

STEVE WARINER: *Drive To Survive*

By Brad Hogue

STEVE WARINER's Arista Records bio describes his current success as poetic musical justice. With the release of his first two recordings on the Arista Nashville label, Wariner has experienced his best years ever during 1992 and 1993's wildly successful renaissance of country music popularity. His first Arista Nashville release, aptly titled, *I Am Ready*, is rapidly approaching Gold Record status. Furthermore, it's finely crafted "Leave Him Out Of This" and "The Tips Of My Fingers" became massive country radio hits and led to a sensational concert tour. Serving as a huge milestone in Wariner's 11-year recording career, *I Am Ready* garnered rave reviews from the press, who dubbed Steve a country renaissance man, not only because of his talents as a singer/songwriter/guitarist, but also for his gifts as a painter, magician, athlete and showman.

With the release of his second Arista CD, *Drive*, Wariner is positioned to achieve even more. The lead single from *Drive*, "If I Didn't Love You," with its intricate harmonies and fiddle brilliance, is a current hit on radio (peaking at #6 in *Cash Box*) as well as CMT and TNN, with a second single release, "Drivin' And Cryin'," going for adds as we go to print.

"I think this album represents what I do live," Wariner told *Cash Box* in a recent interview. "I've tried to do that for years—I've always thought after making an album—'Man, that's good,' but then I get out there on the road and rock out and do my cranking stuff and I think, 'Gosh, I wish I'd have recorded it like that. Can we do a live album?' There's just something about when you get out there live and there are people out there and they're getting into it. There's an added adrenaline level there. So, this album is as close to live as anything I've previously done."

What he's currently doing live includes a tour sponsored by General Motors of Canada—the transcontinental *Chevy Drive Tour*, which includes 16 dates with Canadian singer Cassandra Vasik and continues thru November 16. Opening in Surrey, British Columbia, the tour winds up in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Mercury's Toby Keith and RCA's Larry Stewart will also be included on the bill. General Motors dealerships along the route will promote Wariner's shows with ticket giveaways, banners and vehicle displays at select concert sites. Additionally, Wariner will visit selected dealerships to visit with fans.

Additional exposure for Wariner includes an hourlong radio special in which musical pal Garth Brooks interviews Steve about *Drive*, guitars, family and other subjects. The special will be aired throughout the U.S. and Canada, where BMG Music Canada will stage nationwide radio and record store contests to attract attention to the tour and album release.

"I just love playing live," Steve relates. "It's always a thrill to be out on tour and play a new tune for a crowd that's unfamiliar with the song and have them give you a good response right off. That's

still a thrill to me. I am just so fortunate to be able to do this, but regardless of sales or success, I'm going to be making music one way or another. That's the way I look at it. I love it too much. It's all I've ever done since childhood."

No longer a child, though, Steve was recently named one of country music's sexiest men by *USA Today*. If it's true that good things come to those who wait, finally Steve Wariner is where he belongs. Born on Christmas Day in 1954, Steve Noel Wariner was performing live with his father at age 10, doing weekly radio and TV shows before he was in his teens and fronting his own band as soon as he acquired a driver's license. At age 17 he was discovered by Dottie West, who hired him as her bassist. Following stints with the likes of Bob Luman and Chet Atkins, Wariner first signed with RCA Records in 1977.

Wariner enjoyed five Top-10 hits at RCA, then at MCA during the years between 1984 and 1990, he topped the charts more than 25 times. "Some Fools Never Learn," "Life's Highway," "The Weekend" and many more Wariner favorites are still staples of the country radio airwaves. With the stage clearly set, Arista Records signed the multi-talent in 1991 and by the end of the year "Leave Him Out Of This" blasted into the Top 10, with "The Tips Of My Fingers" becoming his 12th #1 single and the *I Am Ready* album becoming the biggest selling of his career.

With so many skills at his disposal, one would think the renaissance man would have rocketed to superstardom. Instead, Wariner's career has been more of a smooth kite-glide upwards.

"I'm real comfortable with my little place in the music world," Steve relates with a smile. "I still practice every day on the road and there's still a fire there."

Steve and his wife Caryn have two sons, Ryan and Ross. Ryan is 9, the same age Steve was when Roy Wariner began to train him as a musician. "The other day Ryan picked up an electric guitar and real confidently played this little pattern. I said, 'Where did you learn that?' He said, 'I figured it out.' I said the same thing to him I think my dad said to me. 'Son, that guitar will make you eat a lot of hamburger.'"

