

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1997

\$3.00

# COUNTRY MUSIC

**DAVID LEE  
MURPHY**  
Redneck Stuff

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**HIGHTONE**  
Inside An Indie

And...

**THREE HANKS  
JEFF FOXWORTHY**



**DIAMOND RIO**  
Pull-Out Poster

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**DOLLY  
PARTON**  
Hello Again







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# COUNTRY MUSIC



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Michael Bane went Hollywood to find a genuine redneck on TV.

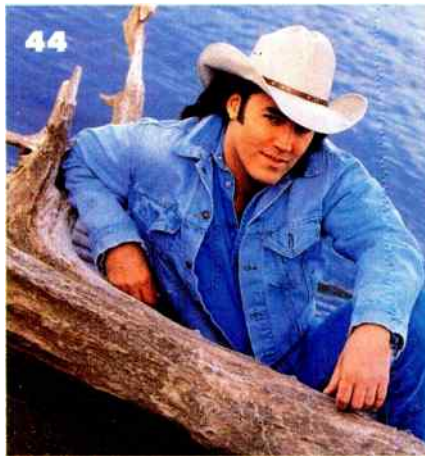
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*Shades of the Redneck Liberation Front! Yes, being from the South and unabashedly redneck has once again become a symbol of pride, thanks largely to the comedy of former Atlantan Jeff Foxworthy. Through his book, his television shows, his touring—and even his “duet” video with superstar Alan Jackson—Foxworthy has elevated redneck humor to a fine art. He also never stops moving, but we caught up with him taking a breather from *The Jeff Foxworthy Show*, just before Turkey Day, and asked him 20 Redneck Questions.*

**1** How's L.A. treating you these days?

Well, it's...L.A. (Laughter.) The air is chunky out here. I guess I'm used to it...No, you never get used to it, but I've been out here seven years.

**2** Since you're *Country Music Fan Number One*, I was wondering if you had any thoughts on your favorite country lyrics...

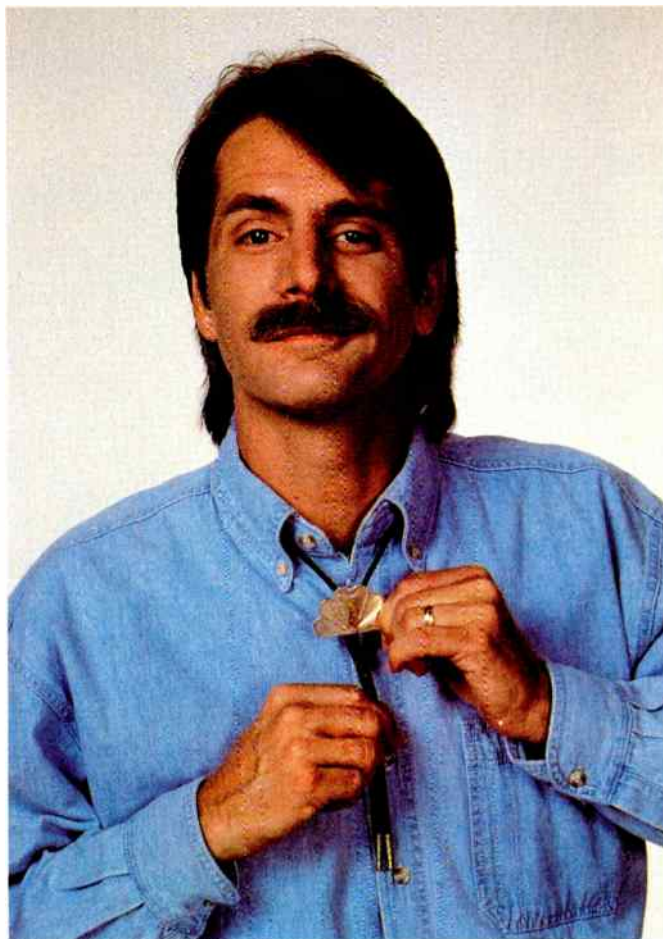
Being a comedian, you'd think my favorite lyrics would be the funny ones. But, you know, it sort of depends on the mood I'm in. I mean, I cry real easy. My wife and I go to the country music award shows, don't matter which one it is, and I end up crying, and she does too, because I always get homesick. It's the only time during the year I get to be around all these people, and I just get teary-eyed. I'm glad they don't put the camera on me all the time!

**3** Okay, give me a song that's made you teary-eyed recently...

Okay, let me think...Oh! You know that AJ [Alan Jackson] song about home? Well, Alan and I grew up about 15 miles apart, so that one makes me real homesick. You catch me in the right frame of mind, and that'll make me cry.

**4** Country music's good about making you cry...

Yeah, but it does make you laugh, too. In fact, I'm slowly



## 20 Questions with JEFF FOXWORTHY

By Michael “My Long Hair Just Can’t Cover Up My Red Neck” Bane

turning the rest of the set at the TV show onto country music. The hair and makeup room has been taken over. We've won that; we've laid claim to that turf, and now we're moving out. We've got most of the lighting guys... Slowly but surely.

**5** Have you ever written a country song all on your own?

No, because I'd enjoy writing one, but then I'd have to sing it. And if you've ever heard me sing, it's not a pretty thing. I mean it—not a pretty thing.

**6** You could get Alan Jackson to sing it.

That's right, because Alan and I were talking about doing some dates together. And I said, “Alan, you could just call me up on stage there, right in

the middle of your set, and let me come out and sing.” Alan said I could sing all I wanted to, but he would be unplugging me at the floor!

**7** You've been slipping country music people onto your show, now that it actually seems to be your show...

Yep. We had Tim McGraw on the other week. And I'm trying to get more country music people on, with a promise that they don't have to play themselves! So Tim played a guy from the family that the Foxworthys had been feuding with for hundreds of years. There was a moment in there when Tim and I were on the back porch singing, trying a reconciliation. Our wives get mad at each other, and they storm off and leave. My wife says, “You know, you were right. The Raffertys are trash!” And I say, “Really? Except for the fact that he couldn't sing worth a damn, I kinda liked him.”

**8** Well, who else would you like to get on the show?

Well, just about everybody. Faith Hill came out with Tim, and I tried to talk her into coming back out and doing the show. I've got a real good idea for a show with Wynonna—are you listening, Wynonna? I've thought of a story I really like that would work...

**9** So you're really having fun with this show now?

You bet I am. It's more like me now, I think. Last year, you didn't need me to do *The Jeff Foxworthy Show*! This year, you do. So I'm having a lot more fun this year. Hollywood is an amazing thing, where they'd give you a TV show, then not listen to you about what the show should be about.

**10** I hear you love Fan Fair...

Oh god, yes! I love Fan Fair! I honest to goodness love Fan Fair, and more reasons than the fact that I get another two or three hundred redneck jokes just out of going! Fan Fair is and now will always be





# People

## WHEN GEORGE COMES TO TOWN

The great **George Strait** came to Music Town and went back to Texas heavily laden with awards, plaques and love for me. Why shoot, yes, I stopped at Mr. **Erv Woolsey's** office for my private hug and chat with George. By now, he probably expects me. All the howdys to greet George, including MCA power honchos **Bruce Hinton** and **Tony (wow) Brown**, were on hand at the Country Music Hall of Fame. Some of Strait's take home goodies included awards for sales of 50 million records, sales of three million boxed sets (largest of any country star, third largest worldwide), five million sales for *Pure Country*, triple platinum for both *Greatest Hits Volume I* and *Volume II*, 36 Number One singles and double platinum for *Ocean Front Property*. Being the good cowboy he is, George presented the Hall of Fame with one of his hats, the coat and shirt he wore in the movie *Pure Country*, a leather George Strait logo and other items. MCA Records presented a startled George with an Australian blueheeler to replace **Buster**, his dog that disappeared last year and has never returned. As he hugged the dog, to be called **Bin**, I knew George was wishing it was me he was holding. "Bin" sounds a lot like "Ben," but lay all rumors aside, George did not name the dog for **Ben Farrell**, who books all his concerts. "Bin" is short for "Bindarra Bounce," the pooch's official name. 'Course, you saw on TV that George won all those CMA Awards. Yes, he might do another movie. If he finds one he likes, he'll let me know, and I'll tell you.

## OAKS/HALSEY RIDE AGAIN

The **Oak Ridge Boys** are beginning another new beginning. In 1990, their manager, **Jim Halsey**, a premier booking/talent agent for country music, sold his company to the mighty William Morris Agency. He continued to manage The Oaks, whom he'd worked with since their infancy in 1974, until 1993. Halsey resigned as The Oaks' manager to write a book and pursue other interests, including Director of Music and Entertainment at Oklahoma City University. Things change. **William**



**MCA Records got the whole gang together to honor George Strait in Nashville. Platinum plaques abounded as they celebrated some 50 million in sales by George. Even better than Gold and platinum, the label also gave George a new dog.**



**Lee Golden** returned to the band in January 1996, after a nine-year absence. There was some legal stuff, detailed in the past, with **Steve Sanders**, William Lee's replacement. Waters have been rough for the foursome. Returning to the safety net of Halsey, The Oaks believe they will remain mainstream.

## BARDSTORM, KENTUCKY

Unless you're from the area or, like me, looked it up on the map, I betcha don't know where Bardstorm is located. But I betcha luscious **Lorrie Morgan** never for-

gets Bardstorm, because this is the locale **Jon Randall** chose to present her with a diamond engagement ring. "By My Side," their Top 20 duet hit, was surely prophetic. The couple wed at Lorrie's lakeside home on November 16th. This is Lorrie's fourth trip to the altar and Jon's first. Lorrie's been through a lot of pain in her life. Here's hoping she and Jon have eternal peace.

What about Lorrie's former beau, U.S. Senator **Fred Thompson**, you ask? Word we got is Fred was smitten with the star and they'd planned to wed. "History" is the name of that tune.

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman



# COUNTRY MUSIC

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**Rochelle Friedman**

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Administrative Assistant  
**Joyce Brown**

## Editorial, Executive and Advertising Offices

329 Riverside Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone (203) 221-4950  
FAX (203) 221-4948

## Subscription Service

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## Advertising Office, West Coast

Leonard Mendelson  
P.O. Box 5489  
Santa Monica, California 90409  
Telephone (310) 207-4948 (Advertising Sales)

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## People

Meanwhile Lorrie is taking some time off to work on a book that tells the life story of her late husband, **Keith Whitley**. The book's title is *Forever Yours Faithfully—The Keith Whitley Story*. Her co-author, **George Vecsey**, co-wrote the biographies of **Loretta Lynn** and **Barbara Mandrell**.

## ROCK 'N' ROLL SCORES

Come March, the late **Bill Monroe** will be inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame. When this news reached me, I stated, "There's fairness on this earth." Every musician on earth, no doubt, is able to name a Monroe song that influenced him or her. **Elvis Presley's** was "Blue Moon of Kentucky."

## CONWAY TWITTY

Even fans weren't aware that the great **Conway Twitty** was hard of hearing. It was good and proper that the late star was honored by the Ear Foundation of Baptist Hospital at their benefit. **Vince Gill, Tracy Lawrence, K.T. Oslin** and a bevy of others performed in his honor at the Opry House. The sold-out crowd was so well dressed the night of the concert, Vince Gill quipped, "Never saw so many ties and teeth at the Opry." I want all you country music fans to know that **Vicki Lawrence**, who claimed to be Conway's biggest fan, was skedded to host the benefit, but had her publicist call to cancel at the last minute. Ms. Lawrence had even said the biggest thrill of her life would be to sing a duet with Vince Gill. With all those thrills, she chose instead to appear on the TV show *Cybill*. Like I always say, when it comes to hillbilly doings, never trust Hollywood.

On another Conway note, there continues to be property disagreements between his widow, **Dee Henry Jenkins**, and his four children. The feud keeps re-igniting.

## A JOE AND TOBY STORY

**Joe Diffie** and fellow Okie, **Toby Keith**, were playing golf with a couple of band members when they ran into a foursome wearing red caps with necks to match. The "bubbas" mouthed off, swearing something about Nashville hillbillies think they're something and they ain't #@&! Walking a couple of hundred yards, Big Toby, former football player, rolled up his sleeves, seethed and said, "We can't let that pass. We need to give them guys a good Oklahoma butt-whipping." Why, when those bubbas saw Toby, Joe and company, they bolted, showing their true

colors, before "wimp" could be whispered. With the closing of A&M Records, Toby is back with Mercury where he started.

## BROOKS TIME

You fans need to know about **Garth** and **Sandy Brooks** renewing their marriage vows. Wearing a Cinderella wedding gown with tiara and train, Sandy looked like she'd been touched by the wand of her fairy godmother, stunningly beautiful. Garth's brother performed the ceremony. The teary-eyed couple dedicated their lives, one to the other, to go forward together. Garth's dad served as best man, his brothers and half-brothers were groomsmen. Sandy chose friends from "home" as her attendants. The un-show-biz affair was held at Good Shepherd United Methodist Church in Hendersonville before an un-show-biz crowd. Only close friends and family were in attendance.

The reception was held at Speer Communications on Dickerson Road. Sandy and Garth led off the dancing with **George Strait's** recording of "You Look So Good in

## AWARD-WINNING TWOSOME



**Bryan White** with his CMA Horizon Award and the show's host, **Vince Gill**, with his Song of the Year Award posed backstage at the Opry. Bryan told me at his Number One party for "So Much for Pretending" that he'd be opening shows for Vince next year. Girls, get jealous. These two are kissing friends of mine.



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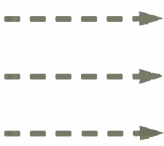
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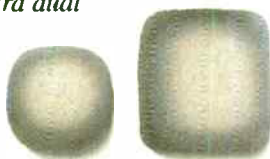
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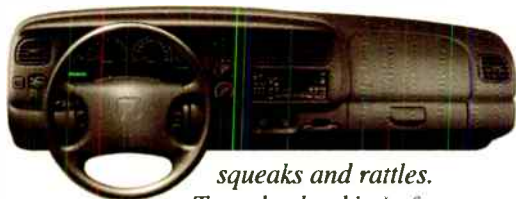


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# People



Appearing and celebrating with new *Prime Time Country* host Gary Chapman are singer-actress Crystal Bernard, Clint Black and Suzy Bogguss. The series airs on TNN.

Love." The two older Brooks daughters, Taylor and August, made themselves at home enjoying one of those air-jumping deals you see at carnivals. Following a buffet supper, guests were served chocolate bride's cake and vanilla groom's cake.

## TNN'S PRIME TIME COUNTRY

It's okay now, fans, pay your cable bill. Gary Chapman is doing a fine job hosting the network's flagship program. Now I'm not embarrassed to turn to Channel 12 in Music Town. I screamed and mouthed and probably made a lot of people so mad they will never speak to me again and made a fool of myself. But they hired the man I wanted to host the show. I'm very proud of the job Gary is doing. Just so you know, TNN invited 40 guests to the debut show...I was one of the 40. Producer RAC Clark (son of Dick) asked me to stay for the champagne toast for Gary, and I did. I met his charming mother, Mary Chapman, who had just moved to town from Texas with Gary's preacher dad. By the way, Chapman's married to singer Amy Grant. Congratulations to all involved. And stay tuned, fans, until I tell you different!

## NO AWARD BUT....

Young LeAnn Rimes did not get a Country Music Association award, but the week following the show, her album, *Blue*, sold a whopping 103,000 copies. Now that's big business for a girl of 14 or 40. These days nobody is scratching and wondering if LeAnn is "just a studio act." Not only sings, the child yodels. Unlike a lot of these other "pretty faces."

## BYRD'S BILLBOARD BASH

After losing a fishing bet to a WSIX DJ, Tracy Byrd was obligated to perform on a Nashville rooftop in front of his billboard at the Broadway-West End split. Traffic had to be diverted, thousands showed up, Tracy performed, it started to rain. Conveniently enough, the concert took place on the day of the release of his new album.



Tracy Byrd blocks traffic in Nashville.

## "STOP THE BUS!" YELLED TERRI CLARK

Driving south on I-81 following a concert, the Cat in the Hat, Terri Clark, lunged from her stateroom yelling, "Stop the bus!" Eyes aglare/mouths agape were driver, band and road crew at 2 A.M. "We're in Winchester," she shrieked to the shrugging 14. "This is where Patsy Cline is buried, and we are going to her grave," said country music fan Clark. So a little after two o'clock in the morning, the entire bunch went trekking out to the cemetery where they put pennies on Patsy's grave (a long-time tradition). And they sat quietly for some 15 or 20 minutes. As they left, no one spoke, but somehow they all knew that what they'd done was right. So right.

## AND THE CAR GOES TO....

Those cute golfing/picking/singing hillbillies, Diamond Rio, held their annual golf tourney. Celebs like Vince Gill, Cledus T. Judd, Jo Dee Messina and others, including golf pros that me and you don't know, turned out for the fun and prizes.

One prize, a 1996 Camaro convertible, was given to the person who shot a hole in one. It just so happened that the only hole in one of the day was by DR drummer Brian Prout's brother, Del. As Del Prout drove away in the hillbilly red vehicle with top down, brother Brian was heard to say, "I don't understand it. Dad gummit, he don't play golf twice a year, and I'm on a course twice weekly!"

## BR5-49 COMES HOME

Crowds spilled out onto Lower Broadway, the street once unsafe to walk. That was before BR5-49 became the toast of Robert's Western Wear, near historic Tootsie's Orchid Lounge with its backdoor to the Ryman's backdoor. The group's been to Europe three times, Japan once, to the Grand Ole Opry and across a whole lot of the U.S.A. Lead singer Gary Bennett told me backstage at the Opry that when he lived in Washington, clear across the country from Twang Town, he would read my column in *Country Music*. I'm out there digging him and the band, and he's telling me what a big fan he is of the magazine. By the way, *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* did a five-page spread on Nashville and the guys, and the following week they appeared on TNN's *Prime Time Country*. Both times they gave out their hotline number (1-888-96-BR5-49). They were so flooded with calls, even BellSouth called to inquire. Their album is doing some climbing. Chart climbing.



# People

## CLASS OF '96

The famed duo, **Bobby and Sonny Osborne**, have recorded an album titled *Class of '96*. The brothers attest, after 30 years on the hillbilly highway, that this is their greatest band ever. Wanna know the band members' names? **Terry Smith**—upright bass, **Terry Eldredge**—guitar, **Gene Wooten**—dobro and **David Crow**—fiddle. 'Course all my readers are smart enough to know that Bobby plays mandolin and Sonny plays banjo. "Rocky Top," their signature song, has been re-released by their former label, Decca, in four forms: radio mix, club mix, championship mix and original version. **Scott Rouse** produced the excellent remix. After two weeks, the single sold over 30,000 copies and made the country sales chart two weeks running. Let's watch the smoke.

Here is a good time to mention Sonny Osborne's meeting retired Chicago Bears football great, **Dick Butkus**. The usually unimpressible Osborne was at a loss for words when he met the All-American backstage at the Opry. Osborne, a pretty good-sized guy at six-foot-two, weighing 200-plus, was dwarfed by big Dick Butkus.

Butkus, an Opry fan since childhood, was at a loss for words himself when he was introduced from the stage by **Porter Wagoner**. Later, **Johnny Russell**, who has a reputation for going overtime into the *Ernest Tubb Record Shop Show* following the Saturday night Opry, was bragging to the audience that he'd sing as long as he wanted to because there was no one big enough to remove his almost 300 pounds off the stage. Dick Butkus walked onto the stage, and Russell bolted.

## OPRY TIDBITS

Forty years ago, when **Stonewall Jackson** made his Opry debut, he didn't own a guitar. On the eve of his 40th anniversary, the marvelous Martin guitar people presented Stonewall with a brand new guitar.

**Box Car Willie** is being treated for leukemia. The Opry member, who spends summers at Branson in his theater, is cutting back performing because of his health. Branson has made Box Car very well off. I understand he owns two theaters in that country music tourist haven.

The great **Ralph Stanley** celebrated his 50 years in show biz with a Grand Ole Opry visit. The bluegrass legend received congratulatory telegrams from **President Clinton**, **Bob Dylan** and other dignitaries.

Opry star, **Tom T. Hall**, after 33 albums, 50 hits and six books, has penned another

## SKEETER AND HANK



When Hank Williams III—son of Hank Jr., grandson of Hank Sr.—made his Grand Ole Opry debut, family friend Skeeter Davis was there to congratulate him. Skeeter is one of few people who has photos of herself with all three Hanks.

zany book. *What a Book!* is a "fictional/factual" hardback weaving in and out with a bit of truth here and there about himself, his wife **Miss Dixie**, a mail-order priest (who is probably fashioned after **Will Campbell**, Tom's "jack leg" preacher buddy and my friend) and a country singer named **Bubba Hernandez**. Country music's greatest poet strikes again. And I'd bank on it being another keeper.

The legendary **Loretta Lynn** was presented the Living Legend Award by the Christian Country Music Association. The honor was given to Loretta because she kept her Christian faith while singing songs like "Don't Come Home a-Drinking (With Loving on Your Mind)." The self-penned true tune was aimed at her late husband, **Mooney**, and their then troublesome marriage. **Chely Wright** presented the award. Chely update: since A&M closed their country label, she has signed a recording deal with MCA. As for Loretta, she continues to spend almost all her time at home grieving over Mooney's death.

Opry's **Vince Gill**, who does no wrong in the Book of Hazel, was honored by the Arthritis Foundation with a black tie event at Loews Vanderbilt Plaza. Reason:

his golf tourney, the Vinny, supports arthritis research in sports medicine. The man does more benefits than anybody in show biz.

**Vince Gill** got labelmate **Reba McEntire** to perform at the Opry unannounced on a Saturday night. Those lucky fans went bonkers. Reba needs to do more Opry-ing. By now, everyone has accepted Reba's new short hair-do. Only the female impersonators are complaining. Now all their wigs are passé.

Opry star **Holly Dunn** has a gig as "spokes-singer" for Wickline Bedding. The local jingle has got her quite a bit of attention, says Dunn.

The blonde, thin and beautiful girl singing harmony in the background during **Lyle Lovett's** closing number at the Ryman was none other than the Opry's **Alison Krauss**. Krauss has been counting calories and fat grams for a year, and she is looking good. Her brother, **Victor Krauss**, is bassist in Lovett's **Large Band** of 17 players. Lovett's show, awesome. The Ryman was sold out.

*Marty Stuart Presents: The Treasures of Hank Williams* is a new display at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Seems **Marty Stuart** spent a whole lot of his savings to buy the paraphernalia from Hank's sister, **Irene Smith**. A lover of country music history, he has some incredible "stuff."

Since **Bill Monroe's** death, Marty, Vince Gill and **Ricky Skaggs** have all gone out and bought new mandolins. It just seemed the thing to do, said the three lovers of bluegrass and Mr. Monroe. Come to the Opry and see them pick the instruments.

Farewell to my dear friend, **Hal Durham**, president of the Grand Ole Opry. The 65-year-old Durham has retired. He will be sorely missed by stars, staff, sidemen and just plain folks like me.

## HERE COME THE GROOMS

Love looks so good on **Travis Tritt**. He smiled like a kid when I asked him when was the wedding date. "April 12th," he replied, with a Georgia grin from ear to ear. If I'm not fooled, this hillbilly is ready to settle down to husbanding. Travis actually admitted to being excited about the forthcoming wedding, which will be "somewhere in Georgia."

By the time you read this, there may be a **Tracy and Stacy Lawrence**. With ink barely dry on his divorce papers, Tracy Lawrence announced that he'd wed Dallas cheerleader cutie **Stacy Drew**. The couple met January 1996 in Phoenix at the Cowboys' victory party and were to wed a year later.

# People



**Kix Brooks, Ronnie Dunn, Georgia Ann Davis, Aaron Tippin, Randy Nelson, Dr. John Holcombe and Mark Collie join forces to raise money for a diabetes cure.**

## STILL RACING FOR A CURE

Mark Collie's third annual Celebrity Race for a Diabetes Cure took place recently, and for the second year in a row, a member of **Brooks & Dunn** walked away the winner. This year it was **Ronnie Dunn's** turn in the winner's circle, while partner **Kix Brooks**—who won last year—came in second. Guess this year we'll have to call 'em **Dunn & Brooks**.... The celebrity-studded event raised some \$400,000 for diabetes research. **Kix Brooks, Ronnie Dunn, Georgia Ann Davis** (who was crowned "Miss Nashville Speedway"), **Aaron Tippin** (third place winner), **Randy Nelson** and **Dr. John Holcombe** were among those involved.

## SKEETER SINGLE

**Skeeter Davis** ended her fourth marriage and was granted a divorce in Williamson County Court. Davis married **NRBQ** bassist, **Joey Spampinato**, in 1987. The romance began when Skeeter recorded an album with the group during the 80's. Spampinato was considered as the bass player for **The Rolling Stones'** last tour. Irreconcilable differences and "inappropriate marital conduct" were the grounds Skeeter gave when she filed the divorce papers.

## OPRY'S 71ST

I cannot believe a year has passed and a huge cake is pulled on the Opry stage. At the Opry's 71st, a very nervous **John Berry** made his debut performance. The pretty redhead singing harmony with John was

his wife, who travels with him in their house on wheels with their three children. The hour-long TV show also featured **Vince Gill**, who welcomed two of the greatest honky tonk singers on this planet, **Gene Watson** and **Johnny Paycheck**. Vince was smart enough to warn the "youngsters" (you know, those with dimples, pretty butts, hats and smiles straight out of the dentist chair, who sing okay) to listen and learn from the masters. So much stuff played on radio today is as far from country as Florida is from Iceland. We are lucky here to have **WSM 650 AM**. They program mostly standards with uncluttered lyrics you can understand and feel. You can hear **Merle Haggard** on **WSM**.

## TED DAFFAN: 1912-1996

Ted Daffan, composer of the immortal honky tonk ballads, "Born to Lose," "I'm a Fool to Care" and "I've Got Five Dollars and It's Saturday Night," writer of the first country truck driving song and leader of his own Western swing band, **The Texans**, died October 6, 1996, in Houston, Texas, after a long fight with cancer.

Born September 21, 1912, in Beauregard Parish, Louisiana, but raised in Houston, **Theron Eugene Daffan** began as a Hawaiian-style steel guitarist playing in a local band called **The Blue Islanders**. By 1934 he'd signed on with the swing-oriented **Blue Ridge Playboys** and started writing songs, including the first trucker number, "Truck Driver's Blues." He later formed his **Texans** band, enjoying a brief run of stardom in the early

## GRANDPA'S 83RD

**Grandpa Jones** celebrated his 83rd birthday at the Grand Ole Opry. He and his bride, **Ramona**, also celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. There was a truck loaded with flowers for the happy couple from **Sandy and Garth Brooks** delivered to the Opry. **Ramona and Grandpa** were greatly moved. Grandpa presented **Ramona** with a diamond-studded necklace especially made for the occasion of silver-dollar size with "50" in the middle. I'm sure we all wish **Grandpa and Ramona** many more years of wedded bliss and a big thanks for all the marvelous entertainment over the years.

## BENEFITS

The biggest and best hearts in the world beat inside the chests of the singers of country music. Let's take time out to mention a few, starting with **MUSICITY CARES**, which benefits **NASHVILLE CARES**, the service organization whose aim is support for the men, women and children living with HIV and the AIDS virus. They also provide education for prevention and community awareness of this incurable disease. An estimated 5,000 persons and several dogs turned out for the five-mile AIDS walk. Arista Prez **Tim DuBois** and **Pam Tillis** served as honorary co-chairs of the event, and Arista VP **Fletcher Foster** was Committee Chair. Four fabulous females and one fabo male royally entertained the audience at the Municipal Auditorium. **Pam Tillis, Kathy**

1940's with originals like "No Letter Today" and the immortal "Born to Lose," penned under the pseudonym of "Frankie Brown." During World War II, these recordings became country standards. Daffan's instrumental, "Blue Steel Blues," gained favor among steel guitarists. The Texans relocated to California during the war years. Daffan later returned to Texas and continued performing and recording. Along with his other hits, he wrote "Tangled Mind," a 1957 hit for **Hank Snow**. One more major standard emerged from his pen: the ballad, "I'm a Fool to Care."

Daffan ran his own song publishing operation for awhile and remained an elder statesman of honky tonk's early days until his death.

—RICH KIENZLE



# People

Mattea, Mandy Barnett and K.T. Oslin gave great concert performances. Host **Clint Black** was cute, funny and sang like a boy angel. This was K.T.'s first local concert in five years, and the crowd loved her. We need to thank all five stars as follows: Mandy for wanting to come, Clint for helping out in the time of need, Pam for lending her name and giving her time as co-chair, K.T. for being so doggone funny and always giving a helping hand for this cause, and dear Kathy, the first Nashville star who held her hand up to help when this dread virus first hit town. Also, Kathy, God bless you for representing all of country music in the AIDS March in Washington, D.C., where you helped carry the AIDS quilt bearing names of those who have died.

Let's talk about **Vince Gill's** seventh annual basketball game benefiting Belmont University Music Department. Playing for fun besides Vince were BNA's **Doug Supernaw**, who pounced **James Bonamy**; **Trace Adkins**, who virtually stood under the net—never moving—preventing the opposing team from scoring; **Bryan White**, whose reddened baby face was shining; **Kenny Chesney**, who had shaved his head because he got bored riding his bus; **Sawyer Brown's Mark Miller**, who has been signed by a semi-pro basketball team somewhere in the USA; **Billy Dean**, who left early with **Terri Clark** for beer; **Steve Azar**, who scored the most points; **Gary**

## HONORING BILL



The late Father of Bluegrass, Mr. Bill Monroe, was honored at the Opry recently when both Ricky Skaggs and Vince Gill sat in with Bill's Bluegrass Boys and performed songs from the pen of the great master.

**Chapman**, who arrived late and left early, and other neryv good sports out for fun. Half-time the girls played. They shot and shot and shot and couldn't score. Finally **Michelle Wright** got a basket. A few minutes into their game, someone delivered

pizza (obviously planned). All the girl players calmly sat down and sucked up pizza with everyone looking on. **Lisa Stewart**, **Amy Grant**, **Linda Davis** and **Joy Lynn White** were among the female players. A *very* pregnant **Bobbie Cryner** shot all foul shots for the girls. Later everybody sang duets with Vince. The Trace Adkins/Vince Gill duet, due to the fact that neither showered or changed clothes after all that running, puffing and blowing, was special. They were a-singing and a-stinking and a-smiling.

Operation Smile, they call it. Started in 1983, the organization provides reconstructive surgery to under-served children and young adults. Example, if a child is born with a harelip and the family cannot afford surgery, Operation Smile steps in. It's incredible to see all the children who have been healed and are being healed or helped. Hosts for the Celebrity Concert were **Marty Stuart** and **Ashley Judd**. Guests included **Mark Luna**, who had facial surgery as a child, country **Tracy Lawrence**, who sang a couple of his hits, jazz guitarist **Larry Carlton** dressed in a red cowboy shirt with white piping like **Hank Williams** used to wear, and the fabo duo of **Brooks & Dunn**. After their performance, Ashley Judd remarked that Brooks & Dunn had won Duo of the Year about four times while her mama and sister won eight or ten times. Also Ashley remarked that her mama (**Naomi**) was backstage and had mentioned to Brooks

## A PLACE FOR MARY CHAPIN



Columbia's **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, second from right, with her friend and opening act, Mercury's **Kim Richey**, are flanked by Columbia/Sony honchos **Allen Butler** and **Paul Worley**. The event was Chapin showcasing her newly-released album, *A Place in the World*, for appreciators of good music. Richey sang on the album, which debuted at Number Three on the country charts.

# People

## COFFEE WITH THE CARTERS



Grand Prize winners in the Maxwell House Search for Country's First Family contest, the Rogers family of Henderson, Kentucky, enjoy breakfast with members of the Carter clan. Young Dan Rogers wrote the winning essay on his family's love for country music. They were rewarded with a trip to Nashville, and a coffee klatch with The Carters. Left to right: Carlene Carter, father and son Jim Rogers and Dan Rogers, June Carter Cash, mom Lela Rogers, and Carlene's daughter, Tiffany Lowe.

## SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

Faith Hill courted and married Tim McGraw, her co-star during the Spontaneous Combustion summer tour. The couple wed at Tim's home near Rayville, Louisiana, with Faith barefoot, reminiscent of her Hollywood look-a-like **Julia Roberts'** marriage to **Lyle Lovett**. Then the couple played a softball tourney fundraiser and gave a concert. Faith announced from the stage that they had gotten married that day. She and Tim lip-locked, a habit they'd practiced all summer on the road. Ole timers used to say cooking lasts, kissing don't. Lord knows, I still cook.

## THIS 'N' THAT

On a flight from Reno to NYC, **Trisha Yearwood** heard a man yelling and some banging and insisted to the flight attendant that the plane be stopped. Sure enough, a baggage handler had been locked in the belly of the plane with luggage. Had the plane reached cruising altitude, the man would have died. Trisha was out west guest-starring as herself on the TV show, *Ellen*.

The great **Earl Scruggs** is resting at home after a dual bout. The 73-year-old master of the five-string banjo was hospitalized for hip surgery. Upon returning to his room, Earl suffered a massive heart attack. He was immediately returned to

& Dunn that she was feeling real good and just maybe **The Judds** might give them a run for their money. To keep the story true, Brooks & Dunn have won CMA Duo of the Year five times, surpassing The Judds, who won four times. Let's mention that Brooks & Dunn donated five grand to Operation Smile, and the father of one of the children said that it was Kix Brooks who made him aware of the organization. Others performing were former Nashvillian **Rosanne Cash**, **Clint Black** (who sang solo on his duet with **Wynonna** because she was late), **Steve Earle** (a man that all of us are happy to see smile), someone I could hear sing all night and not get tired or bored named **Lyle Lovett**, **Michael Bolton**, who sang some song from another kind of country in Italian that he'd sung with **Pavarotti**, followed by "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay," and Wynonna, who sings great but her songs were not country. Ashley introduced Bolton as her "one and only." Wonder if former TV star girlfriend, **Nicolette Sheridan**, is still in Bolton's heart and on his mind? That Ashley Judd is a beauty and a good actress. So's her mama.

He's a road manager extraordinaire. **Phil Kaufman** served the needs of many and served them well. **Emmylou Harris**, **Marty Stuart** and **Rodney Crowell** are among his employers. When Phil, a/k/a The Road Mangler, started his career

battle without insurance, his friends turned out at the Ryman for a fundraiser. **Phil Kaufman** is a cult hero. Many remember him because of his association with his late best friend, **Graham Parsons**.

## JERRY RIVERS: 1928-1996

Jerry Rivers landed his job with Hank Williams' Drifting Cowboys by playing the fiddle favorite, "Sally Goodin," better than Hank could. His association with The Drifting Cowboys and the Hank Williams mystique kept Rivers active until his death in Nashville on October 4, 1996, of pancreatic cancer.

Born in Miami, Florida, in 1928, he lost both parents when he was young, and was raised by maternal grandparents in Nashville. He began fiddling in high school, later working with The Short Brothers and Big Jeff and his Radio Playboys. Shortly after Hank came to the Opry in 1949, Rivers joined the reorganized Drifting Cowboys, and after the Opry fired Hank in 1952, Rivers and The Drifting Cowboys continued as backup band for Hank's protege, Ray Price. After Hank died, the band recorded instrumentals for MGM.

Rivers quit fulltime music in 1954, remaining out for several years before returning to work with The Home-

steaders, a Nashville folk group. His 1967 memoir, *Hank Williams from Life to Legend*, remains in print today. Between performing, Rivers worked with well-known Nashville booking agency Buddy Lee Attractions, and in the late 60's, reunited the original Drifting Cowboys as part of Hank Jr.'s touring show. Later, he served as Hank Jr.'s road manager. The Drifting Cowboys never disbanded after that. Led by Rivers and steel guitarist Don Helms, they continued working from the 1970's to the mid-1990's, their popularity sustained by the ongoing Hank Williams mystique. Most recently they backed Hank's daughter, Jett Williams.

Profiled in a Drifting Cowboys article earlier this year in our sister publication, *The Journal*, Rivers was a true gentleman, affable and well-versed not only about Hank, but about the Nashville scene in general.

—RICH KIENZLE



# People

## TAMMY ON TV



**Tammy Wynette** appeared as herself on Fox's *Married...With Children*. The storyline: the Bundy family vacations in Branson, where mother **Peggy** (**Katey Sagal**) and daughter **Kelly** (**Christina Applegate**) win a talent contest as "The Juggs." Their prize: a chance to open a show for Tammy, but in true Bundy fashion, they screw it up. Left to right: Tammy, **Al Bundy** (**Ed O'Neill**), **Peggy** and **Kelly**. First run was December 1, look for repeats in the spring.

the policeman got in Sammy's face and said he had embarrassed him in front of the crowd. "I don't care," said Sammy. "How do you think the kid felt?" Get 'em, Sammy. Love that Sammy.

## PREZ THIS 'N' THAT

**Kathy Mattea** sang at the State House in Little Rock for the Prez the night of his election. She is a favorite of **Bill Clinton**. **Kim Richey** played for the VP when he and his wife landed in Chattanooga the night before the election. **Al** and **Tipper Gore** came home, made some pit stops and voted. When **Sawyer Brown** showed up for a rally for President Clinton in Birmingham, the Prez surprised the band when he told 'em he'd been a fan since *Star Search*.

## JUST LUNCHIN'

Eye saw **Reba McEntire** and six of her staffers doing lunch at Houston's. I was with a young, handsome man, **Randy Goodman**, VP-GM of RCA.

Eye saw **Kathy Mattea** at Cake Walk dining with hubby and songwriter, **Jon Vezner**, and actor/singer/songwriter/man of big talent, **Paul Williams**. I was having lunch with three handsome men, VP of Arista **Fletcher Foster** and American Country Radio's **Tim Riley** and **Barry Goold**. Kathy was dining with only two men. See, you don't have to be a star to do lunch with the finest-looking men in Twang Town. Just be fickle.

the operating room where he underwent quintuple-bypass surgery. It took a lot of praying and medical attention, but I'm happy to report that Earl is back home in Madison with his beloved wife, **Louise**. My family and I love Earl and Louise Scruggs. So does everyone else who knows them.

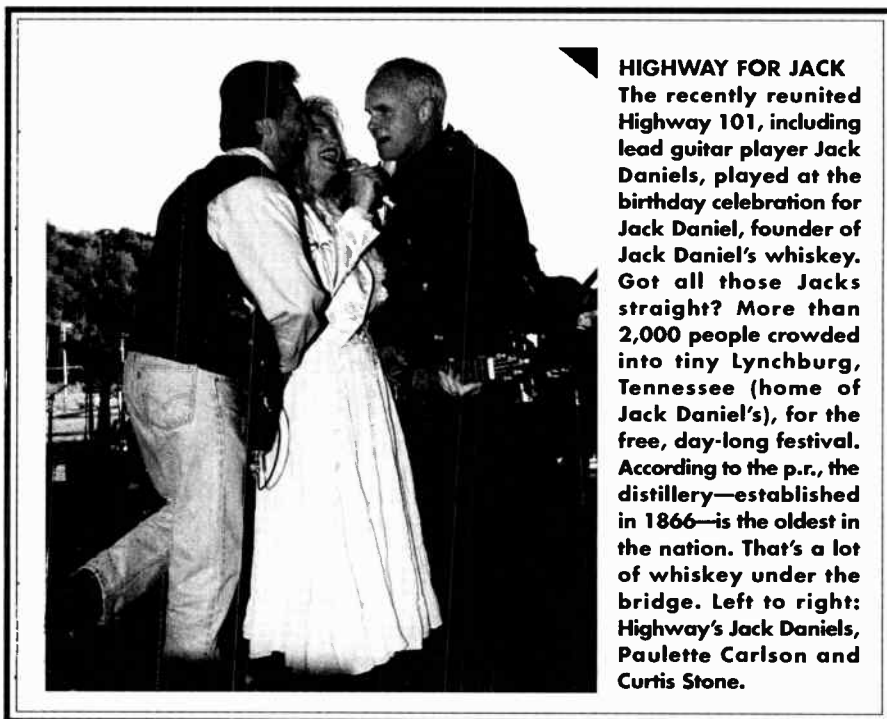
A two-party night, and I'm not talking Donkeys and Elephants. I'm talking hill-billy. First, I celebrated with **Daryle Singletary** at Tom Kats on Lower Broadway. Daryle is country the way I like it. I can tell radio right here and now, if you don't play Daryle's music, then you ain't country. How do you like that truth? Second party was across the street at Merchant's for **Collin Raye**. Collin hugged just about everyone that works at Sony, and there's a bunch of them. I guess they deserve hugging. After all, Collin was celebrating four platinum albums—out of four releases, which ain't bad. Is that batting a thousand? Or maybe four million?

One of my all-time faves, **John Anderson**, has signed with Mercury Records.

"Never was a hat act," says **Rhett Akins**, who's now performing without his hat. The Decca artist is on his second album.

**Sammy Kershaw**, whom I love as a person and as a singer, had a little tete-a-tete in Florida. Seems as he was on-stage singing, he'd thrown a guitar pick to the audience. A little boy was trying to reach a pick that had

fallen on-stage, and this cop pulled him off. The kid started crying. Sammy hollered, "Don't you ever do that again at one of my shows. And while I'm at it, why don't you just get your #@%% outta here!" Sam then gave the little boy a pick. After the show



## HIGHWAY FOR JACK

The recently reunited Highway 101, including lead guitar player **Jack Daniels**, played at the birthday celebration for **Jack Daniel**, founder of Jack Daniel's whiskey. Got all those Jacks straight? More than 2,000 people crowded into tiny Lynchburg, Tennessee (home of Jack Daniel's), for the free, day-long festival. According to the p.r., the distillery—established in 1866—is the oldest in the nation. That's a lot of whiskey under the bridge. Left to right: Highway's **Jack Daniels**, **Paulette Carlson** and **Curtis Stone**.

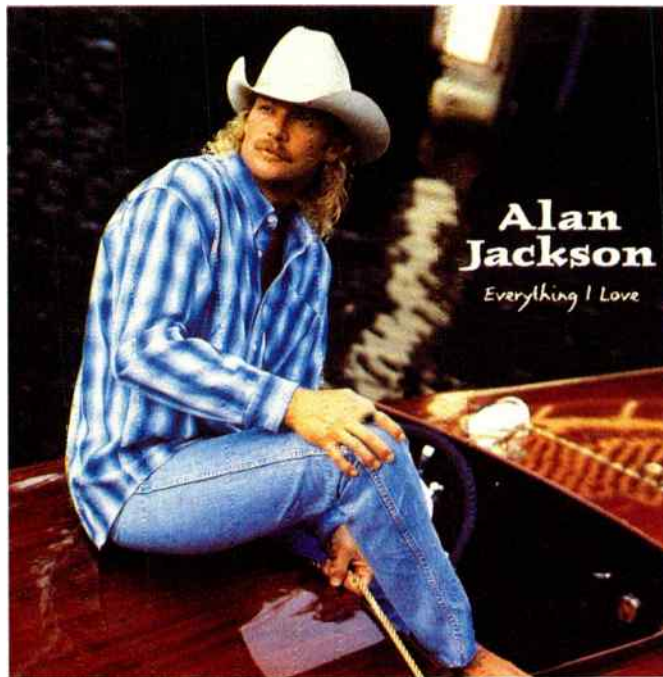
# Record Reviews

**Alan Jackson**  
*Everything I Love*  
Arista 18813

In these days of change and uncertainty, depending on who you read or talk to, Nashville is either (a) on the verge of meltdown, (b) flat for the moment but otherwise more vital than ever or (c) on the verge of a sea change with some new or strange trend. Artists revered in recent years are suddenly being ignored or scorned. The alternative scene generates new artists, magazines and fans, but barely perceptible sales. Superstars who could tour on their own are suddenly teaming with others, an indicator somebody's drawing power ain't what it once was.

One artist not being swept up in this maelstrom of rumor, critique and speculation is Alan Jackson. It's easy to see why. Over the past six years, Jackson has been among a handful of artists who've found their style, succeeded with it and had no need to change or even think about it. The consistency of his music, with its solid traditional roots, hasn't changed. He's proven himself a formidable songwriter, a skill that's improved with time and experience. And regardless of the condition of the scene, all that is hearteningly alive and well on *Everything I Love*.

My only reservation involves the first single, "Little Bitty." Much as I revere Tom T. Hall, I wonder if this uninspired celebration of the predictable, modest, but solid aspects of blue collar life was the best choice. Plenty of better Tom T. gems exist that Jackson could have excelled with. This one isn't bad, but certainly doesn't outdo Jackson's original material, which seems to continually improve. One example is



"There Goes," the tale of a man unable to let go of a very calculating woman. The song is part lament, part homage to her shrewdness. After going through it all, by the time he gets to the line, "I think you're playin' with me, darlin'," he's made the understatement of the album.

Buoying the pure morning-after fun of Jackson's "Must've Had a Ball" is the kind of Dixieland arrangement that Jimmie Rodgers occasionally used on his records. Things become more serious on the final number, a mixture of finality and revenge called "It's Time You Learned About Good-Bye." Jackson and Jim McBride penned two more masterpieces. One is "Buicks to the Moon," an entertaining, clever profession of love. Their skills also extend to one of the album's finest ballads: "A House With No Curtains," a straightforward, somber tale of a marriage that's all over except serving and signing the divorce papers.

Another songwriting team contributed two more gems: Harley Allen and Carson Chamberlain, who wrote the dramatic temptation number, "Between the Devil and Me," enhanced by a smoldering, rumbling arrangement. Carson and Chamberlain also wrote the title song, a tale of a man dependent on negatives—booze, smokes and the woman he loves. Jackson's interpretations are perfect, as is his beautifully understated spin on John Swaim's "Walk on the Rocks," the story of an imprisoned father's cautionary message to a son, imploring the boy to "walk on the rocks that I stumbled on." As for his remake of Charly McClain's 1981 hit, "Who's Cheatin' Who," it wasn't a bad idea, and his performance is fine. The problem is the mindless dance club arrangement. I mean, this is Alan Jackson. He doesn't need to reinforce that flagging fad.

All fads eventually lose their zip. Many artists around half the time as Jackson are al-

ready candidates for future trivia books. The fact remains that nearly seven years have passed since *Here in the Real World*. Of everyone who emerged during that period, most have stumbled after an album or two. This artist hasn't. But then, like I said, it's Alan Jackson.

—RICH KIENZLE

**Dolly Parton**  
*Treasures*  
Rising Tide/Blue Eye 53041

A thumbnail description of Dolly Parton's new album, *Treasures*, makes it sound like a most unpromising comeback vehicle. It contains no compositions by Parton herself, one of the finest country songwriters of her generation. It does feature such gimmicky propositions as Parton singing Cat Stevens' anti-war anthem, "Peace Train," with a South African choral group, and Neil Young's science-fiction fantasy, "After the Goldrush," with Alison Krauss and Suzanne Cox of The Cox Family.

When you actually listen to *Treasures*, however, it turns out to be Parton's most consistent and most satisfying studio album since 1983's *Burlap & Satin* (her best overall album of the 80's and 90's is the recent live set, *Heartsongs*). The new album works because Parton picked all the tunes herself, instead of leaving the job to some A&R guy. She chose some of her favorite radio-listening songs—nine country hits and three rock hits—and when she sings material she really believes in, no one can match her high, sweet soprano and contagiously bubbly enthusiasm.

Her version of "Peace Train," for example, is delightful because she turns the 1971



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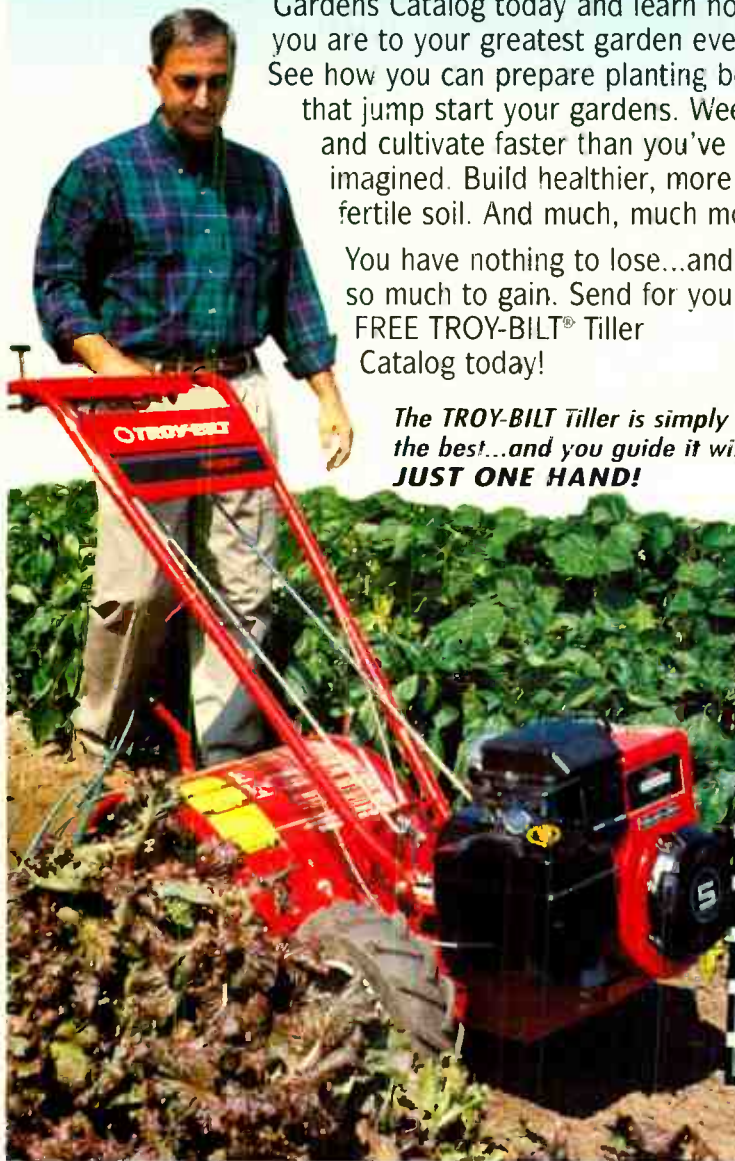
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# Record Reviews

hit into a gospel hymn, using the urgency of prayer to call forth the railroad of reconciliation. Ladysmith Black Mambazo, a gospel choir back home in South Africa, wraps church-like harmonies around Parton as these same singers once did on *Graceland*, Paul Simon's album of secular hymns. And Young's strange story about silver spaceships rescuing an environmentally ravaged Earth in the 21st century becomes a ghostly Appalachian tall tale as the three bluegrass voices of Parton, Krauss and Cox glide through the melody with lots of whispery echoes from producer Steve Buckingham. Katrina & The Waves' 1985 single, "Walking on Sunshine," is the third pop hit, and Parton uses the upper reaches of her voice to provide the required giddiness.

The rest of the album is devoted to country classics. Merle Haggard, publicly smitten with Parton, has recorded several of her compositions, and she returns the favor by singing his 1967 hit, "Today I Started Loving You Again." Reggie Young's tasty guitar fills give the arrangement an R&B flavor, and that feel is reinforced by a guest vocal and harmonica solo by John Popper of Blues Traveler. Freddy Fender's 1975 chart-topper, "Before the Next Teardrop Falls," was a perfect blend of honky tonk and Tex-Mex, and Parton recreates that mix by singing the heart-tugging ballad as a duet with David Hidalgo of Los Lobos. "Don't Let Me Cross Over," a duet for Carl and Pearl Butler in 1962, for Jerry Lee and Linda Gail Lewis in 1969 and for Jim Reeves and Deborah Allen in 1979, is a duet again between Parton and The Mavericks' Raul Malo.

Hargus "Pig" Robbins, the great pianist from hundreds of Nashville sessions in the 60's and 70's (and later), recreates that sound on Parton's versions of two 1973 hits, Jeanne Pruett's "Satin Sheets" and Charlie Rich's "Behind Closed Doors." Both these numbers



explore the differences between public appearances and private romance, and Parton measures the distance between the two with a Southern drawl that's hard-core country. She's on her own for Kris Kristofferson's "For the Good Times," an affectionate breakup song not unlike her own "I Will Always Love You." In contrast to her over-the-top vocal on the latter number, she understates the Kristofferson tune with a whispery friendliness that's disarming.

She brings a similar restraint to the album's first single, "Just When I Needed You Most," the pop-country tune that was a big hit for writer Randy Van Warmer in 1979. With help from Krauss and The Lovin' Spoonful's John Sebastian, Parton preserves the wistfulness of the pretty melody by never pushing it too hard.

Parton has been a lot of things in her long career—songwriter, businesswoman, actress, outlandish personality—but when she gets the right songs, she's also one of the smartest, most effective singers in the business, and *Treasures* is a welcome reminder of that.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

## Marshall Chapman

*Love Slave*

Margaritaville 314 524 288

**F**or those who don't know this lanky, lackadaisical Nashville distaff rocker, Marshall Chapman is a treasure of individualism who has never fit into Nashville's music

scheme, but who has built a catalog of no-holds-barred, no-prisoners-taken music over the last 20 years or so. Her songs are stories from life within and all around her. Her own self-description at the front of this CD's "Leavin' Loachapoka" (a rumbling, thumping, hypnotic piece of autobiography) probably comes closest to a thumbnail sketch of this craggy-voiced Marianne Faithfull of country-rock: "Going 90 miles an hour with her hair on fire/Running on a tank of burning desire."

In "Guns R Us," some bright, punchy guitar work a la Marshall Crenshaw brings to life a tale from the front pages of Nashville's recent headlines. A junior high student is accidentally killed with a pistol brought to school for little more than an illicit "show 'n' tell." A little heavy-handed



as social critique, but brilliant music nonetheless. The silky rhythm & blues of "Better Let Her Go" tells a man-friend to quit a sick relationship, though in other songs she admits she herself usually can't. "If I Can't Have You" is a rockabilly thing that would not have surprised you to hear on a Rosanne Cash record. It kicks wonderfully.

Chapman is a take-no-prisoners rocker who takes love as a visceral thing, as did the men of the genre in the legendary 60's and 70's. She's an inspiring anachronism and yet a pretty unique confessional writer addressing her middle age with no accommodations to it. "Love Slave" is unabashedly passion-driven, the tale of a woman for whom age is never going to be the issue.

In fact, there are more than a few confessions of the overpowering pull of a man (often not necessarily a nice guy) who can make her sweat. She wants to feel all life has to offer and feel it with every nerve she's got. And she admits there are "sick" elements to her needs and attractions. As she sings in "Somebody Like You," "There've been times I've tried to curse you, but the problem's always been me." It's not the kind of sweet and soft image a lot of 20-year-old country dance club girls might identify with, but rock is largely a macho game, and Marshall Chapman has always been willing to play it where it lies, with no apologies for lack of erinoline and lace.

Marshall Chapman comes out of the late 60's and early 70's, which I guess makes her something of a pioneering female rocker 'n' roller. Sometimes her roots in that era's idealism leak through like water stains on a low ceiling. "In the Fullness of Time" is the philosophical daughter of that time when poor, heroin-addled, post-Beatles John Lennon was considered a spiritual prophet, instead of the brain-fried peacenik anachronism he seems to me to be in retrospect. Chapman borrows to good purpose the jangle, the melodic feel and simple chanty lyric of "Give Peace a Chance" here, and one could easily imagine Lennon in the chorus. In "I'm a Dreamer," Chapman is more conventional about her life as a bohemian singer and songwriter. Looking lazy to the workaday world "is a full-time job" as she aptly observes. That's what I try to tell my wife, anyway.

Nashville's "Tall Girl" is known for a more stripped down style of country rock 'n' roll than this, but she's probably got a better chance than ever for airplay with this excellent effort—though probably not mainstream, big-market country airplay, which is suffocating for lack of just such non-homogenized spice as this.

—BOB MILLARD

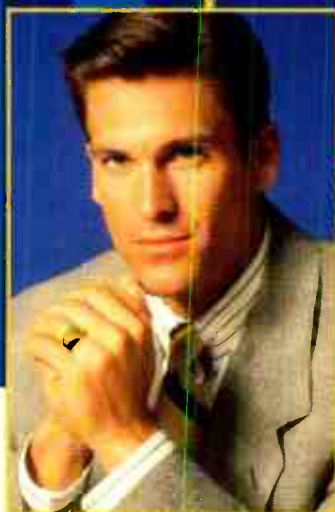


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# Record Reviews

## John Berry

*Faces*

Capitol 7243-8-35464

This could have been "The Many Faces" of John Berry. Having grown up on Carole King's *Tapestry* and Willie Nelson's *Stardust*, Berry gives us lots of looks at his different faces including soul, middle-of-the-road pop and folk, all in the context of explosive, emotional power ballads, such as his recent killer single, "Change My Mind."

"I hope while listening, my music will stir emotions in you," says Berry in his handwritten liner notes. And you'd about have to be dead not to taste a few here on such numbers as "I Will If You Will," where Mary Anne Kennedy gives us her best Jennifer Warnes-style backing harmonies. (Other vocal cameos include Delbert McClinton and Patty Loveless.) Berry also gives range to a brilliant Gary Burr/Michael Bolton collaboration, "He Doesn't Even Know Her." I am not alone in thinking Burr is one of the most talented lyricists and melodists writing in any genre this decade, and Berry has so much more gradation of soul than does Bolton-the-bellower.

Of course, it's not all powder keg romantic ballads. "Time to Be a Man" is the story of a grown up, a man who runs into an old love, recently divorced, and has the gumption to walk away from the stirring embers of an old flame. Particularly poignant is "Forty Again." Weeping pedal steel punctuates what is a basic acoustic track underlying a sweet, nostalgic view of parents. Berry wishes his dad "was 40 again/ He would be young, I would be ten." There is plenty of this sort of bittersweet in life; it ain't all love-scapes and loss-scrapes.

In fact, "Love Is Everything" is more a non-preachy



sermon than anything else. "Life is short and rough, go and tell the ones you love how much they mean." You can pass the plate after selling a point like that, and soulfully sell it he does. Clear to the end Berry is delivering the goods. A plain, romantic sentiment becomes a string section lullabye in "Give My Heart."

Feelings? Yeah, but Berry doesn't just manipulate 'em; he evokes 'em. I think he takes a big risk in the climate of shrinking playlists-aimed-at-youth demographics in not being a hunk-o-matic romancer with a voice like that. He reaches beyond the limited themes and treatments of that teeny bopper country, though, and the product is rewarding. Berry is a singer of depth, not ditties.

—BOB MILLARD

## Jim Lauderdale

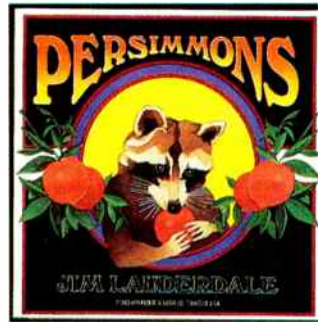
*Persimmons*

Upstart 035

Jim Lauderdale leads two lives. As a songwriter, he has come up with some of the catchiest, smartest mainstream-country material of the 90's. His songs have been the highlights of albums by George Strait, Patty Loveless, Mark Chesnutt and Mandy Barnett. As a performer, though, he leans more in the direction of Beatlesque and soul-flavored roots-rock in the style of John Hiatt, Marshall Crenshaw and Nick Lowe. His songwriting has made him rich, and his poor-selling solo albums have made him a crit-

ics' hero, but his two lives have rarely intersected.

They finally do on his new album, *Persimmons*. Upstart, a subsidiary of Boston's independent Rounder Records, invited Lauderdale to pick out his 15 favorite unreleased song demos from the early 90's. He chose both mainstream country ballads and jittery rockabilly, hard-edged country-rock and Chicago blues. He's good at everything he tries, and *Persimmons* provides the best available overview of his talents. It also includes a handful of country hits just waiting to happen.



Lauderdale's wide-ranging interests have given his record companies plenty of headaches, for they can't fit him into a comfortable slot. He recorded a Bakersfield country album with producer Pete Anderson that Columbia declined to release. Reprise dropped him after one progressive-country album with producers Rodney Crowell and John Leventhal. Atlantic dropped him after two pop-rock albums with producer Dusty Wakeman. Next year Lauderdale gives it another shot with RCA-Nashville.

In the meantime, Upstart has rescued some wonderful songs that might have gotten away otherwise. The album's highlight is "Some Things Are Too Good to Last," a heartbreak ballad with a gorgeous melody delivered in a honky tonk drawl by Lauderdale with angelic harmonies by Emmylou Harris. Almost as good is another old-fashioned hillbilly ballad, "Nobody's Perfect," which has a juicy chorus hook un-

derlined by Dan Dugmore's pedal steel guitar. A similar, steel-wrapped chorus melody graces "Do You Like It," a midtempo number about a remembered love. "I Thought We Had a Deal" builds slowly but surely over a rolling drum figure to a rockabilly climax like an old Roy Orbison tune. All four of these songs deserve to be cut by the likes of Wynonna, Pam Tillis or The Mavericks.

The rest of *Persimmons* finds Lauderdale pursuing his other interests. "Tears So Strong" is a dead-on impersonation of 1969-era Creedence Clearwater revival swamp-rock. On the country-rock "Seems Like You're Gonna Take Me Back," Lauderdale does an uncanny impression of Tom Petty. "And That's a Lot" is a take off on Lauderdale's old pal, Nick Lowe. "Don't Leave Your Light Low" is an experiment in what would happen if you stole the guitar riff from The Beatles' "I've Got a Feeling" and put a country chorus on top of it. "Please Pardon Me" is an experiment in pushing a Buck Owens feel as fast and hard as one can. "Optimistic Messenger" is a slow blues, complete with slide-guitar solo, while "That's Not Right Babe," is a soul tune, complete with B-3 organ.

Lauderdale may lead two lives, but in this case two are better than one.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

## Jason and The Scorchers

*Clear Impetuous Morning*  
Mammoth/Atlantic 92730

These guys were around Nashville over a decade ago, before New Traditionalism, Hat Acts and every other trend—certainly long before Alternative Country ever existed. Some called them country-punk or cowpunk, a reflection of their thrashing, unrelenting sound. Never getting the credit or audience they de-



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# Record Reviews

served, they disbanded for awhile only to reunite earlier this decade. Their 1994 reunion album, also on Mammoth, more or less picked up where the group left off, and included a positively inspired moment, an hilariously savage deconstruction of John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads."

Nothing's very different this time, except that changing trends make them seem a lot less exotic than they were ten years ago. Leader Jason Ringenberg, guitarist Warner Hodges, bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer Perry Baggs have retained the original sound and perspective. Their sardonic, literate humor jumps out of the speakers, beginning with "Self-Sabotage," a Tommy Womack/Ringenberg original, followed by "Cappuccino Rosie," written by the same team, a sort of skewed love song that won't register with fans of more sentimental artists.

"Going Nowhere," the whirlwind tale of a hard-drinking female drifter's night of love, violence and relief at barely surviving it could fail for a more conventional act, but The Scorchers pull it off. "2 + 1 = Nothing," written by the band, is a study in frustration and disgust with a woman who can't forget her past. The tightly constructed "Victory Road" is a tale of trying and searching for a way to fill emptiness while "Kick Me Down" celebrates independence.

The sole cover is also the only failure. "Drug Store Truck Drivin' Man," for those who might not remember, is an acerbic 1969 number written by country-rock pioneer Gram Parsons and Roger McGuinn, leader of the legendary 60's rock band, The Byrds. After a 1968 visit to Nashville, while the group was exploring country-rock, they sang on the Opry, where their long hair (by that era's standard) produced cold, anti-hippie hostility from the audience. Less subtle hostility greeted them when they



stopped by Ralph Emery's all night disc jockey show at WSM. They've changed "radio" to "video" show in the lyrics, but after 29 years, the song nonetheless sounds dated.

The sorrowful "Everything Has a Cost," a bit of philosophizing about the penalties wealth can bring, was written by Jason and drummer Baggs. Musically, it's odd to hear them go from hyperdrive amplification to an acoustic guitar-dominated sound, but when they do, it works supremely well, with Emmylou Harris more than capably making it a vocal duet with Ringenberg. Jason's own acoustic number, "Jeremy's Glory," is an oddly poignant Civil War number. Similar bleakness applies to "To Feel No Love" and the social protest of "Walking a Vanishing Line," shot through with references to the blanding of America through franchises and pollution. "Tomorrow Has Come Today" zaps both the country's obsession with and addiction to both technology and drugs.

The closest to a conventional country love song here is the final track, "I'm Sticking With You," which begins with acoustic guitar and steel only to lurch into a more booming accompaniment and inexplicably ends with what sounds like the needle being jerked from a vinyl record, a lame way to close the album.

I don't think Jason and the boys are (or ever were) for older fans, or anyone who likes to hear a lot of conventional feeling put into lyrics. Not even some of the folk aficionados who embrace certain "sen-

sitive" acoustic singers could deal with the music here. Anyone who appreciates the alternative scene, however, needs to hear these guys if they haven't already. They were truly here first.

—RICH KIENZLE

## John Michael Montgomery *What I Do Best* Atlantic 82947

Ol' John Michael goes for some traditional sounds this go-round, and it's easy on the ears. Starting with the laidback, jazzy "Ain't Got Nothin' on Us" gets him off on the right foot with me. It's different than almost anything I've heard on country radio in the last several years, and it's



a fresh sound for being that.

Montgomery goes to his strength here, painting the canvas across his entire effective range—from ballads to power ballads, with a few mid-tempo thrown in. He has some nice traditionalist moments, such as "Friends" and "Lucky Arms," that I enjoyed. On the other hand, when he pitches goey romance directly to the female listener, as he does most of the time in tunes here like "How Was I to Know" and "I Miss You a Little," it gets sort of creepy after a while. Conway Twitty used to do this kind of thing in a way that left room for a man to put a quarter in a jukebox and tell the lady at the bar, "This is what I'd be sayin' if I could." He was never this cloying.

The two-steppin' "Paint the

Town Redneck" takes a half-hearted dodge toward giving Montgomery some substance as a regular guy. It's a nice little tune; you'll enjoy dancing to it. But, so far as I can hear, there is no John Michael Montgomery apart from his market niche as a ballad-heavy, romancing hat-hunk.

Giving the guy his due, young ladies may really get their money's worth from this fourth, and no doubt successful-selling, album. When it comes to delivering a love ballad, such as "This Is What I Do Best" or "I Can Prove You Wrong" in this collection, Montgomery is on target. Montgomery is a carefully targeted woman's package, after all; an aural romance novel.

John Michael Montgomery's recorded vocal performances always stand as a tribute to modern multi-track technology and technique, state-of-the-art, endless, line-by-line overdubbing. The fact that the guy seemingly has trouble carrying a tune in real life (remember the Grammys?) and couldn't carry the towel for guys in former times who had to come in and sing a song pretty much straight through as a performance to get a record makes no difference in judging this CD on its own merits. Because this is what Montgomery does best: come out at the end of a monumental tweeking effort sounding just like he intends to.

—BOB MILLARD

## Kevin Sharp *Measure of a Man* Asylum 61930

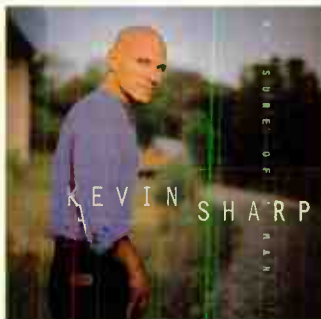
Even if Kevin Sharp's debut album, *Measure of a Man*, was a better—or even a worse—record than it really is, the story behind it (which, indeed, you may have already heard) has undeniable pathos. Having lost a 28-year-old stepbrother and my mother, at too early an age, to cancer, I can certainly relate to it.

Sharp, 25, is a cancer survi-



## Record Reviews

vor. In a very short time, he went on a dark and harrowing journey from being a 200-pound high school football star, weight lifter and weekend singer, to the very brink of death. He bottomed out in the early 1990's when chemotherapy and radiation failed to arrest the malignancy that eventually spread to his lungs and through his bones. Through the Make-a-Wish Foundation, he made an unusual last request: to meet his favorite Los Angeles producer/songwriter, David Foster, who's produced pop megahits with the likes of Barbra Streisand, Whitney Houston and Michael Bolton.



Then, in 1991, after several operations and more radiation, Sharp's deadly disease, much to his and everyone else's surprise, went into remission. Almost immediately, he turned back to music to reaffirm his new foothold on life. In the process, he naturally turned to Foster for guidance. To make a long story short, *Measure of a Man* is the end result.

Great story—one that would be made all the more poignant if Sharp was a great singer, as opposed to a merely fine one who's still a bit unfocused, wet behind the ears and very much in search of a style he can call his own.

*Measure of a Man* is essentially a pop album—Sharp seems to have spent a lot more time listening to Michael Bolton than John Michael Montgomery. (Though, come to think of it, maybe that's not as big a stretch as it seems.)

Yet, since *Measure of a Man* was targeted for the country market, I suppose Sharp and

co-producers Foster and Chris Farren felt compelled to actually throw in a few country tunes for good measure.

One of these is the title tune, co-written by Larry Boone and Rick Bowles. Amazingly, Sharp, who is by instinct (as I've already suggested) a mostly pop singer, is able to take this forgettable tune with its string of shop-worn clichés and turn it into a reasonably persuasive personal statement.

On "Love Bomb," another good-natured country outing, penned by Robert Ellis Orrall and Angelo, Sharp's country chops sound forced and second-hand, and, alas, not especially persuasive. On most of *Measure of a Man*, though, Sharp is on reasonably firm footing as he turns in charming and impassioned performances on pretty, but not particularly memorable, country-flavored pop ballads—the sort of soothing, undemanding songs that you're likely to hear a couple of years from now while you're roaming the supermarket aisles in search of orange juice and cereal.

Significantly, one of the most winning of the handful of country tracks on here is the lone song on which Sharp has a co-writing credit. "Population 4000 Minus 1" puts a compelling and lyrically provocative spin on the oft-told tale of a kid dreaming big dreams in a sleepy small town. Sharp's energetic, gutsy performance suggests possibilities that remain largely untapped elsewhere on here.

Yet, all in all, *Measure of a Man* is as decent an effort as it is an unremarkable one. Despite his penchant for sappy, sentimental and often second-rate material, these 11 cuts indicate that Sharp does possess the raw potential to eventually parlay his remarkable and inspirational personal story into an enduring career.

But to do that he needs to focus quite a bit more and make some tough decisions—like mainly, does he want to grow up to be a pop singer or

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# Record Reviews

a country singer?

Simply put, you can't straddle the two genres as widely as he does here without eventually losing your balance and falling into the chasm that, at least for marketing purposes, lies between. It's a no-man's land that's already swallowed up too many talented singers who've not been heard from since. —BOB ALLEN

## Daryle Singletary *All Because of You* Giant 24660

I've got to confess I sometimes fall down on the job: I'm simply not up to the task of wading through all the dozens of new CD releases that show up in my P.O. box every month—more and more of them each month, it seems.

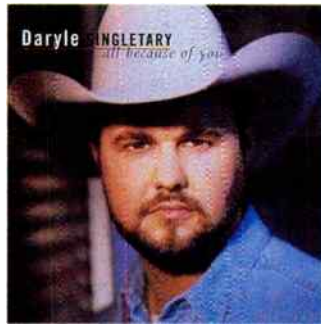
Life is too short, and there's just too darned much music—not all of it even worth a listen.

Along these lines, it seems like promotional CD's, bios and press releases on Daryle Singletary have been stacking up and gathering dust on the shelves in my office for months and months. Yet, I'm embarrassed to say that, at least until now, I'd never gotten around to prying one of his disks out of the shrink wrap and actually giving it a spin.

Only now, after giving *All Because of You*, Singletary's second album, repeated listenings, do I realize what I've been missing.

I've always loved Keith Whitley's big, booming, yet painfully tender baritone, with its swooping range, Lefty Frizzell-style, note-bending curlicues and sonorous bottom end. So naturally, it's delightful to hear a little bit—or actually a whole lot—of Whitley revisited in Singletary's good, honest, straight-ahead country delivery.

Singletary's voice is not quite as finely nuanced and shaded as Whitley's was. Nonetheless, he wears the in-



fluence naturally, and he serves Whitley's memory well.

Above all, there's something earnest, exuberant and unaffected in nearly every note Singletary sings—whether he's serving up a light-hearted goof like "Redneckin'," a quasi-devotional song like Tim Mensy's "He'll Heal My Broken Heart" or a Whitley-esque, romantic "I-told-you-so" like "Hurts Don't It" (a Roger Springer-Trey Bruce composition not to be confused with a recent Wade Hayes cut with the same title).

Similarly impressive are the solid, resolutely country instincts and unadorned restraint that Singletary and his producers, James Stroud and David Malloy, bring to bear on fine cuts like the tender "Even the Wind" (written by Tim Johnson and Hank Cochran), the sprightly Buck Owens-flavored "The Used to Be's," the reverent "Amen Kind of Love" (Trey Bruce-Wayne Tester) and the playful "Liar Liar My Heart's on Fire."

As a songwriter (he co-wrote two of the least impressive of these ten cuts: "Redneckin'" and "That's What I Get for Thinkin'"), Singletary still has miles to go. Yet, with this, as with most everything else about *All Because of You*, he at least seems to be heading in a good direction.

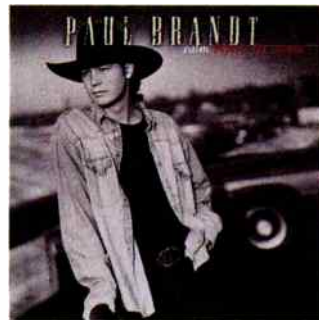
As I write this, I'm giving *All Because of You* yet another spin, and each time around Daryle Singletary sounds better and better. Check him out. I wouldn't be surprised if you give him a similarly hearty thumbs-up.

—BOB ALLEN

## Paul Brandt *Calm Before the Storm* Reprise 46180

This baby-faced Canadian baritone made his initial splash with "My Heart Has a History," co-written with current chart king Mark D. Sanders. Truth told, it didn't just kill me.

Nothing here, however competently put together by Brandt and his producers, really reaches me at any visceral level. Tracks and vocals sort of lie there, unless you crank the volume way up; then everything just lies there really loudly. Brandt hits the right notes, but the result sounds more by-the-numbers than any recent hit I've heard. Frankly, if this is the calm, he ought to have sent the storm.



But, let me explain. There is a joke of long standing on Music Row about a "recovery" dance tune jocularly called "The Twelve-Step Two-Step." Doggone if Brandt and company didn't pick it out of the slush pile, though the actual title of this one (written, completely coincidentally *I'm sooo sure*, by this CD's producer, Josh Leo) is "Twelve Step Recovery." Let's see; how to say this. It bites, big-time.

Brandt does his best Tim McGraw push with the ballad, "I Meant to Do That." This is as close as he comes to breaking free and touching an actual nerve. "All Over Me" gives a big Texas-style bow to Bob Wills' Western swing; at least he has taste. "One and Only One" works Brandt's deep-ended vocal range, which re-

mind me plentifully of Randy Travis doing Brook Benton or George Jones wailing "The Race Is On." Which is to say, it brought to mind better records by much better artists.

Middle-agers—who, by the way, buy a lot of records, still—have heard all this before and better. This especially includes his remake of the 1973 Johnny Rodriguez hit, "Just Pass Me By (If You're Only Passing Through)."

There is probably nothing wrong with Paul Brandt, 23, that a little more experience and loosening up wouldn't cure. But it's always telling when, as Brandt's package did, the bio sheet circulating with a new record addresses talent contests won and the corporate decision-making process rather than any validating life history. Is this going to be another over-ambitious, middle class, workaholic, corporate honky tonk automaton, I inevitably wonder?

Brandt, when asked how he feels about getting to make records and rock the honky tonks says, "I look at this whole opportunity as a responsibility." Huh?

I look for Brandt to do well enough sales-wise with this effort to get a second album, at least. Hopefully, he'll have some glimmer of understanding that music is about emotional release and just plain fun by then. —BOB MILLARD

## Terri Clark *Just the Same* Mercury 314 532 879

"Poor, Poor Pitiful Me" is the first single from Terri Clark's new album, *Just the Same*, but it does her a disservice. The arrangement is so close to the 1978 hit version that the song makes her seem like just another Linda Ronstadt imitator—and Clark is more special than that. A far better example of what she's all about is the new album's first song, "Emotional Girl."



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# Record Reviews

From the title, you might expect a weepy ballad, but instead, from the first rocking guitar riff, it's a swaggering challenge to any male who might try to cope with her uninhibited feelings. When she sings, "I'm warning you, boy, I'm an emotional girl," her sizzling soprano drops down into a low honky tonk growl that should let the guy know just what he's getting into.

No one would ever mistake her for Nanci Griffith or Mary Chapin Carpenter. Clark is not about poetry, irony and social commentary; she's about the sort of wise-cracking, in-your-face country-rockers that have traditionally been a male domain. When she tells an overeager lover to "Hold Your Horses," the grit in her voice implies that she's not opening negotiations but drawing a line in the sand. When she tells a new boyfriend about an old one on "Neon Flame," she doesn't bother to apologize or reassure; she laughingly dismisses the subject with a bouncy two-step beat and the drawling quip, "He ain't nothing to me." That drawl separates Clark from the pack of baby acts on Music Row and gives her a hard-core country identity. She's got that "Twang Thang," as she puts it on another song.

She has less luck with the ballads. "Keeper of the Flame" and the album's title track are pledges to love her man no matter how he responds, and they sound unconvincing coming from the same woman who sounds so self-assured and independent on the uptempo material.

On these numbers, the spunk and drawl go out of her voice, and the songs go sodden with sentimentality. Much better is "Any Woman," a ballad about the universal pain felt by every woman "who's been hurt by a man"; Clark reinforces the strong melody by lending comfort and support to her sisters in heartbreak.

Female solidarity is also the



subject of "Something in the Water," a song about how a group of friends will often all break up with their boy-friends at the same time.

Clark wrote or co-wrote eight of the 11 cuts on *Just the Same*, usually with Tom Shapiro or Chris Waters, and her character shines through. It's a feisty, down-to-earth, hillbilly personality that won't need oldies remakes or conventional ballads to hold our interest for years to come.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

## Three Hanks *Men with Broken Hearts* Curb D-77868

After Hank Williams died in 1953, his adoring, bereaved public clamored for more new recordings by their hero. To meet that demand, Hank's producer-mentor Fred Rose grabbed a number of demo recordings Hank made of his compositions, alone with acoustic guitar. To provide finished product for the future, Rose brought Hank's Drifting Cowboys back into the studio to overdub accompaniment.

In the mid-60's, some geniuses at MGM went further with the much-hated *Hank Williams With Strings* LP's, overlaying syrupy symphonics over his classics. Other LP's during that decade feature Hank Jr. singing overdub duets with his daddy.

Such gimmicks were only occasionally used by country artists until 1979, when Jim Reeves, dead 15 years, "dueted"

on three hit singles with the then-unknown Deborah Allen. Following that came the appallingly tacky manufactured 1981 Reeves-Patsy Cline duets, uniting in death two who never recorded together in life. These weren't quality recordings, merely technological stunts that charted due to media hype. Today, they're virtually forgotten.

In 1989, Hank Jr., backed by studio musicians, recorded an electronic duet with Daddy on the newly unearthed demo, "There's a Tear in My Beer." With it came a father-son video pairing the two Forrest Gump-style, using an enhanced 1952 Hank appearance on TV's *Kate Smith Show* (he was actually singing "Hey Good Lookin'"). It was clever but hardly a milestone, and it should have ended there.



It hasn't. Nashville loves "event" recordings teaming various stars, and loves stunts nearly as much. With Hank Jr. not exactly burning up the charts in recent years, guess what? It's stunt time again, folks. This time it's not two but three generations of Hanks: Senior, Junior and Bocephus' son Hank III, a.k.a. Shelton. At least "Tear in My Beer" had the angle of being a newly-discovered Hank Sr. demo.

*Three Hanks* is simply embarrassing. After years of proclaiming he wasn't gonna live in Daddy's shadow, Bocephus, aided by his son, does just that. The only serious music here comes in two solo performances: Hank Jr.'s dignified solo version of "Never Again (Will I Knock on Your Door)" and Hank

III's powerful performance of "Neath a Cold Gray Tomb of Stone."

As for the duets, each is an unmitigated disaster, and the technology is no help. Cut-ins of Hank Sr.'s low-fi vocals at lower volume create an effect so incredibly phony you have to hear it to believe how bad it is. It sounds as if Hank Sr. phoned his parts in—a bad connection. Neither Bocephus nor Hank III acquit themselves well vocally on these collaborations. "I'm a Long Gone Daddy," "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive" and "Honky Tonk Blues" are all appalling. On the latter, Hank Sr.'s voice is overwhelmed by obnoxious slide guitar, part of the modern, nauseatingly slick instrumental backing.

So horrid is the revamped Luke The Drifter recitation, "Men With Broken Hearts," beginning with Hank Sr. as Luke, then Bocephus, followed by Hank III, that it almost sounds like a spoof.

Singling out a particular performance as the worst is difficult, but a close contender would be Bocephus and Hank III joining Hank and Miss Audrey for a "duet" on "Where the Soul of Man Never Dies," taken from a 1949 radio transcription. At least they didn't opt to join Audrey on one of her own solo recordings, like "Parakeet Polka." The final track, Hank's original recording of Leon Payne's "Lost Highway," is carved into a nonsensical fillet.

Stated simply, nobody wins here. Too many have tinkered with Hank Senior's recorded legacy since he died, so he didn't need this. As for Bocephus, he ought to quit resting on his laurels (and *Monday Night Football* fame) and get back to creating the vital, visceral music he excelled at 15 years ago.

The only unscathed person here is Hank III, whose promising talents deserve exploration on a full-length album, not this overhyped, underwhelming Nashville studio stunt.

—RICH KIENZLE



# VIDEO BONANZA

## PART ONE

### TRAVIS TRITT

**Greatest Hits from the Beginning—50 mins.**

Along with exclusive, never-before-seen footage on this video are hits like "Country Club," "Here's a Quarter (Call Someone Who Cares)," "Can I Trust You with My Heart," "The Whiskey Ain't Workin'," "Help Me Hold On," "I-r-o-u-b-l-e," "Tell Me I Was Dreaming." Item No. V10P - \$19.95

### TOOTSIE'S ORCHID LOUNGE

**—60 mins.**  
Kris Kristofferson, Faron Young and others join host Willie Nelson for this all-star program celebrating Tootsie's famous Orchid Lounge, where a group of songwriters hung out together 30 years ago and penned some of America's most popular songs. Included is footage of Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Ray Price and others. Item No. V1N - \$19.95

### HIGHWAYMEN LIVE

**On the Road Again—60 mins.**  
Cash, Nelson, Kristofferson and Jennings are together on this European Tour. You'll meet them backstage, talking candidly about their lives and their music. Then you'll see them on stage from the opening bars of their theme song, "Highwayman," until the final chord of "On the Road Again." Item No. V2S - \$14.95

### WAYLON JENNINGS

**Lost Outlaw Performances—60 mins.**  
The master recording of this memorable concert was never released and had been forgotten in the vaults of RCA since 1978. Now we bring it to you in its entirety, as it was recorded on August 12, 1978, at the Grand Ole Opry. Here is the "Outlaw" period in all its glory, with eight Number One singles including "Luckenbach, Texas" and "Good Hearted Woman." Item No. V4D - \$19.95



### ALAN JACKSON

**Greatest Video Hits Collection—75 mins.**  
This new collection features 18 songs, including "Blue Blooded Woman," "Here in the Real World," "Wanted," "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," "Don't Rock the Jukebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "Chattahoochee," "Mercury Blues," "(Who Says) You Can't Have It All," "Tall, Tall Trees," "Summertime Blues," "Livin' on Love," "Gone Country," "Song for the Life" AND MORE! Item No. V10J - \$29.95

### ALAN JACKSON

**Livin', Lovin', and Rockin' That Jukebox—28 mins.**  
Here are seven Number One videos from two double platinum albums including "Don't Rock the Jukebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "She's Got the Rhythm (And I Got the Blues)," "Chattahoochee," "Mercury Blues" and "Tonight I Climbed the Wall." Item No. V6K - \$19.95

### MARTY STUART

**Honky Tonk—25 mins.**  
Marty's most recent home video features six songs including "Cry, Cry, Cry," "Hillbilly Rock," "Little Things," "Tempted," "Now That's Country," "Hey Baby" and "Kiss Me, I'm Gone." Item No. V6M - \$14.95

### DON WILLIAMS

**Video Collection Vol. 1: Echoes—55 mins.**  
Here are 14 of Don's personal favorite songs, including "Good Ole Boys Like Me," "The Ties That Bind," "That's the Thing About Love," "Till the Rivers All Run Dry," "It Must Be Love," "I'm Just a Country Boy" AND MORE! Item No. V10E - \$19.95

### SECOND FIDDLE TO A STEEL GUITAR

**—107 mins.**  
Second Fiddle to a Steel Guitar is a rare production featuring 17 old-time artists and 30 great songs including "Born to Lose," "Jambalaya," "Hello Walls," "Don't Let Me Cross Over" and "Two Worlds Collide." You'll see stars like Lefty Frizzell, Dottie West, Bill Monroe, Webb Pierce, Faron Young, Minnie Pearl and others, both on-stage and backstage. Item No. V7E - \$29.95

### LORETTA LYNN

**Honky Tonk Hit—60 mins.**  
This personal portrait follows Loretta from rural Kentucky to the clubs of the Northwest, from her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry to the 1970's Country Music Entertainer of the Decade. This video features never-seen home movies and photos and over 20 songs and performances. Item No. V8A - \$24.95

### GEORGE JONES

**Same Ole Me—60 mins.**  
They call him "Possum." They also call him "Country Music's Living Legend." *Same Ole Me* is the story of George Jones, finally told his way with the help of such great stars as Roy Acuff, Loretta Lynn and Johnny Cash. It includes hits like "He Stopped Loving Her Today," "Bartender's Blues," "The Race Is On," "She Thinks I Still Care," "White Lightning," "Why Baby Why" and "Some Day My Day Will Come." Item No. G4Z - \$19.95

### GEORGE JONES

**Live in Tennessee—34 mins.**  
Taped live from the Knoxville Civic Coliseum, George thrills the audience with 15 of his biggest hits including "I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair" and the Number One country song of all time, "He Stopped Loving Her Today." There's also "The Race Is On," "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes," "Bartender's Blues," "One Woman Man" AND MORE! Item No. V1X - \$24.95

### GEORGE JONES

**Golden Hits—50 mins.**  
This most recent video presents George Jones talking about his greatest hit songs and performing these songs at the time each one was released. We're taken into a time capsule that allows us to experience the career of this "living legend" as it unfolds. Some of the 14 songs are "White Lightning" (2/9/59), "Near You" (12/11/76) and "He Stopped Loving Her Today" (4/12/80). Item No. V3T - \$19.95

### VINCE GILL

**I Still Believe in You—24 mins.**  
Vince Gill has joined the esteemed ranks of country's premier entertainers. Now you can enjoy this popular star on his only home 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



### REBA M'ENTIRE

**Live—60 mins.**  
This new video includes "Respect," "Is There Life Out There," "The Greatest Man I Never Knew," "Walk On," "For My Broken Heart," "Why Haven't I Heard From You," "Does He Love You" (with Linda Davis), "Take It Back," "Till You Love Me" and "Fancy." Item No. V10X - \$24.95

### WEBB PIERCE

**Greatest Hits—52 mins.**  
Before his death, Webb personally created a compilation of his greatest hits from rare filmed performances, narrating and providing background on the songs, their writers and their origins. This unique video contains 17 of Webb's favorite hits including "There Stands the Glass," "I Ain't Never," "Rocky Top," "Someday," "Tupelo County Jail," "Wondering," "More and More," "Slowly," "Take the Time It Takes," "It's Been So Long" and "In the Jailhouse Now." Item No. V2R - \$19.95

### TAMMY WYNETTE

**In Concert—60 mins.**  
This re-release features 24 hits including the classic "Stand By Your Man" and "D-I-V-O-R-C-E." "Take Me to Your World," "I Don't Want to Play House" and "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad." Item No. G1F - \$19.95

### ROY CLARK

**Live From Branson—60 mins.**  
Roy Clark Live From Branson finally brings you the show that has been the hottest ticket on the Branson strip for the past few years. Roy brings you such hits as "The Tips of My Fingers," "Thank God and Greyhound," "Under the Double Eagle," "We Got Love," "Oh Lonesome Me," "Riders in the Sky" AND MUCH MORE! Item No. V21C - \$29.95

### SHANIA TWAIN

**The Woman in Me—25 mins.**  
This new video includes "The Woman in Me (Needs the Man in You)," "Any Man of Mine," "Whose Bed Have Your Boots Been Under," "You Lay a Whole Lot of Love on Me," "Dance with the One That Brought You" and "What Made You Say That." Item No. V10M - \$14.95

### COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**—90 mins.**  
Yesterday's legends, today's brightest superstars. For one magical night, they share the spotlight of country music's greatest spectacular—the Country Music Hall of Fame 25th Anniversary Celebration. There are classic Hank Williams favorites performed by Alan Jackson, Randy Travis and Tanya Tucker. Clint Black sings and plays the guitar of Jimmie Rodgers...Emmylou Harris, Patty Loveless and Pam Tillis pay tribute to Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn and Kitty Wells...and so much more. Item No. V10Y - \$19.95

### DWIGHT YOAKAM

**Just Lookin' for a Hit—30 mins.**  
Dwight's first video features hits like "Honky Tonk Man," "Guitars, Cadillacs," "Streets of Bakersfield" and "Long White Cadillac," plus an interview and performance footage from the I.R.S. label production, "The Cutting Edge." Item No. G1E - \$19.95

### DWIGHT YOAKAM

**Pieces of Time—40 mins.**  
Dwight's latest video features 11 songs, including "Suspicious Minds," "The Heart That You Own," "Turn It On, Turn It Up, Turn Me Loose," "Takes a Lot to Rock You," "You're the One," "Ain't That Lonely Yet" AND MORE! Item No. V9P - \$19.95

### THE STATLER BROS.

**What We Love to Do—40 mins.**  
Celebrating their 31st anniversary, The Statlers released this video featuring "Elizabeth," "My Only Love," "What We Love to Do," "Atlanta Blue," "Maple Street Memories," "Sweeter and Sweeter," "You've Been Like a Mother to Me," "Let's Get Started" AND MORE! Item No. V6A - \$19.95

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# COUNTRY MUSIC

*Times may have changed, but Dolly's still the same. Still larger than life, still self-effacing, and still a great country music singer. No matter how many entertainment worlds she may conquer, Dolly's singing and songwriting are her passion. Convincing radio to play her music, however, is another matter indeed.*

## *Hello Dolly, Again*

**Y**ou want desperation?  
We got desperation: "I swear, Michael, I am desperate..."  
You want obsession?  
We got obsession: "I can't stop. That's what I mean—I'm so serious..."  
You want angst?  
We got angst: "What can I do? Somebody tell me—I'd be happy to do it if they'd tell me what they wanted me to do..."  
You want truth? You want passion? You want talent? You want controversy? Heck, you want lust?  
Hey, we got Dolly, and Dolly is always...Dolly.  
"You know the new country artists?" Dolly is saying. She's wearing a miniskirt and a frighteningly low-cut top, leaning over the conference table and gesturing with her hands. Using a Herculean act of will, I keep my eyes focused rigidly on her blue eyes. "Well, I think they're a pretty clean group. They're nice; they're courteous. I think they love the fans as much as us Old People..."—she pointedly includes me in the "Old People" group—"...You know how everybody used to go to Fan Fair and sit and sign autographs? Well, the new people do, too. So I have to honestly say they're not an arrogant bunch. And they're not a bunch of dopers. But it might be nice if one of them got drunk once in a while."  
Dolly gestures theatrically, her hands in the air. So there.  
"And, another thing..."

The single greatest thing about Dolly Parton is that, no matter how far she might wander, she is incapable of being anyone but Dolly Parton. Smart, funny, disarmingly honest, as quick and as sharp as a razor, spectacularly talented, all packaged in this incredible Barbie doll body. She is one of the tiny handful of artists of any sort to reach single-name icon status and is, arguably, one of the most well-known American women in the world. Say "Dolly" just about anywhere the long tendrils of the media reach, and there's no question about who you're referring to. In a journey far more incredible than any television writers could have concocted, Dolly Parton has made her way from the Smoky Mountains into American Myth, with her honesty and her sense of humor intact.

So why can't she get her records played?  
"You want to know how frustrated I am, Michael?" says Dolly, complete with hand gestures. "You know what I did? I bought my hometown radio station, WFTV, and now the FM is WDOY. It's the smallest station in the world. Plus, I started my own label, Blue Eye Records. So, I said, I got my own label now, I got my own radio station. I can damn sure guarantee I'm going to get some radio play, even if it's on my own station and on my own label. That's having to stretch pretty far, but at least they'll play me in my home town. How desperate can you get? I had to buy my own station and start my own label to get a record played."

*By Michael Bane*



*"I can't stop writing songs. That's what I mean—I am so serious. If people really knew how serious I was about my music...I do still write like I'm hungry, I still sing like I'm hungry, and I am hungry. I'm hungry for that part of the business that is so totally me, which is the music."*

Actually, this interview was supposed to be about Dolly's new album, *Treasures*, which is an eclectic collection of Dolly's favorite songs. *Treasures* is, in fact, a brilliant album that reflects Dolly's wide-ranging musical interests, from the hard country of "Don't Let Me Cross Over" to her fascination with pop ("Walking on Sunshine") to the whacked 1960's mysticism of Neil Young's classic "After the Goldrush." And, to be fair, Dolly always tries to stay on track. It's just that, well, Dolly is Dolly.

I tell her I like the record.

"Oh, great, you like these songs because you're an old codger, too," she begins. "We remember. That's one of the reasons I did this record, 'cause I knew the people like you and me that do remember these great songs will appreciate hearing them again. As for the new country listeners and fans, these are great songs, and they'll be brand new to them."

That's about as close as Dolly gets to Baseline Normal. She quickly drifts into a Dolly Story (which have always seemed to me to come from a slightly alternative universe, maybe Dolly World, where everything was just a tiny bit...skewed). We're talking about Neil Young's "After the Goldrush," for instance...

"I loved that song from the day I heard it on Neil's record. Then that girl *a cappella* group, Prelude, came out with it. And

I loved it then, and I just remembered thinking all of the things I thought it meant—the song was so visual. And I thought, 'What does that song mean?' I just thought it meant everything..."

*Well I dreamed I saw the silver spaceships flying  
In the yellow haze of the sun  
There were children crying and colors flying  
All around the chosen ones  
All in a dream  
All in a dream  
The loading had begun  
Flying Mother Nature's silver seed  
To a new home in the sun...*

"...And I thought, well, I'll interpret it like the Second Coming, or an invasion of the aliens, or whatever. And so when I took the song to the Trio project—me, Linda [Ronstadt] and Emmylou [Harris]—and it was one of the songs...we all took our own suggestions and batch of songs. They both knew the song and had worked with Neil. So we did cut it, although that Trio album's never going to come out because it died on the vine. But we did cut the whole album, and then Linda put "Goldrush" in her album right after that, which didn't do anything. But I just still felt so strong about that song. And so, anyway, when we were doing the Trio album, I asked Linda and Emmy what it meant, and they didn't know. So we called Neil Young, and he didn't know. We asked him, flat out, what it meant, and he said, 'Hell, I don't know. I just wrote it. It just depends on what I was taking at the time. I guess every verse had something different I'd taken.' So when I did it, I thought, well, if Neil can't interpret it, then I'm just going to make it my own. So in this version, I put it in the 21st century. When I said 'something about a king' instead of 'something about a queen,' I thought that could be Jesus and the Second Coming. And then, at the end, when I talk about the space people, I was thinking that the Mayans always said they'd be coming back like in 2011, so I thought, well, the 21st century, that's when something is going to happen. So I thought, well, I'd put it over in the 21st century. I don't know. What do you think the song's about?"

I confess that, as much as I loved "After the Goldrush," I'd never even thought about the Mayans.

"Well, I do," Dolly starts right back, "because I'm a writer, and I just kept trying to think about what Neil meant. I just loved the song. But when I first heard it, you know, when he says, 'I was lying in a burned-out basement,' I just saw the Second World War. I just saw buildings and burned-out cities—I saw every kind of thing, and I thought, 'What does that song mean?' I guess it was the acid."

In Dolly World, this is the equivalent of a "yes" answer. But in Dolly World, this isn't unusual, either. There's a rhythm to being around Dolly Parton, as if she has her own gravity field—no jokes here—which pulls you right out of your own orbit and into her larger-than-life world. Part of that gravity field is Dolly's *Southernness*, the sense of extended family that those of us born and raised in Tennessee carry

**Dolly has a story for every song on her new album. Here with John Popper, who added his blues harmonica to "Today I Started Loving You Again," and below, with John Sebastian, who joined her on another track.**





with us like the proverbial torch. Sadly, it's a torch that's flickering badly as the South metamorphs into Everywhere Else, no longer the separate place that it has been for the last, say, 130 years. I think the secret of that Southernness is not that Southerners are more friendly than people from other areas, but that they are more willing to simply open the door to their lives and let you step in for a few minutes. Rather than addressing comments directly to you, it's more like you've joined a show already in progress.

Another compartment of that Southernness is the acceptance of a landscape that's not totally based in objective reality. The Southern landscape used to be fraught with strangeness—all of us had our "touched" aunts and uncles, graveyards with our personal "haints," strange tales and mythologies that followed us throughout our lives. The result of this whacked-out landscape is that the South, long considered the most conservative area in the country, is amazingly accepting of eccentricities, whether they're self-destructive or not. And our chosen way of dealing with this gothic landscape was humor.

"Well, this is a funny story, Michael," Dolly says. "I did 'Peace Train' on the album. I've always loved Cat Stevens, and I always loved that song. I always intended to record that song someday, and I thought, 'Well, this is a great time, the shape the world's in.' So when we were working on the album, I was trying to think of what group would I like to have sing with me, what people would I like to have on this cut. I wanted something universal, you know. A choir sound, but *different*, you know?"

"So I was watching TV, and I saw a Lifesavers commercial—I heard these voices singing, and they had that real quiver, just like my voice, with all that emotion. That singing reminded me of Cat Stevens' kind of quivery voice, and my own quivery voice with all the vibrato. So I got up from my chair where I was watching TV, and I called Steve Buckingham, who produced the album. I said, 'Steve, I don't know who it is, but whoever's singing the Lifesavers commercial, find out tomorrow, because that's who I want on 'Peace Train.' So he called me back and said, 'You're not going to believe who's singing.' I said, 'Who?' 'Ladysmith Black Mambazo,' he said. 'You know who that is?' I said, 'Ain't that that group Paul Simon brought over from South Africa?' Anyhow, that's who we used, and I thought that is perfect, because that's what I wanted—that universal sound. So anyway, I just thought it fit, and then when they were singing in Zulu, it kind of reminded me of back home when I grew up in the Holy Roller church—people talking in tongues. I started singing my little part at the end, when they were singing in Zulu...I felt like they were talking in tongues, and I was back in church. I said, 'Bless them, Lord. Whatever they're saying, bless them.'"

Dolly has a story for every song on the *Treasures* album—"Some people might say one or two are out of character, but I tried to Dollyize 'em all...." But then, I suspect that



**Ladysmith Black Mombazo was just right for "Peace Train." Bluegrasser Alison Krauss took part in one of Dolly's all-time favorites, "After the Goldrush." David Hidalgo of Los Lobos, below, came for a Freddy Fender classic.**



Dolly has a story for each and every song she's ever sung or written. She flickers back and forth between Hollywood icon and starstruck mountain girl, tells of movie flops and breathless trips to the old Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Nashville with the same equitable humor.

I want to make a couple of points clear here. Most celebrities, whether they're from the music business or movies or even sports, turn their pasts, their personal stories, into commodities, little pieces of eight to be bartered away at the interview table or while the cameras are rolling. But (and I'm as shocked by this as anybody) it's been exactly 20 years since the first time I sat down at an interview table with Dolly Parton—and that's a lot of Dolly Stories. I have always had the sense that Dolly tells her stories with such glee and such reverence both because she is a songwriter—and I suspect that songwriters see their story/songs in everything around them—and because it is the only way, the most Southern way, to hold onto pieces of a life that must fly by with numbing speed.

"We were talking about country music," Dolly says. "Well, I love it. I do other things, but that's my roots; it's my soul. I never go away from country and country music, but I have tried. But I am glad I have different things to work here and there. Because, like I said, before I crossed over, when I was be-





ing so totally true to country music, I wasn't making a dime. I couldn't even buy panty hose hardly. Because I had a bus on the road, and a band, and trying to pay bills, and trying to buy a house, and trying to keep a car, and I was going broke. People thought I was just rolling in the dough, because I was having all these chart records, Number One records, 'Coat of Many Colors,' 'I Will Always Love You' and 'Jolene.' You know what? 'I Will Always Love You' sold 100,000 copies, and 'Jolene' sold 60,000 copies. 'Coat of Many Colors' didn't even sell that. I was starving. And I thought, I know I'm better than that. I know that I'm good enough to make a living at this. God would want me to make some money. I thought, what am I going to have to do? So I thought, I'm going to broaden my appeal. I'm going to have to cross over—try to get into bigger television, stuff like that. I made that choice, Michael, and I got crucified—as you remember—at the time. People thought I'd made a major mistake. But if I hadn't of done that, I wouldn't have any money now. Because I've done the other stuff...if I hadn't of made that move then, I wouldn't have the money now. Because I certainly wouldn't be making enough on country radio and in country music to make a living now, would I? 'Cause I ain't had no hits."

This single fact gnaws away at Dolly Parton, because, at her very heart, she is a singer and songwriter—remember, "I Will Always Love You," a modest country hit for Dolly, became the single best-selling pop song in history for Whitney Houston. And Dolly acknowledges that her song catalog is amazingly lucrative. (No doubt in the first years AW, After Whitney, most of the women singers in Los Angeles were probably mining the substantial Dolly Archives). It's not about money; believe me, if you happen to write the best-selling pop song of all time, you're not going to have to worry about where the next bologna and cheese sandwich is coming from. But what she wants—after the

movies, after the television shows, after pop stardom, after gossip mags, plastic surgery, Beverly Hills, Dollywood, whatever—is a hit country record.

"I can't stop writing songs. That's what I mean—I am so serious," Dolly says. "If people really knew how serious I was about my music...I do still write like I'm hungry; I still sing like I'm hungry; and I am hungry. I'm hungry for that part of the business that is so totally me, which is the music. It was my songs, and my singing, that brought me out of the Smoky Mountains, that really built the bridge into all of the other worlds that I've been in and live in. It was all built with songs. It was all built with the songs I write. As long as I'm living, I will always wish that I could write and sing and have it accepted—and have it played somewhere. But it is frustrating. You don't know hardly what to do. But like I said, it's not the money I need now, because I'm making a living doing other stuff. I've made more money doing outside things than I do with my music, which is unfortunate. Like I said, it's still the music that built the bridges, but...I'm still hungry, you know?"

She shakes her head in disgust.

"I swear, Michael, I've tried everything," she says. "I even tried hanging onto the coattails of Billy Ray Cyrus, Tanya Tucker and Pam Tillis. Hell, I've tried everything to get a record played on the radio, and I just can't hardly do it. But I knew what I was doing. At least I fessed up to it, and said what I was doing. I kept thinking, maybe that'll do it. That didn't do it either. So I don't know what to do."

The *Treasures* album?

"Because it's something I feel like doing," she says. "These are great songs. It's a good time to do it, because, chances are, radio is not going to play any new and original things I'm doing. They didn't play the last two albums. People are excited about the new record here. And I think it's a really good album. I think it's done really well. I just hope my performance is good enough to be played, but we'll just have to see."

In the meanwhile, her new television series is grinding toward completion. She first mentioned it to me almost three years ago. The series, which is based on a song Dolly wrote called "Minding My Own Business," will debut in January, after a Christmas television movie titled *Unlikely Angel*, which follows a television special on the making of the *Treasures* album. The woman does know how to work.

"The series had to be right," she says. "Because you've got to feel that the show is right before you go on, because I had that big ole flop with that variety show. I didn't want to go on again without being a little better prepared. At least, I'll be able to handle it a little better if this one goes down the tubes, because I'll know with all this preparation, if don't work...well, we gave it a shot. It's cute; it's fun; we'll see how it goes."

But about songwriting, Dolly begins again. In addition to knowing how to work, she also knows how to be persistent.

"It's like, what do I have to do?" she says. "What can I do? Somebody tell me—I'd be happy to do it, if they'd tell me what they wanted me to do...I mean, I write all the time. It's like, I see it, I feel it, and it's like, oh, please, let me do what I do best, and accept it. Maybe one of these days I'll just say to hell with trying to be commercial, to hell with trying to see whether the songs are going to get played. Just do whatcha you do...Go do your TV shows, go do your movies, go do your stuff. And write, and write, and write, and put it down. And when you think it's right, put it out whatever it is.

"But at least they'll play me in my hometown." ■

**Adding to her *Treasures* is Raul Malo for a Carl Butler oldie. Steve Buckingham produced the album on Dolly's own Blue Eye label. Here they take a break with John Sebastian.**







World Radio History

**DIAMOND RIO**

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1997



PULL-OUT  
CENTERFOLD  
OF THE MONTH

# DIAMOND RIO

## Facts of Life

### Personal Data

#### Marty Roe—Lead Singer

*Birthdate:* December 28  
*Birthplace:* Lebanon, Ohio  
*Residence:* Nashville, Tennessee  
*Family:* wife Robin, daughters Isabella and Sara  
*Height:* 6'1"  
Brown hair/brown eyes  
*Hobbies:* Golf, fishing, racing (Legend cars)  
*Influences:* father Zane Roe, mother Bertie Roe, Marty Robbins, Merle Haggard

#### Jimmy Olander—Lead Guitarist

*Birthdate:* August 26  
*Birthplace:* Minneapolis, Minnesota  
*Residence:* Franklin, Tennessee  
*Family:* wife Claudia  
*Height:* 6'1"  
Salt & pepper hair/brown eyes  
*Hobbies:* Power walking, racquet ball and weight training  
*Influences:* Earl Scruggs, Leon Rhodes and Clarence White

#### Gene Johnson—Mandolinist and Vocalist

*Birthdate:* August 10  
*Birthplace:* Jamestown, New York  
*Residence:* Franklin, Tennessee  
*Family:* wife June, children Callie, Joe and Mattie  
*Height:* 6'1"  
Brown hair/blue eyes  
*Hobbies:* Carpentry, old tools, shooting (shotguns and rifles), old instruments, fine ales and wines  
*Influences:* Early country and bluegrass and "all the great artists I've played with."

#### Brian Prout—Drummer

*Birthdate:* December 4  
*Birthplace:* Troy, New York  
*Residence:* Nashville, Tennessee  
*Family:* Single, no children  
*Height:* 5'9"  
Blonde hair/blue eyes  
*Hobbies:* Snow skiing, bicycling, golf, "driving out in the country with the top down on my jeep."  
*Influences:* "Every member of my family."



Diamond Rio includes (left to right, front) Dan Truman, Marty Roe, Brian Prout and (left to right, rear) Gene Johnson, Dana Williams and Jimmy Olander.

#### Dana Williams—Bassist and Vocalist

*Birthdate:* May 22  
*Birthplace:* Dayton, Ohio  
*Residence:* Nashville, Tennessee  
*Family:* wife Lisa  
*Height:* 6'1"  
Brown hair/blue eyes  
*Hobbies:* Radio control airplanes, scuba diving, boating and water skiing  
*Influences:* Osborne Brothers, Elvis Presley, Ronnie Milsap and Merle Haggard

#### Dan Truman—Keyboardist

*Birthdate:* August 29  
*Birthplace:* Flagstaff, Arizona  
*Residence:* Goodlettsville, Tennessee  
*Family:* wife Wendee, children Ben, Chad, Casey and McKenzie  
*Height:* 6'3"  
Brown hair/blue eyes  
*Hobbies:* Kids, baseball, baseball cards and jazz  
*Influences:* Chicago, Earth Wind and Fire, David Foster, Jay Graydon and Herbie Hancock

### Recording Career

*Record Label:* Arista Records, 7 Music Circle North, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

Albums	Release Date
<i>Diamond Rio</i>	1991
<i>Close to the Edge</i>	1992
<i>Love a Little Stronger</i>	1994
<i>IV</i>	1996

#### Number One Singles

"Norma Jean Riley"  
"Meet in the Middle"  
"In a Week or Two"  
"Love a Little Stronger"  
"Walkin' Away"

#### Awards

ACM Top Vocal Group 1991, 1992  
CMA Vocal Group of the Year 1992, 1993, 1994  
Radio & Records Readers Poll Group of the Year 1992, 1993, 1995  
Five Grammy nominations

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HighTone execs and stars: Dave Alvin, Bruce Bromberg, Big Sandy, Larry Sloven and Chris Gaffney.

# The HighTone Story

*Love of country music—and a true commitment to it—turned a one-time reissue label into one of the most respected independent record labels in the country field. ▲ By Patrick Carr*

**I**n a diner on a highway out of Austin, Texas, a pale, intense little guy with a cowboy/carny look—sort of an updated, down-marketed Waylon Jennings '69, all denim and tattoos and hair oil—is stabbing his finger at a photo in the new *Illustrated History of Country Music*: Marty Robbins slouched disconsolately in a littered Ryman Auditorium close to midnight in March 1974, after the Grand Ole Opry's last performance in the historic former Tabernacle. The following night the Opry would leave old Nashville for its brand spanking new home in far-suburban Opryland.

"That right there, right *then*, that's when it all started to slip away," says the guy, Dale Watson, who among other things is one of modern country music's greatest bright hopes. "That's when the soul and the spirit started going out of it." He flips back a few *Illustrated History* pages—to Hank Snow, Ernest Tubb, Connie Smith, Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn—and then forward to John Denver, Olivia Newton-John, Kenny Rogers, Lee Greenwood, Eddie Rabbitt...

His point is made, and he's right about the time frame: the mid-1970's *were* when pop music began its rush towards country, and country singers who didn't scramble aboard the bandwagon began finding good work hard to get. Moreover,

the oft-used image of the Opry's owners substituting an artificial, tourist-pleasing version of country culture for the real thing, Disney-style, has true power and meaning: the shift to Opryland was indeed symbolic of a swerve towards new styles and customers, and away from old friends and values, across the entire landscape of the country music business. Looking back at the music itself, in fact, the loss of "soul and spirit" in the mid-70's was so dramatic that it had the catastrophic completeness of a massive hemorrhage, as if someone—Who? Some gang of strangers?—had snuck up and slashed Nashville's throat. It became very hard indeed for any singer with real depth and genuine country credentials to get arrested on Music Row.

The results were distressing from anything but a profiteering point of view. Virtually the only positive effect, and that a cold-comfort kind of affair, was that the mainstream's embrace of mass-pop goals created opportunities for smaller operators elsewhere. Sadly, it became possible for small, independent record labels to sign up the world's best country singers for a song.

For quite a while, nobody seemed interested. Then came Dale Watson's "damn fine label," HighTone Records of Oakland, California.





Folk/rocker Tom Russell and contemporary throwback Heather Myles found a home on HighTone.

Dave Alvin's HighTone debut came in 1990.



**H**ighTone's story is an odd one. For one thing, the original idea, back in '83, was to launch a little label to reissue out-of-print country records, but that didn't work out, and instead HighTone became renowned for producing new music and breaking new ground. Then too, it wasn't in country that the label scored its first home run, but in blues with young Robert Cray, whose success became the lightning rod of the contemporary blues revival. That's what turned a part-time sideline into a full-time job for HighTone co-founders Larry Sloven and Bruce Bromberg.

Bromberg and Sloven were your classic, old-style record guys: Bromberg a promotion man for the independent Tomato blues label with five years at RCA's Los Angeles operation under his belt, Sloven working in distribution for Pacific Record and Tape, both of them ardent

fans of American roots music. Sloven, whose Southern California youth included a thorough education in R&B, had picked up a love for country music in college, progressing from Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen and The Byrds' *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album to Merle Haggard. Bromberg, who had grown up outside Chicago in "a real *Happy Days* kind of place," was a country fan from the get-go.

"In that area you could get XERF from Del Rio. WSM from Nashville every night, and the *Louisiana Hayride* on Saturdays," he remembers, "and then of course on the other end of the dial you had your blues staff. So that was my education. My first thing was country: Hank Williams, Webb Pierce, Carl Smith, Lefty Frizzell—and we had a pretty good local scene. The first show I ever drove myself to, in '58, was Don Gibson, The Everly Brothers, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison and Warren Smith, all in one

afternoon—Roy Orbison featuring yellowish-red hair in those days—and before I could drive, I used to make my dad take me. I saw The Wilburn Brothers, Marvin Rainwater, Marty Robbins, Homer & Jethro, Pee Wee King..."

Bromberg and Larry Sloven's meeting was "just a fluke," as Bromberg recalls. Sloven just happened to be the Pacific Record and Tape's rep assigned to drive Bromberg around Los Angeles when Bromberg visited on Tomato Records business, and the two hit it off. "Larry put a tape in his machine in the car, I think it was Rockpile or something like that, and asked me, 'What do you think of this?' I said, 'Well, I think it's okay, but I've heard the original version of the song by Rockin' Sidney, and I'm more used to that.' So then he put in this other tape, and it was, like, Wynn Stewart. I said, 'Now you're talkin'!' And we got to be friends. When I was in California, we'd get together and go to Merle Haggard concerts."

Eventually, Sloven persuaded Bromberg into partnership with him and Dennis Walker to launch HighTone. Walker pulled out in 1987, leaving Bromberg to focus on the production/A&R side of HighTone and Sloven on the business.

Their first country artist was Bobby Durham, a fine singer/songwriter from Oildale, California, who'd worked with Buck Owens and had several Capitol singles in his own right. His HighTone album, *Where I Grew Up*, was well worth anyone's attention, but it didn't get it. It might in fact be fair to say that it vanished virtually without trace.

Not so the next few HighTone releases. First came the redoubtable Joe Ely's *Lord of the Highway*, his first album after several years in recording limbo. Next was a new voice for many of us, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, whose wonderful *Fair & Square* delivered on the promise of his early work with Ely and Butch Hancock in The Flatlanders, and became one of the all-time classics of the country/folk genre. Then, just in case we needed any more persuasion that *somebody* out there in record-land gave a damn, Bromberg and Sloven fired Gary Stewart back up.

Stewart at his peak, in the mid-1970's on RCA, had been among the four or five greatest male country singers of his day—right up there with Waylon Jennings, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash and George Jones—and the return of his brilliant, raging, swamp rock-honky tonk spirit was an unexpected thrill of the first order. Furthermore, HighTone did him right by having Roy Dea, his mentor during his RCA years, handle the production of *Brand New*. (Subsequently the label released two more new Stewart/Dea albums; compiled the wonderful *Gary's Greatest* from his RCA material; and reissued his *Out of Hand*, surely one of the best country albums ever recorded.)

The gathering of Ely, Gilmore and Stewart on one label was part design, part accident. As Bromberg recalls, "That came in the wake of Robert Cray's big hit, when all of a sudden we were quite healthy financially. We had a list of people we'd love to get, and three I can remember were Gary Stewart, Joe Ely and Delbert McClinton. We got two of 'em. We tried to get Delbert, but they blew us off. So we had Joe, and that was very exciting, and when we met Joe, Jimmie was just kind of around, and Mike Crowley, who was then Joe's manager—now he's Jimmie's manager—showed me some video of him. I said, 'Oh, man! Let's do this, too!' We did it just 'cause we could."



Having done well relighting old fires, Sloven's and Bromberg's next move was to light some new ones. *Points West: New Horizons in Country Music*, released in 1990, combined tracks from the Ely, Stewart and Gilmore albums with work by musicians new to the national scene: Heather Myles, Buddy Miller, Ted Roddy and The Talltops and The Lonesome Strangers. All these acts were at least as interesting as their major-label contemporaries—Ted Roddy a gitty, third-generation rockabilly, The Lonesome Strangers an energetic country/rock/swing outfit with echoes of Foster & Lloyd and The BoDeans in their sound—but the two solo singer/songwriters, Myles and Miller, were truly outstanding.

Buddy Miller, originally from Ohio, had run his own band in New York (with Shawn Colvin singing) and worked as a duo with Jim Lauderdale in California before moving to Nashville with his wife, singer/songwriter Julie Miller. His two classically country-emotional tracks on *Points West* were a tempting foretaste of his first solo album, 1995's *Your Love and Other Lies*, made in his home studio with help from friends like Lucinda Williams and Emmylou Harris (whose band he joined recently), and released in 1995. Miller began his career in bluegrass, and is a diehard fan of Nashville's old masters, particularly Porter Wagoner, and so his songs, though quite contemporary in most stylistic aspects, visit depths of feeling not often explored by his contemporaries on Music Row.

Heather Myles is another great contemporary throwback. Singing in what critic Paul Kingsbury described as "a voice that recalls Jean Shepard for its dusting of honest grit," she made music that "harked back effortlessly to the sounds of West Coast country, circa 1955." From the first note she sang on the *Points West* album, it was obvious that here was another Kelly Willis or Jann Browne or Joy Lynn White, a new female country singer of superb quality and utter distinctiveness, one of her generation's natural successors to Tammy, Dolly, Connie and Loretta. As with those great ladies, you could never mistake Heather Myles' voice for anyone else's.

At first it seemed that her tenure at HighTone would be brief, for surely a major label would snap her up (which was what she wanted, and Sloven and Bromberg wanted for her), but to her and HighTone's great disappointment, that never happened. Utter distinctiveness, it seems, is a career inhibitor in country's new age of sonic regimentation. These days Ms. Myles is directing her efforts at mainstream acceptance via Rounder Records, Alison Krauss' home base, leaving behind two wonderful HighTone albums, *Just Like Old Times* and *Untamed*.

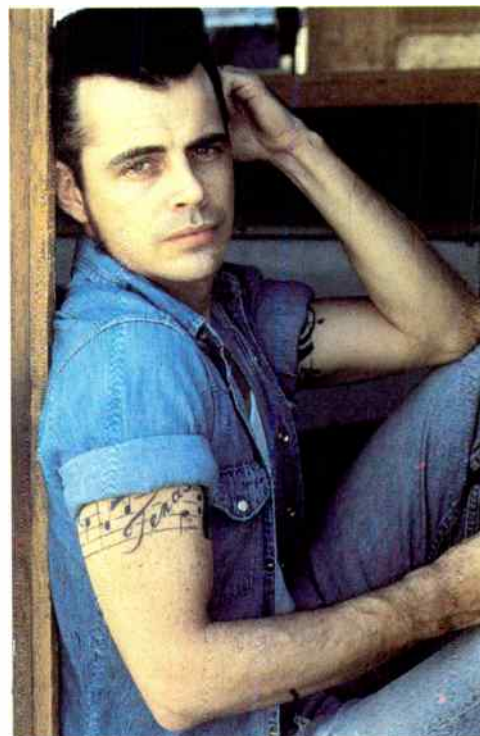
It was in the year of *Points West* that *Country Music* writers and other hard-core tune addicts woke up to the fact that the HighTone label was something really special. Great stuff just kept coming: the Rev. Billy C. Wirtz's gloriously demented *Deep Fried and Sanctified*; the first HighTone album by Dave Alvin, who'd been the creative heart of The Blasters (surely the most satisfying band in the roots/rock pantheon, even if they didn't last long); *After the Farm*, the debut of the fabulous Rosie Flores; Australian aboriginal singer/songwriter Archie Roach's *Charcoal Lane*; Chris Gaffney's *Mi Vida Loca*; a whole slew of fine electric blues albums from Johnny Shines, Otis Rush, Eddie Taylor, Joe Louis

Walker and others; a couple of truly essential rockabilly pieces from veterans Billy Lee Riley and Sonny Burgess (the latter with Dave Alvin); a new album from Dick Dale, hailed quite correctly as the "King of the Surf Guitar" since he first took to twangin' and thrangin' in the early 60's; and so on in an accelerating, increasingly invigorating flow. For those of us whose work is music, the occasional sight of the HighTone logo in the daily cascade of new 'product' became a real thrill. You just never knew what truly cool new sounds were about to enter your musical universe.

That's still the way it is.

In the last couple of years HighTone has introduced us to a wonderful variety of acts from the creative fringes of music around the world: The Loved Ones, an unlikely but very nicely energized Bay Area band reviving the British Mod sound (and style) of the 60's, which itself was a twist on American R&B; Mint Juleps, a wildly original *a cappella* outfit built around a family of four young black women from East London; and, from the alternative world in which boys and girls from urban/suburban backgrounds have grown up to love real country music and play it pretty damn well, a trio of stylish, heartfelt bands comprising The Carpetbaggers from Minneapolis, Wagon from St. Louis, and an assemblage of talented eccentrics from (mostly) Los Angeles and England who call themselves Big Sandy and His Fly-Rite Boys. HighTone has also seen fit to sign Tom Russell, the veteran folk/rocker whose stature approaches that of Dave Alvin, and Chris Smither, the New Orleans blues-based singer/songwriter/guitarist who's been making increasingly worthy small-label albums since 1971. And last year's outstanding *Tulare Dust* album, in which great songwriters as diverse as Ely, Alvin, Russell, Peter Case, Lucinda Williams, Billy Joe Shaver, Dwight Yoakam, Steve Young and Iris DeMent interpreted their favorite Merle Haggard songs, was also a HighTone product.

Altogether, then, the HighTone catalog, all of it still available now and for the foreseeable future, is a pretty concentrated dose of high-grade music, the country collection being particularly rich. Stewart, Ely, Myles, Dale Watson and all the others—just add a name here (Steve Earle? Vern Gosdin?) and a name there (Kelly Willis? Jann Browne?), and you've got a roster that could save the soul of country music, guaranteed. A roster like *that* could get any major-label Vice President in Nashville, no

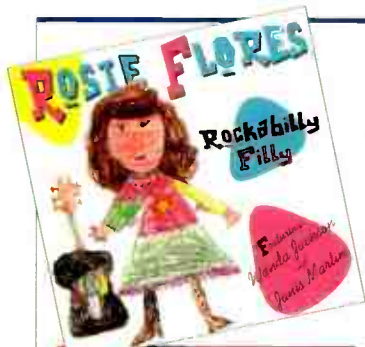


**Dale Watson—  
a great bright  
hope, also on  
HighTone.**

**HighTone's  
originality  
showed in these  
two albums, one  
looking forward,  
the other back.**







**Rosie Flores' 1995 HighTone album, and the label's reissue of the Gary Stewart classic.**

**Buddy Miller soloed in 1995.**



matter how rich from peddling smut and scot to moms and minors these past few gruesomely money-grubbing years, through the gates of Hillbilly Heaven.

Well, fat chance. Some HighTone artists might indeed "graduate" to the major labels in the future, and some have in the past—Jimmie Dale Gilmore went to Elektra, Joe Ely's just gone back to MCA—but it's far more likely that traffic in and out of the HighTone stable will be to and from the other independent players in the roots music field: Watermelon down in Austin; Sugar Hill in Durham, North Carolina; Pete Anderson's upstart Little Dog label in Los Angeles and Randall Jamail's Dallas-based Justice Records; Rounder in Massachusetts, the giant of the pygmies, with all the smaller labels it distributes; Dead Reckoning in Nashville; Bloodshot in Chicago; and a host of smaller garage-and-

basement operations across the U.S.A.

Each label has its own focus and character, of course. Watermelon concentrates mostly on music from the Austin scene, Sugar Hill mostly on the acoustic/traditional axis, and Bloodshot on 'insurgent country,' while HighTone is distinguished by being the first modern independent to aim squarely at the heart of country, rather than at more peripheral areas such as bluegrass/newgrass, folk, Cajun or old-timey music. All the independents, however, share at least two characteristics: They can't get their music played on country radio, and they're cheap. Or perhaps that should be 'economical' or 'non-wasteful.' The average recording budget for a HighTone album, for instance, is about \$20,000 (compared to \$100,000 plus for a major-label Nashville album), and the entire operation is run by Sloven, Bromberg and four full-time employees. Independent contractors handle company business in Europe, some

of the record production work (Dave Alvin, Lloyd Maines and others), and all the publicity (Mark Pucci in Atlanta). Instead of pressing millions of CD's, saturating the airwaves with their singles, and selling them everywhere from K-Mart on down, HighTone presses thousands, tries to get them aired on alternative/college/Americana stations, and sells them in independent music stores or by mail order. Their catalog is available from HighTone Records, 220 4th Street #101, Oakland, CA 94607.

Its small scale aside, HighTone mimicks the major labels in most operational aspects. The basic job is still to find music that people want and get it to them, and the division of labor, risk and profit is the

same between HighTone and its artists as it is between the average Hunk(ette) of the Month and the multi-national corporations in those Music Row office towers: The company collects about 50 percent of the music's retail price, of which the artist is due about one-fifth after expenses. The only real difference is that at HighTone, those last two words—"after expenses"—don't conceal quite the repertoire of accounting acrobatics that help keep the shareholders of the multi-nationals so pleasantly insulated from life's little hardships. HighTone artists will tell you they do actually get what's due them, even if typically, it's no fortune.

That's okay with them, too, for these are people whose dream is a life in music, not a mansion on a hill. That also seems true of HighTone's owners, for when you pop the one essential question, you get the right reply.

Here's the question, put to Larry Sloven: "Larry,



**Big Sandy and His Fly-Rite Boys hail from Los Angeles and England.**

can you truthfully say that you've signed only artists whose music turns you on?" He gives the question the consideration it deserves, then says, "Yes."

**Y**ou don't judge men by their words, of course. You judge them by their deeds. HighTone's most recent was a beauty.

I was at my desk, looking at the stack of HighTone CD's I'd pulled together out of my permanent collection and thinking fondly about what they meant to me, how I'd regret it if they stopped coming, how I still missed the other great little labels of my musical past—Sun, Chess, Stax, Monument, the original Capricorn—and that reminded me to open the latest press release from Mark Pucci. I did that, and learned that HighTone, which had just wowed me once again by plucking Johnny Rodriguez out of obscurity to record anew with his old collaborators, Roy Dea and Jerry Kennedy, had now dispatched Bruce Bromberg to produce a new Marty Brown album. Brown's first since disappearing from MCA after *Cryin', Lovin', Leavin'* in 1994.

You know, in the world of great bright hopes for real country music, Marty Brown is just about exactly as important as Dale Watson. ■

*Editor's note: At presstime, HighTone's roster included Dave Alvin, Big Sandy and His Fly-Rite Boys, Buddy Miller, Dale Watson, Marty Brown, Johnny Rodriguez, Chris Smither, Tom Russell, Astro Puppees, The Rev. Billy C. Wirtz, James Armstrong, Wagon, The Carpetbaggers and Chris Gaffney.*



# VIDEO BONANZA

## PART TWO

### HANK WILLIAMS

**Hank Williams Tradition—60 mins.**

In the *Hank Williams Tradition* traces Hank's life story through rare film clips, music and revealing interviews with friends and fellow performers such as Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl and Chet Atkins. Included are performances of many of Hank's greatest songs by today's top country artists, who also tell how Hank inspired their careers. There are also five hit songs performed by Hank himself. Item No. V2M - \$19.95

### HANK WILLIAMS

**The Show He Never Gave—86 mins.**

This movie permits the haunted singer to play one final show, during which all his fears and passions—all his genius—tumble out for us to see. "Sneezy" Waters plays the self-destructive superstar and admirably performs 23 songs. Adding to the authenticity of the project is the audience of supporting characters who populate the mythical roadhouse where Hank confronts his life, just as it is ending. Item No. V2L - \$19.95

### PATSY CLINE

**Remembering Patsy - 60 mins.**

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### RICKY VAN SHELTON

**To Be Continued...—35 mins.**

Here are some of Ricky's early videos plus two live performances and an interview. Included are "Crime of Passion" and "Living Proof." Item No. G5W - \$24.95

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**VOLUME 2: 1956—50 mins.**

The second volume in this video collection is also a must for fans who love that classic country music sound. Featured artists include Ray Price, Webb Pierce, June Carter, Chet Atkins, The Jordanaires AND MORE! You'll hear such hits as "All Alone" and "Please Release Me." Item No. V10H - \$29.95

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**1956—52 mins.**

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# DAVID LEE MURPHY

## Genuine Redneck Stuff

David Lee Murphy's second album, *Getting Out the Good Stuff*, ends with "Pirate's Cove," a quiet song about negotiating a 12-foot johnboat through a swamp of cypress stumps and cottonmouths. The singer is in search of a campsite so remote that no one will mind if he gets rowdy and no one will disturb him if he wants to be quiet. It isn't one of Murphy's big radio hits, but it may well be his finest song. From the way he describes how the water looks "smooth like polished glass" and how a "trail of smoke curls through the trees," you can tell he's been there.

"I'm a real outdoorsman," he confirms, looking slightly uncomfortable in an air-conditioned conference room at MCA Records. "When you're next to a stream that's fresh off a mountain, and you hear fish jumping or deer walking through the woods or see a hawk circling overhead, it clears your mind. You start remembering the things that are really important, and you realize a lot of things in life get to us that shouldn't. I can sit by a lake in a lawn chair better than anybody. I like being outside, away from people, with a couple of friends, camping in the woods, grilling some steaks, drinking some beer—you know, redneck stuff."

Ah, yes, "redneck stuff." Murphy's music has been described as "redneck country," and that's a large part of its appeal. In an era when so many "baby hat acts" are crooning about suburban puppy love, Murphy is singing about camping, fishing, drinking, fighting, driving and loving with folks whose faded jeans, scruffy boots and shaggy hair camouflage a good heart in much the same way "Dust on the Bottle" disguises good, home-made wine.

This approach works because Murphy is the character in his songs. Even today, when he drops by the corporate headquarters of his record company, he's dressed in a sleeveless Harley-Davidson T-shirt and a Richard Petty/STP baseball cap. He instinctively slouches back in his chair; his black cowboy boots stretched out in front of him. His eyes twinkle mischievously between his razor-sharp sideburns as a reporter grills him about the meaning of "redneck."

"I've had people call me a redneck in a derogatory way," Murphy says, "but my attitude is always, 'That's right, I'm a redneck and proud of it.' I like four-wheel-drive vehicles, and the food I eat is predominantly fried or boiled. Rural people, small-town people who work nine-to-five and are thoughtful of others, are my kind of people. It used to be they called us hillbillies or hicks, and now they call us rednecks, but we turned it around into a term of pride. If you're in a country bar today, and you say, 'Are there any rednecks out there?' everyone will shout, 'Yeah!'"

That sense of pride fuels the infectious barroom an-

them, "Genuine Rednecks" on Murphy's latest album. In contrast to the quiet reflection of "Pirate's Cove," this is a piano-pounding, guitar-twang song which declares there's no place Murphy'd rather be than "in a room full of real live genuine rednecks, bona fide backwoods misfits, good-timin' hillbilly lunatics." It's a sequel to Murphy's 1995 breakthrough hit, "Party Crowd," which expressed a similar desire to be out among "a party crowd, slammin' 'em back and laughin' out loud."

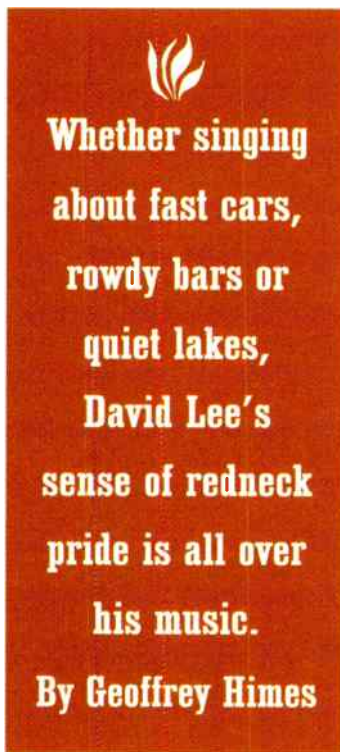
Rowdiness, though, is just one aspect of the redneck lifestyle, according to Murphy. There's also a quiet, spiritual connection to the outdoors that's reflected in songs such as "Pirate's Cove," "High Weeds and Rust" and "100 Years Too Late."

"If I had grown up in Chicago," he says, "I'd probably write about steel-mill towns and those characters, like Bruce Springsteen does. But I didn't grow up there; I grew up in a small, agricultural community, so I'm going to write about going down to the lake with a bottle of wine at sunset. A lot of people out there aren't from a major metropolitan area; they're from small towns or farms. They work hard and are unpretentious, and country music is for them. That's why they call it *country* music, and that's what makes it different from rock 'n' roll.

"And as much as I love Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Beatles and The Allman Brothers," he adds, "that's why I write country songs. I'm country. Someone once told me, 'Write about what you know,' and that's what I did. Take it or leave it, I'm the same person on stage as I am at home. I'm not a created character who has to live up to that character every day. I have the luxury of being myself."

Murphy grew up in Herrin, amid the cornfields and coal mines of southern Illinois. It's a small town closer to Nashville than to Chicago, and it's more Southern than Northern in many ways. His parents were teachers, but his grandparents still worked the family farm, and 500 feet past his front door were untouched woods and fields. He learned to sing in church, where his mom was the pianist, and he started making up songs as soon as he got his first guitar. He was just eight years old when he bought his first two records on the same day at the local Save-Mart—*Flatt & Scruggs' Greatest Hits* and *Meet The Beatles*. By the time he was a teenager, his favorites were Willie and Waylon.

"Even today," he admits, "when I put a CD on, it's usually Willie and Waylon or Merle or George Strait; that's still the stuff that moves me. When I listen to Willie and Waylon, I get the feeling that they're not just singing it, but they've done it. It doesn't have that assembly-line quality to it; you believe it when you hear it. And when



Whether singing  
about fast cars,  
rowdy bars or  
quiet lakes,  
David Lee's  
sense of redneck  
pride is all over  
his music.  
By Geoffrey Himes





you see them on the awards shows, it's like a breath of fresh air, because they don't pretend to be something they're not."

Murphy wanted to walk in their shoes, so he started making the 180-mile trip from Herrin to Nashville when he was 19. Even when he went back to college—eventually graduating from Southern Illinois University in '82—he continued to play in bar bands and to make pilgrimages to Nashville. He moved down for good in mid-'83 and soon landed a writer's deal with a small publisher. He put together The Blue Tick Hounds, a quartet whose raucous brand of country-rock was popular with local club-goers but was considered too raw for country radio. "Back in those days," he remembers. "I was single, and I didn't have any responsibilities to anybody but myself. I spent a lot of time partying, and I'm really glad I did. Even though I had a few album cuts as a writer, I never saw a dime, because my royalties were absorbed by my advances.

"Even after I got married, I had a hard time. A lot of people I had grown up with had gone on to do something successful, and here I was, trying to raise a family in a tiny, two-room house with a broken-down truck out front with weeds growing up around it. A lot of people back home were wondering, 'When is David Lee going to give this up and get a real job?' But my wife stuck with me through thick and thin. She had heard the songs, and she really believed in them.

"I lived below the poverty line for ten years, but I kept going out there, trying to get a record deal. I felt like I was hitting my head against a brick wall. Everyone in town must have turned me down two or three times." Among those who turned him down was Tony Brown, president of MCA Records. Even when he was rejecting Murphy, though, Brown heard something he liked, and in 1992 he heard a demo tape that finally convinced him David Lee was ready for the big time. "Thank God, he turned me down the first time," Murphy says. "I wasn't ready then. I was making mistakes and getting my ass beat, but I was also learning and getting more mature. Being a musician is not a matter of either you have it or you don't; it's whether you get better or not.

"The biggest change for me," he continues, "was learning how to craft a song. All those journalism classes I took in college really helped, because I had learned how to squeeze a lot into a small space. And I've always been impressed by visual writing, like in songs by Kris Kristofferson or Gordon Lightfoot, where you feel like you've been put into a setting. I like songs where the music puts you in the mood and then the lyrics take you somewhere. That's what I'm trying to do."

He succeeded quite spectacularly when "Dust on the Bottle," the fourth single from his debut album, went to Number One. It was a quintessentially redneck story, and it made possible the redneck fairy tale of a bar-band musician from southern Illinois finally becoming a star at last. And how did Murphy celebrate his new-found fame and fortune? By becoming a sponsor of stock car driver Jeff Purvis. When Purvis drove car 44 in the Daytona 500, the album art from *Out with a Bang* was painted on the body. And when you see Purvis out on the Winston Cup and Busch Grand National circuits, you're likely to see Murphy hanging around the pit before the race, helping out however he can.

"I've been interested in racing since I was a kid," Murphy admits. "I even did some dirt-track racing when I was younger, so to be involved at this level is a dream come true. The connection to my music is the fans. A lot of racing fans are into my style of country music, which is a little more rowdy, a little edgier and a little more fun than the mainstream. There's nothing slick or polished about my records; it's blue-collar and raw, just like racing. That's why we attract the same fans." Genuine rednecks. ■



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*First, there was Hank Sr., then came Hank Jr., now get ready for Hank III.*

# The Three HANKS

*By Bob Millard*

**H**ank Jr. fans around Atlanta already knew there was a Hank III, because the boy began coming on stage to play drums for a couple of numbers at Hank Jr. concerts there when he was still in knee pants. Long, tall, lanky and looking a lot like his famous grandfather, Shelton Hank Williams III (“Hank Three”) made his country music recording debut with his famous father and grandfather this fall on a special project album called, not surprisingly, *Three Hanks (Men with Broken Hearts)*.

And this is pretty much a true debut. While Hank III honed his Hank Williams style on his grandfather’s repertoire in 50 shows under the tutelage of Mel Tillis at Branson last fall, he had never sung Hank Williams’ songs—or country music—before.



Hank III

“I played my first show with my dad when I was ten years old; not a whole show, but I played a couple of shows at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta,” Hank III drawls, his shoulders slumped like his grandfather Williams. “I’ve always done a lot of appearances with him. I just played guitar a few years and bass a few years, but like I

say, I can just get by. I’m not a per se musician.”

Born in Nashville in 1972 to Hank Jr. and his second wife, Gwen Yeargain, Shelton—as everyone has always called him—moved at 11 to Atlanta, then to Charlotte, North Carolina, and then back to the Nashville area where he played and sang for several years in a metal/thrash band called Buzzkill.

“Yeah,” Hank III says, “real hard, heavy bands. I did that for as long as I could. Played shows for \$10. You know, I starved; creatively starved tryin’ to do my kind of music. I never got any help from anybody up top, like Dad or nothing.



Hank Sr.







PHOTOS: ALBERT HAYES

Until now, when I do country music. I certainly knew that would happen one day."

If he sounds less than inspired to at last have worked with Hank Jr., it might be because he hasn't, in the strictest sense. Just as Hank Sr.'s parts obviously had to be lifted from old recordings, Hank Jr. and Hank III never actually stood together in the studio to join in singing Hank Sr. songs such as "Lost Highway," "I'm a Long Gone Daddy," "Moanin' the Blues," "Move It On Over," "Honky Tonk Blues" or "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive." (Hank Jr. solos on "Hand Me Down.")

In fact, he explains without much apparent rancor, he has never been close to his father nor to the Williams family—by their choice.

"I've never really been around my father that much," Hank III says, shrugging those slumped shoulders and stroking that thin nose that make him look so much like the grandfather he never got to meet. "Whenever I was, Dad has never talked about the music business. Never asked me, 'How you been playin', how's shows goin'.' He's just never been interested. It's just all me."



The music, produced by Curb Records' Chuck Howard, is all new, sparkling and crisp. The vocal bloodline is eerily dominant, too. Hank Jr. is pulled back to the sound of his father that he reproduced for so many years as a youngster under Ms. Audrey's direction. Hank III, for all his protests to the contrary, also sounds remarkably like his grandfather here. It really is like having three Hanks in the room much of the time.

But, this isn't just a generations album. Curb is using this chance to introduce Hank III in his own right—albeit singing a pair of his granddad's tunes, "Neath a Cold Gray Tomb of Stone" and "Moanin' the Blues." The plan is for him to step out completely on his own in another year or so.

To that end, Hank III is working on his country-song writing and looks forward to blazing his own trail.

"As far as the Hank Sr. trip, I was only going to do that for a little while just to let people know that Hank Jr. has a kid and just to work on my vocal chops," he says. "You know, I got my own sound that's totally different... I just like real hard country that sort of punches you in the face. I don't like real pretty boy stuff. I like for it to be raw. I'm still raw right now in my singin' ways. That's what Mel Tillis says, anyway." ■

**Three generations—Hank Jr. and daughter Katie with Hank III, as playbacks from *Three Hanks* roll. The album was released on Hank Sr.'s birthday.**



**W**e're on the front porch with Marty Brown, having a very informal version of what music business people call a "listening party." It's fairly early on a beautiful morning, though not so early that the birds haven't settled down and the yard work hasn't been done already. Marty, dressed only in cutoff jeans, is sitting on a bench swing with a little Martin guitar across his knees, a boombox beside him and a lady friend squatted on the top step by his feet. I'm opposite, in the rocker. Across the two-lane blacktop out front, which runs west towards Springfield, Tennessee, and east towards I-65 connecting Nashville with Marty's home state of Kentucky eight miles north, fields of soybeans stretch out over low rolling hills. It's very pleasant, just your basic more-or-less-country living, no big deal.

It's not peaceful, though, because Marty Brown is not the peaceful type. Calling him "wired" might be excessive, but "energetic" fits, and although he doesn't have the true egomaniac's disinterest in anything but his own voice—he will listen to you, and hear you—he's certainly no introvert. He talks a lot, and he's not just filling up the air the way some people do, keeping things from getting too quiet; he's pretty seriously interested in letting you know what he thinks.

But of course, that's his job right now. He has to promote himself and fill us in on himself and his music, to give me the story to bring to you.

Here's the story, then. The new album, as is obvious the moment Marty hits the "Play" button on his boombox, is different, different, and different. Firstly, it's different because it's on the small, independent California-based HighTone label, which in terms of market muscle is to MCA and the other major labels what a trail bike is to a tank. Marty left MCA after three albums, and now he's the closest thing HighTone has to a real contender in the country radio market. Secondly, the new work, *Here's to the Honky Tonks*, is different because in style, it flows much more smoothly into the contemporary country mainstream than the MCA albums did. And finally, it's different just because it's a Marty Brown album. Marty's an original, not a knock-off. No confusing *him* with George Jones, George Strait, George Michael, etc.

**T**he fact that Marty Brown and MCA didn't work out wasn't very surprising. Right from the start, the whole enterprise had "Lost Cause" written all over it. Marty's billing as the real deal—the new Hank, the un-compromiser; the kid from the sticks with the great big songwriter brain and the hot hard-country heart—was bound to land him slap in the middle of the fight over coun-

try music's stylistic direction, and that it did.

In the one corner you had almost all your music critics, most of your genuine longtime country fans, and a goodly percentage of your country music industry personnel when they weren't actually having to make decisions about money. In the opposite corner you had many of those same people when they *were* making decisions about money, plus the folks whose job it was to protect "country" radio listeners from too much honk and twang, plus the tide of history. The outcome was never really in doubt: Marty never made it in country radio, and far too predictably he became another Steve Earle, just one more best-of-his-generation talent shunted off the rails so the hunks in the hats could cruise on through to the big New Country money.

It's interesting that the Marty Brown debacle and the Steve Earle fiasco shared key players: not just corporate MCA and the big radio conglomerates, but individuals, most notably Tony (no relation) Brown, the hugely influential producer/executive who talked MCA into signing both great prodigies, and who, with his friend and ally Richard Bennett, produced most of their MCA music.

History has already conferred upon Tony Brown the status of keeper of the creative country flame through the late 80's and early 90's, and rightly so—without him, epochal albums like Earle's *Guitar Town* or Marty Brown's *High and Dry* might never have been made, and artists like Kelly Willis, Lyle Lovett, Nanci Griffith, and Joe Ely might never have worked within the Nashville system—but still, the

intersection of commerce and creativity in which he works and through which artists have to pass if they want their music heard by millions is a chaotic and contentious location, and it's not at all unusual for artists to find themselves suddenly alone on the other side in a cloud of dust, feeling like a Buick just got rammed up their tailpipe and looking for someone to blame.

Marty Brown, for instance, sounds almost like he blames Messrs. Brown and Bennett.

"This new album I did for HighTone, with Bruce Bromberg producing, I had a lot of fun, man," he says. "I mean, I'd like to thank him for letting me be myself and letting me go. He gave me free rein."

He pauses a moment, then makes a wry face and says, "Well, he had to. He didn't have a choice. I didn't *give* him a choice. I say that kind of out of frustration, 'cause my first three records, they were trying to make me sound *too* old, they were trying to make me sound *too* much like Hank Williams in the 1940's. I'm proud of those albums, I think they're great and every song on them is

## On the Front Porch with MARTY BROWN

*Singing the songs and telling the stories behind his new album.*  
By Patrick Carr







strong, but I had it figured out by the second album: the production was from the wrong angle.

"You see, those MCA records were based around the fiddle and steel being out front, with the guitar in the background, where this new one is the way country music is today, with that rock kind of fiery guitar out front and the fiddle and steel in the back."

There's a delicious if painful irony to all this—here's the man promoted as the great white hope of Back-to-Hank-ism bitching, basically, that his producers wouldn't let him sound more like Brooks & Dunn—but let's not dwell on it. If archaic instrumental balance was indeed a problem, Marty has indeed fixed it. Track by track on his boombox, *Back to the Honky Tonks* kicks out from the porch across the land just exactly like any old Hot Young Country radio station cranked up high.

The songs are still different, though. They're not *that* different, since they all run along well-traveled country paths, but they have an edge of quality—Marty's song craftsmanship, always superior, is becoming superb—and they seem authentic in ways most contemporary country songs don't.

That's true of even the weakest of them, the booty-scootin' "Here's to the Honky Tonks" itself. For a song that comes awful close to sounding like crowd-pleasing horse manure, it still it has a ring of truth to it, and that's probably because, like all Marty's songs, it had an honest beginning.

"I wrote that with a buddy of mine, Tommy Smith," Marty recalls. "We were at Mason's Tavern back home in Kentucky. Sam Mason, he was everybody's bartender friend, and he was real close to me. What made the place work was, there was a steel factory across the highway, and he would cash those workers' checks. He kept about \$20,000 in his safe all the time on weekends. They'd come over, cash their check, and buy two or three beers, five beers, and he'd make money that way.

"But then Sam passed on, and his wife took over the business, and she didn't see that. She was nervous about keeping that much money around. So she stopped it, and the minute she did that, the business started falling off.

"So I was in there one night with Tommy—we were about the only people in there—and I said, 'Man, here's to Sam Mason!' Then I thought, nobody would know who he was, so I changed it to 'Here's to our honky tonk...' I wrote it down on the back of one of those potato skin or chicken things, whatever it was."

He goes through every track on the album this way, hitting the "Pause" button on the boombox after each final note and telling the story behind the song.

"You Can't Wrap Your Arms Around a Memory" came from comedy—a put-down line from Alice to Ralph Kramden in a *Honeymooners* rerun—but it escalated quickly towards grand tragedy. "There hasn't been a song like this since 'He Stopped Loving Her Today'." Marty enthuses. "If they ever got to hear it, I think people would just eat it alive!"

He goes on. He chose to record "The Bootlegger," the only song on the album he didn't write or co-write, because "It's got that wild Kentucky heart, and anyway, I've drunk moonshine and I know about moonshine, and my granddaddy was a moonshiner. He farmed, raised tobacco and made moon-





The private listening party takes a break. There's no "business" here, just music.

shine when the crops failed; had to feed his kids." He wrote "Love Comes Easy," which sounds very much like a good late-period Everly Brothers song, after watching a man hand over his whole paycheck at the grocery store cash register and say, "Here. It comes easy and it goes away hard." The idea for "There's No Song Like a Slow Song," which has been recorded by Engelbert Humperdinck ("My mamma told me who he was, so I said it was okay"), came to him in a Nashville dance club when "they'd been playing all these fast songs, then all of a sudden the lights went down, and you saw people pair off, and you knew who was going to leave with each other. I got the melody in my head that moment, and I started singing it—"There's noooooo song like a sloooooow song"—so I ran out to my truck, that old green machine I was drivin', and I grabbed that tape player I keep in there and started recording. It was real cold, snowing, with me shivering, so my voice was all shaky, but I knew I had one."

All of which, you must admit, is old-fashioned in a positive kind of way. It's good to know that modern country songs don't *have* to be written by appointment, during business hours, with a partner or a team, in a home or studio or company "writing room." Music still comes to and from a person alone in times and places chosen by fate, or mystery, or our old friend the Muse. Whether or not you hear such music on your radio is, of course, another question entirely.

Marty has confidence. When I bring up the fact that the past year has seen a 20 percent drop in country music sales, which makes competition for airtime even fiercer and the odds against independent operators like HighTone even longer, he counters with the notion that even so, trends might well turn his way.

"I think there's going to be a real big surge," he says. "See. the kids who made country become really popular five or six years ago—15-to-18-year-olds then—they've grown up some. They've had kids, they've

gotten divorces, they've had to pay their own bills, they've gotten out in the world. So this is what I think is gonna happen: I think the same people that made that positive, happy-go-lucky country popular five or six years ago are gonna make hurtin', drinkin' music popular again. We won't go back to the fiddle and steel, and that guitar will always be out front, but those people will be listening to country music to hear the guy singing about not being able to wrap your arms around a memory, about loneliness, about having a broken heart. They'll be listening because it's telling them, 'Hey, man, you're not alone. There's somebody out here going through the same thing you are.'

"The thing is, those kids jumped on that bandwagon back then because they were lookin' for something real. They still are."

We're done with our front-porch listening party; the soybeans have

heard *Here's to the Honky Tonks*

in its entirety. "Tell you what, those pancakes we had for breakfast are wearin' off," says Marty. "Let's go into Springfield and get Mexican food."

That we do. I drive; he sits in the passenger seat with his Martin. At first we talk about his life, beginning with the fact that he's going through a divorce, meaning among other unpleasant things that he sees his four young children back in Kentucky only every other weekend, which "just breaks my heart. You can tell it in my songs."

Eventually, he says, he'll have to get a place in Kentucky to be near them, but for now he thinks of the modest but comfortable house we've just left as his home. That's okay, he says, and investment-wise the place is a sure thing. "If I want to sell it ten years down the road, five years, depending on what my career does, it can't go nowhere but up. I built it, and I lucked out on that little piece of land." Perhaps, he muses, he'll even end up back with his family. "I love my wife and I'll love her to the day I die. I will. Who's to say? Later on down the road, you never know what's going to happen."

There's a silence as the weight of these matters settles, but it doesn't last. Soon Marty's singing one of his newest works, a good old-fashioned cheatin' song with, unsurprisingly, a good old-fashioned ring of truth to it. "Patty Loveless has that one," he says. "I bet she'll sing the hell out of it. She's from Kentucky, too." Next comes another new song, then another, and another.

They all rate somewhere between very good and just about great, and that's encouraging. It supports something Marty said earlier, seemingly with great conviction, about the intersection of commerce and creativity through which he and his career are passing once again, perhaps briefly, perhaps successfully, perhaps even for the last time.

"I'm not going to do something if it doesn't have integrity," he stated flatly. "I'm just not going to do it. I'll get out there and dig ditches before I do." ■

*"So this is what I think is gonna happen: I think the same people that made that positive, happy-go-lucky country popular five or six years ago are gonna make hurtin', drinkin' music popular again."*



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# Letters

## Love That Dull and Boring

Thanks, Michael Bane. Have never enjoyed an article more than the November/December cover story on Alan Jackson. Am so glad Alan is dull and boring. We need more dull and boring people in country music like this great singer and songwriter. I beg to differ with Alan on Waylon and George Jones—these two along with Willie and a few more nearly killed country music. I agree with Alan on country radio—I don't listen much anymore as the same artists are played over and over and over. Same thing on TNN and CMT. Whew! Somebody down there in Nashville needs to throw away the "cookie cutter"—all these people are starting to sound alike and look alike.

Alice J. Gore  
Denton, Texas

## The Real Deal

I just received my November/December issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and when I took the wrapper off, I was so happy to see Alan Jackson on the cover. It really perked up my day. He is the real deal among the singers of today. Got his new album, which is great. I am in my 60's and have been a fan of country music since I was six and listened to it on the radio. My granddaughter who is six loves him, too. Thanks also for the great story.

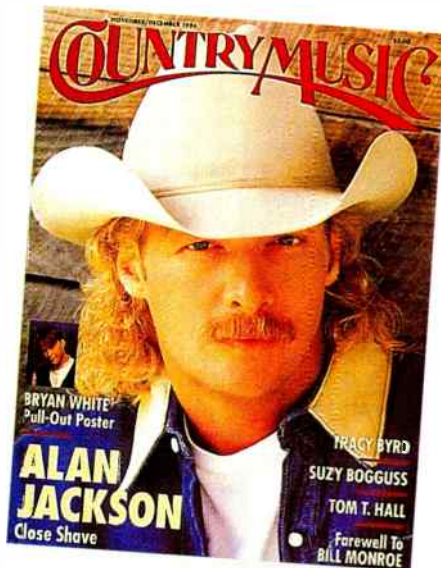
Peggy Lanphear  
Hardwick, Vermont

## Alan All Over

Just a note to say thanks for the story on my favorite country singer—Alan Jackson. Also, for having him on the cover. I have the centerfold photo of Alan (July/August issue) on my cabinet where I can see it whenever. I've about quit listening to radio, don't care for this rock country and drums blaring. Can't even recognize most of the singers unless you know who's singin' what (*Country Weekly* Top 40). A few years back I had radio on all the time. Could recognize Conway, Buck Owens, Johnny Cash, Waylon, Tom T., especially Loretta, who is and always will be the best female singer.

I have all of Alan's cassettes—bought *Everything I Love* four days after it was released. Love "Little Bitty"! Thanks, Tom T. and Alan. Your music is sure not boring. Keep singin' and I'll keep buying and listening.

Anne Bolyard  
Thornton, West Virginia



## Hitin' on Sharon

Thank you for the interview with Alan Jackson in the November/December issue. It's good to see him remain humble. I agree that all the new country music is the same. The old is better—original—real country—not made in a studio.

I do *not* appreciate Sharon Stone wanting to be part of Alan's video. Shaving a man's mustache crosses the line, and it's a dumb idea. I'd like to remind Ms. Stone of the terrible things she said about Dwight Yoakam; because of that this country music fan has very little respect for her. Stay in Hollywood, Sharon.

Nancy Van Den Berg  
Saugatuck, Michigan

## Double Double

Double, double, toil and trouble! Thanks for the double dose of Marty Stuart in the September/October issue. He's one of my favorites. I think he's absolutely eat up with talent! Great article from Bob Allen and a very accurate record review too. Marty's ballads are truly inspiring on this Hillbilly Hot record. Only problem may be it's like pulling hen's teeth to get radio to play the big-haired banty rooster!

My linda Mason  
Morgantown, Kentucky

## Double Trouble—On the Cover

Thank you so very much for the article on Travis and Marty in the September/October issue! I always love to read about these two! What talent! Some people

have missed these two in concert—they sure don't know what they've missed! Great show! Thanks again. Great job!

Suzanne Middleton  
Cedartown, Georgia

## Cover Does It

I just purchased my first issue of CMM. It was the September/October issue, and it caught my attention because of the cover. I am a huge fan of Marty Stuart (I like Travis Tritt, too) and think the cover photo fabulous! I really loved the article! These guys love to have fun, but are serious about the music.

I enjoyed the review of *Honky Tonkin's What I Do Best*. All the songs are excellent and showcase Marty's incredible talent. I have two other Marty Stuart tapes: *The Marty Party Hit Pack* and *This One's Gonna Hurt You*. Both are excellent! I plan to get all of his albums.

Charlotte Palmer  
Longmont, Colorado

## Buckin' for Bogguss

Just had to write and thank you for such a great article on Suzy Bogguss in the November/December issue. A nice write, Bob Allen. Great pictures also! Now can we please have a cover picture of Suzy in the very near future? She is such a great lady, and she has a very beautiful voice, and those big ole brown eyes ain't bad either! Thanks for a such a great magazine. Can hardly wait for each copy to arrive in the mail.

Liner Ann and David Wood  
Nashville, Georgia

## Suzy's Somethin'

Just wanted to thank you for doing that great article on Suzy Bogguss in your November/December issue. I loved all the photos, especially the one with her dog. I buy anything I can get my hands on if it has Suzy in it—she's the best.

Fran Robinson  
Meriden, Connecticut

## Deserving Songwriter

In the article on Suzy Bogguss in the November/December issue, you listed the writers of the title track of her new album, *Give Me Some Wheels*, as Matraca Berg and Gary Harris. We felt compelled to bring the error to your attention. After all, this is the same *Gary Harrison* who is a co-writer on the Deanna Carter smash,



"Strawberry Wine," Martina McBride's "Wild Angels," Trisha Yearwood's "Wrong Side of Memphis" and "Everybody Knows," and Suzy Bogguss' previous hit, "Hey Cinderella"—and many more too numerous to mention.

Because Gary is one of the truly exceptional songwriters, as well as being one heck of a nice guy, we wanted to make sure he received his two seconds in the spotlight. After all, we didn't want him to get too content in the shadows as Director of A&R Mercury Nashville.

The Very Proud Staff at Mercury Nashville  
Nashville, Tennessee  
*Consider it done.—Ed.*

### Clever Collie

As a Collie fan since 1993, I was very happy to see Bob Allen's article on Mark Collie in the September/October issue. Mark is an artist of greatly underrated talent. I really loved Mr. Allen's reference to the "young, clean-cut 'hat acts' who looked, dressed, acted and sounded like a bunch of dentists...off for a weekend Karaoke contest," and the "endemic virus of blandness" which predominates the airwaves these days. While Mark has apparently "toned down his swagger" to some extent, bland is something he will never be. Thank you, Bob Allen.

Lynn Galloway  
Spartanburg, South Carolina

### Younger Generation Heard From

Yesterday, I got my November/December magazine from my grandma, whom I love very much. I like your magazine a lot. But what I really liked was the poster of Bryan White. He's my favorite country music star. Hey, I'm only twelve, yes, twelve, but I know good music when I hear it, and this guy's got it!

Jennie Rogers  
Marion, Wisconsin

### Let's Look at Shania

Thank you for the beautiful poster of Shania Twain in the September/December issue. I read all of the information on the back, and it makes me mad that people judge her by the way she looks or dresses. I am a huge fan of hers, and I get every poster of her I can. Do you think you could put a Garth Brooks poster in an upcoming issue of *Country Music*? I'll be watching. Love the magazine.

Crystal Wheeler  
Fletcher, North Carolina

### Tom T. and Johnny Rod

Sure is very nice to have a wonderful magazine that keeps us in touch with all country music stars young and old. I think it is so sad that the radio stations only play the Hot New Country. Bet their phones would ring off the hook if they would spin a Willie, Waylon, George,

Merle and Hank once in a while. And my favorites Tom T. and Johnny Rodriguez. Thanks to Bob Millard (Record Reviews, July/August), I hear about what a wonderful writer like Tom T. Hall has out in his new album. As you say, *Sopchoppy* is a great collection of tunes by a genius storyteller for his many loyal fans. No one but ole T. could write "Shoes and Dress That Alice Wore," and let's not forget "Little Bitty." Congrats Tom T. on a Number One record by Alan Jackson.

20 Questions with Johnny Rodriguez (September/October) brought back many memories. We met him on one of Tom T.'s shows in the early 70's. He was a really nice young man, and we loved his records. So this is a wonderful new album: "You can say that again" and again and again! Good luck, Johnny. Ethel Cox

Claudville, Virginia  
*Hope you caught 20 Questions with Tom T. Hall in November/December.—Ed.*

### Bravo, Rodriguez

I have only one word regarding your recent 20 Questions with Johnny Rodriguez (September/October): Bravo! It's nice to know there are a few people left who will say without hesitation they are "stone country." And mean it. Not only that, but he also admits to the following: that he's been to the top, sank to the bottom, fell victim to the evils of booze and drugs, is smart enough to not fool himself by saying he's got it whipped (when it is *truly* a day-to-day battle), and has the guts to say that too much of today's so-called country music is nothing more than bubblegum crap in a slick Nashville package! You've been gone long enough, Rodriguez. Get your butt back where you belong. There's still a huge audience out there for you!

Ben Ingram  
Fort Scott, Kansas

### People Come in All Sizes

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for many years off and on. I love your magazine, but I felt I needed to comment on an article in the People section in the November/December issue. The article mentioned that Mary Chapin "always does a superb show" but "she has added a few pounds." This type of criticism is completely preposterous!

The article mentioned how "svelte" Pam Tillis was and later added the comment about Chapin. Why must body sizes be commented on? Why are people who entertain expected to have perfect bodies? Is being a size six a requirement for a *woman* artist to be looked at as a talent to be taken seriously? I am surprised that this article was written by a woman! I realize in the same issue the review of Mary Chapin's new CD was very complimentary as she deserves, but this one comment can't be ignored.

It seems evident to me that there have



## CHEVROLET presents the COUNTRY MUSIC QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the March/April 1997 issue.

1. What is the name of the new record label Dolly Parton started?
2. Which country star recently appeared on Jeff Foxworthy's NBC sitcom?
3. How many albums has David Lee Murphy released on MCA?
4. Who are the two founders of HighTone Records?
5. Who are the "Three Hanks"?
6. Which members of Diamond Rio were born in New York State?
7. What brand of truck do the cowboys count on in the ad on the inside front cover of this issue?

### ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Sharon Stone 2. mandolin
3. Cheryl Wheeler 4. Beaumont, Texas
5. Five 6. Chevy's S-10 is the only compact truck to offer a third door.

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**The Tractors** (Arista) 488-551



**Jeff Foxworthy**—Crank It Up—The Music Album (Warner Bros.) 164-806

**Mark Collie**—Unleashed (MCA) 488-106  
**David Ball**—Thinkin' Problem (Warner Bros.) 487-066

**Vince Gill**—When Love Finds You (MCA) 486-308  
**Alan Jackson**—Who I Am (Arista) 486-233

**Tracy Byrd**—No Ordinary Man (MCA) 484-758  
**Reba McEntire**—Read My Mind (MCA Nashville) 479-717

**Pam Tillis**—Sweetheart's Dance (Arista) 479-683  
**Billy Dean**—Grt. Hits (Liberty) 476-036

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**George Strait**—Pure Country (MCA) 448-753

**Travis Tritt**—The Restless Kind (Warner Bros.) 164-822

**Vince Gill**—I Still Believe In You (MCA) 448-571

**John Michael Montgomery**—Kickin' It Up (Atlantic) 473-157

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**John Berry** (Capitol/Nashville) 463-265

**Tanya Tucker**—Greatest Hits 1990-1992 (Capitol/Nashville) 458-935

**Patty Loveless**—Grt. Hits (MCA) 458-349

**Shania Twain** (Mercury/Nashville) 458-273

**Dwight Yoakam**—This Time (Reprise) 456-913

**Essential Steve Earle** (MCA Nashville) 456-723

**Charlie Daniels Band**—Super Hits (Epic) 456-608

**Tracy Lawrence**—Albino (Atlantic) 456-558

**Patty Loveless**—Only What I Feel (Epic) 454-637

**Trace Adkins**—Dreamin' Out Loud (Capitol Nashville) 159-582

**Hootie & The Blowfish**—Cracked Rear View (Atlantic) 487-553

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**Melissa Etheridge**—Your Little Secret (island) 140-954

**Eagles**—Grt. Hits, 1971-75 (Asylum) 287-003

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**Br5-49**—Br5-49 (Arista Nashville) 166-546

**Brooks & Dunn**—Hard Workin' Man (Arista) 454-025

**John Michael Montgomery**—Life's A Dance (Atlantic) 453-746

**Reba McEntire**—It's Your Call (MCA) 450-361

**Radney Foster**—Del Rio, TX 1959 (Arista) 448-852

**Trisha Yearwood** (MCA) 426-148

**Shania Twain**—The Woman In Me (Mercury/Nashville) 119-768

**Ricky Van Shelton**—Super Hits, Vol. 2 (Columbia) 151-761

**Billy Ray Cyrus**—Some Gave All (Mercury/Nashville) 441-451

**Mary Chapin Carpenter**—Come On, Come On (Columbia) 440-560

**Shenandoah**—Grt. Hits (Columbia) 436-808

**Tracy Lawrence**—Live (Atlantic/Nashville) 136-630

**Steve Wariner**—Greatest Hits Volume II (MCA) 426-957

**Alan Jackson**—Don't Rock The Jukebox (Arista) 420-935

**George Strait**—Chill Of An Early Fall (MCA) 417-634

**Mark Chesnut**—Too Cold At Home (MCA) 414-870

**Reba McEntire**—Rumor Has It (MCA) 411-538

**Sawyer Brown**—Greatest Hits (Liberty/Curb) 411-363

**Alan Jackson**—Here In The Real World (Arista) 406-785

**Vince Gill**—When I Call Your Name (MCA) 402-867

**Marty Stuart**—Hillbilly Rock (MCA) 402-404

**Dwight Yoakam**—Just Lookin' For A Hit (Reprise) 389-718

**Mary Chapin Carpenter**—State Of The Heart (Columbia) 383-505

**Hank Williams, Jr.**—Greatest Hits 3 (Warner Bros./Curb) 378-182

**Rodney Crowell**—Diamonds And Dirt (Columbia) 366-211

**George Strait**—Grt. Hits, Vol. II (MCA) 361-006

**Rosanne Cash**—King's Record Shop (Columbia) 356-824

**Reba McEntire**—Grt. Hits (MCA) 355-826

**Hank Williams, Jr.**—Greatest Hits, Vol. II (Warner Bros./Curb) 340-158

**George Strait**—Grt. Hits (MCA) 334-466

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**Carlene Carter**—Hindsight 20/20 (Giant) 164-772

**Billy Ray Cyrus**—Trail Of Tears (Mercury) 164-632



**Minda Mason**—That's Enough Of That (Atlantic Nashville) 162-024

**Suzy Bogguss**—Give Me Some Wheels (Capitol Nashville) 161-729

**David Ball**—Starlite Lounge (Warner Bros.) 159-434

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**Diamond Rio**—IV (Arista/Nashville) 149-146

**Joe Diffie**—Life's So Funny (Epic) 144-287

**Pam Tillis**—All Of This Love (Arista Nashville) 142-687

**Doug Supernaw**—You Still Got Me (Giant) 141-002

**Emilio**—Life Is Good (Capitol/Nashville) 139-931

**Dwight Yoakam**—Gone (Reprise/Sire) 139-634

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**Aaron Tippin**—Tool Box (RCA) 139-121

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**Little Texas**—Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.) 136-838

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**Sammy Kershaw**—The Hits Chapter 1 (Mercury/Nashville) 136-796

**Collin Raye**—I Think About You (Brooks) 135-814

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**Lee Roy Parnell**—We All Get Lucky Sometimes (Career Records) 133-603

**Jeff Foxworthy**—Games Rednecks Play (Warner Bros.) 133-322

**Lorrie Morgan**—Greatest Hits (BNA Records) 132-480

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**Alabama**—Cheap Seats (RCA) 123-505

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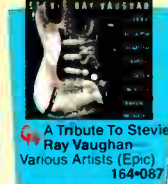
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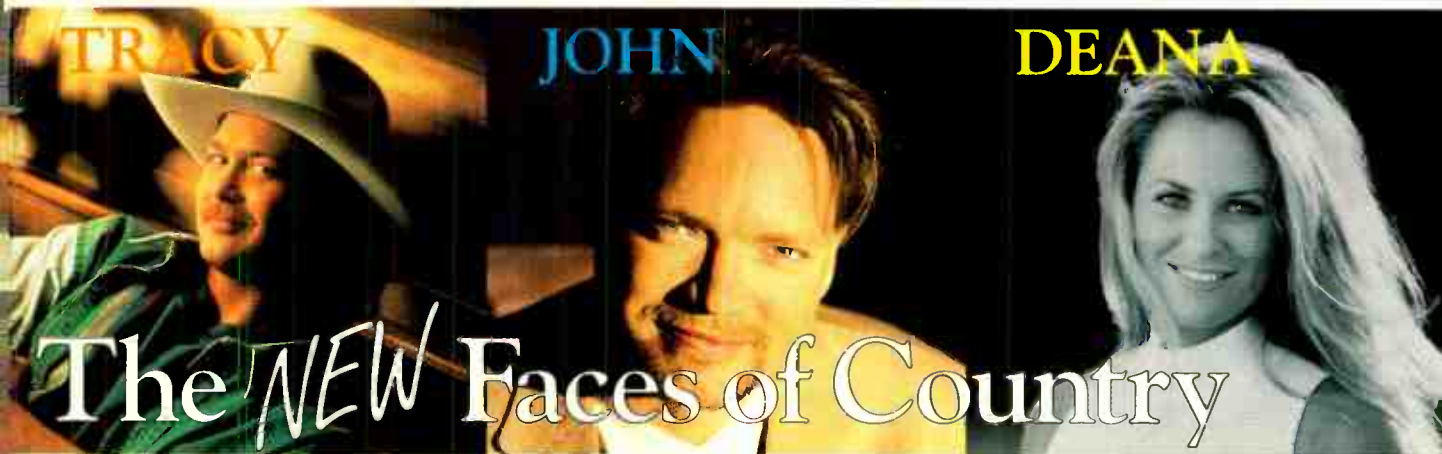
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been several extraordinary artists such as Wynonna, K.T., Oslin, and Trisha Yearwood who have been judged on their weight. I don't recall seeing many *male* artists in any field of music being judged for gaining weight, losing their hair, etc., unless you were to include the many tabloids that are printed.

*Country Music Magazine* has earned respect by many fans of country, and we appreciate you keeping us informed about the stars we love. If the artists make a comment themselves about their weight or body image, it will be their choice, but give the artists the respect and dignity they deserve. We are not all made to be a "perfect" size, and I can assure you that Mary Chapin's many fans love her for the beautiful, compassionate and talented human being that she is. Thank you, and I will continue to love your magazine and would also love to see a centerfold of Chapin sometime if possible. Mary Chapin Carpenter is first rate...at any size!

Kimberley Kime  
 Climax, North Carolina

*Your points are well taken. As for Hazel's comment, she writes a "gossip" column and intended it as such. No offense meant.—Ed.*

**Another Comment**

I have been a reader of and subscriber to your magazine for a couple of years now, and have enjoyed every issue. However, I have two points that I would like to make: 1) What is with Hazel Smith that she can say that LeAnn Rimes "sure is filled out good to only be 14"? (November/December, People) What type of remark is this for your magazine? I honestly cannot believe that you printed it. 2) When are you going to run more articles and/or pictures of Hal Ketchum? Am I the only reader who has been Alan Jackson and Brooks and Dunn to death? Hal is one of the most prolific artists in country music today and does not begin to garner the attention he deserves. Couldn't we get a Hal-fix from you once in a while?

Janice E. Tracy  
 Columbus, Ohio

**Calling Patrick Carr**

I've enjoyed your writing, especially *The Final Note*, for a couple of years now. Your last column (September/October) was particularly interesting. I had always pictured you as a good ole sutherland boy raised on corn pone and Roy Acuff records, so I guess you have assimilated the culture pretty well.

Mostly I want to thank you, along with the folks at *No Depression Magazine* and a progressive thinking writer or two at *Tower Pulse Magazine*, for pointing me toward the artists who are never heard on country radio. I was vaguely familiar with names like Uncle Tupelo and The

Bottle Rockets. Thanks to your guidance I now own a whole bunch of these so-called alternative country CD's. My favorite find was Don Walser; I have gone from "Don Who?" to owning four of his CD's. It's criminal that artists like that aren't the big stars on radio and the charts.

Another salute goes to Rich Kienzle for reviewing Ray Condo (Record Reviews, July/August), whose uncategoryzable sounds are filling the room as I write this letter. I noticed that the November/December issue seems to be entirely Carr-less, although your name remains on the masthead. I hope this just means a well-earned vacation, and not something more dire.

Dick Estel  
 Fresno, California

*Paddy's back. See Final Note and features for more guidance.—Ed.*

**In Trouble Again**

I don't usually write these letters, but I got the September/October issue with Marty & Travis. It was great! It's cool to see a magazine cover without Alan Jackson's face on it! It would have been better with the cover guys in the middle and not Shania. Well, maybe just Marty even. As for the Final Note page, it was a total waste of perfectly good paper. I wish someone would give me a page in a national publication to "rag" off about nothing to millions of people.

He needed a whole page to tell us he was an s.o.b.? Anyone could have figured that out just skimming the article! Personally, a Chevy advertisement would have been better there. Oh, wait, that was the back cover! P.S. Hey, Carr, doesn't Marty wear the coolest suits?

Michelle Watkins  
 Tolono, Illinois

**Travis or Strait? It's History**

This letter is in reference to Rich Kienzle's review of Randy Travis' *Full Circle* album in the November/December issue. Where has Mr. Kienzle been the last 15 years? The moon? I've read some of his reviews before and had the impression he lived on earth, but maybe I'm wrong.

I couldn't believe what I was reading when he said Travis opened a passageway for George Strait. By the time 1986 rolled around, George had something like nine Number One songs under his belt in just a bare five years. And, has anyone out there ever heard of a little album called *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind?* It occurs to me it was the ACM and CMA Album of the Year for 1984. George Strait came light years before Yoakam, Shelton or Travis, and he's still ahead of them.

Kathleen Chaney  
 Long Beach, California

*You've got the right chronology. Our mistake.—Ed.*



### Breakfast Food for Our Reviewer

I have found your reviews section in each issue to be both informative and opinionated. On several occasions, I have purchased new CD's based on a review. However, I have to believe that Rich Kienzle must have eaten nails for breakfast when he panned two brilliant new releases...those of BR5-49 and Randy Travis latest release, *Full Circle*, in your November/December issue.

I found both of these new offerings to be highly entertaining and well-produced. Apparently, reviewers are looking for something much more substantial in music than the average fan. If sales were based on reviews, there would be a number of starving artists out there! Otherwise, I thoroughly enjoy most of the feature in your publication.

Jeff A. Warner  
Mills, Wyoming

### Bad Call on BR5-49

I usually agree with most of the stuff that Rich and the rest of your editors and writers pen, so I feel a little remorse here—writing when I disagree. But I think Rick Kienzle was a little too hard on the BR5-49 boys when he reviewed their album in the November/December issue.

BR5-49 was at WE Fest here in Detroit Lakes last August. As Hazel Smith reported, "thousands turned out in the rain" to see them. There are 50,000 country fans per day at the WE Fest, and over half of them came pouring out of the campgrounds wearing their rain gear and looking like refugees on the move when they heard this group playing their upbeat blasts from the past.

Rich, you're right when you wrote that we are so "Garthed, Shaniaed, McGrawed and Faithed out" that we need some traditional country to embrace. But you're wrong when you write that BR5-49 won't help fill that need. Let's give BR5-49 a little space and a chance to grow before we flatten 'em. I enjoyed their album. And 25,000 cheering country music fans can't be all wrong about their live show!

Ted Fiskevold  
Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

### Randy 'n' More

In your November/December issue, you reviewed the new albums of three of my favorite artists, Mary Chapin Carpenter, K.T. Oslin and Randy Travis. The women got good reviews, but Randy's album didn't. I'm a big Travis fan, so maybe I'm biased. I bought Randy's album, *Full Circle*, and I like it. I don't remember Roger Miller's version of "King of the Road," but I think Randy's is great. I also think his label missed the boat when they didn't use it for the first single.

I thought Randy's acting career was gaining momentum in 1995, but I have been disappointed in the little I have

seen in 1996. What happened?

I agree with Alan Jackson's comment in the November/December cover story on the current state of country music. I can't imagine a radio station refusing to promote a Merle Haggard concert because he's an "old act." I have quit listening to country radio. When I want to hear country music, I turn on CMT or TNN. They play a variety of artists and the best of the old as well as the new. I like good music whether it is old or new.

M.J. Rozier  
Dillon, South Carolina

### Restless Tritt

Sounds like Bob Allen likes Travis Tritt's *The Restless Kind* almost as much as I do (Record Reviews, November/December). I haven't been a fan of his since day one, day two probably! As much as I enjoy his hard-driving songs—no one can "holler" as good as Travis—"Where the Corn Don't Grow" and "More Than You'll Ever Know" are where he shines brightest. And the fact that Marty Stuart's boot prints are all over here makes it better yet! However you wish to describe these two together is a matter of personal preference. For me it's comparable to listening to a pack of coyotes expressing themselves (loudly) in the early morning darkness, or a whitetail doe and fawn feeding in my garden. Odd comparison? Naw! The Double Trouble show I attended just recently was just as exciting. It set my heart to pounding, brought a smile to my face that wouldn't quit, and I felt just as privileged to have witnessed it! Wow!

Roxanne Johnston  
Hibbing, Minnesota

### K.T. Oslin and Letters

Here's a high five, Mr. Kienzle. When I started to read your review of K.T. Oslin's new album, *My Roots Are Showing*, in the November/December issue, a growl began in my throat, but it soon changed to a happy holler. I've idolized K.T. from the beginning and really respect her writing. But the insightful things you say about her gave me a happy glow. You sure hit the spot on this one. She is so special. Thank you.


Now, *Country Music* is undoubtedly the leader in country music magazines, but I'm distressed that you cut down on the Letters space lately. My friends and I feel that the letters are interesting and show the way the fans feel. We love the Letters section. Please don't cut it down.

Jan P. Weaver  
Chicago, Illinois

*Back at fighting length.—Ed.*

### A Fan of BRC

I'm writing this in regards to the story in your November/December magazine about Billy Ray Cyrus. On pages 22 and 24. I don't think after reading it that I will



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| <p><b>ASSOCIATE IN SPECIALIZED BUSINESS DEGREE PROGRAMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Business Management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accounting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bus. Mgmt.—Finance Option</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bus. Mgmt.—Marketing Option</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Applied Computer Science</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality Management</li> </ul> <p><b>ASSOCIATE IN SPECIALIZED TECHNOLOGY DEGREE PROGRAMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering Tech.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering Technology</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering Tech.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Engineering Tech.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electronics Technology</li> </ul> <p><b>CAREER DIPLOMA PROGRAMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Personal Computer Specialist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Computer-Assisted Bookkeeping</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PC Repair</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A+ Cert. Test Prep.*</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Desktop Publishing &amp; Design</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PC Fundamentals*</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High School</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Catering/Gourmet Cooking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home Health Aide*</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical Office Assistant</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dental Assistant</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bartender</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> TV/VCR Repair</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Auto Mechanics</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Legal Assistant</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Child Day Care</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Restaurant Management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Animal Care Specialist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Travel Agent</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning &amp; Refrigeration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electronics</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Secretary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrician</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Art</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small Business Management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Interior Decorating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife/Forestry Conservation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Legal Secretary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Mechanics</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fashion Merchandising</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gun Repair</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle Repair</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Surveying &amp; Mapping</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fitness &amp; Nutrition</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Photography</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Freelance Writer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dressmaking &amp; Design</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Florist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Aide</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home Inspector</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical Transcriptionist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Professional Locksmithing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appliance Repair</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private Investigator</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small Engine Repair</li> </ul> <p><b>COMPUTER PROGRAMMING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> QuickBASIC</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visual Basic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visual C++</li> </ul> |
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\*For personal enrichment

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## SINGERS!

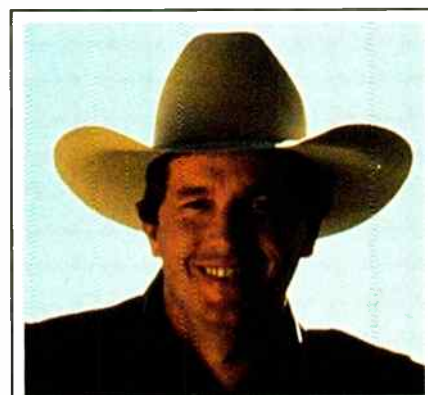
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YES! Send the George Strait Biography when it's ready plus a FREE cassette. Enclosed find \$22.95 and \$2.95 p/h. (89G/39315).

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

be buying your magazine after my membership runs out. I am a lady of 72 years old and enjoy BRC very much. I for one don't believe you gave him a fair shake. Billy Ray has a heart of gold and helps other people all the time. I only wish the best for him and his family. I was able to enjoy his concert when he was in Madison, Wisconsin. Believe me, if I wasn't living on Social Security, I'd travel just to see him and hear him sing. He really cares for his fans. He does so much for other people. Please give him a little break, at least that much.

Betty Blattenberger  
Madison, Wisconsin

### In Praise of BRC's Approach

Thank God everyone is entitled to their own opinion! Because if we had to rely on Bob Millard's record review of Billy Ray Cyrus new CD, *Trail of Tears*, millions of people would have missed out on some great music! The fact that producers Cotton and Scaife were not used on this CD seems to be a big part of this review. Billy Ray chose to co-produce this CD with bandmate Terry Shelton because he is focused on his music, he knows what he wants to accomplish, and he knows which is the best way, for *him*, to go about doing that. He is true to his music, true to his band, Sly Dog, and true to himself! That's why he can sleep at night! Which, after such a misguided review, is probably more than we can say for Mr. Millard.

Jo Chumley  
Hanceville, Alabama

### CMM in the Minority

Bob Millard's review of Billy Ray Cyrus' *Trail of Tears* was so negative that I am completely turned off by your magazine. I wonder if he was having an unusually bad day when he wrote that. In case you don't read *Billboard*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *People*, *Music City News*, *Country Weekly*, *Country Music People* (England) and *Country Music International* (England), I have enclosed their reviews. They say it so much better than I could. Especially Chet Flippo, writer of the Nashville Scene for *Billboard*, who writes "Billy Ray Deserves Some Respect." In this case, it seems that Bob Millard is the outsider. Please send me a refund for the remainder of my subscription.

C. Milner  
Port St. Lucie, Florida  
Bob Millard stands by his review.—Ed.

### Sweeps Winner

Aug/Sept 1996 \$1000 Renewal Sweepstakes won by Mrs. F. J. Babin, Gibson, LA.

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



# CLASSIFIED

For Ad Rates Call (800) 762-3555  
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UNPUBLISHED BOOK, Elvis Presley, The Fifties by Walter Bruce and Lloyd Ozment. Includes free unpublished photo, writings, pictures. 100 pages. Send \$10 plus \$2.00 to Bruce Treasure Corp., 3459 Villa Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107.

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BEAUTIFUL, COLORFUL, Country-Western boot key chains, and cowboy boot candles. Many unique designs. Affordable prices. Free brochure. Jennifer Kam Collection, P.O. Box 604506, Bayside, NY 11360-4506.

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## RECORDING

YOUR GOALS ARE MY GOALS. Work with award winning artist, in artist development recording. Let me help you achieve your goals. MidLand Productions, P.O. Box 2303, Hendersonville, TN 37077. (615) 824-1503.

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POEMS, SONGS WANTED. \$100,000 - recording contract possible! Free appraisal. Majestic Records, Box 1140, Linden, TX 75563.

URGENT! SONGS, POEMS NEEDED. Radio, TV, royalties. Hollywood Records, 6000 Sunset, Studio M, Hollywood, CA 90028.

WANTED COUNTRY GOSPEL song poem hits! \$5,000 cash advance royalties information! Top Records, Box 23505-K, Nashville, TN 37202.

POEMS/LYRICS NEEDED by hit songwriters. Win awards! Free evaluation! Send poems to: Edlee Music, Box 15312-CMM, Boston, MA 02215-5312.

POEMS WANTED FOR MUSICAL SETTING and recording. We pay above costs on selected poems. Jeff Roberts Publishing, 299 Newport Avenue (CM), Wollaston, MA 02170.

HOLLYWOOD RECORDERS makes songwriter demos. Free information, samples. 603 Seagaze, #138, Oceanside, CA 92054. (619) 757-7446.

SINGERS, SONGWRITERS NEEDED. Free! Applications: United Agency, Box 862-D, New York, NY 10009.

YOUR OWN SONG! Write just words or words/music. We provide first-class demos! Professional studio musicians. CD quality recording. \$150-\$250/complete. Sample tape available. Nashville Digital Demos: 113 Catawba Ct., Nashville, TN 37013. 1-(800) 484-8581, code #3631.

LYRICS, POEMS FOR MUSICAL setting and recording. \$1,000 for best poem. Publishing available. Talent (CM), P.O. Box 31, Quincy, MA 02169.

DEMOS LOW AS \$40/SONG! Demos, P.O. Box 463, Beaver, PA 15009-0463. (412) 847-1651.

AWARD WINNING SONGWRITER/recording artist credited with 8 chart records, offering co-writing on accepted material. Send best song lyrics to: Ramsey Kearney, 602 Inverness Avenue, Nashville, TN 37204. 1-(615) 297-8029.

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## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING INFORMATION

**RATES:** Regular classified ads are \$6.50 per word. Minimum ad 10 words. All advertisements are set uniformly. They are set solid with the lead words set in caps. Abnormal capitalization, type variations, illustrations and borders are not permitted. The classified display rate is \$340 per column inch. The magazine will pub-set most regular type faces at no charge. The column width is 2.25 inches including border. For ads using either an illustration or halftone, send negative film, 133 line screen.

**PAYMENT:** All classified advertising must be prepaid with order. Make check or money order payable to *Country Music Magazine*. For credit card orders (Visa or MasterCard only), include account number, expiration date, signature and the amount you authorize *Country Music Magazine* to charge your account.

**CLOSING DATE:** *Country Music Magazine* is published 6 times per year. The next available issue is March/April, which closes January 20th; the May/June issue closes March 20th.

Mail advertising copy, payments and production materials for display ads to: *Country Music Magazine*, Classified Department, P.O. Box 570, Clearwater, Florida 34617-0570. For overnight courier service send to: 1510 Barry Street, Suite D, Clearwater, Florida 34616. Telephones: 1-(800) 762-3555; International (813) 449-1775; Fax (813) 442-2567.



# FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY

## VOTE

### MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1997

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have a 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 of the Month

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

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

#### Do You Own These Things?

5. Please check any of the following owned by you or anyone in your household:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stereo Equipment          | <input type="checkbox"/> Any 4-Wheel Drive Vehicle    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compact Disc Player       | <input type="checkbox"/> Roto-Tiller                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video Cassette Recorder   | <input type="checkbox"/> Riding Lawn Mower            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sport Utility Vehicle     | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Tractor               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pickup Truck (Compact)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Chain Saw                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pickup Truck (Full Size)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Power Tools                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) | <input type="checkbox"/> Guitar                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cowboy Boots              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Musical Instruments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Clothes           | <input type="checkbox"/> Pickup Truck Accessories     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing Equipment         | <input type="checkbox"/> Car or Truck Cassette Player |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting Equipment         | <input type="checkbox"/> Car or Truck CD Player       |

#### 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: January Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.



#### Patsy Montana in Legends

As is the case with many early country performers, there's very little reissue material available on Patsy Montana. One good one did exist not too long ago: In 1984, when Columbia was mining its vaults for the Columbia Historic Edition series, a volume on Patsy appeared. Though now out of print, you may be able to find it at used record stores. It contained 12 tracks she recorded with The Prairie Ramblers, including the original version of "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart."

Meanwhile, a few random cuts by Patsy have appeared on other reissues, most recently on *Columbia Country Classics, Volume 1* (COL 46029). This release contains the original "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" recording, along with material from other early Columbia artists like Roy Acuff, Spade Cooley, Bob Wills, Texas Ruby and more. Available on cassette or CD. Regular price \$9.98 cassette, \$13.98 CD. Members' price \$7.98 cassette, \$11.98 CD.

#### Buried Treasures Special

CMSA members are entitled to a discount on all of the products featured in this section. Take \$2.00 off each item featured this time around, including a set of

early, rare Patsy Cline recordings, and some classic collections on Ferlin Husky, Ray Price, Lefty Frizzell and various bluegrass artists. There's also a new Jeannie C. Riley best-of package featuring her Tom T. Hall-penned classic, "Harper Valley P.T.A." Include membership number if taking discount. See ordering instructions in *Buried Treasures*.

#### Essential Collector Special

Members may also take a discount on anything featured in *Essential Collector*. Members may deduct \$2.00 off the regular prices shown for the Terri Gibbs and Glen Campbell reissues, and the books on Ernest Tubb, The Louvin Brothers and *Hee Haw*. On the Emmylou box, members are entitled to a \$5.00 discount—pay \$44.98 instead of \$49.98 for this three-CD set. Be sure to include your membership number if taking discount, and see ordering instructions on the *Essential Collector* page.

#### Classic Photo

The late Patsy Montana had a long-time fan in Suzy Bogguss. When Suzy's first album, *Somewhere Between*, came out in 1988, she paid tribute to Montana by including a cover of "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart," a song Suzy had loved for years. The two met for the first time at Fan Fair in 1989. Our own Hazel Smith was there, and says Nashville journalist Bob Oermann set up the meeting, surprising Suzy. Suzy cried upon seeing her idol, Hazel reports.

#### How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 010297N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Include \$3.00 postage/handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional.





# TOP 25

## Albums

## Singles

1. Alan Jackson ..... *Everything I Love*
2. LeAnn Rimes ..... *Blue*
3. Reba McEntire ..... *What If It's You?*
4. Deana Carter ..... *Did I Shave My Legs for This?*
5. Clint Black ..... *The Greatest Hits*
6. George Strait ..... *Blue Clear Sky*
7. Brooks & Dunn ..... *Borderline*
8. Shania Twain ..... *The Woman in Me*
9. John Michael Montgomery ... *What I Do Best*
10. Mary Chapin Carpenter .... *A Place in the World*
11. Terri Clark ..... *Just the Same*
12. Mindy McCready ..... *Ten Thousand Angels*
13. Jeff Foxworthy ..... *Crank It Up—  
The Music Album*
14. Alan Jackson ..... *The Greatest Hits Collection*
15. Bryan White ..... *Between Now and Forever*
16. Garth Brooks ..... *The Hits*
17. Patty Loveless ..... *The Trouble With the Truth*
18. Faith Hill ..... *It Matters to Me*
19. Kevin Sharp ..... *Measure of a Man*
20. Tracy Lawrence ..... *Time Marches On*
21. Garth Brooks ..... *Fresh Horses*
22. Trace Adkins ..... *Dreamin' Out Loud*
23. Various Artists ..... *The Best of Country Sing  
the Best of Disney*
24. Collin Raye ..... *I Think About You*
25. Alabama ..... *Christmas, Volume II*

1. Alan Jackson ..... *Little Bitty*
2. Reba McEntire ..... *The Fear of Being Alone*
3. Deana Carter ..... *Strawberry Wine*
4. Trace Adkins ..... *Every Light in the House*
5. Terri Clark ..... *Poor, Poor Pitiful Me*
6. Garth Brooks ..... *That Ol' Wind*
7. LeAnn Rimes ..... *One Way Ticket (Because  
I Can)*
8. George Strait ..... *I Can Still Make Cheyenne*
9. David Kersh ..... *Goodnight Sweetheart*
10. Ricochet ..... *Love Is Stronger Than Pride*
11. Patty Loveless ..... *Lonely Too Long*
12. John Michael Montgomery . *Friends*
13. Tracy Byrd ..... *Big Love*
14. Kevin Sharp ..... *Nobody Knows*
15. Tim McGraw ..... *Maybe We Should Just  
Sleep on It*
16. Mary Chapin Carpenter .... *Let Me Into Your Heart*
17. Tracy Lawrence ..... *Is That a Tear*
18. Mila Mason ..... *That's Enough of That*
19. Gary Allan ..... *Her Man*
20. Faith Hill ..... *I Can't Do That Anymore*
21. Vince Gill ..... *Pretty Little Adriana*
22. Trisha Yearwood ..... *Everybody Knows*
23. Bryan White ..... *That's Another Song*
24. Clint Black ..... *Like the Rain*
25. Travis Tritt ..... *More Than You'll Ever Know*

## A 25% Discount For CMSA Members Only

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 members' 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.

Make check payable to *Country Music*. Mail to: Top 25, P.O. Box 292552, Nashville, TN 37229

Check one:  Cassette \$9.98, CMSA Members \$7.49  
 CD \$16.98, CMSA Members \$12.74

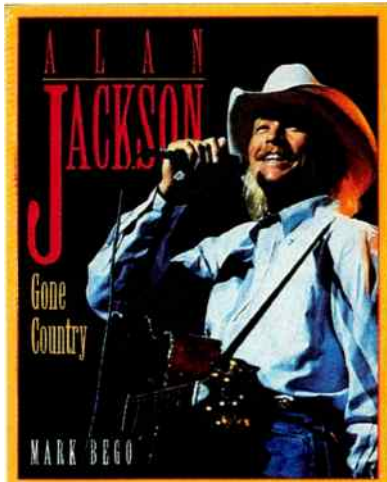
Add \$3.00 postage and handling. Circle numbers you want from album list above. Offer expires May 31, 1997

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<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	Postage and Handling	\$ _____
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<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	Total Enclosed	\$ _____
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I want to join the CMSA and get Member's price. I'm adding \$16 for membership which includes an extra year's subscription to *Country Music Magazine*. **010297T**

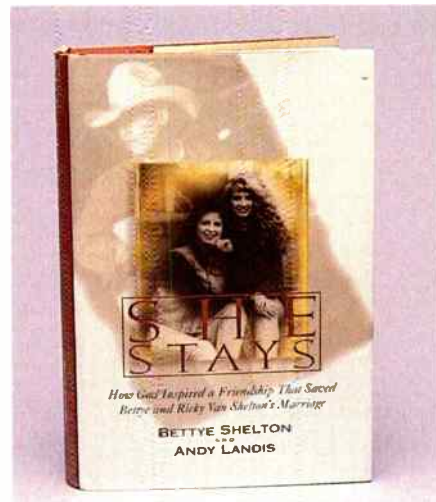
# EDITOR'S CHOICE



**ALAN JACKSON: GONE COUNTRY**

Loaded with more than 100 full-color and black-and-white photographs, *Alan Jackson: Gone Country* is a celebration of this great vocalist and an insightful look at his life and music. It starts by examining his hardscrabble roots, when his family lived in a converted toolshed that his grandfather built for his parents. After working as a carpenter, Jackson started playing small clubs and bars in a band called The Strayhorns. Bestselling author Mark Bego then explores Jackson's big breakthrough in the 90's, his rise to the top of the country charts, his philosophies about music, his inspirations and his off-stage pastimes.

Jackson's life has been as vivid and unusual as any country lyric. *Alan Jackson Gone Country* separates fact from fiction, and what emerges is a candid but affectionate account of the popular singer's life and music. Ask for Item #B5A, \$19.95.



**SHE STAYS: HOW GOD INSPIRED A FRIENDSHIP THAT SAVED BETTYE AND RICKY VAN SHELTON'S MARRIAGE**

*She Stays* takes you behind the scenes of the dream-come-true romance of Bettye and Ricky Van Shelton into a world of personal struggle and turmoil that threatened to destroy their marriage and everything they held dear. It brings you face-to-face with a woman's commitment to her marriage and the pain of forgiving what to many would be unforgivable. Hardcover, illustrated. Item B6M, \$16.99.



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We have put this special cassette collection together to give Academy Members the opportunity to enjoy the best from one of country music's great legends. Featured on these five cassette tapes are such songs as "Orange Blossom Special," "Uncle Pen," "Footprints in the Snow," "Blue Grass Breakdown," "I Saw the Light," "Shenandoah Breakdown," "Mule Skinner Blues," "Prison Song," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Nine Pound Hammer," "Can't You Hear Me Calling," "Shady Grove," "The Long Bow," "Mighty Dark to Travel," "Music Valley Waltz," "The Old Crossroads," "The Old Brown County Barn," "Stay Away from Me," "Bluest Man in Town," "Angels, Rock Me to Sleep," "Dancin' in Brancin'," "Gotta Travel On," "New Mule Skinner Blues," "In the Pines," "Roanoke," "River of Death," "Boat of Love," "Girl in the Blue Velvet

Band," "Toy Heart," "Rocky Road Blues," "Blue Yodel No. 4," "Kentucky Waltz," "Summer-time Is Past and Gone," "Will You Be Loving Another Man," "I Hear a Sweet Voice Calling," "Molly and Tenbrooks (The Race Horse Song)," "Old Danger Field" AND MANY MORE! Cassettes only. Item #CASS20, regularly \$34.75, now \$19.95. YOU SAVE \$14.80!



**THE ULTIMATE RICKY VAN SHELTON COLLECTION—FOUR CASSETTES, 40 HITS—OVER 20% OFF!**

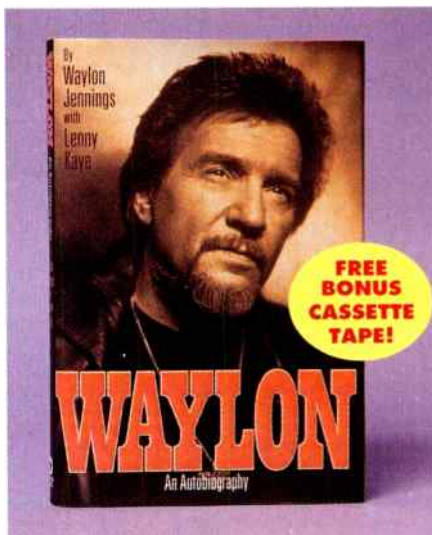
Here are 30 of Ricky's best, on three CBS/Columbia tapes, including: "Life Turned Her That Way," "Don't We All Have the Right," "Statue of a Fool," "I've Cried My Last Tear for You," "I'll Leave This World Loving You," "Don't Send Me No Angels," "Crime of Passion," "Somebody Lied," "From a Jack to a King," "Ultimately Fine," "I Don't Care," "Wild-Eyed Dream," "Crazy Over You," "Living Proof," "Oh Pretty Woman," "Holy Bible," "Don't Overlook Salvation," "Working Man Blues" AND MANY MORE! Sorry, no CD's. Ask for #CS9B2, regularly \$27.80, now \$16.50, YOU SAVE \$4.35!

**NEW! WAYLON: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

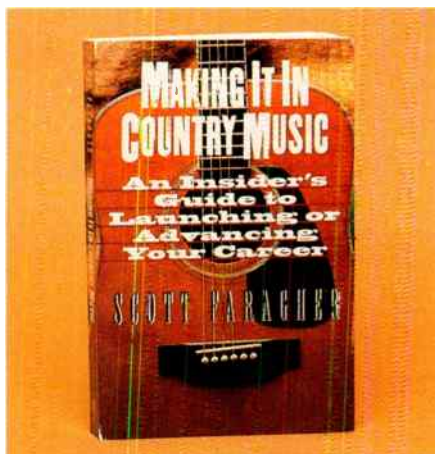
A contemporary country music legend—you know it! Over 27 million records sold to date, 16 hitting Number One—but what about the man behind the music? Now, for the first time, Waylon tells all about his towering career that stretches from the mid-50's, when he was a young protege of the great Buddy Holly, through four fabulous decades of country music. Johnny Cash says, "Of all the books about or by celebrities, it isn't very often that one comes along that I have the slightest interest in. I love this one." But probably Willie Nelson sums it up best when he says, "No one knows Waylon's story better than Waylon himself. Finally, here is the autobiography we've all been waiting for." Well, Willie, I know I have. Item #B5W/R13, \$23.

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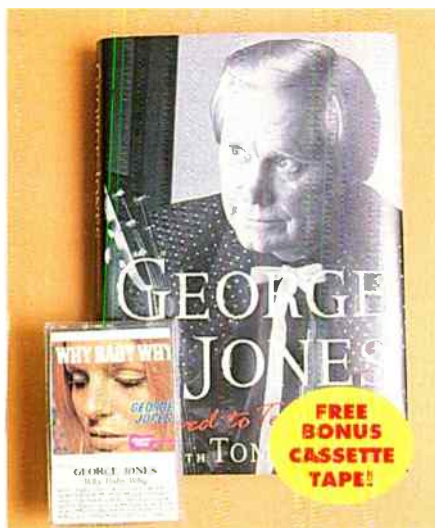






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## THE GEORGE JONES AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Here, for the first time, in *I Lived to Tell It All*, George Jones delivers a no-holds-barred account of his excesses and ecstasies. How alcohol ruled his life and performances. How violence marred many friendships and relationships. How money was something to be made but never held on to. And, finally, how the love of a good woman can ultimately change a man, redeem him, and save his life.

Notorious for evading the press, the subject of two unauthorized biographies and countless cover stories, George Jones finally comes forward with his own story, told to Tom Carter (highly respected co-author of books with Ralph Emery, Reba McEntire and others). Ask for Item #B10A/R12, \$23.

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Here are painfully true stories from 23 country music headliners, sharing their embarrassing private moments for the first time, holding nothing back. These are sometimes hilarious and sometimes humiliating anecdotes from the likes of Garth Brooks, Vince Gill and Aaron Tippin. Item #B8L, \$7.95.

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## MY LIFE WITH TRAVIS TRITT: KEEP THE MEMORIES BURY THE LOVE

They married right out of high school. As Travis' music career took off, they began to grow apart, splitting just as he started to make the move from local club act to national headliner. Now, years later, the former Karen Tritt tells their story in *My Life with Travis Tritt*, and shares her feelings about the man she says is still her greatest love. Item #B5V, \$12.95.

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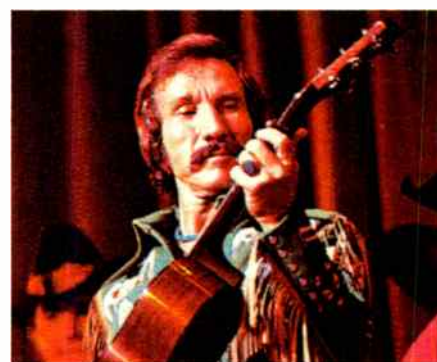
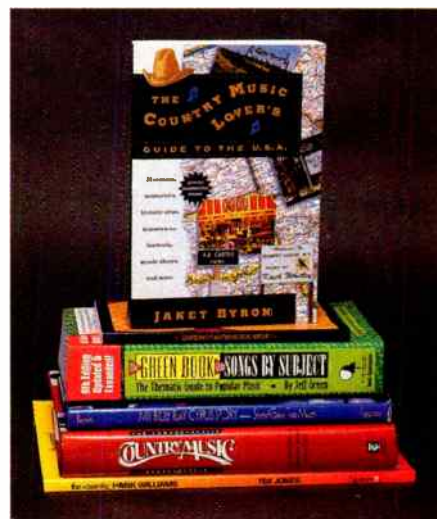
Published by the Editors of *Country Music Magazine*, here is the best country music reference you'll find anywhere. This expansive answer book gives you over 600 alphabetically arranged entries. Hardcover, over 600 photographs. Item #B1S, regularly \$25.00, now \$20.

## OVER 20% OFF! JUNE CARTER CASH: FROM THE HEART

This is a celebration of life as June has lived it, presented with all the honesty and frankness that is her trademark. Hardcover, illustrated. Item #B8B, regularly \$12.95, now \$9.95.

## AN ESSENTIAL MARTY ROBBINS COLLECTION—SIX CASSETTES—OVER \$16.00 OFF!

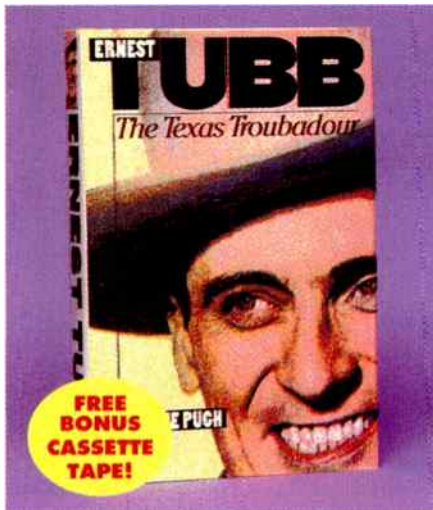
This six-cassette collection features 58 hits. Just some of the songs included are "Singing the Blues," "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You," "Lovesick Blues," "I Started Loving You Again," "Don't Worry," "Bouquet of Roses," "Kaw-Liga," "Begging to You," "San Angelo," "Tall Handsome Stranger," "Dusty Winds," "Doggone Cowboy," "The Red Hills of Utah," "Cool Water," "Old Red," "Johnny Fedavo," "Abilene Rose," "The Master's Call," "The Fastest Gun Around," "Utah Carol," "Big Iron," "Billy the Kid," "A Hundred and Sixty Acres," "They're Hanging Me Tonight," "Streets of Laredo," "Man Walks Among Us," "El Paso," "In the Valley," "The Strawberry Roan," "Running Gun," "The Little Green Valley," "Bend in the River," "A White Sport Coat (And a Pink Carnation)," "In the Valley of the Rio Grande," "Try a Little Tenderness," "The Way I Love You Best," "Sometimes When We Touch," "A Man and a Train," "This Much a Man," "Life," "Don't You Think," "Two Gun Daddy," "Twentieth Century Drifter," "Gardenias in Her Hair" AND MORE! Cassettes only. Item No. CS9C, regularly \$41.70, now \$24.95, YOU SAVE OVER \$16.75!



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You also don't want to miss this memorable bestselling video featuring 18 performances: "El Paso," "A White Sport 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 Robbins' Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." It also features rare appearances from early television shows and the big screen. Ask for Item #G2A, regularly \$39.95, now \$34.95. YOU SAVE \$5.00!



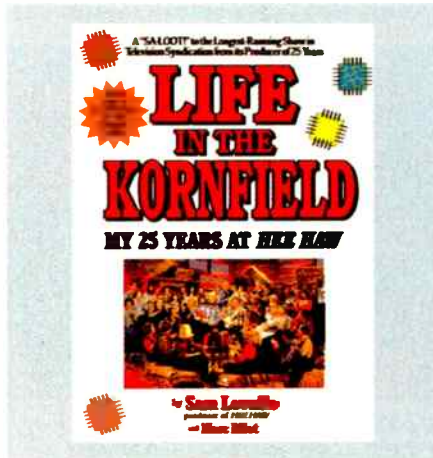


**NEW! ERNEST TUBB: THE TEXAS TROUBADOUR**

In this new definitive biography of the legendary Ernest Tubb, noted author Ronnie Pugh brings one of country music's greatest performers back to center stage. Delving into fan club journals, songbooks, newspaper broadcast logs, record company files and hundreds of interviews, author Pugh draws a picture of Tubb—exploring both his personal and professional life—that is unprecedented in its intimacy, detail and vitality. Hardcover, 455 pages, illustrated. Item #B7E/R15, \$29.95.

**ORDER NOW AND GET A FREE ERNEST TUBB CASSETTE**

Get the Ernest Tubb cassette, *Walking the Floor Over You...* FREE...when you order this great biography in the next 10 days!



**JUST OUT! THE HEE HAW STORY**

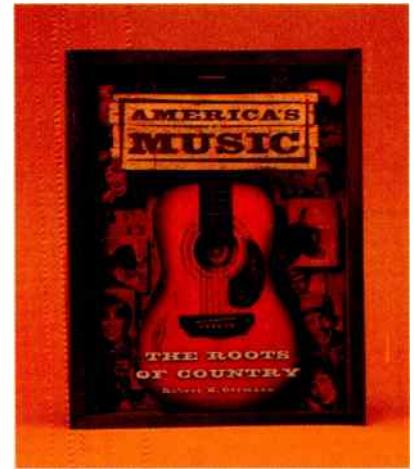
Author and *Hee Haw* producer Sam Lovullo remarks, "Hee Haw was the Grand Ole Opry of television, with a little bit of something for everyone." Now he brings you the real story behind Roy Clark, Buck Owens, Minnie Pearl, Junior Samples, Grandpa Jones, Lulu Roman, The Wonder Dog, The Hee Haw Honeys, the music, the big-name guest stars, the jokes and everything else that made this show so popular. It includes over 50 behind-the-scenes photos. Ask for Item #B4Z, \$15.50.

**COUNTRY MUSIC'S MOST TALKED ABOUT SPECIAL IS NOW IN BOOK AND ON VIDEO! AMERICA'S MUSIC: THE ROOTS OF COUNTRY**

Here is your chance to get TBS's widely acclaimed country music documentary on three fascinating videos along with a handsomely illustrated companion book.

The three-volume video gift set features legendary performers like Patsy Cline, Merle Haggard, Roy Rogers, Chet Atkins and Hank Williams, as well as today's hottest stars like Alan Jackson, Wynonna Judd and Brooks & Dunn, to tell the history of country music. There are more than 200 songs plus behind-the-scenes and rare concert footage. The six 60-minute programs include: *The Birth of a Sound* and *Singing Cowboys and Western Swing* (Vol. 1 Item #V7S), *Honky Tonk Kings and Queens* and *The Nashville Sound* (Vol. 2, Item #V7W), *Folk Revival* and *From Rockabilly to Rockin' the Country* (Vol. 3, Item #V7Y). Each video contains two shows. You get 360 fascinating minutes if you choose to order all three. Ordered separately, each video is \$34.95. If you choose to order all three, ask for Item #V6W for \$89.95. **YOU SAVE ALMOST \$15.00!**

The companion book by the same title is available separately or along with the three-video package. This 240-page oversized softcover edition features some of the best country music photographs you will find anywhere. It is a milestone book assembled by the highly respected Robert K. Oermann. Ask for Item #B8S, \$24.95. Or order it along with all three videos for \$109.95 (Item #V6W/B8S). **YOU SAVE A TOTAL OF ALMOST \$20.00!**

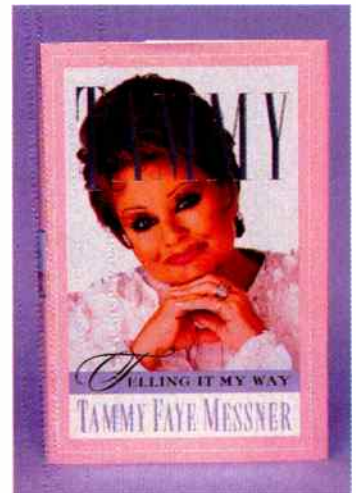


**NEW! TAMMY: TELLING IT MY WAY**

A decade ago, Tammy Faye Bakker was America's televangelical sweetheart. With her husband Jim, she led the PTL ministry, a religious organization so strong that its broadcasts were top-rated fare and its contributions largely financed the construction of one of the nation's most popular tourist destinations, Heritage USA.

But suddenly, PTL came tumbling down. All was lost. Jim went to jail, while Tammy desperately tried to rebuild her life and career. Now, in *Tammy: Telling It My Way*, she finally reveals the unknown triumphs, secret tragedies and unswerving faith that have made her one of America's most controversial and fascinating women.

Powerful, poignant, candid and unforgettable, *Tammy* tells Tammy Faye's own side of the story for the first time. This is the story of a survivor, from her difficult upbringing right up to her current rebirth. Hardcover, 339 pages, illustrated. Item #B5X, \$22.95.

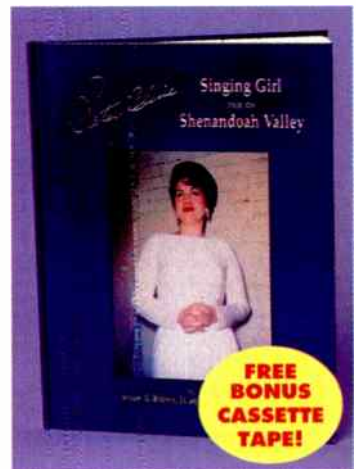


**NEW! PATSY CLINE: SINGING GIRL FROM THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY**

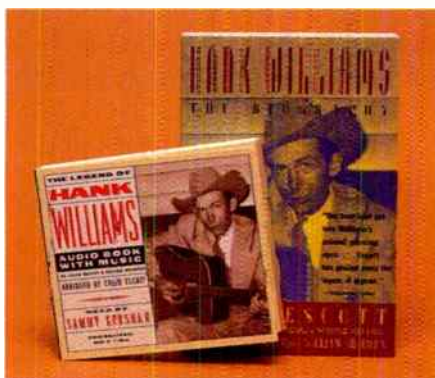
Born Virginia Patterson Hensley in Winchester, Virginia, Patsy Cline was raised for the most part in the Shenandoah Valley. This new hardcover book with its bountiful collection of hitherto unpublished photographs goes beyond the scanty, previously published material about Patsy and delves deeply into her first 27 years. The whole fascinating story is here, from the preteen years with the family always on the move, to the performances at Winchester's Patton Dance Hall at the age of 13, to the early drop out from school to help support the family, to the failed first marriage that gave her the name Cline, to the singing success that took her out of the Shenandoah Valley and on to stardom in Nashville. Item #B6T/R14, \$19.95.

**GET A FREE PATSY CLINE CASSETTE!**

Get the cassette, *Patsy Cline Sings Her Favorites* ...FREE...when you order in the next 10 days!







### NEW! LEGEND OF HANK WILLIAMS—AUDIO BOOK WITH MUSIC

Here is perhaps the most unique product ever released on Hank Williams. This is the real story of country music's greatest star, based on gripping first-person accounts from those who knew him, as well as rare excerpts of Hank himself. There are also 13 songs including "Lovesick Blues," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "Your Cheatin' Heart," plus two spoken recordings. It's two-and-one-half hours on two cassette tapes or CD's from Mercury Records. Item #3145326012, cassettes \$24.95, CD's \$34.95.

### HANK WILLIAMS: THE BIOGRAPHY

Also don't miss the definitive written word on this legendary star, now out in paperback so you save money. It discards the myths and what emerges is Hank Williams as a "pure product of America"—driven, unsophisticated, intelligent, weak, and above all, a musical genius. Item #B2APB, \$12.95.



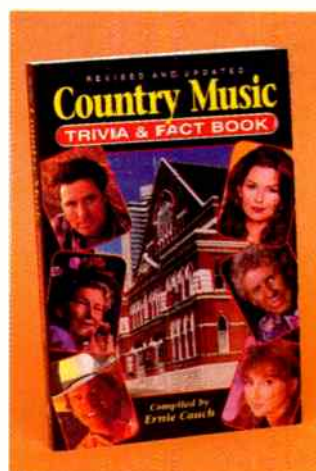
### NEWLY REVISED AND UPDATED! COUNTRY MUSIC TRIVIA & FACT BOOK

This 1992 bestselling answer book is back and better than ever, with all the latest facts and trivia that every serious country music fan should have at his or her fingertips.

More than 2,000 facts will tantalize country music fans. These fascinating questions and revealing answers about groups, stars, writers, songs and famous and not-so-famous places and moments in the world of country music will provide hours of entertaining reading.

Also included are updated lists of award winners, biographical sketches, photos and the behind-the-scenes stories of institutions such as the Ryman Auditorium, Opryland, Dollywood, The Nashville Network (TNN), *Austin City Limits* and the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Whether you are a fan of the current country music scene or you love the stars and music of yesteryear, this new illustrated edition is a must. Item #B6R, \$9.95.

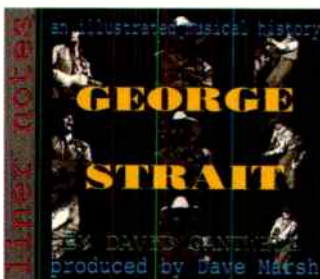


### GEORGE STRAIT FOUR CASSETTE/CD SET: STRAIT OUT OF THE BOX

This *Billboard* Top Ten set is the ultimate George Strait collection. The four cassette tapes or CD's feature 72 songs, and there's a 72-page illustrated booklet. Just some of the songs you'll find include "Right or Wrong," "Let's Fall to Pieces Together," "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," "The Cowboy Rides Away," "The Fireman," "The Chair," "You're Something Special to Me," "Haven't You Heard," "Wonderland of Love," "I Cross My Heart" AND MORE! SPECIAL BONUS: ORDER THIS SET AND GET THE GEORGE STRAIT BOOK BELOW ...FREE! Item #MCAD-11263, cassette \$49.98, CD \$59.98.



### GEORGE STRAIT: AN ILLUSTRATED MUSICAL HISTORY



Edited by *New York Times* bestselling author Dave Marsh and authored by David Cantwell, this popular addition to Putnam Publishing's new compact book series lets fans follow the story of this boy from a small Texas town who made it big in Music City. Photos, timelines, historical data and music criticism combine to make this book absolutely indispensable for the serious George Strait fan. And the unique CD package design is a perfect touch. Order this new compact edition by itself...or GET IT FREE when you order the great George Strait collection just above. Item #B10B, \$7.95.

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# Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

**Patsy Cline:** I annotated the U.S. release of this collection, which was originally issued in England, so just the facts. Patsy Cline's first real national exposure came on the CBS-TV show *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, a sort of *Star Search* program, hosted by beloved radio-TV personality Godfrey, who had previously featured Marvin Rainwater and George Hamilton IV as contestants. On January 21, 1957, Patsy won first place singing "Walking After Midnight," a song she'd recorded that had only recently been released by Coral Records. The TV exposure helped make it her first hit, and she did semi-regular Godfrey appearances over the next year. *The Birth of a Star* (RE 2108-2) issues 19 of these performances on CD (the cassette has two songs less).

On the show, Patsy sang with Godfrey's own pop-oriented band, some of the songs coming from her Coral recordings. Though they were mostly country, she also sang a few oddities, including an explosive performance of "Write Me in Care of the Blues" that, as the reaction reveals, floored both Godfrey and the audience. "Try Again," the ballad "Two Cigarettes in an Ashtray" and "Your Cheatin' Heart" showed her comfortable singing without the fiddle and steel that she preferred (and almost exclusively performed with) in those days. Certain numbers, like "Stop the World and Let Me Off" also pointed the way to her crossover future. Between songs, she was at ease with longtime host Godfrey, whose on-air folksiness masked considerable arrogance. The CD features a second performance of "Walkin' After Midnight," which took place after the song became a hit and won her awards.

**Johnny Paycheck:** Though recent Country Music Foundation collections focused on greatest hits of Jean Shepard and Faron Young, they've



done a major favor for everyone interested in classic honky tonk by digging deeper for *Johnny Paycheck: The Real Mr. Heartache* (CMF-023D). Subtitled "The Little Darlin' Years," it refers to the Nashville label where Paycheck first made his mark in the mid-60's. Paycheck had previously recorded for Decca and Mercury as Donny Young, but no one paid any attention. They began to when Paycheck recorded raw, vital honky tonk for both Hilltop Records and Little Darlin', a Nashville label owned by Paycheck and his producer, Aubrey Mayhew, from 1964 through 1968.

This was raw music, no Nashville softening or gimmickry to grab pop record buyers. The fiddles and Lloyd Green's pedal steel were up front as Paycheck, sounding like a cross between Buck Owens and George Jones, wailed away. This was the Paycheck of "Lovin' Machine," his cover of "A-11," "Jukebox Charlie," "The Cave" and the Paycheck-Mayhew classic, "Apartment #9." Fans who first came upon him in the early 70's era that produced "She's All I Got" or the Outlaw period marked by "Take This Job and Shove It" will be amazed. Only "Lovin' Machine" was a big hit at the time, and looking back 30 years, it's amazing such vital, tremendous honky tonk was taken for granted. One track, "The Late and Great Me," was never issued. Paycheck's voice jumps out of the speakers in a

way it rarely did on many of his bigger hits. For a chilling interlude, check out one of Paycheck's greatest early performances: the haunting "Like Me (You'll Recover in Time)," a tale of broken lovers who wind up in the same mental institution, a song comparable to Porter Wagoner's similarly focused "The Rubber Room." Paycheck's wild past and violent future sometimes serve as an undercurrent, particularly on "Pardon Me I've Got Someone to Kill," though it's amusing to hear him sing of the prison from which "no one's ever escaped" on "The Ballad of Frisco Bay."

**Ferlin Husky:** Facts only on this release also, since I annotated and assisted in production. Capitol Nashville's *Ferlin Husky: Vintage Collections* (36593) differs from the out-of-print Husky Capitol Collector's Series volume by mixing hits, unreleased material and LP cuts from throughout Husky's career. It includes his first Capitol recording as a guest singer on Cliffie Stone's recording of Roy Acuff's "Tennessee Central No. 9." Signed to Capitol as Terry Preston, he floundered. From this period came the never-released "Don't Believe a Word They Say," the original 1952 non-hit version of "Gone," and the suicide tune, "Undesired," with a bizarre opening intro by pedal steel ace Speedy West.

"A Dear John Letter," the hit duet that made stars of both Husky (now using his own name) and Jean Shepard,

is here, as are several later hits and his 1957 hit version of "Gone," a very early representation of the Nashville Sound. Other hits include "Draggin' the River," "A Fallen Star," "My Reason for Living," "Wings of a Dove," "Timber I'm Falling," "Once," "Just for You" and the gospel tune, "(Open Up the Book) Take a Look," which were all chart hits. Album cuts here include "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and "Detour." "Stormy Weather" (1957) and "I've Got the World on a String" (1959) come from two pop LP's he recorded. One odd addition is the closing song: an unreleased instrumental jam session on the jazz tune, "Caravan," played by the musicians on a Husky session including pedal steel great Curly Chalker. The notes contain a doozy of a typo: Hal Ketchum and Ferlin sang "Wings of a Dove" on the Opry together in 1994, 34 years after Ferlin had the original hit, not 24 years.

**Ronnie Dawson:** Rockabilly artist Ronnie Dawson began his career in the 1950's, a teenager performing as Ronnie Dee. His swaggering teen anthems, "Rockin' Bones" and "Action Packed," earned him notice, and he recorded for large and small labels, but Dawson never achieved stardom until re-emerging in the 1990's. Unlike many veteran rockabillys whom time had toned down, Dawson, though in his 50's, retained his rocking ferocity. *Rockin' Bones: The Legendary Masters* (Crystal Clear CCR 9643-2) reissues 34 Dawson numbers (most of them demos), recorded from 1957 through 1962.

The set's producers seem to have taken cues from Bear Family reissues, arranging everything chronologically. On the down side, like some Bear releases, this package includes plenty of early demo recordings. Most of them are at best mediocre and at worst unbelievably bad, particularly



"Baby Brother" and "Green Eyed Cat." Others, including "Fire, Fire Fire," are more polished, as are "Slenderella" and "Why Did You Cry." Things (finally) improve as Disc One ends with "Action Packed," and most of Disc Two is above average, beginning as it does with the single version of "Rockin' Bones" and Dawson releases on the Swan, Columbia, Banner and Levee labels. Among the best moments are his wild, blues-flavored material released under the name Commonwealth Jones, some with Delbert McClinton on harmonica. Again, not all is perfect. Dawson's wretched, sugary teen pop releases on the Texas Do-Boy label should've been omitted. In the end, this uneven, two-CD set could have been one great disc minus all the junk. Also, a historical package deserves better than the superficial, glib liner notes by St. Louis rock journalist Chris Dickinson.

**Best of Bluegrass:** Mercury's 18-track *Best of Bluegrass: Preachin' Prayin' Singin'* (Mercury 314-532) is a selection of sacred material from various artists who recorded for Mercury or MGM. The title track, of course, is a 1950 Flatt and Scruggs recording. Other F&S sacred tracks include "God Loves His Children" and "Take Me to a Lifeboat." The Stanley Brothers' Mercury sessions yielded "Harbor of Love," "A Voice From On High" and Bill Monroe's "I Hear My Savior Calling." Carl Story's "I've Found a Hiding Place," "Are You Walkin' and a-Talkin' for the Lord" (a Hank Williams song) and "God Saved My Soul" come from Story's 1948-1952 Mercury recordings. The MGM recordings of The Osborne Brothers yielded "Lost Highway" (a non-gospel song that doesn't fit the package) and "The Black Sheep Returned to the Fold." Three MGM Louvin Brothers tracks include "Do You Live What You Preach," "I'll Live with God to Die No More" and "You'll Be Rewarded Over There," all written by Ira and Charlie. Four other tracks are more obscure:

The Masters Family's "The Man of Galilee" and "That Little Old Country Church House," early bluegrassers Carl Sauceman's "The Pale Horse and His Rider" and Knoxville radio personality Lowell Blanchard's intense 1940's performance of "Jesus Hits Like the Atom Bomb." Colin Escott's notes provide appropriate historical context for each artist.

**Ray Price:** Ray Price did a number of honky tonk albums that can easily be considered classics, but one of the greatest of all was *Night Life*, the 1963 album that included what many consider the definitive version of the Willie Nelson composition. Koch International has recently issued that album intact (KOC CD-7928), and it's well worth hearing. With a band of Cherokee Cowboys that featured Buddy Emmons on steel guitar, Darrell McCall on rhythm guitar, Price session regulars Tommy Jackson and Shorty Lavender on fiddles (despite a discography that states Lavender played guitar), and guitarist Grady Martin running the entire show, Price nailed the album in two 1962 sessions and one in 1963. Emmons drew on his jazz skill for his brilliant intro for "Night Life." Among the remaining numbers are covers of "Lonely Street," Hank Thompson's "The Wild Side of Life," "There's No Fool Like a Young Fool," Charlie Rich's "Sittin' and Thinkin'," and "Bright Lights and Blonde Haired Women," an obscure

song Tennessee Ernie Ford had recorded. Price also remade his 1955 hit, "Let Me Talk to You." Price's flair for exaggerating is obvious in his spoken introduction at the beginning, where he introduces "Night Life" by stating it was written "especially for me by a boy down Texas way." Willie wrote and recorded "Night Life" before he ever moved to Nashville—or knew Ray Price. New notes by a New Jersey FM disc jockey named "The Hound" succeed as an appreciation of the album, less so as straight history.

**Jeannie C. Riley:** Certainly Jeannie C. Riley's career was launched by one song, her 1968 cover of Tom T. Hall's "Harper Valley P.T.A.," which topped country and pop charts and led to a movie of the same name. She had five more Top Tens between 1968 and 1971, and all appear on *The Best of Jeannie C. Riley* (Varese Sarabande VSD 5748), the first CD reissue of Riley's work. Thirteen numbers hail from her heyday with Shelby Singleton's Plantation label, including the original "Harper Valley P.T.A." along with "The Girl Most Likely," "There Never Was a Time," "Country Girl," "The Back Side of Dallas," "Duty Not Desire," "Oh, Singer," "Good Enough to Be Your Wife" and so on. The package has two flaws: Though her 1971-73 MGM period isn't represented, for some reason two negligible MCA tracks appear, along with gushy, thoroughly unin-

formative notes that read like the blurbs on 1960's LP's.

**Lefty Frizzell:** Though Lefty Frizzell died far too young, it was some consolation that unlike many great singers, his last two LP's, recorded for ABC/Dot, revealed him as anything but outdated, making some of the greatest music of his career. *That's the Way Love Goes: The Final Recordings of Lefty Frizzell* (Varese Sarabande VSD 5733) samples 16 songs from his final two LP's. Among them are the enduring "That's the Way Love Goes," "I Never Go Around Mirrors," a moving remake of "I Love You a Thousand Ways" and a version of Merle Haggard's "Life's Like Poetry."

One remarkable aspect of the twilight of Lefty's career was his ability to seamlessly integrate songs from artists not yet considered country, such as "Railroad Lady" written by Jimmy Buffett and Jerry Jeff Walker. That such a song fit so well along with other material he recorded, written by himself or master honky tonk writers like Whitey Shafer and Doodle Owens, is testament to his genius up until the end.

**Frankie Starr:** Very few people know or care about Frankie Starr, I suspect, except those interested in the history of the vital music scene around Phoenix, Arizona. And, by the same token, 21 of the 25 numbers on *Elevator Boogie* (Bear Family BCD 15990) are dull 1950-1966 tunes that quickly explain why Starr never went beyond regional fame. One song, "My Woman Ain't Pretty (But She Don't Swear None)" (no, I didn't make up that title), is proof alone. So, why mention the album? Reason is: The final four songs, from 1948, are likely the first demos ever made by a very young Marty Robbins, whom Starr met and befriended in Phoenix. In the notes, Starr is justifiably critical of how Robbins later "repaid" his early generosity. Marty's demos, done with acoustic guitar, show an unsure Eddy Arnold influence that he'd leave behind in just a couple of years.

### How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Patsy Cline, *The Birth of a Star* (RE 2108), \$11.98 cassette, \$15.98 CD/Johnny Paycheck, *The Real Mr. Heartache* (CMF-023D), \$13.98 cassette, \$21.98 CD/Ferlin Husky, *Vintage Collection* (Capitol 36593), CD only, \$15.98/Ronnie Dawson, *Rockin' Bones: The Legendary Masters* (CCR 9643), a two-CD set, \$29.98/Various Artists, *The Best of Bluegrass: Preachin' Prayin' Singin'* (Mercury 314-532), CD only, \$13.98/Ray Price, *Night Life* (KOC 7982), CD only, \$16.98/Jeannie C. Riley, *The Best of Jeannie C. Riley* (VSD 5748), CD only, \$15.98/Lefty Frizzell, *That's the Way Love Goes: The Final Recordings* (VSD 5733), CD only \$15.98/Frankie Starr, *Elevator Boogie* (BCD 15990), CD only, \$26.95. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 010297, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

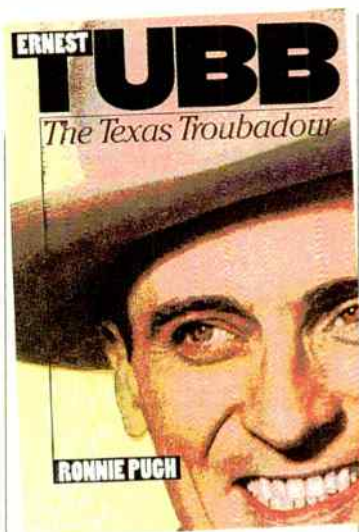
*Offer expires May 31, 1997*

# Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

## ▪ Recordings ▪

**Emmylou Harris:** Emmylou Harris recorded her first LP, a folk effort titled *Gliding Bird*, in 1969. Her real emergence from folk to country-rock came a few years later when she was hired as a backup singer by country-rock visionary Gram Parsons, who became her mentor. After Parsons' 1973 death from substance abuse, Emmylou picked up the reins and had an impact on the music that in many ways surpassed that of Parsons. She made many classic albums. The alumni of her Hot Band include Rodney Crowell, MCA Nashville honcho Tony Brown, Ricky Skaggs and Albert Lee among others. Jon Randall emerged from her later band, The Nash Ramblers. Her advocacy of traditional music, particularly that of The Louvin Brothers, was one of several factors in the continuing Louvin revival (see book review below).

The 61 selections on *Portraits* (Warner Archives 9 45308), a three-disc set, cover her 1975-1992 recording career with Warner Bros. Disc One begins with "Boulder to Birmingham" and "Before Believing" from *Pieces of the Sky*. Then it inexplicably breaks chronology, backtracking to pick up four songs that Emmylou recorded with Parsons. Otherwise, the set includes selections from her Warners albums up through the 1992 live album, *At the Ryman*, as well as her biggest hit singles. Three selections from the *Trio* album with Linda Ronstadt and Dolly Parton appear, along with her hit duet with Roy Orbison, "That Lovin' You Feelin' Again." Among the unreleased numbers is a version of "You're Still on My Mind," a country oldie that Parsons had recorded in his days with The Byrds, Richard Thompson's "Dimming of the Day," Kris Kristofferson's "Casey's Last Ride" and Bob Dylan's "When



I Paint My Masterpiece." Oddly enough, no information appears about when these unreleased numbers were recorded. What doesn't always make sense is the song sequencing, which runs chronologically for awhile, then suddenly moves out of sequence (a 1985 cut preceding a 1980 one). It's any producer's prerogative to maintain a flow, but skipping around isn't always the best for a retrospective package like this one.

**Terri Gibbs:** Beginning with her 1981 hit, "Somebody's Knockin'," singer-pianist Terri Gibbs had a very short run of hits in the early 1980's before she decided to give up secular music for gospel. Eventually, she semi-retired to raise a family. Like many artists with just a few chart entries, Gibbs' recordings quickly went out of print. Varese Sarabande's *Best of Terri Gibbs* (VSD-5615) includes all nine of her MCA hit singles, plus one album track. "Somebody's Knockin'," "Rich Man," the pop song "I Wanna Be Around," the album cut "Go Somewhere and Hide," "Mis'ry River," "Ashes to Ashes," "Somedays It Rains All Night Long," "Baby I'm Gone," "Anybody Else's Heart But Mine" and "Tell Mama" are the tracks, and



*By the Time I Get to Phoenix* (Capitol 52041) follows the same line. Two of his hits, the Jimmy Webb-penned title song and "Hey, Little One," are the major tracks. Everything was recorded in 1967 except a cover of the Ernest Tubb hit, "Tomorrow Never Comes," from 1962. Otherwise, the mix on this one is slightly more geared to country. Though Campbell covered the Simon and Garfunkel pop hit, "Homeward Bound," the album also included Bill Anderson's composition "Bad Seed," a country hit for Jan Howard, Bob Wills' little-known ballad "I'll Be Lucky Someday" and, of all things, The Louvin Brothers' "My Baby's Gone," a song Campbell undoubtedly knew for many years.

## ▪ Books ▪

**Ernest Tubb:** Fans of Ernest Tubb and honky tonk music have eagerly awaited Ronnie Pugh's book, *Ernest Tubb: The Texas Troubadour*, which promised to be the definitive study. Pugh, longtime Head of Reference at the Country Music Foundation, was researching ET's career while Tubb was still actively performing. The depth of his research was hinted at in his various articles, a definitive Tubb discography and liner notes for various Bear Family Tubb boxes.

Sometimes such eager expectations disappoint, but not this time. In this compelling book, Pugh tells Tubb's story in detail, buttressed by research into record sales, and interviews with relatives (including Ernest's son Justin), former sidemen and others close to ET. Anyone who knows Ronnie will notice that he writes in the same formal, Old South way that he speaks. That's a lesson to younger country writers, too many of whom choose to mimic the distinctive and flashy style of gifted writers like Nick

though there probably could have been more tunes included from her albums (or from her period of recording for Warner Brothers), what's here shows that Gibbs was a fine singer in her time. To her credit, she quit while she was ahead, a hint I wonder if some of today's less talented has-beens-to-be will take as gracefully as Gibbs did.

**Glen Campbell:** Capitol Nashville recently released two 1967 Glen Campbell LP's on CD. *Gentle on My Mind* (Capitol 52040), originally released in August of that year, featured the John Hartford-penned hit title track (also the theme of Campbell's CBS *Goodtime Hour* TV show). The album was fleshed out by ten additional songs, mostly covers of folk and pop songs that well mapped out the direction Campbell would pursue for the next decade or so. There was "Catch the Wind," originally a hit for British folksinger Donovan, The Everly Brothers' "Bowling Green," pop composer Harry Nilsson's "Without Her," Roy Orbison's "Crying" and so on.



Tosches instead of finding their own unique voices. Pugh's admiration for Tubb didn't result in a whitewash. While he doesn't provide tabloid details on every personality flaw, he doesn't avoid darker aspects of Tubb's personality, such as his sometimes violent drinking sprees. Under a ridiculously garish cover sleeve (the publisher's fault), it's here in detail: his Texas boyhood, his worship of Jimmie Rodgers, the help he received from Rodgers' widow that led to his first records, his Texas radio successes, first marriage and early Decca recordings. Pugh shines when describing Tubb's success with "Walkin' the Floor Over You," the hit that brought him to the Opry and launched his string of hit recordings from the 1940's into the 1960's. The story of the Ernest Tubb Record Shop and *Midnight Jamboree* radio show are told in fascinating detail.

The saddest portion, handled sensitively by Pugh, deals with the real tragedy behind the triumph. A profoundly decent man, beloved for his kindness to fans and the help he gave many aspiring performers and songwriters, Tubb never amassed the fortune he deserved. Honest to a fault, he believed in others' honesty. Though he was often right, he was also shafted by many (even certain family members). As his health declined, he spent his later years doing shows, crossing the continent on his bus, the "Green Hornet," in part because he loved touring, in part out of financial necessity. Emphysema forced him to quit in 1982. Pugh doesn't avoid Tubb's troubled second marriage, his sad final decline and the IRS problems that preceded his death in 1984. The fact that his grave lacks a proper headstone today remains an obscenity, and Pugh makes you feel as angry about that as he obviously is. This is required reading.

**The Louvin Brothers:** Some years ago, Bear Family released a definitive Louvin Brothers boxed set amassing all of Ira's and Charlie's com-

mercial recordings. The booklet was written by Charles Wolfe, a Contributing Editor to our sister publication, *The Journal*, who'd forged a relationship with Charlie Louvin, the surviving brother. Wolfe's research was undoubtedly read mainly by the few able to afford the pricey Bear box, so he expanded the research into a small book: *In Close Harmony: The Story of the Louvin Brothers*. Given the expanded interest in The Louvins' music and the possibility of a film on their lives, this book appeared right on time.

Wolfe not only traces their Alabama heritage, but uses his encyclopedic knowledge of the old-time country brother duets like The Blue Sky Boys, Monroe Brothers and The Delmore Brothers (also from Alabama) to explain The Louvins' musical roots. Their early careers, military service and serious moves into performing after World War II in Memphis are likewise examined. A Louvin discography scattered throughout the narrative allows Wolfe to explain every recording session. Plenty of Ira Louvin stories appear. A sometimes violent alcoholic, Ira was nonetheless one of the few truly great country tenors, even in Bill Monroe's eyes. Wolfe describes Ira's habit of stomping mandolins at shows and a 1956 near-fistfight with Elvis, provoked by an Ira wisecrack. Wolfe also tells the hilarious tale of the cover photo session for the *Satan Is Real* LP. The

brothers, who conceived the photo idea, were clad in white suits, standing uncomfortably in a rock quarry amid smoldering tires meant to depict hell. Behind them was a 12-foot high plywood Satan. Their 1963 decision to split, followed by Ira's untimely 1965 death in a car crash, could have ended the book on a down note. Wolfe doesn't let that happen. Instead, he goes on to trace Charlie's successful solo career and the revival of interest in The Louvins' music through bluegrass and country-rock artists from Jim and Jesse and The Osborne Brothers to Gram Parsons, Emmylou and Marty Stuart. While Charlie continues to record, Ira's legacy continues in the form of daughter Kathy, a successful Nashville songwriter.

**Hee Haw:** Sam Lovullo was producer of *Hee Haw* from the day CBS decided to create it in 1968, remaining with the show until it ended for good in 1993. His memories of that quarter-century are detailed in *Life in the Kornfield: My 25 Years at Hee Haw*, combining a history of the show with his recollections about the show's hosts, regulars and selected guests, along with a complete program guide. The guide includes each original show number and air-date and a list of all guests on that program. The narrative also includes Lovullo's descriptions of the show's early days, its success, cancellation by CBS and triumphant resurrection in syndication. He answers for all time the question

of who wrote "Phfft! You Were Gone." It was not singer Bob Newman, who recorded it and claimed to have written it under the pseudonym of "Lee Roberts," but veteran pop music composer Bix Reichman, who got his royalties thanks to Archie Campbell.

On the downside, the book has various errors, and an annoying amount of sentences that end with exclamation points. None of that, however, is as disturbing as Lovullo's overall shallowness. Portraits of cast regulars Buck Owens and Roy Clark are brief, breezy and lacking substance, though Lovullo's discussion of Buck's disdain for Nashville is dead on. Grandpa Jones, one of the show's mainstays, gets an insulting two paragraphs compared to nearly a page on fiddler (and onetime Buck Owens wife) Jana Jae. Lovullo also expounds on various guest stars, praising many and criticizing Kenny Rogers, whose *Hee Haw* appearances helped his rise to fame, for taking a "star" attitude toward the show after he got to the top.

Unfortunately, like many Hollywood types, Lovullo's own ego is also something to behold. On page 37 he boasts how the show discovered an "unknown" singer named Mel Tillis, apparently ignorant of the fact Tillis had hit records (and wrote many hit songs for others) years before Lovullo set foot in Nashville. And get this: on page 35, Lovullo claims that before *Hee Haw*, Nashville's leading industries were "publishing religious books, baking Eucharistic hosts, and the manufacturing of coffins. It wasn't until *Hee-Haw* established itself as a hit show that Nashville became recognized as a recording center of country music." That should be news to Chet Atkins, Owen Bradley and country music historians as well. Apparently all the hits made in Nashville's studios in the 20-odd years before the show were just rehearsals for the Big Time that *Hee Haw* brought to town. Sa-loot? I don't think so.

#### How to Get These Collectibles

**Books:** Ronnie Pugh, *Ernest Tubb: The Texas Troubadour* (B7E), \$29.95 (hardcover)/Charles Wolfe, *In Close Harmony: The Story of The Louvin Brothers* (B9L), \$16.95 (softcover)/Sam Lovullo, *Life in the Kornfield: My 25 Years at Hee Haw* (B4Z), \$15.00 (softcover). **Recordings:** Emmylou Harris, *Portraits* (Warner Archives 9 45308), a three-CD boxed set, \$49.98/Terri Gibbs, *The Best of Terri Gibbs* (VSD-5615), CD only, \$14.98/Glen Campbell, *Gentle on My Mind* (Capitol 52040), CD only, \$14.98/Glen Campbell, *By the Time I Get to Phoenix* (Capitol 52041), CD only, \$14.98. To order, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 010297EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

*Offer expires May 31, 1997*



## THE FINAL NOTE

by Patrick Carr

# Get Back to Where You Once Belonged

**H**ere we are in '97, so let's answer the question nowhere near the front of your mind: What did I think of country music in '96?

Well, on the dark side, country radio was still unlistenable, and the CMA version of the music continued to extend the known limits of tedium and trash, but then again, a measure of relief may be on the way. Sales dropped by 20% or more in the last year, so the folks responsible for serving up the last few years' worth of tiny-minded bull manure are running scared. This might create an opening for a few artists with real vision, as did the post-Urban Cowboy crash of the early 80's. And then there's the theory, put quite nicely by Johnny Cash, that "every so often, country has to get back to Emmylou Harris."

We'll see. In the meantime there's much to celebrate. While Music Row has been force-farming its turf into a state of toxic shock, wildflowers have been sprouting and spreading lustily elsewhere. Small labels and independent operators all over the map have been producing great stuff, and plenty of it. In terms of worthy new country/roots music, in fact, 1996 was an even better year than 1995.

Here's the real gold, the music I'm going to keep.

Taking it from the top, from the center of it all, the year gave us wonderful new work from Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, and of course Johnny Cash. Merle's *1996* (Curb D2-77796), Waylon's *Right for the Time* (Justice JR 2101-2), and Cash's *Unchained* (American Recordings 2-43097) were all better than anything any of these great masters has done in a decade, at least. None of them came out of Nashville.

Which isn't to say that Music City, U.S.A. wasn't productive, for it surely was. Johnny Rodriguez's *You Can Say That Again* (HighTone HCD 8073), by far his best album yet, was cut there, and so was Marty Brown's *Here's to the Honky Tonks* (Hightone HCD 8075), though both works were commissioned by an independent label out of Oakland, California. The same label also produced *Blessed or Damned* (HCD 8070) by Dale !!!WATCH THIS MAN!!! Watson, plus a real star of the rockaswingabopably revival, The Carpetbaggers' *Sin Now...Pay Later* (HCD 8071). Those Carpetbaggers are you-bet hot. They write their own songs, play like hell, and generally make the

much-touted BR-549 sound a tad limp. So do The Derailers, The Backsliders (notice a naming trend here?), The Picketts, and The Thompson Brothers Band, in all of whom the spirits of Ernest Tubb and Gram Parsons, among many others of all sorts, coexist quite comfortably. The Derailers' *Jackpot* is on the Watermelon label (CD 1051), The Picketts' *Euphonium* is on Rounder (CD 9056), and The Thompson Brothers Band's six-track *Cows on Main Street* is on RCA (07863-66840-2). For The Backsliders' *Live from Raleigh, North Carolina*, though, you'll have to contact Mammoth Records at 101 B Street, Carrboro, NC 27510.

You might also have to do some searching, and perhaps even end up at the source (Diesel Only Records, 100 N. 6th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211) for *Rig Rock Deluxe* (Upstart 025) a great, great anthology of trucker songs (Buck Owens, anybody? Steve Earle? Del Reeves? Kelly Willis? Red Simpson? Son Volt?). Maybe it won't be so hard, though, since Diesel Only is allied with Upstart, which is distributed by Rounder. No such luck for Bloodshot Records (912 South Addison, Chicago, IL 60613), which released Volume 3 in its *Insurgent Country* series, another very cool anthology from the ever-expanding country/punk/alternative world entitled *Nashville: The Other Side of the Alley* (BS 014).

Mr. Insurgency himself, meanwhile—Steve Earle, who else?—produced yet another work of honest power and lasting beauty in *I Feel Alright* (Warner Bros. 9 46201-2), while across town at rebel base Dead Reckoning, Mike Henderson did himself proud with *Edge of Night* (Dead Reckoning 5 0004 2). Jim Lauderdale's *Persimmons* (Upstart CD 035) and Iris DeMent's *The Way I Should* (Warner Bros. 946188-2) were also well up to their makers' high standards and uppity values, and Gillian Welch, who sounds almost archaic but is young enough to pass as Alternative with no questions asked (she wasn't even conceived when this magazine was), wrote and sang ten deeply true new songs, getting back to Emmylou just beautifully, for *Revival* (Almo AMSD-80006).

Billy Joe Shaver, who's been nourishing Nashville's soul since the early 70's, returned to his native Texas to make *Highway of Life* (Justice JR 2301-2) while his friend Kimmie Rhodes, also a Justice art-

ist and co-conspirator with Waylon and Willie, made the very moving *West Texas Heaven* (JR 2201-2). Justice's Houston headquarters was also home base for a truly bizarre but fitting all-sorts-of-people-sing-the-songs-of-somebody album. *Twisted Willie* (JR 0009-2DP) they called it, and it was. Ranging from Johnny Cash and Kris Kristofferson to Jello Biafra and Steel Pole Bath tub, the Twisted crowd bent Willie into some pretty wonderful new shapes—I mean, this is one of my favorite albums, and I'm not kidding. The much more predictable Buddy Holly a-s-o-p-s-t-s-o-s CD, *Not Fade Away* (Decca DRND-11260), only just made it into this column, mainly because Buddy himself cut the songs so much better than anyone else ever will. Standing on its own, though, it ain't half bad at all.

Still in Texas but over in Austin now, Don Walser made another of his homey, brand-new antique country albums, *Texas Top Hand* (Watermelon CD 1048)—my only quibble about ol' Don is that he isn't Slim Whitman—and the utterly inimitable Junior Brown, our own favorite psychadelibilly, concocted *Semi-Crazy* (Curb 77843).

Back in the general direction of CMA turf, a handful of very nice albums could be heard above the general drone of unintelligent kids and ultra-cautious grownups (among whom my disappointments in '96 were Suzy Bogguss, Patty Loveless, Marty Stuart and John Anderson). David Ball did very well, I thought, with *Starlite Lounge* (Warner Bros. 9 46244-2); both *Mandy Barnett* (Asylum 61810-2) and Rhonda Vincent's *Trouble Free* (Giant 9 24630-2) walked an elegant, compelling line between the traditional and the contemporary; and Trisha Yearwood, once again, achieved a near-perfect Nashville pop album in *Everybody Knows* (MCAD-11477).

That leaves us with two really superb anthologies: *Hindsight 20/20* (Giant 9 24655-2), which is 20 tracks over 20 years of Carlene Carter, and a wonderful three-CD, 61-song collection from Emmylou Harris called *Portraits* (Reprise Archives 9 45308-2). So sooner or later be damned, we got back to her right now.

May 1997 be good to you.

*Editor-at-Large Patrick Carr has been with CMM since September 1972.*



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