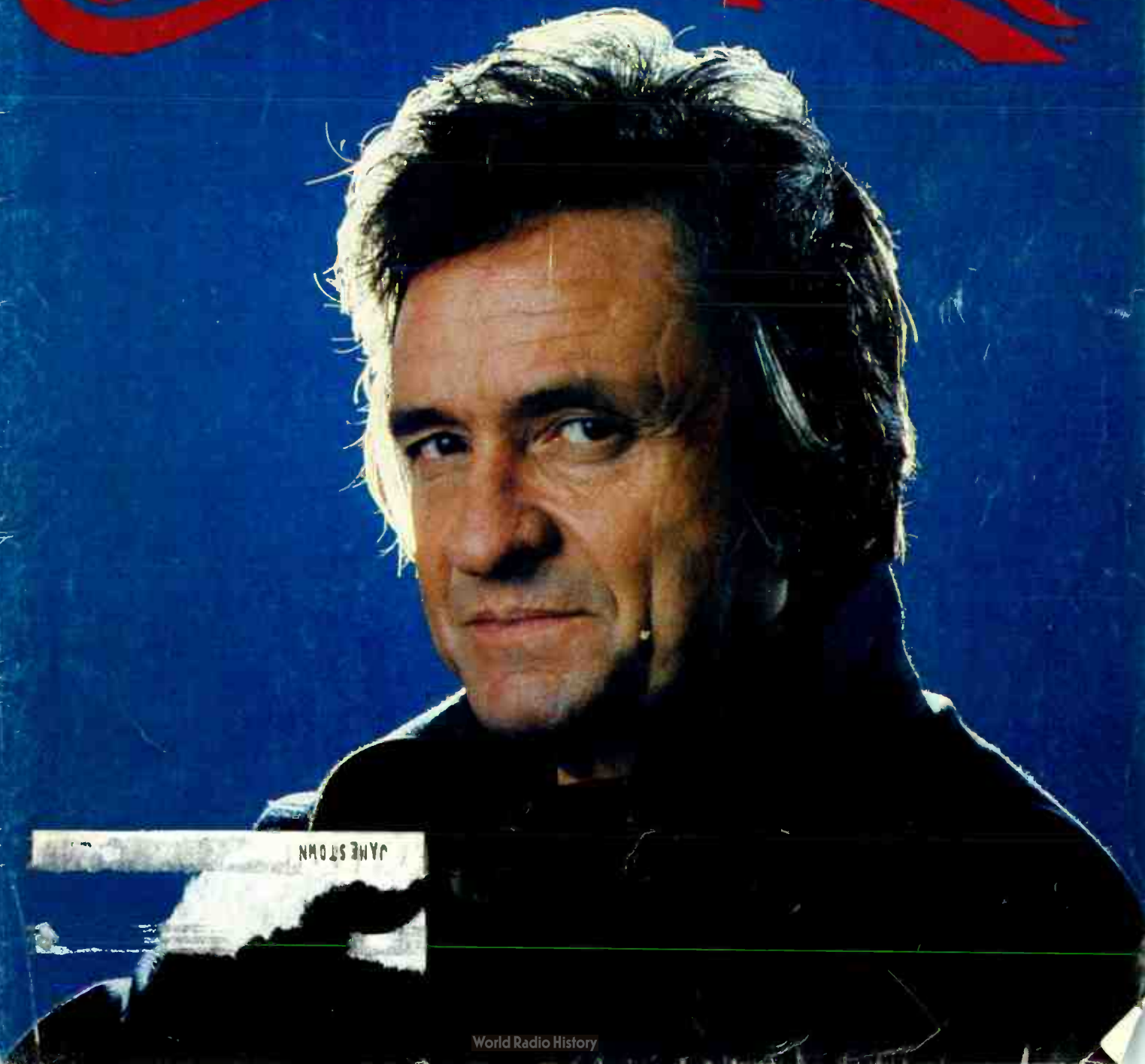


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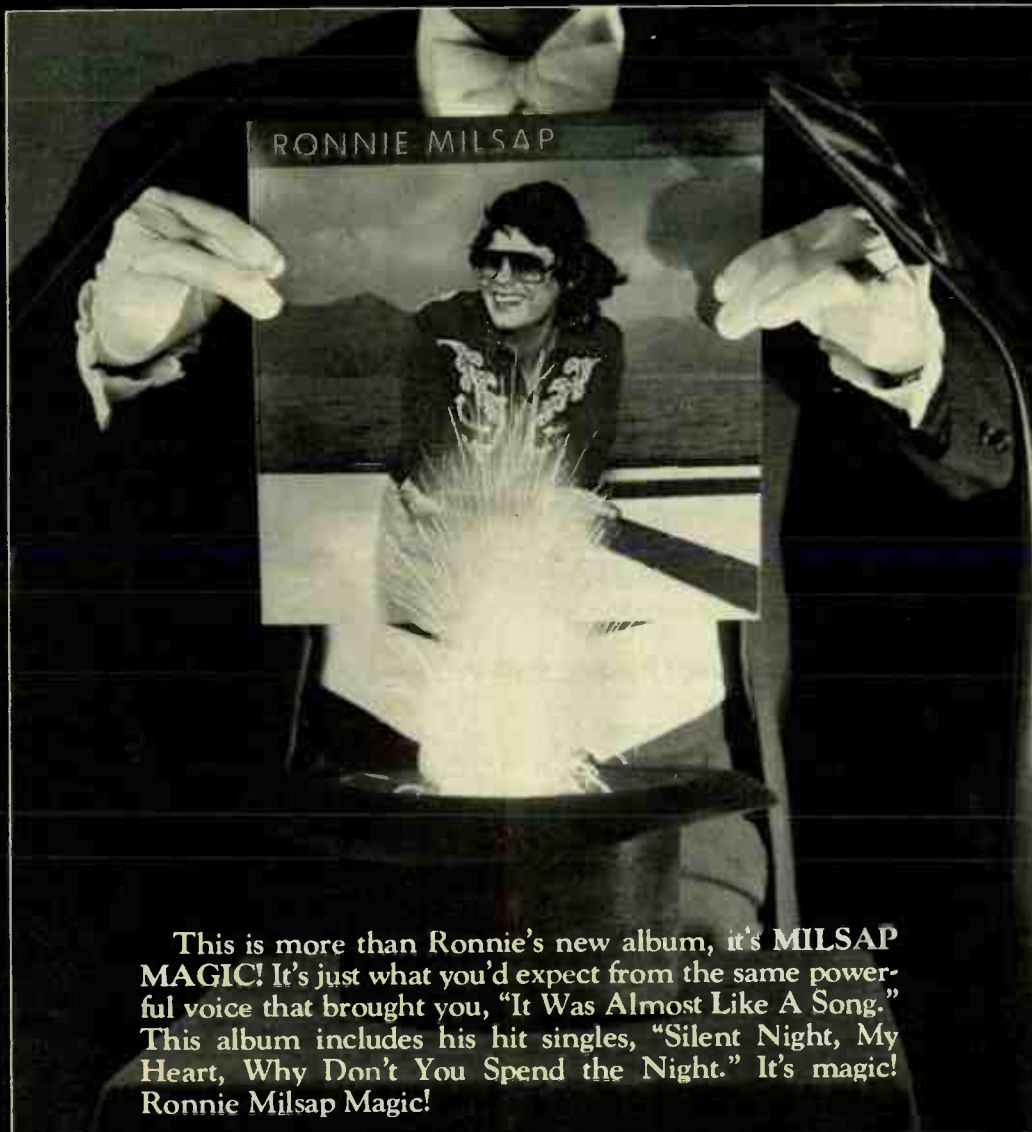
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When we asked Johnny Cash's friends to be part of our tribute to the Man In Black, we got just what we expected—Larry Gatlin, Hank Snow, Kris Kristofferson, Gene Autry, Roy Acuff, Kirk Douglas, Conway Twitty, Jerry Lee Lewis, Rowdy, Marty Robbins, Irene Gibbs, The Statlers, The Oaks, Bo Hopkins, Rick Blackburn—and lots more . . . and Marty Robbins. Read them closely or you'll miss the custard pie in the face.

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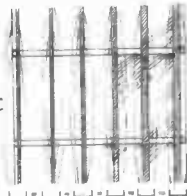


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About This Issue This Magazine, and Johnny Cash

It was hot, windy and dusty in West Texas that day, in 1955, when I first heard Johnny Cash. There's nothing rare about hot, windy, dusty days in West Texas . . . as anyone who has been there can testify . . . no, it was a rare day, though.

Pounding down U.S. 60 as fast as you could make a '54 overhead valve V8, Ford (with dual Douglass glass packs, Edelbrock exhaust manifolds, dual four-barrels, shaved heads and a lumpy camshaft) go . . . which was pretty fast . . . radio turned up full-blast against the wind . . . it came: *Hey porter, hey porter, would you tell me the time? "Hey! What is that?" How much longer will it be till we hit that Mason-Dixon line? "My god, some new kind of Elvis? Slow down so we can hear!" At daylight, would you tell that engineer to slow it down (boom-chicka). "That's no Elvis, that's some other kinda weird thing." Or, better still just stop this train 'cause I want to look around. "Better call KPND, and tell 'em to play that mother again."*

Through all this chatter from my buddies, I was speechless . . . riveted. If ever the word "electrifying" could be applied to music, it belonged here . . . hearing Johnny Cash the first time was roughly like having a 110 volt power supply connected to each end of your spinal cord and turned on for three minutes. Hard to forget.

Ten or twelve years later, when I worked for Columbia Records, I was having lunch at the New York Hilton coffee shop and in walked Cash and June Carter. He looked bad . . . a wreck . . . and June was giving him hell about something, I didn't know what then, but now I can guess . . . but he still radiated 110 volt power. So with my spinal cord still vibrating at 60 cycles per second, I went back across the street to my office and volunteered to write the liner notes for the next Cash album—part of the dues I needed to pay for membership in the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. The next album turned out to be a budget-line reissue of earlier Cash records, but I was thrilled anyway. (I later read in Chris Wren's book that Cash hated reissue albums, so for years I hoped that he wouldn't identify me.)

Columbia Records was an exciting place to work in the '60s. We had Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Blood Sweat and Tears, Sly and the Family Stone, Gary Puckett and Barbra Streisand to mention a few . . . and we had Johnny Cash. In 1969, five percent of *all* the records sold in the U.S. were Johnny Cash records—one out of every

five country records and more records than *any* other act, including the Beatles, the Stones, Jimi Hendrix. In a couple of short years, Cash had gone from the brink of absolute personal disaster to the pinnacle of absolute personal triumph. However indirect the connection was, we at Columbia felt a share of the triumph.

In fact, 1969 was such a good year, I figured it could never be equalled, so I resigned from CBS and went into business with two partners, Jack Killion and Spencer Oettinger, among other reasons, to get into the magazine business. A year or so later, I was having lunch with Bruce Lundvall, an old friend, who today is President of Columbia Records, to convince him that CBS should support a new magazine idea I had in mind. "Sure, we'll support that," was Bruce's unenthusiastic reply. "But why don't you start a magazine on something we need and that you know about."

"Like what?" My eyes widened with hopeful curiosity.

"A magazine on country music."

"*Country Music Magazine* . . . that's what we'll call it," I said, as though I'd been thinking about it for years, ". . . we'll put Johnny Cash on the first cover." That was the end of the other idea (whatever it was) and the beginning of *Country Music*. Johnny Cash was on the first cover (September 1972) and he is on this one . . . five Cash covers altogether, more than any other performer.

From the beginning, Cash respected our efforts. That meant a lot to us. For a while we were afraid that he might be the *only* member of what we viewed as the "Nashville establishment" who had any understanding and appreciation for what we were trying to do.

Years later in 1977, at a CBS preview of his *Rambler* album, when I was introduced to him for the first time, he said, "I've always been proud to be associated with *Country Music Magazine*."

So, on the occasion of Johnny Cash's twenty-fifth anniversary in music, I approached the preparation of this issue with particular personal and professional pride and enthusiasm. This project was kept secret from John . . . which wasn't easy, but as John always says, "If it was easy, everybody would be doin' it." He'll find out about it the same time you do. June Carter Cash, John's sister Reba Hancock and his secretary and superperson Irene Gibbs made both the secret and the project possible. They have our thanks and our ap-



preciation. We also offer our thanks to Bruce Lundvall, Rick Blackburn and Sue Binford at CBS Records and to Johnny Cash's family, friends and colleagues whose contributions, many of which you will read in this issue, made our work a pleasure.

We are also pleased to announce that Johnny Cash has agreed to join our Board of Editorial Advisors along with Tom T. Hall, Emmylou Harris, Barbara Mandrell, and Merle Travis. The board is not responsible for what we publish in any way. Rather it exists so that representatives of the performing community will have an unfettered access to the public. Each board member has the right, when and if he or she wants to use it, to write an editorial or essay on anything related to country music. They may praise or criticize anything they choose, including what we publish. The editors will make no change in what the board members choose to write, and the only restrictions they face are the legal restrictions against libel and invasion of privacy. The first editorial from the board was written by Johnny Cash for this issue.

With all this background in mind, we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Johnny Cash is country music's longest running superstar—longer than Hank Williams, longer than anyone. Many top performers get to the top because they do what everyone else does . . . but they do it a whole lot better. A rare few get to the top because they do something *different*. Cash is one of those few. Elvis was another. Carrying the responsibility of their unique talent—living up to the public obligation to you, the audience *and* the private obligation to themselves—is always a heavy burden to the rare few. It is a burden which crushed both Elvis and Cash to their knees. But Elvis is dead and Johnny Cash lives . . . so, where our only other special issue devoted to a single performer was a eulogy to Elvis, this one is a celebration.

RUSSELL D. BARNARD

Last Sunday afternoon, as I wrote what you read above, watching a televised world title boxing match (one of my weaknesses) out of the corner of my eye, the following piece of dialog took place between me and my five year old son:

"Daddy, could we turn off the boxing and listen to some Johnny Cash train songs."

"You bet, John." And we did. ■

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AUDIO

Special Report

Four Systems

The one constant in the purchase of stereo equipment is that the quality of sound reproduction is proportional to the cost. The more you spend, the more you get . . . up to a point. There are systems which cost as little as \$200 and there are those which run upwards of \$3,000. Somewhere in-between there is a sensible and sound middle-ground.

Depending on how much you can afford, a quality stereo system can be purchased in the \$500 to \$1,500 price range, which

adequately should meet the requirements of any audiophile.

Since Nashville is a mid-sized American city as well as a major musical center, it is a fairly accurate barometer of price trends across the country. There are some 50 audio equipment stores in the Nashville area, and although there might be more potential customers due to the music industry, competition is still keen.

"We're as competitively-priced as anybody," says Ray Elkins, sales manager

of Nashville's Audio Systems. "Our prices are competitive with Los Angeles or New York. In fact, we take their newspapers once a week just to see what their prices are."

Within the price range of \$500 to \$1,500, Elkins, who has seven years experience as an audio expert, suggested five basic systems with price tags comparable to other stores, not only in Nashville but also in say, Des Moines, Houston, or your hometown.

System 1 \$550

The first system he suggested which has a manufacturer's suggested list price of \$708, can be bought for about \$550 after discount. It includes an Onkyo TX 1500 Mk.II AM-FM amp-receiver (\$235 list); a Technics SLB turntable (\$150 list); and a pair of Bose 301 speakers (\$258 list). He included an Acutex 207 Mk.II cartridge at \$65 list.



The Onkyo receiver has one of the top performance records in its price range. "I've never had one come back for repair," Elkins says. He also believes the unit has the best FM receiver for the money. While not a powerful amplifier (17 watts per channel), it produces a clean sound. It has one hookup for a tape deck (cassette, 8-track, or reel-to-reel) which might be a

drawback for someone who wanted to add more components. "This is one way the manufacturers keep the price down," Elkins explains. "They figure if someone is only going to spend that much on a receiver, he's not likely to have two tape decks."

The unit has the standard bass, treble, and loudness controls, but adds Elkins, "It doesn't have a lot of knobs and switches on it to knock out the buyer when he's looking at it. Yet it is a great-sounding receiver."

The turntable with this system, a Technics SLB, is a belt-drive semi-automatic unit. Technics is the number one selling turntable in the country, and according to Elkins there are more Technics turntables used in discos than any other manufacturer.

"This is a dependable model," Elkins says, "and it is a single-play unit." (The arm returns to its original position upon completion of an album.)

Elkins suggested using an Acutex 207 Mk.II cartridge with the turntable, although nearly any cartridge will work. "This cartridge is quite good for the money (\$65 list)," he notes. "It has excellent sound separation and high frequency response to it." While a cartridge virtually lasts forever, the stylus (\$25) should be replaced every six months to a year, depending on use.

For speakers, Elkins selected the Bose 301 model, which is the best-selling bookshelf speaker in the world. The speakers, which list for \$129 each, contain an eight-inch woofer and a two-inch tweeter, and are rated to handle 60 watts.

Bose speakers work on the principle of

reflected sound. "If you go to a concert," Elkins explains, "the sound is reflected off the walls and ceiling. Bose designs its speakers from the same philosophy and have about 40 percent reflected sound."

There is also a five-year warranty on the speakers. "The 301 is such a good speaker," Elkins continues, "that it seems to be the overall choice in its price range. We sell more of them than any other speaker."

System 2 \$800

For a package discount price of about \$800, Elkins combined the same Bose 301 speakers with a Yamaha CR240 amp-receiver (\$250 list) and a Sony T-25 turntable (\$295 list). The Yamaha receiver has more features than the Onkyo, including a variable loudness control rather than an on-off switch. It also has slightly more wattage (20 watts per channel). "With the Yamaha, you can vary the loudness, depending on the speakers, the room, or personal taste," Elkins says. "The sound is also a little cleaner, since it has a distortion of .02 percent, which is the lowest of any receiver in its price range." Like the Onkyo unit, the Yamaha receiver has only one hookup for a tapedeck.

This unit has a slightly better warranty (three years, parts and labor) than the Onkyo (two years, parts and labor).

The Sony T25 turntable is a fully-automatic, direct drive unit. The main

difference between this unit and the previous turntable is that the spindle on the direct drive unit is actually the shaft of the motor, whereas on the belt drive unit, there



is a belt attached to the motor which turns the platter. While the direct drive units are generally more dependable, some people will argue that once the motor wears out, the unit is shot, however that is also true of a belt drive motor. "Usually with a direct drive unit, the company gives you better specifications, which is to let you know their quality control is probably better than on belt drive units," Elkins relates.

As an optional piece of equipment to use with either of the aforementioned systems, Elkins suggested a Sony TCK 15 cassette deck, which lists for about \$190.

System 3 \$1100

The fourth system lists for about \$1336, but could be purchased at discount for about \$1100. Included in this system are a Yamaha CR640 amp-receiver (\$395 list); a Sony PSX40 turntable (\$360 list); and a pair of 38L L40 speakers (\$500 a pair list).

The Yamaha receiver has all the features of previous models, plus 40 watts per channel. The Sony PSX 40 turntable is also a quartz-locked system but it has a better tone arm than the previous model. "This allows it to utilize virtually any cartridge from the least expensive to the best made," Elkins says. He chose the Ortofon cartridge again, adding, "You'd have to spend a lot more money to get something that would be appreciably better."

More JBL speakers are used in recording studios than any other brand and thus are built with a professional in mind. The



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L40 model is a two-way speaker system with a 10-inch woofer and a 1.4" tweeter. They sell for \$500 a pair and carry a five-year parts and labor guarantee. Many feel that the L40 is the best available in this price range.



For a little bit more money Elkins suggested Klipsch Heresy speakers, which are available in two finishes: walnut (\$724 a pair list) or birch (\$622 a pair list). The difference in cabinet wood plays no part in the sound; it is strictly a matter of cosmetics. Located in Hope, Arkansas, Klipsch is one of the oldest manufacturers of speakers, having been in business since 1948.

The Heresy model is a three-way system with a 12-inch woofer and horns for the high frequencies and mid-range. "This is generally the most accurate speaker we've ever tested," Elkins says. "They can handle tremendous amounts of power without damaging the speakers. These speakers are used wherever quality sound reproduction is required."

System 4 \$1500

The next and final system, sells for about \$1,550 (\$1823 list) and although this is a substantial sum, it also represents a considerable sound difference, too. Elkins selected the Sony V55 receiver (\$500 list), a Sony PSX60 turntable (\$400 list), and the Klipsch speakers.

At 15 pounds, the Sony V55 is the lightest 55-watt per channel amp-receiver on the market. This unit is loaded, including such features as a digital read-out, quartz-locked digital tuner, dual tape monitors, button controls (as opposed to knobs), and a built-in moving coil pre-amp.

"One reason for its light weight," Elkins says, "is that it uses a pulse power supply and doesn't require the massive heat sinks most units need. It has a .02 percent distortion, and up to eight FM or AM stations

can be pre-set on the touch button system. This is Sony's best receiver and it looks like no other model."

The Sony turntable is a direct drive, fully automatic, quartz-locked system, with its base made from a specially molded compound material which helps reduce acoustic feedback. This enables you to place the speakers closer to the turntable without getting any feedback.

With this system are the Klipsch Heresy speakers, or for considerably more expense, Klipsch's Cornwall model, which aside from having a 15-inch woofer, is similar to the Heresy model. The Cornwall is a ported-cabinet housing while the Heresy is an air-suspension speaker. "The ported cabinets have slats at the bottom which allow air to escape," Elkins explains. "Thus it takes less power to drive it which makes it more efficient." Like all Klipsch speakers, the Cornwall if rated to handle 105 watts and sell for nearly \$1000 a pair.

Elkins chose the Ortofon Concorde 20 cartridge for this system which at four and one-half grams is the lightest headshell-cartridge combination on the market. "The advantage is that it's able to track warped records much easier than a heavier cartridge would," Elkins notes.

As a component for either of the last two systems, Elkins recommends the Sony TCK 55 Mk.II cassette deck, which lists for about \$400. The unit features solenoid controls, which are all electronic rather than mechanical, so they virtually never wear out. It has an optional remote control which will record, rewind, fast forward, etc. It has a two-year parts and labor guarantee.

Elkins says a purchaser should be able to get a discount by buying an entire system, similar to any of those mentioned here. He also advises the buyer to shop around, compare specifications and prices, and get the most for the money. "Wherever and whatever they buy," Elkins stresses, "they should make sure they can get service. Some stores only give you the impression they have a service department."



Regardless of how much money you have to spend on a stereo system, whether it be \$550 or \$1500, you can be assured of at least owning a system which will provide countless hours of high fidelity entertainment.

—KELLY DELANEY

Our Record Reviewers Review Their Own Systems

Peter Stampfel

When I started writing for *Country Music*, my record playing equipment was a bit crude. I had been given a Gerrard turntable, circa mid '60s, by my friend, Paul Conly. Paul was a member of a great group that never made it called *Lothar And The Hand People*, 1965-1970 or 71, R.I.P. When they broke up, Paul went back to Colorado, and gave me the table as a going away present, because I didn't have a decent record player at the time.

Doubling on amp and speakers, I had an early '60s pre-CBS Fender Deluxe amp. The same one I play fiddle through. I paid \$100 for it in Hollywood in 1968. Since then I have sunk about \$175 in repairs into it. I still play through it.

Low level, you sneer? Listen, good sound is relative. Seventy-five years ago, no one had a phonograph. Low fi beats no fi. Fifty years ago, there were people who could not tell the difference between music on a phonograph and the real thing. Right, with those old windups playing 78 rpm records. Sounds just like real, they said. I didn't feel deprived 'cause my sound setup had no class. I felt lucky 'cause I had one.

Lately I've been using my girl friend, Betsy's, outfit. Her folks gave her a KLH "Christmas catalog" stereo for Christmas in 1972. The sound didn't knock her out, but it sure beat nothing. By '74, she was unemployed, and living in Cambridge, Mass. A friend of hers who also had lots of spare time was using it all to go from audio store to audio store, listening to components. Betsy thought that sounded like fun, so she joined him. They spent most of two months doing that, and had a great time. He was looking for fancy, and Betsy decided to spend all her savings on plain, which was all she could afford.

They came to the conclusion they both preferred Braun speakers to any other. He got the fancy one, she got the plain one. Again, they both liked Thorens turntables best. Also they were on sale. Betsy again got the cheapest one.

It was a manual turntable. I prefer ones that change records, even if they aren't as high tech.

Due to lack of funds, she still has the KLH receiver.

Michael Bane

Actually, my stereo is a genuine (accept-no-substitutes) discount special, featuring a bottom-of-the-line Pioneer amp and a couple of real heavy speakers that periodically sound as if the little speaker cones were made of used Saran Wrap. Also, *stereo* isn't really a fair word, since it hasn't played both channels for about five years. One of my friends, a noted audiophile, has suggested that if I were to replace my needle, which is eight years old, the sound quality would improve. Also, he questioned my thrifty use of masking tape to patch the speaker wires, which are about 400 feet long and cut in about a dozen places.

Well, it's also got a Dual turntable, which was pretty good when I bought it back in the Dark Ages. Now, you've got to crank it around with your finger to get it to start up. The tape deck is a Panasonic 612, which I bought from a joint next door to my favorite Italian sandwich shop because it was cute. It works real good, too.

If I'm really worried about hearing

something to the fullest, what I do is make a cassette of it and haul it out to my truck (The World's Smallest Pick-Up), where I slap that sucker into my ridiculously sophisticated, outrageously expensive Blaupunkt AM/FM/Cassette stereo deck, turn the volume up to mind-numbing (Pioneer speakers, since you asked), and cruise on down to Jimbo's Barbeque, where the drive-in waitress, who's cute as the proverbial button, thinks I'm some kinda psychotic weirdo for playing loud, strange music.

I mean, I'd rather listen to music at home than swat myself over the head with a two-by-four, but music really comes into its own in a car. There's nothing in the world quite like blasting down the Interstate, the wind impacting your ear-wax, while Tammy Wynette or Elvis Presley or Roy Orbison or Bruce Springsteen or George Jones shakes your rear-view mirror out of adjustment. You can sing along, alone or over the CB, terrify people in the car next to you, bliss out, and in general just have a wonderful time.

And, hey, isn't that what music's supposed to be all about?

Bill Oakey

I was one of those guys who wanted to build up my stereo system by adding new

components, and even trying some of the latest gimmicks. It's fun to tell your friends that you just acquired a nude shibata that will track the inner grooves better than his elliptical. It may cost twice as much and last only half as long, but you've got him beat on the specs.

Stylus shapes and groove configurations aside, I decided to stick with a more practical Shure V-15 Type III cartridge. It's a real bummer when your needle is worn and you just got a new Linda Ronstadt album in the mail, and nobody in town has any odd shaped needles for an exotic cartridge.

The wisest investment I've made in quite awhile is the purchase of a pair of compact speakers. At first I was skeptical, thinking most of them were overpriced, and they didn't have enough bass. I wanted a pair for the bedroom, but I didn't want them to be several steps down from my main pair in the living room.

As it turns out, I was blown away by the KEF Model 101's. They're only 12½ inches tall, and they actually outperform the outdated floor speakers I had been using! I told the guy in the store that I would be willing to go on TV and brag about them.

These British made speakers have served their purpose in more ways than one. Not only do they deliver plenty of bass, but they put out unusually crisp high frequen-



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cies, without requiring an uneven boost in treble from the amp. I'll admit that their attractiveness was a factor in choosing them too. And you can't overload them because of a protective circuit that blocks off dangerous wattage. That pretty well sums it up except for one added advantage. They made a good conversational topic over drinks with Tanya Tucker, following an interview (although I didn't get to invite her over to check them out).

The rest of my system is not the latest, but I can claim reliability. I've had my **Pioneer SX-828** receiver for several years, and when it was in need of repair, one of their authorized dealers was able to order the parts to fix it. My **Dual 1219** turntable has not yet learned to reject a mediocre record, but it still keeps the good ones sounding great.

Rich Kienzle

Bare bones and no frills is the best way to describe my stereo system. It's neither fancy nor terribly expensive, for I've always believed that unless you're a true audiophile, interested in distortion, rumble, flutter and wow and all the rest, the best system is the one with the least gadgets to go wrong, the one that gives good sound with minimal maintenance. Now I've got nothing against fancy systems, yet few people I know with \$800 and up setups have more than 20 albums in their record library. As you can see, the opposite's true with me.

The heart of my system is a **Sony HP-250** compact I bought back in 1975 after my faithful Sears portable stereo, a unit that sustained me for nearly a decade, finally blared its last. The HP-250 is just a turntable. AM/FM, two speakers, automatic shutoff and a tape monitor. It can work manually and most important it can play my collection of 78s (a feature that's fast disappearing from current compacts of all brands). The construction is solid; it's built like a tank, and in five years, the only maintenance it's needed is replacing the stylus, the one part of any reviewers' stereo that tends to wear out the fastest.

Three years ago, after deciding my old portable cassette recorder, a **Hitachi** stereo model, had run its course, I started looking for a replacement. Again, I wanted a basic deck with no gingerbread, just Dolby noise reduction, and I settled on the **Pioneer CTF-2121**, one of the first high quality, low-cost cassette decks. Again, I was lucky for it gives me fine sound and high reliability, though I still keep the Hitachi around for dubbing. Since I sometimes review from the cassette of a master, I need solid reproduction and the Pioneer's always delivered, as have my headphones, a set of **Koss PRO-4As**.

Hearing the music clearly and reliably, whether I'm listening to a test pressing to

write a review, playing a cassette or a favorite album or reviewing a monaural LP culled from scratchy 78s for *Buried Treasures*, is the most important thing to me. My whole system's not worth more than \$500, but it's never let me down.

Bob Allen

About three years ago, when I first started writing record reviews for *Country Music Magazine*, I was probably the only writer in the magazine's history that didn't even own a stereo.

Basically, I was too poor to buy one. So the way I got around this minor inconvenience was to ride across town to one of my friends' places and listen to the review records on one of their ancient, decrepit machines.

Finally, after I'd written enough reviews that I could afford to buy one and I'd moved into an apartment big enough to hold one, I decided to buy my own stereo and start saving on gas. After all, it was starting to be a pain to have to ride across town every time I wanted to hear a record.

I do not now and never have, known anything about stereo systems. To this day, I remain blissfully ignorant of the mysteries of circuitry and wattage ratings. This, I reason, is better left to the Japanese. So naturally, my first efforts at buying a component system involved a futile attempt to overcome this ignorance. I visited numerous stores, listened to numerous systems, and became increasingly more confused.

Finally though, I settled on the modest stereo system which is, to some degree at least, the basis of the one I have today. This first time around, I bought a moderately priced **Technic** turntable and an equally modest **Technic** receiver, and two **Altec Lansing Model One** Speakers, the smallest speakers that Altec makes.

I must admit, I was first drawn to the Altecs by the looks and by the name. Then after listening closely to them and comparing them with others in a similar price range, I decided that they had the most *presence*. As I say, I know nothing about stereos, and I'm still not sure what *presence* is. But still, the Altecs seemed to deliver the music more fully and clearly at all sorts of different volumes than the others did. This was—and is—important, because I listen to everything from Tom Petty and the Rolling Stones, to Merle Haggard and Gary Stewart, to movie soundtracks like *The Deer Hunter* and *Manhattan*.

The Technic receiver and turntable were decided on because they were compatible with the speakers and seemed to make them sound good. Similarly, I knew the brand name and had heard good things about them from friends. (Before even going in the store, I polled all my friends

about what they considered to be good moderately priced brands of stereo equipment.) More important, I had set my price limit for an entire system at \$500, and that's not very much at all. But after a bit of bargaining (keep in mind, this was about two years ago), I was able to get the entire system for exactly that much—tax included.

Kip Kirby

Being a record is difficult enough these days . . . Recycled vinyl, poor pressings, mysterious warps that develop in transit . . . So my theory is that as a record reviewer, it's my responsibility to give these vulnerable entities the best shot possible by playing them on a good sound system.

(Of course, this is double-edged sword. The advantages of quality and fidelity in a superior stereo system will also serve as a major *disadvantage* for inferiorly-pressed recordings. Indistinct snaps, crackles and pops amplify alarmingly like a bowl of Rice Krispies next to a microphone!)

Besides reviewing records for this publication, I also write and review for *Billboard Magazine* in Nashville. So I hear a LOT of records in a week. Whenever possible, I take albums home for listening, since I'm frankly partial to my own stereo equipment. I use a **Harmon Kardon 330C** amplifier, **Advent Loudspeakers** (full size), **Dual 1228** turntable with tuning strobe and **Audio-Technica** cartridge, and a **Marantz Superscope CO 330** professional cassette recorder. For headphones, I've got **Koss Pro 4AA**; they're a bit on the weighty side, but for fine reproduction and isolation from outside room noise, they're unbeatable.

I bought most of these components several years ago. The system isn't particularly fancy, but it gives me exactly the sound I like, and for the money, it's been a champ.

Serious stereo buffs might scoff at the idea of driving Advents off a 15 watt-per-channel amplifier. But since I don't make a habit of cranking the system up to the rafters, I haven't had any problems. If I decide to add more speakers, I'll boost the power source.

So much for album reviews, now for singles. Singles that come into Billboard for weekly review get listened to on a **Marantz 2215B** tuner/amp, **Marantz** speakers and **BIC 960** turntable. Our office cassette deck is a **Sony TC-K15** model. While I can't claim any affection for **BIC** turntables, they do have the advantage of being able to be programmed to replay the same record up to six times in a row. This can be a very useful feature when you're trying to write a review but need to listen several more times for additional instrumental details. ■

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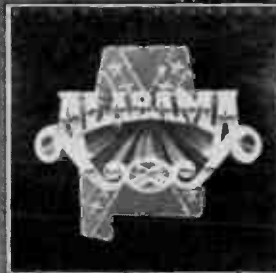
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Old Friends Honor Cash In Anniversary Show

While CBS Records celebrated Johnny Cash's 25 years in music with a snazzy double-record album, *Johnny Cash Silver*, CBS television added its kudos in a 90-minute television special on May 8.

Johnny Cash: the First 25 Years, produced by the Joe Cates Company, included a staggering array of talent—some 40 big names in all—who donated film clips, if not time, to salute the Man in Black.

Though last-minute rumors circulated on the Opry House set that Bob Dylan was flying in for a surprise appearance, the elusive poet never made it. Never mind. Among those who did: Roy Acuff, Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, Larry Gatlin, The Statler Brothers, Tom T. Hall, Anne Murray, Chet Atkins, Dottie West, Ray Stevens, Jack Clement, Carl Perkins, and Roy Clark.

On the eclectic list of non-musical guests, most of whom put in brief appearances on film, or during a final sing-along of *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, were no less than Steve Martin (who delivered a hilarious comedy bit with Cash), Kirk Douglas, Minnie Pearl, Peter Falk and Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander.

"Tonight my memories are of songs and people and lots of places," said Cash, introducing some of the highlights of his career. A skinny, big-eyed Cash singing *Don't Take Your Guns to Town* on his first appearance on the Ed Sullivan show in 1959; clips from *The Gunfighter*, *Little House on the Prairie* and *Columbo*; and a segment from his biblical epic, *Gospel Road*.

If Cash's memories of places are nostalgic, his recollections of people—and their's of him—were even more so. Kris Kristofferson, in one of the show's great moments, recalled the day his career literally got off the ground when he landed a helicopter in Cash's front yard to deliver *Sunday Morning Coming Down*.

"I got to lay down the broom," said Kristofferson of the song's subsequent success. "And I made a friend for life."

Jennings, a one-time roommate of Cash's, described him as "the sloppiest housekeeper in the world, but a good cook. And a wonderful friend."

Carl Perkins and Jack "Cowboy" Clement both came close to stealing the show with *Blue Suede Shoes*, and *When I Dream*, respectively, and kidded with Cash about their down-and-out days waiting for the big time at Memphis' Sun Records.

One of the show's most nostalgic moments came in a film clip of an earlier television appearance Cash made with the late Maybelle Carter. Cash clowns, a tender smile on his face as he peers intently at Maybelle's fancy fingerwork on *Wildwood Flower*, played with her characteristically impassive face. She was, he says proudly, "a fishing buddy, a darlin' mother-in-law and a country music legend."

Maybelle's daughter and Cash's wife and singing partner of 16 years, June Carter Cash, added her share of sentiment to the proceedings too, kissing Cash simply after their quavering duet on *You're a Part of Me*.

As it has through the past 25 years, Cash's music shone. The show catalogued what seemed to be a nearly limitless assortment of hits, from his first, *Hey Porter*, through such gems as *Folsom Prison Blues*, *Ragged Old Flag* and *A Boy Named Sue*, to *There Ain't No Good Chain Gang*, sung with Jennings.

Billed as "the million-dollar quartet," Cash, Jennings, Gatlin and Kristofferson teamed up for a medley of *I Walk the Line* and *Ring of Fire*, while Hall and The Statler Brothers each contributed songs written in Cash's honor. Sang Hall, "they took all they could take, but they couldn't take his mind . . . he was one of a kind." The Statlers added a run-down of their formative years with Cash, who discovered them singing at a county fair in Virginia, concluding jovially "we learned more than we earned, when we got paid by Cash."

Throughout the show, Cash was in rare form, his well-known subdued dignity often lightened with a broad smile, a guffaw here and there, a flash of laughter in his eyes. He seemed to be having a hell of a good time, an opinion he confirmed backstage during the taping of the show. But the experience had also been a sentimental journey for Cash.



"The songs and the people have made me look back a little," he said during a break. "Tom T. Hall and the Statlers have both brought tears to my eyes in the past couple of days with their songs. And it's been great seeing Carl Perkins and Jack Clement again. We've talked all about the early days at Sun Records about Memphis. These people have been a part of my career since the beginning."

He was pleased with the way the show turned out, he said, but felt that the demands of commercial television inevitably limited its scope.

"If I could I would completely forget about ratings and stars' names. I'd do the show with all the people that I've loved and who have loved me in the past 25 years, onstage and off. A good many of them will be on the show, but I guess if we did it right, it would take about six hours."

In looking back over the past 25 years, he said, a few highlights came readily to mind and he's proudest, perhaps, of the production of *Gospel Road* and the writing of *I Walk the Line*.

"But you know, it's what's ahead that I'm really thinking about," he said. "I'm feeling as good as a performer as I ever have felt and I'm more into singing, writing, recording and performing than I've ever been. The show closes with a Steve Goodman song called *The Twentieth Century Is Almost Over*. That I think is prophetic in a way. It's the future that's most exciting to me."

LAURA EIPPER

Tension Surrounds Visit

Statler Brothers Entertain At White House

The President's patience had worn thin. A southern Baptist and devout Christian, President Jimmy Carter considers the protection of American lives his supreme duty. Carter considers himself a reasonable man, but reason had failed to penetrate the religious and political dogma of Iran, a zealous, oil-rich country holding 50 Americans under threat of death. So on April 8, the 157th day of Americans held captive in Iran, and a day when The Statler Brothers arrived in Washington D.C. to prepare for an evening concert at a state dinner honoring Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the President drew a harder line. He announced new economic sanctions, kicked all Iranian diplomats out of the country and threatened military action.

In this volatile atmosphere, the Statler Brothers rolled their bus through the White House gates, donned tuxedos and thoroughly entertained President and Mrs. Carter, President Sadat and his wife, and other invited dignitaries with a smooth, 40-minute concert.

The Statlers had been in the White House on two prior occasions. In 1971, during the Nixon administration, the Statler Brothers performed here with Johnny Cash. During October, 1979, The Statlers mixed and mingled on the White House lawn at a luncheon given by President Carter for country music notables in honor of National Country Music Month. In spite of international tensions, The Statlers felt more at ease than on previous visits. Number one, the group comprised the sole form of entertainment for the evening. Also, according to Statler Phil Balsley, President and Mrs. Carter paid them a short visit in the afternoon—a chat which made The Statlers feel right at home.

"I think we were probably more at ease this time than when we were with John (Cash) back in 1971," said Balsley, the tall, thin, blond Statler who sings high harmony. "We were the sole entertainment, and there was just a different feeling about it. It is hard to describe. I think President Carter and Mrs. Carter helped us along because when we were setting up the sound and checking our equipment and singing a few songs, they were getting ready to go jogging and they came by and said, 'hi.' He had on his shorts and sneakers, and Mrs. Carter had

on a sweat suit. They said they were glad to have us, and they hoped we would do a good job. It made us all feel a lot better."

At a function of this nature, small talk with people like President Carter and Sadat is difficult, if not impossible. A reception preceded a dinner and the concert. At the reception, guests filed by and shook hands with the Carters and Sadat and his wife. However, during the dinner, Harold Reid, the gregarious Statler with the zany sense of humor, managed to speak with Sadat and discovered a rumor the group had heard was true—Sadat shared the Statler's love of old cowboy movies. The Statler Brothers own a huge collection of old movies, and Sadat maintains a similar collection, Balsley said.

"During the dinner, Harold asked an FBI man if it was okay to go over and say hello to Sadat," Balsley said. "The FBI man said 'yeah, I guess so. Just go over and punch him on the shoulder.' So Harold asked Sadat if he was a movie fan. Sadat said he loved old western movies and watched one just about every night before he went to bed. So they dis-

cussed the old '30s, '40s and '50s cowboy movies."

Although the Statlers enjoyed the visit, Balsley said there is a difference in performing before a White House audience. The Washington crowd is not exactly the biggest fan of country music. But if the President likes country music, that is enough for the Statlers.

"A lot of these people aren't country fans to start with, so there is a difference," Balsley said. "Usually people in that realm of society aren't fans. Carter must be a fan because he invites so many country artists up there. So if the President likes the music, everything is okay. We had a good time and things went smoothly."

The only possible mistake the group made was the decision to wear tuxedos, instead of the usual stage outfits. "We didn't have to do it, but we wore tuxedos," Balsley said. "One of the ladies on the social staff said she was expecting us in our red, white and blue stage outfits. Well, we told her we would have worn them if we had known that."



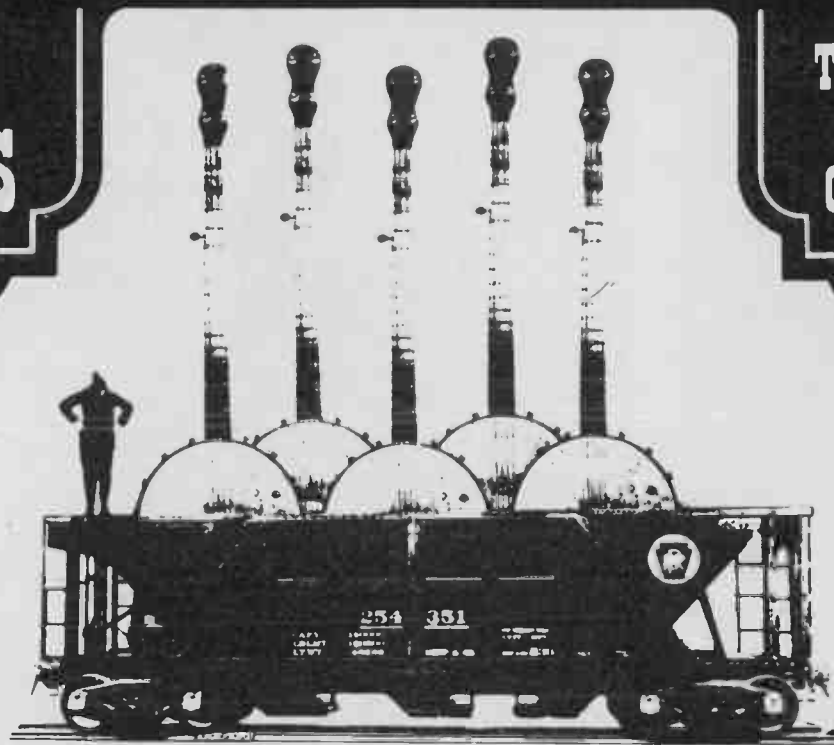
Barbara Mandrell recently signed a new exclusive recording contract with MCA Records. She had been with MCA for the past year, having come to the label through the merger of MCA and ABC in March, 1979. She signed with ABC in 1975 and, with the support of the former ABC staff, now employed largely at MCA's Nashville office, climbed the ladder of accomplishment to be named the Country Music Association's "Female Vocalist of the Year" in 1979.

Pictured above with Miss Mandrell are Irby Mandrell, her personal manager; Alan Siegel, her attorney; MCA President Jim Foglesong and Tom Collins, her producer.

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Catching Up With Dave Rowland

When Dave Rowland and Sugar (Sue Powell and Melissa Dean) rolled into Nashville a couple of months ago for a guest appearance on Tammy Wynette's upcoming syndicated television special, *Country Music* figured this would be a perfect time to find out a little more about group leader Rowland. Dave formed the group, co-produces all the records and acts as guidance counselor. When we found Rowland, he was in his dressing room at the Grand Ole Opry House, putting on makeup and changing into his tailored performing outfit. Slim, about 5'8" tall, Rowland epitomized grace under pressure. Although he was due onstage in minutes, Rowland politely talked until he had to leave. With a string of hits behind the group and a new management deal with Kenny Rogers' organization, Rowland has that clear, confident look in his eye.

Country Music: I understand you are interested in acting?

Rowland: I got interested in acting when I was in the army in 1965. I had the lead role in some productions, and after I got out of the Army I was awarded a theatrical scholarship at the Pasadena Playhouse, California State College and Arizona State U. I got out and went to Fullerton Jr. College (California) at night. I got the lead role in a production and started singing part-time also. Then my music started happening for me again, and I asked if I could postpone my scholarship for a year. They said no. But I live in Los Angeles now, and I am taking private lessons.

Country Music: Do you see any similarities between singing and acting?

Rowland: Yes, I think there is. I think the major reason an actor would like to become a singer or a singer would like to become an actor is they both are entertainers. It is simply an expansion of abilities—another plateau, another challenge. That is how I look at it. I am studying for it, and it might be another life for me if I want to slow up on singing.

Country Music: Do you have any other current interests besides acting?

Rowland: Tennis. I have played in the Music City (Nashville) Invitational Tournament the past two years and will again this year. I am really into it. I'm traveling with the Kenny Rogers Show now and he plays tennis. So we play



everyday when we are on the road.

Country Music: What is it like touring with Kenny?

Rowland: First of all, he is a heck of a nice guy. His show is a great show and it is great exposure for the group. We are playing in front of a market we have never played before. We are playing to pop audiences. We open all his shows now except at fair dates and some Vegas shows, although that may change.

Country Music: Haven't you lost a great deal of weight over the past couple of years?

Rowland: About 45 pounds.

Country Music: What is your secret?

Rowland: Well, an entertainer has the problem of working late at night. When you finish a job, you are hungry, just like when you work a regular physical job. So you have to watch your eating habits. I just wasn't eating the right kind of foods. So I started watching my sugar intake and quit eating late at night before I went to bed. I exercise and don't smoke or drink.

Country Music: Do you think being in shape helps you on stage?

Rowland: Definitely. It is important for an entertainer to keep in shape. I think it is pleasing to go onstage when the audience knows you are in shape and look good. I want the girls to look good also. Sex appeal is a big part of it. There is a time in your career when you need to keep things like that in mind. Before I didn't have any reason to watch my weight.

Country Music: You co-produce Dave

and Sugar's albums. Would you like to produce other artists?

Rowland: Well, I would like to someday produce an album on Sugar.

Country Music: There was a period of time, when you were with the Stamps Quartet, that you sang behind Elvis. And I notice you have a TCB necklace. Any last thoughts on Elvis?

Rowland: I worked with Elvis for a little over a year, and he was a friend. I wasn't there wanting anything from him or to be number one in his eyes. I was there to enjoy his show, enjoy his music, being part of the organization and being his friend. We had a lot of good times together. We used to do karate together, and we would sing after all his shows. He gave me my TCB. He was a nice guy. I never saw him misuse drugs or people. I was never around that scene. I wish they would bring out more good things instead of the controversial things.

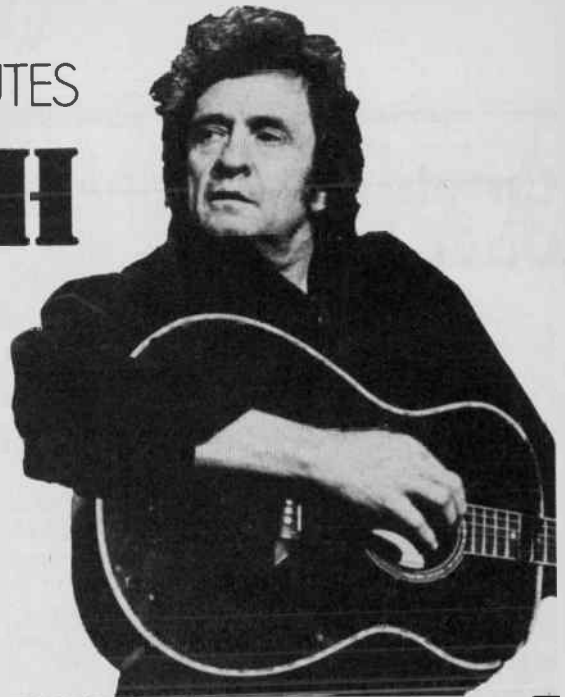
Country Music: Are you pleased at this point with the success of Dave and Sugar?

Rowland: Well, you always wish that you could get more promotion, more television, to break in Vegas—and it looks like we are going to do that this year with Kenny. If not with Kenny, they will put us there with someone else. But there is always something else you would like to do. I am satisfied that now I feel a lot of pressure is off my shoulders, and I have someone working for us to help us create and do these things. I would like to have our own TV special someday, and we are working on that.

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"A klediment is mountain talk for treasured persons and things," begins June Carter Cash. And she has had many of them to share — from her earliest childhood memories with the famed Carter Family to life with the name this issue is dedicated to, husband Johnny Cash. Now, in her autobiography, she talks freely, openly, almost as if from across the kitchen table — sharing personal stories and lessons, treasured photos, and original poetry. She takes us behind-the-scenes and into her thoughts and prayers. We felt it only fitting that we include this book in any special Johnny Cash offer, as it includes so much about him by the woman who knows him best. This is the bestseller from which the poems on pages 32 and 33 of this issue were taken. We highly recommend it.

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PEOPLE

According to some friends of the group, Willie Nelson and his merry band of outlaw/pranksters had an honest-to-goodness showdown with the local law a couple of months ago in Asheville, North Carolina. The fuss originated over a little beer that was consumed onstage by Willie and his band. Asheville is a dry



county, you see, and the police there didn't care too much for Willie's example before the home folks. So after the show, a couple of officers decided they would just up and raid Willie's bus. The promoter there tried to smooth things over, but no deal. Then Paul English, Willie's drummer and old, old friend—a man who knows his way around the front and backside of the law—explained that Willie and company had no idea they were performing in a dry county and they were all sorry about the incident. Well, that explanation didn't pull much truck with the law either. So Paul made it real clear that the officers had better go get themselves a search warrant before they took any steps on the bus. That must have made sense because the local boys left to find a warrant. While they were gone, Willie and the boys cranked up the old bus and waltzed out of town. No harm done.

Larry Gatlin makes a pretty good living singing and writing country music, but some folks may not know that he was a standout high school football player in Texas and also played college ball for the University of Houston for three years on a full scholarship. In an interview given to a local sportswriter in Nashville, however, Gatlin said he didn't exactly burn up the gridiron in college. He did learn a few things. "It taught me about life," Gatlin said. "You go to practice, work hard and still never get to play. That's the breaks . . . just like in life. You

give it your best shot and accept what you get. I think my football experience was good for me. It taught me to persevere, never give up." Larry played wide receiver, but not too much. "Actually, the term 'played' might be stretching it a little," he said. "I think I was in games for a total of 13 minutes during my career. I played behind Ken Hebert, the national scoring champion one year, and Elmo Wright, a three-time All-American . . . gosh, how was I going to beat those guys out of a starting job."

The past year has been a great one for Charlie Daniels, but someone has thrown a damper on the fire. Daniels' favorite guitar, a prized 1958 Les Paul Gibson electric, was stolen from his road manager's car last April in Nashville. The guitar has a cherry-sunburst finish and was stored in a plain case without Daniels' name on it. Charlie has used this guitar for years and years and is offering a reward for its return, no questions asked.



Although fans may think show business is all glamour, the government considers it plain work. For instance, all stars have social security numbers too. Dolly Parton's number is 411-74-3441 and Roy Acuff holds SS# 409-56-2336.

People in the know say Kenny Rogers will make \$18 million, this year. That's right—\$18 million. Even some non-country music critics say he is "the hottest act in show business today."



Rogers is selling millions of records, breaking some of the late Elvis Presley's concert attendance records and starred in

a TV movie this year, *The Gambler*, which achieved #1 ratings the week it aired. Word is out that a sequel to *The Gambler* may be produced for distribution in regular movie houses, not television. Rogers is not even sure he likes acting. "The truth of the matter is, I don't know that I am interested in acting," Kenny told one interviewer. "It is just one of those things, that in this business of entertaining, there is no such thing as status quo. You have to try to get hotter or you will definitely get colder. You may not get any hotter, but you have to try."

No one denies it and no one confirms it, but there is talk that Tanya Tucker and Glen Campbell have eyes for each other. Campbell is currently in the divorce courts. His wife, Sarah, was formerly married to Mac Davis. One truth about Tanya is that she has returned to Nashville for recording sessions with former producer Jerry Crutchfield. Her new LP is said to be much more country than the material she has recorded in Los Angeles the past couple of years.

Merle Haggard is writing a book, and he plans to tell the truth about his life. Tentatively titled, *My Life's Been Grand*, the book is being co-authored by old friend Peggy Russell. "We are telling all the bad stuff, not just the good things," Haggard told a Nashville newspaper. "It is hard to do, but I think people make a mistake when they whitewash themselves in autobiographies. You seem plastic and unreal when you do that. I'm excited about the book. It has been an enjoyable experience, kinda like re-living your life. You pull things out and look at them all over again. It is surprising how many things you forget over the years." Simon and Schuster will publish the book, and Haggard said the book should be in stores by the summer of '81.

Jerry Reed has discovered Burt Reynolds ain't a bad friend to have. Jerry recently celebrated his 25th anniversary in show business, and Burt flew into Nashville just to present Reed with a special present—a black, 1980 Pontiac special edition Trans Am turbo exactly like the four or five Trans Ams used in the filming of *Smokey and the Bandit*. The presentation was made at a local Pontiac dealership in Nashville. After a little good-natured jostling between the two, Reynolds grabbed the keys and took Reed for a quick test run around the block.

Pittsburgh Steeler quarterback Terry Bradshaw flew into Nashville in April for

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Woodchopper's Gall; The Golden Wedding; Who Dat Up Dere; Yardbird Shuffle; Down Under; Indian Boogie Woogie; Blue Flame; Four Or Five Times; Irresistible You; Chips' Boogie Woogie; Las Chiapanecas; Woodsheddin' With Woody.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-219 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - MCA-113 ALBUM \$2.98
Don't Come Home A Drinkin' With Lovin' On Your Mind; I Really Don't Want You To Know; Tomorrow Never Comes; There Goes My Everything; The Shoe Goes On The Other Foot Tonight; Saint To A Sinner; The Devil Gets His Dues; I Can't Keep Away From You; I'm Living In Two Worlds; Get What 'Cha Got And Go; Making Plans; I Got Caught.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-113 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - HYMNS
MCA-5 ALBUM \$2.98
Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven; Where No One Stands Alone; When They Ring Those Golden Bells; Peace In The Valley; If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again; The Third Man; How Great Thou Art; Old Camp Meetin'; When I Hear My Children Pray; In The Sweet Bye And Bye; Where I Learned To Pray; I'd Rather Have Jesus.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-5 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - MCA-6 ALBUM \$2.98
You Ain't Woman Enough; Put It Off Until Tomorrow; These Boots Are Made For Walkin'; God Gave Me A Heart To Forgive; Keep Your Change; Someone Before Me; The Darkest Day; Tippy Toeing; Talking To The Wall; A Man I Hardly Know; Is It Wrong; It's Another World.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-6 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN and CONWAY TWITTY
MCA-8 ALBUM \$2.98
It's Only Make Believe; We've Closed Our Eyes To Shame; I'm So Used To Loving You; Will You Visit Me On Sunday; After The Fire Is Gone; Don't Tell Me You're Sorry; Pickin' In The Mountain Berries; Take Me; The One I Can't Live Without; Hangin' On; Working Girl.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-8 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - MCA-7 ALBUM \$2.98
Who Says God Is Dead; I Believe; Standing Room Only; The Old Rugged Cross; Harp With Golden Strings; If You Miss Heaven; I'm A 'Gettin' Ready To Go; In The Garden; Ten Thousand Angels; He's Got The Whole World In His Hands; Mama, Why.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-7 \$4.98

SAMMY KAYE - MCA-191 ALBUM \$2.98
Harbor Lights; Walkin' To Missouri; Penny Serenade; Atlanta, G.A.; Roses; Laughing On The Outside (Crying On The Inside); It Isn't Fair; Chickery Chick; I'm A Big Girl Now; Blueberry Hill; Room Full Of Roses; The Old Lamp-Lighter.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-191 \$4.98

WAYNE KING - MCA-94 ALBUM \$2.98
The Waltz You Saved For Me; Josephine; Now Is The Hour; Near You; Dancing With Tears In My Eyes; Lonesome; That's All; Goofus; Where The Blue Of The Night Meets The Gold Of The Day; Together; True Love; Deep Purple; Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-94 \$4.98

TED LEWIS - MCA-258 ALBUM \$2.98
When My Baby Smiles At Me; She's Funny That Way; Just Around The Corner; The Sweetheart Of Sigma Chi; The Old St. Louis Blues; Tiger Rag; Wear A Hat With A Silver Lining; Down The Old Church Aisle; I'm The Medicine Man For The Blues; King For A Day; Three O'Clock In The Morning; Good Night.
NO TAPE AVAILABLE

GUY LOMBARDO - MCA-103 ALBUM \$2.98
MEDLEY'S: Blues In The Night; The Birth Of The Blues; I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues; Memories; Let The Rest Of The World Go By; My Secret Love; Love Nest; Love Is The Sweetest Thing; Something To Remember You By; The Very Thought Of You; You're My Everything; Kiss Me Again; A Kiss In The Dark; I'll See You Again; By The Light Of The Silvery Moon; Shine On Harvest Moon; Moonlight Bar; As Time Goes By; Bidin' My Time; Breezin' Along With The Breeze; I Want To Be Happy; I'm Looking Over A Four Leaf Clover; Happy Days Are Here Again; April Showers; September In The Rain; I Only Have Eyes For You; If I Could Be With You; It Had To Be You; In A Shanty In Old Shanty Town; Three Little Words; Baby Face; Somebody Loves Me; Don't Take Your Love From Me; What Is This Thing Called Love.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-103 \$4.98

JIMMY MARTIN - MCA-96 ALBUM \$2.98
Prayer Bells Of Heaven; Goodbye; Give Me Roses Now; What Would You Give In Exchange; Voice Of My Savior; Shut In's Prayer; This World Is Not My Home; Pray The Clouds Away; Lord I'm Coming Home; Give Me Your Hand; Little White Church; God Guide Our Leaders Hand.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-96 \$4.98

JIMMY MARTIN - MCA-137 ALBUM \$2.98
Singing All Day And Dinner On The Ground; Lift Your Eyes To Jesus; My Lord Keeps A Record; God Is Always The Same; When The Savior Reached Down For Me; Shake Hands With Mother Again; Help Thy Brother; A Beautiful Life; Stormy Waters; Hold To God's Unchanging Hand; Little Angels In Heaven.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-137 \$4.98

WEBB PIERCE - MCA-120 ALBUM \$2.98
In The Jailhouse Now; Slowly; I Ain't Never; Wondering; There Stands The Glass; If The Back Door Could Talk; Tupelo County Jail; I Don't Care; Alla My Love; Don't Do It, Darlin'; Missing You.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-120 \$4.98

MILLSBROTHERS - MCA-188 ALBUM \$2.98
Paper Doll; I'll Be Around; You Tell Me Your Dreams; I'll Tell You Mine; Till Then; You Always Hurt The One You Love; Don't Be A Baby, Baby; Across The Alley From The Alamo; Be My Life's Companion; The Glow Worm; Queen Of The Senior Prom; Smack Dab In The Middle; Opus One.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-188 \$4.98

BILL MONROE - I'LL MEET YOU IN CHURCH SUNDAY MORNING
MCA-226 ALBUM \$2.98
I'll Meet You In Church Sunday Morning; Drifting Too Far From The Shore; Master Builder; I Found The Way; We'll Understand It Better; Let Me Rest At The End Of The Journey; Going Home; One Of God's Sheep; Way Down Deep In My Soul; On The Jericho Road; Farther Along; The Glory Land Way.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-226 \$4.98

BILL MONROE - MCA-131 ALBUM \$2.98
Let The Light Shine Down On Me; Lord Protect My Soul; Wait A Little Longer Please Jesus; A Voice From On High; I'm Working On A Building; Don't Put Off Till Tomorrow; He Will Set Your Fields Afire; Get Down On Your Knees And Pray; Boat Of Love; Walking In Jerusalem Just Like John; River Of Death.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-131 \$4.98

RUSS MORGAN - MCA-92 ALBUM \$2.98
Does Your Heart Beat For Me; The Object Of My Affection; Do You Ever Think Of Me; Cruising Down The River; Linger Awhile; Stumbling; The Wang Wang Blues; So Tired; Josephine; You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You; Wash Wash Blues; Johnson Rag; Dogface Soldier.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-92 \$4.98

OSBORNE BROTHERS - HYMNS
MCA-125 ALBUM \$2.98
I Bowed On My Knees And Cried "Holy"; How Great Thou Art; Rock Of Ages; Steal Away And Pray; I Pray My Way Out Of Troubles; Will You Meet Me Over Yonder; Light At The River; What A Friend We Have In Jesus; Medals For Mothers; Jesus, Sure Changed Me; Where We'll Never Grow Old.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-125 \$4.98

ERNEST TUBB - MCA-16 ALBUM \$2.98
Walking The Floor Over You; Rainbow At Midnight; Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello; Another Story; Thanks A Lot; Half A Mind; I'll Get Along Somehow; Waltz Across Texas; It's Been So Long Darling; Mr. Juke Box; I Wonder Why You Said Goodbye.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-16 \$4.98

ERNEST TUBB - MCA-84 ALBUM \$2.98
I'll Get Along Somehow; Slipping Around; Filipino Baby; When The World Has Turned You Down; Have You Ever Been Lonely; There's A Little Bit Of Everything In Texas; Walking The Floor Over You; Driftwood On The River; There's Nothing More To Say; Rainbow At Midnight; I'll Always Be Glad To Take You Back; Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-84 \$4.98

KITTY WELLS - DUST ON THE BIBLE
MCA-149 ALBUM \$2.98
Dust On The Bible; I Dreamed I Searched Heaven For You; Lonesome Valley; My Loved Ones Are Waiting For Me; I Heard My Savior Call; The Great Speckled Bird; We Will Set Your Fields On Fire; We Buried Her Beneath The Willows; One Way Ticket To The Sky; I Need The Prayers; Matthew Twenty-Four; Lord I'm Coming Home.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-149 \$4.98

KITTY WELLS - MCA-121 ALBUM \$2.98
It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels; This White Circle; Mommy For A Day; Release Me; I Gave My Wedding Dress Away; Amigo's Guitar; Heartbreak U.S.A.; I'll Repossess My Heart; Password; Searching; Making Believe.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-121 \$4.98

KITTY WELLS and RED FOLEY
MCA-83 ALBUM \$2.98
One By One; Just Call Me Lonesome; As Long As I Live; A Wedding Ring Ago; Make Believe; Candy Kisses; You And Me; Memory Of A Love; I'm A Stranger In My Home; I'm Throwing Rice; No One But You; I'm Counting On You.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-83 \$4.98

some recording sessions with producer Jerry Crutchfield. While in town, Bradshaw dropped by a party for Barbara Mandrell at the home of MCA music executive Jim Foglesong. Barbara was celebrating the signing of a new MCA record contract. Bradshaw said he might move to Nashville since he comes here so often. He also said he enjoys the music business, but realizes it is as unstable as football. Therefore, he is taking it seriously but not too seriously.

A new movie on the life of Elvis Presley is on the boards, and the consultant will be none other than Col. Tom Parker, Presley's manager. David Wolper, producer of *Roots*, will produce the two-hour film which should be set for theater distribution next year. The biographical film will utilize film clips from movies, television, live concerts and newsreels. Presley's voice will be heard on the soundtrack.

At the annual Wembley Festival in England this year, 20,000 fans helped Bobby Bare celebrate his April 7 birthday by singing Happy Birthday to him.

Times are tough, but . . . A lady in Asheville, North Carolina tried to purchase tickets to a Statler Brothers Concert with food stamps! ■



WHAT NEXT, GEORGE?— George Burns is living proof it is never too late to try anything. At 84, after 50 years of excellence on the stage and screen, Burns opened up a new field for him this year with a hit country song, *I Wish I Was 18 Again*. Burns is shown here accepting a new membership card for the Country Music Association in Nashville. Presenting the card is Ralph Peer II, CMA President. The ceremony took place in Burns' Hollywood office and in the background is a photo of George's late wife and comedy partner, Gracie Allen.

Red Sovine Killed In Nashville Automobile Wreck

The quiet, kind demeanor of Red Sovine was shaped by simpler times. Growing up as a red-headed kid in Charleston, W. Va. a half-century ago, Sovine developed a life-long love for the honesty and fresh, clean melodies of country music. Woodrow Wilson "Red" Sovine impressed those who knew him as a decent, gentle man. His life ended on April 5 in a violent automobile accident. Sovine, 62, suffered an apparent heart attack while driving down a Nashville street. He plowed his 1979 Ford van through a red light and smashed into another vehicle, ending up against a tree several hundred feet down the road. Sovine died at 11:47 a.m. in a local hospital emergency room, and country music lost one of its finest ambassadors.

His career spanned four decades, and he charmed and moved audiences with his emotional recitations. His classic interpretations of *Giddy Up Go*, *Phantom 309* and the million-selling *Teddy Bear* should send Sovine straight into the Country Music Hall of Fame. "I'm very sentimental," he once said. "To do a recitation well, you have to get all wrapped up in it. I still cry sometimes when I do *Teddy Bear*."

His fellow country entertainers were saddened by the death of a man they considered their friend. "He was a real trouper," Minnie Pearl said. "He had dignity. He was like Tex Ritter in that

respect. He had that quality of being able to go out on a stage and just command respect."

Sovine worked with Webb Pierce in the '50s, and Pierce said Sovine was special. "He was quiet when he wanted to be and funny when he wanted to be," Pierce said. "He was great to work with—probably the best front man I ever had. He was able to sing all kinds of songs. I doubt that you could find anyone who didn't like Red Sovine."

Sovine started in country music with the group, *Jim Pike and the Carolina Tar Heels* on the *Old Farm Hour* Show on station WCHS. He soon moved to the *Wheeling Jamboree* and in 1947 formed his own group, *The Echo Valley Boys*. When Hank Williams left the Louisiana Hayride radio show on KWKH in Shreveport, La. in 1949 to join The Grand Ole Opry, Sovine took his spot and remained a regular on the Hayride for five years.

Sovine joined The Grand Ole Opry in 1954 and teamed with Pierce for appearances and records. Their duet, *Why Baby Why*, was a No. 1 country recording. He recorded for Decca, MGM, Chart and Starday Records during his career.

Sovine was eulogized in a simple Nashville funeral service attended by some 400 mourners. Opry member Stu Phillips and Opry House manager Jerry

Strobel sang *Peace In The Valley*, Sovine's favorite song.

A widower, Sovine is survived by four children: Mrs. Janet S. Shepherd of Houston, Tx.; William L. Sovine, Nashville; Michael W. Sovine, Bon Aqua, Tenn.; and Roger W. Sovine of Franklin, Tenn., a Nashville music executive. His wife, the former Norma Seals, died three years ago. Other survivors include two sisters, Mrs. Eula Moales of Glendale Heights, Ill., and Mrs. Mildred Crews, Charleston, W. Va.; two brothers, Arnold Sovine, Vero Beach, Fla., and Norville Sovine, Charleston, W. Va.; and 12 grandchildren. ■





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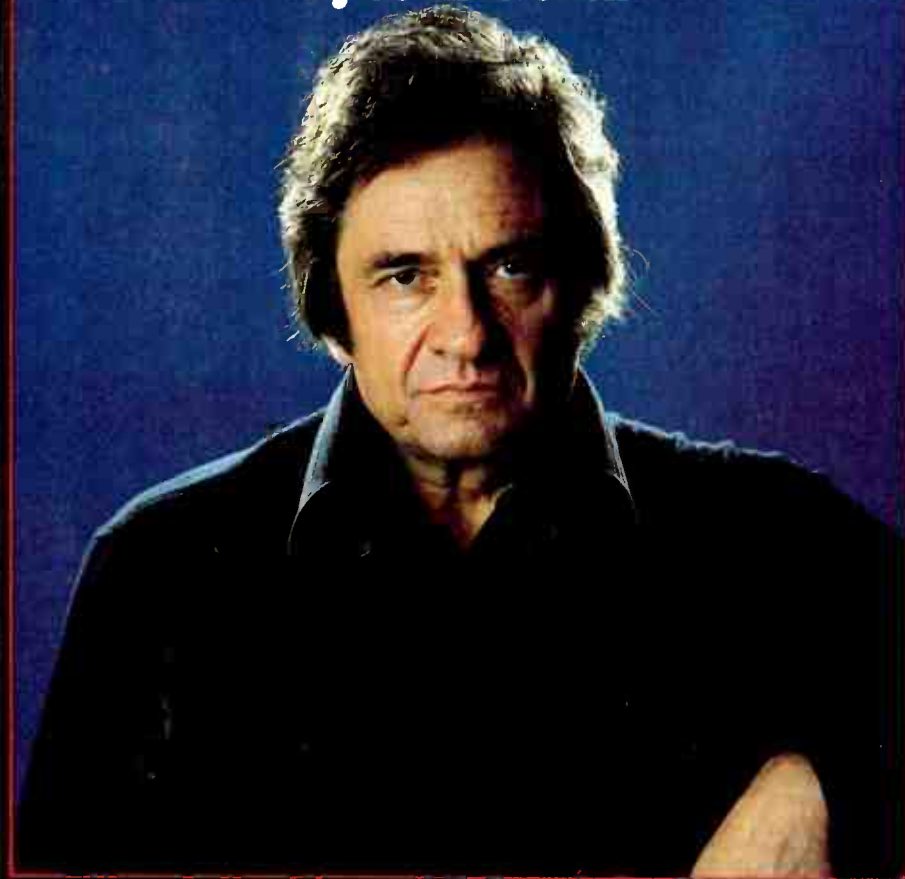
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World Radio History

Editorial

Don't Forget Number Two

by John R. Cash



I claim for my own musical heritage three generations of country music: the '20s and '30s, the '40s and '50s, and the '60s and '70s. I was born in 1932, and by 1935 I was conscious of hits of the day and began singing along with, or listening to, the top artists like Patsy Montana 1935, Uncle Dave Macon 1936, J. E. Mainer 1937, Roy Acuff 1938 and Bob Wills 1939. But there were also a few memorable number two's in the 1930 s.

They were still playing Vernon Dahlhart's *The Prisoner's Song*, recorded in 1924. It became the first million-seller hillbilly hit. But did you hear Vernon Dahlhart's number two's? *The Death of Floyd Collins* or *The Wreck of the Old 97*.

In 1928 Jimmie Rodgers was number one, but the number two spot was held by the Carter Family. In 1929 and 1930, the Carter Family was number one. This was to be the first and only time in the last sixty years that one name held the number one spot for two years in a row. Jimmie Rodgers was number two both years. Jimmie Rodgers was number one in 1931, and the Carter Family was number two. The

year I was born, Bob Miller was number one, but the Carter Family was still number two, as they were in 1933, when Gene Autry was number one. Jimmie Rodgers held the number three spot in that, the year of his death. So who was number one, number two and number three in that five year period from 1928 to 1933? The Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers and Gene Autry. The first two names, number one and two, still hold the record for staying in the top five best-sellers for five years in a row.

I'm not talking about popularity votes which they say are connected with fleeting fame. I'm talking about solid sales according to CMA's archives, whose figures do not fade.

What were those people singing in the early years? Well, they were still singing them in 1935 when I first started remembering: *Picture on the Wall*, "T" for *Texas*, *The One Rose*, *Rock All My Babies to Sleep*, *Mexicali Rose*, *Lamp Lighting Time in the Valley*, *Hobo Bill's Last Ride*, *Sweet Fern*, and many, many more wonderful number two's and three's.

Well, let's just move on through the statistics and, in doing so, maybe close in on the meat of the matter, which, it seems to me, really begins at number two. From the CMA archives for the years 1939 to 1979, commenting as I go, here we go.

1939 Bob Wills
1940 Jimmy Davis
1941 Ernest Tubb
1942 Elton Britt
1943 Al Dexter
1944 Red Foley

Now if you just go by number one's, as we go on along, you'd be led to think that Ernest Tubb faded away after 1941. But he was there, old pickin' pal, all the way from *Rainbow at Midnight* to *Little Old Band of Gold* to *Waltz Across Texas* to a blast of new popularity in 1979, "singing better than ever" on First Generation Records.

1945 Spade Cooley
1946 Bob Wills

And where was Bill Monroe? A hundred years from now, if the students of country music only had a list of number one's, there wouldn't be any Bill Monroe, and country music without Bill Monroe would be like David Allan Coe without his rhinestones and diamonds. Looking back at our list so far, you'd think Bob Wills went to the moon or somewhere between 1939 and 1946, but he didn't. Remember *Take Me Back to Tulsa*, *Hubbini' It*, *Trouble in Mind*, *San Antonio Rose*, *Time Changes Everything*.

1947 Tex Williams
1948 Eddy Arnold

Now get this:

1949 Hank Williams
1950 Hank Snow
1951 Hank Williams
1952 Hank Thompson
1953 Hank Williams
1954 Hank Snow

Well, excuse me Hank, and Hank, and Hank. But where was Carl Smith, Marty Robbins and Faron Young? And, if the last six years were all the Year-of-the-Hank, unless you want to hear all the words, don't ask me to sing *Hey Joe*, *Loose Talk*, *I Couldn't Keep From Crying*, *Castles in the Sky*, *Going Steady*, *I've Got Five Dollars and It's Saturday Night*, and the classic Faron Young song, *I Hardly Knew It Was You*. I couldn't erase those songs from my memory if I had to. Could it be that I heard them all played a couple of million times on the radio? And how come, if those airplays aren't related to solid sales, how come, just how come, when I saw Faron Young's all-paid-for home in 1957, I couldn't see from one end to the other. It looked like a train.

Well, let us continue reluctantly, wearily and doggedly as we go.

1955 Webb Pierce

Excuse me, Webb, but have you heard
A song not unlike a prison bird?
As you busted up past number two
Did you hear Folsom Prison Blues?

Well, I remember, Webb, at one time, a long time ago, you had twenty-one number one country hits. How many number two hits did you have, and how come your name is at the top only once?

1956 Ray Price

Hello, Ray, how are you? Fine.
Who's that with I Walk The Line?

Where's Marty Robbins, I don't know
Guess he went to El Paso
Didn't you hear that song he wrote?
Do you mean, A White Sport Coat?
I believe in '62 or '3
There was that classic,
Don't Worry About Me.
Devil Woman didn't do him in
He was number two, time and again

1957 Ferlin Huskey

What was it about Ferlin Huskey that was so impressive that for two years, after I worked that first long tour with him in 1957, I thought I was Ferlin Huskey? I always wanted to be an entertainer, and Ferlin Huskey was my standard of comparison for good entertainers. So it was natural to try to be like him.

Do you know that if we just go by the statistics, taking just one name per year, and only the top record seller that year, and hang the artist's name on it, we're going to make believe that a lot of people never existed. People like Kitty Wells, Marty Robbins, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Marty Robbins, Tom T. Hall, Tom T. Hall, Larry Gatlin, Jean Shepherd, Billy Walker, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Jimmy C. Newman, Bobby Helms, Jimmy Dickens, Marty Robbins, Dottie West, Lynn Anderson, the Statler Brothers, Barbara Mandrell, Don Williams, Rod Brasfield, Dolly Parton, Minnie Pearl, George Jones, Bobby Bare, Tammy Wynette, and Marty Robbins.

Continuing now, with CMA's list of number one record sellers, one for each year, trying hard to keep my mind off number two's and three's, the first question is: If Elvis Presley's Gold Cadillac is the biggest attraction in Downtown Music Row, USA, why isn't his name somewhere at the top with the biggest names since 1950? Answer number one: "They don't consider him country." Answer number two: He's been number two for twenty-six years. Question: If Elvis Presley's Gold... well,

1958 Don Gibson
1959 Johnny Horton
1960 Jim Reeves
1961 Patsy Cline
1962 Claude King
1963 Bill Anderson

Excuse me, Bill, but golly gee
I remember 1963
Does number two stick like a briar
Or maybe burn like a Ring of Fire?

1964 Buck Owens
1965 Roger Miller
1966 David Houston
1967 Jack Greene

I wish I could find a place to stick Merle Kilgore in here. Since Johnny Horton introduced him to me in 1959, I've always, ever since, felt a little easier whenever he was around. Now get this: Merle Kilgore is a man of unique talent, wit and charm. Me and Bocephus couldn't have made it without him.

1968 Johnny Cash—
Thank you very much.
1969 Charley Pride
1970 Conway Twitty

Hey, do you know what Mr. Ivey at the CMA archives said? Conway Twitty has had twenty-nine number one country hits, breaking Webb Pierce's record. (Get down here at number two with the rest of us, Webb.) Conway Twitty has never won the CMA Entertainer of the Year Award because "he isn't country."

Now concerning the above, see Elvis Presley's Gold Cadillac, or Music City Row, or "Isn't Considered Country."

1971 Freddie Hart
1972 Donna Fargo
1973 Charlie Rich
1974 Cal Smith
1975 Glen Campbell
1976 C. W. McCall
1977 Kenny Rogers
1978 Waylon and Willie
1979 Waylon Jennings

Excuse me, Waylon, long time friend
Will we meet at the old trails end?
And ride together, you and I
With Ghost Riders in the Sky?

Now to close in on and out of statistics, and to put your mind in a whirl, here's CMA's list of Entertainers of the year 1967 to 1979. Now, lay it down beside the list of top sales 1967 to 1979, and where are Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs?

1967 Eddy Arnold
1968 Glen Campbell
1969 Johnny Cash—
Thank you very much
1970 Merle Haggard
1971 Charley Pride
1972 Loretta Lynn
1973 Roy Clark
1974 Charlie Rich
1975 John Denver
1976 Mel Tillis
1977 Ronnie Milsap
1978 Dolly Parton
1979 Willie Nelson

Where's Kenny Rogers? Where's George Jones? Where are the Louvin Brothers? Where's Marty Robbins? Dottie West, the Statler Brothers, Hank Williams, Jr., Merle Kilgore, Barbara Mandrell, Don Williams, Emmylou Harris, the Oak Ridge Boys, Tom T. Hall, Sonny James, Minnie Pearl, Chet Atkins, Merle Travis and Marty Robbins?

Now seriously, could it be that the glow of super number one and all the resulting hullabaloo surrounding it, as a result of it being proclaimed such, makes light of the might of a number two.

Example: In the shadow of the death of Elvis Presley (see Downtown Music Row, Gold Cadillac and "Isn't Considered Country"), how many of us know that we have lost the following VIP country names: Paul Warren, Eddie Noack, Tootsie, Johnny Bond, Foy Willing, Mel Street, Mother Maybelle Carter, Sara Carter, Bob Luman, Wayne Walker, Lester Flatt, Carl Davis, Sunshine Sue, Jimmie Skinner, Tommy Jackson, Ray Smith, Charlie Moore, Warren Smith, and Red Sovine?

Hey, hey, hey, CMA
Did you see the first of May
In prime time from LA
The Academy of Country Music
Awards show?

Willie Nelson's number one, but old Charlie Daniels tore 'em up. Charlie Daniels is gonna be about the biggest thing to come along in the 80's, no matter what number you give him... him and George Jones and Marty Robbins. Loretta Lynn was named entertainer of the '70s decade. Larry Gatlin is the superstar of the year, winning the top spot in several categories. June, your boy finally made it.

Hey Pilgrim, just remember what Gene Autry said, "If it was easy, everybody would be doing it." Pilgrim, did Charlie Daniels remember to ask you for your autograph?

Space reserved for Larry Gatlin's autograph.

Wait three years and then sign it yourself.

CMA, I owe you a lot of thanks. We worked well together for a long time, and I can honestly say that I love you people, and I'm proud of my lifetime membership. But see what your list of number ones did for me. It made me dig and uncover a treasure trove of number twos. I look forward to working with you again in TV. Don't forget me, as I wait breathlessly down here in this often unseen world of number two.

John R. Cash

P.S. Before closing this, let me go back one minute to the West Coast awards show. In the Best New Female Vocalist category, there was a tall, beautiful, dark haired young woman who came out number two. Her name was Rosanne Cash.

(That's OK, honey. Just make yourself comfortable down here at number two with your old dad. I'll always love you no matter what number you are.)

It's so lonely at the top. *TSighhh!*

Two Poems by June Carter Cash

To John

Dedicated to
Marshall Grant After 20 Years

"He's a giant," someone said,
Two hundred twenty pounds of bone
and bread
And eyes that look you in the face,
That don't hide the inside place to
place.
He's like a cat that's on the prowl,
Who stalks a prey and takes a bow,
And sings his songs of good and truth
And holds on firmly to his youth.
He's father, husband, adviser, friend,
He lives within this world I'm in.
His jaw sets firmly on his face,
The lines and scars have been
someplace,
For the man knows steel and what it
is,
But friends, the steel wasn't always
his.
The fire started years ago
With aching bones that hurt him so,
And hours of riding in the car,
And driving days that were too far,
And two friends close as brothers by
his side
Who worked and sweated for the ride.
The guitar, bass, and voice so low
Had made a hit and let it go.
Success was always hanging round,
But the big man stumbled to the
ground,
For deception came to have its fill
In the form of a dainty little pill
To pick him up and help him on,
For the shows they hurt him to the
bone.
And higher and higher on he went
Till the body pained and curled and
bent.
And a boom-chicka-boom filled the
place.¹
And a strong man leaned upon a
bass,²
A drum was added to the beat,³
The bass and drum they didn't cheat.

And a young girl came to pray and cry
For fear that the Man in Black would
die.
Nightmares, shows and pills and
booze
Can show what a man can lose.
The crowds they came and cried in-
side,
For Satan took a joyful ride.
The hits they came on and on,
And the friends they sang a mournful
song
For life jumped and reared and trod,
And we laid boom-chicka-boom
beneath the sod.

For twenty years the man
leaned upon his bass,
The terror around took him every
place,
But like a tree planted there,
He joined the girl within her prayers,
And when all the world said,
"The Man in Black is dead,"
The bass man shook his steely head
And fought and pulled and stood at his
side—
"I'm not here just to take a ride.
This man is more than blood to me.
He'll get up again—you'll see."

So the Man in Black reached for the
sky,
And the bass man lifted him up high,
And God reached down and did His
thing,
And the Man in Black took to a wing,
So the man stands tall, a giant today,
And deception it has flown away.
And me, the wife, and children seven
Thank you, bass man, for a step to
heaven.
Twenty years have come and gone,
And you've been there all along.

¹Luther Perkins

²Marshall Grant

³W. S. Holland

Of John

I try to remember the things that are
precious to you,
And I'd give you money if that would
do,
But money won't do it—
that's not your way,
Your money's been for giving away.
Now if you precede me and go to your
grave
And the angels knock the clouds about
when Jesus comes to save,
I'll be standing there to rise with you
And to go up as you do.

And I will always love you,
you'll always be mine,
Forever and always till the end of
time,
Till the mountains split open with the
weight of the sun,
We'll rise up together . . . as one.

So I'll let my hair hang down
'Cause that's the way you like it,
And I'll have good food on your table,
And I will keep your house in order.

And I will always love you,
you'll always be mine,

*Forever and always till the end of
time,
Till the mountains split open with
the weight of the sun,
We'll rise up together . . . as one.*

*And I will pray for you, for your
wisdom
And understanding and your charity,
And even if you've been wrong,
and I've known it,
You've always been right,
Because that's God's order.*

*And I will always love you,
you'll always be mine,
Forever and always till the end of
time.*

*Till the mountains split open with the
weight of the sun,
We'll rise up together . . . as one.*

*And I will smile for you and I'll be
kind,
And I'll love your babies
just as I've loved mine,
And when I could give you nothing,
God blessed me and I gave you a son.*

*And I will always love you,
you'll always be mine,
Forever and always till the end of
time.*

*Till the mountains split open
with the weight of the sun,
We'll rise up together . . . as one.*



Johnny Cash's Greatest Hits

by Rich Kienzle

Johnny Cash. There's always been a reassuring musical integrity about that name, and a consistency that for sheer longevity, only an Ernest Tubb or a Willie Nelson can match. For sure, he has had his weak periods, yet unlike many of his peers, he has been candid about them, often assuming responsibility that belonged elsewhere. Yet these rare occasions aside, the Best of Cash on record is an awe-inspiring collection of American music.

Cash has maintained these standards of excellence for several reasons. First, he has

always been a superb songwriter, able to custom-design material for himself. In the case of non-original numbers, his strong sense of what does and doesn't work for him leads him to songs that he's both musically and spiritually comfortable with and to reject anything that doesn't suit him. Richard Nixon found that out in 1970 when he asked Cash to sing *Welfare Cadillac* and *Okie From Muskogee* at the White House and was turned down flat. Likewise, Cash knows exactly how much experimentation his recorded sound can

handle, and stays within those limits.

Equally important is his family-like relationship with the Tennessee Three. Having been with him from the start, today they can move with him, sense his ideas and no matter what, always maintain the distinctive Cash sound, even if a large orchestra is playing behind them. In an era when most backup bands change musicians as often as guitar strings, bassist Marshall Grant has been with him from the beginning, as was the late lead guitarist Luther Perkins until

his tragic death in a 1968 fire. Drummer Fluke Holland, who played on Carl Perkins' *Blue Suede Shoes* has been around since 1960 and Luther Perkins' replacement, guitarist Bob Wooten has a dozen years under his belt. From the days Cash, Perkins and Grant played from a flatbed truck, lurching around Memphis to hype a Ford dealer, the Tennessee Three have been the one constant in a sea of variables. Yet had all of them had their way in the beginning, Johnny Cash's career might have gone a different way.

It was late 1954, and gospel music was on the minds of Johnny Cash, Luther Perkins, Marshall Grant and their steel guitarist friend A.W. Kernodle. After several months of informal jamming and two months of playing gospel Saturday afternoons at KWEM in Memphis, they wanted to cut a gospel record and were now waiting in the front office of Sun Records. Suddenly Kernodle walked out, the victim of an acute attack of Cold Feet. The remaining three finally traipsed into the tiny studio where Elvis Presley had made history and took their places. Cash began singing a gospel song, and after several more, Sam Phillips stopped them, obviously unimpressed. *No good*, he told them. There was no real market for gospel (a fact he knew first hand: Sun's earlier gospel efforts failed). Did they have any secular songs, anything that could work as country or rockabilly?

Cash suddenly recalled a song he had. He'd written it as a poem in the air force and had gotten it published in the GI newspaper *Stars and Stripes*

before putting it to music. The song was *Hey, Porter* and Phillips liked what he heard. Come up with another like it, he told Cash, and he might record them.

Cash finally wrote the song, but several months passed before he returned to Sun with Perkins and Grant. All was the same, though Perkins had gotten a twangy Fender

Telecaster and a \$44 Sears amplifier. Lacking any percussion, Cash slid a piece of paper under the strings for a drumlike effect. All three were nervous, but ready. They ran through *Cry, Cry, Cry*, the second song Phillips had wanted, and again he was pleased. Perkins, a rudimentary lead guitarist had settled on a muted "boom-chucka" lick that became the heart of the Cash sound and played only the simplest leads. After numerous takes, Phillips was delighted. Just as he'd coaxed a new sound from Presley, so he had from Cash, a sound born out of limitations, experimentation and sheer luck.

Hey Porter/Cry, Cry, Cry (Sun 221) by Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two was released on June 21, 1955. It showed a music in transition. In an era of singers influenced by Hank Williams' and Webb Pierce's nasal voices, Cash's deep, resonant baritone stood out, conveying a lonesome, bluesy intimacy. And though most country records featured steel and fiddle, with an easy, flowing rhythm, the Tennessee



The first album, Sun 1220, is now a collector's item. This copy was purchased by Russ Barnard in 1956.

Two had a well-defined, primitive beat outlined by Perkins and supported by Grant that gave their music a sense of motion similar to rockabilly, just as Phillips wanted. Little wonder that when Memphis deejay Sleepy Eyed John first played it, he added that he'd "never heard anything come in with such a different sound." Many agreed with him, for it sold over 100,000 copies and got up to number 14 on the national country charts.

In July of 1955, Cash's second session yielded another fine original, *Folsom Prison Blues*, along with the excellent *So Doggone Lonesome*, and a restrained performance of Hank Williams' *I Heard That Lonesome Whistle Blow*. Also included was, at last, a gospel tune, *I Was There When It Happened*, which featured some rare vocal help from Perkins and Grant. *Folsom Prison* was only a modest success when first released.

These early successes gave Cash the confidence to experiment, and late in 1955 he cut a demo of a new original, *Rock 'N Roll Ruby*, a flatout rockabilly number recorded later by Sun artist Warren Smith and a classic of that period.

In March of 1956 Cash recorded again and in May Sun issued *I Walk The Line*. Within a short time it made Cash a major country performer, not only by selling 2,000,000 copies, but by hitting the pop charts as well, a byproduct of the song, Cash's performance and the absence of fiddles and steel. Suddenly with Elvis gone and Jerry Lee Lewis's fame some time away, Cash, along with Carl Perkins, were Sun's stars. And a Sun producer initially unimpressed by him started getting involved.

Jack Clement, the Cowboy himself, saw potential in Cash, and some wider possibilities. He started experimenting with caution, careful not to tamper with a winning formula. In mid-1957 he produced Cash's excellent *Home Of The Blues*, a vastly underrated honkytonk number and some folk material like *Rock Island Line*, one of his most vibrant performances.



That fall he had Cash record *Ballad Of A Teenage Queen*, a Clement original, and Cash's own energetic *Big River*. On the latter, Clement sat in on acoustic guitar and added a hard strummed chord change between verses that made the record even stronger and gave Cash his second big hit. He also cut *Two-Timin' Woman*, an original that showed Cash's debts to Jimmie Rodgers, Ernest Tubb and Jimmie Skinner.

At his next session in April, 1958, Clement went even further, bringing in a pianist and drummer and, for two of the songs *Guess Things Happen That Way* and Don Gibson's *Oh, Lonesome Me* a vocal chorus. In many ways it was a look to the future, when Cash would work with the Carter Family behind him.

At his next session in May, he cut five songs for a planned EP, *Johnny Cash Sings Hank Williams* (later turned into an LP with some non-Hank songs) with the chorus and used them on the semi-risque *Down The Street to 301*, *Sugartime* and his cover of Ted Daffan's *Born To Lose*. Most of this material wasn't issued for some time after Cash left Sun.

Cash recorded with just the Tennessee Two, piano and drums through the spring and early summer, yielding tunes like *Port Of Lonely Hearts* which features an overdubbed which features an overdubbed duet with himself along with *Mean-Eyed Cat* and *Fools' Hall Of Fame*. On July 18, 1958

he recorded five songs, including *It's Just About Time* and *I Forgot To Remember To Forget* featuring Charlie Rich sitting in as pianist. It was his final Sun session.

Fourteen days later, on August 1, Cash's longterm contract with Columbia Records was announced. Columbia had more money, promotion and opportunities than Sun could ever afford. Yet without that formative Sun experience, Cash, just like Elvis, Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis could never have made it beyond Memphis. Those three years laid the foundation, and Cash learned his lessons well.

Cash's first Columbia session took place about a week before the announcement of his new contract. It was, all things considered, a fortunate move for him. The monolithic Columbia operation could hardly be compared with the looseness of Sun, but he was lucky enough to have Don Law assigned to him as producer. Law, who'd worked on country and blues field recording sessions in the thirties and forties, seemed to understand Cash's rough-hewn sound and though he sometimes added voices and additional instruments, it was rare that he tampered with the Cash/Tennessee Two formula. At that first session, on July 24, 1958, Cash recorded six songs, one of which, *What Do I Care*, became his first hit single. About a week later he recorded again, this time doing eight songs, most of which appeared

on his first Columbia LP, *The Fabulous Johnny Cash* (CS 8122), which includes *Pickin' Time*, one of his most engaging snippets of rural life. He also recorded the unusual *Walkin' The Blues*, a raw country blues tune in the style of Brownie McGhee, which wasn't issued for 21 years. A second session in August yielded *I Still Miss Someone*, his first #1 recording for Columbia and *Don't Take Your Guns To Town*.

As his first album was being issued in January, 1959, he was in the process of recording his first gospel album, *Hymns By Johnny Cash* (CS-8125). The production was much like Jack Clement's at Sun. Voices and percussion augmented the Tennessee Two and the result was an impressive set of country gospel so durable that it remains available today. In March of that year, he cut his third album, *Songs Of Our Soil* (CS-8148), notable for its work songs, and for *Old Apache Squaw*, his first musical look at the plight of the American Indian, and *I Want To Go Home*, a calypso adaptation of the old folksong *Sloop John B*. Later that year came one of his best single recordings, the prison-oriented *I Got Stripes*. Its flipside was the classic autobiographical anecdote inspired by Cash's memories of the 1937 Mississippi River Flood, *Five Feet High And Rising*. Later in 1959 Cash recorded his first TV theme song: *The Rebel (Johnny Yuma)* for the hit TV series of the same name.

In late 1960 came a rare departure, with the album *Now There Was A Song!* (CS-8254), an unusual collection of honkytonk and western swing numbers, recorded with a standard fiddle/steel band, and little-if-any of the Tennessee Two. At roughly the same time came an album that set Cash apart from most of his contemporaries. *Ride This Train* (CS-8255), his first "concept" album, arranged thematically related songs of Americana and tied them together with spoken narratives. There were scenes from the Old West (*Slow Rider*), from Kentucky (*Merle Travis's Loading Coal*), and Louisiana (*Dorraine of Ponchartrain*) among others. It was

this record that inspired the *Ride This Train* segment on his TV show. Also, by 1960, Fluke Holland's drums were added to complete the Tennessee Three.

There was an obvious change in Cash's music by 1962, a change that took him even closer to the then-burgeoning folk music audience. His 1962 album *The Sound of Johnny Cash* (CS-8602) reflected this shift by mixing tunes Jimmie Rodgers' *In The Jailhouse Now* (a hit single that year) with folksongs like *Delia's Gone* and *In Them Old Cottonfields Back Home*. His next set, *Blood, Sweat and Tears* (CS-8730) came out late that year, and went even further into work songs, mixing traditional tunes (*John Henry*) with traditional sounding material (Merle Travis's *Nine Pound Hammer*), backed by the Carter Family on certain tracks.

Cash's crossover potential became apparent again in 1963 when his rendition of Merle Kilgore's *Ring of Fire* became a crossover hit as impressive as *I Walk The Line*. A number of things made it work, including the two Mariachi style trumpets that weaved in and around the vocal. There was, of course, some controversy over the use of horns, even though Bob Wills used them identically on his 1940 hit *New San Antonio Rose*. An LP of the same title followed (CS-8853) that featured an engaging mix of folk, country, gospel and a few oddities, such as a version of the *Bonanza* theme with lyrics and *Remember The Alamo*, the sort of saga song Cash's late friend Johnny Horton excelled in.

As time went by, the folk influence on Cash became even more pronounced, particularly the music of singer/composers like Bob Dylan and Peter LaFarge, both of whom he deeply admired. LaFarge's Indian protest songs echoed Cash's own sentiments, and his love of Dylan was reflected in his 1963 recording of *Understand Your Man*, a song obviously inspired by Dylan's *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right*. But his 1964 album, *Bitter Tears* (CS-9048) was a radical step even for a performer used to taking them. In

a music then geared to conservatism and the Status Quo, Cash, using material by LaFarge and others, created a powerful indictment of America's treatment of its native citizens. And the single from the album, LaFarge's *Ballad Of Ira Hayes* precipitated a small, but stormy controversy. Cash's seething, angry performance underscored the injustice done to Indian war hero Hayes and stirred up so many country disc jockeys that Cash took out an ad in the August 22, 1964 issue of *Billboard* castigating them. In the end, it became a hit, one that got him in hot water with the Ku Klux Klan.

Underscoring his endorsement of folk music was his performance at the 1964 Newport Folk Festival that summer, where he gave Bob Dylan a guitar and where Columbia recorded eight songs at his concert, none of which were ever issued.

Early in 1965 Cash proved, again, that his policy of not following up a single or album with similar music worked, when he had a hit single in *Orange Blossom Special*, the old fiddle showcase with lyrics and Cash's own crude, but effective harmonica, an instrument seldom used since the days of the Delmore Brothers and Wayne Raney in the forties. The album of the same title (CS-9019) featured folk material such as *Mama, You've Been On My Mind* and Marijohn Wilkin's classic *The Long Black Veil*, and another unsubtle protest song, *All God's Children Ain't Free*.

Ballads of the True West, his next effort, was issued in two different forms: as a two-record set, with narrations and in a shorter version, *Mean As Hell* (CS-9246). The material was basic western fare, *Sweet Betsy From Pike*, *Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie* and other time-honored western ballads along with Shel Silverstein's *25 Minutes To Go*. Cash also appeared on an instrumental single that year, recorded by the Tennessee Three.

In 1966 came another hit single, the whacked-out Jack Clement composition *The One On The Right Is On The Left*.

Ironically, it satirized those who mixed music and politics, like Cash himself. Since the zany songs of Roger Miller were popular at the time, the single and album *Everybody Loves A Nut* (CS-9292) came at the right time.

By 1967 Cash and June Carter had been working together on the road for six years when they finally recorded an album of duets together. *Carryin' On* (CS 9528) was easily one of Cash's best—and most overlooked—albums. There was their classic duet on *Jackson*, which, released as a single, won them a Grammy along with surprisingly crisp renditions of Ray Charles' *I Got A Woman* and *What'd I Say*. His next set, *From Sea To Shining Sea* (CS-9447) was yet another album of Americana, the standout being the engaging *Cisco Clifton's Fillin' Station*, an autobiographical tribute to a rural gas station near his boyhood home in Arkansas. A *Greatest Hits* (CS-9478) followed, celebrating his 10 years with Columbia.

By 1968 Cash was in the midst of an artistic and personal revival following his recovery from his drug habit, and revived an idea he'd long had about recording at Folsom Prison. Arrangements were made and on Thursday, January 18, 1968 Cash, June Carter (whom he would marry two months later), Carl Perkins, the Tennessee Three and the Statlers along with Cash's new Columbia producer, Bob Johnston, set up in the Folsom cafeteria. The result was *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison* (CS-9639), one of the greatest, most electrifying live performance albums ever recorded; a hit album that effortlessly crossed over to the pop charts and made *Folsom Prison Blues*, a minor hit at Sun 12 years before, into the song most associated with Johnny Cash, and a country classic, one that got as much airplay on rock stations as country. Suddenly Johnny Cash became the country singer, written up in all the national magazines and given the stamp of approval by *Rolling Stone*, which then carried considerable influence in the

rock music world.

Again, it would have been smart business for Cash to follow up with more prison material, but he didn't and instead plunged into *The Holy Land*, (KSC 9726), another concept set, that consisted largely of narration and, oddly enough for a religious album, another hit single: Carl Perkins' *Daddy Sang Bass*, easily the best track on the album. One unpleasant change came in the Tennessee Three in August of 1968 when Luther Perkins died of burns suffered in a fire. Shortly after that he was replaced by Oklahoma-bred Bob Wootton.

Exactly a year after *Folsom Prison* was recorded in January, 1969, Cash's star had risen so much that a camera crew from British Grenada TV came to film a special on him, and filmed Cash in action at San Quentin prison. Bob Johnston was there to record it, and *Johnny Cash at San Quentin* (CS 9827) became an even bigger success than the *Folsom LP*. The entire ambience of the show was different, and only one song was repeated. But the big single was, of all things, Shel Silverstein's *A Boy Named Sue*, which again crossed over to the pop charts. It also showed Cash as a serious spokesman for prison reform with *San Quentin*, a song with the same outrage and anger as *Ira Hayes*.



On February 18, 1969 came another momentous point in



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Cash's recording career, when he and Bob Dylan recorded a number of songs together at the Columbia studios in Nashville. They stuck mostly to old country standards, but unfortunately only one track, *Girl From The North Country*, was issued on Dylan's *Nashville Skyline* album. The remainder of the songs, like *Mountain Dew* and *Big River* remain unissued.

As the acclaim for the *San Quentin* album still swirled around him, in 1970 Cash started his weekly ABC TV series. But he was championing a new cause by promoting Kris Kristofferson and other young, less conventional songwriters that were drifting into the Nashville area, only to encounter much hostility from many established performers, displeased with the newcomers explicit material, dress, and hair length. Cash promptly made Kristofferson's *Sunday Morning Comin' Down* into a hit so big that the CMA awarded him the *Song Of The Year* Award amid many raised eyebrows. Cash took it a step further with *What Is Truth*, a song championing the youthful, longhaired protesters of that era (a song he sang to Richard Nixon, of all people).

As Cash's popularity swelled, most of the Sun material, now owned by Shelby Singleton, was reissued on so many different albums that virtually everything he recorded from 1955-58 was easily available. The TV show took up much of his time through 1972, though he did a couple of fine singles, *If I Had A Hammer*, and, in the fall of 1973, Chris Gantry's *Allegheny*, both recorded with June. This was followed at the same time by the excellent *Johnny Cash And*

His Woman (KC 32443), an LP of seven duets, and three solo performances by Cash. In January, 1974, an unusual single, *Orleans Parish Prison* was released. Though nothing was said about its origin it was actually cut at a live session at Sweden's Osteraker Prison in 1972 for a live album issued only in Europe. Another interesting single, *Ragged Old Flag* was recorded live early in 1974 at the House of Cash with the Oak Ridge Boys doing vocal backup. An album with the same title followed.

By Cash's own admission, some of his efforts during the 1974-5 period left something to be desired. Some were over-produced, or marred by too much weak material. Happily, this trend didn't last, and in 1976 came one of his most enjoyable hits: his own *One Piece At A Time*, which on first hearing sounded like an outtake from *Everybody Loves A Nut*. Yet it had the unique slapback echo from the Sun days. Was it a Sun outtake? Nope. The song, an ode to an autoworker dedicated to stealing enough parts to build his own car, reflected the craziness of the late fifties, when Cash was known for his outrageous pranks while on tour. It seemed Cash had suddenly become reawakened to his roots, and felt a need to return to them. His 1978 album, *I Would Like To See You Again* (KC 35315) was simpler than anything he'd done in years, and again, looked back to the past by spotlighting both he and his old roommate Waylon on two duets, *I Wish I Was Crazy Again* and *There Ain't No Good Chain Gang*, the latter of which was a hit single. Cash, who in the early seventies had set the stage for Willie, Waylon

and the others with his endorsement of the "new" composers sounded perfectly at home with the hell-raising lyrics. And now some of the very performers he'd encouraged and inspired were helping him revitalize his own music.

Cash's next effort was an even greater success, as he reunited with Cowboy Jack Clement, a legend in his own right. Clement's eccentric approach brought out the best in Cash, exemplified through his *Gone Girl* (PC 35646) album. Though the record was low-key, it had all the impact of the *Folsom Prison* album of ten years before. The material, coming from Clement and a number of other sources, was as well-chosen and integrated as any Cash album and the production looked back and ahead at the same time. *Gone Girl*, a Clement original, and combined Clement's best lyrics with the trumpets of *Ring of Fire* and Sun-era slapback. *I Will Rock And Roll With You* was a celebration of the rockabilly days at 706 Union. There was also a stunning bluegrass arrangement of *No Expectations*, the Mick Jagger-Keith Richard tune.

Silver (JC 36086), celebrating his 25 years in show business, followed the same direction. The producer this time was Brian Ahern, who seemed to understand Cash as only Sam Phillips, Don Law or Clement could. It looked at the past and present again, bringing together elements of Cash's musical roots in a superlative, creative, enduring album. The hit single from it, *Ghost Riders in The Sky* was likewise a traditional number creatively arranged. *Muddy Waters* applied Cash's sense of righteous indignation to the

cruel destruction of a flood. These two albums are probably as close to perfection as anything Cash has ever done, aside from the early Sun sides.

Looking back over 25 years of Cash recordings, he can be seen in a number of roles: as semi-rocker, country singer, social critic, gospel singer, musical folklorist, sociologist, and rebel. Yet he also tied all of these roles together as a unifier. For example, for many years folk music and country music regarded each other with a degree of suspicion. Bluegrass was the sole, tenuous bond between the two. Cash widened and strengthened those bonds so that both sides saw their similarities as clearly as their differences. He helped to liberalize Nashville so that it could accept the unconventional and the controversial, and did as much as anyone to make the Outlaw phenomenon possible. He could make even the most downhome forms of country music acceptable, even to blasé rock audiences, demonstrating that it was indeed the voice of all Americans. Because of Johnny Cash, the "redneck" and "white trash" stereotypes that long plagued country music are now out of date.

Cash's records show him unafraid to look ahead, yet retaining his perspective, reconciling the simpler virtues of an earlier day with the present. Through a quarter-century, his unique sound has remained intact, even when augmented by other instruments, proving a durability few others can claim. But ultimately, Johnny Cash has shown his peers that the most enduring American music has been—and always will be—that which draws on the past for inspiration. ■

Unusual Cash recordings

There are, of course, plenty of fine Cash recordings over the years that, for one reason or another have not been issued. The Cash/Dylan session and the 1964 Newport Folk Festival are just two examples. There are also two live shows done at the London Palladium that remain unissued. Though virtually all of Cash's Sun material is

available, the best sets are the three Charly albums from England, all legal reissues from the Sun vaults with enlightening liner notes, none of the annoying "reprocessed" stereo and excellent sound. Germany's Bear Family label, in cooperation with Columbia Special Products, has produced three albums worth of vintage Cash material, much of it never

issued in any form. *The Unissued Johnny Cash* (BF 15016), for example includes material from his 1958-1962 sessions, including the great *Walkin' The Blues* previously mentioned. *Johnny & June* (BF 15030) brings together a dozen unissued duets for Columbia. *Tall Men*, collects singles from 1961 to 1968 and *Destination Victoria Station* combines train

songs (see review in *Buried Treasures*). Two Cash Sun demos from the fifties, *Rock 'N Roll Ruby* and *You're My Baby* are available on a collector's 45 (Cash 1955).

The Charly sets, the Bear Family albums and the Cash 45 are all available from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California 94530.

Johnny Cash Presents...

the

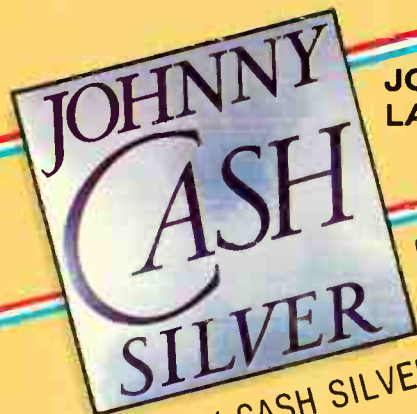
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I recently produced The Johnny Cash Silver Anniversary Radio Special which will be aired on the Mutual Broadcasting System during the Fourth of July weekend. Among many interesting subjects covered in my extensive interview with Johnny Cash, he told the stories behind his greatest hits. Those stories, excerpted from my interview are presented on the following pages. I'm sure you will enjoy them as much as I did, and, for more, I hope you'll tune in my special. Call your local mutual station for the time. —Ed Salamon, Program Director, WHN Radio, New York

Johnny Cash Tells The Stories Behind His Greatest Hits

By Ed Salamon

Johnny Cash recorded his first session for Sun Records at their studios at 706 Union Street in Memphis during May of 1955. Elvis Presley's fourth record, destined to be his first top ten country hit, had just been released and the label was turning its attention from rhythm and blues toward a more commercial sound which would be called "rockabilly."

Hey Porter

"Actually the first thing we recorded at Sun Records was *Folsom Prison Blues*. Sam Phillips liked it very much, but he wanted to hear something else so I did a song I wrote called *Hey Porter* that I had written on the way home from Germany when I was discharged from the Air Force. And it was kind of a daydreamin' kind of thing. I used a train as a vehicle in my mind to take me back home and counting off the miles and the hours and minutes til I would get back home. It wasn't to Tennessee though, it was to Arkansas, Dyess, Arkansas where my parents were still living at the time. *Hey Porter* was recorded and Sam said, 'What else have you written?' I said, 'Well, like I've told you before a lot of gospel songs you know.' I had called him initially saying I'm John Cash—I'm a gospel singer and I want to record gospel. And he said, 'I can't sell enough gospel to stay in business.' He said, 'We got to have something commercial and call me back when you have something commercial.' Well I kept calling back. He

was always out or busy and I finally got the appointment and went in with Marshall Grant and Luther Perkins—The Tennessee Two. We had a steel guitar player working with us, but he was afraid to go in the recording studio and I guess maybe it was lucky for us that he didn't because The Tennessee Two came up with a sound that was kinda unique. I think a steel guitar would've taken us more toward Nashville than what was happening up there, so we recorded *Hey Porter*."

I Walk the Line

Sun #221. Cry Cry Cry/Hey Porter, was not only his first record, but also his first hit to reach the national country charts. In the fall of 1956, Johnny Cash crossed over to the pop charts for the first time with I Walk the Line, a song he had recorded



earlier that year. Like Hey Porter, this song was also written from the Air Force experience.

"That was really a strange thing. For about a year in the Air Force I had a Wilcox-Gay tape recorder. I mean I thought it was the greatest thing in the world, at the time, to sit down with my guitar and sing songs and play them back, but I was working on the five to eleven shift one night, and I came in right after eleven, and I saw somebody had been fooling with my recorder so I punched the play button, rewound it, and punched the play button and here was the strangest sound I'd ever heard of going. . . (Cash hums melody to *I Walk The Line*) except it was backwards to that you know. And at the beginning of it—it sounded like a voice that said 'Father' and then it went into that drawl. And it just about drove me crazy for about a year. I asked everybody I knew if they had fooled around with my tape recorder. I finally found out who did. He had put the tape on upside down and backwards. So when I played it, it was backwards. All he was doing was strumming the chords on the guitar. He was going (Cash strums chords to *I Walk The Line*) and anyway at the end of his chords, he said, 'Turn it off.' And as it happened, turn it off sounded like 'Father' played backwards. And it sound like a religious ceremony or something. And it never got out of my mind and I never got that chord progression out of my mind—from E to A

PHOTO OPPOSITE: LONARD KAMSLER

to D back to A to E to B 7th back to E. It broke all the musical laws in history, but I couldn't forget it. After I got back home and was already touring, there was Carl Perkins and myself playing Gladewater, Texas one night at a high school auditorium. This was mid '55. I just had my first record out and those chords kept goin' through my mind—that chord progression. And Carl Perkins asked me, 'So what are you doing?' We were backstage and I was fooling around with those chords and I said, 'I don't know. It's just something that I had on my tape recorder in Germany that has really bugged me all these years and I was just going over it again.' And he said, 'Well you don't go from E to A to D and back to A to E and B 7th and then back to E to start a song' and I said, 'Yea, you do, you know—it's like it's carved in stone in my mind.' And he said, 'That's really different.' He said, 'Sam Phillips is looking for something different. Why don't you write a song and use that progression?' and I said, 'I don't know what it would be' and we dropped the subject. Then a little bit later on we got to talking about our wives and about the guys running around on the road and so forth. I had a brand new baby and I said, 'Not me buddy, I walk the line' and he said, 'There's your song title.' I had given Carl the title for *Blue Suede Shoes* from a friend of mine in the Air Force who kept saying, 'Don't step on my blue suede shoes man' when he'd get spiffy and go out, you know. And Carl gave me the title for *I Walk The Line* and I used that chord progression. And I wrote it all that night in just 15 or 20 minutes."

Five Foot High and Rising

After signing with Columbia Records, a label he felt could give him better national exposure, Cash began to record more material by other songwriters. Much of his music remained autobiographical. In his song Five Feet High And Rising, released in 1959, Johnny Cash chronicles his family's experience in the Mississippi River flood.

"It was the winter of 1937-1938 and it had been raining for days and days and we'd heard the news reports every night. My daddy would turn on that battery radio to get the 8 o'clock news, so we knew that the Mississippi River which was only six miles from us had passed flood stage which meant it was up to the levees. Then we started hearing scary reports on the radio that the levee might break. Well, one day the levee did break and we heard about the flood waters before we saw them. We heard that they were coming, but it was moving slowly, and there was no cause for alarm. And very quietly and calmly everybody in the community packed up and got ready to go, except my daddy. I remember him taking a yardstick and leaning over the edge of the front porch as the water had covered our field and was

rising up on the steps of the house, and he was measuring how deep that water was. I was only 5 years old so I don't remember all of it, but I remember him saying one day that we just got word that the bus is going to be here in 15 minutes to take everybody to the train to take us to the hills and we've got to get ready in 15 minutes. Well, you've got to pack up your life in 15 minutes. That's what we did, and he put everybody in the boat—my mother and all of his children, but he stood on the porch and pushed us off toward the road. And I remember my mother calling, 'Ray, when are you coming?' and he said, 'I'm going to stay with the house. I'm just going to stay with it. I'm going to keep the livestock if I can. I'm going to turn them into the house if I have to, but I'm not going to let the house go. I'll hang in a tall tree if I have to, but I won't let the house go if I can help it.' So we got on the bus—my mother, brothers, sisters, and I. And I remember driving through water to the railroad station where we got on the train and I remember part of the trip on the train. There was a man on the cowcatcher of the train with a long pole feeling in front to see for sure that there weren't any logs that had floated over the tracks that might wreck the train. And the next night we got to Pine Bluff, Arkansas in the hills of Arkansas and we were safe. We had no news from my daddy for three weeks. My mother had no idea if he was alive or dead or nothing—no news at all. And one morning I woke up at my grandfather's house and I heard my daddy talking to my grandfather about the water that it had washed away the beehives, that they lost the cow—she drowned, that he had opened all the

doors and windows of the house—let the chickens in, even let the pigs in the house so we could keep them you know because the water had gotten right up to the floor but hadn't risen any further. So he let all the animals in the house then he came on to the hills himself, but we stayed about another week. When the water went down, we went back home to the most terrible mess you can imagine. The couch was covered with eggs where the hens had laid. The pigs you can imagine what kind of mess they made all over the house, but we still had them. The beehives had floated off—we had our own honey you know, and they had robbed the beehives for honey. The cow was gone, but we had the chickens and the pigs and we had about 6" of rich, black river dirt covering the whole place that the flood water brought in, which made the best cotton crop the next year we ever had. I got to remembering all these things, and the song just came out, you know. Just exactly as it happened."

Ring of Fire

In 1963 the writing talents of his future wife June Carter were to contribute to Johnny Cash's first number one country song of the sixties and his first top twenty pop hit on Columbia, Ring Of Fire.

"I connected with June Carter the first time in 1956 backstage at the Grand Ole Opry, but it was about 5 years before I saw her again. She was living in New York, going to dramatic school. She was living . . . going to the Neighborhood Playhouse studying dramatics, but in late '61 we played the Big D in Dallas, Texas and my manager at that time, Saul Holiff, said, 'We need a girl singer on the show tonight. They want more than just you and your band.' And I said, 'Well, get one.' He said, 'What do you think about June Carter?' and I said, 'I've always been a fan of hers' and I had, you know. I loved her work. I said, 'Get her if you can.' So we booked June Carter on the Big D in Dallas and then that night she did such a great job, my manager asked if she would work the next tour with us. So she did. Merle Kilgore happened to be on that tour, and they were writing songs together and one of them was *Love's Firey Ring*. And they worked it over until they changed it to *Ring Of Fire* and Anita Carter, June's sister, recorded it. And I said, 'Anita, I'll give you about 5 or 6 months, and if you don't hit with it, I'm gonna record it the way I feel it.' She said, 'OK.' Well one night, not that I acclaim any psychic powers or anything, I dreamed I heard *Ring Of Fire* with trumpets which was an outlandish kind of an innovation for country music. I called Don Law who was producing my records and I said, 'I want to record a song with trumpets with a Tex-Mex sound of trumpets.' And he said, 'Are you sure? Let's just bring in The Tennessee Three,' and I said, 'No, I want two trumpet players in Nashville for this session for one



June Carter and Merle Kilgore wrote *Ring of Fire*. (Shown here at age 15.)

song and when you hear it, you'll know. I think you'll go along with it.' He didn't really, but he hired the trumpet players, and I went to Nashville and recorded *Ring Of Fire*."

The Ballad of Ira Hayes

In 1964 The Ballad Of Ira Hayes became a major country hit and stayed on the charts nearly five months. The record, however, never made the pop charts, which were dominated by the British invasion. Like many of Cash's hits, it was a story in song and brought the problem of bigotry against the American Indian to the attention of the country music audience.

"Gene Ferguson worked for Columbia Records in Nashville. I was visiting him one night, and he played *The Ballad Of Ira Hayes* by Peter La Farge for me, and he said, 'You should record this. It's a true story, and it's the kind of thing you should do.' So I did, and when I recorded it, I loved it so much, I had such a feeling for Ira Hayes. I had been to the Apache country out there, you know. I had seen the old women carrying the big bundle of sticks on their backs for their night's firewood and seen the poverty, and I had a feeling for it. So I really got into it there for a while. Then Peter La Farge himself came down and visited me and brought me more songs, so I decided to do a whole album of them. And Peter wrote half of them and I wrote three or four myself for the album. Now, my involvement in the Indian cause has only been through my music really, except for once. We went to Wounded Knee. This was before Wounded Knee Two. We went to Wounded Knee and Rosebud, and we did a show to raise money to build a school on Rosebud Indian Reservation South Dakota. And we've been involved—I did a movie where I played Chief John Ross of the Cherokees for PBS called *The Trail of Tears* and I felt like the American Indian had suffered great injustices through the treaties that were broken. And especially the dying, the starving women and children and men all with the removal of the Cherokee nation west of the Mississippi and I really had a great feeling for that—for them then. I still do."

Jackson

In 1967 Cash topped the country charts with the first song he recorded with June Carter, whom he would marry in March 1968. Following their success, a similar arrangement of Jackson recorded by Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra became a major pop hit later that same year.

"June and I had probably been singing *Jackson* for about 3 years before we ever recorded it, just for the fun of it. We hadn't thought about doing duets together or singing together until she was really firmly locked in as a part of my show. Then we got to thinking about it. Friends that were working with us said, 'You should record that song. It's a hit. Billy Edd Wheeler is a

great writer, and his songs get a lot of attention, but especially that song's got it for you and June.' And it really did feel comfortable. So one night I was doing a session and I had June, Mother Maybelle, Helen, and Anita at the session, and I told Dan Law that June and I would like to sing a song. Great—he had been waiting for it. He had been hoping you know. I didn't know it, but he had wanted us to do duets. So we did *Jackson*, and I think about the first take was the one that was released because we had sung it so much together."

Folsom Prison Blues

Johnny Cash's 1968 recording of Folsom Prison Blues became his first number one country hit in more than four years. Popularized by his summer replacement television show on the ABC network, it became a top forty pop hit that summer.

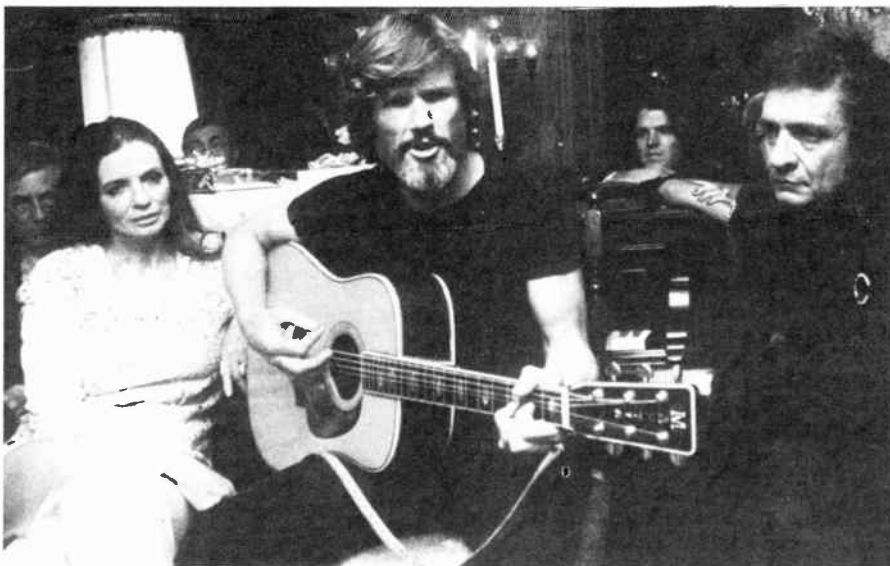
"I was doing a summer replacement series on ABC, or about to, in '68 and things had started looking up for me. And in November '67 is when things started looking up for me through the love of God, June, her parents, but in February '68 was when we played Folsom Prison and it was recorded. I had a new producer named Bob Johnston and I told him, 'I've been playing prisons since I started in '55. Matter of fact, the first prison I played was Huntsville, Texas State Prison in '56.' And then January 1st, 1957 the word went through the grapevine that Cash sings prisoner songs and try to get him on the show at San Quentin so I was there January 1st, '67, '68, '69, and '70—four years in a row we did the show at San Quentin. Then Folsom and the other prisons. The wardens would write you know, or the chaplain saying a concert would do a lot of good to ease tension if you would come. Well we—I found it a part of my religion as I got to studying the Bible more, not only an obligation, but a privilege to be able to perform for people

in bondage of any kind, especially those behind bars. Bob Johnston—it was his idea—announced to the guys, don't say anything when Cash comes on, and he asked me if I would just come on and say 'Hello, I'm Johnny Cash' since it was going to be an album and then kick off *Folsom Prison Blues*. So when I said, 'Hello, I'm Johnny Cash' and then the roof was raised and the song was kicked off and I think the excitement on that record is what I had been trying to say for years to the record people. If you can capture that excitement on record—that energy—then you got a hit record. And it was once in my life I was right."

A Boy Named Sue

A Boy Named Sue was written by Shel Silverstein, a former cartoonist for Playboy Magazine. Cash has called it "the most cleverly written song I've ever heard." Cash's highest charting pop record ever was also recorded in a prison following the formula that was so successful for him with Folsom Prison Blues.

"I had two singles—*Folsom Prison Blues* was still in the charts in '69 I believe as well as the album *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison* and early '69 I recorded *Johnny Cash At San Quentin*. I wrote some original material for that. I got a brand new song that I grabbed just as I was leaving home to go to California called, *A Boy Named Sue*, and I didn't even know the lyrics. When I got to San Quentin Prison, I had to put the words on a music stand in front of me. And I told 'em I want to sing a song called *A Boy Named Sue*. Well they laughed, you know. So here's a song about a homosexual or something you know, and I said, 'No, it's not what you think. Let me sing it to you. Carl Perkins was playing guitar and Luther Perkins. They're not related by the way. They kicked it off, and I read the lyrics off the paper in front of me, and that was the record."



Kris Kristofferson sang in Cash's living room at a party after taping the Silver Anniversary TV Special. In 1968 he landed a helicopter in Cash's yard.

What is Truth

In 1970, a comment by Merle Travis regarding an early performance by Kenny Rogers contributed the inspiration for another of Johnny Cash's biggest hits. Cash said, when he wrote *What Is Truth*, that he always has believed in the youth of this country and that he always will. He used the chance to express, in his music, this confidence.

"We were backstage watching Kenny Rogers and The First Edition and Merle made a—it wasn't a derogatory comment—he made a complimentary comment. He said, 'Boy, the young people are really coming up with some unusual chord changes in their songs these days.' He said, 'We didn't go from so and so to so and so back when I was learning to play the guitar.' He said, 'It was kinda hard to get used to.' And I said, 'They're terrific. I really like it.' I don't remember what they were singing, but I was really enjoying it, and Merle was trying to. He was listening very carefully trying to figure out what this new thing was, that was coming on. So then about that same time, that same night, the producer of my show told me—asked me if I would write a song especially for a campus special we were going to do, which I believe was one of my last network shows. It wasn't my last—it was near the last—*Johnny Cash On Campus*. We had all the Vanderbilt University of Nashville in the Ryman Auditorium the night we taped, so I said, 'Well, I'll write a special song for the college' and so I wrote *What Is Truth*. And I started off with, Merle Travis' 'kids sure play funny music these days.'"

Sunday Morning Coming Down

Johnny Cash is given credit for helping and encouraging the careers of many artists including the Statler Brothers, the Oak Ridge Boys and Larry Gatlin. Kris Kristofferson was a struggling songwriter working at odd jobs in Nashville recording studios when Johnny Cash recorded one of his songs which became another number one country hit.

Kris was working as a janitor at Columbia Records and he got to talking to June because he wasn't allowed to talk to the artists who were recording or pitch songs. They knew he was a songwriter and they told him if you want to work here, you don't pitch Johnny Cash songs while he's recording. Stay away from him, and leave him alone. So he slipped around and talked to June and slipped her a tape. Everytime we'd go home from a session she'd have a new Kristofferson tape. Well, they stacked up, you know, in my house. I didn't pay much attention to 'em until one day I was lying down—taking a nap—and June said, 'Well, the tourists have been coming by boat and by land, but now they're coming by air. Some fool has

landed a helicopter in the yard.' And I said, 'Oh no.' And I went out, and sure enough here's a National Guard Army helicopter, and out of it walks Kris Kristofferson with a tape in his hand. And he said, 'I thought the best way to do it would be to land in your yard. You wouldn't forget that, would you?' and I said, 'No, no, I don't believe I will.' And I said, 'Come on in.' So he came in. We became really close friends, but the song he brought me out of the sky that day in the helicopter was *Sunday Morning Coming Down*."

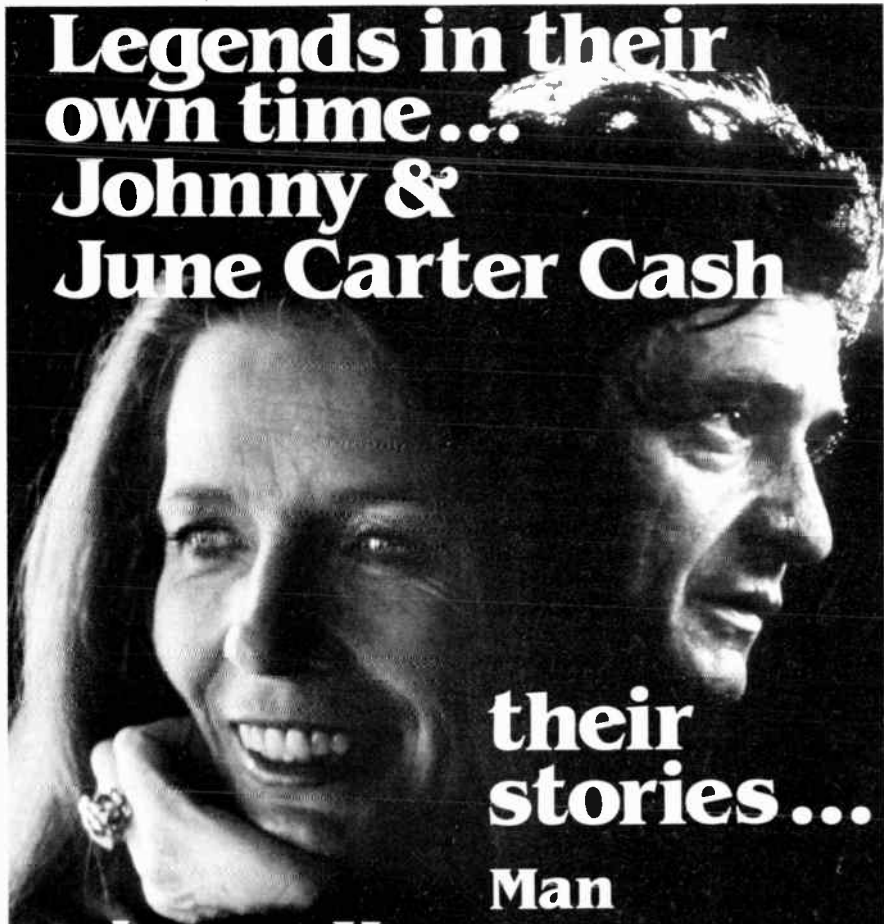
Man in Black

In 1971 Johnny Cash again used his music to bring to the attention of his listeners a song which expressed his obviously sincere concern about his country. Since the seventies Cash has adopted the dress and has become synonymous with *Man in Black*

and his deeply rooted social consciousness has become well known.

"We were right in the middle of the Vietnam War, and I found myself with a social conscience. I'd toured and traveled all over Europe, and then we went to the Orient. Then we went to Taiwan and I saw the men that had been shot up and burnt in the Vietnam War. I came back and, I don't know, people had been asking me why I wear black all the time, and I just decided I'd answer them by pointing up some problems and some things that needed doing—some changes that needed to be made in our country—and pointed the finger at myself as one of those responsible for doing it. I wasn't pointing at others; I was pointing at me, too. I tried to answer why I wear black in that way, by pointing up—I wear it, you know, because I'm concerned, and I care."

Legends in their own time... Johnny & June Carter Cash



their stories...

Man In Black

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JOHN R. CASH

I Will Rock 'n Roll With You (If I Have To)

*I didn't ever play much rock 'n roll
Because I got so much country in my soul
But I'm a different man for loving you
And I'd take a shot at what you asked me to
And, baby, I will rock 'n roll with you (if I have to).
—John R. Cash*

by Peter Guralnick

It all changes the moment he hits the lobby at Dallas International. That's when Johnny Cash becomes public property again. Fresh from a six-day break in Tampa where he "mostly slept" and went fishing with his wife June and son, John Carter, now ten, he is surrounded first by a small cluster, then by a swarm of fans, who shyly seek to make some connection, establish some bond, almost from the moment he strides off the plane in Wranglers and black Civil War-styled cross-buttoned shirt. He handles the requests gracefully, nods at shared experiences and memories ("Really? You were born in Lepanto, Arkansas? That's just a few miles from where I grew up."), poses for pictures, and is only mildly distracted when John Carter starts careening his mother about in the wheelchair in which she has disembarked from the plane. "No, no, she's all right," he reassures anxious well-wishers, to whom June explains that she simply threw her back out the night before. Even after all the luggage has been claimed, he stands beside the limousine for "just one more picture," smiling and exchanging small talk until the last fan is satisfied, the last snapshot snapped, and, amidst waves, the limousine pulls away from the curb.

On the way in to Dallas preparations for the evening's performance, a convention hall appearance for Home Interiors and Gifts, Inc., are discussed; John Carter expressed curiosity about where the other J.R. might live (J.R. Ewing seems to have supplanted J.R. Cash for a moment even in the imagination of his son); a family in a pick-up truck pull alongside and realize excitedly who is in the limo; and Johnny Cash points out a little town just outside the city where fifteen years ago he and Waylon Jennings, then at the height of their pill-taking days, visited Waylon's

first wife and three sons. In the hotel lobby the airport scene is reenacted, with the hotel management offering official greetings, a lobby full of people gesturing excitedly, and fans and employees crowding around for pictures and autographs;



so that it is at least fifteen minutes before the elevator is gained and the crowds at last shut out. I am a little surprised. There have been many wilder scenes, I am sure, in the career of Johnny Cash, and Cash's fans are sedate by comparison with rock fans. All the same many stars would arrive by a less conspicuous entrance; most are surrounded at least by a small retinue and express a conventional distaste for the public mobbing that goes with stardom. Johnny Cash, true to his image, seems almost to thrive on this contact with people. And, one imagines, whether he is alone or fitted out with the full trappings of stardom, there is never any question of just who is in charge or of the fact that John R.

Cash is doing just what he thinks is right, just what he knows he ought to be doing.

"Well, I have my refuges. I *have* to have my time alone, to restore whatever might have gone out of me on a tour, to regroup my forces. There's no way that I won't do that, because I've *always* done that. But when I'm around people, no matter how tired I am or how far we've gone, when I know that I'm going to be around people, I don't ever remember getting upset or getting mad or refusing to sign autographs or take pictures or whatever. When I know I'm going to be around people, I know I'm public property, and I let 'em have me. You can't say no when somebody says, can I have your picture, or can I have your autograph? That's really a compliment. It really is. I can't get over it. I still think like I did, always did, about something like that. I know of entertainers who refuse, and I can't understand that at all. I can't in my wildest dreams fathom an entertainer who would refuse someone their autograph."

From the very beginning of his career 25 years ago Johnny Cash seems to have had a perspective both on himself and on his goals that eludes not only most entertainers but most people as well. Perhaps it was his upbringing in Dyess, Arkansas, a federal "colony," where not only physical strength but strength of purpose was prized. Child of two very determined parents who didn't hesitate to uproot their family to make a new start in the depths of the Depression, heir to a tradition of staunch individualism which goes back, he says, over three centuries in this country, J.R. Cash grew up in a community which was started "as a social experiment, really. It was a rehabilitation project that was done by President Roosevelt for farmers in Arkansas that had lost out during the

PHOTO OPPOSITE: LONARD KANSLER



Depression. My Dad was informed one day in Cleveland County, where I was born, that he had been chosen (if he *cared* to) to have a house and a barn and 20 acres of cotton land in Dyess Colony. Nobody in our family had ever been up there—it was 250 miles then, it's not that far now, but to us it seemed like the other side of the world. We loaded up in an old truck everything that we had, all the kids and moved to to Dyess. Everybody was in the same boat there. Everybody knew that the man down the road next to them didn't have any more or less money than he had. It was a socialist set up, really, where if there was a profit made from the cotton gin, or the grocery store, or the bank, or the cannery, the people of the community shared the profit. We had the biggest co-op school in the state of Arkansas. Nobody had a lot of money, but everybody had a little—and we got by."

Cash has spoken (and sung) often of the values he derived from this kind of upbringing, of the the strictest sense of openness and hopeful prospects that he gained from this new-born community. "I think communication had a lot to do with the way I feel about everything now. There was no lack of communication in any area of my life that I can recall when I was growing up. Everybody knew everybody else; I don't ever remember seeing any real trouble in the community; nobody held anything against anybody else for long. You know, I can remember instances where my Dad would hear that somebody had said something about him, and he'd go to that person, he'd walk a mile maybe down a gravel road and he'd have an understanding about it. Then he'd come back and tell my mother—that was just the way it was."

Music, of course, was always a strong influence. "My parents woke me up every morning with the radio on playing country music." John's mother, Carrie, paid for voice lessons for her son, still a high tenor when he was 16, because she sensed a potential in this boy who was always singing "Irish ballads, Bill Monroe bluegrass songs, I knew *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree With Anyone Else But Me* as well as *Rainbow at Midnight* I wasn't locked into any one kind of music. In my mind I didn't separate the songs, I loved all kinds of music when I was a kid, and I wasn't conscious of any separation until I grew older."

Neither was there any of the sense of guilt that a fellow Arkansan like Charlie Rich (also a member of the Missionary Baptist Church and descended from a long line of preachers) felt growing up in Colt and playing secular music when he felt he should be singing church songs. "No, to me it wasn't like that at all. Maybe Charlie's folks were right, but I don't know, I was taught that music was a joyful thing. I just never have my eyes to anybody's music, no matter what kind. I



think music is a beautiful gift that's been given to man, and any area that you can explore and find something in it I think you gain.

Radio, of course, was the vehicle by which he got access to a wide range of music, and Cash remembers vividly listening to the Louvin Brothers and Bill Monroe, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and the Stamps Quartet, Lulu Belle and Scotty and Blind Bob Steele, a popular cowboy singer on a Memphis station. "Well, he didn't have any records out, as far as I know, but you know, radio was much more important then, records were secondary. That's what I wanted to do was to be a radio singer. That's one of the first things I remember in my life was a radio. When we got that radio, when I was a little boy, I felt like I could tune in the whole world, practically.

Movies, too, provided a glimpse of broader horizons (Movies always did inspire me. Matter of fact, I wrote *Folsom Prison Blues* after seeing the movie *Inside the Walls of Folsom Prison* and he always liked Lash LaRue, the original man in black but it was books as much as anything else that fired the imagination of young J.R. Cash. "Well, I always have been a

bookworm. Matter of fact, we had a very big library in Dyess, our library was really a big deal. Mrs. Roosevelt even came down and officially opened it. I read all the time when I was a kid. I got into just about everything. I can remember reading *Drums Along the Mohawk* and *The Last of the Mohicans*; I read all the Indian books I could get." Was this common? I wonder. Did many of his friends go in for this kind of thing? "No, I don't know anyone else in town who did read those books—on their own, you know, unless they were assigned as textbooks. But I read them because I loved them, and I still do."

At 18 he left Dyess, first for two weeks at the Fisher Body Plant in Detroit; then he enlisted in the Air Force, where he served in Germany for three years, wrote poems for the Landsberg base newspaper, bought his first guitar, formed a country music group, the Landsberg Barbarians, to sing his own songs and those of his idol, Hank Snow, and completed his education. By the time he arrived on the doorstep of Sun Records in Memphis in 1955, he knew exactly what he wanted to do.

Johnny Cash entered the Sun studio more fully formed, it would seem, that any of his equally distinguished fellow alumni (Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Charlie Rich). He had his own sound even then, and his voice already possessed that patented note of tremulous sincerity and vulnerability. Of all the people I ever recorded," Sam Phillips has said, "Jonny Cash is probably the only singer who had a great voice, as such, whether you like it or not."

"I always remember Sam Phillips with very kind thoughts and with great respect," says the subject of his praise, "but one thing about it, Sam didn't come and tap me on the head and say, 'C'mon, son let's go make a record.' I had to fight and call and keep at it and just push, push push to even get in to Sun Records in the first place and make him listen. I don't feel like anyone discovered me, you know, because I had to fight so hard just to get heard. You see, I had started radio announcing school while I was still trying to work as a salesman, determined to get into radio any way that would get me to where I could start singing. It was during this time that Elvis was very popular, and Sun Records was between my house and where I went to radio announcing school. So I just started going by there, and every day I'd ask: could I see Mr. Phillips. And they'd say, 'I'm sorry, he's not in yet,' or, 'He's at a meeting.' So, really, it became a challenge to me just to get inside that studio. It became a fight. Finally one day I was sitting on the stoop just as he came to work, and I stood up and said, 'I'm John Cash, and I've got my guitar, and I want you to hear me play.' and he said, 'Well, come on in.'

"I sang two or three hours for him, everything I knew—Hank Snow, Ernest

Tubb, Flatt and Scruggs (I remember singing *I'm Gonna Sleep With One Eye Open From Now On*), I even sang *I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen*—just to give him an idea of what I liked. He said, 'You really got a range of material that you understand and got a feel for. You say you got a group? Well, bring them on in to the studio.' And we went back in a few days, just Marshall and Luther and myself, and that was when we cut *Hey, Porter* the second time I was in the studio.

"You see, I knew what I wanted to do, and I did it just exactly the way I planned to do it when I went in there, but Sam Phillips saw something new in what I was doing. In his mind he saw this as a way to break tradition, maybe, and reach more people in country music. I heard him say so many times that Nashville is locked into that fiddle and steel guitar, and country music is going to die if there's not some fresh sound, some fresh feeling put in to it.' He told me, when *I Walk the Line* hit, he didn't say much until then, he said, 'Now you see what I'm talking about. The record has crossed over out of the country in the pop. Now your country music can no longer be locked into any one category.' He said, 'That's what music is all about. It should be universal.' And I said, 'Well, Sam, that's what I've always believed, too.'"

And yet for all of his self-assurance, a background more stable than many of his labelmates, and the fact that he approached Phillips on a more nearly equal basis than any of the others, Cash remains fully as ambivalent as anyone in his feelings towards this strangely messianic man. It was Phillips after all who got him to speed up *I Walk the Line* (it was originally conceived as a somber ballad) to the point where when Cash first heard it on the radio, he was so discomfited he called up Phillips and begged him to stop its distribution. It was Phillips who persuaded him that *Johnny Cash* was better than plain John Cash when it came to selling records in the teenage market. "You know, one thing about it, though, I've never heard Sam say a lot of the things that I've read that he said. Sam, matter of fact, was a very quiet-spoken man—unless he was drinking. Which he started doing a lot after Elvis left. Still, even when he was drinking, Sam always had his wits about him, he was still a genius, in that he knew what the music business was all about. He could see me as I was, and I couldn't. He could see Elvis as he was, and Elvis couldn't. Elvis wanted to sing a slow love song to his mother, and Sam Phillips saw him as what he was: a national hero with a new style of music just turning the whole world around."

Nonetheless Cash left Sun Records with very few regrets and seemingly none of the trauma that accompanied the departure of his labelmates. To Carl Perkins, Sam Phillips inspired the early records, and



The Tennessee Three: (left to right) Marshall Grant (who has recently retired), W.S. Holland and Bob Wootton.

Phillips himself characterizes his relationship with his artist as "almost like a father-son or big brother-little brother relationship." When they inevitably left—as Elvis did first for the greater economic vistas of RCA—it was described by both sides in terms generally reserved for the break-up of a family. For Johnny Cash leaving Sun Records for CBS after only three years on the smaller, independent label was simply the logical next step. "There were so many things I wanted to do, I had all these ideas about special projects, different album ventures like *Ride This Train*, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, the Indian album, but I felt like at Sun I would be limited in what I could do, where with a major company I could do all that and reach more people with my music. I think I was right, too. Sam couldn't understand it back then, we had a little misunderstanding at the time, he couldn't see me wanting to go to another record company—but I could."

It worked out, of course, pretty much the way Cash foresaw it. Of all the artists who left Sam Phillips, Johnny Cash was one of the few who continued to evolve. The records that he produced over the years—many of them "concept" albums before the term was invented—were a continuing chronicle of engagement and exploration, even as they remained anchored in the bedrock simplicity of his music. When he made *Ride This Train*, he created a genuinely "Stirring Travelogue of America in Song and Story" by scrupulous research and painstaking attention to detail; when he recorded his gunfighter *Ballads of the True West*, he went straight to the sources, read all the books, played pool with Texas historian J. Frank Dobie. For his blues songs he poured over old

Library of Congress recordings, carefully studying the research material of John and Alan Lomax. He takes pride today, whether in concert or in private, in tracing in accurate detail the genesis of his version of *Streets of Laredo* or *The Legend of John Henry's Hammer*. Even at his lowest ebb, in the years in which by all accounts John Cash should have been lost to the world, some of his most worthwhile projects still emerged (*Bitter Tears: Ballads of the American Indians*, for example, came out in 1964, and *Orange Blossom Special* in 1965), outgrowths of the same restless intelligence which more recently has prompted Cash to write, to actually write an incisive, well paced autobiography (*Man in Black*) and take a year to produce a movie on the life of Christ (*Gospel Road*). "You see, I always have considered myself a student, still do." With his voracious reading and his interest in such a wide variety of subjects, did he ever consider college? I ask. "Never thought of it," comes the reply, almost too quickly, softened only by the familiar hedge of the self-made man, "I guess I just had to get my education in my own way."

Probably he did. Like any self-made man his life has been laced to some extent with contradictions, of which his reliance on pills and his occasional lapses from the righteous path since his well-publicized spiritual rebirth are only the most prominent examples. Like the best of self-made men, though, Johnny Cash has never swept the errors or contradictions under the rug, but has faced up to them instead in interviews, autobiography, and casual conversation. What I wonder is whether his penchant for self-examination and restless thirst to explore new worlds may not outrun his own faith or his audience's limits.



Worth more than ever.
Johnny Cash, on Columbia Records and Tapes.

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"You know, I've thought about that. I've been careful about that. I don't think I'd ever get ahead of my audience. If I ever feel like I might have, with my fancy suit and my 8-piece band, I'll just tell five of them to be quiet, take the other three, and do *Give My Love to Rose*.'" What about politics, though? Cash's populist leanings have been well publicized and have on occasion perhaps created false expectations. What if Indian rights or prison reform or something in which he deeply believed were perceived as an unpopular issue? "Well, I don't know. I've pretty well stayed out of the whole issue of prison reform, actually; I've just sung my songs. I've gone to the prisons, because, you know, I was concerned, but I've stayed out of the political battles because I'm not a politician. I guess a lot of people thought I wanted to be, because I spoke out on the issues, but I'm not. So I kind of quieted down on those things."

Even with his TV series and specials, which have consistently broken fresh ground in their treatment of country music and its heritage, he has steered clear of controversy for the most part. One story though is illustrative of the kind of problems to which this instinctively cautious approach can lead. For the first show in his 1969 weekly series he got the idea of presenting Ervin Rouse, the little known author of *Orange Blossom Special* an old man at the time living in the Florida Everglades with the Seminole Indians. Cash went to the trouble of tracking him down and bringing him up to Nashville for the television taping. "I talked with my producers about really doing it right, about really giving the people an original country show, something nobody had ever seen on network television." Rouse's first version of the song ran to over 7 minutes; the producer talked to the star, and the song was cut to 5½ minutes. "Well, they kept that, and said, 'Thank you very much,' and paid him, and he went back to the swamps and kept writing and writing wanting to know when he was he going to be on. And when they edited the show this was when I got an education about what TV's really all about. Ervin Rouse was not on the show. And I was the one who had to call him and tell him."

Surprisingly this experience only reinforced Cash's inherent servatism. "That was about my first fight with network TV. It was about my last one, too. I was determined from then on that I wouldn't stick my neck out, that if I was going to do TV that I didn't own the networks, so I'd have to do it their way." But isn't there any place for outspokenness? I wonder, "Well, I really don't want to get politically involved," says John Cash, then adds without irony. "Now as far as patriotism is concerned, I'm never afraid to speak out on patriotism. . ."

The audience at the Dallas Convention Center obviously is not afraid of

patriotism either. It is, as one of the ushers from Criswell Bible Institute says, a "godly" crowd, made up almost entirely of women who are sales representatives for Home Interiors and Gifts. Some of them wear gold crowns to symbolize sales success, and the motif of the convention hall is Camelot, complete with lavender castle and battlements as a backdrop. Two years ago they brought in Bob Hope, and not surprisingly they love Johnny Cash, as their flashbulbs create a strobe effect for an already thoroughly modernized show. Dressed up in familiar black frockcoat and pipestem black pants, Cash himself is a masterful entertainer, singer and storyteller. The cordless mike and pick-up system, a recent experiment about which he is very excited, gives some trouble, but The Great '80's Eight, the solid new group which includes two horns, Marty Stewart on fiddle, and Joe Allen replacing Marshall Grant on bass after 25 years, is flawless after no more than a half dozen appearances together. A couple of times in fact they threaten to get out of hand as they rock out on *I Will Rock 'n' Roll With You* or Jerry Hensley's lead guitar heats up dangerously on a blues number, but each time the audience is gently brought back with a gospel song or June's traditional Carter Family sequence or the greatest crowd-pleaser of all, his 10 year-old son, John Carter doing a take-off on *I Walk The Line* and then a gospel tribute to his Carter Family heritage. The film sequences which play behind *One Piece At A Time Casey Jones* and a lyrical *John Henry* are brilliant; the show is altogether satisfying; the well-oiled Johnny Cash machine is on the move, with Johnny Cash himself at its center—a touchstone, a verity, someone his audience wants to reach out and touch, like the old cowboy heroes he admired, someone that same audience wants desperately to believe in. Not surprisingly, he satisfies that belief, Johnny Cash is a pillar; it is an odd position for someone who not much more than a decade ago was on the brink of self-destruction, but then that is part of his strength.

And yet heroes fade, too, and that is one of the things that haunts him as he has supper up in his hotel room after the show and talks about his own heroes, Ernest Tubb and Hank Snow in particular, and the lack of respect they get in today's instant trend world. "Well, that really bugs me. This has been a bone of contention with me for years, for 10 years at least. There is a group of about 4 or 5 singers that have been grossly neglected at all the awards shows and all the big specials—that's Webb Pierce, Faron Young, Ferlin Husky, Carl Smith, Ray Price, and Little Jimmy Dickens, that's six. And these guys at one time in the '40s and '50s were the top male singers, the top entertainers. All these guys—you talk about heroes, all these people ought to have the chance to

show people what they've got. Because these people are still very effective, they still work, they still tour, they still have huge followings, and fan clubs. It's just like these producers will ask Ernest Tubb or Ray Acuff or Hank Snow to come on just for kind of a token performance. 'Let's have one of the oldies on the show,' Well, that's really terrible. I say, 'If we can get Hank Snow to do a show, then let him be a regular guest and do his songs and let me talk to him and do a song—because *that man means a lot to me*. Maybe that's why it bugs me. I'm not concerned that this is going to happen to me because I can handle it, but it does bug me that the people forget—hey, it's not the people, these old heroes of mine are getting pushed aside because they don't mean ratings to the television producers!"

What about his own career? I ask. It seems as if in the last few years he has announced several new directions, and now with the Great '80's Eight and the "contemporary rockabilly" sound he is once more getting back to basics, doing his best to cast off excess baggage like so much excess weight. Is it always a struggle to simplify? "It's impossible to free myself of a lot of the baggage of success, but I've been able to hire enough people to delegate a lot of it to them. As far as making a fresh start, no, I'm not doing that any more, I made that fresh start several years ago. From now on I'm just doing what I do. I'm not just getting a fresh start again. I'm continuing stronger than ever, I believe." ■





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Jack Clement managed to convey to me a genuinely human view of The Man In Black. It was from Jack, for instance, that I first got the idea that perhaps Johnny was not entirely satisfied with the rewards of life as a figurehead/symbol/family man/institution. Perhaps, it was suggested, he also wanted to get down and pick. . . There had been moments—little flashes of grace and movement when the music came together before it fell apart again—in which it was revealed that Cash did have the funk, that what Jack Clement calls “the magic thumb” was stirring.

The Magic Thumb

by Patrick Carr

When I first began working with *Country Music Magazine* back in '72, Johnny Cash loomed large over both the magazine and the country music scene in general. He had already been through the huge stardom of his Sun days, the long torturous affair with drugs, the personal recuperation brought about by Jesus and June and Mother Maybelle Carter, and the professional comeback which began with his magnificent **Folsom Prison** albums. And in the process, with all these great trials and legendary doings riding on his back, he had become far more than a recording star.

He was a symbol—of pain conquered, of honesty and manliness, of rural American values—and he was also an institution. Standing tall at the House of Cash, he was like some grand stationmaster of yore receiving an unceasing flow of dignitaries, emissaries, and supplicants; presidents, religious leaders, corporations, TV networks, songwriters and all kinds of other groups and individuals came looking for his patronage, and he dispensed it where he saw fit.

Naturally *Country Music*, then a fledgling publication, beat the supplicant's path to his door, and Cash received the envoys graciously, wishing them well and encouraging them to do a good job. As a mere Associate Editor, I was not privy to these early meetings. More exalted members of the organization would sally forth from time to time in their best clothes and most sober states of consciousness, leaving me to mind the store and deal with less regal members of the country music community.

Thus it was that before I ever talked at length with Johnny Cash, I made the acquaintance of Jack “Cowboy” Clement. Now Jack, who was Johnny's songwriter and producer in the Sun days, is certainly a prince of a fellow and maybe even a king among the great men of modern funk—he even holds court in his own way—but the best-clothes and high-diplomacy ambience is not his style. This was fortunate for my eventual appreciation of Johnny Cash, for in the course of many conversations best

described as extremely loose, Jack managed to convey to me a genuinely human view of *The Man In Black*. It was from Jack, for instance, that I first got the idea that perhaps Johnny was not entirely satisfied with the rewards of life as a figurehead / symbol / family man / institution. Perhaps, it was suggested, he also wanted to get down and pick.

This, strangely enough, was a surprising notion. It had always seemed to me that most of Johnny's post-comeback music represented just about everything *but* the urge to get funky with a guitar; it was definitely about the promotion of Christianity and the preservation of American folklore and the communication of traditional values and the expression of inner thoughts and the encouragement of worthy young songwriters and a lot more besides, but on the whole it didn't sound like much fun.

The notion was not purely theoretical, for early in '74 I got a call from Jack: would I care to come hang around a recording session at the House of Cash studio with Jack, Waylon, and Johnny? This was a considerable item; the initiative for the

session had come from Johnny, and even though it was to take place at The Palace (an affectionate name for Cash's studio), it held all kinds of interesting possibilities. Jack was, after all, the producer of Johnny's biggest and earliest hits, and Waylon was his roommate during those legendary days of the pill-popping period. Both Waylon and Jack were about as funky as you could get without actually being Hank Williams or James Brown or the Grateful Dead.

It was weird. There beneath a crystal chandelier, surrounded by the overflow of June Carter's antique furniture collection, Johnny Cash sat in the center of the huge room like a man in a fishbowl. Around him, the people split into two broad categories. On the one hand there were Jack, Waylon, and Jack and Waylon's buddies. On the other, there was the House of Cash clan—June Carter, Reba Hancock, the Tennessee Three, and all the various daughters and boyfriends and songwriters of the family. Everybody—including John Carter Cash, who was perched on his father's knee during takes—had something to say, and, naturally, the first victim of the affair was the nerves of the principals. The second victim was the funk. Eventually, everybody decided that it was time for dinner. In the car of the Clement contingent as they made their departure there were sighs of relief and none-too-flattering remarks about how recording sessions should and should not be conducted. It was concluded that there would be no more sessions at The Palace.

At the time, this event seemed to me to signify that although Johnny was looking for the funk, he was also hedging his bets. Besides, as Jack remarked philosophically, it was a beginning. Also, there had been moments—little flashes of grace and movement when the music came together before it fell apart again—in which it was revealed that Cash *did* have the funk, that what Jack Clement calls “the magic thumb” was stirring.



* * *

That first close-range exposure to Johnny Cash determined the pattern of all the interviews I was to conduct with him over the next years as, elevated to the status of Editor of *Country Music*, it became my task to tally forth Cashwards every so often. Although I was interested in his comments on drugs, religion, his family life, his politics, the state of country music and other subjects, my personal interest was in what made him tick as a musician.

The first interview, some six months after the House of Cash session, began with a question diplomatically phrased to reveal this subject. I had heard, I said, that maybe he wasn't satisfied with his recent records. Was that true?

"Well, I feel like I'm growing, see," he said. "I feel like I'm just starting out in this business. I feel better than I ever did. I'm working harder at it. But I've made a lot of mistakes in the last two or three years. . . . But it's not that I'm frantically groping around for a hit. I'm not. Everything that I have released, I was proud of it at the time I released it. It was exactly what I thought I should release—but the public has a way of proving you wrong, you know. . . ."

"But when I made a mistake, I always knew it. I didn't make the same mistake twice. I made a lot of *different* mistakes, which is a good thing to do, because I know not to make *them* anymore."

At this point, he revealed that musically, he was headed in two directions. One was the Clement connection (which, on account of a realistic view of the volatility of the Clement/Cash relationship, he regarded as somewhat tenuous); the other, recording the vocal tracks of his favorite neglected contemporary folk songs and having an outside producer lay in the instrumental tracks without him being there for the process, was in exactly the opposite direction. The plan was almost schizophrenic; while attempting to get back to the low-down one-take-with-embellishment funk of his early Sun records, he was also embarking on a project which positively reeked of the most modern kind of artificiality. He was aware of the contradiction here, but he wanted to try it anyway. Perhaps the secret behind all this was contained in another remark he made: "I've been using my own group to record with me—you know, the one I use for concerts—but I'm going to use a lot of other people, and try different things, because it's apparent that what I've been doing is not what the people really want to hear. So I'm going to try to do something that they want to hear."

My conclusion from this interview was that Cash, though he may be in conflict as to which path to take, was at least *thinking* about his music and concerned about peoples' opinions of it. I got the impression that I had been talking with a musician, not a statesman.

* * *

Some eighteen months passed between that first interview and the next. During that time it became apparent that Cash had, with the release of the contemporary folksongs album, made yet another mistake he would never make again. Also, there were continued messages from Nashville about sessions with Waylon and conversations with Jack Clement, but no product—no Waylon duets, no Clement-produced records. Then, out of the blue, there came the *One Piece At A Time* single (which became Cash's first Number One country single in longer than anyone cared to remember) and the album of the same title. Waylon was not present on those tracks and they weren't produced by Jack, but they had that lovely, sinuous but hard-edged rolling rockabilly rhythm which is Waylon and Jack's speciality. I was delighted, of course, and at first I figured that well, how nice, the boys had moved the old monolith/folksinger towards their style. This notion, of course, was monumentally stupid—Cash was at least one-half the *inventor* of that style—but at least the fact that it even occurred to me illustrated just how far away Cash had been moving before *One Piece At A Time*.

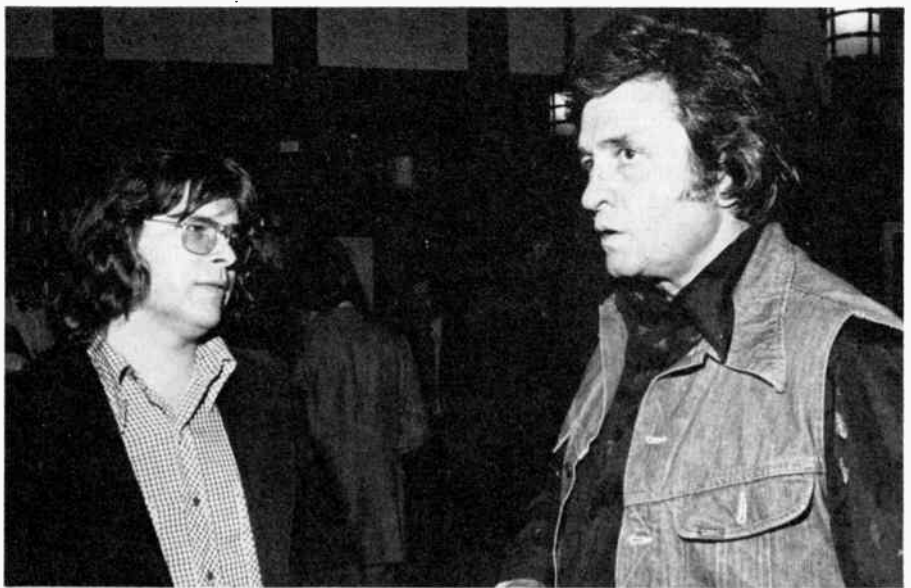
The album had great songs (*One Piece At A Time* was—good God!—actually *funny*), hot picking, advanced but clean production, and an abundance of hardcore musical energy. And as the sales figures indicated, it was obviously "what the people want to hear."

This time around, then, I approached

"I started out with that old simple sound on Sun Records . . . but then I went through kind of a period there. Y'know, the real problem was not that I wasn't enjoying what I was doing; it was just that I was looking for something new, seeing if there was a new way for me to do it. As it turns out, what I think I discovered was that the way I started with it, the old way I've always done it, is the way I really enjoy it.

"You'd feel the atmosphere in the studio now. . . . There's a lot of laughter at my sessions. . . . It used to be like pulling teeth, like 'OK, let's get this over with.' It's not that way anymore. It's joy, it's fun."

Cash went on to admit that the folksong album had been a mistake—it was Columbia Records' idea, he said, and he went along with it—but he stressed once again that he had learned from it. "It's like we learned from the Vietnam War not to send troops to Africa," he said. He also admitted that in the past, he never used to stick around the studio to supervise the mixing of his records. "I threw away a lot of good sounds," he said. All that had changed, though; he was taking control in the studio, he was watching the *Billboard* charts, he was determined to work with Jack Clement, he was planning sessions with Waylon and neither of them cared about the fact that their respective record companies didn't like the idea. All in all, it seemed that he was asserting himself; he was even getting feisty about things; his



The writer and his subject.

Cash in high spirits. He reciprocated in the same manner.

"I'm getting such a kick out of it, feeling the same things I was feeling twenty years ago in my music," he said. "It's a whole new discovery for me, y'know—like, 'Hey, I remember how good this felt, and I remember when I did it like this, and *this* is the way it feels best' . . . it's kind of like being re-born again.

next project, apart from work with Waylon, was going to be re-makes of old Elvis and Carl Perkins and Roy Orbison songs vamped up by modern studio technique and technology but still done with that loose old feeling. Most significantly, he said "If I sing something I *really* enjoy, then that's what I ought to do. It's not always commercial, but it's what I ought to do."

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This basically funk-oriented, outspoken kind of attitude persisted throughout the interview as Cash blasted the lust for “crossover” hits in country music, came out solidly in favor of the “outlaws,” recalled the resistance he met when *he* first broke big on the country scene, admitted irritation about being pestered by fans at his home, and confessed that he did, after all, enjoy being Johnny Cash.

By the end of the interview it was obvious that Cash had come a long way since those first Johnny-Cash-as-Mount-Rushmore days of the magazine. He was happier, more self-assertive, and more humorous than I had ever seen him. I could only reflect that for music fans, this was very good news indeed.

* * *

Early on, around the time of that first House of Cash session with Waylon and Jack, it had occurred to me that Johnny Cash was entering a new phase of life: Having burned himself out and filled himself back up again and established himself in an unassailable position of power and influence and respect, he was beginning to relax at long last, to allow himself to mess around—to *play*—in the knowledge that with his junkie days long behind him, playing was not dangerous. Along with that thought went the idea that he might also begin to back away from his role as figurehead/leader/statesman.

By the time the third major interview rolled around, this was in fact happening. Uncomfortable with the way the annual CMA Awards show was run, he had bowed out of his role as emcee of that event. Also, he had sold the House of Cash studio. “I never was interested in it in the first place,” he said. “Now we’ve gotten rid of that studio, which became kind of a burden . . . which leaves me free. That’s another word that’s important in all of

this. I feel free. If I want to go to California and record, I’ll do it . . . things like that studio, you look back on and say, ‘hey, that was a status symbol, an ego trip. What’d I do that for? That was stupid; don’t do that no more.’ I’m free, you see. I’m free to go where I want to and record with whoever I want to.”

I remarked that this kind of change had been coming on ever since I had known him. “Yes,” he said, “freedom is the word . . . freeing yourself from preconceived notions about what is expected of you. I forgot all of that crap . . . I’m doing what I *feel* is right for me.”

Musically, Cash was all over the place at this time (early ’79). He was still recording with Waylon and still getting Jack Clement in on things now and again and still thinking about old rockabilly songs, but he was also mightily impressed with Tom T. Hall’s songs for the first time and enthusiastic about John Prine and Steve Goodman and Rodney Crowell. The only thing tying these elements together was his excitement; he was humming with a sense of the possibilities open to him; he was turned on.

“Maybe I’m going through the change of life or something,” he said, “but I want more time for myself, and I want more freedom from worry and work and the has-

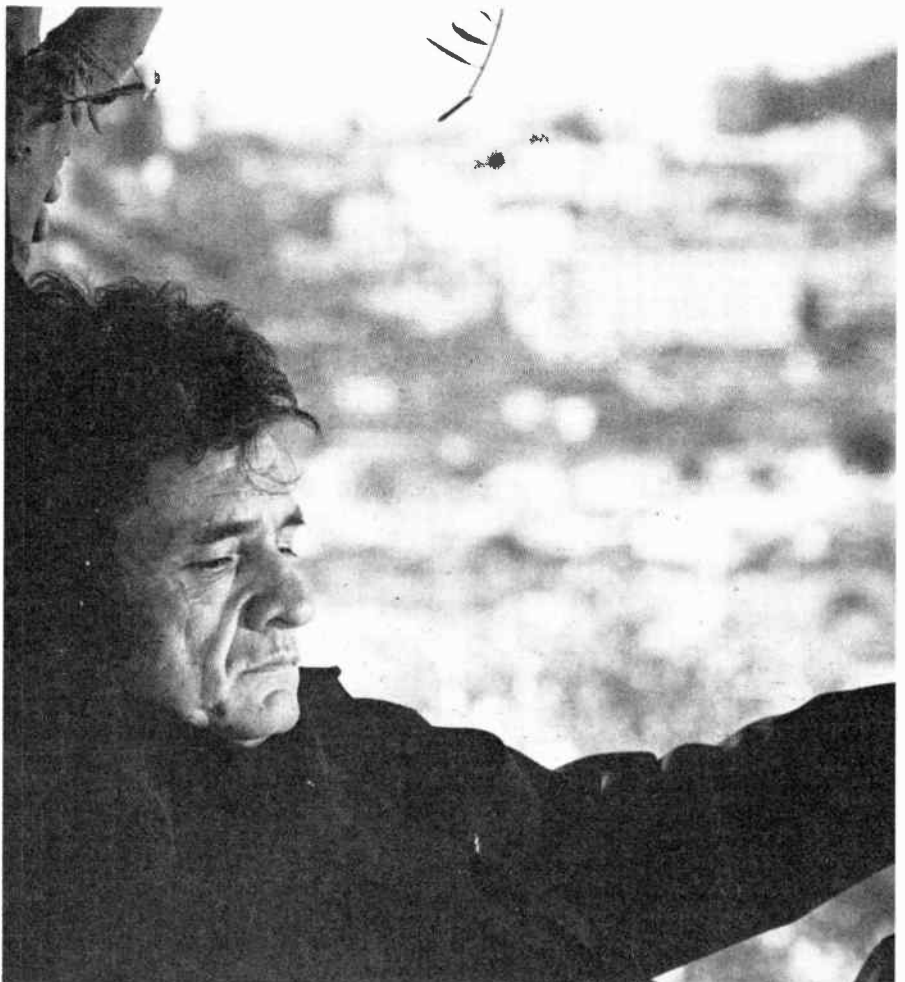
sle that goes on at the offices and the recording studios.”

“It’s showing up in your music, you know,” I said.

“Well, I hope it’ll show *more* the next time around,” he replied.

* * *

Today, Cash is still humming, still making changes and hatching projects and getting ideas. Most of them, like a lot of the ideas which went before, will not come to fruition for one reason or another—some other notion will replace them—but that’s not the point. The point, realized almost subconsciously over these past years of contact with the man, is that he is not a monolith. He is, rather, more like a shark; in order to survive, he needs to be in a constant state of motion. He makes mistakes as he moves, and at times in his career he has even neglected his music while pursuing other goals and projects, but for him there must always be *something* into which that relentless urge to progress can be sunk. This basic characteristic of the true artist is what distinguishes him—as it distinguishes Waylon and Willie Nelson and Jack Clement—from the endless ranks of country music’s very popular, perfectly nice, thoroughly consistent but ultimately boring also-rans. ■



Johnny Cash The Photographer

I found a whole new world through the lens of a camera. When you focus in on something, you can really see it.

Johnny Cash



My Hendersonville home on Old Hickory Lake



Mum Sara Carter just months before death.



John Carter dressed for a wedding - and miserable in that fit.



Mother May Belle Carter
Guitar picker, fishing
buddy of Mother-in-law



June & John Carter



A lizard trying to attract a mate.



A little Macro-
photography.
A Garden Spider,
A Cicada, and
a bee with his
landing gear down.

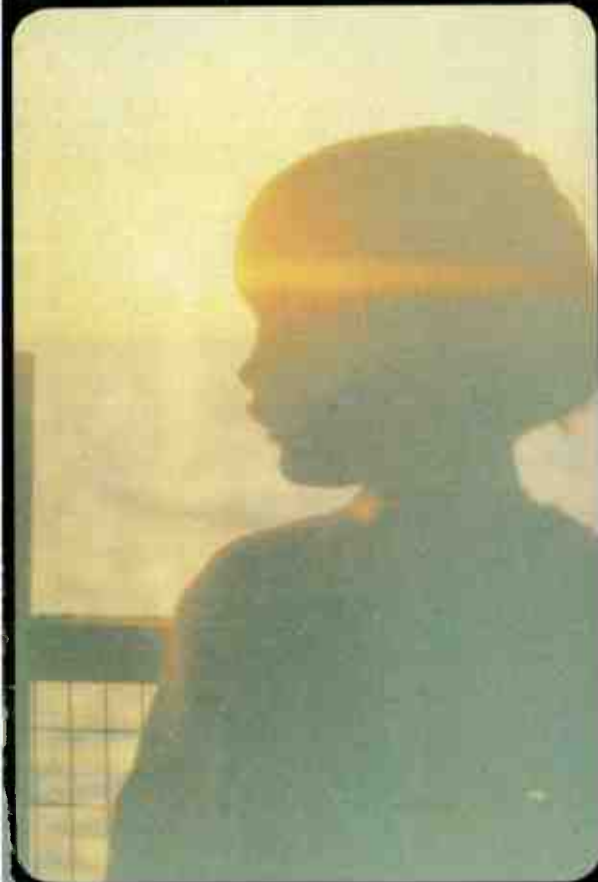




Our Jamaica retreat: Cinnamon Hill Greathouse. Elizabeth Barrett Brownings' father was born here.



The lady of the house.



John Carter - Sunset at Port Richey Florida.



John Carter and Billy Graham in swimming



Backstage with Kris



A pensive, peaceful Weylon. That's rare!

Weylon kills a bear rug at my farm in Hickman Co. Tennessee.



My son with Michael Landon. On the set of Little House.



I caught Barbara Mandrell off-guard. It was at her son, Matthew's birthday party.



Jessi in Jasmine

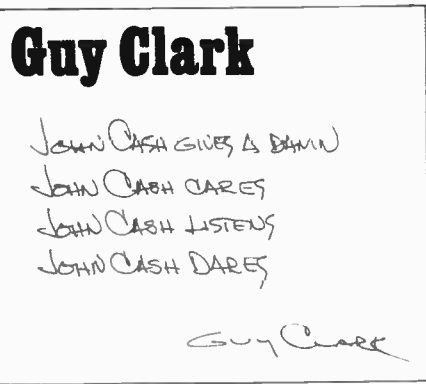
Friends of Cash Share Good Times, Bad Times, Life, Love and Music

We asked Johnny Cash's friends, family and professional colleagues to write letters to the editor, on the occasion of his Silver Anniversary. The response was exciting. Below, we present excerpts from these letters. The full-length originals will be presented to Cash in a bound volume. You'll see famous names here, and some you won't recognize. Together they make a fascinating portrait.

Kris Kristofferson

Johnny Cash has always been a little larger than life in my eyes, going back to the days when I cleaned up the studios where he recorded. The sessions (which were closed to the public and as carefully guarded as a military secret) were the purest form of excitement available to a young songwriter still years away from making any mark with his music. Just being allowed to be there was a privilege I considered to be proof that even then I was luckier than my peers. The atmosphere was electric—tense as a roomful of dynamite, John paced in the studio like a caged panther, looking for a chance to break and run, everyone treated him as if he might explode at any minute, and I did my best to stay out of the way. Those in the control room were understandably nervous because in those

days you never knew what John was gonna do next or what, if anything he was gonna record. At one of these sessions something happened that nearly cost me my job and



gave me some insight into the man. A couple of songwriters had managed to come in at the same time as John, the Tennessee Three, and the Carters, and I just assumed that they were with him. They weren't, and after the first song they cornered John and were trying to make him listen to an entire album of gospel songs they wanted him to cut. By the time we got them away from him the people running the session were furious, and, it turned out, they blamed me for letting them in and tried to get me fired. My boss had a talk with me the next day, and said that he didn't want to fire me but that maybe it would be a good idea if I stayed away from the session that night. I agreed, and that evening I stayed down in the vault cutting leader-tape, or some such thing. The next thing that I knew, John was

standing there. His knuckle was bleeding from some obscure accident (he banged into a lot of things in those days), and he said, "Say, uh, got a cigarette?" I knew he hadn't come all the way down to the vault for a cigarette, but I gave him one and he said, "Are you comin' up to the session?" I stammered out some excuse about having more work to do and he said, "I heard you had some trouble. Might as well come on up, because I'm not gonna start the session till you get there."

Well, I went on up and sat on the floor through the whole session trying to ignore the looks from the control room, and feeling just about proud enough to float. It was just one of many boosts John had given my spirits and/or career, and probably not as important as some of the things he did later on. But it still seems to give a pretty good indication of the measure of the man.

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON



Fred Foster

Thank you so much for asking me to participate in your wonderful tribute to my friend, Johnny Cash. The July issue of *Country Music Magazine* will undoubtedly be the best ever because of it.

I find this a somewhat difficult undertaking because my regard for Johnny Cash can't be confined to mere words of praise. However, I have chosen a couple of incidents from our relationship that I feel will graphically demonstrate the genuineness of his giving nature, and the depth of his humility.

Shortly after I had signed the then unknown Kris Kristofferson, Johnny 'discovered' Kris too. One could almost detect aspects of crusade-ism in the way Johnny went about exposing Kris to the public and media, as well. He put Kris on at

Newport, on his television show, and was singing his praises *and* his songs coast to coast almost weekly.

As Kris rapidly became an important force in our industry, I felt obliged to tell Johnny how grateful we were for his enormous help. I dropped by the Opry House where John was taping his weekly ABC show, to do just that. As I approached the beaming face and outstretched hand of Johnny Cash, he said, "Fred! I've been looking for you. I've been wantin' to thank you for sending me Kris Kristofferson. He sure has meant a lot to me." I'm sure I sounded a lot like Kris as I mumbled a bunch of inanities and left. Imagine! Him thanking me!

One of the most vivid threads in the tapestry of Cash is the Christian one. Shortly after his return from the Holy Land where he had filmed *Gospel Road*, Johnny told me the following story, one I might add, that has left an indelible mark on my spirit. He said that one day, after many days of hard work, he was walking (wearily I'm sure) along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sat down on a rock overlooking the shore, and the magnitude of Christ and what he had done for mankind filled his very being. He suddenly had the feeling that our Lord had sat upon this very rock. He took a pinch of dust from beside the rock and placed it on his tongue, as visions of the Last Supper burned in his brain. He told me it was the sweetest Communion he had ever taken. I have never taken one since that I don't think of Johnny's words.

My hope is that we'll all be around to do the 50th Anniversary. Thanks again for honoring Johnny Cash, one of the last Great Americans, and may God's blessings be upon this most worthy endeavor.

Warm regards,
FRED L. FOSTER

Harlan Sanders

It was 3:00 a.m. and my cell was dark except for the light seeping through the crack under my cell door and a small window that allowed the guards to look in from time to time.

I was sitting up on the edge of my bunk feeling sorry for myself thinking how each year seemed to be passing slower than the year before. I had already lost my father, my wife, and several friends so when the guard slid a telegram under my door I immediately wondered who else had died. I looked down at the telegram envelope a while before I finally had enough nerve to open it. This is part of what it said:

Dear Harlan:

Have just recorded your song *Look For Me . . .* for my album *Man In Black*. If anyone is writing songs any better, I haven't heard them.

Now I'm sure anyone would think getting a song recorded by Johnny Cash would make a man happy. (And I'm sure Johnny meant for me to be) but near the bottom of the telegram was a line that read: WE'RE PROUD OF YOU. When I read that I started crying. When I should have been happiest I only felt shame, because nobody had ever had much reason to be proud of me before.

To this day I still cry when I think of the difference that telegram made in my life. I've been out of prison now for seven years and just wanted to take this opportunity to tell Johnny and the world how proud I am to be part of his life. And to say "Thanks" to him for caring, not only for me but for all the other prisoners and people he's helped along the way.

With Pride and Appreciation,
HARLAN SANDERS

Minnie Pearl

Harlan,
What a joy
to have an opportunity
to say a word of
praise about my
long-time friend,
Johnny Cash. He
has been one of
my best experiences
in my business
and I'm sure that
his work will be
remembered for
years to come.

Minnie Pearl



Earl Ball

Johnny Cash is the best C.B. Radio operator I know. When our rented touring bus gave up the ghost, 50 miles outside of Yuma, Arizona, John took control of the C.B. and summoned in two "19 wheelers" to take us into town in time to not miss the show. The truckers stopped just as he said "Breaker, Breaker, does anyone want to buy a C.B. Radio."

EARL BALL

Floyd Gresset

My first acquaintance with Johnny Cash was 19 years ago. I was driving on the Freeway near Ventura California, I was listening to my auto radio. A song came on, the title, *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* I seldom talk to myself, but I said, "Some day I want to meet Johnny Cash and tell him how I love a guy who sings from his heart."

Months later a friend of mine, Curly Lewis called me and said, "I'm building a home in Casitas Springs for Johnny Cash, I want you to meet him, you will like him."

I knew Johnny when he had problems. BIG problems, but through this I never criticized, ridiculed, or condemned him. I just let him know that I loved him. I am glad I took this attitude with Johnny, I knew, however, that I never won anyone by any method except love. Johnny told me afterwards, "Chief, had you ridiculed, criticized or condemned me during that period, we would not have been friends." He said, "No one knew better than I what I was doing to my family, friends and fans." Last Christmas I received a Christmas present I shall always cherish—a photo of Johnny, a 12 x 16, with a note printed at the bottom, "I wouldn't be alive today if you had not been the great man you are," signed sincerely, Your Friend, Johnny Cash.

May God Bless a wonderful man, my friend, Johnny Cash.

"CHIEF" FLOYD GRESSETT

P.J. Zondervan

Dear Johnny:

Heartiest congratulations on your 25th anniversary in the music business. What a contribution you have made over these years. It has been a privilege for Mary and me to have been associated with you in some of these events.

It was a joy to publish your book, *The Man In Black*, which is making a continuing contribution.

My wife will never forget your introducing her at your concert in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It was a complete surprise and after she got over the surprise—a joy.

God bless you, Johnny.

This morning after I read the seventh verse of I Samuel chapter three, I thought . . . that's interesting.

Sincerely yours,

P. J. ZONDERVAN

Hope Powell

I would like to share with the readers of *Country Music Magazine*, something about my favorite photographer, Johnny Cash.

Unbeknown to Johnny, I have studied his work in photography ever since I realized he was getting serious about it. He has created some very impressive scenics and portraits, some of which hang in the House of Cash museum. Johnny's work betrays a sensitivity and creativity that most people have only been exposed to through his music. His composition and ability to tell a story with the lens of his camera is very explicit. The work by John Carter Cash hanging in the museum also betrays Johnny's ability as a teacher, to say nothing about his fulfillment as a father.

Johnny's subject matter in his photography is obviously his surroundings in his travels and his family. Not to belittle his ability and talent, but with June and John Carter as prime models in his life, how can he go wrong?

What I really wanted to share with you is the humorous side of Johnny, as he is usually sober and serious. I had been called to come to the House of Cash for an autographing party for the publishers and bookstore owners, of *The Man In Black*.

At the end of the party, a line was formed so we could all get our books autographed by its famous author, Johnny Cash. As the line diminished, I turned to Reba, Johnny's sister, and said, "I don't want just an autograph in my book. I've photographed Johnny for so long, I feel 'special,' and I want something slurpy in mine, so I'm going to wait 'til he gets

John Traweek

I have found him to be real—maybe not perfect—but real. He believes, he cares, he works. He also prompted me to write this simple verse.

Country Star

*Twinkle twinkle country star
I'm glad that I know what you are
A family man who loves his wife
A working man who's tasted life
A man who knows right from wrong
And helps the world through deed
and song*

*A servant both to God and men
So God bless you my country friend*

I think your July tribute is great. I hope all goes well for you and your staff.

JOHN TRAWEEK

through and the people begin to leave before I ask for an autograph."

While I waited for the perfect moment to approach Johnny, I put my camera down, and began to indulge in the hors d'oeuvres. In a little while, Reba walked up and handed me a copy of the book. I tucked it under my arm and walked up to Johnny and said, "It's my time, Johnny." He replied, "But I just autographed it!" I turned to Reba with a quizzical expression, and she said, "Hope, I just handed it to you." I opened the book and there in big black letters was: "To Hope, Slurp, slurrrpppp!!! Johnny Cash" . . .

P.S. I would like for it to go on record that I believe in God, what the American flag stands for, Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, and Johnny Cash. . .

HOPE POWELL



Reverend Jimmy R. Snow

The most exciting time, I guess in my whole life, deals with Johnny Cash. In the summer of 1971, Johnny Cash asked me to his house to meet a writer named Larry Murray, who would later on be the writer for the movie, *Gospel Road*. John took Larry and I out to a little shack close to his home where he goes often and meditates. We sat down on the front porch and John said to Larry and I, "Start talking about Jesus, anything you can." This was the beginning of several days of meetings with Larry Murray, and I guess I probably preached just about every sermon that I'd ever preached on the life of Jesus Christ. After we finished, of course, Johnny Cash with his marvelous ability with the pen, and Larry Murray made a script.

I was on my way to Israel in September, and since I was already going over there with a group of people, John sent his writer, Larry Murray and his director, Bob Elfstrom, to go along on the trip with me so they could scout out some areas to film when they came back later. After we finished the trip, we came back and Johnny Cash asked me if I'd like to go along with the whole tour that was going to be working on the film. Now they really didn't need me, but I was glad that they asked me to go, because it was probably the one thing that inspired me to learn more about Israel and to keep me going back there

(I've been there eighteen times now) and to learn to read, write and speak Hebrew, to really become part of that land and pray for it. I would have to say that being there those 43 days is probably the thing that inspired me the most, being a part of that film. Three things stand out in my memory. One thing, every morning John would insist that we gather together, join hands and have prayer because he was so concerned that this film had the touch of God in it. I think the blessing of it came along one morning when John was doing some dialogue on top of Mount Arabel. It was foggy, there was a lot of mist and it was pretty hard to see clearly. He was standing, getting himself ready and trying to get his lines together in his mind, when June shot a Polaroid picture of him. When the picture was developed, a pattern in the clouds looked like a man silhouetted behind Johnny with his arms stretched out. Well, to be honest with you, it looked like Jesus. It was one of the highlights of the entire trip. I think it was more or less an answer to those prayers.

And then I guess next to that, the most exciting thing would be the personal experience that Johnny Cash himself had, and that would be when he asked us to get together and have a baptismal service. Everybody who goes to Israel wants to be baptised in the Jordan River. Johnny Cash was no exception. So several of us found a place, went over one morning before the shooting and had a baptismal service which was filmed. It meant a lot to John and, indeed, a great deal to me.

REV. JIMMY R. SNOW



Jo Coulter

Johnny Cash is celebrating twenty-five years in the music business. For at least half of those years, I have been privileged to work as his make-up artist on his television shows from 1969 to the present time. I also traveled on the road with the Johnny Cash Show for part of that time, so I have a lot of special memories.

John has overcome many obstacles, including pills and alcohol, which certainly wasn't easy. But, one of the biggest battles he fought was giving up cigarettes. He really wanted to quit smoking, but that's easier said than done. During rehearsals for the Johnny Cash television shows at the old Opry House (Ryman Auditorium), I could always find John by looking for a cloud of smoke, and he'd be right in the middle of it. His hairdresser, Pennilane, and I used to joke about the grand explosion we'd have one day while I was applying John's make-up and she was using hair spray, with John sitting there, puffing away. I always knew when he'd run out of cigarettes, because I'd hear a loud "Jo—got a cigarette?" I carried extra packs with me—just in case. He finally attended a Quit Smoking Clinic, and has been off cigarettes ever since.

The day John Carter Cash was born, I was called to the hospital. John met me with a big grin, announcing the fact that he had a boy. While we were waiting in another room to see June, with John pacing the floor like a caged lion, again I heard the familiar—"Jo—got a cigarette?" I gave him one, he lit it, opened the window, and blew the smoke out, while waving his hand to help disperse the smoke—for all the world like a guilty little boy, knowing he was doing something wrong, but hoping not to get caught. As far as I know, that was the last cigarette John ever smoked.

I appreciate the friendship and loyalty John has given me throughout the years. I'm proud of you, Johnny Cash.

Best Wishes,
JO COULTER
(MRS. HENRY C. HUGHES)



Kirk Douglas

I worked with Johnny Cash in *A Gunfight*. It was his first movie, and it was a pleasure working with him. He was professional, good company and always a gentleman. To me Johnny is someone who will always be a credit to the entire world of entertainment, whether he is singing, acting, or just being himself. He's a great guy.

I also judge a man by the woman he marries, and when you meet June you understand a lot about Johnny. They are two fine people.

My affection
to both of them
KIRK DOUGLAS

Jerry Jernigan #68463

I am an inmate serving 99 years in the Tennessee State Penitentiary. I am about to try and tell you what Johnny Cash means to me. I guess you could say that John gave me hope when there was no hope, and it lasted until I met Jesus and became a born again Christian. John's work among inmates in prisons is widely known and heralded around the country. However, my relationship with him is pretty low keyed and known only among a few people in and around Nashville. He has given me some of his valuable time when he could, and also made me feel like he really cares for me as a human being.

I met John in 1974 when he came to the prison to be a guest on the Glen Sherley special. Glen is a former Folsom California inmate whom John has helped. At that time I had a band known as the "Hard-timers" and we auditioned and won a spot on the show. We were all looking forward to meeting John and when I finally did, well ... I was just overwhelmed by him and nervous as an old cat. (I still am very nervous whenever I am in his presence). Anyway, I told him that I was trying to write songs, and that I had written a song for him and June, and would he listen to it. He said sure, and even let me play the song on his personal guitar. He took a tape of the song, *It Ain't No Big Thing* home with him for June to listen to. June liked the song, and John called me later and told me that they were going to record it. This led to a songwriter's contract for me at the House of Cash.

Everyone who knows John as I do knows that he is a Christian man who goes about doing good to others quite unselfishly. I want to touch on a few things that John has done for me, not only monetary, but real things, things that count and will last a long time. John was

responsible for me getting an A.B.A. Degree in Theology from Christian International University. He let me come to his recording studio and make a demo tape of some of my songs. He had a beautiful suit made for me at Nudies in Hollywood, California which I wore on a guest appearance with him on the Grand Old Gospel Time show at the Opry House in 1975. This will sound like a fairytale to some of the inmates reading it, but fellows ... it really did happen.

The times that mean the most to me are when John was able to meet my emotional needs. One time before I became a Christian I was feeling very lonely and depressed as only prison can do to you. I called John, and I told him that I didn't want anything other than to hear his voice, for it was so reassuring to me at that time. He sensed my need and called June to the phone. They talked to me for 15 minutes (which is the limit on phone calls). They may not have known what I needed, but they both were a comfort to me—especially John. He really talked to me even though I have trouble talking to him. Knowing Johnny Cash has given me self respect (which I didn't have when I came to prison), encouraged me to upgrade my morals, and most of all to stand up like a man and be counted.

I've tried to think of one line that would sum this up and be appropriate of what this big dude in black means to me, but there are no adequate words. The only real tribute that I could pay John that would mean something to him, and still come from my heart, is just to say this: "Johnny Cash is one of God's finest Christians ... not only does he talk his Christianity ... Johnny Cash lives it." God Bless you John, always.

JERRY JERNIGAN #68463



Howard H. Baker Jr.

I am pleased to join several million fellow fans and admirers of Johnny Cash in congratulating him on his 25th anniversary in the music industry.

In the course of those 25 years, John has come to be known for much more than his music, great as it is. He is a master showman, a hero of the working American, a champion of prison reform, a Christian pilgrim, a devoted husband and father.

And it is as a husband and father that I will share a special memory of Johnny Cash I have with you. A few years ago, my family decided to spend Christmas in Jamaica. The weather was superb, but with Christmas Eve approaching we began to feel far away from the traditions of our own home in Tennessee. Almost as if in answer to unspoken prayers, John called to invite my family to join his for Christmas Eve at his home, Cinnamon Hill. It was a very special Christmas Eve for my family, made even more memorable by the hospitality that John and June so graciously offered on an evening that many people would only want to share with their immediate family.

Johnny Cash is a true national treasure. The clear, simple melodies of his music have touched the lives of countless people throughout the world. It is music in the finest country tradition, but John has given universal voice to the trials and triumphs, the hopes and disappointments, the love and lost love common to all men and women.

The people of Tennessee are proud to claim him as a favorite son. I am proud to call him my friend, and to wish him well on this very special anniversary.
HOWARD H. BAKER, Jr.



T. Tommy Cutrer

John and I have been friends for some 27 years. As you can see by the letterhead, I am in politics in addition to being a radio and television personality (announcer, m.c., etc.).

I value John's friendship very highly and he is one of the men I admire most. A short story:

In 1976 I ran for my first political office—United States Congress. I subsequently lost the race, but when I entered the contest, I asked John for his help. He contributed \$500 to my campaign and did a radio and television commercial for me. In 1978 I ran for the State Senate and again asked John for his help. He and June contributed \$500 to my campaign and I am today a state Senator.

When he started his weekly ABC-TV show in 1968, he hired me as his announcer.

He's been a good friend. I never met John Wayne, but I've always felt that he and J.C. could've been twins, both big men physically, with big hearts and lots of confidence.

Just quote me as saying, "I love Johnny Cash."

Sincerely

T. TOMMY CUTRER



Larry Gatlin

First of all, I'm not too bright and second of all, I got downright confused! I misunderstood what you wanted from me in regards to the Big Johnny Cash Special Edition of *Country Music Magazine*. I have been informed that what you needed was a letter from me to you, the editor of *Country Music Magazine*. Instead, I wrote a letter to Johnny Cash explaining the way I feel about him. Well, since I've written the letter and since it does come from my heart and since it's probably better that I tell John how I feel person to person, or letter to person, maybe you can use this. If not, ole dummy here will start all over from square one!

Thanks,

LARRY GATLIN

(Larry: We like it the way it is. Ed.)

Dear John:

Even if you hadn't been one of the first people to befriend me when I came to Nashville, I'd still love ya!

Even if you hadn't been the first one to put me on National TV, I'd still love ya!

Even if you hadn't been one of the first ones to take an interest in my old homemade songs, I'd still love ya!

Even if you hadn't called me to come make a little money playin' guitar on your albums (you paid several car notes), I'd still love ya!

Even if you hadn't introduced me to Marty Klein, who has been my friend and counselor for the last seven years, I'd still love ya!

Even if you hadn't brought gifts to my one-day old son, Joshua Cash Gatlin, I'd still love ya!

Even if you were not Johnny Cash, the All-Time #1 Super Star of Country Music, you would still be J.R. Cash, the All-Time #1 Human Being, and for that, more than anything, I love ya!

I guess what I'm tryin' to say is this: If anyone tries to get to your 6'2", 215 pounds, they're gonna have to go through this 5'9", 160 pound buzz saw!! I may not stop any of 'em, but it'll damn sure give you a little time to find a corner to back up into, so they can only come at you from one direction!

Bye Bye. . .

LARRY

P.S. Tell June that me and Kris ain't perfect yet, so we'd appreciate it if she'd keep prayin'.

Faron Young

Thanks for asking—

From time to time when Johnny would get mad at something he would get me to do his cussing for him—Johnny never did cuss so he always had me to cuss for him. He used to tell me I was the greatest cusser in the world.

Johnny is one guy who never forgot a favor. When he first got started in the business, Webb Pierce and myself went to the heads of the Grand Ole Opry to get Johnny a job. They told us that he didn't sing good enough but for us they would give him a try. Well Johnny took the house down with about five encores. The rest is history.

Johnny and I are Pisces. My birthdate is 2/25/32 and John's is 2/26/32. He always kids me about being an old man, one day older than he is.

Johnny is truly one of my greatest friends, and I know if I ever needed something he would be the first one there. I've known him through bad and good times and I have a great respect and love for this man.

Sincerely,
FARON YOUNG

P.S. Happy 25th Johnny.

Louis B. Robin

I have worked with Johnny Cash for the past 12 years as producer and business associate. Through these years I have really been pleased to work with what the public endearingly feels is "a legend in his own time." People always ask me if John is the same sincere, concerned individual as he appears to be to the public. I, of course, see him in many heart warming instances that the public never knows about, as John prefers to keep it that way.

I must tell you of an instance which exemplifies only in one small way the myriad of deeds that show the complete man. Not only is he deeply concerned about the welfare of his close friends and family, but also that of the down-and-out, not so average guy.

I remember one time when John was driving Marty Klein, his agent, and myself into Nashville from his home at Hendersonville, we passed an elderly one-legged man hitchhiking along the highway, while hunched over one crutch. John pulled over and ascertained that this man was on the way to Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville to be fitted for a free wooden leg that he had applied for some years earlier. He indicated that he had to be at Vanderbilt by noon the *next* day and here we were only seven miles from there; but he had been

hitchhiking from up in the hills of Tennessee for at least a day.

John put him in the car and he drove to a motel near Vanderbilt where John proceeded to go inside, rent him a room, arrange for him to have all of his meals and for the motel to take him to Vanderbilt Hospital the next day. He then came out and assisted the man into the motel. The old man had professed to us in the car that he did not know who the man was that was driving but that he looked familiar. We then went on about finishing our business in Nashville.

The next day John called Vanderbilt to be sure that there was no problem with the man getting his wooden leg and was assured that everything was in order. I do not think I will forget the look of deep human appreciation that was on this old man's face as he waved goodbye to us when he departed from the motel.

I think this one instance tells an awful lot of things about the true basic character of "the man."

Sincerely,
LOUIS B. ROBIN
President
Artists Consultants, Inc.

Louis B. Robin

Gene Ferguson

I first met Johnny Cash in Este Park, Colo. in the summer of 1957. Although I could write many special highlights over the past twenty-three years, none seem quite as special as the man himself. I truly feel only a handful really took the time to ever try and understand his ways.

The early years were rough, as they are for many young stars. Many have trouble separating reality from fantasy. John himself could have suffered some along these lines. Adjustment to the business, for a star is sometimes more than many can stand.

I have worked with over four hundred artists in the past 26 years. He has always been my favorite, and the one I feel the closest to. He has never lost control as to

our relation. He has given far more to the industry than most, and still remained good ole John. I give great credit to his mama and papa, and credit to John for listening to them. Their influence shows in John everyday. I could never cover the full report of John on this page, it is far too extensive. The highlight of John's career is TWENTY-FIVE years of devotion to his job, his fans, and his friends, family and a worldwide audience. He is a living humble legend. Definitely a man in every sense of the word, and a mammoth credit to our business.

The important thing concerning this letter, is I sincerely mean every word of it. Take the word of one who knows. . . His GOOD far, far, far, outweighs the bad.

I am very proud to say he is my personal friend, I love him.

Warmest Regards
GENE FERGUSON

Rowdy

People tend to categorize Johnny Cash as bigger than life and virtually indestructible. But this isn't true. The John Cash I know has very human qualities and can, at times be quite vulnerable. Although he has little time to enjoy them, he really likes the simple things in life. And that's when I like him the best, when he's going fishing down at the pond, shooting off fireworks on the Fourth of July, or sipping on a cool glass of tea and laughing with friends.

Even though he's a hero to millions, he's still capable of retaining the qualities that make him fun to be around. And I'm glad that he's been a part of my life.

For this, John, I thank you!

Love,
ROWDY



Bill Anderson

I have many fond and special recollections of Johnny Cash over the years . . . from the time in 1958 when I visited Nashville as Mr. DJ USA and Johnny almost missed a train being nice and talking to me outside the Ryman Auditorium . . . to the time he had his manager call me in 1960 and asked me to work a tour with him, not knowing that at the time my phone rang, my wife and I were talking about packing it in and going home to Georgia because I didn't have any work and no money was coming in.

But my favorite Johnny Cash story is probably embarrassing to him. He and June and Mama Maybelle popped into the TV studio where I taped my syndicated television show late one night just as our taping ended.

"Hey, I wanta be on your show!" he announced . . . and darned if he didn't unpack his guitar and start tuning.

"We just finished taping," I answered, somewhat befuddled, because Johnny Cash just didn't walk in like that and ask to pick on a show that paid the guests something like \$55.00 per shot. "But if you're serious," I continued, "we'll turn the lights back on and crank the cameras back up and go to it."

"I'm dead serious," he replied, and I realized he was. About that time, Luther Perkins, his guitar player, walked in and we started winging it. No script, no plans, just turn on the cameras and go.

The show was going great guns when I pulled a stool up beside Johnny and started talking. The subject got around to Jan Howard, who was my duet partner and featured female vocalist at the time. Prior to joining my show Jan had worked a considerable amount with Johnny as part of



"I don't remember what this picture was all about, but I think I was offering John payola to let me be on his TV show."

the Carter Family. In a kidding way, I said to John, "I hope you're not mad at me for stealing Jan from you. I thought I'd get her over here with me and teach her how to whisper!"

"Naw, I ain't mad," big John replied. "Maybe someday she'll teach you to sing!"

I broke into a roaring laugh. The whole studio broke up. All except Johnny Cash. His face started turning a slow beet-red . . . deeper, deeper, and deeper as he became genuinely embarrassed by what he had said. "You can cut that out of the tape, can't you?" he asked.

"Heck no," I answered. "Why should

we? I'm not sensitive and you were just being honest."

"But I'm afraid it'll offend your fans," he said with genuine concern.

"No, it won't," I assured him, and I was right. The TV audience loved it as the show played across the country. I didn't take it as anything but an honest man being natural and honest and real. And funny.

John, don't be upset by my digging this story up again. I love ya' for the man you are, and the friend that you've always been to me. And, who knows . . . maybe someday Jan *will* come back and teach Ole Whisperin' Bill to sing!!

BILL ANDERSON

Billy Graham

Johnny and June Cash have been close personal friends of ours for a number of years. My wife and I have taken several vacations with them. There are no two people in the world for whom we have more Christian affection than the Cashes. Not only is Johnny a superstar, but he is a super person! He has appeared on a number of our television programs and we are always grateful that he would give his time without any financial remuneration in order to sing Gospel songs on our platform.

Johnny has had many times of difficulty and suffering in his life, which shows on his rugged face. Many of the things he sings about, he has personally experienced. He is no phony.

I am delighted that you are honoring him.

Most cordially yours,
BILLY GRAHAM



Joseph Cates

I produced fifteen network television programs starring Johnny Cash in the past seven years.

When your letter came asking me to highlight something special in our relationship, to recall something that stands out in my memory . . . long or short, serious or funny . . . it brought to mind a great many things, but three things stand out in particular, and kind of tell the story.

First, Johnny Cash is my friend.

Second, I hold him in awe and admiration, both as an artist and as a human being.

Third, it might interest you to know that in this complicated business world of stars, agents, managers, lawyers, producers, etc.—in this age of formal eighty-page contracts between networks, talent agencies, artists and television production companies—the only contract between Johnny Cash and myself over the past fifteen shows and into the future is a simple handshake.

I look forward to the July issue of *Country Music Magazine* and am delighted that you chose to devote it to Johnny Cash's 25th Anniversary.

Best regards,
JOSEPH CATES

Billy Sherrill

I first met Johnny Cash in the early sixties when I was working for Sam Phillips in Nashville. My duties were receptionist, secretary, janitor, and mixer for the studio.

One night after midnight, after twelve hours of demo sessions (no hits), I was preparing to leave. I met John at the elevator, and he told me he had just finished an album at another studio and he wanted me to stay and play it for him.

I was very tired and in no mood to listen to anything, so I politely declined to play it.

He said O.K., so I locked up and we both left.

After I was out of sight, John returned to the studio, politely kicked the door in, and listened to his album.

BILLY SHERRILL

James F. Neal

John Cash has long had a love affair with America, and America and Americans have reciprocated.

I never really appreciated the depth of this affair until I was prosecuting the "Watergate" case. John visited the Watergate trial in D.C. in the fall of 1974, became absorbed in this drama and spent the day in the courtroom listening to White House tapes. After court that day, and as John, June and I strolled along Pennsylvania Avenue, the driver of a tour bus stopped, the door opened and the driver of the bus, obviously aware of the national tragedy Watergate represented, turned to his bus load of passengers and said, "Here is Johnny Cash; he represents the real America." The passengers cheered, and I was proud.

Thanks for recognizing my friend on his 25th Anniversary in the music business.

Sincerely,
JAMES F. NEAL

Bill Walker

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to express a thought or two about Johnny Cash, who means so much to me personally.

My association with Johnny began twelve or thirteen years ago when I was hired as Music Director for his original ABC television series, and I have been privileged to work with Johnny in various facets of the music business, particularly in television, ever since.

I am always impressed with Johnny's deep care and concern for the people with whom he works, or with whom he is associated in the business—especially the "behind-the-scenes" people, such as myself. He surprised me no end when he started saying, "Goodnight, Bill Walker!" at the end of each and every show. He felt that I deserved this recognition, and he was going to give it to me, whether it was in the script or not.

No matter how tired John was at the end of a long shooting schedule, he always had concern and thought for his fellow artists and the musicians working in the "pit." I might add that June always shared this concern, and it was very meaningful to all of us to work with them.

An outstanding thing about Johnny is his deep faith, and his willingness to express his belief in Christ openly and without hesitation. This has been an inspiration to both Jeanine and myself in our own Christian witness.

I would just like to say, "Goodnight, Johnny Cash!"

Very Sincerely,
BILL WALKER

Carl Tipton

I have always admired Johnny Cash and his music. When I was told that Johnny watched our TV show at 5:30 on Channel 5 every morning, needless to say, I was honored. One day stands out in my memory very well. I had advertised a mandolin for sale on our show. That afternoon when I came in from work, my wife, Sophie, met me at the door all excited. She kept saying, you won't believe it, you won't believe it, then she started laughing. When she finally stopped she told me Johnny

Virginia Stohler

In 1976 I entered a contest to name the greatest humanitarian in my lifetime, in no more than 500 words. It was very hard to tell why I thought Johnny was the greatest humanitarian in the limited number of words . . . I could have written a book! I was the winner. I felt very honored to be able to tell others who do not know Johnny as I do, just what he has done and what he means to countless numbers of other people! To be able to appear with Johnny on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry and accept this award along side of him, means more to me than words can tell.

CASHually,
VIRGINIA STOHLER
Co-President, Johnny Cash Fan Club

Bob Lewin & Jack Hale, Jr.

One night in London, John walked over to us and said he was thinking of recording *Ghost Riders In The Sky*. He wanted us to play French horns on that song. We said we thought it was a great idea. But the best was yet to come. John reached into his pocket, pulled out a huge bundle of money and told us to go buy ourselves the best French horns that we could find. We were both at a complete loss for words, but finally managed to utter a very grateful thank-you.

We neglected, however, to tell John that we didn't know how to play French horns. We bought the horns, then stayed up all night trying to learn how to play them. By morning, the only thing we had learned was that a French horn is not a trumpet. So, like good country pickers, we improvised by sticking in trumpet mouthpieces and *pretending* that they were trumpets. In this way we avoided having John take our French horns away.

BOB LEWIN and JACK HALE, JR.

Cash had called and bought the mandolin. It was a present to June. We made an appointment to deliver the mandolin. Johnny and June were just like family. They made us feel so at ease.

Carl gave Johnny a railroad pocket watch converted to a wrist watch for his museum. He (Johnny) gave us a beautiful enlarged photograph of a hibiscus that he had taken. That picture has a special place in our living room. To me, Johnny and June were fine examples of down-to-earth people who treat everyone the same. If you ever get a chance to see their stage show, you will be greatly rewarded. We were guests of Johnny and June at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, and invited backstage. We had a wonderful time.

We will always remember and appreciate the friendliness and hospitality shown to us by the great Johnny Cash.

Sincerely,
CARL TIPTON

Sonny James

The first professional stage show John ever did was with me—Luther Perkins and Marshall Grant made up his band. They did a great job and the crowd loved him.

Since that time we have done a number of concerts across the United States and Canada. Even today when we get a chance to see each other, such as the recent 25th Anniversary Television Special, John or I will eventually get around to reminiscing about that first show he did in a small town in Tennessee years ago, with pleasant memories.

I've known Johnny during the good times and some troublesome times for him, and I much prefer seeing that friendly smile he wears today, which tells me he's attained happiness in his life.

SONNY JAMES



Mae Boren Axton

Everyone knows the phrase "Birds Gotta Fly—Fish Gotta Swim." Well, Johnny Cash has "Gotta Write and he's Gotta Sing." Because, though he is a very private person by nature, he has such depth, such compassion, and such a great understanding of people that his heart and his mind become so full of caring, that he has to put it in writing, and sing these thoughts and these feelings to better establish the special rapport with people that he has.

My friendship with Johnny has spanned his entire 25 years in the profession. I was fortunate enough to have been on a journalistic assignment from my home in Florida on two important 'beginnings' in Johnny's life . . . his initial appearances on the Grand Ole Opry and the Louisiana Hayride. We became immediate friends and have remained so throughout the years.

There have been many wonderful visits, the sharing of ideas and ideals, and mutual respect, but one very treasured moment occurred in Phoenix shortly after the plane crash that took the lives of our several good country music friends, including one of my very closest friends, Patsy Cline. (I had spent the Christmas prior to the crash with Patsy and Charlie in Las Vegas.) I

had been friends, too, with the Carter family even prior to having met Johnny, so June was, and is, very dear to me. Anyway, Johnny and June knew that I flew a lot in small planes, and when I went backstage prior to the show in Phoenix to say "hello", Johnny asked me to meet them at their Cadillac between shows, and I did. Johnny and June got in the back and I got in the front, wondering what it was all about. Johnny started with, "Mae, June and I are your friends, and we love you . . ." At this point his eyes filled with tears, and so did June's, and so did mine. Johnny continued, "We don't want anything to happen to you, and we want you to promise not to fly in those little planes any more."

Here was Johnny Cash, a strong man, a superstar, a total human being and one of God's most gentle people, caring enough about a friend to cry his fear and his concern for her welfare. I shall carry the memory of that moment forever.

I am a lucky lady to have Johnny Cash and his family as friends, and to be able to congratulate him on his 25th year of bringing greatness to the entertainment industry.

MAE BOREN AXTON

Marty Stuart

I began playing music when I was nine years old. I was strongly influenced by the sounds of Flatt and Scruggs and Johnny Cash. I would play their records over and over and imagine standing there with them.

The imagination became a reality when I was thirteen years old. I started performing with Lester Flatt. Sure was a nice way to begin a career wasn't it? And I worked with him up until his death. And now I'm proud to be part of the Johnny Cash organization.

My first meeting came as a result of my friend Danny Farrington's invitation to accompany him to deliver a guitar he had built for John. I was overwhelmed with him. He was down to earth as he could be. We played and the same with Jack Cle-

ment. Then we played *The Wabash Cannonball* one more time and said, so long.

A month later, I was producing an album on Lester's band. And I remembered hearing John sing one of Lester's bluegrass songs. So I called him and asked if he would come and sing on the record. He did, and it was great! And I left the studio that evening understanding why he has endured 25 years in this business.

And it amazes me that after 25 years, he's more solid than ever. He's still the champion.

I've grown up under legends, and so it is here. He's a legend. He's a hero. He's an anchor in the midst of the storm, and he's a disciple with a heart of pure gold.

J.R., I love you,
MARTY STUART

Charlie Stohler

I want to congratulate Johnny Cash on his 25 years in country music. John has worked his way to the top of his profession. Added to this, he is a good business man, always the family man, father and teacher.

He is always the happiest when one of his children is on the stage with him. He has guided and taught them the fundamentals of becoming successful in the music business.

John is always ready to help his fellow man. He does all this and still takes time for his friends and fans.

So I wish to congratulate an amazing man!

CASHually,
CHARLES STOHLER
Co-President, Johnny Cash Fan Club

The Statler Brothers

The following is a "Dear John letter"

Dear John :

You're celebrating 25 years in this old business. We're proud we spent about nine years of that time with you. When we were asked to do your "25th Anniversary TV Show" we decided to write a song in tribute to the Man in Black. It was one of the easiest things we've ever done. We wanted to share it with your many fans. It's a little number that goes sumpin' like this:

WE GOT PAID BY CASH

It started March of '64, 16 years ago
We were hired by Johnny Cash to open up his show
4 boys, a worn-out Cadillac with a road-map on the dash
For the next 8 and 1/2 years we got paid by Cash

He took us down to Nashville to Columbia Studio

Not knowing where we came from, they told us where to go

But Johnny said "I like 'em, don't you give them no trash"

You see we were Johnny's little boys and we got paid by Cash

We were there when June became Johnny's loving bride

And we sang the hymn that morning our buddy Luther died

And we were there when the son was born that filled them both with pride

And we were there when John remembered God was on his side

We watched him on the concert stage and watched him write his songs

And saw the things we had to do and the things that could go wrong

And if we had to start again we'd do it in a flash

Cause we learned more than we earned when we got paid by Cash

Then came the time when our career demanded that we go

And thru some tears we all shook hands that last and final show

All those years we never had a contract or a cash

Whatever we may be today we owe it all to Cash

Now John will tell you there were years when times were good and bad

But we can tell you they were some of the best we ever had

Carl Perkins and the Carters and the Tennessee Three

We were one big happy family and would have done it all for free

To: The Man in Black
From: The Boys in Red, White and Blue
"The Statlers"





Irene Gibbs

What can I say about Johnny Cash? There is so much, so I'll just tell you how it all started for me. Nearly seven years ago I came to apply for the position as John's secretary. I had known Johnny Cash for about four years, had attended the same church as his family, recorded with him as a member of the church choir, and even appeared on some shows with him and the choir. Since I had been a secretary for several years, I felt fairly confident. As I sat in a big, black chair in John's office taking dictation, I suddenly froze. "Over the next hill we'll be home." That was the first thing John said to me. This was a new song he had just written. He dictated two letters and the song lyrics, and I did manage to get some of the words down. Most of it, however, was in my head. Then I was taken to an office to type the letters. Since I had only been typing for about twenty years, I didn't really expect to have any problems. Then I saw the typewriter I was to use. I had never seen that kind of typewriter, and it took me quite a while just to figure out the keys. Then the ribbon ran out, and I had to quickly learn how to change a ribbon cartridge. After about an hour (to type two letters and a song) I still hadn't finished. John came in and said "That's all right, Irene, you don't have to finish." But I was determined. After all, this would be the only chance I would ever have to do any work for Johnny Cash. Finally I got through and put the letters on John's desk, without comment. I started to walk out, and Reba Hancock (John's sister and general manager for House of Cash) told me to wait in her office. In a few minutes she came in. Much to my surprise, Reba asked me when I could start. John certainly had to be a very patient and understanding man to hire me, after I had goofed up so badly. I'm so proud that I am a part of the Johnny Cash Organization, and have been for almost seven years. John is a great person to work for, and one of the kindest, most understanding men I've ever had the privilege of meeting. Thanks for being you, John.

IRENE GIBBS

Don Davis

I was really flattered when John R. Cash made complimentary remarks about me on network television during the CMA awards show, (re: *A Boy Named Sue*), and when he wrote about me in his book, *A Man In Black*. But it really blew my mind when he presented me with a new Cadillac Fleetwood for producing *One Piece At A Time*.

DON DAVIS

Roy Clark

I've always looked up to Johnny Cash 'cause he's taller than I am.

Actually I've known him over 20 years now, back to the days before his ABC series when he was just doing his Johnny Cash impersonations—which he does quite well, by the way. We've been friends so it's sometimes hard for me to think of him as Cash the Artist. (I started to say star, but star spelled backwards is rats.) I simply know Johnny Cash the Man.

When that series began for him it was the most extreme thing to happen to John's career up to that time. It was such a change. He'd been a guest on several TV shows, of course. And at the time he was already thought of as someone almost bigger than life. A rogue, an image, more

than just a singer. So that "image" had to adapt himself as the host of a network series that would entertain everybody. I think he did a fantastic job. John has always done what was asked of him. He's always equal to the task. I respect the man for all those reasons.

The first time I met Cash I performed *Folsom Prison Blues* for him standing on a toilet seat in the men's room at WSM-TV in Nashville. He was there to do a TV show, and I was there for another one. He heard about this "Folsom Prison" thing I did and he told me, "Let's see it." I got somebody's guitar, and he cracked up. He loved it.

ROY CLARK

Dottie Snow

If I were to try to write what I really feel in my heart about the few years I worked for John, you would probably think I was trying to give you a real "snow" job.

Some of the most precious and proud times of my life was spent behind the reception desk at the "House of Cash," answering the phone and the mail.

When I would pick up the phone, I never knew who to expect on the other end. It might have been the President of the United States. It might have been a man that had walked on the moon. Or a mother with a seriously ill child whose greatest desire was to talk to Johnny Cash, or a lonely someone with a desperate need, reaching out for advice and help from somebody that had "been there." Or it might have been one of the multitude of "long lost cousins" that just wanted the home phone number.

Everyday at House of Cash was an exciting new adventure. But what else can you expect when you're working for one of the most exciting, beloved and influential men in the world. God Bless Johnny Cash, greater and greater for His Kingdom is my constant prayer.

DOTTIE SNOW

Hank Snow

Through the years of my long career, one of the things that gives me the most pleasure is to be able to write something about one of my fellow entertainers. This time it concerns a long time friend, Johnny Cash. I remember very well many years ago when Johnny first came to the Grand Ole Opry. He made me feel at home right off the bat by saying he had admired my work for a long time. This, coming from another artist, makes one feel mighty good . . . especially after the great success Johnny has had since that time. His contribution to country music ranks high, and I want to be one, among many admirers, that wish him continued success, health and prosperity in the years ahead. I am proud to be able to call him my friend.

HANK SNOW

Arthur Smith

As I start this "letter to the editor" the thought comes, how do you write about a legend? Then this thought, *John is a legend maybe because he knows how to be a friend.* For more than twenty years of his twenty five years in this business I've been his friend and he's been mine.

A friend is a person who is for you under any suspicion. He never investigates you when charges are made against you. He does not ask proof. He asks the accuser to clear out. He likes you just as you are; he does not want to alter you. Whatever kind of coat you are wearing suits him; whether you have on a dress suit or a hickory shirt with no collar, he thinks it's fine. He likes your moods and enjoys your pessimism as much as your optimism. He likes your success and your failure endears you to him the more. He is better than a lover because he is never jealous. He wants

nothing from you except that you be yourself. He is the one being with whom you can feel safe. With him you can utter your heart, its badness and its goodness; you don't have to be careful. In his presence you can be indiscreet, which means you can rest. There are many faithful wives and husbands; there are few faithful friends.

Friendship is the most admirable, amazing and rare articles among human beings. Anybody may stand by you when you are right: a friend stands by you when you are wrong. The highest known form of friendship is that of a dog to his master. You are in luck if you can find one man or one woman who has that kind of affection for you and fidelity to you. Like the shade of a great tree in the noonday heat, is a friend. Like the home port with your country's flag flying, after a long journey, is a

friend. A friend is an impregnable citadel or refuge in the strife of existence. It is he who keeps alive your faith in human nature; who makes you believe it is a good universe. He is the antidote to despair and elixir of hope; the tonic for depression; the medicine to cure suicide. When you are vigorous and spirited, you like to take your pleasure with him; when you are in trouble, you want to tell him. When you are sick, you want to see him; when you are dying you want him near. You give to him without reluctance and borrow from him without embarrassment.

If you can live for fifty years and FIND ONE ABSOLUTE FRIEND, you are fortunate, for of the thousands of human creatures that crawl the earth, FEW ARE MADE OF SUCH STUFF.

Sincerely,
ARTHUR SMITH

E. J. Butler

Johnny Cash has seen me grow menatally and professionally over the past light years—and he has cared. I have worked with him during some of the happiest and some of the most miserable times of my life—and he has cared. He and June have always made me feel like a member of their family—because they care. How refreshing and rewarding to work with someone who does care! How do I feel about Johnny Cash? I admire and respect him—as an entertainer and as an employer—but most of all, I admire and respect him for the person he is.
E. J. BUTLER

Gene Autry

I have known Johnny Cash for about 25 or 30 years and I have always admired him both as a great man, as well as a fine artist.

I was never fortunate enough to actually work with him, but then I worked on the same movie lot with John Wayne for 15 years and only appeared with him one time in a picture.

I think Johnny Cash is an outstanding credit to his profession and I am very happy to list him among my close friends. I hope we will be able to enjoy his performances for at least another 25 years.

Congratulations, Johnny!

Warmest personal regards,

GENE AUTRY



Rick Blackburn

Johnny Cash is one of those special people who possess a great charisma of dignity and authority. It seems that that personality trait is never compromised.

Several months ago it was surely put to the test. It seems that John, June and all the members of the band had gotten together to celebrate John's 25 years in show business. This was in the form of a very private and elegant dinner. As the evening progressed, some of the musicians in John's band became a bit unruly and it was decided that they would "roast" John on the spot. After everyone had exchanged rather heated but affectionate verbiage, John was unfortunately the recipient of the old pie in the face routine. In jubilation the band decided not to stop there but chose to physically lift John on their shoulders and carry him to the jacuzzi where he was deposited fully attired and still with egg custard all over his face, hair and clothing. It so happened that the jacuzzi was occupied by another gentleman totally unrelated to the Cash party. Where most people would be lost for words, John Cash regained his composure as he sat in the middle of the jacuzzi staring at the stranger seated beside him. At that point he simply stuck out his hand and in a very dignified manner uttered those famous words that we have heard John speak so many times, simply, "Hello, I'm Johnny Cash". The stranger sitting in the jacuzzi was so overwhelmed that he didn't even notice the conditions under which he was meeting this great entertainer. He simply got up, ran over to get a pencil and paper and came back to ask for an autograph. Now that's charisma.

Best regards,
RICK BLACKBURN

Mary Parker

John is the best employer a person could have. He is thoughtful, considerate and concerned about all of his employees.

My father passed away in '70 and I didn't have any idea what my mother and I were going to do financially. John gave me a job keeping scrapbooks of his clippings from newspapers, books and anything concerning his activities. You might think that isn't much of a job, but to me it is great. I thoroughly enjoy it. I get to keep up with places he has been and things he has done.

He is always thinking and doing for others. You can't help from loving him and his music.

Thank you, John, for everything.
MARY PARKER



Johnny Western

On Labor Day morning during the bi-centennial, 1976, at 5 A.M. my drummer fell asleep at the wheel on a journey from Reno, Nevada, where we had closed the night before, to Cheyenne, Wyoming for a one week holiday engagement. We were 38 miles from the ranch town of Rawlins, Wyoming when we crashed off Interstate 80 in the eastbound lane and rolled to oblivion for 15 or so minutes. When I came to, an Illinois trucker named Nick Nichols was holding my severed arteries together with his fingers until the ambulance got there an hour later. Three days later, the first phone call I was able to receive at the Carbon Co. Hospital (other than when they put my wife, Jo, on from Arizona before she flew up to be with me) was from Johnny Cash. I didn't know at the time that he had already been told that I had 10 broken ribs, a severed jugular vein, an artery in my head cut resulting in a great loss of blood, a broken front tooth and body bruises and cuts plus the real dandy of all, a collapsed lung with a rib thru it. I thought I'd be out of the hospital in a few days but he knew otherwise. He told me, "Johnny, you can't get well laying there worrying about medical bills. I'm going to take care of anything you need, carte blanche." Johnny had always been there when any of us needed some dollars to cover this or that thru the years but now we were talking about many thousands. (It turned out to be seven dr.s, seventeen nurses, three different hospitals, Rawlins, Denver and Phoenix, and around \$13,000. in bills. As it turned out, a phone call from my wife to our insurance company auto representative in Wyoming showed that I was covered under an "Un-insured driver clause in a no-fault state" and the bills were paid by them. However, I will never forget the offer and who was there first to help me when he heard about the wreck: my friend, Johnny Cash. On the wall in a frame over my desk in the den of my home is the telegram he sent me in the hospital following his phone call and it reads: "Dear Johnny, In the music business when one of us is hurt, we all bleed. Just wanted you to know that a special friend is hurting and bleeding for you. My prayers are for your total healing. Sincerely your friend, Johnny Cash."

I think the above says more than anything as to how I feel about Johnny Cash. Having just been on tour with him during the occasion of his 48th birthday (also marking my 22nd year touring with the Cash show) in Tucson this past February 26th, I wish him just two more things, another 48 years of birthdays and another 25 years in show business. He deserves both!
His grateful friend always,
JOHNNY WESTERN



The Oak Ridge Boys

The years 1973-1975 were some of the bleakest in the Oak Ridge Boys' organization; we barely kept our heads above water, but I guess we had just enough people believing in us at that time to keep us together. In the years of our recent success, many people have been given much credit for helping and inspiring the Oak Ridge Boys, and it seems the one who gets the least is John R. Cash.

However, it was during those lean years that Johnny Cash took the Oak Ridge Boys on several tours with him, and paid us a lot more than we were worth, just to keep us together. He was one of the very first to expose the Oak Ridge Boys to network television audiences; he was the very first to take the Oak Ridge Boys into Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe and Reno.

What stands out in our minds the most is the night in the penthouse of the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel, in April of 1975, when the four of us and Johnny Cash sat alone. Our heads were hanging low, but he said something we have never forgotten to this

day. "You boys are magic. The way you sing and perform is something like no other has been able to do. If you start breaking up and going your separate ways, then you will stop believing in yourselves. But if you stick it out, no matter what the cost, pretty soon everyone will start believing in the Oak Ridge Boys."

When we left that hotel room that night we knew we would stay together and everything would be okay, because Johnny Cash had said it would be. And since then, Johnny Cash has given the Oak Ridge Boys an example by which to set our lives. An example of how to treat people, how to be fair, how to be loving, and how to act as a Christian would act in every situation.

We've found that in every case someone always needs a hero to look up to—we are fortunate, our hero is also our friend, John Cash.

WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN
DUANE ALLEN
JOE BONSELL
RICHARD STERBAN

Brenda Shaver

John has been very good to me and my family. One example of his generosity, was the time I hadn't seen my husband and son for about three weeks because they were on the road. He gave me the rest of the week off and then paid my plane fare to go see them.

When you mention Johnny Cash anywhere in the world, you automatically think of America. It is a great pleasure to know and work for him.

BRENDA J. SHAVER



Pennilane

Asking me to tell you something that stands out in my memory of my association with Johnny Cash is asking for thirteen years of constant happenings, but, Russ, I think the most important something to me is the fact that I turned to John when I thought God was "after me."

I recall the time of tears that kept streaming from my eyes for days on end for no apparent reason. I had been in the process of self improvement through Transcendental Meditation, Astrology, ESP, Cayce theories on Reincarnation and any other thing except Jesus. I could not figure out for myself what was happening so I called my astrology teacher and asked him to make me up a chart so I could try to find what kind of influence my sign was going through and how long it was gonna take to move into another. While studying my chart, three books of astrology I had piled on my shelves, my late movie on TV ended, and PTL came on. I found myself

glancing and listening and more tears pouring down my face—then, Jim Bakker was telling people to pick up the phone and call and someone there would pray with them. I began crying harder and yelling at the TV like a crazy person saying, "No, no no I will not talk to a stranger about giving my life to God—no, I won't Lord, but if you'll let me stop crying and get some sleep I promise I'll call Johnny in the morning and talk to him about me and You. I have some questions God, that John can answer and help me with. I know it must be You that's making me cry. Just let me stop till mornin' please Lord." And my tears stopped, I slept like a baby. The next morning I called Johnny, and when he answered I said "Johnny, I think God's after me." He said, "What did you say Pennilac?" He calls me Pennilac sometimes. I said, "John I think God's after me and I need to talk to you—you've been as bad as I've ever been, will you help me?" John started laughing and told me to come on out to him and June as soon as I could. I had to work that day, thought I'd never finish. When I got to their home they were waiting with their love and open arms. June wasn't even surprised as I imagined she would be. She told me she knew it was just gonna be a matter of time because she had "claimed" me for the Lord a long time ago. That night in their home John knelt and prayed with me as I gave my life to the Lord. That is one of the greatest ex-



periences I've had with Johnny Cash, my brother in Christ.

Russ, there have been years of happiness spent with him & June as their friend and employee. I owe the best and greatest times in my life to the both of them. I thank you for asking me to share in this surprise party to my hero of the era—**JOHNNY CASH!**

Sincerely,
PENNILANE

Jack Clement

Johnny Cash is a man I admire for my own personal reasons. Johnny Cash is a question that must be answered for oneself.

Johnny Cash is a music man, and that is the highest compliment I give. It has been said of Johnny Cash that he cannot tune a guitar and that he sings awful. And at times this is true. But there are times when Johnny Cash's guitar is pure, plue perfect; and there are times when Johnny Cash sings like Johnny Cash better than anybody in the whole zip-adee-doo-dah world. God Bless Johnny Cash.

Johnny Cash has the heart of a clown. John is a pretty fair rhythm man upon occasion. Upon other occasions, he is brilliant, the only beat around. The only show in town.

Johnny Cash is no secret. Everybody, deep down, knows that clowns are people, too. A magical, mystical, singing clown—that's what Johnny Cash is in my book.

There are Johnny Cash watchers around the world. "What will Johnny Cash do next?" they all say: Will the real Johnny Cash step forward and entertain us? Will Johnny Cash get into his summer whites? Will Johnny Cash step into the world of living color?

Tune in 25 years from now and find out, friends and neighbors.

Sincerely,
JACK CLEMENT
GNASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Ned Joyner

While Johnny and I were visiting down in Jamaica, we decided to go out crocodile hunting. Our guide, Ross Kananga, told us the story of how they look for the length of the crocodile by measuring the inches between the eyes (from a distance, of course). We wanted about a sixteen footer (about eight inches between his eyes). We spotted this big one, just what we wanted, so we shot him. There is a little trough in the bow of the boat where you put the crocodile. We pulled him aboard, and with the load that we had in the boat, we had a tough time getting out of the swamp. So we had to pull from tree to tree to take him out of there. Johnny was pulling on one tree, when the boat lurched forward and we left John hanging in the tree. There he was, with his feet dangling close to the water, when a big crocodile spotted him, started snapping around, coming within an inch of his feet. We just knew John was going to lose both of his feet. So John shimmed on up the tree, and the tree started bowing with his weight, and before he knew it, that old crocodile started snapping at ole John's "hiney." Well, just in



What's Charles Atlas gct that these guys don't?

time, Ross, with our help, got the boat back, got John back in the boat to safety, and we managed to get out of the swamp. Incidentally, you ain't ever tasted meat until you've tried the meat of the crocodile's tail.

NED JOYNER

Ken Overstreet

To become a living legend within 25 years is quite an accomplishment . . . we join in congratulating Johnny not only on his 25 years in music, but his devotion and concern for young people who have been in trouble. John has carried out that concern by his tremendous contribution to the Youth for Christ organization. His hosting of the YFC national TV special, *Where Have All The Children Gone?* has provided thousands of dollars in cities all across the country for work with young people in our juvenile institutions.

No single individual has ever contributed more in making it possible to reach so many troubled young people in so short a period of time. That is why Youth for Christ International has honored Johnny with their Award of Merit. This distinguished award has been given only four times in the 35-year history of Youth for Christ.

Even with his demanding concert, recor-

ding and television schedule, Johnny has never forgotten the "little people." I'll never forget when Johnny agreed to do an 18-city tour with the movie *Gospel Road* so that all the proceeds would go to Youth for Christ to help kids. After a very hard and perplexing day—when several things hadn't gone exactly right, I was a little discouraged. Johnny sat down and said, "Ken, if it was easy, everybody would be doing it . . . and God never promised us it would be easy walking the Gospel Road." He pulled his guitar out of the case and sang me one of his own songs, *Lord, Help Me Through The Hard Places*.

There have been some hard places in Johnny Cash's life, but he's used those moments to learn and to grow, and I'm grateful he's cared enough to share it—not only through music, but in giving of himself to others.

Some time ago when I was with Johnny for several days, I started getting irritated

because we were interrupted so often by fans who came up and wanted his autograph. It seemed as though we couldn't walk through an airport, or have dinner, or even finish a conversation that someone didn't want something from Johnny. When I showed my irritation, he reminded me, "Hey, Ken, these are my people."

On behalf of "his people," the hurting kids in juvenile institutions and in trouble all across our country, we in Youth for Christ say, "Thank you for helping us reach out and love kids. Thank you for your contribution to music, for what you've taught us about handling the difficulties of life, and for the thousands who have found a new faith and direction in life because of your own personal commitment to God, to your family, and to helping the 'little people.'"

KEN OVERSTREET
Vice President, Youth for Christ/USA



Merle Kilgore

I have had and participated in many Johnny Cash memories. Perhaps one outstanding memory is when Johnny and June asked me to be Best Man at their wedding.

The date was March 1, 1968. The place was the Franklin Methodist Church, Franklin, Kentucky.

I was very nervous, so was Johnny. We met in the pastor's study for instructions. The pastor asked John to give me the ring and during the ceremony when the pastor nodded I was to produce the ring and hand it to John.

I was wearing a new, *tight fitting*, shark skin suit. I placed the ring, in the box, in

my pants pocket as the suit was new, the coat pockets were still sewed up.

The next scene, the Ceremony . . . The pastor nodded, then a graveyard silence, the pastor nodded again. I couldn't get the ring box out of my pants pocket, so I ripped it out, tearing my pocket, with a sound that cut through that church like a shot.

With a sheepish grin, I handed the box to John who fumbled several moments trying to open the box.

Yes, I was Best Man at Johnny Cash's wedding and he was Best Man at one of mine.

I'm on my 5th one at the present time. I still get nervous at weddings.

MERLE KILGORE

Saul Holiff

Enclosed are two items that aren't readily available in assembling unique items on Johnny. The stationery evoked strong protests from J.R. when he became aware of the cost—but like almost all my dealings with him he was quick to recognize the value in seeing that gold, and gave me his complete support. Incidentally, the stationery and most of his publicity materials were designed and produced in Canada.

My most poignant memories of Johnny are based on his unshakeable faith in himself. He simply *knew*—after an inordinate dry spell—that another hit was about to happen. Two examples that stand out—*Ring of Fire* followed by *A Boy Named Sue* nearly six years later.

Happy 25 John!!

Respectfully,
SAUL HOLIFF



Billy Edd Wheeler

This is mainly a letter of thanks. Thanks for cutting *Jackson* and making it a standard. The song meant more to me than money. When I wrote it I got chills up my backbone and out along my arms, but when I released it it wasn't a hit. When the Kingston Trio released it it wasn't a hit. When Flatt & Scruggs released it it wasn't a hit. It took the great Johnny Cash and spunky-lovely June to make a hit out of a song that my goosebumps told me secretly was a hit. Thanks for keeping my goosebumps batting a thousand!

And please know that my wife Mary is a bigger fan than I am! Ever since she met you backstage at Carnegie Hall before you did *Jackson* and before you married June she has been a fan. I hope you have several more decades of good health and good music, success and fulfillment living your unique life and making the music we all love so much.

Sincerely,
BILLY EDD WHEELER



John Colbaugh

A Believer Sings the Truth! That was John's response when I asked what the title would be for his new gospel album. As John's pastor and friend, I'm interested in whatever he does; but the making of this album was special because it was the soul expression of what he had hoped for since his music career began. Many times I've heard him say, "I always wanted a hit song in the Gospel charts, but the Lord gave me *Ring of Fire*, *Orange Blossom Special*, and *A Boy Named Sue*!"

I was privileged to be at several sessions during the recording of this album and to see the intensity and depth of John's all consuming commitment to put his feelings into the music and words of every song and to share through them the hope he had gained through Jesus Christ. I have never been so impressed with *anyone* trying to do *anything* as I was with the energy and drive that he put into that album. In it is both Johnny Cash, the believer and Johnny Cash, the entertainer; both were obvious and both at their best.

Now, John's not perfect, he's a man and he'll readily agree; but in this preacher's way of seeing it, he represents the finest tradition of human nobility and what can be done by God's grace with shattered dreams and broken pieces of one's past.

JOHN COLBAUGH

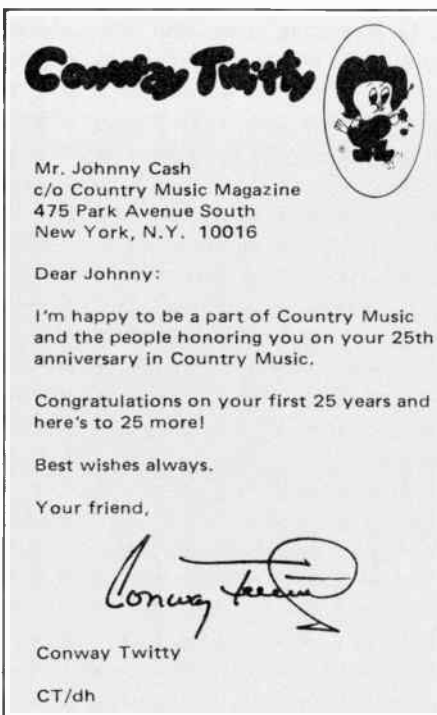


Bill Patch

The friendship of Johnny Cash and Bill Patch of Welch, Oklahoma all began with the song by Johnny Cash *One Piece At A Time*. Mr. Patch was sitting in his office one day when this song came over the radio. Mr. Patch, being mechanically inclined, decided he would build a car according to the song. He sent his mechanics scouring salvage yards for pieces and the final product came from more than 20 cars dating from 1949 to 1973.

The front seat is in the back. It's a two-door on one side and a four-door on the other. It has a 1973 motor and a 1953 transmission. One rear fender has a fin, the other doesn't. It has two headlights on the left, one headlight on the right. The chrome ornaments came from a 1953 hearse. A Coupe DeVille logo is on the right side, a Sedan DeVille on the left side. In the spring of 1977, Mr. Patch drove the One-piece-at-a-time car to Nashville and gave it to Cash. They've been the best of buddies since.

BILL PATCH



Rosanne Cash

There are too many incidents for me to pick out one in particular about Johnny Cash. But I'd like to take this opportunity to tell everyone about how he drives. First, he shouldn't be allowed to. His 12-D foot acts like it's tied to a yo-yo anytime it gets near a gas pedal. He hiccups down the road accelerating from 5 to 75 and back, traffic being of no consequence at all. I have seen a friend with a queasy stomach actually break into tears riding in the back seat. He can park a Cadillac in a space a Volkswagon would have trouble getting into. He bounces off bumpers and curbs with a studied nonchalance. Stop signs are observed by proxy. He will stop anywhere from 150 feet to dead in the middle of the intersection. All other drivers are referred to as "Homer." He is highly suspicious of

Mildred Joyner

Living downstream from John and June Cash was exciting to say the least. The phone would ring and John would say, "Hope the coast is clear down your way. We're coming by boat with a load of family. Put some burgers on the grill, we're hungry." Ned and I would meet them at the dock and tie up the boat. All of a sudden, the hillside would be humming. The neighbor's children would join in the fun with John, June, John Carter, Kathy, Rosanne, Rosey and Thomas. The day would end with a lot of singing, picking, swimming—the whole bit. Our lives have been beautifully blessed by being friends with John and June Cash and the whole family and their many, many friends. Thanks, John, for including us.

MILDRED JOYNER



Winafred Kelley

Johnny Cash, the entertainer. Most people look at John and see the personable entertainer. When he steps on the stage, the building is filled with his presence and his fans love him. His performance is a natural high, and I love his shows. However, when I look at Johnny Cash, I see the man who is the priest in his own home. He is the most loving, devoted father I have ever known, and I'm proud to be associated with him. Johnny Cash, the entertainer, the man, June's devoted husband, and the father.

WINAFRED KELLEY

Patricia Parker

Shortly after my third birthday in 1958, my mother was in an automobile accident that left her paralyzed for life. Since that time we have always dreamed of a reliable source of transportation for her cumbersome wheelchair. I'd been working for John for about a year when he said "I hear you're thinking of buying a van for your mother." He said he didn't think it was a very good idea. "You just don't need *two* vans." This was his way of saying "surprise Pat, I'm getting you the van as a gift." I wept tears of joy because I couldn't believe he gave me my dream.

Thanks again John, and thank you for 25 years of your time, hard work, and beautiful music!

PATRICIA PARKER

left-turning green trucks. He has a remarkable record of never running into anyone (though he *has* put a few in the ditch), but whenever anyone tries to drive one of his cars they invariably wreck it. (My husband Rodney Crowell was a victim of this unfortunate phenomenon twice—once in his car and once in his boat. But boats are another story. I myself have blown up a few engines!)

But—all ribbing aside—I love him to death. He's given me a free education in tolerance and integrity and courage. I thought the inscription under his senior picture in his high school yearbook was apropos in its foresight. It reads: "Be a live wire, and you won't get stepped on."

ROSANNE CASH



Roy Cash

In 1965, Curly Lewis (a friend), John and I went hunting at night for deer, jack rabbit or whatever. This was in the mountains northeast of Ventura, California. We killed time only and started back down the winding mountain road around midnight. The three of us were in John's camper and John was fooling around with a 30-30 deer rifle. I asked John if the gun was loaded. He said, "Of course not, I'll show you." He promptly pulled the trigger, shot through the floorboard, blew out the right front tire on the camper and the explosion almost deafened us. I had quite a battle controlling the camper on the dangerous road, but finally managed to stop the truck on the edge of a cliff, looking down several hundred feet.

I finished unloading John's gun, put him to bed in the camper, changed the tire, and made it home.

John was sometimes dangerous to be around.

ROY CASH

Marty Robbins

When Johnny Cash had his television show, he had me on. I believe, about as many times as anybody could be, without becoming a permanent part of his show, and I've never forgotten it.

The song, *My Woman, My Woman, My Wife* was a big hit for me, pop and country, because I got to do it on Johnny's show. Johnny was thinking about me being a summer replacement on his show but I had a heart attack about then. You know, that was quite an honor, you see, because that was a very popular show. Just to be asked if I was interested was something for me. I told him a couple of times, and I've told anybody who's asked me, there are a few artists in the business who have helped me, but John has done more than anyone.

Now I'm pleased to have a chance to do something in return. I wrote *Song of the Patriot* (with Shirl Milete) which John has recorded for his new single. John asked me to sing harmony on it, and I was happy to do it. (I hope it's a giant hit.) Now, everyone knows that I'm a Ronald Reagan supporter. John may not share my views on political candidates. But one thing's for sure . . . he shares my views on patriotism.

MARTY ROBBINS

Louise Cash Garrett

Johnny is my *big*-little brother. I love him with an endearing respect. His life has made an impression on my heart because the little things of life and "insignificant" people are of importance to him. He has a *caring* and a *sharing* spirit.

His discernment of a need or a dream in the lives of friend or family is what to me makes him big in *mine*, and in *God's* sight.

Like the time he called me, near midnight a year or so ago, and said, "I know you are studying to be a Bible teacher, how would you like to visit the Holy Land?" This was beyond all expectations for me, but he made it possible, and I profited much from it.

I believe God has blessed Johnny's life because he has obeyed a favorite scripture of mine, found in Luke 6:38, which says "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto *your* bosom. For with the same measure that *ye* measure it shall be *measured to you* again."

LOUISE CASH GARRETT



Tara Cash

I am very proud of my daddy. He is very special to me, and I wanted to be a part of your tribute to him. Congratulations, Daddy. All my love always.

TARA CASH



Tommy Cash

Daddy

It is impossible to put in a short letter all the "proud" I feel about my brother, Johnny Cash.

It's been said, that a prerequisite for greatness is to be original. My brother is definitely original, unique and somewhat mysterious. His music touches the *heart* of all of us in the family, like it does his millions of fans. His heart is bigger than he is. He feels pain when those he loves feels pain. He shares our joy, our success and failures.

There is nothing he wouldn't do to help someone up when they fall — nothing. . . . There never has been and never will be an end to his kindness, love and compassion.

My brother, John Cash, marvelous man, loving brother, great American.

I love you J.R.
TOMMY CASH

Joanne Cash Yates

I came to work one day really torn and kinda "sitting on a fence" as to what to do about marrying this Harry Yates. John came in the door and I went to him in tears and said "You gotta help me! I want you to help me make this decision!" He looked at me and laughed in a comical way, put his arms around me and said "O.K. baby, I'll pray for you and tomorrow we'll find out what God wants." I really felt better!

The next morning John walked through the door of the House of Cash, looked at me with a big smile on his face and said "Marry him."

He was right. I did marry Harry Yates. That was in December, 1971.

JOANNE CASH YATES

We bought our first radio in 1936. At that time Johnny was four years old. It was the old time battery radio. I bought it at Sears & Roebuck in Memphis. At that time Lulubelle and Scotty was very popular on WJJD in Chicago. A battery in a radio at that time would last just a certain time. Of course, Johnny, we called him J.R. at that time—his name wasn't changed until he went into the service in 1950—when we got ready to go to bed. Johnny didn't want to go to bed. And you know, a lot of times.



Mama

One thing I remember very specially about John when he was, I'd say growing from childhood to manhood, he always did love to sing. He sang in church, he sang in school and he came in the back door after doing his chores at home. He came in the back door, I was making biscuits, and he began singing *Everybody's Gonna Have Religion in Glory*. He had such a deep voice, I looked around to see if it was him. And I said, "Was that you singing that?" He said, "Yes'm, it sure was." And I said, "Well, the Lord's got his hand on you,

after we went to bed, I'd say after 10:00 at night, maybe we'd be asleep, and we'd hear something. So I'd get up and walk in and Johnny would be sitting with his ear to that radio, since 7:00 at night listening to WJJD in Chicago—running my battery down. He won his first prize of \$5.00 singing in school at a little talent show. He was 10 or 11. And I believe the name of the song he sang was *Lucky Old Sun*. So he's been a professional since he was about 10.

Later, I went with him and Marshall and Luther to his first paid show and guess what the take in was that night—\$12.50. They really got a kick out of it, dividing that \$12.50 between the three of them.

That night was quite a contrast with the time I went with them to Madison Square Garden, when you needed six figures to measure the take.

J.R. was a very good boy, when he was a kid growing up. And he still is. I'll say one thing about him, that very few parents can say, when raising a teenager. He did lots of things he shouldn't have, but he never did tell a lie about it. That's *worth* something!
RAY CASH

Sue Hensley

A personal thanks to a great man who has given me many years of entertainment, a boss that I have enjoyed working with and the greatest thanks to the man, John R. Cash, who cares about people.
SUE HENSLEY

someday you'll be singing on the radio, and people will hear you all over the nation." He said later, he went out on the front porch and sat down in the swing, and he told me later that he wanted to tell me that he knew that.

Our family worked hard, and we went to church Sunday mornings and nights and on Wednesday nights. I tried to raise my children following the Scriptures: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will never depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) and "I rejoice greatly that found of my children walking in truth . . ." (II John 1:4.)

CARRIE CASH

Cindy Cash Routh

Thank you for this opportunity to be a part of something special for my father who so greatly deserves it.

He has taught me so much through the 21 years of my life. With his unique sense of humor we've had a lot of laughs together. There was the time when we lived in Hollywood and had a pool in our yard. He decided to teach me to swim before I could walk, so I wouldn't drown if I fell in, which made my mother almost have a heart attack.

There's the time he was determined to teach me how to ski when I was 12. He sat in the boat for hours in the hot sun and refused to let me out of the water until I got up and skied. He knew I could (which I did).

There was the time he taught me to bait my own hook the first time he took me fishing. I was getting sick trying to put that squiggly worm on. But he told me to get the best out of that worm because it would get the best of me some day.

There's the time when I was a child, Christmas Eve, sound asleep, he made



footprints with ashes coming from the fireplace out the front door so I swore there was a Santa Claus.

There was the time I was 15 and was standing backstage watching him do a concert, and he called me up on stage to sing a solo in front of 5,000 people just because he believed in me and wanted me to believe in myself. (I had never been in front of an audience and I was scared to death.)

Those were just a few of the many good times.

Most of all, though, he has taught me to love, how to laugh, how to cry, how to pray, how to be strong, how to grow from within, and how to enjoy the simple things in life. And together we are not only father and daughter, but have become best friends. He's always been there when I need him, he's the world's greatest father. He's more a man than any and I love him more than life itself.

And now that I am married and have children of my own. I know just what makes the world go 'round . . . a family.
CINDY CASH ROUTH



Kathy Cash Brimm

Having a national figure for a father is sometimes discouraging because I can't always see him or spend as much time with him as I would like to. On the other hand, when I do see him, it's that much more special. He's never been Johnny Cash, SUPERSTAR, to me, he's always been Daddy. By way of something special, recently, when I celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday, this song was his present to me:

*Kathy take that frown from off your face
Let a self-assured expression take its place
For I love you, yes, I love you, yes I do
And you shouldn't let tomorrow bother you
Just rest assured that everything's alright
Then lay you down in sweet, sweet dreams tonight*

*Kathy are you listening, did you hear
I love you not a day and not a year*

*Ah, forever is the timeless time I mean
And I'll prove it to you if you haven't seen
You will know it by the years as they go by
That I'll love you, Kathy, till the day I die*

*Kathy be prepared to understand
I'm just a man and nothing but a man
And sometimes I might forget to let you know
But you must always remember that it's so
There's no way that my heart can change for you
I love you, Kathy, don't forget I do*

Daddy is remarkable. He has shown me that you don't get anywhere unless you have something special in your heart. Compassion, sensitivity, patience, and love is the only way you can make it. *Thank you, Daddy!* I love you and respect you more than you'll ever know, and I'm privileged to be a part of you.

KATHY CASH BRIMM



Reba Cash Hancock

A special memory I have of John was when I was a very young girl. Most of our friends were older than I was, so I was never allowed to go places like the picture show, and to center (the main part of our town). One day when I was begging Mama to let me go with them, and Mama had said no, John spoke up and said, "Aw, Mama, let her go. I'll take care of her and watch out for her." From then on Mama would let me go with the rest of them, 'cause John would always look out for me.

Now that we're grown up, he still watches out for me, and takes care of me. He's my best friend, and is always there when I need him. Thanks, John.

Reba

REBA CASH HANCOCK



Nat T. Winston

As you know, I was Johnny's psychiatrist back in the 1960's when he was having difficulty with drugs. Through that period of time, we became fast and close friends. It is a matter of record, of course, the treatment that we went through, and I can tell you that there is no man in this country with more determination and grit than John Cash!

A little aside that I would like to share with you relates to John and June shortly after they were married. It was, of course their great desire to have a child. When they found out they were pregnant, they came by our house on the way back from the doctor's office and they were in a jubilant mood. Johnny stated, "We've already got the name picked out—John Carter Cash." I said, "Wait a minute, John, there is no way you can have a boy." I pointed out that June had two daughters previously and that he had four daughters and that their chemistries obviously just weren't right for a son, and that he'd better get that out of his mind and think of a name for a daughter. He only laughed and winked at me, and that was the last thing said. About nine months later, when the baby was born, I was the first person John called. Again, he was jubilant; it was a boy, and his name was, of course, John Carter Cash.

Following this episode, I re-married and one day while on a short trip with John and June, we stopped to get a cup of coffee. John asked us if we planned to have children, and I indicated that I felt it would be impossible at my age and that we weren't really thinking in those terms. John reached into his pocket and handed me a Vitamin E and said, "Here, take this, and you'll get pregnant." Jokingly, I took it; and, sure enough, one week later we were pregnant, and nine months later, we had our son, also named John!

NAT T. WINSTON, M.D.

Sandy Minor

As Johnny Cash's newest "Angel," I thoroughly enjoy my job as a tour guide at the Johnny Cash Museum. It is indeed a pleasure to work for John and June. One day when I came out of the museum, Reba came up and told me that John was mad at me. "Why is he mad at me?" "Because he hasn't met you yet and Johnny likes to know all of his 'angels.'"

Well, I finally met the man, and the first thing I said to him was "Welcome to the House of Cash," without looking up to see who he was. He thanked me and introduced himself. The man is just like I heard he was: kind, considerate, patient and understanding, and I am proud to be one of "JOHNNY'S ANGELS."

SANDY MINOR

Carl Perkins

Hello friends, this is Carl Perkins. I'd just like to say that I met Johnny Cash in 1954 at the great Sun Record Company, and at the time I'm talking about, Elvis was there, Jerry Lee Lewis, Charlie Rich, and of all the people, I picked out the long, tall Cash to be my favorite among the whole crop. I think the reason was that John was a quiet, real sincere fellow back in those years, and it seemed like everybody else there was kinda cocky and full of life, but he seemed to be my kind of man right at the very beginning. John and I made close friends back then and in comparing our lives, we found out that we grew up in the same type of environment, the son of a sharecropper and a flat lands farmer. He from Arkansas and me from Tennessee. But we always had a lot in common and that was a four letter word, L-O-

V-E. For 26 years now, without a doubt, if a man can love another man, I love Johnny Cash. I feel that John has definitely been touched by the good Lord to do what he has done, and I think that he's only beginning. I'm proud to say that I know of no better man, and I'm so thrilled that after 26 years I can say that Johnny Cash is one of the finest guys that I have ever known in my life, and it's been an honor to be his friend. I hope there's 26 more years left.

CARL PERKINS

Jerry Lee Lewis

Johnny Cash has been one of my best friends for many years. He is a strong person and an inspiration to us who know him. Hang in there John.

Your friend,

JERRY LEE LEWIS



Diane Ladd

Johnny and June are down-to-earth warm loving human beings. They don't go around judging anybody else, which is terrific because I think the world is in a shock over being judged too much today. And they just do their thing and leave the door open for people to be themselves. It was such a pleasure, working with them on *Thaddeus, Rose and Eddie*. They've both

got great senses of humor, and they're interested, in life and things, and like the vegetarian chili. Johnny, after shooting all day and being up early in the morning with make-up, took the time off to keep running on into the trailer where he was cooking this vegetable chili. And I gotta tell you that its the best chili I ever tasted in my life. Now he gave me the recipe, but it didn't quite turn out like his. So next time I see him I gotta discuss that with him. He's really just a wonderful cook.

They did a lot of nice things. They got us together and got the morale of the company together and their vibrations were good and warm and open. I really love 'em and whenever they come to town or anywhere near here to sing, if its at all possible, both Bo Hopkins and I both go and attend! And you know, the interesting thing is that they know we're there—they always dedicate a song to their friends. And you know, they have the most incredible way of always picking a song that seems to answer some need at that moment of time in your life.

DIANE LADD



Bruce Lundvall

It's hard to pinpoint one particular experience with John Cash since I consider every encounter with the man to be a very special occasion. He possesses a personal magnetism and a commanding presence unlike any artist I've met. There is a captivating honesty and conviction about the man, even the most mundane conversation.

John commands an amazing knowledge of a great many subjects, but get him into history, particularly American history, and he can regale you all night with stories about our country and its people. In fact, I've never met anyone with a greater reverence for our land and its people than John Cash! And once he gets into a story, you know that he hasn't merely studied the subject—he's actually lived it—just as he's lived practically every song he ever wrote or performed.

We were together recently at a private dinner in the wine cellar of Mario's Restaurant in Nashville, and John kept us spellbound with stories. Once we finished dining, he took out his guitar and sang about a dozen songs he had been considering for his next album. Not all of them were his songs, but a common thread ran through all of them—they spoke the truth—and something in the way John sang them told you that he had lived those lyrics at one time or another.

BRUCE LUNDVALL
President, CBS Records

Robert DeVries

Thank you for your letter of March 24 inviting me to share a word of appreciation for the privilege of publishing for Johnny Cash.

As you know, Johnny Cash's *Man in Black* published by Zondervan was one of the most successful personality books ever released on our list. It sold nearly 250,000 copies in hardcover and over 750,000 copies in paperback.

Very honestly, as we anticipated working with Johnny on his book, I was concerned that he might be difficult since many performers in the entertainment field are known by publishers to be prima donnas. Nothing could have been further

Marty Klein

In 1969 Johnny Cash and I shook hands for the first time. From that moment my life and career changed dramatically. As President of this agency (Agency for the Performing Arts) I know that without his faith and belief in me I could not have achieved the success I have personally attained.

In dealing with some of the biggest stars in the entertainment industry I know that I will never come across another Johnny Cash and he will always be #1 with me. From Madison Square Garden to San Quentin, to a children's hospital I have seen his positive energy work in so many different ways to inspire and influence the lives of others.

On many occasions when I would call to offer Johnny an engagement he would say that he couldn't because he was doing a benefit for someone. I would then ask why he was extending himself so freely... his response, "Marty, if it was easy, everybody would be doing it."

It is a privilege that I can say I represent Johnny Cash and all I can hope for is that I have contributed as much to him as he has to me.

Sincerely,
MARTY KLEIN

Merle Haggard

Johnny Cash has been a personal friend of mine all through my years in the business. I've been on a lot of television shows with Johnny. I'm a fan of Johnny Cash, and I believe John's a fan of mine. I think he deserves whatever it is you've decided to give to him as a tribute. He's certainly earned it. And he's probably the giant of the last 20 years as far as country music is concerned. He's all.

MERLE HAGGARD

from the truth. I found John to be a very real person, humble and honest and compassionate; committed to his family, to country music and most of all, to his God. He is all that he appears to be—a real man in a very unreal world.

I am pleased that you are focusing your July, 1980 issue of *Country Music* magazine on Johnny Cash and his 25 years in the music business. No one is more deserving of the accolades of his peers.

It is a great privilege to be Johnny Cash's publisher—and a greater honor to be his friend.

Cordially and sincerely yours,
ROBERT K. DEVRIES

Merle Travis

"I don't care how successful I get in this life, there's one thing I've just got to do before I die. And that's to rustle a cow," Johnny Cash said.

That was some time after I was playing the Canadian National Exhibition with Gene Autry in 1958 and read in the paper that Johnny Cash was appearing in the Toronto area. "He's that new recording artist I've been hearing so much about," I thought, "I'll give him a call tonight."

That night long after Gene had hung up his white hat and Jay Berry had tucked Champion and Little Champion to bed in the big luxurious van, I found myself alone in a hotel room with only a bottle of Canadian Crown Royal to keep me company, I called the place where Johnny was advertised.

They informed me that Mr. Cash had gone to his hotel long ago. I worried them into telling me where he was staying. I called the place and got Johnny Cash on the phone.

"Hullo," came a deep, sleepy voice over the phone.

"You prob'ly never heard of me," I started, "but I'm here in Toronto with Gene Autry. My name's Merle Travis."

"Sure I've heard," came the voice on the phone, "you're talkin' about one of my favorite people."

"Merle Travis?"

"No, Gene Autry."

"Oh."

"Say you're with Mr. Autry?"

"That's right, Johnny."

"Where's Gene?"

"Well, he's gone to bed."

"Oh."

"Johnny, I'm Merle Travis, a guitar picker. You prob'ly never..."

"Wait a minute 'till I get a cigarette."

I waited a month or two in the next thirty seconds, while the brand-new red-hot Columbia, fresh-off-Sun Recording Star lit up a smoke. Then he got back to me.

"... Merle Travis, huh?" he rumbled. "I've heard some of your records... I know some of your songs... You could consider me one of your fans."

"I ain't got no fans, Johnny," I told him. "I've got friends."

I was just about to offer to catch a cab to come over and sign an autograph for him when he suggested we get together and get acquainted, which we did. We struck up a friendship which I hope he holds as dear as I do. Somehow I'm pretty sure he does.

MERLE TRAVIS

Bo Hopkins

In 1977 I had the honor and privilege of working with Johnny Cash in a film titled *Thaddeus Rose and Eddie*. I played Eddie and Johnny played Thaddeus. It was an experience yet to be equaled. Johnny Cash is a true professional in his craft and a joy to work with.

Our relationship, however, goes further than just work. While on location with the show Johnny and June welcomed me into their hearts with open arms, so much so that I am now known around House Of Cash not as Bo Hopkins, but as Bo Carter Cash Hopkins!! And Johnny's generosity and warmth knows no bounds. Upon completion of *Thaddeus Rose and Eddie* Johnny presented me with his own personal guitar. When I pointed out to him that I couldn't play his answer was "If it was easy everybody would do it!" It's not easy, but I'm sure as hell trying!!

Johnny Cash and June Carter are like family to me. I love them both. Johnny has worked hard to get where he is and I admire him. I don't think it was "easy" for him. I send my heart felt congratulations to Johnny on this his 25th Anniversary in the music business and I send my love.

Yours,

BO CARTER CASH HOPKINS
(a.k.a. Bo Hopkins)



Hugh Cherry

My friendship with Cash spans almost twenty years. In that time, Cash has appeared on my radio programs locally and internationally, on AFRTS and Voice of America, often. I've introduced him on the stages of the Hollywood Bowl, Carnegie Hall, Folsom Prison and the Grand Ole Opry. I wrote the first biography on Cash in '69. I researched and helped write the segment of *This Is Your Life*, which honored him in '71 and have participated in some of his television

Roy Acuff

Roy Acuff

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

DEAR JOHNNY:

I wish to congratulate you on your Silver Anniversary in Country Music.

Country music has been good for you and your family and you have been good for the music industry.

I hope you can continue with good health and remain in the business for many many years to come.

Again congratulations!

Sincerely

Roy Acuff

May 2, 1980

productions. We've had some funny experiences and we've shared some sad times. I've often disappointed Cash but he has always been available when I needed him.

I needed John to headline a bill of country artists at the New York Folk Festival in '65. He changed his schedule to make the appearance. John helped me get to California when I burned the engine out of a car in the middle of the Arizona desert. He came to my personal aid in '73 when I was hopelessly in the grip of alcoholism and was in a desperate state of mental and emotional depression.

My personal and professional life was in chaos. I could see no future worth preserving and, in desperation, I wrote Cash a letter. I wrote that my life was in a shambles and I was as far as I could go.

Within a few days I received a hand written letter from John. The letter was three pages of love, compassion and understanding. At the end of the letter John wrote, "Forgive yourself, Hugh." Such a simple thought. But a thought of which I was incapable . . . until suggested by one whom I respected as much as Cash.

I had known Cash when he was in the grip of amphetamines. I was totally aware of his struggle and his accomplishment. Thus, his words were, for me, a beacon.

In the ensuing months, when Cash Played Vegas or elsewhere in this area, he arranged for his office to fly me to him. He asked nothing of me. He gave no preachments. He was concerned and he cared. This was his way of showing it.

My battle with the bottle was not easy. Total elimination of alcohol from my life was difficult. Along the way, I disappointed Cash often and sometimes embarrassed him. I regret that.

Finally, two years ago, I succeeded in eliminating alcohol from my life. One of the most contributive factors was the con-

cern and compassion of Johnny Cash. He was there when I needed him. I will always be grateful.

Johnny Cash and I have had some philosophical differences over the years. I respect his position and I believe that he respects mine. We're both aware of the other's strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, I can say, without reservation, Johnny Cash is the most unique and compelling man I've ever known. I am proud that he has been a part of my life.

Sincerely,

HUGH CHERRY

Barbara Mandrell

Folks don't need me to tell them about the tremendous impact Johnny Cash has had on the music business. His success and accomplishments are beyond words, even for a professional writer. I prefer to tell everyone about something that I am capable of writing about because it is from the heart. I want to share my thoughts with you about John Cash, the human being, who is just as extraordinary as Johnny Cash, the artist. No matter how hectic his lifestyle is—he always makes time for sharing himself with others. I first got to know John after I turned 13. I had the great honor of performing on his road show. He always took time to watch me perform and never failed to compliment and encourage me.

Recently, John shared an afternoon with our family at our son Matthew's birthday party. John, an exceptional photographer in his own right, managed to shoot film most of the party. A couple of weeks later, we received a large package of 11x14 photos framed and signed from John. This is just another example of John's talents and thoughtfulness.

BARBARA MANDRELL

Braxton Dixon

John came by the house one morning and said, "Braxton, June and I have decided to get married and let's go to this little town of Franklin, Kentucky and see if we can get it going." So, we jumped in the jeep, and as we approached the town we saw the steeples of a church. He said, "Hey, that looks like a good place. Let's try that." I knocked on the door, the pastor came to the door and I asked him if he knew John and June, and he said yes. Then he let me know immediately that he wouldn't marry them because they didn't believe in divorces. So I came back out and told John. He looked back at this steeple and said, "That's not a very tall steeple anyway." There was a church next to this flower shop and it was a Methodist Church—so I went in and introduced myself to the preacher, and he said "Sure I'd be glad to marry them."

So, all John wanted was to keep it to a fairly small crowd, only about 13 or 14 people had been invited to the wedding. Somehow the word leaked. When we came out, not just the church was packed, but the whole square.

Then there was the other time that I guess scared us worse than anything. When we had missed him for several days I called the police and everything else. And this time we had about given up on him and I was inspecting their property and thought well I'll walk the floors around the house. So happens I rounded a corner I saw the tractor overturned in the lake and I thought, Oh my God, John will be under that tractor—but fortunately he wasn't. So anyway on my way to call for help, I still thought he was under that tractor and this was late in November—I know it was cold and the ice was forming on the lake and on my way back to the house for the telephone I heard something . . . and I looked and Johnny was standing wrapped around a tree, with his arms around the tree and of course he had fallen in the lake, so therefore ice was forming all in his hair.

Sheriff Ralph Jones

My deputies arrested Johnny Cash the night of November 2, 1967. He was in no condition to talk so we locked him up.

In the morning, after we dropped the charges and released him, I brought him in my office and said, "Tell me one thing. Why would a man with potential to be at the top of his profession let a little thing like this (I held up one of the pills we had found on him) throw him in the gutter and destroy his life? You can kill yourself if you want to, but I'm just curious, why?"

After a long look at me he said, "Sheriff, I'll promise you this: I'll never



Cash's house on Old Hickory Lake near Nashville was designed and built by Braxton Dixon. A color photo taken from the lake by Johnny Cash appears on p. 55.

He was simply frozen to that tree. I didn't know what or how to go about moving him because he stands at least almost a foot or so above me and I just backed underneath him and drug him over to the house and then called my wife and she in turn called June and all the close friends and of course the doctor and we stayed there in this house with him for I'd say eight to ten days or a week or whatever until he got his health back.

Well, then I guess also—to me—then I met him to buy the house. I sold him a \$150,000 house on a handshake.

Oh—Russell, by the way, I don't know if you know it or not, but I'm the man that built the house that John bought from me. It was built for my wife and I and John came to me to build him a house and we were passing the house that John bought from me to look for other properties for John and he said there's no need to go any further, this is the house I want. So that was our meeting.

BRAXTON DIXON

Joyce Traweek

John sings a song which alludes to his being "...an 'ole lump of coal—though he'll be a diamond someday." Though his personal evaluation identifies with this metaphor, mine doesn't. He is indeed a diamond. He is many faceted; and as is true with the diamond, the cutting and polishing of these facets has been a slow and costly process. May I share one example of my precious gem, Johnny Cash, and you examine the facets and their brilliance for yourself.

It was the night of his last Christmas special when I called him with a Christmas wish that only he could make come true. I teach a Bible study at the First Presbyterian Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. One of our most treasured members of the class is Freddie Williams. He was born with severe brain damage thirty-nine years ago. Freddie loves God, his Bible class and his dearest friend in the world—Johnny Cash. His heart's desire was to have John come to his Christmas party. John and June would be appearing in Las Vegas the night before the party, he had a medical appointment in New York the afternoon of the party, and they would be spending the holidays with their daughter in London. He, nonetheless, said he would be there.

The morning of the party found him with chills, fever and a sore throat. Still he came—the great angular frame clothed in black sat trembling with chills—his brow burning with fever.

Our hearts soared as John and Freddie stood in the chancel singing *How Great Thou Art* 'Tis God Who has cut and polished my friend John.

JOYCE TRAWEEK



Connie Dickens

My first job at the House of Cash was as receptionist, answering the telephone. I must have had a hang-up where John's voice was concerned, because every time he would call the office, I would ask "Who's calling, please?"

I asked my same question, "Who's calling, please?", he answered, very loudly, "This is JOHNNY CASH!" I became very nervous, tossed the phone up in the air, and ran. Upstairs, wherever, anyplace where someone would talk to John, because I was scared to death. All I could think of was "I'm going to tell my best friend, June, on him." But I didn't, I got over being afraid, but I still don't recognize his voice. I still work for the man, but I'm no longer the receptionist. Johnny Cash is my pal, my friend, my boss and I love him.

CONNIE DICKENS

Sam Phillips

First, I want to congratulate Country Music Magazine for the highly appropriate surprise for you.

John, as you know, you have been one of my very favorite people of all time. Working with you on Sun gave me the opportunity to recognize your great sensitivity to everything you do and to see all the things I saw in you early on come to fruition in the years since.

You are definitely one of a kind—the right kind—we love you and June very much.

The next 25 no doubt will hold great and good accords for you and your outstanding family. Thanks for being my friend.

SAM PHILLIPS

Brenda Lee

Aside from Johnny Cash's phenomenal contribution to show business, and the gifts of his talents that he has repeatedly given everyone throughout the years, Johnny Cash, the man, has been a lesson in the simple acceptance on one's self as a person. I am proud to have been a friend of a man who's not ashamed of what he was, has been, or is, and has been able to maintain his self respect throughout the peaks and valleys of his life.

BRENDA LEE

Chet Hagan

As the producer of numerous Johnny Cash television specials (the latest being the 25th anniversary show), what has been constantly brought home to me is Johnny's versatility—perhaps a versatility most people don't comprehend and, therefore, don't fully appreciate.

When I was researching Johnny's career for the 25th anniversary special, that versatility hit me right between the eyes. I saw a Johnny Cash who could be a hard-bitten gunfighter (in a movie with Kirk Douglas), I saw a Johnny Cash who could convincingly play a murderer (in a *Columbo* episode with Peter Falk), I saw a Johnny Cash who could play a con-man preacher and then repent (in a *Little House on the Prairie* episode with Michael Landon), I saw a Johnny Cash who could feel and portray an exploited American Indian (in the PBS drama, *Trail of Tears*), I saw a John-

ny Cash whose deep faith shown through (as the narrator of his own movie, *Gospel Road*). And, in the course of working with Johnny on our TV projects, I saw and heard the rockabilly singer, the country singer, the pop singer, the gospel singer, the cowboy singer, the railroader singer, the comic singer.

Amazingly, Johnny Cash is all of those things!

Of course, Johnny has won just about every show business award there is. I can remember vividly that October night in 1969 when, in the old Ryman Auditorium, he turned the Country Music Association's awards show (I was the producer of that one, too) into an evening of personal triumph. There were ten awards. Cash won five of them: *Male Vocalist of the Year*, *Duet (with June) of the Year*, *Album of the Year (Johnny Cash at San Quentin)*, *Single of the Year (A Boy Named Sue)*, and *Entertainer of the Year*.

There is, however, one award he has not won—the coveted Oscar of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. I suspect that's only because a major motion picture production company has not yet thought to cast him in a really good screenplay. It would not surprise me at all to see that day come.

Johnny is so many things: Singer, actor, songwriter, author, "picker," and poet . . . and . . . well . . . he's JOHNNY CASH!

Cordially,
CHET HAGAN

Tom T. Hall

CASH

*It was a long, black shadow of a giant that I saw
Standing just inside the doorway of a big convention hall
His clothes were badly wrinkled and his mind was much the same
Everybody knew his name CASH*

*They locked him up and lied about him, and tried to drag him down
They almost killed the man and yet they could not kill the sound
They took all they could take and yet they could not take his mind
And he was one of a kind CASH*

*Well, they would not let him live and yet they would not let him die
And I suppose that someone always knew the reason why
Some with beer, and some with Bibles, some with treasure, some with trash
Kept on following the man CASH*

*Take away the moon and sun and time itself becomes just one
When you're lost inside a place you know there's no place left to run
Fall so far beyond the bottom that you know it cannot last
There's a girl named June . . . Carter CASH*

*Well, I do not know the problem and guesstimate the pain
A witness is a witness and is not to be explained
We can't say that one's more difficult, the future or the past
It's a friend's name CASH*

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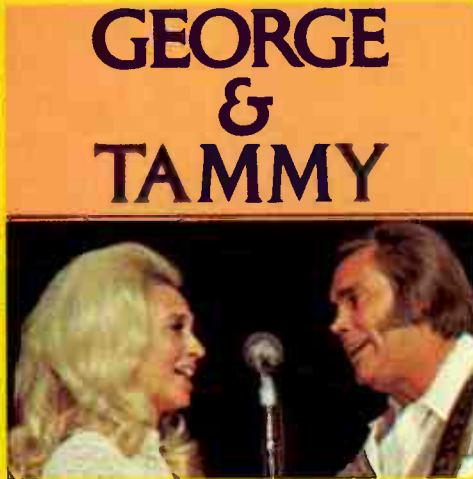
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MCA 3229

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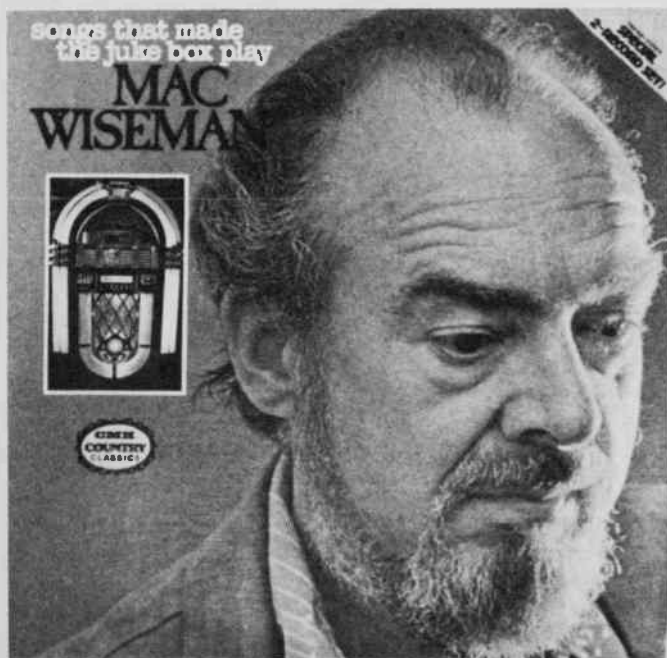
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KELLY DELANEY



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DOUGLAS B. GREEN

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Stuart Margolin And The Angel Sings

Warner Bros. BSK3439

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Rather than give you a blow-by-blow, let's just say that *And The Angel Sings* is chocked full of irrepressible good feeling and the inescapable sense that these guys were having a wonderful time when they made this record. From the Margolin/Riopelle/MacLeod whacko country (ole Stuart calls it "punk country") to the blues (a great version of Jimmy Reed's *Ain't That Lovin' You Baby*, which should make the Blues Brothers slink off and hide) to a Chuck Berry medley (*Brown-*

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Love Bomb

Elektra 6E-255

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Love Bomb, Braddock's recently released second LP, seems to synthesize these disparate elements of eccentricity,

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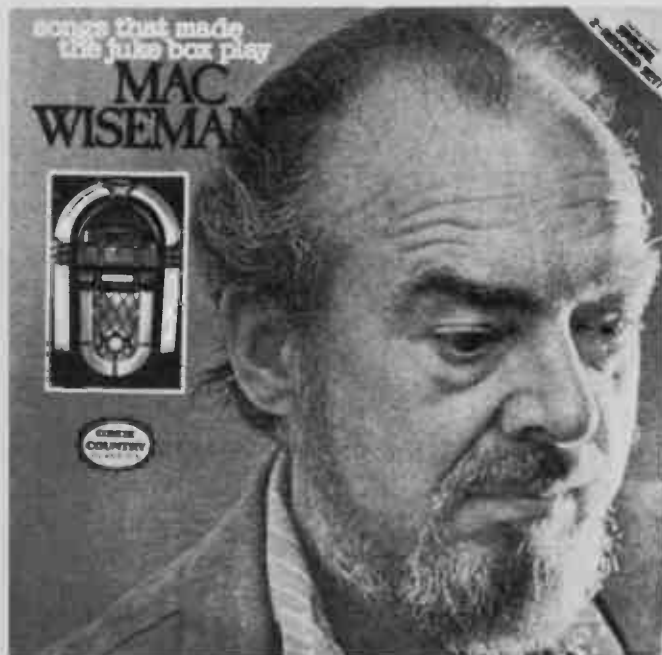
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Record Reviews

Charly McClain
Women Get Lonely
Epic JE 36408

If there were such an award category as Most Exciting Female Vocalist, I would want to present it to Charly McClain. With persistence, I'm convinced she could have entered the race as a soft and sexy ballad singer and done quite well. However, she and producer Larry Rogers opted to expand her image from the beginning, and that's where the excitement comes in.

This album brings her previously tested styles vividly into focus. *Let's Put Our Love in Motion* highlights her Memphis country-rock sound, firmly establishing her innovative approach in that direction. The familiar, share-the-night theme of *Women Get Lonely* does not get overplayed, and the remaining material is nicely arranged and very well paced.

Because of certain highly



publicized events in Charly's past, her bright and snappy song about *Men* poses a bit of irony. Whether or not the play on her Nashville initiation was intended, it provided one of her

biggest hits to date. In a slower and more serious vein, Charly's handling of *Somebody's Got to Sing the Sad Songs* is marvelous. Against a smooth, uncluttered piano arrangement,

her voice is momentarily lifted to a new level of intensity. If this is a sneak preview of a musical chemistry upcoming on Charly's horizon, I'll be ready for it.

Everybody seems to be looking for a few songs which are pointedly country, but are not forced or affected. *Sleepin' With a Drifter* is just such a song, combining a romantic fantasy with an irresistible beat. Charly's pure Southern voice certainly qualifies her for that brand of country. (And who says a bedroom song can't have a little class?).

Before Charly started making records, she worked as a model in a Memphis department store. Lately, she has been spending as much time in fashion studios as she has in the recording studio. That should put her in fine shape for a TV special down the road, or perhaps some acting. In the meantime, I would settle for a couple of posters and a few more albums as enjoyable as this one.

BILL OAKLEY



Loretta Lynn
Loretta
MCA-3217

I wondered how this album would measure up to the single, *Pregnant Again*, that was taken from it. Maybe it's not fair to live up to a single that good. Despite the fact that

Pregnant Again is as much an old fashioned pop song (strangely, the latest label for the old-fashioned-pop-song type music is Adult Contemporary) as it is a country song, and the arrangement is more (pre-rock) pop than country, the down to earth words and Loretta's down home voice make the total effect decidedly country. Loretta sure has a gift for singing powerfully about real things.

Two surprises when I played the album. Number one, Loretta didn't write *Pregnant Again*, and two, she didn't write a single song on the album. But the important question, how does the album measure up to the single?

Measures up just fine. No filler here at all. It would even make a respectable Greatest

Hits album. As usual, however there's way too much strings for my taste. Most folks seem to like it that way, though, and I'm not about to go around telling people not to put sugar in their coffee.

I'll touch down briefly on a few of the high points on this honey of an album. *I've Got a Picture Of Us On My Mind* is a weepy waltz in the finest tradition of lost love and deep regret, with a chord change in the chorus that hooks it right on your heart.

Naked In The Rain could have been a soft rock song from 1961, except they didn't run naked in the rain on records in 1961. But here's a good use for strings—plucking them with the finger (pizzicato) for a dandy raindrop effect.

It's Too Late To Love Me

Now is a country/old rock 'n roll ballad hybrid. The first part is the ol' rock ballad part. Loretta sings it with appropriate '50s style grace notes. The second part of the song is written and sung in straight country style. Great job of work.

The Fool Wouldn't Listen has the overly uncommon theme of the man who commits the sin of failing to pay attention. Beautiful melody plus poignant lyric makes a powerful song.

What's mainly here are songs about lost love, found love, and love continued. With lovely melodies abounding, there's no way you can go wrong on this album. Loretta may not have written a song here, but she sings every word as if she did.

PETER STAMPFEL

Record Reviews

Ronnie Milsap Milsap Magic

RCA ANL1-3563

I couldn't have had a more unfortunate introduction to Ronnie Milsap. It was six years ago, and the local country station kept on playing his record, *Pure Love*, which I became more sick of than anything on the radio at that time. It was the first Milsap I heard.

I went to see Dolly Parton. Also on the bill was Bobby Bare and . . . Ronnie Milsap. But that tough piano player? Ronnie Milsap? He was good. Damn good. But it didn't matter. I knew he was going to play *Pure Love* and spoil everything. I waited, shuddering. And waited. He never played *Pure Love*! Even though it was a local hit! Maybe he was sick of the damn song, too! My opinion of Ronnie Milsap did a very fast turn about.

If you like Ronnie, you'll love *Milsap Magic*. It kicks in with *Why Don't You Spend The Night*, which has been on the country charts four months

now. I think it's really neat the way his voice gets more country when he raises it on the chorus. On the same side you've got his latest two sided hit, *My Heart*, a catchy, rocky hopper, and the slower, sadder *Silent Night (After The Fight)*.

The first two cuts on side two afford the biggest change of pace on the record. First, you got *Misery Loves Company*, a bluesy rocker with a black gospel structure, like Ray Charles used to do. Splat! She runs into *I Let Myself Believe*, a soupy, sappy ballad that would be perfect for Frank Sinatra. Fortunately, it's followed by my favorite cut on the record, *If You Don't Want Me To*, a sprightly little rocker built around a hooky piano riff. This would make an excellent single.

The only songs here that would have been recognized as country 20 years ago are *She Thinks I Still Care* and *Silent Night*. The other eight songs fall into two categories, country rockers and "adult contemporary" ballads.



It's interesting how earnestly so many country performers are trying to "cross over", when in reality 90% of them already have—to Adult Contemporary.

That's Ronnie Milsap, ranging from rockers to adult con-

temporary, with a little country smack in the middle. Come to think of it, that's country music today—ranging from rockers to adult contemporary, with a little country smack in the middle.

PETER STAMPFEL



Billy Crash Craddock Changes

Capitol ST-12054

A lot can be said for Billy Crash Craddock as a ballad singer. You can generally count on him to steer away from mildly stimulating jingles and

deliver material that really penetrates. It has been said that certain songs would be great regardless of who sings them, and that some singers do best with a song tailored to their particular style. Something clicks when a great song happens to match the style of the artist.

That's exactly what happens with two of the selections of this album. *I Just Had You On My Mind*, once a sizable hit for Dotsy, fits Craddock just right. Even more appealing is one called, *You Just Want to Be Mine*. It has a light and breezy, tropical sort of feel, enhanced by mandolins. It's one of those songs that could easily cross some producer's desk and wind

up as a hit single for another artist. There is an intricate pattern to the melody and yet it sounds simple when Billy Crash pulls it off.

If you're expecting this guy to take off on some rollicking rompers one more time, you won't be disappointed. The old *Rub It In* spirit is back on the opening number, *She's Got Legs*. Throughout most of that side, the high energy continues with the rock classic, *Sea Cruise* and *Ain't No Easy Way to Lose*.

A question arises concerning the title of this album, *Changes*. What is so different? For one thing, half of the tracks were recorded in Muscle Shoals under a different producer, Jimmy

Johnson. The musicians' credits for these sessions include guitarist, Duncan Cameron, of the Amazing Rhythm Aces. Among the extra vocalists is Sue Richards, listed as one of the Shoals Sisters. That explains what she's been up to lately. By the way, she wrote *I Just Had You On My Mind*.

As for any major changes in the sound of Billy Crash Craddock's music, nothing of the sort is evident here. On side one, the Muscle Shoals crew aims at the Craddock style, and usually scores pretty well. But, judging from this batch, they haven't quite caught up with the familiar gang back in Nashville.

BILL OAKLEY

From The Cover Of "Back In The Saddle Again" — Doubleday & Company, Inc.



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Record Reviews

Ronnie McDowell
Love So Many Ways
Epic JE36336

There are as many ways to approach reviewing a record as there are records and reviewers, but I pretty much boil it down to two: 1) Is the overall quality of the album so high as to jerk you out of your seat and make you pay attention, or 2) is there a single cut on the album that is striking?

The answers to both questions on *Love So Many Ways* are no, zip, nada. Which is a shame, since Ronnie McDowell is undisputably one of the finest vocalists to surface in country music in recent years. The guy's got a voice that just won't quit, a powerful, smashing voice that can leap off the radio and wrestle you down two out of three falls. So why does producer Buddy Killen insist on wrapping this voice in a gooey mess



of strings, background vocalists, and arrangements that make elevator music sound crisp and original? The reason is that the days of the Nashville Sound are back

with us—formula music that is mildly successful, takes no chances, and is as interchangeable as bottles of Mrs. Butterworth's Pancake Syrup on a grocery store shelf.

One of the biggest problems with this album is that the material, most of it written by Killen and McDowell is almost embarrassingly weak (*I Never Felt So Much Love In One Bed* is a fair and accurate example)—the Mormon Tabernacle Choir couldn't save *24 Hours Of Love* or *How Far Do You Want To Go*. C'mon guys, Conway Twitty covered this same ground while you were still in knickers drooling over centerfold photographs, and at least he did it well. Next thing you know, these guys'll probably be recording *McArthur Park*. There's an awful lot of unemployed songwriters in Music City. I suggest you use them, Ronnie, right after you get another producer.

MICHAEL BANE

Billy Earl McClelland
Zero Hindsight
Elektra 6E258

Billy Earl McClelland's *Zero Hindsight* is another impressive debut album forging ahead in a new country music direction. One of Nashville's up and coming songwriters, McClelland is from the generation of young talents who grew up listening not only to country music but to rock 'n roll as well. The two styles have always had close ties and this album effectively meshes them together.

McClelland's throaty vocals are equally comfortable on the softer, more acoustic numbers, or on the raunchier, rock-edged tunes. Skip McQuinn's production is refreshing, and some of the finest musicians anywhere are listed as contributing to the album.

Of the most ethereal, sen-

sitive love ballads, two stand out—*Waiting For You (To Come Back)* and *Let's Get Together Again*, which sounds like a potential single release capable of fitting into various radio formats. Both were co-written with Rock Killough.

McClelland and company can kick out the jams too, as evidenced by tunes like *Katina*, a country rocker guaranteed to shake the rafters; *My Old Lady*, a funky blues (Stevie Wonder oughtta hear this one); and *Still Hanging On*, another cooker with plenty of funk in the vein of Little Feat. Killough co-wrote the latter tune as well.

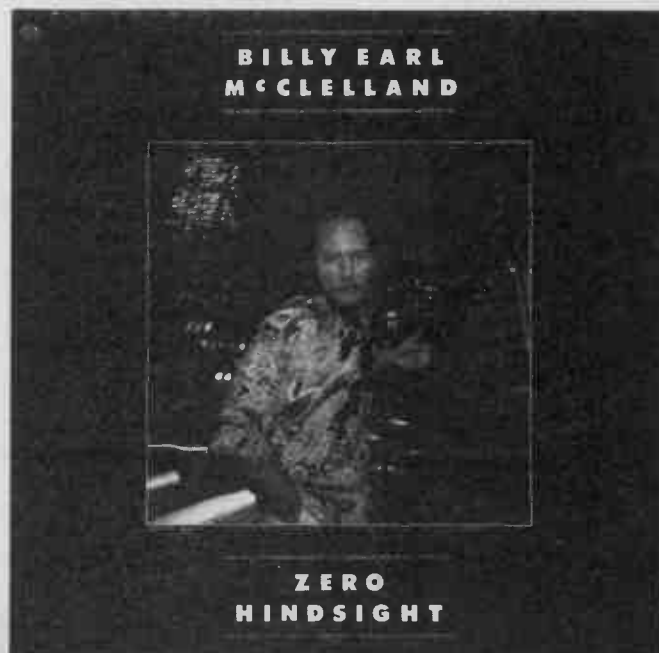
While the more traditional artists don't have to worry about any competition from McClelland, this album may serve as a barometer of where country music is headed over the next few years as it becomes more popularized.

As the title of the album

rather cryptically states, Billy Earl McClelland ain't lookin'

back over his shoulder.

KELLY DELANEY



Record Reviews



Jerry Lee Lewis When Two Worlds Collide

Elektra 6E-254

Everyone pretty much agrees by now that the association between Jerry Lee and Elektra has been one of the happier artist-label unions of the past couple of years. Jerry Lee tends

to wear out record labels anyway. He stayed with Sun until the early sixties, when it started to atrophy, then went to Smash/Mercury, the label that revived him as a viable artist. By the mid-seventies, his records were getting pretty soft, at least by his standards.

And though he wore out producers Sam Phillips, Jack Clement and Jerry Kennedy, I'm not sure he can do it with Eddie Kilroy, who produced his first successful Elektra set. Kilroy seems to understand that the Killer needs different outlets. The first album was largely a reaffirmation of his whiskey-fueled rockabilly madness, while this one takes a number of excursions into hard country, Dixieland and even the Tin Pan Alley ditties he loves,

without relying on any standard Music Row production cliches.

Not that this is a complete break from the previous album. *Rockin' Jerry Lee* and *Good News Travels Fast* are marvels worthy of the Sun Studios. *Who Will Buy the Wine*, the old Billy Mize chestnut and *Honky Tonk Stuff* are the sort of things that got him back on the country charts in the first place. But it is rare to hear him playing *Alabama Jubilee*, an old pop tune that he's obviously been doing since he started pounding that old upright back in Ferriday as a kid, and he gets a lot of the ragtime barrelhouse piano licks in that inspired him back then. *Toot, Toot, Tootsie Goodbye* the Al Jolson standard might seem an odd choice, yet he once described Jolson as

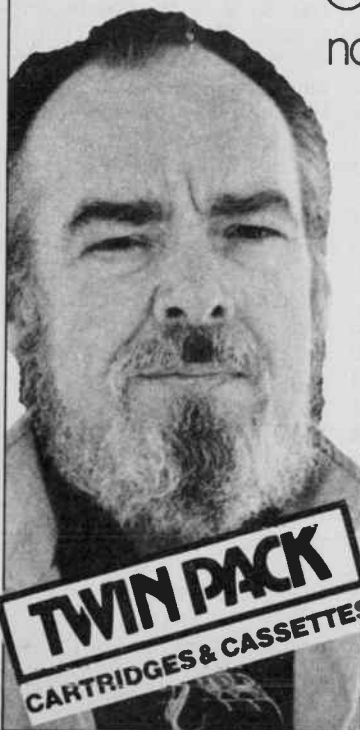
a hero (and compared himself to him) in this very magazine a few years ago, and he's totally comfortable with *I Only Want A Buddy, Not A Sweetheart*, another tune with roots light years from Memphis or Nashville. The title tune, currently high on the charts, is a perfect single, though Ken Lovelace's bluesy fiddle works better than the dull, droning string section.

I've never really felt any producer really explored the creative potential that Jerry Lee has under all his wildness, preferring the security of the status quo. Apparently Kilroy's going to be the exception, and that's one exciting mothah-humpin' thought!!!

RICH KIENZLE

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Record Reviews

Mac Davis
It's Hard To Be Humble
Casa Blanca NB LP-7207

Over the last decade or so, Mac Davis has distinguished himself as an excellent songwriter (*Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me*, *In the Ghetto*, etc), a fine entertainer, an engaging—if somewhat lightweight—personality, and pretty decent recording artist.

Somehow in the past few years though, it seemed like his writing and recording were beginning to take a back seat to his entertaining; and they seemed to suffer as he spent more and more of his time appearing on network TV specials and at Las Vegas casinos.

But recently, it seems like Davis has finally come back from his self-imposed, seven-figure limbo. First, there was the fine acting performance he turned in when he played opposite Nick Nolte in the feature film, *North Dallas Forty*. Now there is **It's Hard To Be Humble**, his latest, and arguably, his best LP ever.

Its Hard To Be Humble was produced by Larry Butler who also handles production for Kenny Rogers and Charlie Rich. The album features one of the finest and most carefully chosen collections of songs I've heard on a Nashville-produced album in some time. It just proves once again—contrary to the excuses given by many producers for turning out albums “stuffed” with uneven material—that there are enough good songs out there at any given time to fill an album, if you just take the time to look for them.

Five of the songs on **It's Hard to Be Humble** were either written or cowritten by Davis himself. Originals like *I Will Always Love You*, *Tequila Sheila*, and *I Know You're Out There Somewhere*, indicate

that he's clearly regained his second wind as a writer of considerable depth and versatility.

The gaps between these fine originals are amply filled with equally strong songs by distinguished writers like Curly Putman, Rafe Van Hoy, Ben Peters, Bob Morrison, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil.

Whatever talents Davis had back in the days when he wrote and made hits out of songs like *Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me* and *Somethin's Burnin'*, he certainly hasn't lost. I for one am glad that he's once again regained his enthusiasm for writing and recording.

BOB ALLEN



BURIED TREASURES

by Rich Kienzle

Two new—and highly worthwhile—Johnny Cash LPs recently showed up on my doorstep, both by way of Germany, and since he's been celebrating the 25th anniversary of his musical career, they're particularly appropriate. **Tall Men** (Bear Family BFX 15033) brings together material, largely unissued, available only on American singles or only in Germany, recorded from 1951 to 1967. The rollicking title track, from 1961, features some wry humor and a sassy female backup chorus. *Foolish Questions* is a talking blues of the *Boy Named Sue* variety. *I Tremble For You* is a rare Cash performance alone with acoustic guitar. Two of the numbers were cut in German, and sound odd, but Cash, obviously singing the lyrics from a sheet, is surprisingly natural.

The second LP, **Destination Victoria Station** VS-150 was originally compiled as part of an endorsement Cash did for the Victoria Station restaurant chain, which included radio commercial spots. I frankly don't know whether the album's available, as it once was, through the restaurants (it came out in 1975), but it, unlike most of these sort of promotional items, is a surprisingly successful anthology of previously released train songs like *Hey Porter* (a Columbia rerecording—not the Sun original), *John Henry*, *City of*

New Orleans, *Folsom Prison Blues*, *Texas 1947* and *Destination Victoria Station*, an original tune written for the album unavailable anywhere else. Bear Family also bought up a number of these, and all things considered, it's nearly as good as his old **Ride This Train** LP.

Anyone who's lived in Texas any length of time is familiar with veteran bandleader Adolph Hofner, who's been playing (and continues to) around Texas for the past 41 years. Hofner, who led one of the finest small western swing bands in Texas before and during World War II, is not only popular for his swing, but in a state with a high concentration of German Americans, for his stops-out polka music, This is an aspect of Texas music that few have noticed, but an important one. **South Texas Swing: 1935-1955** (Arhoolie 5020) looks at his career from 1937, when he was still a sideman/vocalist, through the forties, when his San Antonians with the phenomenal J.R. Chatwell on fiddle held sway over the dancehalls of Texas. There are swing tunes (*South Texas Swing*), Spanish-flavored tunes (*Maria Elina*) ballads (*Mistakes*) and unabashedly ethnic polkas (*Shiner Song*, *Jessie Polka*). And to give an idea of the ambience of Hofner in the fifties, when he led a band minimally different from his other bands, there's an excerpt

from a mid-fifties radio show that features the band on some hot swing tunes. Chatwell's fiddle is, again, outstanding.

The old Flatt and Scruggs band featured one of the greatest dobro players in existence: Josh Graves. Still highly active, Graves has done countless recordings with others, as well as his own album. Cowboy Carl Records, a label known mostly for its rockabilly reissues, has recently reissued an old, out of print Graves album. **Josh Graves and Friends** (CCLP 102) features Graves in 1962 and 1963, recording with greats like Chubby Wise, Jake Tullock and Brother Oswald on 14 hot numbers, including a rumba (!) and a bizarre rendition of *Old MacDonald Had A Farm*.

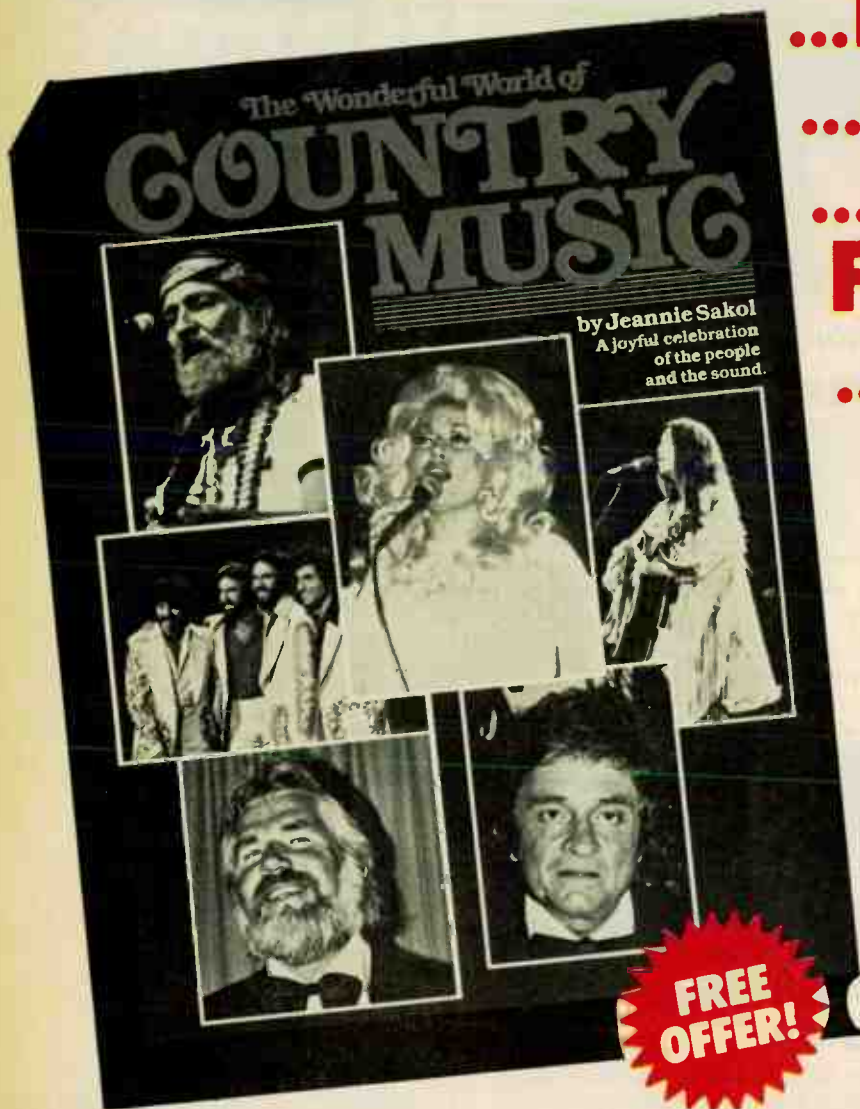
The Seldom Scene, one of America's great bluegrass bands, with another legendary dobroist, Mike Auldridge are in fine, relaxed form on **Act Four** (Sugar Hill 3709), doing contemporary material like Billy Joe Shaver's *Ride Me Down easy* to Jimmie Roger's *California Blues* and *San Antonio Rose*.

The Cash LPs are available for \$8.98 each and the Adolph Hofner for \$6.98 plus \$2 postage from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Ave. El Cerrito, CA 94530. The Josh Graves is \$6.00 plus \$1.75 postage from Cowboy Carl Records, Box 116, Park Forest IL 60466.

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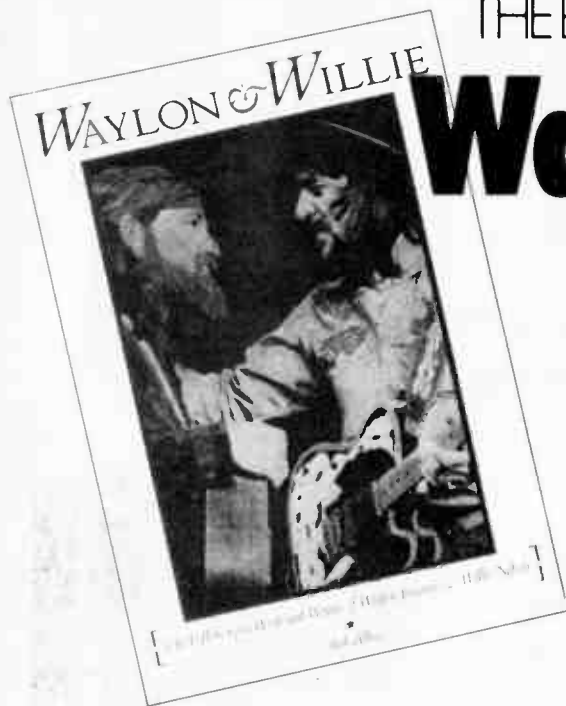
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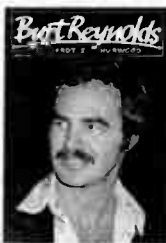
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PICKERS

Special Report

Bob Wootton: Pickin' For Cash

The death of Luther Perkins in August, 1968 caused a seemingly irreplaceable void in John Cash's band. For Luther and Marshall Grant were the band which Cash first bravely presented to Sam Phillips at Sun Records some 12 years before.

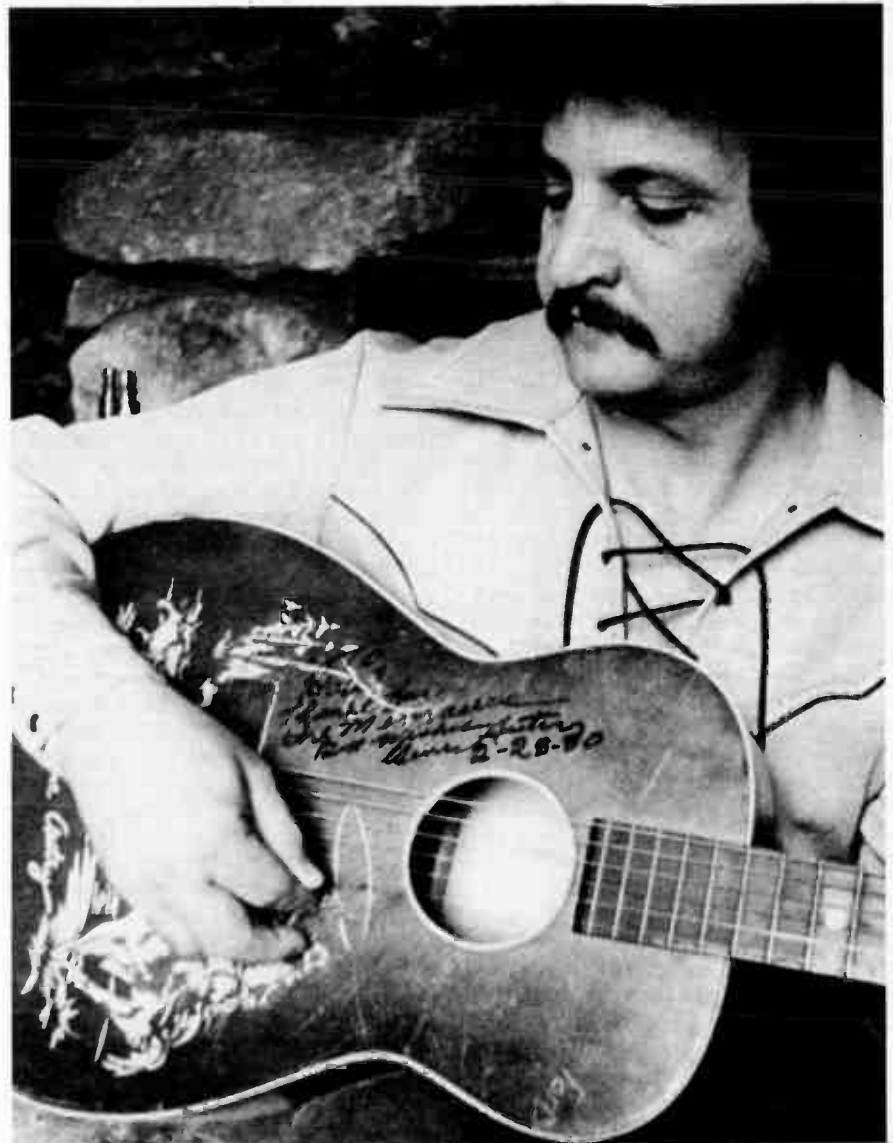
It was widely acknowledged that Luther's simple, straightforward guitar style had a great deal to do with the success enjoyed by Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two. For in its dogged, primitive way it perfectly captured the resileless drive, the plain-spoken urgency and the compelling fierceness of Johnny Cash's early music.

From out of nowhere came Bob Wootton, an Arkansas born, California raised, guitar player from Tulsa, who showed up, unexpectedly, at a Johnny Cash show one day, and knew every Johnny Cash song, and every Luther Perkins guitar lick, all in the proper keys. Bob Wootton filled the void left by Luther Perkins that day, and has continued to do so for the past 13 years.

How did you come to know the Luther Perkins style so thoroughly?

I had a little band in Oklahoma, and I went around playing nightclubs, rodeos, bars till daylight. A lot of the songs we did were Johnny Cash songs—but I couldn't find anybody to play the guitar the way Luther played it. Of course, I studied the Johnny Cash songs and the way Luther played. If I didn't play it, somebody else would be playing *Folsom Prison Blues* on a steel guitar or something, and I'd say "that's not right." So, I mean, I already played guitar—but I never considered myself a real good guitar player. I played mostly rhythm. When I couldn't find anyone to play the Luther Perkins sound and licks, I'd do it myself I learned it to go along with the singing I was doing. Evidently it was the Lord's will.

I understand that when they started the band, all three of them played guitar. They decided one day, one would have to play the bass, one would have to play lead, and one



Bob Wootton, curator of Cash's "boom-chicka-boom" since Luther Perkins' death in 1968, shown with his fifty year old, autographed Gene Autry Roundup Model.

the rhythm guitar.

(Laughs) Luther was the *better* of the guitar players, so they let him get an electric guitar, and Marshall bought an old up-

right bass. I think Marshall owned all the instruments because he was the only one with a good job.

The story of how you joined Johnny Cash

approaches legend. Could you tell it in your own words?

I was living in Tulsa, driving a truck and playing music, too. This guy came in and I was singing some Johnny Cash stuff and he said, "Boy, you like Johnny Cash don't you?" And I said 'yeah.' And he said, "Well, he's gonna be in Arkansas"—this was like on a Saturday—he said, "He's gonna be in Arkansas Tuesday." This was September 17th, 1968. So then Tuesday I went to Arkansas. So we whooped into the airport at Fayetteville, and we hung around, and hung around, and hung around not knowing that he had landed in Tulsa and rented a car. We probably passed him on the way down. But somebody called the Lieutenant Governor and told him that part of Johnny Cash's band was at the airport. And they thought that I was part of his band, because I had the dark hair, and I was dressed in black pants and a black sport coat with a white shirt. I guess being a Johnny Cash fan kinda showed on me.

But the Lieutenant Governor came from the park out to the airport to get me. He said, "I'm the Lieutenant Governor, and I have a car out here waiting for you." And I said, "Okay." So me and the girl I was going with, got in the limousine. And they took us to the park, and we just shoved our way to the flat-bed truck where John was singing and W.S. was playing drums. John was playing an old Fender flattop that was out of tune and W.S. was playing drums, and that's all that there was. But there were eight thousand people out there.

Carl Perkins and Marshall had gotten stranded in Memphis 'cause of the weather. Carl had been playing guitar for John after Luther died. So it was John and June and W.S., and that was all. So, I walked to the front of the flatbed truck, and my chin was about six inches from John Cash's feet, and I looked straight up at him. You know, man, I was awed.

I heard somebody going "psst," and I looked back behind him and it was June motioning "come here," and I looked around me because I thought she was talking to somebody else. But it was me. So I went back there and she said, "You play guitar, don't you?" I said, "yes ma'm." So she stopped him in the middle of his show, and called him off stage and introduced him to me. He told me later that when he shook hands with me and saw the gleam in my eye, he could tell that I could play his music. He said, "You play my kind of music?" And I said 'yes,' and he handed me his guitar and said, "Here tune this." And he said Carl Perkins' electric guitar is over there, and so I tuned it up. He said, "When I come on stage we're gonna kick it off with *Big River, Walk The Line, and Folsom Prison*. After that I don't know what we're gonna do. Do you know those?" And I said, "Yes sir." So I went in and I tuned the two guitars. Meanwhile they found a bass player in the audience—

so now Johnny Cash had a whole band.

I wasn't scared. It didn't seem unnatural to me. It seemed like I had always been there. And so when they introduced him, and he came bouncing out on stage with that guitar strapped around his back, he kind of stopped and looked at me when I kicked the song off. He said, "Do that again." So I kicked it off again. I mean, I didn't ask him what key or nothing. I had learned them all off the record. So we did about an hour show. We did songs, he told me later, that they had never done on stage because Luther couldn't play 'em. Like *The Tennessee Flattop Box* that was played on a flattop by Roy Nichols, who plays guitar for Merle Haggard. He played on the session and played the break on the flattop. He offered to pay me, you know, after the show. I wouldn't take it. So he told me, "Give me your phone number. If I'm ever through Tulsa, I'll give you a call. Maybe we could have a cup of coffee or something." He said, "Because I'm not gonna hire anybody right now."

He called me on Thursday. They had already told me they were going to Harrison, Arkansas for another concert, and he said, "What are you doing?" Of course, I was up getting dressed to go to Harrison, Arkansas. And when he called me, I like fell through the floor. I mean, I didn't expect him to *ever* call me. He said, "Bring your guitar because," he said, "I want Marshall to hear you."

We played that night, and my amplifier had wheels that kept trying to roll off the stage, and I was so nervous I could hardly play. It was completely different than two days before. Two days before I felt like I belonged there, you know, but on the second time it was terrible. I felt that I really did bad, you know. I was embarrassed, and I wanted to go home. I didn't never want to see him again. But, he told me, he said, "I think I'm gonna give you a try." He said, "I'm not gonna hire you right now, I'm gonna put you on a six month probation." He said, "I don't care how good a guitar player you are, or anything. The main thing is, can you live with these people on the road?" He said, "Because you're gonna have to live with them." He said, "So if you can live with them, that's more important than how you play guitar." That's been almost 13 years ago. **I understand you have a very large collection of guitars. Could you tell us about them?**

I have a Gibson Hummingbird I bought in Tulsa when I decided I was going to be a singing star. And I have an old pre-war Gibson J-45 that I bought when I played in the bars and clubs, 'cause I didn't want to use my guitar that I was gonna be a star with. The J-45 is one of those guitars you can make an E-chord on, and run around the block and it will still be humming when you got back.

I've been given several guitars down through the years. Microfret made a guitar

that was chordless, and I still have that thing, Kustom give me a guitar that I had used the very first time I played with Johnny Cash, the second time, actually, I played for him. So, they came in and gave all of us equipment.

I have a Martin that John gave me on his last tour, when he was going to retire—so he gave it to me because he knows I keep stuff, I guess. And of course, I have a Music Man.

What had you been using before? The Fender Telecaster?

Back in February, the day I went to see Gene Autry, Johnny Cash presented me with a guitar—a Sears Roebuck Gene Autry Roundup made about 1930. Gene autographed the thing for me, which just made it worth . . . I wouldn't take a million dollars for it, even if I was hungry. I'd go down and play it, and get somebody to throw me a quarter. I love it. John and June gave me that. They found it in an antique show. That's my pride and joy—of all the guitars I own.

I guess all together, counting the gut-string guitars and my Gene Autry guitar, I probably have around thirty guitars. Most of 'em, I don't even know where they are, or what kind of condition they're in. **So what are you playing now?**

Right now I'm playing this Mohler solid body that John had made for me. It's got solid gold keys. It's about a \$2800 or \$3000 guitar. But it's a beautiful guitar. He had one especially made with my name in gold plate up on the head of it. It's just some kid lives in California, or Washington, or somewhere up in there that builds his guitars.

John has a beautiful 6-string with a dove on the head of it, and then he has a 12-string that was made by this kid. You see, we're going completely wireless on stage. All the microphones are wireless, and all the guitars are wireless. So that's why we went for these guitars.

What kind of amps are you using?

Using Music Man. I have two amplifiers that Music Man had made for me. They're the only two in existence. They're called the 610. They're like 130 watts. My wife said they just sent my new shipment in—so I'm going now to what they call the 412, which is a smaller cabinet, and it will be 150 watts.

You've been with Johnny Cash 13 years come September. How have your perceptions changed since then?

I had a lot of people saying, 'you love Johnny Cash too much, you can't work for him. You'll learn to hate him because you'll find out what he's really like.' But it has not been true, and it's going on thirteen years now. And I love him more than I ever thought possible. And June is just like a sister. Of course, I married her sister, Anita, so we're all kin now.

by Douglas B. Green

A Visit To The Gibson Factory

by Dave Rauscher

Over the years the Gibson company has produced some of the finest musical instruments in the world. Gibson makes all kinds of guitars from acoustics to electrics. There are some very affordable models, as well as many top of the line, reasonably expensive and very fine instruments. Their guitars have been played by: Billy Grammer of the Grand Ole Opry, Les Paul, Charlie Daniels, Jerry Reed, Jack Green, Box Car Willie, Charlie Louvin, the Wilburn Brothers and even Elvis. But when it comes to banjos and mandolins, the name Gibson is a living legend.

Their Mastertone banjos are considered by many to be the standard of the industry. Earl Scruggs, Roy Clark, Tom T. Hall, Barbara Mandrell, Eric Weissburg, Brother Oswald, Sonny Osborne, Ralf Stanley, and Tony Trishka have played Mastertones, to name just a few. When you see a country performer with a banjo it is almost always a Gibson RB-250 Mastertone.

Gibson also makes mandolins. Your parents or grandparents can probably remember when mandolin orchestras were the rage in America. And Gibson mandolins set the standards. Now-a-days mandolins are not as popular as they used to be. But whenever you see a mandolin, whether it is an inexpensive instrument, or a finely hand made one, it is almost always a Gibson "A" or "F" Model. When it comes to serious country pickin', the pinnacle is to own the legendary Gibson F-5.

Most mandolin players dream of owning an original 1920s F-5, and they want one of the very few that were actually signed by Lloyd Loar, the acoustical engineer who supervised the construction. He only signed the ones that were considered to be the very finest. Most of these instruments are now in the hands of collectors or professional players. They rarely go up for sale, but when they do they can cost \$7,000 and up.

So Gibson is doing it again. They are

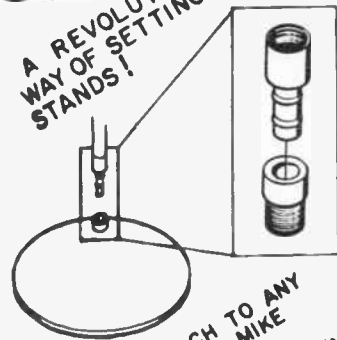


The top and back of the Gibson F-5 mandolin are hand-carved. If they are not perfect, they go straight to the scrap-heap.

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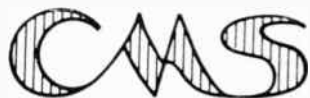
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recreating the F-5L (L for Loar) mandolin after a 1924 model. The original plans and tools are being used and the quality is superb. The suggested retail price is \$2,499, but only six a month can be made because the work is so demanding.

To get a firsthand look at this exciting project, we visited the Gibson plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan where Bruce Bolen, Gibson's Director of Research and Development, and his assistant Tim Shaw gave us a complete tour. It was impressive to say the very least.

The arched tops and backs of the F-5L are rough-carved by a patterning machine. The necks and fingerboards are also rough-shaped by machine. The rest of the work is done almost entirely by hand by a couple of fine craftsmen, Herman Meintz and Dick Doan, sitting off by themselves in the midst of this huge factory.

The tops and backs are carved, scraped and sanded by hand until they reach the required thicknesses. They are made quite thin at the outer edges and carefully graduated becoming thicker towards the center. When the builder thinks he has everything perfect, the tops are put on a very special machine that tests for the proper flexibility under simulated playing conditions. If the tops are too flexible they are discarded. If they are too stiff, a few thousandths of an inch of wood are scraped off and the top is re-tested. The process is repeated until the top either becomes perfect or becomes too thin for Gibson standards and goes to the scrap pile. It takes a lot of time.

Next the sides are bent, assembled and joined to the backs. The tops get two tone regulating bars of wood glued to the under side and are carefully adjusted. Then the top is glued to the rest of the body. The neck is hand fitted to the body because its alignment is critical. The joint is small and quite complex as you can see in the picture. Tiny scraps of wood are removed from all

of the many surfaces until the joint is snug and the alignment is perfect. The finger board is installed and at last you have something that looks like a mandolin. It is now ready for the extremely painstaking work of inlaying the peg head and installing all of the fancy bindings.

Next the mandolin is spray painted by an expert who varies the color from very dark at the edges to quite light towards the center. This laquer is then scraped away from the bindings and inlays and the instrument is sprayed with several coats of specially tinted laquer to make it look aged and buffed to a high gloss, mirror-like finish. The hardware, all made to the original specs (the bridge, the tailpiece, the tuning machines, the pickguard, etc.) is installed, and—eureka—you have a mandolin. But not quite.

Each mandolin can still be slightly adjusted by removing tiny amounts of wood from the tone bars. They can be reached using special scrapers that will fit through the F holes. Half of the mandolin is made to resonate to the key of A the other half to B. Finally, weeks after he began, the craftsman has an F-5L mandolin.

Each F-5L is signed by its maker in the Lloyd Loar tradition (No other Gibson instruments are hand signed today) and given its own serial number. It is proudly ready for sale.

We asked Abe Wechter, a Gibson consultant and one of the men who researched and supervised the F-5L project if the new mandolins are exact copies in every way. The answer was, "Not quite." Where the neck joined the top on the original F-5 there were two pieces of wood completely separated by a strip of inlay that supported the fingerboard. Over the years these pieces could loosen and create a problem. The new F-5Ls use the same piece of wood for both the neck and the fingerboard support. Although it looks exactly the same, the inlay no longer goes all the way under

the fingerboard causing weakness. The old original tuning machines were also a problem. When the strings were tightened, so much tension was placed on the shaft where the strings were tied that the gears could be forced apart slightly and, over the years, stripped. Modern tuners are set up so that this pressure forces the gears together not apart. But using modern machines meant that either the holes in the peg head or the tuning knobs would have to be moved as much as a half of an inch away from their original position, ruining the classic look of the peghead.

The solution was to use original tuning machines but where the shaft passes through the wood a metal sleeve was inserted and fitted to extremely tight tolerances. It replaces the collar that masks the holes through the peg head on the original. The shaft can no longer tilt and pull the gears apart. And the visible part of the sleeve was made to look exactly like the original metal collar. Again, to the eye, the new F-5Ls look exactly the same as the originals. And they sound like the originals too. They are great. The trebles

are clear and true and the basses are nice and bright. They sound just like the F-5s played by the likes of Seals & Crofts, David Grisman, Jessie McReynolds, Andy Statman, Sam Bush ... and, of course, the master, Bill Monroe.

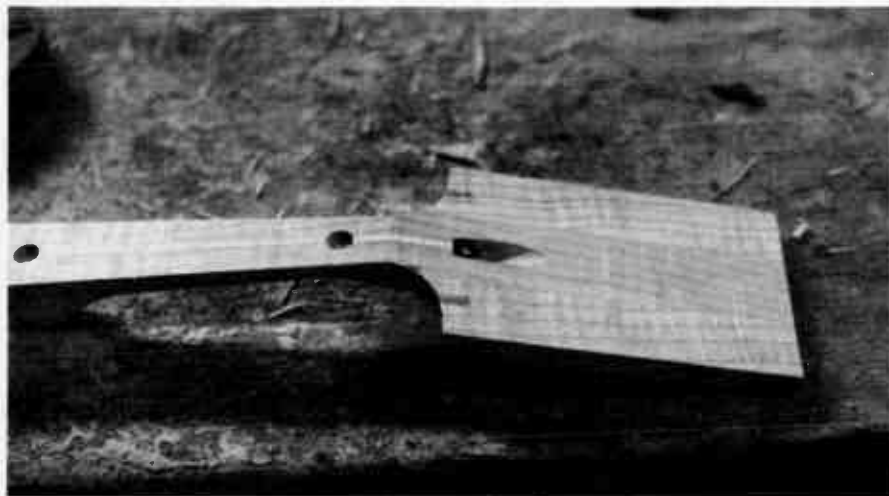
Bruce Bolen gave us what he feels is the company philosophy: "In the area of acoustic instruments, we've gone through several changes to improve our image ... to recapture some of the heritage we had years back and at the same time do things that lend themselves more to modern technology. We want to make an instrument that is good, as well as affordable, and to make it what people expect from us."

John Derloo, the plant manager is justifiably proud of the F-5Ls. He says that Gibson can't keep up to the demand for these fabulous instruments. They just can't hire enough fine mandolin makers.

Jim and Bruce Bolen are now considering whether to reissue other classic Gibsons built to original specs. We hope they do. ■



Before hardware and finish.



The joint where the neck fits the body must be hand-fitted.



A finished Gibson F-5L.

Care And Repair of Your Guitar

Most guitars that have been played several years need at least minor repairs to put them in perfect playing condition. However, some used guitars, although they seem in good shape, will need major repair work.

If yours is in that category, particularly if it is a good one, don't rush to the first repair shop listed in the Yellow Pages. All the major guitar makers have lists of authorized shops which they recommend to you if you write and ask (see list below). Further, you should feel free to write these people to ask advice on any problem you may have with one of their instruments. If for some reason you can't reach the manufacturer of your guitar, take it to several different repair shops for estimates.

These same questions—what repairs are needed and who should do them—also apply if you happen to be thinking about buying a good used guitar.

Buying a used guitar can save you money. It can also end up costing you more than a new one. Some case histories will illustrate the point.

First, a good story. A man in the N.Y. area recently bought a used Martin D-35. It was priced low because the neck wasn't perfectly straight, the bridge had a crack in it and the frets were badly worn. He took the guitar to an authorized Martin repairman where the neck was straightened and refretted and a new bridge was installed. He now has a perfect guitar, and he figures he saved \$300.

On the other hand, a man in Texas bought a seemingly perfect brand name guitar. There wasn't a scratch on it. The only thing wrong was that the action (string height above the frets) was high. He figured that a smaller bridge saddle would make everything fine. However, the previous owner had used very heavy gauge strings. The whole top was bowed out, bridge and all. The guitar was sent to an unqualified repair person who lowered the action by cutting off part of the bridge and putting in a new saddle. The strings then had too little angle from the bridge pins to the saddle. They buzzed a little and broke often. Finally the guitar got professional help. The bridge was removed. The top bracing was replaced to correct the bowing, and a new bridge was installed. In the end, he paid much more than the price of a new guitar.

Roger Sadowsky, in New York City, is a well qualified guitar technician. His shop is an authorized repair facility for Martin, Gibson, and others. We asked his opinion about what to look for in determining needed repairs for your own guitar or when buying a used one. The following is Sadowsky's list of the main repair questions you are liable to encounter:

THE PEG HEAD: Check the spot where the peg head joins the neck. A hair line crack is a sign of disaster to come. When the joint becomes weak enough, string tension will tear the peg head off, usually leaving a \$70 to \$150 repair job. Installing a new neck can cost \$300 to \$450. Also check the tuning machines. They should be easy to turn with very little "gear lash." Tune each string down a little, then tune it up again. If there is excessive gear lash, you will have to turn the knob a quarter turn or more before anything happens. Replacing tuners is not very expensive: \$20 to \$50.

THE NECK: Sight down the neck to be sure it is straight and untwisted. If it is twisted you have a \$150 to \$200 problem. If it is warped (curves up) or bowed (curves down), the problem can often be solved by a simple and inexpensive truss rod adjustment. If there is no truss rod in the guitar in question, you have another \$150 to \$200

problem. Check the frets for wear. Minor fret wear can be cured by filing down all the frets uniformly and re-rounding them. The costs could be \$30 to \$50. When there is *major* fret wear, most qualified repair people prefer to completely refret a guitar even if only a few of the frets are worn. All the frets must be removed, the neck is straightened and squared if needed, and the new frets are installed and leveled. This could cost from \$100 to \$200.

Check the spot where the neck joins the body. If the joint is opening it will only get worse. Removing and resetting the neck can cost \$50 to \$100.

THE BODY: Cracks, if left unrepaired, will get worse. They should be repaired immediately before dirt or oil can enter and discolor the crack and make regluing almost impossible. Minor crack repair can be inexpensive and end up invisible. Major cracks that get dirty require removal of wood on both sides and splinting with new wood. This kind of repair can be costly. The body can be checked for bowing by laying a straight edge across the top rear and parallel to the bridge. There will usually be a small gap at both edges of the guitar, but if the gaps exceed a quarter inch, major repair work may be needed.

THE BRIDGE: Check the bridge for cracks. Commonly they are found running between the bridge pin holes. Also examine the rear of the bridge where it joins the top. There should be no lifting of the bridge. If there is a weak joint, the bridge can snap off with great force and tear up the top wood.

The good news is that bridge repairs are usually not expensive. The old one can be removed and a new one installed for about \$50. If you are buying a used guitar, once you are satisfied that you are getting good value in terms of physical condition, be sure that the guitar sounds right. Be particularly aware of buzzing sounds. Buzzes could be caused by loose bracing within the guitar. While a loose brace is, in itself, not a major problem, it could be a sign that the instrument did not receive the proper care. If it was stored in excessively moist or dry conditions, much of its structure could be weakened.

While all this may sound gloomy, armed with proper information, you may be able to avoid big repair jobs and perhaps save some money the next time you buy a guitar. Remember, used guitars are fine instruments but they are not covered by warranties. Be careful and you can still do very well. And remember to buy a hard shell case. It is not a luxury. It is a necessity to properly care for your guitar. ■



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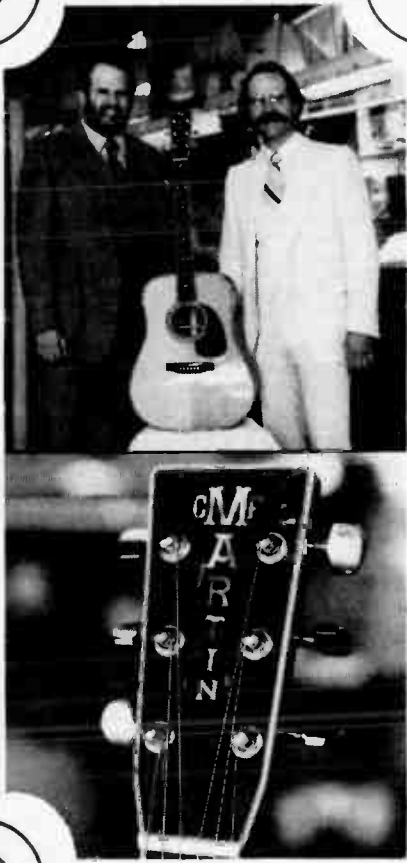
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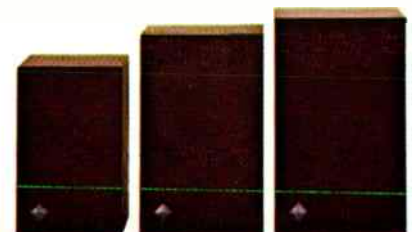
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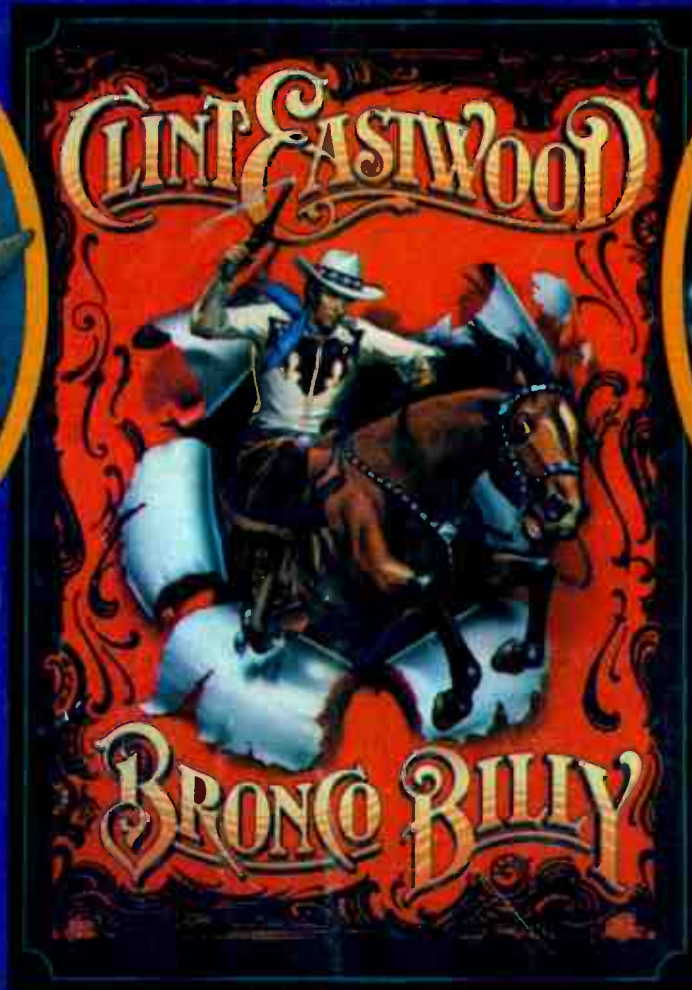
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