

**FREE
BONUS**
ISSUES See Page 78

Chet Atkins: Modesty, Music, Money and Influence

The Singing Cowboy Hollywood '74 Style

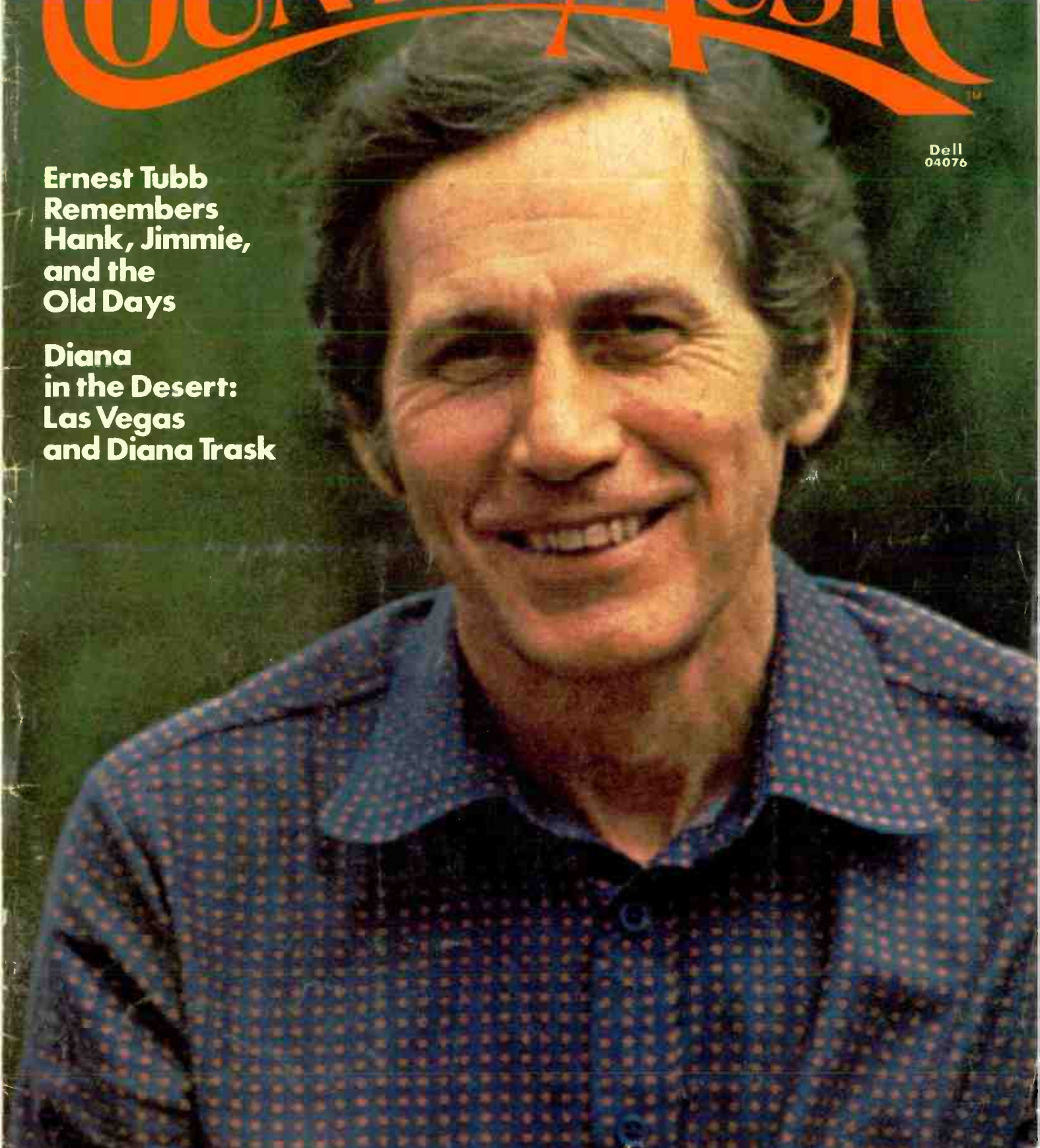
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COUNTRYMUSIC

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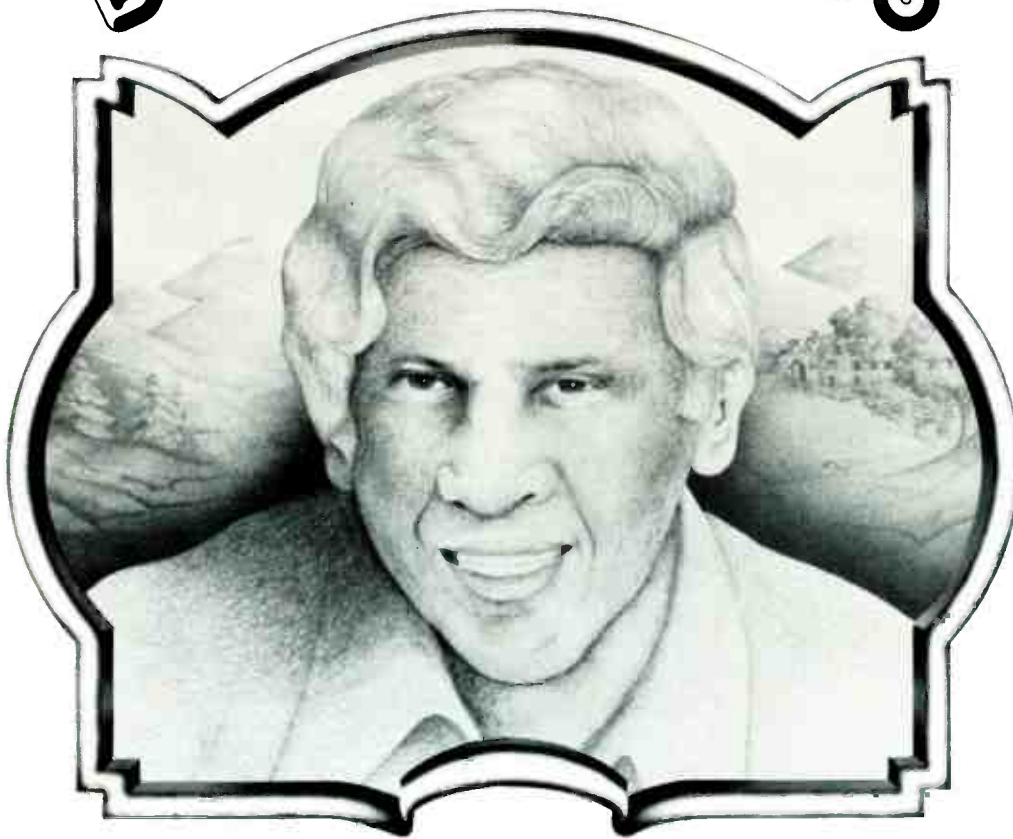
**Ernest Tubb
Remembers
Hank, Jimmie,
and the
Old Days**

**Diana
in the Desert:
Las Vegas
and Diana Trask**



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BUCK OWENS
Volume 5**



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- ★ ROLL IN MY SWEET BABY'S ARMS
- ★ I'LL STILL BE WAITING FOR YOU
- ★ AIN'T IT AMAZING, GRACIE
- ★ MADE IN JAPAN
- ★ GET OUT OF TOWN BEFORE
SUNDOWN
- ★ ARMS FULL OF EMPTY
- ★ THE GOOD OLD DAYS (ARE HERE
AGAIN)
- ★ YOU AIN'T GONNA HAVE OL'
BUCK TO KICK AROUND NO MORE

ST-11273



Capitol
Country

“... was on my Horse the whole night & it raining hard... There was one of our party Drowned today (Mr. Carr) & several narrow escapes & I among them... Awful night... not having had a bite to eat for 60 hours... Tired... Indians very troublesome... Found a human skeleton on the prairie today...”

—Diary of a Texas cattle drive, 1866.
Quoted in *The Cowboys*



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“In Without Knocking” by Charles M. Russell, courtesy Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas



Detail from “The Cowboy” by Frederic Remington, courtesy Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

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Inc. All rights reserved. No part
of this publication may be
reproduced in any form without
permission in writing from the
publisher.

Published Monthly by KBO
Publishers, Inc. Address all
subscription correspondence to
Country Music, Subscription Dept.,
P.O. Box 2560, Boulder, Colorado
80302.

Controlled Circulation postage
paid at Lincoln, Nebraska;
Rock Island, Illinois;
and New York, N.Y.;
and pending at Boulder, Colorado.

COVER PHOTO: MARSHALL FALLWELL

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It's ironic that the most famed electric guitarist in the world used to get fired quite regularly for being "too modern." It's different now, of course. Chet Atkins is a figure of huge influence in Nashville. Here's the story of a modest man with large ambitions.

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Movie cowboys ain't what they used to be, that's a fact. Today they're all filthy or Chinese or just plain weird. But wait! Hollywood has decided that this will change! There will be a new Singing Cowboy for the seventies, and he'll be pure as driven snow...

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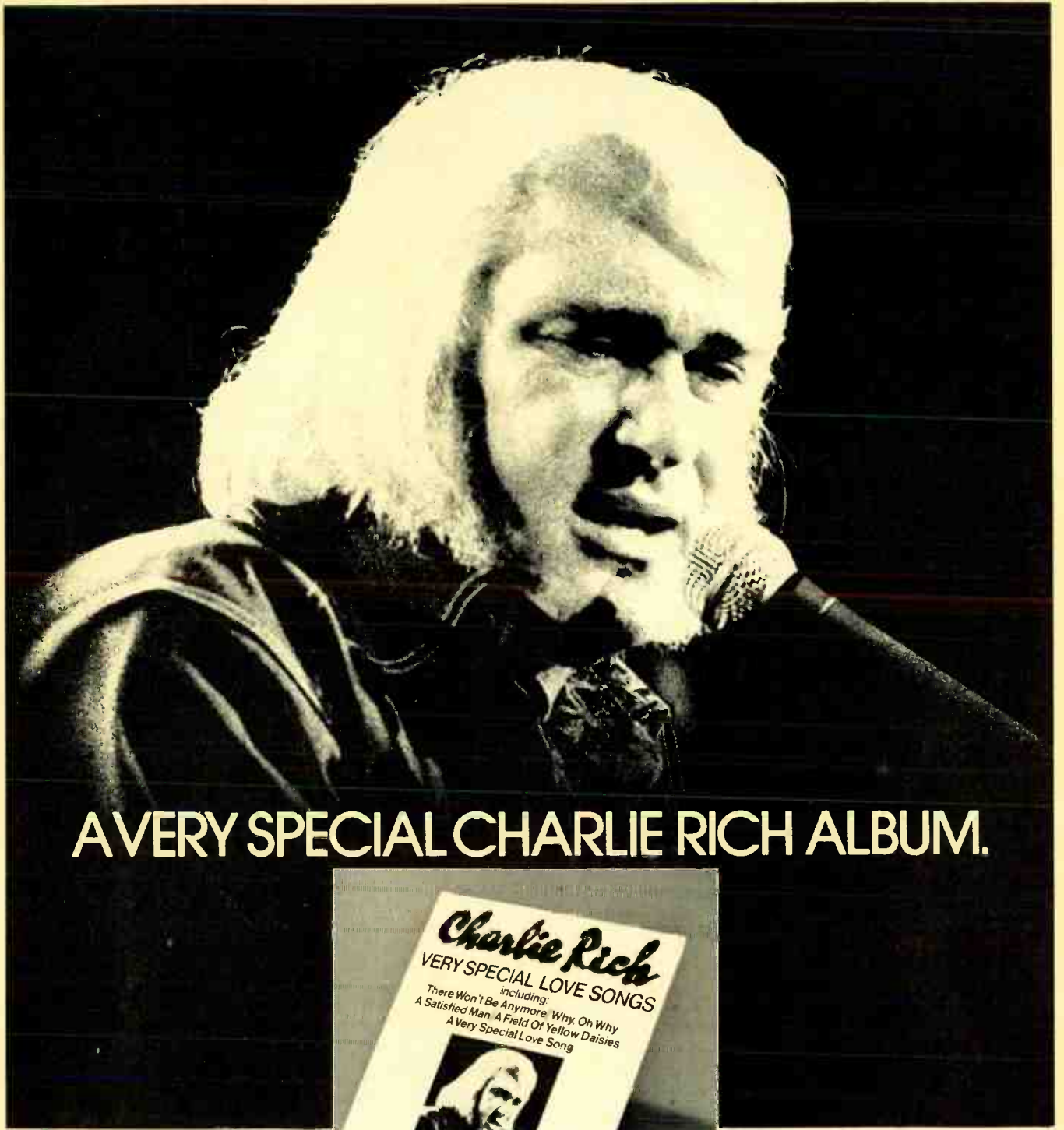
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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

Conway Twitty: Rock 'n Roll Past, Sexy Songs, and a Golden Future... Hangin' With The Statler Brothers... George and Tammy's Top Ten...



A VERY SPECIAL CHARLIE RICH ALBUM.



When you walk into a studio to record the follow-up to last year's "Album of the Year," you have a very special obligation.

Charlie Rich has met that obligation, head on.

If anything, "Very Special Love Songs" is even more brilliant than "Behind Closed Doors."

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Newly recorded Charlie Rich, produced by Billy Sherrill.
On Epic Records and tapes

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Letters

Readers Love Outlaws

In response to your January article by Dave Hickey (In Defense of the Telecaster Cowboy Outlaws), I offer further defense, in this song.

*Waylon & Willie are outlaws, hated in Nashville by some
But not by the folks all around it listen I'll tell you how come.
They're sayin that Willie ain't country, and Waylon can't yodel
a lick
But Willie tells tales and Waylon sure wails, and both of them
boys can sure pick.
The town says they're ragged & dirty & rusty & dusty & worn
Their faded bluejeans ain't none too clean, their boots are
all tattered & torn.
Now neither one claims to be fancy, but country they are
I believe
And mister them two men called outlaws are wearin' their hearts
on their sleeves.
People been buyin' their records, and travelin' to get to their
shows
All of them people know somethin' them "Fat Cats" in Nashville
don't know.
Waylon & Willie have been there they've lived every song
I believe
They play their guitars for the moon and the stars and sing
to the leaves on the trees.
Waylon & Willie are Cowboys, downhome & Country as hell
And whoever outlawed them outlaws ain't country themselves
I can tell.*

HARVEY BENJAMIN GROSS
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

Why do country artists cringe at the thought of being called "hard country"? I am a country fan who feels betrayed by the flood of rock, pop and heaven knows what else coming out of Nashville these days. It's a free country, but why, oh why, do perfectly fine country singers feel that they have to "appeal to a wider audience"?

Does Aretha Franklin feel called upon to appeal to country fans? Does "Chicago"?

Why don't pop-country artists just leave out the country and do their pop thing? Even Charley Pride doesn't sound as country as before. How could he, with all the strings on his latest songs?

I just may submerge myself in my Hank Williams albums and never come out!

MRS. LESLIE HANEY
MCKEESPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

I am writing to thank you for your great article in your December issue on Connie Smith. Since she is my favorite singer, I am always glad to see articles on her and your magazine had one of the best! The pictures were great too, especially the beautiful color picture. I've seen Connie perform several times and she is truly one of the great singers in country music. (The prettiest, too!) I hope you will feature her again real soon.

RON MILLER
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Dave Hickey's excellent article on Waylon, Willie and the other "outlaws" should be required reading for anyone who considers himself/herself a country music fan. I especially appreciated the story about the Tulsa disc jockey who thinks Waylon isn't really country. It makes an interesting contrast to another article in the same issue about a "country" singer who won't allow her "country" band to wear blue jeans on the bus.

CAROLYN G. FULLER
HUNTINGTON, ARKANSAS

I have just read my first copy of your magazine and was, for the most part, impressed with the quality of the articles. I wonder, however if there is room in your "Letters" column for a criticism.

I am a fan of bluegrass music as well as country, and am especially fond of The Country Gentlemen. I was upset by the criticism voiced by David Dunaway of the New Gentlemen album. I feel he was unfair in his choice of words. I know that a critic has a free hand to say just what he thinks of an album, but to say that the Country Gentlemen perform "badly" is untrue.

Bluegrass music has changed in the last few years just as country music has. If each new bluegrass al-

bum contained only the traditional selections, we would soon tire of "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" and "Train 45." Bluegrass has attracted a vast new audience and they like the old songs as well as the new. There are bluegrass versions of songs which originally appeared in some other field of music just as there are country versions of old rock and roll songs making hits every day.

For Mr. Dunaway to say that he did not personally like the selections on this album is one thing, but the logic of his phrase "...leave the soap suds to Proctor & Gamble" escapes me.

BONNIE R. GILLIAM
KEYSVILLE, VIRGINIA

Country cookin' to go.



These six albums are just a taste of what we got comin'. Startin' next month, RCA is hostin' one of the biggest country wingdings ever. It's called "Country Cookin'," and comin' with it is a whole array of

major new releases by some of our biggest country stars. So until then, we hope this country cookin' to go will be enough to whet your appetite for the country cookin' that's comin'!

RCA Records and Tapes

Down Home and Around

by Dixie Hall

New Opry House and Fan Fair preparations are keeping Bud Wendell busy . . . Johnny Rodriguez bought a new rustic hideaway and won't tell where it is.

With all the numerous events taking place down home and around, nobody's been able to spend much time under the shade tree yet this year. Roy Clark and Loretta Lynn have already been hospitalized for exhaustion, and we could name a few more headed that way if they don't slow down.

Bobby Bare is not one of them, however. It takes a lot more than a blood drive commercial to get that

boy moving.

General Manager of the Grand Ole Opry and Opryland Manager, Bud Wendell, has to be one of the busiest people in the world these days. Following the opening of the new Opry House at Opryland, he had to jump right into preparation for Fan Fair, which will be held this year from June 12th through the 16th. One thing for certain is that in view of the fuel crisis, 1974

is a great year for an Opryland vacation. Wonderful food, great country and gospel entertainment, and Tennessee sunshine all to be found at the same location.

Songstress Mama (Jackie) Verns was sitting at dinner at the Henderson Home recently reviewing song material for a recording session, when she was startled by a resounding crash. Running into her bedroom, Mama was thunderstruck to see an automobile parked beside her bed.

"You know what?" she laughed. "It was a runaway car belonging to a songwriter who wanted me to listen to some of his material." That's going to great lengths to get an artist's attention.

Johnny Rodriguez recently purchased a ranch with a rustic log cabin mansion. It is at an undisclosed Tennessee location where Johnny hopes to be able to retreat occasionally from the hectic pace he has been keeping and the girls he hasn't been keeping. Apparently, the young ones rush him on stage and the older ones send him money. His secretary, Loretta, is constantly returning cash which arrives in the mail, and although she can take just about anything in her stride, she is nevertheless puzzled as to how to answer one letter made up entirely of lipstick kisses.


On a more serious note, Johnny is one of the proud recipients of this year's *Billboard* Trendsetter Award. The other two were Elvis Presley and Henry Romersa. Wonder if anyone ever sent Elvis money.

Loretta Lynn's daughter, Sissy, has gone into the dog business. She had her basset hound, "Cute and Country," bred to Tom T's, "Piece of the Road." The stud service fee? A mere song. ■



Loretta Lynn's active schedule recently forced her to enter a hospital for exhaustion.

Why wait to hear Tanya a hit at a time?



**Tanya
Tucker**
WOULD YOU
LAY WITH ME
(IN A FIELD
OF STONE)

In addition to **"Would You Lay With Me (In a Field of Stone)"**, Tanya's third album contains a host of future hits.

So be among the first to hear **"I Believe the South Is Gonna Rise Again,"** **"The Man That Turned My Mama On,"** **"How Can I Tell Him"** and all the rest of the newest songs from the fastest-growing superstar in music.

Presenting Tanya Tucker's next hits.

New, On Columbia Records and Tapes

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People on the Scene

by Audrey Winters

Chet Atkins and Merle Travis get together for an album . . .
Ace Cannon and Boots Randolph fight the Battle of the Saxes . . .
George and Tammy swap Energy Crisis presents.



PHOTO: ROBERT JOHNSON

For Eddy Arnold, another grandchild. Here he is making a point to the newborn Richard Shannon Pollard, Jr.

Good news first: **Eddy Arnold** is a grandfather for the second time. His daughter, Jo Ann, presented him with a grandson called Richard Shannon Pollard, Jr. . . . Otherwise, tales of woe: **Tammy Wynette** has been hospitalized five times in the last eight months—three times for major surgery. The latest visit, though, is less serious. Her doctor tells her that she has arthritis in her knuckles . . . **Bob Luman**, **Mac Wiseman**, and **Roy Clark** have also been hospitalized recently . . . Dot artist **Ray Griff** got his big “break.” It didn’t have anything to do with showbiz, though. Ray fell on the ice-covered steps of his new home, and wound up with a broken rib . . .

Also, **Jack Greene** has had cosmetic surgery on his nose. (He wants to breathe better.) . . . and **Loretta Lynn** is doing something about a rare problem: She’s trying to gain weight. Loretta gained seven pounds while vacationing in Mexico, and then decided to stay an extra day in order to gain more.

MCA recording artist **Wayne Kemp** has had a few narrow escapes in his lifetime. His hands are still badly burned from an auto accident that almost cost him his life and did kill two members of his band. That was a few years ago, but this time he was a lot luckier. He and his wife, Patsy, were returning home

from a show in Toledo when their car hit a “slick” spot. The car skidded sideways past an eight-car pile-up on a bridge near Louisville, but they came through it without a scratch.

For any of you who are planning on singing the National Anthem and want it to sound like **Charley Pride’s** version at the Super Bowl games, here’s a bit of secret information: It’s sung in the key of A-flat. Charley, wearing a beautiful sealskin coat trimmed in leather, was in town recently for four days of recording. His wife, Rosine, and her sister Hortense have formed their own publishing company,

How to judge five kinds of amplifier power



An electric musician is connected to his audience by a cord. Unplug him and he's dead; plug him into a weak amp and he's a weak performer. This is why there's no such thing as a weak amp—at least in advertisements. The trouble is, amplifier power is rated in watts, like a light bulb, and there is a lot more to amplifier power than dim and bright.

A smart musician thinks of his amp as an instrument, and knows exactly what it can (or can't) do for his music. He knows his amplifier's range and tone characteristics. He knows how to adjust its tone to room acoustics where he plays. And he has a good working knowledge of what power ratings really mean, because they determine how effectively his sound reaches his audience.



Actually, he should be familiar with five different kinds of power ratings on amplifiers.

1) *RMS Power* (Root Mean Square—if that helps) is the basic method of measuring alternating current electrical power. RMS is the *average* power delivered over a complete cycle and represents an amp's ability to deliver continuous sound.

2) *Peak Power* is the measure of the greatest amount of electrical power delivered at any *moment* of each cycle while the amp is delivering continuous sound. For a sine wave signal (such as the simplest tone on an electronic organ), peak power is always twice RMS Power.

3) *Music Power* Undistorted music power is produced in a series of *bursts* whose average level is much larger than the RMS power for short periods. The ability of some amplifier components to store energy allows the amplifier to deliver considerable additional power for these very short musical bursts. In most amplifiers, this additional Music Power exceeds RMS Power by about 15%.

4) *Peak Music Power* This has the same relation to Music Power as Peak Power has to RMS Power—that is, twice as much. It is the instantaneous power available for tone bursts.

5) *Absolute Maximum Power* This is the maximum power an amp can deliver regardless of distortion. Depending on an amplifier's design, it may be as much as twice that of the RMS Power. It should not be used as a rating because it ignores sound quality.

To musicians, sound quality is as important as sound quantity, so understanding the five kinds of power is only the beginning. In order to measure power accurately, the relation of power output to distortion must be considered. For example, depending on the degree of distortion, an amplifier can deliver as much as twice RMS Power. Some amplifier manufacturers exaggerate their true power ratings by making measurements with 10-15% clipping distortion—without saying so in their specifications.

All Ampeg amplifiers deliver their rated RMS Power or better without audible clipping distortion over the entire guitar spectrum (40 Hz to 16,000 Hz). They give the fullest power available under any of the accepted rating systems.

Ampeg's Music Power ratings generally are 15% greater than RMS Power ratings. This is possible because Ampeg's power supplies are well designed—they

will not overheat or burn out under extreme demand, and they safely provide a musician with additional power for signal bursts. When you pay for 100 watts, you actually get 100 watts PLUS. Make a test. Plug into an Ampeg and hear the difference. Then plug into another make and *really* hear the difference! Ampeg's power ratings are solid, and so is their sound. Beautiful!

Power is just part of what makes Ampeg great. Ampeg heads are built from the ground up in our own shops. They're considered tops by musicians and technicians for their design—including (among many other features) exclusive hum balance control, reverb lock, exclusive selective midrange equalization. Ampeg cabinets, also made in our own shops, are of 3/4" dovetailed plywood, covered with fabric-backed, no-scuff vinyl to resist the rough handling cabinets get onstage and on the road. Ampeg speakers are the best available, built to our own designs and standards.

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100 Watts	RMS	40 Hz to 16,000Hz	No visible clipping
130 Watts	Music Power	40 Hz to 16,000Hz	No visible clipping
200 Watts	Absolute Maximum power	40 Hz to 16,000Hz	Gross square wave distortion
200 Watts	Peak power	40 Hz to 16,000Hz	No visible clipping
260 Watts	Peak music power	40 Hz to 16,000Hz	No visible clipping



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For Mrs. Dorothy Ritter, Tex's widow, an important new job.

and Charley recorded five of their songs.

Johnny Rodriguez recorded the theme song for the television show "Dirty Sally," but is unsure if it will be used. Johnny has a new five-piece band called the Music City Band... and **Johnny Paycheck** is now signing more paychecks than ever! He now has a brass section in his band, the Tennessee Trumpets.

Merle Haggard has been laughing a lot lately, now that the sales of "If We Make It Through December" have surpassed "Okie From Muskogee." And this after his personal secretary, Betty Azevedo, ad-

vised him that the tune was not a single hit. "You tend to the paper work and I'll tend to the music," Merle told her... **Merle Travis** and **Chet Atkins** did a lot of pickin' when the two got together in the studio out in California. Merle has been Chet's idol as a picker and a person, to the extent that Chet named his only daughter after the famous guitarist... **Ace Cannon** (of "Tuff" fame) recently challenged **Boots Randolph** to a battle of the saxes, and proved that he could blow a mean horn during a week-long engagement in Printers Alley in Nashville. Ace will be doing his recording in Nashville from now on. ... **Dave Dudley**, **David Houston**, and **Jean Shepard** made guest ap-

pearances on the U.S. Navy show last month.

Moving news: **Charlie Rich** and his family will move from Benton, Ark., to Memphis. They bought a modern home there... **Conway Twitty**, his family, and **L.E. White**, Twitty Bird Music manager and writer of many Conway hits, just spent a week in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. They shopped for a chalet in the resort town. Conway is expecting to move from Oklahoma City to the Nashville area soon... **Johnny Cash** and **June Carter Cash** have bought a vacation home in Montego Bay, Jamaica... **Glen Campbell**, wife **Billie**, and their three children have moved into a new home in Hollywood. The house has nine bedrooms, eleven baths, a tennis court, a swimming pool, and a nine-hole putting green. Who said it didn't pay to play?... and **Mrs. Dorothy Ritter**, Tex's widow, will sell their palatial home on Curtiswood Lane in Nashville. Mrs. Ritter said, "I plan to stay in Nashville, get a job, and keep very busy."

She didn't waste any time. Mrs. Ritter is now active in the newly-created post of state director of entertainment industry relations. She was appointed by Tennessee Governor Winfield Dunn.

Atlanta James has been on a long tour with **Jerry Lee Lewis** and his Memphis Beats, playing harmonica. He wrote two of the songs on Jerry's *Southern Roots* album, and the Killer classifies him as "the next big songwriter such as Kris Kristofferson"... **Elsie Kershaw**, designer and seamstress to the stars, said that she and Cajun fiddler **Doug Kershaw** are divorcing... **Loretta Lynn** has been listed in the Gallup Poll's Ten Most Admired Women category. She got an "honorable mention"... **George Jones** and **Tammy Wynette** exchanged sensible gifts recently. With the energy crisis in mind, he gave her a Vega, and she gave him a Volkswagen bus... **Buck Owens** says that George is his favorite singer... and lastly 464,416 Grand Ole Opry tickets were sold in 1973. That figure comes from **Bud Wendell**, the Opry manager who has just stepped into a new post at Opryland. **Hal Durham** is the new Opry manager, and he's a nice gentleman. ■

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an international songwriting competition

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Well, take it from **Helen Reddy**, the top female recording star of the year, now you've got a chance for the whole world to hear your music. By entering the American Song Festival — America's first international songwriting competition. It's open to everyone. And you don't even have to be able to write music to enter, because we'll send

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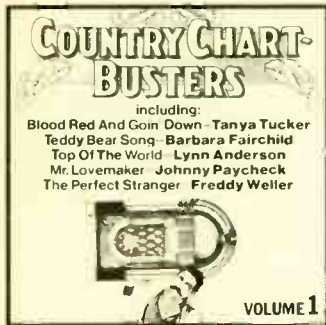
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Five packaged tours of the greatest country in America.



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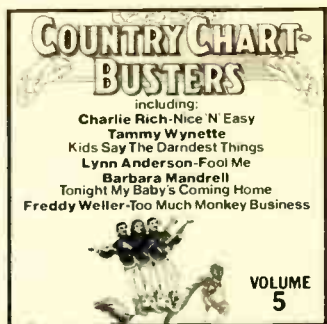
4 What a way to travel! Everything from "Six White Horses" by Tommy Cash to Charlie McCoy's "Orange Blossom Special." Along the way it's Tammy and George's "We Go Together," Mac Davis' "Your Side of the Bed," Barbara Fairchild's "Kid Stuff," and other great songs. By the end of this album of great hits, you'll agree with Bob Luman's "Neither One of Us (Wants to Be the First to Say Goodbye)."



2 "Shenandoah" is always beautiful, especially by Charlie McCoy, but on this musical journey you'll go with Johnny Cash and "Any Old Wind That Blows" and visit Earl Scruggs' "T for Texas," too. Along the way "Listen to a Country Song" by Lynn Anderson and Johnny Duncan's "Sweet Country Woman." There are tears and joy with Tammy Wynette's "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" and Jody Miller's "Good News," Tanya Tucker's "Love's the Answer" and Ray Price's "She's Got to Be a Saint," and still more.



3 Take Tanya Tucker's "The Jamestown Ferry" and you're embarking on the way to musical heights including (among others) Tammy Wynette, David Houston, George Jones, Sonny James and Freddy Weller. There's a behind-the-scenes visit with Charlie Rich's "I Do My Swingin' at Home" and Lynn Anderson's "A Perfect Match."



5 This musical ramble through the hits has something for the whole family including Tammy Wynette's "Kids Say the Darndest Things," Jody Miller's "There's a Party Goin' On," Sonny James' "I Love You More and More Everyday" and David Houston's "She's All Woman." Charlie Rich is represented with "Nice 'N' Easy" and Lynn Anderson offers her request, "Fool Me." You'll learn why Johnny Paycheck is looking for "Someone to Give My Love To," while Freddy Weller complains about "Too Much Monkey Business."

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Country News

After Leon Russell's whirlwind week in Nashville, even the most skeptical observers seemed convinced that "Hank Wilson" was a legitimate country music star.

Leon Russell: Out-of-town Boy Makes Good

by Patrick Thomas

Leon Russell arrived in Nashville on New Year's Day and began a new phase of his second career as "Hank Wilson," the character that he created for himself last year when he made his surprise bid for a country music audience. And not since Bob Dylan released *Nashville Skyline* five years ago has a rock star drawn so much attention to and from Music Row.

Russell, who played piano for both Frank Sinatra and the Rolling Stones, and who produced both Gary Lewis and Bob Dylan, is obviously a versatile gentleman. Currently, he is closely identified with Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, who are at the head of a powerful surge among Nashville artists to sweep away creative control from Music Row producers and executives. Since Russell is his own producer (unless he wishes otherwise), and because he controls his own label, he is something of a god among artists—commerce cannot touch him—and certainly his example reinforces the case to "free Willie and Waylon."

Reviewers worried out loud that Russell's first country record, *Hank Wilson's Back Vol. 1*, might be followed up with volumes 2, 3 and 4 culled from the same sessions—in other words, that he had come to Nashville to make cheap records. Happily, these critics will be disappointed.

Ostensibly, Russell was in town to shoot a television special. Shelter Records' remote video unit followed him up from Tulsa. He said

that he wanted no publicity, but he was definitely a public figure throughout the eight days that he stayed.

At the Exit/In, where Waylon Jennings had played only a few weeks before, Russell and Willie Nelson joined Doug Kershaw in the middle of a radio broadcast from the club. David Allan Coe, head outlaw of Nashville's underground writers, accompanied them on the stage, and later he directed Russell, Nelson and Kershaw to

Pete Drake's studio, where they recorded until seven in the morning.

There were about 15 musicians in the studio the first night, including a bluegrass band from West Virginia called Bluefield, whom Russell had invited to the spontaneous session when he dropped into Tut Taylor's Old Time Pickin' Parlor. Russell spent six days in the studio, and Bluefield—along with Linda Hargrove, J.J. Cale and Karl Himmel (a prominent session drummer who anchored the band)—stuck in



That's "Shotgun Willie" Nelson, left, and "Hank Wilson," alias Leon Russell.

there with him.

It seems unlikely that the Kershaw tracks will be released, although release of an original duet between Leon and Willie seems certain. Russell recorded original material by two Nashville writers, "Mary Magdalene" (by David Allan Coe) and two songs by Linda Hargrove, a 24-year-old singer, composer, session-person and engineer who has stepped steadily to the top since she came to Nashville from Tallahassee three years ago. Coe is her absolute opposite. His record as an ex-convict and his reputation as a hard-liver have denied him the kind of exposure that his talent would naturally attract. Russell was lucky to have run into them, and he treated them with as much respect as they treated him.

On Friday night, sources said that the Grand Ole Opry had cleared the eleven o'clock hour of the radio broadcast to feature "Hank Wilson," but Russell only sat in the audience from seven until he left at 10:30. Tex Ritter had been buried that day so there was no question of a lively debut.

On Monday, January 7, he took his television crew to the House of Cash in Hendersonville, where he was joined by Roy Acuff, Jeanne Pruett, Willie Nelson, Earl Scruggs, Bill Monroe, Ernest Tubb, and a host of country sidemen. The videotaping lasted ten hours, so the resulting show should rival Russell's first television special, which drew unanimous acclaim. One of Bill Monroe's pickers described the taping as a "\$4,000 party."

The outcome of all this is that Leon Russell has now legitimized his place as a country music star. There are certain rules to the game in the country music club, and he mastered them instinctively by lending his own reputation to nearly every vital faction in the Nashville music empire: the Dylan faction (represented by Doug Kershaw), the upper, middle and lower undergrounds (Willie Nelson, Linda Hargrove and David Allan Coe), the mainstream Music Row session pickers (Pete Drake and Karl Himmel), the lucky youngsters (Bluefield), and last but not least, a list of heavies from the Grand Ole Opry (on television). Just shows you what an out-of-town boy can do when he really tries. ■



Leon harmonizes with Earl Scruggs, Ernest Tubb, Jeanne Pruett, Willie Nelson, Bill Monroe and Roy Acuff. Will the circle be unbroken?



Surrounded by "nearly every vital faction in the Nashville music empire," Leon chats with Earl.

PHOTOS: JIM MCGUIRE

Doyle Holly's 'Really Not Such a Bad Guy'

by John Duggleby

The last place in the world you'd expect to meet Doyle Holly is inside a Salvation Army van. Were it a sleek leopard-lined cocktail lounge or a perfumed red parlor, you'd think nothing of it. But there he was, Destroyer of Virtue and Creator of Fallen Angels, the baddest boy on vinyl since Conway Twitty, pumping the hands of passers-by like a Baptist preacher, calling the ladies "Ma'am," and singing the praises of the Salvation Army to anyone who would listen.

"Sometimes I kind of regret falling into this bag," he moaned. "I've been fortunate to have a couple of hits, but my reputation is getting ruined. I'm really not such a bad guy, but nobody believes me."

It's too bad that some of the skeptics weren't shopping at the Chicago plaza where Doyle and the DJ's of country station WJJD were pouring coffee and signing autographs to help the local Salvation Army collect their goal of one million dollars in their red kettles over last year's Christmas holidays.

But like most new stars, everything that most people know about them is contained in the lyrics of their songs. Most fans didn't know at first that Charley Pride was black or Ronnie Milsap blind, and they don't realize that Doyle Holly isn't necessarily the rambling stud that ruined girls like "The Queen of the Silver Dollar," and "Leila." Doyle is clean-cut, soft-spoken, and looks about as likely to be slumming around with low-rent women as Roy Acuff.

"I've gotten some pretty nasty mail," he admits, "all from women. I've been called a woman-hater and a chauvinist pig, but these songs are about things that really exist. I see 'Queen of the Silver Dollars' in every club I play. But except for the fact I sung them, these songs really have nothing to do with me; I love girls!" Which is apparently true because he has a wife and a one-year-old son, statistics that would sink like martini olives in a singles' bar.

"Paying your dues" is a Nashville cliché by now, but it is one



PHOTO: JOHN DUGGLEBY

Back in a trailer again, bitten by the solo bug.

Doyle knows from first-hand experience. Born and raised in Perkins, Oklahoma, his working career began in the oilfields at age 13. Fortunately, after a few years he got drafted into a country band his brothers and sisters had formed, and he set off for the county fairs and honky tonks of the Dust Bowl circuit.

"The best way to describe my career," he smiles, "is by the way I've travelled. I started in a trailer, went to a bus, to a jet, and now I'm back in a trailer again." He started out playing an authentic washtub bass in the Holly family band, and after short episodes with various other groups, he joined the band of a rising star named Buck Owens in 1963. He considers that date a milestone in his career, because Buck travelled in a bus.

But that was only the beginning. As Buck got bigger, so did his accommodations. The bus was soon replaced by a plane, and by the time Doyle left the Buckaroos in 1970 the band took their road trips in a 747 Jumbo Jet.

"Playing with Buck Owens is one of the most thrilling things that can happen to a musician," he claims. As a Buckaroo, he played everywhere from the London Palladium to Carnegie Hall, where he

took great pleasure in standing on an Enrico Caruso memorial plaque during the show.

Despite all the fun and profit involved in working with Owens, by the late sixties, Doyle had been bitten by the solo bug. "I'd gone about as far as I could go as a sideman," he explains.

When he quit the Buckaroos in 1970, it seemed as if a tornado had swept through and sucked up all the money, 747's and jobs (which included the opportunity to appear weekly on "Hee Haw") to which he had grown accustomed. Doyle is back in a trailer now, his name spelled out in adhesive mailbox letters on the door. "A couple more hits, and maybe we can move up to a bus," he says.

He attributes his new success to some things he learned from some old buddies of his, especially Owens and Waylon Jennings. "People have told me I remind them of Waylon Jennings," he says, "and man, that's one of the *best* things you could say to me.

"I try to keep my shows loose and informal," he adds. "We might not goof off as much as Buck, but we try to keep things lively. You have to be a good entertainer as well as a singer nowadays; people expect a good show."

Doyle Holly has also learned a thing or two from his fans. He has found out that fame means working charities on his days off, looking impressed when mothers push their would-be Tanya Tuckers forward to warble sour renditions of "Satin Sheets," and getting hate letters from straight-laced critics who think life is all Dottie West and Coca Cola.

But Doyle is a very patient type and the price of becoming a rising country star seemed far away in his mind. A 10-day Christmas vacation with his family that began the next day; now, *that* was important as he left Chicago and the Salvation Army that afternoon. ■

Hoisting A Few With Uncle John

by John Morgan

Beneath a clump of chinaberry and pine trees, in a hollow surrounded by soybean fields interrupted only by scattered canebrakes alive with quail, near a creek, squats the 52-year-old tarpaper house of Uncle John. It's still only about half as old as he is. Uncle John lives 60 miles from a large Southern city, but slowly the subdivisions are closing in on him.



Dolly Mae and Uncle John: Her daddy was mean.

You approach this house from a dirt road that winds down between the yellow acres of soybeans. Out next to the road is a white '57 Fairlane coupe with its front axle resting on two uneven concrete blocks. The lopsided car points its front fender at the sky. A huge oak hous-

ing garter snakes in its roots dominates the front yard that is bordered by the loblolly pine and china-berry trees. Between the oak and the front stoop, maybe 20 crowded yards, are flowers. Hundreds of flowers. Flowers on top of flowers; begonias and japonica hemmed in by a broken white, foot-high fence, geraniums guarded in their circumference by half-buried bricks, jasmine and mimosa and chrysanthemums in rows. Uncle John plants and tends these flowers every day, one good eye or not. "If I ain't had even my one good eye, if I was blind, I'd get out there and tend my flowers. I'd sure get old if I didn't," he says.

His back yard has an old well with a rusty bucket still hanging from the tow rope and a broken down chicken coop full of moonshine. Behind a cabbage patch in a red-roofed coop roosts row on row of old whiskey bottles full of liquor that tastes enough like gin to be Calvert's or even Tanqueray. And the customers keep on coming, black and white and mostly old, old men in pick-ups and plaid shirts. They pay the same money, drink the same liquor, only they go about getting it slightly different. The black men will go in the house while John fetches a bottle, and then they gather around his pot-bellied wood stove and start taking long pulls on the bottle between the stories they swap.

The white men sit on the front porch chairs and wait. Then they get their bottles and leave. "Uh, uh," says old John, "they know me thirty years, but a white man just won't come in a black man's house. No sir. Ain't that something? Fifteen years ago I used to make my own. Not no more, though. Kin-folks won't let me.

"A man pays me forty dollar a week just to keep his liquor. That's right. Forty dollar a week. I use that kind of money."

John Wright does not even remember when he was born. He estimates he is close to 102 years, but other people are not so sure. His former employer and landlord says he is not but around 90. "I remember old John when I was just a little boy. My daddy told me nobody knew how old he was, only that he was big enough to hold a plow during the Spanish-American War. He's a big liar, alright. Every-



PHOTOS: JOHN MORGAN

"Even if I was blind I'd get out and tend my flowers."

body around here knows he isn't a hundred yet. The county hasn't got any records on him, though, so I guess he can be as old as he wants to be."

"102 is getting right up there," I told him. "You sure do get around well. Where were you born?"

"I was born in Churchill, Virginia. I came down to Georgia when I

uh, uh. What am I gonna eat out of no trashcan for when I got two good feet? I walked all the way from Athens, Georgia, to Washington, D.C. just looking for work. All the way. Wouldn't nobody pick me up so I kept on walking. When I get to Washington I break my foot open. That's how come I got a limp. I came on back to Athens and start-

porch with my guitar and think about that."

Uncle John will sit there for hours, so thin and tall he seems almost to shrink away from you as you watch him talk. When he reminisces or plays the blues, he takes off his sunglasses and focuses on something so far away you find yourself squinting at nothing. Those big, black, shiny Foster Grants that he wears seem to emphasize his coming demise and the end of thousands like him just as the television antennas on his roof seem like a disease choking the life out of his old house.

Now he just presides over his acres and plays on his guitar. Bottleneck blues; that is all he knows or needs to know. Sleepy John Estes, Peg Leg Howell, John Hurt, Blind Lemon Jefferson. They are all dead, all gone. Uncle John Wright is fading away behind his Foster Grants but now and then he takes them off and starts to play, his gnarled hands like black roots sliding up and down the neck. He sings about three different versions of "John Henry" and countless versions of how and why his first wife left him thirty years ago.

His second wife, Dolly Mae Wright, sits right by him and taps her foot in time. Her mouthful of gold teeth calls out songs to play just as regular as if there were somebody up behind her flicking on a light switch in the back of her head connected to a yellow light bulb.

"You want to hear how I got my wife?" Uncle John asks as he finishes a song. "Her daddy sure was mean. Everybody says: 'If you go to Dolly Mae's house, you sure don't take no bottle with you, or he'll blow you down with his shotgun.' Well, I didn't listen to that. I took me two bottles, one in each pocket, right on over there. He sets there in the living room with the shotgun across his lap. I pulled out those two bottles just as natural as can be. 'Want a drink?' I says and he looks at me mean but we just sit there and talk it out a while because I'm afraid to move and pretty soon I gets him to take a drink. Hey, yeah! And another. And another little drink. Pretty soon he falls asleep. I reach over and pull the shells out of his gun and go off with Dolly Mae and he like me fine after that night. Yes-



PHOTO: JOHN MORGAN

"Got a cane snake out my back door, baby . . ."

was about 18 and I been around these parts ever since, except once I left and came back."

"When was that?"

"During the Big Panic. Around 1930. Folks was eating out of trashcans back then. Not me, though,

ed back farming for Mister Jim Smith out in Smithonia. That man had him every bit of 1,000 mules with a colored hand behind every plow. Big farmer he was. He's dead now, though. My kind are passing now, won't be long. I sit on the



Uncle John: "My kind are passing now, won't be long."

sir!" Dolly Mae sits there with 200 golden watts laughing out of her mouth at that and Uncle John goes on singing:

"Got a cane snake out my back door, baby.

Guess you goan stay here to-night..."

After a while, he wants to get another bottle. We go around the corner of the house to the dank coolness of the hen coop up under a pear tree full of overripe fruit. He draws a bottle off the shelf and hands it to me. He elbows me in the ribs and we each take a swig from the bottle and start back to the house.

Leaving Uncle John's at dusk, I pulled out next to the two-lane blacktop from his dirt road. Across the road and down a few hundred yards lay the nearly completed framework of a cluster of black-roofed duplexes newly vomited from the cement mixers and dump trucks parked nearby. Their black roofs formed a circle like a pair of Foster Grants and I drove off. ■

Songwriters to Compete in First U.S. Contest

Budding songwriters who've just been waiting for the *right* people to hear their material will finally get an even chance—in the First Annual American Song Festival, the first public songwriting competition ever held in the United States.

"The idea is to give everyone

who thinks they can write a song a forum in which their composition will be heard by professionals in the music business," said Lawrence Goldblatt, founder and chairman of the Festival board. Both amateur and professional songwriters will be eligible to compete in separate divisions.

Contestants will be vying for large cash prizes, valuable merchandise, and the opportunity to have their song performed by a top recording artist at the final judging.

The competition will be judged in six music categories: country-western; gospel; rock; pop; soul/rhythm & blues/jazz; and folk. Contestants may choose the category in which they'd like their song to be judged.

A total of 36 song finalists—three in each category in the two divisions—will compete in September, 1974. Each finalist will receive \$500 in cash, as well as an expense-paid trip to the site of the finals. Winners in each category will be awarded \$5,000 each; division winners an additional \$25,000 each, and the grand prize winner will also take home a concert grand piano emblazoned with the festival's crest.

Contestants must first send \$10.85 (\$13.85 for entries outside the U.S. and Canada) to American Song Festival, P.O. Box 57, Hollywood, California 90028. The deadline is April 15. An entry kit will be sent by return mail: official entry blank to designate song category, a cassette on which to record the song, and the official Songwrit-

ers Handbook, published by the festival, containing information on copyrights and publishing. All recorded cassettes must be returned by June 3 in order to qualify for judging.

The song entries will be screened by panels of professionals from various music industry organizations and a panel of celebrity judges will select the finalists and winners.

Sterling Recreation Organization, a Seattle-based entertainment complex, will sponsor the songwriting talent hunt. ■

Country Music Study Gets a College Degree by Tom Carter

The nation's first fully-accredited college of country music instituted a course of study last fall leading to an "Associate Degree of Country Music." For \$7.25 per college hour, students at Claremore Junior College near Tulsa, Oklahoma can study the history of country music, musical composition and country music appreciation. They can learn to play an instrument, experience recording studio technique and perhaps most importantly, get an exposure to "the business side of country music," according to Larry Fowler, the school's public information director.

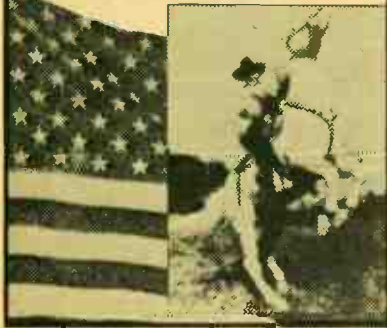
Country music singer Hank Thompson, who lives a few miles from the campus, helped formulate the courses and delivered an orientation address when classes began officially. Appropriately, the college was named the "Hank Thompson School of Country Music." The school administration did some homework too. The college's president, Richard Mosier, traveled to Nashville last year to confer with Jo Walker, executive director of the Country Music Association, and Bill Ivey, director of the Country Music Foundation.

"The school's off and rolling now and maybe it's too early to tell how it will do. But we've got 32 students for the first semester and I understand there are hundreds of applicants for the next semester," said Thompson, whose records have sold over 30 million copies during his 26-year musical career. The singer intends to lecture occasionally at the school and will be accompanied by many of Nashville's biggest stars. ■

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475 Park Avenue South
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Watch This Face: Linda Hargrove

Nashville is full of good, promising young artists who might well be tomorrow's big names in country music. Beginning this month, we shall bring these people to your attention. You can consider an artist's inclusion in this section of Country Music as an endorsement of his or her talent, and feel free to recommend your own favorites.

No woman has ever captured Music Row quite so totally as Linda Hargrove. That may sound excessive, but it's true. As a singer, writer, session-person and recording engineer, she's *hot*.

Linda began singing professionally with rock & roll, R&B and British blues-influenced bands in her hometown, Tallahassee, when she was 16. She first came to Nashville with a group, which was recording seven of her songs for a first album. "Until I moved here," she says, "I didn't feel that I was developing the way that I could."

She had to make adjustments to a new audience to survive on Music Row, where she kicked around for a year or so on the verge of giving up until Sandy Posey decided to cut one of her songs. At that session, Linda Hargrove met the two men who seem to have given her writing its strongest sense of direction: Billy Sherrill and Pete Drake.

Billy Sherrill encouraged her writing and singing and a month after that session, she auditioned for Drake. He signed her on the spot, with the warning, "Nothing will happen overnight. It'll take a while to get your name around. Just concentrate on your writing, and when the right time comes, we'll get you a record deal."

And concentrate on her writing she did, but the way that she got her name around is a testimonial to her energy and her shrewd intelligence. "Pete said that I played a guitar style sort of like George Harrison, so he used me on a Tommy James album he was producing," she remembers. "Then I got into



Linda Hargrove: "I kept my mouth shut and my eyes open."

strumming more traditional rhythms—less of a loose type thing—more strict. So he started using me on a lot of his sessions. I played on a couple of RCA dates, and then other people began to hire me."

Consider this a deadpan description when you realize that Linda Hargrove is the first woman guitar player to become a session regular on Music Row, which is a musician's jungle.

"At first," she said, "I don't think people thought I was serious about it. You know how men are—sort of you're-alright-for-a-girl. I still get that a little bit. But I made friends with all the pickers."

This third career (singing and writing being careers within themselves) tipped the balance in her favor. In late 1972, Mike Nesmith, the ex-Monkee who was creating a country label in Los Angeles, came to Nashville looking for material and pickers, and found Linda. He took her to L.A. to play on an album that he was producing and in

troduced her to A&R man Russ Miller. Russ listened to her sing and play her songs on an unamplified electric guitar, and he asked her, "What do you want?"

"I told him I wanted to record," she says.

She returned to Nashville and began recording almost immediately, and the first album, *Music Is Your Mistress*, made up entirely of her tunes, was released last summer. "It wasn't a hit album," she smiles, "but for a first album by a new artist, I'm pretty well pleased with it."

Certainly, the album is no skeleton in her closet. Its release brought her widespread recognition among other performers. Tanya Tucker, Melba Montgomery and Johnny Rodriguez have covered her material in the past few months, but her biggest break to date has been her association with "Hank Wilson"—Leon Russell, who recorded two of her songs in January.

All of her talents came into play on Leon's sessions. Besides her songs, she contributed her skills as a session musician and even as recording engineer, a fourth career which she learned last year.

"Well, Pete Drake's had the studio for almost exactly a year now," she told me when I asked her about this new development of her capability. "I just kept my mouth shut and my eyes open. I just kind of grew into it."

Grew into it. She's 24 years old now, and she doesn't lack recognition. The week after Russell left town, the night before I wrote this story, she played to a crowd at Nashville's Exit/In which included Kris Kristofferson, Shel Silverstein, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Rodriguez, Chris Gantry, David Allan Coe, Danny Flowers, Steve Goodman, Guy Clark and John Prine. Now that's a hell of an audience, as hard a jury as any performing artist could face. The verdict was thunderous applause.

PATRICK THOMAS

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Chet Atkins: Story of a Quiet Man

by John Gabree



Chet Atkins is in his spacious office at RCA's Nashville complex, unhappily torn between the pleasures of lunch and the duty of allowing himself to be interviewed by two visiting journalists. He moves restlessly from behind a desk big as a ping pong table, to an easy chair, to the outer office in search of a light and back to the desk. Frankly, he looks as if he'd rather be someplace else.

And why not? He is by reputation a very private man, and yet to achieve his ends as a performer and executive he has to allow himself to be examined again and again. He must wonder in his darkest hours what sins he has committed that deserve the punishment of still another interview.

As the conversation wanders from his early days to his philosophy of producing to his family life, Chet relaxes somewhat. He talks equipment for a while with the visiting photographer, visibly interested in the details of the arti-

ficial lighting equipment. "It's one of my hobbies. I'm not very good at it, but I take a lot of pictures. I'm also a ham radio operator, although I'm not at it too much. I have so many interests I get spread pretty thin.

"My real passion is golf. I play at least twice a week at Hillsboro

ness and his famous stoop conspiring to make him appear taller at a distance. There is about him, despite his seeming ease, an air of tension, of control, and one is not surprised to hear about his serious bout with ulcers of a few years ago, despite the fact that he seems in excellent health now.

... It was not the last time Chet was to find himself in trouble for following his own ideas ...

during good weather, though I haven't been playing lately since I hurt my wrist. I tried to change my swing and sprained it somehow. I play mostly in the 80s."

Finally, he calls for a lunch break. "The most photogenic thing about me is the car downstairs," he tells the photographer, referring to his pale yellow "Glassic," a fiberglass copy of a Model A Ford. "Why don't we go down and you can snap a few pictures of that?"

It is a surprise to find that Chet is only about six feet tall, his lean-

There is neither warmth nor coldness in his promises to continue the interview later at his home.

Chet was born on June 20th, 1924, on a 50-acre farm in Luttrell, a small town about 20 miles outside of Knoxville. "We didn't do much plowing," he recalls. "It was hardly that kind of good earth. We had a small herd of cows. You can have a lot of meals off milk."

His parents were J.J. and Ida Sharp Atkins, his father an Irish tenor and piano and voice teacher,



his mother busy with his brothers and sisters. "We were a musical family," Chet says. In fact, his brother Jimmy, 12 years his senior, was something of a star himself in the thirties, playing guitar with Les Paul and Fred Waring.

"My daddy wanted me to be a classical violinist, to play classical music," Chet remembers. "The guitar was my way of rebelling. Every teenager rebels somehow. My way was the guitar and country music."

For the last 15 years, Chet has lived in a large, unflashy two-story ranch-style house at the end of Lenwood Boulevard. It is a long way from the unpainted, crowded farmhouse in Luttrell. Chet grew up in the years of the false prosperity of the twenties and the real depression of the thirties, and economic necessity drove him to drop out of school. "I guess I'm pretty lucky," he supposes now. "It's pretty hard to get anywhere without a proper education."

In the South and everywhere in the country before the days of a radio in every car and two televisions in every home, it was the custom of folks to entertain themselves. For a lot of people, including the Atkins, that meant family singing. Chet remembers that there wasn't a whole lot else to do. There was no radio at home, no movie house to go to: the man who was to become the most famous electric guitarist in the world didn't even know what electric power was until he was a teenager.

Chet Atkins began his career as a sideman. "Jimmy Atkins used to let me pick his guitar occasionally and I also plunked on a ukelele. Whenever a string would break on the uke, I would pull a piece of wire out of a screen door or window, attach it to the uke and resume plunking."

Chet's grandfather, a Civil War veteran, had been a champion fiddler, and that, plus his father's hopes for a little Isaac Stern, push-

ed him into fiddling. In those days, it was the custom to hold a concert or dance for the benefit of anyone who got sick or had some other kind of tragedy. "You know, to help pay the doctor and medicine bills.

"The older musicians in the group would black my face and introduce me as a fiddling minstrel. We also played at the opening of new stores. The owner would give us two or three dollars and all the water-

"... Every teenager rebels somehow. My way was the guitar and country music ..."

melon we could eat. I don't know why, but they usually had these openings in the summer when watermelons were ripe.

"Those were my first professional appearances in public, and I loved them."

When he was 9, Chet acquired his own guitar, trading an old family pistol for what he later called "my first love." He began what was to be years of chasing after visiting musicians, begging for a chance to watch them play in the hopes of learning a new lick. Two years later he was able to put together the \$20 to buy his first new guitar, a Silvertone from Sears Roebuck.

In the meantime, while listening to WLW out of Cincinnati on a homemade radio, he had found his guitar-playing idol, Merle Travis. "Merle was always the greatest," he said recently, describing a soon-to-be released RCA record called *The Atkins-Travis Traveling Show*. He was a great influence on me when I was a teenager. In fact, for a long time I guess I sounded a lot like him. We've talked about doing an album for years, but we finally did it a few months ago in Los Angeles. Shel Silverstein wrote a couple of songs just for the record. The rest are old standards including a few by Merle. We sing together and play. I used to sing years ago but it's been so long everybody's forgotten. It's a kind of debut."

Chet made his real debut when he was 16, playing fiddle, "badly" he says, with a radio act featuring Archie Campbell and Bill Carlisle on WNOX, Knoxville. "They didn't happen to need a guitarist" he says. A couple of years later, how-

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	My Life	DEC	75142S		Strike Back	CAM					702S			
ANDERSON, LIZ	Friends are Strangers	CAM	956S	Humorous Side	CAM	768S	SLIM, MONTANA	32 Wonderful Years	CAM	846S				
											Songs for Out Crowds	CAM	2137S	
ANDERSON, LYNN	No Love At All	EPIC	30099S	HUSKY, FERLIN	Ferlin Husky	KING	647S	SMITH, CARL	Gentleness In Love	HAR	7451S			
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		EPIC	11506S		Fist City	DEC	74997S	STONEMANS, THE	In All Honesty	RCA	4343S			
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	Time Is Moving On	STAR	408		Bob	STAR	403	RED SOVINE	Tell Maude I Slipped	STAR	420
JOHNNY BOND	Famous Hot Rodders	STAR	354		Bummin' Around	STAR	442		Sunday With Sovine	STAR	427
	Man Who Comes Around	STAR	368		Best	STAR	466		Closing Time Till Dawn	STAR	441
	Branded Stock	STAR	388	Good Times	STAR	473	GEORGE JONES	Golden Hits	STAR	440	
	Ten Nights In A Barroom	STAR	402	GUY MITCHELL	Traveling Shoes	STAR		412	BUCK OWENS	Sweethearts In Heaven	STAR
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ever, WNOX's program director, Lowell Blanchard, heard Chet noodling on the guitar after hours and immediately appointed him the station's house guitarist.

In 1945, Chet moved on to WLW in Cincinnati where, after about a year, he was fired for not being commercial or "country" enough. It was not the last time Chet was to find himself in trouble for following his own ideas about what to play, instead of the boss'. But Chet's stay at WLW wasn't a complete disaster. Singing on the station when he arrived were twin sisters, Leona and Lois Johnson. In 1946 Leona Johnson became the June bride of Chet Atkins, and they have lived happily ever after, not always the story of celebrity marriages. A year later they became the parents of a daughter, Merle, so called in honor of her maternal

grandmother and her father's hero.

Chet worked briefly for WPTF, Raleigh, as back-up to Johnny and Jack, then quit at Red Foley's request to take a featured spot on the network portion of the Grand Ole Opry show. After about six months the ad agency for the show asked that he be dropped, presumably for "someone more country," and, his feelings hurt, he quit to join the Old Dominion Barn Dance on WRVA, Richmond, but it wasn't long before he was fired because he wasn't—you guessed it—"country."

Chet's next stop was Springfield, Mo., where he found a job with Si Simon's Radio Ozark. Though it didn't last long, Chet's stay with Simon would result in his meeting Steve Sholes, the man who would have the most lasting effect on his life.

When Chet met Steve Sholes in

the late forties Sholes had already been RCA's representative in Nashville for more than a decade. It was Sholes, a fat, energetic man with a knack for spotting exceptional talent both in his office and on his roster, who brought Elvis to RCA, and he is credited with signing stars as diverse as Jim Reeves, Al Hirt, Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Hank Locklin, Jim Ed Brown and his sisters, Skeeter Davis, Peter Nero,



Views of Chet Atkins



Jerry Reed: "I'd always been in contact with Chester. Every young guitarist copies him. I tried to learn to play like him, too. Chet's playing is all heart, soul, feeling... You don't have to be an expert to like what he's playing. You just have to listen. If he weren't Chet Atkins, he'd have to be a guitar. He loves playing: I've watched him for hours and hours, just playing, and I have yet to be around anyone who feels as Chester does about the guitar. His love goes beyond anything I've ever seen.

He's got me forever working on new ideas. He's amazing."

Charlie McCoy: "Chet Atkins is a stylist, and that's a lot more important than having a good technique. His style falls somewhere in between Merle Travis and Jerry Reed. He's about the smoothest player I've ever heard. He doesn't say much when he's producing. He's so doggone quiet. He just sits and listens and takes it in."

Jack Clement: "I first met Chet at RCA in 1957, when I was cutting a single as a singer for Sun Records. His office was in what is now the men's room for Studio B at RCA. He took me to some crappy restaurant for lunch. I wasn't too impressed. We went in his Oldsmobile. I wasn't too impressed by that either.

"I've loved Chet forever.

"Chet Atkins plays Chet Atkins better than anybody in the world. There are a lot of guitar pickers, but there's only one Chet Atkins. I love Chet. I ain't sure whether Chet loves Chet, though. He always seems to be trying for something else."

Porter Wagoner, Elton Britt, The Sons of the Pioneers, and many others.

In 1961, Sholes was asked at a testimonial dinner in his honor, what he thought was his greatest contribution to RCA's fortunes. His answer was short and sweet: "Chet Atkins" was all he said.

After hearing a tape of Chet playing two numbers and realizing that he had never heard anybody play guitar quite like that before, Sholes tracked Chet down. "I shall never forget that first meeting," he told an interviewer. "He was shy, retiring, and quiet. He was so skinny I had to look twice to see if he was there."

Chet's first work for RCA Victor wasn't very successful, but in the early 1950s he returned to the Grand Ole Opry, this time with Mother Maybelle Carter and her daughters. Mother Maybelle used him as a sideman, and later as the

leader of her recording band. Then, in 1955, Steve Sholes convinced RCA to hire Chet as a part-time assistant for the princely sum of \$75 per week. In 1957, Sholes moved on in the RCA organization, and selected Chet Atkins as his successor in Nashville.

"I had no fear of his capability as a producer. I had watched him work around other musicians in sessions, and I was aware that the



musicians and artists respected him," said Sholes. "I knew his ability better than he did."

In his position as a major player, executive and producer, Chet Atkins has had the unique pleasure of making all country music react or conform to his influence instead of having to conform himself to existing ideas about the boundaries of country music. "People say I brought country music to the middle of the road," he says. "Maybe I did and maybe I didn't, but a lot of people seem to like what we're doing."

"One problem we have, one reason that a lot of country tunes sound the same, is that the artists let themselves get intimidated. On a small label, an artist is freer to express himself without much interference. I had that problem when Roy Orbison was with the label. Nothing seemed to work. Years

later he told me he was afraid to make suggestions. He thought we were the experts.

"And, it's hard not to conform when everybody's using the same musicians. They come into the third session that day and they'll come up with stock endings and intros. But if you have ideas and are willing to work with them they'll come up with new things for you."

Atkins fooled a lot of people by running a tight and profitable ship at RCA. "I don't think I'm much of an administrator, but I can spot talent: I know a good artist when I hear one. Not everyone can do that.

"And I've brought staff into this building, especially Jerry Bradley who runs the operation now, good people who respect me.

They make RCA Nashville go smoothly."

The secret of Atkins' success may be his style. As tough-minded as anyone in Music City, his ambition is tastefully clothed in Patri-

"... He was so skinny I had to look twice to see if he was there," said Sholes ...

cian good looks. Mild-mannered, easy-going, with an attractive if intermittent smile, there is nothing about Chet Atkins that offends: to the contrary, he seems as safe as a pitcher of warm milk.

"I play it pretty loose in the studio," he says. "I like the musicians to feel free to offer suggestions. Nashville is full of good

Dallas has the Cowboys, San Francisco has the bridge, Hollywood has the stars, New York has the skyscrapers, And Springhill has Stampley.

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musicians. Grady Martin never works without adding something. The same goes for Wayne Moss. Reggie Young is the best young rock guitarist right now. Somebody like Jerry Reed, you just have to point him toward the studio. He does the rest.

"All the producer has to do is sift the good ideas from the bad. If you just keep your mouth shut and listen, you can make hit records."

Chet's career as a musician has been no less spectacular than his career as an administrator. Although he had no hits the first three years with RCA, he got a lot of air play in 1950 with "The Galloping Guitar." He did his first LP, *Chet Atkins Plays Guitar*, in 1951, and he has recorded two or three albums a year since. He has over 50 in RCA's catalogue, the only Victor artist never to have had a record withdrawn. Despite all this success, he feels compelled to add, "All my records have been sort of half-assed. I can't stand to hear myself. I'm not one of these people who listens to his own records. I always hear things I could have done better. There are a few that

"... It's always good to hear the others pick. It's just myself I hate..."

are good: *Superpickers*; the LP with Hank Snow; the one with Merle. It's always good to hear the others pick. It's just myself I hate.

"The pressure of the job always meant I didn't have enough time to prepare my own albums. Supervising 40 acts or so doesn't leave room for much else. Now I'm producing less than a half dozen, mostly artists like Hank Snow. We've been together a long time and have had a lot of success together. They just don't want to go with someone else and you don't want to make them."

Still, somewhere Chet has found the time and energy to make, in addition to all those records, numerous appearances with symphony orchestras in places like Nashville, Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans, St. Louis, Birmingham, Seattle, Houston, Pittsburgh and Minneapolis, in addition to several appearances and LPs with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops. He gives two or so concerts a month



and occasionally revives the band he once shared with Boots Randolph and Floyd Cramer.

Although he is famous for his studio work as a producer and sideman, Chet acknowledges that he always wanted to be a star. "I knew the only way I would ever be somebody was with my guitar. And I wanted to be somebody very much. I wanted to be wealthy and famous. I wanted to be respected." This year, Chet was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. *That's respect.*

The late-afternoon sun has broken through an all-day drizzle as Chet pulls his "Glassic" into the garage under his home. He is greeted by a very sweet and very wet Irish setter who seems to have his heart set on making everyone else as wet as he is. Behind his garage is a den piled with drop-cloth-covered office furniture and featuring the inevitable pool table, the only piece of standard equipment in Nashville homes. On the walls something is not so common, even in Nashville: gold records Chet has received for producing million-sellers.

A window at one end of the den opens into the room which is the



The complete musician: Chet teaching a visitor some Spanish licks (above) and playing in his 16-track home studio.



focus of Chet Atkins' life: a workshop and recording studio with 16-track capacity. Guitars are scattered about the room and cases stretch down the hall leading to the main part of the house. "I have maybe 30 or so. If I see one I really like I buy it. The most expensive is about \$1,000, made for me by Has- kel Heile over in Kentucky. It's a classical and I have another, European, classical worth as much."

"... I wanted to be wealthy and famous. I wanted to be respected ..."

As he talks, Chet begins to repair his favorite guitar, damaged in the cargo hold during a recent flight. "It's a Country Gentleman, one of the guitars I endorse"—the others are the Super Chet, the Nashville and the Tennessean, all manufactured by Gretsch—"They sent me one about 10 years ago. It sustains better on the high notes than any guitar I've owned. That's why I like it.

"I get them wrecked or stolen all the time. I've had two or three broken and two or three stolen while flying. If it's lost the air- line'll pay for it, but if it's busted

up it's just too bad. You can't leave equipment in your car during ses- sions either, or it's sure to be stolen."

His Garcia Vega smoked down to a soggy stub, more like a plug than a cigar, Chet scratches around the studio for a match. "I'm never without a guitar. I play when I'm nervous and I practice every day. Or almost. I hate to go a day with- out playing."

The Country Gentleman restrung,

Chet picks up another acoustic and hits into a rhythmic Latin- American melody. "I like all kinds of music. I've played jazz, classical, pop, folk and of course country." He looked solemn. "The guitar is a wonderful instrument. No one will ever master it completely. There is always more to know.

"I'll never be as good at it as I want to be, but I keep learning. I love to play." ■

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RCA STUDIOS,
Nashville, Tennessee



Hollyweird Seeks The Singing Cowboy

by J.R. Young

On a warm October morning outside NBC's Studio 4 in beautiful downtown Burbank, 1500 assorted males lined up in the smoggy morning sun and waited for a chance at stardom. The ever-growing line stretched along the sidewalk for the entire length of three massive studios, then sprawled chaotically into the parking lot.

There were Brillo-headed hippies from Topanga Canyon and Atlanta and Marin County; crew-cut middle-agers in sleek cowboy suits, in from West Covina and Missouri and the far reaches of the San Fernando Valley; Las Vegas lounge-type dudes in doubleknit perfection and stylish Nashville Mod hairdos; fat cowboys; lean Marlboro Man types; early Elvis look-alikes complete with patent leather hair and well-practiced sneers; furry chaps;

gleaming pistols; brown scuffed boots; orange hotshot boots; penny loafers; beards; baldies; city-bred cowboys; back-country mountain men and all of them with a song in their hearts, Gibson elec-

"... Our Singing Cowboy isn't in any agent's book. That's why the audition. And it's blown the industry's mind ..."

trics and Glen Campbell round-backs and beat-up old acoustics in their hands. They were pickin' and grinnin' and listening with sidelong glances at their most immediate neighbors. They'd smile with casual assurance at the sound of someone else's blown chord or flat C, and pale at the sight of some passing honcho with obvious Star Quality.

Yes, it was a long wait in Burbank that day, but the reward would be high. It was quite possible that one—just one—of this motley crew would wind up as The Singing Cowboy. That is, *the Singing Cowboy*.

And meanwhile, back in posh downtown Beverly Hills . . .

The cream-colored phones haven't stopped ringing in the spacious high-rent offices of Pierre Cossette since he and his enterprising young partner, Wes Farrell, made the original announcement last September that the two of them were embarking on "*the greatest talent search in the history of show business to find the dude who will be the Singing Cowboy!*" The Singing Cowboy? Holy *jingle jangle jingle!* Shades of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers circa 1974, Hollyweird style. But when Wes & Pierre sent out the

THE COSSETTE
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Singing Cowboy



word, they sent out *the word*. Lavishly. Word of the impending open audition to find their latest brain-storm was carried in ads in every major metropolitan newspaper in every major metropolitan area from L.A. to the Big Apple.

"We were going to place an ad in *Time*," Wes Farrell noted without batting an eye, just before taking another call from China, "but our schedules got crossed."

"But the response so far has been terrific," Pierre Cossette winked as he spread out Xeroxed copies of letters of response all over a pol-

in short punchy press release jingo. He's a very serious person, and sometimes he even smiles with amusement about how serious he is.

Pierre Cossette, on the other hand, is a dapper 45 with slicked-back, unevenly parted hair who finds fun in all his projects. *All the way to the bank*, as the old joke goes. He founded Dunhill Records, produced the last three Emmy Shows, and teamed Jimmy Durante with Helen Traubel. Like Wes, he just keeps on keeping on, because both men are into *getting things done*. "Confidence" becomes an in-

Wes points out. "We're sitting ducks. If we let too much out, we'll be picked off, and before we turn around, there'll be six Singing Cowboys. They'll do that in this town . . . As far as we know, our Singing Cowboy isn't in any agent's book. That's why the audition. And it's blown the industry's mind!"

Inside mind-blown NBC's Studio 4, a makeshift cardboard barnyard complete with half of a very realistic-looking barn, real haybales, antiqued hoes and shovels, plastic cow pies, and two gleaming microphones faced a long cluttered table of folders, pictures, used coffee cups and ash trays, all presided over by the men themselves, Wes & Pierre. A band of some of Hollywood's finest session men occupied a space next to the barn, the press had their area, and tiers of bleachers (more accustomed to the screams of "Me, Monte! ME!") rose up behind Wes & Pierre's table. Hopefuls who had finished or were about to go on sat there. As the afternoon stretched into evening, the bleachers filled up.

"Number 84. Jim V. Phoenix, Arizona."

Wrangler Jim Brodhead, an L.A. public relations man now handling the clapboard for the day, called out the name as #84 had his picture taken at the microphone. The dude was short, dressed in a blue-and-white sport coat with color-coordinated slacks, and he was nervous to the point of being bug-eyed. He was the fifth person to sing "Please Release Me," and he never got his rhythm coordinated with the piano player. But rather than stop, he pressed on, or at least tried to. After twenty seconds, Wes thanked him, and that was it for #84. He crept off into the shadows.

Robbie R., a short and ruddy man, bounced on stage resplendent in red pants, orange shirt, leather vest and white shoes, with his act *under control*.

"Bless your heart and welcome to the Singing Cowboy Show. How about everybody taking ten seconds of my time and giving the band a *big hand*?"

Had he been auditioning for the Cockpit, a saloon in the Valley where he actually works, it might have been different. But here, well . . . Wes looked quickly at his watch.

Pierre went looking for a candy bar. John Van W., a handsome young



The search continues at NBC in beautiful downtown Burbank.

ished glass coffee table. He was no longer accepting calls for the day. "We've gotten replies for more info from Missouri, Kansas, Idaho, New York. You name it, we have one."

Indeed, they probably do. Wes Farrell & Pierre Cossette's business just happens to be show business, and they just happen to be looking for a Singing Cowboy because they *feel* it's right at this time. If Yodelling Truckers felt right to them right now, appropriate ads would have been placed in *Overdrive*.

Wes Farrell is a tall razor-cut young man of 33 sporting not only steel blue calculator eyes and a well-manicured beard, but a business record that is the envy of very successful lessers in the game. Wes invented David Cassidy and the Partridge Family, produces Wayne Newton, wrote "Hang On, Sloopy" and innumerable other Top 40 million-sellers, and is responsible for the TV commercials of Mobil, Canada Dry, and others. He's a walking conglomerate who talks

adequate term when discussing Wes & Pierre.

"What it's about is quite simple," Pierre said. "We're planning a half-hour network TV show about a Singing Cowboy. That's the end goal. It's that simple. Nothing complicated. It can't complicate itself any more than that. It's cornflakes. Mom's apple pie. Mom, herself. It's America. It's the Singing Cowboy. A real old-fashioned hero. The kind that we haven't seen in years. The stars on TV today are Telly Savalas and Peter Falk. Real people. But we're looking for an Errol Flynn! He's going to be a straight-ahead guy, and he's going to be weird because he's going to be *soo* straight.

"We're expecting to come up with a real Superstar. We're going to sign him to a year's contract, and he'll make records."

"And we'll get an exceptional concert attraction with him, too," Wes noted.

Beyond that, the scheme gets a little hazy, but for good reason, as

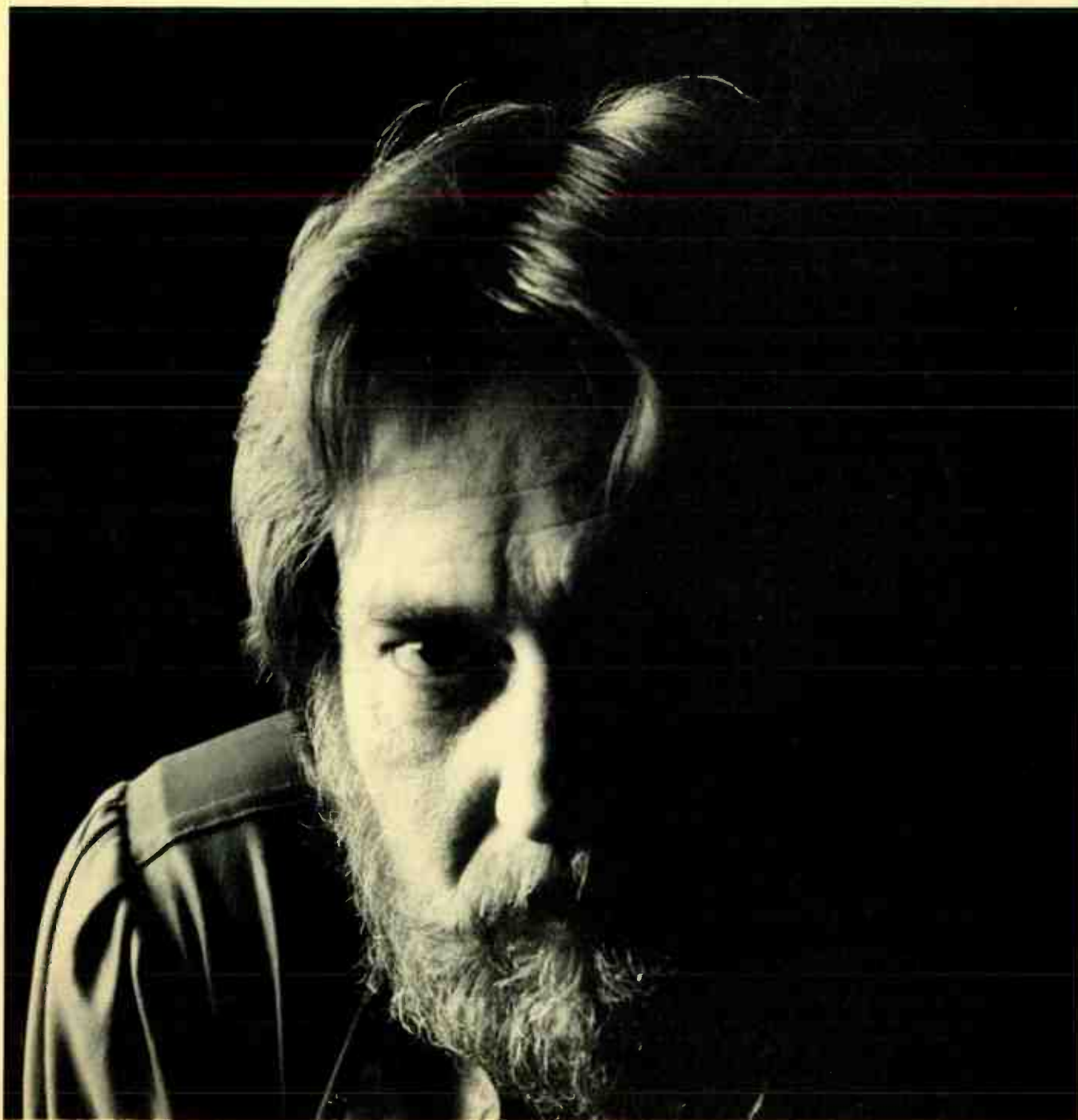
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**"Phases and Stages" by Willie Nelson.
On Atlantic Records and Tapes.**





Pierre (right) with pardner Wes.

"There are lots of Singing Cowboys around," Pierre cut in, "Mac Davis. Neil Diamond. Rick Nelson would be perfect. Put them next to a horse, and they're Gene Autry. Except they sing Top Forty. What makes them contemporary isn't their looks. It's their *repertoire*. Their *attitude*. Change their repertoire and attitude, and it's something else again."

The scene that day had shifted from Burbank to the less expansive (and probably less expensive) studios of local TV station KTLA in sunny Hollyweird. The fact that KTLA was chosen was more than a bit ironic (perhaps on purpose) because KTLA is owned by the original Singing Cowboy himself, Gene Autry.

"Today we're back in the old corral," Pierre laughed in one of the innumerable interviews he gave that day, "and we're expecting Gene to come by any minute with a six gun in hand and asking what in the hell is going on."

Some of the professionals who turned out were "knowns," some almost-knowns. Keith Allison, from the Dick Clark School of L.A. Pickers, stood up there in faded dungarees, sang "Behind Closed Doors," and still managed to recall the famous Paul McCartney look he parleyed into a career on "Where the Action Is." Tall Horace Heidt Jr., dressed in suave leathers and flashing straight white teeth, sang and smiled his way along in Wes' Semifinal Fifty, and so impressed one PR man that he noted out loud, "Gee, now *he* looks like a star."

A young and blonde Conway Twitty lookalike, complete with wind-blown pompadour, took the stage bearing an attitude that indicated he'd been told too many times how truly good-looking he was. He snowed only himself with an off-hand version of "Today I Started Loving You Again." The Flower Power blond from Hermosa Beach was back, flute still in hand, and he sang his song again after announcing, "I feel goofy." Later it was explained by one PR man that certain people were called back "just for color, to give variety to the TV show."

A callback cowboy from Montana showed up not only with a fully costumed string band to back him, but also with two cold-eyed stunt men who, before anybody knew

lad from Hermosa Beach, strolled in dressed in bleached white overalls, long fluffy blonde hair, and nothing else except his flute. He was the personification of the long-lost days of good ol' Flower Power.

"I just want to say 'thank you' that I could be here. The song is called 'I'm Free.' About two years ago it was called 'I'm Not Free at All,' but I've changed since then." The crowded bleachers loved that, and people responded with some lusty *right-ons*. Wes and Pierre got a big kick out of him, too. He launched into a spacey jazz riff.

One old gentleman with eight chins, cokebottle glasses, and heavy-hanging clothes had come from Missouri, and sang in such a deep basso that not one word was intelligible. He sang a whole song, whatever it was, then took a deep bow and went home to Missouri happy. That day before, he'd been to Disneyland.

When it was all over, a bleary-eyed Wes Farrell stumbled out into the dark, still in possession of enough presence of mind to note that it was all "very interesting, very fruitful."

Fruitful is right! The 18-hour shindig garnered more media coverage than all the bigtime money in Texas could buy. The fact that Wes & Pierre didn't have the cowboy yet was really immaterial.

Gary McMahon is a 25-year-old professional. His biography reads "cowboy" for occupation. He lives

in Nashville these days, and plays rhythm guitar for Tracy Nelson's Mother Earth, in addition to session work and some local picking and passing the hat. Like a lot of young pickers, he's looking for *that* break.

Gary grew up in Greely, Colorado, on a ranch and spent his first eighteen years rodeoing and singing. In high school it was Marty Robbins *music*, high school dramatics, and bull-riding. He spent time at Colorado State in veterinary medicine, then the Navy, then a psychedelic band in California, and finally he ended up in Nashville.

"Man," he nodded, "it was like coming home, and I just started

"... It's cornflakes. Mom's apple pie. Mom herself. It's America. It's The Singing Cowboy..."

hanging out like everybody else... But what I really want is my own band. And I could have it now if I only had the bread to afford it. I've got the greatest band picked out. Western music. Not country."

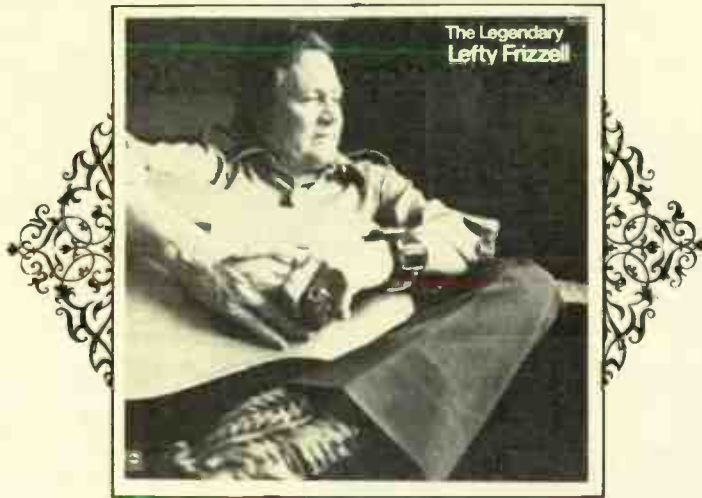
The second audition in the Singing Cowboy series was primarily for professionals like Gary who didn't want to stand in line, and for the call-backs from the first audition.

"No professionals were solicited," Wes Farrell quickly pointed out that morning. "They called us. Remember, we want the most unmechanical person possible."

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what was happening, staged one sensation of a knockdown, drag-out fight. They cleaned the stage up with each other, using loud and terrifying kicks to the stomach and brain-smashing knee drops. One finally pulled his black pistol and nailed the other dead in the back. Their act was so successful that they completely overshadowed the poor dude who had the appointment. After the fight, he never had a chance. Then there was Gary McMahon, who sang a Western tune penned by one of his friends, and accompanied himself with the finest picking of the day. He had that feeling: He made Western music, and everybody listened, tapped their feet, and nodded. Yes, that was *real* Western music.

"Our Singing Cowboy," Wes said during one of the breaks, "is not necessarily a cowboy singer, however. That limits the potential market-place. He won't relate to country music as much as music in gen-

eral. What's music in general? Creedence. Carol King. The roots of today's music have too many opportunities to cross over for me to tell you that the Singing Cowboy is going to sing just cowboy music. That's bull."

The pros and the callbacks finished at one o'clock. Their audition had been thorough and professional. In addition to their singing, they also delivered "lines" into the camera. With great feeling.

"Mornin', ma'am."

"Evenin', ma'am."

"There's a stage leavin' for Yuma at five! Be on it!"

"Look at all them cows. Sure makes you lonesome, don't it."

At 1:30, the open audition began, and the 500 unknowns who waited outside in the hot January sun were led in and paraded on cue down a studio street as they headed for the sound stage. A television camera caught it all. A woman carrying a

washtub. A burly man with his two singing dogs. Ancient square dancers in gingham skirts and matching blue shirts and an equally ancient record player under one old dude's arm and a Floyd Cramer album under the other. Essentially it was the same cast of character types as at NBC, all with the same harried gleams in their eyes, the same hopes and fears in their smiles and frowns. In front of the microphones, it was the same too, except this time Wes pushed them through at the rate of 41 an hour. *Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.* But it was understandable. After awhile you don't hear music. You see only images, and make your judgement on that.

For the first hour of the open audition, Gary McMahon set quietly in a metal chair in the back watching the proceedings and again tugging at his moustache. He had already been informed of his spot in the Semifinals at Knott's Berry Farm.

"I haven't got the bread to keep flying back and forth from here to Nashville," he shrugged, "so I guess I'll just have to stay with friends until I find out what's happening."

That's what he said before he saw the singing dogs and the washboard woman and the square dancers and the high school students and computer operators who couldn't take their eyes off the floor as they quivered under the bright lights. At the first hour's end of the amateur parade, he was slumped low and silent in his chair, his brow was furrowed wistfully, and his eyes were wide open. He shook his head and almost smiled as he muttered something about, "Damn, back in Nashville... well, this wouldn't... ah..." The person next to him nodded in perfect agreement. Five minutes later, apparently, enough was enough because he was up and gone, still shaking his head and wondering what it all meant. And someone else wondered later if Gary was coming back at all. Who knows?

It's like Wes Farrell said very early in the game. "We'll give them the gun and the bullets, and we'll pull back the hammer. But they've got to squeeze the trigger and get off the shot."

In Hollyweird '74, that's what it takes if you want to be the Singing Cowboy. ■

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"I was born in Texas. You know that. But I never got a callin' to music 'til my sister brought home a Jimmie Rodgers record; 'In the Jailhouse Now,' I think it was, and this was when I was 15.

"Now, my daddy used to kid me. He'd hear me down in the pasture tryin' to yodel. That's where I'd practice. Nobody could yodel like Jimmie Rodgers, but I was bound to try. Did pretty good, too, 'til I lost my tonsils.

"Anyway, he'd hear me down in the pasture, and then, he'd come a-runnin', sayin', 'didn't I hear Jimmie Rodgers down here?' And my brother, he'd just aggravate me. He'd come runnin' up, sayin',

'Hey folks, I knew this boy before he could yodel.'

"Well, this was 1929, when I was 15. A couple years later, in Benjamin, Texas, I was singin' at dances, and my sister said, 'Why don't you get a guitar or something?' So, I bought one for \$5.95.

"Well, things moved on. A few years later, when Jimmie Rodgers died, I was in San Antonio. Had a program on radio station WONO. At the time, I also worked in a drug store. And I was thinkin' to myself one day, 'Now, Jimmie Rodgers' widow lives in San Antonio; I wonder if she's in the phone book?' So, I looked up the name, and sure enough, there was a Mrs. Jimmie

Rodgers. I called her, and when she answered the phone, I like to fainted. But, I said, 'Hello, I'm Ernest Tubb, and I was wonderin' if you could send me a picture of Jimmie—just anything.'

"'Come on over,' she said. So, I went to her house, thinkin' I'd stay just a few minutes. Well, we talked and talked, and I looked at my watch, and saw I'd been there three hours. Anyway, she said she'd listen to my program. So, I went on home, and three months later, she called back and said, 'Ernest, I like your show. I've listened for a while, and I think you can go places, so I'd like to help you.'

"And that's how I got started."

E.T. Remembers

On His Last Night at the Ryman, Ernest Tubb Talks About the Old Days

by Marshall Fallwell

In case you don't already know, that's Ernest Tubb talking.

I followed him around all one Saturday night, January 19, 1974, which just happened to be the last night he would perform on the stage of Ryman Auditorium. Because downtown was jammed tighter than a can of tuna fish, I had trouble finding a parking place, so I missed most of Tubb's first show. When I finally managed to find a space, about four long blocks from Ryman, I knew why those vast acres of asphalt and vacant parallel white lines pointing off into the distance would be such a welcome sight to anybody wanting to go to the Grand Ole Opry after March 15.

Ernest Tubb, however, had other thoughts about Ryman, since this was to be his last night in the cramped, hot, uncomfortable old structure where the Opry had lived and flourished since the early forties. So, as he stood in the wings or in the dressing-rooms, rehearsing songs he'd done for 30 years;

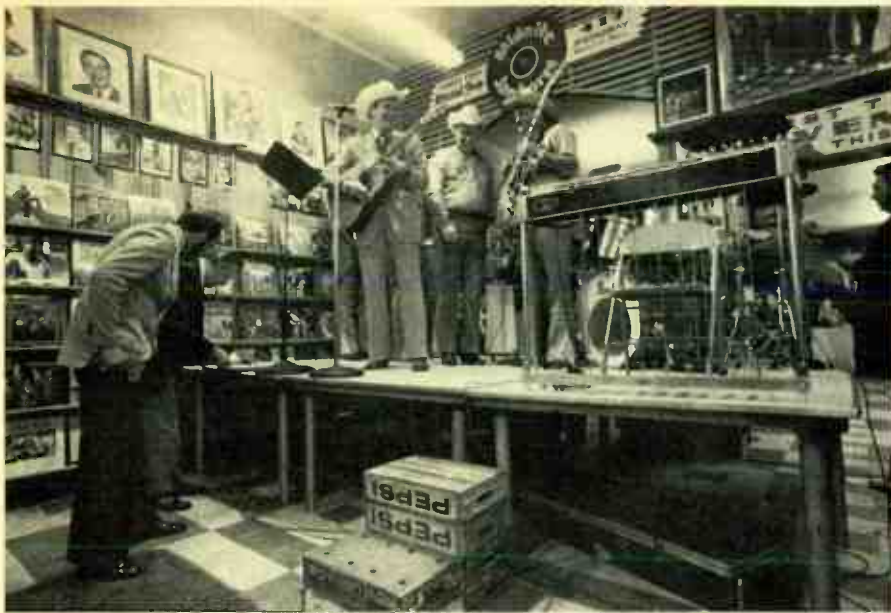
as he talked with friends backstage—Roy Acuff, Hank Snow, Grandpa Jones; as he walked through the dark shadows behind Ryman, holding his daughter's hand and talking to me, Ernest Tubb was feeling nostalgic. Not sad. He's not the kind of man to be sad. If you met him, you'd know what I mean. But he is, as much as anybody I've met on the Opry, aware of a sense of history to his life, to the people he's known, to the million places he's been since that little town in Texas. The next day he would be off on another long road trip, so long that it would be the middle of March before he would come back to Nashville and home.

Ever since that night, I've wondered how I could best tell you about Ernest Tubb. It seems like writing about a legend should be easy, but it's not. There's too much to say. Also, everybody who knows anything about country music knows at least about the high points in Ernest's career, so there's no

point in going over that again, either. Instead, I thought the best way I could tell you about E.T., as his friends call him, is to let him speak for himself. That Saturday night, between shows, we spent about three hours in his private office behind the record store he originally opened in 1946. It is here, or at Linebaugh's cafe down the street, that he goes between shows.

"Oh, I guess I been everywhere. I still go on the road about two hundred days a year. I figured it out once. Since I began, I've averaged about 100,000 miles a year. Back when I started, it was hard travelin'. You see, there weren't no buses or planes like there are now. Another thing—you had to be back in Nashville every Saturday night, come hell or high water, for the Opry. No matter where you were. In the forties, it was rough, too, because of the war. The hardest thing was finding bootleg tires.

"I wouldn't do anything else,



PHOTOS: MARSHALL FALLWELL

The Midnite Jamboree at Ernest Tubb's Record Shop has always been "the" place to go after the Opry. Earlier in the evening, Tubb joins fellow Opry performers backstage.

though. I had a lot of jobs and I hated them all. During the Depression, I worked all over Texas doing everything from threshing wheat to digging sewer ditches at Randolph Field. Listen, that wheat threshing, there ain't nothing harder. You throw that stuff in the air and that chaff gets down your back and you itch all day long. When you get off work at night, the only thing you want to do is get a bath.

"Working on a WPA curing gang on a highway ain't so much fun either. What you did was shovel dirt all day onto concrete that'd just been laid. After 12 hours of that, you can hardly move. I've had to have my sister rub my shoulders with liniment just so I could go back to work the next day.

"Another job I had was soliciting for a dry-cleaning firm. I had to knock on doors all day, and my knuckles got so sore, I finally wound up using my knife to knock, and not my fists.

"Now, when you travel a lot, you've got to take care of yourself. If you don't, you get sick. Back during the Korean conflict, Hank Snow and me went over to entertain the boys, you know. We paid our own bands and everything but expenses. Anyway, we swore we wouldn't take a drink 'til the tour was over. Well, Old Hank didn't make it that far, but I did.

"On the way over, the boys all got together and played a trick on me. You know, there are a lot of people think they're songwriters. Everybody's a songwriter. And that's alright, but sometimes, you can't go no place for people wanting you to hear their songs; I must have heard... I don' know how many. Anyway, on the way over, we stopped off at Wake Island to refuel and get something to eat. And I thought, 'well, while we're way out here, we won't be bothered with people trying to play us their songs.' Well, I had just sat down in this cafe, the only place on the whole island—it wasn't but a mile wide—and the cook, who was also the waiter, came over to the table right when I was about to take a bite of this sandwich, and he puts his foot on my chair and whips this guitar out from behind his back and says, 'Gosh, Mr. Tubb, would you listen to some of my songs? There ain't nothing to do out here but write songs.' I nearly fell out of



It looks like little Cary Justin Tubb wants to take after his grandfather.

my chair. The guys thought they would play a little joke on me by getting this guy to do it, but you know, he wasn't kidding. He *did* have some songs. Not bad ones, either.

"Naw, the road gets to you sometimes, anyway. One time after a Canadian tour, I was driving home. I got almost all the way to Gallatin, not far from here, when the next thing I knew, I was off the shoulder into a telephone pole. I woke up with the steering wheel in my mouth. A highway patrolman stuck his head in the car and said, 'Can we do anything for you, Mr. Tubb?' They knew who I was and all. I said, 'just get me to the hospital.' Well, they did and the doctors ran every kind of test there is, and when my own doctor came in, he said, 'you've got the healthiest worn-out body I've ever seen.' That's what he said. He said, 'Ernest, you ain't sick yet, but you could get *anything* now. You got nothing left to fight with.' So I slowed down a while."

Tubb still had his big white hat on, even in the office. He'd gesture



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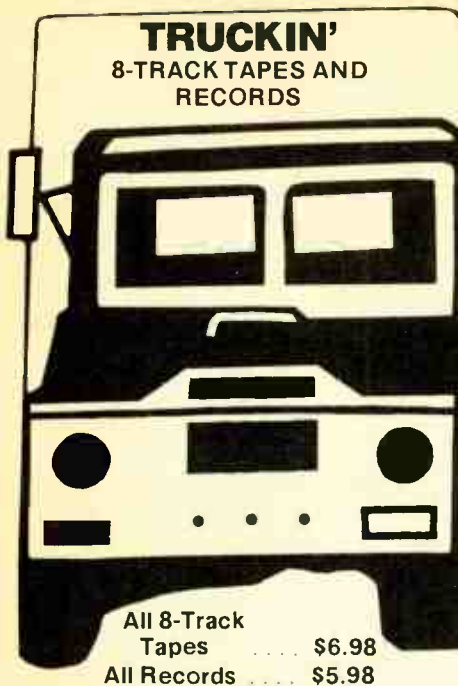
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with his hands as he talked, molding and shaping the story in the air in front of him.

Cary Justin Tubb, Ernest Tubb's grandson, came romping into the small room as if he owned it, which he may well do in a few years. Cary, about three or four years old, wore a cowboy hat, too; and as he leaped across the room into his grandfather's lap, the hat came sliding down to cover his face. Surrounded by all this youth and vitality, Ernest Tubb seemed glad that he had decided to take care of himself. But some damage had already been done.

"I got emphysema, you know... Oh, it's a whole lot better than it was. Why, I'm just like a preacher when it comes to quitting smoking. I smoked for years and years and when I first started getting sick, I was laying on the bed one night and I started to cough. Well, after a minute, I couldn't breathe, and I got scared. I truly thought I would die. I quit the next day, and haven't even wanted one since. And since 1964, I haven't had a drink. Like my daddy said, 'when anything gets bigger than you are, you better quit.' So I did.

"I've seen some mighty fine boys ruined that way. But, you know, back in 1949, when I finally got Jim Denny, who was the manager of the Opry, to let Hank Williams come on my show, Hank promised me he wouldn't drink for six months. He said, 'Lord, I'd crawl all the way to Nashville on my stomach if they'd let me be on the Opry. Ernest, if you let me come with you, I'll never take another drank.' I said, 'Son, don't say something you can't do, but if you quit for six months, I'll try to get you on the show.' Well, not many people know this, but Hank Williams, to my knowledge, didn't take a single drink for nine months. And I know, because he was on my show and I worked closely with him. When he got going, though, there wasn't anything you could do to stop him."

It was about this time, the early fifties, that Ernest Tubb's concern for his fellow-human almost cost him his life. He had come back from Korea with pneumonia. As soon as he got back, though, he refused to rest. Instead, he'd spend his time



calling the wives and families of soldiers he'd met overseas. He had carried a notebook with him to put names and phone numbers in, and he had promised the boys he would contact their loved ones.

"You know, I don't think I've ever seen a sadder thing in my life. I'd call these numbers, and as many as eight out of ten wouldn't care. Sometimes a small child would answer and I'd say, 'Where's your mommy?' and the child would say, 'I don't know.' That kind of thing gets to you."

At this point, Mrs. T. said, "He was livin' everybody else's life in his mind, and when he saw all this sadness, it made him sick."

Ernest Tubb has been living everybody else's life for a long time. Tubb was personally responsible for seeing that Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers received all the money due her from the royalties from Jimmie's songs.

"There's one thing about Hank Wil-



ing to the great Owen Bradley), who singlehandedly made recording in Nashville possible. At the time, most recording was either done on location with portable equipment (Tubb's first record was cut this way, in Houston) or in radio stations. So it came down to Tubb's convincing the bosses at Decca that Nashville was as good a place as any to cut hit records. You could even say that he was responsible for bringing the industry to Nashville in a big, decisive way.

Tubb was also responsible, with others, for giving "country" music its very name.

"Back then, it was called 'hillbilly' music, even in the magazines and papers. Now, I always said, 'You can call me a hillbilly if you got a smile on your face.' You know, it had a kind of mocking tone to it. You called somebody a hillbilly if you was making fun of him. So I started telling the record companies, 'Don't let's call it 'hillbilly'; let's call it something else.' So, I thought, 'Why not 'country' since we all come from the country?' After a while, the name stuck.

Don't nobody call it hillbilly music no more."

By now, it was time for Tubb's last show across the street at Ryman. Once more, we made the walk along Broad. You could tell he was somebody, by his milk-white hat and blue stage suit, and the ever-present fans, his people, would stop him every ten feet, their outstretched hands clutching programs, old photos, odd scraps of paper, anything for him to make valuable with his name. The fans can't seem to get enough of him, and he, for sure, can't get enough of them.

Onstage at Ryman for the last time that night and perhaps forever, the curtains came floating back, the spots picked him out like pointed fingers of light and he went right into "Walkin' the Floor Over You." Before the first bar was completed, the aisles were filled with pushing fans and popping flash-bulbs, and not a single note of the song was unaccompanied by applause. The fans had him now. He was nailed to that stage. And knowing Ernest Tubb, he was loving every minute of it. ■

liams and Jimmie Rodgers that I don't think anybody knows. Now, Hank couldn't yodel. He could break his voice pretty good like he did on 'Lovesick Blues' and other things, but that wasn't a real yodel. Anyway, he loved Jimmie Rodgers as much as I did, and he could do his songs well, too; not like Jimmie, but like himself. Well, Hank was scared to death to record any of Jimmie's songs, because he was afraid Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers would hear them and make fun of him. He'd call her and sing one of Jimmie's songs to her over the phone, and ask her what she thought, and she'd say, 'Well, it ain't Jimmie, but it's you, Hank. Why don't you record it?' But he never would. That's how much the legend of Jimmie Rodgers meant to him."

Ernest Tubb helped not only other performers, but the business itself. After 1942, when he found himself with a big hit on his hands and a whole lot of clout with the money people, it was Ernest Tubb (accord-

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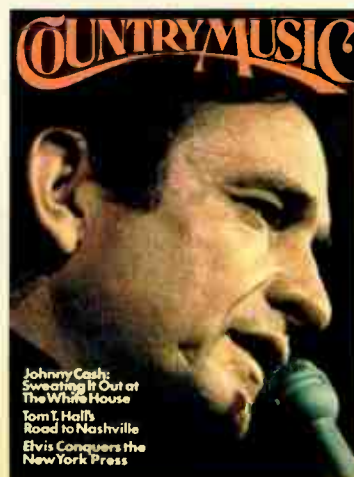
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Records

Jody Miller . . . Joe Stampley



Jody Miller
House Of The Rising Sun
Epic KE 32569 (record)
EA 32569 (8-track tape)

A beautiful thing happens to Jody Miller on her newest album, named after her recent hit single, "House Of The Rising Sun." She is transformed from a proficient but somewhat characterless singer into a subtly original stylist of the first order. Billy Sherrill, surely never a slouch as her producer before, has this time taken extra care to make us all stand up and take notice of Miss Miller.

The songs selected here are not unlike material that would be chosen were Billy producing pop/country star Linda Ronstadt. In fact, Jody puts across a genuinely fine version of one of Linda's earlier hits on this LP, "Long Long Time." Along with it, there's the recent country-styled hit from Dobie Gray, "Lovin' Arms," an Aretha

Franklin oldie, "Natural Woman," and Olivia Newton-John's stupendously catchy "Let Me Be There."

But one song Jody debuts on this LP is even stronger than these already time-tested copyrights, a thing called "Lucky Chicago." On this cut, Jody is a Tennessee housewife whose husband is always on the road due to the demands of his business. Instead of being jealous of the fantasized "other woman," Jody turns her attentions to the city his work so often takes him to. Jody puts just the right mix of sad irony and wistful tongue-in-cheek into it, and the result is the very finest performance of her career.

But none of the cuts on "House Of The Rising Sun" are ever at a loss for ways to impress. You may have only "liked" Jody Miller in the past, but a serious listener to her latest and you'll have to acknowledge the applicability of her closing song:

"Smile, Somebody Loves You."
ROBERT ADELS

Joe Stampley
I'm Still Loving You
Dot DOS 26020 (record)
GRT 8150-26020 (8-track tape)

Joe Stampley's third album, *I'm Still Loving You*, isn't the equal of his last and most successful LP, *Soul Song*. Two of the hit bands from that very album ("Too Far Gone" and the new title track) have been carried from there to here, apparently in an effort to improve the total sound and appeal of this new package.

There is only one new ballad that compares with the two excellent reprised hits, "I Live Just To Love You." When Joe really gets into a heart song as he does here, it exhibits all the latent power of an alarm clock you dare not wind too quickly. Most of the new slow numbers here are rather bankrupt lyrically, never living up to the



slice of life drama inherent in their story lines. Many of the lyrics don't even take the time to rhyme properly, when in fact a good turn of phrase might be just what's needed to save the day.

But any Joe Stampley fan in his growing legion would have to add this new album to his collection because of two up-tempo cuts on the

second side. The first and most creative is aptly titled, "Strong Comeback." There are so many facets to the musical structure of this one, we cannot even begin to describe its power here. But we will say it proves the genius of producer Norris Wilson and the talent of Joe Stampley more unequivocally than anything they've ever done together. The album's closing song, "Not Too Long Ago," is not as ambitious; but again, it pounds its way to all the right places with unerring ease and blatant self-assurance.

Joe Stampley is still young, and he's growing. There's bound to be greater things in store for him than the weaker moments here. From his past accomplishments and his latest high points, there's every reason for great optimism.
ROBERT ADELS

Jeannie C. Riley
Just Jeannie
MGM SE-4909 (record)
SE-4909 (8-track tape)

There's a crop of songs down in Nashville just waiting to be picked that have been written in the past year or two that have to do with our current national dilemmas — from Watergate to strip mining, from criticism of our self-criticism, to songs like "Mother America" and "Good-bye Sam," which relate the country to a woman and make fine, thoughtful songs besides.

Jeannie C. Riley opens Side Two of her new album with "Mother America," which deals with our domestic plight and contains an appeal to "bring us home." Nice song, no fightin' words, no breast-beating or tearing-down, just good country music.

Jeannie C. Riley . . . Gram Parsons

The rest of the album reflects Jeannie's good taste in picking songs to sing:



Helen Cornelius' "Billy Joe, The Seeker," Joe South's "Hush," Dallas Frazier's "Baptism of Jesse Taylor," and Kristofferson's "Why Me." "Soft Texas Rain" is a wistful, lonely-feeling song about a country girl in the city, missing her boyfriend back home. Jeannie's renditions are good, but lackluster, and sometimes suffer from a seeming lack of enthusiasm.

There is another exceptional song on the album I should call attention to: that's "Mama Can You Tell Me," about a little girl questioning her mother about life, and her father's whereabouts. MGM would do us all a favor if they'd release "Mama Can You Tell Me" and "Mother America" back-to-back as a single. **RICHARD NUSSER**

Gram Parsons
Grievous Angel
Reprise MS 2171 (record)

When Gram Parsons died on September 19 of last year, country music lost a force that much of the industry never knew existed. Parsons was born in Winter Haven, Florida; was brought up in Waycross, Georgia, where his father, Coon Dog Conner was a country singer, and except for a brief excursion into rock & roll, as a teenager, he spent his life

playing his own kind of sweet sad country music right up until the time of his death in Joshua Tree, California, at the age of 27. His brief sojourn with the Byrds created *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, and his time with the Flying Burrito Brothers created *The Gilded Palace of Sin*, two albums which were the first, basic, and still the best of California country-rock. In fact, it is doubtful that with-



out Parsons the hybrid style would have been invented. It was Parsons who eluded

sleek Los Angeles to play the talent night at the Palomino talent concert for two years until he finally won, as much an outsider in his satin pants and velvet capes at the Palomino as he was a Georgia country boy in rock & roll L.A.

In the years before his death Parsons cut a lot of his own country music his own way, most of it with Emmylou Harris and a number of Presley sidemen: Ronnie Tutt, Glen D. Hardin and James Burton. Two albums have been released: *GP*, released last year, and *Grievous Angel* just released this year. Both of them reflect Parsons as a coherent and gifted country solo artist. Both albums are evenly divided between Parsons' songs and country songs by other writers, and the selection is as personal as the original material. The first album contains lovely cuts of "Streets of Baltimore," and "We'll

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--	--

#2 STOP THE WORLD & LET ME OFF

<p><i>Songs:</i> I Cried All the Way to the Altar I'm Moving Along Stop, Look and Listen Try Again Crazy Dreams</p>	<p>Gotta Lot of Rhythm In My Soul Honky Tonk Merry-Go- Round How Can I Face Tomorrow Stop The World And Let Me Off</p>
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#3 IN CARE OF THE BLUES

<p><i>Songs:</i> In Care of the Blues There He Goes Love Me, Love Me Honey Do Just A Closer Walk with Thee</p>	<p>I've Loved and Lost Again If I Could Stay Asleep The Heart You Break May Be Your Own There He Goes Just Out of Reach</p>
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Sweep out the Ashes in the Morning” and the second contains fine versions of “Hearts on Fire,” Tom T. Hall’s “I Can’t Dance,” and the Louvin Brothers’ “Cash on the Barrelhead,” and a really beautiful version of Boudleaux Bryant’s “Love Hurts.”

For all his pop music roots, Parsons’ own songs are in no sense “smart”; in fact, compared to much “Top Forty” country they are innocent, sad and scarily honest. If there are sadder or truer songs than “Brass Buttons” from *Grievous Angel* or “New Soft Shoe” from *GP*, I don’t know them.

Gram Parsons was a sweet singer and he never found a place when he was alive, but I hope his music finds a place in the canon of country music; I know, at least to my own certainty, that if Gram hadn’t stuck it out at the Palomino, if he hadn’t bridged the two worlds by himself, it would be a lot harder today for many country artists to find an erstwhile pop audience.

DAVE HICKEY



Mel Tillis & Sherry Bryce
Let’s Go All The Way
Tonight
MGM SE-4937 (record)
SE-4937 (8-track tape)

This is one of those albums that has an awful lot of good things going for it, but there’s an apparent lack of enthusiasm on the part of Mel and Sherry that supersedes all else. Side two, particularly, has a mix of songs that ought to be raising all kinds of feelings, because they’re all about love, its ups and downs, slips and slides, mid-

night meetings, and superglides. But Mel and Sherry sing the words as if they were reading them off a lead sheet, instead of throwing themselves into the act. They only take off on a song called “Happyville,” which is probably where they’re at—Happyville. The slings and barbs of hurtin’ love don’t seem to touch them deep down. And, if you can’t feel it, it ain’t there.

But if you like your music at a pleasant, though nearly listless, pace, this might be your cup of tea. The songs are good. “Let’s Go All The Way Tonight,” “They’ll Never Break The Chains,” “Why Not Do The Things (They Think We’ve Done),” “Stand Beside Me, Behind Me,” “Mr. Right and Mrs. Wrong,” are all well-written, *listenable* songs, but there’s something missing.

The backing musicians are right there, of course, but everything is *too* smooth—for my tastes, at least. Mel and Sherry sing well together, making nice harmonies. But their solos are uneven.

There’s one song, aside from “Happyville,” where they seem to get down to something. It’s “Just Two Strangers Passing In The Night.” Maybe they just don’t know each other well enough to sing those other kind of songs *together*.

RICHARD NUSSER

Ivory Joe Hunter
I’ve Always Been Country
Paramount PAS-6080
(record)

You might well be initially suspicious of any album titled *I’ve Always Been Country*. Sounds like someone’s trying to put one over on you, doesn’t it? But that’s hardly the case with the first Ivory Joe Hunter album in over a decade. His music may have formerly sold under the title of r&b or pop, but his material and style have indeed always been slanted our way.

Ivory Joe Hunter is best known for his late fifties hit, “Since I Met You Baby,”

which Pat Boone covered. Although never actually a part of the Sun Records talent roster—he recorded for Atlantic, and later, Dot—his style was always reminiscent of that label’s golden days,



especially of the kind of music Charlie Rich was, and to this day continues, making in his ballad-prone moments.

Now that Charlie Rich has surfaced to renewed acclaim, it seems quite an opportune time for Ivory Joe to return with material that addresses his most likely audience in the most direct manner possible. Joe’s voice has changed a bit in the intervening year, although not for the worse. No doubt unintentional bits of Hank Thompson and Charley Pride now creep in, but his originality is beyond question, both vocally and in his piano style.

Unfortunately, his producer Bettye Berger and his co-arranger Hank Levine, aren’t always up to the task at hand. While some tracks are brilliant—like his re-make of his ‘59 hit, “City Lights,” and a new version of “San Antonio Rose”—much of the orchestrations elsewhere are plagued by an uneven balance of instruments and a questionably necessary female chorus.

But all in all, it’s better to have Ivory Joe back for an imperfect album than never to welcome him home at all. If you’ve never had the good fortune to hear Ivory’s band of soul country, you really owe it to yourself to pick up this new release for the sheer pleasure found in a first acquaintance. Those who remember him would never think of passing on it.

ROBERT ADELS

The Lewis Family
The Lewis Family Lives In
A Happy World
Canaan CAS-9738 (record)

“Gospel Grass” is a term now being applied to a mixture of gospel and bluegrass music. No one today does it as well as the Lewis Family of Lincolnton, Georgia (near Augusta). This album is their latest, and without a doubt, one of their best. Like the name implies, it is an album of happy music—kicked off by the tune, “I’m Living In A Happy World.”

Whether it is Janis, Wallace, Little Roy, Polly or Pop singing lead, with Miggie assisting, the album turns into a showcase of more than 20 years of vocal harmony and expert musicianship. “Leaning On The Lord” is a good example of the difficult vocal harmony this family is known for perfecting. Jesse McReynolds, of the Jim and Jesse bluegrass team, played the mandolin and over-dubbed the fiddle (Yes, he plays the fiddle, although rarely on stage), with Little Roy’s acoustic Martin guitar to make the introduction of



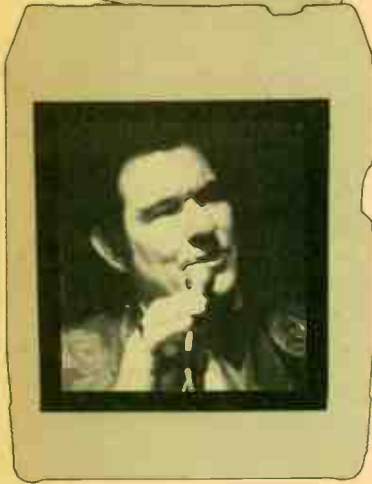
“Nothing Fancy It Is” one of the best gospel intro’s ever captured on tape.

Playing what he does best—the five-string banjo—Little Roy excels on “Let Him Lead You,” by throwing in those licks and runs that have become his trademark.

Canaan Records is not in the habit of releasing singles, and they missed a good opportunity with “Come Walk With Me” on the last Lewis Family album. It’s a good bet they’ll miss the boat again by not releasing “Will He Call Out My Name” from

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Jerry Reed	The Uptown Poker Club	RCA	APL 10356	APSI 0356
Jeannie Seely	Can I Sleep In Your Arms	MCA	385	MCAT 385
Ray Price	You're The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me	COL	KC 32777	CA 32777
Diana Trask	It's A Man's World	DOT	DOS 26016	150 26016
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Linda Ronstadt . . . Hank Snow

this new album. The song is a composition by Paul Craft who wrote the Osborne Brothers' numbers, "Midnight Flyer" and "Till Tears Kiss The Morning Dew."

Two other songs on this album—"Glorybound" and a Hank Williams favorite, "I'm Gonna Sing, Sing, Sing"—let you know the Lewis Family indeed lives in a happy world—made happy from their songs.

DON RHODES

Linda Ronstadt
Different Drum
 Capitol ST-11269 (record)
 8XT-11269 (8-track tape)

Linda's been singing for a long, long time. On this album, which is a sort of greatest hits record she sings "Long, Long Time," her first country hit plus nine other selections from the whole of her career.

Linda started in the middle sixties as part of a group called "The Stone Poneys." They recorded Mike Nesmith's song, "Different Drum," which became their



only real hit. It's included here, as are four other songs done with the group. Nesmith's lovely "Some of Shelly's Blues" is here. You might know it from the recent version by the Earl Scruggs Revue. Also from that period are "Stoney End" by Laura Nyro, "Hobo" by Tim Buckley and, one of my favorite

songs, "Up To My Neck In High Muddy Water" by the members of the old Greenbriar Boys. They are all excellent songs, and interesting in retrospect. You can hear the maturation of Linda's voice and the evolution of her own personal style—and, on the negative side, how the arrangements and production of her records have remained generally flat and uninteresting, in direct contrast to the beauty of one of the finest voices ever.

After her stint as a Stone Pony, Linda did three solo albums for Capitol, with selections from all three included here. Two of the finest of today's young songwriters, Jackson Browne and Livingston Taylor, are represented by "Rock Me On The Water" and "In My Reply" respectively, each one simply exquisite. And Bob Dylan's "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight" is sung with sweet sexuality.

It's a fine, highly represen-

tative collection, my only complaint—and a common one—being that only ten songs were included. Linda Ronstadt sings like no one else, and looks better than any of 'em.

JERRY LEICHTLING



Hank Snow
Hello Love
 RCA APL1-0441 (record)
 APS1-0441 (8-track tape)

To me, Hank Snow has always been "The Singing Ranger" of his earlier days with RCA, turning out good,

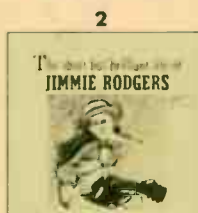
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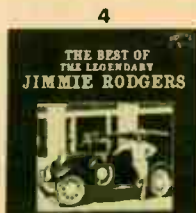
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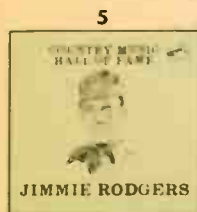
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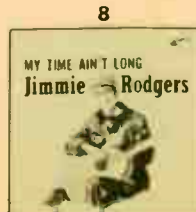
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Danny Davis & the Nashville Brass

straight, and often exciting pure country music, with a resonantly-smooth and uniquely distinctive voice and strong flat-top guitar picking. While the railroad song and the story song were his forte, he would bring those same qualities to bear in the creation of earthy ballads and love songs. This has been Hank Snow.

Hello Love, though, signifies a departure from that inimitable style. It seems to represent an effort to gain a broader audience, by "contemporizing" him. I think this is what is least needed. With the great change that country music has undergone in the past few years, there is a definite need to keep its roots exposed, to celebrate those who first defined it, and to let them be themselves.

My first time through this album was disappointing. Something was missing. Obviously, Hank Snow is not being completely himself here. Only one song, "I've Got To Give It All To You," really brings forth the quintessential Hank Snow, with a strong Southwestern musical flavor and that timbre in his voice. A couple of other tracks, most notably "The

Last Thing On My Mind" and "I Have You And That's Enough For Me," are headed in the right direction, falling only a little short. But the rest of the material, unfortunately the greater part of it, never really comes off. The songs either are too overpowering or call for things that Snow just doesn't have to give. The title tune, "Hello Love," for example, has such an unusual structure that it puts demands on his vocal style that he has to strain to meet.

Hank Snow is certainly capable of better things; I am still one of his biggest fans, but I feel a little let down by not getting all of what I've come to expect.

ALAN WHITMAN

Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass

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Danny Davis' success is based on the timeless formula of finding a need and filling it. The need was for a viable new sound in country music. It was filled with a combination of elements at once so obvious and so simple

that it's a wonder it's been so long coming, though now so firmly established. To the dominant, hard-driving, almost marching-style big brass band, Danny Davis has blended in a subtle yet easily discernible fashion those elements that are unmistakably country music: banjo, steel and electric guitar, strong,



simple percussion—a solid instrumental mix with threads of Nashville-style vocal accompaniment occasionally interwoven. The result has the indelible imprint of Nashville music: naturalness, superb clarity, and an intangible something called "togetherness" that makes it all work. Just as in the days of the

old unscored "hillbilly" recording sessions where everything hung together so well because of the feeling the "pickers" had for their material and for each other—the Danny Davis sound is. Except in this case, the Nashville Brass work with carefully thought out arrangements by Davis and his arranger, Bill McElhiney.

As a "Best Of . . ." collection, little need be said other than all the big Danny Davis/Nashville Brass hits are included, from "Wabash Cannon Ball" to "Kaw-Liga" to "I Saw The Light." The stirring and stunning "From Dixie With Love" medley that usually closes concert appearances is featured here in an excellent "live" recording.

Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass have done justice to everything they've ever done. And in this new package, RCA has skimmed the cream from the top and given it to us at one time. It's a real treat.

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Diana Trask, MOR Country, And That Las Vegas Flash

by Peter McCabe



Jerry Birnbaum, minor Vegas mogul (dapper, graying and a little bit paunchy) is sitting in the Gourmet Room of Las Vegas' Frontier Hotel, explaining that the smart guys in this town are wising up to country music. Jerry is a "dees and does" transplant from Brooklyn, and it still shows—right down to the gold tie clip and the diamond-studded cufflinks. He's lived in Vegas five years now, and he still bitches that he can't find a decent egg cream in the entire state of Nevada, or even California for that matter. But would he ever go back to New York? "You crazy? No way. I hear dey mug people now on the streets in broad daylight!" Las Vegas, Jerry believes, is far more civilized.

Between telling me (about 12 hours too late) that I shouldn't drink the water in Vegas, and shouting greetings across the bar to cronies, Jerry and his wife play "Keno." It's a variation of bingo and it's not very difficult to learn. Jerry and Miranda each lose a dollar or so every 20 minutes this way. They're proud of their ability to stay away from the blackjack tables and the roulette wheel. With Keno, Miranda explains, you can play by a system. She has worked out the odds at 150 to one. "We won \$80 last week, didn't we Jerry?" Jerry's eye has been distracted by

the waitress sweeping past. She's a pretty girl, very Western, straight-backed, with long blonde hair. Very nice. She wears a short, green mini-dress which affords a tantalizing glimpse of matching green panties.

Jerry does little to hide his distraction. "Yeah, we came up and collected eighty," he says vaguely.

I do some quick calculations. That amount would just about cover what Jerry has dropped so far this evening in the Gourmet Room.

Jerry pays the waitress for the sixth round, then leans over to me confidentially.

"You know Marty Robbins?" he asks.

"Sure."

"Now, don't you think he'd be a sensation on this strip?"

"I guess so."

"Good. I think so, too."

Jerry leans back in his chair, feeling reinforced, and takes a hefty pull on his J&B and soda.

"You know something?" He wags his thumb backwards over his shoulder in the direction of his friends, a group of managers, bookers, talent coordinators and show business lawyers. "Half these jerks don't know who Marty Robbins is."

A little self-satisfied smile creeps over his lips. He leans forward again. "You wanna know something else? Six months ago, the *other*

half didn't know who he was either. But they're startin' to learn."

Some winds of change have blown across the neon desert. And even if they don't signal the demise of entertainers who revolve around the Bob Hope/Debbie Reynolds axis, at least the Vegas moguls have begun to take note of TV ratings for "Hee Haw" and "Music Country," and have changed their

**When you're around her,
there's this
inescapable sense that
she's only just
beginning to happen . . .**

marquees accordingly. Country artists have been finding their way into Vegas recently, and proving their ability to pack houses. They're raking in the big money, too. Johnny Cash, so the Vegas grapevine has it, earned \$125,000 a week for his last engagement at the Hilton. Elvis, with some help from the Colonel, took home even more.

It used to be that when you wanted to hear country music in Las Vegas, you went downtown to the Landmark, or the Nugget, or the Fremont, lowlier establishments which lacked the aura, or the tinsel (it depends on your point of view) of Caesars', the Hilton, or the Sands. But as times and tastes have changed, so have the folks



coming to Vegas. There is still a large contingent from New York and Los Angeles; middle-aged ladies in rhinestone glasses, businessmen with secretaries or showgirls, but today's Vegas visitor is increasingly a heartland middle American couple—out on a spree. They play the tables just like the big shots from New York, but when they want to see a show, they want to see Charley Pride or Donna Fargo, or if they're like Dan Logan from Manhattan, Kansas, they want Roy Clark and Diana Trask. Dan Logan is a wheat farmer, and this was his first trip to Vegas. The bumper wheat crop meant he could easily afford to drop a grand, he said. Even two grand wouldn't make him a sore loser. It was having a good time that was important. Besides, he'd already bought a new harvester, "and I ain't about to stack that on these tables."

The sequence of events in Vegas is as planned and predictable as traveling by tour bus. You arrive, and you start spending. You pay basic American prices for rooms and meals (the days of the bargain room rate, all you can eat for a buck, and free chips to get you started are over), outrageous prices to see shows, and no matter what you might win at the tables, you will lose. Peace and quiet in Vegas is

at a premium. Silence in Vegas is lying in your hotel room, listening to the steady slap, slap of the limousine doors as more victims arrive, and feeling, rather than hearing, the background buzz of neon which somehow seeps between your eyelids no matter how tightly you close them. In every hotel there's the constant thud of one-arm bandits, the occasional joyful whoop, the jingle of money spilling, and the endless paging over the P.A. system. Finally, there's the tired faces of the bartenders and the waitresses, visages devoid of emotion, unable to remember you from one Bloody Mary morning to the next.

Vegas is hubby sneaking off to a downtown poker game with his new-found buddies. It's the wife getting a quick kiss from Tom Jones, then speculating later about whether that's *really* a handkerchief he keeps in his pants. It's the place where most every American male over 35 wants to go and play Dean Martin for a week.

The Frontier Hotel, where Roy Clark and Diana Trask are the show's attractions, is a Hughes Re-

sort Hotel. You throw back the covers of your bed, and not surprisingly you find the sheets are stained. Welcome to Las Vegas. From the window of the hotel can be seen a landscape whose architecture can only be described as

**"She said she was a singer,"
says Ewen.
"Oh yeah,' I said . . ."**

Mid-Twentieth Century Holocaust.

The room telephone rang. Tom Ewen, Diana Trask's husband and manager, wanted me to join them for coffee. "Strange place, ain't it?" said Ewen. "See ya downstairs."

Diana Trask was the brightest thing I was to see in Las Vegas, despite the neon. She is a tall, well-shaped lady with bright eyes and glossy red hair, trimmed very short. In her mannerisms she is reminiscent of Anne Murray, except that she doesn't drink beer. She has one of those fresh, healthy faces that are the mark of so many Australians. Diana is from Melbourne, but now she's an American citizen and *very* proud to be one.



Needless to say, she's an outdoors type. She plays tennis whenever she gets the chance, and in the afternoons in Vegas, she works out on the Frontier Hotel's courts. She's good, too, and Roy Clark was paying lots of attention to her backhand. "Sometimes it gets so I'm not sure if it's the tennis or the show I'm here for," she says.

Diana Trask has been getting lots of attention in Vegas. She is eminently suited to this market. She knows this and is making the most of it. She came to the United States in the late fifties, and as she tells it, "hung out in New York." Not many country artists have 'hung out' in New York, but in the fifties and early sixties Diana wasn't singing country, but pop, with a heavy leaning toward middle-of-the-road. Her present singing style still shows some of that background. It might not cut much ice in Bowling Green, Kentucky, but it goes over big in Vegas. In the early sixties, Diana was signed to Columbia. She hit the road for a string of one nighters, and on a flight to Chicago she met a big, bulky New Englander named Tom



Diana and her husband mush it up.

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Ewen. He was working for Gillette. "She said she was a singer," says Ewen. "'Oh yeah,' I said." They married, had two sons and went back to Australia.

Diana makes no secret about not liking Australia today. "There was a time when it was just like the U.S.," she said, "and the Australian Government wanted to attract American investment. But all that's changed. Now it's becoming a Socialist country."

"When the Australian press interviewed Diana last year, they did their best to get her to say she was making a million dollars a year, which she isn't," Tom added.

But that wasn't the only reason why Diana returned to the U.S. It's hard to be a big star in Australia, because Australia just isn't big enough. The latest entertainment Australia has to offer would be two years out of date in Europe or America. So back they came, and Diana consciously made the decision to go country. She ran headlong into skeptical Nashville and equally skeptical country fans.

"It was like I didn't know the rules," she says today. "I offended quite a few people, especially with my choice of material. But I learned on all those tours to all those Podunk, Iowas. I learned never to be afraid of an audience. I learned that a lot of that bluntness from fans was really warmth. Though sometimes they can *really* be blunt. They'd say, 'I don't like your hair the way you've done it tonight,' or simply, 'you're fat.'"

But Diana found some more important fans—Dot Records and the Jim Halsey management company, which also handles Roy Clark, Tommy Overstreet, and Charlie Rich. She feels that they have shown great confidence in her, and now that her song, "When I Get My Hands On You" is soaring up the charts, she feels more comfortable that their confidence is justified. "Halsey and the Dot Records people are alike," she says. "They're both very quiet and cautious, but they run terrific machines, and they're very selective about their artists. I've been lucky."

She's been lucky, all right, but she's also got a lot going for her—years of experience, good looks, a real feel for country music, and so far, one very polished album titled *It's A Man's World*. Even so, when you're around her there's this inescapable sense that she's only just beginning to happen. Diana feels that the smartest thing she ever did was to play Vegas.

"She's a mover, all right," says Ewen. "She started down at the Fremont and moved to the Frontier and the Sands. This May she's on a bill with Danny Thomas, and she has 100 percent billing (her name as big as Danny's on the mar-

ing soft, white suits, and all sporting lacquered hair. They pranced around the stage, their suits clinging rather tightly. This enhanced the appearance of the girls considerably, but the men would have drawn unthinkable epithets from the audience, if they'd been playing south of the Red River.

Predictably, they sang "Top Of The World," then went into a rendition of "I Believe." But wait... what was this? Somebody in the wings appeared to have launched a tear gas grenade at the singers. "Heavens," I thought, "they ain't country, but tear gassing them was a bit much." I looked around ex-

"The Australian Government wanted to attract American investment. But all that's changed. Now it's becoming a Socialist country ..."

quee). That's very important. Here, Roy Clark has 100 percent billing to Diana's 75 percent, but she's billed as a 'Special Guest.' That's very important, too. C'mon, let's go see the show."

Bill Judd was my neighbor during the show. He was a young man in his early thirties, wearing checked pants and an open-necked shirt. He spoke with a strong Midwest accent. His home was Jefferson City, Missouri. "It's the state capital," he said, proudly. "Population, 25,000." Bill was in the construction business, his own business, and this was the first time he and his wife had been to Vegas. He liked Roy Clark, and from all he'd been hearing about her, he figured he'd like Diana Trask too. They were both his type of entertainer. What he didn't like was Ernest Tubb and all that nasal, twangy stuff. Such is the new breed of country music fan.

Bill had spent the better part of the day down at the Nugget, playing poker. "Coupla high rollers in there," he declared. "I got in a game with some fellas. Thought I'd show those boys a thing or two."

"But they all knew each other," his wife interrupted. "It was Billy turned out to be the sucker."

The lights went down and the curtain opened on country music in Las Vegas. The first act was the Spurrllows, who turned out to be not a band, but a vocal group; three girls and three young men, all wear-

ing soft, white suits, and all sporting lacquered hair. They pranced around the stage, their suits clinging rather tightly. This enhanced the appearance of the girls considerably, but the men would have drawn unthinkable epithets from the audience, if they'd been playing south of the Red River.

pecting to observe consternation, only to find that nobody seemed especially concerned. Then I realized that this "gas" was merely steam, piped over ice, to give a misty effect onstage. Those Spurrllows suddenly went up in my estimation. Diana was on next, and what a difference! She wore a simple black dress, fairly low cut, exposing some interesting freckles. She has a powerful voice, and when she wants to she can really open her lungs. She started off with "Soul Song" (the song Joe Stampley scored big with), then did "Games People Play," Teddy Bear" and her own hit song, "Say When."

Sitting in the front this particular evening was a heckler, a total pest. He was actually trying to request songs. He was from Tennessee and he wanted everybody in the room to know it. "Sing us one about Memphis, baby!"

Diana smiled weakly. She did her best to ignore him, sang "Behind Closed Doors" beautifully, and then did her only non-country song for the evening, "Alone Again, Naturally" a big pop hit last year. Finally, she took the roof off with "Stand By Your Man." Most of the ladies in the audience had been standing by their men all day, watching them lose money. They knew what that song was all about.

Then it was Roy's turn, and the song requester opened up again. But Roy Clark knows the honky tonk circuit well. After some of the



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joints in Virginia, this character was small fry. Roy finished "Night Train" and began his patter. He was interrupted.

He leaned forward, very deliberately: "You know, if you're not careful somebody's gonna recognize you and take you outside to the truck." Roy was not interrupted again.

Before the set ended, I went backstage. Roy Clark's wife, Barbara,

"This May she's on a bill with Danny Thomas, and she has 100% billing. That's very important . . ."

and Diana were talking about inviting people to a "celebrity stud party." They expected nearly everybody they knew in Vegas to turn up.

It wasn't as bad as it sounded. Diana had acquired a machine that instantly stapled sequins to clothes. She had tried it out the previous

evening on some guests from the N.F.L. Convention, who were staying at the hotel.

Diana's publicist, Peter Simone, thought the "celebrity stud party" was an excellent idea. He wanted to charge \$100 a guest and donate the proceeds to a worthy charity. Then he hit on a better idea. "Suppose we have a *real* diamond in the sequins," he said. "Then we can *really* have a party. We use up all the studs and some lucky person gets the diamond. Only nobody knows who!"

Everybody agreed that was a good idea.

"How many studs should we use?" somebody asked.

"Oh about a thousand," Simon suggested.

"How many people do you think we'd get?"

"Oh, at least 100, I'd say."

There was a moment of Las Vegas silence while everybody worked out the odds. ■



"I learned never to be afraid of an audience."

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Hi-Fi Corner

You CAN Take It With You, Part I

Everybody owns at least one portable transistor something, but if your experience has been limited to a \$5 pocket radio or a \$19 cheapie cassette recorder, you've been missing a lot. More costly portables, on the other hand, can afford and fit advanced circuitry derived from home-bound stereo components, and are often big enough to hold the relatively large speakers needed to reproduce a wide range of musical tones.

Portable cassette recorders come in three basic sizes. The minis measure about 3½" by 5½" by 1½", and are okay for speech but out of the question for music. The medium-size models measure about 5" by 10" by 3", and are fine for voice or non-critical music. Large models go up to about 8" by 12" by 3", and have the large speakers needed for good music reproduction and lots of other features, often including radios. In this latter category, I recommend the new **Panasonic RQ-448S**, a versatile AM/FM/Cassette unit with a decent speaker that can be powered by regular batteries, rechargeable batteries, AC outlet, or car or boat power. It can record from its own radio, from external sources, or from a hand-held microphone that stores inside the recorder. A mixing circuit lets you record your own voice and another source at the same time, or sing along with a pre-recorded tape. Lots of other features, and the price is \$150.

Sony makes a similar model, the **Sony CF-420** (\$180) that includes both a built-in mike and an external mike for hand-held use, and receives the public service band (weather, police, fire, etc.) in addition to AM and FM. Sony's **Model CF-320** is a bit simpler, and goes for \$140. Both units shut off completely at the end of a tape to lessen machine wear and save batteries.



Panasonic RQ-448S AM/FM/cassette unit.

In the same size and price category is the **Hitachi TRK-1271**, a \$160 AM/FM/Cassette unit equipped with a clever wireless microphone. It looks and works like a conventional built-in mike, but can be lifted out for use at up to 50 feet from the recorder by transmitting over a vacant FM frequency. Should be lots of fun for party games (or bugging your neighbor or president). Other features include sound mixing, and a monitor circuit with volume control independent of the recording level.

If you just want to record and play tapes and don't need the radio, take a look at the **Panasonic RQ-410S** and the **Sharp RD-473UM** (\$55 each), and the **Toshiba KT-216C** at \$85. These three models will operate off batteries or AC, have good-sized speakers, automatic stop, and built-in microphones. They're all fairly large, but you need big speakers in a portable if music is to sound right.

If you **must** save space, you'll appreciate the medium-size **Sony TC-124** and the **Superscope CS-200S**. These units are about the same size as the \$19 machines but have very sophisticated electronics, and unlike most portables, are **STEREO!** The internal speakers limit the sound quality, but both units are capable of making really fine recordings for playback through a

component stereo system, or through their own auxiliary speakers. The **Sony** goes for \$150, plus \$30 for a pair of speakers; The **Superscope** is \$130 plus \$20 for speakers. The units are similar, both rugged and very versatile, with many features normally found only on home equipment. The **Sony** apparently has a more powerful amplifier (not necessarily an advantage); the **Superscope** has two internal mikes and an internal battery charger.

The **Superscope C-101** is a fine monophonic recorder at \$43 that's great for voice recording and fair on music. It has a built-in mike and can accept an external one, and has jacks for remote control, extra input, extra speaker, and works on batteries or AC. An automatic volume control makes it easy to use, and an automatic shutoff saves on batteries.

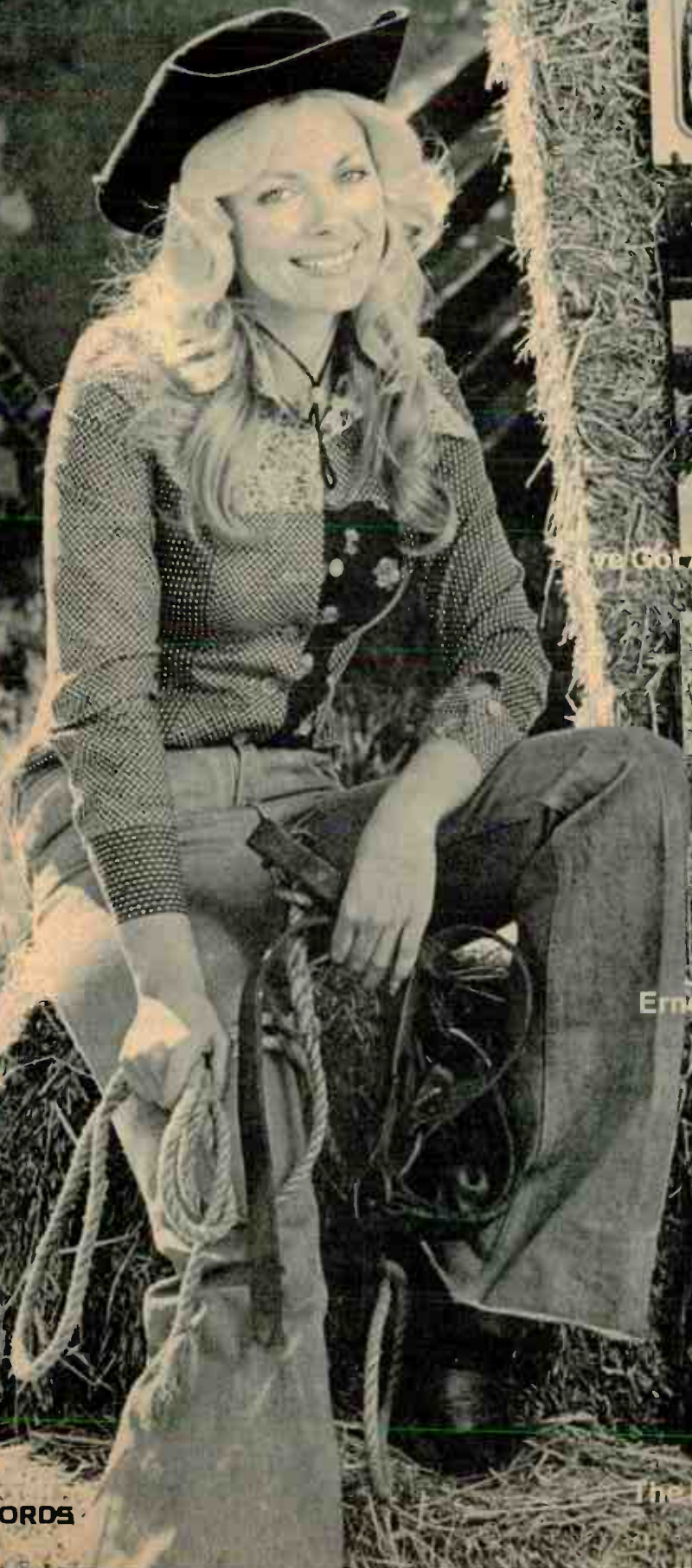
Craig's Model 2624 is similar, but goes for \$7 more. Like all Craigs, it has a built-in battery recharger, plus built-in and plug-in microphones.

There are a lot of portable 8-track players on the market, mostly cumbersome 2-piece models, but they sound pretty good. I recommend the **Craig 3404**, which has AM and FM as well as tape; and you can probably save some money on any model from **Toyo**, a good brand no longer distributed in the U.S.

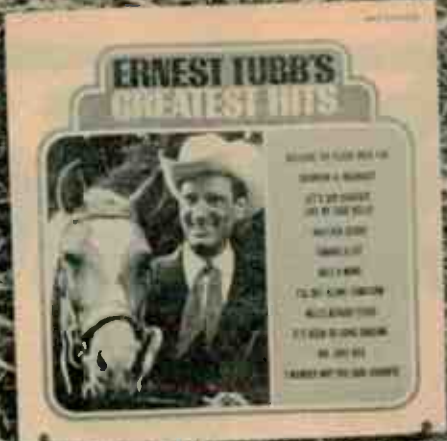
If you must have the absolute best sound and can't trail an extension cord behind you, look at the new **Sony Dolbyized** cassette portable, **Model TC-1525D** (\$300) or the open-reel **Tandberg 41** at \$500, which is as good as many studio recorders; and if you really want to spend money, there are **Uhers**, **Nagras**, and **Stellavoxes** that go for more than two grand.

Next month—radios. ■

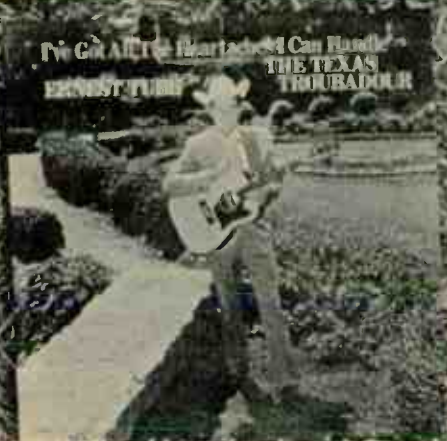
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MCA 1000

The Ernest Tubb/Lorella Lynn Story

Radio Forum



Mark Gibson of KMMO-KMFL

This month's contribution to "Radio Forum" comes from Mark M. Gibson, a 23-year-old disc jockey at KMMO-KMFL in Marshall, Missouri. "Radio Forum" is now a regular feature of the magazine, and we welcome contributions from jocks, executives, or anyone closely involved in country radio.

I have to confess that until about two years ago, the only thing I knew about country music was that Johnny Cash sang "Folsom Prison Blues" and Nashville was the home of the Grand Ole Opry. When our station switched to solid country, I began to realize there was more to it than that. I must also admit that before we switched over, I was not particularly a fan of Country and Western. I didn't dislike it. I just listened to something else. Well, I

have been converted. I can't tell you how it happened or exactly what did it, but somewhere along the line I found out that I was enjoying the country music I was playing over the air. So much for the confessions, but I didn't want anyone to think that I was an old fan of country who was trying to set himself up as an expert. I'm not.

I believe that one of the main reasons for the upsurge in popularity of country music lies in its simple honesty. In these days when we are confronted with Watergate, the energy crisis, the Middle East situation and other such problems, it is refreshing to listen to simple stories told by way of music which we are able to identify with.

An example? How about Merle Haggard's "If We Make It Through December"? Here is a song which was put out at the end of November, 1973 and it puts into words what I think most Americans were consciously or unconsciously thinking. I don't know of anyone who was sorry to see 1973 over and done. For most people, 1973 was a year when prices were up and spirits were down. Merle Haggard, with a touch of genius, managed to put everyone's feelings into a song, and perhaps give us a little hope that '74 would be better. Everyone identified with that song, and *that's* what country music is all about. In these days when most rock music is pretentious or boring or both, and jazz is, for the most part, becoming harder and harder to understand, there is country music standing by itself and growing more popular every day.

But before you start thinking that this is all sugar and spice, let me say that there are some trends in country music that I'm not crazy about. For one, I can't understand

why we keep hearing "cover" versions of pop and rock songs done country-style. A few recent examples that come to mind: "Ramblin' Man," "Bad Bad LeRoy Brown" and "Tie a Yellow Ribbon." They remind me of the mid-1950s when songs that were written and recorded by blacks didn't become hits until they were re-recorded by whites. To my way of thinking, "Ramblin' Man" as recorded by the Allman Brothers was an acceptable modern day country song as it was. It didn't need to be redone by a "country music artist" to make it country. It already was.

The same goes for "Bad Bad LeRoy Brown." Anthony Armstrong Jones' version added nothing to the original version by Jim Croce, except a steel guitar in the background. And if that steel guitar made "LeRoy Brown" into a country song, why haven't we heard a version of the latest Rolling Stones' hit complete with steel guitar, done by a country artist?

I don't mind the cover-versions that much as long as they don't become too numerous. As long as people like Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard, Tom T. Hall and Bobby Bare are around I figure that country music will continue to be what attracted me to it in the first place — honest, feeling music.

I enjoy *Country Music* a great deal. Jazz has its mouthpiece in *DownBeat*, and rock has its various magazines. It's about time country music had a good professionally done magazine. I get a big kick out of *Country Music's* continued amazement that long-haired kids seem to be enjoying country music more and more. Why not? It has what youth wants in life: honesty, true emotion, and simplicity. What more could you ask for?

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 Tony Fontane/Medley: When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder; In The Sweet By And By; We'll Understand It Better

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 Jimmy Dean-Imperials Quartet-The Jordanaires/It Is No Secret
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 Pat Boone/In The Garden
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 Nat Stuckey/He's Got The Whole World In His Hands
 Norma Jean/Heaven's Just A Prayer Away

Danny Davis-Nashville Brass/Wings Of A Dove
 Speer Family/Let's Make A Joyful Noise
 Doris Akers/You'll Never Walk Alone
 Anita Kerr Quartet/May God Be With You
 Pat Boone/Will The Circle Be Unbroken
 Cliff Borrows/Every Time I Feel The Spirit
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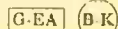
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You may accept or reject selections as follows: every four weeks (13 times a year) you will receive a new copy of the Club's music magazine which describes the Selection of the Month for each musical interest... plus hundreds of alternate selections from every field of music. In addition, about six times a year we will offer some special selections (usually at a discount off regular Club prices). A response card will always be enclosed with each magazine

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... if you want only the Selection of the Month for your musical interest, do nothing—it will be shipped automatically

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You will always have at least 10 days in which to make a decision. If for any reason you do not have 10 days in which to decide, you may return the regular selection at our expense and receive full credit for it

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