

MARCH/APRIL 1988

\$2.50

# COUNTRY MUSIC™



## RANDY TRAVIS

Country Superboy Gets A Workout

---

TAMMY WYNETTE  
Feelin' Good

---

DON WILLIAMS  
Back Again

---

CHRIS HILLMAN  
And Desert Rose

Plus:  
Straight Talk From  
RAY PRICE

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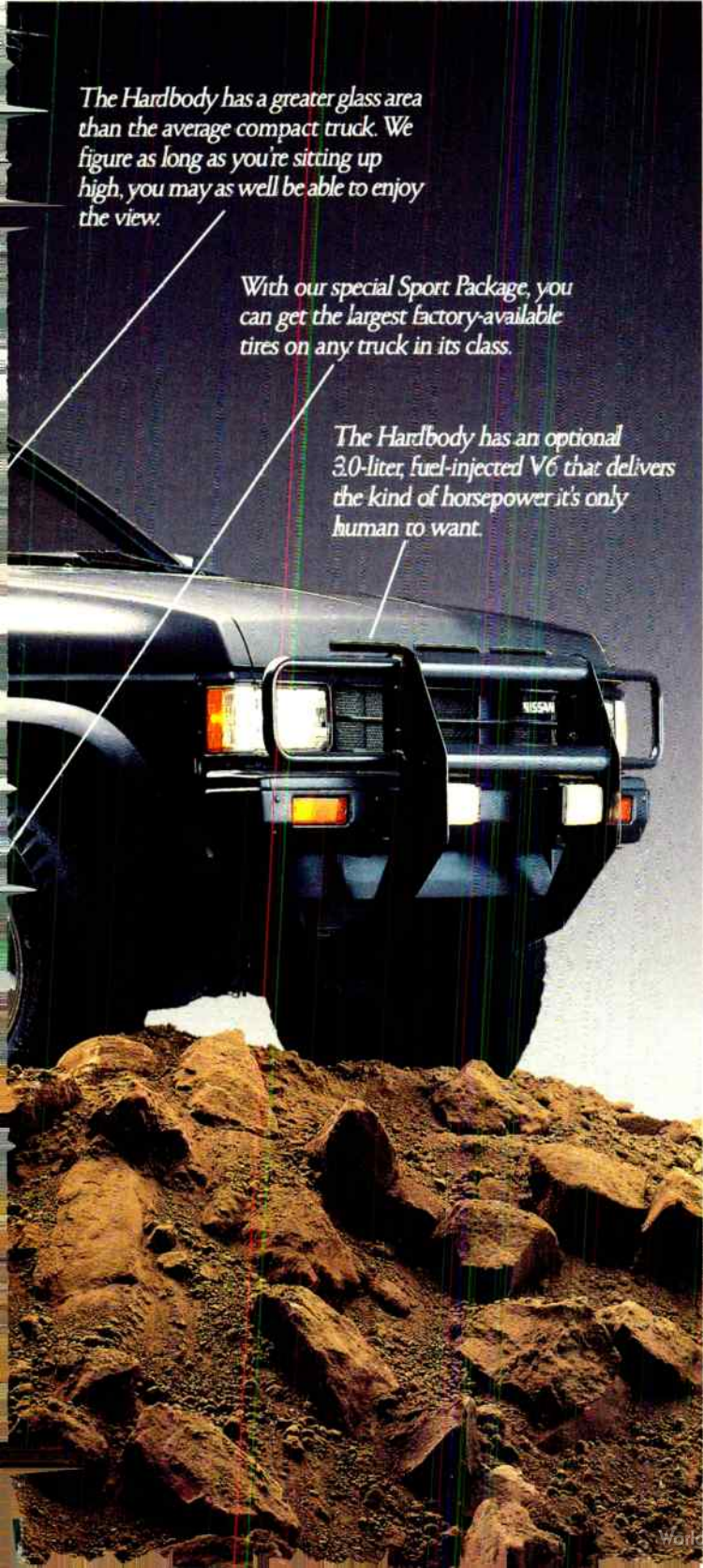
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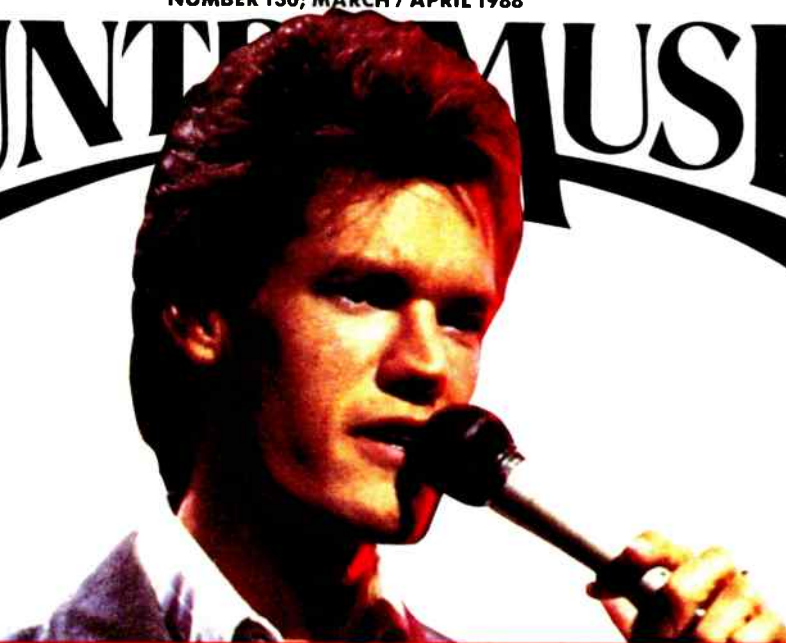
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NUMBER 130; MARCH / APRIL 1988

# COUNTRY MUSIC™



## 7 Letters

Reactions to Waylon and Wariner, outrage over Emmylou Harris review, Little Miss Rita Faye found, more about Minnie Pearl's poem and Eastern European mail.

## 21 People

Ricky Skaggs is honored, Rosanne Cash debuts, Milsap goes home. The Judds and Alabama help Vietnam vets and stars help a local team. Plus, an update on Stonewall Jackson and words from performer Minnie Pearl and songwriter Paul Overstreet.

*by Hazel Smith*

## 32 20 Questions with Ray Price

Well, Ray found us, and he was glad to have a chance to give us some straight talk about his experiences in the music business.

*by Michael Bane*

## 34 Randy Travis: Hard Country

This year's runaway winner in all categories is Randy Travis. You'd think it would all go to his head, but this superboy is handling his success the country way—with modesty and hard work.

*by Michael Bane*

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In the business for over 30 years, Don knows what he will and will not do. One thing remains constant—it's the song that counts.

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*by Patrick Carr*

## 52 Chris Hillman & The Desert Rose Band

Don't ask Chris Hillman about the past. He'd rather concentrate on The Desert Rose Band, a group he is sharing success with in today's country music.

*by Patrick Carr*

## 57 Record Reviews

Merle Haggard's chilling, Bob Wills is still fiddling and George Jones is still wild. Plus, newest releases from Patty Loveless, Dolly Parton, Vern Gosdin and more.

## 74 Buried Treasures

Rich uncovers some of yesterday's landmarks, spruced up and fit for today. Among them, 1927's Bristol Sessions, 1950's Tommy Collins, 1960's Dolly Parton and much more.

*by Rich Kienzle*

Cover Photo: *Bill Bernstein*

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So, swing by your favorite record store in May. And you just might hit it big.



George Strait



Conway Twitty



Steve Wariner



Don Williams



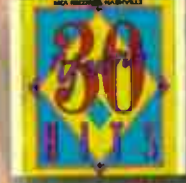
Skip Ewing



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# Letters

## Waylon's a Legend

I'd just arrived back from Boston where we'd driven eight hours from Delaware to see Waylon Jennings in his one man show entitled *A Man Called Hoss* when I opened my issue of *Country Music Magazine* to find his terrific picture on the cover! Thanks so much for featuring a fantastic article with so many marvelous photographs of the man who's a legend to me.

His performance in Boston at the Nightstage was a once in a lifetime experience for me. To hear Waylon and Jessi sing together and look as fantastic as they appeared, I could never imagine the troubled years of the past. His remarkable "audio-biography" is a must for every true Waylon fan and will surely convert others to become one! I only wish I could have been there with Michael Bane to interview Waylon!

Perhaps someday Waylon will permit me to begin a fan club for him. I have written to everyone imaginable to join his fan club but cannot understand why there isn't one. How 'bout it, Hoss? I (and many others) think it's about time.

Thanks again for the marvelous article on Waylon. His biggest fan in Delaware was thrilled!

Vivian T. House  
Camden, Delaware

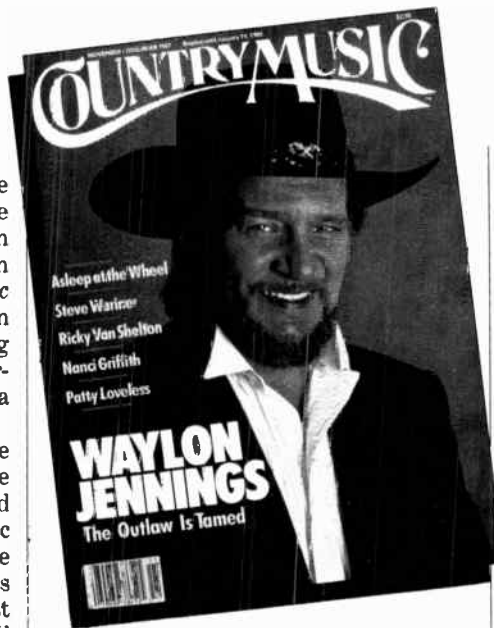
## Waylon the Greatest

I would like to give Michael Bane a real big thank you for the article on Waylon Jennings in the November/December issue. I really loved the cover photo and especially the one of Waylon "standing tall."

I've been a big fan of Waylon's for about 13 years now. I started listening to him when I was 9 years old, and I've loved him ever since.

When I was in school I had to put up with a lot of people talking about me and calling me a nerd because I listened to country music and not rock. But I didn't let it bother me because I knew what I believed in and what I liked.

My parents once drove me from a very small town in Alabama all the way to Mississippi in one day just to see Waylon in concert. It was my first time seeing him, and it took all my parents could



do to keep me in my seat.

I have over 30 records and tapes of Waylon, and I wouldn't give nothing in this world for them. I also have a scrap book of Waylon that I started many years ago. I have all kinds of things in it that I've collected over the years, such as a lot of articles from *Country Music Magazine*, a dollar bill with Waylon's picture on it, an autograph from his truck driver, Tommy Peavy, and many pictures that I took at concerts.

My all-time favorite song of Waylon's is "Dreaming My Dreams." I think he has a wonderful voice, and there is no one else like him—he's one of a kind! I also like his new album, *A Man Called Hoss*, it's really, really good.

I wish nothing but the best for Waylon for years to come. He may think he's getting old, but not to me. He'll always be the greatest, and I think he's one heck of a good-looking man! Keep up the good work, Waylon, I love you.

Cindy Barganier  
Fort Deposit, Alabama

## Country Radio Needs a Shot of Tradition

The new traditionalist movement in country music is a wonderful thing, but when is it going to reach country music radio?

One tunes to a so-called country station hoping to hear a lot of these great new sounds, but still has to sit through acres of pseudo-country "broad demo-

graphics" stuff before hearing anything by Randy, Dwight, Holly, Nanci or The O'Kanes.

Aren't these hotshots who make out the computerized playlists getting the message? Or are they trying to ignore or fight that message? I'm getting paranoid enough to think there is a mandated formula to keep the number of *real* country records played on a contemporary country station down to a specified, small percentage. They probably have signs hanging on the wall that say "stamp out creeping traditionalism."

These guys are still living in the Urban Cowboy era, chasing the fickle trendies, and in the process, spooking away us real country music people. But these days, we've got tapes. We don't have to put up with the glop that's on the airwaves most of the time. I only listen to radio a fraction as much as I used to. I only listen often enough to get ticked off to the extent that I write letters like this.

Jerry Barney

Fergus Falls, Minnesota

*The CMSA Newsletter is currently running a two-part section on traditional—and not so traditional—country music on the radio. Copies of the January/February 1988 and March/April 1988 issues available in this office for \$1.50 each.—Ed.*

## Covering the Fringe

A suggestion for your magazine (which is pretty good already)—how 'bout doing an article every once in a while concerning some of the groups on the "fringe" of country music—groups like: The Long Ryders, The Beat Farmers, 10,000 Maniacs and The Hooters.

Those are ones I personally enjoy—there are others like Jason and the Scorchers, and Green on Red, which I don't particularly enjoy, but someone else might. Groups like The Long Ryders who try to keep the Gram Parsons legend, image, etc. alive in their music deserve a mention once in a while. I know a lot of "regular" country fans might not buy their stuff but a lot of us who are country music fans like these groups along with the greats like Emmylou, Reba, Rosanne Cash, Guy Clark, etc. Even Los Lobos and the

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Cruzados could deserve a mention.

I know a couple of your reviewers are in love with Maria McKee (that is until Paulette Carlson came along), and Lone Justice fits in with the aforementioned groups (their first album, not their second).

Terry Kline  
Bowling Green, Ohio



Steve Wariner hits it at Summerfest.

### Steve Wariner Untouched by Stardom

I just want to thank Patrick Carr for the wonderful article he did on Steve Wariner in the November/December issue. And also I'd like to thank Christopher Wright for the beautiful pictures of Steve that I've never seen before.

Last summer I was lucky enough to get to see Steve in concert at the Mid-America Summerfest in Enid, Oklahoma, and lucky enough to meet him afterwards. What a nice guy! So untouched by stardom. He's terrific.

Steve and the Mandrells are the reason I subscribe to your wonderful magazine. Keep up the good work.

Lisa Trickey  
Alva, Oklahoma

### Never On an Ego Trip

Anyone who has ever met Steve Wariner will know that everything Patrick Carr's article says about him and the rest of the guys is true. Steve is the most terrific, down to earth, nicest guy I've ever met. Never on an ego trip, never thinks he's better than his fans. Same goes for Terry Wariner and T.K.

I've had the pleasure of seeing Steve in concert three times and meeting and talking with him after each concert. I've watched him stand in our hot southern sun and sign autographs, pose for

### Correction:

In the November/December 1987 issue, we referred to the writer of "Cold November Wind," from Willie Nelson's *Island in the Sea* album, as Paul Horne. The name of the writer is Phyllis Horne. Phyllis' dad, Charles Horne, set us straight on this. We thank him.

# COUNTRY MUSIC

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photos, and talk to each and every fan in the long lines and never act as if he were too tired or too big to meet each one, after he'd put on one more great show! He also remembers his fans who have come back more than once to see him.

Jo Ann Barnes  
Norris, South Carolina

**Irate Subscriber Wants to Quit**

I regret having to write this letter. I enjoy the *Country Music Magazine* very much, and always look forward to receiving the next issue. That is why I extended my subscription previously, to April 1989.

However, recently I started receiving invoices for "Amount Due—\$9.97." I am now in receipt of "3rd notice." This states: "Payment Past Due." It goes on to insinuate that since my account is over 60 days past due, you are going to stop sending *Country Music Magazine*, revoke my other CMSA benefits, and damage my credit rating. Not only is this a blatant attempt to intimidate, but I believe it is illegal. I'm going to have this checked out.

In summary, as much as I enjoy your magazine, I find it impossible to send funds to such an obviously crooked parasite as yourself. When my subscription expires in April 1989, I will have to look elsewhere for a good country music magazine.

Edward E. Arnold  
Owego, New York

P.S. Bet you don't print this letter.

*When this happens, and it does sometimes, unfortunately, here's what to do: write "Paid" across the front of the bill, enclose a xerox of your cancelled check (front and back), mail it to Marion, Ohio, and sit back and relax.—Ed.*

**Don't Give Me No Cowpunk Junk**

One of my U.S. friends was so kind to send me a copy of the September/October 1987 issue of your fantastic magazine and I decided to write to you and let you know there are some readers of it and country music friends in this part of the world too. It is not easy to be a C/W fan over here, as we have no country music records, cassettes, videos, magazine, etc., and I am not allowed to send any money abroad to order them.

I have about 100 albums and a few singles. I am male, 45, married, a teacher of German and an ardent country and western fan since 1962. Some of my special favorites are: Marty Robbins, Elvis, Ray Price, Don Gibson, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Snow, Randy Travis, George Strait, Johnny Horton, Patsy Cline, The Whites, Ricky Skaggs, Porter Wagoner, Connie Smith and many, many more. It is great country music, I mean real country music—hate that cowpunk junk! Is back to the coun-

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try roots and tradition. I love those great honky tonk songs of Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam and George Strait. Wish them success. To hell with Alabama, Exile, etc.

I wish I could subscribe to your fantastic and informative magazine, full of great articles and pictures. I have a few back copies and I treasure them so much.

Wish you and your staff good luck and success and prosperity. God bless and protect you and America. Love America, Americans and Country Music. Keep it country and a great work!

Miroslaw Desperak  
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P.S. Please print my full name and address as I would like to hear from some American country music lovers. I promise to answer all letters I get. Thanks a million for your kindness.

*We also have letters this month from Liberec and Prague, Czechoslovakia. Watch these pages.—Ed.*



**Stormey Robinson is part Indian and all country, says her grandma.**

**Stormey Robinson Storms Hollywood**

Finally got around to letting you know the results of Stormey's wonderful trip to Hollywood that I wrote you about in the November/December issue. She did not place, but we saw the video on the talent competition, and other than being real nervous she did sing very nice and also looked like a little star on TV.

I'm sure she plans on going back next year. The songs that she is now working on are "Grandpa" and "God Bless the U.S.A."

Since all my relatives saw the letter I wrote in the November/December 1987 issue, I think you may have quite a few more people buying the magazine.

Hansa Faye Burns  
Lame Deer, Montana  
*Thanks for the update and bravo, Stormey. A descendent of the Alaskan Tlinget tribe who lives in Imperial Beach, California, wrote in to support your granddaughter.—Ed.*



**David Kerber and Reba McEntire—Reba's holding David's drawing.**

**Reba McEntire Weakens Knees**

Hello! My name is David Kerber. I'm 19 years old and one of the biggest Reba McEntire fans in the state of Washington. On the evening of September 24th, 1987, Reba came to the Puyallup Fair to put on a performance. After a truly wonderful show, I had the opportunity to go backstage and meet Reba personally. I was so excited I could hardly speak.

I gave her a picture I had drawn of her (which she really liked). Afterwards she posed with me and signed her autograph. Before I left, she gave me a kiss on the cheek. I thought I would faint.

A week later I received a personal thank you card to thank me for the picture I had drawn of her.

Reba is truly one of the nicest people I've ever met and in my opinion—the Queen of Country Music.

David Kerber  
Mt. Vernon, Washington  
*Oops, not more Queen talk! We're in trouble now.—Ed.*

**Fan Fumes Over Hank Jr. Review**

I'm writing in response to John Morthland's review of Hank Williams Jr.'s *Born to Boogie* album in the November/December 1987 issue. The more I read, the more I became very disgusted with this man. Obviously, John Morthland is not a Hank Jr. fan—it shows.

*Born to Boogie* is a fantastic album that shows not only Hank's abilities as a singer/songwriter, but also the talent of the Bama Band. All the songs are terrific, none are "fillers," "pointless" or "faintly amusing." I have seen these songs performed in concert, and fans don't stand, holler and cheer for nothing!

You sure did misjudge this one—Michael Bane, where were you?

Julie A. Gocal  
Union City, Pennsylvania

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**Earl Thomas Conley  
Loses His Boots**

I had the great pleasure of seeing Earl Thomas Conley at the Virginia/Kentucky District fair in Wise, Virginia. He was absolutely great. I could have stayed all night. Some young lady found her way on stage and talked him out of his boots. I've seen several country stars before, but it's the first time I ever saw one give up his boots. You can't beat that, so three cheers for Earl. I hope I can catch his performance again sometime.

Also, Jeanne Pruett is one of my favorite singers. But I hardly ever hear her anymore. Her "Satin Sheets" is one of my favorite songs, but every one she ever did was great. Has there been anything new from her lately that I may have missed? Do you have an address where I might reach her?

Jean F. Baugh  
Wise, Virginia

Fans can write Jeanne Pruett in care of her fan club, Rt. 1, Box 401, Clinton, Louisiana 70722.—Ed.

**Bravo Emmylou's Angel Band**

What a horrible review Rich Kienzle gave Emmylou on her newest album, *Angel Band*, in the November/December issue. I've been waiting for this



**Emmylou Harris, caught here at Wembley, England, by Mike Farrell, gets Denise Farrell's vote on her new album.**

masterpiece ever since Gram and Emmy recorded "The Angels Rejoiced Last Night."

Our local newspaper, *the Virginian-Pilot/Ledger Star*, gave *Angel Band* a terrific review. It starts out like this: "I have a friend who used to drive a truck, and he insists that Emmylou Harris kept him in tears through the night. He would have never been able to keep on the road with 'Angel Band.'" It goes on to say, "Harris is at her plaintive vocal best, and the straight acoustic instrumentation tears at the soul. Before traditional music became all the rage in Nashville, Harris was setting the standard for excellence. She continues to push for higher levels of achievement that even the veterans are hard pressed to attain."

When I listen to the beautiful "When He Calls" by Paul Kennerly, there is

almost a yearning to leave this old earth just to see the face of our Sweet Jesus. It amazes me how such talented people can put into words what so many of us feel but are unable to express. God gifted Emmylou with a most precious gift, her beautiful voice. To hear her sing praises to her master is not only highly emotional but truly moving. Most of the songs do run right into the following songs, but I find that necessary in order to maintain that same spiritual mood throughout the entire album. Not all albums have to have a balance of uptempo music and ballads to make them a success.

I do, however, agree with Rich Kienzle when he says he loves and respects what Emmylou had in mind. My only difference of opinion is that I think she succeeded.

Maybe Rich should work for *Rolling Stone*. I'm sure he'll find lots of "uptempo music" and very few "dirges."

Denise Farrell  
Norfolk, Virginia

**Little Miss Rita Faye Found**

In response to the letter about Little Rita Faye's whereabouts in the November/December issue, perhaps I can help.

Rita Faye finished high school in

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Nashville, Tennessee. She met and married Earl Sinks (Richards) of Amarillo, Texas, a very talented songwriter, performer, actor. They now live in Springfield, Tennessee. They have two children (one boy, one girl) and one lovely grandson. Rita Faye has been busy making a home and being a mother since her "early retirement" from show business. She's a member of the Baptist Church and quite involved and active with her church work.

Rita Faye also tries to help her mom look after her dad who had to retire from show business as well. Your readers will, no doubt, remember Rita Faye's mom and dad as the country duet, "Smiley and Kitty" (Wilson). I know Rita Faye pretty well...since she is my granddaughter!

Mrs. C.R. (Mom) Johnson  
Marietta, Georgia

Thanks for this update.—Ed.

### This VIP Met Mickey Gilley

This made the happiest birthday yet! We went to see Mickey Gilley and Tanya Tucker at the Rockford Speedway. Mickey's concert was rained out, but after seeing him at a VIP party, I didn't care.

It was a case of being in the wrong place at the right time! We didn't know



Mary Lea Hamilton and Mickey Gilley on Mary Lea's birthday last June.

it was a VIP party. Soon after we took the picture, we left.

Mary Lea Hamilton  
Janesville, Wisconsin

### "Whatever Happened to Wanda Jackson..."

I thoroughly enjoy reading your magazine. I think it's just great about all the country stars you write about. If you ask me who I like, I would go on all day long and name you stars. Yes, I do like Dolly Parton. I think she is just great. I like watching her show. Also, Randy Travis. I saw him in person back in

August 1987. Randy broke a record at this family park. All I have to say is keep up the great work.

One other thing, whatever happened to Wanda Jackson?

Bob Selheimer  
Marydel, Delaware

### ...and Charlie McCoy?"

Can you please tell me whatever happened to Charlie McCoy? He sure could play a harmonica. I loved his music, but I can't find any of his records. Could you please help me out?

Jenny Morris  
Milton, Louisiana

### Anyone Out There Remember Jerry Wallace?

I haven't been able to get any of his old records through the local records shops, and I know I'm not an old fossil who is the only one interested—I'm 42!

Ralph Emery did say he thought he was living in California now. I asked him on the call-in segment of his show.

My daughter says it's time again to do a Randy Owens article. She lives and breathes Alabama. Her room looks like a shrine.

Charleston, South Carolina  
Readers with info on Jerry Wallace, come in, please.—Ed.

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### Thanks for Info on Kyle Lehning

I look forward to each issue of *Country Music Magazine* so I can read the People section. Hazel, I really enjoy the way you pack so much info into your column.

I am a friend of producer Kyle Lehning, whom you mention frequently. He and I grew up together in church and school, and we are really proud of him back here in Cairo, Illinois.

Lynn Simmons  
Cairo, Illinois

*Hazel knows the men and women behind the music as well as the stars. See her interview with Paul Overstreet in People in this issue.—Ed.*

### Update on Norma Jean

Remember "Pretty Miss Norma Jean," as Porter Wagoner so fondly calls her? Sure you do!

Anyway, I recently attended her concert here in Central Florida. Believe me she is still as pretty as ever and a great singer. Between songs, she made quite a few nice comments on her eight years working on Porter's long-running TV show. Seems they are still friends after all these years.

What a nice lady! If anyone deserves another shot at fame, she does.

Thanks, *Country Music Magazine*, for such great stories. I enjoy each and every one.

Flo Kellogg  
Ocala, Florida

### The Disgrace of Graceland

I first saw Elvis Presley many years ago at *The Louisiana Hayride*. That was the beginning. To me he is still not only King of Rock 'n Roll but of gospel and country. I am now married with two married children and one grandson.

My husband and I took a couple of days off and made a wish of mine come true. We went to Memphis and Graceland. Unless you are a true Elvis fan, you would never understand how I felt driving down Elvis Presley Blvd. But quickly the thrill of being where Elvis had been was replaced by a sad disappointment at the way Graceland and Elvis were being treated. Is his memory no longer being cherished by the two women he loved so dearly but left behind? It's hard for me to put into words, but it was the little things I noticed.

His clothes and shoes were covered with dust while expensive jewelry was in a glass case. Aren't his clothes just as important? After all, there will be no more worn by him. The rhinestones on his favorite jumpsuit were not shining, and the suit needed to be cleaned. His

## OUR FIRST 15 YEARS

### 15th Anniversary Letters

*Stars congratulate him, readers suggest improvements, Russ Barnard keeps reading on. Herewith our continuation of this special mail. Watch upcoming issues for more.*



### Greetings from Stars

I want to convey my heartfelt congratulations to you, Russ, and to all the men and women associated with making *Country Music Magazine* one of the best magazines in publication. The fact that you have been around for 15 years says it all. I was honored to be chosen by the Editors of *Country Music Magazine* as one of its top 15 artists during its anniversary celebration.

I heartily recommend your magazine to all my friends and associates. They couldn't find a more entertaining or informative publication in the country music field.

Keep up the good work, and thanks again.

Hank Williams Jr.  
Paris, Tennessee

Congratulations on your 15th Anniversary! I could not let an occasion like this go by without writing to express my gratitude to your magazine for all the support it has given to the country music industry.

I have been very pleased with the articles your writers have published on my music.

Keep up the good work!

Earl Thomas Conley  
Nashville, Tennessee

### More Cover Talk

I've just finished reading and looking at your "Special 15th Anniversary Issue." You could have had more—like why not a special pull-out section showing all the covers from September 1972 (Johnny Cash) through September/October 1987 (Johnny Cash looking at that first issue). And the same size as those on pages 34-35 (14 covers shown). They would have been 5 pages plus at that size (or 6 pages with notes). You could have them all on one 6-page pull-out side and on the other 6-page side either full-page (or 12 half-page) portraits by Leonard Kamsler or album ads, thank yous, etc., by the artists to pay for the "spread."

And as someone else suggested, how about a poster? With covers the size of ones on page 54 of the September/October 1987 issue, the poster would be 3' x 2'.

Another thing I have wondered about is that since you publish only six times a year, your Top 25 Country Singles and Albums don't show some that reach the Top 25 between one issue and the next. Example: The Top 25 listed in the July/August issue compiled during the last week(s) of August 1987 would leave out those who reached the Top 25 during the last week(s) of July 1987.

John Payne Profitt  
Amherst, Virginia

*Some of you readers should really be publishers. Thanks for all these ideas. I will consider them. We are watching the*

*Top 25's currently to see if, in fact, albums do get missed.—R.D.B.*

### How About Listing Some of Those Who Have Passed On?

Hey, here's an idea for you'ins to consider.

I note in looking over the September/October 1987 issue that there are items mentioning the late Merle Travis, Jack Anglin, Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Nolan, D. Wilburn, Jim Reeves, Lefty Frizzell, Stringbean, Red Sovine, the late Carters and perhaps others. Why not prepare an article listing the late stars, listing dates of death and other important details? A two-page story with these details quite likely would be received by your readers with interest as we forget the dates of these great individuals' deaths, etc.

My daughter gets your magazine, and I find it very fascinating as I've allus been a fan of the Grand Ole Opry, since way on back in 1930 when my late parents bought a Silvertone radio from Sears and Roebuck on the Time-Payment Plan for a total of \$72.50, plus about \$8 carrying-charge. That was a gigantic sum of money during those prehistoric decades—as dear Grandpa Jones likely would 'pine.

I'd like to see articles about Grandpa Jones and his tribe. I've passed through Mountain View but failed to see any signs pointing to his location.

H.E. Harvey  
Clarksville, Arkansas

*Gone But Not Forgotten...this might work. Let me think about it. We do want to do something standard about current obits, like Kenny Price this summer or, more recently, Molly O'Day. Watch the People section.—R.D.B.*

home was in need of "Loving Care." Surely the carpet his fans walk on could be cleaned or replaced. Also the stereo given to him needed waxing and dusting. I think the key to it is "Love." The young people guiding were speaking in such a flat monotone, with absolutely no affection, much less love shown for the man they were speaking about.

I ask Lisa and Priscilla to take time out from their busy lives to check into the matter. Lead your own lives, don't be trapped in the past, but please take time to be sure Elvis' memory will not be tarnished by the tasteless souvenirs sold across the street from his home. See to it that these shops are kept neat but his home neater. One way to do this would be to find someone who loved Elvis and his music to conduct the tours. (No, I do not want the job.)

Elvis was born and raised a country boy. One who loved his home, family and friends. Please let Graceland reflect these feelings. After all, when you love—it shows. If you don't believe me, listen to Elvis' music. *That's love.* Those of us left behind have a duty to see to it that his memory is loved and remembered. After all, what would our music be without the influence of "Hound Dog" or "Love Me Tender"?

Barbara Riddle  
Queen City, Texas

### Oscar Loves Mary—More on Minnie Pearl's Poem

*A bell's not a bell till you ring it.  
A song's not a song till you sing it.  
And love in your heart wasn't  
put there to stay,  
Love isn't love till you give it away.*

I can't tell you how many years ago, I saw a program on TV about Mary Martin and her home in Australia, Venezuela or some place like that. In it she told about having done a show and after the show Oscar Hammerstein gave her a crumpled piece of paper and said, "Read it later." The next day Hammerstein died. When she remembered the paper, it was the poem above. It's been a long time ago, but I've loved that poem.

Part of the words are used in "Sixteen Going on Seventeen," I believe. I even quoted it to my girls and grandchildren.

Dora E. Beeley  
Eugene, Oregon

*Thanks, again, to all who wrote in. Many did, including one journalist in Georgia who called. The Reader's Digest was a source of this story for many (details vary). If you have the Broadway cast album of Sound of Music, listen for the poem as the lead-in to the song.—Ed.*

### Progress and Cowboys

I've been a subscriber to *Country Music Magazine* a year now and would like to congratulate you on a very good

publication. I enjoy the articles about country artists very much and the way they are written. None of that rag sheet gossip and dirt digging. Yet the interviews and profiles seem honest and straightforward.

How about a behind-the-scenes, technical article once in a while on the making of records, new advancements in technology, sound systems, etc.—though I don't mean to turn your magazine into a technical manual since music and music makers is what you're all about.

Speaking of progress—I used to enjoy most of the old cowboy songs we don't hear anymore. I know they are out-of-date as far as today's market is concerned, but I still miss them. I wrote a present-day cowboy's lament that I would like to dedicate to all the cowboys who find themselves shoved aside by progress.

Vern Dailey  
Wills Point, Texas

#### *Nobody Needs a Cowboy Anymore*

*His old worn saddle is gathering dust  
hanging on the bunkhouse wall.  
His ungroomed horse is growing lame  
Just waiting in the stall.  
A ten-gallon hat and leather chaps  
are hangin' on a chair  
by a pair of wrinkled cowboy boots  
he no longer needs to wear.*

*He sits all alone in the bunkhouse  
remembering yesterday,  
and wonderin' how an old cowpoke  
like him can earn his pay.  
He never had much schooling,  
he has no framed degrees,  
the only thing he's good at  
takes a horse between his knees.*

*Nobody needs a cowboy anymore,  
the world has changed,  
it's not the same as it was before.  
With four-wheel drives and whirlybirds  
out on the range tendin' herds,  
nobody needs a cowboy anymore.*

*His woman left some time ago  
with a man on eighteen wheels.  
His spirit's at an all-time low,  
how useless now he feels.  
Time has changed the world he knew  
and the life that he loved best.  
He's just a shadow of the past,  
a relic of the west.*

*So he put on his chaps and boots  
and took his saddle from the wall,  
he put on his old ten-gallon hat  
and ambled toward the stall.  
He saddled up his faithful horse  
and slowly rode away  
into the prairie sunset  
to search for yesterday.*

*Nobody needs a cowboy anymore  
The world has changed,  
it's not the same as it was before.  
With four-wheel drives and whirlybirds  
out on the range tendin' herds,  
nobody needs a cowboy anymore. —V.D.*

### Reader Bites Foot and Smiles

I just finished reading the November/December 1987 issue, and I've got a gripe for all the "faithful readers" who read the magazine from cover to cover. They compliment an article in the last issue, then ask for an article on someone who has been in a recent issue. They need to refresh their memories by re-reading the back issues. *Never satisfied, amen.*

I enjoyed the article on Asleep at the Wheel. I have all their albums but one, and I'll find it somewhere. I'm a Number One country music fan but I like the Western swing, boogie, pop, rock and blues you find on their albums and on Hank Jr's., Willie's, George Strait's, etc.

The poem by Jimmy Leon Swain, "The Farmer, His old Gray Mule and Plow" was fantastic. Sounds like a Hag hit to me. I hope he sees it.

I also disagree with about 50% of the Record Reviews. Some of them folks better come on down south and see what's cookin' 'sides ham hocks and pinto beans.

P. Pew  
Atkins, Arkansas

P.S. Now I can open mouth and remove foot.

*At least it's your foot, not ours!—Ed.*

### Pay No Attention to Record Reviews

I am a charter subscriber who finds it quite hard to understand why some subscribers will cancel when they dislike a record review. The record reviews are a relatively small portion of the magazine and will not have any influence on the artists' popularity or record sales.

If I bought only the records that the reviewers liked, I would have a lot of records that I would never listen to. Those reviewers know what they like or dislike, and by the same token I know what I like and will buy.

As for me, I learned long ago to just skip over the review pages just as if they were not there. That way I do not get all riled up over something that don't amount to a hill of beans. I find it much better to read all the other articles and features that make *Country Music* the wonderful magazine it really is.

Dempsey Merritt  
Jacksonville, Florida  
*You're our kind of guy.—Ed.*

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*Send Letters to the Editor to Country Music Magazine, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters. Sorry we can't answer individual inquiries unless accompanied by SASE, and even then, we may not know the answer.*

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# LEE TAKES COMMAND

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 Lieutenant John H. Chamberlayne, Virginia Artillery. C.S.A.



**N**ot everyone cheered the selection of Robert E. Lee to command the army defending Richmond in 1862. Many thought him too cautious, too gentle. They called him "Granny Lee". But within three months the doubts were gone. Lee had driven the enemy from the doorstep of his capital to the doorstep of their own. The tide, it seemed, had turned. Spirits were high. And Lee had begun his rise as the great gentleman-hero of the Confederacy.

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# People

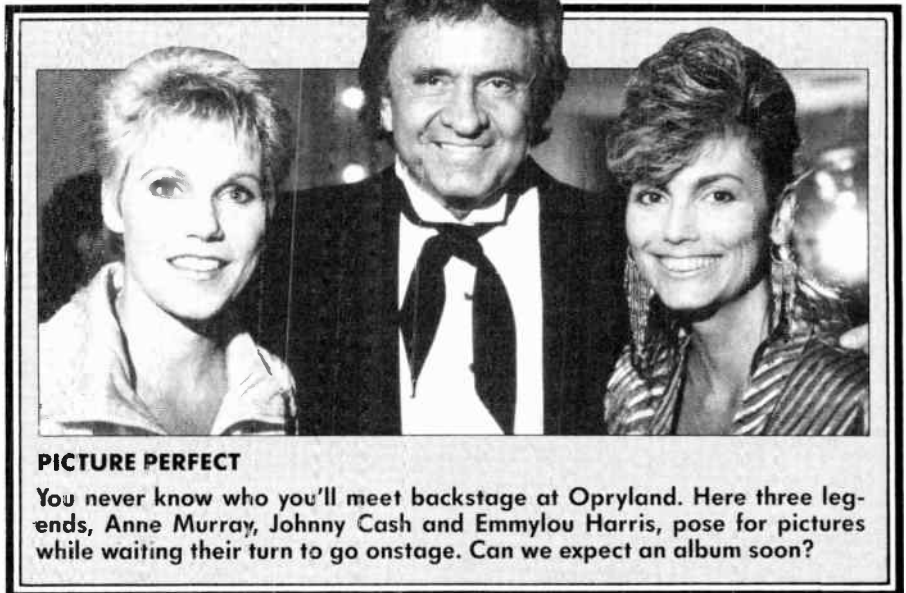
## MUSIC KNOWS NO BOUNDS

Those of you who know where the city of Bor u Tachova is located, please raise your hand. Hmmm. I see a sparse few in the entire U.S.A. Since I am Miss Geography 1988, I will tell you that it's in Czechoslovakia, between two other cities, Plzen and Rosvado. Why would I know this? Well, a gentleman by the name of Dvorak and others organized a musical festival there. Operating without the sanction of their own government, these lovers of music chose to honor our very own Ricky Skaggs. Not only did his fans in this Eastern Bloc nation pay homage to Skaggs, they included his personal history in the festival's program book. Skaggs acknowledged his gratitude by writing to the organizers of the festival.

No, music knows no bounds. Here we sit in Tennessee and around the country trying to figure out what is commercial and what will sell. There sit the Slavs wondering if they will be sent to hard labor for loving the wonderful music of Ricky Skaggs. I don't know about you, but this humbles the hillbilly in me. Thank God to be an American. Thank God also for the common denominator that bridges the gap between us. Music makes us one.

## GREASE UP AND BOOGIE DOWN

Who has to boogie down at least once a year? Who has to get all greased up in the 1950's look? Ronnie Milsap, that's who. Folks who haven't danced in 30 years rushed out in bobby socks, slicker hair and poodle skirts to greet the great Mr. M. at the annual "Lost in the 50's Homecoming" at the Nashville Armory. Sweating and singing like the Lord meant them to do, folks at Milsap's nostalgic night found it a smashing success just for the fun of it and also as a fundraiser for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences—which is what the dance was about in the first place. The 1950's were when a dollar's worth of gas took you there and back and then some. They were the years after



### PICTURE PERFECT

You never know who you'll meet backstage at Opryland. Here three legends, Anne Murray, Johnny Cash and Emmylou Harris, pose for pictures while waiting their turn to go onstage. Can we expect an album soon?

Hank Williams died, the years of penny loafers and Elvis. Milsap's faves. Two thousand others dug it, too!

## NEW GRASS GREAT

I don't know if they will ever have a Number One single or album on the country charts. But I do know they will sell consistently, and I know they have got the best show on the road. I'm talking about New Grass Revival. Sam Bush, Bela Fleck, John Cowan and Pat Flynn have got the fastest fingers in a city of pickers. Their current album on Capitol is *Hold On To a Dream*.

## STEVE POPOVICH, THE MAN WITH AN EAR FOR MUSIC AND NASHVILLE

Headmate for Polygram/Mercury, Steve Popovich, is a helluva nice fellow. I enjoyed meeting with him as much as with anyone I've ever met. He is in it for the music, and the money helps. With new changes, additions and movings around, I look for even bigger and better things for these folks. We sure can use another major-major label in this good town. And I do believe Popovich is about to birth one. I vote for him. Like the

Marines, I like a good landing. Think the big guy does too. My best to you, brother. If I can be of help...

## PAUL WORLEY IN LOS ANGELES FOR A MONTH WITH DESERT ROSE

Out producing the Los Angeles-based group, *Desert Rose*, Paul Worley told me how much he enjoyed working with those guys. All the bigtime producers tell me about their business!

## BRAGGIN' OR COMPLAININ' EARLE?

Was country/rocker Steve Earle braggin' or complainin' in a Los Angeles nightspot that wife Number Four had left him? Either way, I hope by now this is patched up. Their young baby would fare better with two parents. I don't think it's old fashioned to express my opinion on that subject.

## CONDOLENCES

Sympathy to Alan O'Bryant of the Nashville Bluegrass Band on the untimely death of his dad, Bennie O'Bryant of Reidsville, North Carolina.

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

# People

There's no finer folks on this planet than the O'Bryants. We will see you 'over yonder', Bennie. Probably not proper, but if I may, I'd like to also offer my personal congratulations to Alan on "Those Memories of You," a song he penned that ended up as a single on the *Trio* album by Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt. Hope you make a mint on it.

## CASH CELEBRATES SIGNING OF CONSTITUTION

Johnny Cash, June Carter and whatever family members could make it celebrated the signing of the American Constitution at their home. Each family member sounded their own bell. I've never had my own bell, but I've been accused of ringing my own bell from time to time. Especially when it comes to bragging about my cooking. By the way, Johnny and June rang a bell that

weighed 1,500 pounds. Wow! Looks like to me they would have needed a team of horses to ring that sucker.

## CLASSY CASH

Rosanne Cash debuted on the Grand Ole Opry with the Johnny Cash-penned



Accompanied by her husband Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash debuted on the Opry recently.

song "Tennessee Flat Top Box." Her hubby, producer Rodney Crowell, joined her for a "duet number." Did you know Rosanne wasn't even aware when she recorded the song that her dad had written it? It seems that it was Rodney's idea she record it. So Rodney took himself to the Country Music Foundation, where the lyrics for every song since water resides, and got the tape and words. Rosanne just assumed it was a song in the public domain. Not quite, Rosanne!

Laying all joshing aside, the Cash with the class is Rosanne. She is her own person. The *name* may have helped some, but I'd bet my farm and car that it hindered as much as it helped. Ask any second generationer (is that a word?).

## CDB FROM TENNESSEE

Big Charlie Daniels' 17th album is titled *Powder Keg*. The single "Bottom Line"



## Late 80's Stephen Foster— PAUL OVERSTREET

About 10 years ago, I met Paul Overstreet at the Metro Airport in Nashville. I watched through the airplane window as luggage handlers dropped, picked up and dropped, then threw down a Martin guitar case. When Paul picked his guitar up at the luggage counter, I told him what I had just witnessed. The airlines paid for that mistake, but the Martin lived to play many a hit written by Mr. Overstreet.

At the time he was an arrogant kid from Van Cleve, Mississippi. Now he's grown up, married and fathered two youngsters, Nash (named for Music City) and Summer. And he is no longer arrogant.

Paul's first recorded song was by Stella Parton, whom he is now producing. His first hit was "Same Ole Me" by George Jones. It was the title song of that album. This hit put Paul in the hillbilly songwriter showoff department. He bought a Porsche, developed a cocaine habit, and thank God, lost both. Regrouping and looking for his space and something solid, he drifted into a church.

He found faith in the Lord and soon after met his wife. And now he's secure and successful and the winner of more awards than he ever dreamed of. These include, Randy Travis' hit and CMA Song of the Year for 1986 "On the Other Hand," CMA Song of the Year for 1987 "Forever and Ever, Amen," Academy of Country Music Song of the Year for 1986 "On the Other Hand," *Music City News* Traditional Song of the Year 1986 "On the Other Hand," Nashville Songwriter Association Song of the Year 1986 "On the Other Hand," BMI's Songwriter of the Year 1987. His songs have also helped many a career. One example, The Forester Sisters with their hit, "I Fell in Love Again Last Night."

Recently Paul and I got together to reminisce and talk about his current successes.

Q: How do you feel about your wife Julie after three years of marriage?

A: She's the missing piece in my puzzle. My needed helpmate. I was so incomplete without her. Together we have found joy and happiness in the Lord. Julie and I are

locked in on it. We co-exist and help each other. She's her own person and I am mine, but we are as one going toward Jesus together. We benefit one another.

Q: Does she inspire the wonderful songs?

A: She and the Lord.

Q: Career? What's going on, Paul?

A: Couldn't be better. I've chosen songs for my solo album, hopefully to be released on MTM. They want it.

Q: Were there ill feelings when you announced that you no longer wanted to be a part of the highly popular group, SKO?

A: At the time, yes. There were some ruffled feathers. But that smoothed out with time. Now I know that they realize it was for the best. I knew it at the time. It just wasn't right for me to do. And when I came to this realization, I had to let them know.

Q: Let's talk further about the career.

A: Like I said, I've written and chosen the songs. Chose the album cover. I do want to tour some. Probably do some theater concerts. I feel, Hazel, that I can share what's happened in my life because of faith and encourage them toward the right. In a cozy, intimate atmosphere.

Q: What about your songs?

A: My songs have a religious flavor on purpose. I have to keep in mind a positive direction. I do this by dwelling on the good. You know, a body's first thoughts are negative. You have to discipline yourself to write positive. At least I do. You see commercials on TV where fathers tell sons negative things. They say the child can pick up and act out these negative things in life. So can an adult. If we talk bad or think bad, our subconscious will pick it up and eventually we become those things. I try and write toward things I'd like to happen. Try to lean away from negative energy. Some people are so negative. And you can get negative energy

# People

is also out as a video. The Charlie Daniels Band is sponsored on the road these days by Slim Jim Meat Snacks of Raleigh, North Carolina.

## WONDERS NEVER CEASE

Mickey Rooney came to town with his wife Number Twelve or more! This one, named Jan Rooney, wants to embark on a country music singing career. Lordy mercy, never in my time did I ever dream the star of Andy Hardy movies would bring his bride to Nashville and try to make a hillbilly singer out of her. I reckon that's show biz.

## I ASK FOR THE ROYAL TREATMENT, ALWAYS

Tongue in cheek, I refer to myself as queen, and it goes down from there. And always, I threaten to get "royal treatment." Guess what? The great Billy Joe



Ralph Emery welcomed Mickey Rooney and wife Jan to Nashville Now recently.

Royal's brand new Arista album is titled *The Royal Treatment*. The former rock 'n' roller done made himself at home here in hillbilly town. Welcome, Billy, and remember, a hillbilly friend is a lifetime

friend. Very clever title for a recording, I say. It is no secret what country music can do for a body's career. Ask Billy Joe. If I wanted to really cliché, I coulda titled this "Out of the Boon Docks."

from these people. There are some people that way that I have to pray just to be around them. Sometimes I don't want to see those people. So I have to pray myself up. And I feel I learn from this. Rather than shy away. Figure out what's the reason I can't be around those people and change myself instead of changing them.

**Q:** Paul, what would you change in the music business?

**A:** The frustration. Frustration of the business. The business of music takes the joy out of it. The big corporations don't know the joy. That causes me to react in a way that I don't like.

**Q:** Among your hits, what are your favorites?

**A:** "On the Other Hand" and "Long Line of Love." My unrecorded favorites are "So in Love" and "Richest Man on Earth"

**Q:** Do you miss anything in your current lifestyle?

**A:** I don't get home enough. I miss Van Cleve. And I graduated from high school at Prentiss High School in Mississippi. Folks are so good to me back home. I went with Paul Davis this year to the Jimmie Rodgers Memorial in May. They treated me just great. Meridian, Pascagoula and Biloxi, all those radio stations play songs I've written all the time. They play my gospel album. (*Paul wrote and produced a gospel album on his own that he sells at concerts or by mail.*)

**Q:** Who helped you as a songwriter?

**A:** Dolly. Dolly Parton was wonderful to me. She encouraged me. She is still one of my favorite writers and singers. You know, I didn't come to Nashville as a writer, I came as a singer. I married real young and divorced. (*Paul never reminded me, but I recalled that at 18 he had in fact married Dolly's youngest sister, Freda Parton. The marriage ended in divorce.*) People kept asking me if I could

write. Dolly was the first. What I realized was I could always write. I had the talent. I just lacked direction. The difference in then and now is I just take out more. I won't settle for less. I have something to say. Ideas come. Therefore I don't have to write through the bad stuff to get to the good.

**Q:** Early on you wrote with Shel Silverstein. Did that help?

**A:** Not really. Shel, as great as he is, comes from a different place from me.

**Q:** Besides Dolly, who are your favorite songwriters?

**A:** (*Laughs.*) I like your songwriting, Hazel. You know, me and you wrote a great song called "House for Sale!"

**Q:** Who else, Paul?

**A:** Kristofferson. Mac Davis.

**Q:** Favorite singers?

**A:** Julie. I love to hear her singing in the kitchen. Or to hear her singing Nash or Summer to sleep. There's nothing sweeter to me. Also I liked Brooke Benton, Sam Cooke, Johnny Horton. Do you remember "North to Alaska" that Johnny Horton recorded? Also, I like...my favorite singer is Matthew Ward.

**Q:** Matthew who?

**A:** Matthew Ward with the 2nd Chapter of Acts, a gospel group. I also like Amy Grant.

**Q:** Who is your favorite songwriter?

**A:** Thom Schuyler. Thom just kills me the way he writes.

**Q:** Paul, you co-write a lot. Who do you enjoy co-writing with?

**A:** Don Schlitz. I also enjoy writing with Paul Davis and Dean Dillon. Me and Dean have been writing some good stuff lately. Right after he got out of the Betty Ford Center. I ran into Dean and told him, 'I wanna be your friend!' Dean smiled, and in his East Tennessee drawl he said, 'I do have to change friends.'

**Q:** What else, Paul? You are wearing me out!

**A:** I'm working on a play called *Breaking Bread*. It's sort of a "Good Book Cook Book." Using scriptural passages, food will actually be prepared and served during the play. And when you reach the part in the play that refers to the food, why the audience will eat it.

**Q:** Wanna talk about anything else?

**A:** Yeah, I want to do more gospel records. And I want to record country records. Recording one and then the other would be ideal. Also, I am involved with a project where builders and lumber yards donate inferior or secondary materials. In turn this is sold to low-income builders. These builders train people to work who do not know how to work so they can become useful people. Once they are trained, they get a job and someone else comes in to learn to work. So many low-income people have found work through this project. I enjoy my work with these people.

Currently Paul's writing for his own company, Scarlet Moon Music. Even the company's name is taken from the Bible—the mention of the moon turning to blood inspired it. Paul asked that I also mention Taylor Dunn and Mike Bell, two young songwriters signed to Scarlet Moon.

Well, Paul, you've come a long way. I don't think you've hurt very many people on your way up. This is admirable. I know that you help a lot of people now. This is more admirable. You've found a formula that works for you. I respect that. Let me tell you one last thing, hillbilly; when you didn't have nothing, I loved you. I still do. And I am proud of you. But not half as proud as a little lady down in Mississippi named Mary Hatten. Your mama. I know her too, and I know she is just busting at the seams with pride!

—H.S.

# People

## THAT'S SOME BIG CHECK



And to a good cause it went. One stop on the Marlboro Country Music tour, a benefit concert featuring Alabama, The Judds and Bob Hope, raised over \$100,000 for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The Judds, Randy Owen of Alabama and Frank E. Resnik, President of Philip Morris, presented the check in that amount to Jan Scruggs of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The sum went to inscribe 24 new names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to help cover the expenses of the veterans' families while they were in Washington, D.C. That's Scruggs next to Naomi Judd.

## JESSI AND WAYLON IN SWEDEN

Mr. and Mrs. Waylon Jennings spent Thanksgiving in Sweden entertaining the fans. Now that they're back and it's a new season, we will be getting together soon. There's much we plan to do, simple things like move east, west, north and south and then go to lunch.

## NANCY ACTING, SINGING AND WRITING

Nancy Montgomery, who penned the hit song "Love Can't Ever Get Better Than This" with Irene Kelly for CMA duo winners Sharon White and Ricky Skaggs, guested on the miniseries *Windmills of the Gods* in an acting role. The multi-talented lady, married to producer Marshall Morgan, was in high cotton acting company with the likes of Robert Wagner and Jaelyn Smith. Nancy has some high and mighty plans and could very well see them through. More power to you, gal.

## JUDY RODMAN ON THE RISE

The talented Judy Rodman is opening shows for George Jones and T.G. Sheppard. I want your star to rise, darling. I got the above info from MTM's hot shot,

on-the-ball-herself Sandy Neese, who also allowed that CMA winner Holly Dunn played a week at Harrah's in Lake Tahoe with *The Oak Ridge Boys*. The talented Miss Dunn soon will open shows for *The Statler Brothers* and *Sawyer Brown*. The new kid on the MTM block is songwriter Ronnie Rogers.

## RODRIGUEZ SIGNS

Judy Newby called me all excited. The Capitol Records deal for her artist, *Johnny Rodriguez*, which had been rumored a while, is now signed, sealed and delivered. "I wanted to tell you first!" Judy said in a fervor. "Johnny is so happy. He is doing so good. I'm really proud of him!"



From left to right, Becky Hobbs, Tom T. Hall, Sandi Anders, Johnny Rodriguez and David Wills joined together to help out a local team.

## PRAYERS FOR DOROTHY RITTER

Dorothy Ritter suffered a stroke a few weeks back in Los Angeles. The widow of the late *Tex Ritter*, Dorothy moved to California to be near her son, actor *John Ritter*, and his brand new son. Prayers from all of Music City are sent to the lovely Mrs. Ritter—well-known and well-loved.

## MATTEA WALKS THE WAY I DO

Kathy Mattea and longtime steady *Jon Vezner* were wed on Valentine's Day. God bless you both.

## MIGHTY JIM MAKES A MOVE

The main offices of the Tulsa-based *Jim Halsey Company* have moved to Music City.

## MONTEREY TALENT OPENS WITH A HOWDY

*Bobby Cudd* and *Steve Dahl* are the headers-up for the Monterey Talent Agency, a new deal in town.

## HILLBILLY LUNCH

Was talking with my friend *Ricky Skaggs* on his cellular phone in his truck when he said to hold a minute. "Give me a Whopper with mayo and lettuce, large fries, onion rings and an order of chicken nuggets. Oh, and I'll have a diet Pepsi to drink." Yes, folks, that's what I overheard. My kind of diet, Skaggs!

## BIG STARS FOR LITTLE LEAGUE

*Becky Hobbs*, *Tom T. Hall*, *Sandi Anders*, *Johnny Rodriguez* and *David Wills* turned out to give a star-studded benefit for the Shoetiques Baseball Club, a local Little League baseball team in Franklin, Tennessee. Big stars with big hearts.



**S**arah Ophelia Colley Cannon turned 75 on October 25, 1987. Her alter ego, Minnie Pearl, is at 39 and holding. I've never become acquainted with Mrs. Cannon. But Minnie Pearl is a friend of mine. Following a double mastectomy last year, Mrs. Cannon is active in the American Cancer Society. Minnie Pearl knows nothing of society or disease. She lives a euphoric life in Grinder's Switch without gossip, heart-break, terrorism, illness or death. "She thinks everything will be all right," said Mrs. Cannon.

Recently the officers and trustees of the Country Music Foundation and *The Tennessean* presented the Roy Acuff Community Service Award to Mrs. Cannon (a/k/a Minnie Pearl) in a ceremony held at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Previous recipients of the Roy Acuff Award are Kenny Rogers in 1985 and Willie Nelson in 1986. Minnie's been involved with many outstanding organizations, including the American Heart Association, E.A.R. Foundation, Outlook Nashville, United Way, Big Brothers, March of Dimes, Children's Hospital, W. O. Smith Nashville Community Music School, Bill Wilkerson Speech and Hearing Center and the Nashville Humane Society. Because of her work with the American Cancer Society, President Reagan honored Minnie earlier in the year. I asked her to compare the two awards.

"There is no comparison," she stated. "No other award could ever transcend the Roy Acuff Award. This award is closer to my heart than anything ever bestowed upon me in my life. The fact that his name is on it means everything to me."

Minnie Pearl and the King of Country Music, Roy Acuff, became friends in 1941, the year she joined the Grand Ole Opry. Minnie has declared that Roy is the most important person in country music. He had a huge influence on her career.

As a timid Southern belle from Centerville, Tennessee, Sarah Colley came to town with Minnie Pearl in her heart. She'd created Minnie, but she'd never been on the air. She was inexperienced and frightened to act silly. "Never done stand-up," she allowed. "Afraid they'd laugh at me." After a silent moment she added, "I've never said that before. Back home I'd been the clown, the fall guy, and folks would laugh 'with me' not 'at me.'"

She went on the road opening shows for Acuff and The Smoky Mountain Boys. Late one night they stopped for a sandwich at an all-night "joint," as Minnie described it. Someone put a nickel in the jukebox. When it started playing, why Minnie just hopped up on the floor and started dancing.

When she sat down, Roy asked, "Minnie, why don't you do that on stage?"

"That? It's silly," she said.

Mr. Roy Acuff said, "Minnie, give 'em a show. They pay good money to get in. Give 'em a good show. You're a crazy ole gal. Get out there and show 'em."

"Don't know if I can," she answered.

"At the end of your act tomorrow night, tell the boys to play something and close



## A Diamond Called Pearl

your show with that dance.

The rest of the night and all the next day Minnie thought about what Roy had said. By showtime, she'd made up her mind to give it a "clog." Needless to say, the little clog along with the musical ditty by the band became one of Minnie Pearl's trademarks. Minnie describes it as a "blow-off," adding, "Everytime I close my show with that little blow-off, I remember Roy saying, 'Always give 'em a good show.' And when he introduces me on the Opry stage he always says, 'This little lady always gives 'em a good show.'"

"Last year after Roy's heart attack, he wasn't able to perform, but he was backstage at his dressing room during a matinee," Minnie continues. "I was performing and asked Roy if he'd allow me to just introduce him from the stage and he could do a walk on. Roy answered, 'Don't want to work till I can give 'em a good show.' He loves his fans so much. And he's such a godly man. From a good family up in East Tennessee. Kindest man you'd ever want to find. Down at the Old Ryman, I've seen someone walk up to Roy and tell him some pitiful tale, and Roy'd reach in his pocket and pull out a 50 dollar bill or a hundred and just give it to them. Many a time I've seen him do this."

Getting back to Minnie again, I mentioned that Minnie Pearl had matured. Not aged, but matured.

"I hadn't thought about that, Hazel," said Mrs. Cannon. "I think you're right, though. She was 29 when I first started with her."

"How old is she now?" I asked. "Thirty five?"

Mrs. Cannon liked that. She laughed and added, "She is 39. I say she's in her flirties."



Minnie says Roy Acuff is the most important person in country music.

"My age," I added. "Did Minnie Pearl ever come close to marriage?" I wondered.

"No. She had her boyfriend Hezzie. They'd sit in the swing out under the tree in the front yard. Or maybe they'll sit on the front door step and look at each other. Once in a great while Minnie would say to Hezzie--Hezzie, we ought to get married! And Hezzie would say, 'Who would have us?' Minnie lived right next to the church. They'd listen to choir practice. Many a night they'd just sit and listen to crickets chirping. Hezzie'd say, 'Nice sound ain't it. Them crickets make that sound by rubbing their hind feet together.'"

"What about the *now* Minnie Pearl?" I wondered.

"Now? *Nashville Now!* That's what. I'd rather do *Nashville Now* and the Opry with *him* (Mr. Acuff) than anything in the world. My time is too short to miss *Nashville Now* or the Opry. I laughed and told somebody the other day that I don't think about dying, but I didn't buy no green bananas!"

"You really enjoy life, don't you, Minnie?"

"To the fullest. And I just love Ralph Emery. I have the best time with him out there at *Nashville Now* every Friday night, and then I go over to the Opry with Mr. Acuff."

"Is there anything you miss? Something that used to be that isn't anymore?" I asked this great lady of show business.

"Yes. I miss being with country people. There's nothing like country people with country people. It's unfortunate that we don't have a community like we used to have. Back when your word was your bond. I miss that. The honesty of good country folks."

While Minnie gives Roy Acuff all the credit he so richly deserves. Roy in a heartbeat will say, "When Minnie comes onstage, why I just stand back and let her take over. She is the star and she always gives 'em a good show." Roy has played Minnie's straight man for a long time. He is her best friend.

The tag on Minnie's hat is still \$1.98, but her price is far above riches. She can circulate with the best: West Coast, East Coast or Third Coast. Her jokes are timeless. Her timing is perfection. Her memory is incredible. And they say her tennis arm is something to be desired. Minnie Pearl is the funniest woman I've ever met. Like I said in the beginning, I'm not really acquainted with Mrs. Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon, but Minnie Pearl is a friend of mine. And you can bet the farm and next year's crop that she is a diamond called Pearl.

-H.S.

# People

## THANK YOU, LORD

My dear friend Les Leverett went into Park View Hospital for bypass surgery. I was concerned and remained in prayer. My friend came through with flying colors, and I want to say, "Thank you,

Lord! There's no better man than Les Leverett. Besides being my friend, he takes wonderful photos too.

## SNOW ON THE TUBE

The Hank Snow classic "It Don't Hurt Anymore" has been chosen by Curad



## GMM Update: Stonewall Jackson

"I've got some bad news and some good news," declares a weary Stonewall Jackson. "My wife Juanita just got run over by a car. She's in the hospital and I've been up with her about all night. We're tryin' to make sure she don't have internal injuries. She's gonna be alright," he insists. "She's a tough old country girl. The good news," he adds, "is today I came in 17 points in *Cashbox* with my new single "Closer to the Vine" on MSR Records, an up-and-coming label.

"Traditional country music is really makin' a comeback," Stonewall says, and with good reason. Last year Dwight Yoakam revived Stonewall's 1959 hit "Smoke Along the Tracks," on his *Hillbilly Deluxe* album. "I kind of stayed out of recordin' for about five years," Stonewall adds. "But we've got an album 90% ready. It's gonna have some old songs, but mostly new songs.

"I try not to work like I used to work," he says. "I've given 30 years out there and I love the fans, but now I work the Opry, but I don't try to get out and work 20-25 days a month anymore." Instead, he works a few non-Opry dates a month, while his son Turp, 27, who has been his drummer since age nine, still tours with dad's five-piece band.

He couldn't always live this leisurely. Growing up poor in Georgia, he started writing songs in the Navy. Discharged in 1954, he worked backbreaking hours in Georgia to earn enough money to take a stab at music. His success became legend. In 1957 he rolled into Nashville in a pickup truck. Next day walked into Acuff-Rose Publishing. Wesley Rose heard him sing and was impressed enough to ask WSM to audition

Stonewall for an Opry guest appearance.

After Opry patriarch George D. Hay heard him, Stonewall was signed not for a guest shot, but as an Opry artist, which was unheard of for a total unknown. Not even Hank Williams did that. "I came here with nothin' at all," he recalls, still incredulous. "I had patches on my khaki pants. The musicians onstage thought I was supposed to be a comedy act, so they and the audience were laughin'. I had a guitar with my name on it in fingernail polish. I kept on singin' "Don't Be Angry" and the audience hushed. I encored four times." He marked 30 years with the Opry last November.

Fifteen Top Ten hits for Columbia followed from 1958 to 1972, including "Life to Go," "Don't Be Angry," "Waterloo," "Smoke Along the Tracks," "BJ the DJ," "Me and You and a Dog Named Boo" and "Herman Schwartz," the latter on MGM in 1973. He'd left Columbia the year before in a dispute over "Boo." "At least I didn't get dumped," he said. "I dumped them."

Like Jack Greene, Stonewall is currently dogged by an impostor. Based on a photo he has seen of the man, he describes him as "the ugliest dude I've ever seen, looks like the underside of a mud fence." Be forewarned. The impostor brags about his private jet. The real Stonewall owns a bus.

But impostors are the least of his concerns. "We just finished a video on the new single, so things in that line are lookin' real good," he concludes. "And if my wife will get well, I'll be back on track."

—RICH KIENZLE

Bandages for a commercial. All I got to say about that is Curad has definitely got great taste.

## JUST SAY NO

Sawyer Brown and Patty Loveless both play for the benefit of "Just Say No," the anti-drug campaign. Patty came a long way in 1987. 1988 will be even better for her. I predict Patty will become a superstar.

## THE PAINTING IS GONNA VISIT

The mural by Thomas Hart Benton, *The Sources of Country Music*, which hangs in the Country Music Hall of



You might be able to see this mural in your town soon.

Fame and Museum, is going on the road. If you love country music and the showing is in your area, I suggest you view the painting. Might' nigh brings tears to a glass eye. A moving artwork.

## DEL REEVES AN ORIGINAL

Overheard backstage at the Opry, or backdoor at the Opry. Finishing his Opry spots, Grand Ole Opry star Del Reeves was leaving when he ran into a lady sporting a cast on a broken leg, sitting at the back door. "Porter! Porter Wagoner," the very mistaken lady called to Del. "That song you did a while ago was real pretty, Porter."

"Honey, I'm Del Reeves. I'm not Porter. My hair is longer," said a very bored Reeves.

Following close behind Del was his very funny, disgruntled bass player who mumbled, "That's the only thing that's longer."

End of story and threats of being end-of-job for one bass player on the Grand Ole Opry. ■



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*... Richard Simmons*

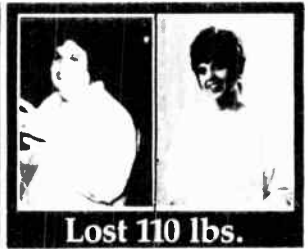
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**Lost 165 lbs.**



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**HERE'S HOW IT WORKS**

**1. Food Groups are divided into 6 colors of cards:**

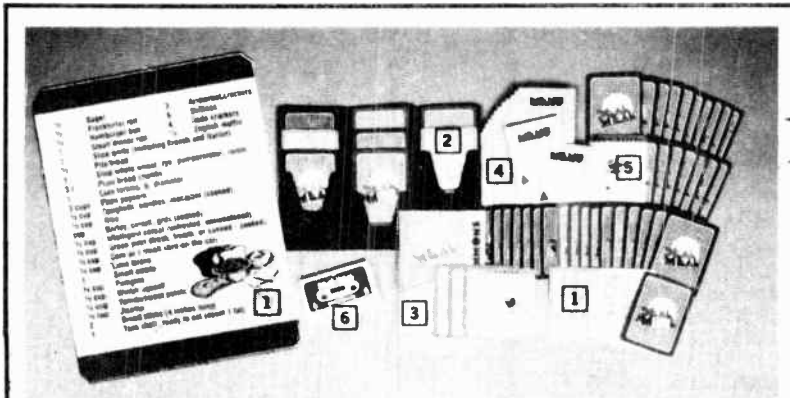
Meats are Red, Breads-Brown, Vegetables-Green, Fats-Yellow, Dairy-White, Fruits-Pink. The back of each card lists the food equivalents that card is worth. For example, one bread (brown) card is worth a slice of bread, a dinner roll, half a bagel, half a bun, a half cup of pasta, a tortilla, etc.

**2. You start each day with a set number of cards of each color.**

For example, if you want to lose 40 pounds or more, you start off each day with 6 Red cards, 6 Brown, 2 White, 4 Green, 4 Pink, 5 Yellow

**3. Whenever you eat a meal or a snack, you "play" the appropriate cards.**

Anytime you eat - whether a snack, or a complete meal, you simply take the appropriate cards out of the left side of your "Deal-A-Meal Wallet," and place them into a "meal" pocket on the right side of the wallet. When you run out of cards - you're done eating for the day. You've eaten the appropriate number of calories in a nutritionally balanced combination.



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Gives you 30 great meal suggestions. Each card plans a whole meal, complete with picture, exchange card equivalents, and calorie counts.
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**359158. Highway 101**. *Whiskey, If You Were A Woman*, etc. (Werner Bros.)  
**353847. Ricky Van Shelton**—Wild-Eyed Dream. Title cut, *Crime Of Passion*, etc. (Columbia)  
**358077. Hank Williams, Jr.**—Born To Boogie. Title hit, *Honky Tonk Woman*, etc. (Warner Bros./Curb)

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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, 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 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. (Multi-unit sets, special and classical

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| 355321<br>NANCI FERGITH<br>LONE STAR STATE OF MIND                          | 349971<br>BOB DYN<br>THIRD STAGE  | 356113<br>M. HARRARD, G. JOHNSON, NELSON<br>WALKING THE LINE       | 348979<br>TINA TURNER<br>BREAK EVERY RULE                          |
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† Selections with two numbers are 2-record sets or double-length tapes, and count as two selections—write each number in a separate box.

# 20 Questions with

# RAY PRICE

by Michael Bane



*If the truth be told, we didn't find Ray Price—he found us. After a picture run in Country Music wondering out loud where Ray was hiding out, we quickly got a call. Ray Noble Price, the Cherokee Cowboy, was doing just fine, thank you, and he wasn't all that hard to find, either. That is, of course, if he wasn't on the road, or herding his cattle, or cutting new records, or doing a little fishing. To be sure, the legendary singer, the man who gave a start to a few pickers like Willie Nelson and*

*Roger Miller and Buddy Emmons and Johnny Bush in his band, is a terribly busy man. And when he finally did catch us, he still wouldn't tell us where he was. Ray did, however, consent to answering 20 Questions.*

**1**

**So anyway, it's been a while since we heard from you. How are things going for Ray Price?**

Well, it's been going really great. We're having a little trouble with the radio stations,

the stations that report their playlists to the record charts, but we're not having any trouble with anybody else.

**2**

**Aren't you always going to have trouble with the few stations that set the charts?**

Yes, especially when they're controlled. It's a hoax. Of the 120 reporting stations, only 40 play album cuts...

**3**

**That means if you're not releasing singles and a major**

**label isn't pushing them, you're in trouble.**

If you're not on a major label, then you're dead. The problem is that country music isn't selling anything. I happen to be in the publishing business, and two weeks ago the Number One single hadn't sold 5000 copies.

**4**

**Do you think it's a problem of radio not understanding the roots of the music?**

It's a bunch of kids who don't know a damn thing about any-

body but the Beatles. They think what they're playing is our type music, and it really ain't. Sixty-five percent of the country is 30 years or older. That leaves 35 percent they're trying to appeal to...But that's the way it is.

**5**

**I take it from this, Ray, that you are definitely still recording.**

Oh, absolutely. Hell, I'm selling millions of records. I'm doing it on TV—screw radio.

**6**

**Pretty strong words, there...**

'Course, naturally. I wish...Well, not all the big stations don't play us. There's about 40 or 50 on my side. Not enough. But I think that we'll see a change this year. Maybe not to my side, but you'll see a change. There's a Top 40 or Top 50 or Top 100, and what do you do with the rest of us?

**7**

**How come you're so hard to find, anyway?**

I was kind of shocked that you couldn't get in touch with me. Then my record company picked it up and called me. Even my mother was raising hell, and I told her it was a cop out that they couldn't reach me. That was the only way they could do it.

**8**

**Are you still hitting the road pretty heavy?**

A little bit. We're getting ready to start out again—we'll do about 75 or 100 days this year.

**9**

**That's a pretty good number...**

Well, when you add that many more days of traveling to it, it's a haul.

**10**

**That's a lot of time to be away from home...**

Well, you just have to take home with you...And I'm still drawing big crowds. I'll be

playing San Antonio, Texas, and for the last three years I've always had 24,000—that's all it'll hold. If you can't sell a record to 24,000, you're in trouble.

**11**

**You've always had a knack for being ahead of the crowd in the style of music you've done. What kind of music have you been recording recently?**

I recently recorded 40 of the great all-time pop hits. Talking about pop hits, not rock hits. We've been on *The Nashville Network* with that one for a year. We buy the time, too. If you do them on percentage, they show the commercials at two or three o'clock in the morning, which don't do anything for you.

**12**

**Are you recording any new albums?**

I've got a new one getting ready to go on television that goes back about 50 years ago in country music. I did a totally acoustic album, with only six pieces and no electronic instruments at all.

**13**

**Sounds to me like you're doing stuff that you might have been interested in doing for a long time...**

It is. It's stuff my record company, people that know me

well, have the same thoughts about. And we're succeeding with it. Of course, like I say, I'd like to be on the charts. Well, we were in the charts on the last one, up into the 20's in *Cashbox* and up in the 40's in *Billboard*.

**14**

**Given the way the business is, that's awfully good for an independent label...**

Yes, that's true. But I've got an independent label with darn near as much money as one of the majors. You take television, like the TNN network, and it costs us \$30,000 a month. When you do that for a year, you know you've got to be selling some albums, because these people aren't damn fools.

**15**

**Who is your label?**

Step One Records. Step One's offices are in Nashville, but it's really a Texas corporation.

**16**

**When did you first start doing television albums?**

Not quite two years ago. It was the only way I could see to beat the radio stuff. We also service 2700 radio stations. We went to the grass roots. We don't want the big city deal. We don't care.

**17**

**Are you still living in Texas?**  
I've been in Texas, Michael,

since 1969. I was in Nashville for about 16 years.

**18**

**Where in Texas?**

Uh, in East Texas. I really don't want to give you the name of the town, because if I do, and you print it, I got a problem. It's a small town. And I live out on the ranch; I don't live in town. We lived in Dallas for about 15 years. It's where my mother lives, and my son and his wife live there. But I'm back about 25 miles from where I was born.

**19**

**Is it a big ranch?**

About 200 acres. It's a horse ranch, but I don't have the horses any more because I don't have the help. Of course, I have my cows and everything like that. It's beautiful. It's quiet. The smog's not eating us up. All those beautiful things that industry brings to us.

**20**

**Of them all, all those great songs, my personal favorite is "Crazy Arms." Do you have a favorite?**

I still do most of them, although I haven't got time to do them all—the show would have to be three or four hours long. For 16 years everything I did was Number One. I still do "Heartaches by the Number," "Crazy Arms," "Release Me." and "For the Good Times." ■



Ray Price in the fifties with the Cherokee Cowboys.

# ◆ HARD ◆ COUNTRY

## **Randy Travis is a modest guy.**

*He doesn't talk to you a lot  
about his talent or how it all happened.  
He doesn't even know how it all happened.  
But women are interested in his private life,  
men know he's a hot property  
and the good songs just keep on coming.*

*by Michael Bane*

**Y**ou can take him, I say, but Randy Travis just squints. He doesn't look enthused.

"His arms," Randy says, "are 'bout as big around as my thighs..."

The object of our attention, wrestler Randy "Macho Man" Savage, is flexing a bicep that looks suspiciously like a Tennessee smoked ham. Without being too obvious about it, Randy Travis and I check out our own biceps, which are found lacking. We look like the "Before" pictures.

Maybe, I suggest, we should go back to Randy Travis' private gym and hit the arm machine some more.

"Yeah," Randy agrees. "For the rest of our lives..."

We are at the Jim Owens television studio in Nashville taping an episode of the *Crook and Chase* variety show for *The Nashville Network*. Macho Man

Savage and his manager, the Beautiful Elizabeth, go on before Randy. It is a coup for *Crook and Chase*, not only because Randy Travis is the country act *Crook and Chase* fans say they'd most like to see on the show, but because Randy Travis may well be the biggest thing to come out of Nashville since the steel guitar. The Travis boom, heading into its third year, is showing no signs of peaking. In fact, if anything, it's gathering steam. Travis' second album, *Always and Forever*, has proven to be just as strong as his first, *Storms of Life*, which is acknowledged, pretty much universally, to be one of the all-time classic country albums. Forget the country charts, which Travis virtually owns—*Always and Forever* has been on the *pop* charts for 28 weeks, the only country album in the Top 50. Both the Country Music Association and the





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*“Some of the time starting out, working with the house bands, it was so bad, all you could do was laugh.”*

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Academy of Country Music have lavished awards on the newcomer; he's mentioned in the same breath with his idols George Jones and Merle Haggard; his concerts are sell-outs; *People Magazine* thinks he's sexy. Scratch that last item—*everybody* thinks he's sexy; when I mentioned I was going to spend some time with Randy Travis, perfectly normal businesswomen of my acquaintance, who would not know a steel guitar from a BMW, pressed their business cards on me and begged me to pass them along.

Can you say *monster*?

All this for an unassuming 26-year-old from North Carolina, a kid who knew what it was like to be on the wrong side of the tracks. Who knew what the inside of a jail looked like, and who had firsthand knowledge of running with the wrong crowd. A person who now will occasionally—special occasions only—have a glass of wine with dinner, but nothing stronger, ever. A person who not only doesn't smoke, but won't allow smokers on his bus, or allow any members of his band to smoke. A person who loves working out—really loves it; not one of those folks who talks about going to the athletic club just so he can buy the latest in jogging fashion—and is an accomplished body-builder (it shows, too, girls). A person who gets genuinely upset when he can't sign all the autographs or spend seven hours after a show with his fans.

Good grief! And if that ain't enough, in a city where “gaudy” has been ele-

vated to new heights, the boy's even got good taste. His grey touring bus should set some kind of standard, proving maybe that you can be the Future of Country Music without looking like a part-time rhinestone thief.

**I**'m gonna tell Macho Man that you think you can take him, I say.

“Go ahead, Michael,” Randy Travis says. “But before he gets me, I'll get you.”

Then it's time for Randy to go on.

“I think I can take him,” Randy tells Crook (or Chase; in truth, I get confused by these things).

When it's time for the audience to ask questions, the first one is: Do you sleep with pajamas or without?

Randy blushes and rocks back in his seat. The audience roars, but the women in the audience lean forward a little for the answer.

“Without,” Randy Travis says.

**S**ex symbol, I ask?

Randy blushes and waves his hand over his head. No sane North Carolina boy is going to sit on this couch in this apartment behind his Music Row offices and talk about becoming a sex symbol. Laugh though we might, there are some topics that, by rights, aren't topics for discussion.

We are in Randy's apartment behind his offices. Like everything about Randy Travis, the apartment is understated and tasteful. The thing he can't wait to show me as soon as I get there is

the gym, down a spiral staircase in the basement. It's small, but amazingly complete, with white-painted workout machines with grey vinyl upholstery. All the equipment shows the signs of use, as do a pair of worn weight gloves resting on the leg press machine.

Right now, though, he's having to ease back into working out since he slipped his back bending over on stage. We talk for a little about how, no matter how much you work out, you always manage to really injure yourself doing something simple. Then Randy sheepishly admits that the slipped back might not have been such a big deal if he hadn't gone home and decided to squat 245 pounds to work out the kink.

“There I am in the basement with 245 pounds on my shoulders,” he says. “And I almost can't stand back up. I'm thinking, ‘Hummm. If I yell, I wonder if anyone can hear me to get this weight off?’”

The result is regular trips to the chiropractor and somewhat less regular heavy squats.

Back upstairs, we talk while Randy signs photographs, albums—a whole box-load of special requests.

He looks at the box full of photos, the apartment with the four CMA awards and the five ACM awards neatly in a row, and shakes his head.

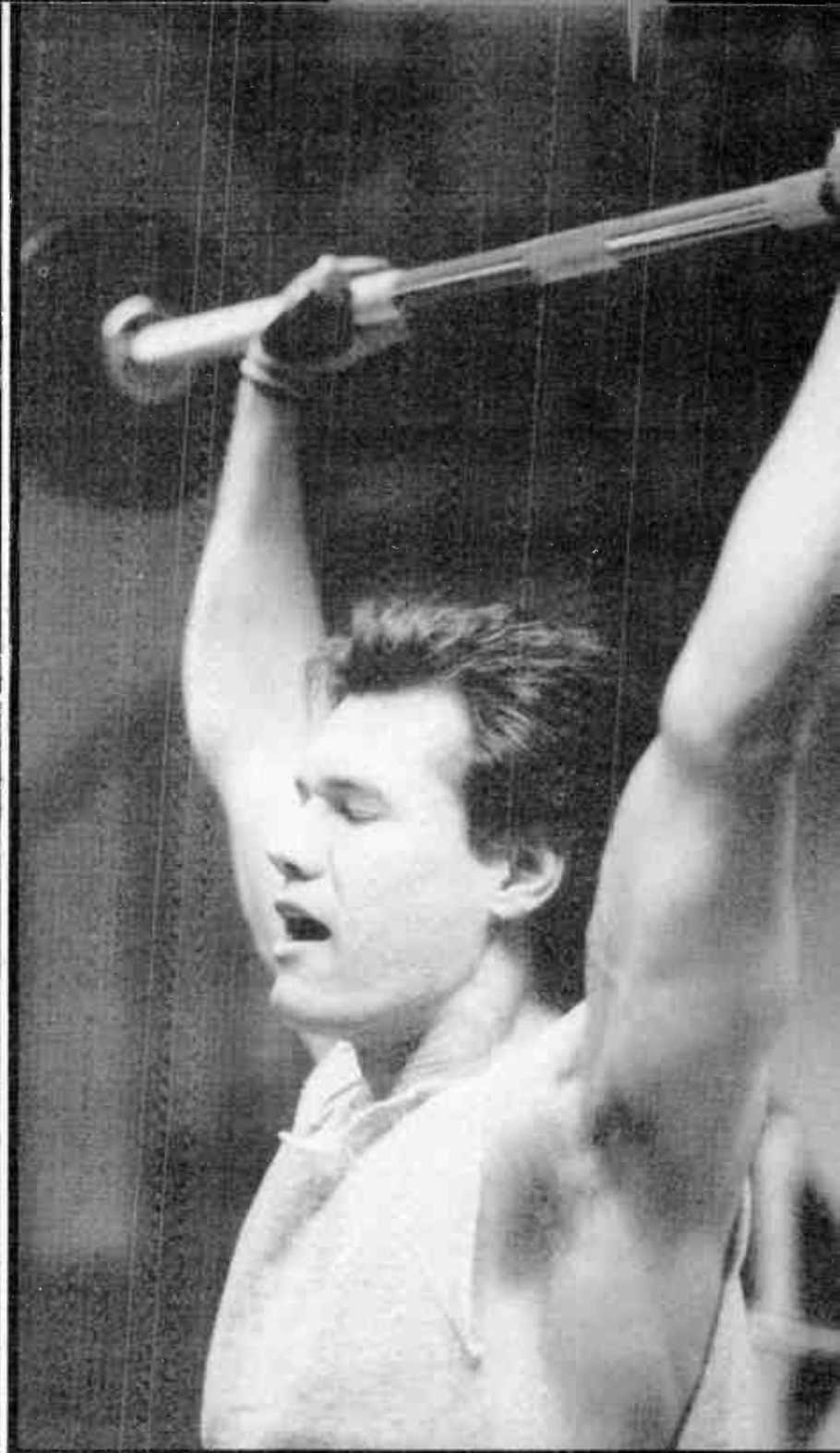
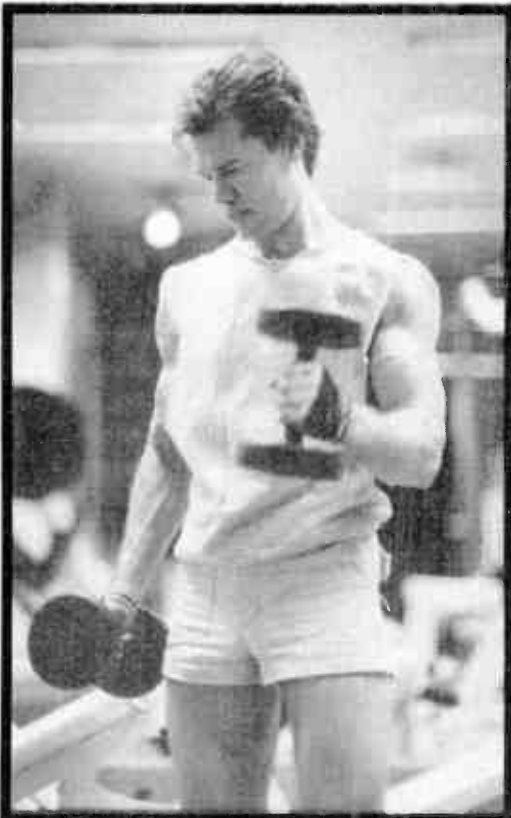
“It does seem strange sometimes,” Randy Travis says. “To go to the shows and see some big crowds—like in North Carolina we had 16,000 people. And that's amazing, isn't it. It's an odd feeling to think that those people came out for *me*. I don't sit and think about it that much, though. Just sometimes when you're on-stage, you just kind of have an odd feeling. Actually, it gives you cold chills, is what it is.”

We laugh and talk about the first time we met, in a honky tonk in Chattanooga, him with a terrible sore throat and a freshly signed contract with Warner Brothers, who were almost terrified to say anything about the diamond they'd found.

Here was a *voice*, a voice with range and depth and power, a voice that sometimes suggested a young George Jones, or sometimes a Hank Williams Jr., or sometimes a less world-weary Merle Haggard. It was a voice without pretensions, an unabashedly country voice singing songs that could break your heart. And the country music world was, once again, in a turmoil. After the



Posing for pictures is about as close as Randy will get to Macho Man Savage, pictured here with Savage's manager Elizabeth, and writer Michael Bane.



Randy doesn't smoke or drink, but keeps himself trim and fit every chance he can, with his exercise regime.

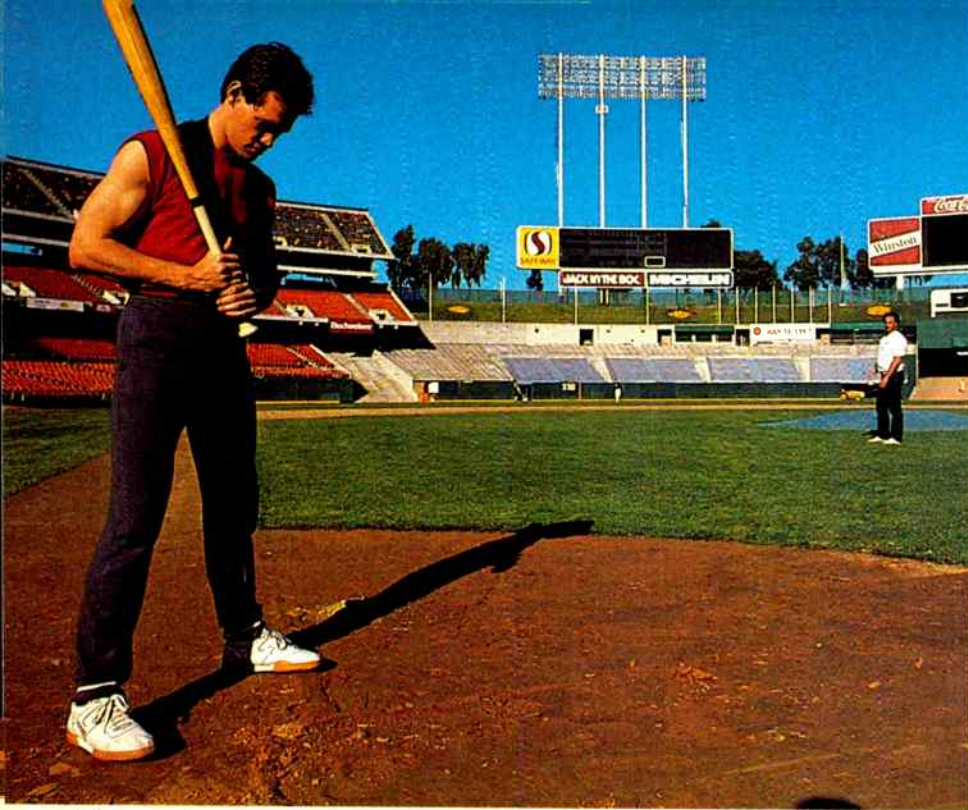
boom years of the mid-1970's, the days of outlaws and *Urban Cowboy*, country music had sunk into the doldrums, once again pursuing its apparently endless love affair with pop music. Sales were off; country radio stations were changing formats. The world was, in a short word, dull.

All the while Randy Travis, under the *nom de guerre* of Randy Ray, was flipping burgers at the Nashville Palace, taking time out to slip off his apron and go out and perform a number now and

then. How he'd gotten there is the stuff that both dreams and television soap operas are made of—a bad kid saved by a good woman. He'd been a hell-raiser around Charlotte, where he grew up on his parents' farm, and he might have stayed a hell-raiser if he hadn't wandered into a local honky tonk and done some singing. The owner of that 'tonk, Lib Hatcher, had spent a long time slinging drinks and listening to hard country music. She had an *ear*, knew genius when she heard it, and set about

to help make a then teen-aged Randy Travis a star.

Along the way, the hell-raising just fell behind him, a shed skin. When Lib thought the time was right, she sold her Charlotte club, moved to Nashville and took over the Nashville Palace, with Randy as cook, bottle-washer, carpenter, the guy who swept up and part-time singer. Lib never stopped believing, never stopped looking for the chink in Nashville's Music Row armor. She tried producing her own album on Randy



**Time out for play. Randy tries to come up with another hit.**

(now a classic), and finally got him a listen by a Warner's exec, who swooned.

"Chattanooga," Randy Travis is saying. "What a great night that was. There was some of the time starting out, working with the house bands, that it was so bad, all you could do was laugh. Nothing you could do about it... There was one time I just cracked up over the mike, just started laughing. I couldn't help it. Lib was out there watching me thinking, 'What in the world is wrong?' The music was just so bad I cracked up. I couldn't stand it anymore. I just had to laugh. And that's better than getting mad. Remember I told you about doing 'I Saw the Light' and the drummer didn't play the entire song. I asked what was the matter, and he said, 'I don't know that one.'"

Randy's still doing about 200 days, an impressive number in itself—especially considering that he's already had one trip to the hospital to rest his vocal chords.

Album three is under way; they've got enough for the album, but, "We're still going in to cut more," he says, laughing. "But, you know, we don't use any huge instrumentation, so we can go in and cut 20 songs for what some people go in and cut ten songs for."

The songwriting, too, is progressing. "It's always been good and bad days," Randy says. "I've had days when I've written a song in 30 minutes or an hour, then sat for two days and couldn't write anything. I think I'm getting a little better—I hope that I am."

There'll be at least one Travis-penned contribution on the new album. He's written a number of his own songs,

including the great "Reasons I Cheat" on the first album.

"Plus I'm writing with some great writers in this town like Paul Overstreet and Don Schlitz and Keith Stegall," Randy says. "I've learned a whole lot writing with these people, about the craftsmanship of writing... Writing

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*"It's an odd feeling to think that those people came out for me."*

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with Paul, that guy's so gifted, I don't know where it comes from with him. You just sit there and pick out the best lines. When I've written with him, I didn't really have to write anything—just kind of sit over there and say, 'I like that line. Let's use that one.' That's about all I did!"

Overstreet, of course, wrote "Diggin' Up Bones" and "No Place Like Home" and co-wrote "On the Other Hand"—one of the finest country songs ever—with Don Schlitz, all on Randy's first album, *Storms of Life*. The Overstreet/Schlitz team contributed "Forever and Ever, Amen" to *Always and Forever*.

We are laughing over old times, back when Randy could sit out in the audience without starting a mini-riot. Still, he says, it's a nice feeling to walk down

the street and have people recognize him.

"They come up and say something nice," he says. "They like your music or something like that. But it's like I was saying about being at the show with all those people there—it feels odd sometimes. Sometimes you can't help but wonder *why*. I don't guess anybody knows."

Randy Travis has struck a nerve, some deep-seated resonance that echoes through popular music. It is as amazing to him as to some of his fans.

"You can't really call it smart, 'cause how can you know what you're doing?" he says. "All you can do is guess at it and hope that you're doing something right, as far as the business and the songs you record and how you sing. I've been singing the same way since I was eight years old."

He has, he says, been lucky enough to find some great songs—and great may be an understatement.

"Some songs like 'Forever and Ever, Amen,' some people don't find a song like that their whole career," Randy says, shaking his head. He has had a whole string of them, beginning with "On the Other Hand" and "1982." It is as if there were a watershed of hard country music waiting for the voice to come along to claim them.

"They just weren't writing those type of songs, because people weren't cutting them," Randy says. "Unfortunately for me, now people are recording a lot of them! Now they're getting harder to find."

We talk about the best country music, and we are in agreement—the best music sounds as if an artist and the band just showed up at your house and decided to play for the heck of it. The best records are unforced, natural, like, in fact, Randy Travis records.

"And it's not like working, either. We go in and we have fun, play around," Randy says. "And still, in an eight-hour day, we've cut six songs, and that's a lot of songs to cut in that time."

On one of the records, Randy adds, producer Kyle Lehning didn't even remix—"He said he couldn't think of anything else to do."

So here is Randy Travis, still lifting weights, still working the road, still in love with country music.

"It's fun to be on stage with a bunch of good pickers," he says. "Especially on those nights when everything is going good."

And he means it, too, and that, I think, makes him a very special person. He is a person who believes the old tie, the old relationship between a country singer and his or her audience, is still a real bond.

He is, above all, a nice guy, and I'll be damned if he hasn't finished first. ■

# CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA MARCH/APRIL 1988-EDITOR, HELEN BARNARD

# Newsletter

## REVIEWS & FEATURES

In this issue, we conclude our special two-part feature on country music radio stations. Many of you have written in to recommend favorite disk jockeys. Your letters give credit where credit is due, sometimes, as you say, to a small station that's only heard in a very local way.

We're also proud to present the thoughts of one of our readers, R.A. Faris of Harrison, Arkansas, about how country music is marketed and labeled these days. Mr. Faris was inspired in part by some of Dwight Yoakam's remarks in the feature *Country*

*Music Magazine* published on Yoakam back in May/June 1986. His letter is followed by others.

While we're on the subject of traditional, what could be more traditional than those updaters and innovators of their day, The Original Carter Family. Read all about them in the *Newsletter's* Legends of Country Music feature, returning to these pages after stepping aside last issue to make way for all you creative members in Readers Create.

Keep those historic photos coming. More next issue.

## COUNTRY RADIO: A SPECIAL TWO-PART SECTION

Here we continue/conclude our latest update on what's going on with country music radio stations. We have a coast-to-coast overview of stations large and small, recommended by you

readers, and notes and comments from you in general on the state of the art. For more, see our last issue, the January/February *Newsletter*.

### KSON San Diego—Major Market, Major Station

In response to our inquiry, Mike Brady, KSON's Assistant Program Director, provided us with this thumbnail sketch of San Diego's first and foremost and now only country music station, KSON AM 1240 and KSON FM 97.3, and its most popular program.

Navy man Joseph B. Vernon, a new subscriber, first put us on to KSON. He wrote, "Right now, I am listening to KSON AM/FM in San Diego, and they are playing the old golden countries of the past 40 years. It is really a great show. Maybe you could mention it. Bill is a great DJ, too."

KSON AM 1240, San Diego's original country music station, began broadcasting country music on a full-time basis in October 1963. Sister station KSON FM 97.3 followed suit on July 4, 1975. In the years following, the KSON stations have been the dominant country music stations in San Diego, and with the format change of competitor KCBQ AM/FM last December 1986, they are San Diego's one and only country music outlet.

The play list for both stations runs from 27 to 30 current singles. Oldies on the AM are more traditionally based, while the FM goes for a more contemporary—but decidedly country—sound.

By far the most popular program on the KSON stations is the "Weekly Country



Bill Macky

Oldies Show," hosted by KSON FM afternoon personality Bill Macky. Simulcast on KSON AM and FM, the program airs from 8 to 11 Sunday evenings and features the greatest country hits of the past forty years. The "Weekly Country Oldies Show" made its debut on May 5, 1985, with a remote broadcast from Wrangler's Roost, one of the area's most popular night spots. The show was the Number One rated program in its period that year and has consistently placed in the top three ever since.

Mike Brady  
San Diego, California

We also asked radio fan, Society member, country music fan and friend Charles McCullough of Lemon Grove, near San Diego, if he listened to the *Weekly Country Oldies Show*. "You bet," he said. "I like it. I like the old country tunes."—Ed.

### In This Issue

- Radio Special—Part Two
- Readers' Opinions on Radio
- Original Carter Family
- Collections

### Contemporary Country Kicks In—Pulls Its Own Weight

In some kinds of markets, contemporary country is what the market will bear. WMZQ-AM/FM in Washington, D.C., is proud of the contribution it's been able to make over the last ten years.

WMZQ-AM/FM in Washington, D.C., has survived and done well with country music for ten years in what the station's publicity person, Michele Dannin, describes as "an upscale situation." "We are unique," she says. "That we are able to survive and do so well...is our strength." Typical of the station's playlist are the stars they invited to perform at their free birthday bash, celebrating the station's first 10 years, held last June 21st at Wild World Amusement Park in Maryland: Lee Greenwood, The O'Kanes and The Girls Next Door.

According to Gary Balaban, Program Director, the station makes up its playlist from the national charts, as many stations do. Specifically, he mentioned The O'Kanes and their song "Daddies Need to Grow Up, Too," Holly Dunn, who has since been named the CMA's Horizon Award Winner, Kathy Mattea and a handful of others whose names and music gladden the hearts of many who write to us, including many CMSA members who vote in the polls, who love traditional-style country music—Randy Travis, "occasionally Ricky," Dwight Yoakam and Steve Earle.



## CMA Declares Radio Awards

In 1987, in addition to their usual Broadcast Personality of the Year Awards in large, medium and small market categories, the CMA presented awards for Station of the Year, General Manager of the Year, Program Director of the Year and Music Director of the Year, all in the three market categories. Station winners were KNIX/Phoenix (large market), WIVK/Knoxville (medium market) and KEAN/Abilene (small). KNIX, featured in last issue's *Newsletter*, was also the ACM Station of the Year in 1987. Other stations that brought home awards in various categories were: WCMS/Norfolk, KIKK/Houston, KASE/Austin and WAXX/Eau Claire. Nominees who did not win this time were: KPLX/Dallas; WSOC/Charlotte; KSON/San Diego; WZZK/Birmingham; WTCR/Huntington; WYNK/Baton Rouge; KSSN/Little Rock; WFMS/Indianapolis; KXKW/Lafayette, LA; WCHY/Savannah, GA; KXIX/Fayetteville, AR; WBHP/Huntsville, AL; KWOX/Woodward, OK; KJNE/Waco, TX; KYKX/Longview, TX and WDXE/Lawrenceburg, TN.

1987 Broadcast Personalities of the Year, introduced at the CMA Awards Show in Nashville last October, were: Rhubarb Jones, WYAY/Atlanta (large market); Eddie Edwards, WSIX/Nashville (medium market); Gary Walker, KYKX/Longview, Texas (small market). Anybody's favorites among these? The Academy of Country Music and *Billboard Magazine* also present radio awards. Pictured above are the happy executives and broadcasters with their CMA Awards.

Michele Danni was frank to admit that her station does not fit in the "traditional" category, but her pride in what they have been able to accomplish reminds this writer of assertions by some of our younger members and readers that they got into country, and believe others do also, by the contemporary country route.

At any rate, WMZQ-AM/FM was ready to thank its loyal fans. In the station's press release, station Vice President/General Manager Paul Wilensky credits country music fans as being the most loyal listeners of any format. "WMZQ has certainly reaped the benefits of that loyalty. Now it's our turn to give something back, and thank them country style for all their support over the last ten years." The concert was free.

—H.B.

## Pop Goes Twang—Add Another Country Station

Just north of Washington, D.C., in Frederick, Maryland, WZYQ, a station with a strong signal, dropped its rock programming and went into contemporary country.

"Morning Drive" disk jockey Jay Lakin's playlist for WZYQ, also known as 82Q, looks a lot like near-competitor WMZQ's in Washington. It includes Hank Jr., T. Graham Brown, Vince Gill, Reba McEntire, Highway 101, Holly Dunn, Exile, Don Williams, Steve Wariner and The O'Kanes, to

name a few. Added in are Dwight Yoakam, the Osmond Bros., Conway Twitty, Eddy Raven and Randy Travis.

The new format went on the air in March 1987. After about five months, Jay Lakin said, "As far as comments go, so far so good. Everyone I've spoken with really seems to enjoy our music selection, most of which can't be heard anywhere else in the Washington/Baltimore market that we serve. Our record service is starting to improve, and both *Radio & Records* and *Cashbox* have asked us for composites and other information relating to possibly becoming a reporter." Sounds like a launch.

—H. B.

## Back Home in Indiana—Country WLJE

*In Valparaiso, Indiana, Country WLJE has been right about a lot of things. A year ago, we featured the station in a letter from Harold Swartz praising WLJE and disk jockey Butch Bennett for playing Randy Travis long before other stations did or would. Here's the program director with more about the station.*

Country WJLE was founded and owned by "Uncle Len" Ellis, a country music pioneer. Mr. Ellis was a major force in booking country talent into the northwest Indiana area in the 1950's. Mr. Ellis, the very first member of The Country Music Association, was

inducted into The Country Music Disc Jockey Hall of Fame in 1983. He has been a member of the CMA's Board of Directors and is now semi-retired.

The station continues his tradition today with a strong commitment to country music. Our playlist is comprised of 50 current selections and selected album cuts from current albums. In addition, we encourage our air personnel to use the extensive music library for oldies, not limiting their selections to a specific time frame. We also run a Featured Artist each day. The Featured Artist can be anyone from Kenny Rogers to Jimmie Rodgers, and we play one cut from them each hour.

Our playlist is determined during weekly meetings between myself and Music Director, Butch Bennett. After checking the trades for national action, we then look at phone action on requests, and finally we listen to the music and trust our own judgment as to how it will fit our format and how our listeners will react.

Our *Morning Show* with Butch Bennett is our most popular program, beginning at 5 A.M. with The Scratchy Old Record Department, a complete half-hour of country classics, and moving into current music mixed with natural humor and local news.

Country WLJE continues to spotlight country music newcomers like Patty Love-

## KNCQ-97 FM

less. We played her "I Did" last year. We also had Patty play for our New Year's Eve Party in 1987.

Thanks for your interest in Country WLJE.

**Dan Lynch**  
Valparaiso, Indiana

### Country Music Alternatives— WBAI-FM, New York City

Station WBAI 99.5 FM is a non-commercial listener-supported station. Provided its listeners support it, it can go its own way. Here's a word about the station's programming from disk jockey Tom Tortorella.

Thanks for your letter. It's great hearing from you. Here at WBAI, we feel we play what the commercial country station is afraid of playing—real country music.

A typical list of artists that I play on my program, *Country Music Alternatives*, is as follows: Nanci Griffith, Doyle Lawson and Quick-silver, Johnny Cash, The Jumbo String Band, Ricky Skaggs, Hank Williams, Emmylou Harris, Sandy Bradly and The Small Wonder String Band, Little Jimmie Dickens, etc. As you can see, I have a large cross-section of artists ranging from traditional country music to bluegrass music. I also feature a lot of music off compact discs, which is something that I feel the local commercial country station doesn't do.

My show airs Saturdays 3:30-5 P.M.

**Tom Tortorella**  
New York, New York

### Another Alternative Station

Station KCSN-FM at the California State University at Northridge, in the San Fernando Valley, adopted a traditional country music format in January 1987. Like WBAI-FM in New York, the station is listener-supported. Below are excerpts from a recent letter from the station's music director.

On Sunday, August 16, I attended a party hosted by country entertainer Hank Penny. The event, which included impromptu performances, was dedicated to guitarist Roy Lanham. Those in attendance included steel guitar legend Speedy West, who came in from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, Sue Thompson, Shari Penny, Eddie & Dearest Dean and others. The party was videotaped by Woodland Music Ranch Video studios as well as by the Country Music Network.

Some of the new releases we've played most often on the station since January 1987 are The Whites, *Ain't No Binds*; Jim Reeves, *Live at the Opry*; Mississippi John Hurt, *The Piedmont LPs*; Tom Ball &

### Nomination for DJ of the Year

The disk jockey is an important link between the artist and the fan. Fans know it and appreciate the finest. Here are two fans and the object of their acclaim.

My wife and I have searched to find out how we could get our favorite disk jockey selected as DJ of the Year. His name is Gary Popejoy of radio station KNCQ 97 FM, Redding, California. We have learned to love this young man very much. He has done more for country music in California than any disk jockey north of Bakersfield. He has been co-host to Exile, Sylvia, George Strait, The Bellamy Brothers, Reba McEntire, John Schneider, Mickey Gilley, Eddy Raven, David Frizzell and Ronnie McDowell. These are just a few.

We have to travel seventy miles from our home in McCloud to Redding so we can see and hear these singers. We are in our early sixties and were country when country wasn't cool and always will be. We feel Gary is deserving of the title DJ of the Year because he puts his heart into it, as we are sure those artists mentioned above will agree.

**Gene and Charlene Cline**  
McCloud, California

Gary Popejoy, Operations Manager and morning drive disk jockey at KNCQ, knows the Clines. He was pleased to hear that we had heard from them, and he admitted that he is "young"—in his early-to-mid thirties, he did confide.

Promotions are important to KNCQ, and they do a lot of them, giving away concert tickets, four-wheel drive vehicles and, once a year, a boat. The station also co-sponsors concerts in the region, and participates vigorously in charity events. Redding is Merle Haggard country, and the station has done two things recently



Disk jockey Gary Popejoy is often involved in concerts with big-name stars. Here he is with Tammy Wynette and husband George Richey recently.

with Merle, one a baseball game at which Merle played third base—"The stands were packed," says Gary—and the other a Toys for Tots concert in which fans "paid for" each ticket with a new toy.

As far as music is concerned, "the format is contemporary country," says Gary. On his morning show, selections are often made on the spot. He likes it that way. Very off the cuff, although in general the plan is "two new songs and an oldie." Gary likes to play requests within 15 minutes unless the song is out of rotation.

Gary's work has been noticed—the Clines are not the only ones to have their eye on him. Both the NBC affiliate in the area, Channel 24, and the ABC network have had feature spots on Gary. NBC's was part of *Mic-Check*, a weeklong series on "Voices Behind the Microphones." ABC caught him as *Person of the Week*, focusing on one of his Thanksgiving promos. Gary is aware of the CMA and ACM awards. He has not thrown his hat into the ring yet.

Booming out of KNCQ's 100,000 watt tower, high on a mountain opposite the town, Gary's *Morning Show* is the most-listened-to program in the north state area and the station is the Number One adult station in the market. "We stress contemporary with what we feel is just the right blend of more traditional country," Gary explains about the station's philosophy as a whole. He's confident he's reaching—and pleasing—the audience. "Judging from the response of the listeners, from cards and letters to concerts and phone calls to being stopped in stores, it seems we're doing something they like and want. So that is what we'll continue to do until they tell us otherwise. We thank the country music audience."

—H.B.

### SONGS PLAYED MORNING OF 1-14-88 7AM-10AM

GOIN' GONE	KATHY MATEA
DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME BABY	JANIE FRICKIE
THE RIDE (Request)	DAVID ALLAN COE
PLEASE, PLEASE, BABY	DWIGHT YOAKAM
I CHEATED ME RIGHT OUT OF YOU	MOE BANDY
CRYIN' SHAME	MICHAEL JOHNSON
WANNA HEAR IT FROM YOU	EDDY RAVEN
THIS MISSIN' YOU HEART OF MINE	SAWYER BROWN
BREAK MY MIND	VERN GOSDIN
GETTIN' TO ME AGAIN	JIM GLASER
MAKE ME WANT TO MAKE YOU MINE	JUICE NEWTON
WANNA DANCE WITH YOU	EDDIE RABBIT
PIN A NOTE ON YOUR PILLOW	BILLY JOE ROYAL
CALL IT MAKING LOVE	TAMMY WYNETTE
WHERE DO THE NIGHTS GO	RONNIE MILSAP
MODERN DAY ROMANCE	NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND
WORKING MAN BLUES (Request)	MERLE HAGGARD
I WANT A LOVE LIKE THAT	JUDY ROIDMAN
CLOSER YOU GET	ALABAMA

Gary Popejoy's record of what he played on January 14th.

Kenny Sultan, *Bloodshot Eyes*; Doc Watson, *Riding the MN Train*; Delmore Bros., *Sand Mountain Blues*; Asleep at the Wheel, *10*; Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys, *Golden Era*.

**Cary Ginell**

**Northridge, California**

*Playlist sounds like Rich Kienzle's Buried Treasures/Essential Collector column. -Ed.*

## DJ Looking for Records to Play

*Here's an opportunity for some of you members who are looking to get launched.*

I need records for a country music program on radio station KJAA Mesa/Phoenix, Arizona. On my show, I play country/western, bluegrass and Western swing. I will play records sent to me by unknown singers on small independent labels. In fact, I am looking for that style of music. We have 10,000 watts of power and cover a listening area of over one million listeners.

I started my singing career on a small independent label and was an unknown singer myself, so I know how important it is for unknowns to get airplay. Those records

that get requested will play again and again, and we'll let you know should one of yours start to get a lot of airplay on my show.

The address here is KJAA/"KJ Country" 1510 AM, 65 E. First Avenue, Mesa, Arizona 85202. Our motto is, "Arizona's Hottest Country Hits."

**Al Ferguson**  
**Mesa, Arizona**

## Comments From You Readers

*In November/December 1986, we published a letter from Charlene Edwards in the Letters section of Country Music Magazine. This letter sparked lots of answers, which we kept because they were so spicy. We've added others over the months that talk about traditional music or how to find—or how hard it is to find—traditional country music on the radio.*

**"WHAT'S TOO COUNTRY"**  
*Does country music ever sound too country and what to do if it does...Answers to these and other questions proposed by a reader, R.A. Faris, who took off on this topic after reading about Dwight Yoakam in Country Music Magazine's May/June 1986 issue.*

# WAAG

## Another Nomination—Small Station and Its DJ's

*Who said bigger is better? Listener endorses an Illinois station and Program Director responds.*

We read and listen to stories about rewards given to big radio stations and DJ's. But we were wondering when the little stations with big listening areas would get their recognition?

Our radio station is marvelous. Their daily routine is always on country music, they are always playing the newest hits, they are on top of the news, they have all kinds of contests for the listening area, they are community affairs DJ's. They always have time to meet you and talk, and they make you feel like you're important.

Right now, they have a program going called *Raymond and Raymond*. The disk jockeys' names are Raymond Smith and Jon Raymond. If there are any gentlemen left in the United States, it's these two men. We really enjoy waking up to them on radio. They laugh, have jokes, play music, read meals from each school around, if there is a delay in buses they have it on the radio right away. This program is interesting to all age groups. Their pictures are on all kinds of things throughout the community. They have stickers for your car, t-shirts for people to wear, they have phone contacts that just make you want to call in and participate. We can't say enough for these disk

jockeys. Also there are other people on the station that are really super people.

Everyone around enjoys this station. It's super—WAAG out of Galesburg, Illinois. It's managed by Harry Greenwald, and he does a wonderful job. Very nice person.

So we in the community of Galesburg would appreciate it greatly if you would submit this letter to the proper people. Thank you very much.

**Leona Gibb**  
**Galesburg, Illinois**

John Raymond does not know Leona Gibb, but he is delighted to hear what she thinks of WAAG and says that the effect she

describes is exactly what the marketing structure has done to true country music. I first came across this sad attitude when I called up a supposed country radio station in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, while in college several years ago. I requested a Hank Williams Sr. tune and was told, "Sorry, he's too country."

I recently saw The Whites in concert during Dogpatch Days at Dogpatch, USA, a theme park here in Arkansas. Sharon White talked about the difficulty in getting some radio program directors to play one of The Whites' singles because, in their opinion, it was too country. Her rhetorical question to the audience was, "What do you do if you're a country group that's too country?" I liked Buck White's statement, "The only time you're too country is when you track it in the house." His comment reminds me of one Hank Sr. made once, "You've had to have surveyed a lot of farm land over the back of a mule to be a good country singer."

Yes, every artist should do what they want musically. However, as Dwight Yoakam points out, it really does do the

describes is exactly what the station is aiming at. "We try to establish a one-to-one relationship with our listeners," he says. "Friendly. If somebody is lonely, that they would like to listen to you."

Raymond describes Galesburg as a railroad and farm community with medium-to-light industry. The 50-watt station reaches about 45 miles, covering 11 counties. Raymond Smith has switched to other duties at the station, but Jon Raymond is carrying on. He has never been nominated as DJ of the Year or ever tried to be, but he believes the station can match any other in a 35,000 or so market.

As for WAAG's stand on traditional versus contemporary, Jon says the station tries to play the best music possible. "We have no problem playing a modern, or crossover, song right next to a modern "traditional" song. As long as our listeners like it, we play it," he explains. Recently, they've added a Bruce Springsteen song to the rotation. It's doing fine.

Since the station takes an overall "modern" philosophy, in Program Director Jon's words, they've recently set up a Sunday morning show, *Country Classics*, where "we play the 'classic oldies' that we can't fit into the daily playlist." Listenership has been increasing over the past few years, so the station, Jon concludes, "will keep 'doing what we are doing' until indications prove otherwise. We appreciate listener input."  
—H.B.

SMALL TOWNS (ARE SMALLER...)	HOLLY DUNN
R.E.D. 30529	T. GRAHAM BROWN
SOME OLD SIDE ROAD	KEITH WHITLEY
TELL ME TRUE	JUICE NEWTON
THAT'S MY JOB	CONWAY TWITTY
I'M GONNA MISS YOU GIRL	M.M.M.
LYN' IN HIS ARMS AGAIN	FORESTER SISTERS
THIS MISSIN' YOU HEART	SAWYER BROWN
FACE TO FACE	ALAHAMA
I WON'T TAKE LESS	TANYA TUCKER
YOU CAN'T BLAME THE TRAIN	DON McLEAN
ONE STEP UP	SPRINGSTEEN
THE RIVER UNBROKEN	DOLLY PARTON
CRYING	ORRISON/LANG
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN	
RAGGED AND RIGHT	ANDERSON/JENNINGS
LOUISIANA RAIN	JOHN WESLEY RYLES
THIS OLD HOUSE	S.K.B.
SHOULDN'T IT BE EASIER	CHARLIE PRIDE
WILDER DAYS	BALLIE & THE BOYS
TOUCH AND GO CRAZY	LEE GREENWOOD
SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD	STEVE EARLE/DUKES
LIFE TURNED HER THAT WAY	RICKY VAN SHELTON
SANTA FE	BELLEMY BROTHERS

**WAAG playlist for 1/16/88.**



music of Hank, Lefty, Ernest, George (and others like them) an injustice to call today's crossover, pop-oriented music country. In addition, this kind of marketing insults my intelligence and borders on outright deception.

The idea of bringing rural music closer to the city is nothing new in American music. Bob Wills did it in the 1930's and 1940's. But at least he didn't try to call his music "country." As a matter of fact, he was offended when it was referred to as such. Mr. Wills never turned his back on his rural fans and he didn't deal in labels. He let his music speak for itself and the public responded. Sometimes I wish the marketing executives would heed the lessons his phenomenal career gave us. Dwight Yoakam seems to have learned those lessons. People *do* know music. Be it hillbilly, rock 'n' roll or anything in between.

I applaud Dwight Yoakam! He calls himself a "hillbilly," not the more subtle marketing title of "traditionalist." I can just see the executives cringing! There never has been anything wrong with being a hillbilly and Dwight Yoakam knows it!

R.A. Faris  
Harrison, Arkansas

## "FLOURISH AND ENDURE"

I can't resist the temptation to respond to Charlene Edwards' question in the Letters section in the November/December 1986 issue of *Country Music*, especially when she asks, "You hoedowners... what's wrong with 'pop country'?"

In the scramble to obliterate a wonderful American institution, the "cross-over" people seem bent on making country music into rock 'n' roll in veneration of the almighty dollar. Gone in "pop country" are the feelings and emotions that are hallmarks of our great country music, and they are replaced with mindless repetitions of a single word or phrase. Here is one "hoedowner" who is proud and thankful to hear and enjoy the music of George Jones, Ernest Tubb, Gene Watson and newcomer Randy Travis.

I sincerely believe that long after "pop country" has faded and is replaced by some other fad, traditional country music will flourish and endure.

Philip C. Hurley  
Ellsworth, Maine

## "JUST GIVE ME VARIETY, PLEASE"

In her letter in praise of Ronnie Milsap in the November/December 1986 issue, Charlene Edwards unwittingly raises some key points when she says, "To you hoedowners out there, what's wrong with 'pop country'? Variety is still the spice of life."

To that I would say there is nothing wrong with pop country if heard in modera-

**Public Station Plays Traditional**  
*Another station to add to the list. This one's in Tampa, Florida. Genie Houghtaling is a volunteer at the station. The Operations Manager comments also.*

Bev King was asking about radio stations that play traditional music. For what it's worth, there's a public FM station here in Tampa, Florida, that has a healthy dose of traditional music. There are about eight paid employees and maybe 100 or so volunteers. WMNF/88.5 FM, 70,000 watts, has *Mr. Ethnic's Old Time Mountain Music* from 5-7 P.M. the first Monday of each month. Every Thursday, 7-9 P.M., is *Traditional Music of the British Isles* (a lot of country music comes from British music). WMNF does a lot of folk and acoustic music in the mornings.

Every Tuesday from 5-7 P.M. is a show called *Country Music Memories* which is, to me, real country music—Hank Sr., Webb Pierce, Ernest Tubb, Loretta Lynn, etc. I've never considered The Everly Brothers, Elvis, Rick Nelson, etc., as "country"—I feel they fit the category of 1950's rock 'n' roll. The other 5-7 P.M. weekday time slots are bluegrass, which is really only about 40 years old, but draws on a *lot* of older music.

Genie Houghtaling  
Tampa, Florida

Operations Manager Cam Hendrix of WMNF has a few interesting points to add about the station's general policy and how they develop their playlist. But first, the station's most popular program is its *Bill and Phil Show*, also known as *The Sixties Show*, a daily mix of rock, country rock and folk rock laced with political commentary.

Cam credits the station's traditional listeners with having lent it major support over the years. As a public station, WMNF derives 70% of its budget from direct public contributions. In return, they plan their programming around listeners' requests and musical as opposed to commercial issues. "We don't like to make hits, not even for the station," Cam allows. "We choose programmers not for their knowledge of radio, but for their knowledge of music. We try to play a wide selection from each artist."

Listeners call in quite a bit, Cam says, especially on the bluegrass shows and the *Country Memories* show. "We usually play the song they ask for within 10 or 15 minutes—except for repeats."

Cam knows Genie. He says the station volunteers are about evenly divided between Northerners and Southerners—not too many native Floridians in the Tampa Bay area.  
—H.B.

tion. But much or most of what her hero, Ronnie, records is not even watered-down pop country. It is straight pop or rhythm and blues, period! I would like to ask Miss Edwards and others if they have any idea what it is like to never, repeat *never*, get to hear even one good straight country song by our favorites on the radio? Not even one song per year. Every country music station in the U.S. could cease playing Ronnie Milsap tomorrow and he could still be heard frequently on the "adult pop" (translation: housewife or elevator music) stations. It is as simple as changing the radio dial for Ronnie's fans to hear his songs.

Not the case with many of us. I like Hank Snow, The Sons of the Pioneers, Wilf Carter, Tex Ritter, and several dozen more of the biggest names ever in country music. I state flatly that I have never heard even one song on the radio by these performers in a full five years. Not from San Diego to Washington state! Yet the first three I mentioned are still active performers. Only last year, Hank Snow had a fine album released in duet with Willie Nelson. Did any reader hear it on the radio?

Wilf Carter may be eighty-plus, but like George Burns he is still hanging in there. I

will catch his act tonight on a package show in Seattle with Jimmy Dickens, Hank Thompson, Ferlin Husky and Kitty Wells. I have fifty of Wilf's albums clear up through 1981, but this great Canadian cowboy singer has not been heard on U.S. stations in 30 years. That's because he sings *western* music, the first no-no to all station program directors.

As Miss Edwards asks, what's wrong with variety? I, for one, would like to hear something more than syrupy love songs or low quality honky tonk songs (I didn't mean you, Ernest), the only two categories heard on U.S. country stations. Variety on a country music station should include train songs, bluegrass and Cajun music, truck driving songs, instrumental music, cowboy or western songs, novelty songs and many more varieties of what is termed "country music." As I am only in my forties, I don't consider myself a washed up old "hoedowner." Just give me variety, *please*.

One last parting shot: if others who feel as I do had continued buying the records of their favorite singers, those singers would still be recording today.

Karl Davidson  
Olympia, Washington



A.P., Maybelle with guitar, Sara with autoharp.

*The Original Carter Family had a genius for discovering songs—that was A.P.—and an innovative performing style—that was Sara and Maybelle. Together they laid part of the foundations of modern country music.*

## The Original Carter Family

**T**o the big-time recording scout from Victor records in New York, they were not very impressive. "He is dressed in overalls and the women are country women from way back there—calico clothes on—the children are very poorly dressed. They look like hillbillies." His name was A.P. Carter and the woman holding the little autoharp was his wife Sara; the other woman holding the big guitar was Sara's cousin Maybelle. They had driven an old Model A Ford twenty-five miles down mountain roads and across rocky streams to get to the record tryouts, and now they were face to face with a fast-talking moon-faced young man named Ralph Peer. It was the summer of 1927, in a temporary recording studio set up on State Street in the mountain town of Bristol, Tennessee. Country music history was about to go into high gear.

After their first audition Peer realized that these hillbillies could sing. "As soon as I heard Sara's voice," he recalled, "that was it. I knew it was going to be wonderful." And it was. The first song he recorded that hot August day, "Bury Me Under the Weeping Willow," was the start of the most incredible dynasty in the annals of American music. For fifty years now, some part of this original Carter Family has been a fixture on the country scene, from the pure folk sound of the original trio to the rock-flavored sound of Maybelle's granddaughter Carlene. "Carter Family songs" is a term that has become synonymous with old-time country standards, and includes a wide range of pieces either written by or introduced by The Carters: "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Keep on the Sunny Side," "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," "Hello, Stranger," and "Worried Man Blues" are just a few. "They didn't have gold records in those days," says a modern Nashville record executive. "But if they had, The Carters would have had a wall full."

Most of this foundation work was laid, of course, by the group people today have taken to calling "The Original Carter Family"—to distinguish them from the various later Carter Families or Carter offshoots. It's that original group that got voted into the Hall of Fame in 1970, and whose scratchy, primitive 1920's and 1930's

records still stay in print in an age of CD's and digital tape. They made six records for Peer that day in 1927 and went back to their mountain farm. A.P. returned to his regular job of selling fruit trees. It wasn't until three months later, when the local Victor dealer hunted A.P. up to give him his first royalty check, that the trio began to sense that there might be something to the record business. Not long after that they were brought up to New York, where they recorded again—and did a song called "Wildwood Flower." In it Maybelle figured out a way to pick the melody on the lower strings of her guitar while she strummed chords on the higher strings, thereby creating the most influential guitar style in country music. The song itself was an old one A.P. had learned in the mountains; though he didn't know it, it was actually an old 1859 composition that had been a hit in sheet music form before the Civil War. If there had ever been any doubt about the Carters' popularity on records, "Wildwood Flower" ended it. Not only was it sold by record stores around the country, but editions of it were also peddled by Sears-Roebuck in their catalogue, by Montgomery Ward and by dime-store chains like Woolworth.

In the years from 1927 until 1941, The Carters went on to record some 270 records for every major American label. There were old folk songs, gospel songs, blues, comedy songs, sentimental tear-jerkers and even a few social protest songs like "Coal Miner's Blues" and "No Depression in Heaven." And though A.P. was supposedly the leader of the group, and the emcee at their stage shows, most of the music was really done by Sara and Maybelle. Maybelle later recalled of A.P.: "If he felt like singing, he would sing, and if he didn't he would walk around and look at the window. So we never depended on him for anything." In one sense, then, The Carter Family could be thought of as country music's first successful female singing group, since most of the records focused on Sara and Maybelle's duet work. A.P.'s great

talent was finding songs; he would travel far into the mountains to seek out old ones, some of them hundreds of years old, and then rearrange them and rework them for modern tastes.

Unlike modern stars, The Carters never really figured out how to capitalize on their record hits. As late as 1929 they were not even performing regularly on tours or on radio, and A.P. was even working in Detroit for a time. Their idea of promoting a tour was having a bunch of handbills printed up ("This program is morally good," read one), tacking them up to trees and storefronts and renting a country schoolhouse to play for two hundred people. As early as 1933 Sara and A.P. had separated, but got back together again when the group finally got a chance at big-time radio—broadcasting over XERA, the notorious "border radio" station that beamed its powerful signal all over the United States. This was in 1938, and by now the Carter show included Maybelle's youngest daughter, Anita, and A.P. and Sara's 15-year-old daughter, Janette; Maybelle's older girls, Helen and June, joined the show the next year. Thousands of fan letters were pouring in, and for a time it looked as if the group would finally begin to reap some of their rewards.

But in 1939 A.P. and Sara split for good, and Sara moved to California; XERA went off the air in 1941. There was time for one last get-together—a six-month contract at station WBT in Charlotte. A photographer from *Life Magazine* came down to do a major photo spread on them; it looked like the big national break might come after all. The photographer filled up a waste basket with flash bulbs, but the story never came out: war news pushed it out of the issue. When the contract ended, finally, Sara decided to really call it quits. A.P. went back to his home in the mountains of Virginia, and Maybelle started up a new act featuring herself and her daughters. All the Carters would stay active in music for another twenty years, but the original trio was history. Their legacy was a hundred great songs and a definition of duet singing—enough to be an inspiration to hundreds of later entertainers, from Ricky Skaggs to Bill Monroe, from Linda Ronstadt to Emmylou Harris.

—CHARLES WOLFE

**Albums Available**  
See For Members Only page.

## COLLECTIONS

### Information, Please

Write to these members directly.

• Trying to find record or tape of "One More Night With You" by Jimmy Doyle. Used to perform in Las Vegas in mid-1960's. Charles R. Shoemaker, 1109 Ave. I, Boulder City, NV 89005.

• Looking for a song with the following words: In my travels round this world/So many nights I've been alone/My dreams are always of you/When we're together, dear/I've never really told you how I feel/I wonder if you really know, I love you so/I want you to know... Drop me a line with title and who sang it. Sung by a male singer many years ago. Mrs. James Bayliss, 911 Division St., Webster City, IA 50595.

• Need a special Johnny Rodriguez release put out on TV offer in 1980 by Lake Shore Music, *The Best of Johnny Rodriguez*. Carol J. Schefler, Rt. 2 Box 157-C, Newman Grove, NE 68758.

• Wanted to buy: three early Reba McEntire tapes or albums, *Heart to Heart*, *Out of a Dream* and *Reba McEntire*. Michelle Jeffries, 13073 Hodgenville Rd., Campbellsville, KY 42718.

• Willing to pay the price to get a copy of Waylon Jennings' *Honky Tonk Heroes*. Al Bukoski, 2444 Hermansal, Saginaw, MI 48602.

• Please help me find these recordings: "If You Were Mine to Lose," Conway Twitty; "Crazy Dreams," Cates Sisters; "Soft Rain" and "Somewhere in Texas," Ray Price; "Three Sheets in the Wind," Reba McEntire and Jacky Ward; "You Still Get to Me in My Dreams," Tammy Wynette; "I Don't Think About Her Anymore," Shilo; "Here in Frisco," Merle Haggard; and the words to "Someone Will Love Me in Heaven" if I can't get the recording. Wanda Owen, Box 254, Paris, AR 72855.

• Looking for Elvis items, book, poster, whatever, especially words to "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" and book *Elvis, What Happened* by Red and Sonny West. Brenda West, Box 593, Mt. Pleasant, TN 38474.

• Looking for copy of song "Please Tell Him I Said Hello" by Debbie Campbell (Playboy 6037). Lowell Highby, Box 83, Garvin, MN 56132.

• Seeking Kris Kristofferson memorabilia, articles, lobby cards, photos, some records, especially the Dell magazine on him. Carol Ristau, 6901 S.W. 26th Ct., Miramar, FL 33023.

• Looking for deck of 1981 Statler

Bros. playing cards, new or used. Have old country records, Gene Autry, Roy Acuff and others. E. Haine, 2600 W. Co. Rd. 60-E, Ft. Collins, CO 80524.

• Looking for version of Judy Rodman's "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight" done several years ago by a male singer. Interested in name of singer and/or record. Carol MacDonald, 6227 Tillen Rd., Boston, NY 14025.

• Trying to find records or tapes of the following songs: Eddy Arnold's "I Walk Alone," "I'm Throwing Rice," "It's a Sin," "Mommy, Please Stay Home With Me," "That's How Much I Love You," "Don't Rob Another Man's Castle," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Love Bug Itch," "I Want to Play House With You," "I Really Don't Want to Know," "Just Out of Reach," "This Is the Thanks I Get"; Faron Young's "Going Steady," "Tattletale Tears," "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young," "It's a Great Life," "Have I Waited Too Long," "Just Married," "Sweet Dreams," "If You Ain't Loving," "It's Saturday Night"; Elton Britt's "Chime Bells"; Ernest Tubb's "Don't Look Now." Also Eddy Arnold albums, *All-Time Favorites*, *Anytime*, *One More Time* and *Eddy Arnold Sings Them Again*; Faron Young album, *This is Faron Young*. Dr. Cornelius Voorhies Jr., 127 Center St., New Iberia, LA 70560.

For Arnold, *All-Time Favorites* see *Buried Treasures* this issue. -Ed.

• Looking for album *Ray Sanders*, by Ray Sanders (United Artists 6822). Carlene Knox, 5 Wood Duck La., Russellville, AR 72801.

• For Sale: country music albums, 45's and 78's, most dating back to the 1950's. Send long SASE for list. Nancy Nazaruk, 6 Skyline Dr., Audubon, PA 19403.

• For Sale: two cases of 45's, various artists. Write what record you want and by whom. I will see if I have it. Mrs. Mary Barker, 306 Young Ave., Nocona, TX 76255.

• Desperately searching for VCR tape of *Merle Haggard: Poet of the Common Man* televised six months ago on TNN. Dean Miller, 215 S. Park, Iowa Park, TX 76367.

• Wanted: Barbara Mandrell, *This Time I Almost Made It* (Col KC

32959). Also, Louise Mandrell 45's (Epic). Elvin Moore Jr., 9-531 Rd. B Rt. 3, Leipsic, OH 45856.

• Will pay premium price for Skeets McDonald's last album on UNI label; must be in mint or excellent condition. Edw. R. Tims, Rt. 8 Box 4A, Piedmont, SC 29673.

• Looking for album or single of Dotie West singing "Here Comes My Baby Back Again" and Gary Nunn's "London Homesick Blues." Bette Radavich, R. 6 Box 6880, Hayward, WI 54843.

• Looking for recording of Bobby Bare singing "Drop Kick Me, Jesus, Through the Goal Post of Life." Louise Wilson, 4653 Hatrick Rd., Ravenna, OH 44266.

• Need a list of the Top 100 Country songs 1940-1987. Have 3000 albums and 2000 45's which I want to put on cassettes by the year that they were popular. Doris Rickerd, 15705 Baldwin Rd., Chesaning, MI 48616.

*Billboard* publishes a list in book form. Check with them. -Ed.

• Looking for magazines, photos, video tapes, etc., on Louise Mandrell, plus her album *Inseparable*. Mrs. Dennis Robinson, 448 N. Colony, Apt. 2, Wallingford, CT 06492.

• Will pay reasonable price for Waylon Jennings' album *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* (AFL-4854), in excellent or mint condition. Also Boxcar Willie's *No More Trains to Ride*, same condition. Bonnie Speer, Box 14, Plainview, AR 72857.

• Looking for following items on Sawyer Brown: first three singles, "Leona," "Step That Step," "Used to Blue"; 1985 *Country Music Magazine* article; *Cashbox Magazine* with Sawyer Brown on cover; other articles; 8 1/2 x 11 studio pictures from 1984-85. Tami Garcia, 3215 Dalhi St., Cocoa, FL 32926.

• Looking for Reba McEntire's first album, *Reba McEntire*, recorded on Mercury in 1977. Also her first single, "I Don't Want to Be a One-Night Stand," and "Three Sheets in the Wind" sung with Jacky Ward. Sonya Wallace, Rt. 1 Box 470, Deatsville, AL 36022.

• Looking for old records and albums. Records are: "The Death of Cathy Fiscus" by Jimmy Osborn about 1945 and "Please, Mommy, Please" -don't know who it is by. Also Patsy Cline or Kitty Wells albums. Constance Parker, Box 1995 Rt. 1, Nicholson, GA 30565.

• Interested in finding an E.P. by Dwight Yoakam released on Oak label before his first album; also newspaper and magazine articles, photos, anything else about Dwight. Hope Williams, Box 81,

Lebanon, GA 30146.

• Need three Ronny Robbins 45's to complete my set: "The Last Lie I Told Her" (Arctic 8781), "Why'd the Last Time Have to Be the Best" (Arctic 8782), "You Don't Cry" (Thunder dj copy). Any reasonable price. Mary Lee Lockerby, 2509 Ferris, Detroit, MI 48209.

• Looking for title, artist and if possible label and number of song that may have been by Eddy Arnold, may have been titled "Just for Awhile." Chorus was: *Just for awhile, I owned heaven for awhile / So I'll remember you and my poor lonely heart will smile / And when the leaves of autumn fall / Or in spring when bluebirds call / I won't be blue for after all / You were mine for just awhile*. Used to hear it a lot in mid-to-late 1950's over KXLA, Pasadena. Verda Rasmussen, Rt. 2 Box 21, Worland, WY 82401.

• Would like a tape of day-long tribute to Marty Robbins broadcast over WSM/Nashville, Sept. 28, 1987. Would supply tapes required or pay. Edie Brown, 3205 Park Pl., Evanston, IL 60201.

• Have thousands of country albums. If there is a special album someone wants, I probably have it. Can't handle a lot of orders, but would be willing to help a few. Send want list with indication of what you will pay and SASE. Anyone interested in buying complete collection, contact me also. Chuck Henderson, 129 Elaine Dr., Cordell, OK 73632.

• Swedish collector of country music needs *autographed* albums. Also anything on George Jones, magazines, photos, live tapes, videos. Also Jimmy Swaggart on video. Would correspond with girls my age. I am 33. Bertil Gustafsson, Hokhult, S-59042 Horn, Sweden.

• Wanted: photos, magazines, 45's, any other memorabilia on 1960's-1970's country singer Jody Miller. Patty Hammond, 7913 W. North Ave., Wauwatosa, WI 53213.

### Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail.

• I would like to have a pen pal. I love all country music from A to Z. I love your magazine too. I love Hank Williams Sr. and Jr., Jerry Clower, The Judds, and George Jones. Scott Carter, 119 34th Street, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266.

Send material for Newsletter to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Ave., Suite 2118, NY, NY 10173. Include membership number. Mark your envelope, Attention: Newsletter.

### Caught Up

We are now caught up on our Information, Please backlog. While we were doing so, we found some old letters from 1986 in our file. We are writing to those members individually to see if they would still like to see those requests published.

# Don Williams Is In It For A Song

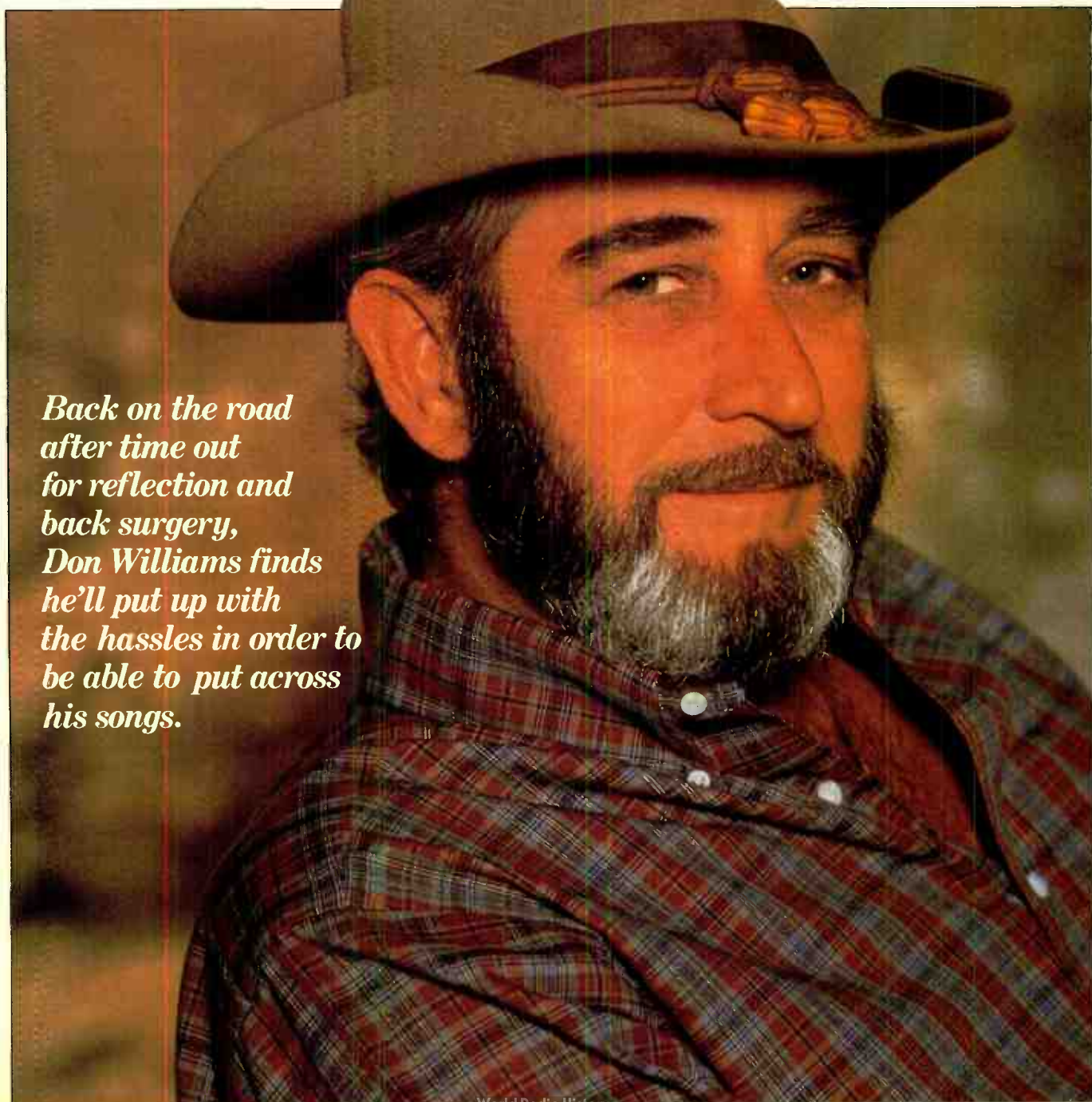
— by John Morthland —

**D**on Williams has my kind of "office." It's what most of us know as The Kettle, a chain coffee shop attached in this case to a La Quinta motel adjacent to Nashville's Metro Center. Don likes to do business here when possible because then he doesn't have to brave the traffic snarls further in town where his *real* office is. He usually takes table 28, though he's not the kind of guy who would try to pull rank on somebody already sitting there.

As he enters the coffee shop on a brisk autumn morning around 10 A.M., after the businessmen have finished filling up on their breakfast buffets but well before the lunch crowd is ready to go burger-hunting,

somebody *is* sitting at his favored table: me. I have already been directed there by Faye, who turns out to be blessed with a condition that prevents her from being able to stop pouring fresh cups of coffee, which makes her my kind of waitress. Like the other workers here, she knows Don's face well, though she remains casual about his presence, which is what makes this so much Don's kind of place. He had been worried enough, however, that *I* might not recognize him that he had called his publi-

*Back on the road after time out for reflection and back surgery, Don Williams finds he'll put up with the hassles in order to be able to put across his songs.*



# TAMMY WYNETTE

**W**e are in a jam-packed auditorium at the Jacksonville fairgrounds in Florida, experiencing a Tammy Wynette concert late in the year 1987. It is approximately a quarter of a century since the lady first came to our attention singing "Apartment #9" out of Nashville, Tennessee.

Now as then, the sound of her voice defines a certain world more immediately than that of any other woman singer. Very simply, and loudly and clearly, it says "country." Tammy's diction, her phrasing, the emotion coursing through her performances and peaking in those eternal instants when her voice breaks the way only her voice can; these elements add up to a symbol as instantly and universally recognizable as the flag of a great nation.

What is true of how she sounds is also true of what her songs say and how they say it. The themes of struggle and loss and heartbreak (and sometimes triumph) in everyday life—in marriage, in the family, in the business of just getting by—are classically country, both directly told and directly relevant to the lives of the people who claim country music as their own. And of course they're also immediately definitive among those who see the white (wo)man's blues from an emotional or cultural distance. Ask any New York cabbie or London punk or Tokyo head-banger what country's all about, and likely as not "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" or "Stand By Your Man" will crop up early in the response. They might love those songs and the sound of Tammy singing them, or they might despise them, but they *will* be under the impression that they're it—they're where country music's

heart is to be found—and they'll be right.

Here in Jacksonville, then, Tammy's concert is a familiarly heartfelt affair. The presence of the First Lady of Country Music, elegantly svelte and plain-folks friendly and powerful of voice, is confirming and exciting and much appreciated. Here's the sharecropper farm girl and housewife who made it, mature and glamorous now but still very similar to her crowd in the ways that matter, back among her people singing the personal truth. And so, if there is a bottom line to this event, it must be that everybody here is getting what they want; in this particular place and time, things are as they should be.

That is a happy conclusion—Tammy continuing the way you figure she always has and probably always will throughout her time—but it is not one anybody really had, or ever has, a right to expect. Quite often the facts of a person's life intrude uncomfortably into such pleasant arrangements. In the case of Tammy Wynette that is all too painfully true, for what we have here is not an unbroken continuance of things as they should be; it is a First Lady of Country Music who in the past decade fell to the commercial recording status of an also-ran, developed a reputation for extreme unreliability in matters like delivering a good show or any show at all, and is now faced with that most difficult of all show business challenges, a comeback.

In a way that is par for the course in country music, a tradition just as ingrained as the rags-to-riches theme. Our idols are almost expected to fall from grace. Their careers are supposed to be subverted by personal problems

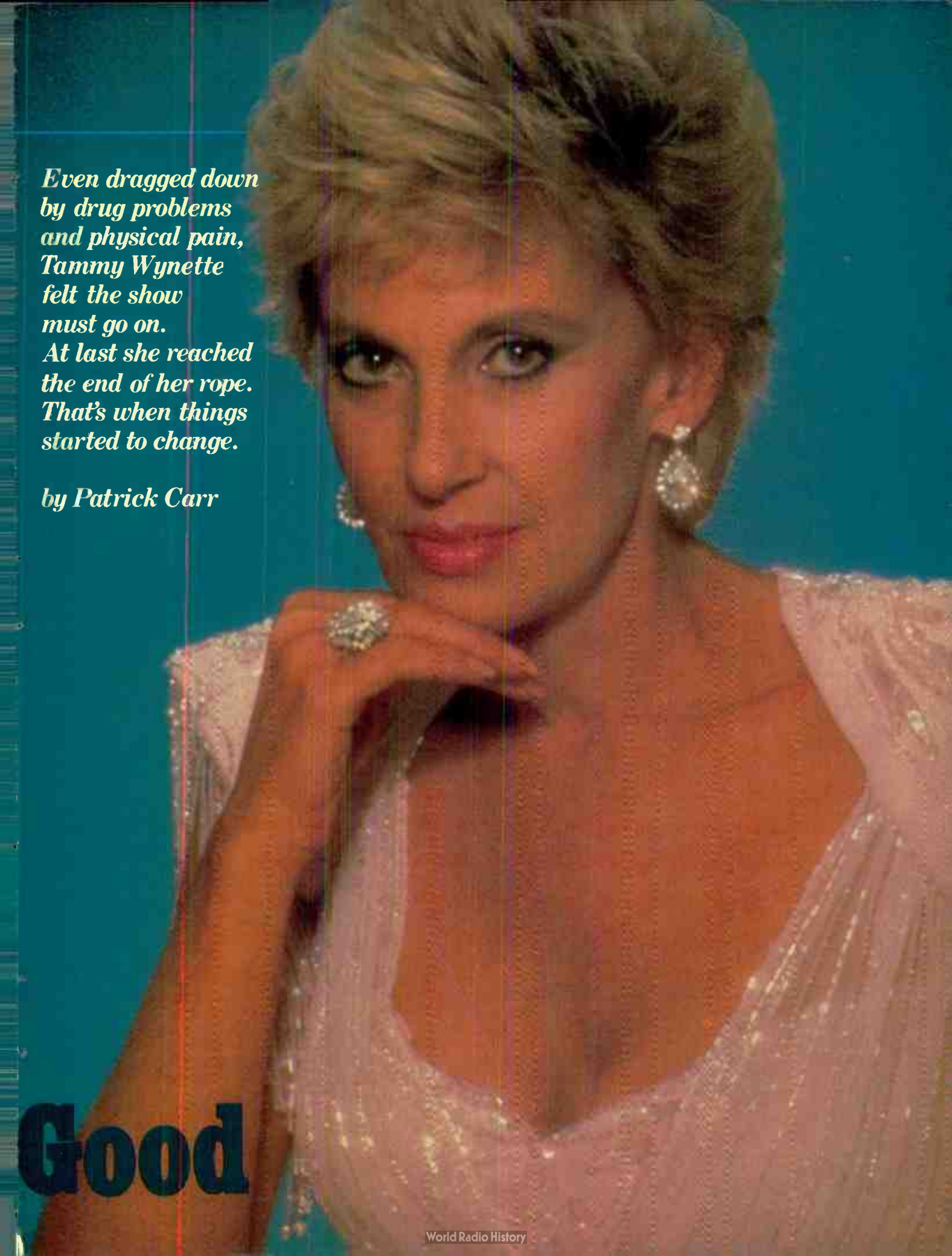
just as tough or better yet tougher than those we face ourselves. They almost have to meet and know the beasts and gargoyles of temptation and tragedy with more than usual intimacy, and falter and fall in their company; skid spectacularly on the ice of the white man's blues, crash and even burn on life's highway. Then, ideally, they can return from whatever hell they've seen and sing to us from experience, and we can value them more highly for the knowledge that they have suffered.

Less ideally, of course, they can stay in their hell, failed and gone beyond redemption, or even just plain die; this is hard core reality, after all, not some showbiz fantasy with a guaranteed happy ending. But whatever the outcome, they're behaving "country"; we know and value the plot elements of the drama precisely because they and the people who live them are so real.

You can speculate about the reasons why the drama of temptation and damnation and possible redemption is so prevalent and meaningful in country music—it must, I think, reverberate in the spaces between strict Christian childhoods and the anything-goes morality of show business, between dire early poverty and suddenly enormous later wealth, between the rooted small-world closeness of the country family and the rootless, ego-twisting kaleidoscope of a world where everybody knows your name but nobody knows your heart—but whatever its sources, the drama just keeps on playing, generation after generation and individual after individual.

Sitting down in late 1987 to hear the story of Tammy Wynette's particular decline and fall and redemption, then, is

# It Feels Good To Feel



*Even dragged down  
by drug problems  
and physical pain,  
Tammy Wynette  
felt the show  
must go on.*

*At last she reached  
the end of her rope.  
That's when things  
started to change.*

*by Patrick Carr*

**Good**

an event with a strong sense of *deja vu* about it. I already know the broad outlines and structure of the story which will emerge—I've heard and written a dozen of them just in the last couple of years, the names and details varying but the bones as familiar as my own—and so I'm confident; I know what the questions must be. I know too that the story has a happy ending, so the questioning process won't be awkward; the subject will cooperate. And ultimately I'm a happy journalist; certain that this story will constitute "good copy," I'm looking forward to its revelation.

But still, when Tammy begins by telling me she's feeling good, and then her smile breaks hugely and freely over her face as she adds, "God, it feels *good* to feel good," I feel that old familiar shiver of something much more personal than hot copy on the way. I'm looking into the eyes of another walking miracle, god-damit. It's beautiful, but it's a bitch, isn't it?

**T**ammy Wynette is an honest, uncalculating person. If you ask her personal questions, she won't hedge or dance or otherwise avoid you; she will tell you the unvarnished truth as she knows it. So today, explaining her last few years of problems, she begins at the beginning.

The beginning was a physiological fact which was already causing trouble fifteen years ago: extensive internal adhesions—scar tissue—resulting from repeated surgery to her stomach. "I guess there's a lot of stress in the kind of life we singers lead, and it shows itself in various ways," she says. "Loretta Lynn gets bleeding ulcers; I get adhesions. She sets the record for exhaustion; I set the record for surgery. Seventeen operations so far."

It was one particular surgical procedure, conducted in Florida five years ago, which instigated her personal and professional decline. Working to create a new opening from her stomach into her intestine because the arrangement with which she was born had been compromised, the surgeons unknowingly created more of a problem than they cured.

Tammy remembers it well. "They had to work around so much scar tissue in there already that they ended up creating a new opening that was too small, and in the wrong place," she says, "so for four and a half years, whenever I ate my stomach would distend; the food had no way of leaving my body, so my stomach would swell to where I looked like I was six months pregnant, and I was in constant pain. All the time."

At that point human nature, in the form of fear and procrastination, entered the picture: "I should have

*"You sit around and compare experiences with other people who have problems like yours, and that's the biggest eye-opener of all."*



stopped working immediately and said, 'Something's wrong; let's correct it,' but after having as many operations as I'd had, I was not too eager to admit I had to have another one. So I kept putting it off, and I took pills to control the pain."

Specifically Tammy took three different kinds of pills: Esgic, Valium, and Demerol, "not always together, sometimes one, two, sometimes all three."

The regular ingestion of any mood-altering pill or other substance is of course potentially addictive psychologically at the very least, but Tammy's combination was a real winner. Valium scores only in the mid-upper range on the physically addictive index but is notoriously addictive psychologically, while Demerol is among the real royalty of prescription drugs; an opiate, it is as immediately and powerfully physically addictive as its pharmaceutical first cousin, heroin. So with these two potent little arrangements of molecules having their way with her, the First Lady of Country Music became a full-fledged drug addict only days after she first began taking them. She was just as hooked and helpless as any street junkie with a needle in his arm.

In some ways her life became very similar to that of such a person, for instance in the psychological pattern of addiction. "Even though I had the pain and the pills helped it, psychologically I

got to the point where I had to have the stuff anyway," she says. "I'd take it when I wasn't hurting bad enough to have to."

And like the street junkie alternately condemned and pitied by the sober citizenry, she encountered both sides of our society's schizophrenic attitude towards addiction (though since she was hooked on prescription drugs as opposed to contraband narcotics, her transactions were with doctors, not pushers and policemen). "They wouldn't taper the medicine before I left the hospital, which was a problem; I'd check out totally hooked," she remembers. "I'm not blaming anybody though, because I would demand a shot—and I usually got it. It worked the other way, too. Being who I am, I either got anything I wanted or they had the attitude, 'I'm not going to give her *anything*;' I'll show her!" I had one doctor who absolutely refused to give me anything to stop the pain after major surgery, so I had to go home and check myself into another hospital where they would."

In one crucial way, however, her situation didn't resemble that of most addicts at all. The very obvious, immediate short-term rewards of both addictive and "recreational" drug use or drinking—the achievement of a high of one sort or another (more self-perceived personal power, less inhibition, greater





**Tammy gets by with a little help from her friends. On her current album, *Higher Ground*, Larry, Steve and Rudy Gatlin added background harmonies to the title song.**



**Emmylou Harris (pictured with producer Steve Buckingham) helped out on "*Beneath a Painted Sky*," and Ricky Van Shelton added his vocals as part of the harmonies on "*A Slow Burning Fire*."**

calm or sexiness or humor or whatever—did not accrue to Ms. Wynette when stoned. In fact, the whole business was a bumner from the start. "It didn't make me feel good," she says. "That was the worst part. It killed the pain, but it dragged me down. It didn't give me a lift at all; it just depressed me."

Quite predictably, her work suffered. "I didn't want to quit work to go have surgery, and I didn't want anyone to know that I was still sick—many of the show promoters I worked for were very understanding, but some had got to the point of saying 'What? Sick again? This is ridiculous!'—so I just kept taking the pills, and things just got worse and worse. My shows were going downhill, and sometimes I was so dragged down by the pills I couldn't do a show at all. But you know, I'm from the old school, so I thought the show must go on, no matter what, and I just tried to keep going the way I was."

So she muddled along somehow, either wracked by pain or depressed by drugs, but things just got worse for her and everyone around her, and slowly the pressure to change the way she was living mounted.

Most significantly the pressure came from her family, husband/manager George Richey and her children. "The kids were very concerned, and they talked to me about it, and I couldn't

count the times Richey said, 'You're taking too many pills,'" Tammy remembers. "He'd say, 'I know you have pain, but the thing to do is stop and find out what's causing the pain.'"

It all came to a head one night in Laughlin, Nevada. "I'd done my first show, and I was back in the dressing room with another show to do, and I just fell apart. I just couldn't do another show. I'd taken some pills, but I was still hurting, and I knew that if I took any more, I'd be just a total zombie. So there I was, with no way out. I couldn't stand the pain, and I couldn't stand to take more pills. That's when Richey said, 'It's time to go to the Betty Ford Center,' and I said, 'Yes, it is.' I cancelled the show, and the next day we took a Lear jet to the center."

The journey was just one step, but it was the biggest Tammy had ever taken.

**T**he Betty Ford Center program, an intense and highly structured affair of group therapy, alcoholism and drug abuse education, exercise, and other components designed to both reveal an addictive person's problems and point out ways of living successfully with them, taught Tammy a lot more than she already knew about herself.

The very first learning tool was the First Step of the Alcoholics Anonymous

*Twelve Steps Program*, a cornerstone of the Center's approach to treatment of drug addiction as well as alcoholism: *We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable*. The key word there is "powerless"; the problem is not manageable by willpower.

That was a radical idea, for Tammy had grown up, and gone through her entire life until checking into the Betty Ford Center, thinking of alcoholics and addicts the way the older members of her family had: as weaklings at best, sinners at worst. She remembers her grandfather, the tee-totaller Mississippi sharecropper who raised her, coming home one day after a visit to a neighbor's house and telling his wife, "Flora, I'm not goin' back there again. He had beer in that refrigerator; I saw it!"

As she had been raised, so she lived. "I never, ever took any kind of pill, or drank, until I became addicted after operation after operation," she says, "and I see now how ignorant I was. When Jones and I were married, I didn't understand his alcohol problem at all. I thought he should be able to just stop drinking; it was ridiculous, he could stop if he *wanted* to! I know I probably caused him an awful lot of grief and hurt because I didn't understand any better than I did, but well, that's in the past. There's nothing I can do about it now. At least now I know that nobody really wants to live that way. It's just something that happens that you can't control, and unless you get help you have very little chance of beating it."

She progressed from that understanding to the next three A.A. Steps: *Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity; Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him; Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves*. And then, having experienced the psychological and spiritual housecleaning those steps bring about, she took her Fifth Step: *Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs*. This she did in front of her therapy group, and then to a clergyman.

All of which, to an outsider, might seem excessive for a lady who after all had apparently been getting by just fine before falling more or less accidentally into drug addiction—but as Tammy says, the experience taught her that she has an addictive personality, a set of characteristics working not just to lay her open to substance abuse but to make for unhappiness in her life in general.

For example, she says, "I found out that I hold things in that I shouldn't. When I'm upset about something, I



PHOTO VICKY HOUSTON

**Flashback:** As the King and Queen of country music with George Jones and with current husband George Richey on their wedding day.

should voice my opinion right then instead of waiting, holding a grudge. The problem is, you see, that I don't get angry easily, but when I do, I say things that five minutes later I'd give a million dollars not to have said. But I'm too stubborn to say 'I'm sorry' right then. I'm so mad I can't think straight."

Tammy admits that she's reacted to people in this fashion all her life, and it's caused all sorts of problems. The pattern came, of course, from her childhood.

"The way I was raised, the woman had very little to say in anything," she remembers. "The man's word was God in our home. It's still that way where I was raised. We didn't know there was anything wrong with that, and even though I think women should have an equal role, period, I'm not saying now that there is...but anyway, that's just the way it was done in our home, and I was not *about* to say anything about it. I was scared to death to raise my voice. I didn't like a lot of what I was told to do, but I did it, and I guess that's just the way I saw things."

Tammy notes that this training, combined with her powerful urge to have her own way as an adult, is at the root of her slow-burn/explosion problem. It's a pain, but she's learning. "At least now I know I have the problem," she laughs, "and I cope with it as best I can."

The key to coping is something else she learned at the Betty Ford Center: the core fact of healthy emotional life: "I come first. Nobody else; not my children, not my mother or father, not my husband. I have to take care of *my* self, or I'm no good to the rest of the family."

She pauses. "God, it's a great program," she says. "It's very hard—at times you feel like a schoolkid being punished severely for something you've

done—but other times it's fun. You sit around and compare experiences with other people who have problems like yours, and that's the biggest eye-opener of all: you realize that you're not unique, that you have a disease lots of other people have too, and so you begin to stop feeling so guilty about yourself. You just accept that you have this problem, and set about dealing with it. And for that you have all the help in the world."

**T**ammy did not complete the whole of her Betty Ford Center program, for while she was working on her emotional and spiritual self, her physical self was still in bad trouble; it let her know just how bad after three weeks at the Center, when she was rushed into surgery one more time. And that meant more post-operative pain, and more pills to control it.

"God, that was discouraging, to have to go back on those damned things," Tammy says now—but she made it through, and she did the right thing. She checked into the Mayo Clinic for a period of eleven weeks, during which some fifteen hours of surgery, entailing a "complete reorganization of my stomach," finally cured the problem which had set her on her downward path almost five years before. And this time, as soon as the pain dropped to a tolerable level, the doctors started tapering her dosages, so that the pain and the addiction died away together.

The end product of the process is the smiling woman in Jacksonville, who can say, "That chapter's closed now. It surfaces from time to time. I think about what it was like when I was taking the pills, but they're not something I *want* because I feel so much better. I can eat.

In the years I was taking pills, everything I ate hurt—I lost a tremendous amount of weight—but now I eat constantly. I can't eat as much as I used to because they removed part of my stomach in the last surgery, but I'm constantly at it. I get up three or four times every night to go raid the icebox; my housekeeper says, 'Oh-ho, the mouse has been here again!' I still haven't gained any weight—I'm still at about 110—but food tastes *great*, and I feel really good."

And yes, things are as they should be. In her professional world Tammy's *Higher Ground* album has broken a pattern of halfhearted and halfheartedly promoted records—with a viable professional to go out there and do her best, CBS Records is once again working its side of the record-selling arrangement—while in her personal world there is now room for the normal joys and sadnesses her pain and addiction had relegated to a position of relative unimportance. As we speak, Christmas is just around the corner, and Tammy, now a grandmother as well as a mother and stepmother of children departed from her nest, is looking forward to the holiday influx. She's already completed her entire Christmas shopping list, and is luxuriating in anticipation of the moment her huge Nashville house comes alive again with the turmoil of family life.

"The old saying is really true, you know," she says. "When your children are small, they walk on your feet. When they grow, they walk on your heart. But I'm a grandmother now, so I'm having all that grandmother-type fun. My grandchildren just worship me, and of course I give them anything they want...you know, just like every other grandmother."

At this point Tammy and I begin talking about kids in college and parental hopes and frustrations and all that kind of stuff, and then we move along into the subject of what it's like for a woman to try to divide her life between the violently conflicting roles of mother and professional singing star.

What Tammy has to say about both sides of that subject—all her stories and feelings from 25 years with four husbands and several housefuls of kids and all manner of adventures on the road and in the studios and offices of Music City—would make lively reading. In a way, then, it's a shame that it's not included in this article. But that's okay. The story you've just read is the most important one. Now that it's over, now that the life-threatening chapter is closed and Tammy is back among the fully living, it's a good bet that there will be time for all the other stories. Things with Tammy might not have turned out that way, but they did. ■

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1st person story by Tedd Mainwaring

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*Tedd Mainwaring*

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**T**here they stand, six of them, casually stylish in their custom-made Retro-Western show clothes. The sharp, bright outfits lend a raffish edge to the atmosphere of composed vitality that surrounds them, the quiet but potent energy of competent, well-travelled gentlemen in the prime of life.

Their music too is stylish. It's a rich, multi-textured coat of many colors from the country fabric hamper of their home, the Golden State of California—the Anglo-Appalachian and Mexican folk music of the first settlers, the long commercial recording tradition stretching from the Hollywood cowboys and balladeers of the 1930's and 1940's and 1950's to the hard-country Bakersfield boys of the 1960's, the electrified "alternative" Los Angeles country introduced by The Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers during the hippie days—and they have made the garment quite exceptionally well, fitted it very nicely indeed to themselves. They wear it easily, with natural grace. These guys, The Desert Rose Band, quite obviously have some experience in such matters.

That in fact is an understatement, for in The Desert Rose Band we have something more than interpreters of tradition; we have its creators, musicians who have themselves been prime movers in the various streams of California country these past twenty years or so.

Look at their credentials. Bill Bryson has been playing bluegrass bass around the state since 1961, working on movie soundtracks (including Ry Cooder's wonderful score for *The Long Riders*), and touring nationally with The Bluegrass Cardinals and Country Gazette. Steve Duncan has drummed for Freddy Fender and The Burrito Brothers and Emmylou Harris and Roger Miller, with whom he has also produced records. Guitarist John Jorgensen has ranged from Rose Maddox's country band to Benny Goodman's jazz orchestra to the New Age music Wyndham Hill Extravaganza. Jay Dee Maness' pedal steel guitar was a key ingredient of the Buck Owens sound; since then it has graced hundreds of records by everybody from The Byrds to The Carpenters to Glen Campbell and Arlo Guthrie, and won Jay Dee the Academy of Country Music's "Steel Player of the Year" award no less than eight times. Herb Pedersen's banjo and vocal harmonies have supported Linda Ronstadt, Kris Kristofferson, Anne Murray, Kenny Rogers, Buck Owens, John Denver and a list of other country and pop performers as long and varied as the Pacific Coast Highway; lately, it was his vocal harmony arrangements which wove the styles of Emmylou Harris,

# CHRIS HILLMAN THE DESERT ROSE BAND

*Each member of this seasoned group has weathered his own personal storm in the music industry. Now, as Chris Hillman and The Desert Rose Band, they are enjoying a success and acceptance in the country field they envisioned almost 20 years ago/by Patrick Carr*

Linda Ronstadt and Dolly Parton so well on their lovely *Trio* album.

At one time or another in the past two decades, all these musicians have worked with each other and with just about everybody else whose name crops up on the personnel credits of made-in-California country music, so really, in The Desert Rose Band you have just about as definitive a California country/pop/folk/bluegrass outfit as you might wish for in the 1980's.

There remains, however, one more rather important ingredient: their leader, the man who got them all together and who writes and sings most of their material. And that gentleman is most certainly a heavyweight. In most circles other than those occupying the very center of the main stream of commercial Nashvillian country music—that is, among music critics, cultural historians, country-rock fans, bluegrass nuts and the broad spectrum of people who came of age with their ears open in the 1960's—it is not at all uncommon for the words "the legendary" to precede the name Chris Hillman.

**L**od, I really don't want to dwell on the history," says our man. "I want to talk about *this* band. It's far more exciting than anything I've already done."

Therefore we talk about The Desert Rose Band, which is an outgrowth of a four-man acoustic band Chris put

together with Jorgenson, Bryce, and Pedersen in 1985 to open shows for Dan Fogelberg (which in turn was an outgrowth of his and Pedersen's work on Fogelberg's *High Country Snows* bluegrass album). Chris was enjoying all-acoustic music in 1985 and 1986, for he was a little burned out from all his years with a succession of electric bands that reads like Everything You Really Need To Know About Country Rock—The Byrds, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Manassas, Souther/Hillman/Furay and McGuinn, Clark and Hillman. On the other hand, he was also interested in acquiring another recording contract. He'd written a lot of new songs since his last two solo albums in the mid-late 1970's and his two early 1980's collaborations, *Morning Sky* and *Desert Rose*, and he wanted to make "some sort of country album" with these songs even if he wasn't really sure what kind of instrumental format would please him the most. Therefore, with the beginnings of a deal with MCA Records in hand—five grand for two or three tracks, with a 90-day option on a longer contract—he began formulating loose plans with Pedersen as his producer.

In the meantime, however, he started messing around with the sound of the acoustic band, adding the drums of Steve Duncan and the steel of Jay Dee Maness, and that outfit started playing more or less for the hell of it in small L.A. clubs. But then they got a job at



HERB  
PEDERSEN

STEVE  
DUNCAN

BILL  
BRYSON

CHRIS  
HILLMAN

JAY DEE  
MANESS

JOHN  
JORGENSEN

the Palomino, and “that changed things.” Among other industry personnel Hillman had invited to the show, two key individuals showed up and commenced to do business. William Lee Golden, then still with The Oaks, arranged for the band to open for The Oaks at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, which “really helped solidify the band, make things serious,” and Dick Whitehouse of Curb Records “jumped up and down and said, ‘I want to sign you guys right now!’”

It didn’t happen right then—another six months went by before pen was put to paper—but it did happen, and there it was: Hillman on the MCA roster after all through Curb’s distribution deal with the much larger conglomerate, but as part of The Desert Rose Band rather than as himself, and without the uncertainty of a “demo deal.” There were still problems to be confronted, notably the record company’s steady pressure on the band to record outside material, but Hillman fought them.

“We stuck with our guns,” he says. “I refused to cut all sorts of material I couldn’t stand that was sent to me by the powers that be—you know, ‘Cut this one, it’s a hit!’—and we recorded in California where we live, and we got across the sound we felt we had, that we could give people. It wasn’t your standard Nashville country band sound, and it wasn’t exactly that West Coast country-rock sound. So it worked out.”

**H**ill the above highlights some points. First it gives you a succinct if not linear history of Chris Hillman’s recording career, a chronicle of considerable rock/pop/folk substance missing only one major component: concentration on and acceptance in the straight country marketplace.

Second, it illustrates the extent of the resources upon which Hillman is able to call after his two-plus decades on the scene—all those musicians, all those connections across the rock/pop/bluegrass/country board.

Third, though somewhat between the lines, it illustrates the man’s considerable skills as a music business instigator, negotiator, peacemaker and businessman. This is a rather effective person.

Fourth, it defines the musical slot occupied by The Desert Rose Band, an intriguing playground in which the lyrical depth and electric energy of the best California country-rock can be woven with the kinetic grace of bluegrass around the melodic heart of straight country by songwriter/musicians now skilled enough in all three traditions to make the fusion work naturally. So ultimately, what we have here is at least the beginnings of an affirmative solution to what are often perceived as shortcomings in each of the musical forms the band holds dear: the technical sloppiness of much country-rock, the tendency

towards monotony in bluegrass, and mainstream country’s often narrow, unadventurous approach to lyrical content.

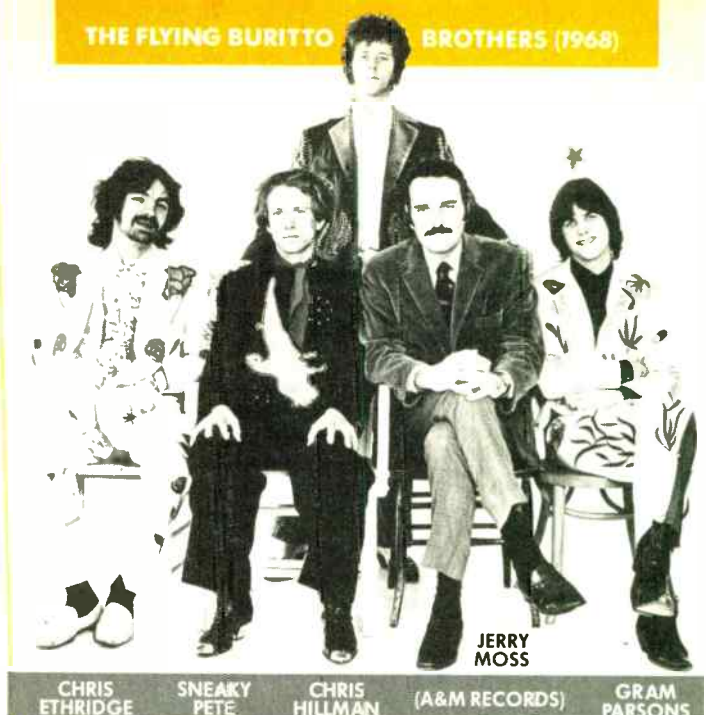
The last point is made by Hillman himself. “I’m *very* happy with The Desert Rose Band,” he says. “As far as personnel is concerned, I couldn’t ask for better people. They’re veterans. They’ve been around the block, and they know how lucky we are to have a record deal, to even be visible in the 1980’s. It’s tough out there today.”

What is true of the band as a whole is even more relevant to Hillman himself. “There’s a stigma attached to me because I’ve *done something*, and it was twenty years ago,” he explains. “It’s hard for me to break through that—‘Yeah, yeah, we love your stuff, Chris, always have, always have’—and get people to listen to what I’m doing *now*. But someone did listen, and they took a chance, and here I am.”

**W**hat Chris Hillman did twenty years ago was something special: with his colleagues in The Byrds, he expanded the sound of rock music. To the all-contemporary California teenage sound of The Beach Boys and the reborn rock ‘n’ roll of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones’ Anglo-updated rhythm and blues, McGuinn, Clark, Crosby and Hillman added another new/old strain, a haunting electrified reinterpretation of



CHRIS HILLMAN GENE CLARKE JIM MCGUINN DAVID CROSBY MICHAEL CLARKE



CHRIS ETHRIDGE SNEAKY PETE CHRIS HILLMAN (A&M RECORDS) JERRY MOSS GRAM PARSONS

American country and folk and gospel music; they were the first new-generation "youth" band to connect the musical traditions of white rural America with the black/urban-inspired mainstream of 1960's rock 'n' roll, creating a new kind of music which quickly earned the name "folk rock."

It figured, for none of The Byrds had urban rock 'n' roll backgrounds. Like the members of The Lovin' Spoonful, Buffalo Springfield and The Grateful Dead (and unlike most of the other major rock bands of their day), they came up on the folkie/oldtime/bluegrass circuit and "went electric" only after The Beatles put the life back into rock 'n' roll.

Chris Hillman had such a background, only more specifically country than most. The son of a newspaper editor raised in a small farming town in San Diego County, California, to the usual American soundtrack—everything from Motown to The Everly Brothers—he was also exposed by the local country radio stations to artists like Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, Cliffie Stone, Rose Maddox, Wynn Stewart, Johnny and Jack and Buck Owens, and he loved that stuff. Once he himself learned his way around a guitar, the first bands he joined were all country: the long-forgotten Scottsville Squirrel Barkers, then the Golden State Boys, a radio bluegrass group which also included Vern and Rex Gordin and Hillman's current Desert Rose Band partner Herb Pedersen. Then he met Roger McGuinn, and those two, quite consciously looking for their own American answer to The Beatles, began building the sound which would become The Byrds.

They spent a good six months experimenting till they found what they wanted, but once they found it, it was found. The Byrds' first single, Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," driven

by the jangling electric 12-string Rick-enbacker of McGuinn and floating on his and Hillman's high folk-bluegrass harmonies, was an instant international megahit.

That was the beginning of folk rock, certainly an adequate achievement for one band, but after three wonderfully innovative folk/rock/psychedelic albums, The Byrds suddenly hatched a whole new direction: with Georgia singer/songwriter Gram Parsons now in David Crosby's spot, they took themselves to Nashville in 1968 to record *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, an entire album of country songs which was both more traditional and more radical than anything heard from Nashville since Hank Williams' honky tonk breakthrough in the late 1940's.

*Sweetheart* was in fact the first country album ever made by a youth-oriented band for a youth audience; its release was the birth event of country rock. Though it sold fewer copies than any of The Byrds' previous or subsequent albums—country rock didn't really take off commercially until the mass success of The Eagles and Linda Ronstadt in the early 1970's—its influence on The Byrds' peers and younger musicians was profound.

On the other hand, its influence on Nashville and the mainstream country audience was close to zero. Columbia Records (which had resisted the whole idea of the album) did manage to get The Byrds an appearance on the Opry, but as most participants recall the event, it was more a head-on cultural collision than the friendly overture Hillman had wanted or the nostalgic homecoming of which Gram Parsons had dreamed.

"As soon as they saw us, the audience started hooting and hollering," Hillman remembers, "and the musicians were

pretty standoffish, too. The only one who even said anything nice to us was Skeeter Davis. I don't know. For that appearance we had Lloyd Green playing steel with us—even then he was a very well-known session musician in Nashville—and I'll tell you, he was a brave man to get on stage with us that night."

The fact that when Green and the California longhairs on stage started playing Merle Haggard's "Sing Me Back Home" and Parsons' own beautiful "Hickory Wind," the audience "warmed up nicely, started enjoying it," didn't really mean anything to the immediate future of relations between rock and country musicians and audiences. The prejudices on both sides of the fence in those days were just too strong to allow such events a chance to happen with any regularity; the farmers and the hippies had too much warring ideology between them to ever be friends.

And when all is said and done, even though they played some of the most moving country music of the decade, The Byrds were a rock band. They looked like one, and they lived in a rock 'n' roll world, and the things which happened to most rock bands of the era happened to them too. They had their internal disagreements and ego clashes, then their breakups. First drummer Gene Clark left, then Parsons, then, after a disastrous tour of South Africa with only McGuinn and himself left from the original cast, Hillman bailed out to join Parsons in mining *Sweetheart's* alternative-country lode with The Flying Burrito Brothers band. And then of course they had their deaths.

There were two of them: Clarence White, Parsons' replacement in The Byrds and "a sweet guy, very gifted, ready to get his career going," killed by

a hit-and-run driver outside his California home; and Parsons himself, dead of a heroin overdose on the road.

"I don't know," says Hillman. "Gram's death upset me a lot, but I was more disturbed by Clarence's because it was an accident, out of the blue. I was ready for Gram's death, I guess; for months before I'd watched him just disintegrate. I don't know if it was a conscious thing for Gram to take his life, but certainly it was a subconscious theme; his family was like a Tennessee Williams play, a lot of death and weirdness, and also he was seduced by all the excesses of the rock 'n' roll world. Both Clarence and Gram were very gifted—the further away from Gram I get, the more I realize the size of his musical vision—but Gram didn't have the control; right from the start I just didn't feel he was going to make it."

Hillman is correct about Parsons' vision. The songs he wrote still constitute the most profoundly moving body of work in the whole country rock tradition, and Hillman will be the first to admit that though he himself played an enormously significant role in the creation of country rock as a singer, songwriter and bandleader, Parsons was the primary poet of the style. Which makes it all the more ironic that although his death robbed country music of a force every bit as potent as Hank Williams' had been, the event was interpreted in Nashville circles—if it was noticed at all—as a rock 'n' roll affair: just another rich hippie paying the price for his kicks. Parsons died without achieving a single Country Top Ten hit.

The same is true of Chris Hillman twenty years later—but then, Hillman is still very much alive and kicking.

**T**oday Chris Hillman is a character to whom Nashville might not have too much trouble relating. In his early forties, the father of a four-year-old girl and a happily married man these past eight years, he dropped the more controversial trappings of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle some ten years ago. "I used to smoke cigarettes and once in a while have a drink, and I experimented with all the rest of the garbage everybody else my age experimented with," he says, "but I stopped all that. I didn't have any kind of religious experience or anything; I just stopped." And anyway, he says, unlike Gram Parsons and all too many other dead or damaged 1960's rock 'n' rollers, "I never played around with anything to the point of being abusive."

On the other hand, he's hardly the kind of basically apolitical or outright conservative character most easily assimilated in the Music Row scheme of things. Philosophically he's somewhat further towards the Kris Kristofferson than the



Roy Acuff end of the social/political spectrum; in sympathetic company he'll crack the odd barbed joke about the C.I.A., sing his sad song about the human cost of American involvement in Central America (not featured on *The Desert Rose Band* album), venture the opinion that his country's hard-line anti-Communist policies "breed Marxism" rather than weaken it, and generally reveal his 1960's-liberal roots.

Neither is he the kind of fellow who'd shoot himself in both feet and then crawl through ten miles of minefields rather than say anything less than absolutely ultrapositive about the country music industry.

"Any other musician in the world will agree with me on this," he begins. "For a long time there, starting with the whole Urban Cowboy thing, country radio got so insipid it really wasn't worth listening to. It was all that mechanical Nashville stuff—you know, 'Let's have nine guys write this song, then turn it over to the production machine.' You'd hear one great song, then have to wait three or four hours before hearing another. It was like, 'Where has all the great country music gone?' That's still happening today—I talk to program directors after I've done the interviews, off the record, and they still say, 'Man, I can't stand all this junk I have to play!'"

"But it's changing; it's getting a lot better. The industry's starting to open up again, take chances on new acts and new sounds, let out some stuff with substance. That had already started happening before Dwight Yoakam came along, but I think he really accelerated things, gave Nashville a good kick in the rear end; here was this upstart kid from California selling tons of records all of a sudden, and then all the other new acts—Highway 101, Rosie Flores, our band. California was putting out

the great country music in the late 1950's and early 1960's, all that stuff coming out of Hollywood and Bakersfield, and I think it's doing it again now."

It is interesting to note that Hillman doesn't include the work of The Byrds or The Flying Burrito Brothers in his words of praise for California country music, even though millions of people now in the late thirties to early fifties age bracket—the generation in which the country music industry's largest growth potential is located—were first exposed to the sound of the white man's blues through *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* and *The Gilded Palace of Sin* and the other core albums of country rock.

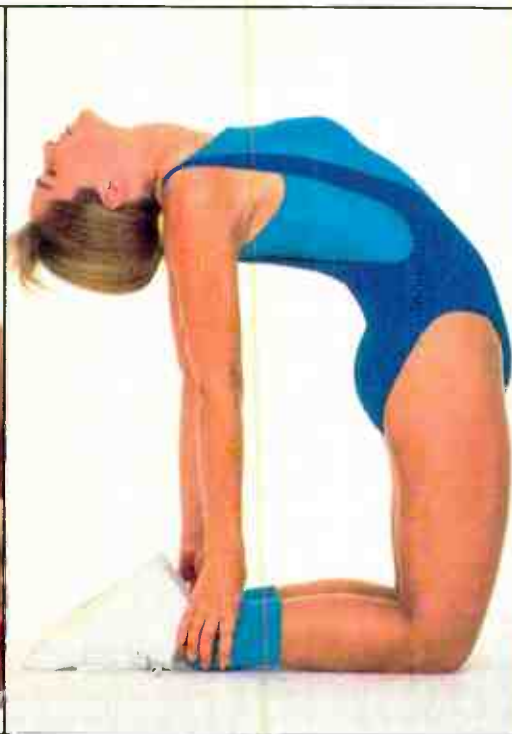
Hillman explains. "Well, quite apart from the fact that we could never really have gotten across in the country market because of what we represented, I just don't think the music was good enough," he says. "I like what we were aiming for, but I don't think we had the proficiency level as artists to execute it properly. I mean, the songs were certainly good, and the records were good enough for a rock audience, but the musicianship, the lead vocals, the harmonies; none of that was tight enough to really make it in country."

Now, every definition of what you need to make it in the country market—age, image, song material, musical style—having changed since 1968, but that one technical-proficiency requirement remaining the same, there is no doubt whatever that Mr. Hillman and the other seasoned veterans of *The Desert Rose Band* do indeed qualify for inclusion in the country mainstream. If you're interested, you can find them out there on the circuit, playing the same places where you'll find George Strait and Reba McEntire and your other familiar favorites, sounding real smooth but still significantly different. ■

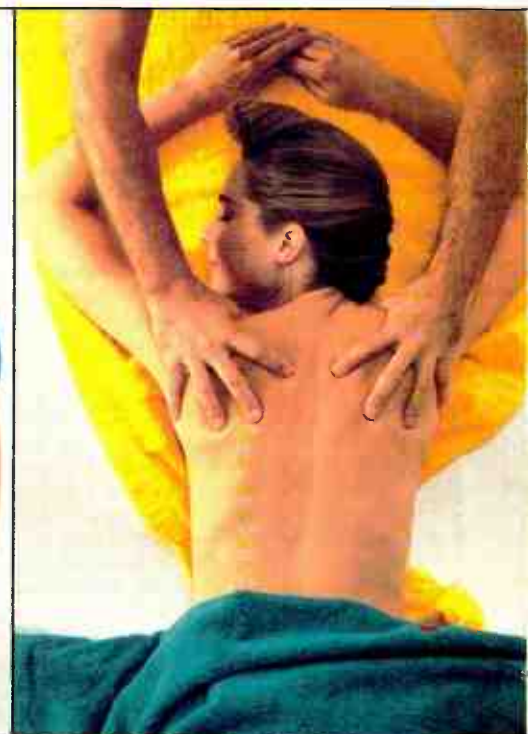
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# Record Reviews

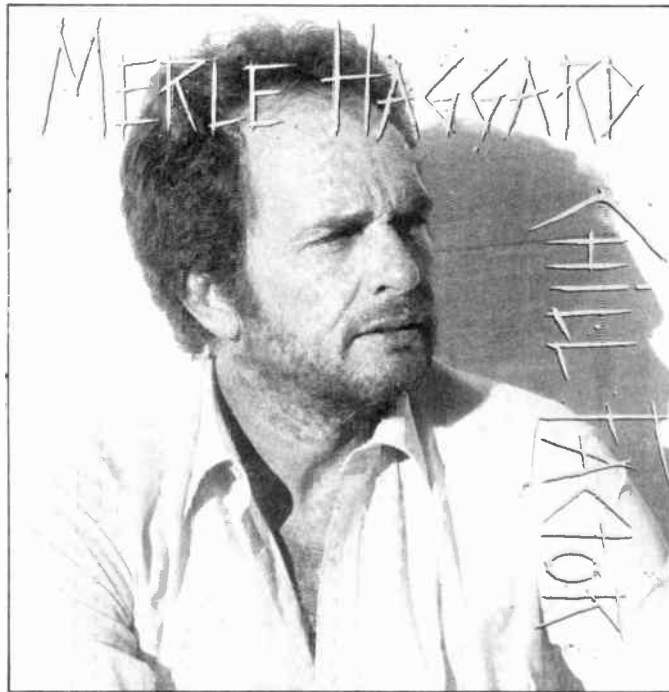
## Merle Haggard *Chill Factor* Epic FE 40586

**S**ay, what? A Hag album with punk-rock graphics? Imagine one of his Capitol albums with a psychedelic cover and inner sleeve in the "Okie From Muskogee" days 20 years ago. Somebody'd have had their head handed to them. You can't account for flaky art directors, I guess. I know, it's just a cover. Still, it looks like a Michael Jackson album...

Until you play it. Merle and his music have undergone mid-life crisis the past few years. Since the success of *Serving 190 Proof* nine years ago, his albums have ranged from sparkling to flat to awful. More than once I despaired that, high musical standards aside, he would squander his future going through the motions. He wouldn't be the first.

However, *Chill Factor* reveals a new, calmer Hag, emerged from the turmoil, seemingly at peace with himself. The young, pompadoured buck of *Swinging Doors* is older and wiser but hardly mellow. He's sensitive but able to cope and explore his pain. His singing has evolved naturally, the edge worn but intact.

The title song, a Hag original, is a brilliant ballad that compares sorrow, loneliness and depression over the past to winter's dead desolation. "Twinkle, Twinkle, Lucky Star" is quite similar, plaintively sung over a piano triplet arrangement right out



of a 1950's teen ballad.

"Man From Another Time," a collaboration with Freddy Powers, thoughtfully reflects on the end of an older-man younger-woman relationship fraught with irreconcilable differences of age, music and outlook. Hank Cochran's "We Never Touch at All" explores a dying relationship both avoid admitting, having flings and coming "back to prison when we're through."

"You, Babe," a Whitey Shafer tune Lefty Frizzell recorded in 1972, turns the melancholy 180 degrees, celebrating the upside of a relationship from a decidedly macho standpoint. "Thanking the Good Lord," written by Hag and Red Lane, celebrates cleansing love over a

chugging "Working Man Blues" arrangement.

From there, he moves on to other subjects. The low key salute to nightlife of "After Dark" is really a vehicle for Clint Strong's superb guitar playing and Don Markham's sax. "1929" returns to a popular Haggard theme of the past: the Depression. In today's economy it provides unsettling images, the Jimmie Rodgers flavor notwithstanding.

The sense of loss in "Thirty Again" is heightened by one of Haggard's most well-turned, cynical lines, "They say life starts at fifty/We've been lied to, my friend," delivered with a bitter chortle, though the melancholy vocal and melody betray more sorrow than anger. Bob Wills counseled

"Don't Be Ashamed of Your Age." Hag obviously disagrees.

"I Don't Have Any Love Around" turns the focus again to frustration and loneliness, heading back to the blue funk of side one. The angry betrayal of "More Than This Old Heart Can Take," written by Hag, Powers and Dean Holloway, brings things full circle, back to melancholy.

When Hag sang of crimes and prison 20 years ago, every word rang true. He'd lived it. And so he has lived this. The difference is that everyone has been in the prisons of *Chill Factor*.

—RICH KIENZLE

## Bob Wills *Fiddle*

*Country Music*  
Foundation 010-L

**W**hen prominent Oklahomans tried to get Bob Wills to run for Governor in 1940, he said, "I don't know anything about these politics. I am a fiddler." True enough. His dad and grandfather were both Texas fiddle champions, and Bob was a popular attraction at Texas house parties and ranch dances long before he had a band.

Fans appreciated Bob's fiddling even when the Playboys were at their peak at KVOO radio in Tulsa. In the late 1930's, Wills, Tommy Duncan and guitarist Eldon Shamblin did an early morning KVOO program of fiddle music as well as their daily noon broadcasts. At a rare college date in the early 1940's, the kids asked not for the big band



# "Love Me Tender"

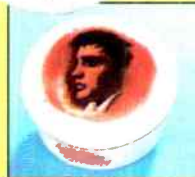
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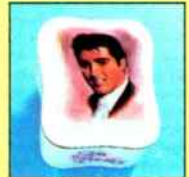
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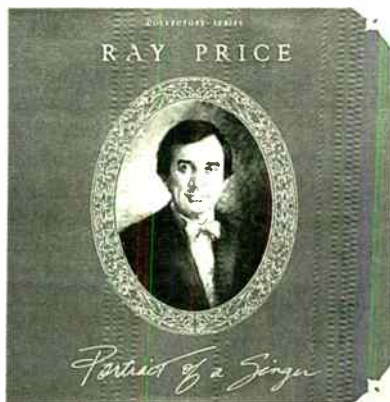
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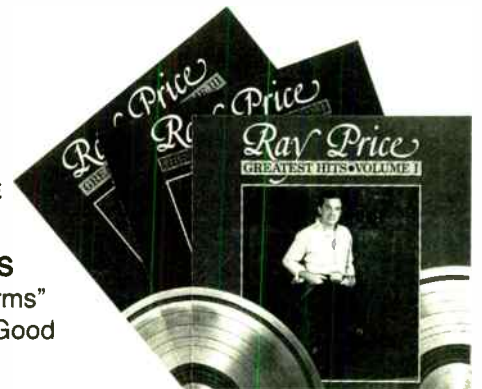


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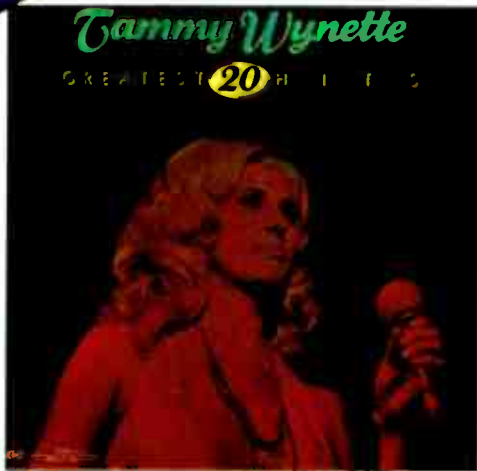
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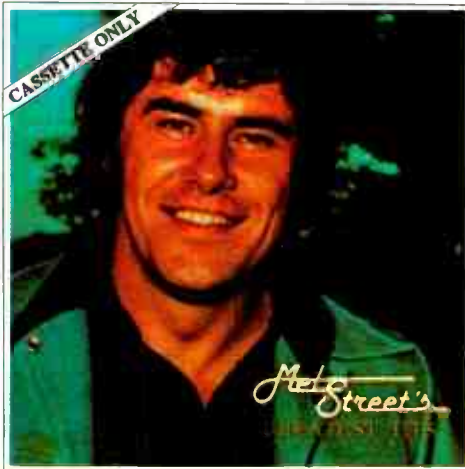
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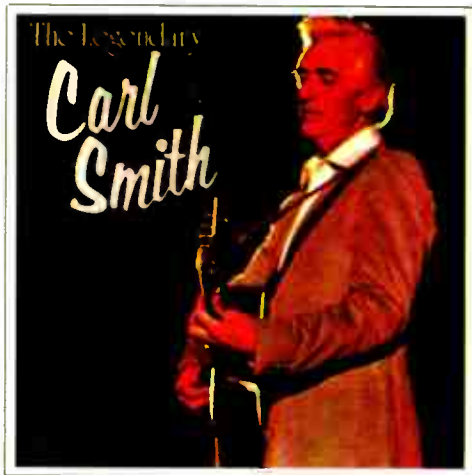
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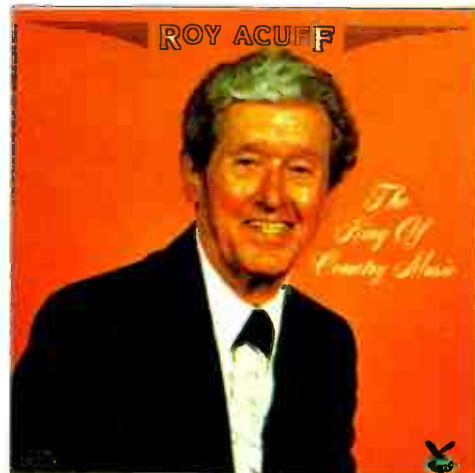
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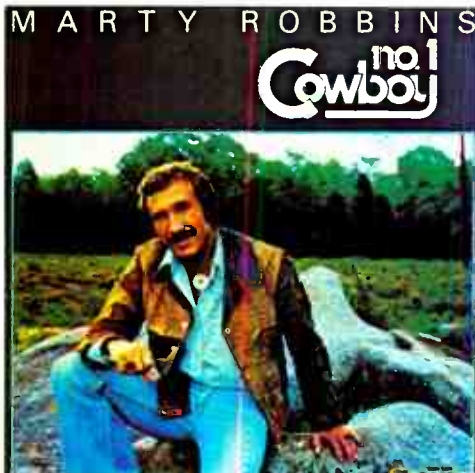
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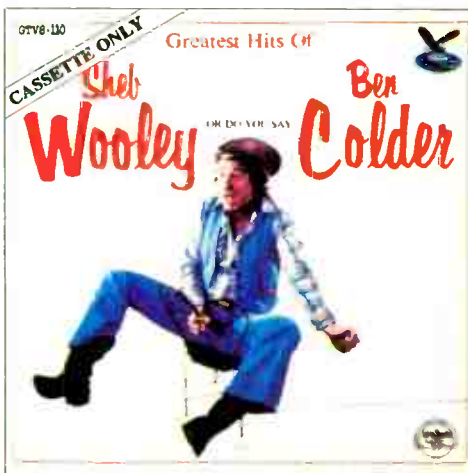
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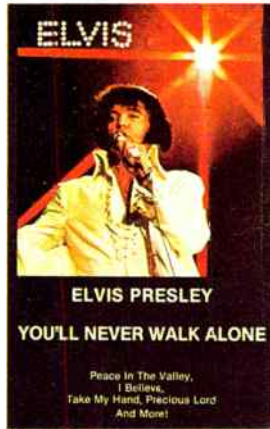
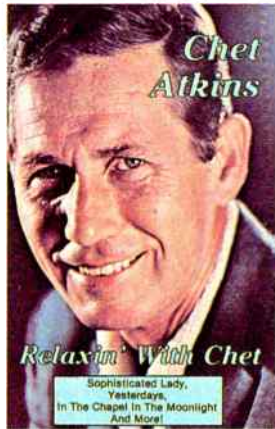
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**DOLLY PARTON—JUST THE WAY I AM:** Just The Way I Am/Little Bird/Mama Say A Prayer/My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy/In The Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)/In The Ghetto/Daddy Come And Get Me/The Carroll County Accident/Gypsy, Joe And Me—No. CAK2583

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Who Am I?/Let Us Pray/There'll Be Peace In The Valley/We Call On Him/I Believe/It Is No Secret/Sing You Children/Take My Hand, Precious Lord—No. CAK2472

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**ELVIS PRESLEY—ELVIS SINGS HITS FROM HIS MOVIES:** Down By The Riverside And When The Saints Go Marching In/They Remind Me Too Much Of You/Confidence/Frankie And Johnny/Guitar Man/Long Legged Girl (With The Short Dress On)/You Don't Know Me/How Would You Like To Be/Big Boss Man/Old MacDonald—No. CAK2567

**ELVIS PRESLEY—BURNING LOVE AND HITS FROM HIS MOVIES-VOL. 2:** Burning Love/Tender Feeling/Am I Ready/Tonight Is So Right For Love/Guadalajara/It's A Matter Of Time/No More/Santa Lucia/We'll Be Together/No Love Only One Girl—No. CAK2595

**ELVIS PRESLEY—SEPARATE WAYS:** Separate Ways/Sentimental Me/In My Way/I Met Her Today/What Now, What Next, Where To/Always On My Mind/I Slipped, I Stumbled, I Fell/Is It So Strange/Forget Me Never/Old Shep—No. CAK2611

**RAY PRICE—THE SAME OLD ME:** Heartaches By The Number/My Shoes Keep Walking Back To You/I Won't Mention It Again/The Same Old Me/Invitation To The Blues/City Lights/You're The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me/Crazy Arms—No. CBK3013

**THE INCOMPARABLE CHARLEY PRIDE:** I'd Rather Love You/Time/You're Not A Friend Of Mine/Jeanie Norman/Anywhere (Just Inside Your Arms)/When The Trains Come In/Piroque Joe/Was It All Worth Losing You/Instant Loneliness/This Highway Leads To Glory/Time Out For Jesus—No. CAK2584

**JIM REEVES—ACCORDING TO MY**



# Record Reviews

like Patty Loveless, a range that can cover everything from a folksy Eric Kaz number like "Once in a Lifetime"—Kaz wrote "Love Has No Pride" for Linda Ronstadt—to a straightforward country piece like "Working Man's Hands," to everything from Dallas Frazier's weeper "If My Heart Had Windows" to Steve Earle's raucous, rockabilly "A Little Bit in Love." *Girl waits* on Steve's song.

This is a good record. Patty Loveless deserves to be a star.

Besides, what a name!

—MICHAEL BANE

## George Jones

*Too Wild Too Long*  
Epic ET40781

**Y**ou'll find few vocal acrobatics on this record, few of those leaps, twists and turns of voice George can do so effortlessly. No, this one is rather more understated, as I

would prefer to think of it, though you could also argue in some cases that George is simply coasting. At any rate, it's a pretty *smooth* piece of work all the way through, and that's one of the last things you'd expect from George.

So the album tends to rise or fall on the strength of the songs alone. And that can be a problem. "I'm a Survivor" puts the worst kind of vapid, trendy clichés in George's mouth. "One Hell of a Song" just isn't. "The Old Man No One Loves" attempts to pull at the same heartstrings as "He Stopped Loving Her Today" did, but the story line isn't as compelling. And "The U.S.A. Today" argues on-the-one-hand-this-and-on-the-other-that in a manner identical to the paper it's named after, which I'm sure is supposed to be the point but which in fact makes it quite pointless.

Still, "Too Wild Too Long" is solid George Jones, with a production job that manages to be dramatic without being overblown. "I'm a Long-Gone Daddy" is simple, under-

stated and mostly acoustic. And "Moments of Brilliance" builds nicely off its basic idea, with George handling his part just as nicely.

That all counts for something, too. I don't think this is the kind of album George can base a reputation on; it has too many songs that play to the George Jones myth and not enough of the type that created that myth. It has its moments, but it will take some getting used to.

—JOHN MORTILAND

## Vern Gosdin

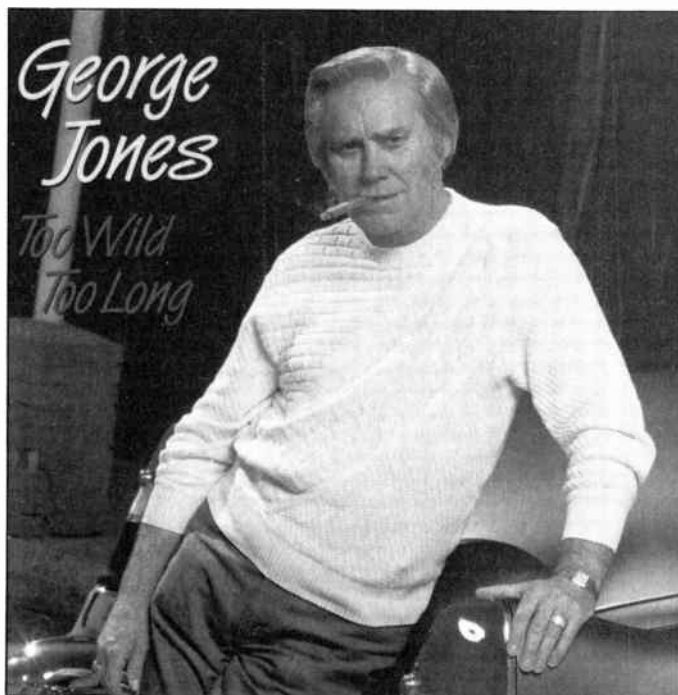
*Chiseled in Stone*  
Columbia FCT 40982

**S**ometimes, as on "Tight as Twin Fiddles," Vern Gosdin sounds just like Merle Haggard. Other times, as on "Is It Raining at Your House," he sounds just like George Jones. But most of the time he sounds just like Vern Gosdin, and Vern Gosdin is sounding very good indeed

these days.

Certainly he continues to grow as a singer, breaking in some classy new vocal licks on "It's Not Over Yet," drawing words out to heartbreaking lengths on "Is It Raining at Your House," bringing great urgency to "Do You Believe Me Now." Not too many guys could pull off a hurtin' song with a jukebox motif in 1988, but on "Set 'Em Up, Joe" Gosdin proves he can. And on "Who You Gonna Blame It On This Time" and "Nobody Calls From Vegas Just to Say Hello" he plays a Johnny Cash-like bass line off against basically bluegrass instrumentation, his own rapid-fire vocal delivery topping it all off.

This is hard country, real hard, and real sparse. Also real sad. In fact, that's my main reservation. "Tight as Twin Fiddles" is the only upbeat song here, and he could use at least one more amidst all the pain in the rest of his material. But there's no denying that Vern Gosdin remains a gripping stylist—





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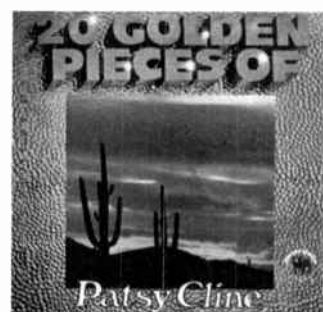
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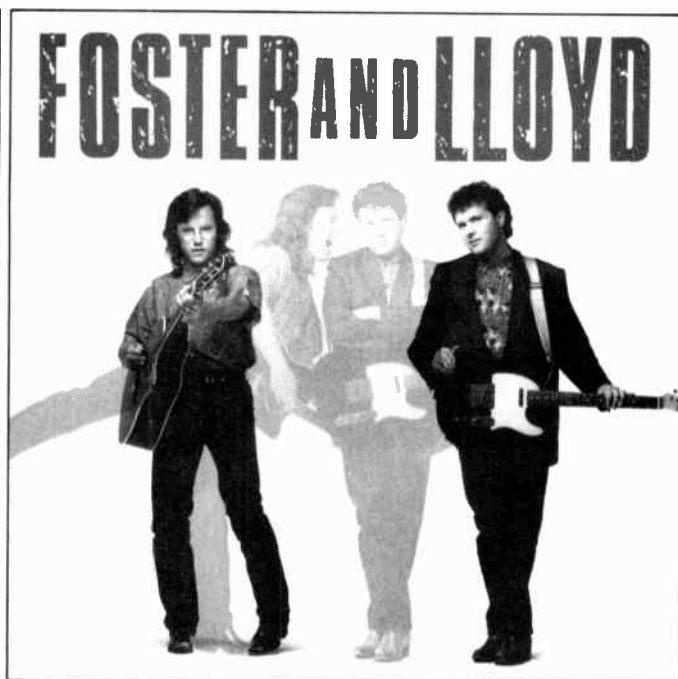
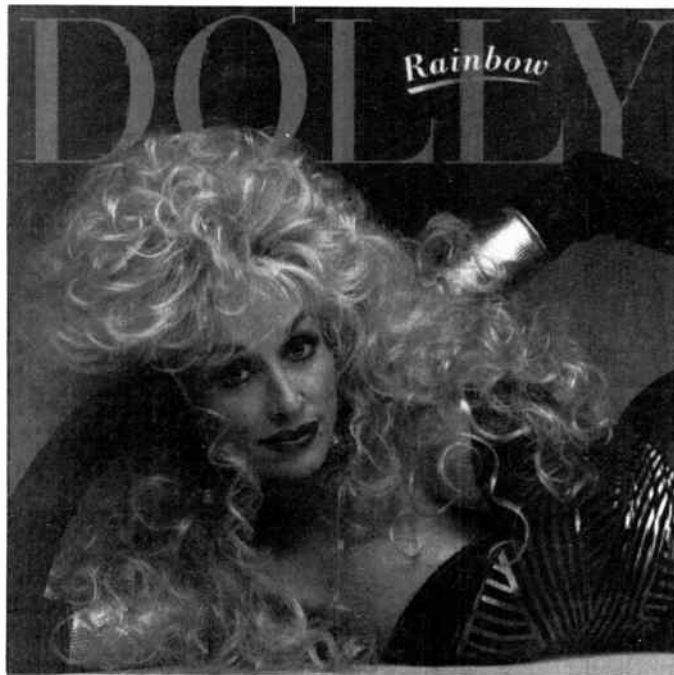
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World Radio History

## Record Reviews



and, if I can emphasize it one more time, one who continues to take chances and to grow.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

### Dolly Parton

*Rainbow*

CBS FC 40968

I really wanted to like this Dolly Parton album. I really did. Mostly because I really respect Dolly Parton. She knew what she wanted, and she knew what she had to do to get it, and, by golly, she went out and did it. She's now richer than 99.999% of the planet and almost as rich as Willie Nelson. She's funny, smart, articulate and talented. She's got her own television show and a designer body. Now she's got an album full of songs by the top pop stylists around and a duet with Smokey Robinson.

And now, here's the blunt truth about *Rainbow*:

My God, it's awful!

In fact, *awful* is a kind word. It's worse than awful. It's the kind of album you might expect if the staff of the *National Lampoon* cut a record on Whitney Houston.

I am reminded of a couple of lines written by Guy Clark and sung by Johnny Cash:

*She left 50, 60 people  
sittin' on their cars*

*Wonderin' what it's  
comin' to*

*And how it got this far...*

Fair questions, Dolly. Let's get on with that country album you promised us...soon!

—MICHAEL BANE

### Foster and Lloyd

*Foster and Lloyd*

RCA 6372-1-R

When I fished this album out of the RCA shipment, I was ready to write it off as another "country rock" effort from some crummy barband following in the footsteps of

another whose name I won't mention, to spare the magazine a slew of X-rated letters. Some years ago, one of my colleagues here blasted an album by a similar act (since unheard of), only to have certain angry fans suggest ways of rearranging his body.

What makes this duo different? For one thing, they're not trying to be The Bellamy Brothers, nor are Radney Foster and Bill Lloyd New Traditionalists. In their own terms, they're so adept at coupling witty, sparkling, original material with snappy harmonies and a rocking consciousness, it's hard *not* to like them. I hear a lot of echoes here—The Delmores, Chuck Berry, even echoes of The Byrds and Beatles—and it works. Even the back cover acknowledgments are loaded with dry, cynical humor.

The genuine contrition of "Turn Around" isn't the way you'd expect such an album to open, and warns up front that this isn't some corporate country-rock effort geared to

sound like everyone else.

As for "Crazy Over You," I liked it the minute I heard it. Not because it sounds like some obscure 1949 record I'd rave about in *Buried Treasures*, but because it simply swings. No fancy stuff, just four and a half minutes of 12-bar Jimmy Reed-style blues with gritty lead guitar from Lloyd and Bruce Bouton's no-frills lap steel. Great for radio. "Token of Love" follows in the same vein: simple lyrics, straightforward harmonies and no phony vocal gymnastics.

"What Do You Want From Me This Time?," simple, wistful frustration over a relationship hanging on a thread, is balanced by a low-keyed, optimistic plea for a chance at love in "Sure Thing." The hard-rocking edge of "Hard to Say No" enhances the song's good-natured spoof of insatiable lust, refreshingly free of the yahoo humor certain (unmentioned) megastars use these days when they have nothing to say.

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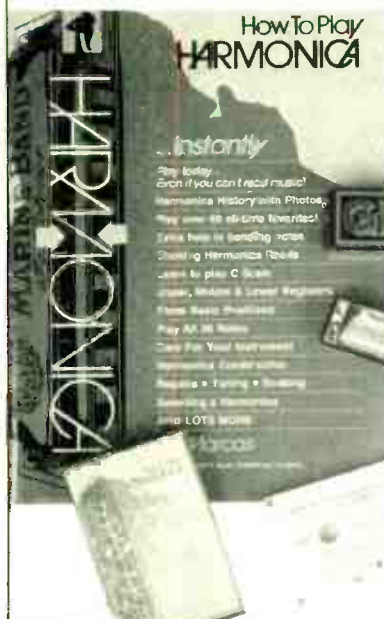
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# FOR **CMSA** MEMBERS ONLY



## Carter Family Specials

Who can imagine country music without "Wildwood Flower" or "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" or many of the other songs popularized by A.P., Sara and Maybelle Carter? See this month's *CMSA Newsletter* for a look at this threesome's career in the continuing Legends of Country Music feature.

To supplement, round out or start your record collection on these greats, CMSA makes the following offerings:

**Twenty of the Best RCA NL 89369** If you only buy one Carter Family album, there's no question this is *the one*. Twenty Certified Heavy-Weight Olympic-Class Legendary Classics. *Whew!* That's right folks, "Wildwood Flower," "Keep on the Sunnyside," "Little Darling Pal of Mine," "I Never Will Marry," "Worried Man Blues," "John Hardy," "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," "Foggy Mountain Top," "Wabash Cannonball" and eleven more. Regular \$11.98. **Member's Price \$9.98.**

**Early Classics ACM-15 "Classics"** is the right word for these 20 Carter Family recordings. Includes "The Storms Are on the Ocean," "Carter's Blues," "When I'm Gone" and "Bring Back My Blue Eyed Boy to Me." Regular \$8.98. **Member's Price \$6.98.**

**Gold Watch and Chain ACM-22** Here's 20 more classics, including "Gold Watch and Chain," "East Virginia Blues," "Lover's Return" and "Broken Hearted Lover." Regular \$8.98. **Member's Price \$6.98.**

**A Sacred Collection ACM-8** Twenty great Carter Family sacred and gospel songs, including "The Church in the Wildwood," "Lonesome Valley" and "See That My Grave is Kept Green." Regular \$8.98. **Member's Price \$6.98.**

**A Collection of Favorites HAT 3022** This new album, produced in England by Stetson Records is a nice addition for Carter Family collectors. Twelve songs including "Hello Stranger," "My Dixie Darling" and "Jealous Hearted

Me." Regular \$9.98. **Member's Price \$7.98.**

**The Carter Family in Texas** This seven record collection includes 145 Carter Family performances transcribed from their Texas radio shows which were broadcast over station XERA from 1939 to 1943. This collection is a must for any serious country music history buff or Carter Family collector. Regular \$70.00. **Member's Price \$39.95** postage included.

## Radio Special

For the past two issues, the *Newsletter* has focused on a topic dear to the hearts of many CMSA members—country music on the radio, who plays what and why, favorite disk jockeys, favorite programs and favorite stations. Copies of both the January/February 1988 and March/April 1988 issues available to non-members in this office for \$1.50 each. Buck Owens' station KNIX in Phoenix, Arizona, operated by a staff that includes his two sons, Michael and Buddy, won both the ACM and the CMA Station of the Year award in 1987.

## Buried Treasures Specials

Members may deduct \$2.00 from the price of every album listed in Buried Treasures. This month Rich Kienzle presents the historic *Bristol Sessions*, which includes The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, plus various refreshing oldies and reissues from Tommy Collins, Ferlin Husky, Dolly Parton, Bill Monroe and others. See pages 73 and 74 for details.

## How to Order These Items

To order any of the Carter Family albums listed on this page or any Buried Treasures album, send check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Dept. 3488N. Add \$.95 postage and handling for each item ordered, except *The Carter Family in Texas* set is postpaid. Include membership number.

## MEMBER POLL / MARCH 1988

# 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.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

### Been to the Grand Ole Opry Lately?

4. Have you or any member of your family been to the Grand Ole Opry?  Yes  No

5. Would you go again?  Yes  No

6. Did you or any member of your family ever attend the Grand Ole Opry at the Ryman Auditorium?  Yes  No

7. How would you rate the Opryland performance compared to the Ryman, if you have seen both?

About the same  Opryland better  Opryland worse

8. If you have never been to the Opry, do you plan to go in the future?  Yes  No

### Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, fill in your 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.)

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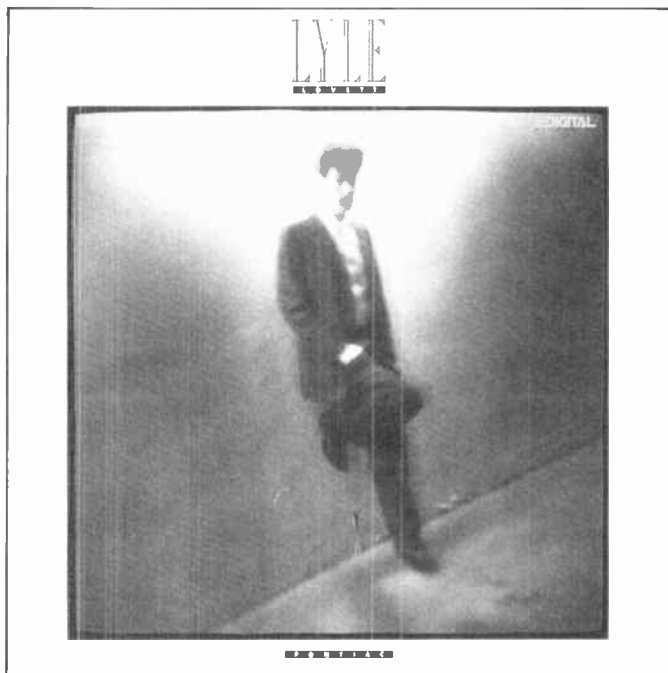
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# Record Reviews

Foster's "Texas in 1880" creates an analogy of rodeo rider as cowboy-of-the-past that seems shaky at first but grows on you through repeated listening. "You Can Come Cryin' to Me" has an honest, romantic and compassionate bent, free of the wimpy 1970's folk overtones that usually corrupt such songs.

I can go on telling you why I like *Foster and Lloyd*, but you ought to know why I think it worked. One, they produced it themselves; two, they sing the material they write, and three, everyone got the hell out of the way and *let* them—no hack producer and 25 superfluous studio pickers to screw it up. Stick to it, guys. Take no prisoners.

—RICH KIENZLE



## Lyle Lovett *Pontiac* MCA 42028

**S**inger/songwriter Lyle Lovett stormed on to the scene with his 1986 debut album *Lyle Lovett*. It quickly became apparent that *here* was a man with a growling, bluesy vocal style, a fresh and captivating musical perspective, a perceptive, irony-tinged world-view and a left-field sense of humor which were all very much his own.

Despite the fact that Lovett emerged (at least time-wise) as part of the same talented "brat pack" that included Steve Earle, Dwight Yoakam and Randy Travis, his music is clearly something else again. For one thing, it is as heavily rooted in folk-pop influences of earlier generations as it is in more straight-ahead country stylings. Though Lovett is a fourth-generation Texan, his music—a captivating mixture of rural and urban sensibilities—vividly reminds us that the Lone Star State has

become as much a land of suburban shopping malls and eight-lane expressways as it is a realm of big skies and wide open spaces. Lovett himself has obviously been influenced by earlier down-home singer/songwriters like Tom Waites, Jesse Winchester and Eric Anderson; as well as exercised his natural gift for melding jazz, folk and even pop and blues shadings, phrasings and attitudes into a provocative and original style.

It might have been hard for Lovett to live up to the standard set by his debut album, but he has done so, in spades, with *Pontiac*, his latest. If anything, *Pontiac* is even more adventurous and open-ended than the first album. For starters, Lovett wrote all 11 songs and expanded his own involvement to include the role of co-producer, sharing this duty with veteran Tony Brown. The arrangements, in their turn, are often as impressive for their sheer unpredictability as

they are for their intelligence and originality. You can hear a fair smattering of acoustic and steel guitars, for sure. But arcane instruments such as the cello, the double bass, Arco and Pizzicato, played by John Hagen and Edgar Meyer, also highlight many of the tracks, while Steve Marsh's wailing, growling saxophone and jazzy piano figures dominate the overall sound.

Lovett's songs are also full of surprises. Most of them defy easy categorization. "Give Back My Heart (Get Back, Red-Neck Woman)," the talking country-blues which got so much radio airplay, is not like anything else you'll hear on here—except for its sly, sardonic, out-of-left field humor. "If I Had a Boat," another example, is a wistful, fantastic reverie in which Roy Rogers, Tonto and other mythical figures of early TV-land set sail in search of bliss on the open seas. "She's No Lady (She's My Wife)" is a serio-comic diatribe dealing

with the miseries of married life. "Black and Blue" is a lyrically obscure, jazzy, meandering piano-bar excursion about lost love and twisted expectations.

For me, the songs on *Pontiac* which stick longest in the imagination are the deadly serious ones. "Walk Through the Bottomland," highlighted by beautiful harmonies from the ubiquitous Emmylou Harris, is a gentle and profoundly lovely ballad, as is the equally powerful "Give Back My Heart." The title song is an eloquent statement about the numbing loneliness and alienation of old age. It's the most moving song I've heard on this subject since John Prine's "Hello in There."

"Simple Song," with its folkish political overtones and its undertone of despair, brings to mind historic images of repression: gaunt figures and starving faces in the Siberian snows, bruised and mangled bodies of political prisoners in Latin American dictatorships....

Oh, and then best of all, there's "L.A. County," a positively *haunting* song: a grim narrative tale of lost love, obsession and bloody retribution. It makes your spine tingle to listen as a lone acoustic guitar kicks things off, and Lovett, in a straightforward verse/chorus narrative, relates the chilling tale in a manner as flat and off-handed as a Death Row confession:

*One year later I left Houston  
With an old friend at my side  
Well, he did not say much,  
But he was a beauty  
of a coal-black .45....*

*Pontiac* is an artistic triumph—an intelligently wrought, exciting musical excursion in which we can hear a stunningly original young artist charting new musical depths of artistry and emotion for himself. *Pontiac* leaves little doubt that Lyle Lovett is destined to be a major player on the American musical scene. —BOB ALLEN

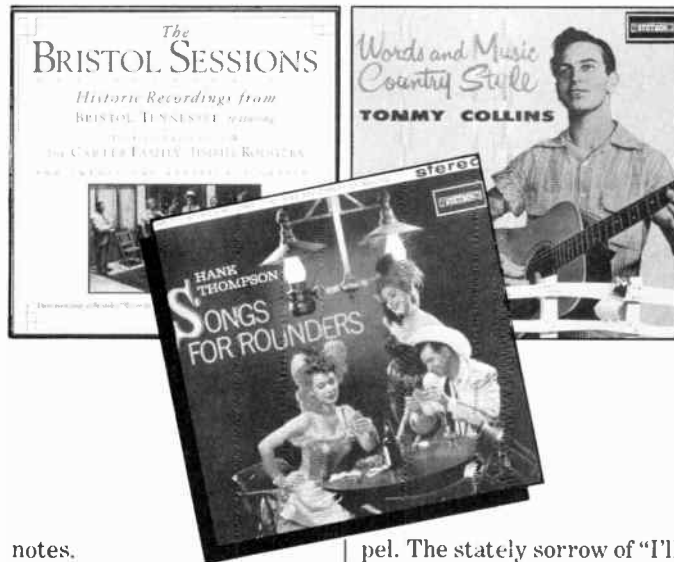
# Buried Treasures / *Reissues, Rarities, and the Hard-to-find*

**The Bristol Sessions:** In late July of 1927, Victor Recording Company talent scout and producer Ralph Peer, portable recording equipment in tow, headed south to record more rural music. He'd recorded the first successful country disc by Fiddlin' John Carson in 1923 and later recorded Virginia's Stoneman Family and Johnson Brothers in New York City.

Peer set up shop in Bristol, a city straddling the Virginia/Tennessee border near the Stonemans' and Johnsons' rural homes. He not only recorded them, he discovered Jimmie Rodgers, The Carter Family and a host of obscure but outstanding Appalachian musicians.

The Country Music Foundation has released a two-record set, *The Bristol Sessions* (CMF 110-L), to document these historic recordings. It includes 31 selections, remastered to astonishing clarity, a sampler of every artist Peer recorded in Bristol. Rodgers hadn't totally developed yet. His two sentimental numbers, "Soldier's Sweetheart" and "Sleep, Baby, Sleep," are light years removed from his later, better-known Blue Yodels. But the four Carter Family numbers, "Single Girl, Married Girl" and "Poor Orphan Child" among them, became Carter standards. All the Stoneman Family material is of consistently high quality.

These are but a few of this set's treasures. Singer-banjoist B.F. Shelton's eerie music remains strange and haunting 60 years later. The early recordings of Alfred Karnes, who became a major figure in country gospel, are still fascinating today. Singer/harmonica player Henry Whitter's "Fox Chase" remains a harmonica classic. There are many more, explained superbly by Charles Wolfe in the album



notes.

To fans accustomed to The Judds or even Dwight Yoakam, such music may seem weird and primitive, but everything—from the Opry, both Hanks, Lefty, Elvis, Waylon and Willie to *Hee Haw* and TNN—evolved from this. That's why this beautifully packaged chronicle of the dawn of our music belongs in every collection.

**Tommy Collins:** Everyone knows Tommy Collins, also known as Leonard Sipe, was the "Leonard" of Merle Haggard's hit a few years ago. An Oklahoma native like Hag, he pioneered the Bakersfield sound with a raw, sassy style epitomized by hits like "You Better Not Do That" and "Whatcha Gonna Do Now." His later maturity as a composer (check the Ferlin Husky review below) made him legendary in music circles long before "Leonard."

*Words and Music Country Style* (HAT 3050), featuring a dozen Collins compositions, his first 12" Capitol album from 1957, reveals his mastery of a variety of hard country. "All of the Monkeys Ain't in the Zoo" is 1950's hillbilly social commentary. "A Man We All Ought to Know" and "Upon This Rock" are equal to Hank Williams' best gos-

pel. The stately sorrow of "I'll Always Speak Well of You" is balanced by the wry talking blues, "Think It Over, Boys." **Ferlin Husky:** Ferlin Husky never recorded a Hank Williams tribute album, but following his 1960 Number One hit "Wings of a Dove," he cut an album emphasizing Hank's music. *Walkin' and A-Hummin'* (HAT 3053) included eight songs by Hank, two originals, a song by Ferlin's wife and one by Tommy Collins. Capitol originally released it in 1961. Don't expect the nasal Hank imitations that often spoil such tributes. This is more a mood album, and Ferlin does it all his way.

The arrangements straddle hard country and the Nashville Sound-slick, but no strings or choruses. His "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and "May You Never Be Alone" are sung with conviction, and anyone upset over modern rock songs about suicide should check out Collins' "Undesired." This stark, unsettling suicide anthem wouldn't make it to many radio station playlists today.

**Eddy Arnold:** Eddy Arnold backed by less than a full orchestra is unthinkable today. But his 1940's and early 1950's records used mainly

steel, lead guitar, fiddle and bass and showcased his warmth and intimacy better than all the symphonies in the world. *All-Time Favorites* (NL 90004) his first 12" album, released in 1955, was reissued last year by British RCA. It demonstrates the power his music had *before* being drowned in orchestration.

He tackles a combination of country and pop standards, though the arrangements are pure country. Both "I'm Thinking Tonight of my Blue Eyes" and "It Makes No Difference Now" feature longtime Arnold sideman Roy Wiggins and his famous "ting-a-ling" steel guitar. His zestful, swinging performances of "I'm Gonna Lock My Heart and Throw Away the Key" and "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself A Letter," expertly backed by guitarist Hank Garland, prove he could handle more than ballads. If his pop material seems dull to you, this Eddy Arnold may be a pleasant surprise.

**Dolly Parton:** Fresh from the success of *Trio*, struggling to make her ABC variety show work, Dolly may be faced with an entire generation that does not understand her musical roots. It's been 10 years since she broke into the pop field with (in my view) dubious success. *In the Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)* (NL 90007) appeared in 1969. Back then she was Porter Wagoner's new girl singer; Hollywood (or Dollywood) were the farthest thing from her mind.

The title track, a bit-tersweet, evocative reminiscence of childhood poverty, remains among her most affecting compositions. "Mine" and "Mama, Say a Prayer," abundant with straight-talking East Tennessee morality, also demonstrate her writing gifts. Like most 1960's country albums,



this one is padded with covers of then-current hits as filler. Yet her "Harper Valley PTA" and "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" are above average, and "Carroll County Accident" nearly equals Porter's.

**Don Gibson:** I was immensely pleased with myself some months ago when I stumbled on a monaural copy of Don Gibson's 1959 RCA album *That Gibson Boy* in a Pittsburgh used record store for \$2.83, a price far below the record's value on the collector's market. You needn't settle for a used copy. RCA International recently reissued the original in stereo (NL 90002).

Produced by Chet Atkins, the album proves Gibson exemplified the best the Nashville Sound had to offer. The Jordanaires' vocals replaced fiddles and steel, yet the music was hardly syrupy. None of his hits are here, but the Elvis-flavored "Won'tcha Come Back to Me," "Ages and Ages Ago" and his stab at Red Foley's 1952 hit "Midnight" are all stellar. Chet Atkins fans take heed: his juicy lead guitar graces every track.

**Uncle Dave Macon:** Contrary to popular belief, Uncle Dave Macon, the legendary Grand Ole Opry singer/banjoist/storyteller, was not Grandpa Jones' main inspiration. Only coincidence made the two sound alike. Uncle Dave performed on the Opry starting in 1926 and recorded from 1924 to 1938. *At Home* (BFX 15214) is taken not from Opry performances but from informal home tapes made by folklorists at Macon's Tennessee home in 1950. On them he plays, at age 80, with the same fervor and humor he'd had 30 years earlier. The complete tape with between-song chatter includes 21 songs, all remastered to improve the low-fidelity of 38-year-old tape.

Singing songs that date back to the nineteenth century, Uncle Dave, like the artists on *The Bristol Sessions*, is a valued reminder of our music's origins: tradi-

tional tunes, gospel and 1800's parlor songs, several original songs he never recorded. Each tune's origin is expertly explained by annotator Charles Wolfe. This album is a bit of a departure for Bear Family, which normally reissues more modern music; it is certainly a worthwhile one.

**Bill Monroe:** Much of Bill Monroe's early bluegrass music has been issued including most of the 1940-1941 Victor material and the 1945-49 Columbia sides. He's done many albums for Decca and MCA, but many of his earliest single recordings for them have never been available in album form in the United States. Rebel Records, the premier bluegrass reissue label, partly fills the gap with *In the Pines* (REB 853), a sampler of the 1950-1955 Deccas.

In the album notes, Dave Freeman and Gary Reid make a strong case for this era of Monroe's, stating that though the 1940's band with Flatt and Scruggs was the best and most influential, it tends "to overshadow the excellence and contributions of Monroe's groups of the early 1950's."

"Sittin' Alone in the Moonlight" features incredible vocal trio performances. The original 1950 recording of "Uncle Pen," done with Jimmy Martin and Vassar Clements, then apprentice bluegrassers, remains *the* version. A 14-year-old Sonny Osborne also appears on the 1952 re-recording of "Foot-

prints in the Snow." On the 1954 "Close By," Monroe goes the twin fiddles of honky tonk and Western swing one better with *three* fiddles, an arrangement he also used on his 1954 remake of "Blue Moon of Kentucky." Originally a waltz, Monroe rearranged the song so it ended uptempo, much like Elvis' then-current Sun version.

Bill Monroe's early bluegrass music was a departure from 1930's stringband music and the duets Bill sang from 1936 to 1938 with his brother Charlie. His creative use of instruments and voices modernized the stringband sound, fusing the traditional music Monroe grew up with and contemporary sounds. In 1939 he joined the Grand Ole Opry. Today at age 76, he is one of the show's reigning patriarchs.

On October 7, 1940, Monroe, singer-guitarist Clyde Moody, fiddler Tommy Magness and bassist Bill "Cousin Wilbur" Westbrook assembled in Atlanta's Kimball Hotel for the first bluegrass recording session. It yielded Monroe's original interpretation of Jimmie Rodgers' "Mule Skinner Blues," Moody's "Six White Horses," the fiddle instrumental "Katy Hill," "Tennessee Blues," a Monroe mandolin instrumental and four more numbers.

October 2, 1941, they returned to Atlanta with a slightly altered lineup to record eight more numbers including "In the Pines," the fiddle instrumental "Back Up

and Push" and Rodgers' "Blue Yodel Number 7." Twelve of the 16 songs recorded at these sessions were reissued on RCA's Camden budget label in 1962 but went out of print within a few years. Last year RCA International rereleased the album, titled *The Father of Bluegrass Music* (NL 90008). Anyone with even the slightest interest in bluegrass music needs this one, for it is truly where the Monroe dynasty begins.

**Hank Thompson:** Hank Thompson broke the ground George Strait now inhabits. Though perceived as a Western swing performer, Hank had his biggest hits at a time in the 1950's when swing was fading fast. That's because his approach differed. Swing vocals were often mere bridges between instrumental solos, but Hank emphasized the lyrics. The swing made it more driving—and fun—than standard honky tonk fare; his beefy baritone and high-quality songs gave it solid commerciality and sustained success. Strait does much the same thing today.

His 1959 Capitol album *Songs for Rounders* was a joyous romp through some of the most gutbucket honky tonk numbers of the 1940's and 1950's. Recently reissued in stereo by Stetson. (HAT 3052), it is, aside from the albums of Thompson's hits, the definitive Hank Thompson album.

His enthusiasm makes these largely familiar songs come alive. From Merle Travis' "Three Times Seven" and "Dry Bread" (yes, Merle's playing guitar on most numbers) to Hank Williams' "I'll Be a Bachelor 'Til I Die," an outrageous "Cocaine Blues," a rocking "Deep Elm Blues" and a pleasing arrangement of the old Jimmy Dean hit, "Bummin' Around." Forgive the annoying stereo gimmickry mentioned on the back cover. Back then, stereo was as new as CDs are today. Everyone had to play with the new technology. Some things never change...

—RICH KIENZLE

### How to Get These Treasures

In records or cassettes, at prices shown: Monroe, *In the Pines* (REB 853), \$9.98/Collins, *Words and Music Country Style* (HAT 3050), \$10.98/Husky, *Walkin' and A-Hummin'* (HAT 3053), \$10.98/Thompson, *Songs for Rounders* (HAT 3052), \$10.98/Arnold, *All-Time Favorites* (NL 90004), \$11.98/Parton, *In the Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)* (NL 90007), \$11.98/Gibson, *That Gibson Boy* (NL 90002), \$11.98/Monroe, *Father of Bluegrass Music* (NL 90008), \$11.98/Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, *The Bristol Sessions* (CMF 110-L), two-record set, \$19.98. In records only: Macon, *At Home* (BFX 15214), \$14.98.

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# TOP 25

## Singles

1. Ronnie Milsap.....*Where Do the Nights Go*
2. Kathy Mattea.....*Goin' Gone*
3. Restless Heart.....*Wheels*
4. Michael Johnson.....*Crying Shame*
5. The O'Kanes.....*Just Lovin' You*
6. Rosanne Cash.....*Tennessee Flat Top Box*
7. Billy Joe Royal.....*I'll Pin a Note on Your Pillow*
8. The Desert Rose Band...*One Step Forward*
9. Don Williams.....*I Wouldn't Be a Man*
10. The Forester Sisters....*Lyin' in His Arms Again*
11. Merle Haggard.....*Twinkle, Twinkle, Lucky Star*
12. Dan Seals.....*One Friend*
13. Dwight Yoakam.....*Please, Please, Baby*
14. Tanya Tucker  
with P. Davis &  
P. Overstreet.....*I Won't Take Less Than  
Your Love*
15. Foster and Lloyd.....*Sure Thing*
16. Vern Gosdin.....*Do You Believe Me Now*
17. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band...*Oh, What a Love*
18. Alabama.....*Face to Face*
19. Judy Rodman.....*I Want a Love Like That*
20. Randy Travis.....*Too Gone Too Long*
21. Conway Twitty.....*That's My Job*
22. Juice Newton.....*Tell Me True*
23. Michael Martin  
Murphy.....*I'm Gonna Miss You, Girl*
24. Glen Campbell.....*Still Within the Sound of  
My Voice*
25. Crystal Gayle.....*Only Love Can Save Me Now*

## Albums

1. Randy Travis.....*Always and Forever*
2. George Strait.....*Greatest Hits, Vol. 2*
3. Reba McEntire.....*The Last One to Know*
4. K.T. Oslin.....*80's Ladies*
5. Hank Williams Jr.....*Born to Boogie*
6. Alabama.....*Just Us*
7. Ricky Van Shelton.....*Wild-Eyed Dream*
8. Dan Seals.....*The Best*
9. Rosanne Cash.....*King's Record Shop*
10. Reba McEntire.....*Greatest Hits*
11. Dwight Yoakam.....*Hillbilly Deluxe*
12. Dolly Parton,  
Linda Ronstadt,  
Emmylou Harris.....*Trio*
13. The Judds.....*Heart Land*
14. Highway 101.....*Highway 101*
15. Tanya Tucker.....*Love Me Like You Used To*
16. Billy Joe Royal.....*The Royal Treatment*
17. Randy Travis.....*Storms of Life*
18. George Strait.....*Ocean Front Property*
19. Restless Heart.....*Wheels*
20. Exile.....*Shelter From the Night*
21. The Statler Brothers...*Maple Street Memories*
22. Dolly Parton.....*Rainbow*
23. Waylon Jennings.....*A Man Called Hoss*
24. The Oak Ridge Boys...*Heartbeat*
25. Sawyer Brown.....*Somewhere In the Night*

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