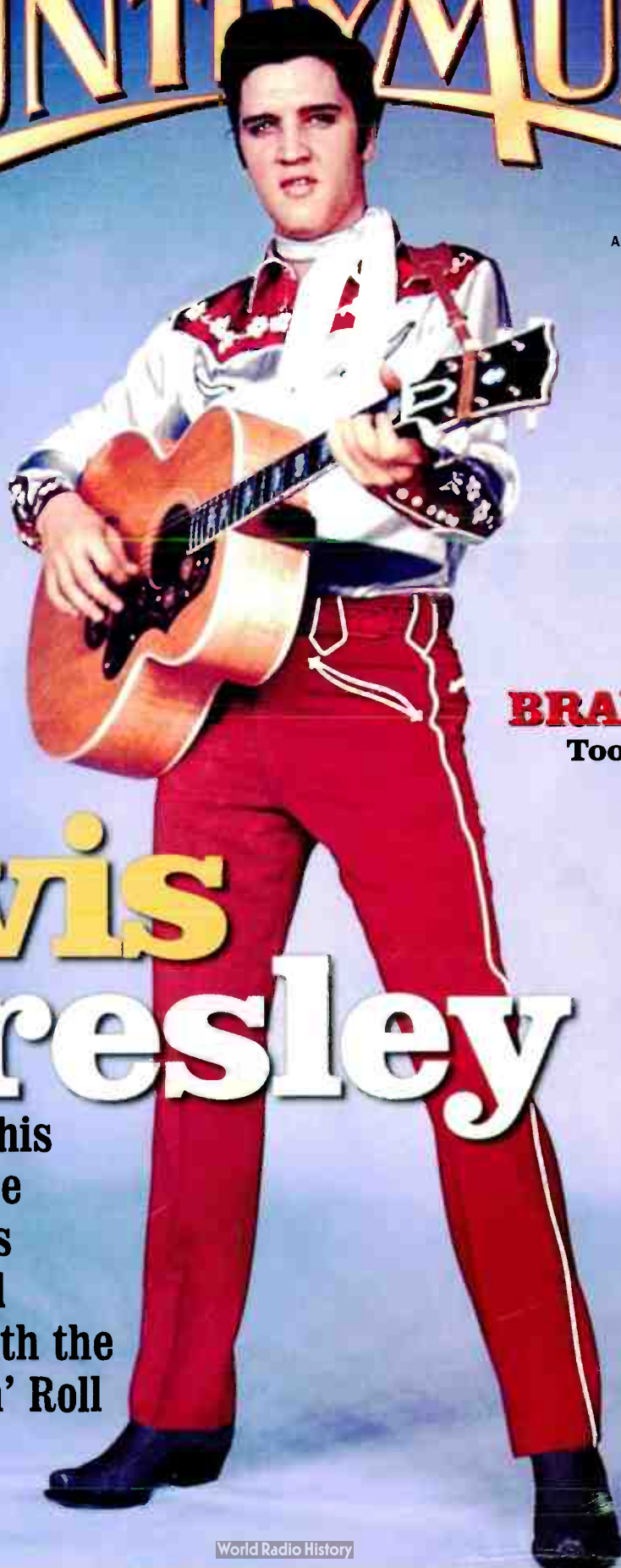


YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE STARS, MUSIC & TRADITION

COUNTRYMUSIC

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2002

12-PAGE
Journal of
Traditional
Country Music
enclosed!



SHeDAISY
No apologies

**Looks Can
Deceive:**
Inside the
business of star
photography

BRAD PAISLEY
Too good to be true?

Elvis Presley

25 years after his death, Nashville re-examines its often conflicted relationship with the King of Rock 'n' Roll

Kathy Mattea

O Brother's
Peasall Sisters

Chely Wright

Reviews

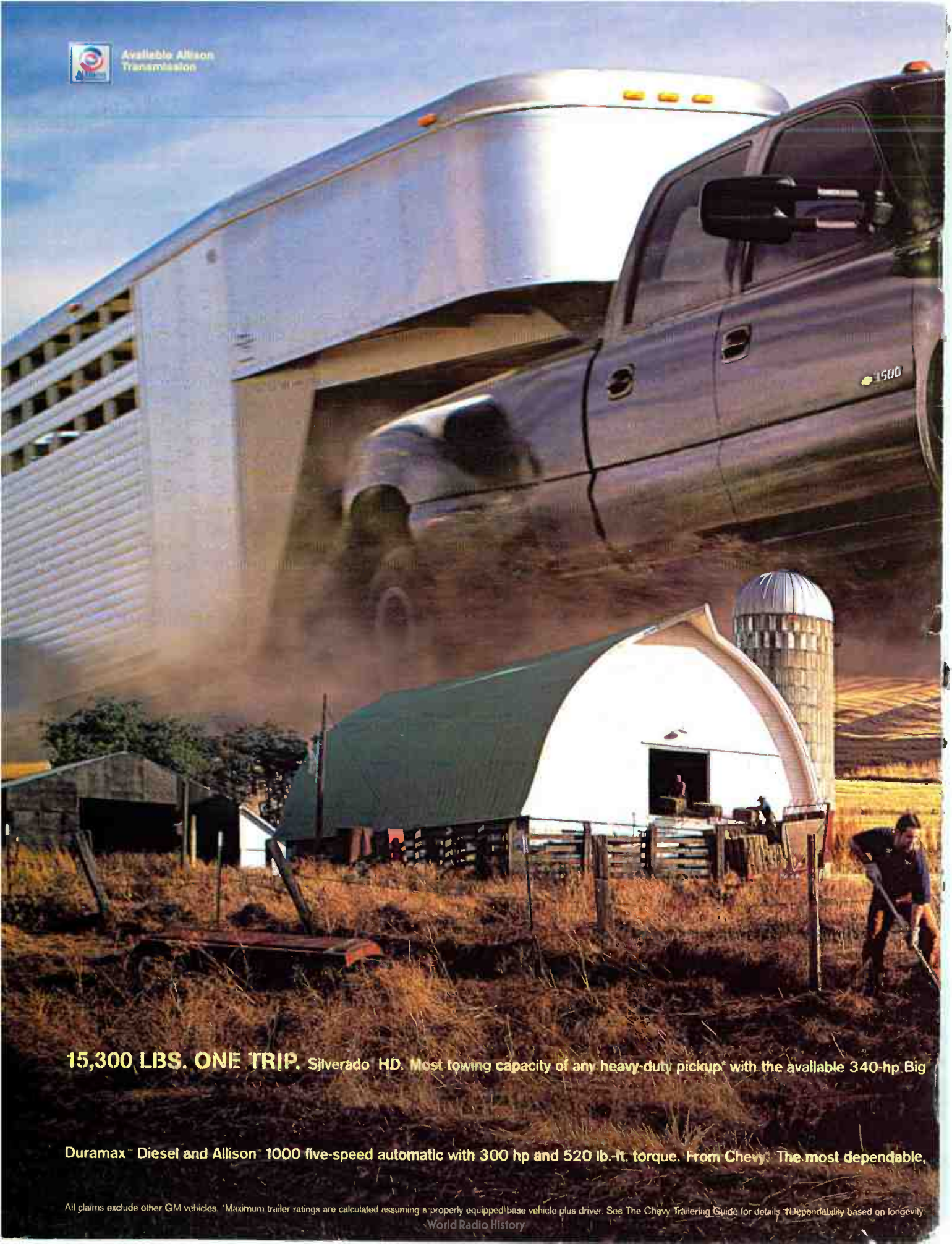
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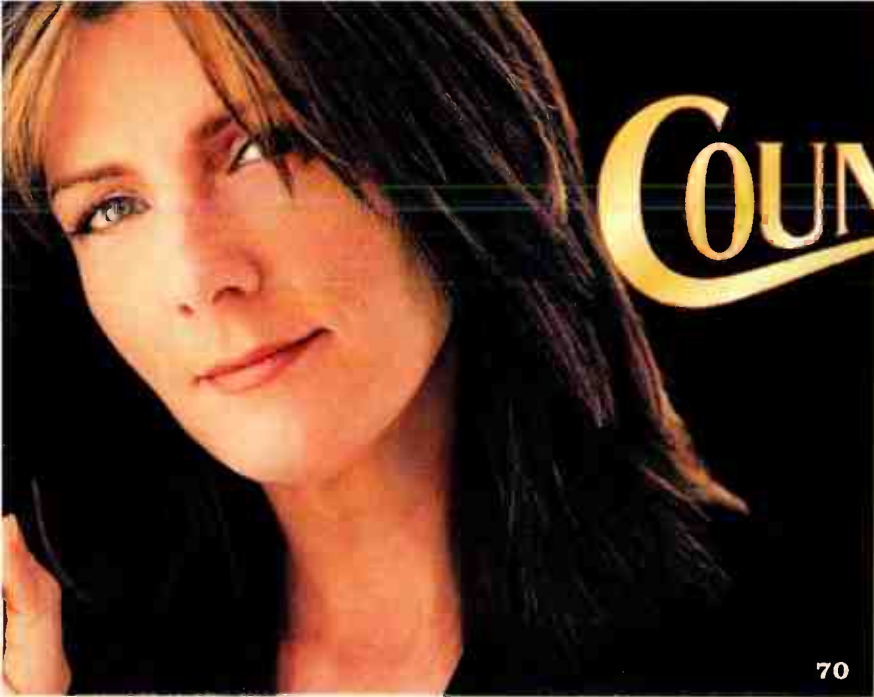
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SILVERADO HD



LIKE A ROCK

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COUNTRY MUSIC

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2002

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Elvis Presley

He was the king of rock 'n' roll and shook up the world - but country music was always on his mind.



MICHAEL OGG'S ARCHIVES.COM

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Fans love them. Critics love them not. The trio challenges both with its second album.

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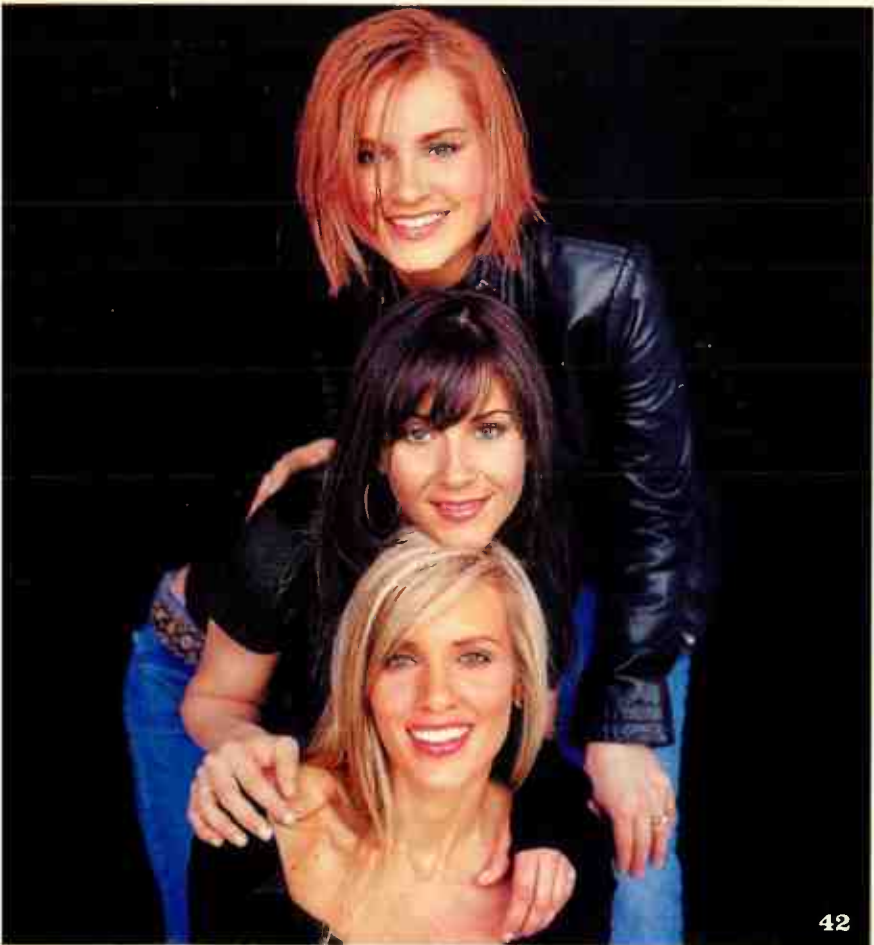
When he needs to get away from it all, Dunn retreats to his Western-themed barn.

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So polite. So good-looking. So traditional. Paisley is a gosh-darn perfect country star.

70 Kathy Mattea

The successful singer decides she'd rather switch than fight for a place in the country mainstream.



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KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

RON DAVIS

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THE Journal

OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC

Will The Circle Be Unbroken ... Sheb Wooley ... "For The Good Times" ... Willie Nelson's bandanna and gym shoes ... Reviews ... More!

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The one time it's
socially acceptable
to lick the plate.



Yeah, it's that important.

COUNTRYMUSIC

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WALLET WALLOP

I agree with a lot of the points in Lisa Zhito's article about concert prices (*Concerts In Crisis, June/July*). I live in Montgomery, Ala., and artists don't come to perform here very often. The venues are small and so they don't make enough money to make it worth their time. When someone does come here, fans need to know months in advance to save enough money to buy a ticket – and you can forget about buying anything else. Country artists need the fans to support them so they can pay their bills, but if fans can't afford the CDs and concert tickets, then it defeats the purpose.

CYNTHIA BRASWELL
MILLBROOK, ALABAMA

Yes it's true. We've stopped going to country concerts as reported in *Concerts In Crisis*. Too much money for concert tickets and too much sound! Now we attend outdoor Bluegrass Festivals with \$10-to-\$20 ticket prices and less volume. We don't even attend local county fair music shows because of the noise. Your loss, country stars. We still love you, but ...

MICHAEL AND NORMA HERR
WAUSEON, OHIO

NO DISGRACE

Your article *Regrets, They've Had A Few (June/July)* states that Ricky Van Shelton canceled his appearance on a



Captured Live:
Charley Pride

PHOTELLO/GHERGA

LETTERS



Randy Travis "had every right to defend himself."

COURTESY: DREAMWORKS RECORDS

CMA TV show in 1993. That is not the way I remember it! Ricky protested that the song they wanted him to sing was in the wrong key for him. The producer told him to do it or he was off the show. Security met him at his bus and told him that they had been ordered to tell him to leave. As far as I know, everyone who wrote about it at the time took Ricky's side. He was right to refuse to do the song, which was in the wrong key and which he didn't have time to rehearse.

MARY IRESON
HOUSTON, TEXAS

LIVE & WELL

While I respect his opinions, Patrick Carr's list of the best live country albums (*Caught In The Act, June/July*) shows he is enamored with fringe artists that music critics seem to like but fans never seem to latch on to. In a nutshell, how could anyone leave Charley Pride's *In Person* off any Top 10 list of live albums? This captures Charley at his best in concert before the bigger hits of his career. I'd also rank a live album of Jim Reeves that RCA released many years ago. Whether he was doing those velvet-toned numbers or the raw country tunes from the Abbott days, you find yourself singing along. Finally, thank goodness someone had the sense to ramble through WSM's archives and release those live recordings of Hank Williams on the *Grand Ole Opry*. I will never get enough Hank.

DAVE SICHAK
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

I want to respond to the inclusion of Randy Travis in your article about artists who should have regrets for stances they took in their career. The rumor that he is gay was a personal vicious attack by an envious person who resented bitterly Randy's success and popularity. It was a deliberate attempt to destroy a man's career. As for Randy being better served had he taken the "high ground" as you suggest, and ignoring the rumor – do you really believe that saying nothing would have dashed out the flames? The consensus would have been that he's not denying it so it must be true. He had every right to defend himself.

DOLORES GUYER
KING GEORGE, VIRGINIA

HAYRIDE HISTORY

The *Louisiana Hayride* has not been gone 40 years, nor was the name "given away" by KWKH in the '60s, as you report in *The Hayride Rides Again*, (*April/May*). KWKH produced more than 150 *Louisiana Hayride* shows on a monthly or quarterly basis throughout the '60s and early '70s. My father, David Kent, purchased the *Hayride* from KWKH in 1975 and produced the show every Saturday for the next 13 years, syndicating the show to hundreds of radio stations and giving breaks to singers Randy Travis, Shoji Tabuchi and Linda Davis. I established the *Louisiana Hayride* archives 10 years ago and continue to use the *Hayride* name to license the photos, memorabilia and thousands of recordings of the show worldwide. I wish the new *Shreveport Louisiana Hayride* show well. Perhaps it

CONTRIBUTORS

Meet this issue's esteemed guest stars

★ **ALANNA NASH** is queen of the Elvis Presley experts. Besides covering The King's 1977 funeral for the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, she also was the ghostwriter of *Elvis: From Memphis To Hollywood* and author of *Elvis Aaron Presley: Revelations From The Memphis Mafia*. Her home is lit by two lamps that once illuminated Graceland's living room, and by a well-worn cowboy boot lamp – a gift from Colonel Parker to Elvis in the '50s. Elvis died on her birthday.



★ **JENNIFER MENDELSON** met up with Brad Paisley in Washington, D.C., where he performed at a benefit. "It was amusing to see a guy in a cowboy hat saying he was 'tickled' to play for an inside-the-Beltway crowd," she says. A Long Island native who has

lived in the D.C. area for 12 years, Mendelsohn has written regularly about country artists for *USA Weekend*, *The Washington Post*, *People* and *Family Circle*. She also writes a humor column for the online magazine *Slate*.

★ **KAY WEST**, whose new food column debuts this issue, has been eating all her life – and writing about it professionally for 10 years. A Delaware native, she moved to Nashville in 1981 to work for a record company but turned to writing five years later. She has contributed to *Glamour*, *TV Guide*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Penthouse*, and she is the author of two books, *How To Raise A Lady* and *How To Raise A Gentleman*. She also is the restaurant critic for the weekly *Nashville Scene*. Her *Country Music* column will explore the origins and ongoing appeal of classic country dishes and regional foods.



★ Los Angeles-based photographer **RON DAVIS** has worked with such luminaries as Princess Diana, Leonardo DiCaprio, 'N Sync, TLC and Josh Hartnett. "I have always had a special attraction to country music and country artists," he says. Perhaps it's their down-to-earth humor. During the SHeDAISY shoot, Davis reports that the sisters had his crew laughing with self-deprecating jokes. His country projects include shooting the album covers for Jo Dee Messina's *Burn* and Reba McEntire's *So Good Together*. Davis' work regularly appears in *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Country Weekly*, *Seventeen* and other publications.

LETTERS

will come to benefit a new generation of country music talent.

JOEY KENT
SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA

HANKS A LOT

I just got through reading *Resurrecting His Roots* (April/May) about Hank Williams Jr. I loved it! Hank Jr. tells it like it is in a lot of his songs. I would love to see him back on the charts. He doesn't get enough credit. Hank Jr., you keep playing those songs.

DEBORAH OSBORN
DANVILLE, ALABAMA

Thank you, Alanna Nash, for the review on Hank III (*Reviews*, June/July). He's the real deal. If only they would play his music on the radio.

AL BAISLEY
HIGHLAND MILLS, NEW YORK

ILL-SUITED

I agree with Billy Walker (*Trailblazers*, March) and Penny Banning (*Letters*,



Fashion flower
Cyndi Thomson

ALAN FAY/OUTLINE



Waylon Jennings' death marked the end of an era.

COURTESY HOT-SCHATZ.FR

WAYLON WRONGED

Words cannot express how much Waylon Jennings means to me. I never had the pleasure of meeting him, but I know enough about him to know that he's probably saying you can all kiss his @%#! A two-page article and a tiny handful of pictures is all that a legend rates in your magazine (*The Eagle Has Landed*, April/May)! For me and for a lot of his loyal fans, the music died on Feb. 3, 2002. Jessi lost her husband. Shooter, Tomi Lynn, Terry, Julie, Deana, Buddy and Jennifer lost their daddy. We all lost our hero. That deserves more pages in your magazine than Kid Rock hanging out with Hank Jr. I believe Ol' Hank would agree with me on that, too!

JACKIE G. FURR
JULIAN, NORTH CAROLINA

June/July). I too wonder where country music will end up. The *Grand Ole Opry* is not what it used to be. The singers wear whatever they want, like torn-up jeans. It was better when the singers had sawdust on the floor and bales of hay with people sitting on them. I, for one, enjoy seeing the singers in something nice. The older singers did not make as much money back then, but they still cared enough to buy nice clothes.

CARL PREWITT
CHANNELVIEW, TEXAS

LISTEN, DON'T LOOK

I read the Teen Country column (*June/July*) about the outfit that Cyndi Thomson is wearing. I am 19 years old – and think that if the teens who contributed are so worried about hearing good voices, they should pay attention to her singing. I think country artists should be thought of the same way any other performer would be. Just because Cyndi sings country shouldn't restrict the way she is able to dress. Don't look down on her for being an individual. Give her a break and let her do what she is great at – singing and being herself.

MINDI KAY GODDARD
HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

CRITICAL MISS

I hope your readers don't go by your CD reviews to determine what to buy! I have the Tommy Shane Steiner album (*Reviews*, June/July) and want to let fans know that if you love the hit "What If She's An Angel"

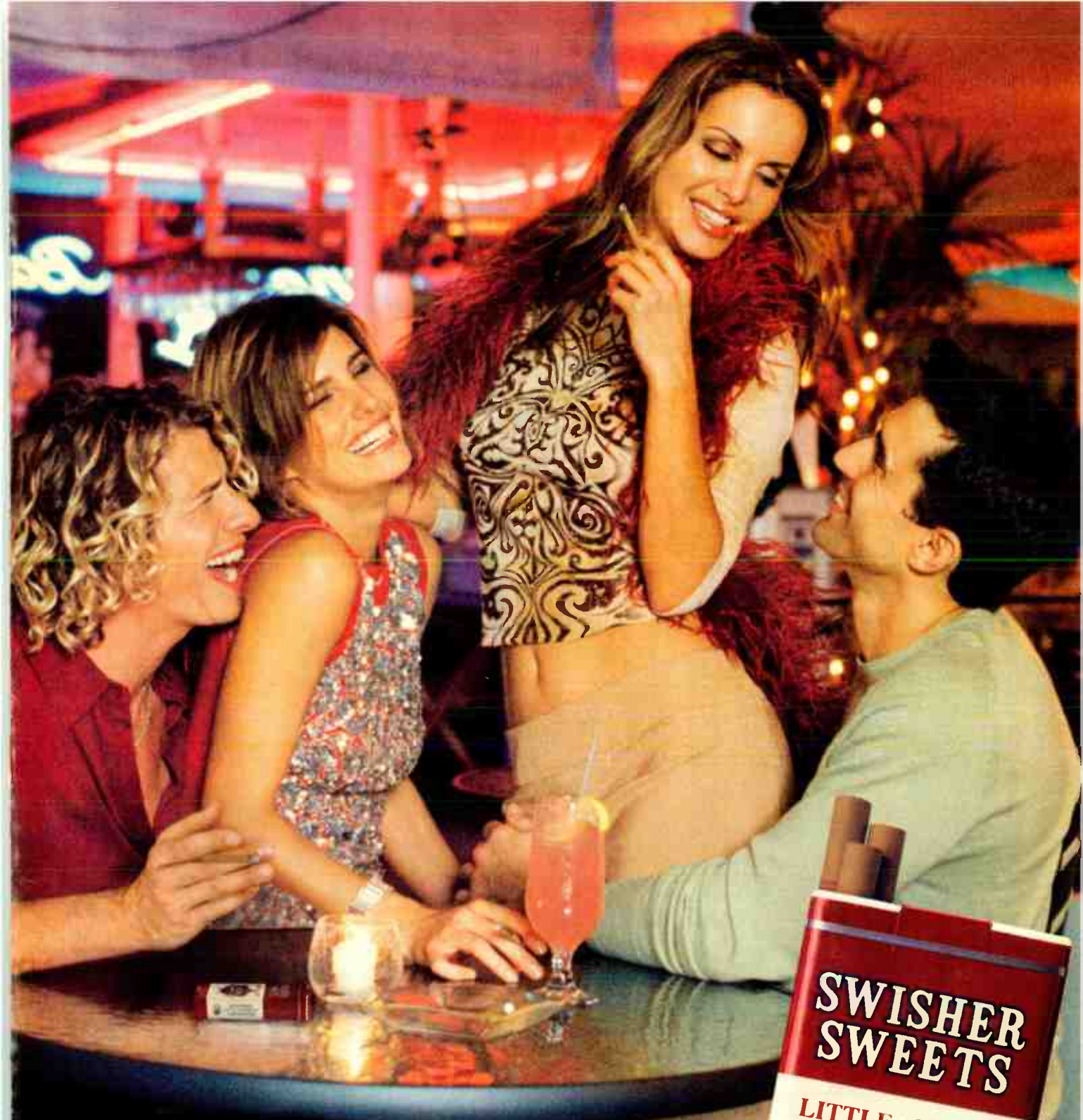
then you will love all the songs on his CD. Just because the music isn't traditional country doesn't mean it's not good. My favorites range from Don Williams to Keith Urban to Aerosmith. People who only like one type of music are small-minded.

JENNIFER MEYERS
MINCO, OKLAHOMA

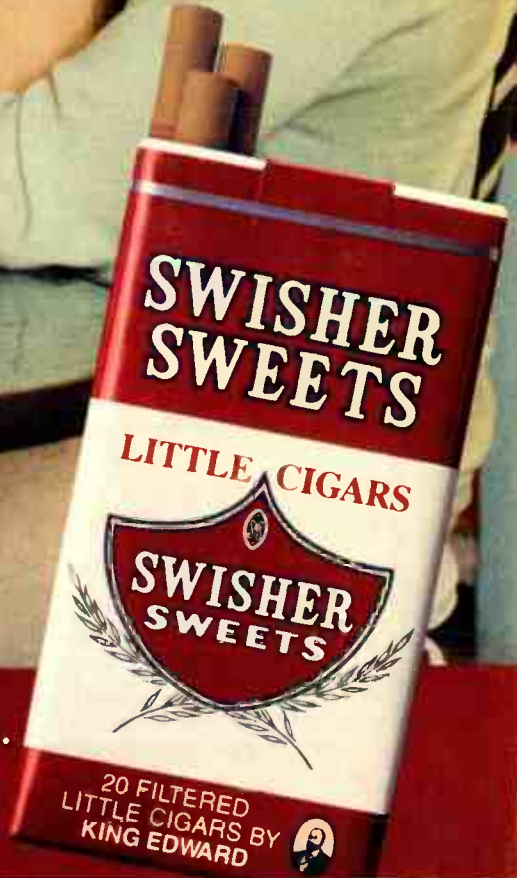
It's great to see artists like Hank Locklin and Billy Walker still recording good music after 50 years. David Cantwell makes a good point about Hank Snow being overlooked in his review of Walker's new recording (*Reviews*, April/May). He not only sang well and wrote many of his songs, but he also played great lead guitar on his records. I feel Cantwell did miss one important point: Three of Snow's last Rainbow Ranch Boys appeared with Walker – guitarist Roger Carroll, fiddler Tommy Vaden and, most recognizably, Hawaiian steel player Kayton Roberts. Thank you, Billy Walker, for remembering Snow and continuing to play the *Opry*.

JIM RHODES
KNIGHTSVILLE, INDIANA

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COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

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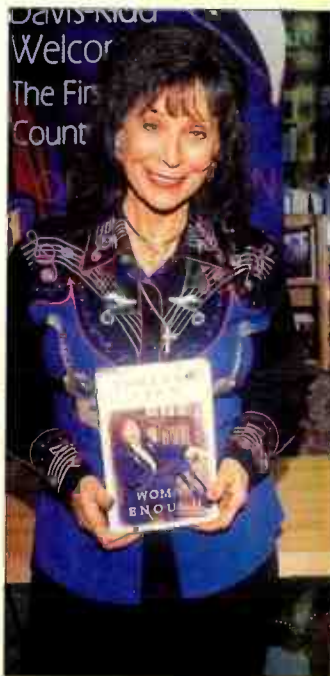
Party On, Garth

A GARTH BROOKS and **TRISHA YEARWOOD** made a little time for the good times when they attended – arm-in-arm, and looking very “couple-like” – a gala Hollywood bash honoring *Daily Variety* columnist Army Archerd. Regis Philbin hosted the star-studded party from the posh Beverly Hilton Hotel. Also on hand for the festivities were **REBA McENTIRE** and husband **NARVEL BLACKSTOCK** (right).



Author, Author!

▶ LORETTA LYNN hit the road again, but not for a concert tour. Instead, she was busy on the promotional trail for her revealing new book, *Still Woman Enough*. The country legend visited bookstores nationwide and signed copies for her fans.



LARRY HILL (2)



Chicks And Nicks

▶ The DIXIE CHICKS became official “Divas” when they joined legendary rocker Stevie Nicks, Celine Dion, Cher, Mary J. Blige and more for VH1’s *Divas Las Vegas* special, live from the MGM Grand. Chicks Emily Robison, Natalie Maines and Martie Maguire jammed with Nicks (second from right) on “Landslide,” which the Chicks have recorded for their upcoming album.

ETHAN MILLER/IMAGE DIRECT

TAMMIE ARROYO

TAMMIE ARROYO

Smiling Sara

▼ **SARA EVANS**, accompanied by a giant mouse, shared smiles, songs and stories with the kids and staff of the Child Development Center at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in Nashville. The "Born To Fly" singer is also serving as the celebrity spokesperson for the Music City Tennis Invitational, which benefits the hospital.



LARRY HILL



THE ARISTO

Alabama Bids Farewell

▲ **ALABAMA** dropped a bombshell at the Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards by announcing plans to split up the act after a 2003 farewell tour. The band will also produce one more album for their label of the past two decades, RCA. Backstage at the ACMs, Alabama's Jeff Cook, Randy Owen, Mark Herndon and Teddy Gentry presented the show's producer, **DICK CLARK** (center), with a custom-made Gibson Les Paul guitar for the ACM archives.



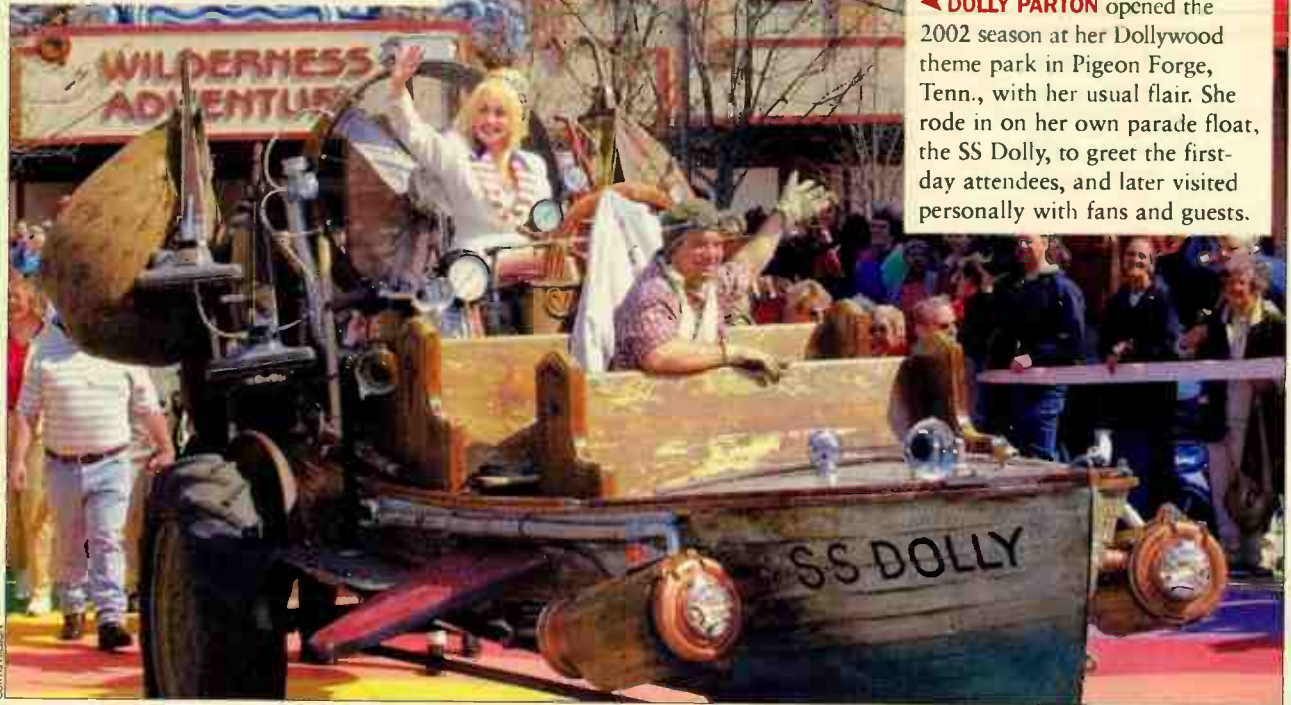
COURTESY WORTHAN WORKS (2)

Where's Charlie?

▲ **CHARLIE DANIELS** stood out as an ambassador of goodwill when he brought gifts of music and cheer to American servicemen and women stationed in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Daniels performed, signed autographs and mingled with the troops. The trip was sponsored by the USO and Armed Forces Entertainment.



COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



Here's Dolly!

◀ **DOLLY PARTON** opened the 2002 season at her Dollywood theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., with her usual flair. She rode in on her own parade float, the SS Dolly, to greet the first-day attendees, and later visited personally with fans and guests.

Painting The Town

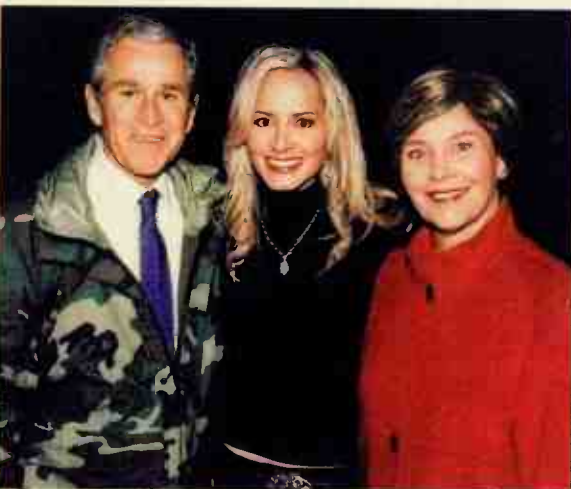
▶ **TAMMY COCHRAN** chipped in for a "barn-raising" charity event in Los Angeles, helping to spruce up La Santa Cruz Childcare Center in a project sponsored by Home Depot and the Academy of Country Music. Tammy lent a hand – literally – as she grabbed a paint brush and did her part to beautify the center's play area.



A Day At The Races

▲ Kentucky Derby Day brought out the big stars – and high fashion.

TOBY KEITH and wife Tricia were on hand to watch the Run For The Roses, along with **JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY** in Southern gentleman garb with wife Crystal (below).



Chely Meets The Prez

◀ **CHELY WRIGHT** discovered that an important stop had been added to her tour of American military bases in Japan and Korea – she would also be performing for President and Mrs. George W. Bush! Chely gave her presidential performance in Osan, South Korea, and later met the Bushes at a reception.

POW!

ZAP!

OMMPH!



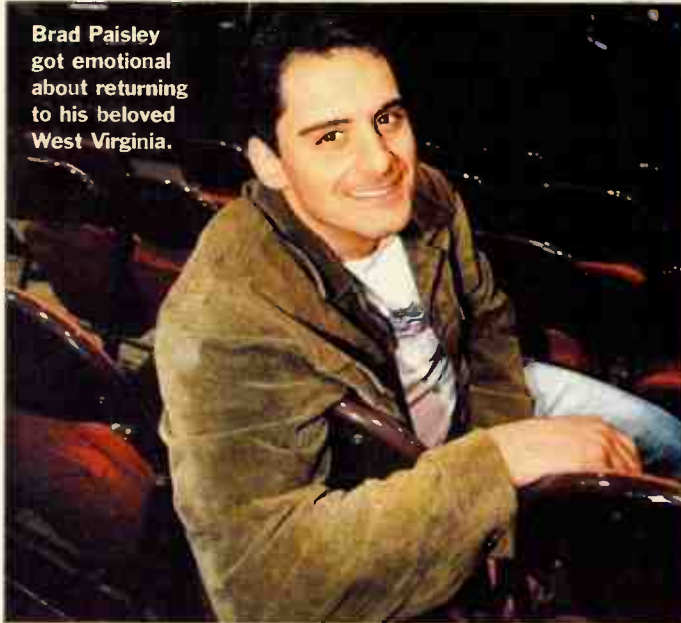
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THE INSIDER

WITH HAZEL SMITH

Brad Paisley got emotional about returning to his beloved West Virginia.



AP/WIDE WORLD

TEARS & CHEERS

Chris Cagle fans know the well-built Texan is as big-hearted as he is broad-shouldered. So when he took the stage at a party for his first gold record, *Play It Loud*, a friend leaned over and whispered to me, "Watch. He will cry."

Sure enough, he did – and right on cue. "I didn't mean to cry," he apologized after sincerely thanking a room full of Capitol Records employees who had been working hard on his behalf for the previous year.

While the rain poured outside, Capitol president **Mike Dungan** handed the tearful Chris his plaque and crowd, "I don't think this is a gold record party. I think it's a halfway to platinum party!"

The celebration, held at The Cantina in Nashville's Cummins Station, also honored Chris' first No. 1 hit, "I Breathe In, I Breathe Out."

A SPECIAL POOH

Sawyer Brown's court jester/lead singer **Mark Miller** and his family took a Florida vacation, and his 11-year old daughter brought her favorite sleeping toy she has had since birth, a Winnie-the-Pooh stuffed bear. Following a wonderful day at Disney World, tears started flowing after the family returned to their hotel and the Pooh bear was missing.

Exhausting all means of finding the toy, Mark decided the toy may have been wrapped up in dirty linens by house-keeping. So he took off downstairs to the laundry room and was stunned by the

CRYING OUT LOUD

Brad Paisley first performed at the Wheeling Civic Center in West Virginia when he was 12. So it was quite an emo-

Two darling St. Jude children attended the event to help Brad sell fishing licenses and to sing along with him on his hit, "I'm Gonna Miss Her (The Fishin' Song)."

enormous stacks of dirty laundry. Nonetheless, the good dad donned a pair of rubber gloves and dove in, digging through the old sheets. Security was summoned. Luckily, the guard had a kid and turned a blind eye. In the second-to-last pile of sheets, Mark found Winnie-the-Pooh. Back in the room the family cheered for Daddy.

BEAUTIFUL BRIDE

Who would have guessed? **Cyndi Thomson** chose to dress conservatively for her wedding, wearing a classy Vera Wang white gown with midriff and navel covered and neckline that was not cut too low. The bride became **Mrs. Daniel Goodman** on a fine Saturday evening at Nashville's Woodmont Christian Church. The bride was given in marriage by her

father. She had seven attendants, three of whom were her sisters from Georgia. Her mother was beautiful, as was her grandmother. A string quartet furnished the music, and a full-fledged buffet reception featured great food, including spicy chicken, pasta and prime rib. A deejay played records for dancing, and everyone agreed with the preacher, who said the bride and groom made such a handsome couple that they looked like they belonged on the top of the cake.

STAND BY YOUR MOM

The four daughters of the late **Tammy Wynette** have reached an out-of-court settlement in their \$50 million lawsuit against their mother's doctor. Nobody is saying how much they received, but

tional return for him when he performed his first homecoming concert at the same Civic Center.

When he got to the last song of his show, Brad told me he looked at the last row and saw every seat was filled. Right there, he broke down and cried so hard that he could not finish singing. "Filling that building was something I'd dreamed of all my life," said the native of nearby Glen Dale.

While on the subject, the young Paisley was honorary chairman for the 2002 St. Jude's Hook, Line & Singer fishing tourney. A catfish luncheon kicked off the event in Nashville's BMG Building.

I hope Tammy's deserving daughters are well taken care of financially.

DON'T CALL HIM NO-SHOW

The great **George Jones** had to cancel and re-schedule a couple shows because he broke his foot in a fast-food restaurant. The Possum apparently lost his footing and twisted his ankle and broke his foot. He didn't realize it was broken until he got home and it hurt so bad he went to the hospital for X-rays. Doctors ordered him off his foot for a few days, and sent him away wearing a foam boot brace.

MARTINA LENDS A HAND

To kick off "Make a Difference Day," **Martina McBride** contributed an

essay to *USA Weekend* heralding this year's honorees. The singer explained that her annual Fan Fair celebrity auctions have raised more than \$300,000 for the YWCA. She encouraged readers to go out and do something to affect someone's life. Approximately 48 million people read *USA Weekend* in 580 newspapers. Around 5,000 entries were received with roughly two million participants. A panel of judges, including Martina and actor **Paul Newman**, chose 10 national honorees. Newman and his Newman's Own foodline donated \$10,000 to each of the honorees for their charities.

This is just another sign that Martina McBride is one country music star you can count on to always keep us proud.

GRASS ROOTS

Seventeen years after it was proposed, the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Owensboro, Ky., is a reality. Kentucky **Gov. Paul Patton** was on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremonies, and the Grand Ole Opry's **Jim & Jesse** and the **Osborne Brothers** performed a free concert. Other performers on the outstanding bill included **J.D. Crowe & The New South**, **Ronnie Reno & The Reno Tradition**, **Rhonda Vincent & The Rage** and **Larry Cordle & Lonesome Standard Time**. The man who invented bluegrass, the late **Bill Monroe**, was honored when **Tim O'Brien** lead the crowd in singing his classic song, "Uncle Pen."

Bluegrass Unlimited stalwarts **Pete and Kitsy Kuykendall** were quick to boast that their genre of music took home a total of 11 Grammy awards this year. Pete Kuykendall pointed out that fans coming to the museum could also tour Monroe's restored boyhood homeplace located in nearby Rosine.

HORRIFYING HOLD-UP

Ty Herndon recently moved to Los Angeles to pursue acting as well as singing, but he didn't receive a very friendly welcome. In fact, he believes he nearly lost his life in a recent mugging incident that he told me about while we shared a limo ride in Indianapolis recently after participating in the WFMS Country Music Expo 2002.

As Ty recalled the event, he said he had just dropped off some friends, parked his car and walked a half block to the door of a restaurant when a car with four goons inside skidded to a stop. Two men jumped out, one with a gun pointed at Ty. He demanded Ty's wallet, which he quickly gave up. The two robbers jumped back in the car and drove to the corner, then suddenly stopped and backed up. A terrified Ty looked up to see the man aiming his gun at him. Ty believes he would have surely been shot, but a woman came walking out of the door and the car sped off.

GRAND VISIT

New York City firefighter

Ken Haskell and his wife, **Genene**, received invitations to go backstage at the *Grand Ole Opry* during their recent visit to Music City. Ken and Genene got to meet their favorites, **Brooks & Dunn**, who were on the *Opry* that night. It was a bittersweet moment for everyone involved. You see, Haskell lost his two firefighting brothers in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

CHASING RAINBOWS

The great **Dolly Parton** is set to tour this year with her new bluegrass band, **The Blue-Niques**, in support of her upcoming acoustic album, *Halo's & Horns*. Not one to rest on her laurels, Parton has two movies in the works – a made-for-TV film about the life of actress **Mae West** and a big-screen feature with **Randy Quaid** that will be titled *Frank McKlusky, C.I.*

But I bet her biggest thrill came when the multitalented Parton was presented the first ever Chasing Rainbows Award from the National State Teachers of the Year



For Dolly, everything is coming in roses.

organization. Parton was honored for giving each child born in her home of Sevier County, Tenn., a book a month, from birth to kindergarten. Says Dolly, "The kids call me the book lady, and my husband, Carl, thinks it's great. Carl said everybody else has known me for my singing, my hair or my boobs."

Dolly also has opened a Chasing Rainbows Museum at her Dollywood theme park in Sevier County's Pigeon Forge. The museum will focus on Parton's entertainment career, but also will give special recognition to the annual winners of the Chasing Rainbows Award as granted by the national teachers' organization.

STATLERS' LAST STAND

I almost wept when I read **The Statler Brothers** newsletter informing fans that the legendary quartet is retiring from the road. They also will downsize their fine organization; after Christmas, they no longer will issue newsletters, personally answer fan requests or mail out auto-graphed photos. I love The Statler Brothers and always have – they're some of the greatest entertainers who ever lived. All the young bucks need to study the Statlers to get lessons in work ethics and in how to treat the fans. They're among the greats and their shows will be missed.

★ JOYS OF FATHERHOOD

Tim McGraw is a superstar. He's received every award available in country music, including the CMA's prestigious Entertainer of the Year. His singles go to No. 1 on the charts and his albums sell in the millions. He shares a lovely home filled with the finest of furniture with his wife, one of the most beautiful women in showbiz, **Faith Hill**. His live shows sell out. He travels to his shows in the best bus money can buy and he drives top-of-the-line vehicles. Considering all that, I want to tell you where this mega-star was seen on his day off – at The Imaginarium, a fun Nashville playhouse for kids with all kinds of games and stuffed animals, with his two oldest daughters, **Maggie** and **Gracie**. In the Book of Hazel, that is a real man.

Tim McGraw, home-team standout, with daughter Maggie



MORRISON/WULFRAAT

Denney's Grand Slam

Kevin Denney is a young man with an old soul's voice

Denney says that idols George Jones, Keith Whitley and Gene Watson were "singing about how I lived."

New stars on the rise



COURTESY LYRIC STREET

When Kevin Denney moved to Nashville, he always hoped to meet his musical heroes. But he had no idea his wish would come true – and in such an up-close and personal way.

"About the time I was cutting my record, a friend told me he was re-doing George Jones' pool," Denney recalls. "He said, 'If you want to come help me, I'll pay you.' So I went over there every day for a week, working on the pool and watching George mow his big yard. Most days, he'd sit awhile and talk with us. It was cool to just hang out with one of my heroes."

Listen to Denney's self-titled debut, and it's easy to hear Jones' influence. On "That's Just Jessie" – the debut Top 20 single he co-wrote – Denney's phrasing echoes the expressive curlicues of classic George Jones. In fact, Denney's tenor drawl evokes many of the singers who dominated country radio in the 1980s.

"When I really started paying attention to music on the radio back in the '80s, George Jones was still on there," he says. "He was my grandma's favorite singer, so I got hooked on George through my family. And I loved Alan Jackson, George Strait, Gene Watson, John Anderson, Keith Whitley.

"I like to sing about things I know, real-life stuff that I can relate to. I think that's why I always liked those guys so much – it seemed like they were singing about how I lived."

Growing up in southeastern Kentucky, the young Denney split his time working on his dad's tobacco farm and listening to his family sing Southern gospel in area churches. At 13, he hooked up with some older cousins in a bluegrass band ("I played banjo, mostly") called Clyde, Marie, Denney & Friend. It wasn't until he witnessed the energy and enthusiasm at a George Strait concert in 1989, however, that he decided to try making it as a country singer.

He's now beginning to experience a bit of that thrill himself as he performs at festivals and state fairs, especially when he cuts loose on a hard, swinging shuffle like "Cadillac Tears." Those are what the ex-wife in the song cries – as she cashes in after being dumped for a "younger ... firmer" blonde.

"I call that one my 'woman song,'" Denney laughs, "because every time I play it, women in the crowd start high five-ing each other and saying 'amen!' and singing along, just having a big old time."

It's the kind of clever look at a realistic situation that Denney hopes to concentrate on. "That's a song that's about real life," he explains. "I've always said my goal was to sing about people's real lives – and to make music my heroes could hear and be proud of."

— David Cantwell



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Wright Stuff

Chely Wright on vicious chickens, fragrant truck stops and the power of oatmeal

Chely Wright's first No. 1 declared that she was a single white female. She still is – and in no hurry to change that designation. "I'm just happy when I have time alone at home, having a glass of wine and painting," she asserts. "I'm not a very 'go out' kind of person, so maybe men pick up on that. I hardly ever get asked out. Maybe it's the size of my feet; I wear a size 10!" Last year the Kansas beauty released her fifth album, *Never Love You Enough*, and has enjoyed success off the charts, too – with the music education foundation she created, Reading, Writing And Rhythm. "We give money and musical instruments to public schools. We've raised about \$250,000 so far." Chely's many interests can leave mere mortals feeling exhausted, but the energetic vocalist recently sat down long enough to answer a few questions.

The last time we talked, you were obsessed with cleaning your bathroom. Still am. I carry a tiny bottle of Pine-Sol in my bag. When I go to a hotel room, I head right to the tub and clean.

When you paint, do you use oils or acrylics? I use anything I can get my hands on, but I prefer to use oils. I was never trained as a painter, so I'm just learning as I go, but I love the rich texture of oil paint. Though I have ruined many a painting by not being patient and waiting for the oil to dry.

I've heard you love truck stops. It's mostly the smell. I love the smell of diesel fuel. I've been on the road on and off since I was 11 years old, so I've always associated truck stops with fun and freedom and music. Plus, my dad drove a truck when I was a kid, and sometimes he'd take me to work with him. So I also associate the smell of diesel fuel with good times with my dad.

Have any phobias? I'm afraid of birds. Mostly big birds, like crows and vultures. I'm kind of afraid of chickens. I think that stems from my childhood, when I was in the chicken

yard once and I riled them all up. I thought they were attacking me, but my mom says they weren't. In my mind, it felt like a full-on attack. I don't even like to be around pigeons. If I see one on the ground, my heart actually races a bit. I'll cross the street to avoid pigeons.

What food could you not live without? Oatmeal. I eat it every morning.

You probably have the healthiest digestive tract in country music. I do! I recently had a physical before I went to Korea, and the doctor said he had not seen bloodwork as good as mine in years. Oatmeal does me good.

Have any tattoos? No way. I will never have one, either. I just don't like to adorn myself too much. I have a single piercing in my ear, and don't wear that much jewelry in general. The idea of needles poking me is unappealing. I'm Captain Safety: I've never done a drug in my life, never even smoked a cigarette. So tattooing is just too much outside my safety circle.

Is it true you dream of being on cable's financial channel The Bloomberg Report?

I do. I've got my TV on the Bloomberg right now.

So if you weren't a country music singer, you might be a stock broker? I probably would be. My best friend is a manager at Salomon Smith Barney on Wall Street. I love everything about the financial world, and I'm addicted to it. I'm geeky enough that if I'm sitting in a hotel room having three hours of hair and make-

up everyday, I read the financial reports and get the low-down.

Who would you like to record a duet with? Pink. I love her new record so much, and I think we'd have fun together. It's either Pink or Patty Loveless. The nuances in Patty Loveless' voice are just amazing. *Mountain Soul* has been in my CD player since it came out. It's what I listen to every night on the bus before a show.

What's the oldest thing in your refrigerator? Let me see ... I'm looking in there right now. It's three years old, a bottle of Ferrari-Carano Chardonnay. It's probably still good, since it's wine. Oh, wait. There's something older here ... black-berry preserves from the Loveless Cafe here in Nashville. It's three, maybe four years old. No mold on it yet!

— Kath Hansen



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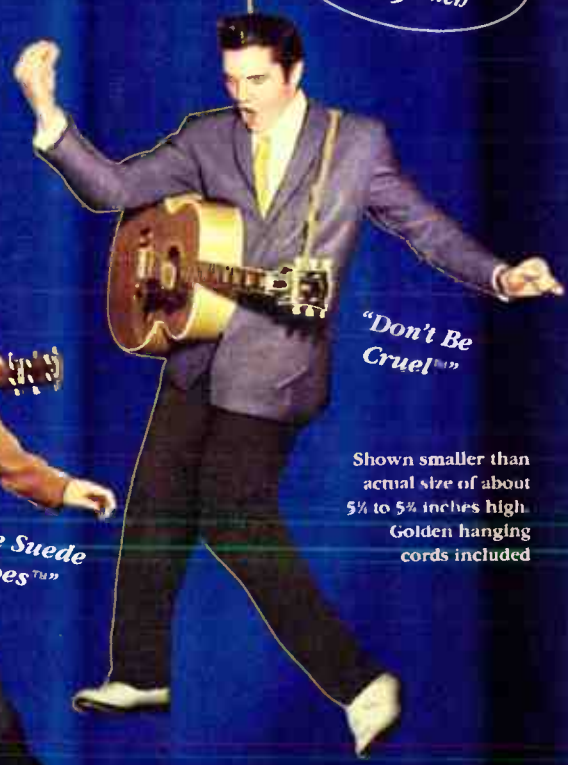


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Under the Covers

The strategy – and agony – behind album art



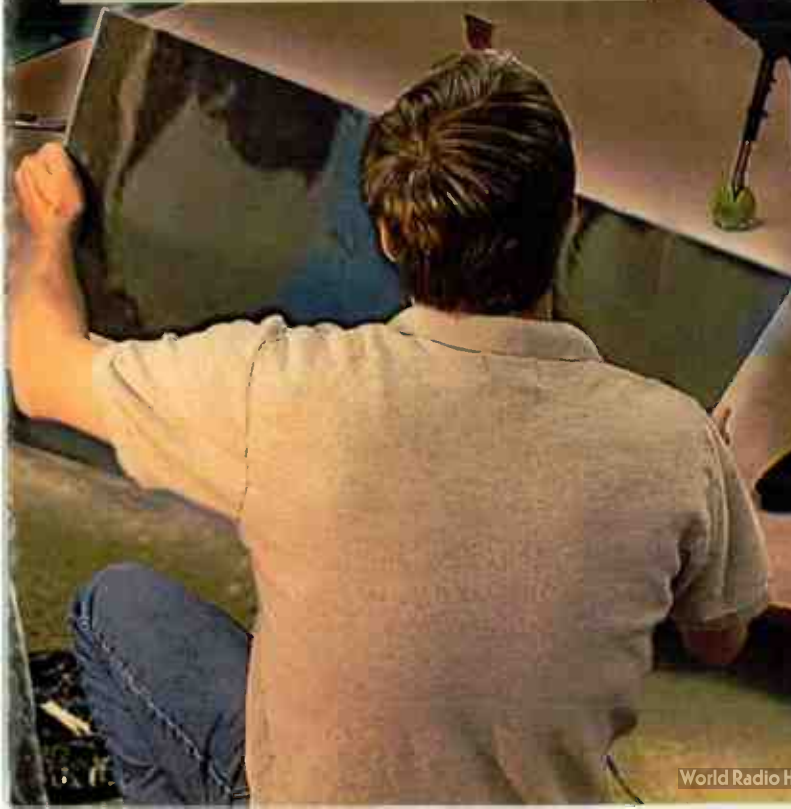
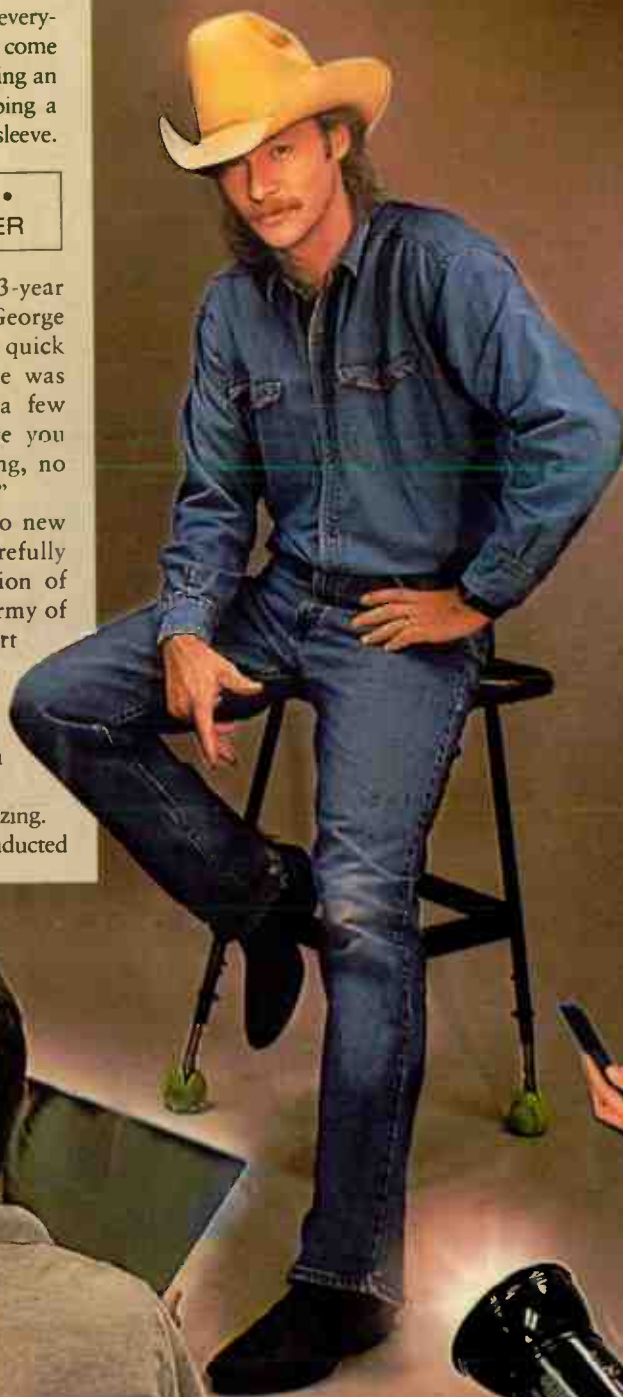
Art director Virginia Team knew her job had changed forever the day she rescheduled a photo shoot to accommodate a makeup artist. "Everything has become so stylized," sighs Team, who's worked in Nashville since 1978. Like everything else in country music, album covers have come a long way from the no-fuss days when designing an album package meant little more than snapping a photograph and slapping it onto a cardboard sleeve.

• BY JENNIFER MENDELSON •
ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD WALKER

Freelance art director Bill Johnson, a 23-year veteran of CBS/Sony, remembers when a George Jones cover shoot took less time than a quick lunch. "You'd go to the studio where he was recording," Johnson recalls. "You had a few minutes with him, and that's the picture you would get. There was no image consulting, no makeup. He'd comb his hair. That was it."

These days, especially when it comes to new artists, album covers are part of a carefully orchestrated marketing plan. The evolution of contemporary cover art involves a small army of managers, publicists, label presidents, art directors, wardrobe stylists, photographers, graphic designers – all trying to create an image that will stand out amidst a dizzying sea of CDs fighting for a potential buyer's attention.

At times the process can be comically agonizing. Ferocious debates over visual details are conducted



Under the Covers

with all the seriousness of post-war treaty negotiations. *Hat or no hat? Smile or no smile? Armani or Levis?*

"It's amazing the level of discussions you'll have about the color of a shirt," reveals Wade Hunt, Senior Director of Creative Services for the RCA Label Group. "And you think, 'My God! The consumer's never going to notice.'"

Or do they? Does a cover that *pops* help propel an album up the charts? Can a dull cover hold a great record back? The bottom line is that a cover must do two things: help build an artist's image and sell albums.

"It's a piece of commercial art," explains designer Maude Gilman-

Perhaps the most important rule for country album covers is that they almost *always* include an image of the star. That's because country music is artist-driven, plain and simple. Country fans want to connect with a person, not buy into an abstract concept. Why try to sell George Strait with a Salvador Dali painting?

"The traditionalists are traditional, and that's how you need to market them," explains Gilman-Clapham.

Rules, of course, were meant to be broken. Some of the most admired covers of late – Tim McGraw's *Set This Circus Down*, Toby Keith's *Pull My Chain* and the Dixie Chicks' *Fly* – don't actually include the artists. Generally, ditching the singer's portrait speaks to a certain level of success, since it implies

the cover and they won't be covered by a retail sticker – and at the same time still be aesthetically pleasing when it stands on its own," says Hunt. "That's a constant struggle for us."

Designers like to tell the frightful tale of the cover that showed a singer – though no one seems to recall who – with his hat tipped, looking down. But when the CD went into the bins, his face and name were obscured by stickers. "It could have been anybody," says Maude Gilman-Clapham. "And that's not a good thing."

MAKE IT TIMELESS

Ask any country music art director about the red leather couch at Nashville's Riverwood mansion, and you'll get a chuckle. "Back in the early '90s, it seemed like every other day there was a cover coming out that was shot at Riverwood or on the Riverwood couch," laughs Dreamworks Creative Director Teresa Blair.

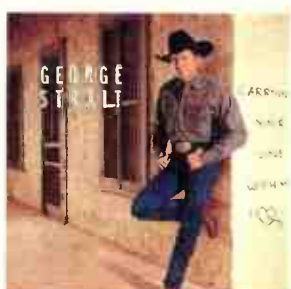
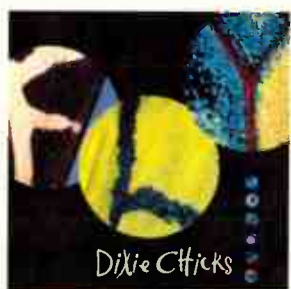
Then there's what Bill Johnson has affectionately dubbed the "one-legged cowboy series." For a while, he says, it seemed like everyone was adopting the leaning, one leg akimbo pose seen on the cover of George Strait's *Carrying Your Love With Me*.

Posing artists in chairs was all the rage at one point. And don't even get us started on all those cringe-inducing fashion statements that must have seemed really hip on album covers at the time. (Big-haired Reba, anyone?)

While sales may not suffer by hopping on a trendy bandwagon, the artist might suffer later ... from embarrassment. Country stars have long careers as a rule, so ideally the goal is to create something that will seem fresh and timeless years after it hits the charts – and those oh-so-hip parachute pants have been relegated to the fashion trash heap.

"The hardest part of choosing a cover is trying to come up with one that is not dated looking and that doesn't follow trends," says Chely Wright. "You'd like to be able to go back to it in five years and be just as happy with it."

Wade Hunt agrees. He always gives artists one piece of advice when planning an album cover: "Make it something you're willing to live with for the rest of your life." But if you're in a pinch, try the old standby: Put on a cowboy hat and just stare straight ahead. ★



Cover concepts can range from the time-honored head shot (Garth Brooks) to the artfully abstract (the Dixie Chicks' *Fly*) and the one-legged cowboy pose (George Strait's *Carrying Your Love With Me*).

Clapham, owner of Nashville's How About Maude studio. "It's not a piece of fine art going in a museum or anything. It has to do its job."

Here are a few ways, the experts agree, to do that job right.

A FACE IS WORTH A THOUSAND SALES

Picture the intricately designed, almost inexplicably detailed cover of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Or Pink Floyd's enigmatic *Dark Side Of The Moon*, or Bruce Springsteen's flag-splashed *Born In The U.S.A.* All right – now ... what was on the cover of Garth Brooks' nine-million-selling debut? A photo of Brooks in a cowboy hat, staring straight ahead. How about George Strait's seven-times-platinum *Strait Out Of The Box*? Again, a photo of Strait in a cowboy hat, staring straight ahead. Um, how about Alan Jackson's four-million seller *Who I Am*? That would be a photo of Alan in a cowboy hat, staring – shocker! – straight ahead.

that everyone already knows the face that goes with the name.

MAKE IT STICK, BUT WATCH THE STICKERS

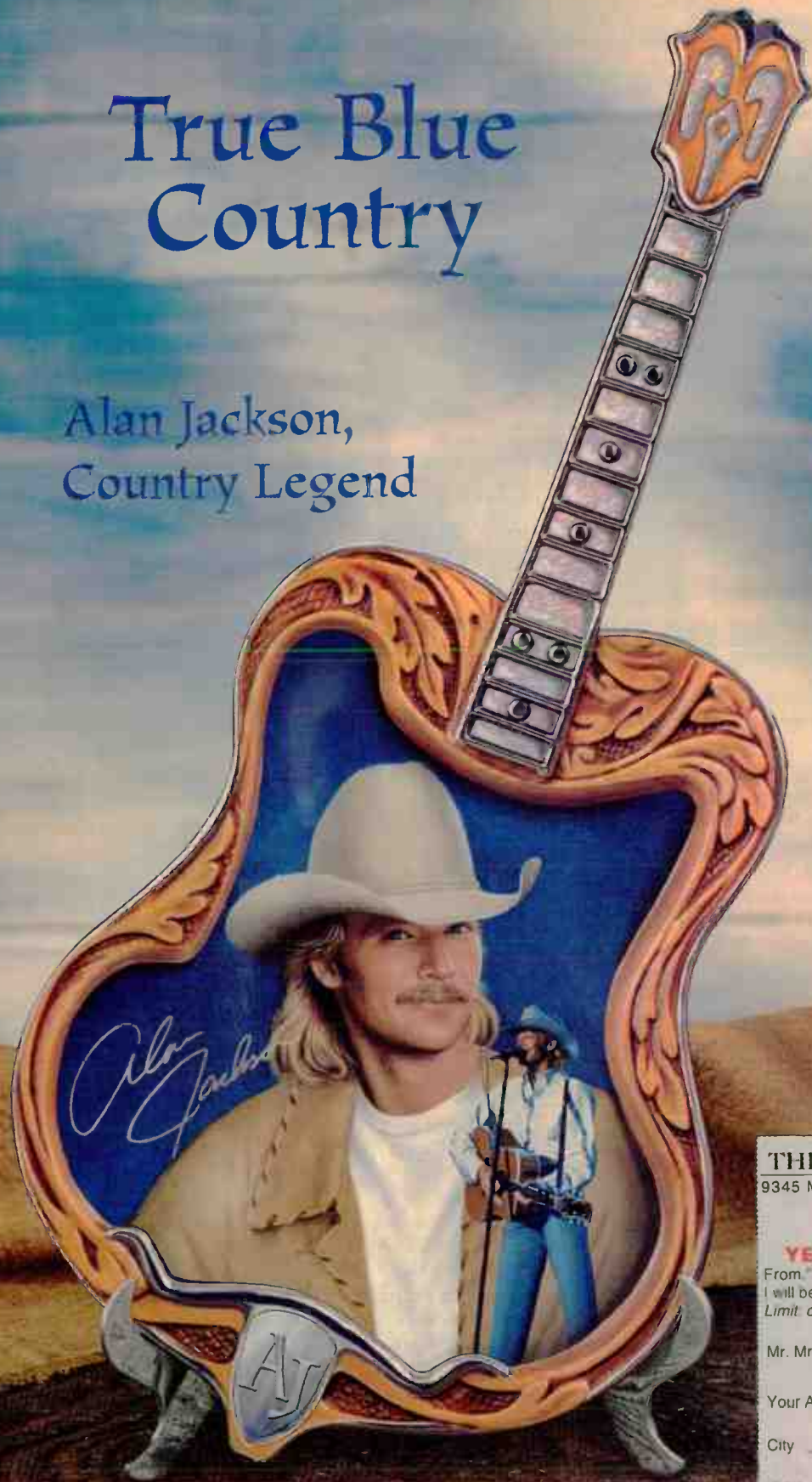
Look closely at the cover of Dan Seals' 1994 *Fired Up* and you'll notice something odd. On every previous Seals cover where he played guitar, he did so left-handed. But on this album, Seals miraculously become a rightie. Did he suddenly master a new skill? Not exactly. According to art director Virginia Team, who designed the cover, the photo had to be flopped to accommodate a sticker.

Think about it: Retailers like Wal-Mart and Target love to blanket CDs with price stickers and bar codes. Luckily, most Nashville designers have templates showing just where those stickers will go so they can design around them. Often that means that the artist's name will float right through the middle of the cover.

"It's a little bit of a contortionist move to make sure that all the elements are on

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In the early hours of Aug. 16, 1977, Elvis Presley sat down at the piano in the lounge of the Graceland racquetball building to sing “Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain,” the Fred Rose classic Willie Nelson had included on his landmark *Red Headed Stranger* album two years earlier. It was the last song Presley would ever perform. Within hours, he would be dead at 42, a victim of bad habits, self-indulgence and unfulfilled dreams.

COUNTRY AND THE KING

The fact that Elvis Presley ended as he began – with country music on his mind and in his lungs – was not especially remarkable. Still, the misconception lingers that Presley appreciated country only in his youth and in the earliest period of his recording career, and that he cast this love affair aside once he left Sun Records for RCA. In truth, aside from the early-to-mid-'60s, when the bulk of his recorded material came from the songs written for the soundtracks of his films, Elvis frequently recorded country tunes.

From childhood on, hillbilly, folk and Western music formed the roots of Elvis' musical experience. Like many poor Southerners, the Presley family listened to the *Grand Ole Opry* on Saturday nights; Presley once remarked that the venerable radio program was probably the first music he ever heard. “Country music was always a part of the influence on my type of music,” he said in 1970. “It’s a combination of country music, and gospel, and rhythm and blues.”

Along with Pentecostal church hymns and white gospel – and the black music that he heard in the Tupelo community of Shake Rag, not far from his own

Elvis Presley loved country music – though it didn't always love him back

Mississippi home – the young Presley found inspiration on Tupelo's radio station WELO. Mississippi Slim, the host of the noon-time program *Singin' And Pickin' Hillbilly*, became Elvis' first true role model.

As an 11-year-old, Presley frequented the station, working up the nerve to perform one day on a Saturday afternoon amateur show called *WELo Jamboree*. By that time, he'd already performed Red Foley's “Old Shep” without accompaniment in front of an audience of several hundred at the

annual Mississippi-Alabama State Fair and Dairy Show in Tupelo – standing on a chair so he could reach the microphone, and winning fifth place



A 1971 album of country songs featured a young Elvis on the cover.

BY ALANNA NASH

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At Sun Studios, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Elvis sang the gospel and mountain music of their youth.

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Parker, who had guided Eddy Arnold to stardom and who booked a number of *Grand Ole Opry* acts, including Rod Brasfield and Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters.

But Parker's brash personality soon rubbed Gladys the wrong way. If the wily manager hadn't sent his business partner, *Opry* star Hank Snow, to Memphis to charm the Presleys, the Elvis story might have turned out quite differently.

But it wasn't just that country music influenced Elvis. From the beginning of his recording career, the reverse was equally true: Elvis influenced country, even as he was borrowing from it. But he also had the good sense to know that not everyone in country's world would be wild about what he did with it.

Nashville music executive Buddy Killen was at the *Opry* the night that Presley made his fateful appearance. "I was walking backstage, and I saw this guy standing over in the corner, just shaking," says Killen. "I went over to him and said, 'I'm Buddy Killen, and I play bass on the *Opry*. What's the matter with you?' He said, 'I'm Elvis Presley and I'm scared to death. These people are going to hate me.' I talked to him for a few minutes and calmed him down, and he went out and sang 'Blue Moon Of Kentucky' and he got a great hand. He didn't get an

ELVIS

in the Children's Day talent contest. He continued to sing the weeper about man's best friend throughout the early years of his professional career.

As Elvis matured into a teenager, he listened not only to Foley, but also to Jimmie Rodgers, Bill Monroe, Ernest Tubbs, Roy Acuff and Hank Williams, whom he would later come close to playing in a '60s movie based on the doomed singer's tragic life and death. He came to the music naturally, absorbing his mother's interests. Gladys Presley was most definitely a country music fan.

Of course, Elvis' love of country music was evident from his first recordings. His first single featured a fired-up R&B song, Arthur Crudup's "That's All Right (Mama)" on the A-side and Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon Of Kentucky" on the B-side, which Elvis and producer Sam Phillips transformed from an elegant waltz to a rockabilly firecracker charged with the slurred vibrato that became Presley's vocal trademark.

In 1954, When Elvis played "Blue Moon Of Kentucky" on his only appearance on the *Grand Ole Opry*,

he approached Bill Monroe backstage in his dressing room and apologized for changing the Father of Bluegrass' signature song. "I thought he had a beautiful voice," Monroe remembered. "I told him, 'Well, if it gives you your start, it's all right with me.'"

Presley's full-speed-ahead version made Monroe re-think his own recording of his song. Later on,

FELTON JARVIS, producer

When he made movies, he had to sing to a cow, or a dog, or a kid. I remember him talking about the soundtrack to *Roustabout*. They were cuttin' the title song, and he told the Jordanaires, "Fellas, sing along with me on the chorus." The director ran out and said, "Elvis, I don't think you understand where this song's going to be in the picture. You're riding down the highway on a motorcycle, singing. If the Jordanaires are singing, too, where are they supposed to be?" And Elvis said, "The same damn place the band is."



LES LEVERETT

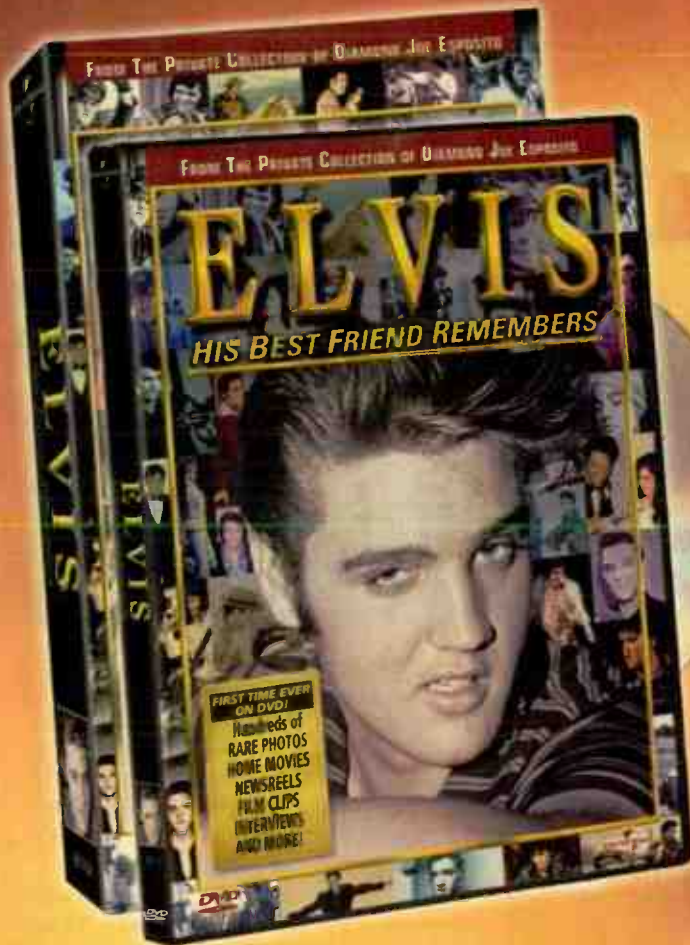
Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys re-recorded it, moving the tempo into overdrive so that it was more like true bluegrass, with a syncopated mandolin break.

Gladys Presley's affinity for country music was one of the reasons she initially welcomed the professional advances of Colonel Tom

enore, but if someone had worked the audience for a bit, he probably would have."

Though the country traditionalists who made up the *Opry* audience didn't warm to Presley right away, the fans of the *Louisiana Hayride* in Shreveport and the *Big D Jamboree* in Dallas did. Presley went on to become

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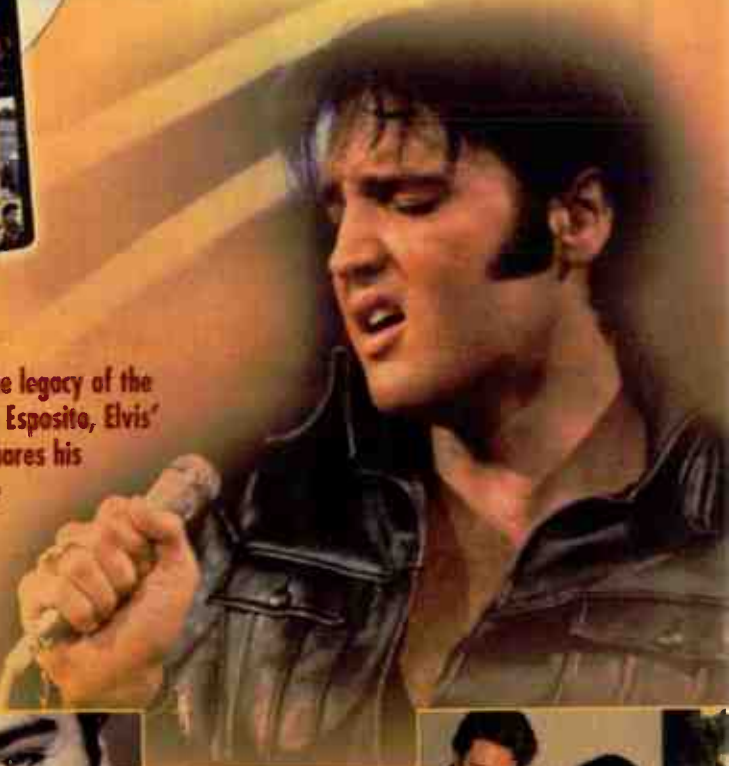
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World Radio History



ELVIS

a regular on the Louisiana program – broadcast over KWKH, a powerful, 50,000-watt station that sent its signal far beyond the state – and his success fueled an important string of dates in the South and Southwest with such country stars as Webb Pierce, Faron Young and Johnny Horton.

In February of 1956, Elvis's last Sun single, "I Forgot To Remember To Forget," a slow shuffle, became his first No. 1 country hit, following the chart appearance of "Baby, Let's Play House" and "I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone." Throughout his career, more than 80 hit singles would make the country charts.

Presley didn't know what to call his hopped-up music, which injected new rhythm and energy into the country format. "You're a bebop artist more than anything else, aren't you?" asked a country radio interviewer. "Well, I never have given myself a name," answered Presley, "but a lot of the disc jockeys call me 'bopping hillbilly' and 'bebop.' I don't know what else."

At his new label, RCA, executives seemed skittish about using the term *rock 'n' roll*, so they marketed Presley both as a pop and a country singer. In a press release, the record company declared that it had acquired "the most dynamic and sought-after new

Seen by some as a "bopping hillbilly," Elvis went along with the image on *The Steve Allen Show*.



AP PHOTO

artist in country music today, one who's topped the 'most promising' category in every trade and consumer poll held during 1955."

Such beat-and-blues songs as "Heartbreak Hotel" temporarily took Presley away from a country sound and led the white, mainstream audience to embrace the notion of rock 'n' roll. Presley's second LP, *Elvis*, contained two country songs, his senti-

mental favorite "Old Shep" and "When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again." But it was his pop songs, ironically, that routinely showed up on the country charts through 1958, when "the Nation's Only Atomic Powered Singer," as Colonel Parker billed him, went into the Army.

Though marketed as a country singer and played on country radio, Presley eventually gathered so much mass as a pop artist that the tidal wave he started nearly leveled the country music business. Country sales plummeted when the nation went manic over such rockers as Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis, and lesser lights like Fabian and Bobby Rydell. Many Nashville artists struggled to get bookings and airplay, and performers like Ray Price and Sonny James were forced to modernize their sound and hone their rough, rural edges to gain a broader appeal to the large segment of adult listeners who simply weren't attracted to rock.

As a survival technique, RCA's Chet Atkins gathered innovative musicians like Floyd Cramer on piano and Boots Randolph on sax and began building bigger, fuller, lush

DUKE BARDWELL, studio bass player

In January '74, I showed up at RCA studios in L.A. for my audition/rehearsal. I was nervous as a chicken in a yard full of roosters. Elvis had been put on the L.A. "crash diet," 500 calories a day, plus injections of something. It was said that he was not in a good mood. Finally, the double doors swung open. It was all there: the funky glasses, the cape, the little black cheroot, the high collar, the big belt, the gun. Most of all – the gun, a nickel-plated pistol.

I found myself standing next to Elvis. I said, "I know you have a lot of martial arts training, so I was wondering why you carry a gun." He put that top lip up a little and said, "That's to handle anything from six feet out. Six feet in, I got it covered." I was left pondering that while he walked away, and then he spun around and threw a punch that stopped with one of his big rings actually touching my nose. It left me with a red face, a racing heart and the realization that he could have missed by a half inch and driven my nose bone through my brain. Of all things, I was wondering if he even *practiced* anymore.



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ELVIS

backgrounds – the so-called Nashville Sound – on the records of smooth-voiced singers like Jim Reeves, Don Gibson and the Browns. Atkins quit booking fiddles and steel guitars on the sessions he produced, instead adding the decidedly non-country accompaniment of gliding strings and background vocalists such as the Jordanares and the Anita Kerr Singers.

Over at Decca Records, Owen Bradley took the same path with Patsy Cline. The resulting countrypolitan sound may have made country records more palatable to adult and pop listeners, but it took the twang out of country. As Atkins told the *New York Times*, “After Elvis Presley came along, all the country artists wanted to make pop hits. Presley almost killed country music. Every country boy thought, ‘I’ve got to make pop records with those triplets’ – those little piano trills that were played

behind every rock ‘n’ roll singer then.”

Yet Presley himself never lost interest in pure country, though he admittedly gave it his own stamp. When his film years wound to a close in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, he returned to



TAMMIE ARROYO

TONY BROWN, record executive and pianist

There was a lot of dissension [in the band] there at the end, and I think it was frustration over Elvis not being at the top of his game. Some nights it just sounded awful. and we were all looking like fools. We were always thinking, ‘Is he going to be on or off tonight?’ Ninety percent of the time, he was pretty much off.

the genre to rack up a total of 11 No. 1 country hits. Part of it was circumstance – his music publishers, Julian and Jean Aberbach, happened to represent a vast catalogue of country songs. But Elvis also fought to record good tunes outside the Aberbachs’ control.

in June 1970, he recorded a number of country love ballads of the ‘60s, including “Make The World Go Away,” which had previously been a hit for Ray Price and Eddy Arnold.

Some singers might have blanched at covering others’ hits at this stage of their careers, but Elvis was fond of conjuring his own versions of country standards made famous by Willie Nelson, Hank Snow and Bob Wills, adding a poignancy on Nelson’s “Funny How Time Slips Away” that came directly from his own life experiences. He also embraced the work of Nashville’s counterculture, including Waylon Jennings, Billy Joe Shaver and Kris Kristofferson, whose “Help Me Make It Through The Night” he recorded with a definite heat.

If Elvis hadn’t ended up on the bathroom floor that awful August day in 1977, chances are he would have made a conscious effort to record more country music, while at the same time remaining a Vegas staple and doing the occasional grand tour, *a la* Frank Sinatra.

As happened with former rockers Jerry Lee Lewis, Conway Twitty and Glen Campbell, Presley might have shifted his attention fully back to the country charts and found a new audience – many of whom hadn’t been born when he first came to prominence.

In his last two years, Elvis listened to country music a great deal, recording both “The Green, Green Grass Of Home” and “Susan When She Tried,” a Statler Brothers song, in 1975. At



With Johnny Cash – another country boy who grew up to have a powerful impact on music

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TOBY KEITH

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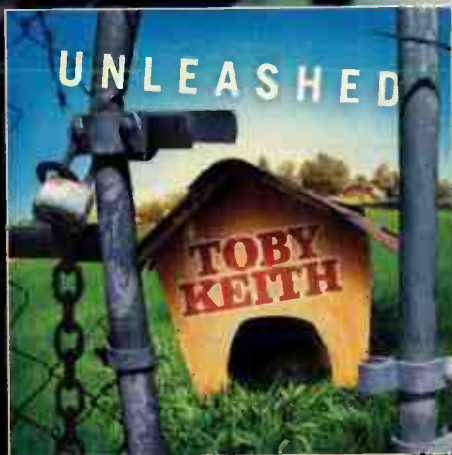
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World Radio History

ELVIS

his last session at Graceland in 1976, he laid down a track of the Jim Reeves hit "He'll Have To Go," making it a sorrowful blues of farewell.

Elvis' influence on country continues today; indeed, many mainstream country stars listened to him obsessively in their youth. While some of Nashville's old guard grumbled when Presley was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1998, his long-term impact helped bring back younger listeners, especially as his early rockabilly style invigorated country in the 1980s.

But it wasn't just the neo-rockabilly stars who felt the fever. Travis Tritt, who recorded a cover of Elvis' "T-R-O-U-B-L-E," attests that a viewing of Presley's *Aloha From Hawaii* satellite special at age 10 dictated the path of his life.

"What impressed me most," he says,

"is that here was the King of Rock 'n' Roll, who could also sing country and gospel and soundtrack material, and do all of it well. I remember it as vividly as I remember watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon."

Today, other country singers would undoubtedly agree. There's more than a little bit of Elvis — his strong leg stance, his loose upper body and chest, and his tendency to cock his head over the microphone — in

RAY WALKER of The Jordanaires

One of the boys who worked for him told me that he found Elvis sitting at a piano playing and singing spirituals one day there at the last. And Elvis said, "I'm alone. I am absolutely alone. I'm by myself." Felton Jarvis told us he went looking for Elvis one time when they were recording in Memphis. He couldn't find him in the studio, so he went outside. Elvis was there — in the dark. Felton said, "Why are you sitting out here?" And he said, "I'm just so tired of playing Elvis Presley."

LARRY HILL



Before that night, Tritt thought his Southern heritage meant he would be accepted only as a singer of country tunes. But Elvis showed him that the boundaries had changed.

performers like Dwight Yoakam, Billy Ray Cyrus, Marty Stuart, Ricky Van Shelton and Tim McGraw. Charlie Daniels says it

ELVIS' TOP 10 COUNTRY HITS

History regards him as a towering pop icon, but Elvis' country roots were never far from the surface. In fact, he hit the top of the country charts 10 times, over two decades, with these tunes.

1. "Heartbreak Hotel" — No. 1 for 17 weeks in 1956
2. "Don't Be Cruel" — No. 1. for 10 weeks in 1956
3. "Hound Dog" — No. 1 for 10 weeks in 1956
4. "I Forgot To Remember To Forget" — No. 1 for 5 weeks in 1955
5. "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You" — No. 1 for 2 weeks in 1956
6. "All Shook Up" — No. 1 in 1957
7. "Jailhouse Rock" — No. 1 in 1957
8. "(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear" — No. 1 in 1957
9. "Way Down" — No. 1 in 1977
10. "Moody Blue" — No. 1 in 1977



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ELVIS

was Elvis who made it possible for a country boy to rock. But it wasn't just the guys. Just ask Tanya Tucker and Wynonna about the moves and mannerisms, or Patty Loveless ("I Try To Think About Elvis") and Faith Hill ("Bringing Out The Elvis") and Trisha Yearwood ("Wrong Side Of Memphis") about the songs.

And consider this from Townes Van Zandt, the late dean of the Texas school of singer/songwriters.

He asked his father for his



If he had lived, he might have shifted his attention back to the country charts.

MICHAEL OGDEN ARCHIVES.COM

first guitar, he once said, after seeing Presley on TV with his guitar, his Cadillacs and his inevitable harem of girls. If Presley started Townes Van Zandt, a man whose music was so

quiet and introspective as to almost be anti-Elvis, who else might he have influenced? Even some of the alternative country and Americana performers channelled some of Elvis, from the late Gram Parsons to today's Steve Earle and The Deraillers. Of course, Raul Malo's singing – and often The Mavericks' entire persona – is straight out of Graceland.

In the end, Elvis Presley transcended genres and formats and styles. But country music was always there, always evident, always bubbling up to the surface, even to the end. Back in 1954, early in what would become the most famous superstar trajectory in history, Elvis stopped a recording session in the middle of "Milkcow Blues Boogie" and turned to his musicians. "Hold it, fellas!" Elvis demanded. "That don't move me. Let's get real, real gone for a change." He didn't know it at the time – and neither did anyone else – but he was about to take country music on the ride of its life. *



CHET ATKINS, producer

When Steve Sholes [of RCA Records] first signed Elvis, he was afraid he had made a bad deal, because right away Carl Perkins got a smash out called "Blue Suede Shoes." Steve called Sam Phillips and said, "Did I buy the wrong boy?" Phillips thought a minute and said, "No, you bought the right boy. Elvis is the one."

Elvis Presley® 25th Anniversary Tennessee State Quarter Tribute

"King of Rock & Roll" Joins Presidents on U.S. Coinage



Collectors scramble to get the new Elvis Presley 25th Anniversary Tennessee State Quarter Tribute.

Memphis, TN – Elvis Presley fans are "all shook up" over the announcement that the King of Rock & Roll has become the first recording artist ever honored on genuine U.S. coinage. The Collector's Edition coin, a colorized Tennessee Statehood Quarter from Elvis' home-state, commemorates the 25th Anniversary of Elvis' untimely passing in 1977. Reaction to the tribute has been nothing short of spectacular as droves of fans are scrambling to obtain the coin before any possible sellout occurs.

The 2002 Tennessee Statehood Quarter is colored by a revolutionary new process that actually fuses a color portrait of Elvis into the face of the coin. Each collectible tribute is completed with the Official 25th Anniversary logo from Graceland along with a reproduction of Elvis' signature.

"Elvis Presley is perhaps the most collected icon of the 20th century," stated George Hubbard of the International Collectors Society, exclusive distributors of the coins. "This uniquely American collectible combines the

legendary appeal of the "Entertainer of the Century" with the popularity of the U.S. Statehood Quarters. It's unlike any Elvis collectible ever released."



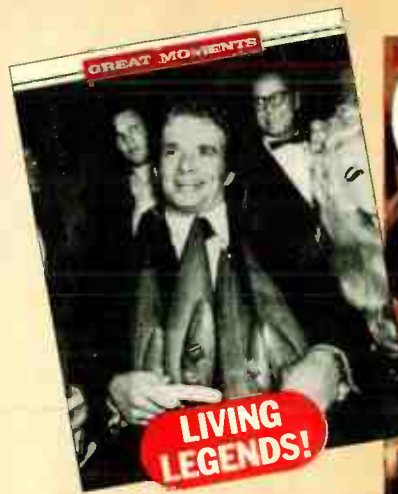
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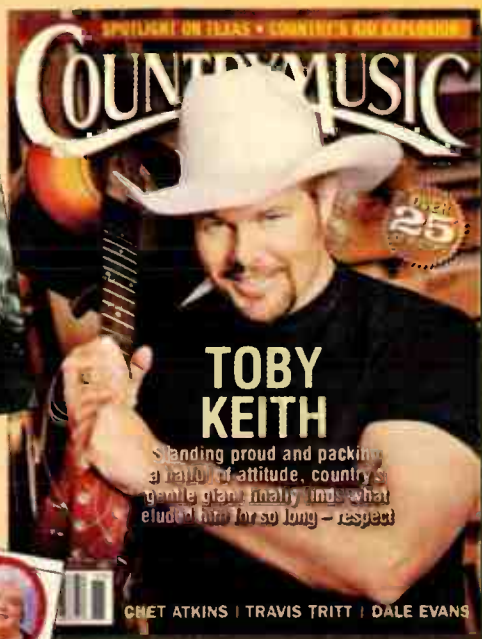
The Elvis Presley 25th Anniversary Tennessee quarter arrives in a black felt presentation case suitable for display with your finest collectibles. Each coin is

backed the International Collectors Society 100% Buy Back Guarantee and comes with an individually numbered Certificate of Authenticity. Given the worldwide popularity of Elvis, fans should order their coins as soon as possible. They're available for just \$9.95 + \$3 postage & handling, limit 3 per household. Send your check or money order to ICS, 10045 Red Run Boulevard, Suite 350CMMQP2, Owings Mills, Maryland 21117 or call toll free **1-800-641-0020**

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Like any good Southern family, the Peasalls are gathered around the kitchen table. They're enjoying a lunch of pepperoni pizza, pouring Coke from a two-liter bottle into glass Bell jars. It's a quiet meal, with mother Sally and father Michael leading the conversation with their daughters Sarah, 15, Hannah, 11 and Leah, 9.

The previous day, on the other hand, was highlighted by "the pinching incident." Leah says, "I was reading a book and Hannah says, 'Your breath stinks,' and I said, 'I've been eating Wheat Thins!'" In a flash, someone got pinched, and a ruckus ensued.

The Peasall Sisters are normal girls with normal hobbies and mostly normal lives. Only at the moment, thanks to their musical participation in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, have they become celebrities.

There are no star-sized egos apparent at the kitchen table. Sarah, the oldest, is the recognized boss, but she's also teased that everything is about her. Hannah is the quiet one, and like E.F. Hutton, when she talks, her family listens. Leah, the youngest of the singing trio, is the most relaxed and secure, probably because it's evident how much she is loved by the other two.

Only as the talk turns to the day's activities does their deviation from the normal become evident.

***O Brother's* Peasall Sisters bask in the glow of unlikely fame**

The girls spent their morning singing at a convention for LifeWay, a large chain of Christian retail stores. "I liked them because they didn't take a percentage of our merchandising," says Sarah, showing that even a sheltered, religiously devout teen can quickly grasp the intricacies of entertainment-world economics.

In just two years, The Peasall Sisters have gone from church performers in tiny White House, Tenn., to Grammy Award-winning artists. As the singing voices of George Clooney's daughters in the Coen Brothers' movie, the trio provided two songs for the five-million-selling soundtrack. That means they've

been out-selling Britney and 'N Sync in recent months.

As part of this collaboration, they earned a CMA Award for Album of the Year, a Grammy for Album of the Year and the International Bluegrass Music Association's Album of the Year award. They also took part in the lucrative, *Brother*-inspired *Down From The Mountain* album and tour, which made stops at the Ryman Auditorium and Carnegie Hall.

Recently the trio released their own album, *First Offering*, on their own label, Peace Hall Records. A collection of traditional country standards (such as the Carter Family's "Keep On The Sunny Side" and "Carter's Blues"), hymns and contemporary acoustic songs, the CD is geared toward a broader audience than their earlier Christian recording sessions. For *First Offering*, unlike the *O Brother* recording, the girls play their own instruments – guitar, mandolin and fiddle. "We can do more than just stand onstage and look cute," assures Leah.

Cute they are, though, and some fans

Initially, the girls would say, "No, we weren't actually in the movie," but it confused people, so they stopped. "Now we're like, 'Whatever, thanks,'" Sarah says with a smile.

At age 2, Leah began singing in the backyard, grabbing a redwood tree branch as a makeshift microphone. By 5, she could nail harmonies. Sarah performed her first church solo at 4, and Hannah can't remember not being in the church's children's choir.

They formed a singing group about five years ago on a Thanksgiving trip to grandmother's house. For the drive, their mother Sally brought tapes that contained musical tracks without vocal parts, which the girls supplied. "You know, 20 hours in a car, I thought we'd have something to do," Sally says.

During a church service, their pastor announced there were a few spots open that night for people to sing at a retirement home. The children eagerly volunteered and were introduced to the crowd as a group called Precious.

"Every time we would go sing somewhere, people would come up afterwards

SMALL WO

are surprised to find that they didn't actually appear in the *O Brother* film. Instead, young actresses lip-synched to their voices. Ironically, while the hit movie was packing theaters, the sisters were barred from seeing the film because some of the language and action grated against the steadfast morals of their parents. Only recently did the girls view the movie for the first time – after their father got the DVD version and muted the bad words.

"The girl who was me had long hair and looks kind of like me because at the time my hair was long," Leah says. Adds Hannah, "Sometimes people think that we are the girls in the movie and they say, 'Y'all sure have grown up!'"

and say, 'They are so precious,' so I just named them Precious," says Sally. However, the Coen Brothers decided to credit them simply as The Peasall Sisters, the name the trio has now officially adopted.

Sally, who has a degree in music and has worked for years with church and children's choirs, began working with the girls in a fun atmosphere, arranging harmonies from *Veggie Tales* albums, popular collections of kid-targeted stories with religious overtones. In 1999, she took them to their first big-time audition at the Nashville Marriott, for the *O Brother* parts. The antithesis of a stage mother, she didn't know to arrive early, and the girls waited behind about 600 others. The aspiring

O Sisters: In just two short years, The Peasall Sisters – Leah, Hannah and Sarah – have vaulted from small-town act to big-time Grammy winners, thanks to the **O Brother** soundtrack.



AUGUSTA MOORE

INDIERS

young stars were herded into a conference room, 20 at a time, to sing “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

“After we did that, they said, ‘Are any of you sisters?’ and so the three of us raised our hands,” Sarah says. “They said, ‘You’re all three sisters?’ and I said yeah and they said, ‘I can tell because of your freckles.’”

A callback with Joel and Ethan Coen and producer T Bone Burnett soon followed. “He’s so incredible,” Sarah says of Burnett. “He’s very nice and he’s just so genius and his mind is always thinking of these brilliant plans.”

Although the girls are home-schooled, touring can be a logistical nightmare. This

summer’s dates on the *Down From The Mountain* tour had to be scheduled around Hannah and Leah’s Girls in Action camp and Sarah’s youth group trip to Michigan. Once they do get on the road, the girls travel with their parents and two younger siblings.

“It’s been harder than they know,” Sally says. “I’m pretty sure I went 30 days without relaxing for one second because their care, their laundry, their sleep, nutrition, everything was on us as their parents. Learning the ropes of how to be on tour was 90 percent of our education, and then anytime we had a day off or even just a couple of hours in a city that was famous for historical sights, we would go.”

As fast and unexpected their success has been, they won’t go as far as saying that it exceeded their wildest dreams.

In 1998, Sally asked Sarah to write down her goals. Last fall, the paper surfaced. “I was 11 and my goals were to be on the Dove Awards, have done something big and record our own album,” Sarah says. “And we’ve done something big, we were on the Dove Awards *and* we recorded our own album.”

It seems that the girls have faced only one professional disappointment. “We were bummed that we didn’t get to meet George Clooney,” Sarah says. “But we’re still hoping.”

— Beverly Keel

Flag-Waving Country

Toby Keith's willingness to boldly speak his mind has made him a bigger star in the last few years. We related with the honesty and humor in sassy songs like "How Do You Like Me Now?!" and "I Wanna Talk About Me," and we were moved by the touching realities he bared in "My List."

Now, in "Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue (The Angry American)," Keith once again stirs our emotions with his bold, openly honest take on a real-life subject – the horrific events of Sept. 11.

There has been a rebirth of patriotism in the United States since the terrorist attacks, and country music has responded by leading the way in expressing the variety of emotions Americans have experienced in the months that have followed.

Alan Jackson's "Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning)" dealt with the confusion we felt and the relationships we turned to for strength;

Stars respond to September 11 with a variety of unabashedly patriotic odes

Aaron Tippin's "Where The Stars And Stripes And The Eagle Fly" addressed how we bolstered our advocacy for our country's ideals; Hank Williams Jr.'s "America Will Survive" spoke to our resilience and strength; and Darryl Worley's "P.O.W. 369" saluted our support for those who defend our freedoms.

Even Brooks & Dunn's "Only In America," written and recorded before the attacks, came along at the right time to stoke our love of country.

No other genre of music responded in this capacity.

This isn't a new role for country music – it's always been fast to raise the patriotic flag in song.

Country's waved the banner from every angle: Ernest Tubb's tragic "Soldier's Last Letter," Johnny Cash's rousing "Song Of The Patriot," Merle Haggard's bellicose "Fightin' Side Of Me," Ricky Skaggs' spiritual "Somebody's Prayin'," Lee Greenwood's fist-pumping "God Bless The U.S.A.," and Willie Nelson's reflective "Living In The Promiseland."

In the first verse of "Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue," Keith sings about the importance of recognizing the liberties stitched into the fabric of Old Glory. He acknowledges that such freedoms come at a cost – one paid by those who fought for our rights, including Keith's father, a veteran who lost sight in one eye during battle.

But "Red, White And Blue" does more than reflect; it also articulates the anger that arises when freedom is threatened. Personifying our



Aaron Tippin used Old Glory as a literal backdrop for his video "Where The Stars And Stripes And The Eagle Fly."

American symbols, Keith paints a clear image of how deep his anger runs.

With powerful words buttressed by liberty bells, a soaring choir and a commanding drum beat, Keith lets the world know he is indeed an angry American. He gives voice to that part of us that wants to fight back, to hurt the assailants as deeply as they hurt us.

As part of healing and recovering, it is important to address all the emotions 9/11 forced upon us. We have a tendency to want to skip feelings of suffering and anguish. In our quick-to-please society, we expect healing to occur as swiftly as picking up a drive-thru Big Mac.

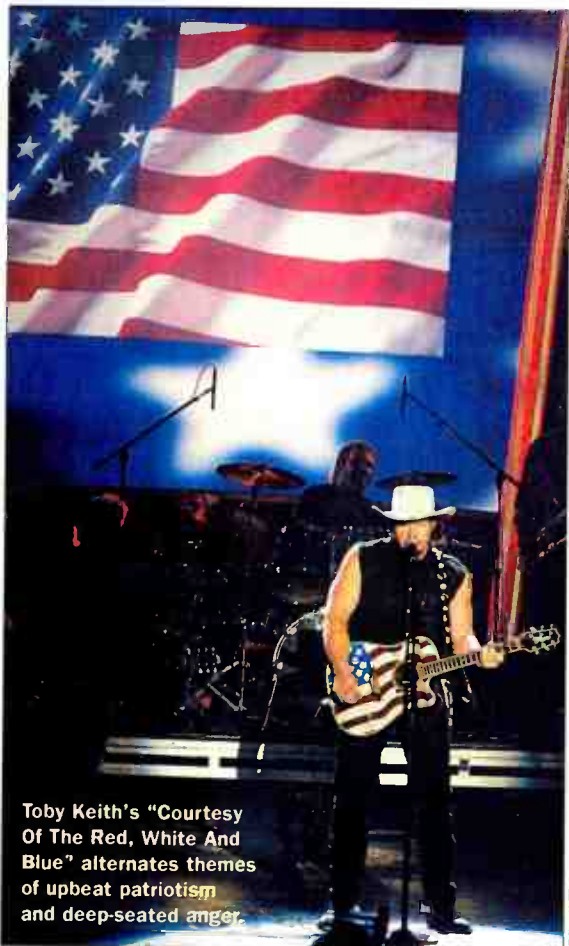
Toby Keith's song taps into our resentment. Hearing our thoughts and emotions through song is a therapeutic exercise, just as writing it may have been a form of personal therapy for Keith. The song helps our minds process what we've experienced.

Yet we also must identify the difference between expressing and acting on our anger. Justice is one thing, revenge is another. Like Keith, we can relate to the angry American in the song; but we also must learn and heal.

Writing about such emotions takes soul-baring courage – the kind of courage Keith, Jackson, Tippin and Worley have shown. Their music has helped us deal with all the conflicting, confounding emotions we've experienced in the last year. Their freedom to express themselves is what makes our country great; their talent and capacity to do so is what makes country music so unique and wonderful.

— Hollie Woodruff

Hollie Woodruff is a former music industry employee who is currently in the Master of Divinity program at Vanderbilt University.



Toby Keith's "Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue" alternates themes of upbeat patriotism and deep-seated anger.

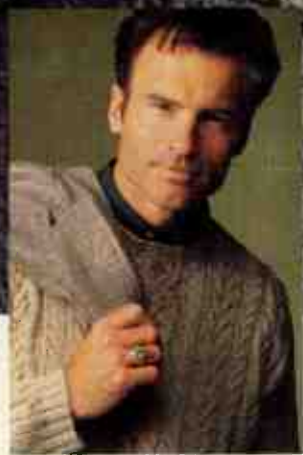
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COUNTRY & WESTERN

Ronnie Dunn
has transformed his
barn into a cowboy oasis



Ronnie Dunn didn't need a stable. But this most public of men did dream of owning a private place that could serve as his personal retreat. So he decided to transform his property's big barn into a particularly masculine oasis. Out went the hay, and in came the steer skulls. "That's my hang down there," says the lead voice of Brooks & Dunn as he walks from his massive,

PHOTOS BY MORRISON/WULFFRAAT



"This photo was taken at President Bush's inauguration. We played on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at the opening ceremony. We got to meet the President backstage at a small reception for the entertainers. At the end there was a finale onstage, and all the performers came out with the candidates. Ricky Martin was doing ... oh, I don't know what song it was. Whitney almost jumped over Colin Powell to get to Ricky Martin. She's not that excited about too many people, but she was about Ricky. So we got her picture with him, and later on got her with the president."

"I bought these candlesticks in San Miguel, Mexico. I thought they were cool. They'd been weathered and bleached out, and went with the desert theme."



"In Oklahoma, my family lived near a big ranch. We'd find steer skulls out on the prairie at times, bleached out, and I would collect them."



"I bought the lamp at a market down in Dallas. That and the chandelier. I just like that Montana/Wyoming kind of Western influence stuff."

Dunn shot this rare whitetail deer on his one and only hunting trip. As it turned out, the antlers measure in at an extraordinary 197 score on the Boone & Crockett system, which rates deer antlers for their size and girth. "I have some buddies involved in NASCAR. They said, 'Let's go hunting!' I caved in. I said, 'I'll go if I can take my son, J.W., because I don't get to spend enough time with him.' It was something we could do together. We went, and I shot that deer."



"The awards I keep in the house. But the plaques and stuff, I thought down here by the pool table was a good personal place for them. It's out of the way. It's not pretentious. I think it's kind of pretentious to have stuff all over your house. That's just me, just my hangup. So I put them down there. It's a casual setting. It's where I go to write songs and do music.



"A lot of the books are just pictures of Western-style clothing and architecture. I used them for references over the years. I buy a lot of architectural books to look at different styles and places.

"My wife, Janine, used to get the sculptures for me. They're Remington knock-offs – a series from the Franklin Mint. She would buy them at times to use as bookends. That's more of that Western art from around Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico. For years, I had collected old T.C. Cannon paintings. They're really hard to get now. It's an American Contemporary Indian artist. When we'd go to Santa Fe a lot, we'd cruise the art galleries and sometimes buy some stuff."

Country & Western

designer-decorated home to his smaller, self-designed

cabin. "I wouldn't let the decorators go in here. This was for me. The kids will sneak in there every now and then, but it's more or less my spot."

That explains the decor, an overtly manly mix of deer antlers, steer horns, cowboy sculpture, Indian paintings and a pool table.

"I'm just into Western stuff," Dunn says in explaining why he brought a Southwestern flavor to his Tennessee home. "That's why Brooks & Dunn integrated the steer head into our logo. I really like that style. But you can take that cowboy stuff too far. I try to mix it up with some different things so it's not so much in your face."

That said, though, even the candlesticks have an Old West motif. Asked if he likes candles, Dunn retorts, "I don't think any real male,

macho country singer is going to tell you, 'Yeah.' " After a hearty laugh, he adds, "My wife will come down here every now and then and put them in to spruce up the place."

Amid all the rugged decor, Dunn displays one of his prized treasures – a framed photograph of Dunn and his daughter Whitney posing with President George W. Bush during his inauguration.

"He asked me where I grew up," Dunn recalls of his first conversation with the president. "I had lived in Midland, Texas, where he's from. It's a small-by-comparison West Texas city, out in the middle of an oil field. He had just left Midland that day. It was on the news where he'd said his farewell to everyone, and they'd had kind of an emotional ceremony.

"He leaned up to me and goes, 'You know, not many people understand Midland, Texas, unless you've been there.' I said, 'I know exactly what you're talking about.' It's a very conservative part of the country. They're no-nonsense, conservative Texans. I knew what he was talking about."

President Bush no doubt would feel comfortable playing a game of pool in this country singer's barn. *



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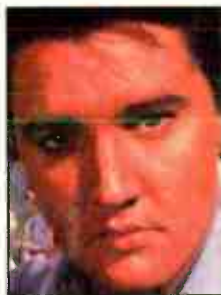
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Sisterly Sizzle

As country continues to ponder its *O Brother* roots, **SHeDAISY** unapologetically plows ahead with pop power

BY MIRIAM PACE LONGINO

It's so easy to take pot SHoTS at SHeDAISY. First, there's the name, which sounds like a piece of beaded jewelry you might make at Girl Scout camp. Cute, in a teen spirit sort of way. Then there are the three sisters who comprise the perky trio. From the family-fun alliteration of their names – Kristyn, Kassidy and Kelsi – to their affiliation with Mickey Mouse via Disney (which owns their label, Lyric Street), they come to country music with a lot of not-so-hip qualities that make traditionalists, critics and the alternative country crowd treat them with all the respect of a karaoke bar.

But wait just a minute.

Their fans, who snatched up nearly two million copies of the 1999 album *THE WHOLE SHeBANG*, love the trio's sassy, stylishly slouchy J-Crew look and accessible country/pop sound. In the midst of the success of the Grammy-sweeping *O Brother* soundtrack and the ongoing debate about the need for country music to "stay country," the Osborn sisters remain unapologetically pop-oriented – speaking to the under-30 audience who grew up flipping channels between CMT and MTV.

With their second album, *Knock On The Sky*, ready for release, the question arises: Are these sisters the portal to country's future, or just more disposable bubblegum? Will SHeDAISY recapture their million-selling momentum, or evaporate like cotton candy?

As they take their seats in Nashville's tony The Palm restaurant and order sparkling water, it would be hard not to notice this trio of attractive women. One's bright blond (Kristyn), one's dark Brunette (Kassidy), the other candy-apple red (Kelsi). They sometimes

talk in unison, finishing each other's sentences. They know the subject of their success or failure tantalizes the industry, but they don't pay much attention to the talk.

Kelsi, 27, is the passionate, outspoken one. Speaking about the new album, she declares, "It's saying 'This is who we are – strong women.' We don't care what people think about us, our clothes or the shoes we wear. We're going to go out and do the music we want and hopefully change some things along the way."

With her deadpan humor and quick asides, lead singer Kassidy, 25, provides the comic relief and carefree image. On her wrists and fingers, she wears wide rubber bands emblazoned with colorful sayings like *WORK IN PROGRESS* and *TASTY*. She also comes across as the group's buoyant cheerleader, offering unwavering support for the new project.

"All of us and our team know how good the album is," she says. "It's been funny listening to the rumors circulating around town about why it has taken so long. A lot of people thought we just didn't have the material. Truth is, we had so many songs it was hard."

Then there's Kristyn, 31, the brooding artist responsible for writing nearly all of the group's material. She won a national songwriting contest as a teen, opening doors for the act to emerge from the cowboy town of Magna, Utah. She is also the sister who came to Nashville at



With their just-released second album, Kristyn, Kelsi and Kassidy Osborn prepare for fan frenzy – and perhaps more critical drubbing.



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SHeDAISY

18, signed a contract as a songwriter, got burned, took a college course on business and started her own music publishing company. Kristyn is the quiet steel underneath SHeDAISY's bubbly veneer – and it's her songwriting talent that could sustain the trio beyond its novelty appeal.

Still it could take a lot to overcome their pop-confection image. Two years have gone by and they still have to live down what Kristyn, Kelsi and Kassidy all concede was the mistake of a lifetime – their awkward, clumsily choreographed performance at the 2000 CMA Awards. The sisters cringe when recalling the moment they took the stage with a goofy, hand-twirling dance routine that made them look like teenagers at a school talent contest. The concept, they explain, was forced on them by the show's producers.

"We thought it was such a great spot [on the show], and that our position would be in jeopardy if we refused to do it," Kassidy says. "It was just one of those things. You learn from it."

Have they ever watched a tape of the performance? "We lived it," Kassidy cracks. "We *don't* need to watch it again."

While the CMA performance rein-

forced their critics' low opinion, the trio's music continued to sell. "One of the things about SHeDAISY is they are so different that they create polarization and passion," explains Randy Goodman, president of Lyric Street Records. "But those are exactly the things that create sales."

With its empowering, female-oriented lyrics and unconventional production tricks – sound effects, false starts and even some rap, on occasion – it's likely the new record will again polarize and create passion. Some tracks could be mistaken for Jewel or Melissa Etheridge, while the carousel-ride "I'm Lit" could easily have been recorded by Britney Spears. Throughout, the melodies are hook-driven and singalong ready. The signature SHeDAISY harmonies are intricately arranged and repeatedly uplift the proceedings.

The sisters believe their appeal is rooted not just in harmonies and melodies, but in lyrics that speak to an audience in an era where satellite dishes and computers have blurred the lines that used to define "country" from other genres. Certainly SHeDAISY cultivates the same musical pastures as country/pop acts Faith Hill, Martina McBride and Jo Dee Messina. But, unlike some country stars, the trio is actually closer in



The SHeDAISY sisters create both "polarization and passion," says their label president.

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SHeDAISY

age to their target audience. "We are our own demo," Kristyn says, "and we write for people our age."

Of course, the group members are now three years older than they were at the time *THE WHOLE SHeBANG* came out, and the new

album reflects that. There's a shift to deeper material that stems from a change within the women themselves—particularly Kristyn.

As the sisters learned to deal with the downside of success, Kristyn encountered a personal crisis: Her eight-year marriage began to crumble. It strained her tight-knit extended

family, who watched helplessly as the oldest sister retreated into privacy, and it came just as SHeDAISY needed to produce a successful follow-up album. As the group's primary songwriter, Kristyn felt like a deer in the headlights.

"The dichotomy I've been living has been almost overwhelming," she says candidly. "You have to be 'on.' You have to act happy. My girlfriends call it putting on my 'Lee Press-On Face.' Then I go home, and I have no home anymore. You feel like you don't belong anywhere."

Fortunately, her record company president came to her rescue. Rather than push for a new album, Goodman told her to take time off to collect herself. "I finally came to a place where I could say, 'Yeah, I'm going through the most difficult thing I've ever gone through in my life,'" Kristyn recalls.

But she poured her emotion into her lyrics.

Knock On The Sky includes the dark mood and somber cello of "I Wish I Were Rain": *It can fall as hard as it wants to, tenderly drift down a lover's face, cry for hours and weeks on end and never feel a bit out of place ... Don't you wish you could live outside the insane, don't you wish you were rain?* That's a long way, you have to admit, from leaving a ditched boyfriend nothing but kitty litter and lipstick tubes on the bathroom floor in their first hit, "Little Good-byes."

Meanwhile, as they prepare to once again confront critics, the sisters feel as if they've gained some grit from their experiences on the debate's front lines.

Kelsi admits that they were naïve when they first faced the press in 1999. "People made personal jabs at us who hadn't even met us," she says. "It was more hurtful to our family than to us. My mom was always reading reviews and saying 'I'm going to write that guy ...'"

"The difference between now and three years ago is we are confident enough to make fun of the negative criticism as opposed to feeling insecure about it," Kristyn says. "We care a little bit less about what the industry thinks about us. We know who we are and what we want to do." ★

“People made personal jabs at us who hadn't even met us . . . It was more hurtful to our family than to us.”





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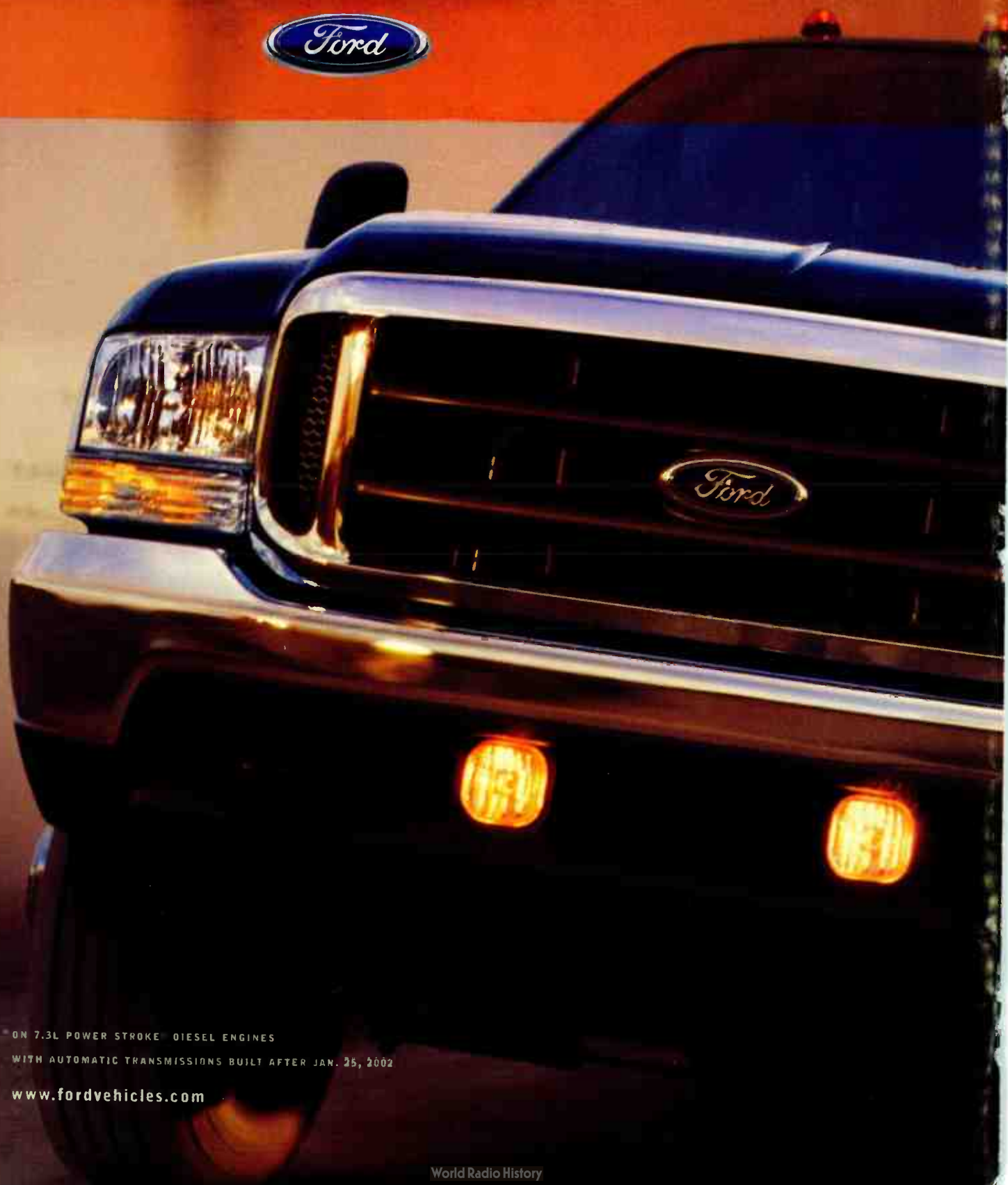
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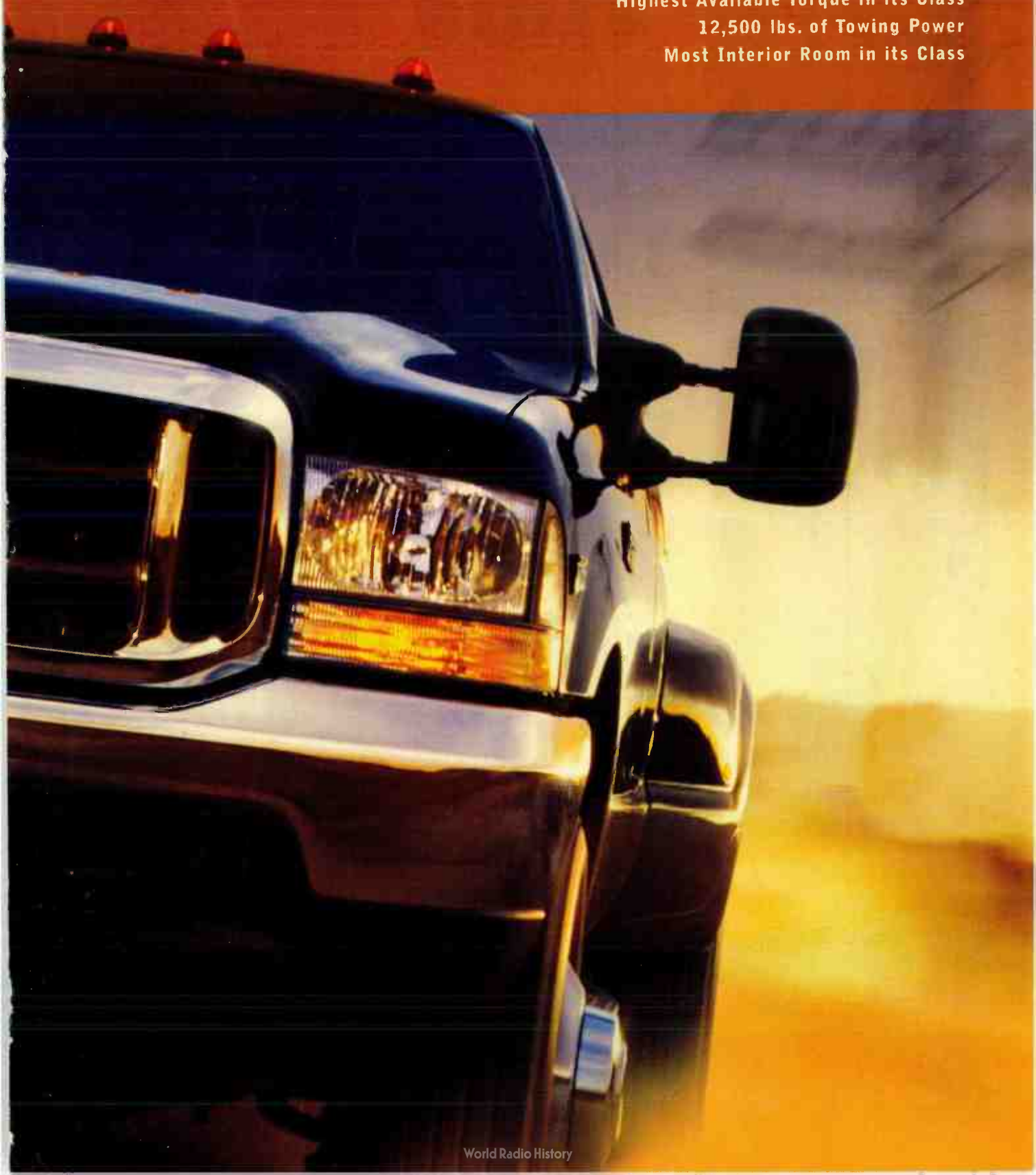
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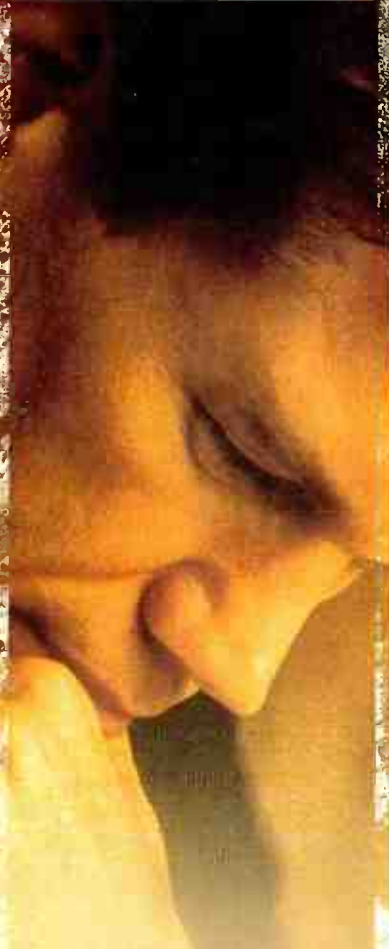
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Below the Mason-Dixon line, there are two kinds of drinkers: sweet and unsweet. The choice is not a character assessment, but a defining question asked by Southern restaurant servers and party hosts.

At The White Trash Café – a Nashville diner specializing in fried chicken, squash casserole, turnip greens and other Southern fare – iced tea is all you can drink. On the menu, it's listed: "Sweet Southern Wine on the Rocks with a slice of lemon."

White Trash owner Lynn Batey says his impoverished family didn't have hot water in rural Tennessee until he was 12 years old. But they always had plenty of good Southern food to eat and a pitcher of iced tea on the counter.

"When I first started going to restaurants, I had no idea what a pig I was being when I would ask for a pitcher of tea," Batey says with a laugh. "I had an English girlfriend once, and I knew the English liked tea. I poured her a glass of sweet tea. She took one sip, and I thought she would spit it out at me. She said it was the most disgusting thing she had ever put in her mouth."

Though the South drinks more tea than any U.S. region, tastes vary. Singer Terry McBride of McBride & The Ride remembers, "Every barbecue place I ate in growing up in Austin had a big container of tea sittin' on a counter, and you would pour yourself a cup. But it was just plain tea. You fixed it up yourself. It wasn't until



GETTY IMAGES

I traveling out of Texas and through the South that I found that most places had sweet tea, and you had to ask for unsweet."

Gourmet magazine's website lists 12 recipes for iced tea – including concoctions like Viennese iced tea, black currant iced tea with cinnamon and ginger, peach-basil iced tea and plum fennel iced tea – but nary a single directive for making plain ol' "iced tea" or "sweet tea."

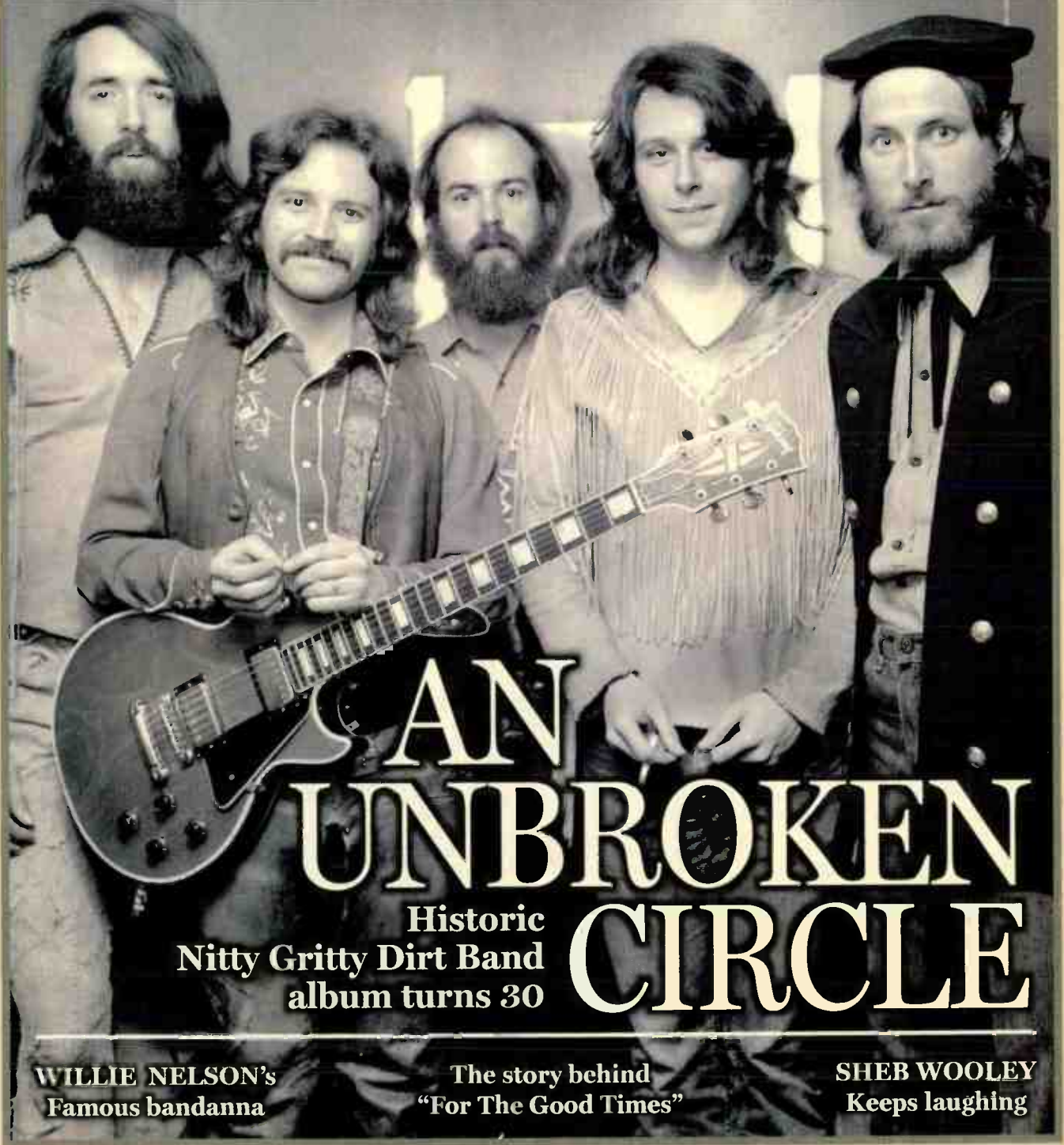
For that, you must consult the back of a Luzianne tea box. Or you could follow the foolproof recipe offered by Lynn Batey's brother Lee, who makes a pitcher of tea every other day at home.

"Put two family-sized tea bags in your tea pot," he says. "Do not mistake a tea pot for a tea kettle. The tea pot is a small sauce pan used only for making sweet tea and never, ever gets washed. Not too much water, just barely enough to wet the bags, then you bring it to a boil. Once it starts boilin', take it off the stove and cover it with a saucer; we lost the lid, and a saucer works fine. Let it sit for five minutes, then pour it in your pitcher. Add your sugar. Use a cup and some. That's pretty much close to two cups. Stir so that the sugar dissolves. Add the rest of your water. Never put ice in the pitcher; always pour your tea over a glass of ice. Add lemon if you want. I've cut way down, 'cause if you drink sweet tea all day long, you'll never get to sleep. I only drink about four glasses a day."

— Kay West

THE Journal

OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC



AN UNBROKEN CIRCLE

Historic
Nitty Gritty Dirt Band
album turns 30

WILLIE NELSON's
Famous bandanna

The story behind
"For The Good Times"

SHEB WOOLEY
Keeps laughing

Editor: Robert K. Oermann

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Feeling ill-suited to Nashville, Willie Nelson moved to Texas and changed his fortunes – along with his clothes.

J3 This Date In Country Music

Anniversaries, birthdays and other musical milestones

J6 Cover Story: Will The Circle Be Unbroken

Thirty years ago, a bunch of long-haired musicians sat down in the studio with country legends Roy Acuff, Earl Scruggs and Mother Maybelle Carter. Looking back on the landmark album that resulted, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band is still awed by the experience.

J8 Sheb Wooley

Acting, singing, songwriting, comedy – Sheb Wooley did it all. With a typical self-effacing attitude, this man of all trades talks about his storied career.

J10 The Story Behind The Song

Kris Kristofferson was recovering from a failed marriage and battling a stalled career when he wrote the bittersweet "For The Good Times."

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PRECIOUS MEMORIES FROM THE COUNTRY
MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



Willie Wear

From head to toe, Willie Nelson changed country's style

Willie Hugh Nelson does things his own way.

The reckless, poetic spirit had already enjoyed success as a songwriter when he returned to his home state in 1970 and wound up helping forge a new musical movement. As a leader of what became known as the Outlaws, Nelson helped fuse two seemingly disparate communities – cowboys and hippies.

In the process, Nelson ditched the Nehru jackets and tailored suits he'd favored during his days in

Music City's star-making machine. Instead, he simply started walking onstage in the same denim and T-shirts he wore offstage.

As Holly George-Warren and Michelle Freedman write in their new book, *How The West Was Worn*, "In the early 1970s, the Outlaw movement, led by artists Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, favored dressed-down scruffy jeans, Western-cut denim shirts and red bandannas, tied around the head rather than the neck."

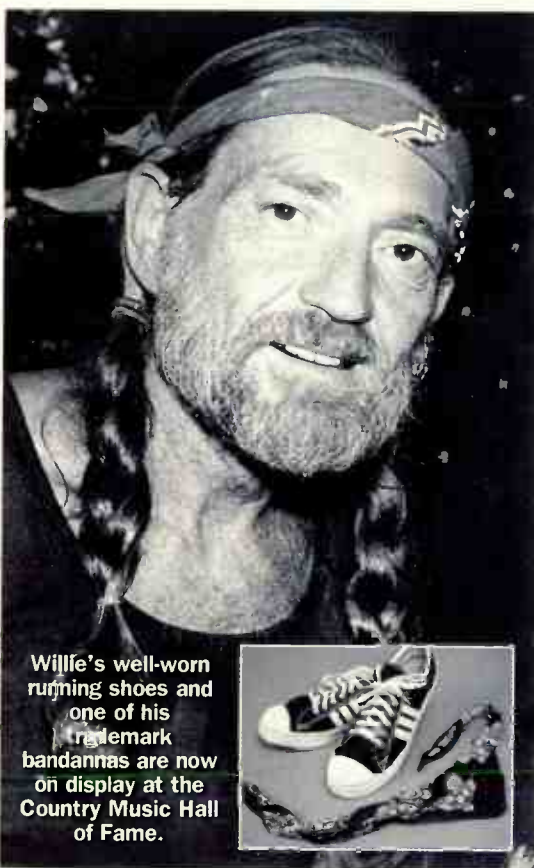
Nelson's big breakthrough occurred with 1975's "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain" and its parent LP, *Red Headed Stranger*. By 1977 he was the grand cowboy guru of country music.

In December of that year he presented the Country Music Hall of Fame with a pair of signature objects. Smiling for photographers in front of the Hall's building, Nelson donated a scuffed pair of dime-store workout shoes and a well-used bandanna.

These humble artifacts might have been a subtle poke at the Nashville system that he had battled for years but they certainly say, "Willie Nelson was here!"

Willie Nelson was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame on Sept. 29, 1993, and his old gym shoes and bandanna are currently on display there.

— Mark Medley



COURTESY OF COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM (2)

Willie's well-worn running shoes and one of his trademark bandannas are now on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame.

THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

AUGUST

August 1

1966 George Ducas born

August 2

1910 Rod Brasfield born

1980 *Urban Cowboy* LP tops charts

August 3

1924 Jordanaires' Gordon Stoker born

1959 "The Three Bells" by the Browns debuts on charts. It becomes first Nashville Sound disc to go No. 1 on pop charts

August 4

1890 Carson Robison born

1932 Fiddler Scott Stoneman born

1963 Connie Smith discovered by Bill Anderson in Columbus, Ohio

1981 Ricky Skaggs weds Sharon White

August 5

1934 Vern Gosdin born

1968 Terri Clark born

1998 Texas Playboy Eldon Shamblin dies

August 6

1968 Lisa Stewart born

August 7

1927 Felice Bryant born

1950 Rodney Crowell born

1961 Patsy Cline lands her first No. 1. "I Fall To Pieces"

1971 Homer Haynes (Homer & Jethro) dies

August 8

1921 Webb Pierce born



Mel Tillis

1932 Mel Tillis born

1939 Statler Brothers' Phil Barsley born

1973 Mark Wills born

August 9

1934 Merle Kilgore born

August 10

1927 Jimmy Martin born

1928 Jimmy Dean born

1949 Diamond Rio's Gene Johnson born

August 11

1946 John Conlee born

1952 Hank Williams fired from *Opry*

August 12

1927 Porter Wagoner born

1929 Buck Owens born

1963 Jim Ed Brown joins *Opry* cast

1989 Patty Loveless lands first No. 1. "Timber I'm Falling In Love"

August 13

1951 Webb Pierce records "Wondering," his first No. 1

1988 Keith Whitley's "Don't Close Your Eyes" hits No. 1

August 14

1922 Blind Andrew Jenkins broadcasts over Atlanta's WSB, becoming perhaps the first country musician on the airwaves

1941 Connie Smith born



Rose Maddox

August 15

1925 Rose Maddox born

1933 Bobby Helms born

1933 Mike Seeger born

August 16

1941 Billy Joe Shaver born

1972 Dixie Chick Emily Robison born

1977 Elvis Presley dies

August 17

1955 Kevin Welch born

1992 *Brand New Man*, debut CD by Brooks & Dunn, tops 1 million in sales

August 18

1955 Steve Wilkinson (the Wilkinsons) born

August 19

1944 Eddy Raven born

1966 Lee Ann Womack born

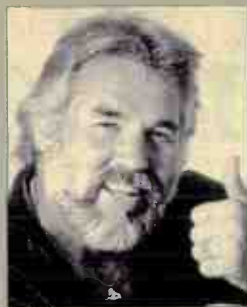
1969 Clay Walker born

August 20

1924 Jim Reeves born

1935 Justin Tubb born

1988 Leon McAuliffe ("Steel Guitar Rag") dies



Kenny Rogers

August 21

1938 Kenny Rogers born

1939 Guitarist James Burton born

1939 Statler Brothers' Harold Reid born

1965 Waylon Jennings first appears on charts

1975 *Opry*'s Sam McGee dies

August 22

1957 Holly Dunn born

1959 Collin Raye born

August 23

1969 Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue" hits No. 1

August 24

1898 Fred Rose born

1970 SheDAISY's Kristyn Osborn born

1998 Jerry Clower dies

August 25

1949 First recording session for Louvin Brothers

1961 Billy Ray Cyrus born

1970 Jo Dee Messina born

August 26

1961 Diamond Rio's Jimmy Olander born

August 27

1925 Carter Stanley (Stanley Brothers) born

1927 Jimmy C. Newman born

1937 J.D. Crowe born

1949 Alabama's Jeff Cook born

August 28

1925 Billy Grammer ("Gotta Travel On") born

1965 Shania Twain born

1970 Sherrié Austin born

1982 LeAnn Rimes born

August 29

1956 Diamond Rio's Dan Truman born

1987 Archie Campbell dies

August 30

1919 Kitty Wells born

August 31

1968 Merle Haggard's "Mama Tired" reaches No. 1

September 1

1931 Boxcar Willie born

1933 Conway Twitty born

September 2

1912 Johnnie Lee Wills ("Rag Mop") born

September 3

1925 Hank Thompson born

September 4

1920 Steel guitarist Shot Jackson born

1991 Dottie West dies

September 5

1946 Loudon Wainwright III ("Dead Skunk") born

September 6

1963 Mark Chesnutt born

1980 Johnny Lee's "Lookin' For Love" hits No. 1

1984 Ernest Tubb dies

September 7

1936 Buddy Holly born

September 8

1897 Jimmie Rodgers born

1927 Harlan Howard born

1932 Patsy Cline born

September 9

1922 Fiddlin' John Carson's radio debut (WSB, Atlanta)

1996 Bill Monroe dies

September 10

1955 Justin Tubb joins *Opry*, age 20



Jimmie Davis

September 11

1899 Jimmie Davis born

1967 Bobbie Gentry gets Gold Record for "Ode To Billie Joe"

September 12

1927 Helen Carter born

1931 George Jones born

1958 Rod Brasfield dies

September 13

1911 Bill Monroe born

1969 Barbara Mandrell debuts on charts

September 14

1959 John Berry born

September 15

1903 Roy Acuff born

1948 Vernon Dalhart dies

1957 Patsy Cline weds Charlie Dick

September 16

1958 Terry McBride born

September 17

1923 Hank Williams born

1955 Chart debut of Elvis Presley's "I Forgot To Remember To Forget," his first No. 1 country hit

1960 Loretta Lynn's first *Opry* appearance

September 18

1947 *Opry* troupe plays Carnegie Hall

1999 Dixie Chicks CD *Fly*

debuts at No. 1 on pop charts

September 19

1964 Trisha Yearwood born

1968 Red Foley dies

1973 Gram Parsons dies

September 20

1955 Tennessee Ernie Ford records "16 Tons"

September 21

1912 Ted Daffan born

1941 Dickey Lee born

1967 Faith Hill born

September 22

1999 Dolly Parton, Conway Twitty, Johnny Bond enter Hall of Fame

September 23

1930 Ray Charles born

1962 Don Herron (BR549) born

1989 Debut Clint Black album *Killin' Time* hits No. 1

September 24

1962 *Beverly Hillbillies* TV theme "Ballad Of Jed Clampett" recorded by Flatt & Scruggs

September 25

1961 Leroy Van Dyke's "Walk On By" hits No. 1. In 1994 *Billboard* names it top country hit of all time

September 26

1925 Marty Robbins born

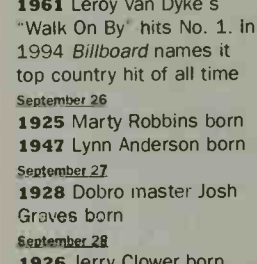
1947 Lynn Anderson born

September 27

1928 Dobro master Josh Graves born

September 28

1926 Jerry Clower born



Jerry Clower



1928 Nashville's first recording session

1950 Bluegrass star Laurie Lewis born

1975 Mandy Barnett born

1991 *Ropin' The Wind* by Garth Brooks becomes first country album to debut on pop charts at No. 1

September 29

1907 Gene Autry born

1935 Jerry Lee Lewis born

September 30

1950 First TV broadcast of *Opry*

1953 Deborah Allen born

1958 Marty Stuart born

1963 Montgomery Gentry's Eddie Montgomery born

The Circle Takes Shape – Again

It all began with Earl Scruggs. In their early days, California-based country rockers the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band wanted to pay homage to traditional country music. After all, their favorite activity was learning old bluegrass, folk and country songs.

But they couldn't agree on exactly how to honor their idols – until a banjo legend pointed the way.

"Our hit 'Mr. Bojangles' led to our first Nashville concert," recalls band member John McEuen. "As we were setting up the equipment, we got word, 'Earl Scruggs is coming tonight.' Sure enough, he and his sons showed up."

McEuen, the Dirt Band's banjo player, was eager to meet his idol. "I asked Earl, 'Why did you come to see us?'" McEuen recalls. "He said, 'I just wanted to meet the boy that played 'Randy Lynn Rag' [a Scruggs original that the Dirt Band had recorded] the way I intended to.'"

Nine months later, McEuen and Dirt Band member singer/guitarist Jeff Hanna attended a performance of the Earl Scruggs Revue in Boulder, Colo. After the show, while taking Scruggs back to his hotel, the two stammered out a question. "Earl, *uh, uh, wou-would* you mind ... *uh, would you want ... do you think, maybe, you could play with our band on a song?"*

Without hesitation, Scruggs replied, "I'd be proud to."

Two weeks later, the bandmates saw Doc Watson play in the same Boulder nightclub. McEuen and Hanna were braver this time. "Doc, we're doing an album with Earl

A look back at the landmark *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* album

BY ROBERT K. OERMANN

Scruggs," McEuen told the master flat-picking guitarist. Merle Watson, Doc's son and performing partner, encouraged his father to sign on, and he did.

Having recruited two of the most revered acoustic musicians in bluegrass and folk, McEuen and Hanna started casting about for even more heroic recruits. Bill McEuen, John's brother and the band's producer, had read an interview where Roy Acuff said he would play *real* country music with anyone – anywhere, anytime. Hanna recalls, "Bill said,

'Well, let's see if he means it.'"

However, none of them had ever met Acuff. In fact, they knew no one in Nashville other than the Scruggs family.

"We needed an ambassador for Nashville, to get inside of the music community," Hanna recalls. "Earl is such a generous guy. He opened up all these doors. And Louise Scruggs [Earl's wife] was very helpful, also."

McEuen agrees. "Without Earl's stamp of approval, this wouldn't have happened," he states. "It was his stamp of credibility that made *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* work."

Fortunately, Scruggs saw the big



Nitty Gritty Dirty Band banjoist John McEuen (left) picks with one of his heroes, North Carolina flat-top guitarist Doc Watson, during the 1971 recordings of the classic album *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*.

ALL PHOTOS BY WILLIAM E. MCEUEN

The five-member lineup of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band – dressed as various Americana archetypes – perform at Los Angeles' Troubadour nightclub in 1969.



picture: Bringing together young, longhaired rockers with authentic, more conservative bluegrass and country pickers could help expose traditional sounds to a new generation.

"I think that was really in his heart," says Hanna. "That was a big reason for him doing this record and putting so much of his time and attention into it."

The Dirt Band started giving Scruggs their wish list, which included country matriarch Mother Maybelle Carter and bluegrass icon Jimmy Martin. Scruggs even started offering his own suggestions. "Earl called and said he'd found a fiddler," McEuen says with a laugh. "I said, 'What's the fiddler's name?' He goes, 'Vassar Clements.' I said, 'Can a guy named Vassar play the fiddle?' And Earl just goes, 'He'll do.'" McEuen later discovered that Clements, a former Bill Monroe sideman, was one of country's finest Nashville players.

The Scruggs family helped assem-

ble an all-star cast, including bassist Junior Huskey, guitarist Norman Blake and Dobroist Pete "Brother Oswald" Kirby. They also contacted guitarist Merle Travis,



The 30th anniversary reissue of the classic *Circle* album features bonus tracks, additional in-studio banter and a complete remastering of the original tunes – but the unique, archetypal cover remains.

who flew in from California to join Watson and Blake.

United Artists Records, the band's label, begrudgingly approved \$22,000 for the *Circle* budget. Nobody men-

tioned the possibility of a three-disc monument. The group set a date of August 16, 1971, to begin recording.

"We had a really big assignment, which was to learn all these classic country songs right," Hanna says of the challenge faced by him and bandmates McEuen, Jimmy Ibbotson, Jimmie Fadden and Les Thompson. "We did a lot of cramming on the bus on the way to Nashville for that record. We felt that the people we'd be playing with were the masters of country music – the Mount Rushmore of the whole genre."

The recording took place over six days at Woodland Sound in East Nashville. The entire record was recorded live on the studio floor, without overdubs.

"If we blew a take," McEuen recalls, "we had to start all over again."

The most fearsome presence was Roy Acuff. Though beloved by the public, the King of Country Music could be imperious and curt offstage,



Young hippies meet the country legends at one of many legendary *Circle* sessions, with bassist Junior Huskey (far left), fiddler Vassar Clements (seated) and harmony singer Merle Travis (second from right, hands in pocket).

Nitty Gritty

and he was suspicious of the long-haired strangers from California. Music publisher Wesley Rose eventually talked the reluctant superstar into visiting the studio to meet the band before the tape started rolling.

"There was an underlying tension in the studio," recalls journalist Jack Hurst, who covered the sessions as a reporter for Nashville's *The Tennessean*. "Musicians like Acuff were representative of a very conservative, flag-waving kind of politics. Whereas the Dirt Band was longhaired, bearded and very liberal. Everybody was greeting everybody and trying to be as neighborly as possible. And Acuff just wanted to get on with it and get out of there. I think he was having a problem within himself as to whether or not he'd gone over to the enemy."

In his original newspaper report, Hurst wrote that Bill Monroe, an even more daunting legend than Acuff, refused to participate at all.

"Roy Acuff was the hardest guy for us to get on the *Circle* record," Hanna says. "We brought him into the studio to listen to the tracks that we had recorded with Merle Travis. He shut his eyes and, after a long pause, he asked what kind of music that was."

Bill McEuen replied, "Well, Mr. Acuff, we think of it as bluegrass, traditional, Appalachian, mountain, folk, uh ..." McEuen replied haltingly.

Acuff cut him off. "Why, hell, it ain't nothin' but country music," the legend snapped. "Let's go make some more!"

John McEuen turned to a bandmate and said, "I guess we passed the test."

It was Bill McEuen's idea to keep the tape rolling between songs to capture the banter and improvised, instrumental interplay.

"Doc Watson and Merle Travis were meeting for the first time," Hanna recalls. "Doc told Merle that he had named his son after him, which was really a significant moment for us. We were just thrilled."

John McEuen also remembers being dumbstruck by the humility of another giant. "If there ever was an angel who played the guitar, it must have been Mama Maybelle Carter," he comments. "She never had one pretense that she had accomplished something as great as she had. She was just the lady next door. It's a lesson that I've carried with me all my life."

Hanna recalls the thrill of doing harmonies on Doc Watson's "Tennessee Stud" and singing lead on "You Are My Flower" with Earl Scruggs backing him on guitar. He also relished watching the recording of Merle Travis' "Dark As A Dungeon," Roy Acuff's "I Saw The Light," Maybelle Carter's "Wildwood Flower" and Jimmy Martin's rousing "Grand Ole Opry Song."

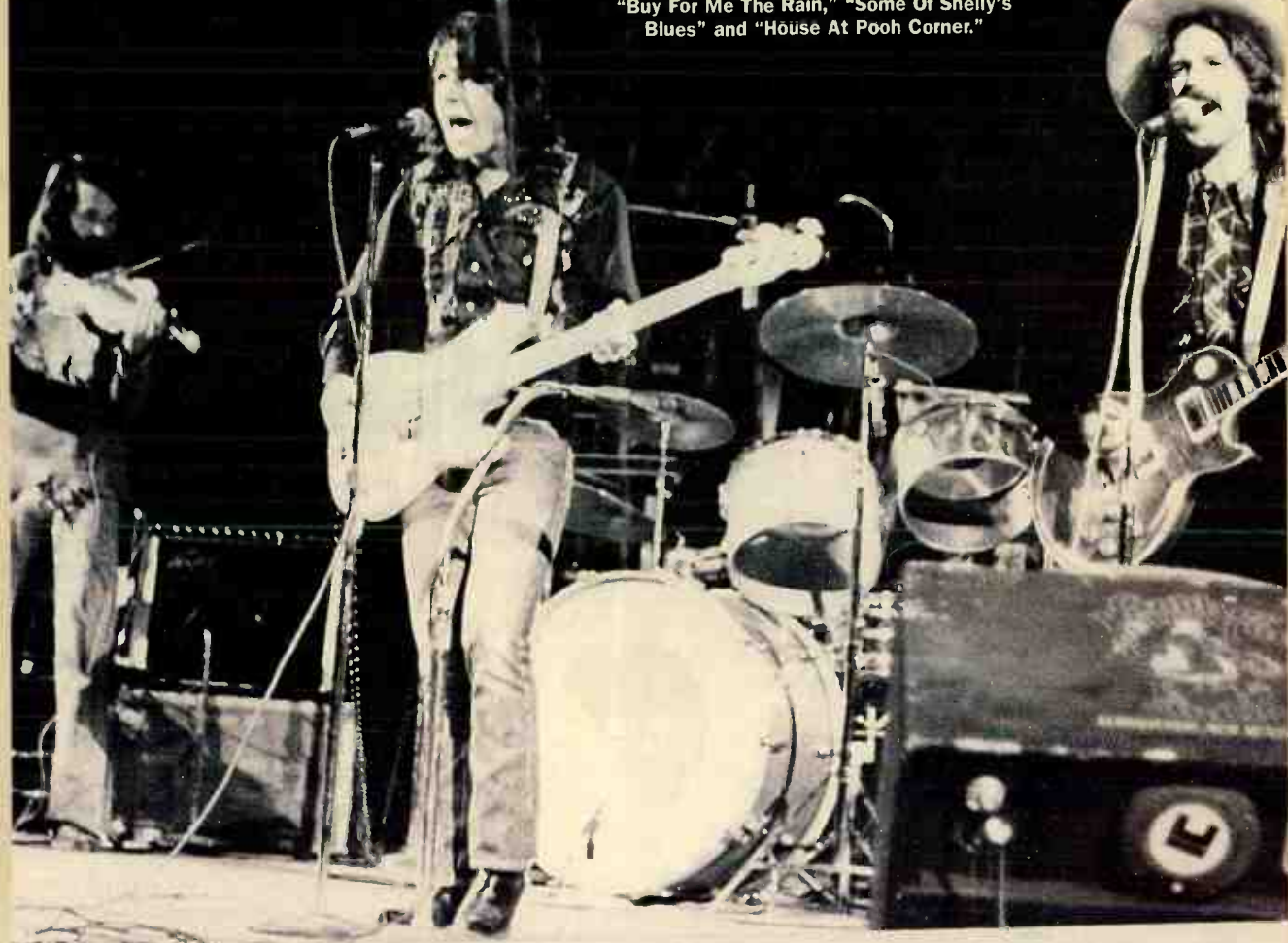
Amid all the virtuosity, Hanna also was struck by the ragged-but-right performance of Brother Oswald Kirby's instrumental "Sailin' On To Hawaii."

"Oswald was the real 'soul' of it," McEuen offers. "He didn't know how



Dirt Band members Jimmy Ibbotson (left) and Jeff Hanna harmonize behind the strong lead of the great Roy Acuff.

By the time *Circle* hit the stores in 1972, the Dirt Band had already cracked pop radio with the Top 10 "Mr. Bojangles," "Buy For Me The Rain," "Some Of Shelly's Blues" and "House At Pooh Corner."



to tune his instrument. He didn't know what key he was in. But it wasn't notes he was playing. It was sounds that were coming straight from his heart and soul. You know, he spoke from that mysterious place."

Issued in 1972, *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* sold slowly but steadily. Because the triple LP was so expensive, the label only pressed 25,000 copies at a time. Retailers lamented how much display space the "thick" album took up. Nevertheless, it became a million-seller – an unheard-of feat for a three-disc set.

"It was word of mouth," McEuen says. "And it was communication between the generations. We got let-

ters from people saying, 'I never understood my father until I got this album. We listened to this record one night and we sat there crying over the music. And now we talk to each other.'"

For its 30th anniversary, the Dirt Band has now completely remastered the album, packaged it on two CDs with 24 previously unseen photos, additional studio dialogue, new liner notes and two unreleased tracks from the sessions.

"Some people are calling it the *O Brother* of its day, and some are calling it the father of *O Brother*," says McEuen, referring to the recent best-selling movie soundtrack, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* "But

whatever they call it, just call it. The thing that is exciting about the reissued version is that it brings out the original sound and puts the listener right in the studio."

Adding historical importance to the reissue is the fact that so many of its participants have passed on, including Roy Acuff, Maybelle Carter and Merle Travis. "The significance of the event really hits home with us," Hanna says. "We feel we were so lucky to be in Nashville at that time."

"It's a piece of American history," McEuen adds. "We have always felt honored by that album. It's not 'our' record. It's everybody's record, and that includes the listener." ❁

MAN OF MANY HATS

Sheb Wooley couldn't decide on a single career, so he mastered several. "I guess I just never could keep a job," he laughs, still cracking self-deprecating jokes at age 82.

Truth is, Wooley found work in nearly every field he pursued. He's acted in

BY BOB MILLARD



Experience in roping and riding made Wooley a natural for westerns, and he had supporting parts in *High Noon*, *Giant* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. But he was best-known for playing Pete Nolan in the TV series *Rawhide*.

classic movies and television shows. He's performed No. 1 country and pop songs. He's written hits in a variety of musical styles. He even spoofed famous country tunes through his comedic alter ego, Ben Colder.

"I get tired of operating in one situation too long," he says. "It's like milking a

In his eighth decade, Sheb Wooley reflects on a multifaceted career

bunch of cows: When you got one milked, you want to move on to the next cow. Or maybe I was just looking for one area I could work in successfully."

Born on a ranch in Erick, Okla., on April 10, 1921, Shelby "Sheb" Wooley grew up with two passions, rodeo competition and playing guitar for local country dances. Both childhood pursuits would play a big role in his career.

After a stint working in a shipyard and writing songs in California, Wooley moved to Nashville in 1946 and secured his first music job as a singer on radio station WLAC. Frustrated when the job didn't lead to a recording deal, Wooley took a job at a Fort Worth radio station, where he hosted a program and led a country band. Two years later, he signed a major-label contract with MGM Records.

In 1950, Wooley settled in Hollywood, where he landed his first acting role in an Errol Flynn film, *Rocky Mountain*. His boyhood experience of roping and riding helped him find a niche as a character actor in westerns, including parts with Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor in *Giant*, Clint Eastwood in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*

and in several John Wayne vehicles.

In all, Wooley's movie career spanned more than 40 films, including *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* (1954), *The Dollmaker* (1984) and *Silverado* (1985). He also played the bedraggled high school principal in 1986's acclaimed *Hoosiers*.

His most-remembered role, however, was as trail scout Pete Nolan on the popular western TV series *Rawhide*.

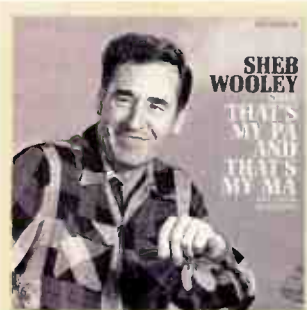
"When you're in this business, you put a lot of irons in the fire, and you're always surprised when one of them gets hot," Wooley explains. "I may have covered more areas than some, but it's just a matter of working and trying to make a living in an industry that I love."

Once his movie career took off, he also started enjoying success as a pop and country songwriter. Up until then, he'd written such tunes as Teresa Brewer's

pop hit "Too Young To Tango," Hank Snow's "When Mexican Joe Met Jole Blon" and Rusty Draper's "Are You Satisfied?"

But his all-time biggest hit as a writer and recording artist came with "The Purple People Eater," a million-selling pop novelty record that completely captured the nation's fancy in 1958.

Humorous story songs



Humorous story songs, like "That's My Pa" and "The Purple People Eater" turned out to be his musical strength.

turned out to be Wooley's strength. His hit "That's My Pa" was a comic original that shot to No. 1 in 1962. The same year, "Don't Go Near The Eskimos" launched a string of parodies written during the height of his Rawhide stardom. Because he already had a country single in release under his own name, "Eskimos" gave rise to his comic alter ego, Ben Colder, who Wooley played as an intoxicated bumpkin.

His formula for the Ben Colder character was simple - and one that parodists like Cledus T. Judd and Weird Al Yankovic follow today. "I'd just pick the biggest hits I could find and do a comedy takeoff on 'em," Wooley explains.

His humorous "Almost Persuaded No. 2" was nominated for a 1966 Grammy, and Ben Colder was named the CMA's Comedian of the Year in 1968.

His last country hit, the parody "Fifteen Beers Ago," came out in 1971. By that time, Wooley had already turned again to TV, this time to a CBS start-up called Hee Haw, a country comedy series based loosely on NBC's hipper Laugh-In. Though Wooley composed the program's theme music, he only appeared in 13 episodes before deciding he didn't care for the program's stereotypical hokum.

"I used to get really upset when we'd play a theater to do country music, and they'd bring an old cow and a bale of hay onstage," Wooley explains. "And I thought, 'Oh Lord, [Hee Haw has] brought in the hay and the cornfield and everything.'"

Luckily for his bank account, his theme song kept collecting royalties for the 25 years Hee Haw ran in national syndication and reruns that aired on The Nashville Network.

Today, Wooley lives in Hendersonville, Tenn., with his wife and manager, Linda Dotson. Despite his current battle with leukemia, he's still the same easygoing, funny fellow. But he notes that he has given up one longtime pastime: riding horses.

"I got down to a saddle and bridle," he says with a still-sly grin. "Tack doesn't eat any hay." ●



Wooley began his career as a serious country crooner, but found more success as a songwriter with tunes like "Are You Satisfied?," a hit for Rusty Draper.

THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG

“For The Good Times”

Written by Kris Kristofferson

“For The Good Times”

BY KRIS KRISTOFFERSON



Kris Kristofferson

Don't look so sad, I know it's over
But life goes on, and this old world
will keep on turning
Let's just be glad we had
some time to spend together
There's no need to watch
the bridges that we're burning

Lay your head upon my pillow
Hold your warm and tender body
close to mine
Hear the whisper of the raindrops
blowing soft against the window
And make believe you love me
one more time
For the good times

I'll get along, you'll find another
And I'll be here if you should find
you ever need me
Don't say a word
about tomorrow or forever
There'll be time enough for sadness
when you leave me

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Times were anything but good for Kris Kristofferson when he wrote what would become his first No. 1 song, “For The Good Times.”

In 1965, Kristofferson visited Nashville and got his song “Viet Nam Blues” recorded by Dave Dudley. Encouraged, he gave up his career as an Army officer and English instructor at West Point to move his family to Nashville. But two years would pass before he had another successful song cut – and it barely cracked the Top 40.

By the spring of 1968, his marriage had fallen apart. “I was dividing my time between making nothing as a Nashville songwriter and earning \$900 a month flying helicopters for offshore oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico,” he later said.

On one of his long drives to the Gulf, he started working on a song about a final rendezvous with a lover. “After a while the melody really got to me,” he said. “I couldn’t wait to get to a guitar. I was riding along thinking about that part where it says, ‘Hear the whisper of the raindrops blowing soft against the window,’ and I wondered what the chords were. Hell, I wondered if I could play it.”

Kristofferson eventually found a guitar, located the right chords and finished the song.

Shortly afterward, his career came alive, thanks to chart appearances in 1969 with “Me And Bobby McGee,” recorded by Roger Miller, and “Sunday Morning Coming Down,” a hit for Ray Stevens.

Then early in 1970, Ray Price

recorded “For The Good Times.” Fourteen years earlier Price had established himself as a honky-tonk artist with the rhythmic shuffle of “Crazy Arms,” but by the late ‘60s he had reinvented himself as a crooner. His singles still consistently made the Top 20, but he hadn’t enjoyed a No. 1 record since 1959’s “The Same Old Me.”

“For The Good Times” fit Price’s lush, sophisticated style perfectly. A Columbia Records executive thought another song, “Grazin’ In Greener Pastures,” was a more likely hit, so it was released as a single. But deejays found “For The Good Times” on the B-side –

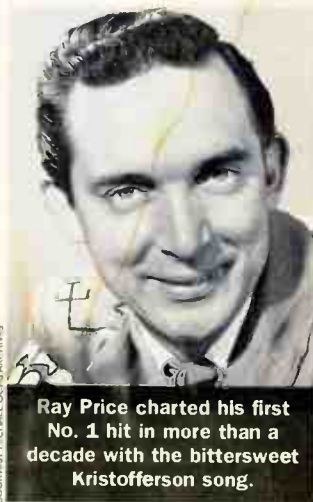
and preferred it.

By mid-1970, Kristofferson had his first No. 1 song. A few months later, Price won a Grammy for his performance.

The singer returned to the Kristofferson songbag for another chart-topper, “I Won’t Mention It Again.” Then Johnny Cash remade “Sunday Morning Coming Down” into a No. 1 hit, and Kristofferson’s stock as a songwriter was established.

“For The Good Times” not only changed Kristofferson’s fortunes, it also changed country music. No one had ever written such a directly sexual line as Hold your warm and tender body next to mine in such a hauntingly tender song. It opened the door for a woman, Sammi Smith, to deliver a similar sexual plea late in 1970 in Kristofferson’s “Help Me Make It Through The Night.”

— Walter Carter



Ray Price charted his first No. 1 hit in more than a decade with the bittersweet Kristofferson song.

NEW AGAIN

NOTEWORTHY DISC-OVERIES



LORETTA LYNN
Best Of, Volume 2: 20th Century Masters, The Millennium Collection

(MCA)

This picks up where the first volume of Loretta's hits left off. Like its predecessor, it samples recordings from throughout her career. The earliest song is 1964's "Wine, Women And Song," the latest is 1981's "I Lie," and in between are such memorable efforts as "Fist City" (1968), "You're Lookin' At Country" (1970), "When The Tingle Becomes A Chill" (1974) and "The Pill" (1975).

Loretta Lynn remains a one-of-a-kind artist whose outspoken style broke all the molds. She's a true American treasure.



ROY ACUFF
The Great Roy Acuff
The Voice Of Country Music
Songs Of The Smoky Mountains

(Dualtone)

When Acuff left Columbia Records in 1953, he signed with Capitol for a three-year stint. While there, he re-recorded classic hits "Wabash Cannonball," "The Great Speckled Bird." "Wreck

On The Highway," "Fire Ball Mail," "Pins And Needles In My Heart" and "Night Train To Memphis." Capitol issued these on a 1955 LP titled *Songs Of The Smoky Mountains*. That album is now out on Dualtone as one of three Acuff reissues by the label. But if you want these songs in your collection, you're better off getting the original Columbia versions.

The other two Dualtone CDs are another matter entirely. The Great Roy Acuff and The Voice Of Country Music compile singles he recorded for Capitol during those years. Although Acuff was nearing his 50s, he still sang with great vigor. And though none of the singles made the charts, they were outstanding songs.

The Voice Of Country Music contains such pleasures as "That's What Makes The Jukebox Play" and "Streamline Heartbreaker." Even more delightful is "Sixteen Chickens And A Tambourine," on which Acuff plays the kazoo. The Great Roy Acuff is even better. "Sunshine Special," "Don't Judge Your Neighbor," "Little Moses" and "Sweep Around Your Own Back Door," in particular, are the equal of any of his better-known songs.

At a time when country music was turning away from string-band music to the harder-edged honky-tonk styles of Hank Williams and Hank Thompson, Acuff stayed with his Appalachian sound. The results, reissued here, were splendid.



FIDDLIN' ARTHUR SMITH

Fiddlin' Arthur Smith & His Dixieliners

(County)

Smith, who died in 1971, was the most modern-sounding of the old-time fiddlers. That's because he was a distinctive stylist with an eclectic repertoire and a dazzlingly complex

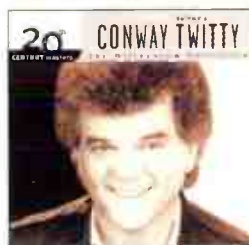
technique. He played with such a rapid, dynamic style that on tunes like "Smith's Rag" it sounds as if the guitarist and bass player can barely keep up.

Fellow Grand Ole Opry act The Delmore Brothers often served as Smith's backup band, The Dixieliners, and they can be heard on 14 of the 22 tunes on this reissue. Though the collection emphasizes Smith's instrumental flash, eight of the songs spotlight his warm, bluesy vocals.

His hard drinking reportedly created problems with the Opry brass, and

he left the show in 1939. But the four recordings from 1940 indicate he was still at the peak of his powers, especially on the marvelous "Weary Weary World." He later found renewed fame in the singing-cowboy films of Jimmy Wakely and still later as a favorite at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival.

Today, Arthur Smith is generally remembered as the composer of the standards "Beautiful Brown Eyes" and "More Pretty Girls Than One." This outstanding reissue reminds us that he was much, much more.



"She's Got A Single Thing In Mind" is mistakenly titled, on both the jacket and in the liner notes, and the photos have all been published elsewhere and often.

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN

On The Road

(Smithsonian Folkways)

The Gentlemen's original lineup created outstanding studio records. Judging by this collection of early-'60s concert performances, their live performances



were just as special. The combination of Charlie Waller's heartfelt lead vocals, John Duffey's stratospheric tenor and Eddie Adcock's matchless baritone is just plain thrilling. Adcock's

string-bending banjo solos are stunningly original, and Tom Gray's bass provides a perfect anchor.

"Poor Ellen Smith," "The Long Black Veil," "Grandfather's Clock" and others were taken from a 1962 concert in an acoustically flawless auditorium at Antioch College in Ohio. "Little Glass Of Wine," "I Am A Pilgrim," "Walking In Jerusalem," "Rawhide" and the rest were recorded at a 1963 club date in a Columbus, Ohio, joint called the Sacred Mushroom. Those two shows comprised the original Folkways LP, issued in 1963. For the reissue, the label has added six additional selections. The new tracks, recently discovered, were taped during the band's appearance at Carnegie Hall in 1961.

This documents one of the greatest bluegrass bands in history performing at its peak.

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

Just a great big *thank you* to everyone who answered my letter about "I'll Sail My Ship Alone." What a response I got!

Geane Smith
301 E. South St.
Mount Sterling, IL 62353-1634

I'd like to see an article on the Sloan family, who have led dance troupes for 50 years on the *Grand Ole Opry*. Ralph Sloan started it, and when he passed away, his brother Melvin stepped in. Whenever conversation turns to the *Opry*, people always seem to remember the square dancers.

Billy J. Stahl
1210 S. Pine
San Antonio, TX 78210-2128

Thanks, readers. When I requested the words for "Taller Than Trees," the floodgates opened. I got letters from Missouri, Florida, S. Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, New York, Texas, Illinois, Louisiana, to name a few. You are special folks.

Aurelia McLendon
629 E. Troy St.
Brundidge, AL 36010

WANTED

I'm interested in collectibles relating to the Browns - Jim Ed, Bonnie and Maxine. Live recordings, video tapes, *Grand Ole Opry* transcriptions, armed forces shows, photos, articles and other printed matter.

Randy Francis
310 Illinois Ave.
Sikeston, MO 63801

Help! I broke a plate of my husband's and I can't find a replacement. It's the Hank Williams Sr. "Pillars Of Country" series.

Carol Matuszak
968 Suburban Dr.
DePere, WI 54115

I'm looking for all the early recordings by Charley Pride, Boxcar Willie and Moe Bandy. Will buy.

Patsy Balkaran
Box #6, Andye Tr.
St. Mary's Village, Moruga Rd.
Via-B/pore. T.W.I. Caribbean

I want the music of David Wills, who sang "From Barrooms To Bedrooms." Please help.

Patricia Dodge
1019 Catahoula School Hwy.
St. Martinville, LA 70582

I am looking for the words of the song by Gail Davies called "Grandma's Song." Also I'd like the words to Stu Phillips' "Juanita Jones."

Pat Meade
1651 Stone St.
Liberty Center, IA 50145

Wanted: *The Guitar Stylings Of Hank Snow* (LPM 3548) and Chet Atkins & Doc Watson's *Reflections* (AHU 3701). Thank you.

James Huttel
422 W. Maple Grove Rd.
Duluth, MN 55811-4535

I am looking for the sheet music of "Still" by Bill Anderson. I want to present it to him in recognition of his Hall of Fame induction.

Does anyone have a copy?
Shirley Younts
4902 Farley Ave.
Merriam, KS 66203

I want a recording of "The Men In My Little Girl's Life."
Cheryl Garner
114 W. Clay St.
Martinsville, IL 62442

Can someone send me the words to the classic song "She Thinks I Still Care" by George Jones?

Jose M. Cuenca
Plaza San Miguel, 8
28005, Madrid, Spain

EDITOR'S NOTE: We printed them in our "The Story Behind The Song" feature in the Dec. 2001/Jan. 2002 issue.

I'm looking for the words to the song "Detour."
Eugene Johnson
216 Bald Eagle Dr.
Roanoke Rapids, NC
27870-9265.

I would like the album by Merle Haggard and Leona Williams. Where can I buy Carl and Pearl Butler's old Columbia albums? I would like to see stories about

Leona Williams, Wanda Jackson, Rose Maddox and the Butlers.

Barbara Estes
P.O. Box 355
Walls, Miss. 38680

QUESTIONS

How many CDs did the Old Dogs make - Waylon Jennings, Bobby Bare, Mel Tillis and Jerry Reed? Where can I find a cassette by Billie Jo Spears that has "Blanket On The Ground" on it?

Joe Barkley
502 West "A" St.
Pomona, KS 66076

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Old Dogs group was formed to perform songs the late Shel Silverstein had written about growing older. Bare spearheaded the quartet, which issued its sole CD on Atlantic Records in 1998. The album is available at the CDNow website. Or you might try ordering it, as well as a Spears tape, from the Ernest Tubb Record Shop (1-800-229-4288).

Can you give me any information about a song by Conway Twitty about a pawn shop where a man buys a gun?

Laurel J. Stankay
207A Lockwood Rd.
Export, PA 15632

EDITOR'S NOTE: That's Conway's controversial 1988 Top 10 single "Saturday Night Special."

Pawnbrokers were outraged by the song's storyline, and Conway never performed it in concert. It can be found on the four-CD box set *Collection* and on the cassette-only *Greatest Hits, Vol. 3*. Try the CDNow website or the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, as above.

Does anyone know anything about a singer from the late '50s named Red Garrett?

Elizabeth Muntz
276 Temple Hill Rd., Unit 1302
New Windsor, NY 12553-6866

EDITOR'S NOTE: The only information I have is that he released a single called "Papa Joe's Place" on Decca in 1955. Can any readers help?

I am looking for a song, "Miss Marcy," by Johnny Horton. It's my

dad's favorite song, and he's 89 years old.

Annita Box
2545 Broadway Ext. N., #D
Greenville, MS 38703

EDITOR'S NOTE: Johnny Horton's "Miss Marcy" is currently only available on the four-CD box set *Johnny Horton: 1956-1960 on Germany's Bear Family label*. It is available at the website CDNow and the Ernest Tubb Record Shop (1-800-229-4288).

Does anyone know about a recording called "Daddy's Last Letter?"

Robert Fahnholz
37 5th Ave.
Neptune City, NJ 07753-6515

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tex Ritter had a Capitol Records single by that title in 1950.

FOR SALE

Selling collection of *The Journal*, all issues 1-39, for \$250. Also about 50 issues of *Country Song Roundup*, most of them from the '60s, '70s and '80s, for \$100.

Robert Hensley
P.O. Box 294
Mars Hill, NC 28754

I have most all of Elvis Presley's 8-track tapes. Would like to sell them.

Loretta Smith
500 W. High St.
Redkey, IN 47373

For sale: Johnny Cash and June Carter yearly cups. LPs also.

Kathie Scott
3344 Hartel Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19136-3026

For sale: 48 issues of *Country Music* magazine, Jan. 1993 to Mar. 2002. Also *The Journal*, 21 issues numbered 15-38.

Harold McDonald
4865 Indian Trail
Mikado, MI 48745

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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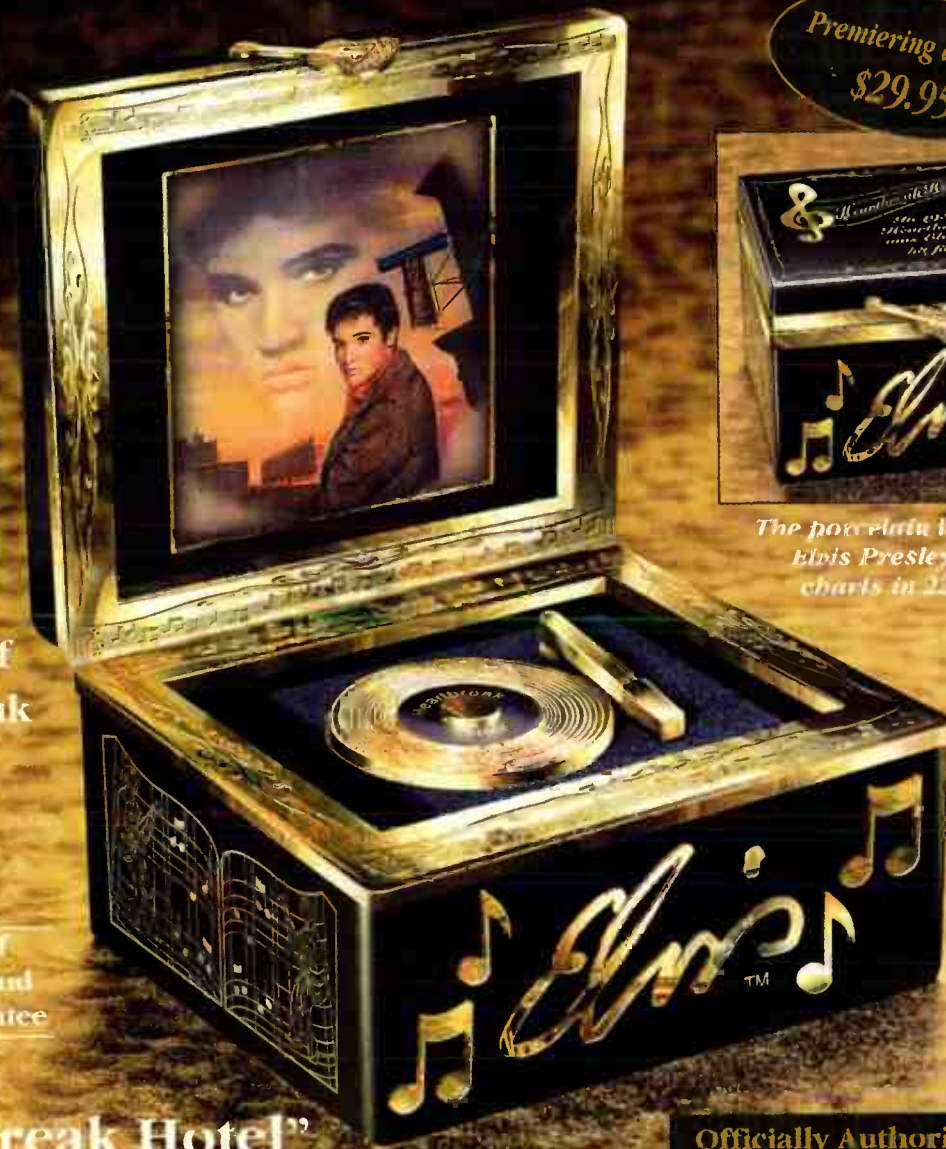
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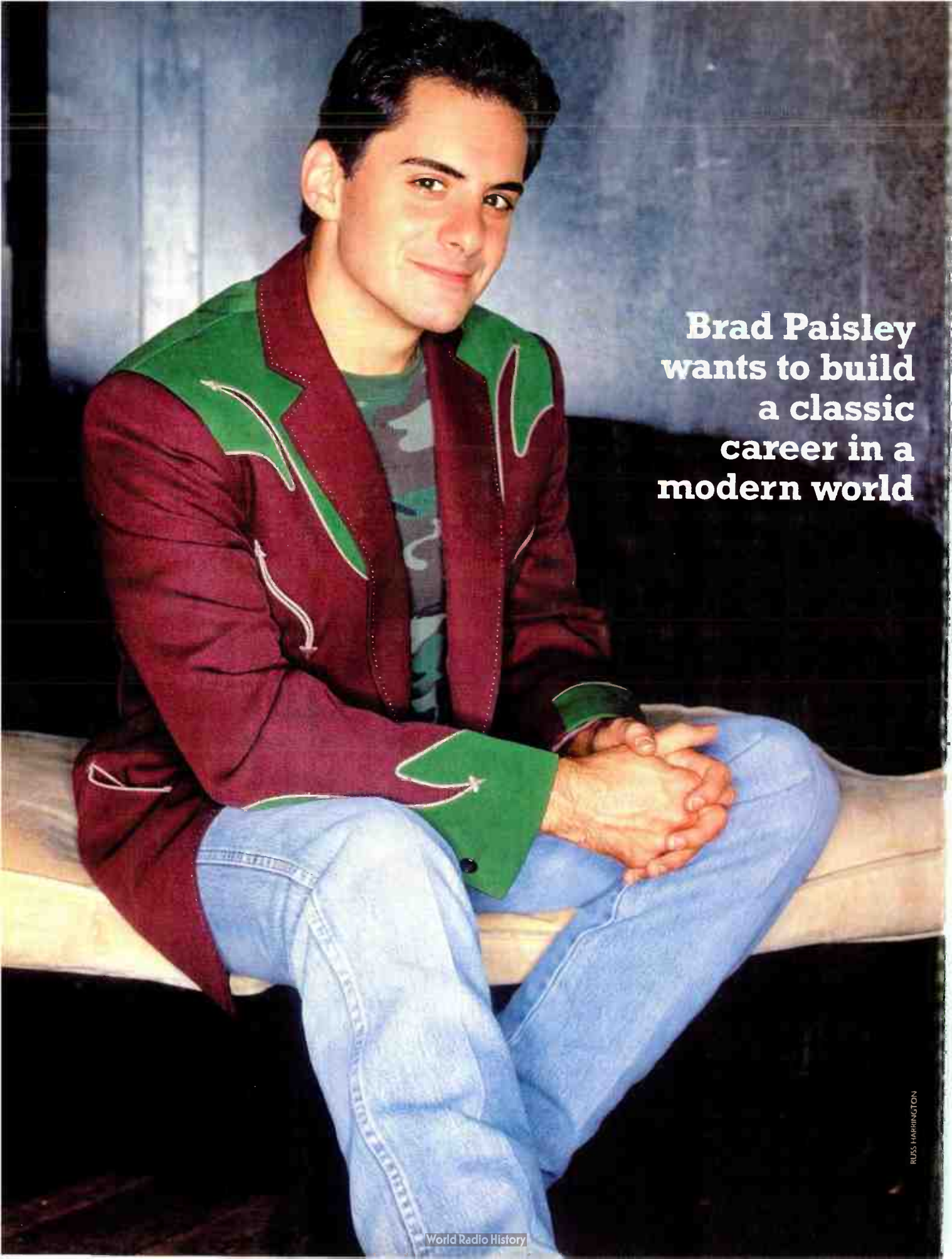
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A photograph of Brad Paisley sitting on a light-colored wooden bench. He is wearing a maroon jacket with green panels on the shoulders and cuffs, a camouflage t-shirt, and light blue jeans. He has his hands clasped in his lap and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a dark, textured wall.

**Brad Paisley
wants to build
a classic
career in a
modern world**

Try to imagine what might have happened if the powers-that-be had tried to create the perfect male country star who could successfully carry the traditionalist flag into the next millennium.

They'd give him an ironclad, down-home pedigree, for sure. They'd make him come from an unassuming map dot like Glen Dale, W.Va., where the Ponderosa Steakhouse was considered *haute cuisine*. They'd provide him with impeccable musical credentials – why not have him be a bona fide triple threat who could sing, write and pick with the best of them? They'd make sure he'd been raised on a pure country diet – Chet Atkins, Buck Owens, Merle Haggard – that could help him resist the siren song of the pop world. It couldn't hurt to make him George Strait handsome, with chocolate-

grandpa's, sitting on the back porch playing guitars, and eating cornbread and biscuits?"

But his success is certainly not imaginary. His debut album, *Who Needs Pictures*, is one of only a handful in the format to reach platinum status in the last few years, generating two No. 1 singles along the way. (The first, "He Didn't Have To Be," also went on to inspire a book and an upcoming TV movie.)

Paisley's highly anticipated sophomore effort, *Part II*, was released last year and hit the gold mark this spring; its first two singles shimmied into the Top 5, and the third single, the humorous "I'm Gonna Miss Her," is the Paisley song most likely to earn him more nominations at awards time.

Inducted into the Grand Ole Opry at the ripe age of 28 (while wearing a Nudie jacket borrowed from Buck

about that. It's more about building a solid career and doing it one song at a time. I feel better about that than if it comes out with a bang and then fizzles.

"I like being able to be just real methodical about a career," he continues. "At the end of it, I want to be able to look back and say, 'Dadgumit! Every single song I cut is one I'm glad I cut.'"

Did he just say *dadgumit*?

Indeed, there's something quaintly anachronistic about Paisley, as if it might be best to watch him perform on a grainy black-and-white television with rabbit ears. He seems like he'd be right at home in a starched white T-shirt and apron, wearing a white paper tri-corner hat and asking whether you want a malt or a cherry Coke with those fries.

VALUE DRIVEN

brown bedroom eyes and a chiseled, all-American face that could get him in *Teen People*. Just for kicks, they might try making him so polite and clean-cut that he wouldn't drink or smoke or swear or even let unescorted young women on his tour bus for fear of the appearance of impropriety.

He'd also be the sort of young artist who'd tell you unironically that he was "really, really tickled" with his latest album. And hopefully, just to keep him from being completely insufferable, they'd let him have a dry, clever wit – make him the kind of guy who'd write a song in which his reply to an ultimatum between fishing and his wife is, "Well, I'm gonna miss her."

Ladies and gentlemen, meet Brad Paisley.

Sure, Paisley might sometimes seem more like someone's *idea* of a country star than, well ... an actual country star. What else can you say about a guy who actually once wondered aloud, "Whatever happened to going over to

Owens, no less), and already winner of both the CMA's Horizon Award and the ACM's Top New Male Vocalist, the question for Paisley is clearly, *What now?*

"There's the battle of the new artist to get an identity, and I sort of feel like we've achieved that," says Paisley, who turns 30 in October. "But then there's the battle of, 'You're no longer a new artist, prove yourself.'"

For Paisley, proving himself clearly means being the tortoise rather than the hare. "It's typical to feel like a record should come out and be a huge seller and phenomenon," he explains. "But I've always known that with the kind of music that I do, I don't think there's any phenomenon here. It's not

Despite his clever forays into the world of Roger Miller-esque, I'm-better-off-without-her sarcasm, Paisley's songs return again and again to old-fashioned themes of family values, lifetime commitments and doing right by your girl. Even his girlfriend of the last year or so, actress Kimberly Williams, is a button-cute, America's-sweetheart type best known for recreating a role in *Father Of The Bride* made famous by Elizabeth Taylor in 1950. "It's kind of like, come on! He [must have] stole something or he's cussed out someone you don't know about," laughs Paisley's longtime close friend and songwriting partner, Kelley Lovelace. "But, honestly, he was brought up pretty well. His straight and narrow

BY JENNIFER MENDELSON

Brad Paisley

path is just a little straighter than everybody else's."

Country legend Bill Anderson concurs. "He's a young man with an old soul," says Anderson, with whom Paisley recorded the CMA award-winning "Too Country," a tongue-in-cheek lament over the erosion of old-fashioned country values. "With Brad, it's not an act; this is sincerely and genuinely who he is. I respect him for that. Whether it's good business or bad business, it's honest. Country music fans can spot a phony a mile away."

Not everyone is entirely charmed, however. The comment about corn-

one who'd been famous "for about 12 minutes." The two ended up trading barbs in a gossip column of a Nashville newspaper.

"I don't know what his problem is," Paisley says of the grudge match. "It kind of made me mad that he wouldn't go away."

Paisley has no regrets about any of his public comments.

"Go find me something I said that was wrong or that was mean about somebody in particular or in the least bit judgmental," he says. "It wasn't."

The problem, he says, is that his comments have often been taken out of context, like his now infamous dec-

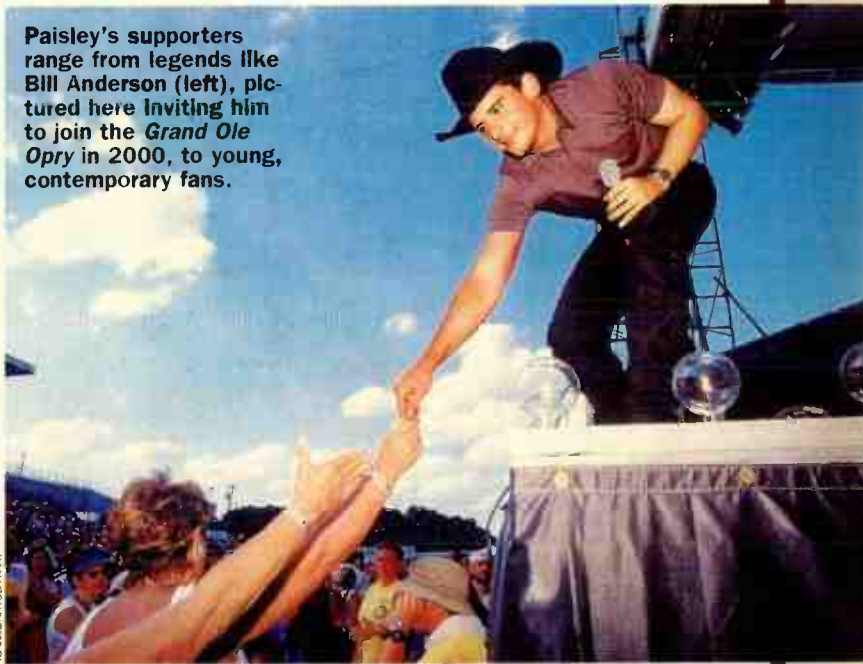
is very lucrative once you venture into it," he continues. "But I think there's a large portion of those first million albums sold to people who don't want to see me do that. Do I need to be double platinum? I don't need to be. I like where I'm at. Certainly some day I'd love to have an album do that. But at the expense of the album itself, it's not worth it. I'll have people read this and say he's an idiot for not necessarily caring about selling more records. It's truly not really about that for me."

And just what is it about?

"It comes down to being happy where you're at," says Paisley. "At some point, you just breathe and you find that zen-like country music place in the world."



Paisley's supporters range from legends like Bill Anderson (left), pictured here inviting him to join the *Grand Ole Opry* in 2000, to young, contemporary fans.



bread and biscuits, which first appeared in a *Billboard* magazine interview, caused the always colorful Texas rebel Charlie Robison to dub Paisley obscenely as nothing less than a "[expletive] moron." ("I love Charlie's music, so I can overlook that," is all Paisley will say in response.)

And when Paisley suggested during a Country Radio Seminar panel that country songs are about the lyrics while pop songs were more about production, he ticked off '80s pop star Richard Marx, who took umbrage not only at Paisley's insinuation, but that it came from some-

laration at the 2000 ACM Awards that country radio was the only place he ever wanted his music played. Paisley insists that while he thinks it's "healthy" for the format when other artists cross over to the pop charts, it's not something he cares to do.

"I'm just proud to be one of those folks who stays right here," he explains. "I think we need a few of us to do that."

When RCA suggested Paisley remix "He Didn't Have To Be" so that it could be played on pop radio stations, he steadfastly refused.

"Maybe it would have sold another million records, because that format

Holding out for country zen may ultimately be the best move for Paisley, says program director Renee Revett of Lafayette, La.'s KXKC.

"If anything, the people who like him probably like him more, and the people who don't probably weren't going to anyway," says Revett. "He's an artist I think we need in our format. While other people might think he has an attitude or whatever, I think it's just about being who he is. He may not be everybody's cup of tea, but he is who he is and he's solid with it."

And, dadgum it, it just doesn't get any countryier than that.*

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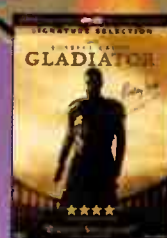
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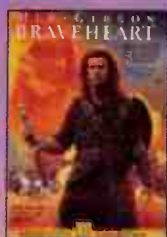
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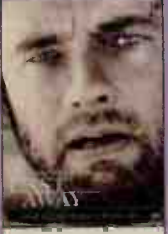
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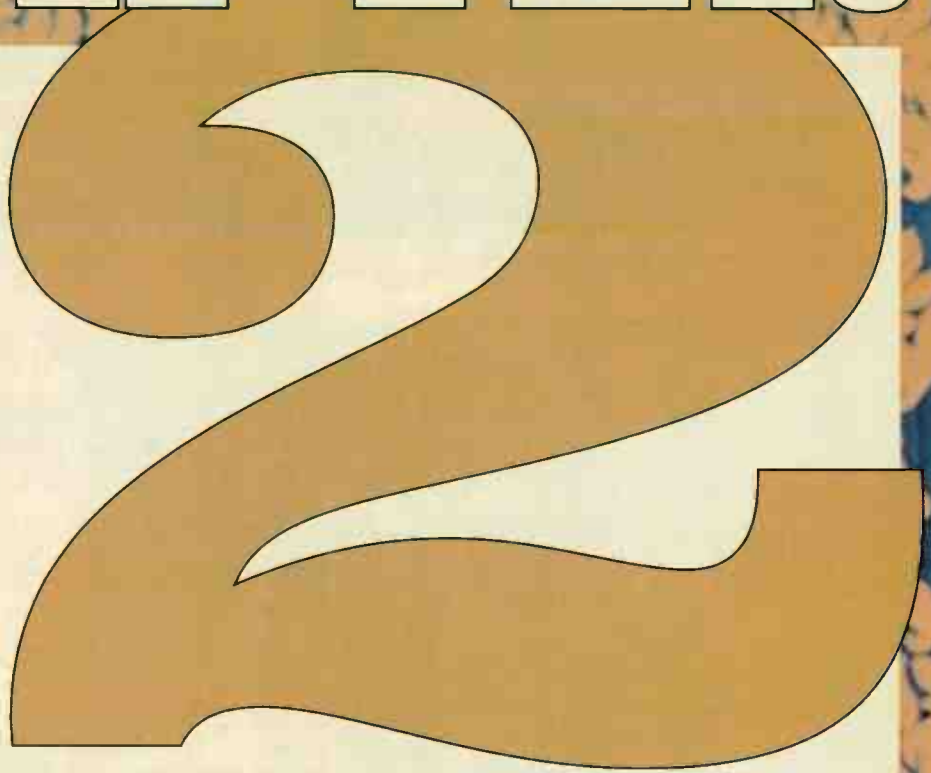
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CHAPTER

The woman sitting in the sun-splashed white kitchen in a Nashville neighborhood could be mistaken for a Vanderbilt University graduate student who has just finished an afternoon jog. Dressed in overall shorts and a T-shirt, her auburn hair is casually tied in a white scrunchie with a few locks tumbling down over a flawless face. She's wearing no makeup, but the wide smile and rich brown eyes are unmistakable: It's 43-year-old country star Kathy Mattea, and she's about to embark on a new life.

After 18 years of making music with Nashville's Mercury Records, Mattea has signed with Milwaukee-based Narada Records, a small label known for its jazz and New Age artists. Her new album, *Roses*, is a stripped-down, acoustic project that plants Mattea's country roots into a pot of folk and Celtic sounds. She plans to hit the road in October, but she won't return to country's sawdust fair circuit. Mattea and her new label plan to showcase her talents in upscale arts centers, often backed by symphony orchestras.

The changes sit well with Mattea, and her mood comes across as confident and optimistic. "I made a conscious decision years ago that I was going to try to take a different path than try to work my way to the top, then try to stay there as long as I could," she says. "The hardest thing has been to know when to jump off."



After 18 years of hits, Kathy Mattea turns a major page on her career

Mattea says she saw the looming precipice in her career in the late '90s. By then, the West Virginia singer was more than a decade into a spectacular run as one of the premier country artists of her time. Her string of

warm, folk-influenced hits – including 1988's CMA Single of the Year, "Eighteen Wheels And A Dozen Roses" – had assured her status as a major star.

Then things started to change.

BY MIRIAM PACE LONGINO



RUSS HARRINGTON/MARADA RECORDS

She first noticed a shift when visiting a major country radio station in California. The new corporate general manager innocently asked Mattea, "What does your husband do?" Clearly, the exec had no knowledge of Mattea's personal history; her relationship with songwriter/husband Jon Vezner is nearly

cycles, because someone had to move out of the picture to make room for me when I came in. At that point, I began to think about whether I was going to keep pushing the same rock up the same hill."

In 2000, Mercury Records moved into sleek new offices. Many of the old faces were gone, replaced by

away my ability to play and sing. The record deal is not what made me good."

Mattea may have felt liberated, but she also faced the daunting challenge of how to maintain a career. Like Emmylou Harris, Nanci Griffith or Mary Chapin Carpenter, her fan base has been tenaciously

Kathy Mattea

"For the first time, there were people in positions of power that, when I looked in their eyes, looked back at me like I was over, like I was too old and a has-been."

as well-known in country music circles as that of George Jones and Tammy Wynette. Vezner wrote Mattea's show-stopping hit "Where've You Been," the CMA Song of the Year in 1990. That song also helped Mattea win the CMA Female Vocalist of the Year award that year.

"That was like a light bulb for me," she says. "I realized a lot of the people I had long-term relationships with are out of radio. There's a real obsession with youth these days. I know these things go in

a new generation of staffers under increasing pressure to sell country music to a younger, pop-oriented audience.

Mattea also lost her support from country radio. After a consistent string of Top 10 hits between 1987 and 1991, her success rate soured. She still occasionally released a major record - such as 1994's "Walking Away A Winner" and

loyal. Mattea's folkie style, warm-honey voice and cerebral attitude held wide appeal for baby boomers who grew up on mellow singer/songwriters.

When word got out that she'd left Mercury, she received several calls from independent record companies. But the most promising call came from Ken Peterson, then executive vice president of Virgin Records in Los Angeles.

"The guy said, 'You know, people our age don't want to listen to Janet Jackson or Mariah Carey. I believe there is a good market out there of people who grew up on good music and don't know how to find it anymore. We want to try to provide that.'"

Peterson convinced Mattea to sign with Narada, a Virgin subsidiary that focuses on alternative forms of artist development beyond radio's cutthroat world.

Mattea's new CD isn't an abrupt change; it showcases the same languid voice, acoustic comfort and thoughtful themes that made her a country star. It does, however, feature broader experimentation with percussion, as well as some Celtic bagpipes and fiddle jigs.

"My goal was to find people who thought the quirkiest aspects of the music I wanted to make were exciting," she says.

"I wouldn't trade my years on Mercury for anything, but nothing stays the same. Years ago, I said I was not going to wind up in my fifties with the face lift, the tummy tuck, the spandex and false eyelashes, singing 'Eighteen Wheels And A Dozen Roses' for the rest of my life, just for the buck." *



Winning a CMA Award in 1990; with husband and collaborator Jon Vezner (right)



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY MAYER

1997's "455 Rocket." But she started having more misses than hits.

"For the first time, there were people in positions of power that, when I looked in their eyes, looked back at me like I was over, like I was too old and a has-been," she says. "I saw the difference in the look on their faces with the younger artists, the artists they thought were viable. That's when it finally snapped in me. It was time to go."

Mattea walked into her label's offices and said, "I love you guys, but I don't love you enough to be miserable." She asked to be released from her contract, and was allowed to leave.

"I thought, OK, they can't take

ALAN HAYES

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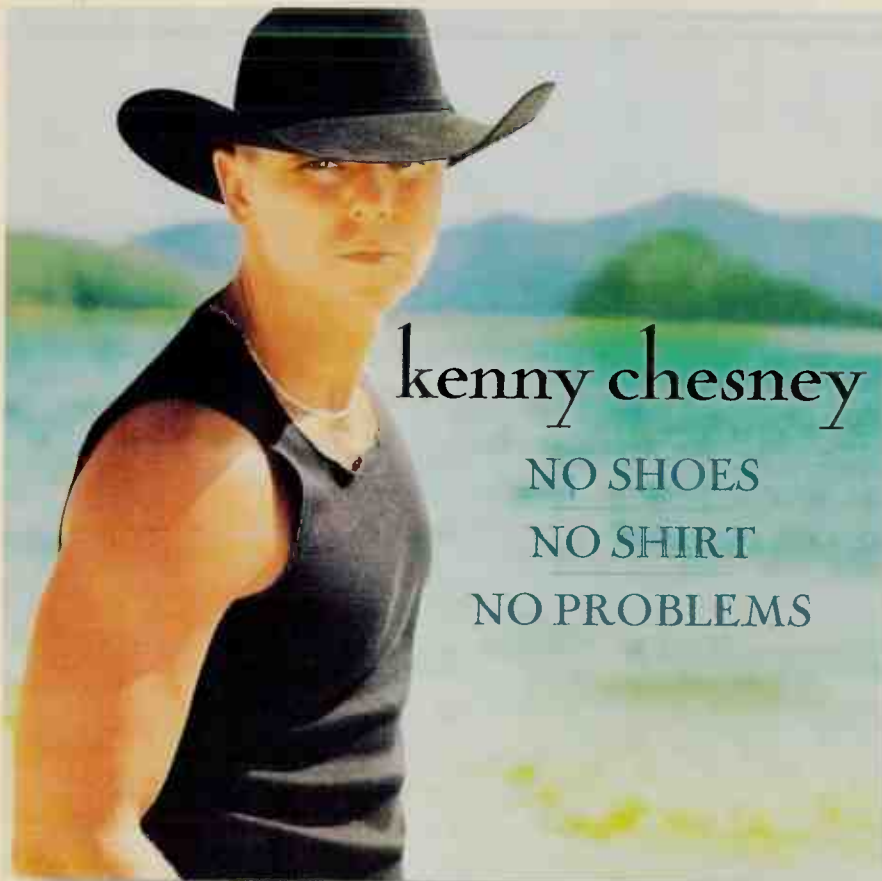
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REVIEWS



KENNY CHESNEY
No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems

BNA
★★★★

Kenny Chesney remembers the bitter-sweet limbo between adolescence and adulthood, a time of still being mama's baby and also thinking of *having* babies, of the tug or war between recklessness and responsibility.

It's that dichotomy that provides the tension and release on *No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems*, the album that catapults the Luttrell, Tenn., native to headliner. It secures his place in a business that has only grudgingly made room for him since he signed to BNA in 1994.

Chesney has triumphed the old

fashioned way – through the graciousness of fans who identify with his music. An affable underdog, Chesney tapped into the national consciousness with songs that express vulnerability (“I Lost It”), celebrate the extraordinary ordinariness of falling in love (“Don’t Happen Twice”) and poke fun at stud appeal (“She Thinks My Tractor’s Sexy”).

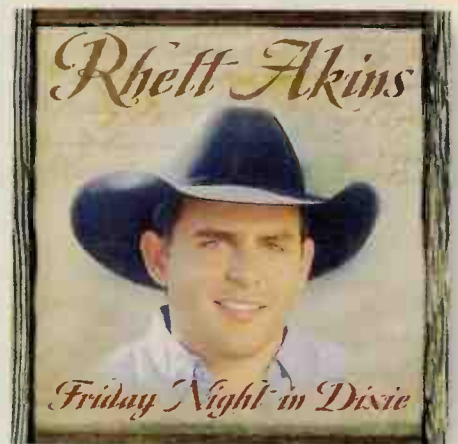
No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems takes his subject matter to a more mature level. While the opening track, “Young,” celebrates the exhilaration of living for the moment, the album soon grows more thoughtful. On “Dreams,” an aging woman finds she’s no longer attractive to men, and youth shows itself to be both fickle and shallow. But Chesney also says

that with experience comes wisdom. “The Good Stuff,” in which a bartender teaches an angry young man the secret of life and love, will undoubtedly melt hearts and prod listeners into examining their own priorities.

This theme, which is carried through much of the record, allows Chesney to inhabit a song in a way he hasn’t in the past. On “A Lot Of Things Different,” he conveys newfound wistfulness and nuance while looking over a life lived and decisions regretted.

Such subtlety wends its way through the album as a whole. After the horror of Sept. 11 and our national loss of innocence, Chesney wisely chooses songs that distill important, heartfelt emotions and applies them to smaller, but no less profound changes in everyone’s life. That he manages to do so while giving hope for the future is testament to both the power of music and to the spirit of a singer who rose above nearly everyone’s expectations of his potential.

— Alanna Nash



RHETT AKINS
Friday Night In Dixie

AUDIUM
★★

Give Rhett Akins credit for persistence. Nashville frequently acts as though artists who lose major-label deals are afflicted with a ghastly disease. But even though the Georgia native was dropped when MCA shut down its Decca imprint in 1999, he hasn’t

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- ★ **POOR** Seriously flawed.

Ratings are supervised by Country Music editors.



CAITLIN CARY
While You Weren't Looking
 YEP ROC

★★★★★
 Caitlin Cary's subtle stunner of a solo debut forces a reconsideration of her former band, Whiskeytown. That group's short, turbulent run has been celebrated in retrospect as the launching pad for the higher-profile solo career of Ryan Adams.

Back then, Adams, the mercurial frontman, changed band members more often than some musicians change socks. Cary, on violin and vocal harmonies, was the only other constant.

This time, however, Cary plays second fiddle to no one, and the result is the finest album yet to emerge from the Whiskeytown camp. Formerly typecast as Emmylou Harris to Adams' Gram Parsons, Cary shows more affinity for the British folk of Sandy Denny/Linda Thompson and the soulful tinge of Dusty Springfield. She's plainly found the perfect match for her melodically graceful songwriting in producer Chris Stamey, who has long been a bastion of intelligent Southern popcraft.

From the dreamy lilt of "Shallow Heart, Shallow Water" through the elusively bittersweet narrative "Fireworks," the giddyup sensuality of "Pony" and the Muscle Shoals

groove of "Too Many Keys," the elliptical precision of Cary's haiku-like lyrics finds heartfelt expression through her unvarnished alto.

The production touches – from handclaps to harmonium to judicious violin, cello and steel guitar – are as perfect as they are understated. Two exceptions: "The Fair" comes across as too poetically precious, with its carny sound effects, while the speeded-up sections of "Hold On To Me" have a generic, old-timey feel to them.

Overall, though, the results sound like a communal labor of love, with former Whiskeytown bandmates (including Adams) and fellow Carolina musicians providing songwriting help and instrumental support. Yet Cary's confidence as a front-woman takes her so far beyond her work with her former band that it makes you wonder what else she was doing while we weren't looking.

— Don McClellan

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given up. Akins kept touring and writing, and he's now aligned with upstart Audium Records.

As admirable as Akins' determination is, what counts is the music, and that's where the problem with *Friday Night In Dixie* arises. Signing with an artist-friendly indie label puts the burden on Akins to show some substance. Sadly, there's not much sign of it here. And with his co-production and slew of co-writing credits, there's not much reason to look beyond the singer for responsibility.

The album starts off on a mildly promising note with the slight traditional flavor of the first single, "Highway Sunrise." The song's drive-your-troubles-away theme is well-worn, and there's nothing fresh in the way it's explored, but it's delivered with a glimmer of spirit. After that, though, it's a long ride to the album's other high point, an acoustic-leaning remake of Akins' most memorable hit, "That Ain't My Truck."

In between is a series of songs that, though new, sound all too familiar to anyone still listening to country radio. Akins and his co-writers tackle obvious themes – the goodness of being a good ol' boy, the sadness of a doomed relationship, how you can't think about anything else when you're in love – with leaden predictability.

Akins' "Rhettnneck" fans may snap up his new effort. But anyone who believes putting control in an artist's hands encourages creative depth will find *Friday Night In Dixie* just plain disappointing.

—Jon Weisberger

ANTHONY SMITH

If That Ain't Country

MERCURY NASHVILLE

★★★

If Anthony Smith's name sounds familiar to detail-oriented country music fans, it's because the East Tennessee native has a few big-time songwriting credits, including George Strait's "Run," Trace Adkins' "I'm Tryin'" and Montgomery Gentry's "Didn't I."

On his debut album, Smith explores

JAMES TALLEY

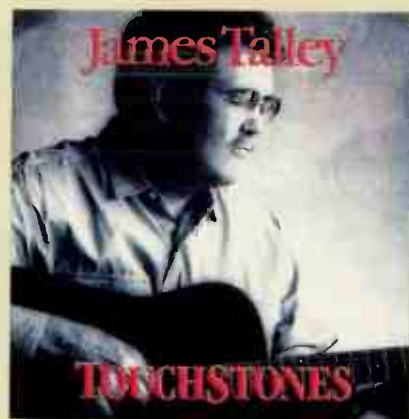
Touchstones

CIMARRON

★★★★

James Talley's new recording takes his folk-oriented tunes from the past and gives them an upbeat, Texas-dancehall spin. Culled from his '70s work on Capitol, these 16 self-written tunes are what Talley calls "my touchstones." But rather than try to copy the original arrangements, he gives his old songs a new shine with help from such Lone Star luminaries as Joe Ely, Ponty Bone and producer-engineer Tommy Detamore, known for his work with Clay Blaker and the late Doug Sahm (whose final album, *The Return Of Wayne Douglas*, inspired Talley to record this collection in Texas).

Critically acclaimed but under-appreciated, Talley stayed out of the recording studio for a decade before releasing a pair of new albums two years ago. With *Touchstones*, his sincere vocal style remains the same, delivering his songs on working life, love and loss in an unaffected manner reminiscent



of Tom T. Hall, Guy Clark or John Prine.

Indeed, Talley may have used Clark and Prine as role models for this album. Both artists have previously recorded albums – Clark's *Keepers* and Prine's *Souvenirs* – that featured re-recorded versions of their best-loved songs. By following this manner, Talley provides an opportunity for the listener to hear the songwriter's time-honored works as a coherent package with a continuity of sound that a greatest-hits-type compilation would lack.

— Paul Griffith



difficult separation ("Who Invented The Wheel") and one of the best apology songs to come along in a while ("Impossible To Do").

The album's first single, "If That Ain't Country," opens with the phrase "Crank it!" But instead of muscular drums and twangy Telecasters, Smith and producer Bobby Terry charge ahead with the mountain-born stomp of an acoustic guitar and jew's-harp. In that sense, Smith's debut leans more toward rural Southern rock than the drum-driven, uptown arena rock of many male country stars.

— Bob Gulla

the same terrain as those songs – patches of turf wedged between country, blues, rock, pop and folk.

His is a forceful voice that's a mixture of sweet and surly, with a nasal inflection that allows Smith to come off as a unique stylist. It helps that he has his own literate songs to sing, including his ode to siblings ("What Brothers Do"), a clever lyric about a

THE FLATLANDERS

Now Again

NEW WEST

★★★★

Jimmie Dale Gilmore's numinous quaver, Butch Hancock's metaphysical ballads, the unearthly whine of Joe Ely's Dobro and Steve Wesson's

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musical saw: In 1972, The Flatlanders appeared as Lone Star mystics par excellence, a Sons Of The Pioneers for the post-Aquarian age. The group's mind-expanding, string-band sound didn't just evoke the windswept plains and endless horizons of their native Lubbock; it conveyed how lonesome a body can feel stuck out there among the tumbleweeds.

When an ill-fated encounter with a Nashville imprint left the band's only album on the shelf for nearly two decades, The Flatlanders seemed, to paraphrase the title of that release, more a mirage than a band. Meanwhile, Gilmore, Hancock and Ely each pursued successful solo careers, influencing



countless progressive country types.

Talk of a reunion record came up occasionally, but rumors started flying in earnest after the trio cut a song, "South Wind Of Summer," for the *Horse Whisperer* soundtrack in 1998.

At long last, we have the aptly titled *Now Again*, a record very much of the moment yet also of a piece with The Flatlanders' 30-year-old debut. "Going Away" opens the proceedings in typically Zenlike fashion, with Gilmore musing in a tenor that's equal parts Gene Autry and the Dalai Lama. There's more wisdom where that came from, notably the country-blues-tinged "Right Where I Belong" and the lurching rocker "Yesterday Was Judgment Day."

Testifying to their kinship, the trio co-wrote 12 of the album's 14 tracks; they also swap vocal lines and harmonies throughout. Less a reunion than coming full circle, it all sounds, as

MIKE IRELAND AND HOLLER

Try Again

ASHMONT

★★★★

Mike Ireland's 1998 album, *Learning How To Live* – which chronicles how he lost his wife and a bandmate to romantic betrayal – ranks among the great breakup albums of its time. Four years later, Ireland picks up the pieces and once again crafts country music of sometimes lavish, sometimes austere beauty.

Now with even greater aplomb, Ireland echoes the lush, soul-shaded country-pop pioneered by producer Billy Sherrill in the '60s and '70s on the records of Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Charlie Rich and others. Strings billow and swirl around melodies, expanding a wistful melancholy or girding a Jordanaires-style choral harmony. Working with producer Michael Deming and string arranger Jerry Yester, Ireland builds artful, intuitively emotional textures that are unlike anything else on the contemporary scene.

"Tragedy plus time" is how moviemaker Woody Allen defines comedy in his movie *Crimes And Misdemeanors*. Ireland's *Try Again* isn't an especially happy or humorous album; but it, too, has a comedic element. It recognizes that while



love may be a fool's errand, it also is both the hardest thing we'll ever do and the one thing we must do.

This time around, Ireland finds it better to smile at romantic folly, as he does on the majestic ballad "I'd Like To." Whether it's the exile in "Welcome Back" who finds himself finally *free from doubt* and returns to the only home he'll ever know, or the couple in "Close Enough To Break Each Other's Hearts" who sense *the danger waiting for us, if we let this fire start*, the bruised believers at the center of these songs realize that their hearts will endure, even flourish, with time.

So too will music this genuine, consoling and gorgeous.

— Roy Kasten

the quasi-title track suggests, like "Now It's Now Again."

— Bill Friskics-Warren

STEVE AZAR

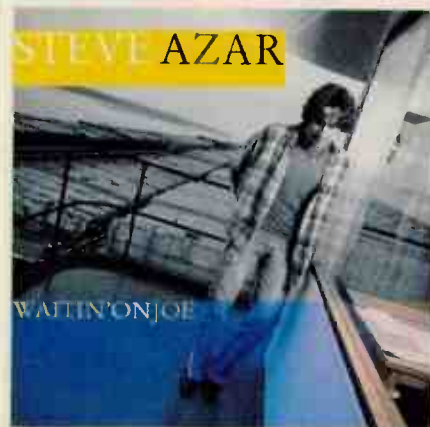
Waitin' On Joe

MERCURY

★★★

The cover photo on Steve Azar's *Waitin' On Joe* makes it clear that he departs from recent Music Row formulas. Sporting a rocker's uniform of frayed Levis and loose flannel shirt, head blissfully devoid of a cowboy hat, Azar's musical heart belongs more to Mississippi than Tennessee.

Azar's Delta influences run deeper than just CD art. *Waitin' On Joe* captures a good bit of this Mississippi native's bluesy spirit; there's Sonny Landreth's



earthy, ringing guitar riffs, some blues harmonica wails and a few delicate mandolin flourishes, giving this collection an organic, swampy feel.

The Mississippi mud is tempered

with Music Row gloss, however – just enough to keep Azar palatable to radio programmers, no doubt, and avoid being categorized as a twang-blues hybrid. The slickness is a distraction on the title track, a tune full of mopey keyboards and radio-friendly strings; the song can't decide if it wants to be an ode to a dead brother or an anthem to living for the moment. But the same studio polish adds a gentleness to the lovely ballad "Lay Your Heart Next To Mine," a sweet summer love song if ever there was one.

Lyricaly, *Waitin' On Joe* is about following your dreams, and nowhere is this better expressed than on the saucy "Damn The Money." The tune is full of attitude, but the lyrics are surprisingly artful for what appears to be a feel-good tune.

Waitin' On Joe does contain some formulaic elements: The first single, "I Don't Have To Be Me ('Til Monday)," is bland compared to the rest of the album. But, for the most part, Azar is one artist trying to make a name for himself with music, not image.

— Lisa Zbito

EMERSON DRIVE

Emerson Drive

DREAMWORKS

★★★

Emerson Drive blows in from Canada like fresh Arctic air. After six solid years of playing everything from remote Canadian beer gardens to American college campuses and Las Vegas lounge rooms, the band has developed a distinctive sound built upon crisp harmonies, taut energy and an interesting, outsiders' musical sensibility.

Their single "I Should Be Sleeping" features an irresistible chorus and a bouncing beat – indeed, catchy sing-alongs and happy musical surprises pack this debut. Sampling Emerson Drive's cheeky, contemporary use of organ, fiddle and sharp guitar is like biting into a juicy, new hybrid fruit. It's engagingly different.

As displayed on the songs "Evidence" and "Passionate Desperate Love," this rollicking band isn't afraid to delve into emotional complexities. And as shown on "Hollywood Kiss" and "Say My Name," they're not



afraid of injecting cerebral wordplay into energized romps.

Of course, if you prefer spud-simple, virgin-goddess love songs, this record also contains the insipid "Only God (Could Stop Me Loving You)" and "I See Heaven." But the six-member band sounds best when digging into the bracing intelligence of "Looking Over My Shoulder" or the solid dynamics of "C'mon Let's Experience."

Emerson Drive takes an uncommon route into the country scene – thank goodness.

— Bob Millard



BETH NIELSEN

CHAPMAN

Deeper Still

ARTEMIS

★★★

Beth Nielsen Chapman has enjoyed a successful career as a Nashville songwriter, penning No. 1 hits for Faith Hill, Willie Nelson, Tanya Tucker and Lorrie Morgan. Her own recordings are in the adult-contemporary mode – piano-based, strongly melodic, inspi-

rational songs in the vein of Elton John, Sarah McLachlan and Carole King. Such is the case with *Deeper Still*, her first new album in five years.

Chapman has a gift for hooks; her choruses almost always boast a concise, contagious melody that won't let go. This album's "World Of Hurt," for instance, reminds one of Bonnie Raitt with its lazy R&B groove and Motown-ish arrangement. Catchier still is "All Comes Down To Love," with hooks stronger than most radio hits and an equally strong chorus. Chapman's silky soprano gets every drop of pleasure from the tune. The song's lyrics, though, offer platitudes that don't always live up to the originality of the music. Much has been written about the tragic loss of Chapman's husband to cancer and her own valiant struggle to overcome breast cancer. But rather than dig into the details of those trials, she reduces them to generalities. Worn-out words

such as "love," "angels" and "light" merely point to a spiritual experience; they don't reveal it.

— Geoffrey Himes

THE STEVENS SISTERS

Little By Little

ROUNDER

★★★

Beth and April Stevens' 1996 bluegrass debut, *Sisters*, introduced their sparkling harmonies, which could be haunting on one song and ecstatic the next. But the album arrived amid the pop-country boom, so too few people heard those stunning vocals – one reason why this follow-up, *Little By Little*, was six years coming.

This time their timing may be better. Thanks to the recent bluegrass adventures of Dolly Parton and Patty Loveless and the sales success of Nickel Creek and the *O Brother* soundtrack, bluegrass and acoustic music is hotter than it's been in decades. It feels like it could be the Stevens' moment.

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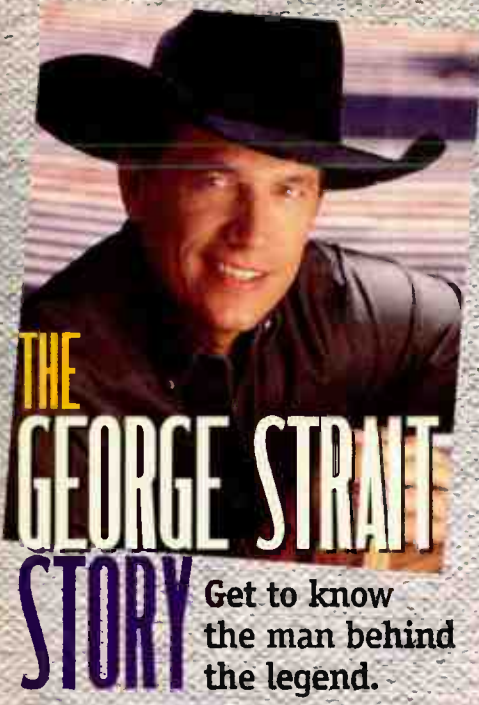
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REVIEWS



If bluegrass-influenced music ever makes a dent on country radio again, it'll likely be with something like the title track. It highlights the down-home virtues the sisters nurtured while in the Stevens Family Band, a mom-and-pop-plus-daughters act popular on the bluegrass festival circuit. Scooting briskly to a rhythm track comprised of mandolin, stand-up bass and brushes, April and Beth Stevens seem to be smiling as sunnily as their harmonies during the song's love-is-on-the-way chorus. "Little By Little" would fit radio as well as it would a barroom dance floor or karaoke contest – or, for that matter, a family show where little kids spaz out happily in the aisles.

The same goes for the bittersweet cover of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Tuesday's Gone" and Dolly Parton's "I'll Never Say Goodbye," featuring backing vocals by the songwriter herself. That said, the modern string-band arrangements do grow a tad monochromatic at times.

Still, the Stevens' dulcet vocal blend (think a female O'Kanes) trumps all quibbles. With a little luck, those harmonies might also inspire a lot of country fans to sing along.

— David Cantwell

CORY MORROW
Outside The Lines

WRITE ON

Depending on your proximity to Texas, you may or may not be aware of one the fastest growing

sub-genres in country music. Called the Texas Movement by supporters and Texas Frat-Boy Music by critics, it combines Willie-and-Waylon honky-tonk, Jimmy Buffett beach-bum hedonism, Charlie Daniels country rock and Guy Clark troubadour folk – all designed to make the aforementioned college crowd whoop and holler.

If Robert Earl Keen and Bruce Robison represent the singer/songwriter end of the movement, and Charlie Robison and Jack Ingram represent the rocking edge, then Cory Morrow and Pat Green are the Buffett-like crowd-pleasers.

In 2001, Morrow and Green collaborated on the album *Songs We Wish We'd Written*, and Green has since released a successful major-label debut, *Three Days*. Morrow is still toiling as an independent artist on *Outside The Lines*,



but he's not nearly as overbearing as Green in his eagerness to please. Morrow may lack Keen's literary ambitions, but he has the gentle Texas drawl and appealing understatement of Willie Nelson, trusting his songs and his audience to connect without shoving one at the other. This tendency is reinforced by producer Lloyd Maines (Joe Ely's former steel player and Dixie Chick Natalie's dad) and a terrific band of Austin veterans.

On the title track, Morrow celebrates a woman who lives life the way children color outside the lines. But he resists the temptation to turn the chorus into a fist-pumping singalong, instead delivering it as crisp Texas

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swing. Some of the love songs are a bit mushy, but the drinking and rambling tunes have the honesty to admit that there's a price to be paid for such adventures.

In his way, Morrow's *Outside The Lines* helps push this blossoming movement toward credibility.

— G. H.

TIFT MERRITT Bramble Rose

LOST HIGHWAY

★★★★

As much as adventurous music fans relish the alternative-country movement, there are a few dark spots in that encouraging overture — notes that slip sharp or flat, songwriting often lacking in originality, and a sizeable percentage of bands with lead singers who can't quite find



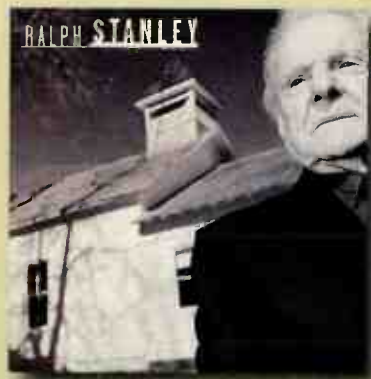
the melody. If Merle Haggard and Buck Owens had a nickel for every time their classic song structures have been borrowed by some earnest alt-country hopeful, they'd own Chapel Hill.

However, with singer Tift Merritt,

Lost Highway Records may have found another keeper.

Merritt's voice has unmistakable overtones of Emmylou Harris and early Linda Ronstadt, minus the latter's power. This debut is a solid, relatively charming effort that proves that the young, confident Merritt has mastered the art of holding a crowd's attention.

She opens with "Trouble Over Me" and "Virginia, No One Can Warn You," both intelligent folk-rock tunes with tuneful pop accents reminiscent of the great Kim Richey. In the mournful title cut, Merritt turns her voice into an effective cry to create a compelling country weeper. "Diamond Shoes" offers a subtle salute to Harris while echoing the spirit of her mid-'80s album *White Shoes*. Ditto "Are You Still In Love With Me," a meltingly



RALPH STANLEY

Ralph Stanley

DMZ/COLUMBIA

★★

DR. RALPH STANLEY & THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS

Live At McCabe's
Guitar Shop

DCN

★★

No one else has said it, so I will: Ralph Stanley's voice is shot.

One of the giants of country music history, Stanley absolutely deserves all the accolades he has received since last year's *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack made him a star at age 74. Singing behind his brother Carter, Ralph's tenor helped put the high-and-lonesome

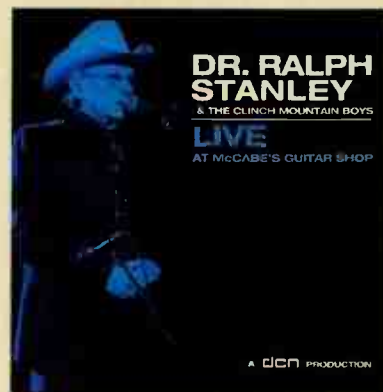
sound in bluegrass vocals.

As recently as 10 years ago, his voice was still in reasonably good shape. But now he suffers from the Tony Bennett Syndrome. Like pop crooner Bennett, Stanley has found a whole new audience late in life. But by the time National Public Radio discovered him, Stanley's voice was gone — just like Bennett's.

This isn't surprising; the human vocal cords are not designed to last more than seven decades. The problem is that when listeners buy the late-career recordings by Stanley and Bennett, they think they're hearing the real thing. They're not. T Bone Burnett, who produced the *O Brother* blockbuster, has co-founded a new label and has chosen Stanley to be the label's first artist to release an album. Burnett did everything right: He chose 11 terrific traditional folk, blues and gospel songs, and he surrounded Stanley with an all-star band of fiddler Stuart Duncan, guitarist Norman Blake, mandolinist Mike Compton, bassist Dennis Crouch and singers Evelyn and Suzanne Cox. A dozen years ago, this formula might have yielded a classic disc. But today Stanley's throat just isn't up to it. His

phrasing is as intuitive and incisive as ever, but there's no power, no pitch control, no tonal consistency. *Live At McCabe's Guitar Shop* is less ambitious; it's a snapshot of a typical live show by Stanley and his band, recorded on Feb. 11, 2001, in Santa Monica, Calif. The first seven songs showcase the pickers and singers in the Clinch Mountain Boys, who are good if not spectacular. But when Stanley takes the lead vocal on "Man Of Constant Sorrow," the vitality of the original Stanley Brothers version that inspired the Soggy Bottom Boys is gone. Fame has come too late for Ralph Stanley to show his new fans what he once could do.

— G. H.



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THE ASHTON-DRAKE GALLERIES

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sad plea that nods towards Harris' "Too Far Gone."

While not everything on *Bramble Rose* equals those high points, the songwriting throughout is impressive. Produced by musical boy wonder Ethan Johns, who worked with Ryan Adams on his recent solo album, this flowing debut is proof that alt-country – while not yet chock-full of masterworks – is building up a cadre of potent contenders.

— Robert Baird

JENAI

Cool Me Down

CURB

Jenai has attitude. Good for her – and good for listeners as well, particularly those who hunger for something more nourishing than ear-and-eye candy from country's emerging female artists. Working with Judds producer Brent Maher,



Jenai uses the material of progressive Nashville songwriters like Kieran Kane, Jamie O'Hara and Kevin Welch to forge an identity that demands a woman be treated as a figure of respect rather than an object of seduction. For her, "Be A Woman" is plainly code for "stand up for yourself," while "It Won't Be Me" suggests the strong-willed

integrity of a younger Bonnie Raitt.

A native of Idaho who graduated from a Seattle performing arts school, Jenai surveys a considerable expanse of musical terrain, from the smoky insistence of the rockabilly-tinged title track to the finger-snapping swing of "Papa Don't Ask, Mama Don't Know" to the torchy sophistication of Shelby Lynne's "Written On My Heart." The singer's conversational phrasing insinuates itself within a lyric instead of overpowering it, establishing an intimacy that suits the languid lilt of "Time To Dream," the album's stand-out ballad.

For all the maturity she displays in taking material of uncommon depth and making the sentiments her own, her songwriting shows less ambition. Her collaborations with producer Maher result in the album's fluffiest throwaways, with "Don't Hold Back Your Heart" invoking a string of sports clichés that equate loving with



JIM LAUDERDALE

Jim Lauderdale & Ralph Stanley: Lost In The Lonesome Pines

DUALTONE

The Hummingbirds

DUALTONE

No one can accuse North Carolina-born, Nashville-based singer/songwriter Jim Lauderdale of laziness. Besides writing several hits for George Strait and others, he continues to release well-crafted albums packed with original songs on a slew of different labels.

This time he's issued two very different – but equally excellent – collections, one with bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley, the other an eclectic mix of roots-rock that veers from twangy to bluesy to old-timey.

Lost In The Lonesome Pines is the second collection pairing Lauderdale and Stanley; their *I Feel Like Singing Today* was nominated for a Grammy a few years back. Lauderdale has written or co-written 13 tracks that sound like they were lifted from classic records by The Stanley Brothers or Bill Monroe – the latter responsible for "Boat Of Love," the CD's one cover song.

Lauderdale's material perfectly hits the mark on all the various strains of bluegrass, including Appalachian-folk romps, gospel quartet numbers, sorrowful blues and good-timin', rib-tickling kickers, to name a few. The Clinch Mountain Boys are in superb form, and Lauderdale's emotive voice meshes with Stanley's finely aged tenor.

Lauderdale's hankering for bluegrass spills over to one track on *The Hummingbirds*, the exquisite, Celtic-tinged "New Cascade." The tune exemplifies the excellent musician-

ship found throughout the album. The songs, written or co-written by Lauderdale, are worthy of the stellar lineup of players he's recruited. Veering from the lovely "Eternal" and "Hummingbird" to the remorseful "Let's Not Say It's Over," the album touches on a variety of emotions and a spectrum of roots sounds, from the breezy Western swing of "It's A Trap" to the kickin', Stones-soaked "Rollin' The Dice."

As these albums prove, Lauderdale is more than the hardest working man in Nashville – he's also one of the most talented.

— Holly George-Warren



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David Oreck
CHAIRMAN

World Radio History

REVIEWS

scoring, while the closing "South Side Stomp" is less a finished song than a rhythm-track groove.

But such is the nature of promising debuts: They leave plenty of room to grow.

— D. M.

DARYLE SINGLETARY That's Why I Sing This Way

AUDIUM
★★★★

A one-time protégé of Randy Travis, Singletary has never quite lived up to his promise. Each of his four previous albums contained hard-shelled nuggets of truth, delivered in a sturdy baritone. But apart from some memorable singles, especially 1995's "I Let Her Lie," Singletary drifted by, never distinguishing himself in a crowded field.

Until now. *With That's Why I Sing This Way*, Singletary serves up one of the purest country records in years, digging back into the honky-tonk treasure chest to find a number of



true gems, originally made famous by George Jones, Conway Twitty, Buck Owens, Lefty Frizzell and Merle Haggard, among others.

From start to finish, the project has a lived-in feel, and though the one contemporary cut, Max D. Barnes' title song, has "radio" tattooed all over it, *That's Why I Sing This Way* is clearly a labor of love, and not just on Singletary's part. The pickers, given plenty of room, delight with

unexpected riffs and trills – and Rhonda Vincent, known primarily as a bluegrass artist, repeatedly shows off her barroom chops as a background vocalist, particularly shining as a duet partner on the Conway-and-Loretta standard "After The Fire Is Gone."

Yet it's Singletary who provides the ultimate surprises. Self-possessed and thoroughly steeped in the nuances of honky-tonk singing, the Georgia native is more than up to the task of dueting with a number of his heroes whose songs he celebrates – Jones on "Walk Through This World With Me," Haggard on "Make-Up And Faded Blue Jeans" and a frail Johnny Paycheck on "Old Violin."

That his voice and his soulful commitment measure up to his heroes speaks to the leap in artistry Singletary has made. *That's Why I Sing This Way* is the sound of an artist coming into his own.

— A. N.

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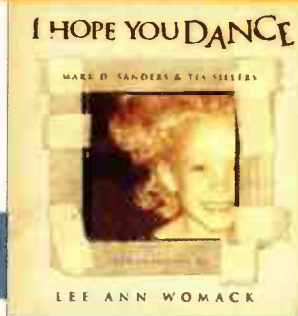
THE COUNTRY BUZZ OUTSIDE THE MUSIC BIZ

Reading Music

Your favorite song is now a book

If you liked the song, you'll love the book. That's the theory behind a bookshelf full of recent hardcover titles. "I Hope You Dance," "He Didn't Have To Be," "God Bless The USA," "One More Day," "Amen," "I'm Movin' On" and "Love Without End, Amen" have all been transformed into books, complete with CD single.

"Most of them contain a message that people want to pass on," explains Bryan Curtis of



Books expand on songs by Lee Ann Womack, Lee Greenwood, Diamond Rio, Brad Paisley, George Strait and Rascal Flatts.

Rutledge Hill Press, the Nashville-based publisher behind the country titles. "I've heard of people who bought 50 copies of *I Hope You Dance* to give to everyone they know."

The song/book format got rolling when publisher J. Countryman released *Mary Did*

You Know?, a Christian music hit by Mark Lowry and the Gaither Vocal Band, in 1998. They also made books of Bob Carlisle's ode to fatherhood, "Butterfly Kisses," and Steve Wariner's circle-of-life saga, "Holes In The Floor Of Heaven."

Rutledge Hill hopped on the bandwagon with Lee Ann Womack's *I Hope You Dance* in October 2000, and has been successfully pursuing the country charts ever since. The books are slightly larger than a CD, filled with pictures of clouds and oceans, sunsets and generic heartwarming family photos, along with commentary by the artist who made the song a hit.

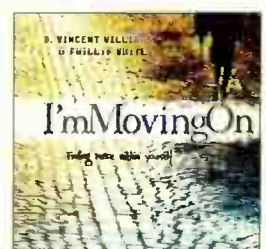
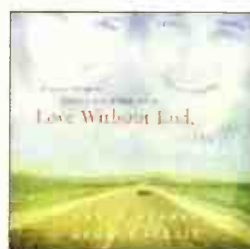
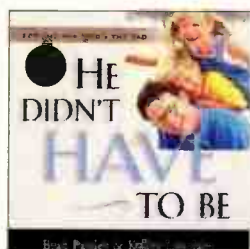
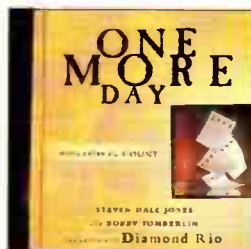
Some include tear-inducing reactions from fans who've responded to the song, such as the letter to Brad Paisley from a

man in jail about *He Didn't Have To Be*. The letter pays tribute to the man's brother-in-law, who raised the prisoner's children as if they were his own and died young of leukemia.

Some of the books offer encouragement or affirmations. *God Bless The USA* is filled with patriotic quotations from American leaders. *I'm Moving On*, based on the Rascal Flatts hit, is being promoted as a self-help book, reflecting the song's message of self-discovery.

Overall, the songs selected for book treatment tell heart-tugging stories, usually connected to family relationships. That means Ray Stevens' "Osama Yo Mama" probably won't be next. But we're betting they've already given Alan Jackson a call.

— Nancy Henderson



The Almighty Buck

A CD tribute honors the 70th birthday of Buck Owens

Buck Owens and Bakersfield. The two go together like biscuits and gravy. So how does it happen that a tribute album, celebrating the main Buckaroo's 70th birthday, comes out of Austin, Texas?

"Of course he was born in Texas," says David Sanger, who co-produced *Happy Birthday Buck* with Casper Rawls. "And the musicians who play what is now identified as Austin country music — real twangy, honky-tonk, hard-core country —



Jim Lauderdale & Buck Owens

were influenced by Buck Owens. He's the spiritual godfather of the music coming out of here."

Each August, for the past 11 years, that bond has been recognized at the Buck Owens birthday celebration at the

Continental Club. One by one, Austin's top musicians take the stage to perform their favorite Owens song. A few years back, the star himself showed up. The music coming out of those shows was so fun, so good and so real that Sanger (of *Asleep At The Wheel*) and Rawls (of the LeRoi Brothers) got together to put the tribute on CD. David Ball, Rodney Crowell, Ray Benson, Flaco Jimenez, Rosie Flores, Rick Trevino, Jim Lauderdale and a host of Austin musicians all contribute their favorite Buck Owens tunes.

Happy Birthday Buck can be ordered from Texas Music Roundup's catalog (512-480-0765) and at texasmusicroundup.com. All artists' royalties will benefit the Children's Advocacy Center of Travis County.

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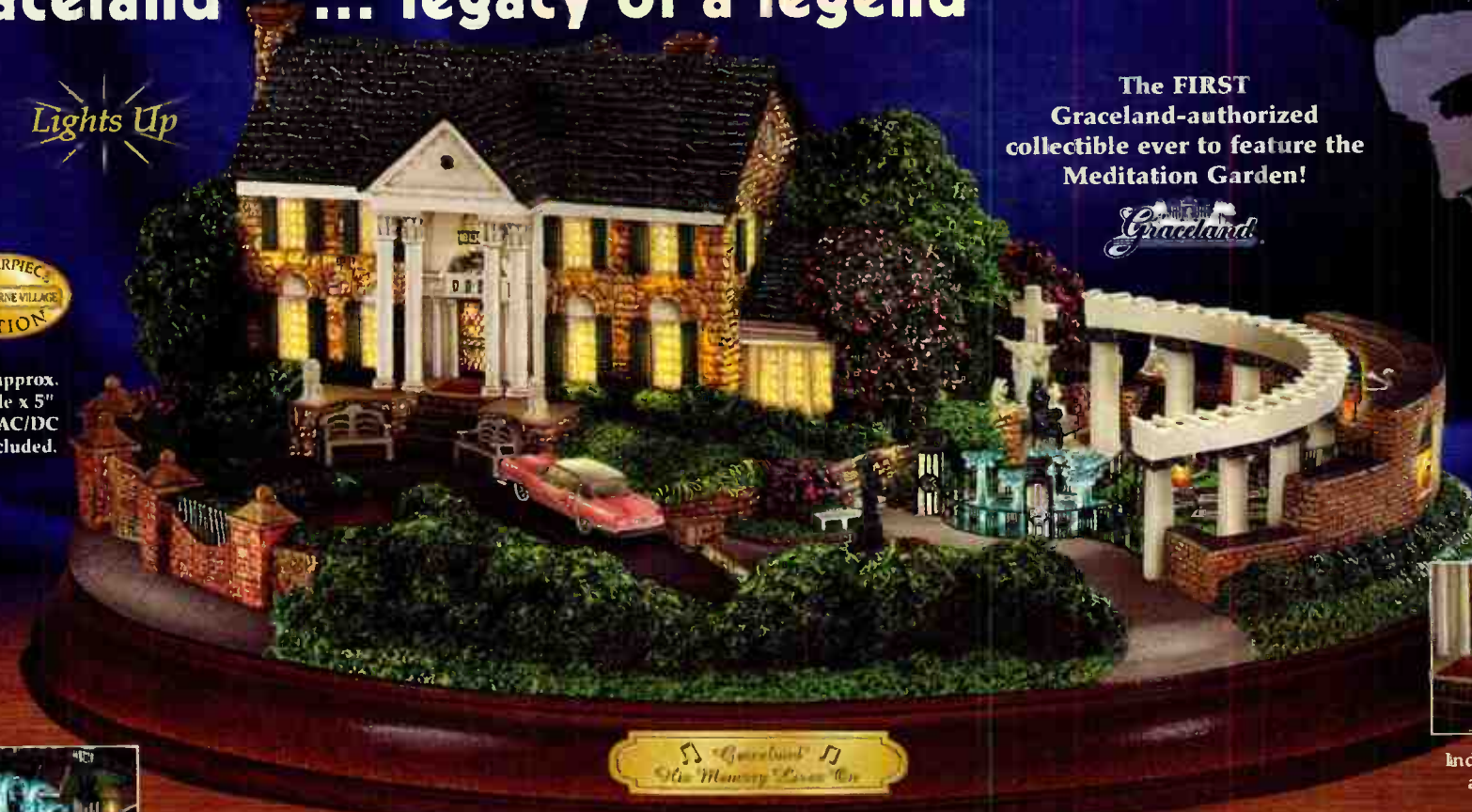
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Greener Pastures?

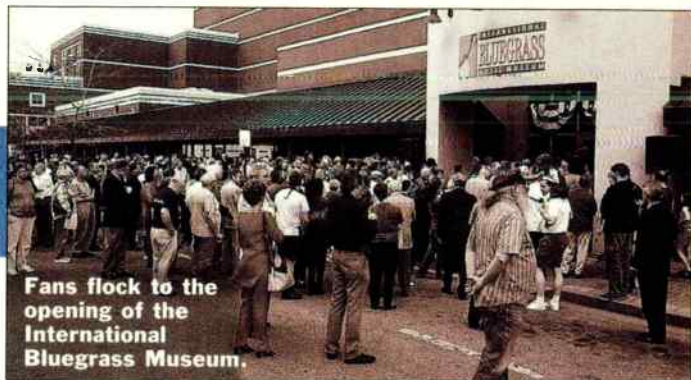
The International Bluegrass Music Association leaves its old Kentucky home

Need proof that bluegrass music has gotten comfy in the mainstream? The International Bluegrass Music Association plans to move its headquarters from from Owensboro, Ky., to ... Nashville.

Actually the move is a practical one. The bulk of the trade organization's members are based in Tennessee, and Music City serves as a geographic hub for other members spread around the nation (and in 30 other countries). Also, relocating to Nashville makes blue-

grass artists even more visible to movie and TV producers – and we've seen what a little movie exposure has done for the genre. Yes, the *O Brother* phenomenon seems to play a role in the move, too – but only as confirmation that the genre is on a roll.

"To people who haven't been paying close attention, today's interest in bluegrass music looks like a brand-new development," says Dan Hays, executive director of the IBMA. "But its popularity has been growing for the past 10 to 15



Fans flock to the opening of the International Bluegrass Museum.

COURTESY IBMA

years. We want to make sure that other opportunities in the future are as accessible as possible to our members."

Though the organization initially opened in Nashville in 1985, it moved to Owensboro soon afterward. The city wanted to build tourism around its musical heritage – Bill Monroe's Rosine home is just miles away – and their plans dovetailed perfectly with the IBMA's mis-

sion of promoting the music.

Kentucky won't be completely abandoned when the association departs. The Bluegrass Museum will remain in Owensboro, and the IBMA's World of Bluegrass events (annual convention, awards show and festival) will still be held in nearby Louisville.

After all, this is bluegrass – where you never forget where you came from.

TEEN COUNTRY

Who do you love?

Country music execs have spent the last decade targeting young listeners. So we asked our teen readers:

Which current country artist do you like the most? Which do you like the least?

Emily Neumann, 16, Aurora, Ill.:

Favorite: Phil Vassar. I like that he writes his own songs and that he plays the



piano. I saw him in concert and he just goes nuts onstage. It's awesome to see him play live.

Least Favorite: Lee Ann Womack. It seems like she

tries too hard to be a stereotypical country female artist. You can see it in her video "Ashes By Now" in her dress and style. Her music is OK, but I don't like her voice.

Courtney Bauclein, 15, Katy, Texas:

Favorite: Martina McBride. She's got a really strong voice and I like her songs. She's



great in concert, too.

Least Favorite: Garth Brooks. I never really liked any of his songs.

Kyle Mullett, 15, Clearwater, Fla.:

Favorite: Garth Brooks. He's an awesome songwriter and I like his energy and his passion for everything he does.



Least Favorite: Jo Dee Messina. I don't like her style of music. I prefer more upbeat stuff, and

what she's doing now is just not as appealing as "Burn."

Allyn Rousselle, 13, Manchester, N.H.:

Favorite: Wynonna Judd. When I was little I thought it was cool that she had an odd name and red hair and a Southern accent. I get the impression that she doesn't sing unless it comes from her heart, and that's a big reason I like her.



Least Favorite: Cyndi Thomson. I really don't like that song "What I Really Meant to Say." She whines, and it gets annoying.

Brittany Fix, 15, Safety Harbor, Fla.:

Favorite: Faith Hill. I like her songs and her image. The themes in her songs



are positive and encourage you to do good things. I like that she doesn't dress like other stars in other types of music, who dress trashy. She's always in style, but she's conservative.

Least Favorite: George Strait or Alan Jackson. I don't like their style of music. I like the more upbeat songs with newer instruments.

Stephanie Martorelli, 18, East Norriton, Pa.:

Favorite: Bryan White. "Sitting On Go" was the first country song I ever heard. That's the song that converted me to country music.



Least Favorite: LeAnn Rimes. Her voice isn't bad, but I just don't like her songs.

Interested in becoming a contributor to Teen Country? Drop us a line, enclose a recent photo, tell us a little bit about yourself and include a phone number where you can be reached. Write to Teen Country, c/o Country Music, 118 16th Ave. South, Suite 230, Nashville, TN 37203 or email to nhenderson@countrymusicmagazine.com.

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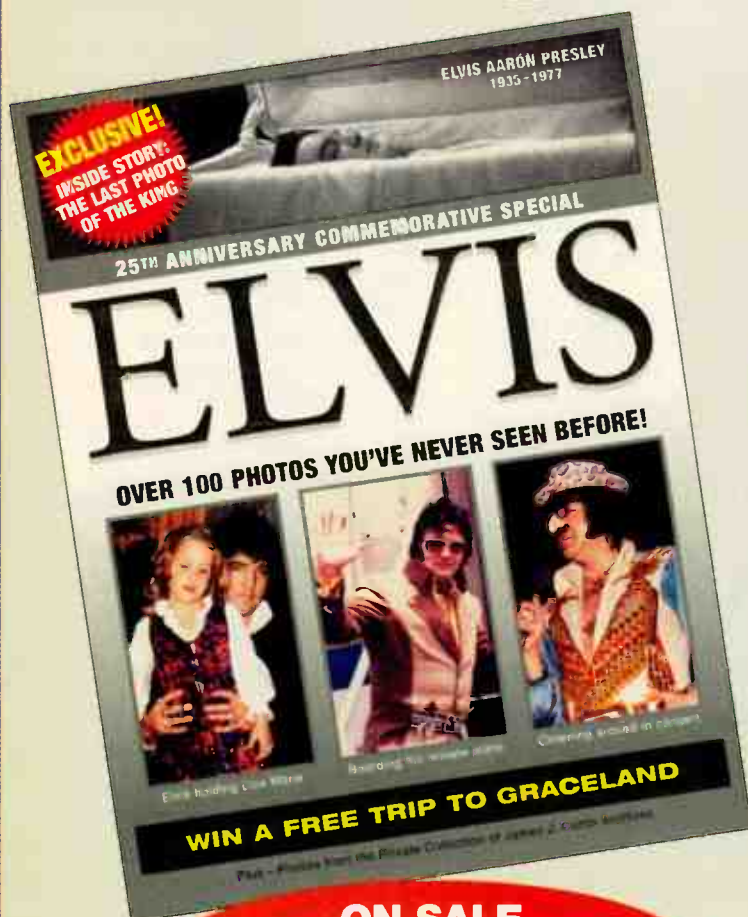
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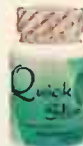
"I have always been unhappy with my figure, I've been yo-yo dieting since I was just 18 years old, now I'm 33 and a mother of two. For 15 years, my weight has fluctuated between 120 and 160 pounds, I'd always manage to lose weight for a special occasion, but afterwards, the pounds would pile on faster than it took to lose them. Then, in June of 1998, a movie star revealed on a T.V. show her weight loss secret. Later I found a Quick Slim ad in a magazine and ordered the product. I didn't know that would be my last diet! After 6 days, I lost 12 pounds, felt and looked great, I never had to go on a diet, I just found that I was eating less because I felt full after a few bites. During the next 24 days, I lost an additional 32 pounds. Since that day in July 98, I'm still at 118 pounds. The Quick Slim Fat Blocker worked wonders for me, I'm sure anyone can have the same success."

Janet G., May 1999



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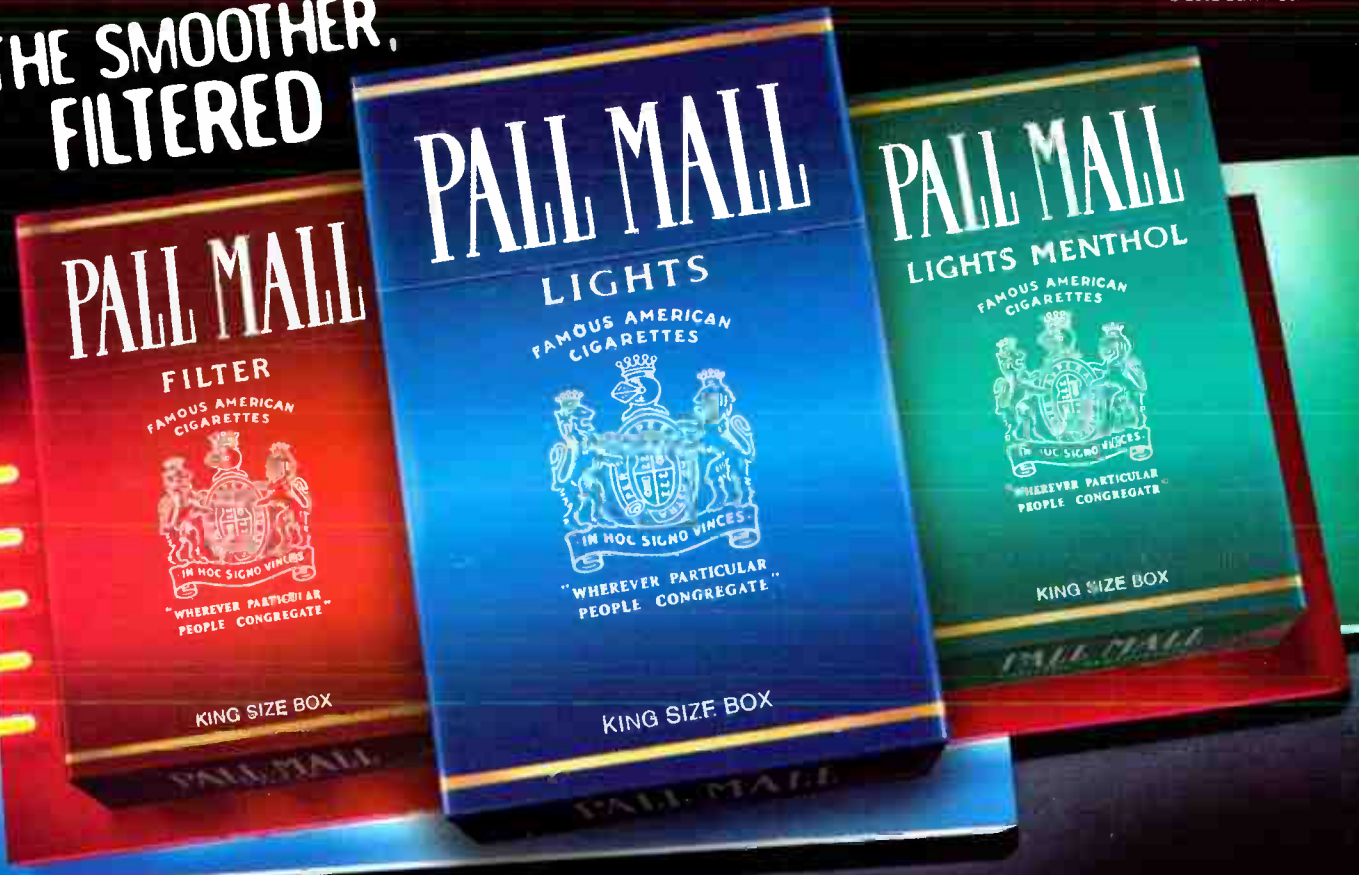
COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

The Torch Singer And The Troubadour

Ernest Tubb keeps a watchful eye on his longtime friend Patsy Cline during a rehearsal for a Nashville TV taping. Tubb had long been involved in Cline's career: He secured her first appearance on the *Grand Ole Opry* and later introduced her to Owen Bradley, who produced her records.

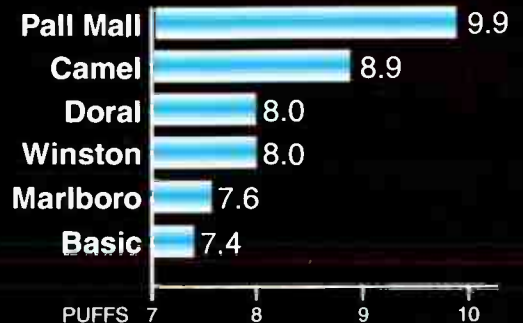
This undated photo comes from late in Cline's life – the album cover pinned to the wall over Tubb's shoulder is Cline's *Sentimentally Yours*, which came out in August 1962. The singer, who would have turned 70 on Sept. 8, died in a plane crash on March 5, 1963.

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