

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1988

COUNTRY MUSIC™

K.T. OSLIN's
Up-to-Date

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EDDY RAVEN's
On the Mark

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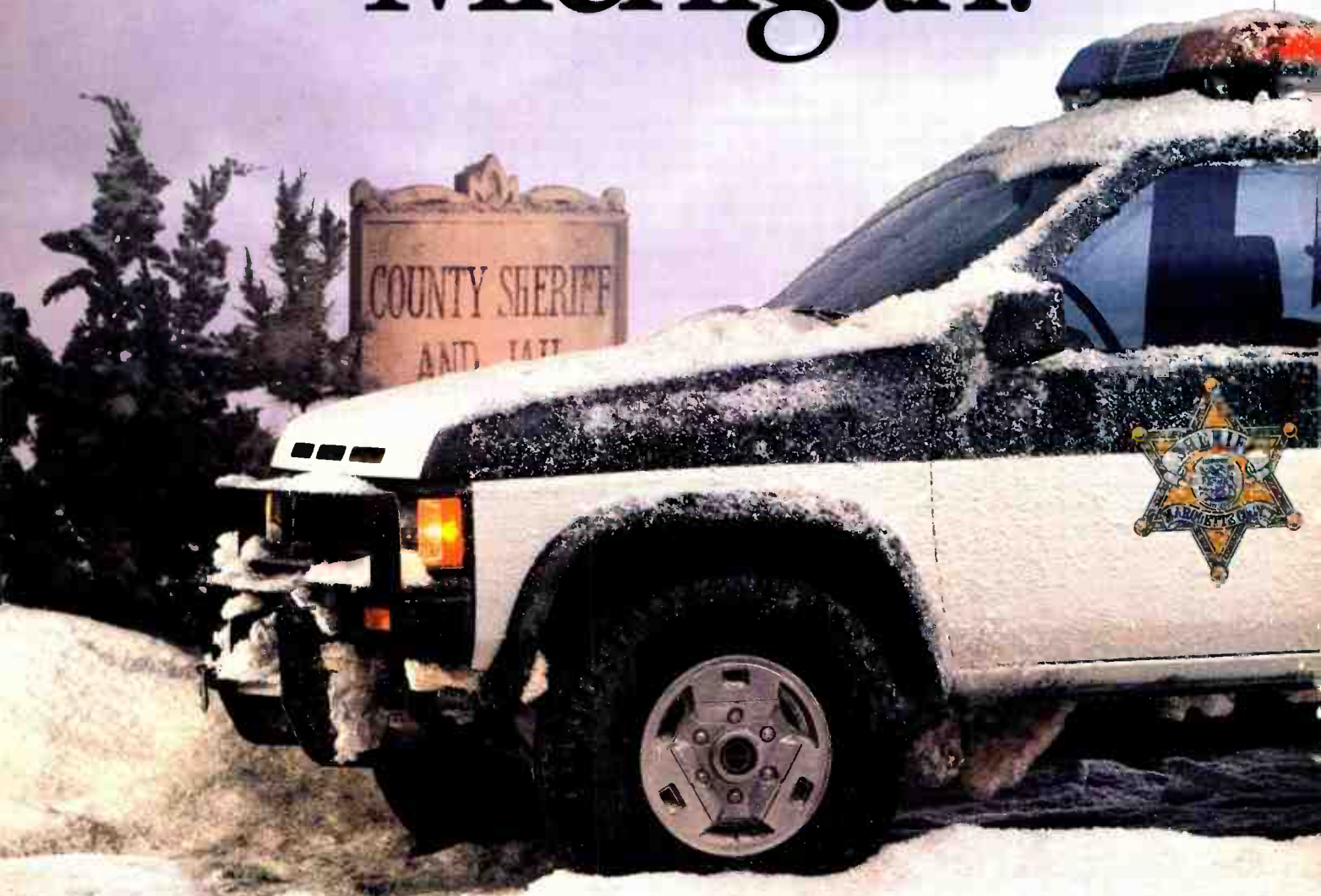
GENE WATSON
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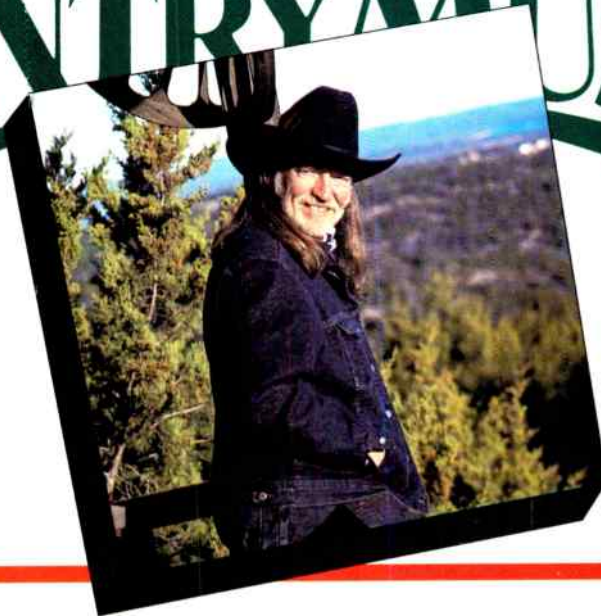
And more importantly, bring them back.

That's not a job to take lightly. After all, if the Search and Rescue Team gets stuck, who's going to come and rescue them?



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COUNTRY MUSIC™



4 Letters

Readers respond to Rosanne, offer opinions on The Oaks, have second thoughts about Hank Jr., comment on Cash, and get riled as usual over record reviews.

21 People

The Judds entertain the President, Roy Clark goes to Russia and newcomers go to England. Buck Owens and Dwight Yoakam appear on TV, and McEntire, McDaniel and Sonnier play the video game. Plus an update on Hank Thompson and a final goodbye to two steel guitar legends. Also, a fond look back at Fan Fair '88.

by Hazel Smith

33 K.T. Oslin: Pickin' Up and Doin' It Right

This '80's lady knocked Nashville on its collective ear by singing up-to-date country lyrics and finding an audience who relates to them.

by Patrick Carr

41 At Home with Ol' Willie

How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm? Well, in Willie's case, the comforts of home include a recording studio, golf course and movie set. Vincent Von Frederick and Terry Taylor got to visit Willie's 725-acre spread in Texas and photograph the star at home.

by Vincent Von Frederick and Terry Taylor

45 Raven Gets Some Respect

After years of being sustained by writing hit songs for other people, Eddy Raven is finally having hits of his own.

by Bob Allen

48 Time Warp with The McCarters

Old-fashioned harmonies and determination brought The McCarters to the Opry. Meet three sisters who have proved that hard work and traditional values pay off.

by Patrick Carr

50 20 Questions with Gene Watson

Gene tells Michael what it takes to have a successful recording career, and reveals some of the pitfalls as well.

by Michael Bane

52 Record Reviews

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72 Buried Treasures

Looking for the best? Rich Kienzle found "Best of" collections by Don Gibson, Skeeter Davis, Merle Haggard, Del Reeves, Willie Nelson and more. Plus something new for Buried Treasures fans: new gospel reissues.

by Rich Kienzle

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FOR COWBOYS

World Radio History

Letters



Rosanne is Real

Thank you for the story on Rosanne Cash in your July/August issue of *Country Music*. I was getting real tired of talented musicians getting a bad rap or not getting the credit they deserve just because they aren't "pure country" or they don't fall into a category that someone invented.

Personally, I like music mixed with tasteful originality, real feeling and some emotional dimension! Something Rosanne has done from the beginning. But it seems that some artists have fallen into the rut of trying to manufacture the "real country sound" by writing some overly sincere, predictable and formulated lyrics along with the proper country instrumentation, just to get that big hit. That way they stay in style and ride the safe wave of fad and fashion and please the record company. But what about those of us who know the difference between diamonds and glass? There are still some out here.

Give me the Rosanne Cashes, Rodney Crowells, John HAITTS and Lyle Lovetts any day. They have that important ingredient called believability, because they know how to write from the heart. Can't we hear more from and about these talented people?

Jessie Stone
New York, New York

The Hippest...Rosanne Cash

I had to write to thank you for the great cover story on Rosanne Cash in the July/August issue of *Country Music*. She is popping up everywhere. In the last month there have been stories on her in *The Village Voice*, *The New York Post*, *USA Today* and your great magazine.

She is finally getting the recognition she deserves, but I guess with four Number One songs in a year, you can't overlook her.

I had the thrill of my life this past June at Fan Fair where I met her. She was so friendly. I still haven't gotten over it. I have to admit coming face to face with my favorite singer, I did get nervous and didn't get the chance to tell her just how big a fan I am. But she could probably tell that by the overjoyed look on my face.

Thanks again for your story on the hippest lady in country music.

Chuck Walter
Staten Island, New York

Cash and Cloggers

Johnny Cash came to town and we are all happier for it! Johnny, June and Anita put on a two-hour plus show that the audience wanted to go on forever.

Our Little Opry Dancers, Leah Houghton, Lauri Houghton, Mary Houghton, Sandra Randall and Tracy Fawns, spent intermission backstage with Johnny, and had their dancing shoes autographed. Then to their surprise and delight Johnny and June

called them on stage to clog, while Johnny played "Orange Blossom Special" on his harmonica and June danced along. The crowd of 3,000 plus roared its approval.

Johnny, you can play music for our dancers anytime, and June, you can always dance with us. Please come back, this community has a love affair with the Cash-Carter family that will last forever.

Dawn D. Matson
Coos Bay, Oregon

Congratulations to Cashes

Hooray for Johnny Cash and Rosanne Cash (July/August issue) for knowing what is good and right and not being afraid to say so. Rosanne and Rodney Crowell are music's most talented and dedicated couple. May they live happily and at peace. And may country radio finally wake up to the talent Rodney Crowell has had for years.

As for Johnny Cash's unabashed support of his friend Kris Kristofferson—well, no wonder lovely Rosanne turned out the way she did.

Jean Gilliland
Clyde, Ohio

A Visit to the House of Cash

My brother and I recently vacationed in Nashville. We left with the intention of visiting Dollywood, as we are avid Dolly Parton fans. While that trip out to Sevier County was fabulous, our best memories are of The House of Cash.

Luck had it that June Carter Cash was home when we visited and came down to sign autographs. She read a passage on Rosanne Cash from her new book (Rosanne and Rodney Crowell are right up there with Dolly to me!). I hung on her every word.

Then she talked about Johnny's health and how well he was doing. "I Walk the Line" was the first record I ever bought. I've always thought this one was a special family. I left the house wondering if they all know just how they touch the lives of their fans.

Peter John Narus
Middletown, Connecticut

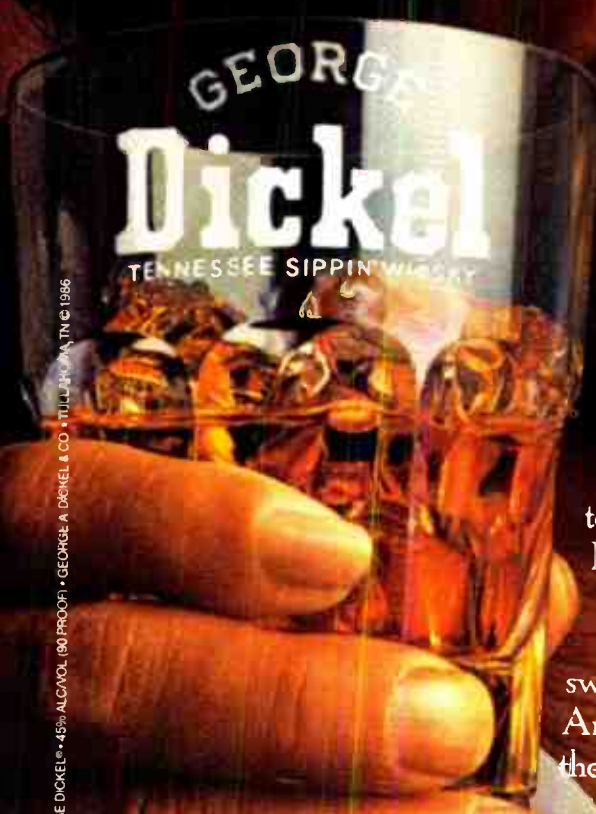


Cash teams up with Coos Bay cloggers Leah, Lauri and Lisa Houghton, Sandra Randall and Tracy Fawns in Oregon.

Oaks...Twitty...All Good

I just received my July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and I was

"Ain't Nothin' Better."



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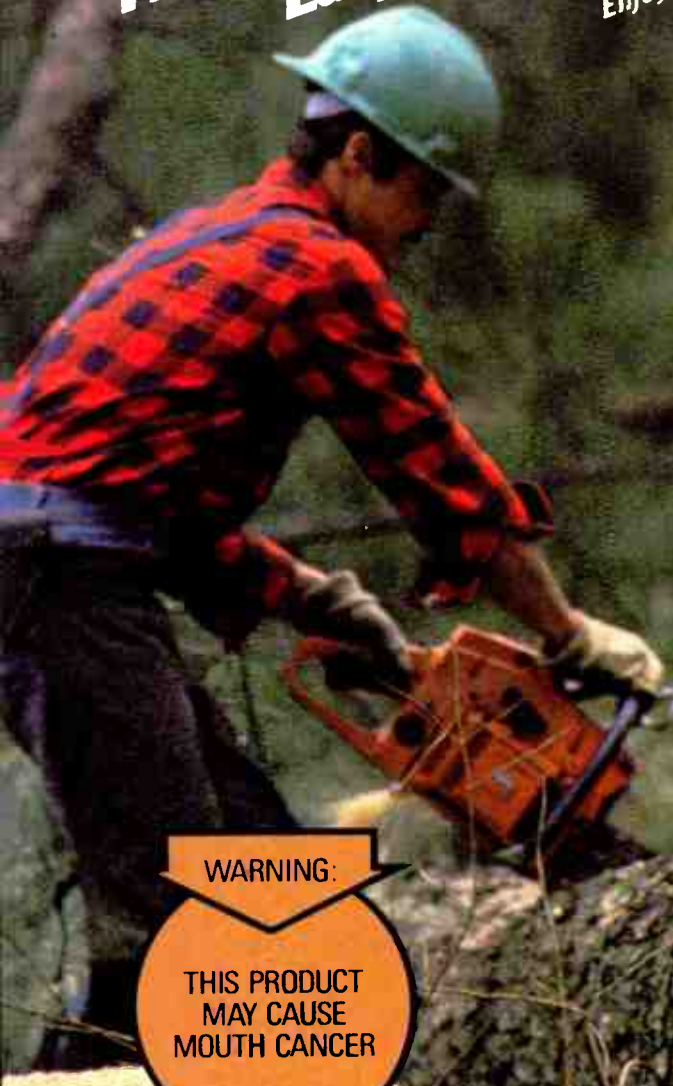
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World Radio History

delighted with the article on The Oak Ridge Boys. It was a fantastic article. I have been an Oaks fan since they started in country music, and they have never sounded better or had as much energy as they have had since Steve Sanders joined them. He is fantastic, and so are Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall and Richard Sterban.

Also, I appreciated your 20 Questions article on Conway. I am also a Conway Twitty fan, and he is just super. Keep up the good work, and keep these great interviews coming.

Beverly Alexander
Evansville, Indiana



Accolade for The Oaks

Although I believe that someone in our family used to subscribe to *Country Music Magazine*, I had not seen a copy for some time. Recently, a friend of mine in another city called me with the exciting news that your July/August issue carried an article on our favorite group: The Oak Ridge Boys. When I couldn't find a copy of your magazine in my area, she proceeded to read the entire article to me over the phone (her call, her phone bill; a true friend, huh?). We found Patrick Carr's piece on The Oaks to be intelligent, articulate, stylish and (hooray!) up-beat and positive.

Sometimes there may be things that we fans suspect, but we don't always wish to know. Once, around 1985 or 1986, when William Lee Golden was late to a concert at the Fox Theater in St. Louis, Steve Sanders filled in until Golden arrived (the second or third song). After that I began to notice that Kip Mitchell was still doing all the guitar solos, and I wondered about Steve's real function.

What those of us who attend several Oaks concerts a year have noticed is that they have never sounded better, and certainly seem happier on stage and more unified than we've ever seen them.

Donna Sellers
O'Fallon, Missouri

Good For Oaks and Golden

Thank you so much for the article about The Oak Ridge Boys in the July/August issue. I have seen seven Oak Ridge Boys concerts since August 1987, and The Oaks are better than ever. They once again are excited and happy while on

stage. The four new songs from the *Monongahela* album are fantastic, especially "Bridges and Walls" and "Gonna Take a Lot of River."

As much as I loved the positive image of the current Oak Ridge Boys that was presented, I was extremely disappointed that Mr. Carr delved into history to discuss William Lee Golden's departure.

I have been an Oak Ridge Boys fanatic since 1978, and for most of those years, William Lee was my favorite because he never seemed to be afraid of himself. I do understand that his eccentricities probably made it difficult for Joe Bonsall, Richard Sterban and Duane Allen to comfortably co-exist with him. It seems that enough time has passed since the changes to let the issue rest.

There have been numerous personnel changes within The Oak Ridge Boys over the years, but the time has come to put the past behind them and allow William Lee and The Oaks do what they do best—make music!

Maureen Ann Riley
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

In Defense of Golden

I have known William Lee Golden for seven years, becoming close both pro-

fessionally and personally, and I was deeply upset about the way he was portrayed in your magazine in the article titled, "Recharging the Oak Ridge Batteries" by Patrick Carr in the July/August issue. To put all the blame on him for the Oak Ridge Boys' slump, in an industry in which ups and downs are part of a natural cycle, is unfair.

No one can deny Golden is eccentric, but that doesn't make someone a bad person. For over 20 years, William Lee Golden was the soul of The Oak Ridge Boys, and that was possible not only because of his voice, but also because of the great kindness and personal warmth that is so much a part of his personality.

I've been with Golden through the good times and the bad times. A few days after he was fired from The Oak Ridge Boys, at a time when Golden was going through a divorce, my father died. Despite his own grief, Golden sent his lawyer and one of his sons to New York, to arrange, at Golden's expense, the catering of my family's shiva (a mourning ceremony). Boxes and boxes of food were brought through our doors, and several days later, Golden was able to put his own grief aside and came through those same doors to comfort me

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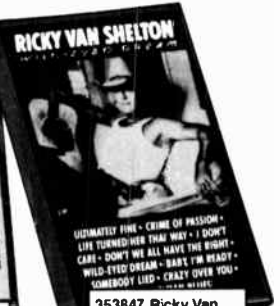
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and my family in our grief. This man does not have a mean-spirited bone in his body.

I have great respect for the other Oak Ridge Boys as both people and musicians, and I don't want to point the finger in the other direction. There certainly were differences between Golden and the other Oaks, and they certainly have the right to tell their side. But by ignoring William's side of the story, Patrick Carr created a vicious, one-sided character attack that was more opinion than reporting. Describing Golden as "a wooden Indian," "an alien presence; the talking tree from Terra Tangentia" is hitting below the belt.

The article ignored the good things Golden did for The Oaks. There was no mention of the time that he and another band member sacrificed their own paychecks during the lean times so that others in the band and their entourage could get paid. And his musical contribution to many hit records should not have been ignored.

William Lee Golden is not a vindictive man, and I won't be either. I just want to set the record straight—that there were no bad guys in The Oak Ridge Boys split, something that would have been apparent if Patrick Carr had included Golden's side of the story and had left out his own opinions of him.

Jeff Panter, Senior Producer
Showbiz Today

We would be glad to hear from William Lee Golden, anytime. We understand, however, that he is not available for interviews until his lawsuit against the other Oaks is settled.—Ed.

Carr and Oaks Rate Rave Review

I've finished reading the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and I commend you for putting together such a great collection of interesting and entertaining articles. I thoroughly enjoyed every one of them.

Thanks to Hazel Smith for her article on Eddy Raven. I agree with her that he is destined for super-stardom with his dynamic personality and his tremendous talent.

My special thanks to Partick Carr for the wonderful article he wrote about The Oak Ridge Boys, "Recharging the Oak Ridge Batteries." His in-depth story gave a much clearer picture of why the changes in the group were necessary to allow The Oaks to get on with doing what they love doing the most, entertaining their fans! It's obvious that they are happier and more spontaneous now than they have been in the recent past. The Oak Ridge Boys are alive and well and coming on stronger than ever. They are still my favorite country

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Editorial and Executive Offices
342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118,
New York, New York 10173
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super-group. I especially enjoyed Patrick's positive remarks about The Oaks' upcoming album, *Monongahela*, which is to be released in the near future. Could this be an indication of what we may expect to read in Record Reviews when it is released? It would certainly be a welcome change from what has been written in previous reviews.

I'm looking forward to future issues of your great magazine. It is the best one on the market in my book.

Linda Nellen
Rock Springs, Wyoming

Mighty Monongahela

Well, just when I thought Patrick Carr couldn't get any better, he does it again! Many thanks for your beautiful article on the fantastic Oak Ridge Boys in the July/August issue.

It's wonderful to see The Oaks back on track. After several years of records that were just sliding by, I had hoped that they could pull it together with Bill Golden. But putting Steve Sanders up front is one of the smartest moves they've made in a long time. Steve adds that additional spark and energy The Oaks have been missing these past few years. This is especially heard in their music. I recently heard "Gonna Take a Lot of River" (off their upcoming *Monongahela*), on which Steve sings lead. What a powerful song! They even sound like they're actually having fun singing it. I predict it will go to Number One.

I can hardly wait for the album to be released. If this song is any indication of what's to come, it's a dynamite album. With this album, The Oak Ridge Boys may have proven once again why they are so lovingly referred to as "The Mighty Oaks." Welcome back, boys! I only hope when it comes time for your people to review *Monongahela*, it'll be done by someone who appreciates the new, recharged Oak Ridge Boys.

Kay Roberson
Malvern, Arkansas

Wahoo, Steve Wariner

Bless your heart, Bob Allen, for the absolutely fantastic review of the Steve Wariner album, *I Should Be With You*, in the July/August issue of *Country Music*.


Having every single and album that this incomparable man has produced, I cannot help but express my gratitude that someone else also feels that Steve can, as you so brilliantly put it, "hold his own with the best of them."

Steve deserves a great review like this. Lord knows, it's long overdue.


Steve is one of the most talented singer/musicians and song writers in the business, not to mention one of the

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Emmylou Harris takes a media break.

Here's Looking at Emmylou Harris

Guess who's reading *Country Music Magazine*? This photo was taken at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia, on July 4, 1988. I know how much Russ Barnard likes Emmylou. For this concert I took eight rolls of film, so it's obvious to see I like her, too. I've been photographing her every year since 1979.

I'll be photographing Dwight Yoakam soon. Hopefully, he will be reading your magazine too.

Denise Farrell
Norfolk, Virginia

niciest, sweetest and definitely one of the sexiest men I've ever met. If you're looking for an excellent show to see, I recommend Steve Wariner's.

Thanks again, Mr. Allen, and a great congratulations to Steve. Keep up the great work.
Kim Clarke

Otto, North Carolina

For those who've asked, there's no Steve Wariner fan club yet, but you can call 615-662-1805 for concert updates. For complete itineraries on Wariner, Nanci Griffith, and New Grass Revival, send an SASE to P.O. Box 128037, Nashville, TN 37212.—Ed.

Smith's Smart About Gosdin

I can't tell you how happy I was to see my favorite singer, Vern Gosdin, mentioned in Hazel Smith's People column in the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*.

I agree 100% with Hazel when she says that "there ain't a bad groove on Vern Gosdin's new album *Chiseled in*

Stone. It is excellent!

I have never written to a magazine before, and I'm not much on writing fan letters, but I like to thank people who have the good sense to recognize superb talent when they hear it.

Twyla E. Dailey
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

Johnson Mountain Boys—Gone But Not Forgotten

My heart literally sank when I read that The Johnson Mountain Boys had disbanded. Not *that* group, not the first bluegrass group I ever had the pleasure of hearing and a main influence in my becoming a total bluegrass/country music convert from Top 40 tunes! It couldn't be so, but it was.

Hazel Smith hit the nail on the head when she pleaded with the public to support bluegrass artists in the People section in the May/June 1988 issue. But support must go deeper than the fan at a bluegrass festival. What about the radio industry? I'm aware that disk jockeys are required to play a certain number of Top 10 and other chart hits per hour, but why can't they support quality instrumental, straight-to-the-heart music at the same time? I don't mean a once a week bluegrass/old-time/traditional show either. If their excuse is that it's because it is bluegrass and not country, I'd have to say that is a load of hog wash. I never met a real country music fan who didn't enjoy a good lick, whether it was created from a mandolin and fiddle or a guitar and drums!

Well, I'm grateful for the memories. I only regret that I didn't purchase more Johnson Mountain Boys records. Heaven knows that's the only way I'll get my ears full of them!

Beth Ann Finlay
Sandfork, West Virginia



Glad About Grandpa Jones

I've been a *Country Music Magazine* reader for many years. I was so impressed by Hazel Smith's article about Grandpa Jones and Ramona in the July/August issue. We have been very close friends of Ramona and Grandpa for nearly 40 years. We have visited them at their home in Goodlettsville several times and at Ramona's Dinner Theater at Mountain View. The Jones family are

the finest in country music today. They established themselves in many areas through the past years. And through all the changes of address of the Joneses and the Chatfields, Ramona kept in touch with us always. We love you, dear friends, and memories will always remain.

Carl and Bernice Chatfield
East Hampton, Connecticut

Grandpa Jones: One Class Act!

Thanks so much for Hazel Smith's interview with Grandpa Jones in the People section of the July/August issue.

I, for one, would love to have her job!!! I have long been a fan of Grandpa Jones' traditional style; he is one class act!

Debbie L. Rushing

Little Rock, Arkansas

You've got the punctuation right already.—Ed.

A Possible Songbook

In the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*, Guy and Jessie Crabtree of Weatherford, Texas, wrote to ask about old songbooks.

Would the words of songs suffice or is the music also needed?

I have the words written down to a great many songs, mostly produced from 1964-1966, a few from earlier years and some from the late 1970's and early 1980's (a wide variety of artists). This is a collection of songs I put together for my older brother who picks and sings but is not a pro. I copied the majority of the words while listening over the radio. This collection has survived, handwritten in a spiral notebook, since early 1967. For my brother's birthday in 1982 I typed the entire collection and added the songs from the later years.

I don't know if he would let me copy the book to give it to anyone, but possibly some of it. I'm not sure I can even claim to have a "songbook," but he does have a huge private "collection of songs."

Nita J. Harter

Friendswood, Texas

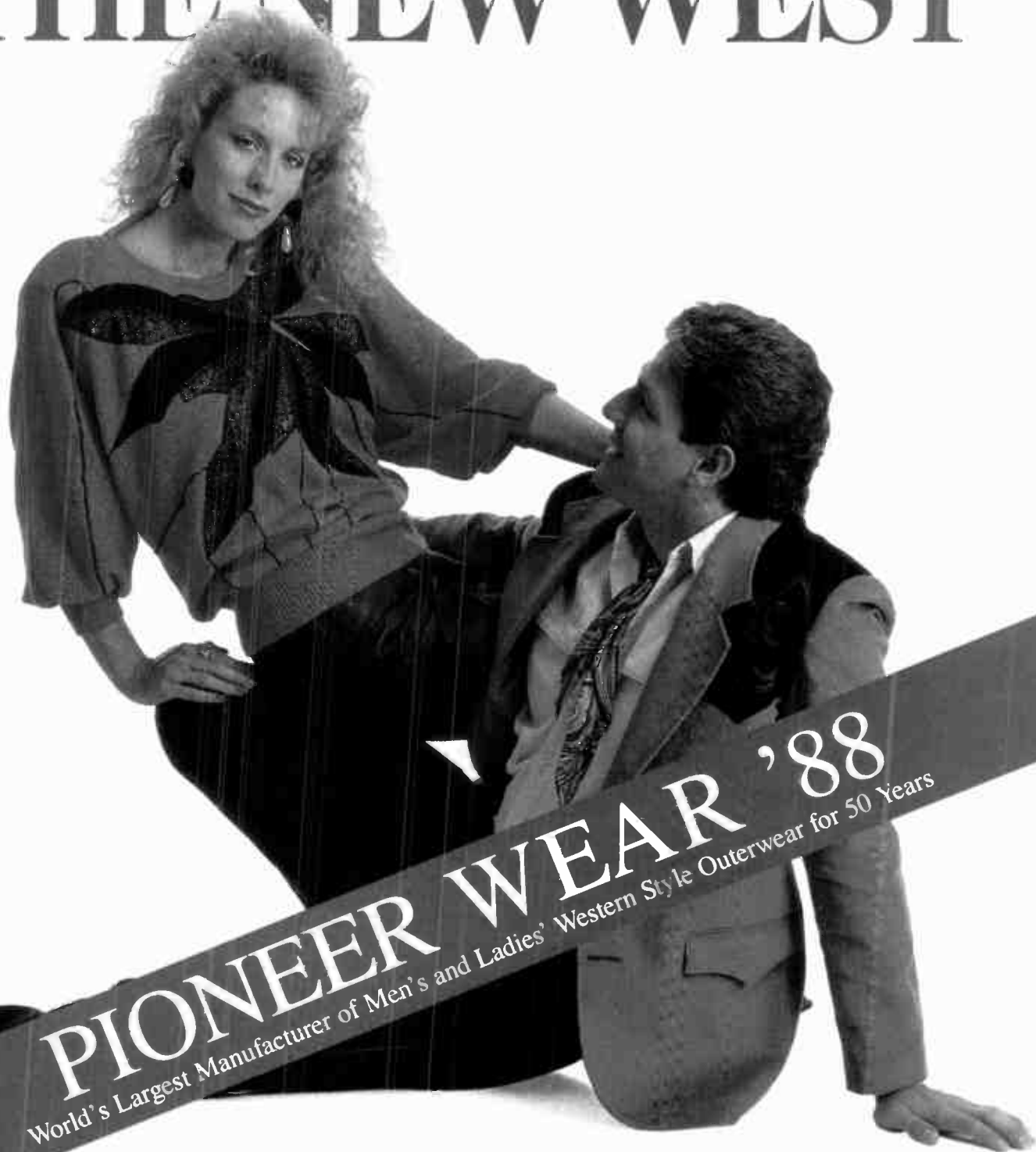
Crabtrees, what say you?—Ed.

Strait Proves Bane Wrong

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for the past three years and enjoy it very much. My favorite singer is George Strait, and your coverage on him is great. In every issue there is something about him. But after reading Michael Bane's review of George Strait's *If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Livin'* album in the July/August issue, I had to write this.

This is exactly what Michael Bane said, "A couple of the ballads—'Baby Blue' and 'Is It That Time Again?'—fall flat. These are the kind of country songs George Strait blew off the charts

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not long ago." Well, I'm sorry to disagree, but the same week I read the review, George's song "Baby Blue" was Number One on the charts. The reason he blew such other songs off the charts was because it was him singing the songs.

I so thank you for your magazine. It keeps me posted on all the country music news.

Milana Reiswig
Morse, Texas

Seconds the Motion

I bought George Strait's new album shortly after it was released, and thought it was one of his better albums. Then I got my July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and in the Record Reviews Michael Bane really lays George out. Mr. Bane even went so far as to say "Baby Blue" just falls flat." Personally, I thought "Baby Blue" ranked with "You Look So Good In Love." So I watched the charts for a few weeks. "Baby Blue" was already Number One on *Radio & Records* (R&R) for the weeks of July 3-9 and July 10-16. *Billboard Magazine* ranked the song at Number Nine for July 3-9 and Number Seven for July 10-16. Boy, for a flat song, somebody besides me sure likes it.

Come on, Michael, give us a break.

Jeanette Smiley
Amarillo, Texas



Fan Agrees With Reba Review

I totally agree with John Morthland's review of Reba McEntire's new album *Reba* in the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*. This album is so far from the country she was doing in the past. The album is not worth the price—I feel like I wasted ten dollars on this one.

I'm sure Reba wants to prove herself and do different material, but give the fans a break and sing it in the shower, or do some of these songs in the live concerts.

Reba's fans expect good country songs on her albums. Let's hope she gets back to them soon.

Gail E. Stafford
Lockport, New York

Reba, Please Come Back Home

Bravo, John Morthland! I agree 110% with your review of Reba McEntire's new album *Reba* in the July/August issue of *Country Music*.

I am a longtime, devoted Reba fan, but her new release is a crossover to pop. Why would the queen of modern country music want to be anything else? Where is the Reba that recorded such hits as "How Blue" and "Little Rock"?

I miss you, Reba, please come home.

Debbie Mitchell
Eugene, Oregon

Another Opinion

I just got the new Reba McEntire album, *Reba*, and I totally disagree with John Morthland's review in the July/August issue of *Country Music*.

I don't think it goes in one ear and out the other or jerks the listener back and forth. I think most of the songs on *Reba* are beautiful. In fact, I think it's one of her best albums. I'm 77 years old and have all her albums. Oh, I suggest John Morthland listen to the album again, very carefully!

LeAnna Moore
Cleveland, Tennessee



Sold on Sonnier

After eight months of searching and asking every record shop in Atlanta and Florida, I finally found Jo-El Sonnier's cassette, *Jo-El*.

The story on Jo-El in the July/August issue was very nice.

Jo-El: I'm glad you didn't give up on your music. It is beautiful. You have a wonderful voice. Also, thanks to your wife for her belief in you. Keep your humble spirit and you'll go far.

Shirley Hicks
Clarkston, Georgia

Hank Jr. Disappoints Fans

I attended my fourth Hank Williams Jr. concert at the Concord, California, Pavilion on August 7, 1988, along with my fiancée and another couple. We are all big fans of his. However, his performance and the audience he attracted left a great deal to be desired. Nobody gets too upset with some people acting "rowdy," but the under-30 years of age group was totally out of line. Between their drinking beer, passing beer, slipping in beer and regurgitating beer, the audience was hard pressed to enjoy the concert. For the first time we left one of his concerts before it was over—several others did also.

We had come to hear Hank play, but

instead he wanted to prattle along and remind us that he has 16 gold albums, six platinum albums, various videos and two Entertainer of the Year awards. Heck, the whole audience had read his book, bought the records and seen the videos. A little humility on his part wouldn't hurt, or maybe he has gotten too big to be humble. It would appear that it's time for him to change his act. Maybe Charlie Daniels was right in his assessment of Bocephus.

Buck Cheshire
Concord, California

Wild Streak Too Wild

Since I am an avid Hank Jr. fan, I bought his *Wild Streak* tape, and frankly, I am disappointed. Besides "If the South Woulda Won," there are only two or three songs that sound country. The rest is too rock for me. I have also been to a concert on his Wild Streak tour, which was also a bit too rock for me.

At the same time I purchased Vern Gosdin's *Chiseled in Stone*. This is a superior recording. I completely agree with Hazel Smith's report in the People section of the July/August issue, which enticed me to buy the tape. I can't stop playing it (while Hank Jr. is on the shelf), and I have a feeling "There Ain't Nothing Wrong (Just Ain't Nothing Right)" will be his next hit. Vern Gosdin is solid country.

I am wondering if anyone agrees with me about Hank Jr. I still admire him, but is he just on a "wild streak" and will it pass?

Dot Marciano
Jackson, New Jersey

Watch out, postman, here comes the mail.—Ed.

Down on Hank Live

Recently, I bought a tape of *Hank Live*, and to tell you the truth, I wasted my money. It doesn't even sound like Hank Jr., and the music sounds like a bunch of cats in an alley.

I am a collector of Hank Williams and Hank Jr. music, and the tape I got sounds like, well, I won't mention that type of music in my letter. But the whole tape is sick.

Don't get me wrong. I love Hank's and Hank Jr.'s music, but that's not music, just a bunch of loud noise that doesn't make any sense at all.

I also know of the way you have of smarting off to people in your Letters section. Well, you can smart off to me if you like. I'm country and don't care who knows it. I know music and that's not music. You be good, and God bless yaw up there in New York.

Hank Lambert
Richton, Mississippi

'Nuff said.—Ed.

George Strait



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SEPTEMBER '81

World Radio History

Here's What Happened To Doris Macon

I am writing in regard to the letter in your July/August issue, asking about Doris Macon.

I regret to inform you that Doris Macon passed away February 15, 1982. He lived in a small town called Woodbury, which is about 50 miles east of Nashville. He is buried in Riverside Cemetery.

His father, Uncle Dave Macon, lived west of Woodbury in a little community called Kittrell.

Mrs. J. Johnston
Woodbury, Tennessee

Ricky Van Shelton Bound For Glory

Talk about someone being a fantastic singer and a wonderful inspiration! I recently attended a Ricky Van Shelton concert at a small fair in Illinois. This man is nice, his band is nice, even his bus driver was one of the nicest people I've met in a long while. I traveled to two other state fairs, just to feel the charisma of this man. Be sure that Ricky Van Shelton will see all his dreams come true, and go to the very top in country music.

Carol Briscoe
Williamstown, Missouri

Country Hawaiian Style

Over the past five years, I have become a very dedicated country music fan. I love your magazine, the music, the dancing and the people. I did not have the opportunity to grow up with a country music background, and it seemed a little ironic that I found and learned to love country/western in Hawaii.

I have worked in the tourist industry on cruise ships and have met people from all over the world. Country folks are so nice and friendly. I have met more cowboys, country boys, rednecks, rebels and just plain good ol' boys here. There are only two country/western clubs on this island, and I am surprised at the number of vacationing people that seek out the country music here.

I have learned so much about the States, where country music has its roots. I hear them talk constantly about "home" and being homesick. I almost have an empty feeling of what I have missed in the country living they grew up with. I would love to offer to be a tour guide for any country folks coming out to this land of Aloha (that's love in Hawaiian). But I would love it even more to have the opportunity to have them be my tour guide to see some country living, maybe Nashville, share some experiences and make some new ones. Anyone going on the country cruise? Please write to me, Ms. Joyce Simone, #2888 Ala Hima St. #2002, Honolulu, Hawaii 96818.

Joyce Simone
Honolulu, Hawaii

Haggard Lends a Hand

Merle Haggard's songs have long brought joy to those with an ear for country music—and our grannie, Hazel Welch, is no exception. Several days ago, Grannie lay in Springdale Memorial Hospital in Springdale, Arkansas, recovering from open-heart surgery.

Merle, visiting stricken kin of his own, gave my grannie something very special—something all his wealth has provided him no extra portion of—he gave her time, time to just lay and talk with a friend. His squeeze of her hand brought a light to her eyes not seen since Papa Welch died in 1973.

We want to publicly thank Merle for this private moment!

Terry Einhorn and Lefty Schenk
Sallisaw, Oklahoma

That Talented Helen Cornelius

I just want to let more people know what a talented lady Helen Cornelius is. Two years ago all I knew about her was that she used to sing with Jim Ed Brown. So, when I first saw her, I didn't know what to expect. All my doubts quickly faded when Helen stepped out onto the stage. Helen is a tiny lady, but the voice that came from that lady is incredible! I wondered where she had been hiding, and why I hadn't heard of her before.

Helen sat and signed autographs in the lobby until everyone was gone. Usually, the artists are packed up and gone before we are. I was amazed. Helen was not only signing autographs, she was actually visiting with the people. She was taking the time to talk with everyone there.

I've seen Helen perform many times since, and I have never seen the same show twice. I once saw her perform twice in one day, and she had a different show for each performance. Helen is also a very talented writer. Some of her songs have been recorded by Barbara Fairchild and The Oak Ridge Boys.

How the Lord put so much talent in such a tiny lady I'll never know. But I'm



Susan Hoffman can't get enough of Helen Cornelius' singing. Here they are in Iowa.

sure glad He did. Helen is back singing with Jim Ed Brown, and I understand they put on quite a show. So, if Helen Cornelius is going to be in your area, go see her perform. You'll be glad you did!

Susan Hoffman
Pekin, Illinois



It's Ray again, Margaret. Becky Poertner gave Ray this cap in Missouri.

Ray Stevens: Devoted to His Fans

Recently, my husband and I went to see Ray Stevens perform in a nearby tourist area, with the promise of an interview after the show. And what a tremendous show it was! Ray expends a great deal of energy in his seventy-five minutes on stage.

When the show ended at 10:15 P.M., Ray invited everyone in the audience to line up for autographs and pictures; and not only did he take the time to sign pictures and t-shirts and pose with each person who had a camera, he took the time to chat with each one, too. I was amazed. Never before had I seen a celebrity who cared as much about his fans as Ray did.

After everyone left, Ray did an interview with me for KRMS Radio and let my husband take several pictures for the newspaper. Even though Ray was tired, he'd have stayed as long as we asked. What a tremendous person!

Now I understand even more why I've been a devoted Ray Stevens fan for more than 18 years.

Rebecca Poertner
Osage Beach, Missouri

P.S. Our music director at KRMS, Roger McDowell, suggests that other stations give a serious listen to Ray Stevens' "The Day I Tried to Teach Charlene Mackenzie to Drive" from his latest album, *I Never Made a Record I Didn't Like*. We play it as an extra album cut and have immediate response.

Send Letters to the Editor to Country Music Magazine, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters.

People

PLATINUM PLATTERS

Both *Alabama* and *The Judds* boast platinum platters. *Just Us* is the one Alabama can brag about. *HeartLand* is The Judds'. From me to you folks, one and all, congratulations and many more happy platters.

SKB PLAYS COWBOYS

To publicize their single "No Easy Horses" from their *Givers and Takers* album during their stay in Phoenix, appearing at Toolies Country, SKB rode horses to The Warehouse Records in the Maryvale Mall. Good sports, I'd say...so is Toolies.

IT AIN'T WRONG, IT'S WRIGHT!

The talented **Wright Brothers**, newly signed with Airborne Records, have a debut single out, titled "Come On, Rain." The Wrights are being produced by veteran **Ron Chancey**. I'd like to see these guys happen. They are talented, and besides, they have a guy in their employ who is married to the nicest gal, who works at El Chico. She always gives me extra tea and talks about The Wrights. Since we are on the subject of Airborne, fans need to know that the great **Larry Butler** has contracted to produce eight albums for the label. Albums Butler has produced have sold over 100 million worldwide. He still remains the only producer in history honored by the Grammy people.

ROSANNE

"My Way" could be Rosanne Cash's theme. She's having another child and consequently isn't touring in support of her current *King's Record Shop* album. This will be the third child for Rosanne and hubby **Rodney Crowell**. Of course the couple are also raising Rodney's daughter from a former marriage. The pregnant star signed autographs for three days at Fan Fair and has graced the cover of no less than six magazines this summer, including *Country Music*. I listen to Rosanne's album as much as



COUNTRY MUSIC & POLITICS

The Judds were recently honored with an invitation from President Reagan to perform at a private luncheon in California. Naomi and Wynonna Judd presented a 20-minute, five song show. Included was "America," on which President Reagan accompanied them. First lady Nancy enjoyed the event.

any one I have. It's my opinion that this pretty and talented gal would have become a star with or without her famous daddy, **Johnny Cash**... she's definitely her own person!

ANOTHER RECORD LABEL

Jimmy Bowen will be heading up the new Universal Label, leaving the MCA post to the talented **Tony Brown**. Universal Artists, I understand, will include **The Judds** (departing RCA) and **T. Graham Brown** (departing Capitol). Bowen will use the same promo team he used at MCA. Who will promote Tony's artists on MCA? Good question?

ROY IN RUSSIA

Multi-talented **Roy Clark** will make his second trip to the Soviet Union this fall. Called The Roy Clark Friendship Tour, the visit will feature a dozen performances. A network of radio stations

called The Friendship Network will involve at least 100 cities, inviting their listeners to send friendship messages to Russia. We'll let you in on more details when we get them. All I know is if folks hold hands and listen to music, they can't fuss, fight and carry arms, now can they?

FOUND-DENNIS LOCORRIERE

Dennis Locorriere, lead singer with **Dr. Hook**, disappeared almost five years ago, following the demise of the group. Dennis is the voice that sang lead on such songs as "When You're in Love with a Beautiful Woman," "Sexy Eyes," "Sharing the Night Together," "Only Sixteen" and all their other hits. Look no longer! Dennis has surfaced! We've had dinner twice and lunch once, and I've learned that he is busy, busy, busy. He's living in Music City, but he's in and out of town doing national radio and TV commercials for companies like

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

FLASHBACK 1940'S STYLE



Reba McEntire took a step back in time with her video for her current single, "Sunday Kind of Love." The video stayed true to the origin of the song, and Reba dressed in vintage clothing and sported a 1940's hairdo. Some may remember the original, recorded back in 1947 by Fran Warren.

Coors, McDonalds, Domino Pizza and Hamburger Helper. Furthermore, he's been busy writing songs and singing backup when he's been in town. "Love Found Me," a song Dennis co-wrote with Troy Seals, is included on Crystal Gayle's brand new Warner Brothers album, performed as a duet by Dennis and Crystal. The tune is rumored to become a single. Dennis told me he also sang background on the new John Hiatt album and on Anne Murray's latest. He is also featured singing harmony vocals on Randy Travis' *Old 8 X 10*. This is the third Travis record Dennis has performed on. Country fans will also recall the "Couple More Years" that Dennis co-wrote with Shel Silverstein. Good luck, Dennis. You sing too good to keep it in the closet. If the masses are missing Dennis, let us know.

STATLERS ON A ROLL

Staunton, Virginia, had 92,000 Statler Brothers fans come to visit for The

FAN FAIR HIGHLIGHTS

Even though Fan Fair 1988 is just a fond memory, I couldn't pass up the chance to tell you about some of the special highlights that went on this year.

The funniest incident at Fan Fair 1988 involves Tom Wopat. Making a B-line and in a hurry to the men's room, Wopat had no way of knowing that an entire army of females was hot on his trail. As Wopat exited through the restroom door, they were there with cameras in hand! Wopat, as all men do, was straightening his belt and checking his fly. When the flash bulbs started popping and flashing, his face was beet red. Being a good sport, he just laughed and invited the crew of fans around to his booth.

The longest autograph line by far was for George Strait. When the doors opened at 10 A.M., females all sizes, ages and colors bounded through the door. They sat on the floor waiting for George, and word was that he hadn't even left Texas yet. They were patient but loyal. They came in high heels, barefoot and in wheelchairs. From bobby soxers to grandmothers...all on the floor. Three-and-a-half hours later, when George arrived, the roar of the crowd was deafening. Security was tight, and the autographing went off without incident. I spoke with one chick

who said she had been working security for five years and she'd never seen a mob equal to Strait's. Word I got was nearly 7,000 people went through the autograph line. Incredible? You betcha. The women love the handsome Texan with the natural curl on his lips. He sure gives us girls something to fantasize about besides singing and picking. Hey, girls!! Mr. Strait is presently in my bedroom in living color where he belongs. The photo (naturally) was shot in George's booth by his fan club president Anita O'Brien whose hubby Danny O'Brien books all the Strait concerts. After they got the photo, they had it enlarged, and manger Erv Woolsey took it to George on the road where he autographed it especially for me. So, girls, me and George decorate my bedroom.

Another long line was for Ricky Van Shelton, who looked like he was just real surprised everybody had showed up. Course, Ricky was handling the situation better than his manager, veteran newspaperman Jerry Thompson. Thompson stood gazing at the mob with a half-grin and every so often he would rub his hands together. I couldn't tell if he was dreaming of spending the money for the records Ricky would sell or counting the people in line. Whichever, Shelton's golden voice is gonna put some green in the pocket of Mr. Thompson.

By the way, I saw Ricky Van without

his ever-present hat during Fan Fair. He and road manager Mike Campbell were driving up Wedgewood from the Fairgrounds, and as I hooked a right on 16th, somebody yelled my name. It was Campbell yelling and Shelton driving the big white Jeep. Fans, you are hero-worshipping a winner with this guy. Ricky Van Shelton is the artist who out-sold all others at the record booth.

Everlys tore up the crowd making a surprise appearance at Fan Fair '88. Like a freight train...that's how the crowd roared when The Everly Brothers took the stage front and center. It was the same magical madness you'd feel when Elvis used to walk onstage. Definitely the highlight of performances. You just can't help but holler at the duo that sang "Wake Up, Little Susie" and it was live and at Fan Fair. Can you dig it!! Steve Popovich, Polygram's top man, had a grin a mile wide. He'd brought the prize to Fan Fair.

Congrats are in order to Ricky Van Shelton and Patty Loveless, who were made members of the Grand Ole Opry during the week that was. I was at the Opry on the Saturday night Patty was made a member but failed to see the occurrence. However, I did see her second show and she was tremendous. Five of her seven brothers were backstage. The girl is gonna be huge. "If My Heart Had Windows" was a real charmer. Also guesting was Holly Dunn, who admit-

People

Statlers' 19th July 4th celebration in their hometown. I don't know where in the world they put all those folks. Only 25,000 residents, and all that overflow. I hear the fab four put on a hot show, as did their guest Miss **Reba McEntire**.

TV-ING

Reba McEntire on *Crook and Chase*. Fans and friends, both Reba and **Lorraine Crook** are beautiful inside and outside. I am not well acquainted with either...they don't come to the house and eat supper, but I have been in their company and they are great people who are very pretty. **Charlie Chase** is a great man too!

The duo of **Buck Owens** and **Dwight Yoakam** on the *Nashville Now* set with **Ralph Emery**. I caught this show live and taped it the second time around. It's the best *Nashville Now* that I've ever seen. The other guest artists were **The Everly Brothers**. Between them and Buck and Dwight, I was in orbit. I love it!

Stars wherever they go, **Buck Owens** and **Dwight Yoakam** enjoy **Ralph Emery's Nashville Now**.



Crook and Chase enjoy **Reba McEntire**.

ted to being a little nervous. Who wouldn't be on that stage. Holly's brother/producer, songwriter **Chris Waters**, performed with his famed sis. The two dueted on Holly's Grammy-winning tune "Daddy's Hands." Was sorry I missed the Ricky Van installation. The powers that be allowed as how the boy was humbly happy. By the way, folks, I heard that Ricky Van will not fly in an airplane!

Take me out to see **Lynn Swann** swing a bat even if he is a **Pittsburgh Steeler** and plays football. **Barbara Mandrell** invited a number of her friends for her game of classic softball. Playing for the benefit of Vanderbilt University's organ transplant program were Barbara and her sisters **Louise** and **Irlene Mandrell** (Irlene got popped in the head with a ball and spent the night in the hospital!) and **Bob Hope**, **Walter Payton** and **Chuck Norris**. Coming home to play was Nashville's own **Oprah Winfrey**, and TV's handsome **John Stamos**, and pro football's **Herschel Walker**. **Paul Shaffer** came to town for the event and so did the forever young **Dick Clark**. *Nashville Now's* host **Ralph Emery** played a little interviewing. **LL Cool** and **Meatloaf** were pitchers and **The Statler Brothers** sang the national anthem. **Sheena Easton** played her first ballgame ever, **Erma Bombeck** nipped the ball, **Betty White**, who has always been a good

sport, gave autographs and **Emmanuel Lewis** hit the ball! Another footballer, **Danny White**, made an appearance, and **Minnie Pearl** got thrown out of the game, while the King of Country Music **Roy Acuff** got a hit. At 85, the Lord and we fans will forgive Mr. Acuff for having Barbara run the bases for him. A remarkable man. Nobody was there to get a home run. The game was a fun way to make up some much needed money. Thanks to Miss Barbara Mandrell, the organization is a half mill better off.

There were 325 booths this year and one of the most popular belonged to **Randy Travis**. With the 24,000 registered fans, a large percentage wanted to see the young man from North Carolina who has taken this hillbilly town by storm. He and his music are the epitome of country music. He is working so hard, maybe too hard. There are those of us in the biz, so to speak, who are concerned about Randy's health. Seems he works harder than anyone. His newly released album, *Old 8 X 10*, was produced by **Kyle Lehning** and is on Warner Brothers.

I met this wonderful travel agent from Tokyo who brought over some tourists, including a couple who were attending Fan Fair on their honeymoon! Remember when everyone you knew went to the Grand Ole Opry on their honeymoon? They were from places like Salina, High Point and Danville. Now,

they come 8,000 miles to Fan Fair.

Ricky Skaggs' booth was awarded the first prize trophy by the IFCO (International Fan Club Organization) and the \$500 first prize donated by the CMA for the IFCO. Following the *Coming Home to Stay* theme of Ricky's current album, Skaggs' club used a white cottage front with flowers, chickens, birds, vines and a mailbox. It really was the cutest booth, I thought.

Dwight is alright, I think. I watched Dwight Yoakam autograph, smile and thank the fans like the genuine Kentucky boy he was born to be. Frankly, I feel some of the things Yoakam has said about the business are legit. The only trouble is he has not been in the business long enough to realize that a lot of us have tried to change or alter things, and it did no good. Some things just don't change. For example, when MCA Records dropped the late **Ernest Tubb**, I cried. Now in 1988, **Vern Gosdin's** Number One single "Set 'Em Up, Joe" is literally about playing E.T.'s "Walking the Floor" on the jukebox. Further theory: if **Elvis Presley** were alive today and had ceased to sell records, his record label would drop him on the spot. Record companies are in the business of making money and only look on the right side of the page where the 1's and 2's are!! Read *The Wall Street Journal*, the trades and watch 20/20. It's called change.

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Loretta Lynn

Loretta Lynn from Franklin Heirloom Dolls.

People

AIN'T MISSED MANY HITS

Eddy Raven and Johnny Bench ain't missed many hits. Course Raven's hits are records and Bench's hits are baseballs. Other than that, the duo of hitters had dinner recently at Cincinnati's Waterfront Restaurant and Club. If you give a tinker's home run, the club has a

built-in waterfall and swim-up bar. That's sounds more hillbilly than baseball to me.

MEL SELLING VIDEOS VIA TNN

Mel McDaniel's videos have all been good and have been a big help for his career. He now is selling a package of five for TV through TNN. So look out!

FINAL BOW FOR TWO STEEL GUITAR LEGENDS

PETE DRAKE: 1932-1988

In the months of July and August we lost two steel guitar legends whose influence spanned over half a century. Pete Drake's death at his Brentwood, Tennessee, home on July 29 at age 55 of lung disease ended the career of a musician/producer who spent two decades at the top of Nashville's recording scene.

Drake began playing around his native Atlanta in the 1950's before moving to Nashville in 1959. His picking on Roy Drusky's "Anymore" and George Hamilton IV's "Before This Day Ends" in 1960 established him. At one point in the 1960's he appeared on 59 out of 75 of *Billboard's* top country recordings. Producers like Billy Sherrill and Owen Bradley knew he could give them whatever sound they needed on a given song.

In 1964 he had a Number 25 pop hit with his "talking steel" instrumental, "Forever." His playing on Bob Dylan's 1969 *Nashville Skyline* album advanced the pedal steel's (and his own) popularity with rock musicians. So did his production of ex-Beatle (and longtime country fan) Ringo Starr's 1970 country album *Beaucoups of Blues*.

Pete founded Stop Records in the late 1960's and as a song publisher nurtured the songwriting careers of David Allen Coe, Ed Bruce and Linda Hargrove; his Pete's Place studio was a popular hangout for Nashville progressives. His First Generation Records, founded in the late 1970's, recorded Ernest Tubb, Stonewall Jackson and other legends who no longer held recording contracts with major labels. He produced the Ernest Tubb album *Legend and the Legacy* as a special tribute to his longtime friend.

Drake is survived by his wife Rose, one son, seven daughters and 13 grandchildren. Services were held August 1; he was buried in Nashville. Appropriately, eight fellow steel players served as pallbearers. The Drakes requested that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the Ernest Tubb Memorial Fund for Ongoing Research, % the American Lung Association, Box 399, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

LEON MCAULIFFE: 1917-1988

Barely three weeks after Drake's death, Leon McAuliffe, known for his pioneering work with Bob Wills' prewar Texas Playboys, died in Tulsa on August 20 of heart disease. He was 71, and had undergone successful open heart surgery several years ago. Bob Dunn of Milton Brown's Musical Brownies pioneered electric steel in country music, but to many steel players, McAuliffe was their first real hero. Houston-born, he started playing the acoustic steel guitar when, as a teenager, he joined the Light Crust Doughboys in Fort Worth in 1933 at age 15.

In 1935 he joined Bob Wills' Texas Playboys, and a year later he recorded "Steel Guitar Rag," his version of an older blues guitar instrumental. Fifty-two years later it remains a Western swing and steel guitar standard.

Leon's early 1940's instrumental duets with Playboy guitarist Eldon Shamblin, numbers such as "Twin Guitar Special," had enormous influence on country musicians. Next to Tommy Duncan, he was the Playboys' second string vocalist, "Miss Molly" being one of his better-known vocals. He left the band in late 1942 to join the Navy.

McAuliffe formed his own band (later named the Cimarron Boys) in 1947 and from his base in Tulsa played dance halls throughout the Southwest. After recording for the Majestic label, he had an enormous 1949 hit for Columbia with his steel instrumental "Panhandle Rag." He had lesser hits in the 1960's for Cimarron and Capitol. After 20 years on the road, he semi-retired in the late 1960's and tended to business interests.

The Bob Wills revival of the 1970's brought him back to fulltime music. He appeared on *For the Last Time*, Wills' final 1973 album, and after Bob's death in 1975, formed the Original Texas Playboys, a band of ex-Playboys and Cimarron Boys. They recorded albums for Capitol and Delta until disbanding in 1986. Up until his death, Leon was playing informally with bands in Oklahoma. With his passing, only a handful of the early Texas Playboys remain. —RICH KIENZLE

WATCH MY SMOKE

There I was at Maude's having lunch with Connie Bradley, Executive VP/ASCAP, and her employee and my friend, Randy Morgan. Supersongwriter Harlan Howard joined us for a time, making this perfectly tuned meal-meter just right. (By the way, Harlan and Connie are my friends, too, I'll have you know.) Connie is pretty enough to be a model or who knows what else, but she chose to serve songwriters. Makes me proud to go with her to lunch.

DEAN DILLON'S TIME

Capitol Records has signed Dean Dillon. I'm hoping they build a fire under his career. This is a multi-talented boy. His problems are behind him, he has a wife and child and musically he's ready to happen. Once a honky tonk crazed hillbilly, now he goes home. So let's give the young man a chance. He's paid his dues and he sings like a bird. He writes like a modern day Shakespeare and he wants to happen. Radio, help me. Fans, help me. If you like him, you know what you have to do to see and hear him. Just tell him I said hello.

A CLOSE CALL

Grand Ole Opry stalwart Jean Shephard was praising God and with good reason last Saturday night on the Grand Ole Opry. Seems Jean has two grandsons that are three years old. One of the children decided he wanted to drive. So, he got in the vehicle, then pulled the car out of gear like he thought daddy did. The car rolled over his cousin, who suffered a broken leg and was laid in Hendersonville Hospital. Of course, Jean was praising God. The near tragedy left her numb and scared.

Jean and hubby Benny Birchfield live in Hendersonville. Benny, an excellent rhythm guitar player/vocalist, was with Jean on the Opry last weekend. He also doubles as a sideman/road manager for Roy Orbison. Talk about wearing two hillbilly hats.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW, IT'S WHO YOU KNOW

The above is the title of The Whites' brand new single and video on Word Records. The gospel-flavored song, penned by Carl Jackson and Jerry Salley, is a fun, uptempo ditty that the talented group hopes will cross from gospel to country or vice versa. It's

They're Back!



'57 CORVETTE



'59 CADILLAC



'56 THUNDERBIRD

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They're all here! The Classic Cars of the Fifties. Twelve authentically detailed replicas, in the prized 1:43 scale. Each loaded with special features usually reserved for one-of-a-kind models costing hundreds of dollars or more.

Hinged doors and hoods that open. Bucket seats. Sculptured engines and undercarriages. Painted, hand-polished metal exteriors. All in the cars' original colors. As many as *fifty separate components* hand-assembled to form a single car.

There's never been anything like it in the hundred-year history of model car collecting. Imagine! Classics of this size and detail at just \$55 each.

And the wall display crafted of hardwood and veneer — is yours at no additional charge.

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**The most exciting cars
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In the most dazzling collection
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*Plus my state sales tax.

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Mr. _____
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CMM UPDATE: *Hank Thompson*

Hank Thompson is alive, well and living outside Fort Worth, Texas. "I'll work this year about 130-140 dates," he says. "That won't include television, record sessions, conventions. I imagine I'll be pretty well busy a couple hundred days." Today his Brazos Valley Boys are a thing of the past, and he generally travels alone, with his pearl-inlaid Gibson Super 400 guitar.

"I don't carry a regular band anymore," he explains. "On some deals we put together a seven- or eight-piece group, like the old band, or use four or five pieces. We work with local bands most of the time. I send a tape, and on it are instructions, the songs, keys, chord sheets. Most of 'em do a good job."

It was 40 years ago this year that Hank, newly signed to Capitol Records, had his first hit with "Humpty Dumpty Heart." His greatest years came in the early 1950's when Western swing was declining, even in the Southwest where it began. For over a decade Hank, a pillar of honky tonk music, produced classics like "Wild Side of Life," "Honky Tonk Girl" and "A Six Pack to Go." In 1961 he cut the first live country album ever recorded, in Las Vegas' Golden Nugget. The fine musicians who made up the Brazos Valley Boys produced a distinctive, dynamic sound, and the hot guitar picker on many of Hank's hits was none other than Merle Travis.

Today honky tonk is solidly back in favor and on the charts. "When I see George Strait and hear his music," Hank admits, "I think, 'There I am 30 years ago.'" His views of country music today are no less insightful, built on over 40 years in the business.

"It all goes in cycles. Right now, I'm glad we have more of what really typifies country music with Strait, Randy Travis, Ricky Van Shelton, Hank Jr., Dwight Yoakam and Reba McEntire. We got too far away from it, with some musical groups that do not typify country music. They alienated a lot of fans. It's just like stretchin' a rubber band.



In 1951 Hank Thompson signed with Jim Halsey's management company. Now, nearly 40 years later, Thompson and Halsey have renewed their contract. That's Hank and Jim as they were then and now. Of course you recognize the lady in the middle as none other than Minnie Pearl.

You stretch it so far and it snaps back to where it started. We're back to where we're supposed to be, but somebody'll stretch it again and go off on another tangent, I'm sure."

Recently reunited with longtime manager Jim Halsey, who got his start booking Hank, he now records for Nashville's Step One Records. A followup to his *Here's to Country Music* album on Step One will be recorded this summer, probably with Ray Pennington producing. Annual shows reuniting him with ex-Brazos Valley Boys have taken place in Wichita the past two years. "I would like to have more recognition of my music today than I get," he admits. He's hoping, though he says it's not an

end in itself, for eventual induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame. He also appeared at Fan Fair this past summer.

Hank's schedule leaves him enough time for hunting trips all across North and Central America. "Hunting is what we like to do. We've been hunting in Texas quite a bit. Last year we elk-hunted in Colorado and the year before that we were in Alaska. We hunt in Mexico for the white-winged dove. That's really our deviation from things."

Still, Hank doesn't mind that 200-day work schedule. "It's keepin' me awfully busy, just the way I like it."

—RICH KIENZLE

taken from their new album titled *Doin' It By the Book*, also on Word. It's kinda ridiculous when you realize that this is The Whites' first video in this hillbilly town, and a gospel label had the taste and sense to see that it was done. Well, I

reckon, "It ain't what you know, it's who you know." Sounds like a song!

A & M GOES COUNTRY

A & M Records signed their first coun-

try act, the Austin-based group **The Wagoneers**. This group has been stirring up dust here and there and have a single out and are going to perform overseas. Making music is my game and theirs.

People

SOME OF THE BEST NEW STUFF



Sweethearts of the Rodeo, Randy Travis, K.T. Oslin, Michael Johnson, Lyle Lovett and k.d. lang recently performed in London for the Celebration of New Country Music for the U.K. So, jolly ole England got a bloody good taste of the best new stuff.

EYE SAW

Eye saw Minnie Pearl dining at Maude's. Eye saw Jeannie (Mrs. Bobby) Bare standing out in front of Bobby's Bare Trap on Gallatin Road. Guess who is gonna produce Bobby Bare? *Chet Atkins!*

VERN'S TURN

"Set 'Em Up, Joe" goes to the top of the charts. To celebrate there were do's to outdo do's! Two in a row and I am there for both parties. First at ASCAP. And then at BMI. See "Set 'Em Up, Joe," Vern Gosdin's hit single, was written by Hank Cochran, Vern Gosdin, Dean Dillon and Buddy Cannon. Vern and Buddy write for ASCAP, and Dean and Hank write for BMI. That's why there were two parties. And, I went to both.

SONNIER'S FIRST VIDEO

Jo-El Sonnier, RCA Records in-house Cajun, finished his first video in Nashville with guest star Judge Reinhold. "Tear-Stained Letter" is the third single from Sonnier's album, *Come On, Joe*. I like the album. Hope you do, too.

ON THE OTHER HAND

Wasn't I one of the first fans of Randy Travis? Am I still a devout fan of Randy Travis? Yes. However, on the other

hand, stars have managers, and managers have folks who work for them. Carole Harper, assistant to Randy's manager Lib Hatcher, has left the organization. The rumor mill has it that Lib is difficult to work for. One can't help but wonder if the situation wasn't next to impossible. After all, Carole had been with Randy and Lib since the start of his illustrious career, and she did everything for them. I know one thing, there's a snake in the woodpile somewhere. I have personally heard Carole say how much Randy meant to her. Also, Carole would work until midnight if it was necessary and never complain. On the other hand, she chose to leave the organization. Hmmm.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS PORTER WAGONER

With his rhinestone suit and all-girl band (well, almost), Porter Wagoner is one of the most popular stars at the Opry or on the road. With a string of hits, Porter would just as soon talk about a string of fish. The man will drop a line just 'cause it's Tuesday. Loves to fish and he fishes a bunch. Does not let his music interfere with his fishing. Porter has now designed a fishing boat which he calls the Nighthawk. Porter says the boat has black lights so you can see the line if it wiggles even a little bit. By the way, Porter, my friend and yours, Harlan Howard, says if I take off

a few more pounds, I'll be ready to join your band!!

I GET PRESS RELEASES

When I read in a press release that David Skepner, manager for Marty Haggard, surprised the young star with a birthday bash, I about died to find out it was Marty's first birthday party ever. Friends, that is show biz. Daddy Merle Haggard, always on the road or busy or at someone else's party, never gave his boy a birthday party. It happens all the time, just to different stars' kids with different but famous last names. It is hard to be an SK (star's kid).

THERE'S MORE TO RODNEY THAN...

Yes, there is more to Rodney Crowell than being Rosanne Cash's husband. There's more to Rodney than being the son-in-law of Johnny Cash. There's more to Rodney than being a hit songwriter. I've been raving about him, and now you readers have started to rave. SRO sell-outs in four markets around the country. Yea, Rodney!

WELCOME BACK, GARY



In celebration of Gary Stewart's Brand New album, a party was held in Nashville, at the Music City Music Hall studio. Old friend Tanya Tucker, who co-wrote one of the songs on the album with Gary, was delighted to be part of the festivities. Everyone in Nashville and all around is thrilled to have Gary back on the scene again.

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2559 "May Christmas bring Friends to your Fireside. Peace to your Pathway, and Good Health throughout the New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



1304 LEGENDARY IRISH GREETING "May the trail rise up to meet you... "Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year" —artist Gordon Snidow



2269 "In every home, in every heart, the lights of friendship glow... it's time to greet the friends it's nice to know." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist K. Eberts



1140 "The wonder of Christmas fills the night" May Christmas bring Friends... Peace to your Pathway and Good Health throughout the New Year" —artist Bill Shaddix



3261 "May Christmas bring to you the music of laughter... the warmth of friendship and the spirit of love" —artist Richard Barth



2480 "Lord, give us eyes that look for Your everlasting light... hearts that are willing to give as well as to receive... May your Christmas be filled with His Love." —artist T. Blaylock



1822 "Christmas Greetings" (from Charlie Russell's personal Christmas card for 1915) "Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist Charles M. Russell



1462 "Peace on Earth" "May Peace be your Gift at Christmas and your Treasure through all the Year" —artist Brummett EchoHawk



2534 "The very finest Christmas gifts are not found below the tree..." "May God's peace touch your heart... and warm your Christmas celebration!" —artist R. Wagoner



2540 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills..." Psalm 121:1 "May you have the Spirit of Christmas... Gladness of Christmas... Heart of Christmas which is Love" —artist R. Moreton



2388 "In every home, in every heart, the lights of friendship glow... time to greet the friends it's nice to know." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



2417 "May Christmas bring Friends to your Fireside, Peace to your Pathway, and Good Health throughout the New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



2409 "From the two of us at Christmas" "To you and all whom you hold dear, a Joyous Christmas and Happy New Year" —artist Robert H. Blair



2507 "May the Great Spirit bless you, your lodge, and those you love with peace and lasting happiness. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



1883 "When pine trees bend with heavy snow and trails are hard to find... brings memories to mind..." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist Kathryn Williams B.

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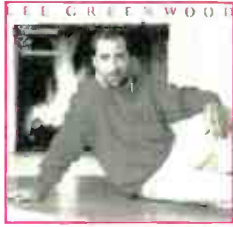
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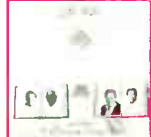
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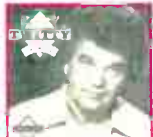
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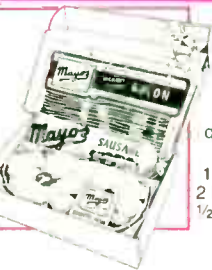
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People



The Forester wedding party included the bride's sisters, June, Christy and Kathy.

ANOTHER FORESTER I DO

Pretty Kim Forester of the famed Forester Sisters quartet has wed Brian Keefe, who currently works with her family group. The pair married in the little church back home on Lookout Mountain where the siblings began singing for love, not money.

JO-EL SONNIER AND CAJUN MUSIC ON THE CHARTS

Cajuns come and Cajuns go. If you ask me, it's been too long since one came and stayed on the record charts long enough for folks to know. Be that as it may, **Jo-El Sonnier**, Cajun extraordinaire, rocked down in the RCA parking lot for the friends and neighbors here in Nashville, and I can tell you firsthand, if he comes to town, put on your most comfortable shoes and loosest clothes and go boogie. Born outside Rayne, Louisiana, to sharecroppers, Jo-El is hillbilly to the core.

GUESS WHO EYE MET

...The Oak Ridge Boys' own Duane Allen driving a van on Gallatin Road. We met, him on his side of the road and me on mine.

AND EYE SAW

Tourists are the greatest. At **Bobby Bare's Bare Trap** on Gallatin Road between anywhere and Hendersonville, there's a giant, people-sized, stuffed black bear out front wearing a baseball cap with Red Man chewing tobacco on the brim. As I passed today, I saw one of

'you' all smooched up to the stuffed beast while hubby snapped the photo. Everybody wants to get in pictures.

EYE ALSO SAW

The Kendalls have a brand new souvenir shop on that same famed Gallatin Road. So all you friends and fans traveling from Nashville or Opryland, the Opry, Music Valley Drive, the Hermitage or the Music Row area toward Conway Twitty's Twitty City or the Johnny Cash Museum, you can stop at The Kendalls' shop along the way too.

TNN VIEWERS CHOICE AWARDS

For those of you who aren't lucky enough to get *The Nashville Network* on TV, I'll blitz the winners in the Viewers Choice Awards. The show was well done, I thought, hosted by the great Willie Nelson, **The Oak Ridge Boys** and newcomer **K.T. Oslin**, along with **Ralph Emery**. The surprise of the night went to **Cousin Minnie Pearl**, who received the first annual Minnie Pearl Award of Excellence for her contributions to country music. Miss Minnie was noticeably moved by the honor. Some called it **Randy Travis Night** when Randy received the coveted Entertainer of the Year Award. Other awards garnered by Travis were favorite Male Vocalist, Favorite Album *Forever and Ever*, Favorite Song "Forever and Ever, Amen" and Favorite Video "Forever and Ever, Amen." Favorite Female Vocalist was **Reba McEntire**, Favorite Group was **The Oak Ridge Boys** (were they happy), and the Favorite Newcomer was **Ricky Van Shelton**. Everybody I saw thought the highlight

of the entire show was **Ricky Skaggs'** guitar/vocal performance of "Thanks Again." Famous folks all over the Opry House were in tears.

LOU GOSSETT THINKS IT'S CHRISTMAS IN THE SPRINGTIME

Kidding! Just kidding. Gossett was in town filming *Roots Christmas* for ABC Television. I figured if Lou Gossett appeared in **Reba McEntire's** video, I could mention him in my column. He ain't country music, but this TV show is definitely country. See, if you just listen I can make everything right.

PRINE AT TENNESSEE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

It's always good when the prodigals return. Born in Chicago, **John Prine** is an adopted son of Tennessee, but he is loved as much or more than any of her native sons. John's songs have a cutting edge that could very well be too true for country, but I love 'em, including outstanding numbers like "Sam Stone," and the nationally-known and loved "Muhlenberg County."

OFF THEY GO INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER

Playing the Royal Albert Hall are **Randy Travis, Kathy Mattea** and **Sweethearts of the Rodeo**. **Jim Owens** will film the show for *TNN*. Mattea will then join **The Bellamy Brothers** and **Asleep At the Wheel** at the Intercountry Fest in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Both **Tammy Wynette** and **Ronnie Milsap** have designs on an Australian tour. I've always wanted to hop along with kangaroos. Remember the bunny hop? Wonder if the Aussies do the kangaroo hop? Milsap also has plans to attend the Seoul Song Festival in Korea.

WISH YOU HAD BEEN THERE

The International Folk Festival held near beautiful Riverfront Park on the River Cumberland moved the love for music in me almost to tears when the exquisite Japanese Mingo Band performed "Tennessee Waltz." Although primarily a folk music group, I was so sorry they didn't have a chance to perform on the Opry or on *Nashville Now*. And I so wish **PeeWee King** and **Redd Stewart**, writers of our state song, could have heard this unusual but beautiful rendition.

K.T. OSLIN

★ 1988 CMA ★
Female Vocalist of the Year



Pickin' Up and Doin' It Right

What would you call a woman who quit the New York theater, made it in TV commercials, only to leave that and try country songwriting? Some would call her crazy, but K.T. Oslin's fans and critics say she's just right / by Patrick Carr

K.T. Oslin is hard to miss. She's quite distinctive. Once you've seen her, you're not very likely to get her confused with any other woman in country music, any other pop singer, anybody in the world of show business at large, or even any other soul on our whole little planet.

In the country field, the first impression she made on the largest number, the fans, was startling. Her "80's Ladies" song wasn't just a new song

from a new singer; it was a once-in-a-decade event. As Jeannie C. Riley's record of "Harper Valley P.T.A." did in the 1960's and Loretta Lynn's "The Pill" did in the 1970's, that one bold and plainly heartfelt anthem brought Nashville song lyrics abruptly up to date with a genuinely contemporary image of women. It was also, not quite incidentally, something of a breakthrough in the very heavily male-dominated Nashville music industry: a big

hit record written by the woman who sang it, and sung by the woman who wrote it.

"80's Ladies" alone would have set its author/singer well apart from the pack, but K.T. Oslin possessed other characteristics which screamed, "different!" loud and clear. There was for instance her age (when's the last time *you* heard of a female country singer just getting started at 45?), and her visual image (a very mature Punk impersonating a very

successful lady of the evening), and her demeanor (in a word, loud). And then too, most significantly, there was the character behind all these unusual traits.

That character was quick, big, bold, brassy, intelligent, incisive, insecure and mouthy—a big-city, therapist-frequenting, Baptist-shocking kind of per-

*“If that isn’t a
country song title,
I’ve never
heard one.”*

son—and among the casual observers and professional gossips of Music Row, it enlivened many an otherwise humdrum day; as the lights of instant stardom turned her way, K.T. Oslin became the most interesting story in town for at least a month, and has continued to supply more occasional but regular entertainment ever since.

She has, quite naturally, inspired an abundance of comment from all quarters, everything from “Oslin dispels the conventional notions about women in Country Music” (*CMA Close Up*, January 1988) to “that big-mouthed New York !#*&!” (male record company executive, name withheld), but perhaps the most accurate quote came from that old wag and wordsmith Tom T. Hall, who had the good grace to say it to her face before he mentioned it to anyone else: “You know what you are, K.T.? You’re everybody’s screwed-up sister.”

Ms. Oslin likes that one. “Right. Everybody’s screwed-up sister,” she says. “I threw back my head and *howled* when he told me that. That’s one of the best descriptions of me *ever!*”

And really, she does fit the profile. Single at 45, never married, a small-town girl who’s been a resident of Manhattan most of her adult life, a “theater person” who’s spent most of her adult life bouncing from one self-defined identity to another, a self-confessed neurotic... If she were *your* screwed-up sister, you’d probably have experienced your fair share of 3 A.M. phone calls over the years, listened to more than a few quite vivid accounts of life’s little ups and downs. One thing screwed-up sisters are good at is expressing themselves.

Even today, under the less-than-perfect circumstances of our little inter-

view—a conveyor-belt kind of affair, conducted under the auspices of the Marlboro Country Tour in which K.T. is a participant, in which journalists are plunked down in front of her on the half hour, every half hour, ravenous for hot copy and good quote—she is doing quite well. She may be shellshocked, but she’s still sharp. When for instance I contrast today’s interview circumstances with yesterday’s—a whole afternoon spent ambling around the Tom T. Hall estate while ole Tom played a leisurely game of Show & Tell with his multitude of goats and birds and cats and dogs and pigs and chickens—she crosses one black-lace-gloved hand over the other, wriggles quickly to relieve the constriction of her tight black leather skirt, gives me a theatrically exaggerated fish eye, and quips that, “Yeah. Well, today *we’re* the pigs and chickens.”

We are, however, long past the point of being suckling pigs or spring chickens, and we’re professionals (if we really had to, both of us could probably conduct this interview trussed up and roasting slowly over an open pit), so we go to it.

We begin at the beginning, with Kay Toinette Oslin feeling different in Crossitt, Arkansas; Mobile, Alabama, and Houston, Texas, the various locations of her raising.

“I felt very popular, very much part of the group, but in a very strange, different way,” she remembers. “I could

always entertain people, and I did that, but I didn’t feel very much *like* them. For instance, it never occurred to me that I would grow up and marry somebody, then live happily ever after.”

This kind of attitude, among others, didn’t make much sense to the kids around her, and probably explains why she was elected Miss Beatnik of 1962 by the Milby High School track team in 1962, but to K.T. it was entirely logical: “I was raised by a working mother and a working grandmother, so I just assumed that when I left school, I would work; I would earn my own keep, and do it in show business.”

That she did. She studied acting in college, then hit the boards wherever they beckoned until, inevitably, she found herself drawn to the bright lights of Broadway and the somewhat dimmer bulbs which illuminate the precarious lives of New York’s legions of struggling thespians (there are only twelve professional waiters on Manhattan island; the other 185,000 are all aspiring TV soap stars in age-progressive states of encouragement, anxiety, depression, despair, or outright screaming psychosis).

K.T. got a lot better start than most—secured a part in *Hello, Dolly!*, no less—but still, as she’d been a different schoolkid, so she was a different thespian.

“All the people around me just lived to take acting classes; they ate,



breathed, and drank 'the Theater,'" she says, "but it didn't consume me like that. I just didn't feel that kind of devotion."

So she did a very unthespianlike thing. Being of the opinion that she was carrying more than her own share of the weight in the cast of *Promises, Promises*, she went to the producers and demanded a pay raise. They figured she was bluffing ("You just don't do that in 'the Theater,'" she explains. "You never quit a job unless you've got another one to go to"), and so they turned her down. But she wasn't bluffing, and she quit. Left that production, left "the Theater," left showbiz and left Manhattan.

She didn't go far on the map—just to upstate New York—but in other ways she might as well have travelled to Mars, because now she was taking a stab at a radically different lifestyle: country living, 1960's style. "I was living with someone, being the domestic country Goddess, the Earth Mother," she explains.

She gave it a good try—two years—but long before the end she knew it wouldn't wash. "I was vegetating, turning into a maniac," she laughs. "One day I woke up and said 'What the hell is *this*?'"

Scratch Earth Motherhood; back to Manhattan and something else K.T. thought she might like: being a singer in commercial jingles. But there again she didn't feel any great satisfaction in the role, so she added a new direction, on-

camera commercial work: playing the poor confused suburban housewife, basically.

It should come as no surprise that that line of work didn't take too well, either, though it and the jingle singing did provide funds for a standard of Manhattan living slightly higher than that endured by "serious" thespians. But K.T. was not a great housewife. She just didn't have it in her soul. Leaving the nest and spending some time in the big bad world had not changed her mind on issues like marriage, motherhood and family.

"I never had a burning, overwhelming desire to have children," she says, "so why get married? Then you're going to have to put up with a husband. It's appalling, you know, how many women marry just to have kids. But really, I never felt like I had one blind chance of making a marriage work, and neither did my friends—and the more their marriages would fall by the wayside, the more I'd get frightened away. And anyway, the kind of guys I was around were musicians and actors, who are just wonderful guys, but you don't want to marry them. At least not in their twenties and thirties..."

So there she was, a grownup screwed-up sister living more or less hand-to-mouth and day-to-day in Manhattan, earning her keep as the exact opposite of who she really was. It wasn't a terrible life by any means—a lot of it was fun—but it didn't have much of a future.

The instrument which would give it one arrived in the form of a piano given to K.T. by a friend. She started noodling around on it in her apartment when she wasn't being Mrs. Fix-O-Dent or whoever, and eventually she got around to writing a song.

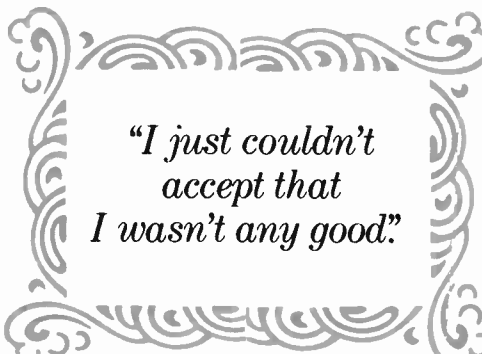
That first song, it bears telling, was a little ditty inspired by graffiti on a ladies' room wall. The ladies' room was attached to a cafe in "some little bitty town" where K.T. and her thespian friends had stopped for sustenance on one of their tours of the boonies, and the graffiti was something else. "It was hilarious," K.T. remembers. "There it was, neatly printed among all this scrawled lipstick and pen scratches: *I ain't never gonna love nobody but Cornell Crawford*. I read that line, and it just cracked me up. I thought, 'If that isn't a country song title, I've never heard one,' and wrote the song with a couple of friends when I got back to New York."

She liked it. "It was pretty silly, but it also had a nice spirit to it, and I thought 'Gee. That was fun. That really wasn't so hard.'"

This, however, was not one of those blinding moments in which one's path through life is suddenly revealed in

crystal clarity. It was a year before K.T. wrote another song, and six months until the next one emerged, and another six months until she produced a piece of work she thought was actually good.

Even then, she didn't exactly swoon away with relief and enthusiasm. It was more like "Oh, no. It's not hard enough trying to be an actress, now you want to be a *songwriter*?"



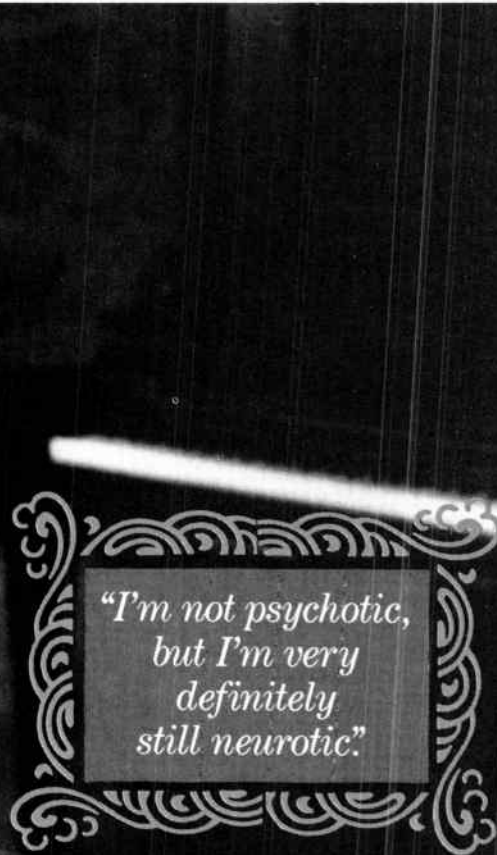
*"I just couldn't
accept that
I wasn't any good."*

A prophetic thought, that. When in the late 1970's K.T. got serious about her new line of endeavor and took it to the logical place, Nashville, she once again got a better start than most, with an Elektra Records deal in 1981. But on the other hand... there she was, different again.

"Well," she says, "I had '80's Ladies' and 'Younger Men' and other songs on my 1987 album already written back then, but nobody would let me record '80's Ladies' and nobody would publish it. My writing was really considered very radical. Women were still supposed to be quiet and demure and sing a sad song, and I just wasn't like that. I wasn't like *anyone* around there. So I was looked upon with great suspicion, and given some measly little singles deal. And as you well know, the smaller your deal, the smaller is the attention devoted to you because there's no big investment. I guess I could have really given it my all and ramrodded *something* through, but really, they just weren't ready for me."

So she quit. Went back to Manhattan, back to being the professional suburban housewife. She felt truly defeated by her Nashville experience, fell into screwed-up-sister thinking: "I assumed for a while it was because I was bad, or I didn't have what it takes—you know how you do." Sure I do. Screwed-up sisters come in all ages, shapes, sizes and sexes.

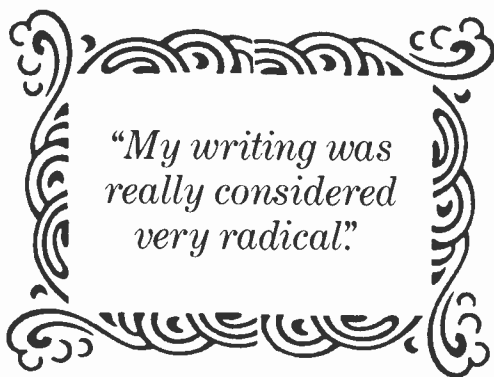
But a change came about, at first through negative pressure. As K.T.'s official record company biography now tells us, "One day I woke up and said 'Do I wanna spend my life being the Fix-O-Dent Lady on a roller coaster and having my head stuck in a john saying *I can see my dishes in here* and worrying about cleansers? Oh my God, I'm gonna



*"I'm not psychotic,
but I'm very
definitely
still neurotic."*

die and the only thing I'll be remembered for is a hemorrhoid commercial! So I knew I had to give this singing thing one more try."

That's when a more forceful part of her took over. "I just couldn't accept that I wasn't any good," she says. "I really thought I was, so I decided that I'd go back to Nashville, and *this time* I'd do it properly."



And that she did. With no mentors or sugar daddies, under nobody's protective wing, all by herself, she spent her eating money on setting up a showcase at a Music Row club and somehow lured, cajoled, or shamed a significant number of heavy hitters into her audience. By the time her show was over, that audience (most significantly Alabama producer Harold Shedd and RCA Records kingpin Joe Galante) had arrived at the conclusion that this New York loony might just sell tickets.

History does not record whether or not Shedd or Galante or anyone else in the crowd asked themselves the million-dollar question about K.T. Oslin: Were the concertgoers and record buyers of the nation really ready for a country Bette Midler?

Evidently they were—K.T.'s *80's Ladies* album entered the charts higher than any first album by a woman singer ever had, and went all the way to Number One to dislodge no less a monster than Randy Travis—but many of the radio people in charge of getting the music to the fans were a touch less progressive. Many stations flat refused to air the "80's Ladies" single until their request lines forced them to.

To a certain extent you can sympathize with those folks. The programming meetings must have been tough. You know... *Gee, boys, the gals out there really seem to like this broad, but "We burned our bras and we burned our dinners and we burned our candles at both ends"? How's the born-again crowd gonna like that? And Crazy Billy Joe Bob down there at Unpainted Furniture Monster Discount Warehouse Heaven,*

you know we're gonna be hearing from him... But the majority does have a way of making its consumer dollars felt pretty quickly, and so it was that a significant percentage of modern women got to hear something with which they could really identify coming out of their local country radio stations.

Ditto for quite some number of modern men. K.T.'s "Younger Men" song met resistance even stronger than that encountered by "80's Ladies" (at first, says its writer/singer, only the half dozen women program directors in the nation would let it on the air), but now—surprise—it's one of the most frequently requested album cuts all over the country, and most of the requests come from men. So much for the *Well, we think this song will seriously offend our male listeners* line K.T. got real tired of hearing a while back.

But oh, well, all that strife is ancient (immediate past) history now. Likely it will recede politely into the mists of time until K.T. comes up with a new song which goes beyond the lyric-acceptability standards her old songs just redefined. She'll surely get the opportunity, because careerwise she's home free. All is well.

Or at least as well as things get for screwed-up sisters. Even now, with her life's direction in place and the ball rolling powerfully forward, K.T. admits to certain areas of insecurity, doubt and neurosis.

"I'm not psychotic, but I'm very definitely still neurotic," she says. "This big change hasn't cured me. Things have just shifted around; the things I'm neurotic *about* have changed. Some of them have gotten better, but others have gotten worse."

The things which are worse include, for starters, a rather large item characterized by K.T. as "the loss of control over your own personal life. You start to realize that you'll *always* have to grovel; you'll just grovel at more powerful feet, because you're never really the boss in this business. And that's a *cold* slap in the face, I think. It feels like I have an awful lot of people to answer to, and an awful lot of people answering for me."

Like who? I ask.

"Well, it starts with your accountant taking away all your money, and you have to go to him for your allowance. So I'm 15 years old again! You know, *Can I have \$25?* And they go *What did you do with the last \$25 we gave you?* And you say *Well, I spent that!* That kind of stuff can make me really crazy."

The fan mail (or hate mail) can be upsetting, too, if you're the type to let one sick person a thousand miles away spoil your day (which K.T. is, which in turn is why she's quit reading it).

Working the road can also be a touch

trying. "I'm an opening act, so what can I say? You have the least fun of everybody; you're at the mercy of everybody else's hand-me-downs," she says. "I mean, it's not like I don't enjoy being out there in front of people—I really do—and I even like some of the travelling, but most of the travelling is like..." (her voice drops to a conspiratorial little-girl whisper, as if a posse of bad Big Daddy baggage handlers and hotel reservations agents is hovering behind the bathroom door of the suite we're in) "...Well, it's like this whole business. They torture you. And then they torture you more, and then maybe they give you some awards, and then they torture you again."

She laughs for a moment, then gets semi-serious again and voices her ultimate complaint, the single greatest irony of her new stardom.

"I can't do what I wanted to do when I tried to get here in the first place!" she wails. "All I really wanted was to get rich enough so that I could sit in my room and stare at the ceiling and think. But there's no time; absolutely *none*."

At this point, in one of those little miracles of negative synchronization, some Marlboro man appears behind my back, evidently gesturing at his watch or holding up two fingers or something, because K.T. says "Yessir! One more minute. Gotcha!"

Thus warned, I use my minute to ask in what areas K.T.'s neuroses have shown improvement since she hit the big time.

Well, she says—and this doesn't have as much to do with stardom as it has with the sheer accumulation of age and experience—"I feel I could probably think about getting married at this point. I think I'm finally getting smart enough to handle it. That's something, wouldn't you say?"

Certainly, I agree. What else is good?

She smiles; a big, broad one. "Well, it's comforting to have the idea that you've actually got some kind of a *future*," she says. "A little financial security. That makes a difference to a *lot* of things. I mean, basically, most of my adult life I've lived like a child, which is fine, but that started catching up with me when I hit my forties. You know, I started wanting things I couldn't afford. So now it's nice. It's very pleasant to think I could actually do a grownup thing like—well, take a vacation for instance. Go away someplace and come back refreshed and renewed, without feeling like I'm never going to eat again."

She pauses a moment, and a frown crosses that mobile, expressive, intelligent, screwed-up-sister successful-80's-lady face. "But where the hell am I going to find the time?" she wails. ■

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1988—HELEN BARNARD, EDITOR

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

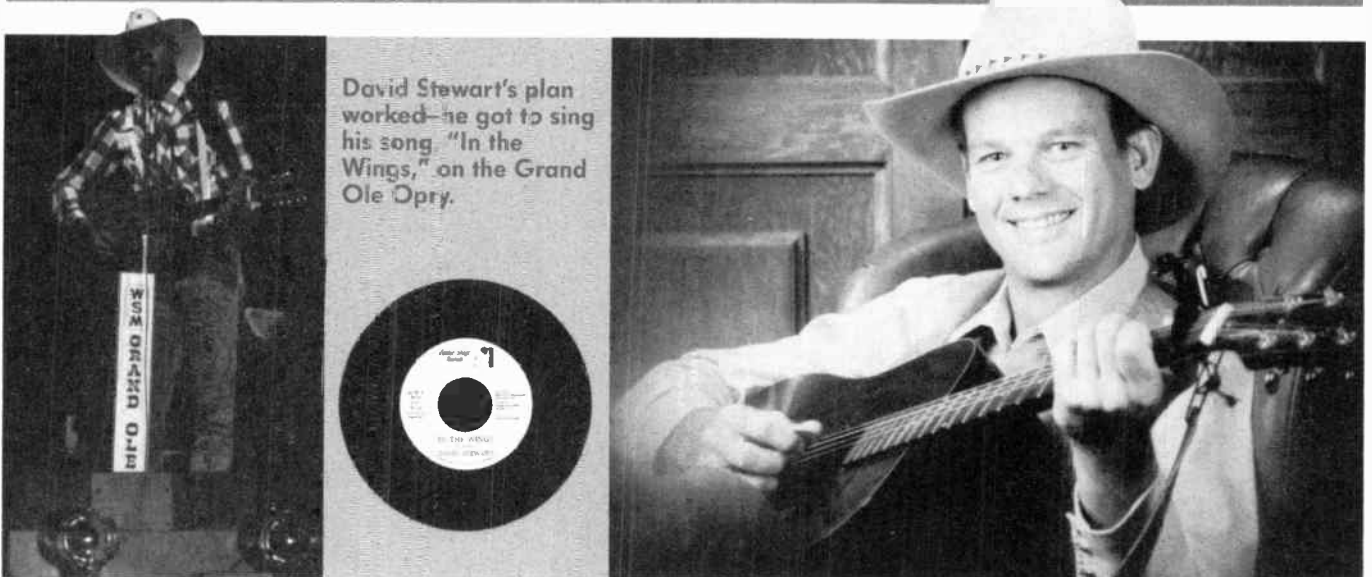
A Lot to be Thankful For

Country music provides many connections for people, connections of different kinds. It connects people from coast to coast with those across the sea. It connects people of like interests in the various regions of our country. It connects fans and stars. It connects generations. Ernest Tubb kept the music of Jimmie Rodgers alive. Vern Gosdin does the same for E.T.'s. Disk jockeys and band leaders in small cities and towns as well as large keep the songs of the 1940's and 1950's alive. Traditional festivals and the Grand Ole Opry form focal points for all this activity. Fans, through

their generosity and their willingness to correspond, keep each others' collections and just plain interest in the music alive.

The harvest is better than we thought it would be in the drought-struck areas of the United States, and the farmers and others who support them in their daily life are not as bad off as it seemed they might be, thanks in part to government support. So for this and all the many ties that bind us, in music and in other ways, we rejoice.

CMSA Q&A returns to these pages this issue.



David Stewart's plan worked—he got to sing his song, "In the Wings," on the Grand Ole Opry.

David Stewart Walks to Opry

Wyoming songwriter and restaurant manager David Stewart hit upon a unique way to approach the Grand Ole Opry.

David Stewart and his wife Jackie conceived the idea of David walking to Nashville from Gillette, Wyoming, as a way to publicize David's music. As he told a local newspaper, "I'm not looking for stardom. There are so many good singers already. I'm a songwriter. But to get recognition so major singers will sing your songs is difficult."

Nevertheless, it was a thrill singing on the Grand Ole Opry. David made it onto the famous stage Saturday night, July 23rd. He couldn't put into words how it felt to be there, but says it was "very emotional." He appeared on Charlie Walker's portion of the

show, met Del Reeves, Jim Webb—who was very "inspiring"—Bobby Rose and others, and generally was walking on air. After singing his own song, "In the Wings," a song about appearing on the Grand Ole Opry, he encored with "Jambalaya."

It took David 84 days to travel the 1600 miles from Gillette to Nashville, backed up by a promoter, a friend, a van, and a dog

named Snicker. He wore Brooks shoes and changed his socks a lot. Challenges along the way were 78 mile-per-hour winds, five straight days of rain and the drought of '88.

David had printed up copies of his record, "In the Wings," posters, balloons, and other promotional materials, and donations of money and other items he needed helped him along his way. The welcome prepared for him in Nashville on July 22nd, by family and friends and the Chamber of Commerce, had him close to tears. But the best part was Hal Durham, manager of the Opry, saying, "We have space on Saturday night's show."

Settled in Nashville for awhile after his adventure, David has high hopes for the future. He walked a country mile—and then some—for a song.
—H.B.

In This Issue

- Walking a Country Mile
- Society Suggestions
- Country Giant Ernest Tubb
- Fans Help Fans

Suggestion Box

Anyone interested in working on either of these ideas?

LISTING OF NEW RELEASES ON INDEPENDENT LABELS

I have two reasons for writing this time: one is to make a suggestion for your already great *Newsletter*; the other a request for space in the Information, Please section (see *Information, Please -Ed.*). When you see my list of song requests, my suggestion, I hope, will make more sense.

How about a section listing new releases on independent labels? In many areas, it is very hard to find even major label records if they don't get in to the upper areas of the charts. It is nearly impossible to find independents. You could also list either record dealers who carry these records or addresses of the record labels where these records may be purchased.

**Harold Swartz
South Bend, Indiana**

Harold first appeared in the Newsletter in January/February 1987. He recognized Randy Travis' future early on. Harold, we will look into this idea and report in a future issue. Anyone with any information, please write us. Are there any mail-

order businesses that sell independent—or major label—singles out there?—Ed.

COUNTRY/WESTERN ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Being in the Armed Forces, my family and I travel around a lot, and we are constantly facing the problem of trying to locate the current "in" country/western nightspot in some of the cities and towns we stop in. Our luck usually runs bad. We usually wind up using the yellow pages and more often than not we pick the wrong spot to hit.

My question is this: is there a worldwide or at least a nationwide Country/Western Entertainment Guide that one could buy that will tell you all the country/western spots and give any info on each one, like a rating system used for restaurants? If there is no such guide, do you think your readers might help us out by writing to us and letting us know about the country/western places around their cities? We usually

stay overnight in cities or towns that have a population of 10,000 or more, but if someone from a smaller town knows of a great place to go for dancing, etc., then we are interested.

I would offer to give routes that we take when traveling except that we vary them each time and usually go with the wind. That is why a guide would be so helpful. In fact, if there is no such guide, if anyone writes us and gives us a ratings list of country/western spots in their area, we will compile a master listing and send them a copy of what everyone else has sent to us.

I appreciate any help the *Newsletter* might be able to give us.

**Gerald J. Andres Jr.
3737 Starlighter Dr.**

Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452

We know of no such guide, and we applaud this project. Our attempt to do the same thing informally has been the Favorite Honky Tonk feature running in the Newsletter in the following issues: July/August 1986, November/December 1986, May/June 1987, May/June 1988. —Ed.

Take a Seat

Country music fan William Britton has been making benches for some famous people.

I've been making benches for about 15 years, and I really enjoy making them. I made one for Roy Acuff in 1976 and presented it to him at the Opry at Christmas. The bench still sits in his dressing room. I also made one for Billy Walker and a coffee table for Betty Walker, Billy's wife.

I retired one year ago, but while I was working, I got the idea to make a bench for Minnie Pearl. After I got started, I talked with Betty Walker and she gave me the name of Debbie Brawner, who works on the *Nashville Now* show. She made all the arrangements for me to present the bench

to Minnie Pearl on the *Nashville Now* show at Christmas 1987.

When the bench was ready, I went to Nashville to surprise Minnie on the show. Unfortunately, it seemed the show was too tight to fit me in, so I presented the bench to Minnie in Ralph Emery's office.

It was truly an honor to give the bench to her. She is such a warm and beautiful lady.

I am now planning to make a bench for a few more stars, Willie Nelson, Hank Williams Jr., and Jimmy Dickens. I don't know yet what arrangements I have to make so I can surprise them.

Maybe the *Country Music Magazine* office would like a nice bench to sit on. How about that?

Minnie wrote me a thank you note soon after I was in Nashville.

I know it is a tough job to put a good magazine together, but you folks sure do a super job. It's the best.

**William Britton
Barto, Pennsylvania**

We certainly would like a bench. Thank you, Bill!—Ed.



Minnie Pearl and William Britton admire the lettering on the handmade bench Bill made for Minnie. It reads: The Queen of Grinders Switch, Cousin Minnie Pearl. Fit for a queen!

SEPTEMBER POLL Album and Single of the Month

Ricky Van Shelton
George Strait

Wild-eyed Dream
"Baby Blue"

The poll is tight this month, and the vote is large. Ricky Van Shelton has the top album again, but close, close, close behind, tied for second, are Randy Travis and George Strait with *Always & Forever* and *If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Livin'.* Amazingly, Randy Travis' *Storms of Life* is in fourth place, way back but still in contention, with Keith Whitley's latest, *Don't Close Your Eyes*, close behind that

in fifth.

Singles is also a tough fight. George Strait's "Baby Blue" just barely touches out Ricky Van Shelton's "Don't We All Have the Right," while Keith Whitley's coming on strong in third with "Don't Close Your Eyes." Vern Gosdin's fourth with "Set 'Em Up, Joe" (third last month), and Rodney Crowell fifth with "I Couldn't Leave You If I Tried."



Merle Haggard in the 1960's and Michael Twitty, Dennis Devine and Marty Haggard in 1988. Michael's Conway Twitty's boy and Marty is Merle's. The photo of Merle is from Dennis' collection.



Like Father, Like Son

CMSA member and longtime friend of the Newsletter, Dennis Devine, attended a special concert in Omaha earlier this year.

Enclosed are pictures of Marty Haggard, Merle Haggard and Michael Twitty. The ones of Marty and Michael I took at the

American Legion Post 30 concert, "The Sons of Country," held May 24 at the Music Hall in Omaha.

I am very impressed with Marty. He should go far in country music. I am sending along a picture of Marty's dad, Merle, taken in the 1960's at the same concert hall. Boy,

do they look alike!

Michael Twitty looks a lot like his dad also. They both took time to talk with me, and both are nice young men their dads should be proud of, as I am sure they are.

Dennis Devine Sr.
Council Bluffs, Iowa

True Country Style

Van Truelove and the True Country Strings play VFW clubs, American Legion and private parties out of Fort Worth. His band provides something that his fans can't find on the radio.

As a subscriber and leader of a five-piece country band, some of the remarks in your March/April issue gave me the inspiration to stand up and be counted. One of the main reasons my band and I have not recorded some of the songs that I have written is

because we know that the radio stations are fighting *true* country music. People call me constantly to book my band because they cannot find their kind of music on the radio, or in record shops. As long as the radio stations get their listings from New York, we haven't a chance anywhere else to hear the music we like.

I have always been a fan of Ray Price, and we get an awful lot of requests for his music, but after reading your article, "20 Questions with Ray Price," in the same

March/April issue, I realized how much he means to country music. We need more great people like him to carry on our "true country" and not give up. He is one of the greatest, and someday I hope to be able to tell him that in person.

I also enjoyed the comments by R.A. Faris in the March/April *Newsletter*. I was born in Harrison, Arkansas, and lived there as a small boy.

Van Truelove
Fort Worth, Texas



Van Truelove (inset), lead guitar and vocals, and the True Country Strings on stage: left to right, Raymond Worley, steel guitar; Art Guinn, fiddle; Bobby Williams, drums; Cal Wayne, bass and vocals. The band's in demand.



Rich Kienzle's question-and-answer feature returns to the Newsletter this issue. We'd like to warn all you enthusiastic readers—Rich cannot answer your questions individually. Do not send him an SASE. If your question is one several people have asked or if it touches on a topic that seems of general interest, it will be answered in this column.

To locate individual records or albums or other items, don't forget the Information, Please column in every Newsletter. Remember also the list of independent record dealers and stores in the September/October 1987 issue.

Q: I would like to know the circumstances of Lefty Frizzell's death. Did he have a heart attack, was he a drinker or what? How old was he at the time he died?

Nina Whitney
Kansas City, Missouri

A: Lefty Frizzell, who suffered from high blood pressure, died July 19, 1975, of a massive stroke, at age 47. His drinking was legendary, and according to Charles Wolfe's notes for Bear Family Records' Lefty Frizzell box set, Lefty Frizzell: His Life, His Music, Lefty wouldn't take prescribed blood pressure medication because he feared it wouldn't mix with booze.

Q: Back in the 1950's, there was a song called "Waltz of the Angels." Who recorded it and where could I get the record?

Mrs. Russell Matthews
Canby, Minnesota

A: Depends on whose version you're looking for. If you want the original Lefty Frizzell version, it's available on Lefty's album, *Treasures Untold* (Rounder SS 11). If you want the Wynn Stewart version on Capitol or the 1962 George

Jones-Margie Singleton duet, they're out of print.

Q: Back quite a few years, we had a disk jockey named Cactus Jack. He had a record of "Truck Drivin' Man" by Terry Fell. I would love to have it. Where could I get it?

Sandy Morris
Kansas City, Missouri

A: Terry Fell's original version of "Truck Drivin' Man," a song he wrote as well as sang, is available on British RCA's trucker anthology, *Keep On Truckin'* (NL 89023), part of the 20 of the Best series.

Q: Will RCA release Dolly Parton's *In the Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)* on CD, and do you think Tanya Tucker will put all her back albums on CD's? Please advise.

Bob Pinckney
Fort Worth, Texas

A: I'm glad somebody brought up CD's. The Dolly album was re-released on record by British RCA earlier this year, (NL 90007), and reviewed in *Buried Treasures* in the March/April issue of *Country Music*, but as far as the country CD market as a whole is concerned, things are pretty much up in the air. Country fans are often the last to accept a new format like CD. Many CMSA readers still swear by 8-track; others are only now buying cassettes. One worry is that while the industry switches over to CD's, if it does, pickings on older country albums may get very slim. A lot of country albums have already been phased out, some re-released on CD's, some not. As far as Tanya's records are concerned, specifically, her record companies decide what material, if any, gets reissued and in what format—she doesn't. I wouldn't hold my breath.

Q: How would a person find recordings of the late Hawkshaw Hawkins?

Madelyn McGonagle
Warsaw, Missouri

A: Gusto Records, which owns all Hawkins' best-known recordings for King and Starday, has an album out, Hawkshaw Hawkins, *16 Greatest Hits* (STR 3013). Hawkins' Columbia and RCA sides are out of print.

Q: I would like some information on Rockin' Sydney.

Polly Elaman

A: Rockin' Sydney is a black Louisiana Cajun performer who plays a form of music known as zydeco, a blend of country, blues, rhythm-and-blues and Cajun favored for dancing in the Cajun areas of Louisiana and East Texas. "My Toot Toot" brought him nationwide popularity recently, but he's been popular in his own region for years. Proves a point.

Q: Is it possible to get cassettes on Sonny James' music anywhere in the U.S.? It seems he is hardly ever heard of anymore. Ever since he recorded "When the Snow Is On the Roses" in 1972, he seems to have disappeared from the scene.

David Wolf

Britton, South Dakota

A: Unfortunately, all Sonny's Capitol and Columbia hits appear to be out of print at the moment. However, he's had a number of hits since 1972, including nearly a dozen in the Top Ten for both Columbia and Monument between 1972 and 1979, songs like "White Silver Sands," "I Love You More and More Every Day," "Is It Wrong (For Loving You)," and "You're Free to Go." He's been quiet as of late, but I doubt he's out of business. Every hit artist has his dry periods.

—RICH KIENZLE

Country Music: Tie That Binds

Louise Burns listens to Harley E. and Bette B.'s Repeat Performance radio show featured in the May/June Newsletter. There are other connections, too.

Anyone who was lucky enough to have lived in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's and loved country music has been twice blessed—if they are within listening range of *Repeat Performance*, broadcast Sundays at 9 A.M. on station WTMA/1250 AM out of Charleston, South Carolina. In our early years the old victrola spun our parents' records; and the jukebox and radio kept us up to date with the new country music. Now Harley E. and Bette B. give us the opportunity to

relive those old days. Those old records are as great today as they were yesterday!

As a young person, up in the Great State of Maine, I remember three programs on the radio that I dearly loved; Eddy Arnold's half hour of music, The Cackling Sisters, and The Carter Family on WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia. (I do not remember when I first heard Chickie Williams' songs, but she sang such beautiful music.) As we grew, so did country music.

It's great to hear those old songs again. We constantly request them because we know their worth. I wish that I had space enough to name all of country music's voices that come across the air waves

through *Repeat Performance* to us; this would be a book rather than a letter!

A while back, Bette B. and I were talking about a lady from California who read your publication and wrote to Harley E. and Bette B. requesting some old songs by Kitty Wells. This lady was mentioned on *Repeat Performance*, and to show you what a small Country World this is, her sister who lives here in Charleston called *Repeat Performance* because she is a listener, too.

Where are The Cackling Sisters now? Are their old recordings still available?

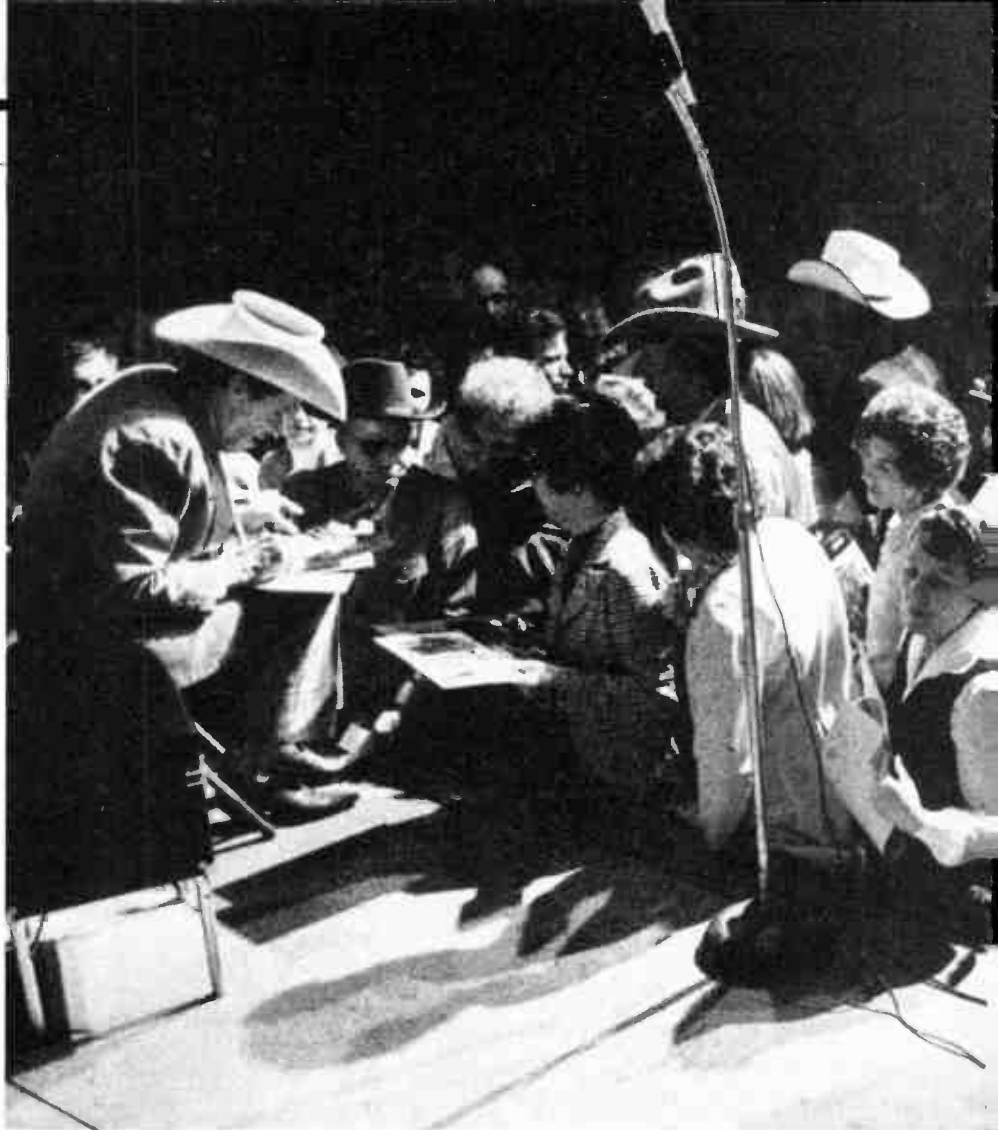
Louise H. Burns
Ladson, South Carolina

We'll ask Rich Kienzle.—Ed.

Ernest Tubb

Revered by fellow stars and wildly successful with audiences, Ernest Tubb reshaped country music with his honky tonk singing and his shrewd business sense.

by Rich Kienzle



E.T. might be a science fiction creature to kids. However, in Nashville, four years after he died, E.T. still means Ernest Dale Tubb, the "Texas Troubadour." A link to Jimmie Rodgers, he was far more: a founder of the "honky tonk" style of country music, humanitarian, businessman, talent scout, father figure and benefactor to many who became stars.

Ask Hank Snow about Ernest Tubb. He'll tell you that without E.T.'s support in Nashville his own career might have ended in the early 1950's. Ask Loretta Lynn about two decades of inspiration and friendship. Ask Jack Greene and Cal Smith, both ex-

Texas Troubadours, how far their careers would have gone without his wise counsel.

Johnny Cash and June Carter can talk of the good advice he gave them about performing. Carl Smith had one of his biggest hits literally handed to him by the man. Hank Williams Sr. got much fatherly advice from Ernest.

Ernest Tubb's birthplace was Crisp, Texas, south of Dallas; the year: 1914. The youngest of five kids, he had little formal education. His folks separated in 1926 and he worked much of the time, staying with different relatives. By then he was marveling over Jimmie Rodgers' records much as later generations would marvel over his own.

1933, the year Tubb started singing, was also the year Rodgers died of tuberculosis. Ernest bought his first guitar and started teaching himself many of Rodgers' songs after finishing his day job on a roadbuilding crew. He moved to San Antonio where he met and married his first wife in 1934. He got a part time job playing mornings over KONO radio.

1935 was a turning point. Ernest's first child Justin was born in San Antonio. He also visited with Carrie Rodgers, Jimmie's

widow, who lived in San Antonio. During their visit he asked her to listen to his radio show. Impressed with his knowledge of Rodgers' songs, she got him two recording dates with RCA, Jimmie's label. In October, 1936, he recorded six songs, two Rodgers tributes and four Tubb originals written in the Rodgers style. The following year he did two more songs. None sold.

Roger Dale Tubb, his second child, was born in 1938 but died seven weeks later, inspiring Ernest's composition "Our Baby's Book." A daughter was born in 1939. Throughout this time Ernest alternated between singing on various Texas radio stations and working conventional day jobs.

He asked Carrie Rodgers, by then his informal adviser, if perhaps Decca Records (now MCA) might be interested in him. Both she and Ernest solicited them, and in April, 1940, he went to Houston for his first session. That fall he moved to Fort Worth as KGKO Radio's Gold Chain (Flour) Troubadour.

"Blue-Eyed Elaine" and "I'll Get Along Somehow" from the first Decca session did well, and Ernest recorded 12 more numbers in L.A. in October, 1940. These failed amid complaints from jukebox opera-



badours band by 1943. His hits continued after the war with "There's a Little Bit of Everything in Texas" (1945), the sentimental ballad "Rainbow at Midnight" (1946), "You Hit the Nail Right on the Head" and "Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right" (1947).

After fans griped that they couldn't find his records in local stores, he opened the Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Nashville. He was also among the first to see the potential of selling mail-order records over the airwaves. When he launched his *Midnight Jamboree* over 50,000 watt WSM from the record shop every Saturday night after the Opry, he hawked records. The store prospered. The same approach is still used by countless retailers on television 40 years later.

He also successfully pushed the music industry to replace the descriptive term "hillbilly" music, which he felt derogatory, with "country and western." In 1948 he cut "I'm Bitin' My Fingernails" and "Don't Rob Another Man's Castle" with The Andrews Sisters. In 1949 nearly every single he came out with, "Slippin' Around," "Warm Red Wine" and "Blue Christmas" among them, went Top Ten. By then he'd divorced Lois, his first wife, and married Olene Adams, who bore him five children.

He teamed with Red Foley for a series of duets, among them the single "Goodnight, Irene," which hit Number One. Decca later released *Red 'n' Ernie*, a duet album. In 1951 he gave "Don't Just Stand There," a song he co-wrote, to a hot new singer named Carl Smith. It became Carl's second Number One in a row.

In the throes of the Korean War, Ernest wrote the hit "Missing in Action" and toured Korea to entertain the troops. While there, he offered to call the families of soldiers he met once he got home. He fulfilled that promise only to be staggered by families' indifference to their loved ones. His good intentions resulted in total frustration.

Illness plagued him, and for a time he was forced to leave the Opry. A heavy drinker and smoker, he also had his wilder moments. In 1957, well in his cups, he shot up WSM's lobby with a .357 Magnum, fortunately injuring no one. From 1955 to 1958 he wasn't on the charts at all, then came back in 1958 with his own "Half a Mind" and "Hey, Mr. Bluebird," a duet with The Wilburn Brothers.

His final Top Five success came in 1963 with "Thanks a Lot." From then on his records generally stayed at the upper end of the Top 50. His excellent mid-1960's duets with Loretta Lynn resulted in four hits, the best of which was "Mr. and Mrs. Used-To-

Be" in 1964. By then his own albums had a standard form: his hits and covers of everyone else's. He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1965.

Ernest was surprisingly candid about his singing. In a 1967 interview he admitted, "I've never been able to hold one note longer than one beat," he said. "...All over the country...guys (sit) in bars trying to impress their girl...My voice comes on the jukebox and they say 'I can sing better than that.' And in about 90% of the cases, they're right."

Emphysema was causing him constant respiratory problems—less serious, yet no less debilitating than those experienced by Jimmie Rodgers. He quit smoking. According to Justin Tubb that decision "probably added four, five or six years onto his life." He kept an oxygen tank on the bus and took more offstage breaks between singing, but otherwise was on the road as much as ever.

On June 18, 1975, Ernest completed his last session for MCA. His last hit in 1973 barely scratched the Top 100. Sagging sales led the company to drop a man whose success had made it a power in the country field. Though deeply hurt, he wasn't alone. MCA also dropped Kitty Wells.

He moved to steel player/producer Pete Drake's First Generation label and recut many of his old hits in 1977 and 1978. Without telling Ernest, Drake overdubbed Willie Nelson, Charlie Rich, Waylon Jennings, Conway Twitty, Loretta Lynn, George Jones, Merle Haggard, Johnny Paycheck and other stars dueting with him. Justin Tubb recalled his dad became misty-eyed when Drake finally played it for him.

The album, *The Legend and the Legacy*, showed how artists, not record executives, felt about Ernest Tubb. On tour he packed 'em in. He was an elder statesman; the road was his life. He enjoyed it so much that friends speculated he'd probably die in the back of his bus.

That didn't happen. But emphysema was gaining ground. On November 13, 1982, he played his last show in Berlin, Ohio. He remained at home, following doctor's orders and struggling to recover. He saw few people before he was hospitalized for the last time in the fall of 1984. He died September 6. Tributes poured in from everywhere.

Ernest Tubb epitomized the spirit of country music old and new. His generosity, modesty and quite dignity were of an earlier era. Yet his music and its popularity helped turn "the business" into "the industry." Perhaps his old drummer Jack Greene, a star himself, summed it up best. "Ernest Tubb gave more to the world than any politician or head of state or famous person in this world and asked for nothing in return...Remember, for God so loved the world, he gave us Ernest Tubb."

tors that nobody could hear Tubb's records in noisy bars. As a solution, Ernest brought electric guitarist "Smitty" Smith along for his April, 1941, session in Dallas.

The first song they cut was Ernest's new composition, "Walking the Floor Over You." Smith, accustomed to playing from written music, simply played the song's melody for his solo, setting the style for every guitarist who worked for E.T. for the next 41 years.

Ernest knew the commercial potential of "Walking the Floor." According to Tubb authority Ronnie Pugh, he urged Decca to release it first. They did, and it wound up a million-seller. Riding the crest of that wave, he appeared in two early 1940's Hollywood westerns, and RCA even went back and rereleased two records he had done for them. Legendary country music manager Joe L. Frank brought Ernest to Nashville for his first Opry appearance in December of 1942. Three encores later he was an Opry regular, and his use of electric guitar helped make amplified instruments acceptable on the show.

Through the World War II years his stature rose with hits like "Try Me One More Time" and "I Ain't Goin' Honky Tonkin' Anymore." He formed his first Texas Trou-

Albums Available
 See For Members Only page.

COLLECTIONS

Collecting the Magazine

Buying or selling extra issues of *Country Music Magazine*? Please write each other directly. If you need more info, enclose SASE.

- 4 sets of *Country Music Magazine*, 1975 and 1977-1979, for sale at \$30.00 per set. Also have 1974 except March, 1980 except Dec., and 1976 except June. Write if interested; you pay postage. Also have old record of Buck Owens at Carnegie Hall. Will make cassette tape if you send a blank tape plus \$4.00. Dorothy Wills, 128 Brown Blvd., Oroville, CA 95966.

- For Sale: *Country Music Magazine* 1976 through present. Will accept any reasonable price or sell single copies at \$1 each plus postage. Juanita Allen, Rt. 1 Box 175, Hinton, WV 25951.

- Wanted to buy: back issues of *Country Music Magazine* with articles or interviews on Gary Stewart or Larry Gatlin. Will pay any reasonable price. Virginia Nowell, Box 4005, Alamogordo, NM 88311.

- Wanted: Complete set of *Country Music Magazine* in mint condition. Ned Sheils, 6771 Miller St., Arvada, CO 80004.

- Wanted, to buy or trade: every issue of *Country Music Magazine*, 1986 on back, with Ricky Skaggs in it. Bobby Blankenship, Rt. 1 Box 444, Millers Creek, NC 28651.

Information, Please

Members, help each other out. Remember to enclose SASE.

- Any information on the age, value or market price of this record would be appreciated: Edison, No. 80345-R/5076-B/Side one, "Shepherd, Show Me How to Go" by Eddy Brackett; Mezzo contralto orchestra, Nevada Van der Veer/Side two, "Saw Ye My Saviour" by Eddy Brackett, contralto with orchestra, Nevada Van der Veer. This is a thick record. Eleanor R. Herrick, P.O. Box 568, Henderson, NV 89015.

- Wanted to buy: clippings, photos, records recorded on Evergreen label by Robin Lee. Patty Hammond, 7913 W. North Av., Wauwatosa, WI 53213.

- Wanted: VHS tapes of 1984 Academy of Country Music Awards Show, 1985 CMA Awards Show, 1985 Academy of Country Music Awards Show, 1986 CMA Awards Show. E. G. Chance, Rt. 4 Box 211C, Selma, AL 36701.

- Looking for 8-track, cassette or album of *Waylon Live*. Tony Clark, 205 Poplar St., Marion, KY 42064.

- Looking very hard for independent label 45's in good condition. Anyone who knows individuals, record dealers or labels who could help, please let me know. Here are the first five on my list: "Don't Let Me Hear You Say Goodbye," Harry Wingfield (Storm); "Other Side of the Hill," Rusty Weir (Black Hat); "Endless Black Ribbon," Tiny Harris; "George Jones on the Jukebox," Georgia Brown (Smash); "Hard Livin'," Jerry Jeff Walker. Harold Swartz, 24374 W. Edison Rd., South Bend, IN 46628.

- Start-up announced: The Andi Luck Company has been authorized to sell Hank Williams Jr. and Sr. memorabilia. I

also write a newsletter and have other fan club information. Send \$3 (for postage and handling) to: A. Luck, P.O. Box 203196, San Diego, CA 92120.

- Where could I sell old 78 r.p.m. records on Decca, Victor, Epic, Cameo, Majestic, Banner, Columbia, Mercury. Some songs are "Rainbow at Midnight," Johnny Bond and The Red River Valley Boys/"Swamp Girl," Frankie Lane, more. Alice Copp, 1301 2nd St. NW, Apt. 106W, Waseca, MN 56093.

- Longtime record collector with tens of thousands of records would be glad to help others find something they've been looking for for a long time. Would also like to find for myself: "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavor (On the Bedpost Overnight)" by Scottish "Skiffle" artist Lonnie Donegan. Only interested in original recording, Dot Records, No. 15911, 45 r.p.m. On *Billboard's* Hot 100 list for nine weeks in 1961. Robert Phillips, 5108 Frenchwood, Arlington, TX 76016.

- For Sale: Hank Snow collection, almost complete. 81 long-playing albums, one E! 33 singles. For details, write: Jurgen Feuss, Postfach 110142, 2800 Bremen, West Germany.

- Do the words "Your good-for-nothing heart" in a classic 1950's honky tonk song backed by a standard five-piece band with a nice steel solo mean anything to anyone? DJ who played it on a classic oldies radio show thought it was a Webb Pierce song, but it does not seem to be. Who knows? Tom Gibbon, 930 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

- Desperately searching for Reba McEntire items, especially her first album, *Reba McEntire*; first single, "I Don't Want to Be a One-Night Stand"; duet with Jacky Ward, "Three Sheets in the Wind." Also VHS tapes of 1986 CMA Awards Show and *Nashville Now* show with Reba and Emmylou Harris. Jackie Edwards, 970 St. Clair Rd., Boyce, LA 71409.

- Would like to buy a beautiful Tommy Overstreet album from several years ago. Some of the songs are: "Ramona," "Sunny Side of the Street" and "Bye, Bye, Blackbird." Bill MacDougall, 671 Kennebec St., Rumford, ME 04276.

- Looking for several real old songs (taped copies would be fine): "Live and Let Live," by Wiley Walker and Gene Sullivan in the late 1930's—not the George Morgan version; "Rubber Dolly," "Playmates," "Crepe on the Little Cabin Door," Marty Robbins' "These Hands You're Holding Now." Nell Kilcrease, 1101 Lee Ann, Crowley, TX 76036.

- Looking for newspaper articles on all Mandrells for my scrapbook. Will trade copies from my Chicago newspapers with anyone interested. Kim Calace, 226 West 24th St., Chicago, IL 60616.

- Looking so very hard for Barbara Mandrell's "This Time I Almost Made It" recorded on Columbia in 1974. Norma Scott, 2204 Mistletoe, Victoria, TX 77901.

- For Sale: Hundreds of country albums and 45's, specializing in Johnny Cash. Also have rock, jazz, soundtracks, rhythm-and-blues, soul. Weeding out my 35-year collection. Send want lists with SASE. Paul Neil Anderson, 681 Merrick #302, Detroit, MI 48202.

- Vern Gosdin fan looking for some of his

earlier cassette tapes or records. I have *Three Is a Season*, Vern Gosdin's *Greatest Hits* and *Chisled in Stone*. Would also like *Country Music Magazines* with items on Vern. Jo Saxton, 111 Asbury Ave., Darlington, SC 29532.

- Looking for four Alabama albums when they were known as Wild Country: *Deuces Wild*, *Wild Country*, *Pride of Dixie* and *The Alabama Band* (also known as *The White Album*). Susan A. Vizzotti, 234 Sixth Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11215.

- Can anyone help me find an old George Jones record, "Babysitter"? I had so many answers when I sent in a request a year or so ago. I still correspond with one great person in Wisconsin. Josie Briese, 715 3rd St., Havre, MT 59501.

- Trying to find Charlie Rich live performance tapes/cassettes such as HBO Special (1981) or *Benji TV Special* (1978). Also, CBS Rockabilly album with Rich's "Feel Like Going Home," Johnny Duncan's single "All Night Long" (1981) and any other 45's from 1981 and on. Also tape/cassette of Johnny Paycheck's 1980 *Austin City Limits* appearance, Jack Clement's "All I Want To Do In My Life" album and the soundtrack to *Waltz Across Texas*. Ronald Brackney, 2458 Rockridge Way, Santa Clara, CA 95051.

- Looking for three albums by Wild Country: *Deuces Wild*, *Wild Country* and *Alabama-Wild Country*. K. Lynn Rumley, Rt. 2 Box 4, Cainville, MO 64632.

- Looking for copy of Walter Brennan's *Dutchman's Gold* album from the late 1960's. Marianne Chetney, Rt. 1 Box 371, Somerton, AZ 85350.

- Looking for pre-1975 45's or LP's of Justin Tubb. Also, any younger photos of him (8x10). Send price and condition. Joyce Shumate, 6017 Cortez Ct., Hermitage, TN 37076.

- Looking for Hank Jr. and Sr. albums to complete collection. Will pay reasonable price. Also, any newspaper and magazine and pictures of Hank Jr. Would also like pen pals. Nadine Parker, 1216 Chestnut, Olympia, WA 98501

- Desperately seeking VHS tapes of any televised interviews or singing performances of Johnny Rodriguez. Colleen Castaneda, 866 Calle Haya #30, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360.

- If you have any albums by Jimmy Bryant besides *Fastest Guitar In the Country*, *We Are Young*, *Laughing Guitar-Crying Guitar*, *Bryant's Back in Town* or *Country Cabin Jazz*, please send list with price to: Donald Bowermaster, 924 N. College St., Carlisle, PA 17013.

- Wanted: newspaper and magazine articles, photos, anything else about Reba McEntire. Dan Little, RR#2, Walnut, KS 66780.

- Wanted: anything concerning Roy Acuff, especially tape recordings. Would like to hear from Roy's fans. M. Triplette, Rt. 2 Box 225, Branchland, WV 25506.

- Need info on any albums of Hank Williams Jr., Dolly Parton and Tom T. Hall—what you have, price, etc. J.R. Stokes, Box 1103, Lake Placid, FL 33852-1103.

- Would like to buy or trade photos, negatives or slides of country singers. M. Neff, 1011 Sassafras Way, Sullivan,

MO 63080.

- Help! looking for early Nitty Gritty Dirt Band albums. Anything before *Plain Dirt Fashion*. Contact me ASAP: Edie Chittulium, Rt 2 Box 94, Lexington, VA 24450-9415.

- Looking to get cassette or record of *Covers Mama's Flowers* by Mel Tillis. Nellie Erickson, Rt 2 Box 96A, Greenbush, MN 56726.

- Looking for 10/72 *Country Music Magazine* with Loretta on the cover. Also her 45 rpm "I Walked Away From the Wreck." Any extras on Loretta, let me know with prices, especially VCR tape of *Fantasy Island* when Loretta guest-starred. Lenny Mattison, Hong Kong Rd., Parish, NY 13131.

Pen Pals

Make new friends through music and the mail.

- I'm a country music fan. I collect country music pictures. My favorite performers are Kenny Rogers, T. Graham Brown, Alabama and The Oak Ridge Boys. Would especially like to hear from fans who love Kenny and *Hee Haw*. I have rheumatoid arthritis and would like to hear from people my age, 25, who have that. I love soap operas: *Days of Our Lives*, *Another World* and *Santa Barbara*. Collecting anything and everything on Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, also Randy Travis. Cindy Bichler, 415 1st Ave. So., New Rockford, ND 58356.

- Hi. My name is Leslie Fuller. I'm a 24-year-old female, devoted to country music. I enjoy country music singing, and dancing, motorcycles and animals. I listen to old and new country music, but my favorites are Johnny Bush and Darrell McCall. I would like to correspond with anyone who likes country music. Leslie Fuller, 1157 E. Adams, Pleasanton, TX 78064.

- I would like to hear from any age men or women who are also country music fans. There are so many that I like, will only name a few: Randy Travis, George Strait, Statler Bros., Gatlins, Oak Ridge Boys, Johnny Rodriguez, Ronnie McJowell and many others. Nadine Fields, 1625 W. Estrella Dr., Chandler, AZ 85224.

- I'm a Hank Williams Jr. kind of guy and am country through and through. I'm 28 years old and am presently doing a little time in a Federal Prison Camp. Oops, guess me and my rowdy friends got a little too rowdy. I enjoy pickin' guitars, horseback riding and listening to country music. Scott Ivy #34095-080, FPC P.O. Box 7795, 1900 Simler Ave., Big Spring, TX 79720-7701.

- Would like to correspond with country music fans (married women). My favorites are Alabama, Hank Jr., Statlers, Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn and many more. My special interests are country music and concerts, knitting and cats. Cora Webster, Box 6, Vinalhaven, ME 04863.

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

OL' WILLIE AT HOME



Terry Taylor, a California journalist, wanted Willie Nelson to sing at her wedding. That didn't happen, but when the opportunity arose to visit Willie at his 725-acre spread in Spicewood, Texas, outside of Austin, Terry and her husband, photographer Vincent Von Fredrick, grabbed the first plane from L.A.

"Interviewing Willie was a humbling experience," says Terry. "He's very shy and that made me shy. Later, after we'd spent several hours together, Willie began to open up to me. He even sang me some new songs he's written and asked me what I thought of them. The whole visit was a great experience I'll never forget."

Willie's house is basically one big room. There are no walls separating the living, working, sleeping, eating and kitchen areas. "A bathroom the size of a restaurant is the only separate room," says Terry. There is a full recording studio on the property, not to mention a golf course and a re-created Western town which was used as the set for Willie's movie, *Red-Headed Stranger*.

by Vincent Von Fredrick and Terry Taylor.

Willie surveys his spread which provides him with all the essentials of life: a golf course, a recording studio, horses and room to ride, plus a nice house with a bathroom "the size of a restaurant."



SPECIAL PHOTO ESSAY
OL' WILLIE



"Willie is shy, but very warm," says Terry Taylor. Willie fixed bacon and eggs for his guests. "It's my anytime meal," said the cook. They also watched TV together, standing on their heads.





The house is one big room, without partitions. The photos at the upper left and upper right sides of this spread show a panoramic view of the living and dining areas. The one room upstairs is reached by climbing the simple ladder shown at left.



SPECIAL PHOTO ESSAY
OL' WILLIE



Clockwise from above: the saloon on the *Red-Headed Stranger* movie set; Willie ringing the bell in the church on the movie set which is still used for real Sunday services; Willie's horse, Scout, posing with his favorite person and singer.





Raven Gets Some Respect

Thanks to a new label deal, Eddy Raven's been able to turn up the heat on his career. After years of being sustained by writing songs for other people, he's having hits of his own. by Bob Allen

It's a clear spring morning, and from the window of the offices on the eighth floor of the United Artists Tower on Music Row occupied by Eddy Raven's public relations company, all of Nashville is stretched out in panorama, cloaked in a light haze. There's RCA Records, the Country Music Hall of Fame and all of Music City's other familiar landmarks, and beyond them, across Interstate 40, the high-rise bank and office buildings of downtown Nashville proper.

Eddy Raven yawns and sips a cup of coffee as he leans back in his swivel chair and stares down at the asphalt and concrete landscape below. After twenty years of paying his dues, recovering from bad breaks and trying to go with

the flow rather than be washed away by it, Raven knows the Nashville music business' tangle of dead-end streets, one-way boulevards and speed traps only too well. But as he peers down at the street on this particular morning, he's neither contemplating the skyline nor pondering the greater complexities of life itself. He's looking down at his truck which is parked in the pay lot across the street, wondering uneasily if he put enough money in the meter.

There's bound to be a parable at work here somewhere. Could this be Eddy Raven, the war-weary veteran who suddenly finds new life at the top of the charts, looking down from on high on the industry which withheld the level of success he knew he was capable of from

him for so long? Be that as it may, there is a perceptible edge of darkness in Raven's laughter as he playfully refers to himself as "Super Cajun: The Act That Wouldn't Die" and "The Rodney Dangerfield-'Can't Get No Respect'-of Country Music."

"I think I came up in country music at a time when it wasn't really ready for the kinds of progressive things I was doing," he shrugs, as if still uncertain as to why success has been so long in coming. "And in Nashville, up until recently, it was like you had to have been here a certain number of years, you know. Like: 'Number sixty-four, it's your turn! Number sixty-five, you're next!' I've always wondered why it had to be that way.

"All through those years, I never had any doubts about where I was going," he insists. "But there were those fleeting moments of confusion when I'd think, 'Oh my God, why is *this* happening!'"

Indeed, Raven has had more than a few years to ponder such questions. From the time he recorded his first album in Louisiana in 1969 and headed to Nashville a year later, he's been "bubbling"—threatening to break through with a brilliant career that, until now, never quite materialized.

Raven has had consistent success through the years as a songwriter. He's written hits for everyone from Roy Acuff, Roy Orbison and Don Gibson to Waylon Jennings ("Sweet Mother Texas"), Eddie Rabbitt and The Oak Ridge Boys. He originally wrote and recorded "Thank God for Kids" himself in the early 1970s; ten years later, in 1982, The Oaks got hold of it and turned it into a monster hit. Along the way, he's won no fewer than 18 ASCAP songwriter awards.

Then there are the seven albums and 40 singles that he himself has released on a half-dozen different record labels. Quite a few of the singles were Top Tens, a couple even Top Fives. But gifted as he'd become at writing hits for other artists, the majority of his own records got lost in the shuffle. A known force within the music industry, he remained relatively unknown to the public at large.

"Part of it maybe is that I've always liked to fly and expand, and jump out and sort of experiment and stay on the outer edge of things," he explains. "And that sometimes causes problems for the ones in control. It's kinda like they have bed-check at night, and if you get too far out of line, well, it can throw a monkey wrench into your career.

"It's like the Cajun thing," adds the Louisiana-born singer, who recently went back to his roots and came up with the hit, "I'm Gonna Get You." "It's been there all along. I had a hit in 1981 called 'A Little Bit Crazy,' which was a Cajun record, and one in 1977 called 'Collinda,' which Jo-El Sonnier even played accordion on. But it's like all of a sudden, they're recognizing it. Cajun's become some of the hottest stuff going."

Like most dyed-in-the-wool musicians, Raven had that old itch to write and perform in his blood almost from the beginning. The son of a truck driver and the oldest of ten children, he was born in South Louisiana bayou country and grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana; Orlando, Florida, and Savannah, Georgia.

Early on, he began soaking up both mainstream country and South Louisiana regional music. As a child, he came to know and love the music of Roy Acuff

by way of his father's record collection. Thus, it was a special thrill for him in 1974, when his "Back in the Country" became Acuff's first chart hit in 19 years.

In his teens, Raven worked with groups like The Lucky Seven, The Rocking Cajuns, The Boogie Kings, The Swing Kings and The Glades, as well as with another band headed by Johnny and Edgar Winter, the two Texas white blues-rock guitarists who later went on

[REDACTED]

"I didn't know if this was going to be my last shot or not, and if it was, I at least wanted to go down making the best music I could."

[REDACTED]

to national fame.

"I played in several bands with a guy named Dickey Landrey, who's been real instrumental in popularizing Cajun and zydeco music. He's the guy who turned Paul Simon on to Cajun and zydeco and played on some of his albums. He lives right across the street from some of my relatives in South Louisiana. And Clifton Chenier, one of the true Cajun masters—bless his heart—he lived right down the road from my mother. There was a guy who used to play keyboards with us called Stanley Durrell (also known as Buckwheat Zydeco) who's probably the best zydeco player in the world. He's getting pretty famous now. And it was Jimmy C. Newman who brought me to Nashville."

In addition to music and sports, Raven, like so many other sons of the rural South, got involved in another little pastime in his teens: moonshine running.

"Yeh, yeh, it's true," he admits sheepishly. "That was just a little kick. Me and a couple of the other guys I was on the football team with in high school got to doing it. It was good money. I had a six-cylinder '58 Ford with overload shocks. We'd run about a hundred gallons at a time, from South Georgia on down to Jacksonville, Florida. It was the thrill of the chase that really got us hooked; it was just some country boys gettin' their kicks, and it *was* exciting: runnin' down those white sand roads under a full moon—I even wrote a song

about it once. But it wasn't like *Thunder Road*," he laughs. "We never got chased, never got caught. Never had any problems, at all. But God, if we ever had gotten caught! If my mother had ever found out! That was felony stuff! And on top of that, I even had my own radio show at the time!"

In 1970, urged on by Jimmy C. Newman, Raven landed in Nashville. On the strength of some songs he'd written and recorded while still in Louisiana, he signed a publishing deal with Acuff-Rose, one of the industry's powerhouse publishing companies.

"I didn't come to town as a singer," he recalls. "I just wanted to write songs at that point. I'd just finished several weeks of working six, seven nights a week in bands. My throat was beat up, and I was just completely worn out. Luckily, some of the first songs of mine that Acuff-Rose published got recorded. Don Gibson had a Top Five hit with 'Country Green,' and he had Top Tens with 'Forever, One Day at a Time' and 'Fan the Flame, Feed the Fire.' So I thought, this is easy money! And it sure was *survival* money."

Time and time again in the course of the next decade and a half, Raven seemed poised on the brink of success as a recording artist. His first Nashville-recorded single release, "The Last of the Sunshine Cowboys," made the charts in the mid-1970s. But his next substantial chart record didn't come until 1981. Never enjoying more than modest success, Raven—often in cahoots with his long-time producer, mentor and good friend, the late Don Gant—bounced from the ABC label to ABC/Dot to Monument to Dimension and then to Elektra.

"Elektra was one of the real turning points for me," he stresses. "It put me in the studio with Jimmy Bowen, one of the greatest production minds in the business. We cut one of the first digital albums ever recorded in Nashville. I learned a lot from him."

All the while, he continued to make strides writing hits for other people. His biggest milestone in that category came in the fall of 1982, when The Oak Ridge Boys recorded "Thank God for Kids."

"I'd written the song in 1970, and I'd recorded it myself in about 1973. But I couldn't get anybody to put it out; they were all sure it wasn't a hit. But it became one of the biggest-selling records The Oaks have ever had, and it's certainly been a great song for me to have in my back pocket! The most important thing, though, was that it finally gave me the financial freedom to take off for a year and a half and seriously re-evaluate my recording career.

"I more or less ended up doing major



surgery on myself," he laughs. "I changed everything—managers, booking agencies, record labels, publishing companies—I started publishing my own material. Mainly, I decided I didn't want to surround myself with people I didn't really like anymore, and who didn't have my best interests in mind. I took control of my own career for a change.

"It's always amazed me," he adds with more than a trace of cynicism, "how someone who's never written a song, or picked up a guitar, or sung, or had anything to do with the road could sit there and tell you what to do with your career and be wrong ninety-five percent of the time and still make more money than you do. I found out the hard way that if people like that make one major mistake, you're *over*. They just move on to another act, and meanwhile you end up down at the Exxon station, pumping fuel."

Raven's long-awaited breakthrough began in 1983 when he signed with RCA. "I could have gotten more money from some of the other labels, but they gave me *control*. For once, I wanted to be able to cut good records—the kind of records I wanted. I didn't know if this was going to be my last shot or not, and if it was, I at least wanted to go down making the best music I could," he explains.

Fortunately, at RCA success came quickly. In 1984, "I Got Mexico," a song he'd cowritten with Frank Myers, became the first Number One single of his career. Two more Number Ones, "I'm Gonna Get You" and "Shine, Shine, Shine," soon followed. His recent album releases, *Right-Hand Man* and *The Best of Eddy Raven* (1988), served—along with his participation in the recent Alabama and Hank Jr. tours—to heighten the public's awareness of him.

It is the ironic toss of life's coin that this long-awaited burst of career momentum, along with all the additional responsibilities and travel obligations necessary to keep it going, come at a time in Raven's life when, if the truth be known, he wouldn't mind spending just a little more time at home. He admits he sometimes misses the Sundays when he could be back on his farm outside Nashville, tinkering with his collection of reconditioned Ford Mustangs along with his two sons, ages 17 and 14, or finishing up work on the new house he started building six months or so ago.

"The last year and a half, ever since the *Right-Hand Man* album came out, things have really started to fly," he smiles with obvious satisfaction. "My heart wanted to take a year off and get the house finished, but my mind knows this is sure the wrong time to do it!" ■

On Saturday night in Nashville, Tennessee, an old familiar dream is coming true.

It's not quite the dream it was at one time, not quite the earthshaking event and key to the future it used to be, and therefore its flame doesn't burn with quite its old brilliance in the hearts of the hopeful out there in the land, but still, it *is* quite something. When you come off that stage and Roy Acuff shakes your hand and Boxcar Willie claps you on the back, and faces you've gazed at on album covers all your life are actually looking back at you, actually seeing you and smiling at you—well, you just have to feel a thrill. No matter what your rational mind tells you, you've got to feel like you've arrived. Live in person here on the Grand Ole Opry for the first time in your life, you feel like you're *there*.

The emotions of the three young McCarter sisters tonight are not unusual, then, but something else is: for them, the dream is as powerful as it ever was, as it was for their parents and *their* parents: an appearance on the Opry is still the ultimate accolade. The McCarters, you see, are different.

If you doubt that for a moment, just look at them. The frilly dresses, the pointy-toe shoes, the makeup layered on like a custom Stingray paint job, the hair piled high and welded hard as a mica helmet. And it's not just the look, either (anyone from anywhere can do *that*). It's in their voices when these girls hit their harmonies, it's in the songs they choose to sing, it's in the way they talk, and it's in the way they act.

All these things tell you that for The McCarters it's not 1988 in the electronic Global Village. No. It's much more like 1950 in some little town in a South-eastern State of the U.S.A., the kind of place where God's in His Heaven and on Saturday nights, the family is in the living room. They're grouped around the radio listening to Mr. Acuff and Cousin Minnie and the gang, and likely as not they're not even talking during the Martha White commercials.

What a trip. The McCarters are so traditional, it's spooky. By rights, they should have been invented by some major marketing manager (*You like hard-core country, do you? Well c'mon in, folks, have we got the act for you.*) They weren't, though. They found Nashville, not vice versa, and they're as real as can be. Really real, that is; really, *really* real. When Mr. Acuff told them what he tells everybody when they first show up on the Opry—"Keep it country, now"—they weren't kidding one little bit when they said, "Yes, sir. And baby, we're as traditional as it *comes!*"



Time Warp with The McCarters

These three sisters have caught up with the past and brought it to the present. With grit and determination, they have taken their old-fashioned mountain harmonies to the Opry stage and landed a major-label album deal.

by Patrick Carr

Which is just the sort of way a McCarter, particularly a boss McCarter like Jennifer, the big sister at 24, would talk to a Living Legend: respectful, certainly, but not without a very definite edge of hard-headed confidence.

Momma didn't raise no wallflowers here, you see. The girls may sound like golden angels when they get to harmonizing—three young Emmylous, singing the sounds of the Hillbilly Heavenly spheres—but in person they're a lot more like a squad of *Panzergrrenadiers* invading Poland. Real cute, friendly, unusually well-mannered *Panzergrrenadiers*, but heavy hitters all the same: lots of grit and determination in there, little tolerance for fools and weaklings, and a real sharp sense of what's what, where to strike and when to do it. These traits are so pronounced in the little darlins that I sure as hell wouldn't want to get

on their bad side. Furthermore, though I won't promise, I'll consider eating my word processor if they don't own half the world in pretty short order.

So whence comes all this grit and fire and countriness? Well, it comes from the country, specifically that small-town Smoky Mountain outpost of it called Sevierville, Tennessee, which is also (perhaps not entirely coincidentally) the birthplace of another distinguished non-wallflower, Ms. Dolly "Iron Butterfly" Parton. So far nobody has considered bottling and selling the water in Sevierville, though maybe they should—I'd buy it—but on the other hand, it's possible that the stuff works only on young women of talent and ambition. Though Sevierville gets a pretty decent pass-through trade because it's located

between the Interstate and the tourist traps of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. In most other respects it's dead as dirt, hopelessly unexciting. Fiery young women don't find much to identify with.

This was certainly the case with The McCarters, who are Jennifer and her twin little sisters Lisa and Theresa, the three oldest of six daughters; once the seven-year-old Jennifer had made up her mind on a career in show business, that was that as far as relations with the local community went. The girls spent all their time clogging for money or training to that end, so they didn't have the time for friends and other things—they never went to high school football games, for instance—and neither did they have the inclination; they weren't *about* to toady up to those other kids who were always being mean to them because clogging was the uncoolest thing a person could possibly do, worse by far than simply liking draggy old country music. The outcasts did take a stab at trying to fit in, they did *attempt* to like Van Halen and Bon Jovi and all the other mandatory high school idols, but as Lisa puts it, "It didn't take." For The McCarters, old style country—the mandolins, the fiddles, the kind of songs Dolly used to sing and Emmylou still does—was always the only music which really got to them.

The McCarters weren't totally tough about all that rejection. They went home and cried often enough. But at least at home they got some sympathy. Their daddy was a semi-professional bluegrass banjo fanatic, and their mama too had once cherished ambitions towards show business. Jennifer says she "had a better voice than all three of us put together until she got polyps on her vocal chords and couldn't sing a note no more." Mama understood where Jennifer and the twins were at, then, and supported them as best she could, for instance by advising them never to get married because their husbands would stop them singing (her own budding career, it seems, got derailed when the family act broke up under just such circumstances).

So Jennifer and Lisa and Theresa just kept at it. Jennifer would always be hauling out that big leather belt and driving the twins downstairs to practice new steps—even a large repertoire wears out pretty fast when you're on local TV seven nights a week (at \$7 per clogger per night)—and then, when she got the idea of singing too, she'd have to be practicing *all* the time. She wasn't a natural singer, had no ear at all, so whenever she wanted to learn a song she'd first have to learn the opening guitar chord, then strum it, and only then start singing. It was *work*, for years and years and *years*.

And then, too, it got pretty obvious pretty quickly that most of the other talent on the shows the girls worked felt a tad threatened by very cute cloggers who could also sing a lot better than average. So all *that* stuff had to be dealt with; the furniture polish spread on the stage, the band walking off when they got up to sing, the male producers and agents and musicians who'd try to take advantage of them one way when it became obvious they weren't going to be able to do it the other.

This kind of thing went on for a long time, with various casts of characters around East Tennessee, until the girls landed a spot in Archie Campbell's *Hee Haw* Village. Jennifer remembers Archie as being really nice, and their treatment fair enough, but ultimately that job too turned into a dead end street. Jennifer and the twins begged Archie to get them on the *Hee Haw* TV show, but Archie flat refused; he didn't help girls, he said, because they never knew what they wanted, ran off and got pregnant and quit singing.

Jennifer got a little annoyed, especially since Archie was sitting at their mama's table eating her mama's biscuits and gravy at the time, and Jennifer isn't the type to roll over when stuff like that happens. So she quit Archie's show and the whole shebang of agents and impresarios and suchlike, and took her act on the street; she and the twins and a bass player and her banjo-picking daddy started singing for tourists' nickels and dimes at Pigeon Forge. They did that for two years; on good nights they'd make about \$100.

If all this has a familiar ring to it, it should have. It's the same old tune women of ambition have to listen to everywhere. In country music it's the invisible subplot of "Coal Miner's Daughter" and "My Tennessee Mountain Home" and most other career-launching women's songs. Basically, it's just exactly the same stuff "girl singers" have always gone through and, Countryopolitanism and the Global Village notwithstanding, still go through: either you latch onto some man someplace powerful, honey, or you ain't playing. The only real variable is the quality of the man.

Jennifer, knowing what's what and where and when to strike and all that, latched onto a really good one: Kyle Lehning, the great, hot-as-a-firecracker producer of Randy Travis. She got ahold of his telephone number, then she got a hold of his attention with a bombardment of long distance calls, and then, with him actually there in person on the other end of the line, she risked it all in one sudden, overwhelming *blitzkrieg*. Rather than persuading him to listen to a demo record (an easy item

to reject or even ignore entirely), she talked him into actually sitting down and listening to her and the twins in person for fifteen minutes.

They blew Kyle away. Just slaughtered him. He got on the phone with Warner Brothers Records, and that was that. Hello, big time. Goodbye and good riddance, you other guys.

Really, they're such a trip. Sitting across a table from them is like—gee, what *is* it like? An explosion in a beauty salon? A seminar in Young Adult Cunning? A brief history of Smoky Mountain Nuclear Family/Extended Kinship Structures with a few quick forays into East Tennessee linguistics?

On this last point, I'm still confused, even after repeated listenings to the tape of the interview. Is the stuff that grows out of your head called "har," or "hur"?

I dunno. Maybe it depends on how you use the word. Like when Lisa describes her whole family's genetic predisposition towards lots of the stuff, she says "We all have big *har*," but when Jennifer is describing things the sisters fight over, she says "Oh, mostly stuff like makeup and *hur* spray."

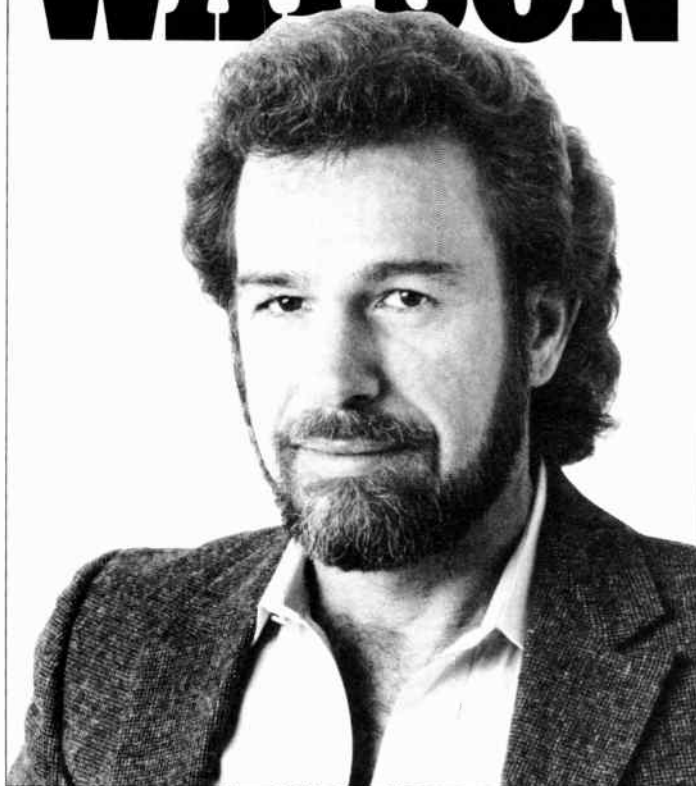
All this might not matter much to you, but I dwell on it because har/hur is something that occupies a significant amount of The McCarters' attention: two-hour minimum every morning (times three), plus an unspecified spell of prep work every night, and then of course whatever other maintenance or major re-engineering is demanded by their busy new life in the public eye.

Another point about har/hur is that frankly, it's not something modern country music journalists and their interview subjects feel the need to discuss very often. Like hula hoops and Saberjets and simple little one-megaton atom bombs and 78 r.p.m. records, the complex manual technology necessitated by The McCarters' do's is a thing of the past, its correct application a lost art. And I find these girls' commitment to such a task impressive. I think it shows real character. Maybe some other things, too: sheer flat-out *girlishness*, for one.

I mean, I liked The McCarters as soon as I heard their lovely old music, and then I got to admire them when I found out how hard they worked and how savvy they are and how successfully they've achieved what they wanted (particularly getting that sweet pure music onto vinyl intact, without pop junk all over it). Now, though, the thing with the hur—I like that better than har, don't you?—has driven me beyond all that, into awe and amazement. May they never change. ■

We confess to having always had a soft spot in our heart for Gene Watson. After all, here is a man who in the face of zillions of country music trends, from Outlaws to New Traditionalists, has stayed true to his kind of country music. Here also is a man who can sing a song like "Carmen, I've Had Too Much Tequilla" and make it sound as real as the last grim night in a Texas honky tonk. The last couple of years have been rocky for Gene, but he's back with a new record, and, hopefully, a new label. He's stayed in Texas whether it was trendy or not, and, by gosh, he can still sing honky tonk with the best of them. We caught up with Gene on the set of TNN's Nashville Now, and coaxed him into answering Twenty Questions.

20 Questions with GENE WATSON



by Michael Bane

1

You're back in the studio working on what I guess we'd call a comeback record for you. Are you going to be producing it as well?

Yeah, and I love to do it, but it's such a mental strain on you. You know, I think maybe it might have taken something away from my performance.

2

That's interesting, because a lot of artists will tell you exactly the opposite—that they want 100 percent control from start to finish.

Well, I think it will work if you live around the studio, if you live in Nashville and you have the freedom to run in the studio anytime you want. You can go in there, you can lay your vocal track down, then you can put the production around it. Then, when you get the production just like you want it, you can go in there and re-do your vocal track.

But there's a big sacrifice there. Some of the best, biggest records that have ever been cut have been spontaneous, off the top of your head. "Farewell Party," I cut it in 15 minutes, you know.

I think I'm gonna really

concentrate on doing what I do best, which is singing. I think my production will be strictly for other people.

3

Who would you like to produce you? Who are you working with?

I'm working with Norro Wilson right now. As far as getting a regular producer and all like that, we haven't gotten anyone yet. But you know, we're going to try to

find the right recipe, and whatever cooks up the best taste, well, that's what we're going to try to stay with.

4

How come you never did move to Nashville? How come you stuck with Texas?

We'll, I'm a Texan and I love it. I love the state of Texas and, too, I'm not real sure that I could stand living in Nashville, mentally, because of the rat race. I think it

helped me a lot in the past, to be able to escape from that, get away from it, piddle around with a few cars and go hunting if I want to, or whatever. I'd like to keep it that way. It seems like every time I get a few days off and get back out on the road, I'm in a better frame of mind. I feel fresher. I don't say it works for everyone, because I'm sure it don't, but for me I think it works best.

5

Your career's gone through a couple of fairly drastic swings—you've been all the way up to the top, all the way down, and all the way back up again. How come?

Well, I've never had the key ingredient it takes to stay on top. Of course, you've got to have the songs, the material, the performance, the record, you know, but you've also got to have the distribution, the promotion; you've got to have the marketing; you've got to have all of the things that a major record label has to offer. And you have to have the cooperation out of it. And it's been so hard for me in the past to get all of these things in the pot at the same time.

6

Why do you think that is?

I don't know.

7

Because you've had some great songs...I mean, just some great songs.

For the first seven or eight years that I was recording for major labels, I was extremely consistent. I was so consistent it scared me. Not as a Number One artist or a Number Two artist, but I was a Top Ten artist for about seven or eight years there, and I really appreciated that. But it seems like as time goes along, program directors change, your audiences change, the record company executives change, and you're constantly dealing with a turnover of different people who you can't really get inside of and get to know. I think that's been one thing that's hampered me some.

And, who knows, I'm not so foolish but what I know that some of the songs just wasn't there. I don't care who you are, you're gonna record one once in a while that just don't do what you think it should.

8

But still there are some great ones that got lost. "Carmen..." comes to mind. I thought that was a hit.

I thought it was a hit song, too. But there again, see, a lot of people related to that song as the old Marty Robbins song, and it was not the same or anything.

9

Of course, if we all knew what made hits, we'd own this place.

It would take the fun out of it, though, you know? I think it's good to play a hunch. I think it's good to play with something new. But just like I've always said, as far as me being a traditional country artist, when everything else fails, you know, you got to come back to what works, and for me it's always been traditional country music. Now, if it takes a few changes, whatever it may be, I've got to find that special ingredient to do what I want to do, and I'm hoping that I'm working with the right personnel; I hope my head's pointed straight, straight enough, to where we can bring it off.

10

You really do have a unique voice. Does that make it hard to find a song to match the voice?

Sometimes I think if I stuttered or slurred my words, or something like that, it might help, but yeah, I'm doing what I started out doing. I love country music and I stay true to it, and that's why it's so easy for me to get out there and sing from the heart. I don't know, if that's unique, well, I'm proud of it.

11

How'd you get hooked up with Lib Hatcher, Randy

Travis' manager?

I've known Lib for years. I've known Lib ever since before the Randy Travis days. She used to work for a radio station. In fact, I don't know whether she might have mentioned it to you or not, but I'm the reason she bought a night club. She enjoyed my singing so much and got so carried away with that part of the country music business and everything, she opened up a club. Every time I was in that area, which was near Charlotte, North Carolina, she would book me in there. And one thing led to another, and here she is in the thick of things. In fact she's at the top of the heap with Randy Travis, and the opportunity came up and she didn't beat around the bush; she let me know that she would like to manage me, and I considered it such a privilege that I didn't think there was any discussion needed. I went right after it.

12

Is it hard to go label shopping now?

I don't know. I'm not gonna shop. I'm gonna sing the best I can, I'm gonna put out the best material I can find and then I'm gonna hand it to her, and say, well, Lib, now the ball's in your court.

13

Are you doing any writing?

Not that much. I just got through recording a song that I wrote the chorus on. Well, I haven't recorded anything that I've had a hand in writing, you know, as far as complete. I used to write some, but with the career being like it is, and making hay while the sun shines, well, I figured I'd leave the writing to the people who do it best.

14

Well, it sounds like you're having some fun with your career still. How heavy are you touring?

Not that heavy right now, because I'm trying to get this session worked up and everything. We're working in

Nashville, and we've got some real knock-out material.

15

That's great, because you hate to see good songs get lost...

I'm trying my best to make sure I'm getting the right mixture on everything. I mean, a song's good, but if it's not your song, I think it would be a hindrance more than a help to record it. So I try to pick the right material for me. That way I can reach down, I can get a gut full of it, I can sing it, I can feel it, and that's one thing that really makes me work hard when I'm trying to put an album together. Especially this one. I want this to be the best album I ever recorded, and I'm working hard on it.

16

When do you think you're going to wrap it up?

I don't know. I don't even have a finish date in sight. We've got four songs down right now, and, actually, I'm sure I'll come back and touch them up, and add to them and all like that, because as you listen to something, you know, it's one of those deals where, hey, man, I wish I'd have fixed it. Well, I'm not going to wish I'd done it, I'm going to do it.

17

Recording seems to be a long list of if I had the time, if I had the money, if I had this or that...

Yeah, I don't want it to be that way.

18

Country music's going in a good direction for you now, isn't it?

Yeah, if you've got the traditional sound, then just about everything that's coming out now in the country field...it makes me feel good, you know. I think it would make anybody feel good to know that they had been there all along.

19

We can't let you leave without mentioning one of our

favorite Gene Watson songs. Remember "I'm Going to Kill You and Bury You In a Box About Half Your Size"?

I sure do, yeah. And, you know, hey, man, I was almost crucified over that song. Too many people took that song literally, especially the women. Of course, anyone that's halfway broad-minded looked at it as a song, like a novelty line that they've heard all their life. You've heard it yourself. But there was that few that said, "Hey, man, whoa!" There were a lot of radio stations I talked to that had calls from their listeners saying "Do not play that song anymore!" We were going to cut it as a single until all that started happening, and we said, "Hey, man, whoa!" "Love In the Hot Afternoon" was enough. We still put it on a B-side and, believe it or not, we're still getting requests for the song.

20

That's right. You took heat on "Love In the Hot Afternoon," too. Did you intend to get all this heat?

No. That's like sticking your head in the lion's mouth when you know you're gonna get bit. I knew that "Love In the Hot Afternoon" had some pretty critical spots in it, especially for that time. We're talking about 1974, you know. But there was enough people hung on to it with the consistency of its airplay rotation, and people that liked it—it turned out to be the Number Four song for 1975. And of course, 'Drinking My Way Back Home', in spite of the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers jumping all over it and everything—and I apologize if I offended anybody. You know, I don't even drink—but in spite of all that, it still was a Top Ten record. Just because you sing about drinking and all that, that don't mean you're a drunk, you know. I have a lot of people ask me, you know, "Where Love Begins," and all like that, they say, "Man, did you live..." I didn't even write the songs, I just recorded them. ■

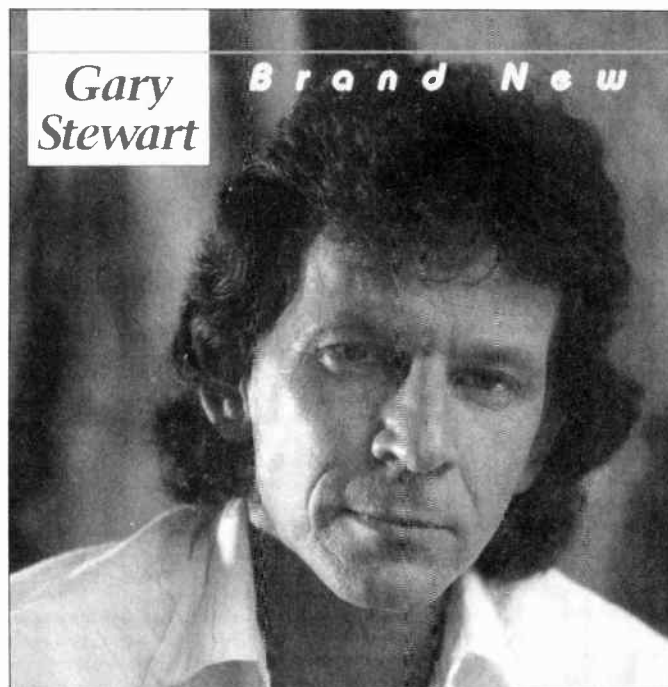
Record Reviews

Gary Stewart
Brand New
Hightone 8014

It's strange to realize that some of you out there may have to be told who Gary Stewart is. But it may be true, for it's been six or seven years since the man's last album (a collaboration with Dean Dillon), and more than a decade since his brief, brilliant ride as the ranking genius of honky tonk country's wildest side.

Man, he was *something*. Never since and never before, not even on the rare occasions when The Killer turned up his apocalyptic heat under a country track, has there been a genuine hard-core country singer of such unbridled passion, such fluid fire. You could make a very good case for the first two RCA albums Gary recorded with producer Roy Dea being the ultimate achievements of the white man's blues; I know that if you came into *my* house and took away all my male-vocalist country albums but one, I'd be facing a hard choice: the best Hank Williams collection I own, or Gary Stewart's *Out of Hand*?

Gary had a huge, often wonderful, often dangerous spirit. Bursting with life and humor and generosity (and anger and doubt and self-destructiveness), he was if anything even further out of hand than *Out of Hand* told us he was. And that was a problem. Basically he just didn't fit; RCA Nashville in the early 1970's was no place for a wild, loud, proud, rebellious hippie-hillbilly to be forging a brand new musical metal (Hank Williams meets



The Allman Brothers) in the emotional fireball of his hard-living youth. The bosses weren't ready for such a radical idea or such an explosive artist. They soon would be, once Waylon Jennings had showed them how much money could be made from artistic freedom and the youth-attractive "outlaw" image, but in Gary Stewart's case they embarked on a tragically ill-advised course: they tried to make him toe the conventional country line. They tried to sanitize him and his music for the friends and neighbors.

There could be, and was, only one result: frustration, conflict and ultimately failure all around. Gary's records lost their life, and he lost his career in the big time.

Where did he go? He went home—back to the country-rock honky tonks which had spawned his music, back to

the nightlife netherworld which fueled both his body and his spirit, back to his dark little house in Ft. Pierce, Florida—and there he stayed as all his many dreams and demons and energies and excesses crowded into the progressively constricting circle of his life. Gary Stewart's post-Nashville decade is a story of frightening intensity and heartbreaking waste; I have memories of those times which still chill me (Gary and I are more than professional acquaintances), and for years I have had in my heart a sad, dark place ready for news of some final accident or worse.

But Gary survives, and in the here and now we get a record. And according to the record, nothing has changed since *Out of Hand*. Gary's back with his favorite producer Roy Dea and the drinking and cheating and honky

tonk-hero songs they've put across so brilliantly in the past. The first words of *Brand New* show they're still in top form: "They oughta make a brand new whiskey, and give it a woman's name." He's still singing like yesterday was a car wreck, tomorrow's a divorce, and today's his only shot at howling his whole life into a microphone. Though is the very highest portion of the top end gone from his voice? If it is, it hardly matters; there's a growling new bottom to compensate, and throughout his whole range he's just singing his *ass* off. Check out the relentless passion of "Rainin,' Rainin,' Rainin'" or the wild, slurring, hillbilly funk of "I Get Drunk" or the gleeful rage of "Murdered by Love," and listen to the growls and laughs and sudden shouts which punctuate Gary's performances of these songs; the man still sounds like the Billy the Kid of country, irrevocably committed to a life of mayhem and loving every minute of it, consequences be damned.

His original vision, in other words, is still intact, and moreover its translation to the listener may be clearer on *Brand New* than it's ever been. Since the small Hightone label need not be concerned with the maintenance of any country-conservative *status quo*, one assumes that this album belongs to Gary and Roy Dea more completely than any of their work for RCA. Gary co-wrote eight of the ten songs (half of them with his one and only longtime wife Mary Lou), and his and Dea's "sound" is every bit as big, bad and bodacious as that of the hard-core hillbilly-rock-blues units Gary fronts in his roadhouse environment. So

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Dear Friend,

I made one million dollars in 9 months. You may do better!

My name is John Wright. Not too long ago I was flat broke. I was \$31,000 in debt. The bank repossessed my car because I couldn't keep up with the payments. And one day the landlord gave me an eviction notice because I hadn't paid the rent for three months. So we had to move out. My family and I stayed at my cousin's place for the rest of that month before I could manage to get another apartment. That was very embarrassing.

Things have changed now. I own four homes in Southern California. The one I'm living in now in Beverly Hills is worth more than one million dollars. I own several cars, among them a brand new Mercedes and a brand new Cadillac. Right now, I have a million dollar line of credit with the banks and have certificates of deposit at \$100,000 each in my bank in Beverly Hills.

Best of all, I have time to have fun. To be me. To do what I want. I work about 4 hours a day, the rest of the day, I do things that please me. Some days I go swimming and sailing — shopping. Other days, I play racquetball or tennis. Sometimes, frankly, I just lie out under the sun with a good book. I love to take long vacations. I just got back from a two week vacation from — Maui, Hawaii.

I'm not really trying to impress you with my wealth. All I'm trying to do here is to prove to you that if it wasn't because of that money secret I was lucky enough to find that day, I still would have been poor or may be even bankrupt. It was only through this amazing money secret that I could pull myself out of debt and become wealthy. Who knows what would have happened to my family and me.

Knowing about this secret changed my life completely. It brought me wealth, happiness, and most important of all — peace of mind. This secret will change your life, too! It will give you everything you need and will solve all your money problems. Of course you don't have to take my word for it. You can try it for yourself. To see that you try this secret, I'm willing to give you \$20.00 in cash. (I'm giving my address at the bottom of this page.) I figure, if I spend \$20.00, I get your attention. And you will prove it to yourself this amazing money secret will work for you, too!

Why, you may ask, am I willing to share this secret with you? To make money? Hardly. First, I already have all the money and possessions I'll ever need. Second, my secret does not involve any sort of competition whatsoever. Third, nothing is more satisfying to me than sharing my secret only with those who realize a golden opportunity and get on it quickly.

This secret is incredibly simple. Anyone can use it. You can get started with practically no money at all and the risk is almost zero. You don't need special training or even a high school education. It doesn't matter how young or old you are and it will work for you at home or even while you are on vacation.

Let me tell you more about this fascinating money making secret:

With this secret the money can roll in fast. In some cases you may be able to cash in literally overnight. If you can follow simple instructions you can get started in a single afternoon and it is possible to have spendable money in your hands the very next morning. In fact, this just might be the fastest legal way to make money that has ever been invented!

This is a very safe way to get extra cash. It is practically risk free. It is not a dangerous gamble. Everything you do has already been tested and you can get started for less money than most people spend for a night on the town.

One of the nicest things about this whole idea is that you can do it at home in your spare time. You don't need equipment or an office. It doesn't matter where you live either. You can use this secret to make money if you live in a big city or on a farm or anywhere in between. A husband and wife team from New York used my secret, worked at home in their spare time, and made \$45,000 in one year.

This secret is simple. It would be hard to make a mistake if you tried. You don't need a college degree or even a high school education. All you need is a little common sense and the ability to follow simple, easy, step-by-step instructions. I personally know a man from New England who used this secret and made \$2 million in just 3 years.

You can use this secret to make money no matter how old or how young you may be. There is no physical labor involved and everything is so easy it can be done

Here's what newspapers and magazines are saying about this incredible secret:

The Washington Times:

The Royal Road to Riches is paved with golden tips.

Los Angeles Herald Examiner:

We've all got to start somewhere... *The Royal Road to Riches* is the first step in the right direction!

National Examiner:

John Wright has an excellent guide for achieving wealth in your spare time.

Income Opportunities:

The Royal Road to Riches is an invaluable guide for finding success in your own back yard.

News Tribune:

Wright's material is a MUST for anyone who contemplates making it as an independent entrepreneur.

Success!

John Wright believes in success, pure and simple.

Money Making Opportunities:

John Wright has a rare gift for helping people with no experience make lots of money. He's made many people wealthy.

Hollywood Trade Press:

We have never heard of an advertiser offering to pay readers \$20 to try its program. Wright's willingness to do this convinces us that his money secret must really work.

California Political Week:

... The politics of high finance made easy.

Hollywood Citizen News:

He does more than give general ideas. He gives people a detailed A to Z plan to make big money.

The Desert Sun:

Wright's *Royal Road to Riches* lives up to its title in offering an uncomplicated path to financial success.

whether you're a teenager or 90 years old. I know one woman who is over 65 and is making all the money she needs with this secret.

When you use this secret to make money you never have to try to convince anybody of anything. This has nothing to do with door-to-door selling, telephone solicitation, real estate or anything else that involves personal contact.

Everything about this idea is perfectly legal and honest. You will be proud of what you are doing and you will be providing a very valuable service.

It will only take you two hours to learn how to use this secret. After that everything is almost automatic. After you get started you can probably do everything that is necessary in three hours per week.

PROOF

I know you are skeptical! That simply shows your good business sense. Well, here is proof from people who have put this amazing secret into use and have gotten all the money they ever desired. Their initials have been used in order to protect their privacy, but I have full information and the actual proof of their success in my files.

'More Money Than I Ever Dreamed'

"All I can say — your plan is great! In just 8 weeks, I took in over \$100,000. More money than I ever dreamed of making. At this rate, I honestly believe, I can make over a million dollars per year." A. F., Providence, R.I.

'\$9,800 In 24 Hours!'

"I didn't believe it when you said the secret could produce money the next morning. Boy, was I wrong, and you were right! I purchased your *Royal Road to Riches*. On the basis of your advice, \$9,800 poured in, in less than 24 hours! John, your secret is incredible!" J. K., Laguna Hills, CA

'Made \$15,000 In 2 Months At 22'

"I was able to earn over \$15,000 with your plan — in just the past two months. As a 22 year old girl, I never thought that I'd ever be able to make as much money, as fast as I've been able to do. I really do wish to thank you, with all of my heart." Ms. E. L., Los Angeles, CA

'Made \$126,000 In 3 Months'

"For years, I passed up all the plans that promised to make me rich. Probably I am lucky I did — but I am even more lucky that I took the time to send for your

material. It changed my whole life. Thanks to you, I made \$126,000 in 3 months."

S. W., Plainfield, IN

'Made \$203,000 In 8 Months'

"I never believed those success stories... never believed I would be one of them... using your techniques, in just 8 months, I made over \$203,000... made over \$20,000 more in the last 22 days! Not just well prepared, but simple, easy, fast... John, thank you for your *Royal Road to Riches!*"

C. M., Los Angeles, CA

'\$500,000 In Six Months'

"I'm amazed at my success! By using your secret I made \$500,000 in six months. That's more than twenty times what I've made in any single year before! I've never made so much money in such short time with minimum effort. My whole life I was waiting for this amazing miracle! Thank you, John Wright."

R. S., Mclean, VA

As you can tell by now I have come across something pretty good. I believe I have discovered the sweetest little money-making secret you could ever imagine. Remember — I guarantee it.

Most of the time, it takes big money to make money. This is an exception. With this secret you can start in your spare time with almost nothing. But of course, you don't have to start small or stay small. You can go as fast and as far as you wish. The size of your profits is totally up to you. I can't guarantee how much you will make with this secret but I can tell you this — so far this amazing money producing secret makes the profits from most other ideas look like peanuts!

Now at last, I've completely explained this remarkable secret in a special money making plan. I call it "The Royal Road to Riches". Some call it a miracle. You'll probably call it "The Secret of Riches". You will learn everything you need to know step-by-step. So you too can put this amazing money making secret to work for you and make all the money you need.

To prove this secret will solve all your money problems, don't send me any money, *instead postdate* your check for a month and a half from today. I guarantee not to deposit it for 45 days. I won't cash your check for 45 days before I know for sure that you are completely satisfied with my material.

\$20.00 FREE!

There is no way you can lose. You either solve all your money problems with this secret (in just 30 days) or you get your money back plus \$20.00 in cash FREE!

Do you realize what this means? You can put my simple secret into use. Be able to solve all your money problems. And if for any reason whatsoever you are not 100% satisfied after using the secret for 30 days, you may return my material. And then I will not only return your original UNCASHED CHECK, but I will also send you an extra \$20.00 cashiers check just for giving the secret an honest try according to the simple instructions.

I GUARANTEE IT! With my unconditional guarantee, there is absolutely NO RISK ON YOUR PART.

To order, simply write your name and address on a piece of paper. Enclose your postdated check or money order for \$12.95 and send it to:

JOHN WRIGHT
Dept. 696
3340 Ocean Park Blvd.
Suite 3065
Santa Monica, CA 90405

But the supply of my material is limited. So send in your order now while the supply lasts.

If you wish to charge it to your Visa or MasterCard — be sure to include your account number and expiration date. That's all there is to it. I'll send you my material right away by return mail, along with our unconditional guarantee.

SWORN STATEMENT:

"As Mr. John Wright's accountant, I certify that his assets exceed one million dollars."

Mark Davis

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really, though we'll never know how the man's music might have sounded on record if he'd been given his head a decade ago, *this* is what the Gary Stewart of today can do, and wants to do.

The bottom line, then. Does it make it? God, yes, it makes it. Gary Stewart with the reins off is an all-too-human monster, his album a country-funk explosion the power of which has not been even approached by his competition (what competition?) in almost fifteen years of recording history. My only quibble is that he has not given us a song which tells us anything about the Gothic turmoil of his last decade, or better yet that darkness touched by light.

When I hope for such a thing, though, I must remember that the man has never really written or sung about what happens in the stormy chambers of his own personal heart. Instead he has always stood off a step or two in the creative process, pouring his passions into the expansion and glorification of the set lyrical traditions of the music he loves: bold and broken love, brawls and barrooms, the honk and the tonk and the pain of the hillbilly nightlife. That's the role he's chosen, and damn, he's played it well again. Nobody plays it better.

—PATRICK CARR

John Anderson

10
MCA 42218

John Anderson has done some exceptional work, and, to a large extent, has not received the recognition he should. Aside from "Swingin'," which is one hell of a song, to be sure, John has been roundly dismissed. I think, though, his detractors have missed a point. John Anderson has consistently both experimented with and refined his particular style of Southern music. He has been



able to swing from totally off-the-wall ("She speaks in tongues, and, Lord, that turns me on...") to that particularly Southern sound that is both laid back and dangerous. It is music with an edge, bar music, the kind of sounds you might hear in a 'tonk outside of Apopka, Florida, where preachers and poachers, smugglers and sheriffs spend their hot Saturday nights with burned-out women, ugly little lizards and mosquitos.

I like 10. John Anderson's tenth album. It turns over ground that, right now, only Hank Jr. plows. This isn't New Traditionalism—this is the Old Traditionalism, the lamp that never really burned out. This is kick-ass music, without apologies, stone country, with roots that run back to Hank Senior and Lefty in one direction, Duane Allman and Toy Caldwell in the other. "Down in the Orange Grove," from Anderson and writing partner Lionel Delmore, and "Lower on the Hog," from Delmore and Larry Cordle, are fine examples of Southern honky tonk. Anderson reaches for the vocals, and he hits them time and again. Just the right elements of rock and danger. With "I Hope Things Aren't Like This Tomorrow," Anderson taps the sense of despair that came so easily to Old Hank.

And it shouldn't surprise anybody that hard rockin' John comes right back with a straight gospel number, "The Will of God." This is Southern music, remember?

This is a solid record, produced—immaculately, as usu-

al—by Jimmy Bowen. John Anderson deserves a wider audience, and, hopefully this album will help.

—MICHAEL BANE

Dwight Yoakam *Buenas Noches From a Lonely Room* Reprise 1-25749

Hillbilly Deluxe nearly sank Dwight in my eyes. Not that it didn't have some good material, but it reflected some of the negatives his critics heaped on him, especially the complaint that he was more hung up on projecting his image than putting across a song. "Little Sister" and "Always Late" especially emphasized swagger over heart. Still, it's ironic that some who've griped that Dwight fabricated his image love k.d. lang, who to me is all image.

Fact is, Dwight's third one is even better than *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc. Etc.* He's really singing this time, and Peter Anderson's production, which didn't impress me on Rosie Flores' or George Highfill's albums, is sharper, better focused and clearer in its intentions than it was on either of Dwight's other albums—he picks great, too!

Dwight's original numbers show the biggest improvement; they're so overwhelmingly real you can reach out and touch them. "I Got You," a love-amid-adversity number, is laden with witty lines like, "I got a letter from the folks over at Bell/Just to let me know for my next phone call/I could walk out-

side and yell." Both "What I Don't Know" and "One More Name" are cheating songs that say it straight and simple. The title track evokes the Tex-Mex spirit of Marty Robbins without a hint of cheap imitation.

The pathos of "I Sang Dixie" is just as real. This story of a wino dying on L.A.'s mean streets is a beautiful short story in miniature, chronicling the sad end of one transplanted Southerner. Ex-Buckaroo Tom Brumley's brief steel guitar solo tells its own story, and Dwight really ought to use steel more often. "Floyd County," a snippet of Southern life and death back home, is just as compelling. "Hold On to God," a bluegrass gospel number which closes the album, has the feel of those wooden religious signs that used to dot Southern roadscapes.

The cover tunes are generally well chosen though I have a couple of minor reservations. Johnny Cash's "Home of the Blues" is played too upbeat and lightly considering its desolate lyrics. Hank Locklin's standard, "Send Me the Pillow That You Dream On," becomes a restrained, dignified duet with Lone Justice's Maria McKee. The most obscure number, Louisiana bluesman Lazy Lester's "I Hear You Knockin'," is raw, unvarnished country blues in the best sense of the word.

Now I come to everyone's favorite: Dwight's duet with Buck Owens on Buck's old hit "Streets of Bakersfield." I've got a gripe, but before you send your letters in, let me explain. The song is fine; both are in great voice; their performance is spirited and compelling. What annoys me no end is the mandolin and pumping Tex-Mex accordion accompaniment. Sure, it was different, but it sure doesn't belong on a Buck Owens classic. Anderson should've Tele-twanged his butt off the way Don Rich used to.

Still, these are minor gripes. I suspect those who

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expected Dwight to be a flash in the pan unable to sustain anyone's interest for more than a few hit singles are in for a surprise this time. Serves 'em right.

—RICH KIENZLE

Randy Travis

Old 8 X 10

Warner Bros. 25738-1

It's tough to top a debut like *Storms of Life*. I realize that, which is why I forgave some weak songs on *Always & Forever*. I know that newly successful artists get pulled in various directions all at once and sometimes wind up doing records too hastily. I was sure the next one would make up for it.

A year has passed, plenty of time to have created a real blockbuster. And there *are* four dynamite cuts on this album. But the rest of it won't bust any blocks. To begin with, Kyle Lehning's production makes little sense. The musicians just seem to go through the motions. And what are Baillie & The Boys, a group that doesn't fit even liberal definitions of country, doing singing backup? This is *Randy Travis*, for God's sake!

I don't mind the album's first hit single. After all, the lighthearted, vivid imagery and easygoing arrangement of "Honky Tonk Moon" are better than the filler that dominates the rest of the record. The fact that some of this chaff comes from writers who've given Randy great material in the past makes it all the more inexcusable. Don Schlitz and Mark McAnally's "Written in Stone" is so slick you could ice skate on it. Schlitz and Paul Overstreet, the team who gave us "On the Other Hand," contribute "Deeper Than the Holler," a synthetic and horrid "hill-billy" tune.

The trivial Wayland Holyfield-Vernon Thompson number, "The Blues in Black and White," is so utterly predictable you wonder how they

got enthusiastic enough to finish it. "We Ain't Out of Love Yet," written by Gene Pistilli and Larry Henley of "Too Gone Too Long" fame, has a jaunty but ultimately hollow feel. I think Randy knew it, given his tentative performances of these tunes. I have never believed great singers can make bad material sound good.

However, the Randy who set us on our collective butts two years ago is here on four magnificent numbers, the lyrics hanging motionless as they sink in. David Lynn Jones' "Here in My Heart" lets him convey a shattering sense of loss with moving conviction. The title track, by Joe Chambers and Larry Jenkins, is no less vivid and affecting.

He reaches his peak on two numbers he wrote with John Lindley. "It's Out of My Hands" chronicles guilt and sorrow with moving precision, but "Promises" is the record's proudest moment. Accompanied by a lone acoustic guitar, Randy pours out raw, unadulterated guilt in a performance so utterly chilling and powerful it left me satisfied—and angry there were so few others like it. Confronted with the other featherweight songs here, I'd lay money that a whole album of Travis originals would be a masterpiece.

That Randy's not backing away from his traditional vision as Reba did on her last album is a relief. But the unevenness of this record isn't reassuring. Relying on this much bad material from good writers makes no sense. If my standards seem harsh,

remember one thing: I'm only holding to the ones Randy and Lehning already set for themselves.

—RICH KIENZLE

K.T. Oslin

This Woman

RCA 8369-1-R

K.T. Oslin's debut album, *'80's Ladies*, was one of the surprise hits of 1987. It constituted one of those rare occasions when a full-grown woman (as opposed to all the sweet sexy, young things of the Tanya Tucker/Charly McClain charm school variety) made her first big splash on the country charts at well past the age of forty.

'80's *Ladies* also marked the emergence of a woman with a musical point of view that was so fresh, so persuasive and so emotionally on target, that it simply couldn't be ignored, and even kind of left some of us wondering how we'd gotten along without someone like her for all these years.

Oslin's new album, *This Woman*, is, in almost every way, a worthy successor to *'80's Ladies*. What makes it so significant is that Oslin emerges stronger than ever as a sort of unofficial spokesman and informal torchbearer for that massive constituency of devoted female country listeners who, in my estimation, are too seldom represented in song: the millions who find themselves at, or approaching, middle age, doing constant battle with the waistline and more alone in the world, whether within

or without a relationship with a "significant other," than they ever imagined they'd be.

K.T., in fact, gets right down to the nitty-gritty and evokes the sort of stingingly unromantic realism that most other women singers would be scared to touch with a ten-foot pole. On "Didn't Expect It to Go Down This Way," she laments—more in disbelief than self-pity:

*I'm overworked and overweight
I can't remember when I last had a date
Oh, I didn't expect it to go down this way.*

Oslin wrote or co-wrote all the songs on *This Woman*, and that's certainly a factor in making the album such a delightfully *personal* musical outing. Nearly all of the songs offer the listener similar no-holds-barred female perspective, and some even pull an out-and-out male-female reversal. On "Hey, Bobby," for instance, it's the gal who's trying to talk the guy into her car for a moonlight ride down Lover's Lane.

On the title song—a particular stand-out—it's the woman who owns up to her own "Casanova Complex," i.e., being footloose. She warns her new lover:

*(This woman's) in love with you baby
This woman don't think you can do no wrong
But I feel it's only fair to warn you
This woman don't stay in love too long.*

Beyond the sheer novelty of a middle-aged woman making it to the top of the country charts by singing about middle-aged preoccupations lies the plain fact that K.T. Oslin is also one hell of a singer. Her emotional forthrightness is mindful of the Loretta Lynn of yesteryear ("The Pill," etc.), while her supple, soulful vocal shadings (which only occasionally have to rise above Harold Shedd's rinky-dink arrangements) awake echoes of everyone from Brenda Lee to Aretha Frank-



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lin. Together they make *This Woman* an impressive effort in almost every way.

—BOB ALLEN

The McCarters

The Gift

Warner Bros. 9 25737-1

The good news is that the first few bars of *The Gift* make a promise—of timeless music from the mountains, of traditional instrumentation, of calm, perfect, lead-vocal pitch echoed by lovely blood harmonies, of taste and integrity and compelling emotional substance. The better news is that the whole album keeps that promise. This is a beautiful record. The McCarters are wonderful, and *The Gift* is as good as they are.

Or perhaps better, for this album is an example of things working as they really should in the music business. It's a best-case-scenario event, one of those instances in which the creative value of the final product was enhanced, rather than compromised or diluted or sidetracked in some way, by every contribution at every step in the record-making process. It began with basic talent of very high quality (the three McCarters, young sisters who have emerged from their formative years with impeccable technique and an East Tennessee mountain-musical vision somehow untouched by popschlock country modernity); it entered the Nashville system through the perfect pair of talent-listening ears (Kyle Lehning, the subtle and visionary producer of Randy Travis and Dan Seals); it connected with the most appropriate Artists and Repertoire person (Martha Sharp) at the ideal record company (Warner Brothers, an open-minded and adventurous outfit currently leading the market in the new-traditional field); and then it acquired producers (Paul Worley and Ed Seay) with the



taste and intelligence to fit the record to the artist, not vice versa. Finally, with all this in place, the team proceeded and travelled First Class all way; found songs they all liked, hired musicians they could all work with, and didn't quit until they were all satisfied they'd done the best they could do.

The result is—well, as I've already said, beautiful. In the context of contemporary Nashville women's music, its sound represents a kind of further progression into country-folk purism, the logical next step deeper towards the music's roots on the path opened by The Judds and followed by The Forester Sisters. More specifically, young Jennifer McCarter and younger Lisa and Theresa, the twin little sisters, sound like Emmylou-plus-two singing a lovely rewrite of The Carter Family songbook, or making the country-folk mountain-home album many of us wish Dolly Parton (who hails from their own home town of Sevierville, Tennessee) could find in her heart today. In fact, the stylistic echoes which permeate *The Gift* are so pronounced that you find yourself thinking you know

this music already, that you've lived for years with these lovely songs. You haven't, though; except for Jesse Winchester's "My Songbird" (that gem of poetic feeling being typical of The McCarters' instinct for great material), every one of them bears a 1987 or 1988 copyright.

I don't know. Maybe *The Gift* isn't as good as I find myself feeling it is. Maybe it's such a bright new pearl in the woefully underexploited prepop-Dolly/Emmylou-always tradition that its mere existence is clouding my judgment of its purely musical worth. But then again, maybe it really is a great one. Maybe it is possible for three modern young women only just past voting age to know exactly how hillbilly angels should sound.

—PATRICK CARR

Jimmie Dale Gilmore

Fair & Square

Hightone 8011

Damn, Lubbock, Texas, in the 1960's must have been fun. Just imagine how it must have been to have all that

great Texas music mixing it up in the air—the blues, Western swing, honky tonk country, Tex-Mex, rock 'n' roll—and homeboy action too: Buddy Holly wowing the world before his plane went down, Waylon Jennings getting it cranked up around town, your own father out there picking in a five-piece band. No wonder your best high school buddies turned out to be such hot stuff after you all upped and moved to Austin: the fabled Butch Hancock, the firebrand Joe Ely. And no wonder you yourself, Jimmie (after guess who?) Dale Gilmore, aren't half bad either. No wonder your first solo album after all those years playing with the boys turns out to be a blast.

Well, *Fair & Square* isn't exactly a blast. That word suggests too much of a party-animal impression, lots of loud hoots and heavy rhythm, and while Jimmie Dale can hoot and has hooted with the best of them (Joe Ely), there's an awful lot more to him and his record than the rockabilly fever and the boogie-woogie flu. A better description for *Fair & Square* would be *tour de force*.

That is, a display of many strengths, beginning with the hitherto unsuspected nature of Jimmie Dale's vocal talents. The fellow's a latter-day Webb Pierce, capable of emotional little miracles through the nose; restricted by nature to a quite quirky corner of the tenor range, he nonetheless puts a song across better than nine out of ten more conventionally endowed male singers.

And what songs! A couple of real bopping beauts from the bygone eras ("Singing the Blues" and "Trying to Get to You"), and then a parade of Austin's best, the kind of tunes the old alternative-country Southwestern songwriting royalty has been sending out in bottles or simply singing among themselves lo, these far too many years: Townes Van Zandt's road-eating, real-life "White

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Freight Liner Blues," which kickstarts the album to life; Joe Ely's frank and nasty old nightlife anthem, "Honky Tonk Masquerade," here rendered in a weirdly easy-breezy gait; Jimmie Dale's trot through his own lilting, melodic, very nicely observed "Don't Look For a Heartache" and his hard charge at his supercharged "All Grown Up" ("but I still like to rock and roll"); Butch Hancock's eerie-stately "Just a Wave, Not the Water," with its aquatic imagery and African allusions and time-space games, all of it crafted into a dead-on piece about love and loss and need ("I would have killed myself," sings Jimmie Dale, "but it made no sense, committing suicide in self-defense"), and then, too, "99 Holes," a fast, funny rip of a song from the opposite end of Butch's wide stylistic spectrum. Finally there are two songs from another old friend, David Halley, a gentleman whose presence in Jimmie Dale's Continental Drifters band gives that outfit the double-whammy songwriting power Joe Ely's band had when Jimmie Dale was in it. One, the title track "Fair & Square," is nice enough—a very clever sad song—but the other, "Rain Just Falls," is a real spell, a gorgeous mood-and-message poem with a power rare indeed in country or any other form. It closes the door quietly on the dense adventure of this album.

A footnote or two. Firstly, *Fair & Square* was produced by Joe Ely, and that shows: it's firing on all eight all the time, no matter what the speed; it sounds *alive*. Secondly, the Continental Drifters themselves (plus Joe and a few other like-minded souls) played the music, and that shows too; this is a real live band here, not a collection of hired hands, and moreover it's a great band, stylistically flexible and technically tight; it sounds excited.

Finally, should this review pique your interest and send



you to either your radio dial or record store in search of sounds rather than words, be prepared for a disappointment. Since Hightone is not a major recording label, the album does not share the advantages of promotion and distribution enjoyed by those of recent Austin graduates like Lyle Lovett and Nanci Griffith. This does *not* mean that Jimmie Dale Gilmore is in any way less worthy of such services. No matter what happens to his "career," he'll be joining his two great Lubbock high school buddies in the better history books.

—PATRICK CARR

Dean Dillon *Slick Nickel* Capitol CI-48920

Dean Dillon, though still a relatively young man, has been a force on the Nashville music scene as a songwriter for a number of years. In addition, over the last decade or so (during which he's occasionally been bedeviled by personal problems), Dillon has made a couple of half-hearted independent forays onto the record charts. For example, he and Gary Stewart recorded a barely-noticed but commendable duet album called *Brotherly Love* some years back.

So in some ways *Slick Nickel*, Dillon's debut Capitol album, has been a long time coming. Perhaps this is why this essentially solid effort—an impressive showcase of Dillon's writing talents (he wrote or co-wrote all but three of the ten songs)—comes

across as something less than what it could have been.

To begin with, in an effort perhaps to play it safe, Dillon has ended up taking a bit of a chance here: in an era of upbeat and medium-tempo radio hits, he's put together an album that is weighted heavily (a bit too heavily, it seems to me) toward slow, inward-looking, pop-flavored ballads, not the least of which is a worthwhile reprise of the old Del Shannon hit "I Go to Pieces (And I Want to Cry)." Songs like these don't begin to reveal their under-stated charm until after several listenings, and that's a problem.

Dillon and producer Gary Scruggs kick things off energetically enough with "Hey, Heart," a wistful contemporary "heart song" about a man who finds himself drawn back to an ex-lover who caused him boat-loads of pain in the past. In this one—as the title implies—the singer actually carries on a dialogue with his most vital organ! Here as on any number of other selections—such as "Station to Station," "You Sure Got This Old Redneck Feelin' Blue" and Mac McAnally's "When the Feelin's Right"—Dillon slips into a candyish

neo-country groove best typified of late by Keith Whitley's "Miami (My Amy)."

The album needs more up-tempo songs like the bouncy, good-timey "Appalachia, Got to Have You Feelin' in My Bones" and fewer pleasant, forgettable latter-day tear-jerkers which ultimately ring *slick* and impersonal.

The final song on *Slick Nickel*, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost," is one of two that Dillon wrote with the assistance of a co-writer, and it is about as un-*slick* as a song can get. In contrast to so much else on the album, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost" is a brooding, highly personal song about loss, grief and begrudging self-discovery.

*My daddy had a bottle
of whiskey in his hand
when he drew his last breath.
I had a bottle of whiskey in
mine when I laid him to rest.*

That's mighty strong stuff, and about as hard to take as 110-proof whiskey. Even so, it's a welcome change, and it gives us a vivid, fleeting glimpse of Dean Dillon himself, complex and sometimes troubled soul that he must be.

We can only hope for a few more such glimpses on his next album. —BOB ALLEN



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Rated ★★★★★ In Country Music, Sept./Oct. '85

Hawkshaw began with King covering whatever Ernest Tubb was doing. But "Sunny Side of the Mountain" and "Slow Poke" in 1948 and 1951 were enough to establish him as a force in his own right. Like Copas, Hawkins fell by the wayside, with no hit records, though he was a member of the Grand Ole Opry and had contracts with RCA, Starday and Columbia. Then in March 1963, just days before he died, his King recording of "Lonesome 7-7203" hit Number One. Hawkins, like Copas, made other fine records, "Rattlesnakin' Daddy" and "Dog House Boogie" among them, that hinted at rockabilly. *16 Greatest Hits of Hawkshaw Hawkins* (Gusto SD-3013) covers all these and more.

Copas first made his mark as a vocalist with Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys... "Filipino Baby," his first hit, came in 1944. Throughout the 1940's he had still more hits—with "Tennessee Waltz," "Tragic Romance" and others. In the early 1960's, Copas was successful with Starday, with the hits "Alabam," and "Signed, Sealed and Delivered" in 1961. Some of his best-known songs are available on *16 Greatest Hits of Cowboy Copas* (Gusto SD-3012). Most of the material is from his Starday period, though "Filipino Baby" and "Tragic Romance" are also included. Copas never got the credit he should have, considering his rich, supple voice and laconic, offhand delivery.

Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper worked together nearly 40 years... *Early Recordings* (County CCS 103) compiles 12 Columbia songs, leased from CBS, that helped establish their reputation. A second Wilma Lee/Stoney album from the 1970's is *Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper Sing The Carter Family's Greatest Hits* (Starday SD 980), an outstanding salute to the Carters cut in the early 1970's. Wilma Lee and Stoney tackle such Carter classics as "Keep on the Firing Line," produce a delicate version of "You Are My Flower" and are back on Wilma Lee's stops-out treatment of "Lulla Walls." The Carter style and the Coopers' sound blend easily here.



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RICH KIENZLE, SEPT./OCT. '85
PAGE 67, *Country Music Magazine*



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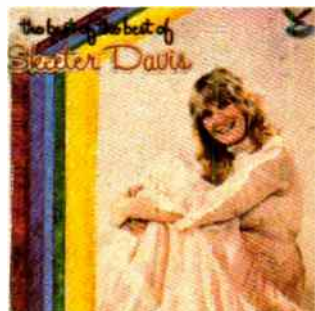
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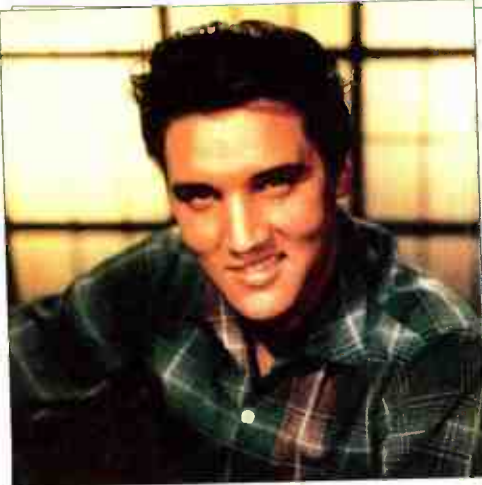
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Record Reviews

The Desert Rose Band

Running
MCA-42169

Excuse me if I sound like I'm raving. But after listening to The Desert Rose Band's new album, *Running*, I just can't help it. It's hard for me to imagine six more talented musicians jammed together with such focus into one band. Nearly every track on *Running* has the energy, forcefulness and sense of purpose of a great live performance. The album leaves me with the feeling that The Desert Rose Band may be the best band working in country music today.

Although it is a much bigger and considerably more seasoned outfit than The O'Kanes—its personnel includes former members of great yesteryear country-rock ensembles like The Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers—Desert Rose Band's music has the same sort of refreshingly unadorned, organic, roots-flavored power that has made The O'Kanes such a hit. It also echoes with the sort of wonderfully free-wheeling, bluegrass-inspired vocal harmonies and the sort of bold, rock-flavored electric guitar, steel guitar and mandolin stylings that were trademarks of great pioneering country-rock outfits like The Byrds, Poco and Buffalo Springfield.

The driving wheel behind Desert Rose is, of course, founder Chris Hillman. Hillman was—not just coincidentally, as this music attests—also a founding member of both The Byrds and The Burrito Brothers. He and the long-lasting Herb Pederson, a celebrated veteran of new-grass musical circles who sings harmony/second lead and plays some acoustic guitar and five-string banjo in this ensemble, manage quite easily—with background vocal assistance from the other members—to come up



with some of the best two-part harmonies that you'll find anywhere outside of a Ralph Stanley or a Seldom Scene album.

Meanwhile, John Jorgenson, master of many stringed instruments, also has his impeccable and amazingly dexterous fingerprints all over each and every cut. In addition to the usual assortment of electric and acoustic guitars, he also adorns several tracks with work-outs on the twelve-string electric guitar and the mandocello. So do pedal steel master Jay Dee Maness, bassist Bill Bryson and drummer Steve Duncan.

Hillman's songwriting seems to have gotten a sharper edge to it, as well. He had a hand in writing eight selections here, most of them with oft-time co-writer Steve Hill. Compositions like "For the Rich Man," "Homeless" and "Our Songs" all ring with a sort of rustic, neo-populist political and emotional conviction. The music's range, stylistically and in terms of content, calls to mind the point Paul Clois Stone made in his liner notes for the group's first album. Discussing the variety of sources of great contemporary country music, he said, "It's okay to listen to music by Merle Haggard and Bob Dylan on the same album."

The Desert Rose Band is an extremely rare bird: a country band that has not only an undeniably bold and forceful musical style of its own, but a few well-spoken political points of view, as well. As *Running* so aptly demonstrates, the band



seems to be one of the few at work in country music today which really has something to say; and which seems to put far more of its best energies into the art of making music—rather than into the art of musical compromise.

—BOB ALLEN

Highway 101

101²

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I can take only so much country-rock before I tune it out. I don't care how good everyone says it is. If it's got 75 studio pickers on it because the band can't cut it in the studio, forget it.

Since I said that, you've already figured I'm *not* gonna put Highway 101 in that category. They don't belong there. The music, picking, production and Paulette Carlson's vocals are real and honest (and forget the Emmylou comparisons—they both stand on their own).

The band, Jack, Curtis and Cactus, don't play like they're grinding it out, rehashing the same melody ten different ways to fill an album so they can hurry back to the income property they bought last year in their hometowns. A small band with the right musicians can get a huge, full sound. These guys, aided by Paul Worley and Ed Seay, do. They also know how to pick material.

"Honky Tonk Heart" is a good example. It's nothing new: the time-tested theme of "Don't Come Home A-Drinkin'," a story of two

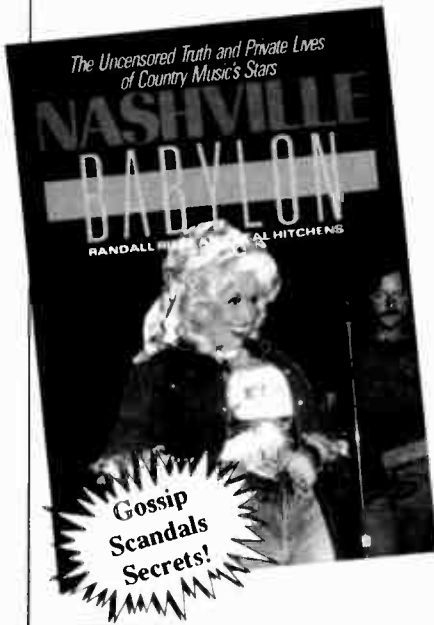
people, one of whom grows up before the other, but the performance is so intense it sounds like a brand new idea. "Road to Your Heart" is lyrically similar to plenty of other songs, but succeeds because of Paulette and the low-keyed, smoldering arrangement. It contrasts with the churning rockabilly styling of Mark Knopfler's "Setting Me Up," a tune that became popular with L.A. country rockers after Albert Lee recorded it several years ago.

"Somewhere Between Gone and Goodbye" is clearly commercial, but for once that's not a dirty word. It works, and is a natural even for the bizarre taste of today's country radio. "There Goes My Love," an early Buck Owens number, gets a smoking Paulette vocal that would please the ailing Rose Maddox (whom she resembles at her best), framed by great Tommy Spurlock steel. It's complimented by the contemporary "Desperate Road," with its complex yet plaintive lament about endless manipulation.

The equally plaintive "All the Reasons Why," which Paulette wrote with Beth Chapman, deftly captures the conflicting emotions of a relationship that's ending. Chapman's own "Long Way Down" is equally good at capturing the inner fears of just about anyone who achieves stardom in any field. ("Do You Love Me) Just Say Yes" isn't really much of a song, and it's a tribute to Paulette that she can make so much of so little.

After The Byrds and Commander Cody disappeared, I never cared for California country-rock. The Eagles, Firefall, even the later Burritos were the musical equivalent of valium to me. But The Desert Rose Band, Southern Pacific and the 101'ers are fast changing my mind. And there's one simple reason: unlike the others, they sound like they *mean* it.

—RICH KIENZLE



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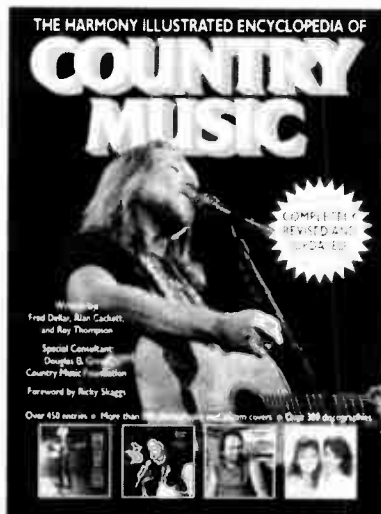
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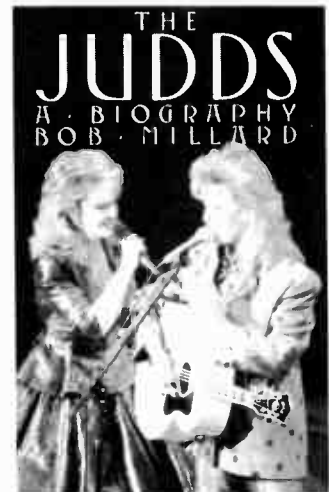
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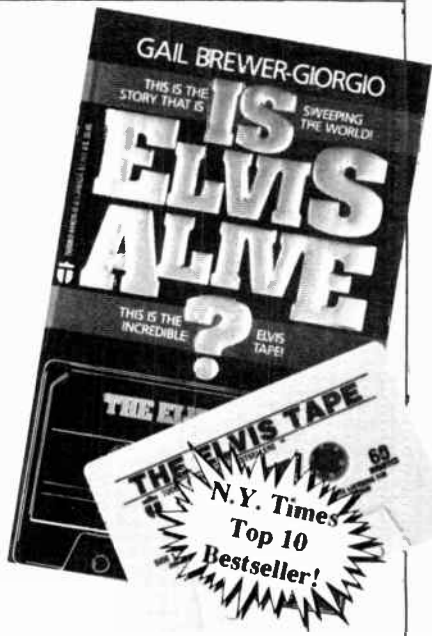


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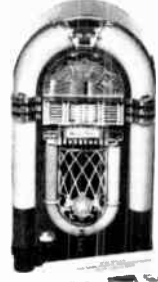
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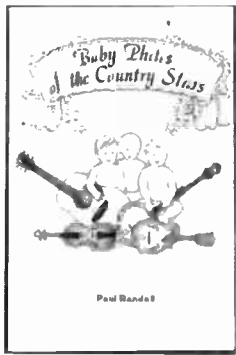
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Record Reviews

The Judds Greatest Hits RCA 8318-1-R

Okay, no big secret. I like "Greatest Hits" packages. I like them for precisely the same reason that most critics hate them, which is that "Greatest Hits" albums aren't cohesive, like a good album should be. Ideally, an album is a single entity, greater than the sum of its parts. Ole Willie's *Red-Headed Stranger* is probably the ultimate example of the flawlessly constructed album.

In the real world of country music, folks, an album is more likely defined as a couple of singles and eight fillers. Like formula album production, you know—couple of weepers, obligatory pop-styled ballad, one or two uptempo things with fiddles. Ho-hum.

That's why I like "Greatest Hits" packages. It's also why I don't even mind a package like The Judds' *Greatest Hits*, which includes two not-greatest hits, "Give a Little Love" and "Change of Heart." "Give a Little Love," another Paul Kennerly song ("Have Mercy" and "Cry Myself to Sleep" are also here) is a new release, and it's a good one, the slow, sultry material that Wynonna and Naomi do so well. And it doesn't hurt that the song's displayed between "Mama, He's Crazy," one of the greatest country songs ever recorded, and "Grandpa (Tell Me 'Bout the Good Ole Days)," no slouch itself.

The other less-than-greatest-hit is Naomi Judd's "Change of Heart," slipped between "Have Mercy" and "Girls' Night Out." It's a weeper, and a pretty good one. On the whole, I wouldn't buy this album for the two new cuts. But if you're missing one of the *real* greatest hits (in addition to the aforementioned cuts, "Cry Myself to Sleep," "Love Is Alive," "Rockin' With the Rhythm of the Rain" and "Why Not Me"



are included), this album is a winner. —MICHAEL BANE

Restless Heart Big Dreams In a Small Town RCA-8317-1-R

When producer Tim Dubois assembled Restless Heart from a handful of top-flight session musicians a few years back, he had a pretty good idea of what he was after: a band that could make music to fill that huge void out there in the netherworld of country-pop radio land—a void created by the demise of The Eagles and other seminal country-flavored rock bands whose heavily-stylized, laid-back sound ("Lyin' Eyes," "Tequilla Sunrise," etc.) still finds enduring favor on both country and adult contemporary (pop/soft rock) radio play-lists.

The fact that *Wheels*, Restless Heart's 1986 album, resulted in four Number One country hits and some serious crossover hits as well is proof that Dubois succeeded in his mission.

Ironically, Restless Heart has, along the way, found itself beset with the same sort of critical backlash that once plagued The Eagles: the recurring complaint that their sound was just too smooth, too mellow, too devoid of personality; and was—

ultimately—little more than masterfully-written, masterfully-played radio wallpaper music.

Big Dreams In a Small Town, Restless Heart's new album, should go a long way toward blunting such criticism. Ever so slowly, the five bandmembers have begun taking a more active role in the studio as co-producers and as songwriters. Ever so slowly, they have shaken off their self-effacing session-musician instincts. After all, the cardinal rule of session-playing is: sound beautiful, but don't call undue attention to yourself at the expense of the artist whom you are backing in the studio. They've loosened up and learned to perform as a *band*—both outside and inside the studio. Along the way, Restless Heart has put a discernible face on its once near-anonymous sound.

For instance, the title song, written by Dave Robbins and Van Stephenson, along with producer Tim Dubois, is the sort of bold, growing-up-in-the-heartland saga we're used to hearing from John Cougar Mellencamp, if you ignore its trite "happily ever after" ending. "Bluest Eyes in Texas," written by the same team, is an utterly beautiful song. Here, the band's harmonies and beautifully blended playing ring so pitch-perfect and compelling that the song seems destined to hit radioland right in



its collective breadbasket (much as The Eagles' "Lyin' Eyes" did years ago).

"Eldorado," written by Restless Heart members Greg Jennings and Paul Gregg, takes the band into the sort of blue-eyed rock 'n' roll territory once staked out by bands like The Guess Who. Meanwhile "This Time," an eminently catchy dance tune with throw-away lyrics, written by Dubois, Jennings, Gregg and Van Stephenson, struts all the chops, confidence and finesse Restless Heart has built up in its two years on the road as a working band.

You don't have to worry about getting Restless Heart confused with some wild and woolly, boogie-woogie-in' outfit like—for instance—Hank Jr.'s road band; if it is still *smooth* that radio programmers want, it's still *smooth* that Restless Heart gives them. But, for a change, the smoothness on *Big Dreams In a Small Town* is smoothness with heart; smoothness with button-down soul; smoothness that smolders beneath its perfectly-creased seams.

Big Dreams In a Small Town is sure to raise both Restless Heart's critical and commercial standing by a significant number of notches. And the boys also remind us that *smooth* doesn't *always* have to be synonymous with homogenized.

—BOB ALLEN



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World Radio History

FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY

Tubb Album Specials

Ernest Tubb, featured in Legends of Country Music in this issue's CMSA Newsletter, is one of those artists whose continuing popularity has ensured that many of the albums he recorded over his long career remain in print. John Miller and Mike Hazeldine of Stetson Records, in particular, deserve praise for making available several of Tubb's most significant Decca albums from the 1950's and 1960's, original covers and all.

Ernest Tubb Favourites, the British version of a 1956 American album, via Stetson (HAT 3011), contains all E.T.'s best-known 1940's original hits, not the re-recordings he did in the 1950's. Included are: "Walking the Floor Over You," "I'll Always Be Glad to Take You Back," "I Don't Blame You," "Soldier's Last Letter," "Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello," "Seaman's Blues," "Try Me One More Time," "Rainbow at Midnight," "Have You Ever Been Lonely," "Filipino Baby," "Till the End of the World," "Slipping Around." *The Importance of Being Ernest* by Stetson (HAT 3006), originally released in 1959, features: "I'm A-Long Gone Daddy," "All Those Yesterdays," "San Antonio Rose," "That, My Darlin', Is Me," "Educated Mama," "The Next Voice You Hear," "I Wonder Why I Worry," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "It Makes No Difference Now," "I'm Waiting for the Ships That Never Come In," "Don't Trade Your Old-Fashioned Sweetheart," "It's the Age That Makes the Difference."

Another Stetson anthology, *The Daddy of 'Em All* (HAT 3015), offers: "You're Breaking My Heart," "I Dreamed of an Old Love Affair," "I Know My Baby Loves Me," "Mississippi Gal," "When a Soldier Knocks," "Daisy May," "I've Got the Blues for Mammy," "This Troubled Mind O' Mine," "I Knew the Moment I Lost You," "You're the Only Good Thing That Happened to Me," "My Hillbilly Baby," "There's No Fool Like a Young Fool." A fourth Stetson release, the 1960 *Midnight Jamboree* (HAT 3032), recreates one of E.T.'s *Midnight Jamboree* broadcasts in a recording studio with Kitty Wells, Webb Pierce, Patsy Cline, The Wilburns and others.

Blue Christmas, also from Stetson (HAT 3020), Christmas album, presents E.T.'s renditions of: "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Blue Snowflakes," "We Need God for Christmas," "Christmas Is Just Another Day



for Me," "Christmas Island," "White Christmas" and others. Not to mention Stetson's *Red and Ernie* duet album, (HAT 3000), which brings together E.T. and Red Foley on these songs: "Tennessee Border No. 2," "Goodnight, Irene" and others.

Also worth noting is Rounder's *Honky Tonk Classics* (Rounder SS 14), which brings together 12 of Tubb's lesser Decca hits from the 1940's and 1950's, including "You Nearly Lose Your Mind" and "I Ain't Going Honky Tonkin' Anymore." Only two of the 12 numbers here are duplicated on the Stetson *Favourites*. Lastly, *Live Transcripts* (Anthology of Country Music-14) consists of 20 early numbers, among them Ernest's versions of 1940's country hits done for World Transcriptions in the 1940's.

To Order These E.T. Albums

Send check or money order payable to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 11288N, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for the first item ordered, \$.95 for each additional. Include your membership number.

Price on all Stetson (HAT) albums, available in records or cassettes, is \$11.98, member's price \$9.98. The Rounder album, also available in record or cassette, sells for \$10.98, member's price \$8.98. The Anthology of Country Music album, available on records only, goes for \$9.98, member's price \$7.98.

Member's Discount on Buried Treasures

Don't forget your CMSA membership entitles you to take \$2.00 off the price of every album featured in Rich Kienzle's *Buried Treasures*, in this and every issue. For this month's selections, see p. 72.

MEMBERS POLL / NOVEMBER 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)

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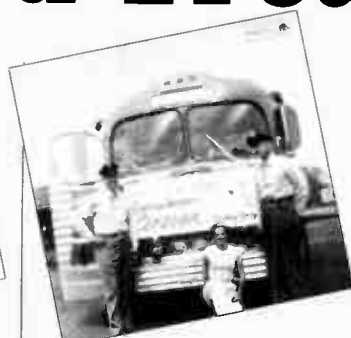
Reissues,
Rarities and the
Hard-to-Find



RCA Country Caravan: The first-ever live country album was the *RCA Country & Western Caravan*, recorded in Little Rock on May 9, 1954, during an RCA-sponsored publicity tour. The stars: Chet Atkins, Hank Snow, Charline Arthur, Hawkshaw Hawkins, The Davis Sisters, Minnie Pearl, Eddie Hill and the team of Hal Lone Pine and Betty Cody. Digitally remastered in an entirely new package, Bear Family's reissue (BFX 15276) has more than historical appeal.

Arthur's two songs are an invigorating start. Chet's "Downhill Drag" and "Yankee Doodle/Dixie" are welcome since the original records aren't in print. The Davis Sisters, back after Betty Jack Davis' tragic 1953 death, come on strong with "Rock-a-Bye Boogie" and their hit, "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know." Minnie's comedy and Hank's medley of hits ("I'm Movin' On," "Rhumba Boogie," etc.) are predictable, but then they were the show's headliners. A wealth of previously unpublished shots from Skeeter Davis' and the late Charline Arthur's photo albums complete the package.

Don Gibson: Recently, Bear Family issued 26 of Don Gibson's finest RCA numbers on a compact disc (BFCD 15401), all with the tremendous sound and generous programming a CD affords. However, a lot of readers don't have (and may never buy) CD players. Happily, those who find themselves in this category are no longer left out so

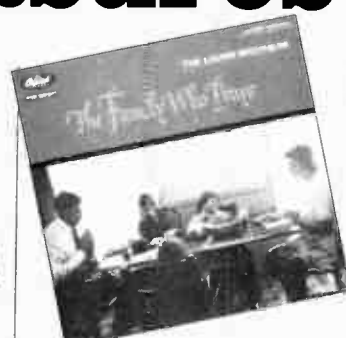


far as Gibson's greatest hits are concerned. *The Best of Don Gibson* (LSP-3376), a reproduction of the original 1965 U.S. album, is available again as an import.

"Oh, Lonesome Me" is here, as is "Sea of Heartbreak," "I Can't Stop Loving You," "Lonesome Number One," "A Legend in My Time" and "Blue, Blue Day." So are "Just One Time," "I Think It's Best (To Forget Me)," "It's a Sin" and "It's My Way" as well as two gospel tunes. There's no need for extensive comment, except to say that these were Gibson's finest moments as an artist and Chet Atkins' as producer.

Skeeter Davis: As is the case with Don Gibson, Skeeter Davis' RCA hits from her peak in the early 1960's haven't been in print for years. From the Caribbean island of Barbados comes a reproduction of the 1965 album *The Best of Skeeter Davis* (LSP-3374). It contains almost everything essential, including the original Davis Sisters' "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know" from 1953. So is "The End of the World" and "Something Precious" (1962), "I Can't Stay Mad at You" and "I'm Falling, Too," "Am I That Easy to Forget" (1960) and "My Last Date" (Floyd Cramer's 1960 instrumental hit with lyrics) from 1961.

This isn't hardcore by any stretch of the imagination, nor were all the tracks hits. "I Will" and "Now I Lay Me Down to Weep" were never on the charts while others that were aren't included. Pro-

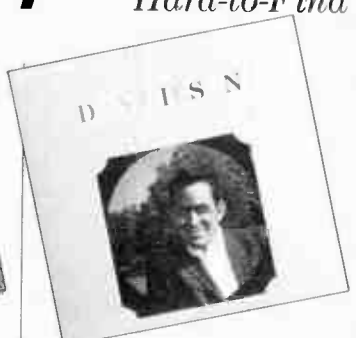


ducer Chet Atkins draped Skeeter's voice (often overdubbed in harmony) in choral and orchestral arrangements she had to overcome, and the mid-song recitations get tiresome after awhile. History buffs will be amused by the original liner notes, which mention "I Forgot More" as a big hit in 1956, three years after the fact.

Merle Haggard: Some of Hag's most important Capitol albums were his "tributes" like *Same Train, A Different Time* (Jimmie Rodgers), *A Tribute to the Best Damn Fiddle Player* (Bob Wills) and *The Way it Was in '51* (Lefty, etc.). Twenty standards from these Capitol albums (most out of print), make up *Merle Haggard Sings Country Favorites* (EMS 1253) from England (hence the odd spelling).

The titles speak for themselves: "Mom and Dad's Waltz," proto-outlaw Johnny Darrell's "Son of Hickory Holler's Tramp," "Take Me Back to Tulsa," "San Antonio Rose," "Right or Wrong," "Moanin' the Blues" and "Lovesick Blues," "Mule-skin Blues" and "Waiting For a Train" as well as "Making Believe," "Walking the Floor Over You," "She Thinks I Still Care," "Folsom Prison Blues" and "Green, Green Grass of Home." Several Hag favorites round it out, among them "Today I Started Loving You Again." The cover features incredible rare photos of the early Strangers.

Del Reeves: Bear Family has gone back to the earliest days



of Del Reeves' career for *Baby, I Love You* (BFX 15269), an album which reprises his first recordings for Capitol, Decca and Reprise from 1957-1962, before his big hit, "Girl on the Billboard." "One Life to Live" and "Love, Love, Love," done in L.A. in 1957, were Louvin-style duets with his mandolin-playing partner Chester Smith from his first session. What may surprise longtime fans was the rockabilly he recorded at his second session, which Capitol producer Ken Nelson forced on Del, who wanted to sing country.

The material from the 1960's came closer to Del's real aspirations, and included his first hits, "Be Quiet, Mind" and the Johnny Cash-inspired "He Stands Real Tall," issued on Decca in 1961, and "The Only Girl I Can't Forget," which was issued on Reprise. These records marked a turning point for him, leading to his contract with United Artists and his joining the Opry 22 years ago this October.

Willie Nelson: 25 years have passed since Willie had his first major-label releases on the old Liberty label. In the past eight years that material's been available in various packages, one of the best being *Country Willie* (EMI EMS 1252) from England. This 20-song collection concentrates not on his better-known Liberty tunes but on some of the less familiar titles, among them "Country Willie," the folkish "River Boy," "Mr. Record Man" and

"Undo the Right."

His original 1962 version of "Night Life" (recorded on the sly for a tiny Texas label while with Liberty) is also here, along with the pop standard "I'll Walk Alone" (cut nearly 20 years before *Stardust*), "Columbus Stockade Blues," "Take Me As I Am (Or Let Me Go)" and Bob Wills' "Right or Wrong." Bill Williams, one of a handful of English country historians who know what they're talking about, contributes intelligent notes.

Ray Charles: If any artist or artistic project has proved the durability of the best country songs, it is Ray Charles and his groundbreaking 2-volume *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, which produced his 1962 version of Don Gibson's "I Can't Stop Loving You," Number One on the pop charts that year. Dunhill Compact Classics recently combined 17 songs from both albums (Charles owns the material) with three Buck Owens hits Charles recorded in 1965 to create *Greatest Country & Western Hits* (DZS-040).

Ray's ability to retain the power of the material with strings and big-band arrangements was amazing but not a total surprise. Having played piano with a country band, he *knew* this music. His versions of "Hey, Good-Lookin'" and Eddy Arnold's "Just a Little Lovin'" roar. He conveys the aching melancholy of "Midnight," "No Letter Today" and "It Makes No Difference Now." The other Don Gibson tunes, "Oh, Lonesome Me" and "Don't Tell Me Your Troubles," are almost playful. The Owens hits, "Crying Time" and "Together Again," both pop hits for Ray, were perfect endings.

Riley Puckett: Think Willie broke new ground when he cut *Stardust*? Figure Hank Sr. recording the 1920's pop ditty "Lovesick Blues" was a first? How about Reba's "Sunday Kind of Love," originally a 1947 hit for singer Fran Warren with Claude Thornhill's orchestra? Nope.

None of 'em an absolute original. Now, would you believe *Riley Puckett* singing pop in 1939? Yep, the same Riley Puckett who worked in the 1920's with Gid Tanner's Skillet Lickers. Bear Family's *Red Sails In the Sunset* (BFX 15280) presents the evidence from Puckett's final 1939-41 Bluebird recordings: pre-Sherrillized country-pop before critics existed to lament Riley's sellout.

Puckett was an oldtimer by the late 1930's, his stringband music out of style in the post-Depression years. In these sessions, accompanied by his own boom-chucka guitar, mandolin and occasional accordion, Puckett's voice was melodic and straightforward as he sang pop standards like "Margie," "Walking My Baby Back Home," "Red Sails In the Sunset," the corny "Playmates" and "Nobody's Business."

Gospel: We seldom mention country gospel in *Buried Treasures*. No particular reason, but not much of it gets reissued. Now, just to prove there's an exception to every rule, here are four newly reissued albums:—

Louvin Brothers: Some of the most compelling gospel of the 1950's was recorded by The Louvin Brothers for Capitol. Unavailable for years, both *The Family Who Prays* (DT 1061), released in

1958, and 1973's *The Great Gospel Singing of The Louvin Brothers* (ST-11193) are now available on imports from Barbados.

Family features the standard Louvin sound: acoustic mandolin and guitars, electric lead guitar, bass and occasional piano. Some numbers, like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," are familiar to everyone while others, like "Satan Lied to Me" and "Just Rehearsing," are Louvin originals. Still others like "God Bless Her ('Cause She's My Mother)" aren't actual gospel, but jibe with the family values.

Four songs from *The Family Who Prays* are duplicated on *Great Gospel Singing*; others come from other Louvin gospel albums that lack a bit of the early edge, featuring slicker production including vocal choruses and a larger band. "Satan Is Real" and "Just Suppose" are almost pure recitation. However, their version of Hazel Houser's "River of Jordan" is as powerful now as then. The recitations on both albums often seem corny, but effectively convey the idea of old-time hellfire-and-brimstone country preaching. And gospel music has changed—a lot—in 30 years.

Connie Smith: For years, gospel music's been a big part of Connie Smith's career, given her own deep religious

beliefs. When I spoke with her for a CMM Update recently, she lamented how hard it was to find her old records. From Barbados comes an exact reproduction of her first gospel album, *Connie Smith Sings Great Gospel Songs* (RCA LSP 3589) from 1966.

Every song on this set is vibrant, in part because, as on most of her secular records, RCA producer Bob Ferguson minimized the Nashville Sound schlock. The presence of the legendary Jake Hess and The Imperials, who sing backup on eleven of the twelve tracks, solidifies the concept even more. The tone of the album is upbeat, starting out with the stomping Martha Carson standard "Satisfied" and similar tunes, such as "He Set Me Free." Even slower tunes like "Farther Along" are uptempo. In places the album almost rocks.

Flatt & Scruggs: Over the past few years substantial amounts of essential Columbia and Mercury material by Lester and Earl have been reissued with excellent packaging and notes. However, those releases have concentrated on their secular material. Flatt and Scruggs also recorded some compelling gospel with their sidemen from The Foggy Mountain Quartet over the years from 1953 to 1959, and it's that period that's covered on *You Can Feel It in Your Soul* (County CCS 111).

This is bluegrass gospel at its best, from the ragged call-and-response on "Cabin On the Hill" to Flatt's original tune "Be Ready, For Tomorrow May Never Come" from 1953. Earl's amazing guitar (yes, guitar) picking comes through on both "It Won't Be Long" and "You Can Feel It" as does fiddler Paul Warren's solid bass singing. Charles Wolfe's expertise in gospel music enhances his liner notes, which summarize each song's history and explain how Lester and Earl reworked the material to suit the group's purposes.

—RICH KIENZLE

How to Get These Treasures

Available in record, cassette or CD (compact disc), at prices shown: Ray Charles, *Greatest Country and Western Hits* (DZS-040), album or cassette, \$8.98/compact disc, \$16.98. Available in record or cassette at prices shown: Don Gibson, *The Best of Don Gibson* (LSP-3376), \$11.98/Skeeter Davis, *The Best of Skeeter Davis* (LSP-3374), \$11.98/Merle Haggard, *Merle Haggard Sings Country Favorites* (EMS 1253), \$11.98/Willie Nelson, *Country Willie* (EMS 1252), \$11.98/Louvin Bros., *The Family Who Prays* (DT 1061), \$11.98/Louvin Bros., *The Great Gospel Singing of The Louvin Brothers* (ST-11193), \$11.98/Connie Smith, *Connie Smith Sings Great Gospel Songs* (LSP-3589), \$11.98/Flatt and Scruggs, *You Can Feel It in Your Soul* (CCS 111), \$8.98. Available in record only at prices shown: Various artists, *RCA Country and Western Caravan* (BFX 15276), \$14.98/Del Reeves, *Baby, I Love You* (BFX 15269), \$14.98/Riley Puckett, *Red Sails In the Sunset* (BFX 15280), \$14.98.

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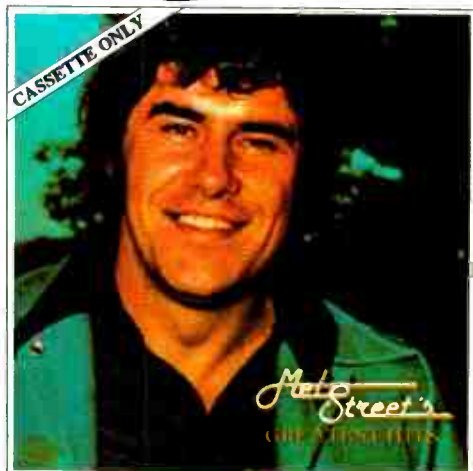
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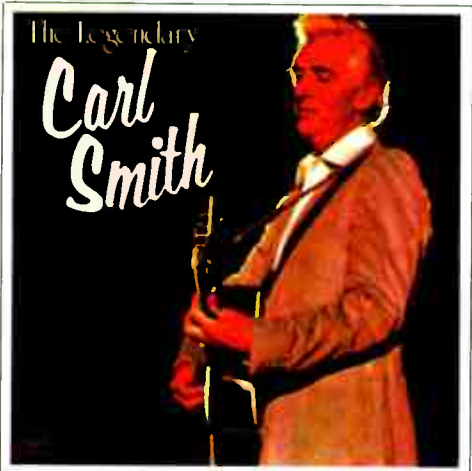
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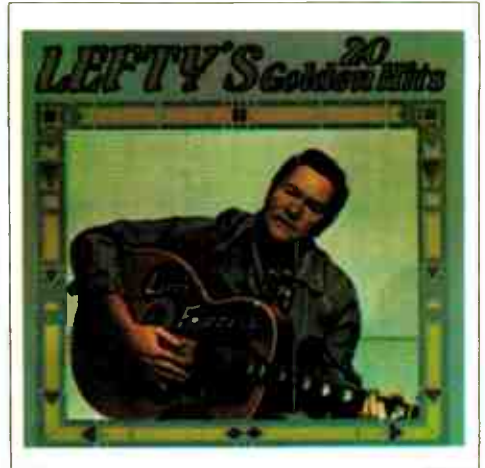
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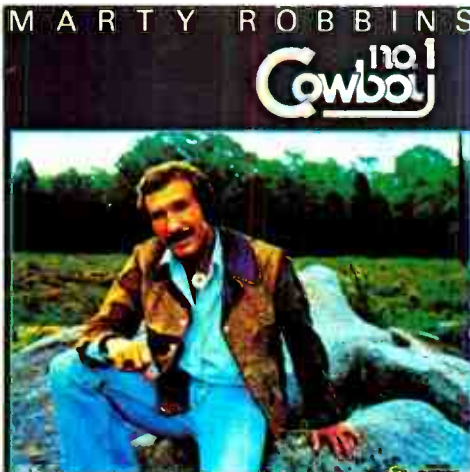
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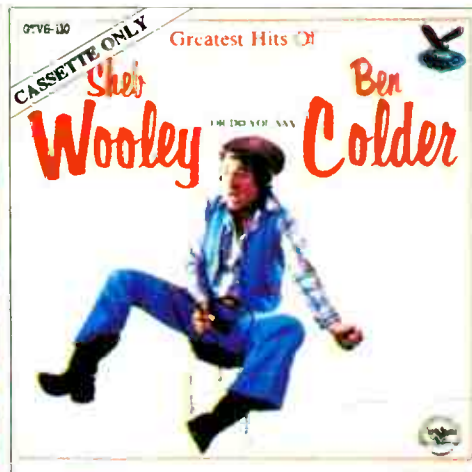
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4. Randy Travis *Honky Tonk Moon*
5. Dwight Yoakam &
Buck Owens *Streets of Bakersfield*
6. Kathy Mattea *Untold Stories*
7. Tanya Tucker *Strong Enough To Bend*
8. Ronnie Milsap *Button Off My Shirt*
9. Holly Dunn *That's What Your Love
Does To Me*
10. Larry Boone *Don't Give Candy
To A Stranger*
11. Skip Ewing *I Don't Have Far to Fall*
12. Eddy Raven *Joe Knows How To Live*
13. The Oak Ridge Boys *Gonna Take A Lot of River*
14. The O'Kanes *Blue Love*
15. T. Graham Brown *Darlene*
16. Jo-El Sonnier *Tear Stained Letter*
17. The Desert Rose Band *Summer Wind*
18. The Forester Sisters *Letter Home*
19. Sweethearts
of the Rodeo *Blue to the Bone*
20. Rosanne Cash *Runaway Train*
21. Southern Pacific *New Shade of Blue*
22. Foster and Lloyd *What Do You Want
From Me This Time*
23. Conway Twitty *Saturday Night Special*
24. Don Williams *Desperately*
25. Highway 101 *(Do You Love Me) Just Say Yes*

Albums

1. Randy Travis *Old 8 X 10*
2. The Judds *Greatest Hits*
3. Dwight Yoakam *Buenas Noches
From a Lonely Room*
4. Hank Williams, Jr. *Wild Streak*
5. Restless Heart *Big Dreams in a Small Town*
6. Ricky Van Shelton *Wild Eyed Dream*
7. Reba McEntire *Reba*
8. Dan Seals *Rage On*
9. George Strait *If You Ain't Lovin'
You Ain't Livin'*
10. Randy Travis *Always & Forever*
11. k.d. lang *Shadowland*
12. Alabama *Alabama Live*
13. Rosanne Cash *King's Record Shop*
14. Rodney Crowell *Diamonds & Dirt*
15. Tanya Tucker *Strong Enough To Bend*
16. Billy Joe Royal *The Royal Treatment*
17. Highway 101 *101 2*
18. K.T. Oslin *80's Ladies*
19. Randy Travis *Storms of Life*
20. Vern Gosdin *Chiseled In Stone*
21. Sweethearts
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