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Plus: 20 Questions with Irlene Mandrell**

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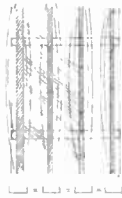
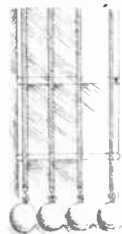
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COUNTRY MUSIC

Cover Photo

Shot in Atlanta during the filming of the upcoming *Sharky's Machine*.
Color photo on page 41 also by Robbie Robinson.

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His "Good Ole Boy" films (*Gator*, *W.W. & The Dixie Dance Kings*, *Smokey and the Bandit I & II*) are practically classics. His secret - make movies that seem like country songs—with a little bit of crying in the beer, a little car chasing, and a little bit of little darlings thrown in with 100% humor. With his new movie, *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*, co-starring none other than Dolly Parton, about to be filmed, Burt was happy to talk about country music.

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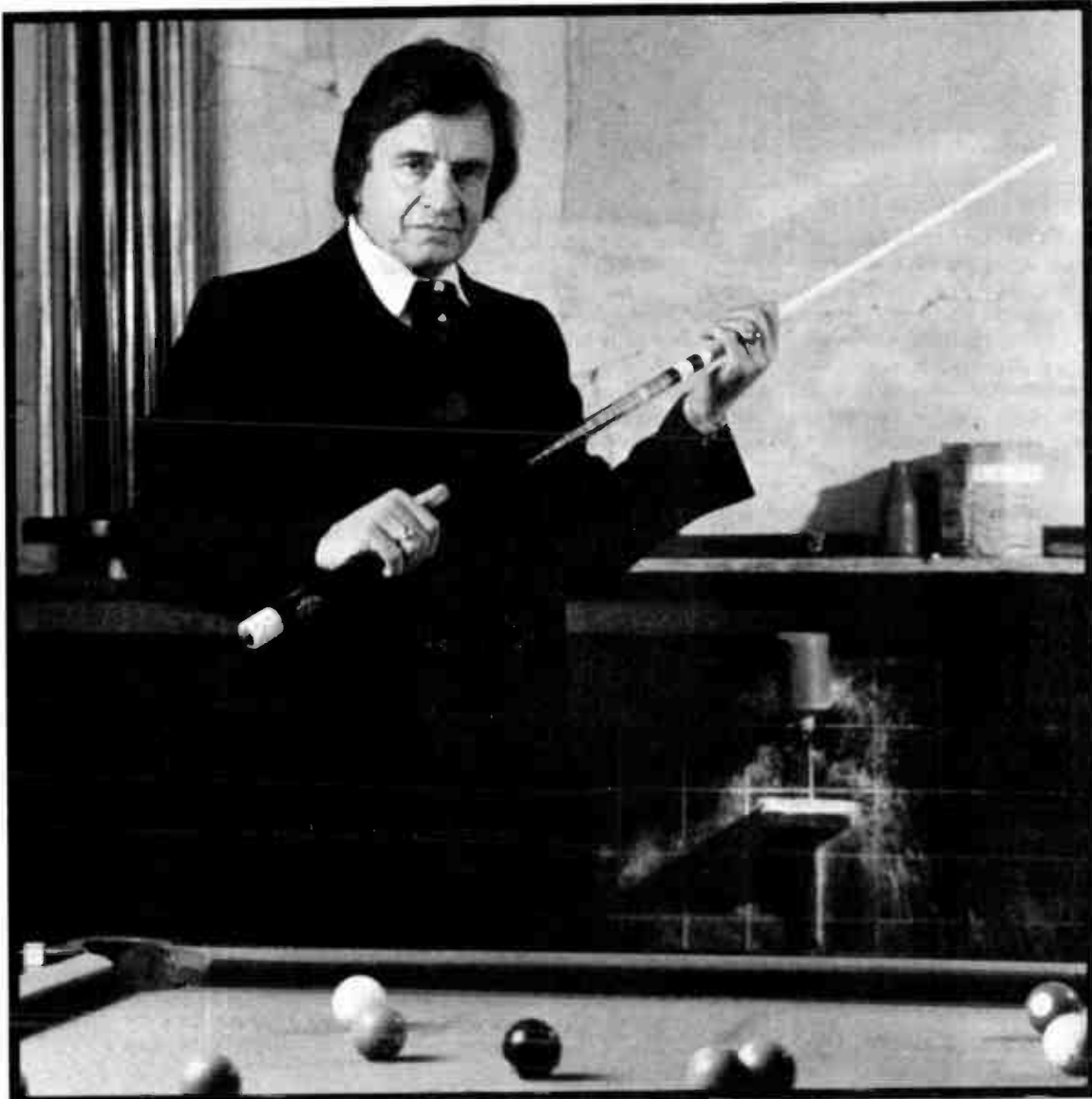
66 The Country Music Bookshelf

This past year has seen a number of country music related books, from autobiographies and biographies (two on Hank Williams) to specific areas of country music. Some are outstanding and a few, downright disappointing. Here's a sample of what's available for summer reading.

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69 Record Reviews

Johnny Paycheck, Tom Jones, Joe Stampley, Johnny Duncan & Janie Fricke, Billy Swan, Merle Haggard, Bobby Bare, Ronnie Milsap, Frizzel & West, Ed Bruce, John Anderson, Charly McClain, Johnny Rodriguez, Lee Clayton & more!



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Letters

Wants To Interview Don

Just received my April issue of *Country Music*. I really enjoy the magazine that I have subscribed to for over two years. One question or request: When may we read and see an extensive article with photos about the giant Don Williams? He's unbeatable in my book.

Work on it, please. Get the Number One country music magazine together with the Number One singer, Don Williams!

AL SMIT
SALEM, MISSOURI

P.S. I would be glad to interview Don as Johnny did Waylon.

She Wouldn't Mind Waiting

In regard to the letter published in the May issue of *Country Music Magazine* about Hank Williams, Jr., I would like to say this to Rebecca West:

I have never had the privilege (and I do mean privilege) of seeing Hank, Jr. in concert, but I can tell you this, and I know I speak for others when I say that I would certainly stand around for eight to ten hours to see Hank sing for even ten minutes. I would not condemn him for being late (as he probably had a good reason), and any true Hank, Jr. fan knows that the beauty of the man and his music is that he does it his way, and if you don't like it, you can kiss his a—. After all, he owes you nothing, he didn't ask you to go to his concert, you made your own choice, and if you weren't satisfied with the fact that he at least showed up, then you can just kiss my a—.

Keep on singing and doing things your own way, Hank. We are behind you 100 percent and we still love you.

CHRISTINE BALLOU
CAVENDISH, VERMONT

A Fellow Cash Fan

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the April issue with the article about the Johnny Cash TV movie and the interview with Waylon by John.

As you can probably guess, I idolize John! I'd be sitting around with you watching him count matchbooks! I also think the Carters are wonderful people, and I think just as much of them as I do John.

I'm a junior at East Texas State University where I'm majoring in journalism. I'd like to visit with you sometime: we would

probably have a lot of things in common.

Getting back to John, I treasure the silver anniversary issue. I have three copies!

I had the opportunity to visit with John, June, and Bob Wootton in Tyler, Texas last month. It was great. I'm a representative in the Cash Fan Club. I send out newsletters to other members. Just wanted to let you know that I'm glad you like John, too.

Also, would you please do a story on the Carter Family? Helen and Anita Carter, Helen's son David, and Anita's daughter Lorrie are continuing that wonderful Carter tradition. I know they deserve a lot of praise and recognition. I would really enjoy seeing a nice story on them. Keep up the good work!

VICKI LANGDON
DENISON, TEXAS

Who's Vernon Dalhart?

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for several years, and have written you several times complaining about the lack of old-timers mentioned in your magazine. But that is now past. Although I would still prefer more about the old-time artists, I must agree that your present format of old and new is probably more acceptable to a larger group of readers. But I still have a complaint against the entire country music field in general, and the Country Music Association in particular. Why has one of the first recording artists, as well as one of the biggest selling early country artists, been neglected for so many years? I refer to Vernon Dalhart. His recording of *The Prisoner's Song* was one of the largest (many say *the largest*) selling records ever released. He recorded hundreds of country songs, many of which are being rediscovered by artists today. He was a popular country singer years before Jimmie Rodgers was ever heard of by most people. I could continue listing his accomplishments, but it would take pages.

With all the above, you still hear little, if anything, about Vernon Dalhart in today's music publications. And worst of all, he has been continually passed over for the Country Music Hall of Fame! I am sure if your readers knew the Vernon Dalhart story, they would agree that an injustice has been done. I know little that I, or others who feel as I do, can do to get Vernon Dalhart into the Hall of Fame. But we

do want to keep his name and accomplishments alive. Your magazine is one forum where this can be done. I would like to see a little comment on Vernon Dalhart from time to time in your magazine. And perhaps, someday soon, an article to introduce him to the many new country fans who know little about him, or may never have heard of him at all.

JACK PALMER
BATTLE CREEK, MISSOURI

Good Planning

I can't tell you how much pleasure I received by watching the television production of *Country Comes Home* with a copy of the April *Country Music Magazine* in my hand. It seemed that almost every performer reviewed in the magazine was on the show (with the exception of Waylon!), and it added an extra dimension to both the magazine and the television show. I did miss Waylon, though. Wonder why he wasn't included?

I've been taking *Country Music Magazine* for several years now and I think you are getting better and better. I always feel after reading it that I know something new about someone, whether they are a "star," a "picker" or even an instrument or stereo.

B. GAY HOEFER
LEWISTON, INDIANA

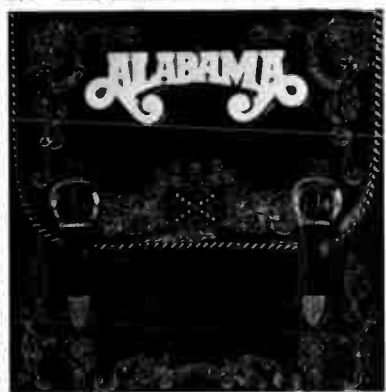
Say It Isn't So

I have been receiving your *Country Music Magazine* for a few years and enjoying it. I know you make both friends and enemies in the business when you say things we do not like about our special country music favorites. But then they are human and make mistakes. If people like myself had their money and were away from home so much, then maybe we would understand. My first thoughts were to ask you to quit writing the bad. Well, so long as it's true. Maybe our prayers will help.

I would love to hear George Jones and Reba McEntire sing a few songs together. But I love him singing alone, too. He sings with so much feeling.

I wanted to let you know how a good old country girl feels about reading your book. Please do some more good and nice things on George Jones. I would also like to hear some more about Cowboy Copas, and what happened to Kathy, his daughter that

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RAZZY BAILEY AHL1 4026
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(Continued from page 4)

used to sing with him.

HELEN McCORMICK
LEESVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Outlaw and the Rockabilly Revisited

Let me wholeheartedly congratulate *Country Music Magazine* for what has truly been a refreshing and innovative approach to the standard journalist/performer format. Today's magazines unfortunately publish many interviews which seem to be infused with a spirit of predictably whitewashed career hype and flaccid personality promotion. In contrast to this seemingly inescapable norm, the interview featured in your April 1981 issue was noteworthy. The novel idea of printing Johnny Cash's rambling discourse with fellow friend and artist Waylon Jennings was without a doubt informative, entertaining, and spontaneous.

DANNY GEBBY
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

In your April issue of *Country Music Magazine*, you ran an article on Waylon Jennings. In the article, he was interviewed by Johnny Cash. It seemed to me that neither guy knew what he was taking about.

When John asked if he had anything he would like to complain about, Waylon replied, "Anything? I'll tell you what. The worst I ever had was wonderful, John."

Celebrity interviews are good, but if any other celebrity interviews Waylon, he should put more time into the story than it seemed Johnny Cash did.

DAVE BLATNER
AURORA, ILLINOIS

This is purely and simply a complimentary message re: your April issue of *Country Music*. Personally, I feel it's the greatest publication of its kind, and I thoroughly enjoyed the Cash-Waylon interview. Those two men were right down to earthy honesty. We need much, much more of that sort of good, honest dialogue, and less of the Bill Buckley long-haired conversation. The good old everyday eighth-grade English is understood by all, whereas William F. Buckley's speech is more like attorney conversation, where the bold print giveth and the fine print taketh away. We need that about like one needs a milk bucket for a bull.

So-o-o, I was wondering if you might get Mr. Cash to interview some more of his good friends, such as Merle Travis and possibly even Merv Griffin. Those two have had long, interesting show business careers. Merle years ago used to ride a motorcycle and carry his guitar around Hollywood, so I'm told, and I was also told he was quite a rounder. Cash could un-

doubtedly get many interesting stories about those days out of Travis, plus much, much more. And Griffin and Cash are quite well acquainted, as I witnessed on Merv's show recently. They were both excellent. This is just food for thought and your consideration.

JACK (DEAN) WILLIAMS
BEAUMONT, CALIFORNIA

Yankees Like Country, Too

I have never written a letter to a magazine before, but I couldn't sit by and not reply to Terri Johnson in your May issue. How could anyone in their right mind say "George Burns, you make me sick." The man is loved the world over and rightly so. It is a miracle in itself how a man his age is still going strong and attempting something new; not many people his age would get off their rocking chairs and pursue a whole new line of work. There aren't many great performers left from years ago and I pray George Burns will be able to do much more in the years to come—he is a legend in his own time.

Another point I disagreed with is the statement, "He's about as country as New York City." Country music is not limited to location; any music is universal, as many entertainers could testify when they bring their music into different countries. Just because we live in the North and don't have a "Southern drawl" doesn't mean we're phonies. Many people in New York loved country music before it became popular, and to try and say you own a certain form of music because it originated in your area is selfish and stupid. Music was written to bring pleasure and a message to people, and the more people who hear and learn to love country music, the better the world will be. I am sure the performers of country music, whether old or new, are happy with the new popularity of their music; it gives them a chance to expand their horizons to places that were never before possible.

Thank you for letting me get this off my chest. Keep up the good work in your magazine. Speaking of your magazine, I send my copy each month, after I have finished it, of course, to my brother-in-law in Korea where he is serving in the Army. He read your magazine while staying with me a few months before he was shipped out and he doesn't want to miss an issue.

JOANN McBRIDE
FLUSHING, NEW YORK

Due to our great volume of mail, we regret we can't answer all letters individually. We welcome your opinions and will publish the most representative letters in this column. Let us hear from you. - Ed.



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20

Questions with IRLENE MANDRELL

By Michael Bane

1.

You don't sing much on the show. . . .

No. I never really did sing much, 'cause when I . . . see, I was about 11 when I started playing the drums, and a year later, I was on the road with Barbara. So I had enough cut out for me right there playing the drums. Then after that I kind of got into a modeling thing as a sideline, and then what I wanted to do was model. So about two years ago, I started doing some commercials instead of still photography. It was different, and it was really strange and I liked it. To me, it seemed like everything I wanted to do, something would happen so I could do it. When I was doing commercials, I was getting a taste of acting a little bit. I really got to like that, so I took a summer course on acting in

Nashville, and I was fixing to sign up and do some more study, but I didn't have a chance because this TV show came along. It was way before I was ready, really, but whenever I would have a desire to do something, it would happen. It always seems to do that. And I want to act, which is really looking great for me. After the last taping of the show Monday, I start taping *The Love Boat*. I don't know what I'll do after that, but I do know that if I'm not working, I'm going to start taking some classes.

2.

Did people ever make fun of you, a little girl, playing the drums?

No. The most they would ever say was when I would get to a place where we were working, and I would go set up my drums, people would make fun of me then. They didn't realize that I wanted to do stuff like that. It was my job. I guess

some people have roadies to do that. But I wanted to, because I thought it was part of my job.

3.

Do you like working with comedy-type material?

Oh yes. That's what I like. Later on, maybe I'll do drama, but right now I like comedy. You have to memorize your lines in comedy, but after you memorize them, you can have a good time and it comes across. But with drama, you've got to motivate yourself with each role.

4.

Have you ever written any of your own material?

A little, but I don't remember it. . . . When I took an acting class, I didn't know what I was doing. It was more *how* to do it. I didn't have the confidence I have now— at the end of our show!

5.

How do you feel about getting cast as your basic sex symbol?

Uh [giggle], I didn't know I was. I thought it was Louise.

6.

Nope, it's you—no offense, Louise.

Gosh, I thought you were going to say how come I was the dumb one!

7.

I would never say anything terrible like that.

Well, I *do* think getting dressed up in certain outfits can be sexy. But if you saw last week's show, where we all dressed up in baseball uniforms, it went completely the opposite direction. The variety is wonderful. . . .

8.

Did you really leave your television on to get better ratings?

[embarrassed giggles] Yes, that did happen. The first night, when we had our first show, we were going over to Barbara's to watch it on her big screen. My husband and I were going, and when I told him to leave the television on, he said that was crazy. Just crazy! Then we saw Louise and R.C. [Bannon, her husband], and I told them I was going to leave my set on. And R.C., who tries to baby me, said, "Oh, for burglars?"



Noooooo. "So your house can watch the show?" *Noooooo.* For ratings! [giggles]

9.

How did you feel about being named "Irlene?" Not your most common name. . . .

It was *wonderful*, because I'm named after my dad, you know, Irby. And I might have gotten stuck with *Irbelline*. So I like Irlene. I had a fan letter the other day from a girl who was named after her father, too, and it was kind of neat. Except nobody knows how to spell it, but I guess I'm used to that now. . . . [giggles]. . . . There's a lot of ways to misspell it, too.

10.

I have to ask you this—all America wants to know. Is Barbara really jealous of Louise's bustline?

[giggles] Well, *no!* If Barbara had it, she might fall over! [giggles] Well, no. I think it's just something to joke about. Besides, I know Barbara is happy being the size she is.

11.

What was it like growing up with Louise and Barbara?

Barbara sort of took care of us. See, Louise is only a year or two older than me. She's more

sultry, uh, more sensual. But uh, Barbara kind of took care of us both. She was more like a mother to us two.

12.

Are there any childhood misadventures that really stick in your mind?

No, not really. Barbara would organize things, and we'd do it. Louise and I, because we were closer in age, would sometimes get into trouble. But Barbara, when she said do *this*, we did *this*, because she was at that age when we'd mind her. [pause] Louise saved my life a few times. . . .

13.

All right, I'll bite. How did Louise save your life?

[brightly] Once she saved me from hanging myself.

14.

Okay Irlene. . . .

See, I was. . . how to explain this. . . well, you know those clothesline poles which are metal and shaped like a big "T?" Mom had a clothesline in the yard, and there was this rope, and for the heck of it, we tied a rope around the bar and then tied it to a clothes basket. Then we'd get in the basket and swing back and forth. And we were playing and Mom went on in-

side. So I got in it and I was *spinning*, and somehow I fell out, but the basket stayed up there. So I was hanging there with a rope around my neck. And Louise held onto me until she could get my hands up on the bar. She screamed for Mom, but Mom couldn't hear us. When she got my hands on the bar where I could hold on, she ran and got Mom.

15.

Do you watch yourself on television a lot?

Yeah. [giggle]

16.

Do you get embarrassed when you see yourself playing the dumb one?

Actually, I don't mind that at all. I don't mind my part, because the writers got together with us and they talked to us and they wrote the parts around our personalities rather than make up a personality for the part. Of course, Barbara had already established who Barbara was. And Louise, I think they're writing real close to her. And me. . . that's just the way. . . well, when I kid with people, that's how I am, and I think that's where they [the writers] get a lot of that from. . . .

17.

What does your husband think of your being a sex symbol?

He's known what I wanted to do all along, and he's excited that I'm getting to do anything that I want to do. . . . We support each other.

18.

One more thing—on a scale of one to ten, how would you rate yourself?

[giggles]

19.

Okay, okay, there's no way to win, but answer anyway. . . .

[giggles] I know. I've heard that asked before. I've thought about it, and I can't answer. [giggles] No, really, you can't rate people, because they are what they are. . . .

20.

C'mon. Give it a try.

Okay. Everybody's a ten. My husband thinks I am, and I'd hate to rate myself any less. Really, everybody is. ■

Tracking Down Joe Ely in the Lone Star State

By Patrick Carr

Austin, Texas, Thursday, 10:30 p.m.: It's so nice here. Free drinks. The Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan rolling discreetly from the club's PA system. Enough food for *everyone* in Austin. Everyone in Austin conversing madly with everyone else in Austin, but no cowboy hats, no visibly crazed behavior. Strange—nice, but curiously civilized. Where's the fun imperative, the commitment to boogie, which is one of our star's major attractions?

Joe Ely is our star, and this event is a promotional party thrown in his honor and on his behalf by his record company, MCA. Here's Joe now, taking a drink at the bar, looking just as Punk-Western-flashy and eager as ever.

"Good question, man," he says. "When are we going to get it on? I'd like to know that myself." And off he goes through a thicket of Jordache jeans and a cloud of Doobie Number Nine to somehow hasten the moment when he will be able to take the stage. Good luck, Joe; it's feeling like a fern bar here.

Joe Ely, it must be explained, is a stranger to fern bars. (A "fern bar" is a bar where people wear neckties and sit around next to huge beautiful potted ferns.) Not literally, of course—nobody could live in Austin today and avoid them entirely—but in spirit, certainly. Being one of America's three great semi-young Princes of Honkytonk (the other two are Gary Stewart and Delbert McClinton), he belongs to a less discreet tradition: He enjoys getting sweaty, turning on crowds like lightbulbs, shaking walls, moaning the blues, that kind of thing. Sings hard-core songs of one sort or another (country, blues, rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, Cajun), nothing lame. Just hired a full-time sax player. So let's go, Joe!

Much later: Joe's been going for some time now—get an eyeful of him and the boys! The stage looks like the location of a conference whose purpose you might not want to know—a Honduran pimp with a saxophone, a large London leather boy, a couple of old hippies, a punk with a guitar who keeps playing with his hair? Whoa. Who packs the heat?

Not to worry, though; they're just musicians at play, occasionally savage but essentially up to some good. They've already played all the songs from their new album, thereby satisfying what is deemed to be the

function of this promotional get-together, and now they're winding up the show with some of their usual slay-'em finales. *Not Fade Away*, *Long Snake Moan*, stuff like that. "I keep my fingernails long so they *click!* when I play the piano," yells Joe to an amended hammer of a Jerry Lee Lewis beat. "I'm gonna keep 'em that way 'til the swallows get back from Louisiana!"

People bopping now, going nuts, a touch of old Austin. Mission accomplished. Girls and boys dancing crazy. Joe spraying sweat, big fat grins all around. A success.

The notes taken at the time conclude thusly: *Joe elfin. Smart, nervous, obviously thrilled, too. Rockabilly future assured—rockabilly encourages Joe, Joe encourages rockabilly. Songs still great, Joe's and rockabilly's. Eddie Cochran memorial tint, pure Texas voice. Miss the steel, love the sax.*

Finally, the notes ask, *Where is Little Pete?*

Austin, Friday, 2 p.m. (A Reminiscence):

Ah, Little Pete. Little Pete, of course, is the black dwarf who opened the show for Joe in days only just gone by. Little Pete would do a few numbers with Joe's band—James Brown stuff, real funk, pretty good—and then Joe, having lifted him off the stage and climbed up there himself, would do *his* show. Sometimes Little Pete and Joe would do numbers together. It was a great act.

So, one night at the Palomino in Los Angeles, Joe's manager, who hadn't been to L.A. before, fell on Little Pete while trying to place a double armload of six Rum Collinses on the bar. He didn't make it, and the weight of the drinks carried him backwards, then down, onto Little Pete. We lost the drinks (three of them were for me, the journalist here), but Pete was okay. The poor manager lost face, though—this was another MCA promo gig—and it was perhaps the beginning of the end for him.

Joe, who is now managed by Michael Brovsky and Chet Hanson (of Jerry Jeff Walker fame), says that his former manager finally became his former manager when "my former manager's phone was taken out." He adds, however, that "the man is wonderful. I mean, he's *great*. That Little Pete thing was one of the funniest things I've ever heard about. I didn't see it, but I wish I had."

Little Pete, Joe says, is in California and

doing all right. The new management is both heavy and efficient.

Austin, Friday, 4 p.m.: I'm talking to MCA publicity chief Joan Bullard in the lobby of the Driskill Hotel, one of well-moneyed and fast-growing Austin's most distinguished guest emporiums.

"Yup, *sure* we're serious about him," says Joan. "What do you think all this is *about?* But he's a tough act to break, 'cause the radio people can't slot him. There are good signs, though."

One of the good signs—a posse of radio program directors flown in for the occasion—is present in the room, chatting at the bar with another good sign, MCA Records' President Bob Siner, who has also flown in for the occasion. These signs mean that a Push is on. The existence of efficient management is no small factor in the affair. Management is also at the bar. Everyone seems happy.

"But don't you just *love* Joe?" Joan asks. Yup, sure do, say I.

"And you know what?" Joan says. "I met Butch Hancock last night, and really, I'm so in awe of him that I felt like a group-





ie. I didn't know what to say. And you know I'm not like that."

Joan's awe is by no means a rare phenomenon; Butch Hancock's songs are one of the wonders of the West, as are Joe's and Jimmie Gilmore's. They grew up together, had a band together, and now play around Austin all the time. Whether Butch and Jimmie will follow Joe into playing around the world remains to be seen.

Austin, Friday, 6 p.m.: Joe has just been interviewed, and some facts have been revealed. Joe, of course, is already known as being from Lubbock, Texas, being the singer of Butch Hancock's, his own, and Jimmie Gilmore's songs, and being real good with country, blues, rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, Cajun, you name it. In the interview we learn further that he was born in Amarillo, moved to Lubbock at the age of nine, is the son of a man who ran a used clothing store, didn't graduate from high school, loved Eddie Cochran and Buddy Holly and all the others, reads the French poets Arthur Rimbaud and Francois Villon, loves Lewisham (Kent, England) because Lewisham loves him, and is in general friendly, modest, and excited. Says that his music's getting harder - tougher - because he spends so much time in big cities these days that the city sound just comes through. Adds that the money is okay, but nothing spectacular, and that, though he'd like to be a star, he never wants to sound like Kenny Loggins or Christopher Cross. Concludes that he's played a lot of hookie in his time, and is still playing. What a life.

Joe has to take off for Amarillo in his ancient, bright red pickup truck, so the interview ends. Don't come to Amarillo, he says—he's been there before, and the gig's not too hot. The gig to make is in Gruene, Texas, where Texas's oldest dance hall is located. He's never played there before.

Joe's wired: Bo Diddley beats and Hank Williams moans come bursting out of him through a haze of his sweat.

but he's heard all kinds of great things. Should be wild, he says.

An apartment in Austin, Saturday, 2 a.m.: The ideal Joe Ely press assessment, here rendered in its entirety with the author's permission to quote at will, is composed before bedtime. It reads as follows:

"With his five excellent albums and frequent, dynamic stage appearances, Mr. Ely has demonstrated an authoritative 'sound,' the likes of which is often attempted in the country/rock sphere but, sadly, is not so often accomplished.

"Mr. Ely, echoing the tradition of Jimmie Rodgers—the moan of the wind, the sound of the train, the vagabond's life, the rich cultural quilt which is Texas, the artist's urge to spread joy and bar no holds—has in his short career distinguished both himself and his native culture immensely. Songs like *Standing At A Big Hotel* and *Because Of The Wind*, plaintive but tough, are masterpieces of modern American angst. Mr. Ely counterpoints this type of material (both on record and in performance) with rousing rock-based anthems of his own and others' composition, and can be relied upon to enliven any atmosphere.

"Mr. Ely, perhaps the leading light of the Lone Star State's current musical *pot-pourri*, is to be encouraged on all fronts."

Gruene, Texas, Sunday, 12:30 a.m.: Damn. Really. When people around here dance too hard, they fall over. Then they

bump into more people who are dancing too hard, and they fall over. Navigation is tricky for most, impossible for some. The timbers in this hall must be strong—they've stood up to generations of this kind of abuse. This is the kind of place which sells Buds for 75 cents, has a beer garden, features roving cops, and draws Great White Texas's youth contingent in droves. Faron Young should play here. It's slightly ugly—"Niggers don't git outa here alive!" yells one customer as he boogies on down to *Key To The Highway*, and someone malicious has left three beer bottles full of stale urine on the bar—but most of the people are okay, enjoying themselves, getting all funky up.

And naturally, Joe's wired: Bo Diddley beats and Hank Williams moans come bursting out of him through a haze of his sweat. He's already played three hours worth of this stuff, but has come back for one final set: the only reason he quit at midnight, he says, was that he thought the club owners wanted him to. Now he's got an eleven-year-old kid up there onstage with him, playing lead guitar and singing the blues. The kid's good.

Much Later Again: Joe backstage, after the show: "Shit, you should talk to him!" he says about the kid. "He's got a brother, man, and he's good, too. It's like the Everlys, y'know?"

Joe, of course, is sweat-soaked from head to foot; you can smell his feet if you stand too near. Best get Joe taken care of—it's chilly here at night in springtime in Texas—and sure enough, his girlfriend, Sharon, a tall and beautiful artist, finds him a dry shirt. Then the fan rush begins.

While the fan rush proceeds, I have a word with the sax player. "Ain't no other band in the world I'd work for!" he exclaims. He's carried away, I think. "Well now," I say, "that's not realistic, is it? Let's not make any rash statements."

"Right," says the sax player, "he might get run over by a truck."

I go looking for the kid, but don't find him. On the other hand, I do find Joe's roadie collecting the night's money from one of the club owners in the men's room, which is equipped with a large porcelain trough of which I am in dire need. Joe's roadie slams the door on my fingers: "Hey, be serious!" he shouts. Right. I might be a rounder. Never know who you'll run into in Gruene. Or Lewisham.

The Final Sight: As somebody who lives near Gruene navigates through the hollows and over the hills, Joe and his friends, all in separate automobiles, venture forth from Gruene itself towards the party. There's always a party. The taillights, sparkling out through the night and disappearing whenever they crest a rise, look like beacons: more drink, more to hear, more good company, more honky-tonk, don't stop now. ■



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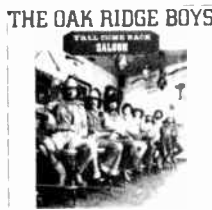
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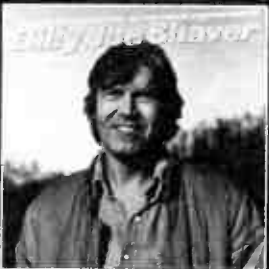
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People

Loretta Lynn joined **Ringo Starr**, **Linda Gray** and **Brooke Shields** on **Barbara Walters's** interview special, and bared her soul about her personal life. When asked about the possibility of other women in husband **Mooney's** life, **Loretta** said, "If you know for sure, you can't live with it. So I don't want to know for sure. I just go on guessing and singing about it."

Also under discussion was **Mooney's** long-standing drinking problem, which now seems to be a thing of the past. The **Lynns** returned to Nashville a few weeks before *Coal Miner's Daughter* picked up an Oscar, after a month-long stay at **Care Manor** in Orange, California. There, **Mooney** underwent extensive treatment to overcome his problem and apparently succeeded completely. The center's **Dr. Joseph Pursch** has treated a number of other celebrities, among them **Betty Ford** and

By Laura Eipper Hill

Billy Carter.

The economy may be slumping, but country radio, says the CMA, is faring better than ever. A recently released study by the CMA claims that the number of radio stations playing at least some country music is up to 2,907, a 21 percent increase over last year's survey of stations around the country. Full-time country stations now number 1,785, up from 1,534 in the previous year, with the largest growth in FM stations. The survey also indicated that the greatest areas of growth for country radio were in the East South Central and Mountain states, each with 27 percent increases last year. The slowest growth area was in New England, which still managed to pick up five new stations.

Buck White and the Down Home

Folks played a sold-out concert at Washington's Museum of Natural History, part of the Smithsonian Institution's American Country Music concert series. Others scheduled for the prestigious series included **Patsy Montana**, **Pee Wee King** and **Redd Stewart**.

The Little Nashville Opry in Nashville, Indiana, was set for a busy season, with some 50 top country acts (\$400,000 worth of bookings) scheduled to perform. Opry president **DeWayne Hamilton** hopes to top last year's attendance of 180,000 at the weekly shows.

Roy Acuff has become the latest spokesman for a Tennessee program for senior citizens, "Tenne-senior," a voluntary discount program sponsored by merchants for those over 65, has so far reached an estimated 100,000 senior citizens around the state since it was started in 1979 by Governor Lamar Alexander.

In an intriguing Want Ad in a Nashville newspaper, one **Larry Gatlin** advertised his services as a gardener. The **Larry Gatlin** in question, it turns out, isn't the singer, but a professional lawn care man and owner of a wholesale lumber yard. **Gatlin** said he is frequently confused with his more famous counterpart, but doesn't mind except for an occasional rude reaction from a disappointed **Gatlin** fan. "After all, I figure I've been **Larry Gatlin** longer than he has, since I'm four or five years older, and I've also lived in Nashville longer," said **Gatlin**. Though he's a fan of **Gatlin** (the singer), **Gatlin** (the gardener) says he has no musical bent himself. "Even at church they ask me not to sing," he says.

Lisa Whelchel, who plays teenager **Blair** on television's *The Facts of Life*, has got her eye on a career in gospel and country music. The pretty 18-year-old turned up in Nashville under the wing of **B.J. Thomas** and his wife **Gloria**, and conferred with producer **Pete Drake** about a possible album session in October.

Lisa describes her voice as "crisp and kinda loud," and says she's been singing since she was a child. At the age of eleven, she began commuting to Hollywood for her role as one of the singing members of the *New Mickey Mouse Club*, but has put her musical career on a back burner since the success of her current series. A born-again Christian, **Lisa** hopes to use her music as a platform to reach others in spiritual need.

When **Loretta Lynn** opens her Las

Anne Murray Performs At Canadian Gala For President Reagan



Anne Murray performed at a gala held by Canadian Prime Minister **Pierre Trudeau** in honor of President **Ronald Reagan's** visit to Ottawa, his first official visit to a foreign country since his election. Accompanying **Reagan** were his wife **Nancy**, Secretary of State **Alexander Haig** and a number of Canadian digni-

taries. **Anne** performed her Grammy-winning *Could I Have This Dance*, after which she was introduced to the guests of honor, who had a number of requests. **Reagan** said he had hoped he would hear a few more of her tunes. **Nancy** agreed and requested *Snowbird*, while **Haig** asked for *I Just Fall in Love Again*.

Kenny · Mel · Bill · Rosanne

Vegas shows from now on, **Ernest Tubb** will be on hand to introduce her, just as he did the first time she appeared on the Grand Ole Opry. A live appearance by E.T. at the opening of one of Loretta's recent Vegas shows was videotaped and will become a permanent part of the show from now on.

Kenny Rogers and **Crystal Gayle** donated all their net proceeds from a recent Capitol Center concert in Landover, Maryland, to the World Hunger Year effort. Others appearing on the benefit bill included comedian **Gallagher** and emcee **Harry Chapin**, co-founder of World Hunger Year.

Earl Thomas Conley enjoyed a sell-out engagement when he played his hometown Portsmouth, Ohio. After receiving standing ovations after every number, Conley stuck around and signed autographs for three hours, before heading to his sister's home for a couple of beers and a little rest. When he got there, an astonished Conley found another 300 friends on hand for a little get-together.

The cast and crew of ABC-TV's *One Life to Live* packed up and headed to Knoxville, Tennessee to shoot a few episodes during the city's annual Dogwood Festival. Starring in the special soap segments

was **Bill Anderson**, who's practically a regular on the show, playing himself.

Tommy Cash joined the ranks of country music stars making the trek to Europe this spring. Cash enjoyed SRO houses during an 18-day jaunt through West Germany, Holland and Belgium.

The Four Guys may have stumbled onto something big when **Roy Acuff** casually asked them for a little barbershop harmony one night on the Opry. The boys obliged, the audience was thrilled, and the bit became an often-requested part of the quartet's Opry act.

Finally, group spokesman **Sam Wellington** figured the Opry might as well hear a little of the best barbershop singing in the country and invited some friends from Minneapolis to appear on the show. **The Happiness Emporium**, 1975 champs of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing, were, to say the least, a hit. They netted a rare three encores from the Opry audience and a standing invitation from Acuff to return to the show whenever they could.

The Four Guys, incidentally, played two sold-out shows in hometown Toronto, Ohio. Hometown sell-outs aren't all that unusual, but the fact that the Guys drew an audience of 2000 in a town whose total

population numbers only 6000 is something else.

The **Country Music Association** followed up the annual Wembley Festival festivities with a two-day board meeting in London, attended by music executives from around Europe.

Mel Tillis was reportedly working on a deal to market molasses made from sugar cane grown on his 1,300-acre farm near Nashville. The name under consideration: "M - M - Mel's Molasses."

Johnny Rodriguez picked up a fancy new title to add to his collection when he was recently named honorary Mayor-President of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Ditto **Ernie Ashworth** and **Little Roy Wiggins**, who were made bona fide sheriff's deputies, the badge-carrying kind, after a show for the Shriners in Huntsville, Alabama.

Con Hunley expanded his sports horizons this spring. Long-time friend of boxer **Big John Tate**. Hunley had already sung the national anthem at the World Boxing Association championship heavy-weight fight in Pretoria, South Africa. Recently, he performed before the Cardinals Phillies game in St. Louis, then played in Nashville's Acuff-Rose Golf Tournament. In June, he was celebrity host to University of Oregon football coach **Joe Avezzano** and guests during Fan Fair.

Tom T. Hall has been immortalized, in a manner of speaking, by the McCormick Ceramics Company. The Storyteller is the model for a McCormick Bourbon decanter which will be on sale at liquor stores everywhere, the second in a line of country music commemorative decanters planned by the company. The hand-painted collector's item features a statue of Hall leaning against a barrel of watermelon wine. It includes a music box that plays, what else, *Old Dogs, Children and Watermelon Wine*.

Bill Anderson inadvertently created a sensation with his new bumper stickers. One Michigan fan told Anderson that a man pulled up next to her and asked to buy a gross of them — his name was Bill Anderson, too. In Illinois, a fan was asked if that was the same Bill Anderson who ran for President (huh?). In Minnesota, the stickers have a special popularity. It seems that in Minneapolis-St. Paul, there's a local Billy Anderson — a popular male stripper.

During a recent appearance on the *Today* show, **Rosanne Cash** was asked about her hair color by anchorwoman **Jane Pauley**. "I can't help but notice that your hair is purple," commented Pauley. Cash: "Eggplant." Pauley: "Eggplant?" Cash: "I like to change my hair color; it changes my attitude. You know, it's funny though. People think that hair color has something to do with moral fiber, which amazes me to

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think that I'm some kind of degenerate because my hair is purple." Pauley: "Eggplant."

Duane Allen of the **Oak Ridge Boys** puts his pet dogs up in style these days. **Chancey**, a Labrador retriever named after the Oaks' producer **Ron Chancey**, and **Duchess**, the other family dog, live in two custom-built, fully carpeted dog houses, finished outside with shingles and roofing. Covering both houses is a larger shelter with a plexiglass front panel so the dogs can enjoy the view, and a front porch with cedar and bark flooring. Needless to say, the quarters come complete with a personalized heating system and thermostat.

Tulsa music impresario **Jim Halsey** hosted a posh reception for **Tammy Wynette** at the Roof Garden of the Royal Garden Hotel in London during the singer's stay for the Wembley Festival.

At the Easter Seal Telethon in Jackson, Mississippi, a **Helen Cornelius** tee-shirt was auctioned off and netted \$250 for the charity. The next evening Helen and **Conway Twitty** attended a Cajun feast with Governor and Mrs. Jimmy Davis after their Baton Rouge concert.

Roy Clark was forced to cancel his Las Vegas opening at the Frontier Hotel after being injured when he was thrown from a horse. The 48-year-old superpicker suffered a dislocated right shoulder and a broken left arm in the fall, which occurred when he was riding alone on a ranch owned by his bandleader, **Rodney Lay**, near Coffeeville, Kansas. Despite the mishap, Clark is no stranger to horses. He is an avid horseman who owns quarter horses, appaloosas, and thoroughbreds.

Jacky Ward has just kicked an already promising career into high gear. The affable singer signed a long-term management contract with **Farris International** in Nashville that guarantees him a whopping \$2 million in income over the next five years. The company has invested substantial sums in Ward's lighting and sound systems and plans to put more into costumes and staging for his road show. Ward also looks forward to greatly expanded exposure on television.

Mickey Gilley, who already has loaned his name to a club, a beer and a line of Western wear, is going into the publishing business with his partner manager **Sherwood Cryer**. The pair plans to publish a bi-monthly (soon to be monthly) magazine called, inevitably, *Gilley's*. The 32-page publication will cover news of Gilley's nightclub, and will feature special sections devoted to country music stars who play the club. Western wear, record reviews and Western dances. Cryer estimates initial printings to be about 100,000 copies. The magazine will be sold at first to club patrons and Gilley's newsletter subscrib-

ers, with national distribution planned later.

Roy Acuff, 77, is celebrating his 50th year in show business, but says he has no plans to retire. "I don't see any reason why I should," said the King of Country Music. "I'm happy, and as long as the company's happy, I have no complaints. I love what I do and maybe if I retired, there might be a few people around who would be disappointed."

The Opry celebrated some of country music's early greats this spring in its annual **Homecoming Show**, a favorite with audiences. Making rare appearances with such regular Opry oldtimers as the **Crook Brothers** and **Kirk McGee** were fiddler **Curly Fox**, **Whitey "Duke of Paducah" Ford**, **Zeke Clements** ("The Alabama Cowboy"), **Tennessee Waltz** co-writer **Pee Wee King**, **Alcyone Bate Beasley**, **Jack Shook** and Western swing-er **Paul Howard**.

Sissy Spacek was an odds-on favorite to win her Best Actress Oscar, but nobody predicted it any sooner than **Loretta Lynn**. "I told everyone right from the beginning that it would do well," Loretta said the night Sissy accepted her statuette. "I said it would be nominated for at least one Academy Award and I knew Sissy would win."


Loretta, who had originally planned to watch the Oscars from home, decided at the last minute to fly to Hollywood, where she applauded her film alter-ego from the audience. Her long-awaited reunion with the actress, she said, "was the only real reason I flew all the way out here."

Though the film was nominated for five awards, the Best Actress honor, Loretta said, seemed to her even more important than winning an Oscar for Best Picture. "If I had to choose between them, I'd choose Sissy," she said, "because the movie has already been, and Sissy's just beginning."

While in Hollywood, Loretta took a small swipe at the extensive (and expensive) hoopla that surrounds the Academy Award voting, particularly the massive print and broadcast advertisements studios are fond of. "A little publicity don't hurt but I don't think it's right to hype a movie so it will win. I think awards should be based on how well a movie does at the box office, how much audiences liked it, not how much money a movie studio spends to hype it."

Archie Campbell kicked up his heels this spring as the Grand Marshal of Columbia, Tennessee's annual Mule Day Parade. The parade kicked off three days of down-home festivities, such as tobacco spitting

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How the Club operates: every four weeks (13 times a year) you'll receive the Club's music magazine, which describes the Selection of the Month for each musical interest—plus hundreds of alternates from every field of music. In addition, up to six times a year you may receive offers of Special Selections, usually at a discount off regular Club prices, for a total of up to 19 buying opportunities.

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The tapes and records you order during your membership will be billed at regular Club prices which currently are \$7.98 to \$9.98—plus shipping and handling. Multiple-unit sets and Double Selections may be somewhat higher. And if you decide to continue as a member after completing your enrollment agreement, you'll be eligible for our generous, money-saving bonus plan.

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and liars contests, knife swappings and competitive mule pullings. The dapper *Hee Haw* comic said he was no stranger to the four-footed stars of the festivities. "Back in Bull's Gap, we used to have a mule race every year," Campbell said. "I remember one time, I went down to the track to get a closer look. I bent over to tie my shoe and somebody put a saddle on me. I didn't do too bad, though—I came in third."

Barbara Mandrell and family headed home to Nashville for a well-earned rest after taping the last of her first spate of NBC television variety shows. The hit of NBC's winter season, Barbara's show wound up its final night with a sentimental good-bye party for the cast, crew and families in the studio.

At home, the irrepressible Barbara took barely a breath before delving into several other projects. First priority was a move to a new house on the shores of Old Hickory Lake near Nashville. In between packing and unpacking, she rehearsed her new road show, then promptly headed off to Hawaii for dates in Maui and Kauai.

Ray Price has been known to pick a few stars in his day, witness the success of former Cherokee Cowboy members **Willie Nelson, Roger Miller, Johnny Paycheck, Darrell** and **Johnny Bush**. Now Price is holding out a helping hand to new talent on a national scale with his first "Ray Price Country Starsearch." Price and Beaumont, Texas promoter Bill Starnes plan to enlist some 900 country radio stations in their search for tomorrow's country stars. Amateur contests will be held around the country on local and state levels, with national finals scheduled for Nashville in October, possibly broadcast as a live network television special.

"Hank Williams helped me get started in the Grand Ole Opry and helping other people get started in country music is something I've always wanted to do," says Price. "I think there's a real need for people to go out and look for talent. I just hope it gives some kids a chance to make it a little easier than I did." First prize in the contest is \$50,000 in cash, a Dimension Records recording contract and a booking agreement with the Shorty Lavender Agency in Nashville. Additional prizes will be awarded on other levels of the contest.

Jeannie C. Riley's autobiography, *From Harper Valley to the Mountaintop*, was well on its way to success even before it hit the bookstores. The book, co-authored with best-selling inspirational author **Jamie Buckingham**, was in its second printing before actual publication and drew enthusiastic comments from **Johnny Cash** and **Tom T. Hall**.

After reading the story of Jeannie's meteoric rise to fame and subsequent personal and professional crises, Cash was so

Herb McCoy Becomes Charlie's Chaplain



Everybody in country music, it seems, has a custom-built tour bus or a personalized airplane, and lots of stars have their own semi trucks for equipment. **Charlie Daniels**, however, has done everyone one better: the CDB has its own chaplain. **Herb McCoy**, who also serves as spiritual advisor to Nashville's Police Department, meets with the band before each trip to pray for a safe and successful tour. He's also available to the band members and the staff of Daniels's Sound Seventy management corporation for individual con-

sultations on an around-the-clock basis. McCoy is a non-denominational minister who is known for his skill with card tricks, a part of his ministerial technique. Says Charlie's chaplain, "A deck of playing cards symbolizes the choice between good and evil use of one's God-given talents." McCoy, who is in great demand as a motivational speaker at banquets and conferences, may be the first rock and roll minister to secure his own booking agency. He's being handled by (who else?) Sound Seventy.

impressed that he agreed to write the foreword to the book. It is, he says, a "textbook example" of what young women go through to make it in the Nashville music business. "Her life speaks of the pitfalls and she tells the story well," he writes.

Hall said that even though he wrote the

multi-million-selling hit that launched Jeannie's career, he was "shocked and saddened by what a hit song can do to a young entertainer who becomes nationally famous overnight. Anyone who desires a career in show business should, and could, use this text as a handbook."

Willie Nelson has called it the "first time the truth has been written about country music," but **Chet Flippo's** biography of **Hank Williams**, *Your Cheatin' Heart*, has drawn fire from other quarters for its no-holds-barred portrayal of the late singer's life. Flippo delves right into the question of Hank's addiction to drugs and alcohol, his passion for guns, outbursts of violence, stormy marriage to Audrey, and the question of whether Williams was the victim of an untreated birth defect that was progressively crippling him.

After four years of intensive research and numerous interviews, Flippo came to the conclusion that Williams, the myth, and Williams, the man, were two rather different people—a conclusion not every-

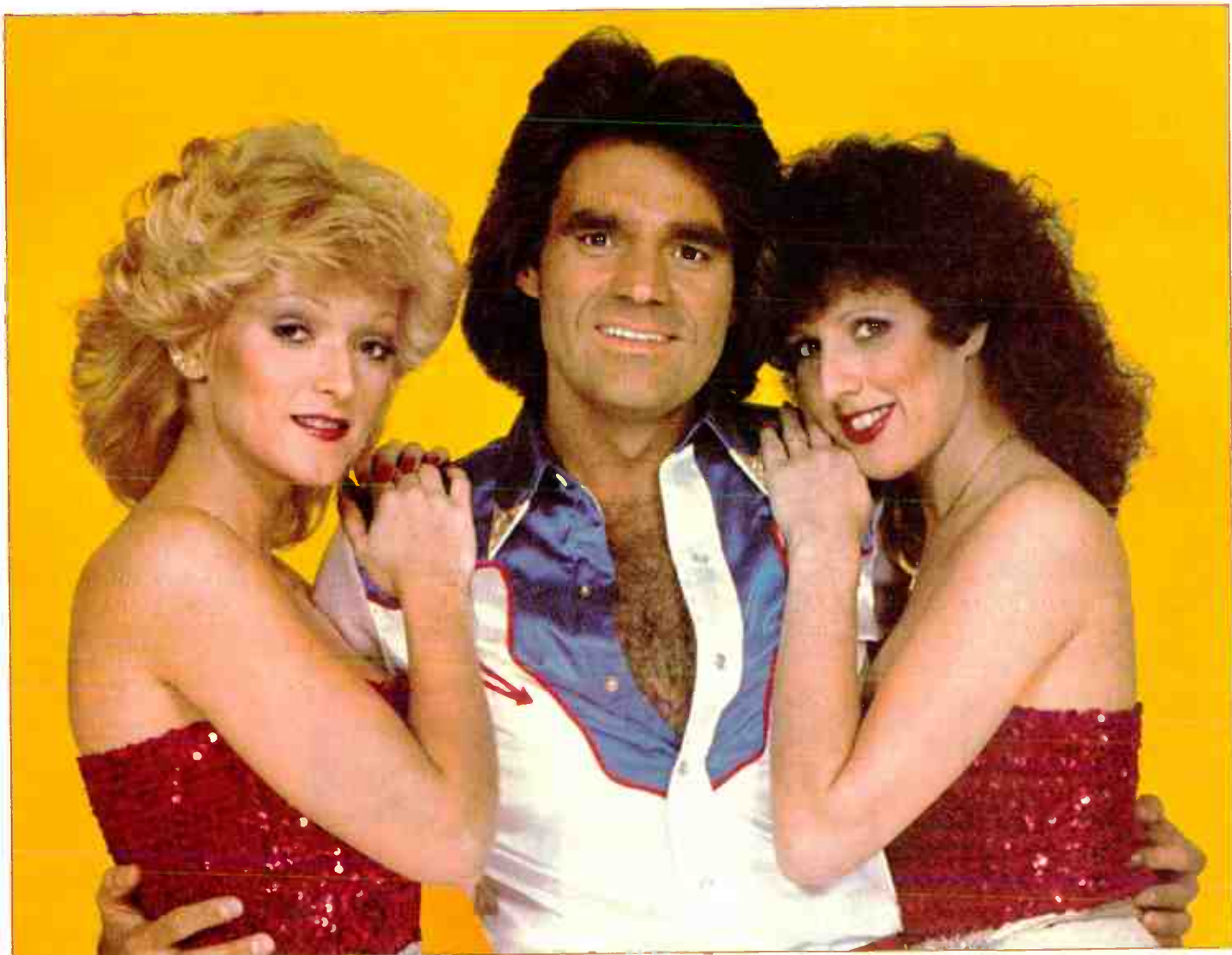
A New Addition to the Williams Clan

Hank Williams, Jr. and his wife **Becky** became the proud parents of an eight-pound, three-ounce girl, **Holly Audrey Williams**. When the newest Williams made her debut at Cullman Medical Center in Cullman, Alabama, she was reported by her father to be "sporting a full beard, mirrored sunglasses, hand-tooled cowboy boots and a Remington rifle sheathed in snakeskin." The Williamses also have a two-year-old girl, **Hilary**, and Hank has an eight-year-old son, **Shelton**, by his previous wife **Gwen**.

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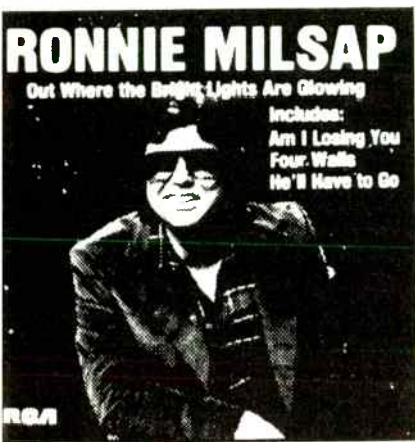
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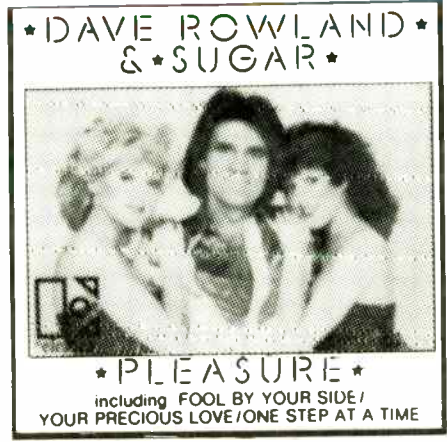
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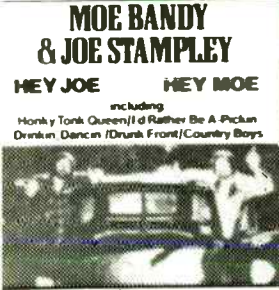
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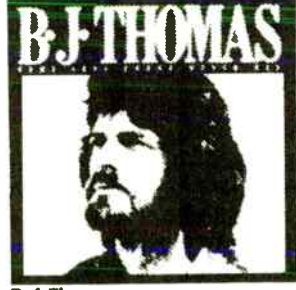
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one in Nashville was pleased about. "The book will make some people furious when they read it," Flippo agrees. "But I think a lot of people will appreciate it. Up until now country music stars have been immune to truthful treatments of their lives. They shouldn't be." [For more on this, see the book review in this issue. Ed.]

Bill Monroe, though on the mend from recent colon surgery, opened the Monroe Steakhouse and Lounge in Nashville with his son **James**. The club will feature "cowboy nights," dancing and concerts in an adjoining pasture. Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys will be in residence when not on the road, and plans call for the opening of a Bill Monroe exhibit at the club soon.

Monroe's Grand Ole Opry colleague **Charlie Walker** and his wife **Virginia** have also taken on a sideline business. The Walkers have become regional representatives for German-made Bosch wheat grinders and accessories. Virginia, an avid baker and natural foods proponent, is teaching cooking classes throughout the Southeast.

Another Cash Hits the Road



Cindy Cash is now touring with the **Johnny Cash Show**. Cindy is the third daughter of the Carter/Cash Dynasty to start a singing career, joining **Carlene Carter** and **Rosanne Cash**. "I see in Cindy my own self at age twenty two. Except she has more guts," says her daddy. Cindy says she is proud to have the Cash name, but that she feels self-confident and independent and under no pressure to outdo sister Rosanne. "My thing is being me," she says.

Billy Bob's Replaces Gilley's As Largest Nightclub In The World Featuring Live Bull Riding

Gilley's Club in Pasadena, Texas, may soon be replaced in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest nightclub in the world by a new nightery called **Billy Bob's**. Located—where else—in Fort Worth, the new club is the ultimate in Urban Cowboy chic. The converted cattle barn stands in the middle of the Fort Worth stockyards area and holds an estimated 5000 people, enough, the club's owners say, to populate the entire Texas town of Rockwall. Among the amenities

Billy Bob's offers are: a live bull riding ring, 42 bar stations, 14,000 square feet of dance floor and an all-star lineup of performers that includes the likes of **Larry Gatlin**, **Waylon Jennings**, **Willie Nelson** and **Hank Williams, Jr.**

Other Lone Star size attractions include 27 pool tables and 50 pinball machines; 300 bartenders and waitresses; a portable barbecue pit that can feed 7,000 people; 2,016 gallons of beer on tap at any given moment; 106 toilet facilities; a barbershop.

Biff Collie celebrated the ninth anniversary of his *Inside Nashville* radio news service by adding five new stations to his list of customers, WYVA (Norfolk, Virginia), KSLV (Monte Vista, Colorado), KJLS (Hays, Kansas), KWMS (Pratt, Kansas), and KSLS (Liberal, Kansas). Collie's broadcast is customized for each station.

Banjo wizard **Wendy Holcombe** may be television's next **Gomer Pyle**, if NBC has its way. The pretty, talented teenager, who recently signed an exclusive development contract with the network, taped a pilot episode of her own series, tentatively titled *Wendy Hooper, U.S. Army*, which is expected to join the regular NBC lineup this fall. In the half-hour sitcom, Wendy plays—talk about typecasting—a fresh-faced, innocent country girl right out of rural Alabama who joins the Army when a crafty recruiter tells her it's the way to country music stardom.

The funny business takes place in Wendy's comic run-ins with her two big-city roommates, played by two other television novices, **Carol Ann Susi** and **Vanessa L. Clark**. The show will be written and produced by **Aaron Rubin** in conjunction with Columbia Pictures. Rubin was the writer who brought us *The Andy Griffith Show* and—what a coincidence—*Gomer Pyle*.

WSM disc jockey **Chuck Morgan** joined the ranks of one of radio's elites, becoming a Grand Ole Opry announcer. The late-night jockey, 26, has been in radio since his teens, and two-and-a-half years ago took over the 10 p.m.-2 a.m. spot that once belonged to **Ralph Emery**.

It rarely happens, but . . . during a refueling stop between Greenville, South Carolina and Biloxi, Mississippi, members of **Ronnie McDowell's** road band left their bus for a quick pit stop. When the bus pulled out a few minutes later, everybody was back on board—except band member **Jackie Brassell**, who found himself with no money, no credit cards, no identifica-

tion and no shoes, alone in a truck stop at 3 a.m. A quick call to McDowell's agent netted Brassell a pre-paid airline ticket and a trip to the airport courtesy of the South Carolina Highway Patrol, and by 6 a.m. he was on his way to Biloxi. Five hundred miles and ten hours later, McDowell still didn't know what had happened until he was told about it on the phone by his agent. Said McDowell: "I knew we'd been making good time. I guess it was because the bus was light one man."

Kenny Rogers is set to star in his second television dramatic role for CBS this fall, based on another of his best-selling songs. The singer will play an Elmer Gantry-type preacher, Matthew Spencer, in *Coward of the County*. Based, loosely it seems, on Rogers's hit of the same name, the movie will revolve around the character of Tommy Spencer, who is torn between his deceased father's advice to be a pacifist and the call of duty to serve in World War II.

Starring as Tommy will be **Fredric Lehne**, who recently appeared in the film *Ordinary People*. Becky, the female lead, will be played by **Largo Woodruff**. The film was shot in Crawfordville, Georgia.

Meanwhile **Kenny** has postponed his feature film debut, originally scheduled for this summer, until December 1982, because of his lucrative road engagements. Word is that plans to star Rogers in a movie sequel to television's *The Gambler* have also been scratched in favor of another film property.

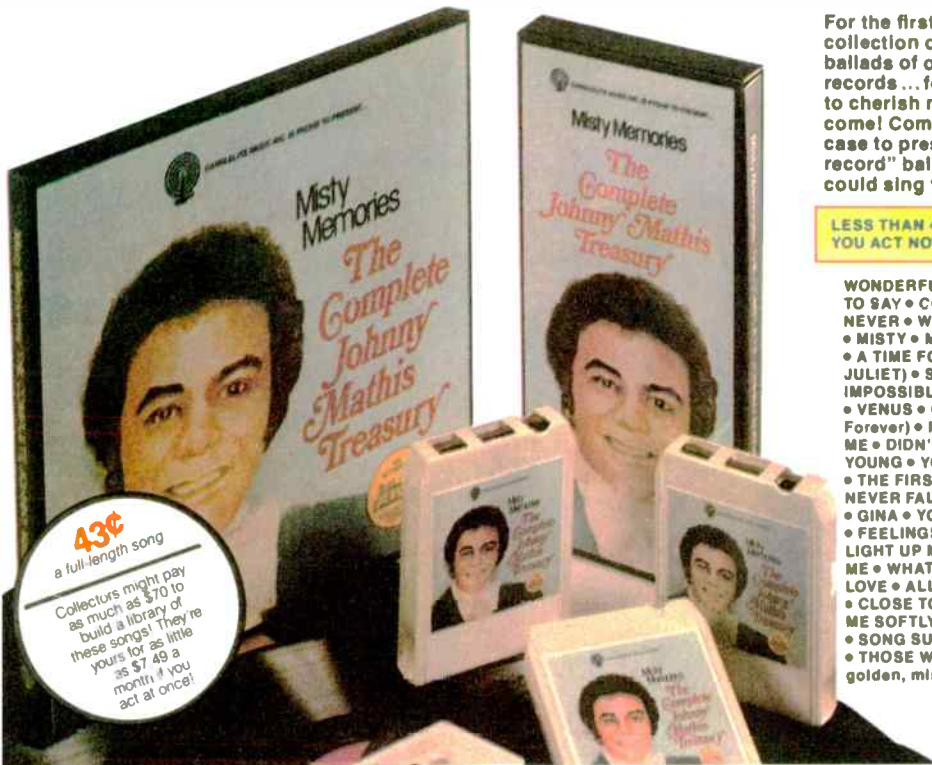
Crystal Gayle will lend her name to a new line of "status sportswear" marketed by a Dallas firm. No Western wear, a la Willie, Mickey and Loretta, the clothes will sell in the \$35 to \$120 price range and will be sold in major department and specialty stores this fall. The singer was scheduled to introduce the "Crystal" line to an audience of 7,000 retailers at the Early Fall Women's and Children's Dallas Market.

Jan Howard was named honorary chairperson of the "9,000,052" campaign



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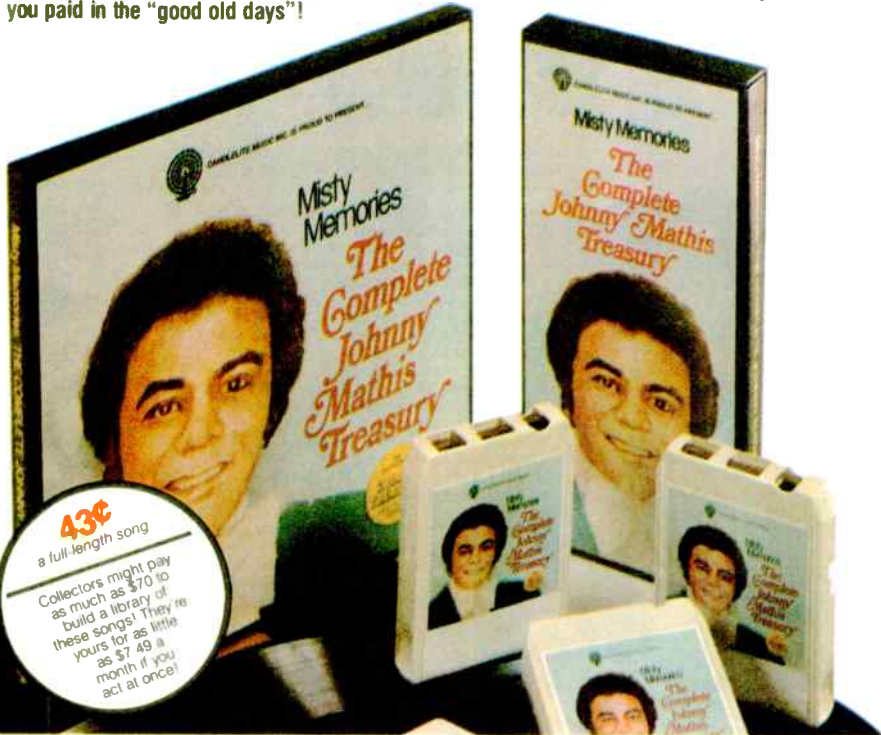
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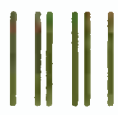


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- "**SMALL WORLD**" (Isn't It?) Another great "summer song," this gem helped make the summer of '59 even better than it was! A true "Mathis" standard for all the years!
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- "**MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF**" A big, powerful ballad that was the Johnny Mathis triumph for the summer of 1972. The song was a hit three times!
- "**CALL ME**" Another great "Mathis hit" that spanned most of the holidays in 1958, and yet remained a smash in 1959!
- "**DIDN'T WE**" (We Almost Made It This Time, Didn't We?) What a song! What a performance! A timeless gem that hit the charts in 1969 and again in 1972.
- "**YESTERDAY WHEN I WAS YOUNG**" We fell in love with this bitter-sweet song way back in 1969. The Mathis performance stands alone as the most sensitive reading and performance this song has ever known.
- "**YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND**" It was the summer of 1971 when this Carole King composition warmed our feelings! And the Johnny Mathis version was still on the charts in the winter of '71!
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- "**SUNNY**" In the summer of 1966 this song just took over everything, from the hit parade to our own lighthearted humming! This lilting recording is a joy to behold!
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- "**I'LL NEVER FALL IN LOVE AGAIN**" Thanks to an outstanding performance by Mathis, this bright song of love lost hit the top in 1969! A real Mathis winner!
- "**SEND IN THE CLOWNS**" A hit in 1975... and several times since! Here is the definitive performance of what is surely your personal melancholy favorite!
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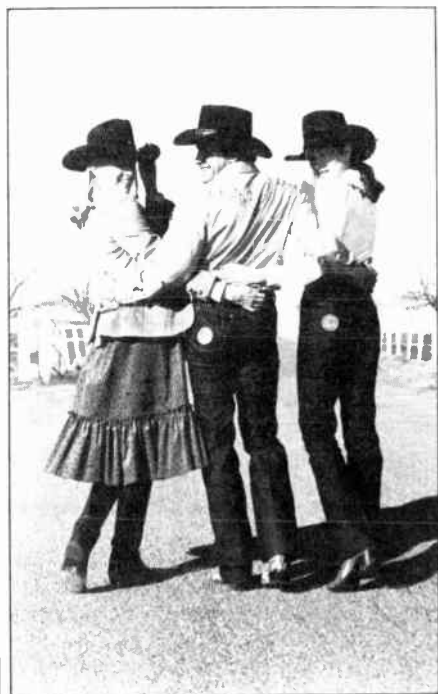
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launched by veterans groups in Nashville to honor the memory of Vietnam vets and the returned American hostages.

Tom T. Hall was a presenter at the annual Iris awards sponsored by the National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) in New York, along with such celebrities as **Lucille Ball**, **Chuck Woolery** and **Ruth Warrick**. The awards are given to outstanding programs produced by local stations around the U.S., 142 of which carry Hall's *Pop! Goes the Country* syndicated show.

Terri Gibbs took a few days off from a whirlwind schedule to help the World Book Encyclopedia launch its special 22-volume (on 219 six-hour tapes) edition for the blind, then spent two days in New York taping radio spots for the U.S. Customs Bureau's passports for the blind program. Terri's fortunes prospered so much as the result of the overnight success of *Somebody's Knocking* (a pop as well as a country smash) that she gave up her nightclub job in the Augusta, Georgia Steak and Ale, settled into Nashville's Radisson Plaza for a month-long engagement, and was reportedly looking for a place to live. ■

And Yet Another Western Wear



Larry Gatlin and his brothers have joined the steady stream of country music stars who have discovered the lucrative clothing business. The Gatlins have endorsed their own line of moderate-to-high-priced sportswear, to be sold in specialty shops and better clothing stores. The duds range from jeans to fancy shirts, blazers and corduroy trousers, and will all bear a special "Gatlin gun" logo. A special line of clothes called "Skins" will boast such exotic trim as python, eel and lizard.

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Moe Bandy

The Honkytonk King

Doesn't Wear a Cowboy Hat

By Patrick Carr

Six years ago, when writer Nick Tosches first interviewed Moe Bandy for this magazine, he found a small, quiet, unassuming ex-sheet-metal-worker still not quite at home in the world of the recording studio, the star spotlight, and the press interview. Tosches found the impression pleasant, something of a change, but guessed quite correctly that the man was going places. Again quite correctly, he figured that Moe wasn't going to make it because he possessed some great charisma suitable to TV exploitation or the demands of country music's then-new youthful following; the factor which would make Moe Bandy a fixture on the country scene was his music, pure and simple.

The music was a revelation. With songs like *I Just Started Hatin' Cheatin' Songs Today* and *Honkytonk Amnesia*, Bandy was making all kinds of waves. Set into a five-piece-band, honky-tonk country background, the songs harkened back to Hank Williams and the early George Jones, and in a market then divided strictly between the experimentation of the "outlaws" and the middle-of-the-road extravaganzas of Billy Sherrill and his followers, their instant success suggested the intriguing possibility that somewhere, hidden behind radio dials alive with the growls of Waylon and the twittering of Olivia Newton-John, there existed a body of fans who would actually count up their money, go out of the house, and buy no-frills, pure-gut country crying records in quantities sufficient to keep musicians alive and accountants happy. At the time, this notion was quite revolutionary, and Tosches' headline expressed his (and others') delight: *Honky Tonk Lives!*

Six years later, a great deal has changed. Moe Bandy is no longer an ex-sheet-metal-worker struggling out of debt and into the full-time music business. He is an established star. "The King of Honkytonk;" he owns a highly successful talent agency (booking the likes of Jeanne Pruett and Leona Williams and Red Steagall) and, with Joe Stampley, his very own hometown honky-tonk, where a

mechanical armadillo and a pure-country house band draw the urban cowboys in droves; when he visits New York City for a guest appearance on *The Tomorrow Show*, he is borne around the city by limousine and surrounded by promo personnel; when he talks to the press, he is articulate and confident, well-versed and easy.

His music, on the other hand, has changed not one iota; honky-tonk it was, and honky-tonk it is. This consistency, which began as merely a personal preference in his early recording days, has now become a commitment—perhaps even a crusade of sorts. The *Honky Tonk Lives!* theme, therefore, seemed like the obvious starting point of the interview.

Moe, how do you feel about the widening of country music—the inclusion of middle-of-the-road and pop sounds under the banner of country? Doesn't that annoy you sometimes?

Well, it's bringing so many more people into our music. They'll listen to a Helen Reddy song on the radio, and then maybe after a couple more of those kinds of songs, they'll hear one of mine, and maybe they'll like it. Even if they don't like it, at least they'll have had to listen to it. You turn on the radio nowadays, and sometimes you have to listen to two or three songs to make sure it's a country station. It used to be that you knew after the first three notes. The thing that *does* annoy me is that I think we might lose the true country music. I think that *somebody* has to cut pure country. I really believe that if that isn't done, we're going to lose an American tradition, which is country music—steel guitar, fiddles, the whole works.

Do you think that the real hard-core country fans are getting the shaft these days?

Yes, I do. I think we need more hard-core country music. You hear people wanting it, and I think we have to give it to them. Two years ago, at the Disc Jockey Convention in Nashville, we did the CBS Records show. Myself, Johnny Paycheck, and George Jones got encores, and there were several other acts on the show who did middle-of-the-road stuff, and the

audience—mostly disc jockeys—booed them. I couldn't believe it! To me, that was the disc jockeys saying, "Hey, we like country!" So people asked them, "Well, why don't you play it on the air?" They said, "Give us some real country, and we'll play it." I can see their point. We haven't been sending it out, but I think that now the disc jockeys and the fans have expressed themselves to the point where the artists and the record companies are listening to them.

You see a hard-core country revival in the future, or do you think it's already happening?

I see it happening now. I talk to people in the business, and they keep saying, "I'm gonna cut country again." Mel Tillis just told me that. Brenda Lee's just come out with a heck of a country song. Gene Watson's doing real good country. So's John Anderson, that new guy. It's getting to be the "in" thing to go back to country—which is, thank goodness, where I've been all along. We took a chance there, too. We were in a bag where everyone was going in one direction, and we didn't go that way. Luckily, it turned out all right.

Well, you had a lot to do with this whole turnaround, didn't you?

I don't know if I did or not. *I hope* I did. I think that the fans really made it happen. **Were you never tempted to cut a crossover-type song?**

No, I never was. I've always hoped that something of mine would spill over—that it would get so strong in the country field that it would just naturally go on from there. It's like, "Man, we're making so much money with country, if we could just get a crossover hit, we'd clean up." But if you go for that, you might just be cutting off your nose to spite your face. I think that right now, if I came out with a real middle-of-the-road song, with an acre of fiddles and all, I would offend a lot of people. People get *serious* about that. It might not ruin my career or anything, but I'm sure that I'd hear about it.

Let's mention the great name in all this pure-country talk—George Jones.

George is the king of them all. George is



the best country singer who ever was or likely will be. He's country all the way. How many people could have the problems that George has had, yet still come back all the way? I idolize George Jones. When George does a song, you know within three notes that it's George Jones. He's got it. Country soul.

Six years ago, George told you that your success had convinced him to go back to cutting real five-piece-band honky-tonk country records again . . .

Yeah, he said that, and he did it, and look what happened: He got the *Male Vocalist* award from the CMA last year. Is George a friend of yours?

We're not real close, but I know him pretty well.

You and he are very different kinds of people, right?

Right. He's obviously got a lot of problems. I hope he's getting them corrected now. I think he is. Considering all

"I think that somebody has to cut pure country. I really believe that if that isn't done, we're going to lose an American tradition."

those problems, though, what a great job he's done! On the recording end, that is. On the other end—well, what can you say? He's put out a lot of great records, but man . . .

You don't have George's kind of problems, eh?

I might between now and when I go back to work, but no: I drink, but I take care of business. I do all the drinking songs, but I don't drink that much.

So what happens when you do the songs? Do you think yourself into the drunk-and-



cheating-and-being-miserable frame of mind, or what?

I can understand what I'm singing about, because I know a lot of people who have problems, who let the bottle take a hold on them.

You've never had a problem with drinking or drugging?

Nope. Never have. I drink, but I've never had a problem with it.

What about some duet work with George Jones, Moe? When that *George Jones—My Very Special Guests* album came out, you were conspicuously missing. Why was that?

I don't know. I wasn't invited. I'd love to do a duet with George. I'd love to record with Willie, too—he's done duets with

I've seen all kinds of people in this business have problems when they up and move to someplace like Nashville. Me, I can still go into the little beer joints and drink beer with the farmers around the neighborhood. I'm still one of the guys.

You'll never leave home?

I don't think I ever will. I like it where I am. I've still got my same old friends. This Sunday I've got a whole bunch of my sheet-metal-worker buddies coming over to watch football at the house—the same guys I ran with before. In our business, people get to thinking that they're stars, and that's the worst thing in the world.

You've never fallen for that one, Moe? Not even when you first hit it big?

I always wanted to run with my old

on the road. Those one-nighters pay very well.

What does a Number One country hit do for you? Do you get much money out of that?

It depends on the record sales, but overall, royalty payments are not that much, nothing near what most people think. But you can take that Number One record and go out on the road right after it's released, and get your price up, and make money *that* way. But we're doing something real dangerous in our business. People are over-pricing themselves. I really watch that. People get a few hit records and *boom!*, they want \$10,000 a day. Not many promoters can pay that much, so it all goes back to the public; the ticket prices go way up. It's already got to the point where you can't go out and see a big Grand Ole Opry-type package show, with several acts, any more. They can only bring in one act at a time. That's going to kill concerts. We'll have to work strictly clubs, one act in one club. I know several performers—I won't mention names—who got real hot, and just doubled their price. That's bad. It's the fans who have to pay for it, and in the end, they just won't go for the price. **That's a good point. Now for something completely different. You're going under the title "The King of Honkytonk" these days. That's kind of debatable, with George Jones out there, but you sure are a real cheatin' and drinkin' song specialist. Why is that, Moe?**

Well, it just kind of happened that way. What happens is that nine times out of ten, when you go looking for a Moe Bandy song, you'll get a song that has something to do with cheating or drinking. We go through all these songs, looking for material, and it just seems like every time we hear a real good one, it's about that subject. I didn't intend it to be this way, but I've become real popular in the bars, in the clubs. When I work those big clubs in Texas and Oklahoma—those one thousand, two thousand-seaters—I break every attendance record there ever was ... everywhere. These days I'm breaking my *own* records. I really believe that I draw in those clubs because I'm there singing about drinking, and *they're* out there drinking.

And cheating ...

And cheating, yes. They're out there with somebody else's wife ... or something.

So when somebody writes a real good drinking or cheating song, they send it to you or George, right?

Right. But what I'm wanting is that people should send me songs about everything, not just all that. I wish we could get more good, positive love songs that are still country. I've said that several times, and now they're starting to come in. It doesn't really matter what the subject is as long as the song is good, and as long as the song is country. ■

"As to cowboy hats, I don't wear one. We worked on a ranch, and every time I went out of the house, my daddy would say, 'Don't forget your hat, now.'"

everyone *but* me. But I think George and I could do a heck of a job on the right song. We could really lay into one, I bet. I bet we could sing real good harmony, too. George and I have talked about it, but it's just never happened. Maybe it's because I do duets with Joe Stampley, and the record company wants to keep things simple.

O.K. Now, Moe, who were your real musical heroes when you were a kid, a sheet-metal worker, all that?

Hank Williams, of course. My dad picked and sang, too. My dad was *my* hero, and Hank was *his* hero, so Hank was my hero, too. Every once in a while, you might hear some Hank Williams style in my voice.

Who else?

Well ... George. By the time I grew up, George was my Number One. I had all his records. They weren't very big records at the time, but it was strange—I just picked this guy up: George Jones, y'know? Merle Haggard, too. I've always admired *him*. I think that Merle Haggard is probably the best all-around country entertainer there is, because he's a great writer, he's a great singer, and he's a great musician. There's not many people who can do all three. I sure can't. Merle could never sing a lick, and still be a great writer or a great musician. That's three very different talents in one man.

Also, he's one who has kept it real country all the way down the line, isn't he?

He sure is. That man's a hero, no doubt about it.

You still live right around where you grew up, right? You never thought of moving to Nashville?

No. The reason most people in the business move to Nashville is that they have to be there to take care of their business. I have Ray Baker, my producer, to do that for me, so I don't see any reason to be there. I think that a guy's head is better if he stays where he comes from.

friends. It was strange, though. I found that I didn't change, but they did. It got to the point where people were saying, "Oh, I don't want to come see you. You're a big star now. You don't want nothin' to do with *me*." So I just had to call all my friends and give them a good chewing-out. It worked pretty good. Also, those are the people we're singing to—the working man, that's who this music is for.

That raises a point. Country music and all things Texan are getting to be chic these days. How do you feel about all of that?

It's strange, but I think it's great. We've been wearing boots and hats forever, and now it's "in" all over, and I don't feel so different anymore. We've had this image over the years—the big hats, the rhinestone suits and all—but the music isn't backwoods, corny stuff. We have some very intelligent people in this business, and now, with it getting popular all over, maybe those outside people will realize that.

When something like this happens, the original fans and artists sometimes feel like, "Hey, who are these bums muscling in on our act?" Do you ever get a trace of that feeling?

I've heard that, but I don't feel that way. I feel like, "Welcome here. Glad to see you." I think it makes us feel like maybe what we were doing wasn't all that out-of-style. As to cowboy hats, I don't wear one. Where I was raised up, I *had* to. We worked on a ranch, and every time I went out of the house, my daddy would say, "Don't forget your hat, now!" So when I got old enough to throw that hat away, I did.

In the early part of your career, you were broke even though you had big hit records. Now you're pretty well set up. Where does most of your money come from?

Where the money's at is personal appearances. My booking agency is getting to be a big business, but our money is

But seriously folks.

After getting "Down And Dirty" and "Drunk And Crazy" Bobby Bare is getting serious. His new album is filled with songs by some mighty serious songwriters: Willie Nelson, Bob McDill, Guy Clark, J. J. Cale, Townes Van Zandt, Tom T. Hall, Ian Tyson.

It's produced by red-hot Rodney Crowell, and backed by

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Ray Stevens The Serious Side of Ahab the Arab

By Bob Allen

Back in the early 1960s, when I was growing up outside Baltimore, Maryland, there was a top-forty radio station that we used to listen to on our transistor radios called WCAO. From WCAO came my first acquaintance with early Ray Stevens songs like *Ahab the Arab* and *Jeremiah Peabody's Polyunsaturated Quick-Dissolving Fast-Acting Pleasant-Tasting Green and Purple Pills*.

At the time, I had no earthly idea who Ray Stevens was; and I often found myself wondering what in the world the guy who sings songs like that must look like in real life. I pictured some wild-eyed, tousle-haired, slope-shouldered character who probably wore a gorilla mask on stage, possibly a weird character composite of Jerry Lee Lewis, Doug Kershaw, Moe of the Three Stooges, and maybe the worst Elvis imitator you could find, thrown in for good measure.

In the years since the early '60s when I first heard him, Ray Stevens has continued his perennially successful musical explorations in the comic vein. In fact, on *Shriners' Convention*, his debut album released for RCA Records last year, his talents for looniness seem to have matured to even newer and greater heights. On *Shriners' Convention*, the world has, in a wildly chaotic yet comic sort of way, simply gone mad. In one song, for instance, Virgil, an obese member of the Doo-rite Family of evangelistic gospel singers in search of God and the ultimate low note, explodes right on stage. In the title song, the Noble Lumpkin of the Grand Mystic Royal Order of the Nobles of the Ali Baba Temple drives his Harley Davidson off the diving board of a hotel swimming pool. In another song, a guy has decided he's going to teach his girlfriend a lesson by committing suicide. The name of the song is *The Last Laugh*. It is a world where even the strongest and most unusual emotions are often cloaked in comedy.

Artistically speaking, there has always been a more serious side to Ray Stevens—even though it has often been obscured by all the comic razzmatazz. The serious Ray

Stevens is the one who has won two Grammy Awards for his nearer-to-the-heart musical efforts: one for "Best Contemporary Vocal Performance-Male" on his own composition *Everything Is Beautiful* in 1970; and one for "Best Arrangement Accompanying Vocalists" in 1975 for his version of *Misty*, which, ironically, he and his band recorded on the spur of the moment one night while horsing around during rehearsals for a television show.

Similarly, this *serious* Ray Stevens was the one who was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Association's Hall Of Fame in late 1979 for his prolific and outstanding contributions as a songwriter.

But as Stevens himself once put it, "People remember the novelty songs."

The front door to the rambling one-story building which houses Ray Stevens's publishing company, recording studio, and business offices is located on a side street less than half a block from 17th Avenue South in Nashville, directly across the street from the offices of his former record label, Warner Brothers. It is guarded by a foreboding electric eye (like the kind used to discourage shoplifters in department stores) and an electronic squawk box which allow Stevens's staff to look you over and sound out your intentions before deciding whether or not to let you through the thick wooden door and into the inner sanctum. Fortunately, they are familiar with the interview mission to which I have been assigned, so I am allowed in quickly, leaving behind the freezing cold and the disarming scrutiny of the camera.

Ray Stevens, as he sits behind the desk in his large but unpretentious office, which is around several corners and down a long corridor from the front door, does not look particularly comic on this late afternoon. He is not wild-eyed, tousle-haired or slope-shouldered. Rather, he has about him an air of professional authority that is urbane and to-the-point, yet at the same time, quiet and understated. He is dressed casually but conservatively in sports shirt and

slacks, with a down vest pulled over as protection against the cold outside. For all the dozens of on-record comic personas he has created, Ray Stevens, in such an everyday situation, does not seem to laugh very often; and there is actually a sort of sad cast to his eyes.

But when Stevens speaks, it's with the easy-going yet no-nonsense tone of a man who is comfortable juggling the various responsibilities of a writer/singer producer who also heads his own complex of commercial interests. Word has it that he paid cash for most of his extensive commercial real estate holdings, and his thriving publishing company includes copyrights not only on Stevens's hits but also on other popular classics. Layng Martine, Jr.'s *Way Down* (Elvis Presley's last single) has brought tens of thousands of dollars into the company by itself.

The top of Stevens's desk attests to a man who is frightfully busy, yet, almost to a fault, organized; though it gives the initial impression of being cluttered, a closer inspection reveals that everything—tapes, memos, documents, contracts—is neatly stacked and in order. Stevens himself takes a phone call while another call holds for him on another of the office's lines.

As Stevens moves around the office, it's obvious that he has more than enough to keep him busy. First, there are the never-ending details of the new house he's having built for himself (Stevens was divorced from Penny, his wife of more than 20 years, in 1980). "It's taken 15 months to get it finished!" he grimaces. "It's been the *pain* of the year! It's almost driven me crazy. I've had to bleed and cry and gnash my teeth down to the nub and it's *still* not finished!"

There are also numerous details having to do with *One Last Chance*, his new L.P., which, at this writing, is only a week or so away from release. And already, he explains, he is working to clear some time to begin writing and recording songs for his next L.P. "You always have to plan ahead," he explains. "In fact," he adds impatiently,



Long before Clint Eastwood began hanging around with orangutans and Merle Haggard, and John Travolta shed his white suits for denim and cowboy hats, Burt Reynolds was making country music movies. Reynolds' "good ole boy" films are practically classics: *Gator*, *White Lightning*, and, of course, *Smokey And The Bandit*, one of the largest grossing films of all time. Burt's secret was pretty simple—make movies that seemed like country songs, with a little bit of fightin', a little bit of cryin'-in-the-beer, a little bit of car chasin', a little bit of little darlin's, and, finally, a tremendous amount of straight, 100-proof good humor, with Reynolds there to hold the whole thing together. And now he's even drifted into singing, with a song from the soundtrack of *Bandit II* (although the song never made the film) called Let's Do Something Cheap And Superficial. That about says it all. I caught up with Burt Reynolds on the set of *Smokey and the Bandit II* in Florida, where the crew was shooting inside sequences near Burt's home in Jupiter, Florida. While Don Williams was doing his stuff onstage, Burt and I talked in his trailer/dressing room. What he wanted to talk about was country music.

COUNTRY MUSIC Interviews

Burt Reynolds

By Michael Bane

Reynolds: It's a little bit of a madhouse here.

CM: Looks like it; I guess they're keeping you pretty busy. Burt, are you going to do *Best Little Whorehouse* with Dolly after you get through with this?

Reynolds: Yeah, we've decided that now. I don't know when we're going to do it. It's either going to be three months from now, or Paramount might want another film, and if I have to do another film for Paramount, we're gonna have to put it off for a year. But if I do do that next, I'll just kind of spend the next three months working with her and go to Nashville and mess around a little bit.

CM: Weren't you talking to

Willie about a project?

Reynolds: Yeah. We want to do a picture together. I'd like to direct him in a film. We have to work it out, but I really like him and obviously I'm not the only one. I'd like to say that I was the first one, but you'd sure have to arm wrastle me for that. I'm a big, huge fan; there's a lot of mileage on that face, and I think he's got a big career in films if he wants it.

CM: You've done an awful lot to help country music out. . . .

Reynolds: Well, I just. . . before, the establishment, the Hollywood establishment, was walking around listening to jazz and Johnny Mathis. I was a country music freak, and I used

to say it. And I think really, I've noticed now, in the last five years, some very heavyweight people are suddenly country music fans. Clint Eastwood's one of my best friends, we've been friends for 25 years, but when Clint did *Every Which Way But Loose*, he didn't know who Mel Tillis was [laughs]. And when Mel came in to do the first scene, he called Snuff Garrett up and said, "We've got to fire this guy, he stutters." And then he called him back about a half hour later and said, "He's stealing every scene from us, we better keep him." And of course now Clint is like, what I call being a newborn Christian—once you get converted, you go

all the way. Now Clint is a country music freak. Merle Haggard and him are running around singing together; he's really with it. But there were a whole bunch of people that just didn't want to have their names associated at all with country music. I guess what made me most angry of all was *Nashville*, the film. I had done a film down there called *W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings* and Altman was coming right in after me, and I told everybody that it was not going to be a bouquet to Nashville. And it wasn't.

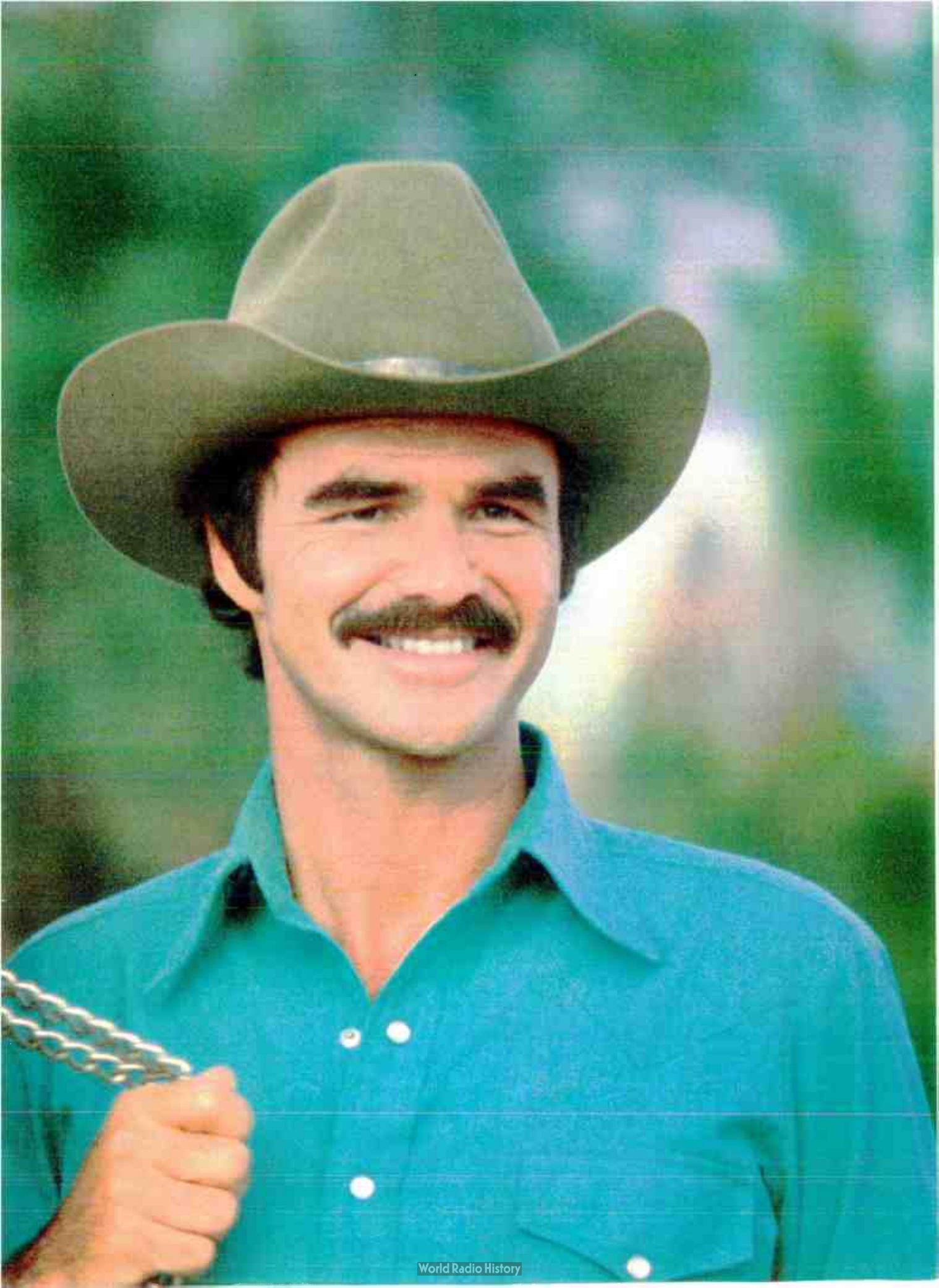
CM: It wasn't about country music at all.

Reynolds: No, it wasn't. It was caricatures of a lot of really nice



people and I really resented that. You don't have to make caricatures out of those people, because they have enough character within themselves to be bigger than life just as who they are; they're special. Just let 'em be who they are; you don't have to do anything else. I mean, to go to Dolly Parton with a make-up kit would be a big mistake. To tell Don Williams to be a little more laid back would be a big mistake. To tell Jerry Reed to have a little more energy would be *crazy*. Those are the things—that's what they all have. It's a special quality they have and those idiots out in Hollywood who bring 'em out there to do a Dean Martin show or something, stick a haystack behind them and shoot 'em—it makes me crazy. I mean, I want to strangle somebody when I see that. The real quality that they have... I did a special about five years ago from the governor's house in Nashville, when I had all of them, and I just talked to them. And that was the most talked about thing I ever did on television. I just talked to Roger [Miller] about why he couldn't write anymore, the problems he had with writing; Charlie Rich was on the show and it was the first time anybody had ever heard Charlie Rich; and Glen Campbell and Bobby Goldsboro and Dolly—this was when she was back with Porter. It was an incredible show. In fact, I'd like to do it again. I'd like to get a lot of other people together. I'd like to get the real Outlaws together—not an audience, just them. Get a room, get a camera, tape for about four hours, then just pare it down to a half hour of really good stuff. I think that's what's happening now; also because of the whole thing in Iran, we're all sort of realizing with patriotism and all that, that the one thing that's really ours, that really belongs to us, is country music. And there's something to be said for a song that has a beginning, a middle and an end, that tells a story. And country music has always done that. It's one thing to sit around and listen to Donna Summer sing *Bad Girls*—I mean, that's terrific, it's sexy and, for what it is, it's wonderful—but if I was sitting over in a foxhole in Nam and guys were shooting at me, I wouldn't want







Ole Burt ... with Willie, Candice Bergen, Kris and Rita.

to hear *Bad Girls*.

CM: I was out at Willie's, and he was telling me how he picked up that young audience. He said, "Listen, there's an age when you get to, crying in your beer isn't nearly as funny as it was when you were maybe in college."

Reynolds: Don Williams just did one take [on the set of *Bandid II*], and it's just beautiful, but he doesn't understand how hard it is to do what he just did. So we won't tell him. If you brought an actor into the place to do that, he's be falling all over the place trying to make it look difficult.

CM: It looked just like a normal concert.

Reynolds: Exactly. Dom DeLuise noticed it and said, "This guy's amazing—how much acting has he done?" 'Bout 15 minutes. When he did *W. W.* with me, I thought he was wonderful and wanted him to do some other pictures, but Don is really his own man, he does what he wants to do, that's it.

CM: His shows are almost spooky sometimes. The crowds always know all the words.

Reynolds: I think he'll probably live 'til 130. He's found the secret.

CM: Do you ever wish you could trade places with someone like Willie sometimes... be a country singer?

Reynolds: Oh, God, yes; oh sure. But then I wish I could trade places with *anybody* that can stand up and do what they do to an audience, because I'm constantly having to do it to another actor. So therefore it comes at me sideways. You know, when you're on stage and you're acting, the few times I've done it—I did a one-man show on New Year's Eve and because they were captured and couldn't get out, I sang a couple of

songs. It was wonderful; I had the best time I've had in my life.

CM: I've read somewhere that you've done a duet with Willie.

Reynolds: Yeah, I got up and went into his dressing room to tell him how much I loved the album he did all the old songs on. So they came in and said, "They want you on stage, Willie," and he said, "I'll be there in a second." So he said, "You really liked that album?" and I said, "Yeah, I love it." So he said, "Somebody give me my axe," and they handed him his guitar, and he sang the entire album. And they kept coming in every 20 seconds saying, "They want you on stage," and he kept saying, "Yeah." And he sang the whole album. I never felt so flattered and indebted to anybody, so when he walked out on stage, I was standing on the side of the stage and he just [beckoned me] and I don't know, I just kinda wandered out there and before I knew what was happening, the two of us were standing up there singing *Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys*. It was really fun. And what he does, which is wonderful, he never says who it is. He never says, "This is Clyde Ledbetter," or whoever. You just walk up and start singing, and people were wonderful. I thought they'd throw about three beer cans at me because it wasn't Johnny Paycheck or one of his buddies. They were really terrific, yelled and hollered, and I sang with him, then walked off. It was really fun.

CM: What sort of music did you grow up listening to?

Reynolds: I grew up—the first song that I ever memorized was *China Doll*. I don't know if you remember that.

CM: It doesn't ring any bells.

Reynolds: Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff, Eddy Arnold was probably my biggest hero. I remember "Check, Check, Checkerboard brings you the Eddy Arnold show..." [loud, jarring whoop imitating Eddy Arnold's cattle call]. I won a talent contest singing *China Doll*, maybe in the tenth grade. But it was all country music. I remember one of the biggest thrills in my life was... when we drove up to do *W. W.*, we had to get permission from the insurance company to get the [old Opry] building, which was really tough

with all the politics that were involved at that time. They were very shaky about us coming there to do a picture. But Minnie [Pearl] was a good friend of mine, and Minnie really pushed it through. She said, "I know this guy, and he's not here to do an exploitation film." She was more instrumental than anybody in helping us.

CM: How did you meet Minnie?

Reynolds: I was an emcee on a traveling show back in the early '60s—The Andrews Sisters, Aldino Ray, Minnie Pearl, and the little Mexican guy who used to be on *The Real McCoys*, a cast of thousands. And I was the em-



... with the best little dall in Nashville.

cee. And Jimmy Dean was the big star. He came out last and sang *Big Bad John*, or whatever he did. This was before pork sausage. Minnie and I did a—I was kind of her straight man for her stuff. So she had remembered those days, and we'd remained friends. She's a Clark Gable freak, she loved Gable. So I had a poster made up of *Gone With the Wind*, and I had Gable holding Scarlett, but in Scarlett's face I had Minnie's face drawn. And it said, "Starring Clark Gable and Minnie Pearl in *Gone With The Wind*." Roy Acuff also had a lot to do with it, too, because he was chairman of that committee.

CM: *W. W. and the Dixie Dance Kings* really was one of the first non-exploitative... it's the first film that showed any sensitivity to Nashville.

Reynolds: I thought it was. It's one of my favorite movies that I've ever done. I really liked the picture, for a lot of reasons. I thought it was funny; I thought it had a lot to say about a lot of our heartache and heartbreak and all that business. Also, it had a lot of '50s kind of stuff in it, too. It wasn't exactly *Ameri-*

can Grafitti, but it did have a lot of '50s stuff.

CM: It was sort of a comedy *Thunder Road*.

Reynolds: That's very good, that's a very good analogy. Yes, *Thunder Road* is one of the most rented films—it hasn't made the most money of any film in the world—it's been rented more than any film in the history of film business. A rental on *Thunder Road* now is probably \$15, so still today, when you're driving through the South, you'll go by a drive-in and it will say *Apocalypse Now* and *Thunder Road* [laughs]. And when I did *White Lightning*, I thought of *White Lightning* as the first technicolor *Thunder Road*. We were the first ones to kind of put music to our films. The films that I started, what are referred to now as the good ole boys' films, we really stuck the music in, and that's what I think made about 50 percent of the success of the films. After Jerry [Reed] did the first *Smokee*, I went to a concert out in Disneyland, and I hadn't realized the impact—it was before any of us had realized the impact of *Smokee*. And when Jerry did *Eastbound and Down*, it was like he did the national anthem. I'd never seen anything like it in my life. I mean, it was bigger than *Amos Moses*, it was bigger than any of the giant hits that he'd done. When he did *Eastbound*, the place came to pieces, and that's when I knew we'd got something real special. And it still is his closing song.

CM: I saw the first *Smokee* at Radio City Music Hall...

Reynolds: Well, that was the wrong place to see it [laughs].

CM: Yeah, but people cried though; people had come in from New Jersey and all around for that...

Reynolds: That was the amazing thing. We opened in the South, and we didn't cross that Mason-Dixon Line 'til four months after we opened. And I think the first figures were like thirty-two million or something, and everybody said, "Well, that's it, let's pack our bags and go home." We were real happy. And then it made like 39 or 42 [million dollars] in the North. So there's a lot of good ole boys in the North.

CM: Why do you think the movie touched the kind of nerve it

did?

Reynolds: A lot of it – and I'm not trying to be silly – but it was luck. It was really luck. It was getting all those people together. Gleason at the right time in his career; he had always wanted to play a Southern sheriff. It was his idea, "you're a bag of monkey nuts," and all those things that he came up with. Jerry was certainly ready to be Gabby Hayes and I had wanted to do that kind of film with Hal for a long time. Hal [Needham] had dreamed up this whole thing and couldn't get it off the ground, and I wanted to do something with Hal because I believed in him. Sally [Fields], I thought, was the most underrated actress in Hollywood, and I was proven right later. That film didn't prove it, but *Norma Rae* certainly did, and *Sybil* did. Mike Henry was just perfect as Junior, and all the chemistry just happened. And we didn't have a script – it was a bad script. We just ad-libbed and improvised, and we had a free rein to do what we wanted to do with it. That was during the CB craze, but we didn't have that much to do with the CBs because, if you remember, there was about fourteen CB movies at that time came out and died. There was about 25 movies came out with bigger car crashes and longer car crashes, whatever. I remember one movie called *3001 Car Crashes* or something. . . .

CM: *Gone in 60 Seconds* . . .

Reynolds: You're right . . . and so was the movie, and so were the profits. So it had something to do with those five people on the screen. I think everybody knew we all really cared about each other – and we do. We all really like each other. And I think this one, we're all back together again and it's all the same, even more so. We all like each other even more now, and we've added Dom, which is another added dimension. I don't know if this one is better, but I think it's funnier; but I would be happy if it's just half as good as the first one just in terms of audience reception.

CM: You really like working off comedians like Dom.

Reynolds: Yeah.

CM: Why?

Reynolds: Well, because I think I react better than I act. I think the secret to every bit of

success that I've had has been reacting, knowing what to do in a situation. I mean, if a building starts falling down around me, that's when I get best, when any kind of humor that I have starts coming out. Comics are naturally hyperkinetic, and it allows me to get rather laid back and do what I do, which is wait for a spot and do my number and react off what they do. And reactions can be, as Jack Benny proved, a lot funnier sometimes than words. You get the right guy, the right person, the right chemical balance – I mean, for example, Jimmy Carter does a lot of the same things I do, and I



... with the "Wild Man" Jerry Reed in *Smokey and the Bandit*.

think Jimmy Carter is wonderful. I'm a huge fan of his. I think we'd be very good together, but we'd be both waiting for the other guy to do what we do. He does a lot of the same stuff I do. I need to be with a real kind of crazy person, and that's when it really works. Gleason is bigger than life, Jerry's bigger than life, Dom's bigger than life, and Sally's such a wonderful actress, it wouldn't matter; put her with anybody and she'd be wonderful. To be very honest with you, it's easier for me. It's just easier. It's like saying, "Why do you like to sing with Chet Atkins playing guitar beside you?" It's just easier.

CM: Were you surprised when Clint Eastwood did *Every Which Way But Loose*?

Reynolds: No. I told him, "Listen, I'm going to do *Dirty Bandit Goes To New York*, you son-of-a-bitch." He knew that he had watched what had happened with me. We talked about the screenplay and whether he should do it. And I said, "Hell, yes." I said, "First of all, get ready to get killed by the critics, but," I said, "open another bank account in Switzerland." I

thought Ruth Gordon and the idea of the chimpanzee was wonderful. And Clint was smart enough to get some really good people around him, good actors around, and like I say, he used all those wonderful people . . . Mel [Tillis] and Eddie Rabbitt, who hadn't quite happened yet, but everybody said he was going to just explode; he was the right choice to do the title song. You know, he's doing *Loose 2* now, and he just did a thing called *Cowboy Billy* or something like that, which I understand is really wonderful, a really good picture.

CM: Every time I saw him come on camera, after about the first 30 minutes, I kept expecting to see you.

Reynolds: Well, it's funny. I had a lot of people say that to me. I happen to be a real big fan of his, and I think you'll find that his style is going to be much looser in the next film, and the one after that even more so. I think you're going to see a different Clint. Clint's always had a great sense of humor, he's just been hiding behind that thing because it worked for him. I think he's going to come out of that a little bit more, and I think he's going to be appreciated a little bit more. I'm talking about critically – fans already are crazy about him. Like I say, he's a newborn country fan. So he's just bananas. You know, Clint's father was an orchestra leader and Clint probably has the best jazz collection of any actor I know, and now he's just jammed full of Willie and Waylon and everybody, and it's really terrific to see that.

CM: He put out a single record ages ago.

Reynolds: So did I, ages ago, and we both had the same success. I have his album and he has mine. They're very rare collector's items. He actually had some training in singing; I never did. He actually thought one time very seriously of being a singer.

CM: Would you do it again?

Reynolds: Sure. I'd do it again. I'm crazy, I'm gonna do it again. I'm gonna do it with Dolly. I don't know about an album, but I'm certainly going to sing a couple of songs in the picture. And that's pretty heady company to sing with. I did a musical, but it really wasn't my fault.

I thought I was pretty damn good in it. I sang live, which nobody does today, and it's Cole Porter, which is probably the most difficult – it is the most difficult – to sing, unless you're Sinatra. I didn't look like a total ass. I remember Roy Rogers was sitting about three chairs from me at the premiere at the Fox, and he's a terrific guy, so I leaned over and said, "What do you think, Roy?" and he said, "I

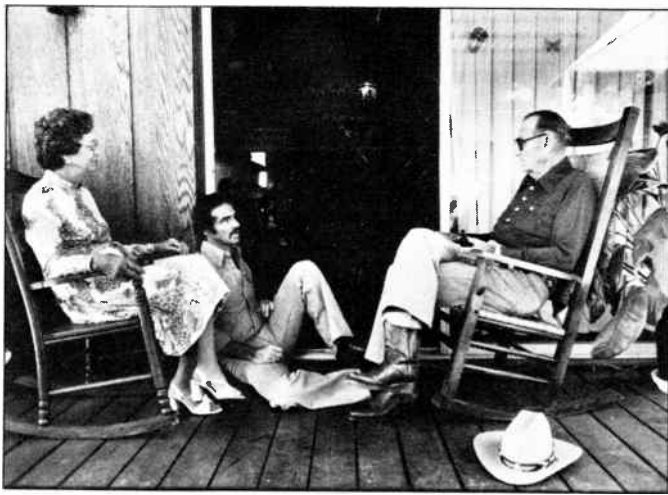


... and W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings.

don't think they're gonna understand it in Scrutahoo, Nebraska." Little did I know that that meant in about 58 of the states in America, they weren't going to understand it. But yeah, I'd do it again, if everything was right. You know, if you get the right people around you, to protect you . . . the Everly Brothers can sing in the cracks better 'n anybody in the world, and if you can keep in pitch and have fun . . . if an actor gets into his mind that he is a singer, and that's all it is, is saying you can sing, and like I say, if you can get somebody to sing in the cracks behind you, you can have a helluva lot of fun. And country soul – if those people buy the fact – there's an 80-year-old man [George Burns] right now with a great hit out and he's about as far from being country as you can imagine. But they buy it, because they know he's singing from here [holds heart].

CM: Ernest Tubb has never been able to sing, there's no voice there, but he's a legend.

Reynolds: Right . . . I never have been able to figure it. There's a couple of those guys – it's not just him – but there's two or three of those guys that when I sit and listen to them, they've always been a mystery to me, what was the attraction. But there's no mystery. You can take somebody who's never ever heard country music and listen to Don Williams, and they say,



... down home on the porch with Mama and Daddy.

"That's a pure, pure voice—there's a purity to it." Larry Gatlin hits notes that dogs can hear. There's no mystery about these guys--the new ones I'm talking about. I must confess to you that there are certain country stations I listen to where I get turned off by them. I can only handle really about only four or five hard country songs in a row.... I do love Larry and Dolly and Roy and Jerry and, my God, the Oak Ridge Boys and the group we got in this picture, the Statlers, they've been voted for the last five years; the Mills Brothers would have a hard time keeping up with that record. I can listen to Anne Murray, for example, all day long and never get bored. And I can't listen to Streisand all day long—I can't, I guess, probably if I sat down and put on twenty records, I'd start with Willie, only because of some of the songs he's done, he's very much a part of my growing up. He and I are the same age, and we went through the same—my dad was a sheriff in the South. I was born in Georgia and was raised in Florida, and every once in awhile he would play some songs that would just blow me away from that era.

CM: Do any come to mind?

Reynolds: Well, like *Mr. Dee-Jay* and then also the ballads that he does, the Sinatra ballads, the straight stuff. The *Stardust* album is a sensational album. And like I say, Anne Murray destroys me. I just think she's got an incredibly special, special voice. It's pure—I keep using that word—but there's a purity to her voice, and I think there must be something special about her. I don't know her, but

I just look at her and think, "That's a real nice lady." I don't know if she is or not, but I just bet she is. You've got to be kind of special to live in Nova Scotia [laughs]. And not want to go to California or whatever. And Jerry, Jerry's now picking different than he ever did, picking with singers and doing a little different kind of playing. And it's just transforming him. I'd like to see him and [George] Benson get together and just pick one night. And he said, "Well, I don't know Benson," and I said, "Well, I know him. I'll get you together." I don't know what it would cost me, but just to get them into a room together one night and hear them pick, I'd be so excited. That's what I think is going to happen eventually. I think you're going to see more and more... Dolly and Crystal Gayle were the first to cut a crossover, or I guess Linda Ronstadt was....

CM: She crossed from the other way and then back....

Reynolds: Right. I'd like to see some of these people that come out in the *Playboy* jazz poll sit down and let Chet Atkins just spin their head around about four or five times, and sit down with some of the banjo pickers that we've got in Nashville and let them play with Count Basie just one time. It would just be so exciting.

CM: You know, Waylon has always said that his favorite musician is Ray Charles and that he's always wanted to play with Ray Charles, but there've always been artificial barriers.

Reynolds: But you know what? I betcha if I called Ray Charles, and said, "There's a guy who

just thinks you're the living end," he'd go, "You're kidding me. I'd like to meet him." I've always found—like the time I said Cary Grant was my idol, somebody said, "Well, he'd like to meet you," and I just about fainted. You don't know until somebody finds out. Somebody's got to make that effort. Maybe I should be the Henry Kissinger of music and go around and do that. It would be great fun, because most of those people are shy. I remember when Gleason had a scene with Brenda Lee, and Brenda and I have been friends for years and years, and she's another person I know can act. And I was scared to death that Gleason wouldn't know who she was and give her the proper respect, so I said to Hal, "Be sure to tell Gleason who Brenda is." So Hal said he went up and said, "Now I want you to know who Brenda Lee is," and Gleason (disgusted) says, "I know who Brenda Lee is, for God's sake. She's been a star for 15 years."

CM: That's one of the most gratifying things to me, having written about country music for five years, seeing the people who deserve it finally get recognized.

Reynolds: I did a picture called *Sam Whiskey* and Del Reeves had a little part in it. And he came up and introduced himself and said to me, "You don't know who I am." And I said, "Yeah, I know who you are; you sang *Watching All the Bell Girls Go By*." And he said, "Gee, how'd you know that?" And I said, "Well, I'm a country music fan." And he said, "I read that somewhere. You'll never know what a difference that made. When I read that, shoot, I've never missed a picture of yours since then." [laughs] But I know a few people that it wouldn't hurt 'em any to say that. It might help 'em a lot. I think McQueen said that. I don't know if it's true. Well, I guess it's true. I think McQueen was a country fan. It's hard to tell because he didn't ever come out of his house. You probably know better than I do—is Redford?

CM: I think he's starting to be, mainly because of Willie. Willie can convert anybody.

Reynolds: Yeah, he sure could. I remember he came to New York when I was doing *Starting*

Over, and Candy Bergen had never heard of Willie Nelson, as you can somewhat imagine. So he brought his guitar over, and he sat down in the middle of the floor and started singing his songs. She would have followed him to Afghanistan.

CM: I think he would've followed her, too.

Reynolds: He said she looked so much like his wife. I guess she's quite beautiful. It was a great night. She was really not only touched by him but more impressed with him as a man, not who he was. He has an enormous sex appeal, which I haven't figured out yet, but it must be true because I keep hearing it from an awful lot of people. I think part of it stems from the fact that you just sort of have to accept who he is. There's something very sexy about that. Also, there's nothing sexier than a man doing what he does best. And that's what he does best. He just does it, and is totally unashamed about it—in a taxi cab, on a corner, on the top of a roof, on a boat....

CM: Is that your secret, too?

Reynolds: No. I don't profess to have any kind of secrets at all in that area. I haven't figured it out yet, and I'm scared to death somebody else will figure out that there isn't one [laughs]. I think probably that my biggest ally is that I *seem* to be having a real good time—and I am. And as long as that's true—once you start thinking that there's something inside that little camera that's saying "he's faking it," then it's all over.

CM: Did you get a chance to read Tammy's book?

Reynolds: No. I heard about it.

CM: You figure prominently.

Reynolds: Yeah, I heard about that, too. But that's all right. Tammy's... I love Tammy. I'm crazy about Tammy. I think Tammy is a real special lady. I think she's got a lot of people around her who are telling her to do some things that I don't think are real smart. And I think Tammy has made a lot of mistakes in her life, and it's made for a great book. I hate to think that I was one of them [chuckles]. And I think she's going to make a lot more of them, but I think that kiss-and-tell books are real cheap and dumb. But there's nothing cheap and dumb about Tammy. ■

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Dave Rowland The Overhead Smash is only Effective if You Can Hit a Winner

By Paula Lovell Hooker

The only thing Dave Rowland loves as much as a packed house of country music fans is a good, tough game of tennis—and of course, his sweetheart, Misty Rowe.

"Tennis is a big part of my life," explains Rowland, after an early morning match with singer and tennis fan, Andy Williams, who was in Nashville recording an old Brenda Lee hit for his upcoming album. "The exercise is really good for me and it's something I can do in any city, year-round." Rowland, a former high school and college athlete, took up the game only five years ago to help shed some extra weight he'd picked up while touring with his group, Dave Rowland and Sugar. Since then, he's shown a natural talent and a passionate fondness for the sport. When

he's not performing one of his 200 dates a year or recording with Sugar—his two female backup singers Melissa Prewitt and Jamie Kaye—and the Silver Dollar Band, Rowland concentrates on his overhead smash and his forehand volley.

"I was really getting out of shape and needed to do something about it," says Rowland, on a tennis break from recording his new album, *Pleasure*, which was released in May. "I like sports and I love competition."

Competition is an understatement, if his tennis game is any indication of Rowland's attitude toward his profession. Every shot seems to count. And, while he's most supportive of his doubles partners, with encouraging remarks and words of consolation for missed points, the name of Row-

land's game still hinges on the final score.

"A lot of nice things have happened to me since I took up tennis," says Rowland, who credits the game with a fortuitous meeting between him and country music's crossover king, Kenny Rogers, another tennis addict and an entertainer Rowland obviously admires. At the International Festival of Country Music in England a few years ago, Rogers needed a partner and recruited an enthusiastic Rowland.

"I was playing doubles with Kenny one day and he said, 'What are you doing January 16th? Want to open my show for me?' Well, we did the date, and the next day we were playing tennis again, and while we were on the bench waiting for our court, Kenny leaned over to me and said, 'Hey, you want to travel with me and open the show next year?' Man, I wanted to jump up and down and shout, but I had to lean over and say, nice and reserved, 'Sure, thanks.'

"Touring with Kenny gave me exposure to a whole new audience—and it was really the result of a tennis game! The tour helped our record sales and made me realize that if we could just get the right song, we would appeal to the broader country pop audiences. I don't want to crossover [into the country pop field]," claims Rowland. "I just want to expand."

About two years ago, Kenny and his wife Marianne played another important role in Rowland's life. They introduced him to one of Marianne's co-celebrities on television's *Hee Haw*, Misty Rowe.

"She's the best thing that ever happened to me," claims Rowland sincerely.

"I'll never forget our first date," he recalls. "I'd asked Misty to go to a party after the Country Music Association awards show, but I forgot to tell her I was also taking Sugar. When I walked her to the car, there were these two pretty girls



... I don't think she was too crazy about it."

When they met, Rowland was a self-professed workaholic—serious and driving, with an explosive temper. Since then, Rowland says he has calmed down considerably and he unabashedly gives Misty "all the credit for straightening out" his life.

"Not that my former wife wasn't good for me. She was a beautiful lady, too, and we're still good friends. But before Misty, I never really took time off to have anyone special in my life. I was too career-oriented and I was trying so hard to get it going,"

says Rowland, who sang with Elvis Presley the Stamps Quartet, the Four Guys, toured with Charley Pride, and even served as a singing waiter in a Nashville Italian restaurant before breaking off to form his own group. "It affected me both mentally and physically. I was intense and very uptight ... and about 45 pounds overweight."

Then he met Misty Rowe.

"I used to have a lot of highs and lows," says Rowland, who admits to past displays of anger on the tennis courts. "Now I'm more mellow," says the singer, who always

found it easy to work and difficult to relax, but who now enjoys a low-key game of mixed doubles with Misty as his partner.

And what about Misty as his life-time partner, on and off the courts?

"You mean marriage?" asks Rowland, coyly. "Well, maybe. Who knows? Right now we're still getting to know each other since she lives in Los Angeles and I'm in Nashville ... but I'm certainly not denying the possibility."

Country Music Magazine, he promised, will be the first to know. ■

Do's and Don'ts on the Tennis Court

The overhead smash gives you a great feeling of being able to smash the ball as hard as you want, while your opponent runs for the nearest foxhole. A lot of players like to show as much power as they can to try to keep their opponents from lobbing, but this is only effective if you can hit a winner. If you miss, it will remain in your mind throughout the match and your opponent will say, "Oh, boy, he can't hit an overhead, so I'll lob him right into his grave."

Well, here are a few tips to make your overhead a winner:



1. Hold the same grip as you use on your serve. The Continental for experienced players should be best.

2. Get the racket back and into position EARLY (like the day before, if you can).

3. Don't wait for the ball. Go to it with short gliding steps.



4. Never take your eye off the ball. Your timing has to be just right or you could miss it entirely (as in the photo with Paula).

5. To help get position under the ball, point with your free arm at the ball as if you were going to catch it with a baseball glove. However, don't let this restrict your rhythm or your shoulder turn when you swing at the ball. This really will help get you under the ball and ready to hit a big winner.

6. Hit up on the ball as you would your serve, with rhythm, power and accuracy, without trying to muscle the ball.

7. Keep your head up as you hit the ball.

8. Hit an overhead before it bounces, unless it is deep. On baseline overheads, depth and accuracy are more important than speed.



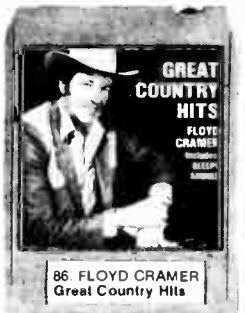
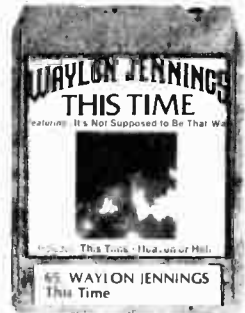
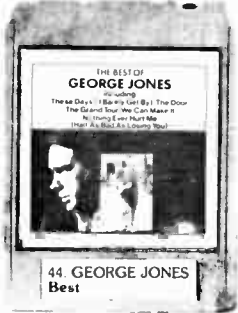
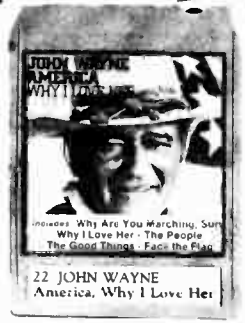
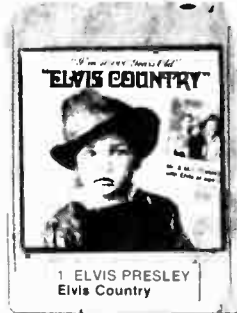
9. If none of these tips work for you, maybe you should take up snow skiing.

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Riders in the Sky: Pioneers' Sons

By Peter Guralnick



Ranger Doug, Woody Paul, and Top Slim LaBour.

In his wildest dreams it seems unlikely that Bob Nolan, founder of the Sons of the Pioneers and almost single-handed originator of the “Western” half of country and Western music, could have imagined one of the incidental benefits that his wide-ranging influence would one day bring about: that in 1980 *Here Comes the Santa Fe*, a tune very much in the Pioneers’ tradition of wistful optimism and forceful three-part harmony, would soar to Number One in Yuma, written and recorded by a contemporary Western group called (appropriately) Riders in the Sky, but sounding almost exactly like some of the classic songs (*Cool Water*, *Tumbling Tumbleweed*) that Nolan himself had written some 40 years before. Well, not *exactly*, since, as the group itself concedes, “you can’t reproduce the groove exactly; ours is the same ... but somehow *bent*.” Nor could Nolan have imagined the makeup of the group itself, three young men in their early thirties—a country music historian, a PhD in physics from MIT by way of Trine, Tennessee, and a University of Michigan graduate turned country music songwriter—who combine equal elements of bawdiness, self-deprecating humor, theatrics, and steadfast dedication to the kind of music you may have last heard in a Roy Rogers movie when you were a kid (no coincidence, really, since Roy Rogers was one of the founding members of the Sons of the Pioneers). What would Bob Nolan think about it all?

“I think he would admire our persistence,” says Doug Green, founder of the latter-day Riders, prolific author (of *Country Roots* and *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Country Music* among others), one-time director of the Oral History Project at the Country Music Foundation in Nashville and sometimes writer for this magazine. “I think he would admire our willingness to go against prevailing musical trends. I think he would feel a lot of sympathy for us. At the same time, I’m sure he would find a lot of fault with our execution.”

Actually Bob Nolan did go on record as to how he felt about the Riders’ music, by writing the liner notes to their first album, **Three On the Trail**, shortly before his death last year. Impressed with the tapes which had been sent him, Nolan broke a long-standing public silence and declared that theirs was “a talent shared by only a very few in the world today. I was going to take each man separately and explore their individual virtues and talents—and they are all loaded with it—but when you take talent and combine it you do not have three individuals, you have a *team* of formidable potential.”

Riders in the Sky are, as Nolan correctly notes, a team, a fact which is evident in every aspect of their music. (“And the determination it takes to master the complexities of three-part yodeling,” Nolan went on, “I wonder how many of you could

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guess the amount of work and constant practicing it takes to perfect that!") But they are something more than that, too. For the Riders are not dedicated merely to reproducing sounds—they are not interested in pure barbershop harmonies, or in becoming the perfect Western copy band. The Riders also have a vision which sees Western music, with its pleasing harmonies, open vistas, and tranquil poetics, as something of a universal promise ("It's a tradition that strikes at the heart of almost everyone"), if not a panacea for the world's ills.

"We all come from different musical backgrounds . . . and all that energy comes together."

Doug Green, whose musical background includes a stint playing guitar for Bill Monroe as well as more formal scholarly pursuits, formed the group in 1977 with Windy Bill Collins on guitar and Fred LaBour, a softball acquaintance (Green, like Bill Monroe, is a baseball fanatic and, at age 35, still one of Nashville's more feared sluggers) on bass. LaBour, who was playing in Dicky Lee's band at the time and had written *The World's Most Broken Heart* for Tammy Wynette, was quickly dubbed Too Slim, both for the obvious reason, and because after each of his solos, Ranger Doug would call out, "Aw, he's Too Slim." To which Fred's loyal female following would respond, "But he's sooo good!" Windy Bill Collins was soon replaced by Tumbleweed Tommy Goldsmith, and then Too Slim brought in Paul Woodrow Chrisman, a scraggly-bearded, pony-tailed fiddle player from Triune, Tennessee, whom he had met at an Opryland audition sometime before. Chrisman, who had grown up knowing Sam and Kirk McGee and was presented with a fiddle upon high school graduation by none other than Roy Acuff, had played professionally on the Opry and with Wilma Lee Cooper and Loggins and Messina. In fact the only blot upon his otherwise stainless record was his attendance at that eastern seaboard institution MIT, where he had acquired his PhD and written a thesis on nuclear fusion which is still quoted today. Oh well, rationalized Ranger Doug, no one's perfect, and he welcomed him into the group, christening him Woody Paul. When Tumbleweed Tommy left, the group was a trio once more.

As you may have gathered from this abbreviated history, Riders in the Sky are first and foremost fun. They are not solemn conservators of a tradition. Their live shows are filled with innocent double entendres (their headquarters are at the old Triple X Ranch in Tenderloin Canyon, and there are a good many animal husbandry jokes), and they are not above, or maybe beneath, poking good-natured fun

at themselves. On stage they are surrounded by an electric campfire, a sorry-looking cattle skull called Mr. Skull, blown-dry tumbleweed, and a moon-and-the-stars backdrop. And then, of course, there is Riders' Theater. The departed Tumbleweed Tommy contributed the first skit, *The Cowboy Who Hated Christmas*, about Ranger Doug's almost pathological aversion to that national holiday. Since then Too Slim has written the majority of their real-life dramas, including such classics as *The Riders Join OPEC*, *The Riders Have a Baby*, and *How Ranger Doug Became a Ranger*, while also upholding his reputation as "king of the varmint dancers" ("I'm gonna varmint dance every chance I get," says Slim of such rites as the rabbit dance, the possum dance, even the sand crab roll, configurations seldom seen in polite society). And yet, if their behavior is sometimes looney, their music assuredly is not. For they are, as Bob Nolan correctly noted, serious musicians. More than that, they are serious *creative* musicians whose first album is dominated by originals which more than hold their own even in the presence of such classics as *Ghost Riders in the Sky* and *When Payday Rolls Around*. The humor may sell the music (with *That's How the Yodel Was Born* they even contribute their own brand of Western tall tale), but never at the expense of the harmonies.

In the last year, quite a bit has been happening for the Riders. They made their first album for Rounder Records, played the Opry with Roy Rogers, taped Austin City Limits, performed a Salute to Texas with the Houston Pops—and gave up all outside jobs to pursue their musical career. In January they even played the Inauguration. The Inauguration?! Wasn't that a little . . . ? Well, Too Slim didn't do any varmint dances, apparently out of consideration for the new administration, but Elizabeth Taylor introduced them and became a Riders convert. Now they are on the road pursuing fortune and fame, waiting for the release of their second Rounder album, and attempting to maintain that delicate balance between good-natured self-mockery and serious intent without any spillover into cynicism. "We feature each other, together and separately, based on the characters all three of us play," says Ranger Doug reassuringly. "Every kind of music we've played—big band, bluegrass, country, rock, jazz—affects the music we create." "We all come from different musical backgrounds," says Too Slim, "and all that energy comes together to make a new sound. In other bands I've played in I felt stifled, but here you can be as good as you're capable of being."

"We build our characters," says Woody Paul. "I ride the high country. Ranger Doug is always the good knowledgeable ranger. Too Slim is always riding drag. Some nights, though, it gets all switched around—and then it's *really* funny." ■

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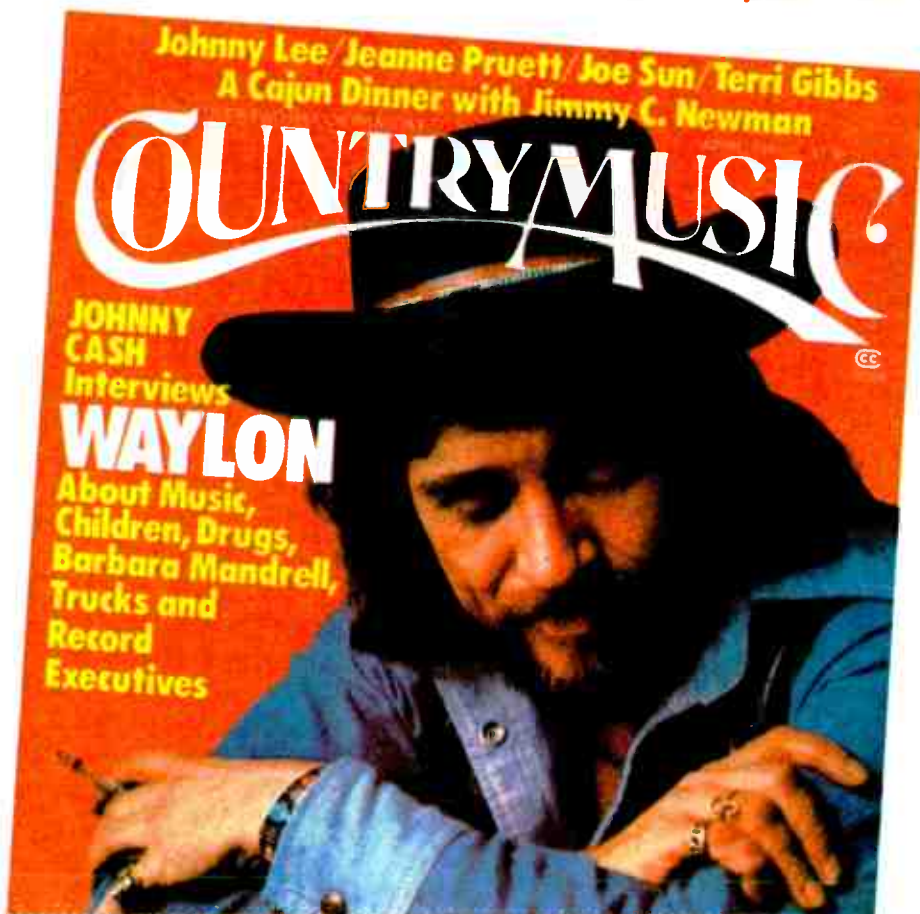
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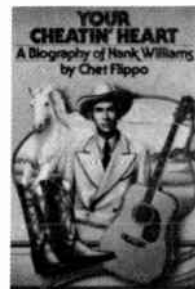
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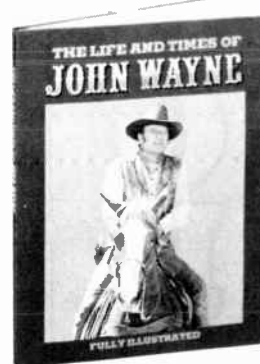
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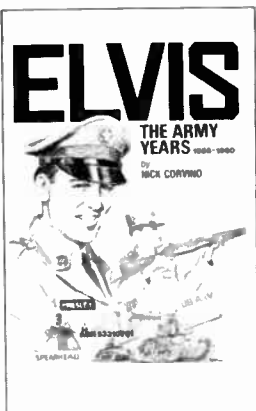
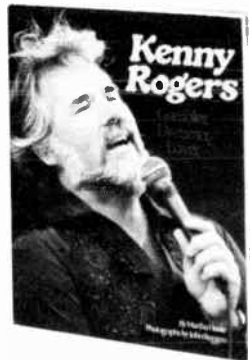
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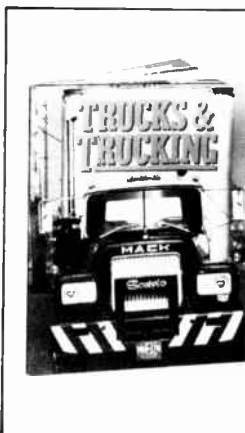


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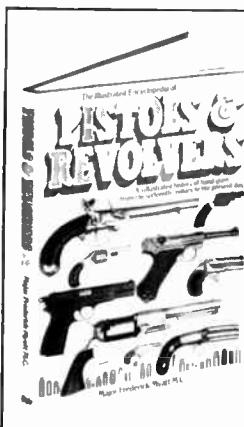


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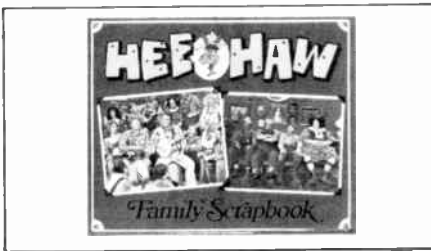


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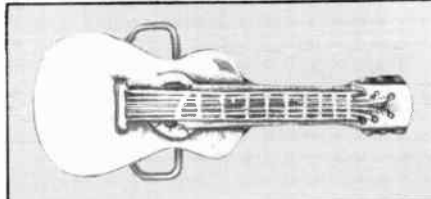
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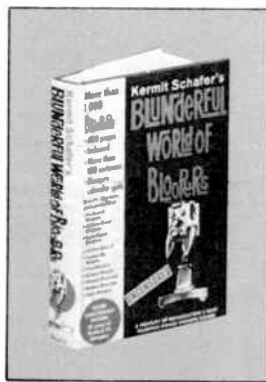
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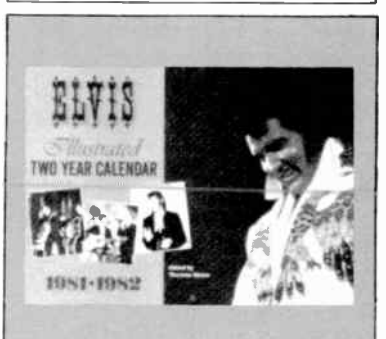
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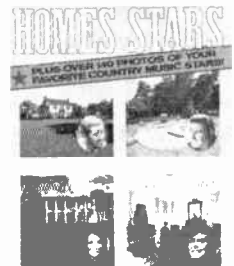
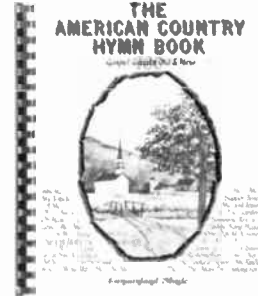
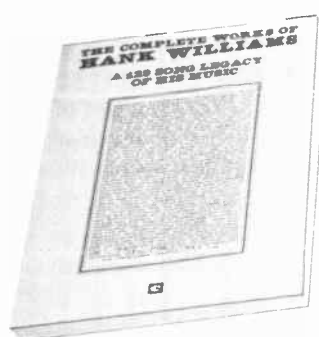


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The Country M

Funny how country music related books seem to come in spurts. But I guess it's always been that way: one or two titles would show up, without fanfare, on bookstore shelves every few months (and sometimes not even that often) in the past. That's changed considerably in the last year, however. More books on the subject seem to be coming all the time from the major publishers and the university presses as well, with rumors and firm information about others still in the works always circulating.

Of course the quality still varies. Those dull fan books, laden with newspaper clippings and posed publicity shots are still around in all their glory, and even some of the major works have problems. Still, the standards are getting higher, in part because there are more good writers interested in the subject than in the past, and readers' standards for buying and enjoying may be rising, too. The past year has seen a number of books, some outstanding, others adequate and a few downright disappointing. This article's a sort of consumer guide to all of them. If you're surprised that you never heard of some of these titles, it's probably because some of them weren't done by major publishers, and promotional budgets are often limited (particularly true with the university presses).

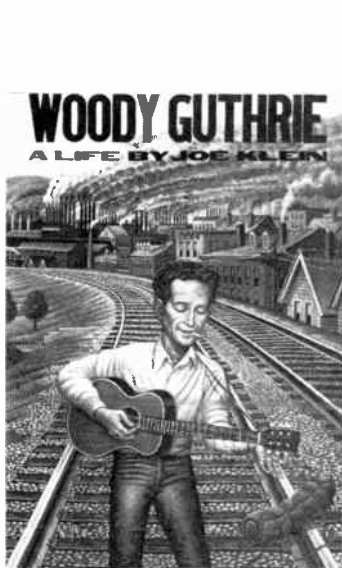
Five recent titles are biographies, two of which look again at the life of Hank Williams. Roger Williams's *Sing A Sad Song* (University of Illinois Press) is a new edition of the 1970 book that researched

Hank's life through interviews with his sidemen, friends and relatives. By today's standards, it isn't the best book on the subject, and the author's attempts to psychoanalyze Hank still miss the mark. But in all fairness, eleven years ago this book broke much important new ground with its tentative looks into previously unexplored areas of Hank's life and music that blazed a trail for other authors. There are no photos, however, and the new "afterword" on Hank's "renewed" popularity (did it ever fade?) seems dry and lifeless, as if the author is tired of his subject. The major addition is a basic recording session discography by master discographer Bob Pinson, showing recording dates, places and songs, including those done for radio broadcasts that were later issued on record.

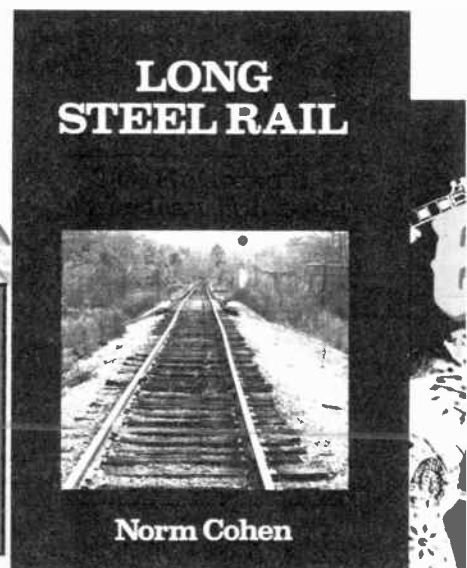
Former *Rolling Stone* senior editor Chet Flippo's biography *Your Cheatin' Heart* (Simon & Schuster) takes a very different approach, looking at the tortured and unsavory side of the man other books have only hinted at. And it is quite apparent Flippo wasn't pleased with the man he uncovered. Those who prefer the Hank Williams of legend won't be pleased with the explicit nature of this book. Yet there are many new details revealed here, such as the spinal birth defect that was slowly crippling Hank, his last written words, some startling, unpublished photos and new details on the origins of some of his best-known songs.

But there's a terribly disturbing side to

this book. In a number of places, Flippo has recreated conversations that took place 30 to 50 years ago, as well as bedroom scenes with Audrey and Hank, scenes involving Hank alone and narratives of the innermost thoughts of Hank and Audrey. Some of the conversations, with Ernest Tubb and the Drifting Cowboys, were undoubtedly documented. Others, Flippo states, were recreated from some newly discovered private papers of Audrey's. But they still seem *too* detailed, as a novelist would describe them, and the minute they start, the book's believability begins to weaken. How can Flippo expect the reader to accept the thoughts and scenes of Hank alone without documenting them? How does he know Hank's thoughts and actions on the bus from Mobile, or that Lonnie Williams, Hank's father, dreamed one evening about World War I? Norman Mailer's biography of Marilyn Monroe incorporated similar scenes, but there was a very frank admission that those scenes were fiction. Flippo apparently wants us to believe that all these impressions came from his research, yet he never cites specific sources for most of these scenes to verify their accuracy (for some there were no eyewitnesses). Where, for example, did he find out what Hank ate alone in a Nashville hotel coffee shop the morning after his first Opry appearance? This would look great in a film: the question is whether such scenes belong, undocumented, in a supposedly factual biography. The end result is a book with weakened credibility, highly



MARTIN GUITARS A HISTORY



Music Bookshelf

By Rich Kienzle

readable but suspect.

By contrast, Joe Klein's *Woody Guthrie: A Life* (Knopf) is everything Flippo's book could have been. Thoroughly researched and vividly written, Klein not only separates the Guthrie legend from fact but, through his use of personal reminiscences from family, friends and fellow performers, he makes Guthrie's folksinging and writing genius come alive. He's studied medical records and both published and unpublished writings of Guthrie's to trace his early development (for a time in the thirties he was an L.A. hillbilly radio singer), his genius and his ramblings along with the failed marriages, belated recognition and slow, agonizing death of Huntington's Disease.

Klein shows Guthrie's country connections were quite strong. His music was influenced by the music of the Carter Family, and *Oklahoma Hills*, a song he wrote in the late 1930s, became a huge 1945 hit for his cousin Jack Guthrie and a country classic (though Woody had to fight for composer credit and royalties). His Okie roots had much in common with Merle Haggard's, and Klein puts it all in perspective with one of the finest books ever written on an American musician.

In 1971, Jerry Hopkins wrote *Elvis*, the definitive biography of Elvis Presley, a book filled with insight and detail about the development of Presley's career, ending with his return to Vegas. After Presley's death, Hopkins picked up the story with *Elvis: The Final Years* published last year

by St. Martin's Press. It admittedly borrows data from other books, including the infamous West/Hebler *Elvis: What Happened* along with much new research and many interviews. Again, the portrait isn't pleasant, showing a man being strangled by his own success, spending huge amounts of money, abusing his body and gradually destroying himself. Elvis is no white knight here, unlike the first book, and Hopkins will undoubtedly upset those unwilling to believe Elvis's tragedy. But reading the original book, then this one, drives home Elvis's sad decline.

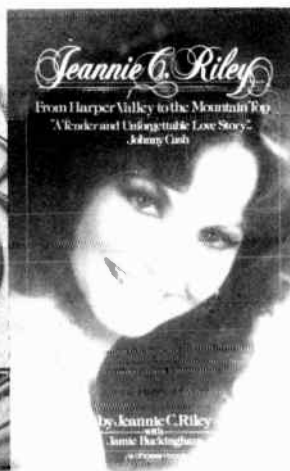
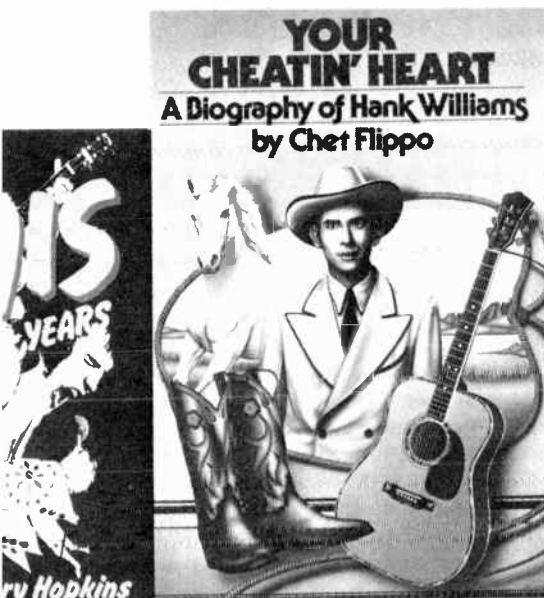
Bradley Kincaid, "The Kentucky Mountain Boy," is a country performer not known to many younger fans. Back in the thirties, he and his "hound dog" guitar were enormously popular over WLS in Chicago, and his mail-order songbooks of mountain ballads he collected sold like today's TV-advertised country LPs. Kincaid's music was a link with the traditional British Isles ballads that came here centuries ago and later American mountain songs. It was he who inspired a young singer named Louis M. Jones to take the name "Grandpa." His impact on country music is described in Loyal Jones's book *Radio's Kentucky Mountain Boy* published by the Berea College Appalachian Center. Kincaid's story is not loaded with honky-tonks and booze, but shows him as a sober, dedicated performer through interviews with him and his fellow performers and fans. A complete discography, along with an inventory of his repertoire (332 songs!) and words and

music to selected numbers are included, along with numerous illustrations.

The autobiography market has been fairly slim, but Jeannie C. Riley's just-published *From Harper Valley To The Mountaintop* (Chosen Books) is somewhat different than other books by country performers who've undergone religious conversions (and occasional flashes of anger), she describes her experiences trying to make it in late-sixties Nashville, where she was confronted with indifference, Music Row politics and lecherous record men. Her marriage became wobbly even before *Harper Valley P.T.A.* hit in 1968, and she details the dizzying and traumatic events that followed her success, her first-hand observations of the phonier sides of Nashville image-making as well as her divorce, constant self-doubt and turmoil that ended with her religious conversion and remarriage.

Though parts of the book have a soap opera tone, it should still appeal to the secular market. There's little of the heavy-handedness and storybook flavor that often runs through such works. Jeannie doesn't attempt to depict her problems as universal to women in country music, but makes it clear that fame should be approached with extreme caution. It's an interesting personal chronicle with overtones of *Coal Miner's Daughter* and a short but insightful foreword by Johnny Cash.

The career of Minnie Pearl (Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon) has certainly been



SOUTHERN MUSIC AMERICAN MUSIC

BILL C. MALONE



a study in contrasts. Raised in a middle-class Southern family, she graduated from an exclusive Nashville finishing school before she brought her Minnie Pearl persona to the Grand Ole Opry, where she became a symbol of country comedy and earned a spot in the Country Music Hall of Fame. *Minnie Pearl* (Simon & Schuster), her autobiography, written with Joan Dew, lays out her entire career in minute detail. The book bogs down at times, particularly in the first half. But once she gets to 1940 and the start of her Opry career, the narrative becomes a vivid chronicle, alive with anecdotes and insight into the Opry of the 1940s. The tours, the spontaneity of the Opry format (and its occasional perils) come alive in a well-paced, colorful narrative that includes the story of her famous "HOW-DEE!" (you'll be surprised where it came from). There are occasional errors, such as the photo caption showing her on Elvis's Hawaiian tour in 1964 instead of 1961, but there's a richness and warmth in the best sections of this book that make it well worth reading.

Other recent works examine specific areas of country music. One, a small booklet about country music books, is a valuable work for anyone wanting to know what has been published. Compiled by Linnell Gentry, author of the valuable *Encyclopedia of Folk, Country and Gospel Music. The Selected Bibliography of Folk, Country and Gospel Music* (privately published) is an essential listing for researchers or fans. There are no notes, just titles, but some of the titles are interesting (did you know the Oaks' Duane Allen co-authored a history of gospel music in 1971?). It's available for \$3.53 postpaid from Linnell Gentry, 414 Wrather Place, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37130.

Almost since there have been railroads, railroad songs have been a part of American folk, country and blues repertoires, some songs handed down and changed through the years. Tracing the origins and incarnations of railroad songs sounds like a formidable task, and that's reflected in Norm Cohen's 700 page tome, *Long Steel Rail* (University of Illinois Press). Cohen has detailed the origins and histories of 85 railroad songs, with complete listings of variations, transcriptions of the primary version, changes in lyrics and complete listings of commercial and noncommercial recordings of each song, including standards like *Wabash Cannonball* and *Wreck of the Old 97*. Many of the chapters include rare illustrations, letters and posters from the past.

Bill C. Malone wrote the first substantial history of country music's development, *Country Music U.S.A.*, in the late sixties, a book that remains the best single book ever written on the subject. More recently, while teaching at Tulane University, he edited the excellent *Stars of Country Music* and most recently, the outstanding *Southern Music. American Music* (University of

Kentucky Press). Malone's book traces the development of such Southern music styles as country, jazz, blues and gospel, their intermixing, and how each rose to prominence, first regionally, then through America and finally throughout the world. He describes the "Southern rock" phenomenon of the seventies with insight and understanding. The idea that most distinctively American music has had its origins in the Deep South is nothing new, but Malone explains how that happened and, more importantly, why.

Britain's obsession with rockabilly music has never really abated, and some of the best writing and research about the music (and the finest reissue albums) has origi-

himself. In an ill-written, rambling, repetitious narrative (ironically he attacks a former MCN writer, by name, for similar writing), Corbin laments and attacks current trends, stressing facts that often turn out to be inaccurate. His birthdates for Roy Acuff and Lefty Frizzell are wrong; he wrongly describes Hank Williams' death as being discovered by a highway patrolman instead of Hank's chauffeur, and he makes the ridiculous statement that "the first pangs of rockabilly" came after Hank died in 1953, conveniently ignoring proto-rockabilly by the Delmore Brothers and other 1940s country artists. To further insult his readers' intelligence, he prints a letter stating that *Cold, Cold Heart* was the first

The idea that most distinctively American music has had its origins in the Deep South is nothing new, but Malone explains how that happened and more importantly, why.

nated either there or in other parts of Europe. Some years ago, two Britons, Colin Escott and Martin Hawkins, began serious research into the history of Sun Records by interviewing former Sun employees and artists as well as listening to most of the music in the Sun vaults owned by Shelby Singleton and talking to other Memphis music personalities. Their research was published in 1975 as the book *Catalyst*, available here only as an import. They also published a comprehensive listing of all the Sun recording sessions, including Elvis's, Cash's and Jerry Lee's, and played a large part in the Sun reissue series on the Charly label.

Their revised American edition of *Catalyst*, retitled *Sun Records* (Quick Fox) has been updated and improved considerably, with much new information on the label, new interviews, many new photographs (including a rare shot of Elvis performing onstage with the Tennessee Two minus Johnny Cash) and chapters tracing the label's blues recording activity, the Sun reissue albums, British and American, and a complete listing of all the original Sun singles and albums. Aside from its reference value, for fans of Elvis, Cash, Jerry Lee, Rich or Perkins, it should be required reading.

A different type of country music book is former *Music City News* editor Everett Corbin's *Storm Over Nashville*, an attack on "modern country music." There's merit to the argument that some wretched excesses have taken place in past years, that overproduced pop music masquerading as country has become far too prevalent, annoying even "Nashville sound" innovators like Chet Atkins. And it's true that some in the business (and in radio) seem to know very little about the heritage of the music they promote. Corbin also complains that country fans "pop off . . . without knowing whereof they speak."

Sadly, that's precisely what Corbin does

cross-over tune, forgetting the earlier *San Antonio Rose* and *Pistol Packin' Mama*.

The greater problem is, what is "modern country?" By past standards, Corbin's heroes, such as Ernest Tubb or Vernon Oxford, might not have qualified, backed as they were by "modern" amplified guitars. He complains about pop-oriented strings, yet admires Western bandleader Tex Williams, who once used a classical harp. He says he doesn't mind modern country so long as it's simple, then attacks Willie and Waylon, whose music would seem to be both modern and simple. All too often he relies on mere letters from like-minded fans to support his contentions instead of doing serious research. I don't question Corbin's right to publish his views, but his double standards, wild statements and confused arguments don't hold up. Considering the fact that there are more record labels than ever specializing in bluegrass and other traditional sounds, I find his fears that traditional country is dying a bit hard to swallow.

Two other new books have special interest for the picker. The revised edition of *Martin Guitars: A History* by Mike Longworth, Martin's company historian, is loaded with fascinating reading about some of the classic Martin models (and some rare ones) used by country players, and includes rare photos and complete data up to 1980. Joe Goldmark, an Oakland, California steel guitarist and record collector, has published his revised *Steel Guitar Discography*, a comprehensive listing of old and new steel guitar recordings.

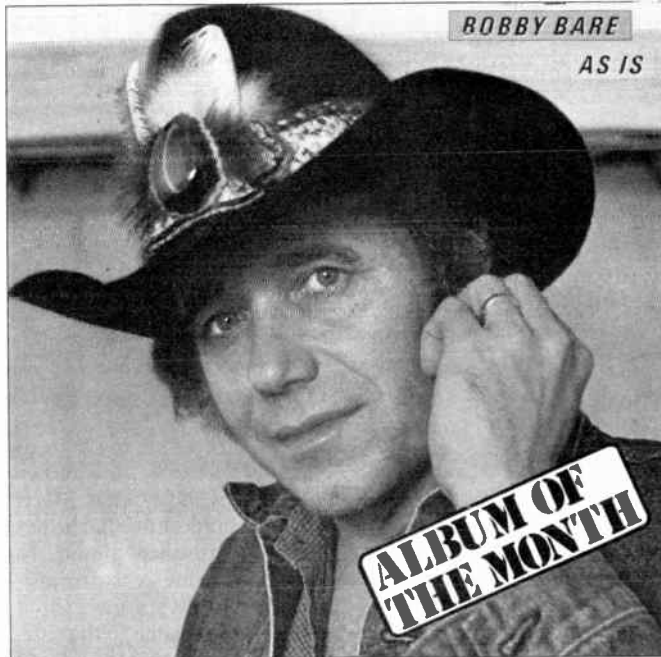
There's even more to come in future months, including new books on Jerry Lee Lewis, Merle Haggard's autobiography, a Patsy Cline biography and a complete Hank Williams discography. But everything here should give you plenty to do through the summer. And you'd better start adding more bookshelves; plan for the future, you know. ■

Record Reviews

Bobby Bare
As Is
Columbia FC 37157

Bobby Bare is a remarkable individual for many reasons—his intelligence and his compassion and his steadiness are only some of them—but throughout his career as a maker of albums, two great and intimately connected qualities have been of paramount importance: he has always given the consumer a square deal, and he has never repeated himself.

His last album, for instance, was *Drunk and Crazy*, but his new one is *As Is*, and if the last one was a loose and light-hearted (Shel Silverstein-dominated, truly drunk and crazy) romp through the thoughtless world of the seriously twisted raiser of harmless hell, then this one speaks well-considered volumes on the darker side of the coin. Produced by the ineffably tasteful and amazingly talented Rodney Crowell and stuffed full of songwriters' poetry and musicians' craft, it dwells on the world of bars and whores and wounds and death and failure and regrets and movin' on with great precision and high art.



And really, this album is *stuffed*. Bare and Crowell together raked the country scenery for the best musicians (Ricky Skaggs and Crowell's renowned Cherry Bombs studio band) and some songwriters (Guy Clark, Bob McDill, J.J. Cale, Tom T. Hall, Ian Tyson, Townes Van Zandt, Boudleaux Bryant, Willie Nelson and one W.M. Cowart) who might mo-

destly be described as being "talented." Then they added little extras like Rosanne Cash on backup vocal. The result is Bare's best album to date.

It's a sad and weary album (the tempo picks up only when, on J. Cale's *Call Me The Breeze* and Townes Van Zandt's *White Freight Liner Blues*, the get-me-outa-here theme is stated), and Bare gives it his

laconically depressive best, singing like the old hard perceptive boy he is.

It's very hard to pick the real star track of the bunch. Perhaps it's W.M. Cowart's slow-metro-nome-rocked *Dollar Pool Fool*, which is about dumb stoned violence ("Wonder if that other guy knew that he was going to die, or if he heard my pool cue slice the air"), or McDill's super-weary *Learning To Live Again*, or one of Guy Clark's two wild folk-speech-as-doggerel story songs (as in "Kentucky's all right but there's too many people; just the other day I thought I saw a church steeple"); perhaps it's *Summer Wages*, in which Ian Tyson wrote brilliantly, in tiny true-life detail, about the sense of have-to-move-on-when-it's-over depression hanging over some Northwestern lumber town; it could even be Willie Nelson's *She Is Gone*, which both reminds you why Frank Sinatra once called Willie his favorite songwriter and draws attention to Bare's own (newly discovered?) croon-power. Whatever. All these songs are wise, and they all speak realities very eloquently, and Bare's done it again.

PATRICK CARR

Merle Haggard
Live At Anaheim
MCA 5216

Merle Haggard and his band, The Strangers, have for some time been acknowledged as one of the most inventive and accomplished associations of musicians at work in modern country music. (A testimonial to this is the cover story on "Hag" and the boys that appears in the May 1980 issue of *Downbeat*, the distinguished jazz magazine.)

Unfortunately, the occasions when the Strangers have really

been able to cut loose on Haggard's studio albums have been relatively few and far between. The strongest point of Haggard's latest album, *Live At Anaheim* (recorded before 30,000 people at Anaheim Stadium in California in late 1980), however, is that it does give them such an opportunity. Live versions of songs like *I Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink*, *Dealin' With The Devil* and *Fiddle Breakdown* (the last two of which are entirely instrumental) demonstrate just what fluid "country jazz" (Haggard's own term for their music) virtuosity Haggard and the boys

are capable of. Whether it is the triple fiddles of Merle, Gordon Terry and Tiny Moore on *Fiddle Breakdown* or the syncopated drumming and extended guitar solos on *I Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink*, the Strangers are at their best on *Live At Anaheim*—or at least, the best you'll hear them on record to date.

Live At Anaheim also offers a fair sampling of Haggard's hits, both past and present. Stirring renditions of *Sing Me Back Home* and a medley of *The Fugitive* and *Runnin' Kind* are included, along with newer songs like *Misery and Gin*.

What's noticeably missing on *Live at Anaheim* is new original material from Haggard. In fact, there is none, save for the single *Rainbow Stew*, which you might say is Haggard's vivid portrait of a comic utopia. Still, this is made up for somewhat by other sparkling moments like Haggard's imaginative vocal on his version of the *Blue Yodel #9*.

All in all, *Live At Anaheim* is a fine album, long on excitement and vocal and instrumental artistry. In fact, the only thing I can think of that could be better would be a new *studio* album from "The Hag."

BOB ALLEN

Johnny Paycheck gets reviewed twice . . .

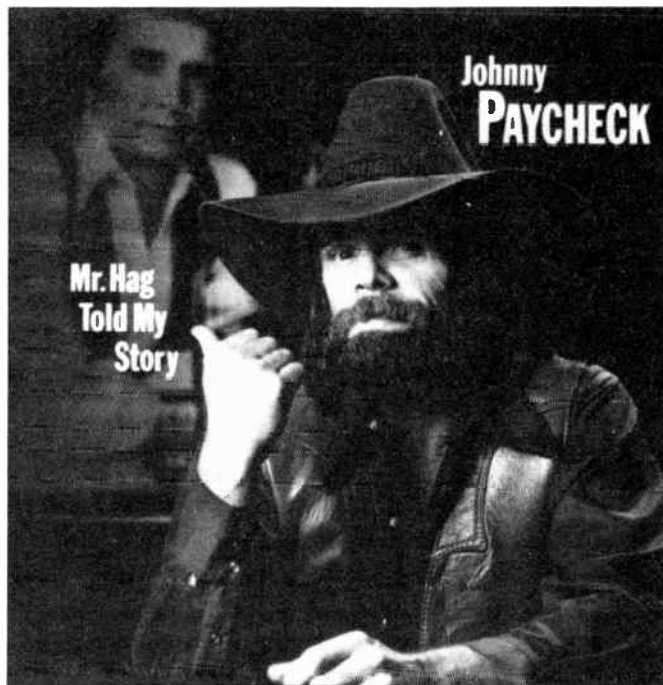
Johnny Paycheck Mr. Hag Told My Story Epic FE 36761

I would rather hear Johnny Paycheck sing than to listen to him talk. And that's what I recommend you do when you listen to this album . . . which you should do because, musically, it's good. Paycheck is a good country singer, and how can you go wrong with Merle Haggard songs? Just forget about Paycheck's talking narrative . . . just listen to the singing.

It's easier for those of us who write songs and sing the songs we write than it is for those who sing songs written by others. They must try to interpret what the songwriter meant at the time he wrote the song, which in the case of some songs on this album was years ago.

Now that would still be acceptable if the singer (Johnny Paycheck) sang *his* interpretation of the writer's (Merle Haggard) songs. In that respect, let's give credit where credit is due. Johnny Paycheck is definitely singing *his* interpretation of the songs, because we already heard Merle sing the songs, and they didn't sound like this. Now that's not to say it's not good musically, but when Paycheck has the nerve to talk to us, and, as if we were total and complete idiots, explain what Merle meant when he wrote the songs, what Paycheck says is trite. Not only is this insulting to one's intelligence, but it also makes you feel foolish. Suppose one of the songs happened to be one of your favorite Merle Haggard songs, and you got a different meaning when you heard Merle sing it. Was all that talking really necessary? Couldn't he just sing the song and let us form our own opinion? Perhaps Mr. Paycheck wants us to think he and Merle are more than just passing musicians who respect and admire each other's work.

Nevertheless, after you put all the B.S. aside and take the music on Paycheck's terms you begin to understand the music a



little more. Paycheck is a good solid country singer, and he can make you cry when he wants to. I was in that studio in L.A. when that album was being recorded. I watched him sing these songs, and I believed in him and what he was doing. When he sang *Carolyn*, a song that Tommy Collins wrote and one of my favorites, it brought tears to my eyes (and I'm said to be tough). I don't know where all the talking took place, that must have been in Nashville later.

When I heard the single (*I Can't Hold Myself in Line*) I went out and bought the album. I rushed home to play the album knowing it would bring those memories of John, Merle, and me back, sitting in that studio until five o'clock in the morning. That feeling got lost between L.A. and Nashville, but then you weren't there so you wouldn't know the difference. Not unless someone told you. Besides you'll like it. It's a good album, the songs are great, and the cover says all the cute things that don't mean much to you but mean a lot to the men who manage John's career. There's only a few things that left me feeling good about the album. But I think I forgot them between Nashville and Key West. They say it is the thought that

counts. I wonder what Merle Haggard thinks now that he has heard the finished album. In brief . . . let me repeat, musically, I think it's a good solid album. Try to listen to the singing and pretend that the talking was meant for the next guy to listen to. The first step in being an Outlaw is not to try to live up to what other people think Outlaws are supposed to act like. Paycheck is too talented to need all that image stuff, so he should just forget it and sing.

DAVID ALLAN COE

Here lately, tribute albums seem to be in season (Willie Sings Kristofferson, San Antonio Rose with Willie Nelson and Ray Price, Ray Price's *A Tribute To Willie And Kris*, and Ronnie Milsap's to Jim Reeves). So, even though it does smack of opportunism, the idea that Johnny Paycheck who seems short on musical ideas or directions of his own here lately anyway should salute his mentor, Merle Haggard, is not surprising.

"The Hag" is very much present on this album, trading vocal licks and verbal quips with Paycheck on many of the cuts. Yet, his presence on **Mr. Hag**

Told My Story, serves as a double-edged sword. On the brighter side, Haggard is largely responsible for what few dazzling moments the album has, like the lively vocal interplays on *I Can't Hold Myself in Line*, a cut that is even further strengthened by the consummate musicianship of The Strangers (Merle's road band)—Roy Nichols, Norman Hamlet and Don Markham.

On the darker side, Paycheck, quite frankly, proves to be a musical midget alongside Haggard. When he takes on a brilliant Haggard original like *I'm Turning Off A Memory*, the song simply fails to ring with the same resonant, spine-tingling sadness that Haggard pulls from it when he sings it. Paycheck's version, by comparison, sounds pedestrian, and you are left wondering if he even understands the emotional implications of the song.

Paycheck's passing reference to prison, in one of his many pointless spoken introductions to the songs (I thought the whole idea of a good country song was that nobody *had* to explain to you what it meant!), is also cloying. (Paycheck got himself in a little hot water here recently when he proclaimed in one interview that he and Haggard were the only "real outlaws.")

I suppose **Mr. Hag Told My Story** is, at least on the surface, a nice gesture. But it is sort of like Ronnie McDowell's 1977 salute to Elvis Presley; everyone knows the two aren't even in the same league; so the motive behind the album obviously has a lot more to do with the career of the *saluter* than it does with the legend of the artist being saluted.

But Paycheck needs to do something to keep out of trouble. And until David Allan Coe sits down and writes him a *Take This Job and Shove It, Part Two*, he better take what he can.

The irony here is heavy considering that, among tribute albums, Haggard's own superb examples (to Jimmie Rodgers, Hank and Lefty, and Bob Wills) are classics. BOB ALLEN

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... Ronnie... Tom

Ronnie Milsap Out Where The Bright Lights Are Glowing RCA AALI-3932

Ronnie Milsap, who is known in the business world for making moves which confound the expectations of those who would like him to be more predictable, has done it again. After seeming to threaten a full-scale explosion of his considerable rhythm & blues tendencies, and then promising a pure-country turnaround, and then fulfilling neither expectation, he has sprung forth a new surprise. It's a Jim Reeves tribute album, of all things.

Perhaps, though, it isn't really such a surprise. Ronnie, who doesn't write songs and has an unusually catholic musical education, is above all a stylist, an artist who is excited more by his mastery of various musical idi-

oms than by commitment to some single, well-defined area. With *Out Where the Bright Lights Are Glowing*, he gets to demonstrate his ability to croon with the best of them.

As with all tribute albums, you have to question the motives behind it (was good new material too hard to find this time around, or did the artist in question wish sincerely to pay homage to a personal hero, or does the rationale fall somewhere between these two extremes?); but in this case, Ronnie's debt to Gentleman Jim has at least been publicly stated many a time in the past, long before somebody came up with the idea for this album. Although Ronnie didn't write *Out Where the Bright Lights Are Glowing*, the opening theme track of the album, the sentiments of the song—fond memories of growing up with Jim on the record player—are sincere.

Like the records of which it is

a reprise, the album is sedate and cool and smooth and careful, a sad and lulling affair set into a soft bed of slow-moving strings. Ronnie treats the material with the traditional velvet gloves (stepping out only on a couple of climaxes and a funky-up version of *I Guess I'm Crazy*); and this respectful conservatism carries over into production, pacing, the works. The great hits—*Four Walls*, *He'll Have To Go*, *Am I Losing You*, *When Two Worlds Collide*, etc.—are rendered with great care, the medley combinations are accomplished flawlessly, the string interludes between songs are tasteful and helpful to the flow of the album, and overall there is much evidence of one stylist's appreciation of another. *He'll Have To Go* and *Am I Losing You* are stellar in this respect; these are rich and timelessly appealing songs, and Milsap mines them with craft and feeling.



So yes, Ronnie can croon, and Jim Reeves sang some wonderful songs, and this is therefore a wonderful crooner-fan's album, and there is no truth to the rumor that Ronnie's next project is a double-album reggae/discathon set.

PATRICK CARR

Tom Jones Darlin' Mercury SRM-1-4010

My friends used to make fun of me because I liked Tom Jones, as if the fact that his overwrought female fans threw their underwear on the stage somehow precluded his being a great performer. Well, panties aside, Tom Jones really is a great performer. Of all the white boys who sang the blues, he is—outside of Elvis, of course—the most commercially successful and the most critically overlooked.

True, in recent years Jones has drifted (as have most of the other soul men) to the dental-work rhythms of disco, but each of his albums has generally yielded one gem. *Darlin'* is a whole new bag (as James Brown would say), recorded in Nashville using the city's heavy-weight sidemen and produced by the unlikely team of Nashville smoothie Bill Justis and Cleveland International's Steve Popovich (who created the rock act Meat Loaf.)

While it's not the breakthrough album I would have



liked to see, parts of it are downright brilliant, and even the stuff that isn't brilliant is pretty good. The flat out best cut on the album is Jones's rendition of the rhythm & blues standard *One Night*. The song is filled with good-time energy and a bluesy New Orleans feeling, and Jones takes just the right touch with the incredible

Tom Jones voice—breathless, hanging on each word. This is, in fact, the best single cut Jones has done in years and, if there's any justice, it ought to be a big hit. Almost as good is the up-tempo country ballad *Darlin'*, which again shows Jones having fun with a song. *But I Do* has all the trappings of a pretty good Vegas production num-

ber, with a real good punchy horn background. Like all the songs on the album, the production is inordinately clean, which serves to focus the listener on the man with the voice.

There are even a couple of weepy ballads that come off surprisingly well—*The Things That Matter Most To Me* and *Come Home Rhondda Boy*. Jones is convincing and pretty good. *Lay Lady Lay* I can do without, regardless of who sings it—it's offensive, period. The remainder of the songs are mostly standard fare, but on balance, this is a pretty good album. What I especially like about *Darlin'* and Tom Jones in particular is his ability to pick and choose from musical styles and weave them into something unique. I like it that he can pick up a touch of gospel in *Darlin'* and a dash of New Orleans r&b in *One Night* and a bit of Vegas in *But I Do*. Just like when he dipped into country music in 1966 for his definitive version of *Green, Green Grass of Home*—forget the underwear for a minute. This guy really is a great and original talent. Listen to him, and give him his due.

MICHAEL BANE

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... Charly ... David Frizzell & Shelly West

Charly McClain Surround Me With Love Epic FE 37108

If after every couple of years singers were given report cards and grade point averages, Charly McClain would have some marks to be proud of. During the latter part of the 1970s, she ranked easily in the top quarter of her class, earning consistently high scores on the record charts. In order to get to that place, Charly had to face that sometimes vexing phenomenon known as competition.

Surround Me With Love represents a sharp turn in Charly's musical course. And in her visual appearance. Gone are the songs of painful sadness and emotional torment. In their place is a neatly wrapped package of positive love songs. These are not shallow, bubbly ditties like so many that crowd the



radio airwaves. They are stirring and convincing (just as Charly's lonely songs were), and their style is more sophisticated than anything she's done be-

fore.

Perhaps the most beautiful ballad to be released so far this year is the title cut, written by Waylon Holyfield. Whether it

was meant to be the keynote of a planned boost for Charly, or was just a lucky find, the song should do a lot for her. To say that this music is sophisticated is to risk the sometimes negative implications of that term. This production by Norro Wilson (his first for McClain) is smooth in texture, without a slick superficial coating. *Sleep-in' With the Radio On* and *I've Never Loved Anyone More* carry the same subtle strength set forth in the album's opener, *Sweet and Easy, Soft and Low*. *He's Back* is a joyful rocker.

Charly McClain may not have a legendary singing partner to sue her, or a Hollywood producer to woo her. She doesn't have a West Coast rhinestone lover, or a stack of magazines with her picture on the cover. All she has is a charming voice, another fine album, and a stunningly beautiful new look. These should combine to nudge her a bit closer to the winner's circle.

BILL OAKFY

David Frizzell and Shelly West Carryin' On The Family Names Viva BSK 3555

When the song *You're The Reason God Made Oklahoma* first burst from the radio, it was a wonderful shock. The song (written by Larry Collins and Sandy Pinkard) was magnificent both in the evocative power of its images—the Oklahoma cowboy remembering “green eyes and a farmer's daughter” as the full moon rises and “the nights are getting colder in Cherokee County,” the rancher's daughter with “a calico cat and a two-room flat on a street in West L.A.” thinking about him and observing that “here the city lights outshine the moon,” and that “all the cowboys down on the Sunset Strip wish that they could be like you”—and in the decep-

tively simple, absolute effectiveness of its plain-speech to-and-fro duet technique. The song worked beautifully (it is in fact very difficult to think of a country duet piece which has ever worked any better), and of course it hit the Number One spot with no trouble.

It was tempting, given the quality of the song itself, to speculate that more or less any pair of duettists could have made a hit of it. That was foolish, however, because David Frizzell and Shelly West sang the song very well indeed.

That was the second shock. Their family trees were of course in good order—David is the late (great) Lefty Frizzell's brother, and Shelly is the daughter of Dottie West—but nothing David had done before came anywhere near *Oklahoma* in quality, and this was Shelly's first record. Together—David an experienced curly-subtle country tenor with a hard edge in reserve, Shelly an open-throated young contralto with

great natural power and a weirdly accented, instantly attractive sense of phrasing which is hers alone—they were magnificent, just as good as Conway and Loretta or, in almost another world, Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris.

The only remaining question, then, was whether *Oklahoma* was a fluke, one of those never-again moments. The answer, now made plain by *Carryin' On The Family Names*, is that it wasn't. And that's the third wonderful shock.

This album is no hit-single-capitalizing “outtake quickie.” Songs like Chris Waters's *Yours For The Asking* and Roger Miller's venerable *Husbands And Wives* and all the others (save for two slightly greasy “family name” tribute numbers) are anything but throwaways. Producer Snuff Garrett, who's been known to turn a quick one now and again, seems to have cared enough about David and Shelly to give them his old-fashioned, strictly-country best, and this is



a great album full of goodies.

David and Shelly seem almost ideally suited to each other. She supports him quietly while he curls himself around the careful slow blues of *A Texas State of Mind*, and he sings subtly behind her stately open-throated refrain on *Yours For The Asking*, and together they swing easily and cunningly through the vamp of *We're Lovin' On Borrowed Time*. They sound like lovers, and they sound very good, and that's the way it should be. Watch these two; they're going places.

PATRICK CARR

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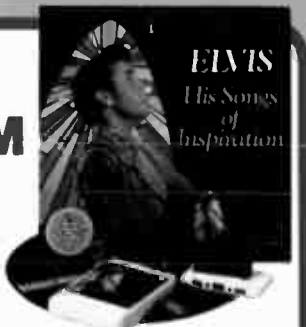
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... Billy ... John ... Johnny & Janie

Billy Swan I'm Into Lovin' You Epic FE 37079

Here's Billy Swan, hugging/holding a woman whose face you can't see. The picture lacks sincerity, especially along with the terrible album title, *I'm Into Lovin' You*. Overused '60s expressions that were dumb in the first place don't sound so catchy in 1981.

So the first song, *Do I Have To Draw a Picture*, came as a pleasant surprise. The melody, chords, and harmonies put over a fine Everly Brothers sound. Things start going downhill with the next number, *Stuck Right In The Middle Of Your Love*, which wouldn't be a bad song if it didn't sound like hundreds of other songs. Next up is the truly awful title tune, *I'm Into Lovin' You*. Only *Be You* on the other side is the other song Billy wrote himself. A better one that he wrote alone is *Not Far From Forty*, which is about rocking towards middle age. A sensible attitude.

Along with *Do I Have To Draw a Picture*, *Win You Over*, which leads off the second side, is a real good song. It features the best chord changes on the album, and is the most beautiful song here as well. They were both written by Billy along with G. Clark. I hope they get together and do this more often.

Billy also wrote two songs with L. Rogers, who I think is Larry Rogers, engineer and percussionist on this album. *Soft Touch*, the first, is all right, but *Lay Down and Love Me Tonight* again sounds like a hundred others. Altogether a weak album from a man who has done—and can do—better.

PETER STAMPFEL



John Anderson John Anderson 2 Warner Brothers BSK 3547

I was tempted to kick off this review with something cute like, "This can't be a country record—where's the orchestra?" or "Ain't no way you can say you're playin' country if you don't have a synthesizer, and there ain't one here," but I decided against it. For one thing, that would be gimmicky, something this album definitely is not. Fact is, John Anderson is everything they say he is—for once all the hype rings true. His music has the impact of Merle Haggard at his finest, the ambience of Lefty Frizzell's later work, and the sound of Nashville in the late forties or early fifties, a sound that is still valid today.

From the very first cut, the Merle Travis/Hank Thompson-inspired arrangement of Billy Joe Shaver's *I'm Just An Old Chunk of Coal* (a song destined to become a minor classic), Anderson's austere sound and his voice, marinated in a mix of Frizzell, Haggard and Hank Williams, carry every song. His arrangement of *I Love You A Thousand Ways*, a number so many have tackled without



quite succeeding, has much of the feel of Lefty's 1950 original. *July 12, 1939*, a tune previously recorded by Charlie Rich, is a stark period piece. *Mountain High, Valley Low*, an Anderson original co-written with Lionel Delmore, has much of the bluesy feel and harmonies of Delmore's distinguished kin, the Delmore Brothers. *Chicken Truck* is solid country boogie. *The Same Old Girl* and *You've*

Got The Longest Leaving Act In Town are solid ballads, the latter with overtones of Floyd Tillman's best work.

If you've yet to be convinced of the growing backlash against crossover excesses, if the success of Slim Whitman, Boxcar Willie and Moe Bandy haven't proven it yet, then *John Anderson 2*, and the magnificent music it holds, should be the clincher.

RICH KIENZLE

Johnny Duncan & Janie Fricke Nice 'n' Easy Columbia JC 36780

I remember Johnny Duncan and Janie Fricke singing together before "Janie Fricke—girl singer" was even a gleam in the eye of CBS.

See, Janie was a back-up singer then, and she merely added her wonderful voice to the so-called solos of Johnny. In fact, I once interviewed the main man and, having been impressed by his back-up singer's anonymous contributions, I asked the publicist if Janie could attend the session, which she did.

During the interview, she explained why she wanted to remain an anonymous back-up singer (good pay, better hours) rather than strike out on her



own. Needless to say, a few months later, she was being touted as CBS's greatest girl singer, anonymity be hanged.

The point of all this—and there is a point—is that the best material on this repackaging of Johnny and Janie duets is the "pre-gleam" material, the songs recorded while Janie was still anonymous and Johnny was at his peak.

All five songs on Side Two

are songs that appeared on Johnny Duncan's own *Greatest Hits* album, released in 1978. To be honest, four out of the five are among my favorites: *Come A Little Bit Closer*, *It Couldn't Have Been Any Better*, *Thinkin' of a Rendezvous*, and *Stranger*.

Each is characterized by Duncan's smooth, sexy voice (it bears repeating—he can put his shoes under my bed anytime), complemented perfectly by Janie's own polished tones.

The hype and repackaging have done no harm at all to these early duets, and they deserve to be heard.

On the other hand, the hype may have hurt the later duets. *He's Out of My Life* opens Side One, and while it may have been a hit single, to me it was a cheap Neil Diamond-Barbra Streisand imitation, not coun-

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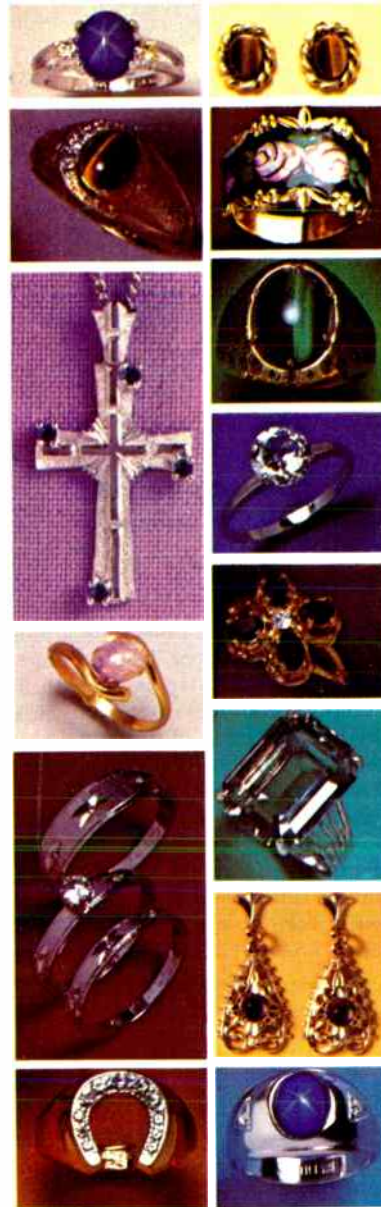
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try, not good, not up to the Johnny-Janie standard. It pretty much sets the tone for the first side, although the title tune is catchy, and I liked the seemingly all-in-fun remake of the old Motown r&b standard, *You Got What It Takes*, perhaps because the duo seemed to enjoy it as well.

All in all, if you like the Johnny-Janie magic—which I do—stick with his **Greatest Hits**. Janie may not get co-star billing, but you'll get (in addition to the aforementioned hits) *Sweet Country Woman*, *She Can Put Her Shoes Under My Bed (Anytime)*, and *Jo and the Cowboy*, a threesome much more worthy of the duo—solo or otherwise—than Side One of *Nice 'n' Easy*.

MARY ELLEN MOORE

Johnny Rodriguez After The Rain *Epic FE 37103*

I wonder what it's like to be Johnny Rodriguez. How, in his peculiar circumstances, does it feel to be an almost-perfect physical specimen of a Latin lover in a traditionally all-white, scarred-up country marketplace? How does it feel, as almost a foreigner, almost an enemy, to give your life to the echo of Hank and Lefty? How does it feel to be almost (but not quite) too hip for the job?



I don't know how much these long-standing questions really bother Johnny, and perhaps they're not very seemly in a simple record review, but I have to ask them. Like bullets buried deep in a wound, I suspect that they have a lot to do with the nature and quality of his latest record.

It's a standard. Cut in three

days, four days, a week, whatever, it's nothing special. If you wanted to be cynical about it, you could say that it sounds like a rush job, none too inspired or inspiring, another piece of "product" from the mill which turns over every day on 16th Avenue South. Technically, it's a mess—the sound rises and fades and takes on sudden strange qualities which seem to have nothing whatsoever to do with the meanings and paces of the songs—and artistically, it's no better; the album boasts no great new songs, no twists of vocal or instrumental brilliance, no new directions, and very little in the way of soul. In fact, absurd though this may sound, you have to wonder whether Johnny even knew what he was going to be singing before he stepped up to the studio mike. Billy Sherrill was the producer in charge of the proceedings, and while these days it is both easy and fashionable to mock that man's much-proven talents (such denouncements are almost obligatory in today's average country record review), it has to be said that in this particular instance, Billy must have been just about asleep on the job.

The album is not *bad*—it's a real country album, cut in Nashville by a real country singer and real country pickers and a real country producer, so it's got the feel of the real thing, it's almost the right stuff and it's also much more traditional in feel, much easier, than Johnny's last two efforts—but damn! It sounds like nobody cared.

Now, why was that?

You could, of course, answer that the familiar low-grade economics of country album production were once again to blame, and you'd be partly right. In the end, though, Johnny himself must also be held responsible. Perhaps it's asking too much, but after ten years in the business, it may be time for him to search through the complex and reverberant elements of his situation, and find a base from which he can produce something more profound than standard modern country records.

PATRICK CARR

Lee Clayton The Dream Goes On *Capitol ST-12139*

Lee Clayton is probably best known for his early '70s song, *Ladies Love Outlaws*. He has a cult (that means small) following, and his records don't sell too well. Maybe he's too serious for standard country tastes. Maybe he rocks a little too hard. Maybe his personal vision is more important to him than selling big. Good luck, Lee Clayton.

Six of these eight songs are more hard rockers than country rockers. Of the other two, one is a country rocker, and one, *Oh How Lucky I Am*, is more straight country; in fact, the chords and melody have a passing resemblance to Loudon Wainwright's *Dead Skunk In The Middle Of The Road*.

The record kicks off with a heavy fuzz guitar riff intro to *What's A Mother Gonna Do*, a tough, catchy rocker about hard

travelin', a popular subject with Lee. Next up is *Industry*, a seven-and-a-half-minute song that is very serious indeed. I don't know if the song is autobiographical, but all the songs on this album sound like they are. He tells of being born near where the first atomic bomb was made, "surrounded by fences electrified and three in a row with machine gun nests at the entrances of town and plants that any minute could go." His father's job "cost him his legs—thanks, Union Carbide..." It's a bitter song. Most of these songs are. Not the best way to sell records. But Lee Clayton is more interested in truth and justice. He even sounds a little like Dylan did in the '60s, although his phrasing is stiffer.

Hard travelin', seeking and still hoping, trying to be an honest man in a dishonest world. That's basically what you'll find here if you're willing to take a listen. Lee Clayton deserves at least that.

PETER STAMPFEL

Ed Bruce One to One *MCA-5188*

Three and a half minutes into a four minute Ed Bruce song, you get the idea that he expects you to draw it in and hold it awhile before swallowing. None of the songs on this album are under three minutes, and most of them have enough holding power to make them listenable.

Perhaps because of his writing skills, Bruce seems to have a knack for building a mood into a song. More often than not, he uses an approach which is the opposite of a crescendo. The register of his voice will drop to the point where he emphasizes part of a line by speaking it rather than singing it. This is particularly noticeable as he lopes along on *Thirty-Nine and Holding*, an altogether different tune from the Jerry Lee Lewis recording.

The eloquent straight talk of a cowboy philosopher is what we've come to expect from the guy whose finest line may be,

"Cowboys like smoky old pool rooms and clear mountain mornings." On this record there are actually only three selections co-written by Ed Bruce. The cowboy chronicles have been temporarily sidestepped, in favor of other topics, namely love, lust, and the proper confronting of temptation.

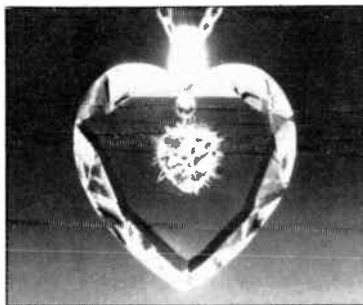
Jesse Winchester's *Evil Angel* is not the typical pace for Bruce, but it was an interesting risk and he pulled it off well. Another surprise is the Louvin Brothers' *I Take the Chance*, which works fine, even without the harmonies. One of the original compositions, *Everything's a Waltz*, is a highlight of the album. The steel guitar and Buddy Spicher's fiddle are gradually and gracefully woven in.

Somebody saw fit not to let eloquence and grace prevent the inclusion of one tale about a poor fella's hard luck in the barroom. *Hundred Dollar Lady* puts a little extra fun into an already well-rounded album. Some more of Ed Bruce's own songs would have made it even better.

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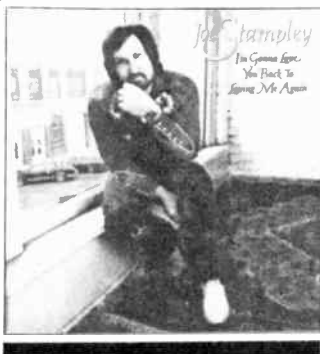
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... Joe ... Sons of the Pioneers ... Rex, Sr.



Joe Stampley
**I'm Gonna Love You
Back To Loving Me
Again**
Epic FE 37055

This album is for the country fan who has a middle income, two kids, a dog named Rex, an intermediate-sized Chevy, a medium-priced home in the suburbs and lots of vanilla ice cream in the freezer. Every-

thing about it reeks of careful planning. The stress is on medium tempos. Repetitiveness is studiously avoided from intro to intro and from arrangement to arrangement. And the songs deal, for the most part, with subjects that are currently "in."

So safe and formulaized an album is often disastrous. Yet this one is not. True, there is nothing inspiring about it. But it is a solid piece of work. Part of its strength is the result of Stampley's being a pro. He sings as well on this album as on any he's done. Then, the songs, with one exception, are fairly intelligent. Finally, the production and arranging are good.

Strongest tune is the title cut, the title of which is self-explanatory. Another goodie is *Give Me The Green Light*, which says that on receipt of said light, the singer will be at his lost love's door inside of a New

York minute, which I assume is a short period of time. *It's Written All Over Your Face* deals with expecting to lose one's lover. The message written on the face in question is, essentially, that someone is about to get the boot.

Speaking of messages, *The Message* happens to be the title of the only dumb song on the disc. It's a word game—a silly one at that—and is built around such profound bits as, "S-O-R-you ever coming home," and "M-E-S-S-A-G-I love you." It's hard to believe your eyes when you see on the label that Willie Nelson was the perpetrator of this alleged song before his unkempt blue jeans period, no doubt.

All These Things is a '50s revival piece rendered with a tasteful mixture of '50s and '80s instrumentation. *Back On The Road Again*, I assume, is an

attempt to ride the coattail of *On The Road Again*. While done in the driving, pulsing tempo now associated with truckers' songs, it is so worded as to apply to almost any constant traveler—country singer, salesman, insurance inspector—who pursues fame, fortune and/or a dream.

The Jukebox Never Plays Home Sweet Home and *Let's Get Together and Cry* are this album's required lonely bar-scene tunes. *Whiskey Chasin'* is the requisite drinkin' song, and *The Fool*, not surprisingly, is a piece of self-castigation over being a fool for someone who keeps giving the cold shoulder to an adoring, would-be lover.

All in all, this is a well-done album for the non-adventurous fan who wants no surprises but who has good taste. It's Stampley & Co. at their best.

ARI MAHER

BURIED TREASURES

By Rich Kienzle

If you were grabbed by the first two Riders In The Sky albums (see the review of the second in this section) like I was, you're probably wondering where they got a lot of the inspiration and ideas. There are plenty of Western reissues around to answer that question.

Without a doubt, the Sons of the Pioneers has been the most influential vocal group in Western music. With such brilliant talents as Karl and Hugh Farr (one of the hottest fiddle-guitar duets in American music), Tim Spencer, Bob Nolan, Pat Brady and Ken Carson, the Sons have been going for decades now. And with a new lineup, they continue to tour the country. Three German imports show the Sons at their greatest, taken from 1942 radio transcriptions. **The Sons Of the Pioneers In 1942** (Danny SP 7907) combines 20 selections on one album, mostly Tim Spencer and Bob Nolan compositions, such as Nolan's *The West Is In My*

Soul and Spencer's *New Frontier* (maybe that's where JFK got the term) as well as a Western blues rendition of the traditional *Crawdaddy Hole*. From the same source comes **The Legendary Sons of the Pioneers Volumes 1 & 2** (Cattle 3 & 4) featuring 40 more tunes from the same period, with some solo performances by Lloyd Perryman and Ken Carson, a hot gospel rendition of *One More River To Cross*, the fiery *Farr Away Stomp* by the Farr Brothers, and other excellent Sons numbers like Nolan's *Move On You Lazy Cattle* and *Sagebrush Symphony*.

One of the lesser-known, but no less excellent Western harmony groups was the Georgia Crackers, made up of Hank, Slim and Bob Newman (Bob wrote the *Hee Haw* anthem *Phffi! And Then You Were Gone* in the fifties). The Crackers were at their peak in the 1940s, working in Ohio and Hollywood with a sound wedged solidly between the Sons and Western-swing-styled

groups. **The Georgia Crackers** (Jewel 530) compiles 13 songs taken from old radio shows. Their rendition of *Cool Water* is crisp and stately, while *Broken Doll* is a bluesy, almost pop ballad sung by Bob, and *Sunday Down In Tennessee* has a distinct rockabilly feel to it. Their guitarist on these sides, Al Meyers, was years ahead of his time. *That's The Way It's Gonna Be* features some virtuoso instrumental work.

Another German import is **Country & Western Memories** (Castle LP 8008), featuring one side by Gene Autry and the other by his longtime associates The Cass County Boys. The Autry side is a bit unusual, coming from old 78s from the 1930s, before he was really known as a Western movie star. There's *Nobody's Darlin' But Mine*, *Mexicali Rose*, two duets with his old partner Jimmy Long, and two later duets with Smiley Burnette (*Ridin' Down The Canyon*) that create an interesting contrast. The Cass County Boys are pretty much in the Sons tradition of close harmony, but their *Heading For The Rio Grande* and *See That*

You're Born In Texas are engaging enough.

There's also an interesting new reissue of material by Rex Allen, Sr. Recorded originally in the early sixties, it doesn't stress the Western end of his career, but **Love Gone Cold** (Longhorn EJ-1234) compiles recordings he did for the Legacy label in the early sixties, with Grady Martin playing lead guitar and a Nashville-styled studio band. There are a number of honky-tonk classics, such as Floyd Tillman's *Gotta Have My Baby Back*, *Cold, Cold War*, and *I'll Keep On Loving You*, done in a bluesy style. There's even a rockabilly recording, *Sure As Your Name's Kate*, and a great version of Bob Wills's *My Confession*. For Rex, Jr. fans who've never heard Rex, Sr., here's your chance.

The Sons of the Pioneers and Autry LPs are available for \$9.98 each, plus \$2.20 postage, from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. For more information on the Georgia Crackers and Rex Allen LPs, write Keith Kolby, 6604 Chapel Lane, Ft. Worth, TX 76135.

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