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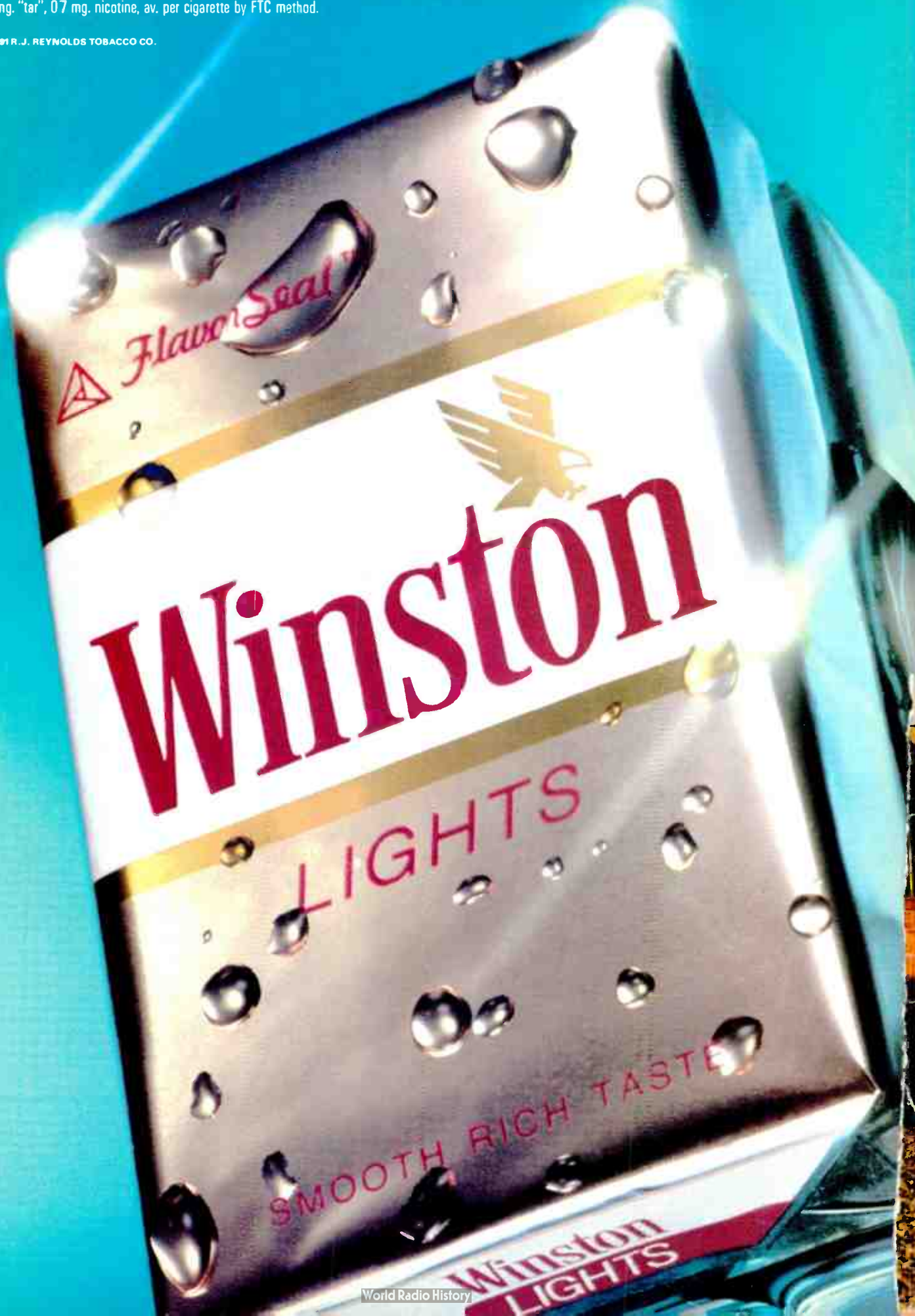
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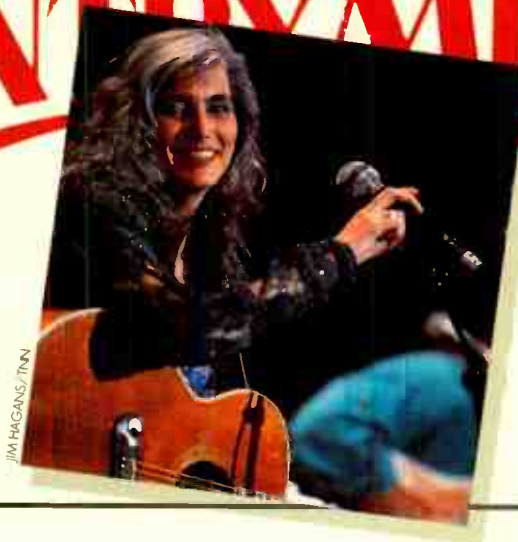
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COUNTRY MUSIC™



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Alan Jackson
Don't Rock the Jukebox
Arista ARCD-8681

One thing is clear from the first 30 seconds of Alan Jackson's sequel to his phenomenally successful debut album, *Here In the Real World*: He's not playing to the VH-1 crowd. VH-1, if you haven't noticed, is the cable TV music video channel aimed at thirtysomething yuppies craving their generation's equivalent of Glenn Miller or Lawrence Welk. It usually features a bunch of ex-rockers, lounge singers and balladeers from the 60's and 70's, all far less raucous than the acts you'd see on MTV, the contemporary music video channel.

The title track—written by Jackson, producer Keith Stegall and Roger Murrah—says it all: *Don't rock the jukebox/I wanna hear George Jones/My heart ain't ready/For the Rolling Stones*. Granted, the Stones are hardly on the cutting edge of rock anymore, but the point is made nonetheless. Fact is, Alan's kind of indulging a George Jones fixation throughout the record. "Just Playin' Possum" (George's longtime nickname) is laden with Jonesisms—and George himself, barely audible, is singing with Jackson on the chorus and at the song's end.

What's more, the influence of Jones pervades much of the material here, not in the sense that Jackson is imitating him; it's more like he's trying to capture the Jones spirit in his own way. The ten songs here reveal a consistency in both Jackson's voice and Scott Hendricks' and Keith Stegall's production. Plus the overall quality of the material (much of which Jackson had a hand in



writing) is stronger than ever.

The exquisite this-is-it, stay-or-split ballad, "That's All I Need to Know," by Jackson and Jim McBride is beautifully evocative and as good a ballad as he's recorded. The ingenuity of "Dallas," a Jackson-Stegall collaboration using locations to chronicle a broken marriage, is impressive, in part because the locations aren't used in an overly cute or clever way.

It's also fair to say that if Jackson hung his hat on nothing else but fiddle/steel honky tonk, he would be great. But he even goes a few steps further with "Midnight in Montgomery," written by Jackson and Don Sampson. This is one awesome performance, laden with dark-hued imagery and the ghost of a certain legend who's buried there (Hank Sr.). It's a dramatic and different approach to a Hank tribute that doesn't fall into the usual formulas others have used (such as trying to imitate the

sound of Hank's records or his voice). The arrangement conjures up mystery, and, overall, the song gives the entire album a different dimension. I don't care what the hit singles are; this number is every bit as good a performance as Jackson has done.

Even shopworn ideas like the love-as-illness metaphor of the Jackson-Carson Chamberlain number, "Love's Got a Hold on You"—call the doctor, describe the symptoms and find out you're in love—manage to at least be entertaining. Also, I can't believe that until now, no one wrote a song titled "Walkin' the Floor Over Me," but Jackson and Don Sampson have, and loaded it with wit and style. (See the Jann Browne review for another take-off on E.T.'s song).

There's even a pretty respectable ballad called "From a Distance." Don't worry, it's not the one everyone including Kathy Mattea has recorded, but a simple ballad Jackson co-

wrote with Randy Travis, who's shown ample promise himself as a writer on his own albums. "Working Class Hero" heralds the same guy Merle Haggard chronicled 20 years ago in his "Workin' Man Blues," now older, having been through it all and approaching retirement. Jackson deserves credit for remembering that particular generation, now up in years. In fact, he's the only singer I can think of who has done so recently.

If you recall, I had a lot of nice things to say about *Here In the Real World* when it appeared last year. I still feel the way I did then, but with *Don't Rock the Jukebox* Jackson has matured, setting a standard many of his contemporaries could emulate and a few of the old hands who've been off their game recently ought to remember. —RICH KIENZLE

Jann Browne
It Only Hurts When I Laugh
Curb D2-77451

Like Alan Jackson, Jann Browne has just released her second album, one that is important in terms of establishing whether the first one was a fluke or not. It wasn't, but first a suggestion. Don't compare Browne to Emmylou Harris as some have. Sure, there are a few similarities. Emmylou sang on Browne's first album which, like this one, was produced by Steve Fishell, former steel guitarist in Emmylou's Hot Band. And Fishell brought in two other Hot Band alumni for this album, guitarist Albert Lee and pianist Glenn D. Hardin, so in places the sound can't help but be similar.

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Record Reviews

Emmylou comparisons don't work, however, is that Browne's vocal style is clearly her own. Jann demonstrates both push and drive, while Emmylou's strength as a vocalist is based on a delivery that's both understated and laid back. Consider the fact that Browne's musical heroes include belters and snarlers like Rose Maddox and Wanda Jackson, and it all makes sense. All comparisons aside, Browne fits seamlessly with the studio sound Fishell has created.

And she lets loose in all the right places. "It Only Hurts When I Laugh," a collaboration from Kostas and Marty Stuart, fairly oozes vintage, late 50's, Bakersfield sound, with Fishell himself conjuring up high-pitched licks that can only be called Ralph Mooneyisms. Ralph Mooney, Waylon Jennings' longtime steel player, played on many classic Bakersfield sides by Buck Owens, Wynn Stewart and others in the 50's and 60's. Browne also makes short work of "Blue Heart in Memphis" and the bluegrass "Who's Gonna Be Your Next Love," both of which she co-wrote with Pat Gallagher.

It was also pure class to dedicate her stops-out version of "My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You" (a Number One hit for Ray Price in 1957) to the late Webb Pierce, who recorded it on an album she heard years ago. The delightfully sarcastic "I Don't Do Floors" is yet another variant on "Walkin' the Floor Over You" (see the Alan Jackson review for a similar song).

The Jim Lauderdale-John Leventhal tune, "Where the Sidewalk Ends," is simple and snarling and another measure of Lauderdale's talents. Browne kicks things along with a punchy vocal complemented by hot guitar from Duane Eddy, who, more than 30 years ago, developed the twangy sound featured on so many contemporary Nashville records. Hearing him swap choruses with Telecaster mas-

ter Albert Lee on the solo break is a treat in itself.

Ballads also turn out to be a stronger area for Browne than you might expect. Her performance of "I Knew Enough to Fall in Love With You" shows her keeping her head, restraining herself and coming up with a perfect performance. I've never been fond of the dry, detached intellect in Nanci Griffith's songs, which always reminded me of the stuff sung around college coffee houses (as opposed to honky tonks), but Browne imbues Griffith's "I Wish It Would Rain" with more realism and grit than Griffith herself could ever manage.

And her rendition of the exquisite John Hiatt-Jimmy Tittle ballad, "Where Nobody Knows My Name," does her talents more than justice. Though known mainly in the pop field, Hiatt, whose compositions combine a 90's perspective with country simplicity, has a great ballad that's been given a classy but not pretentious arrangement. It's one of those performances that could easily cross over to pop success but wasn't engineered to. And that's the best type of crossover.

Browne's debut was inspirational. Her follow-up is even more so. What more could anyone, even a skeptic like me, ask for? A third one as good or better than this.

—RICH KIENZLE

Travis Tritt
It's All About to Change
Warner Bros. 9-26589-4

When Travis Tritt first popped out of the woodwork a couple of years back with the hit single, "Country Club," some people—and Yours Truly was one of them—didn't take him all that seriously. "Country Club" was, after all, an amusing but essentially hokey and artless "one shot" novelty item: the kind of low-brow, bad-pun-intended ditty that some of us *thought* we didn't like.... That is, until we caught ourselves singing it in the shower.

Like it or not, "Country Club" sure didn't seem like the kind of record you could hang a recording career on. Nor did it even begin to hint at the real dimensions of Travis Tritt's musical potential—a potential that became apparent on his

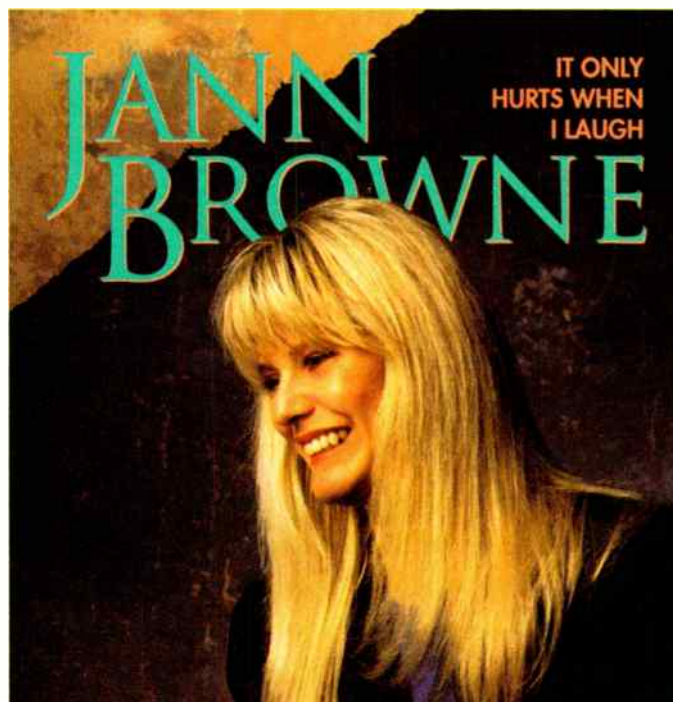
debut album of the same name and that comes several giant steps nearer to fruition on *It's All About to Change*, his second and newest.

From the start, the most refreshing thing about Tritt has been his willingness to let it all hang out: to imbue his music with a refreshingly aggressive and unapologetic Southern rock raunchiness, drawling humor, squinty-eyed machismo and graphic honesty. In this age of near-terminal, clean-cut conformity (to wit: Clint Black's relentless, all-American image and pie-eating, aw-shucks smile; George Strait's immaculately pressed white shirts and equally squeaky-clean image; and Garth Brooks' sensitive-new-age-guy sincerity), Tritt's attitudes rub stridently—and delightfully—against the grain.

In that sense, Tritt has rather self-consciously positioned himself as a next-generation torch carrier for rough and rowdy 70's and 80's anti-establishment heroes like Waylon and Willie and Hank Jr., all of whom have now slipped into or close to middle age, past their musical primes.

Tritt, above all else, is not one to pull punches, musically or otherwise. And he's not timid about wearing his Southern rock-boogie influences on his sleeve. You can hear them loud and clear, for instance, on "Bible Belt." One of several fine Tritt originals here, this cut features back-up from the vintage 70's roots rock band, Little Feat, and actually has an oddly staid and self-righteous lyrical message lurking beneath its wailing guitars and raunchy vocal syncopations.

"Homesick," written by Buddy Buie and J.R. Cobb, even goes a step or two further. It's about a good ol' boy who's pining away for the glory days of Woodstock, Jimi Hendrix, black light posters, psychedelic rock and recreational drugs. "Homesick" even features some screaming, Hendrix-style, acid rock guitar riffs by Jack Holder, as well as riveting backup guitar work



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Record Reviews



from studio aces Richard Bennett, Billy Walker Jr., Reggie Young and Larry Byrom, all of whom can also be heard elsewhere on *It's All About to Change*. At one point in "Homesick," Travis growls out the rhetorical challenge: *Where were you in sixty-nine/Smokin' dope and drinkin' wine/Just an outlaw....*

When Tritt turns his formidable gifts as a writer and singer to the topic of love, the results can be just as gritty and hard-hitting. He doesn't shy away from the cruel, vindictive and sadistic things that a man and a woman can put each other through after the bliss of true love has degenerated into betrayal, treachery and rejection.

"Nothing Short of Dying," an achingly soulful ballad that Tritt also wrote all by his lonesome, recalls the "nights of hell" after a lover walks out on you. "Here's a Quarter (Call Someone Who Cares)" and the title tune (two more powerhouse Tritt originals) are the declarations of a bitter man who's been lied to, stood up, manipulated and misled one too many times by a bad woman.

But not everything on *It's All About to Change* is so painfully introspective. The album kicks off with a swaggering honky-tonker called "The Whiskey Ain't Workin'" (written by Ronny Seiafe and Marty Stuart), which features

Marty Stuart on guest vocals and guitar. Tritt puts a similarly defiant and nonchalant spin on his version of Jimmy Skinner's "Don't Give Your Heart to a Rambler."

In short, *It's All About to Change* is exciting, gutsy, irreverent and occasionally (at least by commercial country's current standards) almost R-rated in its energy level and lyric directness. And with giants of the industry like Randy Travis currently squandering their talents on silly, pandering songs like "A Thousand Pints of Lite" (or was that "Points of Light"?), it's great to see a young, unreconstructed, long-haired rebel like Travis Tritt coming on strong.

—BOB ALLEN

Mark Collie
Born and Raised in Black and White
MCA 10321

Last year, ample amounts of critical praise were heaped on Mark Collie following the release of his debut album, *Hardin County Line*. Few deserved it more. Not one of the Double-H (Hat-Hunk) ranch gang, Collie had a musical vision that was rougher edged than many others and distinctly different from other traditionalists. The rockabilly edge was just a bit harder, the lyrics a bit more complex, the

voice less formal and more nasal. Sure, his reference points drifted back to the 1950's, yet his perspective was modern and laden with immediacy.

Collie hasn't fallen into the current vogue of singing a couple of hillbilly songs for the fans, then moving into sensitive, pop-folkie ballads for the ex-flower children that some in Nashville would like to lure into buying country records. His music is as gutsy and unpolished as it comes, and his knack for writing songs (and selecting good ones by other composers) serves him well.

On his second album, Collie continues blazing his own individualistic path with a stunning fusion of raunchy, hard-edged country and snappy honky tonk, equal to and often superior to *Hardin County*. As producers, Tony Brown and Doug Johnson seem up to the task of whatever Collie wants to do.

The rakish "When the Sun Goes Down," written by Collie and Marty Stuart, shows him able to handle straight-up honky tonk on a par with George, Clint 'n' Garth. His understated voice shines on Gene Levine and Pat Alger's world-weary workingman's ballad, "Calloused Hands," which captures the essence of hard work without any excess of melodrama. The title cut, "Born and Raised in Black and White," a Don Cook/Barlow Jarvis number, works as a mo-

reality play in miniature: two brothers, one a condemned killer, the other a straight arrow. The Highwaymen included this song on their *Highwayman II* album. Collie even breathes life into one of his favorite movie songs, "Ballad of Thunder Road," the theme from the 1958 cult film about moonshiners that starred Robert Mitchum (the song's co-writer). It's not easy to make some songs work outside the context of the movie in which they were featured, but Collie more than succeeds with his performance. In lesser hands Collie's own "Lucky Dog" would be stupid. The endearing goofiness of his performance saves it.

Without question, particularly in the wake of all the Desert Storm flag waving, Collie's own composition, "Johnny Was a Rebel," stands the best chance of stirring controversy. When one first hears the lyrics, it sounds like yet another welcome-home-Vietnam-Vet song of the sort many artists have sung over the past several years. Then come the twists and turns that reveal Johnny didn't die overseas, but at home, killed by the authorities while protesting a war. It takes one back to the days in the late 60's when one talented songwriter was practically run out of Nashville for expressing such thoughts. I doubt Collie will suffer that fate, if for no other reason than that Nashville today is more open-minded.

There's no question that Collie is blazing new trails. Unlike Steve Earle, with whom he's sometimes incorrectly compared, he seems satisfied to remain in the country context. With an outstanding studio backup group dominated by legendary Fender Telecaster maven James Burton (formerly with Elvis, Rick Nelson and Jerry Lee Lewis), Collie has created a major work and one of 1991's genuine masterpieces. It will endure long after the work of many of his peers is forgotten.

—RICH KIENZLE

Record Reviews



**Willie Nelson and
Waylon Jennings**
Clean Shirt
Epic 0604

Clean Shirt, the latest in a long line of Waylon & Willie duet albums, is a good-natured lark: an unpretentious and light-hearted "buddy" album more reminiscent of "Moe & Joe" (a long-forgotten, good ol' boy, beer-drinkin' duet effort from Moe Bandy and Joe Stampley) or even Abbott & Costello in cowboy hats than it is of more serious musical tributes to male bonding like, say, The Highwaymen, or even Jennings' and Nelson's earliest and best duet records.

It's a heartwarming, often humorous and occasionally even moving triumph of style over substance. Thematically, it's like an almost indecent, nostalgia-ridden reunion in the red light district by two former honky tonk low-lifers who vaguely lament the fact that they've turned semi-respectable in their "mature" years.

In that sense, it has the feel of a Civil War reunion as we listen and laugh while these two gray-bearded, arthritic outlaws reminisce and boast about the long-gone wild times when they could not only jump higher but stay in the air, and the saddle, a lot longer.

Most of the songs on *Clean Shirt* sound as if they were specifically written for this duet project (which has been on the planning board since Jennings label-hopped from MCA and joined Nelson over at CBS a while back). Jennings shares co-writing credits on a half dozen of the songs. But most of the actual elbow grease of composition seems to have been supplied by a pair of Jennings' favorite veteran Nashville tunesmiths: Troy Seals is co-writer on seven of the ten cuts, Max D. Barnes had a hand on five. No wonder the songs, at least thematically, sound so much alike.

The mariachi-flavored title tune, as well as other selections like "Old Age and Treachery," "The Makin's of a Song," "The Good Old Nights," "Two Old Sidewinders" and "I Could Write a Book About You," is about two old coots lamenting and laughing about all the years, women, money, whiskey and good times gone by. A few selections—like "Tryin' to Outrun the Wind" and "Put Me on a Train to Texas"—are tinged with genuine sadness and regret. "Tryin' to Outrun the Wind," written by Seals, Barnes and Jennings, is one of the truly moving songs on here.

The most redeeming thing about *Clean Shirt* is its casual, light-hearted sense of scale. There's nothing over-reaching, deadly serious or, for that mat-

ter, particularly memorable about this record. It's certainly no masterpiece; and when stacked against some of the earlier Waylon/Willie collaborations, it's downright forgettable.

But, by God, these two old coots *do* seem to be having a good time here. And that, in and of itself, proves infectious, and makes for some undeniable fun listening.

— BOB ALLEN

Ricky Van Shelton
Backroads
Epic 46855

This one isn't gonna be fun, folks.

Ricky's first two albums were masterpieces. Then came last year's *RVS III*, and something was missing, even given the masterful "Statue of a Fool." Ricky and producer Steve Buckingham were beginning to rely more on formulas and less on the kind of magic the first two albums projected. I mean, did we *really* need another version of "Oh, Pretty Woman"?

I guess you have to see it from Ricky's side. He's had a lot of adjusting to do over the past several years. And he has stayed true to the music that made him without jumping off onto those half-cocked "experiments" that occasionally derail artists. The trouble is, falling into a formula that sounds like

everyone phoned in their parts is no better. And though not an utter disaster, *Backroads* goes further in eroding the edge that made songs like "Crime of Passion" or even "Hole in My Pocket" so compelling. The emotion and urgency that came through on the first two albums is just spotty here.

Indeed, this time he's more effective on ballads. Both "After the Lights Go Out" and "Some Things Are Better Left Alone" are arresting performances, and the Wayne Kemp-Mack Vickery ballad, "Who'll Turn Out the Lights," is better still. Ricky and Dolly sing extraordinarily well on "Rockin' Years." It's the finest duet with a male singer she's done since her days with Porter nearly 20 years ago, and that's including her pop efforts.

It's the uptempo songs that fall flat. Only the bluegrassy "Oh, Heart of Mine" seems to have any substance, as a song and as a performance. The big hit, "I Am a Simple Man," doesn't sound all that different from anything he's done before, but if you listen closer, you'll find a weak song, written around a catchy phrase. Such fluff isn't worthy of Shelton or Buckingham.

Any male superstar today who qualifies as a "hunk" (and Ricky does) does a certain amount of posturing, concentrating less on singing and more on exciting the fans. Now, don't get me wrong—in concerts this is expected. Any great entertainer will alternate great singing with whipping up the audience. But on records, this doesn't work nearly as well. The worst example here is "Call Me Up," a number musically cloned from "Crime of Passion" that undoubtedly sounds great in concert in front of thousands of screaming fans. Here, though, stripped of that excitement, it means very little. The same thing applies to "Backroads," an example of hillbilly boogie at its dullest.

Despite the fine ballads, the sad fact is that *Backroads* reveals Shelton and Buckingham

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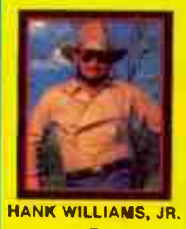
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Record Reviews

way off their form. The music, for all intents and purposes, hasn't changed, but what was once full of terrific songs is fast becoming an empty, glossy shell. And given the time it takes them to make their albums, there's really no excuse.

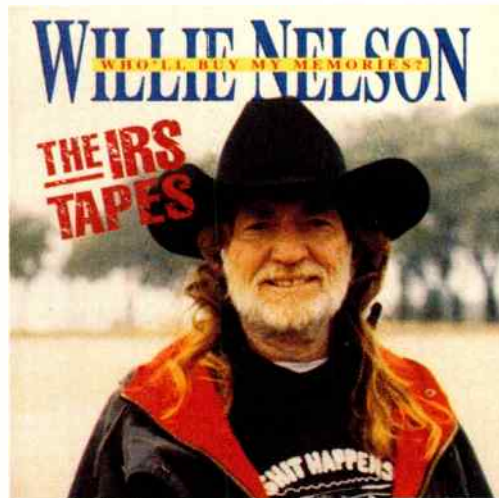
I told you this wasn't gonna be fun. As a fan from *Wild-Eyed Dream* on, I hate saying it, but I hope Ricky and Buckingham see the light—soon. —RICH KIENZLE

Trisha Yearwood *Trisha Yearwood* MCA 10297

Trisha Yearwood, who recently made an impressive chart debut with "She's in Love With the Boy," a spunky hit about true love and the age-old conflict it can cause between generations, has now hit the scene with an equally impressive debut album entitled simply *Trisha Yearwood*. Yearwood emerges at a time when competition has never been keener (particularly for women singers, who almost always take a back seat, popularity-wise and sales-wise, to the Garth Brooks, Clint Blacks and Alan Jacksons of the world). Nevertheless she proves herself to be a remarkable and versatile singer who is quite up to the challenge.

Production on *Trisha Yearwood* is by Garth Fundis, one of Nashville's most tasteful and gifted producers. In the past, Fundis has made memorable records with Don Williams, *The New Grass Revival* and the late Keith Whitley, among others. (He produced Whitley's final two classic studio albums.) His talents and good taste are no less in focus on this project.

The song choices on Yearwood's first album are nearly flawless. So, as a matter of fact, is her singing. She has quite an opportunity here to show what she can do, as she skirts several different



musical styles.

Stylistically speaking, Yearwood is no Patty Loveless; nor is she a Kelly Willis. (Her voice is not nearly as powerful as Willis', but she can and does evoke a similar gutsiness on cuts like "She's in Love With the Boy" and "That's What I Like About You.") Suffice it to say that she's neither a straight-ahead, neo-traditionalist singer, nor a full-tilt, country blues-boogier. She seems most at home with and tends to gravitate most often toward the kind of cool, sultry, pop-tinged love ballads that Reba McEntire has been making such a splash with lately.

A real stand-out cut and a good indication of just where Yearwood, musically speaking, is coming from is the lovely duet with Garth Brooks, "Like We Never Had a Broken Heart," which was also written by Brooks and veteran Nashville singer/songwriter Pat Alger. Brooks and Yearwood are managed by the same outfit, which is why Brooks conveniently pops up here as both guest vocalist and songwriter.

Yearwood's stylistic center of gravity is likewise apparent on the regretful but stoically upbeat love lament, "Fools Like Me," written by Kostas and Hal Ketchum. This is the kind of song that Crystal Gayle might have made into a hit if she had a little more earthiness and soul.

When Yearwood ventures

further afield—for instance into the newgrass vein on Carl Jackson's and Larry Cordle's "Lonesome Dove" (which features Vince Gill on guest vocals and newgrass masters Stuart Duncan and Jerry Douglas on fiddle and dobro, respectively)—the results are affecting, but not quite as convincing. Fortunately, Yearwood stays within her range often enough to make *Trisha Yearwood* a worthy debut. The album marks the emergence of yet another vital and gifted singer into Nashville's already delightfully crowded "new artist" sweepstakes.

—BOB ALLEN

Willie Nelson *Who'll Buy My Memories* a.k.a. *The IRS Tapes* Sony A22323

Back when Willie Nelson's tax problems were first beginning to surface in the newspapers, someone snidely suggested that the Midwestern farmers, for whom Nelson's done so much via FarmAid, ought to get together and sponsor a "First Annual Willie Nelson Benefit Tractor Pull." Now that the true magnitude of ol' Willie's tax bill has come to light (a cool \$16 million), Nelson, in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service, has hit upon a scheme for repayment that is

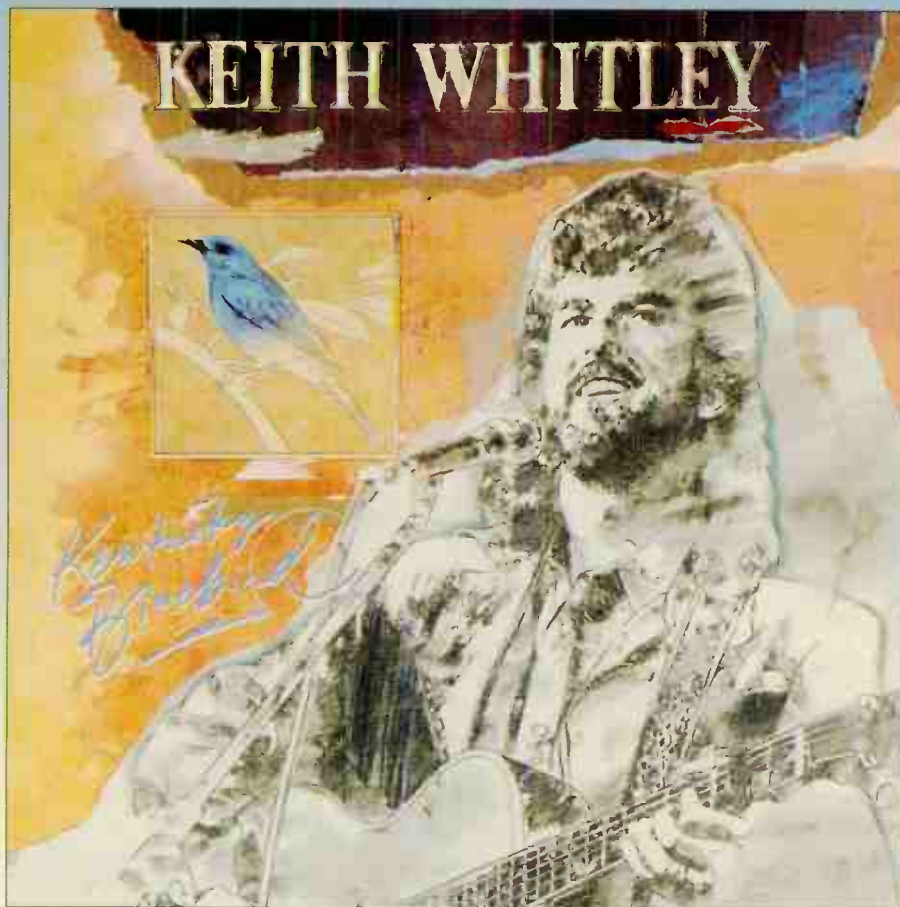
not much less audacious.

This collection of 25 vintage Nelson recordings (more than an hour's worth of music), which were originally seized by the IRS along with most of Nelson's other tangible assets, is being telemarketed (1-800-652-3400) for \$19.95. No doubt, you've already seen the advertisements if you've been watching *The Nashville Network* or any of the other country music-oriented cable TV programs lately.

The press release that accompanied my review copy of *The IRS Tapes* explains Nelson's predicament—somewhat sadly, I thought—and clarifies the forlorn-sounding subtitle, "Who'll Buy My Memories" (actually the title of an old Nelson original): "For a man with no assets left to seize, he only has his songs and his memories left to trade."

None of the actual recordings on *Who'll Buy My Memories* has been commercially released before, although practically all of the songs have appeared in fuller studio versions at one point or another in Willie's career. Evidently Nelson made these recordings over a period of several years in his own Texas studio, with his trusty gut string guitar as his only instrumental accompaniment. Maybe he had hoped to release them under more auspicious circumstances; maybe making them was just his way of getting back in

Keith Whitley



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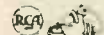
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Record Reviews

touch with his own musical past. Whatever the reason, his stark acoustic versions of these songs—most all of which are drawn from the first 15 years or so of his career—are soulful, introspective and powerful. And, as such, they stand on their own.

Some of these songs—"Yesterday's Wine," "What Can You Do to Me Now," "Opportunity to Cry" and others—are familiar Nelson classics that have popped up time and time again on previous Nelson studio albums, reissues or "best-of" anthologies. Others—like "Home Motel" and "Lonely Little Mansion"—are more obscure Nelson chestnuts that first saw the light of day on his earliest 1960's releases on the Liberty label. Some—like "Wake Me When It's Over"—are drawn from a later stage of his career, the 1970's. A few—like the sad and morbid "Jimmy's Road"—don't seem to have popped up anywhere before.

Regardless of release date, most all of these 25 Nelson originals come from his heyday as a writer, from the 1960's and into the mid-70's (after that his songwriting tapered off drastically in both quantity and inspiration). Reinterpreting them years later, he does them more than justice with his husky, wonderfully nuanced and seasoned voice and his intricate, hauntingly atmospheric, finger-picked guitar figures. In the process, Nelson reminds us what a distinctive and philosophical songwriter he once was, and how he drew so freely from country, as well as from pop, folk and even blues and jazz to meld his own peculiarly original style. If any of the current platinum-selling rages of the age manage to amass even half the vast song and record catalogue that Nelson has over the last 30-odd years, they'll be lucky indeed.

Given the power of Nelson's solo performances, and given the relative obscurity of the material, *The IRS Tapes* stand as a worthy Willie Nelson an-

thology—the irregular conditions of their issuance notwithstanding.

I know, I know: this whole thing does smack of gimcrackery and desperation. And one could understandably take the position of, "Well, we pay *our* taxes; why didn't he pay *his*?" On the other hand, Nelson has been such a towering influence and such an immense contributor to the artistry, spirit and advancement of modern country music that I, for one, certainly wouldn't mind making a small gesture toward his tax bail-out. Particularly when, in the case of *Who'll Buy My Memories*, it's money well spent.

—BOB ALLEN

Charlie Daniels *Renegade* Epic EK 46835

For my money, The Charlie Daniels Band's best album in recent years was 1988's *Homesick Heroes*. On that album, the band's elements of country, Southern rock, bluegrass and boogie all came together to form that swampy, custom-blend CDB sound in a way that they hadn't in a long while. It was all there—hot musicianship and a great mix of songs, from fiddle tunes to train songs to good-time/humorous/real-life/rockin' songs. Last year's *Simple Man* continued that trend. It was almost as good an album, with several tracks worth getting excited over.

Renegade, however, provides very little in the excitement department. It's hard to believe this lightweight album came from the same group that gave us classics like "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" and "The South's Gonna Do It Again," high-octane partying songs like "Drinkin' My Baby Goodbye" and detailed, creative story songs like "Midnight Train" and "The Legend of Wooley Swamp."

Oh, the band's playing is still fine, the problem is *what* they're playing. The songs, for

Record Reviews



the most part, are so dull and predictable and cover so much of the same ground Charlie's covered in the past, that you get a sense of having heard it all before (and in two cases, you may have). Producer James Stroud is not off the hook either—on some cuts, production falls as short of the mark as the songs themselves. If he'd let the boys cut loose a little more, they might've overcome the mediocre material.

But even that probably wouldn't have helped the title track or "Twang Factor." Both are dull, mid-tempo rockers wherein Charlie discusses his background and his likes and dislikes. You've heard him do this all before, and do it much better than he has here (on "A Few More Rednecks" from *Simple Man*, for instance).

Then there's "Talk to Me Fiddle," this album's take on a story song/fiddle tune. It's a jaunt through the life of a well-travelled fiddle, from its origins in Europe through various hands in the U.S. An interesting idea, but it doesn't hold a candle to Charlie's past efforts at either type of song. And while Charlie's fiddling is usually red hot, here it's almost subdued—the solos aren't long enough, and they don't stand out in the mix.

"Fathers and Sons," a song about that sometimes rocky relationship, also loses it in production—could have been a good song, but it comes across as dull and flat. Likewise for "What My Baby Sees in Me." If it were a little livelier, it would have been a winner.

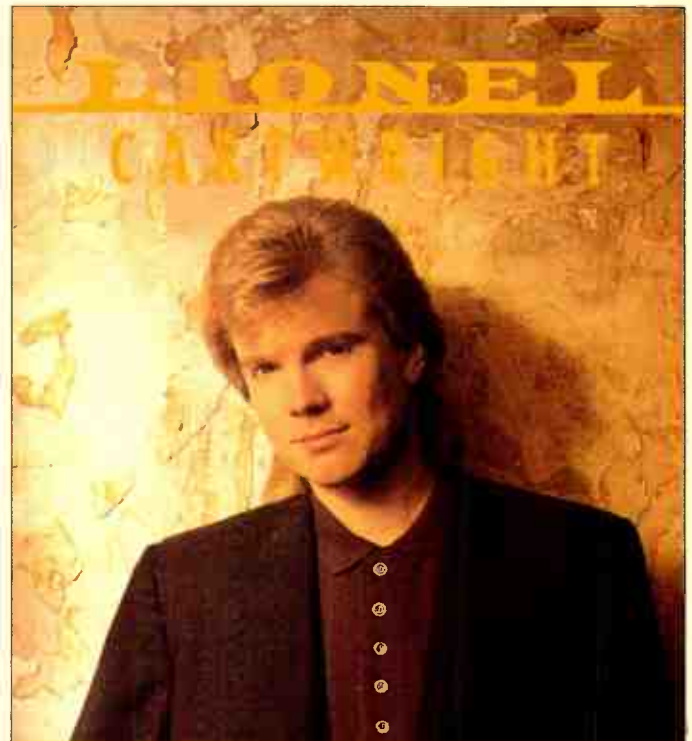
But *Renegade* is not without its high points. There are three tracks that stand out. How-

ever, two of them are actually re-releases (which Epic makes no mention of anywhere on the CD packaging). "Willie Jones," the best cut here, is a new version of a bluegrass-Southern rocker that shows Daniels at his best. It's true to Daniels' original, which was first released on his 1975 album, *Nightrider*. The other re-release is "Little Folks," a tender ballad about children growing up too quickly: *Little folks slip through our hands/ Like so many grains of sand/ Best enjoy them while you can/ So soon they'll fly away.* Nothing truly original, but the song is so well done, and the sentiment so real, that it's hard not to like. It was first released on Daniels' excellent 1990 Christmas album, *Christmas Time Down South*, and appears to be the identical recording.

The other cut that makes the grade is the album's first single, "Honky Tonk Life." This tongue-in-cheek look at the not-so-joyful side of "living the honky tonk life" is an uptempo, CDB original. Daniels' delivery is right on the money, and so is the band's playing. Once more, repetition creeps in, though this time I think Daniels meant it as a little in-joke for long-time fans—he re-uses a few lyrics from older songs, quite creatively. ("The Dew Drop Inn," for instance. And how many other artists could work the phrase, "higher than a Chinese kite," into more than one song?) Apparently, this subtle humor was lost on listeners as the single barely made a dent in the right-hand side of the charts.

I can't help being disappointed in this album—Charlie seemed to be back on track these past few years, and he's certainly capable of much better. As is Stroud, who also produced the fine CDB albums mentioned at the beginning of this review. I'm hoping that *Renegade* is a fluke, and that Charlie hasn't run out of things to say, or ways to say them, for that would be a real shame.

—GEORGE FLETCHER



Hello again,

Remember me, I'm the guy whose name reminds you of trains or "BONANZA"? It seems like such a long time since my last single that I wanted to drop you a line. I've been in the studio a lot over the last several months, and we've completed what I feel is my best album yet, thanks to MCA allowing me to take my time. The album has been long hours, hard work, and an absolute blast working with some really talented people.

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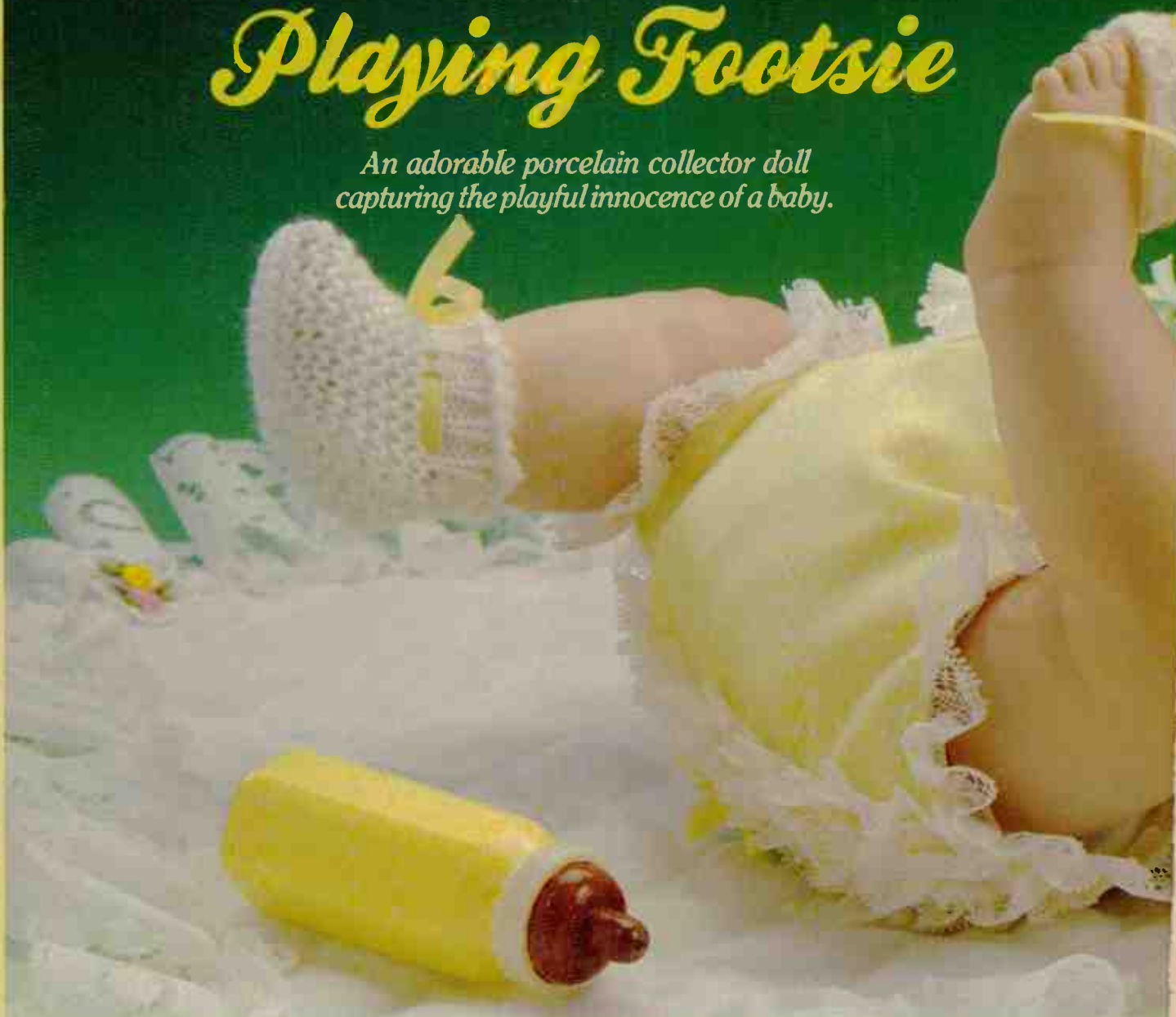
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By Michael Bane

The father of bluegrass music needs no introduction. Bill Monroe has been a powerful presence in country music for more than half a century. He recently recorded another gospel album, *Cryin' Holy Unto the Lord*, and worked with Emmylou Harris on her most recent album, recorded at the old Ryman Auditorium. This interview took place at his farm outside Nashville just days before he went into the hospital for heart surgery. As we went to press, he was recovering nicely. Hopefully, he'll be back on the road soon.

1 Tell us a little about the gospel album.

Well, there's not much to tell, except that I'm real proud of it. There are wonderful songs on it, like "Cryin' Holy Unto the Lord." It's not our first gospel album—over the years we've done a few. But I am proud of it.

2 What about working with Emmylou...

Isn't she a nice lady? She's going to play a show with us on September 13. That's my birthday, and I'm really looking forward to that show.

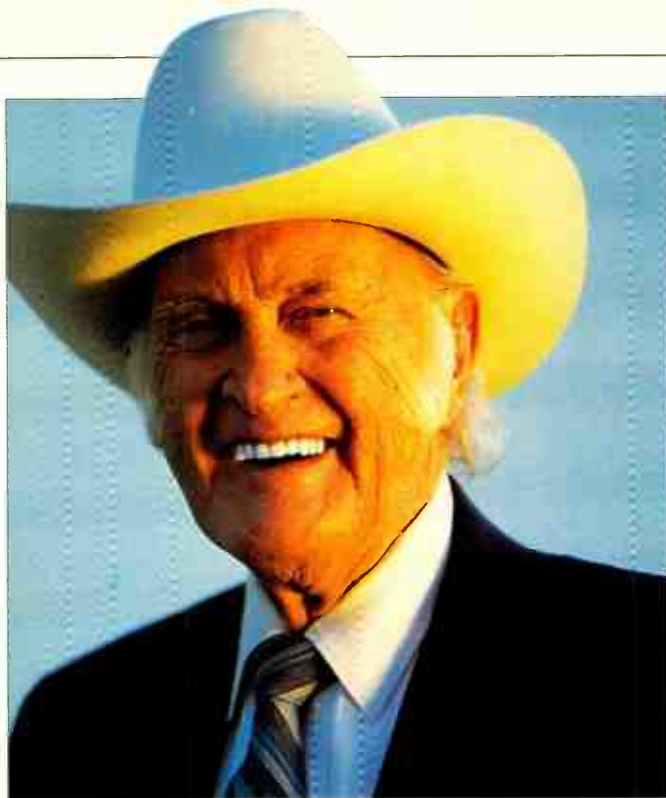
3 So how old will you be? I'll be 80 years old.

4 And you're still on the road? I work for a living.

5 What was it like recording at the Ryman Auditorium after all these years? You know, old fun memories just kept coming back to me, all those years. I just love the Ryman—there's a wonderful sound there. Almost like singing in a church. But there's still a world of talent at the new Opry.

6 So who are you listening to that you like a lot?

Well, Bill Monroe still sings better than anybody else (laughter)! He's taken care of his voice. But there are a lot of good bluegrass and country singers out there. I still love Dolly and Emmylou, and



20 Questions with **BILL MONROE**

Jeannie C. Riley has always been a favorite.

7 Who else rings a special bell?

Barbara Mandrell. You know, she's a pretty good picker.

8 How are things off the road, out at the farm?

Well, Michael, this year's the hottest year I can remember. You know, I'm way back in the hills—can't hear any city noise at all. And it's still a good place to fox hunt.

9 You're still fox hunting hot and heavy?

I've got about 15 or 18 foxhounds.

10 That many?

Yes, sir. And I can blow that old foxhorn, too.

11 Blow the old foxhorn?

Yep. That's the secret to fox hunting. When you blow the foxhorn, the dogs know you're going to turn them loose to hunt. Then, when they're out hunting, and they hear the horn, they know where you are. They can find their way back.

12 Are you still running a lot of cattle out there?

Nope. I sold most of the cattle this year. Feed is so high that you just can't make any money off them. Plus, we've had our share of fence trouble, and it just wasn't worth it.

13 How about that old bull you used to ride around the farm?

Bobo the Bull. He was one fine bull. I kept him here until he

died a few years back, and we buried him right on the farm.

14 Are you still doing any songwriting?

Yes, but you know, I've been writing a lot of instrumentals. I don't know why, but I do like a good fiddle or mandolin number. I just enjoy sitting down to write that kind of music.

15 After all these years, what do you think about bluegrass music now?

It's still the greatest music in the world, and it belongs to America. The last three Presidents have known that—I've played for all three of them.

16 That must be an incredible experience...

It gives me a feeling that will never leave me, Michael. People all over the world listen to bluegrass, and they know it has come from me. I feel very proud. People all over the world are just crazy about bluegrass music.

17 How much are you on the road, now that your 80th birthday is coming up?

Well, we try to do 150 to 200 dates a year. Just played Chattanooga last week, and it was a powerful crowd.

18 Do you ever see a day when Bill Monroe might go off the road?

I don't just see that yet. That's what the touring does for me, keeps me young.

19 How about the Opry?

Well, I've been on the Opry 52 years, and I still love playing there. They always said if I ever left the Opry, I'd have to fire myself, since I was going to be there forever!

20 You've got to have heard "Uncle Pen" a million times or more. You've got to have played it a million times. What do you think about, every time you hear it?

You know, I still think of my Uncle Pen and what a great uncle he was. In 1932 he passed away, but I'd already left home to work. They play that song all over the world, and I think he'd be proud.

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OUTLAWS AT IT AGAIN

Teaming up once again, **Waylon Jennings** and **Willie Nelson** have a new duet album, *Clean Shirt*. Produced by **Bob Montgomery**, the album contains 10 songs written by or for the boys which chronicle their longstanding friendship. "If I Can Find a Clean Shirt," is the first single/video from the album. It combines mariachi horns and Tex-Mex rhythms. The action takes place in a Mexican cantina where the two get involved in a couple of shady situations. Watch for it on your local cable show. Also watch for a tour which should be on the way soon.

MINNIE PEARL DOING WELL AFTER STROKE

The queen of country comedy, **Minnie Pearl**, suffered a stroke early this summer. The 78-year old comedienne fell in the home she shares with her husband **Henry Cannon**. Fortunately, she never lost consciousness, and was able to talk. Doctors say her prognosis is good and they think she's going to have a good recovery. They hope and pray that she will be back on the stage soon. All of us at *Country Music Magazine* wish the same.

GENE WATSON THE GREAT

Nashville Night Life, formerly co-owned by **Willie Nelson**, is a club on Music Valley Drive near Opryland. My pal, *The Tennessean's* Robert K. Oermann, invited me to go see Gene Watson perform there. What a great song stylist this man is. As he knocked out song after song with the same fervor as on his recordings, I could not help but wonder where all these 30-day wonders called stars come from, and why Gene Watson isn't continually at the chart's top. Listening to him perform songs like "Farewell Party," "14 Carat Mind" and "Love in the Hot Afternoon," I sat amazed at the quality of the man's vocals. I wish I knew what to do to put Gene where his talent deserves to be. Nobody out-sings this man. You fans who love great vocals and great songs, you owe it to yourself to go see Gene Watson when he is in your area. I promise you will get a heart filled with music. He is truly Gene Watson, the great.



The boys get into some sticky situations during their trip to the cantina.

THANKS, MARLBORO

I always like to thank corporate sponsors. This time I'd like to thank Marlboro for sponsoring country shows once again this season. Artists performing for Marlboro include **Marty Stuart**, **Matraca Berg**, **Chet Atkins**, **Steve Wariner**, **Delbert McClinton**, **Alan Jackson**, **Pam Tillis**, **Guy Clark** and others. I know you fans will just get down with stars of this caliber.

HELPING FARMERS HELP THEMSELVES

Okies **Garth Brooks**, **Vince Gill**, **Restless Heart** and others went home to Tulsa and performed at F.A.R.M. Festival '91. F.A.R.M. (Farmers at Risk Matter) is a non-profit organization to benefit stressed farmers. It seems the suicide rate is 42 per 100,000 for farmers compared to 15 per 100,000 for the general public. Ain't it a crying shame that the backbone of this nation, those who literally provide us with food, are in such a stressed-out state that they're taking themselves out? Why, in my life I can recall a time when farmers were the happiest people in the world. My daddy was a farmer, and every relative I have farmed. We were tired but not stressed. All

we knew as kids was hard work, chopping tobacco, corn and gardens...getting in hay, picking berries and peeling peaches and apples for canning...and that ever-loving milking cows. So it makes me proud that these fine men are helping farmers help themselves. Lord knows, if the farmers are stressed, this entire nation has got problems. I'd sure hate to see some Wall Street lawyer trying to dig potatoes.

LET'S GO GARTHING

Everybody in the world who knows anything, knows that **Garth Brooks** won six awards at the ACM Awards in Los Angeles. Most all country music fans know that Garth's video, "The Thunder Rolls," got taken off the air at both TNN (The Nashville Network) and CMT (Country Music Television). Lots of you also know that VH-1 added it. But I know something about Garth that a whole lot of you don't know. Our seven-year-old, **Adam Smith**, completed the first grade this year at Chadwell Elementary School (public school). Three days after winning those six awards and a week before getting his video zapped, Garth showed up at Chadwell and read to the kids in classes K through 4th grade. My friends, in my opinion Garth Brooks is a star of

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People



Loretta's family painted a pretty picture on *Nashville Now*. From left are twin daughters Patsy and Peggy, son Ernest Ray, Loretta, host Emery, sister Peggy Sue Wright, brother Jay Lee Webb and daughter Cissie Lynn.

major proportions.

When our Adam came home, he hit the door with his eyes all lit up and a smile clean across his beautiful face, and said, "Guess who read to us at school today? Garth Brooks!"

For all the right reasons we'd never exaggerated our friendships in country music to the kids. And we never exaggerated Garth. Garth's appearance at that little boy's school placed a light in the eyes and love in the heart that will live and grow forever. Is Garth Brooks great? You bet your sweet anatomy he is. There's none better. Whether it's my kid's school or your kid's school, anybody who takes the time to stop and read to children has got their stuff together.

Now, the best part of Garth reading for the children is it was "Unpressless." You know about this because my kid was there. So, friends, let's go Garthing. Let's keep him on the charts and in our hearts as long as he deserves it. Garth, wherever you are when you read this, please take this as a great big thank you from my family and me and all the children and their parents at Chadwell. Lest we forget, the teachers were real impressed with Mr. Brooks who took off his hat, bowed and shook hands with each teacher and called them ma'am like all good hat-wearers do.

LORETTA LYNN FAMILY NIGHT

They called it "Loretta Lynn Family Night" on TNN's *Nashville Now*. It was truly more than that when Loretta Lynn, her sister Peggy Sue, four of Loretta's five living children and her brother, Jay Lee

Webb, just took over the show with host Ralph Emery. To call Loretta Lynn wonderful is like saying New York is big. Wonderful is not enough to describe this truly legendary entertainer. Let's say she was phenomenal, and the rest of her family is wonderful.

SPONSOR FOR CLINT

I have a soft spot in my heart for country music corporate sponsors, and I have a soft spot in my heart for Miller Lite for two reasons. First off, my brother, Daniel

Boone Sr., works for Miller at Eden, North Carolina. Second, Miller Lite is the corporate sponsor for Clint Black for 1991 and '92. I reckon Black will be singing "Chillin' Time" for Miller after he sings "Killin' Time" for the friends and neighbors and me. Thanx, Miller Lite and all country music corporate sponsors. You have excellent taste in music.

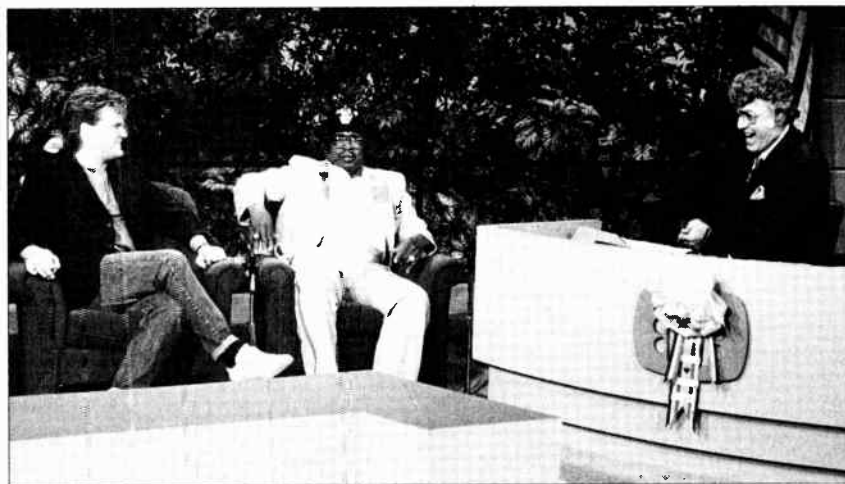
A FOUR-RING CIRCUS

The invitation read, "Come help us celebrate the renaming of South Street—which runs from 16th Avenue South to 20th Avenue South—to 'Chet Atkins Place.' The event will take place at the corner of 17th Avenue South and Chet Atkins Place." Knowing that silent Chet would have to talk, I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

BMI's Roger Sovine, host, introduced Leona "Mrs. Chet" Atkins and Merle Atkins, Chet and Leona's only child. The "four-ring circus" consisted of Atkins, Owen Bradley, Eddy Arnold and Minnie Pearl, who are all four Hall of Famers and definitely have the makings of a four-ring circus.

Sovine introduced Ray Stevens, Bradley, Arnold, Miss Minnie and Mayor Bill Boner, and each had something to say about the great Mr. Chester Burton Atkins, the world's greatest guitar player. Well, Eddy Arnold, who cries at the drop of a smile only shook Chet's hand allowing as how he'd been to the dentist and couldn't say anything. Boner officially set the Chet Atkins Place sign in place, and a bunch of balloons were launched while a bunch of firecrack-

RICK, BO AND CARL



I sure hope you saw Carl Perkins hosting *Nashville Now* with his guests Ricky Skaggs, Bo Diddley, Steve Wariner and Chubby Checker. There was more pickin' going on there than there is at a chicken shack.

She's A Jukebox Baby And A Fabulous '50s Collector Doll!

Cindy At the Hop



As soon as the jukebox begins to shake, she's on her feet. Rockin' and roll'n' to the latest dance sensations. She's *Cindy at the Hop*, the dreamiest new collector doll you've ever seen. Here to take you on a trip back to the fabulous '50s ... when fun was a way of life.

You'd say "she's the most" in her Peter Pan collar, embroidered poodle skirt, turned down bobby socks, and black and white saddle shoes. A charm bracelet dances around her wrist. And she's obviously head over heels in love with the guy who gave her his letter sweater.

Cindy at the Hop is the all-American '50s teenager ... and the perfect collector doll. Commissioned by the Directors of Princeton Gallery, she's an original creation of gifted American artist and child of the '50s, Marlene Sirko. Crafted with face, hands and legs of fine imported porcelain—hard-decorated with rosy cheeks and pink lips. And all decked out in the height of '50s fashion. Priced at just \$95.

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People

ers blasted. I thought for sure the mayor was shooting at pigeons again like he was here a while ago, but that's another story.

Some others in attendance were **Mark Knopfler**—who, with Chet, won a Grammy—**Jerry Reed**, **George Hamilton IV**, **George Hamilton V**, **Mae Axton**, **Don Bowman**, **Stella Parton** and the following folks from Sony Records, where Atkins hangs his recording hat these days: **Roy Wunsch**, **Joe Casey**, **Mike Martinovich**, **Steve Buckingham**, **Margie Hunt**, **Bill Johnson**, **Jack Lameier**, **Beth Mallen**, **Areeda Schneider**, **Jodie Johnson**, **Jules Wortman**, **Cheryl Lindsey**, **Jackie Straka**, **Rollow Welch**, **Jennifer Johnson**, **Jodi Miller** and **Cindy Cunningham**. And, of course, I was there to cover the do for you. My eyes are yours.

GEORGE PROMOTED

And I don't mean **George Jones** or **George Strait**. I mean **Teresa George** at the CMA has been promoted to Public Information Director. That's a fancy title that literally means the girl puts *Close Up* (the CMA mag) together, she puts Fan Fair together, she puts the CMA Awards show together, as well as being the glue for all other CMA events. Teresa did graduate from Sam Houston State University, but she isn't a snob by no means of the imagination. So don't hold that college against her. She's a nice girl and smart, too.

PATTY TURNS GOLD

Forty years from now, **Patty Loveless** will be loved, respected and honored in the way her "fore-mothers" are today. I speak of **Kitty Wells** and **Minnie Pearl**. Everybody loves Miss Kitty and Miss Minnie. Everybody loves Miss Patty. Stars like **Emmylou Harris** and **Mark Collie** turned out as did songwriters like **Hank DeVito**, **Gary Duffey** and **Paul Kennerly**. TV personalities like **Kip Kirby** from *Crook & Chase*, **Cathy Martindale** from *Video PM* and **John Davis** from *Crook & Chase* were on hand, too, to watch Patty Loveless receive her first Gold record for *Honky Tonk Angel*. All the MCA powers that be and those who do not have Gold cards were smiling as was the star, Miss Patty, dressed in a stylish, long black silk overcoat with matching black pumps and a stylish silk dress of fuschia with white dots. You'd never know this lovely lass was from East Kentucky, that is, until she spoke. In this case, words speak louder than actions or looks. Some of the MCA big shots on hand for the spectacular were the head man **Bruce Hinton**, that good looking VP of A&R and Patty's producer **Tony Brown**,

STORMIN' MATTEA & BROOKS



We told you about Garth and Kathy entertaining the families of the military personnel involved in Desert Storm last issue. Here they are with Electrician's Mate Master Chief L.E. Maher, of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Walt Wilson, **Sheila Shipley**, **Renee Bell** and **Katie Gillon**.

Congratulations go out to the whole MCA gang especially Tony and, of course, Patty for this, her first shot of Gold. May she boast many more on her trip up the proverbial hillbilly ladder of success. Patty is one of the purest singers in country music. Here's hoping nothing but Number One's.

By the way, Patty, you asked what was the latest gossip. Honey, we prefer to call it news. Just call me if you want the scoop, and by the way, thanks for the music.

Let me please add, looking at the beautiful Emmylou Harris at Patty's do made me know...Emmylou has flat proven that gray hair is sexy. She is just the best looking chick.

BRANSON, MOE BANDY, A PINK GOWN AND ME

This story begins with that old pink nightgown of mine. All you girls have one. It's the one we wear on Saturday morning up until noon that an entire den of cub scouts plus two heavy-set den mothers could camp under and still have room for a dog, two snails, numerous rocks that favor fossils and a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle flash light. It only touches the shoulders.

Next we get to **Moe Bandy's** Americana Theater—recently completed, its Grand Opening was the order of the day. Moe and

his partner, **Mac Stringfellow**, invited several of us elite from Masic City over to Branson for the celebration. Being a Moe Bandy fan and longing for a while to see the Branson, Missouri, that everybody was talking about, I went along for the ride to see and be seen.

"Staying overnight, alone in a hotel room, nobody will see me, I will pack the old pink gown," thought I, as I rolled it up to fit between my one change of clothes. "After all, they ain't sung no song that sounds as good as that big old gown feels."

Royalty best describes our treatment. Lord, I thought Branson was Hillbilly Heaven and we were Moe's chosen people. The red carpet was rolled and rolled and rolled out for us. **Tammi Jackson**, our hostess, made her list and checked it twice before we arrived at the beautiful Lodge of the Ozarks located right on "Hillbilly Row" (I named it that) in Branson.

Let me explain: Hillbilly Row is the street lined with country music theaters down the several-mile drag, with neon flashing in bold blue, making the whole thing resemble a mini-Vegas strip. A country music fan's Hollywood and Vine. A country music fan's dream come true. A place where fans can vacation, see the most unbelievable mountains in the world, visit all the attractions in the area and hear the world's greatest music, country music.

Those mountains, under the influence of

Relive the golden age of America's family farms!



Shown smaller than actual size of 8 1/4" in diameter.

Bountiful Harvest

by Emmett Kaye

A numbered limited first edition collector plate trimmed in 23kt gold.

The year is 1917. One in three Americans lives on a farm, like this one in Kansas, where the harvest of a bumper wheat crop is under way. The son, who will someday inherit the farm, brings water for his hardworking father.

What makes this painting special is its realism. You can tell this is a prosperous farm—the family owns a 1915 Ford Touring Car. And it is a modern farm—equipped with the latest Case steam-engine tractor. Yet the real strength of the farm, is the family. Father and son... that's what makes this painting so inspiring!

Artist Emmett Kaye is known for his authentic paintings on American themes, which have appeared in numerous magazines and books and as fine art prints. "I love this era," says Kaye, who has made many trips to Kansas. "The family farm was at its peak, and farm machinery made farmers incredibly productive. This is how our country became so strong!"

A Limited First Edition

Now, for the first time, "Bountiful Harvest" appears on a collector plate. It is the first in a new series titled *Farming the Heartland*.

Each will portray an American farm scene of this same era. And the paintings are appearing on plates for the first time.

Each serially numbered plate will be accompanied by a personalized Certificate of Authenticity. The edition of "Bountiful Harvest" will be limited to the production capacity of 14 firing days. This important First Edition is available exclusively through the Danbury Mint. As a finishing touch, each plate will be trimmed with precious 23kt gold... and the original issue price is just \$24.95.

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People

rain, fog and mist, looked like God had sprayed each tree with shiny silver tinsel that raised just a hair above the foliage. A prettier sight you'd never hope to see.

"A class duo" best describes Moe Bandy and Mac Stringfellow. These partners have renovated a theater, wired with unbelievable sound and lighting, and fixed up with comfort second to none. It was an honor to see the first show at Branson's newest theater. The Americana. We watched as Moe sang hits like "Hey Joe," "Someday Soon," "We Got Our Mo-Jo Working" and "Cowboys Ain't Supposed to Cry," all huge records for he and **Joe Stampley**. Of course, he included his own hits, "Bandy the Rodeo Clown," the wonderful "Too Old to Die Young" and "Americana," a real heart-tugger that brought the crowd to its feet. Great show, Moe.

The reception after the show was held poolside at our hotel. Several performers on Hillbilly Row stopped by to say hello to

us Nashvillians. **Mel Tillis**, **Mickey Gilley**, **Jim Stafford** and **Danny Davis** were in the crowd and, of course, Moe was there too. Fun, fun, fun.

Now, let me explain, I am the world's most boring human being. Almost a teetotaler, except for an occasional glass of wine with dinner. I had not touched a drop of alcohol that night. In the middle of the night, I got deathly ill...in Branson. I, of course, was wearing my most comfortable garment, the old pink gown, and was in bed when the illness overtook me. Die, I thought I would. After about four hours of utter agony, I called my guardian angel, Miss Tammi Jackson, for a coffin or a hospital. By ambulance, wearing my big pink nightgown, I was transported to the Skaggs Community Hospital.

Four days I am housed in this hospital with one sleeping garment, the big comfortable pink gown which I kept on day and night. During my second day of hospitaliza-

tion I allowed as how I had no other sleepwear and the nurse on duty replied, "Yes, and half the people in Tandy County have seen that pink gown." It was then that I remembered as I was ushered through the hotel lobby filled with country music fans, that I was wearing that big pink nightgown while laying on a stretcher. "Oh my Lord," I whispered, recalling how this must have looked. There's no song that pitiful.

On my third day in the hospital, I knew everybody's family by name who worked there and was in love with **Dr. Loveland**, who was just like homefolks. Mid-afternoon I am stretched across the bed in that pink gown when I walked **Mike Snider** with his band of **Charlie Cushman** and **Mr. Bobby Clark**. I apologized for my now funky pink gown as the guys hugged me, all perfumed up and wearing clean, ironed clothes. Mike allowed as how I looked good in spite of the funky old pink gown. Charlie

DONNA HILLEY: *Class Act*

Gather 'round, ladies, get a cup and a bite, relax and read. This lady is a class act. Donna Hilley was born in Birmingham. She moved to Nashville when her football hero became the star Vanderbilt University player and she became Mrs. Rayford Hilley—all this when she was a shy 18. No college graduate, this lady is the most powerful female on the planet in the business of music publishing.

Donna denies the power. She says, "God is powerful. We just do our jobs." Somehow Donna manages, with her power, to walk among songwriters, her employees and us common folks with the same persona as when she is in the company of those in higher positions. Her title, Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer Sony-Tree, has not gone to her head nor elevated her personality. Donna is still Donna. Let's see why.

When she was quite young, her late father went with her for a drive in the car. Donna was fretting over some trivial thing, it seems. She was shocked when her dad drove to a cemetery and stopped the car. Her father said, "Only two things in this world are final, death and taxes. Everything else, you can do something about." So she does something about whatever she thinks needs be.

For instance, a few years back, Buddy Killen, Donna's predecessor and former boss, questioned her decision to open a gospel music arm at the mighty "Tree House." Another associate fought bit-



Sony-Tree's Donna Hilley.

terly against Donna's decision. Donna won. Today Meadowgreen Music, Tree's gospel publishing company, has an estimated value in excess of \$5 million, simply because one little Alabama female put her size six shoe down and would not budge. Her dream became a reality.

She considers her personal life as important as her work life, or even more so. "Church is a big part of my life," says Donna, who is not a 'preachy' person. "I go to church Sunday morning and Sunday night and Wednesday night. I pray a

lot. Prayer is cheaper than a psychiatrist," she said over heavenly pasta at The Wild Boar, one of Music City's better eateries. "Prayer has sustained me," she added. "It works for me. I enjoy singing in the choir. Church comes after my family and my job follows church. That's the way it is."

Donna's Southern drawl is charming. Her energy is endless. Some call her stubborn while others call her determined. Whatever, Donna strives at getting things done her way...the way she considers to be the right way. Her tenacity is renowned. And she is surely determined or stubborn—whichever, it works. The difference between Hilley and, say, her male counterparts is she wears velvet gloves and nobody feels it, however, the punch is just as strong.

What's so great about this female in a male's world is she smiles through it all. Men respect her more than they let on. Women respect her, yet they can be jealous and make catty remarks. Donna is too smart to even let them know she is aware. She just goes about her business.

Donna knows the importance of public relations. Tree, renamed Sony when the Japanese purchased the company a couple of years back, has boasted being in the Number One spotlight for 18 years as a publishing company. It owns the copyrights of master songsmiths like Harlan Howard, Willie Nelson, Hank Cochran, Roger Miller, Curley Putman,

People

Cushman added if I got my hair gussied up and my makeup just right, there was none better looking. I just lay there and let 'em lie. Lord knows, at my age if somebody says you look good, you certainly don't discourage it. I sure appreciated seeing Mike, Charlie and Mr. Bobby. What with me being that far from home, sick and not really knowing anyone, they were a welcome sight.

Thanks to all for your kindness—Mac Stringfellow for the flowers; Mac and Moe's assistant, **Jane Gallagher**, for calling at least twice daily to see if I needed anything and using her precious time to drive me to the hotel after checking me out; Moe's theater manager, **Ray Kreutziger**, for coming by the hospital to see me, and driving me to the airport in Springfield, an hour's drive from Branson; and thanks to the little guardian angel, Miss **Tammi Gallagher**, who shyly and sweetly walked into my room with *Country Music Magazine* ask-



That's our own Hazel Smith hobnobbing with Merle Kilgore.

ing for my autograph, then went out and bought me wonderful books and magazines for reading.

Talk about Southern hospitality, I've never been treated finer in my life. From the first hello to the last goodbye and each and every howdy in between, Branson folks was just the best. I surely appreciate the hospitality given me, especially thanks to Moe Bandy's folks and all the nurses and the doctor at the hospital. After all, who would tell the fans all they need to know if I'd kicked the bucket. Now that would be a sad song—as sad as that old big pink gown looked after four days in the hospital.

HANK'S BIRTHDAY

Everybody has one every year, but only Hank Williams Jr. has 17,500 friends turn out for his annual birthday party. The biggest star of all, Hank, in all his splendor, waltzed on stage like an Alabama farm

Bobby Braddock, Buck Owens, Red Lane, Dolly Parton, as well as later bloomers like Pam Tillis, Don Henry, Kieran Kane, Jamie O'Hara, Chapin Hartford and a whole slew of others. With the foresight and knowledge to house a stable of writers with Stephen Foster's talent, it's no wonder Donna's company stays on top year after year.

Being a secretary and a wife was not commonplace when Donna started out in the business. Already married, she started out at 18 as a secretary for Jack Stapp at WKDA Radio. Fortunately she'd excelled in typing and shorthand in high school, so she fit the bill. Stapp owned a fledgling publishing company, Tree, on the side, run by Buddy Killen. Nine years later, when Stapp left radio to run Tree, Donna began working with WKDA's former production man, Bill Hudson who was setting up a new advertising and public relations firm. For nine years Donna handled the Tree account for Hudson. During this time she took some night courses at the University of Tennessee in English and journalism, not enough to mess up her sense of running a publishing company or her sense of dealing with the world of business in a man's world.

Donna's best friend, Joyce Bush, was running the daily operations of Tree for Jack Stapp and became gravely ill with cancer. One day when Donna was visiting Joyce shortly before her death, Joyce asked Donna to please look after Jack. When Joyce died, Jack Stapp called. Donna could not say no.

Donna went from advertising and public relations, where she knew all there was to know, into publishing which she virtually knew nothing about. A rock 'n' roll fan, she even had to learn to like country music. Stapp insisted that Donna listen to country music every day. "I got so depressed listening to those sad songs," said Donna. "But you know, country music grows on you. As I look back, I can't believe I ever listened to only rock 'n' roll." When Donna joined the company, there were around 1200 copyrights in the Tree organization. Today, the number's pushing 50,000.

Donna was named Vice President of Tree in 1976. In 1989 when CBS Records purchased Tree from Buddy Killen for a big \$30 million, it was Donna who negotiated the deal. When Sony purchased the entire conglomerate from CBS, it was Donna who announced that the transition was smooth. She still says that she sees no difference in Sony's ownership and CBS's.

When I decided to interview Donna, who is the first female I've spoken with for my industry profile pieces, I decided to some CI-Hazel work. Over salad and tea at O'Charley's I questioned one of Donna's longtime employees who shall remain nameless. When I asked about the difference in the daily activities at Sony since Donna took the reins, the response was surprisingly simple. My source said nothing had changed, that the only difference was that they missed Buddy. Donna had taken over with ease and grace.

On the personal front, Donna and her high school sweetheart, Rayford Hilley, have been married 34 years and have three daughters and two grandsons. They reside not far from Music Row in the Waverly Belmont area in a Victorian house that is pushing 100 years old. As thorough in this as in everything else she does, Donna bought a house 13 years ago that was past the point of no concern and made it into a majestic mansion. Where there once was worn linoleum, there's beautiful hardwood floors and an empty bedroom where new songwriters with no place to lay their head may end up staying when they arrive in Music City. And don't let the showplace description lead you to think that Donna Hilley would allow her home to be anything but homey and comfortable, in spite of its historical appeal.

In a heartbeat, Donna Hilley will tell you that songwriters are the heart of country music. She declares them *the* most important ingredient in the musical alliance. Hilley stands by her own. She always emphasizes that Harlan Howard is the greatest country songwriter who ever lived. Young Paul Worley, whom Donna made a V.P. some-time back, is her creative partner in the World of Donna. She never fails to sing his praises and deservedly so. To Donna, her writers, her artists, her producers, her song pluggers, her staff, they are all the best. It's supposed to be that way.

Like I said, gals (and guys), Donna Hilley is a class act. And I'd never lie to you.

People

COUNTRY MUSIC

EVERYTHING THAT GLITTERS IS GOLD OR PLATINUM AT MCA



This year MCA Records has a lot to celebrate. Reba McEntire's album, *Rumor Has It*, turned platinum, Patty Loveless, as mentioned elsewhere in these pages, got her first certified Gold album for *Honky Tonk Angel*, plus Vince Gill's *Pocket Full of Gold* went Gold and George Strait's *Chill of an Early Fall* did so, too. And who knows what will happen next? The year's not over yet.

boy. Seconds later the "Born to Boogie" man was all over the stage stalking, gesturing, changing lyrics to suit the occasion and smiling as he sang his heart out. This wasn't Hank Williams Sr.'s little boy. This was Hank Williams Jr. strutting to his own tunes like "If the South Woulda Won," and "Don't Give Us a Reason," which he said was, "to honor servicepeople returning from Saudi Arabia, especially some I met today." He also sang "Young Country," a Hank Jr. anthem, "Good Friends, Good Whiskey, Good Loving" and "There's a Tear in My Beer." The video portion of Hank's brand new show is worth every bit of the price of admission. As the show begins, the big screen features home videos of four-year-old Hank Jr. Mid-way through the show comes footage of Hank Sr. driving his big yellow Cadillac in the driveway of his Franklin Road home and backstage at the Opry in the Ryman Auditorium singing and talking to Rod Brasfield, Ernest Tubb and others. Without tissues I just had to take the tail of my shirt and dry my eyes over and over. Seeing the footage, I could almost hear the tear in Hank Sr.'s voice.

All during the show, standing on the sidelines and every inch a Southern gentleman in his blue linen suit, white silk shirt

and rose in the jacket lapel, was Hank's manager, Merle Kilgore. Merle walked toward the edge of the stage as Hank closed his set with "If It Will, It Will" in sing-along fashion with the audience.

The Kentucky Headhunters presented a rip-roaring set preceding Hank, their most memorable songs being "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine," "With Body and Soul," "Dumas Walker" and "Oh Lonesome Me." I enjoyed watching their antics. Besides, Doug Phelps is so cute I can't hardly stand it. Drummer Fred Young soloed and soloed on and on as his compadres in music left the stage. Then he did what he and the audience apparently considered fun—he stood on his drum stool, dropped his pants and revealed very white and clean jockey shorts (thank God). I can tell you it was not a pretty sight.

Carlene Carter opened the show wearing a dress that could have been cut from one sleeve of daddy Carl Smith's blue, rhinestoned hillbilly jacket. Actually, it wasn't short enough to be a blouse but real close. Cute, though. Her silver boots went dancing all over the stage as her six piece band picked away. Her recent hit on Warner Bros., "I Fell In Love," was her best performance. I tell you, folks, it was a birthday party to behold.

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COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE

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People

FAN FAIR—THE WEEK THAT WAS

The Friday before Fan Fair, **Alan Jackson** was made the 68th member of the Grand Ole Opry. His friend, **Randy Travis**, introduced Alan to the audience. This was Randy's first appearance sporting his brand new wedding ring that was placed on his finger a week earlier in Hawaii, when he married **Lib Hatcher**, his longtime manager, in a private ceremony. Sob, sob, girls.

About the same time Jackson sang his first song as a bonafide member of the Opry, an American Airlines jet was descending upon Nashville's airport, hauling cargo from *Country Music Magazine's* main office in Connecticut—Art Director, **Katheryn Gray**, Merchandising Manager **Robin Tesei** and Assistant to the Publisher, **George Fletcher**. They were coming to see me, of course. Believe you me, after our visit Music City will never be the same, and neither will our illustrious leader **Russell Barnard's** credit card.

We met up on Saturday night and went backstage at the Opry. Afterwards, the three Yankees took me out to Maude's. They knew it was a favorite of mine. We ordered just about everything on the menu.

The next day we hit the Starwood Amphitheater and saw wonderful performances by **Tammy Wynette**, Alan Jackson and Randy Travis. The show, sponsored by GMC trucks, was the finest I've ever seen. Tammy, with her hubby hospitalized following open-heart surgery and her mom at home in a comatose state (her mom later passed away), sang like she didn't have a care in the world. Alan Jackson, who looked like the reason God made him was to wear blue jeans, hit every note just right. Randy Travis curled every note around every word in all the right places.

Monday the kids put the CMM/CMSA Fan Fair booth together. Around seven-ish we met up in the press room at the Opry to attend the TNN/*Music City News* Awards show. Highlights were **Merle Haggard** presenting Tammy Wynette with the Living Legend Award and **George Jones** and Randy Travis singing "A Few Ole Country Boys." It always brings a tear to my eye.

On Tuesday I visited the CMM/CMSA booth with the kids. The Country Music Foundation's **Chris Skinker** stopped by to say hello. We thanked her for the wonderful photographs she hunts up for *The Journal*. George then went to the Curb Records show and was impressed by newcomers **JJ White** and **Hal Ketchum**. The whole gang enjoyed the MCA Records show, especially the final number: As George Jones did "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes," he was joined on the chorus by a gang of MCA-ers.



Crook & Chase reporter John Davis, George Fletcher, Katheryn Gray, Marty Stuart and Robin Tesei at Country Music Magazine's Fan Fair booth.

On Wednesday, Robin and 20,000 other **Garth Brooks** fans stood in the pouring rain to watch their favorite star perform. Robin was soaked but did not care. That night, we went to the Stockyard. It was wonderful. We knew Russell would want it that way. We had, among other things, steaks as big as our plates and tender as can be. After, I thought, "I'll never walk again."

On Thursday, both Katheryn and George went to the Arista show and had water pistol fights with super publicity person **Merissa Ide** and many others. Everybody backstage was armed on this suitary day.



Tammy Wynette receives the Living Legend Award from Merle Haggard.

The CMM-ers were knocked out by Alan Jackson and Pam Tillis.

Friday **Marty Stuart** showed up at the CMM/CMSA booth and signed autographs. Later, the CMM gang headed to **Manuel's** Nashville shop. Manuel, a clothier, makes fine hillbilly wear for many stars. The threesome chatted with Manuel himself, and Marty's sister, **Jennifer Stuart**, who runs the shop.

Friday night Katheryn and George went to Nashville's famed Bluebird Cafe to see **Marshall Chapman**, **Dean Dillon**, **Kevin Welch** and **Danny Flowers** perform their (mostly) homemade songs in the round with just guitars. Report was they loved seeing this type of show—songs stripped down to the base element the way they were written. A powerful night of music.

Saturday we had planned to have our Last Supper on the Broadway Dinner Train, which runs between Nashville and Old Hickory and serves guests wonderful prime rib and trimmings galore. But, that afternoon my attic ladder broke, and I fell from the fourth to the third and onto the second rung, suffering cuts on my leg, a broken ring finger, mashed little finger and sprained knee. My eyes filled with tears and my mind filled with anger while my body was filled with pain.

I know the 24,000 people who attended Fan Fair had a ball. I enjoyed being with the kids—great fun with great people. Thanks to all that I saw or who asked about me. I'm glad that you read what I write. I'm proud that you subscribe to this magazine, and we will see you at the next Fan Fair.

EMMYLOU HARRIS

Live at the Ryman

When Emmylou Harris records a live album, she goes to a place where inspiration abounds. We find her at the old Ryman Auditorium, where memories were made and are still in the making. • By Bob Allen

Standing on stage in the musty old Ryman Auditorium in downtown Nashville, clutching her trusty Gibson guitar and bathed in the unforgiving light of the video cameras, Emmylou Harris for an instant seems timeless.

If only for a few moments, she does not appear to be a day older than she was a decade and a half ago, in 1975, when her first major label album release, *Pieces of the Sky*, and first Top Five single, "If I Could Only Win Your Love," catapulted her to national fame.

This evening, some 16 years and 18 or 19 albums later, Harris is still fine-featured and slender. She still looks very much the part of the 70's Earth mother in boots, blue jeans and a fancy embroidered jacket. Her reedy, ethereal soprano, framed by the fluid, confident, all-acoustic sound of The Nash Ramblers, her new five-piece backup band, is as distinctive and emotionally compelling as ever.

It's only Emmylou Harris' hair that reminds the small audience gathered in the Ryman of all the years that have slipped by as quietly and swiftly as smooth-flowing water under a bridge. Once prematurely streaked with gray, her hair has now gone all silver. It gives her a slightly regal and matronly air, somehow appropriate considering the high esteem in which she's held within the Nashville music industry. She's been a big part of things here since moving to Music City in the early 1980's.

Harris, The Nash Ramblers, her co-producers Allen Reynolds and Richard Bennett and the film crew from The



The evening's music ran the gamut from Stephen Foster to Bill Monroe to Hank Williams.

Nashville Network have brushed away the cobwebs and commandeered the stage of this hallowed, shadowy old music hall, home of the Grand Ole Opry from 1931 to 1974, to tape Harris' new live album tentatively titled *Live at the Ryman*. They are also going to film an accompanying cable TV special and long-form concert video.

The Ryman, built in 1892 as a Mormon tabernacle and now on the National Reg-

istry of Historic Places, is often referred to as "the Mother Church of Country Music." And it does indeed have the hushed, churchy ambiance of a shrine. It's exactly this sense of history and tradition that has drawn Harris to the Ryman for three consecutive nights of taping and filming. The place and its associations even helped shape the list of 17 songs Emmylou chose to record.

"The Ryman is such a wonderful



room," she later explains with a lingering sense of awe. "I have a feeling there's not a bad seat in the house. There are no corners. And the sound: It's not like any place I've ever played before. Acoustically and ambiance-wise, it's the best I've ever played in." And about the choice of songs, she says, "All the songs we played in the show were songs that either had been played on the stage of the Opry, or should have been played on it."

The evening's repertoire was full of unexpected turns. The music ran the gamut from Stephen Foster, Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and Stonewall Jackson to Dion, John Fogerty and Creedence Clearwater Revival, Rodney Crowell and Bruce Springsteen. "It

would have been great if John Fogerty could have played the Ryman. Or Steve Earle or Nanci Griffith," says Harris. "I think those are the kind of people you *would* have heard if the Opry was still going at the Ryman."

Taken as a whole, the two-and-a-half-hour-plus show was like a wonderful trip down memory lane that touched on many musical high points from the last four or five decades. Chosen by Harris, with assistance from coproducers Reynolds and Bennett, the material included country classics like Eddie Arnold's "Cattle Call," Hank Williams' "Half as Much" and Stonewall Jackson's "Smoke Along the Tracks." There were also rousing blue-

grass/gospel favorites like Bill Monroe's and Peter Rowan's "Walls of Time" and The Country Gentlemen's "My Precious Young Children." On a more contemporary note, there were acoustic renditions of more recent country/folk/rock milestones: Steve Earle's "Guitar Town," Nanci Griffith's "Back Seat Driver From America," Linda and Robin Williams' "The Death of Hank Williams" and Bruce Springsteen's "Mansion on the Hill."

A particular highlight of the show was a spirited instrumental break during which Harris did some feisty, high-intensity, aerobic buck-dancing and The Ramblers flexed their musical muscles while special guest Bill Monroe, the crusty old King of Bluegrass, played a fiery mandolin duet

with her band leader and mandolinist extraordinaire, Sam Bush.

For Harris, the three shows also afforded an opportunity to showcase her fine new band at its very best. The Nash Ramblers include: Bush, formerly of New Grass Revival; acoustic bass genius Roy Huskey Jr.; guitarist and harmony vocalist Randy Stewart; drummer Larry Atamanuak; and dobroist Al Perkins, who first played with Harris many moons ago on the records of her mentor and musical soulmate, the late Gram Parsons. (Parsons died in 1973.)

The Ramblers have been backing Harris for more than a year now, and they are simply one of the most accomplished and versatile all-acoustic outfits on the scene. They handle Harris' eclectic song list effortlessly. And with vocal support from Bush and Stewart, Harris can serve up soaring, high-lynesome harmonies on the bluegrass material and tender three-part vocals on pop-flavored songs like The Everly Brothers' "Like Strangers." Like their predecessors, Emmylou's longtime Hot Band (which was a training ground for many of today's stars, including Rodney Crowell, Ricky Skaggs, Vince Gill, all-star country producer Tony Brown and ace session players Albert Lee and James Burton), The Nash Ramblers underline the point that Harris simply does not settle for second best when it comes to her music.

Harris and her representatives more or less turned her three-night stand at the Ryman into a private homecoming party: Thus, Harris' babysitter, her hair-



"I have a feeling there's not a bad seat in the house. There are no corners. And the sound: It's not like any place I've ever played before."

dresser and her housekeeper found themselves sharing the Ryman's old wooden church pews with a host of leading industry lights like Rodney Crowell; Kathy Mattea; Mattea's husband, award-winning songwriter Jon Vezner; Shelby Lynne; Doug Green of Riders in the Sky; Marshall Chapman; John Prine; Russell Smith, formerly of The Amazing Rhythm Aces, and a couple of members of Wild Rose. Musically speaking, no one pushed away from the table hungry those three nights. The Emmylou tapings proved to be one of the hottest musical tickets in town, and one of the crowning events of the season.

Early in the afternoon following her final performance at the Ryman, Harris is sitting in the well-appointed office of Jim Ed Norman, head of Warner Brothers/Nashville, her record label. She is ever so slightly haggard from the three long nights in front of the video cameras and mobile studio mikes.

Yet she is still, in her own quiet way, very much caught up in the excitement and momentum of the project. The morning after the final show, she was up early to do a series of interviews related to the event. And as soon as she finishes here, she'll drive a few blocks to the studio and plunge into the daunting task of culling through the 10 or 11 hours of tape to choose the strongest half-hour or so of tracks (12 or 13 songs) that will end up on *Live at the Ryman*.

As always, Harris is low-key, articu-



late and thoroughly without pretense as she fields questions. "I suppose you could say I'm driven in a way, but in a good way. As far as career moves go, just about everything I've ever done has been following my heart. Like The Hot Band. Forming them was a great career move, but it really all got started when I recorded with some of them and thought, 'They probably wouldn't go on the road with me, but let's ask them anyway.' It cost me a lot of money, but I don't have any regrets. I think it set a tone, and I got a lot of mileage out of it. Not just career-wise, but emotionally: a lot of great friendships that I still have.

"As far as my music goes, I never stop thinking about it," she adds. "People say, 'Well, what do you do to relax or whatever? Do you play tennis, play golf?' I don't do any of those things. I think about music and listen to it. I do take buck-dancing lessons, but even that's part of the music."

Even so, Harris also made the decision some years ago to restrict her touring to the summer months in order to spend more time with her family: her third husband, songwriter Paul Kennerley, and her two daughters from previous marriages, Meghann, 21, and Hallie, 11.

"Doing what I do for a living, you never stop thinking about it. I'm consumed by it," she explains. "And it's very hard sometimes to pull me back down to earth, and sometimes it's very difficult to be a parent. I've just had to learn how to *stop* thinking about it and organize my time better."

If there has been a down side to this shift in priorities, it's that in the past five years or so Harris' public profile has diminished somewhat. Lately she has lost out to younger, trendier and more fresh-faced artists in the increasingly competitive shuffle for airplay at the country radio level. In fact, she's had only a couple of Top Ten singles since the mid-1980's, and her album sales have been less than spectacular.

It's not that she hasn't been consistently recording and releasing decent enough records for the past five or six years—though recent albums like *Thirteen*, 1986; *Angel Band*, 1987; *Bluebird*, 1989; *Duets*, 1990; and *Brand New Dance*, 1990, may lack some of the brilliant focus and energy of *Quarter Moon in a Ten Cent Town*, *Blue Kentucky Girl*, *Roses in the Snow*, *Evangeline* and *Cimarron* from her heyday in the late 70's and early 80's. It's more as if nobody's paying much attention anymore. "I decided at one point that all my fans died of some mysterious disease at once," she joked ruefully to *People Magazine* this year.

"It's not something I'm terribly concerned about," she adds today, acknowledging with a resigned shrug country radio's lack of enthusiasm for her recent



Sam Bush, Roy Huskey Jr. and the rest of The Nash Ramblers have been with Harris for more than a year. Their style suits her eclectic music perfectly. Special guest Bill Monroe added another authentic touch to the old-time feel of the Ryman.

releases. "I think there's a point at which you compete against yourself. Which is to say, my old records are still played a lot. Plus, I think, in terms of radio airplay, there are just peaks and valleys that you have to accept. Fortunately, my live audience, in terms of numbers, seems to hold steady.

"Also, with me, it's never been a case of, 'I have to get a new album out for the summer tour,'" she emphasizes. "It doesn't matter: The people who come out to see me are a great audience, and I'm very fortunate to have them. They don't necessarily come to hear me play new stuff, but they do seem to keep coming year after year, which is wonderful. We probably will do the new album in our live shows, before it's even out. But it won't be as a promotional tool. It will be because we're excited about it."

It's also Harris' nature to lend her time and talents freely to projects in which she's not the headliner—projects she chooses to take part in simply for the pleasure of performing with musicians she likes and admires. And she fre-

quently pops up in a supporting role, lending her unmistakable harmonies to records by Kathy Mattea, Guy Clark, Don Williams, The Desert Rose Band and many others.

Harris did not become a full-fledged member of the Nashville musical community until the early 1980's when she married songwriter Paul Kennerley and relocated from L.A. with her two daughters to become a permanent Nashville resident. Today, her high profile and esteemed status within the community is enhanced by her position as President of the Country Music Association's Board of Directors—an office she's held for several years.

"In Nashville I never go out for a loaf of bread or a jug of milk without seeing someone I know," she laughs. "It maybe was a bit strange at first when I moved here, because in L.A., where I lived before, it wasn't unusual to go a month without seeing anybody you know." In L.A. she shared her life with her then-second husband and longtime producer, Brian Ahern.

"At first," she continues, "it was strange to shed that ability to withdraw completely from the world. But as I get older, I really enjoy being part of the community here and having real friends who understand the things we all have to go through—like raising children and going through all the normal phases and problems that parents go through while also dealing with being a musician and having a public life."

At one point in her conversation, Harris talks about being in her "mature years" and being forced to "realize your limitations and celebrate what you can do, and not worry about what you can't do." I notice the hair all gone to silver again, and it once more strikes me as slightly unbelievable that Harris, once the lovely, young, raven-haired princess of the West Coast underground country scene, is now middle-aged: 44 years old, with a college-age daughter.

Harris goes on to explain that the recent transition from the electrified Hot Band to the all-acoustic Nash Ramblers was part of this somewhat painful and uncertain process of acknowledging limitations and accommodating the changes wrought by time. "I started having throat problems a couple of years ago, and I just couldn't seem to bounce back from the kind of small infections that everybody gets. Then during a big summer tour in 1989, I got bronchitis. Somehow being at half strength like that made me realize I was no longer reaching some kind of peak I knew I should be reaching. And even though The Hot Band was playing great every night, I also felt like I'd done everything I could with them. I needed to do something different, flex different muscles. Not just vocally, but psychologically."

As an alternative to taking a long sabbatical from the road (which she was neither ready nor willing to do), Harris decided to assemble a new band of musicians "who by nature played quieter.... And I wouldn't have to compete with an electric guitar and electric steel, where you almost have to throw your voice into an unnatural place in order to sing above them."

Harris also admits that as she's gotten older she feels the pull of family responsibilities and is more reluctant about giving *all* of her best energies to her music. She's been making a strenuous effort—and she admits it's at times been trying—to give more quality time and *quantity time* to her two daughters.

"I've really tried to spend time with them. Not just being there physically, but really paying attention," she explains. "I'm the kind of person, it's really

hard for me to focus on real-life issues. Music is a very ethereal thing, and I'm up in the clouds a lot, even though I've made a big effort to at least be physically present for my girls. And I've accomplished that. I'm only recently realizing the difference between just being there and really—quote—*being there*: really listening to what they have to say, and really getting to know them as people.



Emmylou is currently taking a more active role with daughters Hallie and Meghann.

"I've fortunately had a second chance to be a mother to my older daughter, Meghann, and get to know her," Emmylou continues. "My career took off when she was five years old, and I was gone constantly. When I was home, I was in the studio. She also had a medical condition, epilepsy, that was just really difficult, and there didn't seem to be anything I could do. The doctors said all they could do was give her massive amounts of drugs. I think I sort of stuck my head in the sand about it. It was very painful to me, and I tended to throw myself into my work. And my parents—who have always been wonderful to me, incredibly supportive—were willing and able to take care of her."

"It wasn't until Meghann was 16 when things were a little calmer and she came to live with me. It was rough—we tiptoed around each other for a while. And we got into some knock-down, drag-out fights—which it was great to do and then hug each other and be able to really tell each other how much we loved each other, and for me to admit to her that I wasn't there when she needed me, and to let her know how much I regretted that. Because she didn't just lose out. I did too.

"I don't know," she shrugs and looks perplexed for a moment. "Being a parent is incredibly important to me, but incredibly difficult. It's never come as easy for me as music does. I don't have much intuition about it. And even though I do it with a lot of love, I make a lot of mistakes."

In addition, there's talk of the town that's troubling: She and her husband, Paul Kennerley, have evidently hit some rough weather in their marriage. Harris herself even made oblique public reference to their tensions when she wistfully dedicated "Save the Last Dance for Me," the final song of her Ryman show, to Kennerley.

Harris is certainly cognizant of the gossip. But she politely, delicately (and probably wisely) withholds comment, except: "It's something we're very actively working on." One can only imagine the strain of having to grapple with one's domestic problems in a public arena like Music Row, where celebrity divorces are, like bullfights and professional wrestling, sort of heartlessly considered good spectator sport. When most of us everyday people indulge in fleeting fantasies of stardom, we see only the bright, shining tip of the iceberg. In our admitted envy of the adulation, the big money and all the materialistic perks, we fail to notice fame's darker aspects: weird crank phone calls late at night, being stalked by the occasional crazed fan who's made you a bit player in his scary private delusions, and gossip.

Harris—intensely private person that she is—seems fragile; yet she also seems to possess a steely inner strength. And she always seems to weather such ordeals with quiet dignity and public composure. When all else fails, she admits that she draws strength and solace from her music and finds rejuvenation in the creative process.

"Back when I got started there was a period of about six months when I went from being somebody nobody had ever heard of who was making an album to sharing a dressing room with Tammy Wynette and having a Number One record. Somehow you just sort of know it's happened, but it's so unreal that you can't quite get used to it.

"Well, the main thing I've learned is to never lose sight of that original spark, that excitement, which is why you started doing it in the first place. That would be the only thing that would scare me: if I lost that. I guess if I ever did, I'd just have to hang up my rock 'n' roll shoes," she shrugs. "But right now I still feel like an active foot soldier, just out there doing the job as best I can." ■

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1991

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Transitions

With this issue, George Fletcher takes over as Editor of the *Newsletter*. He has been a wonderful help and support since he came here a little more than a year ago, and a very able partner, and now the reins are in his hands. Take it away, George, and congratulations!

The *Newsletter* was born in March 1984. Some of you reading this today probably have every issue. Its present Art Director, Kathryn Gray, deserves a lot of credit, with George, for the *Newsletter's* snappy look these days.

You, the members, have always made the *Newsletter* what it is. Your stories, your contributions, your drawings, your puzzles, your poems and above all, your photos, fuel the *Newsletter*, give

it its content and its unique look. Keep those submissions coming.

A word about the Collections page—entries are way down. This may sound strange, but we are delighted. We think this means we have members only writing in. Requests and letters without membership numbers are being discarded, and those with numbers are being rushed right to print. We'll stick with our new system.

The *Newsletter* has always focused on country music as it comes from the heart—the connection between star and fan, love of music, the desire to write and perform. And it's always had a respect for the past—which is what you members insisted upon. With George Fletcher in charge, it will be the same.—H.B.

Member Record Reviews

Member Greg Treadway of Artie, West Virginia, wrote the review of Mike Audridge's latest album in the July/August issue. As promised, he returns here with another review, this one on Jim and Jesse McReynolds' album, *Music Among Friends*. The new release on Rounder Records brings together a fine collection of guests in celebration of Jim and Jesse's 25th Anniversary as Grand Ole Opry members. We'd like to feature member record reviews on a regular basis, so send us your thoughts on recent albums.

JIM AND JESSE McREYNOLDS

Music Among Friends
Rounder CD-0279

The year 1989 marked 25 years since Jim and Jesse McReynolds became members of the Grand Ole Opry. To celebrate the occasion, they have recorded an album that brings them together with several friends and musical associates. The project took more than two years to produce because of the conflicting schedules of everybody who took part, and possibly because of Jesse's involvement in *The Masters* (with Eddie Adcock, Kenny Baker and Josh Graves), who just released two albums on the CMH label. But now the wait is over for Jim and Jesse fans. Their album, *Music Among Friends*, is finally here.

It would be impossible to list everything that happens on the album, but here are a few of the highlights: "Flower in the Desert," which features fiddling from Glen



Duncan and lovely harmony vocals from Enmylou Harris; "We'll Meet Again, Sweetheart," the old Flatt & Scruggs standard, complete with the tenor singing of Curly Seckler, who was with Lester and Earl in the 1950's; "The White Dove," a classic Stanley Brothers gospel song, featuring Ricky Skaggs, who joined Ralph

Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys when he was just 16 years old; "I Thought I Heard You Calling My Name," originally a hit for Porter Wagoner—and Porter himself joins Jim and Jesse here. And finally, there's "Wicked Path of Sin," featuring a vocal quartet consisting of Jim, Jesse, Bill Monroe and an uncredited bass singer (who, to me, sounds a lot like Clarence "Tater" Tate—fiddler and bassist in Monroe's Blue Grass Boys).

I could go on and on, but instead I will conclude by saying that Jim and Jesse McReynolds have a winner with *Music Among Friends*, and so does anyone who goes out and buys it. This is essential listening.

Greg Treadway
Artie, West Virginia

Greg adds that this album, and other Rounder releases, are available from Rounder Records, One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140.—Ed.

Video Clip Tips

Last issue we introduced this new column to review and comment on noteworthy videos in this increasingly important medium. Remember, we'd like to hear your comments on the clips you see on CMT, TNN and elsewhere. Write up your video reviews and send them in.

HAL KETCHUM

"Small Town Saturday Night"

Curb Records

The debut video from Ketchum makes use of footage from an old movie featuring a

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Executive Editor: Helen Barnard

Art Director: Kathryn Gray

cast of midgets for a clever play on the song's title. It also shows off Ketchum's guitar playing and country/folk/rock style. Filmed entirely in black and white and directed by Senor McGuire, the video puts Hal in front of a screen showing the old film clips. His fine picking and odd dance moves keep the video interesting, and the song itself is a hot one. "Small Town Saturday Night" will go a long way toward establishing this talented newcomer.

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

"If It Will, It Will"

Warner/Curb

If you're looking for deep meaning and sensitivity, look elsewhere. But if you're looking for a good time, partying, sing-along with humorous film clips and scantily-clad babes, then Hank Jr. is your man. This video is fun, fun, fun as Hank Jr. struts on stage, having a good time, working the crowd. Throw in a good dose of camp (complements of the flamboyant Little Richard), and you've got one great video. This first single from Hank Jr.'s latest album, *Pure Hank*, is Bocephus in his element. Call your rowdy friends, tap the keg and let's party!



JJ White—Jayne (left) and Janice White.

JJ WHITE

"The Crush"

Curb Records

Curb Records has come up with another winner this time around. New group JJ White (Janice and Jayne White), two sisters from Northern California, have a distinctive sound, look and style and loads of appeal (both musically and, it appears, personally). They have an interesting edge to

their sound. The song's a good one, and the video is equally creative. The video stands some of the usual cliches on end by having the girls do the staring at the guys—when their Jeep breaks down, they leer at the auto mechanic making the repairs. It's a funny twist. Cut away to performance footage set along a lakeside—this part is beautifully filmed, with effective and interesting use of light and dark. Basically, everything works in this video. I'd say that Janice and Jayne are on their way. —George Fletcher

Catching Up With Dennis Devine

Iowa correspondent Dennis Devine has been active on the concert trail of late. He's sent us a bunch of photographs of different country artists who've played in his area. Here's a sampling plus Dennis' notes.

Enclosed are some photographs taken not too long ago in Omaha. The Iowa State Troopers Association and the State Troopers Association of Nebraska sponsored the show, which featured LeRoy Van Dyke, Dick Curless, Ferlin Husky, Sheb Wooley, Bobby Bare and Bobby Helms. It was a very good show, and I got to go backstage and talk to all of them. I also got to talk with



Clockwise from top left: Nebraska governor Ben Nelson (center) poses with (l. to r.) Bobby Bare, Leroy Van Dyke, Bobby Helms and Dick Curless. Waylon remembers this 1987 CMM cover. Ferlin Husky and Dennis read CMM. Members of the Devine family enjoyed Garth's performance—Dennis Devine Jr., his wife Annette and daughter Amanda Mae visit with Garth. The Riders in the Sky, now at work on a children's show for CBS-TV, pose with fan Doris Langeneggar.





Alan Jackson, Lorrie Morgan and Tammy Wynette had 'em lined up for hours. The Oak Ridge Boys got a kick out of their 20 Questions feature in CMM. Robin and Katheryn visited with Roy Acuff. Hazel Smith caught up with Sharon White, while Robin and George met with Connie Smith. Patsy Montana came to the CMM booth. Highway 101 made their first Fan Fair appearance with new lead singer Nikki Nelson.



CMSA Goes to Fan Fair

In June 1991, the 20th Annual International Country Music Fan Fair took place in Nashville. And *Country Music Magazine* and the CMSA were there. This was the first year ever that Fan Fair sold out in advance—more than 24,000 country music fans bought tickets for the week-long extravaganza. Covering the festivities for CMM and the CMSA, as well as working the booth, were CMM staffers Robin Tessei, Katheryn Gray and George Fletcher. This photo essay documents some of the highlights of the week. For further Fan Fair details, see Hazel Smith's People section in this issue.



Nebraska governor and country music fan, Ben Nelson. On another occasion, I saw Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter, *Riders in the Sky* and Johnny Western. They played in Omaha at WOW Radio's Listener Appreciation Party.

Others I've seen recently are Johnny Cash and his son John Carter and Garth Brooks. You know how I feel about Johnny, and among the newcomers, Garth is tops with me.

Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Members, Listen Up!

Been to any good concerts this summer? If so, send us your notes and photographs. We'd also like your opinions/reviews of albums, videos and singles—whether by the top stars, or new artists. Let your opinion be heard—what albums did you like, which ones disappointed you? Anyone been in the Marlboro Talent Round Up or GMC/True Value Showdown? Tell us about that, too. And how about Branson, Missouri? Anyone been to the theaters?

JULY 1990 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

Alan Jackson *Don't Rock the Jukebox*
Ricky Van Shelton "I Am a Simple Man"
It's Alan Jackson month. His sophomore album takes top honors. He's followed closely by George Strait's *Chill of an Early Fall*. And in third is Alan's debut, *Here in the Real World*. In singles, Ricky Van Shelton takes the prize. Second is, you guessed it, Alan Jackson with "Don't Rock the Jukebox." And Strait's "If I Know Me" takes third.

Readers Create

Sharing the Beauty

Faith Stearns of Raymond, Nebraska, sent in the following as her way of sharing her love for horses. The poem and accompanying drawing work together.

Come Ride With Me

Come ride with me
Over this lush grassland
That lies near the sea.
With a sky so blue
You can tell that this day
Was made for you and me.

Come ride with me
And let us go for a run
Over the valley and through the trees.

Up to the mountains we may go
With the peaks and ridges
All covered with snow.

Come ride with me
If only for just one day
And discover how it feels to be free.
With the wind blowing through our hair
We can ride the world over
Without so much as a care.

Come ride with me
It will just be you and I
With Mother Nature and all of her glory
Under the big blue sky.
Come ride with me....

—Faith Stearns



Conway Twitty Word Search

It's been a while since we've run a puzzle in Readers Create. Here's one on a country legend. Betty J. Altis of Salem, Virginia, writes, "I thought I would try my hand at creating a puzzle about my favorite entertainer. Most of the information was obtained from the book, *The Conway Twitty Story.*" Betty adds this special note: Words in parentheses do not appear in the puzzle; they are just meant as helpful information.

G A T R I N E E D Y O U R L O V I N G S M L E B A E
S A X E T Y T T I W T A L W K R O P O R K C H O P N
A M A H E L E N A A R K A N S A S I E N N O A W Y T
N C I C M A D I R O T D N E I R F L R I G N R L F E
D V H A P P Y B I R T H D A Y D A R L I N W O D Y R
O S E E N T H E I M A G E O F M E N T N O A L Y T T
L D C R O H R E G O S P E L M U S I C G L Y D N I A
E T G P S E P T E M B E R I E N I R H S L A J A C I
O P E E E R O S H T I N T N W T E A W D A R E M Y N
P Q V L L O P L O K J D C D I H T I H O B K N I T E
R C E L L S L O W H A N D A T D F E G N E A K C T R
Y R I I E H R A E G F B O B E E A R T S N I S I O
E O L V V Y N E R L D U M N R B E W Q C A S N P W F
L C E N H W A T D L A N R M O E L D C R B A S A T T
D K B O S T C T C O N W A Y T W I T T Y E S B R O H
A A E S A R H A T D N F K M H X N Y W J T O E I M E
R N K R N B R L H A Y M G I E G S O N O E T Q V M Y
B D A E A R I Y E R B M T N R U B I S N S A W E C E
N R M D K P S N C L O Q R D S I T U Z I V D N R G A
E O Y N O I T N L I Y M L A K T J I S N H A G B I R
W L L E A D M E O N D E F R I A R S P O I N T O N M
O L N H C B A L W O R G A F Y R Z X W J V A R A N E
L O O C K H S A N R B A T R F G D E O S U C F T I M
M L S A K B W O R K A H O L I C E S B L L O Y D S P
R V T V E L M A M C G I N N I S X B M A T R X Y A H
O H I S N M A L M I S S I S I P P I R I V E R J I
Y E K C I M F A T H E R A E B C D E J O B L U E I S
W Z X B N E D R A C Y N N O S U T R U D E L T A Q M
S K S O L D O U T C O N C E R T S D A U G H T E R S
S D R O C E R A C C E D C O U N T R Y B O Y O S E F
D R I B Y T T I W T L O V E F L O Y D J E N K I N S

- Army
- Baseball
- Blue
- Canada
- Christmas
- Conway, Arkansas
- Conway Twitty
- Country Boy
- Danny Boy
- Daughters
- Decca Records
- Delta
- Don't Cry Joni
- Entertainer of the Year
- Feelin's
- Floyd Jenkins (father)
- Friar's Point
- Gospel Music
- Growl
- Guitar
- Happy Birthday Darlin'
- Harold Jenkins
- Helena, Arkansas
- Hello Darlin'
- Hendersonville
- Howard (brother)
- I Need Your Loving (first record)
- It's Only Make Believe
- Jean (sister)
- Jimbo (son)
- Joni (daughter)
- Kathy (daughter)
- Lead Me On
- Lloyd (middle name)
- Loretta Lynn
- MCA
- Memphis
- MGM
- Mickey (wife)
- Mike (son)
- Mississippi River
- Nashville
- Owen Bradley
- Pork Chop
- Preacher
- Riverboat
- Rock and Roll
- September
- Sold Out Concerts
- Slow Hand
- Tennessee
- The Clown
- The Image of Me
- The Letter
- The Rose
- Tight Fittin' Jeans
- Twitty Bird
- Twitty City
- Twitty, Texas
- Tom McGinnis (grandfather)
- Velma McGinnis (mother)
- Women
- Workaholic



GARTH BROOKS

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1991

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF THE MONTH

GARTH BROOKS

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Given name: Troyal Garth Brooks
Birthdate: February 2, 1962
Birthplace: Tulsa, Oklahoma; raised Yukon, Oklahoma
Family: Wife, Sandy; Mother, Colleen Carroll; Father, Raymond; brothers, Kelly, Mike Brooks, Jim Smittle, Jerry Smittle; sister, Betsy Smittle
Pets: Siberian husky named Sasha
Hobbies: Working out, watching John Wayne movies, golf, baseball
Famous for: Being the 65th member to be inducted into the Grand Ole Opry, during its 65th year.
Proudest of: Being inducted into the Grand Ole Opry, and the many letters he receives from his fans. He calls them "trophies of the heart."

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'1"
Weight: 185 lbs.
Color eyes: Blue
Color hair: Dark brown

Awards Highlights

1990 CMA Horizon Award and Video of the Year, "The Dance"/1991 American Music Awards Country Song of the Year, "If Tomorrow Never Comes"/1991 Academy of Country Music Awards Entertainer of the Year, Top Male Vocalist, Single, Song ("The Dance") and Album of the Year, Video of the Year/1991 Music City News/TNN Awards Video of the Year, "The Dance"

Recording Career

Record label: Capitol Records, 1111 16th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212

Albums	Release Date
Garth Brooks	1989**
No Fences	1990**

*Gold Album, over 500,000 sold.
**Platinum Album, over 1,000,000 sold.



Number One Singles
"If Tomorrow Never Comes"
"The Dance"
"Not Counting You"
"Friends in Low Places"
"Unanswered Prayers"
"Two of a Kind Workin' On a Full House"
"The Thunder Rolls"

Videos

Broadcast Videos
"If Tomorrow Never Comes"
"The Dance"
"The Thunder Rolls"
A new home video package with concert footage taped live at the Dallas Reunion Arena nearing completion. The producer and Garth plan to "create a once-in-a-lifetime concert film that will capture the unique and exhilarating feel of seeing Garth live." Included in this home video package are the three videos listed above.

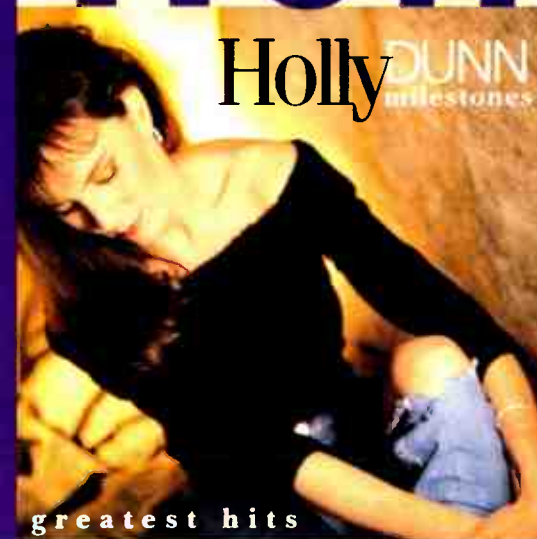
Television Highlights

The Tonight Show/Good Morning America/CBS This Morning/Into the Night with Rick Dees/Entertainment Tonight/Personalities/CNN ShowBiz Today/AM Los Angeles/Good Day New York/VH-1/E Entertainment Television/The Night of 100 Stars/CMA Awards/Grammy Awards/ACM Awards/TNN/Music City News Awards

Fan Club

Membership in the Garth Brooks Fan Club International includes the following: a biography of Garth, an 8x10 photo, newsletters, bumper sticker and membership card. To join, send check or money order for \$10 (\$12 Canada and other foreign countries) plus \$1.95 postage and handling to *Country Music Magazine*, Reader Service Dept., 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, CT 06880.

The Best of Country Holly Dunn



Milestones - Greatest Hits

The New Album and Home Video

Holly Dunn's uncompromising allegiance to the traditional roots of country music have won her tons of fans and a truckload of awards—including the Country Music Association's Horizon Award, the Academy of Country Music's Top Female Vocalist Award, and BMI's Country Songwriter of the Year Award. Now for the first time, hear all of her best-loved songs together on one album and watch them on a specially-priced home video. Featuring "Daddy's Hands" and "Are You Ever Gonna Love Me."



Southern Pacific

Greatest Hits

The New Album

Individually, the members of Southern Pacific have played with Waylon Jennings, Crystal Gayle, the Doobie Brothers, Elvis Costello, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. Together, they've made some of the finest country and country-rock music of the past decade. Featuring "Midnight Highway" and "Reno Bound."

Highway 101

Greatest Hits (1987-1990)

The New Home Video

The Academy of Country Music voted Highway 101 Top Vocal Group two years running. This home video proves they were right. Featuring "Cry, Cry, Cry" and "Who's Lonely Now."



Available Now on Warner Bros. Cassettes and Compact Discs and Warner Reprise Video

© 1991 Warner Bros. Records Inc.

One We Can't Resist...

Member *Richard Tant*, a "graphic artist/singer/songwriter" from *Cayce, South Carolina*, sent us these lyrics. We couldn't pass this one up.

Oh Country Music Magazine

I finally found a magazine
That let's me get involved.
That used to be a problem,
But now that problem's solved.

I love to read about the stars
You learn so much from them.
Now I can write to pen pals
Or send my own songs in.

Oh Country Music Magazine
You're my long lost friend.
Not long after I've put you down
I've picked you up again.

And if I ever lose my friend
My life won't be the same.
You're the sunshine in my life
Right through the pouring rain.

Your centerfolds are awesome
At least they are to me.
There's so much more to read about
Of interest to me.

Your audio and video
Selections...unsurpassed.
Thank God for Country Music
Magazine at last.

Oh Country Music Magazine
You're my long lost friend.
Not long after I've put you down
I've picked you up again.

And if I ever lose my friend
My life won't be the same.
You're the sunshine in my life
Right through the pouring rain.

—Richard Allen Tant

Tribute to the Opry's Past

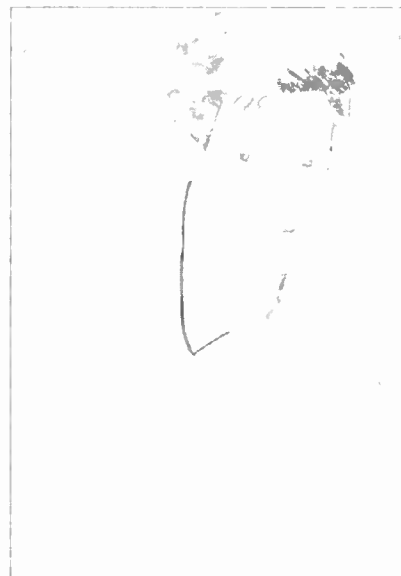
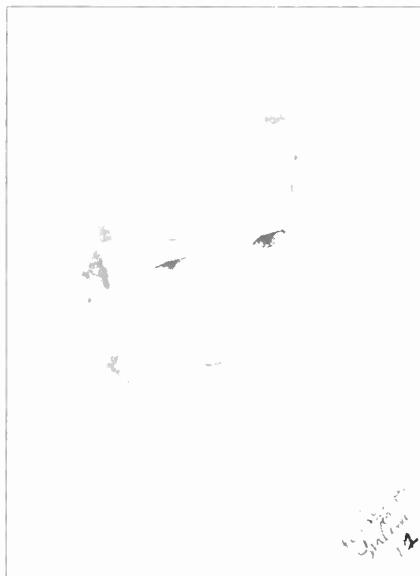
Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is home to member *Jan Streilein*. She sends along this tribute to the days when the Grand Ole Opry was still housed in the Ryman Auditorium. It's nice to note that the performers mentioned are all still Opry members.

It Was Grand

Remember the Opry of years ago
Each Saturday night on the radio.
Minnie would holler some silly riddle
While Roy just laughed and tuned up his fiddle.
Long before New Country became the rage
True Country walked the Ryman stage.
Hillbilly artists with guitars in hand
Some became stars, others worked in the band.
Connie's crying songs were hits right from the start

And she still sings gospel straight from the heart.

—Jan Streilein



Two on Travis

Randy Travis has once again inspired readers to put pencil to paper, and the results are striking. Tracina Collins of Ruidoso, New Mexico, came up with the drawing on the left, while Laura Yoder of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, created the image on the right. Tracina wants to thank Randy for sharing his talent with the world. Laura says that Randy is an inspiration to her.



Cowboys of the Silver Screen

Gene Larson of Miles City, Montana, is a graphic artist, radio enthusiast and long-time country music fan. He got started in radio as an interviewer for KAYO in Seattle, Washington, where he developed a comic alter-ego named "The Old-Timer" to do the interviews. "The Old-Timer" became quite (in)famous for his bizarre questions and mispronunciation. Gene then turned his attention toward art. One of his creations is this montage of the great cowboy movie stars. Gene provided us with a "who's who" key, and space permitting, you may see it in the future.

CO. #157 CHARLES MOORE COLLECTION



Little Jimmy Dickens

by Rich Kienzle



Little Jimmy Dickens found a style and stuck to it. It took him to the Hall of Fame.

One day in 1965, Little Jimmy Dickens was in the middle of a recording session at Columbia Studios in Nashville. A friend walked in with another man who'd written a song he wanted Dickens to hear. Dickens normally didn't stop in mid-session to hear *anyone's* tune, but he made an exception. After listening, he thought the song would be a cute addition to his concert program. Within half an hour he and the session musicians were recording it. That fall Columbia released it as a single. Shortly afterward, "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose" gave Little Jimmy Dickens his first Number One record in all the 16 years he'd been recording. The record also became a Number 15 pop hit.

Suddenly Dickens, legendary hard-country singer of the 1950's and Grand Ole Opry stalwart, found himself hitting venues that were unusual for Opry stars. He appeared on *The Tonight Show*, the 60's rock 'n' roll variety show *Hullabaloo*, and even a Dick Clark teen "beach party" show. On that program, since his cowboy hat and eyeball-blasting Nudie suits would have turned off 15-year-old Beatles and Beach Boys fans, he dressed in a colorful Hawaiian outfit. What irony. Forty-four-year-old James Cecil Dickens of Bolt, West Virginia, who began his career singing gospel and ballads, was selling records to teenagers.

Dick Clark's show was a long way from West Virginia, where Dickens was born December 19, 1920, the oldest of 13 children. His father, like many of his brothers and other relatives, worked in the coal mines. The Dickens family had plenty of music, including gospel, in their midst. Various family members sang and played instruments, and as Jimmy got older, he drank in the Opry and the WLS *National Barn Dance* over the radio. Singing professionally became his goal; he got his start at age 17 over radio station WJLS in Beckley, West Virginia.

He signed the station on the air every morning by imitating a crowing rooster and worked with singer Mel Steele and then Johnnie Bailes of The Bailes Brothers. At that point, thanks to his 4'11" height, Dickens was dubbed "The Singing Midget." He'd also found a musical role model: Roy Acuff, whose full-throated, mournful ballad style Dickens emulated.

In 1941 he moved north to Fairmont, West Virginia, and station WMMN. There he met singer David Myrick, better known as T. Texas Tyler (who later recorded the classic "Deck of Cards"). Tyler and Dickens hit it off and started singing together. When Tyler moved to WIVC in Indianapolis during the war, Dickens went along. (He later credited Tyler with

teaching him much about the music business.) Dickens picked up a song in Indianapolis from a banjoist named Sonny Grubb, "Take an Old Cold 'Tater and Wait." It would have its day.

Following Tyler's departure for the service, Dickens moved to WLW Radio in Cincinnati, where he got major-league exposure on the 50,000 watt station's *Midwestern Hayride*, still singing gospel. In 1945 Jimmy's idol, Roy Acuff, met him and saw him perform. Roy later recalled, "The first time I saw Jimmy Dickens was in Cincinnati at the Music Hall. I was supposed to be the star of the show, but when I introduced Jimmy on the stage, that was all she wrote. He took the show."

After the war Dickens spent a brief period in Kansas, then settled in at WKNX in Saginaw, Michigan, in 1948. He again worked on a show with Acuff; this time, Roy recommended Dickens to his own Columbia Records producer, Uncle Art Satherley. He also got Dickens a spot on the Opry.

In January 1949, Dickens found himself in his first recording session with Satherley, backed by Acuff's Smoky Mountain Boys and Ernest Tubbs' electric guitarist, Billy Byrd. He cut "Take an Old Cold 'Tater," the song he'd learned in Indiana: It became his first hit, a Number Seven record nationwide. His new friend Hank Williams referred to him as "'Tater" from then on. The harder edge of his later music had yet to develop; much of what he recorded now was in a more plaintive vein.

That changed with his upbeat 1949 recording of Boudleaux Bryant's "Country Boy," which went to Number Seven that year, while a ballad in his old style, "My Heart's Bouquet," went to Number 10. Jimmy was looking for his place. He could do Acuff-style music, but Acuff himself was still going strong. He decided to form his own band, The Country Boys, and when he did, he planted the seeds of his own sound.

He recruited a group of musicians formerly with The Arkansas Cotton Pickers, Opry star Paul Howard's hot Western swing band, including bassist Bob Moore, fiddler Red Taylor, steel guitarist Walter Haynes and guitarist Grady Martin. Grady recommended his friend, Robert "Jabbo" Arrington, who'd worked as twin lead guitarist with The Cotton Pickers (an idea Howard had borrowed from Bob Wills). Soon The Country Boys boasted wild, punchy, twin lead guitars.

The change was obvious on "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed," Number Six early

in 1950, and on the follow-up, "Hillbilly Fever." Driven by the guitars, the sound was sassier, and the material—much of it by Boudleaux Bryant—was geared toward novelties and country humor. Through the early 1950's, he continued touring. Traveling through Phoenix, he did a guest shot on WPHO's local TV show, *Country Caravan*. Impressed with the youthful host's singing, Dickens told Art Satherley about him. In May 1951, Columbia signed Marty Robbins.



Little Jimmy Dickens had to leave his fancy duds at home when he appeared on TV with Dick Clark.

During the early 50's, Dickens recorded such irreverent, funny tunes as "Out of Business," "Walk, Chicken, Walk," "C'losing Time" and "Salty Boogie" and hard-edged versions of Acuff's "Wabash Cannonball" and "Night Train to Memphis." Occasionally he'd poke fun at himself with songs like "I'm Little But I'm Loud." Many were solid examples of both rockabilly and country boogie, loaded with dazzling instrumental work. Dickens thought they were no big deal. He had one additional hit in this style, "Out Behind the Barn" in 1954, his last for eight years. He left the Opry in the 50's to join the Philip Morris Caravan but returned to the fold in the 1970's.

The Country Boys became one of Nashville's best backup bands. Among its members were fiddler-drummer Louie Dunn. After Jabbo Arrington left, Grady teamed with Thumbs Carlille, the brilliant guitarist who laid the instrument on his lap like a dobro. Twin guitarists Spider Wilson and Howard Rhoten then replaced Martin and Carlille, and Buddy

Emmons replaced Haynes on steel guitar. The band's excellence remained.

Trends had changed. Like Acuff, Tubbs and others, Dickens, though still active on the road, lacked a style that could lend itself to the "Nashville Sound" production so prevalent in the late 50's. Undaunted, he persevered with Columbia with songs like the crackling, explosive "I Got a Hole in My Pocket," recorded in 1958, revived in 1989 by Ricky Van Shelton.

Dickens returned to the charts in 1962 with "The Violet and a Rose," which made it to Number 10. A couple of numbers made the Top 30 in succeeding years, but it was "Bird of Paradise" in 1965 that brought him back in a big way. Over the next few years, he tried to continue in that vein with songs like "Truckload of Starvin' Kangaroos" and "When the Ship Hit the Sand." "Bird of Paradise," however, was a one-shot deal; nothing else ever matched it.

Dickens remained successful on the road. He even performed for troops in Vietnam in the late 60's. However, his hitmaking days were over. In 1968 he joined Decca where he had only minor success, and his brief tenure with United Artists in the early 70's went nowhere. Regardless, within the industry he was deeply respected. Dickens never felt a need to alter or in any way compromise his sound, which he stuck by through phase after phase—Elvis, the Nashville Sound, the Outlaw and Urban Cowboy periods. Stylistically, he was far ahead of his time, and because of that his music still sounds modern. He continues to tour to this day and hosts segments of the Grand Ole Opry.

When I interviewed him just after his induction into the Hall of Fame in 1983, he said, "I feel like I've been doing this long enough to know what my audience will buy, including how a record is done and how the material is done. And that's just the way I'm gonna keep it. Just down to earth, plain country. You can't tell me it don't work as long as there's a George Jones and a Merle Haggard or Moe Bandy or Ricky Skaggs."

Dickens was 62 at the time. Having been nominated several years in a row, he commented, "I really was not expectin' to go in...that soon...So I just wasn't prepared for it. You always think of somethin' to say, and once I knew I was going to be inducted, I couldn't find any words for it."

Albums Available
See For CMASA Members Only.

Collecting the Magazine

Complete your collection of *Country Music Magazine*

● *Country Song Roundup* back issues for sale, Dec. 1966 to Dec. 1967 (7 issues) when it only published every other month. Also from Feb. 1968 until Nov. 1983 when it published monthly. A total of 196 back issues. Make me an offer! **Anne Bolyard, Rt. 1, Box 386, Thornton, WV 26440.**

● For Sale: issues of *Country Music Magazine* from 1975-1991. Send a SASE for list. **Joan Price, 4135 Furman Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27107-7011.**

Information, Please

Members, contact each other directly about the items listed below. If you must correspond, include SASE.

● For sale: hand-carved, hand-painted wooden eagles. Send SASE for information or \$3.00 for product catalogue listing hundreds of items. CMSA members receive 20% discount on all merchandise. **Freeman Seyler Jr., 248 Hillside Road, Coplay, PA 18037.**

● Wanted: 45 record of "If You're Thinking You Want a Stranger" by George Strait. Send information to **Yolanda Flores, 1517 East Yandell, El Paso, TX 79902.**

● I'm trying to locate sheet music and/or music books by Gary Morris, any except his *Song Book* or *Anything Goes* book. Send price and condition information to **Gretchen Hall, P.O. Box 72627, Bossier City, LA 71172.**

● Wanted: LP's or 45's of "I'll Be Loving You" by Big Al Downing and "Soul Searchin'" by Leon Everette. Will send tape and pay postage if someone could make me a great recording of both songs. Suggestions welcome! **Kevin L. Schupp, Apt. 7, 805 35th Street, N. Council Bluffs, IA 51501-0609.**

● Looking for anything on The Judds. If you've got it, I want it. Willing to buy if price is reasonable. **D. Schmauch, 500 Woodrow, Columbus, OH 43207.**

● For sale or bid: entire original collection of Waylon Jennings albums except for *Waylon at J.D.'s*. Good to excellent condition. **Stanley Wegielewski, Rear 918 Cedar Avenue, Scranton, PA 18505.**

● Wanted: Albums by Ray Pillow, Gary Stewart and Nat Stuckey. Also interested in obtaining Vern Gosdin's *Rough Around the Edges*. **Wanda Wright, 622 Hyde Park Road, Baltimore, MD 21221.**

● We are big Hank Williams Sr., Jett Williams and Drifting Cowboys fans. We are looking for the piece Jim Owens did on Hank Williams. Any idea where to find it? **Anne and Joe Pellowski, R2, Box 122, Spring Grove, MN 55974.**

● I'm interested in trading a double Willie Nelson cassette which includes "Whiskey River," "Georgia on My Mind," "Angels Flying Too Close to the Ground," "Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys," "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," plus many other great songs for a total of 20 Nelson songs. Still in original tape case with picture. Will trade for Reba McEntire's *Sweet Sixteen* cassette and/or Lorrie

Morgan's first cassette *Leave the Light On*. Write: **P.O. Box 329, Delta Junction, AK 99737.**

● My name is Tina M. Jones, and I am an extensive collector of Dwight Yoakam memorabilia, which includes a DY Ranch Wear jacket. The only things I have had real trouble finding are two posters: *Guitars, Cadillac's, Etc., Etc.* and *Hillbilly Deluxe*. I have all the other promotional posters for his albums. I'd appreciate anyone's help and will pay any reasonable price. Also, anyone who would like to correspond about Dwight Yoakam is welcome to write. I have a lot of information on him. Please respond. **Tina Jones, P.O. Box 123, Wilcox, PA 15870.**

Collections Page Works!

After placing an ad in the Collections section of your magazine (looking for two rare Waylon Jennings' albums), I have received letters from all across this nation. Waylon, if you are reading this, you have fans in such states as PA, AZ, MA, WA, VT and KY that wrote to wish me luck in finding the particular album that I am searching for—*Live at J.D.'s*. Waylon's fans are truly dedicated, and I have now corresponded with some very nice people who share my love of his music. Thank you for this service that *Country Music Magazine* provides. **Sandy Shoultz, 720 Pearce Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101.**

● Help! I've been searching for five years for a copy of Al Stricklin's book, *My Years With Bob Wills*. I'm a very big fan of Bob Wills and have over 50 albums of his music. I also do a local radio program which features Western swing. I'd deeply appreciate any help I can get. Thanks. **John Schmitz, 1920 C Street, Lincoln, NE 68502.**

● Looking for George Jones material—videos, photos, LP's, 45's (need transcriptions on LP) and more. Also Merle Haggard original videos. Can someone tape (on video) country music TV programs for me? I pay all costs. I also need tapes of Jimmy Swaggart's gospel hour every week. Can someone help me? Also looking for Dolly Parton's gospel album on Inspiration. Contact **Bertil Gustafsson, Hokhult S-590 42, Horn, Sweden.**

● Looking for the following 45's: "I Just Can't Go on Dying Like This" b/w "Honky Tonk Downstairs" by the Ace in the Hole Band and "What Am I Gonna Do About You" by Con Hunley. Send price, condition and SASE to: **V.L. Segrist, 3939 Russell Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63110-3709.**

● Searching for the albums: *All I Can Do, A Real Live Dolly* and *Golden Streets of Glory* by Dolly Parton. Also any Porter and Dolly albums, older magazines and any other Dolly memorabilia. **Tabby Hall, 290 River Oak Drive, Dawsonville, GA 30534.**

Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail.

● I would like to write to women from Australia. I enjoy cooking, reading, craftwork and animals. Some of my fa-

vorite singers are Vince Gill, Randy Travis, Paul Overstreet, Patty Loveless, Vern Gosdin and many more. I'm married and have two daughters, 19 and 13, who would enjoy writing to Australian teenagers. **Alvena Morse, Rt. 2, Box 209, Wellsville, MO 63384.**

● Hi! I'm 19 years old and love country music and country living! My favorite singers are Sawyer Brown, Vince Gill, Randy Travis, Alan Jackson, George Strait, Clint Black and many, many more. I enjoy sports (especially baseball), animals, reading, TV and rodeos. I would enjoy writing to people with same interests. No prisoners, please! **Joyce Morse, Rt. 2, Box 209, Wellsville, MO 63384.**

● Hi! I'm a 13-year-old female. My favorite singers are Sawyer Brown, Lionel Cartwright, Vince Gill, Aaron Tippin, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and many more. Interests are cooking, reading, horseback riding and sports. Would like to hear from girls only. No prisoners please! **Ramona Morse, Rt. 2, Box 209, Wellsville, MO 63384**

● Hi! I'm 21 years old, single and love country music. My favorites include RVS, Kentucky Headhunters, Clint Black and many more. Will answer anyone who writes and please send me a picture. No inmates, please. **L.J. Meyer, 1120 N. Prairie, Fairmont, MN 56031.**

● Hello. I am a 24-year-old country music fan. My absolute favorite is Garth Brooks. I need some male friends to write me from ages 18 up to 100. Please send photo. **Rodney Smith, 1341 Renslar Avenue, Dayton, OH 45432.**

● Hello from MN! My name is Marie Gowell, I'm 26. I would love to hear from fellow fans of Alabama, Rosanne Cash, Highway 101, Sylvia, The Forester Sisters, Carlene Carter and more. Females 21-31 only, please. **Marie Gowell, 3100 Bloomington Ave., S. #14, Minneapolis, MN 55407.**

Wedding Bells Ring Again

Hi! My name is Betty Hogestyn. I had a pen pal ad in your November/December issue, and I received many letters. Through your ad I met a wonderful man named Ray Childers from Columbus, OH. On June 3, 1991, we were married in Rochester, NY (where I live). If it was not for your magazine, we probably would never have met. Thank you very much. Many thanks to all who wrote. **Ray and Betty Childers.**

● Hello! My name is Paul Joseph Coello. I'm a 52-year-old Pisces. I adore country music both old and new. I need some new female friends in my life as pen pals, 37-52 age-wise and single. My hobbies are working with kids on fundamentals of baseball, football, basketball and bowling. Will answer all. Thank you for being a friend. **Paul J. Coello, 70 Washington Avenue, #2, Suffern, NY 10901-6018.**

● Hi! My name is Charlene, and I love country music! I am 22 years old and have enjoyed country music since I was very young. Some of my favorites are Randy Travis, Kenny Rogers, Alabama and many others. I am especially inter-

ested in hearing from all you guys who love country music, but I will answer all who write. Please send photo. **Charlene Rudisill, JCK Center, Suite 6-128, Westminster, MD 21157.**

● Hello, my name is Dewona. I am 26 and love *Country Music Magazine*. I am not looking for a cowboy. I already have one. Just excited about music and friends, and if anyone needs information about Texas and music here, please write. Oh! I live in Mark Chesnutt's hometown. **Dewona Herring, P.O. Box 5920, Beaumont, TX 77726-5920.**

● Hi! My name is Sara Kegg. I'm 24 years old. I love country music. My favorites are The Judds, Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam, Ricky Van Shelton and Garth Brooks. Would love to hear from true country music fans. I like making new friends. Write soon. **Sara Kegg, RD #1, Box 228-B, Blain, PA 17006-9721.**

● Hi! I'm a 32-year-old single guy in the Navy, stationed in Charleston, SC. I love country music. My favorites are Merle Haggard, Garth Brooks, Travis Tritt and Mary Chapin Carpenter. Also enjoy dancing and camping. Looking to hear from single country girls age 21-35. Please write. **SK Frank F. Luyster, USS Klakring FFG-42, FPO Miami, FL 34091-1497.**

● Hi! I am a 17-year-old country girl who loves country music very much. Some of my favorites are Loretta Lynn, George Jones and Clint Black. Some of my interests are playing guitar, horseback riding and country concerts. I would like to hear from you country boys out there, or anyone. Will answer all. **Tammy Alexander, Rt. 1, Box 828, Lobelville, TN 37097.**

● Hi! I'm a 25-year-old female who loves country music. My favorite artist is John Schneider. I would like to hear from other John Schneider fans. I will answer all who write to me. No prisoners, please! Please write. Thanks. **Teresa Kegg, RD #1, Box 228-B, Blain, PA 17006-9721.**

● I am a 32-year-old married mom to one spoiled poodle. I was raised on country music and just came back to it after my battle with other music, though I do still enjoy some rock 'n' roll. My favorites are Reba, Lacy J., K.T., Clint Black, Garth Brooks, Hank Jr., Headhunters, Sawyer Brown, Oaks, just to name a few. My all-time favorite was and always will be Patsy Cline. I'm a CNA by trade and also part time DJ. My hobbies include fishing, darts, photography, fairs, carnivals, rainstorms, flea markets, etc. I collect unicorns, teddy bears, earrings, T-shirts, oriental items and wicker. Would enjoy hearing from ladies and/or couples 25-45. No prisoners. Please fill my box. **Chris Emerson, 724 Edith Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362.**

Send Newsletter material to *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880. Mark your envelope. Attention: Collections. You must include your membership number or magazine label. Entries sent in without proof of membership will be discarded.



MICHELLE WRIGHT

*Canada's Newest Addition to
the American Country Scene*

*In her native Canada, Michelle Wright sang
country songs. Today she's wowing American
audiences with her sultry singing style.*

By Bob Allen

“It’s history,” enthuses Canada’s Michelle Wright. “There’ve never been so many Canadian artists with American record deals before. It’s like the great wall isn’t there anymore. We’ve finally chipped the bricks away, and we’re coming through.” From Hank Snow through Anne Murray and k.d. lang, Canada has provided many a country talent for Nashville’s voracious music machine. Michelle Wright, one of the latest entrants in this trans-national sweepstakes, is an attractive, dark-haired, dark-eyed, sultry-voiced, 30-year-old country singer from Chatham, Ontario. In the past year, she’s garnered a flurry of attention with her impressive debut album, *Michelle Wright*, on Arista Records. Her first state-side hit single, “New Kind of Love,” is a compelling, gutsy number, composed by Wright’s co-producers Rick Giles and Steve Bogard. Both the single and the album have proven worthy showcases for Wright’s earthy, smoky and sensuous singing style, which, she explains, owes as much to male country stars like Merle Haggard and George Jones and soul and rhythm & blues divas Aretha Franklin and Diana Ross as it does to more mainstream, contemporary female stars.

“I used to do a lot of male songs in my shows, because I didn’t want to just sound like everybody else coming through,” Wright explains in her soothing and surprisingly soft purr of a speaking voice—which, she laughingly explains, is sometimes mistaken for a man’s over the phone. “I really enjoyed a lot of those songs. I’ve always related lyrically to what was going on in them, and I never cared too much for the sort of female *defeating* songs. So I’d do songs by Ronnie Milsap, John Conlee, Vince Gill, Exile. Stuff like that.”

Wright pauses, then continues with a hearty laugh: “The first time Rick Giles, my producer, heard me sing at a festival up in Ottawa in 1985, I was doing an Exile song called ‘Take It to the River.’ Without looking up at the stage, he turned to his wife and said, ‘That man’s got an interesting voice.’ Then he turned around and was shocked to see this little, five-foot-six, 110-pound female with hair down to here!”

Naturally, audiences north of the border, where Wright has been performing steadily for the last eight years, have had more opportunity to catch on to her talents than have state-side country fans. In 1989, she won a coveted Juno Award (the Canadian Grammy) as “Most Promising Female Vocalist.” In 1987, and again in 1989 and 1990, Wright unseated k.d. lang as the Canadian Country Music Association’s Best Female Vocalist of the Year. Additionally, in 1989, she won the C.C.M.A.’s highest honor, its Entertainer of the Year award.

Wright's appearance on the American country scene may seem sudden. (Along with Alan Jackson and Pam Tillis, she is one of the bright-shining stars—or test-tube babies—born of Arista Records' fledgling country division.) But the fact is, Wright has essentially been doing what she's doing now—albeit on a somewhat smaller scale—for nearly a decade.

Since she first hit the road in Canada and the U.S. as lead singer for a band called Wild Oats, she's seldom looked back. "Our motto was, 'Loving Country in a Field of Music,'" she cringes.

"I love the road life. It's great," she beams as she gestures around her comfortable, immaculately tidy room at Opryland (even the leftover packets of rye crisps from room service are stacked in a neat little pile on the end table). She's only one elevator stop away from the banquet room where she'll be singing soon. "I sit in hotel rooms like this sometimes and look around and marvel: 'Wow! There's a bathtub of my own!'"

"But the way it is now, to be doing concerts and doing my own music, and to

have people actually *paying attention*, it's great. I also have my boyfriend on the road with me. He's my road manager and bass player."

She pauses and frowns pensively: "I do often wonder how I would feel about all this if I were leaving someone behind that I love as much as I love him....As it is now, I have the best of both worlds with my music, and I get to share it with someone I love."

For someone who's lived the wandering life for roughly the last third of her life, Wright has a calm, centered sense of maturity about her. No starry-eyed novice, this. She seems comfortable with herself and her life, both on stage and off. Though, as she later reveals, it has not always been that way.

For one thing, Wright comes from a very roots-oriented, rural, small-town background. For another, both of her parents were country singers. "Just from a local standpoint, playing weddings and dances and so forth," she emphasizes. "My mother was in a band called The Reflections for ten years, but she also sold

real estate and was a farmer's wife. My parents separated when I was a year-and-a-half old, but I'd often go visit my father. He was in a real traditional country band—steel guitars, rhinestone suits. He and my mother both would get me up on the bandstand to sing now and then. So that was a big influence.

"But coming from a small town of about 600 people where no touring bands came through, none of us had a clue that you could make a full-time living at it."

During her early years living with her mother in Ontario, not far across the border from Detroit, Wright also fell under the influence of black Motown music being broadcast out of the Motor City. "I listened to a lot of the big Motown stars like Diana Ross, Otis Redding, Smokey Robinson, The Four Tops, and I bought their records," she remembers. "Years later, when I'd be on stage doing a country song, people would come up to me and say, 'You're doing something different I can't really put my finger on. Is there some Aretha Franklin in there or something?' Gradually, I started tuning into what they were saying, and began to realize that, *without* realizing it, those two influences—country and Motown—were starting to cross in my music."

When she was nine, Wright's mother married a grain farmer and moved to the small farming community of Merlin, Ontario. Wright recalls having a room full of musical equipment, occasionally playing acoustic guitar in local teen clubs and even winning a talent contest or two.

Her first real professional gig singing with a band came, ironically, one day when a local group called The Marquees telephoned to enlist her mother as lead singer for an evening. "Mom was out working in real estate that day, but I told them that I sang as well, and asked if I could audition. They said yes. Later, Mom came home and said, 'Fine, just go ahead.' It went well. It wasn't the big leagues by any means. Just a local band playing cover tunes. But I soon discovered that one of the neat things about being a singer was all the attention you got. It makes you a bit of a ham, but it also makes you feel a bit special."

Not long afterward, an American booking agent who'd seen Wright perform with The Marquees offered her an opportunity to go on the road singing lead with another band. "I was going to college to counsel the mentally and physically handicapped, and I'd been dating the same fellow for seven years, and we were going to get married and buy a farm," she recalls. "So I explained to this guy that I already had my life all planned...."

Wright did eventually agree to tour with the band for the summer before returning to college. But that summer stretched into eight years. They were



At this year's Fan Fair, Michelle enjoyed the company of both her fans and stars like Garth Brooks. She says a favorite part of her job is being on stage. Her mother and father were also performers in their native Canada.



"I soon discovered that one of the neat things about being a singer was all the attention you got. It makes you a bit of a ham, but it also makes you feel a bit special."

glorious, sometimes wild and uproarious years, she explains.

"At the time I didn't really take it all very seriously," she shrugs. "It was a party. You had no one to answer to. You could stay up as late as you wanted and sleep as late as you wanted, as long as you were on stage at nine o'clock at night. I really fell in love with being a musician, being on the road.

"It was tough financially," she concedes. "Still is, for that matter. But we had some wonderful wild times out there, which I wouldn't take back for the world. You know: staying up all night and jumping in the swimming pool at six in the morning. It was a great thing, to be playing music every night. But eventually the party ended," she pauses, then adds on a more somber note. "They talk about this invisible line, and before I knew it, I'd crossed it."

As Wright implies, there was, after a while, a darker side to the movable musical feast of her apprenticeship. She sings about it with haunting authority in the bluesy "As Far As Lonely Goes" (written by Janis Ian and Matraca Berg), a song on her debut album which alludes to loneliness and the temptation to seek solace from it in the bottom of a champagne glass.

"We're talking about my alcoholism here, right?" Wright shifts forward. "I'm not ashamed to talk about it, because it's something that people should be more aware of. It's not a lack of will power; it's a disease that runs in families and runs in our society quite a lot.

"There were examples of people in my own family who'd had problems and gotten sober. And it helped having them to tell me, 'Watch it, Shelly: we're seeing it happen to you.' Though I got so mad at them at the time, because I was in strong denial about the whole thing. But I finally did come to see that there was a problem, and that I was losing it. Through my family being there, I was able to recover. And by finding sobriety, I found peace of mind and self-confidence, because I'm not hiding anything anymore, or hiding from it."

During her road years, Wright did make a few token trips to Nashville. "I came here once for three months, knew nothing, knew nobody, and found out I hadn't paid enough dues yet," she explains. In Canada, she made an album for a small label owned by her manager,



down by every label more than once. But I always felt like, 'Dang! Some way or another....' I guess you have to keep believing in yourself. And there were also indications from audiences and things that something worthwhile was going on. I just felt that I could get something going if I just kept trying."

When Bogard and Giles heard that Arista Records, previously known for its success in the pop field, was planning to open a country division, they took Wright's demos as well as a copy of her Canadian album over to the new Nashville label head, Tim DuBois.



Michelle's come a long way. In her hometown of Chatham, Ontario, the mayor presented her with a key to the city.

Brian Ferriman, and stayed on the road.

"Playing the clubs, everybody wanted you to play the Top 20 hits of the day, like you were a live jukebox. I had a problem with that, so I just started bucking the system a little bit by finding album cuts by those same Top 20 artists and singing them. Also, I didn't care how big a hit a song was, if I couldn't relate to it personally, I wouldn't sing it. I ran into some flack over that, and almost lost some jobs," Wright admits. "But fortunately, my manager reassured me that he was seeing something unique develop in me, and he encouraged me to keep doing exactly what I was doing."

Quite by accident, Nashville songwriter Rick Giles happened to catch the end of Wright's set at an outdoor festival in Ottawa while he was on vacation. "He came in as I was playing the last song," she laughs. "If he'd come three minutes later he would have missed me, and I don't know what would have happened." Giles and his songwriting partner Steve Bogard were interested enough in Wright to fly her to Nashville to make some demo records. During the next few years, she recalls, "We got turned

DuBois helped put Restless Heart together and served the group as producer and songwriter. He was impressed enough to fly to Canada and catch one of Wright's live shows. He chatted with her backstage, and asked her to call him the next day so they could talk some more. "It took me an extra day to get up the nerve to call him," Wright giggles. "I was afraid he might have changed his mind." Shortly thereafter DuBois flew to New York and played Wright's tapes for Arista president Clive Davis. Wright was soon added to Arista's small but impressive country roster, with Giles and Bogard on board as co-producers and co-writers of most of the songs on her first album. As for the future she looks forward to hosting an hour-long variety show special on the CBC—Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—that will air in the coming year.

"The one thing I try to convey to a lot of younger artists," Wright observes of her own success, nearly a decade in the making, "is that if you're out there, you'll eventually be seen. If you're at home waiting for someone to knock on the door, you'll wait forever.

"For myself, I believe it was my destiny to play music, if there is such a thing. And I thank God that he led me that way." ■

A South Carolina native who wears his roots on his sleeve, Aaron Tippin brings a 50's edge to 90's music. • By Bob Allen

To hear Aaron Tippin speak in his thick Carolina brogue, you might imagine he came from somewhere so far back in the hills they had to pipe in the sunlight. He does indeed hail from a relatively isolated and somewhat notorious region of the Appalachian foothills in extreme northwest South Carolina known as "The Dark Corner."

To hear Tippin sing in his raw, unreconstructed, rural twang, you might think that the 32-year-old singer has a pipeline straight back to a time quite a few years before he was born: the early 1950's, when singers like Ernest, Hank and Lefty were in their heydays.

"I remember Christmas, somewhere back in '70, '72, somewhere along there," Tippin recalls. "One of my buddies got one of them portable, eight-track tape players for Christmas—you remember the kind you could pop the tape in 'em and carry 'em around?" He sits tapping his foot in a leather-bound chair in the staid corporate conference room at the Nashville offices of RCA, his record label. His battered leather jacket is tossed carelessly across another chair. On his heavily muscled right arm is a tattoo of a palmetto tree, a replica of the tree that appears on the South Carolina state flag.

"We didn't have anything to play in the tape player except my friend's daddy's tape of Hank Sr.'s greatest hits," Tippin continues with a brash burst of laughter, sipping on a cup of black coffee. "We played that thing, and, boy, we was makin' sport of it and laughin' and hoopin' and hollerin' and carryin' on! But before long, I got to where I was playin' it all the time. I got to where I was sold on it.

"Eventually Hank Sr.'s music led me further back," he continues. "Back to

Jimmie Rodgers, Ernest Tubb, Hank Thompson, Lefty....I mean, I knew all about the Joneses and Conways and the Haggards, but I was always curious about what was in front of *them*. I remember sittin' and listening to that old stuff for hours. It was so cool, I loved it. It sounded so real that if you'd closed the curtains, it probably could have been 1950.

"I really think that a lot of the greatness in that music dribbled out somewhere and got lost along the way," he adds with an observant nod of his head. "I just hope that in my own small way maybe I'm puttin' a little bit of it back in today's music."

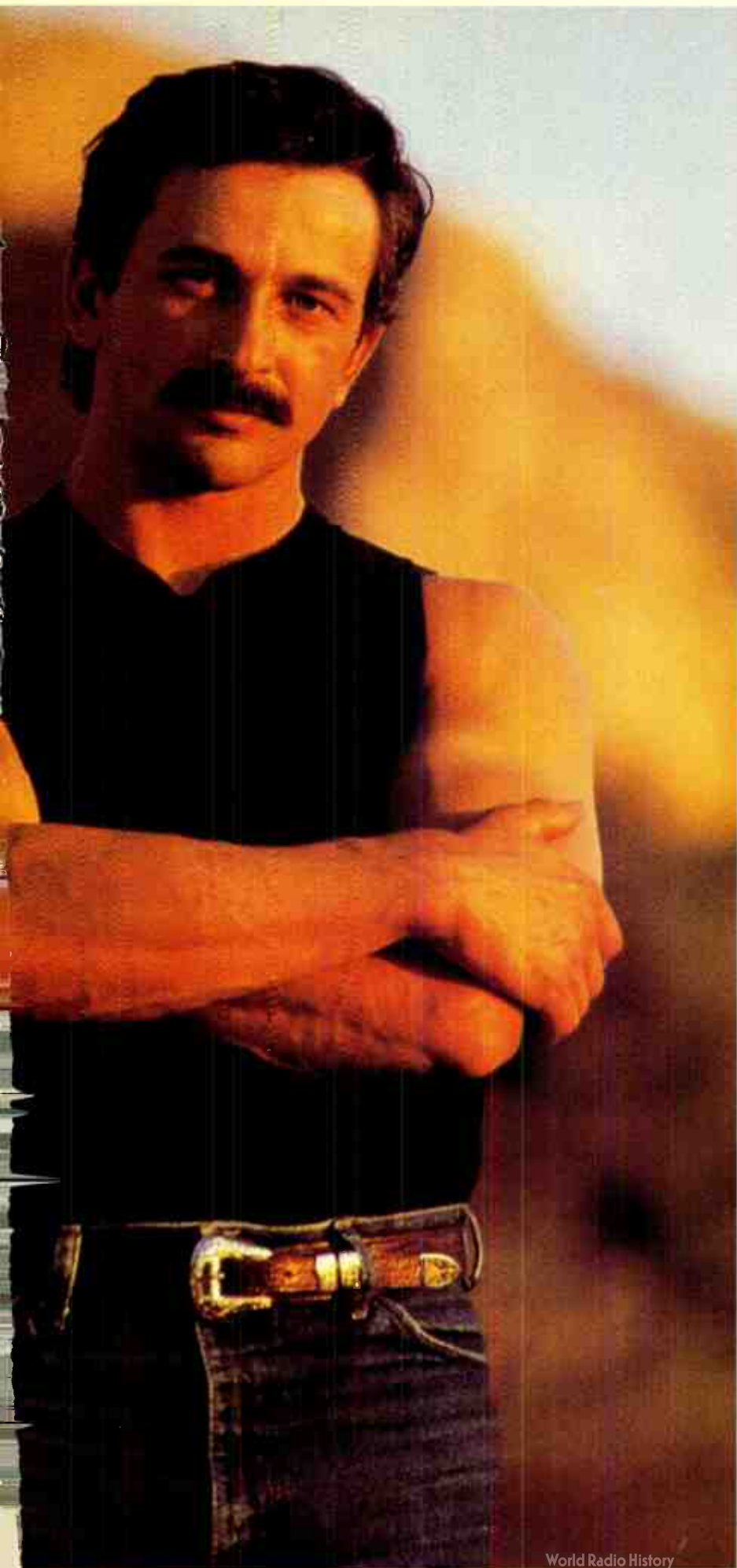
Tippin is a native of Travelers Rest, South Carolina, and a former aviator, welder, truckdriver and heavy equipment operator who turned Nashville songwriter about four years ago. His first major coup as a writer came a couple of years ago, when he and Mark Collie co-wrote Collie's debut single, "Something With a Ring to It." Good-humoredly, he recalls how he suggested the title to Collie one day before leaving on the half-hour drive home from his publisher's Music Row office. By the time he walked in the door at home, Collie had left about a half-dozen potential verses for the song-in-progress on his machine.

A former demo singer, Tippin came roaring on to the scene with his own recording debut early this year, releasing a critically praised album, *You've Got to Stand for Something*. The album's title cut and first single, "You've Got to Stand for Something"—a proud, uncompromising, grassroots anthem reflecting Tippin's hard-baked mountain heritage—soared all the way to Number Five and stayed on the charts for more than 25 weeks.

AARON TIPPIN

Looks to His Roots





You've Got to Stand for Something was highlighted by nine other original songs co-written by Tippin and others in a similar rootsy/country/honky-tonk vein. The song titles—"Many Many Beers Ago," "Ain't That a Hell of a Note," "The Sky's Got the Blues," "Up Against You," "She Made a Memory Out of Me," "I Wonder How Far It Is Over You"—give you a pretty good sense of the general musical drift.

Even in this age of rampant neo-traditionalism, the usually jaded and slow-to-react music press quickly rolled out the welcome wagon for Tippin and his unvarnished country sound. "This South Carolina native has that rare ability to sound totally swallowed up by his songs, and his unabashedly high yodelly yodels remind many of Hank Williams Senior," proclaimed David Zimmerman of *USA Today*. "This guy is the big discovery of 1991."

Nashville music journalist, Robert K. Oermann, was even more to the point: "Aaron Tippin is a star. You read it here first." Even my compatriot, *Country Music's* crusty, vitriolic Rich Kienzle, was uncharacteristically expansive, proclaiming in these very pages (in the March/April issue): "Tippin is simply the freshest New Traditionalist to hit the business in a long while."

"Some may disagree with me and say, 'Well, he talks *mighty country*,' but I think I could'a been in any area of the music industry," Tippin himself observes of his 1950's-flavored musical slant. "50's music with a 90's bottom end," is how he describes the sound on his album, produced by Emory Gordy Jr.

"I could'a been a rock or pop singer, because Lynyrd Skynyrd and people like that really did influence me," he adds. "But I'm here because of what this music means to me. Like, for instance, I take pride in knowing that I'm more or less on the same label that Jimmie Rodgers was on (RCA Victor). He was living in Asheville, North Carolina, which is only 45 miles from where I was born and raised, when he made his first recordings for Victor. And I hope that maybe in some way I'm bringing back a little of his tradition."

Up close and in person, Tippin ("Tip" to his friends—"Actually, my dad is Tip," he grins. "I'm 'Little Tip,' unless he ain't around!") is as trim and solid as a locust fence post. His dark hair is flecked with gray, but his body is hard as marble from seven years of intensive body building. (He's won first prize in a handful of amateur body-building contests in the past few years.) He exudes an easygoing, infectious friendliness, but his forthrightness sharpens into steely intensity when he's making an important point about his

music. His free-flowing conversation is pleasantly peppered with bursts of rowdy laughter and knee-slapping guffaws, especially when he's telling tales on himself or recalling events from his colorful past.

Like the Sunday morning at a "biker swap meet" in Charlotte, North Carolina, when he decided to get his palmetto tree tattoo. Or like the time back in Carolina when he and his country band, Tip and The Darby Hill Band, accidentally got booked into a rock club in Augusta, Georgia: "It was called Smokey's Saloon, so, hell, it had to be country, right!?" he roars with mirth. "Wrong! We went in there and started playin', and, man, they hated

musical intensity.

"Emory and I never sang together. I was just his bratty little brother who was always tearin' up his model cars, bangin' 'em into a wall, and Mama wouldn't let him beat me up!" Tippin lets loose with another peal of laughter. "I only got to see him play one time, since I was too young to go in the honky tonks. But I heard him practice all the time. He didn't have money for equipment, so he'd rig up his own amps and stuff, and he was always tearin' his guitar apart and changing the body. He was an electrical genius. I often wonder, had he lived, whether he would have come around to country mu-

being made back there. Most guys I went to school with, their fathers or grandfathers or great-grandfathers either made liquor or sawed wood. Or both. Times was rough, and people got by best they could. People from that area, including myself, are very clannish. It's easy to understand how a stranger, especially being a lawman, could go into them hills and not come back.

"From the time I was six years old, I lived in those mountains, those foothills," he adds. "And that's where I learned about life and grew up. People there were rough. They came up in a rough life. Workin' 12-15 hours a day you build some mighty tough men. So when they get tired of talkin' and it gets down to scrappin', they're gonna swing some mighty big licks. For the guys that didn't grow so tall, they got knives and guns.

There was a period when Greer, South Carolina, had the third highest rate of violent crime in the country.

"I guess I went through kind of a little rough period myself for a while," Tippin shrugs. "I was ridin' a scooter, and I had my hair way down my back and a big beard and mustache. And in my day, I guess I've pitched my share of three-day drunks. But I don't know as I ever thought of myself as a tough guy," he frowns disapprovingly. "I learned pretty early on to avoid trouble if I could. I learned that tough don't mean *spit* if you end up getting laid in the ground with a nickel's worth of lead in your ass."

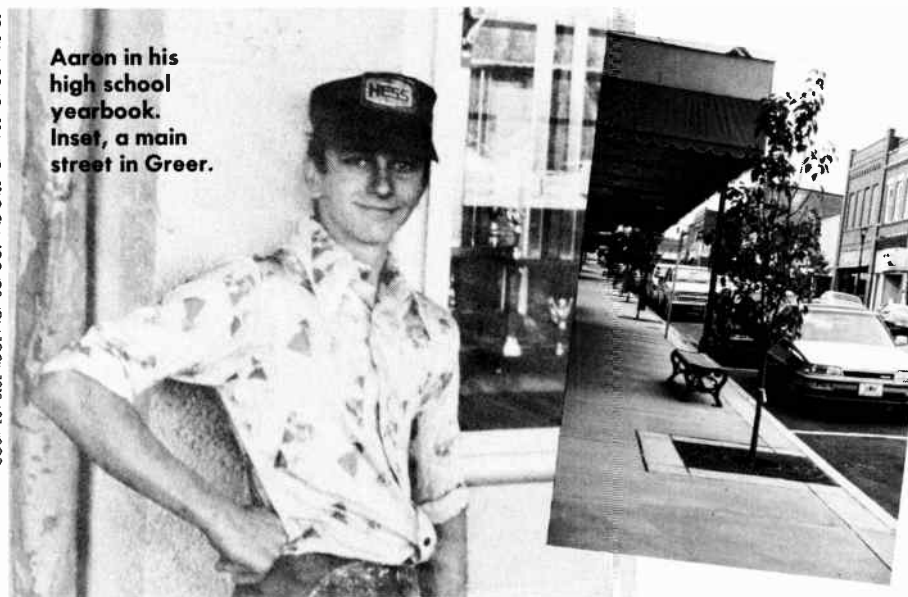
Tippin also remembers that the prevailing musical tastes of his peer group ran toward rock 'n' roll. But even during his formative years, his own tastes already went distinctly against the grain.

"Even bein' from a little bitty high school up in the mountains like I was, it was definitely not cool to be a country music fan," he grins defiantly. "Even the guys I knew who were into it would change their car radios back to a rock 'n' roll station as soon as they got within a half-mile of the school parking lot. But not me, boy! I was arrogant! I'd come through the parkin' lot in my jeep, Conway and Loretta just blastin' wide open!"

Tippin also developed an abiding fondness for bluegrass music and a hankering to learn to play banjo. He ended up in a little bluegrass band called The Dixie Ridge Runners. ("I didn't sing at all, just played 'catfight' banjo. We thought we were great, but we was pitiful.") One day he was hanging out with some other musicians in a music store and wanted to pick banjo on "Life Is Like a Mountain Railway." When nobody else volunteered to handle vocals, he stepped in himself, and a lead singing career was instantly born.

A few years later, at age 22, he graduated up to fronting his own country band, Tip and The Darby Hill Boys. "We'd play around wherever we could, in a four-

COURTESY: BILLY RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL AND GREER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Aaron in his high school yearbook. Inset, a main street in Greer.

"From the time I was six years old, I lived in those mountains, those foothills. And that's where I learned about life and grew up."

us! Hated us! They kept yellin', 'Rock 'n' roll! Play some rock 'n' roll!' Only rock song we knew was the Eric Clapton/J.J. Cale hit, 'Cocaine.' So, man, we played that for 20 minutes! Over and over!"

Growing up in a secure, middle-class household in backwoods Carolina, Tippin recalls that he came from a mostly non-musical family. ("I had a couple of uncles who played a little, and my grandmother was a concert violinist when she was young. But I never was encouraged to be a singer by anybody. I sang in the car, sang in the shower....") His father was a professional aviator, and by the time Tippin was 15, he'd earned his own certification as a small craft pilot. His brother Emory, five years his senior, was, however, a dyed-in-the-wool Southern rocker who fronted a band called The New Vibrations. Emory had an enduring influence on Aaron, at least in terms of his

music, and if me and him would have ever played together."

At the age of 16, his brother Emory was shot to death. "It goes back to the people in that part of the country bein' pretty rowdy," he recalls hesitantly. "He just got involved in the wrong situation. He was over at somebody's house and was accidently shot. Or so I've been told."

Tippin himself spent much of his youth in comfortable enough surroundings. He drove the tractor, did chores on the family farm and flew with his father on weekends. But he takes pride in the fact that he is not only from, but very much of, the Dark Corner and its curious backwoods mentality:

"Anybody who knows anything about South Carolina knows about the Dark Corner," he explains with a trace of reverence. "It got its name back in the 20's and 30's when there was a lot of liquor

“I remember sittin’ and listening to the old stuff for hours. It was so cool. I loved it. It sounded so real that if you’d closed the curtains it probably could have been 1950.”

state area. We had an old school bus we turned into a band bus. Always shoe-stringin’ it, starvin’ to death. Always gettin’ kicked outa places, because we wouldn’t play Top 40 music,” he recalls with another stubborn nod of his head. “That’s what a lot of people wanted, but I just wouldn’t conform to it.”

During his 20’s, Tippin married and had a daughter, and during his stint as an airplane pilot he remembers, “For years every time I flew over Nashville I’d look down and kinda wonder what they were doin’ down there.” His long-range career goal by then was to become a commercial jet pilot—until the energy crunch knocked the bottom out of the demand for pilots. After that, there was a period when, he says, “I was just about to get out of music completely and go get me a job in the mill and live out my life in Carolina.”

But then a number of things happened. He got divorced and moved back in with his mother. Somewhere around this time a gospel song he’d composed one day while operating a bulldozer, called “Happy Birthday, Jesus,” found its way to the desk of Nashville publisher Charlie Monk. When Monk encouraged him to come to Nashville and try his hand at writing songs professionally, Tippin realized that he’d “run out of reasons not to come up here and get in the pile.”

Thus, at age 28, armed with a video of an appearance he’d made on *You Can Be a Star*, The Nashville Network’s televised amateur music competition, he arrived in Music City and, with Monk’s



Aaron displays his palmetto tattoo to Ralph Emery and the Nashville Now audience. The palmetto tree appears on the South Carolina state flag.

help, landed a songwriting contract with Acuff-Rose publishers. Eventually his songs would be recorded by Charley Pride, David Ball and Josh Logan and by two gospel groups, The Kingsmen and The Midsouth Boys, affording him a modest living. During the first three or four years in Nashville, he balanced songwriting with body building and earning a 40-hour-a-week paycheck for himself and his young daughter (still back in Carolina).

“I got a night job in an aluminum roll-

ing mill in Russellville, Kentucky,” he remembers. “I’d work all night, lift weights for about an hour, then drive to Nashville and write and make demos or whatever until one or two. Then I’d drive back, lift weights another hour, go to bed until ten, then get up and go back to work.”

Eventually, demo tapes sung by Tippin and circulated around Music Row began attracting as much attention as the original songs he sang on them. “People started wonderin’, ‘Who’s this redneck singin’ on here? Where’d ya find this hillbilly?’ I guess they thought they were hearin’ something a little different,” he guffaws. Mary Martin, former head of A&R at RCA Records, became especially interested, and brought Tippin to the attention of Joe Galante, then head of RCA/Nashville. Soon Tippin was offered a contract with the label.

Tippin still makes it back to South Carolina and the Dark Corner when he can. (Lately, he concedes, that hasn’t been very often.) And even though he insists that “they’ll throw dirt on me in Tennessee,” he also makes it clear that the Dark Corner and its people will always be with him and will always be a part of his music.

“When I sit down to write a song, many, many of those folks are in those songs,” he explains. “They’re the ones who taught me how to live, taught me about life, taught me how to grow up. So they should be just as proud of what I’m doing with my music as I am, since they’re such a big part of it. I know I owe them a lot, and I hope I always represent them well.” ■



Aaron’s video/single, “You’ve Got to Stand for Something,” attracted worldwide attention. He even sang it for the troops on a Bob Hope TV special in Saudi.

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MUSIC GUIDE

LOOK WHO'S AVAILABLE THIS MONTH

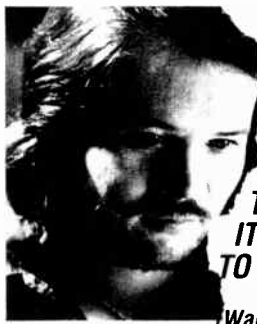


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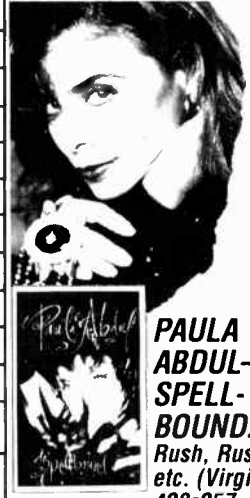
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On the Set with The STATLER BROTHERS

by Hazel Smith

Hazel goes on the set of The Statler Brothers' new TV show and hobnobs with the cast and crew. She finds out a lot more goes on than what we see back at home.

The Statlers' big bus moseys into the Grand Ole Opry parking lot like a large gray turtle finding its way, slowly but surely. It's 10:45 A.M., and like clockwork, here are The Statler Brothers, as always, on time. Call time is 11:00 A.M. for the rehearsals and tapings of The Statler Brothers' new TV variety show.

I wait a few minutes before entering the back door of the Opry House. Inside, down the long corridor, I spy Harold Reid followed by a younger version of

himself—his 18-year-old son who recently graduated from high school. Smiling at the similarity in father and son, I then see Don Reid followed by his 16-year-old, guitar-playing son who is also the image of his old dad. I learn later on that the sons have a band back home in Staunton called Grandstaff. I suggest Sons of Statler. They shrug.

The Statlers, their manager Marshall Grant and Jim Owens are co-producers of the new variety show which will debut in October. Francis Anne Varallo is the

glue that holds it all together. Grant, Owens and Varallo are the next faces I say hello to.

Then there's Gary Leverett, who works as a stage hand. "How many stage hands did they use to put this show together?" I ask.

"Eighteen," replies Leverett. "Wow!" think I. After all is said and done, I know you fans will want to know how many people were required to tape 13 shows. Frances Anne Varallo shares the info with me. Production staff—12, audio—

four, video—one, makeup—two, hair—one, clothes stylist—one, technical director—one, assistant technical director—one, five camera people, one cue card lady, one lighting director, one assistant lighting director and at least five other people who do various chores. Plus caterers—two to four—who serve the food that was already prepared. We're pushing 60 people here and haven't gotten to the orchestra or band.

Don and Harold look pretty unkempt. When Phil and Jimmy show up at 11 A.M. for the rehearsal, their appearance is pretty much the same. For 20 consecutive years, The Statlers have been named group of the year by you fans. That's a record that would take 20 years to tie. Still, these four guys look just like you and me after 12 hours of working hard for several days in a row, with eight hours of sleep, then breakfast and then back to the grind. See, The Statlers tape a few shows in a row, in a short block of time, so it can get pretty intense. But, pros that they are, there is no arrogance, and little egotism. Harold, Phil and Jimmy wear well-worn jeans and sneakers. Don is in brown trousers and brown loafers. They look weary but pleasant, like you and me.

Musical director Bill Walker, seated at the piano onstage, talks with director Steve Womack and The Statlers. Frances Anne receives instructions to get a matching cup, saucer and plate with a real sandwich for a skit. Harold holds a mike, Don wipes his nose, Phil and Jimmy sorta stand there.

Quickly, Harold and Don go through a skit. Harold: "I been to the doctor." Don: "To the doctor?" Harold: "Give me some medicine." (Calls off stage.) "Oh, nurse!" (Two beautiful girls wearing short nurses' dresses enter. One has a plate with a ham sandwich and the other a saucer holding a cup filled with coffee.) Harold giggles with the girls, takes the cup of coffee and the ham sandwich in his hands and takes a bite. Don: (As the girls exit very wiggly off stage.) "Is that your medicine?" (Points to coffee and sandwich.) Harold: "No, this is a ham sandwich and a cup of coffee." (Points to girls.) "That's my medicine."

Decisions are being discussed. Bill Walker plays a few riffs of "Last Date" on the upright, followed by "Sentimental Journey," "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." Mikes are placed stage front. The four Statlers keep in time with the music by tapping their fingers on the piano.

"Ready?" asks Walker.

Nobody answers, so he goes into "Little Brown Church" as the four guys sorta hum along. "Ready," someone yells. Bill Walker straightens up as The Statlers move stage front. "Five, four, three, two, one, and..."

"Noah" is the gospel song the guys bolt into, an up tempo sing-a-long that has me and the stage hands bopping along with them. They rehearse once. These guys are pros. The Statlers' five-piece band watches as the stagehands assemble their equipment. With the band in place,



Variety is what it's all about—in one show The Statlers will kick up their heels with The Oak Ridge Boys.

Harold, Phil, Don and Jimmy perform "Noah" again, but only once. You can't perfect perfection. Next is "Tomorrow Never Comes" with Jimmy's tenor lead strong enough to curl your hair. They follow with their monster hit, "Do You Remember These," with Harold chewing gum, and end with an unbelievable version of "How Great Thou Art."

Lunch is called, and I am allowed to dine "in house" with the crew and stars alike on sandwich fixings, cheeses, meats, potato salad, potato chips, pickles, pineapple upside-down cake, iced tea and coffee.

At 2:00 P.M., Mark Chesnutt shows up for his rehearsal with his producer, Mark Wright. Chesnutt is sweet, shy and ready to sing. Wright, after learning I

am there to do a story on the TV show for *Country Music Magazine*, allows, "Aw, that's the magazine that blasted Mark's album. I'll send 'em a copy of Mark's Gold record when we get it." I sorta eased to my seat. After all, I've never reviewed an album, and at the moment I can't recall who panned Chesnutt's music.

After meeting with the clothes stylist, it is decided that when Mark comes back later on for the taping, he'll wear a red shirt that he left back at the hotel. But for now he can just rehearse in his regular clothes. The 14-piece orchestra files in, takes their seats and begins to tune their instruments. I have heard prettier sounds. Mark walks into the middle of the bunch that includes five violins and a cello and sings the sugar out of "Too Cold at Home," his hit on MCA.

Chesnutt's onstage rehearsal goes well although I can tell he is a little nervous, embarrassed and bored. Lights are flashing, no one is in the audience at this time except the help and me. His eyes tell me he really wants to get it over with. As he curls every word around each and every note, he looks out and smiles my way. I nod and smile as if to say, "Keep on singing, Mark. It'll be over soon, and when you return, there will be an audience and you'll be fine." And soon it is over and Mark leaves.

Rex Allen Jr. and Janie Fricke are the next guests. Janie isn't present the day I am there, but Rex is. Every artist on the show, including The Statlers' band and the orchestra and Bill Walker, as well as all the other guest stars, are very friendly. But Rex is not. He has his nose up in the air, smoking cigarettes and blowing his smoke on whoever is around. He rehearses his song,

"I Remember You," with all the confidence in the world, leaves the stage and whizzes by like we aren't even there. It takes all kinds, I reckon.

The Cowboy Symphony Orchestra is in place, and The Statlers enter in makeup and Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes, looking spiffy. The first song they sing, penned by the Reid brothers, is a wonderful, traditional-sounding number titled "Clay, Kentucky." With Harold on dobro and Jimmy on mandolin, the lyrics, harmony and instrumentation are superb. Later Harold tells me that he and Don had the entire song complete except for the town in Kentucky. They needed a one-syllable town. With their road atlas, the first town they came across that fit the song was Clay, so they say. If you



Harmonies blended when The Gatlin Brothers guested with The Statlers. Both rehearsals and tapings went off without a hitch. Hazel had a front-row seat. Jerry Lee Lewis kept the boys in suspense for a while. When he showed up, The Killer was in top form.



ever get a chance, listen to the song. It sounds like there is a little more to that story than they let on.

Next up is Lacy J. Dalton, and what a nice person she is! Lacy J. was called at the last minute to fill in for Tammy Wynette, whose mother had died. And fill in Lacy does. Her classic hit, "16th Avenue," is a real show stopper on any stage. She goes over the song once, advises the orchestra where she thinks the strong lines are, goes over the song again, and it is rehearsed. I speak with Lacy. She's just moved from California to nearby Mt. Juliet. Lacy is such a talent. I sure hope she connects with another hit record soon.

After the next lull The Gatlins arrive. Larry explains to the orchestra how he wants his songs to sound. Once the orchestra gets "All the Gold in California" and "Star Spangled Broken Heart" the way he wants them, he is fine. Larry is not bossy, arrogant or hateful. When we meet in the hallway, he is talking with someone, but he stops and says hello.

Supper time and again I am allowed to feast with the finest. There is real chow of ribs, sweet and sour chicken, rice, corn on the cob, fresh fruit, bread, cake, tea and coffee. Very good, I might add.

Have you ever been to a TV taping? If

so, you know there's always a half-dozen or so heavy-set, middle-aged biddies running around trying to seat the audience. The show is always overbooked, as is this one, and they frantically rush around filling all seats in the camera's eye. Since this is for a fall show, fans wearing short sleeves have to be seated out of the camera view. I slide and slide, and finally say, "It's a good thing my slider has plenty of tread or it would be worn out."

Now it's time for the real thing. Props are in place and rehearsals are over. The street scene backdrop is in place, lights in windows, and on the marquee of The Roxy is "The Statlers." The audience applauds as Harold walks on dressed in a white jacket, green shirt, black pants and flowered tie, and continues applauding as Don walks on dressed in a gray suit with black shirt and flowered tie. Jimmy enters to the applause in a light tan suit with a white shirt, and Phil, as the applause continues, comes on stage dressed in a black plaid jacket, black trousers, white shirt and paisley tie. They clean up good, The Statlers. The group tapes "Guilty" in one take.

Up goes the street scene. Down comes the brick wall with look-alike stained glass windows. The Gatlins are introduced. Steve wears a black suit, Rudy a

beige suit, while Larry wears a military-looking black jacket belted with aqua shirt and gray jeans. The Statlers and Gatlins harmonize on "Have a Little Talk with Jesus." Friends, it is awesome. Then up goes the brick wall, down comes a sign which reads "Classic Corner," where The Gatlins sing their hit "All the Gold in California."

Now in his red shirt, Mark Chesnutt walks on stage. Every female in the audience starts to wiggle in her seat at the sight of the young, hillbilly stud from Beaumont. The orchestra hits the downbeat, and Mark, who is no longer nervous, sings "Too Cold at Home" for the live audience. As he leaves the stage, the crowd is still screaming for more.

The comedian (there's one in every crowd), T. Texas Terry, is pretty funny. He's a cowboy who rides a stick horse and does rope tricks. It beats begging, and kids at heart will love him. So what the heck. At least he isn't arrogant.

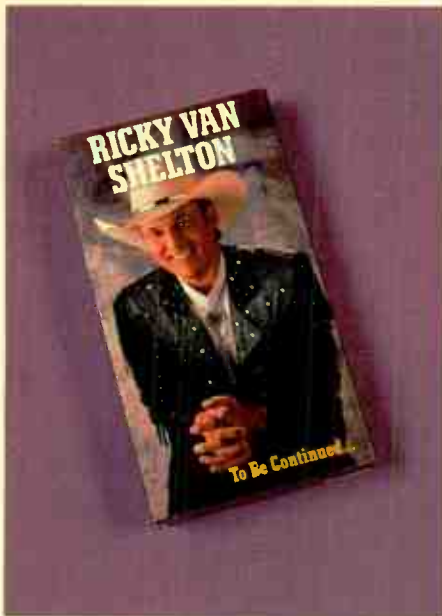
Don introduces Lacy J., and she performs "16th Avenue" in one take, like the champ she truly is. The crowd loves her. Rex Allen follows with "I Remember You." The Statlers tape "Tomorrow Never Comes" in one take and the audience goes crazy. I am screaming, too. It is so good I can't help it. After all, I'd screamed that morning during rehearsal...alone. The church wall and windows are lowered and the guys wail "Noah" with Walker on the old 88 upright. Another winner. After whispers, they decide to do one more song although it is now nearing 11 P.M. Me and them have already been here 12 hours. With Walker, the quartet runs through an unrehearsed version of "This Old House." Would you believe it is perfect, and they keep the take.

The night is over. Marshall Grant, the production crew and The Statlers are concerned that Jerry Lee Lewis, who is booked the next day, may not show up. That will be the last day of taping, and they hope against hope that The Killer will come through. I go home weary, but happy that I got to be part of a wonderful experience.

The next day I learn that The Killer did indeed show up. He was supposed to arrive at 2 P.M., but at 4 P.M. a call came in stating that he was circling Music City in his Lear jet, having his hair cut! No matter, the great Jerry Lee Lewis did make the show. He sang both "Great Balls of Fire" and "You Win Again" like a troupier, thrilling the fans as well as The Statlers.

All's well that ends well. Thirteen shows are done. The fate is in your hands. If you fans love the shows, they will do 13 more and 13 more, and so on. You have the last word. Watch them this fall on Saturday nights following *Grand Ole Opry Live*. Can't wait. ■

EDITOR'S CHOICE

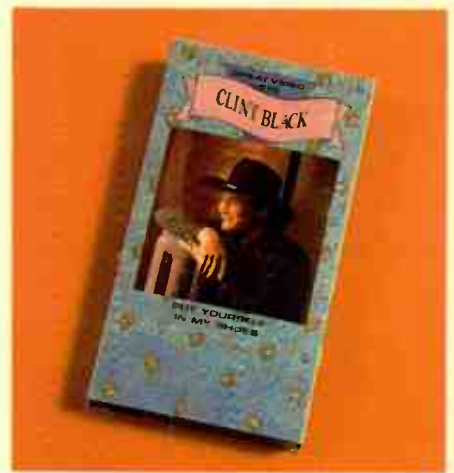
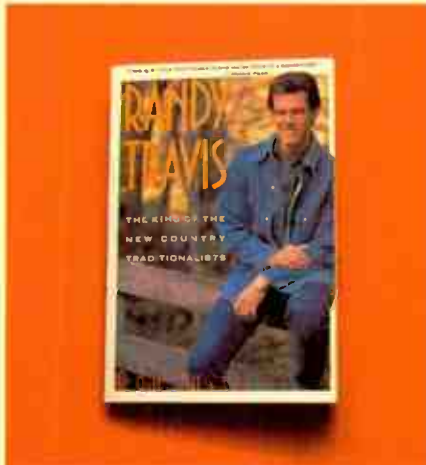


RICKY VAN SHELTON: TO BE CONTINUED...

What can I say...Ricky Van Shelton is a hunk with a fabulous voice! He has topped the country album charts and produced seven Number One singles—so far. Ricky Van Shelton's video, *To Be Continued...*, includes every music video Ricky has made, plus two live performances. In addition, there are interviews with Ricky and his mother. Ricky discusses the time he received his first guitar at Christmas, his hobby of collecting old cars and restoring them, the pleasure he gets taking "Sunday" drives through the country, goals for his Beefalo business and more. During the interviews, Ricky reveals his humility and sense of humor. It is an absolute delight hearing about his interests, plans and lifestyle. His mother adds insight by explaining that all Ricky ever wanted to pursue was music and art. I thoroughly enjoyed *To Be Continued...* In fact, I watched it twice the first night I brought it home! *To Be Continued...* includes Ricky's big hit songs: "Crime of Passion," "Somebody Lied," "Life Turned Her That Way," "I'll Leave This World Loving You," "Hole in My Pocket" (Live), "Living Proof" (Live), "Statue of a Fool" and "I Meant Every Word He Said." *To Be Continued...* is 35 minutes long and costs only \$24.95, #G5W. See the review by Rich Kienzle in *Essential Collector* (November/December 1990 issue, *Country Music*).

RANDY TRAVIS BIOGRAPHY

Something we've all been waiting for—a biography about one of the top country performers (and heartthrobs), Randy Travis! Randy has sold millions of records, won numerous country music awards, toured worldwide and is one of the youngest male performers ever invited to join the Grand Ole Opry—the idol of many. With a name and talent like his, you might think all the acclaim would go to his head, but not so! Randy will take all the time in the world to speak with anyone who passes his way. Now you are given the opportunity to meet this man through the biography, *Randy Travis*. You will learn about his childhood mischievousness, his plight with the courts, his growing success and his relationship with Lib Hatcher. You also get childhood and current photos of Randy and a discography. *Randy Travis* is 196 pages long and costs \$8.95, #B6F. Good Christmas reading!



CLINT BLACK: PUT YOURSELF IN MY SHOES

I have to admit it—just as Hazel Smith has "an eye" for George Strait, I have "two eyes" for Clint Black! Many other warm-blooded women admire his great looks, appealing physique and fabulous musical talent too! And now, not only are you able to listen to this wonderful man, but you can see him on his first compilation of great video hits, *Put Yourself in My Shoes*. Clint's collection includes all his top-notch songs, among them: "Put Yourself in My Shoes," "Killin' Time," "A Better Man" and "Walkin' Away." You also get interview footage from *Country Music Video Magazine*, filmed in Disney World. Don't wait another day to see Clint's gorgeous smile and hear his fabulous voice! What I love most about Clint's video is being able to watch it over and over—I never get tired of seeing him. *Put Yourself in My Shoes* is only \$19.95, #V4M.

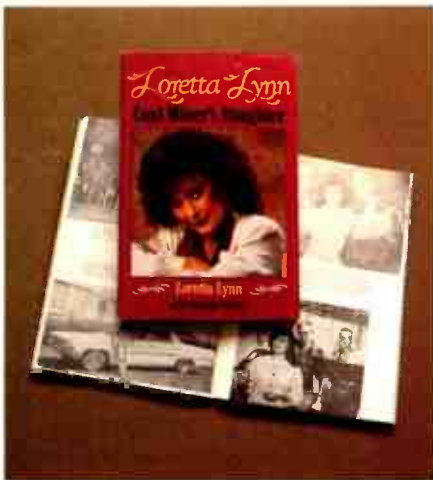


COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE LOGO T-SHIRT

You're familiar with our *Country Music Magazine* trademark. Now you can get this famous logo on a comfortable, 100% cotton T-shirt. Made for us by Champion, these T-shirts are the same top quality Champion provides to most professional sports teams. The classy *Country Music* logo is printed in white across your favorite color: red or navy blue. Melissa models our red T-shirt, and that's me, Robin, wearing our best-selling "I Love Country Music" T-shirt. It comes in navy blue only. We are offering these T-shirts at a low price of \$10.00 each. *Country Music* logo T-shirt, #G2P-navy blue, #G2Q-red; "I Love Country Music" T-shirt, #G2O-navy blue. Please indicate shirt size (S,M,L,XL) and product code on order form.

LORETTA LYNN: COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER

Coal Miner's Daughter is a spectacular autobiography written by The Queen of Country Music, Loretta Lynn. Loretta expresses her true emotions in tell-it-like-it-is language, taking you back in time to experience her life from Butcher Holler, Kentucky, to present-day stardom. Loretta shares the depressed times she lived in—her father couldn't afford to buy her shoes, her mother had to insulate the walls with Sears catalog pages, and they'd go weeks eating only bread and gravy. Yet all these hardships brought her family closer together.



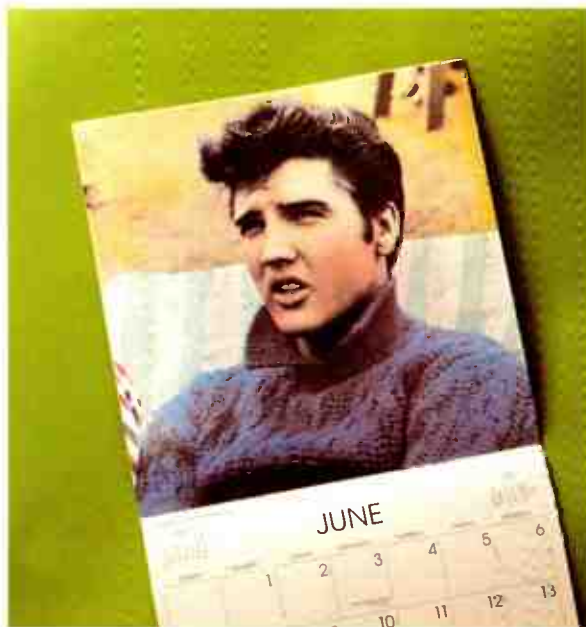
As Loretta continues her story, you'll find yourself captured by the emotions of a 13-year-old bride on her honeymoon night, the confusion of a deserted 14-year-old sent home pregnant, and the anger of a child who was very close to her father when he died of black lung disease. In addition, Loretta goes into detail about her very close relationship with Patsy Cline and Patsy's influence on her life and career. As *Billboard Magazine* put it, "Few subjects are too personal to deal with here, yet there is nothing sensationalistic...Those reading this can be assured they have met the real Loretta Lynn." I agree.

When I started reading *Coal Miner's Daughter*, I could hardly put it down to eat or sleep. I felt every emotion of Loretta's. She told intimate moments of her life, drawing me in to share them. There I was, laughing and crying, just me and Loretta. *Coal Miner's Daughter* has been out of print for a while, but has been reissued now in a larger version with a new cover of Loretta, larger type, bigger pages and better quality paper. Loretta also included a layout of her bus and her own 16-page photo album—fabulous pictures you can't afford to miss. Before this novelty book goes out of print again, I recommend buying it for its insightful content, its rare photos and its status as a collector's item. *Coal Miner's Daughter* sells for \$7.95, #B8W. A perfect stocking-stuffer.



HANK SNOW: THE SINGING RANGER RIDES AGAIN

Here it is, folks! 105 of Hank Snow's legendary recordings, brought together in a four-compact-disc boxed set, covering his career from 1949-1953. You can enjoy nearly six hours of this legend's great music, his most popular songs, including "I'm Movin' On," "Spanish Fire Ball," "The Rhumba Boogie," "The Golden Rocket," "Just Keep A' Movin'" and much more. When Rich Kienzle reviewed this great collection in *Buried Treasures* (March/April 1990 issue, *Country Music*), he said, "Readers must agree...they've been snapping them up like hotcakes." This valuable boxed set is expensive, but the overall cost of the package breaks down to only 80 cents per song, and includes a booklet with plenty of photos covering the personal history and recording career of Hank Snow. This is definitely a CD-set everyone should have in their collection. I keep one on my shelf! You get the four-compact-disc set and history booklet for \$85.98, #BCD15426. Sorry, no LP's or cassettes...CD's only.



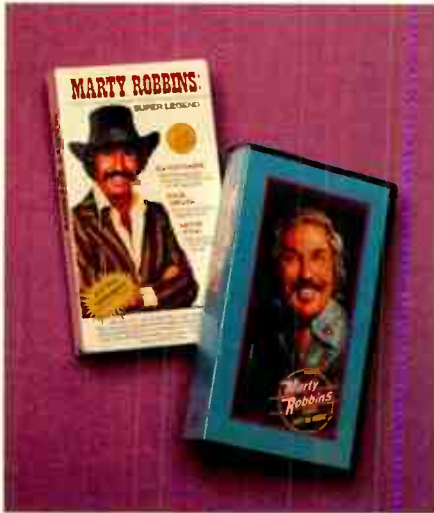
ELVIS 1992 WALL CALENDAR

Wow! Look at dreamy-eyed Elvis Presley captured on 12 months of the 1992 Elvis Wall Calendar. All 12 glossy, close-up pictures of Elvis are 12" x 12", and the entire calendar opens up to 12" x 24". Also, throughout the calendar are facts about Elvis' life and career. For example, do you know when Elvis performed four sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden or when he graduated from high school? Find out these answers on your Elvis 1992 Calendar. This calendar sells for only \$9.95, #G6X. Plus, when you buy now, you get the Elvis 1991 Wall Calendar free! Just think of all those great collector's photos! A bonus just for you!

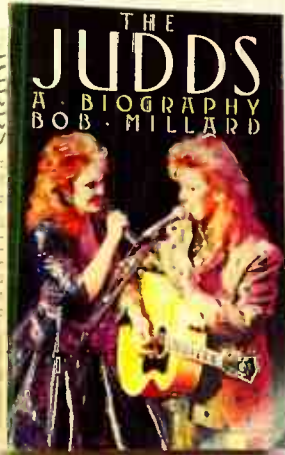
Nashville Warehouse: Country Christmas

MARTY ROBBINS VIDEOS

If you like Marty Robbins, you'll love these videos: *Super Legend* and *A Man and His Music*. The two-hour video, *Super Legend*, features 18 performances and includes Marty's Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." Additionally, you see interviews with Marty's family and individuals who played a major role in his career, from Little Jimmy Dickens to Roy Acuff. The tape also includes exciting clips from his racing career and rare appearances from early television shows and the big screen. This is our Number One selling video. It is hot! Other performances include: "El Paso," "White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Ribbon of Darkness," "Singing the Blues," "I Couldn't Keep From Crying," "Don't Worry 'Bout Me" and more.



Now for a *Man and His Music*. Marty Robbins always made it his business to be different. This often baffled the industry "big wigs," but it never failed to please his fans. When Marty did step in front of his audience, he knew how to make everyone have a good time—just "funnin' around," as he put it. And that is exactly what has been captured for you on this 55-minute video, *A Man and His Music*, taped during a concert at the Grand Ole Opry. You'll hear such favorites as "Ribbon of Darkness," "A White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Big Iron," "Don't Worry," "That's Alright Mama," "Among My Souvenirs," "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife" and "El Paso." This video is one of the top sellers in *Country Music Magazine*, and it shouldn't be missed. Rich Kienzle reviewed both of these Marty Robbins videos in *Essential Collector* (July/August 1990 issue, *Country Music*) and raved about them. Ronnie Robbins, Marty's son, is ecstatic over the continued support his father's fans have shown as demonstrated by the tremendous sales of these videos. You definitely get great entertainment and collector's items when you order these classics. *Super Legend*, #G2A and *A Man and His Music*, #G1G, sell for only \$39.95 each. Super gifts for Marty fans!

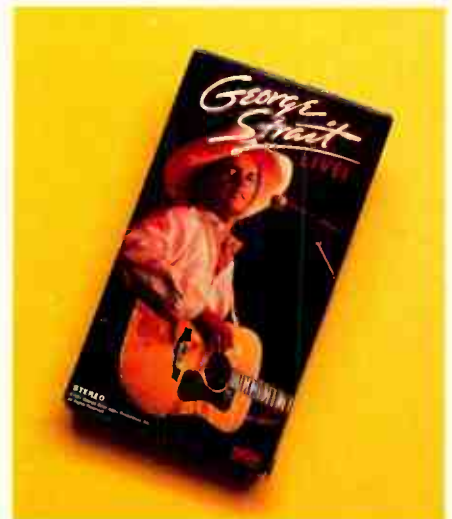


THE JUDDS

Wynonna Judd has a smile like Elvis Presley's, a voice comparable to Patsy Cline's and a vocal style all her own. Wynonna and her mother, Naomi, The Judds, have become the hottest country music duo singing today. Not only are they great entertainers—Wynonna and Naomi have brought happiness and hope into many people's lives. While reading letters sent to the Editor of *Country Music*, I come across many emotional and heartwarming stories of readers who have experienced The Judds' warmth and feeling, often uplifting them through tragic events. Now you can read about this hot duo, including how they had to struggle to make it big in the country music industry. Their climb took perseverance and great talent. *The Judds* is our Number One, best-selling book. Its 206 pages contain plenty of photos, and it only costs \$8.95, #B4A. *The Judds* is out of print, but there are a limited number of copies still in circulation. So order now, and don't miss out on this collector's item!

GEORGE STRAIT LIVE!

George Strait, the platinum-selling Country Music Entertainer of the Year, is captured for the first time on video. Performing live at the Dallas Reunion Arena, George Strait is accompanied by his Ace in the Hole Band. In *George Strait Live!*, George sings all of his greatest hits, including: "The Fireman," "Deep Water," "The Cowboy Rides Away," "Hot Burning Flames," "Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," "Dance Time in Texas," "You're Something Special to Me," "A Six Pack to Go," "Nobody in His Right Mind Would've Left Her," "Amarillo by Morning," "All My Ex's Live in Texas," "Rhythm of the Road," "Any Old Time," "You Look So Good in Love," "Marina Del Rey" and "Unwound." *George Strait Live!* is 52 minutes of colorful entertainment. If you like George, you can't help but love his video. Rich Kienzle states it very nicely in *Essential Collector* (July/August 1990 issue, *Country Music*), "He tears through 16 numbers...showing clearly why he's one of the best entertainers the industry's seen in years." *George Strait Live!* costs \$29.95, #G2G. Order now for Christmas.



DIAMOND CHIP WATCH

Move over, Gucci! Here is a gorgeous, 24-karat, gold-layered watch with a real diamond! We have proudly displayed our *Country Music Magazine* logo in gold, contrasting nicely with the black face and pebble-grain, genuine leather strap. The diamond and gold-color hour, minute and second hands add a handsome touch to the highly accurate, quartz electronic analog movement. This watch is so handsome that Tony Bunting, a Vice President of *Country Music Magazine*, wears it daily, and I must say it looks sharp! The *Country Music* diamond watch is for both men and women and only costs \$19.95, #G4L. A beautiful gift for someone special.

Nashville Warehouse; Country Christmas

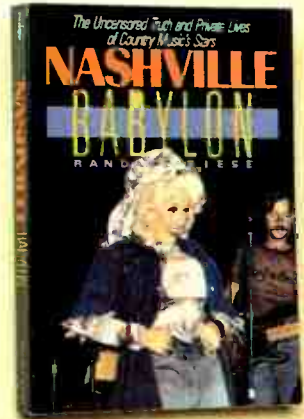


COUNTRY MUSIC ON BROADWAY

Filmed in 1964, in New York City, *Country Music on Broadway* is the first feature-length, all-country music motion picture to be shot on Broadway. Ralph Emery introduces you to some of the greatest country music stars in the world. You'll see the legendary Hank Williams Sr. in his only filmed appearance, uncut and crystal clear. You'll also see George Jones, Hank Snow, Hank Williams Jr., Audrey Williams, Buck Owens, Bill Anderson, Porter Wagoner, Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs, Stonewall Jackson, Ferlin Husky, Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper, Skeeter Davis, Roy Drusky and Merle Kilgore. This film features over 30 hit songs, including: "Hey, Good Looking," "White Lightning," "Waterloo," "Cold, Cold Heart," "Moving On," "Flint Hill Special," "There's a Big Wheel," "A Fool Such as I," "Poor Folks," "Jambalaya," "Big Midnight Special," "Long Gone Daddy" and "Second Hand Rose." This video is in color with better picture quality than the original. You'll just love it, especially if you enjoy seeing superstars early in their careers. *Country Music on Broadway* is 96 minutes. long and costs \$49.95, #G8F. Christmas fun!

THE BEST OF MERLE HAGGARD VIDEO

Clint Black admires Merle Haggard's style and talents, and so do the rest of us here at *Country Music*. This great artist/singer/songwriter/guitar player has been captured on his video, *The Best of Merle Haggard*. As Hag puts it—"I have selected some of my favorite songs for this video...and I hope they will be your favorites too." *The Best of Merle Haggard* was recorded live in concert in Concord, California, and includes 19 of his greatest hits: "My Favorite Memory," "Stay Here and Drink," "Mama's Hungry Eyes," "Today I Started Loving You Again," "Old Man From the Mountains," "Kern River," "If I Could Only Fly," "When Times Were Good," "Honky Tonk Night Time Man," "Ida Red," "Big City," "Okie From Muskogee," "Footlights" and many more. This top-selling, one-hour video costs only \$19.95, #G3F. See Rich Kienzle's review in *Essential Collector* (May/June 1990 issue, *Country Music*). Give it to the Haggard fan on your list.



NASHVILLE BABYLON

Nashville Babylon brings the private lives and secret lies of country music's most notorious characters out of the closet and bedroom and into the spotlight. Extensively illustrated with revealing photographs, this is a fascinating collection. If you are curious about the deaths, marriages, adulteries, prisonmates, drugs and murders that surround some of the best-known country music stars, you'll love this book. You get to read stories about Barbara Mandrell's life-threatening accident, Johnny Cash's struggle to overcome drug addiction, Loretta Lynn's psychic powers, Tammy Wynette's unfortunate marriages, the grizzly murder of Opry star, Stringbean, and how Spade Cooley killed his own wife—to name a few. To quote Jerry Lee Lewis, "You scared of me? You should be. Why do you think they call me The Killer?" This fascinating, behind-the-scenes look at Nashville, its music and its stars, stars whose lives are often more lurid than lyrics they record, is entertainment at its best. This 275-page book sells for \$12.95, #B4C.

NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE EDITOR'S CHOICE

Mail to: Nashville Warehouse, P.O.Box 292553, Nashville, TN 37229

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Letters

Yoakam Worth the Wait

Wow! I simply can't express my appreciation enough for finally putting that wonderful honky tonk man, Dwight Yoakam, on the cover! Yes, it has been three very long years that you've spent testing the sheer patience of a vast number of his dedicated fans such as myself, but as they say, the real good things in life are worth the wait! Thanks to Patrick Carr for his update on Dwight and letting us all "know where he's at these days, and where he's not." Dwight deserves all that he has.

Carole Jelinek
Torrance, California

Yoakam and Jackson Tops

I just had to write and tell you how much I enjoy *Country Music Magazine*. I just renewed after receiving my copy of the July/August issue with the sensational cover of Dwight Yoakam. He is the cat's meow to me; also Alan Jackson. I loved the photo of Alan on the jukebox, and the articles on them. Let's see more on Alan and Dwight.

Earl Seavey
Harrington, Maine

Yoakam One, Nashville Nothing

Boy, was I surprised! I thought you had all forgotten about Dwight. I absolutely loved the cover and story on him in your July/August issue! He deserves all the credit in the world for putting a little spice back into country music. I think all those people in Nashville that didn't want to give him a chance in the beginning should take a look at his record sales now and see what they missed out on! Who wouldn't love this sexy hillbilly?!

Tina Jones
Wilcox, Pennsylvania

Level-Headed Black

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! In the May/June issue you finally printed the greatly desired and long-awaited cover photo and article about the "greatest thing to wear Wrangler jeans," otherwise known as Clint Black! The photos were well worth long gazes, and the article was mighty fine! It is both fresh and exciting to know that there is at least one country music artist with a level head.

Ramona Wulff
Hopkins, Minnesota
We have it on good authority that Clint liked the article too.—Ed.



Here's Looking at Black

I thought the story on Clint Black in the May/June issue was great. It made me an even bigger fan (if that's possible). When you read a story on a great looking, very successful and talented person such as Clint Black, it kind of puts a warmth in your heart and makes you feel good to know that there are still men like that out there. Too bad he's the type you're never lucky enough to run into.

Christy Crawford
Gordonsville, Tennessee

That Black's a Treasure

A million thanks for the long-awaited, wonderful cover photo of Clint Black, along with the great feature story in the May/June issue—both are absolutely incredible! He's been my special favorite from day one, when I first saw him on *Nashville Now*, in early 1989. What a talented young man.

Louise Mayer
Stetsonville, Wisconsin

Our Man Miller in the Gulf

Let me start by saying thank you for all the support you have given myself and the others involved in Operation Desert Storm. It hasn't been the greatest of times for any of us, but we got the job done, and it is time to celebrate our victory. I received the May/June issue today, and the article on Clint Black was outstanding! Your magazine has helped ease a lot of things off my mind.

Lance Miller
FPO San Francisco, California

Navy Likes CMM

I was wondering if there was an easy way to write to country stars such as George Strait, Garth Brooks and Randy Travis, to thank them for their support of the troops in the Persian Gulf? I am currently stationed on board the USS LEAHY. We are still over here doing our job. We are the last of the troops.

I would like to thank each and every person at *Country Music Magazine*. I read it as often as possible. Thank God for country music! It has helped me with this tour in the Gulf.

Tracy Morgan
FPO San Francisco, California
Your thanks will reach them here.—Ed.

Shelton Centerfold Makes Day

Thank you very much for the centerfold picture of the TNN/Music City News Entertainer of the Year, Ricky Van Shelton, in the July/August issue. He is so hot. You made my day when I opened up my mail box and saw his picture. Please have more on Ricky in future issues—I never get enough of him.

Betty Foret
Beaumont, Texas

Shelton Centerfold Not Enough

We were hoping for a cover picture on Ricky Van Shelton in the July/August issue, and to our surprise here is a lovely centerfold on Mr. Ricky! Thanks! Also, we would like to see a write-up on Ricky winning the TNN/Music City News Entertainer of the Year award two years in a row and Male Vocalist three years! In addition, we hope you have a record review on Ricky's new album, *Backroads*, in the next issue. It is excellent! We love your magazine and couldn't survive without it!

G.L. Lamb
Jefferson, Iowa

For Backroads, see Record Reviews in this issue.—Ed.

Cheers for Bocephus Centerfold

Thank you so much for putting Hank Williams Jr. in the pull-out poster in the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*. It's my first issue, and after a bad day at work, it was nice to see something to make me happy! I'm a die-hard Bocephus fan. Will there be an article on him in the near future?

Bonnie Crawford
Mayfield, New York
We're working on it.—Ed.



CMM's Leonard Mendelson just can't resist a good honky tonk. His latest discovery is *Denim and Diamonds*, in Santa Monica. Here's Leonard with D & D's Greg Stewart and Joe Esposito. Leonard says the sound system's great, and there's dancing.

Unstoppable Oaks

Thanks to Michael Bane for his piece, 20 Questions with The Oak Ridge Boys, in the May/June issue. The Oaks are the reason I buy country magazines and listen to country radio. I have had season tickets to the Country Series at the Fox Theater in St. Louis since they initiated it, so I've seen a lot of country acts. To me, The Oaks have the most exciting, most entertaining show in the business. They are constantly evolving and changing, and always give 100%. They really are "Unstoppable."

Donna Sellers
O'Fallon, Missouri

Jackson, Shelton and Delray Makes Three

I just received the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Thank you, thank you so much for having my three favorites: Alan Jackson, Ricky Van Shelton and Martin Delray. The article on Alan was great. Ricky's centerfold is on my bedroom wall, and the record review of Martin Delray is the best.

Debra Morgan
Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania

Paula Kaye Evans' Parents Write

We cried when we read the letters in the July/August issue from Kenny Beverly, Thomas Slack and others, who remember that there are a lot of talented, dedicated, hardworking and loyal musicians and backup singers on stage behind the stars. Our daughter was on that plane that crashed on March 16, 1991, in San Diego, California. Thanks to those fans that still care and remember.

Jim and Hazel Evans
Garland, Texas

Stuart and That Voice

Thank you, *Country Music Magazine*, for the wonderful story on Marty Stuart in the May/June issue. Marty really knows what he's talking about when it comes to

music. I also had the rare opportunity to see Marty perform in Huntington, West Virginia. The show was truly awesome—the jacket, the hair, the guitar and the songs, but most importantly, his voice. Man, I'll tell you, Marty sure has got a good, strong voice. I really got a kick when he did "Western Girls," but in the last verse he so appropriately said "West Virginia Girls."

Keith Whitley's mother was at the performance. Marty directed everyone's attention to her. I thought that was nice.

Angela Adkins
Wayne, West Virginia

KO'd by Stuart Story

Your article on Marty Stuart in the May/June issue is a double knockout! I'm a fan club member and have read quite a few articles about him in the last several years, but you certainly put many important facts of his life together so well! What a great interview Mr. Carr must have had with Marty, in addition to the Memphis trip and Sun studio (some people really have a tough job, Mr. Carr!) That full-page color photo was icing on the cake!

Barbara Smith
Millersville, Maryland

Stuart—Pure Talent

Thank you for the terrific article on Marty Stuart in the May/June issue. Marty was a member of Johnny Cash's band in 1983 when I first heard him perform. His pure talent has only improved with age! I felt like I really got to meet Marty through Patrick Carr's interview. *Tempted* should be in every music lover's collection. It is at the very top of mine.

Margaret Holland
Brewster, Massachusetts

Mattea—Make My Day

I love *Country Music Magazine*, and as fate would have it, the May/June issue showed up the day of Kathy Mattea's concert in Houston, Texas. It was a great article, and after the show I showed it to Kathy—she hadn't seen it yet. Kathy put on a great concert and was very kind to sign her autograph on her picture in the magazine. Thanks, Kathy, and thanks to *Country Music Magazine*—I love it.

Jerry Bubb
Houston, Texas

CMM Booth Sells Fan on Mag

I've been home from Fan Fair 1991 for five days now, and have finally recovered enough to begin writing the letters I promised myself I'd write. How have I missed *Country Music Magazine* all this time? You've really got a good thing going. In the sample I found more information than I've found in "the other" magazine all year. My subscription request is being sent today.

Susan Sand
Aiken, South Carolina

Sample copies of CMM were available at the CMM booth at Fan Fair.—Ed.

Pretty Jann Browne

The lady with the prettiest voice in country music these days (with a face to match, I might add) was at Fan Fair 1991, too! I know because "eye saw" her at her booth, then on the IFCO show Friday night. It was especially special because it was the first time I saw her live. What a performance—the lady sure can sing! Listen to her new release, *It Only Hurts When I Laugh*, and you'll see what I mean!

Roxanne Johnston
Hibbing, Minnesota



Roxanne Johnston ran into Jann Browne at Fan Fair 1991.

Travis in Trouble

The May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine* had a letter titled, "Breathtaking Travis." It said someday his grandson would think that "He Walked on Water." If what I read about him marrying Lib is true, he'll never have a grandson. How sad. I don't understand why such a talented, handsome, charming and vibrant young man could hitch his star to someone old enough to be his mother. Guess I'll find another country music star who lives in the real world and put a halo on them. This one has lost its shine.

Frank Powell
Milton, Florida

What's Travis Trying to Prove?

What a coincidence. Randy Travis is accused of being gay and in response—after years of denying it—he claims a sexual relationship with Lib Hatcher. Then he marries her. Gee, you'd think he was trying to prove something, wouldn't you?

But it's not just Travis who's homophobic. Music City is so afraid of the g-word it pretends gays don't exist. Let me tell you, Nashville, we do exist. And we spend millions on your products. We go to country concerts, buy country records, subscribe to *Country Music Magazine*. We do this in spite of the fact that we're not only ignored by the country music industry, but subjected to its abuse, as in Travis's self-righteous dismissal of our way of life.

Steven Blaski
Iowa City, Iowa

Congrats to Travis and Lib

Congratulations to Randy Travis and Lib—it will work, Randy. I, myself, am married to a wonderful man who is 10 years younger, and we have had 30 years of wedded bliss and one child.

Regarding the statement about Willie Nelson, there are a lot of us fans out here that will keep buying his tapes regardless of who he owes. We're behind you all the way, Willie, and thanks for singing "Amazing Grace" for me at a concert two years ago in Wichita, Kansas. And, yes, I bought the IRS tapes. Ivalee Bush
Wichita, Kansas

A Backroads Boo-Boo

Miss Hazel, eye saw your boo-boo in the People section of the July/August issue. *Backroads* is the title of Ricky Van Shelton's new album. "Between the Lines" is a cut from that album (and a swell album it is!). I'm so glad Dolly's little bubba wrote that song. I'm so glad Ricky Van put his vocal on it. I expect it to be nominated and win when awarding times begin.

Hazel, your People column is the first thing I read and I chuckle all the way through. *Country Music Magazine* sure found a gem when they found you, sugar.

Marilyn Combs
Mt. Pleasant, Tennessee

Legendary Loretta Lynn

I wanted to take this time to write and thank Rich Kienzle for covering Loretta Lynn in *Essential Collector* in the July/August issue. I see that he also does Legends in the *CMSA Newsletter*. Maybe one of these days he will do Loretta Lynn in there—please! She is the most awarded female in the entire history of country music.

Laurie Ann Smith
Three Rivers, Michigan
Watch *The Journal* for Loretta.—Ed.

Gary Stewart—a Buried Treasure

Thanks to your magazine, Rich Kienzle and *Buried Treasures*, I am informed when Gary Stewart has a new release or re-issue (as printed in the July/August issue). I cannot buy his tapes in Canada, so when I read he has a new one, I make a trip to the U.S. to buy it. In my mind, he is the all-time best.

Dorothy Tomlinson
Pincher Creek, Alberta
Save gas. Buy from us.—Ed.

Top 25 Correction

You may appreciate knowing an error on the Top 25 Singles chart on page 72 of the July/August issue. You list Number 19 as Dolly Parton and Ricky Van Shelton and "If I Know Me." Obviously, that should be "Rockin' Years." I hope this helps.

Duane Gordon
Jackson, Mississippi
Correction noted.—Ed.

Joe South Found

I just noticed the inquiry about Joe South in Letters in the July/August issue. According to an article in the March 8, 1991 issue of *Goldmine Magazine*, Joe (who wrote his Grammy-winning "Games People Play," Billy Joe Royal's "Down in the Boondocks" and Lynn Anderson's "Rose Garden") has "recently released a greatest hits compilation on Rhino, and has been cutting new material for Bill Lowery's Independent Southern Tracks label" and, at the age of 51, is planning to "hit the road again, hoping to attract new and old fans alike."

Edith Sheedy
Greer, South Carolina
DJ Bob Grady at WJTA in Calhoun, Georgia, phoned in to confirm the where-

abouts of both Joe and Tony. Speaking of Greer, see Aaron Tippin article in this issue.—Ed.

News on Tony Booth

In response to the letter asking about Tony Booth in the July/August issue, Tony is bass player and opens shows for Gene Watson, and has for the past several years—a great show it is!! Tony has a fan club in Texas. Information regarding itinerary is available by calling Gene Watson's 900 telephone number, 1-900-990-GENE—you must have a touchtone phone to call.

Rhonda Hull
Baytown, Texas
Tony's fan club address is c/o Robbie Minty, 214 Reservoir Street, Sulphur Springs, Texas 75482.—Ed.

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Private Security Officer
Art
Small Business Management
Interior Decorating
Wildlife/Forestry Conservation
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Booth in Branson

Tony Booth and Gene Watson appear at Lowe's Theater in Branson, Missouri, from time to time. They are scheduled there early in October. Enjoy your magazine!
Kathy Heritage
Lee's Summit, Missouri

Here's Little Troy Hess

In response to the letter in the July/August issue asking "Whatever Happened to Little Troy Hess?"—well, Troy is still singing and playing and writing music in the Houston area. He is still looking for the big break, but has put together a fine country and western band called The Yellow Rose Express.

David Haubegger
Houston, Texas

We heard from Troy—"no longer little"—by phone. His dad recorded for Mercury in the 50's, his mom worked for Loretta Lynn. The family left Nashville for Houston in 1975.—Ed.

Hank Locklin Recording?

I have taken *Country Music Magazine* for a long time and really enjoy it. I was going through some of my old records and found one Hank Locklin had recorded. Is he still recording? He has a very beautiful voice. Where is he now?

Berta Hoover
Noblesville, Indiana

Hank Locklin, come in, please.—Ed.

Cain's, Wills and McAuliffe

I've only just started getting your magazine and enjoy it so much. From 1945 until 1965 I lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma. On Thursdays and Saturdays we could go to Cain's Academy and enjoy Bob Wills—we lived two blocks from Cain's, so we could sit on the porch or go dance with everybody else; also on Wednesday and Saturday nights we could go see Leon McAuliffe who had his show on Denver Street. He was the best I had ever heard on steel guitar. I saw the CMM Update on Johnny Gimble in People in the May/June issue. Please write something about McAuliffe.

Judy Spiers
Columbia, Mississippi

For Leon McAuliffe and "Steel Guitar Rag," see *The Journal*, June 1991.—Ed.

Biff Collie and CMM

I continually utilize your magazine for reference and special copy on my syndicated *Inside Nashville* radio news features, as I have since your first issue in 1972, always crediting *Country Music Magazine* and your writers, Hazel Smith, Rich Kienzle, Michael Bane and Patrick Carr. I hope to continue to do the same in my radio and TV reports daily on country stations around America.

Biff Collie

Brentwood, Tennessee
Biff and CMM go back a long way.—Ed.

Back Issues Sell Subs

I was first introduced to *Country Music Magazine* last fall when my brother-in-law gave me some back issues to read. Having enjoyed them so much, I now have my own subscription. Last week I ordered back issues to January, 1987. Being especially interested in Ricky Van Shelton, I will be reading everything *Country Music Magazine* has ever printed about him, and I figure that's about when he first sang that beautiful song, "Somebody Lied"! My husband and I, along with another couple, saw Ricky in concert in June in Indiana. He was wonderful just as he was in Iowa in March and Illinois in April.

Cathy Bartels
Durango, Iowa



A friend of Cathy Bartels caught Ricky Van Shelton at an Indiana concert.

Speedy Service by CMM

I must say that I am truly impressed with your magazine and your promptness. I sent off for the May/June back issue (with Clint Black on the cover) and within five days it was here. I had to wait almost three weeks for *Country America's*. Give the folks in the mailroom, or whoever got it here so fast, a pat on the back for me, and keep up the good work.

K. Martin

Corinth, Mississippi
Josie D'Amico, take a bow.—Ed.

CMM Ten Years Ago

I have been a subscriber to *Country Music Magazine* for over ten years. That said, it is obvious that I enjoy the magazine. Now, I wonder if you could do me a favor. The one issue that has always stood out from the rest, the one that has been invaluable to me and I'm sure a lot of other people, was the September 1981 Readers, Writers and Pickers issue. Could we, the public, have a repeat performance? Please.

Maybe your writers could list their five favorite disks of the 80's. Or maybe

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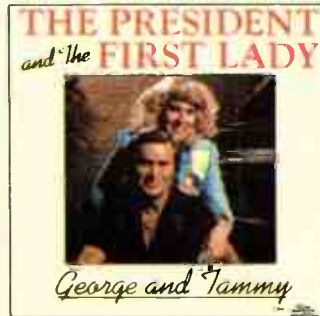
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Night in Alaska • Battle of New Orleans • When it's Springtime in Alaska (It's 40 Below) • Johnny Reb • I'm Coming Home • Honky Tonk Man • Sink the Bismark • All for the Love of a Girl • The Mansion You Stole • Comanche • Jim Bridger • I'm a One-Woman Man • Sleepy-eyed John • They'll Never Take Her Love from Me • 6 MORE! LP No. LP27/RTK No. T27/Cassette No. CASS27



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We're Gonna Hold On • Two Story House • Take Me • The Ceremony • Old Fashioned Singing • (We're not) The Jet Set • We Loved It Away • God's Gonna Getcha (For that) • Someone I Used to Know • Livin' on Easy Street • Golden Ring • After Closing Time • Something to Brag About • We'll Talk About It Later • Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms • 4 MORE! LP No. LP41/RTK No. T41/Cass. No. CASS41



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ROAD MUSIC

Teddy Bear (Red Sovine) • Six Days on the Road (Dave Dudley) • Girl on the Billboard (Del Reeves) • Passing Zone Blues (Coleman Wilson) • Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun (Dave Dudley) • ConvoY (T. H. Music Festival) • Give Me 40 Acres to Turn this Rig Around (The Willis Brothers) • White Knight (T. H. Music Festival) • Giddyup Go Answer (Minnie Pearl) • MORE! Cassette Tape Only. No. CASS46



STONEWALL JACKSON

Waterloo • Life To Go • Read Between The Lines • A Wound Time Can Erase • I Washed My Hands In The Muddy Water • Why I'm Walkin' • I Can't Get Enough Of You • My Hero And The Plastic Radio • Things To Think About • Love Gets All Over Me • Ol' Blue • Lovin' The Fool Out Of Me • Shake 'Em Up, Roll 'Em • Herman Schwartz • 6 MORE! Cassette Tape Only. No. CASS33



LULU BELLE & SCOTTY

Home Coming Time in Happy Valley • Have I Told You Lately That I Love You • Molly Darlin' • Between You And Me • Bonnie Blue Eyes • I'll Be All Smiles Tonight • Try To Live Some (While You're Here) • Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain • When I You Hoo In The Valley • Rocking Alone In An Old Rocking Chair • Sunset Years Of Life • 14 MORE! Cassettes Only. Two Tapes. No. CASS37



SHEB WOOLEY & BEN COLDER

Purple People Eater • That's My Pa • I Walk the Line (No. 2) • Detroit City (No. 2) • Runnin' Bear • Don't Go Near the Eskimos • Harper Valley P.T.A. (Later the Same Day) • 15 Beers Ago • Sunday Morning Fallin' Down • Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms • Little Brown Shack Out Back • 11 MORE! LP No. LP43/RTK No. T43/Cass. No. CASS43



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Elizabeth • Flowers On The Wall • Atlanta Blue • Don't Wait On Me • I'll Even Love You Better Than I Did • Guilty • Oh Baby Mine • One Takes The Blame • My Only Love • Hollywood • Do You Remember These • I'll Go To My Grave Loving You • Class Of '57 • Do You Know You Are My Sunshine • Who Am I To Say • Charlotte's Web • 2 MORE! LP No. LP38/Cassette No. CASS38



RED SOVINE

Teddy Bear • Daddy's Girl • Lay Down Sally • Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun • Colorado Kool-Aid • Little Rosa • I Didn't Jump the Fence • It'll Come Back • Little Joe • I Know You're Married (But I love you still) • Last Goodbye • Phantom 309 • Roses for Mama • 18 Wheels • Humming Home Sweet Home • 6 MORE! LP No. LP17/8TK No. T17/Cass No. CASS17



BOB WILLS

Faded Love • San Antonio Rose • Beaumont Rag • All Night Long • Let's Get It Over And Done With • If He's Moving In, I'm Moving Out • Mayflower Waltz • You Can't Break A Heart • Done Gone • Sooner Or Later • Gone Indian • Buffalo Twist • Wills Junction • Bob's Schottische • No Disappointments In Heaven • Bob's First Fiddle Tune • 5 MORE! Cassette Tape Only. No. CASS39



LEFTY FRIZZELL

If You've Got The Money, I've Got The Time • I Love You a Thousand Ways • Look What Thoughts Will Do • I Want To Be With You Always • Always Late With Your Kisses • Mom and Dad's Waltz • Don't Stay Away • Forever • Release Me • Cigarettes and Coffee Blues • The Long Black Veil • Saginaw, Michigan • 8 MORE! LP No. LP19/8TK No. T19/Cass. No. CASS19



GENE WATSON

Love in the Afternoon • Farewell Party • Pick the Wildwood Flower • One Sided Conversation • Should I Come Home (Or should I go crazy) • I Don't Need a Thing at All • The Old Man and His Horn • Where Love Begins • Cowboys Don't Get Lucky All the Time • Paper Rosie • No One Will Ever Know • Bedroom Ballad • 8 MORE! LP No. LP25/8TK No. T25/Cassette No. CASS25



HANK THOMPSON

Squaws Along the Yukon • Rub-A-Dub-Dub • Blackboard of My Heart • The New Green Light • The Older the Violin the Sweeter for the Music • A Six Pack to Go • Who Left the Door to Heaven Open • On Tap, in the Can or in the Bottle • Tears Are Only Rain • I've Come Awful Close • Anybody's Girl • Wild Side of Life • Humpty Dumpty Heart • 7 MORE! Cassette Tape Only. No. CASS24



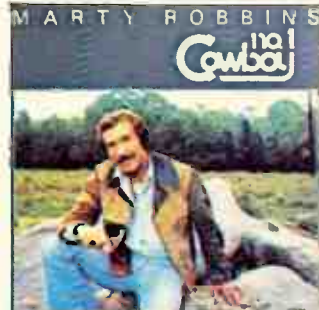
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PATSY CLINE

I Fall to Pieces • Walking After Midnight • I Love You Honey • Just Out of Reach • I'm Blue Again • Hungry for Love • I've Loved and Lost Again • Stop, Look and Listen • The Heart You Break May Be Your Own • Fingerprints • Crazy • In Care of the Blues • Today, Tomorrow and Forever • Never No More • Let the Tears Drop Fall • I Can't Forget You • 4 MORE! Cassette Tape Only. No. CASS16



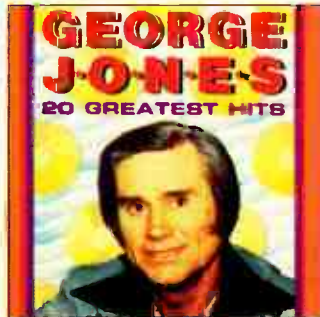
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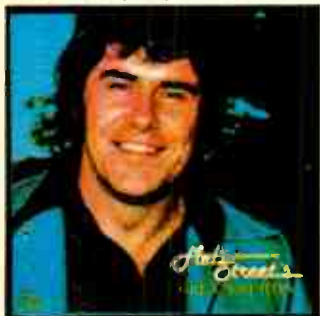
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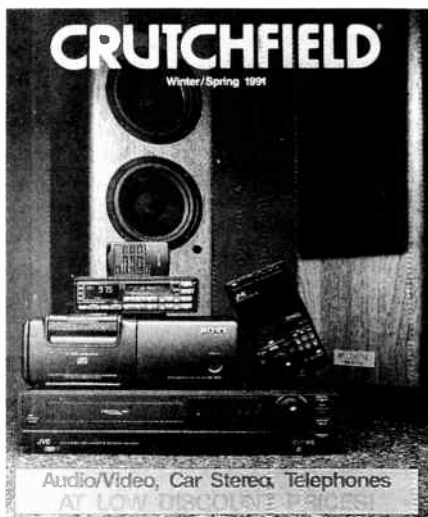
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not have access to the IRS tape offer. Which made me think, maybe I should write and ask you to publish this phone number in case any other Willie fans out there are in the same situation. I enjoy *Country Music Magazine* and look forward to each new issue. Ruth Mason
 Santa Barbara, California

On the Money with Mattea

I really enjoyed Record Reviews in the July/August issue. The review of Kathy Mattea's *Time Passes By* by Bob Allen couldn't have been more on the money. Recently, I had to drive 80 some miles through Washington State wheat country, alone, in the middle of the night, which can be quite a spiritual journey, with nothing but the road before you and a canopy of stars overhead. It was a perfect setting for Kathy's album, and it was very good company indeed.

I wasn't in total agreement with the review of Lorrie Morgan's *Something in Red*, but the comparison of Lorrie with Madonna is a real hoot. I certainly agree with Rich on this one 110%—Lorrie is more beautiful, classy, sexy and talented than Madonna could ever hope to be. I'm very glad I'm a woman when I'm watching Lorrie because I think it would be some form of exquisite torture if I were male—I'd probably blow all my fuses.

Linda Taylor
 Chelan, Washington

We'll ask Clint Black's bus driver.—Ed.

Disagree with Morgan Review

I love your *Country Music Magazine*, but something caught my eye in the July/August issue. The review of Lorrie Morgan's album, *Something in Red*, said that her duet with Dolly Parton was "such a throwaway that hearing it once is about enough." Also that the song "ranks below even her most mediocre work." I personally happen to love the song and the singers. I like any song Dolly has ever written.

Amy Wiley
 Bismarck, Missouri

On Track with Thompson

After reading Record Reviews in the May/June issue, I want to say Bob Allen was on the right track with Verlon Thompson's new album, *Verlon Thompson*. It is very good, easy-to-listen-to music. I met Verlon at a benefit in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was accompanying Sylvia, and both are super-nice people. I'll agree with Bob Allen on his choices of songs, "Makes You Wanna Slow Down" and "Stop the Rain," but my favorite is "More Than Tracks," and I shiver when he sings "Long Cold Winter." If you like singers like James Taylor, Don Williams and Gary Morris, you will like Verlon's new cassette.

Mary Sommer
 Connelton, Indiana

Fan Defends Thornton Sound

Reading Rich Kienzle's review of Marsha Thornton's *Maybe the Moon Will Shine*, in the May/June issue, further confirms why I do not like reading your Record Reviews. Rich states that Marsha is a talented vocalist, yet leaves you with a feeling that she doesn't have a style of her own—only copies Patsy Cline and Emmylou Harris. I could hear the Patsy Cline sound on her first album and thought that was fine, but I've never cared for Emmylou's music, and I didn't hear that on this album. So, I'll make my own decisions about the artists and their albums without reading your reviews.

Joyce Nichols
 Big Spring, Texas



Kathy Saint and Mike Reid at the Opry.

Total Agreement on Reid

I totally agree with Bob Allen's review of Mike Reid's album, *Turning for Home*, in the July/August issue. His music kinda grabs you slow, but once it does, it makes a strong impression!

It was a real treat to meet Mike at the Opry recently in Nashville. This very talented singer and songwriter is also a super-nice guy! He has a personality that is as warm and endearing as his music.

Kathy Saint
 Leighton, Alabama

Cash Live Forever

When my children were little, they used to dress up in cowboy hats and boots and listen to Johnny Cash on the record player. Thanks, Bob Allen, for reminding me of this and of what a great singer he is. Your review of his latest album, *The Mystery of Life*, struck a chord.

Dee Grainger
 Oak Park, Illinois

Strait's Album—Variety Pack

I guess everyone is entitled to at least one mistake, and I think Bob Allen made his when he reviewed George Strait's great new album, *Chill of an Early Fall*, in the May/June issue. I loved *Chill of an Early Fall* the first time I heard it, and that's unusual because it usually takes

three or four plays before I warm up to new songs. He said the album had a "patchwork" feel—well, I think a better word would be variety. There are pretty ballads, cute songs, straight country and Western swing—what else could you ask for? Sorry, Mr. Allen, I wouldn't trade *Chill of an Early Fall* for any of the competition's current albums! You must have been having a bad day when you did this review!

Rhonda Carnell
Murray, Kentucky

Strait to Little Bo Peep

I was looking forward to the latest issue of *Country Music* (May/June) because I knew there would be a review of *Chill of an Early Fall*, George Strait's latest record. I was sure it would be a good review because I absolutely love every song. Well, forget that, Mr. Allen, you sure know how to hurt a girl! Some of us out here like love songs, especially the way George does them, and you don't have to live in Texas to like Western swing. His music may be familiar, but it is never, ever boring—George could make Little Bo Peep sound exciting! Anyway, I think at least three of the songs sound different from his usual style, and different from anything I've heard on radio lately.

Sibyl Moreland
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Renewal Sweepstakes Winner

Thank you very much for the great news that I've won \$1000 in the February/March 1991 Renewal Sweepstakes. It's the first time I've won that much. I plan to pay some bills with the money. However, my dream would be to see my "favorite artists" in Aruba this year. They are The Everly Brothers! and they are the most talented and gracious people in the music industry. It would be great to see an interview, a cover story, with them in your wonderful magazine.

Again, thank you very much and success always.
Iris Ortiz-Valentin
Brooklyn, New York

Other Sweeps Winners

CMM announces that Karla Richard of North Palm Beach, Florida has won the \$1000 October/November 1990 Renewal Sweepstakes. Ms. Richard is a CMSA and Academy member. The April/May 1991 \$1000 Renewal Sweepstakes winner is Juanita Cooper of New Albany, Indiana. Congratulations!

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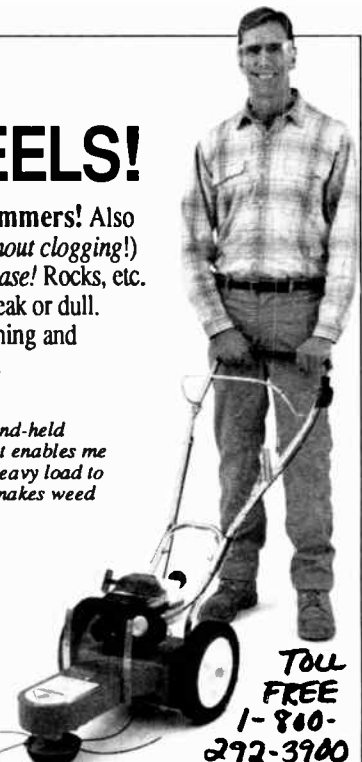
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Little Jimmy Dickens Special

Right now two reissues of Little Jimmy Dickens' Columbia recordings are available. The first one, *Straight...From the Heart, 1949-1955* (Rounder SS26), consists of 12 numbers from his prime period, concentrating mainly on his skills as a ballad singer and gospel singer—the fields in which he started.

The 12 tracks include "Sea of Broken Dreams," "Wedding Bell Waltz" (both Dickens originals), "I've Just Got to See You Once More" (co-written by Dickens and Billy Wallace), "Be Careful of Stones That You Throw," "That Little Old Country Church House," "Teardrops (Fell Like Raindrops)," the more up-tempo "Out of Business" (featuring the hot Grady Martin-Jabbo Arrington twin guitar team), the 1949 Number Ten hit "My Heart's Bouquet," "Lovin' Lies," "A Ribbon and a Rose" and "Bring Your Broken Heart to Me." The notes by Kyle Cantrell are generally well done, and include complete discographical data. *Straight From the Heart* is available on cassette or LP for \$12.98—just \$10.98 for CMSA members.

The only other Little Jimmy Dickens recording available is the *Columbia Historic Edition* album (FC 38905) containing 11 of his tracks. Included on this album are "Take an Old Cold 'Tater," "I'm Little But I'm Loud," "Out Behind the Barn," "Salty Boogie," "I'll Be Back a-Sunday," "Slow Suicide," "The Last Time" and four more. This was first released in 1984 and is available on cassette only. Regular price, \$9.98. Members price, \$7.98. Remember to include your membership number if taking discount.

Buried Treasures Special

MCA Records and the Country Music Foundation have released more material in their Hall of Fame series. This time around, Rich Kienzle tells you about Floyd Tillman, The Sons of the Pioneers, Tex Ritter and Jimmy

Davis. Rich also describes some re-issues from Sony Special Products, including two early Johnny Cash albums and Stonewall Jackson's 1959 debut. Western swing fans will find two Bob Wills anthologies and more.

As a CMSA member, you're of course entitled to a discount. You may take \$2.00 off of each item ordered. For ordering instructions, see the How to Get These Treasures box on the Buried Treasures page. Don't forget your membership number.

Essential Collector Special

Essential Collector lives up to its name—there are important discographies on Johnny Cash and Decca Records, plus cassettes on legends like Ernest Tubb, Loretta Lynn and Patsy Cline. A book on cover star Emmylou Harris' mentor, Gram Parsons, rounds things out. Members may deduct \$2.00 off of each item ordered. See the box on the Essential Collector page for ordering information. Include membership number.

How to Order

To order any of the items listed on this page, send your check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 91091N, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, CT 06880. Include \$1.95 postage and handling for first item ordered, \$.95 for each additional item. Members taking discount must include membership number.

CMSA History

The Country Music Society of America was founded in 1983. The first issue of the *Newsletter* came out in March/April 1984. It was 16 pages long. The first Legends feature was on Tex Ritter. The first Information. Please item from a member in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, ran on the last page. It was a request for information on The DeZurik Sisters and The Oklahoma Sweethearts. The first Top 25 ad (25% off the Top 25) ran there also. Kenny Rogers had the Number One album at that time, with *Eyes That See in the Dark*. George Strait was Number Two with *Right or Wrong*. Of course, that first *Newsletter* printed lots of opinions from members. Some of the most interesting are lists of albums bought that month with comments on each one. For example, this from a member in Texas: "Okeh *Western Swing*. Liked this one so well I bought a second copy. Especially like 'Lovesick Blues' by Emmett Miller. Wish I had everything he recorded." *Okeh Western Swing* appears in this issue of *CMM* in Buried Treasures.

MEMBERS POLL/SEPTEMBER 1991

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, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No

How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____

2. Which ones did you like best? List performers and album titles.

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

3. List the numbers of your top five favorites from the Top 25 in this issue.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Do You Shop By Mail?

4. How many purchases have you or someone in your household made in the past 12 months? _____

5. About how much was spent for all purchases made by mail or phone in the past 12 months? _____

Employment Information

6. Are you self-employed? Yes No
If yes, please specify job type: _____

7. Please indicate the members of your household who are employed. Husband Wife Other adults Children

8. Please list the total number of household members who are employed. _____

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Are you: Married Single

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, write your membership number here. _____

If you are not a member but would like to join and vote immediately, fill out the poll and enclose your check for \$16 for one-year CMSA membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

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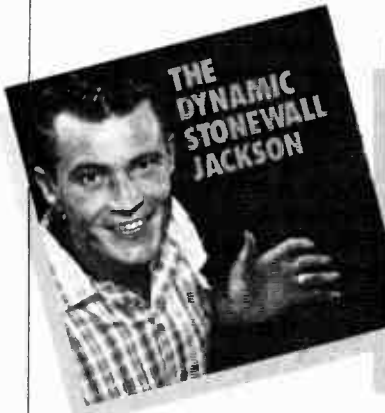
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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle



MCA's new Country Music Hall of Fame series is still releasing material in conjunction with the Country Music Foundation. The latest batch includes the following:

Floyd Tillman: Though Floyd Tillman made his greatest impact after World War II with "Slippin' Around" and "I Love You So Much It Hurts," his earliest recordings were made for Decca from the late 1930's to the mid-40's. At that time he was working in the Texas Western swing scene with innovators like Cliff Bruner, steel guitar pioneer Bob Dunn, electric mandola player Leo Raley and pianist Moon Mullican, all of whom backed him on the Decca sides. So far as I can tell, none of the material on *Floyd Tillman* (MCAD 10189) has ever been reissued. The collection pays homage to Tillman's skills as both a vocalist (who influenced Lefty, Willie and others) and a composer.

From the upbeat version of "A Precious Memory" recorded with Leon "Pappy" Selph's Blue Ridge Playboys, this set moves through other brilliant compositions such as "They Took the Stars Out of Heaven" and "Daisy May." Tillman, widely known as the first country singer to accompany himself with an electric guitar, acquires himself well on the instrumental number, "Rio Grande." By far the most amazing number here is the previously unissued "Dreams Won't Let Me Forget You"

written by Tillman and Bruner, a superb 1944 ballad that reveals Tillman's debt to pop music.

Jimmie Davis: It's amazing it's taken this long to assemble this *Jimmie Davis* collection (MCAD 10087). Like Gene Autry, Davis began his career on Victor Records aping Jimmie Rodgers. He also gained notoriety for his raunchy material.

However, when he joined Decca Records in 1934, he began to grow and expand, and he did well on the charts from the time he signed with the label. That's proven by his hit, "Nobody's Darlin' But Mine" (the original version is included here). But Davis didn't totally give up doing raunchy numbers. "Jellyroll Blues" and "Bed Bug Blues" (both included here) exemplify that side of his music, while "Come On Over to My House" is rakish fun with a decidedly jazzy accompaniment.

For the most part, though, it was ballads like "It Makes No Difference Now" and "Sweethearts or Strangers" that made his reputation. Even during his first term as governor of Louisiana, his hitmaking ability didn't flag. "There's a New Moon Over My Shoulder" went to Number One in 1945 while he presided over affairs in the state capital of Baton Rouge. But by the time he recorded the mediocre gospel number, "Supper Time," in 1953, his hitmaking began to wind down.

Tex Ritter: Following a very brief period with the American Recording Company (ARC) in 1932, Tex Ritter signed his first real recording contract, a four-year agreement with Decca. *Tex Ritter* (MCA 10188) dates from this era, 1935-39. It wasn't a particularly significant period for Ritter, who would have his biggest successes in the 1940's with Capitol. He scored no hits, but managed to record a variety of songs that mixed cowboy standards like "Git Along, Little Dogies" and "(Take Me Back to My) Boots and Saddles" with songs from his movies, including "Singin' in the Saddle" and "Ai Viva Tequila."

Sons of the Pioneers: The *Sons of the Pioneers* collection (MCAD 10090) brings together some of their first recordings for Decca from 1934 to 1943, including some of the definitive versions of their best-known songs during this time. With the Farr brothers (Hugh and Karl), Bob Nolan, Tim Spencer and Roy Rogers on the earliest sides, you hear the stunning first versions of Nolan's "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" and "Away Out There" along with the original 1941 recording of "Cool Water"—all Western standards now.

Also included are other masterpieces like "Echoes From the Hills" and Spencer's "When the Moon Comes Over the Valley." The weakest song in the bunch is a flat version of the

sacred number, "Somebody Bigger than You or I," which the Pioneers recorded for Coral, a Decca subsidiary label. If you're a Riders in the Sky fan, Ranger Doug & Company would definitely want you buckaroos to check this one out. This MCA collection is well worth a listen.

Stonewall Jackson: The recent *American Originals* collection of Stonewall material wasn't perfect; now Sony Special Products has gone one better by reissuing Stonewall's 1959 debut on Columbia in its original packaging. *The Dynamic Stonewall Jackson* (A 8186) includes five of the songs that made his reputation: "Waterloo," "Smoke Along the Track" (which was recently revived by Dwight Yoakam), "Life to Go," "Mary Don't You Weep" and "Why I'm Walkin'." Jackson's rough-edged recordings remain some of the finest, most unadulterated music of any era. The album, recorded in 1959 and produced by Don Law, has lost none of its original power.

Some of Cash's most enduring musical contributions have come in the area of saga songs similar to those of his friend Johnny Horton. Sony Special Products recently reissued Cash's first concept album of saga songs, *Ride This Train* (A 8255).

Originally released in 1960, it was a dramatic excursion through two centuries of American mythology as addressed in eight songs, combining Cash originals with songs by others. Beginning with Merle Travis' "Loading Coal," the collection runs through Cash's "Slow Rider"—a song about Old West outlaw John Wesley Hardin—Leon Payne's "Lumberjack," Tex Ritter's "Boss Jack," Red Foley's "Old Doc Brown" and Cash's own "When Papa Played the Dobro."

The second Cash album is an exact reissue of Cash's 1958 debut album on Columbia, *The Fabulous Johnny Cash*

(A8122). This one linked him with producer Don Law, who produced his records for the next decade. Several of his all-time best were among these 12 songs: "I Still Miss Someone," "Don't Take Your Guns to Town," "Pickin' Time" and "Frankie's Man, Johnny."

Bob Wills: I compiled and annotated this one, so here are the bare facts. Except for a 1982 Time-Life boxed set available only by mail order, there has never been a Bob Wills collection available in stores covering his essential work for Columbia, MGM, the Tiffany Transcriptions, Liberty and United Artists. Rhino Records' *Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys Anthology: 1935-1973* (R2 70744), available on two cassettes and CD's, is the first. Arranged chronologically, it begins with the 1935 instrumental recording of "A Maiden's Prayer" featuring Bob's fiddle, runs through "Steel Guitar Rag," "Time Changes Everything," "Big Beaver," "Right or Wrong" (the version that inspired Merle Haggard's and George Strait's versions), "Miss Molly," "Home in San Antonio," "Deep Water" and, of course, "New San Antonio Rose."

From the Tiffany Transcriptions come the original jam session version of Junior Barnard's "Fat Boy Rag" and "Three Guitar Special" ("Twin Guitar Special" adapted for guitarist Eldon Shamblin, mandolinist Tiny Moore and steel player Herb Remington). From MGM comes "Faded Love," "Boot Heel Drag," "Bubbles in My Beer," "Cadillac in Model 'A'" and "St. Louis Blues." Two tracks from Liberty include the 1960 hit, "Heart to Heart Talk." The last two numbers come from the 1973 album, *For the Last Time*, Wills' final session, including "What Makes Bob Holler," the final recording he ever spoke on. A stroke a day later left him comatose until he died in 1975.

The Bob Wills Anthology (Columbia Special Products A 32416) is a CD reissue of the 1973 double album that pioneered the slew of serious Wills reissues that followed. Combined on one CD, with the

original notes by Country Music Foundation Director Bill Ivey preserved along with complete recording information, it's the perfect companion volume to the Rhino set. The reason? It explores Wills' earlier Columbia period in much greater detail. The years 1935-42 were in many ways Bob's most triumphant. He came to Tulsa an unknown and within a year or two had become one of the region's most popular performers, both in the dancehalls and on his daily broadcasts over KVOO Radio.

The set includes both obvious numbers and obscure performances never issued on any other compilation, though it doesn't cover his 1945-1947 Columbia recordings nearly as well. The early Playboys can be heard on the still-incredible "Osage Stomp" as well as on "Spanish Two-Step." ("Spanish Two-Step" was the fiddle tune that inspired "San Antonio Rose.")

Jimmie Rodgers' influence on the band is underscored with their delightful version of "Blue Yodel #1" (sung by Tommy Duncan). Leon McAuliffe's jiving version of "That's What I Like About the South" is an example of his non-steel guitar contributions to the band.

This collection also explores the band's pop repertoire (which helped make them a favorite with dancers in the late 1930's), giving us their versions of big band favorites like Wayne King's "The Waltz You Saved For Me." Their

1941 version of "Mississippi Delta Blues" was one of Tommy Duncan's finest performances ever. Nine songs are duplicated on the Rhino set, but the quality of the rest of the material makes that a minor consideration.

OKeh Western Swing: In 1982 Gregg Geller, then a vice president at Columbia Records, assembled a superb collection of 28 Western swing numbers recorded for the American Recording Company (bought by Columbia in 1938) and other labels connected with ARC and Columbia. Many of these recordings, produced by Uncle Art Satherley, covered a range of music far beyond Bob Wills.

OKeh Western Swing (A 37324) includes material released on the venerable OKeh label. It begins with material that had considerable influence on Western swing co-founders of the idiom, Bob Wills and Milton Brown, including Al Bernard's "Hesitation Blues" (a song Milton Brown excelled at singing) and the original Emmett Miller recording of the pop tune, "Lovesick Blues." Miller was a blackface minstrel vocalist, and this particular tune had an enormous influence on Wills, Tommy Duncan and Merle Haggard. Hank Williams made his reputation with this number in 1949.

Also included are numbers by such Texas acts as Roy Newman and The Boys, The Blue Ridge Playboys, The Crystal Springs Ramblers, W. Lee O'Daniel & His Hillbilly Boys (the band O'Daniel led after he was fired as manager of Burrus

Mills, where he nurtured The Light Crust Doughboys). Seven more Bob Wills numbers—none of them duplicating anything on the two Wills collections—are also included, emphasizing the mid- to late 30's era of the Playboys. Hank Penny's Radio Cowboys, one of the first swing bands in the Southeast, feature steel guitarist Noel Boggs on the burning 1939 instrumental, "Chill Tonic." The terrific "Knocky, Knocky" by The Light Crust Doughboys features pianist John "Knocky" Parker. CMM Contributing Editor John Morthland's excellent original liner notes have been preserved; however, recording dates, personnel and other information on the album have been inexplicably dropped from this new version.

Slim Whitman: Capitol-EMI's new Slim Whitman reissue, *Una Paloma Blanca* (CAP 94315), is a real bargain for fans. The compact disc includes 27 Whitman favorites, most from his years with Imperial and United Artists, which stretched from 1952 through the late 70's. It begins with his first hit, "Love Song of the Waterfall," from 1952. Most of his hit records are here, sounding incredible since the sound was restored and enhanced using the original master recordings. "Indian Love Call," "Keep It a Secret," "My Heart Is Broken in Three," "Secret Love," "Rose-Marie," "Singing Hills," "Cattle Call," "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen," "The Twelfth of Never," "More Than Yesterday," "Tomorrow Never Comes," "Guess Who" and all the rest are here. The album ends with his original recording of "Una Paloma Blanca," which he did in 1977.

The packaging for this set is exceptional. Unlike some earlier Capitol-EMI sets, the notes by Slim Whitman Appreciation Society President Loren Knapp are loaded with information, and the back of the booklet includes a color montage of old album covers, 78 and 45 rpm discs, songbooks and magazine covers. This is the right way for EMI-Capitol Collector's Series producer Ron Furmanek to do it, and some other labels could take a hint.

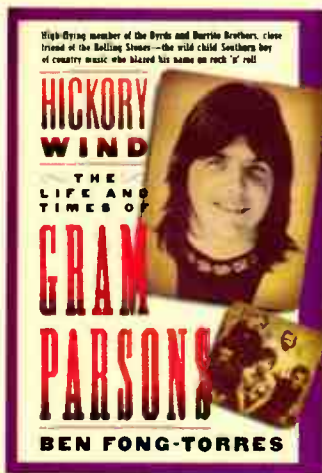
How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: MCA Hall of Fame series, *Floyd Tillman* (MCAD 10189), *Jimmie Davis* (MCAD 10087), *Tex Ritter* (MCAD 10188), *Sons of the Pioneers* (MCAD 10090); in this series each CD \$19.98, each cassette \$12.98/Stonewall Jackson, *The Dynamic Stonewall Jackson* (A 8186) CD \$18.98, cassette \$13.98/Johnny Cash, *Ride This Train* (A 8255) CD \$18.98, cassette \$13.98/*The Fabulous Johnny Cash* (A 8122) CD \$18.98, cassette \$13.98/*Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys Anthology: 1935-1973* (R2 70744), a 2-CD or 2-cassette set, CD's \$29.98, cassettes \$14.98/*Bob Wills Anthology* (Columbia A 32416) CD \$18.98, cassette \$13.98/*OKeh Western Swing* (A 37324) CD \$18.98, cassette \$13.98/Slim Whitman, *Una Paloma Blanca* (CAP 94315) CD \$19.98, cassette \$11.98. Send check or money order payable to *Country Music Magazine* to Dept. 91091, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

- Books -

Gram Parson: When singer-songwriter Gram Parsons died of a drug overdose in 1973, his protege, Emmylou Harris, vowed to maintain his musical vision. Eighteen years after his death, Emmylou, The Desert Rose Band, Dwight Yoakam, Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash, Barry and Holly Tashian and Dwight Yoakam all draw inspiration from Parsons' unique blend of hard country and rock. Ben Fong-Torres, veteran *Rolling Stone* interviewer, has chronicled Parsons' life in *Hickory Wind: The Life and Times of Gram Parsons*.



Fong-Torres has written an excellent and unflowery account of Parsons' complex, tragic life, filled with harsh images of old South wealth, alcoholism and suicide. Born Cecil Ingram "Gram" Connor, he came from a wealthy family. His mother's people owned Florida orange groves. When Gram was 12, his father committed suicide, and his mother married a man named Robert Parsons, who adopted the boy. Gram's roots were in rock and folk, yet he eventually embraced country music with a vengeance. After founding the pioneer country rock group known as The International Submarine Band, Gram joined The Byrds and

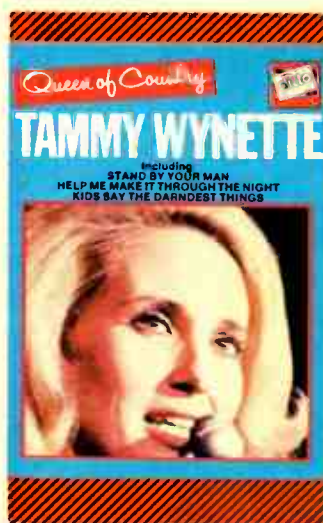
spearheaded their classic 1968 album, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, released the same year they played the Opry. Fong-Torres details that uneasy performance at the Ryman, during which they clashed with Tompall Glaser in his pre-Outlaw days.

With his own band, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Gram's direction became clearer through songs like "Sin City" that combined the perspective of many 1960's folk-rock musicians with raw country music. After leaving The Burritos in the early 70's, he began a solo career. Emmylou sang in his backup band, The Fallen Angels. His albums didn't sell, but critical acclaim was building when he died. As Fong-Torres points out, Parsons' wealth didn't help. He lived off of a generous trust fund that left him free to abuse liquor and drugs, squandering opportunities his less well-off colleagues struggled for. Parsons' story was tragic, yet Fong-Torres does both it and his genius justice.

- Cassettes -

Last month we reviewed some new MCA cassettes by Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty. This month MCA has three new cassettes out that fans of Loretta, Ernest Tubb and Patsy Cline should love.

Tammy Wynette: Many of Tammy's greatest hits can be found on the two-cassette collection, *Queen of Country* (Ditto DTO 10043 A and 10043 B). Volume 1 has 11 songs, all recorded from 1967 to the early 70's. Among them are three of her early hits: 1966's "Apartment #9"; her second hit, "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad," from 1967; and her 1968 blockbuster, "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," Number One for three weeks. The rest appeared on various Epic LP's and include: her late 60's cover version of future husband George Jones' hit, "Walk



Through This World With Me," and, from 1972, her version of the Jean Shepard hit, "Just As Soon As I Get Over Loving You," co-written by Ben Peters and Tammy's present husband, George Richey.

Volume 2 has more hits and less filler. Among them: "Stand By Your Man" from 1968, "Good Lovin' (Makes It Right)" from 1971, "Bedtime Story" and "'Til I Get It Right" from 1972, 1973's "Kids Say the Darndest Things" and "Another Lonely Song," "Woman to Woman" from 1974 and "(You Make Me Want to Be) A Mother" from 1975. To emphasize the point that this is early 70's material, we also are treated to her 1974 version of "Help Me Make It Through the Night." I believe the only artist who didn't record this during that time was Bill Monroe.

Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn: No, the two never recorded together. But they were close friends, and Loretta later recorded an album-length tribute to their friendship. *Just a Closer Walk With Thee* (MCAC 20492) mixes gospel performances by both artists. Patsy performs "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," "Life's Railway to Heaven" and "If I Could See the World Through the Eyes

of a Child." Loretta's performances include "How Great Thou Art," "I'd Rather Have Jesus," "When I Hear My Children Pray" and "In the Garden."

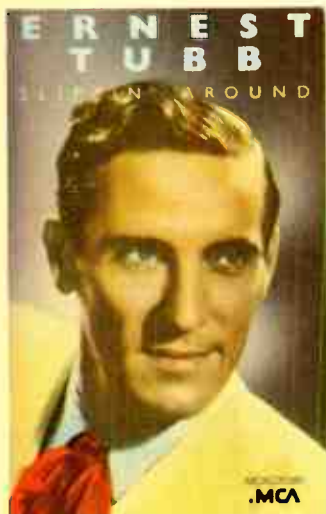
New Tradition Sings the Old Tradition:

A nice idea—compile Warner Brothers artists singing oldies to emphasize the connections between today's music and that of the past. Our new, tradition-oriented publication, *The Journal*, includes a feature titled *New Traditions/Old Traditions* that tries to do somewhat the same thing. It presents today's artists commenting on older artists and/or recordings that inspired them. Warner Bros.' ten-song collection, *New Tradition Sings the Old Tradition* (WB 25949-4), runs the gamut. You have Hank Jr. doing Hank Sr.'s "Honky Tonkin" and k.d. lang performing Patsy Cline's "Three Cigarettes In an Ashtray." Dwight Yoakam sings Stonewall Jackson's "Smoke Along the Track," while Highway 101 covers Buck Owens' "There Goes My Love," The Forester Sisters cover Brenda Lee's "Too Many Rivers" and Michael Martin Murphey takes on Marty Robbins' "Devil Woman." Rodney Crowell's incredibly hot "Old Pipeliner" was originally Moon Mullican's



"Pipeliner Blues," and Emmylou Harris is included with a version of "Tennessee Waltz." A nice idea, though whoever decided to include Pinkard and Bowden's parody of Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through the Night" should be drawn and quartered since it just doesn't qualify.

Ernest Tubb: If you're looking for a cassette with some of E.T.'s best honky tonk material ever, *Slippin' Around* (MCAC 20381) brings together eight gems. All are original performances—no re-recordings. His 1949 ver-



sion of the Floyd Tillman hit, "Slippin' Around," was a Number One record at the same time Margaret Whiting and Jimmy Wakely had their crossover hit. His moving and anguished 1949 performance of "Warm Red Wine" was also Top Ten. "Show Her Lots of Gold" was a hit in 1962, "Be Better to Your Baby" a hit in 1964. "Too Much of Not Enough" was a minor hit in 1968, and "Waltz Across Texas," from 1965, speaks for itself. The only number that really doesn't fit (and it's available on a cassette we reviewed last issue) is Tubb's and Red Foley's 1950 duet of "Goodnight Irene," the only non-honky tonker here.

Ernest Tubb and Loretta Lynn: Ernest and Loretta are represented on yet another cassette, *I'll Just Call You Darlin'* (MCAC 20509). It also consists of eight songs, only

two of which, "Mr. & Mrs. Used to Be" and "Our Hearts Are Holding Hands," were hits. The rest were included on the albums the pair recorded in the 1960's. Their version of the 1950 Jean Shepard-Ferlin Husky duet, "A Dear John Letter," leads the set off. The rest, "I Reached For the Wine," "I'll Just Call You Darlin'," "Just Between the Two of Us," "Keep Those Cards & Letters" and "If We Put Our Heads Together," round it out. Most solo singers who record duets manage to capture the magic with just one singing partner. Loretta managed to achieve it on one level with Ernest, which more than prepared her for her accomplishments with her next duet partner: Conway Twitty.

■ Discographies ■

A *discography* is a list of records organized by artist, by record company or by style of music. There's also a fourth type, *session discographies*, which provide details on recording sessions themselves: recording dates, studio, musicians and instruments they played, songs (released and unreleased) and their composers. Some record companies have this data in their files. However, most files are so spotty that the only way to reconstruct a session is to interview artists and musicians who were there. I've done a couple of these over the years, and I can tell you—compiling one ain't easy.



Johnny Cash. Over 25 years ago, John L. Smith's dedication to and admiration for the music of Johnny Cash resulted in his beginning a serious discography of Cash's music. Though Smith published his original research through the academic John Edwards Memorial Foundation many years ago, his revised *Johnny Cash Discography* is now a 30-year, session-by-session account of Cash's recordings from his first demo recordings at Sun Records in 1954 through an April 12, 1984, Columbia session. It also includes numerous live, in-concert recordings that were never released.

Read closely and you'll find fascinating details, like the first appearance (1974) on a Cash recording of June's daughter, Carlene, then Carlene Smith (her daddy, of course, is Carl Smith), now

Carlene Carter. Information on Cash's legendary 1969 session with Bob Dylan reveals the two recorded everything from "Big River" to "You Are My Sunshine," though only "Girl From the North Country" was issued on Dylan's LP, *Nashville Skyline*.

The Johnny Cash Discography is fascinating reading for any Cash fan, and Smith deserves credit for his labor of love. Cash and his friend, Johnny Western, both wrote introductions that provide some of that credit.

Decca Hillbilly Discography: Cary Ginell's *Decca Hillbilly Discography 1927-1945* is an exhaustive look at one of the most important collections of country music ever recorded. The Decca 5000 series covered dozens of artists, including important work by Bradley Kincaid, Jimmie Davis, pioneer Western swing band Milton Brown and His Musical Brownies, Eddie Dean, The Shelton Brothers, The Carter Family, Ernest Tubb, The Sons of the Pioneers, Johnnie Lee Wills and even a pianist named Freddie Rose (*the Fred Rose*). The book also covers Decca's 17000 series of Cajun recordings, as well as releases from the Montgomery Ward label (owned by the department store chain) that were marketed in selected cities across the U.S.

Much of the information available here will appeal mainly to serious record collectors, and there's not a lot of actual text, just information. For the average fan, the interest will be the old Decca ads and artist photographs and complete listings of all the releases until the end of World War II.

For some artists, the book includes artist-by-artist session discographies, some with complete personnel information that Ginell gained through his own diligent research. Obviously, it was impossible to obtain information on every artist since Decca didn't keep such data. If this era really interests you, this book is well worth the price.

How to Get These Collectibles

Available at prices shown. **Books:** Ben Fong-Torres, *Hickory Wind: The Life and Times of Gram Parsons* (B8G) \$19.95. **Discographies:** John L. Smith, *The Johnny Cash Discography* (B5L) \$38.95/Cary Ginnell, *The Decca Hillbilly Discography* (B7D) \$49.95. **Cassettes:** Ernest Tubb, *Slippin' Around* (MCAC 20381) \$8.99/Ernest Tubb and Loretta Lynn, *I'll Just Call You Darlin'* (MCAC 20509) \$8.99/Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn, *Just a Closer Walk With Thee* (MCAC 20492) \$8.99/Tammy Wynette, *Queen of Country Volume 1* (DFO 10043A) and Volume 2 (DFO 10043B) each volume \$8.99/*New Tradition Sings the Old Tradition* (WB 25949-4) \$8.99. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 91091EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, TN 37229. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

TOP 25

Singles

1. Trisha Yearwood *She's in Love With the Boy*
2. Travis Tritt *Here's a Quarter Call Someone Who Cares*
3. Alabama *Here We Are*
4. Billy Dean *Somewhere in My Broken Heart*
5. Ricky Van Shelton ... *I Am a Simple Man*
6. George Strait *You Know Me Better Than That*
7. Alan Jackson *Don't Rock the Jukebox*
8. Don Williams *Lord Have Mercy on a Country Boy*
9. Reba McEntire *Fallin' Out of Love*
10. Tanya Tucker *Down to My Last Teardrop*
11. Hal Ketchum *Small Town Saturday Night*
12. Vince Gill *Liza Jane*
13. Shenandoah *The Moon Over Georgia*
14. Lee Greenwood and Suzy Bogguss *Hopelessly Yours*
15. Garth Brooks *The Thunder Rolls*
16. Earl Thomas Conley *Shadow of a Doubt*
17. Dolly Parton *Silver and Gold*
18. Exile *Even Now*
19. Randy Travis *Point of Light*
20. Mary Chapin Carpenter *Down at the Twist and Shout*
21. Rob Crosby *She's a Natural*
22. Brooks & Dunn *Brand New Man*
23. Lorrie Morgan *We Both Walk*
24. Ronnie Milsap *Since I Don't Have You*
25. Patty Loveless *Blue Memories*

Albums

1. Garth Brooks *No Fences*
2. Alan Jackson *Don't Rock the Jukebox*
3. Ricky Van Shelton ... *Backroads*
4. Travis Tritt *It's All About to Change*
5. Garth Brooks *Garth Brooks*
6. Reba McEntire *Rumor Has It*
7. Dolly Parton *Eagle When She Flies*
8. Trisha Yearwood *Trisha Yearwood*
9. Clint Black *Put Yourself in My Shoes*
10. George Strait *Chill of an Early Fall*
11. Kentucky HeadHunters *Electric Barnyard*
12. Billy Dean *Young Man*
13. Tanya Tucker *What Do I Do With Me*
14. Alan Jackson *Here In the Real World*
15. Travis Tritt *Country Club*
16. The Judds *Love Can Build a Bridge*
17. Hank Williams Jr. ... *Pure Hank*
18. Alabama *Pass It On Down*
19. Vince Gill *Pocket Full of Gold*
20. Lorrie Morgan *Something in Red*
21. Diamond Rio *Diamond Rio*
22. Clint Black *Killin' Time*
23. Doug Stone *Doug Stone*
24. The Judds *Greatest Hits*
25. Kentucky HeadHunters *Pickin' on Nashville*

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- Rlo Smootho T1
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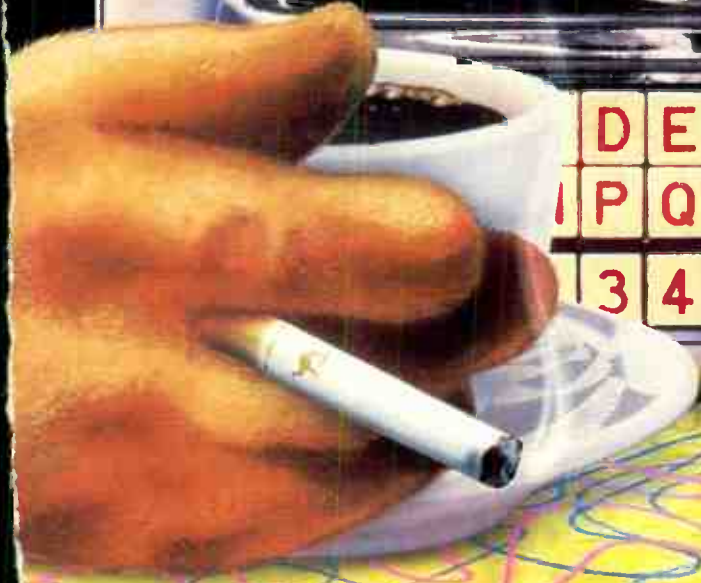
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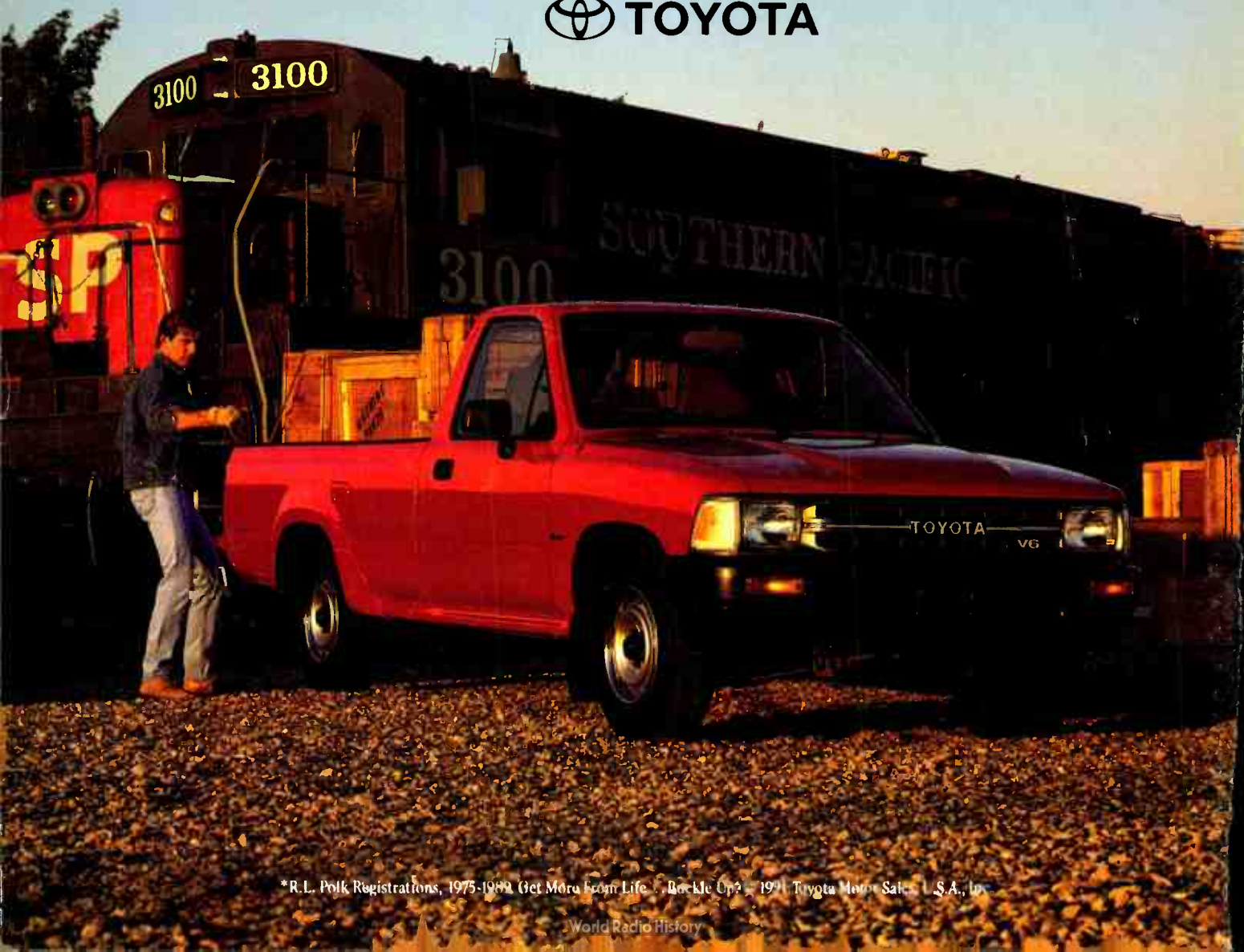
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