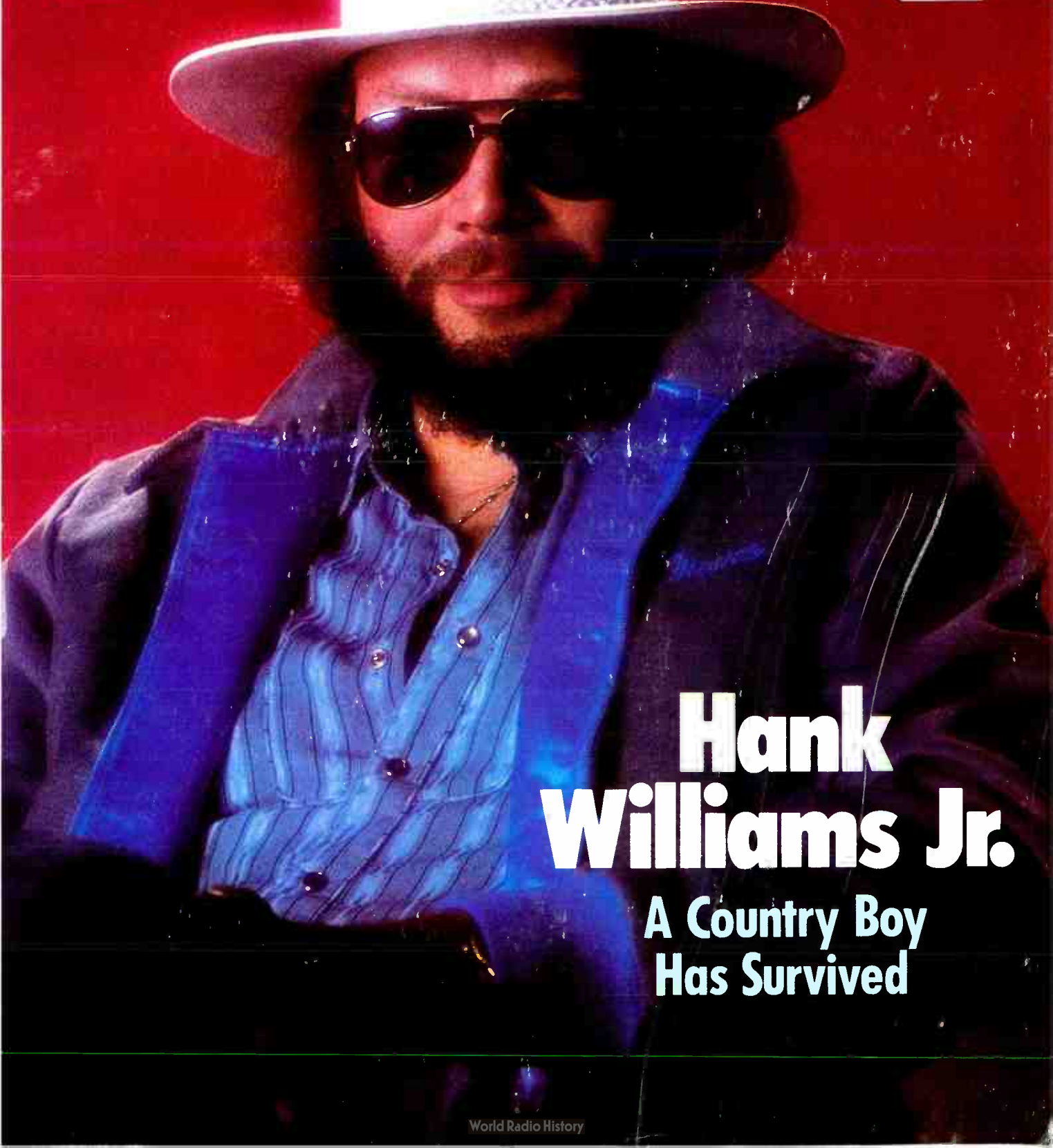


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COUNTRY MUSIC



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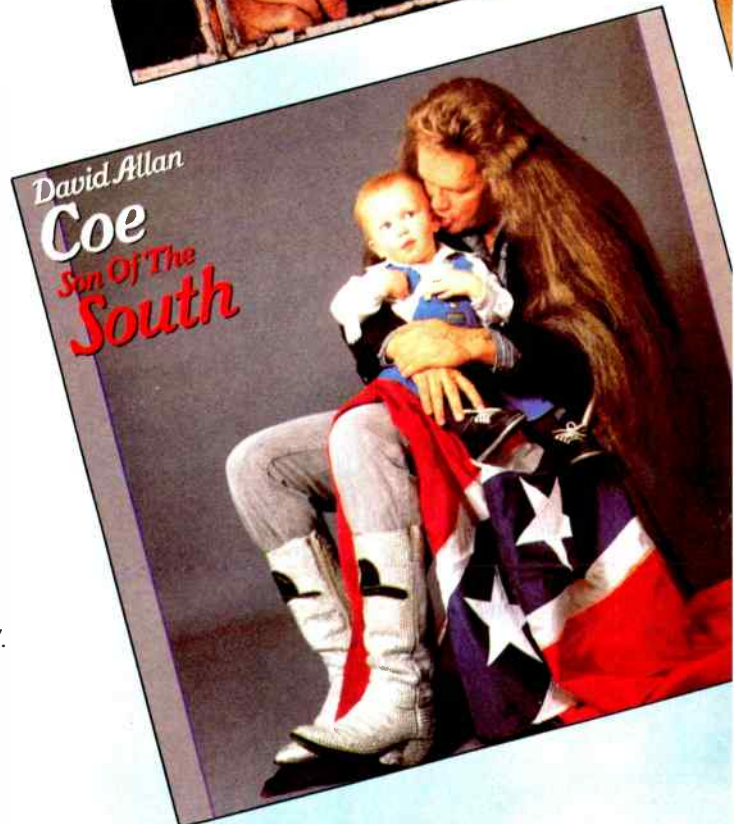
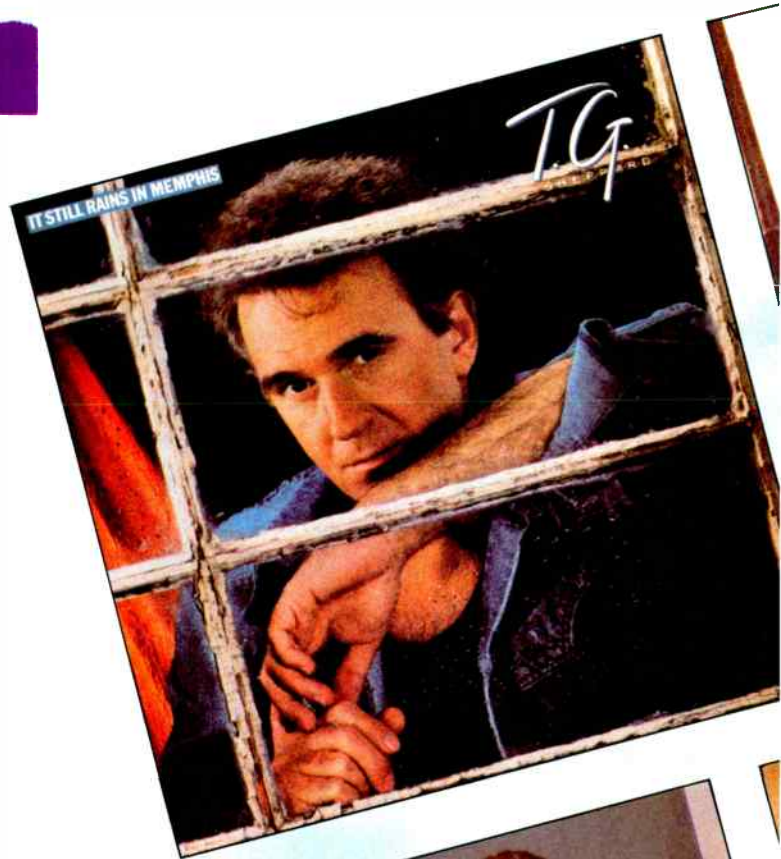
Coe is truly "A Country Boy (Who Rolled The Rock Away)". On his newest album he's joined by Willie, Waylon and other long-time friends and fans.

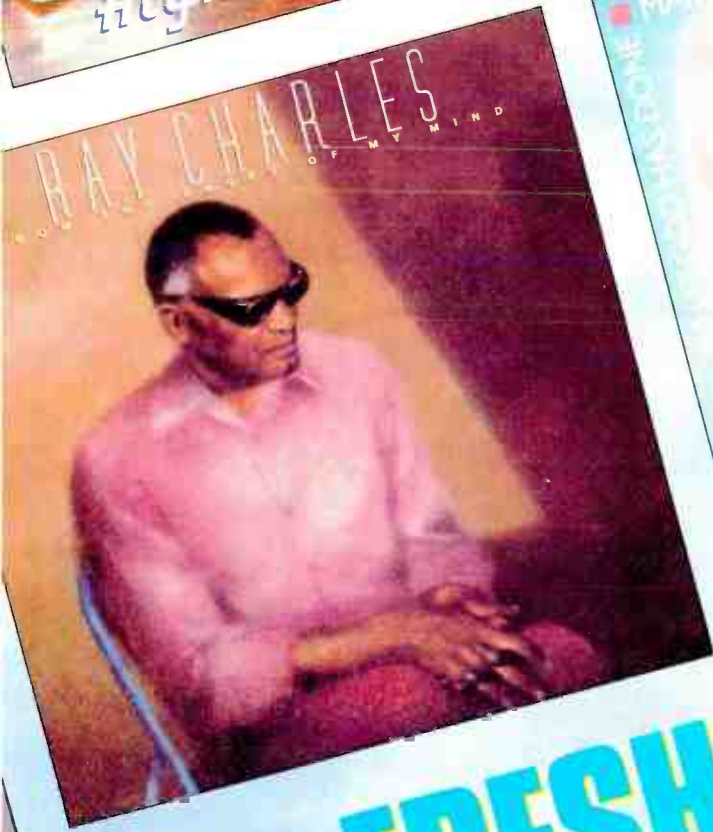
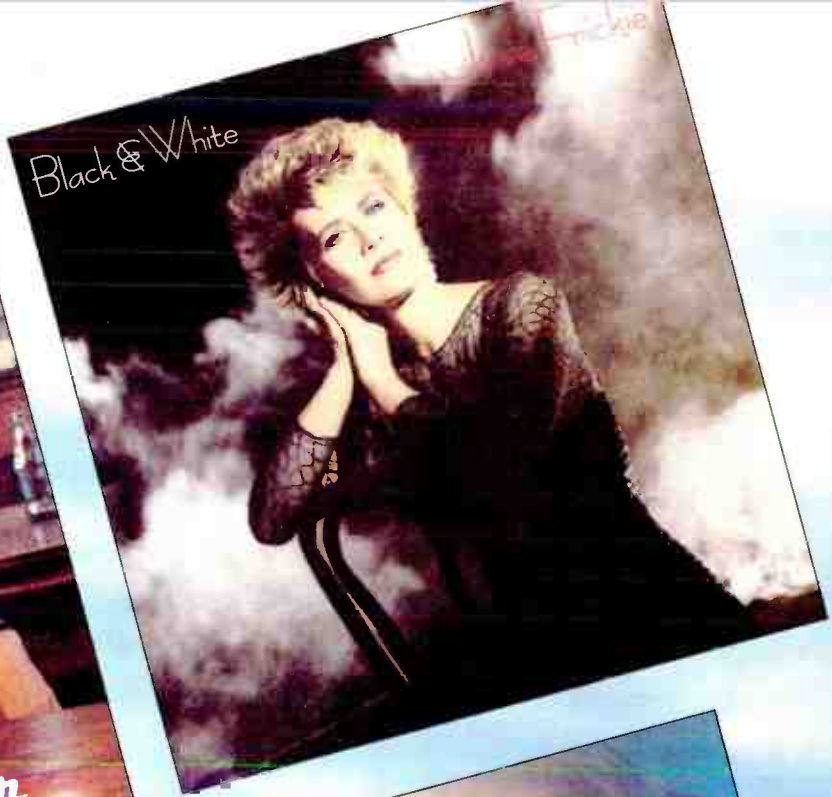
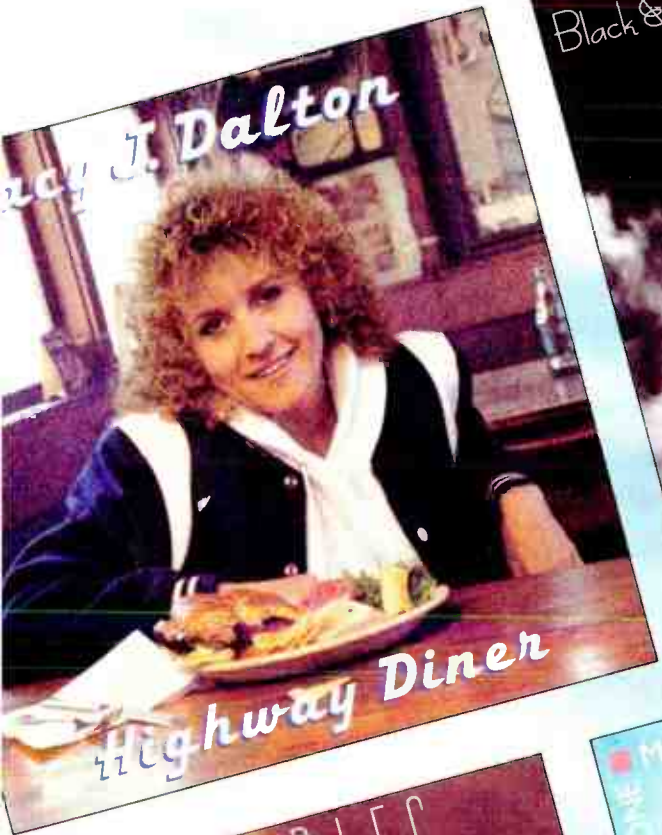
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World Radio History

COUNTRY MUSIC™



- 4 Letters**
Good news about Marvin Rainwater, bad news about Lone Pine Breau, and lots and lots about Barbara Mandrell, Dwight Yoakam, Waylon the Wolf Jennings, Billy Walker, Hawaiian steel and "Old Mac Donald".
- 11 People** *by Hazel Smith*
Skaggs plays Letterman, Bane fandangos, Opry drops backdrops, M'ude's burns down, Dollywood opens, Tanya Tucker's reborn, *Stagecoach* rolls—plus an Update on Johnny Paycheck.
- 22 20 Questions with Ralph Emery** *by Michael Bane*
All-night radio and live TV—Ralph Emery knows all the secrets of both. The only thing he hasn't licked yet is how to make more than one hit record. Bane gets the low-down.
- 24 Hank Williams Jr: A Country Boy Has Survived** *by Michael Bane*
How the legend has found time to find himself, find his fans and find a new gun—traveling in style in his own jet airplane.
- 30 The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band: 20 Years of Plain Dirt** *by Michael Bane*
The Dirt Band has been around for a while, garnering hits all along. At last, their various audiences may be beginning to blend into one.
- 36 Growing Up with Rosanne Cash** *by Patrick Carr*
Rosanne gives some straight answers to tough questions faced by working mothers in all walks of life. Confidence, security, sense of self and timing are all addressed. Plus what makes a good song.
- 42 Marty Stuart: Pickin' and Choosin'** *by Patrick Carr*
Young as he is, Marty's had a long career. He's always been bold as brass, but going out on his own is a sobering experience. He's ready to risk.
- 48 Record Reviews**
Nashville's jumping with the latest from George Strait, The Forester Sisters, David Allan Coe, Ray Charles and Gene Watson, plus debuts by Marty Stuart and Randy Travis, a dobro disk by Jerry Douglas, a solo album by Lone Oak William Golden—and more.
- 66 Buried Treasures** *by Rich Kienzle*
Hank Sr.'s lovesick, Ed Bruce is boppin', Ralph Stanley's live in Japan, Lefty Frizzell's honky-tonkin' and Wanda Jackson's givin' a party—more blasts from the past to delight you.
- 67 Essential Collector** *by Rich Kienzle*
Vintage country radio is now available. Also historic Lefty Frizzell, an exceptional Hank Thompson remake and more.

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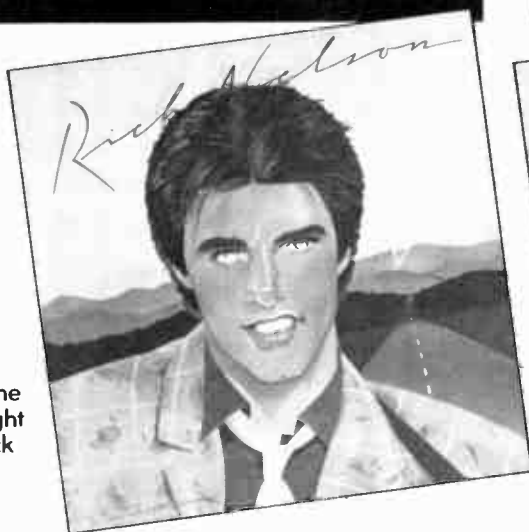
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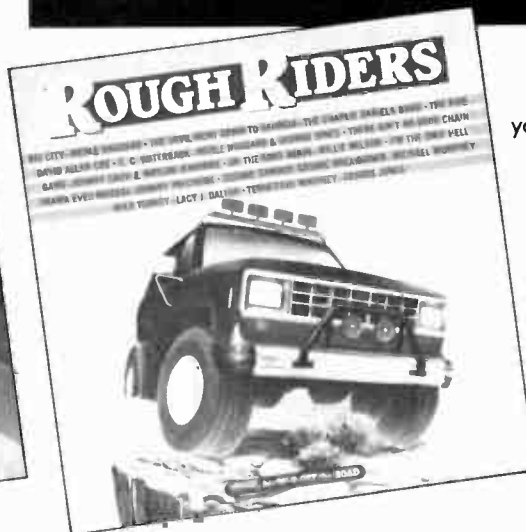
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World Radio History

Letters

The Lady's Still a Champ . . .

When I went to get my mail, I had a surprise in my mailbox—the May/June issue of *Country Music*. On the cover was Barbara Mandrell, my favorite female singer. Thanks to Michael Bane for writing a fantastic story on the “Queen of Country Music.” Barbara has been through so much and has proved she is Entertainer of the Year. Her *Get to the Heart* tour was fantastic. The lady is a champ, and a multi-talented lady. Thanks again for the pictures and story. Keep up with Barbara and her family and I will renew my subscription for years to come.

Renee Groom
New Glarus, Wisconsin

Thank you for the terrific article on Barbara Mandrell in the May/June issue. I can't say enough wonderful things about this great lady. She deserves all the happiness in the world, her songs are so true and honest, her singing is so great, her voice so beautiful. Nobody will ever be able to even come close. I've seen a lot of country artists over the years. The queen still tops them all. Barbara, I love you and always will.

To *Country Music Magazine*, I'm glad I subscribe, and to Michael, who wrote the article, hats off to you and thanks for giving her *Get to the Heart* album a great review.

Tammy Atkinson
St. Albans, North Carolina

Kitty Wells is Country's Queen

Your article about Barbara Mandrell should have been titled “Return of a Country Star” not “Return of the Queen.” No matter how long Barbara Mandrell or Loretta Lynn sing, they will never replace the true queen of country music, Kitty Wells, and Barbara will never be a queen of any kind to me.

I have no records by Barbara Mandrell and aim to keep it that way. Saw Kitty Wells about three years ago, and she will always be my favorite singer.

A Country Music Fan
Bethel, Vermont

Yoakam Hits the Heart of Country

I have been compelled to write to you many times to complain about the ho-



mogenized *sludge* which has been coming out of Nashville for years now, to the point where when tuning your radio you can't tell if you have a country station, rock, M.O.R. or what. But then along comes a singer like Dwight Yoakam. I just bought his *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.* tape and have about worn it out already. It's too bad Nashville can't put out material like this. Dwight, if you're reading, please stick to your Kentucky roots and keep showing everyone that hillbilly, honky tonk, pure country or whatever you want to call it is still alive and well.

Ed Workman
Churchville, Virginia
Nashville was smart enough to sign him up, though.—Ed.

Hooray for Dwight Yoakam for not changing himself or his music to please the record companies in Nashville. There are many of us who spend the weekends out looking for true country dance music. It's very hard to find. Dwight has it.

I knew I wanted some of Dwight Yoakam's records in my collection as soon as I heard him on *Nashville Now*. When I purchased *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.*, the store owner complained that he “just got these albums in and

now they are all gone.” There is a demand for real country music. Much of what I hear on the radio is no more country than a chemical toilet in the outhouse.

Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc. has some of the finest material I've heard. Any address where one could write to Dwight?

Suzy Hicks
Greenacres, Washington
To reach Dwight Yoakam, write to his newly-organized D.Y. International Fan Club, 15840 Ventura Blvd., #465, Encino, California 91436.—Ed.

Great Singers, One and All—or, Cat Conscious

First off I'd like to say Dwight Yoakam is a super singer, and from what I've heard he sure isn't rock 'n' roll. He belongs in Nashville not California. He reminds me a lot of Hank Locklin and he's great. Give him the break he deserves.

The questions and answers story on Waylon Jennings was great. More power to him for his new life. By the way, Waylon, the cats like you or they would have moved on. The one in your chair only wanted you to hold it. Cats pick their owners, and if they don't like you, they won't stay.

I liked the story on Webb Pierce also. Let's see something on Hank Thompson and Hank Locklin, okay? Some of us still like the mature singers.

J. Hillshery
Veronica, Oregon

Waylon, Yoakam and Owens

I very much enjoyed Mr. Bob Allen's interview with Waylon Jennings in the May/June issue. It's nice to hear that things are better for Waylon of late. I don't get to attend many concerts, but I did see Waylon back in 1981 at Pine Knob, near Detroit, Michigan. I had a great time.

I also enjoyed the article on Dwight Yoakam. I like his music, and I am also impressed with how articulate he is.

Finally, I would like to point out a mistake I believe you made in your review of The Statlers' new album. Mr. Kienzle said that Buck Owens recorded “Only You,” made popular by The Plat- ters, and also done by The Statlers on

their new album. However, Buck wrote and recorded a song entitled, "Only You (Can Break My Heart)."

Mark Burkhardt
Caro, Michigan

Buck, now we have another question for you. Come in, please.—Ed.

Wolf Talk

Thank you, Bob Allen, for the story/interview with the one and only Waylon. It's about time someone got the facts and told it like it should be told. I have been a Waylon fan since "year one" and always will be. There are none better—unless it's Willie. Waylon's music has always touched the soul, and you always feel uplifted by his music. These days Waylon may be "Working Without a Net," but that is one wolf who will definitely survive.

Bernice Gallagher
White Bluff, Tennessee

Thank you for the wonderful article about Waylon by Bob Allen. I'm sure grateful that Bob didn't read Patrick Carr's review of *Turn the Page*, or he wouldn't have said such nice things about it. Personally, I find it to be one of my all-time favorites. The way I look at it, Waylon records exactly what he likes—his way—and I love it!

I'm going to run right out and buy *Will the Wolf Survive?* because the answer is *yes!*

B. Gay Hoefler
Lewiston, Idaho

Webb Pierce: Alive and Well

Loved your article on Webb Pierce. I've been a big fan since the 1950's. He is the best!!

I'm glad to hear he's alive and well. One disk jockey said "late and great," but I'm happy he is great and not the late.

"Mort" Huusko Supanich
L'Anse, Michigan

Webb Pierce Strikes the Right Note

I only recently subscribed to *Country Music Magazine*. I would like to tell you my feeling on country music. This new country or country grown-up stinks. The people can't sing; their voices come out yelling and screaming. Empty voices.

I read your article on Webb Pierce—let me tell you about Webb. On a scale of 1 to 10, Webb Pierce is a 12. He can come into my living room any time, and I'll never move an inch.

Webb is up there with Hank Williams Sr. When they sang, it made your heart feel good; it was like they had already experienced their songs. Their voices were not empty, and boy, when they dressed, they were clean shaven, and honey, they had style.

Anyway possible you could send me Webb Pierce's address, and I would write and tell him myself and not bother you all anymore? I would not buy any of this new country. I'll only buy the old. I think I'll write a book called *Country Music's Downhill Fall*.

Grace Bruner
Shelbyville, Kentucky

To reach Webb Pierce, write Webb Pierce Enterprises, 521 Clayton Ave., Nashville, Tennessee 37212.—Ed.



Dirt Band members Hanna, Ibbotson and McEuen at a Midwest concert.

Here's the Nitty Gritty!

I went down to the "Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 20th Anniversary Celebration" not long ago. It was real good. Can we hear about The Dirt Band in a future issue? They did have a good concert. It lasted four and a half hours, and it was well worth the price!

Penny Dickey
Alliance, Nebraska

For the latest on the long-lived Dirt Band, see this issue.—Ed.

The Everly Brothers Still Rockin' True

I would like to comment on the Record Review section of the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*, particularly the review of The Everly Brothers' *Born Yesterday* album by John Morthland. While I appreciate his right to his interpretation of this album, I strongly disagree! For entertainers like these two to be in hiatus for ten years and then be able to come back with material such as the songs on this album is unbelievable. I think this is one of their *best* albums!

Let's face it, they are "rockers." This material allows them to focus in on today's sound while bringing through the original quality of their original sound which we all love so dearly! Who could better accomplish this feat than Dave Edmunds? "Why Worry" is a good example of this, while "Amanda Ruth" is a true "rockers" song." Wow, is there no end to what these two old boys can do?

I urge Mr. Morthland to re-listen to this album and think through what it was we loved so much about The Everly Brothers' music back then and how this album comes through for every Everly

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The Bitlers have good taste in music—I., Chris with Steve Wariner, r., Ron with Mel McDaniel. They could be look-alikes—or brothers.

Brothers fan today. Thank God they are still doing their thing and doing so well.

Peggy Perkins
Columbia, Missouri

For more about the Everlys, see the feature in an upcoming issue—Ed.

Spotlight on Wariner and McDaniel

Both my husband and myself are big country music fans. In the past, we have seen "greats" such as Alabama, Reba McEntire, Exile, The Judds, The Kendalls, Crystal Gayle, Mel McDaniel, The Gatlins, Ricky Skaggs, John Anderson and Terri Gibbs, just to mention a few. But my all-time favorite is Steve Wariner. We always go up and talk to him after the show, and the second time we saw him, he looked at my husband Ron and remembered that my husband played bass guitar for a local band. Now that's what I call being devoted to his fans!

Ron's band opened for The Kendalls at Sunset Park this summer.

Chris Bitler
Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania

The Fate of Harold Breau

Thank you for printing my letter in the May/June issue about my friend Harold Breau, "The Lone Pine Mountaineer," whom I had not heard from in such a long time.

I received quite a few phone calls concerning the matter, and it was all bad news. It seems that all the information points the same way, and that was that Harold Breau, "The Lone Pine Mountaineer," had passed away in March of 1977.

I felt real bad that things turned out that way, but I guess we all have our destinies, and that closes the chapter on another country artist who was well liked and had a lot of friends in this world who mourn his passing.

I would like to mention the names of some of the *Country Music Magazine*



readers who were kind enough to let me know the details: Dale Bennett, who knew Harold personally; a friend of mine by the name of Tex Roe; Ruth E. Dennett, who knew Harold Breau and also his wife, Betty Cody, and is the editor of *My Country Magazine*; and Dick Curless, known as "The Rice Paddy Ranger" during the Korean War. Dick has been making appearances on *The Nashville Network*, and I saw him recently on *Nashville Now* with Ralph Emery.

In closing, I want to thank you again for printing my letter and also say that we have a lot of nice readers subscribing to the publication.

Joseph Vario
Jamestown, New York
Thanks to all who responded, including Betty Cody. We have forwarded her letter to Joseph Vario.—Ed.

Will the Real Johnny Russell Please Stand Up?

In your May/June 1986 issue, I wrote to tell you that the Johnny Russell you pictured in *People* in the November/December 1985 issue did not write "Act Naturally." Well, I was wrong. After checking my source, I discovered that my source was all wet. The Johnny Russell who appears on the Grand Ole Opry did write "Act Naturally." My apologies!

Carla Terry
Stanton, California
Whew!—Ed.

A Rose by Any Other Name . . . Would Still be Statlers

I have just been enjoying my May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*. You have a fine magazine. Please keep up the good work.

Just want to correct you on your reply to Vernon Gayheart of West Virginia. I have been a fan of The Statlers for twelve years, and the two other names they have gone by were The Four Star Quartet, first, and The Kingsmen, sec-

ond. They got the name Statler off a box of tissues.

Carol Morton
Gibsonville, North Carolina

The Statlers' office confirms that The Statlers were known as The Four Star Quartet and The Kingsmen when they were singing gospel music locally. Thanks for setting the record straight.—Ed.

On The Trail of the Pioneers

Thank you for the letter from Betty Joan Reed Stephens in the May/June issue of *Country Music*. I have cut it out and will send it to my grandmother. I had no idea that my letter about her, in the November/December 1984 issue, would have garnered so much attention!

As is usually the case, my last name was misspelled. The correct spelling is *Sedlacek*. No problem, however. Must have been my own mistake.

There remains quite a bit of pioneer history out west here in Oregon.

So, a big thank you for Ms. Stephens' letter and information, and a big howdy from the Old West to the heart of Dixie.

Eric L. Sedlacek
Bend, Oregon

Hot for Hank Jr.

I have really enjoyed being a new subscriber to your magazine.

I especially enjoy reading the letters from subscribers like myself.

I have enclosed a photograph that was taken at a March concert given by Hank "Bocephus" Williams Jr.

In my own personal opinion, he is the greatest entertainer going! He put on a show that kept you on your toes the entire show. The auditorium was packed with folks from every walk of life and every age group. There were senior citizens in the front row!

How about a story on Bocephus soon?

Jeanette Clark Moore
Concord, Virginia

This issue soon enough?—Ed.



Young and old came out to hear Hank Jr. Jeanette Moore reports.

Marvin Rainwater Found

First of all, let me say that I enjoy being a member of the Country Music Society of America. And, Bob Allen, on your write-up on Waylon Jennings in the May/June issue—my hat's off to you for such a down-to-earth interview. I really enjoyed it.

In regard to a question in Letters about Marvin Rainwater, if you're talk-



COURTESY DENNIS DEVINE

Marvin Rainwater is alive and well and has a brand new album.

ing about the man who sang "I'm Gonna Find me a Bluebird," well, I can say he's not sitting in an Oklahoma prison. I'm happy to say I've had the pleasure of backing up Marvin at the Loonlake Resort, in Brainerd, Minnesota, and a few other places. Yes, he has a couple of new albums out and is now living in Aitkin, Minnesota, at his Blue Bird Corner Resort.

Steven Stout
Wadena, Minnesota

For more on Marvin Rainwater, see this month's CMSA Newsletter.—Ed.

In answer to Vera Fackler's plea in Letters in the May/June issue:

Marvin Rainwater is not in an Oklahoma prison. He is alive and well, living in northern Minnesota. To reach him, write Marvin Rainwater, Route #1, Aitkin, Minnesota 56431. I believe his latest album is *Whatever Happened to Marvin Rainwater?* It can be purchased through him for \$10.

Ernest H. Teppo
Coon Rapids, Minnesota

Thanks to all who wrote with news about Marvin Rainwater.—Ed.

Stagecoach Rides Again

Last night I sat and watched *Stagecoach*, the made-for-TV western star-

ring Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, John Schneider, Kris Kristofferson and Elizabeth Ashley.

I used to watch westerns all the time, but after a while they just faded away. I suppose most of that is because there weren't any real cowboys playing the parts. I just wanted to put my two cents worth in.

I really enjoy watching country music men and women play westerns on TV. I also enjoyed *The Last Days of Frank and Jesse James*. Even if the good guys don't wear white hats anymore, country singers are still the best country actors around. They don't just dress that way, they are country.

Thank you very much, guys and ladies, for making country music sound so good, and westerns look so real.

Gerri Davis
Bentley, Michigan

See the People section for more on Stagecoach.—Ed.

Waiting on George Strait

I am a fairly new subscriber, and I look forward to every new issue of your magazine. It's great!

However, something is missing. I never see anything on George Strait. Recently, in Fresno, California, I had the good fortune to meet and spend time with George. He is such a talented performer and so warm and friendly as a person! Let's hear it for George and give him a little space!

Alison Reel
San Diego, California

Watch for a major George Strait feature soon.—Ed.

Non-Violent Country

People in the Detroit area have been concerned about violence downtown during weekend rock concerts and ethnic festivals, but the annual Budweiser Downtown Hoedown held recently had only a few minor disturbances. Appearing were such great performers as Waylon Jennings, John Schneider, Janie Fricke, Sweethearts of the Rodeo, etc., etc., etc!

Same was true of the Marlboro Country Music Tour concert at the Joe Louis Arena the week previous, featuring Merle Haggard, Ricky Skaggs and Hank Williams Jr. Only goes to show what good people are fans of country music.

Denise Bedey
Westland, Michigan

Don't Give Up, Billy Walker

Kudos to Billy Walker. I was very happy to see the article on Billy in People in the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*, but a little perturbed to get the impression that, veteran that he is, he has more or less been put on the back burner. It seems this has also happened



Dot Roggi's special person, Willie Nelson, with Dot's daughter and her kids.

to quite a number of the older artists who are really still alive and well and still recording.

I agree with Billy! Country music definitely did not start with Ricky Skaggs and Reba McEntire. There are still a lot of veterans out there who just happen to be a little older than Reba and Ricky and I guess the disk jockeys and program directors fall into Reba's and Ricky's age group. When you call a D.J. and he says, "Billy who?" (that happened to me), you know he hasn't been a D.J. too long.

I have been a fan of Billy Walker for thirty plus years, and all I can say is, "Keep it going, Billy." I'm all for it!

C'mon, all you other Billy Walker fans. Let's hear it for our "Tall Texan."

Audrey Winsor
Westport, New York

When we were in Nashville last July, we got to see Billy Walker on the Grand Ole Opry, and he introduced a new song, "Coffee Brown Eyes." He did a wonderful job on it, but he's not in the record stores here.

In the article in your May/June issue, his wife said that his fans know where to get his records. I am a new fan. Please, can you help me out? Also need fan club address. I love your *Country Music Magazine*.

James K. Hall
Mulberry, Indiana
To reach Billy Walker, write P. O. Box 618, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37077. Billy's in Europe right now, pleasing his European fans.—Ed.

In Praise of Willie Nelson

I enjoy the *Country Music Magazine* very much. Read every letter sent and enjoy the pictures that are sent in.

Now it's my turn to tell everyone about my favorite person, Willie Nelson. I had the good fortune to meet Willie at

Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada, five years ago. When I got home to Connecticut, I joined his fan club and started writing poetry about him.

Some of my poems have been published in a country western magazine. I have also written a song for him titled "I'm Flying Home." I hope that some day he will see it.

The time that I met Willie at the stage door of Radio City Music Hall in New York City, I told him that I wrote poetry about him, and for that I got a hug.

I have in my possession 15 scrapbooks all about him, plus a Willie Nelson doll from Nashville, Tennessee, complete with bandana, t-shirt and sneakers, three Willie Nelson and Family *On the Road Again* jackets, ten large posters of him and a hook rug that I made with his profile on it. I have been to nine concerts from Las Vegas to Boston, Massachusetts.

What a wonderful person he is—I've made him part of my life.

Dot Roggi
Glastonbury, Connecticut

Hawaiian Steel

Thanks for forwarding a letter to me in response to mine in the November/December 1985 issue.

When I took up the steel guitar, as a child in West Virginia, Hawaiian music was the big radio trend. To try and bring it back, an organization called "World Wide Hawaiian Steel Guitar Music Association" was formed in Tuscon, Arizona, last October. Already, last I heard, it has around 300 members. World Wide Hawaiian Steel Guitar Music Association, 10432 East Flintock, Tuscon, Arizona—Fred Gagner is the man to write if any steel guitarist would be interested or anyone who loves beautiful Hawaiian music.

How I'd love to hear that Hawaiian

music on the airways again along with pure country and modern country.

Carlos Minor
Sesser, Illinois

Support for New Stars

I would like to say that I like your magazine, and I read it from cover to cover.

Wouldn't it be great if all the unknowns had a place or way to be heard by the big wheels, without it costing them so much?

I received a record by mail done by Jessie Anderson of Nashville. It was rock-country. It was great! Have you heard of him? I would like to have more of his music, but he is an unknown.

I understand it is terrible for musicians without money to make it in the business. This doesn't seem right. I feel we the people are being deprived of some great music just because they haven't any money to produce themselves. Something should be done about this.

Cherry Peppar
Where there's a will, there's a way.—Ed.

Gretsch Historian Welcomes Mail

I would like to thank you for the mention in the Letters section in your May/June issue of *Country Music*. As a professional guitarist for forty-three years, and a collector of Gretsch guitars for almost as long, I do enjoy hearing from people interested in guitars, especially Gretsch. My national Gretsch guitar museum now numbers about fifty six guitars, and includes several prototypes and one-of-a-kind models.

My offer to date and identify Gretsch guitars was first published in *Guitar Player Magazine* in October of 1983. There have been hundreds of responses by people who needed to know exactly what they had.

The offer applies to your readers also. I need only the serial number, a photo, or polaroid shot to determine what hardware was used, and, when possible, the model number. The service is free, but



Guitarist Dixon Hooker, and Dean Turner inspect Dean's collection.

we do ask for help on the postage, as the museum operates on a non-profit basis.

You may be glad to know that Mr. Fred Gretsch, great-grandson to the company founder, has purchased the Gretsch company. A very fine new line of guitars is scheduled for release this year. I was fortunate enough to play some of the early prototypes at the factory, and they look and sound great. I am very excited.

Gretschfully yours,

Dean Turner

Ft. Worth, Texas

For all you Gretsch collectors, here it is one more time: Dean Turner, P.O. Box 18095, Ft. Worth, Texas 76118.—Ed.

Down On the Farm with Johnny Cash and Old MacDonald

By popular request—those who wrote in and those who didn't—here are the words to the immortal "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" as performed by John R. Cash at FarmAid I in Champaign, Illinois. Words by John R. Cash and Chips Moman. Music in the public domain.

Old MacDonald had a farm
Eee-i-eee-i-o
And all he's got is the muscle in his arm
Eee-i-eee-i-o
With a dry year here and a price cut there
Here a cut, there a cut, got him in a deep
rut

Old MacDonald had a farm
Eee-i-eee-i-o

Old MacDonald had a farm
Eee-i-eee-i-o
On a good section of sandy loam
Eee-i-eee-i-o
Had to sell off here, sell off there
Deep debt, deep debt, how deep can it get
Old MacDonald had a farm
Eee-i-eee-i-o

Now his banker's got a farm
Eee-i-eee-i-o
And he ain't got a muscle in his arm
Eee-i-eee-i-o
And he can't plow, and he can't mow
'Cause he don't know his ass from a row
MacDonald's banker's got a farm
Eee-i-eee-i-o

Old MacDonald's up a tree
Eee-i-eee-i-o
And the government's got no sympathy
Eee-i-eee-i-o
They got him down, but he won't quit
'Cause Old MacDonald's used to bull shit
Old MacDonald ain't done yet
Eee-i-eee-i-o

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Teenage Country Blues

I have been reading my mother's *Country Music* lately. It's really a great magazine!

I am almost seventeen, live in a small

town and love country music. It seems like I am the only teenager in Dierks that likes country music! For example: if you say The Oak Ridge Boys, people look at you like you're crazy and ask you who they are. If you say Prince, they go crazy talking about him!

Marie Hill

Dierks, Arkansas

We'll be your lifeline.—Ed.

Stand By your Man

I just received my second copy of your magazine and let me tell you this, you guys just keep making it better and better! I love it!

I read everything I can get my hands on about Merle Haggard. I have about

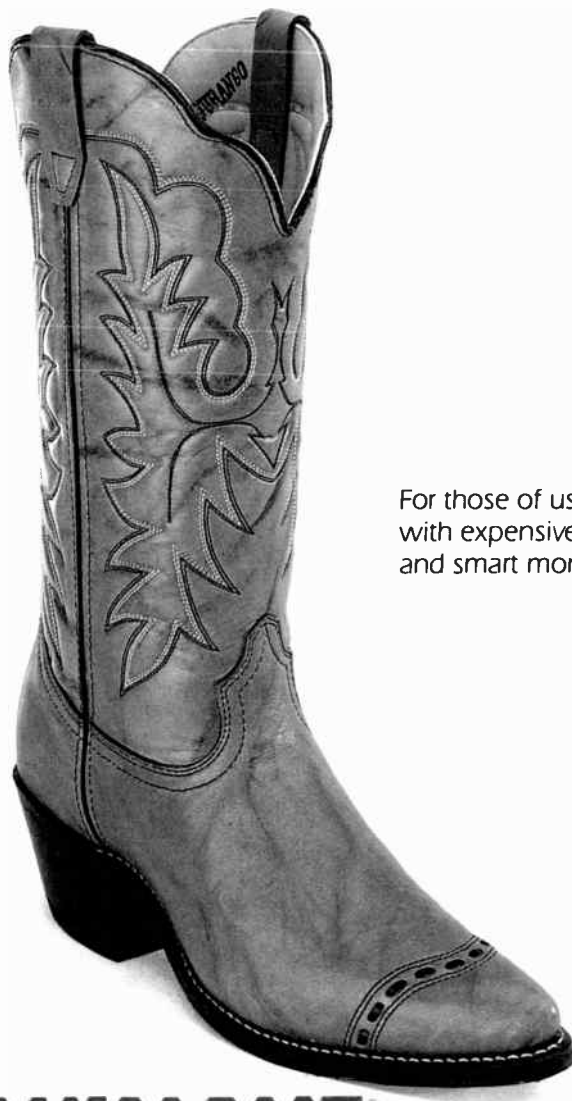
ten of his tapes, and before I even have my coffee in the morning, I plug in my Merle tape. I can't believe that he's been married four times. How those women could let him go once they had him is beyond me. I could put up with anything he had to offer and never divorce him!

N. Sikkema

McBain, Michigan

We'll keep your name and address. Merle may need it.—Ed.

Send Letters to the Editor to Country Music Magazine, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark envelope, Attention: Letters. If you would like photos returned, please send SASE.



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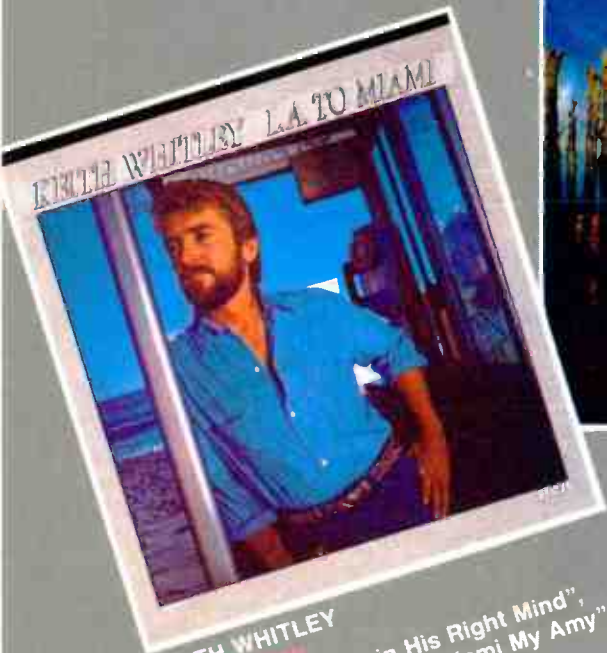
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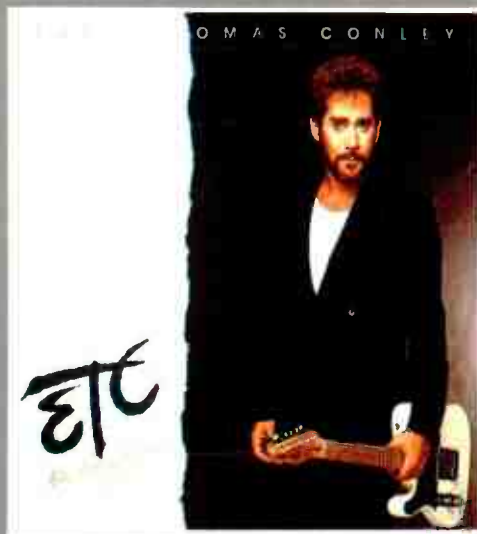
KEITH WHITLEY
LA TO MIAMI
Includes "Nobody in His Right Mind",
"On the Other Hand", "Miami My Amy",
"Ten Feet Away"



MICHAEL JOHNSON
WINGS
Includes "Gotta Learn to
Love Without You",
"Hangin' On", "Wings"



PAKE McENTIRE
TOO OLD TO GROW UP NOW
Includes "Every Night", "Bad Love" and
the Top 3 single "Savin' My Love for You"



EARL THOMAS CONLEY
TOO MANY TIMES
Watch for Earl Thomas
Conley's *Too Many
Times* album to be
released in October!
Includes the duet with
Anita Pointer, "Too
Many Times" plus
many, many more!



People

GOVERNORS, GET ON THE PROVERBIAL STICK!

You know, I wish I felt about the other governors of the United States the way I feel about the good Governor of Kentucky. I'm sure they wished I felt this way too. Governor **Martha Layne Collins** has my love, respect and blessings. Why? Not only did the First Lady of the Bluegrass State have the good taste to select Kentucky's favorite son, **Ricky Skaggs**, as Grand Marshal for the Kentucky Derby, she was a grand hostess for my pal Ricky and his first lady, **Sharon White-Skaggs**, one of the singing Whites. What else makes her so great? Word I got, Russell, editor of this here prestigious magazine, is that the first lady has excellent taste not only in hillbillies and their wives but also in her choice of magazines. Ricky said that there in the governor's mansion, on the table in one of them living rooms, in living color, was *Country Music Magazine*.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have 49 to go. Once all 50 gov's are educated through *Country Music* and via me, then we will look to D.C. for the powers that be. I mean, if Senator **Robert Byrd** from the State of West Virginia can play a fiddle, I can play around with the heads of state. Maybe even **Ronnie**—you know—**Reagan**, has the good taste to do so. He's been hanging around with movie stars for so long, he sure needs to learn what truth and true American music and ways are about. I'd rather know about Dollywood than Hollywood any day!

SKAGGS STRUTS HIS STUFF

Never at a loss for a "note," Country Music Association Entertainer of the Year, Grand Ole Opry and my personal friend, **Ricky Skaggs**, just rocked on out like I knew he would with **Paul Shaffer** and the band on the *Late Night With David Letterman* TV show. Performing the rocking "Rockin' the Boat," penned by Skaggs and master song-craftsman, **Jim Rushing**, Ricky and Paul boogied on down like they had been jamming together forever. Truth is, they just met that afternoon. Word I got from Ricky's



The man in the middle is Ricky Skaggs. He looks quite at home surrounded by Sid McGinnis, Anton Fig, Will Lee and Paul Shaffer of the Late Night Band. This was Ricky's first appearance on *Late Night With David Letterman*.

office is that the number of calls received following the performance from America's youth was certainly noticeable. One young man who gave his age at 21 reportedly said he had gone out and purchased six Skaggs' albums "because there must be more to him than just another country singer." He wanted to find out what Ricky Skaggs was about and planned to see him in concert soon near his Jersey home.

The Epic Recording artist finetuned a bunch of virgin ears in Europe during his 1986 spring tour, as he continues to strew his sounds from sea to shining sea. Hopefully, in a year or so Skaggs will extend his music into the Far East. Already many Japanese bluegrass fans are digging Skaggs' music, so with a push and a shove, with video and press, the move eastward is a possibility, providing the powers that be keep peace in the valley. It would behoove us country music lovers and believers in a higher power to pray for peace. Things sure have got into a mess, and it does put fear in me.

MICHAEL'S BANE UP TO IT AGAIN

I went out to the taping of *Fandango* on The Nashville Network for a little celebrity game playing, and lo and behold, in

living color, wearing suit and tie, scowl replaced by smile was *Country Music's* **Ernie Hemingway**, **Michael Bane** and a contestant at that! Not only did host **Bill Anderson** about faint at how well Bane cleaned up, he and I both almost went into cardiac arrest when Michael won the game. We knew he wrote good, but we had no idea he could think so fast! Just joshing, Michael. I was so surprised and happy to see Michael. I adore him and his writing and was proud he won. (For Michael's own reaction, see the story in an upcoming issue.—Ed.)

PROGRESS IS BREAKING MY HEART

One of the last remnants of how the Grand Ole Opry looked when it was in Ryman Auditorium are the backdrops. It's breaking my heart to think that they soon will be no more. Is it wrong to be nostalgic? Do we have to give up *everything* that has made country music and the Opry the one downhome place of entertainment on the face of this earth? They're doing away with the backdrops in favor of slides. Lordy mercy, I've been in the way of those backdrops as they were rolled down, I cannot remember how many times. And I loved them. If you've been to the Opry, perhaps the

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People



The Martha White curtain backdrop was the last one to be removed from the Grand Ole Opry stage. Martha White Foods, the longest running advertiser of the Opry radio show (37 years), and other sponsors will now be using projected slides to promote their products. It may be progress, but it still makes a girl wanna cry.

most memorable backdrop was Martha White Flour with the great Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs performing the theme. "Now you bake right, with Martha White," etc., every Saturday night for a long, long time. The first time I ever saw the Opry, I knew, just knew I was real close to heaven. The first time I went backstage, I swallowed my chewing gum. Even now, sometimes I get the shivers. It is super starred every weekend, and every weekend you can see the Grand Ole Opry on television on *The Nashville Network* if you have the cable. It's all good and proper and wonderful like it's supposed to be. I'm sure sorry they're doing away with the backdrops. If you haven't been to the Opry (I feel sorry for you), please understand that this is a live radio show and to make the audience in the auditorium aware of the product that sponsors each particular segment, a backdrop either rolled down from overhead or dropped down, as was the case with Martha White. It was like an added attraction.

You know, the Opry has no trouble getting sponsors. Matter of fact, they can pick and choose who they want. Ford Trucks picked up the live TV portions for a year, and Toyota is sponsoring the matinees all summer long. Those fans who come to Nashville and Opryland and want to see some Opry entertainment can certainly do so now that the establishment has added matinees.

As far as I can tell, the Opry is doing most everything to suit my taste these days . . . except, I wish they'd keep the backdrops. It just seemed that Roy Acuff, Grant Turner and backdrops

were all indispensable. Well . . . two out of three ain't bad!

EYE WENT

Yes, I did! I went to Jim Rushing's Number One party at O'Charley's. Why did Jim have a Number One party? Cause he penned "Cajun Moon," and the singer of the Number One song, Ricky Skaggs, surprised Rushing with a dinner. Everywhere I go is Number One. If it isn't, I make it so!

ROCKING ROY AT IT FOR 30 YEARS

What does a rock 'n' roller who reaches 50 and has rocked and rolled for thirty years do? Really, is there anything left to do? Ask Roy Orbison. In case his rockers 'n' rollers have gotten dull, he is whetting his chops by co-writing songs with two of the hottest up-and-comers, Rodney Crowell and J.D. Souther. Or are Crowell and Souther just going to the Roy Orbison rock 'n' roll writing school themselves? The latter, I think!

STRAIT FROM MY HEART TO HEART

There's no doubt in my mind, if I awoke and saw George Strait's face, I would never live to tell it. I would die on the spot! Thirty-four years old, sings like he means it and can ride a horse, too. The answer to a country girl's prayer. The George Strait Team Roping, an annual event in Kingsville, Texas, was held recently. The star and his brother have sponsored this happening for four years running, and word I got is the rodeo, like

the star, gets bigger and better every year. George, astride a horse, like Roy Rogers used to do in the movies, did some fancy roping. When the ridin' and ropin' is over, just like in the movies, George lays down the bridle, picks up his guitar and Strait sings his heart out. There wasn't a woman there who didn't love the multi-talented George!

SINCE 15 FAN FAIRS AGO

Lucille and Ken Crews from Henry, Virginia, attended their 15th Fan Fair in June 1986. How many Fan Fairs have there been? 15! And that's what I call lovers of country music, and that's what Ken and Lucille are . . . besides being my friends.

HOTTER 'N A COUNTRY SONG

One of the better known watering holes in Nashville burned down last night. Maude's Courtyard—you've read about it time and again amongst all my 'eye saw's'. Where will all the drinkers go? And all the nooners who hang out to see, be seen and dine? The chow was better



He sings, he ropes and he breaks hearts all over the country.

than average and the service just fine. I wonder where BMI's **Harry Warner** went to have lunch today? And Cookhouse Music's owner/writer/gad-about **Roger Cook** . . . where on earth did he dine? Also Combine Music's **Bob Beckam**, who at one time had his name on a table in this joint . . . where did he eat lunch? Actually, lots and lots of folks headed toward the newer in-place eatery, Tavern on the Row.

Don't you dare even snicker about Maude's burning. This is a hallowed place. Why once I was dining at Maude's and I heard a voice from my past. "Holy cow," I more than whispered, "that sounds like **Arthur Godfrey**." And I turned slowly to my left and stared directly into his a-baby blues. Fool that I am, I simply said, "Well, howdy doo and welcome to Music City." "Thank you," was his totally shocked reply. Maude's was a special place. People who couldn't afford an office took their calls there between 11 A.M. and 2 P.M. and between 5 P.M. and 9 P.M. The well-to-doers used to buy rounds for the lessers and everybody had a good time. I drove around and looked it over. Would've brought tears to a glass eye. A sad situation if I ever saw one.

A PEARL FROM A COUNTRY GIRL

Several years ago, before **Loretta Lynn** sold her rodeo, she'd sign autographs at the end of the show after her performance. Following one such event here in Nashville at the Municipal Auditorium, someone made Loretta acquainted with a gentleman who told her that he taught English at Vanderbilt University. Loretta replied, "Good God a-mighty! If you'd told me who you was, I'd a-laid some big words on you!" I share that to share this. Love is just a four letter word. Share it, and you'll be glad you did.

BETCHA YOU CRIED

Anybody who watched *Return to Mayberry* on the tube and says they didn't cry is either a liar or slept through it all. The nostalgia got me to the bone. All the actors got just as old as the rest of us watchers. That was sad in itself. Nashville and country music's own **Douglas Dillard** on banjo, his brother **Rodney Dillard** on guitar, **Dean Webb** on mandolin and **Mitch James** on upright bass made up the **Darling Band** . . . if you want to, add actor **Denver Pyle**, who played papa, and the jug. This was the original band from back when, and were known as **The Dillards**. Douglas still

CMM Update *Johnny Paycheck*

You have to remember, Johnny Paycheck is the same guy who has released such hardcore outlaw titles as "Armed and Crazy," "11 Months and 29 Days," "Outlaw's Prayer" and "Take This Job and Shove It." Ever the bad boy, Paycheck is back on the country music scene after a long absence and back in hot water with the law at the same time. As his first single for Mercury Records was carrying his music into the charts this May, he himself was fighting criminal assault charges in an Ohio court room.

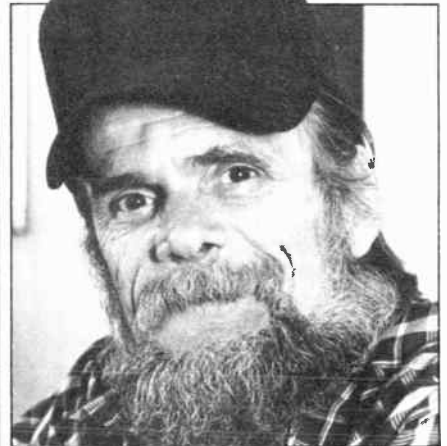
If the record got a so-so reception, barely making the Top 40 of *Billboard's* Hot Country Singles, Paycheck's luck in court was even worse. He was found guilty of assault and tampering with evidence in the wake of a barroom shootout in Hillsboro, Ohio, last December. He had grazed a man's skull with a .22 caliber bullet which Paycheck called "a warning shot."

Paycheck was last in legal trouble in 1982, when he drew a \$1,000 fine and one year's probation for sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl. This time, the Highland County, Ohio, judge sentenced the country singer to terms of 30 months to five years on the assault charge and up to 18 months on the tampering conviction. He was acquitted of charges of carrying a concealed weapon.

travels with a band called The Dillards that features the beautiful vocals of **Ginger Boatwright**.

DOLLYWOOD

Going east or west on I-40, you now see "Dollywood"—Tennessee's newest state sign—in white on green . . . just like you see Nashville, Knoxville or Memphis. The letters are somewhat smaller, but with bifocals I could read it a mile away. I saluted. I smiled. I wiped a tear. And I said right on!! Dolly Parton, 40 year old native of East Tennessee, has definitely hit the big-big time—I said big-big for a tongue in cheek reason . . . I bet you're smart enough to figure that out. Does this not, in a vague sort of way, put Dolly in the category with **Walt Disney**? By Dolly, if I were her I'd put myself into cartoons so fast it would make those space age **Jetsons** look like a horseless carriage. She would be a natural born



You really find out who your friends are when the chips are down. Paycheck's best friends were **George Jones** and **Merle Haggard**, who pitched in to post a \$25,000 cash bond to secure their pal's release pending appeal. That appeal could take up to two years.

Meanwhile, Paycheck has gone right back to plugging his career as a singer. Not wanting to be relegated only to the defensive end of the legal game, Paycheck has sued the bar where the incident took place. So far, the man who got shot hasn't sued anybody.

—BOB MILLARD

natural with wigs, songs, Hollywood, Dollywood, East Tennessee, Grand Ole Opry, movies, songwriting, the entire gamut. God in heaven help us, I want to be the president of the Dolly Parton Bank of America!! Her star has risen so high and so big. Miss Dolly is by far the biggest star that ever was a member of the Grand Ole Opry. She may be the biggest star ever born in Tennessee. Now don't start screaming Elvis. He was born in Mississippi. Remember? At Dollywood, **Stella Parton** is heading up the music department, **Freda Parton** is singing, even **Lee** (daddy) and **Avie Lee** (mama) are busying themselves. Dolly spent two weeks with the family prior to the recent grand opening making business decisions, visiting, and readying Dollywood for the 300 reporters from around the world and the 15,000 fans who showed up! Looking thin and demure, the Queen of East Tennessee and Ruling Monarch of Dollywood met with

WEIGHT WATCHERS



When Hank Jr. headlined the Universal Amphitheatre in Los Angeles, he had many fans in the audience, including Chuck Norris and Ruth Buzzi. After the show, in response to Hank's song "Fat Friends," Buzzi climbed on Hank's back just to show how light she really is. In the song, Hank says that too many of the ladies he meets on the road are hefty dames.

and greeted fan and reporter alike and accused the mayor of making out with her when they were high school seniors at the drive in theater—a feat that millions have dreamed of, I'm sure.

Don't expect to see Mickey Mouse at Dollywood, but do expect to see lots of Partons. Don't expect to see McDonalds, but do expect to see Aunt Granny's Dixie Fixin's. Aunt Granny is what Dolly's nieces and nephews affectionally call her, so I understand, and part of the reason is because she cooks biscuits, gravy and fried chicken for the whole passle of kids like Southern grannies cotton to do. Nobody told me, but I would guess that the kids can talk about Aunt Granny and no one knows who that is, but everybody would know who Aunt Dolly is. Lord knows, there ain't but one. There was a Hello Dolly . . . but no Aunt Dolly!

Start looking in the not too far off future for Miss Dolly to put Aunt Granny's Dixie Fixin's on the road. That's what she's threatening to do. If Colonel Sanders could have Kentucky fried, and J.C. Penney could still undersell . . . then Aunt Granny can sell that sop and chicken and make a billion, too.

Dolly will be dropping in to Dollywood from time to time unannounced. She will oversee the hillbiling just like she oversaw the sawing. This could easily turn out to be the biggest theme park in this country. If folks think they're gonna see somebody like Dolly, they'll drive hundreds of miles. Many times they'll drive a long ways just to see her kin. Shoot, I'd drive pretty far to see Dolly myself. I think she is a natural born for sure and for certain star. Besides, if Dolly were to lay flat on her back, folks from flat country would have problems telling her from the mountains!

STAGECOACH HAD A CAST OF WINNERS

Did you watch *Stagecoach* on TV? I did. Waylon Jennings, you did an elegant job of acting. Gambler you ain't. Card player, maybe, but way too honest to be a gambler. Looked good and done good, and you know, this was Waylon's first acting job. Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Kris Kristofferson and John Schneider better do great cause they've done it before. I must say Willie did a helluva

job as Doc Holiday delivering Mary Crosby's baby. And, interestingly, Mary Crosby's dad, the late Bing Crosby, was in *Stagecoach* too. He was in the first one, made years ago. Unless some higher power brings them together again, this will probably be the only time the big four, Waylon, Willie, Cash and Kris, will be on the silver screen together. Elizabeth Ashley did a bang up job, too. Someone told me that Elizabeth said she would crawl and beg and work without pay to work with those guys again. Picture this. Mary Crosby had a baby the night before. She is in the stagecoach with Elizabeth and the guys and the Apaches surround the wagon. I had to leave the room. I could not stand to watch for fear they'd either shoot the baby or Waylon!

Cash is such a pro. His acting improves with each character he tries. He sure made a believable sheriff. And, as I said, Willie was a good Doc Holiday. He truly did act the part of Doc. For the first time, I saw evil in Willie's eyes. Usually Willie shows compassion. I was amazed that he could actually look evil. Ole Kris just looked lean and mean. His ice blue eyes are still bound to stir up fires from screen to sofa or wherever. Other country favorites in the cast included Jessi Colter as a mistress and June Carter and John Carter Cash as mother and son—which had to be easy since they are. The great Billy Swan played a bartender, and David Allan Coe played a bad guy who never spoke. Thank God, they had him cut that mane of beard and hair for the role. All our country players played real good.

GOOBER IS MORE THAN A NUT

George "Goober" Lindsay's annual celebrity golf tournament for Special Olympics in the State of Alabama chalked up another 50 grand, totalling over a million big ones for this very worthy cause.

A HILLBILLY COLLEGE!! CAN YOU DIG IT!

The Sooner State has become much more respected here of late than I ever suspected it would be. When you think about it, Oklahoma has given us many a son and daughter for which we are and should be dutifully proud. Sooner celebs include Reba McEntire, Tommy Overstreet, The Willis Brothers, Dallas Frazier, Wanda Jackson, Merle Kilgore, Sheb Wooley, Johnny Bond, Henson Cargill, Cal Smith, Cowboy Copas, Woody Guthrie, Norma Jean,

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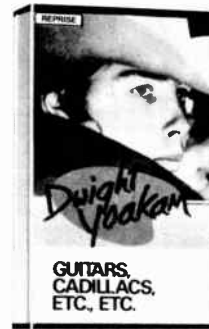
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| 346205* Belinda Carlisle BELINDA (A&R) | 342212 BRNO CROSSBY & THE RADIO YEARS: THE FIRST JUST GARLAND & GREG BURNS, ETC. (COLUMBIA) | 339796 DON WILLIAMS GREATEST HITS (MCA) | 337709 EXILE HANG ON TO YOUR HEART (EPIC) | 335117 JOHN SCHNEIDER TRYIN' TO OUTFRIN THE WIND (MCA) | 334458 SAWYER BROWN (CAPITOL/CBS) |
| 345876 DAVID ALLAN COE SON OF THE SOUTH (EPIC) | 342121* THE OUTFIELD PLAY DEEP (COLUMBIA) | 339499 VARIOUS ARTISTS 19 HOT COUNTRY REQUESTS, VOL. II (EPIC) | 337800 PATTY CLINE TODAY, TOMORROW AND FOREVER (MCA) | 335109 LEE GREENWOOD GREATEST HITS (WARNER BROS.) | 334425 CRYSTAL GAYLE HONOLULU WANTS TO BE ALONE (WARNER BROS.) |
| 345868 GENE WATSON Starting New Memories (EPIC) | 342105* BANGLES Different Light (COLUMBIA) | 339481 RICKY SKAGGS LIVE IN LONDON (CAPITOL) | 337519 HEART (CAPITOL) | 335067 JOHNNY CASH, WILLIE NELSON, MERLE HAGGARD, AND OTHERS HIGHWAYMAN (COLUMBIA) | 334409 15 TOP TEN HITS OF THE 50'S & 60'S VOLUME 1 (LARGE) |
| 345405* THE FIXX WALKABOUT (MCA) | 341636* MAMI SOUND MACHINE PRIMITIVE LOVE (EPIC) | 339325 MEL MCDANIEL STAND UP (CAPITOL) | 337303 GARY MORRIS ANYTHING GOES (WARNER BROS.) | 335000 GENE WATSON GREATEST HITS (MCA) | 334399* WHITNEY HOUSTON (A&R) |
| 345272* SIMPLY RED PICTURE BOOK (SIRE) | 341552 DIONNE WARWICK FRIENDS (A&R) | 339317 SAWYER BROWN SHAKIN' (CAPITOL) | 337147 GEORGE JONES WHO'S GONNA FILL THEIR SHOES (MCA) | SELECTIONS WITH TWO NUMBERS ARE 2-RECORD SETS ON DOUBLE-LENGTH TAPES, AND COUNT AS TWO SELECTIONS—WRITE EACH NUMBER IN A SEPARATE BOX | |
| 345108* 38 SPECIAL Strength In Numbers (A&R) | 341545* BOBBY DARIN & JOHNNY MERCER TWO OF A KIND (EPIC) | 339291 JAMES TAYLOR That's Why I'm Here (COLUMBIA) | 336818 THE BITTY BRIDES OPT BAND - PARTNERS, BROTHERS AND FRIENDS (WARNER BROS.) | 343657* CHUCK BERRY The Great Twenty-Eight (GEM) | 319996 MOTOWN'S 25 #1 HITS FROM 25 YEARS (MOTOWN) |
| 344697 THE WHITES GREATEST HITS (MCA/VERVO) | 341065 FERRANTE & TEICHER A FEW OF OUR FAVORITES ON 3 DISC (GEM) | 339283 THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND ME AND THE BOYS (COLUMBIA) | 336792 JOHN ANDERSON TOKYO, OKLAHOMA (WARNER BROS.) | 343285* JOE JACKSON BIG WORK (A&R) | 318147 GEORGE JONES—TEN YEARS OF HITS (EPIC) |
| 344671 JIM GLASER EVERYBODY KNOWS THE HOUR (MCA/VERVO) | 341024* ELLA FITZGERALD WITH NELSON RIDDLE ORCA JEROME KERN SONGBOOK (VERVO) | 339267 LARRY GATLIN & THE GATLIN BROTHERS BAND SMILE (COLUMBIA) | 336750 EDDIE RABBITT #1'S (WARNER BROS.) | 342865* ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK THE COLOR PURPLE (DECCA) | 317859 ABBA* The Singles, The 39/7851 (GEM) |
| 344663 RONNIE McDOWELL All Ted Up In Love (MCA) | 340976 THE KENDALLS THANKS GOOD FOR THE RADIO... (AND ALL THE HITS) (MERCURY) | 338830 MARIE OSMOND THERE'S NO STOPPING YOUR HEART (CAPITOL) | 336669 STING DREAM OF THE BLUE TURTLES (A&R) | 342785 342751 342751 MARIO JARVIS: TELEVISION'S GREATEST HITS—65 YEARS FROM THE 50'S AND 60'S (TELEVISION) | 314997 STEVE WONDER HIS GREATEST HITS Original Masterpiece 1 (MCA) |
| 344382 THE MONKEES GREATEST HITS (A&R) | 340893* MIKE + THE MECHANICS (A&R/MCA) | 338699 BUCKY GOLLEY I FEEL GOOD (ABOUT LOVIN' YOU) (EPIC) | 336644* More of the Best of BILL COSBY (WARNER BROS.) | 342113* RICKY NELSON 39/2118 (SILVER & GOLD) ALL MY BEST (A&R) | 313221 SHIRLEY BASSEY GREATEST HITS (LIBERTY) |
| 344358* GTR (SONY) | 340885 GLEN CAMPBELL IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME (A&R/MCA) | 338616 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK MUSIC FROM THE TELEVISION SERIES MIAMI VICE (MCA) | 336362 OAK RIDGE BOYS STEP ON OUT (MCA) | 341461 MARIO JARVIS: 50 YEARS OF BLUEGRASS HITS (SONY) | 311373 LENA HORNE THE LADY AND HER MUSIC (GEM) |
| 343020* THE BEST OF VAUGHN MONROE (MCA) | 340760 STEVIE NICKS ROCK A LITTLE (GEM) | 338558 DAN BEALLS WON'T BE BLUE ANOTHER (SONY) | 336339 BELLAMY BROTHERS HOWARD & DAVID (MCA) | 336396 BILLY JOEL GREATEST HITS VOLUME 1 & VOLUME 2 (COLUMBIA) | 311001 WILLIE NELSON'S GREATEST HITS AND MORE (THEY WILL BE!) (COLUMBIA) |
| 343061* THE EVERLY BROTHERS BORN YESTERDAY (MERCURY) | 340745 KENNY ROGERS SHORT STORIES (LIBERTY) | 338475 CHARLY McCLAIN BIGGEST HITS (EPIC) | 336222* DIRE STRAITS Brothers In Arms (WARNER BROS.) | 336388 HANK WILLIAMS 39/6382 (GEM) 40 GREATEST HITS (GEM) | 310219 JOHNNY MATHEIS 39/021 SILVER ANNIVERSARY ALBUM (COLUMBIA) |
| 343038* MORE OF THE BEST OF EXILE (MCA/VERVO) | 340729 BARBARA MANDRELL GET TO THE HEART (MCA) | 338350 THE FORESTER SISTERS (WARNER BROS.) | 335935 ROSANNE CASH Rhythm And Romance (COLUMBIA) | 335877* BEST OF THE 39/5871 (MCA) MILLS BROTHERS (MCA) | 246272 SUPREMES 39/6275 (MOTOWN) |
| 343012 TANYA TUCKER GIRLS LIKE ME (CAPITOL) | 340497 ELTON JOHN ICE ON FIRE (DECCA) | 338319 JOHN CONLEE Greatest Hits Vol. 2 (MCA) | 335885 THE STATLERS Partners In Rhytm (MERCURY) | 334607 THE CARPENTERS YESTERDAY ONCE MORE (A&R) | 224329 PERCY FAITH'S ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA) |
| 342972 EMMYLOU HARRIS THIRTEEN (WARNER BROS.) | 340463 THE BEST OF FRANK SINATRA (CAPITOL) | 338301 GEORGE STRAIT Something Special (MCA) | 335828 T.G. SHEPPARD Livin' On The Edge (COLUMBIA) | 329813 DAVID ALLAN COE FOR THE RECORD THE BEST OF HIS HITS (A&R) | 223131 TONY BENNETT ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA) |
| 342881 CHARLY McCLAIN WHEN LOVE IS RIGHT (EPIC) | 340430 Vince Giordano's Neighborhoods DIGITAL BIG BAND HITS OF THE 20'S & 30'S (EPIC) | 338251* BEST OF PATTI LABELLE (EPIC) | 335778 HANK WILLIAMS JR. FIVE-O (WARNER BROS./CBS) | 329649 MICKEY GILLEY Ten Years Of Hits (EPIC) | 221937 RAY PRICE'S ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA) |
| 342873 MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHY TONIGHT WE RIDE (WARNER BROS.) | 340398* SIMPLE MINDS Once Upon A Time (MCA) | 338061 RAY STEVENS I Have Returned (MCA) | 335653 BARBARA MANDRELL'S GREATEST HITS (MCA) | 324053 OLDSIEBUT GOODIES FROM THE RADIO (LARGE) | 212654 BOB DYLAN'S Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 (COLUMBIA) |
| 342782 JACKSON BROWNE Lives In The Balance (EPIC) | 340109 CONWAY TWITTY Chasin' Rainbows (WARNER BROS.) | 338012 LEE GREENWOOD STREAMLINE (MCA) | 335638 THE BROADWAY COLLECTION BARRY MANILLOW 20 CLASSIC HITS (SONY) | 322164 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (MCA) | 338608 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK SWEET DREAMS (MCA) |

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343236. #1 album and smash *Working With A Net Where Does Love Go*; others.

345900. Top 10 album includes *Juliet, What Are You Doing In My Dream*; many more.

342287. Top 10 album and hit *I Had A Beautiful Time*; plus *Mama's Prayer*; many more.

345231. "A real treat!"—Cashbox. Hit *Even Cowgirls Get The Blues*; many more.

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
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SADE
PROMISE | 340158
HANK WILLIAMS, JR.
GREATEST HITS Vol. 2 | 340018
JIMMY BUFFETT
Last Mango In Paris | 321380
Barbra Streisand's
Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 | 339200
STEVE WONDER
In Square Circle | 338400
JOHN COUGAR BELLECAMP
SCARECROW |
| 334094
THE BEST OF
REBA McENTIRE | 331587
WILLIE NELSON
Family Bible | 328658
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1100 Bel Air Place | 325233
LIBERACE
LIVE WITH THE
AMERICAN VARIETY | 335911
JIMMY BUFFETT'S
GREATEST HITS: SONGS
YOU KNOW BY HEART | 309633
GEORGE JONES AND
TAMMY WYNETTE
ENCORE |
| 333807
MERLE HAGGARD
KERN RIVER | 331249
RAY STEVENS
"THE THINGS HE'S
RAY STEVENS" | 328609
JUICE NEWTON
GREATEST HITS | 324764
RAY CONNIFF'S
GREATEST HITS | 321349
CRYSTAL GAYLE
Greatest Hits | 305672
ANNE MURRAY'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 333708
THE KENDALLS
Two Heart Harmony | 331157
ANNE MURRAY
HEART OVER MIND | 328559
MUSICAL MEMORIES
WITH LAWRENCE WELK | 324418
MADONNA | 321307
AIR SUPPLY
GREATEST HITS | 302281
The Very Best of LORETTA
LYNN AND CONWAY TITTY |
| 333625
EMMYLOU HARRIS—THE
BALLAD OF SALLY ROSE | 330902*
WHAM
MAKE IT BIG | 328435
MUSIC FROM THE MOVIE
PURPLE RAIN PRINCE
AND THE REVOLUTION | 324327
JOHN CONLEE'S
GREATEST HITS | 321067
CHARLIE DANIELS BAND
A DECADE OF HITS | 300962
STATLER BROTHERS
RIDES AGAIN, Vol. II |
| 333344
WILLIE NELSON
ME AND PAUL | 330738
PROFILES II:
THE BEST OF
EMMYLOU HARRIS | 328302*
TINA TURNER
PRIVATE DANCER | 323774
KENNY ROGERS
20 Greatest Hits | 319541
ELTON JOHN'S
GREATEST HITS | 291302
JAMES TAYLOR'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 333286
PHIL COLLINS
No Jacket Required | 330720
JOHN ANDERSON
GREATEST HITS | 328237
RAY CHARLES
FRIENDSHIP | 323428
MANTOVANI'S
GOLDEN HITS | 319269
JOHNNY PAYCHECK
BIGGEST HITS | 288951
LARRY GATLIN & THE
GATLIN BROTHERS BAND
GREATEST HITS |
| 332932
SADE
DIAMOND LIFE | 330704
GEORGE STRAIT
DOES FORT WORTH
EVER CROSS YOUR MIND | 327544
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ATLANTA BLUE | 323410
JOHNNY LEE
GREATEST HITS | 319210
JOHNNY CASH
BIGGEST HITS | 287003
EAGLES 1971-1975
GREATEST HITS |
| 331934*
THE BEST OF
BILL COSBY | 329672
MERLE HAGGARD
HIS EPIC HITS | 327296
HANK WILLIAMS, JR.
MAJOR MOVES | 323261
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Can't Slow Down | 319194
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GREATEST HITS | 286740
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GREATEST HITS |
| 331850
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WAVE 50 YEARS | 329631
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Major Release | 323139
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HAMBURG/ROCK
HIS GREATEST HITS | 319178
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BIGGEST HITS | 281248
LORETTA LYNN'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 331819
THE BEST OF
DOTTIE WEST | 329581*
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SUDDENLY | 327171
ROY ROGERS | 322867
LACY J. DALTON
GREATEST HITS | 318733
MELISSA MANCHESTER'S
GREATEST HITS | 281248
LORETTA LYNN'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 331645
MADONNA
LIKE A VIRGIN | 329235
BARBARA MANRILL,
LEE GREENWOOD—
MEANT FOR EACH OTHER | 326629
Bruce Springsteen
Born In The U.S.A. | 322198
LARRY GATLIN & THE
GATLIN BROTHERS BAND
GREATEST HITS, Vol. 2 | 318394
MOE BANDY
GREATEST HITS | 281248
LORETTA LYNN'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 331801
THE BEST OF
MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHY | 328906
EXILE
KENTUCKY HEARTS | 325266
BEST OF
DON WILLIAMS
VOLUME 1 | 322008
LINDA RONSTADT & THE
NELSON RIDDLE ORCHESTRA
WHAT'S NEW | 318386
MARTY ROBBINS
BIGGEST HITS | 281248
LORETTA LYNN'S
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Yes, you're invited to go on a shopping spree and get 11 albums for only a penny! Just mail the application together with check or money order for \$1.86 as payment (that's 1¢ for your first 11 selections, plus \$1.85 for shipping and handling). In exchange, you simply agree to buy 8 more tapes or records (at regular Club prices) in the next three years—and you may cancel membership anytime after doing so.

How the Club operates: every four weeks (13 times a year) you'll receive the Club's music magazine, which describes the Selection of the Month for each musical interest...plus hundreds of alternates from every field of music. In addition, up to six times a year you may receive offers of Special Selections, usually at a discount off regular Club prices, for a total of up to 19 buying opportunities.

If you wish to receive the Selection of the Month or the Special Selection, you need do nothing—it will be shipped automatically. If you prefer an alternate selection, or none at all, simply fill in the response card always provided and mail it by the date specified.

You will always have at least 10 days to make your decision. If you ever receive any Selection without having had at least 10 days to decide, you may return it at our expense.

The tapes and records you order during your membership will be billed at regular Club prices, which currently are \$7.98 to \$9.98—plus shipping and handling. (Multi-unit sets, special and classical 783/786

selections may be somewhat higher.) And if you continue as a member after completing your enrollment agreement, you'll be eligible for our "buy one-get one free" money-saving bonus plan.

CDs also available to Club members. Each issue of the music magazine contains a wide selection of the latest hits and old favorites on Compact Discs—which you may order as a Club member, and these purchases also count toward fulfillment of your membership obligation.

10-Day Free Trial: we'll send details of the Club's operation with your introductory shipment. If you are not satisfied for any reason whatsoever, just return everything within 10 days for a full refund and you will have no further obligation. So act now!

ORDER YOUR FIRST SELECTION NOW AT A BIG DISCOUNT—AND HAVE LESS TO BUY LATER!

You may also choose your first selection right now and we'll give it to you at a substantial discount off regular Club prices. What's more, this discount purchase immediately reduces your membership obligation—you then need buy just 7 more selections (instead of 8) in the next three years. See application for complete details of this discount offer—and our special *Free Bonus Album Offer!*

If the application is missing please write to Columbia Record & Tape Club, Dept. TSP/BJ, Terre Haute, Ind. 47811

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|--|--|
| 318089
MICHAEL JACKSON
THRILLER | 252387
THE BEST OF
NAT KING COLE |
| 317990
MERLE HAGGARD &
WILLIE NELSON
RANCHO AND LEFTY | 249953
TANYA TUCKER'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 317768
EAGLES GREATEST
HITS - VOLUME 2 | 246868
JIM CROCE
GREATEST HITS |
| 317149
DAN FOGELBERG
GREATEST HITS | 243642
LORETTA LYNN'S
Greatest Hits, vol. 2 |
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LIONEL RICHIE | 236885
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SINGLES 1969-1973 |
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GREATEST HITS | 219477
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Greatest Hits |
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MEL TILLIS
GREATEST HITS | 138588
BOB DYLAN'S
GREATEST HITS |
| 315358
GENE AUTRY | 187088*
Barbra Streisand's
GREATEST HITS |
| 315341
LEFTY FRIZZELL | 312314
CHICAGO'S
Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 |
| 314922
The Golden Hits Of
The Everly Brothers | 319558
ELTON JOHN'S
Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 |
| 314443
NEIL DIAMOND
12 GREATEST HITS, vol. 1 | 338087
SOUTHERN
PACIFIC |
| 313734
WILLIE NELSON
ALWAYS ON MY MIND | 343210*
FALCO 3 |
| 313239
KENNY ROGERS AND
DOTTIE WEST—CLASSICS | 323337
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK
THE BIG CHILL |
| 311738
BEST OF THE
DOOBIE BROTHERS
Vol. 1 | 342873
MICHAEL MARTIN
MURPHY
TODAY WE LIVE |
| 310235
The Oak Ridge Boys
Greatest Hits | 343897*
THE MARSH BROTHERS
BAND—THE BOYS ARE
BACK IN TOWN |

* Available on records and cassettes only

FOR ~~CMSA~~ MEMBERS ONLY

Hank Williams: The First Recordings

A new album presenting 12 of Hank Williams' earliest recordings, never before available, has just been produced by the Country Music Foundation. These were recorded around 1946 as simple demonstration records, featuring just Hank and his guitar, used to tempt other singers and producers to record the songs Hank had written.



This album is worth having just for its historical significance, but fans of stars like Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, who recorded before the days of amplified instruments and back-up bands, will love this record for its music: songs with simple, but gripping lyrics and sentiment; strong, unadorned rhythm guitar; and a clear powerful country voice—all by Hank Williams.

Hank Williams: The First Recordings is available on LPs or cassettes. The regular price is \$8.98, but a special price of \$6.98 for CMSA members has been arranged. Order directly with your check payable to the Country Music Foundation. Add \$.95 postage. Send to Kyle Young, Country Music Foundation, 4 Music Square East, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

Buried Treasures Essential Collector

Special members' discounts of \$2.00 off per album (\$4.00 off for the Ralph Stanley set) are in effect for albums in this issue's Buried Treasures on page 66 and Essential Collector on page 67. Follow ordering instructions on page 67 except figure your cost after members' discount.

Continuing Specials

Members are buying very heavily from the selection of 17 albums presented in Buried Treasures on page 66 of the July/August *Country Music*. If you missed these, members' discount of \$2.00 per album are still in effect. Follow ordering instructions on page 67 of that issue but deduct \$2.00 per album.

Ray Price Preview

Ray Price fans can celebrate an important re-issue, *The Honky Tonk Years*, from Rounder Records which will be reviewed in the next issue. This album covers 1951 to 1953, before Ray Price's giant hits came. It's hard-core honky tonk in the classic Hank Williams style. Ray played in Hank's band, so he got to learn from his idol close up, and this album shows what a good student he was. Included is "I'll Be There," Ray's biggest hit until "Crazy Arms" in 1956, plus "Who Stole That Train," "The Way You've Treated Me," "Slowly Dying," "Move On In and Stay," "The Wrong Side of Town," "The Road of No Return," "I Made a Mistake," "You Never Will Be True," "Wasted Words," "I Don't Want This on my Conscience," "I Can't Go Home Like This," "Cold Shoulder," and "Fallin,' Fallin,' Fallin'."

This album has a special members' price of \$7.98, the regular price is \$9.98. Send your check to Country Music Society of America, Dept. 910, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York, 10173. Add \$.95 for postage.

If You Are Not a Member: You may join and order from this page at the same time at member's prices. Just include a separate check for \$12 (one-year's dues, includes an additional year's subscription to *Country Music*) payable to Country Music Society of America and follow member's ordering procedure above.

MEMBERS POLL SEPTEMBER 1986

VOTE

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out the Members Poll. We forward the results of the Polls to those involved in the business of country music who are interested in what fans are thinking and doing, and we publish the results.

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

- Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month?
 - Yes No
 - How many records? _____ How many cassettes? _____
- Which ones did you like best? List performer and album title.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

- To vote, list the numbers of your top 5 favorites from the Top 25, page 68.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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- Did you or anyone in your household buy any videocassette tapes in the last month? Yes No

How many blank video cassettes? _____

How many pre-recorded video cassettes? _____

- Check any one of the following activities you or anyone in your household does:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend car races | <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable gardening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using video camera | <input type="checkbox"/> Flower gardening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do-it-yourself home repairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Needlecrafts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do-it-yourself car repairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend country music shows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating | <input type="checkbox"/> Camping |

- Check the appropriate amount of the combined annual income of everyone in your household. Be sure to include all salaries, wages, interest, rent and profits from business or farming.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$15,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 to \$34,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 to \$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000 to \$39,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 to \$49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 to \$29,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 or more |

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, fill in your Membership Number _____.

If you are not a member, but want to join and vote immediately, fill out the poll, enclose your check for \$12 for one-year CMSA Membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too.)

Fill out poll and mail to: September Poll, *Country Music*, 342 Madison Ave., Suite 2118 New York, New York 10173.

People

and the great **Jean Shepard**. I'm proud of these children of Oklahoma. I'm proud of the honesty and homespun humor of the late **Will Rogers**, and I am so proud of his hometown, Claremore, Oklahoma.

Nowadays Oklahoma is third in the Book of Hazel. North Carolina is my place of birthing, so it's Number One, and Tennessee is my adopted home and comes in a close second. Oklahoma, a state after my own heart, is for sure and certain Number Three, and that ain't bad! Three out of 50! Not bad at all. Why am I so fired up right now about Oklahoma and Claremore? Rogers State College in Claremore is teaching a two-year, fully accredited course called *The Hank Thompson School of Country and Western Music*. Aren't you proud to be country! The great **Hank Thompson**, who lives in nearby Tulsa, drops by and checks out the students, talks with them as mentor and friend, answers questions and gives advice whenever the need arises. On staff are the pioneering guitarist, **Eldon Shamblin**, and **Leon McAuliffe**, steel guitarist extraordinaire, who teaches a class simply titled "The Music Industry." Both these gentlemen will be remembered as band members of the late **Bob Wills' Texas Playboys**. There are also classes on performing, songwriting, appearance, showmanship, singing, instrumentation—the whole gamut. They start raw and teach all the basics from the ground up. The idea is once students complete the two year course they are ready for Nashville. Question is, will we be ready for them? Won't **Bob Kirsch** at Welk Music and **Buddy Killen** at Tree Publishing faint dead away when a 20-year-old songwriter makes his or her appointment on time, hands over a tape plus typed, double-spaced lyrics, and to top it all off, has a song on the tape with every "t" crossed and every "i" dotted and the potential of being a hit without songpluggers **Doyle Brown** or **Dan Wilson** putting in many man hours of headaches wondering what to do with this person! Won't **Jimmy Bowen** and **Rick Blackburn**, who head up MCA and CBS respectively, need a vacation when a cutesy chick bounces in, sings her heart out like a young **Patsy Cline**, and also knows how to read a contract? And won't **Chet Atkins** and **Jerry Reed** want to hang up their proverbial guitars when some 21-year-old shorthaired Okie removes his prized guitar from its case and shyly picks any tune they ask for and anything else . . . and this is the lad's first trip to Music City. When these prepared and ready hillbillies hit town, it's gonna turn some heads and break

some hearts. It's called show biz, and we will survive.

Harlan Howard and **Curley Putman** have written enough hits for two lifetimes and made enough money for three. Knowing these two songwriting giants so well, I'd might' nigh bank on it . . . they'll wipe the eraser shavings from their hands as they reach out those well-worn hit writing fingers and say, "Welcome. Make yourself at home." And that's what makes me make Music City home.

TANYA TUCKER'S YO YO CAREER IS UP AND AT 'EM AGAIN

With a Top Ten single, "One Love at a Time," **Tanya Tucker**, whose career had swooped to an all time lull, seems to have bounced back. Looks like another case of the right song at the right time. "Write" on, I say, Tanya. Recently, on *Nashville Now*, the Texas-born songstress allowed as how everything was onward and upward with no looking back.

The tabloids kept her face in print during her tempestuous romance with **Glen Campbell**, which was probably a blessing in disguise. How could you forget Tanya? Her face was staring at you every week just above your eggs, bacon and even toilet tissue at the grocery checkout. And you either hated her or loved her, depending on whose side you were on. Once the romance fizzled, Tanya focused her sights once again on the



Tanya—back in Nashville and back on the charts once again.

sidewalks of Nashville, where all her real friends were all the time. She's writing these days with some of the best, and she's got a good album produced by **Jerry Crutchfield** that anyone would boast about. There's no reason that Tanya Tucker can't be the girl most likely to live once again on the charts and in our hearts.

By the way, the writers of Tanya's hit deserve mention here, **Paul Davis** and my good friend, **Paul Overstreet**. I'm not acquainted with Davis, but Overstreet is one of mine. He's dined from my table and told me some secrets. From Mississippi, Paul Overstreet is a good guy. His recent marriage and baby that's about five months old by now fit him like something a mother would dream of. His wife is not to be sneezed at either . . . a makeup artist and very good at it, too.

KNOWING AROUND

Johnny Cash is starting a radio show titled *Johnny Cash's American Folklore*. Folklore is best described as truths that were told so long ago that they sound like lies today . . . from the Book of Hazel. Not far from the truth.

Garrison Keillor, renowned for his book *Lake Wobegon Days*, his radio show *A Prairie Home Companion* and his new TV show on PBS by the same name, sneaked into Music City to make phonograph records with the great **Chet Atkins**. **Johnny Gimble** filled in on fiddle. While Johnny was in town for the session, he and Chet performed on *Nashville Now*, where Chet not only played guitar but also twin-fiddled with Gimble. It was a treat, friends and neighbors. You know, if we don't watch out, we're liable to forget that **Chester Atkins** came from East Tennessee with **Mother Maybelle Carter** and **The Carter Sisters** playing the fiddle.

Hank Thompson cut a duet with **George Strait**, doing "A Six Pack to Go," one of Thompson's jewels that he penned from his heart.

The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band celebrated 20 years in show biz in Denver recently. Being cutesy, they titled the do "Twenty Years of Dirt: A Reunion Concert." Joining in for the songs and fun were **John Denver**, (why, it was in the town named for him), **Ricky Skaggs**, **Rosanne Cash**, **Rodney Crowell**, **Jerry Jeff Walker**, **Doc Watson** and **Nicolette Larson**.

True Value Hardware Stores and **Marlboro Cigarettes** will sponsor country music talent contests this year.

Last but not least, eye saw **Marty Haggard** at the Taco Bell. ■

For 35 years the name Ralph Emery has been synonymous with country music. First as a disk jockey for WSM, home of the Opry, then as a television personality, Ralph Emery has been one of the most visible supporters of country music. He dropped out of radio briefly in the early 1960's to do "Hello, Fool," an answer song to Willie Nelson's "Hello, Walls," but quickly returned to what he loved best. As the host of The Nashville Network's highly rated Nashville Now live show, Emery spends many hours chatting with the top names in Music City; his morning show on WSMV-TV is one of the highest-rated morning shows in the country.

Running down Emery wasn't easy, but we eventually cornered him in his airy offices near the Opryland complex. The walls are lined with photographs, mementoes and awards of 35 years in country music. With a little prompting, he agreed to answer 20 Questions:

1

What was it like being an all-night disk jockey in the early days of country music?

Well, at WSM it probably wasn't as boring as it would be at other stations, because I had an open-door policy which helped to pass the time. People could wander in off the street and watch, or the artists could come in all night, and they did. Plus, during the era I went there, WSM was a very powerful force, because our artists couldn't get on nationwide television. In those days it was almost unheard of for a country singer to get on a nationwide television show . . . So we had the advantage of having most of the major stars in country music drop in all the time. I met most of the big names when they were new.

2

Those must have been exciting times. . .

Well, I must tell you, there were great nights and there were terrible nights. I remember playing an album and then going and looking out the win-

20 Questions with RALPH EMERY



By Michael Bane

dow and there'd be nothing moving. I remember thinking, "Gosh, it's always two o'clock in the morning." There were wonderful nights when Marty Robbins would come up and play the piano all night and take requests. He knew bits and pieces of almost every song he'd ever heard. He might not know all of it, but he could sing a little of it.

3

Who else was fun to have on? Roger Miller. Gosh . . . Doyle Wilburn practically lived up there; so did Charlie Louvin. They came by a lot. Sonny James was a big act in those days, and he stopped in a lot.

4

Did they ever haul up new acts and tell you, "Listen, this guy's going to be famous next week?"

Willie Nelson told me an interesting story one time. I gained a reputation as being kind of tough as an interviewer—some people called me a son of a bitch. But mainly . . . I would never ask anybody about their divorce, but if you told me you had done something great, then, rather than let you just hype me, I'd bore in and say, "Really? How'd you do that? Explain that." If you really did it, you had nothing to worry about. Anyway, years later, Willie told me he brought his

first record up to me, when he was Hugh Nelson and the Little Men, or something like that. It was "Family Bible." I said, "Was I nice to you?" He said, "Yeah, you were very nice to me, but you didn't play my record." He said, "I've hated you ever since." Tammy Wynette came by when she was new . . .

5

You worked for a while with Tex Ritter?

Right. I had quit for a year, and I came back at the beginning of 1966 with Tex as co-host . . . Work on the road was mainly a weekend business, so he made a deal with WSM that when he wasn't working, he came and sat with me all night and we played records together. We had great times. He was wonderful.

6

It must have been interesting with you as the young Turk and him as the established, older star?

I didn't think it would work when it was first proposed to me. I didn't know how we would interact. As it turned out, he became a father figure to me. On the air, I was the antagonist. I decided to let him wear the white hat on the radio and I'd wear the black hat. I'd get on his case about those movie guns that shoot 45 times without reloading, all the ridiculous stuff you saw in cowboy pictures . . . I always had a theory. I hate to bore people. There in the middle of the night, if I'm interviewing you and everything is just wonderful, people will go to sleep.

7

Tell us a little about your short-term recording career. It's largely unforgettable. I had one hit—the first record I ever cut was a hit, and I said, "Hey, there's nothing to this! I'll cut another record." It went to Number Four in *Billboard* and sold about 125,000 records, which was a lot of records back then. It was 1961. Joe Allison called me from California one day and asked me if I'd like to do a record at Liberty. I said,

why not? I think I was on my tractor, out bushhogging, when the call came . . . The first song he came up with was some song about *drugs*, even back in 1961. He thought it would be pretty good, but I didn't like it. In the meantime, I came out of the Opry, when I was an announcer those days, and I saw Hank Cochran in the alley with a little man named Coleman, I think. He had a piece of paper with the lyrics to a song called "Hello, Fool," the answer to "Hello, Walls." I loved the idea so much I went out, got some musicians and did a demo. I don't guess they do answer records any more. I remember one night Faron Young asked me, "Why did you call me a fool?"

8

You cut a Kristofferson song early on?

I did record one song I thought was significant. It was one of the first cuts Kris Kristofferson ever got in this town, called "Late Night Morning Sidewalk." It was the forerunner to "Sunday Morning Coming Down." The songs were quite similar. But I couldn't sing. Still can't.

9

That's a heck of an admission.

One day I went into Fred Carter, who was my A&R man. See, I thought he would argue with me. I said, "Fred, I want to sing. All my friends sing. I'm tired of doing recitations. Let me sing." He said, "Okay." I'm thinking, no argument. What is this? And I was so insecure that we got to the session, and I said, "I can't sing in front of these guys." Here are all the finest musicians in Nashville, and I am not willing to be embarrassed by singing in front of them. I said, "Fred. I can't do it." He said, "We'll cut tracks." So we cut tracks, and I went back in with Fred and an engineer. Then I said, "Fred, come here. I can't sing in front of this guy. He'll think who is that singer? He's terrible." He said I had to, so I said, "Okay, turn the lights down." So I tried to get this guy out of my mind by having all the studio lights out

except the one on the music stand, where I had the words. I sang tracks. I could play you the record, but I won't. It was terrible . . . I've never taken my recording career seriously. Like my golf, I'd certainly hate to make a living with it.

10

You went back to recording recently, though, didn't you?

Well, a couple of years back I recorded an album of Christmas songs with Shotgun Red, who's a puppet. See, I can get away with it singing with Red. I'm not *supposed* to be good there—we're just having a good time.

11

When was the first time you did live television?

The very first time? 1955, I guess. I did live studio wrestling as a substitute commentator.

12

An auspicious start . . .

Well, also because of "Hello, Fool," I did Red Foley's show in Springfield, Missouri. Significantly, it was his last show . . . They decided for me to do a commercial with Joe Slattery, who's a great announcer. They gave me the worst line possible. Slattery said, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." And I had to say, "A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked." No retakes, either.

13

You've been doing your morning show since 1963, and now you're doing daily live television on *The Nashville Network*. What is it that you find so appealing about live television?

Well, it's over quickly. You've got to remember that I did a lot of long radio shifts, from 10 at night until five in the morning. You do an hour of television and go home, that's a damn sight better. Playing records on a long record show, you have to really gear your mind to handle it. Trying to be up all the time, to be entertaining and cheerful and all those things for seven hours a night, five

nights a week, is hard. Also, I could see that television had a far greater impact than radio.

14

Was it tough to shift from radio to television?

Well, I sort of had to learn on the job, because I was really green when I started.

15

You also started television right about the time the country music industry began to change.

You're right. I always pegged 1966 as a key year. It was the year three major stars broke loose—Merle Haggard, who had some success in '65, but really broke loose in 1966; Charley Pride was discovered and Tammy Wynette broke loose as well. It seemed to be a pivotal year.

16

List for me all the stuff you're doing now.

Oh, I don't do much. I do two daily 90-minute television shows live. One from 5:30 A.M. to 7 A.M., we wake Nashville up. We have the highest rated locally produced television show in America . . . The other show is *Nashville Now*, and we're into our fourth year. Then I do a daily syndicated radio show, featuring a different star every week. The other things are an occasional booking on the road.

17

On *Nashville Now*, what's it like playing second fiddle to a puppet like Shotgun Red?

I must tell you that I thoroughly enjoy working with Shotgun Red. I get the biggest kick out of working with him. He's delightful. I brought him to the show. I'd met him about a year before the show went on the air, and I pigeonholed him in the back of my mind for future projects . . . One thing I knew he would do for us would be to appeal to very small children, and it's worked. Also, if a small child is watching the television set, he's going to command it, because he raises too much Cain if you change chan-

nels. It's worked—little kids call in and tell him they love him.

18

He's taken on a life of his own, I guess—I mean, here we are, two adults, talking about a puppet like he, it, was real . . .

Well, he is that real to me. A guy called me one night on the phones and said, "Hey, who is Shotgun Red?" I said, "Let me tell you something. Shotgun Red is as real to me as any person on this show." And he is. I forget Steve Hall, the puppeteer, is down there under my desk. Red becomes a person to me. I haven't figured out several things about Red. I sometimes treat him as a child, and yet he's a grizzled looking old cowboy. People say, how old is he? I have no idea how old he is. Steve and I have talked about that.

19

Has Steve Hall ever been on the show?

We agreed that Steve would never be shown; we'd never show people who Shotgun Red's voice belonged to. Because that would be like telling children there was no Santa Claus. We're going to record again. Tom T. Hall has written five songs for a children's album, and Tom's going to appear on the album with us.

20

So what's your perspective on today's country music?

Well, I've always said there's two things I won't argue with you, because I can't change your mind. One is the Bible; the other is country music. Everybody has their own concept of what country music is and what it encompasses . . . For a while there it disturbed me that there were certain stations, particularly in metropolitan areas, that played a mixed bag of Eagles and Kenny Rogers who wouldn't touch Moe Bandy. I don't know what they do with George Strait . . . You asked me if I thought country music was well. I think it is. I'm not ready to bury it six feet under. ■

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

A Country Boy Has Survived

Hank Jr. is laughing a lot these days, and he deserves to. His loyal fans, top album sales and sold out concerts have put him in a very good position. Today he even has time to play...with his guns.

by Michael Bane

*If the sun don't shine this morning,
People, I have had a good time . . .*
—HANK WILLIAMS JR.

There's just a hint of gray in the beard now, not so you'd notice if you didn't look close. The laugh, though, is still the same, a deep, rich sound that touches on both the frequent pain of being on the bottom and the sometimes absurdity of being on the top.

Hank Williams Jr. laughs a lot these days. As well he should. The scuttlebutt in Music City is that, when it comes to dollars and cents, the country music business can be summed up in three short names—Willie, Alabama and Hank. Starting with *Family Tradition* in 1977, Hank Williams Jr. has sold a staggering 12 million records, rapidly gaining on Alabama's 18 million. Every album he's released since then has gone either gold—half a million sales—or platinum—a million in sales. At one point, Hank Jr. had more albums on the charts than any other act except Elvis Presley. Hank Jr. concerts are guaranteed riotous sell-outs, and his single releases, from honky tonk laments to Fats Waller, routinely go to Number One. He is off-beat, outrageous, iconoclastic, loved by fans and critics and, without a doubt, the finest male vocalist in country music.

So why don't he get no respect?

Kansas, says Hank Jr. We're going to Kansas.

I nod agreeably and wonder whether I should take my little dog Toto. We are going to Kansas, Hank Jr. and I, in search of a rare post-Civil War Gatlin Gun, the multi-barrelled revolving weapon that was the direct predecessor of the modern machinegun. He's gotten wind of this rare "camel" Gatlin—so called because the British supposedly mounted them on the backs of camels for their African campaigns—in the wilds of Brewster, Kansas. Brewster has a population of 300 on a *real good day*; our arrival promises to be an event.

The new plane is a tasteful beige, with the Hank Williams Jr. logo, a black Prussian eagle, painted on the tail. A Cessna Citation II jet, it's good for about 500 miles per hour, a far cry from long days in the back of a Silver Eagle bus.

"I figure it's like this," Hank Jr. says. "I've been on the road for what, 31 years, or something like that. I've had a jet for about two years. I've still got 29 years to go to break even."

It's hard to get a handle on Hank Jr., because he steadfastly refuses to act the way people expect him to act. When it became clear that he was destined to stay in Nashville and die like his famous daddy, Hank moved to Alabama and lived to beat the Williams curse. When the prevailing wisdom demanded coun-

try, Hank Jr. played rock. When they wanted rock, he played blues. If they insisted on blues, he played country. When the country music world had him comfortably placed in Alabama, Hank moved back to Tennessee. He records duets with rockers like Huey Lewis and the News and Tom Petty, plays his daddy's songs on an acoustic guitar in concert and does a killer-cover-version of Cyndi Lauper's "Money Changes Everything." In his concerts down south, girls strip off their tops and throw various and sundry unmentionables on stage. He likes to close his concerts standing on top of the piano shooting off a Winchester lever action rifle filled with blanks. In a business where, these days, *The Wall Street Journal* is required reading and even hillbillies eat sushi, I find this all very heartening. I mean, among all the bickering, all the infighting and the occasional great record that comes out of Nashville, there is at least one guy who still knows how to have a good time.

The sky is lowering over Kansas as we come blasting in from the south to the airport at Goodland, about 30 miles from Brewster. Hank Jr. and I share the little jet with Hume Parks, president of the Tennessee Antique Arms Association, authority on Civil War weaponry and one of Hank's boyhood friends. On the way north and west, we have spent the time like kids going to a garage sale,

Cover photo by Don Putnam





Above, the gun that Hank bought. The antique Gatlin is one of four left in the United States. It is currently being restored. At left, Hank gets in some target practice. Right, Hank and pilot Larry Smith in front of Hank's Cessna II.



COURTESY, CESSNA CORPORATION



The house that Hank built. Far away from the maddening crowd.

sifting through the arcane world of century-old canony. I am once again struck by the fact that Hank is more, much more, than *just* a country singer. He is, for example, an expert on the Civil War and can discuss battles, tactics and weaponry with some authority. Tossed on the empty seat in the little executive jet's cabin, along with a sack of fast food burgers and the ever present custom .45 automatic—yes, folks, there *are* things about the road that no one ever talks about—are books detailing an insider's view of the Mafia and a current history of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Despite the near-legendary, rowdy reputation, Hank Jr. remains a thoughtful observer of current events. More than a few of those events end up in Hank Williams Jr. songs.

We're met at the little airport by Randall Hileman, a Kansas cowboy in dusty



Levis and working boots, who loads us into an equally dusty Ford Bronco for the 30-minute trip to Brewster, near the Colorado border. We talk hard times in the farm belt—and the times are very hard—then Hileman lovingly describes his restoration of the antique Gatlin, one of four left in the United States. He's been offered a lot of money for the gun—he quotes a figure that causes us all to flinch a bit—but he wants Hank Williams Jr. to have it. These dusty wheatfields with their “Jesus is Coming Soon” billboards are as much a part of Hank Country as the deep green woods of Tennessee. Despite—or maybe because of—all the roller coaster years since that first appearance on stage in Swainsboro, Georgia, 29 years ago, Hank Jr. still has a solid bond with the working man, who knows that nothing, *nothing*, is *ever* free.

Among his souvenirs, Hileman is saying, is a rare revolving cannon, made even more rare by the fact that he has authentication proving it was the gun used by the Army on the Indians at Wounded Knee. Hank Jr. flares momentarily.

“I don't think I'd want to own that,” Hank says emphatically.

Brewster, Kansas, is a few dozen houses and a few trees, breaking up the flat tableland of Kansas wheat. The streets are blacktop covered with gravel, and the people are too proud to stare. Hileman's house sits at the end of the main road, on the edge of the Ocean of Wheat. We go through a machine shop cluttered with the tools of a weapons restorer's trade to the little paneled den, where the “camel” Gatlin rests on a polished brass and hardwood tripod. Hume takes one look at the little “big”

gun and nods his head, and Hank Jr. beams. When the restoration is finished in a couple of months, this particular Gatlin Gun, built by Colt in the early 1870's, will sit in Hank's new offices in Paris, Tennessee, a short bullet's flight from some of the bloodiest battlefields of the Civil War.

We stay for a while, but outside, the clouds are lowering. Serious weather is rolling in from the northwest, and we head back to Goodland just as the first drops of rain send muddy trails down the dusty windshield of the Bronco. We say our goodbyes, and the Cessna jet whispers into the sky, bound back for Nashville.

In the air, we talk about old friends and regale Hume with bizarre stories of the music business. Hank Jr. is calmer than I remember him from the old days, after he broke his head and face falling



Back to the business of music. Honk poses with fans and gets ready for his show in Tennessee. "I like to do things that

off that mountain, more poised now, a survivor surrounded by the casualties of battle. Each threshold, I think, has changed him—he has survived professional failure and grave physical ordeal, and now he's survived success as well. Sometimes, when he talks of some of country music's biggest stars now fallen on hard times, it's with a sense of awe, the same sense of awe as a soldier who's walked across a minefield and still has all his arms and legs. One of his biggest problems recently has been coping with his success, changing his organization around to accommodate record sales in the millions instead of the thousands or even hundreds of thousands. That prompted the move from Cullman, Alabama, to Paris, Tennessee—always his refuge in troubled times. It also prompted the exit of long-time manager James R. "J.R." Smith; the organization is now being run by Hank and close friend Merle Kilgore, co-author, among other things, of "Ring of Fire."

After a quick stop in Nashville to drop off Hume, Hank and I decide to head to Paris, Tennessee, a short hop in the Cessna. There's a pickup truck parked at the little Paris airport, and we head through the parched Tennessee landscape to the house made famous as "My party house . . . out in the woods. It's a long, long way from here to Hollywood."

I always figured if there was any house I could just up and move into, it would be the Paris house. It's a comfortable house, wood walls and beams, with high ceilings and skylights, cluttered enough to look lived in. The huge stone fireplace is flanked by elephant ivory, and there's an outsize water buffalo head mounted on the mantel. In fact, it's very much a man's house in the old sense of the word. There are trophies

from hunts around the world, photos of Africa, mementos, cowboy hats, records, cassette tapes, boots, videotapes, holsters, a couple of cameras, duck decoys, an autographed photo of Bear Bryant, fishing reels, shooting earmuffs, miscellaneous rifles, pistols and shotguns, equipment for reloading bullets, books, magazines and letters, a television set and stereo equipment. Leaning against one wall is a plaque from Warner Brothers for 12 gold or platinum albums. "I

"My fans get a little rambunctious sometimes, but they've sure done a lot for me."

keep meaning to put that up," says Hank. On another wall is the only other plaque in the great room, a small plaque honoring him for being nominated as Outstanding Handgunner of the Year in 1983.

For Hank, guns and hunting are the touchstones that keep him sane, a separate life away from the road. "How many performers are there who don't have anything but the road," he is fond of saying, "and what kind of shape are they in?" He is a meticulous hunter, and more and more has turned to hunting with handguns, a more strenuous, more demanding and, ultimately, I think, more honest way to hunt. The hunter is forced to get closer to the game, because even

in the hands of a capable shooter like Hank Jr., handguns are still a short-range proposition. No sitting in a tree and snuffing a deer in another county. Woodsmanship and stalking are the bywords. In the case of dangerous game—water buffalo in Africa, bear in Alaska—it gives the animals a golden opportunity to turn the tables on the hunter.

In the house in Paris, Tennessee, the music business seems remote, exactly what Hank intended. We talk about the new album, *Montana Cafe*, and the pressure of stardom.

"Do you want to ask me what country music is?" Hank says, laughing. "How about the BBC interview I just did," he continues, shifting into a Cockney accent, "where they wanted to know just exactly what *rowdy* meant."

We laugh and send out for Chinese food. The talk over dinner turns to risk-taking in the music business. More than any other artist, Hank Jr. thrives on risk.

"I like to do things that are different," he says simply. "Not the same old deal . . . I don't want to put out the same stuff that's on the radio that was causing that *relapse* in country music a couple of years ago. I just don't want to do that. I don't want to have that kind of sound. If it feels good to me and my audience, then I'd better record it for my audience and not worry about some prima donna program director somewhere. Because if you start writing songs for them, it's over."

The audience, he says, is smarter than the music business thinks.

"I write songs for *people*," he says, "and *people* like my songs . . . yeah, I like to have a little *pizzaz* in there—something to laugh about. Something to get people talking, hold their attention."



are different," he says.

His fans, I say, are probably the most fanatic fans in all of country music. Like an old Lynyrd Skynyrd southern rock audience.

"That's exactly it," Hank says. "They get a little rambunctious sometimes, but they've sure done a lot for me . . . my shows have been compared to Lynyrd Skynyrd's, and I'm proud of that."

We polish off the Chinese food and retire to the great room, in front of the stone fireplace.

"Twelve gold or platinum records," I say, and Hank Jr. starts laughing.

"Sure is different from sitting in Cullman, Alabama, with just a pick-up truck," says Hank. "That's since 1977, right?"

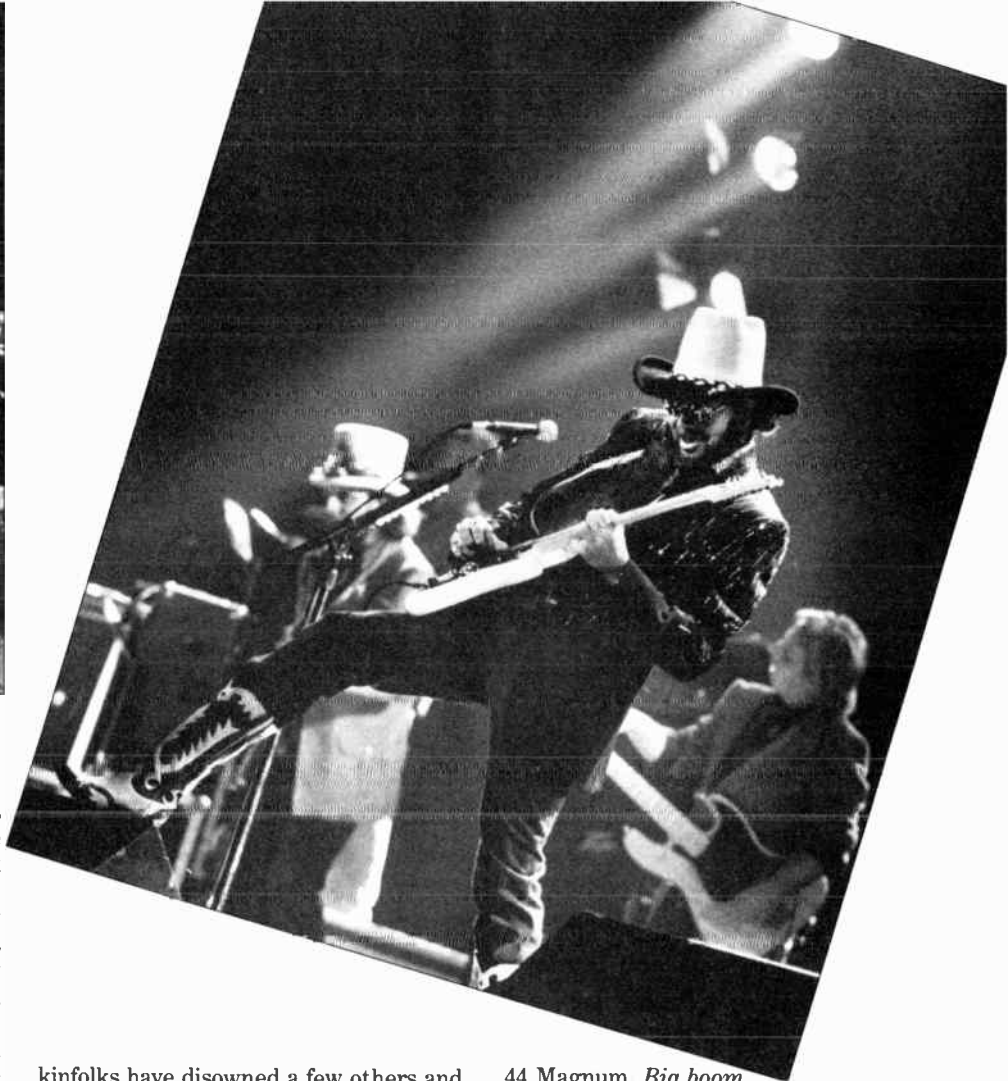
I agree—two albums after the legendary *Hank Williams Jr. and Friends*.

"Right. There was *One Night Stands* and . . . *The New South*," he says. "You know, when I look back on those, it was kind of hard to do well. I was still having operations and everything, and, of course, there were a lot of head things going on. I look back at those and it was a learning process. I had to learn how to sing all over again. I had to learn to be in public again, too."

"Twelve albums," I say.

"Yeah, I think I would have bet against that myself," Hank says. "I usually aim high, but gol-dang, to sit there broke all to hell, bones all broke up, everything wrecked—now this."

I remember sitting on the couch in the basement of the house in Cullman with Hank Jr. while he picked out a song on a Martin guitar. It was a new song, he said, not finished yet, but whether it was a hit or not, it was one he really liked. "Country music singers," Hank sang that night, "have always been a real close family. But lately some of my



kinfolks have disowned a few others and me . . ."

The evening passes quickly. We drink iced tea, eat homemade banana pudding and solve at least all the problems of Nashville, the world and most of the universe. It is interesting to note that even after all the years, all the success, all the records, all the brilliant songs, Hank Williams Jr.—the son of the Hank Williams—is still an outsider in Nashville. From my admittedly prejudiced viewpoint, country music awards are given to people who aren't fit to tune Hank's guitars. And, despite his acceptance of his role as outsider, I think he's both puzzled and pained by Nashville's pretending he simply doesn't exist.

"I would like nothing better than to be looked at as someone who changed things. What could be better than that?" he says. "Somebody who changed a few things. Waylon changed this. Willie changed that. And Hank Williams Jr. changed a few things. There couldn't be anything better than that."

It is late when we call it a night.

The next day, we find ourselves sifting through guns—super powerful hunting handguns, designed for big game hunting and all but uncontrollable for any but the most experienced shooter. Some are almost twice the power of Dirty Harry's

.44 Magnum. *Big boom.*

We fiddle with the guns and discuss handloading the special ammunition. Then Hank Jr. gets up and heads to the basement gun room. He comes out with a stainless steel revolver, one of the finest made, in a powerful enough caliber to shake the fillings out of your teeth.

"Here," he says, "I want you to have this . . . So grab some earmuffs and let's go shoot."

The morning passes with us blasting milk cartons full of water, our eyes focused on the Tennessee autumn and hunting season still months away.

Here is the image of Hank Williams Jr. I'll take away with me from this trip. We are standing on stage at Starwood, a new outdoor concert hall in Nashville. Hank is scheduled to play that evening, his first show in Nashville in years. Ticket sales are tremendous, and we're here to do a sound check—making sure all systems are go. As Hank sits down at the piano on the covered stage to play, it begins pouring down rain, and he launches into his rollicking "Money Changes Everything." He is smiling, happy and singing his heart out for the audience of security guards and vendors. In fact, he looks like he's having the time of his life. ■

THE NITTY GRITTY DIRTY BAND

Twenty Years of Plain Dirt

It's been a long haul for the Dirt Band, but they've managed to hold on. After two decades in the music business, their mixture of folk, rock, country, bluegrass and blues still manages to get to the heart.

by Michael Bane



The faces may have changed during the



two decades they've been performing, but through the years, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band has stayed true to their musical vision.



With a collection of country musicians, including Doc Watson, their *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* album became a landmark.

It is almost dawn in the Smoky Mountains, and I wake up stiff from sleeping a couple of hours on a car seat. It was going to be a simple trip, short cut through the mountains, home by dawn, wrapping up two weeks and a thousand miles. But the shortcut is anything but—four-lanes becomes two-lanes becomes one-lane. Asphalt turns to gravel and then to dirt, then to something that resembles a buggy path. Finally, around 4 A.M., with my muscles screaming from fighting the twisting mountain road, I pull as close to side of the mountain as I can and go to sleep.

I stretch, turn on the car radio and step outside to see if I'm still on the same planet. I don't seem to be. The dirt road, barely a carwidth wide, winds around a little hollow, the bottom lost in the dark a couple of hundred feet down. The only sound comes from a runoff stream splashing down the rocky side of the hollow. It takes me a minute to realize the sounds of the little stream are coming from not only the stream, but the radio as well.

From the radio, the sound of rippling water is joined first by faultless keyboards, then by John McEuen's silvery banjo, and suddenly the little hollow is

filled with the music of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

"I've got rippling water to wake me..." sings Jeff Hanna, and I can't help but laugh.

As if on cue, the sun tops the edge of the hollow, sending bright beams into the green darkness. The sounds of "Rippling Water" cascade from the little car speakers, and suddenly the little hollow is filled with dancing light and sounds of banjo, guitar and drums. The music swells and grows and seems to bounce off the rocks and trees; the sun rises and sends beams deeper and deeper into the hollow. I am transfixed, caught up in a moment as clear and as pure as the ice cold water rippling down the mountain. The world is new again.

"And now rippling water flows through pipes in the wall, and it's keeping me warm," Jeff Hanna sings Jimmy Ibbotson's words. "The closest I've been to my family for days is my music..."

I sit on the edge of the hollow, my feet dangling, and let the sun and the song wash away the miles, a moment to be frozen in the amber of my memory. With McEuen's banjo still ringing in my ears, I get back in the car and head out, south to Atlanta.

We're all packed into a back table at a seafood restaurant in Nashville, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and I. Everybody's here except John McEuen, who's off hiding in a studio. First off, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band wants to impart the most important thing they've learned in 20 years on the road.

Food, says Jeff Hanna.

Food, agrees Bobby Carpenter.

Eat, says Jimmie Fadden.

"It's true," chimes Jimmy Ibbotson. "We all like to eat."

They fall upon the menu like sharks at a feeding frenzy, and pretty soon a heated five or six way discussion is going on about everything from tuna steaks to cole slaw.

"We once had 18 food stops between Chicago and Emporia, Kansas," says Bobby Carpenter.

"That was great," adds Jimmie Fadden, who proceeds to recount each meal.

The tall, gangly figure of John McEuen moseys up to the table and pulls up a chair.

"I guess they've already told you about food," he says. "They once had 18 meals in 200 miles."

"We're 'way ahead of you, John," says

Bobby Carpenter, digging into the appetizers.

There's a severe case of reality slippage here. These guys could be middle managers at the local banking establishment, BMW salesmen, record company executives—not one of the most eclectic and most durable bands in the history of popular music. After all, this is a group who toured with the Grateful Dead, played behind Linda Ronstadt, cracked the Iron Curtain, introduced country instrumentation to rock audiences, introduced country music to rock and recorded songs and albums that have stood the test of time to become classics. The music of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band runs like a recurring banjo refrain through the last 20 years of American music, and despite the years and the miles and the changes, it's a music that remains amazingly true to the vision that brought the first members of the band together in the late 1960's.

It was the 1960's, and the world was a different place, when John McEuen and Jimmie Fadden got together with a folkie duo composed of Jeff Hanna and Bruce Kunkel and school friends Leslie Thompson and Ralph Taylor Barr to form the Illegitimate Jug Band in Long Beach, California. In the polarized world of the 1960's, rock and country were about as far apart as two musical forms could get. But jug band music, a rollicking conglomeration of folk, bluegrass, blues, country and rock, found a place in the thriving West Coast music scene. The story goes that the Illegitimate Jug Band played for kicks for a year or so, briefly became the Dirt Band, since they didn't have a regular jug player, then reorganized as a "real" band, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, after Hanna heard one of his college professors suggest that the class get down to the "nitty gritty."

Here's a chunk of some early press, around 1967:

"Between the six of them, the Nitty Gritties distinguish themselves musically with such diverse instrumentation as guitar, harmonica, mandolin, banjo, kazoos, washboard, phinius, sandblocks, comb and bubbles," wrote *The Beat Magazine*. "Their clothing is just as distinguished as their unique music, dating back to the 1920's, and features double-breasted suits with wide lapels. They add to this cowboy boots and their own inimitable brand of humor for the finishing touches . . ."

The 1960's ground on, and double-breasted suits and natty Beatle haircuts were replaced by long hair and jeans. Barr and Kunkel left the group, Jimmy Ibbotson signed on. In 1970 they recorded Jerry Jeff Walker's story of a street dancer he'd met in a New Orleans' jail. "Mr. Bojangles" became a monster hit, and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band were big news.

At the height of their popularity, they made what at the time seemed a strange decision.

The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band would pack up and go to Nashville and record an album with some of the legends of country music, including Roy Acuff, Mother Maybelle Carter, Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs and others. The idea seemed so farfetched as to be impossible. As one skeptic later wrote, "By every known law of the recording industry such an event should not have taken place, and even if it did, it should have been a disaster of Titanic proportions."

Instead, the project became one of the landmarks in country music. *Will The Circle Be Unbroken?*, released in 1973,

"The most important thing the Circle album did for me is it allows me to go to Roy Acuff's dressing room anytime I want and say hello to Roy."

still stands as a triumph, an incredible collection of country music. Although the Nashville cats were first a little skeptical of the bearded long-hairs from the West Coast—"Well, you're supposed to know a man by the character of his face," said Roy Acuff, "but if you have got your face all covered up with something, well . . ."—the band's musical virtuosity and simple love of country music won them over.

"The most important thing the *Circle* album did for me," McEuen says, "is it allows me to go to Roy Acuff's dressing room anytime I want and say hello to Roy."

"If you could hire musicians like them around here to go with you on the road, there's no tellin' what you could do," said bluegrass master Jimmy Martin after working with the Dirt Band. "Some of my son's friends came to watch. When I told my son who I was recording with, he said, 'Good Lord, Daddy, they're good!'"

See, says Jeff Hanna, the Nitty Gritty Band has these two audiences . . .

"One audience remembers "Mr. Bojangles" but isn't familiar with the new stuff on the radio," says Bobby Carpen-

ter. "Then there's the people who maybe have heard 'Mr. Bojangles,' but really know the new songs."

"There's always a couple from either side of the line," adds Jimmie Fadden, "who, when we play "American Dream," say "That wasn't *them*. That wasn't the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band."

"You can see the lights going on in people's heads," he says, laughing. "Maybe they came because their neighbors had tickets, and suddenly they go, 'Hey, I *know* these guys! I know that song!'"

The band recently played a gig at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, a city they used to play regularly in the hippie days.

"I noticed that, almost like alternating audiences, they'd either recognize the stuff from *Dance, Little Jean* on—what we call the newest era of the Dirt Band—or they recognized everything up to *Dance, Little Jean*," says Jeff Hanna. "Oh, those are nice songs,' you could almost see them say. 'I wonder where they got those songs?' We actually went out there and explained it a couple of times, which did no good."

"Our manager said, 'Go out there and tell those yuppies you're still making records,'" says Jimmy Ibbotson.

"We'd go out and say, 'Here's a song called 'Modern Day Romance,' and it was a Number One for us this year,'" explains Bobby Carpenter. "The audience would just look at us and say, 'Huh? I thought Prince was Number One.'"

"Country?" mimics Jeff Hanna. "What country?"

Despite the commercial success and enormous critical acclaim heaped on the *Circle* album, the years that followed it were lean ones. The reasons have less to do with the music of the band than with the shifting tastes of the rock audiences. Rock had entered a time of super-superstars, guitar monsters and West Coast music mellow enough to congeal Velveta. The musical vision of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, their love of all forms of American music, seemed a strange anachronism. They steadily recorded (as the Dirt Band, their mid-1970's incarnation), including the classic Ibbotson-penned "Rippling Water" in 1975 and Rodney Crowell's offbeat "American Dream" (with harmonies courtesy of Linda Ronstadt) in 1979. They became the first American rock band to tour the Soviet Union, in 1977. "I'd look out into the audience and everybody would be looking off somewhere watching somebody dance," John McEuen told *Rolling Stone*. "Then the secret police would come and make them sit down." They also appeared on *Saturday Night Live* backing their old banjo-playing buddy Steve Martin. Still, though, the group seemed more like a throwback to rock's older, more innocent days.

... After 20 years on the road, next to food, a sense of humor may be the most important thing of all.



JOHN
MCEUEN

JEFF
HANNA

JIMMY
IBBOTSON

JIMMIE
FADDEN

BOB
CARPENTER

Ironically, country music was changing right along with rock. Perhaps the biggest change was that more and more country acts were moving in the direction already well established by the Dirt Band. "American Dream" hit the country charts with no promotion at all, so the band made a crucial decision—Nashville or bust. After making that decision, they had a quick dose of cold water tossed on their dream. Nashville producer Norbert Putnam, riding on the success of Jimmy Buffett, advised the band to forget country music.

"You guys aren't going to get played on country radio," he said. Period.

Instead, he produced another pop album on the band. The only stylistic exception on that album was another Ibbotson-penned song that Putnam hated called "Dance, Little Jean." Like Jimmy Ibbotson's other songs, "Dance, Little Jean" had a sense of intimacy, a sense of a close friend relating a story, that's rare in any music. The production was spare and tasteful, and there was the trademark subtle interplay between five consummate musicians.

The result was a Top Ten country hit.

The next album, *Plain Dirt Fashion*, yielded their first Number One country hit, Rodney Crowell's "Long Hard Road (A Sharecropper's Dream)".

"Not that we've changed," says John McEuen, "but there are more country stations, and a lot of the disk jockeys came from rock stations in the 1970's, which helps . . . if you take "Dance, Little Jean" and play it next to "Some of Shelly's Blues" off an album that was 12 years earlier, it sounds like they were cut the same day, in the same session. If you take "Long Hard Road" and play it next to something we cut in the early 1970's, say the Everly Brothers' "Dream" song we redid, they're very similar . . . They could have been on the same album."

Maybe, John McEuen says, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band will someday be as well established as people think they are.

In the meantime, the road is one solid reality. Jeff Hanna lives in Nashville, Jimmy Ibbotson and John McEuen in Colorado, Bobby Carpenter outside of

Los Angeles and Jimmie Fadden in Sarasota, Florida. They record in Nashville and still tour constantly.

"I love the work," says McEuen, "but I hate being away from my family . . . I'd be happy being Ozzie Nelson."

"Some girl who's almost 21 comes up," says Jeff Hanna, "and all the guys are looking. She says, 'You guys are really great . . .'"

"... 'I listened to 'Mr. Bojangles' in kindergarten,'" says Bobby Carpenter.

"... 'My mother played your records for me when I was growing up,'" continues Hanna.

That gets a round of laughter. After 20 years on the road, next to food, a sense of humor may be the most important thing of all.

The band's most recent album included another Ibbotson song, "Partners, Brothers & Friends," that sums up their 20 years together. The song begins with, "*The promoter wants to cancel, 'cause there aren't enough tickets sold*" and ends with, "*It's great to be a part of something so good that's lasted so long.*"

"I started writing that song on Halloween two years ago," Jimmy Ibbotson says. "As a joke."

"That wasn't the gig up there in North Dakota?" Jeff Hanna asks.

"No," Ibbotson says. "It was the one in St. Joseph, Missouri, in a basketball arena with 40 people there. I sort of started the song that week and sang it to Fadden in the dressing room as just something to pass the time, to keep our mind off the fact that we were bombing."

Everyone laughs, and the laughter is easier because, these days, there are fewer and fewer empty seats. A couple of gigs in L.A. sold out in advance.

"It was a small room," says McEuen wonderingly. "But, holy mackerel, I wouldn't have put any money on that five years ago."

In fact, now the two audiences really do seem to be coming together—two Nitty Gritty Dirt Band audiences, old and new, becoming one.

"I guess our dream is that people are going to sit around someday either in

some club in Wisconsin or a studio in Los Angeles or maybe even in Australia," says John McEuen, "or at some rehearsal hall somewhere and say, 'We need to make this sound more like the Dirt Band.'"

I am on the road, high in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona. I have come to the mountains to escape, for however brief a time, the numbing pressure of the road—deadlines and money and relationships strained to the breaking point by the thin stretch of asphalt. The blacktop turns into gravel, the gravel into dirt, and still the road climbs. Soon, it's a buggy path, switching back and forth up the mountain.

I finally pull off the road onto an outcropping of rock, with a gentle slope down to a sheer drop. The mountains are quiet in the late afternoon sun, a slight breeze carrying just a hint of whispered secrets. I squat next to a red chunk of sandstone and watch a hawk ride the thermals, sliding into the hills and valleys above the mountains. I watch the hawk for some lost period of time, then find myself drawn back to the car, to the radio. I turn the volume on low, and Jeff Hanna and Jimmy Ibbotson's vocals spill into the hot Arizona afternoon.

Rodney Crowell's words are simple, a sharecropper's dream, counterpointed by John McEuen's fiddle. They talk about the road and lost dreams and simple survival, the words and music speaking with an eloquence and an acceptance of the world as it is.

The best music, I think, has little to do with the things we critics value so highly. The best music is an organic thing, a part of the sandstone and the mountains; a living thing, soaring and diving through thermals of which we're only dimly aware. The best music, I think, touches us in a place where we're always alone, to remind us that we're not.

I lean against the red sandstone, close my eyes and feel the warm wind blow across the mountain. Fiddles and guitars drift on the wind, and through my closed eyes I watch the sunrise on a forgotten hollow in Tennessee. ■

Woman Wins Lottery 72 Times Within One Year!

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\$310,000.00 happened for Ken Mathis.

An accountant and computer expert—with a "knack" for gambling systems—Mathis never had a Big Hit in the Lottery. But then he obtained Gail Howard's information, used it picking a number combination in the Lottery, AND WON \$310,000.00.

\$604,000.00 happened for Leavelle Carter.

After playing the Lottery for years without real luck, this successful executive computer programmer decided he'd make his own luck by writing a complex numerical "program." That's when he saw Gail Howard's system—that did the work for him. He used it in the Washington, D.C. Lottery AND WON \$604,000.00.



Manuel Garcete



Ken Mathis



Leavelle Carter

OVER \$9 MILLION happened for a rural housewife from a grape-growing region. (She wants to remain anonymous.) How she successfully used Gail Howard's Report was featured in major U.S. newspapers.

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How long will this Report remain available to the public?

All people preparing to enter the Lottery should be aware of this. Inquiries have been made regarding the advantage this Report gives its recipients. However, as of the date of this Notice, distribution of this Report has not been stopped by Special Report Office—and as an adult preparing to enter the State Lottery, you are eligible to receive a copy. But you are urged to waste no time about it.

You should also be aware of this. Recently, a Professor at a major Eastern university, who teaches statistics and directs a computer data center, saw the Notice and was skeptical of the 500% claim. He obtained a copy of the Report and did an in-depth analysis of the contents. **His conclusion: This Report does indeed increase one's chances of winning the State Lottery by more than 500%. His comment: "Anyone attempting the Lottery would be foolish not to use this information."**

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Rated ★★★★★ In Country Music, Sept./Oct. '85

Hawkshaw began with King covering whatever Ernest Tubbs was doing. But "Sunny Side of the Mountain" and "Slow Poke" in 1948 and 1951 were enough to establish him as a force in his own right. Like Copas, Hawkins fell by the wayside, with no hit records, though he was a member of the Grand Ole Opry and had contracts with RCA, Starday and Columbia. Then in March 1963, just days before he died, his King recording of "Lonesome 7-7203" hit Number One. Hawkins, like Copas, made other fine records. "Rattlesnakin' Daddy" and "Dog House Boogie" among them, that hinted at rockabilly. *16 Greatest Hits of Hawkshaw Hawkins* (Gusto SD-3013) covers all these and more.

Copas first made his mark as a vocalist with Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys... "Filipino Baby," his first hit, came in 1944. Throughout the 1940's he had still more hits—with "Tennessee Waltz," "Tragic Romance" and others. In the early 1960's, Copas was successful with Starday, with the hits "Alabam," and "Signed, Sealed and Delivered" in 1961. Some of his best-known songs are available on *16 Greatest Hits of Cowboy Copas* (Gusto SD-3012). Most of the material is from his Starday period, though "Filipino Baby" and "Tragic Romance" are also included. Copas never got the credit he should have, considering his rich, supple voice and laconic, offhand delivery.

Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper worked together nearly 40 years... *Early Recordings* (County CCS 103) compiles 12 Columbia songs, leased from CBS, that helped establish their reputation. A second Wilma Lee/Stoney album from the 1970's is *Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper Sing The Carter Family's Greatest Hits* (Starday SD 980), an outstanding salute to the Carters cut in the early 1970's. Wilma Lee and Stoney tackle such Carter classics as "Keep on the Firing Line," produce a delicate version of "You Are My Flower" and are back on Wilma Lee's stops-out treatment of "Lulla Walls." The Carter style and the Coopers' sound blend easily here.

RICH KIENZLE, SEPT./OCT. 85
PAGE 67, Country Music Magazine



THE BLUEGRASS HALL OF FAME Stringbean: String's Mountain Dew Grandpa Jones: Old Rattler/Stanley Bros.: Rank Stranger Flatt & Scruggs: Foggy Mountain Breakdown/Carl Story: Tramp On The Street Lonesome Pine Fiddlers: Windy Mountain/Hylo Brown: Hills Of Georgia Country Gentlemen: Sunrise (Instrumental) Reno & Smiley: Home Sweet Home J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers: Run Mountain Jimmie Skinner: Fallen Leaves Rex Allen & Kentuckians: Beautiful Blue Eyes Jim & Jesse & The Virginia Boys/Let Me Whisper, and more!



CARL SMITH: GREATEST HITS

In this album Carl sings better than ever, giving a warm new glow to these classic hits he created. Included are: Mr. Moon/Are You Teasing Me/Hey Joe/Deep Water/I Just Loved Her For The Last Time Again/You Are The One/Don't Just Stand There/If Teardrops Were Pennies/Take My Ring Off Your Finger/Kisses Don't Lie



MAC WISEMAN: GOLDEN CLASSICS

This album is a compilation of some new recordings of the very best traditional bluegrass songs, plus some newer releases. Included: Jimmie Brown, The Newsboy/Goin' Like Wildfire/I Saw Your Face In The Moon/Barbara Allen/The Prisoner's Song/Johnny Cash & Charlie's Pride/Sweeter Than The Flowers/18 Wheels A Humming/Don't Make Me Go To Bed, more!



LULU BELLE & SCOTTY: SWEET-HEARTS OF COUNTRY MUSIC

Their style and songs made America think of them as close personal friends. Here's a sample: Homecoming Time In Happy Valley/Each Time You Leave/Have I Told You Lately That I Love You/Remember Me The Brown Mountain Light/When The Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again/In The Doghouse Now/Sunday School/Sweet Lips/Mountain Dew, more!



LULU BELLE & SCOTTY: SWEET-HEARTS STILL

More classic recordings, including: I Told Them All About You/First Whippoorwill Call Molly Darlin/Between You And Me/Bonnie Blue Eyes/I'll Be All Smiles/Try To Live Some (While You're Here)/Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain/When I Yoo Hoo In The Valley/Rocking Alone In An Old Rocking Chair/Sweet Evalena Sunset Years Of Life. Why not order both.



SKEETER DAVIS: THE BEST OF

A gracious star with a different sound, especially with harmony. Included on this great album are: Set Him Free/(I Can't Help You) I'm Falling Too/The End Of The World/I'm Saving My Love/Gonna Get Along Without You Now/I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know/I'm A Lover (Not A Figher)/My Last Date With You/Bus Fare To Kentucky, more!



PATSY CLINE/COWBOY COPAS/HAWKSHAW HAWKINS: GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Patsy: Lovesick Blues—Just A Closer Walk With Thee—There He Goes/Hawkshaw: I Suppose—Little White Washed Chimney—Sunny Side Of The Mountain—The Life Of Hank Williams/Cowboy: Wings Of A Dove—Cowboy's Deck Of Cards—He Stands Real Tall—Beyond The Sunset. A truly fitting tribute to some great legends.



WILF CARTER: "Montana Slim"

Many of the great old favorites of yesteryear and more. Including: Two Little Girls In Blue/Put My Little Shoes Away/Daddy And Home/One Golden Girl/Hey Hey Mr. D.J./Grand-dad's Yodelling Song/Lonesome For My Baby Tonight/Shoo Shoo Shoo She Lah Lah/Two Little Stars/The Little Shirt My Mother Made For Me



BEN COLDER (SHEB WOOLEY): GOLDEN HITS

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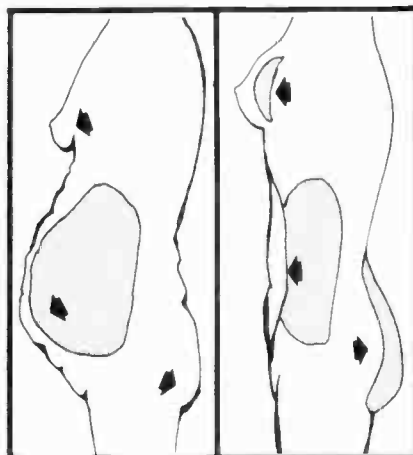
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A black and white close-up portrait of Randy Travis. He has dark, wavy hair and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a dark leather jacket with a light-colored collar. The background is dark and out of focus.

They Call Him
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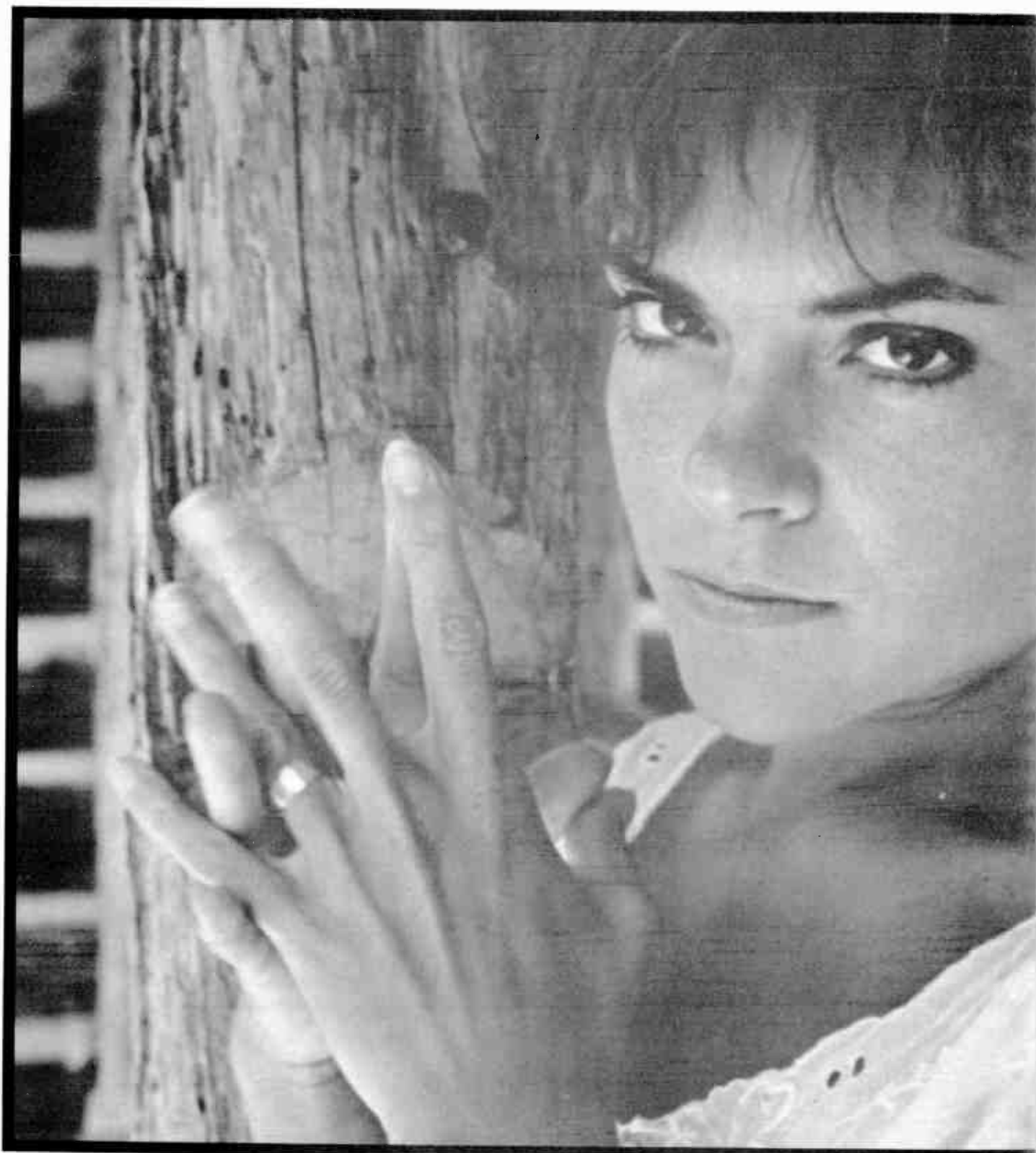
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Dealing with the challenges of motherhood, the strains of stardom and the constant ups and downs of marriage would make anyone want to run and hide.



Rosanne tried to with drugs but she learned she'd rather face life and her problems head on.

Growing Up with ROSANNE CASH

by Patrick Carr

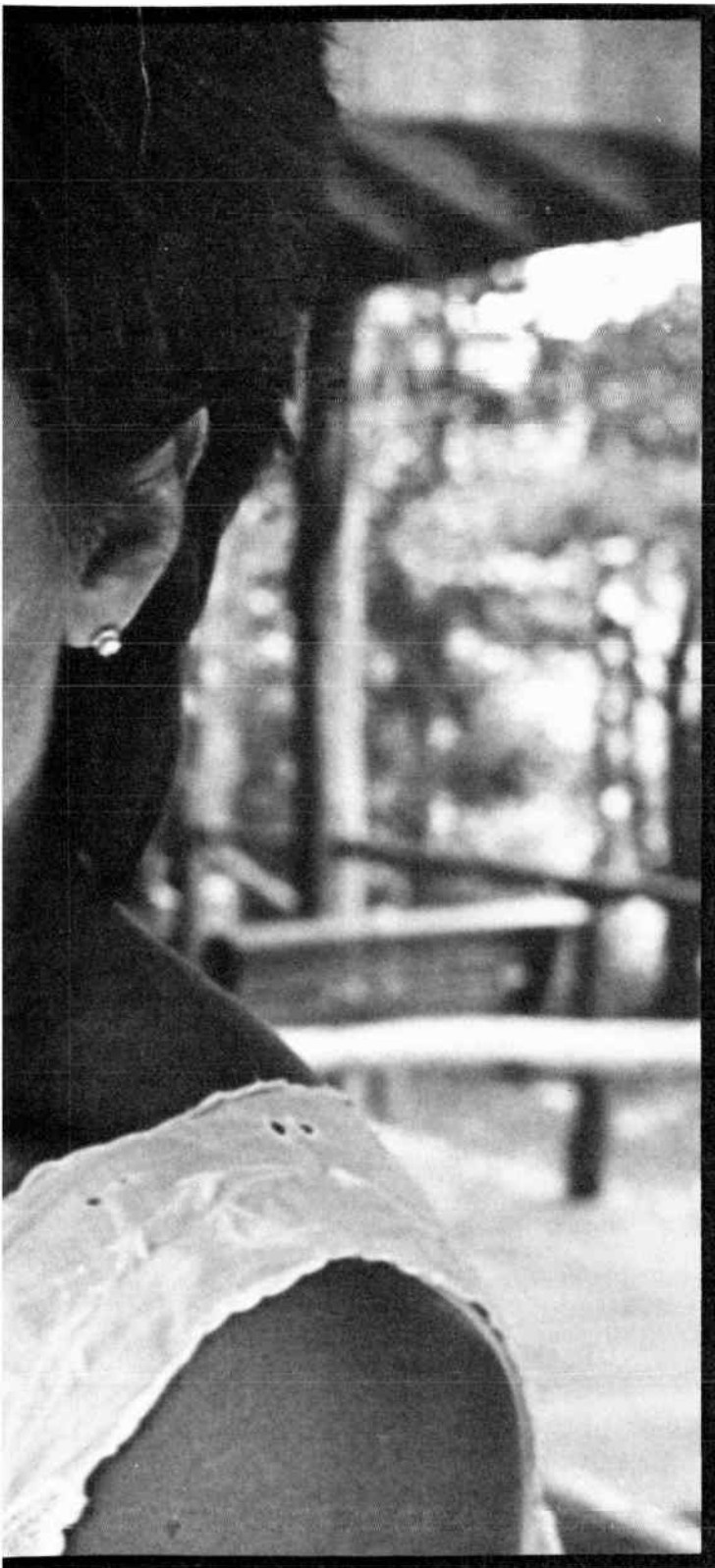
At Rosanne Cash's house, I'm doing what most people do in other people's homes: checking out their things, particularly their books and records. You can tell a lot about people from their books and records.

Books first. One random half-shelf's worth in the casually elegant living room goes as follows: *Wired* by Bob "Watergate" Woodward; *How to Be a Jewish Mother* by Dan Greenburg; J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy; Stanislavski's *An Actor's Handbook*; Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*; a Viking Library edition of the works of William Blake; the collected poems and plays of Alfred Lord Tennyson; and a German dictionary.

Hmmmm. Impressive, this stuff. Not exactly trash reading, not quite the kind of material you expect your average "girl singer" to have on her mind.

Ditto with the tunes. Scattered around Rosanne's stereo system in the den is the music she's been listening to lately: Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love*, *Chiaroscuro* by Mike Marshall and Darol Anger; Tom Petty's *Southern Accents*; Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Soul to Soul*; *The Best of Kitaro*; a collection of traditional Celtic harp music entitled *Flowers of Edinburgh*, and Beethoven's *Piano Concerto #5*.

Hmmmm again. Some taste range; not exactly the kind of sounds "country" singers customarily have drifting around inside their heads. But then, when



HANK DEVITO



you think about it, you might expect such a collection of Rosanne Cash. In reality, she has never been a "girl singer," and neither is her music "country." She is, rather, a woman of the modern world who thinks of herself as a writer more than a singer; concerns herself with the real-life complexities of "romance" in ways which are anything but cute or easy, and ends up being classified as country because she happens to feed her work into the Nashville division of the music business machine.

That work has always been—well, serious; light on the fancy frills, heavy on the hard truths. And personal; Rosanne writes almost exclusively from her own emotional realities. And effective; she communicates strongly and clearly. That may be why she sells lots of records, and why she won a Best Country Female Grammy Award for 1985.

Rhythm & Romance, the album which won her the Grammy, was typically personal, and you didn't have to read between the lines to realize that it emerged from severe emotional turbulence in Rosanne's life. The title of one song, "Halfway House," hinted broadly at a problem with drugs, while the lyric spelled out another theme, hard times in her marriage with singer/songwriter/producer Rodney Crowell. So did much of *Rhythm & Romance*: The first words on the album are "If you want to keep a woman like me, you've got to hold on," and the last are "I was a fool to say it was over."

Evidently it is not over; Rosanne and Rodney are still married. They still live together and raise their children in the country outside Nashville, they still spend part of their time in New York, and both of them are still making music. Otherwise, things may or may not have changed in Rosanne's world during the three years since I last called at her home.

We settle into the small cabin where she writes, and talk about that.

CM: How autobiographical was your album, Rose?

Rosanne: Very. A lot was going on in my life. Rodney and I were trying to figure out how to be in love and stay married, and I went through drug treatment, and I ended up writing an album about it all.

CM: Did you ever tell him that it was over?

Rosanne: No, but I said it *could* be over; and yes, there was a time when it felt like we just didn't want to keep on. We didn't like the way we made each other feel. Things have to come to a crisis point before you become aware of what's making you feel so bad, and that happened: one crisis point, then another, and another, and another. It's only in the last six months or so that we've really re-bonded.

CM: How did you do it?

Rosanne: A lot of intimate work. A lot of crumbling of old belief systems and old expectations and old ways of reacting; all that stuff has to go to make room for the new. We had a lot of help—I'm a firm believer in therapy, if only as preventive medicine—but he and I have done most of the work. It's he and I who have decided that we want to be with each other. We really knew that all along, but we didn't know how to do it; now we know how to be together; how not to be insecure and unreasonable with each other.

The Key to it is that I can't project my problems onto him and say they're his fault; I've got to address them within myself and try to resolve them. And that's healthy. If you don't take responsibility for

yourself, you cut off any kind of connection with your own power—but once you start taking responsibility, that draws the power in; it's something you can use.

It's the same for Rodney. We can't keep bouncing responsibility off each other and making the other person claim it. It's hard, but it's a satisfying process, even though both of us are so tired of working at it that now we just want to relax and have some fun.

CM: What effect did your drug use have on your marriage?

Rosanne: That was part of the problem: you try to reach somebody through a haze of drug abuse, and you just can't connect. Rodney and I were always bonded on a soul level; it's just our minds that screwed us up. But now we're proud of ourselves because we went through so much. At this point, it's unshakable. He's so *cute!* And right now, I haven't seen him in three weeks, so I'm in a bad way.

CM: But at least you're not doing drugs. How did you get out of your cocaine problem?

Rosanne: I got to a point where I was miserable doing drugs, and that I wanted to stop, but I just couldn't do it by myself. So I went into treatment for a month. For the first three weeks I kept saying "I don't have a problem!"—I was there, but not wanting to be there—but then I realized that I really did.

After that, I was white-knuckling it for the first six or nine months, but now I wouldn't touch the filthy stuff. Wouldn't have it in my life. That cleansing process of getting it out of my consciousness, not just my bloodstream, has opened up so much; there's so much more space in here than there used to be.

CM: Well, cocaine consumption is an incredibly labor-intensive habit. It's just about a full-time job.

Rosanne: It really is. You spend so much getting it and doing it and recovering from it that you don't have time for anything else. That's the way it was with me. I can't do it recreationally. I know some people who can—they can just do it socially and leave it alone the rest of the time—but that's not me. I've got an obsessive personality to begin with.

CM: Do you carry around a lot of anxiety?

Rosanne: I used to. When I was doing drugs I became so neurotic and insecure and full of anxiety that my adrenals were pumping twenty-four hours a day. That took more than a year to get rid of after I quit.

The real irony is that it never occurred to me that my anxiety might be drug-induced. I'd say to myself, "I'm neurotic and I have horrible anxiety attacks; gosh, I'd better do some drugs. That'll help." Which of course it never did; it just caused more anxiety. It's amazing how much time you can waste out of your life, doing that kind of thing. It's sad.

CM: How much time did you spend involved with drugs?

Rosanne: With drugs in general, fourteen years. I grew up in Southern California, so at the age of fourteen I got into whatever was around. Most kids out there do.

CM: So in effect, you're only just beginning to find out who you really are, right?

Rosanne: Right. Exactly. And feeling pretty damn good about it, you know? I'm thirty years old; I should get respect! *Laughter.* But really, in my twenties I had no sense of self-confidence, no sense of who I really was,

"If you don't take responsibility for yourself, you cut off any kind of connection with your own power."

no intuitiveness; just all this scattered, insecure stuff. It's only in the last year or so that I've started to rely on my intuition and feel centered and feel like I know what I'm doing. That line in "Halfway House" says it all: "Trying to find the truth inside, instead of getting by on dreams." I'm just beginning to grow up.

CM: I guess the next question has to be: Who are you?

Rosanne: I'm a very strong woman. I'm independent. I'm a writer, and I enjoy being a writer. And I'm a good mother. You want to hear the bad stuff?

CM: Of course I do. What is it?

Rosanne: I'm neurotic, I'm too self-critical, and I'm intolerant sometimes.

CM: What are you intolerant of?

Rosanne: The Bible Belt consciousness gets to me sometimes. I can't bear people who try to inflict their spiritual beliefs on culture and art and decor and other kinds of personal expression. I don't mind what they believe—that's their right, and I have no right to judge anybody's spiritual beliefs—but I *do* mind them trying to inflict their views on everything around them. Fundamental Christianity is very overbearing, very self-righteous. I sometimes find living in the South very frustrating.

CM: You said you were in a non-creative, non-writing period when we last talked, Rose. How's your creative life now?

Rosanne: It looks like death. Bathing a child with one hand and writing with the other. It's just such a dilemma; it's really difficult to raise children and do TV shows and write songs all at the same time. Even when I'm working, I'm usually traveling or talking to the press or lip-synching on TV; there's no real creative stuff going on.

It annoys me that my creative time gets eaten up with surface stuff, but I allow it. I know the way around it—I should set out blocks of time and just go write—but I haven't been disciplining myself to do that. Instead I go to town and go to lunch, this and that. I'll do *anything* to avoid putting pen to paper.

CM: What's stopping you from changing that?

Rosanne: Me. The ball's in my court. I have to get the songs written. But there, you see; I'm being too self-critical. I am writing a *bit*; I've got four or five songs in the works.

CM: What kind of songs? Still very personal stuff?

Rosanne: Yes, but there's some lighter stuff too. I still use writing as therapy in a very self-indulgent way, but I think I'm beginning to get my sense of humor back. All that dark stuff is sort of like mud-wrestling with your own internal chaos; now I feel I can breathe, I have more perspective, so I can be a bit lighter. The issues are probably the same—things that go on in relationships—but it's not as if I'm down in a hole with it all anymore.

CM: The heavy stuff produced a great album, though.

Rosanne: Well, isn't that always the way? If you reach down for whatever strikes the deepest chord in you and express it, it gets across. The human condition is the same everywhere; people say "Yes! I've felt that!" The music that *doesn't* get to you is the stuff somebody has contrived because they heard something successful and tried to copy it.

CM: Speaking of music and perceptions, I should tell you that I don't think of you as "country." Do you?

Rosanne: No, I don't. That's why it always gets me when people write to me saying "You're undermining country music. What do you think you're doing?" I never called my music "country."

CM: You don't look country, either. y'know...

Rosanne: Well, by God, nobody gave me a handbook! I just followed my instincts and this is what happened! *She gestures at her urban-chic self.* I didn't realize in the process that how you looked was a moral issue. I mean, I hang out in the East Village in New York, and there I'm pretty conservative—but here in Nashville I get all kinds of crap for how I look.

But none of that means anything, really. I've stopped trying to be something to other people. That's a useless occupation. That was one of the reasons I got so heavily into drugs; I always thought I had to be perfect, to please everybody. Now I'm only trying to be something for myself, and grow and learn. If a lesson is handed to me, I try to take it as a lesson instead of turning bitter about it. I'm just trying to move along my own path.

That's such a basic principle, but it's so easy to get away from. It's so easy to let your ego be seduced by false glamor. I want to dispel false glamor in my life; I don't want to court it.

CM: Which must be difficult in your business...

Rosanne: It is. This industry is greased by false glamor. But there's a way around it. Rodney does better at it than I do; sometimes I just get distracted. It's really tempting to crawl inside my ego and let somebody inflate it for me, let the machinery inflate it. But that causes so much anxiety, because it's so unreal.

CM: So what's the way around it?

Rosanne: You have to realize that all that stuff just doesn't mean anything to who you really are. When I won the Grammy, everybody sent me flowers and it was very nice, but life went on as usual; nothing changed.

But do you know what really helps the most? Dealing with children every day. I can't come in and talk through my ego with my kids; they're too *real*. They teach me a lot; they're better than therapy sometimes. And they're so sensitive. One day a little while ago, for instance, I'd had a really bad day and I was really depressed about stuff in my career; and as soon as I came into the house Caitlin said, "What's wrong?"

I said, "Oh, nothing. You wouldn't want to know."

"Tell me everything," she said. So I told her everything that was bugging me, stuff she didn't even understand, and she listened. Then she said, "And I bet you're going to miss us when you leave for New York tomorrow, aren't you?"

That brought me right down to earth. I felt like saying, "Let me write you a check." My kids are great. I *really* love them.

CM: But as you said before, it must be hard to meet their needs and still find time for writing.

Rosanne: Yes, it *is* difficult. It's day-to-day stuff, it's a process, it's something that never gets resolved; you work it out every day. But it's not any harder for me than it is for a woman who works nine to five. Being a working mother is just a hard thing to do; it takes a lot of energy.

That's okay, though. I've *got* a lot of energy, so I'm into it. I love taking care of my kids, getting down with them every day. And I love working. I'm learning. ■

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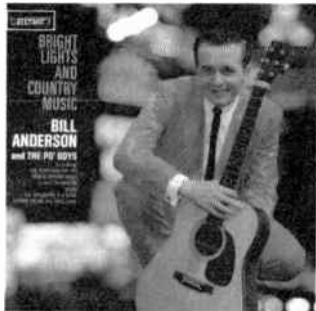
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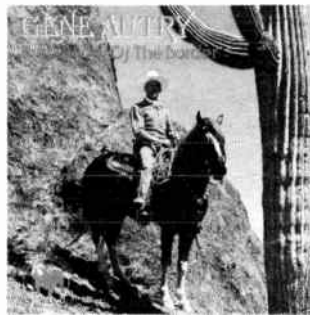
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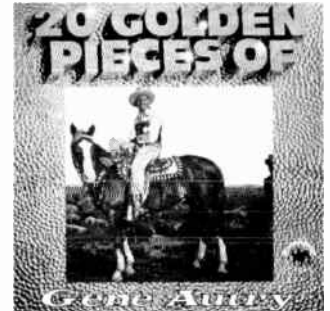
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*Marty's backed the greats.
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and polished his style with Johnny Cash.
Now he's ready to take his experience
and make a statement of his own.*

MARTY STUART

Pickin' and Choosin'

by Patrick Carr

In the garden of The Cowboy Arms Hotel and Recording Spa, an old familiar feeling is upon us. Picking wizard Marty Stuart and I are having fun being music fans.

It's nice to be a fan, especially when as a professional you waste most of your time talking about "careers" and "trends" and similar cold-hard-cash-related questions, and The Cowboy Arms is the perfect place for fan-type feelings. Being the home/office/recording studio of the great Jack Clement (a/k/a "Cowboy," "Cowperson," "Pineapple Jack," and lately "Pop Country"), it is by far the most entertaining musical playground in Nashville, the nation, and

probably the world. Anything can happen at The Cowboy Arms. That's why it's been my home-away-from-home ever since my first trip to Nashville, and why Marty Stuart is proud to acknowledge that "it's my official unofficial office." Marty is also honored to be a member of Nashville's most exclusive fun elite, Cowboy's Ragtime Band.

Right now The Cowboy Arms is in prime form, full of warmth and music and continuity and creativity. Spring is in the air again, the sap is rising and the buds are blooming, the birds are singing and so is Jack; he's been livening up the scenery with his latest infatuation, polka music, but now he's crooning lustily



along with a tape of another recent project, the romantic, sensuous sounds of internationally obscure but locally infamous Latin Lover Roberto Bianco, otherwise known as songwriter Bob White: "My soooooon to be former wife" . . . lots of happy big-band horns, a suave and swinging weekend-in-Rio feel . . . "owns fifti percent of my life . . ."

Here in the garden, then, it's easy for Marty and I to relax. Just play. Talk about the stars of our record collections, memories of magic moments, sweet inspirations, the works: the beauty of Bill Monroe's band when both Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt were in it; the crazy, escalating tension of Johnny Cash's *Live at Folsom Prison* ("It's still the best record to mow the lawn by; you go faster and faster," says Marty); the way the Byrds' *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album combined bluegrass harmonies and honky tonk piano and an electric 12-string Rickenbacker like they'd been together forever; the sudden surprise of Bob Dylan's "Lay, Lady, Lay"; the time Bernie Leadon of the Eagles asked Marty to introduce him to Lester Flatt, and Lester said "Who are the Eagles?"

We can't play forever, though. We can't just sit around being fans and fellow family members in the house Jack built. We have to do business. I have to become the music journalist, and ask Marty questions; he has to become "the artist" and answer them. This is because Marty, at the ripe old age of 28, has made a major career decision; he is now the singer, not just another of the boys in the band.

Well, he never really was just another of the boys in the band. He was always pretty unique, something of a prodigy, and in fact he started out in the music trade as the *only* boy in the band. That is, when Marty Stuart went on the road as one of the legendary Lester

Flatt's crew of hard-core country pickers, he was only 13 years old.

Behind this startling fact was an unusual childhood. The son of a supervisor at a heating-element plant and a lady banker, Marty grew up securely middle-class in Philadelphia, Mississippi, a town of some 30,000 souls which became notorious in the 1960's for the murders of civil rights workers which occurred there. Marty remembers watching Martin Luther King march through town while the local farmers stood by with shotguns breeched over their arms, and realizing that he was seeing something important. "That's where I come from," he says, "but that's not what Philadelphia's really about; it's about a lot of down-to-earth people who get up and tend to their business and their flowers and their farms, and go on living."

He was always a music fan ("I think I fell out of the chute that way"), but unlike most of the kids of his generation, he was always a *country* music fan. He was enthralled by the country TV shows of the era—*The Porter Wagoner Show*, *Jim & Jesse's performances on Country Carousel*, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs' show—but unmoved by rock.

"The Beatles were really happening, taking the world over, and I would listen to their music," he says, "but then I'd go back and listen to 'Don't Let Your Deal Go Down.' And when Paul Warren would play a fiddle break or Earl would take a banjo break or when Lester sang, it just wore me out. It did something to me that 'Help!' didn't. It was really great."

He got serious about music at the age of nine, when his father bought him a guitar in exchange for a lot of grass-cutting and such, and he "had the usual kid bands around town for a couple of years." Then, because his daddy loved the instrument, he also acquired a mandolin. One thing led to another until, through the good offices of his friend Carl Jackson, he spent his twelfth sum-

mer with the Sullivan Family group, playing Pentecostal churches around Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and even Indiana and Illinois.

"I had a *blast*," he laughs. "I haven't had that much fun since. I mean, I got my introduction to the road by way of the Pentecostal Church! Kinda slid into it sideways. 'Course, that fits just about everything else I've done since then."

But summers must end, and twelve-year-old kids, even Future Country Music Stars of America, have to cut their hair and go back to school.

"That didn't take," says Marty, "so I used up one of my aces." He called Roland White, Lester Flatt's mandolin player whom he'd met that summer, got invited to Nashville for a weekend, talked his parents into letting him go, and wound up on Lester's bus traveling to a bluegrass festival in Delaware.

He was on the bus, picking with Roland White, when Lester came by on his way to bed and was, understandably, brought up short.

"I was a real bluegrass fan, knew all about Earl Scruggs and Lester when they were in Bill Monroe's band, so I started talking all this stuff to Lester," Marty remembers. "He couldn't believe it—a 13-year-old kid puttin' all this in his face! It kinda stunned him. We hit it right off. I caught his sense of humor; he loved to tell stories and I loved to listen, and it really was a cool relationship."

Lester, no dummy, suggested that Marty and Roland work up a number for the show. They did, it "didn't go over too bad," and Lester invited Marty to join the band if something could be worked out with his schooling.

Marty didn't exactly need to be asked twice. The phone lines between Mississippi and Tennessee began burning up, and the next weekend his parents traveled to Nashville to meet Lester.

It went well. "They saw what kind of person he was, and how well he was

With Jack Clement it's time to play. But not for long, when Marty takes his show on the road.



respected," says Marty. "I think if he'd been a guitar god in the rock 'n' roll world, it might not have happened—but they turned me loose, and I love them for doing that. It took a lot of love and trust and understanding. That's what a good family's all about."

He adds that his folks are not "stage parents." They were just as proud of their daughter when she became a cheerleader as they were of Marty when he took his first solo on a Lester Flatt and Mac Wiseman album. "And anyway," says Marty, "my dad thinks my career's been shot ever since I plugged in. He's a purist."

Plugged in. A nice term in relation to Marty Stuart. It goes with his rock 'n' roll looks and it suggests other terms like *high voltage*, or, even better, *live wire*. Which he certainly is; this boy has plenty of energy, and he enjoys stirring things up.

"I've always been like that," he says. "Whatever's going on, I've always been one to buck and gnash and claw at it, often just to keep from getting bored. I'm a total cosmonaut, a rebel."

During the six years he was with Lester Flatt, for instance, he made a point of buying every new Earl Scruggs album and presenting it to Lester (who, as every 'billy music fan in the world must surely know, was engaged in the mother of all feuds with his former partner). He also took pains to address Lester as "Earl" at all the wrong moments. "That would always bring on an exchange," he laughs. "It was a lot of fun."

After Lester passed away in 1978, Marty's career continued in an unbor-ing fashion. He grabbed an electric guitar and went on the road with Vassar Clements' hillbilly jazz revue. "I've always gone with feeling players rather than technical wizards, and Vassar's playing just takes me over." Next he met Doc and Merle Watson, and wound up working with *them*. He hitched a ride on Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, and had a ball—"I've seen lots of zoos on the road, but nobody ever admitted they were zoos; Rolling Thunder was *proud* of it." He picked onstage and in the studio with Merle Travis, Ernest Tubb, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Emmylou Harris, Anne Murray, Neil Young, Billy Joel and a few dozen others; he made a great little minor-label album, *Busy Bee Cafe*, with a crew of back-porch pickers whose names read like the honor roll at the Country Music Hall of Fame; and, of course, he got to work with his greatest idol.

"One day in 1980 I was laying in bed, really frustrated because it was medium-time all the way up to that point, and I really wanted some big-time excitement," Marty remembers. "I really wanted to meet my hero, Johnny Cash!"

Marty's feelings about Cash run deep, way back to the first records he ever owned: Claude Boone's *Wolverton Mountain*, Johnny Western's *Have Gun, Will Travel*, and *The Fabulous Sound of Johnny Cash*.

"That was such a great record," he says. "The honesty was the main thing; the sincerity of John's voice, the sincerity of Luther Perkins' mistakes, the way Fluke Holland could make a drum sound like a train, the feeling in Marshall Grant's right hand—he wasn't a great bass player, but he played Johnny Cash music just right—all that stuff just got right to me. John's been a part of my life, all my life, as long as I can remember."

True to form, Marty achieved his ambi-

*"All my heroes are
guys who dared to be
different."*

tion. He went along with a friend who was delivering a guitar to Cash at The Cowboy Arms, and walked into a room containing both Cash and Jack Clement.

"There sat Cowboy drinking olive juice, singing 'The Wabash Cannonball,' and gurgling," he recalls. "John was singing 'The Wabash Cannonball,' then playing rhythm while Cowboy sang a verse. I just watched and enjoyed it, and then Cowboy said, 'Why don't you grab a mandolin?'"

Once again, Marty didn't exactly need to be asked twice. Pretty soon the three of them were having "a magical little pickin' session," and a short while later Marty wound up working for the Man in Black. This he did from 1980 until just recently; traveling the world, playing guitar and mandolin, singing backup, suggesting songs, having fun, stirring things up.

"I think above all I was laying the groundwork for a friendship," he says. "We probably strained it at times, but what 'billies don't give each other headaches now and then? It ain't nothing an aspirin won't take care of, and then you get up and go at it again."

For Marty, that magic little picking session with Cash and Clement was a very big deal—and counting those men as friends still is. "I know this is corny," he says, "but it's like when you're a kid, and the preacher has just preached a good hot one, and you walk up and shake his hand on the way out of the church. You feel a little better about yourself 'cause you were close to that guy who just talked like that. That's the way I feel when I'm around John and Cowboy."

He adds that "I'm not through playing with Johnny Cash; I've just finished my

six-year apprenticeship with him." Now, though, he is no longer a part of Cash's traveling family; he's rolled the dice on his own show. The other day he watched the Johnny Cash tour bus take off on the road without him, and felt strange.

As a professional musician, Marty Stuart has seen it all: the low-bucks "purist" bluegrass/folky circuit, the conspicuous-consumption world of rock 'n' roll, and every kind of hard and soft-core country, from the purely inspired to the numbingly mundane. Now he has a notion about where he fits.

"I could have gone with a solo career a few years ago," he says, "but there was a lot of that urban-cowboy stuff going on, and I *certainly* don't belong there. If that came around again tomorrow, I'd have to jump out. I come at country music from the roots angle, see; that's where I'm at."

Not necessarily his bluegrass/hard-core country roots, however; there's a lot of beat in Marty's music, a lot of rockabilly oompah. "My album's a real *bold* album," he says. "Basically, I pulled out all the stops. I decided to steer away from what everybody who knows me is familiar with. Don't get me wrong—I love a steel guitar and a banjo and a mandolin and a fiddle section as much as anyone, but I figured this material called for a big B3 organ a lot more than a steel guitar."

He also figured the music called for "green energy," so he avoided the business-as-usual Nashville record-making process in which professional session musicians walk in cold and build tracks one part at a time, opting instead for the Cowboy Arms method: you find energized pickers, you rehearse together, and then you all go into the studio and cut the song as "live" as possible.

The resulting album, Marty thinks, will probably turn off a lot of traditionalists and middle-of-the-road fans, but that's too bad; he's loaded for a different kind of game. "I'm out to recruit a youth demographic," he explains. "I swear, it's almost like I'm on a revival campaign, or a political campaign. I believe that the person who buys Madonna records can find something to like about us in this town."

Which is not nearly as odd a notion as it sounds; Marty is just one of a whole new generation of country artists who might very well be capable of stirring the kids of today.

How? Marty has an opinion. "You see, I'm still a fan," he says. "I still know what getting good value for your money is about. I know how great it feels when you buy an honest record, a record somebody's put everything he has into, and I know how it feels when something else is going on. And I also know that the only

way for me to make that kind of record is to be myself. Do what I feel, not what's easiest or what somebody else figures I should do."

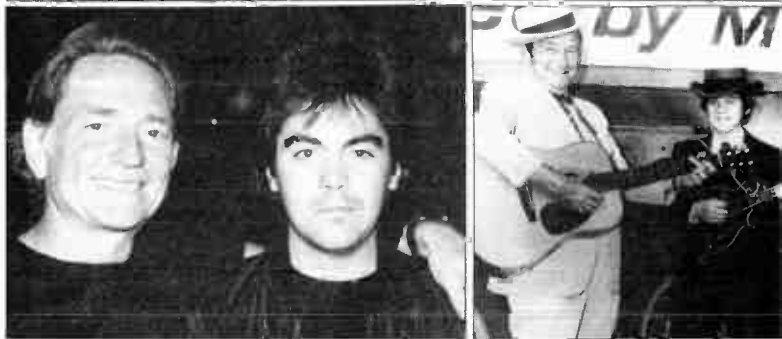
Sometimes that's difficult. Some pressures are hard to resist; the record company wants you to record a song you don't care for, somebody else wants you to open the show for an act with whom you have nothing whatsoever in common. "It's easy to get sucked into that kind of thing," says Marty. "I know, 'cause I've done it. But it's not the way to go; it doesn't work. All of us youngsters have got to remember that it's okay to say 'no', to pick and choose what we do—'cause when it comes down to it, the most valuable thing we have is our integrity. That's the only thing that gets across to real music fans."

We start talking about musicians who have always done what they wanted—have always been honest—and pretty soon we're talking Marty's heroes: Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Bob Dylan, John R. Cash, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Bill Monroe, Roy Acuff. "Every one of those guys made a real bold statement," he says. "Every one of them did something new, every one of them created new fans, and every one of them lasted. All my heroes are guys who dared to be different."

That seems like a good exit line, so I turn off the tape recorder and Marty and I just shoot the breeze for a while: about the family feeling in country music ("It still has that mom 'n' pop element to it; I hope nobody ever figures out how to wreck that," says Marty); about his own family (he's married to Cindy Cash, and she and their daughter are fine); about the progress of this magazine, for which Marty has written several articles and reviews, and about some of his other fan/scholar/collector interests. Then the Cowboy comes wandering out into the garden with a guitar, Marty picks up a mandolin, and the two of them start messing around together, having fun: "Love in Vain," "Waymore's Blues," "Miller's Cave" and (of course) "Wabash Cannonball."

This particular week in this particular month, Marty's place in the scheme of career-related things is not an easy one. Adrift from Cash's bandwagon and awaiting the release of the album to which he is fully committed, he's being so selective about work that the money is beginning to tighten as the available fretting time increases; lots of tension in those doldrums, lots of nagging questions about security and ambition and risk and integrity. But watching him follow the Cowboy's lead with a glow of pure fan's pleasure in his eyes, and listening to the easy flow of fine free music, I get the feeling that no matter what happens, Marty will be okay. ■

Marty's run the musical gamut—with Dave Edmunds, Carl Perkins and Rick Nelson at the recent Class of '55 Reunion session, with Willie Nelson as part of Cash's road tour, and the child prodigy on the road with Lester Flatt.



He says his days with Cash aren't over—he's just finished a six year apprenticeship.

Married to Cash's daughter Cindy, they'll always have music in their lives.



RON RUITA/SCOTT BONNER

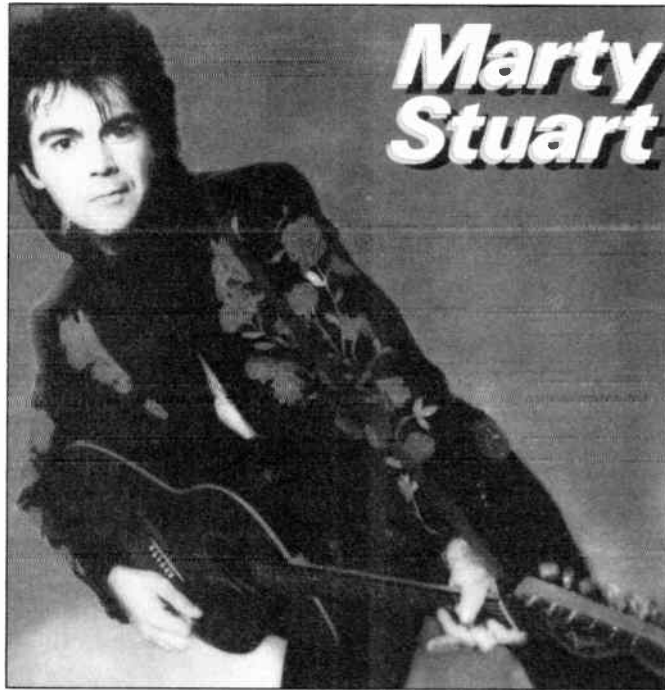
Record Reviews

Marty Stuart
Marty Stuart
Columbia B6C 40302

I don't think it's coincidence that four of today's most interesting new country artists started out as bluegrass child prodigies—Ricky Skaggs, Keith Whitley, Mark O'Connor and now Marty Stuart. Bill Monroe himself has talked of how playing bluegrass gives a performer uncommon strength and depth. This strength manifests itself in differing ways. Skaggs wears his bluegrass roots on his sleeve, consciously sticking to traditional music and values. Marty's music is looser and more raucous; tradition plays a more subtle part.

Working with Lester Flatt, then with Johnny Cash, as Marty did over the past decade, you learn the importance of being true to yourself. The result on this first album, for which both Stuart and producer Curtis Allen share credit, is a nearly flawless synthesis of rockabilly, bluegrass—two forms more closely related than many realize—1960's rock, blues and various contemporary pop styles that succeeds despite being a bit slick at times.

The churning rockabilly of "Arline," also released as Marty's first single, leads off Side One. His revival of The Band's 1970 rocker, "The Shape I'm In"—with Duane Eddy guesting on guitar—is flashier, less rustic and cockier than the original. David Mallett's "Hometown Heroes" is a timeless and intriguing anthem-plus-warning of the ultimate futility of life in the smalltown fast lane.



Two Steve Forbert compositions are among the most successful cuts on the album. "All Because of You" is a love song devoid of sugar-sweet sentiment, and "Honky Tonker," with its unrelenting Bo Diddley/bluegrass beat, breathes new blood into a theme that has been wearing thin for years. "Do You Really Want My Lovin'," which Marty co-wrote with the late Steve Goodman, is a 1950's rhythm and blues roadhouse shuffle arranged Delbert McClinton style. "Maria," co-written by Marty and Curtis Allen, is a modern cowboy/bluegrass that evokes the spirit of Marty Robbins.

My sole complaint—and this is directed at CBS—is the album's brevity, only eight songs. The "mini-album" approach may have its place and they are priced proportionately lower than the standard ten-song al-

bums, but any debut should give an artist the chance to stretch out to the max. I fail to see the advantage of abbreviation given Marty's clear ability to sustain himself. To introduce a new artist, I would argue that it would be money well spent for record companies to offer the customer *more* songs, not fewer.

There will be those who will complain that none of this music is country, just as people complained that Bob Wills, Elvis and even Waylon were too far off the beaten path. Like those three, Marty's music has exciting new dimensions, many of them non-traditional considering Nashville's past direction. After years of watching Music Row—and millions of record buyers—choke on a steady diet of creamy pop mediocrity, maybe that's exactly what we need.

—RICH KIENZLE

David Allan Coe
Son of the South
Columbia FCT 40346

There's no doubt that when David Allan Coe is "on," he remains one of country music's most passionate and inventive artists. And he's "on" for a pretty fair amount of the time here. In fact, his downfall is his singer friends, who appear on four songs, to the detriment of three.

Willie, Waylon and Jessi—who else?—turn up on "Storms Never Last," and seem to be there for no other reason than to let us know they dig Dave and he digs them. Certainly none bring nearly as much to this soft jazz version of the song as Coe himself does. Willie injects the wrong feel entirely into "I've Already Cheated on You," and he and Waylon also fail to convey the sense of loss behind "I Hate Love" as effectively as David does. Only Karen Brooks, duetting on the folk-flavored "Couldn't Do Nothin' Right," manages to hold her own, and that song is marred by an inappropriately doot-dooting chorus that is a case of adding one element too many to the arrangement.

Ah, but the rest of it. Coe favors a more acoustic sound than usual on much of the album, with "Gemini Girl," like "Storms Never Last," carrying some of the feel of a jazz samba, thanks mainly to the percussion—is the man going beatnik on us? No, not really. "Son of the South" ("long-haired, rednecked, rock 'n' roll son of the South," to be more specific) is a loping rocker, with a searing guitar solo from

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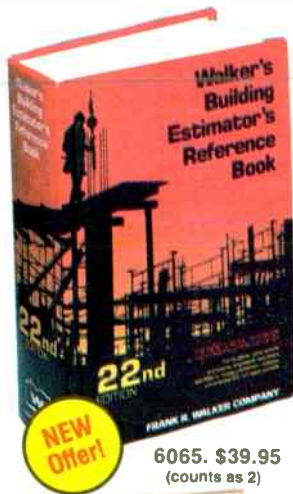
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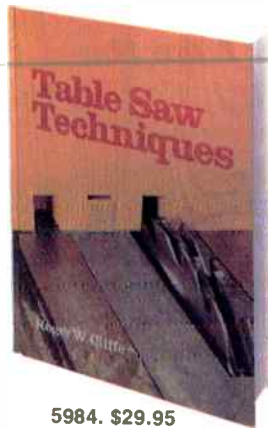
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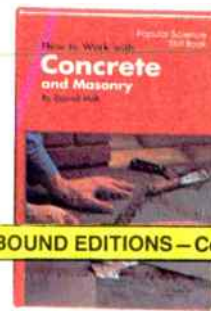
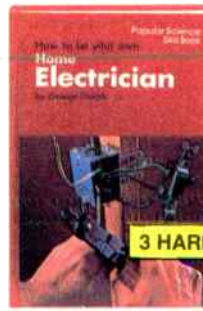
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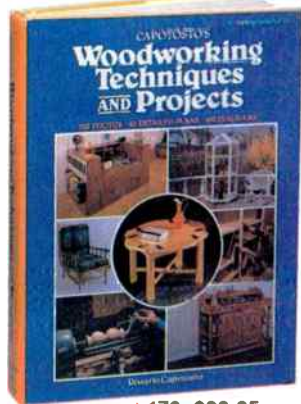


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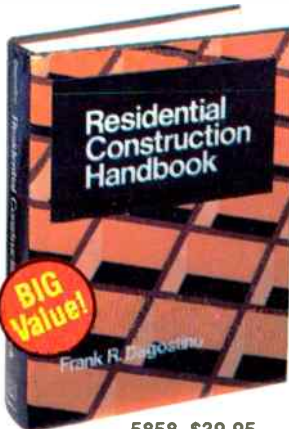


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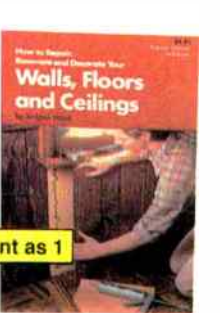
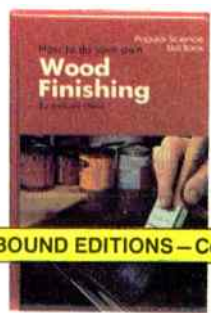
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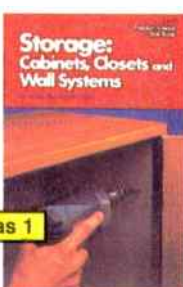
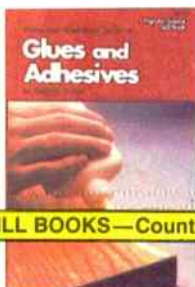
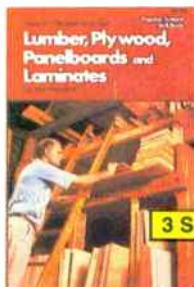
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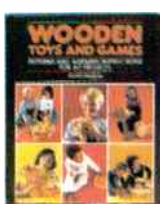
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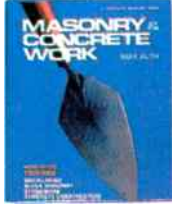


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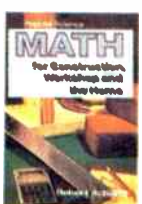
★ 1208. \$17.85 Paper (count as 1)



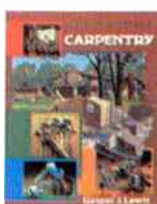
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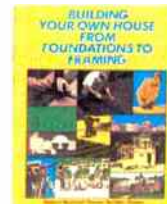
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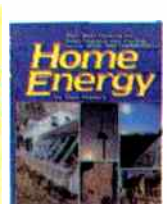
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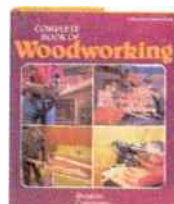
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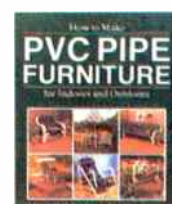
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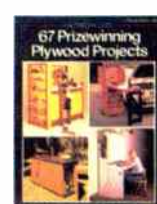
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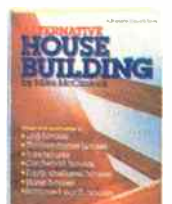
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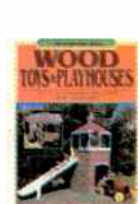
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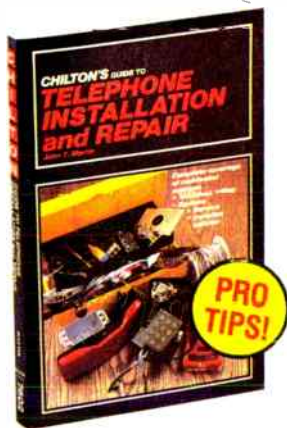
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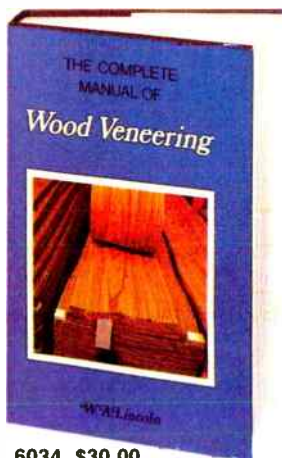
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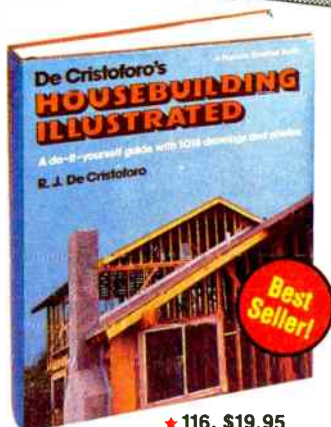


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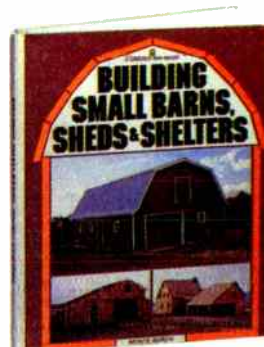


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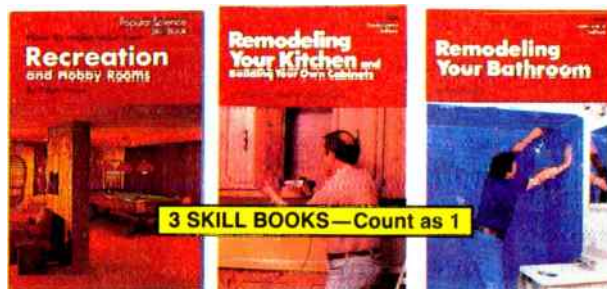
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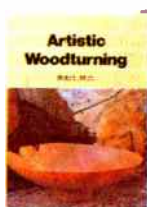


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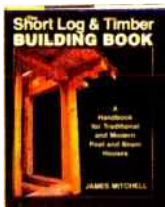
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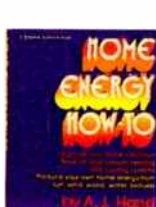
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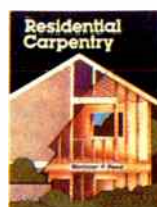
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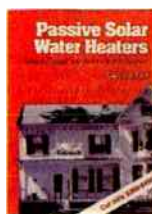
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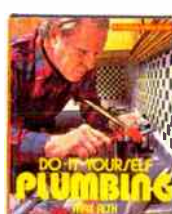
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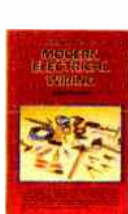
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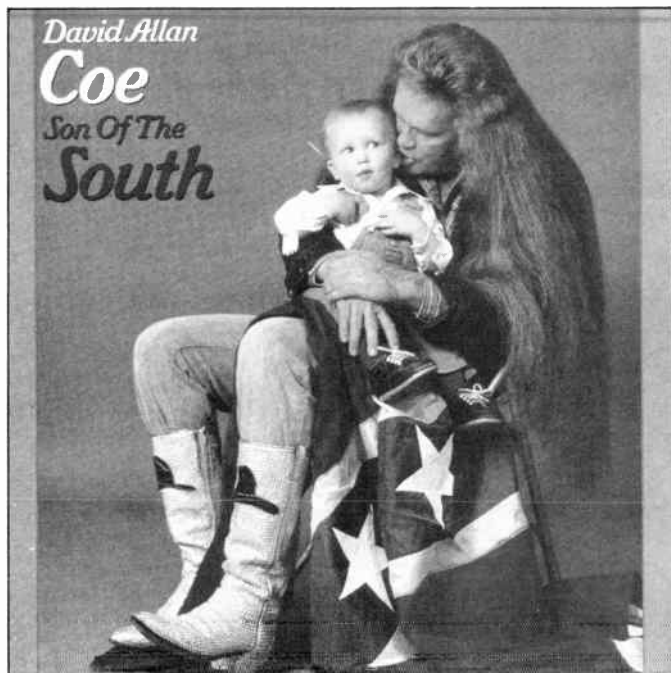
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Record Reviews



Dickey Betts, though I wonder why Dave feels so compelled to put down new-wave music when so many of its finest progenitors are freewheeling southern boys like those in R.E.M. or Jason and The Scorchers.

"To Help You Love Again" is one of those songs of pain and longing that Coe makes more palpable than just about anyone else in country music. And the topper to top 'em all is "Love Is a Never Ending War," a classic slice of DAC swaggering in which he tries, unsuccessfully, to convince some wounded vets that his own scars also came on the battlefield when they are in fact love-induced. "I don't have no purple heart/Mine's just black and blue," he says. Whether you take this one straight or as a joke, it's the kind of metaphor country music provides too little of these days, and those bugle lines are just perfect. Working off an advance tape with no credits, I can't tell if they're real or played on a synthesizer. But then Coe always brings nice little touches like that to his work: a harmonica rarely sounds sadder, more empty, than on a DAC album.

All that being the case, I'd like to hear a little less of his

famous friends and a little more of him. On with the show.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

The Forester Sisters *Perfume, Ribbons and Pearls*

Warner Bros. 25411-1

This is a toughie. My thoroughly adolescent crush on June Forester aside, The Foresters' debut album, *The Forester Sisters*, remains one of my favorite records. I've given copies away to people who claimed to hate or never listen to country music, and they uniformly love it. I've recommended the album to rock critics who'd hate a recording of their grandmother singing in a church choir just on principle, and they've called back with compliments. The secret of that album, I think, is that the girls and producers Terry Skinner and J.L. Wallace were, as Michael Martin Murphey once put it, swinging for the bleachers in the ninth inning. No holds barred, nothing held back, no bets hedged.

The results spoke for themselves—four stone hits, includ-

ing three Number Ones, out of the ten songs on the album. There's at least two other cuts, "Crazy Heart" and "Dixie Man," that I wouldn't hesitate to release as singles.

That brings us to *Perfume, Ribbons and Pearls*, their newest outing.

As bluntly as I can put it, *Perfume, Ribbons and Pearls* isn't the record *The Forester Sisters* was. *PR&P*'s problem is that it's substantially more conservative than the debut, not an uncommon problem with follow-up records to big hits. On the other hand, *PR&P* is still quantum above the usual Nashville "product." I mean, if Sylvia had released this record, they'd be out ringing bells in the churches. For *The Forester*



Sisters, though, some of the advance reviews had stopped just short of demanding a human sacrifice.

Skinner and Wallace are, in my opinion, brilliant producers. Not only do they work well with the four voices, but they have a perfect touch with instrumentation, knowing the difference between augmenting the voices and just filling up tape. Good producers know what to add; great producers know when not to add. My question here is music selection.

What I miss are the up-tempo numbers. *PR&P* is weighted far too heavily to ballads, especially considering that *The Foresters* can deliver up-tempo songs better than anybody else working today—"Mama's Never Seen Those Eyes," for example.

Last time I was in Music City, there was big time pres-

sure on women singers to move toward pop, although I'm at a loss to understand why. Even a cursory examination of the pop charts reveals that the type of pop music Nashville is pushing simply doesn't exist—at least, not on the charts. I hear some of that pressure on *PR&P*.

Okay, so what *do* I like about *Perfume, Ribbons and Pearls*?

I love the arrangement and June's lead vocals on "Heartless Night." In fact, I've listened to that particular cut a lot, and I think it's beautiful. It's also a textbook example of how to produce a song.

I also enjoyed Kim's lead on Pam Tillis' "Drawn to the Fire," one of the most country cuts on this album, and on "Heartache Headed My Way." Kathy is less visible on this album, but I particularly liked her lead on "You Were the One." Christy has the lead on the Holland/Dozier/Holland chestnut "Back in My Arms Again," but that cut pales against their live version of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B."

The harmonies are still flawless, and, problems aside, I find myself listening to the record just for the interplay between the four voices. I'm also aware that there's a big difference between being critics' darlings and a commercial success on the radio, and I expect *PR&P* to do well on the radio.

Next album, how about cutting "The Boy From New York City"? In the meantime, please don't cancel my membership in the fan club.

—MICHAEL BANE

George Strait

#7
MCA 5750

It's somehow difficult to grasp that George Strait, who just yesterday was the celebrated up-and-comer in the male vocalist department, is already being hailed as the new King of neo-hardcore country music with seven albums under his belt.

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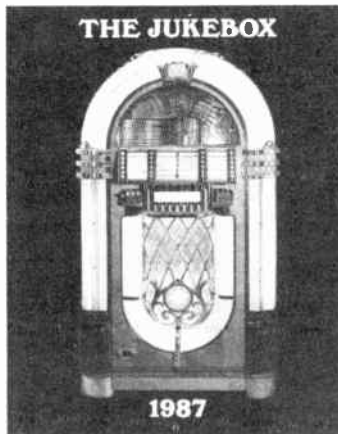
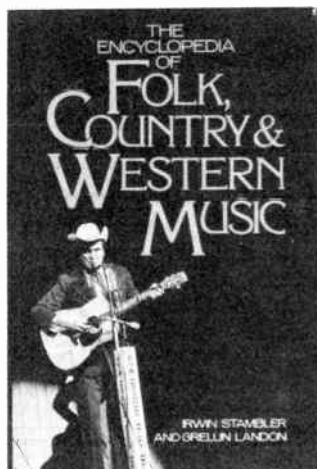


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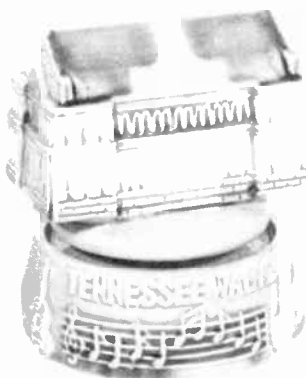
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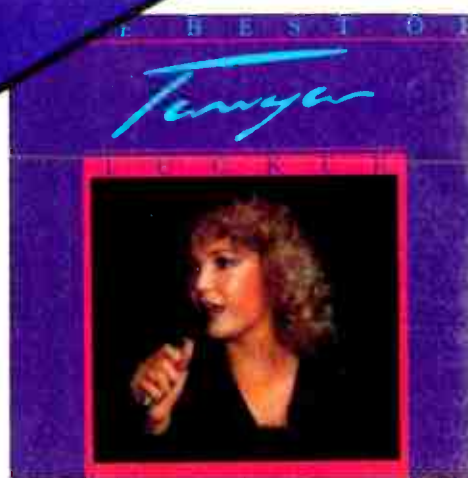
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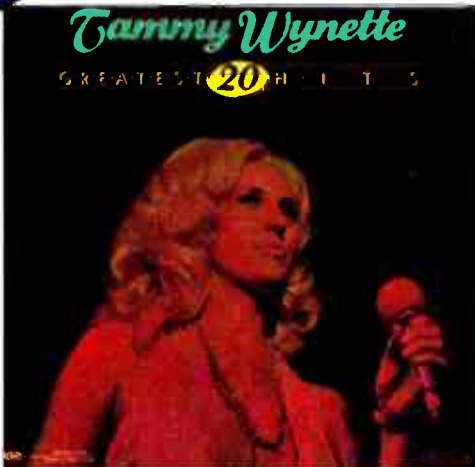
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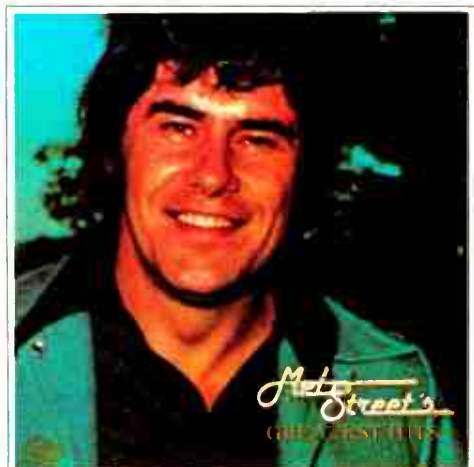
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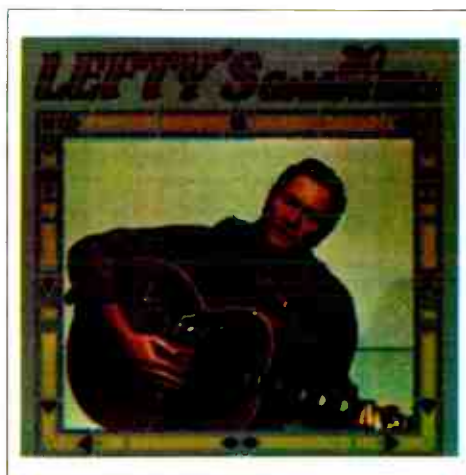
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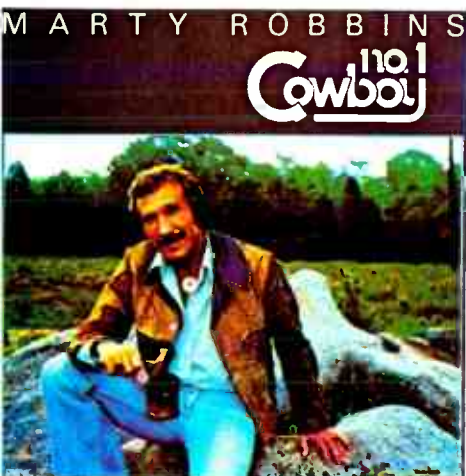
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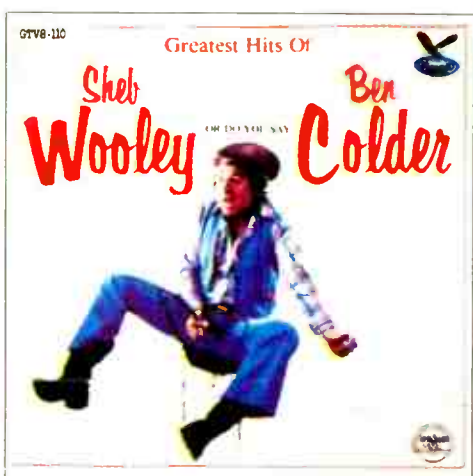
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Record Reviews

you can safely put a new George Strait platter on the turntable and more or less guess what's coming. It's pretty certain you'll get a couple of down-home love ballads. This time, in this department we get "Why'd You Go and Break My Heart" and Dean Dillon's beautiful "Nobody in His Right Mind," which was also recorded recently by Keith Whitley. And, of course, there will be a couple of revivals of Texas Swing-flavored oldies—in this case, a couple of delightful choices, Fred Rose's "Deep Water" and a wonderful old Tex Ritter/Hal Burns number called "Cow Town." And there will surely be one or two rip-roaring honky-tonk barnstormers for good measure. This time Strait turns in a brilliant performance on the modern neo-honky-tonk classic, Mack Vickery's and Wayne Kemp's "My Old Flame Is Burnin' Another Honky Tonk Down."

What truly is amazing is that Strait, after seven albums, can become so predictable in his choice of material, yet so flat-out dazzlingly inspired in his *singing* of it. As a singer, Strait is only unambitious in the sense that he long ago—and with considerable wisdom—staked out the somewhat narrow field, old-line, often Texas-flavored hard country and western music, where he's made his claim. But—to follow the metaphor further—he has an uncanny ability to keep right on mining nuggets from it.

Though Strait is not a songwriter, it hardly matters; he is not a singer like, say, a Merle Haggard of bygone years or a Willie Nelson of the *Red-Headed Stranger* era, who involves us in his personal revelations or world view. Rather, he is an interpreter of rather awesome dimensions. Almost without exception, he nails the ten songs on #7, just as he has the songs on his previous six albums, with an uncanny emotional accuracy. His voice has a robust, relaxed correctness about it that enables him to slip into these songs as easily as if they were each a pair of \$400 boots custom-made for him.



Jimmy Bowen, who has co-handled production duties here, along with Strait himself, has, of course, stuck closely to the basic guitar-steel-fiddle-drum-bass, five-piece band sound that has always served Strait so well. After all, a synthesizer or a string section on a George Strait record would be like purple spray paint on the newly refurbished Statue of Liberty, now wouldn't it?!

If there is any ground for criticism here it is that the arrangements, despite their basic country instrumentation, do have a certain relentless smoothness to them; it's as if the basic, raw, five-piece band sound the producers strived so hard for in the studio ultimately gets watered down in post-production. All the great guitar, steel, fiddle and bass licks, from the likes of Johnny Gimble, Reggie Young and David Hungate, emerge rather seamless, subdued, and smoothed-over after they've been filtered through the lengthy leveling process of mixing and digital mastering. Now and then, one finds oneself longing to hear—a la Dwight Yoakam—just one off-center cymbal crash, just a little trace of leaky guitar reverb, or a steel guitar that wails like a banshee rather than weeps sedately like a stoic widow at a Presbyterian funeral.

But within the greater context of Strait's disarming and effortless-sounding mastery of

his self-chosen musical idiom, such criticisms mean little. What Strait does may someday lapse into formula. But for the time being, at least, it still works wonderfully.

—BOB ALLEN

T. Graham Brown *I Tell It Like It Used to Be* Capitol/EMI ST-12487

What have we here? Where in the world of T-things does ol' T. Graham fit?

Well, he's a touch more tough than tender. He's a tad more tuned to Booker T. Jones than Tom T. Hall, to Mr. T. than to E.T.—either the cute little alien or the late Ernest Tubb. He tends more towards Tamla, as in Motown, than Texas. And basically, he's terrific.

But is he country?

Well, he was born and raised there—in Arabi, Georgia, to be precise—but that's not where his music comes from. *It's* about as country as rush hour in Grand Central Station or a hot summer night in Harlem. If you had to guess at its precise point of origin, you'd probably have to go back to some college bar in the early 1960's just before the mop-top Brits invaded; in those times and places, young white middle-class Americans performed their social rituals to the sweet-sassy

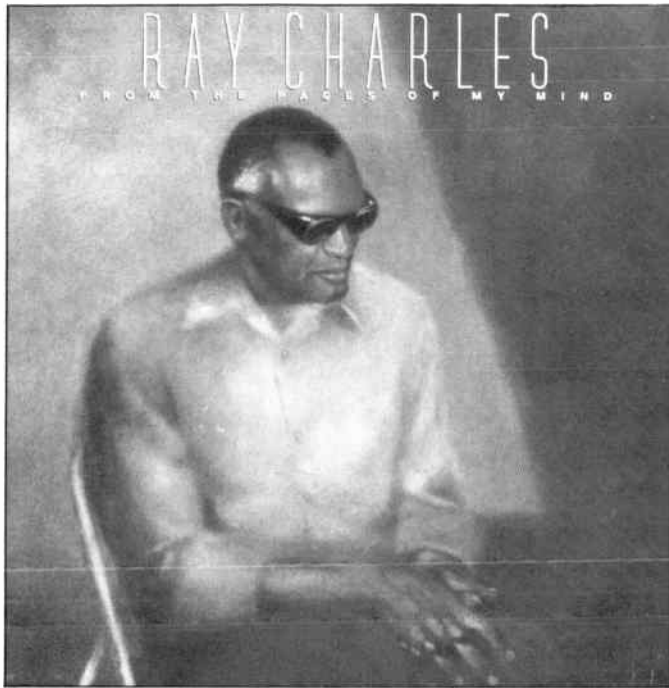
sounds of soulpersons such as Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge. That's where T. Graham Brown's music is: back in the land of the midnight Stax/Volt.

But is it good?

Hell, yes. If you want comparisons, think of a younger, less demented, better-humored, Americanized Joe Cocker, or a rougher Ronnie Milsap when he really lets his soul side shine; T. has lots of grit and gravel in them pipes, and power and potential too. When he gets down with those smoochy Muscle Shoals sassaphones and lets it rip on a hot-soul hook-slinger like "She's Mine," he's just right there, in the groove and on the money. Percy would be proud of him.

I Tell It Like It Used to Be is not, then, a typical Nashville product, if indeed such a thing could be said to exist these days. It's denser, a touch higher on the noise and beat indexes, a little more muscular than most. Which is not to say that much of the material—the crafty title track, the obvious follow up "I Wish That I Could Hurt That Way Again," three or four other pretty conventionally constructed ballads—would not meet the requirements of more than a few other contemporary suburban-country singers. They would. It's just that when done to a T. by His T-ness, they acquire a certain quality, a certain intrinsic raunch, which is

Record Reviews



missing from most "country" records. Partly that quality stems from the album's joint Muscle Shoals/Nashville production, but mostly it comes from T. himself. The boy ain't delicate at all. Couldn't croon to buy his Ray-Bans out of hock.

And that quite naturally raises the question of where he's headed. Is the country circuit really the place for a man of T's particular talents? We'll see. In the meantime, more power to him. He's not even a little bit boring.

—PATRICK CARR

Ray Charles *From the Pages of My Mind* Columbia FCT 40338

Ray Charles is far too spell-binding a singer to ever turn in something completely worthless, but he's never done an album that went in one ear and out the other as quickly as this one. I couldn't figure out why at first, so I went back to *Wish You Were Here Tonight*, the 1983 set that announced his reconversion to country music, for some clues. And the differ-

ences were apparent at once.

Ray didn't have the best material in the world on that one, but he was at the peak of his vocal powers—sighing, swooning, crying, soaring, preaching, moaning, caressing. He was totally involved, and made even the trivial sound transcendent. On this album, he sings everything at the same level, even pace, with no emotional highs and lows; he takes no chances in phrasing, offers none of his trademark tricks. He doesn't even bother to work out a distinct approach to each song. So his material would have to be extra good to carry the set. And it isn't, not by a long shot.

Cuts like the title song or "Dixie Moon" promise a lot but don't deliver much. One suspects Ray chose them solely because he likes the title phrases, but somebody should have pointed out to him just how little content the songs retain beyond that; there needs to be a little more meat hanging from those bones. But even songs that do attempt to go a little further ring hollow. "A Little Bit of Heaven" and "Beaucoup Love" make trendy allusions to blue-collar problems, but those problems are ultimately trivialized because they are injected into the song

so artificially. This from the man who made "Busted" a sort of national anthem two decades ago! "Class Reunion" purports to tell an everyday story with a surprise ending, but is likewise far too contrived, while "Anybody with the Blues," "Caught a Touch of Your Love," and "Love is Worth the Pain" all wallow in their own clichés.

What we're left with is a great voice selling itself short, in terms of both what it sings and how it does so. Harsh words, perhaps, but Ray Charles has never sounded so flat and uninspired.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

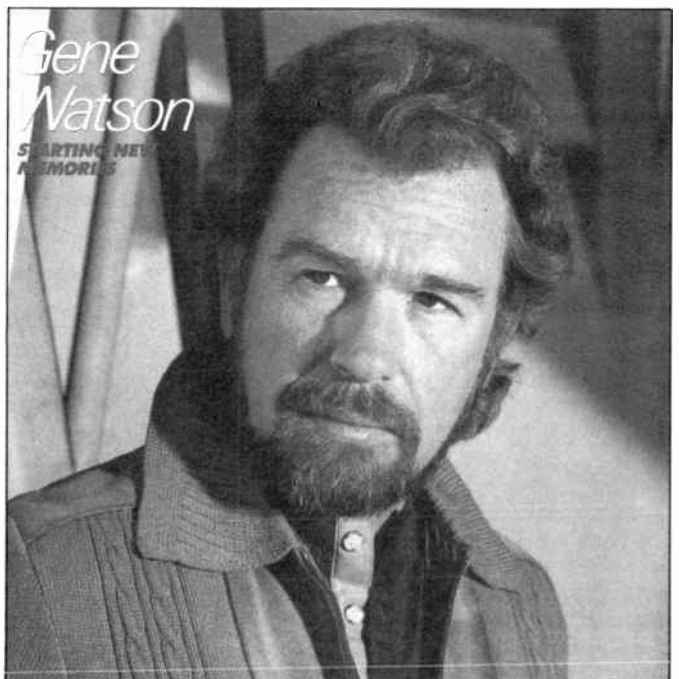
Gene Watson *Starting New Memories* Epic FET 40306

Gene Watson doesn't have quite the edge that many would look for in a honky-tonk singer; he comes across just a little too smoothly for my taste. He also sounds a tad too much like too many other singers some of the time. But after that, it's hard to find anything too wrong with this journeyman. Singers like him are, rightfully, the backbone of

country music. They help keep everyone else honest, and if your radio is sounding like mine, which I'm sure it is, we sure need more like him.

Watson's latest opens with a whining steel-guitar weeper called "Completely Out of Love," and that's always a good sign. He knows his way around some memorable phrases, like those in "Almost Like Having You Here," and he can impart a certain amount of honky-tonk wisdom through songs like "Take It From Me" and "Everything I Used to Do." "I Save Your Place" sounds like something that could have been done by Ray Price back in the glory days. And in "Sittin' on a Gold Mine" and "Atlanta Anymore," Watson serves notice that country music is still best when it tells a story, rather than when it attempts to stretch one catchy slogan out over three minutes. My gosh, the man even ends his album with a truck-driving song—not even a C.B. song, itself pretty archaic these days, but a good old-fashioned trucker's song about being lonely and tired and horny and on the way home to do something about it.

These are mostly midtempo ballads, nothing fancy, but full of lyric and instrumental hooks.



Record Reviews

Watson himself ain't much for vocal acrobatics, but he gets the job done and isn't afraid to make himself sound vulnerable doing it. He goes down too easily for a honky-tonker, like I said, but in his own way, he's as dependable as they come.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Randy Travis *Storms of Life*

Warner Bros. 25435-1

What we have here is *The Red-Headed Stranger* of cheatin' albums, a record so good that you have to play it twice just to believe that it's as good as it really is.

Storms of Life accomplishes three things: first, it establishes Randy Travis as part of the cutting edge of a Nashville renaissance that, to my mind, shows every indication of being more far-reaching and, ultimately, more important than the "outlaw" country music of the mid-1970's.

Secondly, the record establishes Kyle Lehning as an inordinately sensitive and gifted producer, a major power to be reckoned with. Credit also goes to Keith Stegall for his producing on two cuts.

Finally, on the basis of two songs, "Send My Body" and "Reasons I Cheat," I'd say Randy Travis has the earmarks of a powerful songwriter with the ability to go beyond the clichés and the endless clones of previous songs to produce some substantial work.

Storms of Life is powerful stuff. For a start, Travis is one of the most gifted male vocalists to appear on the country scene in years. In his voice there's a touch of George Jones, a hint of Gene Watson, a little bit of Hank Jr. and a whole lot of the North Carolina Cumberland Plateau, where Travis grew up on his family's farm. He plays that tremendous voice like a fine musical instrument, using just the right emotional shadings for each song. The result can be the upbeat and ironic sound of "Send My

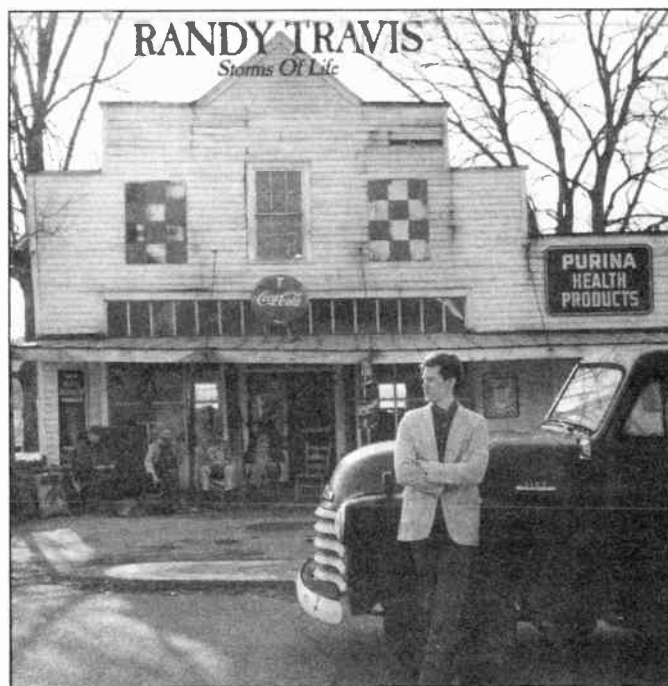
Body," which happens to be about being executed, or the almost painful—and I shudder to use the word—vulnerability of "On the Other Hand," one of the best honky-tonk ballads I've heard in over a decade of writing about country music.

The showcase production makes *Storms of Life* a joy to listen to. The attraction here is Travis' voice, and Kyle Lehning builds a stunning frame around it with impeccable fiddles by Hoot Hester, Blaine Sprouse and Mark O'Conner, steel by Doyle Grisham, acoustic guitar courtesy of Bobby Thompson, Larry Byrom, Kenny Bell and Mark Casstevens and brilliant piano played by Shane Keister, Dennis Burnside, Bobby Wood and Kyle Lehning. Lehning also uses touches of dobro, harmonica, mandolin, clarinet and excellent background vocals to accentuate Travis' vocals.

"On the Other Hand" ought to be required listening for anyone who aspires to produce a record. Like the entire *Red-headed Stranger* album, "On the Other Hand" is spare and simple, a straightforward vocal with subtle overlays of instruments, including a bit of piano reminiscent of Floyd Cramer at his best. Even the lyrics by Paul Overstreet and Don Schlitz are simple, nothing tricky, nothing catchy, although in less talented hands, the "on the other hand" hook could have been too cutsey. Yet the result is a song of tremendous emotional complexity. It's basically about not cheating, about deciding to walk the straight and narrow. Randy Travis shades the song with longing, with passion and with a sense that although the decision not to cheat may be correct, it's not easy.

On the flip side, literally, there's "Reasons I Cheat," which is self-explanatory. Here, with his own song, Travis delivers a performance that is both sorrowful and agonizing—"Yes I'm getting older/My life's growing colder/Just some of the reasons I cheat..."

There is not a bad cut on *Storms of Life*. Travis shows equal strength on ballads and



uptempo material, and he's not afraid to tackle an offbeat song and make it his own. "Bet you never heard a country song with the word *exhume* in it," Travis, chuckling, told me recently. Well, here's "Diggin' Up Bones," a Paul Overstreet/Al Gore number: "Diggin up bones, diggin' up bones/Exhuming things that's better left alone..."

After a few years of sheer creative exhaustion, resting up, I suppose, from the outlaw/urban cowboy frenzy, Nashville is going through a stunning creative rebirth. I think what's happening now is more important than those Lone Star Beer days for several reasons. In the first place, it's more widespread. The creative revival includes not only honky-tonk music like Randy Travis', but rockabilly, represented by Dwight Yoakam, Marty Stuart, Steve Earle, the bluegrass/instrumentalist tradition brought up to date by Ricky Skaggs and The Whites, country pop as sung by The Judds and The Forester Sisters and the music of the unique vocal stylists such as Reba McEntire and Hank Williams Jr. In contrast to the mid-1970's, the renaissance of today isn't tied to one or two superstars or producers or

even record labels. We're not talking Willie and Waylon and the boys here. It's an across-the-board creative boost. Even more important, the new songs are hits, radio and sales hits. New acts like Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam and The Foresters are at the top of the charts—not once, but consistently—and that's something that didn't happen ten years ago.

In short, it's a great time for Nashville and it's a great time for the fans of country music.

Randy Travis' *Storms of Life* is a *must-own* album. It is a classic.

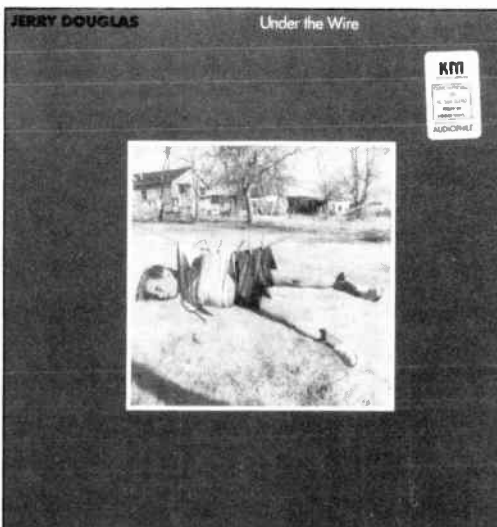
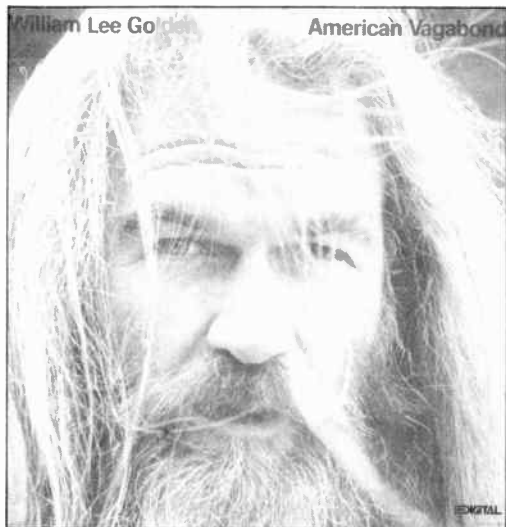
Last year George Jones sang "Who's gonna fill their shoes?" Now we know.

—MICHAEL BANE

William Lee Golden *American Vagabond* MCA-5749

It's no secret that The Oak Ridge Boys work very hard at being The Oak Ridge Boys. Here of late, each new album from the group finds them involved in an almost athletic effort not merely to live up to but to surpass audience expecta-

Record Reviews



tions as to who they are supposed to be. It was right here, in the pages of this magazine, a few months ago, that they compared their musical product to Coca-Cola, as they expanded upon their all-American philosophy of more-bigger-better, more-bigger-better Just repeat that 50 times to the rhythm of Sylvester Stallone dislocating his shoulder as he does one-handed push-ups in training for *Rocky XIII*.

It seems that William Lee Golden, who has always been a somewhat introspective and ethereal presence in The Oaks, particularly when compared to the bouncy, indefatigable extroverts Joe Bonsall and Duane Allen, has felt the need to take a little musical side excursion from The Oaks' perhaps confining rigors of "out-Oaking" themselves with each new album. The result is *American Vagabond*, a slightly flawed, but wholly intriguing solo effort that, in terms of both substance and soulfulness, actually surpasses any of the last few albums that The Oaks, at large, have turned out.

Golden is not a songwriter, so he's had to turn to outside sources for the ten songs on *American Vagabond*. But what an impressive and moving collection this is—with only a couple of exceptions.

As the title implies, there is a thematic feeling to *American Vagabond*. In the past Golden, with his almost shaman-like

presence, has reminded us that still waters run deep. He does so again here with the technically-limited but emotionally inspired interpretations he brings to these songs. He's a good but seldom a great solo singer, but he accomplishes a great deal.

Most of the songs on *American Vagabond* bear simply stated but powerful messages of humanism and healing. "Somebody Gotta Pay," for instance, reminds us, in almost moralistic terms, that there really ain't no such thing as a free ride. "You Can't Take It With You" poignantly reiterates the premise that love—unlike money—is something we should spread around now, since we can't leave it to our children in a trust fund. The full-blown gospel choral finale on "Let There Be Love," cowritten by former fellow music journalist, the multi-talented Walter Carter, more or less drives home the same sort of point.

Among the other noteworthy selections is Golden's solo version of "Come On In (You Did the Best That You Can Do)," which, of course, was a recent smash hit for The Oaks (the other three of whom give their silent blessing to this solo project by singing barely discernible background harmonies on two of the cuts). I find that Golden's version of "Come On In" made me stop and pay attention to the song's rather

compelling lyrics in a way that The Oaks' more super-charged and aerobic version never quite did.

Not to leave you with the impression that William Lee Golden is another Ray Charles or Willie Nelson. Here and there, he does sound a bit stiff, wooden and raspy, as if he's struggling to find his bearings as a soloist and a bit uncertain outside the security-blanket surroundings of the Oaks four-part harmonies.

Even so, the moving material Golden has chosen here, combined with the great arrangements from producer Booker T. ("Green Onions") Jones and his own emotionally well-defined vocal performances, make for a very moving, compelling first-time effort.

—BOB ALLEN

Jerry Douglas
Under The Wire
MCA (Master Series) 5675

It's safe to say that there is nobody who knows the dobro like Jerry Douglas.

At the ripe old age of 29, Douglas, a featured bandmember with The Whites for many years, has won one Grammy, and a half dozen first-place awards in *Frets Magazine's* annual readers' poll. Along the way, he has recorded with everyone from Johnny Cash and

Ray Charles to Ricky Skaggs and David Grisman.

On *Under the Wire*, his third solo album, Douglas is joined by an impressive line-up of his newgrass/new age musical cronies: banjo-player Bela Fleck—with whom he teams up to make the sparks fly on a duet, "Two Friends"; fiddler Mark O'Connor, who is featured prominently on a number of cuts, including the free-flowing "T.O.B.," guitarist Russ Barenberg, the Worf Brothers on bass and drums and Edgar Meyer, who also has a new solo album out on this noteworthy all-instrumental MCA Master Series, and who can be heard here playing bass on one cut.

With this impressive list of players, Douglas does nothing less than forge new and seemingly limitless possibilities for the dobro as a lead instrument. The dobro is unique enough to begin with. It has a distinctively lilting, often bent-note sound, sometimes mistaken by casual listeners for that of a steel guitar, or a specially-tuned acoustic six-string guitar.

Douglas' earlier solo albums have stuck close to the bluegrass vein. He began his career recording with the Country Gentlemen, at age 11; later, he became part of the group, Boone Creek, along with Ricky Skaggs. With *Under the Wire* he ventures into jazzier, more improvisational territory. In doing so, he offers up seven exquisite, melodically provocative originals. He also turns in a hyped-up interpretation of Bill Monroe's "Monroe's Hornpipe" and a breathtakingly melodic rendition of the old Edgar Meyer pop classic, "Time Gone By." Throughout the album, even in the midst of the most abstract and dazzling instrumental excursions, Douglas never loses sight of the value of maintaining a good melody.

If you have ever wondered just how rich and varied the dobro is capable of being as a solo and lead instrument, or if you've ever fallen in love with the soulful sound of the instrument itself, *Under the Wire* is the album you've been waiting for.

—BOB ALLEN

Buried Treasures

Reissues,
Rarities and the
Hard-to-Find

Hank Williams: Hank Williams' MGM recordings have appeared in dozens of configurations, but never in a definitive American series. Last year Polydor began a serious project to reissue all Hank's commercial and demo MGM recordings, minus overdubs and completely remastered in a series of double albums, in chronological order.

So far three sets have appeared: *Lovesick Blues* (825 551-1 Y-2), *I Ain't Got Nothin' But Time* (825 548-4 Y-2) and *Lost Highway* (825 552-4 Y-1), covering 1946 to 1949. No need discussing the music, but it is particularly nice having all Hank's pre-MGM recordings for Sterling in one place, and the sound quality is outstanding.

The packaging, however, is unworthy of such an important project. The cover photos are horribly reproduced, and the recordings are *not* in chronological order since undated demo records were mixed in. Compilers Colin Escott and Hank Davis, noted authorities on Sun Records, may be less knowledgeable about Hank. Liner notes seem sketchy and recording data is vague even though near-complete information is available for those who know where to look for it.

Freddy Fender: Freddy Fender was a regional star around Texas when "Before the Next Teardrop Falls" and a remake of his local hit "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" topped the charts in 1975 and brought him several years of national popularity. *The Early Years* (Krazy Kat 7437) is particularly welcome, since it compiles his earliest small-label recordings. Some of these recordings were overdubbed and released after he made them; these are in their original form.

The original 1960 "Wasted Days," complete with horn section, is so superior to the watered-down hit version



there's no comparison. The same applies to Fender's original interpretation of Ivory Joe Hunter's "Since I Met You, Baby." A remake version went to Number Ten on the charts in 1975. This original surpasses the hit version. Hank Thompson's "Wild Side of Life" gets an ingenious fusion of Tex-Mex and honky-tonk. Fender's early rockabilly efforts were primitive yet effective. Everybody glossed over Fender's roots when he made it 10 years ago; this compilation makes them abundantly clear.

Ed Bruce: Ed Bruce fans may have heard a bit about his days as a teenage Sun rockabilly but never heard how he sounded then. *Rock Boppin' Baby* (BFX 15194) compiles all his known Sun recordings, including six never issued before, and his first RCA Victor single, produced by "Cowboy" Jack Clement. Bruce was not the most impressive artist on Sun's roster then. Yet his potential was clear, evidenced by his original version of "Rock Boppin' Baby," a Bruce composition, which Lorrie Collins of the Collins Kids later transformed into a truly sensual rockabilly number.

Bruce often imitated Johnny Cash, for whom he sang backup at Sun. You can

hear him do so here on songs like "Eight Wheel Driver," two takes of "King of Fools" and the western "Ballad of Ringo"—not the Lorne Greene hit. He apes Jerry Lee Lewis on "Baby, That's Good." Some of the numbers are demos with solo guitar, and occasionally he tries too hard. He later recorded better material and wrote even better songs but this was where he started.

Charlie Rich: Charlie Rich also began on Sun—actually on the subsidiary Phillips International label—and unlike Bruce he began having his right off the bat—"Lonely Weekends" for example—though the hits were modest compared with his later successes on Epic. The two-album *Original Hits and Midnight Demos* (Charly Sun CDX 10) combines all ten Rich singles with an album of outtakes and newly-discovered demos.

Peter Guralnick has written movingly about the soulful integrity of Rich's music, and the demos support his insights. Some are historical documents, like the demo of Rich's composition "Thanks a Lot," which Johnny Cash later recorded. Another is an early try at "There Won't Be Any More," his 1960 RCA hit, as

well as stabs at rockabilly, boogie-woogie and 1940's rhythm and blues.

The high point of the entire album is a newly-discovered demo of a never-released tune titled "Ain't It a Shame." The laserlike intensity of Rich's bluesy, after-hours vocal on this one equals *anything* he recorded for RCA, Epic or anyone else. It is a soul-baring experience that leaves the listener drained.

Wayne Raney: Singer/harmonica player Wayne Raney's King records are becoming available again, a welcome sign since many of them anticipated rock and others were beautifully unforced hillbilly in the best sense of the word. *Real Hot Boogie* (CR30247) brings together 16 songs from 1950-55, many cut with The Delmore Brothers. What I can't understand is why four tracks duplicate four on the Bear Family Delmore/Raney album *When They Let the Hammer Down*. Also, "Bootleg Boogie" is mistitled; the correct title is "We Love to Live."

The beautifully laid back "Blues at My Door" and "I'm On My Way" with The Delmores harmonizing on the vocals are two of Raney's most obscure but powerful recordings. "Undertaking Daddy" is loaded with kinky humor that would keep it off most radio stations even today. "You Better Treat Your Man Right," "Heads or Tails, I Win" and "Beating Around the Bush" are more conventional, but no less outstanding.

Ralph Stanley: After Carter Stanley of The Stanley Brothers died in 1966, Ralph Stanley continued. In 1971, he took one of his best groups of Clinch Mountain Boys to Japan—this was before Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley signed on. The lineup featured fiddler Curly Ray Cline, with the late Roy Lee Centers contributing haunting,

Carter-like harmonies. A live album from this tour was cut in Tokyo but was available only in Japan and quickly went out of print.

Rebel Records has just reissued that album—a complete show titled *Live in Japan* (Rebel REB-2202). It mixes “Little Maggie,” “Orange Blossom Special” and “Blue Moon of Kentucky” with other bluegrass standards as well as Stanley favorites like “Rank Stranger.” The quartet’s instrumental work, particularly Cline’s fiddle, is fine, but the Stanley/Centers vocals are the centerpiece, with “Memories of Mother” and “White Dove” easily capable of sending chills up your spine.

Wanda Jackson: Wanda Jackson’s singing rockabilly again. She moved to gospel years ago, but she’s long been seen as the true female Presley, whose blatant sexuality and no-holds-barred delivery put her light years ahead of every female country and rock singer of her time.

Capital Records had no idea how to market a female rockabilly. Elvis himself suggested she try rock. She also cut plenty of country, and that’s where she had her biggest commercial successes. Though a recent rockabilly album she cut in Sweden is disappointing, Charly’s *Let’s Have a Party* (CDX 11), containing 32 of her hottest rockers for Capitol, is a reminder of just what the fuss was all about.

“Party,” from the Elvis film *Loving You*, was her only real rock hit, but others like “Fujiyama Mama” wear well, as wild, ripping and snarling as the day she cut them; ditto “Honey Bop,” “Riot in Cell Block #9,” “Hard-Headed Woman” and “Mean, Mean Man.” Her guitarists were hot as well. Buck Owens, Merle Travis, Joe Maphis and Roy Clark—Roy later played in her Party Timers band—are backing her, though Travis isn’t playing on “Fujiyama Mama” as the notes indicate. If you’ve heard only her country hits, prepare yourself.

— RICH KIENZLE

Essential Collector



Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Marty Robbins, Hank Snow, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Thompson

Vintage Country Radio:

Since no one’s doing much with vintage country radio, the best examples remain on Radiola. *Ernest Tubb/Texas Tyler* (MR-1141) is built around a 1946 Purina *Check-erboard Jamboree* featuring E.T. with guest shots from Jamup and Honey, Radio Dot and Smokey and the Oklahoma Wranglers. The flipside is a 1950 Tyler performance at Riverside Rancho in Los Angeles, where he fronted a tight, driving western dance band. The album ends with a 1954 Eddy Arnold program with some of his most free and unforced singing. He also plugs a Purina promo film on the digestive system of cows.

More elaborate is Radiola’s four album box set *Classic Country-Western* (4-MR-2),

which covers the years 1934 to 1958. Beginning with the super-obscure Colonel Jack and Shorty’s Hillbillies and Zeke Manners’ reunion of the original Beverly Hill Billies, the set progresses through 1930’s shows starring the Sons of the Pioneers to a 1946 Foy Willing and the Riders of the Purple Sage program and a 1949 Hank Williams *Health and Happiness* show.

The 1950’s material, much of it drawn from Armed Forces Recruiting shows, runs the gamut, starting with early Marty Robbins and some outstanding Ernest Tubb and Hank Snow performances. *The Columbia Country Caravan* from 1951, included here, was an abortive attempt by Columbia producer Don Law and studio

owner Jim Beck to create a Grand Ole Opry in Dallas with Lefty Frizzell, Ray Price and others. The Spade Cooley shows from Los Angeles feature his smooth—and occasionally too slick—big orchestra. For a well-rounded look at two decades of country radio, this is it.

Lefty Frizzell: Speaking of Lefty Frizzell, be forewarned that more Lefty material is coming from Bear Family, in the form of 1947 radio shows predating anything previously known. Even if you have the Lefty Bear Family box, you also need *Honky-Tonkin’ with Lefty Frizzell* (Flyright Fly 596) to complete your collection. The three Lefty numbers on this album were rehearsals at impresario J.D. Miller’s studio in Crowley, Louisiana for an upcoming Columbia session. Also featured is the original (and unimpressive) 1949 version of “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels” by obscure female singer Al Montgomery, an interesting historical artifact.

Hank Thompson: I normally hate re-recorded “Greatest Hits” recordings because artists seldom capture the spirit of the original records. One exception is Gusto’s *The Best of the Best of Hank Thompson* (GT-0060). These remakes of such Thompson hits on Capitol as “Wild Side of Life,” “A Six Pack to Go” and “Whoa, Sailor” were done with considerable care and plenty of respect for the originals. Hank’s voice is a bit older, but with his old steel player Curly Chalker, guitarist Paul Yandell, who plays the Merle Travis licks—Travis was on most of Hank’s hits—and other veteran Nashville sessionmen, these remakes are far above the norm. Thompson purists be forewarned: Stetson will have a reissue of his Capitol *Dance Ranch* out soon.

— RICH KIENZLE

How to Order These Treasures

Buried Treasures: Hank Williams’ *Lovesick Blues* (Polydor 825 551-1 Y-2), *Lost Highway* (Polydor 825 552-4 Y-1), and *I Ain’t Got Nothin’ But Time* (Polydor 825 548-4 Y-2) are all \$9.98, records or cassettes. Freddy Fender, *The Early Years* (Krazy Kat 7437): Ed Bruce, *Rock Boppin’ Baby* (BFX 15194); Charlie Rich, *Original Hits and Midnight Demos* (CLX 10); Wayne Raney, *Red Hot Boogie* (CR30247); and Wanda Jackson, *Let’s Have A Party* (CDX 11) are all European imports at \$11.98, records only.

The two album set Ralph Stanley: *Live in Japan* (REB 2202) is \$14.98, two records or two cassettes.

Essential Collector: *The Best of Hank Thompson* (GT-0060) is \$8.98 on records, cassettes or 8-track. The following are available on records only: Ernest Tubb/T. Texas Tyler (MR 1141) \$8.98; *Classic Country Western* (4-MR-2) 4 record set is \$24.98; *Honky Tonkin’ with Lefty Frizzell* (Flyright 596) is \$11.98 import.

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TOP 25

Singles

Albums

1. George Strait#7
2. Randy Travis*Storms of Life*
3. Dwight Yoakam*Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.*
4. Merle Haggard*A Friend in California*
5. The Judds*Rockin' with the Rhythm*
6. Reba McEntire*Whoever's in New England*
7. Hank Williams Jr.*Montana Cafe*
8. Alabama*Greatest Hits*
9. Ronnie Milsap*Lost in the Fifties Tonight*
10. Willie Nelson*The Promiseland*
11. The Statler Brothers*Four for the Show*
12. Eddie Rabbitt*Rabbitt Trax*
13. Waylon Jennings*Will the Wolf Survive*
14. Ricky Skaggs*Live in London*
15. John Schneider*A Memory Like You*
16. John Conlee*Harmony*
17. T Graham Brown*I Tell It Like It Used to Be*
18. Johnny Cash and
Waylon Jennings*Heroes*
19. Carl Perkins, Jerry
Lee Lewis, Roy
Orbison, Johnny
Cash*Class of '55*
20. Nitty Gritty Dirt
Band*Twenty Years of Dirt*
21. Hank Williams Jr.*Five-O*
22. The Oak Ridge Boys*Seasons*
23. Dan Seals*Won't Be Blue Anymore*
24. Tanya Tucker*Girls Like Me*
25. The Judds*Why Not Me*

1. George Strait*Nobody in His Right Mind
Would've Left Her*
2. The Judds*Rockin' with the Rhythm of the
Rain*
3. John Schneider*You're the Last Thing I Needed
Tonight*
4. Pake McEntire*Savin' My Love For You*
5. T.G. Sheppard*Strong Heart*
6. Waylon Jennings*Will the Wolf Survive*
7. The Statler Brothers*Count on Me*
8. Don Williams*Heartbeat in the Darkness*
9. Randy Travis*On the Other Hand*
10. Ricky Skaggs*I've Got a New Heartache*
11. T Graham Brown*I Wish That I Could Hurt That
Way Again*
12. Conway Twitty*Desperado Love*
13. Eddy Raven*Sometimes a Lady*
14. Hank Williams Jr.*Country State of Mind*
15. Merle Haggard*A Friend in California*
16. Ronnie McDowell*All Tied Up*
17. Kathy Mattea*Love at the Five and Dime*
18. Nitty Gritty Dirt
Band*Stand a Little Rain*
19. John Conlee*Got My Heart Set on You*
20. Michael Martin
Murphey*Rollin' Nowhere*
21. Johnny Paycheck*Old Violin*
22. Reba McEntire*Little Rock*
23. Girls Next Door*Slow Boat to China*
24. Ronnie Milsap*In Love*
25. Nicolette Larson
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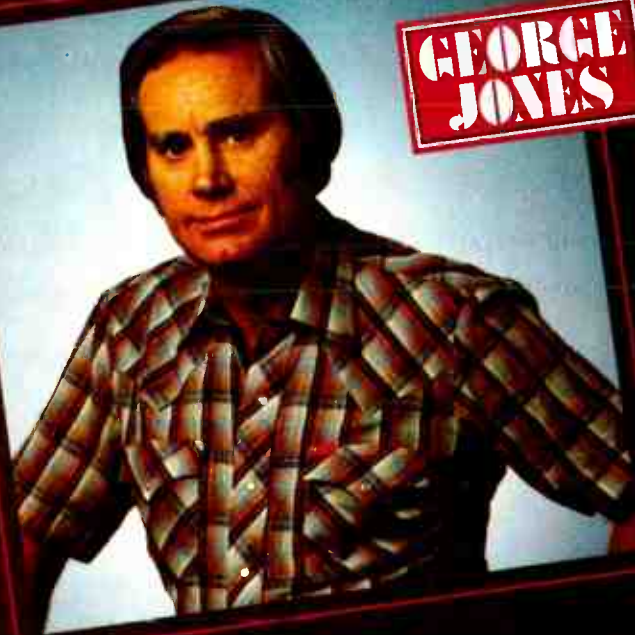
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