

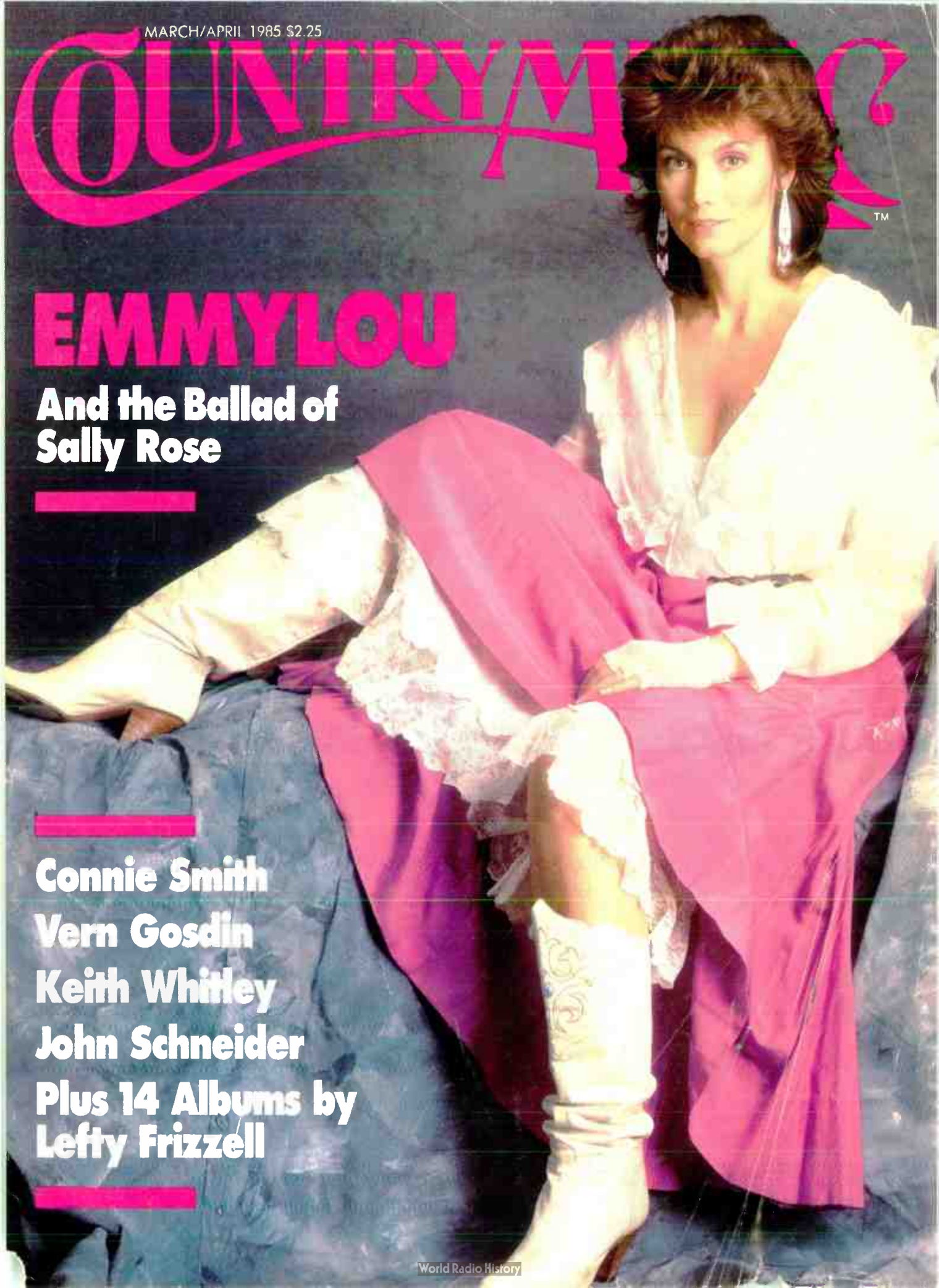
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COUNTRY MUSIC™

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Letters

Records on the Radio

I would like to answer Catherine Lorantos' letter in the September/October 1984 issue about her favorite station not playing Mel Tillis' "New Patches." Ma'am, it would help if the record companies would service all the stations requesting records, and it would also help if the music and/or program director would write to the record company.

However, small stations like ours that are on a tight budget and cannot afford to subscribe or report to a major trade magazine are left off many record companies' mailing lists.

There is one label, EMI/America, Capitol, Liberty, where all attempts have failed, and a DJ like myself can go broke paying up to \$1.50 to \$2.00 for a single on that label. We have yet to play an Anne Murray, Mel McDaniel, Dan Seals or Michael Martin Murphey record that we didn't buy ourselves.

Some of us have little patience to deal with such labels as EMI/America. Now if we write or call and they don't send, we don't play and fans don't buy. Too bad. No wonder it took Anne Murray over 10 years to win a CMA award.

Alan Winsor
Music Director, KTRI/FM
Mansfield, Missouri

P.S. Thoroughly liked the article on Bill Monroe. I'd like to see a bluegrass band featured in each issue.

For an interview with Bill Monroe, see the CMM Update in People soon.

We're forwarding your letter to EMI/America, and we'd like you and other fans, DJ's and music directors to know that the entire November/December issue of the Country Music Society of America Newsletter was devoted to airing members' opinions about what gets played on country music radio.

To order a copy of this Newsletter, send \$1.50 to November/December, Country Music, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016 or join the CMSA, see page 8 for details, and be part of its effort to improve the situation. —Ed.

Congratulations on Conway

First of all, I want you to know how very much I enjoy your magazine. This is my first year to subscribe, and I intend to

continue and to be a permanent member of the CMSA. I am proud to see all of the concern being shown for what's happening to country music. It's time for concern. Give me Conway Twitty, Gene Watson or John Conlee anytime! They have what it takes to be "in" no matter who else changes whatever. They all have class and style of their own.

The article on Conway in the November/December issue was wonderful. He's a special person in a lot of ways, but the main thing that makes him so special is that he really appreciates his fans—maybe as much as they appreciate him.



Of the new artists, George Strait and John Schneider seem to want to help keep country music like we've grown to love it. Hopefully others will see the light and help too. Do it and do it right. (Like Conway.)

Linda Barrett
Belk, Alabama

Thank you for the story on Conway. He is my idol. The story was *super great*.

My husband and I recently returned from a bus tour to Nashville. We didn't get to go to Twitty City but we visited Conway's store on Music Row, where I went crazy. It was like having Christmas.

I plan to go back to Nashville next summer with a friend. We plan to go to Twitty City. Hope my dream will come true and I get to meet Conway.

Jean McKenney
Marlinton, West Virginia

The Truth About Conway

Recently, I visited Twitty City and think it is very nice. I am a long-time fan of Conway. *Please answer this honestly.* Have Conway and his wife Mickey recently separated or divorced? I also read a few years ago that early in their marriage they divorced and remarried. Is this true? I really would appreciate the truth, no matter what it is. Thanks!

Freda Redifer
Scottsburg, Indiana

See People. —Ed.

Conway and the Awards

Just finished reading "The Gospel According to Conway Twitty." A *good* article on a *great* performer. The results really do stagger the imagination. Forty-seven Number One records, *wow*. I think you can make that 48 now with the Moon Song, "I Don't Know a Thing About Love," going to Number One. And I'm sure number 49 has now been released, "Ain't She Somethin' Else."

If Number One records isn't what it takes to win the awards, then what does it take? It seems no one wants to take a strong stand on this issue. I would like to know how the awards system *really* works. In my opinion country music is for the fans. They buy the records and in doing so they rule which go to Number One and which don't. They should have a say at awards time.

How about a full-length article on the awards and *really how they are given out and how they should be given?* Does belonging to the Opry have anything to do with it? I've heard DJ's say things that might suggest that it does. Maybe we should do like baseball and give the vote directly to the fans. I don't know how these people can be so blind. Somebody somewhere needs to wake up.

Mike Whaley
Shepherdsville, Kentucky

We are giving the vote to fans through the Country Music Society of America (see page 8 for information on how to join). Members get regular ballots in the CMSA Newsletter. See page 15 for some results. We plan to give awards several times a year. —Ed.

Hooray for Conway Twitty. I enjoyed

KENNY ROGERS WHAT ABOUT ME? (RCA)	7 4 3 8 8
BRYAN ADAMS RECKLESS (A&M)	5 1 5 4 0
STEVE WONDER: Soundtrack THE WOMAN IN RED (MCA/MPH)	4 3 5 7 4
*1984 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK (RCA)	1 4 7 4 8
*THE KINKS WORD OF MOUTH (ARISTA)	2 4 6 8 0
DEBORAH ALLEN LET ME BE THE FIRST (RCA)	6 1 9 9 7
THE CARS HEARTBEAT CITY (ELEKTRA)	4 3 6 5 0
LEADERS OF THE PACK Vol. 1—Hits of '50s & '60s (LANE)	6 3 6 0 7
ALABAMA ROLL ON (RCA)	4 4 5 4 7
GALWAY & MANCINI IN THE PINK (RCA)	5 1 7 3 8
PRINCE PURPLE RAIN (WARNER BROS)	6 0 1 7 5

PAT BENATAR TROPICO (CHRYSALIS)	5 3 7 4 9
DAVID BOWIE TONIGHT (E&M/AMERICA)	4 4 4 1 8
OAK RIDGE BOYS GREATEST HITS 2 (MCA)	5 2 2 6 1
PAVARDOTTI & MANCINI MAMMA (LONDON)	1 5 3 1 0
*MADONNA (SIRE)	6 4 2 8 8
*RATT OUT OF THE CELLAR (ATLANTIC)	7 2 0 3 8
HUEY LEWIS & The News SPORTS (CHRYSALIS)	4 4 4 4 8
*JOHN WAITE NO BRAKES (LANE/AMERICA)	3 2 8 5 1
THE FIXX PHANTOMS (MCA)	5 3 3 5 3
*ANNE MURRAY HEART OVER MIND (CAPITOL)	3 4 3 7 4
VAN HALEN 1984 (WARNER BROS)	6 0 0 1 8
THE BEST OF MICHAEL JACKSON (MOTOWN)	2 4 1 4 8
NEIL DIAMOND LOVE SONGS (MCA)	4 4 2 8 9
SCORPIONS LOVE AT FIRST STING (MERCURY)	1 4 7 2 8
DURAN DURAN RIO (WARNER BROS)	6 3 4 5 2
*KISS ANIMALIZE (MERCURY)	8 3 4 8 0
JAMES GALWAY VIVALDI: THE FOUR SEASONS (RCA)	2 4 5 4 5
LINDA RONSTADT WHAT'S NEW (ASYLUM)	4 4 3 1 7
TWIN SETS Double the music Count as one!	
Motown Superstars 25 #1 Hits (MOTOWN)	5 4 3 1 0
STYX CAUGHT IN THE ACT (A&M)	5 3 8 2 7
ELVIS' WORLDWIDE GOLD AWARD HITS 1&2 (RCA)	1 3 6 9 0
VARIOUS ARTISTS This Is The Big Band Era (RCA)	2 2 5 1 4
PRINCE 1999 (WARNER BROS)	5 2 4 8 3

HALL & OATES BIG BAM BOOM (RCA)	1 4 7 0 2
ALABAMA 40 HOUR WEEK (RCA)	4 4 5 5 9
BARRY MANILOW 2 A.M. Paradise Cafe (ARISTA)	6 1 4 8 9
*TINA TURNER PRIVATE DANCER (CAPITOL)	4 3 5 8 3
BILLY SQUIER SIGNS OF LIFE (CAPITOL)	4 0 3 1 1
GEORGE STRAIT DOES FORT WORTH... (MCA)	3 4 2 7 3
DIANA ROSS SWEPT AWAY (RCA)	3 0 0 2 1
BILLY IDOL REBEL YELL (CHRYSALIS)	2 4 6 7 4
JOHN ONYER GREATEST HITS, Vol. 3 (RCA)	6 1 6 6 4
NIGHT RANGER MIDNIGHT MADNESS (MCA/CAMEL)	5 3 3 4 5
AIR SUPPLY GREATEST HITS (ARISTA)	3 4 4 2 4
KENNY ROGERS 20 GREATEST HITS (MCA)	4 4 5 2 3
*POINTER SISTERS BREAK OUT (PLANET)	4 3 8 3 3
ZZ TOP ELIMINATOR (WARNER BROS)	3 4 1 2 9
LIONEL RICHIE CAN'T SLOW DOWN (MOTOWN)	1 0 7 6 7

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- Mike Post: "The A-Team"... 14714
- Hank Williams, Jr.: Major Moves... 73828
- Best Of Bill Cosby... 12015
- Partman: Virtuoso Violinist... 50752
- Alabama: Closer You Get... 33563
- The Big Chill (Soundtrack)... 33970
- Chicago 17... 20763
- Hall & Oates: Gt. Hits... 13313
- Lee Greenwood: Good Love... 44275
- Flashdance (Soundtrack)... 33912
- E.T. Conley: Treadin' Water... 50043
- Eddie Rabbitt: Best Year... 50640
- Ghostbusters (Soundtrack)... 43604
- Elton John: Breaking Hearts... 24655
- Two Of A Kind (Soundtrack)... 44646
- Furrythmics: Touch... 63879
- Barbara Mandrell: Spun Gold... 73391
- Alabama: Mountain Music... 60229
- Oak Ridge Boys: Deliver... 43993
- Dolly Parton: Gt. Hits... 14090
- Anne Murray: Gt. Hits... 63530
- Ronnie Milsap: One More Try... 35472
- Waylon: Toe The Mark... 23791
- Commodores: All Gt. Hits... 13622
- Best Of The Beach Boys... 23946
- Jackson 5: Gt. Hits... 44149
- Go-Go's: Talk Show... 51667
- John Cougar: Uh-Huh... 44117
- Krokus: The Blitz... 33615
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- Gary Morris: Faded Blue... 33541
- Urban Chimpunk... 44391
- Alabama: Feels So Right... 53632
- Conway Twitty: By Heart... 23966
- Statlers: Atlanta Blue... 44206
- Kenny Rogers: Duets... 63268
- John Schneider: Too Good... 33756

NEIL DIAMOND LOVE SONGS (MCA)	4 4 2 8 9
SCORPIONS LOVE AT FIRST STING (MERCURY)	1 4 7 2 8
DURAN DURAN RIO (WARNER BROS)	6 3 4 5 2
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LIONEL RICHIE



HUEY LEWIS



ZZ TOP



PRINCE



HALL & OATES



ALABAMA

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the article on Conway, also the ones on "The Day George Jones Met Hank Williams," Moe and Joe, and my hero Roy Acuff. His story really touched my heart.

It sure was good to see some new faces on the CMA Awards show. I agree with Conway. Let's see some more new faces. Let's give some of the other fine artists a chance. How about it, fans?

Mal Adams
Mabank, Texas

One Last Word on Conway

Dear Mr. Bane,

I just wanted to send you a note to tell you that the article you wrote, "The Gospel According to Conway Twitty" in the November/December issue, was one of the best articles on Conway Twitty I've ever read.

I handle the advertising and public relations for Twitty City, and work very closely with Conway and his fine people at Conway Twitty Enterprises. Naturally a lot of articles go across my desk, and this is the most complete, comprehensive and accurate story yet.

Susan Andrews
Bill Hudson & Associates
Nashville, Tennessee



Regarding Reba

I want to thank you for the great article on Reba McEntire in the November/December issue.

I was so thrilled, as I know thousands of other fans were, when Reba won the CMA award. Reba is the best singer to come along in many years. I hope she keeps it country too, as I think there are too many singers getting into the wide country music field that are not country. The country sound was slipping away, and I hope people like Reba McEntire, George Strait, Ricky Skaggs keep it country.

I have met Reba at her concerts and I find her to be very down-to-earth, friend-

ly, sweet, polite and very pretty inside and out.

JoAnn Jones
Rock Falls, Illinois

Thank you all very much for the great story on Reba McEntire. The photographs were super, too. Reba is real "country," and her unique style and delivery are as delightful and refreshing as she is. Now she is the CMA Female Vocalist of the Year, and this award is only the first of many more that will be coming her way.

Linda J. Minneci
Lanesboro, Massachusetts

A Mouthful by Moe

I totally agree with what Moe Bandy said in Twenty Questions in your November/December issue. He said a mouthful when he said there are honky-tonks that you hear about, but seldom see. Well, I saw one too many, and ended up in prison for a spell. Your magazine is passed around by many prisoners. Far more than most people would believe.

Tim "Dusty" Rich
Angola, Louisiana

Family Ties

In your November/December issue you have an article on Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash's husband. In it you say that Carlene Carter is Rosanne's half-sister. I thought Carlene belonged to Carl Smith when June Carter was married to him, which would make her Rosanne's step-sister. Right? John Carter is Rosanne's half-brother.

Mrs. Harry K. Pound
Princeton, Kansas

Right! Thanks for correcting us. Carl Smith, Carlene's father, is featured in our next issue, and for more about Rodney and Rosanne, see People. —Ed.

What's Up, George?

I enjoyed the article "The Day George Jones Met Hank Williams" in the November/December issue.

I saw George at the Palomino Club here in Charlotte. His show was good, but after the hour concert I left feeling it was not worth \$16.00. He did not play his most familiar songs which led the audience to believe the promise he made to play all night after a break. I feel a performer, even Jones, should not hype up the audience and then lie to them. It almost seemed he was forced not to return out *that night*. His motto should be "Rip Off Jones" instead of "No Show Jones."

Many performers, including Conway Twitty, give only one-hour concerts (rip offs), but at least Conway did not promise to come back out.

Bob Baker
Charlotte, North Carolina

Real Music For The 40 Hour Week

ALABAMA "40 Hour Week"

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"40 Hour Week"

"I Want To Know You"

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"Real Love"
(duet with Kenny Rogers)

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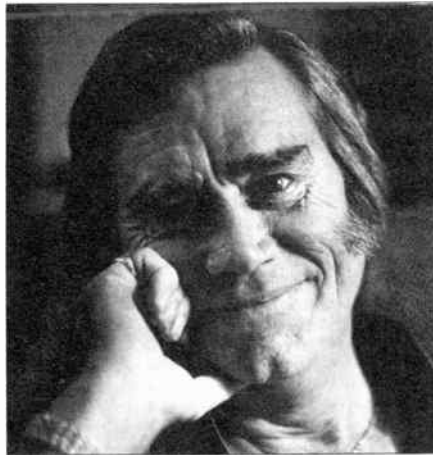
Hope Bob's is a Better Book

Since I've been a George Jones fan forever, just have to comment on the book *Ragged But Right*. As a writer, Dolly Carlisle should have been a toe dancer. The book was dull, dull and duller. She rambled off on things and people that had no bearing whatsoever on George. Most people who read the book are country people. She continually used those \$2 words that would have taken an updated dictionary or Philadelphia lawyer to decipher. I'm a soft touch for most anything pertaining to country music, and on occasion I do get taken, but that's the worst thing I've ever bought for \$14.95.

But George, you're still A-okay with me. Just hope Bob Allen's book does you more justice.

Darlene Owens
Hillsboro, Illinois

For a sample of Bob Allen's book, *George Jones: Saga of an American Singer*, read "The Day George Jones Met Hank Williams" in our November/December issue. Our reviewer, Rich Kienzle, said Allen's book was better. Maybe that's why it costs a dollar more. If you would like a copy, send \$15.95 plus \$1.95 postage and handling to Suga, Country



Music, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. While supplies last. —Ed.

Bane's Our Boy

I noticed in the Letters section of the November/December issue that several folks were complaining about a certain Michael Bane. Hey, guys, lay off! Mr. Bane is one of the best writers working in the field of country music. Even if we do not agree with what he says, he has the right and integrity as a writer to say what he

pleases. I have been a working country and rock musician for 10 years here in Georgia, and for the past year have begun writing on a local level, so I have reason to respect Mr. Bane very much.

I lambasted Mr. Bane myself a few years ago in *Country Music* for his scathing review of the album *White Mansions*. I even unjustly called him a damn yankee. (Bane is from Memphis.—Ed.) Well, all the time I respected Michael Bane and I apologize for what I said.

Remember, as I try to, that the best writers are those who evoke reactions from people, whether good or bad!

If I may remark about *Country Music's* record reviews in general, they are good, but all this rambling on and on with irrelevant abstractions—is this necessary? These reviews often determine whether many of us will buy an album, and we do not need this.

Donny Screws
Eastman, Georgia

Hank Williams, Sr. was a rambling man, so we let our reviewers ramble, now and then, sort of as a tribute. —Ed.

In response to Mark Chisenhall's letter about Michael Bane and Hank Jr. in the November/December issue, maybe Mr.

Go West.

"Now There's You"
is the first hit single
from Shelly West's new solo album,
Don't Make Me Wait On The Moon.
You won't need a compass to find her—
on any record chart, West is always
straight up.



Produced by Barry Beckett
for Beckett Productions, Inc.
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Chisenhall should listen again to *Major Moves*. It is tinged with anger. All of Hank's songs about women are tinged with anger, except a few—"Queen of My Heart," for example, anger at how men are treated by their "women." I like Hank Jr.'s music one whole hell of a lot, even his nasty stabs at women, but I laugh it off because the music's fun and it's bluesy.

About "rock and roll" and "blues," Mr. Bane, I think the blues was rock's mama, if I'm not mistaken. Granted the trash that passes for rock 'n' roll now is "aural slop," but it sounds like some of the country stuff too. In a big sense to quote Hank Jr., "I'm a dinosaur," not only for rock, but also for country. I've liked both for over 20 years; now I just listen to music and don't label it. I like what I like; it all has a blues feel.

Your magazine is fantastic and straightforward. Please don't let the self-righteous change your format. I enjoy honesty and truth, not a sugar-coated version of the truth.

Why it's enough to give this lady a case of the blues if you all changed one little bit. Keep up the good work.

Marshall Chapman's letter said it all. Where, oh where are the quote-unquote "women outlaws," besides Ms. Chapman?

Jilda Lynne Burgoon
Baltimore, Ohio

Country Music has got to be the best, most forthright magazine about country music on the market today. I can't wait until it arrives and read it cover to cover with a great deal of interest. The stars are human beings, so continue to print it and tell it like it is.

Mr. Michael Bane is to be complimented for Twenty Questions with Moe Bandy, "The Gospel According to Conway Twitty," and "Reba McEntire: Rodeo Girl" in the November/December issue.

Your record reviews are always correct as I have found out! Keep up the good work and thanks to all of you for a job well done.

Joyce L. Oncheck
Walnutport, Pennsylvania

Michael Bane's mother made us print all those articles of his in the same issue.

Seriously, though, we want everyone to understand that our intent in reviewing records is to let the writers' opinions through—uninhibited. I judge the reviewers, over the long haul, on their understanding of music and their honesty, not whether I share their opinions on particular albums. I hope you'll do the same. Then let us know your opinion, and we'll print that, too, such as the following letters. —R.D.B.

Be Fair to Fricke

In the November/December issue of your magazine there was a review of Janie

Fricke's new album *The First Word in Memory* by a Kip Kirby. I have every single album Ms. Fricke has made and this one tops them all. There is no voice in country music to equal Ms. Fricke's and most critics will agree with this. Ms. Kirby has done a complete turnabout here that I can't imagine—it borders on being silly. She says that the material is good but that Janie Fricke is "vanilla" (that is the word she used) and just unable to deliver. Janie Fricke ranks up there with Barbra Streisand in "vocal talent" but obviously Ms. Kirby knows nothing about that. This is an excellent album done by an excellent artist and I think Kip Kirby needs to stay away from reviewing albums.

Rose Lawton
Bandera, Texas

For a feature on Fricke, stay tuned.—Ed.

Barbara and Lee are Best

I just finished reading Kip Kirby's review of *Meant For Each Other* by Barbara Mandrell and Lee Greenwood. I was not pleased to read her remarks in the first two paragraphs of her review. This album is quality material, and it is not totally forgotten one hour after it's played.



The CMA may have voted Alabama as "Entertainers of the Year," but I have no doubt in my mind that Barbara and Lee are the "Entertainers of the Year." By the way, I recently bought an Alabama album, and it was just like a Chinese dinner. I totally forgot about it an hour after I played it.

Thank God for today's best entertainers, Barbara and Lee. Thanks to *Country Music Magazine* for letting me share my thoughts with all of your other readers.

Kris Pinckney
Lancaster, New Hampshire

Whitley not Whitely

While I strongly disagree with Bob Allen's review of *A Hard Act to Follow* by RCA's Keith Whitley, I respect his right to express his own opinion. I think the album is great!

However, I do feel an apology is due Mr. Whitley. The only place in the entire article, including the Table of Contents,



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COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

11 Great Reasons Why You

Attention Country Music subscribers. By now, you have no doubt noticed references in Country Music to The Country Music Society of America. And, you may still be wondering just what it's all about. That's why I'm again taking a minute now to fill you in on the details.

For a long time, I have felt that you and I and other fans, whose knowledge and love for country music is above average, should have an organization to serve our interests. Not something for just everyone, but something special for serious country music loyalists. After all, we buy the records. We listen to the radio stations. We spend the money to go to the concerts. So how do we make our voice heard?

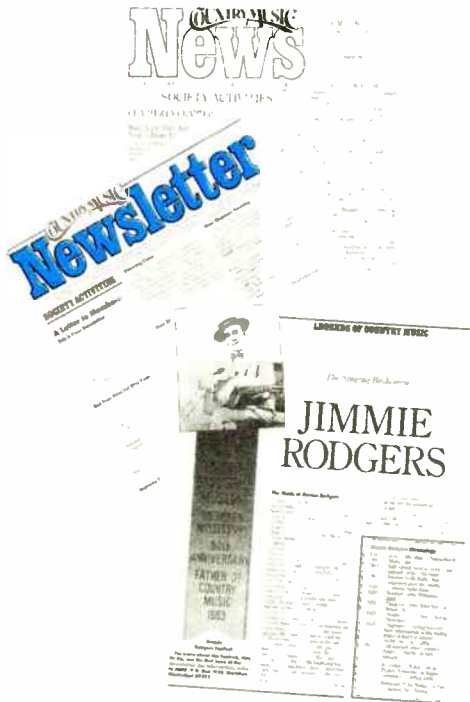
The answer is the Country Music Society of America. With 75,000 plus members enrolled since last October, we are the largest and most influential organization of music fans in the country.

Now, because you are a regular Country Music subscriber in good standing, you are eligible to become a "Charter Member" in this exclusive organization. And best of all, I'll give you your membership FREE when you extend your current subscription for an additional year.

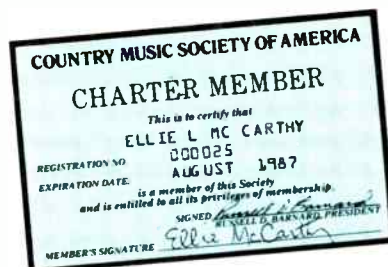
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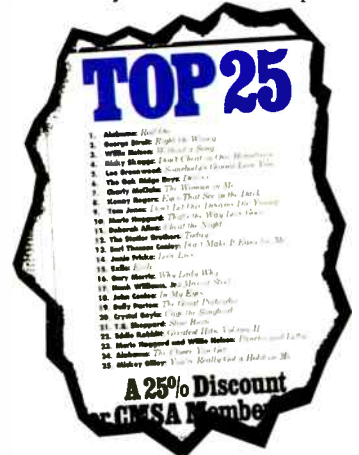


3. You get your own personal Charter Member's Identification Card showing your account number, which entitles you to all member benefits.

4. You get special discounts on stereo equipment, travel packages, home video equipment, musical instruments... anything we can buy for our group, so we can pass along the savings to you.



5. DISCOUNT COUPONS... good for discounts on books, T-shirts, records, tapes and more. You can actually save more than the cost of your membership.



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Russ Barnard
Publisher

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where his name is spelled correctly is on the picture of the album cover which accompanies the review. The name is *Whitley* and not *Whitely* as was printed.

Rosemary Littleton
Grayson, Kentucky

We are so sorry! But did you read the same review we did? It was a rave. For more on Keith Whitley see the feature in this issue, where we have spelled his name correctly, and in the Table of Contents too. —Ed.

Let's Hear It for Young Performers

I certainly enjoy receiving your magazine as I am and have been a country music lover all of my 55 years. I would like to see articles on some of our up and coming young artists who are as good as or better than some of the so-called stars. I belong to several fan clubs of these young people and know that all they need is that one song to put them on top with the best of country music. They appreciate their fans, whereas so many of the stars seem to think they don't need us anymore. They cancel performances without notice or put on such a short show that it isn't worth seeing. Plus they charge so much that a working man with a family can only go to one or two shows a year.

Country music lovers should boycott these people and refuse to buy their records or go to their shows. Maybe then they would come down to earth. Better yet, write to them and let them know what you think.

How about a list of fan clubs in your great magazine to make it even better?

Robert W. Baker
Yorkville, Illinois

The Country Music Society of America's Answer Book 1985 contains a list of fan clubs plus many other items of information. To get the Answer Book, see page 8 for details on the Society and how to join. —Ed.

Good Old Days Almost Gone

This last copy of *Country Music* for November/December is a dilly—Lulu Belle and Scotty, Roy Acuff, George Jones. Our country singers are about gone. A lot of the songs are also being butchered up till they are just a bunch of noise. I only go back about 80 years, but I hate to think what would have happened at a get-together if somebody had come with a horn or drums. He would have had the horn wrapped around his neck and the drumsticks somewhere else.

Why does a so-called country singer try to look as bad as possible? The old timers got a *haircut* and shave someway. Some of the clothes they wear would stampede a herd of milk cows.

Kitty Wells and Loretta Lynn are sing-

ers, as Roy Acuff and George Jones. They ~~don't need a bunch of noise to drown them out.~~ Also Buck Owens and Merle Haggard (The Best). Everyone who can hold a guitar thinks he is a country singer. Way back, a piano was for dance halls and sissies.

Maybe I got bucked off on my head too much.

Thomas Blankenship
Rochester, Washington



Like other CMSA members, Mr. Blankenship receives a Newsletter in addition to his copy of Country Music. Lulu Belle and Scotty, Kitty Wells, Rose Maddox and Jimmie Rodgers are some of the legendary performers featured in past Newsletters. Patsy Cline appears in this current Newsletter along with details on how to get her available albums. For how to join the Society and more on its other benefits, see page 8. —Ed.



LS/MT and Gene Autry

I am glad to see and read once more about Mr. Roy Acuff while he is still with us. As you know, his kind is getting smaller each month now. We lost Mr. Ernest Tubb not long ago. The old timers are going for sure, and our new group is O.K. in some ways, but they are not as good as the old ones that are gone.

Arthur R. Turner
Bartow, Florida

Autry on Our Mind

Gene Autry has been my idol since I was a small boy. Along with some friends, I would ride a bicycle about eight miles to a small theater to see him and Smiley Burnett. To me, he could do or make anything *right*. To this day—I am 55 years old, I still think of him as my hero.

It makes me sad to think he doesn't sing or record anymore. He was good on all his recordings.

Selby Farmer
Heflin, Alabama

That was quite an article about Gene Autry in *Essential Collector* in your November/December issue. I had quite a collection of him. I even got a picture taken with him way back in Salt Lake City when I was in his fan club.

I went from Gene Autry to Elvis Presley. Now one fantastic fan of his. I have about a two-foot wall of him.

I guess that's a big switch for music.

LS/MT
Dallas, Texas

Thanks for the photo. We plan a feature on Autry soon.—Ed.

Wild Bill Older than Grandma

I have been a subscriber to *Country Music* for years and enjoy it very much.

I know you will never publish this. However, I am writing in answer to Eric L. Sedlock's letter in the November/December issue. I am 82 years old and as for his grandmother claiming to have crossed the country in a covered wagon, covered wagons and wagon trains had gone the way of the Pony Express before that time.

I think his grandmother has forgotten. I had to set the record straight. My father traveled with wagon trains, along with William Cody, and he would be 130 years old.

Gertrude Cutchall
Portersville, Pennsylvania

Sounds like you've got a point! Maybe we won't publish your letter. But maybe we will. —Ed.

Let's Hear It for Hank Jr.

I am writing about your mention of Hank Jr.'s Beach Club in *People* in your November/December issue. You wrote

that opening night they had a birthday party for Merle Kilgore. I live in Troy, Alabama and I spend most of my summer in Panama City. I was down there for the opening of the Club. It was three weeks before the birthday party and WPAP broadcast the grand opening. I just wanted to set things straight.

I also have a few words to voice about the way the CMA has treated Hank Jr. It seems like every time award time comes along, Hank Williams, Jr., a man who can pack people in for miles around when he has a concert, and has had more songs in the Top 40 music charts than most of the singers who have won awards from the CMA, gets left out!

I'm not the only fan of Hank's that's mad about this. *It's a slap in the face of country music that Hank Williams, Jr. has never received a CMA award.* I hope the CMA will wake up and see their error.

All of Hank's fans would love to see him receive Entertainer of the Year and Male Vocalist.

I hope you print this because I think if more of Hank's fans speak up, then maybe he will get an award.

Charlean Newman
Troy, Alabama

Got a Minute?

First of all, we would like to say that you are doing a super job for us country and western fans and wish your magazine great success.

Second, we were wondering whatever became of C.W. McCall. Last we heard about him was in 1976. Is he still singing? If not, what's he been up to?

It was nice to hear Freddy Fender is still going strong.

Don and Penny Baker
Medford, Minnesota

Breaker, breaker, one nine—anyone got any mail on ole C.W.? —Ed.

Still Looking for Lew

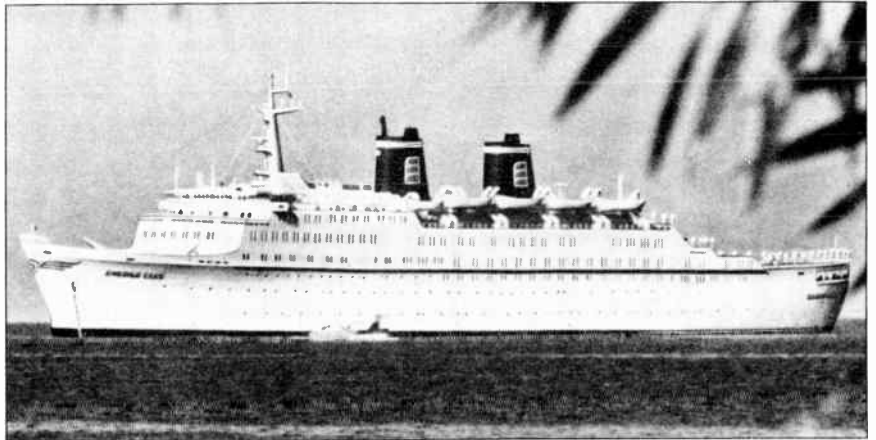
What has happened to Lew DeWitt of The Statler Bros.? I see them on TV with the new man and he's so good, but Lew took sick at a concert in Macomb, Illinois and they had to leave stage. When they came back later, Lew was wearing a McDonough District hospital gown. He brought the house down.

I have all The Statlers' albums and was so glad to see them in person. I am a Country Western music fan. I'm 85 years young. Do hope Lew is still with us, and God Bless You All.

Great-Grandma Snowden
Vermont, Illinois

Thanks to fans like yourself, Lew has been located. For more about him and The Statlers, stay tuned. —Ed. ■

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DAVID ALLAN COE, "DARLIN', DARLIN'" ON COLUMBIA RECORDS AND CASSETTES.

People

PO' BOY AIN'T PO'

Whispering **Bill Anderson** walked up to me backstage at the Opry a while back and asked, "Why aren't you doing that column for *Country Music Magazine* anymore?" I sorta hemmed and hawed around and beat the bush. "Thank you and I do appreciate it," I so cheerfully said, as I smiled from ear to ear, showing all the caps that cost me enough to pay off a car!!

"Why I used to get my *Country Music Magazine* and turn right to *Hillbilly Central* and Hazel Smith," said the man that made Po' Boys a household word. "That was the best thing in the magazine!" Well, I acted as shy as I knew how... sorta hung my head and said a dozen or two more thank-yous; however, I could not find it in my heart to disagree with a man that smart. My lands, he used to be a disk jockey, and I believe he went to college, has his own TV show and for a time guested on the soap opry *One Life To Live*. Why, he sure as the world knows what he's talking about!

HI, HO RICKY AND BILLY THE KID

It was a cool Nashville day when **Ricky Skaggs** added his star to **Bill Monroe's** Bluegrass Walk of Fame at Bill's museum on Music Valley Drive here in Nashville. The master and his disciple burst into an impromptu version of "Christmas Time's A-Coming," to the delight of those in attendance. The *a cappella* sounds were pleasing, as was the smile the bluegrass master displayed when Ricky presented him with a gold album made especially for Bill in honor of the fact that Skaggs' recording of "Uncle Pen," written by Bill, had just hit Number One on the country charts. Also in attendance was Mrs. Ricky Skaggs, the beautiful **Sharon White** of the singing Whites, along with **Daddy Buck** and singing sister **Cheryl**.

BO-JOHN GETS AROUND

There ain't nothing wrong with being Bo Duke on *The Dukes of Hazzard*. No, sir! But if a boy wants to sing a country



The master and his disciple on The Bluegrass Walk of Fame.

song, it can seem like one heck of a load, I imagine. And that's just what **John Schneider** has dreamed of—sources say that for years John, in spite of his fame and money, wanted a Number One hillbilly song on the up and down country charts. He's got one, and I mean it is a down and out country song that **George Jones** could have sung: titled "I've Been Around Long Enough To Know." John sounds as good 'n country as **George Strait** and the song could be played without shame or apology in any honky tonk in Texas. Thank you, producer **Jimmy Bowen** for producing and **John Schneider** for singing a great country song.

CROSSING OVER IN A B-I-G WAY

The magic word in hillbillydom for a dozen or so years has been "cross-over." When I met **Gary Morris** at a local Music City eatery, it never crossed my mind that

he would cross over from Opryland to Opera-land, but he has made the transition—and back again—with ease. Gary had good reviews, nation-wide for his performance with **Linda Ronstadt** and others, in an English-language version of Puccini's opera *La Boheme* at the Public Theater in New York City. The talk now is a record with Gary and opera partner, **Linda Ronstadt**, who can sing opera, pop, big band and country and sing it with style.

I recall when **Dolly** had her TV show here in Nashville and had **Emmylou Harris** and **Linda** on the show. Naturally, I was in the front row, in awe and agape. There *they* were, the three greatest female singers of their era. **Dolly**, the star... like **Mae West**, even then our **Dolly** had those qualities. **Linda Ronstadt**, who opened her mouth and music came out naturally in such force, yet with such ease. **Linda** probably sings with more force than any woman around these days unless it is

Guest Reporter: Hazel Smith / Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People



MARTY STUAET

The boys, together again, are headed for the studio and a new album.

Loretta Lynn. You know? Music just seems to pour out of their vocal chords, like water spilling from a water bucket. And it's so good. Then there was Emmylou. Sweet voiced Emmylou... such a fave of mine then and now. She picks a guitar like a real pro, sings like a bird, looks like a girl singer is supposed to look... a strong beauty reserved for roses and orchids or Lana Turner, that's Emmylou.

Okay... back to square one and Gary Morris, who is the man of the moment, and I say the Jeff Silbar/Larry Henley penned tune "Wind Beneath My Wings" made a Gary Morris believer out of me. Hope to hear from him soon.

HANK SAW THE LIGHT BUT I SAW WAYLON!

For years, years, I have known and loved Waylon Jennings. No better heart did God ever put in a man than in the bosom of W.J. And no more talent did he sow in the vocal chords and hands of anyone. I had read that Waylon had really kissed life hello by blowing off drugs, and by invitation I attended the opening of The Waylon Museum near Music Row. Lo and behold, there stood Waylon, big as life and smiling... ladies and gentlemen, he was shining like new money. After we kissed, hugged, said hello, kissed, hugged some more, and just said a lot of jumbled words like old friends will do, I tried to say how great he looked. Well, I got all choked up and kinda stammered, then backed off, cause there was a bunch more people that needed to speak to the man of the hour. As I backed away, I realized that on one side of Waylon was Johnny Cash and on the other side Robert Duvall. I smiled and knew that the shine was freedom from those chains. It made me see nobody but W.J. for a minute and that's all right too.

Looking lovely and every day of 21 and not a day more was Waylon's lovely Jessi Colter. Also preacher Will Campbell, Earl Thomas Conley and a bunch more came around to honor one of their own, and Waylon is that.

As of this writing Big John Cash and Willie and Kris Kristofferson are in the studio with Waylon cutting a phonograph record for "JRC" on CBS with dynamo Chips Moman wearing the producer's cap. That's a lot of horsepower for one studio, hoss. You already know that Chips produces Waylon, Willie, Jessi, Bob Duvall and whoever else he wants to!

Hey! Big Apple, New York City... the date was February 8, 9 and 10 and the place was Radio City Music Hall. Here's hoping you folks up there did not miss the big show. Live and in person, it was Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash with help from Jessi and June Carter Cash. The prospect of those stars on the big stage made me want to make the trip myself.

A "SHEE HAW" JOKE

(Especially for the loving spouses of Porter Wagoner, Bobby Bare, Jerry Reed, Harlan Howard, Ron Peterson and all the others that are the "Wind Beneath the Wings" of their men).

When a hillbilly relaxes, it is nice when he has a hobby that his lady can share—cleaning fish!

THE FEUD CONTINUES

For all those who still call our music "Country/Western," I hope you caught your local TV stations' showing sometime in February of *Family Feud* with Richard 'Kissy Dicky' Dawson doing "Country vs. Western." Grand Ole Opry manager Hal Durham escorted *Country*

stars Ricky Skaggs, Jerry Clower, Jeanie Pruett, Bill Anderson and Larry Gatlin to Los Angeles where they competed with *Western* stars Amanda Blake, Dale Robertson, Dennis Weaver, Doug McClure and Pat Butram. Our country folks lost the game but still brought back \$11,000 to be donated to the Opry Trust Fund. I asked Ricky Skaggs what was the most exciting thing about the trip, and he allowed as how when the limo was ready to drive him to the TV studio, the driver asked, "Mr. Skaggs, would you mind riding with Miss Blake in the limo?" Ricky said, "I looked down and there sat Miss Kitty. I said, lordy mercy, it would be an honor for me to ride in the car with Miss Kitty!"

WILL NATIONAL ENQUIRER PRINT THIS?

Saw Johnny Lee at Maude's, which is Hillbilly Heaven in Nashville these days and nights, along with his manager/friend Sherwood Cryer. From all the smiles from all the pretty girls, it didn't look like Johnny was too too lonely for his ex, Charlene Tilton.

MR. WENDELL WEDS

E.W. "Bud" Wendell, who heads up the mighty Opryland Complex, and Janice Ericson said "I Do's" recently. A big bash followed at the Hotel Opryland, of course. Lavish food.

UNHAPPY RUMOR

Rumor has it that Conway Twitty, also known as Harold Jenkins, and wife Mickey of more than plenty years are separated. This saddens me. Conway and Mickey dressed in their jeans and shirts and wearing Conway's baseball caps would stroll into Rivergate Mall most anytime and no one bothered them. More than likely no one recognized them or the shoppers there are so used to entertainers showing up that no one pestered them. Just part of the crowd. Rumor also has it that a settlement of mega-bucks could be in the making; however, my sources could not pin point this as a fact. Let's hope none of it is so.

BARE OPTS CAPITOL RECORDS

Real glad to hear that Bobby Bare has signed with a major recording company, Capitol Records. Bare is such a great singer. So unpretentious. So laid back. So great. Sources say Bobby's producer will be Louise and Earl Scruggs' second son, Randy Scruggs. There are those who lay claim that the best TV show on *The Nash-*

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JOHN MCEUEN

Produced by John McEuen

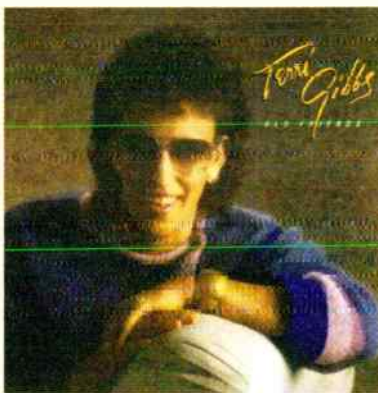
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Norman for JEN Productions, Inc.

Singer, songwriter and musician —
Terri Gibbs has it all. This album
has been a long time coming, but
you'll agree that it was worth
the wait.



John McEuen Terri Gibbs

WHERE THE MUSIC MATTERS



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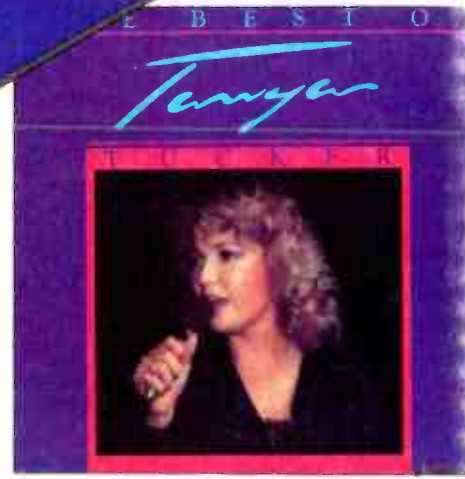
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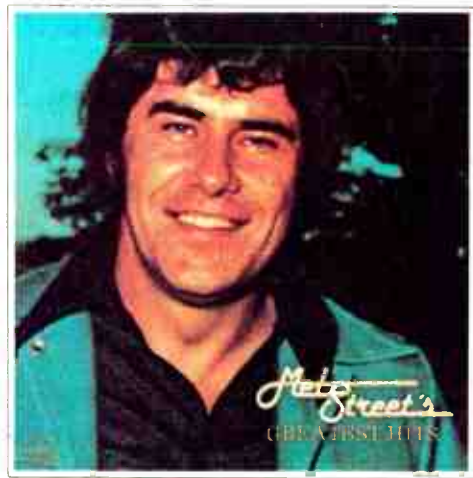
TANYA TUCKER

The Man that Turned My Mama On • You Are So Beautiful • Would You Lay with Me in a Field of Stone • Spring • Blood Red & Goin' Down • Bed of Roses • What's Your Mama's Name • How Can I Tell Him • The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A. • The Jamestown Ferry • Delta Dawn • Almost Persuaded • Greener than the Grass • Love's the Answer • I Believe the South is Gonna Rise Again • Teddy Bear Song • Guess I'll Have to Love Him More • Let Me Be There • and MORE!



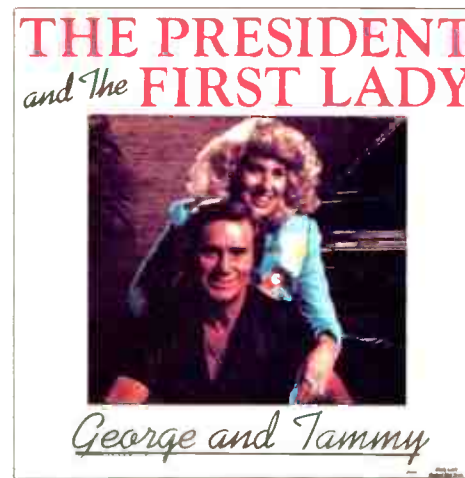
TOM JONES

She's a Lady • Without Love (There is nothing) • I'll Never Fall in Love Again • Green Green Grass of Home • Daughter of Darkness • I (Who have nothing) • Funny Familiar Forgotten Feeling • Love Me Tonight • Sixteen Tons • With These Hands • What's New Pussycat • It's Not Unusual • Delilah • Can't Stop Loving You • Detroit City • Help Yourself • Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay • Hey Jude • Funny How Time Slips Away • Autumn Leaves



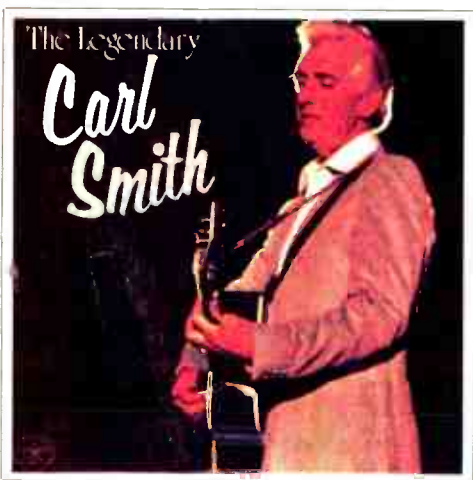
MEL STREET

Borrowed Angel • The Town Where You Live • Bad Bad Leroy Brown • I've Hurt Her More Than She Loves Me • Last Affair • I Met a Friend Of Yours Today • Big Blue Diamond • Forbidden Angel • Country Pride • Don't Lead Me On • Smokey Mountain Memories • Rule It In • Virginia's Song • Don't Be Angry • Even If I Have To Steal • You Make Me Feel More Like a Man • Today I Started Lovin' You Again • Love Me Tender • and MORE!



GEORGE & TAMMY

We're Gonna Hold On • Two Story House • Take Me • The Ceremony • Old Fashioned Singing • (We're not) The Jet Set • We Layed It Away • God's Gonna Getcha (For that) • Someone I Used to Know • Livin' on Easy Street • Golden Ring • After Closing Time • Something to Brag About • We'll Talk About It Later • Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms • Near you • Southern California • Let's Build a World Together After the Fire is Gone • If We Don't Make It



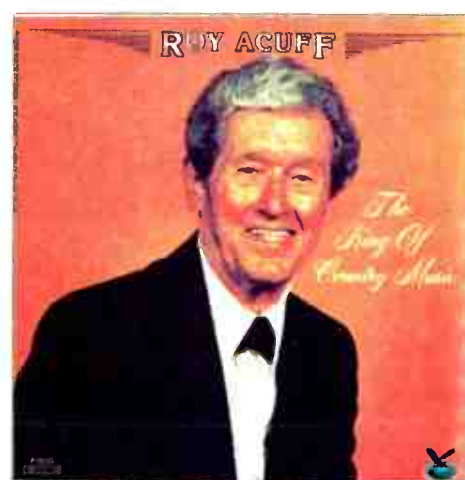
CARL SMITH

Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way • Mr. Moon • Just Wait Till I Get You Alone • Back Up Budd • Deep Water • Hey Joe • Are You Teasing Me • If Teardrops Were Pennies • It's a Lovely Lovely World • You Are the One • Don't Just Stand There • Satisfaction Guaranteed • Kisses Don't Lie • Our Hometown • Trademark • Let's Live a Little • Take My Ring Off Your Finger • I Overlooked an Orchid • Go, Boy Go • This Orchid Means Goodbye



JOHNNY HORTON

North to Alaska • Battle of New Orleans • When It's Springtime in Alaska (It's 40 below) • Johnny Reb • I'm Coming Home • Honky Tonk Man • Sink the Bismarck • All for the Love of a Girl • The Man in You Stole • Comanche • Jim Bridger • I'm a One Woman Man • Sleepy Eye'd John • They'll Never Take Her Love from Me • Old Shesfoot • All Grown Up • Sal's Got a Sugar Lip • Whispering Pines • Johnny Freedom (Freedom Land) • I'm Ready If You're Willing



ROY ACUFF

Great Speckled Bird • Tell Mother I'll Be There • Wait for the Light to Shine • Wreck on the Highway • I Saw the Light • The Precious Jewel • The Great Shining Light • If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again • The Great Judgment Morning • Great Speckled Bird (No. 2) • Wabash Cannon Ball • Lonesome Old River Blues • Be Honest with Me • Fireball Mail • Tennessee Waltz • Muleskinner Blues (Blue yodel no. 3) • Law and Lumber • Pins and Needles • Freight Train Blues • MORE!

ORV8-111 THE BEST OF
RED SOVINE



RED SOVINE

Teddy Bear • Daddy's Girl • Lay Down Sally • Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun • Colorado Kool-Aid • Giddyup Go • Ole Rivers • The Days of Me and You • Little Rosa • I Didn't Jump the Fence • It'll Come Back • Little Joe • I Know You're Married (But I love you still) • Last Goodbye • Phantom 309 • Roses for Mama • 18 Wheels a Humming Home Sweet Home • Anything Leaving Town Today • Daddy • Woman Behind the Man Behind the Wheel

Tammy Wynette

GREATEST 20 HITS



TAMMY WYNETTE

You and Me • Stand by Your Man • "Till I Can Make It On My Own • D.I.V.O.R.C.E. • Singing My Song • Kids Say the Darndest Things • Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad • Womanhood • One of a Kind • I'll See Him Through • Bedtime Story • I Don't Wanna Play House • Take Me to Your World • Apartment No. 9 • The Way to Love a Man • He Loves Me All the Way • Run, Woman, Run • Good Lovin' (Makes it right) • My Man (Understands) • Till I Get It Right

LEFTY FRIZZELL



LEFTY FRIZZELL

If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time • I Love You a Thousand Ways • Look What Thoughts Will Do • I Want to Be with You Always • Always Late with Your Kisses • Mom and Dad's Waltz • Travelin' Blues • Give Me More, More, More of Your Kisses • Don't Stay Away • Forever • Release Me • Cigarettes and Coffee Blues • The Long Black Veil • Saginaw, Michigan • She's Gone, Gone, Gone • Watermelon Time in Georgia • The Waltz of the Angels • and MORE!

MARTY ROBBINS

no. 1 Cowboy



MARTY ROBBINS

El Paso • El Paso City • The Hanging Tree • Red River Valley • Streets of Laredo • San Angelo • All Around Cowboy • Tumbling Tumbleweeds • The Fastest Gun Around • Meet Me Tonight in Laredo • Mr. Shorty • They're Hanging Me Tonight • Cool Water • Strawberries • Roan • Ballad of the Alamo • Big Iron • Running Gun • Five Brothers • The Cowboy in the Continental Suit • Old Red

ORV8-110

Greatest Hits Of

Shel Wooley • Ben Colder



SHEB WOOLEY • BEN COLDER

Purple People Eater • That's My Pa • I Walk the Line (No. 2) • Detroit City (No. 2) • Runnin' Bear • Don't Go Near the Eskimos • Harper Valley P.T.A. (Later the Same Day) • Little Green Apples • 10 Little Bottles • 15 Beers Ago • Almost Persuaded • Hello Walls (No. 2) • Green Green Grass of Home (No. 2) • Sunday Morning Fallin' Down • Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms • Folsom Prison Blues • Little Brown Shack Out Back • Divorce (No. 2) • Easy Lovin' • and MORE!

GENE WATSON

G R E A T E S T H I T S



GENE WATSON

Love in the Afternoon • Farewell Party • Pick the Wildwood Flower • One-Sided Conversation • Should I Come Home (Or should I go crazy) • I Don't Need a Thing at All • The Old Man and His Horn • Where Love Begins • Cowboys Don't Get Lucky All the Time • Paper Rosie • No One Will Ever Know • Bedroom Ballad • Raisin' Game in Texas • Nothing Sure Looked Good on You • You Could Know as Much About a Stranger • Bad Water • and MORE!



ROAD MUSIC

Teddy Bear (Red Sovine) • Six Days on the Road (Dave Dudley) • Girl on the Billboard (Del Reeves) • Passing Zone Blues (Coleman Wilson) • Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun (Dave Dudley) • Convoy (T. H. Music Festival) • Give Me 10 Acres to Turn this Rig Around (The Willis Brothers) • White Knight (T. H. Music Festival) • Looking at the World Through a Windshield (Del Reeves) • Giddyup Go Answer (Minnie Pearl) • The Gearjammer and the Hobo (Red Sovine) • MORE!

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Red Sovine | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tammy Wynette | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lefty Frizzell | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tom Jones | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mel Street | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> George & Tammy | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marty Robbins | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wooley/Colder | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gene Watson | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Smith | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Johnny Horton | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roy Acuff | <input type="checkbox"/> LP | <input type="checkbox"/> 8TK | <input type="checkbox"/> Cass. |
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11124-3

People

ville Network is Bobby Bare's songwriter show, *Bobby Bare and Friends*. And you know what... I think it's definitely one of the best myself.

WHEN YOU SAY EARL... YOU SAY BANJO

Earl Scruggs' music has done his talking a lot of the time, down through the years. The banjo virtuoso didn't need to talk much. He could just sit and pick. But as is the case with many other great musicians, Chet Atkins, Bill Monroe, Doc



Watson and others, when they finally do speak, people listen, because they know that these men have something to say. When asked if he had encouraged his sons to enter the music business as a career, Earl answered, and we listened. "Whatever they were contented with," he said, "I was there for help and encouragement." Earl's older son Gary Scruggs plays bass, harp and guitar with Waylon, on the road and in the studio. Gary also co-produced the single "America" with Waylon by Waylon. Randy and Steve Scruggs co-own Scruggs Sound Recording Studio, where a lot of the famed make their phonograph records. Plus, Randy has become quite the prolific songwriter these days, what with collaborating with Earl Thomas Conley, whom he also produces. And guess who plays sax, banjo, electric and acoustic guitar with Conley? Yep. Young Steve. So I figure that Earl and Louise Scruggs have all the right in the world to be proud of their young uns.

I STILL LOVE GEORGE JONES

Was driving my car through Madison, wearing my new \$150 eyeglasses, when I

saw a show bus. Lo and behold, seated in the front seat was my (and everybody's) favorite singer, George Jones. Friends and neighbors, trust me when I say the lord was with me. I kept at the same speed, did not look toward the road ahead, only looked back till the bus had passed, and then when I did look, I was plumb out of the road. If I had needed gas, the Amoco Station could have filled up my car. Luckily, no one was parked by the tanks, and no one was headed north on Gallatin Road... for I didn't have time to check the traffic, just cut her out and straightened it up.

And I still love George Jones.

TREE BEARS FRUIT

My friend, good guy Bucky Jones, was Tree Publishing Writer of the Year for 1984. Yeah, Bucky. Formerly a pharmacist who owned his own drug store somewhere down in Georgia, Bucky is quiet, easy-going, down-to-earth and sweet. They are few and far between bearing the title of songwriter.

NASHVILLE'S GETTING MORE LIKE HOLLYWOOD EVERY DAY

Movies, movies everywhere. Sissy Spacsek in town starring in *Marie*, the story of Marie Raganetti who squealed on the then-governor Ray Blanton who was selling paroles and other things in the state of Tennessee. Blanton ended up the creek without a paddle for sure... in the federal pen. Sissy was spotted here and there around about town, dining with people like Karen Everly who was working in production on the film. It was at the famed eatery Maude's that Sissy ran into Karen. While there, record producer Ron Haffkine and the two had a pleasant reunion. It seems when Sissy was not quite eighteen years old, Haffkine produced a single on her. At that time he asked what she planned to be if her singing career didn't get off the ground, and in her 17-year-old voice she had said, "a movie star." Well, the lady showed Ronnie and the world that she can act, no doubt about that.

The word is that Sissy loves Nashville, and I know for a fact that Nashville loves her.

And that Jerry Reed, I swear there ain't no telling what he's up to now. He had traffic blocked totally on South Street between 17th and 18th. I mean, if you were going home you either went around or you stayed downtown. It looked really Hollywoodish. There were buses, trucks, vans, motor homes, and a kitchen on wheels that was as long as the front of my

house. All this went on for two or three days, and in the midst of it all was Jerry himself, just acting and directing his anatomy off. The movie is titled *What Comes Around*. Lots of local folks were used in different areas on the film, and that was also good.

And at the same time that Jerry and Sissy are saying their lines, on another set in another part of town the Patsy Cline movie titled *Sweet Dreams*, starring Jessica Lange, is being shot, using the old Grand Ole Opry site, the Ryman Auditorium, and other native Nashville scenery. Jessica had her young child with her and didn't take in the night spots. I've heard the film features such Patsy Cline classics as the title song, "Sweet Dreams," and others, including "I Fall to Pieces" and "Crazy."

With all the movies and movie stars around, during a quick lunch of soup and salad one is apt to hear such words as "the shoot." This very Hollywood term, a video and/or movie expression, means the locale where a scene is being shot. "Who is at the shoot today?" "Was Sissy at the shoot?" And nobody bats an eye, cause everybody is hip to "the shoot."



The model is none other than Oak Ridge Boy, Richard Sterban, and the photographer was none other than Ricky Skaggs. The photo was taken when Richard, along with The Whites, Razy Bailey, Emmylou Harris and others modeled for a NARAS fashion show recently.

RICKY SKAGGS

Ricky Skaggs

FAVORITE COUNTRY SONGS

FE 39409



THE ALBUM HE ENJOYS AS MUCH AS YOU WILL

Ricky Skaggs wanted to hear his favorite country songs all on one album.


So he put together "Favorite Country Songs."

It includes his hard-to-find early selections ("Sweet Temptation," "I'll Take The Blame"), big recent hits ("You May See Me Walkin'") and songs he just plain loves ("A Wound Time Can't Erase," "Waitin' For The Sun To Shine").

Now you can enjoy a collection of Ricky Skaggs' Favorite Country Songs along with him.

Produced by RICKY SKAGGS

ON *Epic* RECORDS & CASSETTES

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People

AND ANOTHER MOVIE THAT WAS SHOT IN MUSIC CITY

Have you seen *Starman* with Jeff Bridges and Karen Allen? The movie is supposed to take place in Wisconsin; however, it seems that Nashville and Tennessee look more like Wisconsin than Wisconsin does. So the moviemakers made the movie here. It's funny to see scenes that one recognizes along Briley Parkway and around the Commerce Union Bank.

THE LUNCH BUNCH

Spied Emmylou at lunch the other day. And the next day spotted Gail Davies. Yep, you guessed it. They were at Maude's.

ROSANNE "CASH-ED IN" WHEN SHE HOOKED RODNEY

For a week or ten days the talk was how great Rodney Crowell's show was at Bogey's. The songwriters said he didn't sing a bad song. The singers went on to say how good he could sing. The girls allowed as how handsome Rodney was. The producers mumbled if he couldn't produce too... even the band was hot, so I'm told. RCA Records' Vince Gill joined his buddy on guitar. Later on in the night, lovely Rosanne Cash sang a couple of numbers to everyone's delight. A great two nights at Bogey's. And remember, this could only happen in Nashville.

THE BANJO MAN FROM TURKEY CREEK

That's exactly what I said. Elmer Bird, "The Banjo Man from Turkey Creek," is a new addition to the cast of *Jamboree, U.S.A.*, in Wheeling, West Virginia. Elmer worked in the factory until he was 65 and retired. Up until that time, he had played a few bluegrass festivals on weekends or holidays. Since his retirement he has devoted all his time to his banjo. And it has paid off. The show's producer, Ron Randolph, said Bird and his banjo fit right in with the rest of the Jamboree's traditional country music.

BYRD OF A DIFFERENT SPELLING

Elmer Bird isn't the only Byrd from West Virginia who loves the old time and bluegrass music. It is a well known fact that Senator Robert Byrd, also from those beautiful hills, has had an on-going love affair with the music for years. He also plays a pretty fair fiddle and sings a little. Every chance the Senator gets, he picks up that fiddle and plays a tune. He

MORE MOVIES WITH TWO FUNNY-SINGING-WRITING-HILLBILLIES



Movie makers Roy Clark and Mel Tillis joined forces and headed for the far-away forty, down Texas way. The two long-time buddies, along with Glen Campbell, went to Lajitas, Texas to the boonies for this one, titled *Up-hill All the Way*. By now lots of folks know that Mel financed the movie in a different sort of way than most. First he met with a bunch of Texans and got a million or two, and then he was riding on an airplane and just happened to be seated by a millionaire who was a fan of his. Honey, before the plane hit the ground, Mel had done stuttered his way into paydirt.

said that one of the proudest moments in his life was performing on the Grand Ole Opry. Now friends and neighbors, they do say that them politicians do fiddle around.

DID YOU KNOW???

T.G. Sheppard's brother Charlie Browder "pitches" songs for Merit Music. How do you pitch a song? It takes a special person who has a finely tuned ear for what type song each recording artist would like. The song "plugger" carefully chooses what songs might fit what artist, records the songs, usually on a cassette, and has his or her own way of getting the song to the artist. That is how you pitch a song. And T.G.'s brother does it.

MR. ACUFF IS BACK HOME ON THE OPRY STAGE

After a five month absence from the Grand Ole Opry following a heart attack, the King of Country Music, Mr. Roy Acuff, was back singing "Wabash Cannonball" to the delight of the Opry audience. Mr. Acuff looked real good and sang great. I had seen him several times back-

stage during late summer, and Roy was pale and appeared to be weak.

Roy didn't look well at the funeral of his longtime friend and Opry associate Ernest Tubb back in early September. But now he seems to be his old self again. His strength seems back to normal. Roy's dear friend Minnie Pearl made a special trip back into Nashville to be on the show with Roy that night. She told him that she just had to welcome him back home. I know I speak for the world when I say "That Great Speckled Bird" don't really fly until Roy Acuff sings it. Welcome home, Mr. Acuff. You make us all proud to be country.

OH JOHNNY, OH JOHNNY

Sources say that Johnny Rodriguez may be opening a restaurant in Texas??

OUT 'O SIGHT DJ OUT OF USA FOR THE HOLIDAYS

DJ favorite Charlie Douglas and wife spent their holidays in Ireland. Mrs. Douglas desired to visit the homeland of her ancestors and hubby Charlie obliged

GERALD CRAWFORD

People

her. Other Charlie Douglas news of interest... Charlie will be hosting a brand new TV show on *The Nashville Network* beginning in late March or early April. *Play It Again, Nashville* will be a 30-minute weeknight show and will feature a daily guest celebrity.

NUMBER ONE AND THERE AIN'T NO OTHER WAY

"Why Not Me," penned by three masters, **Harlan Howard**, **Brent Maher** and **Sonny Throckmorton**, and sung by **The Judds** didn't have a chance to go nowhere but Number One. Just a killer song. Big Daddy Harlan is hot again. Two Number One songs in eight weeks.

JUST QUIT EATING!!

Grand Ole Opry's **Del Wood** has lost almost a person in weight and she looks good. "How did you do it?" I asked, expecting her to relate to me some miracle diet. "Just quit eating," Del replied. Del has nothing but nice things to say about the way **Dolly** and her pals treated her during the filming of *Rhinestone*. God bless **Dolly** for remembering her own.

SONGWRITER'S QUOTE

Paul Craft wrote a Grammy nominated song once called "Drop Kick Me, Jesus, Through the Goal Post of Life." I figure a guy who writes a song with a title like that can be quoted in my column. Paul said that anybody that he ever knew that didn't like bluegrass music, he did not like *them*. As a matter of fact, Paul said he had never met but one person who didn't like bluegrass. And, he added, if they don't like bluegrass, they don't like nothing. There is no pleasing them.

I SAW

Yes, I saw **Roger Miller** in the Minute Market. You never know who you might see in Nashville.

BRODY PARTY

Living proof that, sometimes, nice guys finish first is **Harold Shedd**. Who is Harold Shedd? Harold Shedd produces **Alabama**. And he just produced some sides on **Lane Brody** for Capitol Records. So producer Harold and Capitol Records had a listening party at Harold's Music Mill on Roy Acuff Place on Music Row. Harold has recently been working with **Mel Tillis**, **Roger Miller** and **Glen Campbell**, and he produced **Reba McEntire's** last album. Harold is quiet, easy-going, kind and one of the best-all-round guys you'd ever want

to meet. And he is, in fact, living proof that once in a blue moon nice guys finish first.

SONGWRITER'S QUOTE

*I believe there is a heaven,
Although I've never been
But I'd like to have been there yesterday
When Ernest Tubb walked in.*

Hank Cochran

Nashville, Tennessee

September 7, 1984

Thanks, Hank. Even **Shakespeare** didn't have the heart of a hillbilly songwriter.

A GARDEN WHERE AN EYESORE USED TO BE

Minnie Pearl's lovely museum is but-tercup yellow and looks like her... a happy face. Located directly behind **Barbara Mandrell's** museum, Miss Minnie's is a delightful place. And the yellow paint on the outside seems to smile and say How-dee, I'm just so proud to be here. It really makes a body want to stop and have a look.

WHO WAS WATCHING HILL STREET?

Charles Haid, also known as **Renko** on *Hill Street Blues*, was seen hanging out with hillbillies just before the Christmas holidays. *Hill Street Blues* is my favorite show and **Renko** is presently my favorite actor, a truth shared with my friend **Jennifer**. **Jennifer** and hubby **Barry** showed



Mutual fans, **Charles Haid** and **Ricky Skaggs** backstage at *The Greek Theater*, after **Ricky's** concert.

Ricky Skaggs a photo of their three-week-old son, and as they walked away, **Barry** asked, "Did you recognize that guy standing beside **Ricky**?" Of course **Jennifer** didn't notice. When **Barry** told her that it was **Renko**, she just about screamed. Days later she couldn't understand not being able to recognize her favorite actor.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

John Conlee has never recorded a bad song. Last week my family and I were watching **John** on *Austin City Limits*. There wasn't a bad song in the bunch he sang that night. I inquired about this and learned that this was largely due to let-me-hear-a-hundred-tapes-and-find-a-great-song-**Bud Logan**. Isn't it wonderful to hear 60 minutes of great songs for a change? Wish I could hear it again.

Wasn't it 1978 when **Conlee** came out hot and smoking with "Rose Colored Glasses"? Some of his other greaties are "Busted," "I Don't Remember Loving You" (my favorite), "Friday Night Blues," "Back Side of Thirty," and "Miss Emily's Picture." Hope I didn't leave one of my favorites out. **Bud's** song selection is always so good and **John** just rares back and sings his heart out. Hmmm. Wonder what other singer's songs I could think of right off the top of my head that quick?

STEVENS GETS SQUIRREL-EY

Ray Stevens has outdone "Ahab the Arab" and "The Streak." I was laughing so hard hearing "Mississippi Squirrel Revival" on the radio that I was accused of crying. Funny song.

STAND UP AND BE PROUD!

Aren't you proud that the **Dolly Parton/Kenny Rogers** Christmas TV Show received the top rating of that week, according to the **Neilson** ratings? I am. And **Dolly's** flying. Yep, she flew all twenty of her nieces and nephews to Hawaii for Christmas. Now there is a girl that ain't never gonna get too big for her sweaters!

DO YOU THINK?

Would it be funny or not, if **Dolly Parton** and **Porter Wagoner** shared the same glass case at the Hall of Fame. Sorry... it just crossed my mind. And I wonder if at night the mannequins of **George Jones** and **Tammy Wynette** get out of their cases and dance across the floor? Do you think?

IF YOU GIVE A QUACK...

Songwriter **John D. Loudermilk** and **Donald Duck** were born the same year!!

SHAKES ME IN MY SHOES

Legends, liars and heroes I know and have known, but there is only one in the lot that makes me shake in my shoes. She is the Grandest Lady of Them All, Miss **Loretta Lynn**. Accolades so deserved and so many have been bestowed on this lady and now still another well deserved honor. Loretta was recipient of the special Award of Merit at the American Music Awards in Los Angeles on January 28. The coal miner's daughter was the twelfth awardee; the other musical greats who have received this award are: Irving Berlin, Bing Crosby, Berry Gordy, Jr., Benny Goodman, Michael Jackson, Ella Fitzgerald, Perry Como, Chuck Berry, Stevie Wonder, Johnny Cash and Kenny Rogers. This annual award is presented to a member of the music world in recognition of his or her "outstanding contributions, over a long period of time, to the musical entertainment of the American public."

The inscription on the trophy received by Miss Lynn read, "Because she had the courage and spirit to rise from coal miner's daughter to country music superstar . . . Because she has enriched country music with very special songs and sounds . . . Because she has made country music,

music for the whole country . . ."

Aren't we all lucky to have lived, loved and shared country music by such a great innovator as Loretta? Those of us who have been close enough to her to hear a hello or see a smile for us are so fortunate. I still get cold chills when she sings. She hasn't had a hit single in a couple or more years, but she still sells out shows wherever she goes. And if she never sings another note, she has done enough for this country girl to last forever. Thanks, Loretta. You Still Shake Me in My Shoes!

MONEY CHANGES EVERYBODY & GIRLS DON'T WANT TO HAVE FUN??

Scene/Seen: Ye Old Spaghetti Factory. (Renovated 2nd Avenue building decorated with antiques, serving decent pasta at a reasonable price.)

Present in my presence: 12 relatives, friends and acquaintances and myself.

Purpose: Celebrating a Birthday.

Dialogue: "It's her!"

"I'm not sure."

"What do you think, Hazel?"

Me . . . : "Lord knows, I don't know. All I know is, if I had to guess, I would say it is nobody trying to look like somebody."

I saw her first. She was in front of two other people, taking almost giant steps in knee boots, looking straight ahead . . . but

who could tell through those dark Granny glasses. She had a scarf wrapped around her hair in "Willie fashion," apparently to hide the purple on the right side of her hair, but not too good. Then . . . she spoke. That did it. At our table were three people from the New York boroughs of Brooklyn and the Bronx. They knew the accent. It was her . . . Miss Cyndi Lauper. And she had on the *one* earring from the video!

A lady very quietly went over to ask for an autograph. The lady said, "I hate to bother you . . ." "Then don't!" screamed Miss Lauper. "I'm sorry," the lady said, "but my son stood in line for three hours to get tickets for your show." Cyndi just shooed her away with her hands. The lady left. Next a little boy, real cute with leather vest, blue jeans, short hip hair-do, no older than five went over to her. Cyndi Lauper refused to give the five-year-old boy her autograph.

Now, there are two ways to look at this . . . she was out to have dinner and did not want to be bothered. Granted. However, the people who bothered her are obviously the ones who made her a star. So there you have it. Vote the way you please. We live in a democracy, and if Cyndi Lauper wants to refuse to give her autograph to a five-year-old boy, well, that is her business. Nobody asked my opinion, but I'll bet you know what it is.

GOING TO THE DOGS?



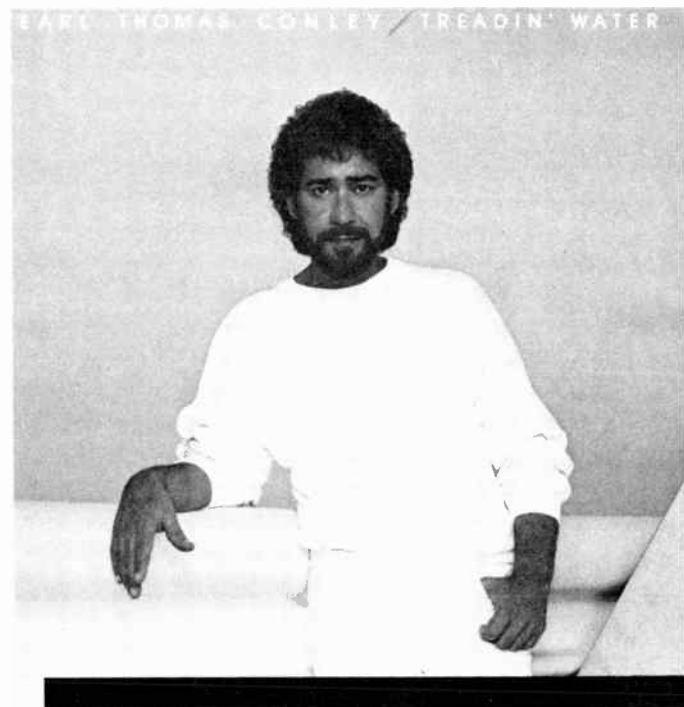
For Christmas, bluegrass Jimmy Martin included with his Christmas card a photograph of some coon-hunting buddies and himself with his pack of coon hounds named Oliver, Hairl Hensley, Roy Acuff, Little "Tater" Dickens, Mona, Tom T. Hall, Hank Junior, Old Fly, Big John and George. There was also a record number of coons in the photograph. There ain't but one Jimmy Martin, and he's the one on the right.

JUDGING FROM THE SOUND OF THINGS, THIS LAWYER WANTS TO SING?

Bill Sinclair is 26 years old, is a graduate of Ohio Northern University, has his doctor of laws degree, ran for magistrate in Ohio County and wants to sing hillbilly songs for the friends and neighbors. After sundown the Wheeling, West Virginia native exchanges his pinstripe suit for jeans and a guitar. He can be found on weekends onstage a-singing those cheating songs with a group called The Blenders. They've been "at it" about ten years and try to sing it all to please the club circuit in that mountainous area. Sinclair is looking down the road at ten years from now . . . say about 1995. If he can become a well-known recording artist by that time, he will put legs on his dream; sounds like a movie to me.

Those in lawyering that I know about in Nashville have gone from lucrative to extremely wealthy. They start out with a sports car to win the girls, then end up with a Rolls for a tax write-off. Mr. Sinclair, wherever you are out there, my humble opinion is this, if you can lawyer and be a star at the same time, you could definitely put the screws to a song and sing all the way to the bank and back. ■

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AHLI/AHKI-5175

EARL THOMAS CONLEY

"Treadin' Water"

"Chance Of Lovin' You"

"Honor Bound"

"Love Don't Care"

From the artist who gave you 4 #1 singles from his last album, Earl Thomas Conley brings you another equally powerful album, "TREADIN' WATER," featuring even more #1 singles. Earl Thomas Conley is one artist who always gives you more for your money.

THE JUDDS "Why Not Me"

"Mama, He's Crazy"

"Girls Night Out"

"Drops Of Water"

From the winners of the CMA "Horizon Award," comes their newest release, "WHY NOT ME." The success of the single, "Mama, He's Crazy," garnered them a Grammy nomination for "Best Country Song," "Best New Artist" (a feat that hasn't been done by a Nashville act since 1968) and "Best Country Performance By A Duo With Vocals." You've got to get your hands on "Why Not Me."



AHLI/AHKI-5319

EMMYLOU

Over the past decade she has distinguished herself as a persuasive interpreter of classic country songs. Now, after a year of self-imposed isolation, she has produced the most ambitious album of her career, dramatic, autobiographic, with shades of her past.

THE BALLAD OF SALLY ROSE

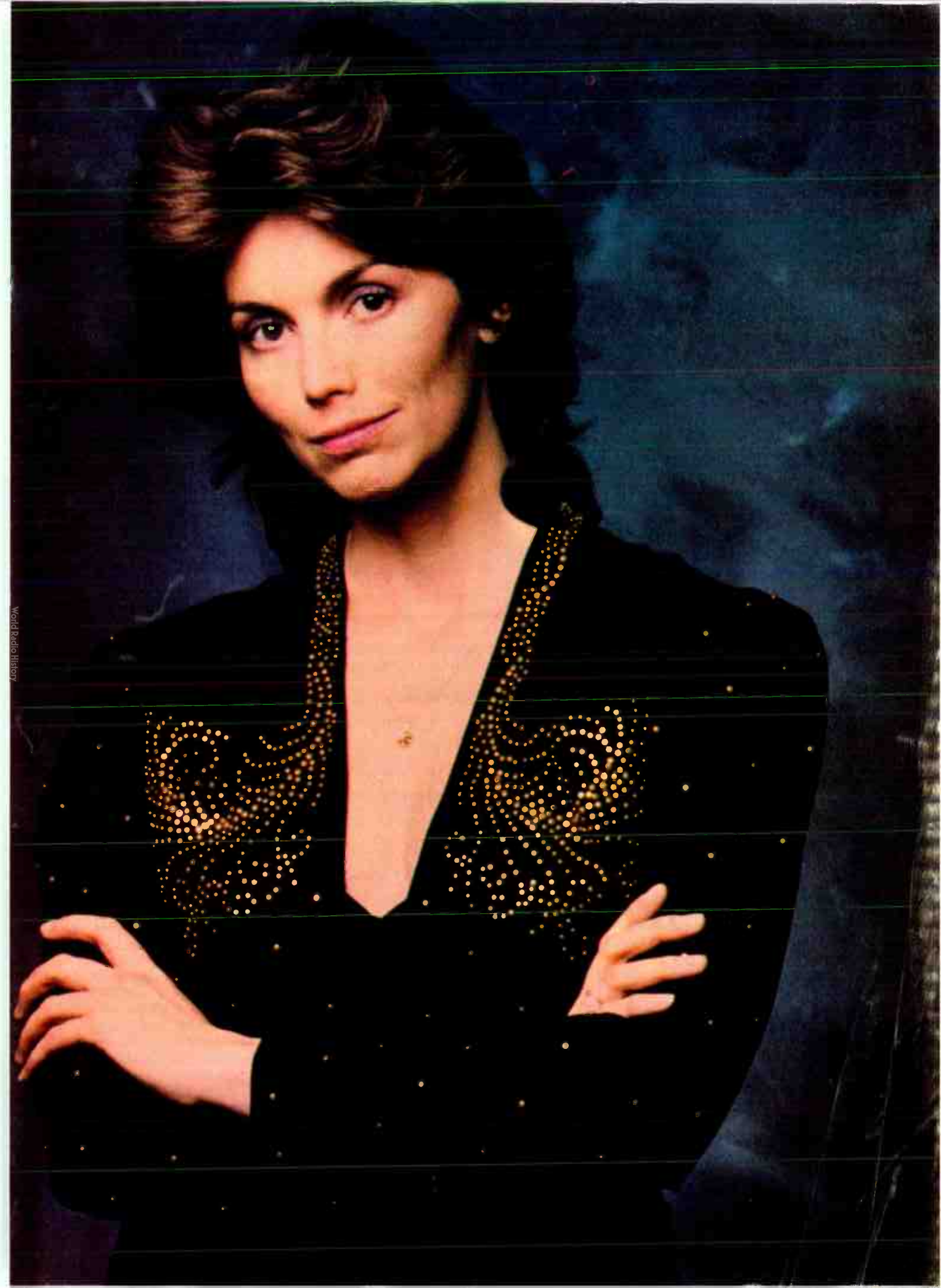
by Bob Allen

For Emmylou Harris, 1985, thus far, has been a coming-out of sorts. With the 1984 calendar now all crossed off and thrown away, she's wrapped up one of the most turbulent years of her life. It has been a year marked by a move from her longtime home in Hollywood's Laurel Canyon to Nashville and numerous personal changes, including the end of her long marriage to producer Brian Ahern. It has also been highlighted by the completion of the single most ambitious musical project of her career: her brand-new concept album, *The Ballad of Sally Rose*.

After months and months of keeping an extremely low personal and musical profile (her last full-fledged studio album, excluding her 1984 *Profile II*, a recently-released "best hits" package with a couple of new cuts thrown in for good measure, was released nearly two years ago), she has emerged with a flourish. In contrast to a year and a half spent off the road (save for a brief swing across Australia and a short European tour), she's now in the midst of a 16-week stateside jaunt in support of *The Ballad of Sally Rose*. Plus, she has broken a long public silence to do a series of interviews to promote the new album, a project which she co-wrote and co-produced with Paul Kennerly, a talented English songwriter who is now her constant companion, both in and out of the studio.

The Ballad of Sally Rose is clearly a project that is near and dear to her heart. She has devoted many long months of toil and anguish to bring it to its completion. The actual seeds of inspiration for the concept album, she explains, were implanted in her imagination as long as seven years ago. But for various reasons ("terror, insecurity, procrastination, and the fact that I'm not a prolific songwriter") the project kept getting postponed. It was not until early 1983 that *Sally*

COURTESY WARNER BROS.





Rose, the character and the album concept, seemed to take on a life of its own, and she knew she could postpone it no longer. Interrupting work on a more conventional album that was already in progress, she began collaborating with Paul Kennerley to finish writing the songs, which she'd been unable to finish over the years on her own, and finally got the project moving.

The Ballad of Sally Rose, reduced to its simplest story line, is the musical pilgrim's progress ("opera" is the word that Emmylou herself tends to use in describing it) of a female singer, Sally Rose. It begins with her cruising the highway in her daddy's convertible. She picks up a handsome Sioux Indian, they fall in love and set up housekeeping. A baby is born, but the passion cools. On her own, she goes back out into the world and meets "The Singer." She joins his band and begins her musical apprenticeship, learning his unique style. They marry. Under his guidance, Sally blossoms into a compelling singer in her own right. But, as the prosaic plot synopsis included in the album's liner sleeve explains, "A distance grows between them . . . he sinks slowly back into his old, restless ways. Sally, not understanding, is hurt, and finally leaves, without realizing how much The Singer needs her." Later: "The Singer is killed in a car accident, never to know that Sally Rose was on her way back to him."

For those familiar with Emmylou Harris' own career—her apprenticeship with the late Gram Parsons, his young and tragic death, and the profound influence

that his music has had on her own artistic development—the parallels between Sally Rose's tumultuous sojourns and Emmylou's own life seem obvious. There is even a song in the new album, "Sweetheart of

"It's really just a love story, in which all the songs grew out of this one character."

the Rodeo," which though not the same song, shares a title with the classic album which Parsons recorded some years ago as a member of the formative country-rock group, The Byrds, one of Parsons' most enduring works. Then there's the name, Sally Rose, which was once assigned to Emmylou as a humorous nickname by a musical associate . . .

"Well, obviously, I want it understood that this is not a thinly-disguised autobiography," Emmylou explains with a steady gaze, but a soft tentativeness creeping into her quiet voice. "It is based on my experiences with Gram . . . But from there, I just took it as a fantasy and made Sally her own person. In my own mind, she has a personality of her own, different from mine. I just really wanted to write a story

that stood on its own—but yes, there are obvious parallels.

"The character, as I developed it, did go through some . . . explorations. It helped me, too, instead of thinking about myself, in the past couple of years, to think of this character. What is this character feeling? Why did this happen? But it's really just a love story, in which all the songs grew out of this one character.

"It's very hard to explain it," she sighs with a trace of weariness. "Because it is what it is. It's taken the form that it has so that I don't, in a sense, have to talk about it . . ."

Nonetheless, on a drizzly winter's afternoon, that is exactly why Emmylou Harris is settled comfortably into a large easy chair, cradling a cup of coffee in the Music Row offices of Warner Bros., her record label: to talk about *The Ballad of Sally Rose*. She is dressed casually, in a dark brown jump suit, the pantslegs tucked into a pair of soft brown leather cowboy boots. Her dark hair is swept back and cut short, obscuring the streaks of premature gray that sweep through it like veins of silver. Settled back into the chair's thick cushions, she seems slender, almost fragile-looking. As she blinks, sips her coffee and complains of jet lag from a trip back from Los Angeles the morning before, she gives the distinct impression of one who, offstage, is more than happy to keep to the sidelines, sinking into a comfortable chair perhaps and gladly letting the center of attention drift to someone else. With her soft voice, her subdued, careful phrasing and her understated humor, she radiates a quiet, unimposing dignity and self-contained beauty which is both comfortable and completely unthreatening to strangers. She seems to comport herself less as a star than as a co-conspirator of musical enthusiasm and a true fan of her own musical heroes. About her own considerable career accomplishments she is modest, always eager to share the praise with the songwriters, producers and band members who have been a part of it. It is only when the subject turns to her own musical favorites that her eyes brighten, and she becomes enthusiastically talkative. One of these favorites is Delia Bell, a gifted singer whose first album Emmylou produced on Warner Bros. She hopes to produce Delia again. Another is artist/songwriter/producer prodigy Rodney Crowell, who launched his career as a member of her Hot Band. "One of my dreams is to do a duet album with Rodney. He's a great singer, and I think he can be a great entertainer—a household word. In fact, I think it's inevitable."

It is this same quiet modesty—coupled, of course, with her unique and similarly understated singing style and her decidedly un-starlike and low-key commitment to her own music—that has won Emmylou

Harris such an exalted place in the contemporary country music scene. She is, to begin with, not a product of the Nashville studio system and star-making machinery. Aside from the indelible influence of her West Coast apprenticeship with Gram Parsons, the closest thing she has to true musical roots stem from her years in the early 1970's as part of the small but vital bluegrass and folk music scene that flourished, and to some extent, continues to flourish, in the Washington, D.C. area.

It was there, in small clubs like The Red Fox Inn, The Childe Harold, and Clyde's, that she first crossed paths with other struggling musicians like Ricky Skaggs, John Starling (formerly of the leading bluegrass ensemble, The Seldom Scene), Rodney Crowell, and Bill and Taffy Danoff, the composers of "Country Roads" who later enjoyed some fleeting chart success of their own with "Afternoon Delight."

What her many fans sense in her—in her voice, in her one-on-one, no-frills involvement in her own music—is, among other things, authenticity. Though she is neither a bluegrass artist, a country traditionalist nor a folk singer in any strict sense, her early exposure to all these types of music has marked both her selection and her interpretation of material, as a recording artist and as a performer. Resonating through all her music is a folksy eclecticism and purity that is relatively devoid of overt commercial calculation, and which defies reproach nearly as much as it defies categorization. It is this authenticity that has enabled her to cover such a

wide range of musical territory—this plus her unique and slightly nasal voice, at once persuasive and trembling, almost emotionally fragile. From album to album, and quite often within the confines of a single album, she will run the musical gamut

[REDACTED]
*"I was so tired
and disillusioned
that I felt like
an old woman at age
twenty-three."*
[REDACTED]

from rockers like Delbert McClinton's "Two More Bottles of Wine" to homespun country oldies like A. P. Carter's "Hello Stranger" or The Louvin Brothers' "If I Could Only Win Your Love." Her albums have even been adorned, from time to time, with a re-worked Beatles tune or two; even a willowy revitalization of the old 1954 Chordettes pop hit, "Mr. Sandman."

As a result, Emmylou has, over the years, sustained a faithful following that will fill up her live shows and buy her albums even in years when there are no big hit singles or awards (though she has won both a Grammy and a Country Music Association "Vocalist of the Year" award). Even with her reluctance to make razz-

ma-tazz TV talk show appearances or overbearing music videos, these people do not desert her. As such, she's been able to sustain a recording career that is refreshingly devoid of extraneous hyperbole. There is none of the overt, brassy sex appeal and erotic parody of a Dolly Parton (a close friend of hers, whom she has described as "my idol," and with whom she has collaborated several times on records). There is none of the all-embracing "life-as-variety show" celebrity overkill of a Barbara Mandrell.

"What I do is sing, mainly on stage, with a band," she explains. "That's my strength. If I can just work and *not* be in the public eye, except when I tour, I'm happiest that way."

Emmylou's career has been highlighted with a half-dozen or so Number One singles, from her 1976 remake of the Buck Owens standard "Together Again," to her 1982 rendition of Floyd Cramer's "(Lost His Love) On Our Last Date." But with or without the Number One hits, this faithful audience of hers has always afforded her hefty album sales as well as a certain amount of artistic freedom.

"It's wonderful," she smiles in hearty appreciation of this constituency of hers, as she sits up in her chair. "It seems like they even pick up on the little subtle things in the music that you try so hard to communicate. Like, when I go to play a show, I've got my songs that have been country hits, and people appreciate them. But they also appreciate those important songs on an LP that weren't even singles, but were really the *heart* of an album. Like 'Pancho & Lefty' (a Townes Van Zandt original that she originally recorded on her 1970's *Luxury Liner* album)... even though my version of it never got any radio airplay, it was one of the most important songs in my show. People knew it. I stopped doing it after Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard had their big hit with it. But even now, I use it as an encore. And I can tell they really want to hear it. That's the kind of thing that makes it so wonderful."

But as natural and even *organic* as this mutual appreciation society between artist and audience seems to be, the whole process of Emmylou Harris' gradual musical self-discovery and her audience's ensuing discovery of her has been a long and sometimes painful one. All in all, in terms of the geographical ground covered, the false starts, the occasional heartbreaks, and the series of fortuitous accidents and events of happenstance that eventually led to her recording career, her path makes the fictional *Sally Rose* mini-epic seem frightfully simple—indeed, almost *mundane*—in comparison.

The daughter of a career military man, she was born in Alabama and moved repeatedly with her family throughout the South in her early years. Her childhood





Companions and collaborators, Emmylou Harris and Paul Kennerley.

was sedate, despite the frequent family moves. On the long car trips with her parents she first heard WWVA, the powerful country station that blasted out from Wheeling, West Virginia, riding across the heartlands on its clear-channel signal. Her brother, now an aerospace engineer, was a country music fan, and even owned his own record player: "I wasn't a big fan of it then," she recalls. "But along with my esoteric little folk songs, I learned to play things like 'I Saw the Light,' 'Louisiana Man,' and things like that that I heard from him. But when my brother wasn't there, I'd sneak in his room and play my Bob Dylan records!"

After finishing high school in Woodbridge, Virginia, where she ended up as valedictorian of her class, she entered the University of North Carolina. At that point, she had her sights set on an acting career; in order to earn money to pursue it, she spent that summer at Virginia Beach, the popular coastal resort. "I knew I could earn money singing and waitressing there, the only two things I knew how to do—and the only two things I *still* know how to do!" she laughs, sipping her coffee and sinking luxuriously back into the easy chair. "But I met these other musicians there, and sometimes I'd stay up all night listening to them sing. I suddenly realized I had more in common with them than I did with anybody I'd known at school. I also realized I was much more at ease singing than I'd ever been acting. I felt... in control. But then I also thought, well, if something comes so easy, you can't possibly be supposed to make a fulltime

living at it."

So she ended up enrolling in drama school anyway—at Boston University. But it took just two and a half weeks there for her to realize that, "it was just wrong for me."

In 1967, with her sights more clearly focused on singing, she got her brother to

[REDACTED]

*"I'm a lot more
pleased with myself
than I have been
in a long time."*

[REDACTED]

drive her to New York City in his "road-runner convertible.... I got a room at the Y.W.C.A. I didn't know a soul."

Her stay in New York stretched into three years. The result was a forgettable first album, *Gliding Bird* on Jubilee Records in 1969, and occasional opening slots at The Bitter End. There were also acquaintances with folk heroes of the day like Jerry Jeff Walker and Ramblin' Jack Elliot, a first, shortlived marriage and a baby daughter. "I was a Medicaid mother," she recalls. "But even though I was poor, it was so exciting at first that it didn't matter. It was a wonderful town. I still love New York. But then, after a year or so, the thrill wore off. In terms of the musical scene, there was nothing. The

club scene had almost completely disappeared. There were just a few places that charged tourists five dollars a drink, and you sang and passed the hat. Usually what you got was subway tokens and pocket lint! Then, when I had my baby, I just got very paranoid about being there. When that Weathermen bomb exploded and blew up that town house, it was only a few blocks from where I was living. I knew then it was time to get out."

With her marriage falling apart, she headed south to Nashville. Her stay there was short and disastrous. Her marriage played out its final, irrevocable scenes as she eked out a living on foodstamps and the money she made singing and waitressing in long-gone restaurants and clubs like The High Hat Lounge, across from the downtown bus station. Her arrival in Music City, as well as her departure a few months later, went totally unnoticed by the local music industry.

Single again, she landed broke and unemployed with her year-old daughter at her parents' home in rural Maryland. Nearly at her wit's end, she landed a job as a hostess in a model home development in nearby Columbia, Maryland. "At that point, I'd retired forever from the music business," she recalls. "I was so tired and disillusioned that I felt like an old woman at age twenty-three."

It was only at the relentless insistence of friends like Bill and Taffy Danoff that she finally ventured back on stage again. "They practically shoved me out there and *made* me start singing again!" Once started, however, she soon became a regular performer at The Red Fox Inn in Bethesda, Maryland, near the D.C. line.

Emmylou seems to grow most nostalgic about these early years on the fringes of Washington, D.C.'s bluegrass and folk scene: "It was an amazing scene," she smiles in warm recollection. "John Starling of The Seldom Scene was always around. I met Ricky Skaggs through him. The Whites would often play in the area, and I met them and became great fans of theirs. It was like a ritual: every night after we'd played at The Red Fox Inn, we'd all go over to somebody's house and play all night. I'd gotten to know Linda Ronstadt by then, and she came through town once to play at The Cellar Door (a popular listening room). I told her, 'You've got to meet these people!' After her show, I brought her over there, and she stayed up all night with us, just drinking coffee and singing...."

During this period Gram Parsons, passing through town to sit in with the country/rock band, The Flying Burrito Brothers, and in search of a female singer to sing high tenor on his own up-coming solo album, happened to hear her sing on a rainy Monday night in downtown D.C. at a club called Clyde's. At the time, Emmylou herself had never

heard of either Gram Parsons or The Burrito Brothers. Nearly a year later he sent her a plane ticket to come West and sing on his *Grievous Angel* album. "I just said to myself, 'I can't believe they're doing this,'" she remembers. "I didn't think anything would come of it, but I thought I'd go anyway—before they changed their minds!"

She ended up completing the *Grievous Angel* album with Parsons, then touring with him. His effect on her was nothing short of a musical awakening. "He was a wonderful friend to me and a wonderful mentor. He was so good to me. I didn't even *have* a style before I met him. I loved music, but nothing ever affected me the way his approach to music did. He was a country singer, but he was also a child of the sixties. He loved rock 'n' roll, and he loved Elvis Presley. You have to remember that, at the time, country music was considered to be for old people or for red-necks. Back then, a lot of people didn't see the poetry, the almost *mysticism*, that they see in country music now. They didn't see the *rocking* side of it. But Gram put all those pieces together. And because he was intact, he wasn't just taking a bunch of styles and putting them together; he *was* that. And when you saw him sing for the first time, it was like it must have been when people saw Elvis for the first time. You just sort of marvelled and said to yourself, 'Why hasn't *this* ever come out before?'"

Emmylou was back in D.C. when news reached her of Parsons' death in a motel on the edge of the California desert from a lethal mixture of alcohol and drugs. In a bizarre incident following his death, the coffin containing his body was stolen from an airport by some of his friends who then cremated his corpse in the desert which he loved so much.

"His death was a shock to me, because when I'd last seen him, he didn't seem like he was sinking. He seemed to be coming out of those dark things he'd fallen into. I'd been committed to the idea of continuing to work with him. I didn't have any thoughts about a solo career then. None at all. When I did put my own band together, it was almost like I *had* to do something, just to put the pieces back together."

Her exposure with Parsons, a Warner Bros. artist, eventually led to her own deal on that label. In the course of deciding her future, one of the first people that Warners sent down to check her out at one of her D.C. club appearances was a young Canadian producer named Brian Ahern. Ahern already had solid credentials based on his discovery and eminently successful production of fellow Canadian Anne Murray. With time, Ahern would not only become Emmylou's producer, but her second husband as well.

"When my first Warner Bros. album, *Pieces of the Sky*, came out in 1975, I

don't think anybody really expected it to do anything—and I didn't either!" she recalls with modesty. "But there were such enormous record sales in Washington, D.C. that the record label people sort of stood back and said (she affects a gruff, uncomprehending down-home voice): 'Hey! What's the *danged deal!*?'"

A series of substantial follow-up albums, *Elite Hotel*, *Luxury Liner*, *Quarter Moon in a Ten Cent Town*, and accompanying hit singles like "Together Again" and "Sweet Dreams" in 1976 and

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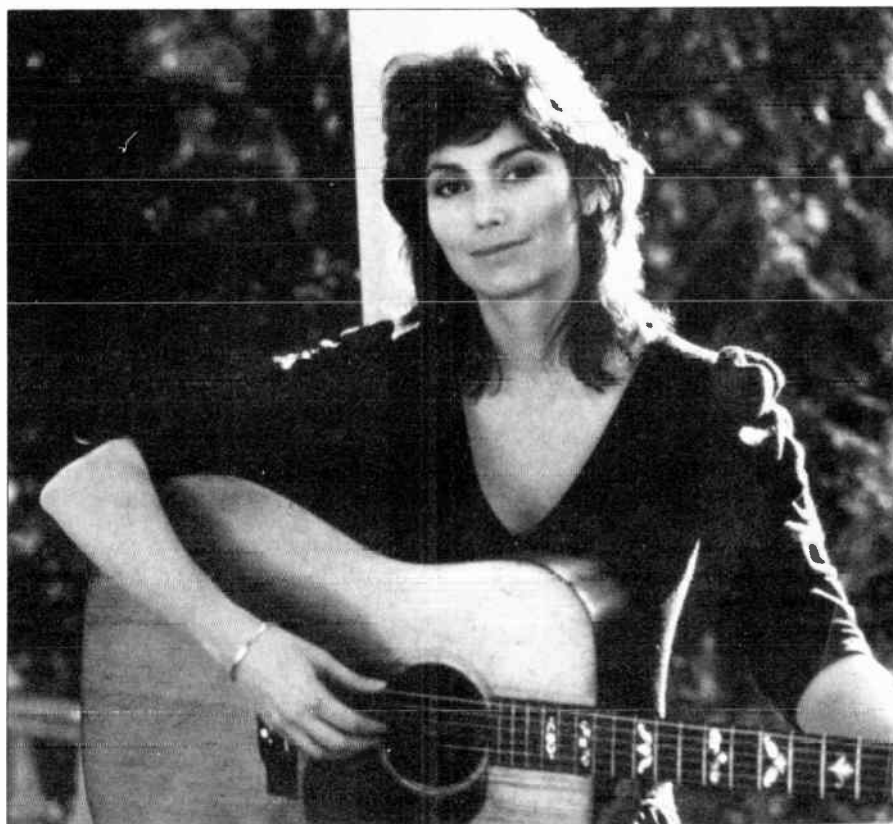
"Two More Bottles of Wine" in 1978, all three of which hit Number One, served to solidify her credentials with country radio and firmly establish her eclectic, folkish, country-rock identity with national audiences.

Then, just when Warner Bros. thought maybe the time might be right for a cross-over push into the big-bucks pop market, Emmylou, along with producer Ahern,

took the unusual step of recording two heavily traditional country and bluegrass-flavored albums, *Blue Kentucky Girl* in 1979 and *Roses in the Snow* in 1980, back-to-back. She was accompanied on both albums by Cheryl and Sharon White who sang harmonies, and by Ricky Skaggs, by then a permanent member of her Hot Band, who contributed vocal harmony and fiddle, as well as considerable arranging and production input.

Though Warner Bros. sensed impending disaster, the two albums, quite the contrary, met with resounding success. *Blue Kentucky Girl* won her a Grammy; *Roses in the Snow* garnered sales of more than 200,000, earned her a Country Music Association Award, and resulted in a Number One single: "Beneath Still Waters," a Dallas Frazier original first popularized by George Jones in the 1960's. (It is a testimony to the music business' sense of history that when I asked a young Warner Bros. publicist for a copy of *Roses in the Snow*, her mouth fell open in distressed consternation, as if I'd propositioned her in some ancient Eskimo dialect; not only had she never heard of it, there wasn't even a copy of it in the entire building.)

"A lot of those songs were songs that we (Emmylou, Skaggs, The White sisters) would sit around and sing before and after shows," Emmylou explains of *Roses in the Snow*, considered by many to be her best and most cohesive album ever. "I loved them so much, I wanted to be able to perform them. But when we started *Roses*, I was really into the idea of watering it down, because I'm *not* a bluegrass per-



■

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staying up to watch Barney Miller.”*

former, and I was afraid it would commercially bomb. I wanted to put ‘Spanish Johnny,’ and ‘How High the Moon,’ and some other songs we’d recorded around that time on there. But Brian said, ‘Listen, you’ve got to keep this album pure, because if you don’t, people will miss the point. It’s really important here that you take a serious chance.’ My one little creative dig, as it turned out, was getting Willie Nelson to play solo on ‘Green Pastures,’” she laughs. “I figured that would make it country!”

None of her albums since then, at least up until her new *Sally Rose* effort, have seemed nearly so inspired. Though sales remained solid, music critics have suggested that she’d fallen into a rut. And, in explaining her near compulsion to see the ambitious *Sally Rose* project through, she concedes as much.

“I sort of felt like I’d gone through a creative crisis where... I wasn’t dried up, but I needed something new to charge me up. I was starting to feel redundant. I mean, I think I’m really good at picking ten songs that fit together well and have an overall texture. But, on the other hand, I came to feel that it’s not enough to just pull together ten songs that sound good together, album after album. I knew that one of the most exciting things that had ever happened to me was writing songs and finishing them.”

As collaborator on *Sally Rose*, Paul Kennerley was certainly an apt choice. Emmylou is profuse in her praise of Kennerley’s songwriting abilities, and, in fact, Kennerley is presently one of Nashville’s most prolific and oft-recorded songwriters. He is also a virtual master of the concept album. It was he who conceived and wrote both the 1978 *White Mansions* and the 1980 *Jesse James*, two epic albums with complex narratives set in the Civil War era. The two albums were collaborations by a diverse collection of country and rock artists: Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter, Bernie Leadon, Eric Clapton, Levon Helm, and Emmylou herself. In fact, it was during the sessions for *Jesse James* that Emmylou first met Kennerley.

Emmylou has obvious anxieties over the question of whether or not *The Ballad of Sally Rose*, over which she’s sweated and fretted for so many months, will ultimately be understood and accepted by the people who buy records. Yet she’s hopeful.

“My biggest fear, I suppose, is that the songs wouldn’t stand on their own, because people can’t carry a synopsis around in their head when they listen to an album. I mean, we’re not talking *history* here, we’re talking about a good record. I knew it had to stand as a good piece of music—not only good songs, but a series of good songs linked by what someone once described as ‘a sonic thread’—and I think it has both.”



With the trying task of bringing *Sally Rose* to completion behind her, Emmylou expresses a similar peacefulness and resolve about her personal life.

“I don’t see any point in discussing that at any length, other than to say my marriage to Brian Ahern ended, and I’m embarking on a new life here in Nashville, and I’m very happy right now. I’m a lot more pleased with myself than I have been in a long time.

“That’s not to say that my marriage was a terrible thing,” she adds softly. “I think there was a great deal of good and wonderful times, and I don’t regret it. We made great music together. Brian is a wonderful record producer and a brilliant man. Other than that, there’s not much sense in going into more detail...”

Suddenly, the Warner Bros. publicist

makes her presence known in the conference room, and the allotted interview time is over, almost, it seems, before it began. But for good reason, for Emmylou has important things to attend to: there’s some last-minute shopping to be done for household items at Kroger’s, a local discount department store; then she’s off to pick up her young daughter, Meghann, at school, as she does every day when she’s home. Her older daughter, Hallie, now a teenager who shares her raven hair and striking features, is off at school elsewhere. It’s clear that despite her near-obsession with *Sally Rose*, it’s her domestic life, and the new sense of roots and quiet daily routine she’s found in Nashville, that now anchors her life with a certain inner calm.

“I used to be able to hang out with the boys as good as anybody,” she laughs wearily as she puts on her coat. “But now I have a hard time staying up to watch *Barney Miller*. When you get up at seven in the morning to cook your kid’s breakfast and get her to school, and then spend the whole day in the studio, or writing, and then pick her up at school in the afternoon, fix supper, give her a bath and put her to bed, I’ll tell ya somethin’: when ten or eleven o’clock rolls around, you’re ready for the sack!”

This homeyness and down-to-earth dignity has always been at the core of Emmylou Harris’ charm. One can easily imagine that if all the coincidences had never materialized—the introduction to the D.C. music scene, the chance crossing of paths with Gram Parsons—and she’d ended up as a young mother with a challenging job in a more conventional profession, the essential Emmylou Harris would be much the same as she is today: the very same quiet, unassuming and comfortable person.

“I am low key, and that’s always been the nature of my career. I’ve never been a competitive person. I’m such a terrible Monopoly player, if anybody lands on my hotel, I’ll leave the room!” she laughs. “And I’ve never felt a sense of competition with other artists. I am so fortunate in that I have this constituency that buys my albums and keeps me a working artist and keeps me having a record deal without seeking publicity or being on television any more than I have to. It gives me the freedom not only to do what I want, musically, but also to *have* a private life. And I can’t imagine it being any other way.” ■

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Say yes now, risk free! To reserve, send just \$90 per person deposit for five-night plan/\$70 per person for three-night plan. (Deposit is refundable until April 13, 1985 so you have everything to gain, nothing to lose!) Full balance of the tour price is due no later than May 13, 1985.

Act now to avoid disappointment.

- **HEAR** your favorite stars in person!
- **WATCH** actual TV tapings, recording sessions!
- **VISIT** the Music Capital of the World!
- **ATTEND** the Grand Ole Opry



HERE'S ALL YOU GET:

- 8 Great Concerts featuring over 150 headliners. Your free pass entitles you to get together with other Society members and Country Music readers and attend all the events that make Fan Fair America's #1 music happening.
- A Gala Night At The Grand Ole Opry. Your free ticket is your passport to all the spectacle and excitement that has made the Opry Nashville's premier attraction for 60 years.
- A Bus Tour To The Homes Of Some Of Your Favorite Stars. Plus you get free admission to Twitty City.
- Free Passes to The Ryman Auditorium, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and exciting Opryland — 120 acres of theaters, TV studios, rides and fun.
- Two Great Plans To Choose From. 5 full nights of hotel accommodations June 11, 12, 13, 14, 15/ or 3 full nights June 13, 14, 15.

Make check payable and mail to:

Country Music Magazine
450 Park Avenue South
New York, N.Y. 10016

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ (\$90 a person 5 nights / \$70 a person 3 nights) to hold reservations for _____ people for 5 night 3 night Fan Fair tour. You'll send me complete details with my confirmation. I understand that the total tour price (double occupancy) is \$289-5 nights / \$249-3 nights, and balance due must be received on or before May 13, 1985. I may cancel without penalty and receive a refund by canceling no later than April 13, 1985.

Please charge my deposit of \$ _____ to my Visa Mastercard American Express

Sign me up as a CHARTER MEMBER in the CMSA and start my benefits immediately. I've enclosed \$12 for one year.

Type of accommodation desired:

- Double occupancy
 Single occupancy
 Three or four persons per room

Please also contact me about arranging round trip travel to Nashville from _____ (city).

Name _____

() _____

Phone _____

Street _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Card # _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____

CMSA Member I.D. No. _____

RISK-FREE RESERVATION FORM-MAIL TODAY!

FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY

Members Album Specials

Special member's prices for albums in Buried Treasures on page 66 of this issue are: *Classic Country-Western* (4-MR-2), a four record set, regular \$24.98 (Members \$19.98). *The King of West Coast Country Swing* (LP63): regular \$11.98 (Members \$9.98). *Roy Orbison, The Sun Years* (CDX4) regular \$11.98 (Members \$9.98). The Delmore Bros. and Wayne Raney on *When They Let the Hammer Down* (BFX 15167) regular \$11.98 (Members \$9.98). No tapes.

This issue's Essential Collector, page 67 presents ten classic double-length albums, all with at least 20 songs. All carry \$9.98 list prices, but CMSA members can get them for \$7.98 each. In addition several other important double-length albums are available at \$7.98 to CMSA Members. These are relative bargains since they contain twice as many songs as a regular album, plus they are generally the best songs by each performer. Here is the complete list:

Available on Lp records or cassettes (specify your choice when ordering) all of RCA/England's *20 of the Best* series:

- Don Gibson
- Porter Wagoner
- Willie Nelson
- Eddy Arnold
- Jimmie Rodgers
- Jim Reeves
- Bobby Bare
- The Carter Family
- George Hamilton IV

- Gary Stewart
- Vern Oxford
- Grandpa Jones
- Hank Snow
- Jerry Reed
- Hank Locklin

Double length albums (all have 20 songs or more) available on Lp records, cassettes and 8-track tapes (specify your choice when ordering):

- Gene Watson
- Carl Smith
- Marty Roberts
- Johnny Horton
- Lefty Frizzell
- George Jones & Tammy Wynette
- Roy Acuff
- Tanya Tucker
- Red Sovine
- Tammy Wynette
- Tom Jones
- Mel Street

Jim Reeves Abbot Recordings

After Rich Kienzle reviewed Jim Reeves: *The Abbot Recordings Vols. I and II* many CMSA members ordered both these records of Jim Reeves' early recordings. They were so popular, in fact, that stock was depleted quickly and refunds had to be sent to many. Now, after many months delay, both these albums are back in print. List price is \$9.98 each, but CMSA members may order both records together for \$12.98. Specify Lp records or cassettes.

Country Music Cruise

If you are prepared to act fast,



Members Get Lefty's 14 Albums At Wholesale

Lefty Frizzell fans should read Rich Kienzle's review on page 48 of the new 14 album boxed-set with book called *Lefty Frizzell: His Life—His Music* which has just been released by Bear Family Records in Germany. Because this set is imported from Germany it is expensive (list price \$179.95), but CMSA has been able to negotiate a wholesale price for members of \$99 (postage and handling is \$5). To order: send your check to Lefty, c/o Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Write your Membership Number on your check. Limit one set per member. (Non-members who want this set can save much more than the cost of a one-year membership by including a separate check for \$12.)

and like the water, there is a cruise ship headed east and south on April 29, from Miami, bearing Moe Bandy, Johnny Lee and Lane Brody into the semi-tropical sunset with... could it be?... you and your family or friends aboard. Moe, Johnny and Lane will sing for you after the sun goes down, and while it shines during the day, you may loll around the deck of the S.S. Emerald Seas, getting tan, enjoying life, and seeing the sights, when the ship docks, of Freeport, Nassau and one of the Out Islands, Little Stirrup Cay. George Jones, Leona Williams and John Anderson entertained on a similar cruise not long ago. That one, which we reported in People in the November/December issue of *Country Music* sounded so good, we, the editors, almost went on it. And that was before the 10% discount for Society members was agreed to.

A picture of the ship, the S.S. Emerald Seas, is shown in the ad for this cruise on page 13. Check there for more details and/or call toll-free 1-800-223-4375. Have your CMSA membership number handy

when you call. (Tennessee residents call 617-327-9170.) Your friends may join the CMSA now in order to go with you. Cruise starts April 29 and lasts four nights/five days. Departing from Miami. All aboard. The *CMSA Newsletter* will publish the stories of those who go on this cruise, and photos too.

Fan Fair/Grand Ole Opry Trip

If you don't have your sea legs, or this is too short notice for you, don't despair. CMSA has a travel package for you to Fan Fair this June in Nashville. This time all *Country Music* readers have a chance to visit Fan Fair with all the arrangements taken care of, fine accommodations for three nights, and an extra tour in addition to all the attractions of Fan Fair. CMSA members get 10% off, so non-members can save enough to pay for their membership. The ad on page 33 has more details and the reservation form. Have your CMSA membership number ready when you call. Have a ball and send us pictures of yourself and the stars.

HOW TO ORDER

CMSA members only may order albums mentioned at these special member's prices. Add \$1.98 postage and handling for one album, \$0.95 for each additional album. Send your check payable to Country Music Society of America to For Members Only, Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. List the albums you want, specify Lp records, cassettes or 8-track tapes if these are available. (If tapes are unavailable, records will be sent.) Write your Membership Number on your check.

If You Are Not a Member: You may join and order from this page at the same time at member's prices. Just include a separate check for \$12 (one-year's dues, includes an additional year's subscription to *Country Music*) payable to Country Music Society of America and follow member's ordering procedure above.

CMSA Newsletter

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA
MARCH/APRIL 1985—EDITOR, HELEN BARNARD

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Staying in Touch With the Stars

Wish Upon a Star, featuring Johnny Cash, and Legends of Country Music, featuring Tex Ritter, Jimmie Rodgers, Rose Maddox and Lulu Belle and Scotty, solved some problems, brought others up, and made at least one fan's dream come true.

Address, Please

This fan wrote after reading about Johnny Cash in our first Wish Upon a Star feature in July 1984.

Dear CMSA,

I have a suggestion. Why not have a page of addresses where fans can write to their favorite singers? I don't mean home addresses as I know the performers wouldn't want that. But their agent or recording company or something. There are so many I'd like to write to.

I did write to Willie Nelson last year after reading an article on him in your magazine. It mentioned his home town, so I took a chance and sent it there and in no time, Willie sent me a big 8x10 autographed (to me personally) photo of himself. I was so pleased. I know a lot of C/W stars do not reply to fan mail. Case in point—I wrote Johnny Cash once and never heard. Then I read in the July/August *Newsletter* that one had to write to the House of Cash and pay \$1.00 for a photo. Another one I wrote to was Roy Rogers. Got a letter back from his museum saying send \$2.50 for a photo!! I think that is

Newsletter Looks Back

In this issue, the *Newsletter* takes a look at some of our past features—how you responded, what you'd like to suggest for the future. Keeping in touch with the stars is our main theme—important to them, important to you. We cry a little over Patsy Cline and come up with some Travel suggestions. More features on Travel in our next issue.

Newsletter departments now have to take turns. One month we feature Newsworthy, one month Travel, one month Reviews & Features. We try to keep constant with Collections and the Polls. Don't forget this month's Poll. Questions on records and travel.

very unfair. After all, it's the fans who make a star, and why should they have to pay for a photo? Without their fans, where would they be? I'm sure there are only a few who charge.

Keep up the good work on your magazine. I'm so happy you got it going again and honored our old subscriptions. I really missed it all that time.

Hazel M. Brown
North Haven, Maine

The CMSA Answer Book contains many addresses of stars, either their fan club or their record company or both. Good luck, and happy writing.—Ed.

Where's the Gift?

Irene Gibbs, Johnny Cash's secretary, sent this letter to Barry Williams.

Dear Mr. Williams,

Your letter to *Country Music Magazine* has been forwarded to this office for reply.

Regarding your gift to Johnny Cash in 1982, please be advised that I have never received any notice of his receiving same. You said that you gave it to his security people, do you remember if it was his personal security, or that provided by the Fair? Sometimes when gifts are left with security personnel, they are never received by Mr. Cash. I cannot tell you that Mr. Cash did not receive the gift, however, he usually gives me the names and addresses of all the people who leave things for him at the shows. Then we acknowledge the gifts from this office.

John is currently on movie location in Georgia, but as soon as he returns I will discuss this with him, and see if he remembers receiving the candle.

John very much appreciates all his fans, and does enjoy the gifts they give him. Your gift was not overlooked intentionally. It is possible that he never received it, or that the name was lost before he got the candle.

Thank you for calling this to our attention. We shall talk to our security people, and try to be sure that we are aware of anything that is left with them for John.

Best regards.

Irene Gibbs
Secretary to Johnny Cash

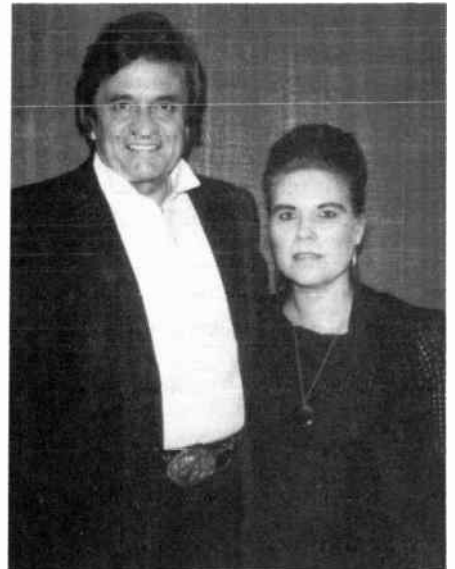
What Luck!

Another response to Johnny Cash.

Dear CMSA:

As I read Russ Barnard's Letter From the Publisher in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine* stating that "Country Music readers are not the average fans, but the cream of the crop, the elite, very knowledgeable and intensely committed nuts," I realized that I am one of the fans he is describing and that I have been since meeting Johnny Cash in February of 1960.

When I first heard that Johnny and June were to be in Lincoln, Nebraska at the State Fair this past September, I wrote to the ticket office for two front-row seats. This was to be the third Johnny Cash show for me in a year—all in front row seats.



Doris Langeneggar with Johnny Cash in Lincoln in September 1984.

My friend Doris Langeneggar and I arrived early and visited with Earl Ball, in my estimation the greatest piano player of all time. I then asked to see Lou Robin, and asked him about seeing Johnny. He told us to come back at 7:15 before the show started.

Doris and I were there waiting at 7:05. At 7:15 Lou took us back to see the "Man in Black." He said that he had read the *Wish Upon a Star* article and would be glad to have a picture taken reading it with me!

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Book At Last

We're proud to announce the arrival of the CMSA 1985 Answer Book, shipped to members the end of January. We're sure you'll agree that it was worth the wait!

After Doris and I both had our pictures taken with Johnny, we went out to our seats to enjoy the show. And what a show it was! Johnny opened it with "Ring of Fire" and "Folsom Prison Blues." The crowd was the first to see the video of "Chicken in Black." "The Baron" was also shown on screen, and Johnny announced that he and June would star in a TV movie based on that song during the winter. June joined Johnny on stage just before intermission. She did a mountain jig to her rendition of "Wreck of the Old 97." We had an extra treat when Anita, June's sister, joined June to sing some of Mother Maybelle's songs, such as "50 Miles of Elbow Room."

Both John and June mentioned the passing of country music great Ernest Tubb and told of his influence on them both. They sang "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" for Ernest.

The crowd showed its appreciation at the show's end by bringing Johnny back for "Orange Blossom Special," which is one of my favorites. But then—all of Johnny's songs are my favorites.

**Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa**

We've put Dennis' picture of Johnny Cash reading the Wish Upon a Star article into our file of stars reading articles about themselves in Country Music. But here is Doris with John. Congratulations, Doris.—Ed.

A Dream Come True

When Donna Church wrote Johnny Cash in Wish Upon a Star, he promised her she would see her when he played the Carlton Club in Bloomington, Minnesota.



Johnny Cash and Donna Church meet at last in Bloomington in 1984.

Dear CMSA,

You have given me the happiest time of my life. On September 29th at the Carlton Club, in Bloomington, Minnesota, I was ushered backstage, after leaving a note saying where I was sitting with one of the ticket office gals. There I finally met the "man": JRC. I spent about 30 minutes with him and June Carter, his lovely wife. Took all the pictures I wanted. He signed my *Country Music Magazine* plus my *Man in Black* book. Been a fan since 1955, have over 150 of his albums, and adore the man.

You made this dream come true for me, and I wish to thank you so much. The last thing John said to me was, "Donna, would you do me a favor and make sure Barnard gets a copy of the picture of you and I?" I promised and it's enclosed.

**Donna L. Church
Duluth, Minnesota**

Glad everything worked out. Next time you see John, you can tell him Barnard got the photograph. Thanks for everything.—Ed.

"R" for Rodgers

Members responded to the Legends of Country Music feature on Jimmie Rodgers in May 1984.

Dear CMSA,

I really enjoyed the picture of Jimmie Rodgers in Legends of Country Music in last spring's May/June Newsletter. I was always his fan. I got to see him once in Greenville, South Carolina back in 1931. I was just a boy back then, but I always liked to hear him sing and play the guitar and never have forgotten the songs that he played, "Peach Picking Time in Georgia" and "T for Texas" and "Way Out on the Mountains."

I like Hank Williams too. Put Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers in the book and also Hank Williams, Jr.

**James L. Lindsey
Travelers Rest, South Carolina**

Dear CMSA,

The article on Jimmie Rodgers was outstanding. How about some more articles on the early artists? You see, I'm 65 and go back to when country was hillbilly! Would like to see something on the following: Blue Grass Roy, Red River Dave, Delmore Brothers, Bradley Kincaid, Carl & Hardy. I could go on and on, but I won't. Just keep up the good work and every now and then put in an article on the oldtimers for us true believers!

**Ed Gardner
Lewes, Delaware**

Glad you liked the article. We keep a record of suggestions like yours and take them into account when we decide which artists to feature in Legends.—Ed.

Album and Single of the Month

Ricky Skaggs	<i>Don't Cheat in Our Hometown</i>
John Schneider	<i>"I've Been Around Enough to Know"</i>

Congratulations to Ricky and John. This is Ricky's second month in the top spot with *Don't Cheat in Our Hometown*. Runners-up are George Strait with *Right or Wrong* and The Statlers with "One Takes the Blame." The Statlers also had a very strong album showing with *Atlanta Blue*. Conway took third place in the singles category with "I Don't Know a Thing About Love." Sure you don't, Conway.

These are the results of the November Poll. Results of the January Poll in our next issue. Keep those ballots coming: fill out the March Poll in this Newsletter.

Raves about Rose

The feature on Rose Maddox in September also brought in some mail.

Dear Mr. Kienzle,

I just wanted to drop you a line to say thank you for the nice article you did on Rose Maddox in the September/October Newsletter.

I don't know if I had something to do with it or not, but I wrote to the magazine a few months ago and mentioned about writing an article on Rose. She is a favorite of both me and my parents. They used to live in California and went to see her all the time.

One thing, though—in your listing of available albums you didn't mention the new album she came out with last winter with Merle Haggard and the Strangers backing her up. We really thought this was the best album she has done in a long time. It is titled *Queen of the West*, on Varrick Records.

**Johnny Bond
Cudahy, Wisconsin**

Glad you liked the article! As we said above, we are guided by suggestions. Dottie Paddock of Tribune, Kansas and Charles B. Johnson of Marysville, California, among others, also asked about Rose. We aim to please, especially in Legends.

You're right about the record. Merle Haggard and the Strangers and Emmylou Harris join Rose on Rose Maddox: Queen of the West (Varrick 010), produced by Michael Melford. Charles Johnson wrote the brief essay about Rose on the back of the album cover. To order, send \$8.98 plus \$1.95 postage and handling to Rose Record, Country Music, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.—Ed.

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Dear CMSA,

Your article on Rose Maddox only reaffirms the "known fact" to her fans that when the history of country music is truly written, she will be in a class with the so-called Super Stars—but, alas, the "long green with the short future" (\$) never came her way.

Fred Smith
Pleasant Hill, California

Dear CMSA,

What a treat to find an article on Rose Maddox in your *Newsletter*. As a young teen-ager in the 1950's, I saw the Maddox Brothers & Rose many times at Fern Ridge Ballroom in Eugene, Oregon. In fact, I still have a scrapbook of news clippings and pictures plus many 78 records in my attic. They were super entertainers. So happy to hear Rose is still singing.

Jean Keffer
Bend, Oregon

Love Lulu Belle and Scotty

Many members also liked the article on Lulu Belle and Scotty in November 1984.

Dear CMSA,

I was so pleased to see your story on Lulu Belle and Scotty. I grew up listening to the WLS *Barn Dance*. I have fond memories of Patsy Montana, Arkie the Arkansas Wood-chopper, Georgie Gobel and so many others. Lulu Belle and Scotty were always my favorites. I wonder why they haven't been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. They certainly belong there.

Please have some more stories on the WLS *Barn Dance* gang.

Eleanor Thompson
Waukegan, Illinois

We plan to.—Ed.

Dear CMSA,

The Lulu Belle and Scotty story in the November/December *Newsletter* brought back many memories. I am originally from Freeport, Illinois which made WLS one of the more popular radio stations in our area. I can recall Lulu Belle singing with Red Foley, and we were all expecting those two to marry. I remember the day Lulu Belle was interviewed and she announced her marriage to Skyland Scotty. We were all quite surprised but very happy. The WLS *Barn Dance* crew and the other entertainers had deep affections in our heart. I remember when the *WLS Magazine* came out with their picture on the cover. I kept it for a long time, but with moving and all, that kind of stuff was eliminated.

We followed the birth of Linda Lou Wiseman, and my mother even marked it in her Birthday Book. My mother is gone now, but not too long ago I found that Birthday Book.

I had heard Scotty had passed away but



Lulu Belle and Scotty at Fan Fair in 1979, by member Hazel Rumer.

often wondered about Lulu Belle. Thanks for the article, as I really enjoyed it, as I do like reading about the old timers.

Marty Robbins was a dear friend of my late husband but I never had the pleasure of meeting him. My husband was a fiddler and also a singer of the old songs. I wasn't ac-

quainted with him when Marty worked in his band at Yuma, Arizona but have heard a lot about the band and Marty from some friends of my husband.

I go more for the older songs, but realize we have to have new ones too. I like Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash and also the songs of the late Bob Wills and those of Jim Reeves. My husband played a lot of their songs before he died. He also took a lot of old unpublished ballads to the grave with him, which upset me very much. I would have liked to have had him put the words down to a lot of them, but he never got around to it.

Keep up the good work.

Belva L. Keith
Tuscon, Arizona

Send Us Cartoons

Like to draw? Send us cartoons or line drawings on country music subjects—all original, please. We try to return all original work, but we are not responsible for damage or loss.

MEMBERS POLL/MARCH 1985

WANTED: YOUR OPINION

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out both sides of the Members Poll. We forward the results of the Polls to those involved in the business of country music who are interested in what fans are thinking and doing, and we publish the results here and in *Country Music*.

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month? Yes No

How many records? _____ How many cassettes? _____ How many 8 tracks? _____

2. Which ones did you like best? List performer and album title.

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____
e. _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

3. To vote, list the numbers of your top 5 favorites from the Top 25, page 68, March/April issue of *Country Music*.

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Been to Any Good Concerts Lately?

4. How many concerts, stage shows, fairs, featuring major country stars, have you attended in the last 12 months? _____

Who were the stars you saw?

- a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____

Fill out both sides and mail to: March Poll, *Country Music*, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Photocopies acceptable.

FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF FORM

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Fishing for Foley

Dear CMSA,

I would like to see an article on the late Red Foley. He has been overlooked by many publications since his untimely death in 1968. He was the first country artist to have a million-selling gospel record, plus he had the first million-selling country record and the first country hit recorded in Nashville.

His career took him to five states and Hollywood. He began his radio career at WLS in Chicago, he was co-founder of the Renfro Valley, Kentucky *Barn Dance*, host of the Grand Ole Opry network radio show, and host of the *Ozark Jubilee* in Springfield, Missouri.

I'm proud to have been a fan of Red Foley's for 45 years, and I hope in some future issue you'll publish an article about him.

Thanks for a good publication. I particularly enjoy the segment, Legends of Country Music.

Alvin Egner
Endeavor, Wisconsin

Red's on our list for Legends.—Ed.

Glad About Gatewood

Kansas singer Johnny Gatewood was featured in Newsworthy in one of the Newsletter's first issues, back in May 1984. Fans responded.

Dear CMSA,

We have seen Johnny Gatewood a number of times. He is an excellent singer and a great guitar player. He and his band put on a good show.

We have also heard Johnny's records on the radio. I really like "Little Ole Dime." I hope he makes it to the top. He deserves it.

Judy Enns
Inman, Kansas

Dear CMSA,

When I first heard Johnny Gatewood on the radio, it was back in August of 1983, and I said to myself, I don't know who he is, but I'll match his voice with anybody's, super stars and all. Then when I heard him in person a month or so later at the state fair, I knew he had something special. Not only was he a knock-out, talented singer, but a super instrumentalist as well. He's just an all-round entertainer; anyone that knows

music will tell you that.

This all might sound a little windy and slightly boastful, but someday when Johnny gets that one big break, I can say I knew him back when . . .

One of Johnny's biggest fans,
Larry Dolechek

P.S. Not only is Johnny a Number One kind of entertainer, he is a Number One kind of person, who takes his music and his fans seriously. And I think that's very important.

Another big fan,
Debra Dolechek

Dear CMSA,

In our area they are playing Johnny Gatewood's records over KAAK radio in Bethany, Missouri and KFEQ in St. Joseph. "Little Ole Dime" was 101 nationally, just one point out of the national charts. It will take a few good breaks and a lot of luck to reach the top or at least get on the charts—something Johnny has dreamed of since he was a small boy.

Thanks for your help boosting Johnny.
Maxine Gatewood
King City, Missouri

This letter came in from Johnny's mother. We were so glad to hear from her.—Ed.

MEMBERS POLL/MARCH 1985

What do You Own, Plan to Buy, Want Information About?

5. Which of the following do you or anyone in your household own now, plan to buy in the next 12 months or would like information on, about special CMSA discounts?

	Own Now	Plan to Buy	Want Info
Cowboy Boots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Western Clothes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hunting Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work or Hunting Boots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stereo Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pickup Truck Accessories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sheet Music for Guitar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sheet Music for Piano	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Want a Country Music Vacation?

6. Check the box indicating your level of interest in these activities:

	Very Interested	Maybe	Not Interested
a. Five days on cruise ship in Caribbean with country singers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Same, but a cruise to Alaska.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Attend Fan Fair in Nashville, 5 days.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Want a Free Fan Club Membership?

7. If you could get free membership in *one* country music performer's fan club, whose would you choose? _____

Fill out both sides and mail to: March Poll, *Country Music*, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Photocopies acceptable.

FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF FORM

E.T. and Marty: Two Tributes in Song

The Newsletter has received word that the following two records are available.

• "Big-Hearted E.T." recorded by Ace Ball, with "Little" Roy Wiggins and others, written by member Margaret Ricks and her husband. To order, send \$2.00 to Margaret Ricks, 7801 Iron Bridge Rd., Richmond, Virginia 23237. Words to the song available free, send SASE.

• *Memories of Marty* recorded by Bev King and Joe Knight, Revonah Records 513. This tribute to Marty Robbins features Joe Knight, who played rhythm guitar on Marty's early 1950's recording sessions at Jim Beck's studio in Dallas, Texas. Joe also played on records for Lefty Frizzell, Rose Maddox and others. Joe's vocal, including an occasional touch of falsetto, and flat-top guitar are backed up by Bev King on dobro. Songs include: "Castles in the Sky," "I'll Go On Alone," "Love Me," "The Hands You're Holding Now." Nine of the 12 are those Joe played on when Marty originally recorded them.

Longtime subscriber and member Lon Suiter of Lake Lotawana, Missouri says that this album contains "music of the heart and soul of country." Available from Bev King, RR 1, Box 320, Madill, Oklahoma 73446 for \$5.95, includes postage and handling.

NEWSWORTHY



Pirk Williams in 1981 at the Houston Championship Fiddlers Contest.

A Party for Pirk Williams

Texas old-timer Pirk Williams is the subject of this article sent in by "Buzz" Carter. A working musician and songwriter himself, "Buzz" is busy recording Pirk's original songs. He also plays dates all over Central and South Texas and has had several songs published and recorded. We're grateful to him for this news of Pirk.

Recently, there was a party held for old-timer, "Pirk Williams." It was held at the home of his good friend, Paul Fulkerson, near Flatonia, Texas. Pirk got his fiddle out and played nearly all his old classics.

Pirk is now 57 years young and has recorded over 60 singles during the period from 1948 until his retirement in 1978, with Imperial and Capitol Records. Some of his hits include: "Release Me," "Today, Tonight and Tomorrow," "Wild Side of Life," "This Song is Just For You," "I'll Do Things For You," and "Hold Back the Dawn," to name just a few. Pirk has worked with people such as Red Foley, Bob Wills, Jim Reeves, Johnny Lee Wills, Keith Coleman, Floyd Tillman, Link Davis, Ray Price, Buck Owens, Merle Travis, Lefty Frizzell, Leon Payne and Hank Williams.

"In 1950," Pirk said, "I wrote, 'Release Me,' and recorded it. It stayed on the market for almost a year, not doing anything. I was playing in Oklahoma City with Red Foley and Leon Payne, when a hatchet man came to me and offered me \$500.00 for all the rights to my song. I took the \$500.00

'cause I needed the money. I wrote the song about my girlfriend, Tamaline Jackson, after she broke up with me. After I sold the song, it made a hit for me and sold nearly one million copies."

In 1955, Pirk's wife died in an automobile accident, and Pirk wrote "This Song is Just For You," for her. He has had 35 published songs with Essential Songs in Hollywood, California. He had 10 of them in Billboard's Top 10 between 1949-1970.

Presently, Pirk is retired and living in Caldwell County, Texas. He only works once in a while in the South Texas area, with a dance and recording group named "Li'l Bit Country," which is recording some of his tunes at Country Roads Studio in Flatonia, Texas, owned by Vernon Votaw.

Pirk is doing very well at present and invites friends to call him or come by when they are in the area.

W.L. "Buzz" Carter
Gonzales, Texas

Who Picks the Top 25?— Importance of the CMSA Poll

Dear CMSA,

Up till now I have answered the questionnaires or polls, but in lieu of that thought I'd write you this letter. Every issue I read the Top 25 and wonder who picks them. It's always the same ones. This time (November/December) I didn't see one listed that I'd run right out and buy.

Margaret Helmes
Sunset, Utah

Thanks for filling out the questionnaires and Polls. They are very important. Your question is important too, and here's why:

The Top 25 are the top-selling singles and albums and, in the case of singles, the songs most often played on the radio, based on reports from selected retailers, wholesalers and radio stations nationwide. The CMSA Album and Single of the Month are the records you pick as the best or your favorites among the Top 25. *And they are different!*

The difference is the point of our Poll. Let's look at the situation in November/December. The top five national album picks were: Willie, *City of New Orleans*; Merle, *It's All in the Game*; Alabama, *Roll On*; Hank Jr., *Major Moves*; and George Strait, *Right or Wrong*. Your top five picks were: Ricky, *George Strait*, The Statlers with *Atlanta Blue*, Merle, and The Judds with *The Judds—Wynonna and Naomi*. No Willie (seventh on your list), no Hank Jr. (eighteenth), and Alabama down, from third place to sixth.

Now let's look at singles for the same period. The top five national picks were:

14th Annual International Country Music Fan Fair

The 1985 Fan Fair is set for June 10-16 at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in Nashville, Tennessee. Registration fee of \$60 per person includes 30 hours of grandstand shows, three luncheons and admission to Opryland, the Country Music Hall of Fame, Ryman Auditorium and the All-American Country Games. For ticket information, write Fan Fair, 2804 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37214.

Watch for a feature on Fan Fair by member Mona Bennett in our next issue. Mona and her husband Tom attended Fan Fair '84. They have some great photos, and Mona has tips on where to go and what to do, including her advice on whether or not to wear your Hank Jr. t-shirt while visiting Vern Gosdin.

Crystal Gayle, "Turning Away"; The Oaks, "Everyday"; Ricky, "Uncle Pen"; Barbara Mandrell and Lee Greenwood, "To Me"; and Conway, "I Don't Know a Thing About Love." Compare this to your picks: John Schneider, "I've Been Around Enough to Know"; Statlers, "One Takes the Blame"; Conway with "I Don't Know"; Merle, "Let's Chase Each Other Around the Room"; and Ricky with "Uncle Pen." You picked Crystal as twenty-third, The Oaks as twelfth and Barbara and Lee as eighth. You put Conway up to third place from fifth, brought John Schneider up from national 13th place to your first and The Statlers up out of the cellar, 25th place, to your number two.

There is a difference in taste here. That is the point of the Poll, to document that difference, because we know, from other figures available, that you, as a group, buy a much higher number of records than the national average. Keep sending in your votes. We are showing these results to the people who make decisions about what gets recorded, what gets promoted and what gets played.

We also show our Poll to the artists. Here's what Ricky Skaggs had to say when he heard he was your winner two months in a row:

"It is indeed an honor for *Don't Cheat in Our Hometown* to be voted Album of the Month in two successive issues of *Country Music Magazine*. They say there are no fans like country music fans and that continuous loyalty and support is very much appreciated. Thank you readers for accepting this country boy and his music."—Ricky Skaggs

Patsy Cline



S ometime in the next six months, another country film biography will show up in theaters. Entitled *Sweet Dreams*, this one will profile Patsy Cline, whose phenomenal success was abruptly ended by her death in a 1963 plane crash. Jessica Lange will portray Patsy, with Ed Harris, last seen in *Places in the Heart*, as her second husband Charlie Dicks. We can only hope the producer, Bernard Schwartz, intends to play it straight. There is some prospect for success. The script is based on over 800 pages of transcriptions from those who knew Patsy. Owen Bradley, who produced her classic Decca recordings of the 1950's and 1960's, is working as a consultant. And her original recordings are to be used in the soundtrack. In addition, George Vecsey, who wrote *Coal Miner's Daughter*, has written a full biography of Patsy, based on his reading of the transcriptions, also entitled *Sweet Dreams*, but covering more of her life than will be touched on in the film. It is due out in the fall, to coincide with release of the movie.

Her original fans never have forgotten Patsy. Keep in mind, though, an entire generation of country fans has grown up since she died, many of whom don't know Patsy's music and her historical importance. Patsy Cline helped female vocalists come into their own in the wake of Kitty Wells. Where Kitty was unadulterated, rough-edged country, Patsy's knowing, smooth sophistication placed her on an entirely different plane. Like Jim Reeves' music, hers was urbane country that appealed to pop music fans, but without the worst crossover excesses. Conversely, she could sing pop songs her own way, making them palatable even to hardcore country fans. Her repertoire was seamless and wide-ranging. The songs of Irving Berlin fit her style as well as those of Willie Nelson or Bob Wills. Even rock and roll fans who had no truck with country could find much to like; she was also the closest thing in country to a torch singer.

Virginia Patterson Hensley was born in Winchester, Virginia, at the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley, on September 8, 1932. Show business was her life as she grew up—first tap dancing, then singing and piano lessons. Throughout her youth her vocal abilities stood out, and following her

COURTESY COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION

LEGENDS OF COUNTRY MUSIC

Patsy brought sophistication and style to the singing of country songs—she took the door that Kitty Wells had opened for women singers and made it a four-lane highway for herself and later stars.

graduation from high school she began working around the Winchester area with local country bands. It was on one of those engagements in the early 1950's that Nashville singer (later gospel star) Wally Fowler first heard her. Fowler was impressed enough to meet her mother and offer his help in getting Patsy heard in Nashville.

That all sounds like a fairy tale, but it wasn't that simple. For one thing, though she got to meet the likes of Roy Acuff and Moon Mullican, both of whom pronounced themselves impressed, Opry stars must've heard a dozen impromptu auditions a week from starry-eyed amateurs certain they could make it. And Kitty Wells' emergence was some time away. Nothing happened, and Virginia Patterson Hensley and her mother trekked back to Winchester empty-handed.

For the next few years Patsy worked various spots around Virginia, building a formidable local reputation that earned her a recording contract with the small Four Star label. There she recorded a variety of material. A few of these records wound up being leased to Decca's subsidiary label, Coral Records, and Patsy became a regular on the *Town and Country Jamboree* out of WMAL-TV in Washington. Still eager for real stardom, she auditioned for Arthur Godfrey's *Talent Scouts* TV program. The show had turned down Elvis before he hit. Now they were full of regrets and looking for young talent. On January 21, 1957 she sang the gutsy, pop-blues number "Walkin' After Midnight" and took first prize.

Promptly Decca's Owen Bradley signed her to a recording contract, and barely a month later "Walkin'" hit number three on the country charts and number twelve on the pop charts. Now she was finally realizing her dreams—membership in the Opry, extensive tours—but after that first hit, she was not selling records. From 1957 to 1961 nothing succeeded, until April of 1961, when the haunting "I Fall to Pieces" became her first Number One country hit (and a number twelve pop success). From there on, she was on top. That November "Crazy," written by a promising composer named Willie Nelson, made it to number two, solidifying Patsy's position and underscoring Willie's talents as well. As she rose higher and high-

er, she was more than generous to new talents in Nashville, including both Dottie West and Loretta Lynn.

By March of 1962 she had still another Number One hit with "She's Got You," and that one reached number fourteen on the pop charts. It was nothing short of incredible at the time. Only two of Jim Reeves' crossovers hit the pop Top 20, compared to Patsy's four. With her voice and Owen Bradley's skillful production, she continued to rack up lesser successes. She cut straight pop tunes like "Always," along with country songs and managed to make it all work. By February of 1963 "Leavin' on Your Mind" hit number eight, and there was no sign of a let-up. She even cut a soulful version of Bob Wills' "Faded Love" that managed to both broaden its appeal and stay true to its Texas roots.

On March 4, 1963 Patsy, Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins were in Kansas City to perform at a benefit for the family of DJ Cactus Jack Call, who'd died in an auto accident. After an overnight stay, the trio boarded a single-engined Piper Comanche plane for the return trip to Nashville, a convenient enough mode of travel, plus the pilot was Copas' son-in-law Randy Hughes. After refueling the plane at Dyersburg, Tennessee, they headed for Nashville, in spite of foul weather. Eighty-five miles from their destination, near Camden, Tennessee, they crashed. Search parties were dispatched, and WSM maintained a vigil on the radio until the grim news came from the crash site.

It was a grievous loss that traumatized both performers and fans alike. Nor did the tragedy end there. Jack Anglin of the popular Johnny and Jack duo was killed in an auto accident while enroute to the Nashville memorial service for Patsy. Then barely a year later, Jim Reeves too died in a plane crash.

Like Reeves and Hank Williams, Patsy Cline's records continued to sell after she died. The brilliant, ethereal "Sweet Dreams (Of You)" became a number five hit that May, followed by "Faded Love" that September. As late as 1969 she was still showing up on the lower end of the charts, and Decca continued to release a variety of albums. Budget labels repackaged the Four Star material in any number of configurations. In 1973, a decade after she died, she

was posthumously inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Patsy had given her personal scrapbook to Dottie West not long before her death. She was also very close to Loretta. In 1977 Loretta Lynn recorded *I Remember Patsy*, a loving tribute and one of her finest albums of the decade. Not all the tributes, however, were gems. Technology made it possible to merge Patsy's and Jim Reeves' recorded voices to create an album of tacky overdubbed "duets." Two songs from the album made the charts in 1980 and 1981—sometimes there's no accounting for popular taste. Thankfully, nobody has seen fit to repeat this experiment.

Patsy's legacy remains unaffected. If done right, the Lange film will, without doubt, bring to the fore a gutsy, courageous and compassionate woman whose talents were stilled all too quickly. Any female artist worth her salt, be it Tammy, Loretta, Dottie, Dolly, or Barbara will tell you that somewhere inside them, dwells a little bit of Patsy.

Rich Kienzle

Available Albums

Without question, the definitive Patsy Cline album is the 2-record set, *The Patsy Cline Story*, on MCA (MCA 2-4038), which features all of her hits of the 1950's and 1960's plus some other excellent material. At \$11.98, it's a bargain in the best sense of the word. MCA has two single albums as well, without the later adulterations: *Portrait of Patsy Cline* (MCA 224) and *Sentimentally Yours* (MCA 90), both \$5.98 each.

Patsy's Four Star material has been re-released on two small labels: *20 Golden Pieces of Patsy Cline* (Bulldog 2003) at \$6.98 and *Patsy Cline Country Classics, Volumes I, II and III* (Picadilly 3314, 3324, and 3325), available at \$5.98 each.

There's little doubt that when the Patsy Cline film is released, there will be other, hopefully more ambitious re-packages from MCA, and probably of the early Four Star recordings as well.

To order, send check or money order to Patsy Cline, c/o Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Add \$1.95 additional for postage and handling for one album, \$.95 for each additional. No cassettes.

A Trip to Turkey and the Bob Wills Day Celebration

An ardent fan of the Wills tradition sent us this article about Bob Wills' hometown and the goings-on there. He's William R. Russell, a 60-year-old Baptist minister, free-lance writer and musician from Paso Robles, California. Mr. Russell plays his Les Paul guitar in a group he formed called Gospel Country. We're grateful to him for this article and the helpful hints it provides.

A Trip to Turkey

If you happen to be traveling U.S. 87 or U.S. 287 south out of Amarillo, Texas, and you are a country music buff, Turkey, Texas is a side trip you mustn't miss. It was in this West Texas town that Bob Wills, the King of Western Swing, spent most of his youth and early adulthood. This quaint western community reflects the merging of southern and western cultures which gave the music of Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys their unique sound in the 1930's and early 1940's.

Bob, a CMA Hall of Fame member, grew up in this farming community of cotton, watermelons and peanuts. He left the farm with his fiddle in a flour sack to become one of the major forces shaping country music in America. The community of Turkey, Texas has never forgotten, nor have they allowed the world of country music to forget Bob Wills.

Turkey named its community center the Bob Wills Center. Along with an Arts and Craft center is the Bob Wills Museum. For the country music fan, and especially Bob Wills fans, the museum is a nostalgic walk into the past which will hold one spellbound.

The community dedicated a monument to Bob Wills' memory in 1972. It is constructed of eight granite panels which form the base of the monument. Each panel depicts special periods in the life of Turkey's legendary son. Some 30 feet above the base are two large symbolic violins. The community leaders saw to it that the monument was placed at one end of the town's Main Street.

Each year on the last Saturday in April, Turkey, Texas observes a Bob Wills Day celebration. The small western community of 600 people grows to three or four thousand as fans and musicians crowd the main street to pay homage to Bob Wills.

This event becomes a time of reunion for former Texas Playboys each year. Names like Al Stricklin, Eldon Shamblin, Leon McAuliffe and Smokey Dacus appear on the roster of former Texas Playboys who come to celebrate a legend they helped to create. Joining together again in musical tribute, these select country musicians fill the warm Texas air with the sound of "Faded Love" and "San Antonio Rose."



The Bob Wills Monument in Turkey, Texas, taken by William Russell.

From the local barber, Harold Ham, whose father employed young Jim Rob Wills to cut hair, to Willie Nelson, veteran country musician, we hear the same words, "Bob Wills is a legend in country music that we will always remember and admire." Turkey, Texas and this legend fit together like the cowboy boots that Bob wore all his life.

Bob Wills Day, scheduled this year for April 27, includes a parade, barbecue, fiddlers contest, arts and crafts show, dance—and, of course, a chance to see the Museum. Prices for each event range from free to \$5 per person. For more information and details on how to reach Turkey, write the Bob Wills Foundation, Turkey, Texas 79261. The attendance always far exceeds the local population. A motor home is an ideal way to attend. Those desiring better accommodations should make plans to stay overnight in Amarillo.

William W. Russell
Paso Robles, California

Collecting the Magazine

Perhaps the two members listed below should write to each other!

● I have the following issues of *Country Music Magazine* for sale: October 1976; January/February, April, May, July/August, November and December 1980; and January/February, March, April, May, September/October and November/December 1983. M. Triplett, Rt. 2, Box 225, Branchland, West Virginia 25506.

● I would like to get a complete set of *Country Music Magazine* from December 1972 to December 1983. I am retired and would like to get them as reasonable as possible. Anyone willing to help me, please contact Emma Haine, 2600 W. Co. Rd. 60E, Fort Collins, Colorado 80524.

Information, Please

Contact these members directly if you have the information or items they need.

● I have been searching for a record of Slim and Byron Whitman's "Four Walls." Any ideas? I would like anything on these singers. Also "Farewell Party" by Gene Watson. I have come to the end around here. Ethel Baker, 1431 Highlawn Ave., Lexington, Kentucky 40505.

● Wanted to find: Ed Bruce records. Thank you. Nina Bilik, 803 Martin's Chapel Rd., Lawrenceville, Georgia 30245.

● Where can I find the record that has the words in it, "The roots of my raisin run deep," by Merle Haggard? I don't know whether that is the title of the record or not. Norma L. Neumeyer, RR #1, Box 37B, Freedom, Indiana 47431.

● I am looking for one of Leon Everette's songs titled "Midnight Rodeo." I've been told it's out of print. I first heard it on radio station KLAC here in Los Angeles several months ago. I've been trying to find it ever since. John C. Brown, 16604 Hamlin St., Van Nuys, California 91406.

● Anyone know where I can find an album by Reba McEntire called *Reba McEntire*? Any information would be greatly appreciated. Jimmy Knox, 1108 N. Main, Carrollton, Missouri 64633.

● Where can I find an album of Hoyt Axton where he sings "A Dog Named Jake and a Cat Named Calmozoo," or any album of his? I would also like an album of Big Al Downing. I can't seem to find that either. Marie Extine, Capitol Hill Apartments, Apt. 63, P.O. Box 1412, Marion, North Carolina 28752.

● Am looking for a recording of a song released after WW II, a duet song by Cowboy Copas (and possibly Cathy Copas), "Strange Little Girl." Any information such as publishing company, catalog number, even the words would be greatly appreciated. Walter L. Leewright, 321 Jefferson, Route 1, Sedgwick, Kansas 67135.

● My husband heard this song one time many years ago, but he does not know the name of it or who sings it. He only remembers part of it. I would like to know if anyone knows the song and if I can order a record of it. Here is all he remembers. "Grandma got run over by a reindeer on the way to the outhouse on Christmas Eve. Me and Grandpa begged her not to go." I would appreciate any help. Judy Brawner, Rt. 2, Box 212, Lebanon Jct., Kentucky 40150.

"Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer" is the title song on a Christmas album by Elmo and Patsy, Epic Records (5E-39931). Hope someone has one for you, or check your local stores.—Ed.

JOHN SCHNEIDER

Vaulting over obstacles like the General Lee, as easy-going and gutsy as the character he has played so long, John "Bo" Schneider has a big country hit and seems headed musically in the right direction. After one false start, he'd like to keep these wheels turning as long as he can.

—by Kip Kirby

Hello, John, So Long, Bo

John Schneider has a problem. He's supposed to be in Nashville in two weeks to begin recording his second MCA album. Only *Dukes of Hazard*, verbally cancelled after a seven-year run, has suddenly taken a ratings surge, and now the producers want to resume filming. In two weeks.

Understandably, the dilemma has its appeal. Six months ago, John Schneider couldn't get arrested in country music. His name drew stony stares from programmers who recalled his 1981 Broadway-barreled remake of "It's Now or Never," and his subsequent string of flops on CBS. Radio is suspicious of television actors trying to make it in country.

But Schneider understood. He had listened to his managers, the record company and his agents, and they were wrong. Those records weren't him. So he continued playing Bo Duke to millions of fans until he felt the time was right to make another try.

Last year, he slipped quietly into Nashville, minus managers, record label and producer, to try country music again, this time his own way.

His ticket was a decade-old Bob McDill/Dickey Lee song, "I've Been Around Enough to Know." The choice proved Schneider's instincts were right: like a nail chasing a magnet, the single shot to the top of the country charts, selling an astonishing number of copies as it went. The week the record went to Number One,

Schneider's album sales stood close to 100,000, more than double initial expectations on the strength of only one single. By the time "I've Been Around Enough to Know" was completing its reign on the charts, MCA had projected sales of 300,000, considerably higher than those of many so-called country superstars.

The kid was hot. Radio resistance had crumbled.

But this might never have happened without a trick and a gamble.

Schneider had been signed by Jimmy Bowen who had only recently assumed control of MCA's Nashville division. Bowen had produced the album as a favor to Ray Katz, Schneider's manager. All concerned knew that they had a fight on their hands. Selling John "It's Now or Never" Schneider back to radio wasn't going to be easy.

So the company took a gamble. As reported in *Hits or Misses* in this magazine, MCA mailed out 75 advance copies of "I've Been Around Enough to Know" in plain white sleeves bearing no identification. They told programmers the singer was a new artist and asked them to guess his identity. Only three guessed John Schneider. The others either said they didn't know or thought it was George Strait. All, however, said they were crazy about the record and would play it.

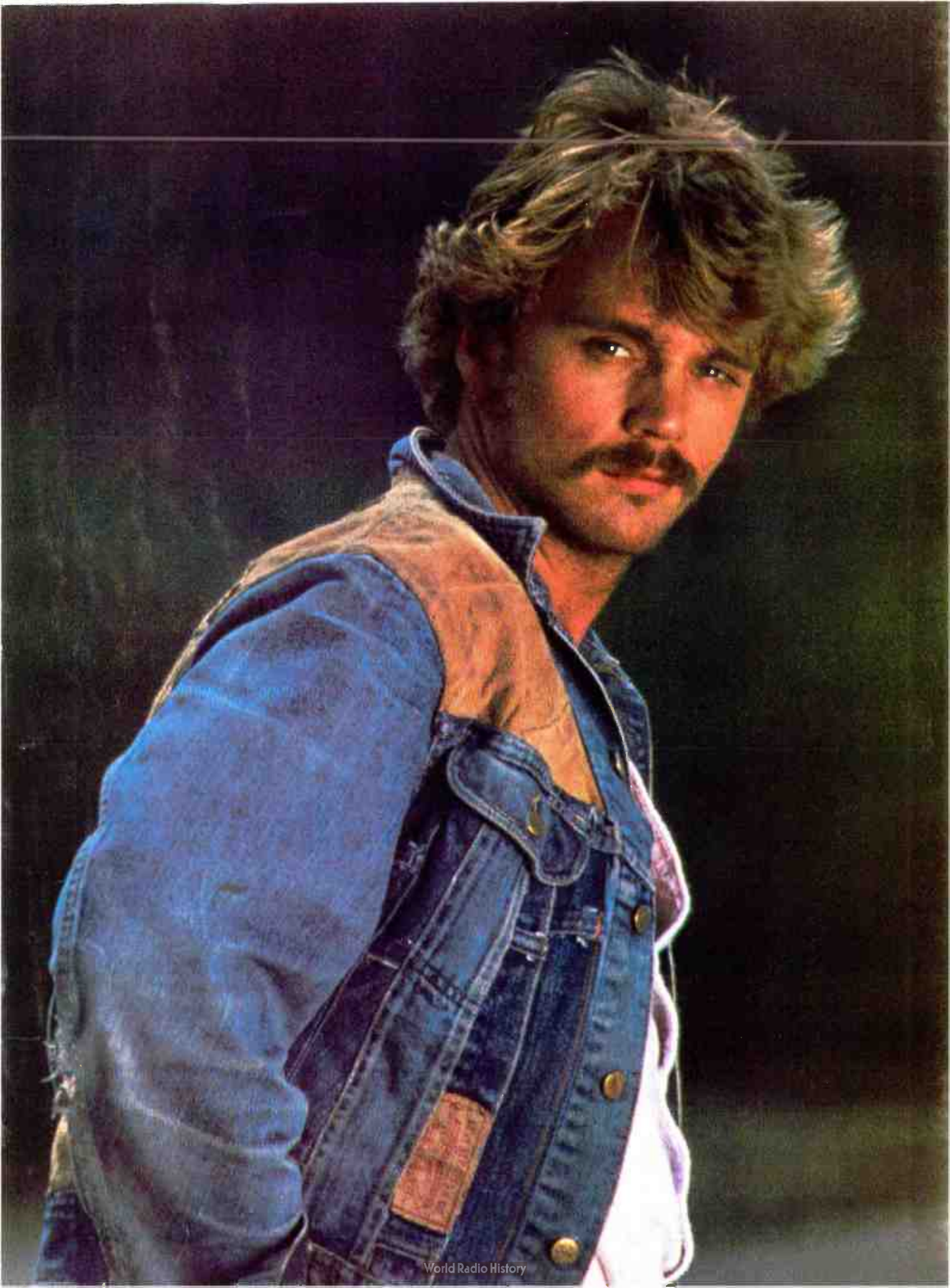
The strategy worked. And its biggest supporter was the artist himself. "It's a good thing MCA did what they did, and

sent the record out without my name on it," Schneider says. "Otherwise, the radio guys have told me they would never have played it. They've told me they were prejudiced against me up front because of how I used to sound on my records. They say if they had known it was *John Schneider* before they listened to it, they wouldn't have listened to it."

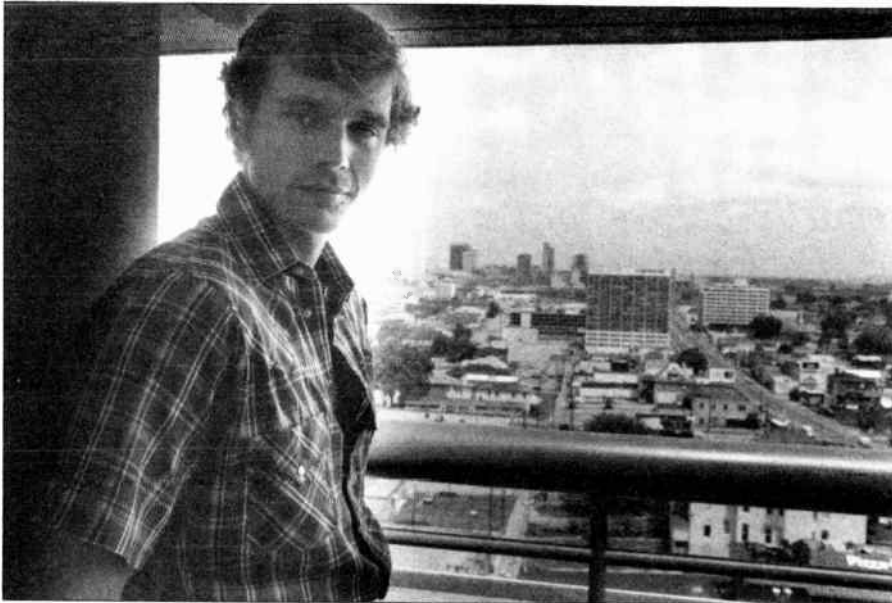
Schneider displays disarming candor about himself. He understands the pros and cons of having a public image and how it can backfire most when you're trying the hardest. Television fame and recording success aren't often compatible, which is why Schneider believes they must be separated and why, now that he's sitting at Number One in the nation in terms of singles record sales, he's in no hurry to return to Hollywood and slip behind the wheel of his orange General Lee. He is enjoying the heady experience of country stardom.

Don't get him wrong. It's not that he isn't grateful for *Dukes of Hazard*. Nor is he uncooperative. But the show was cancelled. That's what he was told. So he's made other plans. He is in Nashville this week, listening to songs for the new album. And in two weeks, he will be going into the studio with Bowen, not back to the set of *Dukes*.

"It really has me angry," Schneider says with perfect affability, showing no sign of anger as he sips orange juice in his



"They say if they had known it was John Schneider before they listened to it, they wouldn't have listened to it."



Gazing out at the Nashville skyline, Schneider says he genuinely enjoys the entire recording process.

hotel suite. "The show asked me, 'Why did you schedule something else?' I told them, 'Because we were told the show was being cancelled.' And they came back with, 'Who told you that?'"

He chuckles. He mentions that Hollywood mentalities are very interesting; and that things there have a way of changing, no matter what you're told. But he isn't about to let their change of plans interfere with this upcoming album. "I'm taking the stance that when they said we were done, we were *done*," he explains. "The ratings were down. We were told we'd do 13 episodes, and that would be it."

"By the time we'd finished the 13, though, three had already aired. The first show got wiped out. The second one did better. The third one, with Waylon Jennings, won its night. So then the network applied the brakes and said it wanted to reconsider. Meanwhile, the crew has all gotten new jobs. Now they've announced that they may decide to start back up again. And if they do, they want it to be the same week I'm here in Nashville."

Schneider shakes his head. What a way to conduct business. Then he changes the subject to follow-up songs for "I've Been Around Enough to Know."

He genuinely enjoys the recording process. He likes listening to songs, working up arrangements, participating in the overdubs, having a say in the sequencing and graphics. He didn't have the opportunity when he recorded for CBS; he says he was basically told what to sing and how to

sing it. At the moment, there's a stack of cassettes on the table, and a portable ghetto blaster playing a new Sonny Curtis tune he thinks he might record.

The success of "I've Been Around Enough to Know" is making it easier to get the kind of songs he wants, the actor says. Still, he's having to battle the crossover stereotype.



Dukes of Hazzard was cancelled, but the show with Waylon Jennings was a huge success.

He's found a way of his own to combat what he wants versus what people think he wants. "People were pitching me these huge soaring ballads because they thought I was looking for another 'It's Now or Never.' Actually, that was the *last* thing I wanted. I kept telling them I wanted country songs, and they kept playing me crossover stuff.

"Finally, I said go get me a song that you think is probably the *last* thing I'd ever want to cut. And they came up with 'I've Been Around Enough to Know.'"

Between *Dukes* and recording, Schneider has managed to put together his own road band to work fairs, clubs and personal appearances. A John Schneider autograph session in a record store is guaranteed to draw hundreds of fans who stand in line for hours to get an autograph on his album.

He gets animated when he talks about going out on the road doing one-nighters. He sounds intrigued by the thought of living on a bus, living out the life of . . . Merle Haggard.

Since he read Merle's autobiography, *Sing Me Back Home*, he's begun writing songs. He isn't sure yet whether they're good. To assure honest feedback, he pretends they were written by one of his band members. He doesn't want anyone catering to his ego at the expense of truth. He enjoys reality, even criticism if it's constructive. But if Bowen likes one of the songs, he confesses he hopes to include it on the next album.

If *Dukes* resumes production, it's unlikely he will be doing many one-nighters. Instead, he will remain in Los Angeles where he lives with his wife Tawny (a former Miss America, now a TV personality on KABC), and do appearances on weekends. If not, he expects to be on the road working country shows when the album is finished.

But even then, his time is spoken for. If things go as planned, he is tentatively set to open on Broadway in March with Lucie Arnaz in a musical remake of *Bus Stop*. The project will be re-titled *Perfect Strangers*. There will be a country score, and Schneider hopes Jimmy Bowen will record it for MCA.

Some artists have trouble balancing the demands of one career. Schneider seems to have little difficulty balancing the demands of several. The important thing, he emphasizes, is being good at what you do. That's the difference between a career and an overnight success. And John Schneider says he is in country music for the long haul. ■

Vern Gosdin: Hangin' On

Gosdin has had hit records before, but stardom has eluded him. Now with the right people behind him, he's at a point where he can watch the good times roll.

Ole Vern has done it again: the boy's got himself another hit. Well, good. A man with a voice and a history like his just plain deserves to have hits.

This hit, moreover, is not just your standard-issue modern country chartbuster: it is, rather, something special, a pleasing cross-cultural set-piece, a genuinely stirring record with a story.

The song is "Turn, Turn, Turn," previously a 1965 Byrds hit and originally a life-on-earth-defining passage from *Ecclesiastes*, and Vern sings it with Roger McGuinn and his 12-string Rickenbacker guitar, the elements which powered the Byrds' record. The new version, then, has all the airy, jangle-bells mysticism of the original (thank you, Roger), but it also has Vern's hard, tight, man-of-the-earth vocal power, a real bedrock.

Vern's singing, featuring its customary perfect pitch and effortless sustain (kind of like George Jones and Ronnie Milsap and Charley Pride boiled down into one throat), sounds wonderful against McGuinn's on this urgent, passionate song; there's a lot of spirit and sheer technique in his performance, and the record goes a long way towards revealing just how deep the man's talent and experience run, and what kind of "new artist" we are dealing with here.

Vern, you see, is a Type B "new country artist"—no Type A bright-eyed young dynamo fresh from the Opryland talent farm or Type C burned-out-pop-singer-looking-for-an-angle, he is instead a genuine hard-core country trouper who has finally been "packaged right"—but he is an unusual example of this increasingly rare species.

Type B singers know better than anyone alive how erratically the elusive little rat-bird of fame reacts to anything but the magic formula which got it to twitter in the first place, and "Turn, Turn, Turn" is therefore an eccentric choice of a single for a man as thoroughly rat-bitten as Vern. The song is straight down the gospel mainline in content, but as any promo man from Baton Rouge to Bar Harbor will tell you, that doesn't mean diddly squat to the radio station program directors if it *sounds different*. Except, of course, if they decide that it sounds DIFFERENT!!! In that case, you've got a bigger hit than usual—but if your "usual" is only two or three records deep and folks are only just beginning to ask, "Which one is Vern Gosdin?," that's a risk. It shows character.

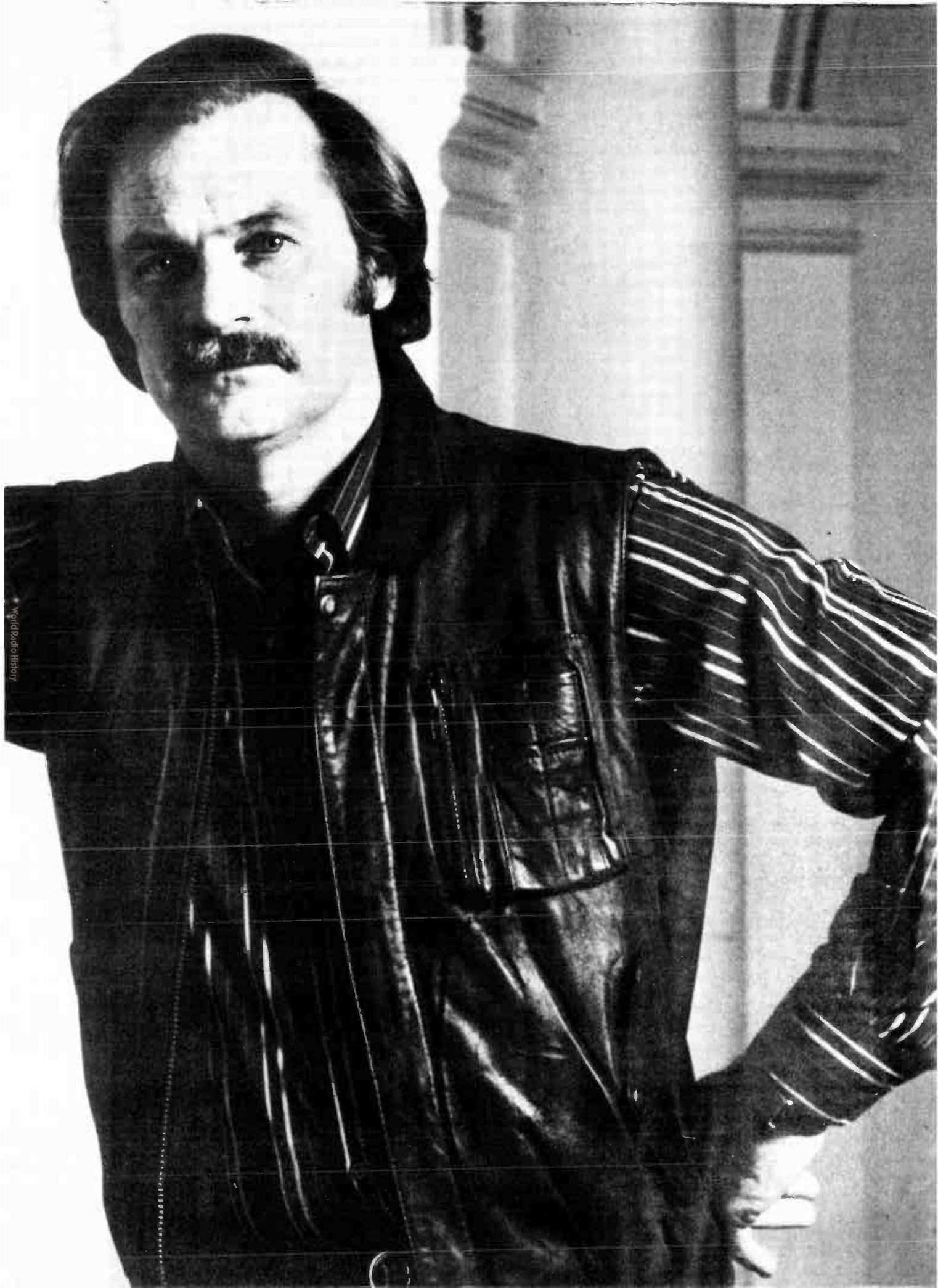
The song, moreover, really is special. For one thing, it was one of the keynotes of the psychedelic era—an anthem, in fact—and for another, it is the word of God according to *Ecclesiastes*. When you add the fact that the sound of the Byrds' record was a "first" in pop music, you come up with a heaviness-count substantially higher than that of most pop hit revivals ("Blue Bayou," "Stardust," etc.) and very uncharacteristic indeed of most successful country singles. You have to wonder what kind of fellow would conceive of such a venture.

Wondering about Vern Gosdin has not been exactly a major pastime on Music Row these past twenty years, but just about everybody with a modicum of curiosity must have cast a question or two his way at one



PHOTOGRAPH BY COURTESY COMPLEAT RECORDS

by Patrick Carr



"It was the people I worked with, son. I wouldn't say they were crooks, but they weren't honest."



time or another. Like, "Who is this Vern Gosdin? Why was he at Number 11 on the charts three months ago, and nowhere to be found today? Why does he appear, then disappear? Does he work Europe? Is he a star in Japan? Didn't we bump into him in Wheeling? No? Is he from Canada?"

The thing with Vern, you see, is that he has a long history of getting records on the country charts, but having his career go absolutely nowhere at all.

The reason always seemed to be packaging; it was never packaged right, if it was packaged at all. Vern would get some really good, hooky, hard-core country song halfway up the chart, and his record company would go out of business. He'd get a new record company, get another record on the chart, and watch as the new company didn't promote it. He'd get another record on the chart, and the company which didn't promote the last one couldn't get good distribution for the new one. It wasn't anything momentous, like being born Hank Snow's double or having Ralph Emery not admire him, that cost Vern his rightful place among country music's living legends; it was just simple things, some squirrel littering the works when the deal went down, some outfit battling out of their league or just some dumb accident.

And that's really true. Chart positions don't lie, so the music was in order—but chart positions don't mean a whole lot if people can't walk into a store and buy the record. That requires grease, and grease is the one thing Vern never had. He had the voice, he behaved himself well, he looked the part, and he knew what to do—his records always showed a canny sense of what would or would not wash at any given time—but the poor man says he never had a lawyer worth spitting at.

Vern himself does not put his story in quite these terms: equipped with both a well-bred country boy's personal modesty and a Christian gentleman's unwillingness to cast stones, he speaks softly and somewhat generally (if not quite evasively) about the various organizations and individuals who have "handled" his Nashville career. Basically, he wants to forget the whole grisly business, but will allow a few remarks if really pushed.

Two major misfortunes, he says, were a staff change at Elektra Records soon after he was signed to the label, and the similarly-timed bankruptcy of Ovation Records. He notes that these incidents were just the tip of the iceberg which sank his career time and time again. "It just goes on and

on," he says. "We'd be here a week if I told you the whole story. I'd just as soon hang it up."

I press him further. Reluctantly, he says that "it was the people I worked with, son. I wouldn't say they were crooks, but they weren't honest."

It is very plain that the next question—"Who?"—should not cross my lips, so I ask instead about why, after his first few years in Nashville in the late 1960's, he gave it all up and went into the glass repair business in Georgia.

"Well, that was all from signing my name too much," he says. "It got so that I was working all the time, and everybody was getting paid but me. I couldn't make a living for myself because all kinds of other people were living off me. So all I could do was quit, and that's what I did."

Vern spent six years in the glass business and did quite well for himself, but as he puts it, he came back to the record business for "just the love of music, I guess."

In 1976 he took himself to Nashville with enough cash to pay for his own recording sessions—no advances, deals with producers, or other potential boobytraps this time around—and cut two songs which convinced Elektra Records to sign him to a contract. Both songs ended up in the Top Ten, but that's when the staff

change left him out in the cold. One imagines that some serious gnashing of teeth occurred in the Gosdin household around this time, and continued through the subsequent Ovation Records fiasco, but this time Vern didn't quit. Neither did he go disco, take to strong drink, or shoot up the offices of certain middlemen; he simply persevered until he found the right management, The Management Group, and the right record company, Compleat Records, a small label with a Polygram distribution deal, with whom, he notes with a certain amount of wonder, he works "together, in the same direction."

You know the rest: it began with "If You're Gonna Do Me Wrong (Do It Right)," which stayed on the charts for thirteen weeks, continued through "Way Down Deep" (again, thirteen weeks), and "I Can Tell By the Way You Dance"—Number One! That last record was Vern's sixteenth chart single since 1976; "Turn, Turn, Turn" is his seventeenth.

The odd mix of elements in "Turn, Turn, Turn" is a reflection of a rather odd period in Vern's career. An Alabama native who worked with his father and two brothers in a "bluegrass/gospel/country" band on radio in Montgomery, Alabama and on TV in Columbus, Georgia, he left all that behind him in 1965 and headed west to sunny Southern California.

There, in Orange County, he and his brother Rex worked the honky-tonks and Army and Navy bases. Chris Hillman was a member of their band, and through him the brothers connected to the SoCal "hootenanny" scene, by all accounts a fun-filled and highly creative phenomenon featuring the likes of Glen Campbell, the Mamas and the Papas, Leon Russell, and the musicians (including Hillman and Roger McGuinn) who would become the Byrds.

When Hillman left their band to go with the Byrds, the Gosdins participated in Byrd activities—singing harmony on records, opening the road show, and so on—but Vern was never really comfortable with the scene. He was very much a country person born and raised, and while a lot of country-type music came out of the So-Cal axis (the Byrds, after all, began the whole country-rock movement with their *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album), the people involved were hardly good ol' boys. Some of them were from the country, but on their way to Mars (dead or alive), while most of the others were middle-class poet/musicans caught up in the any-old-frontier-busting madness of California and the revolutionary tide of the times.

Such goings-on were not for Vern, and this meant that as one after the other of his contemporaries were signed and contracted and distributed unto a "youth market" of unprecedented size, enthusiasm, and affluence, he and Rex weren't. It was O.K. in those days for a rock band to play

country music for Baby Boom dopers, but that audience viewed real country bands as outfits only slightly less unsettling than the First Air Cavalry Division which was doing such a hot job in Vietnam.

"That was quite a trip, son," Vern remembers. "I saw about everything there is to be seen, I guess. There were Rex and I, watching all these people take off, and maybe the fact that we never fooled around with drugs kept us from getting anywhere. I always felt like that might have hurt my career—but it helped me in other ways, and I've never regretted not getting more involved."

He adds that "I cut a lot of country songs in Los Angeles, but none of them sounded country. They sounded like a country singer with a rock band behind him, which is what they were. There's something different about the engineers and musicians in Los Angeles. It just don't come out like it does in Nashville."

Therefore Vern picked up and moved his career to Music City, alone now because of a falling-out with Rex. In Nashville, he figured, he could do what he does without having to deal with trends and revolutions and space cases and all. He was right: all he had to deal with back east were wolves, squirrels, and other pesky examples of the traditional music business fauna.

I don't wake up worrying anymore," says Vern. He is sitting in the The Management Group's offices, modern edifices in the heart of Music Row, and there does indeed seem to be an atmosphere of calm efficiency to the operation. The TMG personnel are young and aggressive, and their interest in upward mobility and Vern's desire to actually make money off hit records coincide nicely. As Vern and I roll tape, for instance, the TMG people are in the back offices sampling a truly beautiful example of product diversification, Arctic whitefish pulped and flavored and reconstituted as an affordable substitute for lobster, shrimp, and crab, and this impresses me no end. We're looking at the future here (I mean, really—the LoCal culture meets the cash crunch! Way to go!), and Vern is a part of it. He is TMG's star, and that bodes very well indeed for the boy.

The pleasures of low anxiety are Vern's lot these days, and he is responding well. He has taken a real-music risk with "Turn, Turn, Turn," he has recorded a long-wished-for gospel album, *If Jesus Comes Tomorrow, What Then?*, and he is having fun with his writing.

This last item began as a response to career frustration back in the bad old days—"I just got tired of looking in the bottom drawer for material, after everyone else," he says. "It was like picking out your cleanest dirty shirt, so I said 'to hell with it' and started writing myself"—but it has become a pleasant obsession. "I love to

write," he says. "I never thought I would, but it's a whole new ballgame, and it's a good game. It's a lot of fun looking for ideas, looking at billboards and listening to people in restaurants and stuff."

And that, really, is the kicker. You get the distinct sense that Vern doesn't really know how good he is. This is a common enough syndrome among country singers and writers—because they didn't get an education, they figure that they're not as worthy as some California suburbanite-turned-revolutionary or Yankee publishing heiress-turned-pop-sensitivity-maven—but most of them get over that impression fairly early in their careers, usually when the big bucks and the loud praise start coming in. That didn't happen to Vern: he has had to wait twenty years before understanding that his personal creative thought processes are a.) as valid as anyone else's, and b.) bankable.

The kicker to the kicker was a real-life event, Vern's nomination for a CMA Horizon Award in 1983 and 1984. Nobody gets nominated by the CMA unless they meet certain rather rigid requirements, the most vital being that quite apart from talent and basic presentability and even recent success on the charts, an artist must have lawyers/accountants/managers/agents with real street addresses to which royalty checks, subpoenas, and the like can be delivered in the routine course of affairs. Giving Tootsie's Orchid Lounge or Big Bob's "We Press 'Em and Dress 'Em" Productions as one's business address, no matter how accurate, just doesn't cut it when one is being considered as an officially endorsed Ambassador of Country Music.

In 1983, Vern met this requirement in full for the first time, and that was just plain nice for everybody involved. There he was, looking like a farmer lined and worn by nothing more complicated than forty-plus years of weather and hard times, surrounded by all these Debbi's and Bobbi's and Wayne's and Bruce's in their short new video-compatible haircuts and little narrow shiny ties, longing for enough new bucks to support their hard drug life styles and keep those bright, tight friends-and-neighbors grins on-line—and you know what? Although he didn't win (you can never be too cautious in these affairs), the unlikeliness of his image in this context did not obscure the fact that a whole lot of people were rooting for him in spirit.

Vern, you see, is of the same generation as Haggard and Waylon and Don Williams and Charley Pride and Willie Nelson and Tom T. Hall, and a lot of Nashville professionals in the CMA crowd must have been wondering what the man could have accomplished in those twenty years if he'd had the right lawyer.

That's a fascinating question, but it's irrelevant now. All that remains is the future. One hopes that Vern will use it well not just safely.

Country at the Core

KEITH WHITLEY

From northeastern Kentucky to the front lines of modern bluegrass music, Keith Whitley kept it country in his heart. With freedom and a lot of help from a friend, he has edged into the music he feels is his own.

If there is any conclusion you could draw from the story of Keith Whitley's ascension to his present status as RCA Records' most promising hard country vocalist, it would either be that talent seeks its own level, or, even simpler, that it's a much smaller world than we sometimes think.

Back in the late 1960's, in Eastern Kentucky, when Whitley was just 13 years old and playing in his very first bluegrass band, he met another earnest 13-year-old bluegrass singer who was just as eager to play and just as immersed in the traditional bluegrass style of the Stanley Brothers as Keith was at the time. The other singer's name was Ricky Skaggs.

"Ricky and I met at a fiddlers' convention at Ezel, Kentucky," he recalls nostalgically. "We got to talking, and we ended up playing and singing together. Before long, he joined this little band I had, The East Kentucky Mountain Boys. After that, we sang together constantly, night and day. Our voices just had a natural blend. People who heard us often thought we were brothers. And the fact is, I ended up being closer to Ricky than I was to my own brothers."

A couple of years later, the legendary Ralph Stanley himself got a chance to hear these two enthusiastic young disciples of his. He was so impressed that he invited them to join his band, The Clinch Mountain Boys. Whitley and Skaggs recorded a

half dozen or so albums together as part of Stanley's band, and Stanley helped them record two duet albums of their own, *A Tribute to the Stanley Brothers*, and *A Second Generation Bluegrass* on the Rebel label. These Skaggs/Whitley albums won awards as the best bluegrass albums of the year; and the two young men were hailed as the saviors of the traditional bluegrass sound.

Not long afterward, the two parted ways. Each left Ralph Stanley's band in order to follow his own distinct musical path—both of which, years later, would eventually lead to Nashville. Whitley formed his own half-bluegrass, half-country band, The New Tradition, later known as The Country Store. This group soon developed a strong following in the Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia region, a hotbed of bluegrass music. Later, in the mid-1970's, he rejoined Ralph Stanley for a several-year stint as lead singer.

Though Whitley and Skaggs did keep in touch over the years, their musical paths did not cross again until very recently. By updating his old-timey bluegrass sound with modern electric country instrumentation, Skaggs has emerged on CBS Records as one of Nashville's most influential new artists. Now, Whitley, too, seems to have a big future in the country charts. He's just released his first album, *A Hard Act to Follow*, on RCA Records, which is just across the street from, and the arch-rival of, CBS, Skaggs' label.

by Bob Allen





“Country music has always been my first love, and I don’t remember a time when I didn’t want to be a country singer.”

But once you get past the coincidences of it being a small world or the idea that talent seeks its own level, the similarities between Whitley and Skaggs end. If you listen to Whitley’s music on *A Hard Act to Follow*, it is apparent that he and Skaggs, musically speaking, are worlds apart.

“The bluegrass influence is very predominant in Ricky’s music, whereas it’s real subtle in mine,” explains Whitley. *A Hard Act to Follow* is, in fact, cast in a hardcore honky-tonk country vein that is not only strongly reminiscent of Lefty Frizzell, but also quite possibly the hardest hard country album recorded in Nashville for a major label in quite a few years.

“In addition to the bluegrass and the Stanley Brothers, I’ve also taken in a number of other influences like Lefty Frizzell, Hank Williams and George Jones,” Whitley adds. “Really, most of what I carry over from bluegrass is the way I learned to emotionally interpret a song. Other than that, it’s very subtle, and it’s not something you’ll notice too much on the surface.”

At first, such a drastic musical departure into honky-tonk country might seem strange for a 29-year-old singer who, as former lead singer for two notable bluegrass groups, Stanley’s Clinch Mountain Boys and J. D. Crowe and The New South, came to be one of the most popular and celebrated singers on the bluegrass circuit. It’s particularly unusual when you consider that a huge, often insurmountable ideological chasm exists between the country music world and the bluegrass world. For instance, there are quite a few dyed-in-the-wool bluegrass fans out there who wouldn’t be caught dead listening to a country radio station, or paying to hear a band that—God forbid!!—featured a steel guitar, drums, or any electric instrument that fell outside the realm of the traditional all-acoustic guitar/banjo/mandolin/fiddle/stand-up bass bluegrass arsenal.

Whitley found this out firsthand a number of times when he tried to slip in some of the hard country music that is nearest and dearest to his heart when he was still touring the bluegrass festival circuit.

“Often, there was some rumbling and some dissension among the bluegrass fans,” he admits. “One time, when I was with J. D. Crowe’s band, we toured with drums. They just about flat-out refused to accept that.

“Admittedly,” he continues, “a little hostility had to be overcome in order to keep my fans in bluegrass interested in me when I began making a transition over into country. But I had to go through it,

because country music has always been my first love, and I don’t ever remember a time in my life when I didn’t want to be a country singer. It’s just that I spent a lot of time in the bluegrass field trying to figure out how to get started in the country field.”

Whitley recalls that the very first music that he heard and grew to love in his native northeastern Kentucky, where he was born in 1955, was his mother’s collection of Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Marty Robbins and George Jones records. In fact, he made his debut of sorts on the Buddy Starcher radio show in Charleston, West Virginia, at age eight, singing a rendition of Hank Williams’ classic, “You Win Again.”

But as he got older, he came to realize that the only other musicians in his neck of the woods were bluegrass pickers. So that’s what he, too, out of necessity, finally turned to, as well.

It wasn’t until 1972, after he’d left Ralph Stanley’s band (Carter Stanley, the other half of the Stanley Brothers, had died in 1966) that his gradual evolution back toward country music began. This was when he formed his own band, The New Tradition, and was, for a while, able to straddle both musical worlds.

“We did country material with straight-on bluegrass arrangements,” he explains. “We did songs by Tom T. Hall, George Jones, Lefty Frizzell and Gordon Lightfoot. But we didn’t make audiences mad, because we used all-acoustic instruments and arrangements.”

In 1978 Whitley left Ralph Stanley’s Clinch Mountain Boys for the second time and joined up with J. D. Crowe’s band, The New South. His association with Crowe proved to be the stepping stone he needed. “He let me be the front man and the guitarist, and he also let me bring new material and ideas into the band.”

Whitley recorded two albums with Crowe on Rounder Records. The first was the noteworthy *My Home Ain’t in the Hall of Fame*, which reflected what Crowe and the band were doing onstage with Whitley out front: country material played with straight-on bluegrass instruments and arrangements. But their second album, *Somewhere Between*, released in 1981, was nothing less than an obscure country classic. Crowe produced the album, but otherwise elected to turn it over to Whitley. It was recorded in Bull Run Studios, near Nashville, and featured a line-up of top Nashville country session pickers. With Whitley singing lead on

songs by Tom T. Hall, Merle Haggard, Lefty Frizzell and Billy Joe Shaver, the album became his first real showcase as a country vocalist.

“*Somewhere Between*, due to J. D.’s generosity and open-mindedness, was actually a Keith Whitley album rather than a J. D. Crowe album,” he explains. “In fact, besides producing it, all Crowe chose to do was play banjo on a couple of songs and sing a little background harmony here and there. Even though it was marketed as a bluegrass album, it was country all the way.

“In a way, J. D. Crowe is the one who made possible everything that’s happened to me since,” Whitley adds warmly.

Even before the fine *Somewhere Between* was released in 1981, rough tapes of it were circulating around Music Row. Through the assistance of booking agent Don Light and veteran publicist Bonnie Rasmussen, these tapes eventually came to the attention of Norro Wilson at RCA, who is the producer of Whitley’s new *A Hard Act to Follow*.

When it came to recapturing the flavor and spirit of the good old hard country sound in the sessions for *A Hard Act to Follow*, Wilson and Whitley had a solid meeting of minds.

“Never once did Norro try to tell me how to sing anything. We talked about arrangements and I told him I wanted to get the old emotional, cryin’ style of steel guitar, so we got John Hughey. We also decided to use the old ‘Tic-Tac’ electric six-string bass, which was real prominent on the old Frizzell records. So we got Harold Bradley for that.

“Most of all,” he adds, “we didn’t want it to sound dated. We wanted to make sure it was 1984 music. So we also put on a Rhodes electric piano and some other contemporary touches.”

The new album seems likely to launch Whitley into the same stratosphere presently inhabited by a new generation of great hard country singers like John Anderson, George Strait, and John Conlee.

In the meantime, though he and Skaggs have taken divergent musical paths, the friendship between these Kentucky boys persists. The two of them recently came together in a touching moment when they rejoined Ralph Stanley on stage to sing a few songs at a local Nashville night spot.

“Ricky and I don’t get to see as much of each other as we’d like, because he’s on the road so much,” Whitley smiles warmly. “But I would say some duets with the two of us are a definite possibility for the future. Ricky’s said he’d be open to that, and I know I’d sure love it!” ■

CONNIE SMITH

A Traditionalist Comes Back to the Fold

Connie says she hasn't changed. But now it's time to re-claim what was her own: a big share of the limelight in the country music world. Singers and songwriters are standing in line to welcome her home.



Connie Smith's enthusiasm courses over the telephone wire like electricity. For good reason. After nearly half a dozen years of being "clear out of the music business," the diminutive country singer with the big country voice is steadily getting back in.

It's been twenty years since Connie arrived on the music scene with her powerful rendition of "Once a Day." Her last big success was in the late 1970's with "I Just Want to be Your Everything," a song she did for Monument Records. When Monument's financial difficulties and ultimate demise made distribution of her album next to impossible, Connie decided to concentrate on the other elements of her life for awhile.

by Mary Ellen Moore

Connie Smith's Family Album



Two things Connie never gave up were her appearances on the Opry, even when pregnant, and her faith.



Strong family ties are another important aspect of Connie's life.



"I was so busy with my kids, my ministry and counseling, my house, my husband," she explains in her rapid-fire manner. (She's married to Marshall Haynes, an advertising salesman with a Nashville television station.) "I had health problems, but I think I was just worn out from having my last three kids so fast. I had to let go of something, and the only thing I could let go of was my country music."

One thing she never let go of was her regular appearances at the Grand Ole Opry. She always has felt a strong loyalty to the Opry although for a few years she sang only gospel on its stage.

With her five kids no longer toddling around in diapers (they range from eight

to 21), Connie began to have time for herself again, and the children actually gave her the impetus to get her going again in the music business.

"My sixteen-year-old son would watch the country music awards shows on television," she recalls, "and would ask, 'Mama, why aren't you on those awards shows anymore?' I would explain that it was because I chose to have them instead, thinking that they would know how much I loved them. But I found they just felt responsible for me giving up something that I had wanted to do. They're real excited that I'm doing this again."

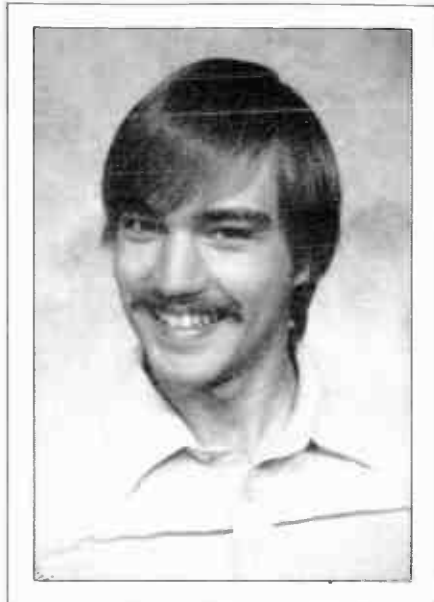
About a year ago, she put together a new six-piece band and has been touring, playing clubs and festivals. A recording

contract with Epic Records is imminent.

"The natural thing for me to do is sing," she explains. "I love to record, I love to take a song and make it mine."

Itried to be what my concept of a godly woman was—carrying soup to the poor and ministering to others' needs." But Connie knew that God had given her a voice meant to sing country music, and she realized, as she said in another interview many years ago, "I'm sure God loves country singers as much as he loves anybody."

Her decision made, she's getting back into the business full tilt. Although she won't spend as much time on the road as she did during the earlier years, she's en-



Clockwise, 21 year old Darren Justin, 10 year old Julie Rae, eight year old Jodi Leigh and nine year old Jeanne Lynn are all proud of their Mom and look forward to her return as a performer.



Recently with Kerry Alan, now 16.



joying the time spent there now, especially when she can take one of her children along for a little special quality time.

"I've got a fan club for the first time in twenty years," she says. "I'm just going at it in a more enjoyable way. I've learned there's not enough of you to go around when you try to be everything to everyone."

One high point in all this was Connie's visit with Nashville's songwriters during the autumn country music convention. She found several of the industry's top songwriters more than just a little eager to write for her.

A writer herself, she says she's written very little recently. "I think it's something that comes in spurts," she explains. "I'm

finding that I'm just getting ideas for songs again." She plans to get together with songwriter Rhonda Fleming and her piano player, Rich Whalen, for some collaborative songwriting.

She also found many of country music's best singers eager to record duets with her—Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson and Gene Watson among others. "Once I get my own things going, I'd like to do that. That would be great fun," she laughs. "Me with all those guys."

Meanwhile, she's begun looking for songs for her upcoming Epic album, which will be produced by Jerry Kennedy, who's produced Reba McEntire and The Statlers. Connie knows Jerry from a different perspective—two decades ago, he played

guitar for "Once a Day."

"We talked for two hours," she says, "and I knew that his and my ideas were very similar. When I record, I get very involved. I want to do it all, and Jerry wants that, too."

Connie still has no aspirations to go pop and, probably because of the success of such traditionalists as Ricky Skaggs and The Judds, the music hierarchy is agreeing that she should indeed do what she does best. "Traditional country," she says. "Just what I always did. I'm still a hillbilly."

And as her deep-throated laugh comes across the phone wires, we can tell that Connie Smith is just as excited about all this as her kids.

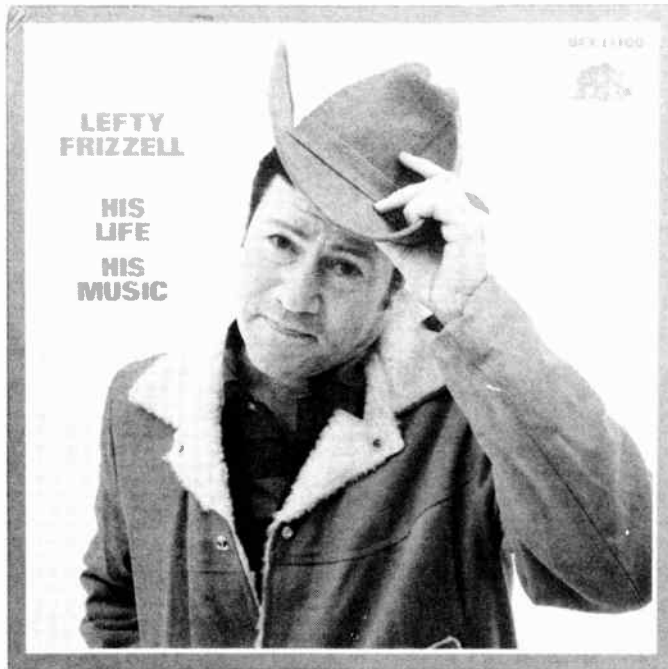
Record Reviews

Lefty Frizzell
His Life—His Music
Bear Family BFX 15000-15
(German Import)

The emergence of Lefty Frizzell as an acknowledged country music fountainhead really began a dozen years ago, before he died, when CBS reissued the classic album *Lefty Frizzell Sings the Songs of Jimmie Rodgers*. At the time Lefty was redefining his own music. He was at work on a compelling debut album on ABC Records that would have re-established him in the mainstream, had he not died at age 47 in 1975.

From then on he became a true cult figure. Not only did longtime disciples like Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson publicly honor him, younger performers like John Anderson evoked his spirit. The Burrito Brothers' John Beland championed his election to the Hall of Fame, which occurred in 1982. At that point Rounder Records reissued two albums of early material, and Lefty's brother David produced a Lefty reissue on Columbia with modern backing overdubbed. But Bear Family Records has now made all this irrelevant with their magnificent 14-record boxed set, programmed chronologically, with a full-length illustrated book (not a booklet) by Charles Wolfe. There are 239 tracks in all, 50 previously unissued.

Nearly everything Lefty recorded for Columbia over 22 years and in the two years he spent with MCA is included, the exceptions being two 1958 sessions CBS was unable to locate in their vaults and some



later tracks. Plus, the additions are outstanding. With the cooperation of the Frizzell family, we have what may be Lefty's original demo recordings done before he signed with Columbia in 1950, including a decidedly racier version of "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time," a variety of interesting recordings and a couple of live radio shows done for Armed Forces recruiting in the 1950's and 1960's.

This album lets us savor Lefty's entire recording career, starting with the first 1950 session that produced "I Love You a Thousand Ways" and "If You've Got the Money." The magnificence of that early music, with its rollicking accompaniment and Lefty's undulating, pliable phrasing can be heard here in all its glory. As in the Jerry Lee Lewis Sun Box, the material runs chronologically, ending with Lefty's final 1974 recordings for ABC (now

MCA). We can now hear unissued first tries at classics like "My Baby's Just Like Money" and never-released tunes such as "You Want Everything But Me" that could have been hits. Finally, the compelling imagery of songs like "How Long Will It Take" and the autobiographical "Just Can't Live That Fast (Anymore)" drive home Lefty's genius as a composer.

In fact one of the most amazing things about this body of work is its sheer consistency. This is not to say every track is a gem (no one gets off that lucky, not even Hank Williams), yet from the earliest to the latest periods of Lefty's career, he managed to write and record songs of enduring quality. The delicate beauty of "The Waltz of the Angels" and the drunken good humor of "Mama!" hold up well nearly 30 years later.

A few oddities also appear. "Sick, Sober and Sorry" is an

engaging 1957 duet with Johnny Bond. Equally surprising is his lowdown 1957 version of "Mailman, Bring Me No More Blues," a number Buddy Holly also recorded, and the tough rockabilly of "You're Humbuggin' Me." "Silence" is a startling, soft-rock ballad that also places Lefty in a different, but effective context.

By 1956 Lefty had left the fertile Dallas atmosphere that had nurtured him early on and was recording in Hollywood and Nashville. It was inevitable that the Nashville sound of the late 1950's would intrude, demonstrated by the 1958 re-recordings of his big hits, rife with slick musicianship, choirs and sanitized lyrics (the references to beer and wine were deleted from "If You've Got the Money"). Yet he made the new sound work for him a year later with the atmospheric, folk-flavored "Long Black Veil." There was also a wealth of mediocre material during this time, including "So What! Let It Rain," a third-rate Ricky Nelson imitation. He tried a variety of different sounds with varying results and an occasional surprise. Lefty was never a saga singer like Johnny Horton, yet in 1964, Don Wayne's mini-drama "Saginaw, Michigan" became one of his greatest successes. The original, unadulterated 1960's material David Frizzell overdubbed on *The Legend Lives On* in 1983 holds up so well, one wonders why he bothered to try to improve it.

A new complexity infused itself into Lefty's music in 1969 when he started recording sophisticated material like "Honky-Tonk Hill" (a Shafer-Owens composition) and "Watermelon Time in Georgia," Harlan Howard's Jimmie Rod-

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Record Reviews

gers-based number. "Honky-Tonk Stardust Cowboy," one of his most underrated numbers, is a look back at the walking wounded of Lefty's own musical generation. It seemed that, as the 1970's came round and country music headed toward the neo-conservative sophistication of the Outlaws, Lefty himself was headed in that direction, aided and abetted by the compositions of his friend Whitey Shafer (who also played a huge part in Moe Bandy's early successes).

Lefty dove into the changes in country music when he signed with ABC in 1972. With Don Gant's sympathetic production, he redefined himself and his music, taking on Jimmy Buffett's "Railroad Lady" effortlessly, and recording an entirely new generation of classics like "I Never Go Around Mirrors" and "That's the Way Love Goes," cut back-to-back in one 1973 session. These songs stand with his finest work. Here, too, are interesting unissued tracks like "I Wonder Who's Building the Bridge," a waltz-tempo confessional. Listening to the ABC material leaves little doubt that Lefty was on his way to a major comeback when he died.

Aside from the music, enough cannot be said about the packaging of this set. Bear Family's Richard Weize has spared no expense to create a true celebration of Lefty's music. Each of the albums comes in a color cover featuring tinted photos or rare color photos as well as exceedingly rare 1950's in-studio candid photos. A few covers are beautiful reproductions of Lefty's old album covers. Wolfe's book, complete with reproductions from Lefty's old songbooks and a truly complete session discography, is probably the last word on the man.

The fundamental point of taking in an artist's entire recording career in one massive dose is that their strengths and frailties quickly rise to the surface. In Lefty's case it is obvious that he was able to maintain the essence of his music

through two generations. So gifted and important an artist *deserves* a collection like this one. Bear Family has set a standard for quality and attention to detail that complements Lefty's own excellence. Without question, this is the finest reissue on a single country music artist ever.

—RICH KIENZLE

George Jones
Salutes Hank Williams
Mercury 822 646-1



Surely nobody can be too surprised at George honoring Hank Williams, the man George tried to emulate the most, whose legend damn near killed him. Hank had a powerful and lasting influence on George's music. Listening to any of George's early hits makes the connection quite obvious.

George recorded this tribute album for Mercury in the early 1960's, in the wake of his earliest successes, and it has been out of print for years. What we have here is not an exact reproduction of the earlier album, since there are fewer songs than the original and new liner notes by Elvis Costello, one of George's biggest fans. Nevertheless, it's worthwhile.

George was clearly comfortable with the material. He'd probably sung it in any number of Texas beerjoints from the late 1940's on. Indeed, numbers like "Hey, Good Lookin'" and "There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight" sound almost custom-designed for his wrenching, tense, vocal phrasing. He tackles "Settin' the Woods on Fire"

and "Howlin' at the Moon" with the same looniness that showed up in his own novelties like "White Lightning" or "Who Shot Sam." "Jambalaya" and "Settin' the Woods on Fire" both get cheerful treatments, but he truly shines on the ballads like "Cold, Cold Heart" and "I Can't Help It." The backing is muted and unobtrusive, except for the tic-tac bass.

In the wake of the recent books about George, reissues of his Starday, Mercury and Musicor recordings are apparently coming right and left. Let's hope they're all this good.

—RICH KIENZLE

Steve Wariner
One Good Night
Deserves Another
MCA 5545



Languishing on a record label is the second-worst fate that can befall an artist. (The first is not having a label to languish on.)

Steve Wariner has been on the verge of stardom since he signed with RCA in 1978. Wariner was imported to the label by no less respected a talent than Chet Atkins; and from the first, he stood out as a performer to watch.

But record companies are fickle. An artist who's viewed as a potential superstar by everyone else can be overlooked in his own company. While the Nipper brass apparently agreed on Wariner's worth, the promised push never jelled.

In a case like this, the only thing to do is wait for the contract to run out, then sign with a label that shows real excitement. Which is what Wariner has done.

Despite its annoyingly-clever title, Wariner's *One Good Night Deserves Another* debut on MCA is a commendable effort. This is the album most of us suspected Wariner had in him, though it took new producers (Tony Brown and Jimmy Bowen) to bring it out of him.

The high points of the album are easily discerned: two stunning numbers, "What I Didn't Do," the album's first single, and "Some Fools Never Learn," both real gems.

"What I Didn't Do" casts Wariner in the unaccustomed role of bereft lover, victim of the "I-Took-Her-For-Granted-Now-Look-She's-Gone" syndrome. He's forced to abandon his eager-puppy cheerfulness

for a more somber mantle of maturity. This isn't the first time Wariner has sung about deflated romance and broken dreams; but his previous efforts never cut to the bone quite like this.

Equalling "What I Didn't Do" is "Some Fools Never Learn." Again it gives the singer a chance to stretch out and show what he's capable of producing vocally. Wariner's voice takes on a soulful sound, as the protagonist in the song struggles for self-control in a no-win situation. He suffers, tries to understand, rationalizes, slips back again. Old habits die hard.

Wariner is not the kind of artist to waste our time with cheating, sneaking-Sally-down-the-alley songs. He's an example of the new, young Sensitive Male, who woos us with openness. He probably goes through periods of introspection, doesn't believe in the double standard (a new first in country music?), handles affairs of the heart with grace and resolute optimism, and understands that it's OK to cry sometimes.

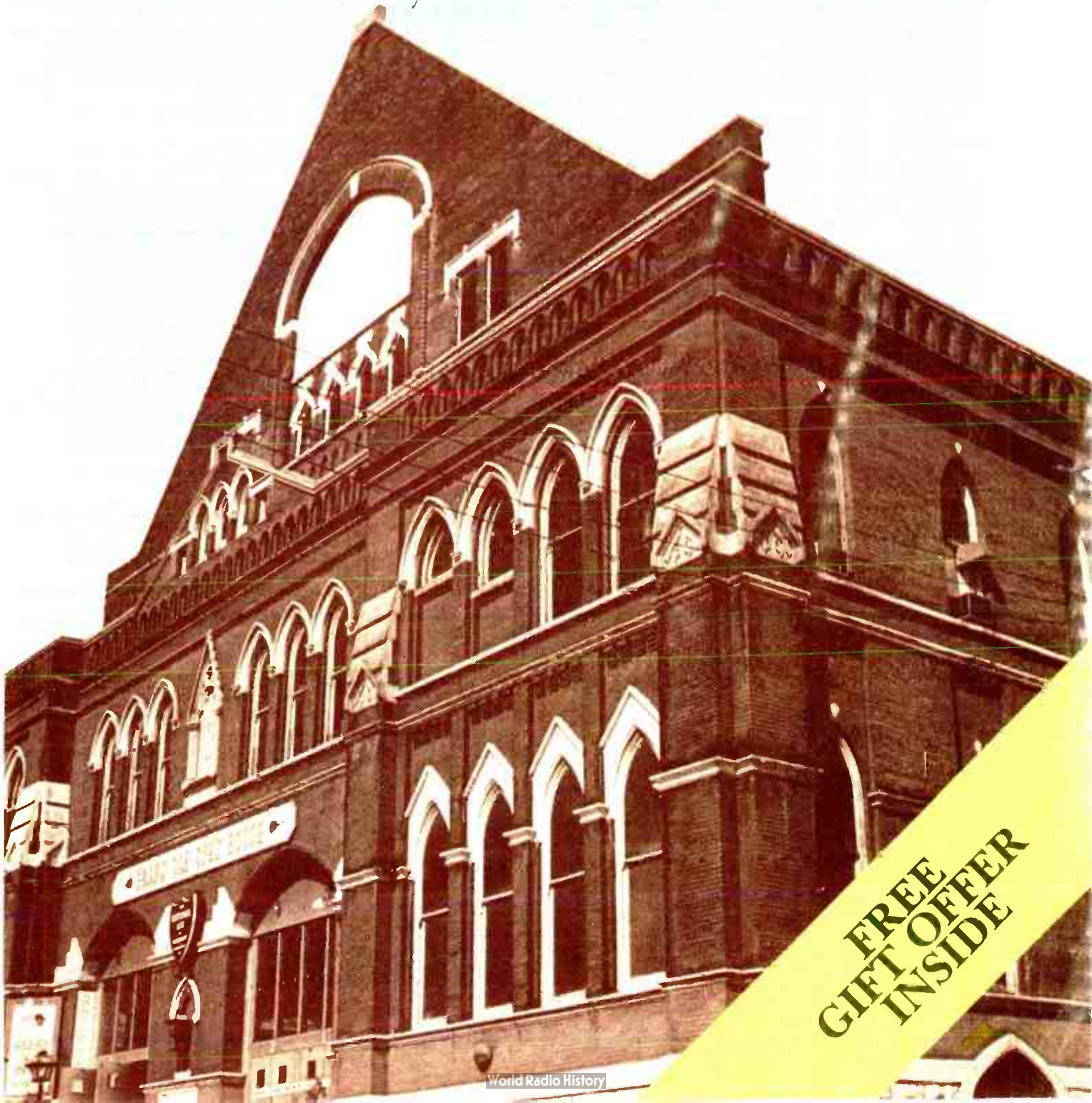
In the past, his records have been pleasant enough but not particularly powerful. Here he gets more than a few chances

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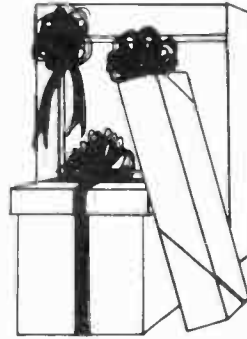
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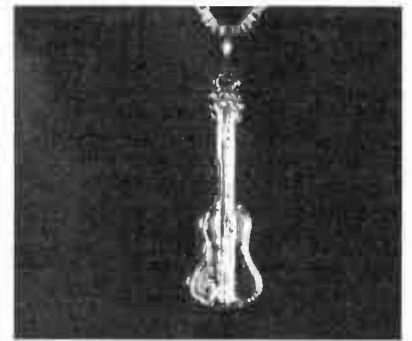
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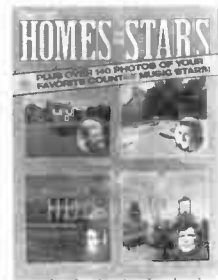
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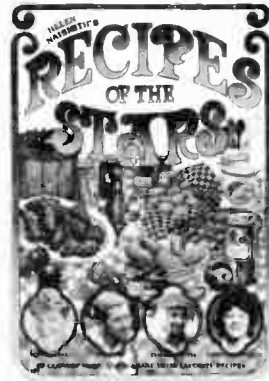


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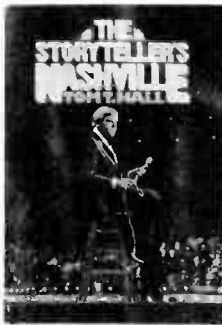
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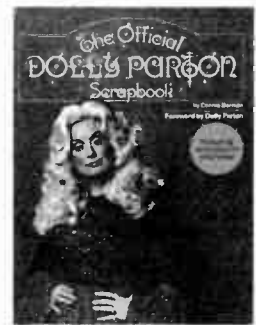
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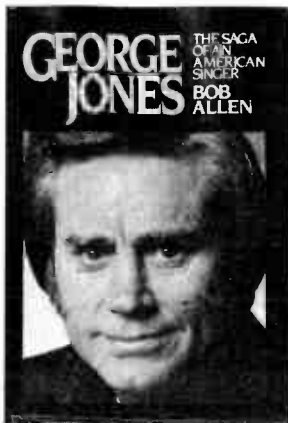
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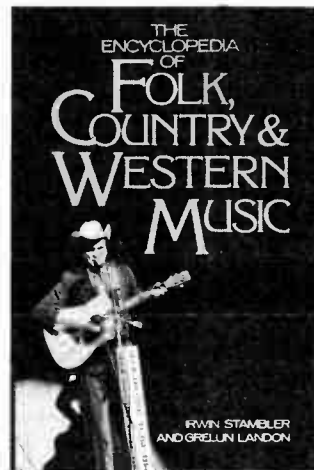
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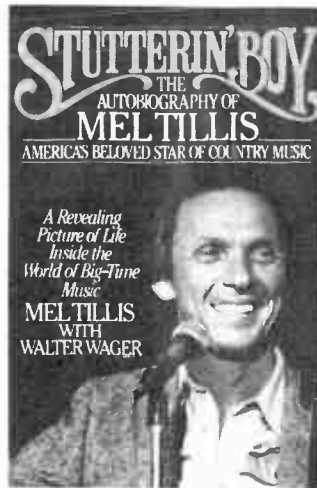


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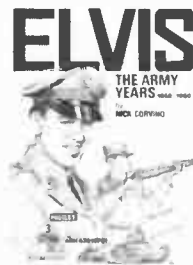
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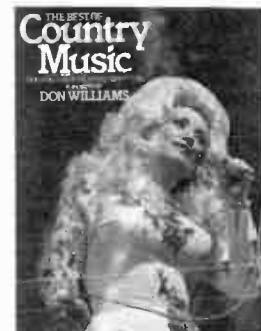
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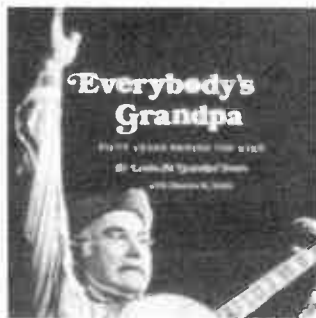
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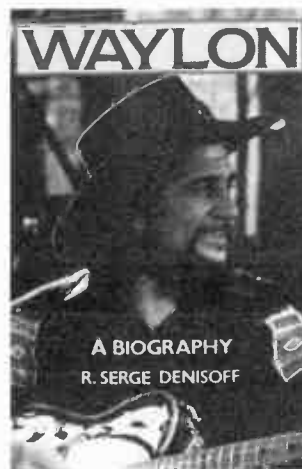
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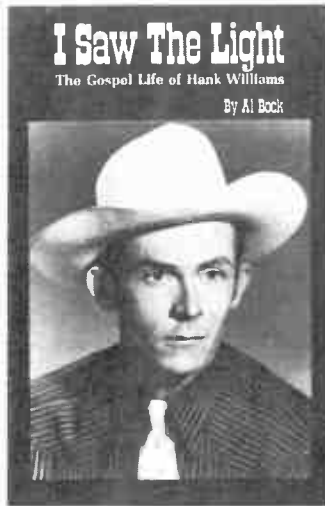


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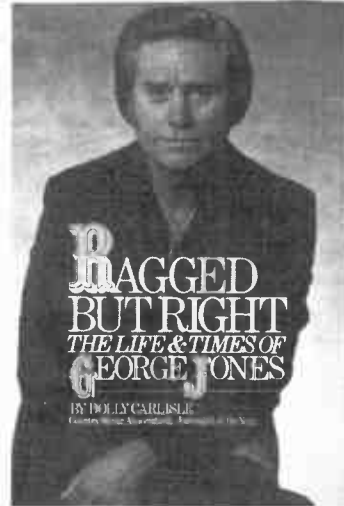


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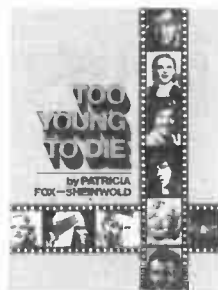
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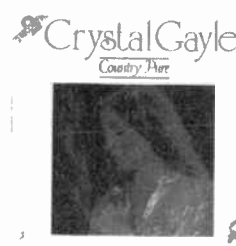
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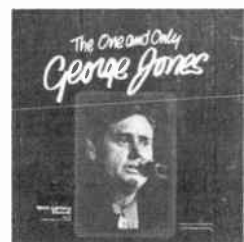
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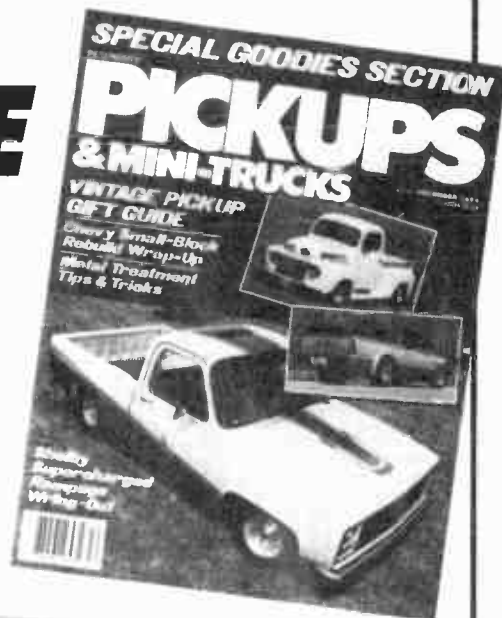


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to shine, including on a song he wrote himself, "You Can't Cut Me Any Deeper," and a Ronnie Robbins' song, "Gamblin' on Romance," where high-energy hijinks are classily united with an irresistible arrangement.

Despite its title, this album is a real album, not merely a collection of singles. Warner benefits from an all-star cast of musicians and studio celebrities to keep things moving along. Better yet, he's got producers who know how to showcase him properly. It's about time.

—KIP KIRBY



Gene Watson
Heartaches, Love and Stuff
MCA 5520

Old Gene doesn't mess around, you know. He does country music, and he doesn't care *who* knows it. You could say this was formula country music, but that overlooks the fact that when the formula works, as it does on most of the songs on Gene's *Heartaches, Love and Stuff*, the result is excellent country music.

I mean, this is what we used to call cryin'-in-your-beer music, before we got all classy and stopped drinkin' beer and hanging out in dives. For instance, there ain't a chance in the world that you'll hear "One Hell of a Heartache" in any bar with ferns hanging in the window that serves drinks like Pink Flamingos or whatever.

I mean, *college* students are never going to study "Wino's Prayer" for its deep, hidden

meaning, although they might puzzle over the title of "I Must Be Somebody Else." A college professor came over to my house once, a Ph.D. and everything. He had real long blond hair and said "Oh, wow" a lot, and he told me that he used Willie Nelson songs to teach his Contemporary American Poets class. That depressed me no end. Country Music 101, where the American aborigines come out of the mountains with fiddles and moonshine and begin to dance! Three credit hours, mid-term and final examinations, plus one paper on how does the music of Gene Watson compare and contrast with *Three's Company*?

See there? It ain't gonna happen, folks. Gene Watson uses fiddles and steel guitars the way they're supposed to be used, kinda crying-in-pain-like. I've found that the pointy-headed types jump back from a good crying steel the way a vampire hauls back from a chunk of garlic.

The next time I go to Nashville, I'm gonna carve me a cross out of a Gene Watson album and wear it around my neck. Then, every time somebody says "Crossover!", I'm gonna whip out my Gene Watson cross and shout, "Get thee behind me, Californian! The true faith is strong!" That oughta ice 'em. Good show.

—MICHAEL BANE

Deborah Allen
Let Me Be the First
RCA AHL1-5318

The thing I like about Deborah Allen on *Let Me Be the First* is that she doesn't sound exactly like the seven or eight billion other girl singers haunting Nashville these days. In fact, she and songwriter/husband Rafe VanHoy seem well on the way to establishing a distinct style for Ms. Allen that plays up her slightly off-beat voice instead of trying to make it sound like Janie Fricke's.

Secondly, she and VanHoy have avoided the savage attacks of the "cutes" that sometimes befall husband-wife teams. The two write almost all of Allen's songs, and for the most part they do an extremely good job of it. It's easy for a songwriter to *say* that he or she knows *exactly the right kind of song* for a singer; in real life, it's much, much harder to hit that mark.



Finally, Rafe VanHoy is a surprisingly restrained and tasteful producer. I say surprisingly because, with a few exceptions, songwriters don't make all that hot producers. The production process is a series of gives and takes, and more than one songwriter has been unwilling to give an inch. VanHoy has done a masterful job of framing and augmenting Allen's talents. There are little touches that stand out—the subtle sax on "Your Love", the *big woo*—a funky opening on "It's a Good Thing," the strong percussion line of "Prove You Right." The overall result is a carefully crafted album that *works*.

This is not normally a type of music I'm fond of, but after listening to this album a few times, I've reached a couple of conclusions. The first is that both Allen and VanHoy have a canny sense of not only her strengths as a vocalist, but her weaknesses as well. She's no torch singer. Her voice is a little thin and maybe without the range of some of the other big-shot women singers. If anything, Allen's voice reminds me of the rock girl-group singers from a few years back, and that's a similarity that Allen

and VanHoy exploit. That particular sound is very popular in rock today, and this album ought to firmly establish it in country as well. I mean, if she wanted to, Allen is the only woman in country music who *could* do a cover version of Madonna's "Like a Virgin" and still come out a country singer.

All in all, *Let Me Be the First* is a surprisingly good album, and it establishes Deborah Allen, along with The Judds, as among the top new female vocalists in country music.

Just as an aside, I was going to write this whole review without once mentioning the inside jacket photo, featuring, as it does, very much of Ms. Allen and, among other things, guaranteeing her place in the Hanes "Great Legs" Hall of Fame. Well, I can't do it. All I want to say is that not only is she one of the better singers around, Deborah Allen is the unconditional winner of the Nashville Living, Breathing Hot Number Sweepstakes. Ms. Allen, do you own any whips?

—MICHAEL BANE

Willie Nelson
City of New Orleans
Columbia FC39145

In the general scheme of things, Willie Nelson is music's Mount Rushmore.

He wears several faces. How many other artists could get by with his oblique and diversified song selections, alternating classic pop standards, jazzy re-notations, personal introspections and country fare in prolific succession?

Nelson has never allowed himself to be limited by anyone else's artificial ceiling of appropriateness. He's continued to sample freely from a musical smorgasbord, opening up realms of new possibilities for his audiences.

Like Mount Rushmore, he's become a national monument. For three decades, Nelson has

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made music the way he hears it, as he feels it, on his own terms. Whether one believes he's a true experimental country/jazz stylist or sings like he's got a clothespin over his nose, Willie still exerts a powerful influence on today's contemporary music.



City of New Orleans continues to explore the singer's fascination with old and new—although the old isn't so dated as earlier efforts like *Stardust*. (Lest we not forget, Nelson was there with the standards even before Ronstadt and Barry Manilow.)

The album is technically superior. Producer Chips Moman has rivaled his work on "Always on My Mind." The arrangements are highlighted by strikingly clear strings and acoustic guitar touches that silhouette Willie's vocals.

Almost all the song choices will be familiar ones. Nelson overlaps mood and style with customary abandon, deftly shuffling selections like "She's Out of My Life" (a 1980 hit for Michael Jackson), "Just Out of Reach," "Cry," "Please Come to Boston," "Until It's Time for You to Go," "Wind Beneath My Wings," "It Turns Me Inside Out," "City of New Orleans" and a lone Nelson-penned original, "Why Are You Pickin' on Me."

Willie's primary concern here—since these are basically major or minor classics in their own right—is with interpretation. He's a master, as we all know, of interpretation; when you aren't born with a perfect voice, you learn to compensate creatively. But this approach works better on certain songs

than others, because it's difficult sometimes to separate his versions from the originals.

Despite winsome performances on David Loggins' "Please Come to Boston," for instance, or Lee Greenwood's "It Turns Me Inside Out," Nelson just doesn't have the vocal intensity or urgency to match his predecessors.

However, Nelson's vocal limitations aren't blanket liabilities. Accept him on his own terms and his music is colorful and appealing. By and large, on *City of New Orleans* he sounds comfortable, in full voice, in total control. The songs are excellent; so is the musicianship. With one notable exception (the title cut, which drags on interminably), *City of New Orleans* is uncorked vintage Willie Nelson. This one will be selling for years.

—KIP KIRBY

Leon Russell
Hank Wilson,
Volume II
Paradise Records 0002

Turning on the TV late at night, I half expect to see a mail-order advertisement for this album: Leon Russell, decked out in dark sunglasses, huge black cowboy hat, rhinestone-studded suit, with his flowing white hair and beard, lip-synching the words to one of the 12 great country oldies



served up on this new album of his. In fact, I'd like to see such an ad, since that might be the only way that this noteworthy album, produced and released by Russell on his own Paradise

Records label, will get the attention that it deserves.

Hank Wilson, Vol. II is actually Russell's belated follow-up to *Hank Wilson's Back, Vol. I*, a similar package of effectively delivered country blasts from the past that Russell released as a tribute to his country roots in 1973, while still at the height of his rock 'n' roll fame.

Volume II, even though nearly twelve years in the making, is certainly a worthy sequel. It's also a welcome alternative to Russell's anemic and badly over-produced *Solid State* album of late last year.

There are few who can intermingle Hank Williams and high-tech and pull it off with the finesse that Russell does on *Hank Wilson, Vol. II*. Though there is an obvious tendency toward over-production and busyness on some of the intricately overdubbed and dense instrumental tracks, Russell's laconic and unobtrusive vocal readings provide an effective counterbalance.

His version of "Wabash Cannonball," a shadowy duet with Willie Nelson, clicks along like a smooth-running dynamo over a swirling, echoey air cushion of pianos, banjos, electric fiddles and electric guitars. On his own, Russell turns in a similarly invigorated and streamlined version of Hank Snow's "Movin' On."

On the surface, the album appears to be a thoughtful collection of country gems including Harlan Howard's "Heartaches by the Number," Ernest Tubb's "Waltz Across Texas" and three oft-recycled Hank Williams standards. However, Russell's renderings of some of these familiar songs are hard to fathom; his quirks of eccentricity—such as his jazz-like intro to "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" or his tossed-off version of "I Saw the Light"—merely obscure the emotional integrity of the familiar lyrics and melodies.

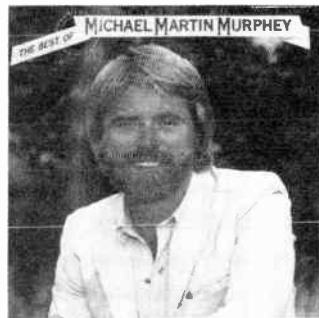
Overall, though, *Hank Wilson, Vol. II* has the comfortable, relaxed feeling of Leon

Russell, decked out in his cowboy persona, delivering some of his favorite hits of yesteryear with loving care and fondness. Better yet, there's 12 songs on here, as opposed to the mere ten that you'll find on most albums in this new era of cost-cutting and less for more.

—BOB ALLEN

Michael Martin Murphey
The Best of Michael Martin Murphey
EMI-America ST-17143

It seems inevitable that when an established recording artist with an impressive catalogue of past hits switches record companies, one of the first things the new company will do is trot him or her into the studio and re-record an album's worth of these old hits, in order to have some instant "product."



It goes without saying that these re-hashed versions of hits, often recorded in a few days, seldom pack the wallop of the originals which may have been recorded years, or even decades, earlier. Consider, also, that when an artist first records a song it is usually new and fresh to him also; but by the time he's returned to the studio to hastily assemble one of these "best of" packages, the emotional edge may be dulled by years of singing the song in concert, night after night.

Considering that about half the songs on this package are re-recorded Michael Martin Murphey hits of yesteryear, this same concern applies. His

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new versions of songs like "Wildfire" and "Geronimo's Cadillac" sound surprisingly fresh, but they don't hold a candle to the originals.

The other half of the songs on here sound better, because they have, in fact, been culled from the albums released by Murphey in the last three years, since he made his new onslaught into the country charts.

As a stopgap piece of product until the time is right to release his next all-new studio album, this one isn't too bad, but there's no denying that it's a strange, uneven, commercial re-packaging of the old and new Michael Martin Murphey.

—BOB ALLEN

Emmylou Harris *The Ballad of Sally Rose*

Warner Bros. WB-25205

Coming to grips with Emmylou Harris is not an easy thing. Coming to grips with Emmylou Harris' long-awaited concept album, *The Ballad of Sally Rose*, may be even harder. I'll say right up front that this may be a great album. It's certainly, far and away, the best thing Emmylou Harris has ever done... which is saying a lot.

It's also probably perfectly suited to the "new" Nashville of the 1980's—a spare, clean album with an almost gospel intensity, bearing the musical history of the last twenty years of country music in its 13 cuts. The comparison that immediately comes to mind is Willie Nelson's *Red-Headed Stranger* album, done—amazingly—ten long years ago.

The thing that makes *Sally Rose* such a hard album to grab hold of is that it is intensely personal. The story of Sally Rose, a girl from the west who went to work in a band and fell in love with the great but doomed bandleader is, of course, the story of Emmylou Harris. Her work with Gram

Parsons did set the stage for the coming of age of country music, and his story—like the stories of too many of the great rock figures of the 1960's—was a tragedy.



There are echoes of that tragedy throughout *Sally Rose*. *Red-Headed Stranger* handles tough material too, but it does it differently. From the very beginning, Willie Nelson casts his story in the terms of myth. It is more than the story of a lost love, it is a fable, a morality tale of souls lost and, ultimately, found. Emmylou Harris refuses to be a party to mythmaking. Sally Rose is a person, seemingly trapped between her music and her love. I suspect that in some way this is a fundamental difference between men and women. Men look outwards, trying to find, in their pain, a universal truth of sorts. Women look inwards, seeking the same answers in another direction. On side one, Sally Rose leaves her home for her music, meets her love and loses him. On side two, long tall Sally Rose and her red hot band are on the road, riding the white line.

The music is uniformly excellent, the production pristine. Emmy-Sally moves lightly through the country music styles of the last few decades, touching gospel, touching bluegrass, even touching the honky-tonk music of Hank Williams.

As good as it is, I found *Sally Rose* a melancholy album. In the end, the Red-Headed Stranger found some kind of redemption; I'm not so sure Sally Rose was so lucky. "We are born to live," she sings in

"Sweet Chariot," echoing the old gospel verse, "and we are bound to die."

There are some beautiful sections of this album—"I Think I Love Him," "Rhythm Guitar" and "Sweetheart of the Rodeo," for instance—but it is a fragile beauty, roses in the snow. In fact, that's the way I feel about the whole album—beautiful, fragile and ultimately, sad.

—MICHAEL BANE

Leona Williams *Someday When Things Are Good*

Mercury/Polygram

822 424-1M-1

Professionally speaking, Leona Williams has had a long shadow to come out from under. Being the ex-wife of a country legend (in her case, Merle Haggard), for one thing, is like being the son or daughter of a superstar: it's more often a liability than a benefit when it comes to launching a career on one's own. Also, the fact that she is over thirty and the fact that her musical tastes—unlike many artists on the country charts these days—are genuinely country seem to be two more strikes against her.

Hopefully, *Someday When Things Are Good*, Leona's long-awaited solo album from Mercury, will effectively surmount all these obstacles. The album certainly has enough depth and resounding strength to it to do so. Produced by Walter Haynes and Ray Baker, it features unimposing and determinedly country arrangements. (There is no shortage of good old "cryin' style" steel guitars here.) The arrangements serve to showcase both Leona's mature, low-key, but persuasive singing style and her remarkable gifts as a songwriter.

Leona turns in stirring renditions of two startling originals, the title song and "You Take Me for Granted," both of which were first popularized by

her ex-husband, Merle Haggard. For good measure, she even throws in some tongue-in-cheek social commentary with a third original song, "The More I See of Those Cowboys (The More I Think of Their Horse)."

Singing other people's songs, Leona shows a similar degree of grace and confidence. "Midnight Love" may perhaps startle a few of the more faint of heart with its candid images of sexual infidelity and misplaced affections. "The Telephone Line," on the other hand, is a delightfully good-natured commentary on the perils of contemporary motherhood.

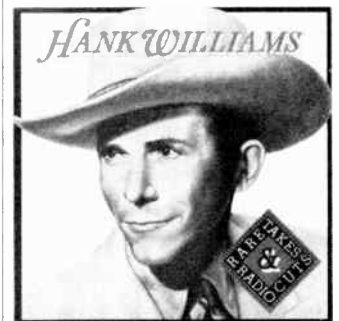
Hopefully *Someday When Things Are Good* will generate the interest that it will take to get Leona Williams, the solo artist, up on the country charts where she certainly deserves to be.

—BOB ALLEN

Hank Williams, Sr. *Rare Takes and Radio Cuts*

PolyGram 823-695-1 Y-1

Just when you thought all of Hank's recordings have made it onto the market, this album comes along. The Time-Life boxed set issued sometime ago revealed two heretofore unissued tracks, and now the demo files of Acuff-Rose music



publishing—Hank's publishers—reveal still more alternate takes of old favorites. It probably ought to be said that barring unforeseen circumstances, no vast slew of unissued Hank recordings remain to be found.

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Most of it has seen the light. Though we do know, for example, that Armed Forces Radio transcriptions of the Opry featuring Hank exist along with March of Dimes shows (which so far have only been bootlegged).

What we have here are different takes, often recorded at different times, of such favorites as "Honky-Tonk Blues" and "My Son Calls Another Man Daddy" as well as "I'd Still

Want You," one of Hank's lesser known numbers. Also, for the first time on album, we have the *original* 1947 version of "Honky Tonkin'," which was issued on the Sterling label (and re-recorded for MGM that same year). More interesting is a solo performance of "Little Paper Boy" taken from Hank's noon radio show at KWKH in Shreveport before he joined the Opry and never issued in any form. "Lovesick Blues,"

"Pan American," "Mind Your Own Business" and "I Saw the Light" all come from the *Health and Happiness Shows*.

Compared with the old MGM releases, Polygram is doing an outstanding job of packaging. Putting master discographer Bob Pinson, whose comprehensive Hank Williams discography (a listing of all recording sessions, dates, sidemen, etc.) is near completion, in charge was a welcome move. Pinson's

notes and research carry substantial authority, and are far more informative than the usual cliched nonsense that once passed for liner notes on Hank reissues.

Even if you have the Japanese Polygram boxed set or the Time-Life set, *Rare Takes* is a valuable supplement and one more indicator of the sustaining public interest in the Hank Williams legacy.

—RICH KIENZLE

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Buried Treasures

Re-issues, Rarities and the Hard-to-Find

by Rich Kienzle

There is such a thing as country radio today, though any resemblance to the days when performers sang live and disc jockeys had their own identities is purely coincidental. Live radio is still a reality on some smalltown stations, but, like Burma Shave signs, its time has largely passed.

Radiola, the label specializing in issuing vintage radio programs on records, runs the country gamut with *Classic Country-Western* (4-MR-2). The 4-record boxed set features 14 complete shows, ranging from 1934 to 1958, covering everything from early hillbilly and western music to 1950's mainstream material, all culled from syndicated radio shows.

The earliest material is a 1934 syndicated radio show by the little known Colonel Jack and Shorty's Hillbillies. This is pretty primitive stuff for modern tastes, yet many of the later programs have the same characteristics. For example, Colonel Jack's huckstering for Crazy Water Crystals, a popular 1930's laxative, doesn't differ much from the Armed Forces recruitment pitches on the 1950's shows. Listeners may sense a tradition.

Zeke Manners' 1935 performance reunites the Beverly Hill Billies, who pioneered country music broadcasting in Los Angeles. A Sons of the Pioneers radio transcription—one of their earliest—features the original group, with Roy Rogers singing lead on their classic "Cool Water." Blue Grass Roy's 1940 show features his Bradley Kincaid flavored vocals. The 1946 Foy Willing/Riders of the Purple Sage sides reflect more urbane, swinging western harmony vocals. The Hank Williams Hadacol *Health and Happiness Show*, part of the series recorded in 1949, was issued once before on a long out-of-print MGM album.

The 1950's material is equally fine. Marty Robbins' spot is pleasing and Ernest Tubb's represents the Texas Troubadour and his group at their peak. Hank Snow's is easily the strongest. From his invigorating version of "Caribbean" to his lowdown version of Jimmie Rodgers' "Anniversary Blue Yodel," he turns in a sparkling performance.

An even greater surprise is the *Columbia Country Caravan* from 1951, an attempt by Columbia producer Don Law and Dallas studio owner Jim Beck to create an Opry-style show in Dallas, centered around Lefty Frizzell, Billy Walker, Ray Price and others. The idea never jelled, but it is interesting to speculate on what might have been. The Spade Cooley shows feature the slick big band he led on his popular Los Angeles TV show in the late 1940's, with some pretty schmaltzy performances, but they also include some fine country comedy from Hank Penny and fine steel and guitar work by sidemen Noel Boggs and Jimmy Wyble. Charles Wolfe has contributed brief but well-researched notes on all these programs.

Dave Stogner never achieved the fame or success of Bob Wills in the Western Swing field. However, working out of Fresno, California in the 1940's and 1950's, he had a solid reputation, bolstered by a popular local TV show and (for a time) the services of former Wills fiddler Joe Holley. Cattle Records of Germany has brought together 14 vintage Stogner performances on *The King of West Coast Country Swing* (LP 63). That title is a gross exaggeration, for Stogner was a regional favorite at best. The band held to the funkier sounds of the Texas swing bands rather than following the lead of sophisti-

cated Los Angeles-based western outfits, a direction reflected on six 1957 numbers from their long out-of-print Decca album featuring Holley. "Yes Sir," the old Milton Brown standard, is particularly exciting here.

Roy Orbison's Sun recording career was nowhere near as extensive as Cash's, Perkins' or Lewis', yet it did give Roy his real start in music. *Roy Orbison: The Sun Years* (Charly CDX4) summarizes his entire recorded output for Sun and reveals not only his Texas country/rockabilly roots, but also the move toward ballads he brought to fruition on Monument in the 1960's. Record one begins with the original "Ooby Dooby" on the Je-Wel label, which predated the Sun version. "Go, Go, Go," an Orbison original, later achieved fame as "Down the Line," a Jerry Lee Lewis favorite. Numerous oddities are included, among them six demo recordings done at Sun in 1958 after he'd left the label, along with several later sessions on which he sang harmony or otherwise assisted. Orbison's finest work was not done at Sun, yet what he did there set the stage for everything that came afterward.

King Records' importance in the development of country music is legendary, though most of their most important material has been unavailable in recent years. Bear Family Records is rectifying this matter through a new series of re-issues of some of King's most important material, particularly in the area of Country Boogie, the idiom that predated, anticipated and influenced rockabilly. Clearly the most exciting set available now is *When They Let the Hammer Down* (BFX 15167), which combines late 1940's-early

1950's tracks by the Delmore Brothers with solo recordings by their harmonica-playing collaborator Wayne Raney. The Delmores were long a hillbilly outfit, but after they moved to Memphis in the mid-forties, their music took on substantial black blues and boogie woogie influences. The addition of Raney improved things even further.

Some tracks feature only the Delmores, their guitars, a bass and Jethro Burns (of Homer & Jethro); others combine the Delmores, Raney and a bass, along with lead guitarist Zeke Turner (harmonica player Lonnie Glosston backed Raney). In any case, the music is exciting and gutsy, from the driving "Jack and Jill Boogie" and the razor-edged "Mobile Boogie" (which Hank Williams, Jr. later cut) to favorites like the enormously influential "Hillbilly Boogie" from 1945 and "Beale Street Boogie," a previously unissued performance from 1947. Raney is well represented by "Lost John Boogie" and the clattering "Real Hot Boogie." If you want to hear some of rockabilly's most important precursors, this is an essential album. ■

Lefty Frizzell's 14 Albums

Regular readers of *Buried Treasures* will want to read Rich Kienzle's review of *Lefty Frizzell: His Life-His Music* (Bear Family BFX 15000-15) on page 48. This amazing 14-album boxed-set which also includes a book lists for \$179.95 (write Nashville Warehouse, Box 236, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37075.) But CMSA members can get this fabulous package for \$99. See page 34 for details. If you want one you should join CMSA. The \$80 savings will cover your dues for years.

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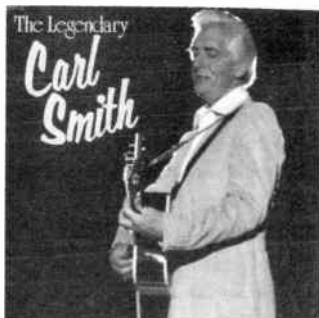
Usually, Essential Collector covers albums that are historically important or favorites of an editor. But we know a lot about what *you*, the readers, think are good to collect. You tell us in answer to our questionnaires and by what you order through the CMSA, Nashville Warehouse and other sources.

The big winners are the following double-length albums. They all contain at least 20 songs, twice what you get on a regular album these days, for a dollar. But these are double values because the 20 songs are generally the best or most famous from each performer. The other bonus is that all these are available on cassettes and the Gusto albums are even available on 8-track! The RCA albums mentioned have to be imported from England! Wake up down there, Randy.

Gene Watson *Gene Watson's Greatest Hits* outsells just about everything offered by Nashville Warehouse. Straight-out, no-nonsense country music, this is Gene Watson at his best—which is plenty good. Gene is the country music industry's most under-rated singer—he is not under-rated by you readers, you know a good thing when you hear it. Includes "Love in the Hot Afternoon," "Where Love Begins," "Farewell Party," "Fourteen Carat Mind," "Paper Rosie" and 15 other top songs by top writers.

Marty Robbins *Marty Robbins: No. 1 Cowboy* is a top collection by the man voted No. 1 All-Time Country Singer by members of the CMSA. "El Paso," "Big Iron," "Strawberry Roan," "Tumbling Tumbleweed," "Streets of Laredo" and 15 more cowboy songs.

Johnny Horton *America Remembers Johnny Horton* is the most complete collection of the Honky Tonk Man's hits. It has been 25 years since Johnny Horton's powerful career was



cut short by a car wreck. So, some may have forgotten these classics: "Battle of New Orleans," "Honky Tonk Man," "North to Alaska," "Johnny Reb," and "When It's Springtime in Alaska (It's 40 Below)." They're all here, plus 15 more.

Carl Smith *Country Music* readers love Carl Smith, and you can tell it by the way they buy this album, *The Legendary Carl Smith*. This one has 22 songs, including a beautiful classic "I Overlooked an Orchid," and his biggest seller, "Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way," plus "Mr. Moon," "Let's Live a Little," "Don't Just Stand There," and a bunch written by greats Felice and Boudleaux Bryant: "It's a Lovely, Lovely World," "Back Up Buddy," "Hey Joe," "This Orchid Means Goodbye," and "Just Wait Till I Get You Alone." It's a lulu.

Eddy Arnold They talk about pop-crossover more than anything else in Nashville



these days, but few today can match Eddy Arnold's record going back 30 years. "Anytime," "Make the World Go Away," "Bouquet of Roses" are not only in the CMSA's Top 200 All-Time Country Songs, they are also pop standards. Also included are Eddy's country trade mark, "Cattle Call," also on the All-Time Top 200, and "I Really Don't Want to Know" plus 15 more. In other words, there are five...that's right *five*...songs on this album which were just selected by readers of this magazine as among the All-Time Top 200 Country Songs. That's Hank Williams territory, folks. All that plus 15 more.

Jim Reeves "He'll Have to Go," "When Two Worlds Collide," "Welcome to My World," "I Love You Because," "Nobody's Fool" and another 15 on this album, *20 Best of Jim Reeves*. That's about all anyone needs to say about Jim Reeves. Twenty odd years

after being killed in a plane crash, his recordings are still a factor. He was Number 14 in the CMSA's All-Time Country Singer voting.

Hank Snow Here is one of your certified, gold-plated Country Music Legends with an album of twenty songs that, all together, were on the charts for 378 weeks—that's about seven years and three months. Believe me, it doesn't matter which Hank Snow songs are included. Any serious collector can't pass this one up. Well, if you insist, I'll mention a few: "I'm Movin' On," "Golden Rocket," "I Don't Hurt Anymore," "Hello Love," "I've Been Everywhere," "Spanish Fire Ball," "Ninety Miles an Hour" and "Lady's Man." And 12 more like that on the *20 Best of Hank Snow*.

Roy Acuff Talk about Walkin' Around Historic Legends, how about Roy Acuff on this little 20 song album called *The King of Country Music*. In case someone is visiting from Mars who may not be familiar with royal song selection, here are a few sample titles: "Wabash Cannonball," "Great Speckled Bird," "Wreck on the Highway," "I Saw the Light," "Tennessee Waltz," "Muleskinner Blues," "Night Train to Memphis" and "Fireball Mail." These are the tunes a king likes to sing.

Jimmie Rodgers and the **Carter Family** Two more albums need mentioning: *20 Best of Jimmie Rodgers* and *20 Best of the Carter Family*. For history-minded collectors, these are the most essential of all. For details read Rich Kienzle's reviews in *Buried Treasures, Country Music* September/October 1984, page 62. These and the other albums mentioned here can be found in some stores, but not many. They are available by mail from Nashville Warehouse (see below) and for members through CMSA, see page 34. ■

How to Get These Treasures

You may order from Nashville Warehouse, Box 236, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37075. All double-length albums on page 67 are \$9.98 for records or cassettes (Gene Watson, Marty Robbins, Carl Smith and Roy Acuff are also available on 8-track). Indicate your choice. Albums on page 66 available on records only. *Classic Country-Western* (4-MR-2), four records in a box is \$24.98. *The King of West Coast Country Swing* (LP 63), Roy Orbison, *The Sun Years* (CDX4) and the Delmore Bros. and Wayne Raney on *When They Let the Hammer Down* (BFX 15167) are all \$11.98. Add \$1.95 postage for one album, \$.95 each additional. (Special prices are available to CMSA members. See page 34. If you are not a member, your savings might make it worthwhile to join.) ■

TOP 25

Singles

Albums

1. **George Strait** *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*
2. **The Judds** *Why Not Me*
3. **Ricky Skaggs** *Country Boy*
4. **Exile** *Kentucky Hearts*
5. **The Oak Ridge Boys** *Greatest Hits Vol. 2*
6. **Earl Thomas Conley** *Treadin' Water*
7. **Willie Nelson** *City of New Orleans*
8. **John Schneider** *Too Good To Stop Now*
9. **Alabama** *Roll On*
10. **Lee Greenwood** *You've Got a Good Love Comin'*
11. **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band** *Plain Dirt Fashion*
12. **Kenny Rogers** *What About Me*
13. **Anne Murray** *Heart Over Mind*
14. **Ray Charles** *Friendship*
15. **Hank Williams, Jr.** *Major Moves*
16. **John Conlee** *Blue Highway*
17. **Jim Glaser** *The Man In The Mirror*
18. **Barbara Mandrell & Lee Greenwood** *Meant for Each Other*
19. **Ray Stevens** *He Thinks He's Ray Stevens*
20. **The Statlers** *Atlanta Blue*
21. **Reba McEntire** *My Kind of Country*
22. **Eddie Rabbitt** *The Best Year of My Life*
23. **Gene Watson** *Heartaches, Love & Stuff*
24. **Crystal Gayle** *Cage the Songbird*
25. **Conway Twitty** *Conway's Latest Greatest Hits Vol. 1*

1. **Alabama** *(There's a) Fire in the Night*
2. **John Conlee** *Years After You*
3. **Merle Haggard** *A Place To Fall Apart*
4. **Crystal Gayle** *Me Against The Night*
5. **Ricky Skaggs** *Something In My Heart*
6. **Conway Twitty** *Ain't She Something Else*
7. **Oak Ridge Boys** *Make My Life With You*
8. **T.G. Sheppard** *One Owner Heart*
9. **Reba McEntire** *How Blue*
10. **Mel McDaniel** *Baby's Got Her Blue Jeans On*
11. **Ed Bruce** *You Turn Me On (Like a Radio)*
12. **Eddy Raven** *She's Gonna Win Your Heart*
13. **Gary Morris** *Baby Bye Bye*
14. **Dan Seals** *My Baby's Got Good Timing*
15. **Gus Hardin** *All Tangled Up in Love*
16. **Gene Watson** *Got No Reason Now For Goin' Home*
17. **Glen Campbell** *A Lady Like You*
18. **The Statlers** *My Only Love*
19. **Jim Glaser** *Let Me Down Easy*
20. **Exile** *Crazy For Your Love*
21. **Vern Gosdin** *Slow Burning Memory*
22. **Eddie Rabbitt** *The Best Year of My Life*
23. **Michael Martin Murphey** *What She Wants*
24. **Ray Stevens** *The Mississippi Squirrel Revival*
25. **Rex Allen Jr.** *Running Down Memory Lane*

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