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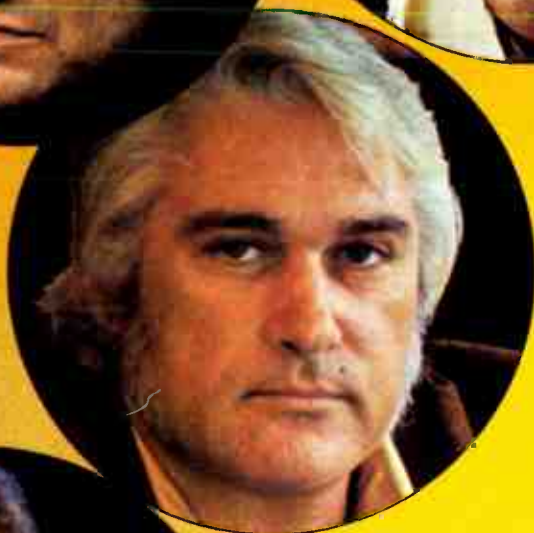
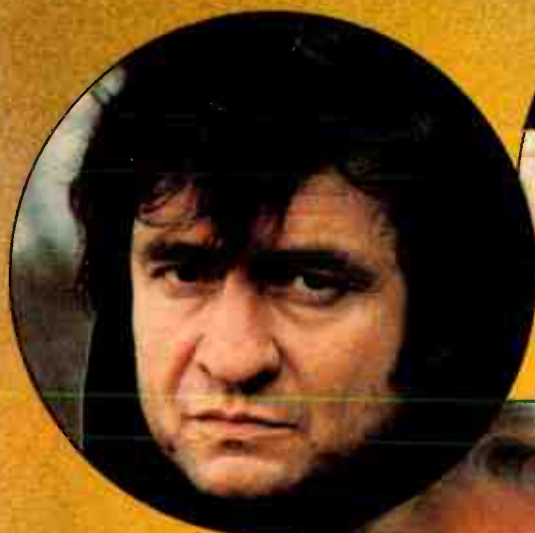
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November 1973, 75 cents

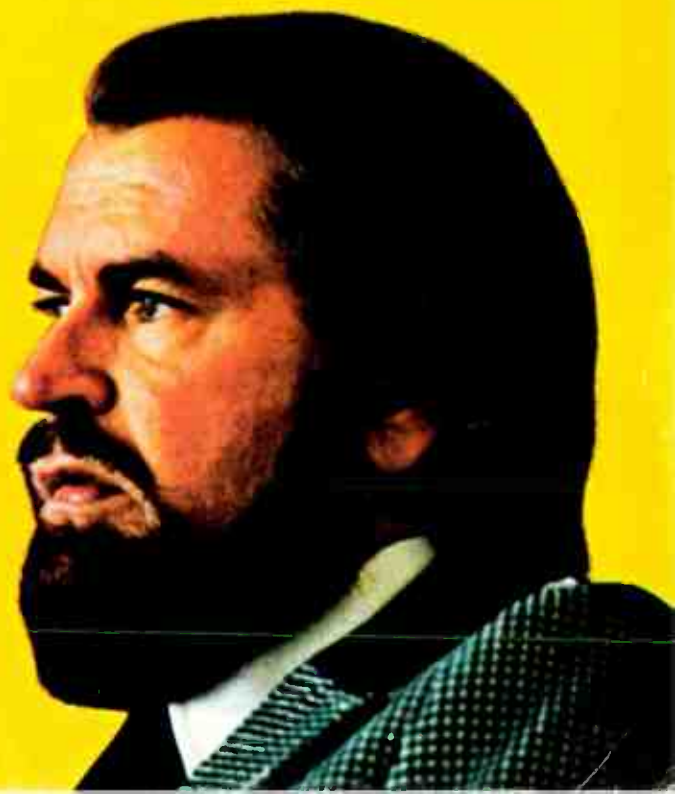
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Letters

Our readers replied with an overwhelming number of "yeahs" in response to the question "should the Ryman Auditorium be preserved?" Here is a sampling of the letters.

It's sad to see that in this fast moving world, our landmarks are disappearing in the name of "progress."

I regret to see the time when, on any day in Nashville, one will not be able to pause at the Ryman Auditorium and feel the heartbeat of country music radiating from its time-worn walls.

DAVID JOHNSTON
BOZOO, WEST VIRGINIA

I am 21 years old, and have only been a country music fan for about a year, but as I understand it, isn't country-western music the only real American music? Therefore, I believe all efforts should be made to preserve a landmark that is held dear to millions. Can't they do what they did years ago to preserve the U.S.S. Constitution, alias, "Old Ironsides?" If pennies from school children can save a ship, then why can't dollars from adults keep the Ryman standing?

RAY F. TOMOROWITZ
EUCLID, OHIO

I have just read your article on the old Ryman Auditorium in the August issue of *Country Music*.

I find it very hard to believe that the National Life & Accident Corporation and WSM would even consider for one minute destroying this wonderful building.

For years my husband and I have dreamed of the day when we could afford to go to Nashville and the old Ryman. Just to be in the same place where such great country singers have been, singers like Hank Williams, Sr., Jim Reeves, Johnny Horton, Red Foley, Patsy Cline, to name a few.

Just to think of being in the same place where Hank Williams once sang his wonderful songs sends chills through me.

I understand the need for a new

auditorium, don't misunderstand me. But why destroy the Ryman? Why not make it a memorial to all those wonderful singers who stood on the stage there and sang their memorable songs—songs that have helped to make country music what it is today? No matter what you do these singers will never appear in the new Grand Ole Opry.

I don't think it will take anything away from the new Opryland. I would travel for thousands of miles just to see the great country singers we have today, just as I would travel thousands of miles to be where those great stars who are no longer with us, once stood. To know that within the walls of the old Ryman some of our country's best songs were sung by singers who will never be forgotten.

Please don't destroy a piece of country music history. It means an awful lot to simple country folks like me.

Thank you for letting me have my say. I love country music and I am proud to be a country music fan.

CAROLINE CORSA
BEACON, NEW YORK

May I offer one tiny bit of criticism about your marvelous magazine? This concerns your album reviews of Charley Pride's records. Truly, your people don't criticize him, but in the review of *Songs of Love*, Cynthia Rosen encourages Charley to "try something different." In the review of *Sweet Country*, Ellis Nassour says, "there is nothing unique in the package, nothing outstandingly different." Come on, you know darn well, if he ever does something different, you and I and all the other Charley Pride fans would *re-volt!!!* His music is one of the only shining lights of real, honest country music left.

LESLIE JEANNE HANEY
MCKEESPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

I just had to write a few lines and let you know how much I enjoyed the article on Bill Anderson in your

August issue of *Country Music* and how true to life it was, regarding his sincerity and patience with his fans.

I was lucky enough to see him when he was in New Jersey earlier this year, and again at the WHN Country Picnic in New York. He signed autographs and talked with his fans after each show, even at the WHN picnic when he and his band must have been dead tired, as they had to fly in because their bus had broken down in Virginia the night before. So without sleep they went on with their show as usual. His performance that day was fantastic. Afterwards he stayed to sign autographs, pose for photographs and talk with everyone who was anxious to meet him.

This is what I call showmanship with a capital S. It certainly was a day I'll never forget as long as I live.

ELAINE TAPLEY
BUTLER, NEW JERSEY

I never saw as many left-handed guitar, bass, fiddle and mandolin players in one band as on pages 26-27 of your July issue (Tex Ritter and band).

Obviously no one in your organization has been observant enough to notice what a guitar player usually looks like while playing... makes one wonder what else is told incorrectly.

I'll bet Merle Haggard will be surprised to learn *he's* turned south-paw *too*, when he sees his photo on page 10 (same issue). I'm sure Merle would *really* rather *fight than switch*.

MAYF NUTTER
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA
P.S. You needn't be brave enough to print this among your other glowing letters from readers. After all, I just "looked at the pictures," didn't I?

Ed. We regret that our assistant art director is left-handed. We suspect that her flopping photographs is part of a leftist plot.

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Volume Two, Number Three, November 1973

COUNTRY MUSIC

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Country News (the Western Film Festival) 15

The Rise and Fall of Sun Records JOHN PUGH 26

In the early 1950s, a little recording studio in Memphis, Tennessee was *it*. That's where rock 'n roll, rockabilly music, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Charlie Rich, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Carl Perkins and other legends started. This is the story of those incredible, wonderful, turbulent and bitter days of musical revolution.

Can Jeannie C. Riley Step Out Of 'Harper Valley'? CAROL OFFEN 34

Jeannie C. Riley's "Harper Valley PTA" record catapulted her to fame and fortune almost overnight, five years ago. But now she wants to sing ballads, leaving the brassy songs and mini-skirts behind. It isn't easy.

Collectors' Record Listing (Not Available in Newsstand Copies) 37

Hank Snow Moves On in the Old Tradition MARSHALL FALLWELL 66

If any country artist is established now, it's Hank Snow. Ever since he was a Canadian cabin boy sailing the North Atlantic, his music has been consistent, pure, and superlatively country. At 59 he looks back on a long, long road.

Record Reviews 75

Growing Up Along the 'Jaxbeer' Highway DAVE HICKEY 84

What is honky tonk? It's something you hear in honky tonks, where a man can get proud, musical, and killed all at the same time. Dave Hickey knows all about it, and he's still here to tell.

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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

A very special Christmas greeting . . .
Tompall Glaser's new solo career . . .
A new blind country singer, Ronnie Milsap . . .
A candid conversation with Connie Smith.

Good country company.

Meet Mother Maybelle Carter, matriarch of America's most popular musical family. The Carters have played and sung the story of our land for several generations, and Mother Maybelle has always been in the center of that music. She's just come from the recording studio, where she led some of the fanciest pickers in Nashville through 19 Carter Family favorites and country instrumental standards. A newly recorded specially priced 2-record set.

Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys were one of the finest stage and recording bands ever to perform country music. Masters of a variety of styles, both urban and rural, the band grew to define a whole new genre known as "Western Swing." This historic reissue, a specially priced 2-record set, contains 24 of Bob Wills' most important recordings from the years 1935 to 1946.

And over on the right is Lefty Frizzell, one of American music's greatest all-around talents. Best known as a composer, Lefty is one heck of a fine singer and he's at his best with the songs of Jimmie Rodgers, perhaps the greatest songwriter ever to use the country idiom. These 11 historic sides, out of print for many years, were recorded in 1951 and '53, and are regarded as a definitive restatement of Rodgers' original work.

Now we'd like to introduce you to beautiful young Tanya Tucker. Tanya's uncanny way with a song has made her the fastest rising star in music today. Here's her sensational second album, produced by Billy Sherrill, and featuring her smash hits, "What's Your Mama's Name" and "Blood Red and Goin' Down."



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Down Home and Around

by Dixie Hall

Softball tournament for next year's Fan Fair? . . .
Jean Shepard pregnant again? . . .
Marty Robbins gives a lesson in total relaxation.

With the disc jockey convention barely behind us, believe it or not some folks are already making plans for Fan Fair, 1974. **Ralph Emery** came up with the truly fantastic idea of getting four more country stars to form softball teams and hold a grand tournament during Fan Fair week. At present there are four active teams within the industry, those of **Conway Twitty**, **Bill Anderson**, **Mel Tillis** and **Loretta Lynn**. The following year perhaps **Roy Acuff** can stage a yo-yo contest. Heaven knows, there are enough of them around.

There is some speculation in Music City as to whether **Jean Shepard** is or is not expecting a baby. Apparently, the rumor stems from a conversation between the United Artist recording star and **Ralph Emery**. "How many kids do you have, Jean?" **Ralph** had asked.

"Five," came the reply.

"Going for a football team?" **Emery** inquired.

"Well, you just never know," came the answer. "Come to think of it, I could be pregnant right now!"

It just seemed like a good time for a quick nap. **Harrel Hensley** was interviewing **Marty Robbins** on his show on **WSM** after the **MCA** recording artist had just completed a drive from Florida. In the course of the interview **Harrel** asked a question and didn't get an answer. **Marty** was fast asleep. Ain't too many artists can be that relaxed in front of a microphone.

Saw **Jeanne Pruett** at the local grocery store, and one thing's for sure, "Satin Sheets" ain't gone to that young lady's head. She's still complaining about the price of bacon.

Another person unchanged by

"Monumental" success is movie star, songwriter and recording artist, **Kris Kristofferson**. First port of call upon his return to Nashville with his new bride, **Rita Coolidge** was the Country Corner, where he once tended bar and emptied ashtrays while his more affluent buddies emptied their beer cans. **Billy Joe Shaver** doesn't change much either. He's still sporting the same haircut . . . probably the same one as last year.

KDAV in Lubbock, Texas celebrated its 20th anniversary on Sep-

tember 19. **KDAV** claims to have been the world's first full time country radio station. That's 20 years of some fine music, folks.

Gary Sargeants is back in the saddle following surgery at Nashville's Baptist hospital. He claims that hospitals are a pain and thereby hangs the tail.

See where one of our prominent publishers had a House cleaning. That's the way it goes though. **John the Baptist** one week, unemployed the next. God bless you all and a happy Christmas.

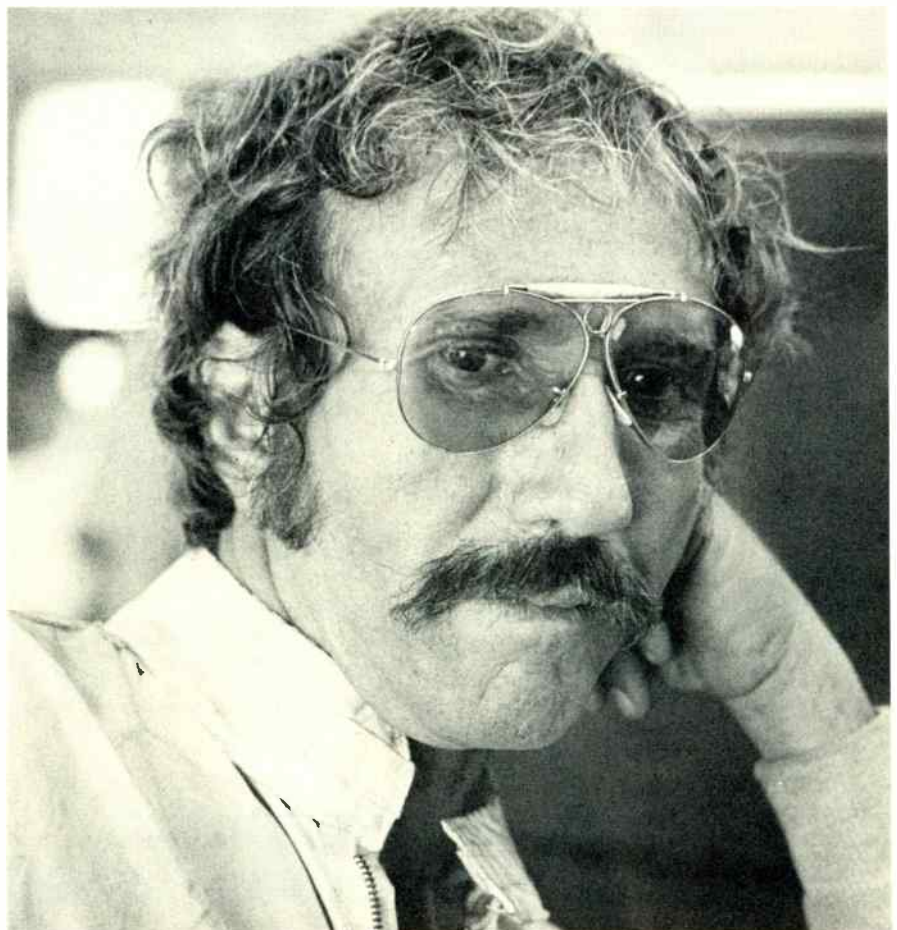
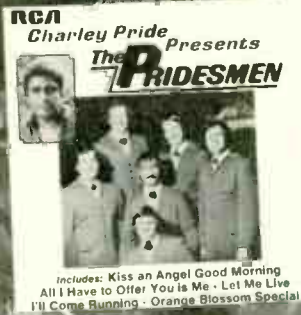


PHOTO: GEOFF WINNINGHAM

Marty Robbins: After a long drive from Florida, he dozed off during an interview.

Have yourself a bountiful harvest of brand-new country sounds.



People on the Scene

By Audrey Winters

Tammy Wynette and George Jones are "Gonna Hold On" . . .
Johnny Rodriguez is besieged by screaming fans . . .
Hank Williams, Jr. nearly causes a riot in Fort Worth . . .

Tammy Wynette was sitting in the make-up room while her hair dresser fixed her long blonde hair for a television show she and husband **George Jones** were filming.

"Look what George gave me for our anniversary," she said, displaying a large turquoise necklace called a "squash blossom." "I can hardly believe George and I have been married five years. But then, Georgette is three [their daughter]."

This was less than a week after Tammy had sued George for a legal separation, charging him with excessive drinking at times. The story of the suit went over the wire services and it was all over the country by the next day. Three days later they were back together.

The music business is one of the toughest on a marriage, and it's situations such as theirs that country songs are written about. Tammy and George decided to "Hold On" and work their problems out. George arranged with his booking agency to cancel him out of their dates for a couple of months. He has been relaxing and getting his nerves straightened out. Tammy and the Jones Boys, their band, worked a heavy schedule of fair dates.

Merle Haggard told a story about his experience with a prominent weekly magazine that interrupted his summer vacation.

"They came to Bakersfield and stayed for weeks, shot hundreds of pictures and I gave them two hours for the interview. Why, they even wanted me to pose on a log in the middle of the river playing the guitar. I just told them I wasn't in a habit of playing guitar on a log in the river.



PHOTO: ALAN WHITMAN



STANLEY W. FARRAR

Above, Eddy Arnold and son, Dickie, out for a walk. Newlyweds: Kris and Rita.

"They called me later and said the photographer was non-professional and the photos didn't turn out and could they shoot more. I told them 'NO!' Then to top this, they said because **Loretta Lynn** was on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine the same time my story was scheduled, they weren't going to use it.

"I told them, 'You think you're so important. I've got news for you. I don't even want to be on the cover of *Time* magazine.'"

Johnny Rodriguez is so "hot" in Texas that the police have to spray the girls with mace in order to get

him off the stage.

"It's just like the early days of Presley," Billy Gray, Rodriguez's band leader, said. "I've never seen anything like it."

Gray's band has been backing Johnny during his Texas dates. In the band is Curtis Potter who records for Capitol and has a new single called "Oklahoma Sunshine." Leon Raouch, the voice on **Bob Wills'** recordings for eight years, is in the band also.

Johnny said, "When I left **Tom T. Hall** I didn't believe I would ever find a bunch of guys as great to work with, but these are."

Johnny bought a new Ford LTD

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automobile, but since he was working Texas so much, he gave his mother his car. He now has a new El Camino truck.

Hank Williams, Jr. nearly caused a riot when he jumped off stage, kissed Texas soil twice and bowed before 38,000 Texas country music lovers in Fort Worth after giving one of the most moving performances of his career. The occasion was WBAP Radio's Third Annual Appreciation Day Celebration. Twenty country acts were on hand to participate in the event. WBAP

is one of the most powerful stations in the Southwest.

Hank, well aware of the importance of his name and his father's music, knew he had captured his audience when he broke into "Hey, Good Lookin'" and literally brought them out of their seats. He continued with other tunes his father made famous, such as "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," played on harmonica. He threw in an occasional joke. One went like this: "When the judge told me, 'Son, we're going to pay your ex-wife \$1,725 a

month,' I said, 'Judge, that's awfully nice of you. I might even kick in 10 or 15 myself.'"

He sat down at the piano and sang the old Slim Harpo tune, "Raining In My Heart" and his masterpiece, "Standing In The Shadows," a tribute to his father which he wrote at the age of 14.

Hank, 24, is losing his hair rapidly. He wears a Western-style hat on stage. He wore a black suede shirt slit open down the front with a necklace of gold coins, Western-cut trousers and boots. He admits his vision is so poor that his eye glasses are "as thick as the bottom of a fruit jar."

In a recent interview, **Eddy Arnold** talked about the adjustments one makes when going from poverty to wealth.

"It can throw you, if it comes suddenly. Some can't handle it... I've seen it happen. We were lucky, I guess, mine came gradually and we just sort of grew with it."

Eddy and his wife, Sally (31 years married), live on a farm on the outskirts of Nashville. Their son, Dickie, 22, who was seriously injured some time ago in an auto accident, lives with them. Eddy claims they live much like average folks, in a "simple house, not very large... maybe eight rooms." But his prize possession is a 43-foot cruiser called the Sally K II.

Today Eddy sings very much like he did when he stood on stage at the Grand Ole Opry, backed by Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys. The big difference now is a full orchestra for background music.

Kris Kristofferson and **Rita Coolidge** are married and expecting a baby next spring... Someone swiped all of the **Tompall and the Glasers'** 45 rpm records at the Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Nashville while everyone was busy waiting on customers... **Stoney Edwards'** single, "Hank And Lefty Raised My Country Soul," was such a good idea that Capitol Records has decided to do an entire album of this type of song. They chose ten top songwriters and each wrote about a star who has meant something special to him. There are songs about **Red Foley, Johnny Cash, Jimmie Rodgers, Merle Haggard,** and others. ■

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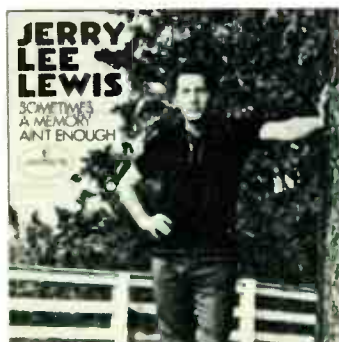
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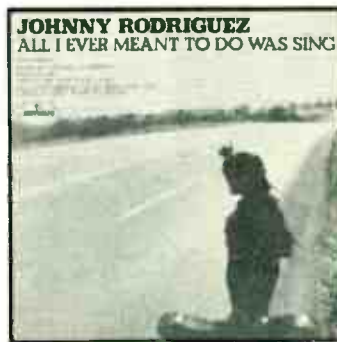
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Country News

Western film buffs gathered in Memphis recently to relive those thrilling days of yesteryear. Tex Ritter, Lash LaRue and Sunset Carson were among them.

Saturday Matinee Veterans Turn Out For Three Days of Westerns by Charles Gillespie

At three o'clock on a Saturday afternoon Wally Herrington was asleep, upright, leaning against the banister and seated upon the marble stairway of the Peabody Hotel's mezzanine, a barren, leaning to seedy area overlooking the hotel's more splendid lobby. This enormous room, a restored relic of a nobler time for mid-city hotels, is not without noteworthy attractions. A squadron of large white ducks, trained to the dainty task, waddles twice daily between an ornate fountain and the rattling elevator doors, leaving no trace of duck doings on the fine carpet.

But Wally Herrington could hardly be less interested. No duck could attract him to the Peabody hotel, although, during the preceding 47 hours he had spent approximately 40 of them on that mezzanine. During those hours Wally Herrington had seen all, or major portions of, 80 movies and four serials. He had watched hundreds of villains meet dusty justice—some meet the same justice dozens of times. He had heard a thousand rounds of gunfire, watched innumerable fistfights, and enjoyed enough sunsets, guitar chords and happy endings to nauseate Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. The night before, Wally Herrington had remained awake until 4 A.M., watching the collective, ragged chapters of the quite rare, original 1938 Lone Ranger serial. This left him time for three hours of sleep

before he returned to the thrilling days of yesteryear assembled in his home town, Memphis, for the first annual Western Film Collectors' Western Film Festival.

A large man with a small mustache walked past Wally and awakened him by flicking ice water in his face. Unlike the stars of the cowboy classics, Wally didn't insist the stranger smile when he flicked ice water into a person's face. During the next 12 hours Wally Herrington watched portions of an additional 34 movies, another complete serial of 15 chapters.

Wally Herrington would have seen 115 instead of 114 films, but he fell asleep on another occasion and missed a Three Mesquiteers feature. Still those final hours concluded a remarkable three days for him, especially if you realize that Wally Herrington does not even consider Western movies one of his interests. Even so, Wally Herring-

ton is not quite a genuine product of the thirties and forties, of Saturday matinees, of huge comic book racks in the neighborhood drug stores. His odyssey on the mezzanine, a most obvious manifestation of a romance with nostalgia, was all the more remarkable, perhaps, for his being only 15 years old. Yet Wally Herrington was both typical and atypical of the hundred odd Western film collectors who collected themselves for the first time. The reasons for his interest might involve a certain amount of explaining and surmising, but there was no mystery at all about the presence of the others. They knew they could retain a part of their past, a dear part, within their collections. They were the Veterans of Saturday Afternoon, the day that disappeared sometime around 1953.

The VSAs have no interest in "super" Westerns with super stars and they have an outrageous contempt



Tex Ritter and his wife, Dorothy Fay, his former co-star.



Monte Hale

for latter day television Westerns with television stars. Almost all of them are too young to claim Tom Mix as a contemporary hero, but they relate to Mix and to William S. Hart, immortals whose silent screen adventures opened the West to Ken Maynard, Buck Jones, Rex Allen, Rocky Lane, Roy Rogers, Hoot Gibson, Tex Ritter, Tim McCoy, Tom Tyler, George O'Brien, Gene Autry, William Boyd, Wild Bill Elliott, Charles Starrett, Sunset Carson, Johnny Mack Brown, Tim Holt, Bob Steele and their respective coteries of humorous sidekicks and wonder horses. They have a limited interest in John Wayne as a result of his early adventures with a popular team known as the Three Mesquiteers and the brief time he was Buck Jones' trusted associate. When "Red River" is mentioned, these people do not think of the John Wayne classic. They think of the Rex Allen classic.

There were several guest appearances by stars at the Festival. LaRue was there and so was Sunset Carson and Russell Hayden. Tex Ritter made an appearance, accompanied by his wife, who had a brief Western movie career herself when she was Dorothy Fay. Charles Starrett, the Durango Kid, telegraphed his regrets, but Monte Hale, Peggy Stewart, the frequently molested and just as frequently rescued heroine, and Kirby Grant (Sky King) were all present for the assembling. The collectors and fans numbered about 300.

Virtually every American male between the ages of 30 and 45 grew

up in a childhood culture greatly influenced by the cowboy movies . . . low budget, black and white films with black and white conflicts and resolutions. Grown up, today, these former children see nothing wrong in the longing for a return of an era in which masked strangers on great white stallions ride into the neighborhood and beat Sam Hill out of the mortgage banker.

Almost no kid ever considered Gene Autry or Roy Rogers his favorite cowboy. To identify with them would have made no more sense than to have adopted Fuzzy St. John or Smiley Burnette as an idol. Yet the two singing cowboys were probably the most successful of all the Western stars, although boys attended the movies to see action.

Nevertheless, the Western Film Collectors take all Western films seriously. They do not suffer the scoffers gladly. Researchers into Western movie music will quickly notice a curious sort of Hollywood logic often at work: the lower the budget, the better the songs. Tex Ritter, a persistent pipe puffer now, had an explanation for his audience of admirers. A Gene Autry feature, with a relatively large budget, would generally include a contemporary hit, frequently a semi-pop composition purchased for \$500 and occasionally employed as the title of the movie itself. ("Mule Train" is one example; so is "Mexicali Rose," the Melancholy Baby of the Western fan.) Low budget films were forced to use low budget songs. Tex Ritter wrote some of his own, but a more prolific source was the traditional cowboy ballad, laments in the public domain, songs that could be picked up for a song. Fifty dollars was the usual price for an original, exactly the sum Ritter paid a New York publishing house for "You Are My Sunshine."

"I'd heard a Jimmie Davis recording and I had a hunch the song would be a hit," Tex said. "I went in this place in New York and told them I was interested in another song. I started out and then turned around and said, 'Oh, by the way, what about this new Jimmie Davis thing?' I got it for \$50."

The superb Ritter version of "Rye Whiskey" was an even greater bargain. He borrowed "Jack of Diamonds," a ballad sung by Confederate soldiers, "changed a few

words and added some cowboy yells. If I'd had any sense I'd have copyrighted it."

Despite Gene Autry's comparatively low stature with action fans, Ritter's recollections award Autry a higher standing with country and western music lovers. "He started the trend of bringing in bands. A lot of the radio stations had their own cowboy bands. There were several even on New York stations and in 50 or 100 other towns, some of them with five or six groups on a station."

Music was the swiftest route to stardom for most of the stars present for the 1973 Festival. Tex Ritter and Monte Hale were singers before they were screen cowboys, Kirby Grant had been a band leader and appeared in "B" musicals before he was moved over to Westerns and, eventually, to his Sky King television series. Music, of course, was the source of much of the Western movie talent, not only Autry and Rogers and Ritter, but even Charlie King, "the greatest of all villains" who began his career in musical comedy and is believed to be the only B Western villain who ever danced on screen.

Monte Hale, who said he still "knows two or three holds on a guitar" began in the old show business tradition, singing 13 or 14 minute spots in vaudeville, then moving on to alternating appearances at the Ranch Club and the Reno Club in Houston, the site depending upon which of the clubs was bidding highest.

Lash LaRue was fairly subdued. His once extraordinary resemblance to Humphrey Bogart has softened and faded, but his hair is thick and black and the speech—still from the side of his mouth—is sharp and quick. He was into his new role as a Baptist-sponsored evangelist, but there is still a lot of Lash in the old LaRue. "I'm against violence," he responded to a question about current movie trends. "If you can't settle it peaceably, blow 'em up."

Alfred LaRue's version of how he became Lash, the King of the Bullwhip, does not involve Schwab's drugstore, although the idea of a young man popping ice cream soda straws out of a customer's mouth is not without possibilities. Actually LaRue says he got his break by telling a big fat fib, a confession and corruption that would have horri-

fied his fans in their tenderer years.

"This producer said he planned to use a man who could handle a bullwhip. I told him 'I've been using a whip since I was 10 years old.' He said, 'Are you kidding?' I said, 'Do I look like I'm kidding?' He said, 'You've got the job.' So I went out and bought myself three bullwhips and hired somebody to teach me how to use them."

All of the old stars professed pleasure at seeing themselves once again returned to action—even Russell Hayden who had earlier insisted that he not only did not want to be a Western actor, he did not want to be any kind of actor when he was recruited off the studio production staff.

None of the guests could summon a serious complaint about his cowboy days—a fact that did not surprise their questioners at all. There was a simple West, a West in which an heroic figure could shoot the eyes out of a spinning coin flung high into the sky, then plug away all day without ever hitting a fleeing felon; finally riding up on the rogue and knocking him out of the saddle and into the dirt where he finished him off by pummeling him about the shoulders. ■

Del Reeves Is Back In The Saddle Again

by John Duggleby

When word reached the Coral Flair Beauty Salon in Coralville, Iowa that Del Reeves was coming to town despite contrary rumors, one silvery-haired gal smirked from beneath her crown of curlers and replied, "Well, he'd better leave his horse at home."

It was sound advice for, only two weeks earlier, Del had been pitched from the saddle at his ranch, and had broken his leg upon landing. "I was just riding along when my horse got scared by a bushhog (tractor, to you flatlanders) and shot right out from under me. Wasn't anyone's fault, really, I just got the worst of it."

Fortunately, Del's determination remained intact, and after a quick plaster job, he was on the road again, picking and grinning as though his affliction was nothing worse than a mosquito bite. But his leg swelled like a wet sponge,

and two casts later, a blood clot developed. Del spent two gloomy days in the hospital as a doctor relieved the pressure. "It looked just like a hamburger," he recalls, still grimacing at the painful memory.

The doctor prescribed a few quiet weeks at home, but ordering Del Reeves to slow down is like advising a truck driver to get more sleep. "I haven't missed a show since the accident," he claims proudly. Not that he ever missed that many before. Del is one of a dwindling breed of performers who treat their audiences as old friends, and he could never let an old friend down.

The people who turned out to see Del and the Goodtime Charlies that night were small-town Iowans who had spent the day watching a summer rainstorm turn their centennial celebration into a swampy catastrophe. They were hoping that the Reeves show would salvage the somber proceedings. For the band, it was just another road engagement, one of over 160 concerts they will play this year. "Hell, we're takin' it easy," Del laughed. "Last year we did 235."

The concert hall was a leaky old circus tent erected on the flattest and driest ground available. The Good-Time Charlies started the show, struggling for balance on a make-shift stage that sloped so much that when guitarist George Owen leaned into the microphone, he nearly tumbled into the first row. But the show continued, with

the help of Billy Cole, the all-night DJ on station WHO, Des Moines. Although Billy's rendition of "Folsom Prison Blues" could have wrung a smile from the Man in Black himself, most of the crowd was resigned to shivering in their wet clothes and scraping their muddy shoes on the bleachers throughout the first set.

After an intermission, the Good-Time Charlies returned, this time with Del leading the way. The tent came to life; the band shifted gears, the crowd switched from nose-blowing to toe-tapping, and even the rain stopped for this North Carolina trucker's son. After sailing non-stop through two numbers, Del paused to greet the audience. He glanced at his injured leg, then down the sloping stage. "I guess you could say we're playing under a handicap tonight."

"Yeah," echoed George Owen, "we're sober."

Back on the bus, Del fished an Old Milwaukee out of his refrigerator and quickly propped his swollen leg on a pillow. The band staggered in one by one, and he thanked them, declaring that they "played their guts out tonight." He probably tells them that every night. "I guess the good-time image people get of me is pretty accurate," he said. "We joke around a lot on stage and play mostly happy music, because I think people should have fun at our concerts. *We do.*"

The mention of music, the ice-cold beer, or maybe the combination



PHOTO: ALAN WHITMAN

Del Reeves: "I think people should have fun at our concerts. *We do.*"

of both, seemed to replace the energy the evening's concert had drained, and he recalled that he had always wanted to be a musician, idolizing the late Hank Williams. "A lot of the stuff we played to-night were old country standards," he mused. "You can call it folk or whatever you want, but it's just *old country music*."

By now, Royce Kendall had come over from his Winnebago, and the two road veterans began to talk about the state of country music today. Royce claimed that despite the hard-luck stories about making it big in Nashville these days, it is actually much easier to land a recording contract than it used to be. "People gripe about having to pitch tapes, but back when I got started, the producers wouldn't listen to *anything*," he said.

Del agreed. "There might be more people in Nashville now, but there are also a lot more opportunities. They're crying for young people down there, and trying to create a new star every day." He attributed this in part to the growing number of frustrated rock disc jockeys who switch to country stations and try to combine elements of both into genetic misfits labeled "pop country" or "contemporary." "It's nice that country music is becoming more popular," he added, "but I wish some of these stations had more of a taste for what they're playing."

Billy Cole, one of the few DJs that Del *does* respect, popped his head into the door to bid the gang farewell before returning to Des Moines and his show. Del quickly reached under his seat and produced a copy of his latest album, *Del Reeves Presents The Good-Time Charlies*. "Let me circle my best ones, Billy," he obliged, selecting a strong vocal here and a good fiddle tune there, until almost every song was engulfed by a red ring.

"You always were the modest type," laughed Billy. "Does anyone play on this album besides you?"

Finally, the equipment was loaded and the bus was ready to roll—this time to Nashville, where Del and the gang were headlining the Grand Ole Opry the following evening. After explaining the directions to an all-night supermarket where they could replenish their beer supply, I asked Del what the



The familiar strains of "I'm Back in the Saddle Again," the theme song of "Gene Autry's Melody Ranch" radio show of the forties, will be coming into America's living rooms once again. Tapes of the weekly half-hour shows, which ran for 17 years on CBS radio, are being syndicated by American Radio Programs.

Besides Autry, each show featured The Pinafores, The Cass County Boys, guitarist Frankie Marvin and Carl

Cotner's "Melody Ranch Band." Other regulars were Johnny Bond and comedian Pat Buttram.

Tapes of the shows, dating back to 1947, are being offered "complete ... Just as they were performed 'live' before studio audiences," according to George Savage, General Manager of American Radio. At presstime, Savage predicted that at least 30 radio stations—"a conservative guess"—would be carrying the show by the time this article appears.

future held for the band.

He thought for a second, then smiled. "I'm not sure," he said, "but most likely it's gonna be another 235 days of the same thing." ■

Ralph Sloan's Been Keeping Time on the Opry For 20 Years by Marshall Fallwell

Ralph Sloan is a big, good-natured man from Lebanon, Tennessee, who makes a living from farming and trading land and livestock. He drives a big car and wears good clothes, so he does okay. He even has time for a hobby. Ralph likes to dance.

The first time I saw him was about ten years ago when a friend drove me the 120 miles north from Muscle Shoals, Alabama, to Nashville so I could go to the Opry for the first time. I remember how hot it was, but how quickly I forgot the heat when six people in gingham outfits clicked onto the stage and danced to the sound of steel-stringed fiddles and the rhythm of their own feet. After a minute or two, the announcer raised his arms and asked us to applaud "Ralph Sloan and the Tennessee Travelers." He could have saved his

breath, because we were all on our feet by that time anyway.

Still going strong after 20 years on the Opry, Ralph and his troupe can be seen there every other Saturday night. About two months ago, I ran into him backstage in a tiny dressing room. One of the girl dancers was stomping away while a very old man played fiddle. Ralph shouted in my ear: "She can go like that all night long." It made me tired just watching her improvise fast, intricate steps to the old tune. Her feet were just a blur.

Ralph started loping around backstage, threading his way through knots of onlookers, herding his gang together, while Roy Acuff balanced a fiddle bow on his nose. The girls in their bright dresses and thick petticoats looked like big butterflies amid the backstage clutter of electrical cables, signboards and sandbags on ropes. It was another hot night. The audience made good use of their fans, and in the backwash of light from the stage, the fans stirred like leaves. I stood next to Tex Ritter as the Travelers moved onto the floor and the fiddles commenced to scrape. He leaned over and said, "I never miss this if I can help it."

The following Thursday, I found

Ralph at the WSM studios where he and the Travelers were to tape a segment for the Bill Anderson Show. The dressing rooms there, thank goodness, were quieter.

Ralph told me he was born in Wilson County, Tennessee, and raised on a farm. In those days, people would gather at a neighbor's house to hear music and dance. They would pass the hat to pay the fiddler, usually a local man trying to make a little extra money, and everybody had a roaring good time. Ralph says he started jumping around to the music almost as early as he could walk.

He has had his own dance troupe for 30 years. For a while, they won dance contests at county fairs, until Jack Stapp, then an official for WSM, got wind of Ralph and his dancers and asked him to go on the Opry. They've been there ever since. Unlike the Stony Mountain Cloggers, who are a family, the Travelers don't really travel much. The dancers all have outside jobs — one works at a shirt factory, one is a mechanic. But every now and then, they make some money from things like the Bill Anderson Show.

As anybody who plays the Opry will tell you, you can't get rich playing there. The Travelers get only \$150 per night, to be split up among as many as eight people. Who pays for the costumes? Ralph does. He estimates that he loses

around \$20 every time the Travelers appear. "Don't get me wrong," he said, "I wouldn't say anything about my friends at the Opry, like Roy Acuff and Porter Wagoner, but the Travelers haven't been treated fairly. I've been with the Opry as a regular for 20 years and they won't let me be a member. We don't get paid scale, and we don't get any of the other benefits. I hate to say it, but the Travelers haven't gotten a fair shake." (Bud Wendell, general manager of the Opry, says that membership in the Opry is more or less reserved for recording artists, that is, singers and musicians; and that the policies governing membership had evolved since the Opry began and are now in their present form, not because of any one person's decision, but through tradition.)

I asked him how many members the group had had since he started. "About 200," he said. "I scout all the local barn dances for talent." He laughed. "I hire the ones that can jump the tallest cotton row. It's either that or like walking through a barnyard. You can always tell the ones that live on a farm. You learn how to step high and scrape the bottoms of your shoes at the same time."

The style is called "Appalachian country dancing." It differs from buck-dancing in that buck-dancing is an entirely individual form, and

from clogging in that cloggers all do the same step. Ralph and the Travelers make standard square dance patterns when they perform, but the steps they do are their own variations of one basic step. Ralph showed me how it's done. Imagine counting like this: "one and two and..." On one, stamp your right foot flat on the floor; on "and" slide it back about two inches by jumping just a little bit and at the same time lifting your left foot. On "two," stamp your left foot; on "and," slide your left foot back and raise your right foot. It's that simple. Keep good time and let your upper body be very limp and Ralph may hire you. Eventually, you will learn to do your own steps around this basic pattern.

Just before the taping, the dancers rehearsed their moves in an empty studio, the one where the daily news programs are shot, so their practicing was done in front of a big weather map. Soon, a man with a headset on stuck his head in the door: "You're on," he said.

Ralph seems to know everybody. Ferlin Husky was talking to some of the make-up girls and waving to the studio audience when we came in. He saw Ralph and came trotting over to say hello. During the taping, Ralph's concern seemed to be in the way the new outfits he had designed would look on-camera. As



PHOTOS: MARSHALL FALLWELL

Ralph Sloan has been scouting local barn dances for prospective members of the Tennessee Travelers for the past 20 years.



The Second Annual Big Wheeling Truckers' Jamboree saluted the nation's truckers September 1 with two big shows from Capitol Music Hall in Wheeling, West Virginia. The headliners were Dave Dudley, Dick Curless and Red Sovine. As a special feature of the show, broadcast live over WWVA, Dick Curless recorded a live on-stage album for Capitol Records. Also performing at the Truckers' Jamboree were Bob Gallion, Patti Powell, The Country Roads (the Jamboree Staff Band) and the Oglebay Promenaders.



usual, they stopped the show.

As we were filing out of the studio, Bill Anderson came over and said to Ralph: "Now, you tell this boy the truth. Don't be tellin' no lies." I'm satisfied that that's just what I got. ■

Country In the City— New York Style by Patrick Carr

When radio station WJRZ-AM in Hackensack, New Jersey went off the air a few years ago, the future of country music in New York City looked bleak indeed. It is a fact of life that in a city of New York's size and diversity, nobody can make a living in country music without the assistance of a broadcast forum: nobody hears the music, nobody knows what's going on in country, and nobody would be so foolish as to attempt anything like regular country concerts in the concrete jungle. There can be no doubt about it—a solid, high-power country radio station is the key to country's success in New York. It is hardly surprising,

therefore, that ever since WHN-AM, a 50,000-watt station in the heart of Manhattan, changed its program format from middle-of-the-road pop to "Easy Lovin' Country" on February 17, 1973, New York has been experiencing a country music revival of some considerable intensity.

Item: Since WHN's commitment to country, there have been more country concerts in New York in six months than there were in the previous five years. Tom T. Hall has played Carnegie Hall. Johnny Paycheck, Joe Stampley, Ferlin Husky, Doc and Merle Watson, and Tammy Wynette and George Jones have taken the stage at Philharmonic Hall. Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Charlie Rich and Kinky Friedman have crowded longhairs and media folk into the ultra-chic little cavern of Max's Kansas City. The Earl Scruggs Revue, Doc and Merle Watson, and Waylon have held forth to capacity crowds in Central Park, where the Schaefer Beer company promotes outdoor evening concerts in the Wollman Memorial ice-skating rink. Bill Monroe drew 2,000 bluegrass

fans to the New York University Law School auditorium, and the promoter of that event, Doug Tuchman (who is secretary of the New York Bluegrass Association) scored a hit again with Don Reno, the Osborne Brothers and the Country Gentlemen in Philharmonic Hall on a weekday night. Although some of these events were not as well-attended as they might have been in, say, Detroit, nobody has given up on the idea. Lessons have been learned, and it is a certainty that country concerts and club engagements are going to be happening thick and fast throughout the winter. Al Aronowitz, the former music columnist of the *New York Post* (he's the man who put on three shows at Philharmonic Hall), says he's confident that live country music *can* succeed in New York.

Item: The King Karol chain of record stores reports a 30 per cent increase in country record sales since the beginning of the year. Sales of bluegrass records have increased by approximately 5 per cent. Other stores confirm this trend.

Item: Since the emergence of

WHN and Waylon Jennings' week of nights at Max's Kansas City, the New York press has been covering country music as never before. The *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, the *Daily News*, the *New York Post*, even the radical-intellectual *Village Voice*, have all done their best to exhaust the significance of it all in countless articles and reviews. If most perceptions of the situation have been rather strange (theories on the subject having ranged from country-music-as-high-camp to country-music-as-evidence-of-takeover-by-the-Silent-Majority), it is only to be expected when you consider the sensibilities of most New York editors. The old saying that the "real" America ends at New York's city limits does in fact come near to the truth. Whatever, experts on country music have been worth their weight in printing presses these past few months. The *New York Times* has gone so far as to commission a discography of country albums from this writer, and there can be no greater indication of acceptance than *that*.

Item: There are now genuine

country music clubs in New York —(O'Lunney's and Hilly's in Manhattan, Henry's in Brooklyn, and three or four others). What's more, they are usually crowded and—get *this*—they usually feature *local* bands.

Item: In Nashville, Jerry Rivers of Buddy Lee Attractions confirms that performers and agencies are gearing up for further assaults on New York. Jerry remembers Buck Owens' live recording at Carnegie Hall in 1966—it was a huge success—and says that he hasn't seen so much New York-oriented excitement in six or seven years. There may be some performers who feel they can do without the smog and hassle of a New York engagement, but that Carnegie Hall (or Philharmonic Hall) gig is a hard one to resist when you've been raised in the country. Carnegie Hall is the *tops*, boy. Like most others in the country music business, Jerry lays the credit for all this squarely at the doorstep of WHN . . .

"You know something?" asked Chuck Renwick, president of WHN, when approached for his comments on the progress of his station. "If

we hadn't gone country, I don't think we would be in business today. The country format has saved this station." When I called, Mr. Renwick was waiting for the results of the ARB audience ratings for July and August, and he wasn't exactly shaking in his boots about what they might reveal. The Pulse ratings (another rating service) had shown a total cumulative increase of 20 per cent from the first survey to the second, and he could state with confidence that WHN had a regular audience of close to one million at that time (early September). After only a little over six months of programming country music—and considering that Mr. Renwick estimates the total potential country audience in the tri-state New York area at three-to-four million—that ain't bad at all. Another measure of WHN's success is that when the station ran a series of commercial spots for this magazine, they generated 900 subscriptions in three weeks—which proves that not only is the station reaching the right audience, but the audience *exists* and is committed to country mu-

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PHOTO: JAY GOOD

Bluegrass fans crowd the South Street Seaport in New York City. The concert was one of many this summer, organized to meet the growing demand for country music in the city.

sic. Similarly, regarding WHN's country picnic on the campus of St. John's University in the New York borough of Queens: Chuck Renwick estimates that if everybody who had wanted to attend *could* have (the picnic was limited to 1,000 guests), there might have been as many as 60,000 city folks listening to Bill Anderson out there in the torrid heat of a New York summer Sunday afternoon.

Another interesting factor in the WHN story is that although the station's target audience lies within the 25 to 49-year age bracket (as is the case with most country radio stations), the 18-to-24-year-olds are tuning in too, and asking for more bluegrass programming. This phenomenon is confirmed by Doug Tuchman, who attributes the growing interest in bluegrass to the recent success of "Dueling Banjos," the increasing amount of bluegrass-oriented material being played by rock bands and, probably most important of all, the mass

youth movement towards traditional virtues in all things. Tuchman feels (and promoter Al Aronowitz agrees) that while there has always been, and will continue to be, a "bluegrass underground" in New York which will attend bluegrass concerts because of love for the musical form itself, the "modern country" audience is more attuned to specific performers than to country music as a whole. Thus the "modern country" concert path must be trod lightly if it is to succeed in this city where on any given night, the music lover can choose from among several dozen musical events of all types. By now, everyone in the business is aware of that point, and it is by no means premature to say that with the continued growth and influence of WHN, the Nashville cats may soon be thinking nothing of cruising around New York City in those big old super-buses—just like they do in most every other city in the nation. ■

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In 1954, a 19-year-old truck driver walked into a studio at 706 Union Street, Memphis, Tennessee and paid \$4 to cut a record as a birthday present to his mother. Later, Sam Phillips, owner of the studio, heard the dub and said, "That's the man I've been looking for." He located the youth, a strange kid who favored pink and black clothes, who sported a copious head of immaculately-combed hair, and who had a singing style that was not quite blues and not quite country. Sam signed him to a contract, and Elvis Presley became part of the legend of Sun Records.

In 1955, a son of a sharecropper telephoned Sam Phillips from Jackson, Tennessee and sang him a song over the phone. Sam told him to come to Memphis right away to cut the tune. The singer came to the studio and cut his creation, a cross between blues and country, a number entitled "Blue Suede Shoes." Sam signed him to a contract, and Carl Perkins became part of the legend of Sun Records.

In 1956, a kinky-haired blond piano player drove up to Memphis from Ferriday, Louisiana, found his way to the studio and demanded an audition. He was told that Phillips was out of town. He replied that he hadn't made the trip for nothing, and was going to be heard by somebody. After cooling his heels awhile, he was taken into the studio, given his audition and told to come back next month when chances would be better of seeing Phillips. A month later he came walking into the studio, announcing that he was ready to record. Phillips sat the lad down at the piano, where he proceeded to bang away with an energy and enthusiasm never before seen. He played and sang in a cross between blues and country, and when he had finished, he had a totally unique record that would eventually sell some 10 million copies—a riotous thing called, "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." Sam signed him to a contract, and Jerry Lee Lewis became part of the legend of Sun Records.

by
John Pugh

The Rise and Fall of



Others were already making their mark at Sun, or else would soon follow. Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Conway Twitty, Charlie Rich, Jack Clement, Bill Justis and J.M. Van Eaton would all be part of the Sun legend for, in its time, Sun Records contained the greatest single collection of musical talent of one kind ever housed under one roof.

It would be absurdly obvious to say that those assembled talents made musical history, for they did something of far greater magnitude: they changed the world. They did it under what today would be considered incredibly primitive conditions, and they did it cast in the storybook setting of a David fighting a host of Goliaths.

In the 1950s Memphis was emerging from the legacy of a wide-open, anything-goes river town. The catchword was "progress." Orderly, respectable progress. The post-war exodus to the cities had seen hordes of God-fearing, peace-loving country folk swarm into Memphis. Almost overnight the city became a quiet, industrious, incredibly well-organized town. A young man seeking his fortune could hardly do better than Memphis in the fifties.

But one place in Memphis that will probably never change is Union Street. Today it presents the same

contrast of gleaming car showrooms and teeming tenements as it did in the fifties. In the middle of all this, at 706 Union, sat an ugly, cramped, red-brick radiator shop that would be the home of Sun Records. It was as if Sam Phillips had set out to find the most unlikely place imaginable. There wasn't even room enough for any offices, save a receptionist's. Sam and the other Sun executives conducted their business at the restaurant next door amidst the normal clientele of grease-stained mechanics and laborers.

One other social upheaval of the fifties would play a large part in the timing of Sun Records: millions of servicemen had returned home. Boys who had previously never been more than 50 miles from their hometowns had, in a few years, seen and done more than anyone ever dreamed possible. They had come home with new ideas, demanding to be heard. Their attitudes quickly filtered down to the campuses and the high schools, and though some of their attempts at this new-found self-expression (duck-tailed haircuts, hot rods) seem almost pathetically comical today, for the first time America had "rebellious youth."

The one thing that had not kept pace with their attitudes, was music. Dominated by the Comos, Crosbys, Sinatras, Bennetts, and the bland ditties of Tin

Pan Alley, music in the early fifties was all the same, very trite and very boring—at least, to the newly-urbanized, newly-affluent, aware, vociferous youth of America. There was nothing *wrong* with this music; it just had no excitement.

One reason the music industry was so listless was because it was so controlled. A handful of major labels had most of the business sewed up, so they had no real incentive to innovate. They might have a few “hillbilly” or “race” singers under contract, but they looked at these artists with an air of quaint bemusement, and gave them haphazard, ineffective production and promotion. Most black men and poor Southern whites, if they had a song to sing, sang it to themselves.

Sam Phillips had grown up in rural northern Alabama. He was familiar with this musical situation because of his years as a radio announcer, engineer, and



Records



part-time operator of a one-man, portable recording service in Memphis. “I was aware of this gap, but had no idea how to make it come alive,” Sam said. “I did know that Negro songs had a much wider appeal than just to Negro audiences, and that there were no recording studios in the South for the black man. So I built the studio at 706 Union. I took my savings and opened it up.

“I started looking in earnest for black talent. I had instant success with B.B. King and Roscoe Gordon, and got a reputation for discovering talent. Then in 1952 my brother Jud approached me about recording a quartet he had in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I asked him if he’d be interested in joining me in promotion. During this time we were always operating on a shoestring and watching every dollar. Jud and I had a dispute about the money it took to keep him on the road, and he went back to Alabama.

“I had the feeling all along that if I could ever find a white man who could sing this black music I could open up a whole new market. The top ten had nothing for the kids, and they would turn to the Negro stations for new music. But they had to do this somewhat surreptitiously because their parents frowned on their listening to black music.

“In the meantime Elvis had come into the studio. I recorded him and got a moderate response. Elvis did not break overnight. I traveled widely and got encouragement from only two deejays. The white disc jockeys wouldn’t play him because he sounded too black, and the black disc jockeys wouldn’t play him because he sounded too white.”

In those days a radio station was either top ten, “hillbilly” or what was euphemistically called a “race” station, and there was no programming deviation whatsoever. As Elvis was neither fish nor fowl, no one would take a chance on him. And for good reason; the first deejay, for example, who played Elvis on WSM—home station of the Grand Ole Opry—was fired for his temerity.

Sam did two key things. He gave records to the jukebox operators who were going through the transition from 78s to 45s. Their number of slots had suddenly quadrupled on the new machines and they were hungering for any new product. Sam also *gave away*—albeit reluctantly—free records to the radio stations. The latter practice was unheard of at that time, but both efforts brought results. People punched Elvis’ number on the jukebox out of curiosity, liked what they heard, and began demanding the record. A grateful disc jockey, awed by Sam’s largesse, would take a gamble, give Elvis a spin, and get an overwhelmingly favorable reaction that the programming director couldn’t ignore. And so, bit by bit, this new cat on this new label with this new music began being heard and accepted.

There were even a couple of factors operating in Sam’s favor. Back then it took three weeks for a record to arrive in the South and Midwest from Los Angeles, two weeks from New York. This time lag could kill a record before it ever got started. Sam, sitting in centrally-located Memphis with his own pressing plant, could have his product all over the country in less than half the time. He literally ran circles around the majors in distribution.

“Elvis’ records began to sell and I knew I had a powerhouse,” Sam continued. “I called Jim Denny and Jack Stapp about getting Elvis on the Opry. They suggested we go to the Louisiana Hayride. That was the first time I had ever seen Elvis in professional circumstances. After the first song, he had them on their feet. I had never seen anything like it before. Then we had him at a park concert in Memphis with Slim

“... I had no idea Elvis was going to be so astronomical, but I’ve never regretted selling him,” said Sam Phillips...

Whitman. Slim was one of the biggest artists in the country. I noticed the size of the crowd was larger than usual, but I had no idea until the show started they had come to see Elvis instead of Slim.

“It was then I began to get calls about Elvis’ going to another label. I couldn’t understand it,” said Sam, “because I had never said anything about Elvis’ leaving, and he had never said anything to me about it. I called Tom Parker and said, ‘Somebody’s putting out this story, because I’ve heard it too many times.’

“He said that it wasn’t he and that he didn’t know who it could be. We talked on and he said, ‘By the way, is he for sale?’

"I said, 'Anybody I got is for sale, but I can't go into it over the phone.'

"He said, 'I'll fly down and let's talk about it.'

"He came down, we talked it over, and I got the impression he was the one who had talked out of school. Anyway, I laid the deal on the line.

"He said, 'That's awfully high, but let me see if I can raise the money.'

"In the meantime I had to call my distributors and set them straight. I told them I had a great bulwark of talent potential, and that I had to have the money to sustain them. I certainly wasn't going to take it and run.

"Parker put up the money and we consummated the deal in the fall of 1955. I took the \$40,000 and plowed it back into the company so I could get into the rec-

1958 to 1963. "But I couldn't complain because he treated himself the same way. He never even shared his success with himself."

To compound matters, Sam had to deal with a man who, like himself, was a larger-than-life personality, but who manifested it in a diametrically opposite manner, his brother Jud. Jud had returned to the company (and would leave and return several times before it was all over) as promotion man. He played a tremendous part in the success of Sun Records, for Jud was everything Sam was not: gregarious, flamboyant, loquacious, fun-loving—and free-spending. As Jud himself, once admitted, "We had \$9,000 in the bank one time, and I blew it all on one tour." (This may be stretching it a little. Jud has been known to exaggerate.)



ord business like I wanted to. I had no idea Elvis was going to be so astronomical, but I've never regretted selling him. The sale was agreeable with everybody, and I finally had my operating capital."

If there is one memory of Sun Records that all its artists share, it is that Sam Phillips was always reluctant to spend money. Sam regarded spending money as something almost pathological. A few examples:

To this day he still changes the oil in his own car. The service stations charge too much.

During Sun recording sessions when the boys felt like having a little pick-me-up, Sam would send out for a half-pint of red-eye. When that was gone he would send out for another half-pint, and so on. It was never more than a half-pint at a time, regardless of how fast they were consumed, or how many trips to the liquor store were necessary.

Sam would not raise artists' royalties above the minimum, steadfastly believing he was showing incomparable magnanimity.

"Sam paid meager salaries, worked you hard, and had little profit-sharing, bonuses or incentives," said Cecil Scaife, Sun Sales and Promotion Director from

The Phillips brothers would clash time and again over many matters, but money was always the cause. "It was a love-hate relationship," said Betty Burger, former Sun employee. "I witnessed some tremendous

"... I wasn't out to destroy country music. I had grown up on the Grand Ole Opry ..."

fighters between them, and it was two geniuses, both working for the same thing, both so close, but so far apart. No one could have kept up the pace at which Jud was spending, but then Sam was as extreme in his way as Jud was in his."

"I can see how people might have said that I was tight-fisted," said Sam. "But I always said that I was going to be a businessman to the best of my ability. This doesn't always make for a good rapport with your artists and employees. I made sure everyone got exactly what was coming to him. I never deducted a penny for such things as studio time and album covers. As for Jud, I would bring him in, explain our financial situation, *show* him where we didn't have the

money, and he'd still go right back out on the road and overspend. I knew I needed Jud with his contacts and his ability to open doors, but even *my* patience couldn't last forever."

But Jud, despite his profligate methods, produced bountiful results. As one artist put it, "Whatever is said about Jud, all I know is, he got records played and sold—by the millions."

Sam, in addition to his scrupulous honesty and in-

... the home of Sun Records. It was as if Sam Phillips had set out to find the most unlikely place imaginable ...

tegrity, had another asset that, for a time, offset his penuriousness. "Sam created enthusiasm in everything he did," said Bill Justis. "He had a commanding presence, and when he talked you *had* to listen. He could get you charged up to knock your brains out for Sun Records. I never gave my measly salary a thought, because I had the feeling I was part of the most exciting thing ever to take place."

The talent began flocking to Memphis in droves, and the glory years of Sun Records and of rock and roll were soon having worldwide repercussions. "Memphis" became an international dateline in anything dealing with music; deejays interrupted shows for "the latest release from Memphis"; kids, receiving word of a new Sun shipment, would be waiting in line for the record stores to open the next morning.

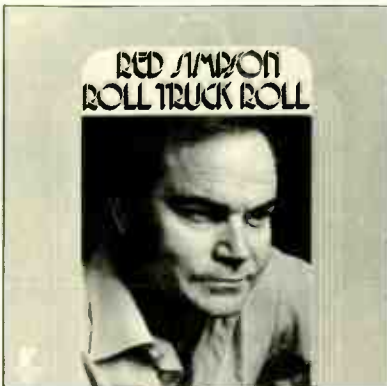
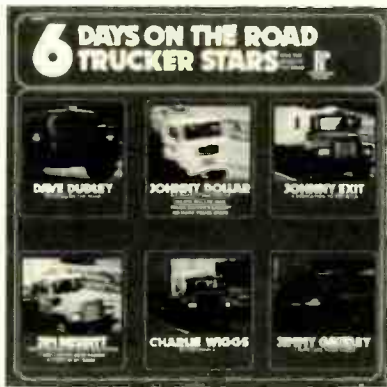
It was a common sight to drive by 706 Union and

see several hopefuls outside the studio at 6 A.M., most of whom had waited all night for an audition. People came from all over the world just to *look* at the place. Sam became a prophet magna cum laude. The local press was continually writing stories about "Tennessee's Youngest Self-Made Millionaire," and "The Genius Of Union Street." Everything Sam did was news, from buying a new car to changing his hairstyle. There was even talk of his running for governor.

"Rock and roll was accused of killing country music," Sam said. "I wasn't out to destroy country music. I had grown up on the Grand Ole Opry like millions of others, and I would be the last one to tell the Opry how to run its show. But country music had become stereotyped, which restricted its appeal. I told Jim Denny [former Opry manager] that the Opry should do more to bring in young people. He said he thought if he did that, it would lose its following. I replied that anyone attempting to block progress was headed for trouble."

Though Sam may have fashioned himself a bizarre studio, the sound he got from it was nothing short of miraculous. "We had a sound that's never been duplicated," said Bill Justis. "It was a strange sound. We had very simple, basic equipment. We had only one power mike. We didn't have an echo chamber, so we used a second tape recorder. We'd put a blanket over an amplifier to hold in the sound. It was a system that anybody would laugh at today, but it was very effective."

"The way we made records kind of coincided with the studio," said Sam. "We'd say, 'Come on over Wed-



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nesday night after dinner, and we'll fool around and see what we come up with.' Or we'd congregate over there after the clubs had closed. We'd be half stoned when we started and completely bombed by the time we'd finished. Sometimes we'd go into the studio and wouldn't even have any songs. But there was something about the looseness that rubbed off on the recordings. We were having a good time, playing without inhibitions, and everything came from the heart."

There were few people who could have made anything—much less million-selling records—out of this primeval, disjointed semi-chaos. But Sam had a genuine love of bringing forth a person's artistry, the necessary rapport with the artist in order to do so, and the patience to wait for the creative process to achieve fruition.

"I never went into the studio with the idea of cutting a hit record," said Sam. "I went into it to draw out a person's innate, possibly unknown talents, present them to the public, and let the public be the judge. I

... Sun Records is the only record company no artist ever re-signed with ...

had to be a psychologist and know how to handle each artist and how to enable him to be at his best. I went with the idea that an artist should have something not just good, but totally unique. When I found someone like that, I did everything in my power to bring it out."

Johnny Cash's first recording session was typical of the Sun Records method. Sam had already heard "Hey Porter," and liked it, but he needed another song with the same feeling for the flip side of the single—a classic country lament with a strong, driving rhythm. Several months later, Cash and his band showed up again at 706 Union with the goods. It was the first time they had ever been in a studio, but they brought some innovations with them, the kind of things that set Sun discs apart from all the rest. Johnny had stuck a wad of paper between the strings of his guitar and the frets on its neck, giving a snare-drum-type rattle to the sound of his strumming: Luther Perkins, never a great guitarist, had developed that simple boom-chucka-boom trademark which characterized the Cash sound thereafter, and these two unique effects resulted in something completely new on the musical scene.

Alone in the tiny studio, Sam and the boys worked all night—trying "Cry, Cry, Cry" over and over again, adjusting the two mikes themselves, trying to get used to the brand new Sears guitar amplifier that had arrived in the nick of time for the session, and concentrating on getting those new rhythms and those new tricks down on tape. They did it, too. In any other studio, at any other time, it wouldn't have been possible: Sam had encouraged these recording greenhorns, directed them towards a new sound, and been more than patient with their own innovations, their nervousness, and their inexperience. He, and they, had got something special out of that session.

"And let's face it," says Carl Perkins, "who would have thought that Johnny Cash could have sold records when he walked in there singing about a train? Them things had been out-dated for a hundred years.

"Sam didn't play any musical instrument, but he

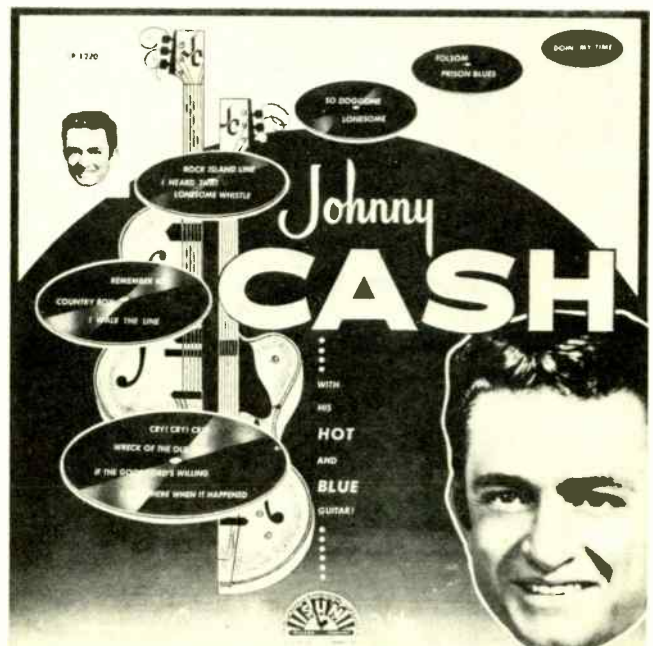
had a magnetic ear; he knew what he wanted to hear and he made you come to him. In the studio, the man was a genius."

"I look back on those years," says Charlie Rich, who was a studio musician at Sun for a long time, "and sometimes it seems as if we all suffered through the same damn thing. But, you know, whatever they say about Sam Phillips, he sure must have known something."

But Sam had one great Jekyll and Hyde shortcoming. Away from the studio, he was a totally different animal. "Sam was never a warm, friendly person," said an associate. "I don't recall his ever inviting any of his artists over to dinner, or throwing parties for them, or anything like this. After a while they began to resent his remoteness."

And after a while Sam gradually began to have what he calls "misunderstandings" with his artists—particularly with that brash, gum-popping kid who played a piano like no one else before or since, and who was selling records as fast as they could be pressed. Outside the studio, Sam never quite knew what to make of Jerry Lee Lewis (a failing common to many others), and it was not long before their contrasting personalities were setting off fireworks between them. The most volatile incident came after Jerry Lee's calamitous London trip at the peak of his rock and roll heyday, where he disclosed to the press that he had married his 13-year-old cousin. Jerry Lee has always blamed Sam for the ensuing fiasco, which resulted in the collapse of his career, maintaining that he arrived home to find Phillips in a state of panic over the matter, refusing to give him any financial, promotional, or even moral support.

"Elvis had just gone into the army, Jerry had already had 'Whole Lotta Shakin' and 'Great Balls Of Fire,' and it looked like the way was wide open for him to be the biggest artist ever," said Sam. "Then this mess in England hit, and the bottom fell out of everything. While Jerry was overseas, I got calls from all



When Sun Records was in its prime: original Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis releases. Jerry Lee's first LP, May 1958, is shown.

over the world asking for statements, but I would not take them, because I didn't really know what was happening myself, and I didn't want to say the wrong thing. I felt the whole thing was blown entirely out of proportion, and when Jerry got back, I decided to go ahead with business as usual. Maybe these two actions are why Jerry has always said I didn't stand by him. I don't know. I *do* know that it would have made no sense whatsoever for me not to back Jerry. I had a great deal of time and money invested in him, I had records in the can, and I did everything in my power to play down the controversy and play up Jerry, but it was no use. His records started coming back by the carload. The older generation was looking for something it could use to squelch rock and roll, and it seized on this. Jerry was the nation's whipping boy. It's true that I did not put a lot of money into a comeback for Jerry because, in view of all this, I felt it would be throwing good money after bad."

The Jerry Lee incident underscores a larger part of the Sun story at that time. Adversities were occurring with increasing frequency. After Carl Perkins had hit with "Blue Suede Shoes," he was on his way to New York to do a network TV show when he had a disastrous automobile wreck. While Carl was flat on his back in the hospital, Elvis covered him on the song. Though Carl would recover to continue selling records at a steady clip, he was never able to recapture his initial magic.

In addition, Sam began spending less and less time in the studio, turning over the control board to assistants. This did not set well with the artists; neither did their growing disputes with Sam over money matters. By this time many of the boys had married and started families. Suddenly their miniscule salaries weren't enough anymore. Perhaps even more important, the newly-spoused husbands and fathers, mindful of their familial responsibilities, began tapering off on those all-night, hard-drinking, hell-raising recording sessions that had produced so many incredible smash hits.

And Jud and Sam had finally come to an irreconcilable parting of ways. Jud left for the last time. Sam

also fired producers Bill Justis and Jack Clement on the same day, Bill for "insubordination" and Jack for laughing about it. There were times when, if the next Elvis or Jerry Lee had come through the door wanting to cut a tape, there wouldn't even have been a producer in the studio to accommodate him.

On top of all this, Sam was having trouble with the IRS and, as practically everything he made was going to the Federal government, he cut down drastically on record releases. It seemed as if the chain of events that had made everything possible for Sam Phillips was now conspiring to take it all away, and one by one, the fantastic array of talent that he had assembled began to leave him. For an enterprise that had so much international impact, Sun Records had an astonishingly short heyday: the main reason being—and this is the most incredible fact of the Sun Story—

"... All this talk of my becoming a fat cat and losing interest in Sun Records was totally unfounded," said Sam ...

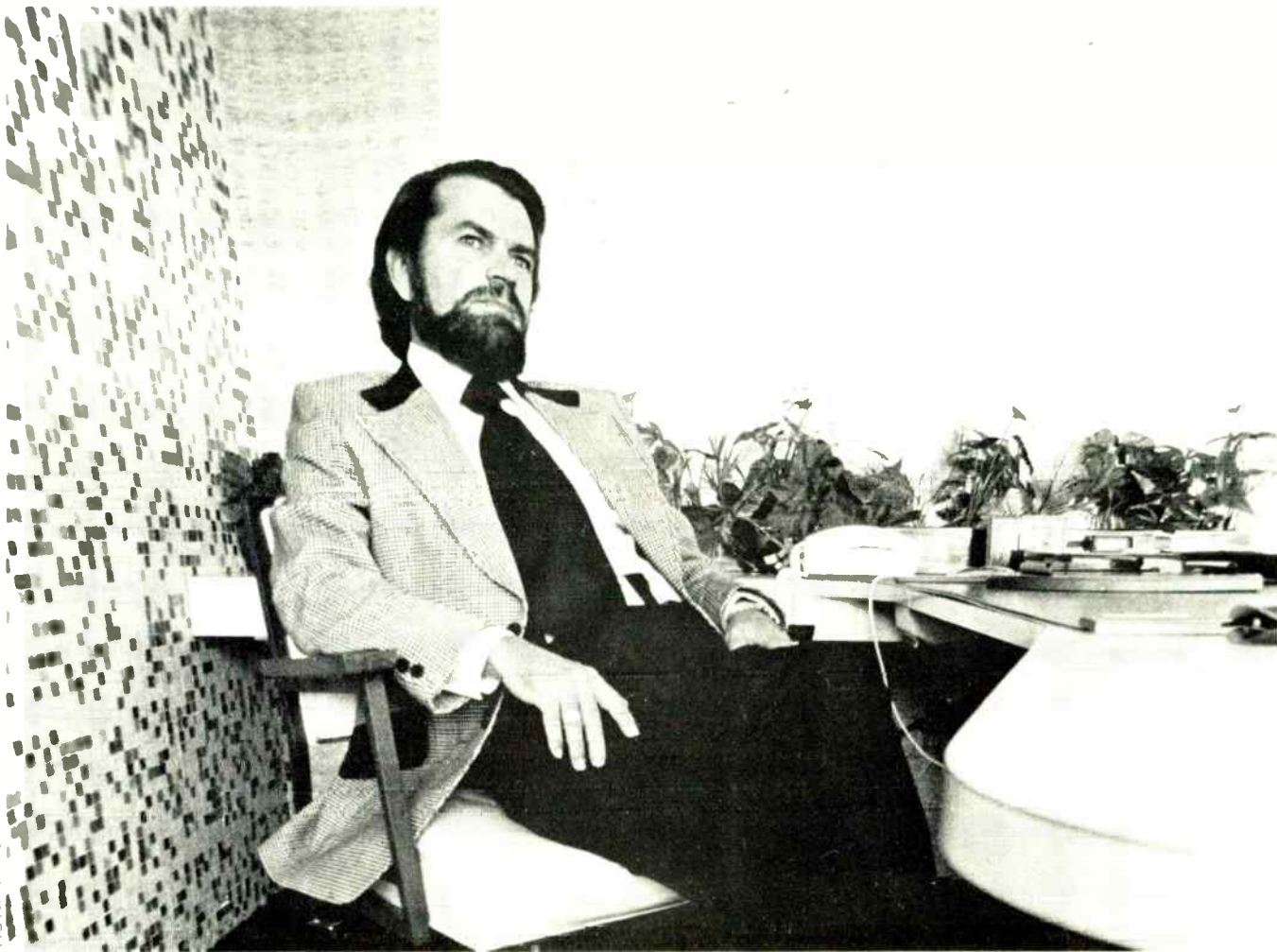
that it is the only record company no artist ever resigned with. By this time the major labels had realized they could not wish away, nor successfully disparage, rock and roll and, therefore, belatedly rushed to cash in on the bonanza. The most logical place for them to rush, waving their big checks and making their grandiose promises, was Sun Records, with its stable of artists, most of whom, despite their prodigious successes, were still impressionable country boys.

"There was a certain mystique about being on a major label," said Carl Perkins. "And we were always suspicious of Sam, figuring he was holding back on us. When the majors approached us, we all signed right up. But it didn't take us long to learn that being on a major label wasn't all we had imagined, and that Sam was probably the straightest man we ever dealt with. We soon realized we had never been as well off as we had with Sun."

"All this talk of my becoming a fat cat and losing interest in Sun Records was totally unfounded," said Sam. "I had become very disenchanted with many things. From 1950 to 1958 I had put in eight hard years to build something that had never been built before. I had struggled, sweated and sacrificed to make Sun Records into what it was. The major companies waited until I had done all their work for them, and then came to my artists with their big deals. And I knew that some of the deals offered my artists were impossible to fulfill. I had become turned off by other things. It had gotten so you had to give away 300 records to sell 1,000. I felt like I didn't have the right to give away royalties, nor the duty to do anyone else's promotion. I was contending with the IRS, I was having trouble collecting from some distributors, and I had worked long and hard and thought it was time to take a rest." Since the latter part of 1965 he's spent most of his time out of the record business.

That was eight years ago. Sam Phillips has not tried to relive past glories, nor rest on his laurels. A real-life Jack Horner, he has stuck his thumb into many pies and never failed to pull out the choicest plum. His being one of the original stockholders in Holiday Inns alone makes him a very rich man. "We





Mr. Sun Records today: Sam Phillips, a major Holiday Inns stockholder, still misses the bygone days of glory.

always used to joke about how tight Sam was," said one associate. "Looks like he got the laugh on all of us."

And Sam has mellowed over those eight years. The old wounds have been healed, the old feuds have largely been patched up, and the old animosities have been forgotten.

Carl Perkins, who sees Sam about once a year, remembers one night in Jackson, Tennessee two years ago. "Sam and his two boys came up and spent the day with me. Y'know, my wife fixed a big dinner and Johnny and the Statlers and everybody came over. He was really, really happy. He had tears in his eyes, and he said, 'Carl, I've thought and I've wanted to sit down with you and hear you play that old guitar again. Today has meant so much to me...' And it did to me, too.

"He asked me to play some of the old songs because he remembered how it was then and how he had a hand in telling me when to push that little old string. The reminiscing was great, and it was the same with John. We all sat there in the den and sang and played all evening."

One doesn't spend such a large part of a life in creating such a venture without retaining something of it in his soul. Despite his current business interests and wealth, and notwithstanding the old quarrels and subsequent disillusionments, Sam misses the bygone days of glory.

"I don't have the feeling anymore that I'm con-

tributing anything," he said. "I miss coming out of the studio and seeing the record break. Back then I felt almost like a preacher feeding the gospel to hungry souls. It hurts me today to see the big mergers and the huge, impersonal companies, because they've lost something in creativity."

In July, 1969, Sam sold Sun to Nashville impresario Shelby Singleton, who was at that time being regarded by Nashville the way Memphis had once regarded Sam. Since then Shelby has fallen on harder times, and though Shelby talks optimistically (Shelby *always* talks optimistically) about his plans to put new life into the Sun label, any corresponding action has been hard to see. "You have to watch ole Shelby, though," said one of his former artists. "He can be down one time and right back up the next."

Whatever happens with Shelby, however, a Sun resurgence seems unlikely because the *era* of Sun Records is over and gone. It seems almost ancient history to recall the days of Saturday morning matinees, hanging out at the corner drugstore, and the Friday night sock hops at the school gym; when the pony-tailed bobby soxers identified with Debbie Reynolds, envied Marilyn Monroe, and swooned over Tab Hunter.

But the times couldn't last. We were already experiencing a vague uneasiness over Russia's sending up Sputnik 1. The days of innocence were rapidly drawing to a close. Forever. And with them would go Sun Records—the symbol of that era. ■

When he stopped
writing songs, the country took
a turn for the worse.

**Dear Folks
Sorry I Haven't
Written Lately
Roger Miller**

including:
Open Up Your Heart
Whistle Stop/I Believe In The Sunshine
Mama Used To Love Me But She Died
Shannon's Song



Cheer up.
He's writing again.
Presenting the debut album
by Roger Miller.

On Columbia Records and Tapes

I couldn't have picked a worse day: the 17th day of a 17-day road tour. The desk clerk of the Sheraton Penn-Pike in suburban Philadelphia told me Jeannie C. Riley's party had checked in at 6:30 A.M., after an all-night drive from Massachusetts. She'd given three shows there the afternoon and evening before. Jeannie was evidently bushed when I called her room at 12:30. She'd need some time to get herself together. Fine.

Two hours and several candy bars later, I was pacing the hotel lobby. I had made several dashes into the ladies room to remove tell-tale traces of chocolate. Admittedly, not very professional behavior. Finally the elevator doors opened and a pretty young woman in a blue denim outfit with a matching newsboy cap appeared. It was definitely



to all of it, but I hadn't. Everything happened so fast after 'Harper Valley'... my head was spinning. Then, with my divorce three years ago—I had even more adjustments to make.

"I started to feel that I was losing Kim. I was hardly ever at home. I felt guilty about having to leave her so much 'cause of bein' in show business. Maybe it's wrong, I thought, a sin..."

These days there is hardly any entertaining done in the 15-room Brentwood, Tennessee home which the singer occupies with her daughter and a live-in housekeeper who takes care of Kim when her mother is on the road. "People in Nashville may think I'm a recluse, 'cause when I'm home I just like to spend time with Kim," she said. One way Jeannie found to give herself more

Can Jeannie C. Riley Step Out of 'Harper Valley'?

by Carol Offen

her. Her long, wavy brown hair was hanging loose from beneath the cap—"when I don't have time to tease my hair up, the cap hides it," she confided later—yet she looked far prettier than in any pictures I'd ever seen of her. She was wearing a pink turtleneck top with a turquoise blue medallion. Heads turned as she led the way to the hotel restaurant.

While we puzzled over the menu, it occurred to me that this had to be her first meal since the previous day. "Oh, yeh, it's always like this when I'm on the road," she said casually. "That's why I got into a vitamin routine. I take about 15 natural vitamins a day. A lot of entertainers do, because of havin' to go without eating. I heard about it from Sonny James—he takes about 50 each day... Oh, I'll have the

filet of flounder," she said, looking up at the waitress.

When we resumed our conversation, the cries of a baby at a nearby table interrupted Jeannie's train of thought. "Oh, sweet little child," she said. "I love children," and then, almost under her breath, she added: "I'd love to hold her." The singer's seven-year-old daughter from a former marriage was back home in Nashville. "Kim's my whole world," she said with a smile.

"What's it like to bring up a child alone when you're in show business?" I asked her.

"It was very hard at first, but I've really managed to work it out fine now," she said. "I've had so many adjustments to make in the past five years. Y'know, I only realized recently just *how* many. I really believed that I'd adjusted

time at home was to dissolve her regular band, "The Harper Valley Express." Two years ago, she hired a self-contained act, "The Homesteaders," to back her. They travel separately, meeting only at shows and rehearsals. "It makes everything so much simpler and gives me a lot more freedom," she explained. One member of the Harper Valley Express, however, is still very much with her. New England-born Jon Rogers, who played bass guitar for the group, has been the singer's road manager since the time of the group's breakup.

As the granddaughter of a Nazarene minister, Jeannie C. Riley had had a fairly religious upbringing. "I was just religious enough to let it worry me that I didn't worship more," she said, "but not enough to really do anything about





PHOTO MARSHALL FALLWELL

it for a long time.” Through traveling, the Texas-born singer was exposed to a different world than the one she’d known when she was growing up in Anson (population: 2,900), in the West Texas cotton belt. She started finding fault with the ways back home and began looking for “some new ways, new answers.” Along came astrology, and soon Jeannie was hooked, so deeply, in fact, that she now says “Satan was trying to take over my life. I never will buy another astrology book.”

Then she turned to inspirational literature, starting off with Pat Boone’s own story, described in “A New Song.” “Now, I knew he wouldn’t be writing things that weren’t true,” she said. “It got me thinkin’. Then I got myself a living Bible. My vocabulary wasn’t really wide enough for me to get much out of the King James version. Then, one day in church, during the sermon, I just thought, ‘well, if I don’t

turn to God now, I never will.’”

Mother and daughter attend church together now, Jeannie said, and their faith has brought them closer. “I let Kim make up her own mind about it. She’s just a changed child. It’s beautiful to see,” she said, her clear blue eyes glowing with pride. “She’s understanding now when I go on the road. And I don’t ever feel guilty anymore. You see, I really believe that I was meant to be in show business.”

In 1966, a 20-year-old housewife in Anson, Texas was rocking her baby girl to sleep as she hummed along to a Connie Smith tune on the radio. Glancing at a magazine that was lying open on the table, she noticed a story about her favorite country singer. The article told how Connie Smith had been “discovered” by Bill Anderson while still a housewife in Ohio.

Hmm... she herself had been singing since she was 16. Her ca-

reer plans had come to a halt when she married at the age of 18. But this article...

A few months later, the young family pulled up stakes and headed for Nashville. But first, Jeannie Carolyn Riley had some shopping to do: a country music star would surely be needing stage shoes. She and her mother went to a factory outlet store and found a few pairs of \$25 shoes for \$2 and \$3. Now, she was set.

“Of course, by the time I *did* need them,” Jeannie recalls with a smile, “pointed-toed shoes had gone out of style.”

The story is almost legendary by now. Although Jeannie had already been in Nashville for two years (she’d been doing demo work for Lil Darlin Records, and had even toured with the Johnny Paycheck

“... I really believe that I was meant to be in show business ...”

Show), she was still an unknown in August ’68. She was working as a secretary at Jerry Chesnut’s Passkey Music. Chesnut, a close friend, had given her the job “mainly so I could get experience. I was the worst typist he ever had, he always told me.”

Shelby Singleton first heard Jeannie’s voice on a demo tape she’d made for Paul Perry, then her manager, and a disc jockey at radio station WENO, who was working for Singleton part-time. Shelby told him he’d heard a certain song done by a girl whom he hadn’t signed, yet he thought the song could be a hit. “This girl’s voice is perfect for it,” Singleton told him. “You get whoever she is over here and we’ll cut a number one record.”

Jeannie insists she shared Shelby’s enthusiasm for “Harper Valley PTA” from the start. As soon as she finished the recording session, near two in the morning, she telephoned her mother in Texas. “Ma-ma, I just cut a million-seller,” she told her calmly. “Oh yeh, I’ve heard that before,” her mother replied, assuming her excitable daughter was getting her hopes up falsely again. Jeannie had called Texas many times before to say she’d be having a record out soon. “But this time I was certain,” Jeannie says. “I called her back the next night

and said, 'Mama, forget what I said about the record sellin' a million . . . it's gonna sell *three*.'

Six days after "Harper Valley PTA" was released, Jeannie had to quit her job to go out on tour. A month later, she was singing it live on the Ed Sullivan Show. And then the floodgates opened: a Grammy Award for "Best Female Country Vocal Performance," a CMA award for single of the year, four gold records, more television appearances, and even her own network TV special followed. The public wanted to see the singer of "Harper Valley PTA."

What the public got was an attractive mini-skirted performer in boots, socking it to 'em with more songs of that ilk. Plantation (Shelby Singleton's record label) was glad to oblige with "The Girl Most Likely," and other "sassy" songs, as Jeannie terms them. Her first album on Plantation, *Harper Valley PTA*, included titles like "Satan Place," "Mr. Harper," and so on.

"I was willing to go along with it 'cause it was all very exciting to me," she said sadly. "I just took it all as part of the game, but all the while I was doin' it, it was nothin' but an act—a *front*."

Jeannie and Shelby may have known it was an act, but the public didn't. "I was just tellin' a story in those songs, but I soon found out people thought that's what I was really like. It's not like me to be sarcastic or suggestive. But that's the kind of material they started expectin' of me," she added.

Translated into hard facts, what it all meant was that a love ballad like "There Never Was A Time" didn't do nearly as well for Jeannie as did "The Girl Most Likely," which was a number one hit after "Harper Valley." Nor did it do as well as its flip side, "Back Side of Dallas," a song about a prostitute. And, more recently, her version of "When Love Has Gone Away," perhaps her best vocal performance on any release, never got off the ground. "The public will accept a gimmick from me, but I want to be accepted for *me*," she said.

"Frankly, I've been very fortunate to be able to keep up my house and car 'n all these past few years, without any big hits," she said. Although she no longer plays nightclubs, Jeannie's concert schedule hasn't slackened; she averages

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PHOTOS MARSHALL FALLWELL

When Jeannie's at home she spends most of her free time with Kim. Wilma, their live-in housekeeper pinch-hits at prayertime when Jeannie's on the road.

about 15 days on the road a month—in the summer as much as 21 days. The reason? “I know there are people more talented than I am, but I think mine is more a personality thing,” she said in a soft voice. “I believe I can give a Christian testimony in song, not by doing gospel—’cause that limits your audience—but simply by doing wholesome, meaningful material. I think that’s where my place is.

“Of course I owe a lot to ‘Harper Valley,’” she said wearily. “But I only wish it hadn’t all happened so quickly. I realize now it would’ve been much better for my career if I’d had a few hits before that came out.”

In an attempt to communicate her real self, Jeannie has devoted much of her time in recent months

to songwriting. The songs, which are “very personal” and are drawn from her own experiences, will probably be included on her upcoming MGM album. “I’d like to record only songs that I’ve written myself or are similar to my own feelings and beliefs,” she explained. “I realize now that I was sellin’ myself short to do something because of its sales value.”

She heaved a long sigh. “I think that if I’d been an outsider lookin’ in,” she said slowly, “and I didn’t know who Jeannie C. Riley was, I would’ve thought of her as a sarcastic sexpot or something, too.”

When she first came to Nashville, the young housewife had planned to record pure country. “I was tryin’ really to be a replica of Connie

Smith for a while,” she said, shaking her head in amusement. “I didn’t even want to do contemporary stuff—a country singer was all I ever intended to be. But ‘Harper Valley’ put me in that contemporary bag.”

The singer says she had little choice in her material, with Shelby Singleton as her producer. “I liked Shelby, I really did,” she added em-

“... The public will accept a gimmick from me, but I want to be accepted for me ...”

phatically. “But I couldn’t talk to him about that. His attitude was ‘I record you. This is my label. We do it my way.’”

Jeannie’s material started to take on that country flavor she wanted toward the end of her stay at Plantation. “We finally found the right bag for me,” she says, “and I’d still be in it if Plantation had been fair to me.” In late 1971, Jeannie moved to MGM in the midst of a dispute over her royalties. There was a law suit: Singleton said she had a 5-year contract, the singer said three—and won. “I had to move on,” she says sadly. “But we’re still friends. I still send Shelby a Christmas card each year.”

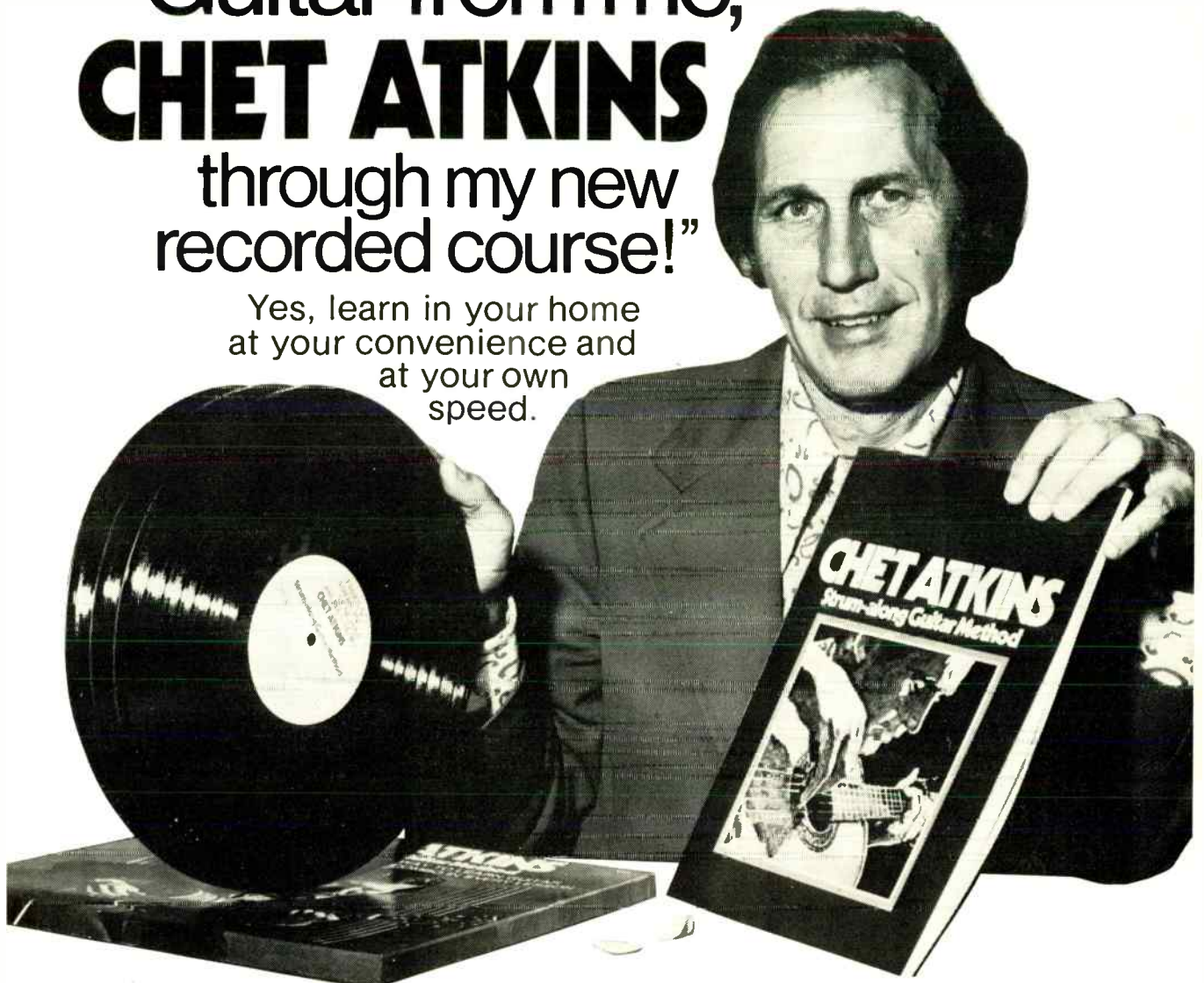
The song that triggered the shift in style was a tune called “Oh Singer,” written by Singleton’s staff writers, Mira Smith and Margaret Lewis. It’s the song Jeannie’s most partial to of all her recordings. “And Shelby really liked it—he built a whole album around the sound [titled, *Jeannie*],” she says excitedly. “It was the kind of song I’d been tellin’ him I wanted to do all along. It was real down-home. I think if I recorded more of that, people would accept it from me.”

With ballads like “Oh Singer,” “Country Girl,” and “Things Go Better With Love,” Jeannie’s lyrics started “getting cleaner” and she “quit puttin’ out those sarcastic songs. Things would do well for me,” she said, “but nothin’ would do really big.”

We were interrupted by Jon Rogers, with George Logan, who drives the singer’s luxury bus, and Ronnie Pelletieri, her light man. It was after 6:00 and they were ready to leave for the show. Five minutes later we all filed onto the “Harper Valley Express.” Jeannie and I walked past the front sitting room,

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Jeannie C. Riley: Five years older now—and wiser—than the star-struck young singer who recorded “Harper Valley PTA” in the summer of ‘68.

with its gold and green brocade couch and thick green carpet, past the sleeping areas, and into her “bedroom”—her real home for much of the time. “I get my best sleep on the bus,” Jeannie said, pointing with pride to various items in the velvet-blue decor. “That’s where my little girl sleeps when she comes along on a trip,” she said, indicating a fold-down couch that becomes a bed.

When the bus pulled into the Temple University Music Festival Theater parking lot, everyone else hurried off to tend to preparations for the show. “I’ve still got an hour or so before I have to start getting ready,” Jeannie said. Her throat was apparently getting dry. “George’ll get us some tea. I always have some before I go on. It helps my voice,” she explained.

We moved up front to have our tea and a few cookies that Jeannie found hidden in a cabinet. This would be her dinner (mine, too, as I

realized later). While she sipped her tea, Jeannie made up a list of her songs for the Homesteaders. She was obviously tired: “Goodness, I can hardly think straight,” she said. “I don’t even know what I’m writing.”

Ronnie Pelletieri ran in and handed Jeannie a card, listing the

“... That’s the way it usually is. I almost never see a theater before I go on...”

auditorium’s vital statistics: *Stage height—4 feet; distance from first row—3 feet...*

“Hmmm... 3 feet. That’s awful close. I guess that rules out a short dress. At that angle...” Pelletieri nodded in agreement.

The card also told at which side of the stage to exit for the dress change. All of the information was vital, since the performer wouldn’t have a chance to see the stage until she walked out there to sing.

“That’s the way it usually is,” she explained. “I almost never see a theater before I go on.”

I left her alone to get ready while I roamed around the backstage area. Just as the Homesteaders were finishing their act, Jeannie appeared in the wings wearing a full-length Bangkok silk-print dress with a high neck; her hair was swept high at the crown, falling softly beneath her shoulders. She radiated far more vitality and warmth than I would have thought possible after 17 days on the road.

Once onstage, Jeannie seemed thoroughly at ease. She sang the kind of songs she says she “came to Nashville for”: love ballads, down-home country tunes and hits like “Okie From Muskogee” (which drew cheers). As a lead-in to “Oh Singer,” Jeannie told the audience how she often missed the simple things in life, things she’d taken for granted as a child growing up in the country.

Take me back, oh singer,

Take me back.

I’m livin’ a life I can’t slow down

Except with a song...

“Oh Singer” © 1971 Shelby Singleton Corp.

The song drew a respectable applause. About two-thirds through the show, The Homesteaders did a country hoedown number while Jeannie exited for a quick dress change. She returned in a low-cut mini-dress with white boots to sing “Harper Valley PTA.” The audience cheered and whistled. I winced inwardly. I’d known that it would be part of the show, but it was a jolt nevertheless. “The audience is happy ‘cause they get what they expected to see, but I get to show them my real self up to that point,” was how she rationalized it.

When she finished singing “Harper Valley,” with a few encores, Jeannie told the audience, “I’ve had a lot of fun with that song and I owe a lot to it—but people have gotten the wrong impression of me because of it. I’m much more at home in a long gown,” she said. “You see, I’m really just a country girl at heart.”

After a few more songs, Jeannie blew a kiss to the audience and left the stage amid cheers and loud applause.

“Did you see that?” she said later with a frown, looking down at her mini-outfit. “They loved it.” ■

LEE CLAYTON

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Hank Snow Moves On

by Marshall Fallwell

Minnie Pearl asked me if I thought Hank Snow was a funny man. I had called her to get some information and maybe a few stories on him. "I think he's one of the funniest men alive," she said. "Oh, I don't mean in a slapstick kind of way. He's not a clown. He's got this dry humor, this quiet humor, that just cracks me up. I've known him for a long time, and that's what I remember him for: the good times we all had."

I had been told—by people who didn't really know him—that Hank Snow was cold and humorless. And to be truthful, it's easy to get that impression when you first meet him, especially in Nashville, where so many people are their own publicity agents, ready to gladhand you and call you "buddy" the first time you meet. Hank Snow doesn't come on that way. When you see him on the stage at the Opry, bright as a Christmas tree in his embroidery and sequins, playing one of his beautiful guitars, you are looking at a real pro. Watch his eyes. They are not starstruck or full of a stagey emotion, but are looking right back at you, calmly and clearly. Merle Haggard does the same thing. Both command your absolute attention before you know what's happening, and they do it quietly, without jumping around and screaming.

Once backstage, Hank goes straight to the dressing room. The first time I met him, the tiny room was packed with hot, sweaty people, myself included. There was, as always, a party atmosphere backstage. Hank was in a corner by himself, putting his instrument into a very expensive-looking case. A string that had broken onstage dangled uselessly against the frets. People milled about him busily, but he went calmly about what he was doing, not aloof nor holier-than-thou, but business-like. He shook hands with me and looked significantly at my tape recorder, as if to say that in the midst of this noise and confusion was not the time or the place for an interview. So, I gave him my name and phone. A few days later, at 8 A.M., he called and set up our first talk.

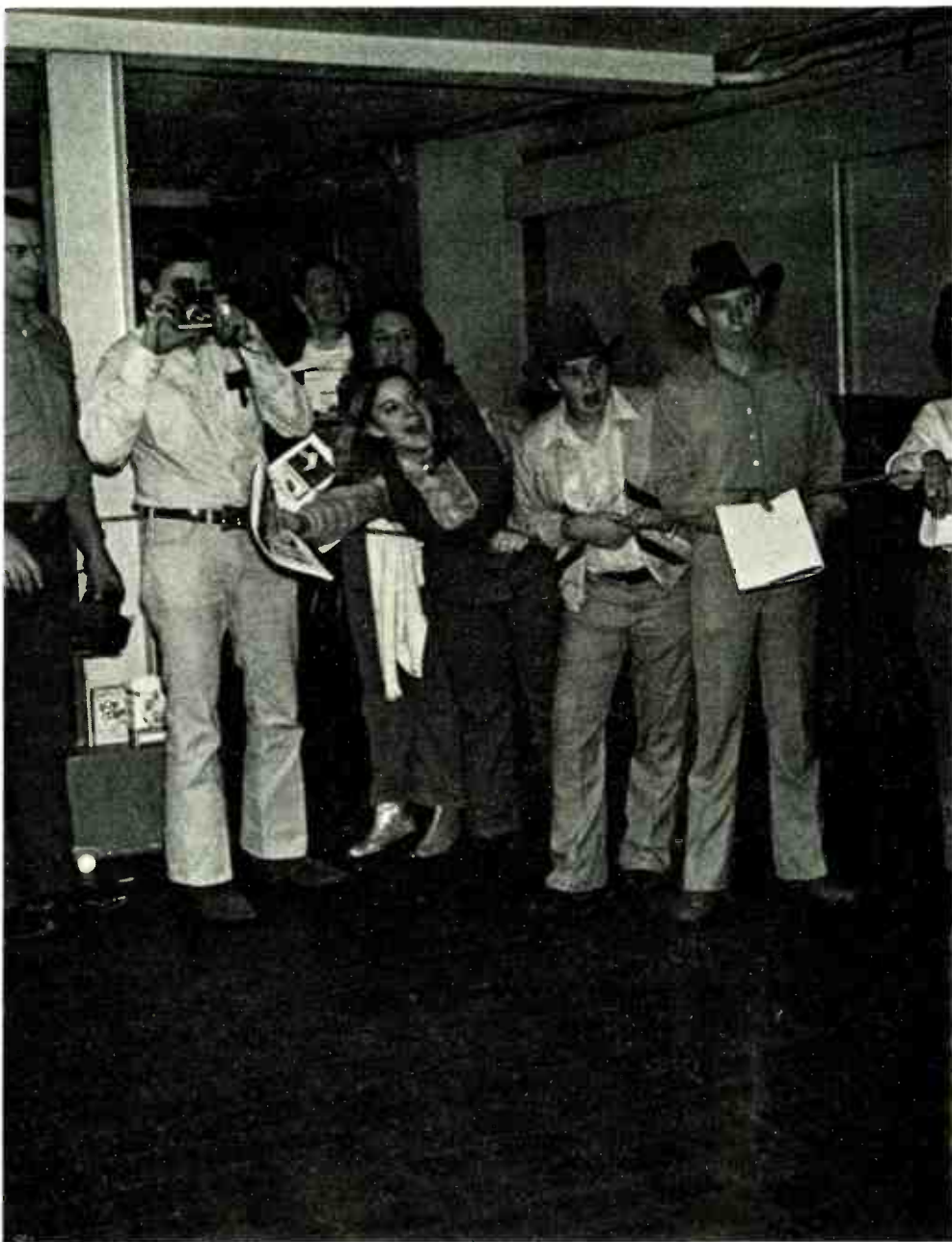


PHOTO: GEOFF WINNISHAM

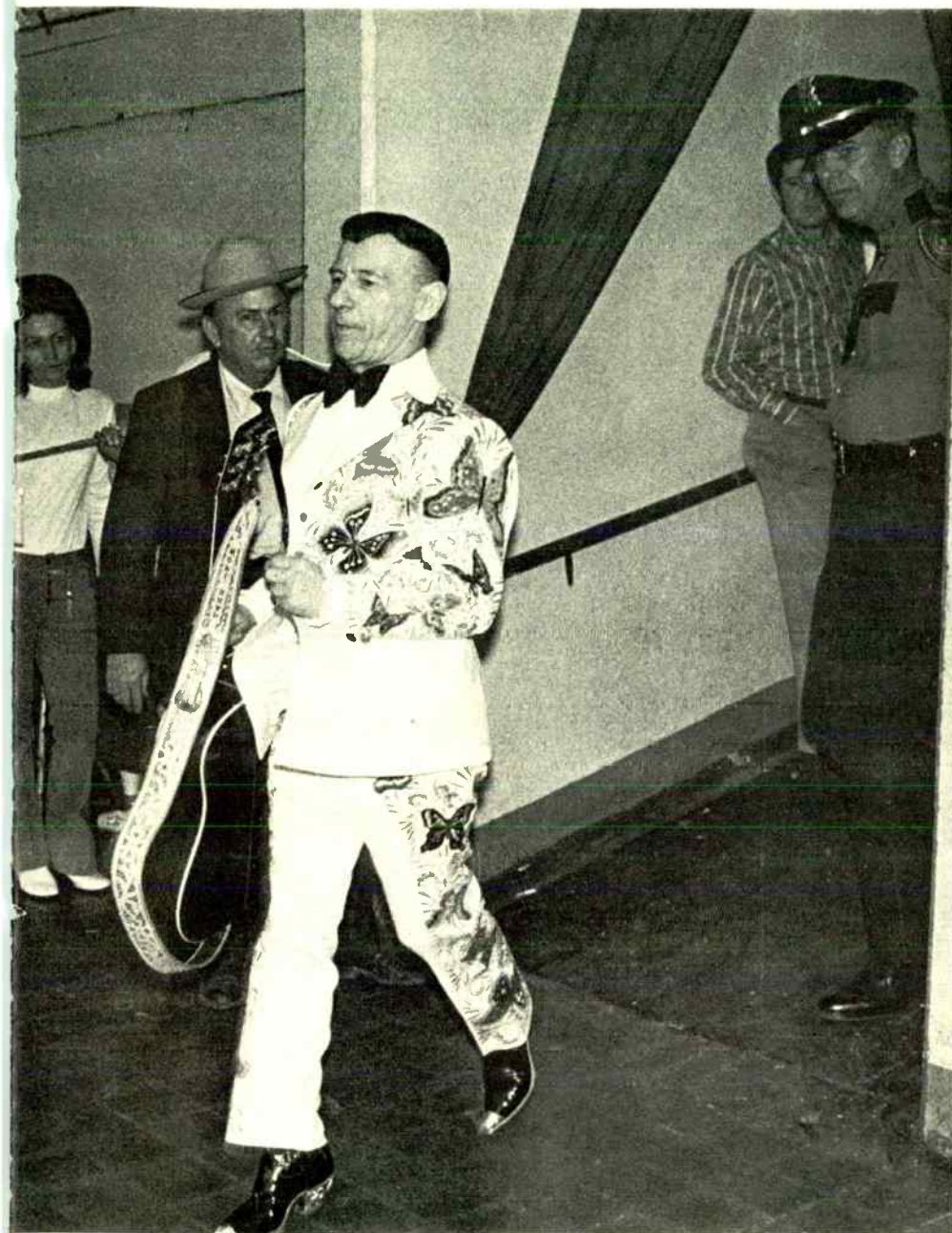
Hank Snow's Rainbow Ranch is a few miles north of Nashville, not far from Maybelle Carter's home (Maybelle is a close friend of Hank's wife, Min). A white, Western-style rail fence surrounds a lovely house set among trees and flower borders. The whole place gives a feeling of quiet and solitude. Around back is a stable and a field which was once a pasture for his horses. Shawnee, Hank's trained horse and part of his act in earlier days, is buried there.

Adjoining the house is Hank's office. Among the furnishings are several stuffed animals, something

that puzzled me for a while since Hank claims never to have killed anything. It was here that our conversations took place.

His story is extraordinary. He is 59 years old and one of America's most respected folk singers; has been with the same record label, RCA, since 1936; has remained happily married to one woman for the same amount of time; has been a member of the Opry for 23 years; did all this without getting involved with alcohol to any great extent and not at all with drugs; has no complaints; and would do it all over

In The Old Tradition



again. "I'm not even really religious," he says, "although I believe in God and the Bible. Maybe I ought to be since my son is a preacher."

As he warmed up, and as he talked about his life and struggles, he showed himself to be a deeply sincere and passionate man, a man who had been paying his dues even as a child. As a matter of fact, perhaps the most astounding thing about Clarence Edward Snow is that he survived his youth at all. He was born in Nova Scotia in 1914. When he was eight, his family split

up, sending one of his sisters to work in a shirt factory, two into orphanages and himself to his grandparents' home. Hank wanted to live with his mother after she remarried, but his stepfather made it painfully clear that he was not wanted. So, at the age of 12, he went to sea as a cabin boy. The story almost ended there.

In the North Atlantic, between the mainland of Canada and Newfoundland, there is an island called Cap Sable, known as "The Ocean's Graveyard." One night, the gales blew 100 miles per hour and churn-

ed the seas mountain-high. "You tell someone the seas get that big and they don't believe you," Hank says. "That night, they wouldn't let me on deck, so I went below and did the best I could. Everybody on deck had ropes around their waists so they wouldn't wash away. Once, the Captain was washed off the prow of the ship and back on the stern. Anyway, the next day, we learned that 122 men from neighboring ships had lost their lives. Nearly all were from one town called Blue Rocks."

At sea, though, the worst dangers were icebergs, ocean liners and sharks. This was before the shipping lanes were moved southward after the *Mauretania* disaster. As for the sharks, Hank says the sailors would catch them in a kind of noose, kill them with axes and throw them back in the sea. He doesn't seem to mind so much the memory of the sharks being killed. "They were a danger to us, you know."

Life at sea had its high points, too. The sailors would throw nickels to see little Hank sing and dance. For once, he was appreciated -- they were his family. And the sea was beautiful. One time, he remembers, the small fishing vessel he was on was trapped in solid ice from horizon to horizon. All they could do was wait. "The sun on that ice would almost blind you; and I can still see the seals on the ice, thousands of them, all over the place. I'll never forget it."

When life as a cabin boy became too much of a drudge, Hank returned to his mother -- for the last time. His stepfather threw him out again, so he went to work at a fish plant until he wound up in the hospital with a ruptured appendix and doctor's orders not to work for a year. His stepfather saw that he was back at the fish plant in three months. When the work proved too hard for him, he took a job at a stable. It was here that he developed his love for animals of all kinds, especially horses.

After having worked on a salt steamer for 11 days, Hank took some of the money and bought himself his first guitar, a T. Eaton Spe-



cial. For hours, he would sit in front of a Gramophone listening to Jimmie Rodgers' records, trying to copy the chords. Rodgers, of course, was the most important single influence on Hank's music. Much later, he was to record an entire album of Rodgers' compositions; he even named his only child, Jimmy Rodgers Snow.

In 1935, Hank wrote radio station CHNS in Halifax, Nova Scotia for an audition, which he got. To his amazement, he was told to report that very evening with a "theme" song ready for his first broadcast. Hank didn't know what a "theme" song was, but he came anyway. Bang. He was a star. The show was called "Clarence Snow and His Guitar" and paid him precisely nothing. As a matter of fact, in order to eat, he went on welfare. To his embarrassment, the welfare department set him to work sweeping the streets—in front of the radio station. For this work, Hank earned \$2.50 per week and some milk.

The following year he married Min. Min was a blue-eyed girl he met at a Halloween party and fell desperately in love with. When he left the church, he had 50 cents in his pocket. He had spent \$150 to make sure that the wedding was a good one. "Why not," he says, "I knew it was going to be the only one I'd ever have."

That same year he began what has so far been a 37-year association with RCA. The first sides for Victor were "Lonesome Blue Yodel" and "Prisoned Cowboy." Since that time, RCA has released about 80 albums of Hank's music and such a large number of his singles that this reporter is afraid to try to count them. But there were more dues to pay, and deadlier sharks than he'd ever seen as a boy. From 1936 to 1942, Hank cut a few more records, but realized the need to build himself a reputation. He worked a little too hard at it, became weakened and nearly died from a bad case of pleurisy. These years, however, saw Hank's records—about nine in number, now—being played more and more across Canada.

From 1942 to 1944, he made a number of tours for a chain of theaters across the country. These gave him the priceless experience of being in front of mean, raunchy audiences that weren't going to swallow just anything they were given.

Hank's first venture south into the United States (he is now a citizen) came at the urging of a fan named Jack Howard, a music publisher from Philadelphia. Hank's first visit netted him, besides some exposure arranged by Howard, a successful introduction to WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia. By 1946, Hank had enough money and sufficient hopes to buy himself a tent, a couple of trucks, a new Buick and a beautiful horse he called Shawnee. Shawnee was to be-

"... I used to drink," he says, "but I gave it up because it was controlling me, not the other way around..."

come a major part of Hank's act in years to come.

That was also the year the sharks came back. The Singing Ranger, a name he'd picked up somewhere, was flying high. He had money in his pocket and the stars were all out for him. He thought. His first trip to Hollywood was comparable to the first time a gambler holds the dice. If his luck holds, he'll make a

fortune. In 1947, he returned to Canada after a short, tantalizing visit to Hollywood. His following was in Canada, so he went back to make enough money for a second assault on Hollywood. In 1948, he bought some new equipment and a \$2,000 silver saddle for Shawnee and returned. After a few bleak summer months, his savings were gone and he was \$3,000 in debt. He has been taken for just about everything he had. Desperate again, Hank drove to Dallas where he had some friends. When he got there, he had Shawnee, a wife, a baby and \$11 to feed them with.

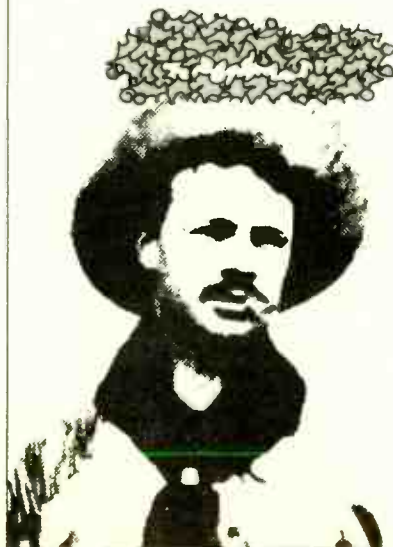
However, in Texas, Hank had a couple of allies, a lady named Bea Terry and a DJ named Fred Edwards at station KRLD. Through their faithful efforts, Hank's records started to take off across Texas. Even so, what money he was to realize from club and concert dates for the next months went to repay the loan company in Hollywood. He hocked his diamond ring and his movie camera. At one point, he had to buy food with a Canadian five-dollar bill he found in his wallet.

So, in 1949, Hank returned to

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Canada where his fans were just as loyal as they'd always been. Canada seems to have pulled Hank Snow out of deep water several times. That fall, when he moved back to Dallas, he found that he'd become a star. He had saved \$6,000 from dates in Canada and was clear of debt. When he played the Sportatorium in Dallas, all previous attendance records were broken when thousands of his fans showed up. That year, the song Fred Edwards and Bea Terry had plugged so hard, "Brand On My Heart," was voted the most popular song played over KRLD.

Shortly thereafter, in Fort Worth, Hank met Ernest Tubb, also a disciple of Jimmie Rodgers. Tubb brought Snow to Nashville, and in January of 1950, Hank became a

member of the Grand Ole Opry. He's been there ever since.

The early fifties were Hank Snow's true heyday. During that period, he cut his theme song, "I'm Movin' On," "Rhumba Boogie," "Golden Rocket," "Bluebird Island"

favorites among the recent releases are the two instrumental albums he has done with Chet Atkins. On the second of these—*C.B. Atkins and C.E. Snow—By Special Request*—Chet joins Hank in singing the old hit, "Poison Love." His re-

... He had spent \$150 to make sure the wedding was a good one. "Why not?" he says. "I knew it was going to be the only one I'd ever have ..."

(with Anita Carter), "Tangled Mind" and "I Don't Hurt Anymore," among others. He has had other hits than these, of course—"Miller's Cave" and "Big Wheels," to name just two. Hank's most recent albums are *The Best of Hank Snow*, *Hank Snow Sings Grand Ole Opry Favorites*, and *The Legend of Ol' Doc Brown*. My own particular

cordings for RCA and his road tours have kept him busy ever since, although lately he has been doing only about 85 days a year on the road.

Recording companies aren't in the least sentimental. If you fail to be of use to them, they drop you, no matter how many hits you've had in the past. Snow is indeed a rare bird because he has been with one company for so long, churning out the albums and singles, obviously making money for himself and the company. And somehow he has managed to do this without changing his music to fit modern fads in production or studio techniques. His style is still as clean and uncomplicated as it was in the beginning. There is a purity to it that many good artists have lost trying to be fashionable.

But the question remains. What kind of man is it that made such an improbable and hazardous life work out so well? The answer is not easy to give. But there are clues. First, he has no visible crutches. He seems to have ironed out any glaring emotional difficulties some time ago; or maybe he was just too busy staying alive to have time for problems. "I used to drink," he says, "but I gave that up because it was controlling me, not the other way around. I drank for one reason—to get drunk. But I've never taken drugs. Nope, I don't have any problems that way."

On this same subject, he told some sad stories about the times he went on tour with Hank Williams to back Williams up in case he failed to show. "One time, we hired a guard for Hank's door so he couldn't get any liquor. But he just leaned out the window and threw a ten-dollar bill to someone in the street and asked him to get him a pint. When the guy came back, he tied the end of a bedsheet to the bottle, and Hank just hauled it up."

There isn't a trace of humor in



PHOTOS: MARSHALL FALLWELL

Hank Snow has managed to retain his popularity without changing his style of music—or stage clothes—to fit modern fads.

Hank's voice when he tells these stories. When it comes to human tragedy, he is truly without humor. I suggested that perhaps the life of a performer on the road could become too much to endure—endless hotels and restaurant food, and so forth. Hank said, "Hell, what's wrong with that?" Then, I remembered what kind of life he'd had before he became a performer, the gales off Cap Sable, the fear of a lonely death from peritonitis without anyone who cared for you, and having to shovel salt for days in order to buy a guitar. Anything would be better than that.

The other clue to his character is the presence of the stuffed animals in his office, something that had puzzled me at first. Hank has always loved animals: Shawnee, a pet dog, the seals on the ice. I think he sees them as images of himself as he once was, a helpless, vulnerable creature in a world that is not very nice, a world full of sharks.

After the interview we went outside to do some pictures. By the garage, he called to an old man, who was fiddling with one of the cars. "Squirrely, I want you to do some-



thing for me." After he'd sent him on his errand, we walked around to the front for some pictures by the gate. "Squirrely's a faithful man. He's been with us for a long time,

helping out." Hank waved his hand, taking in the entirety of Rainbow Ranch, and said, "Squirrely's got a home here for as long as he wants, for the rest of his life." ■

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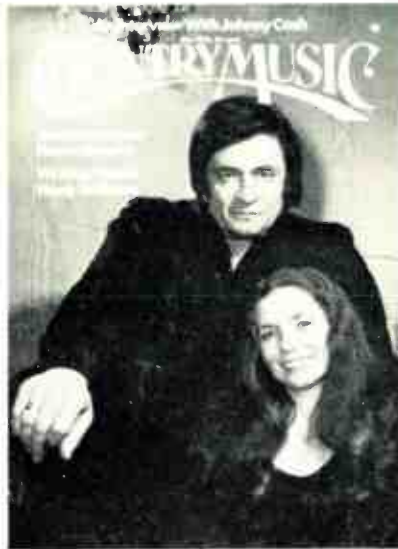


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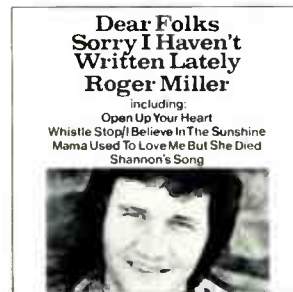
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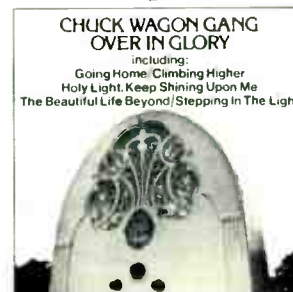
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Reviews

Merle Haggard . . . Johnny Cash & June Carter . . . Dolly & Porter . . .



Merle Haggard
I Love Dixie Blues
Capitol ST-11200 (record)
8XT-11200 (8-track tape)

Very few country performers have shown as much achievement and capacity for sustained growth as Merle Haggard. Going all the way back to the beginning, every album has been terrific on its own, and at the same time Merle has been getting better and better. *I Love Dixie Blues* is no exception.

For a performer of such instinctive soulfulness, Haggard is among the most thoughtful of musicians. His explorations of the music of Bob Wills and Jimmie Rodgers have turned him into something of a country music scholar, and lately he has pushed his historical research even further back into pre-country music blues and Dixieland. Although to anyone hearing this album it must seem perfectly natural that Hag is into Dixie, it is doubtful that any other performer

would try such a thoughtful integration of country and Dixie.

Merle and the Strangers—joined on some numbers by the Dixieland Express in this live recording—don't try to recreate an "old" sound, not even Jimmie Rodgers-some-time-Dixie. The music here is something *new*; it's modern country given added depth and excitement by the rhythms and instrumentation of Dixieland jazz.

The songs fall about evenly between Haggard favorites like "Carolyn" and "The Emptiest Arms in the World," and standards such as "Lovesick Blues" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans." The two bands (the Strangers and the Dixieland Express) are as professional as ever. In fact, the Strangers are even a little more inspired than usual, possibly by the chance to play off against some new instruments, and Merle himself is in top form as he ranges over

material as varied as "Everybody's Had the Blues" and the rollicking "Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)," which he says he learned off a 1934 record by Emmet Miller.

Whatever influence Hag's Dixieland is going to have on the rest of country music, it's clear that he's into something that really works for him. Bravo. JOHN GABREE

Johnny Cash & June Carter Cash
Johnny Cash And His Woman
Columbia KC 32443 (record)
CA 32443 (8-track tape)

Tell the truth. When was the last time an album hit you over the head with the effect of a carefully wielded two-by-four? Well, that's what it's like listening to this LP for the first time, the initial offering from the Cashes' produced by Don Law.



In vivid contrast to the George & Tammy/Porter & Dolly traditions (deservedly successful on their own merits), this record jumps out at you. Then it tones itself down to unravel a series of documentary-type sagas which cannot help but keep your undivided attention.

There are no frills—those who want their "sweetnin'" even where it most assuredly does not belong, may be disappointed. This is a most direct album, production-

wise: two upfront voices, Johnny's guitar and only occasional support from musicians outside the scant and rugged rhythm section. Johnny's always been at his best this way, and June's participation has seemingly given all concerned the spirit of confidence to stick to what is basic and essential.

Her expletives on "Allegheny" are war whoops. The opening cut, "The Color Of Love," by Billy Edd Wheeler, reels off more down-home metaphors per second than any tune I've heard in a long time. Both "Saturday Night In Hickman County" and "Tony" are delivered as Cash vocal/guitar solos. They have to be because the words are too powerful to run the risk of obscuring them in any manner whatsoever.

Johnny Cash And His Woman is no mere flowery valentine. This labor of love is profoundly accented by the dedicated work of a master of country music with his equally talented wife by his side. ROBERT ADELS

Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner
Love And Music
RCA APL 1-0248 (record)
APS 1-0248 (8-track tape)

Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner's albums have always been good; so good in fact that you have to go back and listen to them in sequence to realize how much better they are getting. It is hard to imagine two more complementary talents, but their virtues are quite distinct.

Porter, for instance, is one of the best "stone" country singers around. He belongs to that school of singing in which the dramatic effect of the words is as important as

Roy Clark . . . Lefty Frizzell . . . Loretta Lynn . . .

the notes—and there is nobody this side of Merle Haggard who can “act out” a song with his voice better



than Porter does. Somehow, with each consecutive record, his technical singing becomes better without sacrificing any of the soul. Dolly, on the other hand, has one of the finest concert voices in country music. She has always been able to sing all the notes and then some—and she still can, but with each album the emotional and dramatic range of her singing improves and broadens.

Their songwriting talents are likewise complementary. Porter is one tough, old-time country writer, and as he progresses he just gets tougher and more country. “Wasting Love” on this album is as good as a low-down country song as you could want. Dolly’s music, on the other hand, has roots outside hard country in Appalachian and Soul melodies and tempos, and on this record “There’ll Always Be Music” and “Come To Me” really reflect these influences.

In addition to all these virtues, Porter and Dolly also have the good sense to recognize good material from other sources. And as a result we get to hear a super rendition of Carl Butler’s “If Teardrops Were Pennies,” a country classic if there ever was one. **DAVE HICKEY**

Roy Clark

Come Live With Me
Dot DOS 26010 (record)
8150-26010 (8-track tape)

Every record company in the business would like to have rosters full of Roy Clarks. The somewhat unspectacular

beginnings of his career are humorous now—how long has it been since you’ve heard anyone ask “Roy Who?” Nope, he’s firmly entrenched. And about the time you’ve eased off playing his “new” album, there’s a newer one staring at you from the record rack.

A weak cut or two has been known to sneak onto occasional Clark albums, but if there’s a weak one on this album it slipped by this reviewer. This is all straight singing—no loose pickin’ or clownin’ involved—and Roy has a number of directions in which he can go straight. “Come Live With Me” is a tender love song; “Soul Song” is the same emotion expressed in funky exuberance, and “A Daisy A Day” has much of the attractive innocence of the “Bicycle Built For Two” idiom.

On the other hand, pain gets into high gear in an up-



tempo version of “Lonesome-est Lonesome,” while “Nobody Wins” and “Soft Rain” enable robust Roy to reach way down into the depths of his feeling for country music and lay something heavy all over you. Kristofferson’s “Why Me” will possibly become the “How Great Thou Art” of this decade, and Roy’s rendition could contribute to that.

There’s more: “I’ll Paint You A Song” is similar in overall tone to the title song, and could have been a title song of its own. The same forceful poignancy that helped put Roy in your living room a decade ago with “The Tips Of Your Fingers” hits you square in the face on “Somewhere Between Love and Tomorrow,” and we get

commendable readings on “How Would I” and “Daddy Don’t You Walk So Fast.” About the only way to get a better album is to go the “best of” route. Even if this album was made to satisfy the need for product flow and to protect Gulf and Western investments, it’s a good show. **BILL LITTLETON**



Lefty Frizzell

Lefty Frizzell Sings the Songs of Jimmie Rodgers
Columbia C 32249 (record)
CA 32249 (8-track tape)

Forty years after his death, Jimmie Rodgers’ influence on all of country music remains as strong as ever. Many of today’s living legends—Hank Snow, Ernest Tubb, Bill Monroe, Merle Haggard, and Lefty Frizzell himself among them—began their careers singing his songs, and still incorporate the Rodgers sound into their music.

This is not a new album: it was recorded from 1951 to 1953, and has long been unavailable to the public. Now, thanks to Columbia’s re-issue series, it’s back in the original monophonic version, unspoiled by phony “simulated stereo” effects. Evidently the producers realized the value of keeping the lyrics up-front, for the back-up band is small (and unfortunately anonymous). To Lefty’s credit, he didn’t try to imitate Jimmie’s voice. By being himself, he managed to recreate that blue and lonesome feel of the original Rodgers recordings. A nice job and a sensitive one.

Things get off to a stomping start with the famous “Blue Yodel Number 2,” with a honky tonk piano and bluesy fiddle blowing along he-

hind Lefty. He sings “My Rough and Rowdy Ways” in a relaxed, confident rural voice. “Treasure Untold” is a sentimental old love ballad which offers a lovely dobro solo, and “I’m Lonely and Blue”—a song in which some of Lefty’s own ballads are rooted—closes Side One.

On Side Two, Lefty does a fine job picking out Jimmie’s famous guitar intro to “Travelin’ Blues:” his singing evokes the wistful sadness of all Jimmie’s ballads on “My Old Pal,” a melancholy waltz: on both “Never No More Blues” and “California Blues” he recreates the familiar blue yodel, backing it with a raunchy Charlie McCoy-style harmonica. This album may have been out of print, but like Jimmie’s songs, it’ll never be out of date. Things this good never are. **RICH KIENZLE**

Loretta Lynn

Love Is The Foundation
MCA-355 (record)
MCAT-355 (8-track tape)

Loretta’s latest LP is a package of “weak” and “strong” songs. We’re speaking here only of the roles Mrs. Lynn portrays on these 11 slices of life set to music; of course, each is a knockout of a performance in its own right.



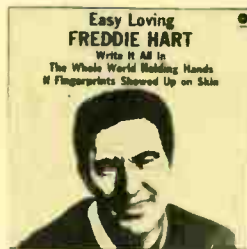
The mutual strength of shared love, the subject of the hit title tune, “Love Is The Foundation,” is evidenced in various proportions on all the cuts. The “weak” woman is the time-honored romantic who views faithfulness as an end in itself. Don Gibson’s “I Love You, I Love You” and Marty Robbins’ “I Gave Everything” are examples of what

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1. Aldrich, Ronnie—Christmas/Lon. 44051
2. All-Star Country Christmas/2 Cap. STBB-348
3. Feliciano, José—Christmas/Vic. LSP 4421
4. Ames, Ed—Christmas Is The Warmest Time Of The Year/
Vic. LSP 4385
5. Anderson, Bill—Christmas/Dec. 75161
6. Anderson, Leroy—Christmas Festival/Dec. 78925
7. Arnold, Eddy—Christmas/Vic. LSP 2554
8. Atkins, Chet—Christmas/Vic. LSP 2423
9. Baez, Joan—Noël/Van. 79230
10. Beach Boys—Christmas Album/Cap. ST 2164
11. Boston Pops Orch., Fiedler—Pops Christmas Party/Vic. LSC 2329
12. Campbell, Glen—That Christmas Feeling/Cap. ST 2978
13. Cannon, Ace—Christmas Cheers/Hi 32022
14. Cash, Johnny—Christmas Spirit/Col. CS-8917
15. Cash, Johnny, Family—Christmas/Col. KC 31754
16. Cole, Nat "King"—Christmas Song/Cap. SW 1967
17. Como, Perry—Christmas Album/Vic. LSP 4016
18. Como, Perry—Seasons Greetings/Vic. LSP 2066
19. Crosby, Bing—Merry Christmas/Dec. 78128
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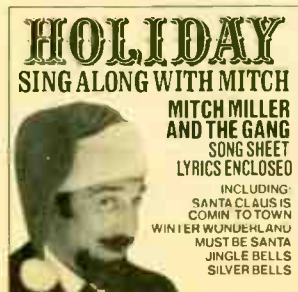
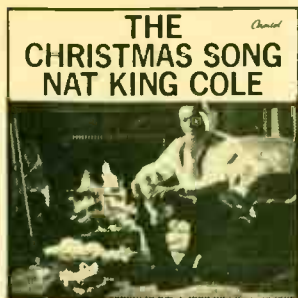
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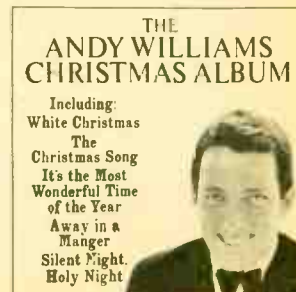
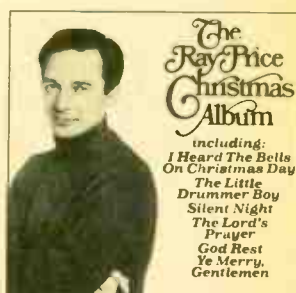


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23. Ford, Tennessee Ernie—Christmas Special/2 Cap. STBB-485
24. Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra—Great Orchestral Music of Christmas/2 Cap. STBB-489
25. Homer & Jethro—Cool Crazy Christmas/Vic. LSP 4001
26. Jones, Sonny—My Christmas Dream/Cap. ST 2589
27. Jackson, Mahalia—Silent Night/Col. CS 8703
28. Kaempfert, Bert—Christmas Wonderland/Dec. 74441
29. Lanza, Mario—Carols/Vic. LSC 2333
30. Lombardo, Guy—Jingle Bells/Dec. 78354
31. Lynn, Loretta—Country Christmas/Dec. 74817
32. Mantovani/Christmas Carols/Lon. 142
33. Mathis, Johnny—Give Me Your Love For Christmas/Col. CS 9923
34. Miller, Mitch—Holiday Sing Along/Col. CS 8501
35. Mills Bros.—Merry Christmas/Dot 25232
36. Mormon Tabernacle Choir—Christmas Carols/Col. MS 6777
37. Nabors, Jim—Christmas Album/Col. CS 9531
38. Mancini, Henry—Merry Christmas/Vic. LSP 3612
39. Owens, Buck—Merry Hee Haw Christmas/Cap. STBB-486
40. Owen, Buck & Susan Raye—Merry Christmas/Cap. ST 837
41. Partridge Family—Christmas Card/Bell 6066
42. Presley, Elvis—Sings Songs of Christmas/RCA LSP 1249
43. Presley, Elvis—Wonderful World of Christmas/Vic. LSP 4579
44. Price, Ray—Christmas Album/Col. CS 9861
45. Pride, Charley—Christmas In My Hometown/Vic. LSP 4406
46. Randolph, Boots—Boots & Stockings/Monu. 18127
47. Reeves, Del—Santa's Boy/UA 6528
48. Reeves, Jim—12 Songs of Christmas/Vic. LSP 2758
49. Simeone, Harry, Chorale—Little Drummer Boy/20th Fox S-3100
50. Sinatra Family—Wish You A Merry Christmas/Rep. 1026
51. Sinatra, Frank—Christmas Album/Cap. DT 894
52. Smith, Kate—Christmas Album/Vic. LSP 3607
53. Snow, Hank—Christmas/Vic. LSP 3826
54. Streisand, Barbara—Christmas Album/Col. CS 9557
55. Mantovani—Christmas Greetings/Lon. 338
56. Texas Boys' Choir—Ceremony Of Carols/Carols of Many Lands/Dec. 710060
57. Mathis, Johnny—Merry Christmas/Col. CS 8021
58. Tubb, Ernest—Blue Christmas/Dec. 74518
59. Vale, Jerry—Christmas Greetings/Col. CS 9025
60. Vaughn, Billy—Have Yourself A Merry Christmas/Dot 25899
61. Wagner, Roger, Chorale—Best Christmas Carols/Cap. ST 2591
62. Waring, Fred & The Pennsylvanians—Christmas Time/Dec. 78172
63. Mormon Tabernacle Choir—Joy To The World/Col. M 30077
64. Shea, George Beverly—Silent Night/ Cam. CXS 9026
65. Waring, Fred—Christmas Magic/Cap STBB 347
66. Wells, Kitty—Christmas Day/Dec. 74349
67. Williams, Andy—Christmas Album/Col. CS 8887
68. Williams, Andy—Merry Christmas/Col. CS 9220
69. Wishing You A Merry Christmas (Atkins, Cramer, Danny Davis, Skeeter Davis)/RCA LSP 4793



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Loretta can do with the form, purring each to a perfect conclusion.

But it's in the "strong" woman song that we truly hear much of what is so special about Mrs. Lynn's ability to think as young as—and often more clearly than—the women's liberation movement. Take her own lyrics in her one songwriting contribution to the new album. She observes, completely without remorse, "We can count our friends on one hand and still have 'Five Fingers Left.'" On her version of Jeanne Pruett's "Satin Sheets," we hear how generous men can still lose the women they love. But her toughness can be amusingly portrayed as well, as in Shel Silverstein's "Hey Loretta." Here, her man compares her to an Irish setter. And though he entices her back with a new pair of overalls, the independence of the gal he's taken for granted for too long wins out in the end as she heads for the highway.

Is "weak" and "strong" an either/or proposition? Not if we listen to the closing song, "You're Still Lovin' Me," in which we come full circle. For here once again, Loretta tells us that love, the "real thing" kind, is indeed the foundation—the true strength of life. And her strengths have once again produced an exceptionally fine album. **ROBERT ADELS**

Louvin Brothers

The Great Gospel Singing of the Louvin Brothers
Capitol ST 11193 (record)
8XT 11193 (8-track tape)

Gospel music has a number of styles. The greatest exponent of what might be called electrified "bluegrass talking gospel" was sung by Ira and Charlie Louvin during the late 1950s. They considered themselves country-western singers, but their two-tenor harmony derived more from classic Appalachia singing than from the Nashville sound.

"Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself," for example, one of



the major cuts on this LP, is an original Louvin composition and is often sung now by college bluegrass ensembles. While talking of sin and Satan and fallen souls, the Louvins' songs always show hope for salvation and the feeling that there is some good in everybody. Many country scholars feel The Louvins were the greatest "pure" singing team in country music history.

"When we sing gospel songs," Ira Louvin said, "we mean every word." On Father's Day, 1965, Ira Louvin was killed in an automobile accident in Missouri. Four days later, tears in his eyes, Charlie played the little town where his brother died. He sang many of the songs that the brothers had sung together—the songs that have been put together on this memorial album.

The Louvins were celebrated for their story songs. "Satan Is Real" was probably their most requested. It tells the story of a man in church who stops the preacher's sermon to testify that the world should fear Satan, for "Satan is real." He tells of his past life when he was a happily married man and a community leader, but Satan led him from the paths of righteousness and ruined his home and family.

There is a straightforward, "artless" quality to the Louvin Brothers' art. Their arrangements are almost nonexistent. They just sing in perfect harmony. Their voices, on a cut like "Make Him A Soldier," are so alike that when the talking parts occur, it is difficult to tell whether it is Ira or Charlie doing the talking. All the songs on the

album are Louvin originals except for Hazel Houser's "River of Jordan" which, as a single, was one of their big-selling records.

Even if gospel music is not your personal delight, if you are building a country music library, this collection of the Louvin Brothers gospel hits is a necessary addition. If gospel is your dish, then the album is a must.

BEAUFORT WILSON

Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen Country Casanova *Paramount PAS-6054 (record)*

More than any other country-rock band, Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen stick to the roots of the music they play. Their previous releases, *Lost In The Ozone* and *Hot Licks, Cold Steel, Trucker's Favor-*



ites featured everything from Sun-era rockabilly and mainstream Nashville country, to Willis Brothers-styled songs. Good as all of this was, I always hoped they'd dig into their supposedly vast Western Swing repertoire. *Country Casanova* has answered this hope, and then some.

The title tune is a country song riding on a Memphis soul beat, and it gives the listener an inkling of the ability of the Airmen to write their own authentic country tunes. "Shall We Meet" is also original, yet it wouldn't be alien to any bluegrass band. Cody's piano licks sound much like Floyd Cramer's. It's a loose, back-porch pickin' thing. "My Window Faces The South," the old swing tune, is given an exhilarating treatment.

"Everybody's Doin' It" features *that* four-letter word, and would no doubt turn off a lot of older country fans, even though it's funny in context.

Side Two has "Rock That Boogie," which features Cody playing the style he plays best, Buddy Holly's "Rave On," and another original rocker, "Sister Sue," which should be picked up by Jerry Lee—though it'd be hard for him to do it with more frantic energy than the Airmen. But the clear standouts of the side are "Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)" and "Honeysuckle Honey."

Cody once told writer John Grissim that the group would like to do for country what the white bluesman Paul Butterfield did in popularizing blues among the rock audience. They have the talent. Let's hope they're successful. **RICH KIENZLE**

Faron Young

Just What I Had In Mind
Mercury SRM-1-674 (record)
MC 8-1-674 (8-track tape)

It's been three albums since the already long-established career of Faron Young became an international success story, thanks to the worldwide reception to "It's Four In The Morning." His records have maintained their even-keel qualities, though on his latest he has added a few new sidemen to help him out with the solid material.

Besides the title hit, "Just What I Had In Mind," there's "It's Warm With Love In Here," which is fast becoming a cold-weather classic. Young does a nice job too with the Loretta Lynn hit, "Love Is The Foundation" as well as on Conway Twitty's "I Can't See Me Without You."

One of the most consistently dependable attributes of Faron's sound is the fine fiddle work. This time, the talents of Vassar Clements augment the likes of Buddy Spicher and Tommy Williams among others. Faron and Charley Pride are the two performers whose records are

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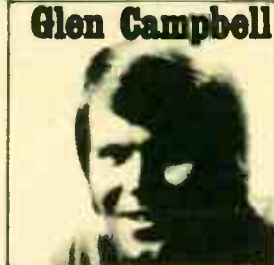
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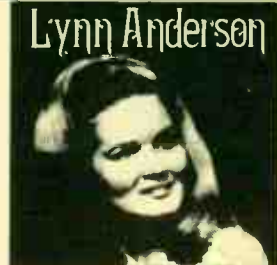
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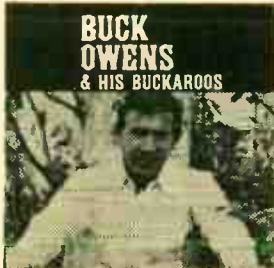
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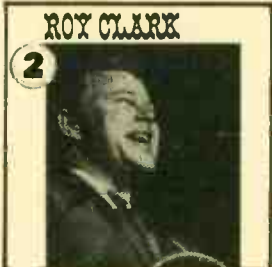
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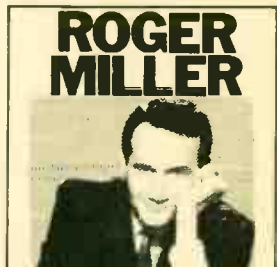
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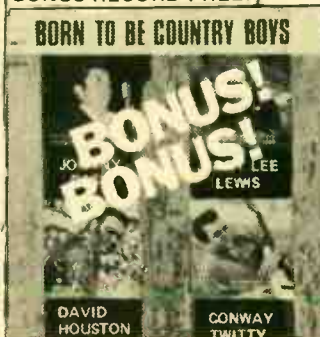


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Tompall Glaser . . . Conway Twitty . . . Recent Releases

best known for keeping down-home fiddle alive in the recording studio, so it's only



fitting that "The Singin' Sheriff" does a version of Charley's hit, "She's Too Good To Be True."

Sideman Pig Robbins continues to impress us with his prominently persistent keyboard work on "Even The Bad Times Are Good." And added to the tenor backup vocals of Dave Hall are the services of Bill Rice. No matter which of them helps Faron out on the duets, the sounds melt into each other perfectly, making the familiar tunes especially fresh and the fresh uniquely familiar.

ROBERT ADELS

Tompall Glaser

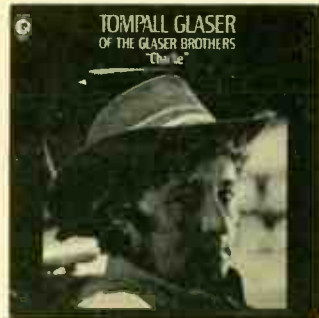
Charlie
MGM SE 4918 (record)

Tompall Glaser has been an integral member of the high-

ly successful Glaser Brothers for more than a decade, but now he has stepped forward with the beginning of a solo career. *Charlie* is the result.

He has proved himself to be as versatile a writer as he is a performer with this album—he wrote six of the 11 tracks—and I think that what we are seeing now is just the tip of his creative iceberg.

The title track is, of course, a winner, but there are others: "Bad, Bad, Bad Cowboy" shows him letting his hair down to reveal a loverman who has the devil in him and loves every second of being a lady-killer: "Mr. Lonesome" is a tender ballad



with a fifties sound to it, and his husky voice eases its way into you and makes you ache for his painful isolation: "Gideon Bible," written by Kinky Friedman and

Willie Fong Young, sounds like a Baptist hymn with a strong Gospel arrangement.

The album is soaked in the theme of a man who is newly alone and trying to cope. In "Loneliest Man," another Kinky Friedman song, he makes you feel that pain and sensitivity. Here and throughout the album there is a simplicity of arrangement and instrumentation that leaves room for Tompall's rich voice.

Like Tompall says in his liner notes: "This album is my story about some life I've watched go by. The music feels comfortable and I know the mood is honest."

CYNTHIA ROSEN

Conway Twitty

You've Never Been This Far Before

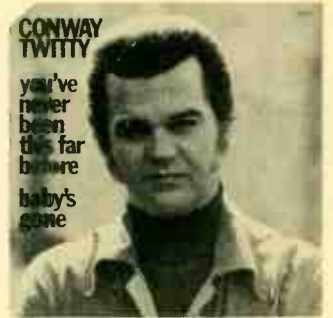
MCA 359 (record)

MCA 359 (8-track tape)

Dear Ms. Rich,

I don't suppose I have to tell you, with you being the president of the Conway Twitty National Fan Club and all, but old Conway is absolutely fabulous. I mean, I'm running out of shelf space for all these great albums.

I mean, have you heard the latest one? Of course you



have! How does he do it, record after record, coming up with these great songs? Up there in New York they've been playing "You've Never Been This Far Before" like it's going out of style. Can you believe it? There's never been a song like that on the radio before, especially with that sexy Twittyvoice. And almost all the other songs are just as good. I mean, this may be the best Conway Twitty album yet.

So please, Ms. Rich (may I call you Edith?), enroll me as a lifetime club member. Send me membership cards, bios, pictures, autographs, a slick of hair, *anything*. I'm hooked. Conway is as good as there is.

Sincerely,

JOHN GABREE

PS: "Seasons Of The Heart" is even better than "You've Never Been This Far Before."

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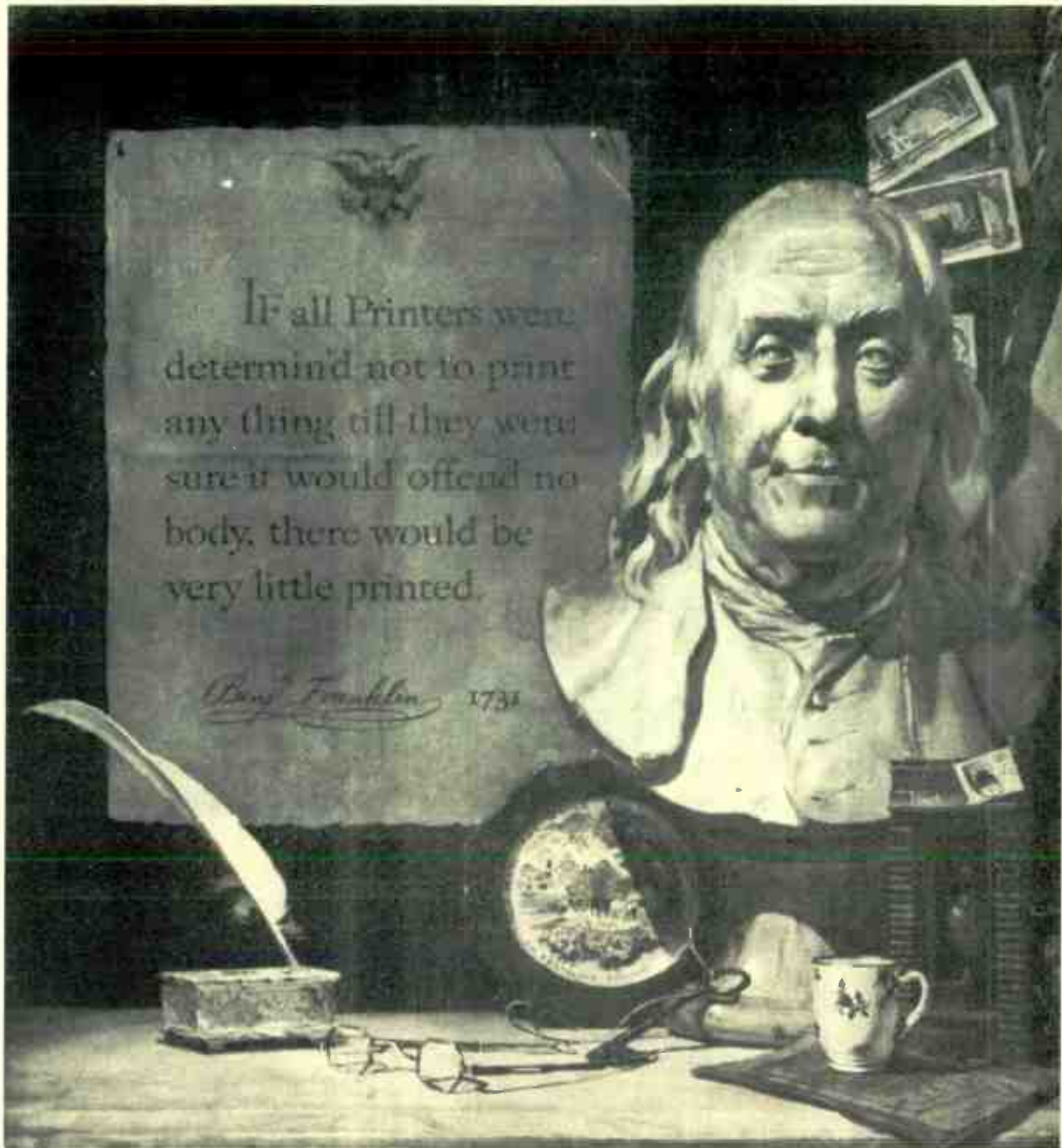
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| Narvel Felts | Drift Away | Cinnamon CIN 5000 |
| Tony Booth | This Is Tony Booth | Capitol ST-11210 |
| Floyd Cramer | Super Country Hits | RCA LSP 4500 |
| Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs | A Boy Named Sue | Columbia C 32244 |
| Dorsey Burnette | Dorsey Burnette | Capitol ST-11219 |
| Skeeter Davis | I Can't Believe That It's All Over | RCA APL1-0322 |
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Growing up along the ↗ Jaxbeer Hwy

by Dave Hickey

A better journalist, perhaps, would start out with some investigation of the roots of the term “honky tonk” but to tell the truth, I just don’t care that much. Growing up in Fort Worth, I always accepted the definition offered by an auto mechanic of my acquaintance. He must remain nameless since, during my youth, his garage was always stocked with automotive equipment at the most amazing discounts, and for all I know he might still be in business. Anyway, my friend used to say that the tonks that lined the Jacksboro Highway (pronounced Jaxbeer Highway) were the easiest places in Fort Worth for a white man to get killed by his own kind. This, of course, was before the freeway interchange was completed, but even then it might have been more accurate to say that the Jaxbeer highway was the easiest place in Fort Worth for a white man to get killed by his own kind while listening to country music.

My friend the mechanic, naturally, was unaware that there was any other kind of music. The radio in his truck was permanently frozen on 820 and the WBAP All Night Truckers show was his constant

companion during his nightly adventures in free-lance inventory expansion. His wife and daughter were doomed forever to rank three and four in his affections—following Hank Williams and a ’55 Chevrolet V8, dago raked with dual quads, that drank gas as enthusiastically as its master drank Lone Star.

I mention my friend in such detail because he combined all the ingredients of honky tonk culture as I knew it during my itinerant youth in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and California: country music, fast cars and men with too much pride, too little money and little chance of changing either quantity. I had to come north before I ever heard the phrase “poor *and* proud”; where I come from the phrase is “poor *but* proud.” Growing up in the mixed tradition of cattle culture and cotton culture, it never entered my mind for a moment that there was any masculine dignity in working eight hours for wages for somebody else. A man was a man on a horse, in a car, moving on and riding high, doing what he damn well pleased. So we may have been poor folks at home, and wage slaves at work, but

set us down in that shiny Chevy and point us toward the Jaxbeer highway, and by God, it’s Rhett Butler, Junior Johnson and Billy the Kid all rolled into one, and Katy-bar-the-Door, if you don’t know it.

The guys I knew might earn their money like dogs, but they spent it like princes (*Innkeeper, more wine for my men!*). And like princes, they had contempt for moderation, disdain for the law, and an almost childlike enthusiasm for physical activity. The thin line between “joshing around” and brawling, between “close dancing” and rape was so vague as to be nonexistent. But unlike princes, they all carried a load of guilt for women betrayed—wives, sisters, mothers and daughters who didn’t expect much and didn’t get even that. It seemed that the women learned how to be poor, but the men never did. Poverty may make Southern women strong, but Southern men, well, I think it just made us a little crazy. And honky tonks are where you find the best and worst of that craziness.

Let me make a distinction right here, though, between afternoons in honky tonks and nights in honky tonks. If you are a peace-loving sort,

honky tonk afternoons are the best places in the world. Everyone there is either unemployed or working a night shift. The unemployed have no job to rebel against and the night shift guys can't get too ripped since they can't sleep it off. So an afternoon honky tonk has the same camaraderie as a bunch of kids playing hooky, sometimes exactly the same. Some of the most serene hours of my life were spent absent-without-leave from Paschal High School in the "Hi-Hat" Lounge. Oh, yes, it is hot outside and brighter than a new dime and you are there in the cool, drinking beer illegally, playing the pinball machine, listening to Marty Robbins on the juke box, maybe pretending to study the bartender's *Racing Form*, or really studying the Football Pool, or hustling some of the local veterans on the shuffle-board bowling machine, or maybe just watching the Miller's sign with its never-ending waterfall... (As it turned out those hours on the bowling machine were better spent than any time spent foolishly sweating on some practice field. I can't tell you how important it was in 1960, broke on the west side of Manhattan, to discover that the shuffle-board bowling machine at the corner bar was a full foot-and-a-half shorter than the one at the "Hi-Hat," and had a slower flash! Imagine Jack Kramer with a two-foot net.)

Honky tonks at night are another thing altogether, especially in Fort Worth and Dallas. There are good times to be had and I wouldn't have missed them for the world, but my



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mechanic friend's definition holds only too true. Two events stand out: at the "Cactus Lounge" out on the Jaxbeer highway one of *those* conversations starts, "What are you lookin' at, Buddy?" and pretty soon everyone is sort of shuffling around talking low and sweet in that special tone that precedes mayhem in West Texas and at the critical moment, I do one of those stupid things that less fortunate men have died for. I picked up my empty beer bottle and cracked it on the metal edge of the formica table. The bottle broke all right, right down the seam, opening up my palm like the Red Sea. A second later and I probably would have been killed but the battle hadn't closed and everyone just stood around looking at my palm, contemplating it. A bystander volunteered that broken bottles were bad form, which didn't bother me, but another allowed that I didn't know how the hell to do it, that I didn't have the wrist action. And that *did* hurt. Then the barmaid told us she had called the Highway Patrol and we decided to leave. I, in fact, decided never to go back, not even to return the bar towel I wound my hand up in.

The second event took place at the "It'll Dew" in Dallas. Just as we were leaving one night a pretty good scuffle broke out. In my limited experience, by the way, a *long*, indoor honky tonk brawl usually lasts about thirty seconds, and in good Dallas fashion the loser was invited to leave. He left and as we were walking out with about five people, we saw the loser opening the shaved trunk lid of his '49 Ford. Now, as anyone who has been around honky tonks *knows*, there is only one reason anyone opens the trunk of his car, and that is to get

his shotgun. We hit the deck, and as if to prove us right, the loser discharged a load of buckshot into the air. I can still hear it, still remember snuggling under my lowered '53 Ford Vicky (it was coral-colored when I got it, but the Texas sun soon bleached it to the approximate shade of Grandma's petticoat). I can still remember lying there, cheek to the ground, looking out across the plain of gravelly asphalt spreading away from me. Three cars away I could see another customer snuggled up under a Buick. He was stretched out there—trying to dust off his shiny new wide-brimmed straw. Grace under pressure. Luckily, one of Dallas' finest was inside the "It'll Dew" and when he came out and did his Wyatt Earp number in front of the glass-brick facade, the fellow with the .410 decided to let discretion be the better part of valor—much to everyone's relief including the cop who was shaking like a leaf when we climbed out from under our respective cars.

All of this is meant as a word of caution for those who think that Texas honky tonks are like those cute places you saw in Italy last summer and stopped in for a glass of wine. Not so. If someone says, "What are you looking at, Buddy?" I suggest a bewildered response in some language that resembles Korean. Further, if you have long hair and are a boy, I suggest a ploy invented by Bud Shrake, who is a lot bigger than I am. You walk in, order your beer and *immediately* say to the bar tender: "Y'all got a good barber in town? I been down in Mexico hunting muleys and I'm beginning to look like a damned hippy. Never trust a Mexican barber, though, skin ya alive..." In passing, I will observe that this ploy

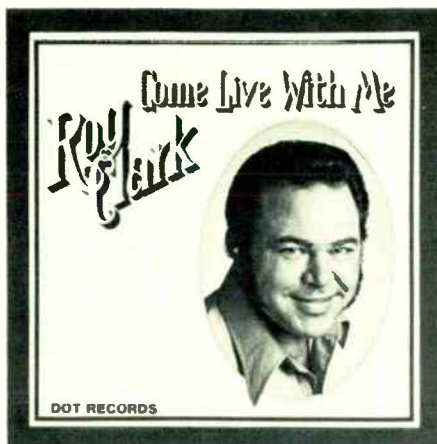


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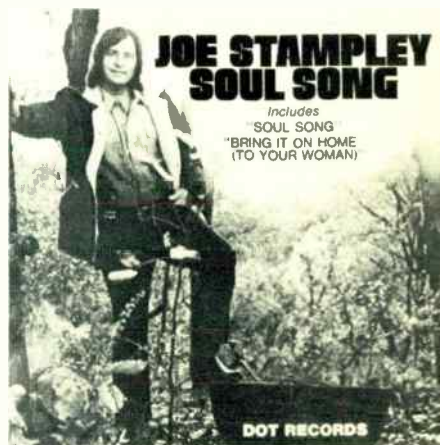
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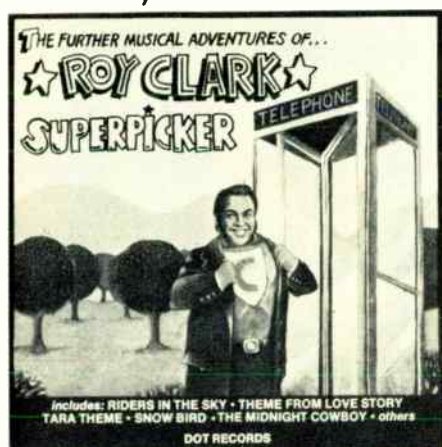
DONNA FARGO
"My Second Album"



ROY CLARK
"Come Live With Me"



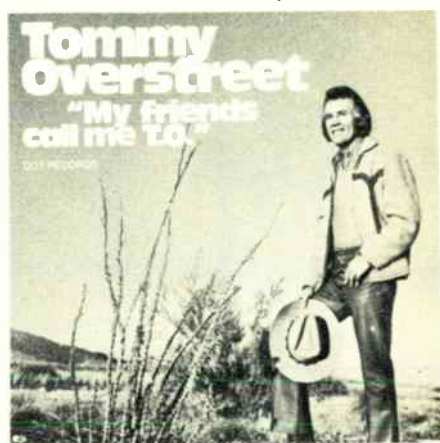
JOE STAMPLEY
"Soul Song"



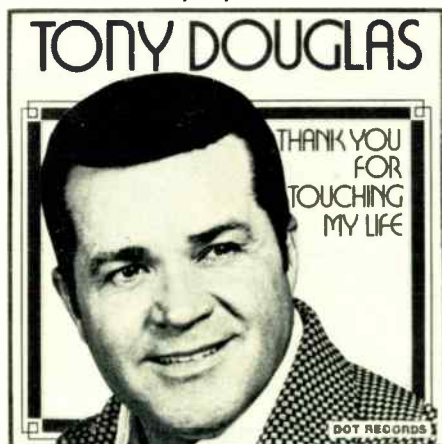
ROY CLARK
"Superpicker"



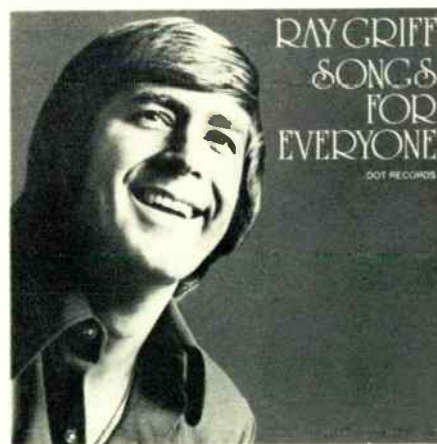
HANK THOMPSON
"Kindly Keep It Country"



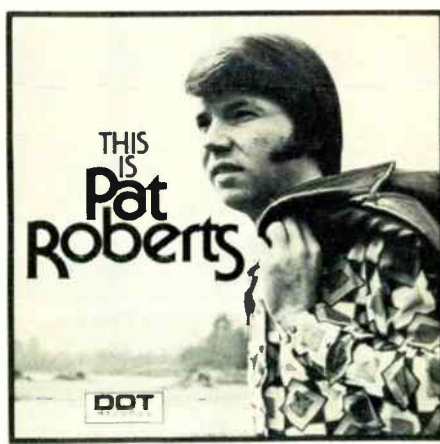
TOMMY OVERSTREET
"My Friends Call Me T.O."



TONY DOUGLAS
"Thank You For Touching My Life"



RAY GRIFF
"Songs For Everyone"



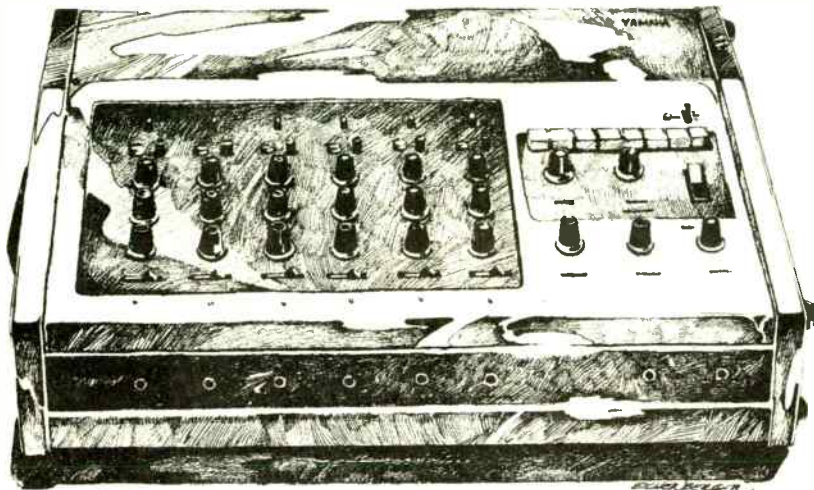
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works better in West Texas than it does in East Texas where local hostility tends to be more ideological. They won't believe you in either place, but in West Texas you get points for audacity.

I realize this little honky tonk tour is beginning to sound self-contradictory, but that is only because the experience itself is contradictory. The despair and the guilt and the violence are very real and very black and too close to me to be quaint. But the looseness, and the good times, and the give-a-damn freedom are very real too and very special. I can remember my first honky tonk (if you stretch the definition), going with my Dad to see Bob Wills at the old Crystal Ballroom in Fort Worth. Dad played in swing bands and Wills was the only hillbilly he admitted to his constellation of heroes. I can remember a honky tonk speak-easy in the dry country around Muleshoe up in the Panhandle. It was called the "Quarterhorse Club" and from the highway it looked like a barn. You parked in the corral and entered from the back into a room with walls of sheet-rock, taped-and-bedded but not painted. The place was furnished with lawn furniture, and Stanley Fox and I sat in a metal porch-glider, drank Coors, and listened while a very young boy with a huge Martin and a very old man with a tiny fiddle played "Faded Love" as truly as it has ever been played. I can remember holding onto the edge of the table at a place in North Fort Worth, over by the stockyards, while Johnny Cash (who was then affectionately known as Johnny Trash) sang about walking the line, although he couldn't have.

And I remember sitting out at Ken Threadgill's converted filling station on Lamar Boulevard in Austin while Kenneth and Janis Joplin sang "My Carolina Sunshine Girl," and thinking that if I ever wanted to remember what joy felt like I would remember that moment.

Finally, I don't know what to think about all those honky tonk heroes. In times like these you have to be glad that there is some courage and some style around, but in a world like this you have to be sad that so much of it is wasted, that so much of it evaporates like the neon colors on an empty parking lot as the sky turns grey before the dawn. ■

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Hi-Fi Corner

Which Watt Is What Watt?

When shopping for a stereo system, keep in mind that within any particular price range any amplifier or receiver will offer just about the same power and performance as any other amplifier or receiver. The only real differences are physical design, controls, and convenience features. So it's a good idea to first pick out a pair of speakers you like, and only then worry about choosing an amplifier or receiver to power the speakers.

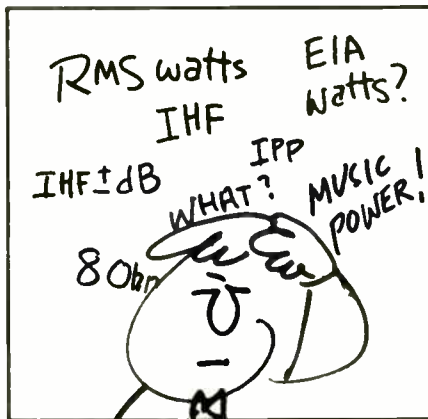
Speakers vary in *efficiency* (the power, in *watts*, they need to produce a certain sound volume in a particular room). Speaker manufacturers often give their products a wattage rating, but the rating is all too often meaningless. You need to know the minimum power needed to produce reasonable sound in a typical living room, as well as the *maximum* power a speaker can handle before distorting the sound or falling apart. A speaker rating of 10 watts or 100 watts means nothing without further qualification.

Once you have selected a speaker that sounds good to you, and you have determined how many watts you need, then pick out the electronics to go with it. It may or may not be an easy choice. You see, there are about a dozen different kinds of watts used by different hi-fi manufacturers, and there's nothing to prevent any manufacturer from picking the particular watt that makes his product seem the most powerful.

The most conservative kind of watt is used by most of the "true" hi-fi manufacturers, and is usually referred to as a *continuous* or *RMS* watt. This kind of watt is almost always quoted for a particular level of distortion (fuzzy sound, basically) which is expressed as a percentage. Naturally, the lower the distortion, the better the sound; and generally

speaking, it is much more expensive to squeeze out 5 watts of low-distortion sound than 10 watts of distorted sound. If a manufacturer doesn't care about good sound he can crank out more power, for seemingly little cost, by allowing more distortion. For REAL hi-fi sound, distortion should be below 1 per cent, even as low as 0.1 per cent or 0.05 per cent.

The next kind of watt is the IHF watt, named after the Institute of High Fidelity, whose manufacturer members don't feel that real watts



are a true reflection of the demands made on an amplifier in the process of amplifying music. The IHF watt is also called *music power* and is generally figured at one per cent distortion, and gives a figure about 20 per cent higher than RMS for the same piece of equipment.

In an effort to come up with even bigger numbers, some companies use the "IHF \pm 1 dB" watt. The dB ("decibel") is a unit of loudness and the expression \pm 1 dB is commonly used as a tolerance range in rating such characteristics as frequency response. It reflects how much a component can vary from a particular standard.

Manufacturers know that consumers usually don't really understand technical symbols like " \pm ,"

but they are impressed by them, and when they tack on the plus or minus bit they can sell something that is 1 dB less than the quoted number of watts—and one decibel amounts to something like 26 per cent less power.

Next step is the EIA watt, named for the Electronics Industries Association, a trade group for appliance manufacturers who make hair dryers and air conditioners as well as hi-fi equipment. This EIA watt is rated at a very high distortion level (5.0 per cent) and is about five times as big as the RMS watt.

And if all this baloney isn't enough, some companies maintain that since music does not demand the same level of power all the time, an amplifier should be rated on the basis of how much it can push out for a short period of time. So we get the *peak* watt (also known as "IPP," or Instantaneous Peak power) which doubles any of the previous ratings.

And for still more paper power, a component can be rated for speakers of 4 ohms impedance, rather than the more standard 8 ohms, hiking up the numbers by about 30 per cent more. To top it all off, the figures can be doubled again to get the total power of a stereo amp or even quadrupled for a four-channel model—a very common, accepted practice.

To recap: an amplifier or receiver that puts out 10 watts RMS at, let's say, 0.25 per cent distortion becomes 20 watts in stereo, and then 24 IHF watts, 30 IHF \pm 1 dB watts, 96 EIA watts, 192 EIA-IPP watts, 250 watts at 4 ohms, and doubles again to 500 juicy watts for 4-channel equipment! FIFTY times the original figure.

When you go stereo shopping, make sure you know what watt you are buying. ■

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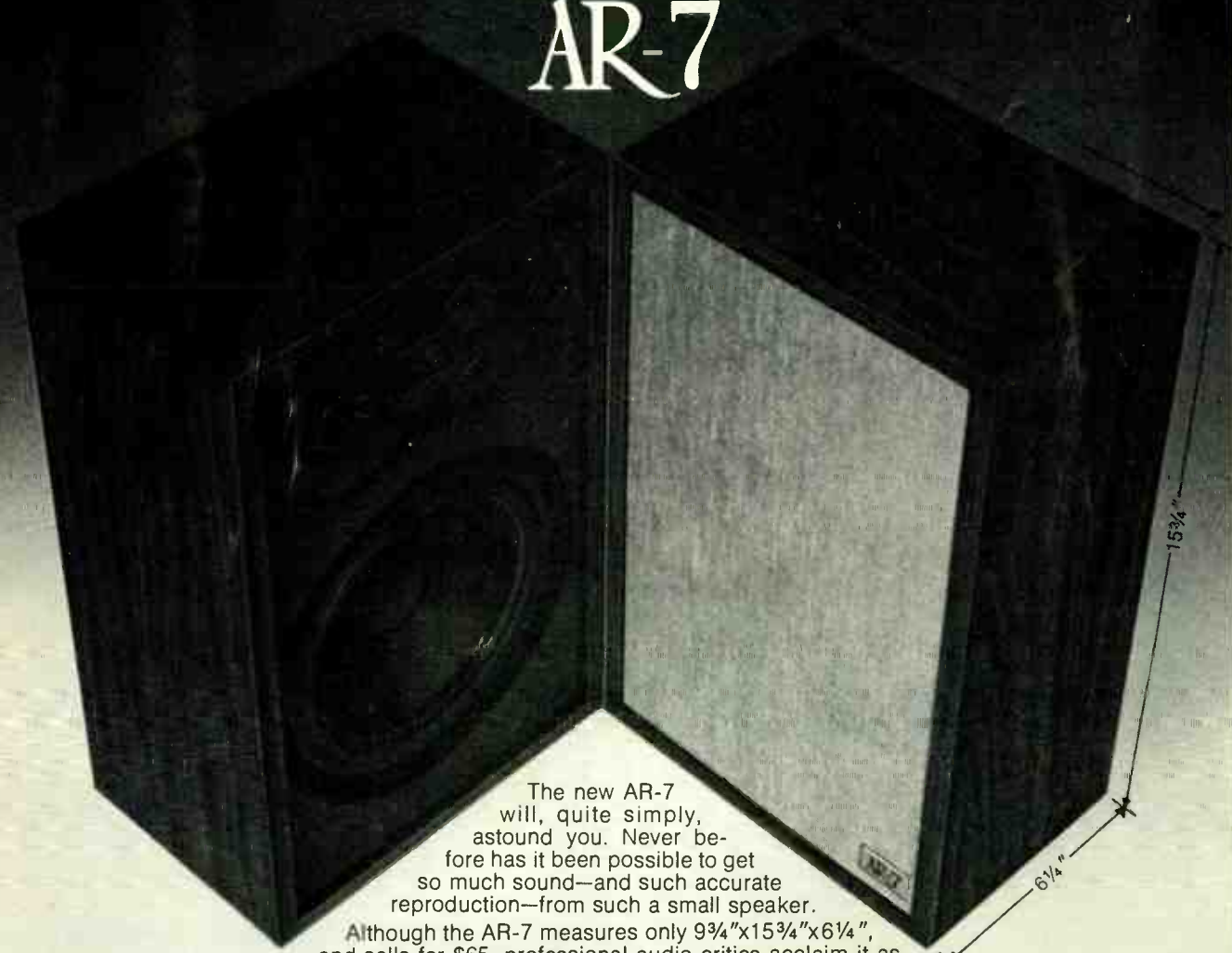
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STEREO REVIEW



"We predict that the AR-7 will become the standard for other speakers in the under-\$100 class and supplanting some speakers of even greater cost!"

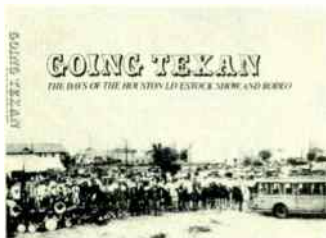
AUDIO

"The AR-7 is quite flat in frequency response and most notably free of excessive peaks or dips... a smooth musical balance that is not significantly bettered by any speaker at any price... only slight rolloff evident well above 15 kHz, but there appears to be strong response far beyond 20 kHz. The woofer solidly strong to about 50 Hz... with strong usable response just extending to 40 Hz. In short, the AR-7 is a remarkable speaker, and an even more remarkable value."

STEREO & HI-FI TIMES

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Books



Going Texan

Photographs by Geoff Winningham

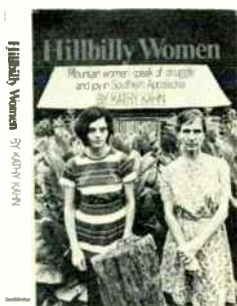
Text by William C. Martin and Geoff Winningham
Mavis P. Kelsey, Jr., \$20

Geoff Winningham left his native Nashville some years ago to study at Houston's Rice University. He liked the Texas city so much, that when he graduated he decided to stay and has been wandering the streets ever since, his Leica in hand, chronicling the city's activities from honky tonk bars and shooting galleries to the Rothko Chapel and new skyscrapers. Winningham's first book, highly praised by national critics, concerned itself with the comings and goings of Houston's professional wrestlers and wrestling fans.

His second, "Going Texan," reveals in intimate detail the life behind the scenes (as well as many of the events) of Houston's celebrated annual Livestock Show and Rodeo. Winningham seems to be everywhere at once. There are the fans holding out the big photos of Sonny James for autographs; Jerry Lee Lewis, in all his arrogance, blasting away at the piano; coiffured rodeo barrel racing stars, ready to ride; the big parade and its sometimes bored observers; the 4-H kids, seriously currying their prize heifers.

Every photograph is lovingly taken; small gems. The large photograph of Hank Snow, returning to his dressing room after a performance

is already being called a "classic photo." (It's been purchased by a museum for display.) "Going Texan" is a big, heavy, profusely-illustrated, handsome, worthwhile, enjoyable book. It's expensive. I think it's worth the price. **BEAUFORT WILSON**



Hillbilly Women

by Kathy Kahn
Doubleday, \$7.95

Not so long ago, country music was known as "hillbilly music." The term referred simply to the folk songs of mountain people. But the word "hillbilly" took on derogatory connotations when used by city people to describe unsophisticated mountain folk; in movies and comic strips, hillbillies were cast as stereotypes right out of "L'il Abner." Yet to mountain people, hillbilly is still a term they're proud to use.

Hillbillies haven't exactly been widely represented in the literary marketplace and so their stories have remained untold and the stereotypes live on. Kathy Kahn, who worked among the people of southern Appalachia—as a waitress, a factory worker and, for the past 10 years, as a community organizer—decided to let hillbilly women tell their own extraordinary stories in her book. The author injected her own comments only where they illuminated something about her subjects. If little is known

about coal miners and mill workers, even less has been written about their women: brave, hardy souls who live with the everpresent fear of losing a loved one—in the mines, from diseases caused by malnutrition or as victims of violence.

The women in the book are wives, daughters or widows of miners; some are militants, organizing for unions or trying to protect their land from strip mining; others are just involved in a personal struggle to keep themselves and their families alive—often in spite of a factory system that begrudges them a decent wage, and a welfare system that may deny them vital aid on a technicality.

Kathy Kahn has done a first-rate job of putting together the stories, of getting these women to bare their souls. Besides being a community organizer and a writer, she is a country singer

(she's had one LP on Voyager Records) and her love for the music and its roots is evident in the book. In one chapter, she describes an evening with a young Appalachian family in a hillbilly urban ghetto in the North. Left alone for a while with the couple's young child, Kathy took out her banjo and happily picked and sang until the youngster had to go to bed. "It hit me then," she writes, "that this little girl, born and raised in Over the Rhine (Ohio), still had the inherited love of old-time country music."

Kathy Kahn obviously feels a strong kinship with the women in the book and her knowledge of the region is apparent. "Hillbilly Women" is much more than a collection of 19 self-portraits; taken together, the stories provide a moving, informative picture of hillbilly life.

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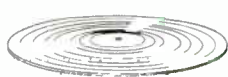


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... and about four times a year, we will also offer some special selections (usually at a discount off regular Club prices), which you may reject by mailing the special dated form provided . . . or accept by simply doing nothing

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