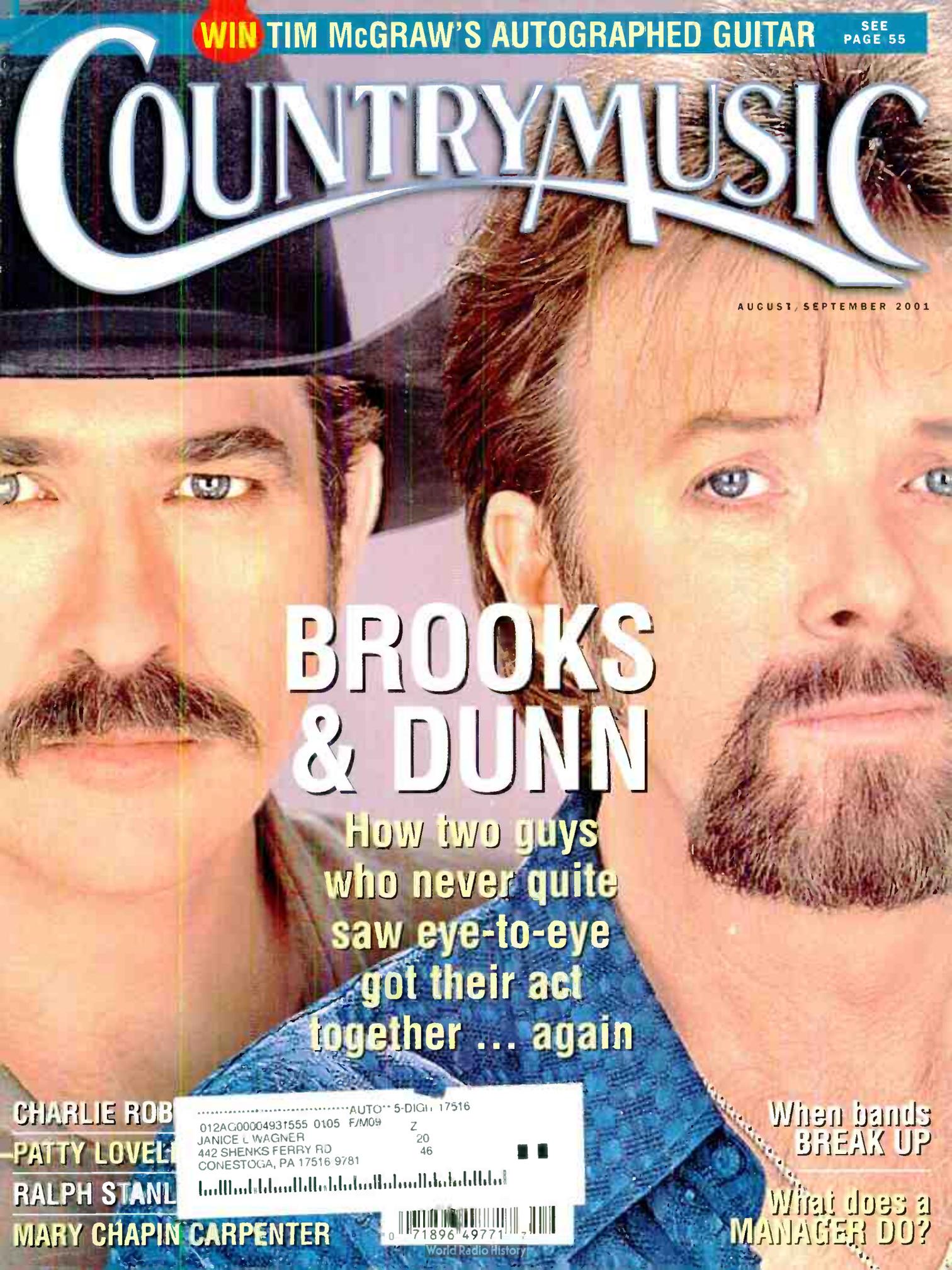


WIN TIM MCGRAW'S AUTOGRAPHED GUITAR

SEE PAGE 55

COUNTRYMUSIC

AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2001



BROOKS & DUNN

How two guys who never quite saw eye-to-eye got their act together ... again

CHARLIE ROBISON

PATTY LOVELESS

RALPH STANLEY

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

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World Radio History

When bands BREAK UP

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World Radio History

COUNTRYMUSIC

August/September 2001

COVER

28 Staring Down Their Future

After hitting a career low with their previous album, *Tight Rope*, Brooks & Dunn dug deep – and struck gold. Their latest CD, *Steers & Stripes*, proves that the honky-tonk twosome has rebounded in a big way, and *Country Music* gets the story behind their climb back to the top.

By Michael McCall

FEATURES

24 Right Man For The Job

He may be married to a Dixie Chick, but Charlie Robison dances to his own Bandera beat, thank you very much. The singing and songwriting Texan offers plenty of 'tude on topics from musical liberty and laughter to home life on his ranch.

By Michael McCall

36 Special Report: The Grass Is Greener

The soundtrack to the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* stunned the music industry by selling more than one million copies with almost no radio play. But should we really be surprised? We examine the momentum behind country's recent acoustic-music phenomenon and its hottest "new" star – the legendary Ralph Stanley. Also, we trek with Patty Loveless to revisit her *Mountain Soul* roots. And Earl Scruggs writes about his illustrious career and the world's hippest instrument – the banjo.

By Bill Friskics-Warren

46 Playing In The Band

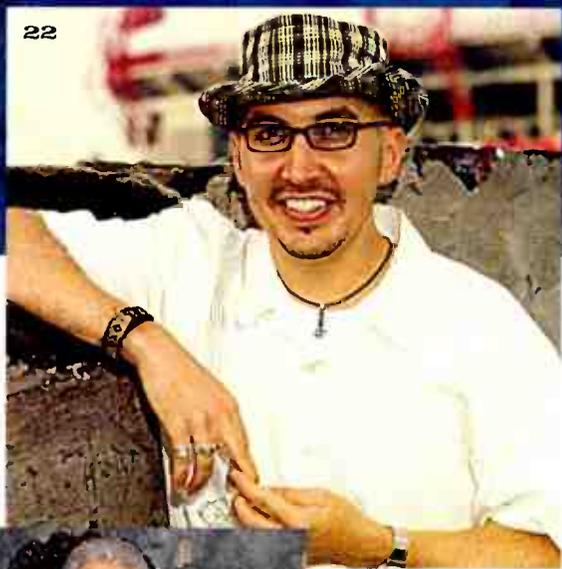
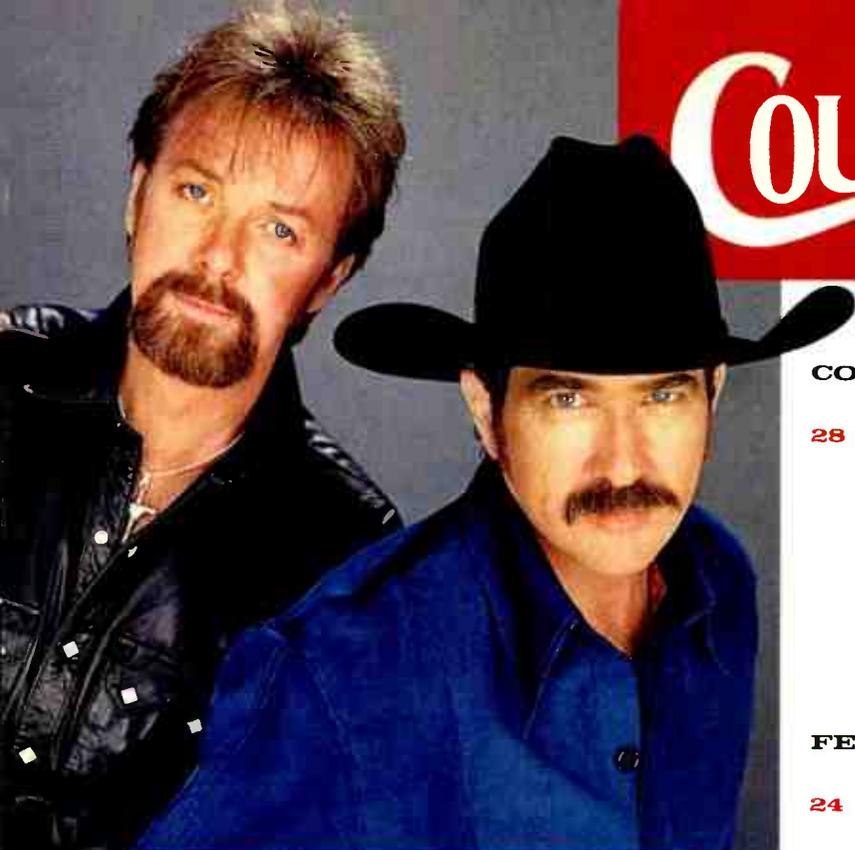
Many dream of making it big with their garage-band buddies, but what does it take to actually form a successful group? Alabama, Lonestar, Sons Of The Desert and Trick Pony are just some of the groups that give us the skinny on getting along, compromise and money – or lack of it.

By Beverly Keel

74 A Survivor's Story

Danni Leigh's story is more typical than we'd like to believe: A hungry, eager star finally gets signed to a record deal, only to find her dreams dashed when the partnership doesn't work the first time – or the second. Maybe the third time's the charm?

By Beverly Keel



22

28

CHUCK JONES

LARRY HILL



36

CHUCK JONES



24

BOBSON/WOLFRAT

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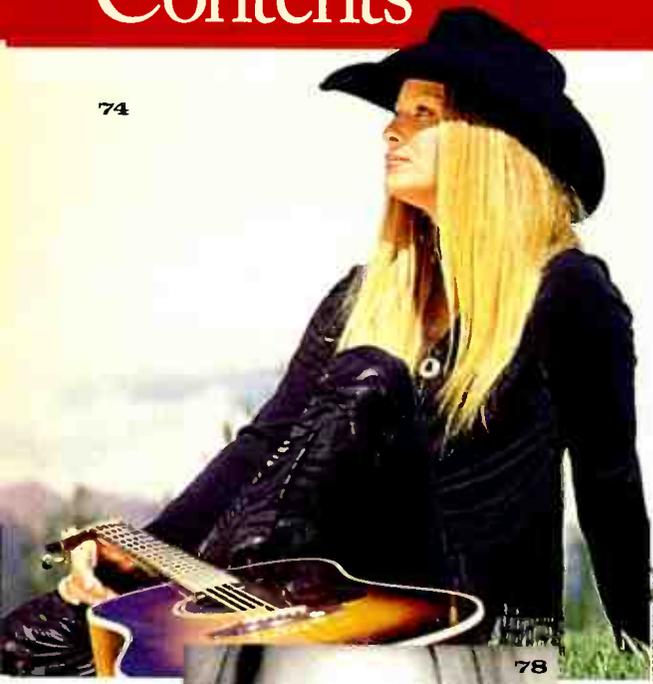
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74



78 **Destiny's Child**

Mary Chapin Carpenter is back with *Time*Sex*Love**, her first studio album in five years. The Washington, D.C.-based artist is more comfortable talking about time than sex or love, but she clearly revels in her craft.

By Nick Krewen

DEPARTMENTS

6 Letters

10 Country On The Town

16 The Insider

Special correspondent Hazel Smith's candid views on the news.

20 Horizon

Tammy Cochran finds success through an ox-roast sandwich, while Mark McGuinn secretly romances "Mrs. Steven Rudy."

57 The Journal

Dottie West always displayed a sunny disposition, despite the horrific secret she kept hidden from the public ... Bluegrass legend Hazel Dickens inspires The Judds ... How the authorship of "Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys" is still contentious ... and more.

73 What I Do

What does a good manager do? Everything.

82 Trailblazers

The multifaceted Whisperin' Bill Anderson reflects on his 40-year career and offers his assessment of the music industry's past and present. He also promises to figure prominently in its future.

86 Reviews

The latest CDs from Patty Loveless, Gail Davies, Pat Green & Cory Morrow, Jim Lauderdale, Brad Paisley, K.T. Oslin, Trisha Yearwood, Montgomery Gentry, the *Songcatcher* soundtrack and more.

98 Say What?

K.T. Oslin waxes eloquent about loving New York, Gene Hackman and her livelihood in miniatures.

102 Off The Charts

BlackHawk's Henry Paul remembers bandmate Van Stephenson ... Thirty years of *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* ... Satellite radio is out of this world ... Why stars need more insurance ... Pop mogul Richard Marx comes to Nashville ... Added value for your music dollar ... and more.

112 Great Moments

A history-making snapshot of the past.



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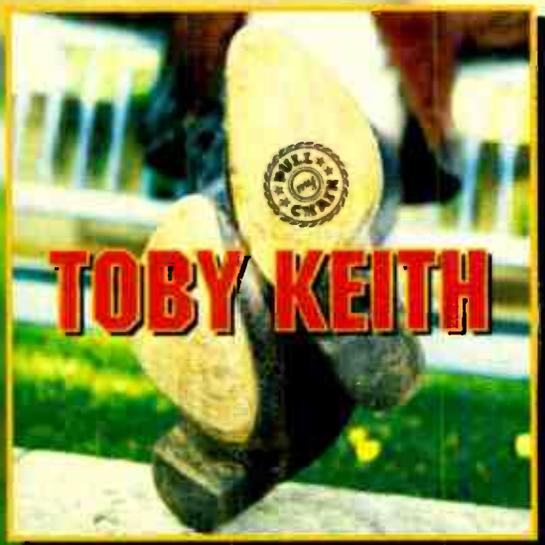
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UP IN ARMS

I am a charter member of the CMA and I've seen a lot of trends and changes. But the cover of your June/July issue is a disgrace. Who wants to look at the hairy armpit of Tim McGraw, or anyone else? This is just another example of the so-called "modern thinking" that has driven movies and TV completely beyond the realms of good taste and reason.

NOLAN YOUNG

HOUSTON

When your magazine came today, my husband and I couldn't believe you had a country singer in his undershirt, with a hairy armpit exposed, on the cover. It wasn't classy, sexy or even good-looking. Come on! You can do better.

MARY MATHES

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

What's happening here, folks? To see Tim on the cover was uplifting. But once I started reading the story, well ... that was something else. First of all, "Mr. Macho" takes off after a speeding truck with his wife and children. How stupid can that be? Anything could have happened; hasn't he heard of road rage? He put his life and family in danger. Then when I saw that picture on the inside, it just made me sick. Tim, pull your pants up, my boy! I don't particularly care to see your tummy or your underwear. Keep that for the privacy of your home and spouse.

JOYCE DUPLCHAIN

RAYNE, LOUISIANA

KEEPING TIM YOUNG

You can't imagine how excited I was to open my mailbox and see Tim McGraw gracing the *Country Music* cover. It was a great tribute to have on the day his new CD *Set This Circus Down* was released. He is my all-time favorite country artist. The article "Life Under The Big Top" by Michael McCall was wonderful, except for the misinformation about Tim's age. He's 34, not 35. Otherwise, I loved the whole article, and the pictures were beautiful. Thank you for showcasing this wonderful person.

RENEE SIGSBEE

FARWELL, MICHIGAN



LETTERS

SARA, NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE

I have just a few comments regarding statements made by Sara Evans in Michael McCall's article "Taking Flight" (June/July) regarding the production process on her album *No Place That Far*.

Contrary to Sara's assertion that Norro Wilson and I tracked the entire album in two days, I have never been fortunate enough when the stars were so perfectly aligned that I could perform my job with such rapidity. I enjoy what I do much too much to hurry through any aspect of it.

Sara stated: "Buddy and Norro don't 'build' records." I am proud to say that this statement is true. I believe that when we bring together select groups of our gifted musicians in one room and present them with great material, spontaneous magic can occur. Sara's first No. 1 single, "No Place That Far," was born in those magic moments after John Hobbs started playing that beautiful piano intro. Music is about feeling, not construction.

By the way, Sara, thanks for the call of apology and for warning me about the article. And no, I don't hate you, as you said I would after I read it.

BUDDY CANNON
NASHVILLE

HOLD ON, HAZEL

So Hazel Smith sees no difference in putting a bunch of baby chicks out in a hotel and a couple of immature adults going for a joyride in an ambulance or on a policeman's horse. Well, I wonder how funny she would think it was if at the exact moment it happened she needed an ambulance or the police. These "stars" need to come to grips with reality. Neither incident was funny at all.

PATRICIA MCENTIRE
AVON, OHIO

CASHING IN

Thank you so much for your "Ring Of Fire" article in the June/July issue on The Man In Black, Johnny Cash. I am a big, big fan of his and have been since the '50s. He has been doing his thing for six generations and is still winning awards. Good luck and good health and keep recording, Johnny!

TOM TISCH
GOLD CANYON, ARIZONA



Johnny Cash

THE BAUER/HEGNER/RETNA

Commendations on your great story on Johnny Cash, who will always be my hero. During the '80s, Johnny and June were kind enough to personally sign photos of themselves for my friends and myself. Johnny also put me in touch with his publishing company regarding my songwriting, and Johnny and June invited me to come visit them in Nashville. Johnny had a cabin on his property where songwriters polished their skills and craft. I'll always be indebted to Johnny Cash for believing in me.

MICHAEL MARTINDALE
BAY CITY, MICHIGAN

CASE CLOTHED

I am writing to let you know how excited I was to see George on the April/May cover of *Country Music*, and to read the interview with him. I enjoyed it very much. To all of the critics that say he just stands there and sings, his fans love his



George Strait

JAMES NIELSON/MORISON WULF/FRAT

show just the way it is. We go to hear him sing with his beautiful voice. We don't go to see him change clothes every 10 minutes. We love what he wears all the time - he is a true cowboy! Besides, no one does justice to a pair of skin-tight Wranglers like George. He looks awesome.

George, if you read this, I hope you know how much you are loved by your fans. You are the best!

WANDA YARBROUGH
OXFORD, GEORGIA

CONTRIBUTORS

Meet this issue's esteemed guest stars

Bill Friskics-Warren, who examines bluegrass and acoustic music in this issue's "The Grass Is Greener," has written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Oxford American* and the *Journal Of Country Music*. He is a contributor to the latest edition of *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia Of Rock & Roll*, to be published later this year. His co-authored *Heartaches By The Number: A Critical Guide To Country Music's 500 Greatest Singles* will be published by the Country Music Foundation in 2002. He lives in Nashville.



Chuck Jones, who brought together Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn for our eye-catching cover-photo shoot, is a noted celebrity photographer whose work has appeared in *People*, *In Style* and other national publications. A Cable Ace award winner, Jones' previous

fashion clients include Tommy Hilf and Diesel as well as celebrity subjects Jerry Lee Lewis, Gregory Peck and actor Ian Bailey. A Nashville resident, his photos are regularly showcased in *Photographer's Forum* magazine's *Best Of Photography Annual*.

Beverly Keel, who authored this issue's "Playing In The Band" as well as our brutally honest profile of Danni Leigh, is a tenured associate professor in Middle Tennessee State University's Department of Recording Industry and a freelance journalist. She's also the Nashville correspondent for *People* and a music columnist at the *Nashville Scene*. Her writing has also appeared on RollingStone.com and in *The Washington Post*, *Entertainment Weekly* and *New York* magazine. An alumna of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Keel is a recipient of the *Associated Press Deadline Reporting Award* and the *Association of American Newsweeklies Feature Writing Award*.



Earl Scruggs, who contributed a special first-person essay to our bluegrass feature, is one of the most influential icons in all of music. Joining Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys in 1945, he introduced his syncopated, three-finger banjo-picking

technique to the world and revolutionized the way the instrument would forever be played. Forming Flatt & Scruggs with guitarist Lester Flatt in 1948, he continued to take bluegrass to the mainstream with such classics as "The Ballad Of Jed Clampett" and "Foggy Mountain Breakdown." A Country Music Hall of Fame inductee and Grammy winner, he recently released *Earl Scruggs And Friends*, a collaborative album featuring Elton John, Sting, Vince Gill and others.

SHOOTIN' STRAIT

Why do people think George Strait is so great? He never comes to Fan Fair and it *isn't* because of his busy touring schedule. He just doesn't give a damn! Alan Jackson always manages to come to Fan Fair. And so do the other singers that care for their fans. Alan Jackson is the greatest and always will be!

CHARLENE WALTERS
HILLSBORO, OREGON

BAD RAP

What, no pictures of Tim and Kenny in the Outlaw spread ("Bad Boys, Wild Women," *April/May*)? I guess the "horse incident," which garnered so much media attention and bad-mouthing, wasn't quite up to snuff with country music's legends – the drunkards, rapists, abusers, child molesters and murderers. Yet the men featured in your spread are praised for being "traditional" country, honored by award shows and inducted into Halls of Fame. If this is what it takes to be legend, I hope Tim never travels down this road.

LINDSAY JORDAN
WICHITA, KANSAS

I know you have an audience for classic Outlaw-era country, but I didn't think the "Bad Boys" are worthy of admiration. How sad that drug users, robbers, murderers, spousal abusers and rapists are admired as long as they are celebrities. I think it is truly despicable that anyone would want country to return to its hillbilly, hoodlum era.

WANDA MONTGOMERY
WAYNESBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

Why did you waste the space, paper and ink on your so-called Outlaws? Let them alone! Johnny Paycheck's in a nursing home. I'm sure glad I did NOT get the issue when Loretta was bad-mouthed. How dare you! Loretta is a legend! I'm very sorry I renewed my subscription.

MILDRED KEITH
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
Editor's note: The review in the December/January issue of Loretta Lynn's latest album, Still Country, takes issue with Lynn's song selections, not her talent – or legend.

LAURELS FOR LAWRENCE

I am a very devoted Tracy Lawrence fan and I was very upset about the "Bad Boys, Wild Women" article (*April/May*). First off, if you're going to print anything about Tracy, print all good things. Don't tell the whole world about his personal life.

That was very mean and cruel what you printed. I'm sure he didn't like it, either. So let's give Tracy the recognition he deserves. Tracy, you will always be No. 1 in my eyes.

DARLENA MCAULEY
NEWARK, OHIO

ONE MORE DANCE

I am writing to tell you how thrilled I was to see your article on the WLS *National Barn Dance* in *The Journal* (*April/May*). It certainly brought back memories. In 1942, when I was 11 years old and my sister was nine, we sang country-western music at our local Grange meetings. Our brother accompanied us on guitar.

We entered a contest and won a trip to Chicago to sing on the WLS *Merry-Go-Round* show, which aired on Saturday afternoons. That evening our whole family went to the *Barn Dance* and enjoyed ourselves very much.

One particular memory is whenever Arkie The Arkansas Woodchopper would sing, the other stars always made him laugh, making it tough for him to finish a song. They would wrap their arms around him from behind and peel a banana in his face and try to feed him. He just couldn't finish the song.

I wanted to share my memories with you, and tell you that my wife and I thoroughly enjoy your magazine.

ROY MILLER
DOWAGIAC, MICHIGAN

CALENDAR CORRECTION

I enjoy your magazine very much, especially *The Journal*. I like sections like "This Date In Country Music," but I noticed you left out one of the greatest singers and guitar players of all time, Don Rich – who played for Buck Owens. I don't know his birthday, but he was killed in a motorcycle accident on July 17, 1974. We lost a great entertainer that day. Buck Owens still hasn't gotten over the loss.

ZEB CONNER
HENRIETTA, NORTH CAROLINA

Editor's note: There's only so much space, and we often don't have the room to fit in everything we'd like. We try to vary the selections on "This Date In Country Music" year after year so we don't repeat ourselves – but thanks for your sharp eye!

GOOD BUZZ ON SKEETER!

Thank you, Bob Millard, *The Journal* and *Country Music* for the excellent story on Skeeter Davis (*April/May*). Skeeter took country music to the world while Nashville executives looked the other way. She opened the doors for today's superstars. It's time she is recognized. She truly deserves to be in the CMA Hall of Fame.

LARRY L. STOUT
RUSHVILLE, INDIANA



COMPLIMENTING CLARK

I have occasionally purchased your magazine from the newsstand. But your interview with Terri Clark ("Seriously Fearless," *April/May*) has prompted me to fill out the subscription card! The article was insightful and captured Terri Clark's intellectual and fun-loving side. Bravo to Terri for having "No Fear" and making some changes in her life that led to the recording of *Fearless*. It's one of the best albums to come out of Nashville in a long time!

Thank you, *Country Music*!

ERICA SIMON
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Have a comment? A complaint? A compliment? Send your letter by e-mail to letters@countrymusicmagazine.com or by regular mail to Country Music magazine, 118 16th Ave. S, Nashville, TN, 37203. Mark envelope: Letters. We will not print any letters that do not contain a name and contact address. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity.

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COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

PARTIES • PEOPLE • NEWS • HAPPENINGS

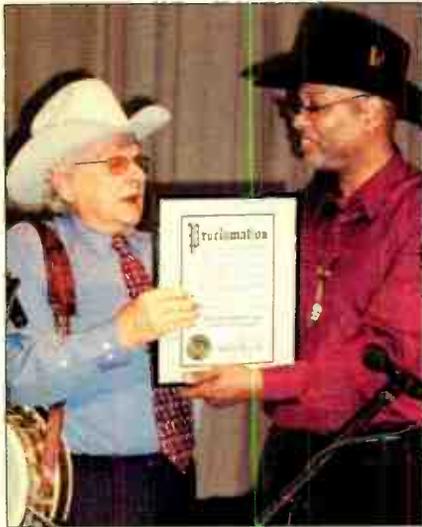


A WHALE OF A TIME FOR ALAN

▲ Killer country star **ALAN JACKSON** was formally introduced to killer whale Shamu during a visit to SeaWorld San Antonio, touted as the world's largest marine life adventure park. SeaWorld animal trainer Mark Galan did the honors, and by all accounts, Alan and Shamu hit it off swimmingly. After Alan exchanged a hug with the 5,000-pound Shamu, he dried off and went on to perform at the George Strait Country Music Festival in San Antonio's Alamodome.



COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO



BILL HOLLAND/NOVA PHOTOGRAPHY

RALPH STANLEY RULES

◀ Bluegrass legend **RALPH STANLEY** accepts a proclamation declaring “Ralph Stanley Day” in San Francisco. The bluegrass titan received the honor from Muata Kenyatta, Director of the Associated Students Performing Arts organization at San Francisco State University, on behalf of the city’s mayor, Willy Brown.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP COLETT



AP PHOTO/HAIR HUPPHEEY

KEEPING IN CHARACTER

▲ **TRACE ADKINS** hosted a paint party at Vanderbilt Children’s Hospital in Nashville and brought a special costumed friend, Arthur – from the popular PBS educational series of the same name – to help with the decorations. Adkins also took time to give a putting lesson to one of the patients, Michael Young.



GILL HITS THE GREEN

▲ **VINCE GILL**, wife **AMY GRANT** and new daughter **CORRINA** take a tour of the First Tee golf facility in Nashville, accompanied by a couple of heavy hitters. Former president **GEORGE BUSH** and wife **BARBARA** joined the Gill family on the ceremonial cart. First Tee provides golf instruction for inner-city youth, a cause close to Gill’s heart. In honor of the singer, the facility will also be known as the VinnyLinks at Shelby Park.



COURTESY ROGERS AND COWAN/TITANS

REEL O'NEAL

◀ **JAMIE O'NEAL** attended the celebrity-studded premiere of the film *Bridget Jones’s Diary* with the movie’s stars **HUGH GRANT** (left) and **RENEE ZELLWEGER** (right). On the movie’s soundtrack, Jamie performed the pop hit “All By Myself” – but she sure seems to be in good company here!

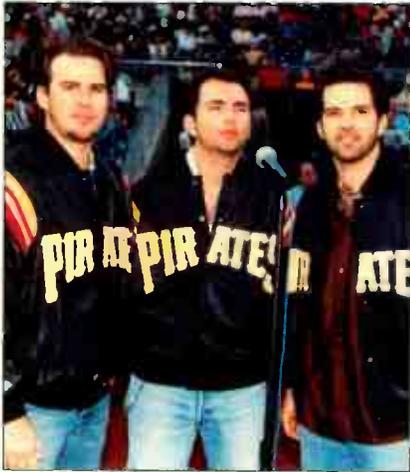


COURTESY ROGERS AND COWAN/TITANS

COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

OH SAY CAN YOU SING ...

▼ **SONS OF THE DESERT** had the best seats in the house for a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game at the Pirates' brand-new park. The trio sang the national anthem to open the game, enthusiastically donning appropriate outerwear for the occasion.



WHO WANTS TO BE A TAMMY?

▲ The casting call went out and hundreds answered. The search was on to find the lead actress for an original play based on the life of the legendary **TAMMY WYNETTE**, which will be produced in Nashville. As yet, no finalists have been announced for the coveted role of country's late "First Lady."

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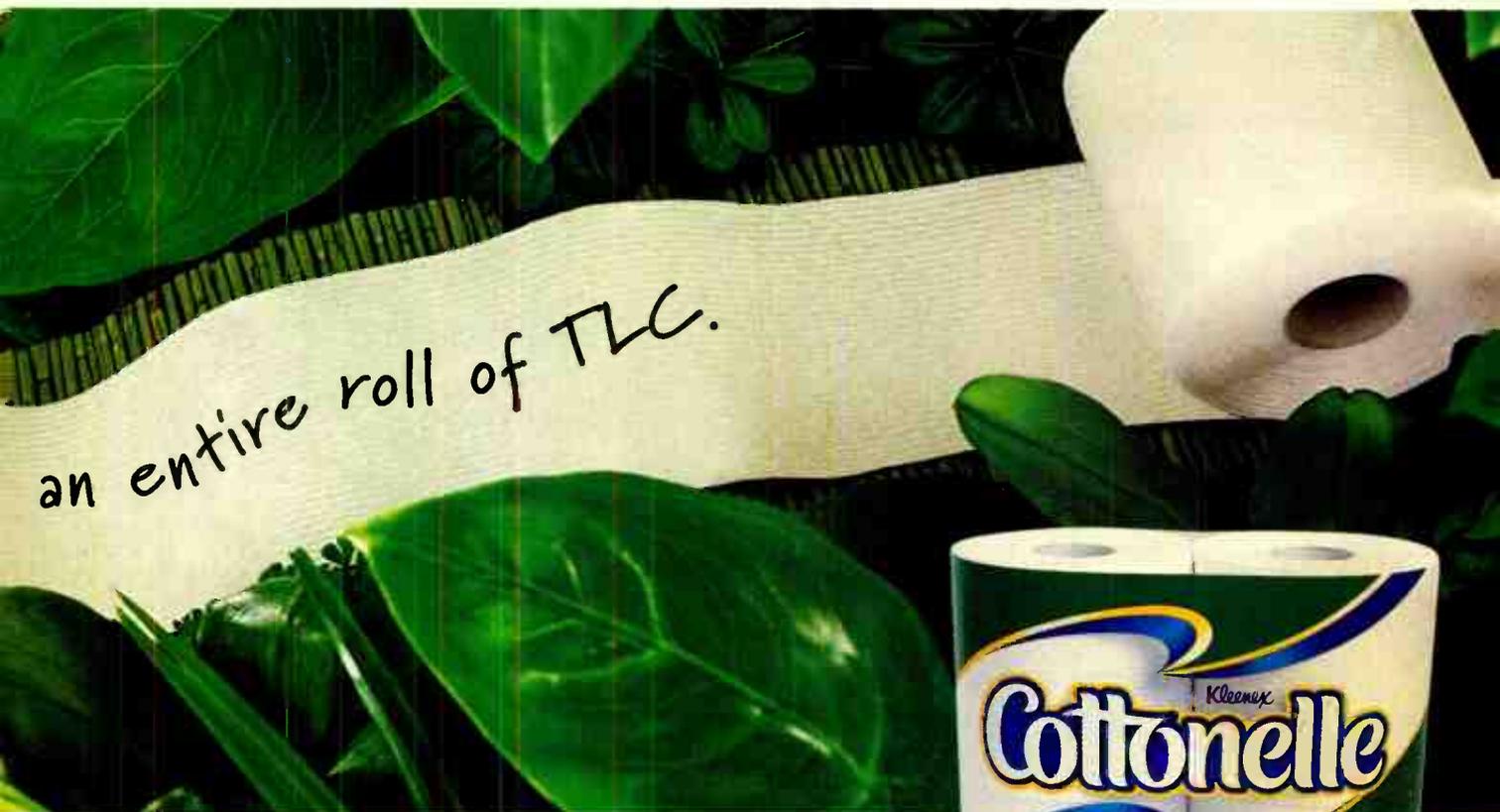
WALTER PICCOLI/RETNA



JOSEPH MARZULLO/RETNA

BIG APPLE TOASTS REBA

◀ **REBA MCENTIRE**, the new darling of Broadway in *Annie Get Your Gun* (left), was honored in New York (clockwise from above left) with a special commendation from the Country Music Association for her critically acclaimed role in the musical. Later, she met with a couple of Nashville VIPs, *Country Music* publisher **SHERI WARNKE** and Editor-at-Large **ROBERT K. OERMANN**; announced the nominees for the 55th annual Tony Awards with *Will & Grace* star **ERIC MCCORMACK**; and hobnobbed with Tony nominee (and former *Alice* TV actress) **LINDA LAVIN**.



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SAMMY & LORRIE GO "LIVE"

▼ **SAMMY KERSHAW** and **LORRIE MORGAN** proclaimed their love and performed a couple of duets when they trekked to *Live With Regis & Kelly* in New York. Guest host **CHEVY CHASE** and **REGIS** sidekick

KELLY RIPA spiced up Sammy and Lorrie's performance of "He Drinks Tequila" with some impromptu mariachi moves. The country couple officially announced their romance and engagement on the TV talk show.



COURTESY ALG HEBA



YOU GET A LINE, I'LL GET A POLE

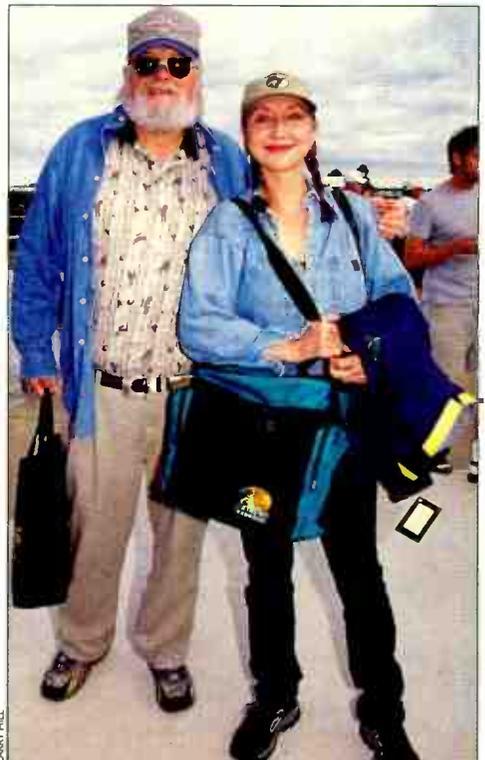
► **CHARLIE DANIELS** and **PAM TILLIS** were only two of the stars docking at a Nashville lake to bait their hooks for the T.J. Martell Fishing For A Cure event. The pro bass-fishing competition united Nashville's sports, music and corporate communities to raise funds for the T.J. Martell Foundation for Cancer, Leukemia and AIDS research.

VASSAR LEAVES HIS MARK

▲ **PHIL VASSAR** kicked off his "Six-Pack Summer" at the Music Valley Wax Museum in Nashville. The singer/songwriter of "Carlene" and "Just Another Day In Paradise" made a lasting impression at the Museum's Walk of Fame, imbedding his hands in concrete next to a star in his honor. Vassar then followed the proper protocol and added his signature above his handprint.



COURTESY HILBUN



LARRY HILL



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THE INSIDER

BY HAZEL SMITH



COOKIN' STARS

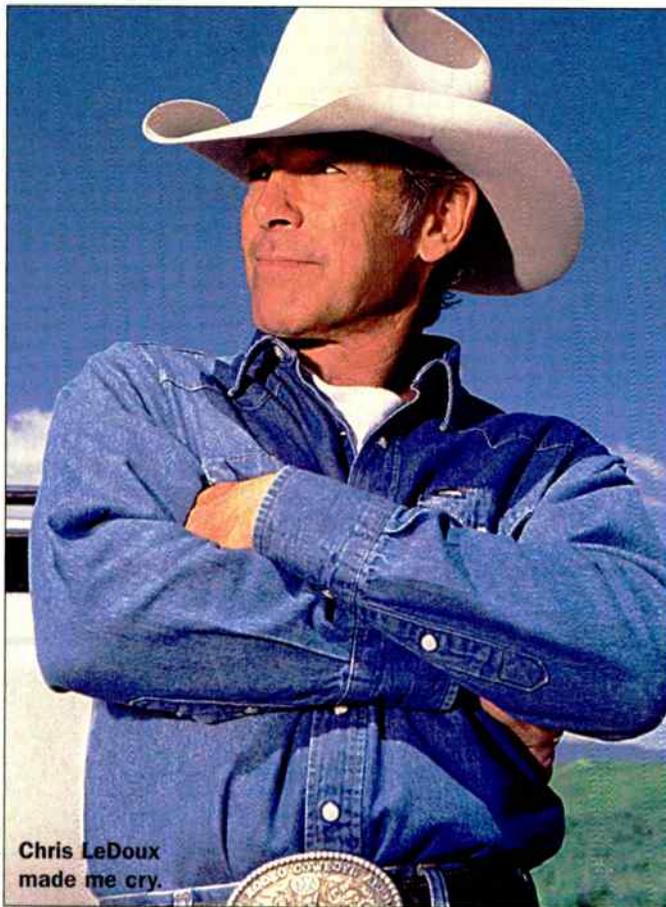
I'm extremely proud of my new book, *Hazel's Hot Dish: Cooking With Country Stars* (\$16.95, Dalmation Press, available everywhere), where 58 stars share their recipes and I write about my personal experiences with them.

Shania Twain, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Martina McBride, Alan Jackson, The Oaks, Pam Tillis, Brad Paisley and **Diamond Rio** all

sent recipes, but none of their letters was more touching than the one I opened from **Chris LeDoux**. Tears fell on the pages. His management company sent a note that Chris had said, "See that Hazel gets these recipes for her cookbook." When he wasn't flying back to the Nebraska hospital that performed his surgery, Chris was recovering from his liver transplant at his home in Wyoming. I had everyone I knew praying for Chris, for I was afraid the new liver, if they found one, might not function.

But trust Garth Brooks to try to come to the rescue. Garth, who honored Chris in his first hit "Much Too Young (To Feel This Damn Old)," was deeply pained by his hero's serious health problem. When it was discovered that Chris was in dire straits and had the same disease – primary sclerosing cholangitis – that had taken the life of football's Walter Peyton, Garth went to the hospital and offered to donate half his liver.

Doctors ran tests for three days before concluding that Garth's liver wouldn't work for Chris. Confronting Garth with their findings, I was told the singer cried like a



MORISON/WALLFRAAT

Chris LeDoux made me cry.

baby for four hours. I also learned that Garth flew Chris and his family back and forth to the Nebraska hospital in a private plane. When I told Garth I'd learned what he did for Chris, he was stunned. I asked him if I could break the news, but he shook his head no, as big tears filled his eyes. "I didn't do anything for him," Garth told me, wiping away the tears. "I failed."

With all the love and respect I have for the man, I said, "Garth, you didn't fail Chris. You did what no one else even tried to do. You offered to give Chris life." The story finally broke when Chris' fan-club newsletter revealed that Garth tried to

donate his liver. Humbly, Chris thanked Garth for the gesture. I think fans deserve to know if a star is truly a good person. In my opinion, Garth is the best.

ALAN ON THE MOVE

Recently, while appearing in Washington, D.C., **Alan Jackson** and his family were invited to the White House to meet the President. Bush escorted Alan, Denise, Mattie, Ali and Dani on a private tour of the big house, where they viewed rooms not included on the public tour. The Jackson 5 are used to being in a mansion. They have 14 garages at their house and have more vehicles stored elsewhere, plus there's a landing

strip. Now that's something even the President does not have – an airplane landing strip in his back yard! Meanwhile, Alan has put his Hill vacation digs, outside of Nashville, on the market for \$3.9 million. The house on the hill has been home away from home for the Jackson 5 for years and was a source of enjoyment for the entire family. Alan, Denise and the kids like skiing and fishing and there's a pool for the entire family. Alan says that recently the family has used the place less and less. The girls are older and involved in soccer and other sports, which take up their weekends. The family is contemplating a vacation home in Georgia near their parents. On the Chattahoochee, Alan?

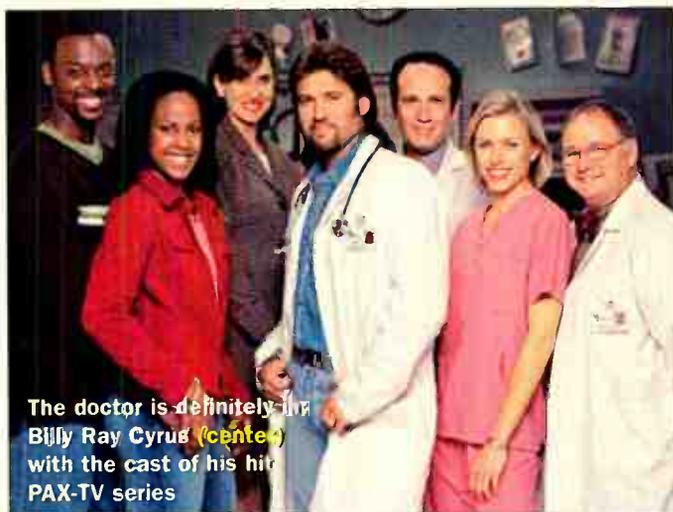


Alan and Denise Jackson: Back to Georgia?

SCHEFFER/ANITA LARSON

O BROTHER

Unless you've had your head under the sand, you know that *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* is the title of the award-winning movie starring **George Clooney**. You also know the acoustic CD of the same title features **Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss**, the great **Ralph Stanley, The Whites, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings, Dobro-god Jerry Douglas** and the marvelous **Dan Tyminski** singing "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow." With virtually no radio airplay, the record was certified platinum for more than one million sales. So we celebrated at The Factory in Franklin. Star-hopper that I am, I rode down with The Whites. We had loads of fun. All the stars turned out, as did Tennessee Governor **Don Sundquist** and his wife, Martha, who asked Ralph Stanley for his autograph. God bless **David Letterman**, who featured the artists from the soundtrack on his *Late Night With David Letterman* TV show, and the whole shebang was invited to perform in June at New York City's Carnegie Hall. I'm not predicting this record will change the programming of country music for the better, although Lord knows we need help. What I am saying is it's a baby step in the right direction, especially when wonderful vocalists like these – who need no technological crutches to force their vocals to be in tune, unlike today's multi-selling pablum pushers – sell one million records. Mercury Records Nashville chairman **Luke Lewis** passed out platinum plaques, saying it was his proudest moment. That's quite a mouthful from the leader of **Shania Twain's** record label.



The doctor is definitely in! **Billy Ray Cyrus (center)** with the cast of his hit PAX-TV series

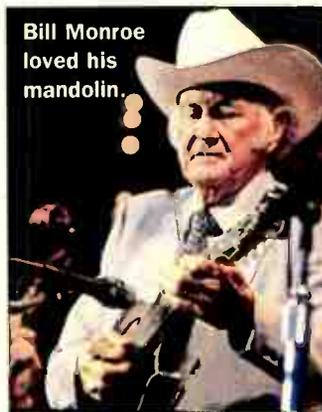
DOC HOLLYWOOD

Doc, the **Billy Ray Cyrus** PAX-TV show, now airs on Sundays and Tuesdays. This absolutely tickles the living daylight out of me. Early on in his career, I was talking up Billy Ray while Music Row was blowing him off. All you fans out there who stuck by Billy Ray knew what you were doing. The ink wasn't dry on the *Doc* news when I learned **David Lynch** tied for the Best Director prize at the Cannes Film Festival for *Mulholland Drive*. Handsome Billy Ray has a big lifeguard gig complete with skimpy swim trunks in this movie about life in Hollywood. This was Billy Ray's first acting project, and if memory serves me, a proposed ABC-TV sitcom based on it was in the talking stages. How can Billy Ray be a doctor and a lifeguard at the same time? Only in Hollywood!

MANDOLIN SOLD

Bill Monroe's F-5 Gibson mandolin was purchased by the Bill Monroe Foundation of Rosine, Ky., for a reported \$1.125 million. Dr. Campbell Mercer, president and executive director of the foundation, paid the required 10 percent deposit to Monroe's son, **James Monroe**. According to Mercer, money for the purchase is coming from various private funds, which have to be raised within the next 18 months for the deal

to stand. The Bill Monroe Museum and the restoration of his old homeplace (price tag for both: \$12 million) are still in the planning stages. My sons Billy and Terry and I once lived on Dickerson Road between Bill's office, where he parked his bus, and his Goodlettsville farm. Occasionally he'd drop by the house to eat with us and



Bill Monroe loved his mandolin.

he'd leave the mandolin at our house while he was at the farm. One day he'd left the mandolin and one of the boys was playing it. The phone rang and soon as I answered, "Hello," Bill asked, "Who's playing my mandolin?" Music was in the house all the time and I hadn't paid attention that a mandolin was being played. I looked in the living room and saw Terry was playing Bill's instrument. "Terry's playing it," I answered. "How did you know it was your mandolin?"

"The tone – I'd know it *anywhere*," he replied. "Tell him to be careful with her. She is a good one, but she is old." Monroe once told me he purchased the Gibson Lloyd Loar F5 instrument in 1943 from a barber in Miami for \$150, who had the instrument for sale in the window of his barber shop.

COUNTRY'S NEW HOME

Fans of country music, come with me on a journey through Nashville's brand-new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. At 9 a.m. on May 17, a motorcade of Grand Ole Opry members inducted before 1974 left the Grand Ole Opry House on Briley Parkway. Traveling to the Ryman Auditorium, the group brought with them a 1920s microphone that once belonged to the late Roy Acuff, a gift from the Grand Ole Opry museum to the new building. A color guard from Fort Campbell, Ky., then led the parade from the Ryman to the red carpet leading to the ceremonial stage in front of the new Hall of Fame and Museum. **Porter Wagoner**, the first star to walk the red carpet with Opry friends **Charlie Louvin, Stonewall Jackson** and **Jimmy C. Newman**, waved at fans and shook hands. They were followed by **Hank Locklin, Bill Anderson, Billy Walker, Jim Ed Brown, Ernie Ashworth, Charlie Walker** and **Jack Green**, all dressed in their Opry best. Next came **Stu Phillips**, the great **Ralph Stanley, Diamond Rio** and the Opry's newest member, **Brad Paisley**, who had girls squealing. A smiling **Wilma Lee Cooper**, who suffered a stroke on the Opry stage in February, waved from her wheelchair as she rolled along the carpet. **Pam Tillis** led the way for the **Melvin Sloan Dancers**. Decked out in three-piece

suits and looking more preacher than hillbilly, **John Conlee** and **Steve Gatlin** were followed by the colorful **Riders In The Sky**. Opry first family **The Whites** preceded **Mel McDaniel**, a thin **Joe Diffie** and a handsome **Hal Ketchum**. **Sharon White's** other half, **Ricky Skaggs**, **Martina McBride** and **Trisha Yearwood** all received rousing applause. Opry announcer **Keith Bilbrey** remembered those members sick and unable to attend: **Bashful Brother Oswald**, **Bill Carlisle**, **Skeeter Davis**, **Roy Drusky**, **Johnny Paycheck** and **Johnny Russell**, who recently had both legs amputated due to circulatory problems from diabetes. Meanwhile, other famous members gathered at the old Music Row Hall of Fame where they picked up the last artifact, **Mother Maybelle Carter's** L-5 Gibson guitar, for delivery to its new home. A fragile **Eddy Arnold** led the procession with his wife, Sally, followed by the Queen of Country Music, **Miss Kitty Wells** – holding hands with her 87-year-old husband of 63 years, **Johnnie Wright** of the legendary duet **Johnnie & Jack**. **Earl Scruggs**, accompanied by his ever-classy wife, Louise, looked agile in comparison to many of his peers. **Little Jimmy Dickens**, 80, wore his royal blue stage suit, and almost ran to the stage. The great **George Jones** followed. Retired CMA Director **Jo Walker Meador** led the way for wheelchair-bound legendary songwriter **Harlan Howard**; **Brenda Lee**, who ran and danced down the runway; dapper industry honcho **E.W. "Bud" Wendell**; and the Hall of Fame's newest member, the

great **Charley Pride**, and his lovely wife, Rozene. Last, but not least, Mother Maybelle Carter's guitar was delivered by her grandson, **Danny Jones**, son of the late **Helen Carter**. The program that followed began with the legendary George Jones and gospel queen **Vestal Goodman** performing a rousing version of "Amazing Grace," then went on to include performances by Earl Scruggs, **Marty Stuart**, **Vince Gill**, **Emmylou Harris** and **Kathy Mattea** (whose first job when she arrived in Nashville was working as a Hall of Fame tour guide). After the ribbon-cutting, thousands mobbed the brand new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, open free that day to the public. Realizing the importance of the historic event, every record label and music publishing company on Music Row closed down for the three-hour ceremony. The only complaint? Sunburn! Long live the Hall of Fame. It was a truly awesome occasion.

LISTEN TO REBA

Doesn't it feel good knowing **Reba McEntire** succeeded when she took country to the city and ended up being the toast of Broadway in *Annie Get Your Gun*? And when I read her name listed with famous actors on the list of new TV shows set for this fall, it makes me prouder. The prime-time series was originally titled *Deep In The Heart*. Now it's simply *Reba*, named after our favorite. Reba's character is a Texas woman whose life falls apart when she discovers that her teenage daughter is pregnant by the star of the high school football team. If that isn't enough, Reba's TV husband has a pregnant mistress. It's

expected to air in October. I hope those Hollywood writers will have the sense to listen to the star.

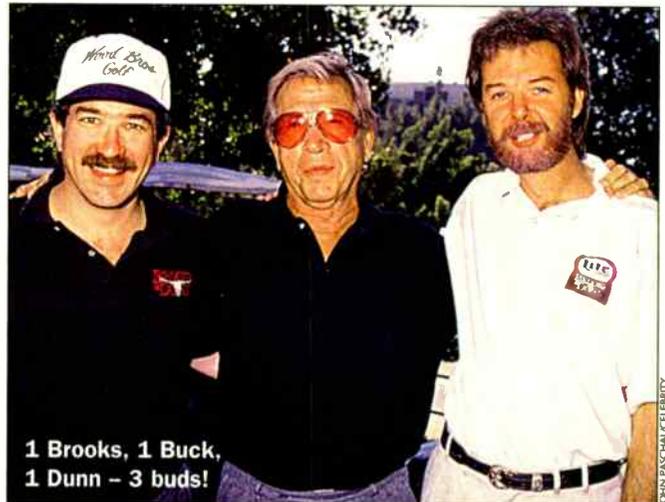
GATLINS ARE GUNNING

The Gatlins are regrouping. Larry, Steve and Rudy, who went their separate ways following the closing of their Myrtle Beach Theater, will be reunited in Branson this fall. The Larry Gatlin And The Gatlin Brothers 2001 Christmas Reunion Show will perform 25 holiday shows beginning Nov. 22 and lasting until Dec. 9. They're planning 61 shows in 2002.

many lucky people a famous red, white and blue replica of his acoustic guitar. But Ronnie just about cried when Buck gave him the guitar. Kix? He was so addled he admitted that it didn't even seem real.

ELTON, BILLY & EARL

What superstar did **Elton John** and **Billy Joel** want to see when they appeared in concert at the Gaylord Entertainment Center? Faith and Tim? One of the Lee Ann/LeAnns? Nope. It was the real deal – legendary **Earl Scruggs**, who they met after the show. Elton appears on Earl's new star-studded album, *Earl Scruggs And*



1 Brooks, 1 Buck, 1 Dunn – 3 buds!

BROOKS, DUNN & BUCK

Brooks & Dunn had lunch with the legendary **Buck Owens** in Bakersfield, and the Hall of Famer surprised the award-winning duo with their own personal Telecaster guitars. The inscription read: PLAY IN GOOD HEALTH. YOUR FRIEND, BUCK OWENS. MAY 15, 2001. When Buck presented his signature Telecaster earlier this year to **Brad Paisley**, it was rumored to be his first or second. My guess is that Buck must have presented one as well to his dear friend **Dwight Yoakam**. My guess is that these are probably No. 3 and No. 4. Of course the Bakersfield native has given

Friends, which should be out by the time you read this.

FARM AID RETURNS

Willie Nelson has announced that Farm Aid will be back once again with co-hosts **John Mellencamp** and **Neil Young**. The event is set for Sept. 29 in **Steve Wariner's** hometown of Noblesville, Ind. Steve's parents and his brother Kenny still reside there, where Kenny owns and runs Wariner's Music Store. According to Steve's wife, Caryn, their young'uns Ross and Ryan love visiting their grandparents and cousins back home in the Hoosier State. *



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Angel Wings

Hailed as the next Tammy Wynette, Tammy Cochran soars with a song that keeps her family memories alive.

It's about as hurtin' and cheatin' as you can get in country music. "If You Can," a tear-jerking ballad with a weeping pedal steel and a pillow full of melancholy, first generated a buzz around Nashville's Music Row a year ago for its fresh, traditional sound.

But it was the tune's singer, Tammy Cochran, who received even more attention. The 31-year-old native of Austinburg, Ohio, was being dubbed by industry insiders as the next Tammy Wynette or Loretta Lynn.

"Those are very big shoes to fill, and I don't think anyone can," says Cochran. "I'm flattered and honored to be compared to those wonderful artists. I want to continue doing more traditional country, but I think it can be done in a way that's still cool and hip and makes young people want to listen."

While legendary status is hardly guaranteed – especially considering her debut, *Tammy Cochran*, has only been out a couple months – there are promising signs.

Cochran received a rare standing ovation at her *Grand Ole Opry* debut last May, and a rarer phone call from an established star, Martina McBride, to a local radio station asking about Cochran's phenomenal voice.

In a life filled with hardship and heartbreak, ranging from a broken marriage to the death of two brothers from cystic fibrosis, Cochran says her misfortunes have only strengthened her resolve. "Through any heartbreak or pain or joy, you learn something from it," says Cochran. "We've all had our heart broken a time or two. I'm no exception. It makes things more real. Not everything's going to be sugar-coated candy."

She began singing at the age of eight, inspired by an endless procession of Loretta Lynn and Barbara Mandrell albums on the family turntable. But it was her first taste of an ox roast sandwich at 12 that hooked Cochran

permanently on showbiz. "Mom found out they were having this talent show and ox roast a couple of towns over," she recalls. "I won the \$20 and the sandwich!" In her teens, Cochran hit the county fair and festival trail, as well as something she calls the "Zoo" tour. "The Elks, the Eagles and the Moose – we played all the lodges," she laughs throatily.

Following high school, Cochran relocated to Nashville in 1991. Her parents, Mabel and Delmar, took early retirement and moved with her. "They really believe in me, so I'm grateful for that. I know when a lot of people come to town, their parents aren't supportive," she says. "Mine said, 'If you think you can do it, then you can do it.'"

Cochran began life in Nashville toiling at McDonald's and eventually landed a publishing deal with Warner-Chappell. She discovered "If You Can" at a rival publisher in 1995, and hung onto it until Sony executive and producer Blake Chancey lent her his studio to cut the song.

Chancey loved her demo, but he rejected signing her because he felt Sony already had too many female singers on its roster.

Others convinced him he was wrong, and she got her first recording contract.

Cochran is most thankful for the chance to record the album's most personal ode, "Angels In

Waiting," a song she penned for her brothers Shawn, who passed away in 1980 at 14, and Alan, who died in 1991 at 23. Both were victims of cystic fibrosis.

"The ordeal made me a better person, and taught me about what's important in life. It's not about all the toys you have, it's about who you are and how you treat people," says Cochran. She also feels she's keeping her brothers alive through the song. "Alan told me once, 'As long as you do enough living for both of us, we'll be fine.'"



Cochran conquered an early life of hardships and family misfortune.

BY NICK KREWEN

World Radio History



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A frozen mistake.

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Check out the dude on the bandstand. With his mustache, goatee, horn-rimmed glasses and leather beret, Mark McGuinn looks more beatnik than country. But a country songwriter he is, indeed, and a darn good one, if first impressions count for anything.

"Mrs. Steven Rudy," his story of a man's fixation on the unhappily married girl-next-door, is only the third single issued by an independent record label in 15 years to break into the Top 10. Recorded for VFR, the Nashville-based imprint launched by music veteran Harold Shedd, "Mrs. Steven Rudy" also offers radio something it hasn't had for awhile: a cheatin' song.

"It's actually more of an 'I'd cheat if I could' scenario," the 32-year-old McGuinn asserts. "The guy wants to rescue his next-door neighbor from a bad situation."

The fact that the song's energetic infusion of banjo, an African hand drum called the djembe and mechanized percussion has struck such a resounding chord with a country audience seems itself as improbable as McGuinn's unusual road to stardom.

Growing up in Greensboro, N.C., with three brothers and a sister, McGuinn was initially *forced* to learn music.

"My mother took me by the ear and said I had to play an instrument. I chose trumpet, which led to piano, guitar

The Green Beret

Newcomer Mark McGuinn - a different kind of hat act - woos "Mrs. Steven Rudy"



TRACY MITCHELL/WAR RECORDS

Mark McGuinn scored a victory for independent record labels when "Mrs. Steven Rudy" landed in the Top 10.

and music lessons," he recalls. Although he studied jazz in high school, he admits his wide listening palate ranges from country to Journey and Stevie Wonder.

His original aspiration was professional soccer, but a knee injury forced him to reassess his future.

"I never considered music until college," he explains. "I saw Doc Watson one night and was amazed at the emotion he conveyed with a guitar and his voice."

Inspired, McGuinn began performing at open-mike nights in Greensboro and began writing songs with his friend Billy Davidson. Deciding to take a serious stab at the music business, the duo relocated to Music City in 1993.

"My folks figured I'd be back in two weeks," McGuinn remembers. "However, I ran into songwriter Whitey Shafer. He told me he'd never met anyone who didn't make it in Nashville, if they stayed around long enough."

Those words kept McGuinn on track. After a few near-misses in placing songs with artists, he decided to try his own hand at recording. He hooked up with producer Shane Decker.

"Shane and I mapped out some tunes using drum loops, adding counter-melodies and bass lines, and made the demo. VFR was the first company that heard it."

VFR gave McGuinn and Decker complete artistic control, resulting in a self-titled debut album that combines the singer's smooth tenor with hard-core picking and flourishes of pop, blues and R&B.

Equally attention-getting is the colorful and playfully geometric David Abbott-directed video for "Mrs. Steven Rudy." It's a rather incongruous work considering the song's take on abusive behavior.

"The song is kind of dark, but we made the colors bright," McGuinn explains. "They filmed me singing first, then David put the images behind me. We didn't want to imprint our vision of the song. We wanted everyone to keep their own ideas about the tune."

In the meantime, "Mrs. Steven Rudy" has topped *Billboard's* Top Country Singles Sales charts, and McGuinn has hired Nashville heavyweight Scott Siman as his manager. Mark McGuinn counts his blessings.

"I know I'm very lucky," he says, "and I'm very thankful."

— J. Poet

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"The End of a Perfect Day" pickup truck is the first issue in the *Rustic Retreats* collection that captures the glory of the great outdoors in rugged

die-cast metal. Hand-crafted by Ertl in 1:25 scale, "The End of a Perfect Day" features a full-color reproduction of Kinkadee's masterwork on the cab doors, along with humorous fishing slogans and "Bait & Tackle" signs on the fenders and hood. This authentic replica of a classic 1947 Studebaker is complete with rubber tires, a chrome-finished grille and hubcaps, a fully detailed interior — plus a rowboat full of fishing gear that can be loaded and unloaded separately. A certificate of authenticity and collector's booklet assures the authenticity of your Hamilton Authenticated purchase.

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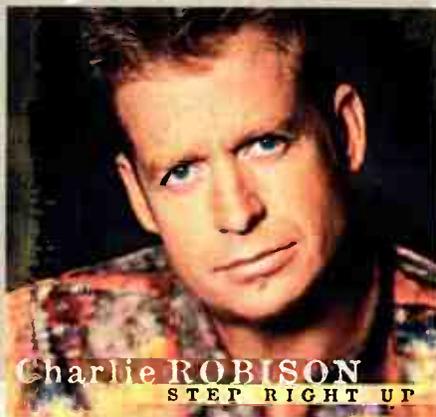
Fun-loving Texan Charlie Robison steps up to the plate

A laugh is more than a fingerprint in sound; it provides insight into personality. For example, the modest laughs of George Strait and Alan Jackson nicely convey the characters of the two country gentlemen.

On the other hand, Charlie Robison does not laugh like a gentleman. His unhinged chortle shatters the air, the sound of a carefree, confident man and a ruffler of feathers.

"When I go to funerals, I end up making fun of the way people are dressed," confesses Robison, 36. "I know why I do it - it keeps me from having to deal with the fact that I'm at a funeral. But I can't help it. Anytime things get too serious, I end up busting out laughing."

At a time when the men of country music comprise a polite fraternity, Robison cuts raggedly against the grain. As country music struggles to recapture public interest, industry insiders believe Nashville desperately needs a charismatic new star who is more spit than polish. So despite his differences - or maybe because of them - Robison sits poised for national stardom. He represents the alternative Nashville male prototype: More reckless than Garth Brooks, more rocking than



Vince Gill and more roguish than Tim McGraw. While many country singers curb their wilder impulses, Robison doesn't camouflage his baser instincts. Just watch him in concert, as recently witnessed when Robison held court at Graham Central Station, a rural Lone Star nightspot that largely exists to entertain the denizens of a nearby airbase.

"This song is about a guy who has the

lead and knows how to swing it," he growls, introducing his self-penned "Right Man For The Job" to the hooting young disciples crammed against the San Angelo club's stage. As he and his five-piece band tear into the bawdy song, with Kevin Carroll's guitar a-blasting and Robison's sardonic baritone forcefully enunciating each word, the audience stands transfixed, yet still lively. By the end of his 90-minute set, Robison's macho swagger has at once energized and pulverized the sweaty crowd.

Robison's rowdy stage demeanor spills onto his records. *Step Right Up*, his third album, is filled with razor-sharp sarcasm, slicing up normally sensitive topics and carving convoluted fables of religion, matrimony, fidelity and sex in a lyrically provocative manner.

"I don't write a lot of love songs," Robison admits. "I like writing about all the weird human things."

by Michael McCall



Robison brings a rock star's swagger to his ribald country tunes.

CHARLIE ROBISON

Despite the double entendres pumping through the juicy "Life Of The Party" and "It Comes To Me Naturally," and the sweaty lust that burns through "I Want You Bad," he suggests that he's matured. He claims his May 1999 marriage to Emily Erwin, the banjo-playing Dixie Chick and fellow Sony artist, has broadened his perspective.

"Males, before they're married, use about 10 percent of their brains for paying bills and the other 90 percent for getting laid," bellows Robison, drawing shocked scowls from diners in a San Angelo seafood restaurant. "After I got married, it was like I had some kind of brain transplant. I've got this whole new side of my brain that I'm able to use now."

Citing such songs as "The Preacher" and his "The Wedding Song" duet with one of his wife's partner Chicks, Natalie Maines, as tunes that sprang from his freshly expanded mind, Robison admits that he's even contemplating parenthood with his new bride.

"It definitely opened up a whole new list of things," he says wryly, "to write about."

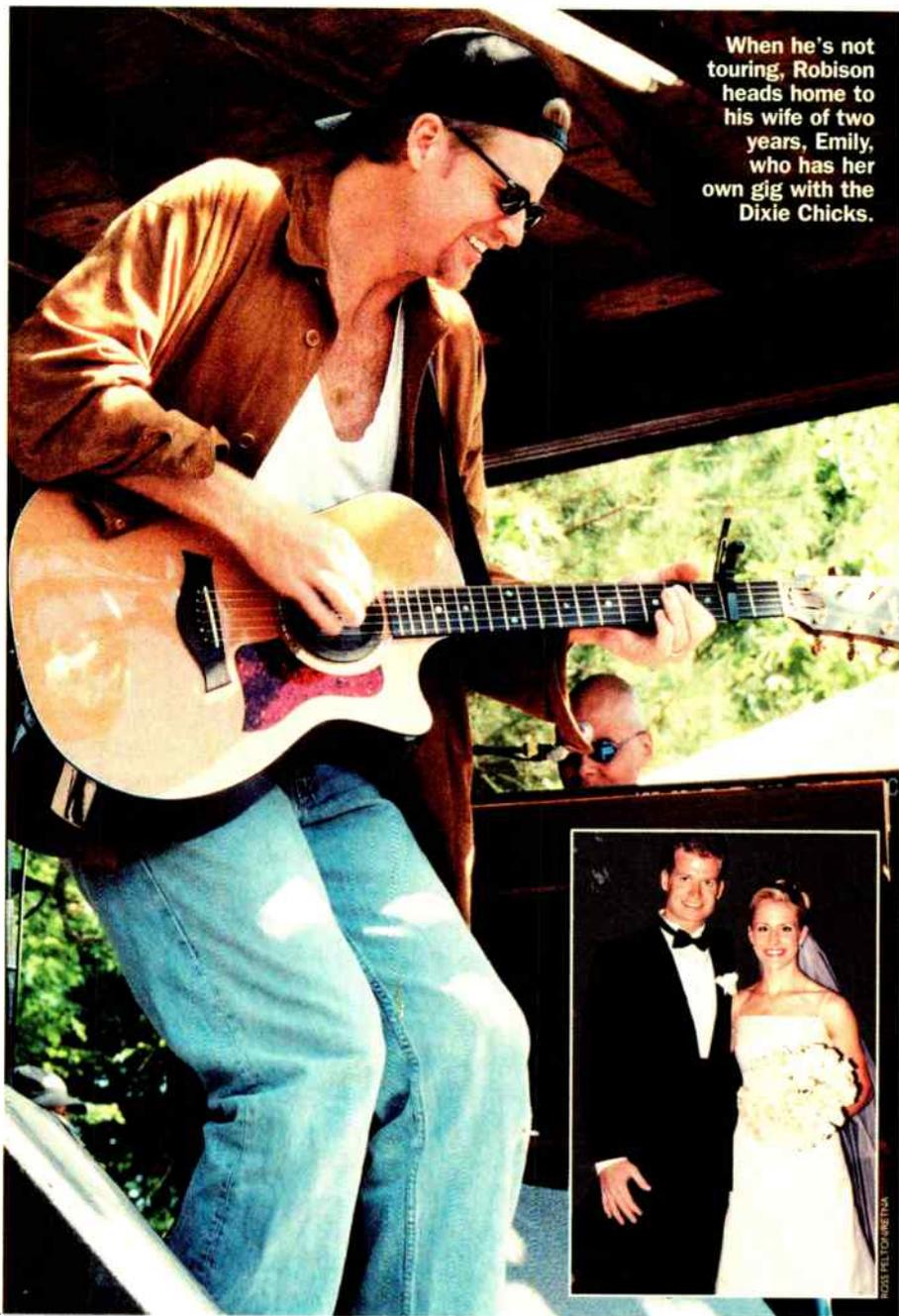
When it comes to family, Robison's background provides plenty of fodder. Veteran Texas country-rocker Joe Ely, a primary Robison influence, describes the singer's ancestry as "an epic tale on the scale of *Gone With The Wind*."

In the 1840s, Robison's kin settled in rural Southern Texas after leaving Liechtenstein, a tiny European country nestled between Austria and Switzerland. "They came over for philosophical reasons," Robison explains.

A pioneering group of philosophers known as the Freethinkers, Robison's descendants trekked deep into the Lone Star State until they came upon an uncultivated abundance of rivers, lakes and lush farmland in Bandera County, west of San Antonio.

"They settled near Comfort and built dams and mills and farmed," Robison says. "Their political philosophy fell by the wayside over the years. We've been here for five generations, and a lot of us are still working the land. Most were still speaking German when I was growing up."

Born in Houston, Robison moved with his family back to a Bandera ranch while he and his younger brother, Bruce, also a singer/songwriter, were still infants. By the time Charlie reached his teens, his college-educated parents had divorced. Charlie's mother relocated to Austin, where her father was a judge and an



When he's not touring, Robison heads home to his wife of two years, Emily, who has her own gig with the Dixie Chicks.

assistant attorney general.

Charlie and Bruce remained in Bandera with their father, a high school coach. Charlie was a football star, while Bruce led the basketball team, and they both earned athletic scholarships to college. In his freshman year, Bruce blew out his knee while Charlie partied rather than practiced. Before long, both wound up as Austin musicians.

In the late '80s, Robison played guitar in several roots-rock and country bands, including the popular Millionaire Playboys. Meanwhile, Bruce married country singer Kelly Willis and built a reputation as a particularly insightful songwriter; his song "Angry All The Time" is a standout on Tim McGraw's recent *Set This Circus Down*.

(McGraw does it as a duet with *his* wife, Faith Hill.)

In the '90s, Charlie concentrated less on guitar and more on writing and singing. The twisted, cheeky songs that filled his 1995 debut album, *Bandera*, created quite a stir in Texas. Within months, Warner Bros. Nashville took notice, snaring the singer with a recording contract. Unsatisfied with the initial direction of the songs, Warner demanded "a more commercial direction," says Robison. "I had already given them my most commercial stuff. I wasn't going any further down *that* road."

So Warner abruptly dropped him. "It was a year and a half stolen from me, but it was a lesson you couldn't pay for,"

Robison says philosophically.

From that point, Robison decided to deal with Music Row "from a position of strength, even though I didn't have any real strength or position to deal from," he laughs. "It's funny - the minute you run scared, they're like a pack of dingoes. But if you stick by your guns, they treat you with respect."

In 1998, Robison signed with Nashville's Sony-owned Lucky Dog Records. His first release, 1998's *Life Of The Party*, gradually found an audience, attracting radio and video attention with two tunes. "Barlight" mutated childhood nursery rhymes into a liquored-up adult limerick with a honky-tonk chorus: *Bar light, bar bright, first bar that I see tonight ...* And "My Hometown" was an unsentimental ode about a high-school football star who blows his scholarship on beer, and a blue collar pipeliner who blows his salary on pot.

Robison received even more mainstream attention for his marriage. He met Emily four years ago at a Dixie Chicks show outside Austin. They celebrated their second wedding anniversary on May 1.

"Emily was probably the only person on that whole Texas circuit that I hadn't met," Robison muses. "We'd played the same places for years. There were many times

when the Chicks would play somewhere Friday night, and I'd play there Saturday."

When they connected, the Chicks had just released "I Can Love You Better," their first hit. "We just hit it right off," Robison says, brightening at the mention of his wife. "We're the only two people in the world who don't take anything seriously, *ever*. No bodily defects or any insecurity is off limits. It's comedy at all costs. We just laugh ourselves sick! It's wonderful."

As the love deepened, the Dixie Chicks exploded into country's hottest act. Naturally, there are those wondering if Robison's recent career push is a result of Sony favoritism by affiliation.

"That's a slap in the face to Charlie's artistry," bristles Sony Nashville senior vice president Mike Kraski. "He was signed *before* their relationship began. And, at Charlie's request, we have played down his relationship. The truth is, he sold more than 100,000 copies of his first album with very little support from us. It's just good business

to capitalize on what he's achieved."

Meanwhile, thanks to the Dixie Chicks' current hiatus, the couple recently enjoyed four uninterrupted months together, plowing land, tending to cattle and horses, and

building a home on their 1,200-acre ranch in tiny Welfare, Texas. It's just a stone's throw from the Robison family ranch.

"She's loving her time off," he says. "She's out at the ranch now. It's calving time, and yesterday she finally caught a cow having a calf. She laid with her and helped her deliver."

He lets out a satisfactory sigh.

"The ranch gives us perspective," Robison says. "Coming off the road, where sometimes you see the worst in people, it really recharges you to get down there in the middle of nowhere and get your hands dirty."

And, one guesses, laugh as loud and often as they want. *

“Anytime things get too serious, I end up busting out laughing.”

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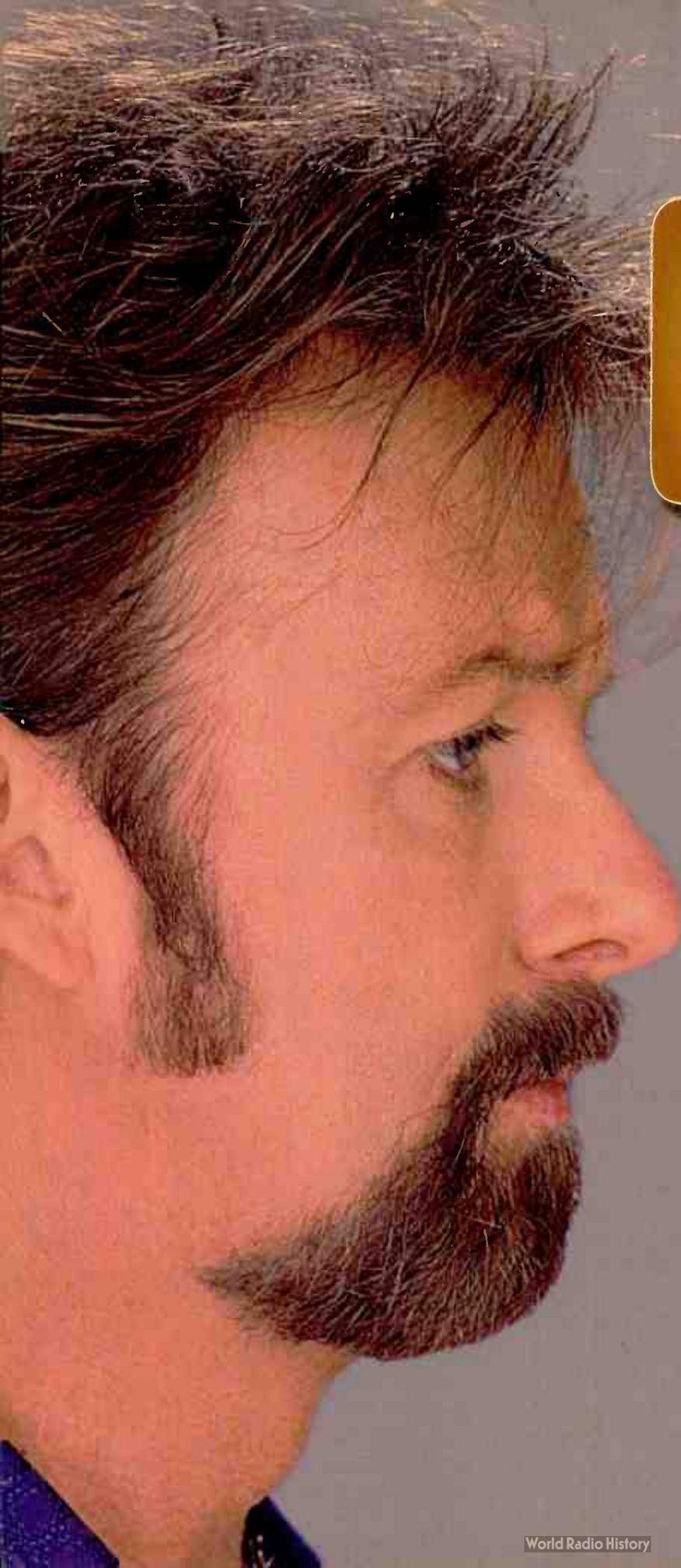
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Staring FUT

As Kix Brooks softens the brim of his black cowboy hat over the steaming spout of a teapot, Ronnie Dunn can't resist the opportunity to throw a barb at his partner.

By Michael McCall
Photographs by Chuck Jones

"You know," Dunn quips, as Brooks molds the brim into shape, "A *real* cowboy would have his own steamer for doing that."

Brooks silently glowers at Dunn, his lip curled in the slightest of smiles, at the Nashville studio where the duo has convened for an afternoon photo shoot and interview.

Minutes later, photographer Chuck Jones tells Brooks he will shoot two rolls of film of the dark-haired singer standing solo.

"Two rolls! *I* didn't get two rolls!" Dunn immediately bellows, and the room falls silent.

Jones eyes Dunn and, fearful that this photo shoot might be on the verge of exploding into a clash of egos, nervously reassures the lanky singer that he has discharged an *equal* amount of film for *his* solo shots.

Suddenly, Brooks and his rooster-haired partner burst out in laughter: Their ongoing sideshow has just snared its latest victim.

"Our humor has always gotten us through," Dunn explains later. "And it gets us out of a lot of tight squeezes – in more ways than one."

These days, they're finding it easier to laugh. After

down their **UARE**

Brooks & Dunn don't always see eye-to-eye, but share a common goal

several years of creative and commercial stumbling, Brooks & Dunn once again stand triumphant at the crest of the musical mountain. Their ferocious country-rocker "Ain't Nothing 'Bout You" recently became the twosome's first No. 1 song in more than two years. It dominated the top spot for six weeks, becoming the most successful radio hit of the duo's decorated career.

Similarly, Brooks & Dunn's Neon Circus & Wild West Show, a colorful concert caravan that includes Toby Keith, Montgomery Gentry, Keith Urban and Cledus T. Judd - and also fire-breathers, stilt walkers and a balloon-blowing goat - is touring amphitheaters and arenas throughout the summer. And the recent debut of the duo's *Steers & Stripes* CD at the top of the *Billboard* country charts handed Brooks & Dunn their first No. 1 album since 1996's *Borderline*, signaling a reversal of previously declining sales.

"The fans didn't necessarily go away, we just weren't giving them good albums," admits Brooks, 46, citing 1999's *Tight Rope* as a particularly lack-

BROOKS & DUNN

luster effort. “We just really hadn’t delivered, especially with *Tight Rope*. So we got real serious about this one. We knew we had to do something really good, and we knew we had to do it *together*.”

As Brooks’ statement insinuates, the restoration of the partnership’s personal dynamic proved crucial in regaining their collective studio strengths.

During the past couple of years, Brooks says, “we were working on different pages. We were scrambling to reinvent ourselves. Ronnie had some real strong ideas on what we could do. I had some real strong ideas – they were different than his – and, honestly, nothing was working.

“So we knew we had to get back on the same page. We had to find some new energy. It all came back together for *Steers & Stripes*. And – bang! Things are better than they’ve ever been.”

Brooks is quick to share credit with

new producer Mark Wright and their revamped partnership with RCA Label Group, the aggressive corporate parent that absorbed the duo’s record label, Arista Nashville.

But Brooks believes the most crucial change was between him and Dunn. “Working together is the single most important aspect of what’s got us back on track,” Brooks notes. “We got a little scattered there.”

After a 10-year reign as country music’s best-selling duo, Brooks & Dunn are only too aware of the public scrutiny they’ve endured since exploding onto the scene with a string of chart-toppers including “Brand New Man,” “My Next Broken Heart,” “Neon Moon” and “Boot Scootin’ Boogie.”

These strong-willed individuals have often employed boyish pranks and resorted to self-deprecating humor to downplay

the tensions created by their inevitable differences of opinion. When tempers do flare, the two eventually compromise in recognition of their differences.

“Sure they fight,” admits TBA Entertainment’s Bob Titley, who manages in tandem with Clarence Spalding. “But they fight like brothers. There’s certain lines they don’t cross, even when they’re upset, because in the long run they know they’re going to have to come together.”

Indeed, Titley characterizes their behind-the-scenes relationship as “one of the most rewarding things about working with them.

“The dynamic between them is really interesting,” the manager adds. “They both have very strong, unique personalities that meld together perfectly. It’s not that they don’t disagree. They do. They just handle it in a very mature way.”

When interviewed, Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn come across as a modern-day Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,



Brooks & Dunn have scored more than 25 hits, more than a dozen of them chart-toppers. But looking back over the past 10 years, does their music still hold up? Here’s a critical view of their eight Top 10 albums:

ON THE RECORD

Brand New Man (Arista, 1991) ★★★★★

Boisterous yet packed with heart, Brooks & Dunn launch their career with what now stands as one of the classic country albums of the '90s. While many country male performers of the period came across as sensitive and introspective, Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn swaggered out in search of a good time. The album features four hits that still rank as their best: “Brand New Man,” “My Next Broken Heart,” “Neon Moon” and the dance-floor smash, “Boot Scootin’ Boogie.”

Hard Workin’ Man (Arista, 1993) ★★★

Punchy but not pithy, the duo’s follow-up maintains the energy and macho attitude of *Brand New Man*, but loses some cleverness and depth. A formula emerges: pumped-up songs about good-time women, as on “Rock My World (Little Country Girl)”; a few references to the Southwest, as on “Mexican Minutes” and “Texas Women (Don’t Stay Lonely Long)”; and a couple of wistful relationship songs, as in “She Used To Be Mine” and “That Ain’t No Way To Go.”

Waitin’ On Sundown (Arista, 1994) ★★★★★

The duo regains its knack for strong material. The soulful “She’s Not The Cheatin’ Kind” ranks among their best ballads, while “I’ll Never Forgive My Heart” proves they can create traditional country tunes with the best of their peers. Of their “rowdy-women” songs, “Little Miss Honky Tonk” stomps the competition.

Borderline (Arista, 1996) ★★

On their fourth album, Brooks & Dunn descend to superficial clichés and formulaic arrangements. The exception is the cover of B. W. Stevenson’s “My Maria,” which reveals Dunn’s voice in all of its expressive splendor. But too many songs – “More Than A Margarita,” “Tequila Town,” “White Line Casanova,” “Redneck Rhythm & Blues” – rely on trite choruses and unimaginative wordplay.

Greatest Hits (Arista, 1997) ★★★★★

Brooks & Dunn have been masterful at providing radio with tightly wound tunes that sound good on radio. This 19-song collection proves why the duo was one of the most popular country acts of the '90s.

If You See Her (Arista, 1998) ★★★

The break afforded by the greatest-hits package worked in their favor, as the twosome bounced back with one of its most diverse and effective collections. Solid covers of Gary Stewart’s “Brand New Whiskey” and Roger Miller’s “Husbands And Wives” add new depth to the partners’ breezy style.

Tight Rope (Arista, 1999) ★★

Marred by too many mid-tempo and lackluster songs, the duo never sounds as uninspired as on this meandering, listless set. No wonder it’s their first album to fall short of the million-sales mark.

Steers & Stripes (Arista, 2001) ★★★★★

Sounding fresher and more energized than they have in years, Brooks & Dunn reconnect with their rock ‘n’ roll attitude and soulful swagger on their latest smash. Songs like “Only In America” spout a broader, more mature viewpoint, while country-rockers like “See Jane Dance” suggest that age hasn’t dimmed their ability to party.

— M.M.



Strangers when they met, Brooks and Dunn developed a camaraderie over the years. "It's still," maintains Dunn, "a learning process."

presenting an easygoing atmosphere of laugh-filled, testosterone-charged give-and-take. Sitting in an office, both kick back with their boot heels perched on a desk, finishing each other's sentences and poking good-natured ribs.

Yet as comfortable as they seem, they readily admit their partnership was strange – and strained – from the get-go.

"When this thing took off, we didn't even *know* each other," laughs Dunn, 48. "We got to know each other as we went, and by then this thing was a runaway train. So we had to learn how to understand each other and live together. It's still a learning process."

The partnership wasn't even their idea. Initially, Leon "Kix" Brooks and Ronnie Dunn spent the '80s pursuing solo careers. Brooks built a reputation as a spirited country rocker playing clubs in his native Shreveport, La. He moved to Nashville in 1979 after releasing an independent album, and upon his arrival worked a number of menial jobs, including concert security. His first break was a music-publishing deal, writing 1983's chart-topping "I'm Only In It For The Love" for John Conlee, and "Who's Lonely Now," Highway 101's 1989 No. 1.

Signing with Capitol Records, his *Kix Brooks* CD was released in 1988. It tanked.

Meanwhile, Ronnie Dunn from Coleman, Texas, was forging a reputation of his own in Tulsa, Okla., leading a pop-

ular dance-hall band. His first attempt to break into the Nashville music scene came in 1974 when he met with a song publisher. It lasted only a few hours.

Back in Tulsa, he scraped the bottom of country radio playlists with a few independent singles.

The Marlboro Music National Talent Roundup provided Dunn with his big opportunity. In 1988, a friend entered him in the contest. A regional victory earned him a trip to Nashville, where he won the

“I knew what I was doing was pissing Ronnie off . . . He was telling me, ‘Why don’t you settle your butt down a bit.’”

first-place prize of \$30,000 and a Capitol Records contract. Dunn recorded three songs, all singles. They flopped, though one of those failed efforts would eventually be re-recorded and validated as the chart-topping Brooks & Dunn dance-floor hit "Boot Scootin' Boogie."

Dunn's work did capture the attention of Tim DuBois, president of Arista Nashville. DuBois wanted to sign Dunn to his roster, but New York-based Arista owner Clive Davis passed. DuBois was

undeterred. He suggested to Dunn that he ought to try writing with another artist, Kix Brooks.

When the duo returned from a session with their first set of songs – which included the future No. 1 hit "My Next Broken Heart" – DuBois knew his instincts were right. He suggested the two record as a duo. Their jaws dropped. But since Brooks & Dunn were both in their 30s, had solo album deals behind them and found their prospects limited in an increasingly youthful field, they decided to give it a shot.

From the start, competitive tension existed between the two men. To record their first album, Brooks suggested working with his songwriter and producer friend Don Cook. But Dunn had Scott Hendricks in mind, co-producer of his Capitol singles. They worked out their first compromise, entering the studio with both producers.

The tension didn't abate. Brooks brought Cook into the duo's songwriting sessions, and the veteran author of such hits as Steve Wariner's "Smalltown Girl" and Conway Twitty's "Julia" wasn't impressed by the novice composer Dunn, flooring him with the biting comment that "a monkey with a typewriter" could come up with something smarter.

Things didn't fare much better in concert. Dunn, who stands still and steady in the spotlight, remembers the first time he performed with Brooks. As Dunn started

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BROOKS & DUNN

to sing, Brooks suddenly darted across the stage, banging on his guitar and rousing the crowd.

Dunn was stunned by the distraction. After a few shows, he asked Brooks to tone down his showmanship. Brooks retorted that he liked bouncing around the stage, that he had always performed that way, and that the crowd always responded. In addition, Brooks informed him, it wouldn't hurt if *Dunn* loosened up a bit.

"I knew what I was doing was pissing Ronnie off," Brooks says. "He was telling me, 'Why don't you settle your butt down a bit.' But I wasn't going to stop doing it. Instead, I was like, 'Move, man! Come on, this is *show business*, baby!' We just had two totally different philosophies."

In the end, crowd reaction convinced Dunn his partner was right. Not only did it rouse them, but it gave Brooks & Dunn a charismatic magic that set them

apart from other country acts. Dunn was a tall, brooding belter who offered his searing voice, while Brooks' lunatic rampage encouraged fans to lose their inhibitions. A Nashville radio deejay characterized them as "a Chihuahua chained to a clothesline pole."

"Our differences are the most important thing that kept us together," Dunn now reasons. "We both acknowledge and respect that. When we started, we were old enough and had been through enough to be mature and listen to each other."

Quick success helped them realize the power of their bond. They hit the ground running in 1991 with their chart-topping debut, "Brand New Man," the first of four consecutive No. 1 songs. The album *Brand New Man* also took off like a rocket, selling five million copies. Cook and Dunn had made their peace and through most of the '90s, Brooks & Dunn were an unstoppable train: seven more chart-toppers, a string of million-selling albums and awards coming out the wazoo, including two Grammys, a succession of CMA and ACM Vocal Duo Awards and even three coveted Entertainer of the Year nods.

But that train ground to a screeching halt with 1999's ill-fated *Tight Rope*. After selling nearly 20 million albums, Brooks & Dunn fell short of the million mark for the first time with *Tight Rope*, which also was the first to fail to spawn a No. 1 hit.

"*Tight Rope* was where it fell apart for us," Brooks admits.

The two had already sensed a need for rejuvenation. Their previous *If You See Her* marked the first time a Brooks & Dunn album had failed to sell two million copies.

"Face it - we were 10 years down the road, and a lot of people already had Brooks & Dunn records," Brooks says. "Without coming up with something really good, we were going to slip."

In 1998, Dunn suggested a new producer, one who would give the music fresh perspective and a jolt of energy. However, Brooks felt loyal to his old friend Don Cook, who had worked on every B&D album.

"Ronnie was ready to shake things up before I was," Brooks concedes. "Cook and I had come into this thing together, and he's one of my oldest and dearest friends. I wasn't ready to give



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TAG TEAMING

Brooks & Dunn break the duo mold

Until Brooks & Dunn shattered the image of the conventional country music duo, the typical duet team consisted of two voices – usually related by blood or marriage – locked in close harmony. From the pioneering sibling sounds of Charlie and Bill Monroe and The Blue Sky Boys' Bill and Earl Bolick, through '80s models The Judds and The O'Kanes, a duo usually built its sound and reputation on its sweet, stirring vocal blend.

• "I think there had been historical, preconceived notions of what a country duo was," Ronnie Dunn says. "But not anymore. Not after us."

Indeed, such early duet teams as '30s *National Barn Dance* stars Karl & Harty wouldn't know what to make of a partnership based more on stage

chemistry. Back then, people were paired because they were related or because their voices created musical magic.

Duos were united through their similarities. Brooks & Dunn work well together because of their differences.

"They bring such different talents to the table," says producer Mark Wright, who worked with Brooks & Dunn on their recent *Steers & Stripes*. "When you're in the same room with them, you really appreciate how they complement and play off each other."

Duos enjoyed their first hurrah in the '20s and '30s, when Mac & Bob, Karl & Harty and The McGee Brothers inspired the formation of The Monroe Brothers, The Delmore Brothers, The Blue Sky Boys, The Dixon Brothers, The Shelton Brothers and The Morris Brothers, among others.

This Southern staple continued into the '40s and '50s, with some of country music's most significant and influential acts, including Flatt & Scruggs, The Louvin Brothers, The Stanley Brothers, The Osborne Brothers, The Bailes Brothers, Jim & Jesse, Johnnie & Jack, The Wilburn Brothers and The Davis Sisters. Then The Everly Brothers took their sound pop by combining country harmonies with rock 'n' roll rhythms and themes.

In the '60s and '70s, country leaned toward male and female duets. Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton,

George Jones and Tammy Wynette, and Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty added romantic tension to country songs, intertwining male and female viewpoints.

But homespun duos didn't disappear: The Bellamy Brothers and The Kendalls

put new twists on family harmonies. The Bellamys gave the long-standing tradition a long-haired, counter-cultural perspective, while The Kendalls bridged the generation gap by combining a father and daughter to present controversial material along the lines of "Heaven's Just A Sin Away."

Duos found new prominence in the '80s, especially in the wake of the commercially groundbreaking mother-daughter alliance

The Judds. It was at this time Foster & Lloyd, Sweethearts Of The Rodeo and The O'Kanes came into their own.

Then Brooks & Dunn altered the landscape. Their successful launch in 1991 spawned a flood of imitators: Archer/Park, Orrall & Wright, Turner Nichols and Thrasher Shiver. None survived.

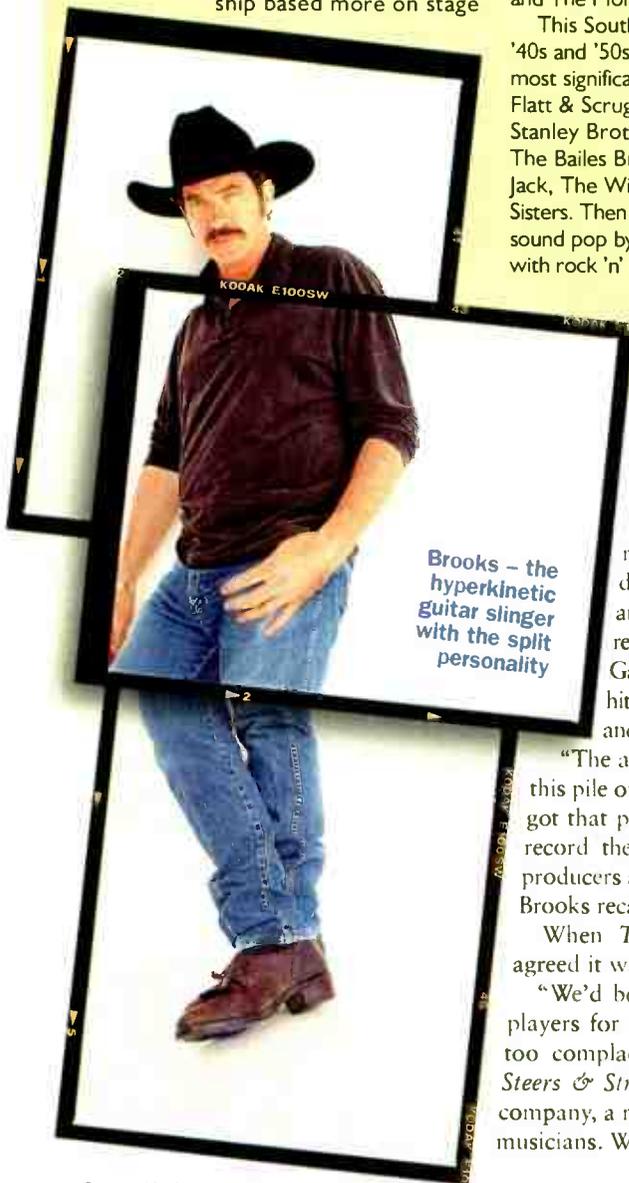
Only Kentucky's Montgomery Gentry has offered any serious competition.

"I still don't think we know why we succeeded," Ronnie Dunn admits. "We didn't do any of the usual duet things. We're not related, we don't sing harmonies, we don't write all our songs together. Somehow it just works."

—M.M.



The Louvin Brothers adhered to tradition.



Brooks – the hyperkinetic guitar singer with the split personality

BROOKS & DUNN

that relationship up."

So the two decided again to record with two different producers. Brooks wrote six songs and cut them with Cook; Dunn recorded seven songs with Byron Gallimore, the man behind recent hits by Tim McGraw, Faith Hill and Jo Dee Messina.

"The attitude we had was, 'I've got this pile of songs over here, and you've got that pile of songs over there. Let's record these piles with two different producers and try and make it work,'" Brooks recalls. "It didn't work at all."

When *Tight Rope* stiffed, Brooks agreed it was time for a change.

"We'd been working with the same players for so long that it had become too complacent," Brooks says. "With *Steers & Stripes*, we had a new record company, a new producer and some new musicians. We wanted to prove ourselves

to them. We both wanted to rise to the top of our game to show we still had it."

Now that they're back on the rebound, Brooks & Dunn are philosophical about their recent problems.

"You're going to have dips in your career," Dunn muses. "If you're going to maintain longevity, you *need* to dip. People get tired of the same thing. But if you dip, then you become an underdog, and people are excited about seeing you win again."

He evokes the image of a late friend.

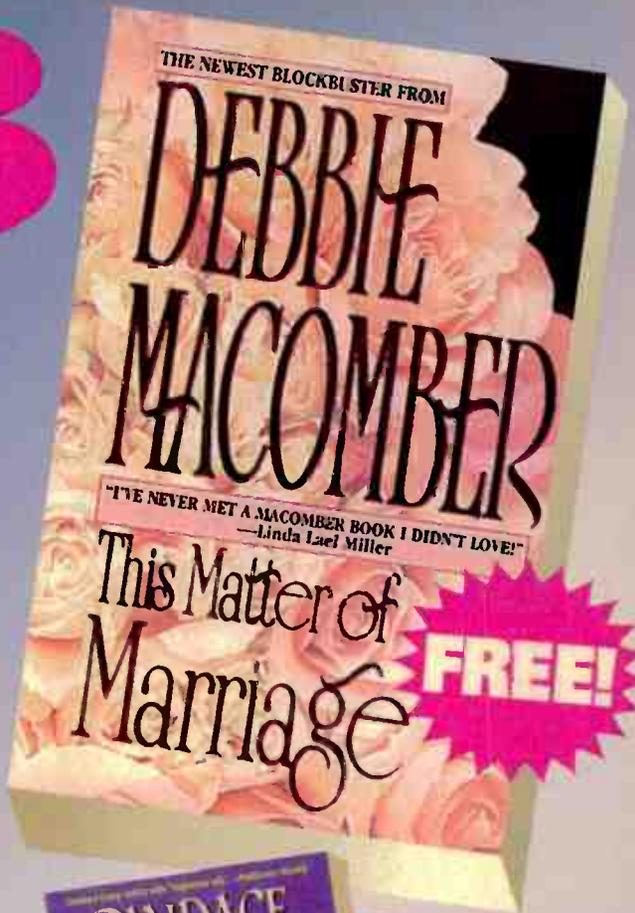
"Suddenly it's like watching [Dale] Earnhardt winning the Daytona 500. Everyone out there seems to be cheering us on and happy that we're making a comeback."

Or, as Brooks puts it, "All of a sudden everyone's head is in the game again – most of all ours. All the pieces came back together at the right time. Now we're back at the top of our game."

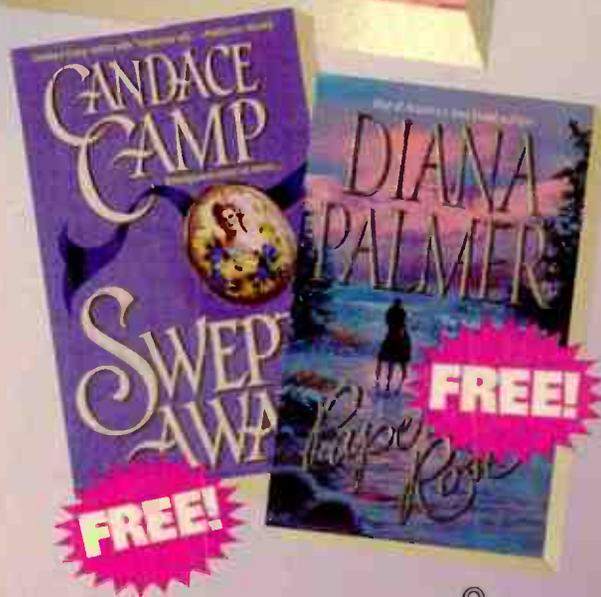
"And, I gotta tell you, man," he adds, breaking into a big smile, "it feels real good!"*

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THE GRASS IS GREENER

The banjo has long been an object of ridicule. It's been the butt of jokes that paint rural folk as hayseed rubes, a legacy most Music Row record executives desperately want to live down.

by Bill Friskics-Warren

Yet if the banjo and the images it conjures are such a source of shame, why has the instrument – along with a legion of mandolins, Dobros and fiddles – been cropping up all over the place lately?

First there was the 1998 CMA Awards show, where the Dixie Chicks brandished banjo and fiddle on prime-time television as they performed "There's Your Trouble." Dolly Parton revisited her roots with 1999's string-band album *The Grass Is Blue*. Then there's *Big Mon*, Ricky Skaggs' star-studded tribute to Bill Monroe, and recent bluegrass tunes recorded by Lee Ann Womack, Patty Loveless, Randy Travis, George Strait and

Alan Jackson. Plinking banjos have even turned up on hit singles by Terri Clark, Sara Evans, Mark McGuinn and Tim McGraw.



The banjo's back, thanks in no small part to the Dixie Chicks.

As unlikely as it may seem, bluegrass and mountain music are making a comeback. Their resurgence reached critical mass with the release of the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, the Depression-era odyssey that became a \$44 million box-office smash and spawned a platinum-selling soundtrack.

Boasting performances from bluegrass crossover sensation Alison Krauss and Clinch Valley patriarch Ralph Stanley, among others, the rustic *O Brother* soundtrack – the equivalent of a cluster of pluckers huddled 'round

The hills – and the nation – are alive with the sounds of bluegrass and mountain music. So why isn't radio playing it?

a single microphone – is drowning out much of its megastar competition.

Earlier this year, the soundtrack reached the Top 20 of the *Billboard* 200 album sales chart, a watershed achievement for nearly any project, but an out-and-out *coup* for one consisting mostly of bluegrass, mountain ballads, spirituals and string-band music with roots that reach deeper than the 20th century.

O Brother also capped *Billboard's* Top Country Albums chart for nine straight weeks. Meanwhile, the soundtrack's first video, an updated version of the traditional "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" (performed – unseen – by Union Station's Dan Tyminski and some like-minded pickers, but actually depicted in the video with clips from the movie) sashayed right past Faith, Jo Dee and others on its way to No. 1 on CMT. What's more, the song came tantalizingly close to entering country radio's Top 40 chart, despite being shunned by most major-market stations – meaning that *somebody* out there was playing it.

And a tour of *O Brother's* various musical contributors – including Tyminski, Emmylou Harris, Krauss, Gillian Welch

and Ralph Stanley – is in the planning stages, buoyed by special performances in June at Carnegie Hall and last year at Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium.

O Brother is just the tip of the iceberg. Hot on its heels is a breathtaking collection of mountain ballads "from and inspired by" the new movie *Songcatcher*. Even stronger than *O Brother*, the all-female *Songcatcher* soundtrack features a who's who of once and current Nashville hitmakers, including Parton, Harris, Sara Evans and Loveless, along with left-of-center ringers like Hazel Dickens, Iris DeMent, Maria McKee and Julie Miller.

Then there's Loveless' own *Mountain Soul*, a back-holler tour de force that's an early frontrunner

for country album of the year, and Ralph Stanley's *Clinch Mountain Sweethearts*, a series of duets recorded with several of the *Songcatcher* women. Stanley's duets project will doubtless be as monumental as *Clinch Mountain Country*, his 1998 super session featuring George Jones, Vince Gill and some two dozen other contemporary stars.

These are but a few of the highlights of



Editor's note: The banjo is the instrument most closely associated with the distinctly American format of bluegrass. And although Earl Scruggs didn't invent it, he stamped it forever with a style of playing that's been the worldwide standard for decades – a thumb-and-two-fingers attack that came to be known, appropriately enough, as “Scruggs style.” So we went to the top of the mountain and sought out The Man himself. This is his story.

PICKING UP A LEGACY

My life with the banjo

I was very young, only four, when I began playing the five-string banjo near Shelby, N.C. – the stronghold of banjo enthusiasm. It was the same year my father died. I spent every spare moment teaching myself on my father's banjo.

At 10, I accidentally developed my three-finger technique – using my thumb, index and middle finger. I was playing “Lonesome Ruben” when I suddenly realized I was playing a syncopated pattern, one that can be adapted to either up-tempo or slow tunes. I was so excited, I played the same tune for several days.

Bill Monroe was still playing string-band music in December 1945 when I started working in his band at 21. My style laid the foundation and became the core of what would later be referred to as bluegrass. It changed Monroe's sound completely.

Lester Flatt was also in Monroe's group, and we left in early 1948 to form our own band. Monroe continued to carry the same sound after we left.

Another turning point in my career was when Lester and I appeared on *Folk Sound, U.S.A.*, a live television program, in 1960. The great saxophonist King Curtis was also a guest on the program, and during a break he said he wanted to “pick” with me. Suddenly, I realized the banjo never had to be pigeonholed again.

The next year, the creator of TV's *The Beverly Hillbillies* saw Flatt & Scruggs in California. Paul Henning decided he wanted our music, and we recorded a number of tracks, including “The Ballad Of Jed Clampett.” Not only did it hit No. 1 on the country charts and cross over to pop, but *The Beverly Hillbillies* turned out to be a great ambassador for the banjo. It aired in 76 countries and was seen by millions.

My music's graduation to the big screen occurred in 1967, when Warren Beatty asked if I would score *Bonnie And Clyde*, which included my instrumental “Foggy Mountain Breakdown.” It would win a Grammy. It was very rewarding.

After Lester and I separated in 1969, I formed The Earl Scruggs Revue with my sons Gary, Randy and Steve. We recorded 17 albums from 1970 to 1980.

Just recently I completed the most exciting album of my career. *Earl Scruggs And Friends* on MCA Records features such talented guests as Elton John, Sting, Don Henley, Johnny Cash, Vince Gill and Melissa Etheridge, to name a few. My sons Gary and Randy each recorded a track, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Overall, I've been privileged to have a legion of fans of all ages, many interested in learning the banjo. Record companies continue to reissue everything Flatt & Scruggs documented, and it's great knowing that something I recorded 53 years ago is still in demand.



BLUEGRASS

this movement, one that has seen bluegrass record sales rise steadily since the double-platinum crossover success of Alison Krauss' *Now That I've Found You* in the mid-'90s. Whether it comes from hot new teen act Nickel Creek or the venerable Del McCoury Band teaming up with Nashville dissident Steve Earle, everywhere you look there's some new bluegrass or old-time country record making a splash.

This isn't unprecedented. Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music* turned thousands of urban folkies on to Appalachian ballads and other early music when it first came out in 1952. Forty-four years later, its 1997 CD

reissue helped spark a new old-time music revival, generating everything from a rash of little-known bands like Smith acolytes the Tarbox Ramblers to techno-savant Moby's sampling of Alan Lomax field recordings on his 1999 album *Play*.

But the impact of Smith's compilation was *nothing* compared to the 1962 Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs country chart-topper, “The Ballad Of Jed Clampett.” As the banjo-driven theme of television's weekly series *The Beverly Hillbillies*, it beamed bluegrass music into millions of homes in 76 countries around the globe.

Flatt & Scruggs repeated the feat five years later when the Grammy-winning “Foggy Mountain Breakdown” galvanized the movie *Bonnie And Clyde*. And don't forget Eric Weissberg and Steve Mandell's Grammy-winning “Dueling Banjos,” the down-home crossover smash from the 1972 movie *Deliverance*. Or the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's innovative *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*, the 1972 LP that found the hippie-leaning Dirt Band gathering several generations of conservative pickers and singers – including forebears Roy Acuff, Merle Travis and Mother Maybelle Carter – to witness to the durability and elasticity of country music.

Which is precisely what folks used to call practically any record that had a banjo on it: country. In the late '50s, with the rise of the Nashville Sound – Music City's decidedly uptown response to the first blast of rock 'n' roll detonated by Elvis and Little Richard – the Nashville establishment, hoping to lure listeners back into the country fold, started

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BLUEGRASS

treating string-band music as a hillbilly stepchild. It was also about this time that people took to calling it something other than “country” or “folk.”

Around 1960 – only three years after the term “bluegrass” started appearing in print – the records of Bill Monroe and his peers all but disappeared from the country hit parade. Aside from the old exceptions – notably Flatt & Scruggs – the music we now call bluegrass grew increasingly hermetic, finally emerging as its own genre, one with its own name, festivals, record store bins and radio airplay charts.

All of which begs the question: Why, at the dawn of the 21st century, are blue-

grass and mountain music making such a resounding comeback? Why is a record as quaint as *O Brother*, one that sounds like it could have been made in the Hill Country of Mississippi during the Depression, currently raising such a hubbub?

Mainstream acceptance for such a rural artform is almost inexplicable, especially in light of how the entertainment industry has cultivated cultural homogenization. Listen to Shania Twain, Madonna, LeAnn Rimes and Celine Dion CDs and it's often tough to tell them apart. But this is precisely why *O Brother* and its down-home counter-

parts are striking a resounding chord: They *don't* resemble anything else on the modern musical landscape.

It's tempting to chalk up some of *O Brother's* current cachet to feelings of nostalgia, to the longing of its millennium-conscious audience for a time, real or imagined, when things were simpler, life was slower-paced and people worked and lived off the land. Sweetened by the homey strains of fiddle and banjo, the movie's bucolic images of pre-industrial society surely play to romantics who find today's digital age cold and impersonal. Yet one suspects that many suburbanites behind the hefty sales



MOUNTAIN

MUSIC

Patty Loveless reclaims her Appalachian soul

“Lately people have been coming up to me and going, ‘Why now?’” says Patty Loveless. “Why, all of a sudden, are you and everybody else doing these acoustic albums?”

Loveless, 44, sitting in the shade of a 70-year-old hackberry tree in Nashville's Centennial Park, is referring to her new *Mountain Soul* CD, as well as a recent rash of other Appalachian-style recordings ranging from the old-timey soundtrack of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* to Dolly Parton's homespun *Little Sparrow*.

She's a little bemused by such queries, and she has a right to be – in the case of *Mountain Soul*, a record that's as austere and awe-inspiring as the Kentucky hills where she was raised, it's hardly “all of a sudden.” It's not like this two-time CMA Female Vocalist of the Year is some carpetbagging upstart hoping to jump on a mountain-music bandwagon. Loveless grew up on the stuff.

Her mother yodeled and sang Bill Monroe and Molly O'Day songs around the house. Her father, a Stanley Brothers and Flatt & Scruggs fanatic, often took his daughter to hear a Baptist preacher who sang a cappella the old mountain way.

To varying degrees, these influences have been evident in each of Loveless' dozen albums building up

to *Mountain Soul*. “I've tried to put a song or two in that mountain vein on each of my albums,” she explains.

Lately, her appearances on *Big Mon*, Ricky Skaggs' Bill Monroe tribute, and Ralph Stanley's *Clinch Mountain Country* only solidified that status.

But it took a while. Loveless says that making *Mountain Soul*, which boasts guest turns from Ricky Skaggs, Travis Tritt and Jon Randall, was a matter of timing.

“I've always wanted to do a project like this,” she admits, speaking about the album's rough-hewn fiddles, banjos and harmonies.

Loveless says her primary motivation for making *Mountain Soul* was to give her audience a better glimpse of the “Patty of the past.”

“I wanted people to understand a little bit more about Patty Loveless, and where I come from,” she says. “I'm very proud of my family and the place where I grew up.”

Born the sixth of seven children to John and Naomi Ramey, Loveless was raised in the eastern Kentucky coal-mining town of Pikeville. “We weren't poor,” Loveless remembers. “Mom and

Continued on page 44

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Many have tried to put their fingers on the ineffable quality of Ralph Stanley's voice.

It's nearly impossible not to resort to hyperbole or cliché when describing Stanley's unearthly tenor, to call him a "force of nature" or prattle on about how his shuddering moans and piercing wails send chills down the spine. But in Stanley's case, those hoary claims are true – he *is* a force of nature, and his singing *can* raise the hairs on the back of your neck. Perhaps Patty Loveless said it best when she observed that Stanley's voice "echoes the spirit of everyone that's ever gone before him in these hills and mountains."

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Ralph Stanley finally gets his due – or at least some of it

"I sing natural, I sing it just like I feel it," explains Stanley, who has carried on solo since the death of his brother and musical partner, Carter, 34 years ago.

"I'm not trying to put on anything, and I hardly ever sing the same verse exactly the same twice. I'm a-singing lead with my tenor and it's been that way ever since Carter was with me. That's how I have kept this old-time mountain sound."

When the Stratton, Va., native says "mountain sound," he's not talking about bluegrass, even though he admits that – before they developed their own style in the '50s – The Stanley Brothers tried for a while to imitate Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys.

"When I think of *bluegrass* I think of Bill Monroe," he begins. "Bill's music had a little more bounce to it than ours did. Flatt & Scruggs had a little bit more fancier banjo than I play. I actually call the music that I've been making since Carter died 'old-time, traditional country music.' A lot of people think if there's a mandolin and a banjer in a band, it's bluegrass. But as far as I'm concerned, Bill Monroe was bluegrass. I'm old-time, traditional country – mountain-style."

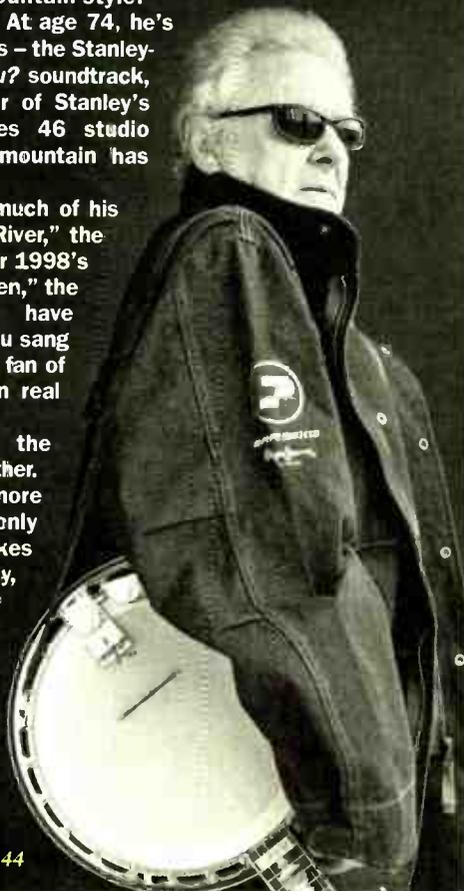
Today Stanley is a hot property. At age 74, he's got a Top 15 pop album on his hands – the Stanley-centric *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack, also the first country chart-topper of Stanley's prodigious career, which includes 46 studio albums. The old man from the mountain has indeed arrived uptown.

Surprisingly, Stanley attributes much of his current vogue to "The Lonesome River," the duet he recorded with Bob Dylan for 1998's *Clinch Mountain Country*. "Since then," the soft-spoken Stanley says, "people have told me, 'I never heard of you till you sang with Bob and now I'm just as big a fan of yours.' Singing with Bob has been real good for me."

Being the heart and soul of the *O Brother* soundtrack didn't hurt, either.

"I think *O Brother* is gonna do more than anything has done yet, not only for me, but for everybody who makes this type of music," says Stanley, whose contributions to the album include a hair-raising version of "O Death" and The Stanley Brothers' 1955 recording "Angel Band." Four different covers of "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow," one of Ralph's signature songs both with brother Carter and later installments of The Clinch Mountain Boys, also appear.

Continued on page 44



BLUEGRASS

numbers of the *O Brother* soundtrack aren't quite willing to trade their cordless phones for a return to the party lines.

So it's not just nostalgia that is the reason for this old-time music revival. And neither is it completely people's hunger for something "honest" and "real." Both those terms are loaded, often divisive, as is the much-banded "authentic." And none of those words – or concepts – is terribly helpful when discussing music that is inherently commercial. Primitive technology aside, the hit records made by "honest, real" country singers like Hank Williams and Kitty Wells were only somewhat less contrived than the latter-day hits of Alan Jackson and Lee Ann Womack – or, all the spectacle aside, the music of Garth Brooks and Shania Twain.

Could it be that albums like *O Brother* and Parton's Smoky Mountain triptych of *Hungry Again*, *The Grass Is Blue* and *Little Sparrow*



Dolly Parton's *Little Sparrow* strikes a chord of honesty.

are reaching people who've actually *done* a bit of living, who are raising children, burying parents, feeling pinched financially or looking for a lifelong romantic commitment? Any number

of songs on the *O Brother* soundtrack speak to one or more of these issues. And with its acknowledgment that the sunny side has a dark counterpart, The Whites' update of The Carter Family's "Keep On The Sunny Side" speaks to them all.

Whatever the reason for this current unvarnished-music vogue, this much is certain: Radio isn't buying it. Except for a few stations programming *O Brother*'s "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow," mainstream country radio has roundly ignored it.

It's the same old story: fear. Programmers are scared to play anything risky. If a song sounds different, it might induce listeners to switch to another station, they worry. That's why we mainly hear emotionally simplistic ditties that are scarcely discernible from frothy advertising jingles – because radio can't afford, literally, to have listeners jarred off their signal. The Dixie Chicks, Lee Ann Womack and a handful of others are the minority. Getting a record like *O Brother*'s "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" into heavy rotation is tantamount to squeezing Brooks & Dunn's

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World Radio History

LOVELESS

Continued from page 40

Daddy always made sure we had school clothes and shoes."

The album's dark, loamy arrangements on standards like "Pretty Little Miss" and "Rise Up Lazarus" certainly evoke the looming hills and haunted hollows of Loveless' native Appalachia. A cover of Darrell Scott's "You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive" hits even closer to home, expressing in vivid – at times harrowing – detail what it feels like to be stuck in a dead-end mining town.

Where the sun comes up about ten in the morning/And the sun goes down about three in the day, Loveless sings, over the sparest of instrumentation. *And you fill your cup with whatever bitter brew you're drinking/And you spend your life digging coal from the bottom of your grave.*

It was a life that Patty's miner father, like his father before him, knew only too well. "My dad and all of his brothers worked in the mines," she explains, noting that her father died of black lung disease in 1979. "It was the only kind of occupation, the only good life for them back then, even though it was hard. I look back at my father, who used to go down four miles deep into the mines. They'd go down when it was dark, and when they'd come up it would be dark."

Most of *Mountain Soul* was cut live in the studio with few overdubs or no drums, much as Dolly's recent bluegrass records and the *O Brother* soundtrack were made. But what sets Loveless' project apart, what gives it such intimacy, is that she made it with

her road band of Tim Hensley, Deanie Richardson, Carmella Ramsey and producer/husband Emory Gordy Jr.

"I wanted the people that were performing with me onstage to be a part of it," Loveless says. "I thought, 'We've been playing with each other. We work with each other all the time. Now is the time to go in and cut something.'"

"We wanted to make the record as if we were in somebody's living room."

Nowhere did this living-room vibe come across more than on the album's closing track, "Sounds Of Loneliness," a song Loveless wrote at 14 that conveys the depth of spiritual and emotional alienation.

Loveless has been singing the song for years. As a teenager, she used it to audition for Porter Wagoner, and later cut it (with a string section) for her eponymous MCA album in 1987. It wasn't until her manager, Ken Levitan, asked if she had anything to contribute to the soundtrack of *Songcatcher* that she even thought of recording it again.

"I watched the movie, and I looked at Emory and said, 'You know what I think would be a good song for this? Not some old mountain song, but 'Sounds Of Loneliness.' And he went, 'You're right.' We ended up cutting the song in my basement, and it was perfect."

Loveless' assessment is, if anything, an understatement. With the fiddles of Ramsey and Richardson droning their ancient tones, and Loveless sounding the cavernous shaft of her cold, aching heart, the recording doesn't just sound older than the hills.

It sounds as old as loneliness itself.

— B.F.W.

BLUEGRASS

tour bus through the eye of a needle.

Apparently, the eight major consultants who influence the nation's 2,186 country station playlists don't think the 1.5 million-plus consumers who like and bought the *O Brother* soundtrack are core country music fans. They assume most are movie buffs swept up in the novelty of the moment. They could be right, but it's just as likely they're missing the boat.

The key difference between the current bluegrass and mountain music revival and the previous commercial breakthroughs of Flatt & Scruggs and "Dueling Banjos" is that many of the artists who are singing this music today are *already* on the radio. Most have record-store and box-office followings in the millions.

Mainstream radio sweethearts Chely Wright, Sara Evans, Pam Tillis and Dolly Parton all appear on Ralph Stanley's latest CD. Patty Loveless, another radio sweetheart, joins Evans and Parton on the *Songcatcher* soundtrack. As for Loveless' Appalachian-flavored *Mountain Soul*, it was her audience, knocked out by the acoustic portion of her arena concerts, who urged her to make the album in the first place.

At a time when country music listener-ship has dropped precipitously, radio would be wise to take heed. It doesn't take a bean counter to see that programming music from *O Brother* and *Songcatcher* would be worthwhile, if only for the movie tie-in. And why not make a play for that "sophisticated" older audience – much as record men Chet Atkins, Owen Bradley and Don Law successfully did with the sequins-and-satin stylings of the Nashville Sound?

Even without the help of radio, the brilliant *O Brother* soundtrack has already proven itself to be a cash cow, selling twice as many copies as neo-trad darling Brad Paisley's acclaimed debut, *Who Needs Pictures*. But just imagine how well it would be doing if the song "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" enjoyed the same across-the-board programming support and exposure as Paisley's "He Didn't Have To Be" did in 1999. Chances are it would transform the current bluegrass and mountain music resurgence into a full-blown movement.

And who knows – it might also exonerate the banjo and erase the shame that surrounds it.*

"I think *O Brother* surprised everybody," Stanley continues. "I've been in this business 55 years and that's the first time I ever played on a No. 1 country record."

The Ralph Stanley renaissance isn't likely to end with *O Brother*. Rebel Records, Stanley's label for the past 30-some years, is about to release *Clinch Mountain Sweethearts*, an all-star session along the lines of his *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning* and *Clinch Mountain Country* collections. This time out, Stanley's duet partners are women: country singers Dolly Parton, Sara Evans and Pam Tillis; and folk and Americana types including Joan Baez, Iris DeMent and Gillian Welch.

Among the Holy Trinity of the music most folks call "bluegrass," Bill Monroe and Flatt & Scruggs have received more accolades over the years than Stanley or The Stanley Brothers. First came Ralph's honorary Lincoln Memorial University doctorate, then membership in the International Bluegrass Music Association Hall of Honor, then the making of *The Ralph Stanley Story*, a documentary film released early this year. His 2000 induction into the Grand Ole Opry was followed by the "Living Legend" medal from the Library of Congress.

The only honor it seems Stanley is still waiting for is membership in the Country Music Hall of Fame, a distinction he'd like to see go to both The Stanley Brothers and Ralph Stanley. "Carter and I worked together for 20 years, and now I've worked 35 years on my own. So I'd like to see The Stanley Brothers, and Ralph Stanley, get in the Country Music Hall of Fame. I know that's asking a lot, but I would be real proud if that happened."

— B.F.W.

STANLEY

Continued from page 42

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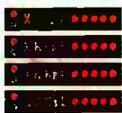
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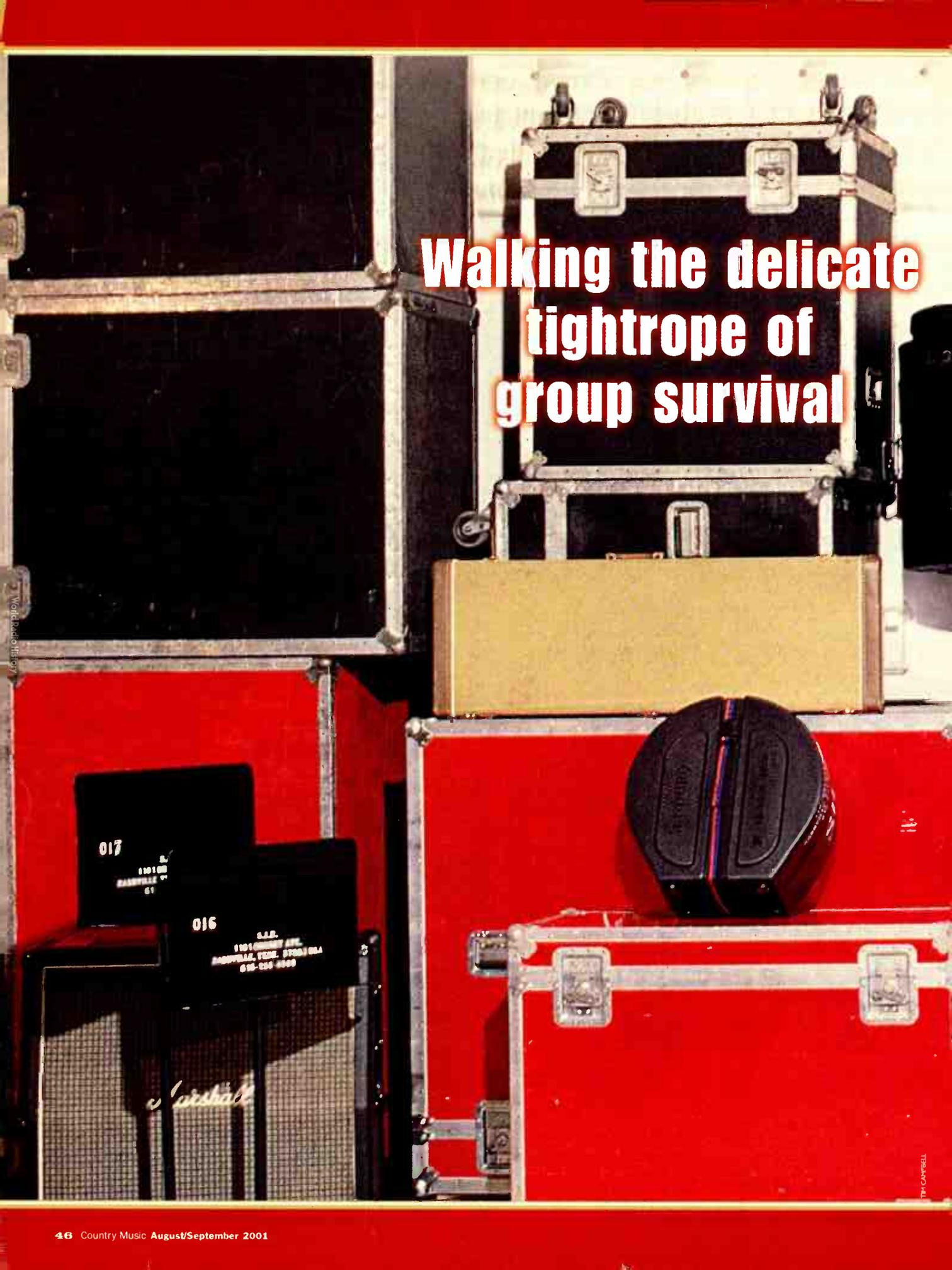


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PLAYING IN THE BAND

When the members of Rascal Flatts heard the group's name announced from the podium as Top New Vocal Group at the ACM Awards in May, the moment was especially poignant. The trio, consisting of Joe Don Rooney and second cousins Gary LeVox and Jay DeMarcus, savored the relatively quick industry recognition they've received since their formation in 1999.

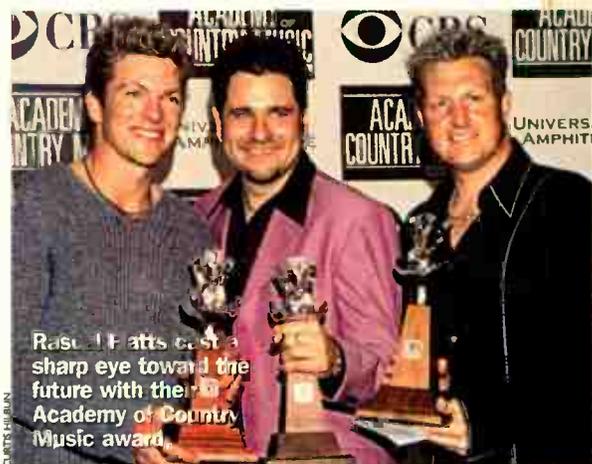
"When you have two other people that you make great music with, especially one being my cousin, it's a lot sweeter," singer LeVox says. "It really is something special."

To the country fan, it probably looks like the best life has to offer: smiling brothers-in-arms, basking in a top-of-the-world, Three Musketeers' "all-for-one and one-for-all" camaraderie that implies loyalty, dedication and friendship as they celebrate the fruits of victory.

But should Rascal Flatts go on to pile up the hits, sell millions of records and enjoy a career that lasts a decade or two, the reality is that they'll be in the minority. Striking up a band – and keeping it together – is a lot harder than it looks.

Although prosperous bands have always been a staple in rock music, it's a different story in country, where solo acts reign supreme. There are, of course, exceptions – like Diamond Rio, Lonestar, Sawyer Brown, Asleep At The Wheel, Highway 101, The Statler Brothers, Oak Ridge Boys and the most successful big daddy of them all, Alabama. But the term "survival of the fittest" takes on a whole new definition when discussing collectives of three or more

by Beverly Keel



Rascal Flatts cast a sharp eye toward the future with their Academy of Country Music award.



Country's big band era kicked off with Alabama, who proved that groups could last.

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PLAYING IN THE BAND

people. Durable superstar entities who write and sing their own music, as Alabama does, appear about as often as a solar eclipse.

But the fact that a quartet from Fort Payne, Ala., can amass sales of 45 million albums and a string of 32 No. 1 hits over 24 years – or that, on the strength of a chart-topper like “Amazed,” Lonestar can sell more records in a year than Garth Brooks or Trisha Yearwood – offers hope to such relative upstarts as Rascal Flatts and Trick Pony. It’s just a tougher road to travel, requiring an inordinate amount of dedication, sacrifice ... and patience.

“It takes a much longer time for people to buy into a band and accept it,” says RCA Label Group chairman Joe Galante, whose company has cornered the market on winning bands with Alabama, Lonestar and Diamond Rio all flourishing under its corporate umbrella.

For one thing, there are a lot more people involved.

“Fewer groups get signed because record companies realize they’re in for a different animal,” says Randy Owen, who co-founded Alabama as a group called Wildcountry with cousins Teddy Gentry and Jeff Cook in 1969.

“It’s much easier for them to sign a solo act. If they can make him or her happy, they don’t have to worry about anyone else,” says Owen.

“Trying to keep a consensus among the band is a lot tougher than the solo artist,” Galante concedes. “Some band members are very content to just be part of the band; some want to be front and center.”

It also costs more money.

“Whatever you do, just think about the expense of flying five people around as opposed to one,” says Galante.

The bottom line begins, however, with the group itself. Jeff Hanna, who has fronted the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band for 34 years, says not everyone is cut out for band life.

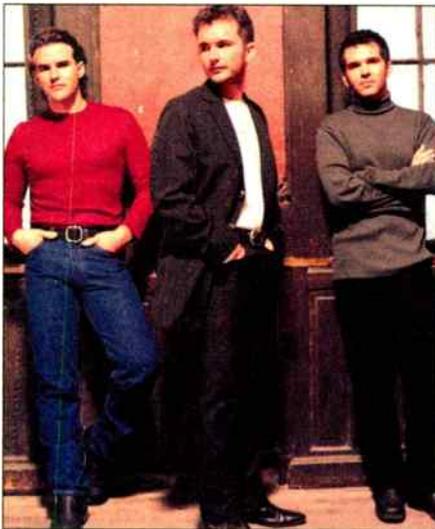
“There are people who are band people and people who are solo people,” says Hanna. “I’ve always enjoyed the concept of a team.”

Sons Of The Desert singer Drew Womack agrees, saying nothing feels better than when his musical home team delivers a touchdown.

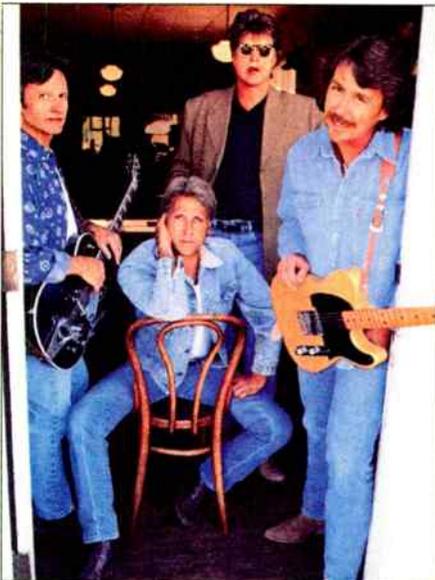
“It’s high-fiving all your buddies that you did it together, just like winning the state championship in football,” Womack says of his four bandmates. “Win a tennis match,

you walk alone. None of us have ever been good at that. We’re all team players.”

“I can’t imagine it working any other way,” adds Lonestar’s Richie McDonald, who formed the band in 1992 with fellow Texans Dean Sams, John Rich, Michael Britt and Keech Rainwater. “You spend so much time on the road that you would be miserable



Sons Of The Desert (above) still search for the oasis, while veterans like the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band (below) have served up hits for decades. Both bands say that they’re committed to the “team” concept.



if you didn’t like each other. When we hit that bus Thursday nights [for weekend gigs], I look forward to it. I don’t want to leave my family, but I know when I go out there, we’re going to make each other laugh and have fun. You’ve got to be like brothers to make it work for a long time, and that’s what we’re in it for – longevity.”

But surprisingly, country’s top band of all time – Alabama – learned that group harmony isn’t essential.

“It’s not important to like each other, although that’s not the case with us. We like one another. We don’t go and hang out with each other because we don’t like to do the same things,” says Owen.

But he does admit that it’s a challenge to keep everyone satisfied.

“The worst thing with any group is that you have four different opinions to deal with,” he concedes. “That is one of the deals when you have four real different people. Some like to travel on a bus. Some like to fly. You can’t make everybody happy, but it’s important to try.”

Owen also admits that he makes most of the group’s decisions, along with Teddy Gentry.

“I’m not okay with that,” guitarist Jeff Cook huffed when informed of Owen’s comment. “They *do* tend to disregard anything I say. You might as well skip all the arguing and do what they want to do. It depends on the situation, what album, what they want to do or what RCA wants to do.”

“It’s not about a boss,” Owen continues. “It’s about how you’re a part of a band, feeling strongly about what you’re doing, and having the other guys’ respect.”

Still, it’s Owen who makes the call when it comes to song selection.

“If I really believe in a song, I’ll do it,” he says. “At times I have done songs the other guys really didn’t care for. ‘Angels Among Us’ was one that nobody really liked, but I just felt it in my heart. Finally Teddy said, ‘If you believe in the song that much, my hat is in the ring.’ They understand that it’s about passion for the music. Obviously, *I* have to sing the songs.”

Guitarist Cook claims that he likes “Angels Among Us,” but says, “I don’t believe it belonged on an album. It should have been a specialty product. I will give it this: It has turned out to be a very special song to a lot of people.”

Cook still seems to be harboring resentment from a decision RCA made decades ago to shift the lead-singer focus to Owen.

“About our third album, it came down from RCA that Teddy and I could only do a lead vocal on *one* song [per album],” adds Cook. “I don’t know what the master plan is behind that, because everybody in The Beatles did songs and had hits.”

RCA’s Galante defends the move. “In the case of Alabama, you can only have one lead singer,” he explains. “Early on, we agreed

Eight months before he left Lonestar, John Rich saw the writing on the wall.

"It was just time to go," says Rich of his departure from former bandmates Dean Sams, Richie McDonald, Michael Britt and Keech Rainwater. "They didn't want to compromise themselves and I didn't want to compromise myself. The best thing to do was agree to disagree and go in different directions."

Rich, who had divided lead vocals with McDonald since Lonestar's formation in 1992, says his 1998 departure was amicable.

"It was emotional when we broke up, but not *angry* emotional. It was more sad because they felt like their little brother was leaving and I was losing four brothers. It was almost a ripping-away process. It wasn't an easy thing."

Some departures aren't so amicable. Nick Kane, guitarist for The Mavericks,

PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW - SOMETIMES

saw blood when he was summarily dismissed from the band in May 2000 by singer Raul Malo, bassist Robert Reynolds and drummer Paul Deakin - largely due to a falling out with Malo.

"I've never made any bones about how I felt about Raul," Kane said in an interview with the *Nashville Scene*. "At best, we tolerated each other."

Transitions and adjustments are a part of life in the music business, and they're rarely easy. So what happens when things are no longer in harmony?

Just as many optimistic but realistic newlyweds sign a prenuptial agreement before heading down the aisle, most bands address what happens in the event of a breakup prior to their collaboration.

"Most bands are urged by people like me to have partnership agreements that spell out what happens in the event of resignation, termination, death and disability," explains Nashville business manager

Mary Ann McCready. "So that everyone understands and agrees ahead of time what happens."

While a partnership agreement is unique to each band's situation, Nashville entertainment attorney Bob Sullivan says that usually some form of compensation is spelled out.

"Generally, the leaving member is compensated for the recordings that have been released or are in the can," Sullivan explains. "There is some type of percentage allocated to them, as far as overall record royalties."

Sullivan says that if there are any other considerations such as property, merchandise or investments, those negotiations are completed in advance.

One of the key things that needs to be addressed is name ownership. In some cases, a group member or a manager has the rights to the name. In others, such as the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, several members own it.

"Sometimes there will be competing groups touring, such as John Doe's Drifters and John Smith's Drifters," Sullivan explains. "That needs to be nailed down, plus what rights, if any, a leaving band member has to use the name."

Once all the financial issues are settled, there's the personal aftermath. Nick Kane says he has mixed feelings about being turfed. "I felt bad for all of 30 seconds," he said. "Mainly, I felt relieved."

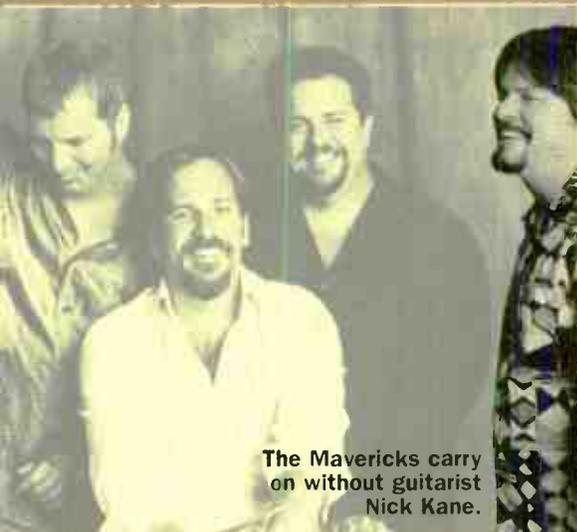
John Rich is still friends with Lonestar, a fact echoed by Keech Rainwater's comments concerning his departure.

"We knew he wasn't happy with Richie singing all the songs," says Rainwater. "We were happy for John because now he could have a solo career and he didn't need to be taking a back seat anymore."

And Lonestar's democracy?

"It's a little easier now," says Rainwater, "because there's fewer democrats."

— B.K.



The Mavericks carry on without guitarist Nick Kane.



John Rich left Lonestar feeling like he "was losing four brothers."

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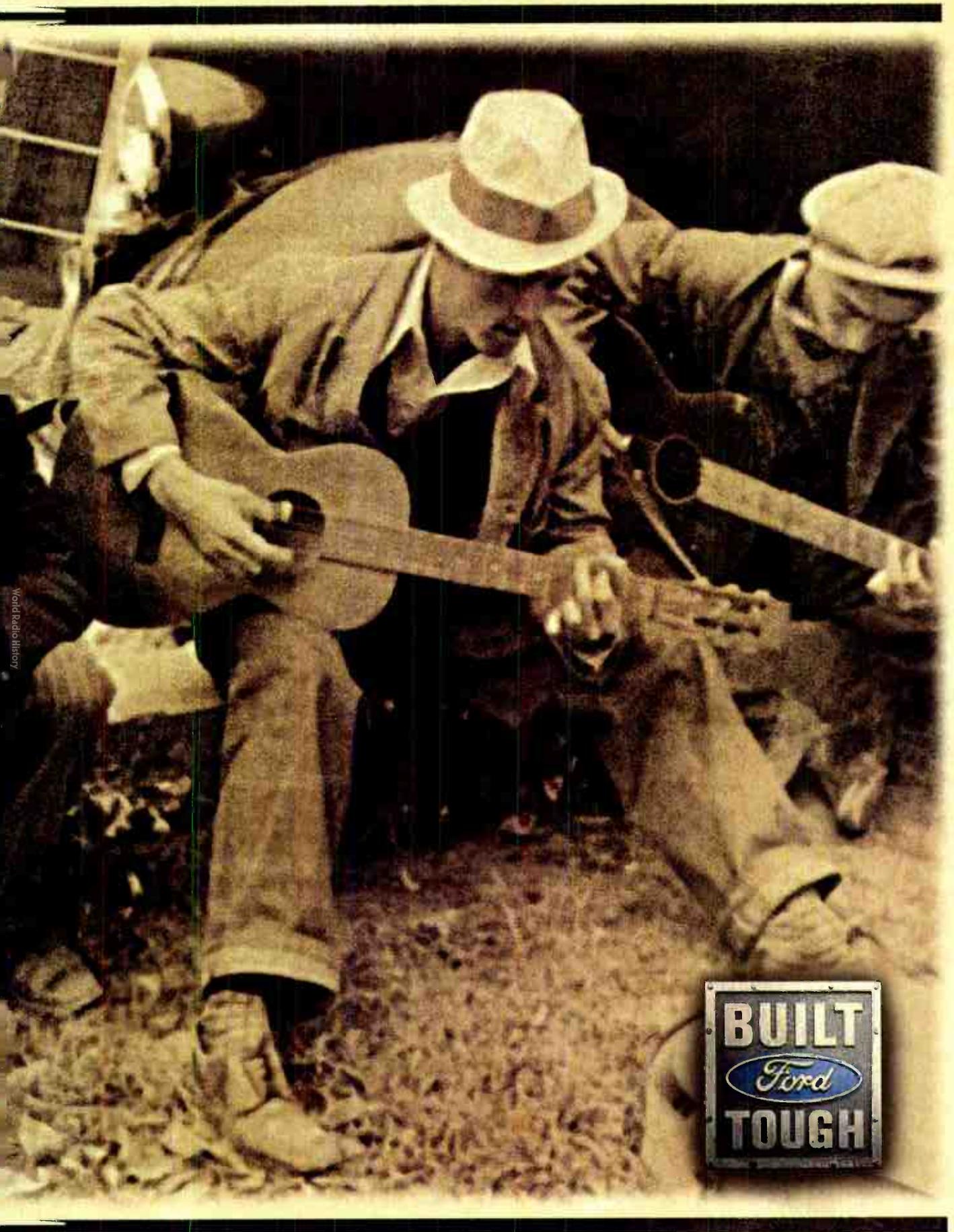
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World Radio History



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PLAYING IN THE BAND

that Jeff and Teddy would get a song apiece on each album. The fans were buying into the idea of Randy being the lead singer. As a result, we had better selling records over the course of time. It was the fact that when he went out and sang, the crowd went wild."

Galante says the star status enjoyed by members of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones is the exception.

"In country music, you have the Charlie Daniels Band, Shenandoah was Marty [Raybon], Sawyer Brown is Mark Miller, and you can readily identify them," he says. "That's the key to being successful in this format – having one guy to focus on. That doesn't mean there isn't a band. Teddy is instrumental in coming up with harmony

parts and Jeff's guitar playing is central to what makes Alabama's sound.

"But when it comes to that persona that is onstage and in the music, you need to have one focal point. You need one identifiable singer to make it stick."

“You can only have one lead singer.”

Cook admits it ticked him off but he's living with it.

"All I really worry about anymore, just for the sake of not arguing, is the song that I put on there," he says. "A lot of the songs I've disagreed with and we've had better

songs pitched than we've cut, but you know what they say about opinions. A lot of times I don't even voice an opinion because I know it's not going to make a difference anyway."

While Alabama's state of democracy is dubious, Lonestar's McDonald says it's essential that he and his four compadres – John Rich left the group in 1998 – are all on the same page.

"Everybody needs to feel like they're involved," says McDonald. "A lot of people think it's all about the lead singer, but it's not. Everybody needs to feel like they're included in making decisions. There is an identity being created, not just with the lead singer, but the band."

Whenever a musical conflict arises, Lonestar's producer, Dann Huff, acts as mediator.

"There might be a song that comes along every now and then that we don't totally

SPLITTING THE PIE WORKING HARDER – FOR LESS \$\$

When it comes to splitting that financial pie, there is no set formula. Sometimes each member is an equal partner. In other cases, each member receives a percentage based on his musical contribution or tenure in the band.

McCready says the ideal group situation is an equitable one where "they all write and they share everything equally. They're a total democracy and nobody is making more than any of the others."

Though she admits that situation "is pretty rare," the most common arrangements involve some band members who write the majority of the group's material.

— B.K.

Think country bands are making a lot of money? Think again.

"Everybody thinks we're millionaires, but very few bands in country music ever made big bucks," says Sons Of The Desert's Drew Womack. "These are just really good, solid jobs that we all enjoy. If we were in it for the money, we would be solo artists."

The problem is simple division. While bands make the same as solo acts – on average one to two dollars per album – those earnings are split among the group's members. But like solo artists, groups don't see even that portion until they pay back the label for the album's recording and promotional costs.

They often have to sell a gold record – 500,000 copies – just to get themselves out of debt. Each band member could see as little as \$40,000 on an album that rakes in \$5 million for the record company. And out of that hypothetical \$40K must come income taxes, management's standard 15–20 percent cut and other fees for publicists, equipment and operational overhead.

That's assuming there are profits. And when bands do get them, they may not be distributed equally.

"The writers in the band make more money faster and could make \$500,000 more a year," says veteran music business manager Mary Ann McCready. In other words, band members who don't write some of the group's songs stand to pull in substantially less money.

But despite the numerous financial obstacles, bands can make a lucrative living. Each member of the Dixie Chicks, Alabama, Lonestar, Diamond Rio and SheDAISY is estimated to be making six or seven figures yearly.

McCready reveals "a rough ballpark estimate" of band members' potential individual incomes: a new act that has a recording deal but is not selling a lot of records can take home as much as \$75,000 annually. An act with a gold record can bring in from \$100,000 to \$150,000. And superstar acts can pull down \$300,000 to \$3 million.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Ever wondered where your dollars go when you plunk down about 13 of them for a new CD?

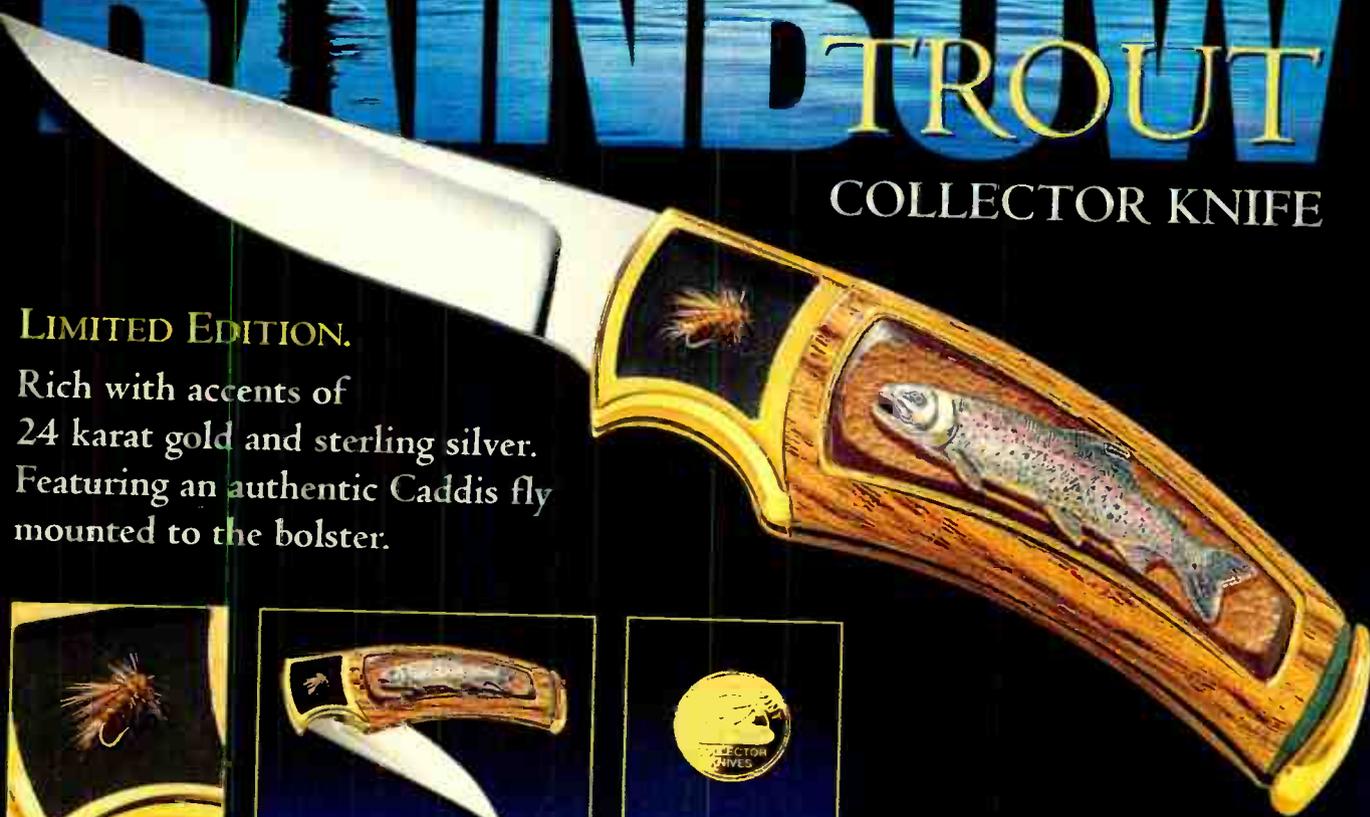


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Sawyer Brown has been cranking out hits for over 15 years - with only one personnel change.



One of country's hottest new bands is the road-tested trio Trick Pony.

DEAN DIXON/REX MEDIA

ROBERT H. ASHCROFT (WARNER BROS.)

PLAYING IN THE BAND

agree on," says McDonald. "That's where Dann Huff comes in. We all trust him to make the song what it should be."

The Dirt Band's Jeff Hanna says there's another person to be relied upon in case an impasse is reached.

"That's also why you hire a manager," adds Hanna, who has helped maintain the band's current lineup of Jimmie Fadden, Jim Ibbotson and Bob Carpenter since 1989. "There was probably more arguing and throwing stuff earlier on than there is now. A majority consensus is how everything works. You figure out what is the easiest and most efficient way to get things done."

When things don't get worked out, the tension can make for exceedingly long bus rides.

"The worst part is probably when you're not getting along," says Sons Of The Desert singer Womack. "If there's an argument in the band, you can't get away from it. Once you get in the public eye, you *have* to act like you just love each other. We're lucky enough to have a group of guys who either forget or have very short-term memories. When we get mad at each other, it just goes away."

The spirit of cooperation does have professional advantages. Strength in numbers means four or five times as many radio stations can be covered for interviews, or various configurations of band members can be available for television appearances. This multi-pronged attack can result in leapfrog media exposure and can considerably lighten stress.

Trick Pony's Heidi Newfield says when she and partners Keith Burns and

Ira Dean first started out in 1996, they each took on a duty.

"Keith was just a little better at booking us, so he handled that," says Newfield. "I would handle a lot of the PR and talk to club owners. Ira really kept his eyes on the business part."

The Derailers' Tony Villanueva describes his relationship with his bandmates as comparable to the one with his wife.

"It's hard to have more than one marriage at once, but I think it's really worthwhile on both ends," he says. "To stick together is a great thing. It seems the longer we stay together, the better we get at communicating with each other."

Other complications, such as financial matters and individual egos, can insinuate themselves into the group mix - especially when a songwriting band member is involved in choosing songs for an album or selecting potential radio singles. His capacity to make additional money could bias his decision, or worse, alienate

other band members.

"I was the primary songwriter on the first record and had two singles," explains Womack. "It was hard, because my income went up and theirs stayed the same." Womack compensated his handmates by building and financing a studio workshop that they can access at their convenience. He views it as an investment - and as a way to show his gratitude.

Oddly enough, sometimes a breakup is just the remedy a band needs to appreciate its situation. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band broke up briefly in 1969, reunited six months later, and has been going strong ever since.

"After a while we all got back together and realized we really enjoyed making music," says Hanna.

"It should be about the music," insists Rascal Flatts' Gary LeVox. "Money is the root of all evil. If you've got something special with a couple of other people and you can live together on the road, then do it." *



The Charlie Daniels Band has weathered the ego clashes that have waylaid other groups.

GRANT LOVETT/CDC

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About COUNTRY MUSIC

- How long have you been reading COUNTRY MUSIC? _____ years
- Approximately, what is the total time you spend reading an average issue of COUNTRY MUSIC?

- Up To 1/2 Hour 1-1/2 Hours Up To 2 Hours
 1/2 Hour Up To 1 Hour 2 Hours Up To 3 Hours
 1 Hour Up To 1-1/2 Hours 3 Hours Or More

About Entertainment

- Who are your favorite country music performers? (Check all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alabama | <input type="checkbox"/> George Jones | <input type="checkbox"/> Travis Tritt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alan Jackson | <input type="checkbox"/> George Strait | <input type="checkbox"/> Martina McBride |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Billy Ray Cyrus | <input type="checkbox"/> Jo Dee Messina | <input type="checkbox"/> Merle Haggard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brooks & Dunn | <input type="checkbox"/> Willie Nelson | <input type="checkbox"/> Vince Gill |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clint Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Kenny Rogers | <input type="checkbox"/> Toby Keith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collin Raye | <input type="checkbox"/> LeAnn Rimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Lonestar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dolly Parton | <input type="checkbox"/> Shania Twain | <input type="checkbox"/> Buck Owens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emmylou Harris | <input type="checkbox"/> Johnny Cash | <input type="checkbox"/> Steve Wariner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Loretta Lynn | <input type="checkbox"/> Waylon Jennings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garth Brooks | <input type="checkbox"/> Kenny Chesney | <input type="checkbox"/> Lorrie Morgan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John Michael Montgomery | <input type="checkbox"/> Tim McGraw | <input type="checkbox"/> Montgomery Gentry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dwight Yoakam | <input type="checkbox"/> Keith Urban | <input type="checkbox"/> Patty Loveless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reba McEntire | <input type="checkbox"/> Steve Earle | <input type="checkbox"/> Lee Ann Womack |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trisha Yearwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Mary Chapin Carpenter | <input type="checkbox"/> The Dixie Chicks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hank Williams Jr. | | |

- In addition to country music, what other types of music do you listen to? (Check all that apply)

- Rock & Roll Bluegrass Heavy Metal Jazz
 Alternative Rock Classical R&B/Soul
 Adult Contemporary Rap/Hip-Hop Gospel/Christian

- What types of programs do you watch on TV? (Check all that apply)

- Soap Operas Sports News
 Movies Entertainment Children's Shows
 Dramas Home Improvement History
 Sitcoms Shopping Country/Country Music

- Which of the following activities have you participated in or attended in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply)

- Country music concerts Hunting Home improvement
 Leisure travel by car Movies Visited a museum or landmark
 Leisure travel by plane Boating Reading
 Sporting events Baking/Cooking Motorcycle riding
 Camping Volunteer work Bought country music CDs or cassettes
 Fishing Entertain family/friends at home

- How many country music CDs, cassettes or videos have you purchased in the past 3 months?

_____ CDs _____ Cassettes _____ Videos

About Travel

- On average, how many leisure trips do you take annually (including weekend getaways)?

_____ None _____ 1-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 10+

- Have you taken a leisure trip in the past 12 months?

Yes No

- Including yourself, how many people do you usually travel with? _____

- Plane Own Car Rented Car Bus Train

- Which of the following places have you visited in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply in Column A)
- Where do you plan to take your next vacation? (Check in Column B)

	(A) Visited	(B) Plan To Visit		(A) Visited	(B) Plan To Visit
Branson	_____	_____	Texas	_____	_____
Nashville	_____	_____	Michigan	_____	_____
Pigeon Forge	_____	_____	Virginia	_____	_____
Myrtle Beach	_____	_____	Orlando/Kissimmee	_____	_____
Las Vegas	_____	_____	Florida	_____	_____
Gatlinburg	_____	_____	North Carolina	_____	_____
West Virginia	_____	_____	Oklahoma	_____	_____
Kentucky	_____	_____	Georgia	_____	_____
Tennessee	_____	_____	Alabama	_____	_____
Mississippi	_____	_____	Missouri	_____	_____
Arkansas	_____	_____			

- On average, how much do you spend on a typical leisure trip?

- Under \$500 \$500-\$999 \$1,000-\$1,499
 \$1,500-\$1,999 \$2,000-\$2,499 \$2,500-\$2,999
 \$3,000-\$3,499 \$3,500-\$3,999 \$4,000-\$4,499
 \$4,500-\$4,999 \$5,000 or more

- What resources do you use most frequently to decide on a vacation destination?

- Advertisements Magazine ads Travel agent Brochures
 800 Numbers Word of mouth Internet Television ads

About Grocery Shopping

- On average, how often do you go grocery shopping in a week?

- Daily 2 to 3 times a week Less than once a week
 4 to 6 times a week Once a week

- On average, how much do you spend grocery shopping in a week?

- Less than \$50 \$50-\$99 \$100-\$149
 \$150-\$199 \$200-\$299 \$300 or more

- Which of the following products have you purchased in the past 12 months? Please indicate which one brand you use most often.

Product Purchased	Brand	Product Purchased	Brand
<input type="checkbox"/> Cold breakfast cereals	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheese slices	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Dry cake mixes	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Grated cheese	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Frozen pie crusts	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Stuffing mix	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Hot breakfast cereals	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Barbeque sauce	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerated biscuits	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Flavored/Seasoned rice mixes	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Stick butter	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned vegetables	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tub butter	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bacon or sausage	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Canned soup	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned chili	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Packaged cheese	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Frozen vegetables	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Instant rice	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Mayonnaise	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Deli meat	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Tea	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee	_____		

About General Products

- Which, if any, of the following have you used to help you lose weight?

- Dexatrim Metabolife Xenical Meridian
 Stimfast None

- What brand of facial tissues do you use most often?

- Cottonelle Puffs Kleenex Scotties
 Northern Store Brand

About Computers

- Do you own a home computer?
 Yes No
- Do you have access to the Internet at home or at work?
 At Home At Work Neither
- If you have Internet access, how often do you "surf" the Internet?
 Daily 4 to 6 times a week 2 to 3 times a week
 Once a week Less than once a week
- For which of the following do you use the Internet? (Check all that apply)
 Business E-Mail Entertainment General information
 Chat rooms Educational needs Games Shopping
- Have you ever purchased anything on the Internet?
 Yes No
 - If "Yes," what types of items did you purchase?
 Airline Tickets CDs/Tapes/Records Electronic Equipment
 Jewelry Auto Accessories Clothing
 Exercise Equipment Tools Beauty Products
 Collectibles Food Toys
 Books Computer Software Hotel Accommodations
 Videos/DVDs Home Decorating Products Gardening Products
 - On average, how much did you spend on items purchased on the Internet in the past 12 months?
 Under \$50 \$50-\$99 \$100-\$149
 \$150-\$199 \$200-\$249 \$250-\$299
 \$300-\$399 \$400-\$499 \$500-\$599
 \$600-\$749 \$750-\$999 \$1,000-\$1,499
 \$1,500-\$1,999 \$2,000 or more

About Home Decorating/Gardening

- Do you do your own home decorating or home furnishing?
 Yes No
- Have you made any home decorating or home furnishing purchases in the past three months?
 Yes No
- If "Yes," where do you normally purchase these products?
 Catalog Online Retail Store Home and Garden Store
 Furniture Store Hardware Store Other _____
- Do you have a garden?
 Yes No
- If yes, where do you purchase items for your garden?
 Catalog Online Retail Store Home and Garden Store
 Hardware Store Other _____

About Your Pets

- Do you own a dog or cat?
 Dog Cat Neither
- What type of pet food do you normally buy? (Check all that apply)
 Dog Cat Dry Canned
- What brand of pet food do you regularly buy?
 Alpo Mighty Dog Purina Kitten Chow Eukanuba
 Nine Lives Purina Puppy Chow Fancy Feast Nutro Purina O.N.E.
 Generic Pedigree Science Diet IAMS Purina Cat Chow
 Store Brand Kibbles 'N Bits Purina Dog Chow Friskies

About Cigarettes

- a. Do you smoke cigarettes?
 Yes No
 - If "Yes," which brand do you buy most often?
 Basic Doral Merit Virginia Slims
 Benson & Hedges Dunhill Misty Winston
 Cambridge GPC Newport Camel
 KOOL Parliament Capri Marlboro
 Salem
- Where do you buy your cigarettes?
 Convenience store Tobacco store Grocery Store
 Mass retailer (Wal Mart, etc.)

About Your Vehicles

- Do you currently own or lease a vehicle?
 Yes, own Yes, lease No
- Please specify the make, model, and year for each vehicle you own or lease.

Make	Model	Year
(e.g. Chevrolet, Dodge, Ford)	(e.g. Silverado, Ram, F-150)	
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
- Do you plan to buy a new vehicle in the next 12 months?
 Yes, car Yes, SUV Yes, truck No

About Your Reading Behavior

- What other magazines do you read regularly, that is, at least three out of four issues?

- a. What do you particularly like about COUNTRY MUSIC currently?

_____b. What do you particularly dislike about COUNTRY MUSIC currently?

- Rank the following regular features of COUNTRY MUSIC in the order of your preference with "1" being your most favorite and "10" being your least favorite.

_____ Reviews	_____ Say What	_____ Horizons
_____ The Insider	_____ Country on the Town	_____ The Journal
_____ Off the Charts	_____ Trail Blazers	_____ Letters
_____ What I Do		
- Which one of these three things would you like to see in the magazine?
 More reviews More photos Longer stories
- How important to you is *The Journal* section of the magazine?
 very important somewhat important not very important
 not important at all
- Which of these acts would you most like to see on the next cover of COUNTRY MUSIC?
 George Strait The Dixie Chicks George Jones Reba McEntire

About You And Your Family

- Are you: Male Female
- Are you: Married Single, Never Married Widowed/Divorced/Separated
- Your age: _____
- Including yourself, how many people are living in your household? _____
- a. Do you have any children under 18 living in your household?
 Yes No
 - If "Yes," how many of these children are:
Under 2 _____ 2-5 _____ 6-11 _____ 12-17 _____
- Please check the highest level of education you have completed.
 High School Graduate Or Less Some Post Graduate Schooling
 Some College Post Graduate Degree
 College Graduate
- Are you currently employed?
 Full-Time Part-Time Not At All
- What was your total household income before taxes last year?
 Under \$25,000 \$25,000-\$34,999 \$35,000-\$49,999
 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000-\$99,999 \$100,000-\$124,999
 \$125,000-\$149,999 \$150,000 Or Over
- Do you own your home rent your home
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

THE **Journal**

OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC

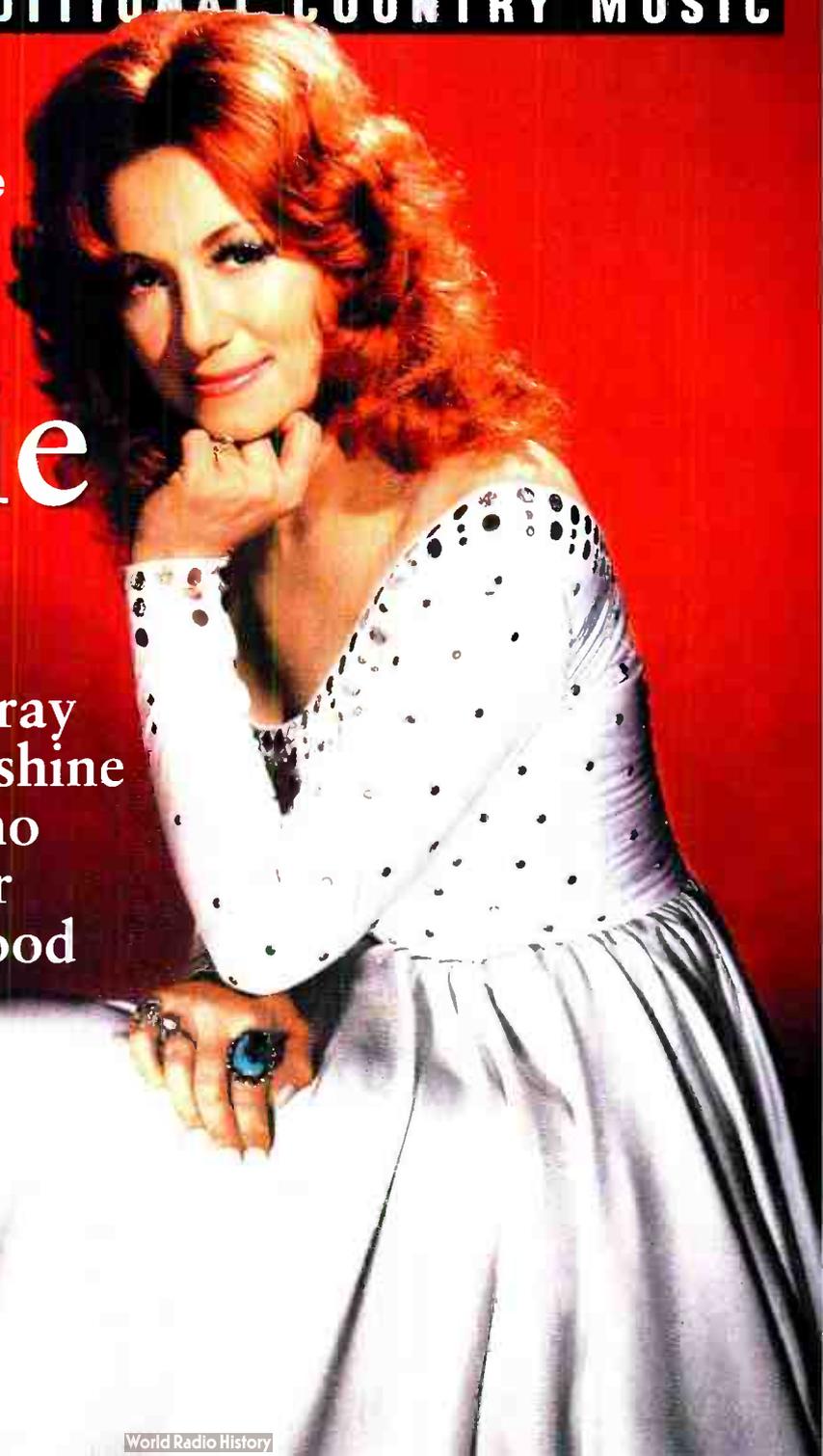
Hazel Dickens

National Barn Dance
souvenir books

Classic reissues

Dottie West

She brought a ray
of country sunshine
to her fans, who
never knew her
terrible childhood
secret until
she died



Editor: Robert K. Oermann

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"Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys" had the rare distinction of becoming a Top 20 hit twice in three years. But it also brought a fair amount of dissension to the songwriters' household, as reported by Bob Millard.
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- 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 My real last name is Segrest.

CLUE #2 I have a second-grade education and a fourth-degree black belt in karate.

CLUE #3 I faked my age, joined the Marines and saw action at Guam, Iwo Jima and Okinawa during World War II.

CLUE #4 I signed my first recording contract in 1952, but didn't have a Top 10 hit until nearly 20 years later.

CLUE #5 I hauled equipment as a roadie for Hank Williams and was Lefty Frizzell's touring partner.

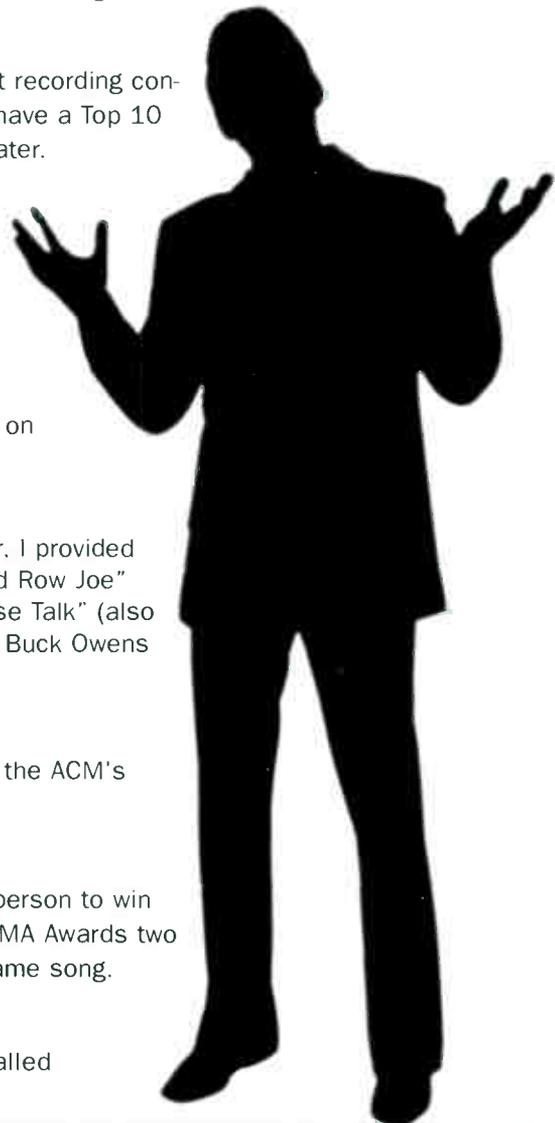
CLUE #6 I was a regular on *Town Hall Party*.

CLUE #7 As a songwriter, I provided Porter Wagoner with "Skid Row Joe" and Carl Smith with "Loose Talk" (also recorded as a hit duet by Buck Owens and Rose Maddox).

CLUE #8 In 1971, I was the ACM's Entertainer of the Year.

CLUE #9 I was the first person to win Song of the Year at the CMA Awards two years in a row with the same song.

CLUE #10 My band is called The Heartbeats.



* Answers on page J16



ROCKIN' AROUND WITH BRENDA LEE

Brenda Lee was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Rockin' At The Ryman concert in Nashville. Crystal Gayle, who credits Lee as a major influence, presented the award along with concert co-host Wink Martindale. Rockin' At The Ryman treated fans to an assembled cast of rockabilly legends, including Boots Randolph and Elvis Presley's drummer, D.J. Fontana. Lee charted 55 pop hits from 1957 to 1973, and had a string of eight Top 10 country singles between 1973 and 1980.



ALL PHOTOS BY MORELLO/GETTY

Remembering

Born in poverty, she brought a ray of 'Country Sunshine' to her fans –

In the early 1980s, Dottie West was on top of the world, enjoying a string of smash hits and a glamorous life. Yet even when the spotlight shone its brightest, it never revealed her darkest secret. Locals in her native Warren County, Tenn., knew the awful truth. And those who read a posthumous biography, or saw the TV movie based on her life, learned the chilling story after she was gone.

By Robert K. Oermann

While West was living, her fans may have known of the brutal poverty into which she was born. Without doubt they knew of her long climb up the showbiz ladder. But most were unaware that through much of her youth, Dottie West was repeatedly raped and beaten by her father.

If she bore emotional scars from her horrific childhood, she never let them show. It is a measure of her dignity that fans had no idea what she had endured and overcome as a child. As a superstar, she could only hint at it.

"I think my strength came from my mother," West once recalled. "She was very determined, and I've always had determination. Maybe that comes from being the oldest of 10."

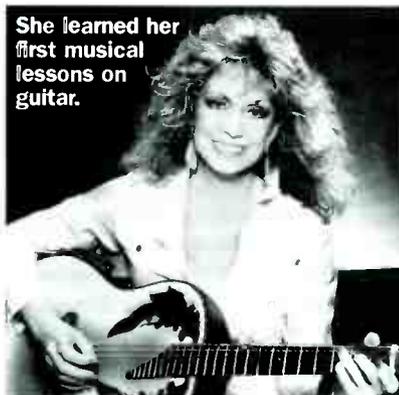
Dottie West was born Dorothy Marie Marsh in McMinnville, Tenn., on Oct. 11, 1932, the first child of Hollis and Pelina Marsh. Her father was a hard drinker, and her mother suffered years of violence at his hands.

Hollis whipped young Dottie regularly, according to the 1995 biography *Country Sunshine: The Dottie West Story*, written by her aunt, Judy Berryhill, and her school classmate and journalist Frances Meeker.

But Dottie's life would turn still darker. When she reached the age of 11, her father began assaulting her sexually. At 15, she became pregnant with his child but miscarried. When she turned 17, Hollis Marsh informed his daughter that she was to quit school and become his full-time household drudge. He intended to take

her with him to Detroit for a car-factory job he'd accepted.

But before he could make the move, Dottie reached her breaking point. One day at school, she broke down in tears, revealing her father's abuse to her principal. The sheriff was called; Hollis was arrested. Dottie testified against him in court, and he was sentenced to 40 years in prison, where he later murdered a fellow inmate.



She learned her first musical lessons on guitar.

With her husband locked away, Pelina Marsh cooked in a restaurant and Dottie waited tables. "We were very poor," the singer recollected, "but I was always too proud to ask for a handout."

Ironically, the man who had made her life a living hell had unwittingly given her a ticket to fortune. Drunk or sober, Hollis Marsh was a talented country musician.

"Back home, I played upright bass and rhythm guitar," she related. "My dad played mandolin and fiddle. That's where my love for absolutely

real country music comes from."

At age 12, she had bought a guitar, using money made by selling ointment door-to-door. Hollis taught her a few chords. It seemed an impossible dream, but she told her siblings that one day she would play it on the *Grand Ole Opry*.

In high school, she joined a country band called The Coonskins. She got a scholarship to attend Cookeville's Tennessee Technological University as a music major, and there she joined another country ensemble, The Tech Two By Fours.

In 1953, Dottie married Bill West, the steel guitarist in her college band. The young couple moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where Bill found work as an electrical engineer and his bride landed a five-year singing job on the local TV show *Landmark Jamboree*, both as a solo act and as one-half of a duo called The Kay-Dots.

"I would get to work with *Opry* singers and Nashville talent, because they came to guest-star," she said. "I'd get to talkin' to them and have them come over to the house to cook for them."

West listened and learned, eager to join their world.

"Looking back, I don't even think I realized how tough it might be. When you're that young, you're not afraid. I had absolutely no doubt that I could be a top singer."

Pursuing her dream, Bill and Dottie began making pilgrimages to Nashville. In 1959, they were on their way back to Cleveland when they drove by the headquarters of Starday Records. "Just pull in right here," she told Bill. "I'm going in there, and I hope they'll listen to me."

"I walked in and said, 'I really am going to make hit records. I am gonna be a singer in Nashville. Here's a scrapbook of the TV show I do.' And then I auditioned live with my guitar."

Amazingly, it worked. Starday recorded

Dottie West

who never knew the terrible secret of her childhood until she was gone



Her sexy, upbeat image boiled a troubled childhood, where she was often beaten by her father. West's past was revealed in a biography published after her death.

Dottie West

her. West's first single, "Angel On Paper," was issued later that year. "I was just goin' for it, that's all," she chuckled.

The Wests moved to Nashville in 1961 with children Morris, Kerry and future singing star Shelly in tow. Dottie began hanging out with Roger Miller, Willie Nelson, Mel Tillis and the rest of Music City's emerging songwriting community.

She too was soon composing. In 1963, Jim Reeves scored a Top 10 hit with West's "Is This Me?" That brought her to the attention of Chet Atkins, head of RCA Records. Atkins recorded her on RCA as Reeves' duet partner on "Love Is No Excuse," which became her first Top 10 hit.

"She sang with so much feeling and musical abandon," Atkins recalls. "She was an original. I remember when she brought in 'Here Comes My Baby,' she didn't even know if it was any good. I said, 'That's a hit.'"

Atkins was right. "Here Comes My Baby" soared up the charts in 1964 – the same year West joined the Grand Ole Opry – and earned her the first Grammy Award ever given to a female country performer. It was one of many songwriting successes to come. In 1966 alone, she had hits with her own "Would You Hold It Against Me," "What's Come Over My Baby" and "Mommy, Can I Still Call Him Daddy," the latter song recorded with her youngest son, Dale.

The death of her father in prison the following year meant that the past was now truly behind her, and her star was steadily rising.

Although she was a fine songwriter, West also shined as an interpreter. This was illustrated by 1967's "Paper Mansions," 1970's "Forever Yours," 1971's "Careless Hands" and 35 other charted hits between 1963 and 1975. Many young songwriters got their first breaks because of West's taste in selecting the songs she recorded.

"She recorded one of my songs in 1964, before I ever moved to Nashville," reports Jeannie Seely. "That gave me the encouragement to move



here. Dottie was always my hero."

West's openhearted generosity was a result of the kindness that Patsy Cline once showed her. When she was a struggling newcomer, Cline gave her money and encouragement. Before her death in 1963, she entrusted her scrapbook to West.

"I think I feel especially close to all the girls in the business," recalled West. "You're a little piece of all those friends, because you learn from every one of them."

West also became a mentor to a number of male stars. After hearing Larry Gatlin sing in Las Vegas, she flew him to Nashville and became the first to record his songs. She hired a 17-year-old Steve Wariner to join her band, bringing him to Music City, too.

In the 1970s, West gained further fame by writing ad jingles for Coca-Cola, winning a Clio Award for the 1973 Coke spot "Country Sunshine."

But after the Top 10 success of "Last Time I Saw Him" in 1974, her chart fortunes declined. In 1976, West left RCA for United Artists. Her career again soared during the next eight years, reaching its highest peak with her first No. 1 solo hit, 1980's "A Lesson In Leavin'," followed by "Are You Happy Baby?" in 1981.

During one recording session, West ran into labelmate Kenny Rogers, who professed himself a

Her simple self-assessment: "I'm a survivor."



fan – and they promised to make a record together. She had previously recorded duets with Don Gibson, Jimmy Dean and Jim Reeves. But in partnering with Rogers, she recorded the most successful songs of her career, including "Every Time Two Fools Collide" and "Anyone Who Isn't Me Tonight." The team won CMA Vocal Duo of the Year awards in 1978 and 1979.

This career boost in her 40s led to a splashy stage show in designer gowns. She became a casino headliner and starred in a road company of the musical *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*.

After Dottie's divorce from Bill West in 1972, she married two much younger men in succession, drummer Byron Metcalf and sound man Al Winters. Cosmetic surgery and outspoken interviews brought her a sexy new image.

She spent lavishly and lived her new life as a hitmaker to the fullest. But West's popularity dwindled as the 1980s wore on. Her last charted record appeared in 1985. Bad investments, financial extravagance and five hitless years led West to bankruptcy.

"I'm a survivor," she decreed. "You can knock me down, but you better have a big rock to keep me there." West needed all the strength and dignity she could muster in the months ahead. The IRS harassed her constantly. She was involved in a car crash, but recovered. She was humiliated on national television when her possessions were auctioned off before her weeping eyes. But she held on to her positive outlook and her resolve.

West was fighting her way back when she died Sept. 4, 1991, after an automobile accident en route to appear on the *Grand Ole Opry*, the stage of her dreams.

Eulogized Kenny Rogers, "What made Dottie West unique is that when she sang about pain, she felt pain; when she sang about love, she felt love; and when she sang about beauty, she felt that beauty. While some performers sang words, she sang emotions." ❁

THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

AUGUST

- August 1**
1927 The Carter Family records for the first time in Bristol, Tenn.
- August 2**
1935 Hank Cochran born
- August 3**
1991 Trisha Yearwood hits No. 1 with "She's in Love With The Boy"
- August 4**
1890 Carson Robison born
1927 Jimmie Rodgers' first recording session
1959 Skeeter Davis joins *Grand Ole Opry* cast



Vern Gosdin

- August 5**
1934 Vern Gosdin born
1968 Terri Clark born
- August 6**
1964 Loretta Lynn gives birth to twins Patsy and Peggy
- August 7**
1942 B.J. Thomas born
1948 Hank Williams debuts on *The Louisiana Hayride*
1950 Rodney Crowell born
1965 Mavericks singer Raul Malo born
- August 8**
1921 Webb Pierce born
1932 Mel Tillis born
1973 Mark Wills born
1975 Hank Williams Jr. nearly dies falling from a Montana mountain
- August 9**
1934 Merle Kilgore born
- August 10**
1926 Hee Haw's Junior Samples born
1927 Jimmy Martin born
1928 Jimmy Dean born
- August 11**
1946 John Conlee born
- August 12**
1929 Buck Owens born

- 1927 Porter Wagoner born
- August 13**
1924 Vernon Dalhart records country's first million seller, "The Prisoner's Song"
- August 14**
1941 Connie Smith born
- August 15**
1925 Rose Maddox born
1933 Bobby Helms born
- August 16**
1935 Patsy Montana records "I Want To Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart"
1972 Dixie Chick Emily Robison born
1977 Elvis Presley dies
1980 Alabama scores first No. 1 hit, "Tennessee River"

- August 17**
1958 Charlie Rich's first recording session
- August 18**
1963 The Louvin Brothers' final performance as a duo in Watseka, Ill.
1972 Elvis Presley files for divorce from wife Priscilla
- August 19**
1944 Eddy Raven born
1966 Lee Ann Womack born
1969 Clay Walker born
- August 20**
1923 Jim Reeves born
- August 21**
1938 Kenny Rogers born
1939 Guitarist James Burton born
1965 Waylon Jennings first appears on the charts with "That's The Chance I'll Have To Take"
- August 22**
1957 Holly Dunn born



Collin Raye

- 1959 Collin Raye born
- August 23**
1917 Tex Williams born

- 1947 Rex Allen Jr. born
1947 Mary Kay Place born
1952 Kitty Wells hits No. 1 with "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels"
- August 24**
1898 Fred Rose born
1970 SheDAISY's Kristyn Osborn born
1998 Jerry Clower dies
- August 25**
1961 Billy Ray Cyrus born
- 1970** Jo Dee Messina born
- August 26**
1961 Diamond Rio's Jimmy Olander born
- August 27**
1977 Crystal Gayle hits No. 1 with "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue"



Crystal Gayle

- August 28**
1965 Shania Twain born
1982 George Strait achieves his first No. 1, "Fool Hearted Memory"
1982 LeAnn Rimes born
- August 29**
1927 Jimmy C. Newman born
1987 Archie Campbell dies
1998 Rockabilly pioneer Charlie Feathers dies
- August 30**
1919 Kitty Wells born
- August 31**
1984 Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard earn a platinum record for *Pancho & Lefty*

SEPTEMBER

- September 1**
1931 Boxcar Willie born
1933 Conway Twitty born
- September 2**
1978 Willie Nelson hits No. 1 with Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies"
- September 3**
1925 Hank Thompson born
1933 Tompall Glaser born
- September 4**
1991 Dottie West dies in a car crash
- September 5**
1958 The Country Music Association is chartered
- September 6**
1911 Zeke Clements born
- September 18**
1918 Hank Penny born
- September 19**
1964 Trisha Yearwood born
- 1968** Red Foley dies
1973 Gram Parsons dies
- September 20**
1895 Songwriter Bob Miller born
- September 21**
1912 Ted Daffan born
1941 Dickey Lee born
1967 Faith Hill born
- September 22**
1956 Debby Boone born
- September 23**
1930 Ray Charles born
1935 First recording session for Bob Willis & His Texas Playboys
1952 Final recording session for Hank Williams
- September 24**
1977 "I've Already Loved You In My Mind" hits No. 1 for Conway Twitty
- September 25**
1965 The Statler Brothers' first hit, "Flowers On The Wall," debuts on the chart
- September 26**
1925 Marty Robbins born
1941 David Frizzell born



David Allan Coe

- 1939 David Allan Coe born
1942 Mel McDaniel born
1963 Mark Chesnutt born
1984 Ernest Tubb dies
- September 7**
1936 Buddy Holly born
1991 Brooks & Dunn notch their first No. 1 hit, "Brand New Man"
- September 8**
1897 Jimmie Rodgers born
1927 Harlan Howard born
1932 Patsy Cline born
- September 9**
1956 Elvis Presley appears on *The Ed Sullivan Show*
1996 Bill Monroe dies
- September 10**
1937 Tommy Overstreet born
- September 11**
1899 Jimmie Davis born
1984 Barbara Mandrell badly injured in a car crash
- September 12**
1931 George Jones born
- September 13**
1911 Bill Monroe born
- September 14**
1959 John Berry born
- September 15**
1903 Roy Acuff born
1948 Vernon Dalhart dies
1957 Patsy Cline marries Charlie Dick
- September 16**
1946 Earl Scruggs first records with Bill Monroe
1950 The Bellamy Brothers' David Bellamy born
- September 17**
1923 Hank Williams born



Lynn Anderson

- 1947 Lynn Anderson born
- September 27**
1987 Dolly Parton's ABC-TV variety series *Dolly* debuts
- September 28**
1926 Jerry Clower born
1928 Nashville's first recording session
- September 29**
1907 Gene Autry born
1935 Jerry Lee Lewis born
1993 Willie Nelson inducted into Country Music Hall of Fame
- September 30**
1950 First TV broadcast of *Grand Ole Opry*
1958 Marty Stuart born

“Mammas Don’t Let Your Babies

(Written by Ed Bruce)

At the height of country music’s Outlaw movement in the ‘70s, “Mammas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys” was a huge hit for Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. It still resonates today as the quintessential romantic theme song of Outlaw music lovers and rugged individualists everywhere.

But if you ask Ed Bruce and his ex-wife and former manager, Patsy Bruce, about the song’s origins, you strike a very dissonant chord. It probably doesn’t help that during their vitriolic divorce proceedings, Patsy was awarded not only the portion ascribed to her in the original copyright, but Ed’s part, too.

“I’m tired of reading all these stories in the paper about what a great songwriter she is and all that bull@#%*!” Ed roars from his horse

farm south of Nashville. “Her name is on it, and the judge gave her my part, too. As far as co-writing the song, she didn’t have a damn thing to do with it, except for pushing me to sit down one night and finish it.”

Patsy offers her own version. “If you look at the first verse of ‘Mammas,’ you will see that it was autobiographical – that was what Ed said about himself,” she says. “Then either he didn’t have any more to say about himself, or he got embarrassed, or he told more than he meant to. The second verse is *my* vision of the cowboy. [Ed] got stuck on it after a verse and a chorus and asked me to help him finish it. I nagged the devil out of him because it was so good. We finished it, and the rest is history.”

Ed counters: “I wrote the first verse and the chorus in my head in five minutes in my car coming back from a jingle session one night. When I got home, I got out my guitar and played it

because I wanted to hear what it’d sound like. I played it for my wife and she said, ‘That’s a hit.’ And I said, ‘I think so.’ She said, ‘Bruce, you need to finish that song.’ So we sat down together, and I finished that song.

“There were quite a few things I [wrote and] recorded that had her name on it. She was my wife and my manager and I was trying to take care of her.”

Regardless of the he-said-she-said argument, Ed Bruce scored a Top 15 hit with “Mammas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys” in 1975. It was his first real success after recording for eight years.

“Mammas” advanced the Arkansas-born, Memphis-raised artist’s career as singer, writer and television actor.

In 1978, Jennings recorded the song and invited Nelson to make it a duet. This time, the single topped the country charts for a solid month during the height of the Waylon and Willie craze. The “Mammas” connection eventually led to Ed’s warm, distinctive voice pairing up with Nelson for “The Last Cowboy Song,” which peaked at No. 12 on the *Billboard* country charts in 1980. Thus began a solid six-year string of hits including the chart-topping “You’re The Best Break This Old Heart Ever Had” and the Top 10 tunes “Ever, Never Lovin’

You,” “My First Taste Of Texas,” “After All,”

“You Turn Me On (Like A Radio)” and “Nights.”

It took America’s favorite Outlaws, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, to put “Mammas” over the top. The song stayed at No. 1 for four weeks in 1978.



LIBBA GILLOM

Grow Up To Be Cowboys” (and Patsy Bruce)



COURTESY ROBERT GERHANN

ALAN FAYATOR

Patsy Bruce and Ed Bruce offer disparate versions of the song's origins and, more notably, each other's contributions. "As far as co-writing the song," claims Ed, "she didn't have a damn thing to do with it." Counters Patsy, "The second verse is my vision of the cowboy."

Today, Ed Bruce is writing, acting and still doing commercials. He has done three seasons of a bird-dog training show for cable TV's Outdoor Life Network. He lives with his wife, Judith, and says most of his recording and performing days are behind him.

"The last time I recorded was in 1985," Bruce explains. "I just lost the fire to do it, because I didn't like what was going on. I think the songs ought to stand on their own, without all the smoke machines

and flames and dancing Druids and stuff. Most of what I've done in recent years has been in Europe. I've always had a good audience over there, but I can't remember the last concert date I did here."

Despite the loss of proprietorship of the most popular song to bear his name, Bruce concludes, "I'm happy. I'm not sleeping by myself. I've got a wonderful wife and partner, four wonderful kids and eight grandchildren. Whatever I had to sacrifice to get

here, it's been worth it."

The successful song-writing Bruce bloodline continues with Trey Bruce (Randy Travis' "Look Heart, No Hands"), Bruce's son by his first wife, Sarah, while his daughter-in-law Robin Lee has also become a successful Music Row tunesmith.

On the other side of the fence, Patsy Bruce owns and operates Events Unlimited, a thriving company that arranges corporate functions. She writes an eclectic weekly column

for a small local newspaper, and is working on her first novel. She acknowledges that "Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys" has opened a number of doors for her.

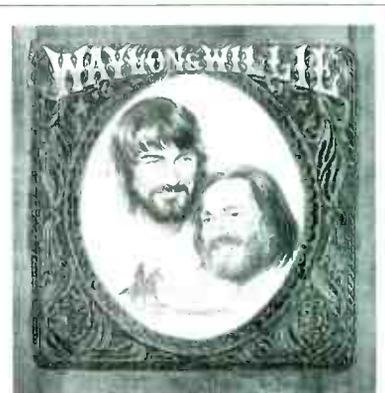
"It's been my passport," she says. "I've met so many people. It has really broadened and colored my world. That's been the neatest part of it."

Patsy's favorite tale of the fame "Mammas" has brought her way is the time a female fan cornered her in a grocery store.

"She said, 'Oh my God, Harry's never gonna believe that I met Patsy Bruce in the grocery store. [Mammas] is Harry's favorite song of all time! I have got to have an autograph.' And she wheeled around and picked up a box of Kotex, handed 'em to me, and said, 'Here, autograph this!'" Patsy says with a laugh.

"If I ever start thinking I'm too big, I remember that I am not too big to sign a box of Kotex for Harry."

— Bob Millard



“Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys”

Ed Bruce and Patsy Bruce

Mammas, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys
Don't let them pick guitars and drive them old trucks
Make 'em be doctors and lawyers and such

Mammas, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys
'Cause they'll never stay home and they're always alone
Even with someone they love

Cowboys ain't easy to love and they're harder to hold
And it means more to them to give you a song than silver or gold
Budweiser buckles and soft faded Levis and each night begins a new day

If you can't understand him, and he don't die young
He'll probably just ride away

A cowboy loves smoky ole pool rooms and clear mountain mornings
Little warm puppies and children and girls of the night

Them that don't know him won't like him, and them that do sometimes won't know how to take him
He's not wrong, he's just different and his pride won't let him
Do things to make you think he's right

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‘Mammas’ became the quintessential romantic theme song of Outlaw music lovers.

Heavenly

A Dickens of a role model in bluegrass

Shortly after *Riders In The Sky* concluded their entertaining set at Nashville's 1995 Fan Fair, lead singer Ranger Doug threw his arm around emcee Naomi Judd. Asking her if she'd like to hear "The Sweetest Gift, A Mother's Smile," the first song she and daughter Wynonna had sung in public, Naomi smiled. "Better than that," Ranger Doug continued, "I'd like to bring out the people who sang the song the first time you heard it."

by Geoffrey Himes

With that introduction, Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard rushed out onto the stage. In what could only be described as a perfect *Jerry Springer* moment, the shocked mama Judd's jaw dropped to the floor. The three women hugged, then serenaded the audience before retiring to a trailer, where Alison Krauss joined them for a *Queens Of Hillbilly Music* summit.

Dickens' music may not reach the best-seller lists, but her influence reverberates throughout the country world. The Judds molded their talents on Dickens and Gerrard's coattails, and a diverse list of country, folk,

bluegrass and rock artists have recorded her songs, including Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Tim O'Brien, Rhonda Vincent and Lynn Morris (whose version of Dickens' "Mama's Hand" was voted the 1996 Bluegrass Song of the Year). Her influential work was discovered by documentary filmmaker Barbara Kopple, who included four Dickens songs in 1976's *Harlan County, USA*. Dickens also appeared and sang in *Matewan*, a film about coal miners in the 1920s.

"A lot of young people say they've gotten a lot from my songs and my



Hazel Dickens' soulful bluegrass sound has influenced a generation of admirers, including Dolly Parton and The Judds.

hard-driving sound, because there still aren't a lot of women who do that," Dickens explains, whose Appalachian sound and twangy mountain voice have won the respect of her peers.

"Sometimes it's embarrassing, because I've never thought of myself in those terms. But when I get off by myself and don't have to look them in the face, it makes me feel real good."

In her autobiography, *Love Can Build A Bridge*, Naomi Judd remembers the momentous day she discovered Dickens' music in a Kentucky music store. "One day I found an album with a grainy black-and-white photograph of a farm on the front," she wrote. "It was a bluegrass record by a duo called Hazel and Alice, recorded on Rounder Records. 'What a concept,' I thought, 'a record with two women singing together.'"

The songs provided a blueprint for her and her guitar-playing daughter



Dickens is currently featured on the soundtrack to the movie *Songcatcher*.

Hazel

Dickens married the feistiness of Kitty Wells and Wanda Jackson to the hard-driving tempo of Bill Monroe and The Stanley Brothers.



Hazel Dickens

Christina (later renamed Wynonna). "The women's voices were singing songs we'd never heard, but the blending of the voices, the harmony and the intonation were as familiar as our own faces in the mirror," Judd wrote. "It was the sound of the Kentucky hills where I grew up. That wonderful summer of 1975 we learned every single song on the Hazel and Alice album."

Actually, Dickens was born and raised not in the hills of Kentucky, but in those of West Virginia, to a world of grinding poverty and dangerous mining life. But nearly everyone, it seemed, sang or picked an instrument. "My father's biggest hero was Franklin Roosevelt," Dickens remembers, "but Bill Monroe was a *close second*."

In the early '50s, Dickens left West Virginia on a Greyhound bus headed to Baltimore where an older sister lived. At age 19, she took a job in a can factory; on weekends, she played bass and sang hillbilly songs with her brothers and new acquaintance Mike Seeger (Pete's half-brother).

"I sang a little bit of everything," Dickens recalls. "We were a bluegrass band but had to do those requests, and that meant the new country hits on the jukebox. I became a great fan of Kitty Wells, because

"A lot of young people say they've gotten a lot from my songs and my hard-driving sound."

she had such a sympathetic ear for women. I also liked Jean Shepard and Wanda Jackson."

In 1965, when Dickens and her musical partner Alice Gerrard signed to Folkways Records, there were few models for female bluegrass singers. So she fashioned something entirely new, marrying the feistiness of Wells and Jackson to the hard-driving tempo of Bill Monroe and the Stanley Brothers. Rather than sensitive confessions, the two women presented aggressive, rhythmic acoustic music –

"My father's hero was Franklin Roosevelt," says Dickens. "But Bill Monroe was a close second."



and at once provided a new model for a whole generation of female country and folk performers.

After the duo split in 1976, Dickens went on to release three solo albums for Rounder Records. As part of a series of albums celebrating Rounder's 30th anniversary this year, Dickens will be featured in a new greatest-hits collection in May, and on a *Women In Bluegrass* anthology later this year.

Dickens' compositions have been covered by hordes of artists over the years, though she was especially pleased when Dolly Parton finally recorded one of her songs.

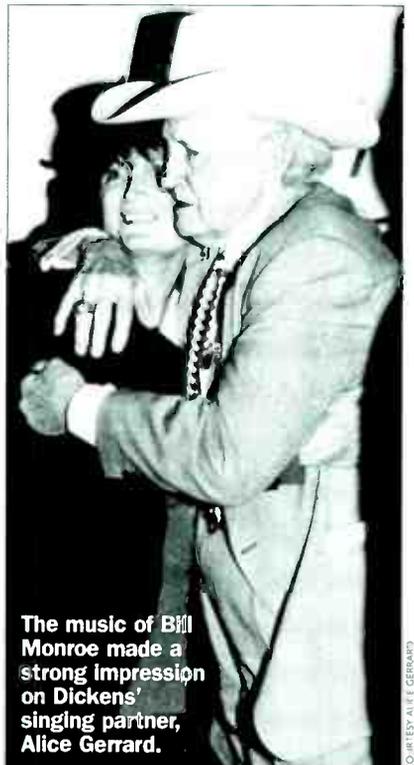
"I thought Dolly did a really great version of 'A Few Old Memories,'" Dickens gushes. "I've never talked to a female musician who didn't say she was influenced by Dolly. Because of where she came from and what she's done, she has proven to women just how much you can accomplish in this business. And I'm sure it wasn't all a bed of roses.

"Men take it for granted, because they've had lots of role models, but women haven't, so when someone like Dolly comes along, we latch on to her. It's not something I would have done, because I don't get out and

push myself. I don't have the same need, but if you have the need, you should do it like Dolly did."

Dickens will never admit it, but in her own low-profile way, she's inspired a whole generation of women herself.

Just ask The Judds. ✱



The music of Bill Monroe made a strong impression on Dickens' singing partner, Alice Gerrard.

NEW AGAIN NOTEWORTHY DISCOVERIES

A Shot In The Dark: Tennessee Jive

VARIOUS ARTISTS (Bear Family, 8 CDs)

A good reissue is a warm breeze of nostalgia. A *great* reissue opens up a whole new world, teaches you and exposes you to wonderful new sounds from the past. This breathtaking set from Germany's esteemed Bear Family label documents the pioneering independent record labels in Nashville between 1945 and 1955. These were the companies that helped Nashville become known as Music City U.S.A.

The label could just as easily have called this set "The 204 Greatest Hillbilly Jukebox Records Of All Time." Labels like Bullet, Tennessee, Republic and Dot were interested in hard-hitting boogie and honky-tonk sounds that would thud from jukeboxes — which in the late '40s could account for as much as 50 percent of a record's sales. You won't find many uptown Eddy Arnold or Red Foley types here. And there are hardly any ballads. There are, however, plenty of good ol' drinkin' songs.

You won't have heard many of these

artists. But the diligent research of Martin Hawkins and Colin Escott provides biographical sketches of even the most obscure ones. Hawkins and Escott's abundant, colorfully illustrated hardcover tome exhaustively chronicles the evolution of the Nashville music scene on all fronts — from record stores, recording studios, radio stations and session musicians to nightclubs and music executives. It also includes a thorough discography, a timeline and seemingly every print ad that promoted the remarkable records you hear. As a groundbreaking work of scholarship, the book is worth the price of the box set alone.

Nashville's independent labels during this era introduced the world to such future stars as Chet Atkins, Bobby Helms, Ray Price, Minnie Pearl and Sheb Wooley. Their performances are all intriguing. These companies also produced some sizable hits, and it's a delight to hear anew such gems as "Rag Mop" by Johnnie Lee Wills, "Down



TENNESSEE JIVE

CD 1&2

Yonder" by Del Wood and "Near You" by Francis Craig. "Near You" remains the longest-lasting No. 1 pop hit of all time and put Nashville on the map as a recording center in 1947.

Citing favorite discoveries is tough amid so many dandy sides, but a few include Lattie Moore's "Juke Joint Johnny," songwriter Leon Payne's original version of "Lost Highway," future furniture magnate Ray Batts' "Bear Cat Daddy," The York Brothers' "Hamtramck Mama" and the sides by Rebe & Rabe, Lee Bond, Randy Hughes and Dick Stratton (namely, his prophetic "Music City U.S.A." from 1952).

JOHNNY CASH AND THE TENNESSEE TWO

Roads Less Traveled (Varese Sarabande)

The Sun Records output of Johnny Cash is one of the most distinctive sounds in American popular music. His Tennessee Two propelled Cash's rumbling baritone with a simple *boom-chicka* backing that still remains riveting after nearly 50 years.

This CD compiles 18 rare Sun sides by Cash recorded 1954–1958. Some were issued later with over-



dubbed choruses or instruments, but now appear in their original stark forms. Though some have never seen the light of day, all are powerful. "Belshazar," "My Two Timin' Woman," "Doin' My Time" and "Leave that Junk Alone" are but four of the performances that make this reissue a jewel.

BUCK OWENS

Young Buck: The Complete Pre-Capitol Recordings (Country Music Foundation/Audium/Koch)

In 1955–1956 Buck Owens was a popular club performer in Bakersfield, Calif. He was still several years from stardom on Capitol Records when he recorded these 21 sides. Most appeared



as singles on little labels like Pep and Chesterfield. Some were song demonstration tapes Owens recorded on his own.

They were the genesis of his greatness. While they lack the distinctive drive of his Buckaroos band, all of these performances showcase a vocalist and songwriter of impressive power. His penetrating honky-tonk delivery is particularly impressive on "It Don't Show On Me" and "Right After The Dance." Buck struts

his stuff as a rockabilly performer on "Hot Dog" and "Rhythm And Booze," both of which were released under the pseudonym "Corky Jones."

These might be the tentative first steps of a superstar in the making, but they're also finer records than most performers ever make.

WEBB PIERCE

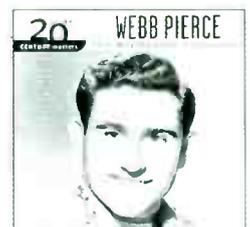
The Best Of Webb Pierce/20th Century Masters/Millennium Collection (MCA)

Only the works of Hank Williams define the honky-tonk style of the 1950s as perfectly as these tracks do. Pierce's sharp nasality, punchy steel-and-fiddle accompaniment and unerring

song taste made him the king of the charts in his heyday.

"There Stands The Glass," "Back Street Affair" and "I Ain't Never" belong in every country lover's library. "Slowly" introduced the pedal steel guitar to the country sound. "More And More" showed the world the songwriting of Merle Kilgore. "Honky Tonk Song" did the same for Mel Tillis.

Historic doesn't begin to describe these 12 tunes. *Essential* comes closer.



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. We encourage readers to write each other directly about information or items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Researcher seeking comments from fans who attended country and swing concerts in the greater Los Angeles area during the 1940s and 1950s. Please write describing events you attended, dates, what musicians did or wore onstage and how you and the audience reacted. Please provide your address, e-mail or phone number.

Peter La Chapelle, History Department, SOS 254, MC 0034, University of Southern California, University Park Campus, Los Angeles, CA 90089 (lchapel@usc.edu)

After putting my ad in to sell my LPs, my son got very ill and I didn't have time to answer all your letters and phone calls. He passed away, and for now I'm going to forget about selling anything. Just wanted to let you know why you never got answers back. Sorry.

Connie De Weese, 624 W. Olive St., Garden City, KS 67846 4273.

Portraits. Will draw a portrait of a country star for a fan. Eugene Hernon, 453127-Allred, 2101 FM, 369 N, Iowa Park, TX 76367.

QUESTIONS

Who played the parts of Jamup and Honey on the *Grand Ole Opry*?

Charles P. Cook, 109 N. East St., California, MO 65018-1725.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The original Opry blackface comic duo was Lassie and Honey, portrayed by Lee Roy White and Lee Davis "Honey" Wilds in the 1930s. Wilds then formed Jamup and Honey and performed on the Opry in the '40s. Jamup was portrayed by several men, including Tom Woods and Bunny Biggs.*

How long did WSM broadcast the *Grand Ole Opry* before it became a stage show?

Robert L. Smith, 44 Woodcrest Way, Conklin, NY 13748.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *During its early years, 1925 - 1934, at Nashville's National Life building, the Opry was more of a radio presentation. Small audiences were present in the studio. But the Opry didn't become a regular stage show until it moved to the Hillsboro Theater in 1934. After that came the stages of The Dixie Tabernacle, The War Memorial Auditorium, the Ryman and the Opry House.*

WANTED

Does anyone have a record or tape of Hank Snow's album *Songs Of Tragedy*?

Helen L. McKnight, 2906 Walker St., Osceola, IA 50213.

Perhaps 45 years ago I used to listen to radio station WWVA in Wheeling, W.Va. A little girl used to recite a piece at Christmas called "Happy Birthday Jesus." Any idea where I could get the recording or even the sheet music?

John Tibbetts, 1544 Congress St., Portland, ME 04102.

I'm looking for a song by The Browns called "Heaven Fell Last Night." Also "The Rovin' Gambler," but I don't know the artist.

Carol S. Huebner, 40505 SE Hwy 224, Estacada, OR 97023.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Tennessee Ernie Ford had the hit recording of "Rovin' Gambler" in 1956.*

Vince Gill sheet music and songbooks are what I'm desperately seeking, especially "The Way Back Home" and "Pretty Little Adriana." Will pay any reasonable prices.

Cindy Boskofsky, #99862-011, Federal Correctional Institution, 5701 8th Camp Parks, Unit F, Dublin, CA 94568.

I want a cassette of the Johnny Cash song "Tree Symbol Of Love."

Juan Terry, 804 E. 7th St., Metropolis, IL 62960.

Is there a discography of Merle Haggard's recordings? I'm looking for the years these songs were released - "No Reason To Quit," "Every Fool Has A Rainbow," "I've Got A Yearning."

Kevin Olsen, 475 Stanley Rd., Two Harbors, MN 5516-1469

EDITOR'S NOTE: *I'm unaware of a full, published Haggard discography. "Reasons To Quit" was a duet with Willie Nelson in 1983. "Every Fool Has A Rainbow" came out in 1969. "I've Got A Yearning" is from 1975.*

I am looking for any 78 RPM records from around 1947 - 50 of Happy Johnny And His Radio Gang. He was on the Signature label. He worked around York, Pa., then moved to KXEL in Waterloo, Iowa, around 1947.

Harry Spahr, 1831 Hilton Ave., Dover, PA 17315.

Where can I get the George Jones video "The Same Ole Me"?

Marie Marby, 2096 Gainsville Rd., Mason, TN 38049.

I've been trying to get information on a singer, Del Pritchett.

Linda Brown, 113 Boot Rd., Downingtown, PA 19335.

I would like to find these songs on LP, CD or cassette: "My Happiness" by Elvis Presley and "Funny How Time Slips Away" by Johnny Bush.

C. Berger, 19118 Tyrone, Spring, TX 77373.

I am looking for an LP or tape of *Merle Haggard Live At Carnegie Hall*.

James Burrows, 1820 Benedict Rd., Westminster, MD 21157.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *I'm not aware of an album with this title.*

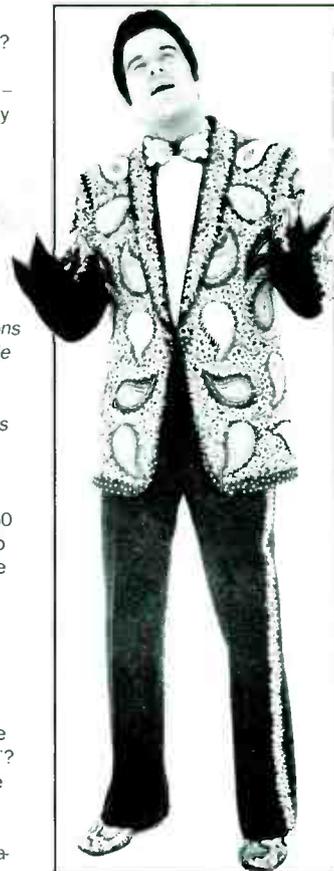
Can someone help me find the words to Archie Campbell's "Cinderella" / "Rinderella" and her two "sisty uglers"? I'd love to read it to my grandchildren.

Nancy Hussar, 1838 Swamp Pike, Gilbertsville, PA 19525.

In the October/November issue you reviewed *Wishful Thinking*, the 10-CD Wynn Stewart collection on Bear Family Records. How do I purchase this?

Richard Barton, 3807 Northumberland Dr., Louisville, KY 40245-1890.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Ernest*



Trivia answer: Freddie Hart

Tubb Record Shop is America's largest mail-order source for country-music recordings. The order number there is 1-800-229-4288. In addition, recordings we review are generally available via the Internet at sites such as www.cdnw.com.

FOR SALE

My entire collection of George Strait memorabilia, 1981 - 2000. Posters, video tapes, tour books, albums, magazines, calendars and many pictures.

Cheryl Simkins, 700 S. 19th St., Rogers, AR 72758.

Have autographed pictures from souvenir books from country shows in the early 1960s that came to Omaha, Kansas City, etc.

Karen Cerra, 1405 Early St., Sac City, IA 50583.

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Bonnie Garner, Personal Manager

Before becoming a personal manager in 1987, Bonnie Garner learned from showbiz legends. The former school-teacher from Mulkeytown, Ill., toiled as a secretary to Hugh Hefner at Playboy; was employed at The Dick Cavett Show and worked at the famed Fillmore East with legendary promoter Bill Graham. After spending a few years at CBS New York working artists-and-repertoire with noted label exec Clive Davis, Garner relocated to Music City in 1973 and was

made vice-president of A&R CBS Nashville in 1984. All this experience prepped her for her true calling in management. With Rothbaum & Garner Management, she was involved in the careers of Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, The O'Kanes, Roger Miller, Emmylou Harris and Marty Stuart. In 1992, she went solo, creating Bonnie Garner Management to guide Marty Stuart's career for the next eight years. She currently represents Andy Griggs and Lee Roy Parnell.

On February 16, I was jarred at 6:30 in the morning by a phone call. It was Mike Copelin, Andy Griggs' road manager, reporting that Andy and a bandmate were cooling their heels with local authorities in Tallahassee. Apparently the duo had been arrested after taking a short ambulance joyride without permission. The driver had left the keys in the ignition.

"After he filled me in on what happened, I made two calls: the first to the bail bondsman to find out their side of the story, and then to Jess Rosen, Andy's attorney, to tell him to expect a call from my client. When Andy finally called me a few hours later, I felt sorry for him. He was really scared – it was a prank that back-fired. He'd never been in that much trouble. I told him to call Jess, and let the attorneys handle it from there.

"By 10:00, my phone was ringing off the hook with calls from concerned friends, Andy's record label and the media. The media was told to contact the label. I didn't breathe a sigh of relief until April 11, when I received a letter from the lawyer stating that Andy was off the hook, that no charges in fact had ever been filed.

"Situations like Andy's come with the territory. As the manager I'm the conduit, the contact and the buffer zone. A friend of mine named Snake – that's the only name I knew him by – who used to work for Willie Nelson once defined management as doing 'whatever it is that needs to be done.' If that means negotiating a contract or getting

coffee, that's pretty much what a manager does.

"You're never out of touch. I need to be available 24-7 because an artist doesn't work 9-to-5. I don't have private numbers.

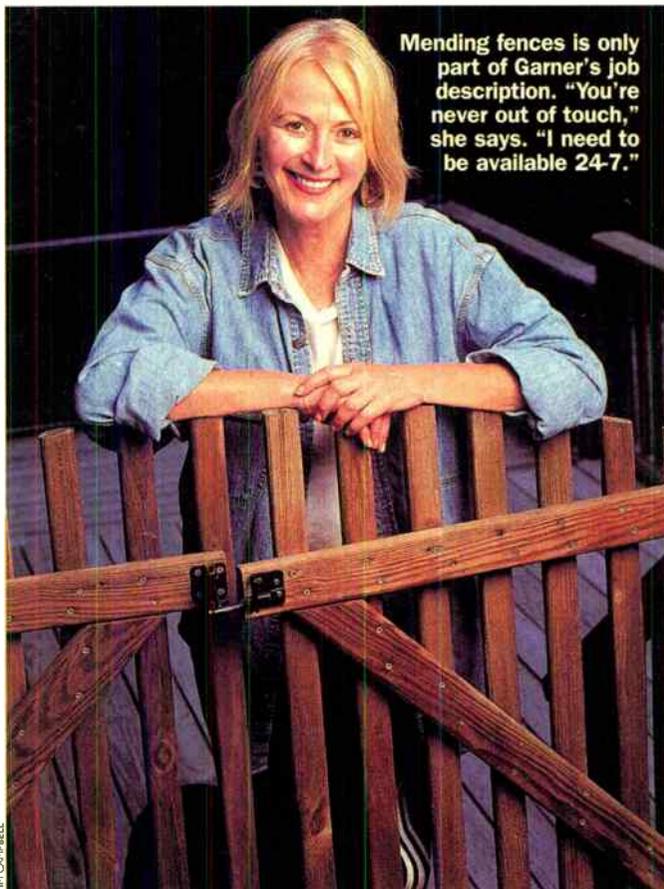
"It's like a friendship, marriage or any close, deep relationship. When you work that closely with someone, you can't help but be involved in all phases of their life.

"The manager is always the bad guy. The buck stops right here. The artist is never wrong. If something worked, it was their idea. If it doesn't, it was yours – no matter whose it was. You're not going to win popularity contests. But the artist pays my bills, so that's who the bottom line is for me. I'll pretty much do what they want, as long as it's fair and legal.

"The way managers earn a living is through a commission, or percentage, of the work they bring in. There's no set rule to becoming one; just learn as much as you can about everything. I was fortunate that I'd worked on the road for a record company and in television. I also happen to like reading contracts. Having patience and a sense of humor helps.

"The biggest pleasures I derive are the little moments. For instance, Andy has a voice that blows me away. Lee Roy's abilities as a triple-threat talent – guitarist, singer, performer – are amazing. Knowing that you had a direct effect, no matter how big or how small, in contributing to a talent or a piece of music being heard is priceless.

"And it pays better than a real job!" *



Mending fences is only part of Garner's job description. "You're never out of touch," she says. "I need to be available 24-7."

THE CAMPBELL

A Survivor's Story

Life had its ups and downs for singer Danni Leigh – even before she signed her first record deal. The Virginia native supported herself briefly in Florida as a bungee jump instructor, coaching customers on their 310-foot falls. Then 20, she began on the ground crew and worked her way up to jumpmaster, where she secured the jumpers' harnesses and taught them how to fall.

by Beverly Keel

"There's not a lot of comforting advice you can give them," she says. "When you get up there, you've just got to fall and enjoy the ride. It's such a rush, it's incredible."

Little did Leigh know she was developing a philosophy that would serve her well over three years of her own ups and downs tangling with the music industry. Since 1998, she has endured three record deals, two managers, two bands and the release of four singles. The only constant in her career has been change.

It's a common Nashville story: a talented, attractive performer scores the big break – the coveted record contract – only to find it never quite translates into the big time.

They do everything right. They work with professionals and consultants to sculpt their sound and image. They tirelessly tackle every promotion, publicity and touring request the label throws their way. They do everything the label asks, everything radio asks, everything managers ask.

But no matter how hard they work and how good they are, the end result is too often the same: disappointment. Radio doesn't embrace their music. Consumers don't buy the album. And the record company lifeline is severed.

Danni Leigh has been there once too often.

"I wish I could enjoy the ride, but it's been scary at times," admits Leigh, 31, as she sits in the Music

Row office of her manager, former Decca Records chief Shelia Shipley Biddy.

She arrived in Nashville in 1994. While working as a waitress at the Bluebird Cafe, Leigh began working with song publisher Michael Knox, who signed her to Warner Chappell Publishing. They recorded several demos, and 18 months later she caught the attention of producer Mark Wright.

In 1998, she was signed to Decca, entering the studio to record her debut album, *29 Nights*, with both Wright and Knox co-producing.

"I was extremely excited," Leigh recalls. "For me it was the realization of a lifelong dream. Everyone in the Decca building believed in me so much. It was a great experience, and *29 Nights* was the album I wanted to make."

Decca released *29 Nights* in October 1998, promoting the single "If The Jukebox Took Teardrops." It tanked.

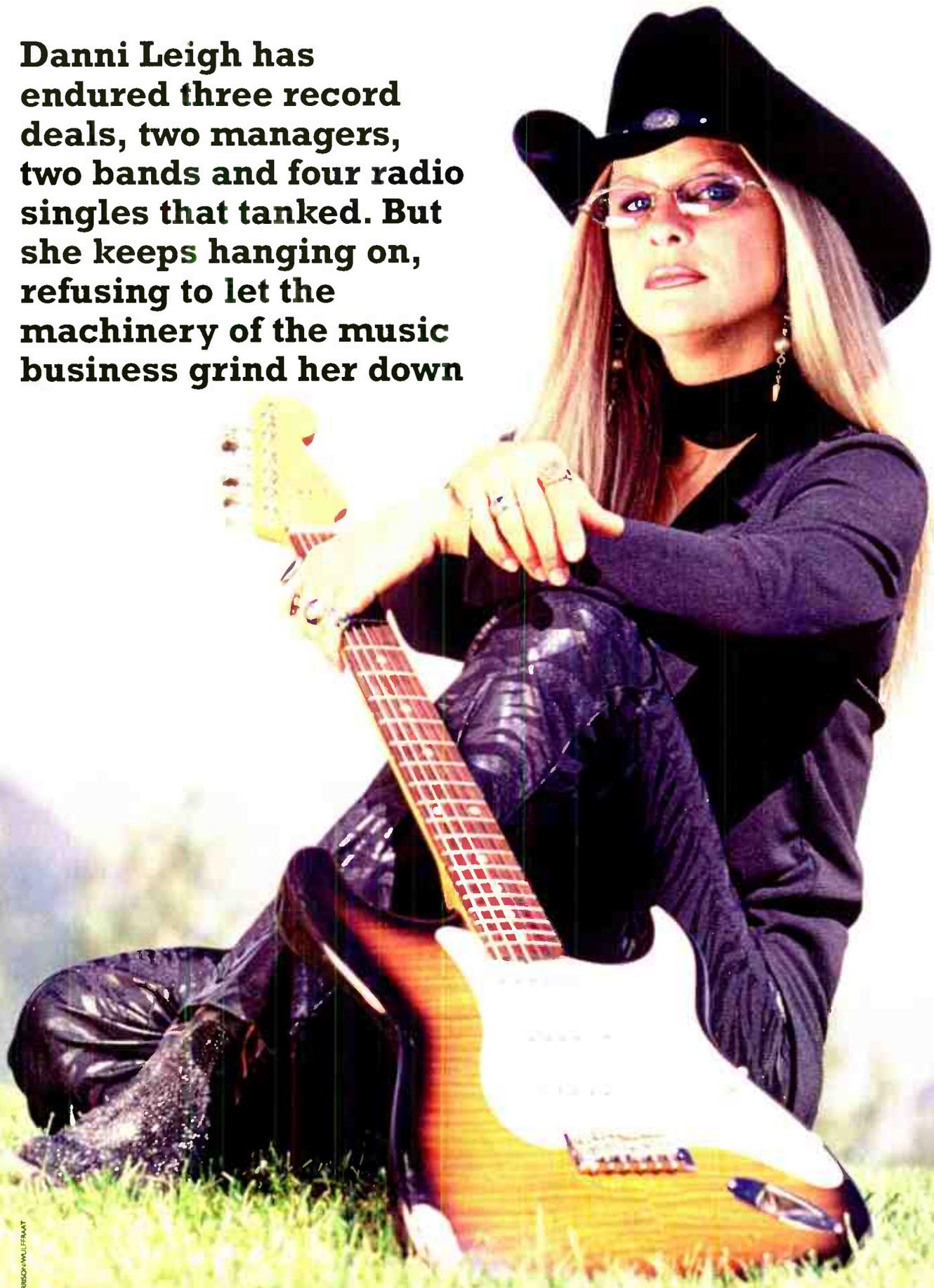
"I was pretty disappointed," Leigh admits. "It was a hard-core honky-tonk kind of song, and there was some radio resistance to the word 'whiskey.' But we *really* felt that '29 Nights' would be the song that would click."

Unfortunately, Leigh never got the chance to find out.

Just as her second single, "29 Nights," hit radio, Decca abruptly closed in the wake of a corporate merger. "When everything you always wanted in life is yanked out from underneath you, it's scary," notes Leigh.

But she wasn't anxious for long. Within a few

Danni Leigh has endured three record deals, two managers, two bands and four radio singles that tanked. But she keeps hanging on, refusing to let the machinery of the music business grind her down



MOORESON/WALLENMAT

A SURVIVOR'S STORY

months, Sony Nashville president Allen Butler offered her a new deal through Monument Records, home of the Dixie Chicks. By this time, Shipley Biddy had re-entered the picture as Leigh's manager, so the singer felt that everything was finally falling back into place.

"I was thrilled that another major wanted to pick up where I left off," she recalls.

At a label meeting, Leigh suggested Pete Anderson as a producer. Sony countered with *their* preference: Richard Bennett and Emory Gordy Jr. Leigh agreed.

Six months later, *A Shot Of Whiskey And A Prayer* was almost complete. Leigh seemed happy with the album (though she now concedes that some of the finished songs "weren't really me"). Then she was informed that there was room for one more track. Butler requested that she cut her rendition of the Willie Nelson and Ray Charles duet "Seven Spanish Angels."

"Allen said he signed me because of 'Seven Spanish Angels,'" Leigh recalls. "He said we could go back into the studio to cut it. But I was already \$225,000 in the hole, and I decided not to. That's one thing I regret."

Still, spirits were high when Sony released "Honey I Do" as the first single in February 2000.

"We were guaranteed it would be a big hit by several Sony staffers," Leigh recalls. The label, she was assured, was committed to throwing all of its promotional muscle into the single. But the record stiffed, making it only into the

lower half of the *Billboard* Top 100.

"I noticed a change right there and then," Leigh notes. "Relations turned from hot to freezing cold. Once they encountered some radio resistance, it went to hell in a handbag."

Leigh says she felt abandoned. "I went out on the road, and asked the label to set up interviews with radio stations and press, but I never got any response. I kept calling the label and asking people to tell me the truth, because something

was wrong. But nobody would. I felt as though I'd hit a wall."

There was still hope – the second single, "I Don't Feel That Way Anymore," was waiting in the wings. But once released, it stalled, too – and after promoting it to radio programmers for three weeks, the label pulled the plug.

It was the end of the line for Sony and Leigh. The two parted ways following a final summit.

"I was upset, and I got emotional at the meeting," Leigh admits. "They told me they were in it for the long haul. I would have never agreed to be their partner if I didn't think they were serious about their commitment. What was so frustrating is that we planned everything with Sony every step of the way."

She takes some responsibility herself.

"I can't sit here and say it was all Sony's fault," she concedes. "Maybe I should have stood up a little more. But with that much money on the table, it's hard to say, 'No, I'm not going to do that' to a powerhouse like Sony."

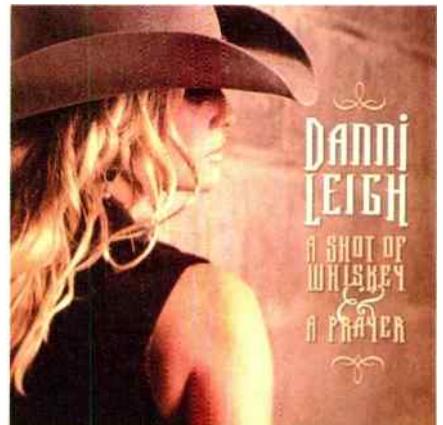
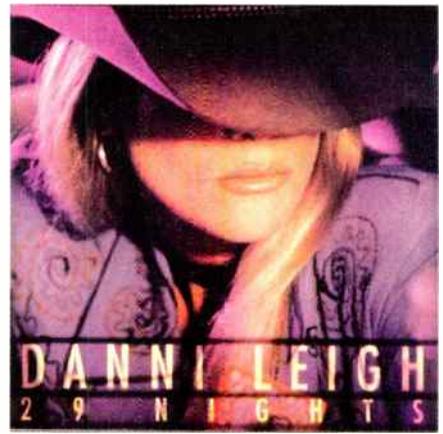
Still Leigh found a silver lining in her exit.

"There was great relief," she sighs. "When I walked out of that meeting, I felt so light in the shoulders – it was amazing. It had stopped being fun for me."

But even two heartbreaking rounds with major labels wasn't enough to make Danni Leigh throw in the towel. Within a few months she was back on her feet with yet another record deal, this time signing with smaller independent Audium Records.

"Danni is one of the strongest artists I've ever known," states Shipley Biddy, who continues to manage her. "Even in the darkest times, she finds a way to pull herself up. She knows who she is as an artist.

“I am determined to make this work,” says Leigh, who has hit one brick wall after another. “Nothing is going to stop me.”



HER FIRST TWO ALBUMS met with critical praise but little commercial success. She now concedes that some songs on *A Shot Of Whiskey And A Prayer* "weren't really me."

That's why you see other labels believing in her and giving her another chance. Very few get a second chance, let alone a third."

Leigh says her ordeal has made her a stronger and more flexible person. "I'm good at change now, believe me," Leigh declares. "I've changed everything – *everything* – from when I first started. A couple of times."

Now she's going back to the basics, preparing to embark on a van tour with Seattle's The Souvenirs. She's also headed into the studio with the producer she'd always wanted to work with, Pete Anderson of Dwight Yoakam fame, to make an album she calls "pure hillbilly honky-tonk." It's slated for release early this fall.

Danni Leigh vows that sooner or later she will succeed.

"I am determined to make this work," she vows. "Nothing is going to stop me from making it happen. Whether that includes radio success or not, I don't know. But success to me comes in many different fashions. Getting radio airplay is not going to make or break me."*



LEIGH'S REBEL STANCE and honky-tonk sensibilities have earned comparisons with Dwight Yoakam, who visited with her during the Academy of Country Music Awards.

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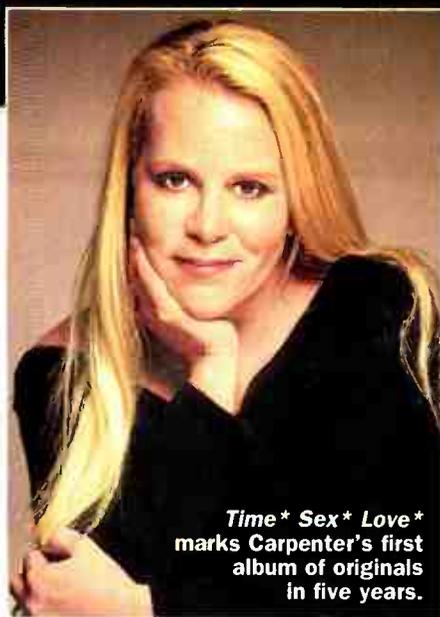
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destiny's CHILD

by Nick Krewen

In fine-tuning the details of her carefully crafted songs, Mary Chapin Carpenter finds herself

Details, details. Unlike many of her country music contemporaries, Mary Chapin Carpenter writes songs that thrive on particulars. She gets maximum emotional mileage out of the minimum of minutia, whether she's singing about being passed around like an orphaned shoe from the lost and found in the memorable "John Doe No. 24" on 1994's *Stones In The Road*, or verbalizing the frantic *had to go, had to be, had to get somewhere* pace of "The Long Way Home" on her latest album, *Time*Sex*Love**.



*Time*Sex*Love** marks Carpenter's first album of originals in five years.

PAMELA SPRINGSTEENSONY

Leaning against a cushioned chair in a Sony Nashville boardroom, long blonde strands of straight hair draped over her comfy sweatshirt, Carpenter contemplates this notion, and then answers – as she does with all questions tossed her way – insightfully.

"I think my favorite writers are those who have an economy about what they do, and yet at the same time have a gift for detail," she explains, pausing occasionally to search for the right words.

"It's almost like they can write a love song, but nowhere in the song do they even say the word 'love.' Instead, they write the little details around the subject in order to illuminate that subject. To me that's breathtaking, and something to strive for. That's the kind of stuff that just floats my boat."

Carpenter has written her own fair share of boat-floaters. This meticulous craftsmanship has served her well in the 14 years and seven albums since she introduced herself with *Hometown Girl*. She's sold nearly eight million albums, received a fistful of Grammys, taken home successive CMA Female Vocalist awards in 1992 and 1993 and scored a bevy of memorable hits. And although only one of those boat-floaters



PAMELA SPRINGSTENSON/SONY

was a No. 1 hit (1994's "Shut Up And Kiss Me"), the Brown University alumna came tantalizingly close on three other occasions – when the *roulez bon temps* of 1991's zydeco-flavored "Down At The Twist And Shout," 1993's sarcastic "He Thinks He'll Keep Her" and 1994's assertive "I Take My Chances" all peaked at No. 2.

Her emotionally empathetic songs, a balance of Ivy League intellect and almost omniscient awareness, are foreign to the formulaic approach favored so brazenly by Music Row. As *The New York Times* once declared, "Few current songwriters look at the small domestic dramas of adulthood, and fewer still depict them with Ms. Carpenter's cliché-free clarity."

Success has allowed the Princeton, N.J., native a sense of creative latitude

that few enjoy. It gives her complete artistic freedom and the liberty to advocate any social cause dear to her heart. Carpenter, 43, who visited Cambodia in February on behalf of the Campaign For A Landmine Free World, relishes

It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to go into the studio just because the contract says it's time.

the platform her celebrity affords her.

"I grew up in a house where parents taught us to pay attention to those things," says Carpenter, who now lives in a Washington, D.C., suburb. "I've always felt it's important to speak to issues. It's a privilege to be able to advo-

cate on behalf of things that you care about, that you believe in and that make a difference in people's lives."

While having an impact on others' lives, however, she remains firmly tight-lipped about much of her own. She rarely divulges details of her romantic attachments or her solitary, at-home lifestyle. "I never talk about my personal life," she says simply.

And when it comes to her professional life, she doesn't let deadlines figure into her art. Even the five-year gap between 1996's *A Place In The World* and the recently released *Time*Sex*Love** – an eternity when it comes to recording careers – fails to faze Carpenter, who once joked to the *Associated Press* that it takes her "an average, historically, [of] 12,000 years" to complete an album. While waiting for motivation to strike, she turned in

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

1999's *Party Doll And Other Favorites*, a prudent pastiche of hits, covers, rarities and live performances, and embarked on an acoustic tour.

"I guess in the world of making records, five years is a long time," she concedes between sips of bottled water.

"I tend not to pay attention to all that stuff – not out of being a flake, but just not realizing that the time is passing. I was writing, I was touring, I was doing all this stuff I usually do. But I do feel I've been doing this long enough that it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to go into the studio just because the contract says it's time."

Indeed, *Time*Sex*Love** might still be a year or so from completion if Carpenter hadn't been inspired and had a writing spurt. "It was about a year ago last Christmas I finished a song called 'Someone Else's Prayer' that seemed to kick off a great period of creativity for me," she says. "It got to a point where I said, 'I'm ready to go in.'"

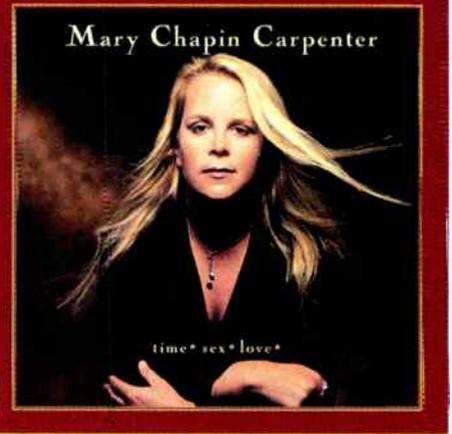
When she finally did travel last November with producer John Jennings to London's AIR Studios, owned and operated by legendary Beatles producer Sir George Martin, to track *Time*Sex*Love**, she did so for a solitary reason: fun.

"During *A Place In The World* there were so many pressures coming at me from the outside that it made it a really tough time," explains

Grabbing Grammys: Carpenter proudly holds a pair.



I'm pretty opinionated, so I don't know how much of an open mind I have.



Carpenter. "A lot of them reflected the realities of the music business, everything from needing to give the record company something they could work with and be happy with, to the fact I was in a really bad management situation at that time. All of those factors made it really hard, and I just didn't want to be in that environment again.

"I wanted to go to London because I love it. I've spent a lot of time there, and I loved the idea of being able to take The Tube to work every day."

*Time*Sex*Love** takes its title from the abbreviated John Jennings quote: *Time is the great gift, sex is the great equalizer, love is the great mystery.* Among its offerings, there's "Going Home," the 15th and hidden bonus track that captures Carpenter "snotting all over" her nose with laughter during what she describes as a "meltdown"; a lusty adrenaline-rushed challenge of "Whenever You're Ready"; and the cascading harmonies of "Maybe World," a song she describes as "The Turtles meet The Beatles who have lunch with The Beach Boys and dinner with Travis [a British pop band]."

And as with many Carpenter songs, there are many vistas to the rainbow of hues in the track "Maybe World," including a Beatles connection.

"I had gotten an idea from an interview with Ringo Starr, where they were asking him about he and his wife going through rehab together," she explains. "The interviewer asked, 'What would have happened if you hadn't been ready to go through that with each other? Would your marriage have broken up? Would your life be different now?' And he said, 'Man, I

can't even think about that. I can't live in that *maybe* world.' And I thought, *Oh, I love that!*

"The sentiment of it definitely is a thematic thread in this record: 'Late For Your Life' and 'Maybe World' and the whole concept of regret and 'what ifs' and 'don't put it off.'"

Carpenter extends this theme to "Simple Life," a tune about the trappings of streamlining complicated lifestyles.

"I buy *Real Simple* magazine like everybody else because I'm looking to simplify my life with this sort of back-to-basics movement," she explains, laughing. "And yet – if I'm as foolish as anybody else who buys that magazine – I'll end up buying all the crap to ostensibly simplify my life! It just clutters it up."

Carpenter's worldly views come naturally. As one of five daughters of a *LIFE* magazine executive and a schoolteacher, she was raised in New Jersey, Japan and Washington, D.C., and later backpacked through Europe after graduating high school. Carpenter has always looked at life as an education, although she scoffs at the suggestion that she may be more liberal in her views than most.

"I'm pretty opinionated, so I don't know how much of an open mind I have," she laughs. "I'm pretty stubborn. I'm Little Miss Can't-Be-Wrong and all that. At the same time I'd like to think I have a brain, and I want to use it. I want to be informed. I want to be able to reason."

Then she pauses – and her sense of humor shines through.

"I absolutely believe I can learn something from everybody," she says with a grin. "No matter what kind of dipshit they are."*

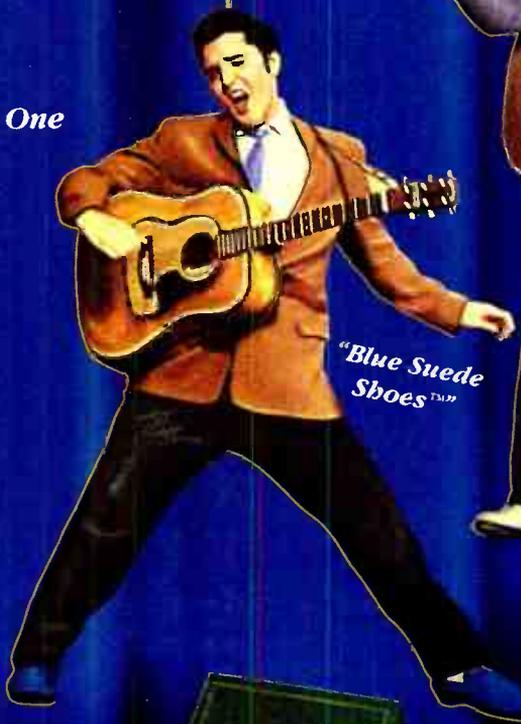
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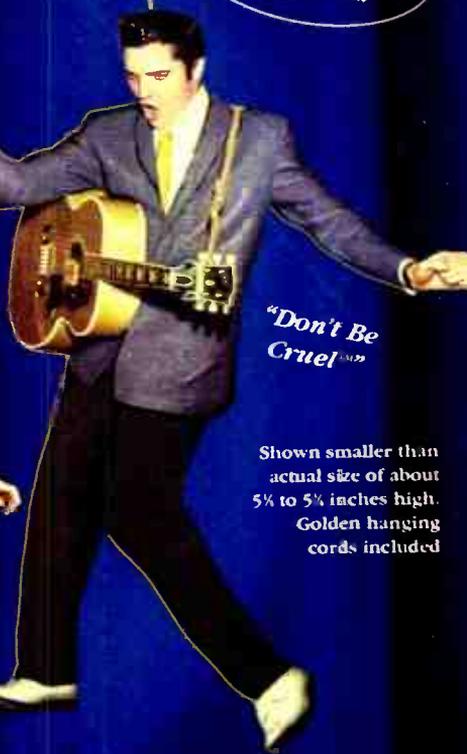


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Whispering Loud 'n' Proud

After 43 years, Bill Anderson's success speaks volumes

Sometimes nice guys don't finish last. "Whisperin' " Bill Anderson's gentlemanly demeanor has never hindered his lifelong run as one of Nashville's most successful artists and songwriters.

With a prolific recording legacy that includes chart-toppers like "Mama Sang A Song," "Still" and "World Of Make Believe," Anderson helped transform Nashville from a haven of hillbilly tunes into the capital of contemporary country. Lefty Frizzell's "Saginaw, Michigan," Connie Smith's "Once A Day" and Porter Wagoner's "Cold Hard Facts Of Life," were all hit versions of original Anderson songs.

A one-time sportswriter with a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia, Anderson got his first break in 1958 when he wrote "City Lights," which would go on to become a No. 1 hit for Ray Price. Within months, the young songwriter had relocated from Atlanta to Nashville and signed a recording contract with Decca Records.

Anderson's multifaceted career doesn't stop at music. Currently the host of TNN's *Opry Backstage*, he also starred in the ABC soap opera *One Life To Live* and hosted the network's game show *The Better Sex* in the '70s. He emceed TNN's *Fandango* in the '80s. He's also authored a couple of books: *I Hope You're Living As High On The Hog As The Pig You Turned Out To Be* and his autobiography, *Whisperin' Bill*. And his stint as a spokesman and investor for the Po' Folks chain of family restaurants met with success.

Now enjoying his 40th anniversary as a Grand Ole Opry member, Anderson finds his productive pen still in demand. He co-wrote Mark Wills' 1999 chart-topping "Wish You Were Here" and Steve Wariner's No. 2 smash "Two Teardrops."

He dispenses plenty of wisdom learned over his 63 years in this candid conversation with *Country Music* prior to an *Opry Backstage* telecast.

What was Nashville like when you arrived?

I was here at the tail end of the hillbilly era. I remember them pulling up in their Cadillacs in front of the old Clarkston Hotel, strapping the bass fiddle on top of the car and taking off to do shows. I did some of that, too. I've ridden in a car with a bass in my lap. It was in the days before Interstates and before buses. I'm glad I got to see that firsthand – and I'm glad it began to change not long after I got here!

There have been a lot of wild stories about Nashville in those days, especially for songwriters. But you always seemed more clean-cut and composed than some of your peers.

Well, I was hanging out with Willie [Nelson], Harlan [Howard], Roger Miller, Hank Cochran, [Mel] Tillis and Kris Kristofferson. Truth is, I didn't hang out like *those* guys did. I probably didn't get as many songs cut because of it, either.

Songwriting started to become more of a business around then?

Songwriters began to gather in town, and publishing companies and BMI established themselves as important aspects of Music Row. The Country Music Association formed, and concert promoters broke away from the Opry and started their own companies. Producers were now heading record companies and selecting the talent – usually *before* the singers go on the *Opry*, instead of afterward. The way music was made and business was done changed completely. It became more directed from above than by the artists and the *Opry*.

The music changed as well?

There was a real shift taking place in the early '60s. We were no longer writing songs about train wrecks and whiskey and blood running together. Our songs went in a different direction – more love songs, more emphasis on stories and lyrics. When you look back at it now, the music that came out of the early '60s is just phenomenal.

Who were your favorite writers?

I loved the stuff that Harlan [Howard] wrote. Hank Cochran, Roger Miller and [Mel] Tillis, John D. Loudermilk, Wayne Walker and Marijohn Wilkin – they were all great writers. Back then, if you didn't write for the same publisher, you couldn't write together. So we didn't do a lot of co-writing. Many of those fences have come down now.

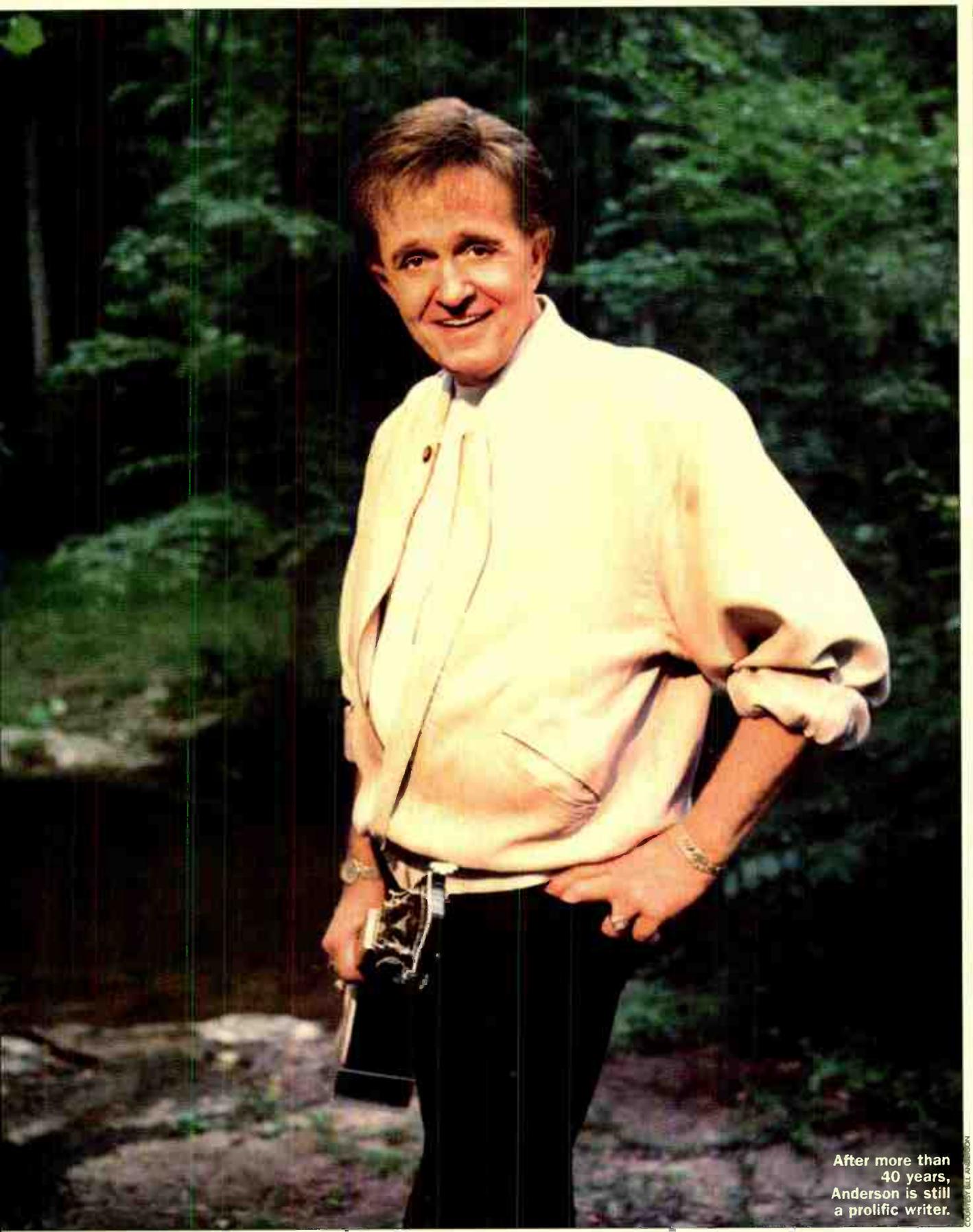
Songwriting then was different in a lot of other ways too, wasn't it?

Sure was. Today they get up, make appointments and meet at an office at 10 a.m. They write for a while, go to lunch, come back and write some more. It's like punching a clock. I had never done that, and I didn't think I could. But I've found out I can. I love the co-writing I'm doing now. I never really thought of myself as a professional songwriter. I was just a guy who made up songs. We flew by the seats of our pants a lot more in



Anderson wrote his first hit, "City Lights," in 1958.

MICHAEL LOCKS ARCHIVES.COM



After more than 40 years, Anderson is still a prolific writer.

COURTESY TELEVISION

the old days. Songwriting was more of a lonely obsession back then. It's treated more like a business today.

Writers and artists also seem more cautious and calculated about the music they make.

It's almost like the industry is afraid to trust the audience or trust themselves. They play it so safe. When we were flying by the seats of our pants, there was no such thing as playing it safe.

Do you have any theories on why it's changed so much?

It's because the music's being filtered through too many people to make sure it doesn't offend anybody. We're so busy trying not to offend anybody that we forget our job is to create things that are memorable. We've got to take some chances! But right now there are too many consultants. Nobody's taking any chances.

You wrote "Too Country" on Brad Paisley's new Part II album. Is it a protest directed toward radio and how stations don't really play traditional country anymore?

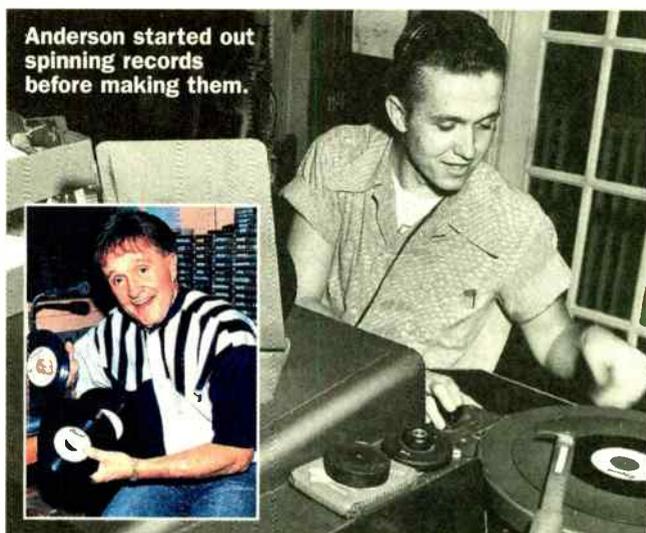
I guess. There are records out there now where radio programmers say, 'Oh, that's really good, but it's too country.' Well, hel-lo! I've never heard a rock 'n' roll station say that a song is 'too rock' or a classical station say that it's 'too classical.' But there's that perception that if something is too country, it won't sell.

You were famous for putting recitations on your records. That's one aspect of country music you don't hear much anymore.

I started doing that with this thing I'd written, 'Mama Sang A Song.' I was able to talk [producer] Owen Bradley into letting me do it. It was the first time I ever talked on record. It became a No. 1 country record and got into the bottom of the pop charts. When that happened, Owen said that we might have hit on something. He said I should do another song where I sang a little and talked a little, but it should be a love song instead of a religious song. He thought it would work for me. That's when I wrote 'Still.' I was purposely trying to write something like that. I have to give credit to Owen for the vision.

Speaking on your songs became your signature style.

It made me different. Those days, if you weren't different, if you didn't have your own style, forget it. Today it's almost the opposite – if you're too different, you don't get a chance. Back then everybody had to have their own style, and that became mine.



Anderson started out spinning records before making them.

Country music misses those real strong stylists.

Boy, it sure does. Today it seems that record companies tell artists who they are instead of artists telling record companies who they are. We're losing something there. Whatever happened to trying to be unique? Someday it will come back to that.

You're one of the few veteran songwriters who still regularly contributes new songs to young artists.

I had quit writing for about 10 years. Then in 1992 Steve Wariner cut "The Tips Of My Fingers," a song I'd written 30 years ago. It inspired me to get back to writing again, and it's the best decision I've ever made. I thought nobody would understand me because I was weird. I thought writing was something you did at night with the shades pulled down, so you could see how miserable you could get. But now it's so much fun, especially writing with these young writers. I've learned a lot about what works today and what doesn't.

Your 40th anniversary at the Opry must've meant a lot to you. Do you remember your induction?

You don't forget something like that. My first appearance had been in January 1959, then I joined in July 1961. What I remember so vividly – and I wrote about this in my book [*Whisperin' Bill*] – was the night Ott Devine, the general manager of the Opry, called to invite me to become a member. I was sitting at home watching the all-star baseball game on television. When the phone rang, I thought, 'Why would anyone call me during the ball game?' I almost didn't get up to answer the phone. Surely there wasn't anything so important that I'd have to stop watching the game. But there was!

Do you find yourself reflecting back on your years at the Opry now that you're reaching this milestone?

I really have. I've stood on that stage a whole lot of times in the last six months or so and thought, 'You lucky son of a gun!' Really and truly. I've stood there and thought, 'Where would you rather be at this moment in time?' And I've never been able to come up with anything. I love the Opry, and I really want to be there. I've been blessed to be able to make a living doing things I love.

— Michael McCall

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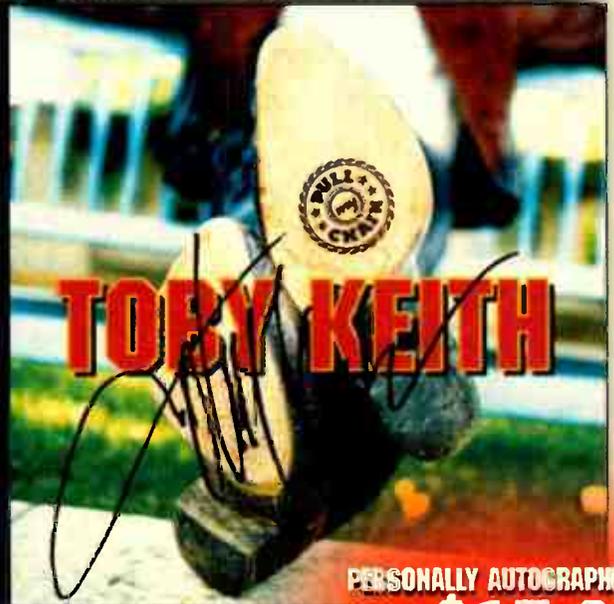
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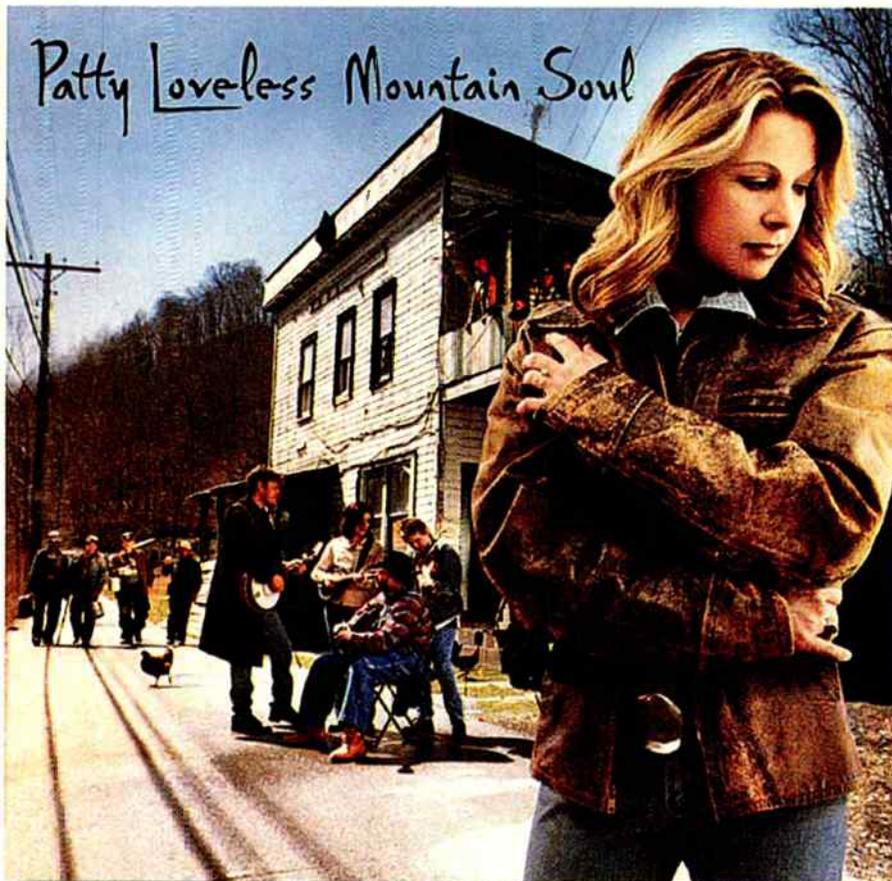
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World Radio History

REVIEWS



“Sorrowful Angels,” a tortured tale of unrequited love.

Mountain Soul, recorded mostly “live” in the time-honored bluegrass tradition, resonates with beauty and authenticity. It’s embedded in the singer’s every pore, from the nasal elongation of her vowels, to the upturned, grassy endings of her phrases, keenly underscored by standout drum-free acoustic instrumental performances. Guests Travis Tritt, Ricky Skaggs and Jon Randall add texture and color, and fiddler Stuart Duncan frequently sends shivers up the spine. But it’s Loveless who burrows beneath your skin.

She’s often been undervalued for her contributions to the integrity of the genre. But if anyone ever doubted she was one of the greats, *Mountain Soul* should make them hang their head in shame. Watch for this one to top the “Best Of The Year” lists.

—Alanna Nash

GAIL DAVIES

Live At The Station Inn

LITTLE CHICKADEE RECORDS

★★★

This is the 14th album by this highly respected roots-music veteran. Aside from 1978’s eponymous debut, Davies has produced all her own albums, a definite rarity in country music, and she’s been cited as a role model by Pam Tillis and Kathy Mattea.

Davies’ vocal, songwriting and production talents are showcased to fine effect on this generous 18-song “unplugged” collection, recorded live at the famed Nashville bluegrass club, The Station Inn. “We’ve left Gail’s voice untouched and untuned with all its little foibles,” the liner notes explain, but such “foibles” are few and far between. Davies’ warm and breezy voice possesses impressive range. It does, however, lack the spine-tingling, angst-inducing resonance of Lucinda Williams or Emmylou Harris, and, as a result, isn’t totally convincing on a hurtin’ song like “Lovesick Blues.”

She often veers to the folkish side of the country-folk spectrum, as evidenced by the choice of two Bob Dylan covers. She romps through a frisky version of traditional Irish folk tune “The Fox Hunting Song,” taught to her by her grandmother.

There’s also a lively bluegrass feel

PATTY LOVELESS

Mountain Soul

EPIC

★★★★★

As a soul of constant sorrow, Patty Loveless sings on this remarkable new album, *I bid farewell to East Kentucky, the place where I was born and raised.*

Loveless may have moved to the big city of Louisville when she was just a child, but she could never leave Appalachia behind. At five, when she was still so small her father could hoist her on his shoulders, she saw Flatt & Scruggs perform on top of the concession stand at the Pollyanna Drive-In Theater in Pikeville. It was a moment the grown-up Patty would preserve time and again in her music – but never as fully as she does in this return to her traditional roots. *Mountain Soul* is her career album, the one she was born to make.

Never has Loveless sounded more emotionally engaged in her material. Much of it reprises a classic back-catalog of old country and bluegrass – Ralph Stanley’s “Daniel Prayed,” Reno And Smiley’s “I Know You’re Married” and George and Tammy’s “Someone I Used To Know.” But Loveless and producer/husband Emory Gordy Jr. have also written a number of new songs that don’t just approximate the classic sounds – they seem conjured straight from the ghost of Bill Monroe and other bluegrass greats. Additional contemporary material seems similarly inspired, especially Darrell Scott’s chilling “You’ll Never Leave Harlan Alive,” which powerfully captures the austere hardship and loneliness of the mountain experience; and Leslie Satcher and Tommy Connors’

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.



here, thanks to prominent use of mandolin, fiddle, Dobro and harmony vocals – all used to exemplary effect on a new version of her 1979 hit “Blue Heartache.” The first-class musician lineup includes Gail’s husband, Rob Price, on bass and son Chris Scruggs on acoustic guitar. Kevin Welch harmonizes on Dylan’s “Tomorrow Is A Long Time,” an album highlight.

Considering her own songwriting strengths, Davies surprisingly settles here for 13 covers. But she chooses from the best – The Louvin Brothers, K.T. Oslin, Kieran Kane and the tandem of Pam Rose and Maryann Kennedy, whose upbeat “Trouble With Love” is a real highlight.

Without the clout of a major label, it’s unlikely *Live At The Station Inn* will set the charts or radio airwaves afire. The charming collection will, however, surely delight Davies’ faithful fan base.

— Kerry Doole

PAT GREEN AND CORY MORROW

Songs We Wished We’d Written

WWW.PATANDCORY.COM

★ ★

As the leading avatars of frat-boy country, Pat Green and Cory Morrow met up in college, began writing songs and have now eclipsed even the likes of Robert Earl Keen as the prototypical singers and songwriters of Texas’ fraternity row.

Though all but unknown outside of their home state, Green and Morrow can transform an Austin beer hall into the kind of bedlam usually reserved for wet T-shirt contests or Willie Nelson. Even without the backing of a major label, Green’s first four independent releases have sold over 100,000 copies combined,

and if he admirably sings about what he knows – Texas beer, Texas women and, hell, *anything* Texas – his worldview rarely surpasses lines like *We’ll go down to El Arroyo, have some tacos and beer, yeah, and let ourselves go.*

Morrow’s approach, as heard on the regional hit “Big City Stripper,” is further dumbed down to make even Green’s local-color clichés seem substantial by comparison.

As *Songs We Wished We’d Written* makes plain, Green and Morrow would never pretend to pen songs as timeless as John Prine’s “Paradise,” as spiritual as Billy Joe Shaver’s “Live Forever,” as poignant as Steven Fromholz’s “I’d Have To Be Crazy” or as wise as Merle Haggard’s “Red Bandana.” Their musical ambitions have never extended beyond giving the Greeks a good time. Why they pretend to possess either the vocal chops



or character demanded by such enduring songs is more of a mystery. Morrow aspires to a conventional honky-tonk style, but his strained drawl makes a parody of “Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?” and a howler of “Delia’s Gone.” While Green’s growl is just right for The Backsliders’ lyrical alt-country gem “Crazy Wind,” he tramples the elegiac spirit of “Paradise” – as does the blustery martial arrangement – and smirks his way through Townes Van Zandt’s silly blues “I Ain’t Leavin’ Your Love.”

Morrow and Green fare no better with Stealers Wheel’s “Stuck In the Middle With You” and Traffic’s “Can’t Find My Way Home,” which is no surprise, given how tired these dinosaur-rock tunes have become. Nor do the album’s flaws rest solely with the singers’ limited talents. Producer Lloyd Maines may have written

the Americana textbook, but the innocuous polish of these up-tempo, country-rock arrangements suggests that he, too, is running out of ideas. And Pat Green and Cory Morrow never had any to begin with for this project.

— Roy Kasten

JIMMY LAFAVE

Texoma

BOHEMIA BEAT RECORDS

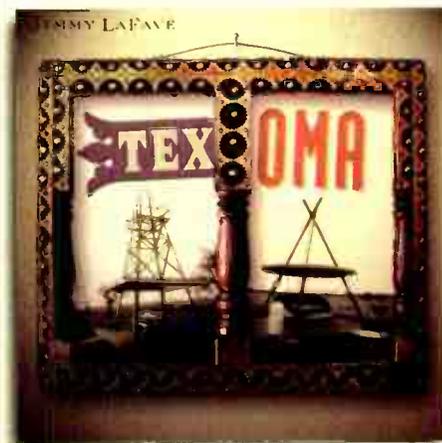
★★★★

Just think what would have happened if Jimmy LaFave’s mom hadn’t traded in a fistful of green stamps for his first guitar. The Wills Point, Texas, native might still be sitting behind a drum kit, his junior high instrument of choice.

Thankfully, he took to his new axe like a thirsty longhorn to water. LaFave is a singer and songwriter in the tradition of John Prine and John Hiatt, and the source of his style comes straight from Woody Guthrie. In fact, he was a guest speaker and performed at the 1997 induction of Guthrie into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Continuing the trend set by his previous five albums, *Texoma* is filled with songs that reflect the working man’s pains and joys. They speak as easily to a Texan cowhand as they do to an Alaskan oil worker or an Illinois farmer.

Living in Austin for the last 15 years, LaFave has created an album of heart-stirring ballads, old-fashioned rock ‘n’ roll and blues-based hip-shakers. Of the 16 tracks on *Texoma*, he’s written nine and filled in the rest with favorites by artists that include Bob Dylan, Alvin Lee and John Phillips. Backed by a traditional lineup of bass, drums, guitar and keyboards, his stand-out vocals are of the scratchy, heart-miss-a-beat variety. Throw in a little



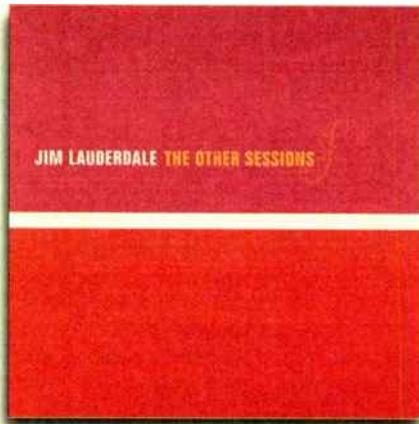
lap steel and Larry Wilson's Dobro and you have an album as strong and gritty as a summer prairie wind.

While the lead-in song, "Bad, Bad Girl," is drenched in slippery roadhouse blues, "Never Is A Moment" rings with the lonely ache of a piano in an empty room. "This Glorious Day," on the other hand, is a joyous anthem to optimism, complete with the sweet background harmonies of The Burns Sisters.

"Red Dirt Song" plumbs LaFave's teenage years, when the family moved to Oklahoma, and "Woody Guthrie" is a simple bow to the man who painted much of LaFave's musical landscape.

LaFave is an American gem who deserves an audience now, and also far into the future.

— Maureen Littlejohn



JIM LAUDERDALE
The Other Sessions

DUALTONE

★★★★

The backbone of great country music is tradition, and Jim Lauderdale's *The Other Sessions* is a telegram to Music Row: RESPECT YOUR ELDERS. DO NOT FORGET FROM WHENCE WE CAME. AND KEEP IT COUNTRY.

Lauderdale knows a thing or two about old honky-tonks and crying steel guitars. The North Carolina native has always gracefully straddled that tricky barbed-wire fence that separates mainstream success from alt-country credibility. Although Mark Chesnutt, Patty Loveless, George Strait and others have ascended the charts with Lauderdale tunes, the singer himself has never had a hit. *The Other Sessions* probably won't change that, especially with its stylistic tip of the hat to the '60s Bakersfield sound.

Sporting the integrity of *I Feel Like Singing Today*, his 1999 bluegrass collaboration with Ralph Stanley, *The Other Sessions* teams Lauderdale with nine co-writers – including the legendary Frank Dycus, Harlan Howard and Melba Montgomery. The resulting dozen gems unabashedly invoke his heroes Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. There are weepers such as "I'd Follow You Anywhere" and toe-tapping keepers like "Born Believers" that would fit in nicely at an Owens concert. Meanwhile, "Merle World" reflects an obvious love of the Hag's poetic trademark, the tear-in-your-beer ballad.

Standing on the shoulders of these giants, Lauderdale favors the classic themes of love and heartache. The best of the batch is "You'll Know When It's Right," detailing a lover's conflicting advice to his ex.

The album's sole anomaly is a reprise of "Diesel, Diesel, Diesel," a trucker anthem that Lauderdale originally cut with Del Reeves five years ago. This gear-jamming novelty provides some levity amidst all the lyrical anguish.

Even the pair of lover's pleas that bookend the 35-minute CD – "If I Were You" and "It's Not Too Late" – are fine examples of the striking coherence of *The Other Sessions*. Lauderdale never stumbles.

— Bobby Reed

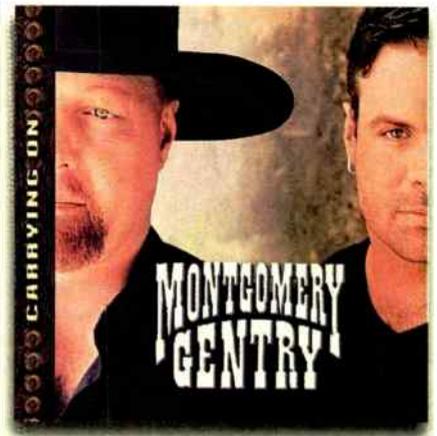
MONTGOMERY GENTRY
Carrying On

COLUMBIA

★★★

The good ol' bad boys are back. Bursting with Southern pride, Kentucky natives Eddie Montgomery and Troy Gentry seem intent on *Carrying On* the success of their gold 1999 debut *Tattoos & Scars*.

Positioning itself as the spiritual heir apparent to The Allman Brothers, Charlie Daniels, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Hank Williams Jr., Montgomery Gentry's twin-guitar-fueled, flag-waving, Southern-fried boogie continues its defiant ways. The album's fifth track, "While The World Goes Down The Drain," says it all: *Give me a .308 and a shotgun, and a gallon of homemade wine/ Drop me off on a mountainside*



where the bear and the deer reside/ I'll spend my nights sittin' around the fire, making this guitar ring/ I'll be doin' fine underneath the pines, while the world goes down the drain.

A declaration of rugged, self-reliant individualism? Or the crazed redneck rambling of isolationists? That's debatable. What's undeniable is that the reigning CMA Vocal Duo of the Year produces its best music when burning through the roadhouse rockers "Carrying On," "While The World Goes Down The Drain" and a cover of the Waylon Jennings hit "Ramblin' Man."

Blistering instrumental flourishes compensate for some of the weaker arrangements, especially "Tried And True," the beer-relief anthem "Cold One Comin' On" and "Too Hard To Handle ... Too Free To Hold." And then there are the *really* tedious songs: the bombastic ballads "The Fine Line" and "Hellbent On Saving Me."

While nothing on *Carrying On* is as infectious as the first disc's "Hillbilly Shoes" or "Lonely And Gone," both albums share a common consistency under Joe Scaife's skillful production. *Carrying On* even features a thematic connection to last year's smash hit "Daddy Won't Sell The Farm." Gentry's expressive tenor celebrates the nobility of farming on "My Father's Son," marking a nice contrast from Montgomery's cracked-leather delivery dominant on "She Couldn't Change Me" and the majority of the project.

Carrying On does just that – but it's neither as striking, or as memorable, as its predecessor.

— B. R

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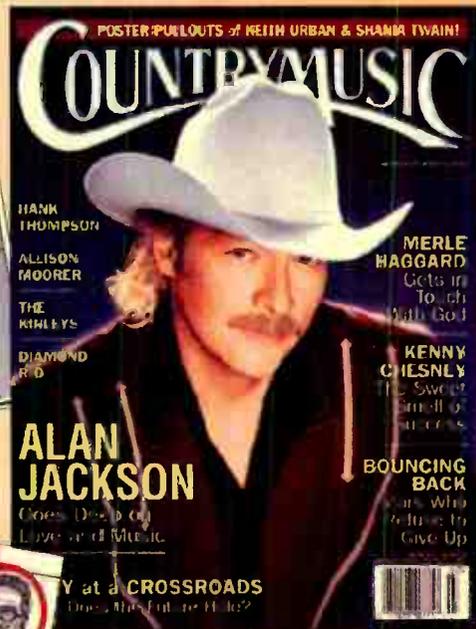
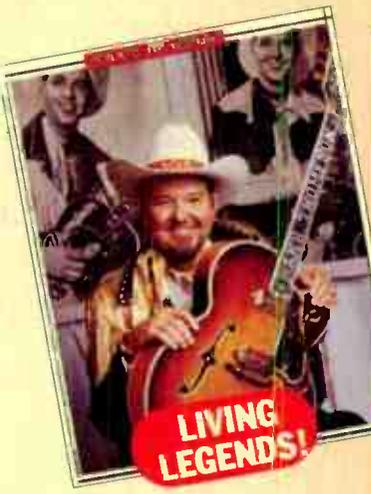
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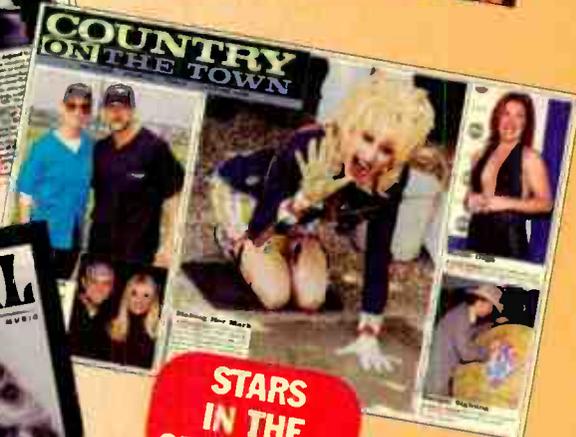
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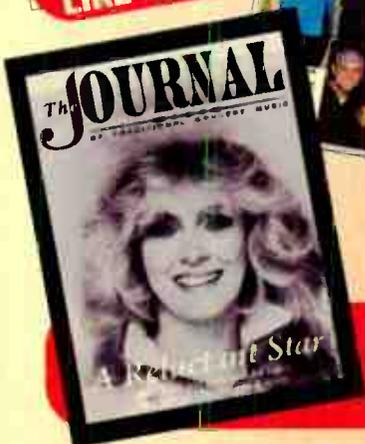
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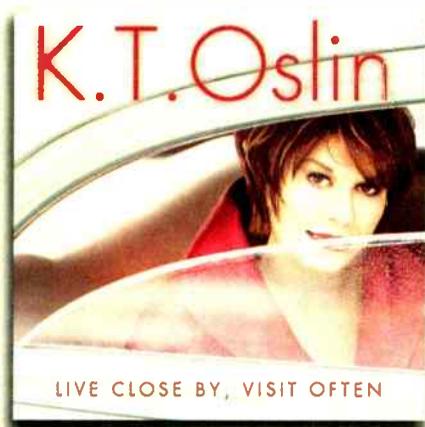
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K.T. OSLIN

Live Close By, Visit Often

BNA

★★★★

It's funny about country's happenin' gals: the Dixie Chicks, Faith Hill, Shania Twain ... not one of these talented women relies – like the line of virtuosos from Loretta Lynn to Trisha Yearwood – on mind-blowing vocal technique.

Instead, like Madonna or Janet Jackson, they create a sexy sonic basis from which their multi-tiered recording, video and concert careers zoom.

K.T. Oslin has always been somewhere in between. In the '80s, this Arkansas-born New Yorker chuckled softly at country's neo-trad thinking and whispered, pre-Shania-like, "Hey, nail polish can be important." But after '80s *Ladies*, the vivid life Oslin breathed into hits "Hold Me" and "Do Ya" established her as a real country-soul stylist, perhaps somewhat plusher than the Great Tradition of Back Porch Divas, but working on her own cuttingly independent terms.

Because *Live Close By, Visit Often* – like the robust single named after one of Katharine Hepburn's tart rejoinders – cops to all this, it's Oslin's sharpest album. Produced by Oslin and The Mavericks' Raul Malo, it's half up-to-the-minute sensation, even including a decent dance-club techno tune, and half timeless traditionalism. The arrangements are big and brassy, rhythmic and roomy, and they fit Oslin's flexibly atmospheric alto like a new pair of silk stockings.

The music reconfirms what The Mavericks' recordings progressively hinted at: Raul Malo has first-rate, smoking ears, able to resurrect the glories of recorded music past without inappropriate curatorship. On the steamy ballad

"Maybe We Should Learn To Tango," Oslin's singing is richly centered, neither overly showy nor too retiring. *I'll melt into your arms*, she purrs.

The whole album melts into your ears. Pop sensation? Vocal genius? With their passionate, occasionally Latin-tinted embrace of liquid ballad, fresh guitars and zero-cheese horns, Oslin and Malo render such questions moot. It's uptown country-soul sublime, and *Live Close By, Visit Often* frequently hits it.

— James Hunter

LOS SUPER SEVEN

Canto

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

★★★★

Three years ago, Los Lobos' David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas got together with Flaco Jimenez, Freddy Fender, Joe



Ely, Rick Treviño and Tejano pioneer Ruben Ramos to record a wonderful collection of Tex-Mex music called *Los Super Seven*. This Tex-Mex supergroup won accolades from critics and a 1998 Grammy award.

Canto, the collective's second album, features a revamped lineup with Mavericks singer Raul Malo, Peruvian songstress Susana Baca, Afro-Cuban pianist Alberto Salas and Brazilian pop star Caetano Veloso replacing Jimenez, Fender and Ely. This "Los Super Seven Plus Uno" is as diverse as the pan-Latin music it makes.

Offering a more international scope than the debut CD, *Canto* is a big bowl of stylistic chili. It might have tasted better, however, with fewer ingredients.

Malo, his sweeping voice in fine form, kicks off the album with "Siboney," a melodramatic Cuban love song that dates from the early 20th century. Treviño, one of the few

Mexican-American country singers, contributes two numbers, including a wonderful Colombian folk song called "Paloma Guarumera," strikingly similar to the original, pre-Ritchie Valens "La Bamba." Treviño makes the link between country and Latin music seem obvious.

Hidalgo's smooth vocals intertwine with the soulful Ramos on "Calle Dieciseis," a percussive Cuban-style dance number written by Hidalgo and fellow Los Lobos member Louie Perez. "El Pescador," a Mexican folk song about a lovesick fisherman, is interpreted with great passion by Rosas. (Most of the songs are in Spanish, but the printed lyrics are provided in both Spanish and English.)

Produced by Los Lobos' Steve Berlin, *Canto's* abundance of riches is also its biggest drawback. Veloso's two ballads, the bossa-nova "Qualquer Coisa" and the jazz-pop "Baby," are fascinating, but don't mesh with the album's rootsy tone. Similarly, Baca's "Drumi Mobila," a gentle lullaby, seems entirely out of place.

Despite its high level of musicianship, *Canto* suffers by trying to be too ambitious for its own good.

— David Hill

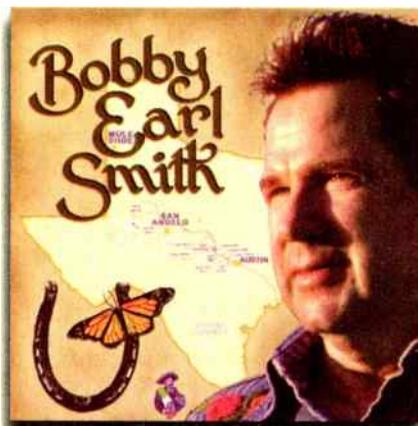
BOBBY EARL SMITH

RearView Mirror

MULESHOE

★★★★

If all lawyers exhibited the laid-back soulfulness of Austin attorney Bobby Earl Smith, the world would be a more hospitable place. But Smith is not a run-of-the-mill legal counselor. Prior to opening his criminal law practice in 1985, he had been a central figure in



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stream. This redirected fat can then be eliminated by the muscles as they burn calories.

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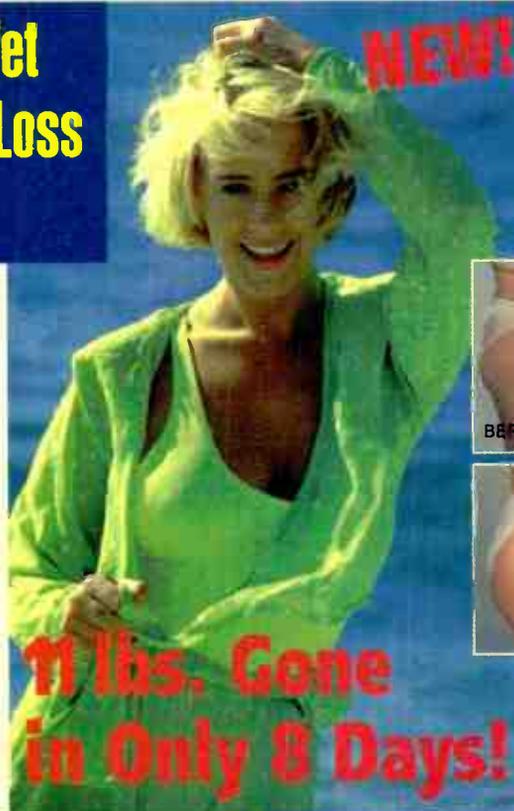
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the Austin music scene. Most notably, he shared vocals with piano pounder Marcia Ball in *Freda And The Firedogs*, an early '70s Austin institution that became one of the first Lone Star bands to merge country music and the hippie counterculture.

Smith recently returned to the studio to create *RearView Mirror*, a low-key gem that puts a mature spin on the jaunty country soul that originally made the '70s Austin scene so compelling. Filled with buoyant rhythms and reflective mysticism, *Mirror* makes Smith sound like the beatific cousin of Willie Nelson or the benevolent uncle of Jimmie Dale Gilmore (who joins in on a sterling duet, the wistful "Cold Wind").

Smith co-produced the album with former colleague Joe Gracey, whose liner notes emphasize that the music is created by a collection of old friends, family members and a couple of heroes – accordionist Flaco Jimenez and fiddler Johnny Gimble. The album's vibrant string interplay and steady-rolling rhythms revel in the back-porch comfort of well-traveled musicians who communicate easily and intuitively.

The relaxed but sprightly arrangements suit Smith's wispy, intimate tenor. Meanwhile, the 11 songs – nine of which Smith wrote – focus on the joy of moving on ("Rear View Mirror"), the frustration of being stuck ("Muleshoe") and the beauty in an unblemished landscape ("Yellow Flowers").

If rhyming *salt around the rim* with the sound of mandolins, as Smith does on "¿Donde Está La Cerveza?" sounds like the ingredients for a memorable evening, then *RearView Mirror* likely will put a spring in your step.

— Michael McCall

VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Songcatcher:
Music From And Inspired
By The Motion Picture**

VANGUARD

★★★★

If you are among the millions beguiled by the music from *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, here's a treasure for your collection that's every bit as sweet and haunting.

Drawing on many of the most emotive female voices in folk and country, *Songcatcher* is a collective labor of love reviving the long-neglected roots



of Appalachia in all its aching, pure traditional glory.

There is not a weak track among the 16 here, from Rosanne Cash's reverential, whispery treatment of "Fair And Tender Ladies" to the transcendental rawness of Iris DeMent's "Pretty Saro." Emmy Rossum and Emmylou Harris deliver separate and equally compelling versions of "Barbara Allen," the former pure trad, the latter contemporized yet true. Rossum appears a second time singing sweet, close harmony on "When Love Is New." Her partner and the song's composer, Dolly Parton – now a few years deep into a late-career return to the old-time music of her childhood – is clearly having the time of her life.

Also on board are Patty Loveless ("Sounds Of Loneliness"), Sara Evans ("Mary Of The Wild Moor"), Deana Carter ("The Cuckoo Bird") and Maria McKee ("Wayfarin' Stranger"), all with winning performances that explore the high, lonesome Scotch-Irish traditions of the Appalachia. Gillian Welch, David Rawlings and David Steele, meanwhile, combine for an a cappella reading of the sorrow-drenched "Wind And Rain" that takes your breath away.

Together, these songs provide the basis for director Maggie Greenwald's independent film portrait of turn-of-the-century Appalachia. A prize-winner at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival, *Songcatcher* has been hailed as an epic tale of struggle between preservation and progress. But it's the music – so raw, so moving – that does most of the telling.

— Mitch Potter

THE STATLER BROTHERS

Showtime

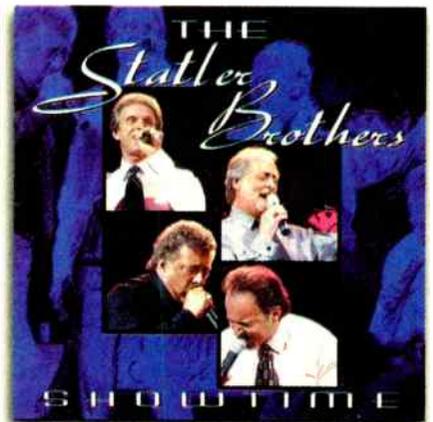
MUSIC BOX

★★

When Eric Heatherly enjoyed a hit last year with "Flowers On The Wall," his remake proved that The Statler Brothers' distinctive formula hadn't lost its charm. Why should it? Virginia's Statlers balanced the elegant four-part harmonies of Southern Gospel quartets such as the Blackwood Brothers with wiseguy country comedy songs in the Roger Miller vein.

Heatherly, though, showed more devotion in his approach than the Statlers do on their new album, *Showtime*, the first for their own Music Box label. In recent years, founding members Don and Harold Reid, Phil Balsley and 1981's "newcomer" Jimmy Fortune have increasingly relied on sentiment and nostalgia, allowing the act's once-witty irreverence to slowly leak out of the material. Without that idiosyncratic perspective on life's ironies, they have become just another barbershop quartet.

The group still sounds good, with Harold Reid's miraculous bass anchoring the bottom, and his brother Don Reid providing the conversational leads. The new album has two promising songs, both written by Wil and Langdon Reid, sons of Harold and Don, respectively. "It's Too Late For Roses" urges us to bring bouquets to loved ones before they're pushing up daisies, while "You Just Haven't Done It Yet" compares wooing a woman to learning how to ride a bike.



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But these two are the exceptions. *Showtime* largely finds The Statler Brothers going through the motions and coasting on their name.

—Geoffrey Himes

ERIC TAYLOR

Scuffletown

EMINENT

★★★★

Although he made his mark in Texas, Atlanta-raised Eric Taylor is a highly revered singer and songwriter — Steve Earle calls him “one of my



heroes and teachers” — who has long been a mystery figure in hybrid country-folk circles. He took an inexplicable 14 years between his first and second albums, became somewhat legendary with other musicians for his intricate guitar finger-picking style and survived a brief marriage to Nanci Griffith. Still, he watched from the sidelines as his other Lone Star cronies made it to the national spotlight before him.

With *Scuffletown*, Taylor’s time has come. Comprised more of song-poems than three-minute melodies, this dark and brooding album drops in on characters either dangling at the end of their ropes, or caught up in personal struggles and circumstances they don’t quite understand. That makes his inclusion of the two Townes Van Zandt songs “Where I Lead Me” and “Nothin’ ” more than fitting. However, it’s Taylor’s original work that you’ll remember best. In the forlorn and blues-based “All The Way To Heaven,” a man in search of an evening of Charlie Rich music gets more than he bargained for — after fantasizing about a woman, he witnesses a shooting and regrets not

stealing the victim’s alligator shoes. Then there’s “White Bone,” the first-person narrative of a black albino preacher, a misfit who sleeps with the light on. Comparable to the work of David Olney, many of Taylor’s songs revolve around religion — whether questioning the kind of deity that would allow the 1998 racially motivated dragging death of Texan James Byrd Jr. in “Your God,” or exploring the Last Supper declarations of Jesus in “Bread And Wine.”

Taylor sings in a kind of laconic, John Prine style, which both gets out of the way of the lyric and adds a sense of irony. The real contrariety is how he’s been playing most of these songs for years in his live show and only *now* has brought them to the fore. Like the album’s cohesive theme — the story of a man’s journey and the experiences that define him — *Scuffletown* was well worth the wait.

— A. N.

TRICK PONY

Trick Pony

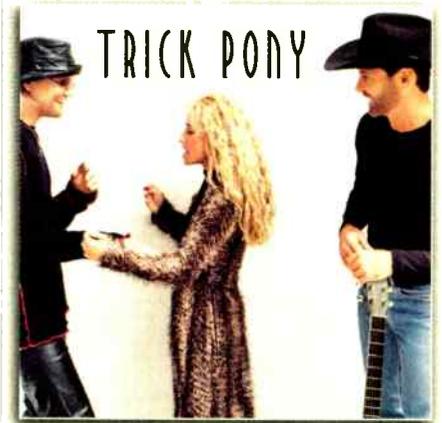
WARNER

★★★★

Trick Pony has made its mark in Nashville the old-fashioned way: by working its collective butt off.

This talented trio — ex-Joe Diffie guitarist Keith Burns, former Tanya Tucker bass player Ira Dean and lead singer Heidi Newfield, who doubles on guitar and harmonica — got together a few years ago. Tireless road warriors, they now bring the tightness and excitement of their live act to this, their self-titled first album.

“Pour Me,” written by the threesome with a little help from a few friends, is the kind of hard-drinkin’ tune that used to define country music: an alcohol-drenched story of hard luck and heartache. It kicks off the album with a furious jolt of energy, a barrage of snarling, Bakersfield-style honky-tonk guitars driven home by a pounding rhythm section and Newfield’s crazed vocals. “Big River,” sung with special guest legends Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings, is also unique. Rather than ape Cash’s familiar arrangement, Trick Pony decided to turn it into a blues-flavored stomp, accented by



Newfield’s gritty voice and wailing harmonica.

But it’s on the ballads that Newfield really shows off her world-class vocal chops. “Every Other Memory” and “Now Would Be The Time” find her soulful, teardrop-choked singing displaying the perfect balance between hopelessness and blind optimism. The trio composed most of the material on the album, and tunes like “Party Of One” — a rocker that deals with love gone wrong — and the Latin-tinged “One In A Row” take an uncompromising look into the hearts and souls of people dealing with everyday joys and frustrations.

When many of today’s acts sound like worn-out nags on the way to the glue factory, Trick Pony distinguishes itself by making no bones about its bucking bronco vitality.

— J. Poet

BRAD PAISLEY

Part II

ARISTA

★★★★

Ever wish recent country music had never shaken, rattled and rolled? That Garth never made one of the world’s most intense Nashville records out of a Billy Joel tune? That Shania never screwed around with breathtaking videos, cunning identity questions and killer guitar sounds? That Tim never rocked things up so effortlessly and Faith never turned back the sheets on modern Mississippi R&B? That the Dixie Chicks never discovered fuschia?

Then consider 28-year-old Brad Paisley. On *Part II*, Paisley’s less playful follow-up to 1999’s

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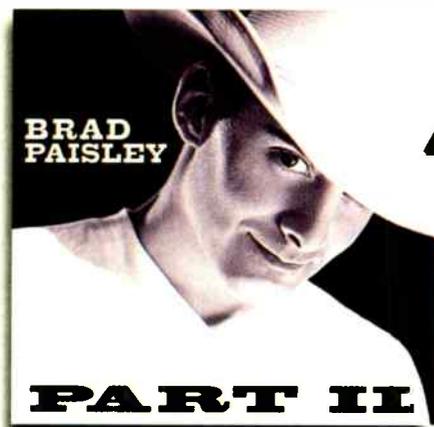
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acclaimed *Who Needs Pictures*, it's like none of that darn cross-genre stuff ever happened. This is flawlessly executed Nashville studio music done by two guys, Paisley and his producer Frank Rogers, who steady a stern vision of modern traditional as the way to go. When Paisley applies his largely unornamented, perfectly thrown dart of a tenor to a lovely melody such as the one that forms this 13-song collection's title ballad, he and Rogers do a good job of approximating the classics. They manage tremendous concentration and focus, like on a proper George Jones vocal. Moreover, they can equally pick up the pace and not lose it, as on "Wrapped Around," which features the clever line *I think it's time to put a ring on the finger I'm wrapped around.*

Yet for all of *Part II*'s hot pickin', its studied absence of pizzas and Go-Marts, its absolute bounty of dizzy love celebrations – not to mention "Too Country," Paisley's purist summit with George Jones, Bill Anderson and Buck Owens that nonetheless falls short of timeless ballad-making – the music never actually wrestles with real traditionalism. For all their liveliness, the songs "Two Feet Of Topsoil" and "Come On Over Tonight" are just packaged up in zinging new sonics. There's no sense of tragic fall, as in George Strait's peerless "Lefty's Gone"; no sense of dirt-road art still dyin' to come out of the Camaro speakers, as in so much Dwight Yoakam; no coolly fascinating contrasts between the past and the present, as in every note Alan Jackson sings. Too often on *Part II*, Paisley's narrowly cast perception of traditionalism ignores the bigger picture: that country must evolve in order to stay vital.

It's admirable that Paisley is the Nashville industry's current boy-wonder of major-label roots, and that as a singer and songwriter he is clearly committed to long-term quality. But even when he's preaching to the converted, he should stretch out a little more than he does on *Part II*.

— J. H.

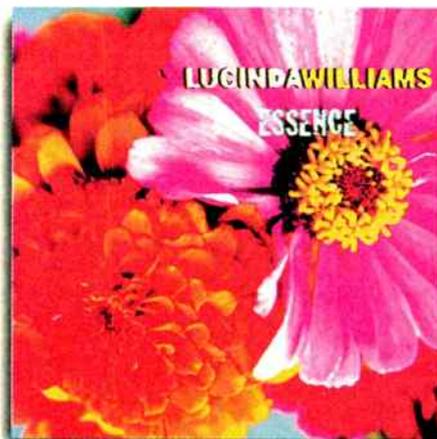
LUCINDA WILLIAMS

Essence

LOST HIGHWAY

★★★★★

Downright breathy and sentimental, Lucinda Williams has taken an unexpected detour with *Essence*, her highly anticipated follow-up to the Grammy-winning *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road*. Possessing none of its predecessor's gritty edge, *Essence* is a beautiful



low-key album filled with melodic ballads of longing, splendor, pain and, ultimately, a resigned tranquility.

Only one song breaks the mold: the swampy, fundamentalist "Get Right With God," a snake-kissing anthem that boasts an ambiguous combination of simultaneous self-confidence and self-doubt.

This collection of 11 tunes ranks among Williams' most accessible. Although a Faith Hill could turn the ravishing "Blue" into a pop hit, no one could rival the depth of Williams' country whine and scratchy vocal.

Her lyrical simplicity is best illustrated by such stanzas as *Some laws should be broken from the start, I'm gonna have to steal your love.* Even as trite a line as *Baby, sweet baby, you're my drug* in the title track is liquified fire when fueled by Williams' indolent, almost bratty approach. The lusty ode turns

torrid with her pent-up passion.

Whether it's the soft hymn "Broken Butterflies" or the plaintive moan of "I Envy The Wind," the shuffling country lilt of "Reason To Cry" or the waltzy narrative "Bus To Baton Rouge" – a nostalgic memory of her grandmother's home – Williams lays her restless life bare with some of the prettiest vocals she's ever recorded.

The essence of *Essence* is confessional; this daring album conjures images of a spent Williams lying on a porch hammock on a hot, humid Delta night, battling her demons with an aching heart, the dismissive brush of her hand and a gorgeous song that offers comfort.

— Robbie Woliver

TRISHA YEARWOOD

Inside Out

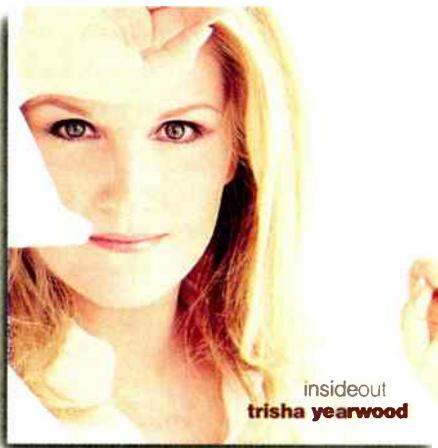
MCA NASHVILLE

★★★★★

When Rosanne Cash scored a No. 1 hit in 1981 with her own composition "Seven Year Ache," it suggested that country-pop fusion could be a marriage of strengths. It could bring together the ambitious harmonies and modern ironies of Cash's heroes, The Beatles, with the sturdy melodies and storytelling lyrics of her daddy, Johnny.

It didn't work out that way, of course. Country-pop became something more obvious and less satisfying. But the genre's true possibilities remained out there, unclaimed.

Trisha Yearwood aims to reclaim that potential on her ambitious new album, *Inside Out*. Not only does she join Cash for an impressive remake of "Seven Year Ache," but the younger singer has also harvested a crop of



REVIEWS

other songs with the same sensibility. This album draws from female song-writers such as Matraca Berg, Gretchen Peters and Rebecca Lynn Howard who have followed in Cash's footsteps to dissect the complexities of adult relationships with a scalpel rather than the usual Music Row cleaver. And while she is not a song-writer like Cash, Yearwood possesses a bigger, surer voice, and she fleshes out these Beatle-esque melodies with all the pleasure they deserve.

On Berg's "For A While," Yearwood tries to persuade an ex-lover that she's over him. But she's also trying to convince herself, and Yearwood's expressive vocals convey the woman's ambivalence as she wrestles with her own doubt and determination. On "I Would've Loved You Anyway," Yearwood declares that she has no regrets about a marriage that is crumbling before her eyes. You believe her because she sings it with such dignity and sad acceptance that the relationship is gone for good.

Over the course of her career, Yearwood has been guilty of some lowest-common-denominator country-pop herself. There was the soundtrack bombast of "How Do I Live," and those overwrought duets with Garth Brooks. But on *Inside Out* she re-dedicates herself to country-pop of intelligence and finesse. With last year's *Real Live Woman* and now *Inside Out*, Yearwood picks up the torch originally lit by Rosanne Cash, and she carries it well.

— G. H.

THE TRACTORS

Fast Girl

AUDIUM

★ 1

The Tractors struck paydirt in 1994 with "Baby Likes To Rock It." It was an irresistible boogie-woogie number, unique to the slick pop-country fare coming out of Nashville at the time. The song was a runaway hit, and so was the Tulsa-based band's self-titled debut album, which sold more than two million copies. Not bad for a bunch of middle-aged studio musicians who just wanted to have a rockin' good time.

Alas, nothing the group has produced since then – 1995's *Have Yourself A Tractors Christmas* and 1998's *Farmers In A Changing World* – has matched



that initial burst of musical creativity.

On paper, at least, *Fast Girl* has a lot to offer. This time around, Steve Ripley, the band's creator, songwriter and gritty, soulful voice – hell, he *is* The Tractors – has assembled an all-star lineup of roots-rock musicians, including pianist Leon Russell, guitarist James Burton, bassist Willie Weeks and drummer D.J. Fontana. Ripley, who once played guitar behind Bob Dylan and J.J. Cale, recorded the album over an eight-month period at his own studio in Tulsa, and it is steeped in that city's funky mixture of country, soul, gospel and blues. Russell and Cale, both fellow Okies, made the Tulsa Sound famous back in the 1970s with songs like "Delta Lady" and "After Midnight." But those guys knew how to write catchy, memorable songs. Ripley just isn't in the same league.

"Babalou," the album's first track, is a nonsensical country-rock number. "Can't Get Nowhere," which features Fontana, is a pleasant enough Western swing ditty, but it's basically a rewrite of the old Bob Wills song "What's The Matter With The Mill." The title track, a burst of retro rock 'n' roll, tries for clever but ends up offensive: *She got homegrown tomatoes/ Ripe on the vine/Gently takes your hand/Then drags you over the line.* The full-blown rocker "A Little Place Of Our Own," which ends the album – and features a cameo appearance by original Tractors drummer Jamie Oldaker – is so lyrically obtuse that Ripley has to explain the song in the liner notes.

Not even Burton, who adds some hot licks to the proceedings, and Russell, whose tasteful playing propels nearly every track, can save this mess.

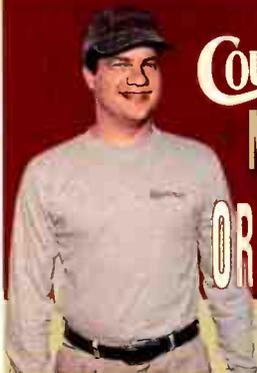
— D. H.



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with **K.T.**

Singer K.T. Oslin talks crosswords, crunchy peanut butter & Carol Channing

She's one of our favorite "80's Ladies," but K.T. Oslin is back with a diverse new sound that's definitely not stuck in the past. Her long-awaited album, *Live Close By, Visit Often*, features Texas twang, salsa beats, top-down country and wistful tear-jerkers. Produced with The Mavericks' Raul Malo, the album's stunner is an honest-to-goodness techno version of Rosemary Clooney's "Come On-A

My House" that gives dance club diva Cher a run for her money. "Oh, I like that! I always like being called a dance club diva!" Oslin laughs throatily from her Nashville home. Well, nobody ever accused Oslin of being predictable. "I usually come creeping out when country music needs a kick," she says, "so let's see what kind of damage we can do!" Ladies and gentlemen, one of country's sauciest divas is back.

Who is the sexiest man alive? Gene Hackman. He's just got something going on. He has this quality where he's not trying to be sexy. Therefore he's unbelievably sexy. He's so good at what he does, and he's not a boy. Plus, he's been with one woman for a long, long time. I find that *very* sexy.

If you had to serve a long prison sentence, what would you do to pass the time? Read. If there were a way, I would try to do some crafts. I do work in miniatures, and I like painting. But I guess if I was in prison, they wouldn't let you have anything that could be made into a weapon, so there go my miniatures. I guess I'd just read.

Crunchy or creamy peanut butter? Crunchy all the way.

Who are some of your favorite actors? Robert DeNiro, Al Pacino, Katharine Hepburn, Ava Gardner.

Your new song and album title Live Close By, Visit Often comes from a Katharine Hepburn quote. Yeah. She was once asked about marriage. She said she wasn't so hot about it, and that the guy should just live close by and visit often. I liked that.



Do you enjoy crossword puzzles? I used to be an avid Sunday morning *New York Times* crossword fanatic. I was addicted to it for years. I'm pleased to announce that my name is now a crossword answer! I think it's because I have the weird initials, and my last name starts with "O." So I'm a perfect crossword answer.

What do you remember about performing in Hello, Dolly! with Carol Channing? I was in the chorus, and I did the show on the road for a year with Carol Channing. Then I came to New York City to do the show with Betty Grable. Both productions were just great, and I learned so much about pacing myself. To this day, I think Carol Channing is still an amazing performer.

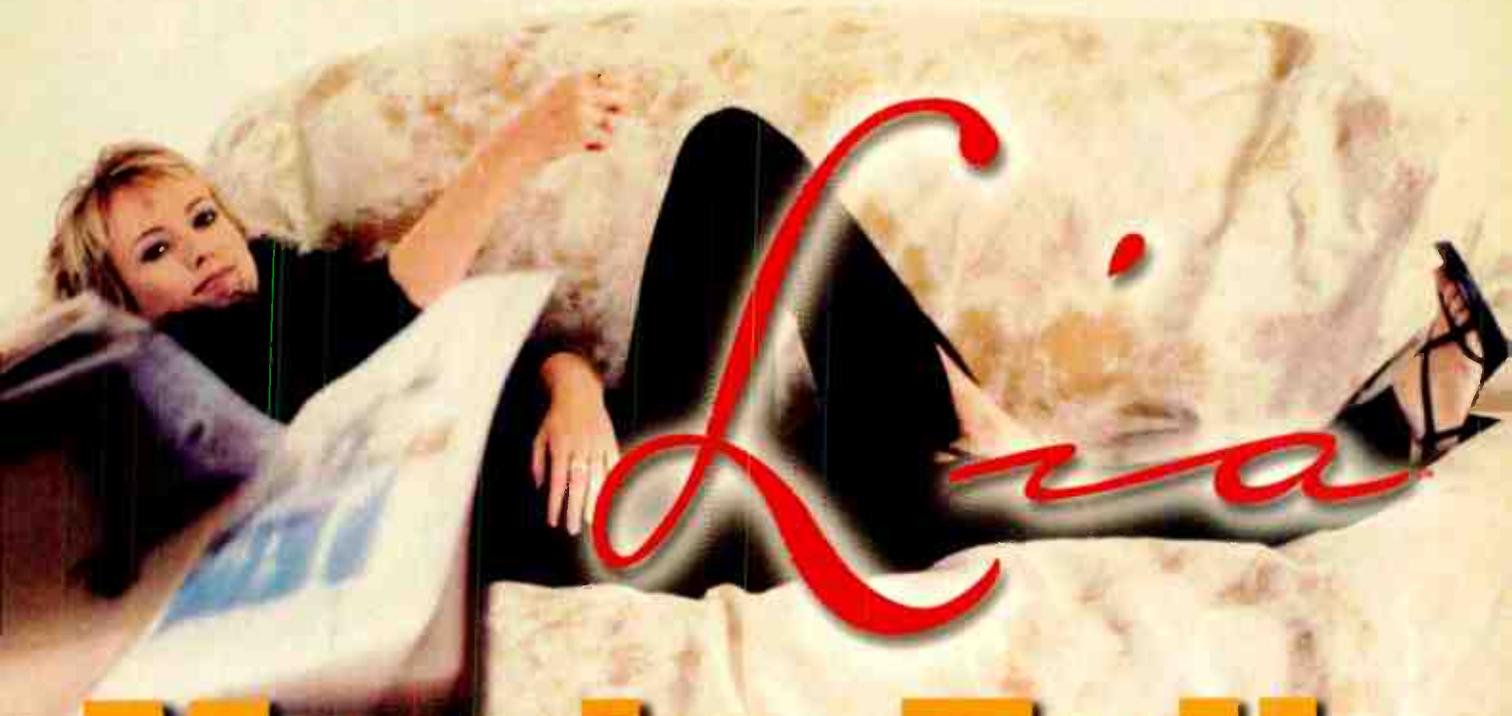
What song do you wish you had written? "Happy Birthday." What a hoot – to have written a song that everyone in the world knows!

You lived in New York City for quite a while before you broke into country music. What do you miss about it? I miss my friends. I still keep in touch with many of my long-term friends there. But you know, I really miss the food! The food in New York is just a wondrous thing! I also miss the energy of the city. I lived there for 23 years, and I had a real love/hate relationship with the city. I wouldn't have given up that education for anything, though I'm not sure I could ever live there again.

Yeah, I was always a B+ type of student, so I was pretty good about homework. It was nothing like kids today. They are just loaded down with it. You see these little kids with suitcases for their homework! When I was in school, you did your work during class. I don't remember taking much home.

What food could you not live without? Tomatoes. I grow them. You have to start them early, but there is nothing like the taste of a tomato grown in your yard.

Three words to describe yourself? Tough, tender and talented!



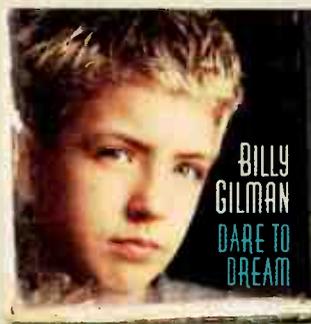
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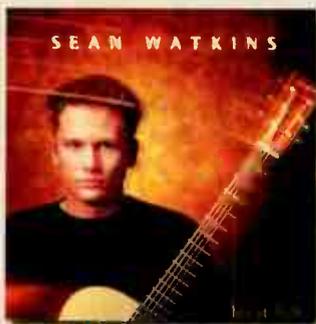
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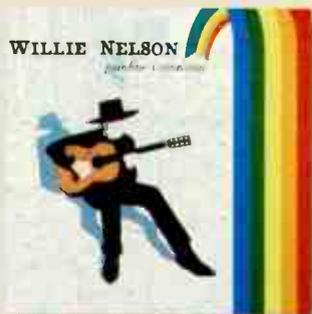
BILLY GILMAN, *Dare To Dream* (Epic) ★★ Has 13-year-old Billy Gilman even *kissed* a girl? We wonder, because producers Don Cook, Blake Chancey and David Malloy have set the young master's hormonal volcano to eruption mode on "She's My Girl," "Our First Kiss," the funky "She's Everything You Want" and "Almost Love" – songs that seem ill-suited for Gilman's innocently high register. Even if Gilman is the new Don Juan of the tweenie set, this forgettable sophomore 12-song album is too contrived, clearly attempting to bridge the double-edged sword of novelty and adolescence with enough variety to stack his career options. Gilman delivers what's asked of him, although the Cab Calloway-flavored "Shamey Shamey Shame" is a bit of a stretch. (NK)

SEAN WATKINS, *Let It Fall* (Sugar Hill) ★★★ Onstage, guitarist Sean Watkins comes off as the most somber member of the well-regarded acoustic trio Nickel Creek, and his first solo album extends that perception. *Let It Fall* concentrates on hyp-



notic, intricate, folk-pop instrumentals; the only vocal turn on the 10-song effort comes from former Toad The Wet Sprocket leader Glen Phillips on the title tune. Although his Nickel Creek partners take part in a few songs, as do such stellar guests as Dobroist Jerry Douglas and fiddler Stuart Duncan, Watkins takes the opportunity to more fully display his precise yet melodically evocative ability as a player and composer. It's a beautiful – if low-key – demonstration of what he can do. (MM)

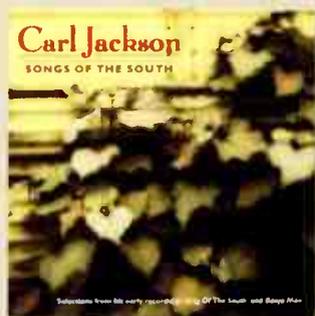
WILLIE NELSON, *Rainbow Connection* (Island) ★★★ Nelson has been the embodiment of diversification lately, swerving into the blues, reggae and instrumental modes for his last few albums. Now *Rainbow Connection* takes care of the children's quotient, and beside his warm, intimate version of the



famous Muppets song, aficionados can look forward to a mind-boggling tale of relations by marriage on the Lonzo And Oscar chestnut "I'm My Own Grandpa," and a molasses version of the old Mickey Newbury-penned "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)," a hit for Kenny Rogers' '60s band, the First Edition. Willie's daughter Amy also acquires herself admirably, applying her hummingbird voice in good form on "Wise Old Me" and "Rock Me To Sleep." Not so

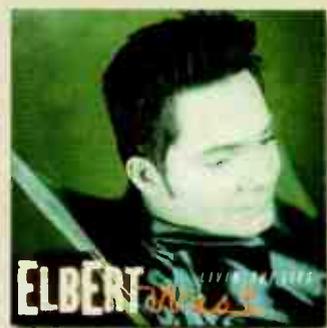
enjoyable: Nelson and family's jarring a cappella rendition of "I'm Looking Over A Four Leaf Clover." (NK)

CARL JACKSON, *Songs Of The South* (Sugar Hill) ★★★ Well-traveled and equally respected, Jackson is an extraordinary banjoist best known for his collaborations with Emmylou Harris and his long association with Glen Campbell. *Songs Of The*



South combines the entirety of Jackson's best album, 1980's *Banjo Man: A Tribute to Earl Scruggs*, and adds four tracks from its follow-up, 1982's *Song Of The South*. Mixing instrumentals with a sprinkling of songs featuring Jackson's wispy tenor, the compilation concentrates on fleet, ferociously played bluegrass versions of songs associated with Flatt & Scruggs and The Carter Family. Throughout, Jackson and his bandmates – who include Marty Stuart on mandolin, Vassar Clements on fiddle and Jerry Douglas on Dobro – put a dynamic fire behind their precise, speedy playing. (MM)

ELBERT WEST, *Livin' The Life* (Broken Bow) ★★★ "Sticks And Stones" didn't break his bones, but it did give songwriter Elbert West chart-topping credibility through Tracy Lawrence back in 1991. Now West Virginia's West dons his recording-artist hat, delivering his knowledgeable drawl with a lot of smart



wordplay on such tunes as the hurtin' ballad "(This One's Gonna) Leave A Mark" and the humorous "Kiss My Lips." West clearly leans toward the more traditional country sound, and what's more rewarding is he has the quality to back it up. (NK)

LORRAINE RAWLS, *Through Her Eyes* (Prairie Schooner) ★★ Since recording her debut in 1996, Rawls has been gradually gaining favor in Western music circles. However, with this, her third album, she steps out as a songwriter – and falls flat. Her lyrics pile up romantic images of the prairie, the mountains and ranching life, but her words too often suffer from



clumsy phrasing and overwrought wordplay. She's best when most concise, as on "The Promised Land," which she performs as a duet with veteran cowboy singer Ian Tyson. But that song is the exception rather than the rule on *Through Her Eyes*. Rawls' appealingly plaintive voice conveys sincerity about the earthy wonders of Western life. Now she just has to be more discriminating with her material. (MM)



THE VILLAGE SINGERS, All Aboard (Pinycastle) ★★★ As bluegrass gospel goes, The Village Singers harken back to a bygone era. They're more mild-mannered than such pew-shaking bluegrass peers as Doyle Lawson or New Tradition, and they're sweeter and softer in tone than the dynamic drama of vocal quartets like the Blackwood Brothers or the Cathedrals. In other words, they're less like a revival meeting than a thoughtful Bible class. They're not trying to dazzle or convert; they're just simply and beautifully conveying the humble strengths they draw from the religious statements found in this fine combination of new tunes and classic church hymns. (MM)



DON WILLIAMS, Don Williams Live: Greatest Hits Volume Two (RMG) ★★★ The hallmark of a Don Williams performance has always been its consistency. Onstage or on record, he can be counted on to apply his warm baritone to a set of meaningful, tastefully rendered songs. While those

qualities shine on this latest release, the album itself is somewhat redundant. (*An Evening With Don Williams*, released in 1994, offers a lengthier and more satisfying representation of the veteran star's live show.) And several other CDs – most notably last year's *Don Williams Anthology* – present far better career-capping collections than this 12-song, 36-minute affair. (MM)



CROSS CANADIAN RAGWEED, Highway 377 (Underground Sound) ★★ Picture Randy Bachman's soaring guitar on John Mellencamp's soapbox with the lightest touch of Steve Earle's Dukes and you've pretty much pegged the sound of Cross Canadian Ragweed, an Oklahoma quartet that offers more momentum than substance. Led by singer Cody Canada and his ostentatious guitar solos, CCR dispatches aggressive country rock with all the subtlety of a hammer. This wouldn't be so hard to stomach if Canada didn't drown out his own singing with busy leads, and even less so if the tunes were anything other than substandard. Promising melodies notwithstanding, "Bang My Head" and "One Of These Days" shows CCR in dire need of a lyricist: *Highway 377* is riddled with verbal potholes. (NK)



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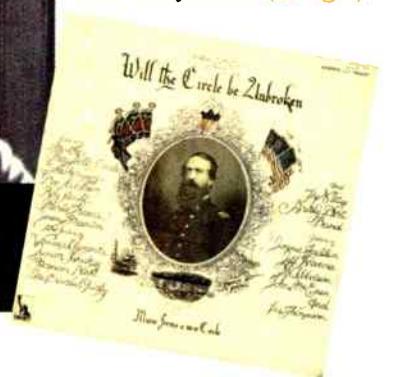
OFF THE CHARTS

THE COUNTRY BUZZ OUTSIDE THE MUSIC BIZ



John McEuen (left) accompanied Opry stalwart Roy Acuff (white shirt) and bluegrass titan Jimmy Martin (far right).

30 YEARS AGO: Dirt Band members Jimmy Ibbotson (hands in pockets) and Jeff Hanna (striped shirt) watched spellbound as legendary Mother Maybelle Carter (foreground) played her autoharp. Earl Scruggs' sons Randy (far left) and Gary (far right) also played on the sessions, as did Merle Travis (behind Gary).



Connecting The 'Circle' Landmark Nitty Gritty Dirt Band sessions celebrate a special anniversary

The country music bridge between traditional and contemporary tastes has always been a tenuous one.

But 30 years ago in August, an unlikely group of California-hippie country-rockers called the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band extended the hand of friendship to some of country music's most revered pioneers and recorded *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*. Mother Maybelle Carter, Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, Norman Blake, Vassar Clements, Jimmy Martin and Merle Travis were among the legendary innovators participating in the landmark all-acoustic sessions.

But one traditionalist was a holdout. "Roy Acuff was kind of resistant at first when we met with him," recalls Jeff Hanna, who has been singer and guitarist with the Dirt Band since it formed in Long Beach 35 years ago. "He wasn't quite convinced we were the real deal because of the way we looked – being scraggly, long-haired guys from Southern California – and here was straitlaced

Nashville in the early '70s."

But Acuff eventually came around. "At the end of Merle Travis' sessions, Roy came down to the studio, snuck in through the back door and listened," recalls Hanna. "Roy said, 'Well, that ain't nothing but country.' He showed up the next day for his sessions."

The week spent in Nashville's Woodland Studio recording the three-record set yielded a lifetime of memories for Hanna and fellow bandmates John McEuen, Jimmie Fadden, Les Thompson and Jimmy Ibbotson.

"We had major hero worship for Doc Watson and Earl Scruggs," recalls Hanna, now 54.

Mother Maybelle Carter's sessions were also unforgettable. "There's a great picture in the album's artwork of us all sitting at her feet, listening to her tell us about playing 'Wildwood Flower' on the guitar," Hanna says. "We were playing music with the mother of country music. That was pretty astounding."

Even more astounding was the impact of *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*. Its 1972 release brought credibility to country rock, winning new respect from country hardliners. And it offered fresh appeal to traditional country for younger listeners more interested in Jimi Hendrix than Jimmy Martin.

Will The Circle Be Unbroken was so successful that it spawned a multi-Grammy-winning sequel 17 years later. Johnny Cash, The Carter Sisters, Ricky Skaggs, Roy Acuff, Rosanne Cash and Steve Wariner were just some of the contributors to 1989's *Will The Circle Be Unbroken Volume Two*.

Though Dirt Band members are contemplating a third volume, Hanna says nothing will match the first. "Our proudest achievement is that record."

And his longest-lasting remembrance? "Fear," he laughs. "Not wanting to mess up, because there we were playing with our heroes."

— Beverly Keel

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Janet G., May 1999



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Risky Business

Why country stars are liable to need extra insurance

When you're a celebrity, a slip of the tongue can sometimes slap you with a lawsuit.

That's why country performers like the Dixie Chicks, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill call Robert Frost, president of a Nashville-based company called Frost Specialty Risk. Frost has been representing nearly 300 Christian music and country performers and entertainment companies since 1988 – and notes the insurance needs of the celebrity go way beyond the routine life, car and home policies of average folks.

Aside from providing insurance covering slander and libel (unjustifiable damage to a person's reputation verbally or in print), Frost also offers policies on everything from kidnapping and ransom to copyright infringement. There's even insurance to cover expensive jewelry borrowed for award shows.

Then there are the everyday things like instruments, tour buses, sound and lighting equipment, third-party property damage to cover dressing rooms, merchandise, stage clothes, spectator liability – and even no-show coverage. Frost says



MASSIVE jam-packed concerts such as Garth Brooks' Central Park blowout often require extra liability coverage.

Celine Dion exercised a family-bereavement rider a few years ago when she canceled a \$16 million tour to be with her cancer-stricken husband.

Frost also insures locations, including New York's Central Park when Garth Brooks performed there in 1997.

And how much do the stars pay for all that protection?

"Start-up performers can pay as little as \$2,500, while some policy costs can go as high as \$500,000," he says.

Insurance costs for country stars aren't as high as for their pop counterparts.

"Country artists aren't Nine Inch Nails," he laughs. "Michael Jackson might want to cover his llamas and ostriches, but country artists are more modest. They have their collectibles, their instruments and their antique Harleys."

Some of his more successful country clients do insure antiques, high-performance cars, works of art, farms and exotic beachfront and mountaintop homes.

Though Lloyds of London once insured Bruce Springsteen's voice for \$5 million, Frost claims country performers are less picky about their own physical assets.

"What people really do is get a disability policy," explained Frost, "so if their voice goes or one of the Dixie Chicks is injured and can't play her instrument, then they're covered. Policies don't really cover a voice or an arm or a rear end."

But they do *protect* your rear end, so to speak – and Frost says foregoing insurance could be a costly mistake.

— Robbie Woliver

Book Beat

100 Years Of Western Wear

By Tyler Beard, photographs by Jim Arndt (Gibbs Smith, \$19.95)

"The West is not a place. The West is a state of mind," author Tyler Beard writes in *100 Years Of Western Wear*, an updated edition of his 1993 classic. And just as Western music brings out the buckaroo in us all, anyone who has ever worn a cowboy hat in New Jersey or a pair of pointy-toed boots in Indiana can attest to that truth. Although you might feel like saddling up and herding cattle, you wouldn't do it wearing many of the fancy duds pictured here. While the text offers a fine introduction to the history

of cowboy attire, it's the photographs you'll remember – Lucchese's gorgeous line of boots honoring each state, Bohlin's Indian Chief belt buckles and bolos and Rodeo Ben's exquisitely detailed shirts.

Many of the photos move beyond the rodeo romance of Roy and Dale and into the closets of Bakersfield and Nashville country performers, showing Hank Thompson in his "Humpty Dumpty Heart" shirt and boots, as well as Johnny Dollar's opulent "Christ with the Cross" suit, Porter Wagoner's eye-popping rhinestone attire and Rose Maddox's elaborately embroidered stage outfits. The designers, particularly Nudie Cohn and his disciple, Manuel Cuevas, get appreciative profiles.

Serious readers who owned the original edition will find a small point of con-



vention. The text has not been substantially revised, and only the photographs from the '90s to the present have been supplemented or replaced. Music historians will find the chapter "1930-1970 Nashville Meets Hollywood: The Golden Years Of Western Wear" rather skimpy in paying tribute to such figures as Pee Wee King,

who helped bring the Western look to Nashville. The new edition is, however, impressively timely – and accurate – in its listing of Western retailers and museums, except in one case: The new address for the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is missing!

Still, this collection is good, nostalgic reading – in or out of the saddle.

— Alanna Nash



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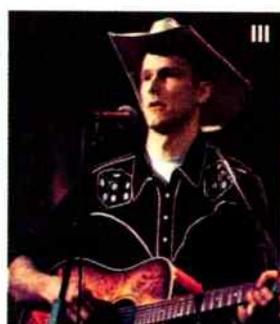
Too much advertising – and not enough tunes – on the radio? More importantly, not enough of the *right* tunes? If the true believers of satellite radio are right, 200 new stations are braced to bombard earth with plenty of alternate choices.

Targeting every imaginable musical taste, XM Satellite Radio is one of two new high-tech pioneers poised to beam CD-quality sound into your cars and homes.

The Washington, D.C.-based company is gearing for a late-summer launch and will offer more than one hundred 24-hour stations, including six dedicated to country.

“We’re going to have a home for the Hank Williams Sr. era, a home for the Hank Williams Jr. era and a home for the Hank Williams III era,” promises Jessie Scott, an XM country music programmer. “We’re talking about programming to the broadest possible taste.” XM will even broadcast a trucker’s station.

The compact satellite receiver – which also includes “standard” AM and FM frequencies – will be available at car dealerships, consumer electronics stores and retailers such as Sears for approximately \$200–\$400. For a \$9.95 monthly



SATELLITE RADIO is the wave of the listening future, offering an infinite number of choices. “We’re going to have a home for the Hank Williams Sr. era, a home for the Hank Williams Jr. era and a home for the Hank Williams III era,” says country music programmer Jessie Scott.

subscription fee, you’ll receive “streams” of nearly commercial-free music.

Hot on XM’s heels is Sirius, which is looking to launch its 100-station subscription-based satellite network in the fall. New York-based Sirius differs from XM in that it pledges complete commercial-free broadcasting and intends to offer its radios exclusively through automobiles.

Sirius has alliances with Ford, Chrysler, BMW, Mercedes, Mazda and Jaguar to offer its receiver with 2002 models. Meanwhile, XM has agreements with Alpine, Pioneer and Sony to construct players for car and home use, as well as a partnership with Peterbilt Trucks.

“It’s going to benefit the consumer enormously,” says MCA Nashville chairman Bruce Hinton. “We’re used to cable TV and all its niches. Once people discern that they can have it on

radio, there will be a huge following.”

Hinton expects that the satellite onslaught will emerge as a threat to conventional radio, forcing stations to renew their local coverage commitments.

“I love great radio, but so many stations across America have forgotten how to serve their local community well,” Hinton explains. “They’ve become so homogenized.”

XM spokesman Chance Patterson concedes the rollout will take time, but hopes for a sizeable listening audience in the near future.

“We want to become the nation’s radio station, with a minimum of four million subscribers in the first four to five years,” says Patterson.

“We’re talking about changing the very nature of radio.”

— Mitch Potter

Book Beat

Desperados: The Roots Of Country Rock

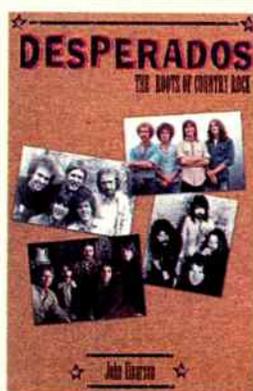
By John Einarson (Cooper Square Press, \$19.95)

The mid-1960s in Southern California were an expectant time, particularly in musical circles. The British Invasion had all but killed the near-resurgence of the American folk idiom, and psychedelic rock had left a wave of listeners desirous of a music you could actually “hear all the parts to.” Meanwhile, a couple of hours north of L.A. in a town called Bakersfield, Buck Owens And The Buckaroos and Wynn Stewart were making a raucous brand of country music that piqued the ears of young musicians.

In *Desperados: The Roots Of Country Rock*, music historian John Einarson meticulously chronicles the fledgling artists of the time and place, and how they influenced each other and created a genre that spawned one of America’s most popular bands, The Eagles. Einarson utilizes hundreds of interviews in constructing his story of life at the

Troubadour and Palomino clubs, often letting the players tell it firsthand. The pioneers quoted include Chris Hillman, Rusty Young, Richie Furay, Jim Messina, Bernie Leadon, Rodney Dillard and Mike Nesmith.

In this first significant book to look at that fertile time, Einarson sets the record



straight on three important points. First, the earliest professional and polished marriage between country and rock was Poco. Secondly, The Byrds’ founder and troubled genius, Gene Clark, had far more influence than he was given credit for. And, lastly, the tragic death of Gram Parsons led to an iconic status the addicted, lackadaisical singer had

not truly earned, debunking the widely held myth of Parsons as the taproot of country rock.

While this insider’s look sometimes reads like a confusing *Who’s On First* compendium, it’s a compelling and important tale.

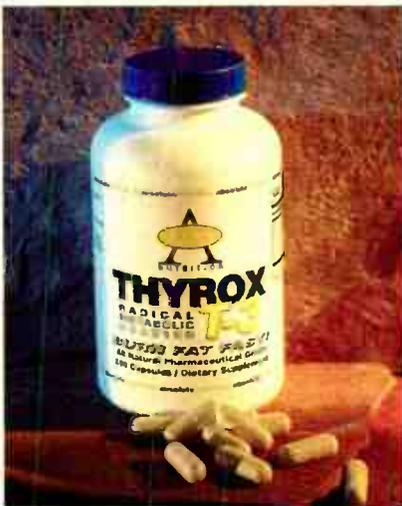
— Charlene Blevins

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causes an increase in basal metabolic rate (BMR), which are the number of calories one burns when at rest. The main ingredient in this innovative formula is Gum Guggul Extract. This extract, which originates from the gum resin of the small, thorny mukul tree of India's semi-arid plains. The mukul is actually related to another tree whose bark is the source for myrrh, which is another gummy substance with healing properties. Guggul extracts have been known to lower overall blood fats, reduce "bad" LDL cholesterol levels and also raise "good" HDL cholesterol levels. The Gum Guggul Extract delivers a powerful 300 mg of guggulsterones per dosage. Guggulsterones have been known to have thyroid stimulating activity, putting the increase of the conversion of T-4 to T-3 in motion.

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Making His Marx

Former pop star Richard Marx looks toward a country horizon

The pop world has been very good to Richard Marx. Now he's hoping that the country community will be even better.

The 37-year-old, Chicago-born son of a jingle writer has been integrating himself into the Nashville scene recently as both songwriter and producer – with Jamie O'Neal, Keith Urban, Chely Wright, Meredith Edwards, Kenny Rogers, Mark Wills and SHeDAISY tapping the benefits of his melodic expertise. Marx has built a proven track record



MARX IS BECOMING a songwriting and performing brother to country stars like Chely Wright.

PATRICK MCELREY

largely in the pop world, selling 25 million albums and amassing such chart-toppers as "Hold On To The Nights," "Satisfied" and "Right Here Waiting."

Now he's setting his sights on country radio with the first single from his latest album, *Days In Avalon*. "Straight From My Heart," featuring Alison Krauss, has already met with some success, but Marx realizes that his pop history may overshadow his country commitment.

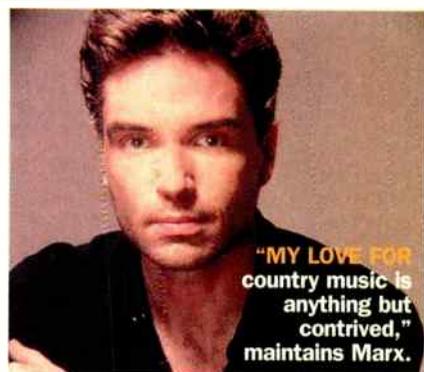
"My love for country music is anything but contrived, and it's anything but brief," declares Marx, pointing out that his first No. 1 hit as a songwriter was Kenny Rogers' 1984 smash "Crazy."

"When I was a kid, my uncle Bob turned me on to all this great country music. From age 8 to 12, I listened only to Jerry Reed and Tom T. Hall, Waylon and Merle, Lynn Anderson and Donna Fargo. It was compelling to me, even as a little kid."

Marx was introduced to pop by his father in 1975, but country remained his favorite.

"I knew the part to every Larry Gatlin and Ronnie Milsap song. Country shaped me just as much as a songwriter as other influences."

His Nashville involvement is also longstanding – his wife, actress and singer Cynthia Rhodes, is originally from Music City – although he admits he was met with Music Row resistance during the '80s.



NELS IRVING/SON

"I felt like I was the new kid in school from another country," he admits.

The tide changed three years ago. Marx began writing with Gary Harrison, co-author of Deana Carter's "Strawberry Wine" and Martina McBride's "Wild Angels," and then became acquainted with Chely Wright. Wright invited Marx to participate in Joe Diffie's annual First Steps Benefit, and he was shocked by the crowd's response. "It was thunderous," Marx remembers. "I now feel very welcome."

And if the country-pop artist's career doesn't pan out, Marx has high hopes as a producer.

"My dream is to produce Glen Campbell and Ronnie Milsap," says Marx. "Those are two guys who can have hits again, because they're *that* incredible."

— Nick Krewen

Book Beat

Colonel Tom Parker: The Curious Life of Elvis Presley's Eccentric Manager

James L. Dickerson (Cooper Square Press, \$27.95)

Twenty-four years after Elvis Presley left us for that great Hall of Fame in the sky, the King continues to be an enigmatic figure. So, too, has his intriguing manager, Tom Parker, a former carny who was most responsible for creating the Presley myth. Author James Dickerson portrays Parker as an unscrupulous character who didn't have much "book learning," but compensated with his tremendous energy, phenomenal street smarts and knowledge that there really *is* a sucker born every minute.

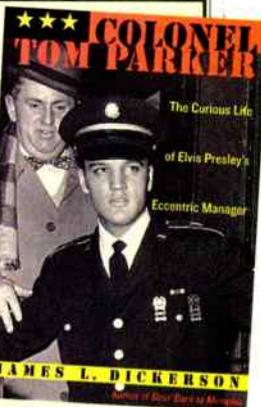
Dickerson does a good job of recreating the early Parker years despite some formidable obstacles. His birth, early life, alleged marriage and World War II draft status remain shrouded in mystery. For instance, although Parker claimed to hail from West Virginia, court documents reveal that he was born in 1909 as Andreas van Kuijk in Breda, Holland. He also claims to have married Marie Mott Parker in Tampa, but no marriage certificate has ever been produced.

A telling incident involves Parker's Tampa carnival days. When the Colonel sold hot dogs, he would place meat only at the ends of the bun, with nothing but globs of ketchup and mustard in between. If customers complained, Parker would point to a strategically placed hot dog on the ground, and inform them that they had dropped their food. Even with Presley, Parker was shrewdly finding ways to siphon more than his fair share of profits. Dickerson's

work is filled with such anecdotes that are a fun read.

Colonel Tom Parker regurgitates some material that appeared in Dirk Vellenga and Mick Farren's *Elvis And The Colonel* (Delacorte, 1988), but with a different emphasis.

Dickerson's book devotes more space to Parker's Tampa days and his managing work with Eddy Arnold and Hank Snow. It's also a lighter read than Peter Guralnick's works on Presley. More importantly, Dickerson provides an intriguing portrait of Colonel Tom Parker, a man who was at once a brilliant promoter and a devious con man.



JAMES L. DICKERSON

— Randy Rudder

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FREE SONGWRITING Success Book! Song poems recorded information. Top Records, Box 23505-CM, Nashville, TN 37202.

SONGWRITERS

AWARD WINNING SONGWRITER co-writing best lyrics: Ramsey Kearney, 602 Inverness Avenue, Nashville, TN 37204. www.RamseyKearney.com

SONGS/LYRICS/POEMS NEEDED FOR Nashville recordings. Send immediately. Paramount, Box 23705-C, Nashville, TN 37202. www.paramountsong.com

POEMS, SONGS WANTED. \$100,000 recording contract possible! Free appraisal: Majestic Records, Box 1140W, Linden, TX 75563.

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1-800-345-2694 CALL FREE. Music Publishers looking for songs. Country/Pop/Rock/Gospel singer/songwriter information.

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TICKETS

NATIONAL FINALS RODEO: Dec. 7-16, 2001, Las Vegas. Pro Bull Riders Finals: Oct. 25-28, 2001, Las Vegas. Country Music Awards: 2001, Nashville. All NFL Games, All Nascar Races. Western States Ticket Service: www.rodeotickets.com (800) 326-0331.

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In Memoriam: Van Stephenson 1953-2001

In 1992, Van Stephenson teamed up with Henry Paul and Dave Robbins to form BlackHawk, a standout trio that plied the charts with such Top 10 hits as "Every Once In A While" and "I'm Not Strong Enough To Say No." When Stephenson was diagnosed with skin cancer, it eventually forced his retirement from the group in February 2000. He lost his courageous battle with the disease on April 8.

Here, BlackHawk's Henry Paul offers a warm and touching tribute to his fallen friend.

"Van Stephenson was the first person I wrote with on my earliest trip to Nashville in 1988. I came away with two great songs and a relationship that would grow into the band BlackHawk.

"I met Dave Robbins through Van and we formed our musical bond. I grew to understand how uniquely talented and complex Van really was. There was a deep spirituality about Van that cut to the very center of who he was as a man, and the most important lesson I learned from him was the art of communication. Through the next 12 years, we always dealt with one another with respect and sensitivity as to who we were as individuals.

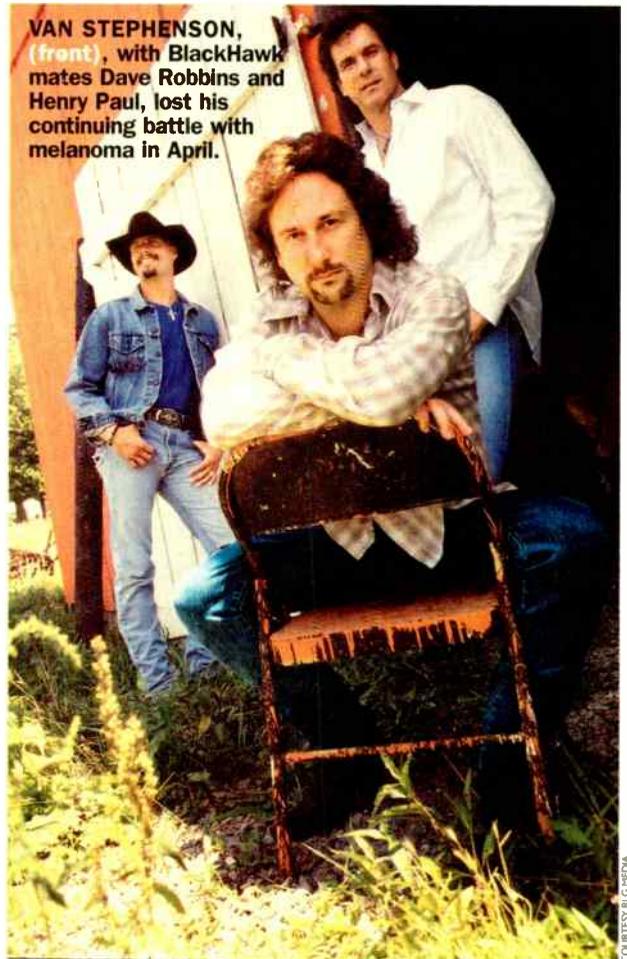
"In bands prior to BlackHawk,

there were always seeds of resentment that grew into much larger problems that would eventually lead to their demise. With Dave and Van, there was always the opportunity to air our feelings and find a point of mediation. This ensured our friendship and our love for each other right up to the very end.

"Van also had an artistic perspective that was unlike anyone I'd ever met. It was tender and vulnerable and through his songs he was able to touch people in emotional places that went overlooked in the course of everyday life. It was always there, and only Van knew where to go to find it.

"Dear Lord, help us understand why you came and took him by the hand and led him to his new home in the sky. Our hearts weren't ready to let him go, so this is our way to

VAN STEPHENSON, (front), with BlackHawk mates Dave Robbins and Henry Paul, lost his continuing battle with melanoma in April.



let him know that we miss him and our love for him will never die."

Lyric to "Spirit Dancer," written by Henry Paul, Dave Robbins and Jim Peterik, ©2001 Henry Paul Music, BMI/Dave Robbins Music, ASCAP and Jim Peterik Music, ASCAP.

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Remembering Zydeco Pioneer Boozoo Chavis

Wilson "Boozoo" Chavis, who offered zydeco music its first major hit in 1954 with "Paper In My Shoe," died May 5 in Austin after suffering a heart attack and stroke. He was 70.

Called "The Creole Cowboy" for his penchant for Stetson hats and raising horses, he was best remembered for his hard-driving accordion style and gritty singing. The left-handed Chavis played on after losing the tips of two fingers in an accident hooking a barbecue pit to a trailer hitch. Less popular, but no less

important than Clifton Chenier, Chavis' influence was widespread to a legion of younger zydeco players.

Country Music's own Robert Oermann described Chavis' music in *The Journal* (Feb/Mar 2001) as "zydeco with the emphasis on its rustic, rural roots, closer to country than soul, yet with a fevered devotion to non-stop rhythmic grooves."

Chavis is survived by six children, 21 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and his wife of 49 years, Leona.

— Nick Krewen

Earnhardt Honored On U.S. Silver Dollar

*Racing Legend Joins
Presidents on U.S. Coinage*

Washington DC – Dale Earnhardt's legendary status was further enhanced today with the announcement that Racing's All-Time Greatest Driver is being honored on a genuine United States Silver Dollar. The image of racing's Man in Black with his #3 Chevy is added to the coin by a revolutionary new process where an extraordinarily detailed color image is actually fused onto the silver coin. "As soon as word got out about this unique commemorative, collectors and Earnhardt's fans overwhelmed our phone center," said George Hubbard of the International Collectors Society, marketers of Limited Edition collectibles.

"Earnhardt memorabilia and authentic U.S. silver coins are two of the hottest collectibles on the market today," stated Hubbard. "The Dale Earnhardt silver dollar, which is made of .999 pure silver, combines the overwhelming popularity of stock car racing's most popular hero with the enduring value of official U.S. Mint struck silver coinage. This represents a true collector's treasure that will be passed on to future generations with a great deal of pride."

The coins used in this touching memento have been obtained directly from the U.S. mint, all in brilliant uncirculated condition. After the high-tech colorization process is applied, the coin is permanently sealed inside a crystal-clear

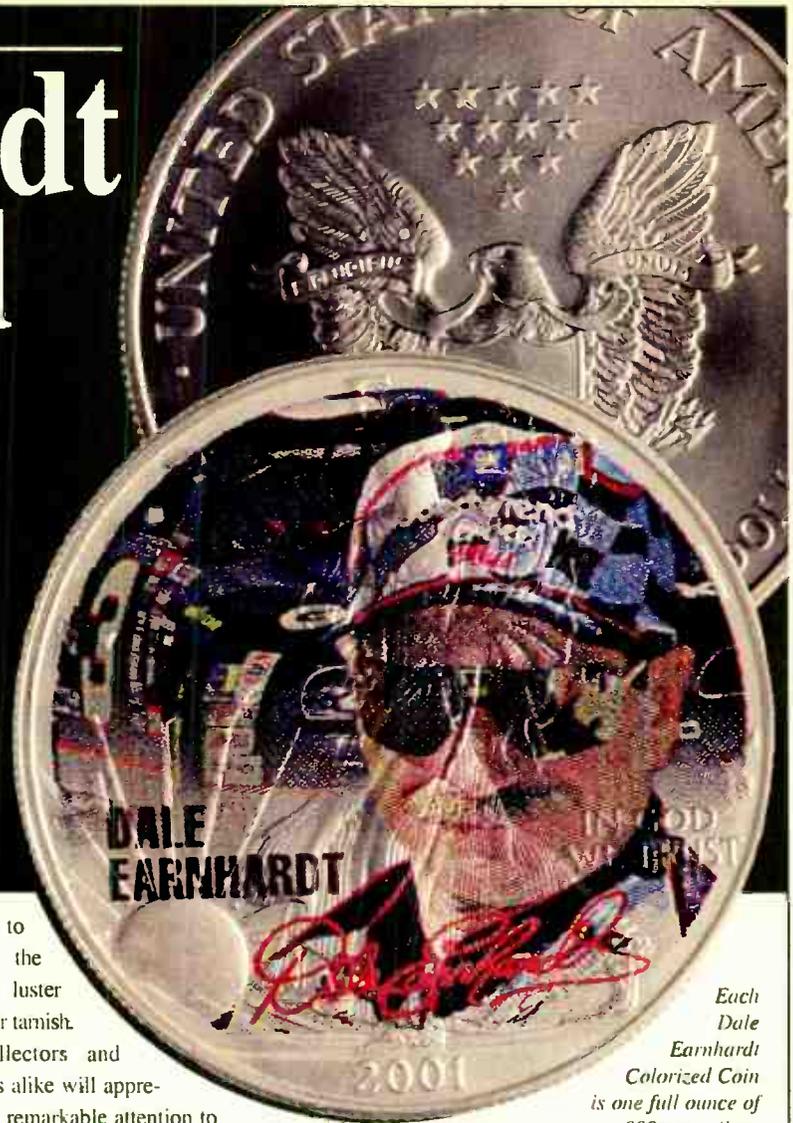
capsule to assure the dazzling luster will never tamish.

"Collectors and race fans alike will appreciate the remarkable attention to detail this painstaking colorization process provides," continued Hubbard. "It features a razor-sharp image of Earnhardt in his trademark dark sunglasses against a backdrop of his legendary #3 Chevy. The coin is completed with a bright red facsimile of Dale Earnhardt's highly sought-after signature."

The Earnhardt silver dollar comes in a stunning black felt presentation case suitable for display with your finest collectibles. Each Limited Edition coin is backed by the International Collectors Society 100% Buy Back Guarantee and comes complete with a Certificate of Authenticity.

"Given Earnhardt's popularity and the laws of supply and demand, we don't know how long we can hold our current pricing," Hubbard said. For now you can still obtain this unique piece of racing history for just \$29.95 (plus \$5.95 p&h). Send your check or money order to ICS, 10045 Red Run Blvd., Suite 350CMMEN1, Owings Mills, MD 21117. Credit card holders may call toll free

1-800-399-7854.



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- 2 Time American Driver of the Year Winner
- Most wins at Daytona International Speedway (34)

*Highlights from
Dale Earnhardt's Auto
Racing Career*

Actual Size of Coin: 40 mm in diameter

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See it in color at: www.icsNOW.com



Lester Flatt and Marty Stuart, 1972

Just a few months before this backstage photo was snapped, bluegrass picker Lester Flatt had taken a 13-year-old mandolin prodigy under his wing and on the road. The youngster would go on to become a star in his own right, but he never forgot the lesson he learned from the legend.

“Lester was the one who gave me my start,” says Marty. “He showed me the ropes of the music business. He was 59 years old and already a legend and he could have retired if he

wanted. Why he decided to put a 13-year-old kid in the middle of a bunch of seasoned pros, I’ll never know. But the lesson he taught me was that you pass it on.

“Lester was universal without even trying. His music appealed to bluegrass, country, gospel, rock ‘n’ roll and blues fans. It was Southern music. It was roots music. Those guys weren’t about coming into town and stealing all the awards and money. It was a career. It was showing up that really mattered, and making a lifestyle of it.”

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