

# COUNTRYMUSIC

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## WAYLON WILLIE Outlaw Blues?

STATLERS:  
Too Wholesome  
To Be Real?

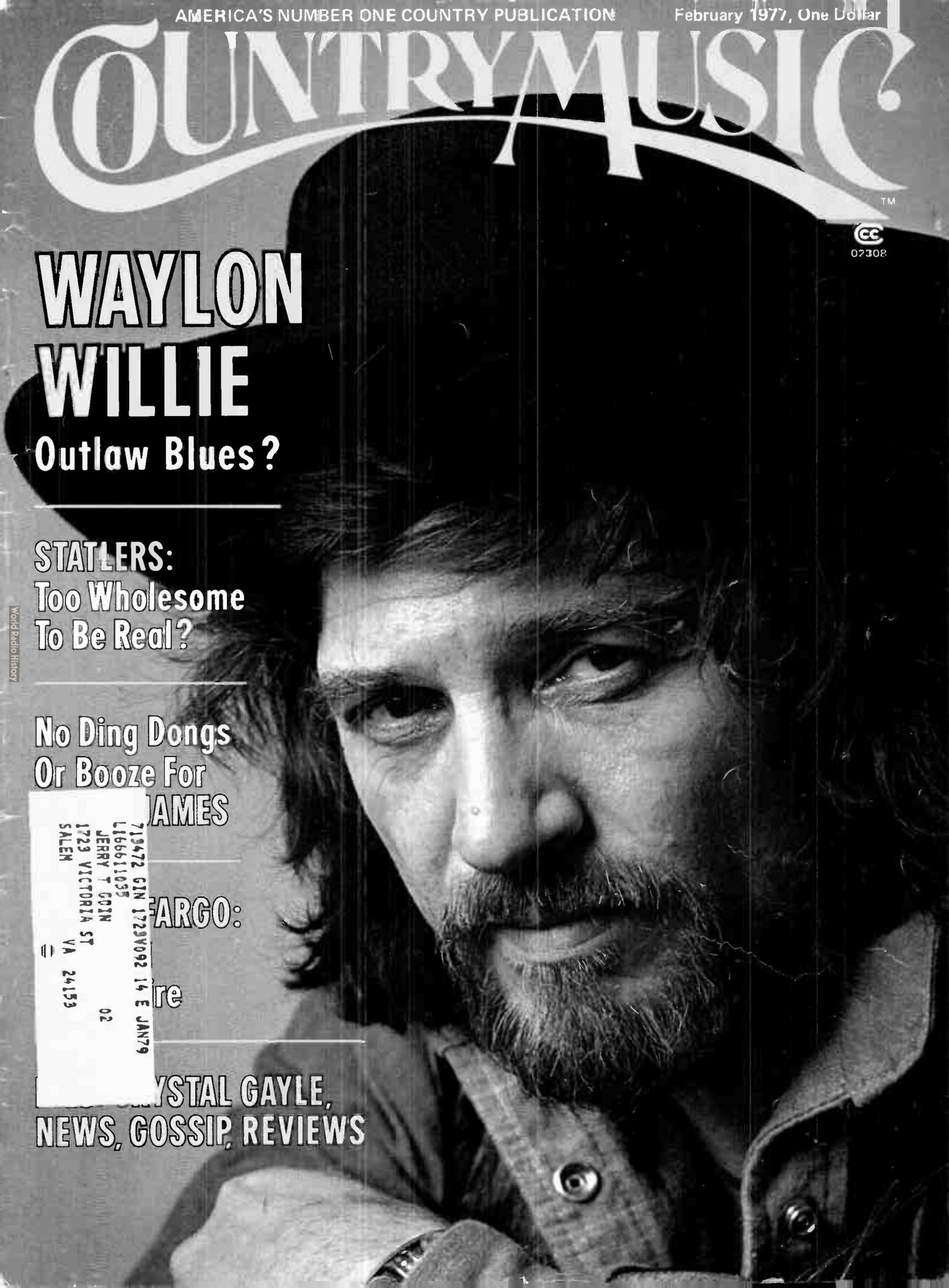
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Or Booze For  
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NEWS, GOSSIP, REVIEWS

World Radio History



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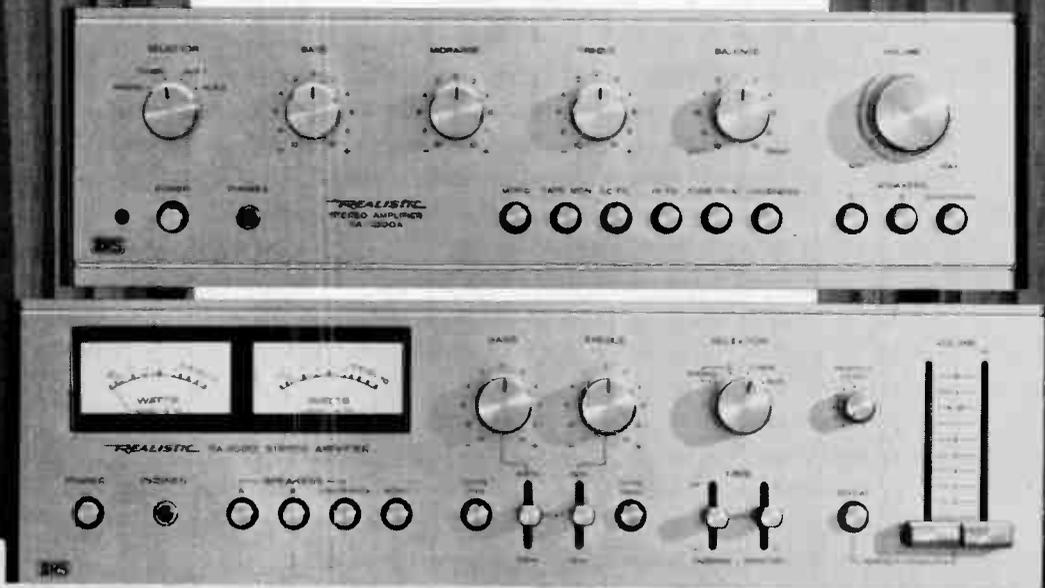
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# COUNTRY MUSIC



Cover: Leonard Kamsler

Volume Five, Number Five  
February 1977

# 2

## CONTENTS

- |    |   |                  |
|----|---|------------------|
| 6  | Letters   |                  |
| 11 | People On The Scene   | AUDREY WINTERS   |
| 13 | Hillbilly Central   | HAZEL SMITH      |
| 14 | The Texas Scene   | NELSON ALLEN     |
| 16 | Country News  |                  |
| 22 | The Outlaws: Has-Beens Already?<br>'Me and Ole Waylon' indeed. What's really going on in the Outlaw camp?     | DAVE HICKEY      |
| 28 | Skippity-Do-Dah Donna<br>Donna Fargo is better than ever. So how come she's not the <i>Happiest Girl</i> ?    | ALANNA NASH      |
| 32 | George Jones Centerfold   | LEONARD KAMSLER  |
| 34 | The Statlers Beheld<br>Are the Statler Brothers really the best group in country music? The most wholesome?   | JOHN PUGH        |
| 40 | Look-alike Winners<br>Thought you looked like the stars, eh?  |                  |
| 42 | Ice Cream Sonny<br>The key to success, says Sonny James, is stability. After 30 hit records, he may be right. | MICHAEL BANE     |
| 48 | Crystal Gayle: Our Rising Star<br>Loretta Lynn's little sister comes of age in a big way.                     | VALERIE RIDENOUR |
| 52 | Record Reviews  |                  |

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Audit Bureau of Circulation membership applied for.

A black and white photograph of Conway Twitty, a country music artist, singing into a vintage microphone. He is wearing a light-colored suit jacket and a dark shirt. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the microphone against a dark background.

**YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THIS  
FAR BEFORE  
LINDA ON MY MIND  
IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE  
BABY'S GONE  
I'M NOT THROUGH LOVING YOU YET  
THE GAMES THAT DADDIES PLAY  
DON'T CRY JONI  
AFTER ALL THE GOOD  
IS GONE  
(LOST HER LOVE) ON OUR  
LAST DATE  
SHE NEEDS SOMEONE TO  
HOLD HER (WHEN SHE  
CRIES)**

**CONWAY TWITTY'S  
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# Letters

I have just had the opportunity (not pleasure) of watching the CMA Awards Show. As I sat there, it occurred to me that this country music organization should change its name to RCA association. Seems this year, like last year, and most other years, RCA has dominated the awards. Not always because the artists were the best, but because most CMA members are RCA associated people. All I can say is "Phooey on block voting." It doesn't take an idiot to see this going on in the country music industry. Why doesn't the Country Music Association allow fans to join? We're what makes the stars or have they forgotten? Where the fans are allowed to be members and cast votes the results are quite different. Just take a look at some of the other polls. And I don't think that just because someone records only one recording together that it entitles them to a nomination.

As for Waylon Jennings, he seems to be hurting the country music industry more than helping it with his ungracious ways. At least, Willie Nelson had the decency to show up and accept his awards. I think enough of country music to show some interest by writing. Maybe some others should do the same.

SHIRLEY FORSYTHE  
PLANT CITY, FLA.

After watching this year's CMA awards show, which was both predictable and dull, all I can say is that the brightest and most surprising event was the naming of Mel Tillis as Entertainer of the Year. It was much deserved. . . .

NICK DE MEO  
YONKERS, N.Y.

As Program Director of a successful country music radio facility, I feel I must express my feelings about the recent Country Music Awards Show on national television. We here strive to keep country music out of the closet and make it something our listeners can be proud to say they listen to. However, when we and our audience watch something so poorly produced as the recent awards show, it makes one want to quit the business we love so much and apply for a job in the shoe department at Sears! Following is a partial list of things that embarrassed me as a representative of the country music industry in our city:

1. Why can't the CMA get a master of ceremonies who can read cue cards or a tele-prompter without getting ahead of himself? I'm not putting down Mr. Cash

. . . I probably couldn't handle the job well either.

2. Why do artists insist on trying to lip-sync records when they can't handle the job? Case in point, one of the biggest of the stars, Charley Pride, was introduced along with Freddy Fender, attempting to lip-sync a portion of *Kiss An Angel Good Morning* and *Vaya Con Dios*.

3. Why couldn't Loretta and Conway have made their presentations in a different manner? I, at first, thought they were attempting to sing *The Letter* and had forgotten the words.

4. And, when each winner was presented his/her award, couldn't he/she have been told where to go or where to walk to meet the person who brought out the awards?

5. And I could see no reason why, in a program produced at one of country music's finest showcases, there had to be any chance of a mix-up between Crystal Gayle and Dolly Parton!

These are only some of the worst things about the Awards Show that come to mind right now. In all, we, here at the station and our listeners, feel that the show was poorly produced and directed, and we know that, without a doubt, there is someone in Nashville who could have done much better.

MICKEY FARREL  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
RADIO WGVM-WDMS  
GREENVILLE, MISS.

I watched the awards show last night. The only thing that held my attention was Johnny Cash. He still is the greatest. . . .

MS. P. McCARTNEY  
SANDUSKY, OHIO

After watching the Country Music Awards show tonight, I am so mad I had to write someone. I am fed up with some CMA "members" doing all the voting. How can 5000 so called *experts* possibly be representative of the feelings of 50 to 75 million country music fans? They can't! That's exactly how Willie Nelson and his outlaws were able to make off with all the awards! There is no credibility to the CMA.

Let's have a public vote on it! Each year, the nominees would be chosen by the following criteria:

1. No. of records sold
2. No. of jukebox/radio plays
3. Length of time on national top 40 chart.

Then, ballots would be distributed to all record shops, printed in country magazines, and maybe even newspapers. All

the votes would be counted so that when the awards show came around, we would finally get a true awards program where we, the fans, paid tribute to the stars we love! Let's put an end to the prejudiced, one-sided and totally unfair CMA voting.

MR. & MRS. JAMES SHERWIN  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Thanks for the centerfold of Lynn Anderson. I had to go out and buy another magazine so my two daughters could both have a picture.

A DEVOTED LYNN ANDERSON  
FAN CLUB MEMBER

In September I had the privilege of meeting and seeing the shows of Narvel Felts and Hank Williams, Jr. Both of their shows were fantastic. They are two of the nicest people I ever met, so Country Music Magazine readers, if they ever come to your town, see them. I know you will enjoy them. I sure did.

SHERRI COMBS  
WILMINGTON, N.C.

In the November 1976 issue of Country Music Magazine a reader requested information on the Jamboree U.S.A. staff band, Country Roads. The Country Roads do have some new faces since October, 1973, and we feel our new band is great. We have L.D. Hines on piano, Rick Erickson on bass, Brad Weltemyer on steel, banjo and fiddle, Joe Ong on drums and Don Dixon on lead guitar.

The Country Roads band has been busy working on several commercial jingles and albums. Plans are being finalized for the production and release of a "Country Roads Album." Thank you for your continued interest in Jamboree U.S.A.

CATHY GURLEY  
DIRECTOR OF PROMOTIONS  
JAMBOREE U.S.A.  
WHEELING, W. VA.

I am writing to plant a seed of nostalgia which could blossom into a story of interest to country music history buffs. In reading any source even touching on country, I find mention of my hometown, Knoxville, Tenn. A rather sizeable number of artists were either born thereabouts or worked there on their road to some measure of success in the music business. Some of my most vivid recollections are of noontime summer days and humid Saturday nights at the old WNOX Auditorium being royally entertained by the likes of Chet Atkins, The Carter Family, The Carlisle Brothers, Archie Campbell, Homer & Jethro and many more.

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Yes, I am interested in finding out more about the 1977 American Song Festival. Please send me complete information and an Official Entry Form.

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5900 Wilshire Blvd. West Pavilion  
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Phone (213) 937-7370



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Other years brought to town Carl Smith, Don Gibson, Dolly Parton, Carl & Peter Butler, Roy Acuff, Eddy Arnold, Bill Monroe, Pee Wee King, The Everlys, Wally Fowler, Flatt & Scruggs, etc. My motive for this correspondence is simply to determine if there is material for a feature story on this gallery of entertainers who more or less started or received impetus to their careers in Knoxville environs. Perhaps some interviews specifically centering on their recall of Knoxville days. I do feel, with justifiable pride in my roots, that there just might be a basis for an interesting article lying dormant in the

musical heritage that Knoxville spawned for the world of country music.

ROBERT C. REESE  
BUENA PARK, CALIF.

Johnny Rodriguez cancelled an appearance here in Imperial Valley, Calif. Oct. 9. So many of us fans here in the valley were very disappointed, but we understand that he might've had more important business elsewhere. We hardly get concerts here in Imperial Valley, but when we do, there's always a big attendance. Last year we had Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn. All this past week many of

my friends and myself were really anxious for Oct. 9 to come along. We just couldn't wait to see Johnny Rodriguez, then we got the announcement that the concert was cancelled permanently. We sure hope Johnny comes our way in the near future cause we all love him and his music.

RUBEN D. GARCIA  
EL CENTRO, CALIF.

I recently attended a concert by Tanya Tucker at the Mid-South Fair in Memphis. I must say I was thoroughly disgusted. When she sang *Would You Lay With Me*, some of the audience made very rude comments. Tanya said something to the audience which isn't very nice to repeat. I didn't go to see her to hear sassy language. . . . I still like the way she sings, but she needs to straighten up her act.

KIM HOLDER  
SMITHVILLE, ARK.

In the November issue, a Charles Brothers of Kentucky thinks the Fan Fair officials charge too much. I would like to express my opposing viewpoint.

For \$25.00 I received the following:

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Free admission to the Country Music Hall of Fame	1.25
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Free admission to Opryland	7.50
Transportation to Hall of Fame, Ryman & Opryland from Municipal Auditorium and back	3.00 (Approx)
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\*Based on \$3.00 for a 3 hour Country Music show

\*\*Based on what a similar dinner might cost at a "Quick-Serve" spot.

The \$25.00 registration fee provided four days of the top Country Music performers, three days dinner at noon, and transportation. I think it was a bargain.

FRED GOLDRUP  
LISBON FALLS, ME.

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8 TRACK TAPE P8T-206 \$3.98.

**EDDY ARNOLD - ACL-7025 - SPECIAL \$2.50**  
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**ELVIS PRESLEY - CAS-2611 - ALBUM \$2.50**  
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**THE LOUVIN BROTHERS - ALBUM JS-6165 \$2.50**  
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**WILLIE NELSON - ACL1-0326 - ALBUM \$2.50**  
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**DOLLY PARTON - ACL-7002 - ALBUM \$2.50**  
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**JIMMIE RODGERS - ACL-7029 ALBUM \$2.50**  
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**ROY ROGERS AND DALE EVANS AND THEIR FAMILY - ALBUM ACL-7021 \$2.50**  
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**ROY ROGERS - ACL1-0953 - ALBUM \$2.50**  
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# Country Scene



Photo: Courtesy Capitol Records

Kitty Wells



Photo: Charlyn Zlotnik

David Allan Coe

## PEOPLE Kitty Wells Revealed David Out-Porters Porter

by AUDREY WINTERS

Kitty Wells has been re-united with her long time friend and record producer Owen Bradley, the result being a new single for Capricorn Records titled *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*. Kitty, to date, has had 23 number one records, more than any other female artist.

Kitty is called "Me-Maw" by her grandchildren. After she returned to her seat after being inducted into the Hall of Fame, her three-year-old granddaughter asked her, "Me-Maw, are you Kitty Wells?"

Little Georgette Jones, 5-year-old daughter of Tammy Wynette and George Jones, was crying after the CMA awards because her mama and daddy didn't win anything. George dried her tears by taking her back stage and buying her a bag of potato chips.

Merle Haggard, a presenter on the awards show, is much too thin. He said, "I weigh less now than I have since I was 15 years old." He explained that he had been sick several months ago and has never fully recovered.

Merle and the Strangers left Capitol Records Dec. 1st to record for his own label, Tally Records. Tally is the label where it all began for Merle. He re-activated the label about two years ago. It is distributed by MCA Records.

Merle's wife, Bonnie Owens Haggard, flew in from Bakersfield, Calif. to accept four BMI Awards for Merle. She, along with Merle's married daughter, Dana, and B.J. Stevenson, a secretary at Haggard Enterprises, stayed the entire week to celebrate the convention. Bonnie, looking

much happier these days, wanted everyone to know, because she is not with Merle's road show anymore, that she and Merle are not getting divorced or even separated. Bonnie and Dana are singing together in and around their hometown.

Kris Kristofferson is being paged for the starring role in the motion picture interpretation of Sidney Sheldon's best selling novel, *The Other Side of Midnight*. Kris' highly-acclaimed and long-awaited LP is entitled *Surreal Thing*.

Kris, by the way, is one hometown boy who remembers his old friends—such as Ms. Sue Brewer, who is ill with breast cancer. She received a check for \$2000 a few days ago from Kris, and a note saying he had just learned of her illness.

David Allan Coe is the flashiest of all the cowboys. He wears more rhinestones than Porter Wagoner ever wore. His suits are made by Nudie and he has a pair of boots completely covered with rhinestones. He wears a bracelet on each arm with large diamonds and diamond rings on four of his fingers. One ring has diamonds on top of a ball bearing and spins around in a complete circle.

Charley Pride says his son and daughter seem to be very musically inclined. His son plays every instrument he gets his hands on. The daughter hears a tune and then picks it out on the piano.

Mac Davis told us he is in a much better mood this year than last. He said, "I had just learned about my wife and Glen Campbell about the way you all did and I wasn't very nice to anyone."

Freddy Fender was very happy he had been assigned to share a dressing room with Chet Atkins again this year at the CMA awards show. Freddy left immediately after making his presentation to go home for a few days of rest, then returned to Nashville for a show, worked the Wheeling Jamboree next day, then headed for Huntsville, Tex., for the annual Texas Prison Rodeo. That's the rodeo in which the inmates are the contestants. Before a record-breaking crowd of 23,000, he donated \$4000 to the Prisoner's Fund for recreational equipment and legal aid for the inmates.

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## HILLBILLY CENTRAL

by HAZEL SMITH



Photo: Paul Levin

Mel Tillis doin' what comes natural.

Like I been telling my friends and neighbors. Nashville is getting more like Hollywood every day. Why just this p.m., I was driving past the Hall of Fame and had to be stopped by policemen for a TV crew to film Claude Akins who was driving a van . . . then proceeded to the Hall of Fame Motel and who walked through the lobby but Mr. Bonanza himself, Lorne Green.

Was talking with T.G. Shepard and just happened to comment as to how he was always congenial for a hillbilly type star, and good guy T.G. said, "The way I look at it is I just happen to be a guy who makes my living singing!" Like that?? I love it!

I personally want all my wonderful readers to know that the man with the musical syndrome. Mr. Willie Nelson, personally stopped by my office and he and I sat on the lawn and visited for about 20 minutes. One of my heroes is he, and forever will be.

*Her Precious Memories* is the RCA, Chet Atkins produced single by Carl Knight.

Talked with entertainer of the year Mel Tillis via phone and asked the famed stutterer if he had any trouble telling hisself what to do, and Mel allowed as how he just said, "Melvin, now you do whatever you 'spo-o-o-o-sed to!" Barbara Fairchild, new mother with 2-week-old

baby, sang at the Old Time Picking Parlor along with Linda Hargrove, Johnny Rodriguez, Willie Nelson, Marshall Chapman, and Billy Ray Reynolds, who hosted the event for Nashville Child Care Center, a day home for underprivileged children whose parents work. Female songwriter Lola Jean Dillon wrote Loretta Lynn's single *Somebody Somewhere Don't Know What He's Missing Tonight*. Am proud of females doing their thing in this almost male run business!!

Jeanne Pruett surprised by Gov. George Wallace with her very own day by the state of Alabama, and that's really something for a country girl to have. I think!!

My guilt by association friends Coleen Mills and Janet Slusser (Music Row secretaries) tell me as how Charly McClain, newly signed with Columbia, is a sure bet for stardom.

Kinky Friedman's new kinky single is *Dear Abbie* and he sang it on NBC Saturday Night where Mr. and Mrs. Kristofferson sang a couple of weeks before. Course you know Mr. and Mrs. are Kris Kristofferson and Rita Coolidge.

My friend Marlu Swan was a former Copa girl and went to the Big Apple for their reunion. WHN's Lee Arnold was interviewing Marlu and asked the musical question of what do you do now. Marlu allowed as how she was in Nashville writing songs. Inquiring of her name, and learning her last name was Swan, Arnold wanted to know if she was any relation to Billy Swan. Only by marriage, pretty Marlu told a surprised DJ. "He's my husband," confessed the first lady.

Clever and talented Jeannie Seely has a new song she wrote that includes lyrics like *You're still hanging in there aren't you Jessi*, a take off on Jessi Colter's self-penned song on her current Capitol LP titled *You Did Hang the Moon Didn't You Waylon*. Another great line in the same tune is *Are You Sure Audrey Done it This-a Way* in reference to Waylon's past hit *Are You Sure Hank Done it This-a Way*.

I've heard rumors that George Jones and Tammy Wynette are still keeping company. They sure looked happy singing together down at Possum Holler the other night. Like I've said before . . . this team teamed up makes me smile.

Eddie Rabbitt's forthcoming marriage may be a 'harey' event!

Have you heard Tom T. Hall's bluegrass LP, *The Magnificent Music Machine*? Me and my youngsters have played it at least twice daily since the release. It is superfine.

Well, it's long handle time in Tennessee once again. Good time for love, candle light, fireplaces, and good country music. Get it on friends!!

## TEXAS Luchenbach In Mourning For Hondo Crouch

by NELSON ALLEN

**Hondo Crouch**, the former rancher, all-American swimmer, all around impresario, and co-founder of the tiny community of Luchenbach, died of an apparent heart attack just one week before the annual **Ma Ferguson Chili Cook-Off**, an event he instituted several years ago. The cook-off took place after a wake for **Hondo** which would've made him proud. **Jerry Jeff Walker**, a longtime personal friend of Hondo's, had just completed recording his second live album at Luchenbach. Other chili news: The world championships were held at Terlingua for the last time according to chili officials who complained of rampant drunkenness.

Good news: **Jess De Maine**, the Austin country singer who injured his back in a motorcycle mishap outside Nashville some time ago and was subsequently told by his doctors he might never walk again has been recuperating here and is now not only walking but starting to perform again. **Bubbles Cash**, the ex-stripper and former Queen of the Dallas Cowboys (she gained some notoriety attending their football games clad in mini mini-skirts a few years ago) has started her own rockabilly band called **Bubbles And The Bucks** and is busy playing clubs in North Texas.

Spent some time talking with **Frank Rodarte** and **Jack Barber**, both of **Doug Sahn's Texas Tornados**, the other day. **Barber** was responding to a compliment from a fan that he was the best bass player in the world. He decided that he was second to **Bee Spears** and then third after **Charlie Mingus**. By the time I left, **Jack** had decided he was the fourth or fifth best bass player in the world. **Frank** and I talked a lot about South Texas music and many of the mostly unknown stars indigenous to that area. **Frank's** favorites: **Robert Gomez**, a singer and songwriter from San Antonio, and conjunto accordionist **Estevan Jordan** from Corpus Christi. A lot of news has been filtering up-state lately about that particular conjunto who plays dizzying accordion and wears an eye patch. **Rodarte** believes that conjunto has a chance to become the new reggae (country-related instead of rock-related).

**Freddy Fender** told me his favorite conjunto was **Tony De La Rosa** of San Antonio. **Freddy's** new album is titled *If You're Ever in Texas*. **Freddy** and soul-mate **Doug Sahn** are set to do a live album together for ABC at **Armadillo World**

**Headquarters** soon.

**Cowboy Jack Clement**, who moved back to Texas briefly (he said it was just to make sure the Arabs didn't buy **The Alamo**) and then returned to Nashville should be releasing his own album soon. He debuted it at a new club in Nashville, with **Alvin Crow** and the **Pleasant Valley Boys** as opening act. **Clement**, according to eye witnesses, has dyed his hair blonde-red in preparation for his new stardom. **Clement** also produced a new album for



Doug Sahn

**Stoney Edwards** which supposedly includes *Deep Elm Blues* as well as the expected country cuts. Maybe **Jack** will be able to do for **Stoney** what he did for country's first black star, **Charley Pride**. Word is that he also had **Stoney** playing his own lead guitar, something he's never done before on record.

**Ray Price**, who's been living in Dallas for the past few years, has a new album out called *Hank 'n' Me*, wherein he sings a collection of **Hank Williams** songs. It was **Hank** who got **Ray** his first appear-

ance on the **Grand Ole Opry**.

Dropped by **BMC** the other day and met **Donnie** and **Bruce** who own and operate the leading guitar making and repair shop in the state. Country performers have been taking their instruments there for repair for some time now but they also make guitars carried by the likes of **Z.Z. Top**, **Lynyrd Skynyrd**, and **Point Blank**.

**Bobby Blue Bland**, who released a progressive country album not long ago, was in Austin recently for a solid week. He's still two steps from the blues and great. **Mel Brown** and **Charles Polk**, the former guitarist and drummer with **Bobby**, both left some time ago to join up with **Tompall Glaser's Outlaw Band** in Nashville.

The **Legendary Stardust Cowboy**, **Norm Odam**, has returned. Originally from **Buddy Holly's** hometown of **Lubbock**, **Norm** was discovered by Fort Worth's famed **Maj. Bill Smith** and ultimately promoted by **Shelby Singleton** and **Mercury**. In '68 he had a semi-hit with *Paralyzed* which some trades called the worst record of the year. From there he did things like lead the Christmas parade in Cleveland, and appeared on *Laugh-In* several times. Since then **Norm's** career has waned but he's now on the comeback trail with appearances scheduled in Texas and elsewhere and possible plans to put together a recording deal with ex-Fort Worth musician **T-Bone Burnette**.

**Outlaw Blues** revisited—the movie we've been talking about—finally started filming in Austin. **Peter Fonda's** apparent idea of a Texas musician (or outlaw if we have to use the word) is that of an aging fraternity boy of questionable sexuality. I watched several scenes being filmed including the title song done by **Fonda**. It's a terrible song made worse by **Fonda's** timid vocals. In general the movie seems to be so far removed from what it purports to represent that it comes off as a bad joke. It's probably inevitable, however, that the first Austin exploitation film would come out awful. Other movie news: a group called **Ensemble Films** in California is preparing to adapt **Charles Townsend's San Antonio Rose** (the excellent biography of **Bob Wills**) to the screen. Everyone's wondering who they'll pick to portray **Wills**.

By far the kinkiest group to hit town is **Zorro** and the **Blue Footballs**, originally from Arkansas (in fact they supposedly entertained at a dinner-dance for the Arkansas Highway Patrol shortly before leaving for Texas). They have definitely become the local answer to country porn, waving the private parts of a walrus around on stage among other antics.



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## NEWS

### Delbert Ascending: Fort Worth Honkytonk Music Rides Again



Delbert McClinton at the piano: honkytonk hunt and peck.

Delbert McClinton has been called "the authentic Fort Worth sound," which means country-based blues, or blues-based rock 'n' roll, or . . . well, actually, it's just good, solid, get-down, bluesy honky-tonk music. In three words, fun and funky.

McClinton is on his first national tour, coinciding with the release of his second ABC album, *Genuine Cowhide*. The first, *Victim of Life's Circumstances*, went "completely unnoticed," according to Delbert. "The week I signed with ABC, everybody got fired, and after that, they didn't even know I was on the label, until *Penthouse* magazine said it was 'the best record of the year and nobody noticed it, not even ABC.' Now they're paying a little bit more attention."

Modest, shy and soft-spoken, with a drawl as Southern as it is Texan, McClinton has long been a figure on the Texas

music scene. "Let me make a point: Texas music is not all progressive country. I've said a few things in interviews that I probably shouldn't have said because they got written up wrong, and it sounded like I was badmouthing all that, which I'm not. There's a lot of good stuff coming out of progressive but there's a lot of bad stuff too." Declining to comment on what he considers either the good or the bad stuff, McClinton did however name his favorite songwriter. "Billy Joe Shaver's the first hero I've had in a long time. He's the greatest thing since—well, I hate to say Hank Williams 'cause everybody says that—but since, well . . . Hank Williams."

Despite his present opinion of the progressive scene, Delbert lived in Austin for a while, "until it got so dadgum crowded," and has played Willie Nelson's 4th of July Picnic. He was scheduled to appear again this year until the infamous three-days-

vs.-one-day legal hassles caused the on-again-off-again problems and forced him to pull out. He did go to Gonzales that Sunday, though, to see the jam with some of his friends.

Born in the Panhandle town of Lubbock, Delbert moved to Fort Worth at 11, when his father changed jobs, and at 13 picked up his first guitar. "It's a very vivid memory—my next-to-oldest brother got to runnin' with this dude that played guitar and he wanted to get him one, so he bought an old Kay for \$3, strings about that far off the neck (Delbert laughingly holds his fingers two inches apart). He just messed with it, and I got hooked." His grandmother played guitar, too, but "she didn't know very many songs, religious stuff mostly."

Delbert spent his teenage years on rhythm guitar and harmonica backing blues greats. "In the late 50's and early 60's, Fort Worth was a big blues area. I don't know why, I didn't even think about it then, 'cause I just thought that was the way it was everywhere. We were working at this club called Jack's Place that at least twice a month brought in people like Jimmy Reed, Joe Tex, Joe Turner, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson. That's where I learned to play harp, from all those guys."

McClinton holds two Fort Worth musical honors: having been in the only white band, the Straightjackets, to play *Blue Monday Night* at the Skyliner Ballroom, "one of those places built in the 30's where the top would roll back," and being the first white artist to be heard on all-black KNOK, doing a Sonny Boy Williamson song called *Wake Up, Baby*.

Next came the long years of dues-paying. Then in 1971, at the request of friend and co-picker Glen Clark, McClinton moved to California. They formed Delbert and Glen, cut two albums for Earl McGrath, and played various places, including the Troubadour.

Back home, Delbert got a call from an old friend, who had become manager of the Dallas district office for ABC, inviting him to do some demos to send to ABC to "see what happens . . . so I did and he did and we did."

The result was *Victim of Life's Circumstances*, produced by Chip Young and recorded in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The album contains all McClinton material, eleven songs ranging from the country sound of *Two More Bottles of Wine* to the pure boogie of *Ruby Louise*. The second album, *Genuine Cowhide*, also produced by Young, boasts only two of Delbert's tunes, concentrating on old rock 'n' roll songs such as *Please, please, please; lip-stick, Powder and Paint*, and *Let the*

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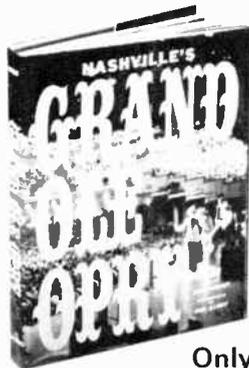
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# Country Scene

## Good Times Roll.

According to McClinton, there were good reasons for the vast difference between the two albums. "I'd spent the four years before *Victim*, beginning with the move to California, in heavy concentration on my own music. But back when those (rock 'n' roll) records were big, I wanted to be doing 'em. Chip Young thought it was a great idea. We weren't trying to do 'em like oldies, but like it was the first time. I also wanted to get the sound of *fun* on there, to get away from tracking. The whole album was live, except the horns and vocal harmonies. It's all group energy."

The next album, he says, will be primarily his own material again. Hopefully, it will include a few of the songs which are a part of the current show, such as his lovely, haunting *Take It Easy (Lovin' Me)*.

After brief sojourns in Nashville and Austin, the McClintons—Delbert, his wife Donna Sue, 15-year-old Monty and 2-

year-old Clay—are back in Fort Worth living quietly. Obviously proud of and pleased with his kids, McClinton is a good, old-fashioned father. When Monty asked for a set of drums, Delbert told him he wouldn't buy some "to have 'em sit over in the corner. If you want to play bad enough, you'll find some way to make some money to get 'em."

McClinton says, "Nowadays it's really hard for kids to find anything to get into, 'sides trouble. If he has to scrounge around and buy 'em piece by piece in a pawn shop, he'll figure some way to get 'em, and those are the people that usually end up playing."

A new (and much beloved) addition to the McClinton family was discovered by Delbert on sale at a flea market in Arkansas one Sunday afternoon—a '47, "looks like brand-new, completely original, except the front seat's been recovered," fluid-drive Chrysler limousine.

SHARON McCORMICK

## Watch This Face: Tom Bresh

Tom Bresh's successful recording of *Home Made Love* put him on the country music map. He was more than a little happy when the record became a top ten hit.

"The minute I heard it, I liked it," Tom said. "I thought it would be a hit, but was surprised because I was an unknown and on a new label. If it climbed higher than number 40, I would have been thrilled."

Things have been moving quickly for Tom Bresh since he was nominated as most promising male vocalist by the Academy of Country Music. The notoriety helped to win him a guest spot on *The Merv Griffin Show* and *Dinah!* Tom capitalized on the experience. His slick impersonations of everyone from Charley Pride to Truman Capote made a big impact.

Tom's fine voice and guitar mastery were readily apparent. He learned to pick from the old master himself, Merle Travis, and Tom is proving that he learned his lessons well.

After appearing at 1976 Fan Fair, Tom appeared on *Merv* and *Dinah!* again, making three guest spots on each show.

These latest TV appearances featured Tom's new Farr release *Sad Country Love Song*, which quickly appeared on the charts, making television producers anxious to include him on still more shows. Tom has been set to tape *Music Hall America* in Opryland and *The Tommy Hunter Show* in Toronto.

A Tom Bresh album is being planned

by Farr, and there's even talk about a possible Tom Bresh-Merle Travis album.

Tom's current success is the result of long years of hard work. By the age of six he was singing and billed as "Hollywood's Youngest Stunt Man" at the Corriganville



Tom Bresh

Movie Ranch. He appeared on many television shows such as *Rin Tin Tin* and *Have Gun, Will Travel*, falling down mountains, buildings and stairways.

As he grew up, Tom's musical skills developed under Merle Travis' guidance. At the age of 16, he was hired for Hank Penny's touring show. As his stage presence grew, he got more and more solo spots. He spent four years on the road, then moved to Seattle where he spent time on other interests such as producing records and running a recording studio.

SANFORD BROKAW

## Fan Club Scene: The Silver Fox

The man about whom I'm writing really needs no introduction. With the mere mention of the word "Silver," you know the star of our fan club is Charlie Rich, The Silver Fox.

When one considers all of Charlie's activities (including performances, benefits, etc.), it is easy to see that it isn't Charlie's inactivity that makes it easy for us to keep abreast of his life. We owe thanks to Louise Young, President of the club, for her successful work in this endeavor.

There is the distinct feeling of being on the "inside" in belonging to the club. The newsletters are not unlike a warm and personal letter from a dear friend or relative. And a letter written to the club receives prompt attention, and is thoughtfully answered.

The club's dues are \$4 a year. Members receive a membership card, photographs,

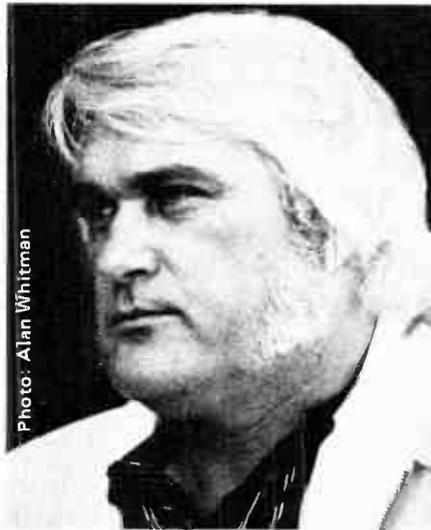


Photo: Alan Whitman

Charlie Rich

a biography of Charlie, newsletters and more. For more information contact Louise Young, President, Charlie Rich Fan Club, 8417 Ensley Lane, Leawood, Kansas 66206.

SUIZI K. HILL

### NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF OTHER CLUBS YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONTACT:

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## The Outlaws: Hollywood Bowling In Tinseltown



Waylon Jennings and Steve Young



Jessi Colter

Photos: Charlyn Zlotnik

A fast-paced show with some of the best sounds in country music was delivered to a capacity crowd in Hollywood last August as Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Jessi Colter, Tompall Glaser, and Steve Young literally took over the Hollywood Bowl.

Despite security hassles (Bowl security didn't quite know how to cope with the large number of fans who showed up backstage from Texas, Colorado, Tennessee and various parts of California), and restrictions on the sound level due to the central location of the Bowl, the show was smooth. The decibel checker—the man who kept his eye/ear on the sound level—was dispatched to the quietest corner of the stadium to measure the sound.

Opening the show was Steve Young, of *Renegade Picker* fame, with a tight set. With Captain Midnight from Glaser Studios on hand to make the introductions, Tompall Glaser followed, backed by the versatile Outlaw Band. Willie and band performed with a couple of guests, including Toy Caldwell of the Marshall Tucker Band and the emcee of the show, Jimmy Rabbitt, on tambourine. Backed by the Waylors, Jessi took over at the piano and ended her set with *You Hung the Moon*, *Didn't You Waylon?*; at this point Waylon stepped out and together they let loose with *Suspicious Minds*. Waylon was hot from the first chords of *Con't You See*, through the second duet of the evening, this time with Willie on *Good-Hearted Woman*, and had the crowd stomping, clapping and out of their seats by *Hank*.

The second show took place afterwards backstage as musicians, actors, Hell's Angels, legends and near legends met and mingled in an atmosphere of total craziness. Ringo Starr was introduced to Willie with Bernie Taupin and actress Candy Clark following close behind. Taupin was

introduced as "the man who writes the words" by Ringo. Sporting a newly shaved head and gold earring, Ringo posed for pictures with everyone from Ramblin' Jack Elliot to fans who had slipped backstage to check out the scene. Waylon, seemingly oblivious to the chaos outside,

extolled the virtues of Steve Young to everyone in his dressing room, including Steve Young.

As attempts were made to close the Bowl, many decided to continue the evening across town at the Palomino Club.

CHARLYN ZLOTNIK

## New Products



A super dreadnought has been added to Fender Musical Instrument's acoustic guitars—the 115 flat top, designed for the demanding musician. The instrument is 40 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches long with 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch scale. The bridge is ebony with removable saddle and two additional saddles for string height alteration. Truss rod is adjustable. Included with the F-115 is its own hard-shell plush lined case.



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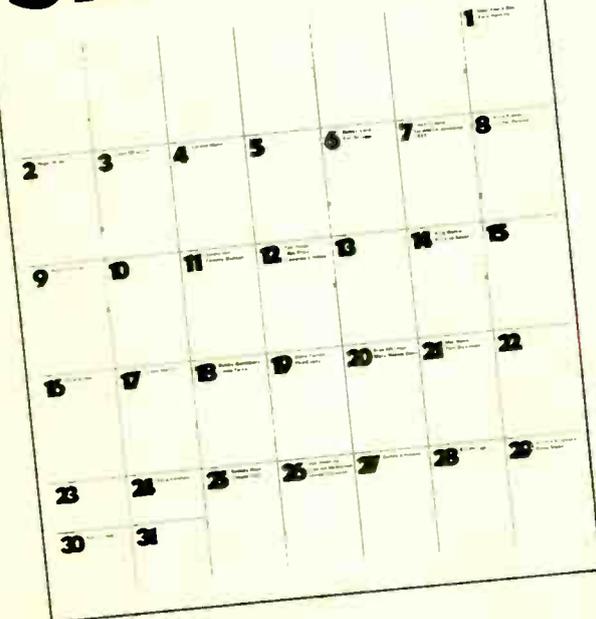
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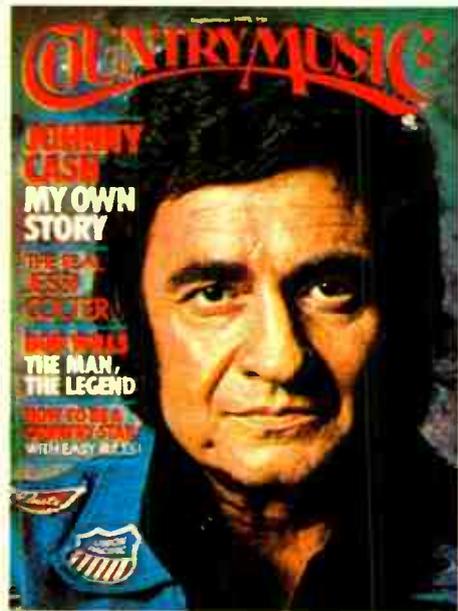
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# OUTLAW BLUES

“In their obsession with making country music ‘legitimate,’ it never occurred to the moguls of country that American youth and young adults could identify with a bunch of over-thirty highway gypsies.”

by **DAVE HICKEY**

**C**omin' atcha again with my annual, unofficial, semipublic report on the status of post-house-broken country music. I am writing, as usual, in the predawn hours under desperate circumstances in Nashville's incomparable Americana Apartments. That much hasn't changed, but everything else has, since Dripping Springs, Tex., in March of '72 when the Outlaws gave a party and nobody came, and I ended up having to pay Billy Joe Shaver's way home—where he didn't go anyhow.

The last time I saw Shaver, he didn't see me. He nearly ran me down in his brand new, giant, white Lincoln, which he docked abruptly and exploded out of, like Hoot Gibson on White Powder, in a brand new giant white cowboy hat—I guess you could say that the boy has come a ways since *Black Rose*.

Well, so has everything. As you have probably heard even in Fresno, our kind of music is now officially a “movement,” complete with its own press, bumper stickers, buttons, tee-shirts and souvenir ashtrays. Depending on who's cutting the deck, it's called “progressive country” or “Outlaw” music, and its followers have been known to hyperventilate at the mention of the word “cowboy” or “longneck.”

This only happens, of course, 'cause some good musicians made some good records and sold a whole bunch of them, thus gaining the undivided attention of

those fellows in the music business who hyperventilate at the mention of the word “profit” (In truth, it's a word which gets me off better than “cowboy” anyway.) So in Nashville these days, you just *cain't git* outlaw enough. All the bars look like the Last Chance Saloon and there are two pair of Luchese Boots and three Stetsons per capita here on Muzak Row (not counting Bobby Bare's hat, which he stole from Red Lane who don't remember where he got it except it wasn't from no cowboy). I went into the Peddler for lunch and it looked like the “MILD BUNGH”—pretty much of a fashion coup in a town where the last known cow was seen wandering down Interstate 40 after a stock truck from Kansas City turned over at the Chattanooga turnoff.

Not to say that everything is red-eye and roses here in Dodge City, Tennessee. After the CMA and *Rolling Stone* went so far as to certify the fact that Waylon Jennings *did* indeed exist and would play your party for a modest fee, Waylon decided to pass up last year's CMA Awards show and managed to upset everybody 'til it was discovered that Waylon didn't want to miss *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which was on TV at the same time. Never a town to stifle a man's religious aspirations, Nashville forgave him. But even so, Waylon has found his new star quality a little hard on his social life. It's tough, you know, to

shoot pinball while a posse of 35 Rodeo Fonzies cluster about, copying your moves and saying, “Hey, cool, Waylon; wow, man.” So Waylon has retreated, moved his offices out of Glaser Brothers' studio (which was beginning to look like a Gunsmoke rerun) and replaced nearly his entire staff. (It is rumored that ex-Waylon Jennings employees and Tammy's ex-husbands are banding together to form their own VFW Post.) This is fine with me, but I *am* sorry Waylon doesn't do his Johnny Cash imitation any more. He used to (on late sets and other demented occasions), sling his guitar around a la The Man In Black, and sing:

*Mah name is Johnny Cash,  
I used to have a monkey on my back,  
Now, I got the Carter Family,  
Singing all my harmony  
God, I wish I had my monkey back.*

Now, if a fellow like Waylon, who was never much of a gladhander, is having problems with his elbow room, I want you to try to imagine what it's like around Willie Nelson these days. You heard the rumor that Willie has been appointed Interim Supreme Being for all of Texas, Oklahoma and much of New Mexico? Well, I confirmed the fact in Ruidoso, where Willie played a date before the Kansas Futurity. The hall he played, roughly the size of metropolitan Shal-

lowater, remained fully packed and fully loaded throughout one of Willie's five-hour marathon sets. I mean, the line for the *restroom* was three blocks long. By the time the beer ran out, so were many of the patrons running out—into the parking lot, only to return for more.

And let me assure those who suspect that Willie's following is composed of, uh, "underground" types: there was nary a hairy hippie in the house (unless you count Willie's drummer, Paul English, whose antisocial behavior predates even the Beatniks). No sir, these were good ole boys whose love of country music is surpassed only by their passion for well-bred horses and yellow-haired women. So, I can assure you that though Willie may be in *People Magazine*, he's still just folks in New Mexico. Also, if anyone is worried about Willie "going rock-and-roll," the three Chuck Berry tunes he played late in the evening would have reassured you that Willie does indeed have a country act.

Willie and Waylon's late blooming has, however, generated a certain amount of mutual backpatting, such as David Allan Coe's single called *Willie, Waylon and Me*. It inspired me to entitle my next novel *Shakespeare, Hemingway and Me*, and leads me to sympathize with the fellow who sat beside me on a recent flight from Memphis. He took a look at my Waylon tee-shirt and grumbled, "Them country singers. They used to sing about us, now all they do is sing about them."

If you've been around Nashville much, though, that urge toward self-definition and self-assertion is easy to understand. It also explains why the Outlaws, having broken jail, look less like a unified group than they did when they banded together to get the hell out of the Nashville straight-jacket.

The fact is there isn't really any such thing as an "Outlaw" style, except on the less talented fringes of Nashville and Austin. If there were, the revolution would have been in vain, because the original rebellion, if you can call it that, was against the stylistic bondage enforced by executives and programmers as to what was country music. Locked inside, Waylon, Willie, Tompall, Bare and any number of others seemed to have a lot of things in common, when in fact they just had one: *they wanted out*.

Once at large it became obvious that they were all being held for different offenses. Their subsequent success did, however, call into question some of the time-honored procedures of the Nashville music scene.

Traditionally, Nashville music has been made with the unspoken assumption that the market for any one country record was relatively small, compared to pop, rock 'n roll or rhythm-and-blues. So the emphasis was on making a lot of different records as cheaply as possible. The technology of sixteen-plus-track recording and the talent of the non-music-reading Nashville pickers was directed toward efficiency

and cost-cutting. Sixteen-track studios which could, if time was spent, create really miraculous recordings, were used to create good improvised arrangements by holding one improvisation while trying for a better one, allowing tremendous savings, since it dispensed with the arrangers required by earlier methods and by union rules in places like New York and LA. This kind of recording, though, ended up neglecting the creative gift of the musicians while taking advantage of their musicianship to generate quick, acceptable "head" arrangements.

As a result, Nashville, blessed with the technology and talent to make great recordings, became a Mecca for people interested in making quick, cheap ones. I have personally seen, for instance, a country album rehearsed, cut and mixed in less than 12 hours. This was assumed to be good, since not many people would buy the album anyway. It never seemed to occur to anyone that the market would be small *because* the record only took 12 hours to make, until people like Tompall

**"It's tough, you know, to shoot pinball while a posse of 35 Rodeo Fonzies cluster about, copying your moves and saying 'Hey, cool, Waylon; wow, man.'"**

Glaser, Allen Reynolds, Waylon and Bare asserted themselves, and, operating on the principle that good music was good music, began making records which, if less perfect in some respects, were more personal and *much* more carefully made. Simply, they invested more money, time and effort up-front in hopes of making more than you were supposed to be able to make—and damned if they didn't do it.

At this point Nashville recording entered the mainstream of contemporary recorded music, and a "good" record began to mean something more than just "well-done." The success of the so-called Outlaws also disproved another Nashville truism—this one about the nature of "crossover"—that is, about how a country record gains popularity outside the country market. Industry wisdom about such crossover material was that country was always destined to cross into the so-called pop market rather than the rock-'n-roll market. The difference being that in pop, what sold was the song; the artist was not important. In rock-'n-roll, the artist was all important; the singer on a pop record was

just a recreative artist doing a "version" of a song. A rock artist, however, had a statement to make, or at least a style to be emulated or admired. The song was the vehicle for his entire personality. Before the Outlaws, only Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard, with their grassroots populism, had been able to extend their audiences much beyond the country charts and even then they were touted as folk artists. In their obsession with making country music "legitimate," in taking it into the television, middle-class mainstream of American music, it just never occurred to the moguls of country that American youth and young adults could identify with a bunch of over-thirty highway gypsies.

Somehow Nashville became so obsessed with reaching Billy Sherrill's imaginary "40-year-old housewife washing dishes at three in the afternoon in Pittsburg, Kansas," that it forgot about the guy in the honky-tonks and the kids coming out of the 1960s—people who could find some common cause with guys like Willie and Tompall and Waylon who had somehow made it past the ominous age of 30 into adulthood with some degree of integrity.

It never occurred to the men who shaped country music that the sons and daughters of George Jones and Ray Price fans were listening to the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Marshall Tucker Band, and not Donnie and Marie. In fact, it probably never occurred to the Outlaws themselves, encapsulated as they were in that non-world called "the road." They simply broke away from the mainstream so they could express themselves as individuals and honor the tradition of country music which they felt to be worth preserving. It is one of the ironies of the scene that so-called progressive country is much more conservative than the "Top-40" variety. The subject matter and instrumentation might be updated, but the conscious homage to and respect for the music and sentiment of men like Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills and Hank Williams is just as intense. As is their commitment to restore to country music those elements which have been subtly censored by mainstream country—especially the influences of the black blues and of early rhythm-and-blues, which from its very inception was a cooperative black-white music. The so-called progressive country movement, at least from where I stand, is less a rene-gade movement than a liberation movement. Having listened to roughly 40 albums dubbed "progressive" country, I can tell you that no two touch the same roots or attack the same shibboleths. But what a lot of interesting music: ranging from James Talley's socially committed folk style to Johnny Gimble's beautiful restoration Texas dance hall music, to the Lost Gonzo Band's seamless blend of country and rock, which manages to avoid being country rock.

Most important for *me*, however, is the restoration of the funky white country blues, which I always thought was coun-



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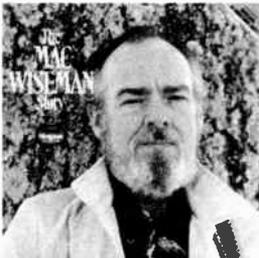
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It is a grey, overcast day in Nashville, the kind with a hint of rain in the air, and the neon "WB" hanging in the front window of the Warner Brothers Records office gives it something of a Southern funeral parlor look. Inside, a reporter is waiting for Donna Fargo to arrive for an interview, and thinking that something is out of kilter—that somehow it doesn't seem right to be seeing Donna, whose work is filled with bright images of warmth and sunshine, on an October day when a touch of coolness is keeping people indoors and wrapped up into themselves.

Donna is not only on time, she's early. As she steps through the office door, she is prettier than most of her photographs let on, and—a month away from her 31st birthday—looking considerably younger

than, say, the picture on the back of her *On the Move* album. Mr. Blackwell, the fashion designer who last year named her to his Worst-Dressed List, would not be pleased with what she has on—a yellow t-shirt underneath a navy zip-up sweatshirt, jeans rolled up just below the knee, and navy boots, her ensemble accented by a Mickey Mouse watch and set off by a pair of pink-tinted, aviator-style sunglasses.

Four years ago, during the 13-month reign of Donna's *The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A.* on the country charts, a reporter would probably have taken one look at the singer/songwriter's eyewear and run back to his typewriter to tell the world that Donna Fargo sees the world through rose-colored glasses. That's the kind of stuff they wrote about her back then, and, unfortunately, old images not

only don't die, they don't even fade away. The idea of Fargo as a starry-eyed, blindly happy ingenue has hung on in the years since she first turned the country music industry on its proverbial ear in 1972, winning almost every award you can think of for *Happiest Girl* and following up that million-seller with four more consecutive number-one singles, *Funny Face* (also a million-seller), *Superman*, *You Were Always There* and *Little Girl Gone*.

But to employ that old rose-colored glasses cliché this late in the game would not only be hackneyed, but inaccurate, because Donna Fargo is anything but a one-dimensional songwriter—or, for that matter, person. And when the subject of her typecasting comes up in the conversation, Donna's face takes on a look that says she's thought of all this before—a lot.

## DONNA'S DILEMMA by Alanna Nash

*Every day isn't necessarily a skippity-do-dah day.*



Although Donna's records don't sell as well as they used to, she is one of the most exciting performers in country music. Whether singing or signing autographs, she knows how to reach an audience. Her fans are very loyal.



"If there's anything to appreciate about my work," she begins in her usual self-deprecating style, sitting in a large desk chair that all but engulfs her petite frame. "I wish people would appreciate the more-than-one dimension of it. I never saw *Happiest Girl* as frivolous, but some did. It was a thought, an attitude that I related to and hoped others would. Whatever it is and however it is interpreted, it is and will always be a part of me, a dominating part, or I don't think fate would have allowed it for me.

"I appreciate any consideration given me, and I'm glad I did something that meant something to someone, but I would obviously like my work to be viewed in a larger perspective. *Happiest Girl* and *Funny Face* are only one side of me. I'm happy, because I have a deep faith and devotion to life, but that doesn't mean I'm

blind to pressure, immune from problems, or free from boredom. I mean, all of my days are not skippety-do-dah days. I don't think we're that one-dimensional. And I like variety, and that's a part of me I try for in every album, and in my songwriting, because I think we're all complicated."

Still, Donna admits that she and Stan Silver, her manager and producer, as well as her husband, intentionally contributed to the *Happiest Girl* image when they brought out *Superman* as Donna's third single. Despite the fact that *Superman* is a tough little song that challenges the male ego—hardly the theme of *Happiest Girl*—many people tend to equate "up tempo" with "happy."

"I thought at the time we did it that it was a real risk and probably the wrong thing to do, because I didn't want to get classified, but it was awfully hard not to

get classified, because those (first) two records were so big."

In many ways the classification was unfair even at the time it happened, because from the beginning of her career and her first album, Donna was concerned with saying other things and exploring other human relationships than those she talked about in *Happiest Girl* and *Funny Face*. Certainly the last two of her five consecutive number-one singles, *You Were Always There* and *Little Girl Gone*, were careful and introspective, as well as bittersweet, looks at the people and the place that formed her childhood and molded her into the adult she became. And her second album contained a down-tempo, straightforward song about as different from *Happiest Girl* as possible—*Forever Is As Far As I Could Go*—about the decidedly *unhappy* subject of suicide.

Since those first two albums, Donna's writing has improved as she's grown as both a person and as a craftsman, despite occasions when she settles for clichés in her lyrics ("You're as welcome as the flowers in the spring") and when she lapsed into labored devices and excessive cuteness, especially in her titles, such as *2 Sweet, 2 Be, 4 Gotten*, written in mathematical form on the lyric sheet. Her melodies, for the most part, have, thankfully, lost their occasional sing-songiness, which at times sounded as if she were leading a grade school group. On the other hand, when Donna's work has been good, it has been among the best in country music.

Warner Brothers obviously realized that, because last January, when Donna's ABC/Dot contract was up, they signed her for reputedly well over \$1 million, with the idea that she would both act in and write music for films in addition to making records. (No one is giving specific details of the deal, and Donna will only say the rumored figure of \$3½ million is "a little steep.") Ostensibly, the record company was interested in acquiring Donna to beef up its stable of country-pop artists (Buck Owens, Margo Smith, Ray Stevens and Hank Williams, Jr., were subsequently signed). Whatever WB's reason for coming up with that much money at a time when Donna's career was floundering, she says she went with them because "they seemed so excited and interested in me, and enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm."

As a result, she turned out her finest album ever, *On the Move*, writing eight of the ten cuts (she has written 52 of the 62 songs on her six LPs), three of which—*Mr. Doodles*, *Song With No Music*, and *I've Loved You All of the Way*, must rank among the strongest of all her compositions.

With these songs, she has finally fully developed many of the concepts she attempted before with only some artistic success. The album, featuring some of Nashville's most legendary studio pickers, seems to radiate that enthusiasm Donna talks about, and if the arrangements are

(Continued on page 60)



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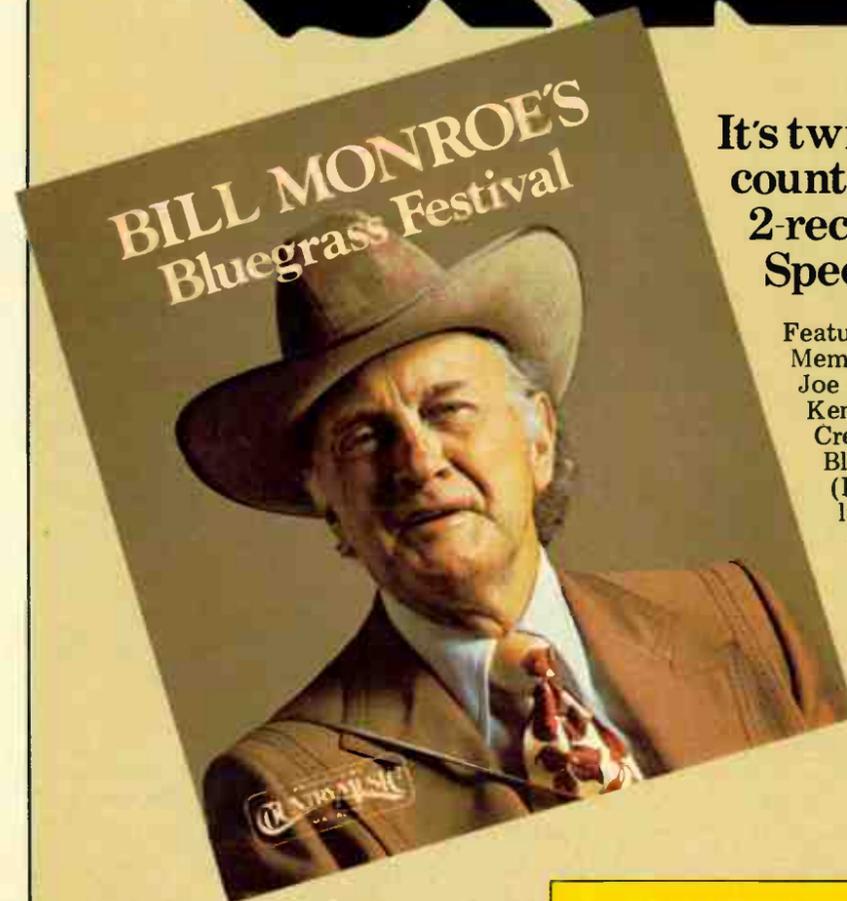


# Nostalgia The ~~Statler~~ Bros.

by JOHN PUGH

In these times when almost every country music artist is growing a beard, long hair and a Stetson; when the erstwhile, straightest, most establishment cats imaginable are suddenly showing up as quasi-outlaws or cowboys; when everyone wants a song about hombres, honchos or machos; in the midst of all this, like a high school prom queen in Times Square, behold the Statler Brothers. And behold them very strongly. For still in the midst of all this, the Statler Brothers

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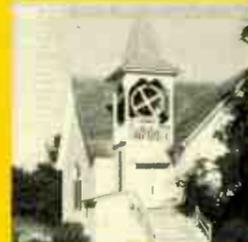
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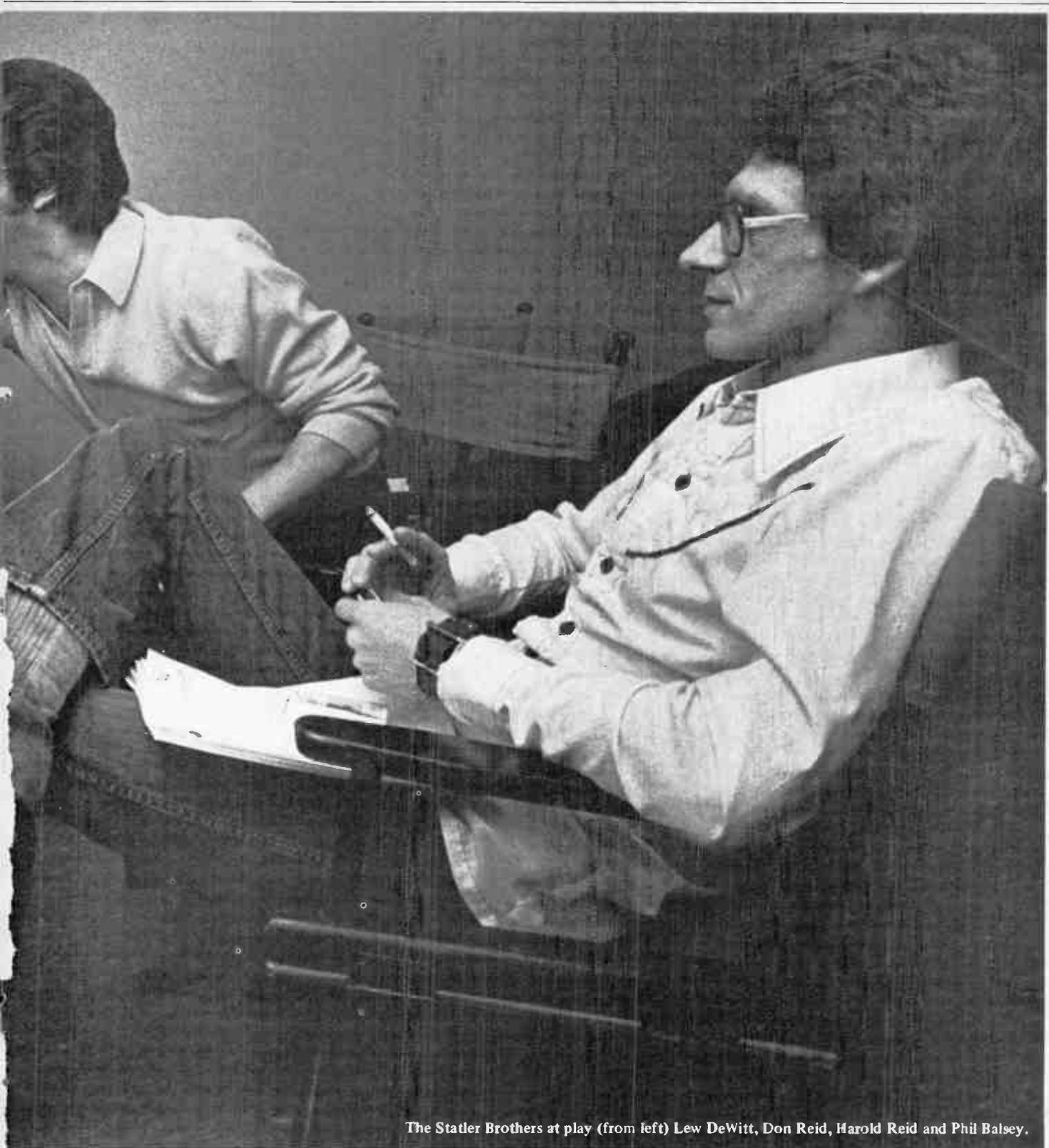
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The Statler Brothers at play (from left) Lew DeWitt, Don Reid, Harold Reid and Phil Balsey.

have become the most successful group in country music. Also the best. And the most-awarded. And the most-programmed. And the most . . . Etc., etc.

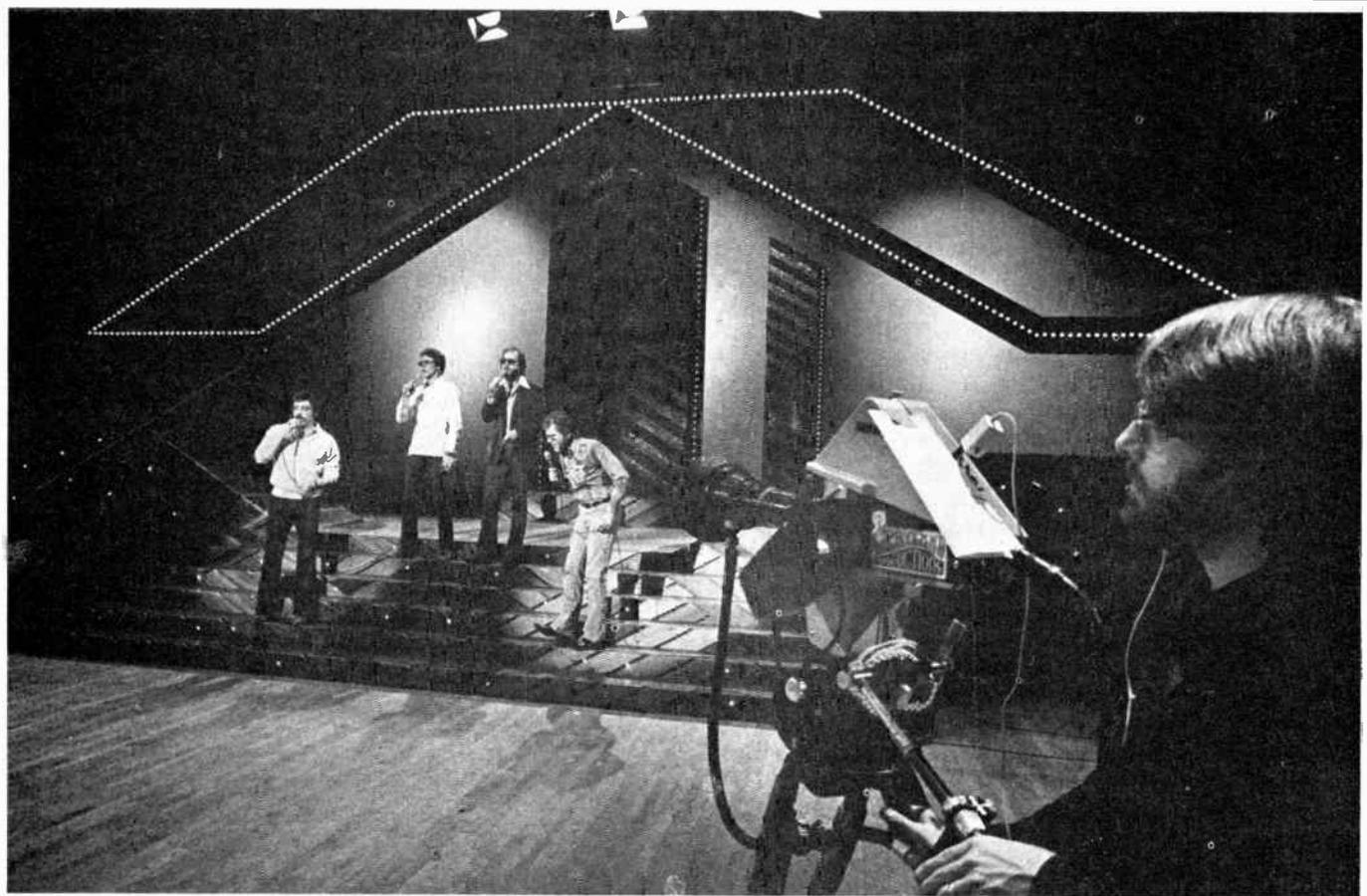
The Statlers do not flaunt their anachronistic quality, their squareness, if you will, nor do they make any apologies for it. They simply lay it on the line that this is what they are: i.e., four family men (with 14 children among them) from basic wage-earner stock (without going into the trite litany about having once lived four

miles from the nearest dirt path) who do not dope up, kick ass, keep a little filly on the side, stay lost for four or five days at a time, or try to come across as a combination of Matt Dillon, Paul Newman and Evel Knievel.

But all sweetness and light aside, and forgetting for a moment that virtue is its own reward, the Statler Brothers would not be where they are today if they were not the greatest show group in country music—perhaps the greatest anywhere.

They re-earn such acclaim on every show they give, as they did last fall in Roanoke, Va. The emcee introduces them promptly at eight and they are on—to thunderous pandemonium. With the exceptions of Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash, no other country music performers know how to come on stage as well as the Statlers—with a little strut, a little swagger, a funny or two and a lot of “Hi folks, we’re the Statler Brothers” kind of air. They are quickly into their songs: *Pictures*.

Photos: J. Clark Thomas



The Statlers rehearse for a recent television taping of Music Hall America in Nashville.

*Susan When She Tried, Do You Remember These?, Bed of Roses, Flowers On The Wall.* One does not really realize just how many consistent hits the Statlers have had until they begin singing them—with a harmony that almost floats you away and a performance that leaves you virtually in awe at their talents. The Statlers don't generate electricity, they generate lightning. Laughs, tears, memories, even a touch of magic: the Statlers evoke all of these. And as they do, one begins to notice a marvelous happening: elderly women dancing in the aisles; little kids mouthing the words to every song; parents hoisting their wide-eyed children up on their shoulders, the way *their* parents did with, say, Lash LaRue or Tom Mix, and dreamy young chicks smolderingly eyeing Harold Reid, who, despite his feigned dumb-carefree manner, is right behind Charlie Rich, Johnny Rodriguez and Waylon Jennings as the biggest sex symbol in country music.

The Statlers do a full 45 minutes of songs, comedy and reminiscences, leaving to a tumult generally only accorded to Elvis in Vegas, Willie in Austin or Cash in Folsom. Later, recalling the audience response to the show, talking to fans, and noticing the remarkable rapport between the Statlers and their followers, an observer begins to reach an inescapable conclusion: the main feeling the Statlers evoke is nothing less than love.

Harold and Don Reid, Phil Balsley and

Lew DeWitt grew up in the 1940's and '50's in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. There was nothing particularly eventful about their upbringing until in high school, when they began singing as a gospel quartet. After their respective graduations they worked at nondescript jobs, always singing on the side and always holding fast to their dream of making it big.

"People told us, 'The odds are so much against you,'" recalled Harold. "I said, 'That's what makes it interesting.' I always knew we were going to make it. I didn't know *how*, but I knew it *was* going to happen. We were in the audience at the Roanoke Fair in 1964 where Cash was headlining. We told a promoter we'd like to meet him and he introduced us. The next night we opened the show and Cash told us he liked us. I found the door open and stuck my foot in. For almost a year I flooded him with letters and calls. One night I called Nashville, California, everywhere, and finally ran him down on the set of 'Hootenany.' Nine months after we first met him he finally called us and asked us to go to work for him. Now when anybody asks us how to get in the business, I just say, 'Go see old John.' We worked with Cash eight and a half years. We started getting calls for dates of our own while still trying to fill all the dates with Cash, and we just couldn't keep up. So we left in December of '72. We're still the best of friends with Cash."

They rapidly became acknowledged as the best of performers—as attested to by their den, which resembles your local high school trophy case. If the Statlers never made another dime, they have enough gold and silver on their walls to house, clothe and feed them until the next class of '57 graduates.

But as nice as all the hardware is, it interests the Statlers far less than their wives and families, their old friends, and their little hometown of Staunton, Va. A day with the Statler Brothers is like finding yourself inside a Norman Rockwell print. The Statlers are so clean, so wholesome, so upright that a visitor ends up almost incredulously asking, "Surely there must be *something* here that's more than meets the eye."

"Well, yes, there is one thing," they nervously reply. "Harold's been carrying on a torrid affair with Brenda."

Brenda is Harold's wife.

But even more pervasive than the Statler rectitude is the Statler confederacy. Notwithstanding all the awards and acclaim, perhaps the most amazing Statler feat is their just plain sticking together after all the years and in such an often dissension-laden business. One of the most-often-heard remarks by the boys when they were coming up was that, "A group can't make it in country music." A group *can* make it, of course: the trouble seems to be that none of them can stay together long enough to enjoy it. The



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Lew DeWitt and Don Reid warm up backstage before the show.

Glasers, the Stonemans, the Browns: name your favorite family group and chances are that they have gone their separate ways.

All except one. The Statlers are at a loss to explain their closeness (Harold: "Well, we are a family, aren't we?"), but do take a few stabs at it, saying that they were all lifelong friends before they got into show business, they're all from the same background, etc.

The real reasons are probably so obvious as to be missed entirely. One is the Statler wives. No jealousy, no animosity, no planting ideas in their husbands' heads about why does so-and-so get a bigger part on the show than you. Just four girls next door, who, simply because they married into show business, don't see any reason to act any differently than if they had married into the law faculty. (One of the biggest ironies is that if the Statler wives—particularly Joyce DeWitt—ever got a shot at the limelight, the Brothers might end up driving the bus for them.)

Another reason is Harold Reid. Whenever things might get a little tight, Harold's incredible impromptu sense of humor can always be counted on to re-grease the wheels. They are sitting around talking about some of the old rock and roll legends and how well they all look when Harold takes off on another of his patented soliloquies. "Martha Kinsey looks real good, too . . . She lives right over the hill here . . . 93 years old and don't look a day over 86 . . . Went on a picnic last week and it only took her four days to get back . . . Course, the picnic was in her back yard . . . Took a wrong turn at the petunia patch."

Or when a fan asks him how much money they make. "We got a machine

back on the bus that we run toilet paper in one end and \$5 bills out the other," he says, pausing for just the right effect. "So we make as much as we want."

He can also take as well as give. A photographer's camera fails him while attempting to snap a group picture. "Can't complain, it's been a good one," the photographer says.

"So's my wife," says Harold.  
"Yeah, but she's just an amateur," says Don.

"That's funny, I always thought she was a pro," says Lew.

As the others let loose with a barrage of "Uh Oh-h-h-hs," Harold, in the rare position of having been one-upped, with a mock-wounded expression, silently acknowledges that he has been gotten—and good.

Still another is their common interests. The Statlers have always had a sort of Huck Finn-Tom Sawyer quality about them in that they seem to personify the life you wish you had never outgrown. And one gets the distinct feeling that the Statlers, themselves, never really outgrew it at all, and remain four guys who have stuck together as a hedge against ever having to completely leave those Fabulous Forties and Fifties.

Nostalgia may not have started with the Statlers, but it certainly finds its biggest fans among them. "We're always collecting old films, comics, memorabilia," said Harold. "We're always asking each other, 'Do you remember this? Do you remember that?' That's how we came up with the song, just from our everyday conversations. We could have gone on forever. As it was, we had to cut out half of it because it was too long. Some people have credited us with starting the nos-

talgia craze. We didn't, but I feel proud that we have played a part in it. It's the one thing all people have in common: their memories. We're not trying to sell them on anything or asking them to accept anything. We're just saying, 'Come back in time with us for a few minutes.'"

*Does the preacher still visit when some poor soul gets down?*

*Do the stores still stay open on Friday nights downtown?*

*Is Jo Anne still as pretty as when she wore my high school ring?*

*When you see her tell her I said July 1959, she'll know what I mean.'*

The uniqueness of the Statler music has played a large part in their success, composed as it is of basic melodies, simple, yet strong, imaginative and clever lyrics, and subject matter that very few others have even attempted, let alone mastered. The Statlers don't just write about nostalgia per se; rather they use it as a vehicle to bring out emotions for people, places and things you never dreamed you would ever feel again: the high school sweetheart you hadn't thought about in 12 years; the snow-covered town square; the way your mother used to cook at Christmas. As one reviewer aptly wrote, "The Statlers make you remember things you never should have forgotten."

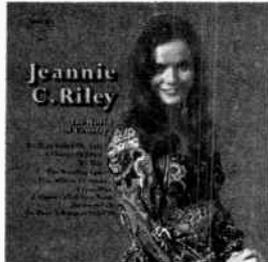
The Shenandoah Valley of Virginia is one of the most fabled regions in America; fabled for its beauty, and tranquility, its history and traditions and its serene timelessness. Spend some time with the Statlers, become familiar with their love of home, and you would just instinctively know that this sort of area spawned them and gave rise to all those wonderful old memories. The Statlers hold a unique position among their fellow townspeople. Everyone knows them, loves them and is proud of them, yet no one really looks at them with the awe generally reserved for celebrities. They go about their business respected and admired, but not bothered or fussed over, in their little town of Staunton, pop. 25,000. And to repay the folks for their kindness the boys give a little get-together every fourth of July. Last year it drew 50,000. Despite all the publicity accorded to all the cowboy-hippie-redneck revelries, the Statler Brothers Fourth of July Picnic has quietly become the biggest festival in country music.

"It started seven years ago," said Harold. "We just wanted to do something for our town. We give all the proceeds to charity, and let all the clubs and organizations have concession booths. Fifty thousand people could really upset a community of this size. But we've never had a fight, a drunk, an arrest, an incident of any kind. It's a real compliment to the town."

And an even bigger compliment to the Statlers. As Ann Peters, their secretary, said, "They project to the fans what they, themselves, are and draw the same caliber

*(Continued on page 59)*

# Great Ladies of country music



**Jeannie C. Riley**—The World of Country: My Man/I Love Him/I Almost Called Your Name/He Made A Woman Out of Me, many more!



**Lynn Anderson**—Flower of Love: Stand by Your Man/ Games People Play/Once A Day/Lie A Little/Paper Mansions/Flower of Love, more!



**Lynn Anderson**—It Makes You Happy: No Another Time/Too Much Of You/It Makes You Happy/Keeping Up Appearances, more!



**Skeeter Davis**—The End Of The World: Hold Me Tight/ The End Of The World/Am I That Easy To Forget?/Son-of-a-Preacher Man, more!



**Skeeter Davis**—He Wakes Me With A Kiss Every Morning: Hello Darlin'/I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry/I Can't Seem To Say Goodbye, more!



**Sammi Smith**—Help Me Make It Through The Night: Then You Waik In/When Michael Calls/Isn't It Sad/He's Everywhere/Kentucky, more!



**Connie Smith & Nat Stuckey**—Even The Bad Times Are Good: Young Love/Let It Be Me/Yours Love/Rings Of Gold, more!



**Anne Murray**—What About Me: It's All Over/There Goes My Everything/Last Thing On My Mind/What About Me/All The Time, more!



**Donna Fargo**—Superman: How Would I/Superman/He Can Have All He Wants/I'd Love You To Want Me/Have Yourself A Time, more!



**Wanda Jackson**—Tears At The Grand Ole Opry: Wasted/If You Knew What I Know/I'd Rather Have A Broken Heart/Lovin' Country Style, more!



**Wanda Jackson**—By The Time I Get To Phoenix: Fever/If I Had A Hammer/By The Time I Get To Phoenix/Your Tender Love/Searchin', more!



**Jan Howard**—Rock Me Back To Little Rock!: Bridge Over Troubled Water/I Still Believe In Love/When We Tried/Rock Me Back To Little Rock, more!

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| 3. Lynn Anderson/It Makes You Happy                    | <input type="checkbox"/> LP SPC-3267  | 9. Donna Fargo/Superman                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> LP SPC-3350  |
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| 6. Sammi Smith/Help Me Make It Through The Night       | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK P8-1137  | 12. Jan Howard/Rock Me Back To Little Rock                | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK P8-259   |
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*Irma Estes from  
Milledgeville, Georgia*



*Miss Dolly Herself*

## *Look-a-like Winners*

Well, country fans, here they are—the winners of our first look-alike contests. In October we asked for photos of a Willie Nelson look-alike. The next month we asked for photos of ladies who resemble Dolly Parton. The prizes? Six albums by the artist whom the winner resembles, plus an autographed photo of that artist.

The Willie Nelson look-alike is Bill Wall of Swanpscott, Maine, while the striking Dolly Parton look-alike is Irma Estes, who owns and operates Irma's Beauty Salon in Milledgeville, Georgia. She could almost pass for Dolly's twin.

We received one look-alike we hadn't asked for. Diane Hollar of Charlotte, North Carolina, sent us a photo and said she looked like Dolly. Well, that's true, but we think she's a dead ringer for Tammy Wynette. So Diane is getting six albums by Tammy plus an autographed picture.

If you feel left out, don't worry. We're having more look-alike contests. This month we're looking for a reader who looks like Emmylou Harris. If people say you resemble her, please send us a photo, preferably black and white, and your name and address, to COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE, Look-a-like Contest, 475 Park Avenue South, New York, New York, 10016. And good luck.



*Emmylou  
Our next Look-alike*

*Dolly Photo Courtesy RCA  
Tammy photo by Paul Levin  
Willie photo by Lon McKee  
Emmylou photo by Art Meier*



*The First Lady*



*Deanne Heller from  
Charlotte, North Carolina*



*Ole Willie*



*Bill Wall from  
Swampscott, Maine*

# SONNY JAMES STICKS TO ICE CREAM

by MICHAEL BANE

NO TWINKIES OR  
DINGS DONGS  
FOR THIS  
COUNTRY BOY

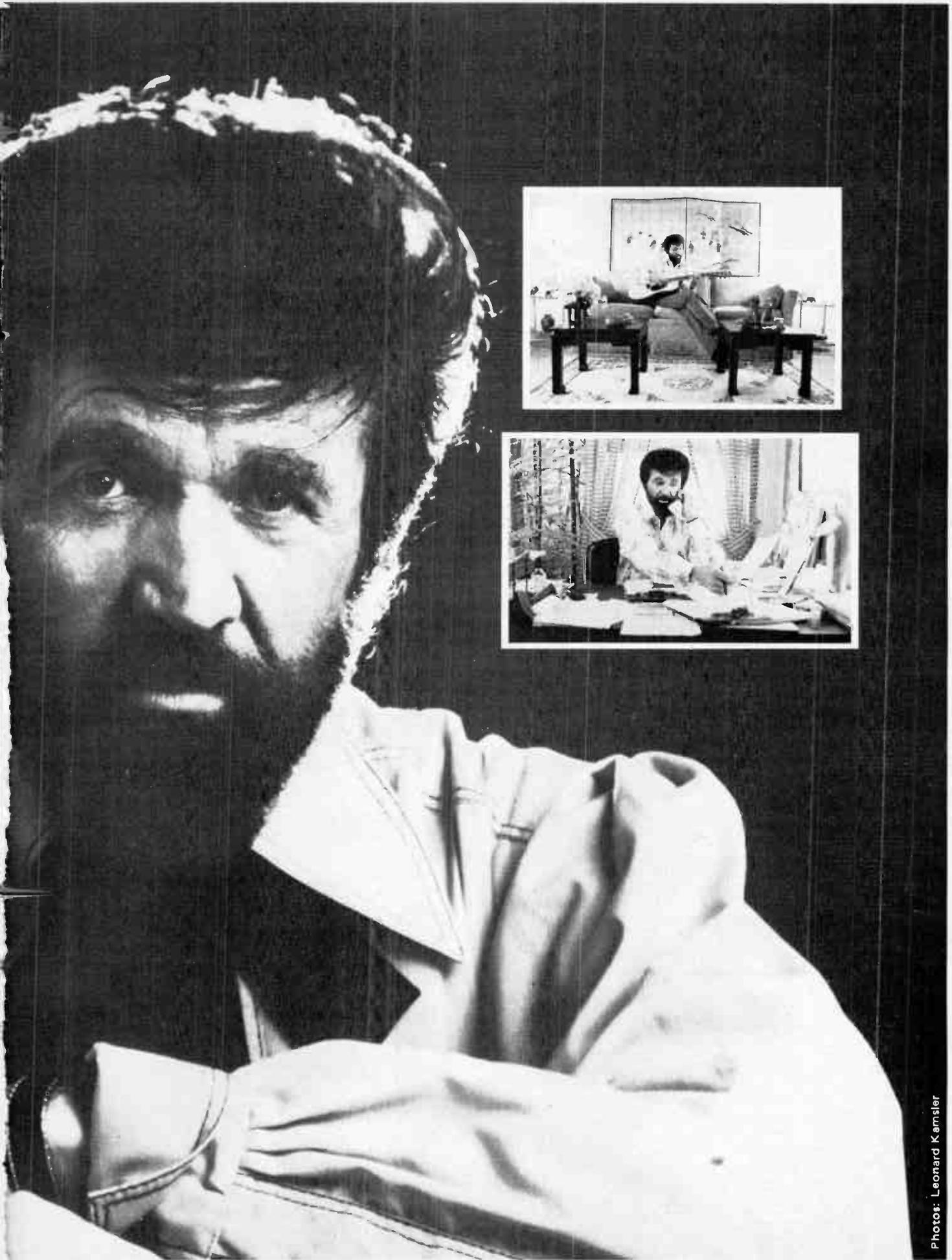
Milkshakes at the Elliston Place Soda Shop just may be the best in the world. They're the old-fashioned, thick and creamy kind, all mixed in shining metal shakers and poured cold into waiting Coca-Cola glasses, with enough milkshake left in the shaker for another full glass. During the summer, if you're so inclined you can sit in the cracking red vinyl booths facing the window, watching the scantily clad Vanderbilt coeds on their way to and from classes and feeding quarters into the jukebox. Even the jukebox at the Elliston Place Soda Shop is something special—rock, country, rhythm and blues, disco—you name it, and it's found its way to the Elliston Place jukebox. And Sonny James turns up on that jukebox no less than six times, far outdistancing his nearest competitors.

Six times—old Sonny James; new Sonny James; 20-year-old Sonny James; right in there with the latest Waylon Jennings and heavy-breather disco hustle from New York; neck-and-neck with everyone from the Rolling Stones to Roy Acuff.

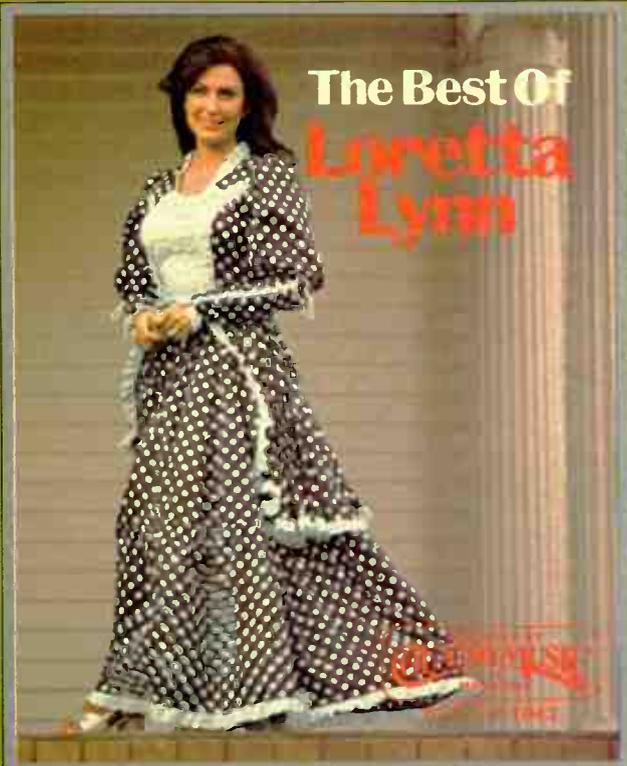
But then Sonny James' exalted position on the Elliston Place Soda Shop jukebox should hardly be a surprise—in his 20 year career in country music, Sonny James has seen the business mainly from the top.

From his 1957 hit of *Young Love* through his Bicentennial release of the old Gene Autry *Back In The Saddle Again*, Sonny James has put together an almost unprecedented string of hits—something





Photos: Leonard Kamsler



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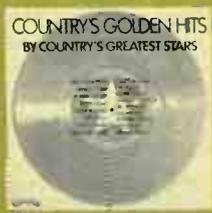
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LOVE COUNTRY STYLE

Johnny Cash A Thing Called Love/Lynn Anderson Easy Lovin'/Marty Robbins You Gave Me A Mountain/Tammy Wynette The Ways To Love A Man/David Houston Almost Persuaded/Carl & Pearl Butler/Don't Let Me Cross Over/Janie Seely Don't Touch Me/George Jones What My Woman Can't Do/Arlene Harden True Love Is Greater Than Friendship plus many, many more!

like 30 number-one songs, which works out to a hit every eight months.

Not bad for an Alabama kid whose first musical instrument was a four-string guitar made from the bottom of a molasses bucket, and who still finds time to jog three miles a day. His music has reached everywhere from his home town of Hackleburg, Ala.—some three hours south of Nashville—to the moon, where three Apollo astronauts played a specially recorded tape presented as a gift to the astronauts from Sonny. In return, they brought Sonny one of the American flags that waved—actually hung limply—over lunar soil.

Sonny laughs.

"That flag is over my mantle now," he says, resting in the A&R offices of Columbia Records in Nashville, his long-time

label. "When I look at that flag and know it's been on the moon . . . I get out at night and look up and say (pointing at some mythical moon) 'I've got something that's been up there, you know.'"

He laughs again, sharing his private joke with a celestial friend. There is a distinct feeling that Sonny James shares many private jokes with private friends: that beneath the press agent facade and the 30 hit records, there is a private person beyond the reach of the insistent lime-light that comes with the career. It is that private Sonny James who could steer a career through 20 years of rough water—20 years of musical history that must rank as the most frenetic, most absolutely weird period of American music—with remarkably few compromises, retaining a musical style that is the very essence of

simplicity. It is that private Sonny James who has steadfastly refused to play clubs where liquor is served, neatly closing to himself about 80 percent of the listening rooms in the country.

"The way I was brought up, our family, both my parents, they brought us up with certain morals," he says, not nearly so lightly as when describing the next Sonny James album. "I didn't feel that it would be the best influence upon maybe fans of mine who otherwise would not go to a place that would serve beverages."

The private Sonny James, for the shortest moment, comes to the surface.

"I didn't want to be an influence on them in that way," he says. "I don't drink myself . . . I mean, I feel that you have a certain responsibility, regardless of what occupation you're in. You're either going



Sonny shows off his celestial flag, a gift from the astronauts of Apollo 14.



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to be a good influence or a bad influence on people. So being brought up in a small community like I was, we were taught to try and be—and certainly everybody has faults—we were taught to the best of your ability to do as best you can for your fellow man. I think that just came across in my recording career."

Stability, he says, and once again the private Sonny James is submerged in the tireless campaigner, the veteran of a hundred thousand rodeos, state fairs and interviews. The secret to Sonny James, if there can be said to be a secret to Sonny James, is stability—artistic, financial and personal.

"This is the way I've geared my life, and I have never become a controversial artist," he says with pride.

Music, for instance. "You listen to that tune (*Young Love*) and compare it to some of our latest material, and you'll find we haven't changed our style that much," he says in a recent press release.

"*Young Love*," he says in person, "was a natural thing for the style of song that I do. There's a difference in a hit record and a record that does good for the artist. Every time the record was played, it was helping me, 'cause it was a style.

"I think once you've got a style, and you don't vary too much from it, you let people know that you're hanging in there with that kind of music," he adds. "You hold those fans."

That style is simplicity itself. James emerged from the rockabilly explosion of the late 1950s with his style intact, a sugar-sweet, milkshake-smooth crooning, backed up with a simple guitar line ("Some people call it pickin', but I just say it's strummin'") and catchy lyrics. Those lyrics, more often than not, were upbeat, light fluff—*Young Love*, *You're The Only World I Know* and *I Love You More And More Every Day*—in stark contrast to the then all-too-familiar cryin' in the beer country epic.

"In my early career I would sing something like *The Little Things* that would be simple, just so simple that very few people were cutting things like that," James says. "You know, it wouldn't knock anybody out. (But) the people were the ones, once they heard it, they were the ones who decided on the hits I've had. The people have kept my career going over the years."

It is, he says, like eating ice cream, maybe an ice cream milkshake. Your style is that ice cream, and maybe you eat vanilla or chocolate or strawberry because you want a little variety. But you don't go wandering off to Twinkies or Ding Dongs—you stick with your ice cream.

"So this is why I've done songs from *Young Love* to *Running Bear*, ballads to up-tempo, slow to fast," James says, relishing the ice cream analogy. "And I've done this over the years because it's just wise to give people a versatile side of you as much as possible."

Stability. Take career management.

"To me, unless a person is surrounded, and unless you have an open ear to receive advice—now, this means in regard to career management, investments, how to conduct yourself as you grow in the business, what shows to do, what kind of material to do, what kind of material not to do—I think unless you have that guidance, your career, it jumps up and it will fall. It's just wise."

Country music, he adds, is probably the most stable end of a notoriously unstable business—a Sonny James fan from, say, 1960 is more than likely a Sonny James fan today.

"Also, living in this part of the country, and I came from the country only three hours south of here, living in Nashville keeps your feet on the ground," James says. "In other words, you're meeting—you can call it—my kind of people; people who grew up in country towns; they came up, most of them did, the way I did, and when we were growing up, we always worked . . . I mean, just be exactly what you are; wherever you are, be what you are."

One of James' type of people was none other than television impresario Ed Sullivan, who put Sonny on national television in the early 1960s, eventually moving James up to four spots a year—a tremendous boost for both James and a country music industry still striving for national respectability.

And now, after a year's layoff, James is back on the road, breaking records at state fairs and rodeos across the country—again.

"I was in Minneapolis not too long ago—Freddie Fender and I played Minneapolis—and the crowd out there, it was 50-50, maybe 50 percent had seen me before and 50 percent had not. Some were college age. And they were coming up after the show; they wanted to know what type of guitar I used, and it was like my early days," he says. "Like some of my earlier days when the teenagers would react. That's the way they were reacting that night, because they wanted to know more about country music."

So Sonny James begins working his magic on another generation, a generation where *Running Bear* is more reminiscent of a bottle of beer than a song. He's looking forward to it, but he's not planning on making any changes.

"The more successful an artist is, to me, the more appreciative he should be of his people. And I don't mean . . . I don't mean like the phoniness thing," he says. "To me, I'm a man to a man. I don't expect, I never expect, anyone to look at me as anything other than what I am. I want them to like me."

He smiles, and for a parting second the private Sonny James adds his two-cents' worth.

"In other words, when an artist starts believing the publicity their office puts out, then they're in trouble." ■

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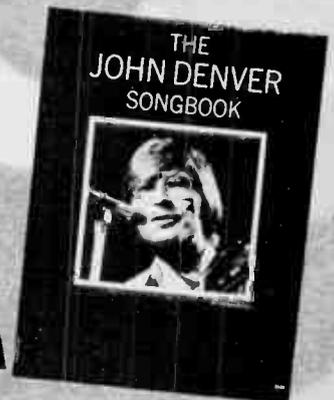


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# RISING STAR AWARD

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Crystal Gayle is our newest Rising Star. With the help of producer Allen Reynolds, Crystal has permanently shed the image of Loretta Lynn's baby sister and gone on to become one of the most promising young singers on the country and pop charts.

# Crystal Gayle

## Young country on the way up

by VALERIE RIDENOUR

**N**ot surprisingly, Crystal Gayle is tired-worn out.

"I've been on the road constantly this last year," she says, sounding not the least bit exhausted as she begins studio work on her next album. "I can only think of one weekend off during the whole year—well, that's not really true. I did take two weeks off this summer."

But the weariness of the road is tempered by a distinct air of excitement—this is, according to both Crystal and her manager/producer Allen Reynolds, her year for success; the year Loretta Lynn's little sister comes of age.

Success never comes easy, and for the sons and daughters and brothers and sisters of the famous, success comes all that much harder. There is, intended or unintended, a constant comparison; a constant pitting of one artist against another where, in the usual case, the least experienced comes out the loser.

More than any other brother/sister/son/daughter in recent years, Crystal Gayle has managed to avoid the pitfalls of an older sister's coattails. Which has been, she says, a conscious decision on the part of both her and Loretta.

"Well, I'll always be her little sister," Crystal says, laughing at the question she must answer at least a dozen times a day. "I'm not trying to do away with it, but I am glad that people are taking me for my own music."

That music is as different from the Kentucky twang of a coal miner's daughter

as the flatlands of Wabash, Indiana, are from the simmering coal mines of Butcher Holler. It is, on the one hand, a softer music, less tied to the hard times and poverty of her older sister's youth. Smoother, owing a greater debt to the styles of such childhood idols as Leslie Gore and Brenda Lee rather than the traditional icons of the Grand Ole Opry. More akin to, say, Olivia Newton-John and Linda Ronstadt, than her famous sister.

In a word, commercial.

But what separates Crystal Gayle's music from the hundreds of other young female country singers with a wary eye on the pop charts is her superb voice, a honey-smooth instrument that flows easily from the innocence of country to the sultriness of bar blues.

That quality, at least, she shares with sister Loretta—that ability to make a song better than it has any right to be; to make the listener feel, rather than hear, the song.

Take, for instance, her first real shot in the limelight, *This Is My Year For Mexico*. The song, a deceptively forlorn little ballad by one of Nashville's best—if unrecognized—talents, Vince Matthews, suited Crystal and producer Allen Reynolds to a tee. Her voice projected the pain of a woman trapped in a relationship and left only with fantasy trips to Mexico with simplicity and pathos. It was the kind of song that got under one's skin, and managed to get under enough skins to boost Crystal solidly onto the national

charts. That voice was convincing.

Quick follow-ups with *Somebody Loves You*, a catchy, uptempo piece of fluff, and a more expansive (and perhaps overdone) vocal arrangement of *I'll Get Over You* added to the momentum, and, like the proverbial snowball rolling down a mountain, Crystal Gayle was off and running.

"You know, when you first get started in this business, no songwriters will send you or give you anything. And I can understand that—they want bigger artists to record their material," she says. "So it's really rough to get into the business. Now once you're established, they'll knock your doors off."

We both laugh. Pretty soon, I say, you'll have to get an unlisted phone and change your address.

"Then everybody'll talk about how accessible Crystal Gayle used to be," she adds, chuckling. "Anyway, it's so nice."

Crystal—born Brenda Gail Webb—was a sure bet to be a country singer. From singing along with Leslie Gore records in her back yard, she moved while still in junior high to touring with Loretta during the summers. Having a sister in country music—even a sister who was already married and moved out of the house by the time Crystal was born—was more than a big incentive. It went a long way toward opening a few doors. It was Loretta who wrote Crystal's first hit, *I Cried The Blue Right Out Of My Eyes*, and who suggested her sister change her name to

(Continued on page 59)



# FEBRUARY BOOK SALE

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### BOOK OF THE YEAR

#### Loretta Lynn's Coal Miner's Daughter

From being nervous, pregnant and poor in Butcher Holler to the queen of country music—this is Loretta's own story. Since she admits she is better at "talkin' than writin'," she found a writer to put her story down on paper. But she warns right off: "You can bet your last scrip penny that I checked out every word...if I didn't like it, out it went."

The result is a book that sounds as honest and saucy as the lady on the records. She talks frankly about her marriage, her medical problems, the gossip about her and Conway Twitty, and about Nashville behind the scenes. She spares nothing and no one. Over a month on the N.Y. Times 10 bestseller list, COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER is the country music book of the year and one you should not be without.

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### My Years With Bob Wills

Here's another great recently released Bob Wills volume, by Al Stricklin, Bob's lead pianist. As Willie Nelson says, "...I know of no one more qualified to write this story..." Stricklin has teamed up with Jon McConal from the Fort Worth Star Telegram to record for all time how Texas' beloved son and his musicians lived, laughed, played and cried. Don't miss this great book. Order now and SAVE!

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#### Just Country

"Country Music has been dealt with in more ways than I care to imagine," says Minnie Pearl in the foreword to this great book, "but this is the most unique treatment of the subject I've come across." It's a rare picture-filled book that views country music—not as a cold heartless area of American music—but as a warm family story with a heart-beat.

Here is what country music people are all about; the true beginning of barn dances of the air; the stories of western swing, honky tonk, bluegrass, the Memphis rebellion and more. It's 176 pages with 169 fascinating photos, and it's quickly becoming the most publicized book of the year.

### How I Write Songs—Why You Can

It's the perfect book for anyone who writes or wants to write songs. Here are 160 pages of songwriting know-how from Tom T. Hall. You'll find the essential rules, definitions of songwriting lingo, the requirements of good lyrics, how to select a song subject and handle rhyming. And most important, there's a whole chapter on the mechanics of publishing where you see how to get your song published.

### The Entertainers of Country Music

Here's the first photo book from Country Music Magazine. It's 105 photographs, on 100 glossy pages—each picture recalling a special song, story or event. There's the last show at the Ryman Auditorium, the first show at the new Opry House. There's Lefty Frizzell, Bob Wills, Hank Snow, Tanya Tucker, Hank Williams—stars, places and events.

### The Tex Ritter Story

"At long last there is a volume that does justice to one of the greatest legends of country music." So says Arthur Maher, editor of this magazine. It's the complete and true story of the singing cowboy himself—written by one of Tex's closest friends and co-workers, Johnny Bond. Johnny has laid down for all time this warm story that needed telling—on 290 pages with over 50 photos. Order and SAVE!!!

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"The 'Man In Black' will help bring about a spiritual awakening in our land," says Ronald Reagan. It's Johnny Cash's own story in his own words—starting with his childhood, through the country music circuit, including the seven long years of drug addiction up to the living faith he now experiences in Jesus Christ. If you haven't ordered this bestseller yet, get it now and SAVE!

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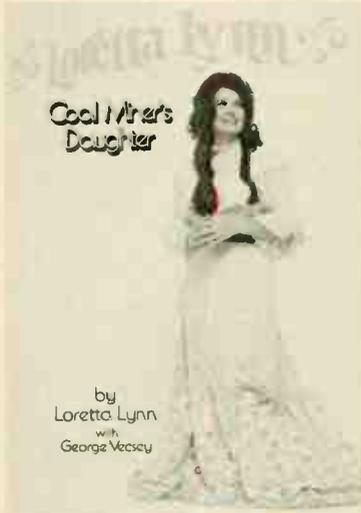
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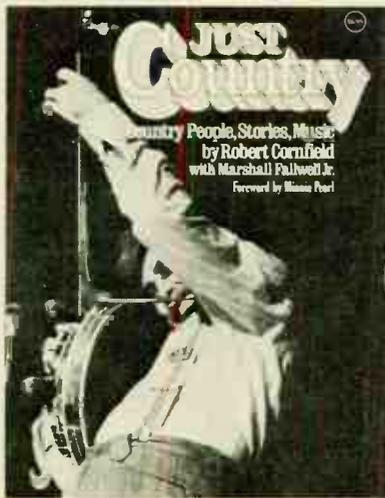
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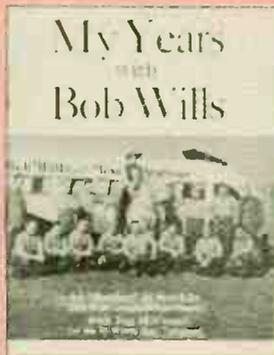
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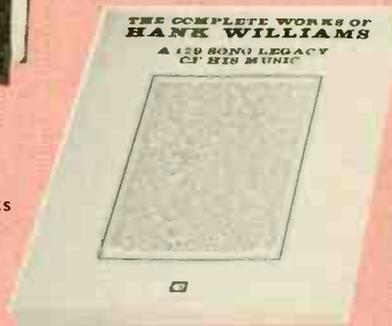
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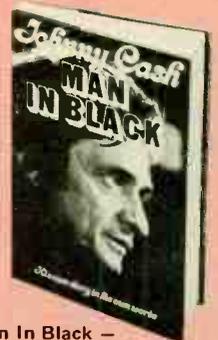
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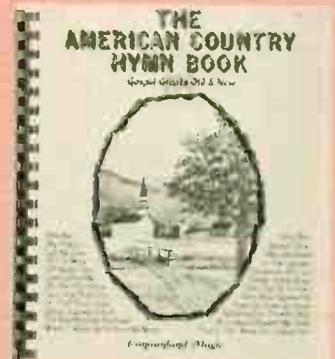
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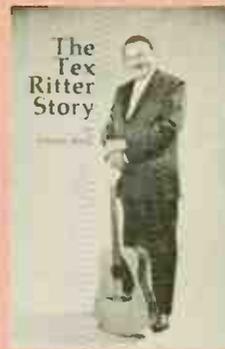
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# Records

## Freddy Fender

If You're Ever In Texas  
ABC/Dot DOSD 2061 \$6.98  
GRT-DOT 8310-2061 H \$7.98  
(tape)

Star rating: ★★

**F**reddy Fender's mysterious career continues. On his fourth Dot album, the good stuff is better than ever, and the bad stuff is worse than ever. *Livin' It Down* is Freddy's best single since *Tear-drop*, and I could easily see *It's All In The Game* or the



suddenly much-revived Gene Thomas classic *Sometimes* doing just as well. And reviving country classics such as Webb Pierce's *Don't Do It Darling* (which sounds like it was written for Freddy) and Don Gibson's *Just One Time* (done in a Johnny Cash style, no less) is a real smart move.

Where the album falls down is with over-familiar material (*Pass Me By*, for heaven's sakes!), bad songwriting (*San Antonio Lady* is a real stinker), and a *50s Medley* that is a confused mishmash of eight half-remembered chestnuts. The overall effect of the album is positive, but a close listen will make you feel it's just been thrown together. Freddy Fender's lost none of his talent or charm, but he and Huey should spend a little more time on his albums and make them as good as this one is in its best spots.

ED WARD

## Chip Taylor

Somebody Shoot Out The Jukebox  
Columbia PC 34345 \$5.98  
Columbia CA 34345 \$6.98  
(tape)

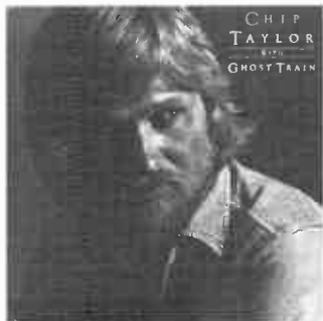
Star rating: ★★★

**T**he title song of Chip Taylor's fourth album, *Shoot Out The Jukebox*, is about listening to songs that are worthwhile, songs in which the "singing is more like believin'—believin' in feelings." And Taylor, who wrote all but one of the numbers in this collection, follows his own advice, giving the listener something worthwhile in return for the careful listening that the material requires. The messages are sometimes simple, straightforward, direct; sometimes metaphorical; sometimes philosophical. The eclectic arrangements—country-flavored folk, pop, and rock—support the idea of the songs, which are presented with a great deal of imagination.

Taylor (whose real name is James Voight, brother of actor

Jon Voight) has a sensitive, though occasionally harsh songwriter's voice, which accurately and clearly conveys the feeling written into the song, but lacks the ease and distinctiveness of a singer/entertainer.

*Shoot Out The Jukebox* will not be a popular album with



mass appeal—but it is worth getting involved with if you like a blend of progressive country/folk rock, and you will be rewarded with songs that, as the title song promises, "get to you, Sayin' son, you ain't alone."

ALAN WHITMAN

## Mary Kay Place

Tonite! At The Capri Lounge  
Loretta Haggars  
Columbia PC 34353 \$5.98  
Columbia CA 34353 \$6.98  
(tape)

Star rating: ★★★

**I**'ll admit it, neighbors, I had my doubts about this one. The thought of another actor singing country brought ugly memories of the time that Joey Bishop, dutifully swaddled in Nudie's finest, recorded an album that hit the cutout bins almost as soon as it was released. The big difference here is that despite what the cover suggests, the artist is *not* Loretta Haggars of *Mary Hartman* fame, but Mary Kay Place, a promising songwriter and, for her first album, a surprisingly fine country singer.



in places, it'll undoubtedly improve with experience.

Even the material, for the most part, couldn't be better. *Baby Boy* and *Vitamin L*, both written by Mary Kay/Loretta are here, and though the former still isn't much, *Vitamin L* is an uptempo kicker that could be a monster single. Ditto for *Coke and Chips*. She puts just the right amount of honky-tonk raunch into *Settin' The Woods on Fire* and successfully tackles the Louvin Brothers' *Get Acquainted Waltz*, a delicate number. In fact the only real mistake is *Streets of This Town*, a dumb folkie lament.

Frankly, I don't give a damn whether or not Loretta ever gets her hit on MHMH or not, because Mary Kay Place has one right now in *Tonite!*, an album that plenty of singers with more experience would be proud to have made on their first try.

RICH KIENZLE

But it would have all been for nothing if she didn't have a voice to work with; she does, and though it's a bit uncertain

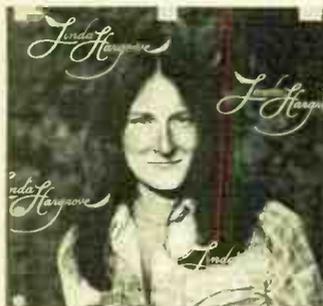


Photo: Courtesy CBS Records

### Linda Hargrove

Just Like You  
Capitol ST-111564 \$6.98  
Capitol 8ST-11564 \$7.98 (tape)  
Star rating: ★★

Linda Hargrove is a mystery to me. She's written such fine songs as *I've Never Loved Anyone More*, *Just Get Up and Close The Door* and *Winonah*, so her songwriting credentials are quite in order. The thing I don't understand is how she got to make four albums.



Nashville has hundreds of songwriters who write beautiful, sharp, funny, catchy songs and never venture near a microphone themselves. And anybody who has heard the album in which Harlan Howard croaks through his catalogue of masterpieces understands why. Now, Linda has a much better voice than Harlan, and she's prettier, but her songwriting isn't consistently strong. She's not a very dynamic performer and her voice is thin. And, in her albums, for every masterpiece there's an embarrassing clunker such as *The Only Man-Made Thing In Heaven Are The Scars on Jesus' Hands*, which isn't even grammatical, let alone singable.

Linda Hargrove is a developing talent who has been grossly over-recorded. You could get one really tremendous album out of the four she's done, and I think she's doing people like Lynn Anderson and Olivia Newton-John a favor by writing for them. But as far as being a performer, I think she should think about cooling it, at least for a while.

ED WARD

Photo: Charlyn Zlotnik



### Floyd Tillman

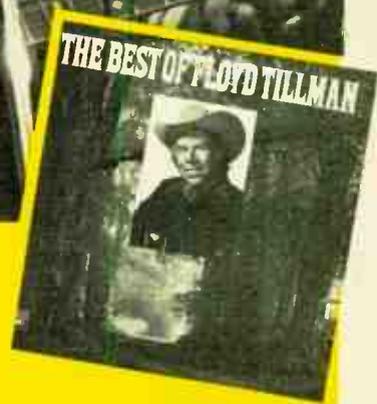
The Best of Floyd Tillman  
Columbia KC 34334 \$5.98  
Columbia CA 34334 \$6.98 (tape)

Star rating: ★★★★★

Everybody knows country musicians can't sing: Ernest Tubb slides into the notes, George Jones sings through his teeth, Conway Twitty sings too low and growls half his range and Johnny Bush has a vibrato so wide you could drive a truck through it. But the grand-daddy of all the country non-singers is Floyd Tillman, author of *Slipping Around*, *Driving Nails in My Coffin*, *I Love You So Much It Hurts* and *This Cold War With You*. Although nobody outside of Texas has heard from Till-

man in years, he's still around, and, in fact, cut a pretty good album for Huey Meaux a year or so back. But in the late 40s and early 50s, Floyd Tillman, along with Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizzell and Moon Mullican, virtually defined the honky-tonk style of country music. Tillman is credited by some with being the first country musician to play electric guitar. Maybe he was Ernest Tubb's voice coach. Information on him is hard to come by.

But one thing is for certain. Just like all those other non-singers, Tillman has a uniquely moving voice, and it doesn't take much imagination to figure out why the ten songs on this album were such monster hits. Columbia,



wisely, has left the original mono alone, and, at long last, the songs that made Floyd Tillman famous are back in print. My only complaint is that they could have stuck two or three more numbers on the album (they're very short sides) with no problem at all. If Glen Campbell is your idea of a country singer, this album will be poison to you, but for the historically-minded and those who remember when these hits were new, this album is a must.

ED WARD

### Anne Murray

Keeping In Touch  
Capitol ST-11559 \$6.98  
Capitol 8ST-11559 (tape) \$7.98  
Star rating: ★★★★★

Anne Murray is one of the most consistently successful female country-pop singers around today. Throughout her nine albums, she maintains superb quality in song selection and rendition. Her material is carefully chosen and arranged specifically for her style—a chesty, seductive lower register for slow, moody songs and a

heady, more relaxed voice on the up-tempo numbers.



Her latest album, *Keeping In Touch*, fits right in with the good-better-best nature of the body of her work. Its standout performances are an old-timey ragtime tune called *Shine*; *Lay Me Down*, a laid-back ballad reminiscent of Rita Coolidge and Linda Ronstadt; and Bobby Darin's *Things*.

*Keeping In Touch* will be a welcome addition to any Anne Murray collection, large or small; or a good point from which to start and build.

ALAN WHITMAN

**How We Rate The Albums: 5 Stars...Album of the Month 4 Stars.. Excellent 3 Stars...Very Good 2 Stars...Good 1 Star...Fair 0 Stars...Poor**

# Records



Photo: Courtesy Mercury Records

## Johnny Rodriguez

Reflecting  
Mercury SRM-1-1110 \$6.98  
Mercury MCR 4-1-1110 \$7.98  
(tape)

Star rating: ★★

It's a good thing for Johnny Rodriguez that he has one of the very finest voices in country music today, because this album, like his last few, dramatizes several problems he's been having since his initial breakthrough. While there's nothing here that matches up to his best work, it is nonetheless a perfectly respectable album, and that's mainly because he sings too well to cut anything less.

What it boils down to, I suppose, is identity crisis. Rodriguez is a young man on the way up—young enough to relate strongly to rock-and-roll and honky-tonking, on the way up enough to recognize the commercial potency of a more middle-of-the-road style. In seeking to straddle all those fences, he invariably stretches himself

thin.

He may do songs already done to death (like *Lyn' Eyes*), or he may allow his own talents to be shoved to the corner in favor of bombastic string and choral arrangements (as on *It Was or Desperado*) that take over the song. That's the bad news.



The good news, in addition to Johnny's exemplary singing, comes with four songs in particular, two of them written by him. (Rodriguez often turns out to be his own best writer,

though he's not prolific.) Micky Newbury's *I Wonder If I Ever Said Goodbye* opens the LP with style, it being one of the few slow songs where all those production extras serve to complement Rodriguez rather than obscure him. *There'll Always Be Honky Tonks in Texas* stands out on the second side. Johnny's own *Louisiana* is my favorite; it's a nicely arranged uptempo number full of sharp little instrumental breaks, and it edges out the album's other original, *Commonly Known As the Blues*.

As a holding action, *Reflecting* succeeds. He would probably be more comfortable concentrating on one particular direction—after all, how comfortable can a man be when he's got one foot in the south Texas beer joints and the other in the Vegas showcases?—but as usual, Rodriguez manages to make it across the tightrope with no major slips.

JOHN MORTHLAND

## Cledus Maggard

Two More Sides  
Mercury SRM 1-1112 \$6.98  
Mercury MCR4-1-1112 (tape)  
\$7.98

Star rating: ★★

The lesson of this second album by the White Knight, aka Cledus Maggard, nee Jay Huguely, is that you can't be a ratchet jaw *all* your life.

Like every other CB song last year, Maggard's *The White Knight* was a novelty, basically a funny record that told a new and unique enough story to catch the ear of even the casual listener. Since then, he's made it to the top, and now he's got to establish an identity to stay there. Obviously, that identity won't be the White Knight, or at least that froggy voice that's been jitterbugging over sandpaper.

The White Knight voice appears only on three of the album's eleven cuts. Two of those aren't so sidesplittingly hilarious either: *Poppin' 'Um*, which tries to get serious and militant like C.W. McCall did following *Convoy* (here Maggard explains why truckers don't have the time or money



Photo: Courtesy Mercury Records

to be courteous to four wheelers when exceeding the speed limit); and *What Are They Teachin' My Boy Floyd?*, where Maggard gets up in arms about dirty words and liberalism in schools. Only *Martian Modulation* rivals Cledus' biggie in craziness due to the total absurdity of talking CB with extraterrestrial beings who are ringers for Shirley and Squirrely.

Besides the White Knight, Maggard turns into plain old Jay Huguely, an adequate ballad singer still in search of appropriate material. Admittedly, I'm easy for *Bear Blue*, a song about CBers chasing down a murderer, which imitates life in reverse in light of the recent CB related murders in Texas.

And I can't deny Maggard has better command of Channel 19 lingo than any other current country star. But wishful thinking such as *Bring Back the Miniskirt* and token pieces of patriotism like *The Torn Flag* indicate Maggard is still searching for the proper vehicle to broadcast from.

JOE NICK PATOSKI

## Johnny Gimble

Johnny Gimble's Texas Dance Party

Columbia-Lone Star KC 34284  
\$5.98

Columbia-Lone Star CA 34284  
\$6.98 (tape)

Star rating: ★★★★★

In Texas, Western dancehall music is still a living, breathing thing, just as bluegrass music is in Kentucky or the polka in Wisconsin.

Texas Dance Party isn't the first album to capture this feel on record (Ernest Tubb's *On Tour* and *Hittin' The Road*, released in the early sixties, share that distinction), but for Johnny Gimble, who launched his career fiddling at Texas dances, it was obviously a labor of love.

What makes this set most appealing is that in paying tribute to his roots, Johnny's avoided the self-conscious aspects, such as lengthy, maudlin sermons between each song that often render live albums un-

listenable. Instead, a few friendly introductory remarks give both band and dancers a chance to catch their breath. Kicking off with Bill Boyd's 1949 fiddle classic, *Lone Star Rag*, he slides into a scintillating version of Floyd Tillman's *I'll Keep on Loving You*. Though vocally he's no Tommy Duncan, his enthusiasm more than makes up for any shortcomings. Five of the ten numbers are Gimble originals, including *Texas Skip* (a schottische), the relaxed *Slow 'N Easy, Blues For Joe Tee* (actually a variation on Adolph Hofner's 1940 version of *Joe Turner Blues*), and *Under The 'X' in Texas*, which boasts as delightful a set of lyrics as any Texas tribute. *End of The Line*, which Johnny wrote and first recorded with Bob Wills in 1950, features one of the best Gimble scat-fiddle solos on record.

It wouldn't be fair not to mention the Bosque Bandits, an excellent pickup group com-

posed of Johnny's son and bassist, Dick Gimble, drummer Bill Mounce, who's played with just about everyone who was anyone in Texas, steelman Maurice Anderson, godfather



of the MSA guitar line, pianist Curly Hollingsworth and guitarist Kenny Frazier: all tight, solid players.

If, like me, you don't dance and haven't yet made it to Texas, Johnny Gimble's *Texas Dance Party* might just give you some second thoughts about both.

RICH KIENZLE

Photo: Charlyn Zlotnik



## Anyone who tells you that a single play turntable is better than one of these has never checked out one of these.



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# Records

## Ray Price

Hank 'n' Me

ABC/Dot DOSD-2062 \$6.98

GRT-Dot 8310-2062 \$7.98 (tape)

Star rating: ★

I'm of two minds about this album, in which Price applies his country-politan formula to 11 classics from Hank Williams, who was instrumental in getting Ray's career off the ground some 25 years ago. I imagine Hank would have wholeheartedly approved of at least the idea, for one of his biggest claims to fame is that he was the country writer whose songs won Mitch Miller's approval and became pop hits for singers like Tony Bennett and Jo Stafford. Though he apparently never dreamed of cutting his songs pop himself, he reportedly took extra pride in those which did "cross over" in this way, and I'm sure the increased royalties didn't hurt his feelings, either. And, if I may coin a phrase, what's good

enough for Hank is good enough for me.

I also feel that Price's style has worked quite well in some songs, especially *For the Good Times*. But I still find this a lifeless album, and that's not the kind of word normally applied to Hank Williams material. I don't object to orchestrating the songs *per se*, but these particular orchestrations are, mostly, as limp and cliched as a bad political speech, and they are not even that well integrated with the country rhythm section. Too often it's just this huge bank of sweet violins swooping into the fills or pinning away in the background. And one of the most appealing things about Hank's songs was how simple and earthy they were; most just plain don't sound right except as done by a basic country band. If you don't believe me, listen to the jaunty version here of *Jambalaya*, about the least

orchestrated cut on the album. It's sandwiched between *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry* and *I Can't Help It (If I'm Still In Love With You)*, both of which get extra sticky arrangements; the difference is dramatic. It swings where they plod.

There are a few moments here. *Hey, Good Lookin'* sur-

vives pretty much intact, Price sings well in *Kawliga*, and the country band hits a nice groove for *Mansion on the Hill*, despite the orchestration. But unless you like the sort of music one hears in elevators and supermarkets, the pickings are disappointingly slim.

JOHN MORTHLAND



Photo: Courtesy ABC Records



Photos: Wendi Lombardi, Sun Records

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for contrast. The singers came from Memphis, rural Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas, and while some became country and rock stars, others faded into obscurity. Nothing was radically different about Memphis country singers, except that some drew on the black blues they'd grown up hearing. From this background, the Presleys and Cashes came.

The cuts here are treasures, reproduced in flawless mono-aural and show influences from a number of sources.



alternate slow take of Cash's *Come in Stranger* is the final unissued Cash performance to be found. Cowboy Jack Clement's *Black Haired Man* is a curiosity, but shows that as a singer, he makes a pretty good producer.

**Rebel Rockabilly** takes things a step further into the music that gave Sun its legendary status, and is a classic collection. Carl Perkins kicks off with an alternate take of *Everybody's Tryin' to Be My Baby* that equals the single, followed by Ray Harris's positively psychotic *Lonely Wolf*.

It's too bad the British are quicker than we to recognize and respect the contributions of Sun to country and rock music, but these albums, at their reasonable price (and eight songs a side!) are worth the trouble to get. J & F Record Sales, 42 North Lake, Pasadena, Ca. 91101 have them most of the time. Remember, Hank Mizzell's 1957 rockabilly waxing of *Jungle Rock* was a top ten hit in England recently; with Gary Stewart and Delbert McClinton carrying on here, a rockabilly revolution can't be too far off.

RICH KIENZLE

#### Various Artists

**Cotton City Country**  
Charly CR 30104 \$4.85  
(No tape available)

Not available through *Country Music Magazine*

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**Rebel Rockabilly**  
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Star rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

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Recently the British Charly label has begun, with the cooperation of Singleton, to release legitimate packages of Sun material, including black blues, country and rock, much

of it never before issued, as part of their Roots of Rock Series.

**Cotton City Country** takes a look at pre-rock Memphis country music in the fifties, with a couple later tunes thrown in

Equally interesting are the efforts of later artists, including Carl Perkins's rocking *Sweethearts or Strangers*, Luke McDaniels's *Uh, Babe* and Jerry Lee's *It All Depends (On Who Will Buy The Wine)*. An

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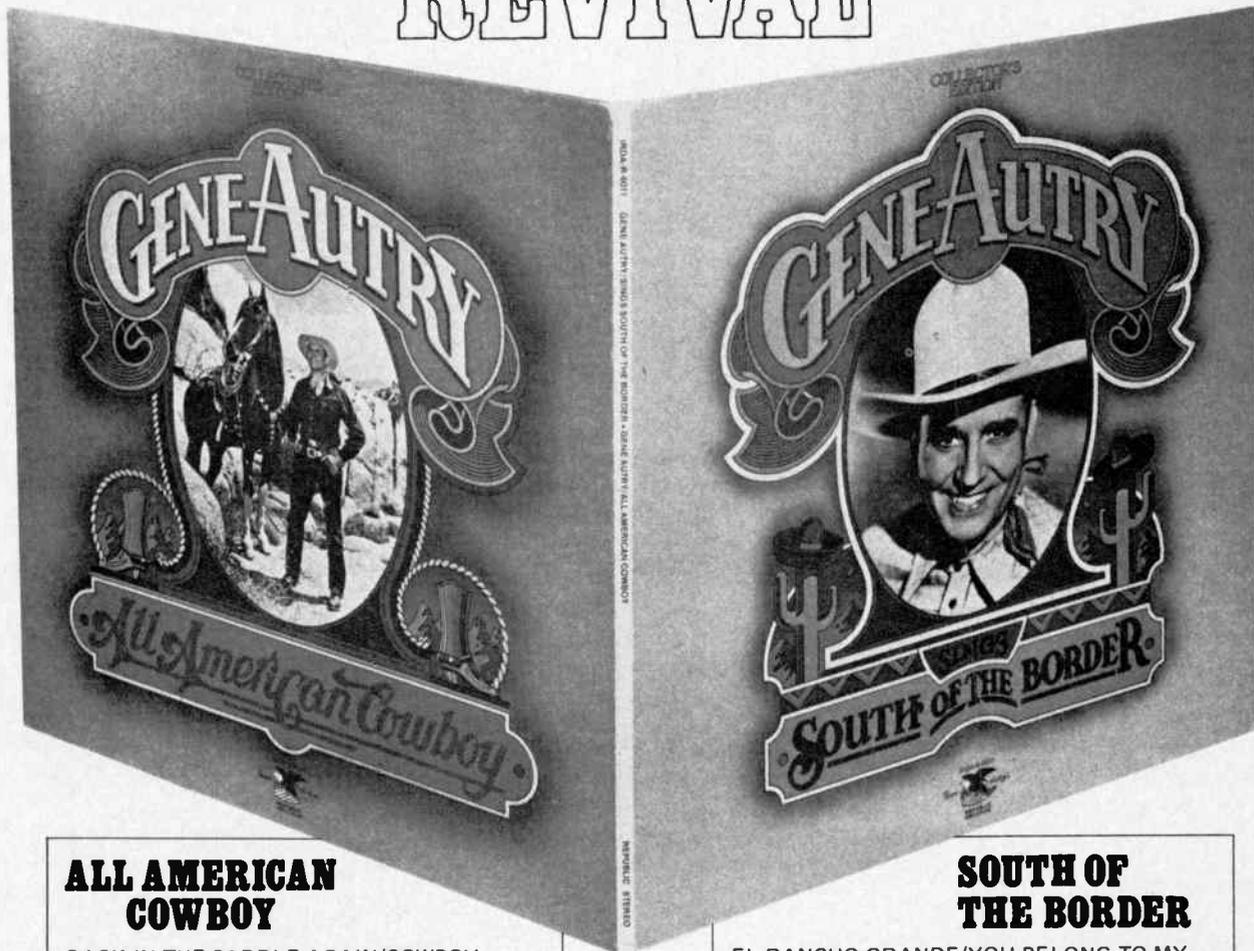
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# THE STATLER BROS.

(Continued from page 38)

of people to them."

As with their All-Americanness, the Statlers do not strut their success, nor do they understate it. Again, they simply speak of it matter-of-factly, saying that this is what they always wanted, always worked for, always knew was going to happen, and now that it *has* happened does not mean that it should blow their minds, swell their heads nor flood them with a gushing false modesty. Even the den is arranged as if someone had come in with the latest award thinking to himself, "Where can I stick this one?"

And yet one of the Statlers' greatest sources of amusement and bemusement is to observe other's reactions to them off-stage.

"We have more fun watching and observing the world than any other group of people I know," said Harold. "We get a charge out of everything we see."

It especially regales them how they are the biggest stars to one person, faceless nobodies to the next. And late of an evening, they sit around the table recalling incidents of this type.

"Once when someone didn't know us, a man said, 'Tell them who you are,' " said Harold. "It reminded me of the time Gregory Peck was refused service in a Hollywood restaurant. A person with him said the same thing, 'For goodness sake, Greg, tell them who you are.' And Peck said, 'If you have to tell them who you are, you aren't.'"

There was a time when that might have been true of the Statlers; back when they were calling themselves the Kingsmen, of all things, before they got the sudden inspiration from a box of Statler Tissues, and long before all the trophies, plaques and statues, long before all the hit records and attendance-breaking shows, long before they became America's foremost musical time machine. Yes, back then someone might well have asked.

But nowadays the Statlers don't have to tell anyone who they are. They're the best group in country music. That's who.

\* \* \*

In 1973 the Statlers, having the idea for a collection of old and new country songs, came up with the idea of an album entitled *Country Music Then And Now*. But somehow that seemed too flat, too listless, too stereotyped. So they put their heads together and began creating a cast of characters that would come to be known as Lester "Roadhog" Moran and his Cadillac Cowboys in a sidesplitting satire of the old live radio shows.

As the most creative concept ever to come out of Nashville, it was an overwhelming smash. Having done their album, however, the Statlers were ready to go on to other matters. There was just one hitch: response was so great that Mercury

Records insisted they do another album devoted entirely to Roadhog. By that time the public couldn't get enough.

Now, fearing that they may well have "created a monster," the Statlers refuse to resurrect Lester and once again turn him loose on WEAK Radio. "People listened to it on the radio and enjoyed it, but it was designed for audio only," said Harold. "Then they started hollering for us to do it on stage. Well, do we do it before or after the Statler Brothers? How do we change costumes? How do we re-create the old radio studio? Trouble is, people are so attuned to instant character changes on TV that they expect you to turn around for ten seconds and be somebody else. We don't want to disappoint the people, but we just can't do it on the spot."

Dale Harmon, the Statlers' bus driver, recalled how he searched the phone books in every town for two years looking for a Lester Moran. He finally found one in Wichita, Kansas, tore the page out and pasted it in the Statlers' scrapbook. And there the saga of ole Roadhog and his Cadillac Cowboys appears to have come to a much-lamented end. ■

(1 "Carry Me Back" Copyright American Cowboy Music. Used by permission.)

# CRYSTAL GAYLE

(Continued from page 48)

avoid being confused with Brenda Lee.

Perhaps her greatest stroke of luck was not as having Loretta Lynn as her big sister, but as having Allen Reynolds as her producer.

"He's the best friend I have in the industry," she says. "Larry Butler (the head of United Artists'—Crystal's record label—country division) put us together. He thought Allen and I would get along well, and we have. There are a whole lot of people in Nashville you really can't run out and trust, but I could tell Allen wasn't that type of person from the first."

His biggest contributions have been the careful choice of material and a delicate touch with production, all with an eye toward the omnipresent pop charts. Mention having a country record go pop—a crossover—and it's guaranteed to bring a wince. There is usually a string of denials, an absolute pledge of allegiance to the purity of country music and a disgusted shunning of the money—and we're talking about literally millions of dollars—that a crossover record can mean.

Crystal Gayle is potentially a crossover artist—a big crossover artist—and discussing that with her is something akin to walking on eggs.



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(Continued on page 62)

"We put out what we ... what we like," she says, picking her words far more carefully now. "You can't please everybody, and we're all having fun making records and that's good."

What about the litany to the purity of country music?

Crystal laughs, and she has a positively disarming laugh.

"Well, they don't want to admit it, I think," she says, laughing. "To me, what we do is go in and record what we want to do and like. I would love to have a crossover—it means more sales, and I don't think any entertainer could say they didn't want one. That's really all there is—the sales are something. But, you know, I'm in the music—country music is what I've been in, and I'm not going to go real pop."

She does, though, acknowledge that the whole definition of country music—thanks to artists like herself—is going through something of an identity crisis.

"I think country music really is changing. It's broadening and opening its doors to a whole lot more people," she says. "You're going to get a few people who are mad no matter what, you know, but I let it go through one ear and out the other. People enjoy my music."

She was, however, exceptionally displeased with the reception Nashville initially accorded Olivia Newton-John, a reception just a few degrees warmer than winter in, say, Siberia.

"To me, when that thing happened, it was disheartening that there was so much jealousy," Crystal says. "And that's all it was—jealousy. If the country music fans bought her records and thought of them as country, they are."

Think of Crystal Gayle as third generation country—first the Roy Acuffs and the Hank Williamses, then the Loretta Lynns and the George Joneses, then the Crystal Gayles and the Steve Youngs. The influences have changed, and as the influences on the performers change, so changes the music. Crystal Gayle's music is rooted not only in the country music of her sister, but in the rock and roll explosion of the '60s. At home she listens to Barbra Streisand and Alice Cooper, the Electric Light Orchestra and the Beatles. She listens, and she knows she's going to be a star.

"I feel it's coming, but I know I have a long way to go," she says.

But most importantly, both she and Allen Reynolds understand that the relationship between pop and country is changing—that perhaps the two old enemies are growing just a bit closer together, and the people who grew up with one foot in each camp have the best chance of making that knowledge work for them.

"We've been lucky," Reynolds says. "I just try to be sensitive to what Crystal feels, 'cause she's the one out there on the road entertaining people. That's what she's got to do, entertain them, or she's out of work. I don't have a destination for her—just good songs." ■

# DONNA

(Continued from page 30)

sometimes too grandiose and gaudy, that can be easily overlooked for the godsend of that one absolutely perfect song, *I've Loved You All of the Way*.

All in all, *On the Move* reflects more clearly the many dimensions of her personality and shows that the person once considered to be a carefree tomboy has matured into a surprisingly complex woman. Donna Fargo, once a facile tunesmith and manipulator of words, has blossomed into a true artist.

Right now should, then, be the peak of Donna's career. And that is not the case. While several of her singles since *Little Girl Gone* have made it into the top 20 (*You Can't Be a Beacon If Your Light Don't Shine* even made number one), there have been no more million-sellers since *Happiest Girl* and *Funny Face*, and the name Donna Fargo is not heard nearly as often as it once was. Sitting in the Warner Brothers office with her, one feels heartless and cruel having to ask why that is, especially since Donna has already admitted that she's "kinda squirrely about interviews," and has shown her nervousness by swiveling in her chair and fingering every piece of paper within reach on a nearby desk.

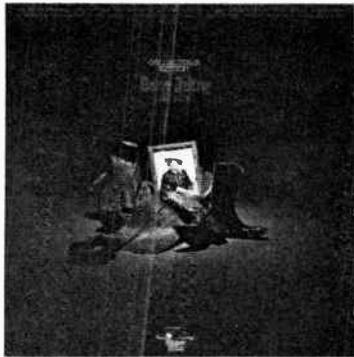
"I don't know," she answers, with a sigh accompanying that disarming honesty that makes her impossible not to like.

"I may be writing better songs now than I ever did, but maybe people just aren't groovin' to 'em. I guess the right combination hasn't happened. I think what often happens is that when people get a big hit they wrote themselves, they get to workin' so hard—goin' around in ruts and circles—that when it comes time to write the songs for the album, they don't have enough time, and they're not as free. (There will be fewer Fargo compositions than usual on her next album.) When I wrote *Happiest Girl*, it was one of the busiest times of my life. I was head of the English department (in a Covina, Calif., high school) and taught several classes and was tryin' to do my best there, but I didn't have an album to write for, and I was just writin' my stuff as I felt it, whenever I had the time. I was doin' a few gigs at night, like maybe every other weekend, but it was a different kind of feeling. Now when you get that pressure on you, sometimes you can react well under pressure, and other times you can't.

"Talkin' about *Happiest Girl* and *Funny Face* really bugs me," she adds in a moment of candor that is surprising even for her. "I'm not the kind of person who looks back. I like to go forward." But she admits that it's not only reporters who ask why she hasn't come up with another million-seller. "You know, sometimes even my family will say, 'Well, why can't you write another *Happiest Girl*?' And I think, 'Wow, what about those other number

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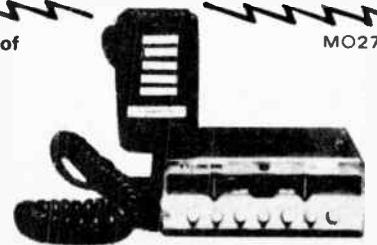
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(Continued from page 60)

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one records?" They think it's so easy. Sometimes I try to explain that I've never tried to rewrite one of my hits, like some artists do, because I think that's tacky. Mostly, though," she says with a limp smile, staring at the floor, her hands stuffed into the pockets of her sweatshirt, "I just sorta tune 'em out.

"I also think part of it has to do with the eagerness to play new artists now," Donna continues in her infectious North Carolina accent, left over from the days she spent growing up on a tobacco farm. "I've never seen that as much as I have now, and that's good, because it's nice to hear new sounds. I think, too, that things just go in cycles, you know. You just kinda have to wait your turn, and until it comes, you just keep pluggin' along. What you have to do is not make too much of success, 'cause it can ruin your life. Success is a very hard thing to live with, but happiness to me is not changeable with everyone else's treatment of me. If it were, I probably would have come apart by now. Like I wrote in *The Awareness of Nothing*—'You can't feel the sun from the sunshine and not feel the wet from the rain.' That's very true. We have the same capacity for success as we do failure. That's the way I've got to look at it, because right now that's the easiest way for me to live with it, even though in most people's eyes I'm very successful."

The thousands of people who attend

Donna's shows each year would say so. One concert-goer calls her "the consummate performer," and another adds that Donna's is "the most exciting performance" he's ever seen. And Broadcast Music, Incorporated (B.M.I.) must consider Donna successful, too, or they wouldn't have given her two writing awards, for *Hello, Little Bluebird* and *It Do Feel Good*, the week after we talked. (She received three B.M.I. awards last year, and four the year before.)

As long as the crowds, the awards, and the offers to do TV and play Las Vegas continue to come, perhaps number-one records needn't be all that important to Donna's career. Certainly there are literally dozens of country performers drawing well on concert circuits who haven't had big records in many years—and who have never had even one monster-selling single.

After all, Donna began writing songs not so much out of a need to explain herself and her thoughts, as some writers do, but because she wanted to sing. And while she says the writing has become a bigger part of her than she thought it would, she tries to think of herself as an entertainer. One suspects while listening to her talk that Donna would be perfectly happy if she never had another hit as big as *Happiest Girl* or *Funny Face*—provided she continues to grow and meet the rigid standards of excellence she's set for herself.

Right now, she says, a sign of growth would be for her not to feel uptight on stage. "I've always had a lack of confidence," she admits, "and I'm looking for that balance of the right amount of confidence and humility. Only a few times have I achieved that, and it's just been for little whiles." Even if she conquers that, however, she says she'll still be seeking "to come up with words and melodies that are meaningful, different, right for me and relevant to others, as well as what people want to hear."

Still, one can't help wishing Donna could be free of the pressures of her career long enough to finish the book of poetry she's started, or to work on her paintings of people and scenery. From what she says, though, that's not likely to happen for some time.

"We've got two buses (one cost \$160,000 and the other "even more") and a bus driver and nine people in the band. There are a lot of decisions you have to make, and bills to pay, and if anybody on the bus is making waves or the band isn't happy with one another, I feel it. I'm such a serious person, and I'm so intense that I take everything harder than other people. I can't laugh at things easily. And I feel like I can't take off because I don't want to have to go through gettin' a new band, or sellin' a bus and then buyin' it back. So there are rough times you go through, but you just have to kinda wait it out, because you feel like it's gonna change.

"Besides," she adds, "other than that obligation I feel to everybody, I know this

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much about myself—I have to be busy or I'd go crazy."

Occasionally, however, she has fleeting moments of wishing she did something else for a living. When those moments come, though, it's usually because she's feeling the pains of transition in her career—writing better, if less commercial songs that she hopes will eventually earn her another million-seller or win over those former fans who now refuse to accept anything but the one side of her they saw in *Happiest Girl*. Those moments of wishing she'd chosen another career probably come on the days she's so busy that, as she said in *Mr. Doodles*, "It's like life's not touching me/And I'm just passing through."

She also wrote in *Kirksville, Mo.*, a song that was due to appear on her new album, scheduled for January release, "The cards were stacked/And there was no turning back." "So often I've felt like that," she says. "But when you're an entertainer, you can't exactly go back to being a teacher or a waitress. You know what I mean? It affects everybody's opinion of you. I genuinely like what I'm doin', though, and it will sustain me. 'Cause I know I'm gonna get through those hard times, and they don't last for long, thank goodness. You'll always have a high. I mean, the sun comes up and the sun goes down and the beat goes on. I gotta move on, too." ■

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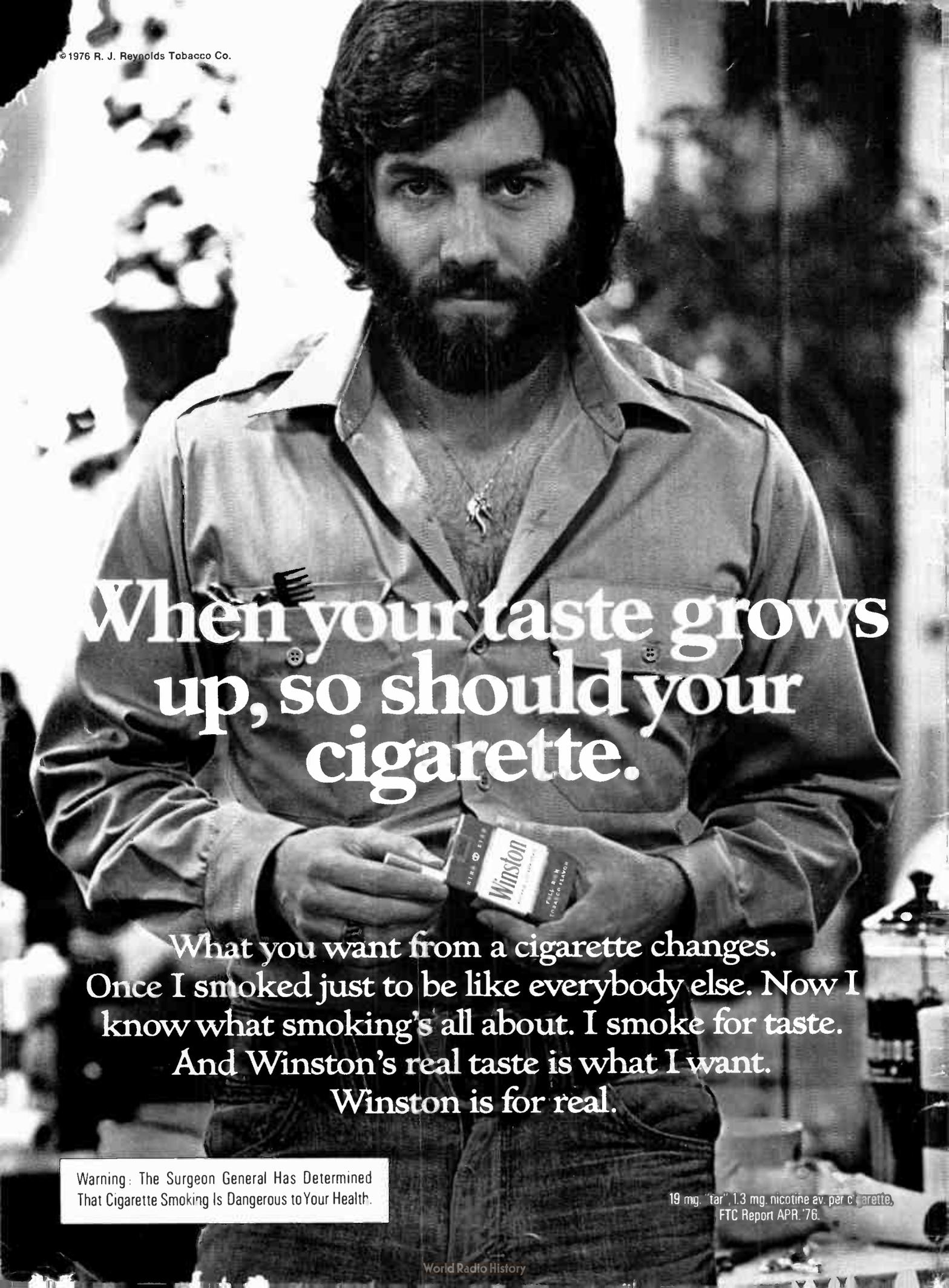
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