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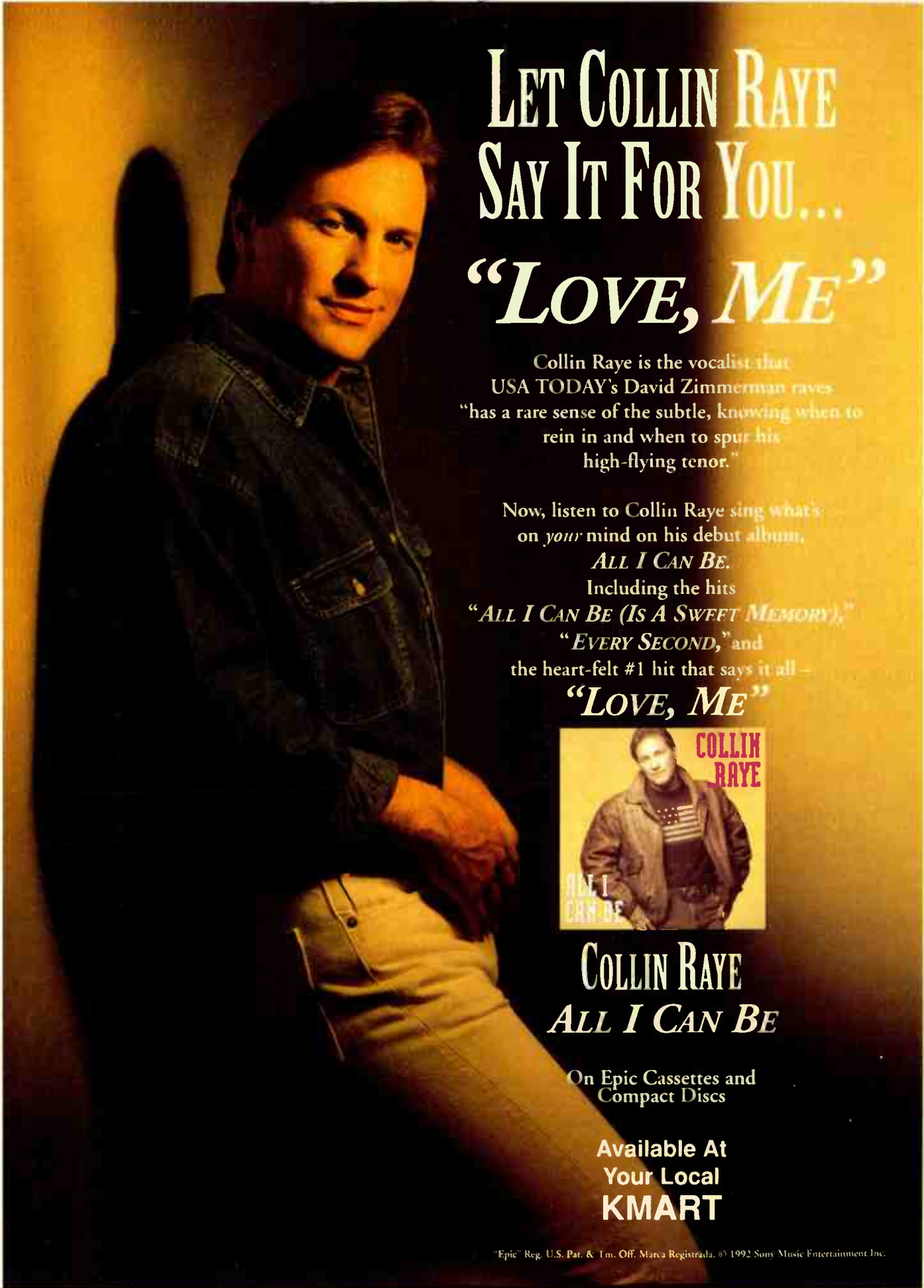
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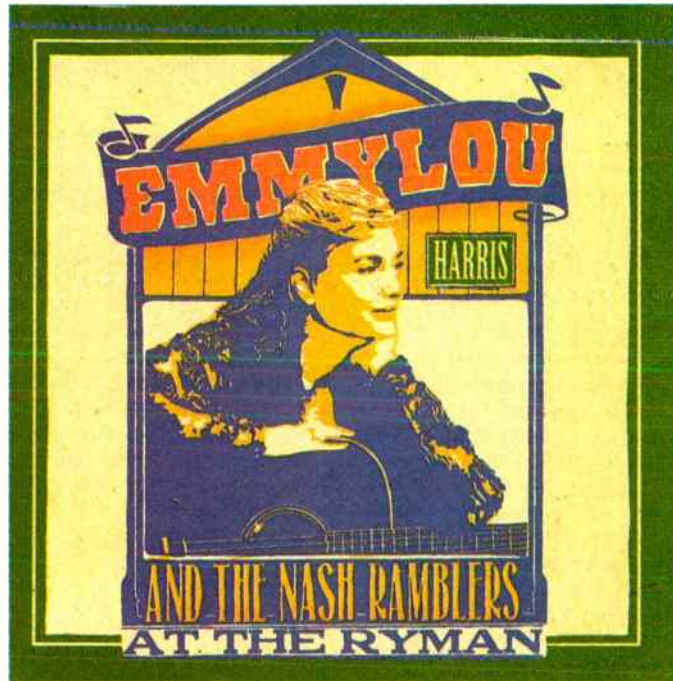
Record Reviews

Emmylou Harris *Live at the Ryman* Reprise 4-26664

Since Emmylou's recording sessions for this album were a recent *Country Music* cover story, there's no point in filling you in on the details of how this album came about. That would just waste space that can better be used discussing whether it worked or not. It works very nicely, thank you. One thing that is clear is that Emmylou's at home on the stage where her many musical heroes, Bill Monroe, Hank Sr., The Louvins, Eddy Arnold and even Gram Parsons (in 1968 with The Byrds) have trod over the past four decades. And this is actually a terrific record to introduce someone (particularly some younger person who hasn't followed Emmylou's career or is new to country) to Emmylou's special mix of contemporary and traditional.

Today it's common for artists to mix old and new material easily onstage, and still mold the performance into a cohesive whole. That wasn't always so. People like Willie, Waylon and Emmylou (and her mentor, the late Gram Parsons) did it first.

She mixes old and new effortlessly: from Steve Earle's "Guitar Town" to Hank Sr.'s "Half as Much" and Bruce Springsteen's "Mansion on the Hill" (different from Hank Sr.'s tune), through Eddy Arnold's "Cattle Call" to Johnny Cash's "Guess Things Happen That Way." She then goes way back with a powerful rendition of the ancient Stephen Foster tune, "Hard Times," a social awareness number from the 19th century



that melds seamlessly into the album's fabric.

"Where would we be without Bill Monroe?" Emmylou asks at one point. A secondary thread running through this set is a sort of Monroe tribute (he was present for these recordings). By way of honoring the Father of Bluegrass, she sings his gospel tune "Get Up John" and a bluesy, rocking version of his "Walls of Time." The latter number reiterates what The Kentucky Headhunters proved (and Elvis proved decades earlier): Monroe's songs can rock with the best of them. She dances as her band plays his instrumental "Scotland" (wisely mentioning it on the tape since listeners at home would have had no idea). The Everly Brothers' "Like Strangers" fits the proceedings perfectly, as does John Fogerty's "Lodi" and an a cappella version of The Country Gentlemen's "Callin' My Children." I don't much care for the pretentious

medley of "It's a Hard Life/ Abraham, Martin and John," but it is part of her musical vision. Luckily, she winds things up with a rolling bluegrass arrangement of Stonewall Jackson's "Smoke Along the Track."

Her impressive new all-acoustic band, The Nash Ramblers, constantly prove their versatility (you don't even miss the amplifiers). The best known member is Sam Bush, former New Grass Revival fiddler/mandolinist (whose blazing mandolin sparks "Get Up John"). Most of the others, including dobroist and ex-Gram Parsons sideman Al Perkins, former O'Kanes upright bassist Roy Huskey Jr., guitarist Randy Stewart and veteran rock drummer Larry Atamanuik are veteran pickers. All in all on this one, Emmylou, The Ramblers and producer Richard Bennett more than deliver. It's acoustic, but it's electrifying.

—RICH KIENZLE

Kenny Rogers *Back Home Again* Reprise 9 26740-2

Kenny Rogers has a voice with presence; a voice that makes people stop and listen, almost like he's talking directly to you. That's why he's endured when so many others have fallen by the wayside. *Back Home Again*, his latest Warner Brothers' release, pairs him with label chief Jim Ed Norman and Eric Pres-tidge, who know exactly how to bring out the best of this superstar. The result? A back-to-the-basics album for Rogers—back to the timeless, nostalgic songs he was cutting ten years ago.

Rogers has never been mainstream country, nor has he tried to be. He has, however, carved out a niche for himself. He grew up in Texas listening to country music, then launched his career as a folk singer with The New Christy Minstrels. That's why we hear so many allegorical story songs from him. Story songs like "Scarlett Fever," "The Gambler" and "Coward of the County" made him famous; his newest, "If You Want to Find Love," continues the tradition. But he's not just telling a story. When Rogers sings these songs, he totally immerses himself into the song's scenario—a rare gift—and actually feels what he's singing. That sincerity has made him a multi-million seller.

The production on *Back Home Again* carefully wraps around Kenny's voice, inviting you to lean in closer, to listen for the vocal. On songs like the power ballad, "Bed of Roses," and "They Just Don't Make 'Em Like You Anymore," he

Record Reviews

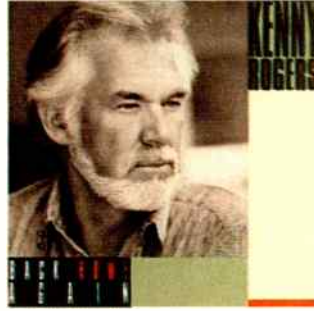
sings of ordinary men coming up short on the kingdom they promised their lovers. Rogers not only waxes poetic on these, he carries them off.

Another situational song, "When You Were Loving Me," is vintage Rogers, as he walks us through the house he once shared with a former love. "I always thought we could come back," he sings and we melt. "How Do I Break it to My Heart" is another Rogers' country classic, right down to the three and four-part signature chorus.

And he's fortified those choruses with some of country's best. Steve and Rudy Gatlin guest on "If You Want to Find Love" and the bouncy J.P. Pennington/J.D. Miller tune, "Two Good Reasons"; Terry McBride and Billy Thomas of McBride & The Ride join in on Jimmy Webb's "They Just Don't Make 'Em Like You Anymore." Same with other cuts: Dennis (Dr. Hook) Locorriere adds vocals to "Some Prisons Don't Have Walls," The Branson Brothers back up "How Do I Break It to My Heart" and Linda Davis helps out on his remake of the cult-favorite, "Sunshine." Add Restless Heart's Larry Stewart on strings and Michael Rhodes (Steve Winwood's bassist) on bass, and it's hard to fault production.

Although it's titled *Back Home Again*, Rogers hasn't forgotten his pop fans—they'll love the Jamaica-tinged rhythms of "Two Good Reasons" and the dreamy "I'll Be There for You." One of the disc's strongest songs is "Someone Must Feel Like a Fool Tonight," a romantic waltz that's sure to be sung in someone's ear. It's tender, reassuring and echoes what all of us would like to hear: "Someone must feel like a fool tonight for letting you slip away...." You won't get tired of this one, even after it's been played hundreds of times in heavy rotation.

Back Home Again captures the best of both worlds. If the



production leans slightly toward pop, it only enhances the nature of the songs—simply crafted music with simply spoken messages. Kenny Rogers isn't trying to be anything but Kenny Rogers. He's believable on the allegorical songs because everyone loves a good story and Kenny's a good storyteller. When he leans toward pop, it's with the same sincerity.

So how would we categorize this back-to-the-basics-but-with-some-pop-leanings album? The acid test is always, "Will country radio play it?" Well, they're playin' it—check how well "If You Want to Find Love" has charted—so it must be country.

If you're a Kenny Rogers fan, you'll love *Back Home Again*—it's everything you've been waiting for. And if you're not, buy it and listen to it anyway—it'll change your mind.

—MARJIE MCGRAW

Paulette Carlson *Love Goes On* Capitol C4 97711

Considering that Paulette Carlson, with her brassy, delightfully eccentric singing style and vivacious stage presence, was somewhere between nine-tenths and nineteen-tenths of the group Highway 101, the fact that she's gone solo doesn't seem like a big surprise, or a big deal.

Neither, for that matter, does *Love Goes On*, Carlson's kick-off solo album, which was co-produced by Carlson and Capitol Records producer/impresario Jimmy Bowen.



Mind you, *Love Goes On* is a competent enough effort, and occasionally even a shining one. It showcases Carlson's captivating and sometimes quirky vocal style and suggests that her transition to going it alone will be a relatively easy one. Yet, due to some less than remarkable material and some overly-facile arrangements, it's not likely that this album will end up on many people's end-of-'92 Top Ten list.

When Carlson manages to really sink her teeth into a great song—as she does several times herein—she sounds like a wonderful combination of a countrified Stevie Nicks and a latter-day, slightly up-town Tammy Wynette.

She indeed turns in such peak performances on a few selections, like "I'll Start With You," a lively up-tempo number written by Carlson and her frequent co-writers, Tom Shapiro and Chris Waters, about a woman who decides to give her faithless boyfriend the old heave-ho along with last year's calendar and yesterday's garbage.

And she's similarly spectacular on "The Chain Just Broke," a love-bitter country-rocker co-written by Monty Powell and Michael Noble; and "Why Should I?" (Tom Shapiro/Chuck Jones), which expresses a heart-broken woman's stubborn refusal to let her unfaithful man walk out on her without first instilling a little well-deserved guilt. With her impressive vocal range and delicious phrases and inflections she imbues these potential radio hits with genuine excitement.

Alas, with what I'm sure was the best of intentions, Carlson chose to stuff most of the rest of her debut solo album with her own material (most all of it co-written with Shapiro and Waters). And when it's all said and done, she seems to have precious little to say. Though she sings her heart out, all her dazzling technique and seeming emotional sincerity can't cover the fact that she and her illustrious line-up of studio musicians (Leland Sklar, Billy Joe Walker Jr., Reggie Young, Sonny Garrish and Tom Rody, among others) simply don't have a whole lot to work with. On "Where Ya Comin' From," an old-style country ballad, she sounds particularly forced and thin—like, for instance, Stevie Nicks trying to do Tammy Wynette.

Thus, what could have been a memorable album ends up being only a pretty good one, and another case of a great singer selling herself short with some not so great original material. —BOB ALLEN

Hal Ketchum *Past the Point of Rescue* Curb D4-77450

It seems as if Texas singer/songwriters have always helped keep Nashville fresh and honest. At the very least, they've always managed to inject a renewed edge of folksy poetics and creative word-smithing into Music City's sometimes relentless songwriter/publisher assembly line system.

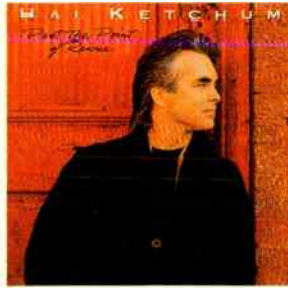
After all, some of the most distinctive voices in progressive country—Lyle Lovett, Steve Earle, Nanci Griffith, Robert Earl Keen Jr., Darden Smith and, before them, Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt—were from the Texas country-folk movement.

The latest from this long line to venture into the country mainstream is Hal Ketchum, a 38-year-old, former Austin club singer

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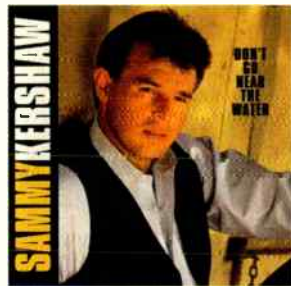
Hal Ketchum
Past The Point Of Rescue
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Collin Raye
All I Can Be
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Brand New Man
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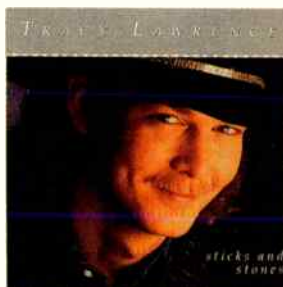
Sammy Kershaw
Don't Go Near The Water
Mercury



Lorrie Morgan
Something In Red
RCA



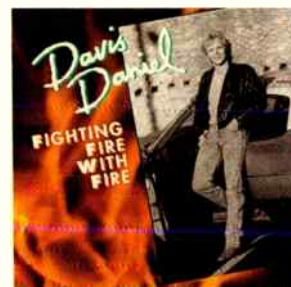
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Record Reviews

(who was actually born in upstate New York) who recently hit the Number One spot with the single, "Small Town Saturday Night."

Past the Point of Rescue, Ketchum's debut major-label album, is a straight-ahead, satisfying effort that was co-produced by Jim Rooney (Nanci Griffith, Robert Earl Keen, etc.) and Allen Reynolds, who has most recently hit the jackpot producing Garth Brooks and Kathy Mattea. (Mattea contributes a guest vocal or two herein.) The album's charm and accessibility lies in the manner in which Rooney and Reynolds have managed to meld the often incompatible stylings of Texas coffeehouse and Nashville mainstream.

"Small Town Saturday Night" (a Pat Alger-Hank DeVito composition which is one of the few songs on here that Ketchum didn't have a hand in writing) mines thematic territory that's been revisited time and time again by everyone from Steve Earle to John Prine and John Mellencamp. Yet it's one of the most on-target songs I've ever heard about growing up bored and restless and longing for another world out beyond the city limits sign. Anyone who comes from such a place and spent years trying to escape it, while being pulled back to it again and again like a bad magnet, can instantly identify with the song. Guitarist Richard Bennett, who was such a force in Steve Earle's early *Guitar Town* sound, contributes some fine dramatic guitar riffs.

Most of the rest of the songs on *Past the Point of Rescue* are not quite as topical. Rather, they are preoccupied with the usual turmoil and trauma of twisted hearts and broken dreams and struggling to get by in an imperfect world. In this department, Ketchum gets a lot of assistance from a star-studded lineup of co-writers, including folksy-turned-country writer David Mallet and the illustrious Pat Alger, who has



penned several of Garth Brooks' recent blockbusters.

A few of the songs, like "Long Day Comin'" (co-written by Ketchum and Gary Burr), stray off the beaten path and touch a different nerve. This one's about a father's heartfelt goodbye to his child as he tries to explain why he's leaving home for good. "Somebody's Love" (by Ketchum and Alger) is a friend's unsympathetic reply to the complaints of a man who's grown tired of his wife whom the friend has secretly been in love with for years. The title song is the urgent, compelling plea of a man who has fallen far deeper in love than he ever intended to.

The real surprise is Ketchum's singing. Often, he sounds low-key and laconic, like a Texas-flavored Neil Diamond; at other times he assumes the drawling swagger of a Steve Earle or the darkly wry and offhanded plaintiveness of a Lyle Lovett. Then he launches into a remake of the old Jay & The American's 60's hit, "Five O'Clock World" (which was written by none other than Allen Reynolds), and unleashes a surprisingly powerful, yodeling falsetto.

Hal Ketchum may seem to have come out of nowhere, but with an effort as worthy as *Past the Point of Rescue* I suspect he'll be around for a while. To my mind, his major-label debut evokes the same kind of excitement that the first-comings of Steve Earle or Lyle Lovett did. Once again, it underlines the point that the Lone Star State is seemingly a bottomless pit of musical talent. —BOB ALLEN

Joe Diffie *Regular Joe* Epic 0102

There's a whole lot more to making good honky tonk music than just having a good voice and finding the right songs. There's *attitude*: a certain, almost indefinable mixture of guilt and unrepentance; the ability to somehow almost gleefully feel guilty about the way you live, while in a strange way, secretly reveling in every heartache, hangover, drowned sorrow and wild time.

Whatever this elusive quality can be called, Joe Diffie captured it in spades on *A*



Thousand Winding Roads, his 1990 debut album, which resulted in four consecutive Number One singles. Diffie not only sang, but co-wrote two of these chart-toppers: "New Way to Light Up an Old Flame" and "If You Want Me To." These and other selections from his debut album, like "Liquid Heartache" and "I Ain't Leavin' Till She's Gone," were crafted and delivered with such authentic neohonky tonk glee, fervor and heartbreak that when I first heard them, I assumed they were remakes of some old Whitey Shafer-Doodle Owen honky tonk classics of yesteryear.

Regular Joe, Diffie's follow-up album, is nearly as laudable an effort as *A Thousand Winding Roads*. Maybe it isn't quite as laden with instant radio hits as was its predecessor; but all the same, this new

batch of selections—some co-written by Diffie, some outside material—resounds with much the same shrewdness and mastery of the idiom as did the songs on *A Thousand Winding Roads*.

The mokey humor and comic despair of "Startin' Over Blues" (co-written by Whitey Shafer and Leona Williams), about a guy who once again finds himself down at the local Walmart, shopping to furnish his brand-new bachelor pad, kicks things off with just the right beat, just the right attitude of sorrow, fortitude and resignation.

The title song (co-written by Diffie, along with M. Higgins and H. Perdew) is the rowdy personal anthem of a down-home guy who is determined not to let the bloom of success rob him of his love of music or his fondness of a good time. "Next Thing Smokin'" (yet another Diffie co-composition) is a shuffly, steamrolling declaration of a man who has resolved to escape a troubling, dead-end romance by means of the fastest thing on four wheels.

Yet this time around, Diffie (who, judging from the cover photo is now coming at us in a new, slimmer and trimmer edition) has also leaned just a little heavier into the ballads. "I Just Don't Know" is the all too real lament of a man who can't "commit" to a relationship, but can't bring himself to leave either. Diffie's singing here is—as it is throughout—confident and persuasive. It aches with all the anguished resonance of the torn emotions and indecision of being trapped halfway in and halfway out of love.

"(All the Good Is Gone) Ain't That Bad Enough" is a similarly troubled, five-beer lament about a man who's simply had more heartache and rejection from one woman than he can stand.

The lovely "Ships That Don't Come In" (co-written by P. Nelson and D. Gibson) is perhaps the most stunning performance on this album.

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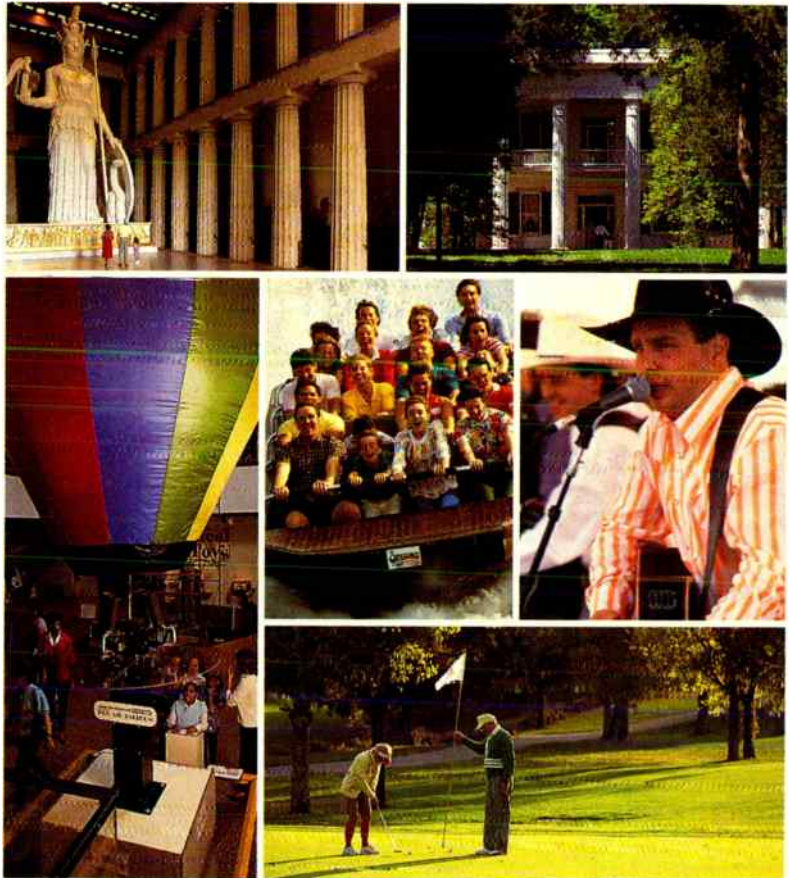
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Record Reviews

Diffie's vocal is understated but emotionally devastating as he wisely reminds us to stop and count our blessings a little more often and quit "bitching about a dollar when there are those without a dime."

There are one or two soft spots on *Regular Joe*. "Goodnight Sweetheart," the closing selection, is a gushy mainstream ballad on which Diffie's talents are somewhat squandered. "Is It Cold in Here" is a convincing vocal performance that is somewhat undermined by the song's metaphorical simplicity.

All told, though, *Regular Joe* is another solid feather in the cap of this "regular Joe" who now finds himself standing in a country star's shoes.

—BOB ALLEN

Texas Tornados *Zone of Our Own* Reprise 26683-2

I've always thought the premise of this act was terrific: Texans Doug Sahn, Freddy Fender, Augie Meyers and Flaco Jimenez playing as a band. They've worked so closely together in the past (though not always at one time) and know the same music so well, that there's no incompatibility. Yet I found that their debut album was not all it could have been; it was less of a band effort and more like a series of solo numbers. I'd also hoped they'd get away from re-recording songs they'd already done in the past.

Things are a bit better this time. There's still plenty of solo space, but that's only natural since all four of these guys have cut numerous solo recordings. But in places, there's the start of a band feeling, of everyone working together even when one is singing lead.

Tex-Mex material gets more emphasis here, and that doesn't hurt the overall sound, particularly since Fender doesn't always do the vocals.



Augie, for example, known for his whining Vox Continental electric organ (which he used in the 60's with Doug's rock band, The Sir Douglas Quintet), sings lead on the acoustic number "Bailando." Behind him, Flaco kicks in some exquisite accordion and Doug plays what are described as "acoustic rhythm fills." That's what I mean by working as a band.

From there, they again begin to go their own ways. Doug takes the lead on "He Is a Tejano," a playful Tex-Mex number about a Texan's first trip across the border (this stuff's pretty esoteric to non-Texans, but no less fun). Flaco's "El Pantalón Blue Jean" (something about blue jeans, but don't ask me what), captures the essence of his sprightly Mexican polkas, though none of the other Tornados appear on it.

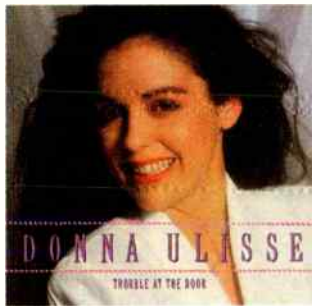
Fender's outstanding vocal performance on the R&B number, "Oh Holy One," also features the entire band in a ballad groove similar to "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" as Flaco, Doug and Augie wail away in the background. Fender recorded a lot of forgettable junk after his big hits of the 70's. However, no one—I mean *no one*—can touch him at this type of ballad. His duet with Flaco on "Volver" fuses Freddy's R&B with Flaco's jumping Mexican music, and shows how well they can interact.

The weak spots are largely Doug's. Though his version of the old Charley Pride tune, "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone," is driving and exciting, this is, after all, the ump-

teenth time he's recorded it (he's been playing it for nearly 20 years). "I'm Not That Kat Anymore" is a mediocre remake of an obscure single he recorded in 1975, and mainly a solo track. Only Augie works on it. Likewise, "Just Can't Fake It" plows old ground without being terribly interesting. Far better is Augie's "Did I Tell You," which features Flaco and Doug.

The Tornados have the ability to work as a band, and when they do, things are at their best. I still wish they'd work together on most songs, rather than bringing in specialist musicians as they often do here. Still, the album's a clear improvement from a group whose musical standards are beyond reproach.

—RICH KIENZLE



Donna Ulisse *Trouble at the Door* Atlantic 7 82282-2

Donna Ulisse's debut album is a pleasant enough listening experience—there's nothing here that would cause you to lunge for the CD player and say, "Shut that off!", nor is there much (with a few notable exceptions) that would cause you to make that same lunge and shout, "I *must* hear that again, right now!" But, I don't fault Donna for that. Her only problems are an occasional tendency to over-sing, and a bit too much polish in spots (a few rough edges, ala Becky Hobbs or Jann Browne, would have helped things along). Indeed, Donna shows herself to be more-than-com-

petent at a variety of styles—a real virtue.

Further, musicianship is fine—renowned studio-ers Brent Rowan, Hargus Robbins and Doyle Grisham are among those included here. And production, by Ray Baker, Josh Leo and Larry Michael Lee, holds up—though they hold responsibility for the aforementioned over-singing and, I suspect, are at least partly to blame for this album's real drawback: song selection.

The album relies too heavily on the kind of standard-issue, non-descript, new trad radio fodder that seems to be popping up more and more lately. Could it be that too many thirsty customers are trying to drink from Music City's songwriting well? Whatever, there are some exceptions.

Three fine songs fall into "best cuts" category. On the current single, "Trouble at the Door," a Reba-esque contemporary ballad, Donna brings forth a balance between hurt and resignation as she tries to uncover the truth about the anguished "other woman" who's landed on her doorstep. She really brings this one to life. Likewise for "Things Are Mostly Fine," a traditional country ballad, wherein she musters up enough conviction to convincingly tell her ex that she's doing okay, thank you, while letting us in on the truth and hurt behind those words. Sure the theme's been done before, but this take is interesting, as is Donna's delivery. And who hasn't played that game at one time or another?

On the opposite end of the musical spectrum, but no less moving, is the rollicking, Cajun-inflected, hardcore country scorcher, "When Was the Last Time." It jumps out of the speakers—Donna's all-stops-out vocal is terrific, the instrumentation is hot and Ray Baker's production is right on. In short, it's perfect. I'll freely admit to lunging to repeat this one (and "Things Are Mostly Fine," too). Surprisingly, these three songs,

Record Reviews

the one's with the most artistic merit, were all chosen as singles. Give Atlantic Records credit for that rarity.

Two other songs fall into the next ("okay-not-great") category—"Fire in an Old Flame's Eyes" by Bob McDill and Jim Weatherly, and R.C. Bannon's "You Always Take Her Memory Out on Me." Unfortunately, the rest of the songs fall into category number three—"unremarkable."

Donna has the talent, there's no doubt about that. She shows more promise than many fellow newcomers (some of whom are inexplicably selling lots of albums and/or cluttering up the airwaves). Next time out, she needs to give it a little more grit and be more discriminating in song selection. That should be enough to put her over the top.

—GEORGE FLETCHER

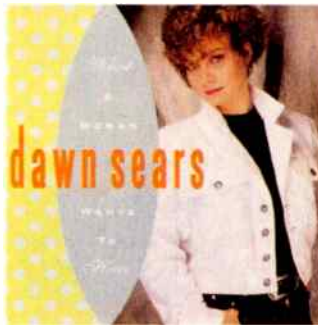
Dawn Sears *What a Woman Wants to Hear*

Warner Brothers 9 26442-2

Dawn Sears' *What a Woman Wants to Hear* paints an intricate portrait of a woman in love. You'll sigh

with her, cry with her and cheer when she finally ditches that no-good lout. Although Sears' voice is brand new to radio listeners, she's a familiar face to the thousands of people who tune into Ralph Emery's Nashville morning television show; she managed to turn a 1987 break on *Nashville Now* into a regular gig on the show. Those local appearances brought her to the attention of manager Bill Carter, who hooked her up with veteran producer Barry Beckett, who got her signed to Warner Brothers, to sing on the label that Jim Ed Norman built.

This is an album that any woman would identify with—men could, but perhaps not as easily—it's filled with wonderful situational song portraits. When she sings "He's in Dallas," you're in a bus headed for Minnesota, looking out the window, holding your baby—"the only dream that turned out right"—while tears run down your face. He's still in Dallas unaware that the myth of happily-ever-after has just been shattered for good. We've all been there, looking out that same window, at a world that inexplicably refuses to stop turning for our broken dreams.



"What a Woman Wants to Hear" is a ballad of the same ilk. While you're desperately lonely and falling out of love, he's flipping through the football games on the tube, completely unaware there's a crisis brewing. In "Tell Me I'm Crazy," you're holding on by a thread during that frozen period when a relationship is gasping its last breath.

But not all the songs are of the four-hanky variety. When it's over and she's on the mend, Sears belts out feisty tunes like the old Hank Williams' classic, "Half as Much" (she's upped the tempo and added a bounce), "No More Tears," where a woman is on the road to recovery and "steppin' out of these blues", and "Good Goodbye," a "Here's a Quarter, Call Someone Who Cares" song for

women. "I've got my radio up and I'm startin' to sing/I ain't thinkin' twice about that no-account man." Any woman who's ever dumped a man, then headed out on the freeway, radio blaring, exhilarated by the feeling of freedom, will love this song, which was co-written by Paulette Carlson and first recorded by Highway 101 on their debut album.

Sears shifts gears with "Could Be the Mississippi," a well-written, catchy swamp tune co-written by award-winning songwriters Susan Longacre and Russell Smith. "Till You Come Back to Me" is torchy song, reminiscent of Roy Orbison, but Sears sings it as a tribute to her mother who died in 1981. "When I first heard (the song), I heard a song to my mother," she says. "I know she can't come back to me, but someday we'll meet again."

Sears proves she can deliver the goods with this album. Her delivery has fire and passion—a torch fan's dream; her vulnerability and sincerity will make you believe. She doesn't just sing songs, she lives them. And this isn't just a debut album, it's her life.

—MARJIE MCGRAW

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People

HEE HAW— DIFFERENT FACES, SAME JOKES

Dyed-in-the-wool country music fans will always watch *Hee Haw*. It's a part of their weekly routine, like grocery shopping, visiting mama and going to church. Those who were past 45 when the show started 24 years ago will pout a bit about the changes, but in a week or two they will be on the phone to Beulah repeating a *Hee Haw* joke.

Country music "tv-ers" are not crazy about change. They want to yell "Grandpa, what's for supper?" And they want **Grandpa Jones** to answer with a menu in rhyme as he has since the show's beginning. Grandpa is still on the show. After all, Grandpa is the longest running grandpa in the world...55 years he has been Grandpa Jones, since he was in his 20's. But even country folks have to keep up with the times, and—back about two issues ago—we reported that changes were in store for *Hee Haw*.

I had the opportunity to visit the set of the "new" *Hee Haw* recently and got to meet some of the old-timers as well as some of the newcomers. All are proud of being with the show. Here's what's up with the new cast that started in January.

Gone is the cornfield and the following cast members: **Roni Stoneman**, the snaggle-toothed, banjo-picking comedienne; gone, too, is **Marianne** (Mrs. Kenny) **Rogers**, the perennial teenager **Cathy Baker**, the greatly endowed blonde with the lisp—**Misty Rowe**, and even **Gunilla Hutton** aka Miss Good Body, the only 50-year-old woman I know who's sported the same hourglass figure for 24 years. Also, singer **Vickie Bird**, **Jeff Smith** and **Dub Taylor** are no longer with the show.

New bodies include the **Norris twins**, **Becky** and **Lindy**. They hail from Springfield, Missouri, and have worked next door in a club in Branson for six years. Identical, right down to the last long strand of blonde hair, the Norris twins are worth watching. When I talked with them, they surprised me by saying that they don't think that Nashville and



Roy Clark and the cast of the new *Hee Haw*. New faces and old help keep the longest-running syndicated television show in top form.

Branson should be compared. Give me a hillbilly break! With tourism down at Opryland and Willie Nelson heading for Branson next year? I disagreed.

Donna Stokes, another body who shows more legs and less boobs than former Honeys, is pretty, cute and says her lines well as Crime Lady. She hails from nearby Clarksville, Tennessee, and has acted and modeled before. I've heard **Alice Ripley** sing on *Nashville Now*, and she's okay. Also a new cast member, she will do skits as well as sing. She has appeared in several theater productions and hails from California.

Dennis Stone, slated to do comedy acting, has been in Nashville three years and is from Georgia. **Pedro Tomas** is a real cutie. He's worked as a dancer with the Louise Mandrell Show on the road, and at Opryland. Pedro could very well be the "Desi Arnaz of Country Comedy." I don't know how they will fit his dancing into *Hee Haw*, but I can tell you this, he is one of the better dancers I've seen. Pedro is

also in the Clown Show segment of the show, does comedy and sings.

Another newcomer, **Billy Baker**, is a former Ringling Brothers circus clown. He has performed in musicals at Dollywood and hails from Gatlinburg. Billy will appear in several character parts on the new *Hee Haw*, and of course he is one of the clowns.

Gary Mule Deer is a comedian who has been around for a while. Locally, I've seen him on *Nashville Now* and at Zanie's, the Nashville comedy club. He should do well on *Hee Haw* with his comedy. **Dawn McKinley**, from California, will round out the cast of females.

With the show since the beginning, **Sam Lovullo** has spent virtually a lifetime producing *Hee Haw*. As a young man, Sam worked up the CBS-TV ranks, then landed the associate producer role for the *Jonathan Winters Show*. It was Lovullo who put down some ideas on two pieces of paper, presented it to CBS and *Hee Haw* became a reality. After three

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People



Patty Loveless, Garth Brooks and Alan Jackson are just some of the stars you'll see on *Hee Haw* this year. The show, which began in 1969 as a summer replacement for *The Smothers Brothers Hour*, was an overnight success.



years, CBS changed its image and dropped the show. It was then that the show went into syndication. *Hee Haw* is the longest-running show in syndication. Sam is the reason for the show's longevity, and he is largely responsible for superstars who want to come back and perform year after year. And he keeps the regulars happy, too.

At Mr. Lovullo's invitation, some of the chart-toppers you will see on the new *Hee Haw* are **Garth Brooks**, **Reba McEntire**, **Alan Jackson**, **Alabama**, **Kathy Mattea** and **Ricky Van Shelton**.

Roy Clark still heads up the cast. The multi-talented Clark is still the proverbial glue that holds the show together. Still with him are his sidekicks **George "Goober" Lindsey**, **Gailard Sartain**, **Gordie Tapp**—who was the first entertainer hired to perform on the show 24 years ago—**Lulu Roman**, **Irlene Mandrell**, **Linda Thompson**, the wonderfully talented comedian/banjoist **Mike Snider** and **Phil Campbell**.

I was truly knocked out by the new backup singers. Led by the angelic vocals of **Lea Jane Berinati**, the group also includes **Danny Bailey**, **Ray Burdett** and **Tammy Smith** (formerly with *The Girls Next Door*). They do some awesome vocalizing...angels on *Hee Haw*, friends. The group is featured as an act on the show a few times and rightly so. Just watch. You'll be impressed. Visiting with them was a real joy. Going into the dressing room, actually hearing them in rehearsal, was so show biz.

Ray Burdett, another newcomer to the show, doubles on comedy and also sings bass with the cowboy quartet. Ray told me he hung around *Hee Haw* for five years, "every chance I got," until Sam hired him to "do something." Burdett is powerful proud of being a part of the show. He's singing and doing skits.

The new writers include the late **Archie Campbell's** son, **Steve Campbell**, **J.R. Miller**, **Herbert Fox** and **Steve Arwood**. I should note here that **Phil Campbell**, one of the regular cast members mentioned above, is also the son of Archie Campbell. Archie, of course, was a *Hee Haw* regular until his death. He also served as a writer.

A couple of years ago **Elmer Alley** was named Executive Producer of the show. The old master of Music City TV, Alley's past is historic. It was Elmer Alley's architectural mind that dreamed up Opryland USA, sitting in the real Tennessee countryside, as a theme park. Alley further dreamed that the Grand Ole Opry should be nearby, and a hotel should be there, too. It happened.

In addition to that, friends and fans, were it not for Elmer Alley, country music television as it is known possibly never would have been. He directed early Opry television shows, produced and directed *The Porter Wagoner Show* with **Dolly Parton**, *The Wilburn Brothers Show* with **Loretta Lynn** and *That Nashville Music* with **Ralph Emery** serving as host. It was Elmer Alley who dreamed up *Nashville Now* and hired

Ralph Emery to host the show. Thick-skinned and determined, Alley has nurtured TV since its infancy. *Hee Haw's* changes probably are due to his thinking. He has never been very wrong in the past. We will see if he is correct again.

I enjoyed watching **Patty Loveless**, who was one of the special guests on one of the days I attended the tapings. I do hope this year Patty gets to the heights her talents deserve. What a singer this little Kentucky girl is. She's so nice, too.

About the new show, Lovullo says, "I'm getting good reactions on the new format from managers, artists, agents, street people as well as the press." Good luck, Sam. You deserve the best. My opinion, you are the best.

Lulu Roman says, "After all those years together, you miss certain people. However, the new crew are not only very talented, they too are very nice." And to my question of how much weight had she lost and how did she do it, "47 pounds...Jenny Craig" was the response.

Director **Steve Schepman** says, "I think everybody will like the new format. It's updated somewhat. I like it. I like the new acts. I think they add a lot to the show. Especially I enjoy the 'blackout comedy,' the hit and run."

Gordie Tapp has these remarks about the fresh new look. "You can't drive the same car all your life. Changes are necessary with anything. These new acts are refreshing. The Norris twins are real bubbly. Pedro is really special. Did you hear him sing 'I Can't Stop Loving You' on *Nashville Now*?" I did and he was awesome.

Gordie continued, "We, of course, couldn't do without Sam. He has his finger on the pulse of everything. We believe with this new format we will get a younger audience, and we believe if the older audience leaves, they will return."

Last, but not least, would you please give a standing ovation for one of the greatest bands on the planet? **Charlie McCoy** still leads the *Hee Haw* band. The band members Charlie has chosen are second to none. They include **Shannon Ford** on drums, **Russ Hicks** on steel, **Victor Jordon** on acoustic guitar and banjo, **Tony Milliore** on keyboards, **Kip Paxton** on bass, **Downs Thompson** on fiddle and **Vip Viperman** on lead guitar. Cooking with gas they are... Watch their smoke.

Even babies need changing. Maybe *Hee Haw* did too. After all, from where I sat, I decided there were different faces, but the same jokes. Isn't that basically what *Hee Haw* has always been? Except same faces, same jokes?

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THE LEGENDARY JO WALKER-MEADOR

As I mentioned last issue, after 33 years with the Country Music Association, **Jo Walker-Meador** hung up her hat and purchased a pair of retirement sunglasses. The country music community honored Jo with a sitdown dinner at the Opryland Hotel not long ago. An estimated 1,000 people were in attendance.

A video highlighting Jo's years at the helm was narrated in person by **Brenda Lee, Ricky Skaggs, Emmylou Harris, Marty Stuart** and **Richard Sterban** and accompanied by **Mark O'Connor's** fiddle. **Garth Brooks, Gene Autry, Kenny Rogers** and others appeared on tape.

As an invited guest, I was proud to be escorted by our illustrious leader, **Mr. Russell Barnard**, from Westport, Connecticut (live, in person and dressed in formal clothes). Other noted guests, besides Russell, were Hall of Famers **Bill Monroe, Roy Horton, Hank Thompson, Grandpa Jones** and **Kitty Wells**. I also spotted *Hee Haw's* **Sam Lovullo** and **Sandy Lyles, Sharon White, Rudy Gatlin, Bobby Bare**, Sony Records' **Mike Martinovich, Kay Smith** and **Margie Hunt, Captain Midnite, Tompall Glaser, Johnny Wright** (of **Johnny and Jack** fame) and the legendary **Anita Kerr**. Furthermore, I hugged Giant Records' new head **James Stroud**, sat with TV's **Bob Precht**, saw **Mary Reeves Davis**, Opry manager **Hal Durham**, MCA's headman **Bruce Hinton**, RCA's headman **Jack Weston** and Press/Publicity Ace **Brenna Davenport-Leigh**. I also spied Atlantic Records' brand-new sensation **Tracy Lawrence**, Warner Records bigshot **Jim Ed Norman**, two VP's from Capitol—**Jerry Crutchfield** and the very beautiful **Sherry Halford**, BMI's **Roger Sovine**, *Music Row's* bossman **David Ross**, and Polygram's three main persons in this hillbilly town—**Harold Shedd, Paul Lucks** and **Sandy Neese**. Writer **Jim Bessman** was in Hillbilly Heaven schmoozing with everybody, as was his pal, *The Tennessean's* **Bob Oermann**. The pair spent time talking with me, of course, and with *The Nashville Banner's* **Jay Orr** and **Shirley Sovine**, and looking for **Anita Kerr**. Other folks of note attending were **Biff** and **Barbara Collie**, songwriter **Suzanna Clark, Justin Tubb, Stella Parton**, GMA's topman **Don Butler** (and a sweetie he is) and super songsmith **John D. Loudermilk** and his bride, the lovely **Susan Loudermilk**.



Lawrence the new "Boy Wonder"?

Last but not least, from Russell, myself and the entire staff of *Country Music Magazine*, thank you, Jo Walker-Meador. We love you and we will miss you. Welcome to **Ed Benson**, the brand new Executive Director of the Country Music Association. We know you will do an excellent job. God speed, Jo.

127

Young **Tracy Lawrence**, Atlantic Records' new boy wonder, raked in 127 stations first week out with his single, "Sticks and Stones," from his album of the same title. A native of Atlanta,

Texas, Tracy, only 23 years old, scored quicker than many of his counterparts which could be due to the songs or the production of **James Stroud**. Whatever the reason, Tracy has star written all over him and his music. Ladies will love Tracy when they learn that he got shot earlier this year, three times, when a couple of goons tried to grab his girlfriend. Tracy stood up to them. I figure men will respect the young man for this as well. Me? I'm glad he's here to sing great country songs for everybody who reads what I write.

SOMETIMES GOOD FOLKS GET THEIR DUE

Doug Johnson started coming to Music City as an engineer/producer four years ago. The Georgia native scored a homer with **Doug Stone's** two Epic albums, the Grammy-nominated *Doug Stone* and *I Thought It Was You*, which was recently certified Gold. Doug (Johnson, that is) has been named the brand new Vice President, A&R for Epic Records/Nashville. A great big title for one of the nicest guys to ever be named to a post in this hillbilly town.

The second person recognized by the Sony folks (parent company for both Epic and Columbia) is **Kay Smith**. One of the brighter "non stars" on Music Row, Kay has been upped to Associate Director, A&R Administration/Sony Music/Nashville. A bestest pal of mine,

SOME LUCKY FAN



When **Kenny Rogers** guest-hosted on *Nashville Now* recently he was able to grant fan, **Sharon Crossover**, a special wish. During the live telecast she was able to meet with **Mark Chesnutt**. She had filled out a questionnaire and asked for a hug from Chesnutt and wanted to know if "he was spoken for." Introductions were made, and...we'll let them take it from there.

People

PROMOTING OUR MUSIC



Yep, that's Ole George with Ole Waylon with Marc Ball from Scene Three video company and Tim Riley of the American Network Radio. The good ole boys taped television spots as part of a national campaign promoting country music across the United States. I'd have Jones and Jennings speak for country music anyway. Other country stars are scheduled to do the same.

Kay will chase young boys—hell, yes—take a sip and hang out with the entire Nashville Police Department. She, however, is the first one to work, the last one to leave and she does know hit songs and hit acts. Ms. Smith answers directly to **Roy Wunsch**, President Sony/Nashville. Congratulations to both Doug and Kay. Sometimes good folks get their due. And I'd like to add here, they probably don't know in Tokyo, or New York, for that matter, just how lucky they are to have folks in their employ as capable as Doug and Kay.

HAVE YOU BEEN TO ALABAMA LATELY?

With 142 awards (you read it right, 142), it should read, 142 major awards, 4 1/2 million records sold in the international market, and 90,000 *Greatest Hits* videos sold. This caused me to ask the question, "Have you been to Alabama lately?" Take a look. They consistently sell and sell. Look closely a dozen years ago; their first album, *My Home's in Alabama*, sold two million copies; *Feels So Right* sold four million, *Mountain Music* another four million, *The Closer You Get* three million, *40 Hour Week* two million, *Alabama Christmas* one million, and *The Touch* and *Just Us* both a million each, followed by *Alabama Live*, *Southern Star* and *Pass It On Down*, all certified

Gold. They had one record shot some 12 years ago. Makes me laugh when I think of the heads that said no to this group who went on to make RCA rich as all get out. I need to go to Alabama again. Right here and now I'd like to take note of **Brenna Davenport-Leigh**, who has kept Alabama's name and face before us. Her work has helped more than a little.



The boys from Alabama.

REMEMBER THE LOUVIN BROTHERS?

How dare anyone ever forget **The Louvin Brothers**, one of the greatest country music duets to ever voice a song. **Charlie** is still alive and singing on the Opry. His brother, **Ira**, was killed in a car accident some years past. You Louvin fans will be happy to know a second generation Louvin has popped up in Music City. Ira's daughter, **Kathy Louvin**, co-wrote "Keep It Between the Lines" with **Russell Smith** for **Ricky Van Shelton**. The BMI folks honored Kathy with a reception recently for her first Number One penned single. I would guess there are many more in the Louvin mind.

THE PAYCHECK PLEASE

Sometime bad boy, **Johnny Paycheck**, donated one of his favorite guitars to the Country Music Hall of Fame. The words "Shove it" are on the fingerboard in mother of pearl inlay while "Paycheck" appears on the body of the instrument. The words, "Shove it," of course, are taken from Paycheck's Grammy-winning hit, "Take This Job and Shove It," one of country music's all-time greatest hits. By the way, did you know Johnny penned "Apartment Number Nine," **Tammy Wynette's** first hit record? The paycheck, please.

CUTTING EDGE

If **John McEuen** hadn't been born too late, and he'd been in Nashville in '39, he might've been **Bill Monroe's** first banjo player rather than **Stringbean**. John can frail a banjo like String did. Had John been around in '45, he might have been a part of the greatest bluegrass band that ever walked onstage, with **Bill Monroe** on mandolin, **Earl Scruggs** on banjo, **Lester Flatt** on guitar, **Benny Martin** on fiddle and **Cedric Rainwater** on upright bass. John has mastered the three-finger roll invented by the great Earl Scruggs. John could have been a part of the great **Flatt & Scruggs Band** or maybe a member of **The Carter Family**...but he wasn't around.

John was in love with all the above and the music they played. At 18, the five-string banjo took him to the club scene in Southern California, to folk groups, to a bluegrass trio and to play with both **Jose Feliciano** and **Steve Martin**, the comedian who's been his best friend since highschool/college days. John loved to hear the music and he loved to play the music.

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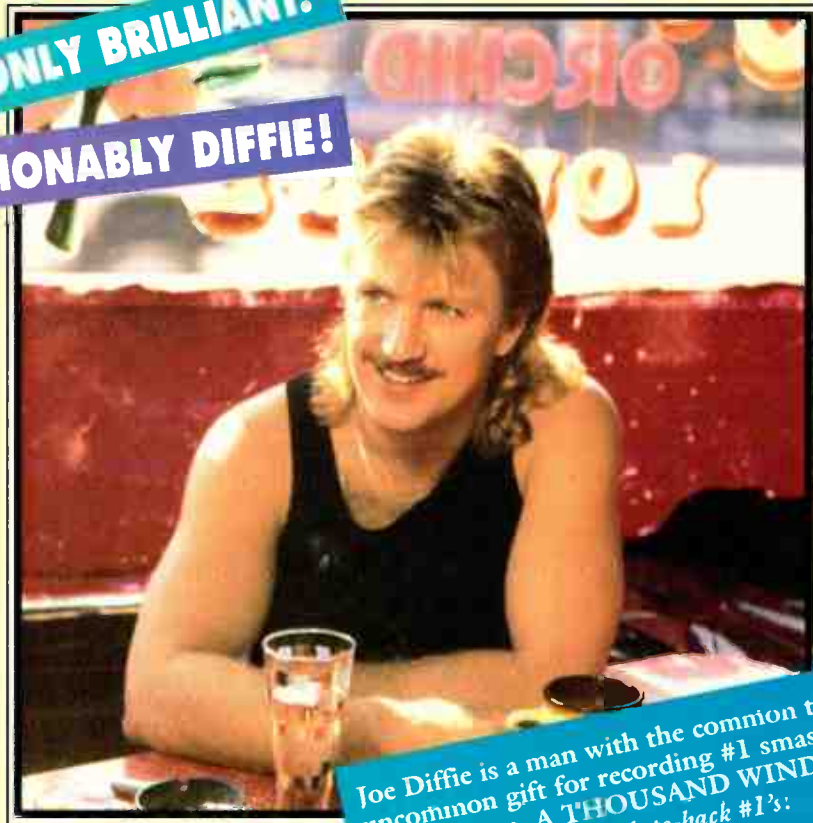
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People

Twenty albums and as many years ago, John and a trio of youngsters gave birth to **The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band** at McCabe's Guitar Shop in Long Beach, California. Folk, rock, country, bluegrass...the cutting edge. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band album, *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, brought John into the studio with **Roy Acuff**, **Earl Scruggs**, **Mother Maybelle Carter**, **Merle Travis**, **Jimmy Martin**, **Doc Watson**, **Vassar Clements**—all of John's heroes. Bringing all these wonderful musicians together, playing their own songs with NGDB for the love of music, and keeping it on the cutting edge.

As you know, John left NGDB and set out on his own to seek his fortune (sorta like one of the three little pigs). John's new Vanguard CD, *String Wizards*, has some of the greatest musicians featuring great music. John picks with greats and near greats like Earl Scruggs, **Sam Bush**, **Stuart Duncan**, **Jerry Douglas**, **Roy Huskey**, **David Grier**, **Josh Graves**, **Vassar Clements**, **Bobby Hicks**, **Byron Berline** and **Kenny Malone**. John's made another musical circle, and thank you very much, as always, he's on the cutting edge. Acoustically yours and on sale everywhere.

IOWA HAS A SONGWRITER'S HALL OF FAME

I learn something new every day. Today I learned that the state of Iowa has a Songwriter's Hall of Fame and that **Bobby Fischer** was recently inducted into said establishment. The writer of **Reba McEntire's** hit, "You Lie," has enjoyed success in songwriting with song cuts by **Eddy Arnold**, **George Jones**, **Charley Pride**, **Conway Twitty**, **The Oaks**, **Mickey Gilley**, **Faron Young**, **Lee Greenwood**, **Moe Bandy** and many others.

A PERSONAL FAREWELL

For me, saying goodbye to **Grant Turner** was like saying goodbye to family. From my first introduction, Grant never forgot my name, nor did he forget anyone else for that matter. Whether it was a fan from Indiana, a promoter from Michigan, a sideman from 30 years ago or a current star, Grant knew each and every one by first name. Amazing!

Called "The Dean of the Opry Announcers," Grant Turner was so loved and is sorely missed. Our last conversation backstage at the Opry was about three weeks before his death. We were comparing the phenomenon of **Garth**



IF'S/EVERETT

We will miss Grant Turner.

Brooks to Hank Williams Sr. Grant allowed that the thrill for him was just as great with **Garth** as it was 40 years ago with **Hank** on the Opry. The 79-year-old veteran added, "My biggest thrill, however, has to be going to Houston with the Grand Ole Opry Show for the summit meeting with **Bill Monroe**, **Minnie Pearl**, **Roy Acuff** and all the Opry stars at the request of the President. And being there with **President** and **Mrs. Bush** and all the world leaders was something else." So were you, Mr. Grant Turner, something else.

STAR TREK EDDIE'S FAVE?

According to the press release I received, **Eddie Rabbitt's** favorite TV show is *Star Trek*. To each his own, whatever makes one's clock tick. Eddie got his ticked in good fashion when he was gigging at Los Angeles' famed Crazy Horse Saloon. He had the chance to do lunch with **William Shatner**, Captain Kirk of the original *Star Trek* TV series. We can only hope Shatner was as happy to meet Rabbitt.

WILLIE NELSON: SORROW AND HAPPINESS

It is amazing how stars have to cope with both the bad things in life and the good things. Just like real folks. **Willie Nelson's** son, **Billy Nelson**, hanged himself in his home in Nashville recently. He was 33 years old. Billy, a child of Willie's first marriage, underwent alcohol abuse treatment last year. His mother, **Martha**, was divorced from his father in 1963 and died two years ago. Private services for Billy were held in Texas.

Another, happier announcement came earlier. Willie announced his nuptials to his companion and the mother of his two youngest children, **Annie D'Angelo**. Four times to the altar for Willie. Hopefully he can enjoy some of the happiness of his marriage. We wish him the best.

INFLUENCED



George Jones and **Randy Travis** called it *Influences*. HBO programmed it and I watched it. What a great half-hour of music from the legend and his protege. I could watch those two guys forever and ever. Amen.



Doll shown approximately actual size.
(Measures 20" from head to toe.)

People

QUEEN FRANCES PRESTON

BMI's Queen Bee, **Frances Preston**, local girl-done good, was honored in "our" hometown for her work with United Palsy of Middle Tennessee. Originally scheduled as co-chairpersons for the event were **Barbara Mandrell** and **Irving Waugh**. The event was held at the fancy schmancy Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel. At the last minute, **Brenda Lee** filled in for Barbara who couldn't make it. A good time was had by all.

SKAGGS HOSTS

Ricky Skaggs and his fine band trekked up to Pigeon Forge in East Tennessee for a concert where they were joined by **Garth Brooks**, **Charlie Daniels**, **The Whites**, **Mark O'Connor**, **Marty Brown**, **Dan Seals**, **Ralph Stanley** and **The Dillards**. The event raised over \$100,000 for Teens In Trouble, an organization sponsored by Skaggs and his wife, **Sharon White-Skaggs**.

MY FRIEND JESSI

The lady who makes **Waylon Jennings'** heart tick, **Jessi Colter**, after all these years, is still the prettiest "wife" in all of show biz. The pretty lady has a brand new video for kids. The 60-minute con-



Hometown girl Frances Preston.

cert contains 60 songs from 28 countries around the world. This is the latest video from Hallway Productions and can be ordered by calling 1-800-238-7600. Other great releases from this company include: *The Real Patsy Cline*, *Jerry Lee Lewis: I Am What I Am*, *George Jones—Same Ole Me*, *Loretta Lynn—Honky Tonk Girl* and *Waylon—Renegade, Outlaw, Legend*. Here's to more good-looking friends and fans.

LORRIE NEWS

As reported last issue, the beautiful **Lorrie Morgan** wed **Brad Thompson** at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Madison, Tennessee.

Two weeks after the wedding, Lorrie was stricken with what was described as an ovarian cyst, but it turned out to be much more serious than originally suspected. Surgery required was a complete hysterectomy. Lorrie, 31, has two children; **Morgan** by **Ron Gaddis** and **Jesse Keith Whitley**, her's and **Keith's** son. Keith adopted Morgan. Here's wishing her a speedy recovery.

CMA AWARD SHOWTIME MOVED

October is Country Music Month and has been for years. Now the CMA has changed the CMA Awards Show from its original time in October to September. This year it will be on September 30, 1992. Talk about country music and sports. The reason for this is because of baseball playoffs and the World Series schedule. Also, with the news coverage of the presidential election coming in October, the awards show might have had some interference. I guess they know what they're doing. I don't like it any more than I would if they moved Christmas to November, but that's me. I keep telling you that I don't like change.

MIGHTY WHITEY

Mighty Whitey Shafer, the writer of hits like "I Never Go Around Mirrors," "That's the Way Love Goes," "The Baptism of Jesse Taylor" and two great **George Strait** Number One's, "Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind" and "All My Ex's Live in Texas," just re-signed with Opryland Music. For almost a quarter of a century, Whitey's songs have been envied, respected, loved and sung. Lucky are the Opryland folks to have the **Mighty Whitey**.

SPORTS AND HILLBILLIES, WOW

Sports and hillbillies go together like fresh, sliced tomatoes on white bread spread with Miracle Whip. Was I ever happy to learn that the hotshot Arista group, **Diamond Rio**, sang the National Anthem, half-time, during the Atlanta Falcons last game of the season. Don't you love to hear those boys sing that wonderful **Larry Cordle/Larry Shell**-penned song "Mama Don't Forget to Pray for Me"?

COLOR VINCE PLATINUM



The in-Vince-ible one, **Vince Gill's** *When I Call Your Name* has been certified platinum, boasting sales in excess of 1,000,000 copies. Surrounding Vince are the powers that be at MCA Records. Left is **Tony Brown** and right is **Mr. Bruce Hinton**. Color the in-Vince-ible one platinum. You could color me blue and broke.

People

LEAVE THEM BOYS ALONE

After way too much time off for litigation and lawyers getting richer, **Shenandoah** can at long last claim the name as their own. According to press releases, former producer **Rick Hall** chose the name Shenandoah along with other names and presented the list to Columbia Records, the group's former label. The label agreed on the name Shenandoah. When other recording groups with the name Shenandoah started coming out of the woodwork, they realized trouble was ahead. Honestly, I don't know all the ramifications of the lawsuit and eventual bankruptcy. All I know is lead singer **Marty Raybon** is great, the entire band cooks, they were named ACM Vocal Group of the Year for 1991 and their *Road Not Taken* album was certified Gold. This group has been struggling long enough. They are a good group and need to surface, debt and worry free. Leave them boys alone. They are now on RCA Records. Watch for them.

OPRY FANS

As you know, **Grant Turner's** loss left a void not to be filled, but to be replaced. Young **Kyle Cantrell** replaces the late Turner as a staff announcer for the Grand Ole Opry. He joins **Keith Bilbrey**, **Hairl Hensley** and **Charlie Douglas** to say howdy to us Opry fans.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that **Doug Stone's** real last name is Brooks? Did you know that his last name was changed to Stone so as not to confuse him with another relative newcomer named, of course, **Garth Brooks**? I've often wondered if Doug Brooks' banner would have flown higher than Doug Stone's has flown. Whatever, Doug Stone's second offering, titled *I Thought It Was You*, is selling twice as fast as his first album. So Brooks or Stone, it doesn't matter. Both are doing great.

CADILLAC—AMERICAN MADE

Sammy Kershaw will be a huge star in the 90's, I predict. The likable Louisiana-born singer's first Mercury single and video, "Cadillac Style," made Kershaw a household word wherever country music is played. "Cadillac" in the song title prompted the American company to choose Sammy as spokesman in exchange for a 1992 red Caddy, all plush

NEW KIDS



Trisha Yearwood's name has been all around lately. She has a lot to be happy about, including her first MCA chart-topper, "She's in Love With the Boy." Helping her celebrate are, left to right, songwriters **Jody Williams** and **John Ims** and BMI's **Roger Sovine**. By the way, Ims also penned Reba McEntire's Top Five single, "Falling Out of Love." This new kid is happening these days.

and shiny. The partnership looks first class from where I sit. Sammy is proof that sometimes things are fair for real good people. As for me, I'm just waiting for my new Cadillac, white and four-door. There must be one for me someplace. 'Cause me and Cadillac are American made. While they're giving me my white car, they could also give the hard-working **Sandy Neese** a red one (to match her red eyes)—she not only does all the press at Mercury/Polygram but is handling videos as well nowadays. The Cadillac folks already know they can find her working long hours over there, where Sammy also hangs his hat.

SHENANDOAH WALKS THE WAY OF STARS

More **Shenandoah** news. They just added their name to the Country Music Hall of Fame Walk Way of Stars on Music Row's 16th Avenue. Family, friends, and their manager **Bill Carter** turned out to see the guys place Shenandoah beside **Hank Williams Sr.**, another Alabama boy done good. Of news to all of us young people, Shenandoah was named "Honorary Chairmen of Alabama Bee." The contest is a preliminary of the National Geography Bee. Truck drivers, bus drivers and country music stars probably personally know every little nook and cranny of USA geography better than

anybody from firsthand experience. Speaking of geography, Shenandoah moved from Sony, located on 216th Avenue, to BMG/RCA located around the block on Music Circle North.

OUR DOLLY

If "Eagle When She Flies" doesn't top the charts for multi-talented **Dolly Parton**, all the women in America need to have their wings clipped. The lyrical content of this tune, geared toward the female, is almost as heavy as **K.T. Oslin's** "80's Ladies," from three years ago. Our Dolly Parton just completed another movie—this time it's *Straight Talk* with **James Woods**. Following her wrap-up of the movie, she jetted to Caesar's in Vegas, played the Mirage in Vegas and then played Atlantic City for a few shows at the other Caesar's. Dolly is an eagle, even when she cries, I'd say.

EYE SAW

Eye saw **Trisha Yearwood** in the elevator with me in a building on Music Row.

Eye saw Sony Records' good-looking VP **Mike Martinovich** on the elevator in my office building. Honestly, I just go up and down the elevator 24 hours a day.

Eye saw Warner's VP **Martha Sharp** across the table from me at the Cooker. I dine with all the biggies.

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Back

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People



Dick Clark at the mike while Marty Stuart checked out Mendelson's picture in CMM (Too Slim of Riders in the Sky looks on) and Graham Gilliam, Mendelson, Garth Brooks and D&D-ers Joe Esposito and Greg Stewart hung out. Donna Ulisse and Marty performed (as did others). Woody Paul and Ranger Doug Green took time out with Leonard.



NBC'S HOT COUNTRY PARTY

Hot Country Nights, the Dick Clark-produced country music variety show, which airs Sunday nights on NBC, is giving the network some of its best ratings in that time slot in quite a while—numbers are up nearly 20% over last year. Shortly before renewing the show for another six episodes, NBC threw a cast party for stars, exec's and industry notables at the well-known Santa Monica, California, nightclub, Denim and Diamonds. **Garth Brooks, Marty Stuart, Gary Morris, Riders in the Sky, Brooks & Dunn, Donna Ulisse, Dick Clark** and our own Associate Publisher **Leonard Mendelson** were in attendance. **Bill Boyd**, Talent Executive for *Hot Country Nights*, emceed. Entertainment was provided by **The Doo Wah Riders** and the rest of the super talent on the scene. At press time, NBC planned to air the last of the 12 first-run episodes March 1st.



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The first time *20 Questions* ran into the King of the Cowboys was, fittingly, in Montana, at the base of the Rockies. Roy Rogers rode in on a horse that looked familiar, and he rode with a grace and verve that belied his almost eight decades as an American icon. Along with John Wayne, Roy Rogers defined the myth of the American cowboy in those days after the Great Depression, when all America was riveted to the daring deeds of Roy and Dale Evans and Gabby Hayes. We caught up with Roy again at the Roy Rogers Museum in California, where we persuaded him to answer *20 Questions* before saddling up.

1 I was up in Montana on a cattle drive with you and Randy Travis, and Randy was telling me that having you ride up to the campfire on horseback was pretty special, since you hadn't been riding for a while...

I haven't been riding for quite a while. I finished performing back in the early 1960's, and I did a few special performances, but when old Trigger died in 1965, I didn't care about doing anything then. I cut way down on all of my appearances. I just...I enjoyed riding for years, but as you get older, it takes more out of you. I just got down to where I don't do many appearances any more, but I just had my 80th birthday, and I've got a lot to be thankful for.

2 Probably after your 80th birthday, you're glad to be on horseback!

Yes, I think so. And I feel pretty good, and I've got so many things to be thankful for...

3 I know Randy really loves that horse you gave him, Trigger Junior. He says if I tried to ride him, he'd kill me...

Randy's a good horseman, too. He was raised around horses, and he's got a lot of early experience with them. You've got to get the rhythm, get the steps just right where you can take all the bouncing on your



—by Michael Bane—

20 Questions with **ROY ROGERS**

.....
*The King of
the Cowboys*

ankles and your knees, so you don't have to hang your rear end around.

4 What was it like going back in the studio and recording again?

Well, I enjoyed it. Of course, I've done so much of it down through the years that it's almost—is—part of my life. I enjoyed being with all the guys singing my songs, too.

5 Were there any cuts on that album that really stand out, that you really remember?

Not really, but, you know, I had to memorize all the new songs, because I don't read music. I got them ahead of time so I could learn all the songs. Then we added some of the old songs, the cowboy songs like "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" and "Don't Fence Me In." Then we went way back for "Little Joe the Wrangler."

6 That's a real cowboy song, as opposed to a cowboy movie song, isn't it?

Yes, it is. You know, the cowboys used to sit around and write poetry, and later on some other people would take that poem and put a melody to it. Back when I first heard the radio, that's when the recordings were just starting, and that's how some of those earlier cowboy songs got to the radio.

7 What do you think is the real appeal of American cowboy music—why it's revered all over the world?

I think it's home music, it's music like the guy next door might start singing. It's homey; it's family. I can't say enough about it. You grow up with it in your own family and your buddies' families and the folks next door. There's always a singer or an entertainer or a ham in one family, and they always put on the show for everyone else. Of course, we lived way out in the sticks, and that's how we did. We three kids sang, and Mom and Dad played. We didn't have lessons except what Mom and Pop taught us.

8 *Do you have a favorite country singer right now?* There's so many of them, and they've all got their own styles, it's hard to pick a favorite one. There's so many of those young guys coming along, even younger than Garth Brooks and Randy and Clint.

9 *Do you think it's fair to say that everyone in the world loves the American cowboy?*

Well, I think if they've been exposed to cowboys, yes. You know, my pictures were the American cowboy, but they weren't the 1800's American cowboy. They were the modern cowboy of the 1930's. We just added music to them. We did the same story over and over again, with different characters and fight scenes and so on. We'd take a song like "Don't Fence Me In" and write a story around it. That way, we'd get a lot of good publicity from the song and from the people who recorded the song. 'Course, I always played Roy Rogers. It wasn't some Joe Doke playing Roy Rogers...

10 *You know, if you think about it, that was an inspired idea, your always playing yourself...*

Yes, it was. Other actors played different characters, but I didn't. It put my name before the public with the whole picture, in the form of a story. The hero was Roy Rogers and ole Gabby, and Gabby played Gabby all the time. We'd put Dale Evans there...I made my first picture 54 years ago.

11 *Who was your favorite sidekick?*

Oh, Gabby, of course. He was my brother and my father and my buddy all wrapped up into one. We got along so well—we did about 40-some pictures together. I loved Gabby, and I think he added so much to our series.

12 *You just turned 80, you just recorded another album, you're back on television specials—is there anything you haven't done that you'd like to?*

Well, I just like to enjoy my family and live as long as I possibly can, as long as I can stay healthy enough to enjoy it. I don't have anything in particular I want to do. Roll on and enjoy my family.



A hero to many, Roy Rogers counts Clint Black as one of his fans.

13 *One thing I thought when we met in Montana, you look great...*

Well, somebody said that for my age, I look pretty good.

14 *Do you have any secrets that you want to impart?*

(Laughter.) Try to be happy in what you do! You know, I weigh the same as what I did years ago. I try to stay basically the same weight, but I don't seem to have any trouble. I don't diet. I'm just not a big eater.

I was brought up during the Depression, and maybe that's the reason! We didn't have that much to eat, so I'm used to it!

15 *How many times do you figure you've sang "Happy Trails"?*

"Happy Trails" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" have to be two of the most sung songs in the country. A lot of times.

Millions. I don't know how many.

16 *Did you ever just get up one day and say, "I can't face 'Happy Trails'?"*

No, I didn't. But if you were doing it every day, I'd probably have gotten pretty tired of it. But when you do get to where you're doing it once a year, maybe at a recording session, it's fun, 'cause you're

met yet and some I hadn't seen for a long, long time. It was really nice.

19 *Is there a follow-up in the works?*

I don't know if they want me to do any more or not, but I've been thinking about those old songs I did. All my young fans from the pictures are up in their 50's or 60's now, and they're just beautiful. When I was sick last year, I received 15,000 letters in the first week, 4,000 the second week. It was beautiful, and that made me want to maybe record again. There's a song called "Lights of Old Santa Fe" that I did in a movie. That song was very popular, and it was a pretty song with good words to it. I might put that one down again. See if I could sing it again.

20 *When you started out, did you ever imagine yourself ending up an American original?*

No, I was raised in the Depression, and I was just trying to make a

living. I was picking peaches, you know, during the summer, trying to make a buck to eat on. My kid sister talked me into going on a little radio station, a little amateur show, and to this day I still can't remember the songs I sang, I was so scared. I was about 18. When they announced my name, I just froze to my seat, and she came over and said, "You get up there and sing." So I got up and sang, and they took my name and address—I couldn't get out of there quick enough. About three days later, an old boy asked me to join the group The Rocky Mountaineers. That was the starting. Funny how it works that way. I've just got to know that I'm where God wants me to be, or I wouldn't be here. I never had much education or any lessons about singing or playing. So I had to know that what happened to me was because of someone else.

17 *You used to just go in in one take...*

Right! You'd go in, rehearse before you went in, and then record 'em.

18 *I think it might have been better that way—I'm not sure...*

I'm not either, Michael! It is lot easier this way on the artists. You know, the way we did this recording, we had a whole group come in, some of the young artists, to sing "Happy Trails." We had 38 show up—it was like a family reunion, it was so good. I got to see some people I hadn't



by Michael Bane

“They only think I’m going to do it,” says Alan Jackson, his trademark white hat pushed well back on his head. He’s grinning, and I suspect if there were any teenaged girls in the room, they’d be sitting up and barking like seals at Sea World. Across the room, stacked on a table, are Alan Jackson photos, both black and white and color, Alan Jackson T-shirts and sweat shirts, Alan Jackson hats, Alan Jackson posters, Alan Jackson coffee mugs, all manner of Alan Jackson memorabilia. The plan, see, is for the subject of all these photos, T-shirts, coffee mugs and what-have-you to spend most of the rest of the afternoon signing each and every piece for expectant fans.

What he’s actually going to do, since he’s been up before dawn this morning, is sneak out, then go home and take a nap.

It is, I agree, a good plan.

The boy probably needs his sleep, too.

In just a few weeks he’s back on the road after a Christmas layoff, and this time he’ll be headlining his own show. That means carrying 25 people instead of nine, tons more equipment, all the paraphernalia of a major touring show. It also means that for the first time, the buck stops squarely on blond-haired, blue-eyed heartthrob Alan Eugene Jackson.

“Well, sure, there’s a little more pressure,” he says, eyeing the table full of his images. “But, heck, it beats the opposite.”

Sure does. Alan Jackson, along with such icons as Garth Brooks and Clint Black, has come to virtually define country music in the early 1990’s. That definition reads, roughly, “hunks and hunkettes singing traditionally tinted country, with homage to both George Jones and The Rolling Stones.” Of the whole bunch, Jackson sets himself apart with his fiercely literate songwriting—something that is as much a surprise to former car salesman, former house builder, former forklift operator Jackson as it is to anyone. What Alan Jackson has done, by intent or by luck or by sheer raw talent, is take the traditional country “hook” song to a whole new level, a level where the audience is 17-year-olds instead of 50-year-olds. And that, folks, means dollars—big dollars.

ALAN JACKSON

He Rocks the Jukebox

And that’s not all he rocks. The country charts and young girls and old are shaking everywhere. In the wake of Alan Jackson’s newfound stardom, he’s finding out that being a sex symbol/country singer changes everything—even the way he goes out to dinner.



"I've done that. I've been that guy out there mounting those tires and sweeping up the shop. I know what it feels like. And that's who I write songs for."

You remember the classic country hook, don't you? A hook is a phrase that, had you uttered it at a cocktail party, everyone else would have groaned.

"You're so cold I'm turning blue..."

"At least I've learned to stand on my own two knees..."

"If I said you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me..."

Hook songs are the lifeblood of country, but most hook songs are so...well... *hookish*. Catchy. Lightweight.

But not Alan Jackson's songs:

Don't rock the jukebox

I wanna hear some Jones

My heart ain't ready

For the Rolling Stones...

An anthem for new country—rock's great, but there's times when only country music will do.

"The thing about writing is the discipline," Alan Jackson is saying.

"It's like exercise. I have a hard time making myself want to get up and walk. Like being on the road with Randy," he muses, speaking of Randy Travis. "He goes and works out, and I don't. But songwriting's the same way. It's work, and you've got to get self-motivated. Whether it's at home or on the road doesn't matter. You got to set aside a certain time, then just do it."

And, he says, songs are hard work, except for those "triggered inspiration songs."

Do you have many of those, I ask.

"Every now and then," he replies. "I'll be driving down the road, and see something, and there it is."

Like, he says, "I'd Love You All Over Again," a song he wrote for his high school sweetheart and wife of 12 years, Denise.

"It was just there," he says, shaking his head. "I wrote the whole thing in about 30 minutes."

You know what the real problem is for songwriters, Alan Jackson asks, changing directions a bit.

What, I ask.

"Half-finished songs," he laughs. "You just get tired of 'em before you finish them, and you never get back to them."

They're not totally lost, though.

"Sometimes, I'll take a song I've written myself, then take the title or the part I really liked and write it with someone else." Sort of like the ultimate in recycling.

Alan Jackson got to be a songwriter not because he had a driving desire to be a songwriter, but because he didn't have a clue about the music business. He was, however, a hot country act in Newnan, Georgia, which is reasonably close to nowhere, and everyone urged him to head to Nashville for the big time.

"Well, I didn't know anybody. About the only person I knew in the business was this guy who played in a rock band around



Alan became a member of the Opry on June 7, 1991.

Atlanta, and they were signed to this small record company," Alan Jackson says. "And he said if I was going to Nashville, I needed to put together a demo tape of me singing, but I really needed some original songs. Well, of course, there weren't any original songs in Newnan, Georgia, just laying around! So I started to try and write songs myself. I had to continue writing when I got to Nashville, because I wasn't big enough to attract the kind of songs that I needed to try and get a record deal. So I guess that's how I ended up a songwriter."

It sounds so simple, doesn't it? Kind of like basic forklift operation. (Of course, in my own brief stint as a forklift operator, I ran into a wall and knocked it down. Bad example.)

"You know, I never had really paid much attention to the songwriting side of the business," Alan Jackson is saying. "Whenever I got albums, I never really sat down and looked to see who wrote them. I didn't know that much about it, actually."

I'd stumbled into Alan Jackson the songwriter through Randy Travis, who'd insisted that I come

out to the bus in the middle of the night to eat oysters fried up by Lib Hatcher (excellent) and listen to several songs he'd co-written with Jackson, including "Better Class of Losers," which is a better song than it was given credit for.

"Listen to that line, 'Buys their coffee already ground!'" Randy had waxed enthusiastic. "He is just one great songwriter!"

Who's the most fun to co-write with, I ask.

"Depends on your idea of fun," replies Alan Jackson. "But I've written a lot with Jim McBride, and we've had a lot of songs come out of that...Once we wrote a whole song—melody, lyrics, everything—except the hook. I mean, that was the last we wrote."

Songwriter heroes?

"Merle Haggard, maybe one of the greatest who's ever lived."

Confidence in his own songwriting?

"That's a tough question," he says. "It's a question of maybe not being able to hear what you write objectively. You're just too close to it sometimes to tell whether it's good or bad, and you need somebody you trust to be able to listen and help you out."

Of course, he adds, sometimes it just doesn't work.

"You sit in a room for two hours staring at somebody. Then you get up and leave," he says, laughing again. "Okay, you can always write a song. You can go in there and write a song. But it's a question of is the song worth recording? Is it a song you want to sing? But just write a song to be writing a song, I just don't feel good about that."

Of course, I add, the fact that “Here in the Real World,” “Chasin’ That Neon Rainbow” and “Don’t Rock the Jukebox” have sold about a billion copies doesn’t put any additional pressure on Alan Jackson at all, does it?

“Yeah, right,” he says. “Top this.”

Seriously, Alan Jackson adds, that is always on his mind, just sitting back there when he walks into that room.

“Come up with something big,” he muses.

Alan Jackson took a month off in December, the first time off he’s had in a couple of years. What he wanted to do was not do anything, spend some time with Denise and 18-month-old daughter Mattie, tinker with the old cars he so dearly loves.

“I pretty much did that,” he says. He wants as much time with Mattie as he can arrange. “She’s already growing up,” he says, perhaps a bit wistfully. “I guess that’s one of the sacrifices you have to make.” And a little bit more time with Denise wouldn’t hurt. She always believed in him, when making it big in country music seemed about the least likely thing in the world.

She believed in you, but she had to scratch her head and wonder, I say.

Alan Jackson laughs.

“Yep, I think that’s about right. But she never doubted me, even when she knew it was a long shot.”

In a classic music business story, Denise Jackson did more than believe. When Alan was finally committed to moving to Nashville and taking his shot, it was Denise who cornered Glen Campbell in an airport and badgered him—however nicely—out of a card. That card led to Alan Jackson’s first Nashville job, a salaried position as a songwriter at Glen Campbell’s publishing company.

It is, says Alan Jackson, hard to find your own voice, both as a singer and as a songwriter. When you start out, you start out by imitating. “You want to sound like Haggard, or you want to sound like Jones. It’s really hard to figure out what *you* are supposed to sound like. I mean, just like everybody else, I sang everybody’s songs, and when I sang a Hank Jr. song, I tried to sound like Hank Jr. When I sang George Strait, I tried to sound like George Strait. And every night after the show, people would come up to me and say, ‘You know, you sound just like Hank Jr!’ Or somebody else would say, ‘George Strait!’ I

didn’t know what I sounded like!”

Apparently, you found your voice, I say.

“I guess,” Alan Jackson says. “I just sing the best I can and hope that it sounds real.”

The same goes for writing. At first, you’re writing a Haggard song or a Jones song. One day, surprise upon surprise, you find yourself writing an Alan Jackson song.

Tell me, I say, about—pick one at random—say, “Don’t Rock the Jukebox.”

“We were on the road, back in the early days. We were playing this truck stop in Dalton, Virginia. We were on break, and my bass player was over looking at the records on the jukebox. I walked over...” He leaned up against the jukebox, he explains, and the bass player said, “Hey, Alan! Don’t rock the jukebox! I’m trying to read the songs.’ I thought, ‘Hummmm, that sounds like a song title,’ so I wrote it down on a little slip of paper and stuck it in my pocket. Six months or a year later, I’m writing with Keith Stegall, and I whipped out the line, and we

CHRISTOPHER BRADEN



BETH GWINN



JEFF LOUIS



CHRISTOPHER BRADEN



Quite a year for Alan and Denise—platinum album parties with Clive Davis of Arista Records and Katie Haas and Al Wynor of Video Morning and memorabilia bearing his likeness. He’s in demand for autographs, too.



ALAN MAYOR



CHRISTOPHER BRAUER

"Blue Blooded Woman," "Don't Rock the Jukebox" and "Chasing That Neon Rainbow," three of Alan's videos, prove that his charisma translates well to the small screen.



"You want to sound like Haggard, or you want to sound like Jones. It's really hard to figure out what you are supposed to sound like."

wrote it, almost playing with it. You know, 'I wanna hear some Jones.' We finished it up, and I put it in my live show and the people loved it."

That's why, I say, songwriters should never throw away any little scraps of paper in their pants pockets.

"Oh, gosh," he laughs, "I've lost so many ideas, you wouldn't believe it!"

Is that frustrating to you, I ask.

"Oh, yeah," Alan Jackson says. "Especially melodies. You'll be rolling down the road, and you'll hear this melody in your head. And before you can get to a tape recorder, it's gone. Just like that."

The important thing, says Alan Jackson, is to remember. Remember who you're writing for. Remember the people who buy your records.

"The other day while I was home, I had to get some tires on

the truck," he says. "So I took it down to the shop, and I was sitting there in that little waiting room, you know, watching the guys put the tires on. And it just hit me hard. I've done that. I've been that guy out there mounting those tires and sweeping up the shop. I know what it feels like. And that's who I write songs for."

Is it weird, though, being Alan Eugene Jackson, country music sex symbol?

"Well," he says, embarrassed. "I didn't realize it had gotten to the point it had until the holidays, when I took some time off. I don't go out in my cowboy hat and boots, because people recognize me. And I like that, but it's strange. My wife says she's not going to go out with me any more." By way of explanation, he dives into a description of an experience he and Denise had on their way to Georgia.

"It was about dark," he says, "and we stopped at this Cracker Barrel restaurant in Alabama. And my little girl, it was about her bedtime, and we'd hoped she'd sleep the rest of the way to Georgia... We tried to do something with her and nothing worked. So we stop at this Cracker Barrel, and it was just packed full of people. And as soon as we walk in there, people start staring. And my little girl is screaming and pulling toys off the shelf, and finally they seated us ahead of people, which I hated. So people just kept coming over to the table for autographs, and we'd be talking to them. And my wife said afterwards, that's what everybody's going to think about Alan Jackson—his bratty little child screaming!"

Is this a problem that you ever thought you'd have to worry about, I ask.

Alan Jackson just laughs.

"My whole career is just a fairy tale to me," he says. "I was telling somebody the other day, the last two years have been so good, I couldn't even think of anything else to ask for. I'm almost afraid something bad's going to happen."

He remembers driving down Briley Parkway in Nashville in his beat up old van—"It had a really bad radio, that van"—when he first heard Alan Jackson on the radio, and he knew he had a shot, a real shot. At the same time, Denise dis-

covered she was pregnant. "My career was just starting, not a sure thing by any means, and here she was going to have a baby. I thought, 'Oh, no, what if I end up working in a factory.' We were laughing and crying at the same time."

And now here we are in his office, a stack of Alan Jackson images on the table and a career that cuts across so many lines, old and young, that they had to start carrying a line of Alan Jackson kiddie T-shirts on the road just to meet the demand. "I don't know," he says. "Makes me feel *old*."

Older than his 33 years.

A mere child, I say.

"Oh, yeah!"

So what about this restored Harley Davidson I keep hearing about, I ask.

"Let me tell you about this bad boy," Alan Jackson says, and, finally, we're into the nuts and bolts. ■

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA MARCH/APRIL 1992

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Volume 1, Number 1

Eight years ago, the *Newsletter* first appeared—March/April 1984. It wasn't even called the *Newsletter* then, though by the time we got to May/June 1984, it was. By July/August, the first page looked very much as it does today. That first issue included a number of features that are still running, including Member Record Reviews, Legends of Country Music and the Collections page (then called Collectibles). Reader participation and respect for the past were the two keynotes of the *Newsletter* then, as they are today. Editor George Fletcher has done such a good job of reviving the Members' Reviews section, and his wise selections for Readers Create seem to keep you members working. Bravo!

Legends of Country Music and your continuing response to it eventually led to the founding of American Academy for the Preservation of Old Time Country Music—and *The Journal*—a magazine and a membership of which we can all be proud. The first Legends featured Tex Ritter. Rich Kienzle and Charles Wolfe, both stalwarts of *The Journal*, soon took over as regular writers of the section, and they've been going strong ever since. In 1990, the Legends of Country Music Calendar was born, another effort by the CMSA to honor the past. The beautiful photos we found for that first calendar also helped inspire *The Journal*. If these photos existed—some in collections we had never heard of or did not use frequently for *CMM*—others, we reasoned, must also. —Helen Barnard

Concert Comments

Several more members have written up their reviews of recent concerts. Linda Bittle, of Butler, Missouri, fills us in on a recent country music festival sponsored by her local radio station, while Carol Bryce, of Joliet, Illinois, tells about a recent Gatlin Brothers show.

INCREDIBLE COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

The staff of WDAF-AM (61-Country) recently threw a party for their listeners. Tickets were free, and an estimated 26,000 brought blankets and lawn chairs and settled under sunny skies to hear six great bands. First up was Spontaneous Combustion, a popular local group. Their "Blue Rock" style combined old rock tunes with bluegrass picking. After their set, they moved to the autograph booth to sign for the fans. Next up was new Atlantic Records' artist Ray Kennedy. He did songs from his first album and his upcoming one. Favorites were the hits "Scars" and "What a Way to Go." The guitar work by Ray and his band delighted the crowd. He then went to the autograph booth and stayed until all fans were satisfied.

Rob Crosby of Arista Records hit the stage next. He gave an exuberant performance, including songs from his first album and his next project. Rob then hurried to the autograph booth, where, in addition to selling 8x10's, he brought a stack of photocopies and gave them away to those who couldn't afford to buy an original.



The very first CMSA Newsletter—March/April 1984. It featured Tex Ritter in Legends.

The big surprise of the day was the fourth act. As a new artist who has just started touring, Mike Reid was a wild card. No one knew what to expect. Well, the guy puts on a show! He's energetic and articulate, and he plays a mean keyboard. Along with "Walk on Faith" and other songs from his Columbia release, Mike sang hits he's written for others including Ronnie Milsap, Alabama and The Judds. He didn't have photos, but he cheerfully signed programs and copies of his albums.

The much-awarded Desert Rose Band followed. As they sang hit after hit, Chris Hillman pointed out each band member's talents and achievements. They did old tunes like "Love Reunited" right up through their newest single. Everybody signed autographs afterward.

Marie Osmond provided the grand finale. She got the crowd on their feet and kept them there. Her TV background was evident as she proved to be a true entertainer, even managing a costume change. "Paper Roses" and "Meet Me in Montana" were popular selections with the fans. Unfortunately, Marie's schedule didn't allow her to stay and meet the fans after her set. The event was well organized with food and drink stands, plenty of restroom facilities and tents for first aid and lost children. This was one music festival that lived up to its "Incredible" billing.

Linda Bittle
Butler, Missouri

In This Issue

- Concert/Record Reviews
- Living Legend Merle Haggard
- Collections
- Readers Create

Editor: George Fletcher
Executive Editor: Helen Barnard
Art Director: Kathryn Gray

THE GATLIN BROTHERS

I had the privilege of seeing The Gatlin Brothers in concert in Merrillville, Indiana. I went in feeling disappointed that they were quitting the road after this tour, but all thoughts of that were pushed aside during the show. As I expected, it was fantastic. From their classic "Broken Lady" to the soon-to-be-classic "Boogie and Beethoven," their harmonies never sounded better. Larry was in near-perfect voice despite having had surgery, and I was touched when he talked about it, thanking God for helping him through it. He couldn't quite reach some of the high notes, but the crowd loved it anyway. I got a lump in my throat when everyone stood up and cheered like mad. He just stood on stage and bowed his head, and when he looked up, I could tell he was touched by the reaction, too.

The nicest surprise of the evening was when they showed a home video of the brothers when they were children. Yes, they were adorable! Another surprise was just after the show began, when Larry asked anyone who had a camera to come on down and take pictures. They were real hams, and even stopped in the middle of a song to pose!

I would like to thank Larry, Steve and Rudy for a great show. I will miss you guys, but I will always have your music to listen to. I'd also like to put in a good word for The Forester Sisters. They were great, too. It was the first time I'd seen them live, and I certainly hope to see them again.

Carol Bryce
Joliet, Illinois

Record Reviews

Member Janet Price gives us her view on the new album from Jerry and Tammy Sullivan. It's on CMF (Country Music Foundation) Records.

JERRY AND TAMMY SULLIVAN
A Joyful Noise
CMF Records

Jerry and Tammy Sullivan could very well be the best-kept secret in American music. However, with this long-awaited Country Music Foundation release, the talented father and daughter team should get the recognition which they deserve.

A Joyful Noise is a bluegrass gospel album that leaps through your stereo speakers, yanks you out of the easy chair and drops you in the front pew of a spirit-filled country church. As the rollicking number, "Brand New Church," exclaims, it will have you "rocking and reeling with that old-time feeling." Eight of the 10



songs included here were co-written by Marty Stuart and Jerry Sullivan, and as Marty states in the album's liner notes, they all sound "like standards from the hymn books."

On an album so blessed with top-notch picking, singing and production—the roster includes such names as Richard Bennett, Roy Huskey, Stuart Duncan, Marty Stuart and Sullivan group member Johnathan Causey—it is impossible to select just one highlight. But songs that immediately capture your heart and your ear include the first cut, "Get Up, John" (a traditional Bill Monroe tune with new words by Sullivan and Stuart, featuring Marty on lead vocals), "Think About That Promise" (an a cappella selection), "Gospel Plow," "He Called My Name," "Soldiers of the Cross" and "When Jesus Passed By" (on which

Tammy Sullivan's voice seems to soar on angel's wings). Other fine tunes include "I'm Working on the Building," "The Gates of Zion" and "What a Wonderful Savior He Is."

This album is a must for anyone who appreciates traditional music. It was clearly a labor of love, and the results are truly inspirational.

Janet Price
Stokesdale, North Carolina

Connecticut Country

Donna and Charles Iannotti are members in Wallingford, Connecticut, in the central part of the state. Donna fills us in on a local band that participated in the GMC/True Value talent contest.

We are fans of a local group called the Triple T Band. They've certainly turned a lot of people on to country music here in Connecticut. Triple T won the GMC/True Value state competition in 1991, in New Britain, Connecticut, as representatives of Hartford's country radio station, WWYZ. They then participated in the next phase—the Tri-State Finals—which were held in Nanticoke Hills Country Park near Binghamton, New York. Triple T won this round, playing all original music. They were great! The next stop was the Northeast Regional competition at the Valley Forge Music Park in Devon, Pennsylvania, where Triple T placed second. We are very proud of them.

Triple T consists of Scott Zito on lead guitar, Ray T. on vocals and bass, Don

Members' Top Ten Classics

Carter Betz, a member in Central, South Carolina, has another idea for a newsletter feature. He's sent in his Top Ten Classic Album list, and would like to read the lists of other members. Carter also sent us a review of Mary Stuart's *Tempted*, which, space permitting, we may run in the future.

I would like to see readers send in their ten classic albums of the 1980's. By "classic" I mean an album that will stand the test of time and still be just as good, if not better, ten or 20 years from now. We've had time now to reflect on that decade, so here's my list (in alphabetical order):

Rodney Crowell	<i>Diamonds and Dirt</i>
Steve Earle	<i>Guitar Town</i>
Merle Haggard and George Jones	<i>A Taste of Yesterday's Wine</i>
Alan Jackson	<i>Here in the Real World</i>
Ricky Skaggs	<i>Waitin' for the Sun to Shine</i>
Ricky Skaggs	<i>Highways and Heartaches</i>
Marty Stuart	<i>Hillbilly Rock</i>
Randy Travis	<i>Storms of Life</i>
Keith Whitley	<i>I Wonder Do You Think of Me</i>
Dwight Yoakam	<i>Buenas Noches from a Lonely Room</i>

George Strait gets an honorable mention because all of his albums are consistently good. And Crowell's single, "I Couldn't Leave You If I Tried," is one of the decade's best.

Carter Betz
Central, South Carolina



Connecticut's Triple T Band—left to right: Don Hemmer, Matt Smith, Ray T and Scott Zito. Drummer Richie Cat is hidden.

Hemmer on steel guitar, Matt Smith on fiddle and Richie Cat on drums. A big thrill for the band was when they played at a club in New Jersey and members of The Charlie Daniels Band, including Charlie himself, came to see them. They've opened shows in Connecticut for several big acts including The Marshall Tucker Band, The Pirates of the Mississippi, The Desert Rose Band and Gary Morris. The band is hoping to go to Nashville in the near future. In the meantime, they'll be entertaining the crowds throughout the Northeast, including many shows in Connecticut, New Jersey and on Long Island.

**Donna Iannotti
Wallingford, Connecticut**

JANUARY 1992 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

Alan Jackson *Don't Rock the Jukebox*
Alan Jackson "Someday"
Cover boy Alan Jackson does it again. For the fourth consecutive poll, his *Don't Rock the Jukebox* is your pick for Number One. What's more, his debut album, *Here in the Real World*, jumps up from Five to Three. Country Music Association Female Vocalist of the Year, Tanya Tucker, jumps into the Number Two spot on the album chart with *What Do I Do With Me*. There's a tie in fourth place—George Strait's *Chill of an Early Fall* battles it out with Vince Gill's *When I Call Your Name*. And, while Garth Brooks' *Ropin' the Wind* holds the Number One spot on the *Billboard* charts, CMSA members vote him in at Number Five (or Six if you count the tie).

In singles, Alan's "Someday" is tops. On his heels is Vince Gill with "Look at Us." The Number Three single among CMSA members is Ricky Van Shelton's "Keep it Between the Lines." In fourth is Reba McEntire with the title track to her latest album, "For My Broken Heart." Fifth goes to Tanya with "(Without You) What Do I Do With Me," another title track (almost).

Dennis Devine and The Rock

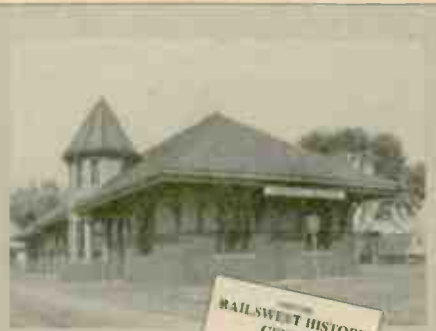
The late, lamented Rock Island Railroad ("The Rock" in railfan circles) bowed to the pressure of long-term bankruptcy and quit running in March of 1980. When The Rock gave up the ghost, some sections were picked up by other railroads, others were abandoned. The same holds true for structures along the route. The Rock's depot in Council Bluffs, Iowa, lay dormant and neglected through the early 1980's until a local historical society came up with a plan to save and restore it. Our Iowa correspondent, Dennis Devine, has coordinated fund-raising events for the cause—including a visit from Johnny Cash.



Johnny Cash and Dennis Devine

America's railroads and the city of Council Bluffs, Iowa, are forever woven together. Railroads spurred the development of Council Bluffs—by the 1890's, the city was served by 15 railroads, and by 1940 there were seven depots in the city, and more than 120 trains passing through each day. The historic Rock Island depot was built in 1898 and served the city's rail passengers until 1970. The Rock then used it for non-passenger purposes until 1980.

In 1984, the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County and the Greater Omaha Society of Model Engineers began to restore the building as the RailsWest Railroad History Center, a museum to document and highlight the important railroad heritage of Council Bluffs. The museum includes railroad memorabilia, equipment and displays, and a working model railroad. In May 1985, during Council Bluffs annual Pride Week, I coordinated the first fund-raising flea market for the



The Rock Island depot in Council Bluffs is the site of a railroad history center.



depot's restoration. Now in its eighth year, the flea market features food, entertainment and the merchandise of nearly 65 vendors. More than 5,000 people attended last year. A local, old-time country band, The Acorn Pickers (named for the local feed store whose employees make up the band), plays every year. Johnny Cash has sent books, clothing and boots to be sold at the flea market, with the money going to the depot fund. He came to the depot—in 1987—where he received the key to the city and a plaque from the RailsWest Historical Society. He even rode on the handcar on display at the depot. We're hoping he'll make it back for the 1992 celebration, which will take place on May, 9, 1992. For further information, write Historical Society of Pottawattamie County, P.O. Box 2, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51502, Attention: Depot.

**Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa**



Cash rides the rails—in a handcar.

Collecting the Magazine

Complete your collection of *Country Music Magazine*. Write each other directly for issues and information.

- Wanted: Sept/Oct 1990 issue of *Country Music Magazine*, featuring Ricky Van Shelton on the cover. Will pay \$5.00. Dorothy Lange, P.O. Box 134, 516 S. Hickory, Gardner, KS 66030.
- Looking for *Country Music Magazine* and *Music City News* from the early 1970's. Also looking for radio shows from country station WHN 1050 (New York) from 1973. David Freeman, 83 Rolling Meadows Rd., Middletown, NY 10940.

Information, Please

Members may write each other directly about information and items they need. If you must correspond, please include a SASE.

- Wanted: Back issues of *Country Music Magazine* with articles on George Strait earlier than 1986. Also VHS copies of the 1989 CMA award show and *Austin City Limits* with George Strait and Bob Wills' band, The Texas Playboys. If you have any of these, please send price list. Will pay for tapes and postage. Stacy Kopsian, 2937 N. Allen, Chicago, IL 60618.
- For Sale or trade: Articles, pin-ups, posters, buttons, etc. on country and some rock artists. SASE and want list to Donna M. Warmuskerken, 5354 Sheridan, Yale, MI 49097-9655.
- Wanted: Any video of Aaron Tippin. Will pay any price within reason. Also looking for pen pal who likes Aaron. Send lists to: Lisha Judy, 8221 Goodman Ave., Cleveland, OH 44105.
- Looking for photos, newsletters or any other material on Tanya Tucker except records or tapes. Send list and prices to: Theresa Fusco, 4284 Woodleigh, Youngstown, OH 44511.
- Help! Looking for the following albums: *Little Junior* by Gary Stewart and *Cowboys and Daddies* by Bobby Bare. Also looking for an album by Justin Tubb (not sure what label) which includes "Keeping up with The Joneses," "The Other Kind," "Little Miss Lonesome," "You'll Never Get a Better Chance" and several others. Albums and/or tapes must be in good condition. Richard G. Topham, 15 Mellen St., Dorchester, MA 02124.
- Wanted to buy and/or trade: Any George Jones or Merle Haggard cassettes, photos, posters, memorabilia, including videotapes. Janet Lyles, P.O. Box 1102, Mena, AK 71953.
- Wanted: Anything and everything on The Marcy Brothers (photos, articles, TV appearances, etc.). Also looking for posters on any country artist and photos of The Judds, Tanya Tucker, Lorrie Morgan and Bobby Randall. Will buy or trade. Ryan Udelhoven, 5865 Hwy. 133, Cassville, WI 53806.
- For Sale: albums, LP's, 45's, promotional copies, etc., of many country artists. I specialize in Johnny Cash and will buy records as well. Please send SASE with specific wants listed. Paul Neil Anderson, 7411 Walmer Ln., Overland Park, KS 66204.
- Looking for LP or cassette of Jay Lee Webb's *I Come Home a-Drinkin'*—his first LP. Probably released late 50's or

- early 60's. Will pay reasonable price. Write Ron Kluth, 215 W. Mullett Street, Apt. 209, Portage, WI 53901.
- Wanted: Anything and everything on Dwight Yoakam, such as pictures, posters, T-shirts, etc. Would also like to correspond with other Dwight Yoakam fans. Alice Van Camp, Rt. 2, Box 2202, New Philadelphia, OH 44663.
- Wanted: VCR tape of Randy Travis on *Country Kitchen* with Florence Henderson. Also, Randy Travis on *Nashville Now* or *Crook & Chase* during the time *Storms of Life* was released. Will send VHS tape and postage or will pay. Denise Hughes, R.D. #1, Box 29-C, Burgettstown, PA 15021.
- For Sale: Louise Mandrell collection. Have albums, clothing, box of clippings, club items, etc. Robinson, 30 Knob Hill Rd., South Meriden, CT 06450.
- I am an elementary special education teacher. I have used The Judds as role models and their music as a learning motivation in my classroom. In the classroom my students have set up a Judd Center which features many Judd activities. We are looking for photos, posters, articles, VHS copies of shows and memorabilia dated before 1990. Willing to pay for any items we can obtain plus postage. Please help! Thanks, Judds' fans! Cheryl A. Mazzeo, 10 Tanglewood Ln., Apt. 512, North Providence, RI 02904.
- Wanted: Holly Dunn memorabilia. Interested in purchasing videos (including any past appearances of Holly on TNN), cassettes, CD's, LP's, 45's, posters, photographs, magazine articles, etc. Also need Holly's first three CD's/LP's that she made at MTM Records. Send price list and item condition to: Doug Hendricks, 21692 T.E. 175, Mount Blanchard, OH 45867.
- For Sale: LP albums by Hank Williams, Christmas albums, recordings by Elvis, The Searchers, Roy Acuff and others. Send SASE to Linda Osborn, Rt. 5, Box 524, Lake, MS 38852.
- Wanted: *Crook & Chase* coverage of The Judds' break-up. VHS tape, color photos, interviews, TV appearances, magazines and 5x7 photos. Will pay for them. Sara Kegg, RD 1, Box 2288, Blain, PA 17006-9721.
- Looking for any VHS coverage of The Judds' break-up announcement. Send list and price to: Deborah Stahl, Rt. 1, Box 290, Hudson, IN 46747.
- For sale: LP's of various artists—Hank Williams Sr. and Jr., Hank Snow, Ernest Tubb, Bob Wills, etc. Send SASE for list. Robert D. Johnson, 914 Larson St., Knoxville, IA 50138.
- Looking for someone who would make VHS copies of some of George Strait's earlier television appearances. TNN's special *Strait from the Heart of Texas*, ABC specials *Texas 150* and *Perry Como's Christmas in San Antonio*, *Hee Haw* and the *Today Show*. Anything he might have appeared in before 1988 like the 1985 and '86 ACM awards. Will pay a reasonable price for good quality copies. Wanda Chandler, Rt. 1, Box 202, McKenzie, TN 38201.
- I am trying to locate the first album released by Travis Tritt titled *Proud of the Country*. Would appreciate it if anyone can tell me where I can purchase it, or if

- anyone is willing to record it for me. Willing to pay for the cassette. Sherry Pullen, 1136 Sunset Dr., Winchester, VA 22601.
- Wanted: LP or cassette of The Amazing Rhythm Aces album, *The Last Dance*. Will pay. Write M. Swart, P.O. Box 1343, Windsor, CA 95492.
- Albums wanted: Marty Robbins, *The Drifter*, Columbia 2527; Wanda Jackson, *Party Goin' On*, T1511 Capitol; Buck Owens, *Arms Full of Empty*, Capitol; and Cal Smith, *I Found Someone of my Own*. Also interested in finding VCR tape of 20th Anniversary of *Hee Haw*, and would like copy of Buck Owens and Buckaroos from his TV shows in the 60's and 70's. Vern Kongsli, P.O. Box 234, Towner, ND 58788-0234.
- Looking for The Judds' 45 "Why Not Me" b/w "Lazy Country Evening." Willing to pay a reasonable price. Kevin Abercrombie, 30345 Chualar Cyn Rd., Chualar, CA 93925.
- Wanted: Video of Marty Stuart with Shelly Mangrum on *Video Country*. Also Marty Stuart with Carlene Carter on VH-1. I will send VHS tape. Sharon Cooper, 1193 Delno Ave., Columbus, OH 43224.
- Looking for an album known as *The White Mansions*. It was put out by A&M records many years ago and features Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter, John Dillon and one other person. Album has a Civil War flavor. Anyone with information, please write. Would love to hear from other Waylon fans. Kathy Rowland, P.O. Box 1292, Stockbridge, GA 30281.
- Looking for a clothing catalog (address or phone number) that has Rocky Mountain Jeans in it. Our store in Tucson is no longer ordering my size. Judy Harris, 7351 E. Speedway, #23G, Tucson, AZ 85710.
- Looking to locate a VHS copy of *Austin City Limits* with Keith Whitley. Also interested in any other video or concerts of Keith. Willing to pay any costs involved. John Vaughan, 20 Park St., Cortland, NY 13045.
- Wanted: Sealed copy of the Becky Hobbs LP *All Keyed Up* on the MTM label and videotape of the *Nashville Now* program which featured Reba McEntire, her brother Pake and sister Susie, broadcast September 12, 1986. Send prices, item condition and SASE to V.L. Siegrist, 3939 Russell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63110-3709.

Pen Pals

Meet new friends by mail.

- Hi, country music fans! I am a 21-year-old farm girl from Pennsylvania, with interests in writing, reading, listening to country music and being outdoors. Some favorites are Alabama, Reba, The Judds and Garth Brooks. I am especially interested in learning about foreign countries and their beliefs, so everyone is welcome. Tammy S. Buser, RD #12, Box 299, York, PA 17406.
- My name is Nellie Behrens, and I am 31 years old, looking for male and female pen pals. I play guitar and sing, and I love all country music. Some of my favorites are Tanya Tucker, Don Williams, Dan Seals, Earl Thomas Conley, Garth Brooks, Patty Loveless and The For-

- ester Sisters. Also like to help other people. Please fill my mailbox. No prisoners, please. Nellie Behrens, P.O. Box 509, San Jose, CA 95103-0509.
- Hi, my name is Danna, and I'm 52 years old. I'd like to hear from females close to my age. I'm a country music lover, and I've written song lyrics since I was small. I'd just love a pen pal. Danna E. McKenney, P.O. Box 7722, Eugene, OR 97401-0027.
- Hello, my name is Ronnie Eads, and I'm a 41-year-old, divorced male. I love country music, travel, kids and outdoors. I'm an M.D. I need some female friends in my life—any age, attractive, single and willing to travel. Will answer all who send photo. Ronnie Eads, P.O. Box 56, Elmore, AK 36025-0056.
- Hi, my name is Nanci. I am a 36-year-old, divorced mother of two. I love country music and going to concerts. Some favorites are The Oaks, Gary Morris, Dan Seals, Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton and Dwight Yoakam. Working full-time and raising my children, I am quite busy, but always have time to write letters. No inmates, please. Nanci Seltzer-Bonder, 40 Chapel St., Apartment 104, Milford, CT 06460-8032.
- Hi! I'm a 21-year-old, single girl who loves country music. A few of my favorites are T. Graham Brown, Garth Brooks, Travis Tritt and many others. Also enjoy dancing, fishing, concerts and traveling to see my favorite singer, T. Graham Brown. Also a collector of Elvis Presley and T. Graham Brown. Looking to hear from single country guys, age 21-35. Will answer all. Send photo. No inmates, please. Georgiana Jones, 3945 Susannah Ave., Dayton, OH 45414.
- Hello, my name is Ardella E. Ball. I'm 64 years young. Would love to hear from some guys out there between 65 and 70. I do a lot of reading. Also, I've been getting *CMM* for two years, and I read every page. I love country music and love Travis Tritt and Garth Brooks. Let's hear from you. Write Ardella E. Ball, R.R. 2, Box 90, Hwy. 25 S., Mount Vernon, KY 40456.
- Hi, my name is Linda. I am an old-fashioned, 27-year-old single, Christian female. Would love to make some new pen pals and friends among fellow country music fans. Some of my favorites include Travis Tritt, Restless Heart, Pirates, McBride & The Ride, Billy Dean, Doug Stone and Garth. I would enjoy hearing from folks, age 25-35, with similar interests. No prisoners, please. Linda Griffin, 1063 Sparta Hwy. NE, Devereux, GA 31087.
- Hi, my name is Linda, and I'm 42 years old and divorced. I'm a mother of three, ages 17, 12 and 10. I love country music both past and present. Also like to dance, cook and go camping. Looking for a new relationship. Non-smokers and non-drinkers only. Love to hear from anyone between the ages of 42-50. Please send photo. Will answer all. Linda Stiltner, P.O. Box 1284, Castle Rock, WA 98611.
- Hello! I'm an Italian guy, my name is Alberto, and I'm 26 years old. I'm a photographer, and I like music, movies, books and travel. Looking for female pen pals, age 18-26. I'll be waiting for your letters. Sommaruga Alberto, Via Vitt.



VINCE GILL

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE MARCH/APRIL 1992

World Radio History

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

VINCE GILL

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Given Name: Vincent Grant Gill
Birthdate: April 12, 1957
Birthplace: Norman, Oklahoma
Family: Wife Janis; daughter Jenifer; father Stan; mother Jerene; sister Gina; brother Bob
Hobbies: Golf, basketball, more golf.
Favorite film: *Lady Sings the Blues*
Famous for: Working on several hundred different artists' records (everyone from Tammy Wynette to Bonnie Raitt, Conway Twitty to Dire Straits).

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'3"
Weight: 190
Color eyes: Hazel
Color hair: Brown

Recording Career

Record label: MCA Records, 1514 South Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

Albums	Release Date
<i>Turn Me Loose</i> (RCA)	1984
<i>The Things That Matter</i> (RCA)	1985
<i>The Way Back Home</i> (RCA)	1987
<i>The Best of Vince Gill</i> (RCA)	1989
<i>When I Call Your Name</i> (MCA)	1989**
<i>Pocket Full of Gold</i> (MCA)	1991**

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

Number One Singles
 "When I Call Your Name"

TV Highlights

Good Morning America
The Tonight Show
The Today Show
Austin City Limits
Christmas in Washington
CBS This Morning
 Sang National Anthem at Fifth Game of the 1991 World Series
Nashville Now



Roy Acuff welcomed Vince as a member of the Grand Ole Opry on August 10, 1991.

Videos

"When I Call Your Name"
 "Never Knew Lonely"
 "Pocket Full of Gold"
 "Liza Jane"
 "Look at Us"

Awards Highlights

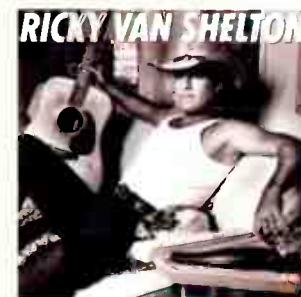
1984: ACM New Male Vocalist Award
 1990: CMA Single of the Year ("When I Call Your Name")
 1991: Grammy Award (Best Country Vocal Performance, Male); CMA Male Vocalist of the Year, CMA Song of the Year ("When I Call Your Name"), CMA Vocal Event of the Year (Mark O'Connor &

The New Nashville Cats featuring Ricky Skaggs, Steve Wariner and Vince Gill); TNN/Music City News Awards Single of the Year ("When I Call Your Name"), TNN/Music City News Awards Instrumentalist of the Year; NSAI Songwriter/Artist Award; inducted into the Grand Ole Opry.

Fan Club

Membership in the Vince Gill Fan Club includes a fan club kit, four quarterly newsletters, Vince's itinerary and merchandise information. To join write: Vince Gill Fan Club, 27 Music Square East, Suite 107, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

HOW LOW CAN CD AND CASSETTE PRICES GO?



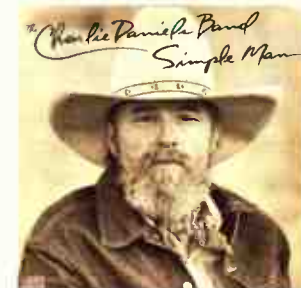
RICKY VAN SHELTON
Wild-Eyed Dream



DOLLY PARTON
White Limozeen



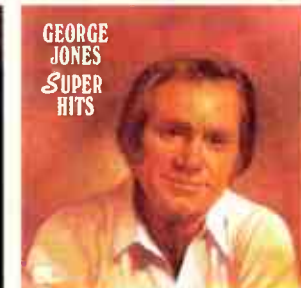
SHENANDOAH
The Road Not Taken



CHARLIE DANIELS
Simple Man



DOUG STONE
Doug Stone



GEORGE JONES
Super Hits

**DON'T GET STUCK...
LOOK FOR THIS STICKER!**
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Veneto, 12, 21040 Carnago (VA) ITALY.

•Hi, I'd like to see lots of mail from new friends in all 50 states and overseas! There's nothing like mail from a friend to end each day. I like most all types of music, horses, being outdoors, movies and more. I'm 40 years young with a 15-year-old son and divorced. I'm sure we have lots in common, so why not write and find out. Sorry, no prisoners, please! **Karen S. Simone, P.O. Box 852, North Vernon, IN 47265-0852.**

•Hi, I'm an 18-year-old female who loves country music and cowboys. My favorite country singers are George Strait, Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson and Clint Black. Willing to write to males or females from anywhere, between the ages of 18 and 25, especially from Australia. Will write all who respond. Please send picture! **Marsha Peterson, 3900 Teasley Ln. 325, Denton, TX 76205-8460.**

•Hi, my name is Cynthia. I love country music. My favorites are Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam, Mark Chesnutt, Clint Black and many others. I'm 25 years old and would love to make new friends. Love to hear from men 23-33 years old (military or not, single or married). Send photo if you wish. **Cynthia Keenan, 127 Albany St., Buffalo, NY 14213.**

•Hi, I'm a 19-year-old country boy who likes Hank Jr., Clint Black, Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson and Tanya Tucker. My other interests are drag racing, model cars, pickups and hot rods. Would love to write to people with similar interests, especially females. Will answer all. **Don Jarrell, 41 West Cadet Dr., North Ridgeville, OH 14213.**

•Hi, my name is Joseph, and I'm a 28-year-old single male who loves country music. Some of my favorites are Hank Williams Jr., Garth Brooks and Marsha Thornton, just to name a few. My hobbies are attending country music concerts and spending time outside. I also enjoy listening to country music on my stereo. Would like to correspond with all you fine country music fans. I will answer all letters. Hope to hear from you soon! I enjoy all the stars of country music. **Joseph Butala, 525 Pewabill St., Laurium, MI 49913.**

•Hi, I'm a 28-year-old, married mom with two girls, and I love country music. Some of my favorites are George Strait, Garth Brooks, Patty Loveless, Mark Chesnutt and Brooks and Dunn, to name only a few. I love playing guitar, reading, listening to the radio and making new friends. I'd like to hear from anyone who'd like to make a new friend, so please write, I'll be happy to answer. Fill my mailbox! **Diane Bush, Route 3, Box 287, Sulligent, AL 35586.**

•Hi, I am a 26-year-old female who loves country music. My favorite artist is George Strait and would like to hear from other George Strait fans. Will answer all who write to me. Please send picture. **Tina Bogaye, P.O. Box #2344, Chinle, AR 86503.**

•Hi, I am a 30-year-old, half native American woman who would like to hear from people with a similar ethnic background. I am single and love both country and rock 'n' roll music, animals, travel, writing and photography. No

drugs, no prisoners, please! Will answer all. **Sharon Bell, 6123 Barbara Ln., Brook Park, OH 44142.**

•Hi, I'm a 19-year-old girl who loves country music. Some of my favorites are Garth Brooks, Clint Black, George Strait, Ricky Van Shelton and Reba McEntire, just to name a few. I also like some of the older singers. I enjoy listening to the radio, watching TV and playing volleyball. Would like to hear from anyone, especially guys. Will answer all. A photo would be nice. No inmates, please. **Kim McKinney, 217 East Ironwood, West Monroe, LA 71291.**

•Hi, my name is Michael, and I am 43 years old. Would like to correspond with a female pen pal (18-26) who loves country music and country living as well. My old favorites are Ernest Tubb, Loretta Lynn, Hank Sr. and Marty Robbins. Of the newer ones—Mark Chesnutt, Alan Jackson, George Strait, Dwight Yoakam and lots more. Some interests are country concerts, country fairs and cookouts. Will answer all. **Michael Weesner, P.O. Box 652, Bluff City, TN 37618-0652.**

•Hello, I'm just an ol' cowboy sittin' here in the state lockup. I'm so lonesome I could cry, so I figured I'd reach out through the good folks at *Country Music* and see if I could get me a pen pal. I'd like for me and you to be two of a kind workin' on a full house. I got a heart full of love, am 30 years young, and I don't play games. Age, race, etc. don't matter, so drop me a line. **Richard Kelly #860033, I.S.P.A.O., P.O. Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46360.**

•Hi! My name is Nancy, I'm 29, single and I love country music. Some favorites are Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Ricky Van Shelton, George Jones and Marty Robbins. No prisoners, please. Will respond to all others. **Nancy Baker, 4431 West Holt Rd. #8, Holt, MI 48842.**

•Hello, my name is Michael—a 36-year-old country music fan. Some favorites are Clint Black, Dwight Yoakam, Willie Nelson and many others. My interests are rodeos, camping, cooking and watching most sports and movies. Would like to hear from cowboys age 25 to 45 with similar interests. Photo, please. **Michael Coley, 708 SE 1st St., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301-2018.**

•Hi! I'm a single male, 31 years old and a fan of rock and new country music. Would like to hear from single females who are 18-wheeler truck drivers and military service women age 18 to 35. Some of my favorites are Reba McEntire, George Strait, Shelby Lynne, Michelle Wright and Jerry Clower. Please include in first letter photo and address. **Benton Kennedy Jr., Rt. 3, Box 424, Angie, LA 70426-9718.**

•Hello from Kentucky! My name is Sheree. I am 30 years old and happily married to a great guy and have one spoiled cat named P-Jib! I love reading *Country Music Magazine* and love all country music. My favorite artists are Garth Brooks and Travis Tritt. Just excited about meeting new pen pals and making friends from everywhere. I'll answer all. **Sheree Kidd, P.O. Box 752, Junction City, KY 40440.**

•Hello, my name is Jeannie, I'm past 40 and single and I love country music. Also enjoy rock 'n' roll, R&B and soul. My in-

terests are writing songs and performing. I would love to hear from anyone who performs either professionally or otherwise. I love people, children, horses, old western music, new and old country music and have many favorite artists. Looking forward to lots of letters and will answer all. **Jeannie Troxell, Apt. B, 6411 102nd Ave., N. Pinellas Park, FL 34666-3027.**

•Howdy, I'm 29 years old, looking for an open, honest, mature relationship. Love animals and hope to own my own ranch some day. Enjoy sharing and doing things together such as horseback riding, hiking, camping and more. I love country music (especially the old-time country music). Some favorites are Hank Williams Sr., Conway Twitty, Dwight Yoakam, The Highwaymen, Loretta Lynn, etc. Please send letter and photo to: **Janice Funk, N7139 Highway K, Fond du Lac, WI 54935-9099.**

•Hi, I'm Paul from Valley City, North Dakota, and I've lived here all of my life. I've worked for the railroad for the last 10 years, but have traveled a lot. I'm 29 years old and interested in hearing from girls age 21 to 31. My favorite artist is Hank Williams Jr., but I enjoy all country music. **Paul Komrosky, 636 9th Ave. SE, Valley City, ND 58072.**

•Hello, my name is Janet Traynor. I am 25 years old and a country music fan. Interested in hearing from all you musicians out there, especially guitar pickin' fools. **Janet Taynor, 5301 Lennox Ave. #93, Bakersfield, CA 93309.**

•Hello, my name is Jennifer, and I am 19 years old. I would like to have pen pals in all 50 states. No romances, just new friends. No prisoners, please. **Jennifer Gooding, 103 Camellia Ave., Garden City, GA 31408.**

•Hi, my name is Evelyn. I am married, 45 years old and love country music. Some favorites are Reba McEntire, Garth Brooks, Ricky Van Shelton, Wild Rose, The Statlers plus many, many more. I love pen pals. Will try to answer all. **Evelyn Kennedy, 6209 Glen Dr., Merrillville, IN 46410-2726.**

•Hi, I'm a 32-year-old truck driver traveling between western PA and Maine. I love country music, watching rodeos and traveling. Would love to meet new friends along the way. **Brian Lechleiner, 615 Chester Ave., Riverside, NJ 08075.**

•Hi, my name is Barbara. I'm a 27-year-old single country girl who loves country music and also likes some rock. Like to go for walks and I love animals. My favorite singers are Loretta Lynn and Barbara Mandrell. Would love to hear from anyone. **Barbara Moore, 2625 East Woodrow Pl., Tulsa, OK 74110.**

•Prisoners Only. I love you guys—you've proven to be loyal country music fans. This 50-plus year-old female would like to add eight of the most sincere replies to my list of 12 prison friends. Any age—any race—and any place, who would like to correspond. I like both old and new in country music—Hank Sr., Merle Haggard, Emmylou Harris, Alan Jackson, Clint Black, Carlene Carter and her scrumptious dad, to name a few. **Doris Peters, 1901 Alabama #2, Huntington Beach, CA 92648.**

•Hi, my name is Janet Lyles. I'm 33 years old, looking for all good country western music fans who love George Jones and Merle Haggard music. Would enjoy hearing from you. Will answer all letters and exchange photos if you will. **Janet Lyles, P.O. Box 1102, Mena, AR 71953.**

•Hi! My name is Cynthia (Cindy for short), and I'm 25 years old. I have several country music favorites, too many to list and not enough space! Love to write anywhere to almost anyone. Also would love to hear from military personnel. Male or female, 25-??, No inmates, please. So, c'mon, make my day and write. You won't be disappointed. I'll answer all. **Cynthia Keenan, 127 Albany St., Buffalo, NY 14213.**

•Howdy, my name is Robin. I'm a 17-year-old country girl who thinks Clint Black is the sexiest man to ever walk on the stage in a cowboy suit and a 10-gallon hat! I would love to hear from anyone who loves Clint and his music as much as I do. **Robin Ruffino, P.O. Box 143, Bonne Terre, MO 63628.**

•Hi, I'm a 25-year-old single female. I have loved country music for as long as I can remember. My favorites are Clint Black, Reba McEntire, Barbara Mandrell, Garth Brooks, Travis Tritt and many others. Would love to hear from everyone. Will answer all letters. **Joanne Eddy, 390 Adam St., Tonawanda, NY 14150.**

•Greetings from Texas! I am a 23-year-old single Texan filly. I absolutely adore Clint Black, but I also enjoy a lot of others as well. I really like trying different things. Looking for pen pals—guys or gals, all ages. Will answer all who write. **Tammy Watkins, 315 Gum Dr., Bridge City, TX 77611.**

•Hi, my name is Kelli. I am 21, single and looking for males about 20-25 years old to write to. I am a Garth Brooks fan. My hobbies are going to movies, four-wheeling and bumming around. Will answer all, please write. **Kelli Bingham, P.O. Box 571, Marcola, OR 97454.**

•My name is Bill, and I am 45 years old, divorced and lonely. Would like to hear from single country girls 30-45. I love country music and country living. A few favorite singers are Garth Brooks, Ricky Van Shelton, Patty Loveless, Dolly Parton, Travis Tritt, Randy Travis, George Jones and Lorrie Morgan. Please write. Send photo and I'll do the same. **Bill Decker, RR 2, Cuba, IL 61427-9802.**

•Hi, my name is Charmon. I'm a 24-year-old single female. Some of my favorite artists include Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, Clint Black, Lorrie Morgan, Travis Tritt, Alan Jackson, Davis Daniel and Mark Chesnutt. I would like to correspond with males or females near my own age. My interests include reading, watching movies, listening to music, going to concerts and traveling. Would like to hear from others with the same interests. No inmates, please. **Charmon LeMaire, P.O. Box 1381, Gonzales, LA 70707-1381.**

Send requests to Country Music Magazine, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880. Mark envelope, Attention: Collections. Entries sent without membership number will be discarded.

Merle Haggard

Merle Haggard's distinctive songwriting and Bakersfield sound influenced a generation of country performers and earned him the title, Poet of the Common Man.



by Rich Kienzle

On April 6, 1992, Merle Haggard will turn 55 years old. Since thousands of others also reach that milestone this year, that alone is no big deal. His heavily-lined face looks much older, but then Merle has lived enough for several lifetimes. He is one of our music's Elder Statesmen, that select group whose music, past and present, serves as a musical role model for younger artists. It would take two parts to tell his story completely. What you get here will be a mere thumbnail sketch.

Haggard created music as compelling as any ever written. His songs evoke vivid scenes of the rough life of Dust Bowl immigrants who traveled from Texas and Oklahoma to Northern California during the 1930's. He drew on his own troubled youth and prison days to draft telling, dramatic miniatures of life's less savory side. His songwriting skills created exquisite love ballads, anthems of blue collar pride and honky tonkers that stood with the best.

He also reminds us of where it all came from. In his way, Hag was a new traditionalist 20 years ago, paying homage (as he still does) to Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills and Lefty Frizzell, men whose music influenced his very being. Indeed, his recorded tributes reintroduced them to new fans and, in the cases of Wills and Lefty, triggered vast interest in their music.

He has influenced numerous younger singers too, including Emmylou Harris and the late Gram Parsons, along with today's new traditionalists—Randy Travis, John Anderson, Alan Jackson, the late Keith Whitley and even the more pop-oriented K.T. Oslin all cite him as a major influence.

However, Merle Ronald Haggard's boyhood route to stardom was anything but simple. Like Johnny Cash, he lived

through the hard times many singers sing about but few actually experience. In 1934 Merle's parents, Jim and Flossie Haggard, lived on a farm in Oklahoma with two of their children when a fire caused by lightning destroyed their barn, taking much of the farm with it. Shortly afterward they moved west and settled near Bakersfield, California.

Merle was born April 6, 1937, in a home built from an old railroad refrigerator car. Merle's childhood was mundane until his father died following a series of strokes in 1946. The trauma remained with Merle. His mother had a formidable task. Suddenly she had to work to support the family. By the time Merle was in his teens, he'd fallen in love with the music of Hank, Lefty, E.T. and Bob Wills. He was also playing guitar, trying to sing like his idols. His high-spiritedness led him to skip school and wind up in a reform school from which he escaped at one point. From there, his rebellion against authority grew. And so did his rap sheet. From 1952 to 1958, he was arrested for everything from auto theft to burglary in the Bakersfield area. Flossie Haggard's best efforts weren't enough to control him. He even married and had two children while continuing his life of crime.

When he tried to burglarize a restaurant that was still open, he was again apprehended. Convicted and sentenced, he wound up in California's legendary San Quentin prison in 1958. Even there he resisted authority and wound up serving seven days in isolation. That seven-day stretch gave Merle the chance for some brutal self-examination, and when it ended, he decided to work toward a parole. A live performance by Johnny Cash at San Quentin helped keep his musical dreams alive.

Paroled in 1960, he dug ditches and picked guitar on the side in a Bakersfield

club. The club work turned into a full-time job and transformed him into one of the principal pickers in Bakersfield's local music scene. He then signed on as a bass player with Wynn Stewart, one of Bakersfield's pioneer country stars, playing in Las Vegas.

Wynn Stewart had written "Sing a Sad Song" and planned to record it himself, until Merle begged Wynn to let him try it. Merle recorded it for the tiny, Bakersfield-based Tally label. Late in 1963, it went to Number 19 nationwide, but stayed only one week before disappearing. His next single, "Sam Hill," barely broke the Top 50. Then he found a song by Liz Anderson, Lynn Anderson's mother and a formidable songwriter in her own right. The song was "(My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers." Released by Tally Records late in 1964, it crashed into *Billboard's* Top Ten early in 1965 prompting Capitol Records to sign him. They'd had several successful Bakersfield singers under contract: first Tommy Collins, then Buck Owens and now Haggard and Wynn Stewart, whom they picked up around the same time they signed Merle. In 1965, the year that his first marriage ended, he formed his band, The Strangers, and married singer Bonnie Owens, Buck Owens' ex-wife, who became part of Merle's act.

In 1966 he had three Top Ten records, all of them now classics: "Swinging Doors" and "The Bottle Let Me Down" were both Haggard originals. "The Fugitive" was another Liz Anderson tune. Despite their shared Bakersfield background, Haggard's singles differed greatly from Buck Owens'. Buck's were jovial, while Merle's outlook was darker, more sobering, based on his own past. The quality and integrity of his music was immediately obvious. He won his first awards from the West Coast-based Academy of Country Music in 1965.

The year 1967 brought "Branded Man" and "Sing Me Back Home," both Haggard originals that are considered classics today. Not all of Hag's singles during this time became classics, however. "The Legend of Bonnie and Clyde," Number One for two weeks in 1967, has been all but overshadowed by its flipside, "I Started Loving You Again." This ballad became a Haggard classic, though it wasn't a hit for him. By then The Strangers were staffed with such top Bakersfield pickers as guitarist Roy Nichols (formerly of The Maddox Brothers and Rose) and steel guitarist Norm Hamlet. His first hit of 1968 was "Mama Tried," another confessional about his past. He paid tribute to blue collar workers in 1969 with "I Take a Lot of Pride in What I Am" and "Workin' Man Blues," then honored his mother again with "Mama's Hungry Eyes." Even the anti-hippie "Okie From Muskogee"—written by Merle and Stranger Eddie Burris more as a laugh than a reprimand—and "Fightin' Side of Me" didn't diminish Merle in the eyes of Gram Parsons and other long-haired, country-rock musicians. "Okie" was the Country Music Association's Single of the Year in 1969.

In 1969 he cut a two-LP tribute to Jimmie Rodgers: *Same Train, A Different Time* and in 1970, combined The Strangers with former Texas Playboys for *A Tribute to the Best Damned Fiddle Player in the World*, his influential Bob Wills tribute. He did two live albums, one of which, *Okie From Muskogee*, won the CMA's Album of the Year Award. That same year the CMA named him both Top Male Vocalist and Entertainer of the Year.

The hits continued through the 70's, more than can be mentioned here, from "Daddy Frank" and "Carolyn" to "Grandma Harp" to "If We Make It Through December." He dabbled in Dixieland music, adding horns to The Strangers. Ironically his final Number One with Capitol, in 1976, was a re-creation of Bob Wills' "Cherokee Maiden." In 1977, when he joined MCA Records, he recorded a tribute single to Elvis Presley and followed it up with an entire tribute LP.

With MCA and with Epic, he continued to cut acclaimed recordings. His 1979 MCA album, *Serving 190 Proof*, remains one of his greatest successes and produced two classics, "Red Bandana" and "My Own Kind of Hat." After his move to Epic Records, he released his 1981 album, *Big City*, which was on the *Cashbox Magazine* Top Country Album charts for nearly two years. When his



COURTESY GENE BEAR ARCHIVES

marriage to Bonnie Owens ended in divorce, he married singer Leona Williams, who worked with The Strangers, in 1978.

There were more hits in the early 80's, like "Misery and Gin," "Big City," "Are the Good Times Really Over" and a few quirky ones like "Let's Chase Each Other Around the Room." He had hit duets with Clint Eastwood, Janie Fricke, George Jones and Willie Nelson. And *Pancho and Lefty*, recorded with Willie in 1983, was a huge success too.

He added ex-Texas Playboys Tiny Moore, Jimmy Belken and Eldon Shamblin to an expanded group of Strangers around that same time. They remained with him several years. His records have occasionally lost their edge, yet after a miss or two, Merle comes back with a big hit. By 1983 his marriage to Leona Williams had ended. Mean-

while, his son Marty was pushing his own solo career and worked both with his sister Dana and as part of The Strangers.

Haggard's complexities continue to define him and influence his music. It is only a matter of time until he winds up in the Hall of Fame next to his idols. Though Bonnie Owens and Merle haven't remarried, she again tours with The Strangers. And Merle—who left Bakersfield long ago for a home near Mt. Shasta—is still telling his story in music.

Editor's Note: Photo credits were inadvertently left off of last issue's Legends feature on Loretta Lynn. Our apologies to photographer Les Leverett.

Albums Available
See For CMSA Members Only page.

Readers Create



Touched by Reba

Fifteen-year-old Aubree Ethington sends in her portrait of Reba McEntire. Aubree says this is the first drawing she's ever attempted, and, she adds, probably the last. She comments, "Reba has had a profound influence on me, and this is my way to repay her. Thanks for a great magazine." Aubree's from Bountiful, Utah, near Salt Lake City, and adds that she enjoys Reba's concerts.

The First True Love

North Tonawanda, an upstate New York community, is home to member Sara Jay. She says she was thrilled to find the Readers Create section in the Newsletter and discover that "there are many others like me." She adds, "I grew up with country music, not only from the radio, but from a mother who played the piano while my uncles strummed guitar and played mandolin. Your magazine shines with true country style, and I'm glad to contribute."

There's no time like the first time
The first time that we kissed
The first time that I held you
On a starlit night like this.

There's no time like the first time
With moonlight on your face

That glowing sense of promise
The need for your embrace.

The touch that you can offer
Still brings me to my knees
And for that precious moment
There's only you and me.

There's no time like the first time
With flames that never die away
And each time that I see you
That feeling's back to stay.

With you each time's the beginning
We'll never reach the end
An eternity of first times
That you and I will spend.

—Sara Jay

It's Crying Time Again

One of the things people love about country music is that it talks about real emotions—all of them, even love's end. Daniel B. Wood, a member in Phoenix, Arizona, wrote "You Have Everything."

You Have Everything
When I'd have problems
with no answer in sight,



Another New Face

Karen Wheland, a member in Palmyra, Pennsylvania, sent in this sketch of Shelby Lynne. This is Shelby's first appearance in Readers Create. Sharp-eyed readers may remember that we printed Karen's take on Alan Jackson in the November/December issue, and it was his first time in Readers Create, too.



A Willie Fan

Scott Collard of Hartford, Kentucky, is a big fan of Willie Nelson. Scott says that he has "just about all" of Willie's albums, and that this portrait was drawn using one of those album covers for inspiration. Scott adds that he is pleased to see Readers Create as a regular Newsletter feature.

you could always make me
see the light.
You were my reason for going on
without you my will is gone.

Since you took your love
and left me behind
you have everything
that used to be mine.

You were always so special to me,
I thought you'd be mine
till the end of time.
When you took your smile
and went away,
you took the sunshine from my day.

Since you took your love
and left me behind
you have everything
that used to be mine.

The look of love on your face
is the one thing I can never replace.
Oh, I still have things
that anyone can own,
but they just don't matter much,
since I'm all alone.

—Daniel B. Wood

Two songbirds sparkle against the snow.



Fire in the SNOW

by Derk Hansen

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

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A numbered limited edition collector plate lavishly decorated with 23kt gold.

What naturalist or backyard bird-watcher wouldn't be thrilled at the sight of a pair of cardinals in winter! Perched on an evergreen branch—brilliant red feathers like fire against the freshly-fallen snow—America's favorite songbirds make a striking impression.

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"Fire in the Snow" is the first in a series of limited edition collector plates entitled *Winged Treasures*. When you acquire "Fire in the Snow," you have the option, *but not the obligation*, to acquire all subsequent plates in this series. Furthermore, under our 100% *Unconditional Guarantee*, you may return any plate for replacement or refund within 30 days.

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World Radio History

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WTP	The Danbury Mint	Limit:
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Credit Card No.	Exp. Date	
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Name: _____ <small>(Please print clearly)</small>		
Address: _____		
City: _____		
State/Zip: _____		
Name to print on certificate(s) (if different from above)		
Allow 4 to 8 weeks for shipment.		
*Any applicable sales tax will be billed with shipment.		

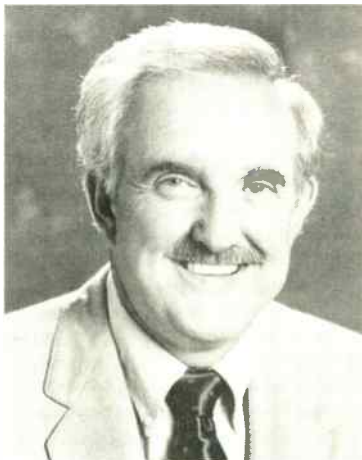
RALPH EMERY

Part of the Country

*This interview was held just weeks before the publication of Ralph Emery's book, *Memories: The Autobiography of Ralph Emery*. It quickly hit Number Two on *The New York Times* best-sellers list.*

By Hazel Smith

Ralph Emery is a hero of mine for many reasons. First, Ralph has always been in a position, jobwise, to help up-and-comers, whether songwriters or singers, and he has made it his business to help as many as he could. Back in his disc jockey days, he'd play the new records, interview artists and talk about them over the powerhouse WSM Radio with 50,000 mighty watts screaming northward to Canada, southward past the Gulf to the islands, eastward to the Atlantic and westward



Ralph Emery now and in days gone by.

across to the Rockies. He was a radio phenomenon. If Ralph said a record was a hit, it was. He led and others followed.

The Nashville Network was just a baby when Ralph Emery was set to host *Nashville Now* five years ago. The doubting Thomases and Thomasinas outnumbered the believing Johns and Johannas. TNN, the network, is now programmed into some 53 million homes daily. Needless to say, a major reason for its enormous success is Ralph Emery and the nightly *Nashville Now*.

If you're in awe of Ralph Emery, you have a right to be. For 35 years the McEwen, Tennessee, native played records and hosted television with a lean toward country music entertainers. He's country music's guru. When I visited with Ralph in his offices located between Music Row and Opryland, the first thing I noticed was a red, white and blue guitar. "Buck Owens?" I asked.

"Yep," Ralph drawled as he picked up the instrument. "Buck gave away two of these, one to me and one to Harlan Howard a couple of years ago. See that engraving? Says thanks for 30 years of

friendship. I treasure this."

"Weren't you Buck's ally in the early days?" I asked. "Buck," said Ralph, "was a disc jockey in Washington, and he knew Loretta up there." He's speaking, fans and friends, of Loretta Lynn. "They'd played some shows together. He put out a record, 'Under Your Spell Again,' using Ralph Mooney on steel guitar. I'd fallen in love with Ralph Mooney's steel playing through Johnny Paycheck—Paycheck brought it to my attention. Wynn Stewart was using Mooney on his records, and the steel guitar was wonderful," Ralph smiled as he reminisced. "Ray Price was on the Opry at that time, and he'd also recorded 'Under Your Spell Again.' I thought Buck's version was great with that wonderful Ralph Mooney intro and turnaround, and too, I thought it was a better record. Ray, being an Opry member, complained to the officials because I was playing Buck's record on WSM radio. I contended that Buck had the best record, and it went as that. As a result the entire East Coast radio network opened up for Buck Owens. Prior to that he'd only had

radio support from the West Coast. 'Under Your Spell Again' reached Number Five on the country charts for Buck and Number Six for Ray."

Ralph Emery made his TV debut in 1955 as substitute announcer on live wrestling and saw himself on TV. His elongated jaw caused a protrusion of his lower teeth. "I was fat, had zits and was freaky looking," says Emery. "I was an ugly duckling, felt inferior with girls, so in 1958 I had surgery. They cut half off my jawbone, shoved it

back in and lined the lower teeth up with the upper ones. My jaws stayed wired shut for six weeks. I lost 30 pounds. To survive in TV I had to do this."

Ralph's *Nashville Live* television show on WTBS was canceled a month before Elmer Alley selected him to host *Nashville Now*. He recently left his early morning local TV show, after 15 years. As host of *Nashville Now*, as well as during his days of radio, Ralph has worked hard to prevent country music from being put down on the lower end of the socio-economic scale. He looks at country music stars as being wonderfully talented people. "I've tried to give country music dignity," he stated. "I personally don't like the word 'hillbilly'."

When TNN went on the air, *The New York Times* would not acknowledge it on its entertainment page. "Now look," explained Ralph. "When they changed the *Billboard* charts, it was proven that Garth was outselling most of the pop acts. In my opinion, this has been happening all along."

I'm a fan, I told Ralph. Fans want to know who Ralph helped along the way.

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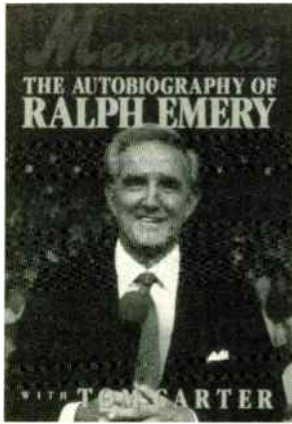
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PHOTOS COURTESY: RALPH EMERY



Ralph's career spans decades. He's worked with Loretta Lynn, Marty Robbins, Bud Wendell, Johnny Cash, Tex Ritter, Merle Haggard, Roy Rogers, Marty again, George Jones and Ray Price on radio and TV. He counts many of them as friends today.

What did he do? "I was on radio following the Ernest Tubb Jamboree on Saturday night after the Opry till four in the morning, on weekly, 10 P.M. till 4 A.M. People were saying other DJ's were following my lead, so I did a test. I played an obscure cut from a Cowboy Copas LP, 'Alabam,' got so many requests I called Tommy Hill at Starday. He passed the word to his boss, Don Pierce—they released a single that went to Number One for Copas. He hadn't had a hit in eight years. I fought Jim Denny with a Stone-wall Jackson single. Jim wanted a Cedarwood song to be the single, but I played 'A Wound Time Can't Erase,' which went to Number Three. And I played lots of Skeeter Davis records. I was so in love with Skeeter, I played her records a lot." (Ralph and Skeeter did marry and divorce.)

Ralph says he was the first to put Dolly Parton on television. Carl and Pearl Butler brought her down from Knoxville. Grant Turner turned Ralph on to funny man Jerry Clower, who had released a record on a small label. Ralph thought Jerry was funny, so they began a telephone funnybone with Jerry home in Mississippi and Ralph on all-night radio. Clower still credits his success to Ralph.

"I loved Marty Robbins," Ralph stated. "Marty was nocturnal. He couldn't go to sleep until four or five in the morning, so he would come up to the station and sit with me with his small Martin guitar or the old upright. I'd cut on the phones, stop playing records and just take requests. Another person I

loved was George Morgan," said Ralph. "So, I take parental pride for Lorrie. I tell her when I am proud of her, but I kick her butt if she needs be." Lorrie, of course, is George Morgan's daughter.

Who else Ralph?
 "Tex Ritter. Tex was a father figure to me. He was the father I never had. Back in '64 after Skeeter and I divorced, I was feeling sorry for myself. WSM approached me about doing a radio show with Tex Ritter. I'd never co-hosted before, but it turned out to be wonderful. On radio I was the bad guy, wore a black hat, and Tex the good guy—he wore a white hat. I came to love him."

"Was your father dead?" I wondered.
 "No. He's still alive. He's an alcoholic. He was an educated man, a CPA, that could not handle whiskey. Today he's in a nursing home. He showed up about five years ago, in a bad way, and I had him placed in a home. He doesn't even recognize me now, but I pay to have him taken care of."

"Your friends are Jimmy Dean, Tom T. Hall, Dolly Parton, Ray Stevens and Minnie Pearl. Did I get them all?" I asked.

"That's about it except for Barbara and Chet," he said, referring to Barbara Mandrell and Chet Atkins. "You know me pretty good, Hazel. You know, I've written a book about my life, *Memories*. I have chapters on all these people except Chet. There's also a chapter on Cash, who has done so much for our business. Several years ago I was in Berlin with my wife and kids, rented a car and hired an English speaking person for a sightseeing trip. When he learned we

were from Nashville, he said, ah, country music, Johnny Cash."

Another person Ralph loves is Shotgun Red. When TNN was young, ratings were real important, and there was a meeting with Ralph and the powers that be to discuss what would attract audiences. Ralph remembered seeing a dummy dressed like a cowboy at some fair. As a result, puppeteer Steve Hall from Brainerd, Minnesota, was contacted. After an audition Shotgun Red was hired and put to work. Shotgun Red is Steve's arm. Steve lies on his back on a board covered with a piece of foam rubber and watches the TV monitor to see which way Red needs to turn as he does the voice. Truly amazing. By the way, Steve bought Red in a pawn shop for \$40.

Other special people for Ralph are Mr. Roy Acuff and "in my business," said Mr. Emery, "Johnny Carson, and I like Arsenio...Arsenio Hall. I think he's great." One more friend is Nathan Mandrell Dudney, Barbara Mandrell's youngest. "Nathan and I are phone pals. We talk on the phone," he explained.

Anybody who talks to a puppet to entertain kids and older people has got my attention. That's just one reason I watch *Nashville Now*. And that's just one reason why I love Ralph Emery. ■

Ralph Emery's book is available for \$19.95 plus \$1.95 postage. Send check to Country Music, Book Dept., Suite 1, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, Connecticut 06880. For a review see page 66 of our January/February issue.

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Patsy Cline | Take Me Back To My Boots and Saddle
Jimmy Wakely |
| Cattle Call
Eddy Arnold | Home On The Range
Gene Autry | Pistol Packin' Mama
Al Dexter | Old Shep
Red Foley | Have I Told You Lately That I Love You
Gene Autry |
| Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie
Tex Ritter | The Shifting Whispering Sands
Jim Reeves | Don't Fence Me In
Bing Crosby | I'm Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes
The Carter Family | Twilight On The Trail
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| New San Antonio Rose
Bob Wills | I'm An Old Cowhand
Patsy Montana | Goodnight Irene
Ernest Tubb & Red Foley | Along The Navajo Trail
Sons Of The Pioneers | You Are My Sunshine
Jimmie Davis |
| The Last Roundup
Rex Allen | The Prisoner's Song
Vernon Dalhart | I Want To Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart
Patsy Montana | Sioux City Sue
Bing Crosby | That Silver-Haired Daddy Of Mine
Gene Autry |
| Cool Water
Sons Of The Pioneers | Whippie Ti Yi Yo (Get Along Little Doggie)
Sons Of The Pioneers | Empty Saddles
Sons Of The Pioneers | Beautiful, Beautiful Brown Eyes
Jimmy Wakely | Wagon Wheels
Sons Of The Pioneers |
| Riders In The Sky
Vaughn Monroe | When It's Springtime In The Rockies
Montana Slim | My Little Cherokee Maiden
Bob Wills | Blue Yodel ("T" Is For Texas)
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K.T. OSLIN

Making Smart Moves



Back in mid-1990 or so, K.T. Oslin finally almost got to meet Cornell Crawford.

Surely you recognize the name, for in 1987, when “80’s Ladies” made K.T. an “overnight success” after two-plus decades in the trenches (or is it the pits?) of showbiz, said name was an essential element of K.T. Oslin. As virtually every article about her synopsis from her official bio, “Cornell Crawford” was the title of the first song she ever wrote, back around 1974, when she was part of the chorus in the Carol Channing national touring company of *Hello Dolly*. At a stop in Due West, South Carolina, Kay Toinette Oslin spotted some bathroom wall graffiti that said, “I ain’t never gonna love nobody but Cornell Crawford,” and she put her first-hand knowledge of Southern ways to work to sketch out a musical portrait of what kind of young man might inspire such devotion, and what kind of young lady might say so.

In 1990, the rest of the world finally got to hear this much-discussed song—which turned out to be good-natured, if broad, burlesquery—when K.T. included it on her *Love in a Small Town* album. An enterprising professor at Erskine College in Due West was inspired to track down the Cornell Crawford in question; he still lived in the vicinity, was in his early 40’s, married. He agreed to call in to a local radio station at the same time as K.T. so they could speak to each other over the air. But as the appointed day drew nearer, he changed his mind. This not only came as no surprise to K.T., it struck her as the prudent thing to do.

“Remember, not everybody takes being known and talked about very well,” she cautions. “I respect very much his privacy. He is an actual person, and he still lives where he always did and now he is already very well known because of that

song. I thought it was a smart move for him.”

So K.T. Oslin still doesn’t know one thing about Cornell Crawford except what she fantasized in her song, but that’s okay. She does know a lot about “being known and talked about” and has been known herself to make a “smart move.”

As we speak today, she is coming off an album that proved a bit of a disappointment and is girding herself up for a next one that should

present new challenges. She has just gotten off a tour that’s been going steadily for almost six months, and she is using the rare day off to...work. Tonight, she is taping a segment for *Austin City Limits*, which means that this afternoon she is doing a run-through for the TV show’s technicians so they can figure out sound levels, camera angles and the like. She’ll return to Nashville for a couple of days before heading out to Hollywood for some network television, and soon after she’ll embark on a 10-day USO tour in Central America and the Caribbean. Then she has a couple more months off in

Nashville so she can...work, which in this case means write material for album number four.

For someone who claims to be on the edge of fatigue, she remains in remarkably good spirits. Bounding off the elevator at the TV studio with members of her band, she stops to look at portraits in the foyer of others who have done the show. Wearing black leggings, a long red blouse with black and white geometric patterns on the collar and the ends of the sleeves and a very classy, floppy brown sweater with horse-shoes and cowboy boots embroidered on the back, still a little sleepy/disheveled, she looks every bit the bag lady at Balducci’s. Pausing in

The independent singer/songwriter has to wear many hats in her career. While she finds life on the road difficult, she’s aware of its pitfalls and tries to keep in control.

By John Morthland

front of one photo, she squints and then starts prowling the foyer frantically, searching for her purse. "I can't read who that one is, and I can't find my glasses anywhere," she complains. The reporter points out that her glasses are hanging from a chain around her neck. "Well, that's about par for the course today," she groans. She pauses in front of a 1984 shot of George Jones. "That's amazing—he looks identical to today," she exclaims.

On the sound stage, the band—veterans Owen Halo on drums, John Crowder on bass, Dino Zimmerman on lead, newcomers Kevin Salyer on keyboards, Brian Cumming on guitar, sax and keyboards—has finished setting up, and is fighting the urge to sound-check on an amped-version of The Rolling Stones' "Honky Tonk Woman" when the star hops onstage. "You guys wanna play something we all know and love?" she orders sweetly. "Yes, m'lady," several musicians reply in unison, m'lady being their designated mocking term for her ("diva" had already been taken by folks back in Music City...). And boom, they're off into a loose and slaphappy approximation of your basic K.T. Oslin set, concerning urges, indecisions, botched opportunities and lack of communication between men and women.

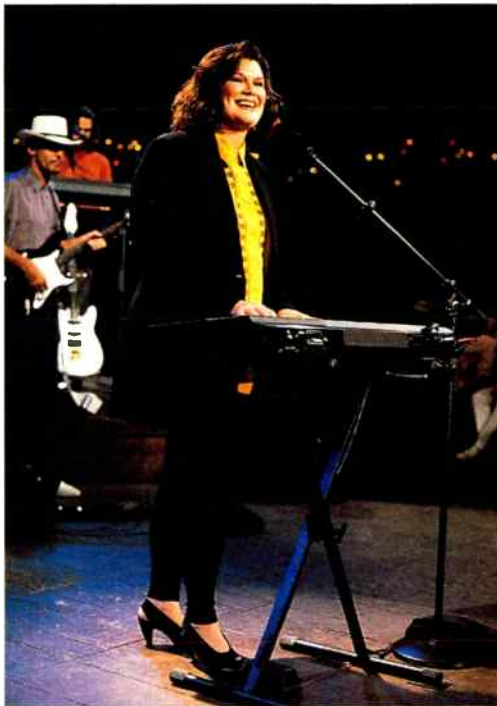
Before beginning "Younger Men," she confers briefly with guitarist Zimmerman. Then, as the song begins, she commences running in place on the stage, runs through the song's entire rehearsal, in fact. Upon completion, she strides back over to the guitarist, who fishes through his wallet for a one-dollar bill to bestow upon the star. "Thank you," she says primly, before turning back to the handful of onlookers. "He bet me I couldn't do that."

K.T. handles her band like a combination of Boss, 80's Lady and One-of-the-Guys. When she introduces them to the audience during her regular show, she always stresses that while she hired them for their playing, she also considered their cuteness. "It's just my little reversal on the old 'Here's a darling little girl, where you from, little gal? South Dakota? Well, turn around for us,'" she grins. Turn-about, in K.T. Oslin's world, is not just fair play, it's necessary for survival (just as surely as the irony, the self-mockery, is necessary for deflecting the criticism her self-sufficiency has always brought her in the country music world).

"The thing is, people don't understand how hard it is to do this," she points out in the dressing room between the run-through and dinner. "It's a physically athletic thing to do, to sing. It's like asking the high jumper to go for the medal four nights in a row. They don't do that. They don't run four days in a row. But they ask singers to do that. It's not my idea of fun,

touring. I love the performing, but it's the getting there. For every show you do, you have to get there and you have to get somewhere else. We're talking about three days to sing once. And it's just hard to be away, to be out of your nest, hard to sleep in strange places every night. It becomes harder than you ever expected to just try to eat right, to get a little exercise, to keep some kind of schedule. I like to sing, but the rest is so energy-sapping."

This leads into a general—albeit, again, rather mocking—discussion of the touring life for an independent, single woman: The guys in the band can unwind by going down to the hotel bar after a



At the taping of *Austin City Limits*.

"It's a physically athletic thing to sing...like asking the high jumper to go for the medal four nights in a row."

gig, but K.T. probably couldn't get away with that even if she drank; it's such a man's world out there in the music biz that her female lighting director often comes around to K.T. for no reason except, as she says, "I just need to smell some perfume and look at something that isn't guys." Moreover, touring women require so much more in the way of clothes, cosmetics and grooming gear. Take yesterday, for example, when, after being home for two weeks, she had to prepare for a brief trip to Austin.

"It can overwhelm you, that picking what to wear," she laughs uproariously. "You can slip real fast if you've been off

the road for a while. So I was desperately trying to make this one top work, and I realize I'm in my closet with stuff everywhere, which is not like me at all, and I'm trying to hammer a square peg into a round hole by working with this jacket. And so I said, 'Well, don't take this jacket, take another jacket and just pack.' And that worked fine. But I can remember that first year when everything was so hectic and I had no one to help me with a lot of things, and I was standing in front of my closet crying because I couldn't figure out what shirt to wear on the bus. I mean, forget about what I was gonna wear performing, I can't even figure out what I wanna sit around in."

In truth, though, she has other, weightier matters on her mind these days. As we speak, K.T. is coming up on a two-month block of time set aside for writing an album scheduled for August 1992 release, and you can tell she's nervous. Right now she has a couple of songs done, a couple more in the works and a couple more she's been thinking about, but that's hardly an album. She has no theme—all her albums are built loosely around a theme—and, as she acknowledges, "I've written 30 songs worth hearing in my life, and we've heard 27 on the first three albums over the last four years."

Put another way, she's been working up until now with a body of songs stockpiled over her struggling years—"80's Ladies" was written around 1980, during her hastily-aborted stint with Elektra in Nashville, even though it wasn't recorded and released until early 1987—and album number four will be the first one she goes into needing an entire album's worth of material. She usually goes for a couple of "outside" songs per release, but "I would rather write my own as much as I can because I have a quirkier style than most people. And I like to just sorta go with that. They're more interesting to me to sing."

The issue is made more prickly by the fact that album number three represented a notable fall-off from the first two, when her brand of bluesy country-pop (or whatever you wanna call it) took country fans by storm. Though it contains typically masterful vignette-type songs and perhaps her most assuredly soulful vocals yet, *Love in a Small Town* yielded but two bona fide smashes so far (with radio completely rejecting her remake of the 1940's standard, "You Call Everybody Darling").

"Yes, it's quite disappointing, and no, I don't have any idea why," she declares. "I don't like to pick things apart. If they don't work, you're sad for a moment and then you push on. If you just sit and say, 'Well, why didn't this work'...it doesn't



After her performance on *Austin City Limits*, K.T. embarked on a 10-day USO tour of Panama, Bermuda and other points in between. Shortly thereafter it was back to the U.S.A. to resume touring and songwriting.

matter why it didn't work, it just didn't.

"Airplay creatures, as I call 'em, have a certain personality to them, and just because a song is not a single doesn't mean it's not good. At least not on my albums, because I don't put ringers on my albums, I don't put filler. I want people to listen to the whole album. The majority of people listen to music going to and from work, and that's on the average 15 or 20 minutes at a time. I want them, instead of waiting to hear something on the radio...I want them to buy the album and listen to the whole album, and I structure them that way so that you can listen all the way through. I don't want them to go, 'Oh, I don't like that song, I wanna skip the last two on that side.' That's not an album to me, that's just a bunch of singles and then you filled in."

Fine and dandy, K.T., and that philosophy shines through on every album so far, but tell us more. Like, just what is an "airplay creature"?

"Right now it should be very traditional. Sometimes you get in concert and you hear these peoples' singles—they don't have the impact live that they do on the radio hearing it over and over again. Sometimes the...um...more lightweight, less intellectual, less having-to-listen works great on radio. There are a lot of songs that are radio hits but nobody buys

them. So is that really a hit? No. Do people wanna buy it? No. Like I said, sometimes they just don't have a lot to them, they're just bouncy and catchy and they go hey hey hey hey and off you go. A song like 'Mary and Willi' is much more fun to sing and much more fun to perform. You really touch people with songs like that. 'Come Next Monday' is just something to attach people to."

K.T.'s songwriting savvy didn't come overnight. A native Southerner, she had been living on New York City's Upper West Side about a decade when she began to write in the late 70's. She had worked in Broadway musicals and she had sung jingles, so she considered herself an actress as much as a singer. Though Nashville took a while to perceive her songs as country, she never let her varied background confuse her, never let herself get turned around by the gap between where she had started and where she had wound up. "When I realized I had a thing for writing and maybe that was the way to get into the business, punk music came along. I looked at that and went, 'Boy, if that's what's gonna happen for a while, I'm an idiot to try to approach them with this.' You got Oingo Boingo and then I'm gonna stand there and sing '80's Ladies' right afterwards? I knew my stuff wasn't pop. I

thought it was country and I still do. I think in 10 years people are gonna look back and go, 'She was right on the money.'

"There's always gonna be traditional country with steel and the same theme and basically the same melody a little twisted around. It's what it is, and that's why it's traditional: You don't change it too much. I don't use a steel guitar because I don't like the sound of the steel guitar, and if country music had to have a steel, I guess I wouldn't be country after all. But there will always be that other fringe, and that's the beauty of country—it does have other sides to it. The bluegrass side is totally different, and then the bluesier side, which is what I fit into. But when I started to write, that's when I realized I could incorporate both the singing and acting, and I thought my songs were really right for country music because country music tells stories. It's about people, and there's room for all kinds of stuff in there," she continues.

It's the sort of debate that's never fully resolved, but K.T. Oslin has learned to live with it. "There are people in Nashville who understand exactly what I do," she concludes. "There are other people who don't understand it but appreciate it, and there are other people that don't get it at all." Kinda like the rest of real life, kinda like country music itself. ■

“HE’S A WALKING CONTRADICTION
PARTLY TRUTH AND PARTLY FICTION
TAKING EVERY WRONG DIRECTION
ON HIS LONELY WAY BACK HOME...”

Kris Kristofferson, “The Pilgrim”

DAVID MICHAEL KENNEDY

“**A**nd now, ladies and gentlemen,” the unseen Nashville Network announcer says in his perfectly modulated radio voice, “America’s favorite outlaw...Willie Nelson!”

And Willie Nelson strides to center stage, as he has a million times before—and as he probably will a million times more—oblivious to the incongruity of the words “favorite” and “outlaw” being strung together in his introduction; oblivious to the cameras and lights and dancers and producers and directors and general mayhem that accompanies any television production; oblivious, as always, to the storm of controversy that has once again descended on his long-haired head.

Craggy and timeworn, he is as he has always been—unlikely golfer, long-distance runner, famous songwriter, semi-fugitive from justice and, of course, the Lord High Zen Master of the Road.

“Howdy, folks,” he says in his perfect Willie Nelson voice. Next he will say, “Good to see you,” and damned if he doesn’t mean it.

You’ve probably been reading a lot of news about Willie recently, and none of it has been good news. Depending on which tabloid you happen to be reading at the time, Willie Nelson is broke, destitute, desperate and probably living in some cardboard box under an Interstate overpass. He does, in truth, owe the Internal Revenue Service around, oh, say \$16.7 million (“Say it real quick,” Willie confides, “and it don’t sound so bad.”). The federales auctioned off his property to pay the debt, although, other than a few souvenir-hunters, there weren’t a lot of takers. It just wouldn’t, you know, be right, somehow, profiting from Willie Nelson’s distress.

I have caught up with Willie Nelson, whom I have known for the better part of two decades, to ask him two simple questions I already know the answers to. Both are pretty obvious. The last time Willie and I talked, it was in a ritzy club in New York City, Willie and Burt Reynolds, actresses Carol Lynley and Candice Bergen and me. It’s sure as heck, I say, not the bad old days.

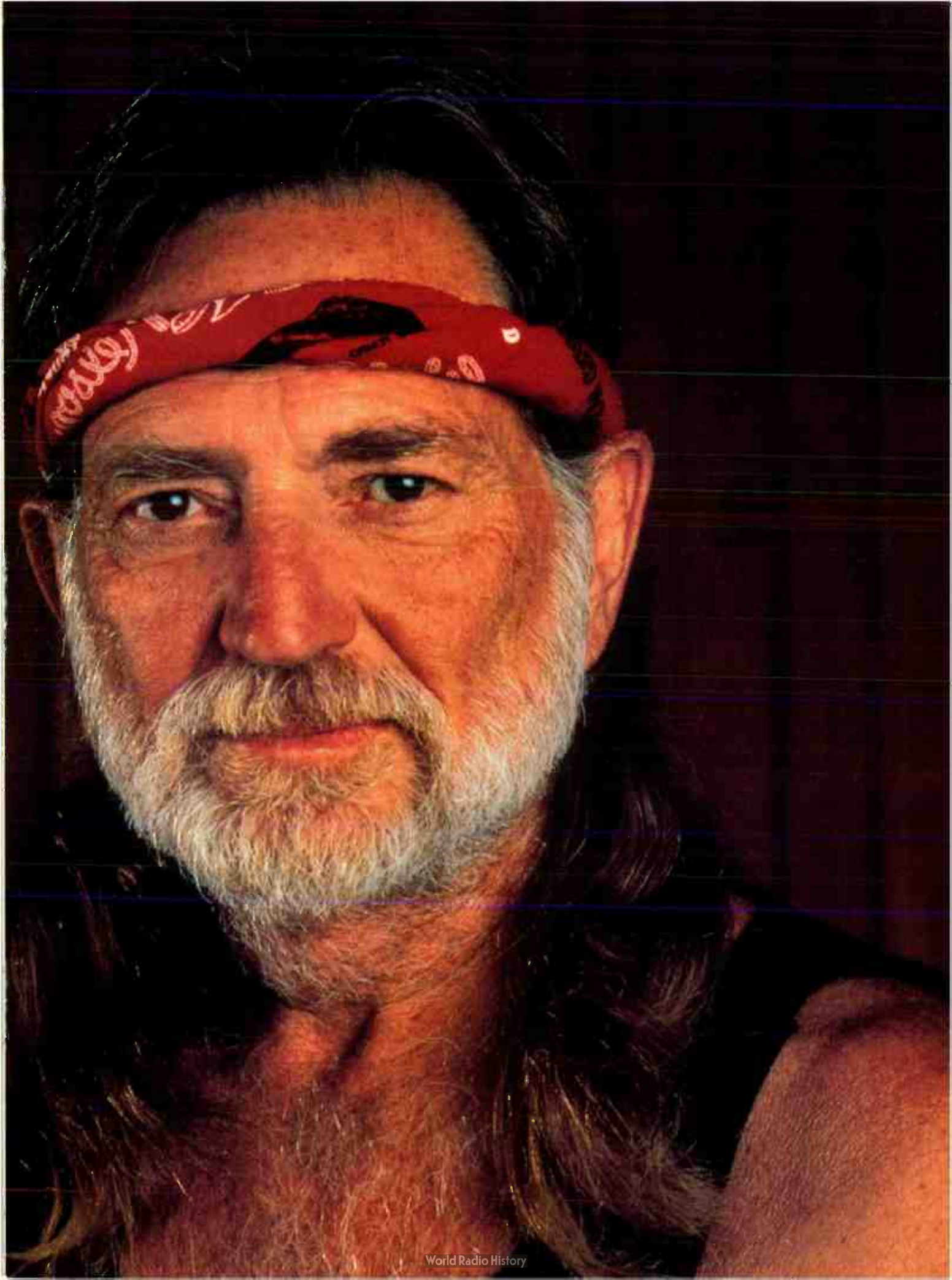
“No,” Willie laughs, “thank God, it’s not.”

Question One, then, is how did the bad old days come back with such a vengeance?

Question Two dates back to the first time we met, not surprisingly in another older and substantially more decrepit tour bus parked outside a gig in Charlotte, North Carolina, where a younger Willie Nelson told a much younger me, win or lose, that this—the bus, the road, the gig—was his life, and he never wanted it to change.

BY MICHAEL BANE

WILLIE NELSON



Question Two, then, is has it changed? Let's let Willie answer in his own words.

To Question One:

"Ah, Michael," he says, shrugging his shoulders. "You know how it is."

And to Question Two:

"Look around you, Michael," he says, his arms encompassing the Honeysuckle Rose II tour bus, his manager Mark Rothbaum doing business in the back, Kris Kristofferson exchanging "remember when" stories with assorted Family members, all the flotsam and jetsam of a life on the road. "Do you see anything different?"

That's a fair question, but it's not what you can see that gets you. What happened to Willie Nelson was, as Robert Draper in his exhaustively chronicled financial story in *Texas Monthly* said, not "a story of greed that backfired. It's instead a story of generosity to a major fault."

In a story that's suitable for the lyrics of a country song, the single most successful act in the history of country music made it all, then gave it all away—unfor-

tunately, before he had paid any of the taxes due. In the scrambling to salvage his life and lifestyle, Willie Nelson has been forced to make decisions that make the bad old days look like a church picnic. So far, he hasn't had to race back into another burning house to rescue his legendary guitar, but it's been close.

Might as well blame it on the road.

Here's one of my favorite images of Willie on the road. We're out somewhere, Louisiana, I think, ten years or so ago. Outlaw music is riding high, but Willie hasn't yet reached the stature of saint—at least, not nationally.

The show's been over for a while, and the road manager comes onto the bus.

"Well," he says, "guess it's time to get the money."

Everybody laughs, and the road manager goes over to his briefcase, hauls out a battered Colt .45 automatic and racks a round into the chamber, clicking the safety on. This is, for most of the history of country music, business as usual. Pick up the gate money from the show promoter or the club owner, stuff the cash in a briefcase and walk it back to the bus, or

whichever beat-up car or truck was carrying the freight. The hardware, of course, was for that long, dark walk back to the bus, but it didn't hurt for your average sleazy promoter to understand that this was serious business. Other money came from song royalties and record company advances—no one ever expected the record company to sell enough records to pay off the advance—but it seemed like magic money, to be spent just about as quickly as a person could lay hands on it. I recall one singer-songwriter from that period who had a genuine million-seller on a song he had written and sung. Because he had a couple of kids and a wife he adored, and because he'd just scraped through a dirt-poor, eat-the-dog period, he took the money from the record and invested it in savings bonds or something equally mundane. Invested it! I happened to be at the recording studio when his pal-around buddies found out that instead of buying a Cadillac, a bus and a 27-year-old waitress from North Carolina, he invested the whole batch in boring stuff! Didn't he understand that this was miracle money, and he didn't need to worry because the money always came? He was a total object of derision. I remember him sitting there, his face beet-red and, later, painfully trying to explain to me why he hadn't pissed it all away, why he'd done something...responsible...with the bucks.

Business as usual, but then, for people like Willie Nelson, the money got bigger. Unimaginably bigger. Once the Outlaw Train began rolling, around 1976, there was no stopping it.

Everybody, though, did start casting around for a conductor.

For Willie and Waylon Jennings, the conductor came in the form of a hot-shot New York music business wiz named Neil Reshen, who signed on as manager to both Willie and Waylon. Reshen brought a shock of negotiating to small-town Nashville.

"Why are they afraid of him?" Waylon told me when I was working on the Outlaws book back in the 1970's. "Cause he knows where all the bodies are buried, man! I tell him, 'You're my ole mean dog. I got you on a chain over there, and every once in a while I'm gonna pull it and you just bite.'"

Unfortunately, the chain proved to be a speck too long, allowing the "ole mean dog" to bite the hand that held it.

"I can't be sure the taxes are paid and records kept and also write songs and play music," Willie says. "At some point you have to trust somebody. And that's always dangerous."

Willie broke with Reshen in 1978 and sued him two years later. One particularly bitter point of contention being that, according to Willie, one of his manager's prime duties was filing

Two decades ago, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson hobnobbed with the likes of Rita Coolidge, Candice Bergen and Burt Reynolds backstage at New York's Bottom Line. In 1991 Willie and Kris taped a TV special for TNN. Tuxedos weren't worn on either occasion. The more things change, the more they stay the same.



JIM FAGANS/TNN

Willie's returns and taking care of the taxes, something Reshen disputes.

Even more controversy swirled around the famous Fourth of July Picnics. Willie had been concerned with Reshen's handling of the events, and there were serious questions of where the money went. Willie claimed that was something he'd like to know. So did the IRS.

Willie's troubles continued to escalate. All his financial records for the year 1975 through 1978—the Outlaw years—had been destroyed, and the IRS is asking \$2 million for those years, according to Draper. Willie and new manager Mark Rothbaum went to one of the top accounting firms in the world, Price-Waterhouse, for financial help and advice.

What followed there, as evidenced by a 1990 lawsuit by Willie against Price-Waterhouse, was nothing short of falling out of the frying pan and into the fire. A series of disastrous tax-deferred investments left Willie in worse shape than ever. In 1984, the IRS began getting serious, demanding taxes due from the mid-1970's. The tax notices began snow-balling while Willie tried to tread water.

In fact, he didn't have the money to pay. To Willie, maybe all money was miracle money, to be touched, but never held. The Family had become a bloated caricature of the Sherwood Forest crazies of the old days. Willie was, as Robert Draper pointed out, supporting an entire community, and like any community, it had its share of lowlifes. Deals, scams and projects seemed to pour off Willie's organization like heat from a forge, and Willie's response was to do what he had always done—play music and put the miles on the bus. He paid his people exorbitantly, and when anyone needed the money, Willie was there.

More and more of the concerts were benefits—some huge media events such as the FarmAid shows for displaced farmers. Others, in typical Willie fashion, were done quietly, with minimum fuss.

In 1990, the man who once sold the classics "Night Life" and "Family Bible" for the grand total of \$200, sold his publishing company, Willie Nelson Music, for \$2.27 million. After all the debts were paid, Willie lost not only his songs, but \$35,000 on the deal.

And now we're in Nashville where "America's favorite outlaw" and Kris Kristofferson, in jeans and ragged T-shirts, are on the set of a television show, performing to the vast chasm of the Opryhouse.

"They wanted us to wear tuxedos," Kristofferson says later. "Ha ha." Some things, I suppose, never change.

There is, I think, a tendency to want to pick through Willie's troubles again and again, feeding those two base feelings—How could he do it? and Not me, thank God, not me!



The Outlaw's belongings up for auction. The tabloids predicted doom.

The horror novelist Stephen King, when asked once about the most terrifying thing he could think of, replied not with slimy monsters of the rising undead, but with the simple statement, "Financial ruin."

Predictably, Willie sings his barroom anthem, "Whiskey River," and Kristofferson sings "Me and Bobby McGee." Also, perhaps predictably, when he gets to the refrain of "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose," he pauses. "Just ask Willie," he adds. The crowd gives an appreciative laugh.

We are on the bus later, and we are laughing. Kristofferson is telling Kris stories, Rothbaum is doing business and the whole bus has the atmosphere of an old club. Earlier, I'd grabbed Rothbaum and asked how things were really going.

"Willie's Willie," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

I grab Willie and tow him to the back of the bus. We sit on the edge of the bed, Willie with his hands clasped and his uncanny ability to tune out the entire rest of the world.

"How do you survive in all this crap?" I ask.

"I maybe even thrive in all this crap," he says.

"Has it been pretty hard on you?"

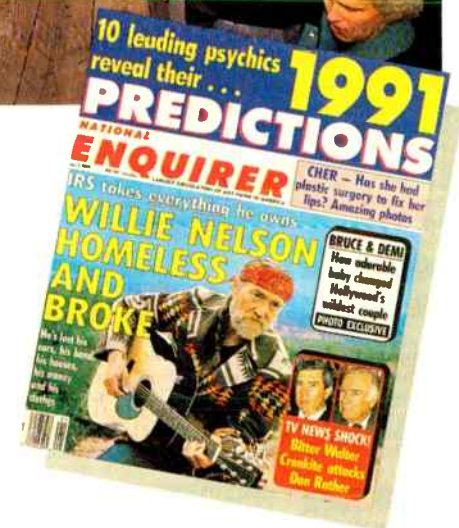
"Not on me, Michael. A lot of people worry about me, and it's been hard on them. I haven't noticed any major changes in my life... You know, the road is really the only safe haven. Once I get stopped in one place too long, I get in all kinds of trouble."

"You told me once that it was hard to write when things were going too good..."

"Well, that's true..." (Laughter.)

"Where are you living, anyway?"

"Well, I've still got a house in Austin



and a house in Abbott, my home town. I move around a bunch on my days off. 'Course, there's not many of those this year."

We talk about running, about doing FarmAid in Russia, about *Who'll Buy My Memories: The IRS Tapes*.

"Somebody asked my bass player, Bee Spears, if I was in trouble. Bee says, 'Well, if he owed them \$1 million, he'd be in trouble. But he owes them \$17 million, so they're in trouble!'"

"You still give away everything you get?"

"I try to. It's hard to carry all that shit."

In the front of the bus, Kristofferson has everybody on the floor laughing, and, pretty soon, we join them. Stories are the currency of the road, maybe what we've bought and paid for. I can't help thinking of another Kristofferson song, one I'd heard when I was just starting out on the road... "Once he had a future full of money, love and dreams, which he spent like they were going out of style..." I had thought "The Pilgrim" was the most romantic song I'd ever heard. Having it, losing it, still knowing that, "The going up was worth the coming down..."

Hell, maybe it still is the most romantic song I've ever heard. ■

Nashville Warehouse

COUNTRY FASHION JEWELRY

Can't you just see yourself or your friends in these beautiful earrings and brooch! When I was in Nashville in June, I bought myself a pair of the guitar earrings—they look great with my new boots! The fiddle brooch (#J1X) is gold with rhinestone clusters—it's a class act. The guitar-shaped earrings (#J2A) are also gold with rhinestones, and with emeralds, too—they look great with the brooch. And how about those adorable gold cowboy-hat-shaped earrings (#J3M) with diamond-color posts? Each item of jewelry sells for only \$7.98, or save money, make a set and buy two pieces for only \$13.98—\$2.00 off! Please note these earrings are for pierced ears only.



COUNTRY MUSIC BELT BUCKLES

Look at these gorgeous belt buckles made out of genuine pewter with vibrant enamel colors highlighting the words "Country Music." These buckles will wear handsomely on your belt—the publisher of *Country Music Magazine* loves his! The "I Love Country Music" buckle is nicely accented with a bronze fiddle and guitar; the "Country Music" buckle shows off a banjo and fiddle. Each belt buckle costs only \$9.95, or save money and buy two for \$17.90. "I Love Country Music" belt buckle, #G6J; "Country Music" belt buckle, #G7L; both belt buckles, #G6J/G7L.



THE PATSY CLINE COLLECTION

MCA certainly did it right when compiling this fabulous collection of Patsy Cline songs. *The Patsy Cline Collection* encompasses 104 of Patsy's best-ever songs including: "Walkin' After Midnight," "I Fall to Pieces," "Crazy," "Sweet Dreams," "Hungry for Love," "I'm Walkin' the Dog," "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," "Turn the Cards Slowly," "Honky Tonk Merry Go Round," "I've Loved and Lost Again," "Just Out of Reach," "I Can See an Angel," "Let the Teardrops Fall," "Never No More," "If I Could Only Stay Asleep," "I'm Blue Again," "Who Can I Count On," "Seven Lonely Days," "I Love You So Much It Hurts," "You Belong to Me," "Why Can't He Be You," "Leavin' on Your Mind," "That's How a Heartache Begins," "Faded Love" and lots more! As Rich Kienzie states in *Buried Treasures* (January/February 1992 issue, *Country Music*), "The packaging here is outstanding, and the sound is excellent. Some of the best moments are the live recordings. The booklet is beautifully done with complete discographical data and rare color photos." *The Patsy Cline Collection* is available in a four-cassette or four-CD boxed set and includes a 63-page booklet. The cassette set costs \$49.98 and the CD set costs \$79.98, #MCA 10421. Please indicate which format when ordering. This collection is a must for any Patsy Cline fans!

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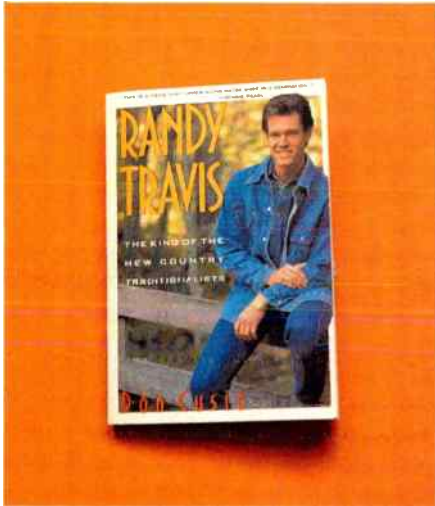
You're familiar with our *Country Music Magazine* trademark. Now you can get this famous logo on a comfortable, 100% cotton T-shirt. Made for us by Champion, these T-shirts are the same top quality they provide to most professional sports teams. The classy *Country Music* logo is printed in white across 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 the 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, (S,M,L,XL).



Nashville Warehouse

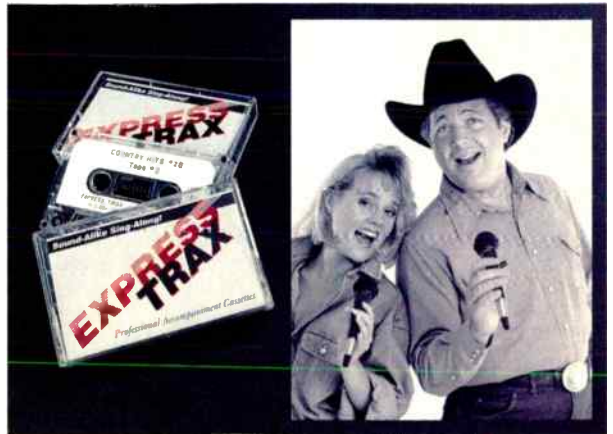
RANDY TRAVIS BIOGRAPHY

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.



EXPRESS TRAX SING-A-LONG TAPES

Now you can step into the country spotlight with the *Express Trax Sing-a-Long* tapes. These high quality, chrome tapes are recorded by top studio musicians in the songs' original keys. The back-up band plays real instruments, such as the fiddle and steel guitar—no synthesizers! One side of the tape is all instrumental so that you can be the lead singer; the other side includes both instruments and vocals. These tapes are great for parties, talent competitions, night club performances or just having fun. Both amateurs and professionals will enjoy singing with the background tracks—each song is a big hit in country music. Package #16 includes: "Thunder Rolls"/Garth Brooks, "Better Man"/Clint Black, "Point of Light"/Randy Travis, "Down Home"/Alabama, "When I Call Your Name"/Vince Gill, "Friends in Low Places"/Garth Brooks, "Forever and Ever, Amen"/Randy Travis, "Put Yourself in My Shoes"/Clint Black, "I Am a Simple Man"/Ricky Van Shelton, "Don't Rock the Jukebox"/Alan Jackson, "If I Know Me"/George Strait, "If the Devil Danced in Empty Pockets"/Joe Diffie, "Blame It on Texas"/Mark Chesnutt, "If Tomorrow Never Comes"/Garth Brooks and "Here in the Real World"/Alan Jackson. Package #28 includes: "Bing, Bang, Boom"/Highway 101, "Silver and Gold"/Dolly Parton, "Men"/Forester Sisters, "Fancy"/Reba McEntire, "Daddy's Hands"/Holly Dunn, "You Lie"/Reba McEntire, "Dear Me"/Lorrie Morgan, "We Both Walk"/Lorrie



Morgan, "Fallin' Out of Love"/Reba McEntire, "One of Those Things"/Pam Tillis, "Love Can Build a Bridge"/The Judds, "Where've You Been"/Kathy Mattea, "I'm That Kind of Girl"/Patty Loveless, "One Hundred and Two"/The Judds and "Down to My Last Teardrop"/Tanya Tucker. Each package gives you 15 country songs on two cassettes. Only \$19.95 for each package, #PKG28 or #PKG16—please specify which when ordering.

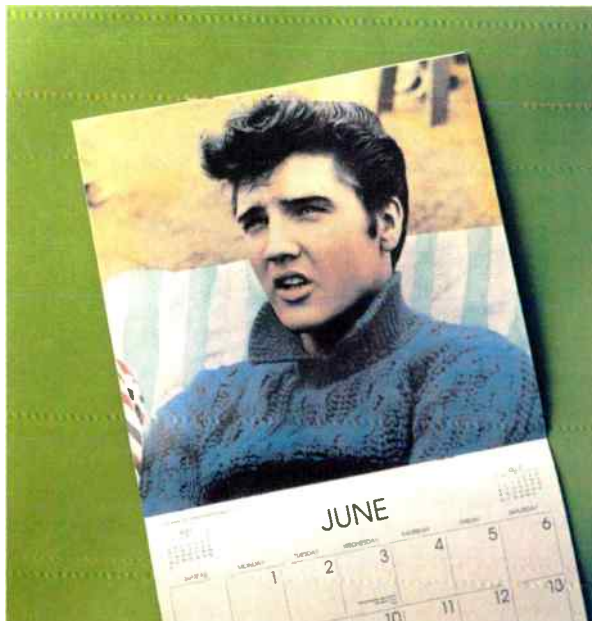


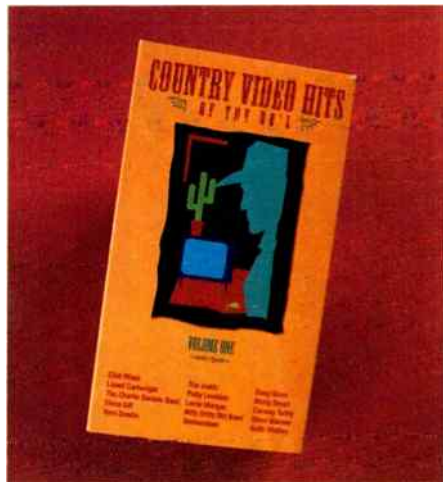
I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC BASEBALL CAP

You've seen our ever-so-popular "I Love Country Music" T-shirt. Now you can get the same design on a baseball cap. The "I Love Country Music" baseball cap comes in navy blue with the words, "I Love Country Music," the guitar and the banjo all in puffed white. To add a nice touch, the words "Country Music" and "love" are highlighted in a subtle red. The baseball cap is 100% polyester, with a foam lining inside the top-front and mesh in the back for ventilation—it is extremely comfortable. My husband wears his while driving with the top down! The "I Love Country Music" baseball cap costs only \$5.00, #G2N.

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". Scattered 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 the answers to these questions on your Elvis 1992 Calendar. It sells for only \$9.95, #G6X. Don't miss out on all the great collector's photos! They're a lifetime treasure.





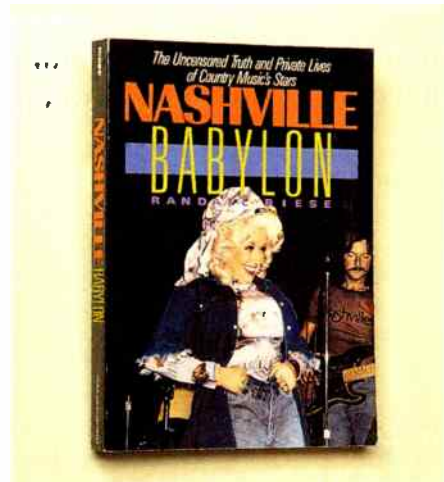
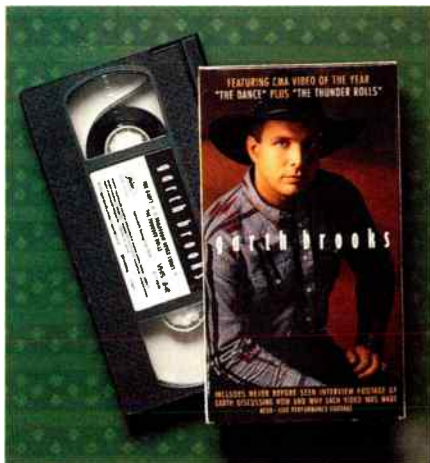
COUNTRY VIDEO HITS OF THE 90'S

What a treat! Fifteen of your favorite country videos brought together in one place. Now you don't have to wait for CMT to play what you like. Just pop *Country Video Hits of the 90's* into your VCR, and there you have it. If you are like me and can't get CMT at all, this certainly is a great compilation of songs—now I don't feel I've missed anything! *Country Video Hits of the 90's* includes: "A Better Man" by Clint Black, "I Watched It All" by Lionel Cartwright, "Simple Man" by The Charlie Daniels Band, "When I Call Your Name" by Vince Gill, "That Just About Does It" by Vern Gosdin, "Give a Little Love" by The Judds, "Don't Toss Us Away" by Patty Loveless, "Out of Your Shoes" by Lorrie Morgan, "When It's Gone" by The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, "Sunday in the South" by Shenandoah, "I'd be Better Off (In a Pine Box)" by Doug Stone, "Cry Cry Cry" by Marty Stuart, "Crazy in Love" by Conway Twitty, "The Weekend" by Steve Wariner and "It Ain't Nothin'" by Keith Whitley. It costs only \$19.95, #V6E, and runs 56 minutes. A great buy!

GARTH BROOKS VIDEO

It's new! It's hot! It's Garth! Someone finally came out with a fantastic compilation of Garth's most popular videos. Included in the set, titled *Garth Brooks*, are "If Tomorrow Never Comes," "The Dance" and "The Thunder Rolls." In "If Tomorrow Never Comes," Garth's real wife, Sandy, plays his "video" wife—a special touch. "The Dance," already well-known, will definitely go down in history. Garth has said many times that if something ever happens to him, "please play 'The Dance' video." And then there's "The Thunder Rolls," which has stirred up so much controversy. Interestingly, Garth explains the creation of this video and his purpose in making it. He even goes into detail about his performance as the "bad man." An additional surprise—the original last line to the song was cut from the recording. It is included in the video!

In addition to the videos, you get live clips of Garth performing "Friends in Low Places," "Much Too Young (To Feel This Damn Old)" and "Not Counting You." Garth's video runs 30 minutes and costs \$19.98, #V2D—definitely worth every minute!



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, prison-mates, 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—whose lives are often more lurid than the lyrics they record—is entertainment at its best. This 275-page book sells for \$12.95, #B4C.

NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Letters

Garth Power

Garth Power? Give me a break. The only power Garth Brooks has is the power that everybody has given him. I have been a *Country Music Magazine* subscriber for several years and attended a lot of concerts. Garth's concerts don't compare to those of Hank Jr., Alabama or The Kentucky HeadHunters. He's not much of a musician, either. You people have blown him up so big that his success might end earlier than it should have. He should have been a pop star.

Dan Patton
St. Elmo, Illinois

Give Me a True Rebel

I do not understand all of this hype over Garth Brooks, as covered in the January/February issue. He's only recorded a few songs that I even like, but on January 17th I watched his NBC-TV special. After the smash-up of the guitars, I fell asleep. If I want to see a rebel in concert, I'll take my favorite, Hank Williams Jr.!

Brenda Keck
Knoxville, Tennessee

Concern Over Guitar Bashing

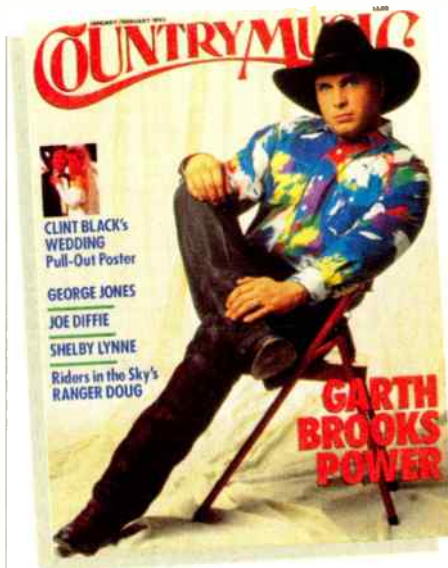
Thank you for the great cover story on Garth Brooks in the January/February issue. I love Mr. Brooks' music, and had a great time at his Minnesota State Fair appearance in August. However, I would like to express one concern I have about some of Garth's performances. The issue is the onstage destruction of guitars. Is it really necessary, Garth, even in the heat of your show?

My daughter, Michelle, a musician who owns two modestly priced guitars, is particularly disturbed by this practice. Many of your fans will never be able to afford an instrument of the craftsmanship and quality you own. It is such a waste to see such a precious thing as a guitar being broken up needlessly.

Paula Jones
Fridley, Minnesota

Pop Goes Brooks

The cover of the January/February issue with Garth Brooks on it was enough to throw it in the trash, but the centerfold is so beautiful, I'll pass it on. After reading so much I don't agree with, I put the magazine down in disgust. Whenever Garth comes on the radio, my husband or I will turn the dial to another station, or



off. He, like many others, "makes it" by singing country, and then switches to crossover, or in his case, pop. If it isn't country, then the stations shouldn't play the song just because the artist sang country before.

Joyce Jackson
Ore City, Texas

Garthmania

I just finished reading the January/February 1992 article on Garth Brooks. I do like a few of his songs, but I can not see where all the "Garthmania" comes from. In fact, the word "Garthmania" seems to be as much hype as Mr. Brooks' popularity.

One group that hardly ever gets any recognition is Sawyer Brown. I have thought seriously of cancelling my subscription because of *Country Music Magazine's* lack of interest and articles on Sawyer Brown. I have written several times before and bet that this letter will not get printed.

Annette Wood
Davenport, Iowa

Bravo, Garth

Thank you, *Country Music Magazine* and Michael McCall, for the wonderful article, "Garth Power," in the January/February issue. I have been a big Garth Brooks fan since he started out. Garth caught my attention really when I went to a concert of his in Billings, Montana. I really admire Garth for the success in awards that he has received.

R. Crum
Hipham, Montana

Touching Judds

I have been a big Judd fan for three years now, and I must say that the article on them in the November/December issue is one of the best I have ever seen. It truly was an inspiring look at two of my favorite people. Being a musician myself, The Judds have provided me with more ways to touch people. When I do "Grandpa" or "Guardian Angel" for an audience, it really makes an impact on them.

I want to thank The Judds for sharing their music with me and other people. I have learned so much from them, and am still learning. Naomi Judd is one of the strongest people I have ever known.

Erin Cline
Homer, Alaska

Compassionate Naomi

Thank you so very much for the deeply moving and well-written story on The Judds in the November/December issue. I can personally attest to the fact that Naomi Judd is the epitome of human kindness and compassion. Not only did she call me personally to thank me for a letter I wrote in support of her, but about two weeks later I received a beautiful, inspirational book with a handwritten message inside, along with a thoughtful, encouraging letter from her. I will treasure it always. I was going through a difficult time in my life, and somehow she knew I needed comfort and reassurance.

Kristine Litten
Riverview, Michigan

From Naomi to Wynonna

Your cover photo of The Judds in the November/December issue was breathtaking, and the accompanying article was excellent! These ladies have taken country music to new heights. We will sorely miss Naomi, but I can guarantee that Wynonna has a great future ahead of her.

This whole situation reminds me of a child learning to ride a bicycle. She begins with training wheels, and even though she knows she can ride with no help at all, it's always nice to have someone running by your side when you make that big step. Wynonna has the talent, the looks and underneath it all, she has the heart and personality to take the country by storm!

Christine Voisin
El Dorado, Kansas

Mr. and Mrs. Black a Hit

There is something in the January/February issue that I find very ironic. I am a fan of Clint Black and have both of his albums. But I was a big fan of another performer who had made three albums of her own. I think she sings great, and I was a fan of hers long before I heard of Clint Black. Here is the ironic part—the name of this person I have been a fan of for so long is Mrs. Clint Black, Lisa Hartman. I think it's great that these two folks—whose music I have—got married. Congratulations, Clint and Lisa! Nice photographs, *Country Music Magazine*. I'll keep it!

Sam Young
Norfolk, Virginia

Gorgeous Wedding Photos

Thank you, thank you so much for the gorgeous pictures and pull-out poster of Clint Black's wedding! I will cherish it forever! Clint Black is so sexy! Clint is my absolute favorite, and he always will be!

Robin Ruffino
Bonne Terre, Missouri

Travis—It's Not the Jeans

Thanks for the very sexy centerfold picture of Randy Travis in the November/December issue. I can say he doesn't need long hair, oversized hats, tight jeans or jewelry to stand out. It's definitely what you see is what you get.

E.W. Chambers
Corbin, Kentucky

Thanks from a Jones Fan

The first thing I do when I get my *Country Music Magazine* is look to see if there's anything on George Jones. This month I wasn't disappointed. Thanks for the article in the January/February issue. I've been a Jones fan since the start of his career. I think I have about everything he has recorded. I also got to see him in concert in Salem, Ohio, many times. His shows are great. Even though I've been a fan for years, I never joined his fan club. Could you give me information on how to join?

Joyce Dumire
Madison, Ohio

The fan club address is: Rt. 3, Box 150, Murphy, NC 28906. Cost is \$12.00.—Ed.

Jones—Still the Greatest

Thanks so much for the story on George Jones in the January/February issue. We have been fans for many years. We used to go to Jones Country Music Park and see him. We still go to all the concerts that we can. He is still the greatest true country singer.

Glenda Childress
Troup, Texas

Regular Joe Diffie

I just love *Country Music Magazine*! I just had to write and thank you and Bob Allen for the article on Joe Diffie, "A Regular Joe," in the January/February

issue. He is truly that! I am a big Diffie fan! I was so lucky. My husband and I met Joe on New Year's Eve. He was performing at the Opryland Hotel. He was so nice. He has more talent and more looks! I know he is on his way to the top.

Cathy Jones
Moulton, Alabama

Down-to-Earth Joe Diffie

I loved your recent article on my favorite singer/songwriter/performer, Joe Diffie, in the January/February issue. Joe's two releases, *A Thousand Winding Roads* and *Regular Joe*, are two of my favorite albums in my all-kinds-of-music collection. I've seen Joe's performance several times, and his show is absolutely fantastic. Plus, he's one of the nicest, most down-to-earth people you'll ever meet. I'm thrilled to see more and more articles about Joe in magazines such as *Country Music*. He's a tremendous talent and a great guy—and gorgeous.

Cara McPeake
Newark, Delaware

Carter Feature Fantastic

Thanks for the fantastic article on Carlene Carter in the November/December issue. Carlene is truly an artist to watch in the coming years! Can you tell me how I can get my hands on the earlier works of Carlene? The article mentioned *C'est Si Bon*, *Blue Nun* and *Musical Shapes*. Much thanks!

Lori Ryner
Winterset, Iowa

These albums are out of print; try used record stores or flea markets.—Ed.

West Tribute Tops

In the November/December issue of *Country Music Magazine*, there is a great article on Dottie West. The writer, Rich Kienzle, covered all the major highlights of Dottie's career, and this is certainly my favorite obituary since her death. I have been a Dottie West fan since the mid-1970's, and I have never before seen the photo of her used in this article.

Carson Storm
Watertown, South Dakota

Where's Georgia Slim Rutland?

In the July/August issue, you located Wilf Carter, the great Canadian yodeler. I was wondering if you could locate a great fiddler, from Texas, named Georgia Slim Rutland. He was way back there also. He played the beautiful song, "Listen to the Mockingbird," and you could swear that bird was right there. He played on KRLD here in Dallas, in the late 1930's and 40's. If he is still alive, I would love to get his address. If not, does anyone know where I can get this record?

Mrs. Dwight Liggett
Dallas, Texas
Georgia Slim fans, come in, please.—Ed.



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COUNTRY MUSIC QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the May/June 1992 issue.

1. To whom did Alan Jackson write his hit, "I'd Love You All Over Again"?
2. Emmylou Harris recorded her new live album at this former home of the Grand Ole Opry. Name the auditorium.
3. What is the name of the first song K.T. Oslin ever wrote?
4. How much does the IRS claim Willie Nelson owes them?
5. When was Vince Gill inducted as a member of the Grand Ole Opry?
6. Big changes were made in *Hee Haw*'s format this season. For how many years has this show been on the air?
7. Chevy's full-size turbo-diesel pickup puts out more horsepower than any other. How much does it produce?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Brentwood 2. *Regular Joe*
3. Shelby Lynne 4. Four
5. Kyle Lehnig 6. "Hold on Partner"
7. Chevy's S-10 produces 160 hp



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Any News on Big Al Downing?

You are my last resort, and I truly hope you can help me in my quest. Do you remember an entertainer named Big Al Downing? He had a few hits awhile back, maybe late 1970's/early 80's, but I really loved his voice and songs. The only trouble is, I can't find any of his tapes or albums or even singles. They are listed in record shops, but when I order them, the answer is always the same—we can't get them. The three that stick out in my mind are "Bring It On Home," "Mr. Jones" and "The Kid at the Bar." If you could tell me where to look, or if you have any ideas, I would be eternally grateful. I think he lived in Massachusetts or New Hampshire.

Shirley Jones
Poultney, Vermont

Last we heard, he was living in central Massachusetts and occasionally performing. For recordings, check with record stores that specialize in used or out-of-print items.—Ed.

Claude Gray Found

This is in response to John Bell's letter printed in the November/December issue, requesting information on Claude Gray. Claude is a cousin of mine. We grew up in a small place outside of Henderson, Texas, called Oak Hill, on Lee's Creek in East Texas. He is out of Arizona, also promotes shows for other bands (some promotions in East Texas). He has a tour bus for him and his band. I hear he still likes to fish a lot.

Mrs. M.H. Turner
Henderson, Texas

Claude Gray Sings

My husband and I saw Claude Gray here in Austin, Texas, about two years ago in a package show including Hank Thompson, Allen Dressen, Norma Jean and Georgia Riddle. He did not sing, "Have Another Cup of Coffee, and Then I'll Go," so I yelled the title to him as he was leaving the stage, and he informed me that I was dating myself. I am glad to see someone else remembers his great song. I think he lives in Henderson, Texas. Thanks for a great *Country Music Magazine*.

Alice Herzog
Austin, Texas

Gunsmoke in Connecticut?

I would like to introduce a four-piece country band from Connecticut called Gunsmoke. Considering they are a local band, and haven't had the exposure of touring nationwide as of yet, they certainly do rate high in my book! I grew up with country music, spent time in the hills of West Virginia and Kentucky, so I know what good ole country music should sound like. Gunsmoke has shared the stage with the likes of Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings and Sweethearts

of the Rodeo. And, they performed on the same bill as Chet Atkins and Carl Perkins at the Hunter Mountain Country Music Festival in New York—they did a superb job! What I like most about Gunsmoke is the diversity of their music, and their smooth country sound. Their songs range from Bob Wills swing, to Sons of the Pioneers trail songs, to Ray Price shuffles and Alan Jackson's ballads.

Michael Siganos
Greenwich, Connecticut



Gunsmokers Jeff DeMaio, Nick DeMaio, John D'Amato and Gary Tokarz.

Airplay in Australia

As a new subscriber to *Country Music Magazine*, I would like to let you know what a great magazine you have. As a part-time announcer presenting a bluegrass and country music program, I find it an excellent source of information on current and past country artists. As an ordinary reader, I think it is the best country music magazine I have read. It's a pity *Country Music Magazine* is not a monthly publication.

Bill Hazel
Toowoomba, Australia

Poll Problems

I purchase between 30 and 100 albums a year in all formats from 78 rpm to CD's. However, I have never submitted one of the Members Polls because most of my purchases are for the old-time remaindered records. If my favorite purchase was a Bob Wills album from 1965, or a re-release of Marty Robbins, what bearing would that have on your poll? It would not even be considered. Or, what if it was a 78 rpm record from 1928 or 1930?

Another problem. Since most of the newer artists do have their hit records played on the radio, you can get an idea of which ones you might enjoy, but since only the hits are played, you can never be sure what else might be in any album you buy. And I hate to pay the price of a CD for only one or two songs I like.

Jack Palmer
Battle Creek, Michigan

Re poll: Every album listed is counted, bar none.—Ed.

Identify the Musicians!

I am sure that by this time you have received countless letters advising that Ernest Tubb's steel guitar player was Buddy Charleton, and not Charleston, as you and reader Gary Buffalo stated in

Letters, November/December 1991.

I agree 100% with reader Buffalo's suggestion that the background musicians be given more attention in your magazine. A picture and brief profile of a different musician in each issue would do a lot towards making the public aware of the people whose talents have been so instrumental in enhancing the performances of stars.

Hudson Hawk
Monongahela, Pennsylvania
Charleton is correct.—Ed.

Don't Forget Mark Chesnutt

Many thanks for a great magazine. I truly enjoy your articles on Garth and Clint, but aren't you over-looking that boy from Beaumont, Texas? I would love to see an article on Mark Chesnutt in your magazine! Perhaps a cover? I've recently had the extreme pleasure of meeting Mark and he may be a bit bashful, but there is nothing bashful about his singing. This guy knows what a song is and how to deliver it!

Amy Clayton
Covert, Michigan
Stay tuned.—Ed.

Another Chance for Anderson

I am writing in hopes of a future update, on an old favorite, who is on his way back—John Anderson. His new album, *Seminole Wind*, sounds like a winner, with his new single, "Straight Tequila Night." Here's one talented guy who deserves a second chance at stardom.

Tamela Varner
Duncan Falls, Ohio
You stay tuned too.—Ed.



Meanwhile, Anderson and CMM publisher Russ Barnard waiting for a train.

Any Ray Whitley Guitar Fans?

In the November/December issue, you printed a letter about the Ray Whitley guitar. An article I found in a 1975 *Guitar Player Magazine* states that Gibson marketed a Ray Whitley model under

the name "Recording King," through Montgomery Ward. There were two versions of this Recording King Jumbo—a rosewood model and a mahogany one. The more expensive rosewood guitar was almost identical to the Gibson Advanced Jumbo, and its mahogany brother was very close to the Gibson J-35. In each case, the Recording King models sold for about half the price of comparable Gibsons. The Ray Whitley Model Recording Kings brought \$300 and more from collectors back in 1975.

I have a Recording King guitar with the name of Carson J. Robison on the head. I bought this from Montgomery Ward in either 1938 or 1939. This guitar is still in perfect condition.

T.J. Keziah
Charlotte, North Carolina

A Poem for Neal McCoy

He's new, he's hot,
Whatever it takes is what this boy's got!
The first time I saw him, it was love at first sight.
His music! His talent! His Wranglers, so tight!

If you like country music you'll love this country boy.
He's headed to the top, he's Neal McCoy!

I would love to see Neal featured in *Country Music Magazine* soon.

Jennifer Jones
San Antonio, Texas

Who is Clinton Gregory?

The first thing that I would like to know is who is Clinton Gregory? He just made the country charts. I hear him on KEZJ in Twin Falls, Idaho. My mother's maiden name was Gregory, and she had first cousins that were on the Grand Ole Opry. In fact, Hubert Gregory was a musician and band leader for over 40 years. He had two brothers, Aubrey and Leonard Gregory, who once had a band on the Grand Ole Opry. It was called Hubert Gregory and The Rhythm Ramblers. Bill Byrd was his lead guitar player, and Big Howdy Forrester played the violin. As you know, Bill Byrd went with Ernest Tubb and Big Howdy Forrester went with Roy Acuff. The last band that Hubert Gregory was with was named The Fruit Jar Drinkers. Now about Clinton Gregory again, is he from the Gregory clan there in Nashville?

Dixie Marie Callis Woodfin
Buhl, Idaho

Try asking Gregory at Step One Records, 1300 Division Street, Nashville, TN 37203.—Ed.

Love for The Judds

I just wanted to write and express my love and concern for The Judds. I attended their final concert and it was the best ever. I was left with a warm feeling from the love that filled the room. It was

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VOTE

SEE PAGE 58

a very emotional evening, that I won't soon forget! I'll pray every day for Wy and Naomi, as will all their other fans, I'm sure!

The audience was filled with country music's finest, like Reba McEntire, Kathy Mattea and Ricky Skaggs, to name a few! They sat in the audience, with the rest of us fans—not in private reserved seats. I thought that was great!

Eddie Dean Davis
Union, South Carolina

Disheartened with The Judds

I was extremely disheartened to find out that The Judds had elected to promote their commercially profitable parting on Pay-Per-View TV—probably one of the least accessible venues for the majority of their fans. I am one of those fans.

I'm sure what Naomi has gone through has been traumatic, but I felt somewhat betrayed when I found out that my local cable service did not have access to Pay-Per-View. I have seen The Judds four times in person, and always found them to be personable, caring and very aware of what their audience wanted. That is, until now.

Tim Anderson
Grand Coulee, Washington

Not Made in the U.S.A.!

My brother Bryan and I recently had the privilege of seeing The Judds, Billy Dean and Pirates of the Mississippi in concert in Gainesville, Florida. An exceptional performance by all, especially The Judds. Wynonna and Naomi were fantastic!

On the way to our seats, my brother and I each bought a couple of hats at a souvenir stand. When we got home, after closer inspection, we found the hats to be made in Korea and Malaysia! I don't know about you, but I'm a red-blooded American that drives a Ford, listens to country music and eats apple pie. And to buy a souvenir, which I paid a premium price for at a country music concert, and find that it's not made in the good ole U.S. of A.! It makes me irritable.

Albert Turmel
Homosassa, Florida

Tammy in the U.K.

Just had to tell you about the tour that Tammy Wynette has been on here in the U.K. For six weeks Tammy has travelled England, Wales and Scotland, entertaining at sell-out concerts. The only break for her was a five day spell in the hospital suffering from laryngitis. Tammy is a great favorite over here and gains more and more fans each time she appears.

After 25 years, Tammy still reigns supreme as The First Lady of Country Music, and we hope she will be able to sing to us for many more years to come.

Tina and Roy Kerswill
Norfolk, England

Is Randy Being Ignored?

Maybe someone can tell me why Randy Travis has been completely ignored by the CMA? Could it be the asinine rumors about him? If so, it is unjust. Randy is one of the most beautiful people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. He loves his career, music, home life and most of all, the thousands of fans who attend his concerts and buy his recordings. Randy deserved Entertainer of the Year as well as Male Vocalist. He is still doing great concerts and singing superb songs.

Janet Albert
Kingsley, Pennsylvania

On the Mark on Whitley Review

Bob Allen was right on the mark with his review in the November/December issue of *Kentucky Bluebird*, the latest release of Keith Whitley. This is an excellent album. There are several songs which should be big hits. My favorite is "Somebody's Doin' Me Right." Hopefully, that song will be another Number One for the late singer.

Lynn Garrison
Temple, Texas

Off the Mark on Stone

I am writing in regards to the record review of Doug Stone's album, *I Thought It Was You*, in the November/December issue. I found the review to be offensive and wrongly critical. Bob Allen is way off his mark on this album. Bob states how much potential Doug's debut album had. This album has much more potential. Bob knocks down all the songs and says they are no good. He's wrong. Very wrong! "The Feeling Never Goes Away," "Come in Out of the Pain" and "I Thought It Was You" are the best songs on the album. They touch everybody. Bob is the only person in the country music business who thinks this album is bad. I can show you many positive reviews from all the major country music magazines and Nashville newspapers.

Ruth Stuart
Ontario, Canada

More Respect for Garth

This is concerning Patrick Carr's record review of Garth Brooks album, *Ropin' the Wind*, in the November/December issue. All of Mr. Brooks' songs have a special meaning, including the songs on *Ropin' the Wind*. He uses a brilliant way to get his point across on this album, by the use of "extended metaphors." Patrick said that "they're really nothing special." If these songs weren't anything special, would this album have hit platinum already, and made history when it debuted on the *Billboard* charts at Number One? In case you haven't noticed, Garth Brooks is the hottest thing around since Elvis Presley.

Sarah Robinson
Six Mile, South Carolina

Agrees with Brooks Review

I am writing in response to Patrick Carr's review of Garth Brooks' new album, *Ropin' the Wind*, in the November/December issue. I have to agree with the review. When I bought the album, I bought it on the assumption that Garth would continue with the quality work of his previous releases. To say the least, I was very disappointed with the content. Garth has turned into a packaged product with this latest endeavor, a "hat act" in the worst sense, catering to a production style reminiscent of the 1970's "formula recordings." While giving credit where credit is due, songs like "Rodeo" and "Against the Grain" add spice to a product that is otherwise flavorless. The rest of the songs seem to be nothing but fillers, to include the infamous "Shameless." Not at all what I expected. A note to Mr. Brooks: You've got a good thing going Garth, get back to the basics. If you want to go pop, go pop, but don't lead your country fans on.

Edward M. Halpin
Honolulu, Hawaii

Terrific Marty Brown Review

Thanks for the review of Marty Brown's *High and Dry* in the November/December issue. I agree with the review. I liked Marty's songs so well, but couldn't find his album in mid-Michigan. I finally ended up going right to Marty's home town for a copy. It was worth all the phone calls and trouble—the album is terrific! I also agree with your statement regarding the radio stations. I call to request Marty's songs about three times a week and mailed a copy of your review. Nothing has been played on the radio yet. I want everyone else to hear him too!

Sheila VanHoose
Greenville, Michigan

Reba Builds Confidence

I would like to thank Reba for her new song and video, "Is There Life Out There." I'm a single young mother and a first year nursing student. A lot of people tell me I should quit school and get a real job at a local factory, and I was starting to believe them. But thanks to Reba and her new video, I know I can finish school with more confidence. Thanks, Reba!

Laura Lavender
Webster City, Iowa

Reba's Album Extraordinary

I would like to thank you for the record review of Reba McEntire's new album, *For My Broken Heart*, in the January/February issue. Reba is a remarkable singer and actress, and a wonderful person. Just like all of Reba's albums, *For My Broken Heart* is extraordinary. I hope to see more on Reba in the future.

Torry Hansen
Hayfork, California

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Reba McEntire, Alan Jackson and Charlie Daniels are among the stars appearing at the 21st Annual Easter Seals Telethon. Also on board will be Kathy Mattea, Marty Stuart, Travis Tritt, Clint Black, Eddie Rabbitt and Patty Loveless. The program airs March 7th and 8th. The Easter Seal Society is dedicated to helping people with disabilities achieve independence.

Appreciate Reba's Review

In reference to the review of Reba McEntire's album, *For My Broken Heart*, in the January/February issue, it is wonderful to see someone really appreciate what Reba has done. I quickly went out and bought the cassette when it first went on sale. My tears flowed from the very first note and way past the last. This has been a difficult year for me, and this album has touched home.

Barbara Sherrill
Houston, Texas

Kienzle Right on Randy

Rich Kienzle's review of Randy Travis' new album, *High Lonesome*, in the January/February issue was wonderful and right on target. Of course he's right when he says, "In the end, what really matters is Travis' voice and musical maturity." But, the fact that Randy is young and handsome with a great bod is just an added bonus which us female fans enjoy.

Betsy Lassiter
Atlanta, Georgia

Travis—True Country

I would like to say thank you to Rich Kienzle for his record review on Randy Travis' new release, *High Lonesome*, in the January/February issue. It was

straight to the "Point of Light." I am a big Randy Travis fan, and I am proud to say he has not gone to some rockabilly sounds as many of our new stars are trying to do. He stays plain and true country. My favorite on *High Lonesome* is "Have a Little Talk with Jesus." Anyone who can sing with no musical instruments has to be a heck of a singer.

Avon Childers
Houston, Texas

Direct Hit With B.B. Watson

My husband is in the Army, stationed in Panama. We love checking our mail and finding *Country Music Magazine* in our box. In the January/February issue, we read Michael McCall's review of B.B. Watson's album, *Light at the End of the Tunnel*. We went out and bought it, and you are right all the way! Outstanding singer, outstanding album! You hit it right on the nose. It will be one of my favorites for years to come. Can't wait for his next one.

Christi and Tom Britt
Ft. Clayton, Panama

Corrections on Rogers Review

I would like to make a comment on the review by Bob Allen of Roy Rogers' *Tribute* in the January/February issue. Mr. Allen might find it to be informative

if he were to read the notes with the recording. He mentions the song, "That's How the West Was Won," but the title given with the CD ended with "Swung" not "Won." He also writes that he has one complaint—"Why aren't Doug Green and Riders in the Sky on here?" They are and they are mentioned four different times. How reliable are his reviews if he can miss this stuff? I would also like to say that it was nice to see a review in the *CMSA Newsletter* on Chris LeDoux's *Western Underground* album.

James Eggener

West Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Bob Allen regrets these errors and so do we. Your information is correct.—Ed.

Wowed by Wariner

Reading the record review on Steve Wariner's album, *I Am Ready*, in the January/February issue, makes me recall the March/April 1990 review on Vince Gill's album. The reviewer stated that "no one would be able to hum a single line" of any of the songs on Gill's album. I'm sure *he* can't, as he is probably still choking on his words almost two years later. Country music fans don't really pay attention to such opinions.

Steve Wariner doesn't have to stray from his mold. Like Vince Gill, he continues to give us fans the music we love—he just keeps us listening and wanting more.

Shirley Brindle
Chatsworth, Georgia

Dedicating "The Dance"

Among my favorite Garth Brooks' songs, "The Dance" holds a special place in my heart. Like Garth said in the video for the song, if he was ever to leave this world, he hoped they would play "The Dance." Well, my cousin, who was my best friend, had the same desire, and about two months ago a tragic accident took his life and his wish was granted. "The Dance" was played at his funeral, and I would like to dedicate it in memory of Abel Uballe.

Sandra Tamez
Canyon Lake, Texas

More Becky Hobbs, Please

Why haven't we seen any more recordings by Becky Hobbs? She's one of the hottest female singers today, not to mention her talent on the keyboard! My husband and I saw her performance at Billy Bob's in Ft. Worth in October 1989 and thought she was dynamite! My *All Keyed Up* album is about worn out, so please tell me she'll have another release out soon.

Anita Lynn
Wichita Falls, Texas

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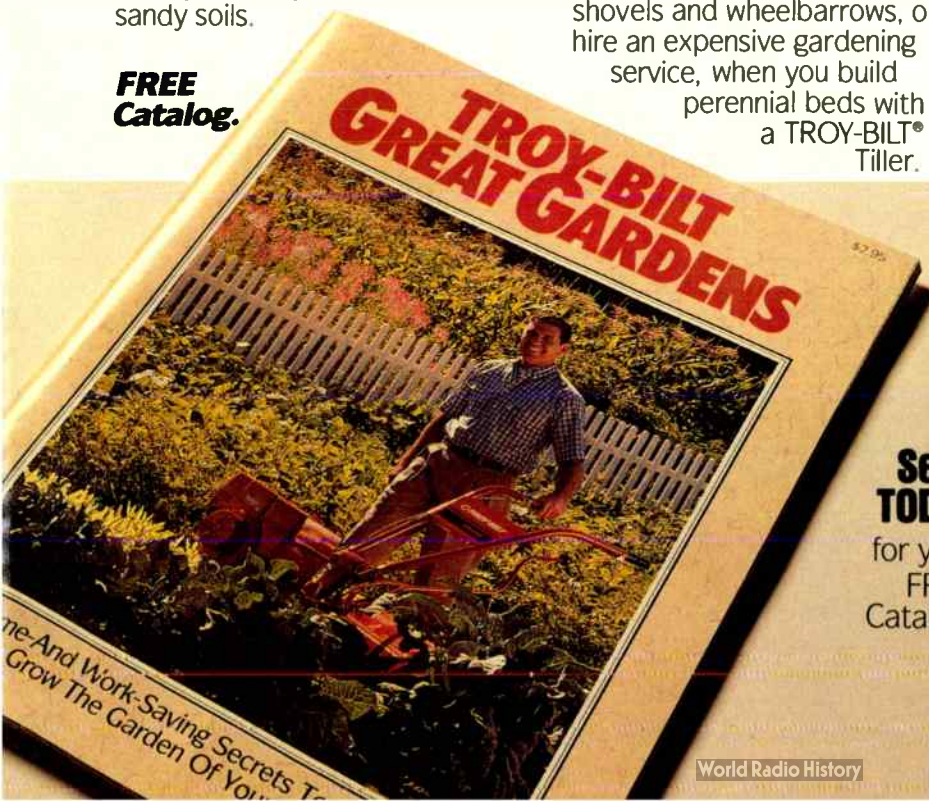
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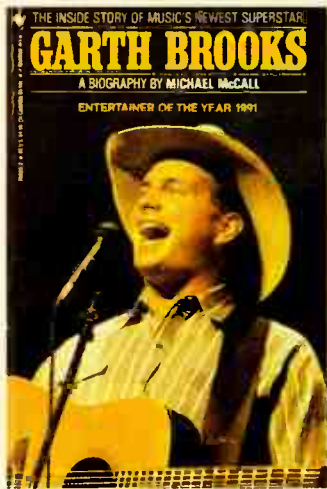
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Essential Collector *by Rich Kienzle*

- Books -

Garth Brooks: It is no surprise that Garth Brooks' massive popularity spawned the inevitable quickie unauthorized paperback biography, hence sometime *Country Music Magazine* contributor Michael McCall's new *Garth Brooks*. Such books appear on any actor or singer who becomes a sudden superstar. Their greatest weakness as a whole is that artists seldom cooperate (either because their managers advise against it or because the artist is too busy). Writers usually receive a cash advance from a publisher and must scrape for their facts, burning plenty of midnight oil, because the publisher wants the book out on the shelves fast. That's the system, and it's little wonder such fast-food type books rarely do the artist or the writer's talents justice.

The writers wind up talking to the artist's classmates or



others who are willing to talk. They draw from previously published interviews, videotapes or whatever. The author's talent notwithstanding, nearly all such books reflect the fact they've been pieced together. Not that McCall hasn't tried. He provides some worthwhile insight into Brooks' rock 'n' roll roots (which have undoubtedly en-

hanced the singer's appeal to pop audiences) and some early photos, though most are straight publicity snaps.

Occasionally, however, the fault is McCall's. In discussing Brooks' crossover success, he mentions past successes of Roger Miller, Johnny Cash and Marty Robbins. Surprisingly, he ignores Willie Nelson, whose *Stardust* album remains one of the most amazing country crossover successes of all time. At times the writing could be better. Sentences like "as a star athlete, (Garth) ran with the in-crowd," are wooden. Fans will love this book, I'm sure, and McCall has done his best with the very formidable limitations of the genre.

DeFord Bailey: A biography of pioneer Grand Ole Opry harmonica player DeFord Bailey has long been needed. DeFord was not the Opry's greatest pioneer, but was its first black member, his superb harmonica adding much to the show until he was fired in 1941. He later ran a Nashville shoeshine stand and, despite repeated offers to record, refused to do so. He did, however, perform occasionally including on some of the Opry old-timers' shows. Through the 70's and early 80's, Bailey told his story to David C. Morton, a graduate student at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Morton knew little or nothing of country music when he met the aging musician, who died in 1982; Charles Wolfe, a professor at Middle Tennessee State University in nearby Murfreesboro, who worked with Morton on the book, knows a lot.

Bailey grew up in rural Middle Tennessee, outside Nashville, and his harmonica instrumental of "Pan American Blues" was the first music played when George D. Hay introduced the first actual Opry broadcast in 1927. Over the next 16 years he worked with the Opry's greatest per-

formers, from Uncle Dave Macon and The Delmore Brothers to Roy Acuff and Bill Monroe. He was also among the first recording artists to record in Nashville in 1928. His remembrances of stardom, including touring with Opry shows in the rural South through bad roads and bad weather, are rich and loaded with sometimes hilarious detail.

Bailey was let go in the early 1940's, a situation long attributed to both a refusal to learn new tunes on his part and racism on the part of management. The racism theory was reinforced by patronizing remarks made about DeFord by George D. Hay in his 1946 Opry memoir. The truth's not so simple. Bailey had a limited repertoire, in part because he knew what songs he played best, in part because Opry management insisted he stick to his best-known tunes. In addition, a dispute between the song licensing organizations, BMI and ASCAP, led to a nationwide radio boycott of all ASCAP songs (in those days most radio shows featured live music). Since some of Bailey's strongest songs were ASCAP numbers, that circumstance surely hurt.

While Morton had the knowledge of Bailey's career, Charles Wolfe's organizational fingerprints are all over the book, including added information about harmonicas and the folk music revival. Morton's hero worship of Bailey detracts from the narrative, making Bailey seem a saint instead of a simple, decent man. Morton's amateurishness can be seen in ponderous photo credits ("Photo Given to Morton By Bailey to use in Biography") that shouldn't have been allowed to creep in, nor did we need to know the exact length of the cassettes he used to interview Bailey (why not brand names?). Taken as a whole, however, this is an engrossing memoir

of the Opry's early days, from someone who literally was there from the start.

Gibson Super 400: Tom Van Hoose's book, *The Gibson Super 400*, discusses the history of an instrument that for years was Gibson's fanciest acoustic archtop guitar. To fans of country music, it may not seem on a par with better-known flat top country guitars like the Gibson J-200 and the Martin D-28 and D-45. Introduced in 1934, the fat, lavishly appointed 400 (which origi-



nally sold for \$400) was Gibson's top of the line archtop instrument for many years and was used by jazz and pop guitarists. However, many country pickers also swore by 400's, among them Texas Playboy Eldon Shamblin, Jerry Reed (for a time), Jack Greene, Don Gibson, Merle Travis and Hank Thompson. Hank and his buddy Merle had identical custom 400's—the sole difference being their respective names inlaid on the fretboards. Joe Maphis played a 400 until he got his famous Mosrite doubleneck model.

Van Hoose's detailed history is brightened by reproductions of old Gibson catalog pages and ads along with beautiful, newly-shot color photos of vintage instruments (not all Gibsons). The author takes it right up to the present, when 400's are special models, handcrafted at Gibson's Nashville factory (at

a \$9,000 starting fee). He provides production totals on the 400's and similar Gibson archtops produced and discusses related archtop instruments such as the famous Gibson L-5 (Maybelle Carter used a 1920's L-5 for years) and other worthy competitors. However, Van Hoose's country music knowledge has its limits. He says that Merle Travis "developed" his famous finger picking style on a Super 400, an absurd comment. Merle was learning that style in Kentucky before the first 400 was ever made, and didn't actually start playing a 400 until later in his career.

Chet Atkins Guitar Course: According to Chet Atkins' office, the first Chet Atkins guitar instruction book appeared in 1955, published by Acuff-Rose song publishers. Now, Chet and his longtime associate, guitarist Dr. John Knowles, have come up with an entirely new method, using today's technology. The package, *Get Started on Guitar*, includes an hour-long videotape, a booklet with both musical notation and the visual diagramming of guitar music known as tablature, and an audio cassette. The videotape includes a timer so you can rewind or fast forward to the exact spot you wish to review.

This is a beginner's course, and the two young people in the video with Chet serve as good examples to the at-home student. Together, Chet leads them through simple, basic accompanying chords, single-string leads, changing keys through the use of a capo (a clamp over the guitar's strings), country songs, pop songs and even blues. And from the beginning, Chet makes it *his* course, as if you were studying with him. It is not some generic self-teaching method he put his name on.

That might seem quite enough. However, for experienced pickers or even non-playing Atkins fans, there's an even greater treat. The master's hands are constantly shown in action, up close, playing many of the famous licks he used on his own

records (and on those of other singers). He demonstrates the basics of the picking style he adapted from Merle Travis' playing. And he even performs his famous "Yankee Doodle/Dixie" instrumental. Chet's tips on adding finesse and polish to one's playing would serve an intermediate player well. For those who want to learn Chet's style (no one plays exactly like him), this is a terrific launching pad.

• Cassettes •

Chet Atkins: Later this year, RCA Victor will have an elaborate Chet Atkins collection available on compact disc (it's about time!). Right now there's a 12-song cassette, *Down Home*, (RCA 2450-4-R) which mixes different aspects of Chet's repertoire (including two classic instrumentals), mostly from the 50's and 60's. Chet picks country hits like "Salty Dog" (not "Salty Dog Rag" as listed), Merle Travis' "I Am a Pilgrim," "Steel Guitar Rag," and "I Ain't Gonna Work Tomorrow." A strange rock 'n' roll version of Ted Daffan's "Blue Steel Blues" also appears along with two of his best known numbers, "Trambone," and "Windy and Warm." Several others are pop tunes from bygone decades—"Tuxedo Junction," "Give the World a Smile" and "The Girl Friend of the Whirling Dervish."

The Louvin Brothers: A revival of interest in Ira and Charlie Louvin's music has been building for years. Nothing much is available on CD, but two cassettes of Capitol



The Louvin Brothers



material do exist. Unlike some hits packages that mix a couple of hits with a lot of secondary material, *Greatest Hits* (Capitol 4XL-57222) features all but three of their hits from 1955 to 1962. Numbers include "When I Stop Dreaming," "I Don't Believe You've Met My Baby," "Hoping That You're Hoping," "Cash on the Barrelhead" (which was covered by Gram Parsons), "You're Running Wild," "I Love You Best of All," "Knoxville Girl" and "My Baby's Gone" from 1962, their final hit before Ira's death in 1965.

Thank God for My Christian Home (Gusto GD5-5041X) is a reissue of a 1965 Capitol gospel LP, one of their final albums as a duo before Ira died that year. This 12-track collection includes the title song along with "Now Lord, What Can I Do For You," "I'll Never Die," "The Price of the Bottle," "Oh Lord, My God," "I've Known a Lady," and seven more.

George Jones: In the current George Jones revival, everyone is pointing to his greatest accomplishments in the honky tonk field, which speak for themselves. However, he also made many formidable gospel recordings, music he knew well from his childhood days in the Big Thicket of east Texas.

24 Gospel Greats (Deluxe DLX-7791) brings together 24 songs of George's gospel material from his Musicor recordings of the 60's and early 70's. A few are remakes of gospel tunes he cut earlier for Starday. Among the high points are "Small Time Laboring Man" (a Bob Dylan favorite), a remake of "Taggin' Along," "Cup of Loneliness," "The Good Old Bible," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Flowers for Mama," "If You Believe" and 17 more.

Patsy Cline: Patsy Cline's musical career has finally been done justice in MCA's boxed set, *The Patsy Cline Collection*. But if you want the bare essentials from her Four Star/Coral and Decca periods, *20 Golden Hits* is a respectable mix, though the title actually isn't accurate. Only a handful of the 20 were hits at all, including the famous "Crazy," "Walkin' After Midnight" and "I Fall to Pieces." The rest are lesser known tunes like "Fingerprints," "Got a Lotta Rhythm in My Soul," "Let the Teardrops Fall" and "Stop, Look and Listen." There's nothing earth-shaking here (get the MCA boxed set for that), but if you want a few of the basics, this might well do the trick.

Johnny Cash: *The Many Sides of Johnny Cash* doesn't even begin to cover Cash's 25-odd years with Columbia Records (with only eight songs that would be difficult), but picks up six hits from the 70's and two from the 60's: "Ghost Riders in the Sky" (1979), "Flesh and Blood" (1970), "The Last Gunfighter Ballad" (1977), "One Piece at a Time" (1976), "Ragged Old Flag" (1974), "Look at Them Beans" (1975), "The Ballad of Ira Hayes" (1964) and "Daddy Sang Bass" (1968).

How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Michael McCall, *Garth Brooks* (B8K) \$4.99/David Morton with Charles Wolfe, *DeFord Bailey* (B9A) \$27.95/Tom Van Hoose, *The Gibson Super 400* (B5F) \$49.95/Chet Atkins, *Get Started on Guitar* (B2G) \$69.95. This package includes book, videotape and cassette. **Cassettes:** Chet Atkins, *Down Home* (RCA 2450-4-R) \$9.98/The Louvin Brothers, *Greatest Hits* (Capitol 4XL-57222) \$6.98/The Louvin Brothers, *Thank God for My Christian Home* (GD5-5041X) \$6.98/George Jones, *24 Gospel Greats* (DLX-7791) \$9.98. This item also available on CD (DCD-7791) \$12.98/Patsy Cline, *20 Golden Hits* (DLX 7887) \$9.98. This item also available on CD (DCD-7887) \$12.98/Johnny Cash, *The Many Sides of Johnny Cash* (BT-19845) \$6.98. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 030492EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, TN 37229. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional.

Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Jack Guthrie: In the 17 years since Bear Family Records was founded, I cannot think of a better CD than *Oklahoma Hills* (BCD 15580) by Jack Guthrie. Jack, cousin of the famed folksinger, Woody Guthrie, recorded Woody's song, "Oklahoma Hills," for Capitol in 1944. It became a hit in 1945 while Jack was doing World War II service as an Army Special Services entertainer. After his discharge, he continued recording and had a final hit in 1947 with "Oakie Boogie." A year later he was dead of tuberculosis. This package includes 29 of his 33 Capitol recordings, and all are outstanding, from his good-natured interpretation of Jimmie Rodgers' "When the Cactus Is in Bloom" to "Shame on You," "Ida Red," "San Antonio Rose" and "Dallas Darlin'," backed by Porky Freeman's hot lead guitar and some swinging fiddle.

The sound is phenomenal, although at times worn lacquer discs had to be used to re-record the material for the release (a process known as "mastering"). Badly mastered CD's sound worse than the old 78's, but when done right, as it is here, the results are amazing. Notes by Guthrie family authority Guy Logsdon, based on new research, reveal that at his final Capitol session, Jack was so ill that he had to lie on a cot between takes, much as Jimmie Rodgers did at his final session.

The Farmer Boys: Though The Farmer Boys were little more than a footnote to the Northern California scene that evolved into what we now call the Bakersfield Sound, their Capitol recordings have long been popular among rockabilly and country collectors, particularly in Europe. Now, for the first time, the story of Bobby Adamson and Woody Murray, transplanted Arkansans, unfolds in Bear Family's *Flash, Crash and Thunder* (BCD 15579).



Bakersfield TV show host Cousin Herb Henson helped The Boys—who sounded like a bubblier version of The Louvin Brothers—get a Capitol contract in 1955. Over the next two years they recorded 16 fine numbers, backed by the cream of the Bakersfield pickers, including guitarist Roy Nichols and steel guitarist Norm Hamlet (later two of Merle Haggard's Strangers), and Buck Owens and Tommy Collins, both in supporting roles. Their material ranged from Lulubelle and Scotty's "Charming Betsy" to new songs like "You're a Humdinger" and "Oh, How it Hurts" by Tommy Collins. Forget The Farmer Boys' obscurity: This is a solid collection chronicling an act that deserved more success than it enjoyed.

Les Paul: It's easy to think of Les Paul as a pop guitarist, yet his country roots are substantial. He began his career as a hillbilly singer named "Rhubarb Red" in the 1930's. Country pickers were influenced by his playing, and many (like Charlie Daniels) played Les Paul model Gibson guitars for years. Paul's original solidbody guitar now rests in the Country Music Hall of Fame. Throughout his peak years as a hitmaker, he and his wife, Mary Ford (another former country singer), continued recording country material among the pop tunes. Capitol's *Les Paul: The Legend and the Legacy* (Capitol C2-97654) is an outstanding

boxed set covering all the high points of his career—over 116 songs.

This music transcends category—the pop tunes are enjoyable and at times country-flavored. Among the country tunes are "Steel Guitar Rag," "Cimarron," "I'm Movin' On," "San Antonio Rose," "Tennessee Waltz" and "Chicken Reel." But there's much, much more, including some of Les Paul and Mary Ford's old radio shows that combined comedy and music (all complete here) and old commercials. Disc four includes 34 never-released songs. The booklet, laden with photos, ancient ads and detailed notes, also includes Les' track-by-track discussions of each song. The book is a bit *too* flashy in places, as Capitol ran some text over photos, making it tough to read.

Don Gibson: Some years ago, Bear Family issued several Don Gibson albums that brought together his earliest recordings for Mercury, RCA, Columbia, MGM and the high points of his second, triumphant stint with RCA. Now they've assembled every number he did during those years (a total of 123 songs) on the four-CD box, *Don Gibson, The Singer-The Songwriter: 1949-1960* (BCD 15475).

Starting with four 1949 songs he recorded as part of a hometown North Carolina quartet called The Sons of the Soil, it's possible to trace his development as both singer and songwriter. He became a

solo artist for RCA in 1950-1951, and though his voice was improving, he didn't fit into the Hank Williams mold which was in vogue at the time. The dozen Columbia recordings, done from 1952 to 1954, were excellent vocal showpieces for him (though at times he made the mistake of imitating Hank) but still went nowhere.

The first glimmers of success came when he took his song "Sweet Dreams" into the Top Ten in 1955, though the music still didn't fit his singing. Faron Young's massive hit with "Sweet Dreams" established Gibson's credibility as a writer. Chet Atkins resigned him to RCA in 1957, cut one unsuccessful straight country session, then for the next date, dropped the fiddles and steel. The result was "Blue Blue Day" and the creation of the Don Gibson "sound" that fit his singing style perfectly. "Oh, Lonesome Me" and "I Can't Stop Loving You" (Gibson wrote both songs in one afternoon) followed.

Like Jim Reeves, Don was one artist enhanced by the "Nashville Sound," a fact proven by his other hits, "Look Who's Blue," "Give Myself a Party" and "Who Cares." These are all here, as is his entire gospel album, *No One Stands Alone*. The set ends with a September 12, 1960, session that yielded his second hit version of "Sweet Dreams." The booklet included is Charles Wolfe's previously-published *A Legend in His Own Time*, with a complete Gibson discography.

Sara and Maybelle Carter: By the mid-60's, Sara and Maybelle Carter had long since taken separate paths following their days with Sara's late ex-husband, A.P. Carter, as the legendary Carter Family. Maybelle kept performing with her daughters as part of Johnny Cash's traveling show, while Sara moved to Califor-

nia, and though she still played, she rarely performed. In 1965, Maybelle recorded *Mother Maybelle Carter: A Living Legend* for Columbia with a small group of Nashville pickers. The album blended traditional Carter tunes with more contemporary numbers; vintage A.P. Carter compositions like "Let's Be Lovers Again" co-existed with "San Antonio Rose" and Johnny Cash's "We'll Miss You, Joe."

Shortly thereafter, June Carter and Johnny Cash recruited their producer, Don Law, to produce a new Sara and Maybelle album. The result was *An Historic Reunion*, cut in 1966 with only Maybelle, Sara (playing an instrument known as the guitaro) and A.P.'s son Joe (recreating his father's vocal parts) on the record. The dozen numbers mix a few Carter favorites such as "Farther On," "Lonesome Pine Special" and "Happiest Days of All" with ancient songs they knew but had never recorded. Among them are "Goin' Home" and "Higher Ground." "No More Good-byes," recorded but not released on the original album, has only been issued once previously, on Time-Life's out of print 1982 Carter Family collection. Both albums appear on Bear Family's single CD, *Sara and Maybelle Carter* (BCD 15471).

Johnny Cash's original notes to *Historic Reunion* are preserved with new notes by Charles Wolfe which contain detailed information on the origins of each song.

The Stanley Brothers: Singer-banjoist Ralph Stanley and his singer-guitarist brother Carter were among the first bluegrass acts to come along after Bill Monroe in the late 40's. After recording for the small Rich-R-Tone label, they signed with Columbia (which so upset Monroe, that when his own Columbia contract expired in 1950, he signed with Decca). *The Stanley Brothers and The Clinch Mountain Boys: 1949-1952* (Bear Family BCD 15584) brings together all 24

of The Stanleys' Columbia recordings (including two alternate takes). Taken together, the songs show how the brothers built a musical identity distinct from Monroe's.

One factor aiding them in this endeavor were Carter's skills as a composer. He wrote or co-wrote songs with rural themes (18 of the 22 numbers here are his), among them "The Fields Have Turned Brown" and "Man of Constant Sorrow," which are bluegrass standards today. With mandolinist Pee Wee Lambert and fiddlers Bobby Sumner and Les Woodie, they also created a sound with a vocal trio far different from Monroe's. Instead of lead, tenor and baritone vocals, The Stanleys used "high" baritone, which created a truly haunting sound unlike any other.

The never-issued alternate takes are of two of their classics: "The Fields Have Turned Brown" and "Little Glass of Wine." Stanley expert Gary Reid's notes, based on interviews with Ralph Carter (who died in 1966) and Les Woodie, are enlightening. Given The Stanleys' massive influence on both Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley (both worked together with Ralph in the 70's), having all these sides in one place is a revelation. There's plenty more from King Records that could be reissued as well.

George Jones: Mercury's 20-track *The Best of George Jones Volume 1: Hardcore Honky Tonk* (Mercury 848-978-A) duplicates a few tracks from the

previously-reviewed Rhino collection, but most of it, recorded for Starday or Mercury, delves into his mid- to late 50's material in far more detail, picking up not only hits, but other outstanding numbers that weren't hits at all.

In addition to hits such as "Why Baby Why," "Just One More," "Color of the Blues" and "Window Up Above," the disc includes many long-unavailable performances well-known to hardcore Jones fans. These include "You're Still on My Mind," the same song that Gram Parsons covered on The Byrds' *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album. Among the rare gems are "Relief Is Just a Swallow Away" (based on a 1950's Alka-Seltzer TV commercial, though George isn't singing about Alka-Seltzer). I do wish that rhythm and blues musician/scholar Ben Sandmel's liner notes showed more expertise regarding Jones. He keeps invoking rhythm and blues and jazz analogies that just don't fit.

Best of Bluegrass: Mercury and MGM Records both did very significant amounts of bluegrass recording in the 40's and 50's. Some of those high points are contained in *The Best of Bluegrass Volume 1* (Mercury 848-979).

Flatt and Scruggs, who made their first recordings for Mercury not long after leaving Bill Monroe, are represented here with "Pike County Breakdown," their original version of "Salty Dog" titled "Old Salty Dog Blues," "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms,"

"Cora is Gone" and the original "Foggy Mountain Breakdown." The Stanley Brothers' 1950's sides feature the Carter Stanley compositions, "I Long to See the Old Folks," "Our Last Goodbye," "Who Will Call You Sweetheart" (written with Bill Monroe) and "Angel Band." The Osborne Brothers' MGM sides with Red Allen include Charlie Monroe's "Down in the Willow Garden" and "My Aching Heart," along with "Ruby Are You Mad," the song they later made a country standard. The original Arthur ("Guitar Boogie") Smith and Don Reno recording of "Feudin' Banjos" (better known as "Dueling Banjos" in the film *Deliverance*), reveals why Smith easily convinced a court that the film's producers used the song without proper credit.

Gary Stewart: I annotated the Gary Stewart package, *Gary's Greatest* (Hightone 8030), so just the facts. RCA has never done a CD package of Stewart's best recordings from the 70's and 80's. Hightone, the Oakland, California, blues label that releases Gary's new recordings (produced by his old RCA producer, Roy Dea), has leased the RCA material for their own set.

The 17 songs here (including three from Hightone) cover everything from his first recording, a cover of The Allman Brothers' rock hit "Ramblin' Man," through his first big country hits, "Drinkin' Thing" (1974) and "She's Actin' Single (I'm Drinkin' Doubles)" (1975), and later hits like "An Empty Glass," "Quits" and the searing rocker, "Little Junior," which to many of his longtime fans is now Gary's theme song. In doing the notes I was fortunate enough to get Roy Dea's remembrances. He colorfully recalled his and Gary's mid-70's battles against the RCA executives who held to the Nashville formulas that dominated things in those days. Back then they tried to put all their artists into pigeon-holes—something that failed with Gary.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Jack Guthrie, *Oklahoma Hills* (BCD 15580) CD only, \$27.95/The Farmer Boys, *Flash, Crash and Thunder* (BCD 15579) CD only \$27.95/Les Paul, *The Legend and the Legacy* (C2-97654) 4-CD boxed set \$129.95/Don Gibson, *The Singer, The Songwriter* (BCD 15475) 4-CD boxed set \$99.95/Sara and Maybelle Carter (BCD 15471) CD only \$27.95/The Stanley Brothers and *The Clinch Mountain Boys* (BCD 15584) CD only \$27.95/George Jones, *The Best of George Jones Volume 1: Hardcore Honky Tonk* (Mercury 848-978-A) CD only \$21.95/*The Best of Bluegrass Volume 1* (Mercury 848-979) cassette \$12.95, CD \$21.95/Gary Stewart, *Gary's Greatest* (Hightone 8030) cassette \$11.95, CD \$19.95.

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TOP 25

Singles

1. Doug Stone *A Jukebox With a Country Song*
2. Tracy Lawrence *Sticks and Stones*
3. Sawyer Brown *The Dirt Road*
4. Ronnie Milsap *Turn That Radio On*
5. Travis Tritt with Marty Stuart *The Whiskey Ain't Workin'*
6. Collin Raye *Love, Me*
7. Sammy Kershaw *Cadillac Style*
8. Randy Travis *Better Class of Losers*
9. Garth Brooks *What's She Doing Now*
10. Tanya Tucker *(Without You) What Do I Do With Me*
11. Pam Tillis *Maybe It Was Memphis*
12. Mark Chesnutt *Broken Promise Land*
13. Hal Ketchum *I Know Where Love Lives*
14. Diamond Rio *Mama Don't Forget to Pray for Me*
15. Ricky Van Shelton *After the Lights Go Out*
16. Lorrie Morgan *Except for Monday*
17. Joe Diffie *Is It Cold in Here*
18. Trisha Yearwood *That's What I Like About You*
19. John Anderson *Straight Tequila Night*
20. Steve Wariner *Leave Him Out of This*
21. Kenny Rogers *If You Want to Find Love*
22. Brooks & Dunn *My Next Broken Heart*
23. Restless Heart *You Can Depend on Me*
24. Mike Reid *I'll Stop Loving You*
25. Alan Jackson *Dallas*

Albums

1. Garth Brooks *Ropin' the Wind*
2. Garth Brooks *No Fences*
3. Garth Brooks *Garth Brooks*
4. Reba McEntire *For My Broken Heart*
5. Travis Tritt *It's All About to Change*
6. Vince Gill *Pocket Full of Gold*
7. George Strait *Ten Strait Hits*
8. Collin Raye *All I Can Be*
9. Alan Jackson *Don't Roock the Jukebox*
10. Trisha Yearwood *Trisha Yearwood*
11. Tanya Tucker *What Do I Do With Me*
12. The Judds *Greatest Hits, Volume 2*
13. Ricky Van Shelton *Backroads*
14. Tracy Lawrence *Sticks and Stones*
15. Alabama *Greatest Hits, Volume 2*
16. Clint Black *Put Yourself in My Shoes*
17. Randy Travis *High Lonesome*
18. Doug Stone *I Thought it Was You*
19. Reba McEntire *Rumor Has It*
20. Lorrie Morgan *Something in Red*
21. Diamond Rio *Diamond Rio*
22. Sawyer Brown *Dirt Road*
23. Pam Tillis *Put Yourself in My Place*
24. Dolly Parton *Eagle When She Flies*
25. The Judds *Greatest Hits*

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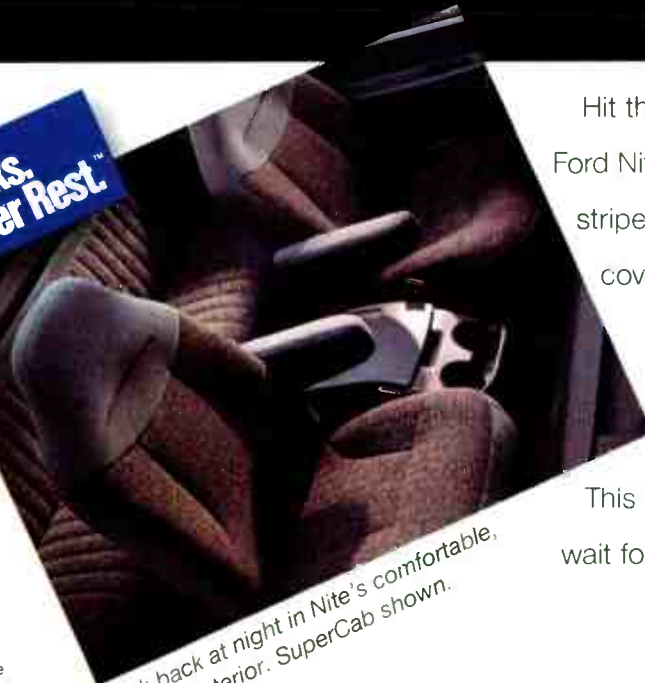
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