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COUNTRYMUSIC

JUNE/JULY 2001

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Gentry

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VIRGINIA SLIMS





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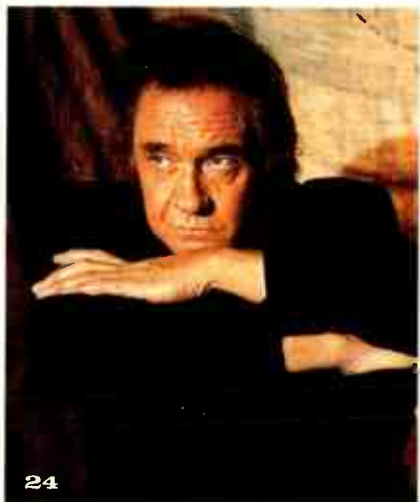
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PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY HILL



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ANDREW ECCLES/RLI



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PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM BAUER/BOOPRESSURE/STNA

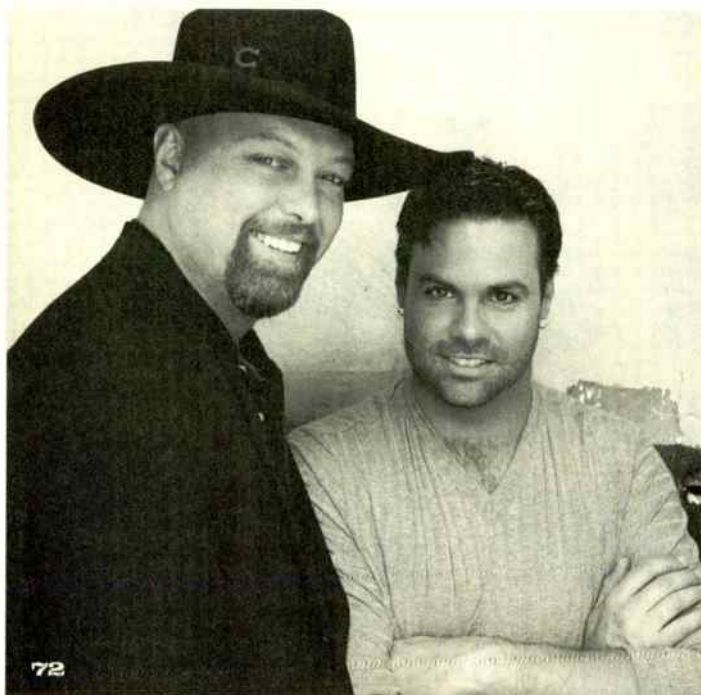
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Lee Ann Womack

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LETTERS

WHEN SOMEBODY LOVES ALAN

I enjoyed the wonderful article on Alan Jackson (*February/March*) so much that I wanted to tell you about a smile he brought me. Recently Alan held a concert at the Target Center in Minneapolis that my friend and I attended. On my way home from dropping off my friend, I was hit by another driver in a head-on collision. I was injured; the other driver died at the scene. I am mending physically, but emotionally it is a struggle.



Alan was informed of my accident through his fan club. About six weeks later, I received a personalized, auto-graphed photo, which I have framed and placed on my desk in my office. It brought tears to my eyes to think that Alan would take time out to sign a photo just for me. I look at it every day and smile to think that a

lot of people still have a heart. Alan has always been one of my favorite country music performers, and now he will have a place in my heart for many years to come.

Thank you Alan Jackson – and thank you to the wonderful people that made my gift photo possible. I love you all!

JOANN BOECKERMANN
FREEPORT, MINNESOTA

BLUE ABOUT JEANS

The February/March issue is the first I've read of *Country Music* magazine. I'm so glad I subscribed. I have read every article in it. I read the Hank Thompson article and his answer to the question, "What do you think of musicians' garb today?" I agree with him. The entertainer owes the audience a little more respect. I'm thinking of the CBS telecast of the 75th anniversary of the *Grand Ole Opry* where Alan Jackson wore jeans with big holes in them. Jackson sings traditional country music, of which I approve, but with his money there is no reason he has to look like he's at home doing some dirty job instead of performing at an important event.

DARLENE DRAEGER
ZUMBROTA, MINNESOTA

I would like to know what statement Alan Jackson is trying to make by wearing those holey jeans on stage? I saw him in Decatur, Ill., one summer, and he was the only one dressed in holey jeans. I know he could afford better ones. If not, does he know a friend who could loan him enough money to buy a new pair?

DAVID R. HUDSON
MATTOON, ILLINOIS



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World Radio History

A PLEA TO GARTH

After reading the news on Garth Brooks, I'm going crazy. I can't believe it! After selling 100 million, he calls it quits. I can understand the divorce from Sandy is taking its toll. He's very family-oriented. But waiting until the kids are of college age to tour?

I'm 24 years old with two beautiful daughters. However, life has been rough the last year. On February 10, 2000, I lost my 9-month-old son Jacob in a horrible accident. When I thought my life could not get any worse, when I thought I could just give up, I was driving my car to work and I heard "If Tomorrow Never Comes" on the radio. I cried so hard that I had to pull over. I realized that no matter what I did, it wasn't going to change the fact that Jacob was gone. Nothing I could do would bring him back. God needed him more.

Sometimes tomorrow never comes. That's why you live for today.

Garth, I think I speak for a lot of fans when I say your children see the joy you bring to so many people and how you've helped so many families. You don't know when tomorrow won't come. Do what you love. Your children will love you for it.

LINDA LOGSDON
INDIANAPOLIS

DEFINING DUFFEY

Your February/March issue had a review of John Duffey's album, *Always In Style*. The reviewer said that Duffey was neither a "great vocalist or mandolinist." While your writer did seem to have some respect for Duffey's huge talent, he needs an education in what makes a great vocalist or mandolinist.

Duffey was one of the most powerful mandolinists in bluegrass history, second only to Mr. Bill Monroe. Every note counted, many times with a skill of improvisation that widened the definition of bluegrass mandolin style. His high, powerful tenor was among the absolute best in bluegrass. He sang tenor and hit the highest notes squarely – not like most current male country stars, some of whom sound like a hound dog caught in barbed



Garth Brooks

HOWARD WAGGENER/EPIC/PLA

wire. His version of the high, lonesome sound could create the most excitement in those fast, hard-driving songs, and yet send chills up your spine with the slow, mournful songs. He had an opportunity to sing opera in his younger years, but instead chose bluegrass, luckily for us. Anyone who can voluntarily turn down opera to sing another kind of music style is a great vocalist.

While I agree with the four stars that your reviewer gave the album, I believe a better understanding of John Duffey and his talents is in order.

DAVID WEST
CONCORDIA, MISSOURI

LOWER THE DRAWBRIDGE!

Just finished reading your super magazine. In response to the article "Farewell To Country's Camelot" (*February/March*), one word comes to mind: sad.

My opinion is that the airtime is being wasted. Maybe luck will be with The National Network and they will draw the younger demographic of viewers they are seeking. Who knows, they may give the HBO and Playboy Channels some stiff competition. People over 35 should really appreciate that this new network considers people who listen to country music too narrow and too old for their ratings.

This certainly will be another channel to block out of my TV. Oh, but first I'll have to check with my teenager to see when he'll have time to help me with this procedure. I might be too narrow and old to handle this on my own.

GERRY KING
RUSSELLVILLE, ALABAMA

Who is responsible for taking all the great shows off TNN? Why do the powers that be feel they need only to appeal to the 26-to-36 age group? We have seen more than 200 country stars in concerts all over Ohio and Florida. And in case they don't think older people spend money, they should see our collection of CDs and tapes.

We never watch anything on TNN except the Gaithers and *Grand Ole Opry*. We resent repeats of the old shows, even the Christmas specials. How cheap can you get? We deserve better.

It just makes us sick the way TNN has been ruined. I'm sure not getting exposure on TNN has hurt the country stars.

AGNES AND CHARLES THOMAS
FRUITLAND PARK, FLORIDA

If TNN really knew how many Americans looked forward to its country format, they might have given careful consideration to the decision to cut country out of its loop. Too bad for the old and young alike who love country music that "the audience for country music was too narrow and too old for its commercial purposes." Too bad, too, that young and upcoming acts lose a spectacular showcase to expose their talents to a nationwide audience.

Maybe now that we have a Texan in the White House, TNN will realize that country music will become an even more vibrant part of our culture and put Nashville back on TV where it belongs.

ANNA M. ENGELHARDT
MIDDLE ISLAND, NEW YORK

RESPECT YOUR ELDERS

Thanks for the article on the *Grand Ole Opry*. I've listened to the *Opry* nearly every weekend since I was a child in the early '70s. In that time



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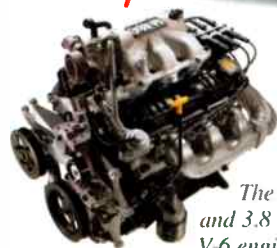


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It's a minivault.

there has been constant change. November of 1992 seemed to be a turning point. After Mr. Roy Acuff passed, Hal Durham was replaced as *Opry* manager, and the elder artists left at the *Opry* appeared to become followers instead of leaders.

Please remember this: There are approximately two dozen performers – like Porter Wagoner, Jan Howard and Charlie Walker – who continue to appear every weekend. If they all decide to retire this year, the newer members will have to put their heads together and agree on the one weekend they want to do the *Opry*. There will not be enough acts to have a show the other 51 weekends. These veterans deserve respect. Do we have to wait for *Opry* legends Jean Shepard and Charlie Louvin to pass before they enter the Hall of Fame? As the old song says, *Give me flowers while I'm living.*

JIM RHODES

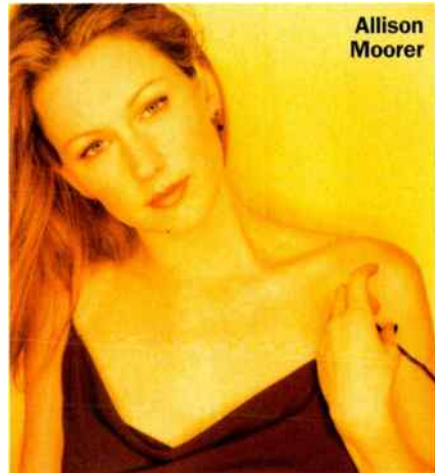
KNIGHTSVILLE, INDIANA

MARVELOUS MOORER

First of all, great magazine. I read it cover to cover. You had a fantastic article on Allison Moorer (*February/March*). I would encourage everyone out there who likes pure country – not the so-called “pop country” – to get both of her CDs. I had read several reviews of *The Hardest Part* and went out to buy it. *Alabama Song* was on sale, so I got that, too. What a treat. Both are heartfelt, and just great music. It's a shame she isn't played more on mainstream country radio.

KATHY O'CONNELL

DERRY, NEW HAMPSHIRE



Allison Moorer



THE CORPUSCULE

MARVELOUS MERLE

I was very pleased with the article on Merle Haggard (*February/March*). Way to go, Merle! So glad you've cut another album, and please don't put away that guitar yet. I love to hear good old country music.

EVA M. SHUTT

GENESEE, PENNSYLVANIA

CHAMPIONING CHALEE

I'm writing in response to Nick Krewen's review of Chalee Tennison's new CD, *This Woman's Heart*. I am outraged that he would say such things as “She has certainly got the goods. Now if she can only find the songs.” *Every* song on this album is great. Chalee deserves more respect than the country music industry has given her. Her music certainly touches this woman's heart.

KATIE CLEEK

CODY, NEBRASKA

SUPER SMITH

I have been subscribing to *Country Music* for a long time. I loved the recent *Journal* (*February/March*), especially the cover story on Connie Smith. The article and photos were great. It is wonderful to see the artists who have been around for a long time get some much deserved attention. I have seen Connie in concert 18 times, and that

big, big, beautiful voice just gets better and better. She looks great, too.

BOB LEATHERMAN

VALE, NORTH CAROLINA

KUDOS FOR CURLESS

Thank you so much for your “Noteworthy Disc-ouvertes” item on Dick Curless' *Hard, Hard Traveling Man*. I just received it and I will always be grateful to you – it is the *greatest!* I am an avid country music fan with more than 500 CDs, plus cassettes, vinyl, etc. If I had to make a choice to just keep one, I would trade them all for this set of Dick Curless. Bear Family Records has proven that Dick Curless may be gone, but his music still lives on. Thanks for bringing it to our attention. Keep up the great work.

MINETTA BROWN

SANGERVILLE, MAINE

BRAVO BLACKHAWK

I've enjoyed your publication for years (I love Hazel). Thank you for the interview with the best music men in the business. I'm talking about BlackHawk! They don't get the credit they deserve for their wonderful talent. Van Stephenson's “Ships Of Heaven” is glorious. I wept for the dear ones who have preceded me.

HAZEL MCMURRY

TACOMA, WASHINGTON

URBAN RENEWAL

I wanted to write and thank you for the pull-out poster of Keith Urban! I was able to hear Keith at Tower Records in Nashville during Fan Fair. Keith is not only a great singer, but he plays a guitar like no one I have ever seen! What a great musician. After his show, I got to meet him and he was so nice. It will be a night I will never forget.

DIXIE DEMOE

FORT ATKINSON, WISCONSIN

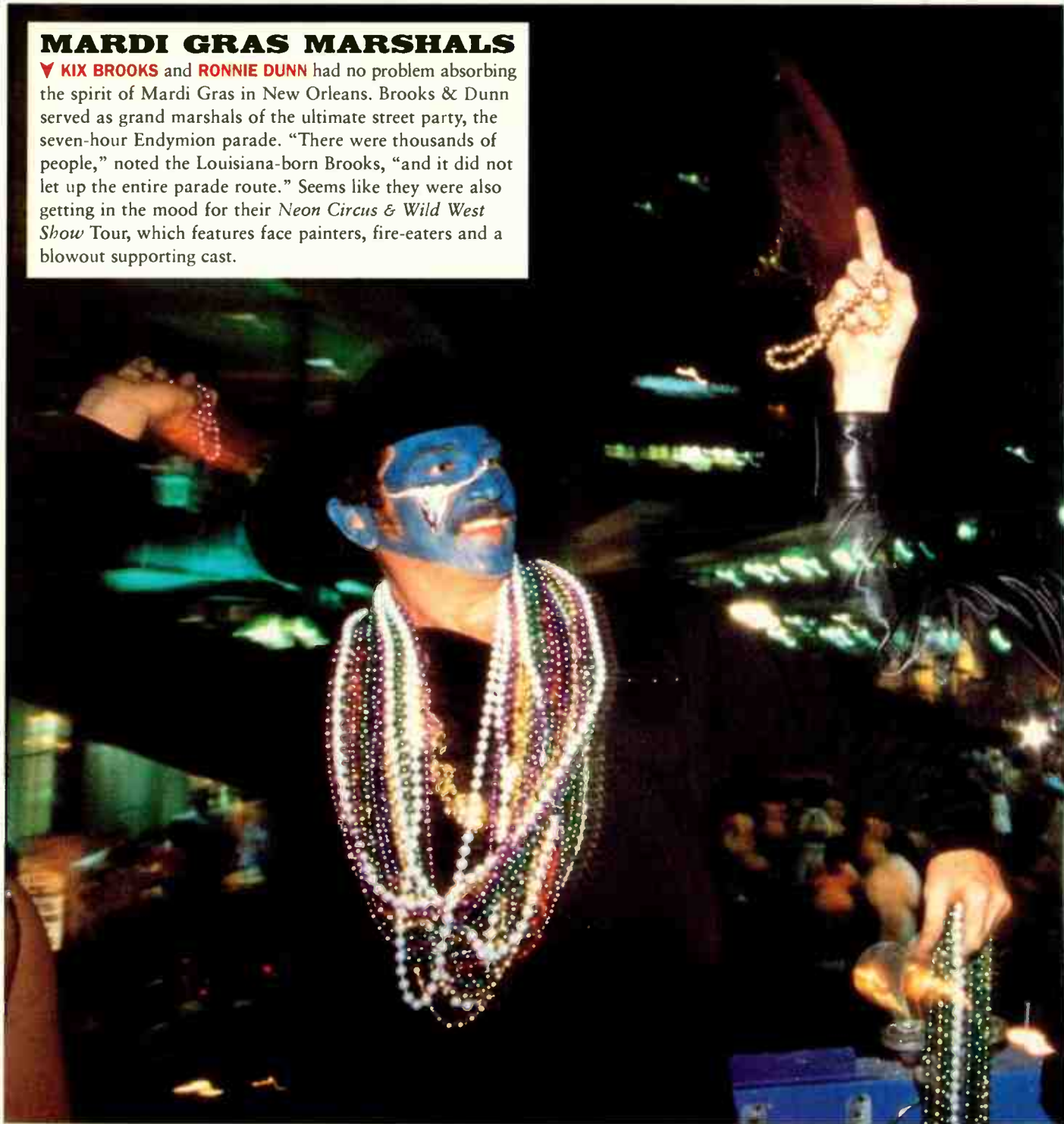
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COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

PARTIES • PEOPLE • NEWS • HAPPENINGS

MARDI GRAS MARSHALS

▼ **KIX BROOKS** and **RONNIE DUNN** had no problem absorbing the spirit of Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Brooks & Dunn served as grand marshals of the ultimate street party, the seven-hour Endymion parade. “There were thousands of people,” noted the Louisiana-born Brooks, “and it did not let up the entire parade route.” Seems like they were also getting in the mood for their *Neon Circus & Wild West Show* Tour, which features face painters, fire-eaters and a blowout supporting cast.



IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL

► The members of **BR5-49** got a courtesy call from an admirer, guitarist **KEITH RICHARDS** of The Rolling Stones. Richards and the BR boys jammed together on the Stones' hit "Happy" at the 12th Annual Rainforest Alliance Concert in New York. Smiling for the camera are (left to right) **CHUCK MEAD, DON HERRON, RICHARDS, GARY BENNETT, JAY BENNETT** and **HAWKSHAW WILSON**.



MIKE PANTES



LARRY HILL

AUSSIE POWER

▲ Australian export **JAMIE O'NEAL** welcomed surprise guest and fellow Aussie **RUSSELL CROWE** backstage at Nashville's Wildhorse Saloon. Crowe, who nabbed an Oscar in March for his leading role in the hit movie *Gladiator*, happened to be in town when he spotted O'Neal's name on the Wildhorse marquee. So he dropped in – much to the delight of the crowd – to catch her performance.



BOB HARRINGTON



BRANDI BLOUF

POETIC LICENSE

▲ Backstage at a show in Florida, **AARON TIPPIN** was presented with a license plate bearing the title of his recent No. 1 hit.

COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

NATURAL FRIENDS

► **VINCE GILL, GARTH BROOKS** and others paid musical tribute to *Grand Ole Opry* stalwart **JOHNNY RUSSELL** at a recent show at the Opry House. The concert helped raise money for Russell, the writer of "Act Naturally" and other hits, who has been hospitalized with complications from diabetes. Brooks recalled that Russell had inducted him into the Opry in 1990, calling it the high point of his career. Also on hand for the tribute were **ROY CLARK, JEANNIE SEELY** and the **OAK RIDGE BOYS**.



COURTESY VECTOR RECORDS

BROTHERS BUOYED BY BEAUTY

► **THE WARREN BROTHERS** performed at the recent Miss USA pageant and received a nice perk: mingling backstage with some of the contestants. Brother Brett found himself surrounded by four beauties, then – with brother Brad – grabbed a glamour pic with the newly crowned winner, **KANDACE KRUEGER** of Texas.



COURTESY VECTOR RECORDS



LARRY HILL



LARRY HILL

URBAN LEGEND

▲ Sensational **KEITH URBAN** celebrated his No. 1 smash "But For The Grace Of God" with co-writers **CHARLOTTE CAFFEY** and **JANE WIEDLIN**, members of the all-female '80s rock band The Go-Go's. **SONYA ISAACS** also dropped by the party to offer her congratulations.

TODAY, PEOPLE ARE LIVING LONGER THAN EVER. WHY SHOULDN'T YOUR DOG?

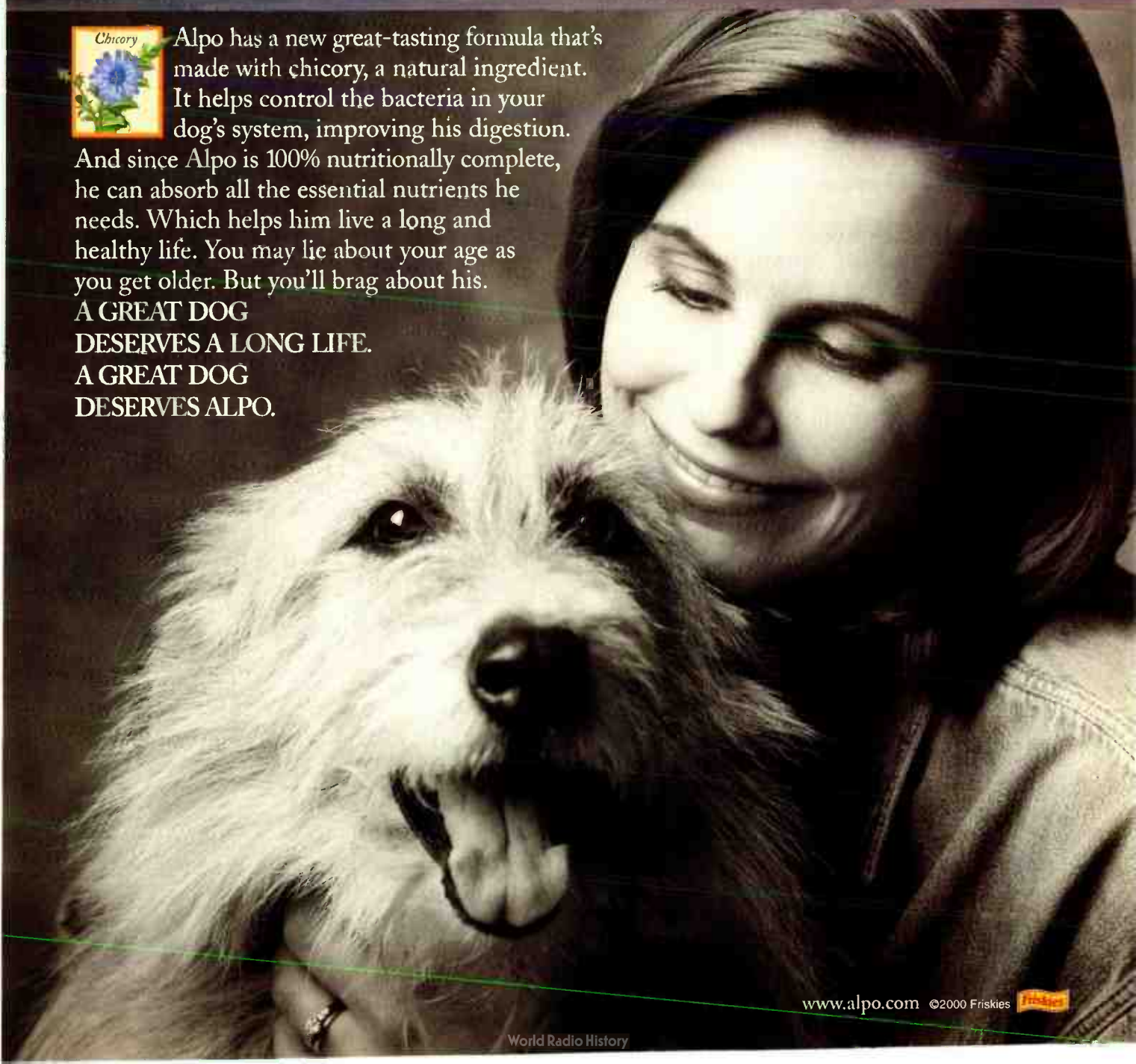


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COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



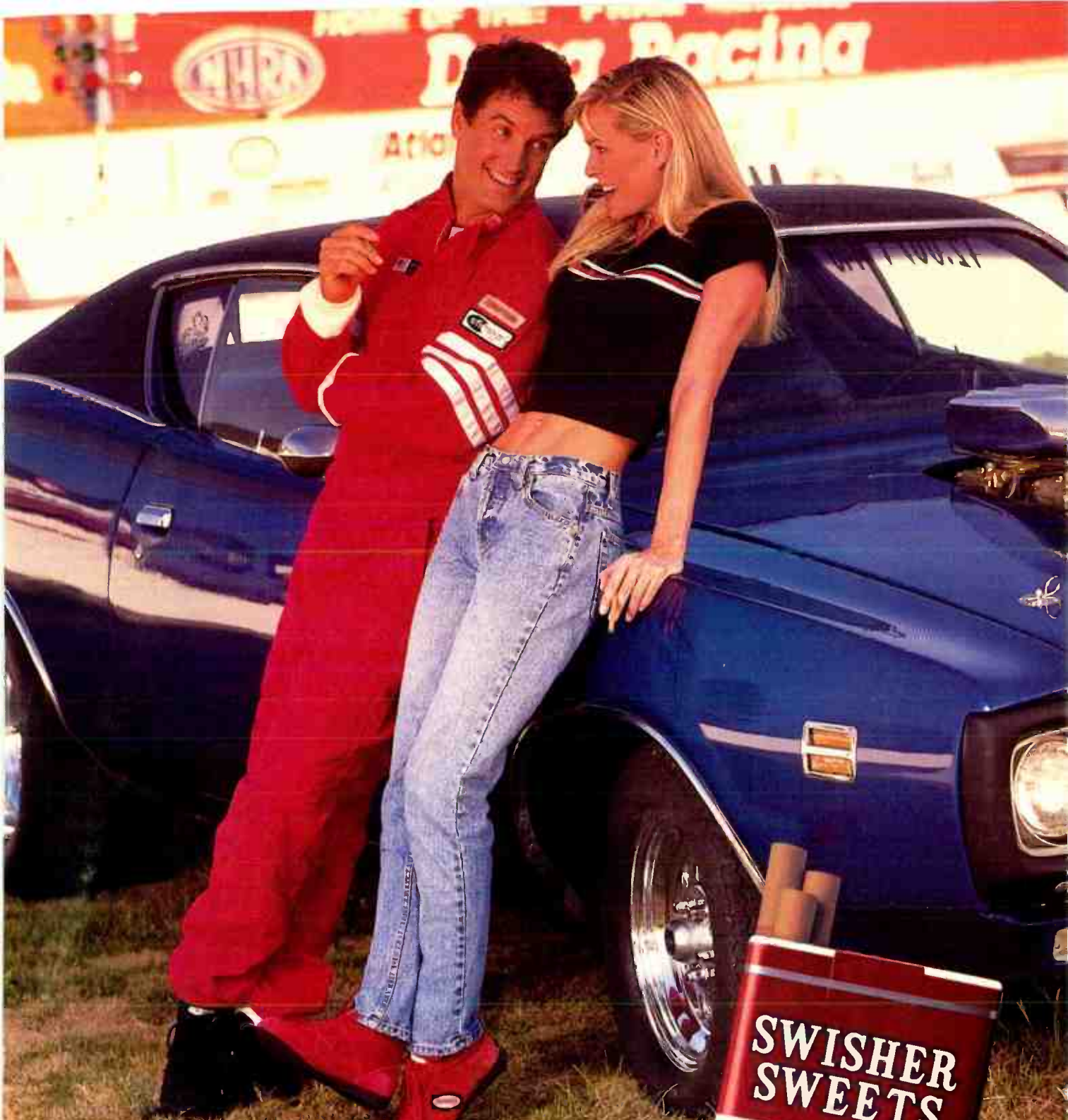
DAYS OF WINE AND POSES

▲ The stars were wined and dined in high style at one of Nashville's top charity events, the Best Cellars Dinner, which raises funds for the T.J. Martell Foundation. Some of country's "best sellers" lent a hand, including **AARON TIPPIN** and **MINDY MCCREADY** and **HAL KETCHUM** with wife Gina. Also taking in the exotic gourmet feast were **KENNY CHESNEY**, **SARA EVANS** and **PHIL VASSAR**.

LEE ANN GOES TO WASHINGTON

▼ A tale of two Texans: U.S. President **GEORGE W. BUSH** extends a warm handshake to **LEE ANN WOMACK**. Texas-born Womack was invited to perform her inspiring "I Hope You Dance" at a White House state dinner for the National Governors Association's winter meeting.





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THE INSIDER

BY HAZEL SMITH



COUNTRY MUSIC & NASCAR: DALE EARNHARDT, 1951 - 2001

The Blue Ridge Mountain states of Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky and Alabama gave birth to musical legends whose names are etched in eternal country music granite: **Hank Williams, Roy Acuff, Earl Scruggs, The Carter Family and Bill Monroe.** The same region also gave us superstars like **Dolly Parton, Randy Travis, Ralph Stanley, Loretta Lynn** and the group **Alabama.** Dirt roads also sprung up in those Blue Ridge hills, and many a 13-year-old learned to drive by running shine and out-running the law. Then shine drivers

began racing with each other on crude dirt tracks. Little did the suits on Wall Street know this was the beginning of what would come to be a sprawling empire: NASCAR. It comes as no surprise that fans of races are fans of country music, and vice versa. The drivers and singers traveled the same narrow paved roads that became interstates, supped together and talked about who won what race and who played the fiddle on which song. The same loyal fans who cheered for Randy Travis from Marshville, N.C., cheered for **Dale Earnhardt** from Kannapolis. Lest we forget, the late, great **Marty Robbins** owned and actually drove a race

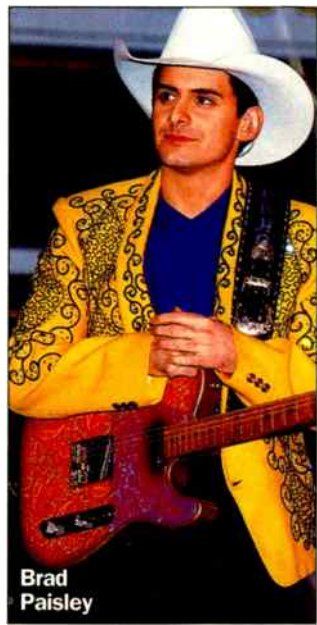
car at Daytona. Marty loved the sport and he drove until his heart would not allow him to take the stress of the oval track anymore.

It's no wonder the world of country music could barely smile through a Grammy night knowing that day the great Intimidator, Dale Earnhardt, was laid to rest. Brooks & Dunn, extremely close to Earnhardt, attended the invitation-only memorial in Charlotte where another close friend, Alabama's **Randy Owen**, sang a tearful goodbye, fulfilling a family request for "Goodbye (Kelly's Song)" and "Angels Among Us." **Travis Tritt** and **Billy Ray Cyrus** openly grieved for the loss of a friend. **Hank Williams Jr.** compared Earnhardt's greatness to that of his legendary father. **Willie Nelson** recalled a friendship that began when they were both sponsored by Wrangler. In Nashville, **Vince Gill** and **Steve Wariner** performed at the Gaylord Entertainment Center memorial that gave fans an official place to grieve. Almost 8,000 fans turned out and stayed all day. Entire families attended and many brought their kids. The races and the billion-dollar NASCAR empire will certainly continue, but with much less gusto now that the driver of car No. 3 has left the track.

PRAISING PAISLEY

Brad Paisley said he was only joking when **Buck Owens** asked him if there was anything he could do for Brad's induction into the Grand Ole Opry in February.

"Yeah, you could loan me the jacket you wore on the cover of my favorite album, *Carnegie Hall Concert*," Brad joked. The night of his induction, Brad was listening to Buck's *Carnegie Hall Concert* album backstage in his dressing room when there was a knock at the door. There stood a rep from Buck's organization carrying a box, delivered on Buck's own dime. Brad was shocked to find it contained the yellow rhinestone-studded jacket he'd requested, freshly dry-cleaned and hand-carried to Music City. Brad Paisley is just the kind of guy who would inspire Buck to do what he did, and compel a very busy Travis Tritt to drop by the Ryman and welcome Brad to the Opry.





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Brad Paisley is also the kind of guy who would inspire me to ask during a press conference, "Are you saying your prayers every night?" He is. Brad's Opry induction was marvelous, as was the party that followed across the alley from the Ryman at Jack's Bar-B-Que. Jack, the barbecue man himself, didn't make the party. He was out delivering a barbecue plate to an area hospital for another Opry star, **Johnny Russell**, who was in with complications from diabetes.

GARTH BACKSTAGE, ONSTAGE AND UPFRONT

One of my greatest pleasures is hanging out with friends and this one happens to be a superstar. My friend **Garth Brooks** came to Country Radio Seminar to perform at a luncheon. Garth told me backstage that he doesn't plan to tour again, but he never said he was through recording. The man who has sold 100 million records told me he will continue to make music. But in the middle of recording an album, he says he's having trouble finding great songs. Garth also told me how much he loved living in Nashville, but with his separation, he divides his time between here and Oklahoma. "That's hard," he confided. Onstage, Garth is the most incredible performer I've ever seen. With just his guitar, he had that audience in the palm of his hand. Apologetic for his weight gain, the singer was dressed in a red denim shirt over a gray cotton shirt, a **Chris LeDoux** ball cap, jeans and work boots. "Can't fit into my stage attire," he admitted. Garth performed mini-versions of his hits "Unanswered Prayers," "The River," "The Dance" and a comedic parody of "Friends In Low Places" about spicy food called



"Pains" that had the audience in stitches.

A VISIT WITH THE SKAGGS FAMILY

Ricky Skaggs and Sharon White have moved into their new four-story house on the highest hill in Sumner County in nearby Hendersonville, Tenn. Skaggs, who has his own label, Skaggs Family Records, tells me he makes more money on his own independent label than he ever made on a major label. Focusing altogether on a bluegrass career, Skaggs brought home a Grammy for his gospel album *Soldier Of The Cross*. Time sure flies. I have to reach up to hug his daughter, Molly Kate Skaggs, who turned 17 this year. Seems like yesterday when she was born and Sharon took that baby home from the hospital. Lucas Buck, his middle name in honor of Sharon's dad (Opry member Buck White), is 12, and taller than his mother. Yes, I toured the Skaggs residence. Both Ricky and Sharon have their own bathroom, but they have to share the double sink. Pity. Sharon says she's been in the jacuzzi twice. And when she looks out the window at the view, it's the finest in Tennessee.

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

I hear **Cledus T. Judd** has just purchased a pre-Civil War-era house in Paulding County, Ga., and has plans to refurbish the place. Wonder what "Judd-to-be" neighbors **Travis Tritt** and **Mark Wills** have to say about the colorful comic moving into their neck of the woods? They love their country peace and quiet. Maybe locks on the front gates would be appropriate!

FAN FAIR 2001

This year's Fan Fair will be held for the first time on a four-day weekend, June 14 - 17, with performances each night at the brand new Adelphia Coliseum, home of the Tennessee Titans football team. Fan Fair booths will be set up at the air-conditioned Convention Center where artists will sign personal autographs daily. There's been some question about Fan Fair's new pricing system, which now offers a range of rates, from \$90 - \$115. In my opinion, Fan Fair is still *the* most entertainment you'll ever get for your money. It's like attending any major league sport - you pay a higher price for a better view. For the first time, the powers that be in Nashville have joined forces with the CMA to create

the *greatest country music show on earth*. Once you depart Fan Fair 2001, it's my opinion that you will have enjoyed just that! Like you, I loved the Fairgrounds. But I think I'll love the new locations more. See you there.

REBA'S RUN

Nobody in Nashville was surprised at **Reba McEntire's** performance in *Annie Get Your Gun* on Broadway, nor was anyone surprised at her rave reviews. We are talking about a woman who as a young girl held the bucket while her daddy castrated the bull calves on their Oklahoma ranch. The rest of the story is that young Reba would then wash and clean the "mountain oysters" then take them to the house where her mama would fry 'em up for a family meal. Turn up your snobbish nose if you will, but it's called making do, and it was a way of life. Reba has just finished taping her sitcom pilot, and now she's on the concert trail. She's geared to make whatever comes along work. When she opens her mouth, she's still an Okie - but she also knows a Versace from a Calvin Klein. She's never gotten above her raising, and now it's paying off big time.

KEEN ON ROBERT EARL

There are 20 million people in Texas, and all those Lone Star residents love music. Country music. A band can forge a decent living in Texas honky-tonks, thanks to loyal followings. A lot of Texas acts are considered *local* by outsiders, but nothing could be further from the truth. **Robert Earl Keen** is such an act. I saw him at Nashville's 328 Performance Hall and watched in awe as the youth of Music City filled that venue to SRO and lip-synched with him on every song. Recently signed to the newly formed Lost Highway label, Robert got *three* encores



THE INSIDER

in this hard-nosed, spoiled, over-entertained town.

Easygoing Robert talked to me about full houses in San Francisco, New Orleans, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Knoxville, Fort Worth ... everywhere! He's pleased to be part of the Nashville recording biz. The man don't talk much. Most of all he likes to sing. And he knows those kids pay to hear him sing.



Tammy Wynette

CARRYING TAMMY'S TORCH

Nashville's Ryman Auditorium will be home to a new musical based on the life of the legendary First Lady of Country Music, **Tammy Wynette**. *Stand By Your Man: The Tammy Wynette Story* will be produced by Gaylord Entertainment as part of the BellSouth series. The show is set to run from Sept. 13 - Oct. 28. At press time, they hadn't found a singer for the role. Hopefully they'll find someone who was as good a match for Tammy as the wonderful **Mandy Barnett** was for **Patsy Cline**. There is no one with the ache in her voice like Tammy Wynette had. Nobody but Tammy could love, hurt and feel that much.

VISITING THE WARINERS

I must be the luckiest person in town. Would you believe I was invited to the privacy of **Steve** and **Caryn Wariner's** home? Busy Caryn, overseeing the remodeling and enlarging of their beautiful residence, had just gotten over painful knee surgery. On my former visit, Steve's recording studio was upstairs. Now he's been busy building a new one over the three-car detached garage, out of earshot of the main house. I couldn't help reminding the Wariners that when Steve was a tender 17, he made his *Opry* debut playing bass with Dottie West. "I felt older," admitted Steve.

WHERE IS YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR?

In my humble opinion, over-reacting police caused all the hullabaloo in Buffalo last year for **Tim McGraw** and **Kenny Chesney**. I know in my heart's heart that Kenny Chesney got on that blooming horse and rode off as a joke. McGraw and Chesney are good guys and meant to cause no trouble. Down in Tallahassee in February, **Andy Griggs** and a bandmate saw a parked ambulance in front of their motel. For the heck of it, they jumped in, drove around the block back to the front of the hotel and parked it. They ended up getting arrested for grand theft auto. Griggs is a good boy and meant no harm. I think back to the time that Johnny Cash bought a bunch of baby chicks. We call them "biddies" back home in North Carolina's Caswell County. Well, Cash put the biddies on the elevator of the very tall hotel where he was staying and touched the button for *every floor*. On each floor when the elevator stopped, biddies walked out the door and down the hall. I don't recall the law being called. Back then, police - and people - could take a joke. *

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Tall Order

Darryl Worley, a 6'7" jack of all trades, finally becomes master of one.

One humid June afternoon last year, Darryl Worley felt he might not get a second chance. So the Pyburn, Tenn., native decided to make the most of it.

Standing on the Fan Fair stage at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in Nashville, elated by the crowd's warm reception after performing his debut DreamWorks single "When You Need My Love," he seized his opportunity.

"Folks, I'm not sure I'm ever going to get the chance to play for you again," said Worley (who has since scored his second Top 20 hit, "A Good Day To Run"). "So I'd like to bring out a couple of special guests who are making their first Fan Fair appearance, my parents."

Tom and Bonnie Worley proudly joined their towering 6'7" son onstage, looked at each other and charmingly bowed in unison. The audience loved it.

It was more than just a simple, satisfying family moment – it was a meaningful and symbolic gesture of support. For there was a time when Mr. Worley, a former paper mill worker turned Methodist minister, wasn't thrilled about his middle son's desire to become the next George Jones.

"My parents were pretty strict," admits Worley, 36, of his West Tennessee upbringing. "The tough part was knowing what I wanted to do and getting Dad's blessing. He was one of the old-fashioned guys who believed you should hang on to your regular check."

Ironically, it was his father's career switch that got Worley and his two brothers interested in music in the first place. "That was kind of a cool deal, because all of us boys learned how to perform, play and sing in church," Worley explains. "That's where it all started."

He continued cultivating a musical sideline while studying biology and chemistry at the University Of North Alabama. Following graduation, he started a successful chemical business, earning a significant paycheck supplying the Southeast paper mills with microbicides, preservatives that eliminate bacteria from wood chips used during the process of papermaking.

But while the money was rolling in, the satisfaction wasn't.

"I hated my job," says Worley, whose résumé also includes work as a commercial fisherman, car salesman, biologist and science teacher. "Eventually, Dad had a change of heart."

"He said, 'If you're as unhappy and miserable as you say you are, go for it. Do this music thing while you're still young.'"



He taught school, sold cars and started his own chemical business – but Darryl Worley finally gave in to music's siren song.

It was all the prompting Worley needed. He quit the next day, eventually signing a \$150-a-week song publishing deal and supplementing his income with gigs in West Tennessee honky-tonks. He eventually graduated to a better deal with EMI Publishing and scored his DreamWorks contract when he convinced label president James Stroud to fly to nearby Savannah, Tenn., population 6,900, to watch him perform at the local Moose Lodge.

"Stroud flew down in his big jet, and I didn't know if the runway at our airport was big enough for them to land," Worley recalls. "They were going to rent a car, but there's no car rental at the airport. So they asked an attendant, 'Do you know Darryl Worley?' He said 'Yeah, I know Darryl. You can take my car.'"

The resulting album, *Hard Rain Don't Last*, offers more than Worley's Haggard-and-Whitley blue-collar heartache. It offers Worley the stage.

"That is my place in this world," he says. "I read something Merle Haggard wrote once that the stage was the place in the world where he was most at peace. Now I understand. I love singing more than anything and hope I never have to stop."

— Kerry Doole

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"Even though we've all been in California for a while, we still feel like hayseeds," says Red Meat front man Smelley Kelley (far left), with bandmates (left to right) Scott Young, Michael Montalto, Les James, Max Butler and Jill Olson.

Smelley Kelley can remember when the San Francisco nightclub scene embraced every kind of roots music *except* country. Bay Area bohemians enthusiastically rallied behind traditional forms of blues, swing, rockabilly, jazz and countless other ethnic styles. But a solid, straightforward, honky-tonk band was nowhere to be seen, or heard.

"It was taboo," spouts Kelley (who adopted his fragrant stage name because it's more memorable than his given one, David). "The club owners thought no one wanted to see a bunch of us peckerwoods onstage."

That resistance was turned around by a raucous yet reverent country band with the beefy name of Red Meat. Led by three Iowa transplants, Red Meat found immediate San Fran support in the mid '90s by serving up high-calorie doses of barroom country music with their first two albums, *Meet Red Meat* and *13*.

"Someone who thinks they don't like country music

behind by Nashville's current modern pop focus.

They also set themselves apart by their lineup, cruising on the strength of the songwriting of singing guitarist-and-bassist tandem Scott Young and Jill Olson. Kelley is the rowdy toastmaster, spinning yarns and raising enough ruckus to transform Red Meat's audience into party animals. Young is the reserved, stoic anchor of the group, while Olson personifies the friendly girl-next-door.

"When we perform, I get everyone's attention, then I turn them over to Scott and Jill, who dazzle them with their talent and their songs," says Kelley, who cites *The Beat Farmer's* late Country Dick Montana as his prime influence. "It works out pretty well."

The fact that Young, Olson and Kelley grew up in working-class towns in the Iowa farm belt also lends an authentic feel to Red Meat.

"Even though we've all been in California for a while, we still feel like hayseeds a lot of the time," Kelley sug-

Where's the Beef?

Honky-tonkers Red Meat dish out sizzling country fare

will be dragged to our show by a friend, and they'll end up having a great time," the 40-something Kelley says. "They'll come up afterward and say, 'You sure that's country music?' I'll tell 'em, 'Yeah, I'm sure. It's just that you've been listening to the wrong kind.'"

It's easy to hear why people stay: The six-piece band puts a gleeful spin on the tight, propulsive sound of West Coast stalwarts Buck Owens, Merle Haggard and Dwight Yoakam. On its third and latest album, *Alameda County Line*, Red Meat also branches into Western swing, Willie Nelson-style country blues and nimble novelty numbers that are clever rather than corny.

Produced by roots-rock veteran Dave Alvin, Red Meat's new collection aligns the band with a club-driven country movement that includes such kindred spirits as BR5-49 and The Derailers. Red Meat dishes out an entertaining version of roadhouse country that attracts young rockers, aging hipsters and older country fans left

gests. "Besides, I go back to Iowa once a year to keep my accent correct and to breathe in the smell of the corn processing plants. That keeps me in touch with my roots."

The band, which also includes guitarist Michael Montalto, pedal steel player Max Butler and drummer Les James, underscores its love for traditional country by dressing in stylish Western clothes and cowboy hats.

But don't call them retro.

"That term weirds me out," Kelley says, adding that just because Red Meat plays classic-country music doesn't mean they're old-fashioned. He cites recent albums by Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, George Jones and Johnny Cash when talking about the sound that Red Meat emulates.

"Just because we're 30 years younger doesn't mean we shouldn't play the same kind of music as our heroes," Kelley says. "Why should it be a sin for younger musicians to play real country music?"

— Michael McCall



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The flame still burns within Johnny Cash

“There’s nothing wrong with me.”

Uh-oh. Johnny Cash is spitting in the face of mortality again, his resonant baritone as commanding as ever, his words carrying Mack-truck authority. The legendary Man in Black is digging in his heels of defiance once more time.

He has survived so many battles and close calls throughout his 69 years that the cumulative effect has enhanced his mythical reputation as an indestructible cross-cultural icon.

His latest skirmish with ill health occurred only weeks after this interview. On February 11, Cash was airlifted from the Jamaican hideaway he shares with wife June to Nashville’s Baptist Hospital to treat his fourth bout with pneumonia in three years. Unlike his 1999 battle, this hospital stay was relatively short, and Cash was comfortably back at his home on Old Hickory Lake, north of Nashville, just hours before finding out he’d won his 11th Grammy Award.

By Jim Patterson

Today, however, on a more distant, Jamaican shore, Cash is up early and sounding chipper, soaking up the therapeutic effects of a tropical, sunny, 75-degree morning, with the cool Atlantic Ocean breeze blowing through his window. He outlines his daily activities.

“I’m up every morning at five. I get up and make the coffee before everybody else gets up in the house. I sit in the breakfast room and I do a lot of peaceful, calm, very beautiful, early morning reading. Then June gets up and we’ll watch the morning news.

“After breakfast, we’ll jump in the golf cart and go all the way to the sea. We’ll sit down there on the beach for awhile.”

Even when he’s relaxing, Cash’s creative flow doesn’t stop.

“Usually late morning, I’ll do a little work on my songs,” he says. “After dinner, and after we watch a little television, I’ll work on a song some more.”

It’s clear that Cash is no longer sweating the small stuff. This leisurely lifestyle is agreeing with him. He slowed down in 1997, after being hospitalized and diagnosed with Shy-Drager syndrome, a progressive disease similar to Parkinson’s that attacks the central nervous system. Since then, Cash has learned doctors misdiagnosed his condition.



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JOHNNY CASH

"My doctor told me a year ago, 'I have talked to the Vanderbilt specialist, and I have decided on my own that you do not have Shy-Drager syndrome,' " he reveals. " 'If you'd had it, you'd be dead by now. You're getting better, obviously.' "

"I denied I had that disease all along. God wasn't going to let me die with something that sounds that nasty."

Cash was told that he was instead suffering from autonomic neuropathy, a nervous disorder that weakens pneumonia resistance.

It made sense – in 1999, it was pneumonia that nearly killed him. He fell into a coma for 12 days. His faith and his family pulled him through.

"When I was dying in the hospital, and I got well by the grace of God, it was a miracle that saved me," he says. "My doctor had been by my bedside, and she said that she prayed God would take over, bring me back and not let me die. She told God she had done everything she could.

"But she was there all night long. A lot of my loved ones were there – June, of course – and they laid hands on me.

"When I woke up from the coma, I sat up in bed and asked for a cup of coffee. Everybody was crying, thanking God that I was alive."

Cash has suffered three bouts of pneumonia since then. But he wasn't prevented from recording *American III: Solitary Man* last year.

"That really took a toll on me and my lungs and vocal cords," says Cash, noting his trademark voice is a little thinner and a touch more frail on the album's songs. Despite illness, Cash has been on something of a hot streak. Aside from his Grammy victory, his seminal albums *Folsom Prison Blues* and *Live At San Quentin* have been repackaged and remastered as part of Sony's respected Legacy series. Last year, Cash oversaw a Sony trilogy compilation, *Love, God, Murder*, that not only received rave reviews but also sold well.

He has been making guest appearances on everything from wife June's critically lauded CD *Press On* and Rodney Crowell's acclaimed *The Houston Kid* to contemporary trio Trick Pony's eponymous debut. In addition, his 1956 Sun recording of "Folsom Prison Blues" was inducted into the 2001 Grammy Hall Of Fame, *American III: Solitary Man* has been nominated for ACM Album of the Year.



Cash escaped a poverty-stricken childhood in Arkansas.



After serving a stint in the U.S. Air Force (above) Cash began a recording career as seen here performing "Folsom Prison Blues" in 1968.



Born John R. Cash in Kingsland, Ark., on February 26, 1932, the fourth child of Ray and Carrie Cash grew up impoverished during the Great Depression. As a youth he worked in cotton fields. His older brother, Jack, was killed in a sawmill accident when Johnny was only 12.

Cash first sang on the local radio station in Blytheville, Ark., during his high school years. He joined the U.S. Air Force when the Korean War began, and spent four years as a military cryptographer in Germany. Cash has said his love of country music helped him deal with his loneliness in the military.

Loneliness also inspired "Folsom Prison Blues," his early classic about a prisoner tortured by time as he sits in his cell. Although he writes his material more from imagination than experience, Cash says he always aims for the heart.

"It's touching emotions and reaching people's hearts and guts," Cash explains. "And saying something that makes them say, 'Hey, I'm glad you said that, because that's the way I feel.' It's all about feelings with me."

After returning to Memphis from the Air Force in 1954, Cash toiled as an appliance salesman but had his sights on local label Sun Records as a ticket to a music career. Sun Records already boasted an impressive roster including Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison and Elvis Presley.

Cash thought they could use a gospel singer, and presented himself as such. After that failed, he finally hooked Sun Records founder Sam Phillips' interest with his own rockabilly number, "Hey Porter," and Cash had a deal. It was the single's B side, "Cry, Cry, Cry," that struck first. It cracked the Top 20 in 1955, and a star was born.

Cash stood out because of his darkness and maturity. His distinctive vocals found favor with a huge audience, and helped him score his first No. 1, "I Walk The Line," which also crossed over to the pop charts, in 1956.

Over the next decade, the Cash legend grew immeasurably. Memorable songs ranging from "Tennessee Flat-Top

“
My doctor
had been by
my bedside,
and she said
that she
prayed God
would take
over . . . She
told God she
had done
everything
she could.”

JOHNNY CASH

Box” and “Ring Of Fire” through “The Ballad Of Ira Hayes” and the novel tune “A Boy Named Sue” transformed him into a country icon. When he got his own ABC-TV variety series, *The Johnny Cash Show*, in 1969, he vaulted into mainstream superstardom.

But as Cash’s popularity grew, his personal life suffered. An on-and-off addiction to amphetamines and painkillers dogged him in the ’50s and ’60s, while his stormy marriage to Vivian Liberto ended in 1966.

His personal life stabilized two years later when he married singer June Carter. She was his muse and his soulmate, and she eventually helped him kick his bad habits for good.

But by the early 1970s, Cash found his chart success running hot and cold, and by the ’80s he was struggling. After the superstar collaboration with Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson – The Highwaymen – had run its course, he was dropped by Columbia.

Recording success eluded him until 1994, when he found a new lease on his artistic life by teaming up with an unexpected ally. Producer Rick Rubin had forged his cutting-edge reputation by producing such rap and rock acts as Beastie Boys, Slayer and The Cult. The first collaboration, *American*

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Cash's wife, June Carter Cash, helped him kick his bad habits and develop healthier ones.

about it is, he trusts my final decision.

"We've worked that way for the last three albums, and we're working that way again for *American IV*."

No longer chasing radio trends, Cash has discovered the rewards of independence. For instance, he never would have recorded the *American III* standout "Mercy Seat" if he'd been worried about airplay. "Mercy Seat," written by Nick Cave, is set in a prison – more accurately, a prisoner's mind. The narrator is being executed in an electric chair, and his mind races with explanations, protestations of innocence, panic and gory details. *I think my face is melting*, Cash sings at one point.

"I wouldn't be so presumptuous to say that my music can change the country, you know?" he says. "I thought 'Mercy Seat' was a chilling, shall we say, verdict against the death penalty. Tennessee just executed a man [Robert Glen Coe]. And Texas is killing them every so often.

"I won't make a stand either way. I just wanted to call attention to some of the heart-felt gut emotions that come along with it."

But Cash has always written and identified with the downtrodden, which is evident through his music sung for the underdog. He has always related to the common

man, regardless of race, religion, creed, economics or controversy. He has helped us to consider certain issues without being judgmental. It's one of Cash's distinctive gifts that makes him original.

"I've never tried to copy anybody else. Never will," Cash says, clearing his throat. "If I hear a song that another artist has had a big hit with, if I feel like I can't bring any of my individuality and my own feelings and emotions to that song, then I won't record it."

Even though he has sold over 50 million records, earned a berth in both the Rock 'n' Roll and Country Music Halls Of Fame, and won countless awards, Johnny Cash isn't ready to retire. He likes the terms of his partnership with Rubin, and he intends to honor it until he draws his last breath.

"I don't have a budget for recording," Cash said. "Nobody ever brings a clock into the studio. It's much like it was in my early days, when we went in there until we had it, and it didn't matter how long it took or how much money.

"So, as long as I've got that situation, and Rick and I are both comfortable with it, I don't ever intend to quit. Rick told me that I have a standing order for one album after another, unending.

"Until I'm not able to record anymore."*

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LIFE UNDER **The** BIG TOP

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ringmaster
Tim McGraw
jumps
through
the hoops of
his changing
times

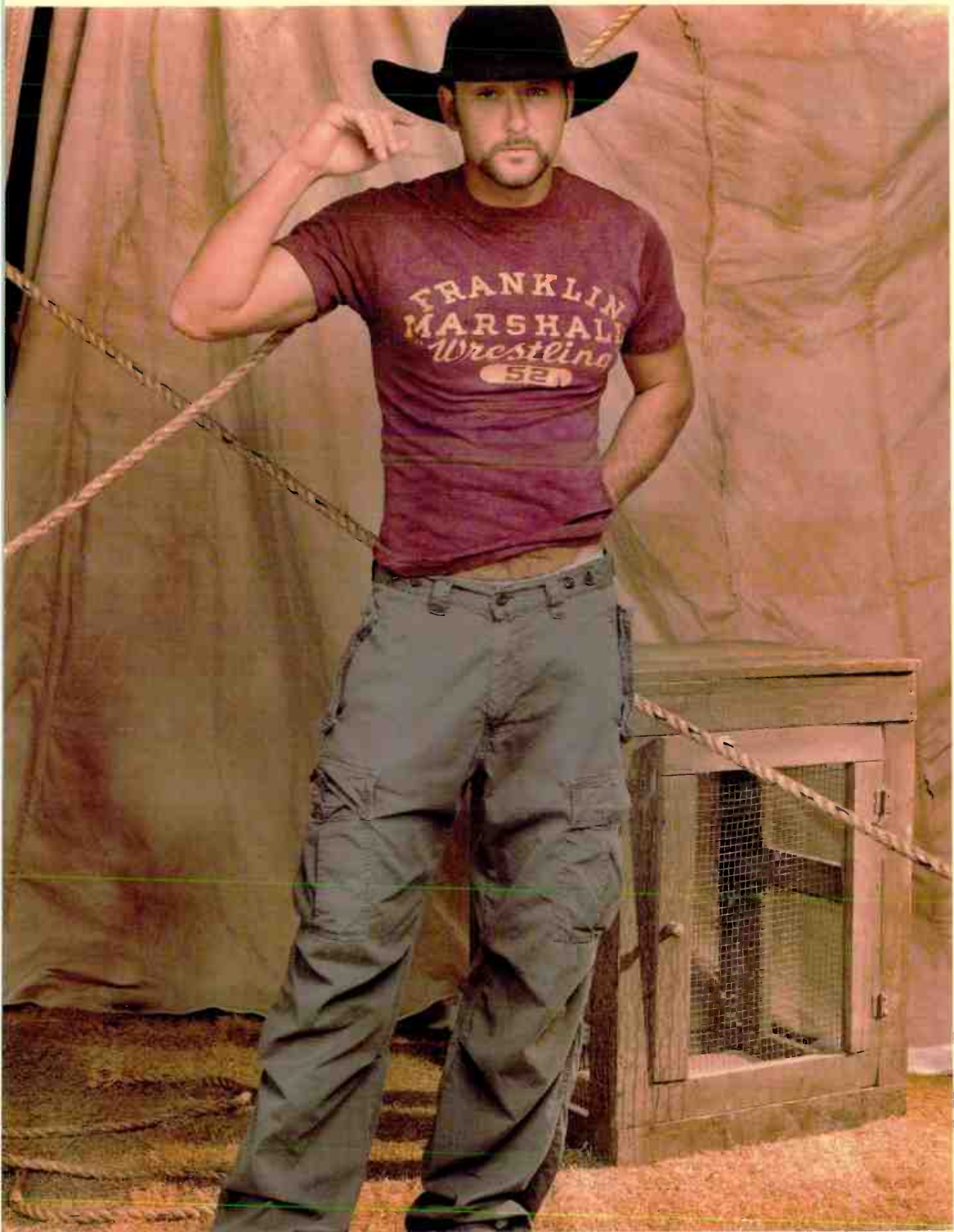
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Things change. Even if your name is Tim McGraw. Even if you are the hottest male country star of the new millennium. Even if you have a picture-perfect marriage. Even if you are the parent of two healthy, beautiful children. Even if you are perceived to have the ideal existence.

Even if all those things are true, certain other things are beyond your control. Life doesn't discriminate when handing out surprises.

Or as the 35-year-old Louisiana native himself succinctly states, "God's always going to knock you upside the head."

by Michael McCall



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVEN KLEIN/PHOT RIGHT

LIFE UNDER The BIG TOP

Consider this: Tim, wife Faith Hill and daughters Gracie and Maggie are driving along in the family truck on a beautiful sunny afternoon. They're on the way to Leiper's Fork to check out some property just south of Nashville that they may

want to purchase. Driver McGraw is cruising down a back road, cell phone to his ear, nonchalantly discussing his new album *Set This Circus Down* and its controversial song "Things Change."

Suddenly his conversation is interrupted by a disturbing sight.

"Oh God, hold on!" he cries. "Somebody just ran over a dog – right here in front of us!"

Instantly, McGraw pulls his truck over. He and Hill jump out, joined by their kids, and rush to the stricken canine's side.

"Here, puppy," he whispers tenderly so as not to upset his toddlers. He looks over at his concerned wife. "God, he's really hurt. He's going to bite me if I get close."

As McGraw tries to comfort the dying animal – whispering, "It's okay, baby, it's okay" – Hill runs up a driveway in an attempt to locate the dog's owners. She finds a neighbor and learns that the pet belongs to absent homeowners next door.

"This is awful," McGraw exclaims, his voice filled with distress and anger. "I can't believe that truck didn't stop. I feel like chasin' them down."

Just after country music's supercouple helps a neighbor move the lifeless dog onto its owners' lawn, McGraw gets his wish. The red pickup responsible for the hit-and-run zooms by, now going in the opposite direction. McGraw hustles Hill and his children back into the truck, guns the engine and eventually catches up with the perpetrators – and confronts them.

"They said they didn't do it," reports McGraw later, a remnant trace of disgust sticking in his words. "But they *did*. They ran over it. Then they sort of copped to it. They said, 'Well, if we *did* do it, we couldn't do anything about it.' I told them they could have stopped, looked after it and apologized to the owner. But they got all rednecked-up and weren't going to say anything. So I left."

That's Tim McGraw for you: concerned citizen, loving father, sensitive husband ... and like the rest of us, powerless to prevent tragedy. Even the loftiest of stars are occasionally jerked down to earth.

McGraw is the first to concede his mortality.

"We're reminded of it every time we pull into the gates of our home," he says, speaking on behalf of his wife, who happens to be country music's hottest female star. "Once we're there, we're mommy and daddy. That's pretty much it."

But outside those gates and in the public eye, they're Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, superstars. Though Hill has gained greater recognition over the past couple years in crossover circles, McGraw has certainly kept pace in the country arena. Since he recovered from the false step of his self-titled debut album, which yielded *no* hits, and vaulted into the Top 10 with his 1994

smash "Indian Outlaw," from the aptly titled *Not A Moment Too Soon*, his musical instincts have been impeccable.

All 20 singles he has released in the interim between that album and *Set This Circus Down* have been Top 10 hits, 12 of them hitting the top spot. He has sold 17 million albums, and extended his Midas touch to others as a co-producer of Jo Dee Messina (although the jury on his other act, The Clark Family Experience, is still out).

Add the McGraw awards roster – he's been named CMA Male Vocalist twice, and captured his first Grammy in February with Hill for Best Country Vocal Collaboration on their hit duet, "Let's Make Love" – and cumulative concert grosses that have added up to \$80-million-plus over the years, and you'll find that his stardom is untouchable.

But not infallible. In McGraw's own words again: "God's always going to knock you upside the head."

On June 3, 2000, as he was nearing the close of a three-year run on the enormously successful George Strait Country Music Festival concert series, he was tagged with felony assault charges while coming to the rescue of tourmate Kenny Chesney. Yes, it was the infamous police horse incident – but Chesney and McGraw may have the last laugh. They're touring together this summer, playing in no small part off the partner image forged by that particular incident, in what promises to be a hot-ticket item.



McGraw also had at least one health scare: An emergency appendectomy on Dec. 14, 2000, ruined the post-celebration jubilation of the 64-date, \$45-million-grossing *Soul 2 Soul* Tour he had just completed with Hill. (He made a full recovery.)

And relations with his label, Curb Records, turned decidedly frosty when the company released a *Greatest Hits* package in November 2000 against his wishes. Although the album spent nine weeks at No. 1 and sold more than two million copies in just four months, McGraw had planned *Set This Circus Down* as his pre-Christmas present to his fans. He hasn't forgiven label chairman Mike Curb for the transgression, and is no longer talking with the label.

"It's tough to deal with people when you're not getting the truth," McGraw says. "And that's probably the nicest thing I can say. When you're under contract to Mike Curb, you're pretty much an indentured servant."

Through a spokesperson, Curb Records declined to respond to McGraw's comments for this story. But the superstar made it clear he is fulfilling his contract.

"We'll do our job," McGraw concedes. "We'll record our records and give 'em to them. Their job is to sell it, and may our paths never cross."

Regardless of whether the relationship is repairable, this much is certain: *Set This Circus Down* will likely be one of the top-selling albums of 2001.

If anything, McGraw's stature dictates it. He has maintained an incredibly consistent presence on country radio, especially during the Shania Twain, Faith Hill and Dixie Chicks years when women dominated the medium. It's an impressive accomplishment



*Shirley
and
Her Doll*

*Doll shown much
smaller than actual size
of 14 1/2" seated height.
Chair included at no
additional charge.*



"I don't really listen to the radio or what everybody else is doing," declares McGraw, "and I don't think about whether there's a trend to follow."

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVEN NEE WUPHIG/GETTY

LIFE UNDER The BIG TOP

especially considering that when you first hear him, McGraw isn't an obvious candidate for superstardom. His talents aren't immediate, they're cumulative. McGraw is far from Music Row's most powerful vocalist. But he makes great use of the intimate quality of his husky, mid-range voice. Instead of dazzling listeners with roof-shaking force, he concentrates on communicating the themes of his songs in a clear, friendly, believable style. He also excels at presenting songs that celebrate the settings, relationships and simple, positive pleasures of life in Middle America.

As a performer, he comes across as a genuine, principled guy with a bit of a mysterious wild streak, whose passion translates into a charismatic presence. At the same time, like Alabama's Randy Owen before him, McGraw also has an everyman appeal, and he can make the basics of life seem exciting and important.

Whether it's a tender ballad like "Don't Take The Girl" or a steamy one like "It's Your Love"; the raucous revelry of "I Like It, I Love It" or "Down On The Farm"; or slices-of-life philosophy with "Where The Green Grass Grows" and "My Next

Thirty Years"; McGraw's music is a tightly crafted, intriguingly infectious projection of his own personality. He's a combination of sensitive father, tender husband, warm lover and good ol' boy, his actions triggered at times by macho swagger and spontaneity.

In short, Tim McGraw knows himself, and enters a studio with supreme confidence.

"I don't go into the studio with anybody else's agenda," he explains. "I don't really listen to what's on the radio or what everybody else is doing, and I don't think about whether there's a trend I need to follow with my music. I just find songs I like and go in the studio and let the songs sort of speak for themselves. I think you can over-think it. I just go in, try to have fun and listen to what the songs tell me."

On *Set This Circus Down*, the songs apparently told McGraw three things: He needed more of a crossover, modern-rock edge; he should address and emphasize his spirituality; and he should imply that a life outside the spotlight someday isn't out of the question.

"You're not doing any good if you're not taking a step forward," McGraw contends. "You've got to be a little different than the last record, yet still be yourself. Every artist has to evolve. I'm

learning as I go, and I don't think I've gotten as good as I can get."

Considering his last two studio projects, 1999's *A Place In The Sun* and 1997's *Everywhere*, were each crowned CMA Album of the Year, *Set This Circus Down* has some pretty big shoes to fill. His continued momentum suggested a stylistic adjustment might be in order, and McGraw publicly hinted that he would follow his wife toward a more uptown sound when he performed the country-rock flavored "Things Change" on the CMA Awards telecast last October.

As the soulful linchpin of *Set This Circus Down*, the lyrical content of "Things Change" alludes to several musical renegades – Hank Williams, Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings – and talks about the resistance from purists to entertain new ideas. The personal nature of the song was crystal clear: McGraw was addressing the numerous arrows that have been borne by wife Hill and other pop-flavored country acts, shot from the bows of bellyaching obstructionists who don't feel the trend is favorable to the future of modern country.

"I like what the song says," McGraw notes, admitting that criticism of Hill's mainstream expansion "didn't suit me very well."

He feels that those who offer the "traditional versus contemporary" argument are missing the point – that artists should just follow one voice: their own.

"If you want people to be artists, you can't tell them to cut stuff that *you* want them to cut," he elaborates. "You have to let them cut what they want. If you're trying to please others, then you're not being a real artist."

McGraw also feels that those who complain about country artists



“I don't understand why people get in an uproar when they play a country record on a pop station.”



gaining airplay on other radio formats are not only missing the big picture, but a historical perspective.

"I don't understand why people get in an uproar when they play a country record on a pop station," he fumes. "It's not something new. It has happened all throughout country music history. What do you want me to do, call them and tell them not to play my record? That's like telling people not to *buy* your record."

With that in mind, McGraw has pushed his own creative envelope on *Set This Circus Down* with a number of tunes. The song "Angel Boy" employs progressive studio effects found on modern hip-hop and dance albums.

"It's a pretty wild song," he laughs. "But the song lent itself to that."

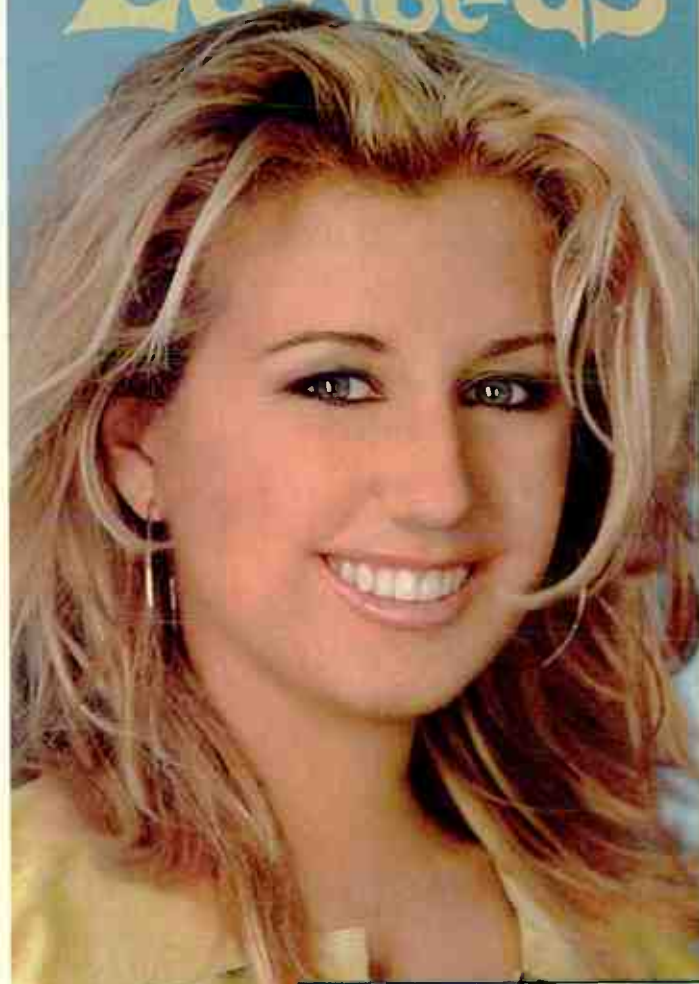
The Latin-flavored "Let Me Love You" also finds McGraw surprisingly cross-referencing Ricky Martin and Carlos Santana, creating a blast of steamy, romantic sensuality that uses the sway of a samba and an electrifying in-your-face electric guitar solo to get the mojo working.

"I've never done anything that Latin before *per se*," McGraw says. "We've had songs that leaned that way a little – 'Senorita Margarita' [from 1999's *A Place In The Sun*] and 'Refried Dreams' [from 1994's *Not A Moment Too Soon*] – but this one's a lot more wired."

McGraw did have the recently rejuvenated Santana in mind when he began including the song in his Soul 2 Soul Tour. "I'm a big Santana fan, 'Samba Pa Ti' is one of my favorite songs," he admits. "I'm a big guitar fan, and my guitarist Darren Smith is a great player. 'Let Me Love You'

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Congratulations to
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sweepstakes winner

has been doing great for us live."

Another new song, Mark Collie's "Forget About Us," was modeled on a different classic-rock star, Bruce Springsteen. It's the story of a man, upset with his girlfriend, who drives down to the river, pulls up to the bank and does some serious reflecting - a popular motif in Springsteen narratives.

"That's who I was thinking about when I cut it," McGraw concedes. "That's the kind of mood I wanted. I'm a big Springsteen fan. Being from Louisiana, that song reminded me of the levees. It could be a guy like me with a primed old Camaro, and he gets up on the levee around Natchez, Mississippi, or Ferriday, Louisiana, and is just laying on his car."

McGraw hasn't abandoned his country roots, but he is offering a twist or two. A surprising inclusion is his version of Bruce Robison's "Angry All The Time," a song previously recorded by Robison with his wife, Kelly Willis, on harmony.

A husband's painful plea to his embittered wife, it's a powerful, dark-toned lyric about the disintegration of their family. Faith Hill plays the Willis role in the McGraw version.

"It's one of the best-written songs I've ever heard," McGraw says. "We did it live on tour, with just me playing the acoustic guitar and Faith singing it with me. It was one of our favorite moments in the whole show."

He figures that people will be surprised that the royal couple of county music tackles a downer song about Splitsville.

"You know, we thought about the fact that it's not a happy love song," McGraw chuckles. "But I think we were at the point where people would be saying, 'Oh no, not another love song from those guys.' We certainly don't have to sing about our own situation all the time. We still want to do love songs. But it's all right to do something different. We just didn't want this song to go unnoticed."

Not everything under the big top of *Set This Circus Down* breaks new ground. On several songs, McGraw finds solace in quiet, philosophical tunes about men confronting their feelings and their weaknesses. Songs like the first single, "Grown Men Don't Cry," and the

LIFE UNDER The BIG TOP

album-opening "Cowboy In Me" are mature, reflective stories about real-life men confronting turning points in their lives.

"It's hard to imagine a 16-year-old singing that kind of song," McGraw comments wryly. "A lot of these are very reflective of my life and my experience."

Indeed, the title song is perhaps the strongest statement of purpose on the album. "Set This Circus Down" portrays a rocking musician living it up on the road but dreaming of the day when he will leave the hustle of show business and settle down "in a sleepy little town" with his wife and family.

"I absolutely see myself doing that down the road," McGraw suggests. "Once the kids start school, we're definitely going to be winding off the road and at least be home during the school year."

He pauses, taking a deep breath, and continues in a gentle tone.

"Someday I want to coach football or something. You know, I was somebody before I started making music, and I'll be somebody afterward."

He then recalls an inspiring conversation he had with comedian Jeff Foxworthy. "We were talking about money, retiring and being successful," McGraw recalls. "Jeff

said, 'Fifteen years from now I want somebody to come up to me and say, 'Didn't you used to ... ?' 'Yeah, yeah, I used to.' I feel the same way. That's where I want to be."

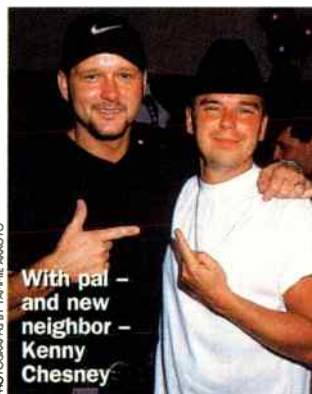
But things can change. Tim McGraw reassures that any talk of retirement is still a ways down the road. In fact, he's about to disprove it with a summer tour that will include his Buffalo cellmate and longtime pal Kenny Chesney. Not that McGraw hasn't been spending time with Chesney off the road as well.

"He just moved in down the road from us," McGraw says. "I can hit his house with a baseball."

Is that why he's out driving around scouring new property?

McGraw laughs long and hard at that suggestion.

"Kenny's moving in! We'd better move!" he howls. "And I hear he wants horses!"*



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TAMIIE AMBRO

With pal -
and new
neighbor -
Kenny
Chesney

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The new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is much more than a series of artifacts and exhibits, it's an *experience*. "This is a completely new vision of how to communicate what country music means and has always meant to our culture," declares Hall of Fame director Kyle Young. "And we expect the experience to have an emotional impact on our visitors."

Produced by Robert K. Oermann

Your visit to the Hall begins when you step through the doors and into the massive 11,000-square-foot Conservatory, its glass ceiling more than 50 feet above your head. Then you pass by an interior pool of water – a wishing well symbolizing creative energy – and head toward a collage of posters from the Hall of Fame's Hatch Show Print to purchase your ticket and begin your tour.

When you walk into the barnwood-lined elevator, you're welcomed by the voice of Reba McEntire and taken to the third floor. As the doors open, you see a vast, dimly lit main gallery designed to resemble a backstage area, with hardwood floors and curtain pulleys and ropes visible in the near darkness. In the gallery, every exhibit appears to float in its own



Hall of Fame director Kyle Young unvels a scale model of the new museum to "oohs" and "ahhs" from entertainers (left to right) Trisha Yearwood, Reba McEntire, Loretta Lynn and The Wilkinsons' Amanda Wilkinson.

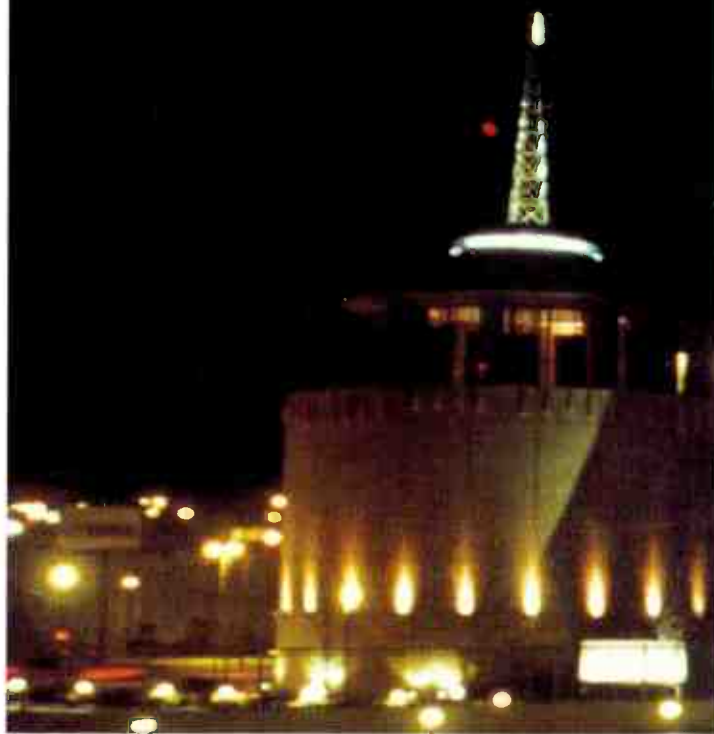
pool of light as you journey through time.

"We wanted artifacts to tell the story," explains deputy director Diana Johnson. "When the staff brought in their suggestions, our rule was that each artifact had to have two stories – one personal, about the star it belonged to, and one about the evolution of the music."

As you begin, you are enveloped by the blues, gospel and folk sounds that formed country's foundation in the 1920s. And even better – visitors who are enthralled with the classic country music that they hear in the museum will have the opportunity to take some of those sounds home.

"When you buy your ticket, there will be a UPC code along the base," notes Young. "At a custom CD station, you can insert

FORWARD



your ticket in a slot, 'order' from a selection of songs you've heard in the museum, and have a custom-made CD waiting for you at the end of your visit."

Among the exhibits on the third floor is The Carter Family's priceless autoharp, seen so often in photographs of Sara Carter. Various artifacts tell the story of country's emergence on disc, on radio and in singing-cowboy movies.

As visitors hear music they like on their tour, they can 'order' it by using the UPC code on their ticket and then have a custom CD made as a souvenir.

As you move from listening booth to exhibit case to video display, a series of giant movie screens goes up and down beside you, where clips feature contemporary stars discussing influences and traditions.

"There are over 100 'media points,' as I call them," says Johnson. "Music, film, video and computer interactions with the visitors. So it's a blend of the personal *and* the high-tech."

INTO THE PAST

The new Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum



The screens move in front of the glass-walled center of the building, which houses the library and archives. Looking through the glass, you can watch the museum's curators, audio restoration technicians and "nerve-center" programmers working with the museum's audio-visual components. "It's kind of like an aquarium," says Johnson, "and we're the fish." The museum again picks up its historical narrative as country music moves through the 1940s and World War II. Rhinestone Nudie suits, Hollywood movie posters, Hank Williams' outfit and a famous



The dazzling new 213-seat Ford Theater is a cornerstone of the new Hall of Fame facility.

Wurlitzer "bubbling" jukebox take turns in the spotlight.

As you move into the 1950s and 1960s, Elvis Presley's sweater and gold piano share the spotlight with Patsy Cline artifacts. Turning to your right, you walk between the customized cars that carried Elvis and Webb Pierce in their heydays, parked like lions at the gate heralding the next gallery's entrance.

Here, the museum looks at the importance of "image" in the development of country music. There's a 75-seat theater with a film called *Changing Channels* in which Glen Campbell provides narration for vintage clips of country musicians on TV. Near the theater are 10 touch-screen interactive computer stations.

As you leave the room, you are faced with a colossal wall of gold and platinum records, including every country album that ever sold over half a million copies in the 20th century.

Descending to the second level, you walk into an area resembling a huge recording studio with tiled floors and acoustic panels. The actual office from famed producer Owen Bradley's studio is meticulously reconstructed on your right. Throughout this gallery space, the museum salutes Texas music in a special exhibit. Nearby, live demonstrators and footprint patterns on the floor teach basic country dance steps.

Next, another theater spotlights a live songwriters' show-

Budgeted at \$37 million, the new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's 40,000 square feet of exhibit space more than doubles the size of the old building. "We have a story to tell, and the great thing is that now we have the space to tell it," says Hall of Fame director Kyle Young. "But we have almost a million objects, so there's no way we can display them all."

The original Country Music Hall of Fame opened on Music Row in 1967 and has been visited by more than 10 million people. Singers who got their starts as employees of the Hall of Fame include Kathy Mattea, Doug Green of Riders in the Sky, Trisha Yearwood and Larry Stewart of Restless Heart.

Ford Motor Company is a founding partner of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. As a testament to that commitment, the state-of-the-art Ford Theater is a highly regarded performance venue that will feature a variety of original programming and live performances. It also showcases the feature film *This Moment In Country Music*.

The first commercial recording of a country artist is considered to be Eck Robertson's "Arkansas Traveler"/"Sallie Gooden" in 1922. Country's first "hit" was "The Little Old Log Cabin In The Lane" by Fiddlin' John Carson in 1923. The format's first million-seller was Vernon Dalhart's "The Prisoner's Song" in 1924.

Country's first two national stars were discovered in the same week in Bristol, Tenn., in the summer of 1927 – that's when Jimmie Rodgers and The Carter Family both waxed their debut discs.

Gene Autry made more than 90 films, sold more than 60 million records, recorded more than 635 selections, wrote more than 200 songs and was the first movie star with his own TV series. His wealth soared to a reported \$450 million.

Hall of Famer George Jones has posted 162 songs on the country charts. Below him on the list are Eddy Arnold with 146, Johnny Cash with 136, Willie Nelson with 114, Ray Price with 109, Dolly Parton's 105, and Merle Haggard's 104. The only pop star with more than 100 charted titles is Elvis Presley, and he's also a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.



Plaques of Hall of Famers are now displayed in a symbolic unbroken circle.

case, where Nashville composers demonstrate their craft. Around the theater six more touch-screen interactive stations invite you to "interview" Dolly Parton, Harlan Howard and other top country songwriters. Also displayed are the manuscripts and/or handwritten lyrics of classics like "Jolene," "Detroit City" and "Strawberry Wine."

A demonstration gallery where you can handle musical instruments is next. Then the historical tour resumes with exhibits featuring modern country's impact on the mass market, and the 1970s rise of the Outlaw movement. Southern rock, the neo-traditionalist wave of the '80s, and the country boom of the '90s are all explored as you move along. The guitar used by Garth in his video for "The Dance" is among the modern treasures.



HILLBILLY SHOES: Hank Williams' custom-made boots

In this area, a film takes you inside the life of a country superstar. For openers, it's Tim McGraw – seen on the road with his band and with wife Faith Hill. Footage on five video monitors past the theater offers an ever-changing look at country music today. The gallery concludes with nine interactive screens showing stars talking about their fans.



RICHARD CONNORS

'CIRCLE' CHORDS: The autoharp played by Sara Carter

Next a passageway leads you from the museum to the Hall of Fame itself. This area, entitled "The Road To The Hall of Fame," features TV footage of acceptance speeches, Hall of Fame-related items, and displays spotlighting the newest inductees.

Your journey comes to a close inside the Hall of Fame's impressive rotunda, where plaques are arranged in a symbolic unbroken circle around the walls so that no one is first or last. It's a calm, reverential space with a magnificent Thomas Hart Benton mural at one end. Water bubbles out of the stone wall into a cistern, then flows dramatically down a flume along the staircase leading you back down to the Conservatory floor, finally tumbling down a six-foot waterfall into the wishing well.

Still hungry for more? Well, there's also a satellite radio station broadcasting country classics and welcoming live visits from country stars. Then of course there's the museum store, featuring an A to Z of country records past and present. The food in the bistro is prepared by a group of top Nashville restaurateurs. And there's no telling who you might hear singing on the plaza outside.



CJ YERKS

ROYAL GOWN: Reba McEntire wore this dress as host of the 1991 CMA Awards.

THE NEW SHRINE

Constructing the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

Visitors to the new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum will be startled by the dramatic curves, impressive beauty and sheer size of the building itself. But the architects of country music's hallowed homeplace set out to create a structure that does more than impress the eye.

"Buildings should tell a story through their symbolism and design," says principal designer Seab Tuck of the Nashville firm Tuck Hinton Architects. "We felt that the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum should reflect the music."

Tuck set a number of goals for the design of the \$37 million, 130,000 square-foot facility. He wanted something instantly identifiable as a hall of fame; he wanted to give visitors a good view of the city's downtown skyline; and he wanted the building to blend with downtown Nashville and with the historic exhibits presented inside.

Before starting the designing work, Tuck educated himself about the culture of country music. For the architect, that meant collecting pictures of farms, railroads, gospel tabernacles, old-time barn dances, musical instruments, costumes and other country-themed visuals. He then went to work to integrate these images into his design.

Tuck decided he should divide the

building into three separate sections: the Hall of Fame, the Conservatory and the Museum.

His first challenge was to design the section of the building that would house the Hall of Fame member plaques. Tuck chose to create a round chamber so that the plaques are presented in a circle, giving them each equal priority.

"It's a place of reverence," he explains. "That's why the light enters from above."

Stone bars on the outside wall of the Hall of Fame rotunda represent the musical notes of the Carter Family's classic country standard, "Will The Circle Be Unbroken." Inside, the lyrics of the song are quoted in a single line that runs above the plaques. The bronze Hall of Fame plaques themselves are arranged in five-line grids to resemble musical staves.

The roof over the Hall of Fame rotunda is layered in four tiers, each configured to represent comparative sizes of recording technology: the vinyl LP, the 78 rpm platter, the 45 rpm single and the compact disc. Steel beams pierce the tiers in the distinctive shape of the WSM-AM 650 radio broadcasting tower to create a country music "steeple."

"We wanted the building to express the movement and rhythm of music," explains Tuck.

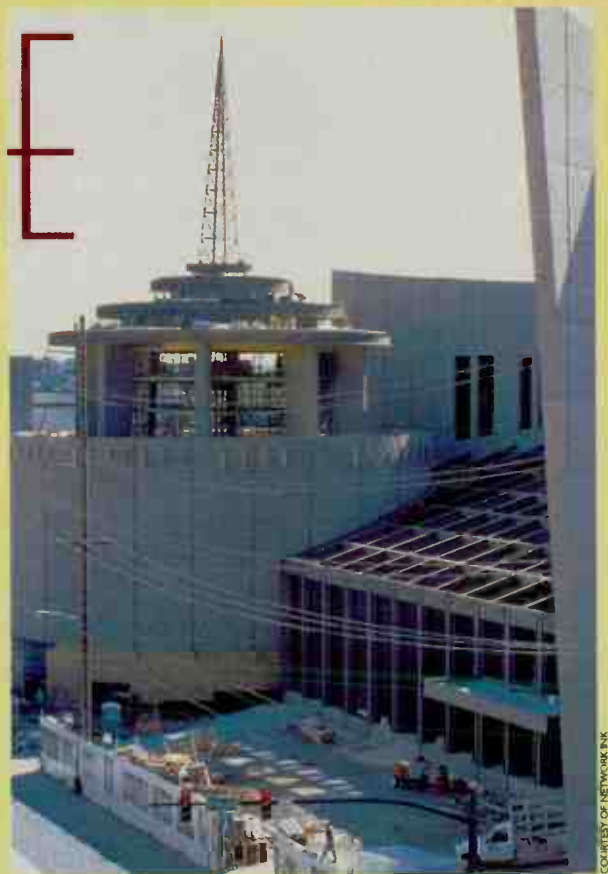
The second major section is the magnificent Conservatory, the main entrance of the building. A wondrous, open plaza of angled glass, steel girders and East Tennessee Crab Orchard stone, the spacious Conservatory offers natural light that illuminates a

floor consisting of blocks of lacquered Mississippi yellow pine. The ambience is completed by a stream of water cascading alongside a staircase and emptying into a pool, representing the flow of creativity.

"This is the 'front porch' of the building," says Tuck. "The large wall embraces the Nashville skyline and ends like a car's tail fin. The exterior windows above the Conservatory are arranged to replicate a piano keyboard. We've also incorporated design elements that suggest the front of a giant general store." Viewed from the air, the circular Hall of Fame, combined with the lines of the Conservatory and the building's facade, suggest a giant bass clef.

The spectacular Ford Theater, the cornerstone of the Hall of Fame's main floor, is a state-of-the-art, acoustically perfect facility designed for film screenings, live performances and television broadcasts. It was designed by the same acoustics firm that previously worked with such other landmark performance venues as the Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.

By creating such an artful structure, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum stands as a breathtaking monument to American music's past and present.



COURTESY OF NETWORK, INC.



Vince Gill and Amy Grant (right) take a hard-hat tour of the museum-in-progress along with retired Gaylord Entertainment CEO - and Hall of Fame member - E.W. "Bud" Wendell (left), Wendell's wife, Janice, and Hall of Fame director Kyle Young.

FORD

Few products, musical or otherwise, have been associated with country music as long or as intensely as those of the Ford Motor Company.

Fans whose memories reach back only as far as Alan Jackson's popular "Ford Country" ad campaign of several years ago may not realize the full extent of the company's history with the art form. It is a legacy which now culminates in Ford's \$4 million donation to the new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and the christening of the dazzling new 213-seat Ford Theater.

The advent and continuation of country music as a commercial entertainment industry over the past century is directly linked to the accessibility of affordable and reliable commercial vehicles – specifically, Fords. The company's automotive products made it possible for musicians and performers to bring their music out of Tennessee, Alabama, the Carolinas, Georgia and Kentucky to the radio stations, barn dances and recording studios of the greater South, Southwest and Midwest. In effect, Ford vehicles took country music from the hills and hollows and drove it into the hearts of Americans nationwide. The story begins with Henry Ford himself, who became fascinated with "old-time" music when he attended country dances in the 1880s. He even met his wife, Clara Bryant, at such an event.

The later success of Ford's innovative, assembly-line-produced Model Ts gave him the chance to become a valuable booster for country music. He ran stories about fiddle music in his weekly *Dearborn Independent* magazine, staged fiddling contests at Ford dealerships, launched a radio show to promote the country sound and even formed his own record label to distribute square-dance music. The result was a nationwide fiddling craze.

Mellie Dunham of Maine was the winner of Ford's first national fiddling con-



Henry Ford, founder of the automotive empire, loved old-time, traditional music and once launched a national talent search to crown the "King of the Fiddlers."

COUNTRY

test and promptly issued a challenge to Nashville's famed Uncle Jimmy Thompson. Though Thompson lost a preliminary competition in Louisville, Ky., and never made it to Detroit to challenge Dunham, he remained a loyal Ford driver. The pioneering *Grand Ole Opry* star's Model T, outfitted with a home-made camper, was probably country's first tour bus.

Of course, Uncle Jimmy wasn't the last country artist who relied on a Ford to travel the nation – in Georgia, Fiddlin' John Carson and his daughter, Moonshine Kate, traveled in a Ford "Flivver." Country musician Riley Puckett finally earned enough money as a performer to purchase a brand new Model T in 1925. (Puckett's car was later totalled when it collided with a street car, but Puckett – who wasn't driving, because he was blind – and the other occupants were not injured.) And it was a Ford that carried The Carter Family to Bristol, Tenn., in the summer of 1927 for one of country's most legendary early recording sessions. Jimmie Rodgers posed happily next to his Ford Roadster on several occasions. In the 1940s, Roy Acuff traveled in a customized stretch Ford touring car. One of Brenda Lee's birthday presents when she turned 18 was a white Thunderbird, given by her record label.

John Conlee became a pitchman for the auto maker in the 1970s, singing *Gonna hit the ground runnin' in my new Ford truck*. Merle Haggard chose a vintage Model A to illustrate the jacket of his 1975 album *Keep Movin' On*, and Jerry Reed scored a major hit in 1973 with "Lord, Mr. Ford." Conway Twitty posed with a lime-green '56 T-Bird on the cover of his album, *Mr. T* in 1981. Six years later, Nanci Griffith sang of a woman taking to the highway in her "Ford Econoline." And that's a Ford pickup behind Patty Loveless on the cover of her 1988 album, *If My Heart Had Windows*. In recent years, George

Jones posed with a Mercury Grand Marquis on the cover of his 1994 album *High Tech Redneck*. In 1993, Alan Jackson's smash hit "Mercury Blues" praised one Ford product, while the ad jingle adapted from it – "Crazy 'Bout a Ford Truck" – praised another.

In 1998, Jo Dee Messina was trumpeting the virtues of a "Silver Thunderbird." Newcomer Carolyn Dawn Johnson's recent video for "Georgia" features a Ford Falcon.

The Ford automotive empire touched country music in other ways, too. Ford also manufactured affordable Philco radios (and later, televisions), upon which

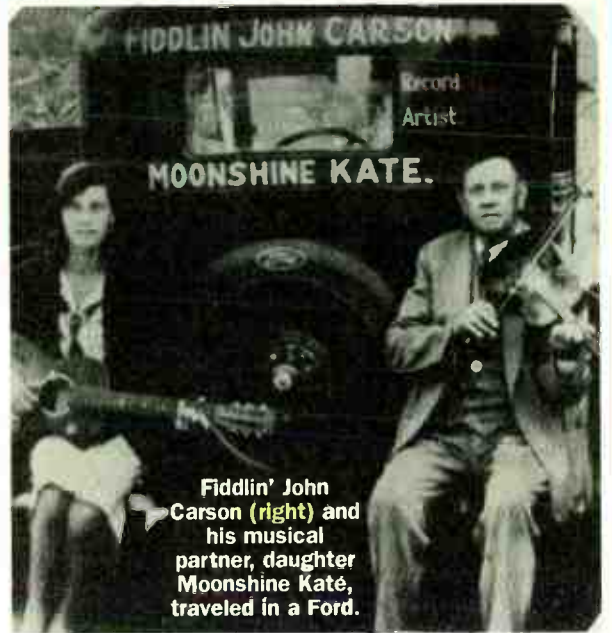
Few products have been associated with country music as long or as intensely as those of the Ford Motor Company.

countless Americans were exposed to country music on a regular basis through broadcasts of the *Opry* and the *Louisiana Hayride*.

Henry Ford helped shape the landscape of country music and steer its course in a multitude of ways, and his commitment continues today in the automotive company's partnership with the new Country Music Hall of Fame.



Numerous stars, including Merle Haggard, George Jones and Patty Loveless, have posed with Fords on album covers throughout the years.



Fiddlin' John Carson (right) and his musical partner, daughter Moonshine Kate, traveled in a Ford.

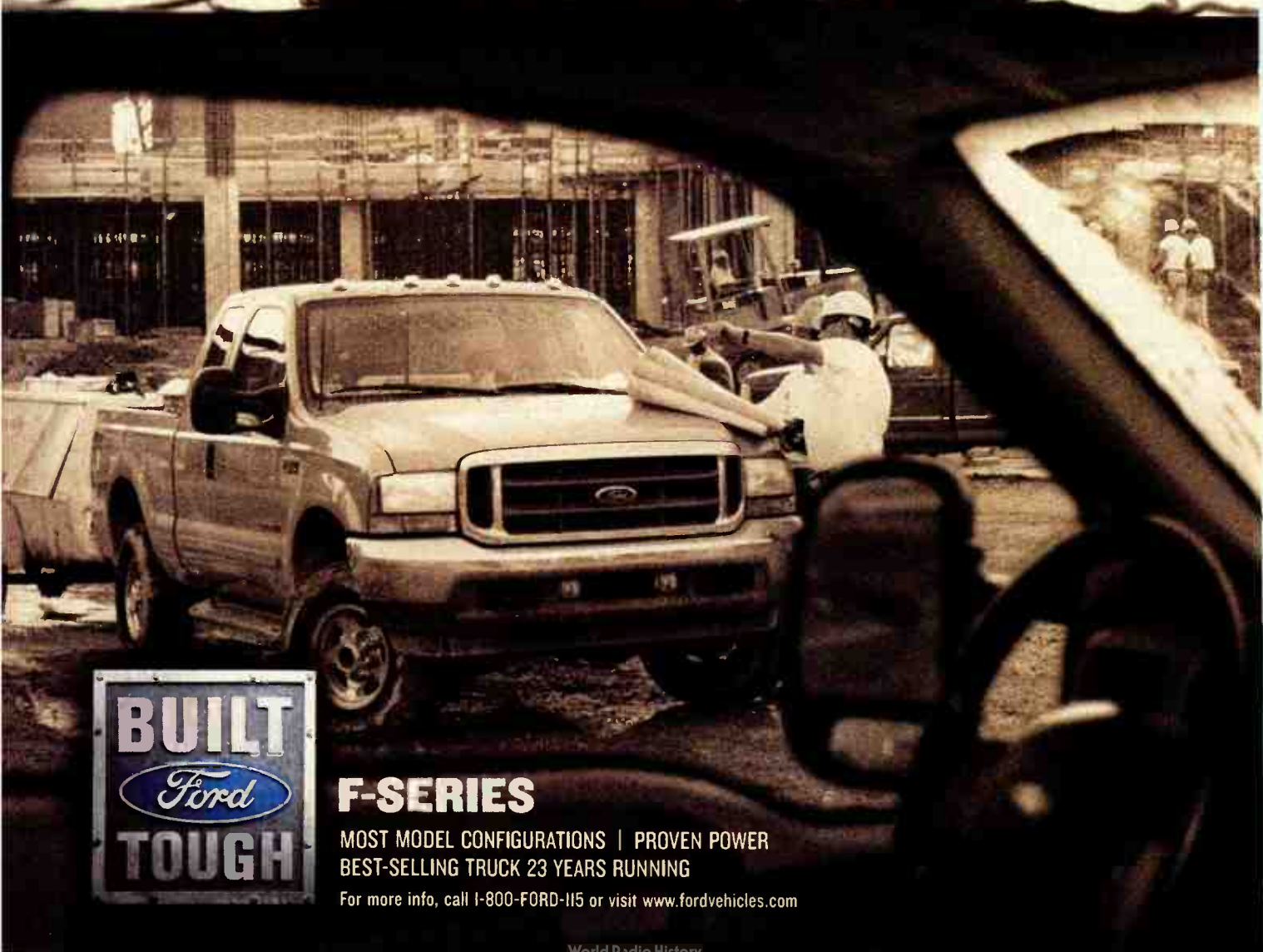
Through the company's active role with the Ford Theater, visitors to the Hall of Fame will see original programming celebrating the diversity of country music, watch aspiring artists step into the spotlight and experience other special events.

Ford's relationship to the new Hall is literally etched in stone – there's a trademark Ford oval carved into the side of the building. Ford also has a permanent seat on the Hall of Fame's Board of Directors.

"We're very excited about our new relationship with the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum," says Ford Division Truck/SUV Group Marketing Manager Al Giombetti. "We are making what we consider to be a major investment in the future of country music, and Ford is delighted to play a role in preserving the legacy of country music for generations to come."

Henry Ford died in 1947, but his company keeps his flame of faith alive in country music – and now burning brightly at the new Hall of Fame.

THEY SAY OTHER TRUCKS EXIST. BUT I BELIEVE



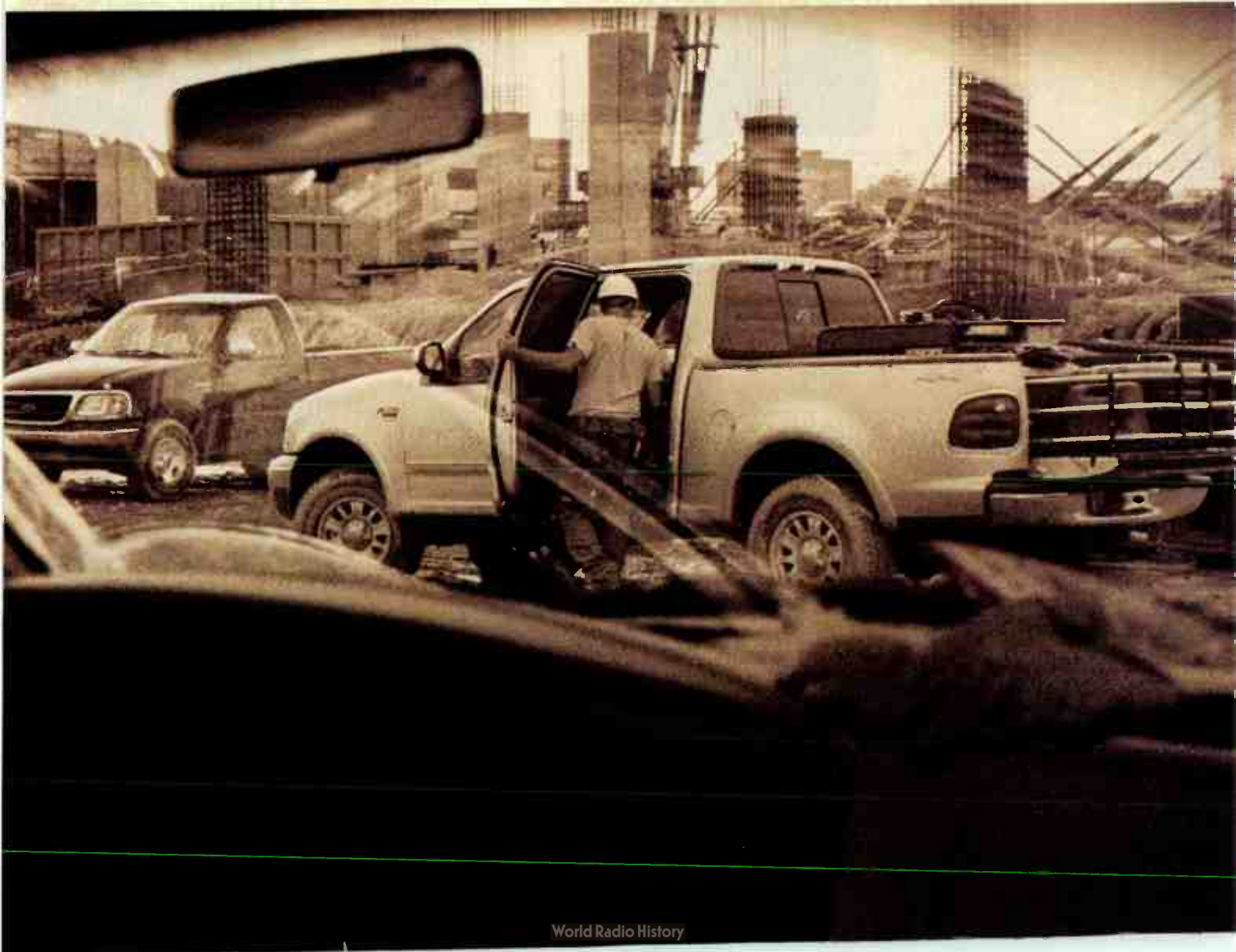
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I'M SERIOUS.
NEXT TIME YOU DRIVE BY A
"MEN AT WORK" SIGN,
STOP AND COUNT HOW MANY
SHINY BLUE OVALS YOU SEE.
YOU'LL FIND 'EM ON EVERYTHING
FROM F-150s TO 750s. TWO-DOORS
AND FOUR-DOORS. SUPERCREW
TO SUPER DUTY. LIKE THEY SAY,
SEEING IS BELIEVING.





FIELDS OF GLORY

The honored men and women of the hallowed hall

Meet the individuals who make up a most prestigious group – members of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

PERFORMERS

1 9 6 1

▲ Jimmie Rodgers
Hank Williams ▶

1 9 6 2

Roy Acuff

1 9 6 4

Tex Ritter

1 9 6 5

Ernest Tubb



1 9 6 6

Eddy Arnold
Uncle Dave Macon

1 9 6 7

Red Foley • Jim Reeves

1 9 6 8

Bob Wills

1 9 6 9

Gene Autry

1 9 7 0

Bill Monroe ▶



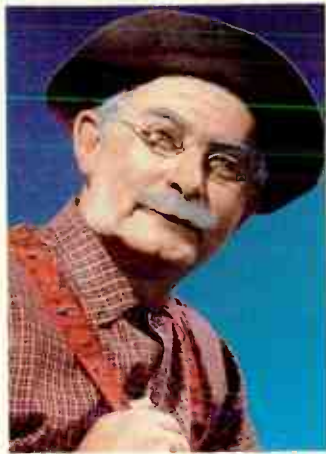
TRIVIA TIME

Test your Hall of Fame knowledge

- Who is the only person inducted *twice*?
- Who was the first living inductee?
- Who was the youngest at the time of induction?
- Two members of the Hall of Fame can take credit for inventing a musical style. Who are they?
- What six members of the Country Music Hall of Fame are also members of the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame. (And who is the only *living* member of both?)
- Who died less than two months after his Hall of Fame induction?
- Who is the shortest member of the Country Music Hall of Fame?
- What three members of the Hall of Fame were not born in the United States?
- How many Hall of Fame members were in the founding cast of the *Grand Ole Opry*?
- Who accepted her Hall of Fame induction by reciting a special poem, composed just for the occasion, on the televised CMA Awards?

BONUS QUESTION:

How does one become a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame?



- 1 9 7 6**
Kitty Wells
- 1 9 7 7**
Merle Travis
- 1 9 7 8**
◀ Grandpa Jones
- 1 9 7 9**
Hank Snow
- 1 9 8 0**
The Sons Of
The Pioneers



- 1 9 8 5**
Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs
- 1 9 8 6**
Whitey Ford,
The Duke Of Paducah
- 1 9 8 7**
Rod Brasfield
- 1 9 8 8**
◀ Roy Rogers
Loretta Lynn
- 1 9 8 9**
Hank Thompson

1 9 7 0
The Carter Family

1 9 7 2
Jimmie Davis

1 9 7 3
Chet Atkins
Patsy Cline

1 9 7 4
Frank "Pee Wee" King

1 9 7 5
Minnie Pearl ▶



1 9 8 0
Johnny Cash ▶

1 9 8 1
Vernon Dalhart

1 9 8 2
Lefty Frizzell
Marty Robbins

1 9 8 3
Little Jimmy Dickens

1 9 8 4
Floyd Tillman



ANSWERS

1. Roy Rogers In 1980 as a member of the Sons Of The Pioneers, and again in 1988 as a solo artist
2. Roy Acuff, in 1962
3. Eddy Arnold, who was 48 years old in 1966
4. Bill Monroe, the Father of Bluegrass music, and Bob Wills, the King of Western Swing
5. Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Bill Monroe, Elvis Presley, Bob Wills and Johnny Cash – the last named is the only living member of both Halls
6. Marty Robbins was inducted on October 11, 1982, and felled by a heart attack on Dec. 8, 1982.
7. Brenda Lee is four-feet, nine-inches tall. (Jimmy Dickens is two inches taller. And at five-feet-seven, "Pee Wee" King towered over both of them.)
8. Producer Art Satherley was born in England. Bob Nolan of the Sons Of The Pioneers and Hank Snow are Canadians
9. Two – Uncle Dave Macon and announcer George D. Hay
10. Songwriter Cindy Walker in 1997

BONUS QUESTION ANSWER:

The Country Music Hall of Fame was established in 1961. Inductees are selected annually by an anonymous panel of 200 electors, each of whom has been an active participant in the music business for at least 15 years and has made a major contribution to the industry. The Hall of Fame election is conducted by the Country Music Association. The museum housing the Hall of Fame is maintained by a different organization, the Country Music Foundation (CMF).



1990
Tennessee Ernie Ford

1992
George Jones

1993
Willie Nelson

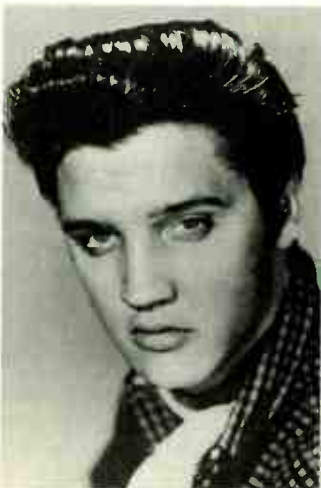
1994
Merle Haggard

1995
Roger Miller

1996
Patsy Montana
Buck Owens
Ray Price

1997
Brenda Lee

1998
George Morgan
Tammy Wynette
Elvis Presley ▼



1999
Johnny Bond
Dolly Parton ▶
Conway Twitty

◀ **2000**
Charley Pride
Faron Young

BUSINESS FIGURES

1966
James R. Denny
Cedarwood Music
publisher,
Grand Ole Opry
executive

▼ **1966**
George D. Hay
Grand Ole Opry
founder, announcer



1967
J.L. Frank
manager, concert
promoter, talent agent

1967
Stephen H. Sholes
RCA Records executive

1971
Arthur Edward Satherley
pioneering talent scout,
Columbia Records executive

1974
Owen Bradley ▶
Decca Records producer



1976
Paul Cohen
Decca Records executive

1979
Hubert Long
talent agent, concert
promoter, song publisher

1980
Connie B. Gay
pioneering country TV
producer, CMA founding
president

1981
Grant Turner
Grand Ole Opry announcer

1982
Roy Horton
Peer Southern Music
publisher

1984
Ralph S. Peer
talent scout, record producer,
song publisher, manager



1986
Wesley H. Rose
Acuff-Rose Music publisher

1989
Cliffie Stone
Capitol Records executive,
publisher, TV producer

1989
Jack Stapp
radio executive, Tree
International song publisher

1992
Frances Preston
BMI president and CEO

1995
Jo Walker-Meador
CMA executive director



1998
E.W. "Bud" Wendell ▲
Opryland, WSM
and *Grand Ole Opry*
executive

SONGWRITERS

1961
Fred Rose

1991
Felice &
Boudleaux Bryant

1997
Cindy Walker
Harlan Howard

ALL THE GOLD IN NASHVILLE

One of the most awesome sights in the new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is a two-story display containing *each and every* gold and platinum-selling country album of the 20th century.

More than 800 gold and platinum discs line both sides of the wall dividing the third-floor exhibit area and the spiral staircase suspended above the gift shop. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) awards gold records for sales of over 500,000 copies, while platinum earners have sold more than a million. The Hall of Fame's display of certifications includes a number of interactive panels – touch them and they play music. Among the 12 audible million sellers are clips from landmark recordings like Kenny Rogers' *The Gambler*, George Strait's *Strait Out Of The Box* and *Now That I've Found You* by Alison Krauss. Here are just a few of the hundreds of records that made country-music history in the 20th century.

The first country gold record award went to Tennessee Ernie Ford in 1959 for his album *Hymns*. It is also the first gospel album to strike gold.

The first platinum record in country music was awarded to the compilation *Wanted: The Outlaws*, featuring Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Jessi Colter and Tompall Glaser. It was certified platinum on November 24, 1976.

Bobbie Gentry's *Ode To Billie Joe* was the first gold country album by a female, certified on Oct. 9, 1967.

More than 800 gold and platinum discs line both sides of the wall.

Tammy Wynette's greatest hits package is generally credited as country's first gold-record best-of collection by a woman, certified on April 16, 1970, three days after Loretta Lynn's *Don't Come Home a Drinkin'*. With nine million in sales, *Patsy Cline's Greatest Hits* is one of the biggest-selling hits collections by a woman in *any* field of music.

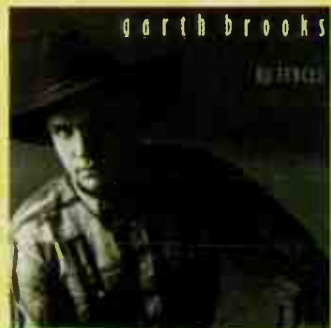
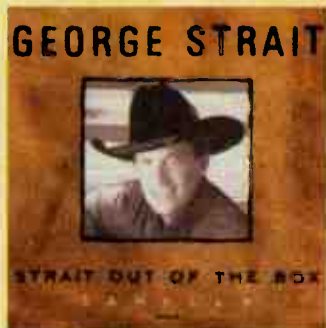
At the close of the century in 1999, two discs were tied for the biggest-selling country album of all time – *No Fences* by Garth Brooks (1990) and *Come On Over* by Shania Twain (1997), both of which were certified as 16-times platinum. Shania has since edged out Garth by two million albums.

Alabama holds far more gold and platinum albums than any other country group, racking up 20 between 1980 and 1999. The first platinum country-themed movie soundtrack was 1980's *Urban Cowboy*. It has since been joined by *Pure Country* (1992), *Honeymoon In Vegas* (1992), *8 Seconds* (1994) and *Hope Floats* (1998).

Johnny Cash scored a trio of honors in 1986 when three separate albums were certified platinum on Nov. 21 – *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison* (1968), *Johnny Cash's Greatest Hits* (1969) and *Johnny Cash At San Quentin* (1969).



Tennessee Ernie Ford, the *Urban Cowboy* soundtrack and Alison Krauss (above) are all represented on the Hall of Fame's wall of precious metal, along with (left) George Strait, 1976's groundbreaking *Outlaws*, Garth Brooks and Patsy Cline.



CONSIDERING HOW MANY MUSICIANS GOT TO NASHVILLE IN **FORD TRUCKS,** IT WAS HIGH TIME WE HELPED BUILD THEM A NICE PLACE **TO STAY.**



The Carter Family borrowed a Ford to get to their first recording session. Fiddlin' John Carson hit the road in a 1913 Ford. To play shows across Tennessee, Uncle Jimmy Thompson outfitted his Model "T" truck as a camper.

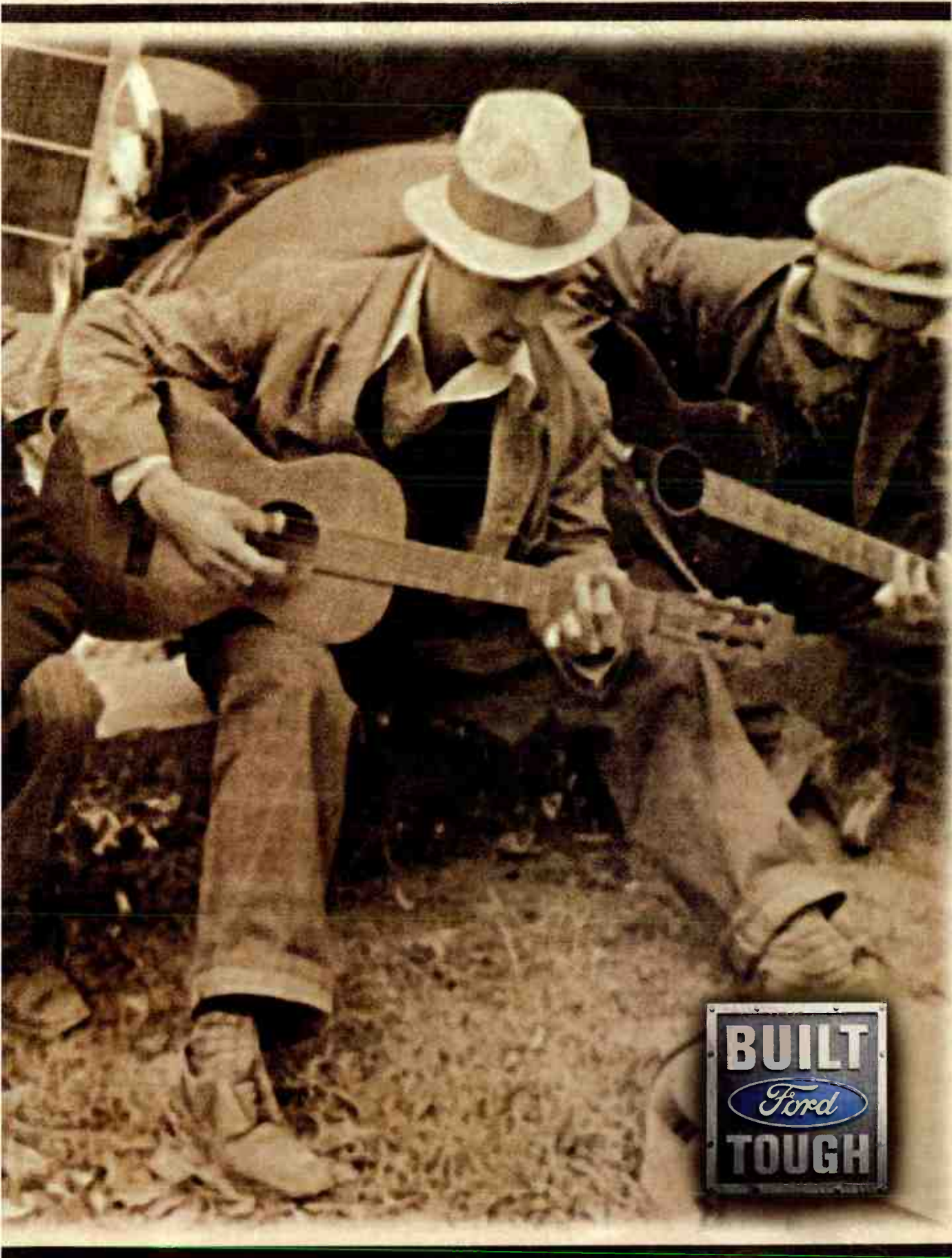
So it's only natural that when the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum opens its doors, Ford trucks will be there. As you can see, our role as Founding Partner is the logical next step in a relationship between Ford and Country

artists that stretches back almost nine decades, to the very roots of the music.

Our special contribution is Ford Theater, a state-of-the-art showcase for solo and small-group music and dance performances as well as the high-definition digital documentary "This Moment In Country."

Ford is part of Country Music's past. The Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum makes us a part of its future, too.





BUILT
Ford
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and New Year's Day)

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Memorial Day through Labor Day

Museum store open
11 a.m. - 7 p.m. daily

ADMISSION

\$14.95 adults/\$7.95 children
Children under 6 free
Group rates available for tours of
15 or more

LEVEL 3

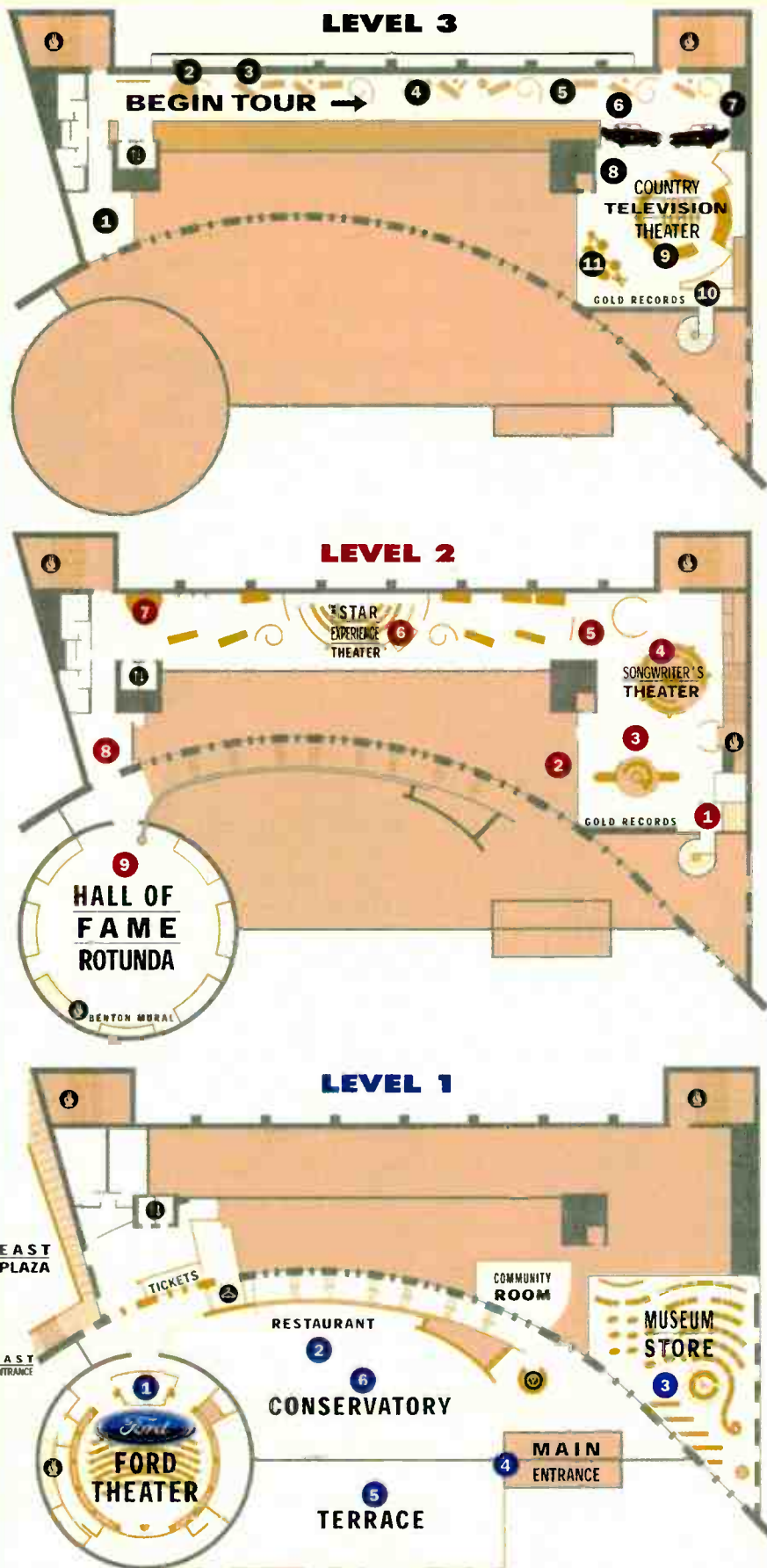
- 1 BENTON GALLERY
- 2 THE ROOTS OF COUNTRY
- 3 TURN YOUR RADIO ON
Country Music Leaves Home
- 4 HILLBILLY FEVER
The War Years and Beyond
- 5 ALL SHOOK UP
Country After Elvis
- 6 Webb Pierce's Convertible
- 7 Elvis Presley's Gold Cadillac
- 8 ACT NATURALLY
Crafting the Country Image
- 9 COUNTRY TELEVISION THEATER
- 10 WALL OF GOLD RECORDS
- 11 INTERACTIVE COMPUTER ARCADE

LEVEL 2

- 1 WALL OF GOLD RECORDS
- 2 NASHVILLE SALUTES TEXAS!
Country from the Lone Star State
- 3 THE TWO STEP IS THE FIRST STEP
Learn Country Dancing
- 4 DEEP WITHIN MY HEART LIES A
MELODY The Songwriter's Craft
- 5 ARE YOU SURE HANK DONE IT THIS
WAY? Outlaws, Arenas and the
Age of Celebrity
- 6 WELCOME TO MY WORLD
The Life of a Superstar
- 7 HEART TO HEART TALK
Welcome to the Fan Forum
- 8 THE ROAD TO THE HALL OF FAME
- 9 HALL OF FAME

LEVEL 1

- 1 THE FORD THEATER
- 2 RESTAURANT
- 3 MUSEUM STORE
- 4 MAIN ENTRANCE
- 5 TERRACE
- 6 CONSERVATORY



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FEATURES 14 NEW SONGS

INCLUDING "AIN'T NOTHING 'BOUT YOU"
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PERFORMING "AIN'T NOTHING 'BOUT YOU"
ON THE 36TH ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS,
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AVAILABLE NOW
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World Radio History

Max Hutchinson

Song Plugger

Vancouver-born Max Hutchinson got his start signing rock and pop acts to A&M Records Canada. But he soon discovered his true calling was songs rather than artists, and he moved to Nashville a decade ago to help Anne Murray develop a song publishing company. In 1994, he became a song

plugger, representing writers and publishers so that their songs get into the hands of recording artists. In that role, he has successfully pitched hits to Randy Travis, Mark Chesnutt and Doug Supernaw. And if it weren't for Hutchinson, you probably would never have heard of David Kersh.

“**E**very time I see Randy Boudreaux, he thanks me and offers to buy me a drink. Why? Because I made him a lot of money. Randy is a songwriter who co-wrote ‘Goodnight Sweetheart,’ for David Kersh in 1996. Through my efforts as a song plugger, David chose to include that song on his first album. When it jumped into the Top 10,

Randy’s royalty share was in the low six figures. So whenever he sees me, he always says, ‘You keep on pitching songs that say Randy Boudreaux on them!’

“What’s a song plugger? It’s a song broker. I pitch songs from publishers to artists, producers and record labels. It’s a profession unique to song-driven towns like Nashville and Los Angeles, and since I formed Valhalla Music with my partner, Debbie Matthews, last August, we’ve expanded our horizons internationally.

“There’s a lot of grunt work – listening to music, booking appointments, dropping off discs. You have to be both salesman and psychologist. It’s a hit and miss success rate, working very much like a lottery.

You keep showing up, and occasionally you win one.

“When I pitch a song, I’m looking for commitments. It’s great when you can pitch a song directly to an artist and they say, ‘Yes, I’ll cut it,’ but that’s rare. Usually if an artist is interested, they’ll put the song on hold, reserving it for a period of time. A hold has the potential to end up on an album. But it has its draw-

backs: It pulls a song out of circulation for months, sometimes years. If an artist takes it, then that’s great. If a track gets picked as a single and goes to No. 1, it can generate over \$1 million for the writer and publisher. And I get a percentage of that – or a bonus.

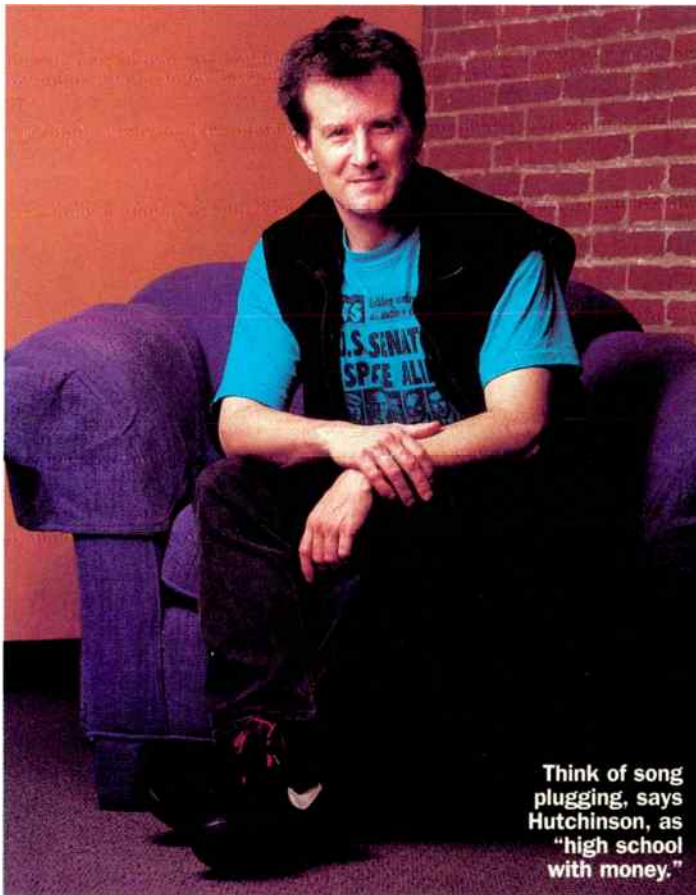
“It’s a small miracle when a song gets cut, because so many factors can knock it out of contention. Maybe the artist just wants to cut his own stuff, or maybe his producer will place one of *his* own songs with the artist. Perhaps someone at the label will push a writer they like. So what I have to do is show up with superior songs.

“Anyone can be a plugger, as long as you have someone who believes in your chutzpah and thinks you have a good ear for songs. There’s no set rule or requirement, and you can be hired either by a major corporation or by an independent songwriter. I love my job because it’s very social – I think of it as high school with money. You never know who you’re going to meet and there’s something appealing

about dealing with an eclectic mix of people.

“I have an upcoming cut, ‘If I Ever Wash Away This Kiss,’ that’s been recorded by a new female trio called 3 Of Hearts on RCA. With any luck, I’ll have a hit on my hands.

“Some people have said songs are timeless, but plugging is timing. I’m keeping my fingers crossed.”



Think of song plugging, says Hutchinson, as “high school with money.”

TRIP CAMPBELL

THE **Journal**

OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC

Charley Pride

Bill Carlisle

Donna Fargo



Conway Twitty

Remembering the masterful
entertainer who was often called
“the best friend a song ever had”

Editor: Robert K. Oermann

IN THIS ISSUE

- J2 Quiz: Who Am I?**
Test your knowledge of a legendary entertainer.
- J3 Classic Stars**
Social snapshots spotlight favorites of yesteryear.
- J4 Cover Story: Reinventing Conway Twitty**
Beloved singer Conway Twitty never rested on his laurels when it came to incorporating change into his career. Robert K. Oermann traces Twitty's evolution and philosophy up to his untimely death in 1993.
- J7 This Date In Country Music**
The house of country has been built musically, brick by brick. Revisit the architects on their anniversaries.
- J8 The Story Behind The Song**
"The Happiest Girl In The Whole U.S.A." was the song that changed school teacher Donna Fargo's life. Aside from winning her a Grammy, it also made her a national superstar. Fargo talks about how she created this breakout song.
- J10 Bill Carlisle**
"Jumpin'" Bill Carlisle has been keeping *Grand Ole Opry* audiences in stitches for nearly 50 years. Now 92, Carlisle has just published his autobiography, *Not Too Old To Cut The Mustard*. Bob Millard catches up with Carlisle as he reminisces about the old days and his brother, Cliff.
- J13 Disc-coveries**
Notable country reissues are newly available, including historic collections by Howard Vokes, Roger Miller, Ricky Skaggs, Steve Wariner, The Carter Family, Gene Autry and Mac Davis.
- J14 Hall Of Fame Spotlight**
Dolly Parton's wigs. Need we say more?
- J16 Collections**
An essential marketplace for buyers, sellers and traders, as well as a forum for readers to share their observations.

WHO AM I?

How much do you know about your country music favorites? Here's your chance to find out. Test your trivia knowledge about one of the greats.

CLUE #1 My hometown is Crisp, Texas.

CLUE #2 I worked on farms, dug ditches, clerked in a drug store and sold beer in my early years.

CLUE #3 Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers gave me my show-biz break.

CLUE #4 I was the first country star to headline at Carnegie Hall in New York.

CLUE #5 My fan club was the role model for virtually every other star's fan club.

CLUE #6 My duet partners included Red Foley, The Andrews Sisters, The Wilburn Brothers, Loretta Lynn and Willie Nelson.

CLUE #7 The radio show I founded is second only to the *Grand Ole Opry* in longevity on Nashville's WSM.

CLUE #8 Jack Greene and Cal Smith played in my band before finding their own solo stardom.

CLUE #9 My name is on country music's most famous record store.

CLUE #10 I paved my way to the Hall of Fame with such country classics as "Blue Christmas," "Walking The Floor Over You" and "Waltz Across Texas."

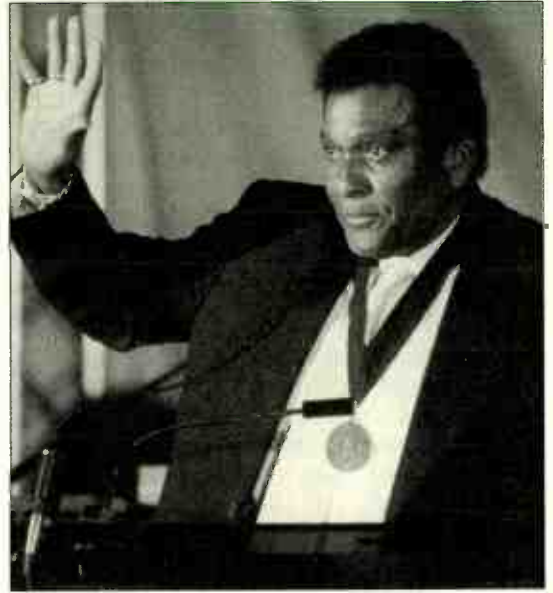
★ Answer on page J16





PROUD PRIDE

The Country Music Hall of Fame presented Charley Pride with a medallion commemorating his 2000 induction at a lavish ceremony in Nashville. The event was the first held at the Hall's new downtown location, giving Charley and wife Rozene plenty of reasons to smile. Charley displayed the shining medallion for the evening's guests then visited with friends Brenda Lee, Eddy Arnold and Earl and Louise Scruggs.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY HILL

Reinventing Conway Twitty

BY ROBERT K. OERMANN

As the 1970s drew to a close, one of country's biggest hitmakers shocked both fans and Music Row insiders by turning his back on his successful formula.

Conway Twitty dramatically overhauled his image between his 1978 *Conway* and 1979 *Cross Winds* albums.

First, he left the security of longtime producer Owen Bradley, the man behind all 46 of his country hits. *Cross Winds* became the first album the star produced himself.

The second stage of Twitty's radical transformation was evident on that album's jacket. Gone was his trademark pompadour, which was replaced by a windblown, curly, more modern hairstyle.

Both moves defied the age-old motto, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Why tamper with an established persona that was still doing spectacularly well?

"The time to change is when you're hot, not when things are cooling down," Twitty explained some years later. "I felt like I needed a fresh approach. When things stop changin', they die. Every once in awhile, to recharge myself and rededicate myself, and to stay fresh and new to the fans, I do something a little different. It seems healthy to me. I believe in change. It's the only thing that I know that's constant."

Though this shift seemed extreme at the time, Twitty had reinvented himself at least twice before.

Born Harold Jenkins in 1933, Twitty grew up in Friar's Point, Miss., a tiny town nestled just below the massive levee separating the mighty Mississippi River from the cotton fields of its bottomland. His initial music exposure came from several sources: An old bluesman tutored him on guitar, and he absorbed the Dixieland

sounds coming from the dazzling showboats that would anchor nearby.

But the radio broadcasts of the *Grand Ole Opry* did the most to fire the boy's imagination.

"My first musical heroes were Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold and Red Foley," he recalled. "Then a little later came Carl Smith, Ray Price, Webb Pierce, Faron Young and people like that. I tried to sing just like 'em."

His father ran a ferryboat, and one day

Twitty even sang during his Army tour of duty in the Far East from 1954 – 55, with a service band called The Cimarrons. The repertoire was straight-ahead country, but his first metamorphosis remained just around the corner.

"The first thing I heard when I came back to the United States was Elvis Presley," Twitty recalled. "That was a new kind of music. I actually did try my best to sing like Elvis. Everybody did. I'm just the one who admits it!"

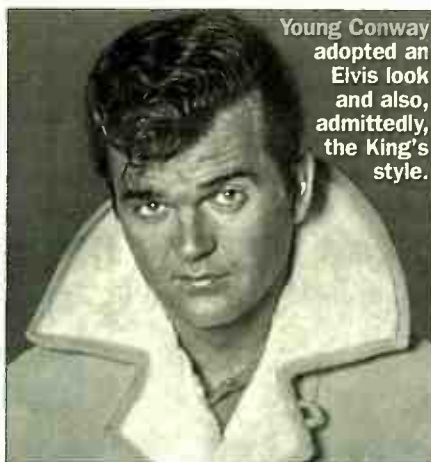
In 1956, he headed to Memphis to audition for Presley's label, Sun Records. He taped several songs with Sun, but none of them were released. His chief contribution to the label was writing Roy Orbison's "Rockhouse."

By now new rock 'n' rollers were popping up all through the South, and the name Harold Jenkins didn't sound "teen idol" sexy. So the singer began casting around for a new identity. After discarding Kane Tuckett as a possibility, he consulted an atlas and selected the town names of Conway, Ark., and Twitty, Texas.

His new name made its debut in 1957 with a false start at Mercury Records, grazing the bottom of the charts with "I Need Your Lovin' " and creating the rockabilly classic "Shake It Up." He also shifted his recording base from Memphis to Nashville.

The next year he finally got his rock 'n' roll act together at the MGM label, issuing his blockbuster "It's Only Make Believe." A string of hits ensued, including a rocking Top 10 version of "Danny Boy" in 1959, followed a few months later by 1960's growling "Lonely Blue Boy."

By 1962, however, Conway Twitty was fed up with being a teen idol. He yearned to become a country star. He had started

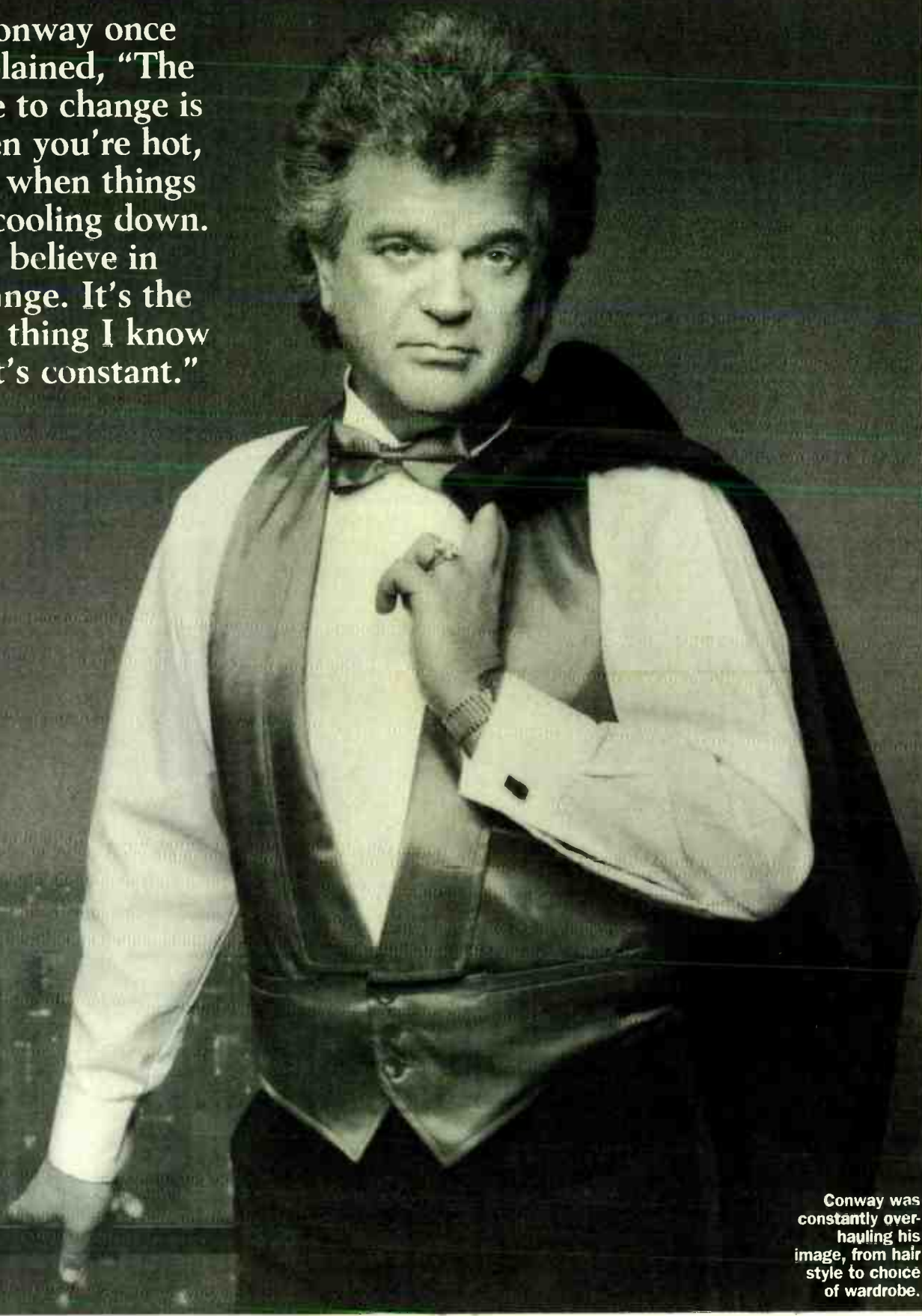


a passenger heard Twitty singing country tunes. He introduced the then-11-year-old to the Arkansas Cotton Choppers, a local band that played on KFFA radio in Helena, Ark. Shortly thereafter, Harold Jenkins made his public debut on KFFA singing Ernest Tubb's "Our Baby's Book."

The following year he formed his own band, The Phillips County Ramblers. KFFA hired the group as its Saturday morning entertainment. A tape of Jenkins singing the Leon Payne and George Morgan favorite "Cry Baby Heart" on the air was made in 1946. It later opened the singer's career-spanning 1994 CD box set *The Conway Twitty Collection*.

Conway once explained, "The time to change is when you're hot, not when things are cooling down.

I believe in change. It's the only thing I know that's constant."



Conway was constantly overhauling his image, from hair style to choice of wardrobe.

CONWAY TWITTY

writing honky-tonk songs, and he had started playing them for his fellow Nashville songwriting friend Harlan Howard. An impressed Howard sent a tape to Ray Price, who scored with Twitty's "Walk Me To The Door" in 1963.

Twitty took one more pass at pop with a New York session for ABC Records in 1963, but then completely turned his back on rock 'n' roll. His second transformation had begun.

Harlan Howard continued to work on his behalf in Music City. Without disclosing the singer's identity, he played a tape of Twitty's country tunes for producer Owen Bradley. Bradley was impressed

enough to fund the 1965 session that resulted in Twitty's recording contract with Decca.

"Owen Bradley was like a father to me," said Twitty fondly. "He was my pipeline onto the country music charts."

The honky-tonk hits began in 1968 with "The Image Of Me." Bradley guided Twitty and encouraged his songwriting. The producer suggested the singer speak the opening lines of his composition "Hello Darlin'," creating a 1970 classic. Their collaborations also resulted in such memorable '70s performances as "Fifteen Years Ago," "There's A Honky-Tonk Angel," "Touch The Hand," "How Much More Can She Stand," "You've Never Been This Far Before" and "Linda On My Mind."

Bradley was also behind the great '70s Twitty duets with Loretta Lynn, including "After The Fire Is Gone," "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man," "Feelins'" and "Lead Me On."

By the end of 1977, Conway Twitty had amassed 36 Top 10 country hits and more than two dozen No. 1 smashes. But creatively he remained restless.

Twitty began using his band members in the studio instead of the tried-and-true A-Team of Nashville musicians. Notable among them were steel guitarist John Hughey, his friend dating back to the Phillips County Ramblers days, and drummer Tommy "Pork Chop" Markham, the star's stage announcer and comedic foil.

During the 1978 session for "Boogie Grass Band," Twitty's imaginative salute to Southern rock, the star was not satisfied with the solo of the session guitarist. He brought in Charlie Archer from his road band to give the song a sizzling Allman Brothers sound.

Singles in 1977 and 1978, such as "Boogie Grass Band," "Play, Guitar Play" and "I've Already Loved You In My Mind," had a bluesy edge that indicated that the artist was evolving.

Still, his 1979 transfiguration shocked many observers.

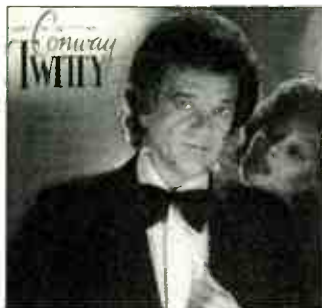
"Don't Take It Away,"

Twitty's 1979 debut as his own producer, was a hoarse, urgent shout of gospel/soul intensity. His gamble paid off when the performance blasted straight to the top of the charts. "I'd

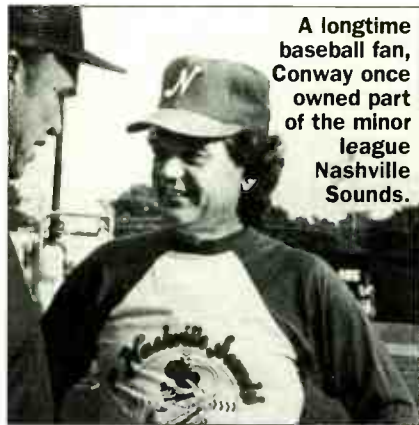
Love To Lay You Down" in 1980, had an undertow backbeat that was equally fresh. He reached into the repertoire of the Bee Gees for 1981's "Rest Your Love On Me," revived The Pointer Sisters' "Slow Hand" in 1982 and did a country treatment of Bette Midler's "The Rose" in 1983. All of them hit the top spot.

Before "The Rose" went No. 1, Twitty had shaved his trademark sideburns and begun to dress in casual outfits instead of polyester suits. Previously adverse to publicity, he opened up and routinely began doing television, newspaper and magazine interviews. His recordings in the 1980s employed Nashville's new breed of session players.

"All of it was the result of changes that I was trying to make," he remarked. "We needed some younger people listening to country music, because the rest of us are going to get old some day and die. If younger people don't get interested in it, country music will die. So I wanted to lead some change with a better recorded



A then-unknown Naomi Judd modeled with Conway for the cover of his 1983 album *Lost In The Feeling*.



A longtime baseball fan, Conway once owned part of the minor league Nashville Sounds.

sound and some younger pickers who have different ideas of what country music is."

He maintained that credo for the rest of his life. Twitty quit smoking in 1985, which gave his voice more range, power and excitement. Some of the most passionate performances of his career came in the late '80s with 1987's "I Want To Know You Before We Make Love" and "That's My Job." Twitty began the 1990s with still another Top 10 hit, the poignant, wistful "Crazy In Love."

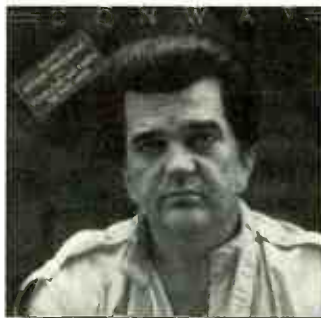
"I never want to die doing the same old thing," he said. "I want to always be making that switch and drawing on new ideas."

He meant it. Twitty's last recording session was a duet with R&B legend Sam Moore. They created a magical version of Tony Joe White's "Rainy Night In Georgia" on May 3, 1993, for the chart-topping album *Rhythm Blues & Country*.

Just over a month later on June 5, Twitty was heading home to Nashville to participate in Fan Fair when he suffered an abdominal aneurysm on his tour bus and died. He was 59.

By then, though, Twitty had accomplished the rare feat of

scoring Top 10 hits in five decades – the 1950s, '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s – and his longevity is largely credited to his continual reinvention as both recording artist and stage performer. ●



BEFORE & AFTER: Conway exchanged his slicked-back, pompadour hairstyle (above) for a more casual, natural look (below).



THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

JUNE

June 1
1915 Johnny Bond born
1953 Brooks & Dunn's Ronnie Dunn born



Johnny Horton

1959 Johnny Horton hits No. 1 on pop charts with "The Battle Of New Orleans"
1974 Ronnie Milsap scores his first No. 1 hit, "Pure Love"

June 2
1927 Carl Butler born
1998 The Carter Family's Helen Carter dies

June 3
1948 Riders In The Sky's Fred "Too Slim" LaBour born
1989 Reba McEntire marries manager Narvel Blackstock
1994 Wally Fowler, founder of the Ryman's *All-Night Sing* gospel show, dies

June 4
1910 Texas Ruby, The Sophie Tucker of the Cowgirl Singers, born
1937 Freddy Fender born

June 5
1945 Statler Brother Don Reid born
1948 Gail Davies born
1993 Conway Twitty dies of a stomach aneurysm on the way to Fan Fair

June 6
1943 Joe Stampley born
1960 Brenda Lee's "I'm Sorry" debuts on pop charts

June 7
1934 Wynn Stewart born
1991 Alan Jackson joins the Grand Ole Opry

June 8
1941 Honky-tonker Vernon Oxford born

June 9
1915 Guitar pioneer Les Paul born
1941 Wedding of Wilma Lee & Stony Cooper

June 10
1931 Jinninie Rodgers and The Carter Family record together
1998 Oak Ridge Boy Steve Sanders commits suicide

June 11
1939 Wilma Burgess born
1949 Hank Williams debuts on the *Grand Ole Opry*

June 12
1965 Tex Ritter joins the Grand Ole Opry

June 13
1952 Hank Williams records "Jambalaya"
1960 Loretta Lynn debuts on country charts with "I'm A Honky Tonk Girl"

June 14
1923 Ralph Peer records Fiddlin' John Carson, country's first "star"
1968 Ernest "Pop" Stoneman dies

June 15
1937 Waylon Jennings born
1954 Terri Gibbs born

June 16
1939 Billy "Crash" Craddock born
1939 The Rouse Brothers recorded first version of "Orange Blossom Special"

June 17
1910 Red Foley born



David "Stringbean" Akeman

1915 David "Stringbean" Akeman born
1949 Amazing Rhythm Aces' Russell Smith born

June 18
1915 A.P. Carter marries Sara Dougherty

June 19
1914 Lester Flatt born
1926 Harmonica Wizard DeFord Bailey debuts on *Opry*

1956 Doug Stone born
1997 "Jingle Bell Rock" singer Bobby Helms dies

June 20
1916 T. Texas Tyler born
1924 Chet Atkins born



Anne Murray

1945 Anne Murray born
1965 The Louvin Brothers' Ira Louvin killed in a car accident

June 21
1948 Leon Everette born
1955 Johnny Cash releases his first single, "Hey Porter"

1959 Kathy Mattea born
June 22
1930 Roy Drusky born
1936 Kns Kristofferson born

June 23
1929 June Carter born
June 24
1917 Ramblin' Tommy Scott, America's last medicine-show operator, born

June 25
1961 Elvis Presley records "(Marie's The Name) His Latest Flame" in Nashville

June 26
1914 West Virginia country king Doc Williams born
1976 The Oak Ridge Boys debut on country singles charts with "Family Reunion"

June 27
1913 Yodeling king Elton Britt born
1924 Yodeling queen Rosalie Allen born
1986 Joe Maphis dies

June 28
1924 George Morgan born

June 29
1974 Mickey Gilley captures his first No. 1 record, "Room Full Of Roses"

June 30
1922 Fiddlers Eck Robertson and Henry C. Gilliland make the first country-music recording

JULY

July 1
1955 Keith Whitley born
1961 Michelle Wright born

1990 Hank Williams Jr. marries Mary Jane Thomas

July 2
1925 "Gonna Find Me A Bluebird" singer Marvin Rainwater born

July 3
1946 Johnny Lee born
1958 Aaron Tippin born

July 4
1937 *Opry* star Ray Pillow born

July 5
1954 Elvis Presley makes his first recordings for Sun Records

1969 Merle Haggard's "Workin' Man Blues" enters the charts

July 6
1925 Bill Haley born



Jeannie Seely

1940 Jeannie Seely born
1998 Roy Rogers dies

July 7
1927 The Louvin Brothers' Charlie Louvin born
1930 Wilburn Brothers' Doyle Wilburn born

July 8
1961 Toby Keith born

July 9
1907 Singing cowboy Eddie Dean born
1923 Molly O'Day born
1929 Jim & Jesse's Jim McReynolds born

1953 David Ball born
July 10
1965 Ken Mellons born

July 11
1981 Earl Thomas Conley celebrates his first No. 1 with "Fire & Smoke"

July 12
1943 Roy Rogers & Trigger appear on the cover of *Life* magazine

July 13
1895 Bradley Kincaid born
1954 Louise Mandrell born

July 14
1933 Del Reeves born
1961 Bill Anderson joins *Opry*

1973 The Everly Brothers announce their breakup as a duo

1987 *Always And Forever* goes platinum for Randy Travis

July 15
1913 Cowboy Copas born
1946 Linda Ronstadt born

July 16
1954 Nanci Griffith born

July 17
1918 Red Sovine born
1952 Nicolette Larson born

July 18
1954 Ricky Skaggs born

July 19
1937 *Opry* star George Hamilton IV born
1975 Lefty Frizzell dies

July 20
1944 T.G. Sheppard born
1959 Radney Foster born

July 21
1899 Sara Carter, of The Carter Family, born
1972 Paul Brandt born

July 22
1874 Old-time singer Obed "Dad" Pickard born

July 23
1967 Tommy Duncan, lead singer of Bob Wills & The Texas Playboys, dies



Alison Krauss

1971 Alison Krauss born
July 24
1957 Pam Tillis born

July 25
1995 Charlie Rich dies
July 26
1968 Jeannie C. Riley records "Harper Valley P.T.A."

July 27
1944 Bobbie Gentry born
1967 Stacy Dean Campbell born

July 28
1962 Bill Anderson's first No. 1, "Mama Sang A Song," debuts

1971 Charley Pride records "Kiss An Angel Good Mornin' "

July 29
1966 Martina McBride born
1999 The Carter Family's Anita Carter dies

July 30
1958 Neal McCoy born
July 31
1964 Jim Reeves dies in a plane crash

“THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN

(Written by

Some people are born songwriters. Others have to learn the craft.

Donna Fargo definitely falls into the category of “student,” who absorbed the process of creating new songs out of her burning desire to be a singer. She didn’t begin to jot down her ideas until well into her adult years.

Born Yvonne Vaughn and raised in the mountains of North Carolina, Fargo enjoyed a classic country upbringing that included listening to small-town radio stations, performing in local bands and singing in church.

“When I was a kid, my role models were Brenda Lee and Elvis, and then later Tammy Wynette,” she recalls. “I think the first country song I ever

learned was ‘Take An Old Cold Tater (And Wait)’ by Little Jimmy Dickens. I’d sing that for my father. When I was about eight I sang ‘I’ve Got A Mansion Over The Hilltop’ at the little Baptist church down below our house.

“But I really carried this little secret that I wanted to be a singer. I was afraid to tell anybody, because it seemed like too much ego or something.”

After college she headed to Covina, Calif., to take a job as a school teacher. That’s where Fargo began to realize her childhood dream of becoming a performer.

“I became a writer, actually, to become a singer,” she admits. “So I learned to play the guitar and actually taught myself to write.”

Every day she would go home from school, grade her papers and then toil at her tunes. Fargo admits her first efforts weren’t up to snuff.

“I didn’t know my elbow from my toenail, hardly,” she admits. “I didn’t know any songwriting rules. I was just educating myself as I went along. You just have to analyze the songs on the radio and figure out the structure, then see what you can write that would be a little different.

“At first, I would write about anything. I’d write a drinking song or a cheating song. But that wasn’t me. As I continued to write, I started to unveil the child in me who had grown up in the country. I was deeply serious about life, about love, about people, about prejudice, about the South, about *my* country.”

She met music business veteran Stan Silver in California. He encouraged her songwriting and began booking her as a performer in the Los Angeles area. She adopted the stage name Donna Fargo in 1966 when she began issuing a string of singles on the small Ramco and Challenge labels. Two years later her self-composed “Daddy” became a regional hit.

“I could hear it on the radio!” Fargo exclaims, the wonder still in her voice. “I can’t tell you how that inspires a writer. It was a major big deal.”

“Daddy” also opened another door for the aspiring writer. Actor and comedian George Lindsey heard it on the radio in Burbank, called the disc jockey at KLAC and tracked down Fargo, asking her to write a song for him.

“I had written ‘Funny Face,’ ” she recalls. “I thought, ‘Well, that’s easy to sing. I’ll pitch him that song.’”

“Then I wrote him a song called ‘Georgia Peach.’ It was just a dumb song about a guy walking down the street and seeing this person in front of him that he thought was a girl because of her long hair. But when the person turned around, it was a guy! George recorded that song and turned down ‘Funny Face.’ So I



Donna
Fargo

HIND THE SONG

THE WHOLE U.S.A.”

Donna Fargo)

thought, 'Gosh! "Funny Face" must not be a good song.' ”

Fargo kept writing and recording throughout the late '60s, but none of her singles made the national charts. She and Silver married in 1969. He tirelessly promoted her and she kept teaching school, until a song arrived that would bring Fargo international stardom.

“I'd always been so serious, so sad and dark,” Fargo readily admits. “Looking back, it's weird and ironic that I wrote a song called 'The Happiest Girl In The Whole U.S.A.’”

“I wrote it around 1971, when Stan and I had gone through a turbulent period in our marriage and resolved some issues. And I was just happy. I had this idea of being 'The Happiest Girl In The World,' and it just sat there for two or three weeks. One Saturday morning, I specifically said to myself, 'OK, don't put any restraints on yourself. Just go to work and see what comes out.' I remember picking up the guitar and just fiddling around and saying, *Good morning, hello sunshine, wake up sleepy head.*”

“By the time I got to the end of the second verse, I realized that 'The Happiest Girl In The World' was cumbersome and not a natural rhyme scheme. That's when it became 'The Happiest Girl In The Whole U.S.A.’”

Next stop: Music City.

“We had saved our money to go to Nashville to record,” Fargo recalls. “It was so exciting to be where country music was. I was like a little kid in a candy shop. But it wasn't anything dramatic. I was prepared. The musicians were prepared. It was just a three-hour session and we did four songs. It was fast and everything went well.”

Released by Dot Records in early

1972, “The Happiest Girl In The Whole U.S.A.” shot to No. 1 on the country charts, crossed over to the pop hit parade, sold a million, won the CMA's Single of the Year award and earned Fargo a Grammy as icing on the cake.

Fargo says the tune expressed a heartfelt message that appealed to both sexes.

“I think it's a song that explored our commonality, because it was a girl going off to work and

everything was cool. She loved her husband. She wasn't a slave, and he wasn't her master – they just worked together. *I'll fix your lunch and you'll fix mine.*”

Fargo was on a roll. “The Happiest Girl In The Whole U.S.A.” was followed by the song she thought was her failure song, “Funny Face,” which duplicated her earlier No. 1 success and went all the way to Top 5 on the pop charts. She scored seven more Top 10 hits by 1975, then an additional seven Top 10s with Warner from 1976 - 79. She even re-recorded her regional hit “Daddy” in 1979, transforming it into a Top 20 national hit.

While her professional career was healthy, Fargo had a personal scare when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1978. She has since battled the disease into remission and continues to expand her professional horizons. She wrote the 1997 inspirational book *Trust In Yourself* and developed a

successful line of greeting cards. She also continues to perform.

“I've always tried to take anything negative and turn it around into something positive,” she says. “I will always try to uphold that 'Happiest Girl' type of attitude. Because I've always believed it.”



“The Happiest Girl In The Whole U.S.A.”

Donna Fargo

Shine on me, sunshine
Walk with me, world
It's a skip-a-dee-doo-dah day
And I'm the happiest girl
In the whole U.S.A.

Good morning, morning
Hello sunshine. Wake up sleepy head
Why'd we move that beautiful clock
So far away from the bed?

Just one more minute, that's why we
Moved it, one more hug or two
Do you love wakin' up next to me
As much as I love wakin' up next to you?

You make the coffee. I'll make the bed
I'll fix your lunch and you fix mine
Now tell me the truth: Do these old
Shoes look funny? Honey, it's almost time

Now you be careful, gotta go. I love you
Have a beautiful day
And kiss the happiest girl
In the whole U.S.A.

Skip-a-dee-doo-dah. Thank you, Lord,
For making him for me
And thank you for letting
Life turn out the way
That I always thought it could be

There once was a time when
I could not imagine
How it would feel to say
I'm the happiest girl in the whole U.S.A.

Now shine on me, sunshine
Walk with me, world
It's a skip-a-dee-doo-dah day
I'm the happiest girl in the whole U.S.A.

Shine on me, sunshine
Walk with me, world
It's a skip-a-dee-doo-dah day
I'm the happiest girl in the whole U.S.A.

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CARLISLE



Carlisle is one of the few living entertainers in any genre whose career goes back to the 1920s. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of Jimmie Rodgers.

“Jumpin’ ” Bill still plays for laughs – at 92

At last year's 75th anniversary weekend performance of the *Grand Ole Opry*, Bill Carlisle fooled everyone. Appearing on stage with a walker, “Jumpin’ ” Bill Carlisle joked with the audience.

by Bob Millard

“I’m old!” Bill hollered at the *Opry* audience that night, laughing with them as a time-tested line hit its mark. “When ya get old, you pretty much get what you want.” He paused. “People’ll bring it to you.”

He then astounded his audience by abandoning his walker and jumping up and down on the spot, living up to his trademark name. After using his knees as ageless shock absorbers, Carlisle flung the walker over his shoulder and left the stage. The crowd ate it up.

Later in dressing room No. 4, the oldest active member of the *Grand Ole Opry*, the only one whose working career actually touches that of the legendary Jimmie Rodgers, held court.

At 92, dressed in his Sunday-go-to-meetin’ suit, Carlisle makes 80-year-old Little Jimmy Dickens seem a spring pup. Considering he started performing on the radio in 1929, wrote a handful of country novelty standards in the 1950s and has never stopped entertaining, Carlisle is the dean of living country legends.

He’s come a long way from his humble beginnings. Carlisle was born and reared in a log cabin on a farm outside Louisville, Ky. The family labored hard to survive, churning out the cash crops of corn and tobacco with back-

COMEDY

breaking intensity. Entertainment was self-generated. Somewhere during the long, toiling days and brief evening respites, the Bill Carlisle story began, inextricably interwoven with that of his older brother, Cliff.

"How I started?" Bill responds to his questioner. "Well, Cliff was playing the Dobro at the time. At the age of about 15, I got a guitar and teamed with him, just at home a'playin'. Finally, I started singing with him some. Then we went to the record companies."

But Carlisle leaves a few steps out. Brother Cliff fell in love with the sound of Hawaiian lap steel guitar that became popular in America in the 1920s, and he took the lead in establishing it as a hillbilly instrument. Their father led a family choir of four sons, two daughters and assorted cousins.

"We loved to sing in church, but mostly we just loved to sing," Bill recalled in his conversational new autobiography, *Not Too Old To Cut The Mustard* (Overmountain Press). "Anyway, we Carlisles harmonized pretty good, so we decided that we were going to start a barn dance show at the little radio station WLAP in Louisville. We called it *The Carlisle Family Jamboree*. Every Saturday night we would go up there and broadcast for an hour."

In 1926, the Dopyera brothers perfected their National Steel guitar, or "Dobro." Cliff Carlisle already played the Hawaiian slide guitar and soon adapted the Dobro to country-blues. It carried him to a seminal and historic juncture, as he recorded with Rodgers and later launched a solo career as an imitator of the pioneer.

"I remember Jimmie but I never did meet him, personally," Carlisle recalls. "My brother Cliff, he knew Jimmie and he played that Dobro guitar on some of his

records. All Cliff played was the Dobro."

Joined by another Rodgers accomplice, Wilber Ball, Cliff Carlisle began playing at several radio stations. The duo was soon in great demand on the Southern vaudeville circuit, giving hillbilly and Hawaiian music shows featuring the exotic slide steel guitar. Cliff's early recordings on the Gennett and Champion labels earned him a large following, and he used this leverage to eventually get Bill onto the Vocalion label in 1933.

Bill recorded a Rodgers-style blue yodel called "Rattlesnake Daddy," which became his first hit – long before there were country record charts.

"Well, actually, I'm not too proud of that song," he admits.

"It was the first one, so it's alright if you want put it in there. Well, Jimmie ... a lot of his stuff was risqué. Cliff and I both sang at that time tryin' to copy him."

In the late '30s, Cliff invited Bill to join him, replacing Wilber Ball. Combining two successful, if not yet equal careers, they became The Carlisle Brothers. They played on radio stations on morning and noon-time shows, then played courthouses and schoolhouses within broadcast radius that same night. (Many schools of the early 20th century, recognized as social centers for a town, contained excellent auditoriums.) Their only unsuccessful territory was Charlotte, North Carolina, where The Monroe Brothers dominated with a different style and sound.



As the Carlisle Brothers played around the region, aligning with Louisville, Lexington and Knoxville radio stations, Bill refined a native talent for comedy, developing a rube character called Hot Shot Elmer. He wrote skits involving Cliff and others incorporating heavy physical shtick as his Hot Shot Elmer character jumped over tables. When he carried that dynamic physicality into his normal stage persona, he acquired the nickname "Jumpin' " Bill Carlisle. The act thrived in the mountain regions.

"We was stationed in Knoxville on radio station WNOX," Carlisle recalls. "They had a show there called *The Mid-Day-Merry-Go-Round*. Lowell Blanchard was the emcee, and one of the best. At night we'd make show dates. Back then you would go to a radio station and stay until you played all that radius around, maybe 200 miles. We stayed in Knoxville 13 years."

The Carlisle Brothers recorded "Rainbow At Midnight," their biggest hit, for King in 1946. Bill gave a young Chet Atkins his first job in those sessions, forging a lifelong friendship.

"Chet was always worth more than I could pay him," Bill confesses.

Cliff went solo in the late '40s. Bill continued at WNOX, where the elder Carlisle rejoined him a few years later. Now they were The Carlisles, Bill's band of ever-changing personnel. Within weeks of Cliff and Bill's reunion, country gospel great Martha Carson joined them for recordings. Never meant as a permanent ensemble, Bill, Cliff and Carson were an early country music supergroup: three established stars making some of their best music together.



BILL CARLISLE

In the summer of '51, the trio drove down to Nashville to record, bringing Chet Atkins. Bill had been signed to Mercury by Murray Nash, and though he didn't know it at the time, he would be the last artist Bill would sign for Mercury before Dee Kilpatrick took over. Atkins' hopped-up thumb-picking made these sessions formative proto-rockabilly music – another important historical niche for Bill and his Carlisles.

At these sessions, they recorded Bill's "Too Old To Cut The Mustard," and its success was a group breakthrough, topping the charts. The tune became a country standard and, paired with Bill's 1953 hit "No Help Wanted," brought him to the *Grand Ole Opry*, where he remains today. The Carlisles also enjoyed a successful string of Top 5 hits after the No. 1 "No Help Wanted," including "Knothole," "Is Zat You, Myrtle" and "Tain't Nice (To Talk Like That)."

By this time, Cliff, a 30-year veteran entertainer in his late 40s, was growing tired of the road. His final retirement was triggered by a heckler.

"We was playin' a show in Sterns, Kentucky, in the courthouse," Bill recalls. "So we did Hot Shot Elmer and [the skit] 'The Ghost Walks At Midnight'. I'd come out as Hot Shot and Cliff would say, 'This railroad station's got a fine echo in it.' He'd say 'Look,' and he'd clap. Homer Harris was backstage and he'd clap. Well, Cliff clapped, Homer clapped, and then somebody up in the balcony clapped, too.

"Cliff looked out and hollered: 'Hey, what're ya doin' up there?' and some guy in the audience said, 'None of your damned business.' That made Cliff mad. He said, 'Hoss, people paid to see this show and if you don't want to see it, well, you can leave. But let's be quiet and let the people hear it that's paid to get in.'

"And, so, he done it again, and that guy echoed again.

"Then Cliff said, 'One more time and



Popular vocalist Martha Carson joined Bill and his brother Cliff on several recordings. They became an early country music supergroup.

I'm gonna come and get ya.' He did it again, so Cliff steps [off-stage] to go up in the balcony where the guy was.

"I couldn't let him go up there by his self. Here I was, barefooted and my teeth blocked out, doin' Hot Shot Elmer, and I went with him. He got up there and he got the hammerlock on that ol' boy. I didn't

know why he was puttin' so much pressure on that ol' boy. I said, 'Don't kill him, Cliff!'

"He never said nothin'. He just kept squeezin', and the guy dropped a knife. Cliff knew it. So I got a hold of the guy's feet, and Cliff held on to the hammerlock. We carried him down the steps and the law took him in.

"On the way home that night, Cliff said, 'Bill, it's time for me to quit.' And so he retired. He retired that night."

Bill Carlisle says he's not likely to follow in his brother's footsteps.

"I'm gonna be right here at the *Opry* every Friday or Saturday night, doin' the early show, for the rest of my life," he says with a wink. "If I live that long." ❁



NEW AGAIN

NOTEWORTHY DISCOVERIES



HOWARD VOKES
Songs Of Tragedy And Disaster (Starday)

Vokes bills himself as the King of Pennsylvania Country, and he's a traditionalist – but not a happy one.

By the close of this set of weepers, recorded in 1963, 'vokes' morbid sensibility takes its toll: four deceased children, a wrecked train, a crippled boy, a dead dog, a cyclone, a shipwreck (The Titanic, no less), a school house full of burned kids, a car crash, a Death Row inmate, two doomed miners and a flooded bus trapping 20 children who all drown.

The closest stylistic parallel here is the work of Roy Acuff, whom Vokes emulates in repertoire and Dobro-laced accompaniment. But Vokes' sturdy tenor is lower and less fevered; he lets the lyrics tell the tale, not the sobbing. Reissues from the precious Starday vaults such as this are beginning to occur regularly again. A very good thing.

ROGER MILLER
Oh Boy Classics Presents Roger Miller (Oh Boy Records)

Here's the deal: These aren't the original versions of "King Of The Road," "England Swings," "Chug A Lug" and other

Miller classics. Miller re-recorded these tracks with modern Music Row musicians in the 1990s. Mind you, everyone did their best to imitate the original Jerry Kennedy/Smash Records session work. But if you seek the real deal, you need to get Mercury's *Golden Hits* collection, still in print and at a bargain price.

When Miller recut the hits, he also did new versions of some of the best-known songs he wrote for others. If you can't afford the excellent 3 CD box set *King Of The Road*, but you want his renditions of



"Husbands And Wives," "When Two Worlds Collide," "Don't We All Have The Right To Be Wrong" and "The Last Word In Lonesome Is Me," then this is the place to go.

GENE AUTRY
The Gene Autry Show (Varese Sarabande – 3 CDs)

These soundtrack recordings from Gene Autry's television shows of 1950 – 55 offer a distinctly low-fi sound, a tinny orchestra and a listless guitar strumming throughout. Autry's bland voice doesn't change from track to track.

Yet there are a number of things to commend. First of all, the 3 CDs contain dozens of tunes that he never recorded commercially, including "Sierra



Nevada" and "Crime Will Never Pay." While some are disposable TV ditties, a number of others are quite good. Second, there are millions of grown kids who were first exposed to Autry's music on the small screen, and, for them, this will be a banquet of nostalgia. Third, Allen J. Wiener's liner notes illuminate a side of The Singing Cowboy's career that is seldom discussed.

STEVE WARINER
Ultimate Collection (Hip-O)

No exaggeration here. Hip-O has gone out of its way to include material from most of Steve Wariner's varied label homes. Everything from his early RCA work ("All Roads Lead To You," "Midnight Fire"), through his stint with Arista in the early '90s ("Leave Him Out Of This," "The Tips Of My Fingers") is included.



The bulk of the package is from his MCA years, the label where the performer spent most of his career. Wariner really hit his stride at MCA in the '80s with "What Didn't I Do," "Life's

Highway," "The Weekend," "Lynda" and others.

Twenty-one tracks, liner notes and booklet photos qualify this as a generous ultimate collection for Wariner fans.

RICKY SKAGGS
16 Biggest Hits (Epic Legacy)

Has it really been 20 years since Ricky Skaggs charged onto the *Urban Cowboy* scene on his white horse? He was never more inspiring than he was when he recorded these gems.

All the major hits are here: "Don't Get Above Your Raising," "Uncle Pen," "Country Boy," "Crying My Heart Out Over You," "Heartbroke," and "Honey (Open That Door)." They should be in every country lover's library. These recordings will stand the test of time.



THE CARTER FAMILY
Can The Circle Be Unbroken (Columbia Legacy)

The timing of these recordings is important since The Carter Family's abilities had strengthened significantly just prior to their Columbia years. By 1935, Maybelle Carter's guitar playing was at its most bell-like and confident, and Sara Carter's singing was at its deepest and most soulful. The trio's harmonies were more polished than ever.

So although these are not the first versions of "Wildwood Flower," "Keep On The Sunny Side," or "I'm Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes," they are arguably the group's most accomplished versions.

During this era The Carters also recorded several new standards,



notably "Gospel Ship," "Sinking In The Lonesome Sea" and "Can The Circle Be Unbroken (Bye And Bye)" – all included here with their initial Victor remakes.

In 1940, The Carter Family returned to Columbia and recorded the last two tracks, "My Home Among The Hills" and the ancient British ballad "Black Jack David."

One interesting note: Eighteen of these 20 tracks were recorded during a six-day, 40-song marathon session in New York City. What act today could even attempt that?

MAC DAVIS
The Best Of Mac Davis (Razor & Tie)

The genial drawing of Mac Davis charmed listeners in the 1970s as he scored major hits with "Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me" and "Stop And Smell The Roses."

Moreover, Davis had been a composer of consequence, penning not only his own hits, but Elvis Presley's "In The Ghetto" and Bobby Goldsboro's "Watching Scotty Grow."



All five songs are included in this collection, offering strong proof that Davis' induction into the Nashville Songwriters Hall Of Fame is highly merited. However, his '80s country hits are sadly absent.



PRECIOUS MEMORIES

FROM THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

A NEW WIG FOR A NEW GIG | Dolly Parton's Hair-Raising Career

The Country Music Foundation's Library and Media Center contains the world's largest collection of country star photographs. Who better to illustrate its archival value than

one of country music's most enduring icons, Dolly Parton? We think of Parton's image as unchanging. However, these examples show that her wigs and couture continue to evolve.

When Parton first signed with RCA in 1967, her wig was a simple bouffant bubble. It wasn't long, however, before her over-the-top fashion sense asserted itself. In this publicity photo circa 1970, she's in loose curls, ruffles, rings and dimples.



Parton's wigs were at their most elaborate in the mid-'70s. Pictured here around 1973, she's sporting a towering mass of blonde swirls. (That lace tablecloth she appears to be wearing never looked that good in the dining room.)

In 1977, when Parton declared her independence from Porter Wagoner and issued her LP *New Harvest, First Gathering*, she adopted a new look. Sporting a softer, flowing wig, denim jacket, light lip gloss and simple hoop earrings, she never looked lovelier.



Parton sported a more full figure when she became a pop hitmaker and a movie star in the early '80s. She compensated with shorter, curlier wigs like this one. The cowgirl hat is not typical. She evidently donned it to publicize her 1984 movie, *Rhinestone*.



What a difference a year makes. When Parton posed for famed fashion photographer Richard Avedon for a 1984 RCA publicity photo, she showed off her sleek new figure. The star has long said that conquering her weight problem is her greatest accomplishment.

Dolly was dripping with diamonds for this photo to publicize her 1987 TV variety series for ABC. The wig is an attractive mane that cascades down her back. For her LP photos that same year, she hired renowned photographer Annie Leibovitz.

Photographer Randee St. Nicholas dressed the star in a peasant blouse for this 1991 Columbia publicity shot. Dolly's gray eyes are framed by highly arching brows and fluttery dark eyelashes here. St. Nicholas later became one of Parton's video directors.

In 1998, Parton released *Hungry Again*, the first of a trio of albums that earned her universal acclaim and reaped Grammy awards. This Matt Barnes photo, braided wig and rustic setting capture her back-to-the-roots mood.

For her new *Little Sparrow* CD on Sugar Hill Records, photographer Jim Herrington captured the usually smiling Parton in a pensive mood. Again, the wig and the clothes chosen are simple and flattering.

For information or to contribute to the Hall of Fame, please contact the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, 222 Fifth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203; phone (615) 416-2001; or visit the website www.countrymusichalloffame.com.



By 1995, it was back to glamour. This Dennis Carney shot shows country's queen of glitz flashing plenty of cleavage and smiling under a wig with feathery bangs and attractively turned-under, shoulder-length ends.



COLLECTIONS

ATTENTION, READERS! The Collections page is your source for buying, selling or trading country music-related merchandise and memorabilia. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when submitting your entry: 1) Entries must be kept to 40 words or less. 2) Only one entry per member per issue. 3) We reserve the right to edit for space and style. Please write each other directly about information or items.

COMMENTS

I read your article about the Father Of Southern Gospel Music. I am so glad you have searched back from some of this old-time music and the Southern quartets. I sure would appreciate it if you could find me some old albums by the Speer Family and the Vaughan quartets or any of the old gospel quartets. William J. Cleaver, 30521 Road 400, Coarsegold, CA 93614.

I read your article about Leon Kagarise. I'm writing a book on the life of Cowboy Copas and wonder if he has any material on Copas. Could you give me his address? John R. Simon, 8721 Pond Creek Rd., Portsmouth, Ohio 45663.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Write to Leon Kagarise c/o Joe Lee, 4624 Westwind Dr., Mt. Airy, MD 21771. Good luck with your book.

Thanks for the long overdue article on Tompall & The Glaser Brothers. I would really like to find "Loving Her Was Easier." Mr. & Mrs. Don R. Lark, 5725 W. Carters Valley Rd., Church Hill, TN 37642.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The only still-available recording of Tompall and The Glaser Brothers performing "Loving Her Was Easier" appears on a Kris Kristofferson double-CD set called *Singer/Songwriter* (CBS).

QUESTIONS

How do I order the Bear Family 12 CDs of the original Carter Family? R.T. Wood, P.O. Box 176, Fortson, GA 31808-0176.

How I can order the Carter Family collection featured in the *Journal* in the December/January issue? W.G. Bundurant, 7359 Colonial Dr., Fountain, CO 80817-1344.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Ernest Tubb Record Shop is America's largest mail-order source for country-music recordings. For more info call (800) 229-4288. In addition, recordings we review are generally available via the Internet at sites

such as www.cdnw.com and www.amazon.com. The boxed set you seek with the 12 CDs and a hardback book is imported from Germany on Bear Family Records and costs roughly \$200.

I'm looking for a song called "Kay." Part of it goes, *Kay I'm living yet I'm dying/Staring out at Music City from my cab.* Who sang it? Vincent Belfire, Box 53, Eustis, NE 69028.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This hit was by John Wesley Ryles on Columbia Records in 1968. Today, John is one of Music Row's busiest session backup vocalists. "Kay" is not commercially available anymore.

I am trying to find out the name of a song and who sang it. It was popular in 1950 or 1951. The only words I can remember are *You slip through my fingers just like quicksilver.* Betty J. Kline, Park Motel, 2711 2nd Street, Coralville, Iowa 52241.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Quicksilver" was a hit by Elton Britt and Rosalie Allen in 1950. It appears on the CD Elton Britt: RCA Years (*Collectors Choice Music*).

Can someone help me find this song? I think it was by Jimmie Rodgers. I think the title was "That Little Girl Of Mine." I'm 76 and would like to pass it on to my family. Martha B. Payne, 16850 Jasmine St., Apt. G-7, Victorville, CA 92392.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "That Little Girl Of Mine," which matches the lyrics you sent, was initially a 1931 pop tune. You probably remember Eddy Arnold's touching 1947 rendition of it. Currently it is only available on his multi-CD German-import boxed set. There is a version of it by The Browns on a CD titled *Town And Country* (BMG, also a German import).

WANTED

I want the Connie Smith Christmas album called *Joy To The World*. If anyone has a copy, I would love to

buy it. Belva J. Kittle, P.O. Box 2264, Elmira Heights, NY 14903.

Searching for a song by Tom T. Hall called "Ramona." On the same 8-track there were other good traveling songs, including "Tulsa Telephone Book." If someone would make me a tape of this album, I would pay them for their efforts. Richard J. Day Jr., 3785 Laurette Rd., Merritt Island, FL 32952.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Ramona's Revenge" and "Tulsa Telephone Book" both appeared on Hall's 1971 LP *In Search Of A Song*. It is not available.

I want the George Hamilton IV 45s "The Good Side Of Tomorrow"/"Leavin' London" (RCA 2542) and "I Still Do"/"Good Old Days" (Broadland International 18777). Reasonable prices. Phillip Paulson, 2517 E. 10th St., Apt. 3, Indianapolis, IN 46201-2154.

I want the words to "Silver Threads And Golden Needles." Also, I'm looking for someone to sing some country music songs I wrote. I am going deaf. Please let me know before it is too late. Deloris Underhill, 8405 Five Mile Rd., Mecosta, MI 49332.

I'm looking for a cassette copy of Sammi Smith singing *My darling lying under the deepening snow.* Irene Owens, 1606 N. Pack, Spokane, WA 99212.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Harlan Howard classic "The Deepening Snow" has been recorded by many country stars. Sammi's version was on her 1974 LP *The Rainbow In Daddy's Eyes*. It is no longer available.

I am looking for "Super Skirt" by Connie Cato. Trudy Barr, 94 Willow Ln., Goldwater, MI 49036.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This 1974 Capitol single ("Superskirt," actually one word) is out of print. Anybody out there have a copy?

FOR SALE

A collection of sheet music and songbooks. I started collecting them in 1952. It is all country and western - Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, Carl Smith, etc. Jo Ann Butler, 5106 Wexford Rd., Lansing, MI 48911-3308.



Trivia answer: Ernest Tubb

If you guessed correctly after hint #1, consider yourself a country music authority.

If you guessed by hint #5, you're a bona-fide country expert.

If you guessed by hint #7, you are absolutely a fan.

If you had to go all the way to #10 to find out this person's identity, you need to buy some Ernest Tubb records immediately!

Send requests to *Country Music* magazine, 118 16th Ave. South, Suite 230, Nashville, TN 37203. Mark envelope, Attention: Collections. Collections is printed as a service to readers, and *Country Music* magazine assumes no liability for any losses or damages resulting from any Collections page correspondence. Parents, be aware of children's correspondence.

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HITTING THE HONKY-TONK HIGHWAY

**A wild weekend with
Montgomery Gentry**

by Nick Krewen

Photographs by Mike DeHoog

If she hasn't bathed since early February, there's a woman somewhere in Florida with a left breast christened EDDIE and a right one designated TROY.

The 40-ish redhead obtained her prized signatures at a meet-and-greet before a Montgomery Gentry concert at Joyland in Bradenton, Fla., a juke joint designed to resemble a barn.

But let's back up a few minutes. Troy Gentry, wearing brown pants and a tan and white faux cowhide shirt that frames his chiseled features, nods appreciatively as a male fan shakes his hand. Meanwhile, the fan's girlfriend is holding court with Eddie Montgomery, whose 6-foot-2-inch mass is formidably amplified by a trademark wide-brimmed hat and black duster. He's signing a copy of *Tattoos & Scars*, the duo's first CD.

Then, the redhead is up to the front of the line. She grabs everyone's attention by lifting her sweater to her neck, asking the duo for their John Hancocks. Without batting an eyelash, both Montgomery and Gentry comply, signing just above the woman's brassiere. Then they all pose for a snapshot.

All in a day's work.

"If it's signable, we've signed it," cracks Montgomery, a twinkle in his eye.

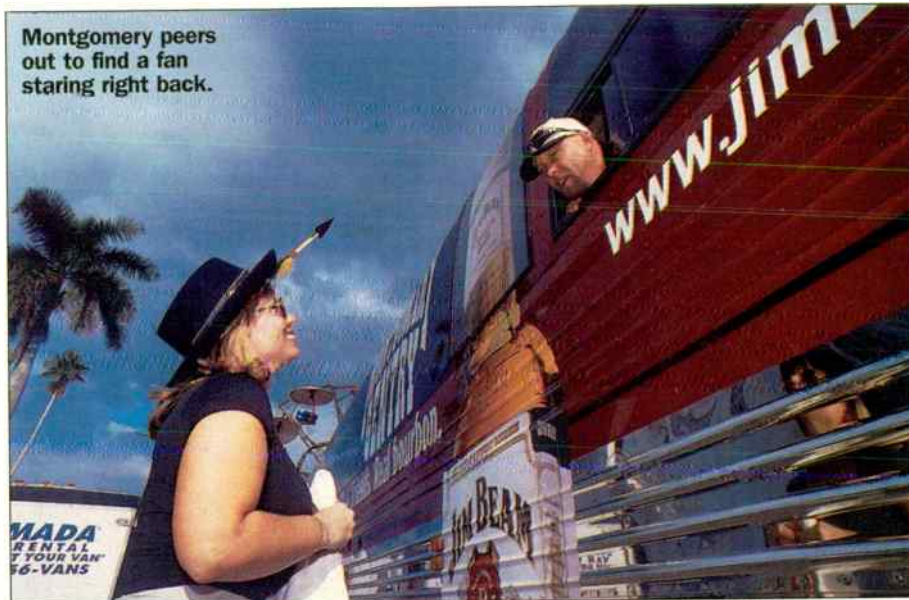
Montgomery Gentry is back on the road in style. On a four-day Nashville-to-Florida trek with the wild duo, the road is a place where anything can happen.

And usually does.

NASHVILLE, THURSDAY, 6:30 p.m.

You can't miss the Montgomery Gentry bus idling outside the Hampton Inn – with the Montgomery Gentry logo tattooed on its shell, and the massive Jim Beam bottle with its eye-popping slogan, REAL FRIENDS. REAL BOURBON.

The duo's Jim Beam connection is everywhere. Gentry got his first break when he won the 1994 Jim Beam Country Band Search contest, and his guitar still bears the Jim Beam trademark. A bottle and its 80-proof wallop



Montgomery peers out to find a fan staring right back.

Sarasota for their first gig of the year, Gentry and his wife, Angie, have already retired to the stateroom at the back lounge of the bus to sleep. Montgomery, whose wife, Tracy, is home with the kids, decides to hang with the band. He's looking forward to getting back in the groove after a 90-day holiday layoff.

"We're going back to work!" he bellows, as he high-fives his bandmates. He surveys the territory, sighs happily and plops into a seat in the front section of the bus. "Damn, I feel like a newlywed."

He scrambles for a cigarette and an unmixed copy of *Carrying On*, closing his eyes and strumming a little air guitar while cranking the bus' stereo system to maximum volume.

"I can't believe we finally got it finished," he sighs, rubbing his hand over his bald pate. "I need a drink."

He vaults to his feet, grabbing a cup and adding a generous amount of Jim Beam to his cola before passing the bottle. "It's good to be back at work!" he yells again, smiling.

Now, where the stereo left off, the VCR takes over with Mel Brooks' slapstick *Western Blazing Saddles*, but Montgomery doesn't make it to the final scene. By 10 p.m., he has squeezed into his coffin-size bunker and fallen soundly asleep, his snoring undisturbed by the drone of the interstate.

FLORIDA, FRIDAY, 6:30 a.m.

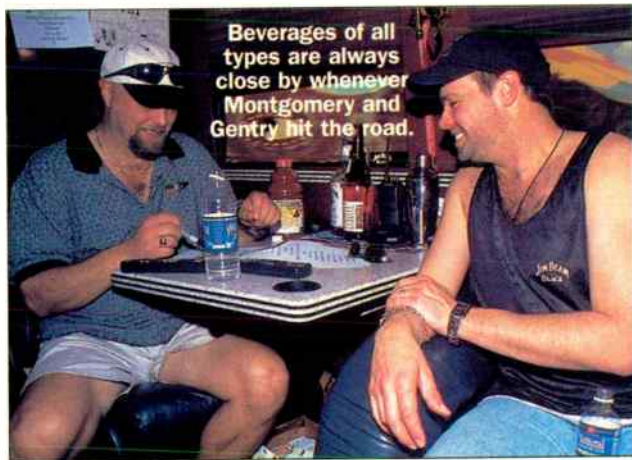
It has been raining for a few hours, and a wide-awake Montgomery, dressed in a T-shirt and sweat pants, is talking with the bus driver, Frank "Pork Chop" Owen. Sarasota is still a couple of hours away and Montgomery is restless.

"It always takes a couple of shows to get back in your groove," he says, lighting a cigarette. "I'll feel better once we get them under our belt. But we *do* plan on having a good time."

It's a philosophy that Montgomery, 37, has lived by since first playing drums as a teen in his father Harold's band. Later, Montgomery struck out on his own with younger brother John Michael and another musician from the area, fellow Lexington, Ky., native Troy Gentry, as a band called Young Country. When John Michael split to pursue his own solo career, Gentry and Montgomery carried on, changing their act's name to Deuce. Gentry toyed with going solo, but was later convinced that, with Montgomery, the act really had something. He looked out at the crowd one night when he and Montgomery were working them into a frenzy, and it just clicked.

"People were having fun out there, and we were thinking, 'Maybe this was meant to be,'" Montgomery recalls.

The duo honed its hillbilly honky-tonk sound playing the local club circuit five sets a night, five nights a week. They fused the Southern rock legacy of Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers and Stevie Ray Vaughan with country icons Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings and Hank Williams Jr.



are never far from reach on the bus, and the hospitable guys are more than willing to share its contents. Visitors are "offered" a mandatory drink by Gentry. "We don't make up the rules," he disclaims. "We just live by 'em."

THE TENNESSEE/GEORGIA STATE LINE, 9 p.m.

It's a good thing they're not performing tonight. Both Gentry and Montgomery are well lubricated from partying for a few hours at Nashville's Longhorn Steakhouse before the bus pulled out. The duo was celebrating the wrap of their second album, *Carrying On*. As the bus barrels down the interstate towards

MONTGOMERY GENTRY

"We're reality country," says Gentry, 34, who emerges to join the conversation. "We sing about everyday life. Good or bad, we're gonna talk about it."

The bus rolls into Sarasota's Holiday Inn, and Montgomery is the first out the door, cell phone to his ear as he paces back and forth outside the coach. Tour manager Robin Majors picks up the keys for the rooms everyone will use on this trip. There are no showers on the bus, so it will be grab-em-if-you-can-get-em over the next two days. As they head for the hotel restaurant, breakfast is the chief priority. But the guys get a little more than the omelette they're looking for.

"There's a girl at the front desk coming to the show tonight that wants you to sign her butt," their waitress blurts.

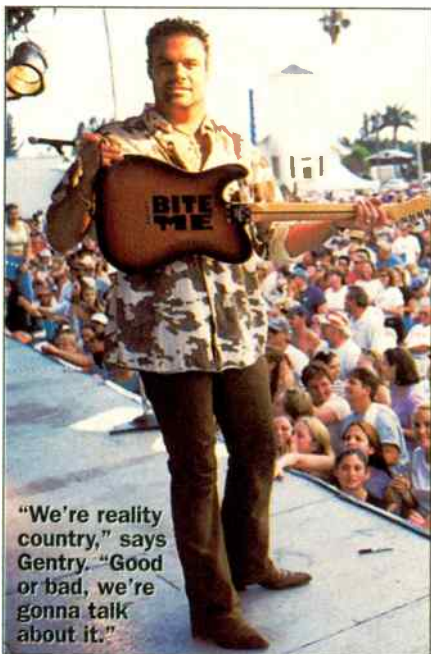
"Well, tell her to bring it on in," says Montgomery, sipping his coffee.

"Not *now!*" says the waitress.

As they wait for their eggs, Montgomery decides to check out the harbor next to the restaurant and slides open a glass door leading outside. Gentry sneaks up behind him and locks it, grinning like the cat that ate the canary. But the attempted prank backfires when Montgomery walks back in through *another* door that Gentry didn't know was open.

Everyone laughs.

There's a curious chemistry that exists between these singing partners. Perhaps



"We're reality country," says Gentry. "Good or bad, we're gonna talk about it."



Gentry and wife Angie shop for fresh crayfish in an open-air Florida market.

it's a testament to their 18-year friendship, or perhaps it's the mutual understanding of the cooperation their career naturally entails, but the two never seem to argue or say a disparaging word to each other.

And they're almost telepathic.

"Yeah, we start laughing because sometimes we know just what each other is thinking," Montgomery chuckles.

Later, the sound check at Joyland goes smoothly. Well, almost. "Cold One Comin' On," a powerful new drinking ballad about depression, isn't up to scratch.

"Let's run through it again," says Montgomery. "Trying to do this song while being sober sucks."

"I don't think the guitars are quite there," Gentry says. "I think it'll just take some time for the band to hit its stride. A couple of gigs."

SHOWTIME, 10:30 PM

As the Joyland crowd's screams can be heard from the bus, the duo is rocking with its pre-show ritual: a few Jim Beam cocktails, and the stereo booming Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Crossfire." Just before they leave for the stage, they hug and share a few inaudible words of encouragement. Then comes their unison battle cry: "We're cocked, locked and ready to rock!"

And so is the crowd. Montgomery Gentry and its five-guitar attack launch into "All Night Long" and the audience shouts back the call-and-response chorus. Gentry sports the devilish grin of a kid in a candy store, gyrating his hips and singing his heart out. His guitar rips

through the acoustic intro of their debut hit, "Hillbilly Shoes," and Montgomery is right there with him, twirling his microphone stand and slapping extended hands of fans at the lip of the stage. Women are perched on their boyfriends' shoulders, singing and clapping along.

"Down On The Farm" rocks the house, and new songs like the rip-roaring "Carrying On" and the adrenaline-pumping "While The World Goes Down The Drain," are greeted with cheers. A woman hoists herself onstage to dance with Gentry.

The band is on fire until "Cold One Comin' On," when Montgomery flubs the words. It's a minor setback, as the band seizes the momentum on a rollicking rendition of The Allman Brothers Band classic, "Good Clean Fun" and Gentry literally *throws* himself into the crowd, body-surfing on a sea of hands. Not to be outdone, Montgomery dives in as well.

"There's nothing like being onstage," he says later. "Now *that's* a high that no drug can give you. I'd be searching for it if there was. Seriously."

The party continues on the bus, as 30 friends, acquaintances, strangers and stragglers squeeze into the narrow aisle for some serious Beam-and-beer bonding. One plastered old-timer gets a little too drunk and paws women as they walk by. Surprisingly, no one slaps him. He's eventually convinced to leave, and at 3:30 a.m. the emptied bus slowly rumbles back to the Holiday Inn. Most remain on the coach, since roll-out time is 6:30 a.m. The Everglades beckon.



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World Radio History



The party train moves on to a swamp buggy in the Florida Everglades.

MONTGOMERY GENTRY

SOMEWHERE IN THE EVERGLADES, SATURDAY, 10:30 p.m.

It's swamp buggy time. Both Montgomery and Gentry have been looking forward all day to riding the monstrous machines. As two dozen revelers with two beer coolers pile onto the mechanized beasts, the vehicles lurch forward into the moonlit swamp. Before long, Montgomery, Gentry, his wife, Angie, and nine more pals are stranded in the bog.

"This is what it's all about," says Montgomery with a laugh, as the other buggy wheels away to retrieve some tow rope.

Everyone is on a high after this afternoon's blazing performance. The band was hot, and during "Good Clean Fun," more than 17 people climbed onstage to party. Caught up in the frenzy, Montgomery threw his prized hat into the crowd.

"It was one of those moments where as soon as I did it, I wished I could take it back," he says, rolling his eyes. "I watched it sail across this sea of upraised hands in what seemed like slow motion."

Meanwhile the party rages on – in the middle of a gator-infested swamp. While waiting for the rescue buggy to return, various members are exploring places to relieve their bladders.

Thirty minutes later, Montgomery Gentry's buggy is free to roam again. Sailing through the swamp, rushing through the reeds, the beer once again begins to flow.

Gentry is trying to stand up to moon the other buggy, but a cloud of inebriation fogs his judgment. The buggy jolts to a stop, and Gentry goes flying into a blanket of reeds that cushions his fall. Wife Angie shrieks and revelers on both buggies double over in laughter.

It's after midnight. Time to head to Hollywood.

HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA, SUNDAY, 8:30 a.m.

"We're gonna see Hank Jr.!" bellows Montgomery.

They're rolling into C.B. Smith Park for the 99.9 KISS FM Country Chili Cook-Off where they find 10,000 country-starved fans. *This* is the gig everyone has been waiting for.

There are other acts on the bill – The Kinleys, Aaron Tippin, and headliner Kenny Chesney – but Bocephus is *the man* in the eyes of Montgomery Gentry. Montgomery shakes his head.

"I feel sorry for Chesney," he says. "Oh, did I say that out loud?"

He laughs.

"I can't imagine anyone following Hank Jr. There are two things you don't do: You don't talk back to your Mama, and you don't follow Hank!"

Montgomery Gentry flies through the 45-minute set, but the real highlight occurs

after the show: Hank Jr. wants to meet them. Now!

"Where's Angie? Where's my wife?" Gentry asks, before he and Montgomery are whisked aboard Hank's coach without her. Ten minutes later, they emerge all smiles. But the real rite of passage occurs near the end of Williams' set. During "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight," Hank addresses the crowd. "I've still got some rowdy friends hanging out, like Montgomery Gentry," he yells. "There aren't many of us left. We've got to keep it loud and proud!"

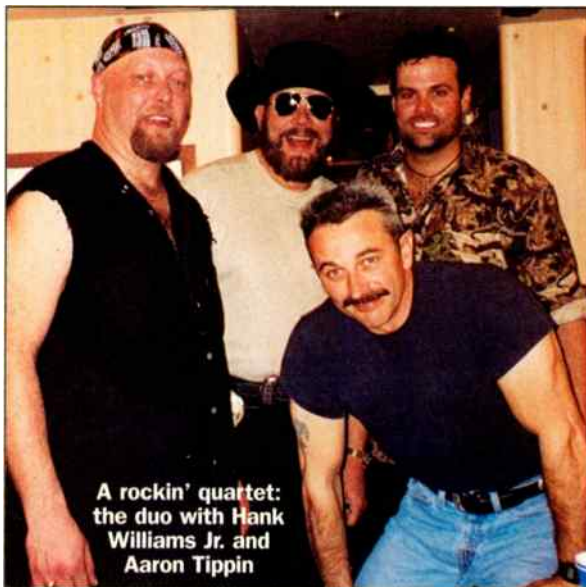
He then waves Montgomery and Gentry, along with Aaron Tippin, onstage, and places his guitar in Gentry's hands. Then, for about five minutes, Montgomery and Gentry are in seventh heaven, actually sharing the stage with one of their heroes. Life doesn't get any better.

HEADED HOME, MONDAY, 9:00 a.m.

As the bus clears the Tennessee border, Montgomery and Gentry are spent but happy. Things are looking good. The word on "She Couldn't Change Me," the first single from *Carrying On*, is positive. They also secured a slot on Brooks & Dunn's Neon Circus & Wild West Show with Toby Keith, Keith Urban and Cledus T. Judd that promises to be one heck of a party. Montgomery Gentry will feel right at home.

"As you've noticed, we like to have a good time," says Gentry. "Life's short, and we wanna live every single day of it."

"And if we're dreamin', I don't want nobody to pinch us and wake us up," Montgomery adds. "If they do, there's gonna be an ass-whippin'!" *



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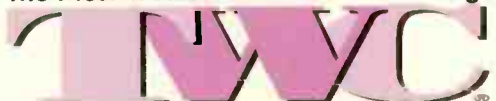
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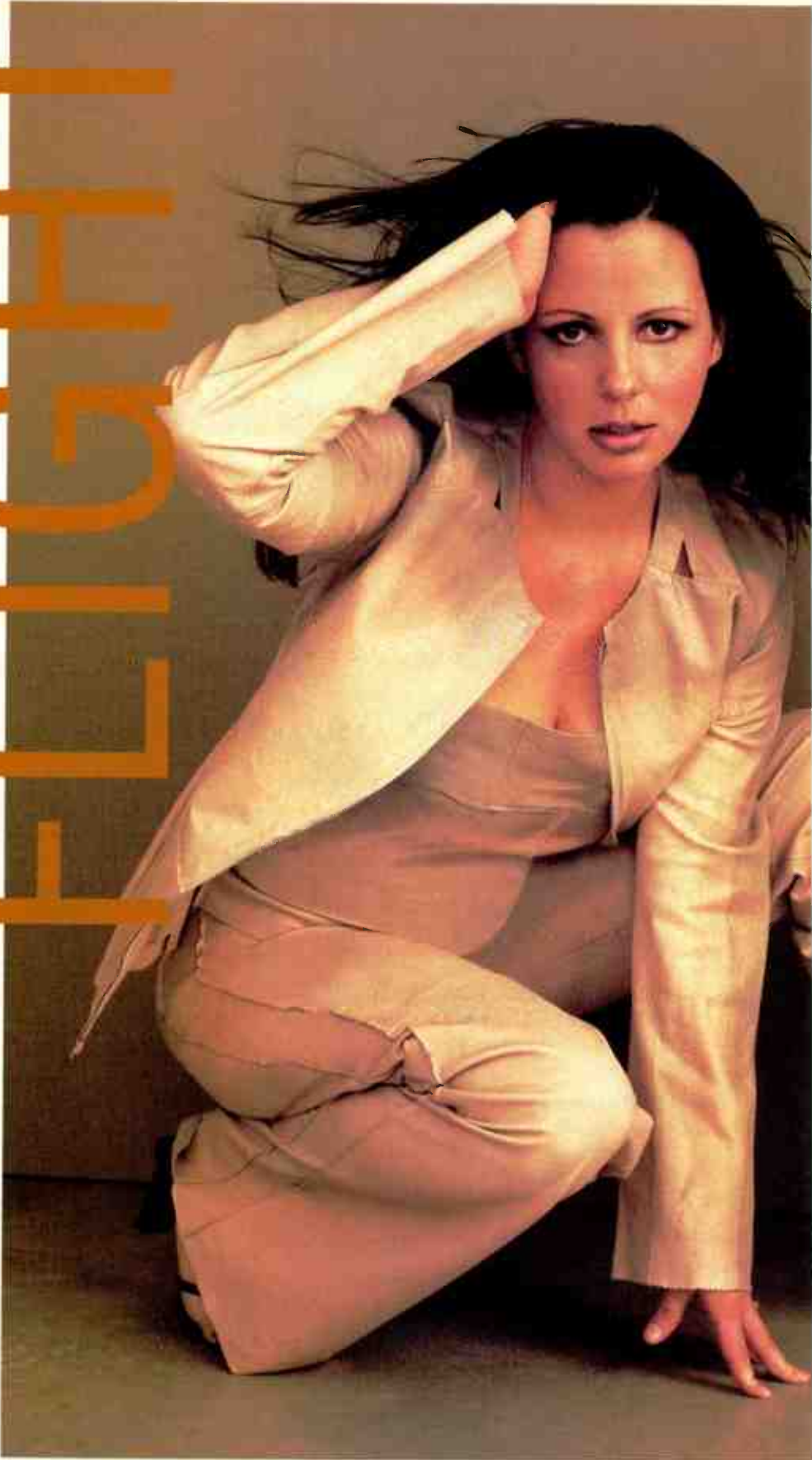
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TAKENIGHT





Sara Evans finally finds her path to stardom

For Sara Evans, the epiphany arrived in a flurry of happy hellos and excitedly extended hands. Walking around the Country Radio Seminar, an annual music business convention in Nashville, the statuesque brunette realized she no longer needed to introduce herself to the thousands of radio deejays crowding the corridors.

by Michael McCall

"I've been coming since 1997, and I always had to remind them who I was," she says with a laugh. "This time the radio people are getting up and coming to me. They're even getting their pictures taken with me. It's like, 'Oh, *this* is different!'"

As she finishes the story, Evans beams a satisfied smile – and lets out a sigh of relief. Thanks to the hit title song of her album *Born To Fly*, and the success of its follow-up, the ballad "I Could Not Ask For More," she's crossed the threshold from up-and-comer to certified new star.

"It feels like everything has finally fallen into place," she says, her voice weary but happy. "It's been really hard. But now it all seems magical."

As she sings in the autobiographical "Born To Fly," Evans has long felt poised for fame and fortune. Since childhood, when she sang as a young girl in the Evans family band in Missouri, people have predicted that she would one day soar among country's biggest stars.

But the last few years have kept her down to earth. Her debut album, 1997's *Three Chords And The Truth*, drew enormous critical praise but little airplay. "I was very disappointed," says Evans. "I felt like the train was running away from me."

Like several other talented but roots-oriented young performers – Mandy Barnett, Bobbie Cryner and Danni Leigh among them – Evans could have lost her record deal before realizing her potential. Instead, she chose to drastically overhaul her music and her look, transforming herself into a performer with an upbeat style that strikes a balance between the contemporary country of the Dixie Chicks and the Middle American adult pop of Faith Hill and Martina McBride.

Her transformation from twangy rural innocent to confident pop-country diva provides a clear-cut study of how Nashville and country radio shape the direction of young performers. Once a country purist, Evans realized that in order to make it on the radio she had to embrace an uptown sound and image. And when she did, radio enthusiastically welcomed her.

"I definitely am a classic case of artist development," she says.

Having mastered the game, she's now reaping its rewards: Evans garnered her first major awards nomination earlier this year when the ACM Awards placed her in the elite Top Female Vocalist category with Hill, McBride, Jo Dee Messina and Lee Ann Womack. She's also been invited to participate in this year's three biggest country concert tours. She'll team up with Alan Jackson, then climb aboard the massive and prestigious George Strait Country Music Festival, and finally link up with Reba McEntire, McBride and Jamie O'Neal as part of a package called *Country Divas*.

"What's great about Sara is that her build has not been meteoric," explains Joe Galante, chairman of RLG/Nashville. "It's given her time to learn her craft and develop. As a writer and an artist, she's taken giant leaps from one album to the next. She's always been an unbelievably talented singer, and now she's getting the chance to put all her talent and experience into her performance. It's a deadly combination onstage. She's brilliant up there."

Now that *Born To Fly* has lifted Evans off the ground, the singer can better appreciate the fact that her career built slowly and steadily.

"The timing has been perfect," she explains, "because now I'm mature

TAKING FLIGHT

enough to deal with my success.”

As Galante recalls, Evans came to RCA Records with definite ideas on how she should sound and dress. “She definitely had an attitude about what she wanted to do with her entire look and the kind of records she wanted to make,” he says.

Evans rolls her eyes, characterizing herself as a naive firebrand in her early RCA days.

“I was very determined to be different,” she remembers. “At first, I thought I really wanted to go with that retro thing. Now that I look back, although *Three Chords And The Truth* was very cool, I’m not naturally that hillbilly. Pete Anderson, who produced it, that’s *his* thing. That’s what *he* does. So now I think it’s better that it didn’t work out, because I like what I am today much better.”

Nonetheless, while *Three Chords And The Truth* didn’t launch any hit songs, it did give her a reputation as an artist of enormous ability.

“That whole album was really instrumental in getting me respect,” she admits. “It got great critical acclaim. Other artists in Nashville started calling me in to sing harmony on their records, and I was always getting to sing on special projects and soundtracks.”

But after *Three Chords* fell on deaf ears, Galante asked Evans to create a



Sara and her “Born To Fly” co-writers, Marcus Hummon and Darrell Scott, celebrate the song’s No. 1 success.

more contemporary album. “At the time, Sara was very determined *not* to become a pop singer,” he recalls. “I said to her, ‘Sara, you could take any record on the pop charts and sing it, and with your voice it’s going to be country. Now, are we going to make the tracks more contemporary?’ She agreed that yes, we would.”

Initial reservations or not, Evans eventually leapt wholeheartedly into a

contemporary sound. She agreed to change producers, initially approaching Paul Worley, best-known for co-producing McBride and the Dixie Chicks. But Worley was busy with McBride, so Evans recruited Norro Wilson and Buddy Cannon, a production team that has worked with Kenny Chesney and John Michael Montgomery.

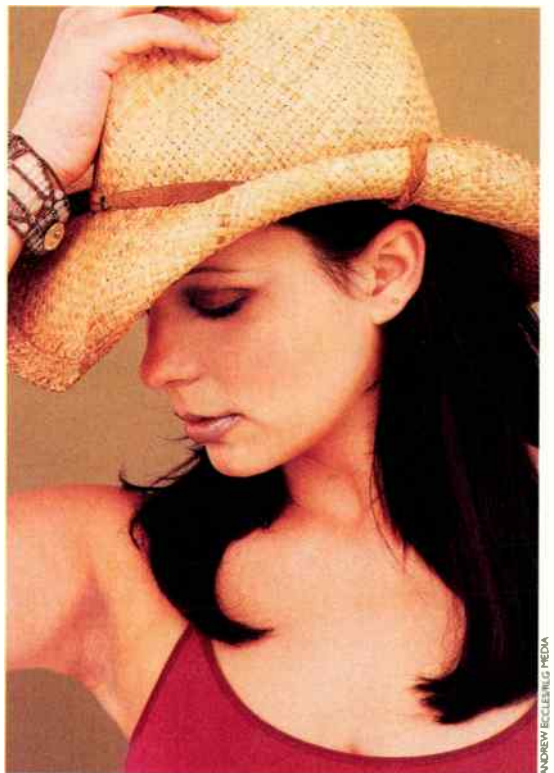
The resulting album, 1998’s *No Place That Far*, found Evans revamped as a pop-country chanteuse. She ditched the shuffles and torch songs to embrace bouncy tunes and dramatic ballads. The album’s moody title cut became the singer’s first No. 1 hit, and the collection sold well enough to earn her a gold record. But the album didn’t carry the sustained impact needed to make Evans a household name.

“It was disappointing that we made the record so fast,” she says of the producers. “I was like, ‘Wait! Slow down.’ They had the entire record tracked in two days. Buddy and Norro don’t really ‘build’ records. Whatever the musician thinks of at the moment it’s being recorded, that’s what goes on your record.”

With *Born To Fly*, the experience was completely different. Worley cleared time in his schedule to collaborate with Evans, and the two spent several months painstakingly piecing songs together.

“Before we started, Paul came to my house for dinner one night,” Evans says. “I told him, ‘You’re going to have to be the one to put me over the top. You’ve got to do it.’ He said he was up to the challenge.”

As soon as Evans completed the album, she felt she had finally created the collection of songs that would establish her. A big part of her evolution came from her personal life: She gave birth to her first baby, Avery, and then moved with husband Craig Schelske from rural Springfield, Tenn., to a home in Brentwood, a comfortable bedroom community south of Nashville.



“When I had Avery, something clicked in me and I became a different person,” she says. “I became so confident.”

The self-assurance shined through her songwriting and her recording. “I just knew that nothing was going to stop me,” she affirms. “Everything about me as a woman had changed. I think I really grew up. I got to the point where everything artistically from now on will be my decision, because it’s my career and my art.”

As for her future, Evans expects to move even further away from her past traditional sound. “I see my music going edgy,” she predicts. “But that’s what I think today. If the music turns back where it starts to sound more country again, then I’ll probably adapt. In the entertainment industry, you have to follow trends.”

After rolling through her career with bright-eyed urgency, Sara Evans stops and takes a rare deep breath. “I fully believe God put me on this earth to do what I’m doing,” she contends. “He didn’t give it to me right away. I’m not sure why, but I think I know. I had to have time to fully understand how to appreciate success. And, believe me, I appreciate it now more than ever.” *



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TRAIL BLAZERS



MICHAEL STUESSY/CHARLEY PRIDE FAN CLUB

Hitting His Stride

Fans tell Charley Pride he's 'singing better than ever.' With a new album out and plans for three others, who's he to disagree?

Last October, Charley Pride realized a lifelong dream when he was elected to the Country Music Hall Of Fame. Few are more deserving: He amassed 29 No. 1 hits over 14 years, including such classics as "Kiss An Angel Good Mornin'" and "Is Anybody Goin' To San Antone."

For Pride, the honor marked the zenith of a life that began 63 years ago on a sharecropper's farm in Sledge, Miss. A former Montana smelting plant worker, Pride initially played pro baseball for the Negro Leagues in the '50s and even tried out for the California Angels, before being sidelined by an arm injury.

His life changed when a pair of Reds, Foley and Sovine, heard him sing and directed him to Nashville. In 1965, he signed with RCA Records and swiftly scored a Top 10 hit with "Just Between You And Me." Although Pride later won CMA Entertainer and Male Vocalist of the Year honors, his lasting legacy may be his ability to look beyond the racial discrimination that could have impaired his career.

By picking cotton and enduring hard labor in a smelter, do you feel you're a better country singer because you're familiar with the world of a working person?

"It has to start in the home. You don't stray too far from your raising. My mother always told me, 'Don't go around with no chip on your shoulder. There's good people everywhere. Don't try to keep your nose in the air.' There's not one night that I'm onstage that it doesn't cross my mind that any one of those people giving me all those accolades could be up there. That's the way I've always looked at it. People say, 'You don't act like no star. You just walk out here like anybody else. You go to the restroom. Where's your entourage? Where are your bodyguards?' I don't have any. I carry my own briefcase."

You certainly have more drive than the average person. You kept at it with baseball. When that didn't work out for you, you turned to music.

"People have asked, 'What if you hadn't made it in singing?' I've always been interested in acting and movies. I probably

would have gone to California like John Wayne, been a prop man, and next thing I would have been up on the stage. Or maybe I would have started working with a company and started at the bottom and ended up as CEO. It's just the kind of drive I have. I believe I'm built that way."

Though you recently released your Tribute To Jim Reeves album, I understand you're planning a busy year in the studio.

"I'm going to be very busy in the next 10 months. I'm trying now to get the songs together for a Christmas album. I'm going to do a gospel album. Then I'm going to record a tribute album to Marty Robbins."

Why did you decide to salute Jim Reeves?

"I've always loved his singing; he was one smooth singer. Even though I never met him, he's one of the people I've always admired. I just wanted to do a tribute to him. Plus my Hank Williams tribute album, *There's A Little Bit Of Hank In Me*, was my last million seller. My fans have told me they'd like to see me do a tribute to Jim Reeves."

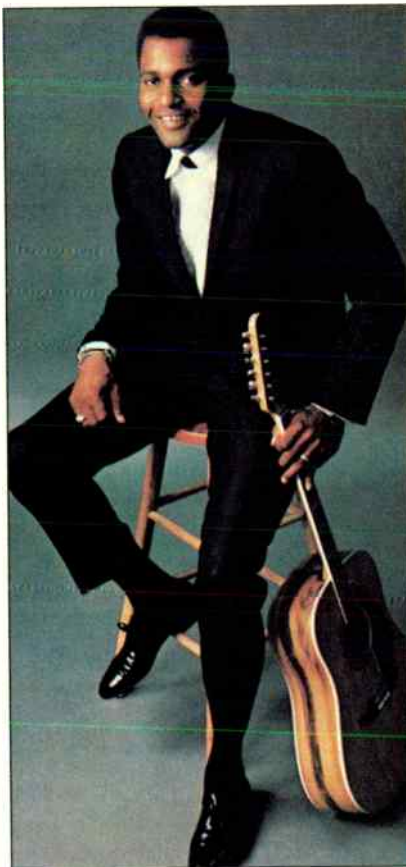
You've recorded many great songs over the years. Do you consider any of them autobiographical?

"A bunch of them: 'I Wonder Could I Live There Anymore,' 'Mississippi Cotton Pickin' Town,' which is about our hometown. The guy who wrote it worked for the grocery where we grew up. 'That's Why I Love You So Much' reminds me of when I was trying to get in baseball, and my wife Rozene stuck with me."

Did you ever have input in selecting your early singles?

"When I cut 'Snakes Crawl At Night,' 'Atlantic Coastal Line' and 'Just Between

You And Me,' I remember telling my producer, Jack Clement, that I liked that last one. He said, 'No, we ain't going to release "Just Between You And Me." We're going to release "Snakes Crawl At Night."' They didn't want me singing love songs at that point because people might wonder who I was singing to and what the color of their skin would be. All of that factored into the equation, and I think they had a point. Even though we weren't off the ground, it ended up that all my fans want to hear me sing are love songs. 'Just Between You And Me' ended up being my first Top 10 record. So now I say, 'Charley, level with yourself: do you like that song?' If I like it, I know my fans will."



COURTESY CHARLEY PRIDE



CHARLEY ALMOST COLLECTED his hits in another field. At age 16, he left home to join baseball's Negro American League, playing for Memphis and other teams. Charley (second from left) also had try-outs with the California Angels in the early 1960s.

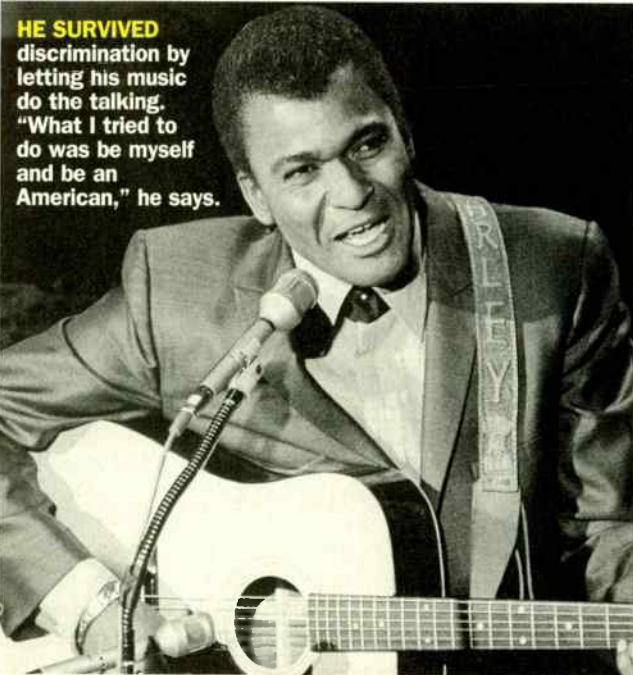
COURTESY CHARLEY PRIDE

Do you have a favorite?

"I've been lucky that where most artists have one signature song, I have four or five. It's hard to pin me down. I do know I've always wanted to sell records, and was kind of disappointed when I slid off the charts into the 'legends and classics' [category]. It would be one thing if I couldn't sing. But some of my fans have told me they think I'm singing better than ever. The time may be ripe for someone of my vintage to record an 'A' song that has the potential of a 'For The Good Times.' "

How would you define a leisurely day?

"I've never been extravagant. I like to play a good winning golf game, and sometimes I like to just lay back and watch TV. I love cartoons. It don't take much to satisfy me."



HE SURVIVED discrimination by letting his music do the talking. "What I tried to do was be myself and be an American," he says.



CHARLEY'S WIFE of 45 years, Rozene, still oversees the business end of his career. This past year, he realized a lifelong dream – induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

LARRY HILL

CHRIS HARRIS

You were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame with the late Faron Young, who – you say – took a little bit of time to warm up to you in the 1960s. Were there performers who never did warm up to you?

"People say, 'It must have been rough on you going out on that stage.' They thought I was getting the same kind of treatment as Jackie Robinson. I never did. When I'm talking to reporters, they'll give me that I-can't-believe-it look. I say, 'Fourteen gold records in America, 35 worldwide, four quadruple platinum albums Even if I had been called the N-word every time I walked onstage, I'm still a success.' They agree. I believe that I've always wanted to be a staunch American and have all the rights. Although I was excluded from a lot of things, through segregation policies, that wasn't my dilemma. So what I tried to do was be myself and be an American. When I walk on that stage, I'm Charley Pride."

— Michael Streissguth

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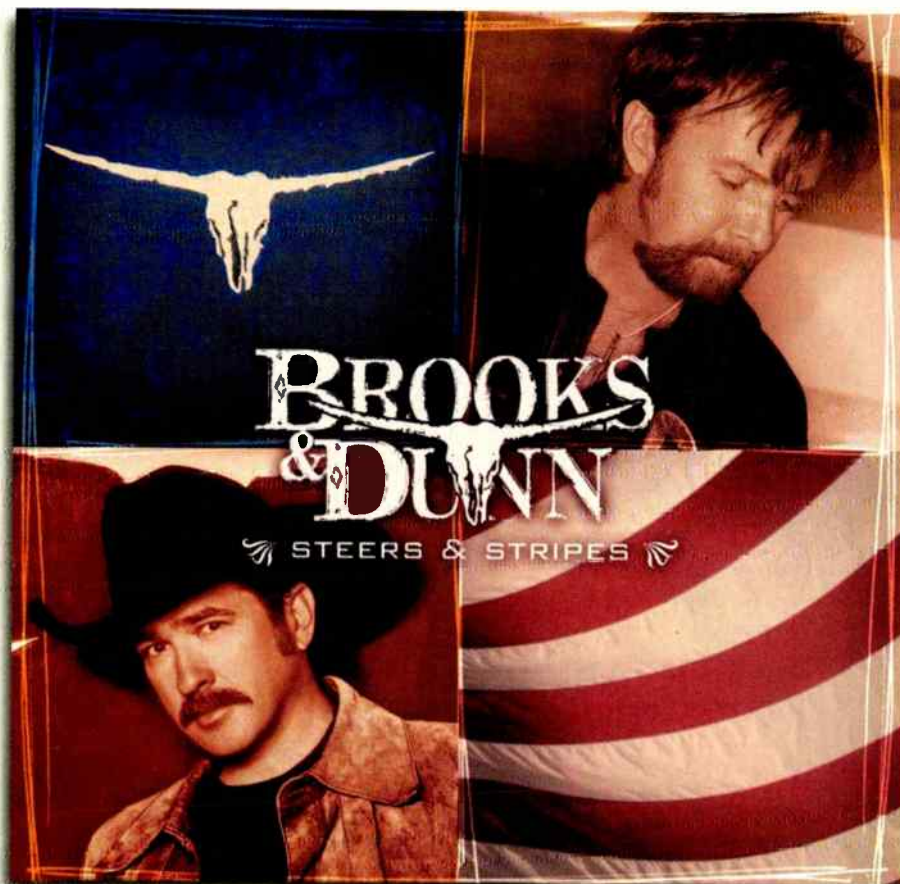
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REVIEWS



BROOKS & DUNN **Steers & Stripes**

ARISTA NASHVILLE

★★★★

With Montgomery Gentry breathing down their necks and a pair of so-so albums in their immediate past, Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn now make a run for the border. Not the one between Texas and Mexico, which so often figures into their songs, but the line between “has been” and “still in the game.” You’ll be glad to know they cross successfully into safe territory.

Steers & Stripes isn’t a rebirth, but for the duo that helped usher in the country dance club craze a decade ago, it’s a satisfying comeback. There are two small surprises: One, the sum is greater than its parts, boasting only four truly outstanding songs; and two, Brooks, who turns in more than his usual share of lead vocals, has apparently learned how to stay on pitch and vary his jovial monotone.

First-time Brooks & Dunn producer Mark Wright energizes the pair, goading

them to build on their strengths, even if the turbo-tonk stomp numbers sound rather familiar. Brooks & Dunn still sing of yearning and heartache, but they now sound more determined to do something about it.

Dunn’s tendency to wallow in hurt has been supplanted here with a hell-bent desire to save a relationship. With “Ain’t Nothing ’Bout You,” a brooding song of romantic obsession, he draws on a reservoir of secret memories to create a primal performance. On “The Long Goodbye,” a middle-of-the-road offering awash in soft-rock guitars, he says it’s over, but his anguished vocal lets you know he won’t accept it. Finally, as the lusty trucker of “The Last Thing I Do,” Dunn is fueled by caffeine and testosterone, putting the hammer down to get home to the one he loves, while churning guitars evoke the man’s overheated engine.

All in all, good news: Brooks & Dunn have “steered” themselves back on track and into the game.

— Alanna Nash

CHARLIE ROBISON

Step Right Up

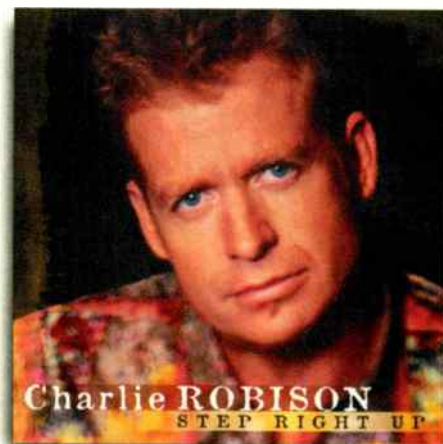
LUCKY DOG/COLUMBIA

★★★★

He’s boisterous, bawdy and full of bull. *Every* party needs a character like Charlie Robison to agitate folks into loosening up a bit. On *Step Right Up*, the lanky Texan shoulders through polite conventions of modern-day country music to present randy, ram-bunctious and rockin’ roadhouse tunes that are playfully rude. Along the way, he blows the top off of Nashville’s mindset of political correctness and rubs some lust into the sensitive valentines delivered by most contemporary male singers.

As audacious and gutsy as Robison is, his intelligent, wry self-deprecation keeps him from crossing into the redneck belligerence that sometimes befalls Hank Williams Jr. and other country-rock swaggerers. Robison’s machismo is more cheeky Mel Gibson than stonefaced Clint Eastwood, and his twinkling eyes and brainy wordplay fill his narrative songs with a lighter heart.

The husband of banjo-wielding Dixie Chick, Emily Robison, displays plenty of gutsy fortitude in his song selection. “The Preacher,” for example, is a ribald yarn concerning a church-going sinner who spins a deceitful tale that’s more blasphemous than the Chicks’ “Sin Wagon” – and just as much fun.



And when Robison tackles love, it’s sexual rather than sensitive: “Right Man For The Job” sets a carnal boast to a jubilant guitar riff, while a rousing cover of the Hollisters’

"Sweet Inspiration" toasts how his lover cranks his libido into overdrive. He revives two NRBQ songs – "Comes To Me Naturally" and "I Want You Bad" – and highlights the rakish qualities inherent in both.

Surprisingly, Robison is even more compelling when stepping away from guitar-fueled, rockin' honky-tonk tunes. "John O'Reilly," one of eight songs he wrote or co-wrote, is a full-tilt Celtic tune reminiscent of the great Irish rock band The Pogues. It's about an immigrant boxer who double-crosses the Mob. The jaunty Tex-Mex sound of "One In A Million" provides the perfect backdrop to the hilarious story of a lying scoundrel who invents outrageous excuses to explain why he's always late for his dates.

With *Step Right Up*, Robison puts himself in league with Steve Earle, Joe Ely and other remarkable Texas rockers. As country music goes, he's just the kind of refreshing stylist that the genre desperately needs.

— Michael McCall

TIM MCGRAW

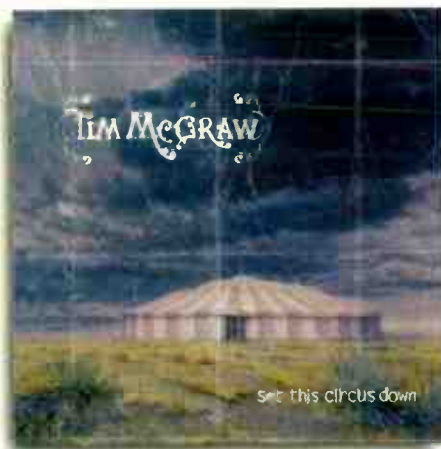
Set This Circus Down

CURB

On *Set This Circus Down*, Tim McGraw climbs into a cannon and aims to blast himself through the Big Top – to pop stardom. Most of his 14 new songs soar with rock 'n' roll bombast, and this modern-country ringmaster leaps through a variety of musical hoops, all flaming bright with dramatic statements and epic themes.

Like wife Faith Hill, McGraw targets the pop market by emphasizing melodrama and intensity. Unlike Garth Brooks, McGraw doesn't change identities to make a modern-rock move. Instead, after years of walking a highwire, balancing country and pop sounds, he dives without a net into a pumped-up style that leaves any hint of backwoods flavor behind. Nothing on *Set This Circus Down* romps with the simple, fun spirit of past hits "I Like It, I Love It" and "Down On The Farm." One song, "Smiling," takes the whimsical philosophical approach McGraw employed on "My Next Thirty Years," but everything else rolls out at a fever pitch.

To McGraw's credit, he repeatedly takes bold musical and lyrical chances that will challenge his fans. For example, "Let Me



Love You" incorporates Latin rhythms. "Unbroken" uses an oddly timed piano pattern. And "Take Me Away" features a sophisticated string arrangement. The moody "Forget About Us" would fit on a Bruce Springsteen album, while the modern-pop "Angel Boy" brings in altered harmonies, psychedelic flourishes and other alternative-music effects.

Lyrically, McGraw breaks away from macho posturing to portray himself as a multidimensional fellow. "Cowboy In Me," for instance, speaks of how impulsiveness and stubborn pride can damage a man's goals. And on "Angry All The Time," an immensely powerful tune from songwriter Bruce Robison, McGraw delves into the confusing gray areas of relationships rather than the black-and-white issues normally expressed in modern country songs.

On one of the album's centerpieces, "Things Change," McGraw invokes Hank Williams, Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings to address the importance of breaking with musical convention. But McGraw is changing, too, and here he seems to be predicting that his own music might shake things up the way those icons once did. ("Things Change" has, in fact, already sparked controversy. McGraw's CMA performance of the song last October was uploaded by fans to Napster, the Internet song-exchange service, and downloaded by several radio stations, appearing on the charts based on the strength of airplay alone.)

As McGraw goes further uptown, he's not just trying to appeal to a larger base of fans. He's also trying to create music of substance that will elevate his respect as well as his fame.

— M. M.

DIAMOND RIO

One More Day

ARISTA NASHVILLE

Hit singles are often efficient assessments of an artist's capabilities, but they don't always provide the *whole* picture. Sometimes what you hear is exactly what you get. With others, what you hear on the radio just scratches the surface of a formidable talent. Throw Diamond Rio in the latter batch: Their new album yields both hits and depth, and should go far to extend a 10-year success story that includes such high points as "Unbelievable," "How Your Love Makes Me Feel" and "Mama Don't Forget To Pray For Me."

The multitalented sextet shines consistently on *One More Day*, a highly polished, 13-song collection that's easily their best effort to date.

A wide array of modern pop-country tied together by the band's musical prowess – the tasty instrumental flourishes of mandolinist Gene Johnson,



pianist Dan Truman and guitarist Jimmy Olander – and by Marty Roe's powerful, full-ranged voice, *One More Day* is full of meaningful songs. There's the ebullient, upbeat "Here I Go Fallin'," the poignant message of the title track and a stunning duet with Chely Wright about a couple's emotional struggle with alcoholism, "I'm Trying."

The dazzling three-part vocal consonance of Roe, Johnson and bassist Dana Williams also figures prominently throughout the rest of the album. The mountain-grown harmonies of the bluegrass-fueled "Hearts Against The Wind," the playfully presented

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commentary of "Stuff" and breezy, Latin rhythms of "I Think I Love You" all prove that the band is more than the sum of its hits. Overall, *One More Day* rides the crest of a Diamond Rio wave that continues to roll.

— M. M.

JOHN ANDERSON

Nobody's Got It All

COLUMBIA NASHVILLE

★★★★

John Anderson has signed enough recording contracts to make a lawyer dizzy. Columbia Records makes a seventh major-label home for the Florida native, country music's ultimate survivor.

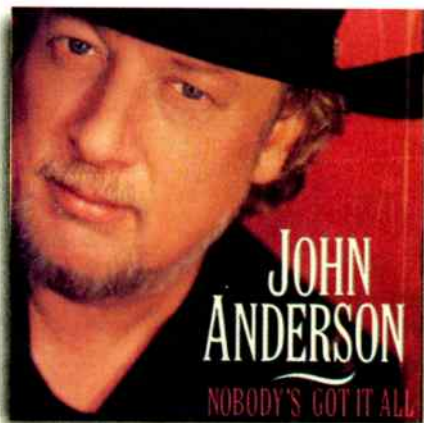
As much as he's perceived as Nashville's favorite son, in truth he has forged an uneasy alliance with Music City over the past 20-odd years. Anderson has constantly fought to defend his soulful style and distinctive Deputy Dawg drawl from being buried under a commercially sonic oil slick.

He sounds best when he's gritty.

When Anderson sounds the most natural – as on outstanding past chestnuts "Wild And Blue," "Swingin'," "Down In Tennessee" and "Seminole Wind" – he ranks among modern times' most emotionally expressive performers. But he hasn't always won the battle, which is why his uneven catalog dips as often as it rises.

On *Nobody's Got It All*, the fight continues ... and this round goes to Anderson.

Producers Blake Chancey and Paul Worley, who also work with the Dixie Chicks, take Anderson's swamp-roots sound and give it a new twist by matching stomping fiddles, mandolins, banjos,



Dobros and autoharps with arena-rock drums and screaming guitars. Some arrangements occasionally suffer from clutter, but for the most part the music supports, rather than deserts, Anderson.

The album's greatest strength lies in its songs. Whether it's the honest insight of the ballad "Go To Town," the pointed social commentary of "Five Generations Of Rock County Wilsons," or the good-'ol'-boy humor in the country rocker "Baby's Gone Home To Mama," the dozen songs here do a good job of displaying Anderson's breadth and depth.

Nobody's Got It All also soars on Anderson's compelling cover choices, Bruce Springsteen's "Atlantic City" and Chris Knight's "It Ain't Easy Being Me."

Maybe nobody has it all. But on this latest and notable comeback attempt, John Anderson proves he has more than most.

— M. M.

SHERRIE AUSTIN

Followin' A Feelin'

WE RECORDS

★★★

Former *Facts Of Life* starlet Sherrie Austin has followed her country heart from her native Australia to Nashville and through a two-album stint with Arista. Now re-emerging as the cornerstone of new independent label WE Records with *Followin' A Feelin'*, she takes advantage of the extra creative freedom the upstart company affords her. Regrettably, the disc falls short of an artistic triumph.

Austin ventures into traditional country, but her results are mixed. "Goin', Goin', Gone" is a potentially classic hurting song that Austin describes as "hard-core country that didn't fit on my other records." Here, it's an album highlight due to her convincing delivery and evocative lines such as, *Like the moon fades with the dawn, I'm goin', goin', gone.* The song "Followin' A Feelin'" is another pinnacle, with Austin cutting loose on a spirited mission statement following a heartfelt spoken-word intro.

On the other side of the ledger, though, is her banal rendition of Dolly Parton's "Jolene." Austin may have cut her teeth singing this as a teenager, but it should've remained buried Down Under. She rushes her delivery, in turn obscuring the original's poignant feel.



The remaining seven tracks veer between fairly standard contemporary pop-inflected country and rootsier fare.

Austin does possess an attractive and assertive voice. It is relatively twang-free, drawing valid comparisons to fellow Aussie Olivia Newton-John, and can be a strong, clear and flexible instrument, complementing her no-nonsense persona. But it occasionally shifts from trill to shrill, illustrated best by the overly ambitious "My Brilliant Mistake."

There are moments when Austin shines as a writer, although not nearly enough of them. Co-writing eight songs with producer Will Rambeau, the lyrical maturity apparent in the sage advice of "In The Meantime" and "Time, Love & Money" confirms she's more than a pretty face. That's what makes the inconsistency that befalls *Followin' A Feelin'* so disheartening: Sherrie Austin is capable of offering so much more.

— Kerry Doole

HAL KETCHUM

Lucky Man

CURB

★★★★

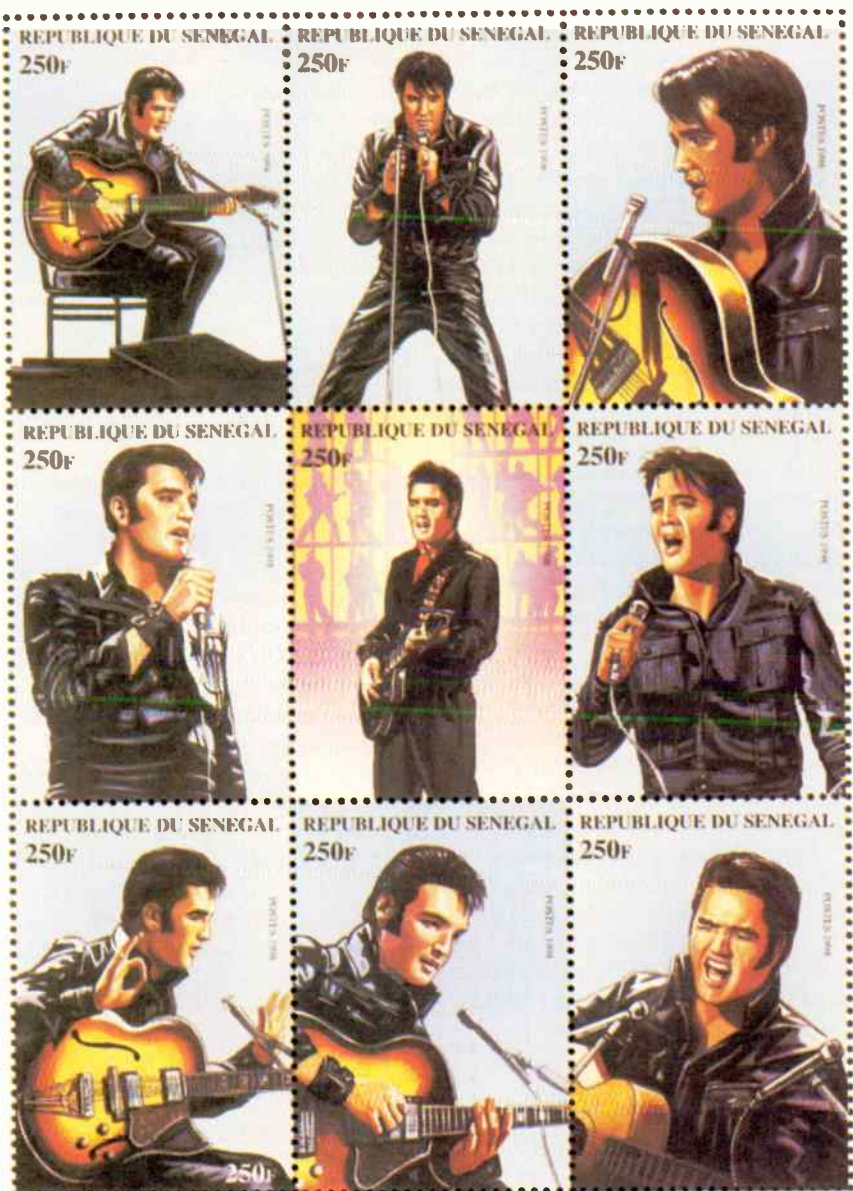
Hal Ketchum has experienced a fair amount of personal bliss over the past few years. He's kicked his drug habit, recovered from a debilitating disease, survived a bitter divorce and remarried. Then, in 1999, he and wife Gina adopted a baby daughter from Bulgaria, and earlier this year, the couple welcomed the birth of a biological daughter. And with Rodney Crowell as producer, Ketchum has hired his most sympathetic accomplice yet for *Lucky Man*, his seventh studio album.

Elvis Fans “All Shook Up” Over Postal Encore!

Rare Collectible Opportunity Incites Collector Frenzy

Memphis, TN – Elvis fans and collectors are “all shook up” over the latest issue of Limited Edition Official Postage Stamps honoring “the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll.” The mint condition 9 stamp set commemorates Elvis’ 1968 television special which fans now refer to as the “comeback special.” Some collectors are calling this a rare collectible opportunity for admirers of this American icon.

“With the public’s continuing fascination with everything Elvis, it wouldn’t surprise me if these stamps became one of our most popular collectibles ever,” stated George Hubbard of the International Collectors Society, worldwide collectible authorities and distributors of the stamps. “And knowledgeable collectors who



Collectors race for Elvis Presley Stamps.

understand the simple, yet powerful laws of supply and demand realize that when many collectors chase a limited number of items, there’s no telling what will happen to the price in the future. That’s why it’s so important to act quickly.”

Each of the 9 full color stamps is about four times the size of a traditional U.S. postage stamp. And these stamps are officially authorized and endorsed by the Graceland estate. The stamps are suitable for framing and display, or even passing on to future generations.

“This is a sensational way for anyone to establish a link with one of the most enduring pop icons of

the 20th century,” added Hubbard.

The stamps are available while supplies last for just \$9.95 (plus postage & handling) along with a Certificate of Authenticity. All purchases are backed by the ICS 100% Buy Back Guarantee. And anyone who orders by phone will receive the collectors pamphlet “99 Little Known Facts About Elvis Presley” absolutely free. Purchase is limited to 6 sets per household. Send check or money order to ICS 10045 Red Run Boulevard, Suite 350CMMEV, Owings Mills, Maryland 21117. Credit card holders may call toll-free

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Staying away mostly from serious topics, Ketchum sounds incredibly cheerful. Just how chipper? Well, you'd be able to tell if he wasn't. Ketchum, a New York native who now resides in Nashville, possesses a passionate tenor that wears its heart on its sleeve and seems incapable of hiding its emotions. The happier he gets, the more tremolos he packs onto the end of his phrases. His tremolo is wigglin' big time on "She Was Something, You're Everything" – even without the encouragement of a booming baritone guitar intro. *I was searching for something, she had what it took*, he sings, the arrangement building as Ketchum's heart teeters to the edge of explosion.

There are a few more of Cupid's musical arrows aimed at his wife: "That's How Much You Mean To Me" offers an ardent declaration to a soulmate, while "Loving You Makes Me A Better Man" finds Ketchum's vocals soaring throughout his humble pronouncement, complemented by tasteful acoustic guitar. Last, but not least, Ketchum ends the 11-song album with the intense ballad "She Is," employing an angelic falsetto to portray his wife as *the golden light that lies beside me*.

Ketchum shows his reverie in other ways: the calm finger-snap rhythm of "You Can't Go Back" and its fun *shagalagaboomboom* harmony; the rockabilly cover romp of Roy Hamilton's classic "Don't Let Go"; and a dramatic, orchestrated, over-the-top duet with the incomparable Dolly Parton on "Two Of The Lucky Ones."

What makes *Lucky Man* so rewarding



is that Ketchum accomplishes all this without stooping to saccharine sentimentality. He's an intelligent writer, smart enough to recognize and appreciate his lot in life, and sing about it. Hal Ketchum may be lucky, but he's also skillful.

— Nick Krewen

CHARLEY PRIDE
Tribute To Jim Reeves

(MUSIC CITY)

★★★★

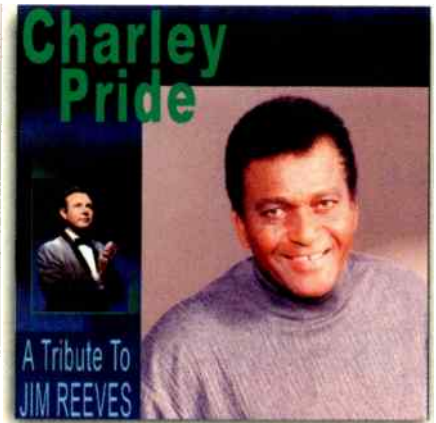
Although they never met, there is something that Charley Pride and Jim Reeves shared besides their love of music: Both were baseball players whose professional aspirations were cut short by injuries.

So perhaps it's appropriate that for his first new studio CD since 1988's *I'm Gonna Love Her On The Radio*, Charley Pride, recent CMA Hall of Fame inductee, pinch hits for a voice that was prematurely silenced in a 1964 plane crash. Although Reeves' popularity didn't die with him – indeed, he scored six No. 1 hits *following* his death – this new collection is sure to heighten his profile. As for Pride, he's singing as well as he ever has, with a dulcet baritone more than up to the task of delivering 15 of Reeves' greatest hits. Among the selection of ballads and mid-tempo masterpieces are Reeves' monster chart-toppers "Four Walls," "He'll Have To Go" and "I Guess I'm Crazy."

However, Pride isn't only out to preserve Reeves' reputation. He's also preserving the sound, as the entire recording session is a throw-back to the late '50s and '60s, a recreation of the harmony-thick, lushly-orchestrated Nashville Sound that increased country music's audience tenfold, thanks largely to Jim Reeves.

Pride understands that intimacy was Reeves' forte, and he sings such classics as "I Love You Because" and "Adios Amigo" with such reverence that he vocally paints a portrait of the artist he's saluting.

These types of records simply aren't being made anymore, so Nashville Sound purists and, particularly, fans of Reeves and Pride have a lot to get excited about.



In his quest to honor a fellow singer, Charley Pride has delivered a home run.

— N. K.

MARK MCGUINN
Mark McGuinn

VFR RECORDS

★★★★

Is Mark McGuinn unconventional? Country music fans who adamantly require Wranglers, a Stetson and a sartorial salute to Hank Williams will certainly think so. Yet cue up McGuinn's self-titled debut and you'll find creative elements that have spawned country legends for decades. This masterful singer/songwriter from North Carolina performs graceful, yet powerful compositions that proudly display jazz, Afro-pop and rock influences, but still celebrate well-established Nashville values and traditions.

With a James Taylor-meets-Vince Gill style, this talented, appealing tenor, who co-wrote 11 of the 12 tracks, produced a disc that exudes seasoned sophistication. He comfortably and aggressively introduces the collection with the hit single "Mrs. Steven Rudy," an upbeat, mainstream, controversial piece that describes one man's friendly relationship with another's wife. "That's A Plan" and "Silver Platter" speak to old-fashioned truths with modern flair.

McGuinn slows his pace with "Heaven Must Be Missin' You" and "One Of Their Own," two rustic slow-dances that ambitiously explore angelic attachment, and while doing so, prove his genuine nature and artistic versatility. Within this vein,

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Janet G., May 1999



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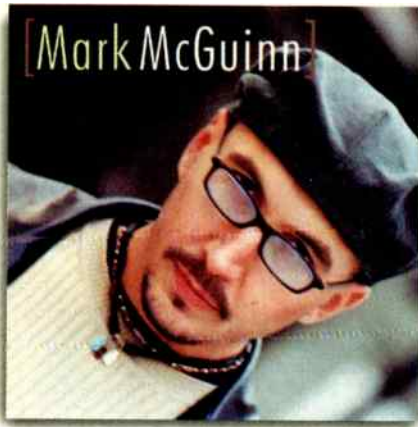
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McGuinn presents one of the album's true treasures, "She Doesn't Dance," a tale of heartbreak and denial that inspires both pity and identification. This one sways both the shoulders and the soul.

Co-produced by McGuinn and Shane Decker, the CD thrives on meticulous production and unusual instrumental components, with djembe – a South African conga drum – and jazzy electric guitar passages blending with fiddles and banjos.

Factor in McGuinn's distinct vocals, his appealing lyrics, the album's slate of instrumental excellence and its superb production, and this one-time semi-pro soccer player has scored an impressive debut. To paraphrase the collection's final track, Mark McGuinn has "Done It Right" – in a way that some country fans may view as unorthodox, but that others will graciously accept as his own.

— Damon Arhos

DON EDWARDS
Kin To The Wind:
Memories Of Marty
Robbins

WESTERN JUBILEE/SHANACHIE

★ ★ ★

VARIOUS ARTISTS
On The Trail: Songs Of
The American West

WESTERN JUBILEE/SHANACHIE

★ ★ ★

"I play both kinds of music," an old musician's joke used to go. "Country and Western." The second half of that musical pairing has virtually disappeared in recent years as cowboy songs have become a sub-genre even smaller than bluegrass. But Western music fans are every bit as passionate as their bluegrass counterparts, and one of

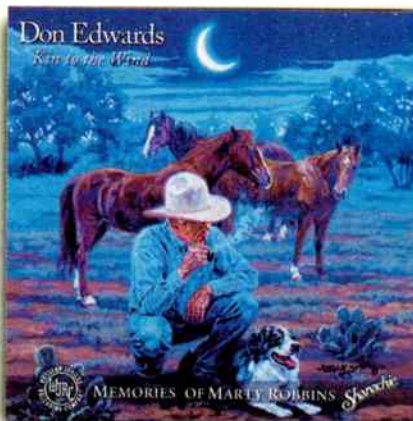
their modern heroes is Don Edwards, a seasoned performer who grew up in Boonton, N.J., as a cowboy movie fan, moved to Texas in 1956 and plunged into ranch life at age 17.

Edwards' first single was 1964's "The Young Ranger," a frank imitation of Marty Robbins' big Western music hit, "El Paso." Since then, Edwards has modeled much of his own career on Spanish guitar embellishments, ranch-life details, B-movie-style storytelling and pop-flavored melodies – all *a la* Robbins. Edwards now salutes his hero with *Kin To The Wind: Memories Of Marty Robbins*.

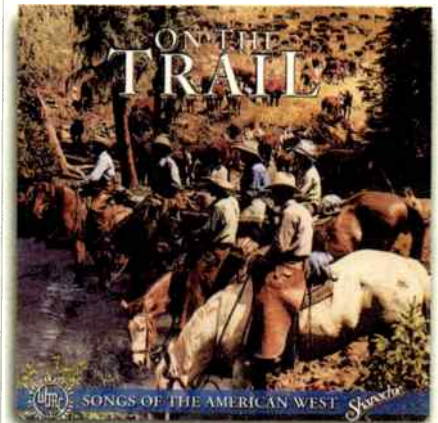
Edwards avoids the obvious, passing on "El Paso" and "Big Iron" to dig deep in Robbins' catalogue for obscurities like "San Angelo," "Saddle Tramp" and "Old Red." These are delightful examples of the way cowboy singers used to sum up a whole Gary Cooper or Tom Mix plot line in a three-minute song. Edwards doesn't possess Robbins' mellifluous tenor, but his dignified delivery and stark arrangements are campfire intimate. While no substitute for Robbins' original recordings, Edwards' are a nice supplement and a welcome sign that Western music is alive and kicking.

Edwards' definitive stamp is also all over the cowboy-music anthology *On The Trail: Songs Of The American West*. Not only does he plunk four songs from four different albums on this 16-song collection, but joining him in the saddle for their own individual contributions are occasional duet partner Waddie Mitchell, producer Rich O'Brien and steel guitarist Tom Morrell.

As with most multi-artist packages, the quality varies, from the under-



whelming harmonies of the Sons Of The San Joaquin to a sparkling guitar duet between O'Brien and Norman Blake on "Flop Eared Mule." What this collection emphasizes is the sheer diversity of today's Western euphony. Through Edwards, it's the familiar Gene Autry-Hollywood cowboy sound. Through Mitchell, it's the working cowboy. Cowboy Nation, comprised of



Rank & File's notorious Kinman brothers, presents an alt-country take on the music with their seven-minute version of "Shenandoah," while David Wilkie makes an unexpected connection between Celtic and cowboy songs in a medley of traditional tunes.

Western music is indeed a many-splendored thing, and *On The Trail: Songs Of The American West* serves its purpose as an interesting primer.

— Geoffrey Himes

LORRIE MORGAN/
SAMMY KERSHAW
I Finally Found Someone
RCA

★ ★ ★

Lorrie Morgan and Sammy Kershaw say they have been waiting two decades to cut this album. They met that long ago in Lafayette, La., one night when Morgan was the opening act for George Jones, and Kershaw was a last-minute replacement for ol' No Show. The Jones and Tammy Wynette classic "Good Year For The Roses," which Morgan re-did on her *War Paint* album in 1994, marked her first recorded duet with Kershaw. She returned the favor five years later on the title track of Kershaw's *Maybe Not Tonight*.

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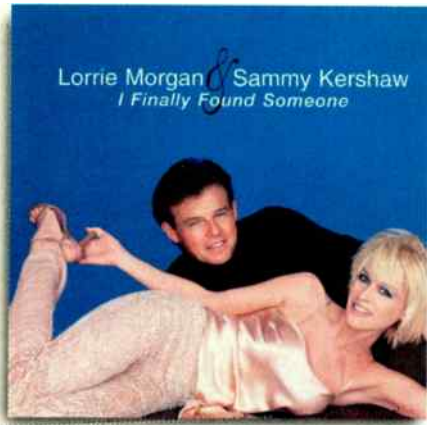
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On *I Finally Found Someone*, Kershaw remains in fine command of his expressive voice, and Morgan still enchants with her smoky pipes. Unfortunately, their attempt to satisfy differing tastes and styles – they sing six duets and three solos each – materializes as musical schizophrenia with only one common thread: a few lovely ballads.

Best of the lot is “That’s Where I’ll Be,” composed by Kershaw and Morgan – surprisingly, since neither of them professes to be a writer. “I Can’t Think Of Anything But You” is also a moving, gentle ode to love. In “29 Again,” about a woman’s sorrow over aging, Morgan reaffirms herself as a tip-top torch singer, bringing an emotional depth that elevates self-pity to the realm of soul-baring honesty.

The up-tempo numbers, however, all fall flat. While Morgan sings the well-written “Big Time” with attitude and verve, it’s ruined by a tired ’80s rock guitar line. The duet “He Drinks Tequila” is a pallid Tex-Mex “Margaritaville” wannabe, while Kershaw’s self-penned “Sugar” also sounds dated.

Though vocally simpatico, George and Tammy they ain’t. With 20 years to plan for this, you would think they could have found better material.

—Charlene Blevins

**OLD 97’s
Satellite Rides**

ELEKTRA

★★★★

On *Fight Songs*, the previous set from Texas tunesmith Rhett Miller and his Duane Eddy-traditional Old 97’s band, the message began to take shape – the group’s keening twang remained, but it was now occupying the rumble seat while Elvis Costello-smart songwriting

took the wheel. Miller, it seemed, was through playing the bratty baby brother; suddenly he was *serious* about his craft, and that message has now embedded itself on the shimmery surface of the new Old 97’s collection, *Satellite Rides*.

These days, Miller seems intent on one-upping himself compositionally. His band’s country element resurfaces here and there, especially in the hillbilly-driven “Am I Too Late” and in partner Murry Hammond’s two tart contributions, “Up The Devil’s Pay” and “Can’t Get A Line.”

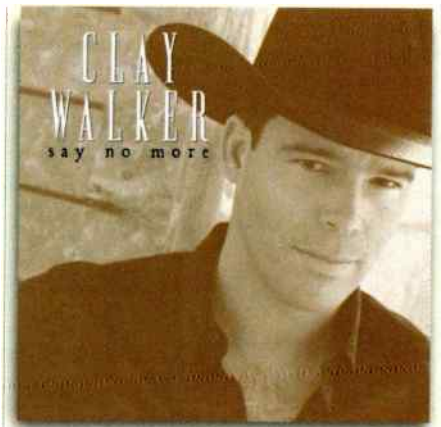
But Miller keeps digging deeper into himself, pushing the parameters of modern songwriting. Sometimes he delights in exposing the obvious, as in his punchy, punkish tale of a not-so-sensitive guy in “Book Of Poems,” or in the acoustic drive of his delightful marriage-proposal ditty “Question.” As these songs illustrate, Miller excels at the veiled reference, the oblique strategy and the tune that sneaks up on you from around a darkened corner.



For instance, in “Bird In A Cage,” he turns the tables on simple verse-chorus-bridge construction by housing the craftiest melodic hook *within* the verses, while the more obvious hook acts as a mere transitional bridge. *Why give everything away the first time through?* Miller is probably thinking. *Keep your cards hidden, and show that royal flush only after you’ve got everyone on the edges of their seats.*

An admitted pulp-fiction fan, Miller is an Old 97 who likes that oldest of plot devices best: Suspense, something with which most of his hokum-hack peers are shockingly unfamiliar.

— Tom Lanham



**CLAY WALKER
Say No More**

GIANT RECORDS

★★

Seven albums and six No. 1 singles into the game, stalwart East Texan Clay Walker has never quite escaped the musical shadow of more distinguished Lone Star honky-tonk kings like George Strait and fellow Beaumont native Mark Chesnut.

Part of the reason is evident on *Say No More*, where he once again embraces the contemporary country-pop influence with a wholehearted fervor far beyond Strait’s or Chesnut’s passing fondness for that uptown genre. In fact, the title cut “Say No More” and slick, melodramatic tracks “Real” and “More Than That” are overwrought, earnest ballads.

Without fail, Walker throws his heart and his formidable talent into this sap. But the songs’ trite lyrics and generic melodies don’t give him much throwing room.

Instead, his energy and emotion are more wisely spent when he keeps one foot planted firmly in the honky-tonk – which, fortunately, he does on occasion here. “Rough Around The Edges” is a robust Texas shuffle, while the sprightly Walker co-written “Texas Swing” says it all. An added treat is his stirringly invigorating and faithful reprise of the late Ritchie Valens’ familiar classic “La Bamba.”

Another highlight is the unadorned honesty and restraint he expresses with a trio of 24-karat ballads: “You Deliver Me,” “If You Ever Feel Like Lovin’ Me Again” and “Could I Ask You Not To Dance.” Walker extracts all the tenderness, nuance and power he can muster, and it’s a good thing. Not only do these songs take him home, but they also make him sound oh-so-glad to be there.

—Bob Allen



Lee Ann Womack

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REVIEWS

GRAM PARSONS Sacred Hearts & Fallen Angels: The Gram Parsons Anthology

(RHINO RECORDS)
★★★★★

EMMYLOU HARRIS Emmylou Harris Anthology: The Warner/Reprise Years

(RHINO RECORDS)
★★★★★

It was music's most fragile student-mentor relationship: Country-rock pioneer Gram Parsons, in his tattered and frayed final years, finding an all too brief renewal and redemption in the soaring soprano of 24-year-old, and then-unknown, Emmylou Harris.

Parsons succumbed to his many demons in 1973, just two albums into their pairing, but not before imparting to Harris an almost messianic vision that American roots music – be it country, folk, rock, rhythm 'n' blues and all that lies between – should have no borders.

More than a quarter-century later, Rhino Records brings welcome clarity to the overlapping legends of each artist with a pair of immaculately researched and assembled double-disc retrospectives that honor substance over style, fact over fiction.

Make no mistake: These are important documents. *Sacred Hearts & Fallen Angels*, the first-ever effort to present Parsons' tormented oeuvre in a single sitting, is a remarkable success. In addition to the unearthed country blues cover of the Marty Robbins hit "Knee Deep In The Blues," it is essential Parsons. There are 46 songs here that trace a restless journey from the jaunty embryo of the International Submarine Band to the Byrds' *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*, then onward to the Flying Burrito Brothers,

Parsons' personal heaven and hell, where he climbed creative peaks with one album only to fall off the cliff of self-destruction during the making of the next.

A Southern boy born with a silver spoon and a broken heart, Parsons has cut some of the loneliest songs ever put to record, from the timeless plaintive "Hickory Wind" to the twin masterpieces "Hot Burrito #1" and "#2." All the while he ignored the fact that his music was all too country for the rock universe, and all too rock for country. And as his world fell apart, it just got lonelier.

Which brings us to Emmylou, and the amazing grace of "We'll Sweep Out The Ashes In The Morning," "Streets Of Baltimore" and "A Song For You," in which Parsons' keening tenor, now coarsened and cracking, rises one last time to mesh with the immaculate soprano of his newfound disciple. Together, they take ownership of Felice and Boudleaux Bryant's "Love Hurts," making it an Everly Brothers song no more.

Rhino's sister project, *Emmylou Harris Anthology*, an exquisite body of work featuring 45 songs far more familiar to country listeners, is incomplete in that it takes us only to 1990, thus leaving for a future project the decade in which Harris' own torchbearing vision of the Parsons legacy fully blossomed. Yet it remains a moving document of how the student becomes the teacher, introducing kindred spirits Rodney Crowell, Ricky Skaggs, Vince Gill and the rest of her evolving Hot Band to the Parsons family tree.

— Mitch Potter

JUSTIN TREVINO Travelin' Singin' Man

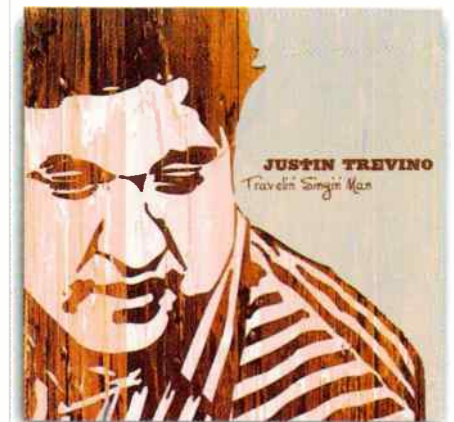
(LONE STAR RECORDS)
★★★★★

If honky-tonk singers were beers, Justin Trevino would be a robust, full-bodied stout. No watered-down, less-filling, light brew for this 27-year-old Texan. Trevino pours his soaring, wailing, roof-shaking tenor into each note, and he serves his classic brand of barroom country in high-proof arrangements packed with fiddle, steel guitar and rhythms that shuffle and swing.

Blind since birth, Trevino grew up in a music-loving family, and his

father's album collection leaned heavily on hardcore country artists Ernest Tubb, Marty Robbins, Bob Wills and others.

Trevino's influences make themselves evident throughout *Travelin' Singin' Man*, his third album (but only his first to be nationally distributed). Already well-regarded among honky-tonk fans in his home state,

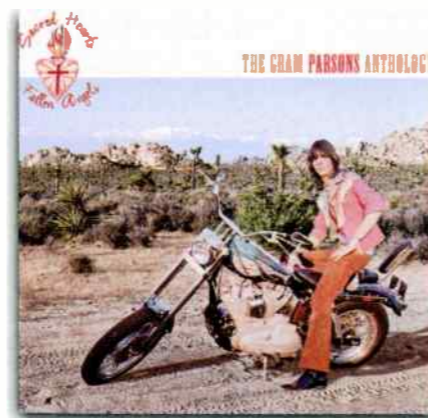


where he's been performing since age 13, he clearly models himself on operatic Lone Star state vocalists like Don Walser and Johnny Bush. Trevino, who actually plays bass in Bush's band, invited the Texas legend to participate as co-producer and singing partner on a couple of chest-pounding duets.

In selecting material, Trevino doesn't lean on the obvious jukebox classics. Instead, he punches up lesser-known tunes from the past, taking cues from Ray Price, Faron Young, Marty Robbins and Mel Tillis to record such titles "Unloved, Unwanted," "Leavin' And Sayin' Goodbye," "Waltz Of The Wind" and "Alright I'll Sign The Papers." These and others – such as stunning versions of the spirited two-stepper "Who Will Buy The Wine" and the heartbreaking cry of the mid-tempo "Brand New Mister Me" – are the song choices of a dedicated fan who has scoured back catalogs in search of one-of-a-kind gems.

But *Travelin' Singin' Man* is the work of a committed traditionalist who proves that he deserves to stand on equal ground with his famous influences. With his third effort, he's created an album that will move others in much the same way that his idols inspired him.

— M. M.





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REVIEWS



TAMMY COCHRAN

Tammy Cochran

EPIC

Back when country music was *really* country - roughly the post-war years, through the '70s - Nashville's royalty not only had readily identifiable voices, they had *personalities*.

If that seems like a radical idea in these modern days of manufactured music and pre-fab stars, say hello to Tammy Cochran, who picks up the gauntlet that another Tammy can no longer carry, and one that Reba left behind. Whether singing woman-to-woman songs of hardship and personal growth, like "Say Goodbye," in the deeply personal lament about the deaths of her two brothers, "Angels In Waiting," the Ohio-born Cochran sings like a woman possessed.

In an era when screaming electric guitars pass for passion, Cochran, instead, enlists instrumentation as sophisticated as a cello and as traditional as pedal steel, presenting herself as an honest-to-goodness singer plumbing the emotional depth that remains country's bedrock. She sings a song inside out, and she sings about things that matter - a woman's appreciation for a long-ago partner ("What I Learned From Loving You"), a couple's quest to regain their relationship ("When Love Was Enough") and the importance of personal responsibility ("That Ain't Right").

This is a woman of integrity, and she's writing and performing music to match. It's about time.

—A. N.

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

Time*Sex*Love

(COLUMBIA)

★★★★

If you exclude 1999's odds-and-sods collection *Party Doll And Other Favorites*, *Time*Sex*Love* marks Mary Chapin Carpenter's first studio album since 1996's *A Place In The World*. While the wait has been a long one, Carpenter doesn't disappoint with either the quality or the amount of material, indulging listeners with 15 songs that clock in at almost 70 minutes.

In less capable hands, an hour-plus CD might seem like an eternity. However, Carpenter reaffirms her reputation as one of the most articulate, dynamic and sensitive songwriters of any genre, expressing life's experiences from a perspective fueled by perceptive awareness.

It is this awareness that is her greatest gift. On the painful post-break-up ballad "What Was It Like," she sings, *I feel like a passing glance that you never gave a chance* and offers a river of insight within a trickle of words. On "The Long Way Home," her brisk *had to go, had to be, had to get somewhere* catchphrase perfectly echoes the frenetic pace of human traffic.

Philosophical and romantic, Carpenter's gilded alto stirs us through the upbeat "Simple Life," soothes us with muted resignation in "King Of Love" and serenades us with the optimistic "Late For Your Life," bestowing old-soul wisdom in sonically sweet packages.

While she's had stronger collections than *Time*Sex*Love*, here Carpenter, nonetheless, connects with both your heart and your head.

— N. K.



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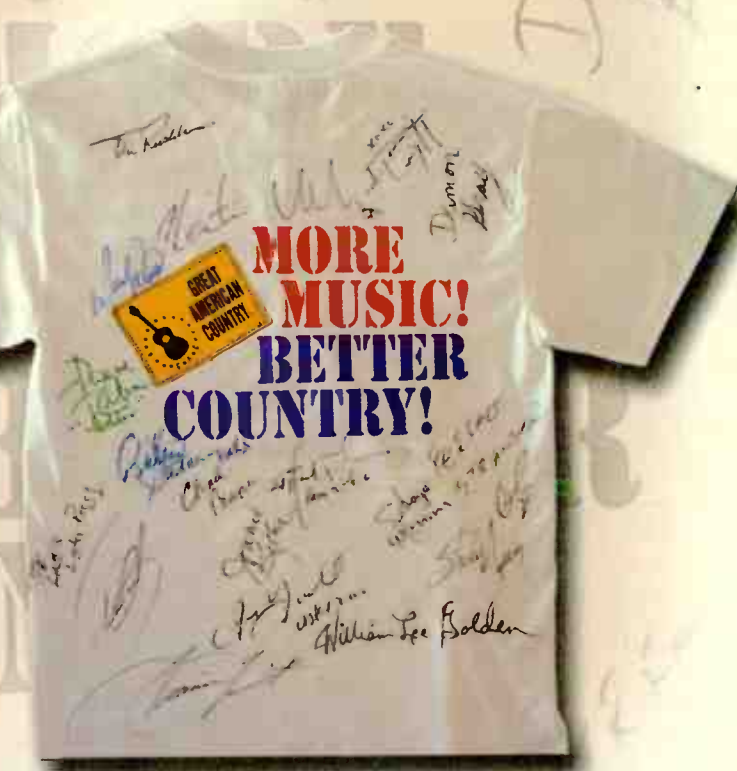
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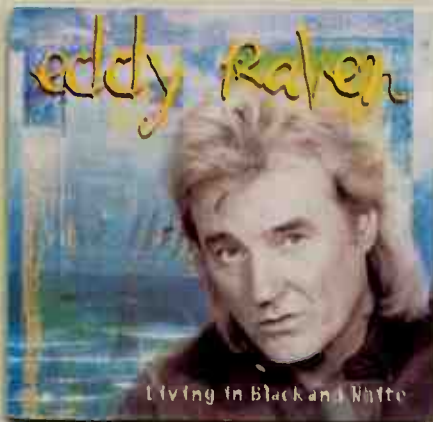
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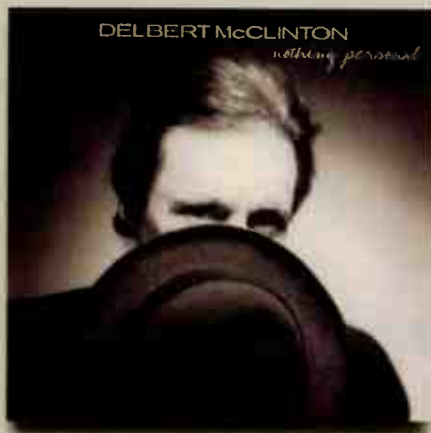
LeAnn Rimes, *I Need You* (Curb) ★ No wonder LeAnn Rimes is suing her record label and her father. If those legal maneuvers fail, *I Need You* suggests she should file charges on purely artistic grounds. This cheaply assembled collection cheats Rimes' fans and mistreats her capable voice. Curb presents the CD with shoddy graphics and amateurish packaging, and Wilbur Rimes' pop-dance production is clumsy and out-of-date. The CD is built around three of the singer's previously released hit soundtrack contributions: "I Need You" from the mini-series *Jesus*, "Can't Fight The Moonlight" from *Coyote Ugly* and "Written In The Stars," a duet with Elton John that appeared on the soundtrack to the Broadway musical adaptation of *Aida*. The remaining tracks were leftovers from past recording sessions, and all of them are substandard. Both LeAnn's record company and her father – until recently, the dominant career advisers for this talented teen singer – should be ashamed. — M.M.

Eddy Raven, *Living In Black And White* (ROW) ★★★★★ Louisiana's Eddy Raven has been away from the spotlight for a



decade, but if there's any justice, he'll garner a lot of sales and attention for this bountiful collection. Producer Ron Chancey – now *there's* a name we haven't heard in a while – plumbs the depths of Raven's emotions on the CD's dozen songs. The forlorn ballad "A Little Bit More," the *bon temps* rigamarole of "Hearing It In French" and the Jimmy Buffett feel of "Bermuda Triangle" reveal a stylistic sincerity and integrity you'd be hard pressed to find anywhere else these days. Eddy Raven may be *Living In Black And White*, but this fresh musical technicolor is the pot of gold underneath a brilliant creative rainbow. — N.K.

Delbert McClinton, *Nothing Personal* (New West) ★★★★★ That Delbert McClinton ranks as one of the most gifted, emotionally effective vocalists alive may not be news. However, the fact that at age 60 he's creating the most potent music of his career *is* news – and it's a glorious thing for fans of gritty, down-home



R&B. A native Texan, McClinton remains a gravel-voiced shouter with an amazingly expressive range, and thanks to co-producer Gary Nicholson and a hot-shot band, he's on a roll. For fans, this is McClinton at his most electrifying. For those who don't know him: If rousing blues and low-down acoustic tunes get your mojo working, then McClinton will rock your boat. — M.M.

Rosie Flores, *Speed Of Sound* (Eminent) ★★★★★ Since her mid-1980s presence as part of the Los Angeles country underground, Nashville resident Rosie Flores has brightened the roots-music scene with a jaunty yet grown-up mix of traditional styles. *Speed Of Sound* leans hard on stripped-down



rockabilly and swing, with highlights coming with the moody "Devil Love," a rollicking cover of Robbie Fulks' "I Push Right Over" and spirited romps through '50s classics like the Davis Sisters' "Rock-A-Bye Boogie" and Johnny Cash's "Country Boy." — M.M.

Lisa Brokop, *Undeniable* (Cosmo Records) ★★★★★

If there's an undeniable quality about Lisa Brokop, it's that her voice packs the wallop of a freight train. It fills your head with resounding power and purity, creates vertigo with its dizzying sensitivity and knocks you on your keester with its adaptability. The biggest problem she faced in past CDs was finding the right material, and though she has a better handle on it with *Undeniable* – cramming the album with meaty hooks – the majority of the 11 songs aren't memorable. Highlights: "Keep Mom And Dad In Love," a dynamic duet with Hal Ketchum, who matches Brokop in vocal intensity; and the choral beginning of "Whiskey And Wine." Also watch out for "I'd Like To See You Try," which has plenty of attitude to spare. — N.K.





independence allows Kelley to present her gentle music with the subtle nuance of an Alison Krauss and the observant eye of a Kathy Mattea rather than the commercial sheen of a Faith Hill or a Shania Twain. She makes the best of it, too, presenting her contemporary, thoughtful songs with a grace that effectively conveys the tenderness of her message-filled material. — M.M.

Scrimshanders, *Longneck* (Southern

Trespass) ★★★ The title of The Scrimshanders' album may be slang for a cold beer, but it just as easily could denote the body part singer John Magee puts on a chopping block whenever he falls in love. On the debut of this Boston-area alternative-country quartet, Magee spends 13 songs bemoaning his bad luck in clever, biting songs that blend a twangy pedal steel and chiming electric guitar with basic barroom rock rhythms. Fortunately,



Magee's swagger and wit don't camouflage the desperation and real-life heartache that pulse through his tunes. With a droll, conversational vocal style reminiscent of Steve Earle, and smart, memorable songs comparable to Richard Buckner's or Rhett Miller's of the Old 97's, The Scrimshanders show that sticking out your neck can make for powerful, liberating music. — M.M.

Toni Catlin, *Heartache On The Run* (Western Beat Entertainment) ★★★

There's a delicate tenderness to Toni Catlin's voice that is both a blessing and a curse. On weepers such as the Buddy & Julie Miller classic "Sometimes I Cry," the Colorado native evokes an emotional



resonance that nicely reflects the song's sorrow. But on the pedestrian ballad "Somewhere In Your Heart," Catlin's identity barely registers, leaving a somewhat bland aftertaste. Though her voice is well suited to both country and blues, this effort often veers between being solid and uneven. — N.K.

Blue Mountain, *Roots* (Blue Mountain Music) ★★★ Blue Mountain knows how to raise a traditional ruckus. For its fourth album, the Mississippi quartet raids the public domain for spirited takes on such folklore classics as "Rye Whiskey" and "Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair." Their typical approach? Think of the electric intensity of Neil Young & Crazy Horse espousing an energetic dialect of swamp fuzz and roots righteousness. That is, except in two cases: a fiery stringed rendition of "Spring Of '65" and a respectful acoustic cover of A.P. Carter's "I'm Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes." Those are the exceptions; everything else has the amps cranked up, and Blue Mountain's love of music shining through the sonic haze.— N.K



The Time Jumpers, *On The Air* (Time Jumpers) ★★ If you like your Western swing as clean as a whistle, Nashville's Time Jumpers may be the band for you. This talented nine-piece assemblage of studio and *Grand Ole Opry* musicians draws its inspiration from the '40s, and if you can get past the cloying opening "Time Jumpers Theme," there's some tasteful playing and singing to be found. Set up as a 34-minute faux radio broadcast with guest *Opry* announcer Eddie Stubbs, *On The Air* offers an exquisite Dawn Sears vocal on "Love Me All The Way." Unfortunately, the whole "radio" shtick gets rapidly tiresome with each repeated listen. — N.K.

Irene Kelley, *Simple Path* (Relentless Nashville/Irk) ★★★ A veteran Nashville songwriter, Kelley released two singles you never heard on MCA. This Pennsylvania native proudly sports a delicate, sweetly tempered voice and a subdued, acoustic style during a time when country music favors chest-pounding singers and aggressive arrangements. Her label



OFF THE CHARTS

THE COUNTRY BUZZ OUTSIDE THE MUSIC BIZ

Time Passages

Paul Burch provides a soundtrack to some Depression Era fiction

For his new album, *Last Of My Kind*, country traditionalist Paul Burch took a novel approach, literally: He turned to author Tony Earley's novel, *Jim The Boy*.

Musically adapted from the English professor's tome about a fatherless 10-year-old living in rural Depression-era North Carolina, Burch created 13 original swing and string-band songs stylized to fit the sound of the 1930s.

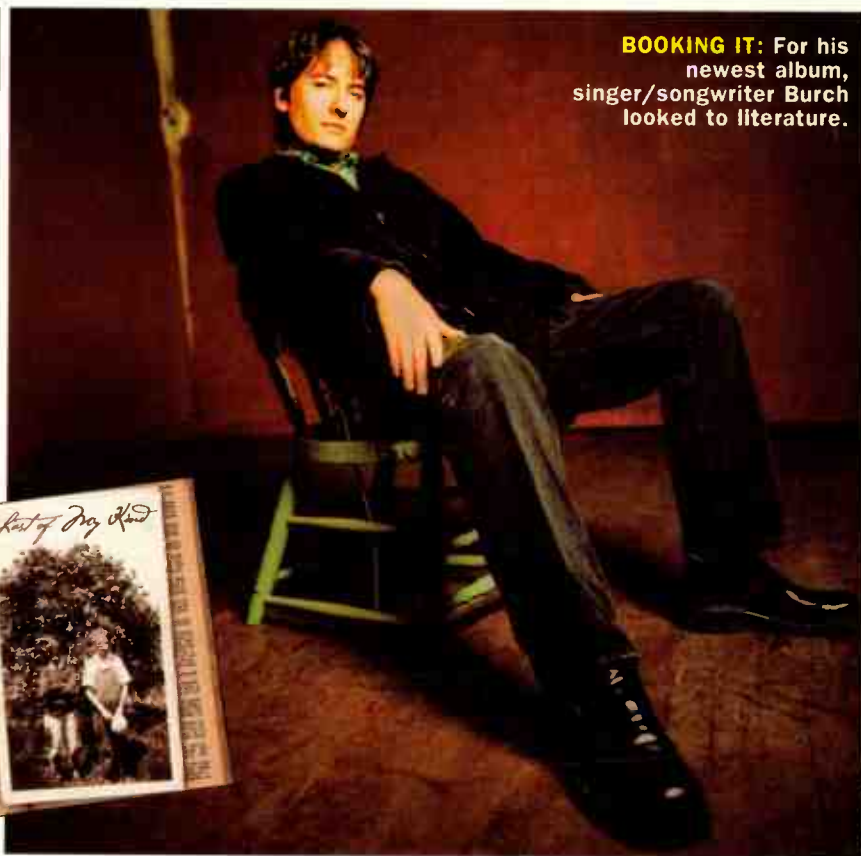
"I had been looking for a reason to make music that was straightforwardly country, where I didn't have to worry about making it modern," explains Nashville-based Burch. "It was a great excuse to make a record that sounded like the Delmore Brothers or some of the old honky-tonk swing."

That rationale was suggested by Earley himself, a fan of Burch's first three albums, *Pan-American Flash*, *Wire To Wire* and *Blue Notes*. The two met naturally through their association at Vanderbilt University's English department: Earley is a faculty member; Burch was an administrative assistant.

Last summer, Earley proposed that the musician provide instrumental backing for a reading of *Jim The Boy* at Nashville's Southern Festival Of Books later that year. "I thought maybe he could do a Carter Family song or two," Earley says.

Burch's counterproposal was more intriguing: "How about if I write new songs based on the book's characters?"

Earley gave his blessing, albeit tentatively at first. "I knew he would create terrific music, but I was awfully nervous about the lyrics," Earley says. "Those characters live in my head, but I thought it odd that they could live in somebody else's head. But he proved that they



BOOKING IT: For his newest album, singer/songwriter Burch looked to literature.

could. He did such a marvelous job."

Sculpting country music to reflect a specific era is a talent that comes naturally to the 35-year-old Burch. Regular trips to the Smithsonian's folk music archives and the availability of his parents' record collection at his fingertips, fueled the imagination of the Washington, D.C., native, who sings and plays guitar.

Shortly after arriving in Music City in 1994, Burch hooked up with hillbilly auteur Greg Garing to become his band-leader for seven months at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, helping to spearhead a back-to-basics movement that revitalized Nashville's downtown club scene. When Garing quit Tootsie's, Burch formed a band called WPA Ballclub and continued performing around town.

In 1997, he recorded his first revivalist take on country swing and early honky-tonk. *Pan-American Flash* was followed a year later by the relaxed and resonant *Wire To Wire*, while last

year's *Blue Notes* delved more into late-night moodiness.

With *Last Of My Kind*, Burch returns to his revivalist thirst for early hillbilly string bands. Yet he paid heed to modern-day discipline when it came to writing its lyrics.

"One thing I like about country music is that you have these tight structures," he explains. "The songs have to sound a certain way, but those borders can be very freeing. It's interesting to me to put myself inside this specific box and then let my mind wander."

Burch may also be a part of a visual version of the book. Hallmark Hall of Fame Productions has asked author Larry McMurtry to write a screenplay, and Earley is lobbying to have Burch's songs become part of the film's score.

"I've put three copies of the CD into the pipeline," Earley says. "They're such a natural fit for the story."

— Michael McCall

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-K. J. F. Ake, News, Little Rock, Arkansas*

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Friends In Row Places Nashville songwriters pay tribute to Garth

This is the story of how a river of songs trickled to Garth Brooks.

In the beginning, there was a group of songwriting friends that included Pat Alger, Kent Blazy, Kim Williams, Tony Arata, Larry Bastian, Stephanie Davis, Victoria Shaw and Dewayne Blackwell. Oh, yeah, there was also an unknown guy from Oklahoma. His name was Garth Brooks.

Twelve years and 100 million record sales later, things have gone financially insane for this clump of lucky and talented tunesmiths, thanks to Brooks.

In turn, the happy and grateful writers have decided to give something back. *In The Beginning: A Songwriter's Tribute To Garth Brooks* (VFR Records) is a collection of 16 songs that helped make Garth Brooks a household name, performed by the writers who wrote them.

Co-produced by Alger and Blazy, the

collection contains several classics – “The Dance,” “Friends In Low Places,” “The Thunder Rolls,” “If Tomorrow Never Comes” and “The River” – as well as lesser-known lights – “Wolves,” “Cowboy Bill,” “Cold Shoulder,” “Mr. Blue” and “A New Way To Fly.”

There’s even a hilarious new parody of “Friends In Low Places” called “Pains” which refers to Mexican food; it’s a real gas. Each song is performed acoustically by the writer with living-room production values that take the stadium out of the equation.

“This record was nothing but fun from the beginning,” observes Alger, who was inspired to record the tribute when Brooks crashed a songwriter’s round at Nashville’s Bluebird Cafe in January 2000 that also featured Blazy, Arata and Williams. Alger called Blazy soon thereafter and the duo gave the project the green light. Brooks contributes observations and a photograph to the CD.

“He was amazingly generous to the project and really likes it,” notes Alger. The project will live on as the writers

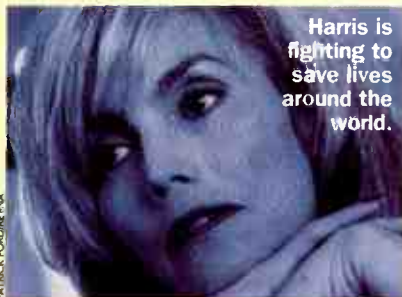


HIT MEN: Brooks flew high on tunes by writers like Kent Blazy (top left), Kim Williams (top right) and Pat Alger (above left).

plan to perform it in various combinations through 2001. They’ve also taped a TV special for Turner South. Even more rewarding than Brooks’ participation is his lasting friendship, Alger says.

“All these years later, he’s the same guy he was when I met him, the same guy who helped my kids move furniture into my house.”

— Tommy Womack



Harris is fighting to save lives around the world.

Mining Her Business

Emmylou Harris spearheads an international campaign to bring attention to an explosive issue

World, and vowed to get involved.

“I thought I could make a difference,” said Harris, whose father, a marine, was held captive during the Korean War.

Harris was invited to perform at a 1997 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony for the cause and later traveled with her mother and Muller to Cambodia and Vietnam, where she saw landmine-induced injuries firsthand.

Since then, she’s recruited influential songwriting friends as performers for her annual *Concerts For A Landmine Free World* performances. Recently Vanguard Records released a live companion album featuring such advocates as Mary Chapin Carpenter, Kris Kristofferson, John Prine, Guy Clark and Nanci Griffith.

Harris hopes these high-profile names will bring attention to the problem.

“Unlike hunger and homelessness, the problem doesn’t exist in this country,”

she admits, “So that makes it more difficult to raise awareness.”

Since all performers have waived album fees and royalties, proceeds will benefit the VVAF and help provide artificial limbs, wheelchairs and rehabilitation services for landmine victims in Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Vietnam and Sierra Leone. The organization also hopes to facilitate clearance efforts, although the estimated cost of a single landmine removal sits at \$1,000.

Harris, in conjunction with like-minded singers and songwriters, has already helped raise over \$500,000, and vows to continue the fight.

“We’ll do this concert every year until the problem is solved,” she states.

Concerts For A Landmine Free World is available at your local record store. For more information, call toll-free 1-888-BAN-MINE.

— Bob Gulla

When Emmylou Harris read a 1994 *New Yorker* article on land mines, she couldn’t believe her eyes: It estimated that there are 100 million overseas mines that are still active.

“I thought it was a misprint,” said a horrified Harris. It turns out that it was more of a miscalculation – 70 million is today’s officially accepted number – but the gravity of the situation is no less diminished.

Harris sought out activist Bobby Muller, chief of the Washington, D.C.-based Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and its Campaign For A Landmine Free



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Green Acreage

Country stars use name value for profitable property

Country music transformed Nashville into a holiday haven. Now stars are cashing in to try to attract some vacationers of their own.

On www.travismauiivacation.com, Randy Travis has been using his name for years to lure prospective escapists to his two private Hawaiian retreats. If you have pockets that are "Deeper Than The Holler" or want to be "Too Gone Too Long," the singer will rent "your gateway to the perfect Maui tropical vacation" in the form of a magnificent four-bedroom home in the historic coastal whaling town of Lahaina. At \$800 a night, you'll get access to Travis' tranquil Zen garden, his showering flower trees and a rock-lined pond with bubbling waterfall for the ultimate serenity. But wait, there's more. A quaint guest cottage beyond the waterfall-fed pool and spa will serve all your social needs. Inside the main house, palm trees curve from the



STAY IN STAR COUNTRY: You can spend the night, or the week, in the Colorado lodge (above) owned by Gary Morris — who may even be on hand himself to take in a little fly-fishing.



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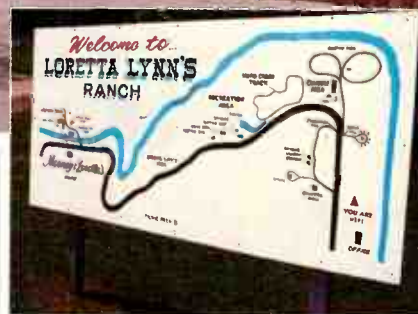
YA'LL COME: Fans are invited to vacation at Loretta Lynn's Ranch outside of Nashville.

floor, adding a casual island ambience to the living area.

Travis also offers a less expensive, but just as stunning alternative — a \$450 per night hillside multi-level cedar and redwood vacation home above the Kaanapali Resort area, also on Maui, which is hidden between a lava rock wall and a screen of palms.

If you're looking for something a little closer to home, Gary Morris offers visitors a vacation at his rustic, century-old Mountain Spirit Lodge in Chromo, Colo. Nestled on 4,000 acres beneath towering white aspen trees between the Navajo and Banded mountain peaks, the 6,000 square-foot hunting lodge offers four private guest rooms for a total accommodation of 20 people. If you want to rough it, there are scattered teepees that allow you to sleep under the stars. Look up www.mountainspirit.com for more details. It's especially ideal if you're an elk hunter or fly-fisherman.

For a less extravagant, but no less satisfying family experience, Loretta Lynn's Family Campground in Hurricane Mills, Tenn., 70 miles west of Nashville, is an extremely pop-



LORETTA LYNN

ular destination. Part of the legendary Lynn's ranch, guests can enjoy cabin, tent and RV camping for \$22 full hookup per day and \$17 non-hookup. If you like fishing, swimming, hiking and canoeing, Loretta Lynn's Family Campground may be right up your alley. Call (931) 296-7700, and if you like music, a bluegrass weekend has been booked for July 27 – 28.

If you want something more permanent, you can rent Patsy Cline's house in Winchester, Va., for \$625 per month. Cline lived in the 1,716 square-foot home in the '40s and '50s, which was recently bought by the corporation Sweet Dreams For Patsy for preservation purposes. Occasionally, even stars' homes come up for sale, judging by the recent listing of Jim Reeves' three-bedroom, 4,000 square-foot home in Madison, Tenn., for \$229,000.

If buying, renting or temporarily living in a piece of country music history is beyond your budget, remember ... there's always the bus tour.

— Marianne Horner



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Susan, Iowa City, Iowa
—Results not typical

The Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet combines ancient wisdom with modern technology to jumpstart you to a better lifestyle.

by Pete Johnson



In a recent health survey, it was determined that 61% of Americans are overweight. Like most of these people, you are probably looking for a way to lose weight...without the pain, struggle and failure that come with many diet plans on the market. For many of these people, the problem is mainly one of motivation. Getting started on a diet or even a simple exercise program is difficult to do, especially when there's the added frustration of not seeing results right away. That's why the Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet is different. It uses centuries-old wisdom of periodic fasting and the latest nutrition technology to help people reach their goals quickly, naturally and safely. Isn't it time you started taking losing weight seriously? The Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet can help.

Detoxify your system. For centuries, many religions have used fasting, water-fasting and juice-fasting as a means for spiritual clarity, and a way to detoxify the body. Those who fasted in the ancient days apparently became many times more conscious about what they put into their bodies. By detoxifying their bodies,

they enjoyed the feeling of being closer to optimum health and happiness. The Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet can help you achieve weight loss through detoxification in just two days. For two days you give up all bad food habits. In place of food, you flood your body with the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and essential oils found in the special formulation of all-natural juices and botanical extracts. And it's so easy! Just mix half of this delicious juice with an equal amount of cold water and sip it throughout the day. There's no measuring, combining foods or counting of calories.

Do your part. This amazing diet is ideal if you are looking to jumpstart your motivation for weight loss. Then, it's up to you. You've just spent two days treating your body right, and you've gotten yourself on track to healthy living. By continuing a light and healthy eating schedule that consists of more fruits and vegetables and less meats and fatty foods, you're on your way toward a brighter future. Also,

exercise for 30 minutes five days a week. You don't have to be a marathon runner, walking is a perfect way to accomplish your goals. This weight loss system is a great way to fit into those sleek suits and sexy dresses...fast.

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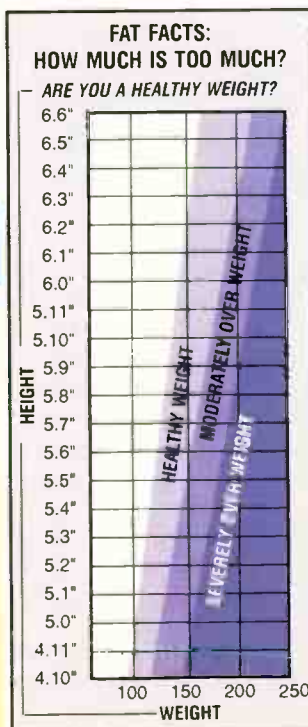


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Whistlin' Hayseed Dixie

Appalachian renegades push the bluegrass pedal to the AC/DC metal

There's a hairpin curve in the road in the tiny Appalachian community of Deer Lick Holler called Devil's Elbow that lives up to its repute: The road suddenly veers 110 degrees to the right, and if you're traveling more than 40 mph, you risk serious injury or death. So a stranger who passed through the holler sadly discovered, when he wrapped his sports car like a yellow ribbon around the old oak tree that marks the road's arc. Nearby residents Cooter Brown and Barley Scotch heard the jarring thunder of metal colliding with wood and rushed to the scene. Sadly, there was nothing they could do for the stranger, but they did salvage his AC/DC record collection.

Or so the story goes.

And then it continues ...

Scotch and Brown, along with Cletus Williamson and Wilson Cook, just happened to be part of a bluegrass band. And since Deer Lick Holler isn't the most technologically advanced place in the Northern Hemisphere, the boys had only one way to hear the stranger's mysterious music: an Edison Victrola, circa 1929, with one speed – 78 rpm. Putting the albums they'd salvaged on the turntable, they were enamored by the tunes, which

were kicked into hyperdrive by the fast-spinning player. So then and there, they decided there was only one way to honor the departed stranger: record an album of his favorite tunes.

"Not a whole lot of strangers pass through town," says fiddler Scotch as he packs his pipe with tobacco. "But when one does, it's an event in itself. When they wrap their car around a tree and expire on us, well, that's worthy of a tribute."

Thus Hayseed Dixie was born, and their 10-song, 29-minute salute, *A Tribute To AC/DC*, celebrates the music of the Australian heavy metal band like few have ever done, or dared, before. Instead of electric guitars and ear-splitting vocals, the album kicks grass: "Highway To Hell" offers a flurry of acoustic pickin' and flying fiddle; "You Shook Me (All Night Long)" is remodeled with an easy-swingin' country beat; and "Hell's Bells" keeps up with the chimes, replacing the almighty gong that introduces the original with a hotel desk clerk's dinger.

"We can't tell you which hotel," says Scotch. "They'd want their bell back."

The foursome initially gained its reputation around Nashville as AC/Dixie, performing in their overalls and winning

not only rave reviews, but a contract with Western Beat Records. But "some lawyer fella up in New York City" told the band that altering their name to Hayseed Dixie might avoid future litigation.

"My Daddy always said, 'Don't get involved with the law if you can keep from it,'" says Scotch, who adds he's particularly enamored with the songwriting.

"I'd always loved songs about prison and death and heaven and hell and right and wrong and Mama," he notes. "I know some of those songs are about some of those things."

Now the fellas are going national, since Western Beat has struck an alliance with Dualtone Records, and radio station morning shows around the U.S. are spreading the Hayseed Dixie gospel.

"Who wouldn't be?" reckons singer Cooter Brown. "If you have a good bit of thunder, you can't blame somebody for trying to steal just a taste of it."

Brown also figures that Hayseed Dixie's success will also go a long way toward promoting Deer Lick Holler, a place where relations are relative. Brown points out that Scotch is his distant cousin.

How distant?

"He lives about five miles away."

— Nick Krewen

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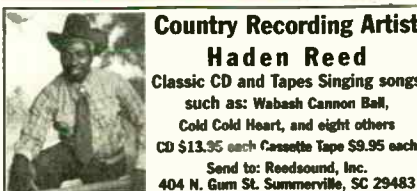


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Unlisted Numbers

Listen closely – some CDs offer hidden bonuses

When first-time listeners of Allison Moorer's *The Hardest Part* reach the end of the CD, they're in for a surprise: The first quiet notes of an acoustic guitar segue into an unlisted track called "Cold, Cold Earth."

There's no sign of it in the credits, no mention of it on the album, and it's not searchable through the CD player. The only clue of its existence is the length of "Feeling That Feeling Again," the album's official final song. Listed on the CD sleeve at 4:19, the song magically clocks in at 7:31 when cued up by a disc player. Subtract the smaller time from the larger and you get the length of the hidden track.

Moorer is among a handful of country artists who have included hidden tracks on their CDs. Diamond Rio, Neal Coty, Gary Allan and Dwight Yoakam have all added cloaked tunes, for various reasons. For Moorer, the reason was exceptionally personal. "Cold, Cold Earth" tells the autobiographical story about the night her father killed her mother and then committed suicide.

"Someone said it was naive of me to hide the last song," says Moorer, a teen at the time of the tragedy. "Maybe it was, but I don't regret it. It was something I needed to do. At this



point, to anybody who has questions, I can say, 'Go listen to this song because it's all there.' I've tried to be real open at this point about them."

But she also didn't want the rest of *The Hardest Part* to be overshadowed.

"I didn't want this record to be about 'Allison's parents,'" she explains. "I wanted people to be able to take these songs, relate to them on their own, and not have it be something I've documented."

Most artists include a hidden track if it projects a drastically different mood than the rest of the album, or if it offers

a funny, novel afterthought – as was the case with the untitled track Neal Coty added to his *Chance And Circumstance*. Often the performance will be acoustic, a studio outtake or a live performance.

Mike Clute, producer of Diamond Rio's *IV*, ingeniously helped the band hide its bonus instrumental montage ahead of its opening song. To access it, you have to hold down the CD player's reverse button before the album's first track begins to play.

"It's a little bonus, like the Ginsu knives sold with the TV set," says Clute. "It was a neat piece of music for which there was really no other outlet. Sometimes we do it just because we can!"

Clute admits that some labels frown upon hidden tracks due to royalty issues, although it helps if the artist is the writer of the song and is willing to forego their share of the pie.

So the next time you buy a CD, spend a little extra time with it. You may get more than you bargained for.

—Beverly Keel

Bowing Out Legendary fiddler Benny Martin dies at 72

An important chapter of bluegrass and country music history came to a close on March 13 with the death of master fiddler Benny Martin. He was known for his flamboyant style, honed by playing for countless greats from Bill Monroe and Roy Acuff to Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

Born in Sparta, Tenn., in 1928, Martin was playing professionally in Nashville by the time he reached his teens. It was his pioneering work with Flatt and Scruggs in the early '50s that marked him as an innovator. Working with the duo in the studio and on radio, Martin created a signature sound that remains a model of bluegrass style to this day.

"Every day I play something that Benny Martin played, even when I'm playing with Shania Twain or Tim McGraw," says session fid-

dler Glen Duncan. "His sound is as current today as it was 40 years ago."

Martin later worked with Johnnie & Jack and Kitty Wells, before pursuing fame on his own as a singer. He joined the Opry in the mid-'50s, and recorded for Mercury, Decca, RCA and Starday.

By the mid-'60s, he was back to working sessions, though he continued to occasionally record solo albums for small labels.

In 1980, Martin was struck by the nervous disorder spasmodic dysphonia, which robbed him of his voice. Treatments temporarily enabled him to complete one last album, 1999's *Big Tiger Roars Again*.

Survived by three sisters, four children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild, Benny Martin represents the last of great fiddle players who made their mark in the '40s.

"When you think about the fiddle players who hit this town in the 1940s, you think about Dale Potter, Chubby Wise, Howdy Forrester, Tommy Jackson – and Benny Martin," says Eddie Stubbs, a former fiddler and current WSM-AM disc jockey. "With the passing of Benny Martin, all of them are gone."

—Jon Weisberger



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Cowboy

Newcomer Keith Urban likes baths, his mom and Don Williams – but hates crocodiles

Whenever he's called the Australian country hunk, Keith Urban audibly cringes. "I don't see myself that way, so I'm quite taken aback by that description," he says. Urban should get used to such fawning. With his No. 1 "But For The Grace Of God," an ACM nomination for Top New Male Vocalist and official crowning as one of *People* magazine's sexiest

men alive, he's not only turning heads, he's also becoming a bona fide celebrity. Born in the Australian farm town of Caboolture, the singer, songwriter and guitarist moved to Nashville in 1992. While he still misses his homeland, he has adjusted to Tennessee life just fine. Watch for Urban touring with Brooks & Dunn through the summer.

What do you miss from Australia that you just cannot find in Nashville? Vegemite! [A vegetarian spread] You just can't find that wonderfully vile stuff anywhere in Nashville. I've been eating it since I was a kid, and I understand that it's repulsive, but I've developed a taste for it – or some might say lack of. There are also some Australian chocolates that I miss. My mom sends me a box from time to time, but often the chocolates don't make the trip too well.

Baths or showers?

Both. Not at the same time, though. I'm a functional shower-type guy during the week, but about twice a week, I like a bath.

I hear you get some of your songwriting ideas in the shower.

Yeah, never in the bath, that would be far too convenient! Often when I'm taking a shower, that's when I'll get a great idea for a song. My muse has a great sense of humor. There have been many mornings when I've run from the shower dripping wet to the cassette deck.

What was the first concert you attended? Tom T. Hall, in Australia when I was 5 or 6. The next week, Johnny Cash came to town and my dad took me to that, too. There were about 5,000 people at that Cash concert, in a place called Festival Hall in Brisbane. I remember him onstage, smoke rising up through the white-hot spotlight and the electricity of the crowd. It was so unforgettable.

People find it fascinating that you co-wrote "But For The Grace Of God" with Charlotte Caffey and Jane Wiedlin of the pop group The Go-Go's. Do you find it odd writing

songs with people outside country music? I find it very uncomfortable. I actually accepted that offer somewhat reluctantly, because I've been in situations before with non-country writers, and often they come with these clichéd, hayseed ideas about writing country songs. When I got together with Jane and Charlotte, they initially came up with a few cheesy things. Then Charlotte came up

with the title, I was strumming a melody and Jane wrote the first verse. It just came together all of a sudden once we came up with the title. I'd like to write with them again someday.

You were spotlighted in People magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive" issue. Who is the sexiest woman alive?

My mom! She's pretty hot. Other than dear mom, well, I'm a little keen on Elizabeth Hurley. She's got a beautiful face; I'm a face guy. I look at a face before I look at anything else.



Do you have any phobias? I hate crocodiles. You'll never see me going to the Everglades or any swampy area. They are so prehistoric looking, and they hide so well.

What's a sure sign of the decline of Western civilization?

I think it's a bit scary that more and more people I know are yanking their kids out of public school to do the home-school thing. But it also could be looked on as a good sign, because it means that there are less latchkey kids out there.

Who is not making records as often as you'd like?

Don Williams. His voice, to me, is the sound of being 10 years old and sitting in the living room with my dad. The most soothing, warm voice ever.

BY KATH HANSEN

ILLUSTRATION BY JERRY DILLINGHAM

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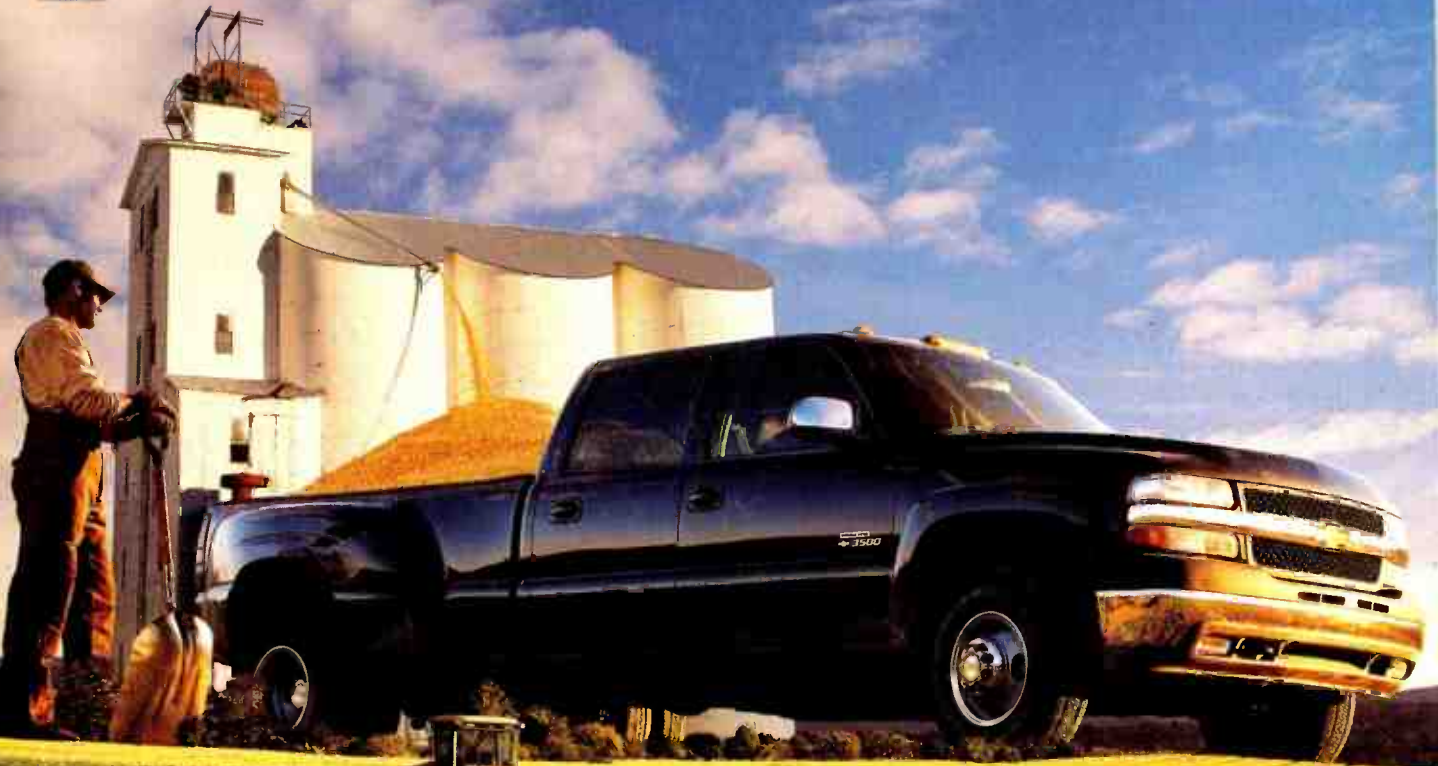
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