

**TRACY LAWRENCE** • *Do We Believe Him?*

# COUNTRYMUSIC

**EXCLUSIVE  
FASHION  
PHOTOS**

APRIL/MAY 2000  
Issue 202

## MARTINA McBRIDE

**As You've Never  
Seen Her**

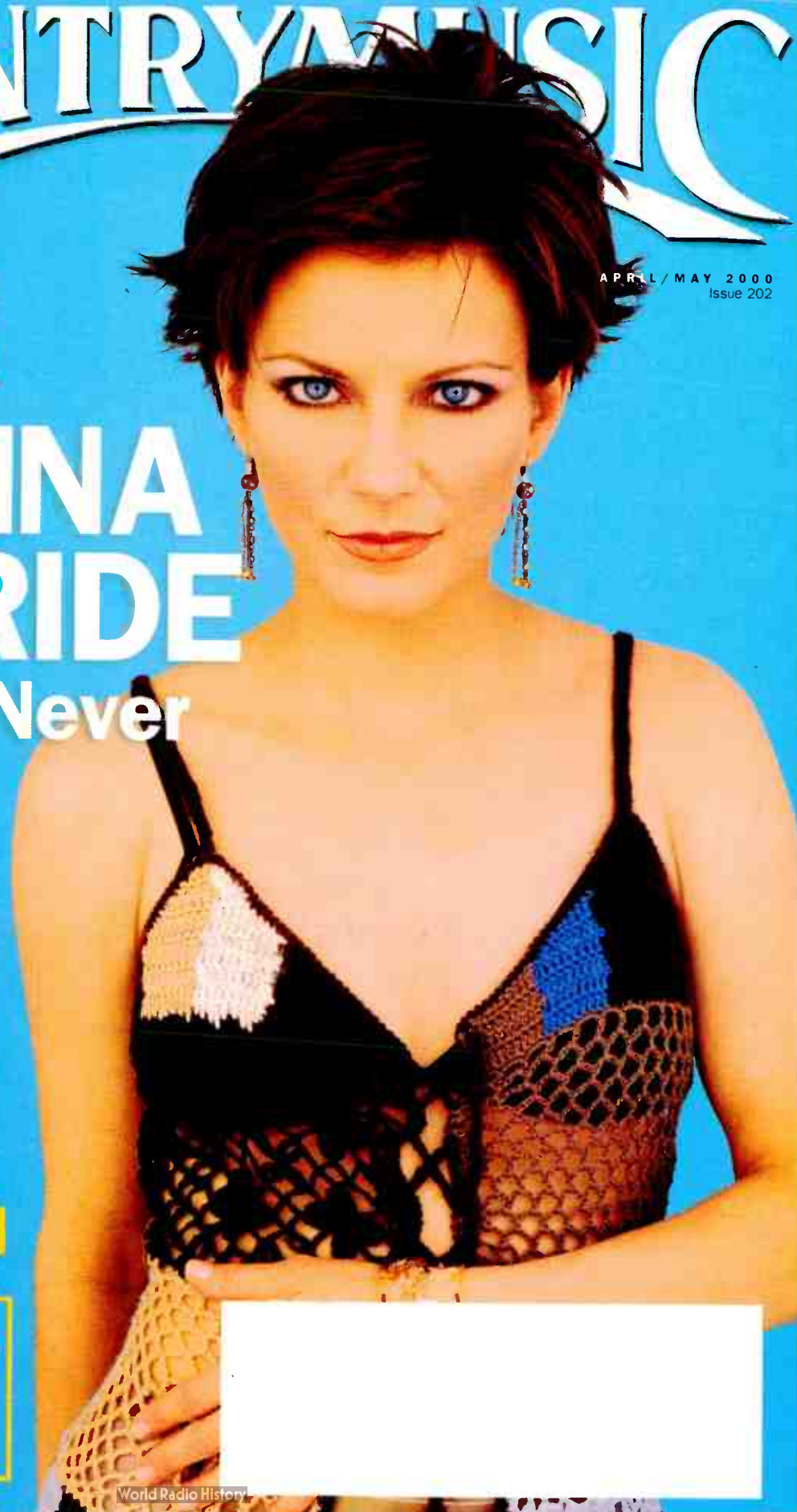
**BROOKS  
AND DUNN**

**From Hitsville  
To Splitsville?**

**Bull Buster**

**GARY ALLAN**

**News, Reviews,  
Concert Dates  
and More!**





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World Radio History

# COUNTRY/MUSIC

April/May 2000



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## COVER STORY

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Is country's hottest duo headed for a split? Brooks and Dunn address the ongoing breakup rumors.

*By Geoffrey Himes*

### 36 No Bull

Gary Allan's shoot-from-the-hip style is one reason he's the perfect performer to entertain the rowdy rodeo crowd.

*By Michael McCall*

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*By Michael McCall*

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*By Tamara Saviano*

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*By Julie Zarling*

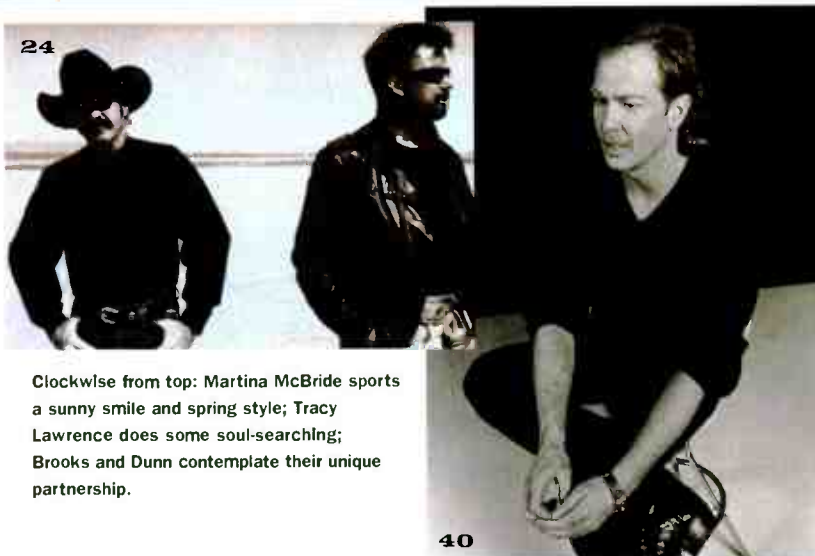
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Del McCoury and his sons Ronnie and Rob have been making exquisite mountain music for years. But with a new bluegrass boom, the Del McCoury Band is hotter than ever.

*By Michael McCall*

ANDREW ECCLES

FRANNE RUBENSTEIN



24

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Clockwise from top: Martina McBride sports a sunny smile and spring style; Tracy Lawrence does some soul-searching; Brooks and Dunn contemplate their unique partnership.

COVER PHOTO: ANDREW ECCLES; STYLING: CLAUDIA FOWLER; MAKEUP: MARY BETH FELTS FOR EMBE COSMETICS; HAIR: EARL COX OF TRUMP STUDIO



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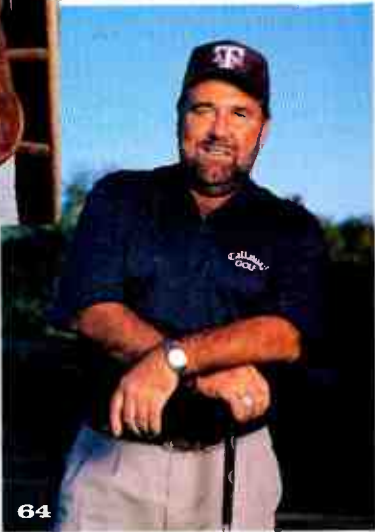


ALL PHOTOS COURTESY WARNER BROS./JIM BRITT



DAVID JOHNSON

FRESH AIR PHOTOGRAPHICS



BETH GWINN

From top: Members of Ricochet heed the call of the wild; the Dukes face the cameras again; Gary Allan is right at home at the rodeo; the Del McCoury Band can't resist the chance to pick a little; Johnny Lee tees off on the music biz.

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**AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS  
FAVORITE NEW ARTIST (COUNTRY)**

**ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC  
2 NOMINATIONS!**

**TOP NEW DUO OR VOCAL GROUP  
TOP DUO OR VOCAL GROUP**

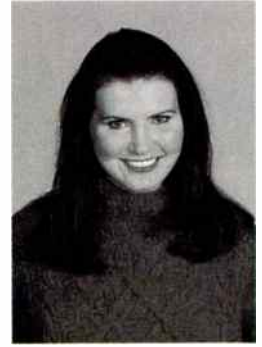
# MONTGOMERY GENTRY

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MUSIC**

There's an old saying that in springtime, a young man's thoughts turn to love. That may be true for some folks, but ask a dozen people what comes to mind when they think of spring, and you'll probably get a dozen different answers, from the first bloom of flowers to the first pitch of baseball season.



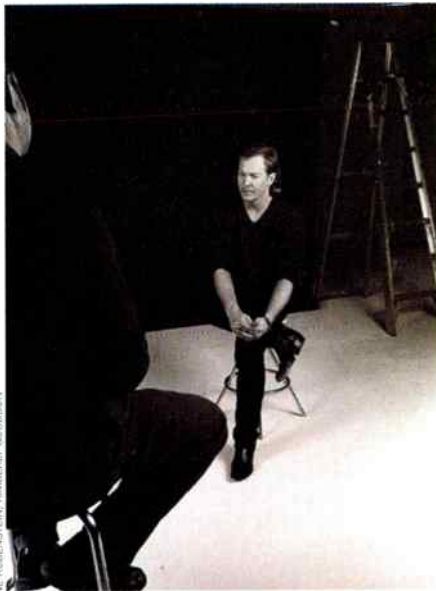
**WE'VE COVERED A NUMBER OF SPRINGTIME BASES** in this issue with several features that have that warm-weather feel. First, there's our semi-annual fashion section, with our cover subject, Martina McBride, in feather-light frocks that say spring has definitely sprung.

Good-sport Martina endured hours of posing for our exclusive photo session, yet remained as sunny as May Day throughout. As she surveyed an array of chic ensembles, she revealed that in spite of her cover-girl looks, she's really a practical dresser. "I've got a shirt on today from Target for \$7.99!" she admitted proudly.



With the return of warm weather, outdoor-sports fans spring to life. We tagged along as the members of Ricochet escaped to the great outdoors for a weekend camping trip—their favorite way to unwind from the grind of the road. It's clear that these guys are friends both on and off the stage, reports managing editor Tamara Saviano. "They weren't just bandmates, they were buddies," she says. "There was so much laughing and good-natured ribbing during the whole weekend. It was obvious they had a great time."

And heading into summer, rodeo season hits full stride. Gary Allan is not only a rodeo fan, he is a regular performer on the SuperBull tour, which pairs a bull-riding competition with a country music concert. "I'll always love to play live more than record," Allan told senior editor Michael McCall. "My favorite thing is doing it live—I love to play."



From top: Managing editor Tamara Saviano (center)—along with publicists Val Vanderwest (far left) and Jules Wortman (second from right)—experiences the camaraderie in the Ricochet camp; Tracy Lawrence opens up to senior editor Michael McCall; the Del McCoury Band hits a high note during their photo session.

On a more serious note, McCall also examines Tracy Lawrence's return to recording after several tumultuous years. Has Tracy really turned over a new leaf to take advantage of what may be his last chance at musical success? Plus, writer Geoffrey Himes digs into the Brooks and Dunn breakup rumors in a candid interview with country's most dynamic duo.

And on a subject close to my heart—bluegrass—Del McCoury and his band talk about the new bluegrass boom that has them playing places they never thought of before.

There's also our usual mix of new faces and old favorites, the latest music and more. As you might have guessed, in springtime (as in every season) our thoughts turn to country!

**DEBORAH BARNES**  
Editor-in-Chief



TOP TO BOTTOM: BREANNE RUBENSTEIN; ED POSE; BREANNE RUBENSTEIN; KIMBERLY GOODSON



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music. His comments about all that matters is radio and Wal-Mart were pathetic. I'm ashamed that he's a Texan and he should be ashamed of himself.

**Heather Duncan**  
Austin, Texas

#### **CLAY WALKER? WHO CARES?**

If you're going to write about a Beaumont, Texas, artist, how about one who has talent, like Mark Chesnutt or George Jones?

**Jessica Schurtz**  
Lubbock, Texas

#### **BIG BYRD**

#### **THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR**

the good interview with my favorite artist, Tracy Byrd. In my opinion, he has the best voice in country music and I wish him great success with his new RCA contract. I hope we will be reading

lots of good things happening for him in coming issues of *Country Music*.

**Lois Johnson**  
Windsor, California

#### **GAINES AND LOSSES**

#### **I ENJOYED BOB MILLARD'S**

review of Garth Brooks as Chris Gaines. However, I would like to give you some information. You correctly identified two songs that Garth borrowed from for "Right Now" but then commented that Brooks forgot to credit songwriter Dino Valenti. Well, he did properly credit him because Chet Powers and Dino Valenti are the same person.

**Jerry Bruner**  
Albany, New York

#### **I'M WRITING IN RESPONSE**

to Bob Millard's review of Garth Brooks' *In the Life of Chris Gaines*. The first thing that struck me about this

**THE CRITICS AREN'T THE** only ones who don't get Clay Walker. After reading Craig Havighurst's story about him, it was clear to me that Walker is in the music business to make money—not for the love of country



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album was Garth's simple mastery of his own voice. He makes it very clear that he can sing any style and do it well. I love his sultry voice on "Lost in You" and I love the way he cuts loose and belts out "Snow in July." He has dared to sing songs that are definitely not country. Obviously, no one wanted Garth to try new things, but I admire him all the more for this album. He has not lost a fan in me.

**Jobeth Stewart**  
Ashland City, Tennessee



Trace sings songs from his heart and he is a wonderful person. Trace got a wonderful review from another magazine and I will certainly lean toward staying with that one and not this magazine.

**Margaret Secrest**  
Raleigh, North Carolina

**IT SEEMS LIKE TRACE ADKINS** had a great career in front of him when he released his first album a few years ago. "I Left Something Turned On at

Home" was a great song and there were many more on that CD. His new one, *More...*, shows that he has succumbed to the slicker, more polished sound that has been coming out of Nashville. I'm disappointed. I thought, if anyone, Trace would be man enough to stand up to the powers-that-be and put out his own brand of music. Thank God for Jack Ingram. He may not be on the radio but he's got so much gravel and guts in his music that he makes Trace sound like the Backstreet Boys.

**Rod Pelletier**  
Shreveport, Louisiana

**CORRECTION:** In our Horizons feature on Yankee Grey in the Winter 2000 issue, the band's album title should read *Untamed*. We regret the error.

Send letters to the editor to *Country Music* magazine, 7 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. Mark envelope: Attention: Letters. Sign your full name. We reserve the right to edit for space and style. E-mail us at [comments@countrymusicmag.com](mailto:comments@countrymusicmag.com).

## TRACE UNDER FIRE

**I'M VERY UPSET ABOUT THE** bad review Craig Havighurst gave Trace Adkins. He certainly does not have a good ear for great music or he would have given more than two stars to Trace. The CD is the best work Trace has done.

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# Country on the



## COUNTRY MEETS POP

at the American Music Awards as **Brooks and Dolly** flank **Dolly Parton**, with Arista Records chief **Clive Davis**, right, looking on.

## 'POP'-PING FLASHBULBS



▲ "Bad boys" **Eddie Montgomery** and **Troy Gentry** meet "good boy" **Donny Osmond** at the American Music Awards gala in Los Angeles. Believe it or not, the rowdy duo was later a big hit on TV's *Donny and Marie*.

◀ **Garth Brooks** poses with his AMA honors after mentioning his marital problems onstage.

▶ Pop star **Amy Grant** and **Vince Gill** are beaming sweethearts at the AMA gala.



TOP: COURTESY, ARISTA; MONTGOMERY, LEFT; GENTRY, MIDDLE; OSMOND, RIGHT; BROOKS, GILL, GRANT: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

AM  
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**Academy  
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 Country  
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**THE NOMINEES FOR 1999**

Prior to the show, choose your favorite nominees by checking the boxes in the left column, then tune in May 3rd and follow the action and see who wins.

**YOUR CHOICE**

**THE WINNER**

**ALBUM OF THE YEAR**

- A Place In The Sun**  
Tim McGraw
- Breathe**  
Faith Hill
- Cold Hard Truth**  
George Jones
- Fly**  
Dixie Chicks
- Ride With Bob**  
Asleep At The Wheel  
And Various Artists

**SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR**

- Amazed**  
Lonestar
- He Didn't Have To Be**  
Brad Paisley
- Please Remember Me**  
Tim McGraw
- Ready To Run**  
Dixie Chicks
- Write This Down**  
George Strait

**VOCAL EVENT OF THE YEAR**

- A Country Boy Can Survive**  
Chad Brock,  
Hank Williams Jr. &  
George Jones
- After The Gold Rush**  
The Trio (Harris,  
Ronstadt, Parton)
- God Must Have Spent  
A Little More Time On You**  
Alabama & NSYNC
- My Kinda Woman**  
Vince Gill &  
Patty Loveless
- When I Said I Do**  
Clint Black & Lisa  
Hartman Black

**VIDEO OF THE YEAR**

- Breathe**
- He Didn't Have To Be**
- How Do You Like Me Now**
- Ready To Run**
- Single White Female**

**SONG OF THE YEAR**

- Amazed** Lonestar
- Breathe** Faith Hill
- Choices** George Jones
- He Didn't Have To Be**  
Brad Paisley
- Please Remember Me**  
Tim McGraw

**TOP NEW FEMALE VOCALIST**

- Jessica Andrews**
- Julie Reeves**
- Chalee Tennison**

**TOP NEW MALE VOCALIST**


- Gary Allan**
- Chad Brock**
- Brad Paisley**

**TOP NEW DUO OR GROUP**

- Montgomery Gentry**
- SheDaisy**
- Yankee Grey**

**TOP FEMALE VOCALIST**

- Faith Hill**
- Martina McBride**
- Jo Dee Messina**
- Shania Twain**
- Chely Wright**

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 George Strait  
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 Kenny Chesney  
 Lonestar  
 Martina McBride  
 Montgomery Gentry  
 SheDaisy  
 Tim McGraw  
 Yankee Grey  
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# Town

By Robert K. Oermann



## MILLENNIUM BUBBLES

▲ **Faith Hill** and **Tim McGraw** ring in the New Year holding silver goblets before a sold-out crowd at the Gaylord Entertainment Center in Nashville, finding "A Place in the Sun" for "This Kiss." ▼ Dapper **Travis Tritt** starts 2000 off right as the Performer of the Year winner at the Georgia Music Awards show in Atlanta.



## GRAND GALS, GRAND OPRY

The Opry returned to the historic Ryman Auditorium in January, drawing a "power trio" of **Reba**, **Loretta Lynn** and **Patty Loveless** to country's "Mother Church."

## OUT AND ABOUT

### FAMOUS FILM FANS

◀ **Brian Prout** of *Diamond Rio* escorts fiancée **Mary Bono** and her kids to the Palm Springs Film Festival. ▼ **Trisha Yearwood** takes in the premiere of *Stuart Little*.



### CRUSADERS UNITED

◀ Backstage at the concert for a Landmine Free America in L.A. are, from left, **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, **Nanci Griffith**, **Emmylou Harris**, **Steve Earle**, Vietnam Vets of America founder **Bobby Muller**, **Guy Clark** and **Terry Allen**. These Americana stars oppose the cruel and senseless slaughter of civilians by landmines worldwide

(continued on p. 16 ▶)



LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: SAM JORDANI; SCHMIDT BELLETT; TIMMY VAN WINKLE; RIGHT: TOP TO BOTTOM: ALAN ARNOLD; \*CHARLOT RELATIONS; HALL; SUPPER HUTCHINS PHOTO-AGENCY; JILL JOHANSON-HITCHINS PHOTO AGENCY; SHERRY RAYN BARNETT

# THE BUZZ



BY HAZEL SMITH



Stuart gets a Presidential greeting.

WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

## Come On Over

**Marty Stuart** and **Connie Smith** were invited to the lighting of the Christmas tree in the nation's capitol over the holidays. After the ceremony **President Clinton** asked Marty, "Y'all going over to the house?" "I reckon," answered Marty. So Marty and Connie joined **Bill and Hillary** for a little cheer.

## Keepsakes

The difference in a relic and a keepsake is that a relic should be trashed. The **Country Music Hall of Fame**, on the other hand, showcases keepsakes. Original members of the **Hackberry Ramblers**, 87-year-old fiddler **Luderine Darbone** and guitarist **Edwin Duhon**, recently donated keepsakes to the Hall of Fame: the instruments they played to record "Jolie Blonde" in 1933. The Ramblers, joined by **Rodney Crowell**, spiced up the afternoon with Cajun picking, singing and dancing.

**Darbone** and **Duhon** say they've played every club and roadhouse from New Orleans to Houston and have no plans for retirement. A week later, following 10 years of incredible success, **Garth Brooks** announced he will retire next year to spend time with daughters **Taylor**, **August** and **Allie**, ages 7, 5 and 3.



## West Coast LeAnn

The last time I saw **LeAnn Rimes** she was a chubby teen. Lo and behold she shows up on the *Billboard* awards with all of her 17 years in a push-up bra, bare midriff with navel a-shining, tight-as-

she-dares pants and crimped hair. **LeAnn** reports she is growing up and choosing what she likes to wear, and says she dresses edgy and modern. To me she's too Hollywood. Too adult. Besides, no more than she's wearing she's apt to catch cold.

## They Do Lee Ann

**Womack** married **Frank Liddell**, the father of her 10-month-old daughter. **Lee Ann** reports she was on the road, so **Frank** made all the arrangements, including choosing and hemming the gown, hiring the minister and selecting the locale. **Frank** even handed her a bouquet of flowers as she headed for the preacher. Whadda way to say, "We do."

## Joe's 50th

The legendary **Eddy Arnold**, fabulous **K.T. Oslin**, CMA Female Vocalist **Martina McBride**, those crazy **Warren Brothers**, and Alabama's great **Randy Owens** showed up at the *BMG Chapel* all dressed in '50s attire to surprise **CEO/Prez** and my friend, **Joe Galante**, on his 50th birthday. The '50s attire included poodle skirts, saddle oxfords, bobby socks, Elvis lookalikes and one hideous blond ponytail wig, worn by

someone old enough to know better! I don't know when I had so much fun. Shoot, one of those **Warren Brothers** even french-kissed me and I almost enjoyed it.

## Hat Act Tim McGraw

and wife **Faith Hill** visited the Big Apple to tape a segment of *Sesame Street* with **Elmo**. **Tim** woke up and realized his hat was in his bus heading back to Music City from Connecticut, where he'd performed the previous night. By then the bus was in Knoxville. There were no flights from Knoxville to New York City,

but there was a flight leaving Nashville. **McGraw's** housekeeper found **Tim's** other hat, bolted to Metro Airport by the 11:10 a.m. departure time and gave the hat to Continental Airlines, which delivered it free of charge at 2:40 p.m. in NYC. The hat arrived just in time for the taping at the studio in Queens where **Tim** had rehearsed, bald-headed and bare-headed.

## Booking It

Legendary **Loretta Lynn** has partnered with **Tom Carter** to write her second book. Her first book, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, was a bestseller and an award-winning movie. **Loretta** has long said she wanted to rewrite her life and "write it right." However, press releases say that she and **Carter**

are taking up where *Coal Miner's Daughter* left off.

## Fresh Kersh

Yep, **David Kersh** posed nude in *Playgirl*. Well, I had to look to tell you it was there. **David**, **Lila McCann's** escort for the CMA awards, attended her 18th birthday party in Music Town. Special guests were **Tim McGraw**



McCann celebrates with dad (inset) and Kersh.

PATRICIA PRESELEY/OLY

and **Faith Hill**. **Fresh Kersh** came fully clothed to **Lila's** party, which is proper.

## A Legend Records

Remember **Kathy Mattea's** monster hit "Where've You Been," penned by her songwriter hubby **Jon Vezner**? Remember **Garth Brooks'** huge hit "The River," from the pen of **Victoria Shaw**? Songwriters **Vezner** and **Shaw** combined their studio talents to produce the lady who made Tennessee a household word 50 years ago with "Tennessee Waltz," **Miss Patti Page**. The project is **Patti's** first all-country record. The music will be released on **Patti's** label. Surely you didn't think a Nashville label would sign an act as steeped in history as **Patti Page**? Makes too much sense. \*



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## COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



## ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

▲ **Dolly Parton** accepts her medallion for achieving the ultimate honor of her profession, membership in the Country Music Hall of Fame. Among the hundreds of well-wishers at the ceremony were, from left, **Emmylou Harris**, Country Music Foundation executive director **Kyle Young** and Parton's fellow Hall of Famer **Bud Wendell**.



▲ **Connie Smith**, **Mark Collie** and **Marty Stuart** gather at the antique store in picturesque Leiper's Fork in the countryside south of Nashville for an art show spot-



lighting the paintings of Collie's wife **Anne** and the photography of Stuart. Other celebrities with works in the show included **Steve Wariner**, **Michael McDonald**, **Hal Ketchum** and **Kim Carnes**, above.



► **Lila McCann** joins mellow popster **Barry Manilow** during the Nashville taping of his TV special *Manilow Country*, airing on TNN in April. Other guests include **Trisha Yearwood**, **Jo Dee Messina** and **Deana Carter**.



**Joe Diffie** welcomes pop singer/songwriter/producer **Richard Marx** to the lineup of artists at Diffie's eighth annual *Country Steps* in for *First Steps* benefit concert in Nashville. Other performers included **Chely Wright**, **Collin Raye** and **Ty Herndon**.

## A REAL 'LIVE' OUTLAW

▼ The legendary **Waylon Jennings** recorded his new live album and video at the equally legendary Ryman Auditorium in Music City. Several notables joined him both onstage and backstage, including his celebrated singer/songwriter wife **Jessi Colter**, who joined him for duets. Their hits together include "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" and Colter's song "Storms Never Last."



◀ Guitarist/producer/songwriter **Randy Scruggs**, left, congratulates **Ricky Skaggs** on his nomination at the Grammy nominees party in Nashville. Other guests at the star-studded event included **Martina McBride**, **Del McCoury**, **Vince Gill**, **Marty Stuart** and Randy's daddy **Earl Scruggs**.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MORELLO/GHERGIA; THERESA MONTGOMERY/CBS; PATRICIA PRESLEY; 3: BOB ALEXANDER/21

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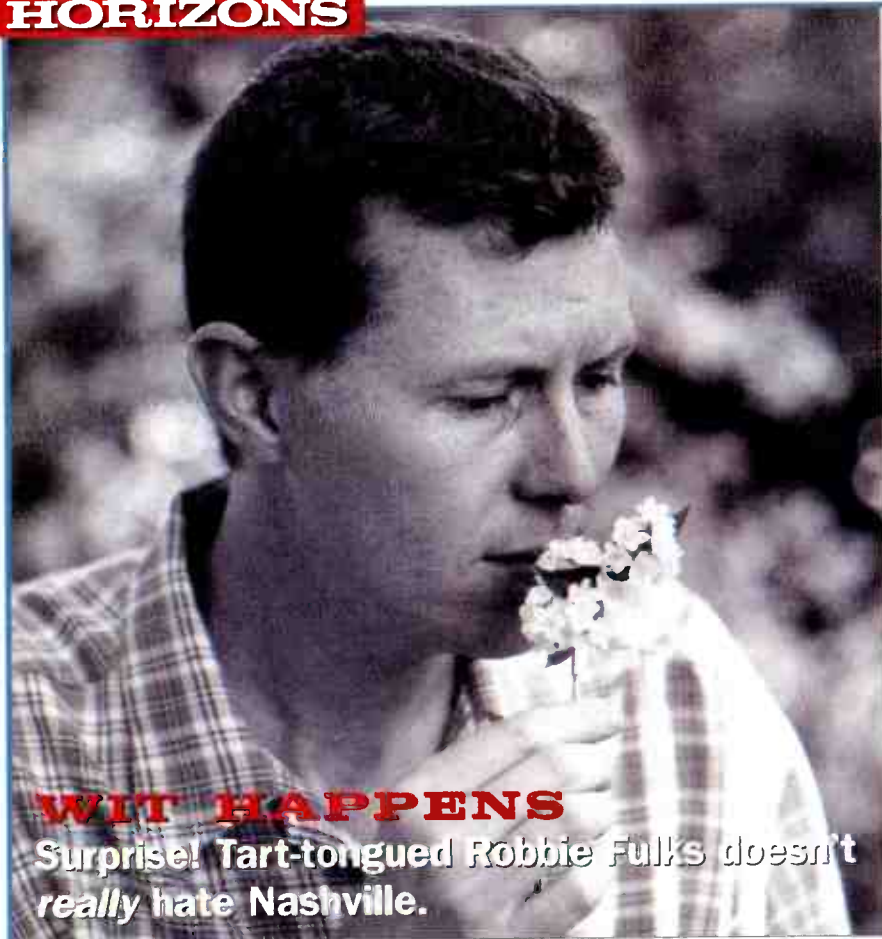
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## WIT HAPPENS

Surprise! Tart-tongued Robbie Fulks doesn't really hate Nashville.

**T**O THE FAINT OF HEART AND bland of taste, off to the next article with you. But if bland is what you think of today's radio country, then Robbie Fulks may be your antidote. In the four years since his debut CD helped make Chicago's Bloodshot Records a focal point for the alternative country movement, he's scrambled to the top of the heap on the strength of his pungent songwriting, his versatile voice and his big, very funny mouth.

He shocked his way into national attention with "Fuck This Town" off his 1997 *South Mouth* CD, a hilariously petulant song about his feelings after three fruitless years shuttling between Nashville and his home in Chicago trying to score mainstream country cuts. "Shook a lotta hands, ate a lotta lunch, wrote a lotta dumbass songs," he sings. "But I couldn't get a break in Nashville if I tried my whole life long."

On many of Fulks' songs, such as "She Took a Lot of Pills (and Died)" and "The Scrapple Song," he aims for the jugular vein and the funny bone at the

same time. And like George Carlin or Kinky Friedman, Fulks consistently justifies his wickedness with intellect and wit.

But he also writes scorching portraits of human frailty, like "I Just Want to Meet the Man," as well as dark ballads like "South Richmond Girl" and melancholy shuffles like "The Buck Starts Here."

But Music Row still doesn't get him. Take the song "Parallel Bars" off his latest collection, a retrospective grab bag of mostly unreleased songs titled *The Very Best of Robbie Fulks*. It's a duet with Kelly Willis in which each half of a couple retreats after a fight to the only two bars in town—across the street from each other. "We take our stools and we just pretend we don't know where the other one's at," they sing. It's got it all: keening pedal steel, a happy honky-tonk thump and insightful wit. Ernest Tubbs and Loretta Lynn might have sung it once upon a time. But a bemused Fulks says his Nashville publisher reports artists being "taken aback" by the cut. "No matter how hard I try to bend over backward to be safe and polite, I can't seem to

bend far enough," he says with a laugh.

Fulks grew up in Creedmore, North Carolina, just down the road from the place where the state houses the criminally insane. His dad was a semi-professional guitarist, and, by age 10, Fulks was enamored with hardcore country music and flailing away on a flattop guitar. He spent time in Special Consensus, a venerable Chicago bluegrass band, and worked for years at the Old Town School of Folk Music. But even after earning the adoration of music critics and the alt-country crowd, Fulks' career has been beset with frustrations. He released his most interesting and radio-ready album, *Let's Kill Saturday Night*, in 1998, marking his major-label debut. But because that label was Geffen, which was in disarray at the time, sales never measured up to the critical buzz. It made 1998 a tough year, "watching my career hopes go from a really high point to a really low point, and losing a lot of my own money in the process."

Bruised by Nashville and Los Angeles, Fulks has returned undaunted to the studio to make what he says will be a more serious and sonically challenging record, for whomever wants to release it. "I'm just really trying to find an interesting hybrid place between a lot of different kinds of music," he says. In the meantime, he plays groovy joints from coast to coast, attracting disaffected country fans and a crowd he sends up in yet another bite-the-hand-that-feeds-you song from *The Very Best of* called "Roots Rock Weirdoes."

And just to set the record straight, he doesn't really hate Nashville. "Nashville's got better players per capita, I think, than any place in the world. Even the ones who play on those stupid records," he says. "I benefited a lot from my time down there as a writer. I love the town, the whole vibe of it. I love driving around and seeing musical people on big billboards in the sky. It's just a romantic place to be." On the other hand, he says, "The way country music has gone in the last couple years constitutes a really serious betrayal of a lot of things I'm pretty religious about." And you can bet he'll keep mouthing off about that as long as he feels it's true.

—Craig Haughurst

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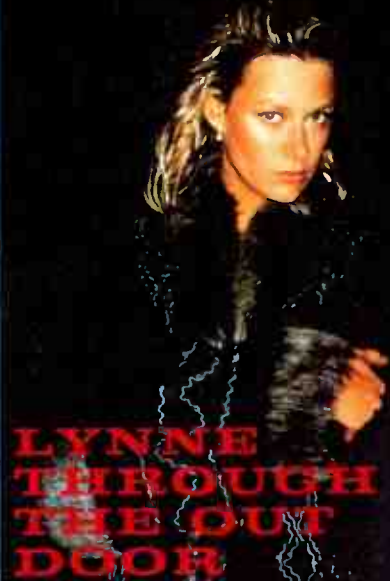
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## LYNNE THROUGH THE OUT DOOR

### Leaving Music City pays off for Shelby Lynne.

**Y**OU CAN'T EXACTLY TERM IT "antagonistic." But scrappy southern renegade Shelby Lynne certainly maintains an, *abem*, adversarial relationship with the press. "I wanna beer!" she demands, lounging in the lobby of a posh San Francisco hotel. "Make it Miller Lite!" Maybe it's something in her authoritative voice, maybe it's her wicked leather pants and dangerous-looking needlenose boots, but you find yourself doing exactly as she orders—buying her a beer and serving it to her inside the cavernous hotel lounge. But that's not enough.

"Waidaminnut! What are you drinkin'?" Lynne barks, narrowing her eyes to study your imported Samuel Smith's. The bottle is already to her lips before—as an afterthought—she asks, "Mind if I try some?" Then slowly, as if no one will notice, she slides your beer to her side of the table, hers to yours, and semi-declares, "You don't have any problems drinkin' *Miller*, do ya? Good. Let's get started."

This is how the interview with Shelby Lynne begins. Blunt. Forward. No dilly-dallying. By all accounts, Lynne—who currently resides in the California desert—was too wild, too left-field for Nashville, where she recorded several albums in the late '80s and early '90s. Fed up, she moved back to her (and kid sister Allison Moorer's) Alabama birthplace a couple of years ago, rethought her sound, and—with assistance from one-time Sheryl Crow collaborator Bill Bottrell—cobbed together *I Am Shelby Lynne*, a sweeping, velvet-orchestrated opus reminiscent of Dusty Springfield's Memphis sessions. From the opening symphonic strut of "Your Lies" through the Muscle Shoals-sultry "Leavin'" and the folksy farm-girl finish of "Where I'm From," the songstress belts out every autobiographical

note as if her life depended on it. What were Lynne's most career-changing moments in Nashville? "Can't answer that. There is no answer. Too difficult to explain." Did she give up trying

to fit in? "Everyone wants to fit in. But everybody doesn't. Some folks just don't fit." Feelings on Nashville in retrospect? "I don't believe I think about it in any way. Nashville is a town that makes records the way they make records."

Nashville, she allows, didn't want her anymore. She wanted to make music her way (a '93 all-swing album, *Temptation*, fell by the wayside, ahead of its time and misunderstood), but encountered game-playing rules at every turn.

"So I don't have anything bad to say," she smirks, "because everything bad I have to say is on this new record, in their face. And there's some people there that'll get it. But that doesn't mean they'll do anything about it. I dunno...I think if you have an honest answer, it's just too much for Nashville."

But conceiving *I Am Shelby Lynne*, she adds, "made me free. Now I can make music anywhere in the world, any time of day, any day or night, *anywhere* I want. This time around, I knew that I was gonna do the music that I liked, and I didn't have to have permission from *anybody*. I'm tellin' ya, it made me strong."

—Tom Lanham

## GENERATION NEXT

### Hank Williams III carries on his famous family's musical tradition.

The tattoo—*Rising Outlaw*—stands out proud and loud on his right forearm. For Hank Williams III, it's more than the name of his Curb Records debut; it's also his credo.

Until four years ago, the 27-year-old Nashville native, born Shelton Hank Williams, downplayed the fact that his grandfather is the patron saint of country music and that his father is a famed country rocker.

Then he got a young woman pregnant, and needed to find a fast way to make more money. He turned to the family tradition.

"Yeah," he confirms, speaking in characteristic blasts of emotion. "I got into the country music business just to save my own ass! You can't be a deadbeat dad! I started playing more country music. I started getting this attitude to try to take Tennessee back and get rid of all the pop bullshit. Now that's my goal."

The spittin' image of Hank Sr.—rail-thin,



JEAN LAUGHTON

with a cool smirk that creates a slightly dangerous veneer, Williams originally "didn't give a hoot" about his grandfather's music. "Now I love it," he admits. "But my music and my granddaddy's music are in no way alike."

Of the original rebel son himself, Hank Jr., Williams says, "We're not close. We ain't never talked much. I was raised by my mom, his second wife. He was busy doin' what he was doin' and [now] he's livin' this big ol' life...." Williams mumbles something under his breath. "I mean, I understand totally." He pauses, caught up in his thoughts. "It's just one of those things."

—Mike Greenblatt





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# SIX ARTISTS TO WATCH FOR

**LISTEN**

# Over & Done

Rumor has Brooks and Dunn headed for splitsville, but country's biggest duo says that ain't no way to go.

BY GEOFFREY HIMES

**W**HEN I FIRST SAW KIX PERFORM live," Ronnie Dunn recalls, "my mouth just dropped open. I didn't know what that was. Even on the slow songs, he jumped around like Mick Jagger. Early on, we had a discussion, and I said, 'On the slow songs, why don't you kick back just a hair?' And he came right back at me and said, 'OK, but on the fast songs, can you at least move around just a little?'"

Anyone who saw Brooks and Dunn on their first tours in the early '90s remembers just how different the two singers were. Kix Brooks, the one in the bushy black mustache and the broad-brimmed black cowboy hat, dashed about the stage like a puppy just freed from a long car trip. Ronnie Dunn, the hatless one in the red goatee and a tangle of bangs, stood as still as a deer frozen in the headlights. Brooks sang the rowdy country-pop tunes, and Dunn sang the old-fashioned honky-tonk ballads. Where they overlapped was in the country dancehall songs, the kind of material they had both played on the Oklahoma-Texas-Louisiana barroom circuit. Nonetheless the contrasts between them were so glaring that most Music Row observers thought they'd never stay together long enough to make a third album.

"People are always trying to drive a wedge between us," Brooks complains. "Since we started, the press has been writing articles that we're breaking up. That rumor has always been there. It's almost as if most people are cheering us on and then there's this other camp that would like nothing better than to see us

break up. It hurts me when people assume we don't get along. I feel we get along as well as we ever have."

Here it is, the year 2000—10 years after Arista president Tim Dubois introduced the two strangers to one another over lunch in Nashville—and Brooks and Dunn are still together, touring in support of their sixth album, *Tight Rope*. And yet, even though the duo has defied every prediction about its survival, today there are more breakup rumors than ever.

Those rumors are fueled by the new album, the first Brooks and Dunn disc without a single song cowritten by the two singers. Moreover, all the songs written by Brooks were produced by Don Cook, while all the songs written by Dunn were produced by Byron Gallimore. Some critics complained that it sounded like two solo albums squished onto the same CD.

But the two singers maintain the breakup rumors are totally unfounded. For this album, they insist, they needed the fresh input of a new producer. The situation grew out of the creative process, not personal antagonism.

Such assurances probably won't stop the rumors, for the simple reason that Brooks and Dunn are so unlike the typical country duo. When you think of duo acts such as the Everly Brothers or the Louvin Brothers, you think of harmonies so close, so well matched that the two personalities blend into one (even though those two acts had serious offstage conflicts that led to breakups). Brooks and Dunn, however, have built their act not around their similarities but around their contrasts.

"Ten years down the road, we're still not that great as harmony singers," Brooks confesses. "We still have to work out parts, but that's not what people really care about. I think people are attracted to the contrasts between us. I'm the extrovert and he's the introvert. I'm the first to admit that Ronnie's one of the great country singers, but I like to think it took the two of us to win Entertainer of the Year. I think I provide an energy level that people appreciate."

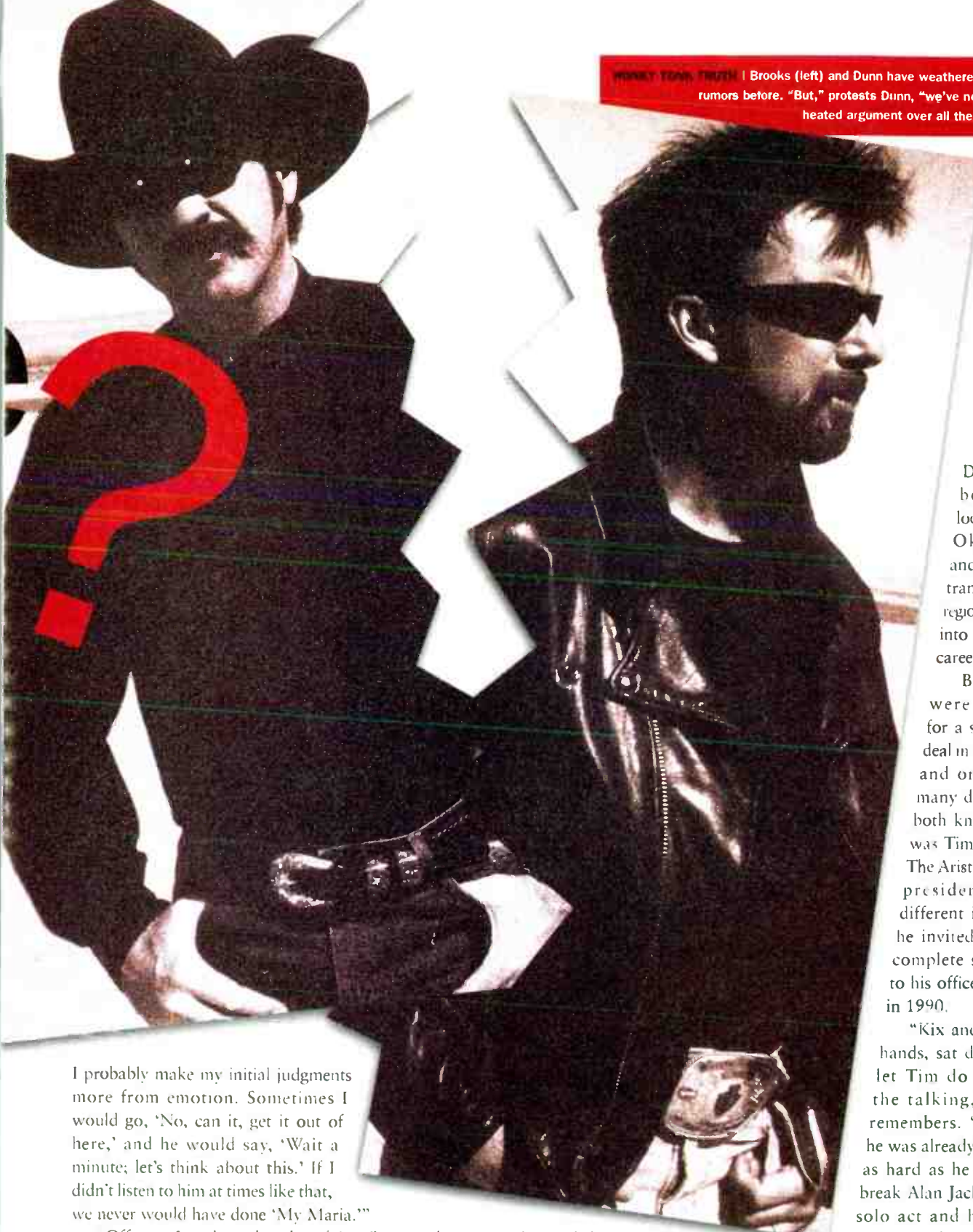
It's easy to imagine how a full evening of Dunn, singing beautifully but remaining aloof, might try anyone's patience. It's just as easy to imagine how an entire show of Brooks, bouncing off the walls, could quickly become exhausting. But when the two of them share the stage—or a CD for that matter—one provides welcome relief from the other.

"We have different styles, different ways of doing things," Dunn points out. "It's an asset that we're so different personality-wise. As far over the edge on the extrovert side he is, I'm probably too much so on the other side. So when we come together, it evens out. That's the dynamic that works. And it works because it's not contrived; it's reality."

"The weird thing," Brooks notes, "is we're almost the opposite offstage. Ronnie tends to be much quicker with decisions and his temper offstage; he's a much more fiery person than you'd think. Whereas I tend to sit back and think about things before I get mad about them."

"It's true," Dunn agrees, "Kix is a lot more methodical in his thinking than I am."

HONKY-TONK THRU | Brooks (left) and Dunn have weathered breakup rumors before. "But," protests Dunn, "we've never had a heated argument over all these years."



I probably make my initial judgments more from emotion. Sometimes I would go, 'No, can it, get it out of here,' and he would say, 'Wait a minute; let's think about this.' If I didn't listen to him at times like that, we never would have done 'My Maria.'"

"Offstage, I tend to take a lot of time," Brooks adds. "I meet people in the airports and they go, 'What's wrong with you?' They're surprised at how quiet I am; they expect me to be swinging from the chandeliers. The stage is my escape valve."

To understand this peculiar partnership,

you have to understand the unusual circumstances of its beginning. In 1990, Brooks had one unsuccessful album to his name (1989's *Kix Brooks* on Capitol) but a long list of songwriting credits, including No.1 hits for Highway 101 and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. Meanwhile,

Dunn had become a local star in Oklahoma and hoped to translate that regional success into a national career.

Both men were looking for a solo-artist deal in Nashville, and one of the many doors they both knocked on was Tim Dubois'. The Arista Records president had a different idea, and he invited the two complete strangers to his office one day in 1990.

"Kix and I shook hands, sat down and let Tim do most of the talking," Dunn remembers. "He said he was already working as hard as he could to break Alan Jackson as a solo act and he didn't need another one. He thought the niche in the market that could be exploited was the duo category. It was that analytical. We just sat there and went, 'Huh?'"

"When Tim suggested it," Brooks adds, "I said, 'That's not really what I'm

trying to do here. I've never done anything except lead a band, and I'm not that great a harmony singer.' I could tell Ronnie

wasn't too excited by the idea either. I don't think either one of us in our heart of hearts thought much would come of it."

What really convinced the two strangers to try the duo idea were the demos that Dubois played for them. When Brooks heard "Neon Moon" and "Boot Scootin' Boogie," which Dunn was already playing in Oklahoma, he thought they could both be hits. And Dunn was just as impressed by Brooks' demo for "Lost and Found."

But the partnership didn't really click until they took their first batch of songs into the studio. The two men discovered that what they had in common was an enthusiasm for old-fashioned country songwriting and newfangled country-rock arrangements. And because they had both cut their

teeth in the dancehalls of Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to make country dance.

"That combination of country lyrics and rocking guitars just moves me," Brooks maintains. "The great country writers were as good as Hemingway as far as I'm concerned, but a lot of country records have not moved me musically. They didn't kick hard enough."

"Long before *Urban Cowboy* took off and long after it faded out," Dunn argues, "people have been dancing to country music. If you play a club in Texas and Oklahoma and you don't play dance music, you're dead. They'll boo you off the stage."

"It's dumb to even debate country dancing," Brooks adds. "To act like that's something we came up with is just silly. We may have kicked it into a higher gear, but where we came from it's always gone on and has never lost a beat. Down there people don't say, 'Let's go to the show'; they say, 'Let's go dancing.'"

"The turning point came when we recorded 'Brand New Man' with a rocking



PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAMS WINE PHOTOGRAPHY MANAGEMENT

**OH DARN DUNS** | Both Brooks and Dunn pursue solo projects and separate interests that fuel the breakup rumors. Dunn is busy producing Wade Hayes' next album (top); Brooks sometimes goes solo at charity functions, such as this visit to St. Jude's Hospital in Memphis (right).



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guitar riff in the middle. We sat down in the studio and said, 'Maybe we should put a steel ride there instead, because radio might put up a stop sign.' Finally, we said,

Hendricks, in much the same way they worked with Cook and Byron Gallimore on *Tight Rope*. Dunn took charge of the merchandising, while Brooks handled the

thing's on your shoulders. If it doesn't work out, we're both to blame. Or I can go, 'That was Ronnie's idea.'"

"Just for the sake of public perception," Dunn suggests, "we'll probably use one producer on the next record. We may even produce it ourselves. But that's just for politics, because the record will sound the same.

"People are always looking for chinks in the armor of Brooks and Dunn, but it's not nearly as vulnerable as it seems. There are a million agendas out there. We've had radio guys tell us that other labels have told them that we're breaking up. But we've never had a heated argument over all these years. We've talked about staging a public feud just to stir it up for publicity, but my wife says, 'Don't even go there.'"

**"People are always trying to drive a wedge between us," Brooks complains. "Since we started, the press has been writing articles that we're breaking up."**

"You know, who cares? Let's make a record we like. If it doesn't work, we can go back to what we were doing."

It worked so well that the 1991 debut album, *Brand New Man*, yielded four No. 1 singles. Suddenly, Brooks and Dunn were on the road all the time and had to figure out how to turn their marriage of convenience into a true partnership.

On the first three albums, they used different producers. Brooks worked with his old songwriting partner, Don Cook, while Dunn relied on his demo producer, Scott

financial end. Brooks still writes the humorous stories about Slim and Howdy in the CD booklets, and Dunn takes the duets with other singers.

"By dividing responsibilities," Brooks points out, "it allows each of us some pride of accomplishment, as opposed to being in a group where everything has to be voted on, down to the paper clips. But it's not like being a solo act where every-



KATHY AUTCHINC, JUPITER'S PHOTO AGENCY

Relax... Cambridge only tastes expensive.

**W**HETHER IT'S AN ELEGANT STRAPLESS GOWN AT AN awards show or the youthful gear she sports in the video for her No. 1 hit "I Love You," Martina McBride somehow makes everything she wears look better. She's one of those enviable few (you know the type) who has a gift for always looking, as the fashion magazines say, "pulled together"—polished and perfect.

"Martina always looks great," declares friend and makeup artist Mary Beth Felts. "Her style is very sophisticated, simple but elegant. It's not over-the-top."

"I don't think I have a certain style," McBride ponders, "[but] if I had to pin it down, it would be things that are classic—I like trendy things, but I don't go really over the edge."

What is it that causes style savants like McBride to turn heads in even the simplest shift? The reigning Country Music Association Female Vocalist of the Year claims there's no special secret to her fashion sense, and that her own sensible fashion philosophy hasn't changed much over the years.

"I'm still pretty practical about what I buy, because anything I buy I like to wear a lot, for a lot of years," she says. "That's one reason I don't go too trendy, because I like to wear pieces for a long time. I think you can update or do the trendy thing with accessories, instead of the main pieces, because to really spend a lot of money on something that will be out of style in three months is kind of crazy. That doesn't really appeal to my practical midwestern side. I have suits and stuff that I've had for almost 10 years, and they still look nice.

"Probably one thing that has changed over time is that now I look at clothes as an investment; I invest in quality a little more than I used to. There really is a difference in clothes if you can spend a little more for a finer fabric or something that's made better. It usually lasts longer."

McBride admits it's easier to look great now that she has wardrobe professionals working with her on a regular basis. It also simplifies her life since, between work and spending as

much time as possible with husband John and daughters Delaney, 5, and Emma, 2, shopping trips are a rarity.

"Being in this business and having stylists bring you all these great clothes to try, that's a luxury, definitely," she laughs. "Finding the time to go shopping, and shopping with two little girls, is crazy. So it's a luxury to have somebody bring it all someplace and you can pick and choose.

"I've been exposed to so much more than I was when I first moved to Nashville, just through the business and through stylists who go find clothes. I really love trying on different clothes, but I find myself gravitating toward the same favorites."

As one of country's most stylish celebrities, McBride is the perfect model for our special fashion section on the following pages. With her glamorous looks, plus a successful career that could potentially support a hefty shopping habit, some would guess that the singer's life is one long buying trip through the world of couture. But even women as petite and fashion-friendly as McBride face their own wardrobe challenges—and truth be told, she says, she prefers to dress down.

"I'm pretty short, so everything I try on is usually too long," she complains. "I always have to get everything hemmed or taken up. That's probably my biggest challenge—finding things that fit lengthwise. Anyway, when I'm home, I just like to wear a T-shirt and jeans or overalls. I really hardly ever dress up, especially when I'm touring, because I get to dress up almost every day. So at home I'm really casual and comfortable."

McBride will likely be dressing up daily when she joins the mammoth George Strait Festival tour at the end of May. She also continues to perform and make appearances in support of her platinum album, *Emotion*. But according to McBride, the best part of her busy life these days is not the great wardrobe, the top-selling album, the No. 1 song or the long-awaited CMA Vocalist award. "I'm so proud of my girls," she says, beaming. "Being a mom is the best thing I've ever done." ★

—Deborah Barnes

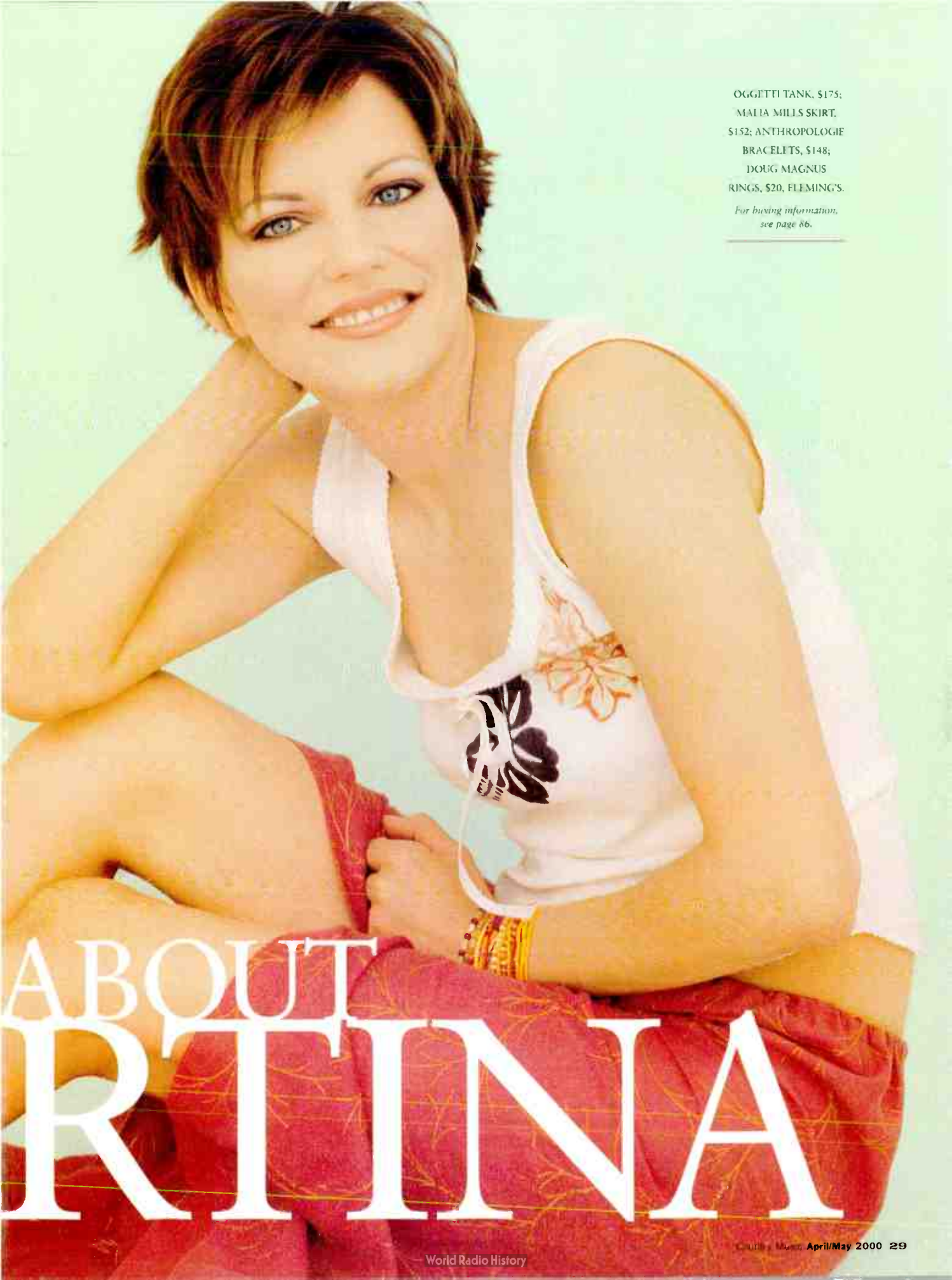
# THERE'S SOMETHING MAMA

Photographed by ANDREW ECCLES

Styling by CLAUDIA FOWLER

Hair by EARL COX of Trumps Studio

Makeup by MARY BETH FELTS for EMBE Cosmetics



OGGETTI TANK, \$175;  
MALIA MILLS SKIRT,  
\$152; ANTHROPOLOGIE  
BRACELETS, \$148;  
DOUG MAGNUS  
RINGS, \$20, FLEMING'S.

*For buying information,  
see page 86.*

# ABOUT RITINA



KNIT TIE-DYE TOP,  
\$59, BARNEY'S NY;  
LAUBSDY BY SHELLI  
SEGALL SKIRT, \$138;  
BETSEY JOHNSON  
NECKLACE, \$45;  
DOUG MAGNUS  
RINGS, \$20, FLEMING'S.

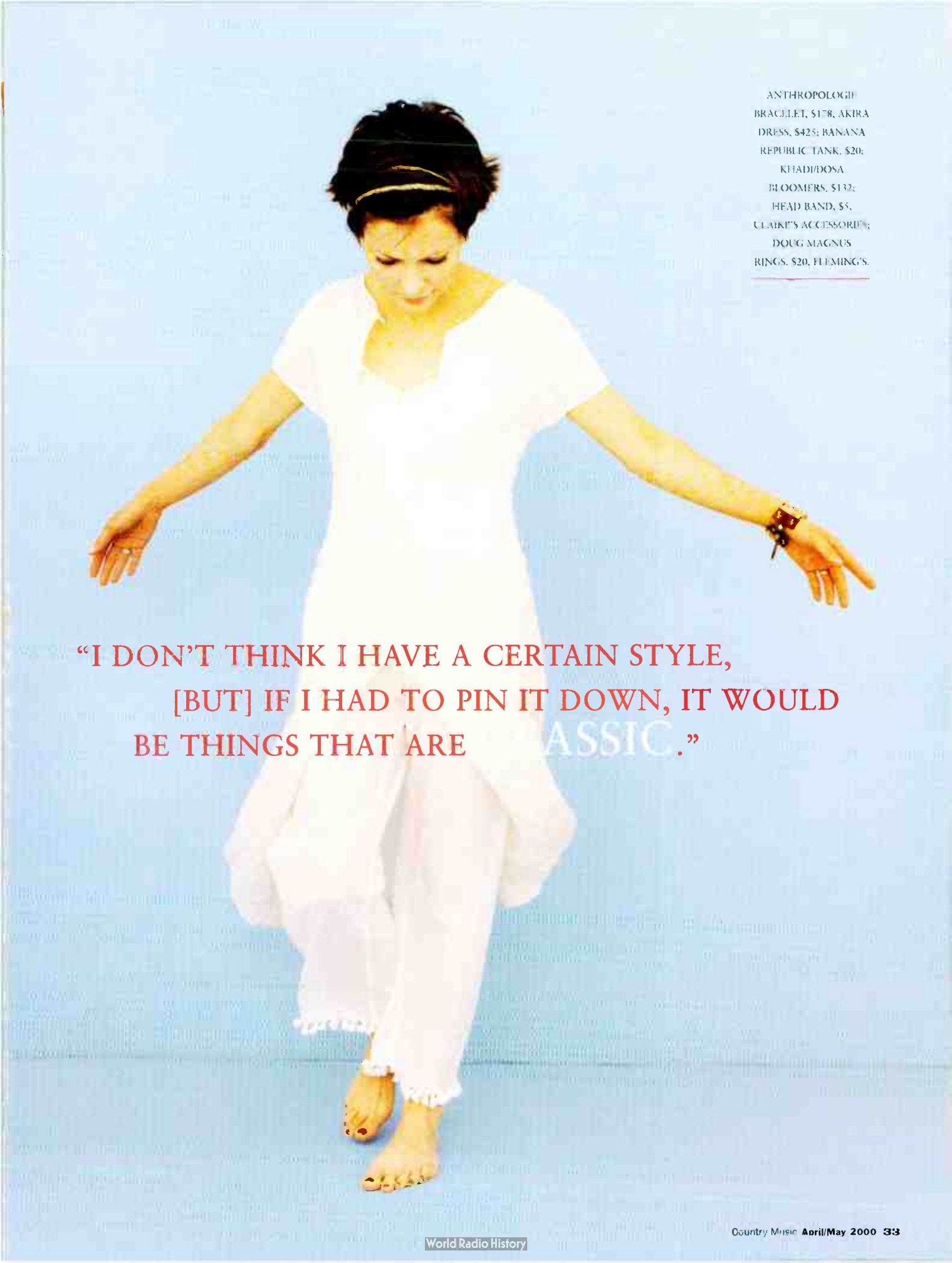
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XHILARATION PURPLE  
TANK, \$8; DOSA WHITE  
TANK, \$86; CLAUDIE  
PIERLOT SUDE  
PANTS, \$175; DOUG  
MAGNUS RINGS,  
\$20; FLEMING'S  
BEISEY JOHNSON  
NECKLACE, \$50;  
GUCCI SHOES, \$400.





A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a white short-sleeved dress with a square neckline and a headband, stands with her arms outstretched against a light blue background. She is looking down. The dress has a subtle pattern and a ruffled hem. She is wearing a dark headband, a dark bracelet on her left wrist, and a ring on her left hand. She is barefoot.

ANTHROPOLOGIE  
BRACELET, \$178, AKIRA  
DRESS, \$425; BANANA  
REPUBLIC TANK, \$20;  
KHADI/DOSA  
BLOOMERS, \$132;  
HEAD BAND, \$5;  
CLAIR'S ACCESSORIES;  
DOUG MAGNUS  
RINGS, \$20, FLEMING'S.

“I DON’T THINK I HAVE A CERTAIN STYLE,  
[BUT] IF I HAD TO PIN IT DOWN, IT WOULD  
BE THINGS THAT ARE CLASSIC.”

DIABLESS KNIT TOP,  
\$51; ANTHROPOLOGIE  
SKIRT, \$118;  
BELSEY JOHNSON  
EARRINGS, \$50;  
CHINESE LAUNDRY  
SHOES, \$45.

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**The wait is over**

**CLAY DAVIDSON**  
**“UNCONDITIONAL”**

from his debut album of the same name  
single available immediately  
album available April 11 wherever music is sold



"To me, country music should tell the truth," says Allan (pausing outside the SuperBull arena). "I want things to be more real. I think there's a huge market out there for real country music."

# No BULL

Gary Allan's straight-shootin' style is right on target with the rodeo world.

BY MICHAEL McCALL



**BULL'S EYE** Before a SuperBull performance, Allan likes to check out the rodeo action.

**A** YOUNG COWBOY TRUDGES THROUGH the soft red dirt of the rodeo arena, his legs bowed wide under the worn suede chaps strapped over his Wrangler jeans. A couple of steps behind him a dark-haired woman, about 19, carefully negotiates the clumps of red clay. She wants to make sure she doesn't step in anything deposited by the enormous bulls that have just finished warming up on the arena floor; at the same time, she doesn't want to fall too far behind the cowboy, since he's about to fulfill his promise of introducing her to country singer Gary Allan.

"Mr. Allan?" the boyish rodeo competitor asks through the split-rail fence. Allan turns, smiles and reaches to shake the hand sticking between the fence rails. "I'm sorry to bother you," the cowboy continues. "But this girl was about to go crazy over here. She wanted me to bring her over here so she could, I don't know, touch you or something."

The girl shoots a dagger-filled gaze at the cowboy, then smiles sweetly at Allan. She tells him how much she likes his music, then asks about a barrage of guitar chords Allan had unleashed a few minutes earlier during his pre-show soundcheck. "Wasn't that Metallica?" she inquires.

Allan beams a smile of recognition. "Yeah," he says. "That's from my past life." She used to be a Metallica fan too, she tells him. But now she mostly listens to country music. Allan nods in agreement. "That's what I'm all about now," he concludes.

The exchange takes place on the floor of Freedom Hall in Johnson City, Tennessee,

where Allan is about to perform as part of a SuperBull Tour event pairing a bull-riding competition and a country music concert. Allan is a favorite of the SuperBull organizers, and he will join the event repeatedly during its 16-city, 31-show tour. Allan also enjoys hanging out with the young rodeo cowboys, watching the competition and conversing as he does with the young couple. That conversation's content, going from heavy metal to honky-tonk music, elucidates part of what separates Allan from other, up-and-coming country singers.

A native of southern California, Allan is a surfing enthusiast who grew up in an oceanfront suburb entrenched in heavy metal and punk rock. But, thanks to his father, Allan grew up loving country music—a definite oddity among his peers. At age 12, he joined his father's honky-tonk band and began performing in local working-class bars. He's been playing traditional country music ever since.

Though his recordings can be compared to those of modern honky-tonkers like George Strait and Mark Chesnutt, Allan also has developed a style all his own.

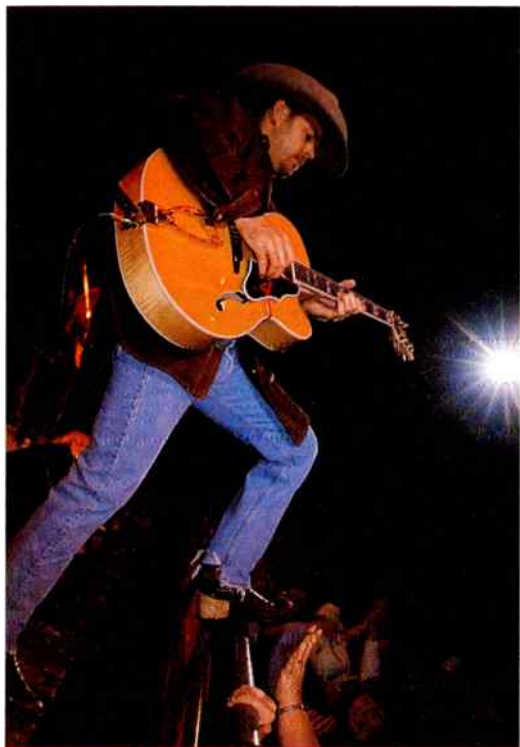
"I always try to shape my music toward the California sound," Allan says when explaining why his latest album, *Smoke Rings in the Dark*, has a rawer and moodier sound than most country albums recorded in Nashville. "To me, the California style is a little edgier. It's the

music of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard and Dwight Yoakam. Most of the honky-tonk guys play in a Texas style; it's a lot smoother than what I do."

However, what separates Allan from other young country competitors is what he repeatedly refers to as his "edge." As a musician, he's interested in a rougher, more visceral sound than the typical Nashville fare. He's a traditionalist who likes his honky-tonk and his barroom ballads to contain a bite.

"I have a hard time liking real sappy songs," Allan says while relaxing in the back of his touring bus before his SuperBull performance. "To me, those songs are the hardest to put across sincerely. Country music is about stories, and I want to tell the bad stories as well as the good stories."

As he makes apparent, Allan isn't afraid of taking a stand. Moreover, in an era when many country singers exhibit carefully manufactured images guided by



FRESH AIR PHOTOGRAPHICS

**ARENA ROCK** After the bull-riding competition, the rodeo arena is transformed into a concert stage for Allan and his band.

“My point is that I want [the records] to represent who I am. That’s what I care about.”

He’s clashed with the powers-that-be over smaller issues, too. For example, he refuses to remove his hat for photo sessions, despite the urging of the staff of MCA Records. The label believes fans could more easily distinguish Allan from other singers if his rugged good looks weren’t shielded by the shadowy brim of his hat. Allan says the hat is as integral to who he is as his guitar or his songs, and that he wore it every night onstage long before Nashville showed interest in him.

“I just tell ’em I know who I am,” he says. “If you like me, that’s fine. If you don’t, that’s fine. But don’t accept me and then try and change me. I don’t need changing.”

He’s had his share of turmoil off-stage, as well. His marriage last year to model Danette Day lasted only seven months. Asked about its brevity, he says, “Yeah, man, it was real brief.” Pressed further, he takes a labored breath and adds curtly, “It was just a big mistake, and I realized it and got out. I rushed into something, and I shouldn’t have. Love makes you do stupid things.”

Asked how he’s doing now, he lightens up a bit, allowing, “I’m flying low and avoiding the radar.” He then laughs and says, “I’m trying real hard not to make eye contact with anybody. Fortunately, the music is going real well. That’s always been what keeps me sane.”

His success— as well as his attitude and the aggressive aspect of his music—is part of why the SuperBull organization courted Allan. In staging its wild-and-woolly bull-riding events across the country, SuperBull decided to beef up its evening of entertainment by closing the event with a concert—a first for a nationally touring rodeo event. Allan’s rough-hewn individuality and spitfire musical style fits in with the rowdy night of entertainment that bull-riding provides. Says Kathy Brown, talent coordinator for SuperBull, “We try and get artists whose music works well

# Rodeo COUNTRY

Country music and rodeos fit together as naturally as cowboy hats and boots. Businessman George Marshall made the same connection when he decided to take a rodeo event on a multicity tour across the United States. Marshall came up with two ideas: He would focus his event on bull-riding, one of the most exciting rodeo competitions, and he would integrate live country music into the evening of entertainment.

That’s how the SuperBull Tour was born 11 years ago. This year, Marshall will present 31 SuperBull events in 16 American cities. “It’s a perfect match,” Marshall says. “The first thing you get is the excitement of seeing the bull riders in an indoor setting where everyone is close to the action. Then you get to whoop it up to some high-powered country music. The people who come for the rodeo might find that they really like a music act they hadn’t heard before. And the people who come to see the music show walk out as fans of bull-riding and rodeo. Everyone wins.”

SuperBull’s not the only rodeo event that’s making a country music connection. Rodeo’s biggest events—the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, the Houston Livestock show and the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo—all feature big-name country stars as part of their festivities. For example, at this year’s Houston Livestock event in January, the performers included Alan Jackson, Reba McEntire and Brooks and Dunn. The same performers also showed up in February at the San Antonio Stock Show, along with Jo Dee Messina, Willie Nelson and Robert Earl Keen, among others.

in a rodeo-type environment. You can’t follow the bulls with a wimpy act. They’ve got to have a lot of energy onstage to follow that. And they’ve got to be the kind of country music cowboys like. They’ve got to be real. Gary is all those things.” ★

behind-the-scenes pros, Allan has his own ideas about how to present himself. “I don’t let anybody tell me what to do,” he says, sharpening the tone in his voice. “I don’t like to be told what to wear, how to play or how to do anything. I know record companies have a whole committee of people who talk about what an artist should look like. But I’ve always told ’em, ‘I don’t need to be developed. I need to be marketed. I’ll make my music. You go sell it.’”

His outspoken self-confidence has led to what he describes as “a few head butts” with record executives. On his second

“...I’ve always told [the label], ‘I’ll make my music. You go sell it.’”

album, 1998’s *It Would Be You*, he wanted to include a pointedly political song called “No Judgment Day.” Based on a story of three teens beating an elderly man to death with a baseball bat, the song deals with the growth in incidents of cold-blooded violence by America’s youth. Record executives fought him on it, and eventually Allan won a compromise: He could put the song on the album, but only as an uncredited hidden track on the end of the CD.

“Every record I’ve done has had some stuff they weren’t excited about,” he says.

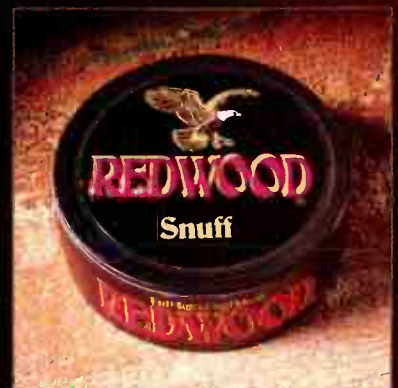


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MOUTH CANCER



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World Radio History

About half the price of Copenhagen.

Tracy Lawrence stages his comeback. Is it an act of contrition or deception?

By Michael McCall

Photographs by Raeanne Rubenstein

# Truth

# and CONSEQUENCES

**I**N A NEW SONG, “UNFORGIVEN,” TRACY LAWRENCE names two American heroes, Thomas Jefferson and John F. Kennedy. He cites the sins both committed in their personal lives, then notes that they were forgiven by the public at large. Lawrence then refers to three well-known outlaws: Judas, Jesse James and Billy the Kid. “They’re all forgiven,” he sings with weighty seriousness.

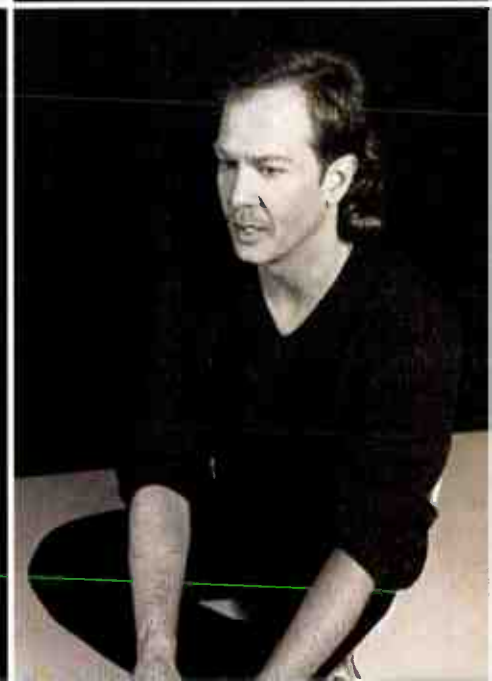
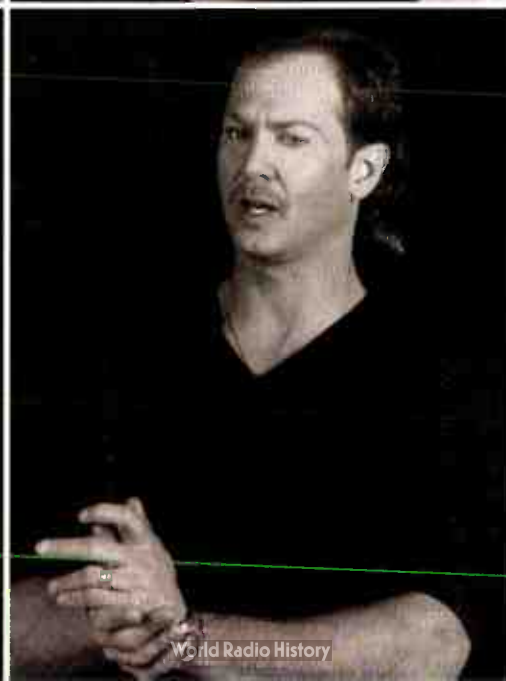
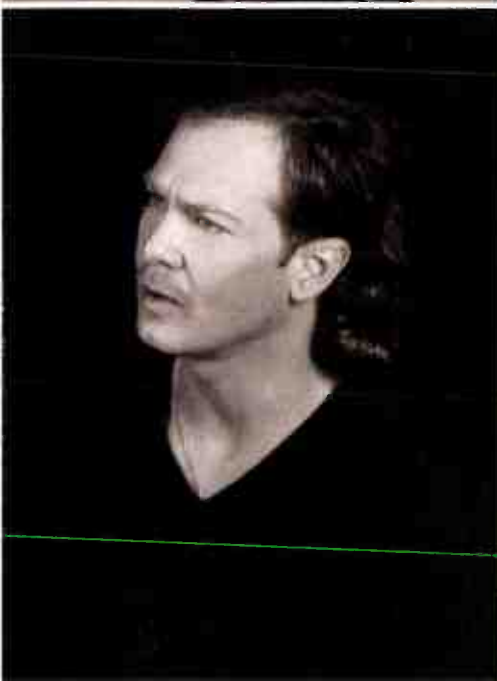
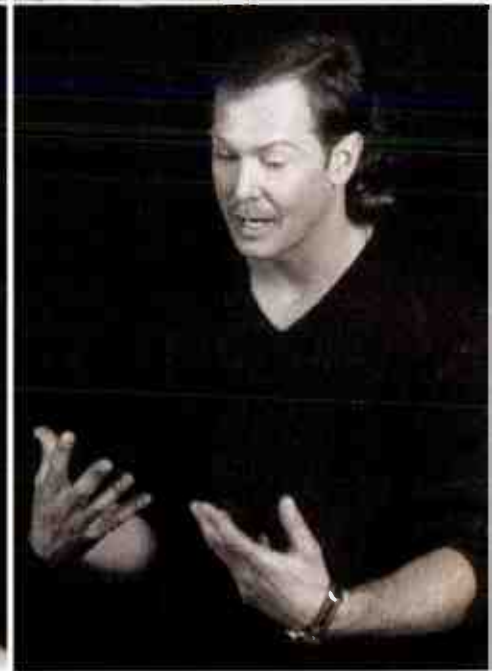
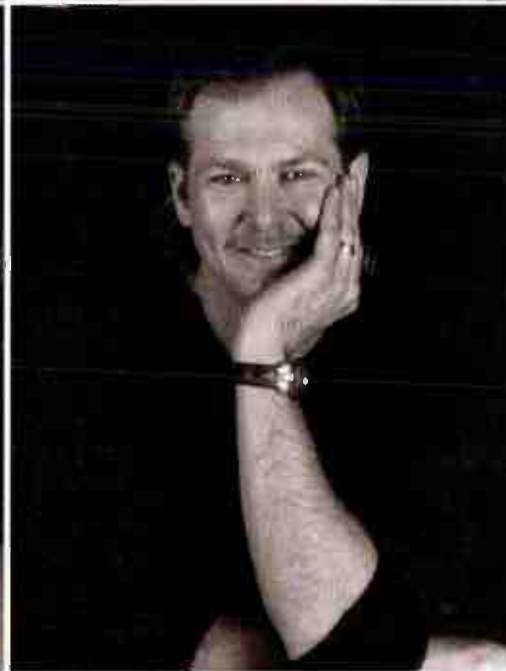
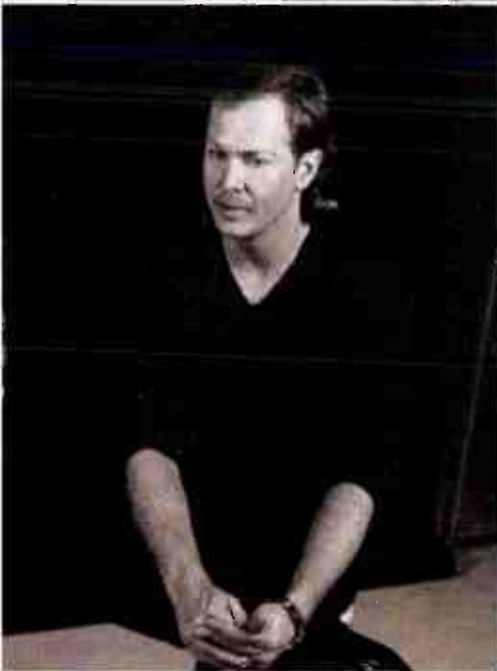
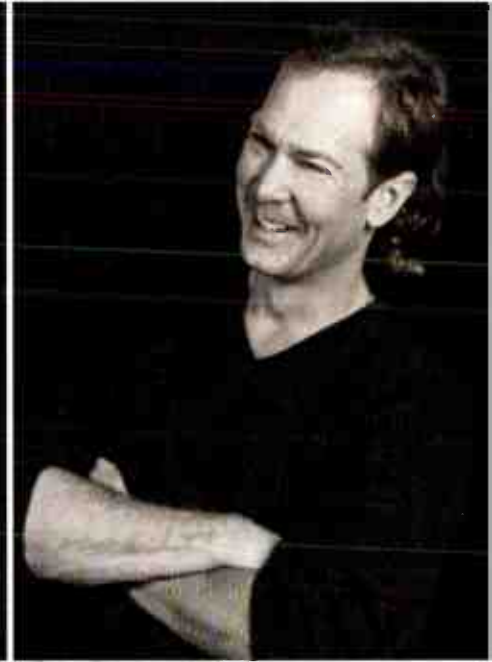
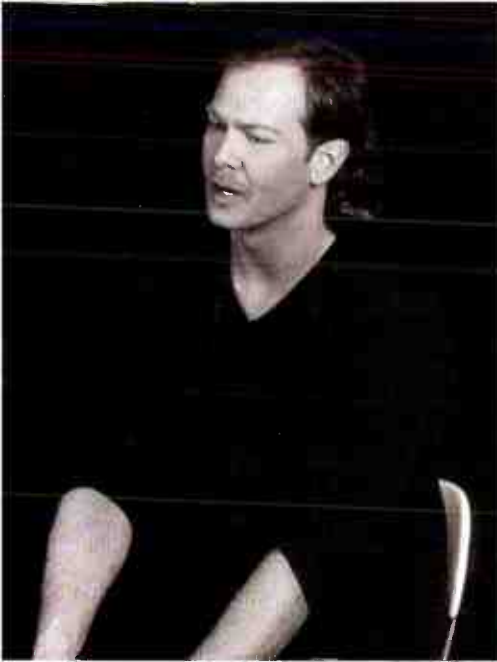
In the song’s chorus, Lawrence gets personal. He acknowledges that he’s done wrong. Then, in a plea rife with aching emotion, he sings, “I don’t know just what I’ve done to be one of the unforgiven.”

The song’s message characterizes the singer’s current challenge: Will Lawrence be forgiven for crimes he committed in his personal life, or will country fans reject Lawrence’s comeback attempt, spearheaded by his new album, *Lessons Learned*, his first new material since his widely publicized arrest three years ago for beating his wife in a Nevada hotel suite?

“I’m a different person now,” Lawrence says, sitting on a stool in a photography studio and somberly answering the difficult questions that have to be asked. “I’m different than I was two years ago or five years ago. I’m 32 now, and in the last 10 years, I have seen the top of the mountain and the bottom of it. But I feel I’m in a great place now, and I want to go out and show that to people.”

Of course, modern society is full of public figures who disgrace themselves, then return, heart in hand, begging to be given back their former position and the glories that accompany it. From President Clinton to boxing champion Mike Tyson to rock stars like Mötley Crüe’s Tommy Lee, persons of power and celebrity regularly overstep the bounds of what the public considers moral and decent.

In most cases, as in Lawrence’s, it usually takes a day of reckoning—an arrest, a court hearing, the detailed accusations of a criminal report—before we learn an ugly truth about the character of someone we’ve admired. In some situations, the disgraced figure disappears from public life. More and more, though, the person in question asks for another chance. Hugh Grant. Tonya Harding. Jim Bakker. Marv Albert. O.J. Simpson. The list goes on, with new headlines each week blaring accusations or charges about stars, politicians and sports figures.



Photographer's notes: "The F-150 SuperCrew handled the tough conditions as well as it handled the crew. Chuck Bergin, THE MAN down here, said, "All six of us fit in the cab. The clothes we wear aren't business clothes; they're heavy, thick, and we still had room. It handles smooth. And the fact that the bed extends when you need it is a plus." Whether you're man or machine, if you're part of the crew, you do the hard work." - Raymond Gelman



Waynesboro Mississippi **Ford Country** December 18, 1999

For more information on the Whole F-Series lineup, including the new F-150 SuperCrew pictured, log on to [www.fordvehicles.com/to/ocountry](http://www.fordvehicles.com/to/ocountry). Or call 1-800-258-FORD, ext. SC72.



The all-new **Ford F-150 SuperCrew** digs in.

*If the crew fits.* Out here, there are no burger joints, no gas stations. If you need a road, you make one, and it takes a crew to do the job. "Out here" is a 110,000-acre forest. The crew is a forest management team – pros who set fires for a living. They burn to promote growth, and they say teamwork is everything. "If I don't do my job, the other guy could be in trouble – could get trapped." And the right tools are essential. On the equipment list this time out was the 2001 Ford F-150 SuperCrew. "It hauled everything we needed through ditches, down hills, through water and over six inches of Mississippi gumbo." Yeah, the mud can get thick, and the air can reach 150 degrees. Perfect conditions for a ride through Ford Country.

For much of the '90s, Lawrence was a shining young country singer from southwest Arkansas. He won the Academy of Country Music's Best New Male Vocalist award in 1992. He created an impressive 17 No. 1 country hits. He sold more than 7 million albums. But after his conviction of battery, discussions of Lawrence included the description "confessed wife-beater." Eventually, though, a problem becomes the past, and the question becomes, *what's next?*

"I've gone through a tough period," Lawrence says. "I had to get my heart and soul back in order. There's a natural process that goes with that. You back up, you get some rest, you get your bearings down. You figure out what your problems are and you adjust accordingly."

To his credit, Lawrence isn't asking anyone to forget. He's asking them to forgive, to see that there have been lessons learned. His songs delve directly into his dilemma: "The Holes That He Dug," "The Man That I Was," "Lessons Learned," "Unforgiven." All could be interpreted as Lawrence opening up and revealing emotions he's confronted since his downfall.

"I feel like I've addressed all the issues in myself that have to be addressed," he says. "I needed to find peace within myself and to be happy with life again."

Lawrence describes his rehabilitation in terms of a timeline. He withdrew from

the spotlight, turning to family and to religion for strength. He reconnected with the values he'd lost in the maelstrom of stardom. Then he started writing songs again, pouring his emotions of regret, reconciliation and renewal into verse.

Next came re-emergence. Lawrence could fix himself. But could he repair his relationship with his label, with radio and, most important, with country fans?

Atlantic Records suspended Lawrence's contract after his conviction in the fall of 1997. Rick Blackburn, president of Atlantic's Nashville office at the time, had nurtured Lawrence's career from its outset. Both Blackburn and Lawrence used the term "father figure" to describe their relationship.

As several former Atlantic employees put it, Blackburn overlooked repeated behind-the-scenes incidents involving Lawrence, including one involving Lawrence firing a gun from his truck window on a highway at a vehicle. The staffers, all of whom worked closely with the star, recall how Lawrence treated Atlantic employees rudely and belligerently. He propositioned female employees; he went on tirades; he played people against each other; he openly used drugs and boasted of how hard he partied.

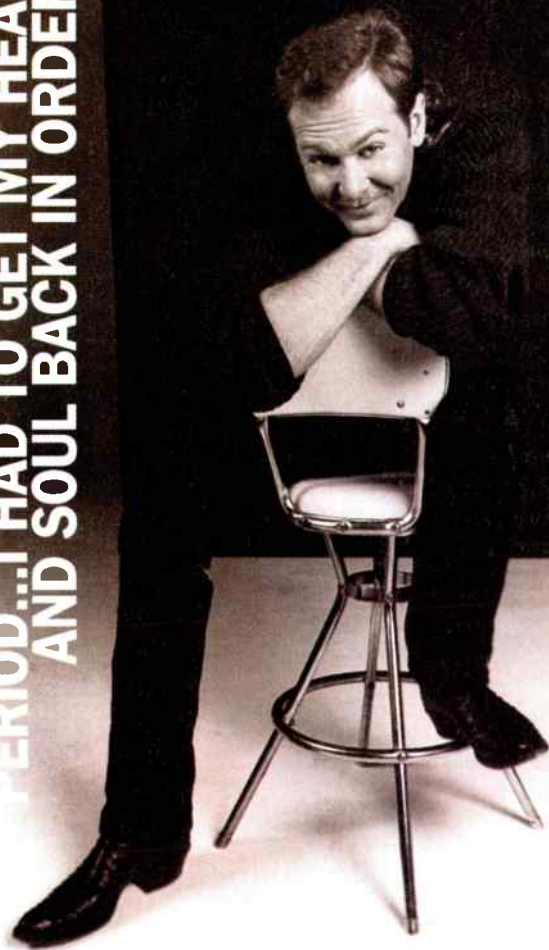
After Lawrence's 1997 arrest, Blackburn no longer excused his protégé's behavior. After suspending him, Blackburn told several Atlantic employees that the label was finished with Lawrence.

However, in 1999, Blackburn retired. A new set of executives was

appointed, headed by Barry Coburn, a veteran artist manager who had previously worked with Alan Jackson and BR5-49, among others. Coburn knew little beyond the headlines about Lawrence's troubles. "I'd seen the one side of it, what was in the press," says Coburn. "I wanted to hear from Tracy. When I first met with him, he struck me as incredibly focused and on-track. I found him to be direct and honest."

As they talked, Coburn formed an opinion about Lawrence. "A lot of the stuff that went on was youthful craziness," the executive says. "I was surprised to learn that he's only 32. He was so young when stardom came. He's still young, but he's matured a lot. I'm not defending his bad behavior, but one of the problems we have in country music is we've homogenized and purified everything. As soon as I heard Tracy's new music, I knew we had something special. He gave us something to rebuild

"I'VE GONE THROUGH A TOUGH PERIOD...I HAD TO GET MY HEART AND SOUL BACK IN ORDER."



Lawrence married former Dallas Cowboys cheerleader Stacie Drew in March 1997. Six months later she accused him of battery.

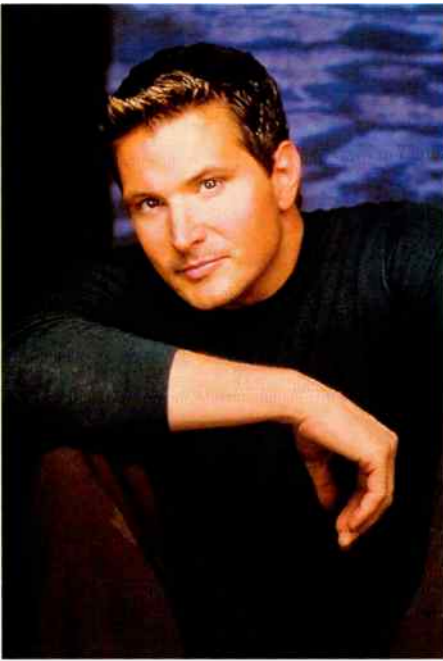




TY HERNDON

APRIL/MAY 2000

COUNTRYMUSIC



# Ty Herndon

**H**ot on the heels of a...well, “steamy” single, Ty Herndon stripped down to his boxers for his latest video, “No Mercy.” Meanwhile, his lusty take on the Randy Newman striptease anthem, “You Can Leave Your Hat On,” has fans breathing heavy from coast to coast. What gives? “We’re pushing the envelope a little more,” he concedes.

“I don’t consider myself a sex symbol. Being the nerd in school, I kinda still see myself that way. I’m a clown, and most people who know me know that. I’m thrilled with the image, all kidding aside; it’s something that I needed to do. Whether I want to be a sex symbol or not, being a country artist and being on stage, you already are that—female fans are going to respond to you no matter what. I didn’t exactly fight [the record label] on pushing the envelope a little bit.”

Yeah, baby. Towel, anyone?

My career is wonderful, but I had to learn that I have a life outside of that. What’s important to me now is to open my eyes up to what myself and my family need in this life.”



Herndon enjoys supporting Special Olympians.

COURTESY SONY MUSIC

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**BORN**

May 2, 1962, in Meridian, Mississippi. He was raised in Butler, Alabama.

**CURRENT RESIDENCE**

Dallas, Texas

**FAMILY**

Wife Rene is a pediatric nurse. Mom Peggy and younger sister Alicia live in Alabama; Dad Boyd died in 1983.

**GUILTY PLEASURE**

“Chocolate milkshakes. I have one a day at least. I have all my favorite milkshake joints in Dallas, Nashville, L.A.—all over.”

**WORST HABIT**

“I used to have a lot of them,” laughs this veteran of drug rehab. “My wife gets mad at me because I’m a clean freak. I hate dust.”

**HOBBY**

“Fine dining! I didn’t know you could have that as a hobby, and then I was watching the Learning Channel, and they said if you’re into wines and different chefs, that’s your hobby.”

**REALITY CHECK**

“Probably one of the things that I’ve learned to do in my life is to have a life.

**RAVES**

**NON-COUNTRY MUSIC**

Sheryl Crow’s *The Globe Sessions*, Santana’s *Supernatural*

**TV SHOWS**

*The Sopranos*, *South Park*, *The Golden Girls*

**CURRENT MOVIE**

*Magnolia*. “It’s brilliant.”

**RESTAURANT**

The French Room in the Adolphus Hotel, Dallas. A second favorite is Houston’s. “That’s my everyday restaurant. I go there all the time.”

**BOOK**

*Angela’s Ashes* by Frank McCourt and *The Seasons* by Ronald Kessler

**CAUSE**

Special Olympics

**ADVICE**

“I’m still a dreamer. I tell kids no matter how small their dream is, don’t be afraid to say that’s what you want out of this life. If you want to be a singer, a skater, a fireman, let your parents know that’s what you want.”

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**FAN CLUB**

Ty Herndon & Friends  
P.O. Box 850176  
Richardson, Texas 75085

—Compiled by Lisa Zbito

## PastImperfect

Lawrence’s headline-making history.

**May 1991:** Lawrence is shot four times in a motel parking lot in Nashville. He had been walking a female friend to her motel room at 3 a.m. when they were attacked by three armed robbers. No arrests are ever made.

**April 1993:** Lawrence fires a .357 Magnum from his truck on a Tennessee highway after teenagers in another car make an obscene gesture. He fol-

lows the teens home and fires more shots. He is charged with two counts of aggravated assault. Lawrence gets a year’s probation after paying all court costs and surrendering his gun.

**September 1997:** His wife of six months accuses Lawrence of beating her and threatening to kill her on his tour bus in Primm, Nevada. Police photograph her facial bruises, identify lumps

on her head and collect clumps of hair pulled out during the altercation. Lawrence eventually is convicted of domestic violence/battery.

**October 1997:** Police in Medford, Oregon, question Lawrence after arresting a 33-year-old man for staging a fantasy rape scene with his wife that included tying her to a fence near a motel.

Lawrence and keyboardist Richard Toops had accepted an invitation from the couple to be observers.

his career with. Tracy Lawrence has something to say to people.”

Coburn recognized that reestablishing Lawrence would be a challenge. There were major radio stations that had stopped playing Lawrence’s records completely. So Atlantic Records set up dinners across America, inviting radio programmers and their spouses to have dinner with Lawrence. They encouraged the visitors to talk to Lawrence, to ask him hard questions, to observe his behavior.

“We watched to see how people would react,” Coburn says. “People realized he’s a straight-ahead guy. I can’t say I wasn’t nervous about how people would react. I think they walked out feeling good about him.”

Of the 100 or so leading radio stations across America, a few initially took a wait-and-see attitude to Lawrence’s first new single, “Lessons Learned.” They wanted to see how fans reacted in cities where stations did play the song. In late January, the song was in the country music Top 20. Only one major station continued to refuse to play it. By February, when the song climbed into the Top 10, that station began playing it, too. Lawrence was back on the radio.

“Fans are loving it,” says Kevin Anderson, program director at WSM in Nashville. “We’ve had no negative reaction at all. As long as the audience accepts him back, that’s what I care about.” Bill Poindexter, program director at WSY in Chattanooga, Tennessee, concurs. “We’ve

had nothing but positive responses to playing his song.”

At this point, the final verdict rests with the fans. Will they forgive Lawrence and embrace his music again? So far, the posts on the Internet website of the International Fan Club Organization have been overwhelmingly positive. Scores of posts on a Tracy Lawrence bulletin board on the IFCO.org website enthusiastically welcomed Lawrence’s return. The comments occasionally mention his arrest or his troubles, but the vast majority say that they’re glad he’s learned his lessons and improved himself. When the occasional negative comment arises, a flood of fans shoot back, criticizing the naysayer. Everyone makes mistakes, most of the responses say. Everyone deserves another chance in life.

Lawrence says a second chance is all he asks. “If I’m going to talk the talk, then I’m going to have to walk the walk,” he admits. “The most important thing I can do is to go out and reconnect with people who were worried about me. I want to be able to look them in the eyes and let them see where my head is and where my heart is. I want them to see I’m an OK person. I appreciate things so much more. I won’t take it for granted again.”

He realizes that if he violates the fans trust again, he won’t get another chance. The question, then, is will enough fans accept him back now and make him successful once again? It’s a question each fan must answer for himself. ★

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## GET THE LOOK



Stutzman (left) and Austin



# Sherrie Austin

## Bird of Paradise

**F**INE FEATHERS DON'T ALWAYS MAKE FINE folks, but they can't hurt. So discovered Australian beauty Sherrie Austin, who morphed from a simple country girl into an exotic tropical bird for her video "Little Bird."

With feathers as fine as these, it's inspiration for all of us to take wing.

Want to join the flock? Here's how she did it.

**HAIR** Jetty Stutzman, of L.A.'s Cloutier Agency, did Austin's hair and makeup. Austin's masses of natural curls can sometimes get out of control, so Stutzman used lots of leave-in conditioners. Stutzman started with Sebastian Potion 9, followed by KMS Curl Up curling balm. When the hair was dry, she wound a few random pieces around a half-inch curling iron to create ringlets. La Coupe Big Hair hair spray finished the look, a product Stutzman likes because, among other things, "it smells really good," she says.

**EYES** Austin sports two different looks in the video, a natural country girl and the more flamboyant little bird. Stutzman started with La Femme No. 26 lavender, applied over the entire eyelid and carried to the lower lash line. At the upper lash line she then applied charcoal pencil to create definition. With a slant-tipped brush she combined purple Shu Uemura P-790 and indigo MAC Contrast, and smudged it along the lash line. On the brow bone, Stutzman applied MAC Pink Opal, a shimmery pigment. Lots of mascara completed the look.

For the little bird look, Stutzman simply added darker colors to what was already there.

**FACE** Austin has "awesome skin," so no prep work is required, says Stutzman. She uses Prescriptives Match Stick in No. 2 Vellum for foundation.

For cheeks, Stutzman used Monet's Barely Rouge cream blush on the apples of the cheeks, followed by Stila's Shell, a light shimmery pink color.

A slight dusting of Makeup Forever powder under the eyes and along the "T" zone finishes the look.

**LIPS** Sebastian Lush liner was first applied to the lips as a stain. Clinique's Black Honey gloss was applied on top of that, followed by Poppo King clear gloss.

**CLOTHING** Los Angeles-based designer Tim Chappel created Austin's peacock-feathered frock (bottom left). He used approximately 350 peacock feathers laid over one another like fish scales to create the bodice. (Peacocks naturally shed the colorful tail feathers each spring.) A lamé fabric was used for the skirt.

Chappel built panels of different-colored lamé into the skirt like a bustle, which become wings for Austin's "flight" at the video's end. As a special touch, he detailed them with glitter using musical notes and heart shapes. "You can't really see it, it's more like a magic charm."

Feathers and a jeweled necklace were added to Austin's hair to complete the look. "We wanted to make her like a bird in a cage, trapped in her finery, so we used a lot of accessories."

—Lisa Zhito

WHERE TO FIND IT: KMS: 800-342-5567, [www.kmshaircare.com](http://www.kmshaircare.com); MAC: 800-387-6707, [www.maccosmetics.com](http://www.maccosmetics.com); Stila: 888-999-9039; Sebastian: 800-829-7322; Shu Uemura: 800-829-7322.

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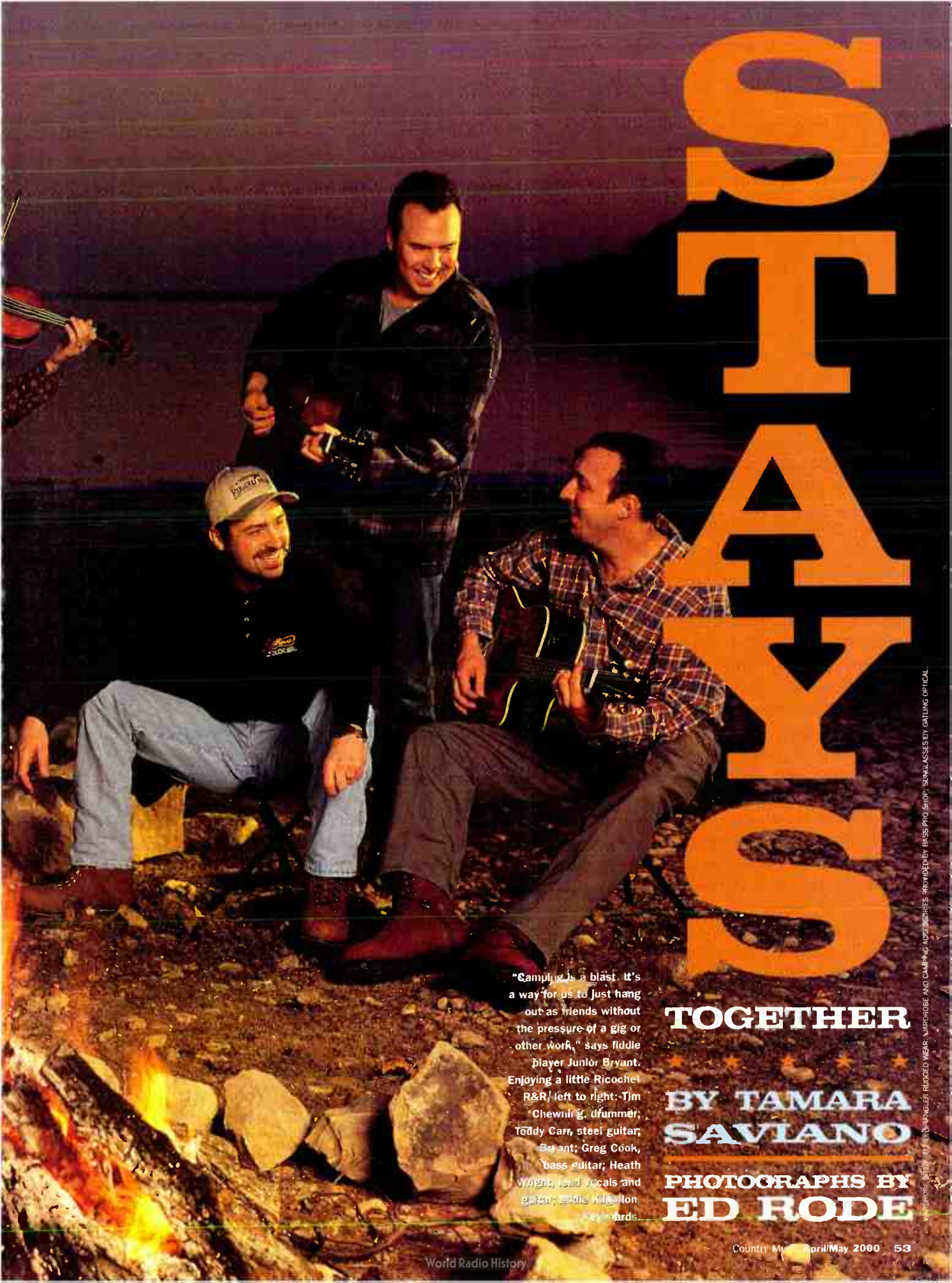
# T★H★E BAND THAT

Since Ricochet hit the Top 10 with "What Do I Know" in 1995, it's been too much work and very little play for the six busy musicians. When they do finally decide to get away from it all, they head for the woods.

# P I L A Y S

TOGETHER





# SET TAY S

**TOGETHER**

**BY TAMARA SAVIANO**

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY ED RODE**

"Camping is a blast. It's a way for us to just hang out as friends without the pressure of a gig or other work," says fiddle player Junior Bryant. Enjoying a little Ricochet R&R/ left to right: Jim Chewill, g. drummer; Toddy Carr, steel guitar; Bryant; Greg Cook, bass guitar; Heath Wagon, lead vocals and guitar; Eddie McMillon, keyboards.

WARDROBE: DUSTY; LEATHER JACKET: RIGGERS; PROVIDED BY BRASS PRO SHOP; SUNGLASSES BY GATLING OPTICAL.



Band members take advantage of the warm fall weather and go for a hike.



Left: "It's sort of politically incorrect to hunt, and outdoor sports don't have enough spokespeople," Cook says as he shows off his bow to Kilgallon. "Archery hunting is a lost art."

Bottom: Turning over a new leaf are (left to right) Carr, Bryant, Kilgallon, Wright, Cook and Chewning.



"Eddie and Heath are great cooks," raves Chewning as he fills his plate. "I've only been with the band for a few months, and it's cool to hang out with them like this."



Eggs, potatoes, country ham and English muffins make a hearty breakfast.

**R**icochet's been working on their third album, scheduled for release this summer, since January of 1998. That year, they released the single "Seven Bridges Road" to critical acclaim but little radio airplay. Rather than release the yet-to-be-titled CD, the guys went back in the studio.

"We've cut 17 songs now," Eddie Kilgallon explains. "We even worked with a different producer on a couple of songs. We don't want to put out the album until we have a hit single because otherwise no one will go out and buy it."

Between recording sessions, the band's been on the road almost nonstop. Camping provides a much needed respite from the chaos of the road.

"It's good to be outside and not be confined by a bus or a gig," says Kilgallon, as the group hikes at Land Between the Lakes near the Tennessee/Kentucky state line. "If you don't take time to see nature once in a while, you really miss it."

The band is a close-knit group, but each of them has habits that can drive the others wild.

"I hate it when people take a bottle of water and drink part of it and leave it sitting somewhere," Wright complains. "That's so wasteful!"

"Speaking of stupid habits," Cook pipes in, "Eddie collects rocks for his kids!"

"They're not even cool rocks," adds Wright. "He'll pick up a piece of gravel and write 'Ohio' or 'Nebraska' on it."

"Heath is the cleanest of all of us," Bryant says. "He puts everything from tallest to smallest on the vanity in the bathroom. To mess with him one night, we took all his stuff and superglued it out of order on the vanity. When he came in he was cussing up a storm and trying to scrape the glue off everything before he went to bed." \*

"Food always tastes better outside," Kilgallon says as he watches his buddies prepare the morning meal. "You can wake up in the wilderness and a bowl of Captain Crunch tastes like heaven."



Cook and Wright discuss whose turn it is to cook the chow. "I grew up with Greg, and I



don't have a better friend in the world," says Wright. "He's got so much integrity."



"I appreciate Heath's honesty more than anything," says Cook. "Even if he is anal."

Left to right, Kilgallon, Cook and Wright hot-dog it for dinner.

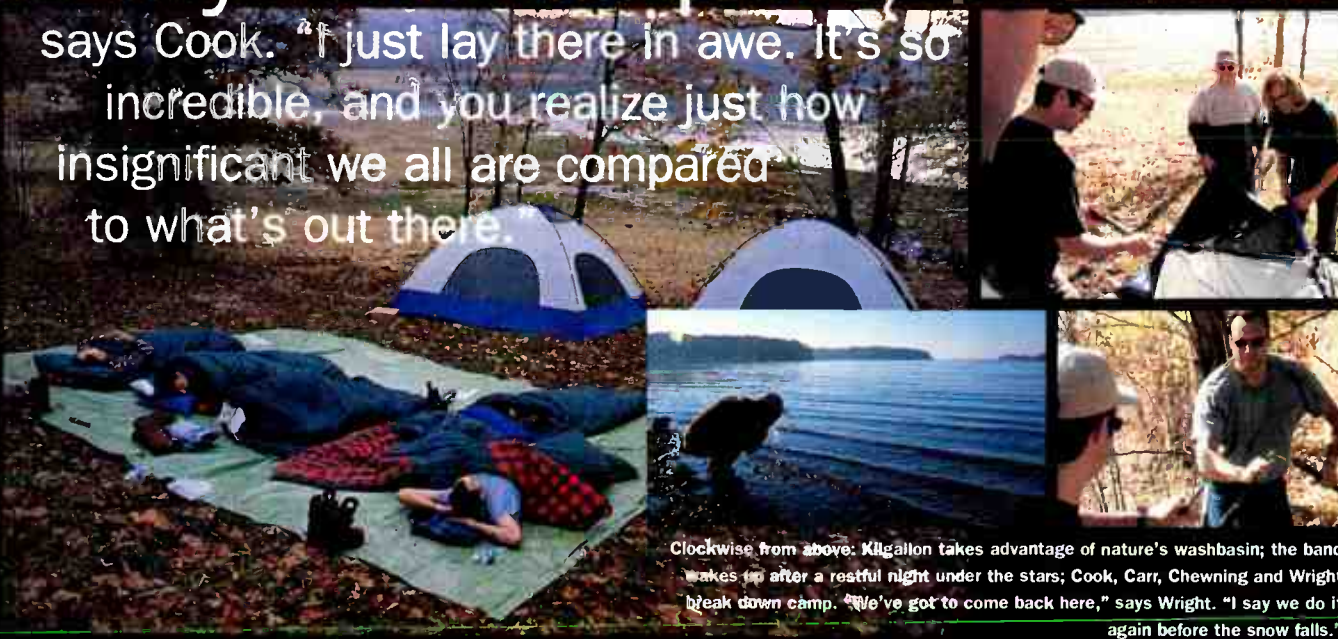
"We're having so much fun around the campfire that one of us can't remember the words to our first big hit," jokes Kilgallon.

"I'm too busy looking at the falling stars," adds Wright.

"I'm glad we only have one bottle of Makers Mark," Cook pipes in. "If we had any more, somebody might have gotten drunk."

"Sleeping under the stars is my favorite part,"

says Cook. "I just lay there in awe. It's so incredible, and you realize just how insignificant we all are compared to what's out there."



Clockwise from above: Kilgallon takes advantage of nature's washbasin; the band wakes up after a restful night under the stars; Cook, Carr, Chewning and Wright break down camp. "We've got to come back here," says Wright. "I say we do it again before the snow falls."

Hazzard regular James Best (as Sheriff Rosco P. Coltrane) shares a laugh with musical guest Toby Keith on the set of *Hazzard In Hollywood*.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY WARNER BROS. /JIM BRITT

# oad down in Tinseltown

A new TV movie has the Dukes of Hazzard joining some country music cousins for a hillbilly adventure in Hollywood.

**By Julie Zarling**

**T**HAT'S WALTON'S MOUNTAIN OVER THERE." RAISING A long arm, actor John Schneider points over the rooftops of a small town square on a Warner Bros. backlot to a distant peak along the back side of the Hollywood Hills. "It hasn't changed very much at all," Schneider says. "Our little Hazzard County back here—the trees have gotten bigger, but other than that, it's the same. It's like a time warp—like we never went away." *(continued on p. 58 ▶)*



# Lacey

by Rhonda Shear

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Schneider is leading an impromptu tour of the Burbank studio set that was home to CBS-TV's *The Dukes of Hazzard*, an unlikely hit series from 1979-1985. The street is a beehive of activity on this sunny morning, as a ribboned bandstand is set with mics, amps and bales of hay. Bundled cables snake through the Main Street set, while a camera crane hovers overhead.

Hazzard is bustling again for a reason: Cast and crew are hard at work on a new Dukes television movie. It's the second time the Dukes have reunited on TV since the series ended nearly 15 years ago. Given that the original show was a perennial whipping post for critics and the punchline of endless jokes, a second family reunion would seem about as likely as the return of *The Gong Show*.

Yet here they are, Bo, Luke and the whole gang, gearing up for another adventure in *Hazzard in Hollywood*, set to air on CBS in May. The movie follows the misadventures of the Duke boys as they try to raise some fast cash for a Hazzard County hospital. Schneider (Bo) and Tom Wopat (Luke) reprise their good-ol' boy roles, and Catherine Bach returns as cousin Daisy Duke. Ben Jones, James Best, Sonny Shroyer and Rick Hurst round out the cast of regulars. (Actor Sorrell Booke, who played the conniving Boss Hogg, died in 1994.) And arguably the show's real star, the souped-up

'69 Dodge Charger known as the General Lee, is tuned up for takeoff.

Why the Hazzard nostalgia after all these years? Reruns of the show on TNN have made the Dukes hotter than buffalo wings, giving TNN a ratings boost while flaming the fans' appetite for tire-squealing car chases and down-home humor. CBS aired the television movie *Reunion in Hazzard* to a substantial audience three years ago, winning the broadcast ratings for that night. That got the network



Top: Schneider and Ben Jones (Cooter) get ready for the next scene. Above: The original *Dukes of Hazzard* cast included (left to right) Bach, Wopat, Schneider, Sorrell Booke (Boss Hogg) and James Best.

suits to thinkin' the time might be right for another trip to Hazzard County.

"The Dukes are like a warm, comfy slipper to put on every once in awhile. They're a bunch of good old boys, and we love 'em," says Jim McKairnes, VP of Program Planning and Scheduling at CBS



Keith and Cochran (left) are two of the performers at the Hazzard Hoedown (right).

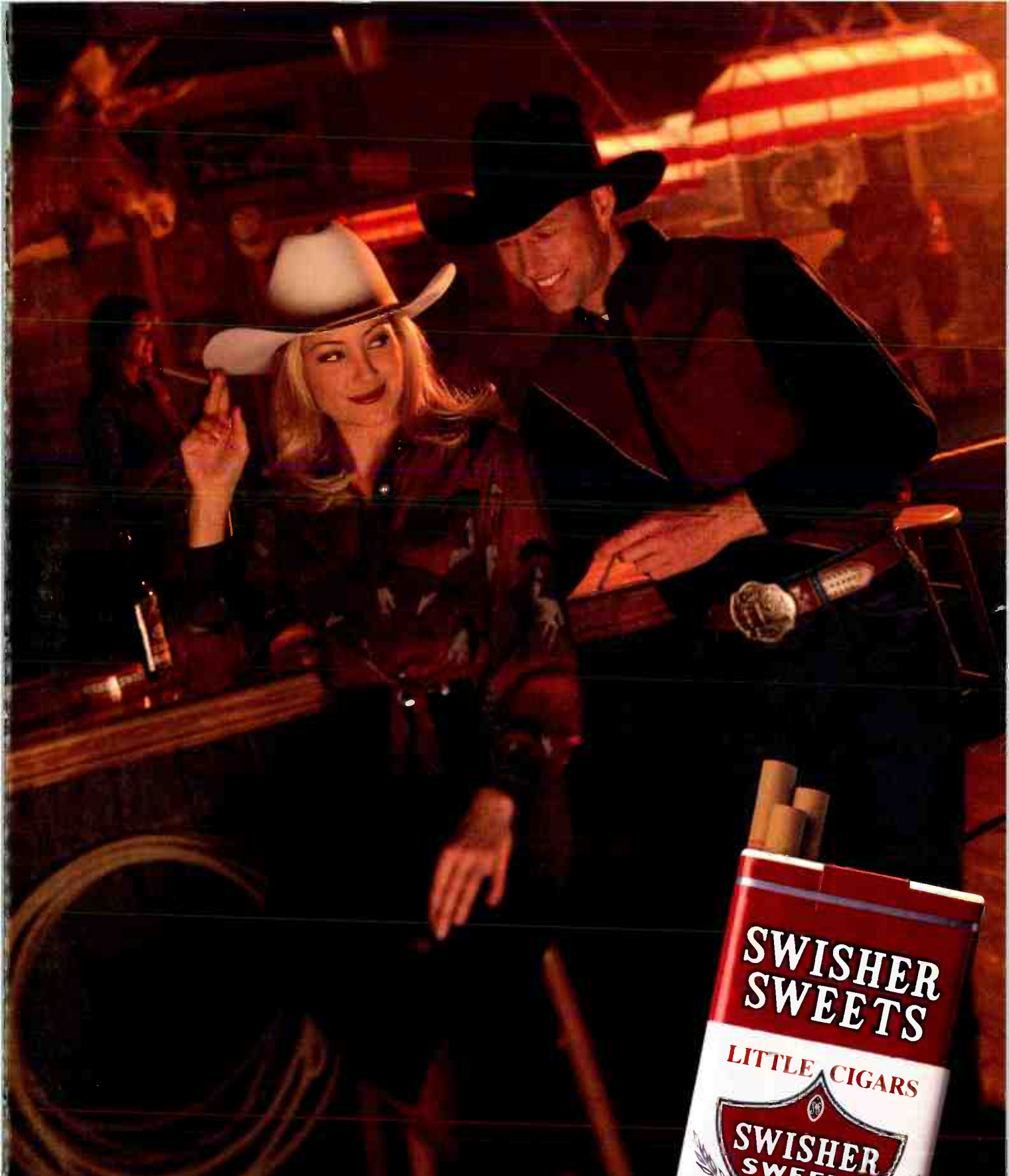
Entertainment. "For comparison, in its zenith, *The Dukes of Hazzard* got higher ratings than [NBC drama] *ER* has ever had. It came on as a midseason replacement in 1979, and it was already in the Top 25 at the end of that season. At the time, *Laverne and Shirley* was the No. 1 show. By its third season, paired with *Dallas*, the Dukes were No. 2, second only to *Dallas*. *The Dukes of Hazzard* was so popular it spawned a Saturday-morning cartoon, a hit song for Waylon Jennings and a spin-off series."

Adds Wopat, "There's a certain nostalgic aspect to the show, but the younger crowd's looking at it, too. It has a certain attitude to it that people seem to enjoy."

The current installment begins at the annual Hazzard Hoedown, a fundraiser for the impossibly expensive hospital. A crooked businessman proposes to foot the bill if the citizens of Hazzard raise half a million dollars in 10 days. Their prospects seem dim until a shady music promoter reminds them that they own the tapes of a lot of celebrity performers from Hoedowns past. The Dukes head for Hollywood to score a record deal, enlisting the help of country stars Anita Cochran, as Luke's now-famous former girlfriend, and Toby Keith, another Hoedown headliner. Country legend Mac Davis also makes an appearance.

Music has always been part of the Hazzard scene. Remember the celebrity speed trap? An A-list of lead-footed stars performed at the Boar's Nest to pay off their tickets and help Boss Hogg keep his entertainment costs down. Recalls Wopat, "We had a bunch of singers that we enjoyed a great deal. Loretta Lynn was there, and Waylon [Jennings] came through, and Johnny Paycheck. We had a blast." (continued on p.60 ▶)





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World Radio History

# Stunts



The General Lee was one of the original series' most popular "actors," often receiving more fan mail than any other cast member. So it's no surprise the General plays a major role in the new movie. Here,

in one of the Dukes' patented chase scenes, the indestructible Charger crashes through a wall and races through the streets of L.A. with bad guys in hot pursuit.

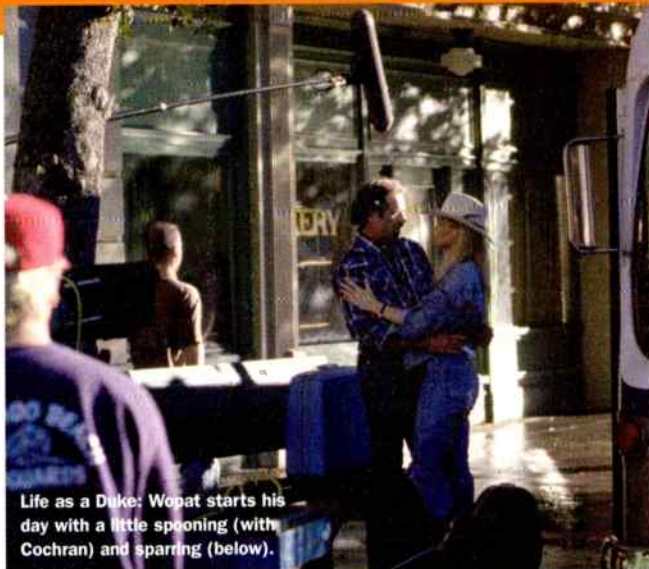
**S**TANDING ALONE ON THE FRINGES OF today's activity, a dashing desperado in crisp white shirt and black vest surveys the scene through dark sunglasses. Camera-ready from hat to boots, Toby Keith is kicking back until call time. He's still bemused by how his acting debut came about. Apparently, an interview on a Los Angeles radio station landed him the role.

"I guess they called my publicist and said, 'Howdy, howdy' and 'Who is this guy?'" Keith says. "I flew in here and met with them, and here I am doing a *Dukes of Hazzard* movie."

Director Bradford May and crew are set up in the shade of the barbecue tent, as the cast mills about on the sunlit lawn. Catherine Bach, the "Daisy" of legendary hot-pants fame, is wearing a cherry-red wraparound dress with a fluttering diagonal hemline, black heels and a single daisy pendant on a delicate chain. Her face lights up as she sweeps back a sun-streaked lock of long hair to show off the matching daisy earrings. The actress, mom and community activist now adds jewelry and clothing design to her list of accomplishments.

"I've been making my own clothes since I was about 11," notes Bach. "I made all the beginning clothes for Daisy Duke—the T-shirts and the little red-and-white checked shirts. I told them, 'This is it—this is what Daisy looks like.'" Her instincts proved right on the money. The famous cutoff shorts, dubbed "Daisy Dukes," caught on like wildfire. Bach giggles at the idea that she made a pair of shorts famous. "It's just mind-boggling!"

As Schneider crosses the lawn, Bach smiles like a proud sister. "I've been through everything with them," she recalls. "I'll never forget, I was dating this fellow on the show and he did something terrible to me—he probably dated another girl



Life as a Duke: Wopat starts his day with a little spooning (with Cochran) and sparring (below).

or something that really made me mad. So [Schneider and Wopat] chained him to the car, and the water truck squirted him down!"

As a smoke machine dots the air, extras line up for their prop hamburgers in the barbecue tent. Parked at the curb, in all its hemi-orange glory, is the General Lee. It is one of many Chargers that have been commissioned over the years to perform the slow-motion jumps and wild turns through the Dukes' back forty. Across the street, the crew is busy prepping the stage for Keith and his band. Schneider, who had a string of No. 1 country hits in the '80s, settles back against a tree and remarks, "He's part of what's really good about country music these days. You know, I listen to old stuff. I've always been very much into the lyric, and into songs that really told a story. Toby's one of the people who can do that."

Anita Cochran, who's releasing her second album on Warner Bros. this spring,



also makes her acting debut in the *Dukes* reunion. "She blew me away; a natural actress...she's got it locked down," observes Wopat.

Playing Wopat's love interest was a learning experience for Cochran. "It's the first time I've ever kissed somebody in an acting situation," she says. "I guess that was probably the hardest

part about what I had to do. Tom was great—he made it very easy. Usually before I'm going to kiss somebody, I know him pretty well!"

Becoming a resident of Hazzard was an ironic twist of fate for Cochran, who's been a fan of the show since her childhood.

"When I said to my parents, 'I'm going to go play on *The Dukes of Hazzard*,' the first thing my dad said was, 'You gonna be Daisy?'" Cochran laughs. "I played in my parents' band when I was 5 years old. Every Friday night was our rehearsal night, but by golly, by the time *The Dukes of Hazzard* came on, we were eating our cake and ice cream and watching the Dukes. I watched it every Friday. It was definitely part of my life."

These days, Schneider's kids are watching it. "They think it's cute; they think it's corny, because it's Dad," he laughs. "But they enjoy it, they like watching the cars fly around and watching us relate to one another, so they laugh. And I'm still dressed exactly the same!" \*

# collin raye

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The McCoury clan's stock is soaring as a bluegrass boom has the Del McCoury Band in peak demand.

# FAMILY

# BUSINESS

BY MICHAEL McCALL

**D**EL MCCOURY DOESN'T LOOK TIRED. At age 61, he appears exceptionally fit, energetic and comfortable with himself. Nor does he sound tired. Instead, he comes across as laid-back as Andy Griffith manning the Mayberry sheriff's desk, and he speaks with the easy-going frankness of a man with nothing to hide and with the good humor of a man who enjoys his life.

Nevertheless, McCoury has plenty of reason to be tired. After 43 years of performing bluegrass music, the silver-haired leader of the Del McCoury Band characterizes the last 16 months as the busiest—and most fruitful—of his storied career.

"It just seemed like we never have stopped, not since recording the songs for *The Family* back around Christmas of 1998," he says of the heralded album, which was released in February of 1999. "That record came out so fast, then we went right out on the road and never slowed down."

The work paid off handsomely, too. The band played in front of more people in 1999 than in any previous year. Thanks in large part to touring with Nashville renegade Steve Earle and to a high-profile performance at a festival hosted by the rock band Phish, the McCoury Band reached beyond the bluegrass faithful to dazzle rock and country fans across America and Europe.

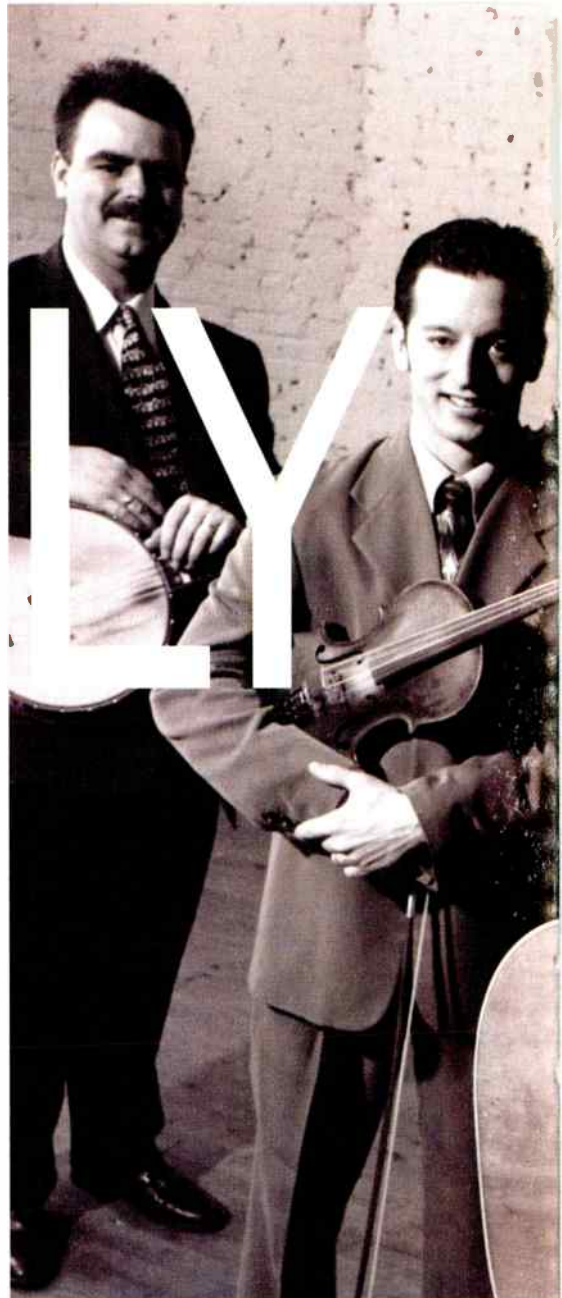
"Man, we played so many places that we'd never played before," says Ronnie

McCoury, Del's eldest son and an award-winning mandolinist who arranges the band's songs. "A lot of the promoters were taking a chance with us, but we didn't have one bad date. A lot of the clubs were selling out before the doors opened."

Widely viewed as among the best bluegrass groups to emerge in the 1990s, the Del McCoury Band is well-equipped to join Alison Krauss and Ricky Skaggs in leading acoustic mountain music to greater recognition.

"When you see them live, they just explode onstage," Skaggs says. "It's phenomenal. They just play with such energy. It must've been what it was like to see the original Bluegrass Boys band, when Bill [Monroe] still had Lester [Flatt] and Earl [Scruggs] with him."

The band has featured the same lineup since 1991—Del McCoury on lead vocals and acoustic guitar, Ronnie McCoury on mandolin, his younger brother Rob McCoury on banjo, Jason Carter on fiddle and Mike Bub on bass. Together they take the most potent characteristics of traditional bluegrass and crank everything up a notch in terms of intensity, soulfulness and talent. Del's high tenor pierces with its unbound power and emotive expressiveness; Ronnie's mandolin work constantly dazzles with its dexterity and clever musical accents; Rob's banjo gives the band its drive, as well as adding another inventive soloist,

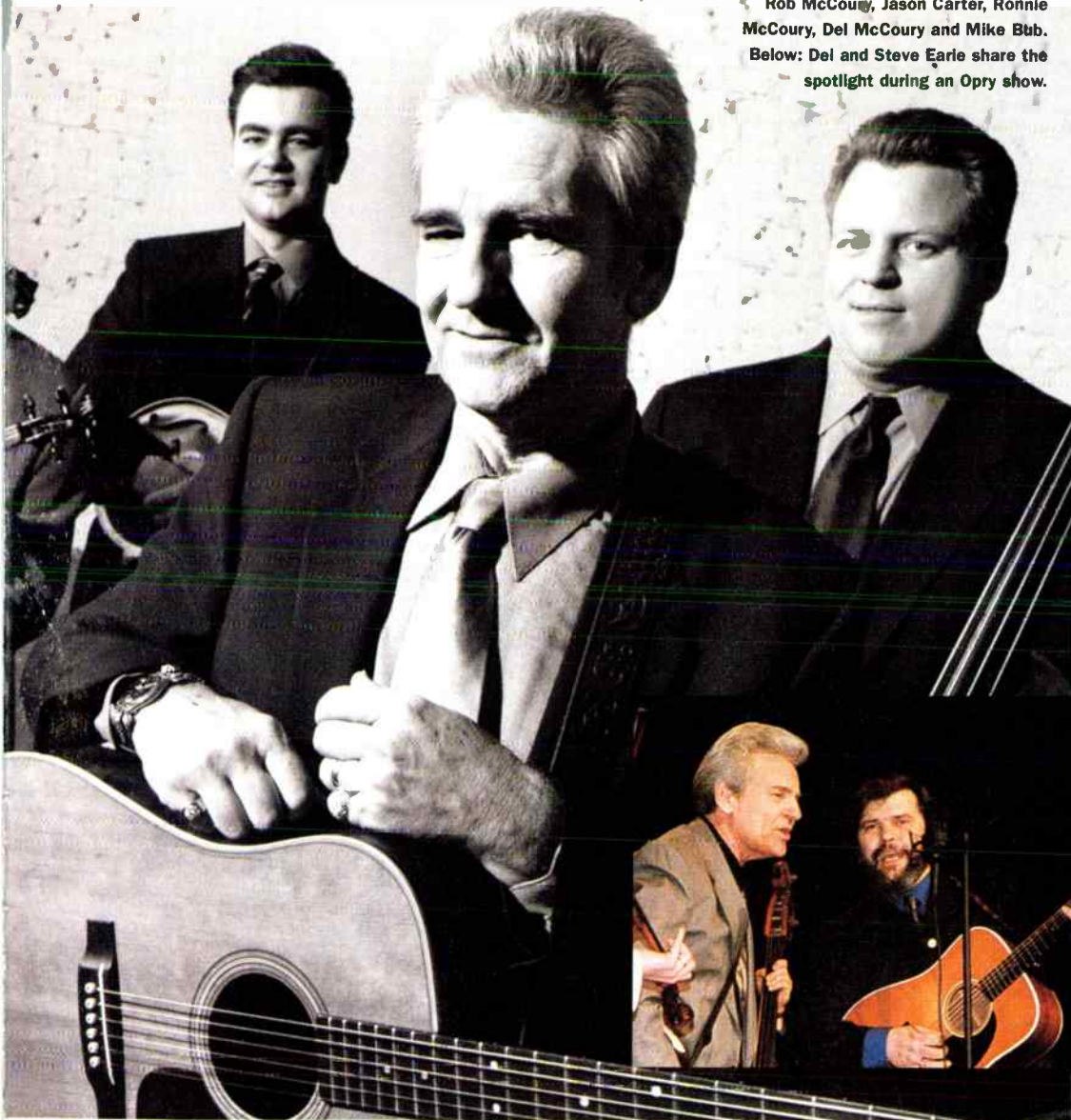


while Carter's full-toned fiddle playing has an unusually bluesy flavor.

The band seemed poised for a breakthrough in 1999. They hooked up with Earle, a critics' favorite with a large cult following, to collaborate on *The Mountain*, an album released within weeks of *The Family*. Also, the McCoury Band joined Ceili Records, a new label formed by Skaggs. The moves presented certain risks, but the McCourys are pleased to say that the chances they took paid off.

"We changed everything!" the elder McCoury says about the group's shift in record labels, management and concert booking. "You never know how that is going to turn out when you do that. It could've been a bad year for us, but thank God it wasn't."

**PICKIN' AND GRINNIN'** | Left to right: Rob McCoury, Jason Carter, Ronnie McCoury, Del McCoury and Mike Bub. Below: Del and Steve Earle share the spotlight during an Opry show.



## “The bluegrass community is like a family,” says Ronnie McCoury. “Only...the family is growing.”

The biggest difficulty flared when Del ran into some conflicts with Earle and his manager Dan Gillis. “Someone called it a ‘culture clash,’ and I’d say that was pretty much what it was,” McCoury says. “You see, I didn’t know these guys too well when we started. I had no idea about their outfit and what it was like. I guess they’re OK. But I did have a run-in with [Earle’s] management, and I kind of quit the tour.”

As McCoury tells it, the tension began at Merlefest, an annual acoustic hoedown in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. Until then, Earle had divided his shows with the McCourys. However, at Merlefest, Earle

was allotted only 40 minutes. He performed the entire set as lead singer, with Del McCoury playing acoustic guitar.

“He didn’t call me up to do any solo singing, and I had a lot of fans there who would have liked to have heard me,” McCoury says.

The following day, the band appeared in Nashville at the River Stages Festival. Again, Earle and the McCoury Band were given 40 minutes. Again, Earle took all the lead vocals. “I know the shows were shorter, but I still thought he should’ve let me do some of my numbers,” McCoury says.

Then, backstage at River Stages, security guards refused to allow Jason Carter into the artists’ area to park his car. He had to park a mile away and carry everything with him. After the show, Carter again was told by the same security guard that he couldn’t pull his car around to load up. Del felt that Earle’s manager should have taken better care in getting band members backstage.

“That really bugged me.” McCoury says. “I went back up there and said, ‘Look, man, this is the end of this tour on my part.’”

The McCoury Band stayed on long enough to fulfill a scheduled tour of Europe with Earle. Once over, the band canceled talks of extending the tour.

For his part, Earle says the tension came from a misunderstanding. He took the lead vocals at the Merlefest appearance because the McCourys had a show of their own scheduled at the festival. Earle didn’t realize until afterward that the McCourys

were playing on a smaller side stage.

Ronnie McCoury says such conflicts are rare for his father and the rest of the McCoury Band. “You know, we’re family,” says the mandolinist, who released his own solo album earlier this year. “Three of us are related, and the other guys are like family to us. I can’t say we’ve ever had an argument. Dad is such a soft-spoken person. He’s the most easy-going guy I’ve ever met. And we all respect him so much that I don’t think we’ve ever spoken back to him.”

Meanwhile, the band looks forward to charging ahead and gaining new ground. “The bluegrass community is like a family,” Ronnie says. “They’re the most devoted fans around. Only now it seems like the family is growing.” \*



These days, Lee still appears in nightclubs around the country. But he also cherishes a quiet family life in Branson, Missouri, where he's a single dad raising his 9-year-old son and sneaking in as much golf as he can. We caught up with Lee shortly after he'd finished a round at Opryland's Springhouse Golf Club in Nashville.

**Country Music: You come from small-town roots, don't you?**

**Johnny Lee:** I grew up in a little town called Alta Loma. The reason I say I'm from Texas City is that in Alta Loma my mom had a choice of either going to the veterinarian or holding out until she got to the hospital. She held out, so I was born in Texas City. They've changed the name of it. All these little towns around there kind of grouped up and now they're one big town called Santa Fe. I never took too kindly to that. It depressed me the last time I went back there and looked around. Things

change too much. I'd rather have it in the back of my mind the way it was.

**CM: How did you get hired by Mickey Gilley?**

**JL:** Gilley had a hot spot up in Pasadena, Texas, and I was singing and playing drums in this trio. I went up to Gilley's. They pointed him out to me, and I went up and slapped him on the back and said, "How you doing? I know you don't remember me. We did a TV show together, and I was on before you down in Galveston, and I didn't get a chance to talk to you after you were through. I just wanted to meet you and say how much I enjoyed you." In all reality I went up there to get a job from him, but I didn't want to ask him if I could sit in. So I just acted like I knew him. After we'd played some pool and had a few beers, he asked me if I wanted to sit in. I said, "Whatever, sure." I came back a few times, and after a few weeks he offered me a job. Later I told him that when I'd first met him, I'd never seen him before in my life, and he said, "I didn't remember you either." But he didn't want to be rude or appear to be the dummy. So I just bullshitted my way in.

# H-e-e-e-re's Johnny

Former urban cowboy Johnny Lee is still swinging.

**T**wenty years ago, *Esquire* magazine planted the seed of country music's "urban cowboy" craze by colorfully depicting the raucous nightlife that erupted each evening inside the famed Gilley's nightclub in Pasadena, Texas. The magazine article, written by Aaron Latham, inspired the hit movie *Urban Cowboy* and gave a name to an entire musical movement that flared between 1980 and 1983.

Other than club namesake Mickey Gilley, the performer who benefited most from the craze was Texas barroom singer Johnny Lee. Lee's "Looking for Love" became the movie's signature tune and a huge crossover country and pop hit.

Working as Gilley's touring partner had already earned Lee the loyalty of his home-state natives. But *Urban*

*Cowboy* brought him to the nation. No one-hit wonder, he achieved a string of top country hits, including "One in a Million," "Bet Your Heart on Me" and "Be There for Me Baby." Now, with the release of Lee's *Live at Gilley's* on Q Records, fans have a chance to hear how Lee sounded in his heyday at the famous venue.



**CM: How did Gilley's become a scene?**

**JL:** Gilley and I started writing and producing our own television show, and that's really the tool that got Gilley's to start growing. We had a kick-ass band. Everybody loved Mickey Gilley, and people seemed to like me a lot. After the TV show, [the club] really started expanding, and in the end it seated about 7,500 people. And the rodeo arena next door seated about 10,000 and was packed many, many nights. One night I remember, we had Willie Nelson and David Allen Coe in the rodeo arena, and myself, Mickey Gilley and Loretta Lynn in Gilley's, and both places were elbow to elbow. It was a phenomenon.

**CM: So how did you get into the movie *Urban Cowboy*?**

**JL:** The movie company came down to work the deal out with Mickey Gilley, and I was singing, and Irving Azoff heard me. He managed the Eagles and some other groups.



I had some records out prior to that—"Cherokee Fiddle" was a local hit at the time. [The movie company] wanted me to do "Cherokee Fiddle" and to find two other songs. Whenever there's going to be a movie made, every writer from everywhere submits tapes. I went in and just started listening. But out of the first 15 or 20 songs I listened to out of these boxes, this little song "Looking for Love" came up. And I freaked out over the lyrics. I was like, "Why didn't I write this? 'Cause this is my life story." I'd lived the song, except for the ending—I hadn't found true love yet. And everybody seemed to relate to it—it's a great song. I didn't cut it to fit into the movie. I cut it because it was a great song.

**CM: What was your career like after that?**

**JL:** It only made sense to me, after I did "Looking for Love," to release this song "Do You Love as Good as You Look?" I'd recorded it for the *Looking for Love* album. The record company said no, so the Bellamy Brothers took my cut, recorded it, released it, and it was a crossover gigantic hit. I'm still pissed at the record company for not releasing that one. They released a song called "One in a Million." It went to No. 1,

and we just kept going after that: "Picking Up Strangers," "Bet Your Heart on Me," "Be There for Me Baby," "When You Fall in Love." Then I got one from the old Blues



**FEATHERS IN HIS HAT (clockwise from top):** Vintage Lee onstage with Mickey Gilley; with talk show host John Davidson; plugging the boss' ears. Below: Lee at a recent Opry appearance.

Brothers album, "Hey Bartender." I loved that song, and the record company said, "We're not going to release that song; it's got a saxophone in it." And I said, "Bullshit. Release it." And it was a big hit song.

**CM: What are you doing today?**

**JL:** I'm still working on the road. I take as many dates as I can get, provided they're decent offers. I've been in Branson for about three years. My show there ended last year. I don't want to travel near as much, but I couldn't just pull the plug. It's in my blood. Branson's a great place to raise kids. There's no gangs, no violence, clean water, good fishing. People still stop and let you out in traffic. I know I can't shelter my son from the world, but I can give him a break while he's a kid.

**CM: How has country music changed?**

**JL:** I could succeed if somebody'd sign me to a record deal. But that's not going to happen. I'm 53 years old. I'm over-the-hill

for record companies. I love a lot of the new music. As far as these image consultants and all that, I think it's all horse shit. And I think it's a shame that a lot of new artists

have to go into debt like they do and not know anything about the business. It also sucks that the record business and a lot of the radio stations have turned their backs on the people who kept them alive for many years. I'm talking about guys like Conway Twitty and myself and Johnny Paycheck, Merle Haggard and

Waylon and Willie. There's still a gigantic audience out there that still loves them people. I love Shania Twain and the Dixie Chicks and Lonestar. But I believe that the

country music business has just totally turned its back on the audiences that kept them alive long before this came along.



I'm fortunate because there's many of my songs that still get played on stations. There are not a lot of cats that had music out in the early '80s that are still being played. I'm very blessed that I had the staying power that I had.

—Craig Havighurst

TOP: COURTESY SANDY BROWMAN COMPANY; 3: MORELLO GHERGIA

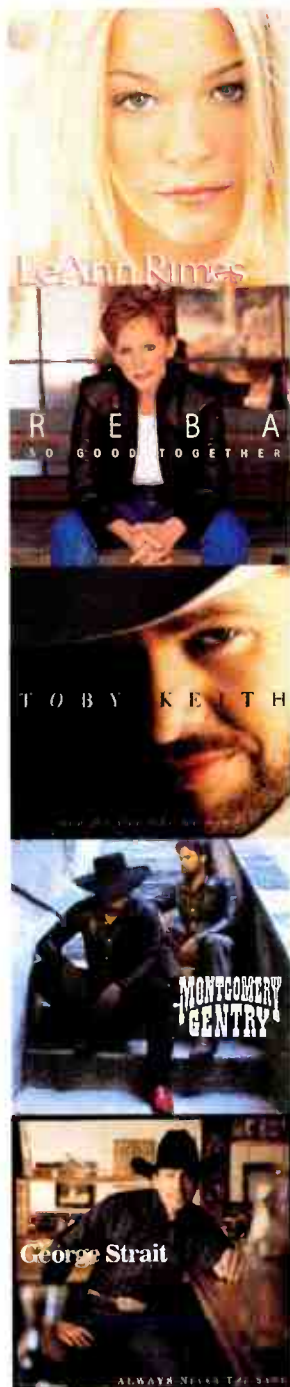
# 25

## ALBUMS

**The hottest hits on the country charts.**



Brad Paisley celebrates his first No. 1 single and video, "He Didn't Have to Be" from his debut album *Who Needs Pictures*. At the label bash, left to right: Tim Dubois, Arista Records president; producer Frank Rogers; cowriter Kelly Lovelace; Paisley's manager Mike Dungan, Arista senior VP.



- |     |                          |   |
|-----|--------------------------|---|
| 1.  | <b>DIXIE CHICKS</b>      | <i>Fly</i> (Monument) ●                       |
| 2.  | <b>SHANIA TWAIN</b>      | <i>Come On Over</i> (Mercury) ✦               |
| 3.  | <b>FAITH HILL</b>        | <i>Breathe</i> (Warner Bros.) ●               |
| 4.  | <b>TIM MCGRAW</b>        | <i>A Place in the Sun</i> (Curb) ●            |
| 5.  | <b>MARK WILLS</b>        | <i>Permanently</i> (Mercury)                  |
| 6.  | <b>LONESTAR</b>          | <i>Lonely Grill</i> (BNA) ●                   |
| 7.  | <b>DIXIE CHICKS</b>      | <i>Wide Open Spaces</i> (Monument!) ●         |
| 8.  | <b>LEANN RIMES</b>       | <i>LeAnn Rimes</i> (Curb) ●                   |
| 9.  | <b>ALAN JACKSON</b>      | <i>Under the Influence</i> (Arista) ●         |
| 10. | <b>KENNY CHESNEY</b>     | <i>Everywhere We Go</i> (BNA) ●               |
| 11. | <b>MARTINA McBRIDE</b>   | <i>Emotion</i> (RCA) ✦                        |
| 12. | <b>REBA McENTIRE</b>     | <i>So Good Together</i> (MCA) ✦               |
| 13. | <b>SHEDAISY</b>          | <i>The Whole Shebang</i> (Lyric Street) ✦     |
| 14. | <b>GARY ALLAN</b>        | <i>Smoke Rings in the Dark</i> (MCA)          |
| 15. | <b>JO DEE MESSINA</b>    | <i>I'm Alright</i> (Curb) ●                   |
| 16. | <b>TOBY KEITH</b>        | <i>How Do You Like Me Now</i> (DreamWorks)    |
| 17. | <b>CLINT BLACK</b>       | <i>D'lectrified</i> (RCA)                     |
| 18. | <b>BRAD PAISLEY</b>      | <i>Who Needs Pictures</i> (Arista)            |
| 19. | <b>FAITH HILL</b>        | <i>Faith</i> (Warner Bros.) ●                 |
| 20. | <b>GEORGE JONES</b>      | <i>Cold Hard Truth</i> (Asylum)               |
| 21. | <b>MONTGOMERY GENTRY</b> | <i>Tattoos &amp; Scars</i> (Columbia)         |
| 22. | <b>KENNY ROGERS</b>      | <i>She Rides Wild Horses</i> (Dreamcatcher) ✦ |
| 23. | <b>TRACE ADKINS</b>      | <i>More...</i> (Capitol)                      |
| 24. | <b>BROOKS &amp; DUNN</b> | <i>Tight Rope</i> (Arista) ✦                  |
| 25. | <b>GEORGE STRAIT</b>     | <i>Always Never the Same</i> (MCA) ●          |

Compiled by *Country Music* magazine. Based on a combined tabulation of sales and airplay data for the four weeks prior to publication.

✦ Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certification for net shipment of 500,000 album units (Gold); ● RIAA certification for net shipment of 1 million units (Platinum); ✦ RIAA certification for net shipment of 10 million units (Diamond).

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# Off the Charts

The country buzz outside the music biz

## JUST WRITE

For Beth Nielsen Chapman, it takes more than chart success to make a great song.

**E**VEN BEFORE "THIS KISS" BECAME A top country and pop hit, Beth Nielsen Chapman ranked among the most successful songwriters in Nashville in the late 1990s. But Faith Hill's award-winning smash turned Chapman into the toast of the town. Along with Annie Roboff and Robin Lerner, her co-conspirators in creating "This Kiss," Chapman won the Country Music Association's prestigious Song of the Year award as well as Country Song of the Year honors from the songwriting association ASCAP.

Those awards add to the recent avalanche of accolades given the Texas born Chapman. Among the highlights include Elton John's 1997 recording of the touching ballad "Sand and Water," adding it to "Candle in the Wind" as one of the English superstar's tributes to the memory of Princess Diana. For Chapman, the song's success was a bittersweet achievement; she was inspired to write it after her husband succumbed to cancer. However, it convinced Chapman once and for all that personal experience is a most effective songwriting ingredient.

"To have someone like Elton be affected by that song was really special to me," says Chapman, who has released five of her own solo albums over the years. "A lot of writers don't realize how powerful that is. It is very easy to get caught up with things like what's going to get played on the radio that they forget that these songs can have that kind of impact."

Of course, Chapman has enjoyed her share of radio success as well. She cowrote such popular works as Martina McBride's "Happy Girl" and Bonnie Raitt's "Meet Me Half Way," among others. However, "This Kiss" represents Chapman's personal best in commercial achievement. How does Chapman explain the song's across-the-board appeal?

"It's very catchy and simple because you can sing any section of it," observes

Chapman. "But to me, that song really worked because it contained three different women's points of view on being kissed: one from a divorcee, another a widower and one who'd never been married. All of our experiences just made it a very universal song that a lot of people could relate to."

—David Simons



Singing her own song: Chapman on stage (top); with Annie Roboff and Robin Lerner, cowriters of "This Kiss," accepting a Nashville Music Award (middle) and a CMA award.



## TOM FOOLERY

Would Mark Twain have done it this way? A new animated version of *Tom Sawyer*, Twain's classic novel about a rambunctious boy, updates the story to feature fire-breathing dragons, a magic genie, a three-headed beast, friendly dolphins, scary-looking cave bats and a Mississippi River that cascades through the air.

Apparently, ol' Tom and his buddy Huck Finn aren't in small-town Missouri anymore.

Nonetheless, the 90-minute video loosely follows Twain's original adventuresome plot. There's also plenty of southern flavor, thanks largely to the convincing rural twang given the lead character by country singer **Rhett Akins**, whose voiceover work nicely captures the rascally yet goodhearted spirit of young Tom.

The cast also features the voices of several other country stars: **Mark Wills** takes on the mischievous Huck Finn, **Lee Ann Womack** is Tom's best gal Becky Thatcher, **Waylon Jennings** is the dimwitted Sheriff McGee and **Hank Williams Jr.** is the villainous Injurin' Joe (a name given a PC-update for this modern version of the story).

They're joined by the voices of such down-home actors as **Don Knotts** (*The Andy Griffith Show*) and **Betty White** (*The Golden Girls*). The direct-to-video release from MGM Home Entertainment is available in April.



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# Off the Charts

## BOOKBEAT

### The Nashville Family Album: A Country Music Scrapbook

Alan Mayor (Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, \$27.50)

Photographer Alan Mayor has long been a familiar presence at Nashville's major music events. Since his arrival in the early '70s, he's become a friend to many of the stars he covers, in part because he's respectful of their privacy, but mostly because he only presents the performers in flattering ways.

That doesn't always make for the best journalism. However, it does allow Mayor access to about anyone he pleases. It was Mayor, for example, who provided the photos that introduced Garth Brooks' first child, Taylor Mayne Pearl Brooks, to the world in 1992. Brooks even contributes a short introduction to this volume, which gathers Mayor's favorite Music City photos of the last 25 years.

Although his work has appeared in a number of other volumes, *The Nashville Family Album* is Mayor's first book. He supplements pictures of such greats as Minnie Pearl, Johnny Cash and Shania Twain with personal observations about the photos and careers of the stars. Not surprisingly, Mayor is better at capturing a telling moment on camera than at evoking atmosphere or personality in words.

Almost strictly for fans, Mayor's book leans too heavily on images from routine label gatherings or

onstage performances. But there are several that should haunt even the most casual reader: The black harmonica player DeFord Bailey, an important part of the Opry's early history, is photographed by Mayor as he returned to the Opry stage on

his birthday in 1974; and a shot of Johnny Cash, looking off to the wings with an expression that suggests he's just seen something not entirely of this earth.

—Alanna Nash

### Lynyrd Skynyrd: An Oral History

Lee Ballinger (Spike, \$13.50)

Contradictions underlined the lives and music of Ronnie Van Zant and Lynyrd Skynyrd, the band he led for more than seven years. Van Zant considered himself a Merle Haggard-influenced country singer, yet he fronted a ferocious southern rock band. At the same time, the three-guitar band's churlish behavior and unapologetic celebrations of white southern culture got them stereotyped as ignorant rednecks. In truth, however, Van Zant, Gary Rossington, Allen Collins and the rest of the band openly attacked segregation and embraced environmental and anti-war issues.

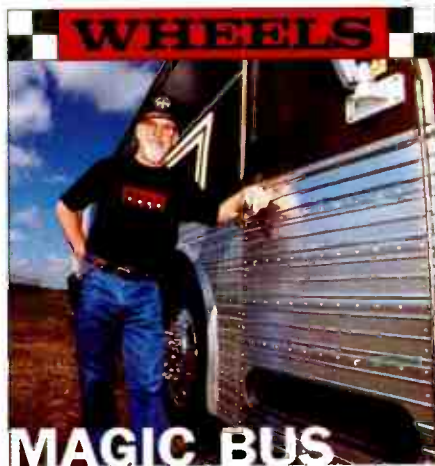
Lynyrd Skynyrd: *An Oral History*, a new book edited by Lee Ballinger, the west coast editor of *Rock & Rap Confidential*, lets the words of group members and longtime associates set the record straight.

A prominent point made throughout the book is how much traditional country music influenced Van Zant, whose macho, crackling vocal style proved ideal for Skynyrd's high-octane anthems. Van Zant modeled himself after Haggard, and dreamed of cutting an album with Hag and his other idol, Waylon Jennings.

"I get into a lot of country music but the band won't do that sort of stuff," the late Van Zant said in 1977. "I'd like to get into the country thing when I'm 33 or 34—after I've had as much fun as I can with Lynyrd Skynyrd...Everybody in the band thinks I do a better job with gospel and country than with rock 'n' roll, and I also like that music a lot more."

What comes across clearly is that Lynyrd Skynyrd was a band that loved music, loved to play, loved to party and loved to fight. And, by being themselves, they changed the rules about what southern bands could do.

—Ron Wynn



Thirteen years ago, Tony Sizemore pulled a brand-new, custom-designed bus onto a Florida highway and headed toward Texas to pick up his boss, Willie Nelson. The bus, the driver and the artist have been together ever since. • Like all of Nelson's buses, this one has a name: "the Red Headed Stranger." It also recently hit a milestone: The Red Headed Stranger has gone platinum. Last winter, somewhere in California, the bus crossed the one-million-mile mark.

• Sizemore points out that other buses have joined the million-mile club in the past. But no one knows of a bus that traveled the entire way with the same artist and the same driver. "That's pretty unusual," he says. • Customarily, drivers and buses change with each tour. "I never thought I'd want to be with one group for very long," says Sizemore, who had driven for Bruce Springsteen,

Tom Petty and Kenny Rogers before joining Nelson. "But with Willie, every day is different. It's never boring with this

bunch." • Along the way, Sizemore has become as much

a part of the family touring group as anyone on board. "I know what the guys like for breakfast. I know what kind of cigarettes they smoke," he says. "I know their kids, their wives, their ex-wives—a lot of ex-wives!" • Meanwhile, the Red Headed Stranger is now barreling toward double platinum. "It runs good, and it looks good," Sizemore says. "People like getting their picture taken with it. Heck, they like just touching it."



TAMMY VAN WINKLE (TOP), COURTESY TONY SIZEMORE

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# Off the Charts

**HE'S SO VAIN** Nashville makeup pro Michelle Probst kept getting the same question from male celebrities: "What can



I do to cover a blemish or a scratch?" Probst solved the problem by creating a line of skin-care products for men,

Menaji—a name chosen because it "sounds masculine," she says. • Less detectable than what women use, the Menaji line includes concealer, eye gel and other products.

• "Men want to look good," says Probst, whose clients have included Al Gore, Evander Holyfield and Diamond Rio guitarist Jimmy Olander (above). "They just don't want anyone to know their secrets."

(For information, call 1-888-MEN-8990 or go to [www.menaji.com](http://www.menaji.com))



## ACM FASHION FLASHBACK

Country often goes Hollywood for Tinseltown's ACM awards.

**W**HEN THE ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS airs its 35th-anniversary program on May 3, the stars once again will take the opportunity to have some fun with their clothing choices.

Unlike the more conservative Country Music Association awards, which occur in the fall in Nashville, the ACM awards take place in the spring at the Universal Amphitheatre in anything-goes Hollywood.

Besides the biggest names in country music, the awards extravaganza features actors and television personalities among its presenters. So, in addition to the influence of spring fever and the sunny California weather, the country performers and presenters must hold their own next to the outrageous fashions of Hollywood stars. No wonder so many of the costumes draw ooohs, ahhs and gasps of surprise.

The ACMs also take advantage of the Universal Studios tie-in to place young country newcomers amid the colorful movie sets and tourist attractions that are part of the Universal Studios theme parks in Universal City, California, and Orlando, Florida.

Tune into the CBS-TV broadcast to see who wins—and who wears what.

The country-goes-Hollywood procession: In the '70s, Loretta Lynn shows how a coal miner's daughter goes uptown; in the '80s, two other Kentucky-bred country queens, Wynonna and Naomi Judd, get as flashy as any starlets; in the '90s, was anyone willing to dress as wild as the Dixie Chicks? Right: Tanya Tucker struts her ACM stuff



1970s



1980s

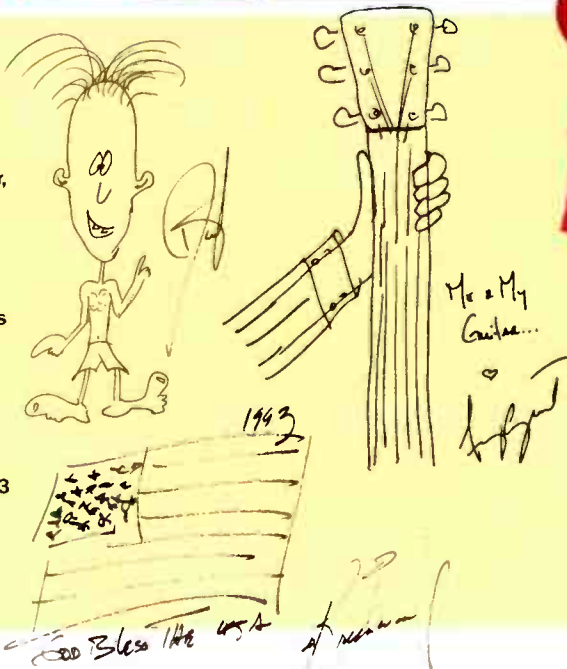


1990s



## STAR DOODLES

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**THE ASHTON-DRAKE GALLERIES**

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**FAITH HILL**

**Breathe**

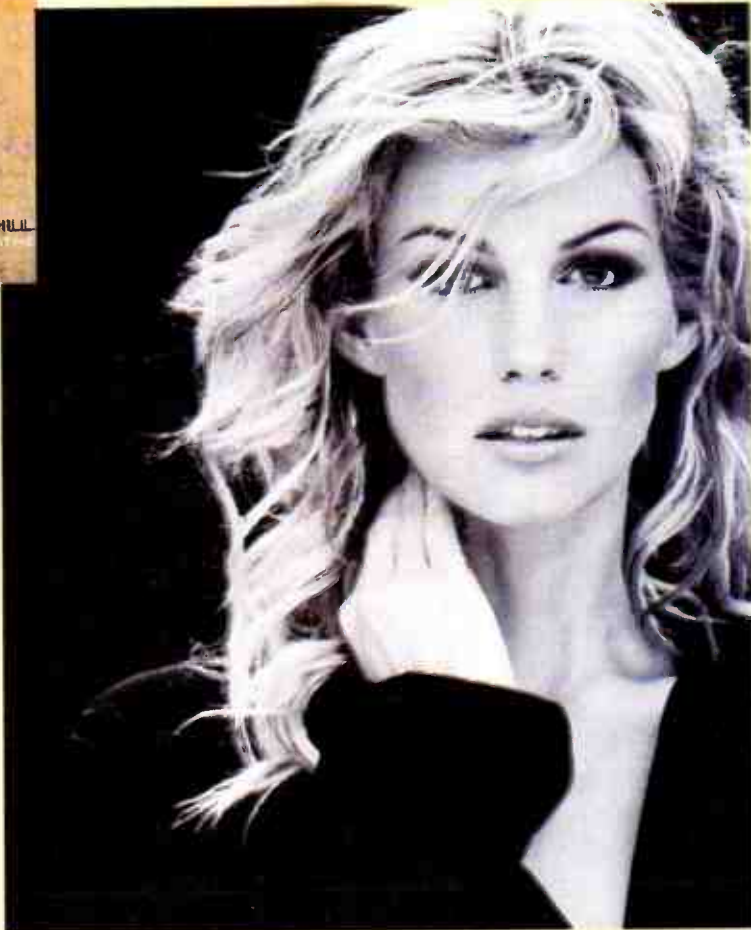
WARNER BROS.

You've heard the title song, "Breathe." You may well have been tickled by it, though many of us were not. Well, the whole album is equal to the title track. Although parts of this record are enjoyable—for instance, Hill and husband Tim McGraw's duet, "Let's Make Love"—it is '70s arena-rock balladry at its best. "What's in It for Me" is a terrific dynamo of attitude from the pens

of Billy Burnette, Bekka Bramlett and Annie Roboff. Hill's cover of Bruce Springsteen's "If I Should Fall Behind," a haunting tribute to love with grace and commitment, has a spacious, jangly, Spanish-guitar feel I loved. And when was the last time you heard electric sitar used to good effect, as "That's How Love Moves" delivers here?

Considering that Hill's model was Reba McEntire, her stab at pop and rock music was probably inevitable after McEntire's baroque, leather-pants forays into Aretha Franklin-land. The long and the short of *Breathe* is that it probably represents a jaunt into personal and artistic growth. That said, there's growth you benefit from, and then there's the kind of growth you get a surgeon to remove.

It's probably too obvious to note that there isn't anything even remotely "country" on this album. The question these days is, "Does it matter anymore?" Hill



has taken the leap into and beyond Shania Twain-land of inoffensive rock 'n' roll. Wardrobe and poses in the CD booklet present her as one of those sensuously unsmiling, mouth-breathing girls from a Victoria's Secret catalog. But, back to the music: Aside from maybe tagging it old-style arena rock, can we find a new name for this? What's offered here is clearly aimed at third-generation suburbanites raised in shopping malls, not black-dirt farms or even factory towns. Sophisticated chord patterns and complex rhythms carry innocuous love lyrics for youngsters with no calouises, with college educations in their pockets or in their futures. It represents not "country" culture, but a cultureless milieu homogenized by dozens of channels of cable television that are the same everywhere, cleansed of most class or regional differences by Wal-Mart, McDonald's, Blockbuster and a dozen other ubiquitous, identical chain stores.

We have a handful of contemporary honky-tonkers yet, but they don't seem to sell as well as the other stuff. It's a sad time for fans of real country music and the world it came from.

—Bob Millard

**Country Music rates all recordings as follows:**

- ★★★★★ **Excellent.** A classic from start to finish.
- ★★★★ **Very Good.** An important addition to your collection.
- ★★★ **Respectable.** Recommended with minor reservations.
- ★★ **Fair.** For loyal and forgiving fans.
- ★ **Poor.** Seriously flawed.

Ratings are supervised by Country Music's editors.



**GEORGE JONES**

**Live With the Possum**

ASYLUM RECORDS

This live set, the audio tracks from Jones' 1993 video *George Jones Live*, is the aural embodiment of that old marketing axiom "strike while the iron is hot," or more appropriately in Jones' case, "get while the gettin' is good." After his near-fatal auto accident and the success of the portentous *Cold Hard Truth*—the combination of which spelled sudden but very welcome career momentum—the finest male voice in country music and truly a living legend (who is gonna fill his shoes?) decided with the help of his label to hurry another disc into the stores before the Christmas rush.

From most other performers this kind of blatant marketing ploy would leave a bad taste in your mouth. More often than not, the resultant album would also be something less than their best. In other words, you'd feel used. But because George Jones is George Jones—an other-worldly phenomenon that apparently now even covers cheating death—this disc is a pleasant if slightly goofy snapshot of late-career Jones mugging and singing well in front of an adoring crowd whose cries of worship have been sonically tweaked to sound as if he's wowing Shea Stadium.

Many of the hits get a run through—"The Race Is On," "Bartender Blues," "A Picture

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of Me (Without You)” and, of course, as a closer, “He Stopped Loving Her Today.” He basically nails each one with the burnished, wise instrument that his voice has become. Even the “medley,” that lazy, burn-up-some-time device favored by all aging country performers, one that usually spells sleepy time or outright disaster, comes out fine here, melding “I’ll Share My World With You,” “Window Up Above,” “The Grand Tour” and “Walk Through This World With Me” into a seamless whole that elicits the kind of shrieking that might occur if two 747s took off while the pope was tossing out handfuls of hundred dollar bills. The waves of applause and screaming, which are more amusing than annoying, are this disc’s only flaw.

Nowhere near the peak represented by Jones’ *Live at Dancetown U.S.A.* session, which remains one of the essential Jones discs live or otherwise, *Live With the Possum* is full of

his voice, his sentimental stage patter and that special energy that continues to make him so essential to country music, both as an immortal character and a genuine star.

—Robert Baird



**CRYSTAL GAYLE**  
Sings the Heart & Soul of  
Hoagy Carmichael

PLATINUM

★★★★

Quite a classy move, truth be told. A ’70s country diva, Crystal Gayle, surely aware that she’s been unjustly lost in the Faith/Shania lip-gloss shuffle, has risen to the challenge

by simply shrugging her shoulders and rising above the chart-hungry throng. Why pump the publishing houses dry looking for the next half-wit hit when there’s a wealth of remarkable historic material shelved away in archives, just waiting for a loving interpreter to dust it off, rediscover it? Gayle chose—quite wisely—underappreciated ’30s and ’40s composer Hoagy Carmichael, and proceeds to sing the hell out of his quirky catalog.

The matchup couldn’t feel any more comfortable. Carmichael (one of the first 10 inductees into the Songwriters Hall of Fame) penned gentle, slumbering numbers—sweet, but not sickly so, with just enough big-band *oomph* to guarantee their timeless cachet. Gayle (whose smooth, gossamer voice is far too regal an instrument for cornpone contemporary country) drifts across these classics like aspen leaves fluttering softly to the

autumn ground—crisp, golden, with the slightest hint of resignation around the edges. With a flick of her delicate wrist, for instance, Gayle gets inside the world-weary ennui of “Rockin’ Chair” and really brings out the decrepit motif Carmichael originally intended. And—aided by fellow Music Row outsider Willie Nelson—she conjures up the post-high-life comedown, the flaming youth morning after. Rather than blinding listeners in Vegas flash, the polite orchestrations (courtesy of Jeffrey Steinberg) keep the session personal, like an evening at a particularly intimate cabaret.

Neophytes will hear memory bells chiming here, on better-known fingerpoppers like “Stardust,” “Heart and Soul” and “Georgia on My Mind.” And old-timers will marvel at the genuine reverence Gayle shows her subject; this isn’t some A&R man’s crafty comeback blueprint—it’s a project



**LARRY CORDLE AND LONESOME STANDARD TIME**

Murder on Music Row

SHELL POINT

★★★★

Good writing distills the things people already have on their minds—things they talk about over beers but wish they could say to the world.

So Larry Cordle, best known as the author of catchy country hits like “Lonesome Standard Time” and “Highway 40 Blues,” may be poised for a cult hit with the title track of this CD, a witty and honky-tonkin’ indictment of today’s country music business. “The steel guitar no longer cries, and fiddles barely play, but drums and rock ‘n’ roll guitars are mixed up in your face,” he sings against a slow, heartfelt shuffle. There have been other anti-Nashville anthems, but not many by songwriters who’ve been part of 44 million record sales. And when performing for the bluegrass faithful, Cordle can get the room swaying together and singing the chorus of this tune like the clientele of Rick’s in *Casablanca* singing “Le Marsellaise.”

That said, this album is far more than just a manifesto. It’s a dynamic and crisply written collection of nearly all original songs that takes Cordle deep into his bluegrass roots. And it’s propelled by solid instrumentation and magnificent vocal work by Cordle and his bass player/tenor

singer Terry Eldredge. They launch the record with “I’ve Never Been to Heaven,” a smart, bluesy song that cranks the hair-raising harmonies up right from the top. “Black Diamond Strings” is a charming memoir of falling in love with the guitar, replete with on-target details. The boys turn in an infectious instrumental with “Buck’s Run,” a tune by mandolinist Buck White, and the classic “I Wonder Where You Are Tonight” gets a tasteful update.

The spoken-word “Old Kentucky Miners,” contributed by friend Bert Colwell, is vivid and original, but it might have been better as a song at the end of the album as a coda after “Deep Mine Blues.” And though it’s hard to get the song “Jesus and Bartenders” out of your head, Cordle notes that he almost titled it “Preachers and Bartenders,” which may have made it a little less...well, preachy. But these are quibbles. This is exactly the kind of hard-core country and bluegrass that the title song lamonts as being scarce in Nashville.

—Craig Havighurst

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for which this sensitive singer truly has an affinity. Check out the way she insinuates herself into the playful, horn-but-tressed whimsy of "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening." Then try to picture any one of Nashville's "new breed" even coming halfway close to such perfection. Respect your superiors, kids. Study at Crystal's feet to learn how it's *really* done.

—Tom Lanham



**ED BURLESON**  
**My Perfect World**

TORNADO

★★★★

Ed Burleson's debut carries the same welcome shock of recognition that came with hearing George Strait's *Strait Country* or Clint Black's *Killin' Time*. That is, he's a born-to-it country singer coming at you as unfiltered and as unaffected as they come.

A sixth-generation Texan and former bareback rodeo competitor, Burleson is as country as a split-rail fence. Best of all, he assumes the best aspects of southwestern barroom music with guileless ease, and the lyrics of his songs, most of which he wrote, redefine the music to fit a specific and personal point of view.

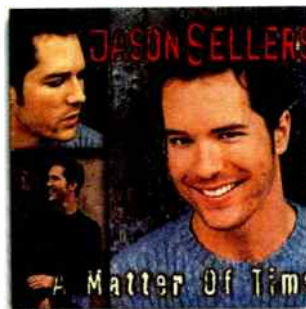
As Texas retro-outfitters go, Burleson has more of a polite, yes-ma'am cowboy sound than, say, truckstop daddy Dale Watson or the bass-slapping jive of Wayne Hancock. In his best two

hurting songs, Burleson is a stoic stand-by-your-woman man. In "Dreamworld," he watches in silent pain as the woman he loves slides into a tight dress and paints herself up for a night on the town without him. Similarly, in the title song, he's the one who wants to work it out when his wife says that they married too young.

Elsewhere, he bemoans the loss of untouched rural countryside and the lifestyle that goes with it. And on the lone song in which he wants to stay up past closing time, it's only because he wants to keep dancing with the one he loves. Together, the songs portray a traditionalist of the mind and of the heart, and they reveal the character of the singer in a way few modern country albums ever do.

In other words, Burleson is more than a careful revivalist; he's that rare artist who uses traditional music forms to speak about who he is and what matters to him.

—Michael McCall



**JASON SELLERS**  
**A Matter of Time**

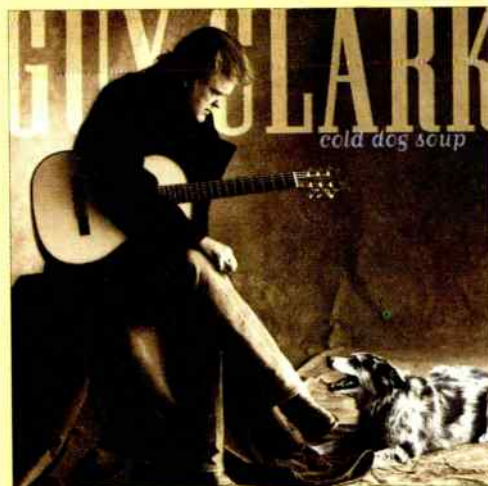
BNA

★★★★

In the press notes for his new album, Jason Sellers claims, "I

want to be known as a country-soul singer, like the greats—Ray Charles, Charlie Rich, Ronnie Milsap and T. Graham Brown." It's a grand ambition, but *A Matter of Time* lives up to it. Maybe Sellers doesn't quite reach the Olympian heights of Charles and Rich, but he has made a great Ronnie Milsap album for the new century. Sellers has the voice for the job, a muscular tenor that knows how to lean on a beat, how to tell a hillbilly story and how to testify with soul.

Even better, Sellers knows how to write a song that combines the best elements of country and soul. On the title track, a clever rewrite of Brook Benton's 1959 hit, "It's Just a Matter of Time," Sellers exudes self-assurance that he'll find the right woman, and the seductive,



**GUY CLARK**  
**Cold Dog Soup**

SUGAR HILL

★★★★

Of course, Guy Clark has little left to prove. For 25 years he has been an acclaimed singer and a successful songwriter ("Desperados Waiting for a Train," "Heartbroke"). At 58 he is asked neither to expect nor to reject the footlights of fame, for what he has will endure, and there's little enough to be gained by arguing about the rest.

Only the work itself, then, matters; that, and the will to continue to do that work. If Clark writes less compulsively

than Texas compadres Steve Earle and the late Townes Van Zandt, he also sands his words to a more exact fit. *Cold Dog Soup* is his first collection of new songs (mostly cowrites, a few covers) in five years, his accustomed pace.

More than ever Clark now sings with the patience of the thick, proud old men he once witnessed waiting for that train. Indeed, he nods toward "Desperados" in "Indian Head Penny," itself a story song reminiscent of "The Randall Knife," though lighter. And if there's a problem with *Cold Dog Soup*, 'tis that puny one: At some point Clark inevitably runs into his own legacy. Is it a triumph if he is merely as good as before? Well, yes, as a matter of fact.

The past—our past—is often here, well-rendered and wisely told. From the eloquent complaint of the title track ("There's no money in poetry/That's what sets the poet free") to the distant west of "Bunkhouse Blues" (and the other distance of Earle's "Fort Worth Blues"), even to the delightful fiddle frolic of "Sis Draper," Clark's songs recall a sepia-toned America, a time when his sense of craftsmanship was the norm. The present of "Men Will Be Boys" is more lightly dispatched, more easily forgotten.

Clark prefers to set his songs simply and casually. Again on *Cold Dog Soup* he has recorded more or less live with frequent cowriter Verlon Thompson and multi-instrumentalist Darrell Scott, with harmony vocals on two tracks by the ubiquitous Emmylou Harris.

—Grant Alden



## KEITH HARLING

### Bring It On

GIANT

Whose idea was it? Somebody has to take responsibility for such poor judgment. In Nashville, it's often difficult to discern how much artistic control a singer has, but somehow it was decided that Keith Harling's second album would not contain any of his own compositions. The result is a disappointing disc with little firepower.

A corporate shake-up got Harling dropped from MCA, which released his promising debut, *Write It in Stone*. That album contained five strong, self-penned tracks, including the hit "Papa Bear." Harling has already dodged one bullet by getting signed to a new label, Giant. He's now at a career crossroads. The South Carolina native should be armed with a couple of six-shooters. Instead, he's got an air rifle and a squirt gun.

The expression "sophomore jinx" isn't really applicable here because it's usually applied to a bungling clunker that follows a brilliant first disc. Harling's debut wasn't that outstanding, and *Bring It On* isn't a complete failure. The highlight is the anthemic title track, which is fueled by a hook big enough to get 'em waving

their lighters in an arena. Although its title suggests a hallelujah cry, the tune is actually about breaking down the barriers to emotional intimacy. The lyrics offer a surprising bit of sensitivity combined with swagger.

"Honey Do" is a jaunty rocker that succeeds despite its line-dance trappings. "Heartaches and Honky Tonks" comes across as a paint-by-numbers genre piece. The chorus of "Four Walls," however, is as pithy as a finely crafted haiku: "Four walls, three words, two hearts, one love."

Unfortunately, these modest pleasantries are counterbalanced by dreck like "Over You" and "As If," two syrupy ballads that could appear on a compilation titled "Nashville Recycles the Clichés, Vol. 17." Speaking of which, Harling has even included one of those dreadful songs about trying to make it in Music City. The title is "It Goes Something Like This," and there's a painfully unintentional irony to hearing Harling lament that his tune sounds just like a million others being sung in Nashville.

For every midtempo yawner like "Love Without Question" or "Easy Makin' Love," there's bound to be a better, unrecorded composition that the prolific Harling has written. Even the aforementioned standout cut is flawed: The narrator of "Bring It On" wants to convince his gal that he's man enough to understand and support her. She is compared to a wounded bird that might fly away. What this has to do with the Biblical "water into wine" allusion in the chorus is unclear. Harling's own songwriting avoids such sloppy mixing of metaphors.

George Jones has observed that many of his '90s albums suffered because Nashville's finest songs were not being pitched to him. Bob Dylan has said that he started composing his own songs because no one was writing what he wanted to sing. Mr. Harling would be wise to heed the words of his elders.

—Bobby Reed

finger-snapping hook backs up his confidence. "Till I Felt Your Hands," the romantic ballad he cowrote with Sharon Vaughn, boasts funky drum pushes, weeping pedal steel guitar, and a vocal with the rhythmic urgency of the former and the honky-tonk confession of the other.

Sellers' ex-employer, Ricky Skaggs, backs him up on one broken-hearted ballad, "That's Not Her Picture," and Sellers' ex-wife, Lee Ann Womack, backs him up on another. "Every Fire." Sellers and daet partner Pam Tillis give the old George Jones and Tammy

Wynette hit, "Golden Ring," a Memphis groove. Best of all is "Everybody's Walking," a country-rock anthem about the compulsive restlessness of Americans—Sellers captures both the hopes and dissatisfaction that drive such motion in his big, belt-it-out vocal. It's a rare treat

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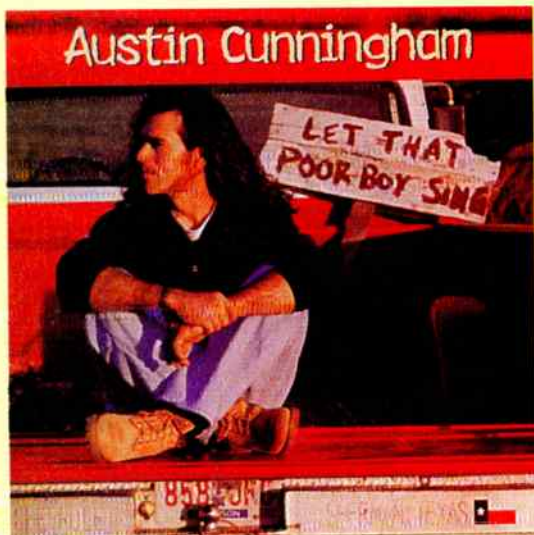
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**AUSTIN CUNNINGHAM**  
**Let That Poor Boy Sing**

SENIOR PARTNER

★★★★

Like singer-songwriters from all over America, Dallas' Austin Cunningham packed up his acoustic guitar and notebook in the late 1980s and moved to Nashville. He had more success than most, having his songs recorded by such country luminaries as the Judds, Dolly Parton, Kathy Mattea and Martina McBride. But he never gave up on the dream of making it as an artist himself.

So he has released his debut album, *Let That Poor Boy Sing*, on his own label. These dozen songs (and one instrumental) represent Cunningham's more personal material—the tunes that didn't have a ready market on Music Row. There are story songs about high school rodeo riders ("My New Old Friend"), disreputable childhood role models ("Buck Clayborn") and Brenda Lee's auto mechanic ("Here's to Ya Roger") as well as the usual songs about new love and love gone wrong.

Recorded without synthesizers or string charts, the arrangements have a stripped-down, alternative-country feel, thanks to the sparkling picking of New Grass Revival's Pat Flynn, the Dead Reckoning Band's Fats Kaplin and others. Such a setting is appropriate for Cunningham's modest tenor—personable but lacking much range or power.

The songs, though, seem stranded between the alternative and mainstream camps. They boast a sensory detail (the mechanic is evoked through a "name stitched on his pocket" and a "bloody knuckle") and a knack for real-life dialogue that are missing from modern country's deliberate vagueness. On the other hand, the songs have a sentimental streak—an eagerness to go for the easy, feel-good message every time—that marks them as more middle-of-the-road than edgy. It remains to be seen if Cunningham can bridge these two camps or will just fall through the cracks.

—Geoffrey Himes

which at times goes flatter than a pancake and recalls the grizzled baritone of Ernest Tubb. The more successful vocal pairings find him with Loveless, in a particularly Loretta Lynn-ish performance of "Back Street Affair," and with the rawer sopranos of DeMent and Lucinda Williams, where none of the rough edges have been shaved away.

*In Spite of Ourselves* is Prine's first studio album since 1995's *Lost Dogs and Mixed Blessings*, after which he battled throat cancer and retreated from touring for two years. His illness apparently did nothing to diminish either his fun-loving spirit or his sandpaper vocal charm. This is an album made not necessarily for sales, but for enjoyment. When's the last time you heard one of those?

—Alanna Nash

indeed to hear a Nashville singer sound so aggressive, so smart, so soulful.

—Geoffrey Himes



**JOHN PRINE**  
**In Spite of Ourselves**

OH BOY RECORDS

★★★★

At the core of John Prine's alternately goofy and aching brand of folk music beats a hillbilly heart. Anyone who's cared to look for it through the years can

trace it all the way back to 1971 and his first album, to his Kentucky relatives and the childhood visits that inspired his earliest songs. Yet, even though Nashville artists from Gail Davies to Johnny Cash have covered his tunes, nowhere has Prine made his country affections as clear as on *In Spite of Ourselves*, a collection of duets of "meetin', cheatin' and retreatin' songs," as he dubs them, with his favorite female singers—among them Trisha Yearwood, Emmylou Harris, Patty Loveless and Melba Montgomery.

Although he wrote only one song here—the funny, if somewhat coarse title tune, one of four duets with Iris DeMent—Prine sings these honky-tonk standards and obscurities as if he's been doing it all his life. Not

many performers would have the gall to undertake the George Jones part on "(We're Not) The Jet Set," but Prine makes no attempt to approximate Jones' clenched-jawed delivery or to steal his thunder, only to evoke the times when country wasn't ashamed of its blue-collar past. Further along, he brings the same wry flavor to "Milwaukee Here I Come," which harkens to the days when Nashville drew a firm line between country and pop and was only too happy to poke fun at itself.

In typical Prine style, the album is spare and mostly acoustic, and frightfully honest in its production. If Melba Montgomery, who appears on the latter song, sounds older than Methuselah, Yearwood seems too polished rubbing up against Prine's scraggly bray,



**PHIL VASSAR**  
**Phil Vassar**

ARISTA

★★★★

Maybe there are those of you who wonder, *Why can't every song be positive and upbeat?* Well, let us introduce you to Phil Vassar, the singer you've been imagining in your sug-arplum dreams.

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TO WHERE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ...

**I - 10 CHRONICLES**

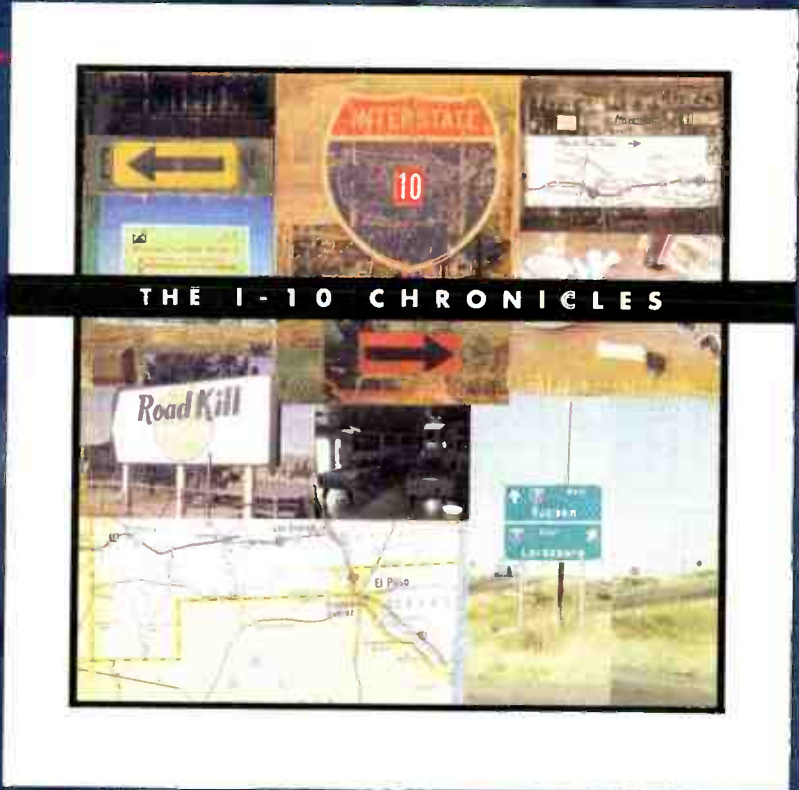
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**with**  
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**introducing**  
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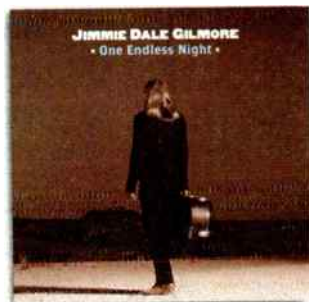
to getting over the problem and getting back to enjoying life.

And, aw shucks, why shouldn't his life be all zip-a-dee-doo-dah these days? Vassar was named ASCAP Songwriter of the Year in 1999, thanks to the number of successful hits he's provided for others, a list that includes Tim McGraw's "For a Little While," Blackhawk's "Postmarked Birmingham," Alan Jackson's "Right on the Money" and two chart-topping Jo Dee Messina tunes, "I'm Alright" and "Bye Bye."

The jaunty, head-over-heels energy of Messina's hits best represent the bubbly sound that fills Vassar's debut album. Utilizing a driving rhythm aided by propulsive acoustic guitar work and a waterfall of piano notes, Vassar's music has more in common with early Bruce Hornsby than with any country stars. He matches the upbeat sound with blithe,

positive stories that paint life as an endless summer of fun and fulfillment. It's a fantasy life, for sure. But for those who look to music for escapism rather than self-reflection or emotional purging, then jump on Vassar's colorful carnival ride.

—Michael McCall



## JIMMIE DALE GILMORE

### One Endless Night

WINDCHARGER

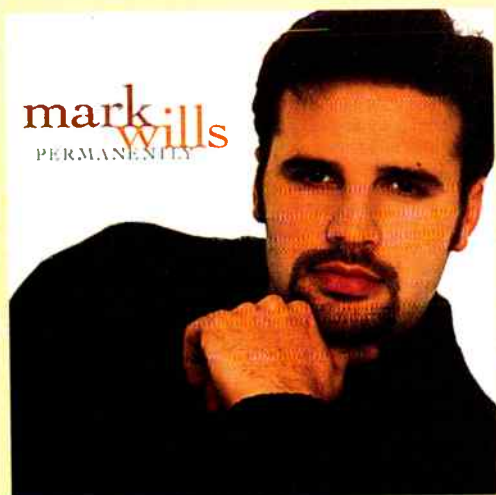
★★★★

If there were ever any fault to be found with honey-throated

Texas warbler Jimmie Dale Gilmore, it's only this: The guy's just too damned *nice*. That's why a tougher troubadour like Joe Ely can take Gilmore's gentle southwestern classic "Dallas" and sing the hell out of it, transform it into a meaner, grittier piece of work that almost loses its warm, neighborly intent. It's no crime—fans follow Gilmore for exactly that reason: his lilting, non-threatening, almost *karmic* take on life. Like the kid in high school who rises above his bullying tormentors, he gets knocked down and he gets up again—you're never gonna keep him down. But peace and love and sylvan singing will only get you so far. Sometimes you just have to get mean.

Which is why this pairing with scruffy producer Buddy Miller couldn't come at a bet-

ter time. Miller—an ace with a rocking hook if there ever was one—prods his protégé, really pushes him into sharp-cornered arrangements he's rarely attempted, with remarkable results. Gilmore needed the not-so-subtle nudge. With a terser twang pulsing behind him, he takes chances and gets almost daredevil with his delicate voice. He hops atop Miller's Duane Eddy-echoed guitar waves and hangs ten like some pipelining surfer. Granted, it's easy to test your limits when a good deal of your set is covers—Walter Hyatt's "Georgia Rose," Jesse Winchester's "Defying Gravity" and Townes Van Zandt's definitive "No Lonesome Tune." But Gilmore insinuates himself inside oldies like "Darcy Farrow" and "Mack the Knife" with Ely-ish ease, polishing them to a quirky



## MARK WILLS

### Permanently

MERCURY RECORDS

★★★★

Mark Wills' 1996 debut should have made him a star. Stocked with midtempo commercial songs like "Jacob's Ladder," which climbed its own few rungs on the *Billboard* chart, the album showed him to be just as familiar with neon-tinged honky-tonk as ballads, and

announced the Georgian's arrival as a contender. However, it took his second effort to rack up the No. 1 hits, even as it sanded off the rough edges of his style and propelled him further into the country-pop arena.

Now comes the 26-year-old's third release, and as the reigning Academy of Country Music's Top New Male Vocalist, Wills is on his way to the kind of acclaim he deserves. *Permanently* showcases him as a solid hitmaker, with no wasted songs to slow his ascent. Furthermore, it proves him to be a singer of tremendous emotional empathy and vulnerability, as Wills virtually lives the repertoire, all of it dealing with love in one incarnation or another, be it romantic ("Back at One") paternal ("In My Arms," which he cowrote for his daughter, Mally) or societal ("Still Waiting," which addresses the issue of orphaned and neglected children).

Wills, who brings a winsome, puppy-dog appeal to his most earnest material, probably appeals more to female fans, as his profes-

sional persona now centers almost entirely on his role as a romantic figure, a man willing to risk everything for the perfect relationship. That's mighty seductive when it's backed with such well-crafted songs as the title tune—including the lyric "you're part of every heartbeat that keeps me alive"—and even when the focus shifts slightly off-center to "Time Machine," in which he wishes he could go back and change certain events ("make sure Patsy Cline didn't fly"), especially the circumstances that caused his love to leave.

In the long run, however, Wills will lose ground if he doesn't establish himself as something other than the sensitive lover. As his first album demonstrated, he's got a lot of different kinds of music in him, as well as a sense of humor. Who, like the protagonist of "Everything There Is to Know About You," doesn't adore the head-spinning euphoria of falling in love? But in the fame business, like real life, you'd better have something real in place by the time the infatuation wears off. Wills has got it—he just needs a chance to let it shine.

—Alanna Nash

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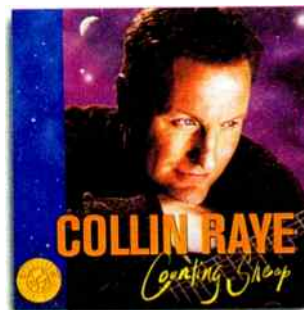
World Radio History

but appealing new luster. On “Mack the Knife,” especially, he sounds as if he’s truly enjoying himself, especially in the way each of his syrupy syllables drips over the Brecht/Weill darkness. Lotte Lenya must’ve once felt that very same thrill.

Even Gilmore’s originals benefit from the Buddy Miller boost. There’s a touch of vintage Marty Robbins wafting through “Blue Shadows,” a loping sagebrush saga he co-penned with Hal Ketchum. And on “One Endless Night”—a

softly brush-stroked ballad backed by the faintest hint of a bass line—he simply does what he knows best: croons nicely, sweetly, as if he were entertaining the tiniest of dinner-theater crowds. But there’s a subtle confidence coloring the cut—hard to put your finger on, but there nonetheless—as if Gilmore is more than willing to be the club’s bouncer in addition to its entertainment. Better make sure to tip the waitress—this Texan’s packing a pair of brass knuckles now.

—Tom Lanham



**COLLIN RAYE**  
**Counting Sheep**

EPIC

★ ★ ★

Collin Raye excels at singing about what we hold dearest,

such as nostalgia (“Love, Me”), finding common ground (“Not That Different”) or honoring true love (“In This Life”). On *Counting Sheep*, an album of lullabies, Raye salutes something adults can rarely get enough of: sleep.

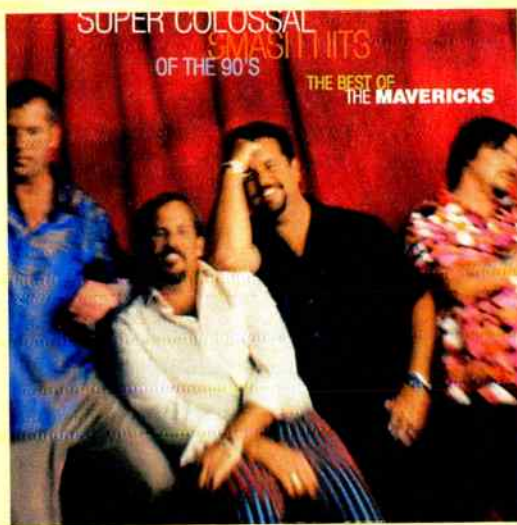
This album will put your kids out quickly, and that’s the highest compliment it can receive. Equally important, parents won’t soon get sick of these songs. They’re not ridiculous, repetitive or inane, and it’s refreshing to hear a voice as pure as Raye’s singing for the younger set.

The title track is a playful romp that should mix in nicely with a child’s dreams. It’s the first song on the album, and it’s hard to imagine many kids with open eyes at the end of it. But for the stubborn sleeper, there’s an endearing remake of the Beatles’ “Blackbird” and a magical take on “When You Wish Upon a Star.” A few originals complete the mix. The best is “A Heart Is When You Want to Love Someone,” because the whole family’s in on the story—even if the brother doesn’t do much but steal the candy.

Melissa Manchester guests on “A Parent’s Prayer.” (She also cowrote the song.) The pop singer relates the many things she hopes that God can do for her children. However, her whispery vocals are too darn sexy. If you play this one enough, your little boy may grow into a man much sooner than expected.

Other than that, *Counting Sheep* is terrific. Raye’s trademark throat-busting vocals are much smoother and more innocent than ever before. Best of all, he’s totally sincere in his delivery. Children and adults alike will appreciate the lack of pandering. Sweet dreams, country kids.

—Craig Shelburne



**THE MAVERICKS**  
**Super Colossal Smash Hits of the '90s—the Best of the Mavericks**

MERCURY

★ ★ ★ ★

Its title may be on the cheeky side, but this 12-song career survey makes it clear why the Mavericks are the hippest, most respected country band of the last decade. Over the course of four albums spanning *From Hell to Paradise*, their 1992 major label debut, through 1998’s *Trampoline*, the foursome truly lived up to its name, proving itself immune from the pressures of the industry and the enticements to become just another flavor of the month.

From the start, it was clear that this was a band with a deep reverence for all kinds of music, especially the pop and country of the ‘60s. Remember when “What a Crying Shame” burst onto country radio around Christmas 1993? It sounded like some great lost Roy Orbison song, one where the broken-hearted singer just

can’t get over the hurt of a doomed relationship. Raul Malo sang the song’s jangly, instantly catchy melody in a voice stung with vulnerability and ache, and it was unlike anything else out at the time. Thanks to the perseverance of the band, its record company (MCA) and some smart music directors, the song became the Mavericks’ first super colossal smash, just cracking the Top 25.

The music on *Super Colossal* is presented in reverse chronological order, beginning with four new tracks. Though Malo typically writes most of the band’s material, only one of the new songs, “Pizzirico,” with its south-of-the-border lilt, is from his pen. The best of the new batch is a cover of Buck Owens’ 1966 chart-topper “Think of Me (When You’re Lonely).” Though the Tex-Mex arrangement is thoroughly contemporary, Malo sings the song with such utter conviction that the decades seem to melt away. The band’s nostalgic indulgence in the past is also apparent in their rocking update of “Here Comes My Baby,” a late ‘60s pop hit written by the songwriter formerly known as Cat Stevens.

Included in the eight remaining selections are their most memorable hits—“What a Crying Shame,” the equally gorgeous and aching “Here Comes the Rain,” the supple honky-tonk staple “All You Ever Do Is Bring Me Down” (with Flaco Jimenez on accordion), and the salsa-enriched “Dance the Night Away,” a smash overseas. Unfortunately, the latter is the album’s only representative from the masterful genre-bending *Trampoline*. It’s also too bad that *Super Colossal* omits early, minor chart successes written by Hank Williams, Jesse Winchester and Bruce Springsteen. But otherwise it’s a worthy introduction to a truly original and visionary band. And be sure to see ‘em in concert; they’re the Bruce Springsteen of country music.

—David Sokol

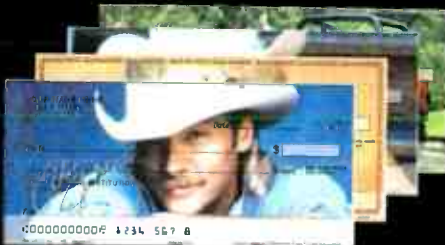
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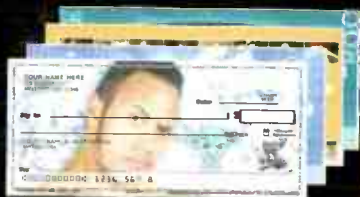
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#LOM1 (4 SCENES)



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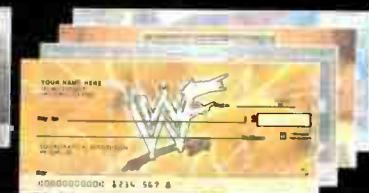
#RKYI (4 SCENES)



#9XSCSA (4 SCENES)



#CHHI (4 SCENES)



#WWPI (4 SCENES)



#9XUTI (1 SCENE)



#9XSMT (1 SCENE)



#DEBI (2 SCENES)



#9XRSI (3 SCENES)

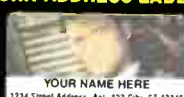
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**ALECIA ELLIOTT**

**I'm Diggin' It**

MCA

One of the current trends in pop music is the seemingly endless supply of prefabricated pretty-boy pop acts and teenage divas. The moment one becomes tiresome and too old for the average teen rag, there is another polished act waiting in the wings to perform the choreographed steps that will make them the next new sensation. It's a popularity contest in which the music matters very little compared with the image. We all know the acts—the Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera.

Not to be outdone, it appears that the country music industry has decided to submit to the allure of the quick turnover formula. LeAnn Rimes thinks it's a "real big deal," Jessica Andrews is too busy wondering, "Do you wanna kiss?" and Alecia Elliott, quite simply, is "diggin' it."

This is not to say there is a lack of talent—quite the contrary, Elliott shows a great deal of vocal promise. The texture of her voice at times exudes maturity far beyond her 16 years. However, the way her marketing department has decided to pitch her reeks of Britney. Sporting red stacks,

**RHONDA VINCENT**

**Back Home Again**

ROUNDER

For musicians searching for inspiration to play from the heart, there truly is no place like home. For Rhonda Vincent, it took the better part of 10 years in Nashville's mainstream country music scene to discover where her "home" was, but she's finally found it with her latest album *Back Home Again*.

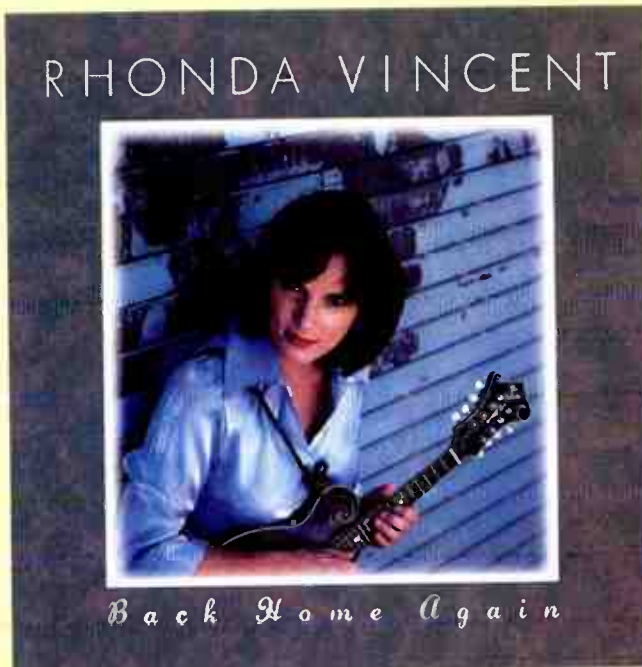
Vincent returns to her first love, bluegrass, the music that's touched her soul ever since she was a little girl. Growing up, Vincent performed with her family in the group Sally Mountain Show. Today, after a frustrating spell in commercial country, it's finally the Rhonda Vincent show, and it's well worth the price of admission.

Like Ricky Skaggs, another country star who returned to bluegrass, Vincent is a skilled instrumentalist with a specialty in the mandolin. Fronting an excellent band called the Rage, Vincent uncorks the high lonesome sound of bluegrass as if she'd held her breath for 10 years waiting to do so. Jimmy Martin's "Pretending I Don't Care," the crisp down-home "Passing of the Train," the Osborne Brothers' gorgeous ballad "You're Running Wild," and the uptempo "Keep Your Feet on the Ground" are refreshingly traditional compositions. And songs like "When I Close My Eyes" and a cover of Dolly

Parton's haunting "Jolene" place Vincent in the rarefied company of Alison Krauss, whose part-old-time, part-country, part-bluegrass chemistry has become widely revered. Bolstered by Vincent's great voice and the homespun harmonies she sings with her brother, tenor Darrin Vincent, the material on *Back Home Again* serves as a resounding "Welcome home!" to those who hear it. "This is the first of 17 albums I've made that truly captures my music," admits Vincent in the liner notes. May it be, then, the first of many.

hip-hugger pants, an exposed midriff and cutesy red-beaded pigtails, the attractive blonde could pass for Spears' little sister. It's not just the look: The video for the title track is apparently copied shot for shot from Spears' "...Baby One More Time" video. Unfortunately, this has some insiders feeling that Elliott, in this respect, has shot herself in the foot.

To Elliott's credit, the single "I'm Diggin' It" (penned by Daryl Burgess and Michele McCord) has a catchy hook with a good groove. Likewise, the track "Some Say I'm



Running" allows her a bit of freedom to show her talents as a heartfelt vocalist. The rest of the album seems to have been played a bit safe. It is begun with a remake of Matraca Berg and Randy Scruggs' "Some People Fall, Some People Fly," which seems a smart decision; you can't go wrong with something that has already proven successful. "I Don't Understand" and "You Wanna What?" (which Elliott has a writing credit on) are tunes of youthful wonderment, and will probably be popular with the younger audience.

Throughout the album, one thing is clear: It is a nice, clean, inoffensive record.

On the other hand, in its safeness it lacks the grit that so often defines an artist's individuality. Produced by Tony Brown and Jeff Teague, *I'm Diggin' It* has incorporated the talents of Nashville's A-line session players. It's impressive and polished. And—take this how you will—so very Nashville. It will be interesting to hear what Alecia Elliott has to say in a few years, after she has pleased the execs.

—Bob Gulla

—Bill Pursell Jr.

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 Kenai High School  
**4/29** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry
- May**  
**5/4** LOS BANOS, CA  
 Merced Cty. Spring Fair  
**5/27** HIWASSEE, GA  
 Anderson Music Hall

### GARY ALLAN

- April**  
**4/1** COLUMBUS, GA  
 Bradley Theatre
- May**  
**5/7** AUGUSTA, GA  
 A Day In The Country  
**5/20** MIDLAND, TX  
 Downtown Arts Fest.
- June**  
**6/3** UNIONVILLE, MO  
 Putnam Cty. Fair  
**6/9** CROSBY, TX  
 Crosby Fair

### BILL ANDERSON

- April**  
**4/8** TROY, OH  
 High School

### May

- 5/17** FLANDREAU, SD  
 Royal River Casino  
**5/18** MAHONOMEN, MN  
 Shooting Star Casino  
**5/20** SANDSTONE, MN  
 Midwest Country Theater  
**5/27** MARTINSBURG, WV  
 Panhandle Home Show  
 Grand Ole Opry House

### JOHN ANDERSON

- April**  
**4/8** GREENCOVE SPG., FL  
 Clay Cty. Fair  
**4/21** SUTTONS BAY, MI  
 Leelanau Sands Casino
- May**  
**5/12** KINDER, LA  
 Grand Casino Coushatta  
**5/20** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry

### JOHN BERRY

- June**  
**6/2** WABASH, IN  
 Honeywell Ctr.  
**6/3** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry  
**6/24** CADOTT, WI  
 Country Fest

### BROOKS & DUNN

- April**  
**4/27** EDMONTON, ALB., CANADA  
 Skyreach Centre  
**4/28** CALGARY, ALB., CANADA  
 Canadian Airlines Saddledome  
**4/29** SASKATOON, SASK., CANADA  
 Saskatchewan Place  
**4/30** WINNIPEG, MAN., CANADA  
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**4/29** FREER, TX  
 Cactus Corral
- May**  
**5/6** WHEELING, WV  
 Jamboree USA  
**5/13** MAHONOMEN, MN  
 Shooting Star Casino  
**5/27** MONTICELLO, MS  
 Atwood Music Fest.  
**5/28** PIGEON FORGE, TN  
 Oollywood

### KENNY CHESNEY

- May**  
**5/27** KANSAS CITY, MO  
 Station Casino  
**5/28** AMARILLO, TX  
 Fun Fest

### TERRI CLARK

- April**  
**4/29** STILLWATER, OK  
 Tumbleweeds
- May**  
**5/12** TAYLORVILLE, IL  
 Nashville North  
**5/19-20** RED WING, MN  
 Treasure Island Casino
- June**  
**6/3** WHEELING, WV  
 Jamboree USA

### BILLY RAY CYRUS

- May**  
**5/28** SILVER SPRINGS, FL  
 Silver Springs Park

### CHARLIE DANIELS BAND

- April**  
**4/9** DOVER, NJ  
 Baker Ballroom  
**4-13-14** RISING SUN, IN  
 Grand Victoria Casino  
**4/15** WISCONSIN DELLS, WI  
 Crystal Grand Theatre  
**4/21** RED BANK, NJ  
 Count Basie Theatre  
**4/28** SOUTHAVEN, MS  
 Snowden Grove Park  
**4/30** COLUMBUS, OH  
 Columbus Civic Ctr.

### May

- 5/24** PRESCOTT, AZ  
 Yavapai College  
**5/25** IRVINE, CA  
 Crazyhorse Saloon  
**5/26** KELSEYVILLE, CA  
 Konocti Harbor Resort  
**5/27** HIGHLAND, CA  
 San Manuel Indian Bingo/Casino  
**5/28** RIDGECREST, CA  
 Naval Air Weapons Station  
**5/29** POWAY, CA  
 Poway Ctr.

### DIAMOND RIO

- April**  
**4/8** SILVER SPRINGS, FL  
 Silver Springs Park  
**4/30** QUEEN CREEK, AZ  
 Country Thunder USA
- May**  
**5/5-6** SUTTONS BAY, MI  
 Leelanau Sands Casino  
**5/27** HIWASSEE, GA  
 Anderson Music Hall

### JOE DIFFIE

- April**  
**4/8** RENFRO VALLEY, KY  
 Entertainment Ctr.
- May**  
**5/6** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry  
**5/7** SALEM, VA  
 Salem Civic Ctr.  
**5/8** HAMPTON, VA  
 Hampton Coliseum  
**5/9** RICHMOND, VA  
 Richmond Coliseum  
**5/18** PITTSBURGH, PA  
 A.J. Palumbo Ctr.  
**5/19** BETHLEHEM, PA  
 Stabler Arena

- 5/21** FAIRFAX, VA  
 Patriot Ctr.  
**5/22** BALTIMORE, MD  
 Baltimore Arena

### MERLE HAGGARD

- May**  
**5/3** NASHVILLE, TN  
 Ryman Aud.  
**5/4** CHATTANOOGA, TN  
 Memorial Aud.  
**5/5** BILOXI, MS  
 Grand Casino  
**5/6** SEVIERVILLE, TN  
 Governor's Palace  
**5/7** AUGUSTA, GA  
 A Day In The Country

### GEORGE JONES

- April**  
**4/7** RICHMOND, VA  
 Landmark Theatre  
**4/8** SALEM, VA  
 Salem Civic Ctr.  
**4/14-15** MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
 Alabama Theatre  
**4/28** RAINESVILLE, AL  
 RAINESVILLE Civic Ctr.  
**4/29** GENEVA, AL  
 Fest. On The River
- May**  
**5/6** TUSCALOOSA, AL  
 Southern Star Music Fest  
**5/12** BRANSON, MO  
 Grand Palace  
**5/13** WICHITA FALLS, TX  
 Memorial Aud.  
**5/20** SUTTONS BAY, MI  
 Leelanau Sands Casino

### TOBY KEITH

- April**  
**4/29** AUSTIN, TX  
 Polo Club
- May**  
**5/19-20** HARRIS, MI  
 Chip-In Casino
- June**  
**6/22** OSHKOSH, WI  
 Sunnyside Expo Ctr.

### SAMMY KERSHAW

- June**  
**6/10** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry  
**6/25** MANHATTAN, KS  
 Country Stampede

### KINLEYS

- April**  
**4/1** MELBOURNE, FL  
 Maxwell C. King Ctr.  
**4/29** GUYMON, OK  
 Texas Cty. Activities Ctr.

### TRACY LAWRENCE

- April**  
**4/9** POTEET, TX  
 Strawberry Fest.  
**4/28** QUEEN CREEK, AZ  
 Country Thunder USA
- May**  
**5/25** BURGETTSTOWN, PA  
 Pepsi Cola Roadhouse  
**5/26** ATLANTIC CITY, NJ  
 Resorts International  
**5/27** VERONA, NY  
 Turning Stone Casino



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# On the Road Again...

## BRENDA LEE

- April**  
**4/27** IRVINE, CA  
 Crazyhorse Saloon  
**4/28** LAS VEGAS, NV  
 Boulder Station Hotel  
**4/29** PRESCOTT, AZ  
 Yavapai College  
**4/30** TEMPE, AZ  
 Red River Opry

## CHRIS LEDOUX

- April**  
**4/6-8** LAUGHLIN, NV  
 Riverside Hotel & Casino  
**4/13** WORLEY, ID  
 Coeur d'Alene Tribal  
 Casino  
**4/14** TACOMA, WA  
 Emerald Queen Casino  
**4/28** QUEEN CREEK, AZ  
 Country Thunder USA  
**4/30** STILLWATER, OK  
 Tumbleweed Call Fry

## LONESTAR

- April**  
**4/15** WHEELING, WV  
 Jamboree USA  
**4/16** HAGERSTOWN, MD  
 Maryland Theatre  
**4/27** EDMONTON, ALB.,  
 CANADA  
 Skyreach Centre  
**4/28** CALGARY, ALB.,  
 CANADA  
 Canadian Airlines  
 Saddledome  
**4/29** SASKATOON, SASK.,  
 CANADA  
 Saskatchewan Place  
**4/30** WINNIPEG, MAN.,  
 CANADA  
 Winnipeg Arena  
**May**  
**5/6** VIRGINIA BEACH, VA  
 Main Stage  
**5/20** SEVIERVILLE, TN  
 Governor's Palace

## LORETTA LYNN

- May**  
**5/12** ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
 Sam's Town  
**5/13** FORT WORTH, TX  
 Billy Bob's  
**5/24-25** MT. PLEASANT, MI  
 Soaring Eagle Casino

## KATHY MATTEA

- May**  
**5/5** ALEXANDRIA, VA  
 Birchmere  
**5/6** TIMONIUM, MD  
 Maryland State Fairgrounds  
**June**  
**6/3** PEEKSKILL, NY  
 Paramount Ctr.

## MARTINA McBRIDE

- April**  
**4/6** SIOUX CITY, IA  
 Sioux City Aud.  
**4/9** COLUMBIA, MO  
 Hearnes Ctr.  
**June**  
**6/10** HOT SPRINGS, AR  
 Convention Ctr.  
**6/22** TAMA, IA  
 Meskwaki Casino

## NEAL McCOY

- April**  
**4/7** ZANESVILLE, OH  
 Secrest Aud.  
**4/8** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry  
**4/12** DALLAS, TX  
 Eddies Oean's Ranch

- 4/14** VERONA, NY  
 Turning Stone Casino  
**4/29** QUEEN CREEK, AZ  
 Country Thunder USA

- May**  
**5/1** IRVINE, CA  
 Crazyhorse Saloon  
**5/13** WARSAW, IN  
 Wagon Wheel Theatre

## TIM McGRAW

- April**  
**4/29** CHARLOTTE, NC  
 Lowe's Motor Speedway  
**4/30** NASHVILLE, TN  
 Adelphi Coliseum  
**May**  
**5/13** ORLANDO, FL  
 Citrus Bowl  
**5/14** JACKSONVILLE, FL  
 Alltel Stad.  
**5/20** CLEVELAND, OH  
 Cleveland Browns Stad.  
**5/21** CINCINNATI, OH  
 Cineray Field

## JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

- April**  
**4/29** HAVRE DE GRACE, MD  
 Steppingstone Museum  
**May**  
**5/20** GADSDEN, AL  
 Riverfest

## LORRIE MORGAN

- April**  
**4/29** ARNOLD, MO  
 Rickman Aud.



Lorie Morgan

## WILLIE NELSON

- April**  
**4/8** FORT WORTH, TX  
 Billy Bob's  
**4/9** WIMBERLEY, TX  
 Cypress Creek Cafe On  
 The Square  
**4/12** ROCHESTER, NY  
 Aud. Theatre  
**4/13** NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ  
 State Theatre  
**4/15** ATLANTIC CITY, NJ  
 Sands Hotel & Casino  
**4/16** PHILADELPHIA, PA  
 To Be Announced  
**4/18** ENGLEWOOD, NJ  
 John Harms Theatre  
**4/19** BURLINGTON, VT  
 Flynn Theatre  
**4/20** WILKES-BARRE, PA  
 F.M. Kirby Ctr.  
**4/22** POUGHKEEPSIE, NY  
 To Be Announced  
**4/25** LEISENRING, PA  
 Olivito Park  
**4/27** WILKESBORO, NC  
 Merle Watson Fest.



The Kinleys

- 4/28** GREENVILLE, SC  
 Peace Ctr.  
**4/29** VALDOSTA, GA  
 Wild Adventures  
 Theme Park

## BRAD PAISLEY

- April**  
**4/26** GILLETTE, WY  
 Cam-Plex Ctr.  
**4/28** W. VALLEY CITY, UT  
 Westerner Club  
**4/29** LAS VEGAS, NV  
 Boulder Station Hotel  
**4/30** QUEEN CREEK, AZ  
 Country Thunder USA

- May**  
**5/10** IRVINE, CA  
 Crazyhorse Saloon  
**5/11** BAKERSFIELD, CA  
 Kern Cty. Museum  
**5/16** VICTORVILLE, CA  
 San Bernardino Fair  
**5/17** SAN JOSE, CA  
 Santa Clara Cty. Fair  
**5/19** CHOWCHILLA, CA  
 Chowchilla Madera  
 Cty. Fair  
**5/20** MADRAS, OR  
 College of Culture  
**5/26** MONTGOMERY, AL  
 Jubilee CityFest

## SAWYER BROWN

- April**  
**4/8** LAUGHLIN, NV  
 Flamingo Hilton  
**4/27** LAS VEGAS, NV  
 Bellagio Hotel  
**4/28** QUEEN CREEK, AZ  
 Country Thunder USA  
**May**  
**5/6** HIAWASSEE, GA  
 Anderson Music Hall

## RICKY VAN SHELTON

- May**  
**5/13** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry

## RICKY SKAGGS

- April**  
**4/16** GAYLORD, MI  
 Evangelical Free Church  
**May**  
**5/21** LEXINGTON, VA  
 Cameron Hall

## STATLER BROTHERS

- April**  
**4/6** WICHITA, KS  
 Century II Conv. Ctr.  
**4/7** DENVER, CO  
 Temple Hoyne Buell Th.

- 4/8-9** CASPER, WY  
 Casper Events Ctr.  
**4/11** ST. JOSEPH, MO  
 St. Joseph Civic Arena  
**4/12** DES MOINES, IA  
 Oes Moines Civic Ctr.  
**4/27-28** CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MI  
 Macomb Ctr.

- May**  
**4/30-5/2** COLUMBUS, OH  
 Memorial Aud.  
**5/18-19** EASTON, PA  
 State Theatre

## PAM TILLIS

- April**  
**4/11-12** BRANSON, MO  
 Mel Tillis Theater  
**4/25-26** BRANSON, MO  
 Mel Tillis Theater  
**4/29** MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
 Alabama Theatre  
**May**  
**5/9-10** BRANSON, MO  
 Mel Tillis Theater  
**5/13** SAN JOSE, CA  
 Santa Clara Cty.  
 Fairgrounds  
**5/14** VICTORVILLE, CA  
 San Bernardino Fair  
**5/23-24** BRANSON, MO  
 Mel Tillis Theater  
**5/27** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry

## GENE WATSON

- April**  
**4/7** MONROE, GA  
 Monroe Fairgrounds  
**4/29** KANSAS CITY, MO  
 Northtown Opry  
**May**  
**5/20** MONROE, GA  
 Monroe Fairgrounds

## BRYAN WHITE

- May**  
**5/28** GURNEE, IL  
 Six Flags Great America  
**June**  
**6/10** WINSTEAD, MN  
 Country Music Fest.  
**6/23** CADOTT, WI  
 Country Fest

## MARK WILLS

- June**  
**6/17** SAGINAW, MI  
 Ojibway Island St. Park

## LEE ANN WOMACK

- June**  
**6/17** NASHVILLE, IN  
 Little Nashville Opry

## CHELY WRIGHT

- April**  
**4/2** RENO, NV  
 Lawlor Events Ctr.  
**4/3** STOCKTON, CA  
 Alex G. Spanos Ctr.

- May**  
**5/20** GADSDEN, AL  
 Maragne Park

- June**  
**6/16** BOTTINEAU, ND  
 Bottineau Cty. Fair  
**6/17** FT. THOMPSON, SD  
 Lode Star Casino  
**6/18** NORTH PLATTE, NE  
 Nebraskaland Days  
**6/23** MANHATTAN, KS  
 Country Stampede  
**6/24** GREEN RIVER, WY  
 Flaming Gorge Days  
**6/25** GRAND JUNCTION, CO  
 Country Jam USA  
**6/29** PONOKA, ALB.,  
 CANADA  
 Ponoka Stampede &  
 Exhibition  
**6/30** CALGARY, ALB.,  
 CANADA  
 Silver Oolcar Showroom

## WYNONNA

- May**  
**5/19-21** LAS VEGAS, NV  
 Las Vegas Hilton

## TRISHA YEARWOOD

- May**  
**5/5-6** LAS VEGAS, NV  
 Las Vegas Hilton

Dates are subject to change without notice, and we recommend contacting the venue before traveling. For complete ticket and show information, contact the venue directly. Call information (area code) + (555-1212) for a venue phone number. If they don't have a listing, try the local TicketMaster office. If that doesn't work, try contacting the nearest Chamber of Commerce to the venue. *Country Music* magazine is not responsible for where an artist performs, nor does the magazine have any control over their schedules. Tour dates provided by Sheri Rettew.

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# RedAlert

**Rambunctious redhead Jo Dee Messina runs head-on into our off-the-wall questions.**

Strong-voiced, buoyant, vibrant, flame-haired—these are just a few adjectives used to describe Massachusetts native Jo Dee Messina. Her latest album, *I'm Alright*, spawned two No. 1 hits, "I'm Alright" and "Bye Bye." No wonder the ebullient Messina seems excited about everything. "This year has been unbeatable," she says. "On one hand it's been overwhelming, and on the other it's like, where do I go from here?" With a new record due soon, and daily interviews such as this one, Messina can pretty much say "Bye Bye" to downtime.

**if you could go back in time and ask anyone for advice, who would it be?**

Jesus. How do you deal with heartbreak, how do you keep strong, how do you make things better? Those are questions I'd like to ask Jesus.

**Wheat or white bread?**

Wheat—but it has to be soft! I love soft bread.

**Do you still do kickboxing?**

Yes, I have a trainer who comes over and kicks my butt daily! My weight is a constant battle. I see pictures of myself and think, *I was heavy then, I was thin then*, back and forth. It's my genetic code. So I have to work out daily. Boxing also keeps me strong.

**Do you enjoy getting dressed up for the awards shows?**

I'd say it's half and half. I love it, but I feel uncomfortable. I've never seen myself as a "fashion queen." If I could go to an awards show in jeans and a sweatshirt and not be ridiculed, that's what I'd wear. I grew up as a sort of tomboy, so that's how I'm most comfortable. But I love looking at and wearing



those gorgeous dresses. I just worry about carrying it off!

**I always worry about women in high heels climbing those staircases at awards shows.**

Oh yeah! At the ACMs, my feet buckled in because I was wearing pointy heels.

Never again! Then at the CMAs, I was wearing a strapless dress, and my date stepped on the back of my dress. You can imagine what happened. It wasn't on TV, but I was mortified as it was; I had to go regain my composure back in the dressing room.

**Let's do some word association. What do you think of when I say Viking?**

Minnesota.

**Stilettos?** Ouch!

**Redhead?** Lucy.

**Holland?** Them wooden shoes!

**All-American?** Tom Hanks.

**Tell me what you do when you get the hiccups.**

Oh, my guitar player showed me something that really works. Plug your ears while you drink some water. You plug your own ears, and have someone else give you the glass of water. It really works, every time.

**Do you do any shopping online?**

No, I hate to shop online or anywhere. I'm afraid to shop online because I don't want to give out my credit card number.

**With which type of car did you first learn to drive?**

Plymouth Horizon. Hatchback.

**What was the last book you read?**

*Where the Heart Is*. It was an Oprah Winfrey book. It has to do with improvising against the odds. Oh, it was so good.

**Can you sleep on a bus?**

Oh, I can sleep anywhere! I could probably sleep right now! I slept on the floor of the Dallas airport. We were doing a red-eye from California, with a layover in Dallas. So I slept on the floor, with my manager sitting right next to me.

**What will you miss the most about the '90s?**

My 20s! I guess I'll just rock on into my 30s, though! \*



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