

COUNTRY MUSIC

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Real World

JANIE FRICKE
Makes
A Video

MINNIE PEARL
Answers
20 Questions

GARY MORRIS
Grand Opera
Goes Country

American Flag
Apple Pie and
**WILLIE'S
PICNIC**





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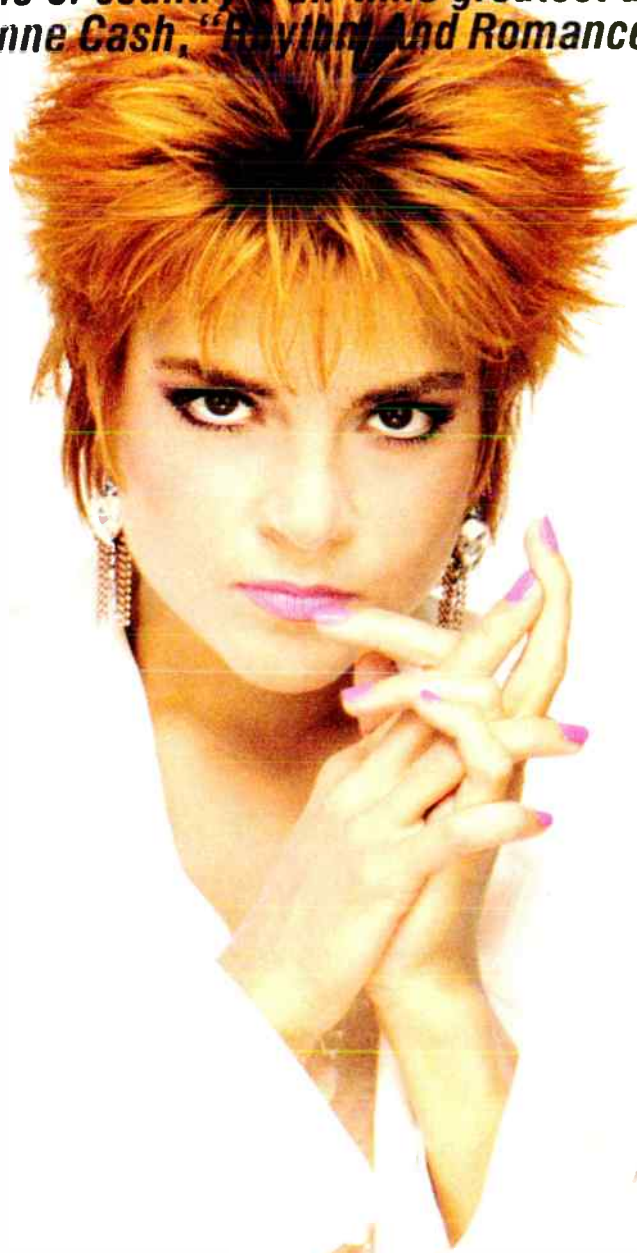
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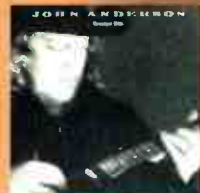
And Don't Forget These Other Great Albums
by John Anderson



All the People Are Here



Eye of a Hurricane



Oceans III

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COUNTRY MUSIC™

4 Letters

The latest from readers on Emmylou-John-Vern-Wynonna-Naomi-Alabama and Harold—oops, that's Conway. Also support for Hank Jr. and a lot about records, old and new.

15 People

by Hazel Smith

Patsy Cline comes back from the past, Bill Monroe marries, Larry-and-Larry quit substance abuse, Chips Moman moves. Clower goes military, Mandrell cooks, Margo recovers and Wilma Lee goes on a march with a mule. Also an Update on the Opry's Jean Shepard.

25 Willie Nelson's Picnic

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The eternal Picnic—Michael Bane reports on his trip to last year's big bash as Willie and his fans get ready to reconvene again this year down on the dry ground of Texas for a little music from Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings and a few of Willie's other buddies. Photographs by *Country Music's* own Leonard Kamsler, including the cover.

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Video is hot and so is Janie Fricke. So it's natural the two would get together. A bird's eye view from behind the scenes while cameras roll.

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Call her a classic, oldtimer, old fogey—that's what she calls herself, all in fun. She's Minnie Pearl. Tune in to her wit and wisdom.

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A bumper crop of reissues includes George Jones, Don Gibson, Elvis, the Stanley Brothers and more.

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Letters

Can't Find Us on Newsstands

Thank you so much for printing my poem and letter about Elvis in your January/February issue. I wrote to my Elvis fan clubs and told them, I told my family, and they have all tried to find copies of *Country Music Magazine*. My issue came in the mail. I have looked on newsstands in four towns around here and looked in Memphis when we were there. My children from Alabama have looked, and I even asked the lady in the drugstore here to see if she could order some, as pen pals from West Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Florida and Maryland have written and said they can't find it and would I please send them copies. Why can't we find it?

Darlene Caputo
Rushville, Illinois

Right now, Country Music is only available by subscription—378,000 of you got the last issue. That's a lot, but we'd love to have some more. Send us your friends' names and addresses, and we'll send them a subscription form. Or, you can give them one of the subscription forms in the magazine. They can order individual back issues for \$2.25 each, by writing to our offices in New York. —Ed.

Ballad of Emmylou

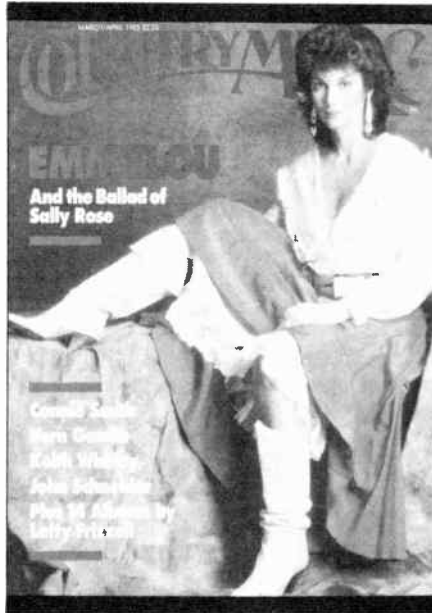
It's impossible for me to describe what the music of Emmylou Harris means to me—what it does for me. Her voice is so beautiful, so fragile—proof for me that there is a God who wants us to have some peace, beauty and contentment in this crazy world, *my* cure for the blues.

I just *know* by the songs she chooses to sing and the way she treats them that she is as beautiful a person as the music she makes. I would *love* to see her in concert someday. My impossible dream: to meet that special lady.

Thanks for the great article. Thanks, Emmylou—you're my Heaven on Earth.

Hal Swartz
South Bend, Indiana

Emmylou Harris gave an outstanding performance at the Agora Ballroom in West Hartford, Connecticut, this spring. She was on stage for over two hours, then did two long encores for about another half hour. Above all, she was very personable with the audience, a trait often lacking



these days. It was good to see the artist enjoying herself.

As Emmylou herself admitted, she didn't know what to expect here in Connecticut. By the end, she seemed incredulous at the response from the crowd. She shouldn't have been because the show she gave was one of the best, if not the best, I have seen in a long time. The crowd was only responding to her great voice, wonderful selection of songs and personality. Anyone who has the chance to see Emmylou perform and doesn't go is only cheating themselves.

Don Bateson
West Hartford, Connecticut
Country Music Magazine saw her concert in New York this spring. It was great, too.—Ed.

I have been buying Emmylou Harris records and tapes for ten years, since the *Pieces of Sky* album, and I will continue to buy her records even if she never makes another public appearance. I greatly appreciate her music. Being a private person myself, I can understand why an entertainer would shy away from a very public life.

One of my biggest dreams is to see Emmylou perform in concert. Maybe someday!

I am not a member of her fan club but

would sure like to be. Thank you for the article on Emmylou!

Christy Mahar
Lubec, Maine

Emmylou's fan club address is: Emmylou Harris Fan Club, Box 248, Rodeo, California 94512.—Ed.

It's about time you got around to doing a story on Emmylou again. I thought that you people had forgotten her. That article was all right. The pictures were even good. That cover photo is almost good enough to frame and hang.

Thanks for the bit on Patsy Cline in the *CMSA Newsletter* too. When is the movie due out anyway?

Dena Kay Warren
Blair, Oklahoma

This fall. See People in this issue for more details.—Ed.

Smiles for John Schneider

Thank you for the article on John Schneider in your March/April issue. As long-time fans of his we are overjoyed over the success he has achieved recently in the country music field, and as a mother I am glad that my teenage daughter and younger son have chosen John as their favorite entertainer. While other kids follow the ways of some "strange" rock stars, my kids look up to this decent, optimistic, multi-talented, intelligent individual.

It didn't come easy for John. His career has had its ups and downs. It just goes to prove what belief in what you're aiming for can do.

We've had the pleasure of meeting him twice, and he treats his fans with kindness and respect.

Susan Knight
West Chester, Ohio

Do you have any information about a fan club for John Schneider? I really like him. He is *good!* And I never watched *Dukes of Hazzard*, so I wasn't prejudiced.

B. Gay Hoefler
Lewiston, Idaho
Bo's—oops, that is, John's—fan club address is: Number One Fan Club, P.O. Box 467609, Atlanta, Georgia 30346.—Ed.

The article on John Schneider was su-

perb. He's on the rise. His singing voice is majestic.

It meant so much your publishing my letter about Conway in your January/February issue. I received a letter from another Linda Barrett in Dry Creek, Louisiana. Seems as though we both have the best taste in magazines.

Linda Barrett
Belk, Alabama

Versatile Vern

Finally, you have written about one of my favorites, Vern Gosdin, in your March/April issue. He is one of our true country talents today. I saw him in concert in 1984. He was and is very good. He has a style that all country fans can relate to. He is also a very good gospel singer. I just love his music.

Elsie A. Sullivan
Sims, North Carolina

Jolly Judds

After reading your article on The Judds in your September/October 1984 issue, I went out and bought the tape *Why Not Me*. What can I say? . . . it was as great as Bob Allen said it was. I have played that tape a million times and I love it more every time I hear it! I've only bought a few tapes where I've liked every ballad—this is one of them.

I had the pleasure of seeing The Judds in concert this spring at the Albany Civic Center in Albany, Georgia. They were great! They sang like angels and believe it or not they are more beautiful in person than they are in photos. Wynonna appeared to be so reserved and shy, while her mother (*Mama!*) was cut loose and fancy free. She danced and clapped, she's a sight! She also seemed like a loving mother. As you can tell, I really loved it.

Connie M. Warren
Cordele, Georgia

The Judds do well with CMSA voters too. They're consistently near the top of the Members Polls—second place in albums in March with Why Not Me.—Ed.

Energetic Oaks

This spring I had the pleasure of listening to the best group in country music—The Oak Ridge Boys. It was the most invigorating and exciting concert I ever went to. What made me the happiest was that they really looked as if they enjoyed putting on their show for us, and they seemed so appreciative we were there. That's the very quality that puts them on my Number One Hit list. When I went into the auditorium I expected a slower show because they had just finished a show a half an hour earlier. Not so! If they came again tomorrow, I would certainly stand in line to buy another ticket.

Please send me some information on how to join their fan club. I would also like

to see more of them in your magazine.

Regina Johnston
Wichita Falls, Texas

This is fan club month! The Oaks' fan club address is: c/o Kathy McClintock, 329 Rockland Rd., Hendersonville, Tennessee 37075. Watch for a feature on The Oaks soon.—Ed.

Controversial Conway

The letters on Conway Twitty in the March/April issue just about turned my stomach. Until my visit to Nashville in the summer of 1983, I too believed him to be a saint and thought that he cared deeply for his fans. I had always adored him and bought all of his albums and 45's from his first recording of "It's Only Make Believe." Nothing or no one could compare with him, even Elvis. Then in the summer of 1983 my family and I went to Nashville, probably my only opportunity in a lifetime. We visited Twitty City and heard that Conway's daughter would be in concert there that night. We decided to take in the show.

While walking into the tent, I looked around, and Conway walked right past me, to take his seat among the people, along with his family. I asked if I could take his picture—he turned and looked at me and kept on walking. I snapped his picture and took my seat with the rest of the crowd. Finally I got up enough nerve to ask him for his autograph. I walked over to the row of chairs behind him and asked him if he would sign the paper I had in my hand. His exact words were, "Honey, if I signed one autograph, I would have to sign autographs for all of these people." There were not 50 or 60 people there, and I only noticed three of them ask him for his autograph. Embarrassed, I walked away and tried to understand his situation. I know he wants his privacy and deserves it.

We took our seats for the show a few



Donna Frank Meyers met kissin' cousin Harold Jenkins, a.k.a. Conway Twitty, in Hollywood in 1960. Conway with, left to right, Donna's sister Sue, Donna, and another cousin, Kretta.

rows (empty rows) behind Conway and his family. I was appalled as I watched a small girl, who looked to be about six or seven years old, sit down behind Conway and, through the encouragement of her older brother, finally get up enough nerve to ask for his autograph. She was turned down also. From that time on, I haven't been able to stand the mention of Conway Twitty's name, and when he comes on the radio, I turn it off. No more baloney about this is all for my fans. He built Twitty City to be a fishbowl where he can gaze out and see the fans drooling at him. Who does he think he is fooling when he says this is for the fans, as if he doesn't make any money from the outrageous prices charged.

My days as a Conway Twitty fan are over, and I'm sure that little girl will never forget the shame and embarrassment she experienced when she was turned down. These people know what they are getting into when they enter show business and should be able to live with what is required of them in public. I've gotten this off my chest after all these years. Thanks for the opportunity.

Rose Biven
Shelby, North Carolina

Conway was in Lexington, Kentucky, early this spring at the Rupp Arena. I had not gotten to see a Conway concert for several years and I was elated at how good it was. The concert was *fabulous!* I just could not quit talking about it. Conway spoke little in between his songs, but he said everything he needed to say in the words of his songs. I had never seen the light effects and the pictures they used on the background before. They were beautiful and so meaningful. Conway is a great entertainer. I really enjoyed my night out getting to see his concert.

Darlene Smith
Frankfort, Kentucky

I am a third cousin of Conway's, and have kept track of his career, which gets better and better. His latest three songs have been great.

In March 1960, when he first came to Hollywood, he came to my parents' house in Lynwood, California. I was only 10, but we were all thrilled for him, and he was as always, Harold Jenkins; he was down-to-earth, and loved Mom's fried chicken. We loved the red T-bird he was driving, and he gave us girls autographed albums, his first. Haven't seen him since then, except on TV, but it's enough to know he's family.

Congratulations, Conway! We all knew you'd make it big. Hope to meet up again someday, maybe at a concert here in Oregon.

Donna Franks Meyers
Salem, Oregon

Holler for Hank Jr.

In response to Charlean Newman's letter in your March/April issue, we here in the

COUNTRY MUSIC

Editor and Publisher
Russell D. Barnard

Managing Editor
Rochelle Friedman

Editors-at-large
Michael Bane, Patrick Carr

Art Director
Pat Stuppi

Associate Editors
Helen Barnard, Peter Joost

Art Associate
Brian Jack

Contributing Editors
**Bob Allen, Peter Guralnick,
Dave Hickey,
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Associate Publisher /
Advertising Director
Leonard Mendelson

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Anthony Bunting

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George Mankes

Publisher's Assistants
Anne Barnard, Annemarie Hlavac

Office Assistant
Bernadette Collins

Mascot
Margie

Editorial, Advertising and Executive Offices:

450 Park Avenue South, 10th Floor,
New York, N.Y. 10016. Telephone
(212) 889-4600.

Subscription Correspondence:

c/o: Country Music Magazine, 1
Country Music Road, P.O. Box 2000,
Marion, Ohio 43305

Advertising Offices:

West Coast, Leonard Mendelson,
12077 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 762, West
Los Angeles, California 90025.
Telephone (213) 207-4948.

**Ohio/Michigan: Pete Kelly, Peter
Kelly Associates, 725 S. Adams Rd.,
Birmingham, Michigan 48011.
Telephone (313) 642-1228.**

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Kennesaw area are very mad that Hank Jr. didn't get a CMA award. Hank has always packed them in and has sold millions upon millions of records. I think the only reason he has not won an award is because the voters of the CMA are a bunch of old fogeys. Hank Jr.'s music is loved mostly by the younger crowd. The CMA had better start opening their eyes and see who is buying the most records. I say it is time Hank Jr. got the recognition he deserves!

Jimmy Barton
Kennesaw, Georgia

Hank Jr.'s 50th album is out now. See if you agree with the review in this issue.—Ed.

We all know of Hank's original ability to tell of the "way of the world" and to give his heartfelt outlook on country music, today's civilization and just our society itself. Not to mention Bocephus' top-of-the-chart hits which he never fails to deliver, and those that didn't make the Top 40 but should have, seeing as they *all* inspire us... in concert especially, where Hank always has that contagious air about him that just makes you forget your problems and just *feel great*. "Rockin' Randall" is today's greatest contribution to the world of blues and country music.

Johnny P. Nixon
Margate, Florida

Since the age of two and old enough to notice country music, my daughter Missy has been attracted to Hank Williams Jr. At four, she was able to live a dream come true and meet him. Knowing his reputation with women and being her mother, I was somewhat uneasy. I was not sure how he would react to a small child. *Well*, much to my surprise, Hank Jr. was very kind and patient. He was as wonderful as she had dreamed. Missy is six now and adores him all the more. Dedicated as she is, she only listens to Hank Jr. and, of course, Hank Sr.

Hank Jr. has a soft spot for all the women, young or old. Let's see him win an award soon!

Maria Richards
Fraser, Michigan



One of Hank Jr.'s friends, Missy Richards, with him two years ago.



Hank Sr. takes shape in Sam Massey's workshop in West Virginia.

Movin' On with Hank Sr.

My statue of Hank Williams Sr. is seven feet tall and weighs about 500 pounds. Hank is carved out of solid pine. He took many months of hard work. I am making plans to carve Willie Nelson next, life-size. If I had all of the tools I need and a little shop in Nashville, I could carve everyone in the Hall of Fame. However, I am financially embarrassed, I need all the help I can get. If you are interested in this project, please contact me.

Sam Massey
Box 29

Page, West Virginia 25152

Sam kept on chippin'. We published his first letter about this project in September/October 1984. Anyone interested in helping, contact Sam.—Ed.

Comparison Shopping for Concerts

I'd like to add my two cents to Bob Baker's letter in your March/April issue about George Jones' concert.

We saw George Jones early in 1984. We left the arena in "dumb shock." Finally my daughter and I looked at each other and started talking. He didn't sing this big one—he left that big hit out. He was on for exactly 45 minutes. He had to lean toward his tall band member a lot. Seemed they were talking something out between lines.

We love George Jones, but also thought we were ripped off at \$15 a ticket. And I even bought two "No Show Jones" t-shirts.

Sure doesn't compare with Willie's three- and four-hour concerts, not to mention his Picnics at \$12 a ticket in 1978-80.

Waylon and Johnny Cash also get out there and make exciting evenings for all.

And Haggard, what goes with him? Traveled 165 miles last year to see him. No Show Jones Number Two.

Donna Church
Duluth, Minnesota

In response to Bob Baker's letter, George Jones does not *lie* to his fans about playing all night. If Baker was a *real* Jones fan, he would not expect George or anyone else to play all night for a mere \$16. If George sang for me for one hour, charging \$20, I'd feel that I had my money's worth. If Baker wants a long concert, he should try Willie Nelson. What a show!!

Colleen Sipes
Mustang, Oklahoma

Continuing Coe

I recently attended one of David Allan Coe's concerts for the first time. He put on the best concert I ever heard. He sang for three solid hours without so much as a drink of water. It was just great. He is one of the best country singers of our time, and I hope you have more articles on David soon.

Carolyn Thomason
Blandinsville, Illinois

Reviewing the Reviewers

The record reviews in Country Music Magazine are an invaluable aid to me. Since many albums contain one or two hits and much filler, it's great to distinguish between the fine albums and the stinkers before spending my hard-earned cash.

By the way, Johnny Cash and June Carter, Waylon and Jessi were all great at Radio City in New York this spring. I bought a Waylon t-shirt as a souvenir of the event. It was the best show since Willie's July Picnic at Giants Stadium in 1983.

Lawrence Lehman
Brooklyn, New York

Being raised in Beaumont, Texas, I am a life-long worshipper of George Jones. I hear what he sings and feel what he feels. I recently purchased his *Ladies Choice* album (my 46th), and while I am not impressed with Side One, I must take exception to the comments made by Patrick Carr about the selection with Lacy J. Dalton in his review in the January/February issue. This is definitely the best cut on the album, "Slow Burning Fire" being a close second.

This spring I read that David Allan Coe had declared bankruptcy. Maybe he can survive on his inflated ego. Country music doesn't need his pompous attitude.

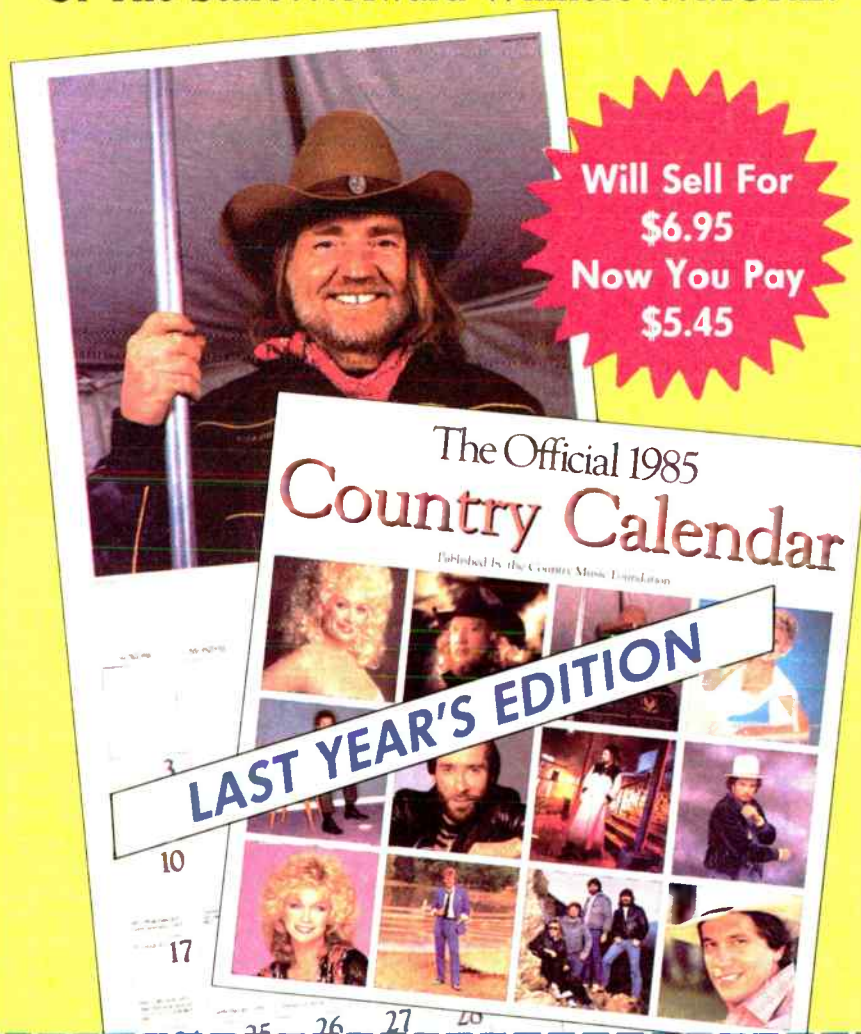
Wayne Guidry
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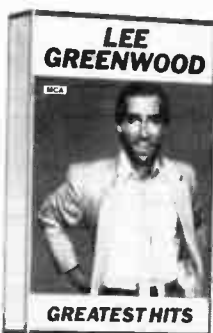
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328211 WILLIE NELSON City of New Orleans	333203 GEORGE JONES FIRST TIME LIVE	287003 EAGLES 1971-1975 GREATEST HITS	261248 LORETTA LYNN'S GREATEST HITS	331603 JOHNNY MATHIS LIVE
314443 NEIL DIAMOND 12 GREATEST HITS	333112 VOLLENWIDER WHITE WINDS	324509 EXILE	325704 MICKEY GILLEY IN WITH IT... OUT IT TAKES SEVERAL YEARS	326356 VERN GOSLIN There Is A Season
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313734 WILLIE NELSON ALWAYS ON MY MIND	320705 BOB SEGER & THE BLUET BULLET BAND LIFT AWAY	330303 28 of Hank Williams 393033 Greatest Hits	330704 GEORGE STRAIT LET'S GET WORTHY EVERYBODY'S YOUR MIND	331645 MADONNA LIKE A VIRGIN
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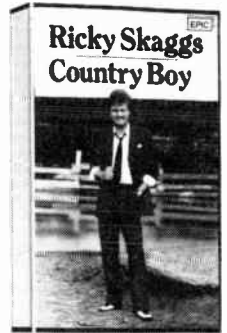
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333344 Top 10 album! Smash Forging You Was Easy, plus title song; Black Rose, more.

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334433 "Magical!"—*Billboard*. Top 10 title smash; Somebody Lied; Take It Like A Man.

331157 #1 *Nobody Loves Me*; Top 10 *Time Don't Run Out*; *I Don't Think I'm Ready*.

329631 "Delightful!" *People*. #1 album & hit *Something In My Heart*; Top 10 title song.

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- 331934P THE BEST OF BILL COSBY
- 329681* BILLY OCEAN SUDDENLY
- 330381* RICHARD CLAYDERMAN AMOUR

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

If you wish to receive the Selection of the Month or the Special Selection, you need do nothing—it will be shipped automatically. If you prefer an alternate selection, or none at all, simply fill in the response card always provided and mail it by the date specified.

You will always have at least 10 days to make your decision. If you ever receive any Selection without having had at least 10 days in which to decide, you may return it at our expense.

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

10-Day Free Trial: we'll send details of the Club's operation with your introductory shipment. If you are not satisfied for any reason whatsoever, just return everything within 10 days for a full refund and you will have no further obligation. So you risk absolutely nothing by acting now!

NOTE: all applications are subject to review and Columbia House reserves the right to reject any application.

Special Start-Your-Membership-Now Offer: you may also choose your first selection right now—and we'll give it to you for at least 60% off regular Club prices (only \$2.99). Enclose payment now and you'll receive it with your 11 introductory selections. This discount purchase reduces your membership obligation immediately—you then need buy just 7 more selections (instead of 8) in the next three years. Just check box in application and fill in the number you want.

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Barbra Streisand, Barry Manilow, Neil Diamond
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Fill in this box to get your Bonus Album



Merle Haggard hadn't had breakfast when he met Maxine Eden on a country road. She wanted to cook for him, but lost her nerve.

dium, then maybe country music fans will listen to them. How many albums have they cut? If they are such experts, let's hear from them and let Willie, Tom, George, Ricky, Kris, Gail and Reba review their work. If their music is like their reviews, they need not bother.

By the way, Patrick Carr must not know many George Jones fans. If George recorded a terrible record, which he has not, we still would buy it.

J. Channell
Elmore, Alabama

Patrick Carr is a George Jones fan, too. His reviews and those of our other writers are their opinions. Knowledgeable fans like you may have a different view. That's why we publish your letters, especially when you disagree.—Ed.

Where's the Steel?

When was the last time you heard a good, strong steel guitar entry or solo in a song in the style of Hank Williams' great band of the late 1940's and early 1950's? Very few current songs use the steel guitar. The fiddle is also disappearing but not as noticeably as the steel. In my opinion, should "country" music continue following this trend, I doubt that anyone will be able to locate a truly proficient steel guitar player within the next twenty years. A great instrument will have become obsolete.

Dale Wilson
Odessa, Texas

Meets Hungry Haggard

You can imagine my surprise one day when I was driving through the mountains in Northern California and ran into Merle Haggard. That has to be the saddest guy I ever met. No wonder his songs just pull at your heartstrings.

I had always thought country stars would live ritzy, glamorous lives, but Merle just appears to be a part of the countryside up there. I started to ask him

if he would like me to cook him some country sausage, biscuits and gravy (he told me he hadn't had breakfast yet), but I lost my nerve. I wish he'd let me write a country and western song for him. That's a great ambition of mine.

Maxine Eden
Santa Rosa, California

The Value of Old Records

While going through the attic of an old home recently, I discovered about two hundred country and western 78 rpm records, dating from the 1940's and 1950's. Included are recordings by such artists as Grandpa Jones, Cowboy Copas, Gene Autry, Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams and others.

The records seem to be in good condition, and I would like to know if they have any monetary value.

George D. Herndon
Cape Coral, Florida

Readers often ask us this question. The answer is, we don't know. CMSA members are always looking for old records. You could advertise in Information, Please in the Newsletter and see what you get. Or you could ask other readers or Society members to suggest stores in various parts of the country that handle collector's records. One, Rose's Collector's Records in Louisville, Kentucky, is mentioned in Information Please this month.—Ed.

Out in the Sticks, No Store Around

This little town does not have or will not support a record store. The one we did have went out of business quite a few years ago. This makes it hard on me to get my country music albums. *I buy no others.* I have been country since the mid-1930's. I do not drive and am a senior citizen, so just have to send off for the ones I really want. I have 48 of Hank Snow's, and it's hard to find the ones I do not have. Any suggestions? Have 20 Marty Robbins

... and on and on ... over 200 in all.

I heard some of the songs from Ray Price's new album on *Nashville Now* when he was on. Sure would love to get it.

Ruth Lienhard
Salida, Colorado

Many country fans share this problem. That's one reason the Country Music Society of America was formed—to make hard-to-find records available to members by mail. Also, the Columbia Record Club, whose ads can be found in this and other magazines, is an excellent source for newer records and tapes.—Ed.

Album for Farmers

How about our country singers getting together and making a single or an album to aid our United States farmers, since that guy in Washington turned them down?

We need our farmers and need them badly.

Phoebe Allen
Abington, Pennsylvania

Good idea. Anybody listening on Music Row?—Ed.

In Days Gone By

I love country music and singers Roy Acuff and Ernest Tubb. I have loved their songs and singers like them all my life. I bought Roy Acuff's and Ernest Tubb's first records in 1940, the first ones that came to Brookhaven, Mississippi, "The Great Speckled Bird" and "Walking the Floor Over You," and I still have them. Also have "Roll On, Weary River, Roll On" by Roy Acuff. These are the old-timey records.

I am 71 years old and have about 50 of the old records of the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's, and they all still play.

Elena Foster
Brookhaven, Mississippi

Years ago I had a guitar and a holder for harmonica. Loved playing them together. One day I came home from town and my father-in-law had destroyed my holder. I have never been able to get another. He would no doubt have destroyed the guitar and harmonica, but I think he would have thought he had a tiger by the tail on that deal. He got the why-for enough on the holder.

My children, all six, loved to have me play them to sleep with the harmonica. At 72, I still play it.

I like the news on the different stars. My big dream was to be one of them. All gone up in smoke. But will be glad to get the data on the other ones... Lulu Belle, Patsy Montana, Bob Atcher. I have been informed that Red Blanchard and The Woodchopper have passed on. I have a picture of The Woodchopper that I really treasure.

Lonesome in Music,

Edith Shear
Lowell, Michigan

I enjoy the magazine immensely, but I think you ignore a lot of the oldtimers who fought the hard fight, such as the Wear Family, Raymond Fairchild, Clarence Jackson and many others that the modern fan has never heard of at all.

I have listened to country music since 1928 that I can remember and own over 2000 albums with artists from Uncle Dave Macon to today, so I know there are many of them you could write about in our magazine.

I am getting to be an old man and have recordings from all of them, from Roy Acuff to Faron Young. (Don't have one that starts with a Z, although I'm sure there must be one.) Some of them impossible to find today.

I don't think a true fan ever loses his or her interest. I love the country and western music today as much as I did fifty years ago.

John D. Ayers
Port St. Joe, Florida

If anyone would like to write to any of these senior citizens, we'll forward your letter. Watch Legends of Country Music in the CMSA Newsletter and People in the magazine for updates on older artists.—Ed.

Roll On, Alabama

It is plain to me you don't like Alabama. They aren't "real country." Well, if "real country" means treating your fans the way George Jones does, you can just keep it. Alabama cares about their fans, their fan club is free, and you get your money's worth at their concerts. They make the audience feel so important.

I was raised listening to George Jones and all the other "real country" singers, and with the exception of Loretta Lynn and Barbara Mandrell, you can keep all of them because I don't want them. You can also keep your magazine. I cancel my subscription.

Linda Simas
Cupertino, California

Even though you cancelled your subscription, Linda, I'm sending you this issue so you can see your letter in print. You'll miss our upcoming Alabama story, however, and our feature where Alabama answers questions from our readers. I like Alabama. They are hot. Also, they are controversial. Like Hank was. Like Elvis was. Like Johnny Cash. Yes, even like George Jones. You seem to be reacting to what some readers have written. Only an important act can be worth the effort of taking such strong positions, as in yours and the two letters below.—R.D.B.

I feel I must answer the letters in your January/February issue protesting the winning of the CMA Entertainer of the Year award again by Alabama.

The award speaks for itself. You must

be out there entertaining almost all year and be the best at it to get this award. Having a hit record or album does not by itself make you the entertainer of the year.

Alabama has made a new album each year. They have put together a new and completely different tour each year. They expand their tours to cover more cities, therefore entertaining more people; and entertain they do. They do not just come out on stage, sing and say goodnight. They have original openings and during the show they do things to entertain besides singing. After each concert they stay for hours signing autographs. This is all well-planned entertainment and takes a lot of work preparing before the tour actually goes on the road. To keep this pace year after year has to be grueling. The Entertainer of the Year award is presented to those who do this the best.

I have been to concerts by other artists where you cannot take pictures, as one

gathered around to give congratulations, and Randy called for a moment of silence just to thank God.

I love country music, and there are a lot of great stars in the business, hard working young people who do appreciate their fans—Barbara Mandrell, Janie Fricke, Ricky Skaggs and Lee Greenwood, just to name a few. I hope these younger people do not take their fans for granted as years pass, as some of the older, more established stars seem to have done, but rather continue to put on good concerts and entertain.

Anna St. Louis
Amsterdam, New York

We went down to Jones Country Music Park for George Jones and Willie Nelson in concert this spring. We really enjoyed it.

While we were there, we asked about Alabama cancelling their show there last fall. Someone told us that Alabama said



Alabama does it again—Mark, Randy, Jeff and Teddy accept the Academy of Country Music Entertainer of the Year award for the fourth year in a row.

lady said about Merle Haggard. Conway Twitty, whom I also love to hear, comes on stage, says "Hello, darlin'," sings and says goodnight. No encore, no rapport with the audience, and he doesn't even introduce his band. Hank Williams Jr. doesn't give autographs; Merle Kilgore announced this on the *Nashville Now* show. Stars like these feel they are on a higher plateau than their fans; that they've "made it" and do not have to go out of their way to please their fans. This is wrong.

I know Alabama appreciates their fans. I watch every award show I can, and I have heard Alabama thank everyone, including fans who buy their records and disk jockeys who play them. Randy Owen even remembered his mother on one show, particularly, because it was near Mother's Day and he didn't get a chance to see her.

And they do indeed thank God. Backstage after they won Entertainer of the Year for the third time, a lot of people

that they didn't make the parks anymore because they had gotten too famous for parks. Alabama would feel funny if all the fans felt that they were too famous to go see at all.

You know, it is funny how some of the artists forget about the fans that helped put them where they are today. If I was a famous artist and my fans wanted me to stand on the banks of the river to perform, I would.

I just wanted to let the fans know how snobbish Alabama has become.

Mae Adams
Mabank, Texas

Why not ask Alabama to explain their position? To be part of Readers Interview Alabama, write to us in New York, Attention: Alabama Interview.—Ed.

Send Letters to the Editor to our editorial offices in New York: Country Music Magazine, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. We love photos too.

Country Calling!



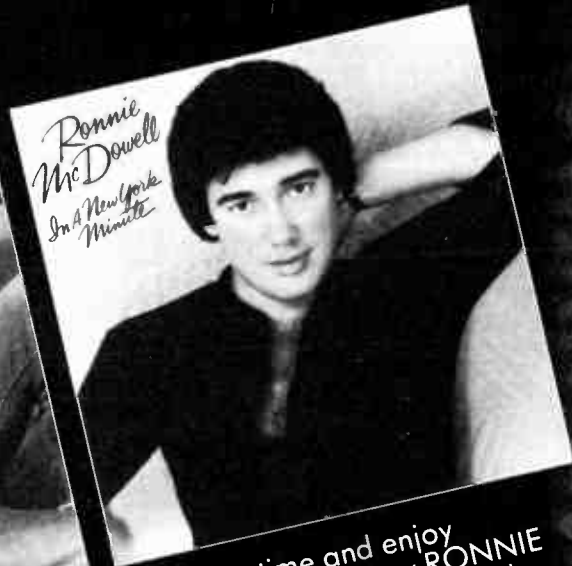
Tammy Wynette

"Sometimes When We Touch" is TAMMY WYNETTE at her touching best. Featuring a special guest appearance by Mark Gray on the haunting title track.



JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ FULL CIRCLE

JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ has come "Full Circle" on his new album. He's singing country music as pure and true as he did on the day he made his first record. Including "Here I Am Again" and more.



Ronnie McDowell In A New York Minute

Take your time and enjoy everything on the new RONNIE McDOWELL album. It's titled after his big hit "In A New York Minute." But that doesn't mean you have to rush through it!



Keith Stegall

KEITH STEGALL is Nashville's own favorite new artist...soon to be everybody's. His debut album includes "California", "Pretty Lady", and other outstanding compositions.

Let 'em in!

- NEW ALBUMS BY
- TAMMY WYNETTE
 - JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ
 - RONNIE McDOWELL
 - KEITH STEGALL

ON *Epic* RECORDS AND CASSETTES
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People

EYE SAW

Yes, I saw the King of Country Music, Mr. Roy Acuff, at Zayre. I don't know what Mr. Acuff was doing at Zayre on Sunday, but I was buying elastic for my Adam's pajamas.

And yes, I saw Gary Morris with a new, just sprouting, beard. I was walking down the street and he was going into Warner Brothers Records!!

It's true, I saw Chet Atkins, Ray Ste-

vens and Johnny Gimble lunching together at Maude's... the famous Maude's.

The newest Music Row eatery located on 16th Avenue South is aptly called "Tavern On the Row." Owner Al Cartee pushed out walls, added windows, glamorized and comforted as well as renovated the old house, and decorated it tastefully with antiques. The food is above average for Nashville, a tourist town which does not necessarily cater to the gourmet palate. Nashville Music Association's "header up" and lady about town Dale Franklin

Cornelius and I dined there—chicken salad laced with walnuts and lots of other goodies for me, while she feasted on spinach salad. Minnie Pearl was there too, sampling the fare. Cartee also owns Cartee 2 Recording Studio and the building that houses Dick James Music. All three businesses are joint properties.

Guess what else I saw?? I saw Ricky Skaggs kissing Sharon White of *The Whites*. Oh!! That's right, they are married!! By the way, have you seen Ricky's *Country Boy* video? We told you about it

SWEET DREAMS



The Patsy Cline movie, *Sweet Dreams*, starring Jessica Lange, is near completion. The film, due to be out sometime in the fall, was shot on location in Nashville. Tri-Star productions and HBO are making this feature-length film, with Ed Harris starring opposite Lange as Charlie Dick. Jessica won't be doing the vocals; they are using original Patsy Cline recordings for the soundtrack. But, if Jessica is as good as she was in any of her other theatrical endeavors, her portrayal of Patsy is sure to be top-notch.

Guest Reporter: Hazel Smith/Editor: Rochelle Friedman

in the last issue of the magazine. It's been out for a while now and I think it's one of the finest, if not the finest, country music video I have ever seen. Didn't you think New York mayor **Ed Koch** was just a blast and wasn't **Bill Monroe** great showing those break dancers what the Kentucky backstep (a.k.a. clogging) is all about?

I saw **The Oak Ridge Boys'** lead singer **Duane Allen** with his lovely wife **Nora Lee** and their two handsome children dining at **El Chico**, where the Mexican food is hot. That night the company was too.

HEARTS AND CHARTS AGAIN

Did you know that **Willie Nelson's** classic *Star Dust* album has been on the country charts for seven (7) years!! That's longer than most musical marriages last. Of course, Willie is an entertainer who lives in our hearts as well as on the charts. Definitely one of the legends. I believe that however long this old world keeps on going, Willie Nelson will always be known as a stylist, creator and giant in music. It is up to us today to see that those who so deserve to be mentioned in the pages of tomorrow are remembered and that the music we not only love but make our living from is preserved. And don't you know it's wonderful to eke out a living doing something you love? Lord knows I love country music.

HERE COMES THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Sorry folks, I ain't got no pictures of the **Bill Monroe** wedding. Bill, who usually removes his glasses when being photographed, wouldn't even allow any photographers or press at his spring wedding. The 73-year-old creator of bluegrass shocked his many acquaintances by saying "I do." To tell you the truth, I wouldn't have been as shocked if the Pope had wed!! My best to you, Bill. May all the happiness in the world be yours. You've fought a fight that was impossible, but you did it, and now your music is hotter than ever. May God bless you and yours. You know I told you once, there's two things from Kentucky that the sun don't never set on: Kentucky Fried Chicken and bluegrass music!!

WELCOME BACK HOME, LARRY

One of the better record men—producer, writer, and all around good-guy—is the great **Larry Butler**. He's dried out from drugs and is back ready to make some more hit records. *Country Music Mag* and me are happy you're back, Larry!

YOU CAN ROW ON BOTH SIDES

Mighty **Merle**, **The Hag**, call him what you want to, I call him great, won a Grammy for the song "That's the Way Love Goes." It made headlines.

Do you want my opinion? Firstly, I personally think it's close to being a mortal sin that this is **Merle's** first Grammy. But, isn't he very fortunate to have lived in the U.S.A. where he could pay for his crimes and be forgiven by the powers that be and by common folks like us country music lovers? We love you, **Merle**. You didn't win a Grammy... you earned a Grammy the hard way. Which goes to show a coin has two sides, there's two ways to look at things and you can row on both sides of the boat!

COUNTRY MUSIC SENDS CONDOLENCES

Sympathy to the family of the late **Jimmy Gately**, who passed this life March 18. Jimmy was probably best known for fronting **Bill Anderson's** Po' Boys Band from 1964 till 1977 and for playing fiddle and guitar and singing harmony for **An-**

derson from the beginning of Anderson's career. Recently he owned and operated **Jimmy Gately's Western Store** in Madison, Tennessee, where he could be seen singing and playing his guitar for tourists who stopped by. Funeral services were conducted at Rivergate Calvary Church where Jimmy had served as a deacon. The Missouri native was buried in his home-state at Springfield's Mt. Comfort Cemetery.

Country music lost a friend with the passing of **Bill Gavin**, publisher of the *Gavin Report*, a trade newspaper. Bill's love for and interest in country music was renowned. He was one of the first to see the importance of radio to country music.

Fiddling **Tommy Jarrell** died at his home in the North Carolina mountains that he loved so well. I cannot recall when I first knew of Tommy's fiddle playing. He was well known all over North Carolina and played at many a square dance. I wouldn't be surprised if his repertoire of fiddle tunes ran into the thousands.

Personal love and sympathy from myself and the magazine to **Kathy** and **Benny Martin** on the loss of **Gene Martin**. For nearly 20 years Gene played guitar on the Opry with **Roy Acuff**. His wife **Kathy** would drive him to and from the shows every weekend because Gene suffered with diabetes. All the ladies who hung out backstage at the Opry loved **Kathy Martin**. And everybody in the world that loves fiddling knows Gene's brother **Benny Martin**...one of the finest. Fifty-one years old is too young to die...that was Gene's age.

BOWEN'S SPOT

My good friend **Billy** went to MCA records to take a tape, and I wondered where he parked. "In **Jimmy Bowen's** spot," he replied. "Why in heaven's name did you park in Bowen's spot?" I wondered. "Any producer that has nine singles and nine albums on the country charts won't be at the office. He's in the studio making hit records."

I turned to the top country charts and there they were! Artists on the charts produced by Bowen include **Steve Wariner**, **John Schneider**, **Johnny Lee**, **Hank Williams Jr.**, **George Strait**, **Crystal Gayle**, **Razzy Bailey**, **Jimmy Buffett**, **The Bellamy Brothers** and others. That may not be a record, but it's a darn good average!! Excuse the pun!

In the meantime, we understand that Bowen is currently in the studio with another country legend—**Loretta Lynn**. Can you imagine the tracks those two will come up with? It boggles the mind.

MOUTH OF THE SOUTH MEETS THE ARMS THAT PROTECT US



For a few hours back in February, our country was in dire danger of being "laughed off the face of the earth!" Country humorist **Jerry Clower** journeyed to **Camp LeJeune**, the N.C. Marine base, to record his 15th live album. The album, titled *An Officer and A Gentleman*, tells stories of **Marcel Ledbetter's** military experiences. Jerry, former fertilizer distributor, continues to strew fertilizer wherever he goes.

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With all their talent, warmth and personality, no wonder the Statler Brothers were voted 1984 "Country Group of the Year" by the prestigious Country Music Association. They've sold well over ten million records... had eight Gold and Platinum Albums... and the fans have voted them more Music City News Awards than any country group ever, including the 1984 "Song of the Year" award for the beautiful "Elizabeth." Now, the magic of this fabulous group is captured in this special extended record treasury.

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People

NASHVILLE AIDS THE HUNGRY



George Jones showed up, along with forty other country artists, including Little Jimmy Dickens, Porter Wagoner, Webb Pierce, Sonny James, Roy Acuff and more, to record "One Big Family." The song, written by Troy Seals, Mike Reid and Ronnie McDowell, is Music City's version of "We Are the World," the very successful project of major pop musicians. Ronnie McDowell headed up the undertaking, and enlisted the aid of these country superstars. A video of the recording session will go on the market, and an album of donated songs from various artists, titled *From Nashville to the World With Love*, will be released soon.

DON PUTNAM

LOUISE, GET YOUR HANDS OUT OF THE KITCHEN AND GO TO CHINA

I mean... it's enough that Louise Mandrell can dance, can sing, can play the fiddle, can play bass, can blow some kinda horn, can sell a Trivia Game and can marry that good-looking R. C. Bannon. Now, she has to show up at the Radisson Hotel at the Gourmet Gala and cook! Along with *Nashville Network's* Ralph Emery and banker Clarence Reynolds, Louise got in the coop and whipped up some Chicken Soupe. Lord, don't ask me what that means. I don't put no "e" on my soup, so it ain't no telling what it was. Somebody said it was chicken breasts served on a bed of rice. Now, that Louise, she's getting as bad as Barbara about staying busy. When she isn't doing all the above, she's doing commercials for Miss Goldy's chicken. Why, she's busier than a set of jumper cables at a country funeral in the winter. And come this fall, Louise is set for a tour of China. The tour, dubbed China '85, will be the first of its kind, covering parts of China and the Far East, including Peking, Shanghai, Guangzhou (Canton), Hong Kong and Tokyo. The tour will be acclaimed as the largest single gathering of Americans to visit China; the first country music delegation to tour China. Not only will Louise be touring, but

400 additional tourists will accompany her. If you are interested in making this trip with the Mandrell entourage, the price is \$2750 for air fare, hotels and food. The dates are set for August 28 through September 10. Contact the Advance Travel Agency in Nashville (1-800-251-5600)—they are coordinating all the tourist information and details.



Clarence Reynolds (left) and Ralph Emery (right) helped Louise prepare her "soupe." It was all for a good cause, to benefit the March of Dimes.

MOMAN MOVING

Back to his roots, extra added producer for folks like Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash and a bunch more greats, is migrating back to where he got his start, Memphis. Rumor has it that Chips Moman is being "sorta set up" in the studio business by the city of Memphis. Apparently they want him that bad. And you know what? I don't blame them. He's a great producer and songwriter. ... While Nashville music biz is show-biz busy, Memphis has sorta slowed to an idle. Chips will definitely change that. The tracks will be running.

Nashville, though, is losing a friend, and any time someone with that much talent moves, it hurts. Ouch!

OVERHEARD

While dining on one of my fave's, chicken tostado at Close Quarters, I overheard someone say, "Think about what a boring thing I have to do this weekend... go to Alabama to a Hank Williams Jr. look-alike contest."

Now friends, that makes me hot under the collar. If somebody don't want to be around the look-alike contests, or if—to take another case—they don't like the way that the country people talk, then I

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People



Margo's home was destroyed in the fire, but fortunately her cat Muffin survived.

say they shouldn't be in country music. There's nothing that makes me madder than to hear somebody that has made a blooming fortune on some country music person go around and imitate the way they talk, or call them stupid. People from all over the world are living in Music City nowadays and that's okay, but if they came here to rip off the hillbillies or to hang out someplace and talk about our stupidity, then I say go back to wherever folks don't talk like we do!

I sure hope Hank Jr. reads this 'cause I am ready to describe the guy. There's hundreds of folks who may or may not look



like Hank Jr. but who sure do talk like him who would probably give their last cent to go to the contest.

WHEN HELP IS NEEDED YOU CAN COUNT ON MUSIC CITY-ITES

When Margo Smith's lovely log home and all her belongings were destroyed by fire recently, pals Dottie West and Jan Howard pitched in and threw a party to end all parties. Held at the Nashville Palace on Music Valley Drive near Opryland, the bash was attended by Margo's hubby Richard Cammeron along with Lee

Greenwood, Jack Greene, Terri Gibbs, Little Jimmy Dickens, Jeanne Pruett, Leroy Van Dyke, Jim Ed Brown, Lorrie Morgan, Helen Cornelius, Gai' Davies and others. One of the most special gifts was given by Lorrie... a little puppy, to replace the one that died in the fire.

Speaking of lovely Lorrie Morgan, she is the daughter of the late Opry star George "Candy Kisses" Morgan. One of the "second generation" members of the Grand Ole Opry, Lorrie has yet to have a Number One country recording, but she has the looks, the poise, the voice and the quality to be a super-duper star. For some time the little lady from Music City has guested on the Opry and has been a "semi-regular" on Ralph Emery's TV show *Nashville Now*, as well as appearing on other TV programs on the *Nashville Network* and local syndication. The CBS recording artist has an awful good chance of being real big with the right song. Hey, maybe she ought to redo "Candy Kisses." I've heard her sing it and it cooks.

SHEEHAW'S JOKE OF THE WEEK

It's bluegrass heaven. Lester Flatt walks up with his D-45 Martin Guitar and he's tuning and strumming, tuning and strumming. Finally it sounds just right to that perfect-pitch left ear and he does the famed G-run that all bluegrass guitar players better know! Red Smiley joins Lester with his shiny D-45 Martin strung around his neck. Red strums and tunes up along with Lester. He gets his right, does the G-run, and he and Lester have just started

Following news that Larry Gatlin had undergone treatment for alcohol and drug dependence a few months back, many readers have been interested in his progress. So, Editor Russ Barnard called the never-shy champion songwriter recently to see what he had to say.

"I just thank the Lord that I'm healthy and happy," said Larry with his characteristic energy. "A lot of people with the problem I had feel sorry for themselves. But... in a way... it was the best thing that ever happened to me. If going through what I've been through helped me realize my dependence on the Lord, it's worth it. It saved my life!"

Larry says that being free of alcohol and drugs lets him see himself and other people in a more realistic light—that he is less resentful and hostile. As part of his therapy, he attends "anonymous"

GATLIN CHANGES HIS TUNE



Gatlin, looking happy and healthy, says he has new views on life.

meetings with others recovering from similar problems. In one session with another important Nashville figure, Larry says the two acknowledged years of unspoken negative feelings toward each other and are building a new friendship.

"The worst part was the mental agony I put my family and friends through. Being drunk every day... it's hard work getting up on stage to do your job. I showed up, but there were a lot of times when the fans didn't get their money's worth."

Larry, who never hesitates to say what's on his mind, also volunteered this intriguing comment: "I'll tell you something else, Russell. All those things I used to say to you... I don't feel that way anymore." So, stay tuned. That sounds like a good opening for the next interesting chapter in the Larry Gatlin Story.

People

to sing when up walks Carter Stanley with his mighty D-45. He does the guitarist's bluegrass ritual. He tunes and strums and tunes and strums. Soon his Martin is perfect too and the three giants start to sing. About that time a bright light blinds the three. Before them they see a road covered in gold leading to a hill-top. The light shines to the top and there, there stands a man. The man wears a white suit with a cowboy hat to match. He's standing straight and tall with his head turned a bit to the left. In his hands he is holding a F-5 Gibson mandolin like it's his baby. He's tuning the mandolin and strumming. The light shines brightly as one of the startled three breathlessly asks, "Is that him?"

St. Peter, who's standing nearby watching the scene, answers, "Oh, that's just God. He thinks he's Bill Monroe."



Dave Kellog (left) from WMZQ Radio and Jim Bakas, Director of the Washington D.C. Commission on Arts and Humanities, presented Emmylou a proclamation for Emmylou Harris Day.

PEOPLE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL GET SMART FOR A CHANGE!!

Country music has a legitimate "new connection" in Washington, D.C.—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This is all due, so I am told, to the efforts of super-songstress Emmylou Harris. She put on one heckuva show there this spring for the friends and neighbors, therefore and whereby a series of country music concerts will take place in this prestigious hall. Emmylou's concert was termed a "tremendous artistic success" and it was a sellout performance too.

Mayor Marion Barry declared March 27 Emmylou Harris Day in our nation's capital. Washington, D.C., should be honored to honor Emmylou. Early on in her career, Emmylou spent a lot of time in and around that area, where they love their

bluegrass, picking and singing and whetting her musical chops in preparation for what is one of the more exciting careers around today. My good friend Judy Newby, who does press for Tandy Rice and all the folks at Top Billing, tells me that Tandy and Top Billing coordinated this do with the Kennedy Center folks. Don Goodman of Top Billing, not to be confused with the songwriter of the same name, and Ken Levitan of Aldridge and Levitan will be working out contractual questions and answers for the forthcoming country music series.

Tandy, get your feet in the middle of that and get Senator Robert Byrd from the great state of West Virginia to do a little fiddling for the friends and neighbors!! And wouldn't that make a great TV show—music and politics?

SONGWriters HONOR ONE OF THEIR OWN

Good guy Kenny O'Dell has achieved what every songwriter dreams of and few find—two giant hits and the recognition of his peers. The entire Nashville show biz scene, plus country radio and all us fans, made two of his songs biggest among biggies. First, "Behind Closed Doors," the monster recording by Charlie Rich some years back, and now "Mama, He's Crazy" by The Judds in 1984. Kenny is such a nice guy. He could be a farmer or a pharmacist, but he's a songwriter. He and his lovely wife Corky make such a striking couple. You'd never know they have a couple of grand-kids because they look and act so youthful.

This spring, when the Nashville Songwriters' Association International (NSAI) honored their own, they named Kenny Songwriter of the Year. The moment may have been the biggest thrill of Kenny's career. It took place at the NSAI's 18th Annual Achievement Awards Ceremony and Dinner, held at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Nashville. Kenny was moved to tears by the honor voted him by his fellow songwriters. Nashville being the songwriting capital of the world, this is a *very* special award. Other nominees for the prestigious prize this year were Harlan Howard, Bob McDill, Dave Loggins and Dickey Lee.

A complete list of the honored songs includes: "City of New Orleans" by Steve Goodman; "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind" by Whitey Shafer and Dar-



Wilma Lee Cooper and Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander took to the streets on Mule Day.

MULE DAY IN TENNESSEE

Wilma Lee Cooper announced on the Grand Ole Opry that she was the Grand Marshal of Mule Day, in Columbia, Tennessee. But what happened was not what a surprised Wilma Lee expected. It seems the mule pulling Wilma Lee's wagon got excited, started to buck, and had to be taken out of the parade. I guess the 100,000-plus people who came to view the festivities were too much for that mule. Not to worry, no harm done... old pro Wilma Lee has been bucked before. She just got out of the wagon and walked along the parade route with Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander. Shoot, I'd rather walk with the good-looking Gov than be pulled by a team of mules any day!!

TERRY MORROW

People

lene Shafer: "Elizabeth" by Jimmy Fortune; "God Bless the U.S.A." by Lee Greenwood; "Got No Reason Now for Going Home" by Johnny Russell; "I Don't Know a Thing About Love" by Harlan Howard; "I Guess It Never Hurts to Hurt Sometimes" by Randy Van Warmer; "I've Been Around Enough to Know" by Dickey Lee and Bob McDill; "Let's Fall to Pieces Together" by Dickey Lee, Tommy Rocco and Johnny Russell; "Looking for a Place to Fall Apart" by Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson and Fred Powers; "Mama, He's Crazy" by Kenny O'Dell; "That's the Way Love Goes" by Whitey Shafer and Lefty Frizzell; "To All the Girls I've Loved Before" by Hal David and Albert Hammond; "Why Not Me" by Harlan Howard, Brent Maher and Sonny Throckmorton; and "You Could've Heard a Heart Break" by Marc Rossi. All the songwriters were honored with Certificates of Achievement in the course of the evening.

At one point in the ceremony, NSAI executive director Maggie Cavender announced that Nashville Mayor Richard

Fulton had donated a plot of land to the organization for the purpose of building a Songwriters Hall of Fame. It's high time that the songwriters, long the bastard children of the entertainment world, had a place to display their laurels, hang their hats and call home. God bless Mayor Fulton, a true friend of the country music industry.

Don Wayne, president of NSAI, remarked that Mayor Fulton had made him the happiest man alive. Don has always been active in the organization and has wanted a Hall of Fame since the beginning of the first meeting.

Few of the partytimers realized that about a third of the way through the festivities NSAI Hall of Famer Pee Wee King almost choked to death on some food. With the help of Dot Thornton, who works at NSAI, King's wife Lydia got King to his feet and into the lobby. Thornton's screams were heard by Eddie Foy, who rushed to King's aid and successfully applied the Heimlich maneuver to dislodge the food. King, the songwriter who gave us "Tennessee Waltz," was one

grateful man to be alive.

Songwriters are a different breed. They are poets. They are lyricists. And sometimes they are composers. They are a very sensitive lot, wear their feelings on their sleeves and are sometimes paranoid. All songwriters cry, but they cry alone... if they are sober. Songwriters are about my favorite people in the world. There's a spot in my heart that don't love nothing but songwriters. Dear fans, I beg of you to make yourselves aware of who writes your favorite songs. There's a very special person who spent many hours sweating, swearing and praying over that song before it became one.

TIME FLIES

I can't believe that *Austin City Limits* is 10 years old. Ever since the show began, I have been an ardent watcher. As a matter of fact, I once pledged to the local NET TV station for carrying the show. Congratulations to all those who do what they do best down in Austin. We look forward this year to seeing all the new shows. I understand there will be a tribute

I've been a fan of Jean Shepard since she and Ferlin Huskey sang that great duet, "Dear John Letter." Wasn't that about ten years ago? No, it was 1953. Time flies when you're having fun, doesn't it.

It was about 15 years ago that I first had the pleasure of seeing Jean perform. She was working a Carlton Haney festival up near Sandusky, Ohio, with a bunch of bluegrassers. Usually country entertainers leave a lot to be desired when performing for bluegrass fans. Not Jean. She rared back, put her hand behind her, snapped her fingers and sang her heart out, to the utmost delight of everybody. Since that time I've seen Jean onstage at the Opry many, many times. When that hand goes behind her and that smile crosses her face, you know the lady is ready to sing. And does she sing!

Some weeks back the evening paper in Nashville printed the word that there was a "phasing out" underway at the Grand Ole Opry. The article stated that management wanted to cut the 62-member cast of the world-famous live radio show by 20 percent—and listed some dozen names. Jean Shepard's name was on the list. Further, the article said, eventually these persons would be fired. I asked Jean about it.

"I have no idea what's going on at



Jean Shepard

the Opry. I've been out of town so much. I don't know how the Opry feels. One thing I do wish is that they would come forward and, if these rumors are lies, say so. If they are not lies, then say so," Jean said. "Why, it's leaving the entertainers in a difficult situation," she went on to explain. "Last weekend I was in Washington and there were a couple reporters from the *Washington Post*, I believe they said. The promoter of the show called me over to the side of the stage and asked me if I'd been fired from the Grand Ole Opry. I told him no, that I had not been fired. Then he asked me if I would tell that to the audience. I had to walk out onstage and tell the audience that I hadn't been fired from the Opry and

that, as far as I knew, nobody had been fired."

"Is there a list of names," I asked.

"Nobody seems to know," Jean replied.

Let's talk about Jean Shepard, I suggested. What's Jean up to these days?

"Working! I'm working about sixty days a year. Every other weekend and that's about as much as I want to work," she laughed. "You know, I still have a sixteen-year-old son, Cory, and I like being home with him."

"Is Cory your and Bennie's son?" I inquired. (Bennie is Bennie Birchfield.)

"Yes...and I'm fixing to be Grandma. And I'm really looking forward to that. I'm real excited," she added. Jean and the late Hawkshaw Hawkins had two sons, both older than Cory.

Jean went on to say that she has two albums in the works. Produced by Ronnie Cochran, they will be sold on TV. She is looking forward to the records coming out and to recording more albums. I mentioned Larry Butler, and the great Jean Shepard said what all of Music City knows...she and Larry Butler were quite a team in the recording studio. And she wonders if Larry would like to do it again! Don't you wish they would. "Slipping Away"—an example of greatness, sung by Jean, produced by Larry!



People

to the late Steve Goodman, a great human being and a great songwriter whose time was cut too short.

MOST GOLD AND PLATINUM

Almost all the gold and platinum in the music business is on the walls of the Rogers homestead!! Yep, the most awarded artist in RIAA's program is **Kenny Rogers**—with 11 platinum and 18 gold albums. Do you know that accounts for more than 20 million dollars!!! I can't even imagine that much money. Anything over a thousand really confuses me. That's about as far as I can add!

WHEN BARBARA TALKS, THE LEGISLATORS LISTEN

Little **Barbara Mandrell** took herself to the Tennessee Legislature and insisted that a state law be passed making it mandatory to wear seat belts. She explained that had it not been for seat belts she and her daughter Jamie and son Matthew would surely be dead. The law is closer to being passed now than before Barbara went there.

CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF EYE SAW

Lunching in O'Charley's I ran into old friend **Bob Kirsch**, who heads up the mighty **Welk Music Group** here in Music City, and super-guy-producer **Eddie Kilroy**. I also saw **J.P. Pennington** driving his new blue Jaguar. J.P., lead singer of **Exile**, joined the other members of this hotter than hot country music bunch for lunch. Also dining with them was **Exile's** record producer, **Mr. Buddy Killen**. As always, this could only happen in Nashville.

Eye also saw **Mel Tillis** driving his mini-van off I-265 onto the ramp and heading for his office. I know that the stuttering boy was singing as he drove, cause Mel's lips just don't move that fast when he talks. Mel is now recording for almighty **RCA Records**, being produced by one of my favorite people on this planet, **Mr. Harold Shedd**. Now, that Mel, his lips might not move the fastest when he's talking, but he has a bunch of irons in the fire . . . recording hits, doing movies, TV and concerts, as well as promoting his book *Stutterin' Boy*.

Dear Mr. Mendelam:

Thank you for your letter and for sending me Country Music Magazine. I very much enjoyed reading those issues.

Secretary Block was right when he told you I am an avid country western listener. He is the performer, I am the listener.

Many thanks for your courtesy.

Sincerely,

Leonard has been corresponding with some heavies lately. Vice President Bush recently sent him this letter.

HONORS FOR ONE OF OUR OWN

We always tell you about the honors, awards and accolades granted to others, so now it's time to toot our own horn. **Leonard Mendelson**, associate publisher and advertising director of *Country Music* since 1972, has been named a lifetime member of **Musicians Union Local 47** in Hollywood. Leonard started his musical career during his high school days, playing in the same band with **Herb Alpert**, and played in the **Air Force Band** in the 1950's. On the other hand, not everyone applauds Leonard's prowess as a musician. When **Willie Nelson** autographed a copy of *Country Music* for Leonard, he wrote, "To Leonard Mendelson, the world's greatest Publisher, but the world's worst trumpet player."

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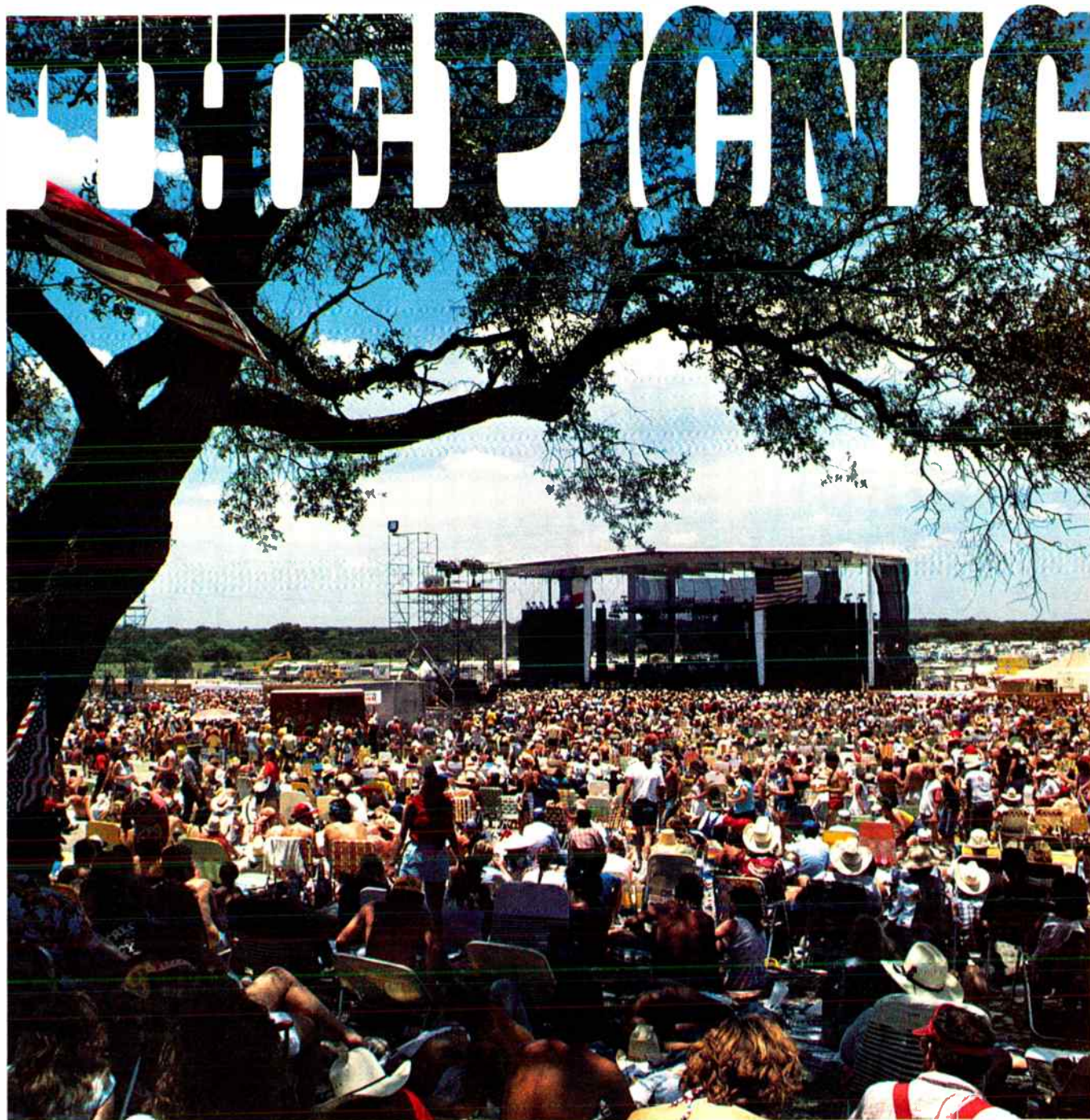
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T.G. Sheppard, "Livin' On The Edge"

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*Where does it go?
The good Lord only knows...
—Billy Joe Shaver*

The wind was the wind off a blast furnace, a hot, dry sirocco that rolled across the flat plains of Texas to spray a fine abrasive grit into every crack and crevice of rock, tree and human being. It

was the kind of wind, wrote Raymond Chandler fifty years ago, that cancelled all the bets.

"Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands'

necks," he wrote. "Anything can happen. You can even get a full glass of beer at a cocktail lounge."

Willie Nelson squinted out across the crowd, blinked in the relentless sunlight, grinned a classic Willie Nelson grin. The wind blew fine white dust in little ripples across the newly built stage; the speakers whined slightly, a hum not unlike the space shuttle getting ready to blast off.

"Hello and welcome," said Willie Nelson. "Welcome to my Picnic."

The crowd, all denim and leather even in the hot Fourth of July sunshine, roared

BY MICHAEL BANE · PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEONARD KAMSLER

their approval, and Willie Nelson, the absolute undisputed world-champion country music singer, well, he sang "Whiskey River."

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the 1984 version of Willie's summer extravaganza, held in a natural amphitheater on the outskirts of Austin, Texas, was that the first Willie Nelson Fourth of July Picnic was held twelve years ago!

Twelve years ago! The thought boggles the mind. When the first one was held, the 1972 First Annual Dripping Springs Reunion, the smell of Woodstock was still in the air, and white kids with ponytails called each other "brother." The kids came to Dripping Springs to get high and see folks like Kris Kristofferson and that no-good looking Waylon Jennings and his mean guitar. They came with a gut feeling that the 1960s, the Psychedelic Sixties, were finally dying, and that the next decade, the one that had been trying to lurch to a start for two years, would bring something different. The older folks came to the concert to see their heroes from the 1950s and even the 1940s; to see Roy Acuff and Loretta Lynn; to hear Tex Ritter tell one more time the story of a brave man torn between love and honor:

*Although you're grieving
I won't be leaving
Until I shoot Frank Miller dead...*

Like the young people, the older fans knew in their hearts that the times they were a-changin', and after a decade of change, they looked at a hazy future with more than a little fear and not too much in the way of hope.

In these business-like 1980s it is perhaps unfashionable to talk about miracles. Suffice to say that over a cold, dreary, wet couple of days twelve years ago a whole lot of kids discovered that their parents weren't nearly as *hopeless* as they'd previously believed, and a whole lot of parents discovered that their kids weren't nearly so weird as they'd thought. Jointly—an apt word—both groups discovered an old truth: that no generation has an exclusive on emotions, and that music—the best music—speaks to emotions held in common by all people. Willie Nelson had known that truth, *lived* by that truth, his entire life.

Twelve years later, they still come, the not-so-young and the just-a-bit-older, to reaffirm the old coalition, to remember the way it was. Like the Crazy Old Soldier of the Troy Seals song, they just don't know when to quit. Instead, they gather once a year in somebody's meadow or somebody's stadium, in Texas or Oklahoma or even New Jersey, to wear the old hats and chant the old chants and hear the old music, Crazy Old Soldiers rubbing a cherished medal until the surface is smooth and shiny, the inscription lost.



*Freedom's just another word for
nothing left to lose...*

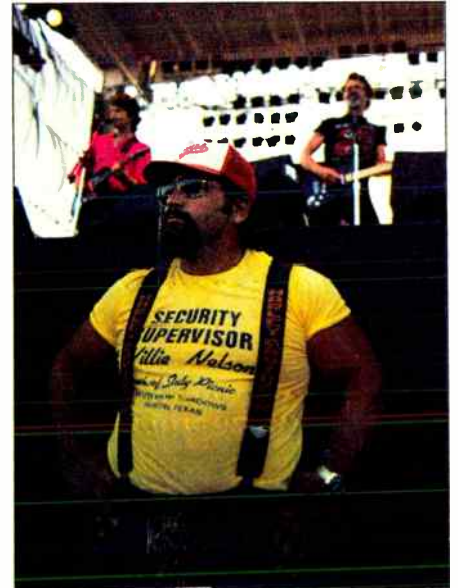
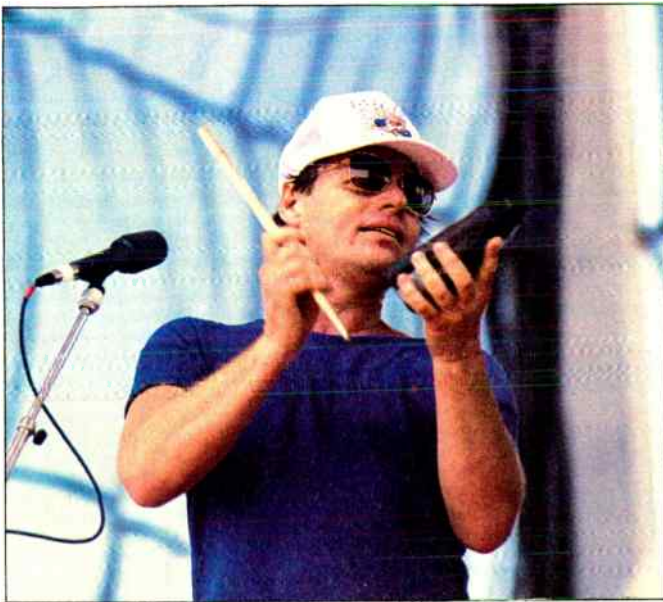
—Kris Kristofferson

First thing about Willie's Picnics you've got to learn is that you're not talking about Woodstock here, folks. There are 12 levels of backstage passes, for guests, performers, press and a whole bunch of people nobody knows. Many of the passes expire at a certain time, and most of the genteel stage security people look like a cross between your normal backstage people and your average, run-of-the-mill motorcycle gang. So the easiest way to find out where you are and aren't allowed to be is to go there and see if somebody resembling the Incredible Hulk comes along and throws you out.

Also, although it's a Picnic, forget the food. In fact, forget the following items:

- food
- beverages
- coolers
- containers of any kind
- signs and banners
- umbrellas
- movie cameras
- tape recorders
- pets
- weapons of any sort, including pocket knives
- fireworks
- anything that can be thrown, including Frisbees and what-have-you.

To prove the concert promoters weren't kidding, most of the 18,000 people who



showed up were required to submit to body searches before they were allowed to enter the picnic ground. The “contraband”—sandwiches, pocket knives, fried

the arms, the necks and backs dished out, and the whole shirt cut short. They sprayed themselves with spray bottles of water. As the day wore on, their noses

Printers' Alley, talked Willie into a duet on “Ain't It Funny (How Time Slips Away).”

“Here’s another song Willie wrote for me when I was just a little boy,” said the Singing Sheriff, and Willie just laughed, then joined in on “Hello Walls.” Even after all these years, that song and Faron Young’s voice remain a perfect match. For a second, watching Willie’s intense harmonizing, it was possible to imagine a much younger Faron Young in the cool, dark confines of Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge, listening to a much younger (and unknown) Willie Nelson pitch him the song.

To be sure, music is what the Picnics are all about. This year, the line-up featured Waylon and Willie, Jessi Colter, David Allan Coe, Johnny Rodriguez, Moe Bandy, Faron Young, Kris Kristofferson, jazzman Jackie King, Floyd Tillman, Leon Russell, Townes Van Zandt, Billy Joe Shaver, Delbert Mc-

*In Texas the talk turned to Outlaws
Like Willie and Waylon and Me...
—David Allan Coe*

chicken, potato chips, beer, ice chests, thermos bottles and other “deadly weapons”—was heaved into one of the waiting dumpsters.

David Allan Coe’s daughter wore a t-shirt that read, “Willie, Waylon and Daddy.” Willie’s t-shirt read, “Life is a bitch. And then you die. Have a nice day.” Some of the women backstage wore t-shirts with gaping holes cut for

sunburned a bright red.

Johnny Rodriguez played poker and refused to leave for his next gig until the game was over. David Allan Coe posed at the back of the stage for photographs. Waylon and Jessi visited Willie, who popped out on stage during just about every act to sing a duet with the artist. Faron Young, looking exactly as if he were playing a late-night lounge show on



Clinton, Jerry Jeff Walker and Joe Ely. The sets were either 30 or 45 minutes, and this year the Picnic ran like a well-lubricated clock. Willie and Kris closed it with songs from the upcoming film *The Songwriter*. As befits a Crazy Old Soldiers' convention, most of the music wasn't new. It was, rather, the music of the Outlaws, country music circa 1975-

and Sunday mornings, and the crowd moved with him in a special way. Although Willie and Waylon became the greatest, Kris was the first. "They're not following me," said his character in the movie *Convoy*. "I'm just in front." For many of the people in this audience, the music of Kris Kristofferson helped define their generation—the Baby Boom

*He's a walking contradiction
Partly truth and partly fiction
Taking every wrong direction
On his lonely way back home...*

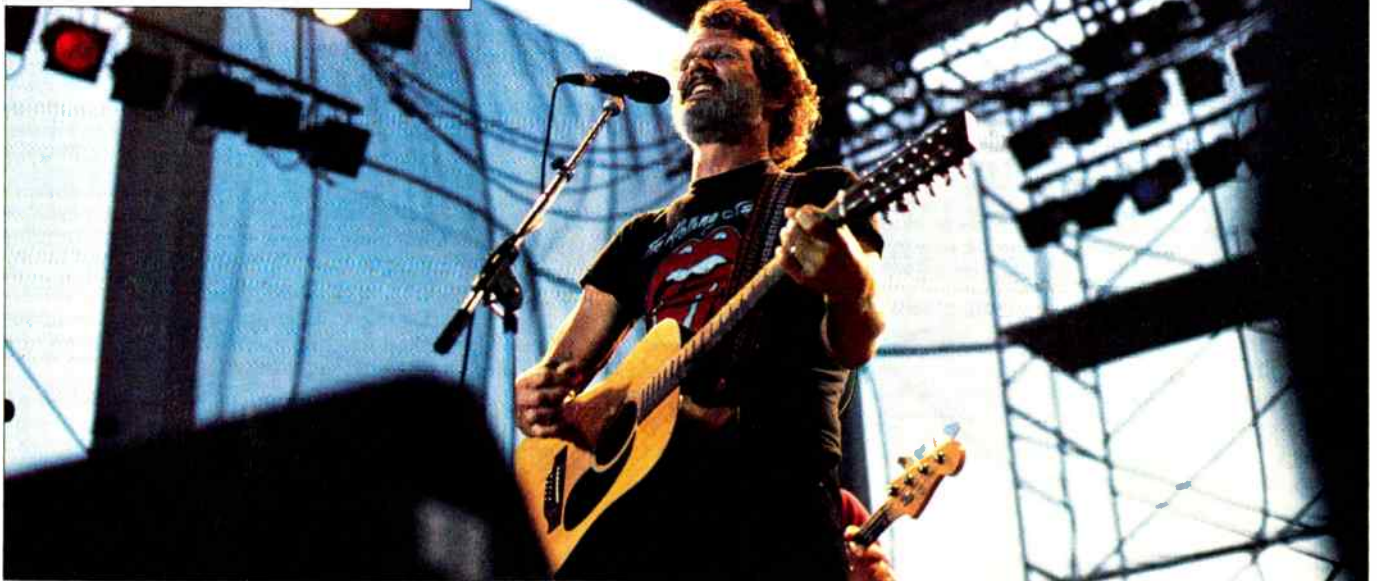
—Kris Kristofferson



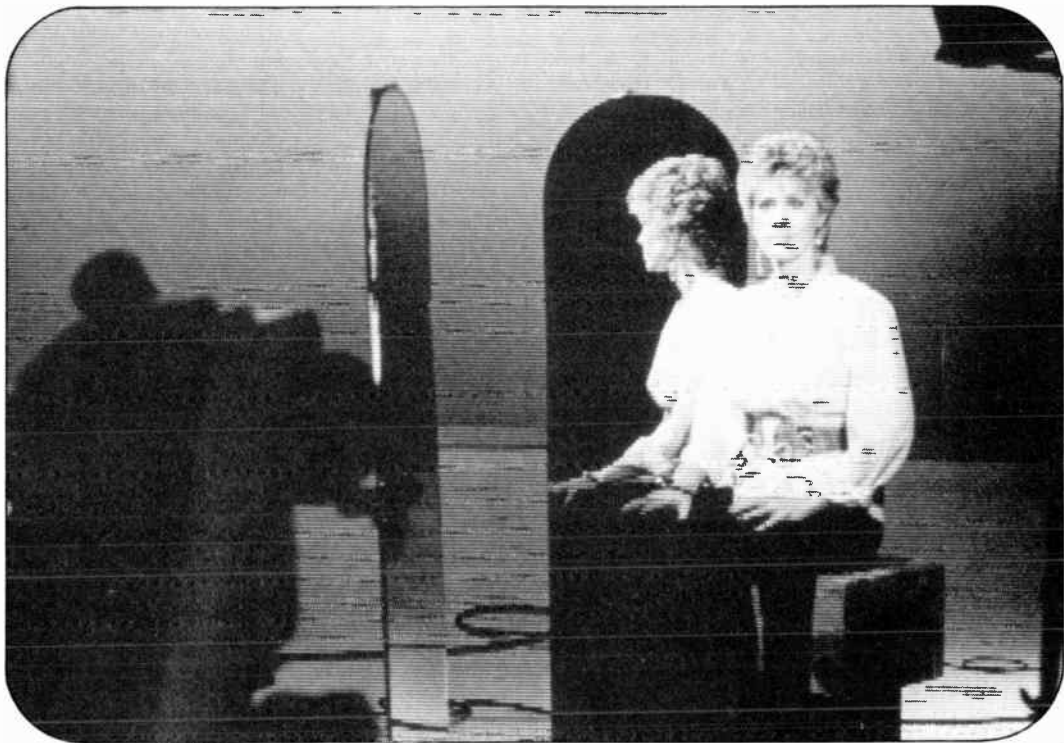
1980, when the whole world was discovering Willie and Waylon and Billy Joe and David Allan and all the rest. "Good-Hearted Woman," "Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys," "Up Against the Wall, Redneck Mother," "Willie the Wandering Gypsy and Me," "Honky Tonk heroes"—they sang 'em all, and the crowd drank 'em up like cold Coors in big plastic cups.

Kris came on at sunset, when the sky shaded all different colors and the fiery red sun tinted the white dust the color of fresh blood. He sang about lonely nights

kids, the outlaws, the outsiders, the rebels, the protesters. Now, so many years and miles later, the music echoed across a hot Texas meadow, and the crowd seemed caught up not in nostalgia, but remembering. The hot wind moved the years aside, and Kris Kristofferson sang all the words. And when he finished singing, after the applause and the cheering, everyone in the crowd—even the security guards—seemed to be smiling. Maybe, they all seemed to be thinking, the going up *was* worth the coming down. ■



Janie Makes A VIDEO



Seated in the exact center of a darkened studio, bathed in a pool of red light, Janie Fricke is surrounded by cameras, like hungry sharks circling just on the outskirts of the pool of light. She is smiling, but smiling like a trouper. Definitely, an I'll-muddle-through-no-matter-what sort of smile.

"The only thing about doing a video on this song," she says to the darkened studio, "is that I don't get to smile at all."

There's a hushed laugh from the people in the dark, and Janie goes back to smiling her trouper's smile. Finally, there's a hum of the tape machines rewinding, and Janie is called over to the closest monitor to watch a snatch of the playback. On the small screen, a tiny Janie, pain etched across her face, sings about seven words and the tape stops.

"Oh," she gushes, "I like that."

Over to the side, her husband and business manager Randy Jackson shakes his head.

"She doesn't know what she likes," he says, rather fondly. His eyes only leave Janie in real life to flicker down to Janie on the screen.

We are in this darkened studio in Nashville to witness the next step in the still skyrocketing career of Janie Fricke, the creation of a "video" from her song, "The First Word in Memory Is Me." A video is a visual interpretation of a song, a little movie. Before the cataclysmic arrival of *MTV*, Music Television, most artists did stuff like this for a lark or to show in record stores alongside a big display of new albums. Following the success of *MTV*, which shows nothing but rock videos 24

hours a day, and the advent of *The Nashville Network*, which offers an outlet for country videos, everybody in Nashville began a headlong rush to the little screen.

Well, almost everybody.

Janie Fricke, arguably the most successful woman artist in recent years, hung back, waiting until she felt the moment was right.

And that's not surprising, either. Although she winces when anyone asks whether she really was a "reluctant" superstar, Janie Fricke has approached her growing stardom in a methodical, almost calculated, manner. To hear her tell it, it's as easy as one, two, three—jingle singer, back-up singer, star. Actually, she probably can't help having it sound that way—as a person she is enthusiastic, optimistic

by Michael Bane



Getting ready for the shooting, Janie gets a touch-up from the makeup artist.

and surprisingly modest. The same one-two-three formula applies to her solo career, only this time it's producers—Billy Sherrill, Jim Ed Norman and Bob Montgomery were all looking for a distinct Janie Fricke "sound." This is no small feat when you're dealing with a singer with the range and power that Fricke has.

"I started out, back in the Billy Sherrill days, doing songs like 'Baby It's You' and 'What Are You Doing Tonight' and 'Please Help Me I'm Falling,'" she explains. "Then, when I was with Jim Ed Norman, it was the dancehall songs, like 'Down to My Last Broken Heart' and 'I'll Need Someone to Hold Me When I Cry.' And now, of course, with Bob, it's been the Number One songs like 'He's a Heartache' and 'It Ain't Easy Being Easy.' So there you have a pretty wide range of songs. But I loved each and every one of those guys. It was great working with all three of those producers."

The television studio is hung with black drapes and five sets of venetian blinds. A large spotlight is mounted on a movable boom. The spotlight is fitted with different colored gels, colored filters, so when the boom is moved up and down, different colored lights shine at different angles through the blinds. On the set, whole days seem to pass in just seconds as the light moves up and down.

Janie is standing in the pool of light, reading a letter. She is dressed as she is on the cover of *The First Word in Memory* album—white blouse, wide snakeskin belt, carefully tailored jeans and ivory cowboy boots. On the cover of her album she's also reading a letter; if you'll look closely, that letter has the lyrics of "Your Heart's Not in It" on it. The letter she's holding in the studio is from a friend.

The light boom moves up and down until exactly the right shadows fall on the wall behind Janie. On the small screen monitors, the mood looks properly moody. Two cameras, one mounted on a dolly arrangement, the other a "Steady-Cam" unit strapped to the cameraman, circle Janie. As they move, the view in each small mon-

itor shifts. A make-up woman in a red sweater runs out to Janie for a quick touch-up.

Janie stares at the letter.

"Are we ready?" the director, Marc Ball, asks.

There is a low rumble of agreement.

"Okay. Janie, walk in and move to your right," he says. "Stand by. Roll tape."

Twin pictures of Janie appear on the two monitors, quickly replaced by a close-up of the letter. Camera One moves back to take in Janie's expression, which is close to tears.

"Okay," the director says. "Good. Let's do it two more times."

Janie walks in, moves to her right, looks at the letter, looks pained twice more. The music starts and stops and starts and stops.

"Good," the director says.

Janie starts laughing. "I didn't know I could be this serious," she says.

"Next shot," says the director.

This time Janie lowers the letter, looks to the right and begins to sing the song. Six whole words of the song. On the cue she lowers the letter, looks to the right, and music fills the studio.

"I can see you don't know..." she sings.

The music stops.

"Thank you," says the director.

"That was good. Set change!"

Janie walks back over to the high director's chairs where all the rest of us are hiding in the dark. She rolls her eyes back in her head and laughs.

"It's weird, isn't it?" she says. "They're taking it measure by measure, a piece of the song at a time. I didn't know it was going to be this intricate. Very detailed."

Someone asks if she would like to see more of the playbacks, and she emphatically shakes her head no.

Getting in the mood with letter in hand she goes over her lines.

"I'd rather see the whole thing when it's finished," she says. "It's hard to relate to the pieces."

Unlike other performers, whose careers seem to be half-crazed roller coasters, Janie Fricke's career can fit neatly into certain compartments. She grew up on a 400-acre farm in the heartland of Indiana, with both parents deeply involved in music. Not surprisingly, Janie's interest in music came quickly, and by the time she left for college, music ranked right along with teaching as a possible career.

At first Janie Fricke followed the coffeehouse trail blazed by such folk music luminaries of the 1960's as Joan Baez and Judy Collins. It looked like elementary education might win out after all until the summer after her sophomore year, when she was playing a gig in a small club.

"I was playing at a Holiday Inn one summer," she told *Advertising Age* recently, "and a guy came up to me during the dinner hour—I was playing my guitar—and he said, 'You ought to try commercials.' And I said, 'I never thought of that.'"

The impressed dinner patron suggested she head for Memphis to audition for a company there that specialized in radio jingles.

End folk singer, begin jingle singer.

"We punched a time clock and sang radio identification jingles six hours a day, five days a week," she says. "But it gave me tremendous experience in reading, in blending and with a microphone."



"I didn't know I could be this serious," says Janie as she breaks up and has to retake the shot.

After an unhappy loop to Los Angeles and back again to Memphis, Janie found herself in Nashville, working with the justifiably famous Lea Jane Berinati, the leader of the Lea Jane Singers, one of the most oft-used studio vocal groups. There Janie became something of a commercial singing superstar, singing "Me and My RC" or the theme for Red Lobster, 7-Up, Coors Beer, United Airlines—you name it, Janie sang it. The secret was her enormously powerful and expressive voice, with her rare ability to shift from style to style without losing warmth and, for lack of a better word, *presence*. Janie Fricke singing sounds like Janie Fricke in the room with you, a good friend with a couple of kind words about her favorite soft drink. No wonder advertising clients were beating down her door.

While she was with the Lea Jane Singers, another component of Janie Fricke's career was falling into place. She worked recording sessions with all manner of heavyweights, from Elvis Presley to Millie Jackson. On some of those sessions, she was more than just a back-up singer. One particularly noticeable performance was on Johnny Duncan's "Jo and the Cowboy," an excellent song that just got lost in the Music City Shuffle. Janie also joined Duncan on "Stranger" and "Come a Little Bit Closer."

The Number One "Stranger" prompted Billy Sherrill, Duncan's producer, to bring the back-up singer to the attention of the Columbia heavyweights, who opened up a whole new phase of Janie's life when they decided Janie would be a perfect solo act. Then a whole new and somewhat unique problem cropped up:

Janie Fricke could sing like *anybody*, in any style. Who was she supposed to sound like?

"Billy Sherrill told me once that with Tammy Wynette he knew what songs to pick, because he knew her voice and he knew what she could do. But with my voice, there was a pretty wide range of songs. And so we kinda experimented back then in the beginning. We put all different kinds of songs on the album. We didn't really have one identity, because it was so hard to know what my voice could do or what it would do. It was hard to really lock into one style. That's the way it happened when we first started out. We couldn't help that. It just happened that way... 'Cause I had been a back-up singer, and he hadn't really heard me sing as a soloist before. When he wanted to sign me up to the record label, he just had to make



a gamble there and go for it, except we weren't sure what to go for."

There was also the great reluctance question. The fact is Janie Fricke was making a great deal of money—a six-figure income, in fact—as a commercial and back-up singer. The uncertainties of life as a country singer on the road were not necessarily all that appealing.

"It wasn't that big a deal," she says. "As my solo career got bigger, I phased out my commercial work."

While the three Sherrill albums were moderately successful, they didn't establish Janie as the kind of star Columbia envisioned.

"Unfortunately, I think Billy Sherrill and I were ahead of our time," Janie says. "If right now he was producing me and we did some of those same songs, we might have some hits on them. Especially songs like 'What Are You Doing Tonight' or 'Baby It's You.' 'Please Help Me I'm Falling' I believe was a Number Nine or Number Ten hit, but if it were cut today, it would be a Number One record."

Jim Ed Norman gave her the Number One hit that had eluded her in the Billy Sherrill days with "Don't Worry 'Bout Me Baby," but it was really under Bob Montgomery that her career took off.

"In my case, working with all three producers, I have tried to convince them that the songs I find are just as good as the songs they find," she says. "I have to con-

vince them of that. I don't know whether it's an ego thing with a producer or what. But a lot of them are like that. They'll listen to the songs you bring in, but there's something in the back of their mind that's saying, 'Well now, I'm the one who's going to find the hits, because I've been in this business a long time, and I'm not sure whether it's a good song or not. Since I didn't find it, I don't know whether I'm going to like it or not.' I think that happens a lot of times."

We're ready!" the director yells. Janie has one last quick sip of Cranapple Juice and heads back to the set, where a large high-backed rattan chair has been placed in position. The make-up woman hurries out for another quick touch-up; the light boom goes up and down; the make-up artist concentrates on Janie's lips with a small paintbrush. As soon as Janie is ready, she sits in the chair and a backlight is adjusted to highlight her blonde hair.

"Okay," says the director, "now we're going to do the closing."

Janie smiles.

"Roll tape!"

"The last word in memory is me..."

"When you run that back," Randy says from the sidelines, "see if her eyes shine. Janie, when you blink your eyes, it's real pronounced and real long."

Janie laughs. "So I won't blink."

"Let's put *him* out there," the director chimes in, "and see how *he* looks."

"Okay," says an abashed Randy. "That's why I make little bucks and she makes big bucks."

"Again," says the director.

"The last word in memory is me..."

"Bingo," says a cameraman.

"That's it," says the director. "Set change! Costume change!"

Janie smiles and gets up. All in all, it's like watching paint dry. As she walks by on the way to the dressing room, she whispers, "That's show biz." ■



Behind the camera once again, Janie brings the song home... and this time it's a wrap.

20 QUESTIONS WITH *by Michael Bane* MINNIE PEARL



In the heart of the hurly-burly known as Music Row there's a gingerbread cottage, a quiet little place with a picket fence and beds of flowers. Almost every day of the week an older woman is there, with her out-of-fashion dress and hat with its price tag still flying in the wind. When visitors come—and they come by the thousands and thousands—she greets them all with a great big, “How...deeeeee!!,” as she has greeted millions around the world in the years

since Minnie Pearl came to be in 1936.

Minnie Pearl—Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon—stands as one of the giants of country music. She has not only survived but prospered in the battlefields of stand-up comedy. We caught up with her right after she'd had a visit from Barbara Mandrell, who was still recovering from an automobile accident and still very pregnant. We convinced Minnie to lay aside her hat and answer twenty questions.

1

We saw you on the Academy of Country Music Awards show the other night. What do you think of award shows in general?

I don't think you can argue with success. You have the highest ratings with the live shows, maybe because of a big lack of live events. And there is a certain voyeurism, a chance to see someone flub up. I personally enjoy them. I watch them all. Tonys, Emmys, Oscars, Music City News Awards. I think ours, the Country Music Association Awards, is something special. More tradition.

2

Who are you listening to these days?

Gary Morris. He and I were joint presenters at one of the awards shows, and he was so sweet to me. I just fell in love with him. “Wind Beneath My Wings” is one of my favorite songs. I just love to hear him sing.

3

What is it about him that you like so much?

I have a bad habit of liking people's songs when I like the person. When I love somebody, I love their work. There are

some others I really like, too. Emmylou Harris—she's so nostalgic. Reba McEntire—I just like the way she operates. I like her personality. She's a nice person and she loves her public, and you don't see that too much in our business.

4

Why do you think that is, Minnie?

I don't know. I was talking to Charlie Daniels—I guess he's relatively new compared to me—the other day, and he said it hurt him to see some of the changes in country music. See, I never had the superstar experience. I started out little, stayed little, moved from one plateau to another. I had time to digest each plateau, time to adapt to each one. I wasn't a comet. No meteoric rise. I never was a superstar. I think that word has been real dangerous to our music. What we did, we rode in cars with the fiddle.

5

Well, then, what would you say the state of country music is these days?

Well, every once in a while... “Wind Beneath My Wings,” for example, was not a country song. I thought it was comparable to “Stardust.” At the same time, because it was done by a country singer, it be-

came a country song. I think Willie Nelson may be the most enduring of all our singers. Willie, Hank Williams, Roger Miller—I'm so glad to see *him* back. I had a fair tour in the 1950's and Roger was on it. Played fiddle and sang, "Fraulein, fraulein..." Mel Tillis was on my fair tour too, and he stuttered so bad he could hardly talk. Anyway, I think that every once in a while someone comes out with a real country song. Right now, we're going the way the record-buying public wants us to go. There's no choice. Some of what is played on country stations is pure rock. I don't criticize it; I just don't understand it. I understand "The Great Speckled Bird."

6

Ultimately, you follow the audience, though...

You know, Mike, thinking of audiences, you'd be surprised at the number of women who come up to me and say, "I could be doing that." They're not aware of how long it took me to get in. It looks easy, and they say, "Well, I was always the class clown." They seem to resent it, some of them, that they didn't do it.

7

There don't seem to be a lot of women country comedians. In fact, you're the whole lot.

Nope. June Carter is a fantastic comedienne. I was with her on *The Nashville Network* and she killed that audience. I couldn't play comedy around her. She has excellent timing, and she says funny things—she doesn't have to have gags. I do that occasionally.

8

I'm convinced comedy—good comedy—is the hardest thing in the world to do.

Comedy is 99 percent set-up. You can't play comedy in a room full of drunks. You don't get good response from drunk people. That's the reason I don't play clubs.

9

But you did.

In 45 years I've played every place. I played *tent* shows for two years. Name it, I've played them all.

10

Tell me more about playing comedy.

There are comedians who fight the audience. I've watched a lot of comedy—after all, I created this character in 1936—and in country music, you have to like the audience. Not necessarily love them, but like them. And they have to realize it. I like to have fun with an audience. I like to play with the men in the audience. They know I like them. A party, that's what it's like.

11

It sounds like you're still having a good time with it.

Good heavens, as old as I am, if I can't have fun with it, I won't do it. It's a good time and a happy time—the audience relating to the performer and the performer to the audience. We have people coming along who don't perform. They just stand there and sing their records. I'm an old fogey, but I know what's gone well.

12

How are things different today from the way they were when you started, aside from the obvious things?

Well, to go back for a second, it's just as important to know why you lose as why you win. Opryland asked me to speak with their young people who perform there, and I agreed. That's one difference. It's too bad these kids don't have the chance to talk to oldtimers like I did when I was starting out. I talked to great people—vaudevillians and stage performers. And they influenced me tremendously. So with these kids, I get down to it. I tell them what it means to do 45 long, hard years and still be able to get out there and get a network show. I've said it before, the only way you stay around is to like the audience and let them know it.

13

It keeps coming back to the audience, doesn't it?

Sure it does. An audience is like an animal. You've got to gentle it, tame it, pet it. They've all paid their money, and it's your job—your obligation—to quiet that audience.

Let them know you like them and bring them along to excitement. If you fail—and I've failed a million times—you're impaled, stuck like a butterfly on a wall.

14

That, to me, is one of the nightmares of stand-up comedy. You're out there all by yourself....

A singer sings a song and it flops, he only flops once in three minutes. In comedy, you can die five times in three minutes, seven times in three minutes, *ten times* in three minutes. You open up and fall on your face. Nothing happens. Sweat breaks out on your forehead. You don't have a hit song to sing. I've even broken into song, and that didn't help either.

15

Of all the stars you've performed with, Hank Williams seems to have a special place in your heart.

He was so lonely. Henry and I were as good friends as Hank had, and we loved him. Henry had a flying service, and he flew Hank around. Hank liked the idea of having his own plane. He liked the anonymity of being in the plane. Henry was flying him and Moon Mullican when they wrote "Jambalaya."

16

What do you think of the Opry today?

Listen, people been telling me this is going to kill the Opry, that's going to kill the Opry. Well, me and Roy Acuff *screamed* when they put drums on it, and that didn't kill it. The roots always remain. It isn't dying. It's doing great. There are parts I like and parts I don't. I'm an old-fashioned girl. But I love it. I've always loved it.

17

Don't you still get a pang, though, when you drive past the Ryman?

Yes, I do. My museum opened in November, and people asked me what I wanted for my 45th anniversary with the Opry, and I said something from the old Opry. So they got me a pew from the Ryman, and there's a

plaque on it that says, "Presented by her friends, with love." Somebody figured out that 37,415 and a half bottoms have sat on that pew. Still, when I drive past, I get a feeling. Or they go in and tape a show there, and I look out over all those benches and I think of those that are gone. Tex and Red, Jim Reeves and Hank. There are echoes there.... I remember the first time Hank was there. We were having a good time. I mean, we were having a good time, and we could hear the crowd out there. He was just tearing the place up. What a performer! What a singer! I could just name so many names. They're golden moments, Mike, and I wouldn't take a million dollars for them.

18

What do you miss most about the old Ryman, Minnie?

I miss the fans, those old hand fans they had. The first night we were at the new Opryhouse, Roy asked me what I missed most. I said the fans. The people out there would sweat and fan and sweat and fan, and I loved that.

19

Do you ever think about retiring?

It's crazy, isn't it? I'm 72 years old and still working. I never thought I would retire. I saw my father retire, and it killed him. If the Lord will let me, I'll go on working. When I had this bout with cancer, I thought I might lie, say I had a gall bladder operation. Then I said no, I'd say I won a bout, and maybe encourage enough people to go to the doctor. I won one. The times have sure changed; now a woman can have a radical mastectomy and talk about it. We've won a bout.

20

Minnie Pearl will outlive us all....

My face is lined, but they're lines of character. I don't worry about being 72 except for one thing. I want to see what's going to happen next. Think of what I've seen! So many odd things. Men walking on the moon. Television. Computers. It's going to be wonderful. I don't know how long I've got, but I'd sure like to see it! ■



Owning a gun never crossed my mind...

Even with a husband and two sons that love hunting, I never considered buying a gun myself. Frankly, I didn't know anything about them and was a little nervous even to handle one.

But when my husband brought home a **Night Charmer®** shotgun, he insisted I go with him to our farm so he could try it out. And, after a little coaxing, I took a few shots with the gun myself.

Designed for the novice.

The **Night Charmer®** is comfortable for me because it's almost 40 percent smaller than the average sized shotgun and weighs about 3 pounds. It's a .410 gauge, with an easy to load, single shot mechanism and a dual safety system that gives me added confidence and security.



This small shotgun also has an exclusive built-in light that allows you to aim the gun in the dark. And for convenience, the aiming light's special battery has a normal shelf life of 10 years.

A variety of uses.

My husband keeps a **Night Charmer®** for backpacking trips and varmint extermination at our farm. Our sons use it to hunt small game. And, since our first **Night Charmer®** was so affordable, I bought one to keep around the house for our security and protection.

Make a trip to your local sporting goods dealer or gun store and ask to see the **Night Charmer®**. If the store doesn't carry the **Night Charmer®**, ask them to contact their distributor.

SPORTING ARMS, INC. 12923 Valley Branch Dallas, Texas 75234 214/243-8124

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Country Concerts—The Stage is Set for the Fans

Summer is tour season. The stars play most of their fair dates between June and September, plus the big festivals like Jamboree in the Hills. The weather is good, and the big buses roll.

No matter how far away the stage, no matter how large the crowd, something special happens at concerts. Whether it's the energy coming from the stage or the caring—and clowning—of the fans, or both, or more, the live performance is the life-blood of the relationship between fan and star. There's no greater pleasure for a fan than meeting or seeing a star face to face. And most country artists will admit that the sounds of applause from thousands of fans keep them going in an otherwise topsy-turvy world. So it's no surprise that there's a long tradition in country music of courtesy between fan and star—the autograph, the kiss, the handshake, the photograph, the fan's present for the star. All this you bear witness to in your letters to us about great moments you've shared with the singers who live, whatever the season, in your musical hearts.

But summer is the big time, when grandstand after grandstand, open-air park after open-air park, is filled to overflowing with music and applause. These are your reports of the goings-on in the summer and fall of 1984, beginning with one of the giants, WWVA's Jamboree in the Hills, and ending with Kenny's food-gathering bonanza as the year wound to a close.

Jamboree in the Hills— The Biggest of Its Kind

Betty Stewart is a big fan of Jamboree in the Hills. Now in its ninth year, hosted by Jamboree U.S.A. and radio station WWVA of Wheeling, West Virginia, the big outdoor festival will be held July 20-21 at Brush Run Park, St. Clairsville, Ohio, west of Wheeling on Interstate 70. The festival's orderly in spite of its huge size—more than 57,000 fans came last year.

Betty was one of them. We're grateful to her for her description of the fun and frolic there and to the Jamboree for their photos of the 8th Annual Jamboree in the Hills.

Jamboree in the Hills is the biggest outdoor country music event of its kind anywhere in the world. People from all over the U.S., Canada and a number of foreign countries gather each year for the two-day happening.

It is a gathering of young and old alike. For the size of the crowd (over 57,000 in 1984), there are very few disturbances. There are police to keep an eye on everything. It's amazing that so many different types of people can and do get along so well. Everyone goes to have a good time and they do.

Not all who attend come just for the music. Some come just for the sights. You never can tell what you'll see. It goes from one



COURTESY JAMBOREE USA/WWVA

Regardless of the weather, the Oaks are always hot, as they proved at the 8th Annual Jamboree in the Hills last year.

extreme to another. There is no dress code. You wear whatever you think you'll be most comfortable in. It's usually pretty hot, so most people wear shorts or bathing suits. People like to clown around, and there are always those who like to dress up for the occasion. You might see Santa Claus or someone in a skimpy bikini. Sometimes the sights are better than the performers.

The festival is very well organized. There are food and drink tents, souvenir tents, a first-aid tent, a fire truck to hose down anyone who wants it and port-o-johns. Emer-

gency medical teams patrol all the time to make sure everyone is O.K., and if medical help is needed, it is available.

There is an open section directly in front of the stage for people to go down in front to take pictures or just to see the performers up close. In a huge crowd like this, more often than not you don't see the stage all that well.

Sometimes the sponsors provide part of the sights. Last year there were two hot air balloons provided by Stroh's Beer. They were beautiful at night when the gas made

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NEWSLETTER

them light up.

Being at the festival is just like being in one big happy family. Everyone talks to everyone. If you feel like dancing or singing, you do it. Nobody objects... they might even join you.

Every year it gets bigger and better. I'm looking forward to it already and I'm sure I'm not alone.

Hope to see you there,

Betty Stewart
New Martinsville, West Virginia

The 8th Annual Jamboree featured the likes of Janie Fricke, Johnny Rodriguez, Moe Bandy, Reba McEntire, Steve Wariner, Don Williams, Tanya Tucker, Gary Morris, Mickey Gilley, the Oak Ridge Boys, Merle Haggard and others. Among those slated to appear this year are Crystal Gayle, Charlie Daniels Band, Brenda Lee, John Anderson, Boxcar Willie, Michael Martin Murphey, Pinkard & Bowden, Exile, Ronnie Milsap. Regular stars of Jamboree U.S.A. are also on hand.

Music runs for twelve hours on Saturday, from 11 A.M. to 11 P.M., and for seven hours on Sunday, from 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. Approximate show times for each act are given in the program. Gates open 6 A.M. both days.

The 9th Annual Jamboree in the Hills

"The Super Bowl of Country Music"
July 20-21

For information on tickets, camping, schedule and stars, call (toll-free) 800-624-5456 or write Jamboree in the Hills, c/o Jamboree U.S.A., Radio Station WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia 26003. Tickets available also at Capitol Music Hall Box Office in Wheeling during regular business hours.

Two-day tickets cost \$40. Saturday only or Sunday only, \$25. Children under 12 admitted free with an adult. Camping, \$30 (no hook-ups available). Jamboree U.S.A. will be glad to advise you of hotel vacancies in the area. They do not make reservations.

To reach the festival site, turn off Interstate 70 at Exit 213, St. Clairsville, Ohio, just west of Wheeling, and follow the Jamboree signs.

Seating is informal, festival-style. Bring your own lawn chairs or blankets. No chaise lounges or umbrellas. Be prepared for hot weather—temperature in the high 70's or mid-80's. Suntan lotion advisable. Food, drink and souvenirs available at the festival. *Don't forget your camera!*



Elsie Sullivan met Earl Thomas Conley after a concert at Norfolk, Virginia. She enjoyed the concert and says that Earl "is really a very nice man as well as a Number One performer." Elsie is from Sims, North Carolina. Take a look at Elsie's hat and you'll see that Earl is just one of her favorites.

Fans Review Concerts

Members have let the Newsletter know how they've felt about concerts by various stars—and have sent photos. We're grateful for these reviews.

THE OSMOND BROTHERS

The Osmonds put on two shows in Orlando, Florida, this spring and had a full house both times. I really enjoyed both performances. I met each of them after the last show. They signed autographs and let us take pictures. Even the band members were nice. They are all down-to-earth people

Lena Jordan
Columbia, South Carolina

THE OAK RIDGE BOYS

I was lucky enough to see The Oaks in concert as part of their *Deliver* tour. I have seen my share of concerts, but the *Deliver* tour was by far the best my ears have heard and my eyes have seen. The concert was full of energy. But at the same time, The Oaks really showed a lot of courtesy to the fans. They shook hands and had three encores, and William Lee Golden had a tear in his eye. I would like to see the Oak Ridge Boys win the CMA Entertainer of the Year award.

Daniel Dugger
Leesburg, Georgia



Fans sizzle at last year's Jamboree as the temperature goes sky-high.

COURTESY JAMBOREE USA/WWVA

NEWSLETTER

AL DOWNING and JOHNNY RUSSELL
I first saw Al Downing about five years ago, then again a little later. Then I saw him this past August 1984 at Morgantown, Pennsylvania, in an outdoor show at the carnival grounds. He was just so improved—he sang his heart out and the people loved him. He got standing ovations at each show. He is a true showman. I agree with everything Deanna Busby said about him in her letter in the November/December 1984 *Newsletter*.

Johnny Russell is another artist who doesn't get the credit due him. I saw him in October 1984 at a club in New Jersey. He did two shows and just sang and sang. He did old songs I had not heard in a long time. The people ate it up. Don't anyone try to tell me that people today don't still like the pure country songs and music and the artists who perform them.

**Hazel Rumer
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

JOHNNY CASH and JUNE CARTER

Johnny Cash and June Carter gave a wonderful show at the Allegan County Fair on September 12, 1984. Everyone there loved them both so much. No one was supposed to go up on stage afterwards, but—I did. I jumped up there and John gave me his autograph and I pulled his head down and he kissed me. Then he ran off stage.

That was the first time I was ever that close to a country singer. I was so happy all the rest of the evening. But I sure did feel sorry for all the others that wanted his autograph and didn't get it. I think Johnny and June are just *wonderful*.

Sure do wish Waylon Jennings would come to the Fair this year. Man, I'd sure love to jump up on stage with him.

**Mary E. Town
Otsego, Michigan**

WAYLON JENNINGS

My husband and I are subscription members of Poplar Creek, an outdoor concert hall in Illinois. One of the shows in September 1984 was Waylon Jennings. Jessi Colter came out and sang about half an hour. Waylon was then introduced and was on stage 26 minutes. He was absolutely disgusting. He couldn't even sing, he didn't complete his songs and couldn't even stand up on the stage. Waylon, you have my last dime for anything that has anything to do with you. You *were* my favorite country star. Straight-up!

**Jeanne Schulz
Leland, Illinois**

Waylon has frankly discussed the improvement in his life—and in his performances—since he has been free of drugs. Watch for an interview discussing these matters in Country Music Magazine soon, and listen to how



Lisa Bennett of Livermore, California, had the pleasure of meeting Lee Greenwood after Lee's appearance at the 1984 Alameda County Fair. Lisa says she was "treated like family instead of just like a fan!"

great his voice sounds on Highwayman, the new album he recorded this winter with Willie. Johnny Cash and Kris Kristofferson. Country Music Magazine saw Waylon at Radio City in New York in the spring, and he was A-1.

REBA MCENTIRE

I have seen six of Reba McEntire's shows and just want to say she is one super showman (woman)—puts on a tireless, superb show with super musicians, and a good time is had by all. She never fails to give anyone an autograph or a minute of her time. Keep up the pace and the good shows, Reba, and we'll try to keep up to you.

**Richard Bolin
Deland, Illinois**

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

I saw Hank for the seventh time at Freedom Hall in Johnson City, Tennessee, in June 1984. He was *fantastic!* I was in the front row, my voice is hoarse from screaming, and I would go back and see him this minute if he were anywhere close by. I have never been to a show that was too short and couldn't possibly go to one that was too long! Every time I leave Hank's concerts, I leave wanting more.

I don't agree at all with the fan from West Chazz, New York, who wrote about Hank Jr. in the *Newsletter* of July/August 1984.

**Elizabeth Rhoton
Blountville, Tennessee**

Poll in Magazine

Look for the Members Poll/July 1985 on the FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY page in the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Don't forget to vote.

On June 13, 1984, we went down to the Seattle Center Arena to see Hank Williams Jr. and Friends and Eddie Raven. We bought the best seats we could get on the main floor, at \$12.50 each. When Eddie Raven came on, we could see him real good. Eddie put on a good show. It's a good thing he did because he's the only one we saw.

Even before Hank appeared—and I don't know if he really did appear or not—the people from the back rushed up to the front and blocked the stage. All we got of the show was the music. It could have been a record or a tape for all we knew.

We are all Hank fans and really like him, but we feel we were cheated and should have gotten at least half our money back as we only saw half a show. We could have stayed home and saved ourselves the 170-mile round trip. Or we could have put a record on the stereo and saved a lot of money.

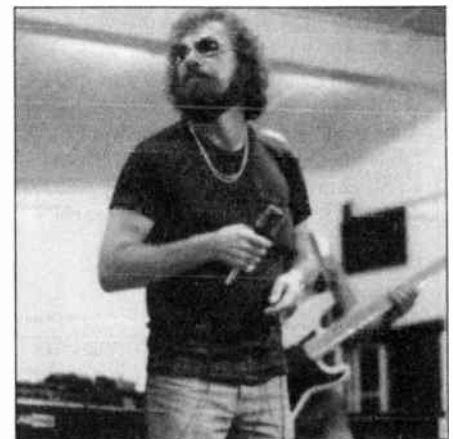
Why isn't there someone with authority at concerts to control people from blocking the stage?

**Jolene Wilkerson
Sedro Wolley, Washington**

CARROLL BAKER

Canadian female country singer Carroll Baker's concert in St. Stephens, New Brunswick, on June 7, 1984, was fantastic. I have always felt there is *no other* singer who puts as much energy and emotion into the delivery of a song. Seeing her live reinforced this opinion. She also writes some really nice songs.

**Christy Mahar
Lubec, Maine**



Ruth Keller and other concerned fans waited long hours for Gene Watson to show up for a concert one hot afternoon and evening in August 1984. Finally Gene arrived by helicopter. According to Ruth, he got a thirty-minute ovation and then sang his best for his fans "into the early morning." Here's Gene that night, in concert near Reading, Pennsylvania. Gene is Ruth's Number One—"a truly great country music performer."

BARBARA MANDRELL

I drove over to Davenport, Iowa, in the summer of 1984 to see Barbara's new show. This was their first stop on the new tour. We had talked to the bandmembers Gene and Kirk quite a bit at the last concert we saw. Kirk remembered us—we were so impressed! Gene wasn't touring with Barbara any more; however, we talked to his replacement and new Do-Rite, Sid, quite a bit. We also became good friends with Barbara's agent Jo Anne Berry and other Do-Rites—Lonny, Charlie and Mike Jones. We didn't get to talk to Randy and Mike Rohaus as much, for they had other things they had to do. Kathy, one of Barbara's helpers, was as sweet and fun as could be! Don, Barbara's bus driver, was also a lot of fun!

As for Barbara, well—everybody knows how wonderful she is! She allowed us to be by her bus to give her the gifts we had for her. She was so sweet as Barbara the person. It wasn't as though she was out there as Barbara the Entertainer.

I can't wait to see every one of them again. Kirk, if you're reading this, if those photos of us with Barbara don't come out, we're *really* looking forward to seeing you—to give you what for!

Things to Do, Places to Go

58th Annual Mountain Dance and Folk Festival August 1-3

The oldest continuing festival of its kind in the nation: dancing, including clog dancing, bluegrass and traditional string bands, held at the Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, North Carolina. Tickets, \$4 on August 1 and 2, \$6 on August 3. For more information, write Jackie Ward, Asheville Chamber of Commerce, Asheville, North Carolina 28802 or call toll-free in North Carolina 1-800-548-1300, elsewhere in the East 1-800-257-1300, all others call 1-704-258-3916.

1985 Annual Country and Western Dance Convention August 16-18

The National Association of Swing Dancers' 1985 convention takes place at the Convention Complex in Denver, Colorado: dance socials, contests, instruction in classic western styles. General admission three-day ticket, \$35. Dance instructor training ticket, \$150. For more information, including brochure describing convention and all Association instructional materials, send SASE to National Association of Swing Dancers, Dept. CMM-1, Box 9841, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80932 or call 303-633-0601.

Hats off to Barbara for having the best road show in country music!

**Merri Brown
Elgin, Illinois**

Merri would like to hear from other Barbara fans. Her full address is 3704 Acorn Lane, Elgin, Illinois 60120.

KENNY ROGERS

Kenny Rogers seems to get better with each performance. At the Centrum in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Sunday after Thanksgiving 1984, B.J. Thomas and Eddie Rabbitt were on the bill with him. Their special brand of excitement added to the evening.

Kenny usually picks out somebody who looks like they'll play along with his good-natured bantering and concentrates on that one person for most of the show. This time, it was a person who had a pair of binoculars in the fourth row! You can imagine the comments that got made along with plenty of chuckles from the rest of the crowd.

Kenny sprinkled his segment with film clips and hits like "The Gambler," "Lady" and "Lucille," and included clips of his young son's first year—although he claimed that this would be the last year he'd run those!

Between contributions from the crowds at both shows and corporate contributions, Kenny's World Hunger Campaign garnered 120,000 pounds of food from the Worcester area.

**Sandie Bateman
Hudson, Massachusetts**

Fan Review

Over the past year, members have let the Newsletter know about albums that have impressed them strongly, one way or another. We're grateful for these reviews.

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

Hank Williams Jr.'s album *Major Moves* shows major talent. It seems each album he cuts gets better. Just when you think he can do no better, he outdoes himself again! "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" is a gritty song with that Bocephus bounce. Another particularly good song is "Promises." It is in a little different vein than usual. One thing I like about Hank is that he always has room for fun. On most of his albums there is a song to make you smile; on this album there are two, "Video Blues" and "Attitude Adjustment." "Knoxville Courthouse Blues" is also excellent.

Hank has such a fresh, new approach to things, every time around. Through his songwriting, you can tell that his emotions run hot and cold, which provides us with great variety. All in all, every song here is excellent, with the exception of "Wild and Blue." I am conditioned to John Anderson's bouncy version, and I feel Hank has slowed it down a little too much.

If you don't have *Major Moves* yet, my advice would be to make some major moves down to the local record store and make this purchase. You won't be sorry.

**Dee Tatum England
Lamont, California**



For Kay Walker, seeing Johnny Rodriguez at Six Flags in Missouri this past September—after not seeing him for four years—was a "heart thumper!" She watched both shows from front row seats, then had this photo taken. Back home in Lawndale, Illinois, Kay has 12 of Johnny's 19 albums in her collection. She hopes to locate the other seven soon. Kay thinks John is "getting better every day!" Johnny also has a fan in Idaho—see next page.



Album and Single of the Month

The Statlers	<i>Atlanta Blue</i>
Mel McDaniel	"Baby's Got Her Blue Jeans On"

These are the results of the March Members Poll. The Statlers are winners again in the album category with *Atlanta Blue*, followed closely by those lovely ladies, The Judds, with their second album, *Why Not Me*. Alabama is in third place with *Roll On*.

In the singles category, Mel McDaniel is your Number One choice with "Baby's Got Her Blue Jeans On," followed by guess who?—The Statlers singing "My Only Love." Alabama is third with "Fire in the Night," just ahead of Ray Stevens and Merle Haggard.

Look for the July Members Poll on the *For Members Only* page of *Country Music Magazine*. Don't forget to vote. CMSA Album and Single of the Year awards will be made public based on your total vote from September 1984 through July 1985.

I was very fortunate to obtain a copy of Louise's 1981 album, *Louise Mandrell*, recently. For some reason it's out of print. Especially like "Beggin' for Mercy," "Put It on Me" and "I Thought You'd Never Ask." If you're lucky enough to find a copy, I highly recommend its purchase.

BARBARA MANDRELL

As far as I'm concerned, *Clean Cut* is Barbara's best album yet, aside from her gospel album. "Happy Birthday, Dear Heartache" was the first single release and a big success. Her current hit, "Only a Lonely Heart Knows," is my favorite because she really brings her emotions out. Anything Barbara sings is O.K. with me because she's my favorite.

BARBARA MANDRELL and LEE GREENWOOD

Meant for Each Other goes to show that you can put two great singers together and get an even better duet team. Their voices really blend together on "To Me" and a song Lee wrote, "We Were Meant for Each Other."

THE JUDDS

These two are destined for stardom. There is not a song on *The Judds* that I dislike. My favorite is "Mama, He's Crazy." A worthwhile album for any true country fan.

GEORGE STRAIT

George is definitely a pure country singer. My favorite songs on his *Right or Wrong*

album are "You Look So Good in Love," "Right or Wrong," and "80 Proof Bottle of Tear Stopper."

STEVE WARINER

I waited a long time for *Midnight Fire*. Steve is my favorite male singer and a true gentleman. What makes *Midnight Fire* special is Chet Atkins lending his guitar licks on "I Can Hear Kentucky Calling Me." If you like guitar picking, this is a great buy.

MICKY GILLEY and CHARLY McCLAIN

There are three hits off *It Takes Believers* already and I'm sure many more where they came from. "Candy Man" is my favorite because Mickey does his growling on it.

Tina Gutshall

Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania

LOUISE MANDRELL

I'm Not Through Loving You Yet is Louise Mandrell's very best album ever. The music is great, and Louise's voice is better than ever. All ten cuts are worthy of being solid Top 10 singles. My very favorite cuts are "The Eyes of Tex Are on You," "So Much Love" and the title cut. I highly recommend this great album.

BARBARA MANDRELL

Recently found a copy of *Treat Him Right*, Barbara Mandrell's debut album, at a bargain store for the bargain price of \$3.98! Contains Barbara's first four Columbia singles, both A and B sides. Especially like the title cut, "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man" and "Playing Around With Love." A great album!

Elvin Moore Jr.
Leipsic, Ohio

JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ

How about an unsolicited review of Johnny Rodriguez' new album *Full Circle*? I've always liked him but this album really *speaks* to me. Every song is a winner. I especially enjoy the title cut "Full Circle" and "Here I am Again," but there are *no* losers on this one.

It is a real pleasure to listen to the whole thing time after time. I put it on my Walkman and tune in and drop out my way. My husband keeps asking me why I have this smile on my face!

I really like Johnny's version of "Forgiving Her Was Easy" better than Willie's.

Mrs. B. Gay Hoefler
Lewiston, Idaho

Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper



In the days of live radio, Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper built a following from the West Virginia mountains to the Great Plains and on to Nashville with their big-voiced, mountain-pure sound. Now Wilma Lee carries on the tradition alone.

state, West Virginia; even the name of their long-time band, The Clinch Mountain Clan, derives from the rugged geography of their home in eastern West Virginia. Wilma Lee was born in Valley Head, at the edge of the Monongahela National Forest, while Stoney—real name, Dale Troy Cooper—hailed from Harmon, about forty miles north. When Stoney joined the Leary Family in 1938, they were fresh from a trip to Washington, D.C., where they had played for Eleanor Roosevelt, and Mr. Leary was thinking about expanding his family act for radio work. He began asking Stoney and Wilma Lee to do some duets together on shows. Stoney recalled, “We were a young couple and we looked good together,” and soon the people of the Shenandoah Valley were demanding more and more duets from the young singers—not only gospel songs but chestnuts like “Paper of Pins” and “Salty Dog.” Though Roy Acuff had asked them to come and appear on the Opry in 1939, the Leary Family decided to stay in West Virginia and to accept an offer to start appearing on WWVA in Wheeling. Meanwhile, though, Wilma Lee and Stoney had married in 1941, and, to everyone’s surprise, they dropped out of music to start a family.

She was a raven-haired beauty, the oldest daughter and guitar player in a popular West Virginia gospel group called The Leary Family. He was a sharp-looking, cigarette-smoking fiddle player with a pencil-thin mustache and a love for the music of the Grand Ole Opry’s 1930’s superstar Arthur Smith. When her father hired him to play fiddle back of the Leary Family, for “ten dollars a week, room and grub,” they began court-ing. But after a few weeks of feeding the young fiddler, Mrs. Leary took her daughter aside and said, “He’s a fine boy and I

think the world of him, but if you two get married you’d just as well face it. He’ll eat you out of house and home.” But they did get married, kept up their music, and soon were known to thousands of radio listeners as Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper. And for two generations their names were synonymous with the high harmonies and sentimental songs of mountain-pure country music.

Though the Coopers were fixtures on the Grand Ole Opry for years, for many fans their name remains linked to their native

After daughter Carol Lee was born, they decided to give show business another try, and struck out for the radio circuit. “We made our name in the days of radio,” Wilma Lee reflects today, but it was a vastly different world from today’s formula of hit records and follow-up tours. It was a world in which success was measured by how strong your home station signal was (5,000 watts was good, 20,000 watts was better and could cover half the nation), and how much mail you pulled in. During their round-robin tour of stations in the 1940’s, the Coopers

ran up some impressive totals: 10,000 books sold in three weeks at Blytheville, Arkansas, and everything from nylon hose to baby chickens sold on a per inquiry basis over WWVA West Virginia. Still, acts usually "played out" an area in the days of live radio in less than a year, so the Coopers kept on the move: Grand Island, Nebraska (KMMJ), Indianapolis (WIBC), Chicago (WJJD), Fairmont (WMMN), Blytheville (KLCN), Asheville (WWNC), and Richmond (WRVA).

During this time, they perfected their style and built their repertoire. By 1943 Wilma Lee was delighting fans with her vocal versions of Roy Acuff numbers—songs like "Low and Lonely," "Wreck on the Highway," and "Don't Make Me Go to Bed and I'll Be Good"—and Stoney had learned to play dobro just to back her up. Hers was a style that would endure, a loud, open-mouthed style with lots of long, sustained notes, one often associated with Roy Acuff, but it was Wilma's own. "I sing just like I did when I was growing up back there in those mountains," she recalls. "I've never changed. I can't change. I was one of Hank Williams' favorite women singers. . . . Hank said what he liked about me was that I sang out. I opened my mouth and sang out, he said." As for the songs, the Coopers shied away from the new style honky tonk and cheating songs that came into vogue in the late 1940's, and stuck to their gospel and sentimental songs—and what Wilma Lee calls "story songs." "I like story songs. And I always thought it was important to say your words where people could understand. If they don't understand the words, then they don't get the story." One of their biggest radio hits was a patriotic World War II number called "Cowards Over Pearl Harbor." They followed it up with songs like "Little Rosewood Casket," the old gangster ballad "Girl in the Blue Velvet Band," and sentimental favorites like "Willy Roy, the Crippled Boy."

Up to this point, they accomplished everything without making a single record or having a recording contract. Then in the summer of 1947 the Coopers made a series of recordings for a small east Tennessee company called Rich-R-Tone; done on a shoestring budget, the records were sold by mail over the Coopers' Asheville radio show. The Coopers knew relatively little about the recording business—Wilma Lee got the words to some of the songs they recorded by taking them down in shorthand as she and Stoney listened to various singers on the Opry. When Hank Williams' mentor Fred Rose heard the Coopers in 1948, he got them a contract with Columbia—and with it, an easier way to get lead sheets. They had no monster hits with Columbia, but their work there won them a nationwide

audience, and their versions of "Sunny Side of the Mountain" and "The White Rose" became their best-known work.

From 1947-57 the Coopers were headliners at Wheeling's WWVA, a 50,000 watt station whose *Wheeling Jamboree* was giving the Opry a run for its money as the leading country barn dance. Carter's Little Liver Pills also sponsored a syndicated radio show featuring the Coopers that went to twenty other stations. Unlike the signals of other southern stations, WWVA's signal went north and northeast, so Wilma Lee and Stoney soon found most of their fans writing in from Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada. Harvard University scholars came down to study their work and pronounced them the "most authentic mountain singing group in America." By the time they were asked to join the Opry, in February 1957, they were so successful they debated



COURTESY GRAND OLE OPRY

Performing keeps Wilma Lee young—here she's part of the Opry's 55th birthday celebration in 1980.

whether moving "so far south" would cause them to lose their audience. But they took the chance.

They needn't have worried. Within months after moving to WSM, they were touring more than ever and, for the first time, had a series of chart-making hits on a new label, Hickory. First "Come Walk with Me," then "Big Midnight Special," and then "There's a Big Wheel" (a Don Gibson song originally written for Wheeling) cracked the Top Ten, and it looked for a time as if the Coopers were going to be big recording stars. However, problems interfered. One was Nashville's tendency to type music; because the Coopers relied on acoustic instruments, Nashville called them bluegrass. "Stoney would say, 'We're not exactly bluegrass. We're just country,'" says Wilma Lee. "And people would say, 'Yes, you're

bluegrass.' Then you don't know what to call yourself." Another problem was that Chet Atkins had done electric guitar work on many of the Hickory sides, and later Decca sides were even more mainstream country in style. Yet when Wilma Lee tried to do modern country songs, her fans objected. It was a case of Catch-22.

So the Coopers settled in to become Opry regulars and contented themselves with the routine of regular, well-received albums—not block-busters—radio work, and successful tours. In the 1970's Stoney began having respiratory problems, and they let up on the tours a little. They had just completed a "comeback" album for the young Rounder label when Stoney's illness caught up with him and he died, from a heart attack, on March 22, 1977.

Wilma Lee decided to carry on and reorganized the band around her solo work; she has kept the Cooper sound alive, both on the Opry and on records. Often she works with daughter Carol Lee, the leader of the Opry's foremost back-up vocal group, the Carol Lee Singers. Wilma Lee's still on the road, touring more than she has in years, in fact, and has developed her own hits, such as "Daisy a Day." She has even been honored by the Smithsonian Institution for her contributions to country music. "I'm sure I don't do it the way Stoney would do it," she reflected recently. "But you can't just sit down. That'll make you old too fast."

—Charles Wolfe

Available Albums

The best sampling of the team at their peak appears on *Early Recordings* (County CCS 103), an authorized reissue of many of the Coopers' 1949-53 Columbia cuts, including "Sunny Side of the Mountain," "The White Rose" and "Walking My Lord Up Calvary Hill." A Starday 1973 remake of most of their favorites titled *Walking My Lord Up Calvary Hill* (Starday/Power Pak 242) features "Tramp on the Street," "Little Rosewood Casket" and "Thirty Pieces of Silver." *Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper Sing the Carter Family's Greatest Hits* (Starday/King 980) also presents later material; *Wilma Lee and Stoney* (Rounder 0066) offers a remake of "Cowards Over Pearl Harbor." Recent recordings by Wilma Lee alone, originally done for the Leather label, are out now on two Rebel albums, *The White Rose* (Rebel 1623) and *A Daisy a Day* (Rebel 1625). Both present Wilma in a well-arranged bluegrass format.

All offerings here are regularly priced at \$8.98. Members' price is \$6.98. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one album, \$.95 for each additional. The two Starday albums are also available in 8-Track tape and cassettes, the two Rebel albums in cassette: specify album, 8-Track or cassette when ordering these. Send check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016, Attention: *Cooper Albums*.

COLLECTIONS

Co ectin † M

These two members might like to get in touch with each other.

I have several very old copies of *Country Music Magazine* for sale and several old copies of *Country Song Roundup*. I have been with *Country Music* a long time. Am working on three different people to be new members. **Jack Pruitt, P.O. Box 3351, Huntsville, Alabama 35810.**

I still need the following issues to complete my set of *Country Music Magazine*: September 1972, October 1972, November 1972, February 1973 and October 1974. Thank you for publishing my first request in the November 1984 *Newsletter*. The response was tremendous. I started out with about three issues and now I have all of them but five. **Ford Howard Willett, 9251 East Colby Road, Crystal, Michigan 48818.**

p v

Thanks to Lon Suiter for this offer.

I have noticed from letters in each issue that readers are having trouble locating recordings by their favorite artists. Also, some wish help with their songwriting, and some are trying to find words to songs for their collection. If they will write to me and enclose an SASE, I will be glad to help them.

I also have back issues of *Country Music Magazine* and other publications pertaining to country music.

**Lon Suiter
R.R.4 Box 38**

Lake Lotawana, Missouri 64063

n P

Write to the members listed below if you have the information or items they need.

• I need the album *Hank Williams Jr. and Friends*, MGM Records (M3G-5009). Thanks. **Jack Pruitt, see address above.**

• Would like to buy an old record, Eddy Arnold's "Sweet Molly." Anyone know the number of the record or album? It's probably an old 45. **Daphne Lee, 336 No. 9th St., Salina, Kansas 67401.**

• Please, is there any way I can get this song on a record by Kitty Wells? A friend and I have wanted it for a long time and can't

Correction, Please

The addresses of the Ronny Robbins Fan Club and the T.G. Sheppard Fan Club in the CMSA 1985 *Answer Book* have been changed. The new address for both clubs is Nancy Van Putte, P.O. Box 50727, Nashville, Tennessee 37205. *Thanks to member Linda Marsters of Lima, New York, for this correction.*

find it. It's called "Cold and Lonely," and the first stanza goes like this: *The winds of loneliness blow strong/Since the one I love is gone/ And I don't see no change in sight/Cold and lonely is the forecast tonight.* **Hazel Smith, Rt. 3-9426-S.F. Austin, Freeport, Texas 77541.**

If no member can help, you might try Kitty Wells' and Johnny Wright's record store, Johnny Wright Enterprises, 240 Old Hickory Blvd., Madison, Tennessee 37115.

• Anyone know where I can obtain an album of Jimmy Work—or a cassette tape? **Duff Matson, N. Front Street, Wrightsville, Pennsylvania 17368.**

• I'd appreciate so much obtaining a copy of Willie Nelson's "Hill Country" written for President Johnson. Could someone help? **Sammy Wells, 2002 10th St., Brownwood, Texas 76801.**

• I have been trying to find an old song on record by Mel Tillis: the name, "Veil of White." Anyone know where I may find one? **Mrs. Vernon Hanson, Star Rt. Box 1206, Mulga, Alabama 35118.**

• Was wondering if anyone could help me find this record. All I have is the cover or jacket—someone stole the record. It's *Live! Direct from the Stage in Nashville, Country Music Festival, Master of Ceremonies: Grant Turner*, featuring Johnny Bond's entire five-minute uncensored performance of "The Little Bottles," Starday (SLP 327), *Volume 2*. I have tried for a long time to get this record, but no luck. I bought it when I was in Nashville and saw the Grand Ole Opry. World Record Shop in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Rose's Collector's Records in Louisville, Kentucky have not answered my letters. Thanks. **Clifford Storlie, Spring Grove, Minnesota 55974.**

• I have been searching for two records. One is George Morgan's recording of "You Turn Me On." The other is a Cowboy Copas recording. I believe the title is "Forever." Some of the words are: *Forever I'll miss you at the close of each day/I'll count each heartbeat of time/Although you've forgotten the love that we knew/In my heart you'll always be mine.* Any help will be greatly appreciated. **James E. Brown, 9780 Guidy Lane, Pensacola, Florida 32514.**

I'd like a copy of Jessi Colter's *Diamond in the Rough*. I prefer the album, if anyone has a copy that's in pretty good shape that they no longer want. Will settle for a tape if that's all I can get. So far I haven't been able to find it, even at flea markets. **Genie Houghtaling, 5220 S. Crescent Drive, Lot 9-A, Tampa, Florida 33611.**

I am looking for a song by Charley Pride which he had out several years ago, entitled "Time Out for Jesus" or "Take Time Out for Jesus, He Took Time for You." Also I would like to hear from anyone who has Hallmark Keepsake Christmas ornaments for sale. **Carolyn Conley, Rt. 1 Box 77, Spen-**

cer, West Virginia 25276.

• I have been trying for a long time to find a record put out by Columbia (KC 32917), *The Ragged Old Flag* by John R. Cash. John is a favorite of mine, plus my favorite group is The Original Texas Playboys, Bob Wills' old group. I have a couple of records of theirs and would like to know where to get more. **Virgil T. Brazell, 644 South Alder, Burlington, Washington 98233.**

• Here are two requests, First, can anyone help me identify the title of the following and the artist? It was sung by a lady who sounded very much like Melba Montgomery. It was only played on the radio a few times about five years ago, and I was never able to find it in the stores. Some of the words are: *I may be behind the time, but I know my own mind/Make my country music plain/And let me hear that good old Tennessee Flat Top/ Grand old open-hole ring.* Second, can any of you "old timers" tell me who recorded "Hot Rod Race" back in the days of the 78's? As I recall, there was a series of at least three records—Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3. My 78's were destroyed in a fire years ago, but I hope these songs may have been reissued in some collection of 33 1/3's. Thanks. **Sheila Popwell, P.O. Box 478, Hampton, Georgia 30228.**

I have been trying to find a record by Rose Maddox. I pray you can help me. It is called "Faded Love." I do not know if it was a single or an album. It came out during the 1950's. I have nearly all her records, but this one is special for me and I have been unable to buy it. Could anyone please help me? **Mrs. Mary Wohlsein, P.O. Box 344, Washougal, Washington 98671.**

Pa P

I would like to know whatever happened to singer Jody Miller, singer-actress Conny Van Dyke of W.W. and the Dixie Dancekings, and former Elektra and Warner Bros. artist Sami Jo Cole. I would also like to correspond with fans of these beautiful and talented ladies. **John O'Dowd, 37 Bloomfield Ave., Pine Brook, New Jersey 07058.**

• Anyone want to correspond with a crazy, weird, single, bluegrass-and-country-and-western-loving switchboard operator and volunteer disk jockey in sunny central Florida, give 'em my name and address. *It's Genie Houghtaling, see address above in Information, Please.*

• Attention All Hollywood Cowboys and Cowgirls—Celebrities, That Is! I would like to correspond with anyone who has an avid interest (old or new) in American country music. If possible, I'd like to reach Kurt Russell, who has been a longtime favorite of mine and to whom I've become most attracted. **Susan Parker, Apt. 206, 990 West Main, Waterbury, Connecticut 06708.**

FOR **CMSA** MEMBERS ONLY



CARIBBEAN COUNTRY CRUISE

Earlier this year, a group of CMSA members sailed from Miami aboard the *S.S. Emerald Seas* for a five-day country music cruise to Caribbean ports. Entertainment was by Moe Bandy, Johnny Lee and Lane Brody. Above left, Karen and Ray Harris of Rogers, Texas, are shown boarding. Above right is Barb Eversman of Rochester, Minnesota, with Moe Bandy. Look for details in the September/October CMSA Newsletter.

July/August Member Discounts

Members may order all 20 Best albums on page 68 directly. LP or cassette. List \$9.98. Members \$7.98.

The Stanley Brothers, Don Gibson and Zeb Turner albums from Buried Treasures on page 67 are available, LPs only. List \$11.98. Members \$9.98.

All Members album Specials mentioned in For Members Only on page 34 in both the January/February and March/April issues of *Country Music* remain in effect till August 31, so take a look. A new five-record Bob Wills set with a book just arrived from Germany's Bear Family records. For details see the ad on page 56 of this issue. LPs only. List \$71.88. Members \$39.95.

To Order: Send your check payable to Country Music Society of America, For Members Only, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one album, \$.95 for each additional, \$4 for the Bob Wills set.

Merle Haggard's Silver Thorn Resort

Merle lives on a two-story houseboat on beautiful Lake Shasta in northern California. Recently, he has opened the Merle Haggard Silver Thorn Resort, offering cabins, houseboat rentals, marina facilities and a country music nightclub. Those interested in a visit, call toll-free 1-800-332-3044 or write Alan Stevens, P.O. Box 4205, Redding, California 96099. CMSA members will receive a 10% discount on cabin or houseboat accommodations.

Sail in December With Ricky and Tammy

Another country music cruise on the *S.S. Emerald Seas*, this one featuring Ricky Skaggs, Tammy Wynette, The Whites and Mark Gray, will depart Miami on December 2 for five days visiting Caribbean ports. The entertainment lineup sounds pretty exciting. Once again CMSA members who go will receive a 10% discount. For information write: CMSA Cruise Director.

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.

MEMBERS POLL/JULY 1985

VOTE

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 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.

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? _____

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

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Want a Free Fan Club Membership?

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

Been to Any Good Concerts Lately?

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

Who were the stars you saw?

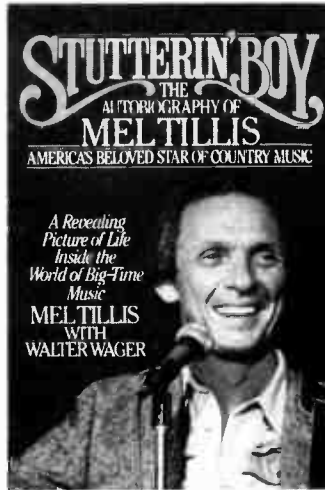
- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____
 d. _____

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, fill in you Membership Number _____

If you are not a member, but want to join and vote immediately, fill out the poll, enclose your check for \$12 for one-year CMSA Membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too.)

Fill out poll and mail to: July Poll, *Country Music*, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.



STUTTERIN' BOY: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MEL TILLIS Mel's brand new autobiography tells how, with an unflinching sense of humor and fierce determination to succeed, Mel went from a little boy picking strawberries for 3¢ a quart to a teenager struggling to overcome his stutter, practicing talking alone to Lake Okeechobee, waiting for his stutter to go away, to a recording artist whose many hits are always in the Top Ten. It's filled with anecdotes about Mel's hilarious escapades and encounters with famous friends and associates. It's a book you'll love. Item No. B6B-NOW \$15.95

The GENERAL

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THE ELVIS PRESLEY COLOR PICTURE PLAYING CARDS Each of these cards carries a different color photo of the "King" in action...on stage. There are 54 in all. Use them to play cards or put them away for safekeeping. Either way, they are an absolute must for every Elvis fan. Item No. G4P—ONLY \$3.95



HEE HAW FAMILY SCRAPBOOK Here is a book that truly captures all the fun of America's number one country music television show. It includes 176 photos, all in glowing full color, and all on high-quality heavy glossy paper. There are photos and brief sketches of all your favorites: Roy Clark, Buck Owens, Minnie Pearl, Archie Campbell, Junior Samples, Lulu Roman and all the rest of the zany crew. You'll love it. Item No. B4T—ONLY \$4.95



THE "I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC" BELT BUCKLE For country music fans this is an absolute must. This handsome design was originally made up exclusively for Country Music Magazine. Now it's available through Nashville Warehouse while supplies last. It measures 2" x 3 3/8" and is brass plated. Item No. G3X—ONLY \$6.95



THE LORETTA LYNN STORY Here is truly a great treat for Loretta fans...all the original songs from the hit film "Coal Miner's Daughter" sung by Loretta herself. Featured on this rare 16-tune collector's album are: It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels/I'm A Honky Tonk Girl/Success/One's On The Way/You Ain't Woman Enough/Your Squaw Is On The Warpath/Don't Come Home A Drinkin'/You're Lookin' At Country/Walking After Midnight/Crazy/Coal Miner's Daughter, plus 5 more! LP No. R6Q-An \$8.98 Value... NOW \$6.95 (No Tapes Available)

TO: Nashville Warehouse, Box 1226, Hendersonville, TN. 37077

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No foreign orders accepted. Offer expires 10/31/85!

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THE "I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC" T-SHIRT It comes in blue with white and red lettering, in adult sizes only. This half cotton/polyester shirt is available for a limited time only. Order now and specify small-medium-large-X-large. Item No. G20-ONLY \$8.95



THE COUNTRY MUSIC ALLSTAR PHOTO CARDS Here is one of the most unique decks of playing cards you are likely to find anywhere. Each card carries a full color photo of a different country music celebrity. You'll find Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty, Johnny Cash, Barbara Mandrell, Roy Acuff... 54 in all. If you're more than just an occasional country music listener, you should have them. Item No. G2T-ONLY \$3.95



THE "I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC" ADJUSTABLE CAP This unique blue cap adjusts to fit all adult sizes. It is fully vented to insure cool wearin' during these hot summer months. And it carries the country music message on a handsome 3-color patch. You'll love it. Item No. G2N-ONLY \$6.95



HOMES OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC STARS There's nothing like this gem. Now, through its beautiful full color pictures, you can visit 23 homes of Nashville's country music elite... Johnny Cash, Chet Atkins, Tom T. Hall, Loretta Lynn, and more. You'll get a first hand look at how they live and learn a little about them from the brief biographical sketches on each. You'll love it. Item No. B2M-ONLY \$4.95

NEW



ALABAMA Here is the rags-to-riches story of America's number one country music act, as told by author Edward Morris, columnist and Nashville insider. Based on extensive interviews with Alabama's members, relatives and friends, here is the whole fascinating story. From the band-in-residence at Canyonland Park to three years in a row as winners of the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year Award. **ALABAMA** contains more than 80 photos, an exclusive "Alabama Almanac", discography, and more! Item No. B11-ONLY \$6.95

NEW



THE COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION'S AWARD WINNING SONGS

Here in one handsome book are the words to all the songs that have achieved the coveted "CMA Award"... plus the lyrics to all the hits that have ever been nominated for that prestigious honor. There's over 80 in all. But that's not all. You also get a treasury of color photos and stories of the legendary stars that will live in your heart forever. It is an absolute must for every country music lover's library. Item No. B4M-ONLY \$4.95



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY TOM T. HALL

TOM T. HALL

Fox Hollow Squire

After a few years without one, Herman Woonzel's favorite singer has found his way back to the Top Ten with his recent hit "P.S. I Love You." In a visit with Patrick Carr, the ole storyteller gives us his current views on Nashville politics, business meetings, drinking, not drinking, the Grand Old Opry—all provocative and humorous, as usual.

by Patrick Carr

Fox Hollow, the home/farm/workplace of Tom T. Hall, is not quite baronial, but it *is* respectable. You could say that it looks rich, or elegant, or even classic in a landed-gentry sort of way, but you'd be closest to the mark if you simply noted that above all else, it has "tone." It looks like the kind of simple little country estate where a retired U.S. Ambassador of the old school might spend his twilight years writing books on ornithology and entertaining minor royalty with good fresh garden vegetables and perhaps a Tennessee ham cured in the smokehouse by the Master himself.

It is not at all incongruous that such a place should be the home of Tom T. Hall. Most of the man's work, after all, has "tone" written all over it—not quite the sort supplied automatically by a blue-blood birth, but a kind of minor-key elegance, an understated and apparently effortless simplicity (as in "I Love" and "Old Dogs, Children, and Watermelon Wine") behind which lurks a complex but invisible creative imagination. Just as you might pass a genuine blue-blood on the street and never know it (for such people, unlike those who would kill to be in their shoes, attach no importance whatsoever to the *appearance* of wealth), you might easily mistake the simplicity of Tom T.'s best work for simplemindedness. And that, moreover, seems to be just how he wants it; like aristocrats in every field, he seems to find dazzling displays at best irrelevant and at worst positively vulgar.

The factor behind all this is Tom T.'s intellectualism. Like the majority of his peers in country music he was raised poor, got hooked on music, and wound up drawn to Nashville by its radioactive magnet, but, unlike most others, he was also raised with a book in his hand. He wasn't just smart: he was *learned*. Thus, while writing all those simple little story songs of his, he also found it perfectly natural to write a full-blown (and very Southern-Gothic, very funny-bizarre) novel, *The Laughing Man of Woodmont Cove*, which had nothing at all to do with country music. When he wrote his autobiography, *The Storyteller's Nashville*, it was not the straight-ahead life story (honest or otherwise) which usually emerges from country stars and their ghost writers, but a breezy narrative structured around those parts of his life which made "the best material"; this was not a star telling his fans all they wanted to know, but a writer spinning a yarn about life in the music business which was far more entertaining than personally revealing.

With Tom T., then, you get the distinct impression that nothing he produces has much to do with real simplicity, or the well-worn elements of a country star's existence. What other country star's bus, for

example, features real built-in bookcases full of real books which can actually be read, not those beautiful "All The World's Classics" items which come in simulated-leather blocks of six, twelve, or however many your own particular custom-crafted bookcase will fit? What other country star would state that the mainspring of his work is the observation of "ordinary people doing extraordinary things"—and set off by himself in his car a couple of times a year to cruise around various parts of the nation in a conscious search for such material? Tom T. does that, and regards it as an extremely important part of his creative process.

All of this, quite naturally, makes the man something of an odd bird in Nashville's aviary. In New York or Boston (or wherever else "literary types" congregate) he would hardly raise an eyebrow, but in Music City his sensibility is far from the norm. That makes for the occasional flurry of controversy when he states his views about this or that—he is no respecter of the town's sacred cows—but because he is so obviously committed to Nashville and cares so deeply about country music, it has never resulted in the kind of ostracism reserved for mouthy outsiders; Tom T. may at times sound like an arrogant sonofabitch, but he's *our* arrogant sonofabitch.

After "Harper Valley P.T.A." made him more than just another struggling songwriter-about-town (weirdo-in-an-Army jacket division) in the days when Tootsie's Orchid Lounge was the *ground zero* of Nashville's song-production machine, Tom T.'s off-brand material continued to sell until the late 1970's. At that point, when the outside world had gotten over being amazed that hillbillies like him were just as capable of creating "art" as their Anglo-Yankee-West Coast musical cousins and was embarking on a full-scale love affair with Outlawism, he faded from the front lines. He has returned only recently, and new Tom T. Hall material (not just his "golden oldies") is to be heard on the radio. It is very much up to par—his *Natural Dreams* album is just as cunningly, movingly plain-folks observational as his best past work—and one wonders why that period of obscurity happened.

It was partly to address this question that I visited Fox Hollow one sunny winter afternoon. Tom T. received me casually and cordially, took me into the kitchen to say hello to his wife Dixie and the family maid, and settled down in his graciously panelled drawing room for a civilized chat. I fought the notion that I was about to be interrogated by the local squire about certain recent incidents of poaching on the estate (an unfortunate legacy of my misspent English youth), and proceeded like a pro.

What other country star would state that the mainspring of his work is the observation of "ordinary people doing extraordinary things?"



What caused your virtual disappearance from the charts in the late 1970's?

Well, I went from Mercury Records to RCA to be with Roy Dea, the producer, but Roy left immediately. I didn't because I was under contract, and that's how the misunderstanding happened; Roy knew exactly who I was and what I did, but the folks at RCA didn't. If you're in the music business, you have this notion that people know what you do, but the RCA folks could never understand these little story songs I was giving them. They knew a couple of my tunes and they knew I was on TV and that I smiled a lot and all that, but really, they had no idea what I did. It wasn't like anything they were selling or promoting, and it was a real disaster. And if you have to tell people who you are, you're not.

So they just didn't promote you?

No, they didn't at all. They didn't know they were supposed to, I guess. I only found out about it when I went out on the road to promote my first album after going back to Mercury, and some of the disk jockeys asked me why they hadn't heard about me for so long. I dunno... the RCA experience was strange, the strangest thing I've done in my whole career. We had a lunch one day, and I told them, "Gentlemen, this may sound goofy, but this is what I do: I sing about little baby ducks and old people and dogs and stuff like that." They just didn't get it. They were big into the Outlaw thing at the time, and I guess I looked kind of like Billy Graham to them. You know—"Who is this guy? He's wide awake, and he's had a shower and a shave. What are we going to do with him?"

But they were all very nice people. Even when they didn't want me any more, though, they wouldn't release me from the contract. That confused me, but I found some people who explained it to them somehow, and now I'm back with Jerry Kennedy at Mercury.

And selling records again. That must feel good.

I'm thrilled to death—but there are measures of a record's success other than sales and airplay. You can't convince record companies or managers or any of those people about that, but in the back of my mind there are other reasons to make records. I've always had this foolishness about me, and I've never given it up. I've been coached, I've been trained, I've been lectured, I've been chastised, and I've been taught a thing or two—I've had people try to teach me lessons—but it's never succeeded. I keep on telling stories and playing the guitar and singing and staying alive, and I've got a few fans out there, and I travel in my bus and they come and see me, and I have some sort of smug satisfaction about that.

You can't be passive about music. People ask me, "Why not just go for a hit?" and I say, "Because it just doesn't seem like the thing to do. You can shop around until you find a song which seems like a hit, then record it until it sounds like a hit, then promote it until it looks like a hit—but six months later, nobody remembers it.

That's like making hula hoops or something." So I've held out. It's cost me in prestige, and it's cost me money, but I haven't lost any sleep about it.

And I've done all right, I guess. I've been out there a long time, and I've sold a lot of records. I was never a rage, though; I never became a superstar, I never won any big awards, I never got any of that. I took whatever somebody else didn't want,

From the plains of Texas to the sidewalks of New York, Gary Morris made the leap and liked it, starring in an opera and showing the world country talent and country style.

GARY MORRIS

For Warner Bros. recording star Gary Morris, the first six months of 1985 have been big. In late February, "Baby, Bye Bye," from his album *Faded Blue*, became his first Num-

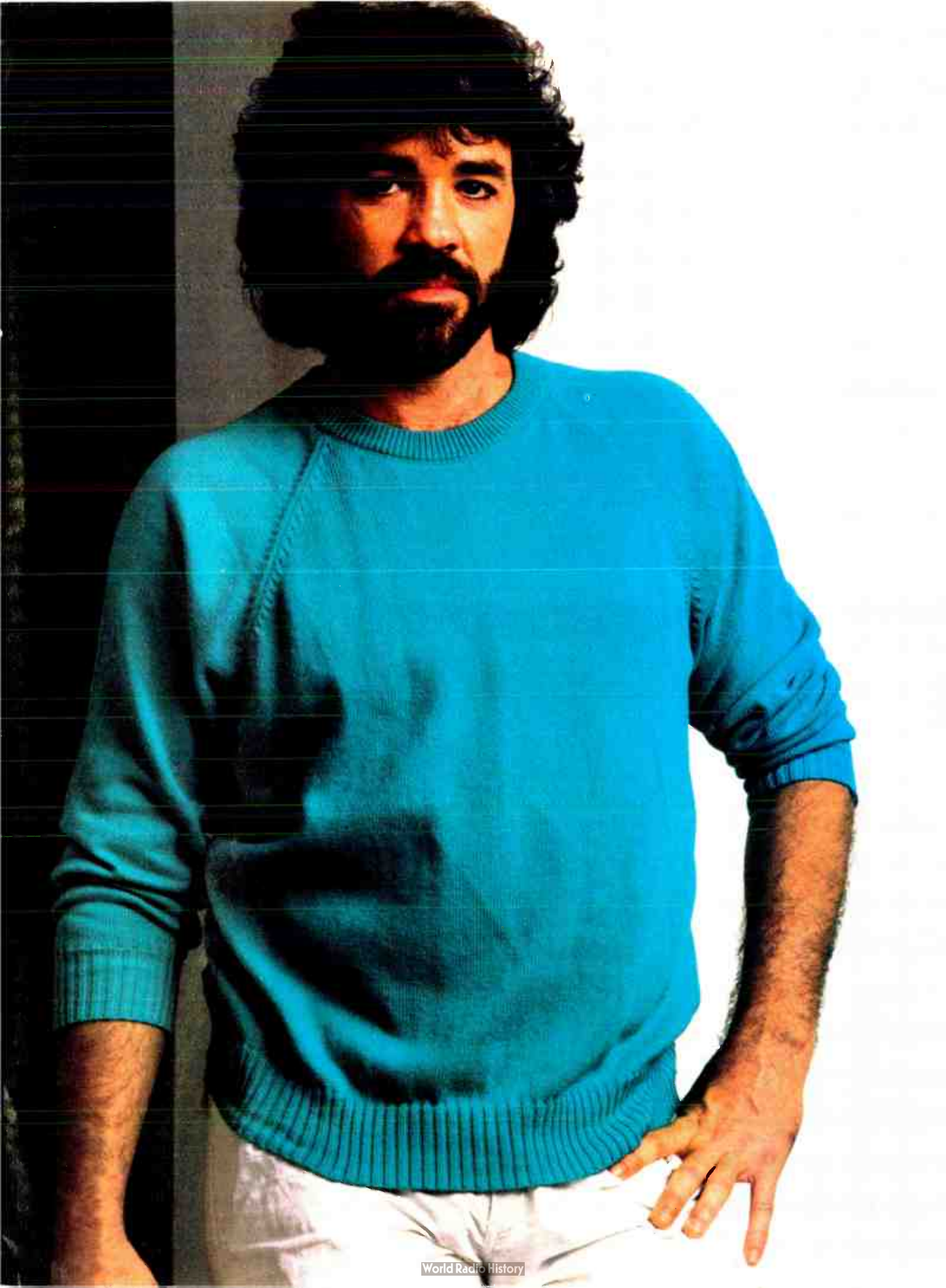
ber One single. The end of March saw the release of his fourteenth single, "Lasso the Moon," from the Warner Bros. sound track album *Music from Rustlers' Rhapsody and Other Songs*. The album features Gary, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, John Anderson and others; Gary's song's slated to be the theme song of the Paramount film *Rustlers' Rhapsody*, a western comedy starring Tom Berenger, Marilu Henner, Andy Griffith and Patrick Wayne. Mid-April found the Texas-born-and-bred singer shooting a video for "Lasso the Moon" in San Antonio, his second. His first was a video of "Second Hand Heart" from *Faded Blue*. All this activity took place in and around touring and preparations for his fourth solo album, due for release in mid-July by Warner Bros. Right down to press time there were hopes that the album would include a Gary Morris/Linda Ronstadt duet on a Gary Morris/Dave Loggins tune.

When "Baby, Bye Bye" hit Number

Singer in the City

One, it topped off a string of ten Top Ten hits, starting with "Heading for a Heartache" back in 1981 and peaking in the super-nova "Wind Beneath My Wings," which just missed the magical top spot but did earn Gary both the CMA's and the Academy of Country Music's Song of the Year award in 1984. The CMA also nominated Gary for Male Vocalist of the Year in 1984, and for the Horizon Award in 1983. Not bad for a former defensive back at Cisco Junior College in Cisco, Texas, who put in his time singing in clubs and in Jimmy Carter's political campaign before being discovered by Warner Bros. producer Norro Wilson in 1979. Indicative of his clear country calling, too. Although he grew up in the age of rock 'n' roll, Gary and country never drifted apart. He won his first talent show with a Hank Williams medley, and his favorite current country singers are Reba McEntire and Merle Haggard.

by Helen Barnard





Gary in costume as Rudolfo with Linda Ronstadt as Mimi in performance at the Public Theater in New York City. "I love to sing," he says. "It's instant gratification. You get kind of revitalized, recharged."

But in the fall of 1984, in his late thirties, Gary took a big step sideways. He cancelled three months' worth of concert dates and recording activity to go to New York City and sing the lead role in a classical opera... a risk few singers without formal training would have had the nerve to take. He's riding the crest of a big surge now, but things were different for Gary then. Had he made a big mistake? Professionally and personally, would he bomb? The answer was no. Singing the opera *La Boheme* with Linda Ronstadt and others in New York from November 2-December 30, 1984, gave a lift to his career—an energy beneath his wings—that no one could have foretold. Personally, he's happy too, and thinks he made some new friends for country music.

The house is small, seating no more than 750 people. Tiers of seats slope sharply down on three sides to a theater-in-the-round type stage. Above the seats, balconies—like porches or second-floor galleries on an old Southern house. This is an intimate setting, warm and dark. The orchestra, thin, reedy, pop-sounding, hides out above and behind the revolving set: an odd arrangement. The singers cannot see the conductor much of the time.

The production blends many elements—opera, pop, chamber theater,

country. It is Joseph Papp's English language version of Puccini's opera *La Boheme*, staged at the Public Theater on Lafayette Street in New York during the closing months of 1984. It stars Gary Morris and Linda Ronstadt, alternating with David Carroll and Patti Cohenour in the lead roles. The cast revolves, but the kudos and bravos don't. Before the show's two-month run is over, Gary will collect far more than an even quarter of them. His performance will be favorably reviewed across the country, and he will outshine his more famous star-partner, Linda Ronstadt—who herself praises Gary's performance. Linda is expected to be the box office draw. Gary steals the show.

"We've taken Hispanics, we've taken blacks, we've put them in Shakespeare. So why not a country singer in opera?" says Joseph Papp, veteran producer of culture-with-a-difference. Previously, Papp made a Broadway hit of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, starring Linda Ronstadt and Kevin Kline. The show later became a movie. So why not *La Boheme*? Linda came back to take on the leading feminine role, the seamstress Mimi, *Pirates* director Wilford Leach and musical director William Elliott were on hand... and then came Gary. "His speech is pure Tennessee twang," observes Papp, "but that's a great voice." "Pure Texas twang," I corrected him. "Ah, yes," said Papp.

the voice. "I was lucky," Gary says, as we sip coffee and tea in the lounge outside the press office of the old Anspacher Theater, the winter home of the Public Theater—its summer home is Central Park. Outside, the first flakes of winter strike the gritty street, in this off-Broadway neighborhood dominated by old, turn-of-the-century, low, brick-and-stone warehouses. The Anspacher used to be the Astor Library. We are near Astor Place.

If his voice was a gift, his whole musical background, passed on to him by his family, was also. Both his grandfathers were musicians—his mother's father was a traveling minister of music who wrote several songs in the Baptist hymnal. His father kept the car radio tuned to Ft. Worth's country station, WBAP; his mother loved to sing. Gary, his twin sister Carrie, and their brother used to sing gospel and pop with her on family trips. Gary and Carrie hit the performing boards in the third grade, when they entered a talent contest and won. Carrie got all the music lessons. She still plays the piano, but is otherwise retired from show-biz, married and raising a family in Arizona. Gary went on to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of fame and fortune—and personal satisfaction—through music.

"I never experienced rejection from an audience. I don't think I ever have, ever, as a performer." Gary shifts his weight in the chair, looking a bit like a lumberjack in his checked shirt, vest, jeans and muffler. "Of course, there are times and certain audiences that want you to prove something to them," Gary continues. Doing the opera has been, at times, a case in point. Gary explains: "Some people that come here are legit fans that go to the Met all the time." When he shuffles out—for he does shuffle in the role—as Rudolfo, the hot-blooded young poet, writing and starving, living on a shoestring in Paris in the late 1890's, it seems, at times, as if these fans are saying, "O.K., Rudolfo, show me your stuff." "You can see it, you can feel it sometimes," Gary notes. "It takes through the first act before they believe that I'm actually going to be able to pull it off."

Gary looks satisfied. He is satisfied. He's brought his voice and his background to New York, and he's been able to cope, even take a step or two forward. He took his first voice lesson as part of his preparation for the opera role and found that he already knew one important technique, how to "take words to a certain place—I already do that." He's had to change the pronunciation of certain words, substituting "pen" and "then" for "pin" and "thin," but otherwise his accent works just fine. His greatest satisfaction in the experience—aside from the several letters of praise he has received from opera fans he's impressed—has been the discovery that he can act. This seems to him to open a

path to the future, and, in any case, finding out he can do it makes him feel good.

"Singing is one thing, acting is another," Gary elaborates, as the phone rings frantically in the press office next door. "I found out that I could reach inside myself and portray this character, Rudolfo, and assume another person's identity on stage. It's worked out quite nicely for me." Thoughts of doing TV or movies loom. But that's for the future.

The challenge of acting is one thing that binds Gary and Linda Ronstadt together. Even at this stage in her career, Linda is almost as much a newcomer to the boards as Gary. "She is a recording star," Gary explains, "I am a country singer who's made some records." He's being modest. "When we are on stage together, there is something raw, uncontrived, between us—uncontrived because we don't know how to contrive. That's very elegant in a small theater. I don't know how it would come across in a large one," he adds. Modest again. He makes no claims beyond what he knows he can do.

When writing songs, Gary finds that there's something of himself in each one of them. "I haven't written a song that's my own life-story, but bits and pieces of everything I write expose parts of me. Of course, you have to know who I am to know which bits and pieces they are," he states, smiling. In *La Boheme*, Rudolfo is tenderhearted, protective, artistic. He loves Mimi, but when the demands of caring for her, dealing with her moods, and bolstering her up become too great, he allows the relationship to end in order to devote himself more fully to his writing. Torn between love and work, Rudolfo lets love go. Is there a little bit of this in this appealing, bearded singer, twice-married, twice-divorced, and twice a parent?

Gary Morris has two sons. Sam, 11, from his first marriage, lives with him in Franklin, Tennessee. Matthew, five, lives with his mother, Gary's second wife, who once sang in his band. He is a protective parent. Speaking of Sam, he says, "I try to provide some stability for him in a very unstable world—the entertainment business." He does not encourage the boy to play football, although he himself was a star player in high school near Ft. Worth and at Cisco Junior College in Cisco, Texas. But the game is too rough, he says. "Too many broken bones." He wiggles his nose with his finger and smiles. "No cartilage left *here!*"

The phones are still ringing in the press office. Outside, it has stopped snowing. Our talk drifts back to the opera. Although the libretto—the vocal score—has not been simplified for this production, singing it three or four times a week has not been a problem for Gary. He feels fit and loves the music. Here, as on tour with his band,



Gary with reporter Helen Barnard in the press office lounge at the Public Theater. When he writes a song, "some things are made up, other things that are painful just come from inside."

he does not hold back. His performances are always, in his words, "pretty high-powered." He does not claim to be even vaguely familiar with any other opera, but this one he likes. "It's a wonderfully written opera. The music is so beautiful, it's really a treat to be able to sing it," he states warmly. And in fact, when Gary-Rudolfo and Patti-Mimi sing about flowers in Act One, about love in Act Two, when, in Act Three, Mimi dies, stroking her bonnet—adorned with flowers—which Rudolfo saved when they parted, it's a treat to hear them. Their voices are tender, expressive, soaring. The production is not for everyone, but for those who would like to start somewhere with opera, as Gary did, it's beautiful. Chamber opera—in English—with pop overtones.

In addition to finding out he could act, Gary is glad he could come from country music into an opera that's, as he puts it, "a noted tenor's opera, and pull it off." So what's next? Well, he says, as we turn our empty cups in our hands, he would be less than honest if he didn't admit he's anxious to leave and to be back home, that he misses the wide open spaces he gets out west, that he "can't *imagine* growing up in this town." But it's been good finding out he can adapt if he has to. He appreciates the way New Yorkers protect themselves with, as he sees it, a series of shells—defense mechanisms—against the energy and intensity of the city, and he's

found real warmth once he got past the shells.

As for his career, he wanted a Number One record and got one. He doesn't want to lose contact with the audience as the concert crowds grow larger... "you really can't see past the first 25 rows"... and he probably won't go to Europe with his band for a while. "Fans forget quick," he says wisely, and, for now, he'll concentrate on the U.S. The business side of the music business holds no terrors for him. Facing the fact that there *is* a business side is "just part of growing up and being an adult." He's glad he's now at the point where he can really make a living at what he likes to do. "People assume," he points out, "that if you've had some hit records, you own ranches and resorts and ships, but it's a very long, rigorous, hard road to get where you are able to survive." Like Rudolfo with his writing.

Is there a dark side to this extroverted, expressive personality? If there is, it is something he is trying, step by step, to leave behind. His face grows serious as he explains: "I personally adhere to a philosophy of removing elements that are negative within your life, professionally and personally. When I started doing that, my career started taking shape nicely. Because you have all this positive energy going for you, and if everything is positive around you, you just can't help but go forward." ■

Record Reviews

**Waylon Jennings
Willie Nelson
Johnny Cash
Kris Kristofferson**
Highwayman
Columbia FC 40056

The *Highwayman* marks the first time the Fearsome Foursome of Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson has been together on one album. Rick Blackburn at CBS says, "I want everyone to know, this is Cash's project. He made it happen, and I want him to get the credit."

Since our editors Patrick Carr and Michael Bane have probably written more words about this foursome than everyone else combined in the last dozen years, we decided that, instead of a regular review, we would just bug the room where Michael and Patrick talked to each other about *Highwayman* and the highwaymen who made it:

Michael: This record ought to have been called *The Last Cowboy Album*. It's wrapped it all up. It's the closing parenthesis on the Outlaw Movement. *Red Headed Stranger* was the opener. It is a real good record, an excellent record—you know, about ten times better than most of the sludge that comes out these days. When *Red Headed Stranger* came out, you saw vistas opening up in front of you. This is what the music could be. Right? Right. On *Highwayman*, you're strictly looking behind you. Like retired cowboys... the whole album's about stuff that's done. Yeah... finished. It's sad-world songs... this is what we've



missed... "The 20th Century Is Almost Over," "Desperados," "Last Cowboy Song." You've got the conscience of Johnny Cash speaking, "Deportee," "Welfare Line," and then you've got "Big River" and "Highwayman." There's a lot of wrap-up stuff here. They're wrapping up the Outlaw Movement. Cash with "Deportee" and "Welfare Line"... he's wrapping up what he did before. It's like, let's talk about folk music, let's wrap that up. Not wrapping up—it's a summation album.

Patrick: It's like everything is back to normal, and these are just four guys, four working professionals. All in high productive spirits. All working. They're all fine, and drug overdoses haven't killed any of them. And they're all straight—allegedly—so it's like a normal day down in the record factory... out on the range. It's real money's worth.

Michael: How often do you go to a record store and find a good record? One like this only comes along about once in ten years. It's like a Best of Dolly Parton album—it don't mean nothing; it's just very good. Except "Against the Wind," which is not nearly as good as Bob Seger's. I think the problem was that Bob Seger did the definitive version of that song and everything else is immediately measured against it. When I saw that on the album, I thought that's the perfect song for these guys to record, but it fell flat. I think because they were working on somebody like Willie Nelson's arrangement, as opposed to Bob Seger's arrangement and Willie Nelson's arrangements cause my teeth to stand on edge these days. All that weird phrasing. I harken it back to Willie's rearrangement of "City of New Orleans." Steve Goodman had gone to some lengths to arrange it with a certain

rolling beat, like the train, you know. Willie's, instead, was like the City of New Orleans by covered wagon. But they kept him in control, more or less. It's not overwrought.

Patrick: Kris Kristofferson really sings on this, too. Kristofferson didn't used to sing.

Michael: That's not true, the thing is that everybody remembers Kris singing poorly. See, I really liked Kris in that period where everybody said he was awful. I wrote a bunch of stories about how he actually wasn't awful. After *Me and Bobby McGee*, there was a whole string of country albums. He did "Stranger," and years later people said that was a really good song. He did all those weird ones, off-beat songs. After he toured with Billy Swan, he was doing just pick-up band stuff, and he would wack off those albums. They were pretty funny, and he sang pretty good.

Patrick: I guess he had problems... including the opposite sex, booze and such.

Michael: Also, everyone wanted to see "Me and Bobby McGee" again. I mean, having written the quintessential 1960's song, he had to live with it. Like Jimmy Buffett writing "Why Don't We Get Drunk and Screw," apologies forever. Russ told me the same thing, and I didn't agree with him. I always thought that Kris was a better singer than a lot of critics gave him credit for. His songs are always better when you listen to them two or three years after they were out.

Patrick: Well, he got a bad rep also because he's such a terrible performer.

Michael: 'Cause he's coma-



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WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS
GOD IS THE ANSWER
HE SEE'S MY HEART
LAY IT ON ME
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL
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DANNY BOY
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ALLEGHENY MOON
SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES
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Record Reviews

tose, he's awful. But the "Highwayman" song is real moving. That's my favorite.

Patrick: I like the way they set it up for the entry of Johnny Cash. Director enters: they have the highwayman and the sailor and then Johnny Cash, space pilot. Flying his starship.

Michael: Is that a Jim Webb song? It's interesting, it's like Jim Webb transcends every-thing.

Patrick: Another thing they're doing here is a heavy-duty salute to America. Americana album. All the characters, all through here, they're all cowboys and soldiers and outlaws and pioneers. They're all ruffian-types—all gone.

Michael: And they're what built America. They reminded me, in a bizarre way, of the Americana Museum, the Lewis and Clark Museum under the Arch in St. Louis. You could take this album and play it throughout that museum. They got sobbusters, they got cowboys, they got outlaws. It's very similar to that.

Patrick: That's the stamp of Johnny Cash—our teacher—trains across America. Speaking of which, I don't think Johnny Cash gets enough respect, lately, among current music writers and people in general.

Michael: That's because he's so weird.

Patrick: Well, maybe so, but you know, everybody knows that Waylon is really great, and everybody's crazy about Willie, and they think that Kris is wonderful. But Johnny Cash, some of these experts seem to miss the point... look at him like a historical curiosity... a dinosaur... when he's really a *dynamo*! These people have no idea of what he's been doing in the last six or seven albums, which is just really great stuff. The same stuff he's done since he first started out.

Michael: I think that's the operative word, dinosaur. Some of these music business heavies, they were 12 years old when they used to watch Johnny on TV with Bob Dylan and that bums them out. They think history is over, but Cash knows today's album is tomorrow's history. I think what you said is probably true, you know. Everybody's crazy for Willie, and Waylon is straight and he does this and that, and Kris takes his clothes off in the movies, and he still comes back and sings. But, of that group, Cash is the one with the vision... that overriding vision of what the music is, where it's been and where it should go. Those other guys—whatever you want to say about them, Cash has the grand vision.

Patrick: Well, Cash has a great sense of responsibility, the sense that somebody's got to do it.

Michael: Of course, his vision has always been more focused politically. A real specific commentator on American politics.

Patrick: But if you think about this right now... you know that "Deportee" song, on this album. Given the general mood of the nation right now, sympathetic songs about Mexican immigrants, they don't make the movement. They're not all that common. Nor is "Welfare Line." And here comes Mr. Cash reminding us of all the problems that people used to think were real but don't seem to care about anymore... reminding us that they're still there.

Michael: Cash is able to cast the material within a social vision that isn't necessarily tied into a political viewpoint, which, say, Kris can't do. The last Kristofferson song that I really liked was "Under the Gun," off the soundtrack to the Willie Nelson movie *Songwriter*. It's a great song, but I think the politics in it are just screwed beyond words. It doesn't make it any less of a great song. The politics are

just erroneous, but it's still a real good song. It's polemic music. Cash doesn't generally deal with polemics, he transcends them. It's like he wants people to think about things. Whatever they conclude is O.K. with him. He just wants to make them uncomfortable if they try to look the other way. He has you listen to "Welfare Line," and you think about respect for basic humanity.

Patrick: He's never really attacked anyone. He never really loses his cool and gets really angry and slams something.

Michael: He ain't political in the sense of who-gets-elected and that's an asset. Cash's politics kinda sneak up on you.

Patrick: Well, he's very political, but he doesn't show it.

Michael: Willie is operating on a totally personal agenda. It doesn't have anything to do with the world. His last five albums haven't had a thing to do with the real world. Russ is always saying, "I got a new Willie album and this one's different"—yeah, right—they're all different and they're all the same.

Patrick: What I really like about what Willie is doing is all these Ray Price records and Faron Young records and Hank Snow records. He's gonna record with these boys and these boys can't get a record out. So good old Willie....

Michael: I think Willie's last ten albums can be boiled down to a hell of a two-record set. When I met him in 1974, he told me he had an agenda when he got rich and famous, and by god, he's still working on that agenda. It's an incredibly monomaniacal view of how to approach your career. I mean he told me, "I'm gonna do gospel records, I'm gonna do all my favorite songs from the 1930's and 1940's." And he did it. I always expected him to whip the list out of his back pocket.

Patrick: Well, anyway, *Highwayman* is a lush, dramatically

sentimental album. It's dramatic as hell and it's done to a tee... which is an intelligent way of going about it. If you recall the early Outlaw albums, *Dreaming My Dreams* and *Red Headed Stranger*, they were all done with great care, they were really finely produced, finely crafted, humanly turned-out products. It's nice to see that again.

Michael: The "Last Cowboy Song" is still a real good song. It is overwrought... it's overwritten is what it is. But it's really sentimental. I think it probably stands. Ed Bruce wrote it... all them singers come back... and it's sentimental. It's trite, but it's also true.

Patrick: Well, it really is a pisser that that whole cowboy way of life is gone, or is going, or is vanishing. It's strange and it's a drag.

Michael: That's one of the things I told Ed Bruce once. I said, "I give you credit, you figured out a way to be a cowboy. I mean you wanted to grow up to be a cowboy and you did." It's the same thing with these four guys, the thing that's really interesting is that they *actually* figured out a way to do it, in the face of really insurmountable odds: like the twentieth century, for example. And, it's like the whole "Highwayman" thing, you got to give them credit, they took the money, got the women, and rode out of town.

Patrick: Well, it's a lovely album, well worth the money. The boys are all in good shape, business as usual, and we can count on them. They all sound good, they sound better than they sound on their own records, with the exception of Cash who has been on a peak his last several albums. One thing I noticed is when you take Cash's cut, "The Twentieth Century Is Almost Over" on *Rockabilly Blues* and put it alongside this one, guess who wins? Well, Johnny Cash has perfect rhythm. One of the

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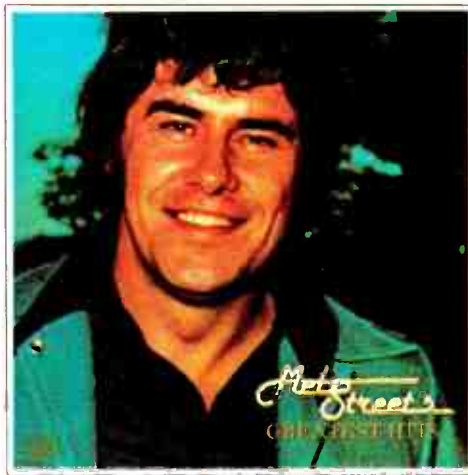
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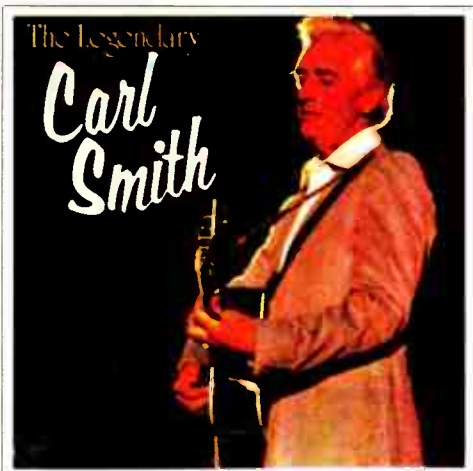
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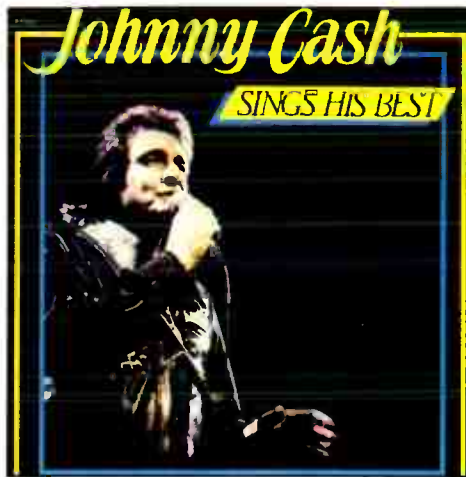
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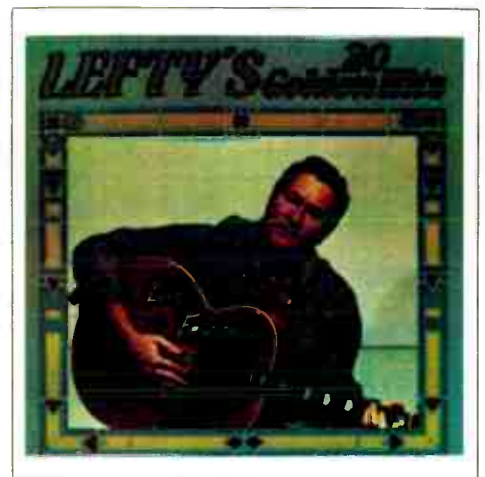
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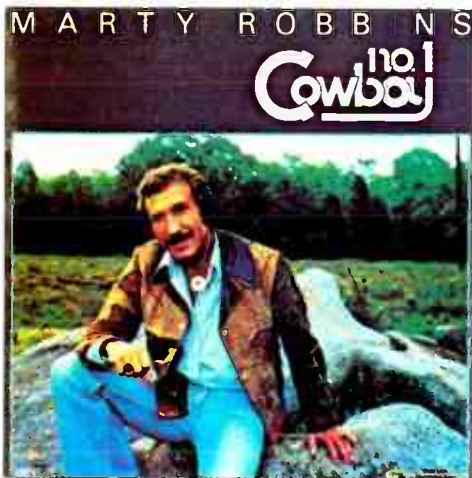
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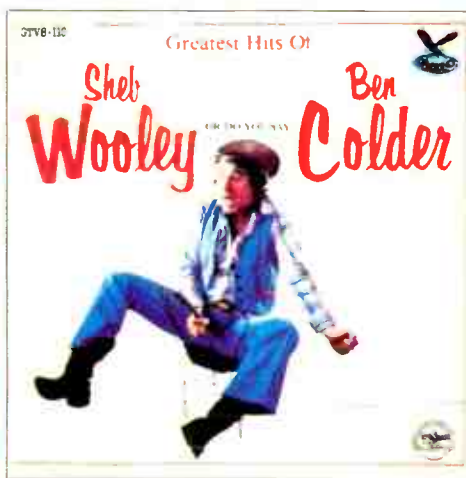
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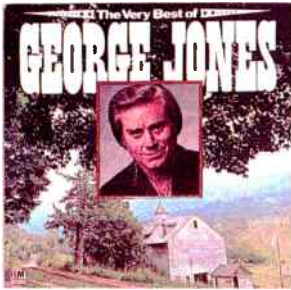
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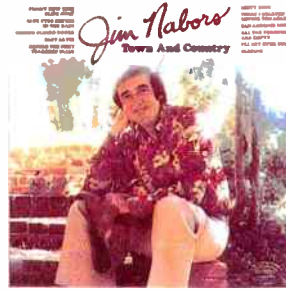
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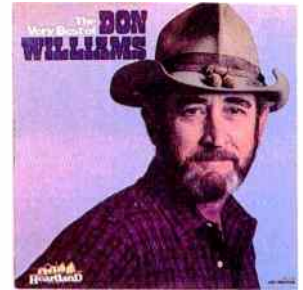
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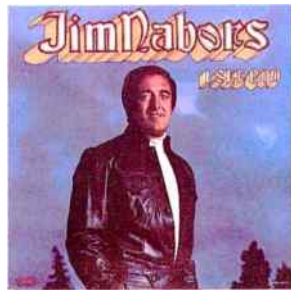
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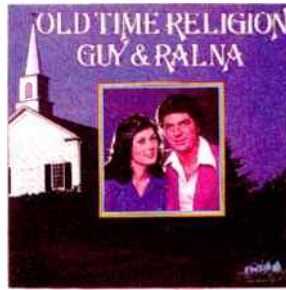
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TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD - (2-Record Set) - Old Time Religion/My Faith Looks Up To Thee/What A Friend We Have In Jesus/Bringing In The Sheaves/Just As I Am, Without One Plea/The Old Rugged Cross/His Eye Is On The Sparrow/Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross/I Love To Tell The Story/Blest Be The Tie That Binds/Nearer My God To Thee/Holy, Holy, Holy/I Need Thee Every Hour/The Church In The Wildwood/Sweet Hour Of Prayer/Where Could I Go (But To The Lord)/How Great Thou Art/Abide With Me/Share We Gather At The River/Almost Persuaded/In The Garden/ more!

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Record Reviews

secrets to this album is that to have Cash as the rhythm machine is a real good idea. It benefits.

Michael: You can tell it's Cash's album by just the music choices. None of those other guys have that weird eclectic taste. Good for Johnny Cash. Even "Desperados"—there's been so many versions.

Patrick: There's places in this album, particularly when they're straining out the high notes, some of these folks go off track, Waylon and Willie go off track....

Michael: Hey, nobody ever told Waylon he had to sing—all he ever had to do was grunt—but it's probably good for him to be forced to do an album

under stricter musical constraints than before, 'cause, like we said, they all really sound good.

Patrick: It doesn't even get tacky. It doesn't get tacky with them trading off the verses 'cause they chose the right songs.

Michael: And that's how you

can tell. Cash can get away with that, and there's not another producer in the country who could tell Willie Nelson to sing different.

Patrick: My only reservation is: I wish they'd sung, "All of us...why not take all of us..."

—PATRICK CARR/
MICHAEL BANE

Merle Haggard

Kern River
Epic FE 39602

Merle Haggard has reached the point, a place of deep taste and experience, where it is simply impossible for him to make an album that is not higher in basic quality than just about anything else around. All the elements—the good or great songs sung right, the beautifully clean production, the magnificent band—are always there these days, so the question when a new album is released (blessedly, a regular event) is not is it good, but what is it about: what was on Merle's mind when he made the record? How was he doing?

It seems that he was doing a lot better than during the end of his relationship with Leona Williams—gloom and anger and doubt and despondency do not bleed from *Kern River* like they did from his last round of work—and it seems that this time, perhaps feeling a drop in pressure, he set out to make a nice, balanced, classically low-key variety album: some well-turned love (and loss) songs, a little swing, a touch of raunch, and the usual steady stream of precision picking by The Strangers. This last item, incidentally, somehow manages to be unobtrusive until you really pay attention to it, and then you realize that to call The Strangers just "a band" is hardly adequate. A band they are—a unit whose interaction is so perfect, in fact, that it sounds as if God had put a soul into a Swiss watch—but they are also a Smithsonianlike reposi-

tory of the national musical treasures (Western Division), a living-history lesson built to boogie. Ol' Merle, of course, leads them with a sure and graceful touch, and to my mind he has molded them into the most rooted, stylish country band in the world. *Never* miss a chance to catch the road show.

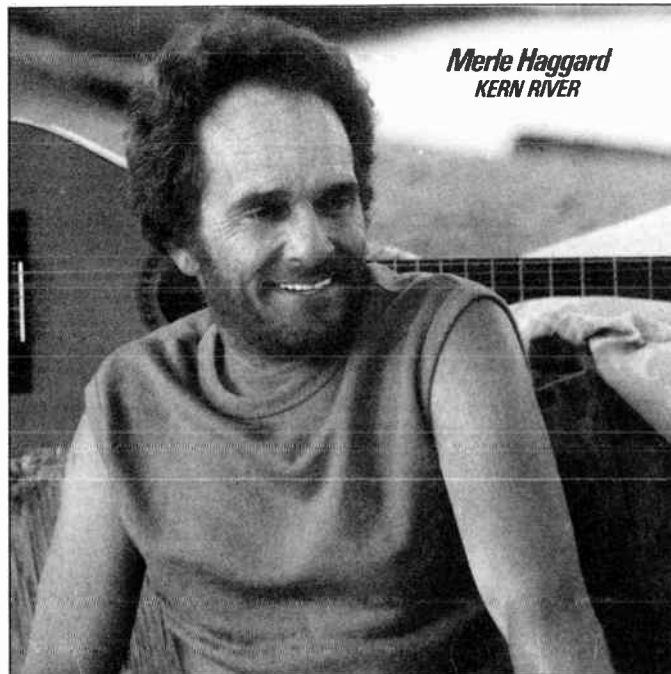
In the meantime, *Kern Riv-*

er should keep you amused. Capsule material), and it's good to have his take on record. Another song, "You Don't Love Me Anymore," has the same kind of heart-stop emotional impact (though it's neither as happy nor as melodically perfect as "Old Flames"), and "Natural High," with Janie Fricke on background vocals, is very sweet, a real complement of a love song. A couple of oth-

age to the western swing era so dear to Merle's heart.

All in all, then, we have here a quiet and comfortably casual little masterpiece. It's not a historic or even a newsworthy album—it marks no major turn or trauma in Merle's life, and it introduces no new area of enthusiasm—but, boy, is it solid. It's Merle operating calmly from the center of his art, and that is always a joy.

—PATRICK CARR



Merle Haggard
KERN RIVER

er should keep you amused. The title song, a lost-love number in which what actually happened at Kern River is never revealed but the feeling of it couldn't be plainer (or more artfully conveyed), is the clear star of the album, but "Old Flames Can't Hold a Candle to You" is almost as nice; Merle country-curls the vocal on this beauty more than either Crystal Gayle (who had the hit) or Jack Clement (whose straight waltz version is pure Time

er love songs are just good, not classic.

Which leaves us with what is usually, on a country album, "the filler material." In Merle's case, it's more little gems for his now enormous collection of continued traditions: a wonderfully relaxed and whimsical "There I've Said It Again," a great reprise of Pat Venable and Louis Armstrong's tongue-in-cheek-suggestive "Big Butter and Egg Man," and "The Old Watermill," another hom-

Hank Williams Jr.

FIVE-O

Warner Bros. 1-25267

Incredibly, it has been ten years since I sat on Hank Williams Jr.'s back porch for the first time and shot tin cans. Shot at tin cans, I should say—he hit them, I didn't. On that first afternoon, he was worried about an uncertain future, a future that was to be filled with operations and empty concert halls and broken dreams. Still, though, the thing I remember most about that afternoon was that anybody as light-hearted and half-crazy as Hank would end up doing all right.

That he has. That he has.

Five-O is his fiftieth album, an incredible total for a performer in his mid-30's. Along the way he has produced one of the most substantial bodies of work of any performer in country music. Even a lousy Hank Jr. song is better than the best of the rest of the sludge that passes for country music these days.

Five-O has the feel of a summation, although Hank says that it wasn't intended to be that way. There's some really

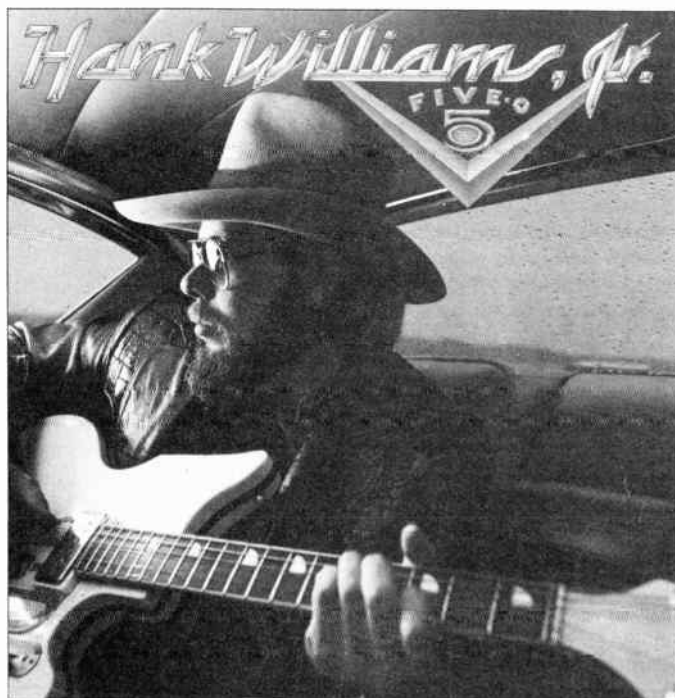
Record Reviews

good stuff here, and, boy, is there a mixture! There's everything from Rockin' Randall (his rock 'n' roll incarnation in high school) to Fats Waller's classic "Ain't Misbehavin." There's light-hearted country ("This Ain't Dallas") and overwrought introspection ("I've Been Around"); a well-deserved slap at Nashville ("The Nashville Scene") and a genuine stone-cold killer duet with George Thorogood (as in George Thorogood and the Destroyers, the best white boy to sing the blues in a long time), "I Really Like Girls." All right! Finally, a sentiment I can understand! Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be hamsters!

Also, finally, Hank Jr. does a cover of one of my all-time favorite songs, Warren Zevon's "Lawyers, Guns and Money." I mean, this is the perfect song for Hank Jr., 'cause he's one of the few people I know who uses all three when the chips are down. Actually, the proper order is probably Money, Lawyers, and Guns, although one of my friends suggested taking the money, then using the guns to dust the lawyers. That doesn't have anything to do with this record, but I suspect it has something to say about Hank Williams Jr.

Every time I talk to him, he's always getting ready to do something the same and something different. His nature is to push both ends against the middle. If the critics say he sings too many introspective songs, he sings another one. People say sing rock, he sings "Ain't Misbehavin." People say sing the blues, he does "I Really Like Girls."

It's not unusual for an artist of Hank's stature to record pretty much what he wants—look at Willie Nelson. What's unusual is that Hank Jr. remains the consummate risk-taker. I know and he knows and Jimmy Bowen (who co-produces him) knows, that Hank could stamp out a formula Hank Jr. record, Marshall Tucker's greatest hits, for example, and sell about a billion of them. That's what the other formula country acts (uh-uh, no



names here) do, and they're more popular than cold beer and short skirts.

The audience is looking for performers to fit a certain niche. The quality of the performers varies with the times—Alabama, for instance, occupies the same niche as the Allman Brothers Band. But Hank Jr., in 50 albums, is a man without a niche. He is the only act in country music who has succeeded without going pop or mining the same lode to death. His fans love him for it; the industry hates him for the same reasons.

I mean, "I Really Like Girls" is probably the best song to come out of Nashville in the last year (or at least since the last Hank Jr. album). We're talking monster here. High speed. Big time. George Thorogood joins on a mean electric guitar (and a little slide, which is *ba...a...a...d to the bone*). Call your local radio station and demand they play this song. Then call the CMA and tell them Hank Jr. ought to be Entertainer of the Year. And as long as you're running up your phone bill, call the producers of *Miami Vice* and tell them you've got a perfect song for Friday night mayhem. This song alone could cause Kenny

Rogers and Lionel Richie to re-evaluate their careers.

So congratulations on making the big *Five-O*, cousin. When I got this record, I got to thinking back, and what I thought of was a song by the Grateful Dead. I think it's an appropriate ending, too.

Sometimes the light's all shining on me

*Other times I can barely see
But lately it occurs to me
What a long strange trip it's been...*

—MICHAEL BANE

Johnny Rodriguez

Full Circle
Epic FE 39583

This is a good album, and it deserves to restore Johnny Rodriguez to his rightful place in the front lines of country. It is a rewarding and thoroughly satisfying album, with enough of the essential ingredients to make it indispensable to country music lovers.

Johnny can read; Johnny can write. However, he does neither here, save for the title cut. Instead, he turns to master song craftsmen like Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Harlan Howard, Mickey Newbury and

Shel Silverstein for his material. Maybe that's why the choices are unhesitatingly appropriate.

Rodriguez never stoops to reading lyrics. He pours into them a profound tenderness that contrasts sharply with his surface self-possession. So affecting is Rodriguez' voice, in fact, that songs of pain, foolish pride, mistakes repeated and weaknesses revisited become anthems of autobiography rather than rote recitations.

Full Circle explores Rodriguez's artistry without ever exhausting its limits. Without affectation, he transforms memories into mirrors, turning them into experiences we share.

When he confesses, "I'm saying words I said I'd never say again/I thought I could stay strong, but I got weak again" in Shel Silverstein's "Here I Am Again," it's hard not to feel his helpless flush of failure even as he admits defeat. When he regretfully wonders if a bygone love might yet carry a flame for him in "If You See Her," it's impossible not to feel his ineffable sense of loss.

When he sings, "I love you so much I can't let you go/And sometimes I believe you love me/But somewhere between your heart and mine/There's a door without any key," he makes Haggard's lyrics spring to life with stirring believability.

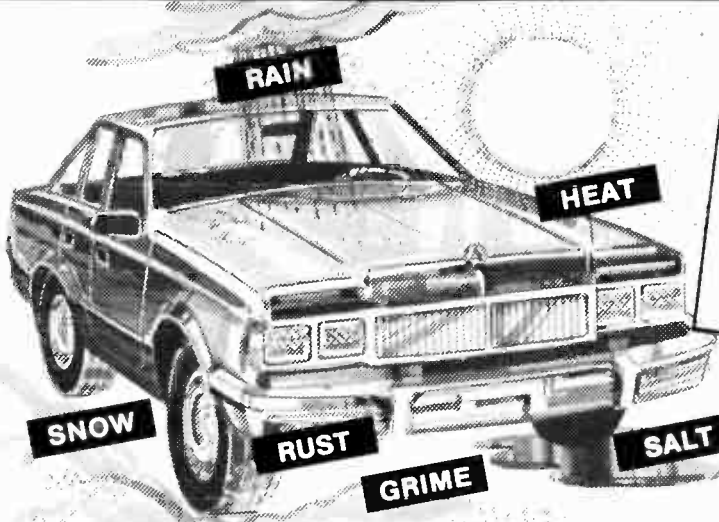
And while others have sunk trying to sing duets with Willie Nelson, Rodriguez does a beautiful job on Nelson's "Forgiving Her Was Easy."

An album like this is a faith-restorer for those of us who wonder whether artists really give a damn any more about what they sing or how they sing it. The eloquence of this album draws equally from faultless production, flawless arrangements and fluid performances.

Rodriguez is fortunate to have Richie Albright as his producer. Albright (who also plays drums for Rodriguez) pinpoints the essence of each song and then gets down to the business of making it breathe.

(Continued on page 63)

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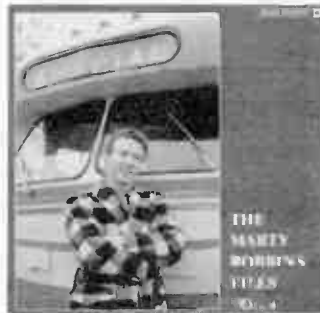
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Record Reviews



In contrast to many Nashville producers, Albright uses only a handful of selected, skillful musicians and background singers to highlight Rodriguez instead of drowning him out.

Full Circle isn't an album that will be listened to once and stored on the shelf under "R." It's an album with a life of its own, fashioned by an artist who obviously cares—deeply—about his music.

Whether the album gets the attention it deserves is another matter. Rodriguez fell from sight several years ago battling personal problems and the stress of youthful stardom. Had he gone to the Betty Ford Clinic or some other in-vogue detox center, he might have parlayed his plight into a press agent's dream and won national empathy.

However, being somewhat more reclusive than that, Rodriguez chose to deal with his problems alone; and his career since then hasn't caught fire the way it deserves.

If there's justice in country music, *Full Circle* will undo this inequity. Rodriguez is an artist who defines country by country's own standards and leaves one wishing for more.

—KIP KIRBY

John Fogerty *Centerfield*

Warner Bros. WB 25203-4

People are saying, isn't it good to have John Fogerty back. I don't think of him as ever having left. If he had never uttered another sound, he would've been remembered as a classic—timeless. John's name might not be familiar to

many country music listeners, but without even trying, he has become a part of the country tradition. From the first recordings of Creedence Clearwater Revival, his raw voice and stylish guitar made people sit up and take notice. As a songwriter, he made his mark with such songs as "Proud Mary," "Bad Moon Rising," "Looking Out My Back Door," "Green River," and "Lodi." Well, how many times has your favorite local band played "Proud Mary"?

Now after a decade of virtual silence, his new album *Centerfield* is a welcome arrival—nine songs that should live on both pop and country charts. The album opens with his current pop hit, "The Old Man From Down the Road." Amid the synthetic stuff that's the usual fare on the radio, this song jumps at you with honest, raw emotion, the same effect a



Sun record once had measured against the big band/crooner format of the time. "Big Train from Memphis" pays tribute to the bluesmen and rockabillys from the glory days of Memphis. One line from the song captures the scene: "When that Memphis train came through, this old world's not the same." This is a song that should make it to the charts.

Fogerty plays all the instruments throughout the album, a task that is sometimes attempted with disastrous results—like one person playing all the instruments. For the most part, though, he pulls it off, and the performance has a live feel. The songs "Searchlight" and "The Old Man from Down the Road" would have fit comfortably on any Creedence record. This is not to say he's

trying to trade on old material. But it does erase any doubts—if there were any—as to where the heart and soul of Creedence lay.

I could talk a lot about this album—its themes, its technical qualities, comparisons to his former band, but it can be best enjoyed by forgetting all of that and cranking up the victrola to maximum level, and then proceeding to dance.

John Fogerty is a valuable asset to American music. He is one of Muddy Waters and Howlin Wolf's crowd—with a dash of Memphis '55. I now anxiously await the next release from the swamps and bayous of San Francisco Bay. I hope it's not another ten years before it happens. Here's to you, Fogerty.

—MARTY STUART

The Statler Brothers *Pardners in Rhyme*

Mercury 422-824 420-1 M-1

First, I'll tell ya what I don't like: *the title*. A pun is the lowest form of humor and even Ole Roadhog himself wouldn't use something this lame—maybe something like *Secretary of Defense* with the boys standing in front of a whitewashed picket fence or something, but "Pardners in Rhyme"? C'mon, guys. Also, I note that D. Bergen White did the "string & horn arrangements." If I never see that notation again on a Nashville-bred record, it'll be fine with me.

Anyway, that is about as bad as it gets. The Statlers always show class, as befits their place in a tradition. I've always considered the Jordanaires to have paved the way for the Statlers, and the Statlers to be the stylistic fathers of the Oaks, the Four Guys and just about every other former gospel vocal group who's gone secular from then on. And I've always admired their good sense. Rarely have they ever ventured into an area they could not handle, nor have they tried jumping on bandwagons that weren't com-



fortable or wouldn't work for them.

So the result is another excellent collaboration between The Statlers and Jerry Kennedy, leaning toward the nostalgic. Jimmy Fortune's "Memory Lane" fits this pattern well, as does the Reid Brothers' "Sweeter and Sweeter." Track one, a thumping, vibrant version of the old Rick Nelson hit "Hello, Mary Lou" sets the early 1960's tone. Nobody has ever described the Statlers as the poets of advancing middle age, but that's not such a bad thing (who else is gonna do it?).

"Remembering You" is a competent Reid Brothers' ballad, with nary a pop pretense to be heard. The same is true of Fortune's "Too Much on My Heart." The only lapse occurs with "I'm Sorry You Had to Be the One," a Reid Bros./Fortune collaboration that reeks of crossover and suffers by comparison with "You Don't Wear Blue So Well," written by the Reids' three daughters. "Her Heart or Mine" is vibrant 1950's country with a Chet Atkins style guitar break like the ones Chet used to pick with Maybelle and the Carter Sisters.

The ending, an inspiring version of "Amazing Grace," is marred only at the last by the swelling Bergen White travelogue soundtrack orchestrations, which should have been kept muted. They could've used just a guitar...

Still, the Statlers' standards are so far above those of most of their peers (and you will never see a "hair and makeup consultant" listed in their album credits) that it's easy to take them for granted. No one should.

—RICH KIENZLE

Record Reviews

Willie Nelson

Me & Paul

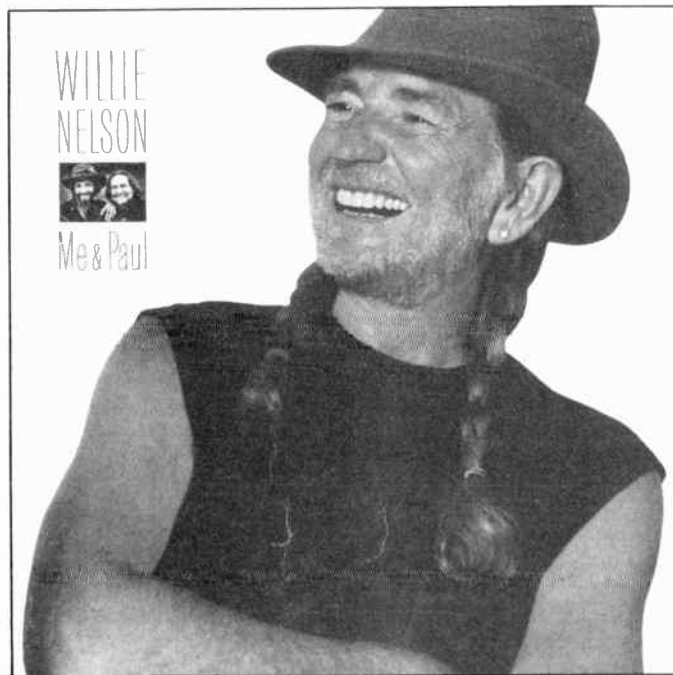
CBS FC 40008

From one album release to the next, Willie Nelson, who seems compulsive about turning out ever more material, has steadfastly defied prediction and refused to cater to anyone's expectations.

Recent Nelson releases have included the following: remakes of pop standards of long ago, a concept album grounded in the mythology of the Old West, a gospel album with his sister Bobbie, remakes of pop and country standards of not so long ago, and a jazz album. Then, of course, there have been the duets.

Admittedly, some of the above-mentioned efforts have seemed uninspired and lackadaisical, as if merely spun off by Nelson while he was puttering around his Pedernales Studios, where he also produced this new album.

Nelson seems to apply the same sort of philosophy to record-making as Clint Eastwood does to movie-making: if the



first take isn't the best, it will certainly do.

Me & Paul is dedicated to Paul English, Nelson's drummer and close friend who has been a member of his band and tight inner circle since way back in the 1950's, when Willie first launched his career in the nightclubs and dives of the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The title song is a popular classic from

the huge Nelson catalogue and has appeared on several of his earlier albums.

The title song is just one of nine Nelson compositions featured on *Me & Paul*. Since he hasn't come up with an abundance of fresh material in recent years (there is one song here, "Forgiving You," written as recently as 1984), Nelson has instead settled for the next

best thing. He's turned in some finely understated and slightly updated versions of a handful of his more obscure and hauntingly introspective songs of yesteryear. Quite a few of these first appeared on his RCA albums from the 1960's, and at least one was written as early as 1961. He's rounded this collection out with "I Been to Georgia on a Fast Train," "Old Five & Dimers Like Me," and "Black Rose"—three classics by Billy Joe Shaver, one of the most gifted and original songwriters ever to emerge from Texas.

Nelson's production of *Me & Paul* is sparse and straightforward. Accompaniment comes from six core members of his Family Band: English, Bobbie Nelson, Bee Spears, Jody Payne, Mickey Raphael and ace guitarist Grady Martin. Billy English, Paul's brother and another Nelson crony from way back, offers assistance on percussion and drums.

The essential charm of *Me & Paul* lies in its simplicity and its unobtrusive road-band arrangements. This collection of Nelson oldies comes alive under Nelson's evocative, laconic latter-day interpretations. His rendering of Shaver's "Black

Hits or Misses?

Restless Heart

Restless Heart

RCA CPL 1-5369

Terri Gibbs

Old Friends

Warner Bros. 25209-1

Leon Everette

Where's the Fire

Mercury 824 309-1

Remember the name: Restless Heart. You'll be hearing a lot about this new five-piece Nashville band. Restless Heart, in its dazzling debut, pulls off a performance it usually takes groups several albums to achieve.

Restless Heart is strikingly reminiscent of the Eagles in their "Desperado" days, although at moments, they can sound like a combination of Poco, Crosby Stills & Nash, and Little River Band.

"Let the Heartache Ride." Restless Heart's first single from its self-titled mini-album, is a dazzling blend of a *cappella* vocals and explosive instrumentals that instantly defines the group's sound. Cuts like "I Want Everyone to Cry," "Heartbreak Kid," "She's Coming Home," "Til I Loved You" and the signature, "Restless Heart," are just as fine: powerful, galvanizing performances that show Restless Heart's fine-tuned country-rock dynamics.

Besides its proficiency and

musicianship—its vocal harmonies and instrumental expertise—the band also writes many of its songs. Members Larry Stewart (lead vocals and keyboard), Greg Jennings (vocals and guitar), Paul Gregg (vocals and bass), John Dittrich (vocals and drums), and Dave Innis (keyboards and vocals) are all Nashville musicians with studio seasoning. Under the careful direction of mentor/co-producer-fellow songwriter Tim DuBois, they perform with seamless precision.

But what makes this band special could also be what initially makes Restless Heart anathema to country radio. For one suspects that without much provocation, Restless Heart could slip its traces and slide right over the edge into

rock 'n' roll. The elements are already in place: instrumentals that cut with knife-edged clarity, perfectly fused harmonies, blistering musicianship on high-voltage material.

Well, why not? Country music could use some excitement. Maybe Restless Heart will restore the youth market lost to country since "Urban Cowboy" saddled up and rode away.

The band certainly gives every indication of mega-audience crossover potential, not to mention a possibility of selling the kind of numbers that make record executives heady.

Hallelujah! They said it couldn't be done, but somebody did it. Two somebodies, to be exact: producers Steve Buck-

Record Reviews

Rose," a guilty-gleeful tale of interracial lust, is the first of the several versions I've heard to really bring the song to life.

The only thing that might be more satisfying than this refreshingly unambitious little album would be one with as many brand-new Nelson originals. But applying for a moment the rules of horseshoes, I'd call *Me & Paul* a winner—it's close enough. Not to mention the fact that there are twelve songs here, as opposed to the usual ten. That, too, is another step in the right direction.

—BOB ALLEN

The Whites

Whole New World

MCA/Curb, MCA-5562

With *Whole New World*, their first album for the MCA label. The Whites—Cheryl, Sharon and their father Buck—who have their own delightful brand of bluegrass-flavored and roots-oriented music—seem to have edged, just perceptibly, closer to the mainstream.

Have no fear: all the essential ingredients that have ac-



counted for The Whites' charm—chiefly their superb musicianship—remain intact. The threesome's tight, countrified harmonies, Buck's supple, bluesy piano, and Jerry Douglas' masterful Dobro work have not been tampered with.

Co-producers Marshall Morgan and Ricky Skaggs (Sharon White's husband) have, however, beefed things up a bit by

adding a few contemporary production touches that enhance the overall sound without radically changing things. The drums and bass weigh in a bit more prominently and give the recordings on *Whole New World* a bit more "bottom" sound. Here and there, subtle rhythmic shadings on the electric guitar also give an added edge to the group's ordinarily

acoustic arrangements.

The carefully chosen material also leavens the old with the new. Daddy Buck sounds particularly hot on his rendition of Buck Owens' "I Don't Care (Just as Long as You Love Me)." On Keith Stegall and Jim McBride's "Down in Louisiana," his rousing singing and inspired ivory-tickling is enhanced by a spirited workout on the Cajun accordion by Bes-syl Duhor and by some nice fiddle fills from son-in-law Skaggs.

Sharon White deftly handles the lead vocals elsewhere, except on "No One Has to Tell Me" and on the traditional gospel number (every Whites' album will have one or two of these!) "Angel Band," where the duties go to sister Cheryl White Warren. Sharon turns in delightful performances on songs by everyone from Gail Davies, Bobby Braddock and Rafe Van Hoy to Dallas Frasier and Jimmie Davis.

With a group like The Whites, even a dash of the new, like the ingredients aforementioned, risks ruining the dish. But—as *Whole New World* amply demonstrates—so far, so good.

—BOB ALLEN

Notes on Review by Kip Kirby

ingham and the aforementioned Jim Ed Norman. They've made a really *good* Terri Gibbs album, with some of the best songs and arrangements she's had since "Somebody's Knockin'." Will somebody forge these guys a medal?

"A Few Good Men" strikes the match almost as soon as needle touches vinyl, setting the thermostat to a tempting degree of chill and burn. "Someone Must Be Missing You Tonight" and "I Know the Feeling By Heart" drop the boil to a steady simmer, country as anything Gibbs has yet done, while cuts like "You Can't Run Away From Your Heart" and "Here I Go Again" show flashes of the fire we all suspect smolders just under

Gibbs' smooth surface.

Her problem is, she doesn't fit the stereotype of today's female country artist. Her voice is passive, unlined, sometimes even curiously flat and emotionless. You can't tell what she's thinking; you sure can't tell what she's feeling.

In the past, this emotionlessness was compounded through misguided arrangements or disastrous song choices. There's little danger of that here, surrounded as Gibbs is by Emmylou Harris and Vince Gill ("Someone Must Be Missing You Tonight"), Kathy Mattea ("A Few Good Men" and "Ain't Nobody"), Linda Ronstadt ("You Can't Run Away From Your Heart") and Wendy Waldman and Kathy Burdick.

Some were starting to de-

spair that Gibbs would ever find her way back to country after several failed attempts. Fortunately, *Old Friends*—while not perfect—is sufficiently intoxicating to make us forget the past and look forward to more of Terri.

Leon Everette managed to bring producer Bill Rice out of retirement to work on his first album for Mercury. The result, *Where's the Fire*, is more of what he can always be counted on to deliver: sturdy, no-frills country.

Everette's albums are noteworthy for their tendency toward experiment without loss of focus. *Where's the Fire* is no exception. He explores the intriguing, almost-pop-but-not-

quite "Feels Like Forever," assuages his woman's fears of aging in "I Still Love Your Body," cries his way through "He's Taking Up Where I Left Off," alternates between desperation and hope in the title cut, romps through the fiddle-edged "A Good Love Died Tonight," and sparkles on "Too Good to Say No To," managing all the while to stamp them indelibly and authoritatively as his own.

There's a comfortable conviction about Everette's albums. He isn't slick or gimmicky, doesn't dilute his basic working-man strengths with off-target forays, and his arrangements always have clean instrumentation that packs a punch and nicely defined harmonies. ■

Buried Treasures

Reissues, Rarities and the Hard to Find

by Rich Kienzle

Whether it's coincidental or not I don't know—two George Jones biographies have come out recently—but a small deluge of Jones reissues have hit the market since January. One of these is an import; another is a bargain-priced domestic album. *White Lightning* (Ace CH 117) replaces an out-of-print 10" British album, with the same title, of George's more rocking Starday sides from the 1950's. All the cuts from the earlier record are included: "White Lightning," "Who Shot Sam," "Revenooer Man," "Rock It," "How Come It" and "Play It Cool Man," the latter an uncanny evocation of Hank Williams. Ace has added other tracks not on the first album, some not so fantastic. "Boogie Woogie Mexican Boy," for example, is a bad Hank Snow imitation (complete with an awkwardly phrased guitar break probably played by George). Two tracks, "Rock It" and "You Gotta Be My Baby," are actually unissued alternate takes. That would be nice, except they're only marginally different from the originals. "Don't Stop the Music," though, is fine—one of his best early ballads.

The other album, released by Gusto, is a new version of one of his mid-1960's Musicor albums, which brought him into the slicker Nashville Sound production, complete with the Jordanaires in the background. *The Best of Sacred Music* (Musicor GT-0135) is not quite a total gospel album (his brilliant "Small Town Laboring Man," written with Peanut Montgomery, is stone secular). There's a slightly less frantic remake of his Starday recording of "Taggin' Along (with Jesus)," and his versions of "Family Bible," "I'll Fly Away" and "Where We Never Grow Old" are all stunning.



Anyone who's seriously into Ricky Skaggs knows that the music of the Stanley Brothers is an important segment of his musical roots. Not only did he grow up listening to the Stanleys' records, he and Keith Whitley worked with Ralph Stanley in the early 1970's, helping Ralph recreate some of the old numbers he hadn't done since his brother Carter died in 1966. The Stanleys were among the first significant bluegrass bands to emerge after Bill Monroe, recording first for Columbia, then for Mercury and from 1958 to 1960 (except for a brief interlude with King in late 1958) for Starday. County Records, which previously reissued the complete Columbia Stanley sessions, has now done likewise with the Stardays. *The Starday Sessions* (County CCS 106/107) is a marvelous two-record collection of some of their finest moments, organized in chronological order.

The high harmonies of Ralph and Carter are awesome even today.

Everything—from the incredibly haunting sacred tune "Rank Stranger" and the moving "A Few More Seasons" to the spritely "Christmas Is Near"—is of such a consistently high quality it's easy to see why the Stanleys have been long considered among the finest of all bluegrass artists. Both Skaggs and Emmylou Harris have drunk deeply from the well of these two. The influence on Skaggs is apparent on every number, and Emmylou with his help recorded a masterful version of "The Darkest Hour Is Just Before Dawn" on *Roses in the Snow*. This is some of the finest traditional music ever recorded, and those hot-licks bozos who think vocals are secondary in bluegrass should listen to the masters.

One of the great pities today is the scarcity of greatest hits collections by some of the

1950's best artists. Right now, American RCA has *not one* Don Gibson album in print. Luckily, Bear Family Records has two. *Rockin' Rollin' Don Gibson Vols. 1 and 2* (BFX 15089 and 15097) bring together his finest RCA recordings of all. Don't let the "Rockin' Rollin'" business upset you. It isn't accurate and is mostly a measure of the influence rock had on Gibson and other "Nashville Sound" artists in the late 1950's. Volume 1 includes standards like "Sea of Heartbreak," "Blue, Blue Day" and "Oh Lonesome Me," along with a number of unissued tunes, including his first attempt at "Sweet Sweet Girl," (the issued version's on Volume 2). The excellence and consistency of Gibson's RCA sides (which, to me, were some of Chet Atkins' finest productions) have been badly underrated today, and these two records, replete with recording dates and personnel, prove it.

RCA may not be doing so well by Don Gibson, but RCA's Gregg Geller has just done it again with Elvis. *Reconsider Baby* (AKA *Elvis Sings the Blues*) (AFL1-5418) brings together a dozen of his best blues performances from 1954 to 1971. It begins with the original, undubbed Sun version of the Lonnie Johnson blues classic "Tomorrow Night," recorded at Sun and released with overdubbed accompaniment on RCA in the 50's. Geller recently discovered the original undubbed version, and it is virtually a *cappella*, with Scotty and Bill far in the background. Elvis' delicate treatment here contrasts with the hard edge he gives to "Reconsider Baby," the explosive rockabilly version of "My Baby Left Me," to the *original*, uncensored version of "One Night" and to late 1960's masterpieces like "High

Heel Sneakers" that managed to appear among all the sound-track piffle he was recording. The packaging is superb, and Peter Guralnick's liner notes masterfully tie Elvis to Memphis blues traditions.

Zeb Turner (real name: Eddie Grishaw) was not a star when he was still alive. His importance is as a pre-rockabilly figure. Zeb was one of the pioneers of the idiom known as "country boogie." His "Zeb's Mountain Boogie," a guitar instrumental, was a sizable hit on the Bullet label in 1946. A friend of Hank Williams, he and his brother Zeke (James Grishaw) played on some of

Hank's early records as well. Zeb began recording for King in 1949, and the material, though little of it sold well, was excellent boogie/country/blues fare. *Jersey Rock* (Bear Family BFX 15166) includes early Haley-styled rock ("Jersey Rock," recorded when he was working in Trenton, New Jersey) along with Hank Williams' "Never Been So Lonesome," a number Hank himself never recorded. The country boogie numbers like "Travelin' Boogie" and "Tennessee Boogie" are easygoing, while his version of Billy Briggs' "Chew Tobacco Rag," the only hit he ever had, is clattering

and wild. The high point, however, is his cover of Peppermint Harris' 1951 rhythm and blues hit "I Got Loaded," given a mellow, boozy delivery. Turner, who died in Canada in 1978, has been a lost figure—until now.

Bob Wills dominated the last *Buried Treasures*. And though more material is coming, an interesting footnote to the Wills sound is a record that, long out of print, has recently made a comeback. *The Old Masters: Emmett Miller* (TOM 1) compiles 14 1930's recordings by the mysterious minstrel show country/jazz crooner who in many ways an-

ticipated the Wills sound; they include backing by some of the greatest jazzmen of the day. Both Wills and Tommy Duncan were Miller fans, and though little is known of him, his influence on the prewar Playboys was profound. Old pop numbers like "I Ain't Got Nobody" that Wills later cut were clearly taken from Miller's versions. And Miller's rendition of "Lovesick Blues" set the style for Rex Griffin's recording later copied by Hank Williams. Miller was a true original—Merle Haggard, among others, has sung his praises—and this album proves it. ■

The Essential Collector More double-length albums: Connie Smith, Don Gibson, Porter Wagoner, Skeeter Davis and The Browns.

British RCA continues to warm our hearts by providing double-length, 20-song albums of important country stars whose recordings are otherwise hard to find. Compared to standard \$8.98 American albums, these imports deliver double value: they include twice the music for only \$9.98, plus they are packed with each performer's best-known hits. No single album can sum up a major artist's career, but these come close.

Connie Smith "Who's your favorite girl singer?" Tammy asked George Jones in an interview for this magazine. "Connie Smith," replied George, without a second's hesitation. That answer caused him a little grief from Tammy, but many agree with George about Connie Smith. Fans are looking forward to her new album, now that she is recording again. In the meantime, you can't beat *Connie Smith: 20 of the Best*, including "Once a Day," her first big hit written by Bill Anderson, "Then and Only Then," "I'll Come Running," "Nobody But a Fool," "I Never Stopped Loving You," "If I Talk to Him," "Just One More Time," plus 14 more.

Don Gibson "Oh, Lonesome Me," "I Can't Stop Loving You," and "(It's Been a) Blue, Blue Day" are on everyone's list of classics, but Don Gibson cut lots of other hits for RCA and this album has most of them: "Who Cares (For Me),"

"Just One Time," "Don't Tell Me Your Troubles," "Sweet Dreams," "Lonesome Number One," "Sea of Heartbreak," "Look Who's Blue," "Give Myself a Party" and nine more.

Porter Wagoner Seldom does a performer jump straight to the top with his first record as Porter Wagoner did with



"Satisfied Mind" in 1955. For the next 15 years Wagoner was a mainstay in RCA's line-up with hits like "Green, Green Grass of Home," "Skid Row

Joe," "Cold Hard Facts of Life," "The Carroll County Accident," "Big Wind," "Eat, Drink and Be Merry" and "Misery Loves Company." The *20 Best of Porter Wagoner* has all these and a dozen more.

Skeeter Davis Skeeter (real name Mary Francis Renick) and her friend, Betty Jack Davis, began recording as the Davis Sisters in the early 1950's. On August 2, 1953, they were in a car wreck which killed Betty Jack and seriously injured Skeeter. The following week, their record "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know About Him" hit the *Billboard* chart. It rocketed to Number One and stayed on the chart for six months. Skeeter retired until 1959, when Chet Atkins convinced her to try a solo career. A string of rapid hits—"Set Him Free," "I Can't Help You) I'm Falling Too," "My



Last Date (With You)," "Where I Ought to Be" and "The End of the World" (which hit Number Two on the pop chart with more than a million sales)—established her at the top of women in country music alongside Patsy Cline. The 20 hits on this album prove that few women in country music rival Skeeter Davis in her prime.

The Browns Maxine, Bonnie and Jim Ed Brown had their first hit in 1956 with the Louvin Brothers' "I Take the Chance." They followed with "I Heard the Bluebirds Sing," "Would You Care" and "Beyond the Shadow." Then, in 1959, The Browns recorded "Three Bells," their adaptation of French singer Edith Piaf's European hit "Les Trois Cloches." Now a classic, "Three Bells" hit Number One on both country and pop charts, selling over a million. This album includes those great hits plus "Scarlet Ribbons," "Then I'll Stop Lovin' You" and 13 other fine examples of The Browns' sweet harmony. ■

How to Order These Treasures

Buried Treasures *The Stanley Brothers Starday Sessions* (CCS 106/107), a two-record set; *Don Gibson Volume I* (BFX 15089) and *Volume II* (BFX 15097); Zeb Turner *Jersey Rock* are all \$11.98. All other albums in *Buried Treasures* are \$8.98. No tapes except *George Jones: The Best of Sacred Music* (GT 0135), available on LP, 8-track or cassette.

Essential Collector All 20 *Best* albums are available on LP or cassette for \$9.98. In addition to *Connie Smith*, *Don Gibson*, *Porter Wagoner* and *The Browns*, these 20 *Best* albums are available: *Jimmie Rodgers*, *Jim Reeves*, *Carter Family*, *Bobby Bare*, *Hank Snow*, *Vernon Oxford*, *Eddy Arnold*.

Mail your check to *Country Music*, Dept. 78, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one album, \$.95 each additional.

TOP 25

Singles

1. Conway Twitty *Don't Call Him a Cowboy*
2. Sylvia *Fallin' In Love*
3. Merle Haggard *Natural High*
4. Ricky Skaggs *Country Boy*
5. The Oak Ridge Boys *Little Things*
6. Ronnie Milsap *She Keeps The Home Fires Burning*
7. Barbara Mandrell *There's No Love In Tennessee*
8. Crystal Gayle *Nobody Wants to be Alone*
9. Mel McDaniel *Let It Roll (Let It Rock)*
10. Charly McClain *Radio Heart*
11. Exile *She's a Miracle*
12. Willie Nelson *Forgiving You Was Easy*
13. Dan Seals *My Old Yellow Car*
14. Emmylou Harris *White Line*
15. Lee Greenwood *Dixie Road*
16. Ronnie McDowell *In a New York Minute*
17. Ed Bruce *When Givin' Up Was Easy*
18. Steve Wariner *Heart Trouble*
19. The Statler Brothers *Hello Mary Lou*
20. Louise Mandrell *Maybe My Baby*
21. Eddy Raven *Operator, Operator*
22. Mark Gray & Tommy Wynette *Sometimes When We Touch*
23. Earl Thoms Conley *Love Don't Care*
24. John Schneider *It's a Short Walk From Heaven to Hell*
25. John Conlee *Working Man*

Albums

1. Alabama *40 Hour Week*
2. Sawyer Brown *Sawyer Brown*
3. Ray Charles *Friendship*
4. The Judds *Why Not Me*
5. Mel McDaniel *Let It Roll*
6. Anne Murray *Heart Over Mind*
7. Willie Nelson *Me and Paul*
8. Emmylou Harris *The Ballad of Sally Rose*
9. Dolly Parton *Real Love*
10. Ricky Skaggs *Country Boy*
11. The Oak Ridge Boys *Step On Out*
12. Conway Twitty *Don't Call Him a Cowboy*
13. George Strait *George Strait's Greatest Hits*
14. George Strait *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*
15. Exile *Kentucky Hearts*
16. Earl Thomas Conley *Treadin' Water*
17. Crystal Gayle *Nobody Wants To Be Alone*
18. Kenny Rogers *Love Is What We Make It*
19. Sylvia *One Step Closer*
20. Reba McEntire *My Kind of Country*
21. Hank Williams, Jr. *Five-O*
22. Lee Greenwood *Greatest Hits*
23. John Conlee *Blue Highway*
24. Ray Stevens *He Thinks He's Ray Stevens*
25. The Statler Brothers *Partners In Rhyme*

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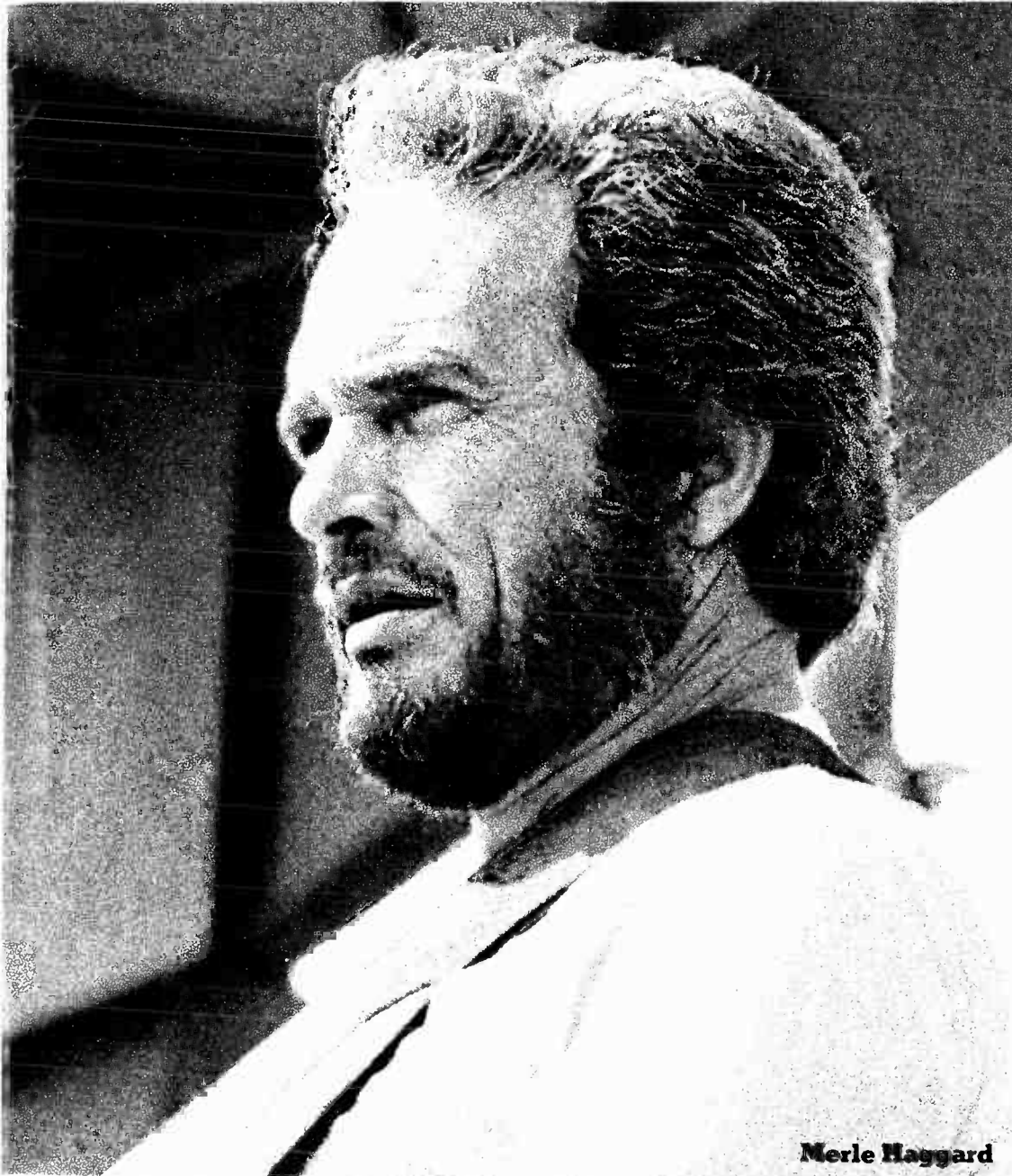
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