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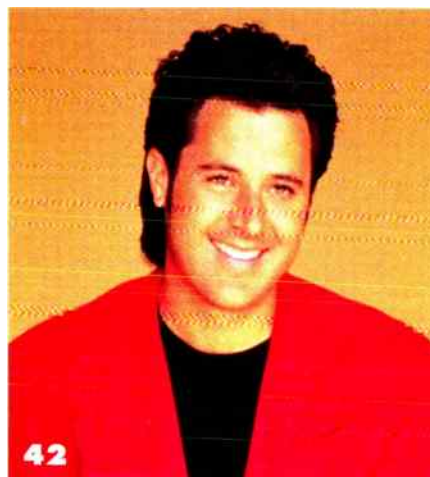
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COUNTRY MUSIC

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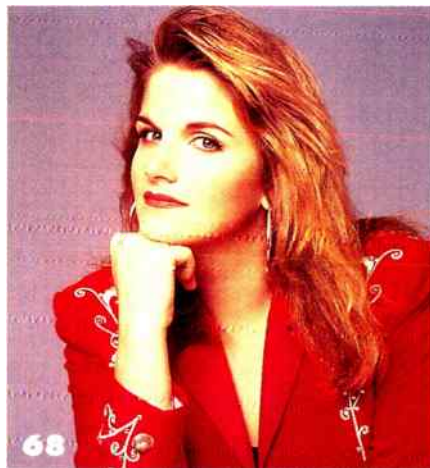
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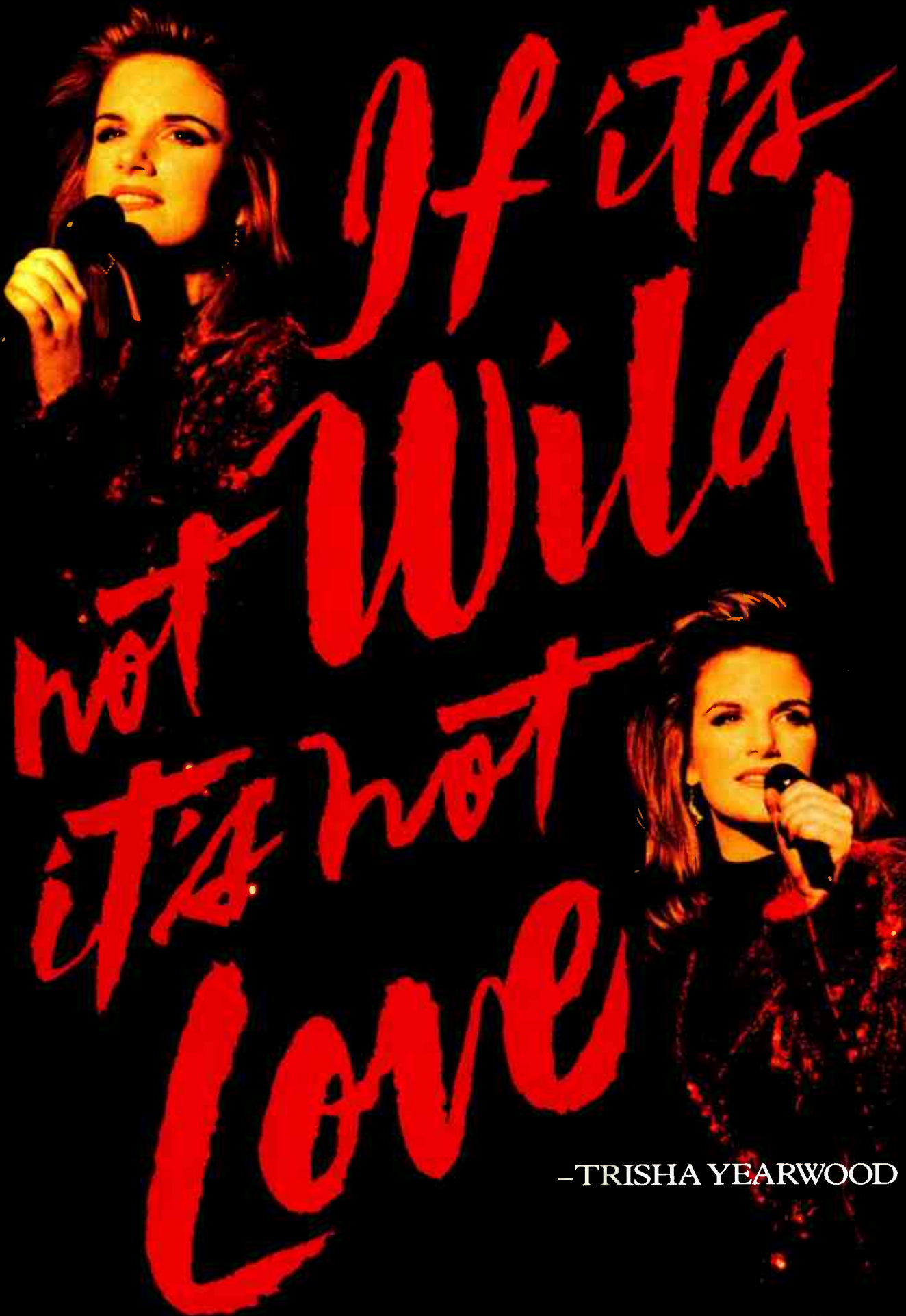
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RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS

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People

SHANIA'S LATEST



Hollywood bad boy Sean Penn (right) served as director for the second video from Mercury's Shania Twain (center), "Dance with The One That Brought You." Veteran character actor Charles Durning (left) stars in the clip, which was filmed in Los Angeles. The single is the follow-up to her debut, "What Made You Say That."

lars. The reason the company was so valuable was Bobby Braddock, Harlan Howard, Curly Putman, Hank Cochran, Don Cook, Roger Miller, Willie Nelson, Dave Kirby, Red Lane, Sonny Throckmorton and Glenn Martin....all songwriters who wrote for Tree. These songwriters were barely mentioned on the pages of Killen's book. The man who started Tree, **Jack Stapp**, was pictured by his former employee Killen as being a troubled man with addictions. I never knew Jack Stapp, but I know other people who worked for him, and they all loved the man. They are quite upset over the negativity Killen has poured out about him in the pages of his book. I've talked with a bunch of former and current Tree people, and they all agreed Jack Stapp was a great man and a great boss, as well as being a pioneer music publisher/radioman/businessman and the man who gave Buddy Killen his start in the music business as a song plugger. The same people do say that Buddy Killen was a great song plugger too, however.

GREGG IS MOTIVATING

Ricky Lynn Gregg, long-haired Texan with a great song, "If I Had a Cheating Heart," had the 18,000 fans cheering at the Riverbend Festival in Chattanooga. Like Liberty labelmate **Garth Brooks** and an-

other long-haired country boy, **Billy Ray Cyrus**, "RLG" danced in the streets and autographed for the fans till 2 A.M.

HAZEL JUDGES LYLE

Since **Lyle Lovett's** latest CD is titled *Joshua Judges Ruth*, I figured you fans would dig that I titled this piece thusly. Lyle is obviously a wonderfully talented, cynical human being. I never pictured him as one to be smitten by Hollywood or a Hollywood starlet. Even with his hair, I thought him low-key. Wrong I must be, especially since he's wed the darling of the tabloids, **Julia Roberts**. Even though it's an odd pairing, I do wish the couple the very best.

THE VALENTINO OF COUNTRY MUSIC IS LAID TO REST

Women worshipped **Conway Twitty** in the same fashion that they did **Rudolph Valentino**. To these women, it was more than being a fan. Conway was an idol, a hero and the sex symbol who growled those sexy nothings on those phonograph records to all the lonely women who loved country music. I'd wager that 90% of the females 45 and up who are fans of country music wept when they got the news that Conway Twitty had died. "Hello Darlin'" uttered from the lips of Conway in con-

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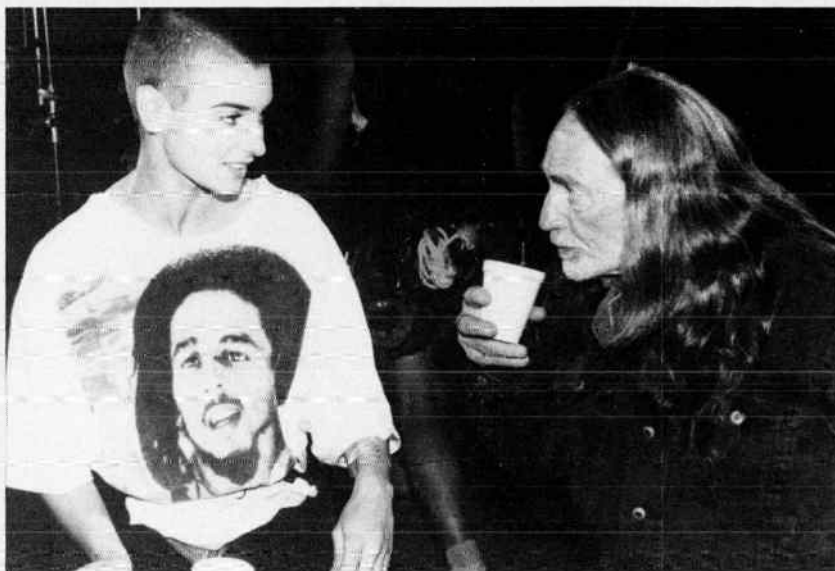
People

cert would send a frenzy over 9/10ths of the women in attendance. Conway would smile with a tinge of embarrassment as these females screamed unashamedly night after night. Yep, if there ever was a loved star, it was the Valentino of country, the great Conway Twitty. Did I cry? You betcha I did. Sometimes now tears still come to my eyes. But you know what, Conway was such a decent person, and he did so much good and gave so much of himself to his fans, I suppose God just wanted him to take a break. Heaven's gain is Music Row's loss. From the women who are fans of country music and myself, I'd like to thank the four Twitty kids for sharing their caring father with us.

NUMBER ONE FUN AT ASCAP

When **Connie Bradley** took off to Los Angeles to the CMA Board meeting and left **Shelby Kennedy**, **Pat Rolfe** and **Eve Vaupel** in charge, the fun began. First off, they did a do honoring **Carl Jackson** and **Vince Gill** for writing the Number One song, "No Future in This Past," and they had MCA Prez **Tony (wow) Brown**, MCA's **John Day** and a bevy of cool folks up on the third floor, where the handsome Vince held court with all us young and lovely ladies. The next day, the self-same party-hosting trio—Kennedy, Rolfe and Vaupel—hosted another Number One do; this time for "That Summer" written by **Garth** and **Sandy Brooks** and **Pat Alger**.

NO BORDERS HERE



Duet partners, Ireland's own **Sinéad O'Connor** and Texas' **Willie Nelson**, at work on the video for their single, "Don't Give Up." The tune's included on Willie's latest album, *Across the Borderline*. Album producer **Don Was** suggested the pairing.

Slim Garth and svelte **Sandy**, dressed in their black (his) and white (hers) cowboy hats, were just too cool. Garth is definitely thinner than I've ever seen his anatomy, and **Sandy** was Hollywood-in-Musictown in black jeans, white silk shirt and boots. Record producer **Allen**

Reynolds was present for the do as were songwriters **Sandy Mason** and **Kent Blazy**. I bet the next time **Connie** leaves town she takes the party key with her, 'cause **Shelby**, **Pat** and **Eve** do know how to have a good time and to show the friends and neighbors a good time.

THIS TIME IT'S GOLD FOR YOAKAM



Celebrating Gold sales of his current album, *This Time*, during a tour stop in **Merrillville, Indiana**, are **Dwight Yoakam** and reps from his label, **Warner/Reprise**, along with Yoakam's producer, **Pete Anderson** (third from left, in rear).

NUMBER ONE FOR TOBY

I can't say "Sfuzzi," much less spell it. But I went to the Italian eatery. Wouldn't have missed it for the world. **Pal Toby Keith's** Number One party for his debut single, "Should've Been a Cowboy," was a Western blast, what with all the Mercury staff dressed in vintage outfits. Wish you could have seen label Prez **Luke Lewis** in a cowboy hat and Senior VP **Harold Shedd** in a bad guy hat...best of all, all those beautiful gals who work their fingers to the bone were dressed like **Miss Kitty** from *Gunsmoke*, with low-cut, tight gowns resembling "ladies of the evening." Just a too cool do for a real cool **Toby Keith**. Congrats, **Toby**. See ya.

RODRIGUEZ RECORDS

Add another name to the roster of new record label, **Branson Entertainment**. **Johnny Rodriguez** has signed on and is about to release a new album, *Run for the Border*, which will include both greatest hits and new material. It's **Rodriguez's** first album in six years.

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TOYOTA 4x4 XTRA CAB	Available 3.0L V-6 EFI	150 @ 4800 rpm/ 180 @ 3400 rpm	Max - 5500 lbs	72.5 cu ft/41.2 cu ft	No driver's airbag No 4-wheel ABS	3/36 Bumper-to-Bumper & 5/60 Powertrain
FORD RANGER 4x4 SUPERCAB	Available 4.0L V-6 MPI	160 @ 4000 rpm/ 225 @ 2500 rpm	Max - 5600 lbs	75.0 cu ft/53.3 cu ft	No driver's airbag No 4-wheel ABS	3/36 Bumper-to-Bumper
CHEVY S-10 4x4 MAXI CAB	Available 4.3L V-6 CPI	195 @ 4500 rpm/ 260 @ 3600 rpm	Max - 5500 lbs	74.0 cu ft/59.9 cu ft	No driver's airbag Avail. 4-wheel ABS	3/36 Bumper-to-Bumper

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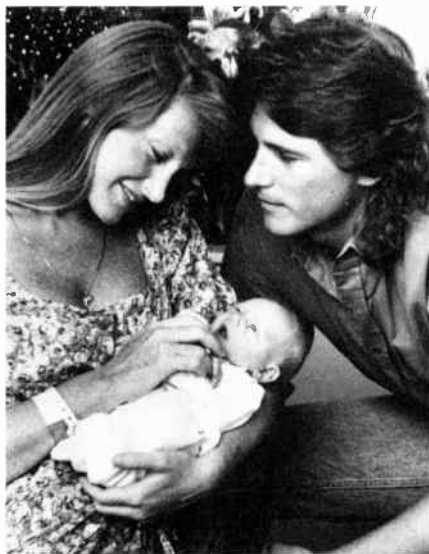
A western, set in the 1870's, titled *Ieska*, starring **Francesco Quinn** (son of legendary **Anthony**), **Jason Connery** (son of legendary **Sean**) and **Tahnee Welch** (daughter of legendary **Raquel**), is in the making in Nashville. **Cecil Scaife** (father of the almost legendary **Joe Scaife**, who, with the almost legendary **Jim Cotton**, produces **Billy Ray Cyrus**) was instrumental in bringing the flick home to Music City. Cecil, a man of vision, has always wanted to see movies made where the music is. The actual filming schedule remains up in the air, as does my list of possible suitors.

BABY DEAN

You might sell out the Meadowlands in Jersey seven nights running, but you won't ever get the thrill that **Billy Dean** is getting right now with his firstborn, **William Eli Dean**, in the arms of mama, **Cathy**, who is a real beauty, too. Congratulations, mama and daddy. Now you know what your parents went through for you.

OKAY OKIE

Can you believe it! She's just a little red-haired cowgal that God blessed with a powerful set of lungs, but Ms. **Reba**



Cathy and Billy Dean with firstborn, William Eli Dean.

McEntire has done grossed \$8.1 million dollars in concerts from January till June, 1993. And she took off a good portion of May and June to act in the movie, *North*, which filmed in New York City. Not a bad half a year for an okay Okie, I'd say. Other Nashville acts who fared well on the concert trail, according to *Pollstar*, were **Jimmy Buffett**, who ain't country but is good, **Alan Jackson**, contemporary Christian artist **Michael W. Smith**, **Sawyer Brown**, the **Travis Tritt/Trisha**

Yearwood tour, **Alabama**, the **Clint Black/Wynonna** pairing and **Billy Ray Cyrus**. Just for the record, without hitting a beat or humming a note or leaving town, **Garth Brooks** has sold \$10 million dollars in advance tickets for his current tour. Another okay Okie, says **Hazel**.

TRISHA DO

Balloons, games, burgers, chips, franks and Yearwood herself marked **Trisha Yearwood's** platinum celebration for her MCA disc, *Hearts in Armor*. The do, held at Fountain Square, brought out all the MCA crew: **Tony** (wow) **Brown**, **Bruce Hinton**, **Walt Wilson**, **Scott Borchetta**, **Katie Gillon**, **Jim Kemp**, **Janet Rickman**, **Shelia Shipley**, that good-looking **John Day**, and all the rest, as well as Trisha's record producer, **Garth Fundis**.

CATCH A RISING STAR

Besides the established guest stars who appear regularly at Dollywood, the park has a new feature called "Sunset Musicfest" which showcases both stars and up-and-comers. Some stars and stars-to-be who entertained in July were **The Remingtons**, **Boy Howdy**, **Alison Krauss**, **Tracy Byrd**, **John Berry**, **Shania Twain**, **Matthews, Wright & King**, **Dixie Chicks**, **Ronna Reeves**, **Riders in the Sky**, **Martina McBride**, **Skip Ewing**, **Ricky Lynn Gregg** and **Andy Childs**. Cheers to the luscious **Dolly Parton** and her staff for supporting acts who have made a splash but haven't reached superstardom. Dollywood is a great venue to add to anyone's list.

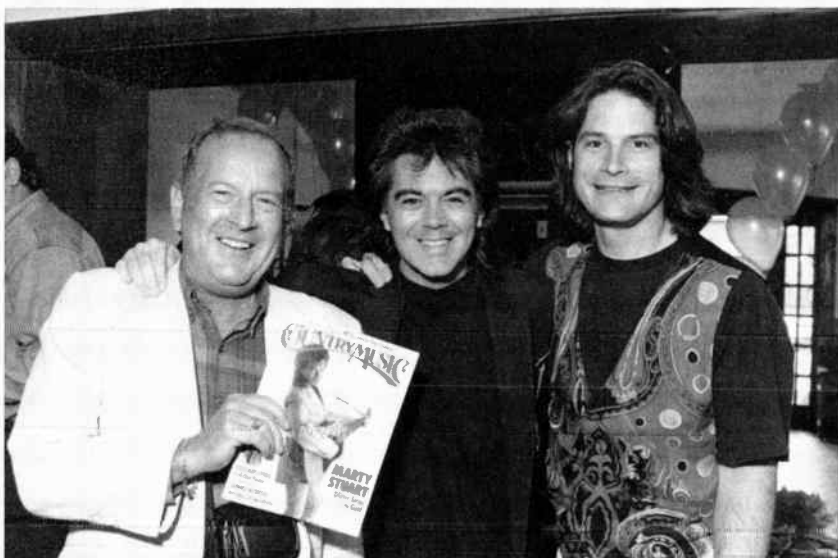
BELLAMYS LATEST

On their very own record label and the top independent act on the planet, **The Bellamy Brothers** are set with a new record titled *Rip Off the Knob*. 'Course, with the first class Bellamys there's always a single with a video in the works.

MCA'S LOSS IS LIBERTY'S GAIN

One of the best-loved and most talented people on Music Row has changed jobs. **Renee Bell**, formerly A&R Director for MCA Records, has been hired as Vice President A&R Liberty Records. Renee's knack for knowing a hit song or a hit act is legendary, and her friendly manner makes her one of the most loved people around. Here's wishing her all the very best at her new position, and I must thank Mr. **Jimmy Bowen** for making another deserving female a vice president.

MARTY PARTY ANIMALS



Country Music's ad man, Leonard Mendelson, joined fellow party animals Marty Stuart and MCA Records Advertising Director, Steven McCord, for the Gold celebration of Marty's current MCA album, *This One's Gonna Hurt You*.

*"I listen to all kinds
of music, so I can
usually help people
with what they're
looking for."*

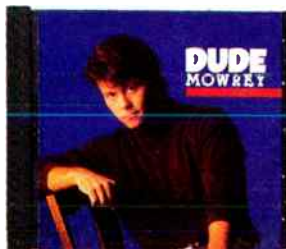
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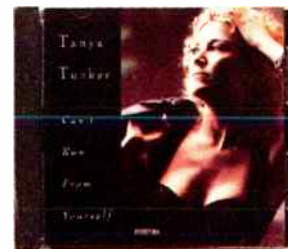
Radney Foster
"Del Rio, TX 1959"
Arista



Dude Mourey
"Dude Mourey"
Arista



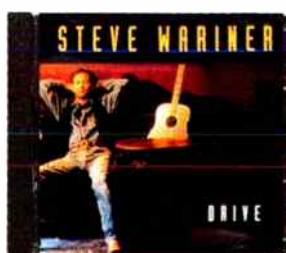
Dolly Parton
"Slow Dancing With The Moon"
Columbia



Tanya Tucker
"Can't Run From Yourself"
Liberty Records



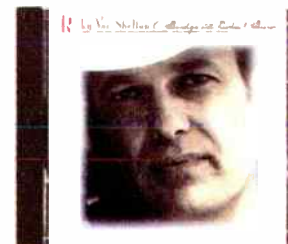
Gibson/Miller Band
"Where There's Smoke"
Epic Records



Steve Wariner
"Drive"
Arista



Chris LeDoux
"Under This Old Hat"
Liberty Records



Ricky Van Shelton
"A Bridge I Didn't Burn"
Columbia



Joe Diffie
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Patty Loveless
"Only What I Feel"
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Taking Renee's place at MCA is **Larry Willoughby**, who recently headed up the pop department at ASCAP. In naming Renee, Bowen also upped two longtime associates: **Bill Catino** was named Senior Vice President of National Promotions and **Sam Cerami** was named Vice President of National Promotions. Congratulations to Renee, Larry, Bill and Sam.

BROOKS BREAKS RECORDS

The **Garth Brooks** 195,000-ticket sell-out at Texas Stadium in Dallas-Ft. Worth is the single biggest event ever in the history of country music. The three-night event is September 23rd, 24th and 25th. I'll be happiest when Garth sells more than **Michael Jackson** myself.

HILLBILLY ALTAR CALL AT THE OPRY

When I saw **Sammy Kershaw** backstage at the Opry, I was surprised because he wasn't scheduled to appear that night. According to Sammy, he was appearing at the GEO Theater at Opryland when he received a call saying that **Joy White**, who had been set to perform, was ill, and the powers that be wanted him to take her place. Sam agreed.

The audience didn't know Sammy was there until it was announced. The band went right into Sammy's Number One hit, "She Don't Know She's Beautiful,"



Aaron Tippin shared the magic of music with some special children.

and the energy started to happen. The aisles filled with females with cameras who rushed to the front of the Opry stage. As many as could stand were packed in there, staring at Sammy, who was singing like the superstar he is becoming, throwing kisses to those ladies who don't even suspect they are, in fact,

beautiful, waving, bonding, communicating with the fans all the way in the last row of the balcony. It was so electric. Had the crowd in the palm of his hands, that boy did. The audience just roared. And that, my friends, is a Hillbilly Altar Call at the Grand Ole Opry. I was there so I could tell you about it.

ONE COOL PHOTO



At one time or another everybody who is anybody will come to Music City. Look at this wonderful photo of the famed. At MCA's Fan Fair party are, left to right: **Walt Wilson**, Sr. VP Marketing/MCA Nashville; **Marty Stuart**; **Mark Collie**; baseball great **Mickey Mantle**; baseball fan **Bill Monroe**; **Mark Chesnutt** and MCA/Nashville Prez **Tony (wow) Brown**. If there are photos floating around cooler than this, they're those taken with Polaroids in private.

CHECK OUT "THE MAGIC OF MUSIC"

The Magic of Music is an organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of terminally ill children. Here is **Aaron Tippin** with some of these very special people. Thanks to Aaron, the Family Channel blimp and RCA Records for giving these children something to smile about. And a special thanks to The Magic of Music. I sure appreciate **Greg McCarn** at RCA for making us aware of this.

THE EVERLYS EMPLOY

Some 500 new jobs have been created for the homefolks in Central City, Kentucky, thanks to their most famous sons, **Don** and **Phil Everly**. Flynn Enterprises has opened a clothing manufacturing plant, there's two new hotels that are filled to capacity every night and there's even a new state prison bringing in jobs. The publicity generated by The Everlys' annual benefit has put the area "on the map." That's about the most American thing I've heard about in quite a spell. All of you stars take heed: Go home and do an annual benefit and put your family to

People

work. You know, that's what **Dolly** did at East Tennessee at Dollywood....the whole Parton clan is employed there. Back to The Everlys...this year's guests included **Tammy Wynette**, **Bo Diddley**, **Clinton Gregory** and songwriter **Alan Rhody**.

WHEN FEET ARE STILLED

After 35 years dancing on the stage, Grand Ole Opry members **The Stony Mountain Cloggers** are hanging up the taps on their square-dancing shoes. When **Ben Smathers** died three years ago, his wife **Margaret** decided to carry on the tradition, which she has done beautifully, along with her children, **Candy**, **Debbie** and **Hal**. I know you recall Ben's ashes were strewn across those Carolina hills that he loved so well (Margaret loved them too). Margaret made more and more trips "home" to heaven on earth, Hendersonville, North Carolina, where the mountains are tall, the pace slow and God close. She rekindled a friendship with her best friend from high school and is happy as a lark in a Carolina pine. Tennessee's loss is Carolina's gain.

ALISON THE 71ST

The Grand Ole Opry's brand-spanking-new 71st member is old enough to vote. She's 21-year-old bluegrass phenomenon, **Alison Krauss**. The Champaign, Illinois,

native started taking classical violin lessons at five (which proves that sometimes lessons don't hurt), turned to bluegrass at eight (smart girl) and began winning fiddling championships at 12. National attention focused on Alison vocally and musically with CMT and TNN programming her video, "I've Got That Old Feeling." Her angelic vocals, coupled with awesome fiddling, captured the heart of country music fans who previously frowned on bluegrass/acoustic music. Alison scored Grammys for her singles, "I Got That Old Feeling" and "Everytime You Say Goodbye," and attracted Music Row interest from both **Tony (wow) Brown** at MCA Records and **Kyle Lehning** at Asylum Records. As of now, she remains on Rounder Records; however, expect a lot of romance from the major labels when her contract runs out in a couple of years. Meanwhile, Krauss gives **Bill Monroe**, **The Osborne Brothers** and Opry manager **Hal Durham** credit for helping her get inducted into the prestigious Opry. Friend **Garth Brooks** gave Alison's introduction, mentioning that the last bluegrass act to join the Opry was in 1964.

SKEETER'S HUBBY

Opry star **Skeeter Davis** is married to NRBQ bassist **Joey Spampinato**. Rumor has it that Spampinato might very well

THE FIRST LADY AND TWO SUBJECTS



The First Lady of everybody's music, Ms. Tammy Wynette, is flanked by two lovely songbirds, Miss Patty Loveless and Miss Joy White. Country girls. There's nothing better in this world. That's what I always say. All three ladies record for Sony.

IF THIS
IS YOUR
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SMOOTH...



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People

be in the bass spot with the 1994 **Rolling Stones** tour. He is definitely in the running. Skeeter mentioned that her hubby auditioned for the most famous rock band on the planet under the eye of none other than the pouty Mr. **Mick Jagger**. It ain't country, but it would be cool if an Opry member's husband were on the road with The Rolling Stones. After all, it's only music, and Nashville's is as good as any.

LEAN AND SEEN WITH A FAN/PAL

Lean and tanned **Garth Brooks** could be offering pointers to up-and-comer **John Brannen**, who records for Mercury. Brooks and Brannen visited following their appearance on the popular *Crook & Chase* TV show. Garth has an uncanny talent of making those around him feel like somebody, and according to Brannen, Garth made him feel right at home.

DOTTIE WEST MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

The 12-mile stretch of Tennessee State Highway 56 from McMinnville, **Dottie West's** hometown, to the DeKalb County line, henceforth will be called Dottie West Memorial Highway. Dottie never forgot McMinnville. It's good to know that McMinnville hasn't forgotten her. The lady is surely missed.



Garth and new Mercury artist **John Brannen** went tv-ing on TNN.

A DECADE PLUS ONE

For ten years the good people at Marlboro have sponsored country music at its best, and 1993 is no exception to the rule. Starting their 11th year as a corporate sponsor, the Marlboro Music folks turned their attention to the military bases with **John Anderson**, **Lynyrd Skynyrd**, **.38 Special** and others. At the

state fairs in October, look for **Alabama** and **Diamond Rio**, **Brooks & Dunn** with **Pam Tillis** and **Mark Chesnutt** and **Ricky Lynn Gregg**. **Confederate Railroad** joins Chesnutt and Gregg on some dates, while **Tracy Lawrence** joins them on others. We are grateful to the Philip Morris people, parent company of Marlboro, for their belief and support of country music. We thank **Jose R. Fontanez**, manager Marlboro Music, and promoter **Glenn Smith** for helping to get the music to the fans. I'm proud to call you friends.

COLLIN RAYE'S STAND

Collin Raye got my respect and my attention. At the trendy Bluebird Cafe nightspot, the heart of the city—the songwriters—gathered with their publishers by invitation, and there they received Gold albums for Collin Raye's *All I Can Be* and *In This Life*. Legendary songwriter **Harlan Howard** rose to the occasion unannounced and embraced Collin, who was stunned, as Howard explained how special it was for the singer to honor the songwriters. The fact that Collin Raye had the smarts to thank songwriters just thrills me. You know, I never met a songwriter I didn't like.

BILLY RAY PLAYS BALL

Ever notice how country stars love baseball? In the 1940's **Bill Monroe** had a traveling baseball team, and **Roy Acuff**, **Charley Pride** and **Roy Drusky** all played baseball in leagues of some note. Well, **Billy Ray Cyrus** is no exception to the rule. After meeting Dodger manager **Tommy Lasorda** on *Nashville Now*, Billy Ray was extended an invitation to a game. Of course, he went. All of us know Billy Ray played on the Cincinnati farm team. Not only did Billy attend the game as Lasorda's guest, he practiced with the Dodgers before the game. Is that cool or what?

A THREE-HOUR SHOW

The CMA has announced that they will broadcast a three-hour awards show this year. It happens on September 29th. In other CMA Awards news, it was announced that executive producer **Irving Waugh** is retiring from his position. Waugh, if you remember, got into a tangle with **Ricky Van Shelton** at a CMA taping last year. Longtime director **Walter Miller** will serve as both producer and director of this year's show. This marks the 27th year for the CMA Awards show.

NINE MILLION AND RISING



A special plaque was made up to commemorate world-wide sales of nine million copies of **Billy Ray Cyrus'** debut album, *Some Gave All*. Presenting the heavy metal plaque to BRC are Mercury Nashville President, **Luke Lewis** (left), and Polygram's President and COO, **Eric Kronfeld** (center).

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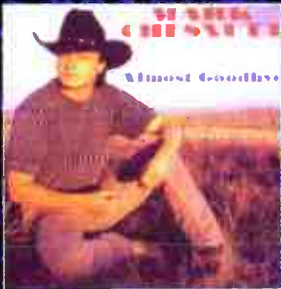
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who **it** IS

Mark Chesnutt



"The best pure singer in the new country crop." —LA Times

Featuring "Almost Goodbye" and the #1 hit "It Sure Is Monday"

Vince Gill

His hottest selling album ever has yielded three #1 singles including "I Still Believe In You". Also features the run-away smash "One More Last Chance"



Reba McEntire



This greatest hits package features two new tracks, "Does He Love You" and "They Asked About You".

WATCH FOR CONTEST DETAILS.

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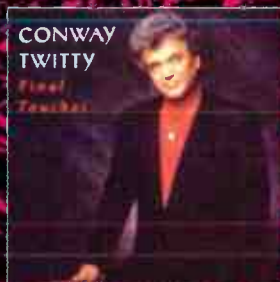
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Fresh on the spurs of the triple platinum, *Pure Country* album comes *Easy Come, Easy Go* featuring "The Man In Love With You"

George Strait

A farewell album of all new songs, *Final Touches* features the smash, "I'm The Only Thing (I'll Hold Against You)"



Conway Twitty



Her debut album sold over three million copies and generated three #1 singles. *Tell Me Why* features the smash, "Only Love"

Wynonna

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- Sept. 23 Indianapolis
Little Bit of Texas
- Sept. 30 Houston
Wild Wild West
- Oct. 1 Shreveport
Neon Moon
- Oct. 3 Wichita
City Limits
- Oct. 5 Denver
Grizzly Rose
- Oct. 6 Kansas City
Guitars & Cadillacs
- Oct. 7 Dallas
Cowboys
- Oct. 12 Chicago
Whiskey River
- Oct. 13 Detroit
Diamond & Spurs
- Oct. 19 Albuquerque
Midnight Rodeo
- Oct. 20 Phoenix
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- Oct. 24 San Dimas
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People

QUEEN OF MORE THAN DENIAL



Coollest queen on the planet is our own Pam Tillis. However, in this photo Ms. Pam is very definitely "Queen of Denial" on the set of the video shoot for her single. This video could very well be a winner. One of my faves.

MARTY STUART LATE FOR A SHOW

The always ready-for-anything **Marty Stuart** was appearing at the GEO Theater at Opryland. It was showtime, but Marty thought he'd run into the bathroom for a "quick one" when it happened. No, he didn't break his fly zipper, but with those tight britches that, too, is a possibility. What did happen was that when Marty started out the bathroom door, the handle came off in his hand. Marty screamed and yelled. Finally someone realized the show couldn't go on without the star. Ten minutes later, those handy Opryland fixers freed Marty from his cell of ill excuse. And he told the friends and neighbors he'd been locked in the bathroom. You had to be there.

STARS LEND SUPPORT

Tracy Lawrence had the "Feed the Children" truck in the Atlantic Records parking lot with the understanding that it would remain there until it was filled with food for the flood victims in the Midwest.

McBride & The Ride were appearing in Walcott, Iowa, and decided on the spot to turn the concert into a benefit for the flood victims in nearby Davenport.

Clinton Gregory and **Martina McBride** both played flood benefits in Missouri. And this is only the beginning, every day more stars are signing on to help out victims of the rising waters.

The wonderful **Emmylou Harris** was honored by the National Association for Music Therapy for her contributions to the health and welfare of children. The group uses music to help those with disabilities.

Clint Black and **Wynonna** both participated in the "Together For Our Children/M.U.S.I.C. (Musicians Unite With Stars To Immunize Children)" concert. To Tracy, McBride & The Ride, Clinton, Martina, Emmylou, Clint and Wynonna: God bless you and thank you for helping those who cannot help themselves.

NASHVILLE BOUND DYLAN?

Rumor had it that **Bob Dylan** was house hunting in historic Edgefield in East Nashville. Now rumor has it that he has in fact purchased a house there.

EYE SAW

Eye saw the Alabama Leaning Man, the legendary former keyboardist for **Kris Kristofferson** for 23 years, funky **Donnie Fritts**, at Nick's, the best Italian food in this Southern town. Fritts was with songwriter **Roger Murrah**, who wrote more hits than **Stephen Foster**. If you want some Donnie Fritts hits, call Maypop in Music City where Fritts stashes his sure-hit songwriting pencil these days.

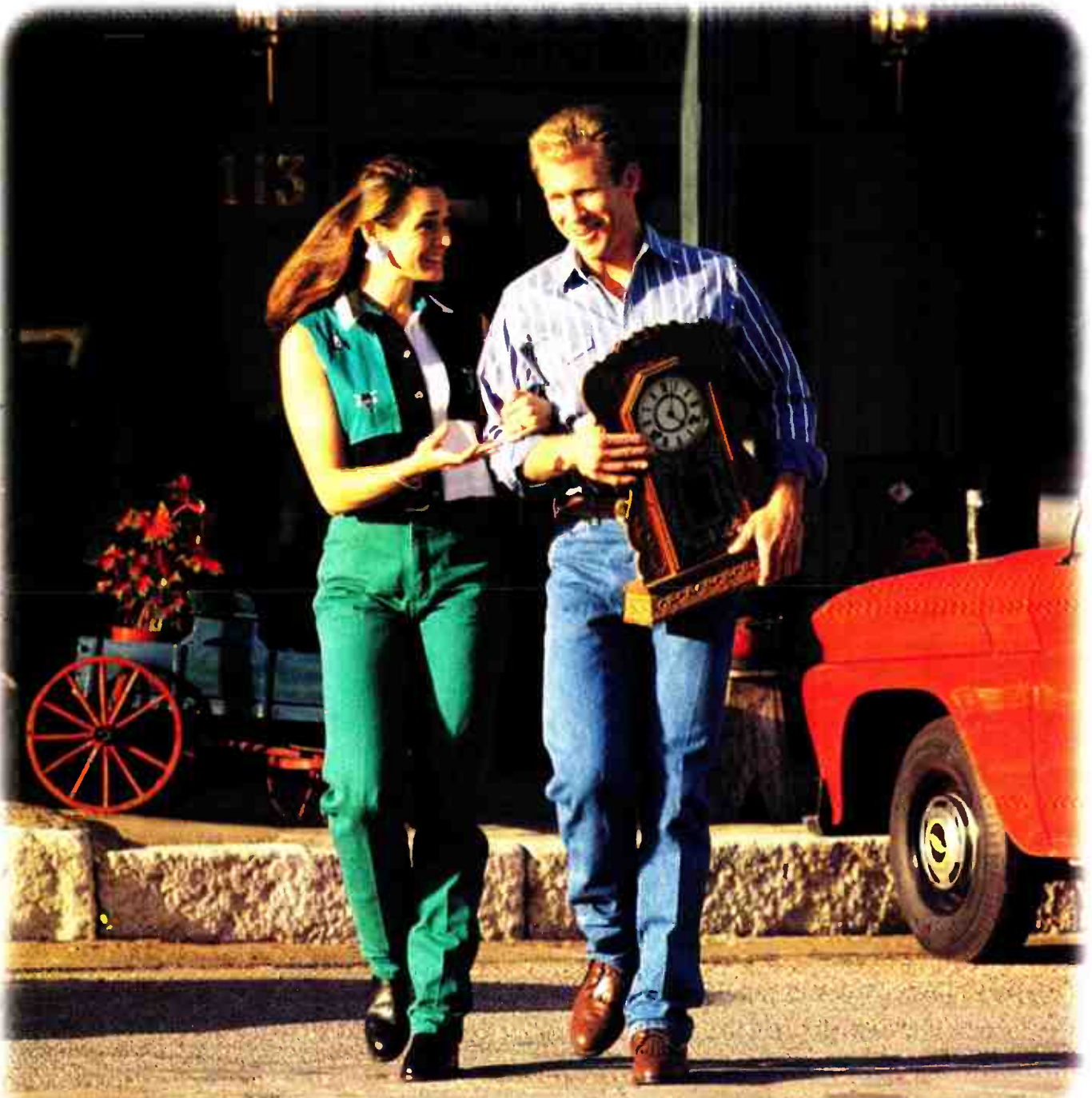
Eye saw the beautiful **Pam Tillis** at her manager's office. One of the sweetest and most talented babe singers on the scene.

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Record Reviews

John Anderson
Solid Ground
BNA 66232

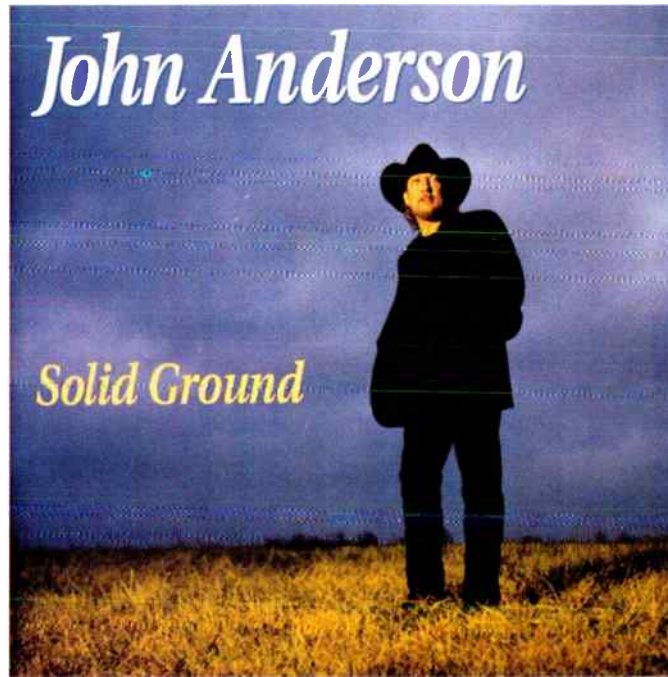
John Anderson ain't got no white hat. He's not retro, not new wave country, not the next biggest thing or getting ready to make it big in Seattle. He ain't gonna marry a movie starlet with more legs than brains. What he does is sing country music with a voice as distinctive as the Florida flatland from which he hails. It's a voice that evokes whiskey and heartbreak, but with a sense of innocence and even naivete. He always seems to be reaching for a note that's just a speck beyond his reach, but, next thing you know, you're reaching for it with him—C'mon, John, just go for it...And damned if he doesn't nail it.

Well, I was afraid he'd fallen off the edge of the world until he resurfaced with *Seminole Wind* last year, and, miracle of miracles, reached for and grabbed a solid platinum record.

Solid Ground, the second release from the resurrected Floridian, is solid, a better album than *Seminole Wind*. It's got the songs—including four co-written by Anderson; two with his long-time writing partner Lionel Delmore—it's got some slick, low-key production by Anderson and James Stroud, and it's got that Anderson voice, half honky tonk, half crazy.

The thing I've always liked about John is that he can carry off schmaltz (Max D. Barnes' "I've Got It Made"), then come back hard-core honkin' with "Money in the Bank" or "I Fell in the Water," your classic Nashville hook song—"I fell in the water you walked on."

I think what I like best about John Anderson is the



absolute lack of pretension in his music. He doesn't do country music for 16th Avenue South or the yuppie enclaves of Austin or Boulder. He sings about bad ladies and good women, hard drinking and redemption, and he means it. He's the country side of Southern rock, weepers with a hard edge.

Bottom line: John Anderson is an authentic talent. He doesn't fit any of the convenient molds, and it's hurt him more than it's helped him. But he has stayed true to his roots, and he has come back strong. He still comes from where he comes from. —MICHAEL BANE

Kelly Willis
Kelly Willis
MCA 10789

Bang Bang justifiably made a lot of critics' best album lists in 1991 as the next step in Kelly Willis' metamorphosis. Now, two years have gone by. She's acted in the Tim Robbins

film, *Bob Roberts*, as the backup vocalist to a right-wing folksinger-politician. The soundtrack of the movie *Thelma and Louise* included two of her songs, and if a measure of an artist's standing can be taken by her producer, Willis' status is clearly on the rise. Along with MCA executive Tony Brown, no less than Don Was, producer of Willie's magnificent *Across the Borderline* album, co-produced on every song here, either with Brown or, in one case, with John Leventhal.

Following up a masterpiece, tough as it is, seems effortless this time. The Brown/Was production is flawless, the selection of material nearly as much so. The strong Southwestern feel of Willis' earlier music remains, and much of the material doesn't come from the usual Nashville grind-'em-out songsmiths but from some talented writers who so far haven't benefited as much from the so-called country boom as they should have. Yet

there's ample diversity, allowing her to shine in several contexts that underscore her versatility.

Willis' own "Get Real," co-written with John Leventhal, works beautifully, its lyrics a model of economy that say much in few words. The talents of cutting edge singer-writer Kevin Welch, whom success has eluded despite some fine recordings, are showcased on his song, "That'll Be Me," which he and girlfriend Willis sing as a duet. It succeeds beyond any expectations, not only reflecting well on her but also suggesting that Welch's mainstream potential is greater than a lot of us first assumed.

Better still is her interpretation of Jim Lauderdale's masterful "I Know Better Now," a song so timeless that Patsy Cline could have made it soar 33 years ago. Not only does Willis drive home the song and make it her own, but she reminds everyone about Lauderdale's own underrated gifts in the process. She does likewise with rocker Marshall Crenshaw's "Whatever Way the Wind Blows," making it her own, while the music frames the immediacy and urgency of the lyrics. A subtler note is a creative arrangement that makes the wheezy organ appear to be driving the band instead of the rhythm section.

Some critics have zeroed in on Willis' version of The Kendalls' 1977 hit, "Heaven's Just a Sin Away," as an annoying fly in the ointment, but I don't see it that way. Willis, who found the song and initially didn't realize it had previously been a hit, gives it a different approach. Being no fan of The Kendalls' original, I find her interpretation cooler, more knowing than theirs. She's also a damn sight better vocalist than Jeannie Kendall

Record Reviews

ever was. Her vocal flies over "One More Night," the churning accompaniment giving the song a sense of drama, a technique Was used on many songs on the Willie album. The second "night" song, Libby Dwyer's "Up All Night," has a similar dark, understated dramatic sense, her voice slicing masterfully through the dense accompaniment.

"World Without You," a Willis-Paul Kennerley composition of modest substance, serves mainly as a cooldown period in the album before the explosive conclusion, the rocking Willis-Leventhal "Shadows of Love," a passionate cheating number with its own tension and foreboding. Her delivery fits the lyrics hand in glove, and few songs she's recorded better reveal her magnificent vocal control.

Everyone knows Willis has the power and substance to break through, if not now, soon. *Kelly Willis* may well be the one to do it. This is the second Don Was project with a country artist that's succeeded magnificently, as it proves her potential was no flash in the pan. On nearly every song, you hear not only echoes of the past and present; you hear (hopefully) the future as well.

—RICH KIENZLE

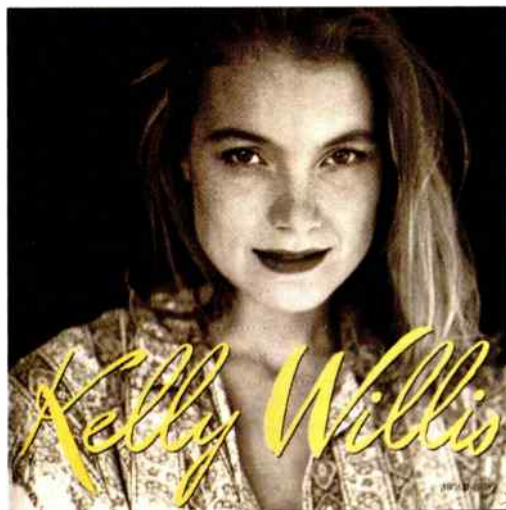
Shelby Lynne

Temptation

Morgan Creek 2959-20018

The first time you heard Shelby Lynne's 1989 debut album, *Sunrise*, you knew this was a very special singer: a 21-year-old kid with terrific pipes who was worldly enough to bring plenty of hurt and resilience to her delivery and smart enough to understate everything. Unfortunately, her albums grew progressively less interesting as Epic tried to tame her best instincts in search of a radio hit.

With her fourth album, *Temptation*, the now-25-year-old Lynne has not only switched labels but has radi-



cally changed her sound as well. In contrast to her old recordings, which took a Reba McEntire/Vince Gill mainstream approach, Lynne has adopted a big-band country-swing strategy, much like k.d. lang and Lyle Lovett. The new sound is as rewarding as it is surprising, for Lynne has lang's vocal power and Lovett's sense of wit.

There were hints of this swing tendency in her versions of Floyd Tillman's "I Love You So Much It Hurts" on *Sunrise* and Duke Ellington's "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" on *Tough All Over*, but on the new album it blossoms into music of remarkable confidence and consistency. Producer Brent Maher, who guided The Judds through their hits, put together a 16-piece fiddle, steel and horn band and co-wrote eight of the 10 all-new songs with the likes of Jamie O'Hara, Don Potter, Don Schlitz, Mike Reid and Lynne herself. Apparently, a lot of Music Row writers have been harboring fantasies about swing material, for they turned in 10 sparkling tunes with no filler.

Lynne brings the songs to life with just the right finger-snapping sass or lonely yearning. The album begins with the horn riff and fiddle fills of the title track, written by Maher, O'Hara and Lynne. Over a walking bass line, Lynne marvels at the

good-looking guy strolling by, and her instinctively rhythmic phrasing mimics his swagger. Her excitement builds into a giddy chorus where she asks herself, "Should I give in to this temptation?" The way her squealing soprano slides through notes like Randy Howard's fiddle, there's little doubt as to the answer.

On "Some of That True Love," she snaps off syllables crisply and locks into the band's syncopation, as if to demonstrate what she means by the line, "One thing that makes life worth livin'/Two hearts beating in perfect rhythm." The album is refreshingly free of romantic self-pity; typical is a newly single singer's response to sympathetic friends, "Don't Cry for Me," which finds Lynne tossing off notes as briskly and precisely as the super-pickers in her band. "The Rain Might Wash Your Love Away" is the album's most Lovett-like number, complete with film-noir narration on the verses that gives way to hard-swinging choruses. It concludes with the Lovett-like advice, "If you save your love for a rainy day, the rain might wash your love away."

Though the album is dominated by uptempo numbers, a few ballads show off Lynne's ability to hold a note, bend it like a steel guitarist pressing down his slide bar and fill it

with tender regret and longing. On "Tell Me I'm Crazy," she confesses her infatuation with a helpless sigh and then purrs lazily and seductively. "Tell me I'm crazy and then love me like crazy tonight." On "Little Unlucky at Love," she bends notes into the bluest shade of the blues. "I Need a Heart to Come Home To," written by Russell Smith and John Jarvis, is a straightforward honky-tonk lament, and Lynne manages to sound dignified even as she pleads for affection.

There hasn't been anything quite like *Temptation* since Chris O'Connell and Mary Ann Price lent their cowgirl voices to *Asleep at the Wheel*, but Lynne is dedicated to keeping the country-swing tradition alive with new material and new arrangements. It's hard to think of another young country singer whose combination of talent and instincts suggests as bright a future as Lynne's.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Billy Ray Cyrus

It Won't Be the Last

Mercury 314-514 758

I come here neither to praise nor to bury Billy Ray Cyrus, but rather to point out several things about the changing nature of the business. Fact is, I have no strong feelings for the star either pro or con. Due to



MANY
STARS

BY LINDA MASON



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Record Reviews

my enmity for all radio except Geezinslaw Sammy Allred's morning talkfest in Austin, I managed to go several weeks without hearing "Achy Breaky Heart" while the battle lines were being drawn over it. When it finally did come on a radio I was listening to—everyone else in the car mock-retched instantly—I listened with curiosity and concluded that it sounded slight but inoffensive, the credible rocking balancing out the really lame lyrics.

And I don't think his detractors despise Billy Ray's music so much as they despise what he stands for—the careful grooming, the "dance craze" created to make the record sell, the way every drop of sweat is in place when he does his robotic stage show—but it seems to me that all this was quite inevitable, and if it hadn't been him, it would soon have been someone else. Nowadays, country music is made and marketed more or less like pop music. This began during the Outlaw period, when country artists began conceiving whole albums that were self-contained entities, rather than just a couple of singles and some filler, and when mystique-building became as important as music. At first it seemed an admirable trend, because it represented the country artist taking more control over his own music and image, but it wasn't

long before both the mystique-building and the music fell into the hands of producer/businessmen, as had been the case in rock since at least Fabian's stardom in the early 1960's. It's little wonder, this decade-and-a-half later, how many country acts seem to get signed because they have movie-star faces that will enhance promotional videos, or because they have a hat and well-toned muscles.

Billy Ray is the most advanced manifestation of that syndrome so far. Like many of today's country stars, his approach was inspired mainly by the theatrics and big sound of 1970's arena-rock. As a singer, he and his producers flaunt his good points and bad equally, as if nobody was quite sure which was which. His sense of rhythm is certainly superior for a country artist, and his delivery makes clear his complete sincerity, which has always been primary in country. His songs are melodic. Thus, he sounds much better on straightforward rockers like "Ain't Your Dog No More" than on those mid-tempo power ballads, where his vocal shortcomings are way too obvious to miss. To put it bluntly, Billy Ray doesn't phrase at all; he has no discernible technique, uses none of the fillips with which real singers put their own stamp on their music. In short, the guy's got no personal style whatsoever; he

simply mouths the words, and on the louder and faster songs, his producers can either hide or distract from this woeful state of affairs. Favorable comparisons to Elvis—and on "When I'm Gone," he's angling for just that—are about as apt as favorable comparisons between weekend adventure-hikers and Lewis and Clark.

Ultimately, given today's music-biz politics and economics, I suspect that Billy Ray will come and go just as surely as so many contrived, trend-mongering rockers have done, making a big though short splash, but still offering a little disposable pleasure before disappearing. Still, there's no real point in "Throwin' Stones," to quote the title of a song which pretends to advocate ending a feud while actually perpetuating it. Because Billy Ray Cyrus is hardly the problem—he's more like the symptom.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Clint Black
No Time to Kill
RCA 66239

Remember how George Bush used to talk about the "Vision Thing"? Remember how George Bush didn't get re-elected because people figured out he didn't have one?

I found myself thinking about the "Vision Thing" when I saw Clint Black in concert a

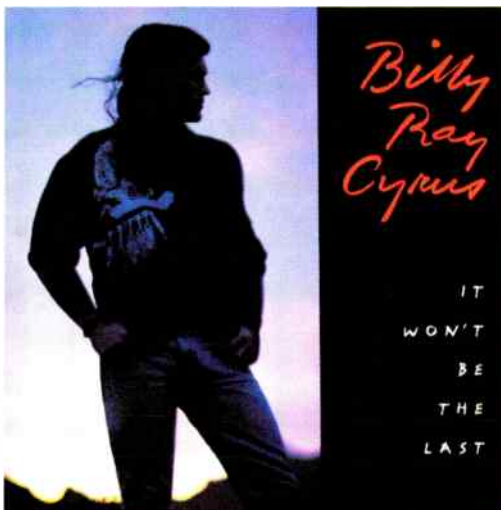
year or so ago. There he was, this little guy in a black T-shirt and a big smile, up there on stage, dwarfed by a massive and somewhat bizarre stage set that featured a cave that billowed smoke. Whatever the intended symbolism of the cave was (a return to the womb? the tunnel of love?), it was lost upon me and on a goodly portion of the rest of the audience as well. I guess it was that night that I first got an impression of Clint Black as an artist curiously adrift from his Texas honky tonk roots, earnestly struggling to find a new musical identity.

The Hard Way, Black's last album, confirmed that impression. Though he labored long and arduously on them, his original songs were marred by loopy phrasing, the thematic mushiness and too much shallow introspection. He seemed dangerously aloof from the resolute honky tonk stylings of his first album, *Killin' Time*; and the incisive songwriting which made his second album, *Put Yourself in My Shoes*, such a winning effort, was noticeably missing as well.

On *No Time to Kill*, which Black co-produced with James Stroud, he seems to be groping his way back, yet still stumbling in the dark. Once again, he's chosen to stick with all-original material (all but three of the tracks co-written with Hayden Nicholas, his guitarist). Once again, as on *The Hard Way*, you can't help but wonder how wise a choice this was.

Granted, on *No Time to Kill*, Black's come through with a half-dozen or so new songs that are as fine as anything he's written; but he's also included a handful of others so pointless that they're hardly worth the expensive studio time and exquisite musicianship wasted on them.

The title song ("Killin' Time..."/"No Time to Kill...") Clever, huh!?) is a near-masterpiece: a song full of anguish and urgency that laments the brevity of life and the mad rush from cradle to grave with



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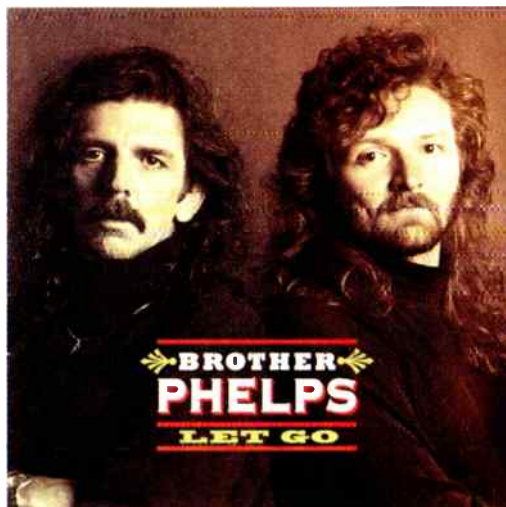
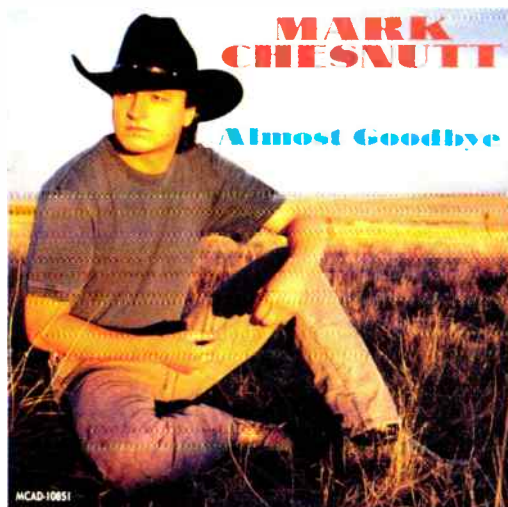


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Record Reviews



a frantic rush of near-breathless lyrics and harried instrumentation. "Thinking Again," "State of Mind" and "Happiness Alone" (a mournful ballad co-written with Jimmy Buffett) are the sort of irresistible soul searchers' almanacs which have long been Black's strong suit. In them, he comes off as a kind of latterday honky tonk Hamlet as he convincingly slips into the persona of the lost drifter desperately in search of love, belonging and a sense of higher meaning.

But in songs like "Half the Man," "A Good Run of Bad Luck" and "Tuckered Out" (in which he strings together the names of a bunch of country stars to no great effect) he indulges in a lot of overly-intricate word play on which he expends a lot of breath and ends up saying just about nothing at all. On "A Bad Goodbye," his duet with Wynonna, he and "The Big Wy" come off sounding more like Barry and Barbra (Manilow and Streisand) than George and Tammy. The song's a vivid reminder of just how slick it's all gotten while we weren't looking.

"I'll Take Texas" is about as interesting as the last two-dozen songs I've heard with the word Texas in them. And it also points up the "Vision Thing" problem again. Even though Black croons lovingly of his allegiance to his native state ("My mind is free to wander, but my heart will never

stray...."), he's actually long gone from the Land of the Lone Star, ensconced in the Hollywood hills.

Thus, on *No Time to Kill*, decent album that it is, the drift continues. Clint Black, for all his talent and musical soul-searching, still seems curiously aloof and lacking the musical surefootedness of his first two albums. And you can't help but wonder when he's finally going to get that footing back.

—BOB ALLEN

Mark Chesnutt *Almost Goodbye* MCA 10851

You can learn most of what you need to know about Mark Chesnutt on this album's first song, "It Sure Is Monday," a country version of the working man's bane, that ol' Blue Monday Syndrome. Mark sings it in something between a bluegrass holler and a honky tonk moan, while the band anchors the honky tonk sound with a rockin' beat and a punchy guitar solo. Chesnutt is a fine country synthesizer, his voice echoing everyone from Jones and Owens to Strait and Travis, and the wellerafted music behind him works similarly.

He also puts real yearning into Don Gibson's early 1970's ballad, "Woman, Sensuous Woman," and his husky, virile

voice is perfect for the dramatic lyric and arrangement of the title song. But after those three, things momentarily bog down in a way that bares his shortcomings—"April's Fool" and "I Just Wanted You to Know" are both stock country album filler, and Chesnutt is simply not unique enough to redeem them.

But he does come back strong again after that. "Texas Is Bigger" is an infectious, swinging fiddle tune that celebrates the music of his home state, with hot solos passed among the musicians and a good dance beat holding them together. "My Heart's Too Broke" sustains the dancehall swing atmosphere, followed by "Vicki Vance Gotta Dance," which would surely seem hokey if it didn't so skillfully fuse rockabilly, swing and Cajun. "Till a Better Memory Comes Along" is a fine down-and-out ballad—how can you not pay attention to a song that begins, "See the lines in my face..."? The set then ends with "The Will," a tinkling ballad complete with recitation that serves up an overdose of classic country feel-good sentimentality. It's not much to my taste, but it will jerk many a tear from other listeners.

Chesnutt may never be a superstar, but he's no fluke, either—right now, he sounds like a solid mainstream country artist who has the potential to remain one for as long as

his material and his production will allow. As final proof, I offer up the observation that this album started sounding a lot better once I started playing it in my car instead of my living room. That counts for something, too, you know.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Brother Phelps

Let Go
Asylum 61544

When I heard that Ricky Lee Phelps and his little brother, Doug, The Kentucky HeadHunters' former lead singer and bass player, had departed The HeadHunters and had the inevitable solo album on the way, I can't say that I was overwhelmed with expectations.

Ricky Lee, I'd always figured, was mostly just The Kentucky HeadHunters' flash and front—the band's hood ornament, if you will. The Heads' real heart, soul and driving wheel seemed to be founding members Greg Martin and Richard and Fred Young (who remain together as The HeadHunters with a new singer and bass player).

Turns out the Phelps brothers had cards they never got a chance to show in The HeadHunters: a sure-footed flair for country balladry, a promising but uneven penchant for songwriting and some exquisite two-part brotherly harmonies. In fact, it's their confident, exuberant harmonies that time and again rise above their patchiness as writers on *Let Go*, the Phelps' debut album. (Ricky Lee and Doug wrote about half the songs on their new album, which is really about half again too many.) Indeed, vocally they really sparkle and shine, at times sounding almost like The Everlys in their heyday or Charlie and Ira Louvin. Time and again, their exquisite two-part vocal hooks enable them to transcend the slapdash lyrics of songs like the tritely pseudo-philosophical "What

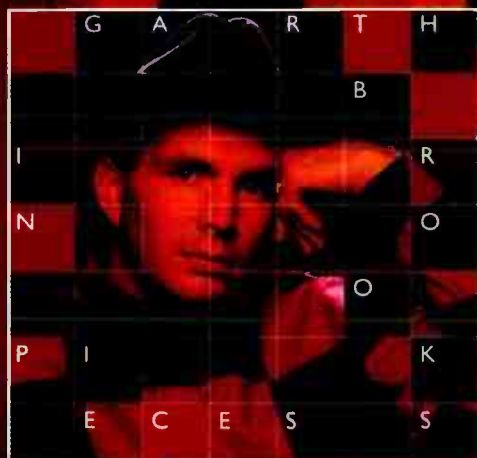
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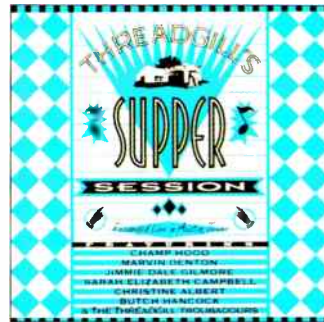
Goes Around (Comes Around)," or the clumsy rhyme schemes of a mock-somber ditty like "Playin' House."

Phelps & Phelps may have left The HeadHunters, but unintentionally or no, they have brought just a little bit of the lingering spirit of the band with them on *Let Go*. On a few cuts they cop Fred Young's unique drum sound so closely, it might as well be Fred in the studio pounding the skins. "Were You Really Livin'," one of the Phelps' stronger original tunes, is just the sort of roller-coaster Jerry Lee Lewis-style country-boogie that would be right at home on a HeadHunters' album. There's also a gentle, good-timey blues called "Everything Will Work Out Fine," which the Phelps brothers wrote with Greg Martin and the Young brothers back in HeadHunter days, and which sounds like a breezy, bury-the-hatchet epitaph to their former musical alliance.

Yet, overall, *Let Go* is considerably more subdued than almost anything the Phelps did during their two-album stint with The HeadHunters. Now and again on *Let Go*, Ricky Lee and Doug settle comfortably into some soulful, straight-ahead country balladry—something that was always slightly out of The HeadHunters' purview. And when they do, as on "Eagle Over Angel" (Gerald Guinn-Yvonne Guinn-James H. Peters) and "Ever Changing Woman," a Dave Kirby-Curly Putman composition recorded by Merle Haggard some time back, it's without the playfully snide sarcasm that resonated through The HeadHunters' most fervent country covers.

But man, oh man, it's those great Phelps-on-Phelps harmonies that really float the boat on *Let Go* and give their debut its true luster. Now if they can get out there and back up this impressive album with a live show that's even two-thirds as moving, then they've got a good shot at it.

—BOB ALLEN



Various Artists

Threadgill's Supper Session

Watermelon CD 1013

Kenneth Threadgill, for years a legend in Texas folk music circles, first gained national notice for his connections with the late blues-rocker Janis Joplin. Long before her late 1960's rock stardom, she was a regular at Threadgill's club, a converted Austin gas station. Threadgill's skills at singing Jimmie Rodgers songs (with Bill Neely) were particularly noteworthy. In the 1970's, the club continued as a center for various young, talented Austin artists and fans who attended the University of Texas. Even Threadgill's death didn't end it.

On September 4, 1991, some recent Threadgill's graduates who cut their musical teeth there returned to do this live set at the club. Among them were Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock and Marcia Ball, along with lesser-knowns Champ Hood (bandleader at Threadgill's), Sarah Elizabeth Campbell and Christine Albert. This is not a program of new songs, but a loose, earthy and utterly enjoyable exploration of the artists' musical roots, mostly old country favorites. If you like your music note-perfect, flawless and smooth, you won't enjoy this one. Missed notes and imperfections are here in force, but they simply enhance the loose, easy feel throughout.

Gilmore and Champ Hood kick things off with a duet on Jimmie Rodgers' "Waiting for

Record Reviews

a Train." Gilmore's solo performances of The Delmore Brothers' "Brown's Ferry Blues" and Johnny Cash's "Train of Love" are spirited, and his version of the old Shelton Brothers favorite, "Deep Ellem (*sic*) Blues," is witty and arresting. Campbell's exquisite, folk-flavored version of the Patsy Cline-Don Gibson favorite, "Sweet Dreams," provides contrast.

At first I found Hood's weird-sounding voice a bit annoying, but over time it grew on me, aided by his ingenious New Orleans/R&B flavored arrangement of "Stag-O-Lee," and his version of The Delmore Brothers' "Deep River Blues," taken from an earlier Doc Watson recording of the song re-arranged Merle Travis-style. Hood can pull off surprises, like his rocked-up version of Nat "King" Cole's 1950's hit ballad, "Pretend." Appropriately, Butch Hancock starts winding things up with his own "Bluebird" (joined by Gilmore), and, with Hood joining for a third voice, they wrap it up with a driving, bluegrass arrangement of the old blues, "Sittin' on Top of the World."

There's nothing profound here in the way of new or cutting edge Texas music, just some friends reminiscing and rummaging through the classic songs that remain at the heart of those modern visions. Every artist should do that once in awhile, and one suspects Kenneth Threadgill is pleased that even without him, it continues.

—RICH KIENZLE

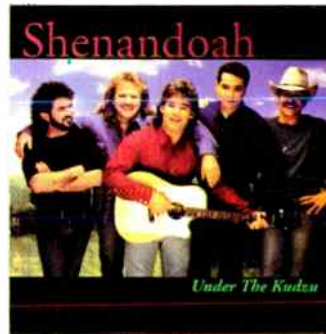
Shenandoah

Under the Kudzu
RCA 66267

Shenandoah got off to a great start in the late 1980's with a string of Number One singles. But then they lost crucial momentum in the very early 90's when they became ensnared in a protracted legal battle (over their name) which kept them out of the studio for the better part of two years.

They returned early last year with *Long Time Comin'*, a solid enough album which, curiously, seemed to fall on deaf ears at country radio. Indeed, "Hey Mister (I Need This Job)," the final single off *Long Time Comin'*, was a moving enough ballad; but it hardly broke a sweat in the Top 20.

So, with their new album, *Under the Kudzu*, Shenandoah has reacted to this adversity the same way that some Hollywood leading men do when they find themselves getting typecast or their phone stops ringing. They've hit the weights and bulked up, so to speak. They started by bringing a new producer on board: Don Cook, who recently



muscled Brooks & Dunn into the top of the charts with a string of finger-popping hits and put fresh fire in Mark Collie's career with a new lean & mean sound.

Cook, in his new role with Shenandoah, is indeed something like a highly paid weight trainer. He's put these boys through the paces with some musical heavy-lifting and toughened up their sound with an aggressive "live" band approach that's full of ultra-groovy drum licks, flurries of sinewy reverbed guitars and just a lot more spunk and groove overall.

As part of their rigorous new training program for *Under the Kudzu*, Shenandoah has also undergone a little theme-stretching, image-enhancing aerobics as well. In the past the band cultivated a wholesome Southern gospel sort of image—an ambience enhanced by heartland hits

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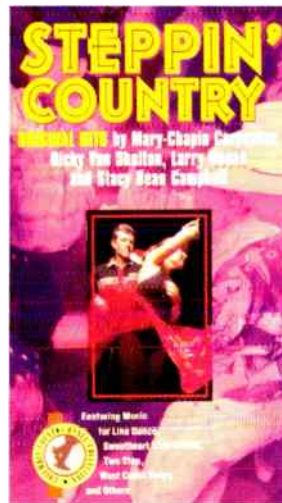
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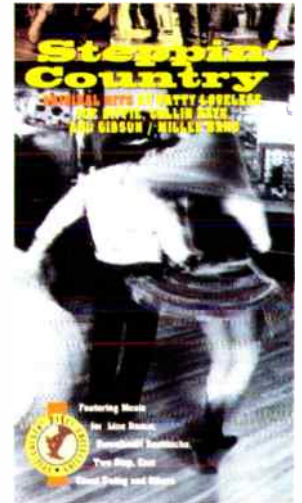


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like “Church on Cumberland Road” and “Sunday in the South.” So what do they come out of the chute with this time? A single with a blistering rhythm track and the improbable (at least for these guys) title of “Janie Baker’s Love Slave.”

As radical as this program sounds, it all works surprisingly well on *Under the Kudzu*. In fact, this may be Shenandoah’s best album yet. Certainly, it’s their most resolutely upbeat, varied and adventurous.

“Hey Mister” having died a quick death on radio, there are understandably fewer ballads this time around, replaced by more dance tunes and honky tonkers. Selections like “The Blues Are Comin’ Over to Your House” (by Don Cook and Kix Brooks), “If Bubba Can Dance” (co-written by Bob McDill, along with bandmembers Marty Raybon and Mike McGuire, who co-wrote quite a bit of the material this time around) also reveal a lot more worldliness, wry humor and danceability than Shenandoah has ever indulged in before.

The mid-tempo title tune (written by Dennis Linde, who also wrote “Janie Baker’s Love Slave”) speaks of the uneasy transformation of the “old” South into the new South as seen through the eyes of one lonely old man.

Still, the ballads, what few of them there are, remain *Under the Kudzu*’s most memorable moments and the band’s true strength. Lead singer Marty Raybon, a brilliant and (I think) somewhat underrated singer, slips into his most earnest little-boy-lost, broken-hearted mode on “I’ll Go Down Loving You” (Hartford/Hogin/Powell) and the ex-quisite “I Want to Be Loved Like That” (Barnhart/Hogin/Bill LaBounty).

The best thing about *Under the Kudzu* is that Shenandoah has managed to put new bubbles in the bath water without throwing out the baby. The band’s heartfelt

Southern harmonies and appealing Sunday-down-South sincerity somehow remain intact, even amidst the muscularity, heightened decibel levels and rowdy two-steps of this album. —BOB ALLEN



Steve Wariner
Drive
Arista 18721

Steve Wariner would seem to have it all. He’s an accomplished guitar picker as well as a singer with a warm, personable tenor. He displays good taste in picking songs, preferring pop melodies and realistic lyrics to melodramatic excess. He’s had enough hit singles to enjoy his pick of songs and producers. (He’s even good-looking enough to be a *Country Music* centerfold.) So why are his albums so underwhelming?

His latest, *Drive*, suggests that the problem may lie in his absolute refusal to take chances. The ten songs on Wariner’s 15th album are all tasteful country-pop numbers with pleasant melodies, well sung and well played, but without anything distinctive to remember them by. Wariner never lapses into bad taste and embarrassing corniness as George Jones and Dolly Parton sometimes do, but neither does he tap into the uninhibited honesty and one-of-a-kind eccentricity that inspire Jones’ and Parton’s best moments.

Consider the lead-off title song from *Drive*, which Wariner co-wrote with Bill LaBounty. With an Eagles-like melody loping along over a

mid-tempo drum beat, Wariner sings of driving the interstate across New Mexico to get back to his baby. He mentions “passin’ trucks with Haggard singin’ on the radio,” but you can be sure if Haggard were writing and singing this song, he’d make it a whole lot clearer why he was separated from his lover and why it was so important to get back to her as soon as possible. And you can bet that Hag would insist that the chorus have enough melody to distinguish itself from the verses.

The album’s first single, “If I Didn’t Love You,” written by Jon Vezner and Jack White, is a clever song that starts out by describing the freedom the singer would enjoy if he didn’t love his wife and ends up admitting how empty that life would be if he didn’t have her. Once again, though, the chorus melody is too much like the verse melody, and Wariner’s vocal never communicates the sense that he’s seriously considering leaving his wife. And if that’s not a serious option, the song is just a mind game without anything at stake.

Maybe Wariner is just too nice a guy to sing about country music’s fractured relationships. When he sings that the next time he’s crying from a broken heart “It Won’t Be Over You,” he delivers none of the gleeful vengefulness that this put-down song desperately needs. When he sings the ballad, “(You Could Always) Come Back,” he gives no hint that his ex-lover’s return is all that important. When he sings, “I die for the mail,” on the ballad, “Missing You,” Wariner sounds far too healthy and comfortable to be anywhere near his deathbed.

The album’s best songs are the final two, which tilt the pop-country balance heavily in the direction of pop. The Caribbean lilt and conversational advice of Dave Loggins’ “Married to a Memory” makes it sound like a sentimental Jimmy Buffett number, and Wariner sounds well suited for such material. There’s a lot of

Buffett as well in John and Johanna Hall’s “Sails,” a lulling tribute to sailboats. Backed only by a string quartet, Wariner picks out the pretty ballad melody on a gut-string guitar and sings with the laid-back satisfaction of one watching a sunset from a wooden boat deck.

Maybe that’s the answer. Maybe he should move to Florida, buy some Hawaiian shirts and become a beach-bum balladeer like Buffett. It would at least transform Wariner’s easy-going mellowness from a liability into an asset. —GEOFFREY HIMES

Mark O’Connor

Heroes

Warner Bros. 45257

The fiddle, which was so easy to pack in a westward-bound wagon and so easy to pull out during a Saturday-night house party, represents country’s roots as a traditional, rural dance music more than any other instrument. Perhaps that’s why the fiddle is unpopular among those who’d rather pretend that country has always been a suburban pop music. The fiddle is unlikely to disappear entirely from Nashville, however, as long as Mark O’Connor is waging his ongoing campaign on the instrument’s behalf.

O’Connor’s new album, *Heroes*, finds the self-styled “New Nashville Cat” playing fiddle duets with 14 of his idols. Although the guests come from the fields of jazz (Jean-Luc Ponty and Stephane Grappelli), classical (Pinchas Zukerman), world beat (L. Shankar), bluegrass (Byron Berline and Kenny Baker), hillbilly blues (Vassar Clements), old-timey (Benny Thomasson, Terry Morris and Texas Shorty), Cajun (Doug Kershaw), Texas swing (Johnny Gimble), country-rock (Charlie Daniels) and Nashville sessions (Buddy Spicher), there’s a bit of country fiddling in every cut. O’Connor is more

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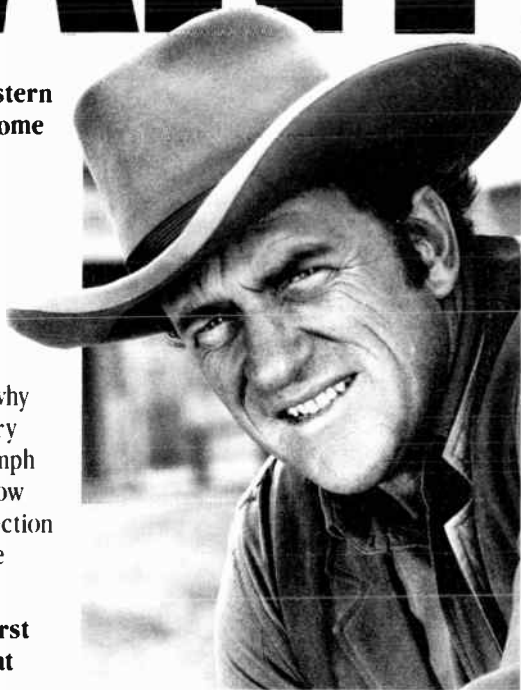
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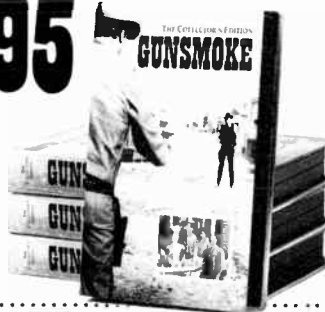
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interested in the similarities between these styles than the differences, and the common ground is American frontier dance music.

Ten of the 14 tracks are instrumentals, and they're filled with some astonishing virtuoso performances. To hear O'Connor, a four-time National Fiddle Champion by the time he was 22, trade licks with Jean-Luc Ponty or Doug Kershaw, is to rediscover what the violin can do as lightning-fast melodies and variations slide by in long legato phrases. Most of the pieces are built atop a chunky rhythm section, but the fiddles are pushed to the front of the mix, where they "sing."

And "sing" they do, for O'Connor has wisely chosen these pieces for their melodic pleasure rather than their technical challenges. Vassar Clements could certainly play a more showy piece than the slow blues, "House of the Rising Sun," but it's unlikely he could play anything as expressive. Johnny Gimble can play a whole lot faster than he does on "Fiddlin' Around," but he'd be hard put to play anything as catchy and fun. And it would be difficult to find an instrumental as sweet and eloquent as the airy fiddle lines played by the 85-year-old Stephane Grappelli on Rodgers & Hart's "This Can't Be Love" and Fats Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'."

Even on Tin Pan Alley standards like these, O'Connor makes the connection to his own old-timey background. The way he adds rhythmic accents with a bit of sawing emphasis reminds us that the difference between a fiddler and a violinist is that one improvises in rhythm for dances, while the other interprets notated scores for seated listeners. O'Connor brings the two styles together when he and Pinchas Zukerman trade interpretations of Jay Ungler's "Ashokan Farewell," the theme from PBS-TV's *Civil War*.

The album's first single is "The Devil Comes Back to Georgia," a sequel just like



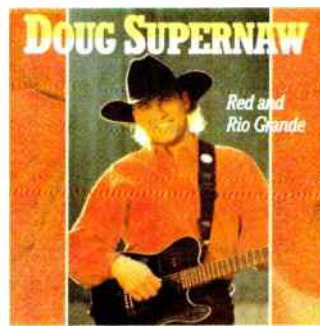
those at the movie theater. Johnny Cash narrates the story of Lucifer's request for a rematch; Travis Tritt and Marty Stuart sing the parts of the two contestants, and Daniels and O'Connor play the competing fiddle parts.

Not all the distinguished guests are fiddlers. Mandolinist Bill Monroe and fiddler Byron Berline reunite 25 years later to reprise their composition, "Gold Rush," with Berline's regular partners, guitarist Dan Crary and banjoist John Hickman. On another Monroe composition, "Jerusalem Ridge," O'Connor and Monroe alumnus Kenny Baker are joined by bluegrass legends, dobroist Josh Graves and mandolinist Sam Bush. And the album's best track, "House of the Rising Sun," features Bush, dobroist Jerry Douglas, and guitarist Russ Barenberg behind O'Connor and Clements. To hear the fiddles and dobro bending notes into weary moans and anguished groans on this old song about a brothel is to understand why some songs just don't need a vocal—and why the fiddle is still American music's best link to its past.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Doug Supernaw *Red and Rio Grande* BNA 66133

Is this guy country? Oh, wow, man, I don't really know. The fiddles and steel guitars aren't covered up by rock guitar riffs and bass riffs for line dancers. The songs don't sound like they came off



some 20-year-old California country-rock album. The voice is rough, with plenty of character. Like, it doesn't sound like some aging hippie folksinger trying to keep his career alive with the same watery ballads that made him such a hit with baby boomers. It sounds... hillbilly. Bummer.

Thanks, readers, for allowing me that bit of sarcasm. It could have been worse. I could have begun with "Is it a bird? Is it a plane? It's Supernaw!" The fact is Doug Supernaw is probably too country for the "country boomers," the 30/40-something newcomers to the music who've arrived in the past two or three years. Some of them worship Billy Ray, Mary-Chapin or Ketchum.

Like Willie Nelson, Texas native Supernaw came to Nashville to write songs, but didn't find himself as a performer until he went home and rediscovered his Texas roots. As those roots are revealed here, he, like Tracy Byrd, is a promising honky tonker if he stays the current course.

"Honky Tonkin' Fool," a unique requiem to a barroom denizen gone to his final reward, kicks off the album and showcases Supernaw's rough, smoky voice. His straight-ahead approach enhances the song's wit and in the process revives the "story song," which has been out of fashion in recent years. Another story song, "Five Generations of Rock County Wilsons," penned by John Scott Sherrill, falls flat, however, but through no fault of Supernaw's. The stream of consciousness lyrics simply don't tell a very clear story. "I Don't Call Him

Daddy" is much more expressive, though, about a divorced father confronting his kid's ability to deal with a broken home.

Supernaw also co-writes some material with his band, including the sage and deftly crafted single, "Reno," which equates the mysteries and risks of a cold, shallow woman with the ups and downs of that glitzy Nevada casino town. The Tom Shapiro/Chris Waters stomper, "You're Gonna Bring Back Cheatin' Songs," may sound traditional, but the perspective is post-traditional, as if traditional songs have become passe. Of course, the very next number, "I Would Have Loved You All Night Long," a conventional cheating song, proves they haven't fallen out of favor. The same goes for the Bob McDill/Bucky Jones barroom weeper, "The Perfect Picture (To Fit My Frame of Mind)." Both songs are reaffirmations of Supernaw's unadulterated barroom perspective.

His original Texas ode, "Red and Rio Grande" (named for the two rivers that form parts of the state's borders), co-written with Lonnie Atkinson, cuts a vivid, poetic picture of the state's heritage, minus the shallow Lone Star Beer, Bob Wills, etc., etc. odes which often trivialize such numbers. His original (written with Rick Robinson) "Daddy's Girl," a lighthearted throwaway cut spoofing garden-variety teenage spoiled brats, is mere filler that hurts nothing but, likewise, adds nothing. The final number, his despondent composition, "Carousel," uses a merry-go-round as a symbol of a life utterly wasted, and provides the best sample of his skills as a writer.

Richard Landis' production keeps the music free of excess and reveals Supernaw as yet another Texan who hopefully (you can't tell for sure, as volatile as things are nowadays) will transcend the generic "hat act" stereotype and become an artist of substance. He's got a good start with this album.

—RICH KIENZLE



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Conway Twitty

1933-1993

by Rich Kienzle

Tennessee Ernie Ford, Dottie West, Roger Miller and Roy Acuff have all passed on in the last two years. All were in the twilight of their careers, and all except Dottie were battling health problems. Historically, accidents—not illness—have claimed most active artists. The suddenness of Conway's passing made it all the more shocking. Even severe stomach pain couldn't prevent his performing at the matinee at Jim Stafford's Branson theater on June 4. It was Fan Fair weekend, and he was heading back to Nashville on his bus that

evening with his band and wife Dee. During a brief stop near Springfield, Missouri, he collapsed. Doctors at a Springfield hospital found a ruptured abdominal aneurysm—serious business for anyone—and his children were summoned. Though surgeons could repair the damage, his heart stopped twice; a third cardiac arrest the next morning was too much.

At age 59, when many artists his age no longer had recording contracts, he still actively performed and recorded hits for a major label; the current "youth movement" didn't affect him. Some 20,000,000

records sold and 50 Number Ones are nothing to sneeze at. As of 1988, he ranked fifth among top country record sellers, and, though not the first 1950's teen idol to focus on country, he alone attained superstar status. Too many of today's young male singers ladle on the macho until you wonder how much is contrived (hint: often a lot of it). Conway never exaggerated. It was there. From the start, his love of country, gospel and blues infused his vocals with pure Mississippi Delta soul.

Like the blues, Harold Lloyd Jenkins came from the Delta, where he was born in Friars Point, Mississippi, September 1, 1933. When Harold was four, his father, riverboat captain Floyd Jenkins, got his son a guitar and while piloting boats on the Mississippi River, taught him to play. By 1943, the year the Jenkins family moved across the river to Helena, Arkansas, he had his first country band, The Phillips County Ramblers, and absorbed the Delta's rich black blues and gospel heritage.

Like so many other country singers, Jenkins aspired to play baseball and showed such promise that the Philadelphia Phillies offered him a contract. A 1954 Army induction notice got in the way. Stationed in Japan, he led his own band, The Cimarrons, and played for servicemen until his 1956 discharge. Back home, with fellow Mississippian Elvis Presley changing American music, Harold Jenkins sought to follow in Elvis' wake. He recorded at Sun, though nothing was released. In 1957 he had one modestly successful single with Mercury which led to a contract with MGM that year. Jenkins and his band, The Rock Housers, toured the country with a wild, Elvis-styled stage show. Feeling his name was bland, he created a new one from the names of Conway, Texas, and Twitty, Arkansas.

When he wrote and recorded "It's Only Make Believe" for MGM, he didn't initially like it, making its success as a rock and pop hit all the more surprising to him. "Danny Boy" and "Lonely Blue Boy" went Top Ten in 1959. With Elvis in the Army, Twitty became a teen idol. His name inspired the name of lead character Conrad Birdie in the Broadway musical, *Bye, Bye Birdie*. He also did a number of cameo appearances in teen movies.

When rock music changed in the mid-60's Conway, living in Oklahoma City, and weary of playing the rock circuit, was ready to focus on the music he loved all along. It's said he recorded some country songs and had his friend, songwriter Harlan Howard, take them to Decca producer Owen Bradley. Howard didn't identify the singer, but Owen's curiosity was piqued. When he found out, Conway found a new home at Decca. His records were country, though

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Clockwise from lower left: magic at the mike no matter what the era; at Decca Records in 1970 with Loretta Lynn and others; in Canada with his band in 1958; with Loretta in October 1977; and visiting the Houston Livestock Show in 1974. He had 50 Number One hits in all.



From the start, his love of country, gospel and blues infused his vocals with pure Mississippi Delta soul.

onstage he sang some rock and blues.

There was some skepticism in Nashville, and Conway's early Decca hits were minor; then in 1968 "The Image of Me" went to Number Five, starting him on a roll that never really ended. His first Number One was "Next in Line," followed by others that became classics, among them "Hello Darlin'," "Fifteen Years Ago," his vocal version of Floyd Cramer's "Last Date" and his controversial 1973 song, "You've Never Been This Far Before." Straitlaced listeners and radio stations felt it too racy; it wouldn't raise an eyebrow today.

Conway didn't try to record crossover hits. He and his friend Loretta Lynn enjoyed a streak of down-home hit duets. His own early hits featured bluegrass-like vocal harmonies from Conway and background vocalists Carol Lee Cooper (daughter of Wilma Lee and Stony) and L.E. White. His momentum remained through the Nashville Sound and Outlaw eras, from Urban Conway to New Traditional. A Twitty single that didn't reach

Number One was a fluke; few ranked below Top Five. His skill in creating sensual, catchy ballads successful in any climate gave him virtually no "slack" periods for 25 years. That consistency was nothing short of amazing. Few of today's "hot new" artists will ever equal it.

Offstage, hard living wasn't part of Conway's makeup. Like Buck Owens, business savvy brought him wealth, in Conway's case through real estate, a booking agency owned with Loretta Lynn, the Nashville Sounds baseball team and more. A suspicion that Nashville's tourism could sustain more than Opryland led to the multi-million dollar Twitty City amusement complex, which opened in 1982. Later, he and other performers invested in the Treasure Island resort in the Bahamas. In recent years, seeking a simpler life, he sold off all but Twitty City, part of Treasure Island and some land.

Changing labels often heralds the end of an artist's glory days. But not for Conway. He left MCA in 1982 to sign

briefly with Elektra, then signed with Warner Brothers and found a formula of turning pop hits like "Rest Your Love on Me," "Slow Hand," "The Rose," "Heartache Tonight" and "Three Times a Lady" into country smashes. Back with MCA in 1987, he continued with Top Tens like "That's My Job," "Saturday Night Special," "I Wish I Was Still in Your Dreams," the ultra-macho "Tight Fittin' Jeans," "Crazy in Love" and "I Couldn't See You Leavin'."

Soon, MCA will release *Final Touches*, Conway's last studio album. It's a finished project and not one thrown together to exploit his passing. It is a fitting way to close his career. Consider what he told Bob Allen in these pages three years ago. "This business is like walking through a swamp with 90% quicksand, and you gotta stay on your toes to stay outa that stuff. So I'm constantly trying to watch and learn, because if you use your head, you can last a long time in country music."

He learned, he lasted, and he will be missed. ■

THE ROPER SPIRIT



CATHY MARTINDALE

Occupation:
Television Personality

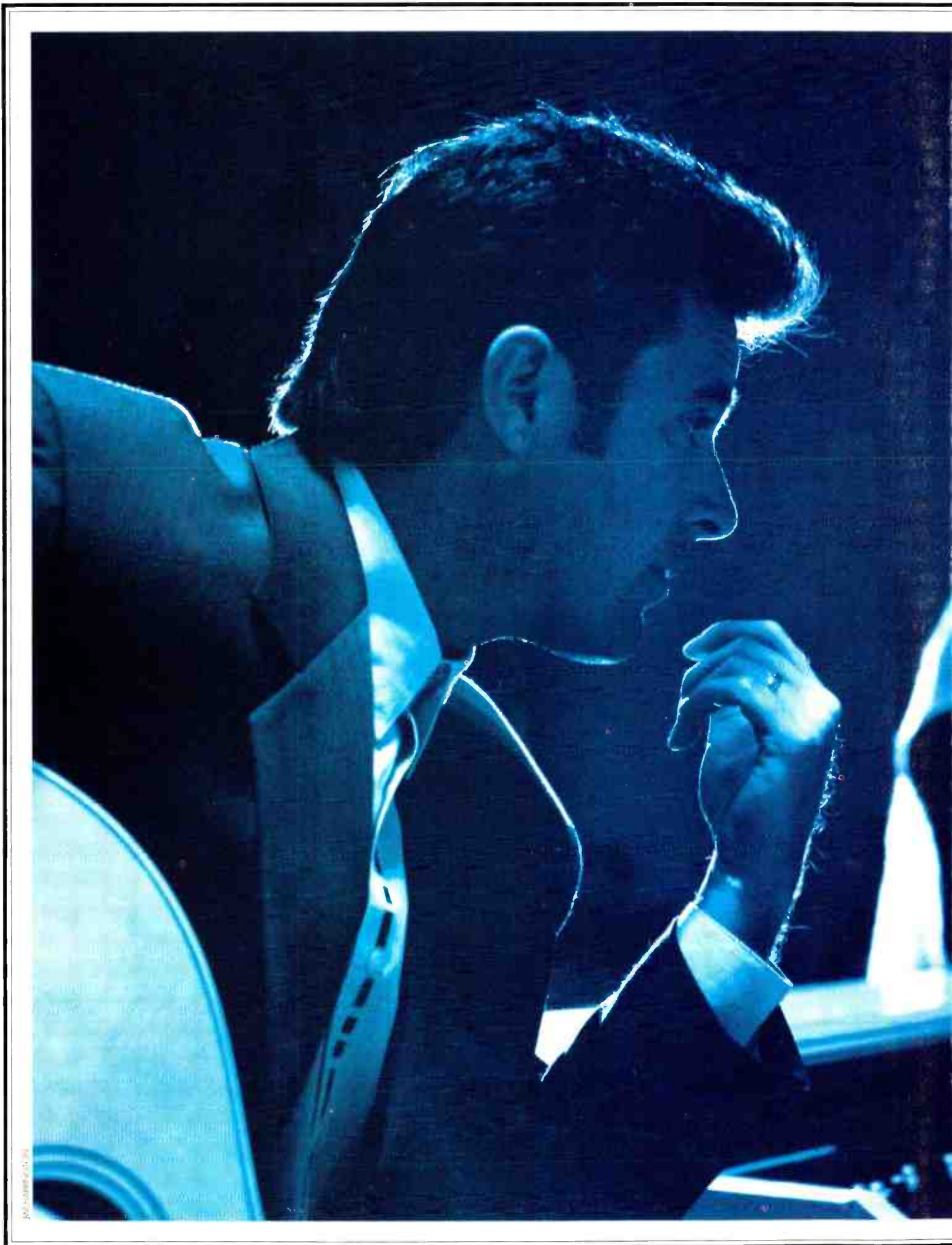
Latest Achievement:
Host of TNN's "Country Beat"
and "Video PM."

Interests:
"I live to fish - everything from perch
to marlin! I also enjoy
horseback riding, snow skiing
and gardening."

Quote:
"The best part of my job is meeting new
artists when they're just starting out and then
getting to watch them rise to stardom."

Roper





JOE HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

At the Vince Gill recording session, it's Christmas in May and there's musical magic in the air. But the star is dealing with some conflicting emotions this year. And, true to form, it all shows up in the music.

There's a very relaxed, cordial kind of atmosphere in the studio. The guys aren't goofing off exactly—far from it, they're very much on the job—but it's odd; they're so casual about it all, they're almost a caricature. You know: Nashville cats, man. They play stuff in their sleep or other dudes can't match in a month. And they really do. Their work flows with such apparently effortless individual precision, and meshes together so beautifully into a whole, that the usual metaphors—your Swiss watch, your high-performance auto engine—aren't even in the neighborhood. The music happening here is way beyond all that, such a thing that it has the feel of magic.

But still it's the workaday world for these guys, and it has that feel, too. All the principal players—musicians, producer, engineer, singer/star—are, after all, simply earning their keep, doing what they did last week and will be doing next month, and so the energy in the studio is a calm, steady kind of force, not the high charge of creative chaos, risk or passion. This is business as usual.

Well, perhaps for the singer/star it isn't, since by definition he's the eye of a travelling hurricane, and his usual working environment, out there in the wide open places where the egos fly free, is often a lot loonier and lonelier than this.

For a star, though, Vince Gill seems remarkably calm, so unassuming that he appears almost ego-deficient. Perhaps the standard rap on him, that he's really just one of the boys in the band among his fellow musicians, has some reality to it. And perhaps that's why everyone else in the studio is so relaxed—which isn't, you understand, the way it always is. I've been in more than one star's session where you needed a chainsaw, never mind a knife, to cut the atmosphere, and I'm sure that's true for everyone else.

All the same, Vince is very clearly the man who matters most in the studio. For one thing, he doesn't blend into the woodwork visually the way he does behaviorally; he alone in this gathering actually looks like a star, while the others look pretty much like what they are. Tony Brown, the producer (with the numbers one, two, and five albums on the country charts this particular day, probably *the* producer) is compact, neatly bearded, casually fashionable and fast of foot and lip, very much the wired-in, make-good-things-happen man—sort of a power pixie of the console and cel-

lular phone. John Guess, the first engineer, a bearded, middle-aged fellow who delivers his occasional laconic comments around the stem of a comfortable old unlit pipe protruding from the corner of his mouth, also fits the occupational profile, and so do the session musicians, which is to say that they look exactly like middle-aged liberal arts professors at some obscure, extremely permissive college.

I dunno. I study the musicians, then Vince, and I find myself thinking it's a good thing he finally hit the big time. The whole idea of a tall, dark, handsome, trim, athletic, suave, sexy, session jock, which was his role during his years of falling short in the charts, just doesn't fit, and I

understand perfectly why, apart from him being such a well-known nice guy and all, his peers rooted so long and loudly for his ascent to celebrity. The way it is these days, it's more comfortable for everyone, not just Vince.

Here he comes now, ambling into the control room from the studio itself (Vince tends towards a shuffle more than a stride, and often moves slightly stooped, as if trying to downplay his height). He and the guys have just finished their first three runs at "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"—right, it's a Christmas album being made in May—and, with a consensus that something worth keeping might be on tape, it's time for ev-

eryone to gather in the control room and listen. So Vince sinks onto a couch set directly behind the producer's and engineer's chairs at the console, with the musicians sitting or standing around him, and off we go, take three first.

Each man has his own way of listening. Leland Sklar, the massively bearded, truly legendary bass player (yes, the A Team is working today) leans against the back of the console, facing everyone else, with his head bowed into his chest like some funky Druid communing with the earth gods. Steve Gibson, the sly country-jazz guitarist (and producer of McBride and The Ride, among others) has picked out a spot on the ceiling and is staring unfocusedly straight at it. Shane Kiester, the session leader—he used to be the top keyboard man in Nashville, now he's close to being the top man in New York—stands against the wall with his head back, eyes shut, his features dancing to every musical twist and turn and chord change. Tony Brown, perpetually in motion, scans the faces around him for reaction. Vince himself sits calm and low and still, studying the

VINCE GILL'S BLUE CHRISTMAS

by Patrick Carr

"I think that country music is a very blue music, just like soul music. It's a very soulful art form, and what touches me as a listener is that emotion that comes from that blue sound."

toe of the black suede cowboy boot at the end of one long black-jeaned leg crossed over another in front of him. The picture of well-dressed composure.

Take three ends, and Vince asks to hear take two. Marty Williams, the second engineer, punches up the appropriate numbers on his digital unit, and we listen.

"Hmm," Vince ventures. "Three's better, but I don't know about that Rhodes." He's talking about Shane Kiester's part, played on a Fender Rhodes electric piano.

"Think it's too schmaltzy?" asks Tony. They're going for style on this Christmas album, not country corn (Vince says he's modelling his approach on Tony Bennett, Mel Torme, Johnny Mathis, those guys).

"Yeah," Vince says. "Let's go back to the acoustic. Shane?"

Shane nods. "Yeah. No problem. And that'll get it away from the Rhodes on 'I'll Be Home for Christmas,' 'cause that sounds real similar."

Vince agrees, then moves on. "Let me hear the end guitar part again, by itself, before tracking. There was something weird in there. Just so we don't get into, y'know, overdubs from hell."

Marty Williams goes for his controls again. "Okay, that's track nine, or... Wait. You mean the electric?"

"The electric," says Vince.

Marty punches up the track, and Steve Gibson's guitar part comes belling through the studio monitors, a beautifully fat, full sound—damn, he's good—but the glitch Vince heard on the first playback isn't there. Therefore it must be somewhere else.

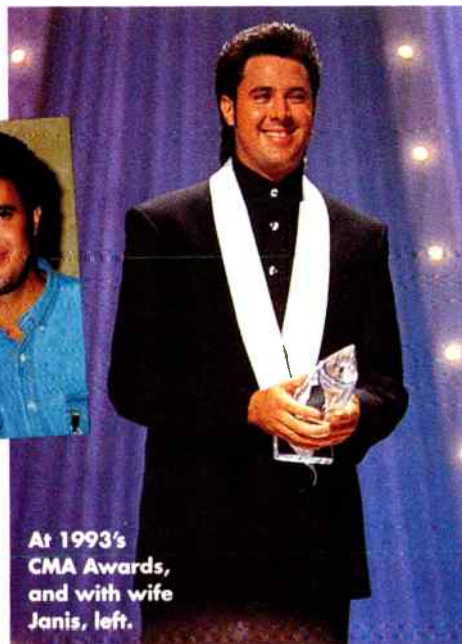
They go looking for it among the other players' performances, each recorded on its own separate track, and find it quickly in Dean Parks' acoustic guitar part, or rather in the way his and Steve Gibson's parts end up at odds with each other. Nobody understands quite why that is, because in theory everything should be hunky dory, harmonically speaking, but oh, well, go figure: just one of music's many little mysteries. Shane Kiester works out a solution, then quickly rewrites the offending few bars, runs the new chart through the xerox machine, and hands out copies to the other musicians.

"Okay, gentlemen," says Tony Brown with a pleasant little grin. "Man your instruments. Let's run it down."

Take four kicks off—tape rolling on the big master decks behind the control room, Shane counting it off out in the studio—and it goes very well.

The new acoustic piano part is much more soulful, and you can tell that the musicians are still on the up curve with this particular number. The subtle new shifts in their performances sound right and natural,

moving the track towards its essence rather than diluting or overcomplicating it. And Vince's vocal, barely distinguishable in its pitch-perfect precision from his last performance, is fine, just fine. Pretty damn good by any standard you could dream up, that is. Uneanny. Sort of



At 1993's CMA Awards, and with wife Janis, left.

amazing. Wonderful, really. It's just like Tony Brown says, turning around from the console with a knocked-out grin, "Now, is that a voice, or is that a voice?"

Perfection, however? Perhaps not. You never know. So Tony sends into the studio that combination of little words spoken by producers and listened to by session jocks far, far more than any in the language: "One more, guys." And on it rolls, soaking up the hours.

It goes almost without saying that Vince Gill's career is in very good shape; anyone exposed to TNN or country radio can figure that out immediately. The major features of his biography are probably familiar, too: his Oklahoma roots; his bluegrass/newgrass training; his years with the country-rock band Pure Prairie League and then Rodney Crowell's Cherry Bombs (with Tony Brown on keyboards, not at all incidentally); the next few years of working the Nashville studios and trying to hit the big time as a solo artist while, much to the delight of angle-seeking celebrity journalists up to and including Barbara Walters, his wife Janis did rather well, thank you, as half of Sweethearts of the Rodeo; then the huge success of "When I Call Your Name," a ballad of such mournful power that it was surpassed only by George Jones' "He Stopped Loving Her Today" in a recent survey of country fans' all-time favorite songs; and now stardom. And stardom, mind you, without a hat, a dance, a hairdo, an array of computer-driven pyrotechnic stage effects, or anything else but, well, that voice.

Two other well-known items figure largely in the basic Vince Gill information package: he seems easily moved, often shedding tears in public (during awards shows, Barbara Walters interviews, etc.), and he is obsessed with golf. He's not alone in the latter regard, of course—half the hillbilly musicians you meet these days are running late for tee time, and isn't that just a grand little indicator of Music Row's overall upward mobility?—but Vince is a special case. He's serious enough, and good enough, to play at semi-pro level, and moreover he's no Jim-Bob-come-lately to the lure of the links. A good solid upper-middle-class boy from the get-go (his father's a federal judge), he's been an ardent golfer since his teens.

So Vince and golf, I'm told, are never very far apart. I believe that, too, for even in the studio today the connections are constant. When I walk past him at the phone in the reception area outside the control room, I hear him setting up a golf date. When I ask Tony Brown about the big, deeply tanned, ultra-clean-cut fellow in the Lacoste shirt who doesn't seem to know anyone but is sitting in the control room for the whole late afternoon, I'm told he's a golf buddy of Vince's, maybe even a famous one. ("Those guys just show up," says Tony. "I never know who they are"). And when Janet Rickman, the MCA Records publicist, asks Vince, "What was that I heard you'd said? Being in the music business was ruining your golf?" his reply has a ring to it: "This music thing is getting in the way of my golf game." It's a routine kind of quip, of course, but I'll bet he's at least half serious.

The relationship between golf and mu-

sic isn't very interesting, though (which is putting it mildly). Country music and male emotionalism, on the other hand, is rather obviously a subject of some substance; the richest vein running through the music's whole history has after all been the self-expression of some of the most spectacularly broken-hearted sons of bitches who ever opened their mouths in front of a microphone. Therefore this is one of the first items on the agenda when Vince and I sit down to talk over dinner.

"I read something you said in another interview about the kind of songs you value the most," I begin. "You said, 'The sadder the better for me. I even like a little death in there.'"

"Well, yeah," he says. "I think that country music is a very blue music, just like soul music. It's a very soulful art form, and what touches me as a listener is that emotion that comes from that blue sound. I don't very often hear happy-happy songs that jerk my heart out. Do you? I mean, I think 'He Stopped Loving Her Today' is one of the greatest songs of all time, and it deals with death. There's no use pretending that death doesn't go on.

"I don't know. It's just that I get more of an emotional pull from that blue side, and I'm able to convey it to people as a singer."

"Well," I note, "you sure have hit the motherlode, sad song-wise. Now you're that lonely guy with the real high voice."

He shrugs. "Yeah. And it's really quite odd, 'cause I'm really quite funny, and I enjoy laughing a lot."

"You know, I've seen you in tears on TV a couple of times, and I'm wondering about something Rosanne Cash said, that you're a person who has his emotions accessible. According to her, that's a rare quality in a man."

"I remember when she said that. I think probably my emotions aren't hidden. If I'm angry, I'm angry. If I'm sad, I cry. I guess I'm not afraid to have my emotions show in whatever way they decide to."

"Any idea why not? I mean, I think Rosanne's right. That's unusual."

"I just think I've lived the majority of my life in a very creative environment, a very expressive environment," he reflects. "I don't go to a place and do my work. My work is right there for you to see, and it kind of leaves you naked. So I think that would have something to do with it. And, yeah, I come from a very emotional family. There was probably more reactionary emotion than anything else—everybody had a temper in my family. You always knew where you stood with my folks. If you screwed up, they let you know about it.

"I never remember much crying, though. That came along later. It's great to get older and embrace a lot of those emotions with your folks that you couldn't when you were younger. Being



able to tell your dad you love him and have him say it back to you, that can be really hard—for him to have the courage to say it, and for me too."

I hear that and stare at something on our dinner table for a moment, just the way I'm staring out the window as I write these words. In both instances I'm aware of a fact so far unmentioned in either our conversation or this story.

The fact is that Vince is mourning his big brother, Bob Coen, who died in March.

I myself didn't know that until, during lunch break in the studio, Vince wandered up to me and we started chatting. I made the observation that the vocals he'd been performing sounded sad, and he said that well, that figured. He'd lost his brother recently, and the Christmas theme was making him think about how painful the holiday season might feel this year. The only new song he planned to record for the album, in fact, was one he'd just written on that subject. It would be "my one songwriting statement, a tribute to him."

I expressed my sympathy and asked some questions, which he answered.

"He died of a heart attack. My mother found him, in his house. Nope, he didn't have any kids.

"He had a pretty rough life. He had a car wreck when he was 21, just about to graduate college. He was going real fast, and it was real bad; he was in a coma for three months, not expected to live, and they said if he did live, he'd never do this, never do that, he'd be a vegetable, and so on. But he came out of it, prob-

ably not altogether like he'd been. Just a few things you take for granted he didn't have any more—memory and stuff. Head injuries are real interesting, you know. They say that only, like, five percent of head-injured people who are in a coma for more than a few days ever retain all the functions they had before.

"So he had a pretty rough life the last 25 years. He tried to work for a while, but he couldn't keep a job long. He'd forget to do things—little things like putting oil in his car, he could never remember to do it and he'd burn motors up. So he never really could find a great job, and he just..."

He stopped there, expressing himself with a grimacing little shrug.

"You have any other brothers or sisters?" I asked.

"Yeah. One sister, two and a half years older. I was the youngest. I was the accident."

I told him then about my own recent loss, a daughter, and I asked if he, like me, felt the pain physically after it happened.

"Yeah. I was sick for two weeks. I just shut down. The body has a way of doing what it needs to, physically and emotionally too."

"Have you had a chance to just bawl about it?"

"Yeah, a few times," he said quietly. "Good," I told him. "You have to." He agreed.

Neither of us wanted to say any more, so he loped off into the control room and I stayed alone in the studio. And as I sat there on a speaker case, staring at the walls, it suddenly occurred to me: The studio was very familiar to me, and from very long ago and far away. I remembered, in fact, sitting in a bedroom many thousands of miles from Nashville and staring at a black-and-white photo on the back of one of the first record albums I ever owned, somewhere around 1959: the great Jim Reeves singing into an RCA boom mike in this very studio, with what looked like the greater part of a full symphony orchestra at their viols and cellos behind him. So this—Javelina Studio today—was the old RCA Studio A, the big one, where the very smoothest, most stylish records of the Nashville Sound era were created.

Well, I thought, fancy that. What an appropriate setting for a Vince Gill session. Could the spirit of Gentleman Jim be in here somewhere, communicating his velvety vibe to the premier country crooner of the 90's?



The greatest challenge with a Christmas album, of course, is to make it not just another Christmas album. Tony Brown and Vince have solved that problem by making theirs not just another country Christmas album—that is, they're going the classic route, interpreting standards like "White Christmas" and Mel Tormé's "The Christmas Song" ("Chestnuts roasting on an open fire..."). But that means they now face the problem of achieving something original. These songs, after all, have been done.

Right now, for instance, there's some concern over "White Christmas." It's late afternoon on the last day of recording, with Vince's song about his brother not even begun, and all the guys are still feeling their way through yet another subtle variation on a jazzy, tastefully understated, but not quite right arrangement around the song's unchangeable melody. Tony, at the console, is using a call from Kelly Willis to express his frustration—"Yeah, this Christmas stuff is a pain. Would you believe we've been four hours on 'White Christmas'?" The chief and assistant engineers are, respectively, in the bathroom and at the coffee machine. The rest of us, including the (famous?) golfer in the polo shirt, are watching the walls, filing our nails, counting armadillos, thinking about home improvements, etc.

Eventually, though, Vince and the guys latch onto something they like, man their instruments and microphones, and put three new takes on tape. "Y'know, we may have something there," Tony concludes with visible relief after the last note has died away. "Let's have lunch and listen back after."

Lunch is lovely—cold poached salmon with all the trimmings (three-pasta and romaine-endive salads, raspberry torte, various juices; your typical hillbilly fare)—and, although the problems with "White Christmas" have injected a certain weariness into the atmosphere, the overall mood is still very pleasant. Everyone, Vince included, is on the lookout for a little laugh whenever possible, so there's a lot of banter, joking and punmanship. When Janis Gill drops in for a quick visit, for instance, and Tony Brown compliments her on her ultrachic, Sweetheart-of-the-Boardroom outfit—"Nice suit, Janis. Armani?"—Vince lowers his usual mild-mannered tenor into a passable imitation of a

redneck baritone and quips, "Yup. Got that fer her down in Mexico. Only three-quarters the price of your reg'lar Armani."

The break works. As lunch concludes and listen-back time approaches, the group's steady vibe of relaxed creativity is back on line.

Ditto Vince's individual state. When I sit down with him for a few minutes before he goes back to work, he has nothing but good to say.

"Yes, I think I have found my niche," he says. "Kind of, anyway. 'When I Call Your Name' kind of cast me as something of a balladeer, and I'm happy about that, 'cause I always wanted to sing ballads. Like we talked about before, that's where more emotion comes from."

"So before that song," I ask, "were you searching around for something?"

"Oh, yeah. That very record, the *When I Call Your Name* album, Tony and I will both admit freely that it's pretty diverse. We just kind of, 'Let's do a little bit of this. Now let's do a little bit of that.' So yeah—it was always like making records with a little bit of guesswork in mind, rather than a little bit of light. Always kind of wondering, where's the light?"

"So you'd say that success has been liberating for you, creatively speaking?"

"Yeah, I think so. That wondering of 'What is it?' has gone. And also, there are so many people here that always said I should be a huge star, so this pressure—'Ah, he never delivered. He was a great singer, great player, but he never delivered'—that's gone too."

"And you're really doing the music you want, huh?"

"Yeah, I think so. I'm real comfortable with it. I'm glad the commercially successful thing for me turned out to be something that was very much a part of my roots: acoustic music and bluegrass, really traditional, country-oriented kind of stuff."

"Are there things you haven't done yet, directions you'd like to go in?"

"I dunno. The songs will take you. And this Christmas record's been a blast. I'm playing and singing stuff that I would never get the opportunity to do if I weren't a commercial success."

"These little dabbling things I get to do—the duet with Gladys Knight on "Ain't Nothin' Like the Real Thing"; the Allen Toussaint song for the *Indecent Proposal* movie soundtrack where I got to use Little Feat as the band; the session I got to do with Michael McDonald—little deals like that are more than enough. Even if I get to do an old r&b tune or an old blues tune at a sound check, that's fun. It doesn't have to be recorded and put out and judged, all that. The happiness can come from within. So yeah, I'm enjoying it all."

That wraps it up. We go back into the control room and listen to "White Christmas." Tony and Vince agree that, well, it's getting there, but it has a way to go. So Vince and the boys troop back out into the studio and perform takes three, four, five and six, then come back into the control room to listen again. Take five's a good'un, it's agreed, but there are glitches that need fixing. The clock ticks on, and soon I know that I have to leave and catch my flight home before Vince sings the song for his brother. And that's what happens. As I walk from the control room, I can still see him sitting calmly at the studio mike and hear his gentle, melancholy vocal: "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the ones I used to know..."

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Our Family of Publications

What's your favorite part of the *CMSA Newsletter*? For many, the answer is Legends of Country Music—the section where our own Rich Kienzle reaches into country music's past for profiles of the greats. This time out it's Johnny and Jack. Read all about them on pages F and G. And if Legends is your favorite section, and just whets your appetite for more, then our sister publication, *The Journal* of the American Academy for the Preserva-

tion of Old-Time Country Music, is for you. It's a whole magazine devoted to country music's historical figures. It's also about to celebrate its third anniversary. So, if you haven't checked it out yet, you've already missed a lot of good reading—from big stars to regional favorites and everyone in between, they're all in the pages of *The Journal*. Yep, we're proud of the quickly-growing baby of the family. Look for subscription offers in the mail, on your wrap and, occasionally, in the pages of CMM.

"Dream Concert of the Century"

A special story comes to us this issue from Norman Dolph, a member of Silver Eagle Publishers' Board of Directors, and longtime friend, Yale classmate and co-worker (at CBS Records in the 1960's) of publisher Russell D. Barnard. The famous Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is the setting for Norman's tale.

It was the call we all dread. Middle of the night, brother in Tulsa phones me in New York—Mother had a stroke. Hours of her dog's barking alerted a neighbor. Ambulance. Hospital. Intensive care unit. I catch the next plane, arrive Tulsa Wednesday night. Condition stable but some paralysis probable. Lot of spirit in the old girl though, which shows in her grip and twinkle.

What does this have to do with Delbert McClinton? While reading the *Tulsa World* (a Tulsan's only choice, the *Tribune* having just folded after 70 years) what do I see but the stupendous dream concert of the century—a perfect synergy of artist and venue as few other times in history. Beatles at Shea Stadium. Michael Jackson at the Super Bowl. And now, Delbert McClinton at Cain's Ballroom on Bob Wills Avenue (near North Main Street).

The facade is freshly painted, but no one would dare touch a flake of paint on the interior, which is probably just as it was the last time Hank Williams appeared there. It is a joint, a dive, a fire-trap and when that sucker goes (and my every prayer goes to God that it will happen at noon on some Wednesday in June when it is totally empty), it will be gone. And I mean irreplaceable.

Cain's was, I suppose, the poor man's



Ryman Auditorium. It was home to Bob Wills for a time and later Johnnie Lee Wills, his brother. All the major recording stars touring the southwest were booked in it. Testimony to this is the irreplaceable collection of blown up (2' x 3') black and white promotion photographs which encircle the room and convert it



Tulsa's legendary Cain's Ballroom was the locale for Delbert McClinton. Norman Dolph (right), longtime associate of Russ Barnard, was there.



from a mere dance hall to a Louvre of country artistry.

Little Jimmy Dickens, Lefty Frizzell, Spade Cooley, Pat Breen, Moon Mullican, Gene Autry, Ernie Ford and Hank Williams to name a few. And of course, the Wills family and players adorn the stage wall. Even Leon McAuliffe, the quintessential steel guitarist (who "took it away"), beams down looking exactly like Buffalo Bob from *Howdy Doody*.

As a dance hall, it may be unique in the world. It has a "comfortable" floor. "Comfortable" you ask? The building is about 75 feet wide and 120 feet long. (The ratio is doubtless the golden section.) The center space, about 50' by 100', is isolated from the periphery and is supported on

In This Issue

- Dolph Visits Cain's Ballroom
- A Special Billy Ray Fan
- The Johnny & Jack Story
- Collections and Readers Create

Editor: George Fletcher

Executive Editor: Helen Barnard

Art Director: Kathryn Gray

railroad car springs. There is about 1/8" of give—3/8" in times of high stomp—that adds a lilt to every step. And the rhythmic movement of the crowd pulses the floor, which synchronizes the dancers in an uncanny way. Once experienced, never forgotten.

Nor have I forgotten about Delbert, or my mother either. She and my father used to come here, I bet. My father made a fifth of bootleg whiskey last a decade, with one snort at Thanksgiving and one at New Year's. They must have whizzed a few turns around this floor. When I go to the hospital tomorrow, I must ask her.

The ceiling is made of rectangular battens of Celetex about 2' by 4' tiled together, with simple decorative diamonds cut from plywood and painted red holding them in place. The stage is only about 30" off the ground. Very intimate feel between artist and crowd. Just dance up and shake hands.

The layout is sane and the sightlines are totally unobstructed. The dance area is a "T," across in front of the stage and down a wide center aisle which runs the length of the room. On either side tables for drinks and drinkers. In the back, pews for sitters, latecomers, or those who want to be close to the bar. Because Oklahoma serves funny beer (3.2% alcohol), the crowd never got rowdy or weird—just urinated a lot. But let me tell you—was had a good time.

Delbert arrived. Never felt so good. Whipped out a cigar so big I didn't know whether to smoke it or defend myself with it; lit that momma (In New York you can't even smoke at Madison Square Garden!) and I kicked back. Delbert, who looks just like James Garner (surely I can't be the first to say this in print), comes out and goes, "One, two, play!" And there is no pause for the next two hours. Classic Memphis lineup: drums, bass, guitar, keyboard, tenor sax and trumpet. DMcC played cowbell and now and then harmonica. He had more important things to do. "Every time I roll/Every time I roll/She's like rollin' a 7/Every time I roll the dice." He didn't write those words, but he sings 'em like he did.

The band, she is tight! If The Rolling Stones had been from the United States South, this might have been them. Delbert does songs with those inevitable, relentless, non-fruity chord changes that always go to the neat places. He wore a blue shirt and a pair of jeans. Wasn't a work shirt, just blue oxford cloth. Plain shoes. As "normal" as you or me. But he circumscribes the idiom of American "rock 'n' roll." I mean really, long neck, big cigar and this....What more could a

man possibly want!

He does work up a sweat. 'Bout three towels worth. He has a little bit of a paunch, which I think he protects to confirm his universal bond to the rest of us in the real world. To meet him on the street, you might take him for the successful regional manager of a chain of lawn and garden supply stores. Nice neighborly fellow, far less menacing than his pictures on the album jackets. But on stage, it's "Lipstick traces on a cigarette...!"

People are jumping. Somebody remarks, "Hope the fire marshall doesn't come by" (Sign says "Capacity 1123"). I keep my eye on the nearest exit, which I suppose sane people have been doing since 1939 when Cain's opened. He gets

an ovation. He comes out for an encore. Three more songs and a bit of humble thank you banter. For a closing number he auditions would-be "Raelettes" to supply the field holler (that's mellismatic appoglotura to you). He builds up to the climax and then holds the microphone to the face of various Aretha wannabes. Most are embarrassingly feeble and draw a huge laugh. When he finally locates the right one, the effect is electrifying. He says, "That's it!" Takes a bow. Show's over.

And my mother, with thanks to, and the blessing of, God is out three weeks later, rehab'd, home and rarin' to go.

Norman Dolph
New York City, New York

Concert Comments

Julie Yocum, of Mapleton Depot, Pennsylvania, checks in again, this time with a review on Diamond Rio.

When the reigning ACM and CMA group of the Year, Diamond Rio, recently performed in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, it was apparent why they have received such honors. The group, which was in town with Michelle Wright and Alabama, had the sold-out crowd rockin'. From the time they hit the stage with "Nowhere Bound," you knew you were in for a good time, or as lead singer Marty Roe says, "a party"! They were running all over the stage, on top of the speakers, and even playing to the fans seated behind the stage. Calling their show "high energy" would be an understatement.

Of course, all the great Diamond Rio hits were there, but they also showed another side of their sound when they went into a bluegrass medley. Highlighted by Gene Johnson playing the fire out of the fiddle and Jimmy Olander's outstanding banjo picking, I'm sure the song made bluegrass fans out of anyone who previ-

ously wasn't. Marty, Gene and Dana Williams filled the hall with beautiful harmonies, while we got to see Brian Prout drumming his heart out at the front of the stage for a change. The show's finale was the mega-hit, "Norma Jean Riley," which was co-written by keyboard player Dan Truman.

Julie Yocum
Mapleton Depot, Pennsylvania

Country Music Lookalikes/ Soundalikes

Ever seen Spy Magazine's "Separated at Birth" column, where they pair up noted personalities with similar features? Well, Jay McKenna of Yorba Linda, California, apparently has, and he sends us his take on country music star lookalikes and even soundalikes. It's all in fun, folks....hold the rotten tomatoes.

- Lorrie Morgan is really 60's glamour girl Joey Heatherton. Joey just got nipped and tucked and put a twang in her voice.
- Are Travis Tritt and bad boy rocker David Lee Roth soulmates? They both spell t-r-o-u-b-l-e.
- Lookalikes: Dave Gibson of the Gibson/



Appearing in concert in the famous flood town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, were the boys of Diamond Rio. CMSA member Julie Yocum (center) was there. Also on the bill were Michelle Wright and Alabama.

Miller Band and Gentle Ben (famous TV grizzly bear).

•Soundalikes: Mary-Chapin Carpenter and no one. The lady's music is unique.

•If Shelby Lynne shaved her head, would she be Sinead O'Connor?

•If Randy Travis keeps up his body-building, could he be Arnold Schwarzenegger's twin? Yes, but he'd have to sing with an Austrian accent.

•Would it be indecent to propose that Alan Jackson is the Robert Redford of country music?

Jay McKenna

Yorba Linda, California

A Special Meeting with Billy Ray

Brenda Harvey of Tallulah, Louisiana, and her two daughters found a friend in Billy Ray Cyrus.

In October 1992 our house burned and left my two daughters and myself devastated. One of the first things bought for the girls was a new radio and some tapes, the first of them being Billy Ray Cyrus' *Some Gave All*. My oldest child, Carla (age 13), and youngest, Kristi (age 8, with Down syndrome), both love "Achy Breaky Heart," just like everyone else.

When Christmas came, Kristi told Santa that she wanted to see Billy Ray. Well, I called Gilly Crowder of McFadden Artists (Billy Ray management) and told them the story. They sent us four tickets and backstage passes for Billy Ray's show at the Pyramid Arena in Memphis on March 7th. The children were just beside themselves, and just looking at their faces made everything worthwhile.

About two weeks before the show, the girls decided they wanted to give Billy Ray something. Carla made him a shirt and was very proud of herself. Then there was the gift from Kristi. I had no idea what to give this man that had everything. Then, early one morning before the show, a poem about Billy Ray and my daughter came to me, and I had it made into a plaque, with a picture of Kristi—a very special fan—for his bus.

The day of the concert, Carla wasn't feeling well. Sure enough, she had a 24-hour virus and would miss the star she wanted so much to meet. A friend stayed with Carla while Kristi, Barbara Sanders (a nurse who travels with us) and I went to the show. Carla wanted me to go so I could give Billy Ray the shirt she had made. We enjoyed the show, as we knew we would.

Afterwards, we went backstage and awaited his appearance. It was late and Kristi was getting very tired. She was ready to go until right behind her stood the tall, smiling, long-haired superstar she adores. When she turned around, her



Brenda Harvey's daughter, Kristi, was thrilled to meet Billy Ray Cyrus.

He said she should make him another and give it to him next time. He also signed a picture for her.

While the shirt and picture did not take his place, it helped ease her pain. And sometime in the near future, Billy Ray will finally meet Carla and will see Kristi, "A Very Special Fan," once again.

Also, the day of the concert, we found out that Billy Ray had spent time at St. Jude's Children's Hospital, and would make an annual donation to them.

One thing I've learned over the years living with my little girl, Down syndrome children are very good judges of character, and they always see the inner person. What Kristi sees in Billy Ray is a genuine, loving man.

**Brenda Harvey
Tallulah, Louisiana**

eyes lit up like it was Christmas again. We gave him the plaque, and he leaned down and put one of his towels around Kristi's neck. He knelt down next to her and read the poem. When he looked up, he had the most sincere look I had ever seen. He smiled and said it was the nicest thing anyone had ever given him. Then we presented him with the shirt Carla had made, and he put it on for pictures, then took it off and signed it for Carla. He said he loved it, but wanted her to have it.

JULY 1993 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

Alan Jackson	<i>A Lot About Livin'</i> (And a Little 'Bout Love)
George Strait	"When Did You Stop Loving Me"

Alan Jackson is still at the top of the album heap this time out. In fact the Top Five are a near duplicate of last issue, with only Number Four being different: George Strait's *Pure Country* remains at Number Two and cover boy Vince Gill's *I Still Believe in You* is still ensconced in third, while Tracy Lawrence's *Alibis* jumps in and bumps Reba out of fourth. Brooks & Dunn hold at Number Five with *Hard Workin' Man*.

George Strait's latest was your top single pick, by a pretty wide margin, too. He's followed by Vince Gill's "No Future in This Past," which is followed by Clint Black and Wynonna's duet, "A Bad Goodbye." Landing in fourth, but nipping closely at the heels of Clint and Wy, is Patty Loveless with "Blame It on Your Heart." Fifth place belongs to Tracy Lawrence's "Alibis," the title track from his album, the second time in the Top Five.

Rhode Island's Hayloft Jamboree

Back in the November/December 1989 Newsletter, we told you about Eddie Zack and his family band. They're about to celebrate their 55th anniversary. Fan club president Anita Hubert of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, fills us in.

Eddie Zack, his brother "Cousin" Richie and The Hayloft Jamboree started playing country music in 1939. They were one of the first to bring country music to Rhode Island. Eddie is now 70 years old, Richie is 68. Next year (on April 16th), we will be giving them a 55th Anniversary Party at the King Phillip Inn in Bristol, Rhode Island. The governor of the state and the mayor of Bristol will be attending, and presenting the band with a citation for their years of service.

On Sunday mornings from 10 A.M. to 12 noon, Eddie and Richie serve as DJ's on Providence's WHIM Radio. The Hayloft Jamboree performances, at clubs and halls throughout Rhode Island, are regularly attended by 400 to 500 people.

**Anita Hubert
Fairhaven, Massachusetts**

Collecting the Magazine

Members help each other complete their magazine collections.

*Assorted country music magazines for sale. SASE for list. **Kay Kovar, 12210 West 96th Terrace, Apt. 205, Lenexa, KS 66215.**

*Wanted: back issues of *Country Music Magazine*—Sep/Oct/Nov/Dec 1979 and 1981. Also, any issues between Mar 1982 and Dec '89 with Barbara Mandrell. Also wanted: videos of Barbara Mandrell's special, *Something Special*, and *Hats Off to Minnie Pearl*. Will pay reasonable price or will send blank VHS tape. **J. Moore, 2016 Kinsman Rd., N. Bloomfield, OH 44450.**

*For sale: various issues of *Country Music*, *Music City News*, *Country Song Roundup*, *Country America* from 1973-1993; Grand Ole Opry books and weekly programs; song books of Elton Britt; 228-page song book of various country stars. Also country and pop LP's and 45's. **Ruth E. Pitts, 4600 Jackson Blvd., #175, Columbia, SC 29209.**

*Looking for two *Country Music Magazine* issues to complete my collection—Sep '72 and Sep '75. Will pay fair price. Also looking for Slim Whitman's album, *Record Hits* (LP 9102). Will pay fair price for album or to have a tape made up. Also looking for a Hank Thompson album, *An Old Love Affair*. **Norm Boucher, 8 Wildwood Ln., East Hampton, CT 06424-1813.**

Information, Please

Members write each other directly about information or items they need. When corresponding, include SASE. We reserve the right to edit for space and style.

*Looking for Dale McBride records: *Ordinary Man* (Con Brio 114, 1976), *Corpus Christi Wind* (Thunderbird 539, 1971), *Get Your Hands On Me Baby* (Con Brio 158, 1979), *Getting Over You Again* (Con Brio 109, 1976). Will pay reasonable price. Dale McBride is the father of Terry McBride of McBride and The Ride. Any info welcome. **Maggie Turner, 3923 S. Sunset Sq., Greenfield, WI 53220.**

*Wanted: John Schneider's 1982 release, *Quiet Man*. Also, a VHS copy of TNN's *American Music Shop* from 3/20-21/93 featuring Jon Ims. Reasonable prices paid. **Greg Janetta, 1150 Fairmount Ave., Vineland, NJ 08630.**

*Wanted: anything to do with Reba—newsletters, magazines etc. Also VHS tapes of Reba (TV, Fan Fair parties, etc.). Pay or swap. **Lovina Bourgerie, P.O. Box 8198, Bartlett, IL 60103.**

*For sale: articles, autographed photos, newsletters, fan club items on Clint, Randy, Ricky, Reba, Travis Tritt, Kathy Mattea, Garth, Billy Ray, Alan, Patty Loveless, Judds, Lee Greenwood and more. All originals...not copies. For price list, specify artists, send SASE with two 29 cent stamps. **Dana Stein, 345 E. 80th St., New York, NY 10021 #10B.**

*For sale: Reba concert photos. Send 29 cent stamp for list and sample photo. **Richard D. Moore, 20 Maple St., Hopedale, MA 01747.**

*Wanted: VHS copy of TNN's broadcast of Farm Aid V. Will pay reasonable price. **Linda Tvedt, 269 Oregon St., Ripon, CA 95366.**

*Looking for photos, posters, articles, anything pertaining to Clint, Travis Tritt, Billy Ray. Trade or pay reasonable price. **Nancy Baughman, 805 W. 10th St., Apt. C, Fremont, NE 68025.**

*Hank Williams Sr. memorabilia wanted: books, records—78's, LP's, etc. **Bob Vogel, 80 Beaver Grade Rd., McKees Rocks, PA 15136.**

*For sale: articles on The Judds, Marty Stuart, Travis Tritt, Joe Diffie, Kevin Welch, George Strait, Lorrie Morgan, Reba and Matthews, Wright and King. **Michelle Origer, Rt. 1 Box 85A, Omaha, AR 72662.**

*Fan club newsletters for sale. Send SASE for price and list. **Jo A. McNeill, P.O. Box 31584, Black Creek Postal Outlet, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.**

*Help! Does anyone out there have Part I of Bob Wills and His Texas Playboy tribute? **R. W. Reed, 1115 Greenlawn Ave., Culver City, CA 90280.**

*CMA/ACM Trading Cards, buy/sell/trade to complete my sets and yours. **Kelly Showalter, Route 1 Box 500, Penn Laird, VA 22846.**

*Help! Looking for Travis Tritt TNN special from April 5. Also, other videos and shows he was on. Will pay anything reasonable. **Lillian TeFor, South Rd., Moriah, NY 12960.**

*Wanted: Dolly memorabilia—photos, albums (especially older recordings), books, magazine cover stories and VHS tapes of TV appearances (particularly the last *Oprah* and the 5/3/93 *Arsenio Hall*). Please send list, prices and condition. **Dennis Shears, 6560 Mudd St., Lincoln, AL 35096.**

*Wanted: Conway Twitty memorabilia—photos, posters, rare records, etc. Looking for pen pals who are Conway fans. Also sell photos of Conway and others. **Leslie A. Gardner, 7533 Madora Ave., Canoga Park, CA 91306.**

*Send a SASE with country and western recordings wanted. I will search for them. **J. J. Hollin, 2113 Parkdale Ave., Glenside, PA 19038.**

*Wanted: Reba LP's, especially *Heart to Heart* and *Reba McEntire*, video tapes of Reba and magazines with Reba on the cover. **Rolland Johnson, P.O. Box 5002, Eureka, CA 95502-5002.**

*Wanted: VHS tapes of the 1990 and '91 Academy of Country Music Awards and of the 3/29/93 Barbara Walters special (w/Garth Brooks). Will provide tape for copy and pay reasonable price. **Stacy Howells, 14609 Colony Wy., Poway, CA 92064.**

*Wanted: Holly Dunn memorabilia. Photos, videos, articles etc. Send list, condition. **Doug Hendricks, RR 1, 21692 T.R. 175, Mount Blanchard, OH 45867.**

*For sale: onstage/offstage photos of country artists 1980-1993. Also, magazines, LP's, clippings and posters. I'm looking for concert photos of Crystal Gayle, Tanya Tucker and Patty Loveless from Opryland, Branson and Dollywood. Send SASE. **Galen Duncan, 3517 Grier Nursery Rd., Street, MD 21154.**

*Wanted: to buy or trade, the Elvis Collection Cards to complete my set. **Jimmy Tabor, 203 Betty St., Anderson, SC 29624.**

*Wanted: Anything on Little Texas: VHS tape on *Celebrities Outdoors*, ar-

ticles, photos, books, posters and postcards from their hometowns (Ada, OK; Arlington, TX; Longview, TX; Hamilton, OH; Cincinnati, OH.) Also anything on Billy Ray, Confederate Railroad and Doug Supernaw. Have articles and videos to trade or send prices. **Kimberly Sigel, Rt. #1 Box 299, Bedford, PA 15522.**

*Wanted: Anything on Dwight. Send list with prices. **Pat Walker, 19 Moore St. Lot 5, Thomasville, AL 36784.**

*Wanted: Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers albums. **Jo E. Sterns, 45 Park Dr., Williamsville, NY 14221.**

*For sale: large collection of country music LP's. Send want list. **Don C. Felster, 622 S. Mountain Rd., Dillsburg, PA 17019.**

*Thousands of country albums for sale: collectibles and out-of-print. Dolly, Hank, Loretta, etc. Want list or 4 stamps for large list. **Rick J. Cunningham, 134 Berwick St., Berwick, ME 03901-2702.**

*Wanted: RVS memorabilia. Anything and everything from early years in Grit to the present. Send list, prices and condition. Also looking to correspond with other serious RVS fans such as myself. **Leanna Marie Duh, 2080 Majestic Woods Blvd., Apopka, FL 32712.**

*Wanted: Sawyer Brown photos, articles, videos (especially *Star Search* footage), etc. Send list and prices. Also looking for an Amazing Rhythm Aces LP including Duncan Cameron. **Joy M. Jurrises, 605 10th Ave. NW, Waverly, IA 50677.**

*Wanted: records, tapes, CD's by Tom T. Hall: *I Witness Life*, *100 Children*, *In Search of a Song*, *We All Got Together*, etc. **Charley Huffman, 484 Pine Ln., Drummonds, TN 38023-7406.**

*Looking to buy LP, *The Music of Hank Williams—The Guitar Sounds of Rock Gunter*. Album was sold through Heather Enterprises in the late 60's or early 70's. **Gerald Wells, Box 549, Deer Lake, NF Canada AOK 2E0.**

*Wanted: Someone to tape episodes of *Dukes of Hazzard*. Will pay for episodes. **Karen Nowak, 366 Elm St., Stirling, NJ 07980.**

*Have country magazines, posters from magazines, cassettes, T-shirts, photos for sale. Am looking for Alan Jackson trading cards, photos, other items. Also, music by George Strait, Randy, Tanya, Lorrie Morgan. Will buy or trade. SASE with two stamps for list. Name favorites. **Mary Florane, 1400 2nd Ave. SE #311, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403.**

*Trying to locate a copy of Tommy Collins' "You Better Not Do That" on Capitol. I've always heard my mother talk about the song and would love to have a copy for her. A 45 would be perfect if anyone would part with it. Send name, condition and price. **Patricia Scott, P.O. Box 1047, Jones, OK 73049.**

*Wanted: promo items, older fan club merchandise, local articles and photos, etc., on George Strait. Have clippings for sale/trade on Garth, Alabama, Dolly, Kenny, RVS, Billy Ray, Billy Dean, Travis Tritt, Marty Stuart, Vince Gill, Dwight, Johnny Lee, more. Also want anything on Jason Gedrick. Send SASE. **Tammy Henriksen, 3152 W. Holladay, Tucson, AZ 85746.**

*For sale: country concert shots—Joe

Diffie, Collin Raye, Alan Jackson, Billy Dean, Aaron Tippin, Sammy Kershaw, Sawyer Brown and more. Send SASE for more information. **Barbara Cherry, 3625 Greenvale Rd., Baltimore, MD 21229.**

Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail. Pen Pals is a means of introducing CMSA members who wish to correspond. It is not a "personals" column. Physical descriptions and requests for romance will not be printed. We also reserve the right to edit for space and style. Parent's permission required for those 16 and under.

*Hello! My name is Robert. I'm 50 years old and love country music. Favorites are Conway, Jones and Elvis. Hobbies are fishing, camping, dancing. Want to correspond with female near my age. **Robert E. Sherwood #5317, P.O. Box 30, 49-2J, Pendleton, IN 46064.**

*Mom and daughter want new pen pals. Susie is 35, happily married. Would like to hear from fans of Alan Jackson, Mark Chesnut, Mark Collie. Collects photos of country singers. Monika is 16. Likes Garth, Alan, Clint, Mark Chesnut and Trisha. Wants pals of all ages. **Monika Thorson or Susie Jutawararat, P.O. Box 1907, Suisun City, CA 94564.**

*Hi. I'm a 33-year-old, single female who loves country music, traveling and NASCAR. Favorites are Garth, George Strait, Alan Jackson. Would like to hear from single men or females, but, please, no inmates. **Pam Killian, Rt. 2, Box 325, Hickory, NC 28601.**

*Hi, my name is Bill. I'm 24 years old and incarcerated. Seeking understanding correspondence from males and females. I'm a big country music fan. Favorites are Garth, Clint, Travis, Reba and Dolly. Please write. Will try to answer all. **William Burgess (AB206), #A-210-448, P.O. Box 740, London, OH 43140-0740.**

*Hello. My name is Jane Goodwin, widowed in the 60's, would like to hear from anyone who enjoys country music. Like George Jones, Randy Travis, Hal Ketchum, Doug Stone, Alan Jackson, Travis Tritt. **Jane Goodwin, Box 657, Dunkirk, NY 14048.**

*Hello, my name is Dee. I'm a single, 28-year-old female who enjoys country music. Favorites are: Reba, Alan Jackson, Dwight. Would love to hear from single guys with similar interests. Will answer all. **Dee Klein, P.O. Box 39161, Cincinnati, OH 45239.**

*Hi! My name is Patricia. I'm a 38-year-old, single lady. Would like to hear from country music fans my age. Favorites are Alabama, Billy Dean, Collin Raye and many more. Send photo if possible. No inmates. **Patricia Lorey, P.O. Box 245, Celina, TX 75008-0245.**

*Hi! My name is Darlene. I'm 55 and married. I love country music—favorites are Vince Gill, Alan Jackson, Reba, Lorrie Morgan. Would like to hear from other ladies, any age, who love music and like to write letters. No inmates, please. **Darlene Livingston, 2920 Hwy. 71 N.E., Mountainburg, AR 72946.**

*Hi there, my name is Michelle. I'm an 18-year-old, female country fan. Favorites are Billy Ray, Travis Tritt, Clint, Garth and more. Interests are sports,

What do

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Brooks & Dunn: Hard Workin' Man (Arista) 00887

Alabama: American Pride (RCA) 20614

Billy Dean: Fire In The Dark (Liberty/SBK) 00887

The Best Of Vince Gill (RCA) 00155

The Judds: Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 (RCA) 74054

McBride & The Ride: Hurry Down (MCA) 01508

The Best Of Lacy Dalton (Liberty) 01435

Radney Foster: Del Rio, TX 1959 (Arista) 00655

John Anderson: Seminole Wind (BNA) 83466

Clint Black: The Hard Way (RCA) 35458

Mark Chesnut: Longnecks & Short Stories (MCA) 20505

Patsy Cline: 12 Greatest Hits (MCA) 53849

Kathy Mattea: Lonesome Standard Time (Mercury) 00873

The Best Of Dolly Parton (RCA) 51583

Sammy Kershaw: Haunted Heart (Mercury) 01340

Charlie Daniels: America, I Believe In You (Liberty) 20847

Diamond Rio: Close To The Edge (Arista) 54478

Trisha Yearwood: Hearts In Armor (MCA) 21048

Marty Stuart: This One's Gonna Hurt You (MCA) 35348

George Strait: Ten Strait Hits (MCA) 25425

The Remingtons: Aim For The Heart (BNA) 60093

Sawyer Brown: Greatest Hits (Capitol/Curb) 43412

Larry Stewart: Down The Road (RCA) 01462

Aaron Tippin: Read Between The Lines (RCA) 05650

George Strait: Pure Country (MCA) 83064

Pam Tillis: Homeward Looking Angel (Arista) 00156

Robert Ellis Orrall: Flying Colors (RCA) 01188

Willie Nelson: Greatest Hits & Rare Tracks (Rhino) 63284

Suzy Bogguss: Voices In The Wind (Liberty) 00178

Brooks & Dunn: Brand New Man (Arista) 64331

Mark Collie (MCA) 00855

Garth Brooks: Ropin' The Wind (Liberty) 25535

Marty Brown: Wild Kentucky Skies (MCA) 01368

Jimmy Buffett: Songs You Know By Heart (Greatest Hits) (MCA) 42157

Alabama: Greatest Hits (RCA) 20247

Janie Fricke: Now & Then (Branson) 01503

Kenny Rogers: If Only My Heart Had A Voice (Giant) 01290

Steve Earle: Essential Steve Earle (MCA) 01347



Reba McEntire: It's Your Call (MCA) 00422

Hank Williams, Jr.: Out Of Left Field (Capricorn/Curb/Warner) 01350

Kentucky Headhunters: Rave On!! (Mercury) 01202

Lisa Stewart (BNA) 00986

Ray Stevens: Greatest Hits (MCA) 00416

Randy Travis: Greatest Hits Vol. 1 (Warner Bros.) 21091

Restless Heart: Big Iron Horses (RCA) 34548

John Michael Montgomery: Life's A Dance (Atlantic) 01265

Randy Travis: Greatest Hits Vol. 2 (Warner Bros.) 11125

Kenny Rogers: Greatest Hits (RCA) 01032

The Best Of The Statler Brothers (Mercury) 13572

Kathy Mattea: A Collection Of Hits (Mercury) 10791

Reba McEntire: For My Broken Heart (MCA) 73624

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The Oak Ridge Boys: Greatest Hits (MCA) 44417

Johnny Cash: Classic Cash (Mercury) 00595

Keith Whitley: Greatest Hits (RCA) 10728

Dwight Yoakam: This Time (Reprise) 01360



Lorrie Morgan: Watch Me (BNA) 03592

Vince Gill: I Still Believe In You (MCA) 21063

Loretta Lynn: Country Music Hall Of Fame Series (MCA) 00633

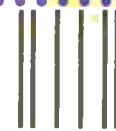
Dwight Yoakam: If There Was A Way (Reprise) 64310

The Best Of Baillie & The Boys (RCA) 64623

Confederate Railroad (Atlantic) 80635

Alan Jackson: Don't Rock The Jukebox (Arista) 43877

Holly Dunn: Milestones—Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.) 83614



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Garth Brooks: The Chase (Liberty) 00141

Conway Twitty: #1's/The Warner Bros. Years (Warner Bros.) 00522

Roy Rogers: Country Music Hall Of Fame Series (MCA) 00639

Trisha Yearwood (MCA) 64033

Merle Haggard Capitol Collector's Series (Capitol) 72263

Country Gospel Classics, Vol. 1 (Capitol/Nashville) 63955

Run C & W Into The Twangy-First Century (MCA) 01205

Crystal Gayle: Classic Crystal (EMI) 43259

Little Texas: First Time For Everything (Warner Bros.) 10009

Tracy Lawrence: Sticks And Stones (Atlantic) 05614

Vince Gill: Pocket Full Of Gold (MCA) 73599

The Judds: Greatest Hits (RCA) 44578

Kentucky Headhunters Electric Barnyard (Mercury) 25138

k.d. lang Shadowland (Sire) 34567

Emmylou Harris & The Nasr Ramblers At The Ryman (Reprise) 25475

K.T. Oslin: Greatest Hits—Songs From An Aging Sex Bomb (RCA) 01461



Travis Tritt: f-r-o-u-n-d-l-e (Warner Bros.) 44828

George Jones: Walls Can Fall (MCA) 00303

McBride & The Ride: Sacred Ground (MCA) 44394

Ronnie Milsap: Greatest Hits (RCA) 10243

Anne Murray: Fifteen Of The Best (Liberty) 64657

Marty Brown: High And Dry (MCA) 10837

Chieftans: Another Country (RCA Victor) 00268

Wickey Gilley: Make It Like The First Time (Branson) 01505

Roy Clark: Great Picks & New Tricks (Branson) 01501

Clint Black: Put Yourself In My Shoes (RCA) 24690

Suzy Bogguss: Aces (Liberty) 05631

Diamond Rio (Arista) 10702

The Forester Sisters: Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.) 60322

The Gatlin Brothers: Moments To Remember (Branson) 01504

See Greenwood: Greatest Hits (MCA) 40383

Sammy Kershaw: Don't Go Near The Water (Mercury) 25140

Chris LeDoux: Whatcha Gonna Do With A Cowboy (Liberty) 00101

The Best Of Restless Heart (RCA) 24774

Marty Stuart: Tempted (MCA) 70076

Billy Ray Cyrus: Some Gave All (Mercury) 41711



Aaron Tippin: You've Got To Stand For Something (RCA) 24816

Hank Williams, Jr.: Greatest Hits (Warner/Curb) 34553

Glen Campbell: Classics Collection (Capitol) 00564

Sons Of The Pioneers: Country Music Hall Of Fame Series (MCA) 00636

Joe Ely: Love And Danger (MCA) 01274

Skip Ewing: Greatest Hits (MCA) 11080

Mark Chesnut: Too Cold At Home (MCA) 24819

Patty Loveless: On Down The Line (MCA) 00553

Michael Martin Murphy: Cowboy Songs (Warner Bros.) 82231

Dan Seals: The Best (Capitol) 00042

Roy Rogers: Tribute (RCA) 73608

Billy Joe Royal: Greatest Hits (Atlantic) 53576

Wynonna Judd: Wynonna (MCA/Curb) 64540

Randy Travis: High Lonesome (Warner Bros.) 11075

Johnny Cash: The Sun Years (Rhino) 64181

Earl Thomas Conley: Greatest Hits (RCA) 62294

Reba McEntire's Greatest Hits (MCA) 6210

Garth Brooks: No Fences (Capitol) 73266

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Bruce Hornsby: Harbor Lights (RCA) 01262

k.d. lang: Ingénue (Warner Bros./Sire) 44370

Genesis: We Can't Dance (Atlantic) 00423

Elton John: The One (MCA) 35022

Tina Turner: Simply The Best (Capitol) 01195

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U2: Achtung Baby (Island) 25174

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Creedence Clearwater Revival: Chronicle—20 Greatest Hits (Fantasy) 01520

Fleetwood Mac: Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.) 00796

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The Doors: L.A. Woman (Elektra) 00215

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GEORGE STRAIT

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GEORGE STRAIT

Update '93

Vital Statistics

Given name: George Strait
 Birthdate: May 18, 1952
 Birthplace: Pearsall, Texas
 Family: Wife, Norma; son, George Jr.,
 nickname, Bubba.
 Height: 5'10"
 Weight: 160
 Color eyes: Green
 Color hair: Brown

Discography

Record label: MCA Records, 1514 South
 Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37212. Strait
 has been with the label since 1981.

Albums:	Release Date
Title	
<i>Strait Country</i>	1981*
<i>Strait from the Heart</i>	1982*
<i>Right or Wrong</i>	1983*
<i>Does Ft. Worth Ever</i>	
<i>Cross Your Mind</i>	1984**
<i>Greatest Hits, Volume 1</i>	1985**
<i>Something Special</i>	1985*
#7	1986*
<i>Merry Christmas</i>	
<i>Strait to You</i>	1986*
<i>Ocean Front Property</i>	1987*
<i>Greatest Hits, Volume 2</i>	1987**
<i>If You Ain't Lovin'</i>	
<i>You Ain't Livin'</i>	1988**
<i>Beyond the Blue Neon</i>	1989**
<i>Livin' It Up</i>	1990**
<i>Chill of an Early Fall</i>	1991**
<i>Ten Strait Hits</i>	1991*
<i>Holding My Own</i>	1992*
<i>Pure Country</i>	1992**
<i>Easy Come, Easy Go</i>	New

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

Singles:
 "Unwound"
 "Down and Out"
 "If You're Thinking You Want a Stranger"
 "Fool Hearted Memory"
 "Marina Del Rey"
 "Amarillo by Morning"



"A Fire I Can't Put Out" *
 "You Look So Good in Love" *
 "Right or Wrong" *
 "Let's Fall to Pieces Together" *
 "Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind" *
 "The Cowboy Rides Away"
 "The Chair" *
 "You're Something Special to Me"
 "Nobody in His Right Mind Would
 Have Left Her" *
 "It Ain't Cool to Be Crazy About You" *
 "Ocean Front Property" *
 "All My Ex's Live in Texas" *
 "Am I Blue" *
 "Famous Last Words of a Fool" *
 "Baby Blue" *
 "If You Ain't Lovin' You Ain't Livin'" *
 "Baby's Gotten Good at Goodbye" *
 "What's Going On in Your World" *
 "Ace in the Hole" *
 "Overnight Success"
 "Love Without End, Amen" *
 "Drinking Champagne"
 "I've Come to Expect It from You" *
 "If I Know Me" *
 "You Know Me Better Than That" *
 "Chill of an Early Fall" *
 "Gone As a Girl Can Get"
 "I Cross My Heart" *

"Heartland" *
 "When Did You Stop Loving Me" *
 "Easy Come, Easy Go"

*Number One single

Media Highlights

Broadcast Videos:
 "Amarillo by Morning"
 "The Chair"
 "Baby's Gotten Good at Goodbye"
 "If I Know Me"
 "I Cross My Heart"
 "Heartland"

Home Videos:
George Strait Live
Pure Country (movie release now
 available on home video)

Television:
Austin City Limits
The Today Show
Live from Tucson (TNN special)
Strait from the Heart of Texas
 (TNN special)
The Tonight Show
Texas 150 (ABC-TV Special)

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World Radio History



November



long walks, writing poems. Like to hear from anyone, 18 to 27. **Michelle Walls, Rt. 1 Box 126, New Albany, MS 38652.**

•Howdy. I'm a 36-year-old country boy from back hills of WV, in state prison for short time. Love the South and country music. Favorites are Tanya, Billy Ray, Wynonna, Willie. Females please. **Donnie Collins #10101, Box 41, A-O, Michigan City, IN 46360.**

•Hi, my name is Lynne. I'm 35 years old. I have a daughter who's 15. We love country. I love singing, have since I was 13. Favorites are Alan Jackson, Travis Tritt, Tracy Lawrence and Reba. I enjoy meeting new people. No inmates, please. **Lynne Weatherspoon, 325 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC 27603.**

•Hi from NC. I'm a 33-year-old mother of two. Separated, soon to be divorced. I'm a big country music fan and would love some pen pals, especially along the Eastern seaboard, but will answer all. Favorites are Lorrie Morgan, Aaron Tippin, Reba, Conway and Loretta. Hobbies are reading, walks, picnics and flea markets. **Elizabeth Williams, Rt. 2 Box 15-B, Garland, NC 28441.**

•My name is Joe Meadows, 43 years old and divorced. I would like to make new friends. My country favorites are too numerous to mention here. Other interests are Christmas collectibles, railroads, U.S. military history, fire/rescue and movies. **Joe Meadows, Rt. 2, Box 182, Elkton, VA 22827.**

•Hi! My name is Kristy. I'm a single, 19-year-old Michigander. Love listening to Neal McCoy, Doug Stone, Sammy Kershaw and my all-time favorite, Loretta Lynn. Would love to hear from anyone, 19-29, male or female. No inmates, please. **Kristy Allen, 7750 Beech St., Lake, MI 48632.**

•Hi! My name is Arlene. I'm a 40-year-old, divorced mother of two boys (20 & 8). I love country music, rodeos, the outdoors, cowboys and all animals. Would love to hear from single men, ages 35-55, with same interests (especially those from MT, WY and OK), but will write to all. Favorites are George Strait, Reba, Tanya and Vince. Please, no junk mail or chain letters. **Arlene Moore, 8142 E. 5th Street, Tucson, AZ 85710.**

•Looking for pen pals who love McBride & The Ride as much as I do. Also like Radney Foster and Aaron Tippin. If you like writing, then write me soon! No prisoners, please. **Susan Comelius, 2516 Tiffany Tr., Cayce, SC 29033.**

•Hello! My name is Sheila. I'm 27, single and love country music. Favorites are Travis Tritt, Marty Stuart, Dolly, Reba, Alabama and Dwight. I love music, concerts, horses and country living. Would like to hear from single males, ages 25-35. Send photo if possible. No inmates, please. **Sheila Stanton, 4355 1/2 Matson Ave., Deer Park, OH 45236.**

•Single male, 35 years of experiences, wishes to write physically challenged females. I'm a T-4 paraplegic due to spinal cord injury that occurred in 1982. Totally independent, enjoy wheelchair sports and country, rock, art, photography and civil rights law for the disabled. Will answer all! Photo and interests receive prompt reply. **James C. "Mitch" Mitchell, Esq., 1300 Western Blvd. #GL-108, Raleigh, NC 27606.**

•Hi, everyone. My name is Sandi. I'm 37 years old and would love to write to some country lovin' people. I just love Reba, also like George Strait, Lorrie Morgan, RVS and more. I play pool, bowl, bike ride. Will answer all, just looking to share some friendship. **Sandra Young, P.O. Box 8858, Riverside, CA 92515-8858.**

•Hey! Would like to correspond with musicians/singers. I'm 19, play guitar, sing and write songs. Music is my life! The Judds rule! Also looking for Carter Family Fan Club. **Darla Chasteen, Rt. 1, Box 234, Cameron, OK 74932.**

•Hi! My name is Becky. I'm a 21-year-old, single country music fan. Interests include the outdoors, country music and country living. Favorites are Alabama, Travis Tritt, Garth, Billy Dean, Wynonna, Reba and many more. Would like to hear from single guys with similar interests, but will answer all, ages 21-30. **Becky Morgan, 1031 Holtville Rd., Wetumpka, AL 36092.**

•Hi! I'm a 25-year-old mother of one. Would love to hear from guys or girls, 24-32, from all over who share my interests. Enjoy writing letters, animals, crafts, outdoors and country music. Favorites are Billy Ray, Lorrie Morgan, Doug Stone, Reba and more. Photo gets mine. No chain mail or prisoners, please. **Libby Mayet, 453 Hwy. 665 Lot #1, Montegut, LA 70377.**

•Hi. My name is Judy O'Brien. I'm 38 and happily married. I love country music and writing long letters. Would love to hear from all. **Judy O'Brien, P.O. Box 228, Drums, PA 18222.**

•Hello, my name is Fred. I'm 43 years old and single. I'm a country music fan and have many favorites. I would like to correspond with females of all ages. I'll answer all. **Fred Greco, 1611 Williamsbridge Rd., Bronx, NY 10461.**

•Hi! I'm Betty, and I'm 27 years old. I love Billy Ray, Garth, writing poetry and watching pro wrestling. Love to hear from guys, 25-35, from England, Canada and Scotland! **Betty Ritter, Rte. 1, Box 406, Moatsville, WV 26405.**

•Hi there! I'm a single, 23-year-old female country music fan. Favorites are Little Texas, Tracy Lawrence, Reba, Travis Tritt, George Strait, Alan Jackson and more. Enjoy writing letters, animals, computers, dancing, rodeos and being outdoors. If you have something in common with me, please write. Will answer all, especially guys. **Jean Bucko, 188 Main St., Jeansville, PA 18201.**

•Hi! My name is Tammy Fleck. I am single, age 26, a teacher, and I love singing. Favorites are George Strait, Alan Jackson, Tracy Lawrence, Tammy, K.T. Oslin and many others. Interested in hearing from single LDS males or females, 20-30, who also love country music. **Tammy Fleck, 436 Muskegon Avenue, Valparaiso, FL 32580.**

•Hi, I'm Lori. I'm a 29-year-old, divorced female with four children. We love country music! Favorites are Clint, Randy and Garth. Looking for a country boy at heart to write to and be pen pals with. Will answer all! **Lori Parker, Rt. HCl, Box 68, P.S.J., FL 32456.**

•Hi! My name is Bernie. I'm 34 and live in KY. I love country music—favorites are Reba, George Strait, Tanya and

Haggard. I love movies, reading, the outdoors, meeting new people and baseball. Would enjoy hearing from ladies, age 26 to 40, but it doesn't matter. Promise to answer all. **Bernie Merren, 797 Sunset Dr., Apt. 4, Radcliff, KY 40160.**

•Queen of Hearts—North Country girl trying to make it in Music City, alone. Singer/songwriter, country music biographer/historian/freelance journalist and portrait artist. Grossly in need of moral support. Send photo so I know who I'm talkin' to. Let me hear from you. As Queen of Hearts I love everyone. Everyone means everyone! Inmates included. **Tiana Dreymore, 915 W. Eastland Ave., Nashville, TN 37206.**

•Hi, country fans. My name is June, and I'm a 21-year-old college student. I love finding new pen pals. I'm a huge Reba fan. Look forward to making new friends. **June Pena, 729 1/2 Washington St., Grand Haven, MI 49417.**

•Hi! I'm a 21-year-old country music fan. Favorite is Aaron Tippin, also like RVS, Billy Dean, Billy Ray, Alan Jackson, McBride & The Ride and more. Would like to hear from guys and gals, 18-30, but no inmates, please. **Ginger Vinson, Rt. 3, Box 328, Clyde, TX 79510.**

•Hi, my name is Dorothy. I'm 51 and divorced. Love country and rock oldies from the 50's. Like RVS, Travis Tritt, Reba and others. Like to hear from nice guys over 50. No inmates, please. **Dorothy Masters, 5129 Sycamore Spgs. Dr., House Springs, MO 63051.**

•Hi, my name is John. I'm 35 years old, temporarily incarcerated. Favorites are Reba, Loretta, Billy Ray, RVS, Clint, Crystal Gayle, Marie Osmond and many more. Enjoy collecting pictures, autographs, going to concerts. Would like to hear from anyone who likes country music and writing. Will answer all! **John Livinghouse 4Cl-4116, LCP, 38 North 4th St., Allentown, PA 18102.**

•Hi, my name is Charlie Adkins. I'm a 39-year-old country boy who would like to hear from a country girl who would like to write a country boy doing time in WV. Like Billy Ray, Waylon, Willie and any good old, down-home, bar drinkin', slow dancin' country music. I'll be out this summer and need someone to write to. **Charlie Adkins, 818 Jefferson Ave. Apt. 2-R-15, Moundsville, WV 26041.**

•Hi! My name is Sharon, and I love country music. Would love to hear from anyone who loves The Judds, Reba, K.T. Oslin. Send photo if possible. **Sharon Strohl, P.O. Box 611, Lehighton, PA 18235-0611.**

•Hello there. My name is Michelle. I'm a 25-year-old, single mom of one son. Big fan of country music. Favorites are Travis Tritt, David Allan Coe, Vern Gosdin, Patsy, Loretta. Love the outdoors, fishing, pool, flea markets, cooking. Like to hear from old-fashioned country boys. Will answer all. No inmates! **Michelle L. Schumbert, P.O. Box 3682, Columbia, SC 29230.**

•Hello from Georgia! I'm a 19-year-old, married female who is wild about country music! Favorites are Alabama, Exile, Conway and more, but my all-time favorite is Hank Jr. If you want a mailbox that is always full, write me. I'll answer all regardless of age, religion, race. Everyone welcome. Send picture if pos-

sible! **Angle Williams, 2318 Rockmart Hwy., Cedartown, GA 30125.**

•I'm a 29-year-old female, an avid country music fan. My favorite is Travis Tritt. Anyone who loves Travis, please write. **Libby Worley, 137 W. First St., Gastonia, NC 28054.**

•Country music guy seeks pen pal gals, 18-25. Have own band working Midwest and various country fairs. Like camping, song publishing, Garth, Billy Ray, Alan Jackson. **Jerry Minnick, P.O. Box 1946, Hiram, Ohio 44234.**

•Hi, my name is Randall. I'm 19 and studying engineering. I'm a big country fan. Favorites: Chris LeDoux, George Strait, others. Interests: dancing, playing pool, horseback riding, ranch work, construction and the outdoors. Love to hear from anyone with similar interests. Will answer all. **Randall Phelps, Box 7239, Durango, CO 81301.**

•Howdy, my name is Thomas. I'm 26 and presently incarcerated in Texas. Love to hear from women and men of all ages. Favorites are Clint, Garth, George Jones, RVS, Mark Chesnut, Alan Jackson, Reba, Tanya and more. Come on and write. **Thomas E. Parker #585941, Rt. 2, Box 20, Midway, TX 75852.**

•Hey. My name is Dewey, but everybody calls me Hank because I'm such a Hank Williams Sr. fan. I love most all country music and rockabilly from the 50's. Some interests include cooking, hunting, collecting old records and tapes, old cars and the outdoors. Will answer all. **Dewey Gillikin, Rt. 2 Box 428, Smyrna, NC 28579.**

•My name is Anita. I'm 21 and would like to hear from anyone who loves country. Favorites are Reba, Vince, Lorrie Morgan, Wynonna, k.d. lang, John Denver, Collin Raye, Billy Dean. Hobbies are Native American arts and crafts, backpacking, camping, outdoors and animals. Especially want to hear from guys, 21-29. I'm half Cherokee Indian and would love to hear from other Native Americans. **Anita Young, 690 S. Main St., Georgetown, OH 45121.**

•I'm a 30-year-old gentleman who loves listening to Charly McClain, Deborah Allen, Suzy Bogguss and Mary-Chapin Carpenter. I have yet to find ladies who share interests in music and life. I also enjoy the outdoors, art and adventure. **Gene A. Grimm, 4180 Kirk Rd., Austintown, OH 44511.**

•Hi, I'm a 25-year-old single cowboy who does professional rodeos and carpentry for a living. I enjoy Reba, Alabama, Trisha, John Anderson and more, also the great outdoors, horses, writing, computers and semi-trucks. So come on, ladies, help fill this old cowboy's mailbox. Ages 20-40; send photo if possible. Will do the same. **John Montgomery, c/o Montgomery Construction Co., P.O. Box 651143, Vero Beach, FL 32965.**

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By Rich Kienzle

Wright and Anglin.



COURTESY SOUTHERN FOLKLIFE COLLECTION

JOHNNIE AND JACK

In a partnership that lasted 25 years, brothers-in-law Johnnie and Jack added new elements to male close-harmony duets.

Close-harmony male vocal duos have been a mainstay of country music since the early days. Some of these duos were brothers, some not. Either way, their influence has extended far beyond country. From the early ones, Karl Davis and Harty Taylor, Bill and Earl Bolick (The Blue Sky Boys) and Alton and Rabon Delmore (The Delmore Brothers) through Bill and Charlie Monroe (who worked together before Bill left to create bluegrass music) and The Louvin Brothers, the line is both distinguished and long.

Johnnie Wright and Jack Anglin, brothers-in-law, stand with the best of them. In their 25 years together, they proved to be among the most durable close harmony duos around. Like the other early acts, they had only a few hits, but made many classic recordings that have endured. Such duos inspired The Everly Brothers, who took these vocal harmonies from country into pop music. And Johnnie Wright's wife, originally a secondary part of their act, made a splash of her own along the way.

Both men hailed from Middle Tennessee, the area surrounding Nashville. Johnnie Wright was born in 1914 in Mt. Juliet, 15 miles due east of Nashville; Jack Anglin was born two years later, in 1916, in Franklin, 20 miles due south of the city. They came from musical families and began playing guitar as children. To both, music wasn't initially seen as a career, but rather as a pleasurable supplement to day jobs. Jack and his brothers, Red and Jim, were working as The Anglin Brothers in the mid-30's and had their own radio program on Nashville's WSIX in 1936.

That's where Wright met the Anglins. He, his sister, Louise Wright, and a Nashville girl named Muriel Deason were performing on the same station as Johnnie Wright and The Harmony Girls.

Wright and Anglin knew each other well enough to occasionally work together even while The Anglin Brothers were still a unit. The Anglins also recorded for ARC Records, though none of their records were particularly successful. Johnnie married Muriel Deason in 1937; a year later, Anglin married Johnnie's sister, Louise. As things slowed down for The Anglin Brothers, they finally dissolved, and in 1939, Jack joined Wright's new band, The Happy Roving Cowboys. Music was still a sideline for them. Johnnie was a cabinetmaker; Anglin had a job at a Tennessee factory that made hosiery.

Their musical potential became clear

over time. Encouraged by promoter George Peek, who managed The Delmore Brothers, Wright and Anglin took the plunge into fulltime music as Johnnie and Jack and The Tennessee Hillbillies in 1941. Working for short periods at radio stations in three states (West Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky) didn't provide the sort of foothold needed to gain a following, and they weren't yet recording. Finally around 1942 they joined the staff at WNOX in Knoxville. WNOX had a respectable listenership with its noontime *Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round*. Saturday nights they went head to head with the Opry with their *Tennessee Barn Dance*.

The harsh realities of World War II intruded at this point. The act barely had a chance to catch on in Knoxville before they had problems traveling to engagements in the area, a direct result of the gas and tire rationing required by the government. For a time in 1943 they gave it up. Wright went back to Nashville and worked in a Dupont plant making parachutes for the war effort; Anglin was drafted into the Army. By June, Johnnie returned to music, replacing Jack with singer Eddie Hill. They returned to Knoxville and WNOX. They met Chet Atkins, one of the station's staff guitarists, who worked with them on the air. Muriel was back in the act, now billed as Kitty Wells, a name inspired by the traditional folk ballad, "Sweet Kitty Wells." They still had to be creative to get enough gas to travel back and forth from theater engagements in the WNOX listening area, but managed to make most of their shows.

When the act left WNOX for WPTF in Raleigh, North Carolina, late in 1945, things remained much the same. Late in 1945, Atkins, who'd also left WNOX only to be laid off by WLW in Cincinnati, joined them in Raleigh. As planned, Hill left after Jack Anglin returned from the Army early in 1946. Atkins was there only a short time before he left for Chicago and joined Red Foley's band. Foley was heading for the Opry, and in January 1947, Johnnie and Jack and The Tennessee Hillbillies were Opry-bound as well, the sole stipulation being a name change to "The Tennessee Mountain Boys." By that time, the term "hillbilly" was considered a slur, and various performers were pushing the term "country and Western."

Surprisingly, Johnnie and Jack's first recordings were done in 1947 for the New York-based rhythm and blues label, Apollo. Since the company was not really set up to promote country artists, it wasn't surprising that the records didn't sell. They made half a dozen gospel re-

cordings for King with their mandolin player, Ernest Ferguson, and dobroist Ray Atkins under the name "King's Sacred Quartet." Again, nothing happened. King's "name" artists were Grandpa Jones, Cowboy Copas and Moon Mullican. The Quartet's releases were barely noticed.

WSM's 50,000-watt clear channel was a good outlet, but there were plenty of bigger stars at the Opry, so in early 1948 they left to become bigger fish in a smaller pond. KWKH in Shreveport, Louisiana, was starting a new barn dance show, *The Louisiana Hayride*, and Johnnie and Jack were with them nearly from the start. The *Hayride* remained their home base, except for a brief absence, until 1951. In 1949, producer Steve Sholes, encouraged by his friend, RCA artist Chet Atkins, signed Johnnie and Jack to RCA Victor. Kitty also recorded as a solo artist for RCA with no success.

Then, in 1950, Johnnie and Jack recorded an uptempo duet titled "Poison Love." It stood out from other country duets, using a maraca and rhythm sticks to lay down a strong Latin rhythm. Latin music was popular in the pop field, and this infusion of its style into country was catchy enough to make the record a success. Early in 1951 it entered the charts, rising to Number Four in *Billboard*. The next single, "Crying Heart Blues," did nearly as well.

At last Johnnie and Jack were a name in the field. Their records sold steadily, and as the *Hayride* became a major farm club for new talent (including Hank Williams, Jim Reeves, Webb Pierce and Faron Young), its stature increased, and so did theirs. In early 1952 they left the *Hayride* to return to WSM. Other excellent musicians were now part of their band, including electric steel guitarist Shot Jackson.

Meanwhile, Paul Cohen signed Kitty to Decca Records. Johnnie, Jack and the band backed her on May 3, 1952, when she recorded "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," which outdid any Johnnie and Jack release, remaining at Number One for eight weeks. The group now had a third star, one who would remain part of their act, but who was, frankly, far more successful on records. Johnnie and Jack themselves weren't without hits, however. "Three Ways of Dreaming" went Top Ten in 1952, and other RCA releases sold well enough to sustain them nicely.

In 1954 their first and only Number One record, "Oh Baby Mine (I Get So Lonely)," appeared. They also began to change directions a bit, recording semi-rock tunes like "Kiss Crazy Baby." Other

Top 20's included "No One Dear But You" and "SOS" and "I Want to Be Loved" in 1955-56, with a final Top Ten, "Stop the World (And Let Me Off)," in 1958.

After 11 years, RCA and the duo parted ways in 1960; it was hardly a surprise that Owen Bradley signed them to Decca, where the spelling of the name changed slightly to "Johnny and Jack." Not much happened for them at Decca. They still did well on the road and on the Opry, so records weren't determining their success. But producer Owen Bradley managed to get them only one hit, a remake of their popular RCA recording, "Slow Poison," which got to Number 17. Clearly, the boys' hitmaking days were threatened by changing trends. At that point even The Louvin Brothers were having trouble getting hits. Close harmony had fallen into the hands of a new, younger generation, exemplified by The Everly Brothers.

The duo's end came suddenly and brutally amid the grief over the deaths of Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins. Johnny and Kitty were at the March 7, 1963, memorial services, and it's said that Jack Anglin was to attend. After leaving a barber shop in Madison, Tennessee, so the story goes, he was enroute to the services, driving along Due West Avenue, when he missed a curve, went over an embankment and smashed into a tree, fracturing his skull. He died at a Madison hospital. When the news reached the services, an already somber mood turned even darker and remained so for quite a while.

In his recent autobiography, Nashville music publisher Buddy Killen maintains Anglin was drinking that day and not actually heading to the services. The truth will probably never be known, though there are advocates for both viewpoints. It didn't matter. The duo of Johnny and Jack was stilled forever.

Wright, who will be 80 in 1994, continues to tour with Kitty and their group, still called The Tennessee Mountain Boys. They also maintain a museum just outside Nashville. He had a modestly successful Decca career as a solo artist, the biggest hit being his version of Tom T. Hall's "Hello Vietnam" in 1965. Their son, Bobby, enjoyed a brief acting career as a Southern-bred sailor on the popular TV sitcom, *McHale's Navy*. Today Bobby works with his parents. During their live shows, Johnny Wright always performs a few Johnnie and Jack favorites—which his audiences haven't forgotten.

Albums Available
See For CMSA Members Only page.

Readers Create

A Tribute to Conway

Tammy Boyce, of Big Cabin, Oklahoma, says that she's been a Conway Twitty fan for 17 of her 23 years. She wrote this tribute to him in 1991. It takes on a special poignancy given his recent departure.

Sing to Me Tonight

You've always come through for me,
been my lover and my friend.
The first time I heard you,
I knew I'd never be alone again
You're here to comfort me
with your soft and sexy voice.

So hey hey Conway,
sing to me tonight.

Do it like you've done so many times,
help me make it through the night.
You and this jukebox,
you're the only ones I need.
And 'til this hurtin' leaves me,
here with you is where I'll be.

You always know just what to say,
no matter what the situation.
Whether I'm in love, or my heart breaks,
or just another infatuation.
I know you're singing all those songs
especially for me.

'Cause those hurtin' words and phrases,
they all fit me to a T.

Hello Darlin', Baby's Gone,
I'd Love to Lay You Down,
Desperado Love, Who's Gonna Know,
Fit to be Tied Down.

These songs and all your others,
to me they mean so much.
Your sultry voice reaches in my soul
deeper than a lover's touch.

So hey hey Conway,
sing to me tonight.

Sing to me your songs of love,
get me through the night.
I'll close my eyes and listen with my heart
to every song you sing.

I'll love you always, Conway T.
And that's not Make Believe.

—Tammy L. Boyce

Stop! In the Name of Love

Cyndi Johnson's song, "The Grass Is Always Greener," below, won an Honorable Mention at a recent Music City Song Festival competition held in Nashville. Cyndi works as a legal secretary in San Antonio, Texas, where she also lives.



A Billy Dean Fan

Here's Shari Kaye Cloutier's take on Billy Dean. Shari, we've lost your address, so please drop us a line. Remember, folks, when submitting drawings and photos, please put your name and address on said item. Envelopes and their contents have a way of scattering.

The Grass Is Always Greener

I've heard the talk in town
that you've got someone on the side,
and all those nights you told me
you were working late, you lied.
Before you pack your bags
and say you're leaving me behind,
you'd best sit down and think a spell,
and then make up your mind.

(Chorus)

'Cause my mama always told me,
and I've found out that it's so:
the grass is always greener,
but it's just as hard to mow.

They call it "mid-life crisis,"
this phase you're going through,
but you're gonna pay high prices
if you look for someone new.
You think your life is boring,
and you want to have more fun,
but you'll find out if you leave me
that the hurtin's just begun.

That little blonde you're playin' with
may treat you like a king,
but when the party's over,
it was just another fling.
So remember if you start to stray,
or cast a roving eye,
when you dance you pay the fiddler,
so you better walk on by.

(Repeat Chorus)

—Cyndi Johnson



Next Year's Top Vocal Duet?

After watching awards shows throughout the past year, and hearing the repeated exchanges between Billy Ray Cyrus and Travis Tritt, member James Kessler suggests that the two should bury the hatchet (*In whose head?*—Ed.) and record as a duet. "Watch out, Brooks & Dunn!" he adds. James is from Connelsville, Pennsylvania.

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World Radio History

Larry Gatlin

A FALLEN COUNTRY STAR LANDS COMFORTABLY ON BROADWAY

✧ by Bob Allen ✧

Larry Gatlin answers the door to his apartment on the 63rd floor of New York's Trump Tower, wearing nothing but a towel and a face full of shaving cream. "So, how ya like me so far?" he asks.

It's true that Gatlin, one of the hottest—albeit also one of the brashest, most arrogant and loud-mouthed—stars of the 1970's, has not been heard from of late in the country charts.

But have no fear: Gatlin, love him or loathe him, is alive and well and on Broadway, currently starring in the Tony-winning hit musical, *The Will Rogers Follies*, reprising a lead role previously handled by actor Keith Carradine and Hollywood's resident country crooner, Mac Davis.

And even though Gatlin may have fallen from grace with the latest generation of country fans, he sure seems to have landed in a comfortable place: a \$10,000-a-month luxury pad at Manhattan's most prestigious address, with a breath-taking, top-of-the-world vista of Lower Manhattan Island.

Yet Gatlin casually insists that even at ten grand a month, the apartment, which he rents from his pal Donald Trump (whose off-again, on-again companion Marla Maples was Gatlin's former *Follies* co-star), is a steal.

"This place is for sale, \$4.7 million, if you know anybody who wants to buy it," Gatlin announces nonchalantly as he finishes shaving and settles into an easy chair that offers him a stratospheric view of the Goodyear blimp playing tag with the top of the Empire State Building. "It normally rents for \$35,000 a month," he adds casually, glancing around the spacious, airy apartment which he and his wife have tastefully decorated with expensive-looking Western art and Santa Fe-style accouterments. "But Donald made me an offer I couldn't

understand. So I took it."

Heady stuff indeed: a luxury condo on top of the world, a plum Broadway lead, initial co-billing with the Big Donald's favorite tall blonde drink of water, and golfing buddies like Frank (as in Gifford), Bob (as in Hope) and George (as in Bush) dropping by to catch the show and taking him to dinner afterwards. Even as Gatlin and I sit there talking and watching the Goodyear blimp negotiate the Empire State Building's spire, the ex-President's office calls, inviting Gatlin up to Kennebunkport for a weekend of golf. Needless to say, he quickly re-shuffles his schedule to accommodate the man he still calls "Mr. President."

All in all, it would be enough to inflate the ego of any small-town West Texas singer to Goodyear blimp dimensions, much less the legendary 63-story ego of Larry Gatlin, the much-dreaded John McEnroe of 1970's Nashville. So, naturally, Gatlin, at age 44, must still be the same old out-of-control basket case of petulant, thin-skinned self-righteousness that he once was, right? Still the same old brash country music *enfant terrible* of yesteryear, huh?

Well, surprise: actually, no. Not at all. It seems, at least on the face of things, that age and maturity, along with the



Twelve Steps Program and any number of other personal growth manifestos, plus the humbling experience of watching a once-magnificent singing career slowly crumble to dust before your very eyes, have actually instilled in Larry Gatlin a measure of grace. And tolerance. And compassion. Mind you, he's still subject to his little twinges of irascibility and self-righteousness. But unlike the old days, these eruptions are now just brief, harmless flashes of heat lightning rather than devastating squalls.

Gatlin is, of course, best re-



membered as the man who, in the 1970's and early 1980's, wrote some of the loveliest, most soulful country songs of his times: "I've Done Enough Dying Today," "Pennie Annie," "Broken Lady," "All the Gold in California." Yet, like some impressionistic painter gone mad, like some insane, ear-slicing artist who insists on defacing his own priceless creations with spray-painted purple graffiti, he often defaced the exquisite currency of his music with his ugly outbursts and condescending tirades—whether against fans who hounded him

for autographs or writers who suggested that maybe he didn't really walk on water after all.

"Between bad press and a bad attitude, and everything I put up my nose, I blew what could have been the greatest country music career ever," he shrugs—more stoic and matter-of-fact than bitter.

There's a self-initiated reference here to his years of excessive drinking, drugging and wounded egomania, all of which culminated in the mid-1980's with a cocaine free-basing binge and a 28-day detox in an Orange County, California,

hospital. Then came the final I.O.U. for his decade of over-indulgence which landed just a couple of years ago in the form of a nearly million-dollar bill for back taxes.

Yet from Gatlin's perspective, the lessons learned are worth every lost dollar, wasted year and squandered hit. These days, Broadway star or not, he's not only exceedingly deferential, but unflinchingly introspective about nearly everything. He's also about as down-home as a soul can be, what with having Donald Trump as a next door neighbor and all. Later in the

day, he even fixes me lunch—a chicken sandwich and homemade vegetable soup.

"One of my reasons for doing this play was for my own personal growth," he notes of his involvement in *The Will Rogers Follies*, a Broadway extravaganza which offers the bare bones of cowboy/philosopher Will Rogers' amazing life amidst a whirl of lavish sets, dazzling choreography and several score high-kicking, long-legged dancers. "I wanted to learn to work on a daily basis with people whose lifestyle choices and politics are on the other end of the



Gatlin gets ready to be Will Rogers in *The Will Rogers Follies* on Broadway. For him, there's irony in the role.

spectrum from my own. It's well known that New York City and, especially, Broadway are bastions of liberal thought and the gay community. But this whole experience has been a great one for me. And I can say—hand to God—that the cast and I have had an incredible journey together. I love 'em all, and if they say they don't love me, they're lyin', because they sure act like they do!

"It's been an awe-inspiring, humbling experience, as well," he insists as he gazes down from his not-so-humble glass-walled perch at the lunchtime crowds along Fifth Avenue moving like ants 60-plus stories below. Gazing farther south and marveling at a fleet of U.S. Navy destroyers cruising past the Statue of Liberty, he adds: "I've been aware of Will Rogers since years ago, when I was a kid in Odessa, Texas, and I saw the movie, *The Will Rogers Story*, on TV. And being from Texas, and him from Oklahoma, I've always known a little about him and appreciated what he had to say: how he took the horrible things of his time, the Great Depression, the political scandals, and turned them around and made people laugh.

"The last thing I do eight times a week before I go out on stage is kneel down and say the Serenity Prayer, and pray that God, in his infinite wisdom, will allow the audience to fall in love with Will Rogers," he continues in an almost reverential tone. "It's not impor-

tant that they fall in love with Larry Gatlin, but that they fall in love with Will Rogers, the man who went all around the world saying wonderful things, trying to help his fellow man and spread a little cheer."

After lunch, Gatlin begins his pre-matinee warm-up ritual with a brisk 15-or-so-block walk down crowded Fifth Avenue from Trump World to the Palace Theatre, at Broadway and 47th Street. Backstage in his small, cluttered dressing room, he strips down to knee-length gray underwear and cowboy boots and runs through some warm-up scales with his vocal coach. A little later, as he sits before a mirror, smearing on make-up, he falls to reminiscing about his bittersweet years at the top of the country charts, when he won a Grammy and legions of fans, while, at the same time, engendering an almost equal measure of ire and resentment.

There is a bit of infamous Gatlin lore, which has never seemed more timely than it is now. Quite a few years ago, some anonymous detractor at Monument Records, the company for which he then wrote and recorded, scribbled a line on a blackboard that added a cruel twist to Will Rogers' famous populist adage, "I never met a man I didn't like." It read, *Will Rogers never met Larry Gatlin*.

For a while, this twisted one-liner threatened to become Larry Gatlin's professional epitaph; and the fact

that now, more than a decade and a half later, Gatlin has, at least in a sense, become Will Rogers, is an irony that is certainly not lost on the singer. Indeed, to hear him talk, it's maybe more than just coincidence; there may be an element of penance, and perhaps personal redemption, at work.

"Hell, I think whoever wrote that about me back then was pretty astute," he offers, without a trace of his old rancor or defensiveness. "Hell, how could they have liked me? I didn't like me. I had a serious case of cranial rectumitis. I was living against the grain of everything I'd ever been taught, and between the booze, the drugs, my immaturity and my West Texas kick-ass mentality, I was a pain in the butt. My number-one goal in the world back then was to be the richest, the cutest, the best everything. To have the fastest car, the biggest house, the biggest stack of money....

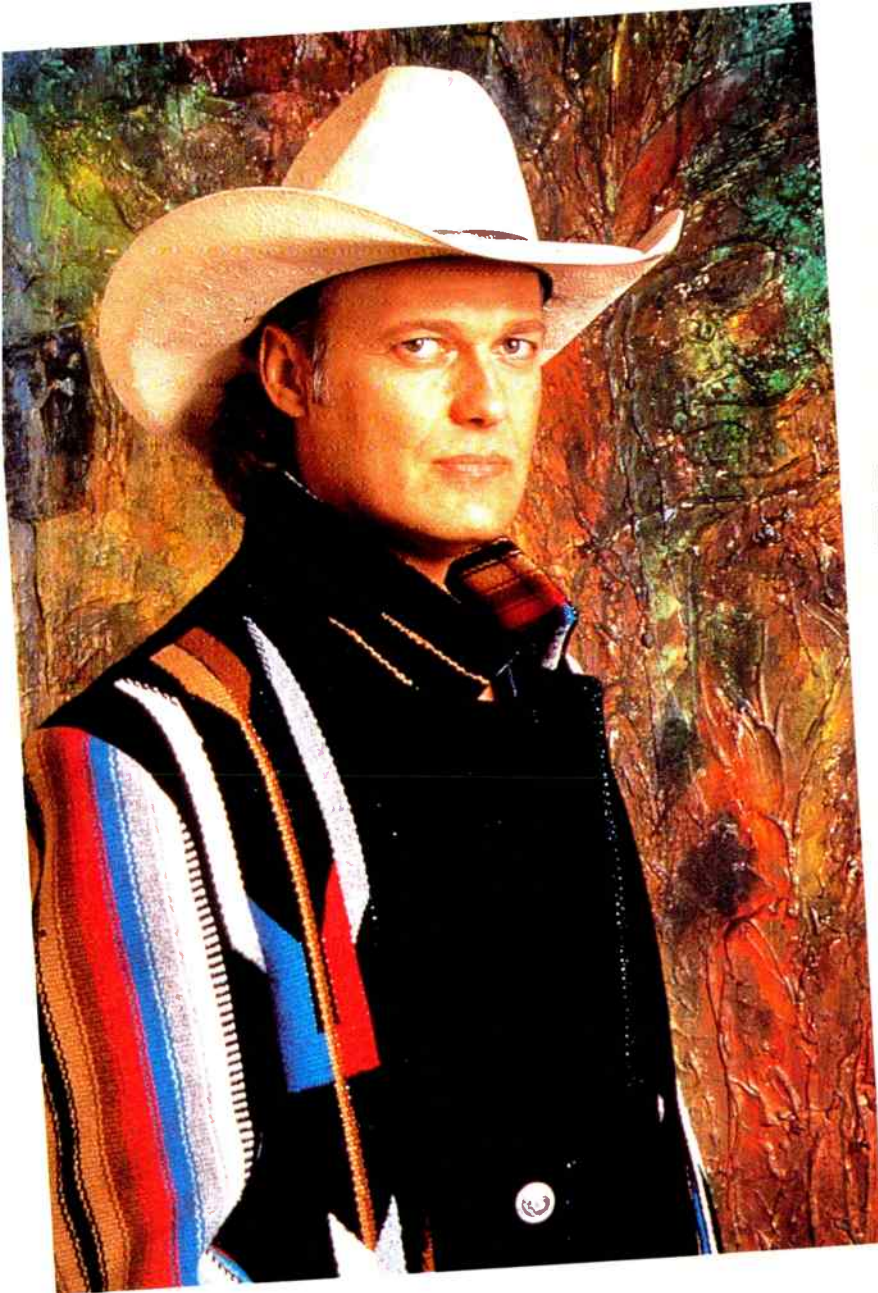
"You're not going to believe this, but it's the God's honest truth," he laughs sadly at himself and shakes his head in disbelief. "I had an acceptance speech made up for the Grammy awards." (He was nominated nine times, but won only once.) "If I won," he continues, "I was gonna get up there and say, 'Well, we won the sonofabitch, but I know some of you assholes didn't vote for me!'" He chuckles and shakes his head again. "I mean, I wanted the thing by acclamation! Now how sick is that?"

Minutes later, Gatlin is in full costume as Will Rogers, and in no time at all he's in front of the footlights, singing, dancing, joking and doing rope tricks for nearly three hours as he brings Will Rogers back to life for another packed matinee crowd.

Gatlin acquits himself remarkably well as he revivifies the homespun wit, wisdom, humor and humility of America's beloved "Cowboy Philosopher" who died in a plane crash in 1935, even though, at times, Rogers' material seems oddly misplaced amidst the ultra-sophisticated glitz, glitter and schmaltz of this mega-bucks Broadway production.

Really, the most convincing moment comes after the grand finale. At that point Gatlin, still in character as Will Rogers but now speaking very much as Larry Gatlin, comes to the edge of the stage and shares a gentle confessional/testimonial with the audience. He speaks of his own long-standing sobriety, urges them not to drink and drive and encourages everyone to make a small donation to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

So what about it, Lar, I ask later, as closing notices for the show begin to bloom on Broadway, would Will Rogers like Larry Gatlin now? Gatlin smiles. "I do think there's been a great victory and growth over the Larry Gatlin that they had to write that about. Yeah, I think Will Rogers would like Larry Gatlin. I know he would." ■



Ricky Van Shelton Speaks Out

After seven years on the music scene, the singer has come to some conclusions about the job he once longed to have. What he's learned, he says, is not all positive. In his interview he takes on the music business, radio, substance abuse and life on the road.

by Michael McCall

Ricky Van Shelton, when he arrived on the scene with his first hit record in 1987, seemed cast in the perfect mold for the new country star. Most of his fairy-tale story is true, and it has been told over and over. But fairy tales aren't always everything they seem.

First, let's recount the original story: Ricky grew up in a tiny, backwoods Virginia community with the colorful name of Grit. He spent several years as a blue-collar worker, earning money as a pipefitter and a gas station attendant after marrying his childhood sweetheart, Bettye, who later encouraged their move to Nashville, where she supported him as he attempted to follow his dream of becoming a singer.

Once in Nashville, Ricky was discovered the hard way, playing little dives around town where record executives rarely set foot. He owned a virile, breath-

taking baritone with a strong range, and his classically chiseled features provided the looks needed to succeed in the age of video and fashion photography. He came across as a salt-of-the-earth kind of guy, a humble and reverent family man. He preferred white Resistol cowboy hats, off-the-rack denim jeans and well-pressed casual shirts. He said 'yes, sir' and 'no, ma'am' with a rich Southern twang. He spoke well of his mother and father, he grew up singing the gospel, and he loved older country songs, many of which he recorded.

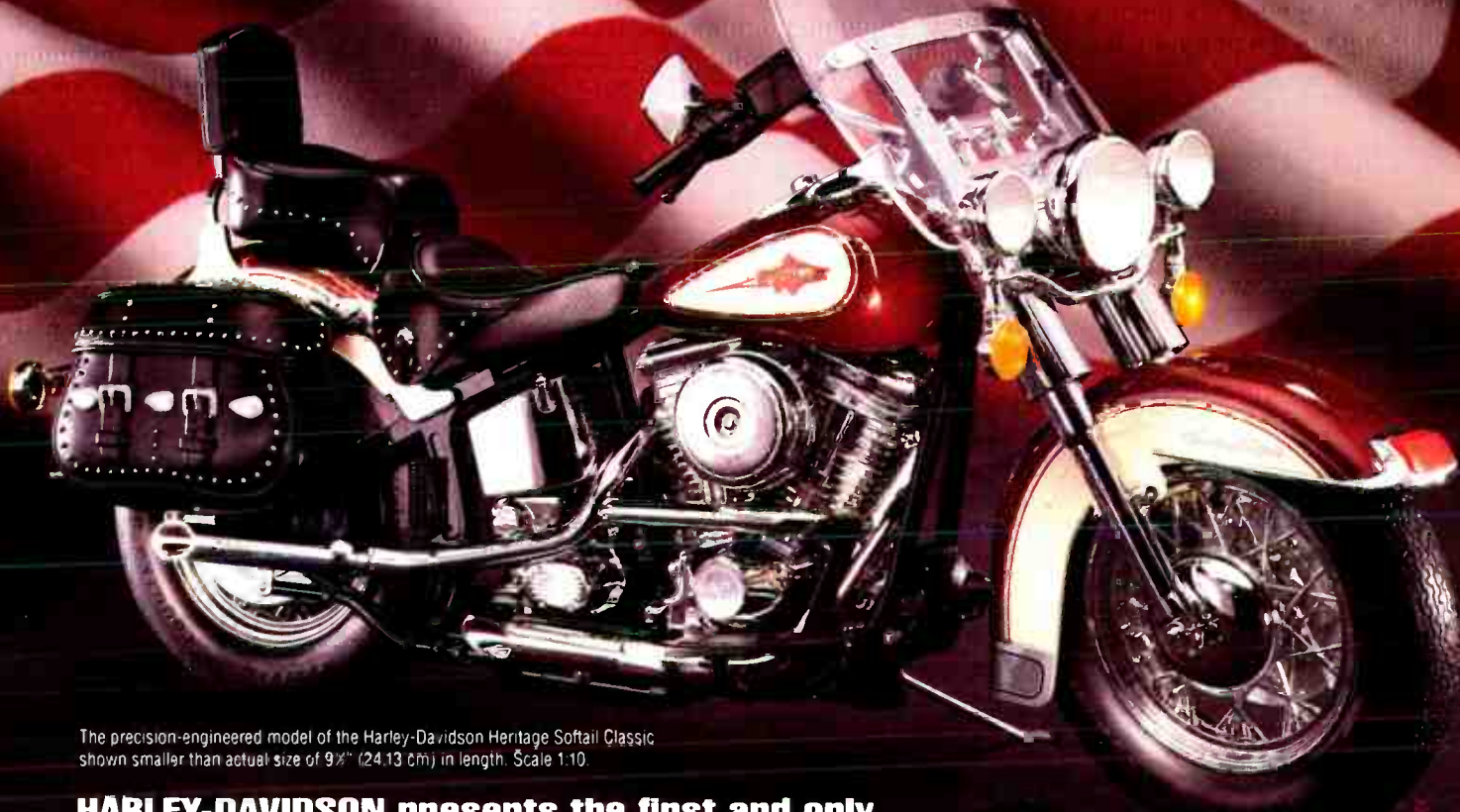
He also seemed at ease with himself, for the most part. If at times he appeared a little uncomfortable in the limelight, it only served to add a hint of vulnerability, which made him all the more human and likable. As with most new country stars, he didn't appear to be dogged by personal problems: He seemed physically healthy,

emotionally balanced and happily married. He didn't criticize the country music industry or the established way of doing business. Instead, he graciously accepted his awards, thanking God and Columbia Records. He came off as genuinely content.

Except it wasn't exactly that way. Not always, anyway. In truth, his stoic, humble facade hid a festering drinking problem. As his fame grew, so did his drinking. It finally spilled over into his personal life, causing problems in his marriage, among other things. As it often does, the drinking also masked other difficulties with which he struggled.

"The pressure and the boredom, especially the boredom of traveling on the road, had something to do with it," Shelton says in his thick-as-tire-rubber Virginia accent while relaxing on his custom bus after finishing a sound check.

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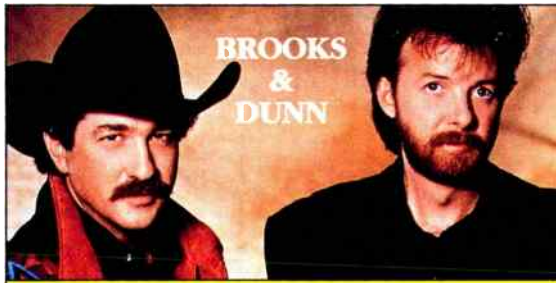
Travis Tritt—Country Club (Wamer Bros.) 405•068

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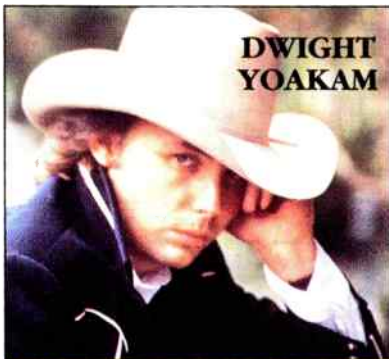
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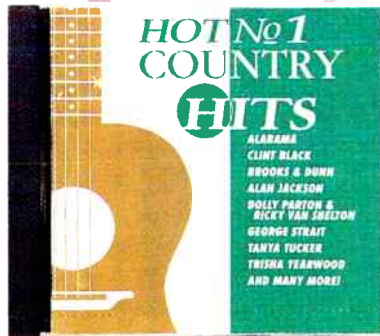
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"But it's also something that has been growing since my teens. It was just partying, you know. Getting loose and having fun. But partying can turn into a real dangerous thing late in life. It puts you on a dangerous road. You go along and think you're just partying a little bit, then one day it's got you, and you won't admit it to yourself. Drinking about put me under the table."

With help from Bettye, Ricky went cold-stone sober more than a year-and-a-half ago. "The good Lord came into my life, and I quit drinking," he continues. "Alcohol is the most dangerous drug. America is really blind. This ain't just opinion, it's fact. Alcohol is more dangerous than marijuana and crack cocaine put together. There are more deaths, more suicides, more accidents, more broken homes, more ruined careers because of alcohol than all the rest of the drugs combined. But America says it's OK. Why is it OK? Because congressmen drink, and lawyers drink, and judges drink."

As the last part of his statement suggests, Ricky no longer is content to remain the quiet, soft-spoken, unassuming star he once was. After cleaning himself up and clearing his mind, he began to tackle several problems that had been eating at him.

He followed through on several creative projects, both inside and outside of country music. He finally completed a long-delayed gospel album he promised his mother he'd do. He finished the first in a series of children's books, *Tales of a Duck Named Quacker*, which was written in one afternoon in a Detroit hotel room and has sold more than 60,000 copies in its first six months.

"I remember looking out the window of that room and thinking, 'What am I gonna do with myself today,'" he recalled. "I was just bored out of my head. All of a sudden God just opened up the window of heaven and poured this story on me."

Ricky grabbed a sheet of hotel stationery and sat at a table and wrote until he finished the first book. "There's a real difference between something that's really inspired and something you just work on," he notes. "So when I say the Good Lord gave me these stories, I mean it. They are truly inspired."

When his initial fury of writing ended in a complete story, he called his wife to see if she felt it was as good as he believed. When he came to the end, she made him read it again, from start to finish.

"We both realized this was a good kid's book, not just a vague bunch of words that make a useless story," he recalls. "It's a happy story with little values in it. Once I went looking, I found that there's not a lot of values in kids books that are out there, and values and morals are things that kids need to be taught. They watch all this filth and garbage on TV, and all they're exposed to in this day and age, and they need some kind of good shown to them. Some of the kid's books these days just take them out to La La Land, and I don't mean Alice in Wonderland



There's a real difference between something that's really inspired and something you just work on."

either. You can tell there must be a lot of potheads writing these stories these days."

Four other books in the Quacker series also are completed. The second, *A Duck Named Quacker Meets Mrs. Moo*, is illustrated and ready for publication.

Ricky also has been working on a cookbook, but it is not yet fully baked. He has accumulated 21 recipes, all conceived in his own kitchen and given original, playful names by the star and amateur chef. There's "Tuesday Night Chicken a Cluck Cluck," a pasta and chicken dish, and "Beefalo Buddy," a casserole made with the meat from a buffalo-cow hybrid. He also offers his personal twist on a couple of other standard dishes, such as "Ricky's Chili." "I make the best chili in the world," he boasts as if he means it.

Just as important, at least to Ricky, is that he has become more forthright and outspoken about his career. He sued an old management firm that he believed was getting money it no longer deserved, then later filed another lawsuit against a Texas promoter who, according to the singer, didn't uphold a contract.

His newly uncompromising attitude led to a confrontation with the Country Music Association and a high-level television producer during the taping of a network special. When the CMA asked him to take part in a multi-artist finale, Ricky refused. The song wasn't in his key, he said. It wasn't right for him. When producer Irving Waugh threatened to cancel Ricky's other performance in the program, Ricky stood his ground. The producer had Ricky thrown off the program and out of the Grand Ole Opry House. He even ordered security to escort the singer and his bus off the Opryland grounds.

"That whole thing got blown out of proportion," Ricky says without apparent emotion. "I didn't mean to cause a big scene. I just refused to do that little 15-second part in the finale."

He stops for a second, deep in thought, then continues, growing more impassioned as he speaks. "It was very inconsiderate of them to try to force it on me, I thought. They always do that. Then this guy makes a wisecrack. He said, 'Well, that's art.' I thought, 'Um-hmm, you wouldn't know art if it slapped you upside the head.'

"I'd just had enough of it. All the artists hate those finales, because you can't really sing. That does matter to us. And then to make smart remarks, that's not the way to make you do something. But I got nothing against nobody, not even the guy who kicked me off the program. I never got mad. I was not belligerent or nothing like that. It didn't upset me. I just said that I got a right to refuse to do something they ask me to do. And I'll tell you, I got more support on that than I can shake a stick at, from people I can't mention. It just shows me that a lot of artists don't like how they're treated by those people."

So what's happened since? "There's a lot of sticky things

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by 

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In a forest clearing, surrounded by the fallen leaves of autumn, a young Native American cradles her little brother. All is quiet as the infant settles in for his afternoon nap. The only sound to be heard is his sister's soft, lilting voice as she serenades him with a lullaby. Sweet dreams...

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the Danbury Mint

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This business is a rat race. They came up with the word 'rat race' for this business. You go go go go go go. It just burns you out. At least it does me."

going on within different groups, the CMA and others. I don't want to talk about it. It's over. It ain't no big deal. They issued an apology the next day," he said, then laughed coyly, adding, "but it wasn't very sincere. It was forced on them. But I got no quarrel with them. And I ain't worried about it at all. The CMA can't make you or break you. Nobody can make you or break you except God."

He stopped with that last sentiment to rethink his words. "No, that's not true," he corrected. "The fans, they can make you or break you. And radio, well, they can make you or break you, too. Especially these days, when they let one person control 30 stations, stuff like that."

With that, the newly outspoken singer—Ricky the Lion-Hearted—sounds off about another sacred cow of the music industry. "Radio these days is something else," he begins. "They have these consultants now. They have one man programming something like 30 radio stations. If he don't like a song, he's playing God. There's no way in the world that a man sitting in New York City can tell somebody down in Mississippi what they want to hear. But that's what's going on, and that is not healthy. It's the biggest bunch of bull I've seen in my life. And to think the music industry puts so much emphasis on that system is ludicrous. It goes past ridiculous. It's ludicrous."

Ricky paused, looking out the window as the wheels inside his brain continued to turn. He wasn't finished with radio yet. "You know what's going to happen? Payola is coming back, and there's going to be more, and it's going to lead to attitude adjustment. I hate to say it, but I'm telling you what I believe. When you're dealing with this much money and power, things start happening, and people are gonna get hurt. One night that programmer is going to walk out to his car to go home and there's going to be a big black Cadillac standing there, and four big men are going to get out and stand him on his head and give him an attitude adjustment. I certainly ain't endorsing that. But I'm telling you that's going to happen. Somebody's going to cut him down. They're going to clip his wings."

If he sounds a little frustrated with how the music business operates and where it's headed, well, that's because he is. "This business is a rat race," says the award-winning country star. "They came up with the word 'rat race' for this business. You go go go go go go go. It just burns you out. At least it does me. Some people, like Willie"—just plain Willie, he said, but we know who he means—"he likes it so much, he wants to stay on the road forever. I'm sure there are others like that. But not me."

The road has been Ricky's nemesis from the get-go. He's never liked living on a bus and being away from home for long stretches. He loves to sing, he says. He loves to record albums, to perform in front of fans. He just doesn't enjoy what happens between concerts.

"I'm one of those people who loves to work in a garden, to work on my home and in my yard, to get on my tractor and bush-

hog," he says. "I like being home in the evenings—especially in the evenings. So, for me, being on the road is hard. It's all that I can do to do this job. I'm a hard worker. I don't mind that. I like to plant posts and dig and scratch. But the music business is tough. It's something you have to be in to really know what it's like to miss the people you love, to miss your home, your favorite car, your favorite girl, your own bed. I'd love to sleep each night in a bed that don't move. My bed's in the back of this bus, and I can't sleep on my side in it. I have to sleep on my back. Because if you're on your side, and they hit a bump, you roll over and wake up. You never get no solid sleep, you eat junk food all the time, and so you drag all the time. You know what's bad? I can find my way to the bathroom in

a Holiday Inn in the dark.

And I know exactly where the light switch is if I need it."

His tirade continues, covering how he never gets to see the cities he visits because he's either on the bus, doing soundchecks or performing. "Yeah, I get to see the world, through a windshield," he says sarcastically. "We get to see the telephone poles and the highway lines. We're either working or traveling. It ain't like we get to the park."

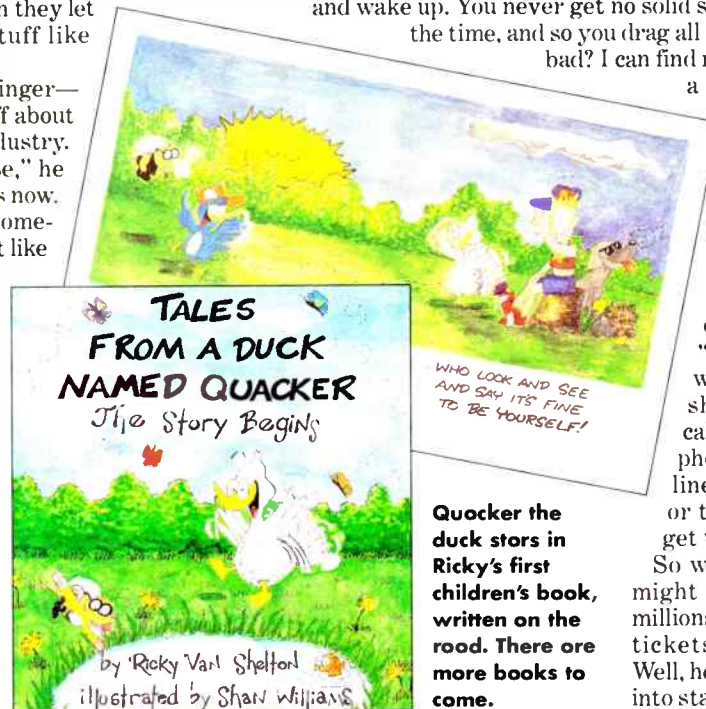
So why doesn't he quit, you might ask. Surely, after selling millions of albums and millions of tickets, he's got some money. Well, he's put most of his earnings into stage production, equipment and paying the salaries of all

those who make his show a success. But, he's given the idea some thought.

"I really hope I can slow down soon and regroup," he says as fans begin pouring into Freedom Hall in Louisville for his show that night. "But, right now, if I'm going to eat, I got to work. This will sound silly, but I've seriously looked back happily on my days as a pipefitter. It was hard work, but in the evening I got in my car or truck, and I went home. I had weekends off. I had more of a life. But there ain't no way I can go back and work a public job. People would want my autograph and make a big fuss. So, if I was to do something else, I guess it would have to be something with music or writing or farming. I could be a farmer. I really like it."

But doesn't he own a farm now? The question draws the heartiest laugh of the interview. "Yeah, I've got a 150-acre farm now, but it's 149 acres of rock," he said after a loud, long chuckle. "That's Middle Tennessee for you. They sure got that song right, 'Rocky Top'. Middle Tennessee ain't got nothing but rock. East and West Tennessee got some good dirt, but not the middle of the state."

As show time nears, Ricky foregoes a planned trip back to the hotel to eat, opting to stay on the bus and relax until his performance. "Boy, that's the one thing I love," he adds. "I love going on that stage. If that was all there was to it, I'd be in heaven." ■



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This splendid portrait, the first in a series of country music's finest performers by artist Nate Giorgio, has been captured on a porcelain limited-edition collector's plate. And, like exceptional collector's plates that command hundreds of dollars on the plate market, "Dolly Parton: 'I Will Always Love You'" appears to have what it takes to go up in value once the edition closes.

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K.T. Oslin has twisted the tail of country music more than once. With hits Like "80's Ladies" and "Hold Me," she helped redefine a woman's place in country music—smart, funny, sensitive and cynical, a survivor in the war between the sexes. There's been much written recently about her stepping out of country music—and maybe music entirely—so *20 Questions* thought it important to catch up with her and get the real skinny. We found her on her back porch in Nashville, threatening the neighborhood children. In between the giggles and the outright hysterical laughter, she agreed to answer *20 Questions*.

1 So, Ms. K.T. "Recently Retired From The Country Music Business" Oslin, how are you?
Soon to be Surgeon to the Stars!

2 So you're in this Peter Bogdanovich movie, and now you're famous in new fields...
Which is pretty much like being famous in the old fields! There's no difference.

3 Except that we're all another day older.
It's just pitiful, isn't it? I hear myself saying things that my mother said, and I found myself going, "This is actually coming out of my mouth"...I find myself talking about the weather...My mother would say, "You're going out in the rain?" And I'd say, "What's that got to do with it?" No, no—I'd be out there in a rain-storm. And now if it looks like even the wind is going to blow in the wrong direction, I'm gonna stay home.

4 I find myself wanting to say, "The younger generation's gone to hell..."
In a handbasket. What's really scary is when you find yourself saying, "Well, in my day...We didn't have rocket packs, we had cars...and we didn't do this and we didn't do that." I stop and I look at things that have come along since I've been, *ahem*, more



20 Questions with K.T. OSLIN

—by Michael Bane—

than an adult, and it is scary. Look at cassettes. We still use the term "record player," and my nephew, who's 17, looks at me like I'm from the Stone Age. He goes, "What?" You know, a record player, with a needle. A wooden needle or something. They're called records. So time marches on, and we come back as a damned grapefruit or something.

5 The karmic wheel turns, and we all come back as bluebottle flies...
Life's short, but you don't need to suffer nearly as much!

It's over in a matter of eight days. Then you come back as a grasshopper leg or something, and finally a person. Hey, that's better than show business.

6 So you decided that it's time to take the proverbial break from country music?
Oh, Michael, I haven't decided doodley-squat! You know, here's the deal. My record company asked me a couple of years ago if I would consider doing a pop project. I was kind of intrigued by it, but I was starting to go nuts at the time.

I was quite harangued and quite strung out and crazed and tired. And I didn't want to talk about getting up the next day, much less a pop project. So they see me slipping away—Look! She's slipped her moorings and she's floating away!—so they said how about this: A greatest hits package, and you do four pop things on it just to see how you like it. So I said, "Okay, I can handle that." So that's what we did. It really wasn't my "decision"; it was something we evolved into. The longer I write—you know, I've only written about 40 songs, and 31 we have heard on record.

7 Lots of people would kill for that average.
That's a pretty good average. But I'm really a baby writer. The longer I write, the more it evolves and changes. It's no longer...I mean, I never fit neatly into country anyway...

K.T.—I'm shocked! I never realized that...
I thought I was the only one who didn't know that—sure she's country, but *what* country?

8 I hate to be the one to tell you this, but you don't have big enough hair.
I don't have big enough hair at all! But in that movie I come pretty close to having big hair. My hair was very long, and I wanted to cut it, but they said "Nope, we want you to have *Big Haaar!*" So I had really big hair, but it was tastefully done.

9 What do you want to do?
Absolutely nothing! I want to sit and stare at the hummingbirds. I know that people have some kind of idea that I'm a driven thing; that I hung in there for 46 years, knocking on people's doors every day of the year, *Being Rejected!* That's not the way it was. Every ten years, I'd make a foray into the record field, then I'd fall off the face of the earth. This business has driven me crazy. I'd like to do some more movies. I've been sounded out about doing some movie scor-

ing. I like the idea of interweaving drama with music. I like that very much. I thought country music would be a better venue for that than it turned out to be. They get a little worried on country radio when you want to step a little further to one side. They get very worried. They worry themselves to death. The movie thing is not quite so confining as a writer. And I'd like to do some more acting.

10 *Doesn't sound like touring figures very heavily into this.*

The problem with the music business is that it would be lovely if we could make these little albums, but in order to merit putting the time and the money into it, then you have to do the rest of it. You must tour. *The Road!* And the road means you must talk to at least "x" number of people a day. Meet and greet and, "Hi, we don't like you, but our dry-cleaner does, and we're here to look you in the face and tell him later what you look like."

11 *Travis Tritt says you actually get paid for the meet and greets—performers would be willing to sing for free.*

Absolutely. I'd get up there and sing for free. Everyone in the business ends up saying the same thing. I'd sing for nothing, but they've got to pay me to do this traveling and talking and interviewing and meeting and greeting and being the Meat. You're the Meat they want to see.

12 *Is there anything about the road you liked?*

Well, I loved the camaraderie of being with the band and being with that tight little family there. I loved at least getting a glimpse of some cities—"Oh look, there's Dallas! What does it have in it?" The hotel room and the venue. Other than that, I don't know what it has. Really, there was a lot of it I loved. If you could sleep better on the road; if you could eat better on the road; if you could have just a little bit more of a humane schedule on the road, you would be rested and ever

so much more cheerful. But it's really difficult. It's difficult in your 20's; it's difficult in your 30's; it was almost impossible in my 40's; I'm now in my 50's, I really don't give a damn! I want to sit on my front porch and yell at the kids, "Hey, get out of my yard!"

13 *Where is your front porch?*

I live in Nashville, but no one knows it, of course. I love it when I go to events, and people say, "Where do you live now?" And I say, "A block from you."

14 *Do you ever miss New York City?*

Yeah, I really do. I don't miss living there, but, as a writer, I miss the stimulation. I miss seafood. I miss shellfish. Here, 9 P.M. and the lights are on blinking caution. If you try to eat after 9:15, you're in trouble. I've lived here six years, and the last two years I've spent a lot of time here. And I've had the time to look around and say, "Where is everybody?" I miss my friends. I miss the restaurants...but mostly I miss the people-watching. Everyone is so normal here.

You know what I noticed about New York when I first moved there? How loud the restaurants were. Everybody was yelling and screaming and slamming that food around, and I'm going, "What is the noise about?" And here you can go to a packed restaurant and not hear a voice above table level, you know. Nobody laughs outrageously loud and makes a scene and falls over. Everyone is very, very well-behaved here. I always refer to them as "house-broken Texans."

15 *I always thought country music could do with an infusion of weirdness.*

Oh, absolutely. You're not allowed to be weird at all. But don't get me started about what country music has turned into...It's all of the most mundane things. Have you read this book, *The Bridges of Madison County*? There's this one section that really hits the

nail on the head about marketing to the masses. The writer had a paragraph in there about his main character, who was a photographer for *National Geographic*. "I make pictures," he says. "I don't take them. I change filters; I change angles; I set it up so it looks different in the photo than it does with the naked eye." Then he says when he turns the photos in to the magazine, they can edit them any way they want, and he never agrees with the editing. The trouble with mass marketing, he says, is having to boil it down to the average taste. And the average taste is average, and it does not want to be shook up, and it does not want to take risks. It doesn't want something too new or too different to upset it. The meat and potato acts are what makes this business go around. If we had to wait for something wonderful, we'd have three records a year, and two movies. And two movie stars and five singers. So mass marketing has done more to kill passion in art than anything.

And so you end up with Branson...

That's all about money there; it's got nothing to do with art. It's take the money and run time...I think I might do a theme park there, call it OsLand...It only has one ride, and you're all killed at the end, just fall off into a big hole.

16 *Has anybody ever told you you've got an attitude?*

No, Michael. No one has ever picked up on that except you.

Hey, you never know with you big stars...

Big star, my butt! My definition of a star is someone my grandmother knows the name of. Elizabeth Taylor. I think she knew Charlton Heston. And Guy Lombardo. If your grandmother knows 'em, they're a star. If your grandmother doesn't know them, they ain't nobody. The word star, I mean—you put out a country single, it bombs and you're declared a star.

17 *Or, at least, a country sex symbol.*

Or a country hunk. Huuunk! I'm considered a country chunk....You have to be either a hunk, a hat-head or a nice little ole girl. We've got to find that slot.

That's right, K.T. 'Cause if we journalists can't get you in the right slot, people won't keep sending us checks.

Oh, okay. Put me in the curmudgeon slot. Put me down with George Jones—he did this interview a few weeks back, and he's very much on his soap box about radio not playing the older artists. He said, "They won't play me; they won't play Willie; they won't play Merle; hell, there's even K.T. Oslin!"

18 *It's getting harder and harder to think, I think...*

I was with a little girl, a friend of mine, she's about three. And it was in the autumn, and we were running around collecting leaves. And she's got leaves in both hands, and I'm talking to her. I tell her I understand she's got a new boyfriend in playschool. "Yes," she says, and she's not looking at me, looking very pensive. I say tell me about him; what's his name. How old is he? She says, "I can't think with leaves in my hand." And I say that's pretty much how I feel, too.

19 *So let me get this straight—you're now the "curmudgeonly aging sex bomb woman in her 50's sitting on the back porch yelling at the neighborhood children" person.*

Yeah, that about sums it up. It's so sad for my life to have boiled down to that. At least I don't have to work.

20 *Any profound words about dating?*

What's that? *Qu'est-ce que c'est* dating? You mean picking up the dates in the palm grove or you mean going out on the social events with the opposite sex? I remember my dates, both of them. In the 50's, I think. Dating? It's very difficult to date. "I need a date Saturday night...I know, I'll call K.T. Oslin! She'll be fun!"



THE BANKER'S DAUGHTER FROM GEORGIA IS MAKING ALL THE RIGHT MOVES. WITH CHART SUCCESS AND A HIGH-PROFILE ENDORSEMENT, SHE'S FAST BECOMING A HOUSEHOLD NAME, AND THERE'S NO ONE TO BLAME BUT THE STAR HERSELF.

Trisha Yearwood Makes It

Sitting composedly at the table in the front parlor of her tour bus, seeming more adult and serious and substantial than she appears on video, Trisha Yearwood is reflecting on some aspects of her first year at the top.

There was the beginning of it, for instance, when, having gone stratospheric straight after takeoff with "She's in Love With the Boy," young Ms. Yearwood and her career found themselves immediately, with nary a hindrance nor a warning, hurtling across the ceiling of the known pop-country universe: sharing sold-out-into-the-next-millennium tour stages with none other than Garth 'Bazillion' Brooks.

"I'd gotten real comfortable in the studio, but all of a sudden I got thrown from singing in front of five people to the biggest tour in the country, in any kind of music," Trisha recalls. "There was no in between. There was no time to prepare."

She takes a sip of soda and laughs calmly at the memory. "I was horrified. I mean, I'd done some clubs, so I wasn't a complete stranger to performing, but I'd never had a stage to maneuver on, and I didn't know what to do with it. It was kind of trial by error, and I probably made a lot of mistakes in front of a lot of people."

It all worked out, though. "It was okay. Those country audiences were real forgiving and accepting. They made me feel real comfortable really quickly."

Soon there came another very significant potential embarrassment and/or challenging opportunity. With her career still hurtling onward and upward, Trisha decided, for reasons she continues to veil in diplomatic generality, to cast off her main booster rocket. She left the management team of Doyle and Lewis, which also meant leaving the orbit of their main client (and her mentor), Garth Brooks.

"When I fired them, with nobody else in mind for a manager, it was right before they were named Managers of the Year, and I looked like an idiot," she laughs.

"People were thinking, 'Oh, she's had a hit record and she's lost her mind.'"

But again, it worked out fine. "I went for a month without management until I met with Ken Kragen, and he and I decided to work together. Then, I think, a lot of people said, 'Well, maybe she's not so crazy after all.'"

Indeed. Kragen, the manager of Kenny Rogers and Travis Tritt, among others, has been at the top of the pop business for a long time, and has a very attractive record of creating major stardom for his clients. Trisha was fortunate to hook him; moving to him from Doyle and Lewis was sort of like quitting Saturn and ending up at Toyota.

There was of course some turbulence in the transition, notably around Trisha's own values as "a Southern girl, raised not to ruffle feathers" and "a perception in some parts of Nashville that I'd sold out to L.A. management." Such concerns were, however, insignificant in the larger picture, and by the end of her first year at the top, Trisha was very well positioned indeed: firmly established as *the* new woman on the country scene (her first album having yielded one Number Two and two Number One hits and, more to the point, gone platinum); chosen by no less a corporate entity than Revlon to launch a 'sophisticated' new perfume (a natural match, given Trisha's model-grade height, slenderness and creamy Georgia peach complexion); and reviewed very flatteringly in just the right places. "She has the potential for a long and significant career," quoth *Rolling Stone* in reaction to *Hearts in Armor*, her second album (a third is in the works). "She has succeeded as a contemporary woman, without bowing to domestic country archetypes," noted *Newsweek*. "She soars outside country conventions," said *The New York Times*.

Music to the Young Country ear, all that—and ah, yes, New York. It happens to be where our interview is taking place. Trisha's bus isn't parked behind some

◆ BY PATRICK CARR ◆

suburban 'shed' or heartland honky tonk, its usual spots, but right out on the lower-mid-Manhattan street in front of Tramps, a several-hundred-seat, latest-happening, music-industry-showcase kind of establishment on the West Side. Trisha's job there is to headline the event of the evening, a critic- and VIP-packed affair sponsored by MCA Records to promote her and The Mavericks, the wonderful Anglo-Cuban-Miamian rockabilly band whose bass player, Robert Reynolds, is her fiance. So it's a big deal—everyone from Ken Kragen to MCA Nashville's top hierarchy to *The New York Times*, etc., is watching closely—and the pressure's on.

Not that she seems anxious in any way, or even tense. She is in fact impressively cool. When her road manager interrupts our interview to ask for a decision on a problem—The Mavericks' drummer wants to play his own kit rather than Trisha's drummer's, which means a lot of very troublesome stage re-setting between the opening act and the headliner—she asks some pertinent questions, acknowledges the tricky personal aspects of the situation (her fiance, remember, is a Maverick), and then makes a quick but unhurried decision: there will be no stage re-setting. The Mavericks will use her drums.

Watching her handle such matters, and listening to her talk about her trip to the top, I'm struck by one overpowering impression: the sense a young woman with her ducks in a good, straight, taking-care-of-business row. I can see exactly what Brooks, Doyle, Lewis, Kragen, Revlon's ad executives, the MCA brass and all the other honchos see in her—the voice and the looks, of course, but also the attitude.

What we have here is a performer impossible to even imagine not far back in country music time—say, in the heyday of George & Tammy and Waylon & Willie—but exactly right for this particular moment: a sober, hardworking banker's daughter with a business degree and Linda Ronstadt's vocal chords.

That is, a small-town Southern banker's daughter with a music business degree. Trisha grew up in Monticello, Georgia (pop. roughly 2,000), the daughter of a Vice President of a locally owned bank and a third-grade schoolteacher, then moved to Nashville and earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Music Business from Belmont College, the idea being "to become a singer, and control my own business."

The degree (can you imagine that in the days of guitars, Cadillacs and hillbilly music?) gave her an education in the practical aspects of her intended career; her purely musical education was already in place. She'd begun with The King—Elvis Presley, who held her five-year-old soul in thrall via old albums given her by a neighbor ("hypnotic" is the word she uses to describe his voice)—and also more country-style singers: Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, Buck Owens, Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells and others.

A little later she discovered Linda Ronstadt, beginning with the *Heart Like a Wheel* album. Then she got into a mixture of 70's and 80's rock/pop favorites, among them Billy Joel, The Eagles, The Allman Brothers and The Atlanta Rhythm Section. And she was (and is) attracted to strong female voices regardless of the genre in which they sing. Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt, Rosanne Cash, Annie Lennox, Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders and Ann Wilson of Heart are among the ones she mentions, as of course is Carole King: *Tapestry*, that queen of New York pop's crowning achievement and the single most popular album of the 70's, was one of the first two cassettes Trisha got for her new cassette

player at the age of six (the other was an Elvis *Greatest Hits* package). Even today, she says, she herself would record any one of the *Tapestry* songs.

Musical roots so typical of her age and demographic (white, female, middle 20's, smalltown/suburban) positioned Trisha very nicely for a run at the modern country music business—basically, she fits the profile of the industry's target consumer in most ways and exceeds it in significant others, notably socioeconomic status and education, which makes her a perfect product. Her first experiences in the workplace, however, were not inspiring. Answering the telephone at MTM Records was the kind of job that "sent me home at night miserable," but she used it to make contacts and began working her way up the ladder as a demo singer, then a background singer on other artists' records. Eventually she met producer Garth Fundis at a Nashville writers'

night she attended with writer Pat Alger, and—well, and so on: MCA recording contract; big hit; etc., etc.

Looking back on it, Trisha acknowledges that her strategy worked better than she'd anticipated. She'd been pretty sure she'd make it, she says, but she'd thought it would take a few years longer than it did.



Trisha with mam, Gwen, and sister, Beth, in L.A.

Showtime. After a fiery, ragged set by The Mavericks, Trisha's act is a cool dream. Her band looks and sounds like the careful assembly of deeply experienced, highly paid professionals it is. The sound balance is clear and clean, just right. When she herself steps out onto the stage, she looks perfect for the time and place: tall, blonde, poised, graceful and elegant in a long, stunningly simple black gown she designed herself. She looks like the Plaza Hotel at its best; like a Tiffany model; like a Revlon ad. And when she launches into her first number, the rocking "Say You Will,"

there it is: that new-generation Ronstadt power, a voice that sounds as if it could go anywhere its owner has a mind to take it.

And its owner takes it to some interesting places: songs Trisha has made her own, like "The Woman Before Me," "Walkaway Joe," the powerful "Down on My Knees" and of course "She's in Love With the Boy"; nicely chosen extras like Garth Brooks' "Victim of the Game" and James Taylor's "Bartenders Blues" (the song George Jones made unforgettably his own); and, in duet with Raoul Malo, The Mavericks' lead singer and songwriter (who, unlike 99.9999% of the other humans on the planet, can sing fully as loud and long as she can), the genuinely spine-tingling "For Reasons I've Forgotten." When she's not singing, she talks comfortably with her crowd, keeping it brief and casual but hitting all the bases: offering thanks to MCA and Revlon and her other important allies, compliments to Raoul and Garth, a little humor, a personal remark or two. She seems thoroughly at home, and if you want to, you can see in that effect a winning combination of intense recent experience, high-quality professional coaching and keen personal intelligence.

Yow. By the time it's all over, Trisha's fans are more than happy, and her judges—the critics, the industry people who don't work for her—are fans. Which doesn't happen much in Manhattan, and means something when it does.

Later in the evening, then, at a party thrown by MCA in a chic pool hall near the club (another cultural phenomenon you'd never have encountered in George & Tammy's day), I have no trouble accepting the prognosis offered by Bruce Hinton, MCA's Nashville boss. "Trisha's not the flavor of the month," he says. "She's too good. She's in it for the long haul." ■

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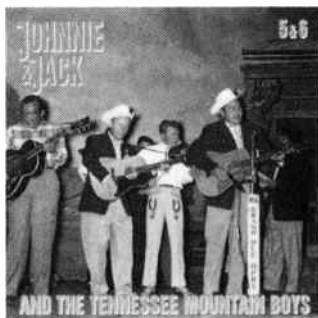
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Johnnie and Jack and Friends and Family

We didn't have room for the classic photo below on the Legends page, so we're including it here. It was taken in spring 1957 at the Municipal Auditorium in San Diego, California. From left rear: Ernest Tubb, Kitty Wells, Johnnie Wright, Jack Anglin, Fender Guitar exec Forrester White and E.T.'s guitarist, Billy Byrd. In front are steel guitar builder Leo Fender (left) and famed steel player Shot Jackson, who worked with Johnnie, Jack and Kitty.

Buried Treasures Special

Members get a discount on all items featured in Buried Treasures. Members may deduct \$10.00 off the prices on the Bear Family boxed sets. This time out, there are sets on Ernest Tubb, Don Gibson and Conway Twitty. Tubb and Gibson boxes are CD only. Twitty is LP only. For all other items, members take \$2.00 off prices shown. Include membership number when taking discount. See ordering instructions on Buried Treasures page.

Essential Collector Special

CMSA members may deduct \$2.00 off the price of any products offered in Essential Collector. This time around, those items include CD reissues on Willie Nelson and Webb Pierce and several books on guitars. You must include membership number when taking discount. See instructions on the Essential Collector page.

How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 091093N, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880. Include \$2.00 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional postage.



GENE BEAR ARCHIVE'S

VOTE

MEMBERS POLL/SEPTEMBER 1993

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out the Poll. We'll publish the results, and forward them to those involved in the business of country music who are interested in what fans are thinking and doing.

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____

2. In the boxes below, write the numbers of any of the albums on the Top 25 list in this issue which you bought in the last month.

3. For any albums you bought in the last month not on the Top 25 list, write performer's name and album titles in the space below. (Attach a separate sheet if you need more room.)

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

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

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Do You Own Audio Equipment?

5. Do you own a home stereo system? Yes No

6. If yes, which components are included: (Check all that apply)

Receiver/Amplifier

Cassette Player/Recorder

Compact Disc player

Turntable

What brand?

7. If no, do you plan to buy a home stereo system in the next 12 months? Yes No

8. Do you own a portable radio/cassette player?

Yes No

9. If yes, what brand? _____

Who Can Vote

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

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

Fill out poll and mail to: September Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.

“You can make an eternal difference in the life of a needy child.”

—Larry Gatlin

Grammy Award-winning country music artist and World Vision Childcare Sponsor.

There's an old saying that goes, "Things done for self so quickly pass; only things done for God will last."

I'm thankful for the good things that have happened to me in my life. And the things I do for myself today are important, but they're going to fade away. What really matters — what lasts — is when you can touch someone else's life and make it better.

That's why I'm a World Vision Childcare Sponsor — because I know I'm doing something that has eternal value. As a sponsor, I'm helping to bring God's love to a suffering child . . . to make her future brighter.

Christ says that if you give a cup of water to even the least of the brethren, you have given it to Him. I think that's what we're doing for these children through World Vision. It's really made an impact on my life.

There's a little boy or girl out there who needs your help, too.

For just \$20 a month, you can provide a child with things like food, clothing, medical care, education, and the opportunity to know about Jesus. Your sponsored child's family and community benefit as well, through training and development programs that will have a lasting impact.

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Take a minute now to send in the coupon or call the toll-free number to request an information package about a child who needs your help.

Join me as a Childcare Sponsor today.

Larry Gatlin



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Letters

Y'all Hear This

"The Second Coming of John Anderson"—it's about time. I'm a big fan of *Country Music Magazine* and an even bigger fan of John Anderson. The cover of the July/August issue was the best picture I've ever seen of him. I would like to thank Jim Shea and *Country Music Magazine* for giving it to us. About the article, it's a good one for the fans. We ain't heard nothin' about John in a long time, and I believe we all know why. It's good to know that some people in the business still care about good music and not just making a buck. They can have both with John.

Darryl Glenn
Providence, Florida

P.S.—Tell Patrick Carr that's a Tennessee fieldstone gate and not a brick one. What will you fans notice next?—Ed.

Anderson on Top

I want to write and tell you how very much I enjoyed Patrick Carr's cover story on John Anderson in the July/August edition. I'm very happy that John is back on top again. I found the last page of the article very interesting. The views concerning the country music business were enlightening and depressing.

The favorite artist at our house is Ricky Van Shelton. Please have articles or news about him. Keep up the good work. Your magazine is very professional—not thrown together like a gossip sheet.

Mrs. Barbara J. Jutsler
Ravenna, Ohio

See this issue for RVS.—Ed.

A Thump on the Head

Although I did enjoy the article "The Second Coming of John Anderson" in the July/August issue, the award for most obnoxious comment goes to Patrick Carr, and I quote, "John, at 38, is now substantial enough that he probably won't be taking his shirt off in any videos any time soon." Please! Patrick, get a clue. John Anderson is not the type of country singer that paid his dues with a sexy smile or a great bod. His extraordinary voice alone is music to this country girl's ears. It was this type of comment that drove Karen Carpenter to anorexia and eventually her death. Get with the program. The day I buy a record because I like someone's abdominal muscles is the day I'm too old to hear the music.

Jill Boone
Perrine, Florida



Anderson and Carpenter

Kudos on a splendid issue (July/August 1993). This one stands out because of articles on two of my favorites, John Anderson and Mary-Chapin Carpenter. Mary-Chapin has been my absolute favorite since hearing her in Norfolk, Virginia, and then buying her breakthrough album. I have been amazed at the commercial success she has enjoyed. The depth and intelligence of her lyrics seems well above the level of most of the fluff that passes for mainstream, commercial radio.

Anderson's *Seminole Wind* is the best album I have heard in the four years since my wife got me hooked on country music. The songs are great to listen to, plus the cuts (specifically the title track) have a real meaning beyond the traditional country themes.

Ben J. McCormick
Lemoore, California

Head's Up With Dwight

Thank you so much for the Dwight Yoakam interview in the May/June issue. I don't see or hear much about him, and he's my absolute favorite. He seems to disappear from the face of the earth sometimes, and then—bang! He's back for a while until he's had enough.

And he has one fan that comprehends what he's saying and doesn't get lost or left behind when the discussion becomes "deep" or "cosmic." It shouldn't be surprising to find a hillbilly with a little intellect.

Lisa Monson
Franklin, New Jersey

Best Yet on Dwight

The best article on Dwight Yoakam yet. What a great and talented man. I don't feel anyone could duplicate his awesome voice or style. I'm impressed that Dwight is a teetotaler—I feel this contributes to his songwriting that gets better and better with each new album. I just can't stop listening to his new album, *This Time*. It should be a Number One hit. Saw him in *Southern Rapture*. I forgot he was a country singer and saw him as the character he played. Great actor, great play. Thank you, *CMM*, for getting Dwight's point across. I feel that credit is not given when Dwight has earned it. Also, thank you for your great photos. The best.

Pam Lacefield
Tehachapi, California

The album's already Gold. See People section for more.—Ed.

Correction on Dwight

Thank you kindly for your cover story on Dwight Yoakam in the May/June issue. Dwight continues to make great music, all the while expanding his boundaries and growing artistically. One correction to Carr's review of *This Time* in the same issue. Buck Owens did not sing background on "This Time" (the song); that voice belongs to Grammy-award winning bluegrass artist Carl Jackson.

Gwen L. Cohen
Baltimore, Maryland

Warner Bros. confirms it's Jackson on those Buck-like vocals. Patrick sends his apologies.—Ed.

Sizemores or Dwight?

Please check out the statement on page 39 in the Dwight Yoakam article. I question whether Dwight wrote "How Far Is Heaven." I am 74 years young and have listened to Nashville music and the Grand Ole Opry most of my life. I remember in the 1930's two entertainers called Asher and Little Jimmie Sizemore sang together. The young son, six or seven years old, sang "How Far Is Heaven." I remember how touching it was. His father played on his guitar while the son struggled with the lyrics. I think Dwight is a super writer and entertainer.

M. W. Watson
Mt. Croghan, South Carolina
Same title, different song. Patty Loveless sang a song called "How Far Is Heaven" as a child. See People last issue.—Ed.

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1. Vince Gill's wife is also a country star. Name her.
2. Who has Larry Gatlin been playing on Broadway?
3. In what year did Ricky Van Shelton have his first hit?
4. Whom did Trisha Yearwood open for on her first major tour?
5. How many albums has George Strait released so far?
6. What was Conway Twitty's given name?
7. For how long will Chevy's Bumper to Bumper Plus Warranty cover your Chevy pickup?

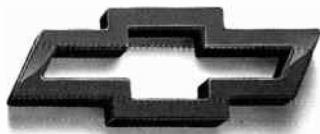
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1. "Straight Tequila Night" 2. Sixty
3. Washington, DC 4. 11 5. *Only What I Feel* 6. Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn
7. The Chevy S-10

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Carpenter and Willis

I am a recent subscriber and enjoy *Country Music Magazine* very much. I would like to thank you for the Mary-Chapin Carpenter article in the July/August issue. It was long overdue. Can you provide any current information on Kelly Willis? I enjoy her two albums very much and am looking forward to any new recordings.

Kim Messier
Tucson, Arizona

See *Record Reviews* this time.—Ed.

Weigh Those Words

While Bob Allen's piece on Mary-Chapin Carpenter (July/August 1993) provided new insight into this intelligent and sensitive far-thinking artist, I was rather taken aback by Mr. Allen's description of Ms. Carpenter as once being "slightly overweight." This is a prejudicial judgment that has no place within the framework of responsible journalism and is in no way related to her tremendous talent or her easy, quiet, outer beauty. It also carries pernicious sexist connotations that have long been harmful and hurtful to women in general. There is far too much emphasis placed upon the wrapping paper and not enough attention paid to the real gift that is inside.

Jana Pendragon
Long Beach, California

Mary-Chapin, Meet People

I am a new subscriber to your magazine and enjoy it very much. I have a question regarding the article on Mary-Chapin Carpenter featured in the July/August issue. The author stated that she had recently been featured on the cover of *People Magazine* as well as in an article. I have been searching for that specific issue of *People Magazine* with absolutely no luck. I have gone so far as to call *People*. They have no record of her being featured on the cover or in an article.

Jill Schmidt
Bel Air, Maryland

Check *People's* August 31, 1992 issue. Chapin was the cover's inset photo; Woody and Mia were the main shot.—Ed.

July a Joy

I enjoyed the July/August issue a lot, particularly the 20 Questions with Tom T. Hall and (at last) Mary-Chapin Carpenter pieces. She's a great performer and a generous human being, and if she's too "folky" for some fans, there's lots of other singers out there...such as Patty Loveless and Carlene Carter, whose latest albums were reviewed in the same issue! I'm glad your reviewers enjoyed these records as much as I did—they're both on my own "year's best" list. Both these women are forging ahead, doing country their way and making no compromises.

Dean Eaton
Somerville, Massachusetts

Alan All the Way

I just received my July/August issue. Thanks for the Alan Jackson pull-out. I have been waiting for another one to come out, and you did good. I think he is the most talented, best-looking country star there is and would love to see an article on him with photos in every issue. Keep it up.

K. Harvey
Middlesburg, Florida

We can't win.—Ed.

Jackson a Hit, Where's Ketchum?

I wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoyed the July/August issue of *Country Music*. The centerfold of Alan Jackson was a definite hit with me. My only complaint is the lack of attention devoted to Hal Ketchum. He is very good-looking and extremely talented. He may have been born in New York, but his music and his heart lie in the country.

Kimberly Hayek
Friend, Nebraska

Feature on Ketchum coming soon.—Ed.

May/June Hits Spot

Thank you for the wonderful article on Dwight (wow) Yoakam in the May/June issue! I am and always have been crazy about him and his music, and the article by John Morthland is just great. I'm not a bubbly teenager but a 60-year-old wife, mom and grandmother. That's why I haven't joined his fan club. The May/June issue is a wonderful issue, packed with all sorts of goodies—Dolly Parton's 20 Questions and the Randy Travis Pull-Out poster are great. Keep up the good work.

Lucille Dull
Prescott, Michigan

More May Madness

My compliments on a fantastic May/June issue! Who says you can't judge a book by its cover—Dwight caught my eye and the contents kept me delightfully entertained! Dwight and Diamond Rio have one thing in common—neither of them can make a bad album! Loved Patrick Carr's review of Dwight's album, *This Time*, as I do all of his writing.

It was great to see the Randy Travis Update. There is so much talent out there that the staff at *Country Music* must have quite a time deciding who to feature, but you do a great job. (Maybe you'll have to go to a monthly magazine in the future...)

Flo Gorton
Hudson Falls, New York
More work for George!—Ed.

Cheers for CMM and Randy

I think you have the best country music magazine in the business. Your feature articles make the subjects seem real and interesting, but they don't hurt or embarrass anyone. I also enjoy the Letters section and the music and book reviews.

I read the review of Scott Faragher's

book, *Music City Babylon*, in Essential Collector in your March/April issue. I ordered it and read it. Sometimes I wish I hadn't. I will never enjoy country music quite as much again.

Thanks for the Update on Randy Travis on the Facts of Life page in the May/June issue. I was disappointed in the centerfold. Why does a guy who is built like Randy wear a big baggy shirt for a centerfold photo?

Miriam J.
Florence, South Carolina

What's Sauce for the Goose...

Set me straight as to why a picture of a female country singer cannot be included as a centerfold in *CMM*. Patty Loveless is a beautiful lady and a wonderful singer. Now that she is well and back on the tour circuit, give her a break. Enough said. Let's see the poster.

Robert E. Coleman
Newport News, Virginia

Heart to Heart with Hazel

After reading the People section in my May/June issue, you are a lady after my own heart. At 57 years of age, married 37 years to a wonderful man, two grown children, five grandchildren, I too love those buns of George Strait's. But being also a lover of those nice-fitting jeans, check out those wonderful, lovely ones on my hunk, Dwight Yoakam! Nice, nice, nice! I'd love to cut off that long coat in his video that covers 'em up.

Sandy Hildreth
Millerton, Pennsylvania

Where will it end? See also centerfold in this issue.—Ed.

Quality Goods

I have read your fine magazine for about a year and feel that I should compliment you on the great writing. Most of the other country "magazines" seem to act like nobody ever puts out a bad record, makes a mistake or whatever. Your writers are better and sharper than the writers for those other mags, some of whom seem like they are writing publicity not articles about certain singers. Except for one, and that is Hazel Smith. Do your readers like the way she makes every singer out to be some kind of giant?

Ken Ifkin
San Francisco, California
Hazel just has a big heart. Big eyes, too!—Ed.

The Robbins Brood

I was thrilled to see your mention of the birth of the newest Robbins kid, Michael Martin, in People in the July/August issue. There are, however, a couple of corrections to that story. First of all, after the child's name, Michael Martin, you said "Marty's real name." Half of that is correct. Marty's real name was Martin David. Only the baby's middle name was

named for Marty. Also, this is not the first child for Ronny and Cathy. They were proud parents several years before, when daughter Courtney was born. Like you, I hope that boy learns to sing, and thanks for calling Marty Robbins "great." He certainly was a great singer and a great man offstage as well. I was working for him at his office when he died in 1982, and I can honestly say he was one of the nicest men I've ever known, and certainly the best boss I've ever had.

Sandy Daens
Nashville, Tennessee

Thanks for this correction.—Ed.

Patrick's Pulpit

I have just finished reading Patrick Carr's Final Note column in the July/August issue. Radio can make or break an artist, Mr. Carr; I realize your purpose in the article, but some of us out here are still country at heart. In Hawaii, George Strait is hot and so is Garth Brooks, as well as Tracy Lawrence and Randy Travis, but don't close the book so soon...the likes of Bob Wills, Flatt and Scruggs, Hank Sr., Conway and George Jones. George, God bless him, is still giving us some of the hottest music out of Nashville.

Naomi Rivers
Disk Jockey KDEO Island Country
Waipahu, Hawaii

Bay Area Breeze

Thanks so much for Patrick Carr's column in the July/August issue. For five hours every Sunday night, KSAN in the Bay Area (one of those stations) has "All Kinds of Country" hosted by my hero, Sally Roddy. She plays everything from Kevin Welch and Jim Lauderdale to Dire Straits, Alison Krauss, Lucinda Williams, Bob Wills and Rosie Flores. A breath of fresh air in a country radio wasteland.

Janet Byron
Berkeley, California

"Oldies" and Real Oldies

I want to compliment you on Patrick Carr's Final Note in the July/August issue. You have expressed my feelings about the current radio so-called playlist exactly. I no longer listen to the leading country radio stations in the Phoenix area, even though KNIX is one of the top stations in the country and I have listened to it since Buck Owens founded it! They say they play all of the new country music, and the "oldies of the last ten years." In my book (of course, I'm 76), the last ten years does not constitute "oldies." Station KCW on AM here does play the new, the hits of the last ten years, plus the classics. Instead of hearing the same ten or 15 songs all day long, they have a wonderful mix of country music. I love your magazine and have been a subscriber since it began. You are all wonderful.

Jean Butler
Phoenix, Arizona

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288 Clint Black	115 K T Oslin
165 Larry Boone	108 Marie Osmond
109 Suzy Bogguss	315 Lee Roy Parnell
257 Garth Brooks	261 Dolly Parton
407 Brooks & Dunn	NEW 309 Sandi Patti
267 Marty Brown	195 Pirates of Miss.
158 Tracy Byrd	701 Bonnie Raitt
245 Glen Campbell	826 Collin Raye
241 Carlene Carter	255 Jerry Reed
279 Lionel Cartwright	NEW 308 Ronna Reeves
232 Johnny Cash	199 Restless Heart
141 Rosanne Cash	555 Johnny Rodriguez
822 Mary Ch. Carpenter	244 Kenny Rogers
246 Charlie Daniels Band	111 Roy Rogers
243 Mark Chesnut	281 Billy Joe Royal
278 Mark Collie	242 Sawyer Brown
318 Confederate Railroad	307 Dan Seals
296 Earl Thomas Conley	206 Shenandoah
643 Cowboy Junkies	237 Ricky Skaggs
292 Rodney Crowell	846 Statler Brothers
257 Billy Ray Cyrus	216 Gary Stewart
310 Davis Daniel	NEW 134 Larry Stewart
304 Billy Dean	324 Doug Stone
128 Desert Rose Band	258 George Strait
212 Diamond Rio	147 Marty Stuart
150 Joe Dillie	825 Sweethearts Rodeo
845 Dean Dillon	269 James Taylor
238 Holly Dunn	843 Texas Tornados
173 Ellis Brothers	844 Pam Tillis
146 Exile	282 Aaron Tippin
260 Forester Sisters	240 Randy Travis
172 Randy Foster	226 Travis Tritt
135 Crystal Gayle	283 Tanya Tucker
163 Gibson/Miller	NEW 256 Ricky Van Shelton
250 Vinca Gill	219 Steve Wariner
290 Lee Greenwood	190 Gene Watson
162 Ricky L. Gregg	NEW 112 Kevin Welch
207 Nanci Griffith	132 Don Williams
311 Merle Haggard	NEW 356 Hank Williams Jr
239 Emmylou Harris	NEW 206 Michelle Wright
143 Highway 101	309 Tammy Wynette
821 Becky Hobbs	294 Trisha Yearwood
695 Indigo Girls	153 Dwight Yoakam
125 Chris Isaak	
248 Alan Jackson	
174 Waylon Jennings	
215 Michael Johnson	
113 George Jones	
317 Wynonna Judd	
180 Toby Keith	
253 KY Headhunters	
777 Sammy Kershaw	
118 Hal Ketchum	
234 k.d. lang	
841 Tracy Lawrence	
160 Chris LeDoux	
842 Little Texas	
194 Patty Loveless	
154 Lyla Lovell	
252 Barbara Mandrell	
824 Louise Mandrell	
301 Kathy Mattea	
319 Matthews Wright King	
291 Arkansas/LA	
312 Martina McBride	
300 McBride & The Ride	
201 Delbert McClinton	
302 Neal McCoy	
254 Reba McEntire	
314 Ronnie Milsap	
169 J M Montgomery	
170 Lorrie Morgan	
251 Anne Murray	

Concerts by Area

ID# Area
801 Tennessee/KY
802 Illinois/Indiana
803 So. California
804 Texas
805 Colorado
806 Pennsylvania
807 New York
808 New England
280 Maryland/VAAWV
298 Ohio
417 North Carolina
323 Florida
198 Alabama/Miss.
305 SC/Georgia
130 Missouri
284 Michigan
286 Wisconsin/Minn.
316 Washington/OR
291 Arkansas/LA
312 Iowa/Nebraska
325 Arizona/NM
400 Oklahoma/Kansas
221 N Dakota/S Dakota
233 Wyoming/ID/MT
228 Nevada/Utah
230 No. California
131 New Jersey/DE
140 Hawaii/Alaska

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Mack White Recalled

In your July/August Letters section, there was question raised as to the whereabouts of Mack White. My late father, Al Cape, was the promoter for Mack from the late 1960's until Mack left Panama City Beach, Florida, for Nashville in the mid- to late 70's. Mack passed away around 1985 from a rare blood disease. At the time he was playing at a piano bar in Mobile, Alabama. Not only was Mack a wonderful singer and musician, but he was a much loved husband, father and friend. Fortunately, he has left behind a legacy of beautiful music.

Jane Cape Latner
Pensacola, Florida

Billy Joe Shaver Found

This is in answer to my own letter in your July/August issue, asking "What ever happened to Billy Joe Shaver?" Billy Joe is living in Nashville and makes appearances in the area, performing locally and backed by his son on guitar. He also has an album due for release in the near future. My thanks to Rich Kienle and *Country Music* for printing my inquiry, and to Mr. Ronnie Pugh, Country Music Foundation librarian, for sending me in the right direction.

Lucille VanDusen
Wrightstown, New Jersey
Shaver's new album, Tramp on Your Street, is out now on Zoo Records.—Ed.

Conway Deserved Better

Conway was never honored as he should have been while he was alive. Sure, his shows were not elaborate technical shows, but every song he sang, every person there thought he was singing just to them. He should have received Entertainer of the Year. No singer in history has ever had or ever will have as many Number One hits as Conway. He is truly a professional and I hope he receives the recognition he deserves now that he is gone, since he did not get it while he was alive. We will truly miss this giant of a man.

Beverly Alexander
Evansville, Indiana
CMM's Conway tribute in this issue.—Ed.

Sad Song for Conway

I lost an old friend on June 5th. Conway's music inspired me when I was in love, comforted me when I wasn't, but it always, always entertained me. It spoke to me in a personal way. It wasn't "Only Make Believe," Conway—you were the real thing.

Debbie Ames
Reno, Nevada

The Legend and the Man

I just couldn't believe it when I heard about Conway. I've a heartfelt of sympathy for Conway's family and friends. I can only imagine their loss, but I do know the loss a devoted fan feels, for I've been

a Conway fan for 25 years or more.

I have listened to nothing but Conway's music for hours at a time. When I first heard "The Legend and the Man," I knew I just had to have it. Now after Conway's death, I have rewritten it as my way of thanking the man. I hope you like it.

Jerry D. Gates
Cleveland, Texas

*From "The Legend and the Man" by J.G.:
He's won all the shiny statues
All the records pressed in gold
But now he's won what really matters
What he really deserves the most
And tonight in heaven
Lord, he'll drive the crowd insane
They'll feel the pleasures of his songs
And he won't feel any pain.*

Possum Huntin'

I am a 38-year-old welder who knows about being a "Hard Working Man." I also know how it feels when it's "Too Cold at Home." I was raised as a youngster listening to Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Tammy Wynette and of course "Mr. Jones." There are too many talented people to mention, all great singers and performers. I like to listen to ZZ Top, Bad Company and those persons and supergroups of their eras, too. Today we have Garth Brooks, Brooks and Dunn, Reba McEntire, Lorrie Morgan, Travis Tritt—we know we can't list them all. The point is, this boils down to respect. If these "old horses and mares" hadn't have trampled these trails before, all of the new "studs and fillies" wouldn't have known which trail to take. Now give it up for The Possum.

Tony D. Robinson
Iron Station, North Carolina

Barely There

I have an old record made by Bobby Bare which was purchased in Nashville some ten years ago. There are some, I'm sure, who dislike the ideas about which he sings (or is it "sang"), but I liked the lonesome tone of voice and the fact that he often used the voice of a person identified as his son. I have not read or heard about Bobby for many years. Can you tell me his whereabouts?

Bruce Feighner
Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan
B.B.'s alive and well in Nashville. He's quoted in 20 Questions with Tom T. Hall in the July/August issue.—Ed.

Where's the Star?

My wife and I have just returned from our fifth Fan Fair. During the past five years, I have noticed something that troubles me. Some of the big country superstars do not appear in their booths anytime during Fan Fair, for a variety of reasons. They have booths selling their merchandise but never appear in person or have a special event for their fan club members only.

Garth Brooks is one of the hottest superstars. However, he spent countless hours at Fan Fair with all of the fans. Maybe some of these superstars need to take lessons from Garth and some of the other new stars, or maybe the Fan Fair committee should make it a prerequisite that, to have a booth at Fan Fair, the star must personally appear during the week.

Edward Swank
N. Miami, Florida

Where's the Red Ribbon?

Even though I enjoyed watching the 28th Annual Academy of Country Music Awards, I was greatly disappointed to see only one Host/Hostess, Randy Owen, wearing a red ribbon for AIDS Awareness. I will never buy any records by Reba McEntire and George Strait since they shunned the AIDS Awareness program by choosing not to wear a red ribbon on the CMA Show. Vince Gill is another non-wearer of red ribbons whose records I will boycott too! And no one wore red ribbons on the TNN Country Awards show—which should be voted the Most Boring Awards Show of the Year—it was more boring than an Academy Awards show. God bless people like Randy Owen, Kathy Mattea, Garth Brooks, Michelle Wright, etc., who continually wear the red ribbon at awards programs.

R.T. Roberts
New York, New York
Billboard reports that a new Country Music AIDS Awareness Campaign is about to begin. Mary-Chapin Carpenter and Mark Chesnutt will co-chair.—Ed.

Give Us More Country Women

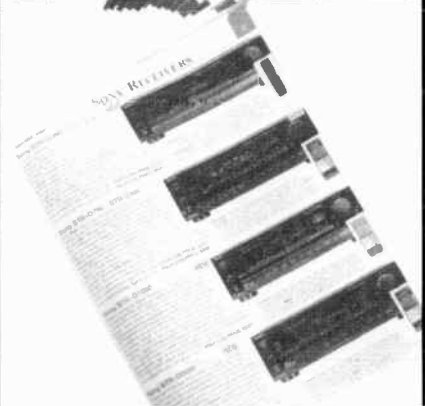
I'd like to know why we don't see more feature articles on the women of country music? There are a lot of special women in the business, and we need more articles on them, and more updates. And if you caught the very recent TV special on CBS, *Women of Country Music*, then you'll see what I'm talking about. These were some of the very best and talented ladies, such as Tanya Tucker, Trisha Yearwood, Patty Loveless and Suzy Bogguss, just to name a few. There are a wide variety of talented country music stars out there besides the same old four or five that seem to make the cover and feature stories in every issue of *CMM*.

R. C. Fulcher
Temecula, California

Where's the Small Fruit?

I'll bet this is one letter you will not print in your column. The whole magazine doesn't even cover these issues. If you are not a top banana, you don't even get an honorable mention. I have been trying to get CD's by Karen Tobin, Donna Ulisse, Lisa Brocop, and a record by B.O.T. Even heard of them? They are excellent performers. But, no, they get no rec-

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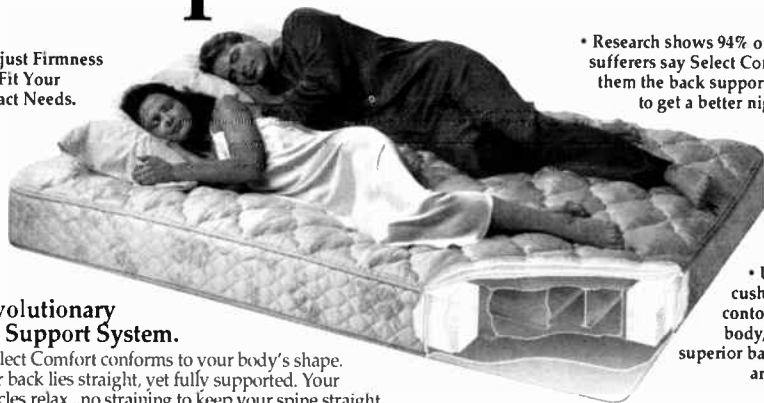
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ognition, therefore, they don't exist. I can't even order them out of the catalogs in the record stores. I'm sure many people agree with me, although they may not take time to write.

Linda Phillips
Olean, Missouri

Not Exactly Mainstream

Your record reviews are always excellent. You do strive to cover the lesser-known artists in country music along with the established stars. But have you ever considered reviewing some of the artists on the smaller, independent labels—maybe every six months you could do a write-up on these performers? There is a lot of good country music (albeit, not exactly mainstream) out there that never makes the national publications. Some of these groups deserve a little publicity via the printed word. Six of my recent favorites are: The Picketts, Gutterball, Uncle Tupelo, Vigilantes of Love, Goober and The Peas and Southern Culture on the Skids.

Terry Kline
Bowling Green, Ohio

Waitin' on Wynonna

Until I read the review of *Tell Me Why* in the July/August issue, I was starting to think I was the only one who felt that way about Wynonna's solo singing. The songs she is singing are nice but nothing more. If she combined the full power and sassiness of her voice with the right songs, Wynonna would be nothing short of staggering.

Kelly Coyle
Reisterstown, Maryland

It's All a Matter of Time

I agree with some of what was said in Record Reviews in the July/August issue about Wynonna. I can tell you why she keeps "sentimental niceness" in her albums. She's still a Judd, and that sentimental niceness took them straight to the top, and even though she likes where she's going, she'll never forget where she came from. When she's comfortable with how her fans feel about this new (and somewhat brassy) sound and she's satisfied with the reaction, she'll gradually ease away from her "sentimental niceness." It has to be at her own pace, and it has to be right. After all, timing is everything!

Bobbi Jo Craft
Greenville, North Carolina

Salute to Ralph Stanley

Thanks for the very nice record review on Ralph Stanley's album, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, in the July/August issue. I attended the Bill Monroe Bluegrass Festival this June in Bean Blossom, Indiana. Jim and Jesse have a fantastic band. Alison Krauss, Doc Watson, Del McCoury, Ralph Stanley, Bill Monroe and others put on outstanding shows. Keep up the good work!

Wilma Kennison
Asheville, North Carolina

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Dwight's Her Lucky Seven

Until the review on Dwight Yoakam's *La Croix D'Amour*, in the July/August issue, I was perfectly happy with my six Dwight CD's. Now, after the review, I need to make it seven. I have tried just about everything short of going to Europe to purchase it. Any suggestions on how I can obtain this CD? After all, you guys started this.

Rhonda L. Miller
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Look for record stores that deal in imports. Most cities have one. Otherwise, Delta is ready when you are.—Ed.

Right On, Rich

I just read your review of Patty Loveless' new album, *Only What I Feel*, in the July/August issue. Thank God someone more articulate and intelligent than I, plus being a recognized authority, has confirmed in print what I've been bitching about for at least a year. Your description of "hot country" radio and burned out rockers who do most of the programming is a masterpiece. Your comments on the seemingly unlimited signing by labels of new kids who are at least mediocre (and incidentally all sound alike) were right on the mark. Thanks so much for vindicating what I've been yelling about.

Joe Talbot
Nashville, Tennessee

Bootin' Bob Allen

In response to your review of Brooks & Dunn's *Hard Workin' Man* in the May/June issue, ever wear a cowboy hat? What do you mean Brooks & Dunn wrote most of their songs this time around? If I recall, they wrote all the songs on *Brand New Man* (that time around). You also stated four-wheel-drive, girls in tight blue jeans and getting smashed on tequila, then to get your point across repeated the phrase. However, four-wheel-drive was only mentioned once on the album, same with tight blue jeans, and for tequila, it was in a chorus of only one song. In closing, I would like to say, no, I haven't heard "Boot Scootin' Boogie" enough, especially the remix.

Bradley A. Gibson
Arcanum, Ohio

One man's meat.... —Ed.

All Things Come to He Who Waits

I love Reba McEntire, but I disagree with the letter of Jennifer French in the July/August issue about her disagreement with Mr. George Fletcher on his review of Reba's latest album, *It's Your Call*, in the March/April issue. This album is just what George Fletcher said it was and is by far not one of her best. Her best albums are *Reba*, *Sweet Sixteen*, *Live*, *My Broken Heart* and *Greatest Hits*. I agree with George that half the songs are mediocre. I just listen to the first side (the

side with the great songs); the second side is just okay. I was disappointed when I first bought it, but every album can't be great, as this one isn't. Jennifer French, get real. Don't get dead or blinded just because you like Reba (that "I like everything no matter what" syndrome).

Donny Depew
Mississippi State, Mississippi
The defense rests.—Ed.

Our Achy Breaky Hearts

This letter is in reference to a letter in the May/June issue asking if The Marcy Brothers recorded "Achy Breaky Heart" first, which they did, only it was entitled "Don't Tell My Heart." The answer was, yes, it is the same song, and "It went no-

where for The Marcy Brothers." We must protest. First of all, The Marcy Brothers never released the song as a single. Second, if The Marcy Brothers had come out with all of the hype that Billy Ray Cyrus has, they too would have had a hit.

We like Billy Ray Cyrus' version of "Achy Breaky Heart" (The Marcy Brothers do, too), but as Marcy Brother fans, we have to say *loud and clear* to all of you Billy Ray Cyrus fans, if you ever go to a Marcy Brother concert, you might have the "Cyrus Virus" when you arrive, but when you leave, you will have "Marcy Mania"!

Laurie and Terry
Twin Falls, Idaho
We stand clarified.—Ed.

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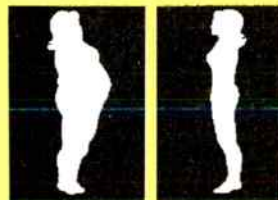
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COWGIRLS & COWBOYS MEET! Nationwide western singles' club introduces, by mail, people with similar interests. Personal, confidential. Send \$3.00 for application, details: Jan's Horse Sense, P.O. Box 1202CM, Pilot Point, TX 76258.

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COUNTRY MUSIC'S OLDEST independent record company. Interviewing country singers to record. (615) 883-5349.

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CALL FREE 1-(800) 345-2694 Nashville's singer/song-writer information service. Tip sheets, free song production, artist development, recording stars addresses. 24 hours.

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LYRIC CONTEST! \$250 awarded. Send 1-3 lyrics with SASE. \$5.00 entry fee per lyric. American Press, Dept. CM, P.O. Box 127, Odessa, MO 64076.

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CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Country Music classifieds target your perfect market --- every issue is read by more than 7 million country music fans. Don't miss our November/December issue. The closing date is Monday, September 20th

Rates: Regular word classified ads \$5.90 per word, minimum ad 10 words. Classified display is \$340 per column inch. All classified advertising must be prepaid with order. Camera ready artwork is required for display ads.

Mail copy, payment and any artwork to: Country Music, P.O. Box 570, Clearwater, FL 34617. Telephones: National 800-762-3555 • International 813-449-1775.

Kienzle Strikes a Chord

I had a fit when my wife allowed some "smooth" salesman to talk her into ordering about ten magazines for several years for several hundred dollars (two something). But to console me, she included your magazine. I wasn't too impressed until I began to read about the old "treasures" that are available in Buried Treasures by Rich Kienzle. I believe Rich and I see eye to eye on some things. Being a traditionalist, I consider Porter the true Rhinestone Cowboy. It doesn't cut much mustard with me to hear Gary Morris make the hair stand up on the back of my neck singing one of Hank's masterpieces.

You can't be all things to every age and taste of fan, but I believe you come as close as possible. Thanks and keep it up!

Bill Fanning
Fowler, Illinois

P.S.—I'll take any color on the Blazer. I know you'll be more faithful than Ed McMahon.

John Melvin Travis

I have been reading about Merle Travis in Buried Treasures in your May/June issue. I enjoyed it very much. I love all the old country stars. I am sending an obituary from my hometown newspaper about John Melvin Travis. He is the brother that wrote some of Merle's songs.

Patsy Brown
Princeton, Kentucky

John Melvin Travis, 1915-1993. Died May 7th, "preceded in death by two brothers, Taylor Travis and country singer Merle Travis," from the Princeton paper.—Ed.

Serving 190 Proof

For those who asked, Merle Haggard's *Serving 190 Proof*, reviewed in Classic Record Reviews in the May/June issue, is out of print. Check used/rare record dealers and hope for a reissue soon.

Win Big

Thank you so much for the \$1000 check for the Sweepstakes prize. I thought I would have been the last person in the world to win anything like that. This was a very pleasant surprise. I have been playing country music (as a hobby) since I was nine years old. I also enjoy *The Journal*. I am familiar with (or heard on the radio) most of the older type performers. As for spending the prize money, I will probably take a short vacation. Thanks again.

Herbert L. Flowers
Memphis, Tennessee

We also heard from \$5000 winner Marlene Broyles of Corpus Christi, Texas. Congrats to all our winners!—Ed.

Send Letters to the Editor to Country Music Magazine, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters. We reserve the right to edit for space and style.

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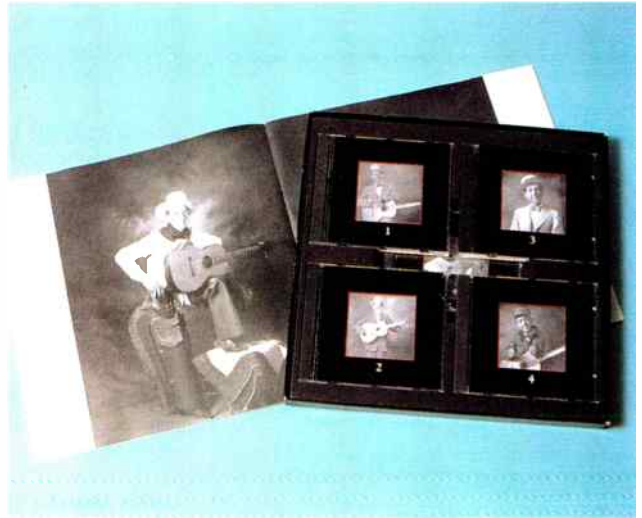
EDITOR'S CHOICE

REBA MCENTIRE BIOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

Reba McEntire is unquestionably one of the most beloved performers in country music. Her millions of fans have made her last nine albums national bestsellers—she is a true superstar. She has embarked on an acting career; she sang for former President Bush; she runs her own corporation; and she is a successful mother and wife. Yet not all of Reba's life has been so glamorous. An Oklahoma native, she was a rancher's daughter and spent much of her early life on the rodeo circuit, where her real talent as a singer was first discovered. Success did not come overnight, however—she had to work hard, travel far, listen to a lot of bad advice and overcome a series of setbacks, including the

JIMMIE RODGERS: THE SINGING BRAKEMAN 6-CD SET

The Singing Brakeman is the definitive Jimmie Rodgers treasury collection. It features 145 songs, beginning with his first recordings done during the legendary 1927 *Bristol Sessions* that put The Carter Family and others on record for the first time. It ends with the final session done in a New York City studio in May 1933, just days before his death. This historic Bear Family compilation is superior to the more recent Rounder Record collection, in part because it manages to further improve the original sound by using a computerized noise processing program known as the CEDAR system. Just some of the classic songs included in this set are: "The Soldier's Sweetheart," "Sleep, Baby, Sleep," all of the classic "Blue Yodel" songs, "Mother Was a Lady," "My Little Old Home Down in New Orleans," "My Carolina Sunshine Girl," "Waiting for a Train," "I'm Lonely and Blue," "Any Old Time," "Train Whistle Blues," "Frankie and Johnny," "The Land of Boyhood Dreams," "In the Jailhouse Now," "I've Ranged, I've



Roamed, I've Travelled," "Mississippi River Blues," "Nobody Knows But Me," "She Was Happy Till She Met You," "A Drunkard's Child," "Looking for a New Mama," "My Good Gal's Gone," "Southern Cannonball," "Long Tall Mama Blues" and "Peach Picking Time Down in Georgia." There is also a 60-page booklet with notes and discography by Rodgers' biographer, Nolan Porterfield. The booklet is a treasure in itself, with many never-before-published Rodgers photos. This is an essential set for every serious country music fan. It is available on CD only for \$169.95, #BCD15540.



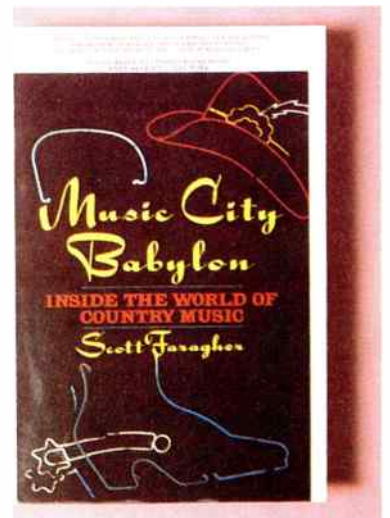
end of her first marriage. It was not until the early 1980's that she began to find success. And when success did come for her, it came in a major way. Even the tragic loss of her band in an airplane crash failed to slow her pace. Along with Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn and the late Patsy Cline, she has joined the ranks of country music's legendary performers. *Reba McEntire: The Queen of Country* is the story of her life and career as it has never been told before. It sells for \$10.99, #B2T.

And if you haven't seen Reba in person, I advise you to buy her spectacular video, *Reba in Concert*. This video was shot live and includes many of her popular Number One hits. Included are: "Whoever's in New England," "One Promise Too Late," "Walk On," "Rumor Has It," "Respect," "Little Rock," "Oklahoma Swing," "Fancy," "Cathy's Clown," "You Lie," "Sweet Dreams," "Let the Music Lift You Up," "Love Will Find Its Way to You," "Can't Even Get the Blues" and a medley of her other popular songs. *Reba in Concert* costs only \$19.95, #V3E. When you buy both the biography and the video, #B2T/V3E, your cost is only \$27.94—YOU SAVE \$3.00!

MUSIC CITY BABYLON

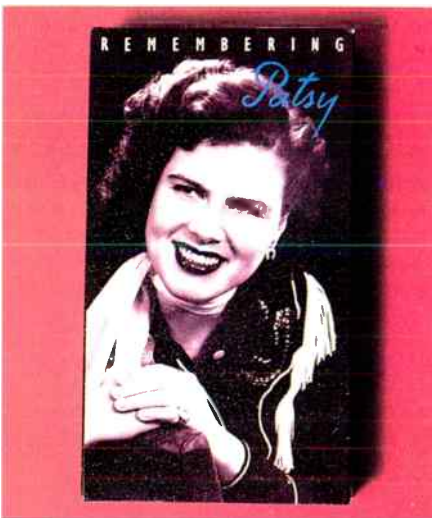
Author Scott Faragher is a talent agent who has represented country artists like Waylon Jennings, Barbara and Louise Mandrell, Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Billy Ray Cyrus, Ray Price and dozens more. For the past 20 years he has booked his clients into club dates, tours, exhibitions, fairs and concerts around the country. He has juggled talents and temperament, kept his clients happy and loyal and persuaded his customers to pay top dollar, while fending off sharklike competition. Now he takes you deep inside the country music business that generates over \$700 million in record sales alone. You'll see how agents and managers are on the take. Why Loretta Lynn fired her agent of 14 years the week before Christmas with only two weeks' pay. Why Billy Ray Cyrus went from \$2,500 to \$150,000 a night as the result of one hit song. Plus a whole lot more. But *Music City Babylon* isn't only about big names and bigger egos. Faragher also reveals what actually happens to the wide-eyed innocent who brings a song, a guitar and a dream to Nashville. Stardom, fame and wealth are

temptingly offered—for a price. *Music City Babylon* is a revelation of arrogance, greed and excess at all levels. This expansive, 420-page, illustrated volume sells for \$19.95, #B6E.



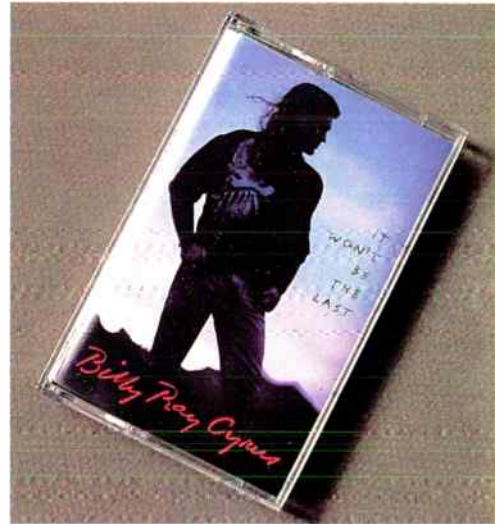
REMEMBERING PATSY VIDEO

Patsy died in a plane crash in 1963. Now, her musical legacy lives on in this new *Remembering Patsy* video from Hallway Productions in Nashville. This heartfelt, 60-minute celebration features 17 great songs and 10 rare television appearances, recently discovered and never before seen on home video. You'll meet Patsy through intimate home movies, personal letters, as read by Arista artist Michelle Wright, and fond reminiscences of Patsy's husband Charlie Dick, and Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, George Jones, Mel Tillis, Roy Clark, Eddy Arnold and Jan Howard. A new generation of stars, including Trisha Yearwood, k.d. lang and Ronna Reeves add insight into Patsy's influence and proof positive that she lives on in her music. This video sells for \$19.95, #V1E.



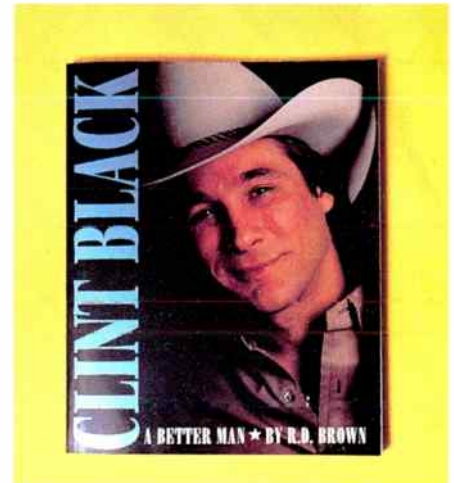
NEW! 1994 BILLY RAY CYRUS PHOTO CALENDAR... NEW! BILLY RAY ALBUM: IT WON'T BE THE LAST

Here is country music's hottest commodity on two brand new releases. There's the 12" x 24" 1994 Billy Ray Calendar with twelve great photos for \$11.95, #G3G. Then there's his new album, *It Won't Be the Last*, featuring: "In the Heart of a Woman," "Talk Some," "Somebody New," "Only Time Will Tell," "Ain't Your Dog No More," "Words by Heart," "Right Face Wrong Time," "Dreamin' in Color, Livin' in Black and White," "It Won't Be the Last" and more! Choose cassette for \$11.98 (#MERC514758) or CD for \$19.98 (CD514758).



CLINT BLACK BIOGRAPHY: A BETTER MAN

In 1987, 25-year-old Clint Black was just another country music star wannabe—a Houston construction worker by day who performed in clubs at night and dreamed of a time when he would do nothing else but write songs and play music. Six years later, that time has come. Now one of the nation's premier country music superstars, with four albums—each with sales in the millions—he is often compared to such greats as Merle Haggard and George Strait. But despite Clint's success and enormous popularity, the six years have been a roller coaster of per-

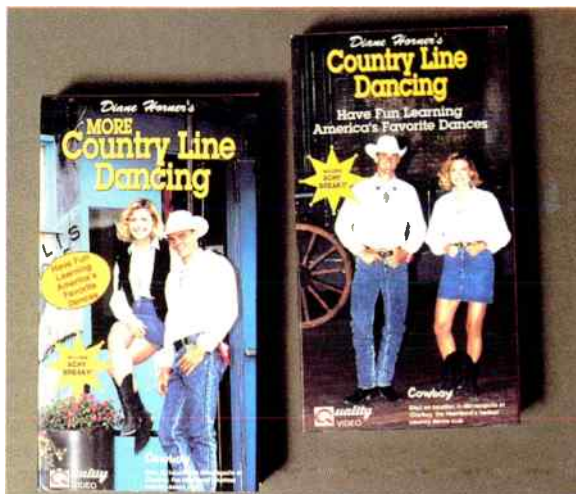


sonal and professional highs and lows. Now, author R.D. Brown presents the telling success story of this talented singer-songwriter (and high school dropout). Follow Clint's rise to stardom, from the painful breakup with a longtime girlfriend—which led to the creation of his debut smash album, 1989's *Killin' Time*, that spawned five Number One singles and won three Grammy Award nominations and the Country Music Association's prestigious Most Promising Newcomer Award—through his struggle for recognition before being plucked from obscurity by ZZ Top manager Bill Ham, to his staggering success in both country and pop music worlds and his marriage to Lisa Hartman. Illustrated with nearly 75 color and black and white photographs and peppered with numerous anecdotes, this new book lets you witness first-hand the intensity of life on the road, as Clint tours in support of his blockbuster albums, including *Put Yourself in My Shoes* and *The Hard Way*. No fan of today's country music scene should miss this 117-page, over-sized paperback that is currently selling for \$12, #B1P.

COUNTRY MUSIC LINE DANCING & MORE COUNTRY MUSIC LINE DANCING

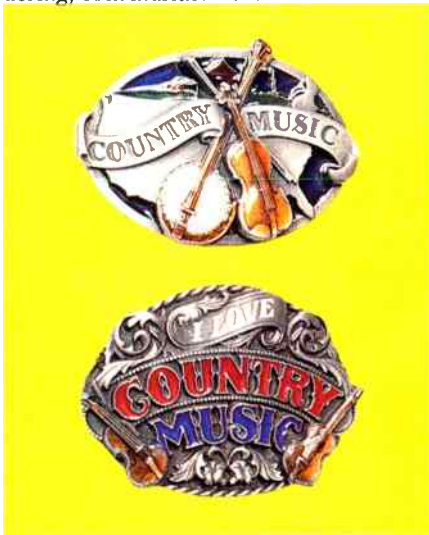
The *Country Line Dancing* video, #V9B, has become the most popular dance instruction video in America today...and the first to feature the dance inspired by Billy Ray Cyrus' hit song, "Achy Breaky Heart." Unlike other dance instruction videos that "break away" for you to prac-

tice alone, this one practices each basic step with you until it's automatic. After learning the basic country line steps—vine, stomp, pivot hitch, strut, reggae—you will dance your way through the "Electric Slide," then move on to the more demanding "Achy Breaky." There's also the "Cotton Eyed Joe" (Circle Dance). Once you can do the basic country steps, you are ready to increase your repertoire with the new video, *More Country Line Dancing*, #V9X. You'll practice each step before learning the pattern. Audio cues help you remember the pattern of steps unique to each dance, including: "Achy Breaky II," "T.C. Electric Slide," "Country Strut," "Southside Shuffle," "Coy Cha Cha" and "Sixteen Step." Each video is \$9.95 or order both for only \$18.



COUNTRY MUSIC COLLECTIBLE BELT BUCKLES

Here are, without question, the two most popular, best-selling country music accessories we have offered over the past few years. Each of these handsome belt buckles is made of genuine pewter, with vibrant enamel colors highlighting the words "Country Music." The "Country Music" buckle shows off a banjo and fiddle. The "I Love Country Music" buckle features two smaller fiddles. Each buckle sells for \$9.95. Or you can order both for only \$17.90, so you SAVE \$2.00. When you order, indicate the "I Love Country Music" buckle as #G6J and the "Country Music" buckle as G7L. When ordering, both indicate #G6J/G7L.



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 #17 includes: "Here's a Quarter (Call Someone Who Cares)"/Travis Tritt, "Shameless"/Garth Brooks, "Dallas"/Alan Jackson, "Born Country"/Alabama, "Love Me"/Collin Raye, "Forever Together"/Randy Travis, "Lovin' Blind"/Clint Black, "Look at Us"/Vince Gill, "Anymore"/Travis Tritt, "What's She Doin' Now"/Garth Brooks, "Keep It Between the Lines"/Ricky Van Shelton and "Somewhere in My Broken Heart"/



Billy Dean. Package #29 includes: "Maybe It Was Memphis"/Pam Tillis, "Except for Monday"/Lorrie Morgan, "Is There Life Out There"/Reba McEntire, "Eagle When She Flies"/Dolly Parton, "Jealous Bone"/Patty Loveless, "For My Broken Heart"/Reba McEntire, "What Do I Do With Me"/Tanya Tucker, "She Is His Only Need"/Wynonna Judd, "Like We Never Had a Broken Heart"/Trisha Yearwood, "That's What I Like About You"/Trisha Yearwood, "I Can't Make You Love Me"/Bonnie Raitt and "Down at The Twist & Shout"/Mary-Chapin Carpenter. Each package gives you 12 hit songs on two cassettes. Only \$19.95 for each package, #PKG17 or #PKG29—please specify which when ordering.

CHET ATKINS VIDEO INSTRUCTION COURSE: GET STARTED ON GUITAR

Here is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn to play the guitar (or sharpen your existing skills) from one of the grandmasters of guitar pickin'. With the *Chet Atkins: Get Started on Guitar* video course, beginners can have fun learning the basics, and advanced players will discover a goldmine of helpful hints and ideas. *Chet Atkins: Get Started on Guitar* includes a one-hour video cassette, a 112-page instruction book

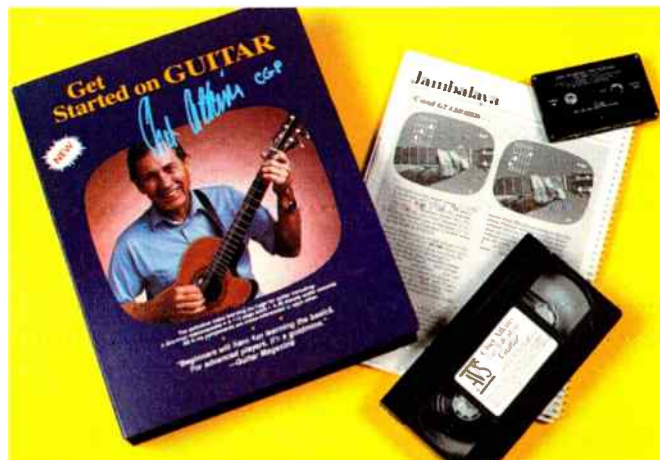
and a 40-minute audio-cassette—all three components cross-referenced to each other and packaged in a sturdy plastic case for convenient carrying and access.

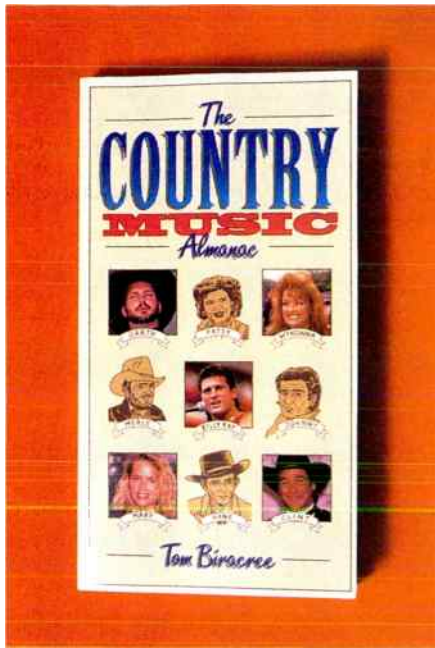
The instruction book will guide you through the music Chet plays in the video. Each tune has its own chapter complete with both basic information and tips for the advanced player. Plus special reference sections on "Playing Chords," "Finger-picking Chords," "Playing Melodies" and "Playing by Ear." The video shows split-screen close-ups so you can see exactly how the techniques are done. Also included are on-screen chord symbols that let you play along as you watch...plus an on-screen clock to help you instantly go to specific places in the video. You receive the video, cassette, instruction booklet and binder case all for \$69.95, #B2G.



THE OFFICIAL COUNTRY MUSIC DIAMOND CHIP WATCH

Here is the most attractive entry in our line of country accessories...our 24-karat, gold-layered unisex watch with a genuine diamond chip. Our popular *Country Music* logo in gold stands out against the black face and black, pebble-grain leather strap. The gold-colored hands add another handsome touch. Inside is an accurate electronic quartz movement. Order one for \$19.95 or two for only \$37.90 and SAVE \$2.00, #G4L.



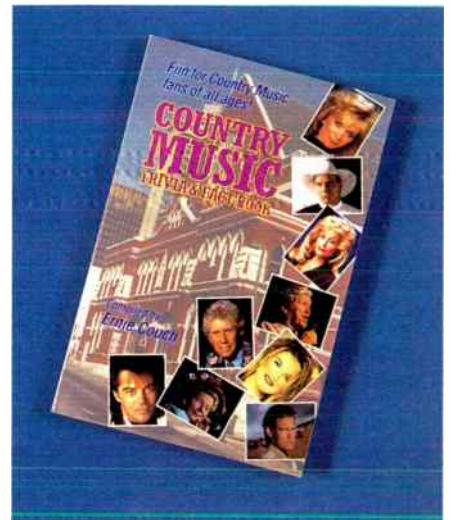


BRAND NEW! THE COUNTRY MUSIC ALMANAC

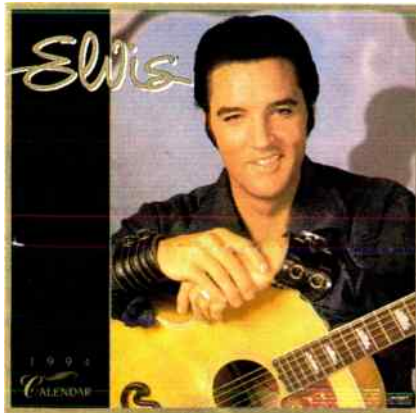
Like the *Trivia Book* also offered on this page, this essential new edition of *The Country Music Almanac* is sure to appeal to millions of country music fans. More fun than going backstage at the Grand Ole Opry, this book presents profiles of the country greats—from Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers and Kitty Wells to Randy Travis, Billy Ray Cyrus and the rest of today's sensations—along with little-known facts, juicy tidbits and the best country songs of all time, including the Number One hits and Gold and platinum albums. Find out who's sold the most albums and who's garnered the Grammys. Read the behind-the-scenes stories of the great country songs. You'll get all this and much more in this 280-page illustrated edition for only \$10, #B10.

BRAND NEW! COUNTRY MUSIC TRIVIA AND FACT BOOK

What is the name of Billy Ray Cyrus' back-up band? When did Garth Brooks join the Grand Ole Opry? What is the amount on the price tag of Minnie Pearl's straw hat? What ailment forced Naomi Judd to retire in 1991? When did *Hee Haw* first air on CBS? How tall is Little Jimmy Dickens? Who is The Tennessee Plowboy? What instrument did Tennessee Ernie Ford play in his high school band? Here is your chance to have a whole lot of fun testing yourself about America's best-loved music and performers. In the brand new *Country Music Trivia and Fact Book*, more than 2,000 facts will tantalize you—a surprise on every page. Here are fascinating questions about groups, stars, writers, songs and famous and not-so-famous places and moments in the wonderful world of country music. Also included are lists of award winners, biographical sketches, photos and the stories of Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, Dollywood, Missouri's own Branson, *Austin City Limits*, Opryland, The Ryman Auditorium, The Nashville Net-



work, Fan Fair and the Country Music Hall of Fame. Every serious country music fan should have a copy of this entertaining volume. It's 288 pages, illustrated, and it sells for only \$9.95, #B1L.



BRAND NEW! THE OFFICIAL 1994 ELVIS PRESLEY WALL CALENDAR

It's that time again for you Elvis fans—time to send for next year's new 1994 Elvis Presley Wall Calendar. As in years gone by, the Calendar features 12 fabulous photos of the "King of Rock 'n' Roll" during his early years of superstardom. The pictures measure 12" x 12", and the entire Calendar opens up to a big 12" x 24". There's plenty of room to jot down appointments or important messages. As in the past, important facts about Elvis' life and career are scattered throughout the Calendar. We have purchased only a limited number of Calendars for 1994. It's first come first served. So order yours now. Order one for \$10.95 or two for \$19.90 and SAVE \$2.00, #G6F.

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TOP 25

Singles

1. Alan Jackson *Chattahoochee*
2. Brooks & Dunn *We'll Burn That Bridge*
3. Mark Chesnutt *It Sure Is Monday*
4. Tracy Lawrence *Can't Break it to My Heart*
5. Carlene Carter *Every Little Thing*
6. Reba McEntire *It's Your Call*
7. Clint Black with Wynonna... *A Bad Goodbye*
8. Doug Stone *Why Didn't I Think of That*
9. Sammy Kershaw *Haunted Heart*
10. Little Texas *What Might Have Been*
11. Doug Supernaw *Reno*
12. Hal Ketchum *Mama Knows the Highway*
13. Dwight Yoakam *A Thousand Miles from Nowhere*
14. Restless Heart *We Got the Love*
15. Sawyer Brown *Thank God for You*
16. Shenandoah *Janie Baker's Love Slave*
17. Billy Ray Cyrus *In the Heart of a Woman*
18. Aaron Tippin *Working Man's Ph.D.*
19. Trisha Yearwood *Down on My Knees*
20. George Strait *When Did You Stop Loving Me*
21. John Anderson *Money in the Bank*
22. Gibson/Miller Band *Texas Tattoo*
23. Tracy Byrd *Holdin' Heaven*
24. Pam Tillis *Cleopatra, Queen of Denial*
25. Rodney Foster *Easier Said Than Done*

Albums

1. Billy Ray Cyrus *It Won't Be the Last*
2. Clint Black *No Time to Kill*
3. Alan Jackson *A Lot About Livin' (And a Little 'Bout Love)*
4. George Strait *Pure Country*
5. Billy Ray Cyrus *Some Gave All*
6. Wynonna *Tell Me Why*
7. John Michael Montgomery .. *Life's a Dance*
8. Brooks & Dunn *Hard Workin' Man*
9. Reba McEntire *It's Your Call*
10. Dwight Yoakam *This Time*
11. Tracy Lawrence *Alibis*
12. Garth Brooks *The Chase*
13. Mary-Chapin Carpenter *Come On Come On*
14. Brooks & Dunn *Brand New Man*
15. Confederate Railroad *Confederate Railroad*
16. Garth Brooks *No Fences*
17. Toby Keith *Toby Keith*
18. John Anderson *Solid Ground*
19. Mark Chesnutt *Almost Goodbye*
20. Little Texas *Big Time*
21. Chris LeDoux *Under This Old Hat*
22. Vince Gill *I Still Believe in You*
23. Lorrie Morgan *Watch Me*
24. Patty Loveless *Only What I Feel*
25. Dolly Parton *Slow Dancing With the Moon*

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Here it is, folks! Your quick and easy order form for your choice of the Top 25 **Albums** currently on the country music charts. Everyone may order, but members of *Country Music Magazine's* own Country Music Society of America get 25% off list price.

Albums listed on this page are available on CD or cassette. **Sorry, no singles, LP's or 8-track tapes available.** To order, fill out coupon on this page and include your check or money order. Be sure to specify format. Allow six to eight weeks for delivery. To join the CMSA and save 25% on every CD or cassette you buy, send \$16 to cover membership dues and use member's prices. Dues entitle you to an additional year of *Country Music Magazine*, the *CMSA Newsletter* with every issue, membership card, discount coupons, other merchandise discounts and more.

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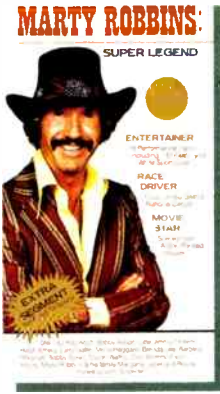
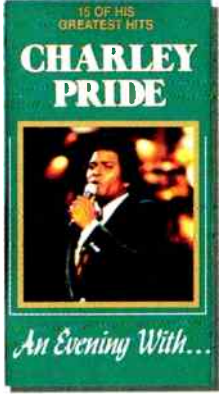
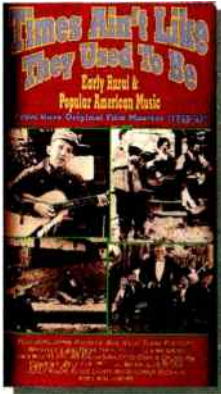
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COUNTRY MUSIC



GARTH BROOKS

Live TV Special - 85 mins.

Here is the brand new video that everyone has been waiting for. Garth's NBC special complete with additional interview and backstage footage. There are fifteen hit songs, including: *Not Counting You/Rodeo/Two Of A Kind, Workin' On A Full House/We Bury The Hatchet/The Thunder Rolls/The River/What She's Doing Now/Papa Loved Mama/If Tomorrow Never Comes/Friends In Low Places/Shameless, AND MORE!* Item No. V3H - \$29.95

RICKY VAN SHELTON

To Be Continued... - 35 mins.

Ricky had topped the charts in three out of three tries and scored seven #1 singles at the time this video was released. *To Be Continued...* features every one of his videos plus two live performances and a fascinating interview. Included are: *Crime Of Passion/Someone Lied/Life Turned Her That Way/I'll Leave This World Loving You/Hole In My Pocket (Live)/Living Proof(Live)/Statue Of A Fool/I Meant Every Word He Said.* Item No. G5W - \$24.95

COUNTRY VIDEO HITS OF THE 90'S

15 Great Performances - 56 mins.

Here are the best of the best, including: *A Better Man* by Clint Black/*I Watched It All* by Lionel Cartwright/*Simple Man* by The Charlie Daniels Band/*Give A Little Love* by The Judds/*Out Of Your Shoes* by Lorrie Morgan/*Crazy For Love* by Conway Twitty/*It Ain't Nothin'* by Keith Whitley/*Don't Toss Us Away* by Patty Loveless/*Cry, Cry, Cry* by Marty Stuart/*When I Call Your Name* by Vince Gill, AND MANY MORE! Item No. V6E - \$19.95

JOHN ANDERSON

Seminole Wind - 28 mins.

Enjoy the complete *Seminole Wind* experience from John's comeback #1 smash hit - *Straight Tequila Night* - to the hauntingly beautiful *Seminole Wind*. Listen as John recounts his personal life and experiences. Watch behind the scenes footage of his famous *Seminole Wind* video shot in the Big Cypress Reservation of Florida. And finally, come to know the man and his music as never before. Item No. V9J - \$19.95

HALL OF FAME COLLECTION

4 Full Tapes - 120 mins. - Special LOW Price - SAVE \$5.00!

Here is a real treat. Four complete shows from the early days of the Opry, each one hosted by one of country music's biggest names. There's Ernest Tubb with guests Webb Pierce, George Morgan and Marty Robbins, just to mention a few, Carl Smith with Jim Reeves, The Carter Family and others, Faron Young with June Carter, Ernest Tubb and Marty Robbins again. And Little Jimmy Dickens with Cowboy Copas and a whole bunch of other great stars. The best part is, you see them in their prime doing such fabulous songs as: Ernest Tubb - *Two Glasses, Joe; Dear Judge*/Marty Robbins - *Poor Unlucky Me; Pretty Mama; Tennessee Todd*/Faron Young - *If That's The Fashion; A Place For Girls Like You*/Jim Reeves - *My Lips Are Sealed; Bimbo; Down In The Caribbean*/Carl Smith - *Satisfaction Guaranteed; Darling, Am I The One, AND MUCH MORE!* Item No. V5W-If Ordered Separately - \$39.96. - NOW \$34.95 For All Four!

PATTY LOVELESS

Greatest Hits - 25 mins.

She started out singing five years with The Wilburn Brothers, then ten with a traveling country-rock club band before she emerged as one of the top half-dozen female stars in country music today. Here's your chance to enjoy her early hits with MCA. Included on this popular video are: *If My Heart Had Windows/Don't Toss Us Away/Chains/The Night's Too Long/I'm That Kind Of Girl/Luri Me Bad (In A Real Good Way)* and *Jealous Bone*. Item No. V1Q - \$19.95

VINCE GILL

I Still Believe In You - 24 mins.

Since the early 1980's when he first arrived in Nashville, Vince has contributed vocals and guitar licks to the studio sessions of some of country music's biggest stars. Now he has joined their ranks as one of country music's premier entertainers. Here's your chance to enjoy this popular star on his only video performing: *When I Call Your Name/ Never Knew Lonely/Pocket Full Of Gold/Liza Jane/Look At Us and I Still Believe In You.* Item No. V1M - \$19.95

MARTY ROBBINS

Super Legend - 120 mins.

This memorable video features 18 performances: *El Paso/ White Sports Coat/Devil Woman/Ribbon Of Darkness/Singing The Blues/I Can't Keep From Cryin'/Don't Worry 'Bout Me/This Time You Gave Me A Mountain*, and many more, including Marty's Grammy winning song, *My Woman, My Woman, My Wife*. It also includes rare appearances from early television shows and the big screen. PLUS A LOT MORE! Item No. G2A - \$39.95

MARTY ROBBINS

A Man And His Music - 55mins.

This additional Marty Robbins video was recorded live at the Opry in 1980. "Funnin' around" was what he called it. And that's precisely what this video is all about. It includes his version of Elvis' *That's All Right (Mama)*, plus these other great selections: *Ribbon Of Darkness/Devil Woman/ Big Iron/Among My Souvenirs/Don't Worry/A White Sports Coat/My Woman, My Woman, My Wife/El Paso.* Item No. G1G - \$39.95

MARTY ROBBINS

Best Of His TV Show Vol 2 - 55 mins.

Here is the recently released volume two of Marty's popular TV show. It contains more of the great standards of country music including: *Take Me Back To Tulsa/ Mississippi River Blues/Anytime/Streets Of Laredo/Deep Water/ Heart Full Of Love/Candy Kisses/Never Tie Me Down/Old Red/Devil Woman/El Paso/Time Changes Everything/ Kalua, 22 SONGS IN ALL.*, with various excerpts of the humor Marty was famous for. Item No. V9I - \$29.95

MARTY ROBBINS

Best Of His TV Show Vol 3 - 55 mins.

Here is the newly released volume three of Marty's popular TV show. It contains even more of the great standards of country music including: *Room Full of Roses/Red River Valley/Beyond the Reef/Oh How I Miss You/Now Is The Hour/Way Out There/Chant of the Wanderer/One Kiss Too Many/I Walk Alone/Mr. Shorty/Rainbows/Lonely Old Bunkhouse/People's Valley/Billy The Kid, 22 GREAT SONGS IN ALL.* Item No. V2E - \$29.95

ROY ACUFF

Open House Vol 1 & 2 - 60 mins. ea.

Despite the cheesy backdrops and minimal production value, these two videos give a good accounting of Roy's sound in the late 50's when they were recorded. They feature Roy along with the Smoky Mountain Boys and Girls, singer June Webb and The Wilburn Brothers. Roy sings a real variety of music: *Wabash Cannonball, The Sinking Of The Titanic* and *There Is A Tavern In The Town* among them. Vol. 1 - No. V9E/Vol. 2 - V811 - \$24.95 Each

WAYLON JENNINGS

Waylon - 60 mins.

Hallway Productions is right on the money again, with this true story of this renegade, outlaw, legend. From his early days as Buddy Holly's protege to his battles with the Nashville system, good times and bad, this is a memorable portrait featuring rare never-before-seen footage and over 20 classic songs and performances. Included: *Hanky Tonk Heroes/Cold Hearted Woman/Luckenbach, Texas/The Eagle/Amanda, AND MORE!* Item No. V3Q - \$29.95

GRAND OLE OPRY GREATS

Leading Ladies - 50 mins.

Reba McEntire, one of country's most luminous stars, hosts this video celebration of famous women who preceded her and ushered in a new era on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry during the 50's and 60's. Photographs, archives performance clips and narrative stories recall the Original Carter Family, Kitty Wells, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton, Dottie West, Skeeter Davis, Jean Shepard and others. Item No. V3A - \$39.95

BILLY RAY CYRUS

Live On Tour - 60 mins.

Here is Billy Ray's latest video release featuring 14 great songs performed live on stage, including: *Should I Stay Or Should I Go/These Boots Are Made For Walkin'/She's Not Cryin' Anymore/Wher'm I Gonna Live?/Somebody, Somewhere, Somehow/Could've Been Me/I'm So Miserable/ Never Thought I'd Fall In Love With You/Ain't No Good Goodbye/Some Gave All/Only Time Will Tell/Achy Breaky Heart, AND MORE!* Item No. V2B - \$29.95

GEORGE JONES

In Concert - 60 mins.

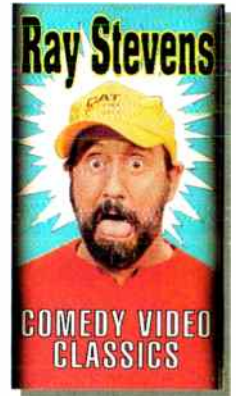
Unlike *Same Ole Me* above, this great video is strictly music. It's George Jones in a landmark live concert from 1987 performing hits like: *No Show Jones/Once You've Had The Best/Corvette Song/Bartender's Blues/Fire On The Mountain/I'm Not Ready Yet/Wine Colored Roses/Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?/Tennessee Whiskey/Sugar Foot Rag/She's My Rock/Treat Her Right/White Lightning and 8 MORE!* Item No. V1N - \$39.95

CHARLEY PRIDE

An Evening With... - 48 mins.

Listen to the rich baritone sounds of Charley Pride, the Country Music Association's 1971 Performer of the Year. Included in this noteworthy live performance are: *Kiss An Angel Good Morning/Kawliga/So Afraid Of Losing You/ Oklahoma Morning/It's Going To Take A Little Longer/ Crystal Chandelier/My Eyes Can Only See As Far As You/ Me And Bobby McGee/Louisiana Man/Cottonfields Back Home, AND MORE!* Item No. V1C - \$19.95

VIDEO BONANZA



STREETWISE: Guide To Success In The Country Music Business - 90 mins.

Watch and listen as veteran record producer, Beau James, takes you right through the streets of Nashville and brings you face to face with country music's most successful industry professionals, whose "inside information" will prove indispensable to aspiring singers, songwriters and musicians. There is detailed information on a vast range of essential subjects and guest appearances from such country music mainstays as Johnny Cash. Item No. V2F - \$29.95

MERLE HAGGARD The Best Of - 60 mins.

"I have selected some of my favorite songs for this video...and I hope they will be your favorites too." - Merle Haggard. You be the judge: *My Favorite Memory/Stay Here And Drink/Mama's Hungry Eyes/Today I Started Loving You Again/Old Man From The Mountains/Kern River/If I Could Only Fly/When Times Were Good/Honky Tonk Night Time Man/Big City/Okie From Muskogee/Footlights.* AND 7 MORE! Item No. G3F - \$19.95

MERLE HAGGARD Live In Concert - 45 mins.

Merle's fans are treated to a very special upbeat performance with this great video. He's joined by Willie Nelson and Johnny Paycheck. You'll enjoy such hits as: *Misery And Gin/Back To The Barrooms/Our Paths May Never Cross/Tennessee Hustler/The Runnin' Kind/Workin' Man Blues/Always Late/Little Liza Jane/Faded Love/Okie From Muskogee (With Willie)/Just Stay Here (With Johnny Paycheck).* AND MORE! Item No. V11 - \$19.95

GEORGE STRAIT Live - 52 mins.

Now this platinum-selling country superstar is captured for the first time on video cassette. Backed by his famed Ace In The Hole band, he whips up the audience performing all his greatest hits, including: *The Fireman/The Cowboy Rides Away/Amarillo By Morning/All My Ex's Live In Texas/Any Old Time/Hot Burning Flames/Dance Time In Texas/A Six Pack To Go/Marina Del Rey/You Look So Good In Love.* AND MORE! Item No. G2G - \$29.95

REBA MCENTIRE For My Broken Heart - 22:41 mins.

Reba fans, this is your lucky day. We have her most recent video ready to send out to you by return mail. Here is your chance to bring country music's current reigning queen home for a private screening. Featured on this popular chartbuster are: *Rumor Has It/You Lie/Fancy/For My Broken Heart/Is There Life Out There.* Whether or not you have ordered either of Reba's past videos, don't miss this one. Item No. V5M - \$19.95

ERNEST TUBB Thanks Troubadour Thanks - 62 mins.

Here is the complete, true story of "America's Troubadour." From his birth in depression-era Texas, the early influence of Jimmie Rodgers, the first recording sessions, early radio shows and Hollywood movies, to the Grand Ole Opry, over 40 years on the road, and sales of over 20 million records. This fascinating video biography features classic performances and Ernest's top hits. It's a must for serious country music fans. Item No. V2N - \$19.95

JIMMIE RODGERS Times Ain't Like... - 70 mins.

In the early days of sound film, in addition to covering major events, newsreel cameras captured the sights and sounds of everyday life in America, including its music. The compelling performances assembled here communicate the innocence and power of that early American music. Besides Jimmie Rodgers, some of the other pioneers included are Bob Wills' Texas Playboys and Otto Gray's Oklahoma Cowboy. Item No. V1L - \$29.95

BILLY DEAN Video Hits - 23 mins.

Here is one of the hottest new stars on the country music scene today, already voted the 1992 ACM Top New Male Vocalist. This new video features Billy's 1992 ACM Song of the Year, *Somewhere In My Broken Heart*, plus these other important hits: *Only Here For A Little While, Only The Wind* and *Billy The Kid*. There's also live interview footage and additional footage courtesy of the ACM. Don't miss it! Item No. V9G - \$19.95

GRAND OLE OPRY Country Music Celebration - 48 mins.

This fabulous video includes memorable performances by such legendary singers as Ernest Tubb, Stonewall Jackson and Jean Shepherd. There are 15 hits including: *Too Many Rivers/Slippin' Aways/I Know A Goodbye When I See One/ Evil On Your Mind/Walkin' The Floor Over You/Thanks A Lot/Rocky Top/I'm Just An Old Chunk Of Coal/Charlie's Shoes/Wasted Again/Ten Years, Three Kids And Two Loves Too Late.* AND MORE! Item No. V10 - \$19.95

DWIGHT YOAKAM Just Lookin' For A Hit - 30 mins.

Few can dispute the impact that this young star has had on the country music scene. And what better way to enjoy your Yoakam Country than with his first Warner video featuring: *Honky Tonk Man/Guitars, Cadillacs/Little Sister/Always Late With Your Kisses/Streets Of Bakersfield/Long White Cadillac.* There's even a Yoakam interview as well as performance footage from the I.R.S. label hit *The Cutting Edge*. Item No. G1E - \$19.95

COUNTRY MUSIC ON BROADWAY Filmed New York City - 96 mins.

Here is the first full-length country music movie ever filmed. See Hank Williams in his only filmed appearance, uncut and crystal clear. Enjoy 30 full musical numbers by Hank and headliners like George Jones, Hank Snow, Porter Wagoner, Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper. Including: *Hank Sr. - Hey Good Looking/George Jones - White Lightning/Hank Snow - Moving On/Porter Wagoner - Satisfied Mind.* AND MORE! Item No. G8F - \$39.95

RAY PRICE/JIM REEVES (With Ernest Tubb) - 60 mins.

Shot from 1954 through 1956, this classic collection features: *R. Price - Crazy Arms/One Broken Heart Don't Mean a Thing/Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes/You Done Me Wrong/Sweet Little Miss Blue Eyes/Run Boy; J. Reeves - I've Lived a Lot in My Time/Then I'll Stop Loving You/You-der Comes a Sucker/Down in the Caribbean/Bimbo/Mexican Jael'm I'm In/Inside; E. Tubb - Dear Judge/I'm With a Crowd.* 24 IN ALL! Item No. V1S - \$39.95

MARTY ROBBINS (With Ernest Tubb) - 60 mins.

Here is another fabulous collection from 1954 through 1956. This one features: *M. Robbins - Singin' the Blues/Time Goes By/I Can't Quit/Pretty Words/My Castle in the Sky/Don't Let Me Hang Around/Pretty Mama/Call Me Up Gossip; E. Tubb - Walkin' the Floor Over You/So Many Times/So Doggone Lonesome/Tomorrow Never Comes/Don't Look Now/I'll Step Aside/They'll Do It Every Time/Two Glasses Joe.* 26 IN ALL! Item No. V2G - \$39.95

WEBB PIERCE (With Chet Atkins) - 60 mins.

Here is the last in this highly acclaimed series covering 1954 through 1956. Included are: *Webb Pierce - I'm Walkin' the Dog/More And More/I'm Gonna Quit/Slowly/I'm Really Glad/Why I Want to Cry/I Don't Care/Each Day/I'm Gonna See My Baby Tonight/That Heart Belongs To Me; Chet Atkins - Pickin' the Blues/Georgia Camp Meeting/Humoresque/Wildwood Flower/Dark Eyes/Tennessee Polka.* 27 HITS IN ALL! Item No. V2I - \$39.95

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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Conway Twitty: Conway Twitty's passing reminded everyone that of all the rockers who turned country, Jerry Lewis, Carl Perkins, Mickey Gilley and the rest, not one matched Conway's success. An MCA boxed set should have been done long before Twitty died. Meanwhile, several years ago Bear Family explored his rock and pop career on a nine-LP boxed set titled *The Rock 'n' Roll Years* (BFX 15174).

This comprehensive box goes back to the beginning of his 1956 and 1957 demo recordings at the Sun Studios, none ever deemed worthy of release by Sam Phillips. He did marginally better when Mercury signed him in '57. He had one minor hit there before signing with MGM. The first song he cut at his first session, "It's Only Make Believe," skyrocketed to the top of the pop charts. The remainder of the set includes not only early Twitty classics like "Mona Lisa" and "Lonely Blue Boy," but also other Conway hits ranging from pop and rhythm and blues to rock.

It ends with the conclusion of the MGM contract, with Twitty financially well off but facing a faltering career. Rockabilly was out of fashion, and so were Conway's teen ballads. After a brief interlude with ABC he went with Decca and Owen Bradley, and you know the rest. He can be heard clearly leaning toward country with some later MGM tracks on this collection including "City Lights," "Faded Love" and "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes."

Ernest Tubb: The five-disc Ernest Tubb boxed set, *Yellow Rose of Texas: 1954-1960* (BCD 15688), runs through some of his best and weakest material. The first disc in particular is all prime E.T. He's backed by a superb set of Texas Troubadours that included lead guitarist Billy Byrd. The band stands out on "Yellow Rose of Texas," "Till We Two Are



One," "Journey's End," "Two Glasses Joe," Jimmie Rodgers' "Last Blue Yodel," "Kansas City Blues" and his surprisingly strong hit version of rocker Chuck Berry's "Thirty Days." Things became a bit shaky in 1957 when Owen Bradley tried to fit E.T. into Nashville Sound production. The Troubadours were still on hand, but so were the Anita Kerr Singers. Things really hit bottom with "Hey Mr. Bluebird," E.T.'s 1958 hit duet with The Wilburn Brothers, a song too cute for its own good. The 1958 hit, "Half a Mind," came during this time also.

Some fans like the stereo remakes of old hits that Tubb and Bradley created for the old two-LP *Ernest Tubb Story* collection, and that material's included in its entirety. Some of those selections succeed better than others. Sometimes a surprise sneaks into the collection. You wouldn't think that Connie Francis' pop smash, "Everybody's Somebody's Fool," would fit Tubb's style, but it did, and even became a hit for him in 1960. Not all of these experiments succeed, proven by his disastrous stab at the rhythm and blues hit, "Let the Little Girl Dance."

The notes by Tubb expert Ronnie Pugh are enhanced by numerous rare photos, including early shots of the original Ernest Tubb Record Shop. By the way, Bear's next E.T. box will cover everything from his 1936 Bluebird recordings through all the Decca material up to 1947.

Don Gibson: The four-CD box, *Don Gibson: The Singer-The Songwriter: 1960-1966* (BCD 15664), kicks off with his second hit recording of his classic "Sweet Dreams" (he had an earlier hit with it in 1956). At the beginning of these six years, Don and his producer, Chet Atkins, were creating some of the finest Nashville Sound recordings ever made, among them "Sea of Heartbreak," "Lonesome Number One" and "I Can Mend Your Broken Heart."

In the spirit of experimentation Don also recorded the album, *Girls, Guitars and Gibson*, backed by the Anita Kerr Singers and guitarists Hank Garland, Harold Bradley and jazz great Johnny Smith (all playing nylon-string instruments). On *I Wrote a Song*, he remade some of his old hits, while the album titled *Some Favorites of Mine* featured his versions of other artists' hits. Nine songs are released here for the first time. Sadly, the later performances reflect a lack of vocal power, aggravated by Gibson's admitted drug and alcohol abuse. I wish I could be more complimentary to annotator Dale Vinicur, but her notes add little new information to Charles Wolfe's original Gibson research. The use of large, pretentious "pull quotes" that supposedly summarize Gibson's life, including one quote from the Bible, one from psychic Edgar Cayce and three more from a book about Cayce, is simply silly.

White Country Blues: Elvis did not pioneer fusing hillbilly and blues to create rock 'n' roll. It was being done decades earlier, and if you don't believe it, Columbia/Legacy's *White Country Blues: A Whiter Shade of Blue: 1926-1938* (C2K 47466) should set you straight. Some early country singers sang and played music with strong black blues content that they could only have gained by listening to blues singers or to records. Others were obviously inspired by Jimmie Rodgers. Most performances are gems, particularly West Virginia's singer-slide guitarist, Frank Hutchison, represented by three selections including his classic, "Train That Carried My Girl From Town," and banjoist Charlie Poole's superb 1930 version of "If the River Was Whiskey." The Allen Brothers were among the blackest-sounding white acts around, proven by their "Drunk and Nutty Blues." Columbia wound up in trouble when they mistakenly marketed the Allen records as being by black artists. In later years white artists who admired black music would consider such a mistake a badge of honor, but in that less enlightened era, the Allens were insulted and sued the label. W. Lee O'Daniel and his Hillbilly Boys show the influence the blues had on Western swing music. Chris Bouchillion's talking blues, including "Adam and Eve," influenced Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and even Tex Williams. This is a beautifully balanced set, produced by Larry Cohn, with fine notes from Charles Wolfe.

Maddox Brothers and Rose: It's heartening to see that The Maddox Brothers and Rose are finally getting the credit they deserve. Not only is Rose's influential vocal style now recognized by many, but the band's importance both to the creation of the Bakersfield sound and to rockabilly is finally being acknowledged. A

full-length book is soon to be published about Rose and her brothers. And now Arhoolie Records has created a 27-song CD from their two 1976 reissues of classic 1946-1951 Maddox material: *America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band* (Arhoolie CD 391). The title refers to their flashy outfits by pioneer L.A. Western designer Nathan Turk.

The material, recorded from 1946 to 1951, retains its sense of rip-roaring fun. Rose's cutting-edge vocals were punctuated by jarring lead guitar, much of it from Roy Nichols, who later played with Merle Haggard's Strangers. Hank Williams' "Move It On Over" and "Honky Tonkin'." Woody Guthrie's "Philadelphia Lawyer," Merle Travis' "Dark as a Dungeon" and the psychotic "Hangover Blues" all got the Maddox treatment.

The album is marred by sloppy production that left the songs with too much bass and too few "highs," and one song, "I Want to Live and Love," is repeated twice, once mistitled and once under its own name. Didn't anyone bother checking? This is inexcusable.

Western Swing: The British label, Country Routes, has dedicated itself to releasing previously unavailable, rare, live 1940's and 50's radio performances, most by West Coast and Southwestern artists. We'll be looking at their releases here.

Western Swing on the Radio (Country Routes RFD CD 07) features 20 selections from rare radio transcriptions from 1946 to 1959. The sound can sometimes be problematic, but the punch and drive of these performances outstrips much of what you'll hear from these same bands playing in the more sterile atmosphere of a recording studio.

Most numbers are by West Coast-based bands, an exception being the 1948 cuts by former Milton Brown fiddler Cecil Brower. He led his Kilocycle Cowboys over KECK radio in Odessa, Texas. The three Bob Wills tracks, "Liberty," "Summit Ridge Drive" and "Home in San Antone," were done over KXLA in

Pasadena in 1953. In The Playboys of that era were three of the band's finest musicians: swing fiddler Keith Coleman, guitarist Eldon Shamblin and steel guitarist Billy Bowman. The 1952 instrumental numbers from Hank Thompson include one Western favorite, "Silver Bell," and Glenn Miller's "In the Mood."

The Spade Cooley tracks spotlight one of his best bands, built around ex-Bob Wills twin lead guitarists Jimmy Wyble and Cameron Hill and steel guitar virtuoso Noel Boggs. The combination shines on "Texas Playboy Rag" (Boggs' showcase). Tex Williams' numbers with his Western Caravan (including most of Cooley's 1945-46 band) include "Careless Love," an explosive "Steel Guitar Rag" with Joaquin Murphey and an excellent Williams vocal on "Corrina, Corrina."

Hank Penny's bands boasted some of L.A.'s finest Western instrumentalists. Three songs from a 1949 Armed Forces Radio remote broadcast showcase steel guitarist Speedy West (including "Texas Playboy Rag" and "Panhandle Rag") and Penny's girl singer, future pop star Jaye P. Morgan, doing the Gene Krupa big band anthem, "Boogie Blues." The latest pieces on the set are a Tommy Duncan performance from *Town Hall Party* and a Leon McAuliffe performance of "Steel Guitar Rag" from 1959.

Merle Travis: Right now, it appears that Bear Family's Merle Travis boxed set will appear later this year. Until it arrives, Country Routes has one LP and one CD of even rarer Travis material from recorded radio broadcasts.

The LP, *Merle Travis: 1945-1946* (RFD 9001), covers 21 songs from a period of nearly a year, from October 31, 1945 to October 12, 1946, most of it taken from the *Hollywood Barn Dance* program hosted by Cliffie Stone. On many selections, Merle accompanies himself with acoustic guitar; on others, he plays electric. Several cuts feature vocals by himself and Tex Ann Nation—"I'm S-A-V-E-D" and "Our Little Home in the Country." Others include Travis favorites such as "Nine Pound Hammer," "Cannon Ball Rag" and "Fuller Blues," and early vocal numbers Merle later recorded, like "Ain't That a Cryin' Shame" and "Dapper Dan." Still others are songs he never recorded, including "Darktown Strutter's Ball," "Go 'Long Mule" and "Kansas City Blues," that show the onstage side of Travis that the Capitol recordings don't reveal.

Country Routes' other Travis reissue, *1944-1949* (RFD CD 09), available only on CD, covers a broader swath through the 1940's than the LP. Much of this material comes from Cliffie Stone's various California radio shows including *Hollywood Barn Dance*, *Dinner Bell Round-Up* and

Western Party. The earliest numbers are two 1944 performances, done not long after Merle arrived in California from Cincinnati. One of these, for Armed Forces Radio, is a hot electric guitar instrumental of "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes." Another is a vocal version of "Roll On Mississippi," on which Merle backs singer Johnny Bond, while a 1948 *Dinner Bell* performance includes Merle playing electric guitar while singing "Old Rattler," his friend Grandpa Jones' hit. On a 1948 Grand Ole Opry performance, he sang "Sweet Temptation" and "John Henry." Some numbers, including a version of "No Vacancy," and "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town," feature Merle alone with his Martin acoustic; others like "T for Texas" have full band backing. Steer carefully through the program on the CD insert. The information presented is a bit confusing.

Hickory Records: Roy Acuff and Fred Rose founded Hickory in 1954 as an adjunct to their Acuff-Rose song publishing. Hickory did well for an independent label, racking up hits through the 50's, 60's and 70's, a few of them classics. Some of their recordings were more modest, however, and a few were just plain lousy.

The Greatest Hits of Hickory Records Volume 1 (Scotti Brothers 72392-75404) reflects both the good and the bad. (Very little Hickory material, bad or good, has been available up till now, since the label is now owned, along with Acuff-Rose, by the Opryland Music Group.) Ernie Ashworth's original recording of "Talk Back Trembling Lips" and Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper's "There's a Big Wheel" are new to CD. So is Don Gibson's 1972 hit, "Woman (Sensuous Woman)" (recently covered by Mark Chesnutt). All are fine. Selections by Don Everly and Bob Gallion are less impressive, and the 1979 Lorrie Morgan recording is particularly bad. Hopefully, the just-released *Volume Two* will add Al Terry's "Good Deal Lucille" and Rusty and Doug Kershaw's original "Louisiana Man."

How to Get These Treasures

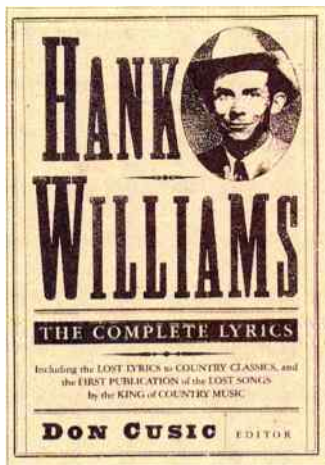
Available in formats shown at prices shown: Conway Twitty, *The Rock 'n' Roll Years* (BFX 15174), a 9-LP boxed set, \$159.95/Ernest Tubb, *The Yellow Rose of Texas: 1954-1960* (BCD 15688), a 5-CD boxed set, \$165.95/Don Gibson, *The Singer-The Songwriter: 1960-1966* (BCD 15664), a 4-CD boxed set, \$139.95/Various Artists, *White Country Blues: A Whiter Shade of Blue: 1926-1938* (C2K 47466), a 2-CD set, \$29.98/Maddox Brothers and Rose, *America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band* (Arhoolie CD 391), CD only, \$19.98/Various Artists, *Western Swing on the Radio* (RFD CD 107), CD only, \$29.98/Merle Travis, *1945-1946* (RFD 9001), LP only \$14.95/Merle Travis, *1944-1949* (RFD CD 09), CD only, \$29.98/Various Artists, *Greatest Hits of Hickory Records Volume 1* (72392-75404), available on cassette or CD, \$11.95 cassette, \$17.95 CD.

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Essential Collector *by Rich Kienzle*

■ Books ■

Hank Williams: Recently I received a copy of Don Cusic's *Hank Williams: The Complete Lyrics* and a letter from a promotion person at the book's publisher lamenting the lack of attention the book received. Regular Essential Collector readers know we pay ample attention to Don Cusic's books. Actually, the premise of this one is quite sound. Putting all Hank's lyrics together in one spot makes solid commercial



sense. There are no musical scores (or guitar chords), but if you want that, other Hank songbooks have it.

There are 139 songs here, listed in alphabetical order by title. It's said to include "lost lyrics" and "first publication of lost songs," so you might assume you're getting everything. For most people, it will suffice. But if you're expecting everything, beware. Why? Because this is not complete, and it's deceptive to state otherwise. In 1944, when an obscure Hank worked at WSFA radio in Montgomery, Alabama, he published a songbook. Cusic included some Hank compositions from that book but overlooked 15 others, including "Granddad's Musket," "My Darling Baby Girl," "Someday You'll Be Lonely Too," "Backache Blues," "Won't You Please Come Back" and ten

more. That's a lot to miss.

As usual, Cusic's essay is clumsy and error-ridden, wrongly stating Hank's given name was "King Hiram" when it was actually "Hiram Hank." The most telling comment is Cusic's assertion that, despite the inaccuracies, the Hank Williams movie, *Your Cheatin' Heart*, starring George Hamilton "somehow captures the true spirit and essence of Hank Williams." Sure it does—just like this book includes all of Hank's songs.

Buddy Killen: Recently departed *Nashville Now* host Ralph Emery's best-selling autobiography is soon to have a sequel. In the wake of Ralph's book(s) comes *By the Seat of My Pants* by Buddy Killen (with Tom Carter, co-author of Emery's book). Who's Buddy Killen? He's a power behind the scenes—first as bass player and song plugger, then as music publishing executive and record producer. For years he orchestrated the growth of Tree Music into one of Nashville's biggest song publishers. He bought it after founder Jack Stapp's death, then sold it to CBS Records (now Sony) for \$40 million in 1989. His philanthropy in Nashville is legendary.

Not to play Emery off against Killen, but Ralph's massive TNN audience hungered to read about him. A backstage figure like Killen, likable as he seems, is another matter. He tells tales of his Alabama poverty, of working as a musician and of searching for Jim Reeves' downed plane and recalls soul singer Joe Tex (a Killen discovery), his problems producing Doug Kershaw and hosting Paul McCartney's Nashville visit. All these accounts are entertaining.

The problem is there aren't enough such tales. Killen and Carter waste too much space dealing with Killen's personal life and minute details of Tree business operations, like how he financed buying the com-

pany. Likewise, he goes overboard with incessant self-congratulations and name-dropping. I wonder if most fans can really relate to a wealthy businessman's financial woes and marriages, the fortunes of his fabled Nashville restaurant, The Stock Yard, and lists of its celebrity customers. This is a mighty thin premise for an autobiography. Will most country fans care about Buddy Killen? I doubt it.

Acoustic Guitars: Few of us are fortunate enough, except perhaps for a quick visit to a museum like the Country Music Hall of Fame, to see truly beautiful, vintage, American-made acoustic guitars, banjos and mandolins up close. Many such instruments are in private hands, in bank vaults and out of view; many are in Japanese and European collections.

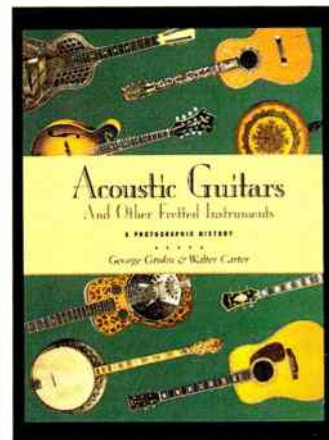
The next best thing is finally here in *Acoustic Guitars and Other Fretted Instruments: A Photographic History* by George Gruhn and Walter Carter. Gruhn, owner of Gruhn Guitars, Nashville's vintage instrument emporium, knows more about the history of American stringed instruments, particularly guitars, than anyone. Former Nash-

complete with closeups. Most of these instruments today are priceless, worth six figure amounts.

Models played by country singers include Gene Autry's Martin D-45, the first ever built (complete with a rear photo showing scratches from Gene's fancy belt buckles). Guitars owned by Jimmie Rodgers (including his famous Weymann Jimmie Rodgers model and a custom-built Gibson J-200 acoustic and WLS singer Arkie the Arkansas Woodchopper's rare Martin D-2 guitar. The photos of fancy F-hole archtop guitars, particularly the handmade D'Angelicos and Strombergs, are pure class. One D'Angelico shown was custom built for Nashville studio guitarist Harold Bradley. Various five-string and tenor banjos are shown, some with eyeball-blasting inlays, along with mandolins made by Gibson, Martin, Epiphone, D'Angelico and smaller companies. I hope that Gruhn and Carter author a similar illustrated history of electric guitars, both standard and steels.

Larry Sandberg's *The Acoustic Guitar Guide* does not really overlap in its content with the Gruhn-Carter work, and does so only slightly with *The Complete Guitarist*, below. There are no color photos, and it's clearly oriented to the beginning guitarist looking for a good but inexpensive instrument. It lays out some basic guitar history, as well as construction and guitar design in very simple, easy-to-understand terms. It also covers such topics as how certain types of guitars (nylon-string, steel-string) are better for certain types of playing, the basics of strings, acoustic guitar amplification and the market for vintage instruments.

Sandberg details things to look for when buying one's first acoustic guitar (new or old), and discusses some of the



ville *Tennessean* music reporter, Walter Carter, is a worthy collaborator. The banjos, ukeleles, mandolins, Hawaiian and standard guitars are beautifully photographed in color,

basic instruments of major companies like Martin, Gibson, Gretsch, Guild, Santa Cruz, Takamine and Washburn, as well as smaller guitar makers. A glossary at the end of the book rounds things out.

The Complete Guitarist: Originally published in England, *The Complete Guitarist* by Richard Chapman tries to cover all aspects of the guitar: the instrument's history and evolution, the various types of instruments past and present, the development of various musical styles on the instrument and musical theory itself. It does a respectable job in a lavishly produced, oversize book with flashy graphics. The photos of disassembled guitars say much about what it takes to build them.

Another section deals with amplifiers, and explains every component of electronics from pickups and switches to special effects and speakers. Several "classic" amps and amp sounds get brief but reasonably complete explanations. The book ends with a section explaining recording studios and a glossary of guitar-related terms. It doesn't concentrate exclusively on country, but as a general work there's much here for the beginning and intermediate player in any style. Sections on tuning, on basic beginner's techniques, scales, chords and picking techniques don't substitute for a good guitar teacher, but can supplement lessons quite nicely, as the book gets more complex and advanced as it goes on.

■ Recordings ■

Willie Nelson: The Mobile Fidelity label is a record company dedicated to reissuing classic albums. First they did so on high-quality, remastered LP's, then on high-quality compact discs (some of them actually made with 24-karat gold) specially created to provide top-drawer sound above and beyond LP's or even previous CD issues. Though most of their work is in the rock and jazz fields, they've recently turned their attention to country with two titles.

Some 20 years ago, Atlantic Records started their first ac-

tual country music division, and opened offices in Nashville. Willie Nelson, a favorite of Atlantic Vice President Jerry Wexler, was to be the company's flagship artist. In 1973 and 1974 he recorded three sessions for Atlantic, one a five-day 1973 marathon in New York that produced *Shotgun Willie*, the gospel LP *The Troublemaker* (issued in 1976 on Columbia) and some other material Atlantic has yet to release. Another of these sessions, this time in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, produced the classic concept album, *Phases and Stages*. Atlantic also taped several 1974 live shows in Austin that remain unissued.

Now Mobile Fidelity has released *Shotgun Willie* and *Phases and Stages* on one 24-karat gold CD. The sound is



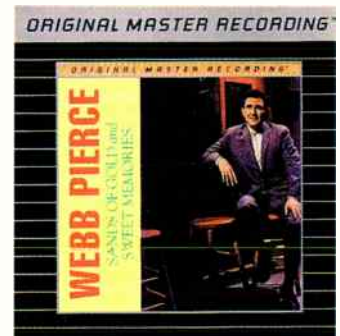
noticeably clearer and crisper than some of the other CD's of this material, though advocates of LP sound, and plenty are around, will undoubtedly say the LP sounds better. *Shotgun Willie*, 20 years old today, long ago became a classic, with songs like "Shotgun Willie," Johnny Bush's "Whiskey River," his revivals of his own older songs like "Slow

Down Old World" and Bob Wills' "Bubbles in My Beer." All the original credits, including identities of musicians, are reproduced in the insert.

Phases and Stages, his 1974 concept LP chronicling both a man's and woman's side of a shattered relationship, likewise became one of Willie's landmark albums. The album itself was a concept he'd been working on since leaving RCA in 1972 (his last RCA single was "Phases, Stages, Circles and Cycles"). Using both new songs and older songs he'd written, Willie skillfully constructed the album to work as a whole, and it certainly succeeded. Mobile Fidelity wisely included Willie's original liner notes to explain the concept as he created it.

Webb Pierce: Mobile Fidelity has also paired two of Webb Pierce's 1960's LP's, his 1964 album, *Sands of Gold*, and his 1966 LP, *Sweet Memories*. Both were done when Webb's massive record-selling days were far behind him. Though Webb is in fine voice, these songs aren't the raw honky tonk of the past but were instead recorded during the Nashville Sound era with vocal choruses and soft accompaniment. If you wonder why they didn't select his classic early LP's, like *The Wondering Boy*, it's because they were recorded in monaural sound; these newer albums were done in stereo. (Webb's 1951-58 Decca material is available on a Bear Family box set.) As with most Decca albums, several hits mix with covers of others' hits. Two of Webb's own Top Tens appear on *Sands of Gold*:

the title song and "These Wonderful Years." Some of the covers are excellent. Though a virtual clone of Hank Locklin's version, "Please Help Me, I'm Falling" is effective, as is his version of Carl and Pearl Butler's "Don't Let Me Cross



Over" and Bobby Bare's "Detroit City." He even does well with the schmaltzy Bobby Vinton pop oldie, "Roses Are Red (Violets are Blue)." Except for "Fool, Fool, Fool," Webb's final Top Ten record, *Sweet Memories* is nearly all others' hits, like "Wolverton Mountain" and Dottie West's "Here Comes My Baby."

Mobile Fidelity's external packaging has both strong and weak points. The sound is improved and, to their credit, in remixing the tracks, they deliberately de-emphasized the vocal choruses to boost Webb's voice. Reprinting Hugh Cherry's essay from *Sweet Memories* was equally wise. It's superior to the brief and foggy 1993 essay (writer unidentified), which is laden with errors. Webb first recorded for Four Star, not King Records, and his stardom didn't "soar" until he joined Decca. Other mistakes: his "21" Number One records (according to *Billboard*, he had 13, including one with Red Sovine), and Willie recording an album with him "in the mid-1980's, shortly before Pierce's death." That album, *In the Jailhouse Now*, appeared in 1982; Webb died in 1991. I mention this only to show how inaccurate information spreads. Most people believe information in liner notes, and sometimes that's risky. But don't hold this against the collection. For Pierce fans, these albums are currently available nowhere else.

How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Buddy Killen with Tom Carter, *By the Seat of My Pants* (B1A) \$22.00/Don Cusic, *Hank Williams: The Complete Lyrics* (B1F), \$12.95/Richard Chapman, *The Complete Guitarist* (B1G), \$29.95/George Gruhn and Walter Carter, *Acoustic Guitars and Other Fretted Instruments: A Photographic History* (B1D), \$39.95/Larry Sandberg, *The Acoustic Guitar Guide* (B1H) \$14.95. **Recordings:** Willie Nelson, *Shotgun Willie-Phases and Stages* (UDCD 581) available on 24-karat gold CD only, \$37.95/Webb Pierce, *Sands of Gold-Sweet Memories* (MFCD 750) available on CD only, \$23.95. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 091093EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, TN 37229. Add \$2.00 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**



THE FINAL NOTE

by Patrick Carr

Singing the Blues

I've got a pretty deep case of the blues today, so right now I'm listening to country music rather than thinking about it. Dwight Yoakam's singing the chilling "A Thousand Miles from Nowhere" from *This Time*, and next up on the tape is Patty Loveless doing "Nothing But the Wheel" from her current one, *Only What I Feel*.

Now, *there* are two wonderful albums. They're triumphant by any standards, both of them (particularly Patty's, since for her it's such a huge step closer to the heart and soul), and their slow songs are doing a great job of doing their job. Or at least for me they are. It's cold a thousand miles from nowhere, holding onto nothing but the wheel, and I'm as sad and scared as I've ever been in my life, but at least there are voices out here with me that seem to know how it feels.

So thank you, Dwight, and thank you, Patty. Personally, I'm grateful for the company, and professionally I'm glad to be reassured that country music, with all its contemporary fluff and boogie ("Without All The Twangy Stuff" as the latest New York City megawatter so touchingly promotes it) can still get down as far as real live people can.

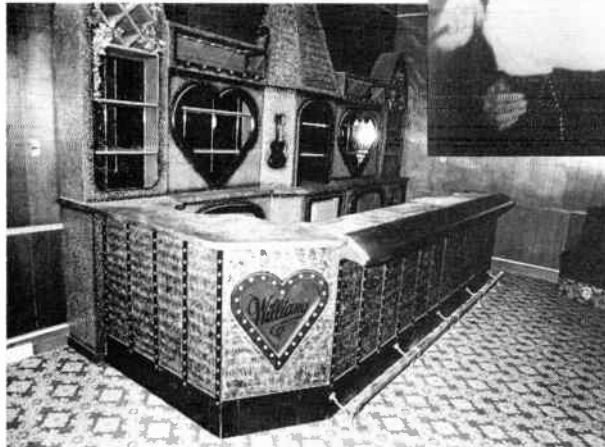
You, I'm sure, can relate. In fact, if you've been a country fan for a while, you can probably do just what I'm doing right now: making a quick little mental checklist of the country songs that have spoken directly to me during the saddest, most frightening times of my life. So you remember yours, and I'll remember mine: Willie Nelson doing "Walking" on *Phases and Stages* (my divorce, my dad's death); Gary Stewart singing the hell out of "I Still Can't Believe You're Gone" (another breakup, my mother's death); George Jones moaning "Bartender's Blues" all the awful, wallowing way through the final years of my drunkenness; and of course the first one, with me at the start before I even strayed from home, and still with me now in my hour of darkness, in my time of need: "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," written and sung by the late Mr. Hank Williams.

I'll tell you a story about that song. It's from 1974, and although that was any-

thing but a time of sober reality for me (or for Nashville, or the western world in general), this tale is stone cold true, one hundred percent.

I was the editor of *Country Music* then, and in that capacity I took a call from Audrey Williams, Hank's wife for most of his professional life. Audrey had a proposition for me: How would I like to come to her house, the one Hank had called home, for an interview and photo session? She was turning the place into a museum open to the public, she said, and she'd like to

Audrey and Hank Williams knew the blues firsthand. Among the items included in Audrey's Hank museum was the heart-festooned, pink satin bar.



show us around and talk about her life with Hank.

She didn't exactly have to ask twice. At the appointed time on the appointed day I walked up to her front door on Franklin Road with our photographer.

The maid answered the bell, and to my great disappointment informed us that Miz Audrey was sickly—drunk or drugged or hung over, I assumed and still do—but we were welcome to take the pictures we wanted. She showed us the old den where, she said, Mr. Hank used to relax, and then she led us to the new, soon to be public part of the house: a chapel-like space with a small stage at one end and a bar at the other (the latter upholstered in deep pink satin and emblazoned with large Hallmark style hearts), and the unforgettable Cheatin' Heart bedroom, a

testament in off-white silk, satin, velvet and shag (and hearts, everywhere the hearts) to Hank and Audrey's great undying romance.

It was all pretty sad and more than a little weird, and it got sadder still when the maid let us into a small side room to show us Hank's "things." And there it all was, in all its priceless glory, thrown and dumped and scattered uncaringly: everything from Nudie suits and handmade boots to guns and holsters to guitars and fiddles to lyric sheets and photographs to...well, everything you'd expect. The one and only absolutely legendary Hank Williams' most personal stuff, gathering dust and construction debris, underfoot.

We spent several very strange hours in that place with those things. We moved suits and guns and guitars into the bedroom, dusted them off, laid them out, and photographed them. We photographed each other

with a life-size stand-up photograph of Hank we found in a closet. We went to the garage, pushed the Cadillac in which he'd died out into the daylight, and photographed that, too. We even photographed the back seat, the very spot.

We looked up and a storm was coming, a big one. The world was darkening, the air growing stiller and more potent by the minute. I was extremely uneasy. I felt like a violator—a bandit looting a tomb—but I felt violated, too. I felt unsafe.

We were ready to leave, and thankful for that, when I did a final walkaround, looking for anything we'd left lying. In the chapel-like room I walked towards a picture window to close the drapes we'd opened, then caught sight of something on the floor:

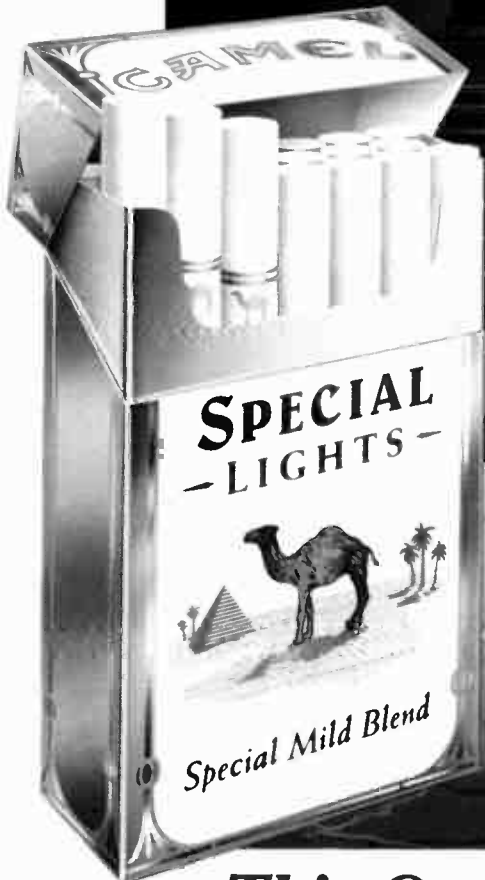
It was a robin, dead, on its back, with a spot of fresh blood on its breast.

My first thought was *How on God's earth did it get there?* We'd heard nothing. No doors or windows had been open.

Then those dark, lovely lines from Hank's wounded heart sang clear in my mind, as they'd done all my life:

*Did you ever see a robin weep
When leaves begin to die?
That means he's lost the will to live
I'm so lonesome I could cry.* ■

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