

COUNTRY MUSIC?



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COUNTRY MUSIC

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BETH GWINN



DENNIS CARNEY

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BILL BERNSTEIN/OUTLINE

GARTH POWER



Garth Brooks' rocket-like rise astonished the entire music business, not just Nashville. Garth Power is money power. The rest of Nashville hopes it'll rub off on them.

by Michael McCall

Garth Brooks bursts onto the stage, through billows of smoke, and bounces down a stairway through multi-colored lights as another sold-out auditorium full of fans explodes with deafening cheers.

It's just one more stop on the multi-million dollar tour of sold-out shows for America's newest megabuck superstar. Yet, on this night of all nights, a little more excitement hangs in the air. The new crown prince of country music, the economic savior who suggests that country music could rise to the top of American pop music on its own terms, is staging his first full-scale appearance in the Nashville area since he turned up the sales volume and hit the top of the pop charts with his third album, *Ropin' the Wind*.

Garth and his band, Stillwater, are playing the 10,000-seat Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, a college town about 30 miles outside of Nashville. In the crowd and milling backstage are several music industry insiders whom Garth is making rich beyond their dreams, and there's a few hundred more business-types in the audience who hope the brash Oklahoman will bring good fortune for everyone involved with country music.

The spectacle he unleashed that cool November night awed even those who thought they'd seen it all. It was almost as entertaining to watch industry veterans react to the euphoric atmosphere as it was to watch the crowd itself. The hysterical reaction Brooks draws has long been a part of American culture. It's happened to Frank Sinatra, to Elvis, to The Beatles, to Bruce Springsteen, to Michael Jackson, even to New Kids on the Block. But when has it happened to an artist who proudly says he plays country music? There are stories about the tens of thousands who lined up for Hank Williams' funeral, and veterans like

Minnie Pearl and Chet Atkins say Roy Acuff's popularity was so massive during World War II that hundreds of fans would line the streets of Southern towns waiting for his concert caravan to roll by.

Since the coming of the rock 'n' roll era, though, it hasn't happened to a country artist—not on this scale, anyway. The Murphy Center show sold out in 21 minutes, a record for the 10,000-seat arena.

The air crackles from the start. The crowd sits impatiently through new country group Great Plains and grows more vocal and excited during a confident, energized set by Trisha Yearwood. Once Stillwater starts, though, the charge must be like attending a Super Bowl or the seventh game of a World Series. The crowd whips itself into a frenzy of anticipation before the star appears, and they remain standing and straining to absorb it all throughout the 90-minute performance. Many in the crowd gasp at each song introduction, sing along with every word and scream themselves hoarse every time the star displays another dramatic gesture.

Brooks works a crowd like a star linebacker or quarterback charging up a football team before a big game. The singer paces back and forth, pump-

ing his fists in the air, shouting, fired-up—it's easy to imagine him stalking a sideline in shoulder pads and smacking helmets with teammates, raising the energy level another notch. He'll sprint across the stage, dangle from a rope ladder, pour glasses of water on band members—anything for a response—and when the crowd's with him, it works in a way that keeps heightening the level of emotion. On the ballads, he stares off with a maniacal glint in his eye, and at the climax of "Shameless," he falls dramatically to his knees as he wails full-throttle.



PHOTO BY BETH GWINN

The Nashville Network and Country Music Television both refused to show Garth's controversial video, "The Thunder Rolls." But Garth admits they weren't his only critics: When his wife Sandy saw the scenes with Garth acting the part of the husband in bed with the other woman and preparing to strike his child, she exploded with anger and gave him a strong piece of her mind.



ALAN MATOCH

Less than two months before, Brooks had set a new benchmark in country music by becoming the first artist to have an album leap to the Number One spot on the national pop charts its first week, an historic event that left Nashville's music business quivering. The country music community loves to celebrate its accomplishments—cocktail parties are held nearly every week for some Number One or big-selling album. As word spread of Brooks' unprecedented feat, Capitol Records quickly set up a party at the Country Music Association to honor its new superstar. Capitol invited everyone involved with the Nashville entertainment industry.

Jimmy Bowen, president of Capitol's Nashville division, opened the festivities proclaiming, "Sure, Garth Brooks is great for Capitol Records. But Garth Brooks is also great for all of Nashville and all of country music." He also emphasized that Brooks was not a singular phenomenon. He held up a copy of *Billboard Magazine's* pop album charts. "I see Travis Tritt at Number 27. I see Ricky Van Shelton at Number 42. I see Alan Jackson and Randy Travis and Trisha Yearwood." He named more than 20 country acts among the Top 200-selling albums in the U.S. He paused and stated grandly, "How about that, Nashville? Doesn't sound like a fluke, does it?"

Bowen then introduced Joe Smith,

president of Capitol's U.S. operations, who flew in from Los Angeles for the celebration. "What a great day this is," Smith crowed. "What keeps us loving this business and staying in this business is seeing a truly talented artist succeed on this kind of level. It creates an excitement we can all feel, when somebody you hadn't heard of two years ago is sweeping the country and bringing people into record stores because they must have a copy of his music."

Smith then brought on the man of the hour. Wearing a black, crewneck sweater and acid-washed blue jeans, Garth ambled on stage with a slow, aw-shucks swagger. Smith announced that Brooks' new album, *Ropin' the Wind*, had already sold more than three million copies.

"Garth Brooks has set a new benchmark," Bowen said, "and you're going to see him continue to succeed because he's got his head on straight and he's got some very creative ideas on how to reach people. He's showing you how you act when you earn this kind of success. He's a fine young man."

Garth then sauntered forward and was greeted with a rowdy ovation. Scratching his chin and mustering all the modesty he could in an immodest situation, Brooks apologized for his casual attire—"If I knew this was going to be this big a deal, I would have dressed for it."

He paused dramatically, gazing across

the crowd. "This has been quite a week, and I don't know if this guy deserves it," he said of himself. "I just think country music is finally getting what it deserves. It's the Number One form of music on this planet."

That same day, NBC signed Brooks to star in a television special focusing on his music, his performances and his life. "There is rarely a performer who explodes with the popularity that Garth Brooks has," said Rick Ludwin, senior vice president of specials for NBC. "We're tremendously pleased that his first TV special will be with us."

At the Country Music Association awards in October, Brooks became the first singer to jump from winning the CMA's Horizon Award (a new artist honor) one year to taking the Entertainer of the Year trophy the next. Altogether, he won four 1991 CMA awards, including best video for the controversial "The Thunder Rolls," best album for *No Fences*, best single for "Friends in Low Places," and the Entertainer of the Year award, country music's most prestigious annual honor.

Director Bud Schaetzle accepted the video award and tossed a pointed comment toward executives of The Nashville Network and Country Music Television, thanking them for helping publicize the video by banning it from the air because of its dramatically violent footage of a husband striking his wife, resulting in the woman pulling a gun and the trigger on her abusive mate. "Domestic violence is something we can all stand to learn a little about," Schaetzle said. "I hope that everybody down at TNN knows how much we appreciate their help."

In a backstage press conference, Brooks took issue with Schaetzle's comments on TNN's refusal to play the video. "The remark does not stand for Garth Brooks and his corporation. I love the people at The Nashville Network. Although my discontent and displeasure with them was very obvious, out of respect I never voiced my opinion."

When accepting the Entertainer of the Year award, Brooks stood before millions of viewers scratching his head with the pointed end of the award and said, "This is cool. It's funny how a chubby kid can just be having fun and they call it entertaining." He then paid tribute to his two primary country influences by saying, "I know this embarrasses these two guys every time I say this, but I don't think an entertainer is anybody without his heroes. I love my Georges, George Strait and George Jones. Thank you, guys." (Jones would later relate how the next week young folks called radio stations and walked into record stores asking about this George Jones fellow men-

tioned by Garth Brooks on TV.) After Brooks made his remark, he remembered another well-known George was in the audience, so he quipped that he did not mean any offense by leaving out the visiting President Bush, who laughed at the comment.

Brooks also took the occasion to publicly refer to "The Thunder Rolls" video victory. He said that, besides TNN and CMT, there was someone else important to him who objected. Later, he explained that he had discussed the video script with his wife, Sandy, before making it.

She asked him not to include any footage suggesting he was making love to another woman or that he would physically strike a child. When she saw the completed video's scenes with Garth acting as the husband in bed with the other woman and later acting as if he's going to smack his young girl, Sandy exploded with anger and gave the singer a strong piece of her mind.

He also suggested that he hoped his night of honors was the beginning of a career and not the culmination of one. "A big word for me is seven letters, something George Jones and George Strait have been able to do—sustain. I want to be here a long time and not be a flash in the pan."

Ken Kragen, the Hollywood-based manager of Kenny Rogers and Travis Tritt, says that Brooks is smart to be wary of winning so much so soon. "He's enough of a smart, sharp guy to realize that this year's sweep is next year's shutout. That's what happened to Kenny Rogers, and it happened to Randy Travis. There's definitely an 'All right, you've had yours, let's move on' kind of thing that happens."

The massive exposure given Brooks by the awards show sure didn't hurt. In October, *Ropin' the Wind* averaged more than 400,000 in sales each week, thanks in part to the star's stirring performance of "Shameless" on the CMA show and his four high-profile awards the same night. (Billy Joel himself contacted Capitol's Nashville office after seeing Brooks' cover of his song, "Shameless," for the first time. Joel stands to earn a six-figure payoff in royalties because of Brooks' success with the tune.) Capitol sales executive Joe Mansfield later attributed approximately one million sales

of the new album to the singer's appearance on the CMA show.

Billboard reported that *Ropin' the Wind* was still selling more than 175,000 copies a week at the end of November. By then, more than five million copies of the album had been sent to retail stores. Even more incredibly, Brooks' 1990 album, *No Fences*, was still selling at a clip of 140,000 a month. Brooks spent most of the fall of 1991 with America's number-one album, and he had another album in the Top Ten. He was out-selling Guns N'

Roses, Mariah Carey, U2 and other well-hyped rock and pop acts.

He set other new precedents, too, such as selling 23,807 tickets in Charlotte, North Carolina, in one hour and 17 minutes. That same day, he also sold out shows in Jackson, Mississippi, and Shreveport, Louisiana, piling up a grand total of more than 40,000 tickets sold in one day. The number would have been larger if the auditoriums had held more seats. For the Jackson show, police had to stop fans from camping out more than three weeks before tickets were to go on sale.

In at least one case, Garth's runaway fan enthusiasm has created an unexpected problem. His lawyer has announced that the Garth Brooks Fan Club "has been disbanded due to Garth's inability to meet one-on-one with each of its members." Instead, The Believers, Inc., a Tennessee corporation, has been formed which "will soon be publishing a Garth Brooks fan magazine entitled *The Believer*."

Off stage, the stocky singer has played it humble, even as he has been appearing on countless entertainment news programs and popping up as a guest on several prime-time shows, including the NBC series *Empty Nest*. When Brooks was on a Bob Hope special, Hope asked him, "Well, Garth, just what does it take to make it in country?" The singer shuffled his feet and replied, "Well, Bob, you need a guitar. And you need a hat. And they say you need talent."

To become a nationally recognized superstar whose music has crossed far beyond the normal country music audience, Brooks could have said you need a little something more, a little something extra. You need the guts to take chances and follow your own artistic impulses even if they do go "against the grain," as the singer touts in the opening song on *Ropin' the Wind*.

Whatever the reason, Brooks has touched a power chord. And he's ready to share his rewards without flying too far from the nest where he started. Asked if his success meant he was leading country music to the pop marketplace, Brooks replied, "I don't think we're going anywhere. I think the crowds are coming over to country. Country music's in a great driving seat right now."

The driver with the most power right now is Garth Brooks. ■



Garth works the crowd like a star linebacker.



COLUMBIA HOUSE

MUSIC GUIDE

LOOK WHO'S AVAILABLE THIS MONTH



**ALAN JACKSON—
DON'T ROCK
THE JUKEBOX.**
Title cut;
Someday; etc.
(Arista)
420-935



**Kris Kristofferson—
Singer/Songwriter—
Jody And The Kid; etc.**
(SSP)
430-165

**Travis Tritt—It's All About To
Change. Here's A Quarter (To
Call Someone Who Cares); many
more.** (Warner Bros.)
422-173

**John Mellencamp—
Whenever We Wanted. Title cut.
Get A Leg Up; plus many more.**
(Columbia)
430-231

**Trisha Yearwood. She's In Love
With The Boy; Like We Never Had
A Broken Heart; plus many more.**
(MCA)
426-148

BROOKS & DUNN 429-969
Brand New Man (Capitol)

DESERT ROSE BAND 430-108
True Love (MCA)

PATTY LOVELESS 428-094
Up Against My Heart (MCA)

WILD ROSE 429-027
Listen To Your Heart (Capitol)

ROGER WHITTAKER 420-364
The Country Collections (Capitol)

SOUTHERN PACIFIC 420-323
GREATEST HITS (Capitol)

HOLLY DUNN 425-785
Milestones—Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.)

RICKY SKAGGS 426-932
My Father's Son (Epic)

ORBISON/CASH/LEWIS/PERDINS 426-577
Class Of '55 (Polygram)

THE BITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND 425-736
Live Two Five (Capitol)

THE STATLER BROTHERS 425-090
All American Country (Mercury)

KATHY MATTEA 424-622
A Collection Of Hits (Mercury)

AIR SUPPLY 426-858
The Earth Is... (Scepter)

ROBIN LEE 423-178
Heart On A Chain (Atlantic)

SHELBY LYNNE 423-111
SOFT TALK (Epic)

WILLIE NELSON/WAYLON JENNINGS 422-204
Clean Shirt (Epic)

HIGHWAY 101 422-105
BING BANG BOOM (Warner Bros.)

EMMYLOU HARRIS 414-185
Brand New Dance (Mercury)

HIGHWAY 101 413-633
GREATEST HITS (Warner Bros.)

TEXAS TORNADOS 413-252 (Mercury)

JOHN ANDERSON 412-494
GREATEST HITS VOLUME II (Mercury)

SAWYER BROWN 411-363
GREATEST HITS (Capitol/Curb)

VERN GOSDIN 409-656
10 Years Of Greatest Hits (Columbia)

KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS 423-533
Pickin' On Nashville (Mercury)

THE CHARLIE DANIELS BANO 411-843 (Epic)

GEORGE JONES 408-260
You Oughta Be Here With Me (Epic)

JOE DIFFIE 414-458
A Thousand Wishing Roads (Epic)

HIGHWAYMAN II 401-976
Waylon Jennings, Johnnie Cash, Merle Haggard, Bob Dylan (Columbia)

RODNEY CROWLEY 386-094
COLLECTION (Mercury)

ANNE MURRAY 385-385
Greatest Hits Vol. 2 (Capitol)

FORESTER SISTERS 383-869
GREATEST HITS (Columbia)

K. D. LANG AND THE RECLIMES 381-624
Absolute Torch & Twang (MCA)

Lyle Lovett & His Large Band 378-935 (MCA)

RANDY TRAVIS 370-643
OLD 8 X 10 (Mercury)

PATSY CLINE 368-290
The Last Sessions (MCA)

THE BEST OF DAN SEALS 364-042 (Capitol)

OAK RIDGE BOYS 383-588
Greatest Hits 3 (MCA)

D. PARTONE, HARRIS L. RONSTADT—TRIO 352-633 (Mercury)

TAMMY WYNETTE 1352-427
20 Years Of Hits (Epic)

352-423

WILEY MARSHALL & THE BLUE BELLS 317-990 (Epic)

Pancho And Lefty

GARTH BROOKS 381-608 (Capitol)

**DOUG STONE—
I THOUGHT
IT WAS YOU.**
Title cut;
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BRYAN ADAMS 429-779 Waking Up The Neighbours (A&W)	JOHNNY MATHIS 424-408 Better Together—The Duets (Mercury)	GLORIA ESTEFAN 415-943 INTO THE LIGHT (Epic)	ROY ORBISON 377-945 All-Time Hits Vols. I & II (Columbia Special Prod.)
THE COMMITMENTS 429-753 Original Motion Picture Soundtrack (MCA)	THE ORIGINAL CAST 424-333 Phantom Of The Opera (Polygram)	THE CIVIL WAR 415-828 Original Soundtrack From The PBS TV Series (A&W Home Video)	THE WHO 1376-657 Who's Better, Who's Best (MCA)
LOUIS ARMSTRONG 402-941 The Best Of The Decca Years, Volumes One—The Singer (Epic)	RIGHTeous BROTHERS 423-772 The Very Best Of Unchained Melody (Mercury)	MICHAEL BOLTON 415-711 Time, Love & Tenderness (Columbia)	FLEETWOOD MAC 375-782 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)
DAN FOGELBERG 429-241 Greetings From The West (Mercury)	THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND 423-624 Brothers & Sisters (Mercury)	MADONNA 414-557 Immaculate Collection 394-551 (Mercury)	TONY BENNETT 362-236 Bennett Berlin (Mercury)
JAMES TAYLOR 429-209 NEW MOON SHINE (Mercury)	SCORPIONS 423-608 CRAZY WORLD (Mercury)	FIREHOUSE 414-318 (Mercury)	BEST OF THE DOORS 1357-616 397-612 (Mercury)
HARRY CONNICK, JR. 429-191 Blue Light, Red Light (Mercury)	JOHN COUGAR 423-574 MELLENCEAMP (Mercury)	PAUL SIMON 412-809 THE RHYTHM OF THE SQUARES (Mercury)	LIBERACE 354-522 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)
HEART 428-961 Rock The House Live (Capitol)	ERIC CLAPTON 423-467 The Best Of Eric Clapton (Mercury)	STEVIE WONDER 412-130 Jungles Fever—Soundtrack (Mercury)	BILLY JOEL 1336-396 GREATEST HITS VOLS. I & II (Mercury)
BASIA 428-722 BRAVE NEW HOPE (Epic)	BONNIE RAITT 423-186 Luck Of The Draw (Capitol)	JETTA MIDLER 411-934 Some People's Lives (Atlantic)	ELTON JOHN 319-541 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS 428-367 Blood Sugar Sex Magik (Globe)	NATALIE COLE 1422-279 UNFORGETTABLE (Mercury)	WHITNEY HOUSTON 411-710 I'm Your Baby Tonight (Mercury)	FOREIGNER 318-055 RECORDS (Atlantic)
DIRE STRAITS 428-359 On Every Street (Mercury)	SKID ROW 422-220 Slave To The Grind (Mercury)	THE WAUGHAN BROTHERS 411-306 Family Style (Mercury)	DAN FOGELBERG 317-149 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)
NEIL DIAMOND 428-318 LOVESCAPE (Mercury)	BAD ENGLISH 422-170 BACKLASH (Mercury)	GEORGE MICHAEL 411-181 Listen Without Prejudice Vol. 1 (Columbia)	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER 308-049 REVIVAL 20 Greatest Hits (Fantasy)
THE CULT 428-300 CEREMONY (Mercury)	FRANK SINATRA 421-651 Capitol Collectors Series (Greatest Hits) (Mercury)	BING CROSBY 407-437 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)	AEROSMITH 306-225 GREATEST HITS (Columbia)
PRINCE AND THE NEW POWER GENERATION 427-419 Diamonds And Pearls (Mercury)	EMF 421-487 SCHUBERT DIP (Mercury)	WILSON PHILLIPS 406-793 (Mercury)	LED ZEPPELIN IV 291-435 (Mercury)
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AARON NEVILLE 425-611 Warm Your Heart (Mercury)	PAULA ABDULL 420-257 SPELLBOUND (Mercury)	DAMN YANKEES 405-886 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)	BARRY MANILOW 1288-670 Greatest Hits (Mercury)
ROD STEWART 425-322 Downright Year's Greatest Hits (Mercury)	R.E.M. 417-923 OUT OF TIME (Mercury)	BARBRA STREISAND 401-141 A Collection—Greatest Hits... And More (Mercury)	EAGLES 287-003 Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975 (Mercury)
BOYZ II MEN 424-754 Cooleyhighharmony (Mercury)	JESUS JONES 417-691 DOUBT (Mercury)	LINDA RONSTADT 389-874 Cry Like A Hurricane. How Like The Wind (Mercury)	SIMON & GARFUNKEL 219-477 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)
AMY GRANT 424-457 Heart In Motion (Mercury)	PAUL McCARTNEY 1417-477 Tipping The Scales (Mercury)	LYNARD SKYNYRD BAND 381-129 Skynyrd's Innards / Their Greatest Hits (Mercury)	BOB DYLAN 138-586 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)
SKIP EWING 427-351 GREATEST HITS (Mercury)	MARTY STUART 416-305 TEMPTED (Mercury)	MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHY 412-338 Cowboys Songs (Mercury)	TANYA TUCKER 406-421 Tennessee Woman (Mercury)
STEVE WARINER 426-957 Greatest Hits Volume II (Mercury)	SAWYER BROWN 415-166 BUICK (Capitol/Curb)	MERLE HAGGARD 412-189 Greatest Hits Of The 80's (Epic)	ROSANNE CASH 406-397 INTERIORS (Columbia)
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HANK WILLIAMS, JR. 426-502 Volume 1: Roots And Branches (Mercury)	MCBRIDE & THE RIDE 425-403 Burnin' Up The Road (Mercury)	KATHY MATTEA 423-558 TIME PASSES BY (Mercury)	BILLY DEAN 422-527 YOUNG MAN (Capitol)

DIAMOND RIO.
Mirror, Mirror
Meet In The
Middle; more.
(Arista) 424-739

**GEORGE STRAIT—
CHILL OF AN
EARLY FALL.**
Title cut; I Know
My Name.
(MCA) 417-834

**HANK WILLIAMS, JR.—
PURE HANK.If It Will & Will,
more.(Mercury Bros., Cash,
420-109)**



**TANYA TUCKER—
DOWN TO MY
LAST TEARDROP.**
Title cut; Down To My
Last Teardrop; more.
(Capitol) 420-372



Vince Gill—Pocket Full Of Gold. Never Knew Lonely: When I Call Your Name, etc. (MCA) 418-459

Randy Travis—High Lonesome. Let Me Try: Heart of Hearts: more (Warner Bros.) 427-666

Reba McEntire—For My Broken Heart. Title cut; Greatest Man I Never Knew; etc. (MCA) 430-090

Dolly Parton—Eagle When She Files. Rockin' Years: Silver And Gold; more. (Columbia) 412-171

Mariah Carey—Emotions. Title cut. Can't Let Go etc. (Columbia) 428-029

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Record Reviews

Randy Travis

High Lonesome

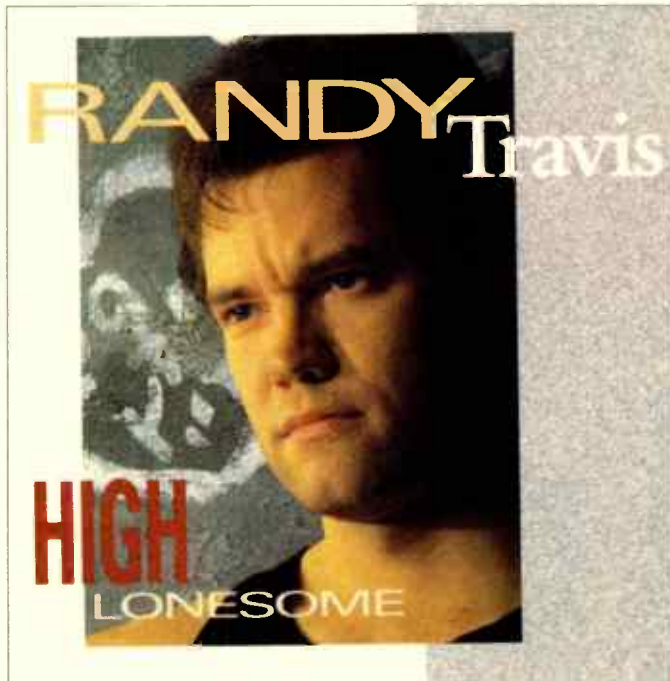
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Recently the Sunday magazine of a major East Coast newspaper ran a cover story on Randy, written by a middle-aged female reporter who spent half the story confessing her schoolgirl crush on him and her disappointment when she found he and Lib had married. She penned gooeey prose about how exciting it was to meet Randy at a Pennsylvania show, detailing what she wore and asking very few serious questions.

Granted, most female fans would love to have as much luck. The problem was that the author spent so much time drooling that she missed what, in the end, really matters: Travis' voice and musical maturity. Fun as such a childish article might be about a group like New Kids on the Block (or, 20 years ago, David Cassidy), it cheapens Randy's music at a time it's leaping ahead.

Times have changed since everyone discovered Randy nearly seven years ago. The traditional sound was fresh and new to an audience weary of the Urban Cowboy sound. To these folks, fiddles and steel were a revelation, and to older audiences who missed hearing them, their return was like an old friend come home. Now traditional music has been on top for a while, and it's inevitable that good as it is, what once sounded fresh occasionally seems routine. Even Randy's sound doesn't feel quite as revolutionary as it did.

The difference is, he's growing artistically without abandoning the original vision he



and producer Kyle Lehning created seven years ago on *Storms of Life*. Instead, the pair subtly play and tinker with that sound, experimenting here and there just enough to keep it fresh. I wish some of Randy's peers, who are *really* getting long in the tooth because they won't experiment, would take the hint.

Randy's songwriting, both alone and with worthy collaborators like Alan Jackson, now accounts for his strongest performances. His early stabs at writing seemed promising. Now that promise is being realized. His low-key humor, which comes out in his words and vocals, is a formidable combination, particularly on "Oh, What a Time to Be Me," a mocking, smug, I-told-you-so ditty from the "other man" to the friend who once had the girl. Co-written with Don Schlitz, its hints of Jimmie Rodgers (with Dixieland horns yet) are the perfect

counterpoint to Randy's smooth delivery.

So far, though, his most formidable collaborator is not professional composer Schlitz, but Jackson. The sharp-tongued combination of sarcasm and blue-collar pride expressed in their "Better Class of Losers" roars and shines with lines like, *I'm goin' back to a better class of losers/This uptown livin' really got me down/I need friends who don't pay their bills on home computers/and they buy their coffee beans already ground*. These vivid images don't just put the song across, they literally boot it over.

The exquisite "Forever Together," a reaffirmation of a relationship, is as unpretentious and direct as any love ballad around today, as is another Travis-Jackson collaboration, "I'd Surrender All." Either man could record these songs well, even though their vocal styles are different. A

swing beat propels the delightful "Allergic to the Blues," an Alan Jackson/Jim McBride dance tune, featuring hot twin steel guitars by Buddy Emmons and Doyle Grisham. The title track, a Gretchen Peters number, captures the "high lonesome" mood of isolation (complete with Marty Stuart's expressive, Bill Monroe-style mandolin and Mark O'Connor fiddling the way I wish he'd do more often).

Compare these tracks to the handful of flat Nashville pot-boilers here. One example is "Heart of Hearts," a cryptic, below-par Kevin Welch-Michael Henderson composition. One can argue politics on "Point of Light" (remember President Bush's 1988 campaign catch phrase praising volunteerism?), but I won't. This piece of Don Schlitz-Thom Schuyler fluff is simply a lousy song, not so much political as it is custom-tailored for some future public service ad. It's far beneath Travis' talents.

For those who wish Randy would try something creative, I give you the contemporary gospel tune, "I'm Gonna Have a Little Talk," a Travis-Don Schlitz collaboration which features only Travis' voice and the breathtaking *acapella* gospel group, Take 6.

If this sounds like a gushy review (for me), it is. In addition, bear in mind that I'm not unaware of Randy's other appeal, but as we all know, looks eventually, inevitably go (though Randy's got lots of years before he needs to worry). Nonetheless, the music on *High Lonesome* indicates that under those beefcake poses beats the heart of an artist unafraid to mature, unwilling to stand still. —RICH KIENZLE

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Record Reviews

Reba McEntire *For My Broken Heart* MCA 10400

When Reba McEntire started selecting songs for her new album, she told co-producer Tony Brown she didn't want to record anything uptempo or happy. It was her first album following the tragic death of six band members and her road manager, and she didn't want to plaster a smiling face where it didn't belong. She feared she would sound fake, and she was concerned about how people would react.

As a result, *For My Broken Heart* is charged with quiet, restrained emotion. It's a moving reminder of how Reba excels at conveying the complexities of adult feelings and relationships: Think of how convincingly she put across the delicate tension of hits like "Somebody Should Leave" and "The Last One to Know" or memorable album cuts like "Don't Touch Me There," "Red Roses (Won't Work Now)" and "The Girl Who Has Everything." On her new album, the tension rarely lets up, and it results in Reba's most consistently striking collection since 1987's *The Last One to Know*.

The singer smartly avoids any direct references or lyrical tributes to her former colleagues. Instead, the songs portray everyday folks caught in circumstances that force them to deal with grief, loss and questions about fate.

The title song, which opens the album, suggests that an unexpected turn in life can make it difficult to find the strength to make coffee and face another day. The album closer, "If I Had Only Known," gracefully touches upon how swiftly a loved one can be taken and how people naturally wish to have better savored the time they had together.

In between Reba surveys



the hidden battles of people caught in heartbreaking circumstances of everyday life. There's the young, upright married woman who yearns to do something foolish in "Is There Life Out There"; the retired woman who waits for family members who never arrive in "All Dressed Up (With Nowhere to Go)"; and the women who struggle with themselves for settling for too little in "Buying Her Roses" and "The Greatest Man I Never Knew."

These dramas are all the more powerful because the lyrics never slide into clichés or easy moral judgments, and Reba never reaches for melodramatic overstatements. The exception is her cover of the "The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia," a song as incredibly overwrought as "Billy, Don't Be a Hero" or some other campy remembrance of years past. Reba and producer Tony Brown approach the old pop hit, a Number One song in 1973 for TV actress Vicki Lawrence, with remarkable reverence. They slow the arrangement down to a less grating tempo, and thanks to Reba's careful enunciation, the story actually can be followed. But nothing can excuse that bombastic chorus.

In recent years, Reba has pursued a larger audience by experimenting with contemporary pop sounds and various other styles. On stage and on record, she appeared to rejoice in how capably she displayed her vocal technique and how commandingly she conquered a wide range of styles.

Perhaps using Dolly Parton as a role model, Reba has pur-

sued multi-media superstar-dom, and there's no reason to think she can't become the next "Daisy Mae in Hollywood," as Dolly described herself in "White Limozeen." But Dolly sacrificed some musical integrity somewhere in the bright lights, and she's now working to regain it by returning to what she does best.

From my perspective, some of Reba's musical moves in recent years have strayed from her strengths. Years before Garth Brooks, she balanced spirited Oklahoma swing with emotionally effective, pop-influenced ballads. To some of us, she had provided hope for the future of mainstream country music at a time when positive movement was hard to find. It's hard to fault someone for challenging themselves or trying something new. It's even harder not to be disappointed when that person doesn't live up to one's particular expectations. However, that's not the case here.

For My Broken Heart is an affirmation of music's ability to probe ticklishly complicated topics in a powerful, universal way. It also reaffirms that Reba McEntire is a remarkable talent.

—MICHAEL MCCALL



John Anderson *Seminole Wind* BNA 61029

At any given point in time one can look at the Top Ten and be reminded that greatness often fades into oblivion while mediocrity, dressed up in flashy clothes and a flashier sound, often

lives on.

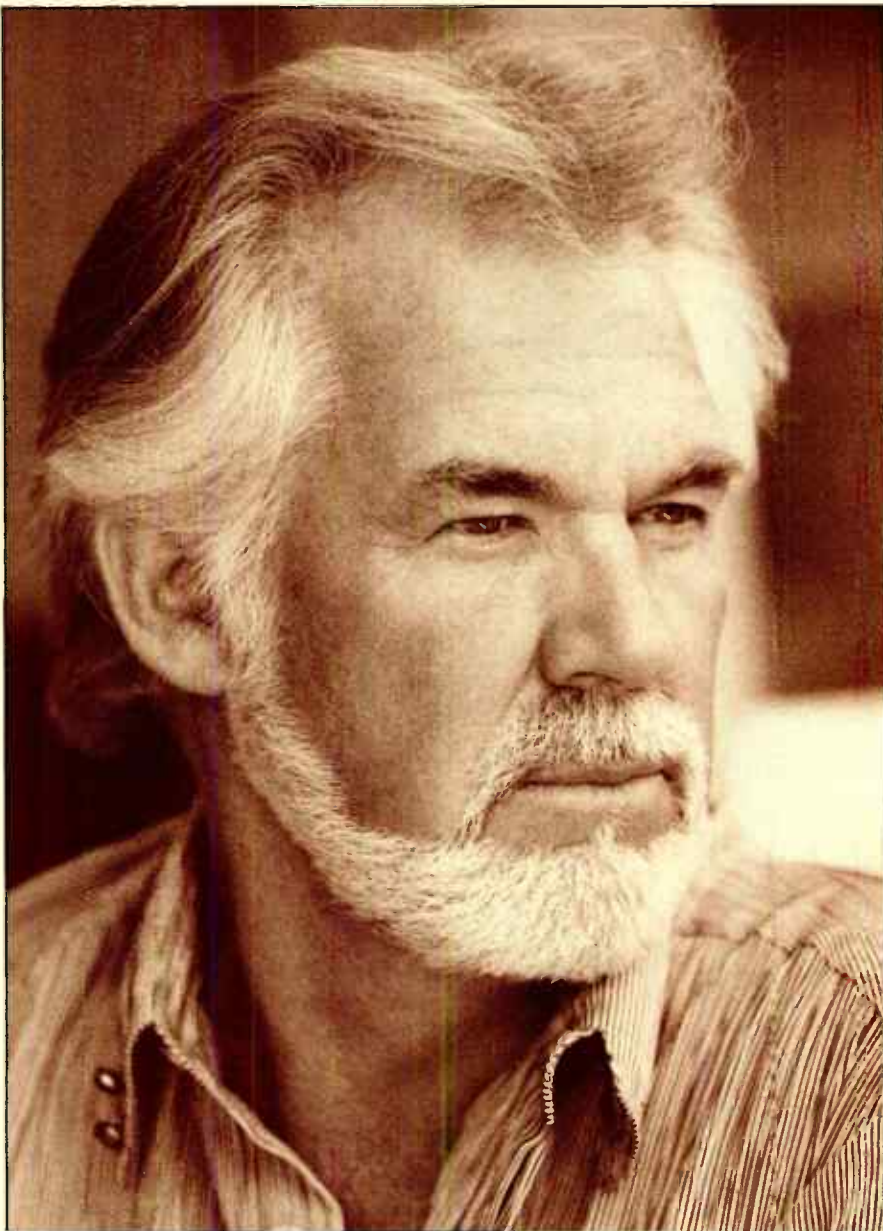
John Anderson is a case in point. After a brief run in the late 1970's and early 1980's highlighted by hits like "Swingin'," "Wild and Blue" and "Tokyo, Oklahoma," Anderson just sort of slid out of sight for most of the rest of the 80's. To me, it always seemed a great injustice that a singer hailed as one of the first of the so-called "new traditionalists" and acclaimed as one of the best country stylists of his generation was without a record contract at the turn of the decade.

Thanks to producer James Stroud (of Clint Black fame), Anderson's long creative hiatus seems at last to be over. *Seminole Wind*, his newest album and his first in several years, is a spirited, inspired and delightfully provocative effort that promises to jumpstart his long-stalled career.

Seminole Wind opens with "Who Got Our Love," a drawling, low-moaning, tongue-in-cheek love lament that is vintage Anderson. This radio friendly tune was written by Anderson and longtime co-writer Lionel Delmore, the same team that gave us "Swingin'" a few years back, and it's nearly as catchy a song.

Side one is rounded out by a pair of stirring honky tonk ballads on which Anderson spryly struts his vocal chops: "Last Night I Laid Your Memory to Rest," co-written by Anderson's sister, Donna Kay, and Frankia W. Treat; and "Let Go of the Stone," by the redoubtable team of Max D. Barnes and Max Troy Barnes. The side closes with "Look Away," a wry, ironic reflection on the so-called "New South" written by the great Bobby Braddock ("Golden Ring," "He Stopped Loving Her Today," etc.) and delivered with great feeling by Anderson.

On side two Anderson strays a little further out of the mainstream with good result. He infuses "Steamy Windows," Tony Joe White's



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Record Reviews

semi-lurid ode to lust and body heat, with smoldering R&B intensity, accompanied by some equally steamy guitar work from Dan Huff. On "When It Comes to You," a haunting tale of love gone sour and the ensuing bitter contest of wills, he is joined by the song's composer, Mark Knopfler, who underlines Anderson's compelling vocal with some brilliant electric guitar fills.

Seminole Wind is closed out by the title song, Anderson's own eloquent, heartfelt lament over the ecological demise of Florida, his native state. His stirring lyrics are framed by the lovely instrumental interplay of Gary Smith's piano and Joe Spivey's fiddle.

After a long, discouraging string of clunkers that almost culminated in total career derailment, Anderson, with Stroud's deft guidance, has hit his stride once again with *Seminole Wind*. All along, I believed that Anderson still had another great album in him somewhere. And here it is.

—BOB ALLEN

George Jones

And Along Came Jones
MCA 10398

When George left Epic Records—and Billy Sherrill—for MCA after two decades of triumph, it seemed on the surface that the king was starting the inevitable road downhill. When singers leave the label of their greatest achievement, then get nominated for the Country Music Hall of Fame, it's often an indicator that they're moving to the final stage of their career.

These Living Legends, artists who've sold millions of records, often wind up recording for some small, obscure label, content to tour and rest on past achievements or to drift into semi-retirement with appearances on the Opry or *Nashville Now*. Considering how many thousands of



dates they've played over the years, who can really blame them?

But then George Jones has always had a tendency to surprise people. His move to MCA may actually have been a move *up*. With Randy Travis' producer, Kyle Lehning, behind him, George, at 60, shows himself to be anything but ready to look back. Has Lehning changed George?

Nope. He simply helped George create an album that reaffirms everything we've always admired about Jones in the past. He didn't modernize, streamline or update him. It wouldn't have made any sense to do so. If anything, during the past several years, more artists—hat acts and otherwise—have drawn inspiration (if not ideas) from George's durable, enduring sound.

Here Jones and Lehning skillfully explore every aspect of Jones' musical vision, from excruciating domestic tragedies such as "Where the Tall Grass Grows" to "She Loved a Lot in Her Time" and the masterful if quirky "You Couldn't Get the Picture," which turns a "Dear John" letter into Post-It Notes. You get a masterfully flippant barstool ditty in "Honky Tonk Myself to Death" and deliberately bad novelties such as "Heckel and Jeckel" that are very much in the tradition of classic Jones throwaways like "Love Bug."

However, as always, anguished ballads—"I Don't Go Back Anymore," "Come Home to Me" and "Angels Don't Fly"—remain his forte, and that grinding, primal cry of desolation has, if anything,



gained power as he enters his seventh decade. "She Loved a Lot in Her Time," an errant child's unabashed tribute to mothers, has a power of its own. There's also a revival: the Cajun flavored "You Done Me Wrong," a Jones-Ray Price collaboration that was originally a hit for Price in 1956 (the original is available on the new Columbia Country Classics Ray Price set).

George wasn't voted into the Country Music Hall of Fame this year, but there's no question that he'll eventually make it. To be able to turn out an album this good, 36 years after he first entered a makeshift Texas recording studio, is inspirational. Where the genius of some of his peers (Lefty Frizzell comes to mind) wasn't seen clearly until after their deaths, George has lived to be recognized for what he is. His past problems behind him, he is able to view what he has wrought and still do it better than anyone else.

—RICH KIENZLE

Roy Rogers/Variou Artists

Tribute
RCA/BMG 3024

Be forewarned, *pahdners*: sheer nostalgia appeal, combined with a superstar roster (both of which this album has in spades), do not always great music make. Nevertheless, *Tribute* has its fine moments. It's not a great album, nor a particularly memorable one. But it is an immensely pleasurable listening experience.

According to the press release that accompanied my review copy, when word of this project got out, producer Richard Landis was flooded with calls from country stars, all of them dying to duet with Roy Rogers. (After all, who *wouldn't* want to record with Roy? It must be sort of like recording with George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln, or Lassie, or Wally Cleaver, or Captain Kangaroo, or somebody.) Rogers, after all, is an American icon, an institution, somebody who sort of like *stands for something*, you know? Why, he even had a chain of roast beef joints named after him, and if that's not the true all-American measure of "legend," then what is!?

And he's not a half-bad singer, either.

Thus there are stars, wall-to-wall, on this tribute; it's literally stuffed with them—Clint Black, K.T. Oslin, The Kentucky HeadHunters, The Oaks, Ricky Van Shelton, Kathy Mattea, Randy Travis, Emmylou Harris and a whole bunch more. And quite a few of them shine brightly in Rogers' presence.

The HeadHunters' vocal accompaniment on Troy Seals' and Gene Pistill's "That's How the West Was Won" is fun-loving yet authoritative. Randy Travis—wonderful singer that he is—is hand-in-glove with Rogers on "Here's Hoping." (Travis and Rogers are no doubt already quite comfortable with one another after their duet on Travis' album, *Heroes and Friends*.) Kathy Mattea sounds positively lovely accompanying Roy on "Final Frontier," as does K.T. Oslin on the timeless "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." Willie Nelson imbues "Rodeo Road," his duet, with leathery authenticity.

On "Alive and Kickin'," Rogers' only solo outing and only original song herein, the King of the Cowboys takes the opportunity to give humble, heartfelt thanks to all those millions who have welcomed

Record Reviews

him into their lives over the years.

The finale is (of course!) "Happy Trails," on which Rogers is joined by Dale Evans and about two dozen other country superstars (everyone from Marty Stuart to Roger Miller) who couldn't be fitted elsewhere on the album. And what a finale it is! It's guaranteed to raise goosebumps of nostalgia.

To criticize any musical project involving a national treasure like Roy Rogers would make me about as popular with *CMM*'s readers as I personally went over to all of their houses, spilled beer on the carpet and kicked their pet dogs. Yet I do have one complaint: Why aren't Doug Green and Riders in the Sky on here? The Riders are, after all, the most talented and devoted contemporary practitioners of Cowboy & Western music, and, as such, they deserved a spot on this tribute. Somehow, without them, the circle seems incomplete, and there seems the slightest taint of insincerity to it all.

—BOB ALLEN

Jim Lauderdale

Planet of Love
Warner/Reprise 26556

I recently received a copy of the advance cassette of Jim Lauderdale's music that has been circulating within the industry for a while. Lauderdale has been on every critic's short list as a comer for some time. And this album shows why the hype wasn't hype, but the truth.

Lauderdale is not a Hat Act. Nor is he a singer who tries to pen numbers that self-consciously sound like undiscovered Hank Williams Sr. tunes. His songs are modern, witty but without the literary, urbane folkiness that turns some people off toward artists like Mary-Chapin Carpenter and Don Henry. If he has a stylistic ancestor in Nashville, it would be the Steve Earle of



Guitar Town vintage. But Lauderdale's vision is also quirky and individualistic. You'll hear none of the plays on words (also called "hooks") that make most Nashville-generated numbers these days sound like they were written by punsters.

Musically, Lauderdale uses fiddles and steel only when they suit the song. Much of the arranging here is closer to mid-60's Bakersfield (or even Creedence Clearwater Revival) than the conventional sounds of Nashville. Vocally, Lauderdale bears more than a passing resemblance to the young, Sun-era Jerry Lee Lewis.

Face it. Few today can pen a line as irrepressibly stylish as *The king of broken hearts doesn't ask much from his friends*. Among the few bows to the traditional sound is the haunting 1950's shuffle, "I Wasn't Fooling Around," done up in a Ray Price-styled package. "I Wake Up Screaming" has the kind of dark, bluesy overtones that led me to regret Patsy Cline wasn't around to take a shot at it.

His version of "Where the Sidewalk Ends," which Jann Browne covered on her latest album, is arranged much like Browne's, and "Planet of Love," the title tune, has the same oddball, humor-laden feel of Randy Newman's best work. Lauderdale's gifts reveal themselves slowly, but every listen is more worthwhile. His artistry and gutsiness could put him in the same ballpark as Vince Gill. He goes a long way in establishing himself here.

—RICH KIENZLE

Sammy Kershaw

Don't Go Near the Water
Mercury/Polygram 314-510

You'll never catch him barefoot or without a twinkle in his green eyes. And I'd be real surprised if you found him sitting still. "I'm like an old woman," Sammy Kershaw chuckles. "I have to have my fingers in everything." And looking at him, you'd probably expect a baby baritone to come out when he opens his mouth to sing—you'd be dead wrong. This 220-volt Cajun's powerful voice will hit you hard. And if you're lucky enough to meet him, you'll discover he delivers as much punch in person as he does on disc. So much, in fact, that he's been accused of being hot-wired to a "jukebox full of George Jones oldies."

Jones—who, Sammy feels,



has a natural tear in his voice" and sounds like he's "eaten up with heartbreak"—did, in fact, have a profound influence on Kershaw, who met and began singing with The Possum when he was an impressionable pre-teen. "A lot of people say I sound like George, but I'm not trying to," he sighs. "All my life, everybody told me, 'You can't sound like George; we don't need another George.' But I've tried and I just can't do it; it's just natural harmonics. It's my voice and I've got no other."

So if you keep in mind that Kershaw, as a part of Louisiana legend J.B. Perry's show, has shared the stage with Jones since he was 12 (and

dueted with former Jones band member Lorrie Morgan on those occasions when George lived up to his other nickname, "No Show"), it's not surprising that his phrasing on ballads often mimics the master, especially on songs like "Real Old-Fashioned Broken Heart," "I Buy Her Roses" and the Jones-penned ballad, "What Am I Worth." Kershaw's voice, however, is more tender, less piercing than Jones'. It'll wrap you in the ache of loneliness; it'll reach deep inside you and wrench your guts. These moose and painful ballads provide some of Kershaw's finest moments.

On the uptempo tunes, however, it's all Kershaw. "Cadillac Style," his debut single, is a feisty boot-tapper that showcases his sparkling style. "I ain't Burt Reynolds and I ain't Tom Selleck," he sings. The tune's only weakness is you can't see his twinkling eyes and engaging grin when he belts it out. "Don't Go Near the Water," the title cut of this Mercury/Polygram release, is a swampy, cleverly-written tune; "Anywhere But Here" is a radio friendly rocker.

Then, in the split second it takes a heart to break, he slips back into raw pain. "Yard Sale" chronicles the aftermath of divorce, where people are "sortin' through what's left of you and me."

Kershaw readily admits he's pretty much lived and breathed every syllable he sings. That's why he hits hard—it comes from the heart. "Even when I was a little boy," he says, "I knew the difference between a guy singing from the heart and a guy just singing a song."

With Kershaw's gut-wrenching vocals, some of Nashville's finest musicians, veterans Buddy ("Set 'Em Up Joe") Cannon and Norro Wilson producing, and the legendary Billy Sherrill recording, this one's a shoo-in. It's just a shame it's not a picture disc.

—MARJIE MCGRAW

Record Reviews

Steve Wariner *I Am Ready* Arista 18691

There seem to be some obvious parallels between the careers of Vince Gill and Steve Wariner. Both Wariner, who has just released *I Am Ready*, his first album for the Arista label, and Gill, who was this year's CMA Male Vocalist of the Year and who contributes a few harmonies to Wariner's new album, are fine ballad singers, outstanding musicians and immensely well-liked and respected figures within the music industry. Both men have always taken a low-key approach to their careers, avoiding the more blatant, self-promoting aspects of "stardom," preferring instead to let their music speak for itself.

After years of making good records and quietly waiting for the worm to turn, Gill's hour in the sun has finally come around. Wariner—after a handful of hit singles and a number of albums for RCA (the label where both he and Gill made their inauspicious debuts), then MCA (Gill's current home) and now Arista—is still biding his time.

I Am Ready is certainly a step in the right direction for Wariner, though not nearly the bold one that is needed. Over the years he's become pigeonholed as a sort of smooth-crooning, country-pop ballad singer, and *I Am Ready*, solid effort that it is, does not stray far enough or resolutely enough from that mold.

There are a handful of top-notch cuts on here that remind us that Wariner is indeed a far more versatile stylist than he's normally given credit for. "My, How the Time Don't Fly" (one of a half-dozen selections that Wariner either wrote or co-wrote) is a case in point. He gives the song's bittersweet lyrics and catchy, mid-tempo feel just the right



spin with his witty vocal delivery. The high-spirited "Crash Course in the Blues" (co-written by Wariner, John Jarvis and Don Cook) not only provides a refreshing and much-needed uptempo change, but also gives Wariner an outlet for his deft lead guitar stylings. He is ably assisted here by fellow guitar masters Albert Lee, Reggie Young and Mac McAnally.

"Crash Course" is indeed a pretty good indication of what *I Am Ready* needs a little more of: a little more push, a little more shove, a little more rawness, blood and guts and a little less countrified Perry Como. Unfortunately, the rest of the album, solid effort that it is, is too heavily weighted toward the heartfelt (some would say sappy), middle-of-the-road ballads that have become Wariner's signature.

The more memorable cuts on *I Am Ready* demonstrate that Wariner can throw us a change-up right along with the best of them when he wants to. He just needs to do it a little more often.

—BOB ALLEN

Brooks & Dunn *Brand New Man* Arista 18658

Kix Brooks leans back in his chair. "There's nothing weird or complicated about the music we're trying to make," he says. "We're just cranking it up and going for a good time."

That would be an understatement. Brooks & Dunn's debut Arista disc, *Brand New*



Man, makes you want to head for the nearest honky tonk, swill down a cold brew, grab a partner and hit the dance floor. If you're looking for music to soothe a broken heart, find another album; if you want romantic tunes so you can dance cheek-to-cheek, forget it—this is one of the hottest collections of kick-ass country music available. In fact, there's only one slow song on the whole album.

"When we were nearing the end of writing the album, we looked and found out we didn't have any ballads," Ronnie Dunn confirms. "We hadn't really written a love song, so we had to kind of stop ourselves and slow down."

What's responsible for the plethora of white-hot honky tonk tunes? The two shake their heads, admitting that ballads don't come easy. "We get together and immediately start stirring it up," says Brooks. "Before you know it, we're rockin'!"

And you will be too—whatever chemistry these two have, it works. The two—Brooks, a top Nashville tunesmith, and Dunn, a 1990 Marlboro Talent contest winner—crank out some of the most fun, danceable music around. Part of their magic comes from two songwriters singing their own material. They're not just selling words, they're singing their lives. Brooks, a Shreveport native, grew up just down the street from Johnny Horton's home; Dunn's father was an oil pipeline worker who played in a "hillbilly band"—both singers were spoon-fed country music from the time they were in

diapers.

Their lyrics are strong, the music an interesting marriage of Southern rock and straight-ahead country. Although their style is traditional, there's almost a 70's pop sound to some of their chord changes, especially in their lone ballad, "Still in Love With You," with its Eagles-like progressions. On "Lost and Found" and "Brand New Man," the power chords and harmonies are reminiscent of early Alabama.

Even when you're caught up in the rollicking "Boot Scootin' Boogie," with its great honky tonk piano, you hear a slide guitar instead of steel, which gives the number a Southern rock/bluesy effect. The fiddles are done ala Charlie Daniels.

In "I'm Still No Good," the duo tackle both Hank Jr. and Hank Sr. in the same song. The lead-in is a throwback to the 50's when country was steel, fiddle and acoustic; the second verse kicks in with a Hank Jr. beat. It's foot-stompin' country at its best. But the two Hanks aren't the only ones given a nod to. "Neon Moon" proves the two can hold their own with the big boys like Jimmy Buffet and Eddy Raven when it comes to setting honky tonk lyrics to island rhythms. "Cool Drink of Water," the tale of a girl who hocks her engagement ring to buy a hot dress, is a witty, uptempo rocker with a chemically responsible (in a honky tonk?!) attitude.

The multi-dimensional sound Brooks & Dunn create is refreshing—just when you think they're leaning to the left, they swing back to traditional, but always with one boot firmly planted in Southern rock. That explains their broad appeal and why the title cut, their first single, bolted to the top of the charts.

Bored with ballads? Sick of crying in your beer when you know you should be out having a good time? Grab this disc and a partner who can boogie. You'll get a crash course in fun.

—MARJIE MCGRAW

Record Reviews

B.B. Watson

Light at the End of the Tunnel

BNA 61020

Just when honky tonk music started to seem safe, along comes a Texan with a wide swagger, a loud laugh and a rambunctious glint in his eye.

B.B. Watson has a big voice, and he likes to let it fly. On the title song, he celebrates a glimmer of opportunity with an unrestrained howl. By song's end, he's mocking the sound of the freight train he fears might be around the bend, as if to say nothing can knock him off track now that he's built up a head of steam. In many ways, Watson kicks a barrel full of peanut shells onto the dance floor that country's neo-traditionalists have just swept clean. In "Honkytonk the Town Tonight," he proudly personifies the spirit of the guys that Garth Brooks plans to meet when he talks of friends in low places, and he does so without the guilt that runs through Clint Black's "Killin' Time" or "This Nightlife."

He doesn't wear a hat, and he's not exactly the best candidate for posing for some pin-up centerfold. He'll tell ya quick that B.B. Watson isn't his real name, that B.B. stands for the nickname "Bad Boy" given by the musicians on his album, and that his record company is a little afraid of what he might say or do. At a time when aw-shucks politeness and sensitivity rule, he's somewhat unreconstructed. But, man, he can sing.

He sounds like Hank Jr. freed of family ties and political commentary, or like Gary Stewart heading out for a night rather than looking for a way home. He's not above bragging, as in the obvious postal delivery *entendre* of "Overnight Male," and he openly expresses his appreciation for the woman with the "drop dead smile and the go-



to-hell look in her eye."

When Watson slows down to express his pain, his directness can knock a listener back. "Eye For an Eye," which is the album's most powerful ballad, reveals the emotion that pushes B.B. through life with such force. Like the loud guy in the middle of the bar, B.B. wants to make himself heard. In this case, he's a colorful guy worth hearing.

—MICHAEL MCCALL

Nanci Griffith

Late Night Grande Hotel
MCA 10306

Change has been one of the few constants in Nanci Griffith's career. Her style has shifted over the course of her nine albums—from the folk traditions of *Poet in My Window* to the country/folkabilly of *Last of the True Believers* to the solid country of *Lone Star State of Mind* to the pop/folk of *Storms*. This latest album, *Late Night Grande Hotel*, goes further into the pop realm, which makes sense, since another of the changes she's made is a move to MCA's pop division in Los Angeles from the country division in Nashville.

Steve Earle did the same a couple of years back and Rosanne Cash made a similar move recently—from CBS' Nashville office to New York. Why is it that some of our finest singer/songwriters are finding more of a home in the pop world? Are the artists merely expanding their horizons, or is country radio's reluctance to accept diversity to



blame? In any case, even Griffith's voice is a little more "mainstream"; her wonderfully offbeat phrasing and vocal inflections are toned down, though she does get in the occasional flourish heard in abundance on past albums.

One thing hasn't changed though—Griffith's songwriting. It remains top-notch, and solidly in the poetic, literary folk/country vein. Each of the eight songs that she wrote or co-wrote for *Late Night Grande Hotel* is a gem, shining with heartfelt emotion and character. She masterfully weaves tales of (mostly) loneliness, distance and isolation (but never hopelessness), tempered by the finding of inner strength. Consider these lyrics from the title track: *And maybe you were thinking/that you thought you knew me well/but, no one ever knows the heart of anyone else/I feel like Garbo in this late night grande hotel/Cause living alone is all I've ever done well.* "Hometown Streets" suggests that the disconnected feel of life on the road has made its mark on Griffith: *Hometown streets are paved with gold/with faces that you've always known/But you'll never see them/until you pack your dreams and leave them.* Even the simplest of ideas—morning light in "It's Just Another Morning Here" and high-tension wires in "The Power Lines"—provide Griffith with the raw materials with which to paint moving, achingly beautiful portraits of various facets of life.

Her instinct for picking appropriate songs by other writers (the other three of *Late*

Night's 11 cuts) proves infallible as well. Here she does another song from Julie Gold. (Remember, Griffith was the first artist to record Gold's Grammy-winning "From a Distance"—long before Bette Midler and a host of others cashed in on it.) This one's called "Heaven," and it works beautifully, as does Vince Bell's powerful "The Sun, Moon and Stars." Likewise for the album's closer, the brilliant "San Diego Serenade," written by Tom Waits. Its piano and string arrangement provide the proper backdrop for one of Griffith's most subdued, gentle performances.

An artist—especially one on the "folkie" side—runs the risk of falling into pretention and affectation when tackling an "issue" song, but Griffith, to her credit, avoids these pitfalls on "Down 'n' Outer," her look at homelessness in the United States. Her deft handling makes for a thought-provoking song that is neither preachy nor wishy-washy.

But not everything on *Late Night* is so heavy and involving. Griffith lightens things up with "One Blade Shy of a Sharp Edge," a wry jab at the Mercedes-driving, yuppie, young republican crowd. It's reminiscent of The Roches, the urban folk trio known as much for their bizarre humor as for their sisterly harmonies. And speaking of harmonies, two guest vocalists appear on *Late Night Grande Hotel*, Phil Everly on "Just Another Morning Here" and husky-voiced British popster Tanita Tikaram on "It's Too Late." In both cases, they add a nice touch, their lows countering Griffith's highs.

With *Late Night Grande Hotel*, Griffith's excellence as a singer/songwriter shines through once again, and producers Peter Van-Hooke and Rod Argent have done right by her. If all of the changes she's made bring her music to a wider audience, they will have been worthwhile. She's been a well-kept secret for too long. —GEORGE FLETCHER

People

COME WITH ME, FANS

Marjie McGraw described her adventure on the Patty Loveless Scavenger Hunt in last issue's Record Reviews section, but she was not with the winning team. Hazel, however, was.—Ed.

Welcome to the great **Patty Loveless Scavenger Hunt**. Best that I can, I will take you with me. First, we were provided by mail with a tape of Patty's wonderful new MCA album, *Up Against My Heart*, and were invited to meet for the "hunt" at the Country Music Hall of Fame parking lot. Nine teams were chosen, and as we drove away in nine vans, we received our first clue.

Come with me as we cruise down Broadway to the historic Union Station Hotel, where we listened to "Waiting for the Phone to Ring" as we were advised. Out we skedaddled down 8th Avenue to Franklin Road to Stevens Market, where a "Jealous Bone" was discovered in a shopping cart. Our next stop was Maryland Farms Country Club, where we danced to "Hurt Me Bad (In a Real Good Way)," then out to some park (by now I am lost) where we had to dress up in real tacky clothes and perform in a video. During the entire trip Patty's tape was played in the van, and we had to busy ourselves answering questions like, "What color is mentioned in four Patty Loveless song titles?"

After our Academy Award performance in the video, the last clue said, "Join us for biscuits and jams." Loveless Restaurant is world-renowned in this field, so we headed out Highway 100. The rations were absolutely the best on the planet.

Under the big top (tent) we dined—hoping we would win the scavenger hunt, but not knowing what the prize would be. As each group presented their scavenger items and videos to the judges, I knew our group had a great shot. Right I was. The prize, a pair of Justin boots for each of us. Winners included MCA's **Michelle Myers**, Sony Publishing's **Tracy Gershon**, Polygram Publishing's **Milly Catignani**, MCA's **John Day**, Sony Publishing's **Jim Scherer**, Polygram Publishing's **Doyle Brown**, your very own **Hazel Smith**, Zomba Publishing's **Thad Tarelton**, Alamo-Irving Music's

HOLD ON, PARTNER



Pals Roy Rogers and Clint Black got a chance to saddle up for their video, "Hold On Partner." If you've seen the video, you know that there's some mighty fine footage of days gone by from old western movies. Also if you've seen the video, you know that the horses are a little "different" than the ones that Roy used to ride in the good old days. Oh, the magic of videos.

Mary Del Frank, Music Biz Attorney **Doug Howard** and super songwriter **Alan Shamblin**. We had a ball. I just wish all you fans could have been with us in person. Since you couldn't, I hope you enjoyed reading about a fun afternoon in Music City and the music of the next female superstar, Patty Loveless.

DIAMOND RIO IN NEW BOOTS

The hot young Arista Records group, **Diamond Rio**, has something to brag about with that Number One single, "Meet in the Middle," to say nothing of their second hot single, "Mirror, Mirror." Everybody's taking notice, especially the folks at Laredo Boots. They've just been added as a sponsor for the group. Ten feet now wear Laredos, I betcha.

CASH AND CROWELL CALL IT QUITS

The announcement came in a press release, but rumors of the split between **Rosanne Cash** and hubby **Rodney Crowell** had been circulating around

town for months. Now it's official: The couple filed for divorce, ending a marriage that began in 1979. Separated since June, Rosanne moved to Connecticut while Crowell remained in Nashville. In the press release Crowell states, "After much consideration, and with mutual love and respect, Rosanne and I have decided to divorce. We remain close friends and co-parents of our children."

BOXED SETS

Look for a double CD or cassette set on **Kris Kristofferson**. Monument/Sony Special Products has released *Singer/Songwriter*—it should be available by the time you read this. On one disc you'll find Kristofferson singing all his classic songs, and on the second you'll find all his songs that became hits for other artists.

Another collection to look for is MCA's **Jerry Jeff Walker**—*Great Gonzos*. Included are 14 classic **Jerry Jeff** recordings from the 1970's. Most of these songs were written by other writers, including **Willie Nelson**, **Guy Clark** and others.

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

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MEN WITHOUT HATS



Travis Tritt and Marty Stuart teamed up at the video shoot for Tritt's single, "The Whiskey Ain't Working," written by Marty and Ronny Scaife. Tritt and Stuart are on the road together, too, bringing their No Hats Tour to selected markets.

THANKS, GARTH FUNDIS

There's another **Garth** on the musical horizon, **Garth Fundis**. He was the one for all these years until the man from Oklahoma showed up. You remember Fundis as producer for **Don Williams** and of course for the late **Keith Whitley**. Garth did a fine job with Whitley's *Kentucky Bluebird* album. Fine music with not a lot to work with. Thanks, Garth.

HOSTS WITH THE MOST

Marty Stuart, Mac Wiseman and **Chris Hillman** hosted the International Bluegrass Music Association Awards in Owensboro, Kentucky. Won't it be wonderful when *all* our music, including bluegrass, can be televised for all events, including these special awards. It's high time we recognized this wonderful art enjoyed by so many.

THANKS TO HANK JR.

Thanks to the chip off the old block, **Hank Williams Jr.** He commissioned sculptors **Doug** and **Sandra McDonald** to create a statue of his father in Montgomery, Alabama. The 6'2" figure took over 1800 hours to complete. The unveiling of the statue took place on the 68th anniversary of Williams' birth in Montgomery. I don't know about you, but I am

proud there is a statue of the great **Hank Williams**. Shucks, I think there should be a Hank Williams postage stamp. There's not enough press on country music stars. Our stars should be in encyclopedias. Why, did you know that **Bill Monroe**, who invented his own music, is not even mentioned in the *World Book Encyclopedia*? Shame and disgrace.



A dedication for all the world to see.

COLLIE AILING

Much loved **Biff Collie** is suffering from a recurrence of cancer, which required both radium and chemotherapy. A member of the Disc Jockey Hall of Fame, Collie has been a mainstay in many a star's career. **Colonel Tom Parker** (**Elvis Presley's** manager) and **Hank Williams Jr.** and his manager, **Merle Kilgore**, have been most helpful to Biff. There is a fund to assist Biff at Forest Hills Baptist Church in Brentwood if you'd like to help this country music radio pioneer. My personal thanks and prayers go out to all who have so graciously opened their hearts and pocketbooks. God bless you.

A JENNINGS WEDDING

Buddy Jennings, **Waylon's** third child, was named for **Buddy Holly**. When he, sister **Julie** and brother **Terry** moved from Texas to Nashville to live with **Waylon** and wife **Jessi Colter**, **Waylon** and **Jessi** had a bus driver named **Harley Pinkerton** who had a daughter named **Kathy**. **Buddy** and **Kathy** became friends. This was a dozen or more years ago. Last year, **Buddy** was working the Summer Lights Festival here in Nashville and met up with **Kathy** again. Needless to say, the duo became an item, and last week they were married at Judson Baptist Church. **Kathy** was lovely in her white bridal gown with a long train and veil. Her six bridesmaids wore peach, street-length gowns with matching shoes, as did her honor attendant. **Buddy**, best man **Terry**, and his six groomsmen looked quite spiffy in their black tuxedos. **Will Campbell**, preacher for the hillbillies, performed the ceremony in black tennis shoes. Only in Music City, huh?

The music was appropriate for the occasion. A male/female duo performed the **Dolly Parton/Ricky Van Shelton** hit, "Rockin' Years," and **Jessi Colter** sang "Amazing Grace" as sweet as an angel. **Waylon** did not sing. The reception was held at the Jennings mansion in Brentwood. The peach and white color scheme was carried out with balloons over the pool. Under a tent on the hillside, punch, sandwiches, mints, hors d'oeuvres and wedding cake were served to the many guests in attendance. **Buddy** and **Kathy** led off the dancing. Then the bride danced with her proud father, **Harley**. Of course, yours truly would not have missed this grand event for the world. Here's wishing the best to **Buddy** and **Kathy**.

People

MONROE RECUPERATING

Two weeks after open-heart surgery, the inimitable **Bill Monroe** showed up at church on Sunday, and the following weekend he celebrated his 80th birthday at his beloved Bluegrass Festival in Bean Blossom, Indiana. Helping Bill celebrate were **The Osborne Brothers, The Kentucky Headhunters, Marty Stuart, Emmylou Harris, Jim Ed Brown** and others. The report I got was Bill had to use a cane and looked "fragile," but neither of these facts hurt his picking and singing. God bless the Old Master of Bluegrass. Definitely, there is only one Bill Monroe.

TRISHA YEARWOOD CHANGES MANAGEMENT

Trisha Yearwood, the new MCA songbird, has dropped her management company, Doyle/Lewis Management, which also manages **Garth Brooks**. Trisha's now signed to **Ken Kragen's** agency. Not sure what the reason is, but it does seem rather strange, especially since her debut album, out for only 11 weeks, was certified Gold. Trisha had been opening shows all over the country for Garth, which probably aided the enormously quick sales for a brand new artist. I must say, however, Trisha's album *is* great. And she is a wonderful singer.

GRANT TURNER: 1912-1991

On October 18, 1991, 79-year-old announcer Grant Turner, "The Voice of the Grand Ole Opry," with WSM since 1944, did the Friday night Opry as usual. Hours later, a heart aneurysm ended his distinguished life. He'd lived with the risk for some time but refused to let it slow him down.

Professionally, Grant Turner was of a more innocent era, a time when most country radio was live, announcers held sway and created their own commercials, and the idea of disc jockeys was a new one. His easy-going, dignified way made friends of both his listeners and the artists he worked with. That he began his career when radio was new, and ended it with both radio and TV being bounced off satellites, was itself an achievement.

Born in 1912, Turner began not as an announcer but as a performer. While in high school he worked at KFYO radio in Abilene, Texas. He sang and played

SKAGGS CUTS VIDEO



Ricky Skaggs with Grandpa Ed White and son Lucas Buck White during the filming of his video, "Life's Too Long (To Live Like This)." Look closely at the video and you'll see Grandpa playing the upright bass and Lucas Buck playing the drums. Young Lucas is two-and-a-half years old and quite a little man.

WEDDING BELLS

By the time you read this, **Lorrie Morgan** will be Mrs. **Brad Thompson**. I send my prayers and love to Lorrie and the young man, who happens to be **Clint Black's** bus driver. Lord knows, Lorrie

deserves some happiness after all the sadness she's had. Lorrie's album, *Something in Red*, has done well.

CATCH 'EM, KETCHUM

Hal Ketchum's debut single on Curb, "Small Town Saturday Night," went to Number One after 18 weeks on the country charts. There were moments when it looked as if it wouldn't make it, but it slid right on up there. Produced by **Allen Reynolds (Kathy Mattea, Garth Brooks)** and **Jim Rooney (Nanci Griffith, John Prine)**, Ketchum's album is titled *Past the Point of Rescue*. At the celebration, held in Curb Records' parking lot, the Cajun catfish was de-lish as were the rest of the Cajun goodies. A new restaurant in town called Cajun Filet catered the event, and a good time was had by all.

CLIFTON CLOWERS 100 YEARS OLD

Clifton Clowers' nephew, Merle Kilgore, commemorated his uncle in the famous song, "Wolverton Mountain." Clowers, a native of Conway, Arkansas, turned 100 years old and was visited by *Nashville Now* for the occasion. Mighty Merle made a pickup truck load of money on the multi-million selling record. **Claude King** had the country hit in 1962. Pop artists like **Bing Crosby** and **Nat King Cole** also recorded the song. See what you learn by reading my column.

guitar before graduating to announcing. After majoring in journalism in college, he briefly wrote for newspapers but returned to announcing in Texas. By 1942 he was at WBIR in Knoxville working with a variety of country acts, including some he'd later work with at the Opry. In 1944 he came to WSM. After a time as a staff announcer, he became a protege of Opry founder George D. Hay, introducing the Opry's legends, Hank Williams, Minnie Pearl, Ernest Tubbs, Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe and the rest. After Hay's retirement in the 50's, Grant became known worldwide as the Voice of the Opry. Opry managers came and went, but Turner stayed. It was little wonder he was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1981.

Though he wasn't a performer, the Opry truly will not be the same without Grant Turner's warm, familiar voice.

—RICH KIENZLE

People



Norro Wilson, Richard Landis, Roger Sovine, Tammy Wynette and her husband, George Richey, celebrated Lorrie Morgan's release of "A Picture of Me (Without You)." Lorrie attended in photo form. Wilson and Richey co-wrote the song.

A GEORGE AGO

A George ago, when Tammy Wynette was married to George Jones, he had a hit song titled "A Picture of Me (Without You)." The song was penned by Norro Wilson and George Richey. Plenty years later, Lorrie Morgan released the same song as a single. BMI recently celebrated the second go-round with a reception for the writers and the producers of the song. Unfortunately, Lorrie was out of town when the happenings went on, but a picture of her stood in her place.

JUKEBOX DARLING

Young Mark Chesnutt was named Rising Male Star of the Year by the 1991 Jukebox Awards. "Too Cold At Home" surely helped the young native of Beaumont, Texas, garner this one.

GOODBYE, DOTTIE

They came in pickup trucks and limos—for she too had ridden in both—to say goodbye to one of our own, Dottie West. Dottie West was much loved by the people in country music. Steve Wariner sang a goodbye song to his mentor, and Larry Gatlin shed a tear—he was discovered by her. Mark Gray performed a song he and Dottie had recently co-written, and two of Dottie's granddaughters sang a little song they'd written for her.

mourning country music's loss. Noticeably absent was Kenny Rogers. Some say Kenny enjoyed a career resurrection because of the duets he and Dottie recorded. In any case, Rogers was in Nashville and visited with Dottie in Intensive Care at the hospital the day before she died.

RED STEGALL NAMED COWBOY POET

The man who brought Reba McEntire to the attention of Nashville, Tennessee, and the music industry, Red Stegall, was recently declared Cowboy Poet of Texas by the Texas State Legislature. Red declared, "This is one of the greatest honors of my life. There are many truly outstanding poets in this state and to be selected as the poet to represent the great state of Texas is a tremendous honor and one that I will treasure forever."

Not too long afterwards, Red held a Cowboy Gathering & Western Swing Festival. Included in the three-day festival was a Ranch Rodeo at the Cowtown Coliseum, an Art & Trappings Show and Chuckwagon Cookoff held at the Stockyards, a Western Swing Festival held at Billy Bob's Texas, a Ranch Swap Meet also at the Stockyards and a Cowboy Poetry Gathering held there, too.

I'd bet my snakeskin boots that 10 barrels of beer were consumed that weekend.

Among the mourners were Johnny Cash, Jeannie Seely, Opry manager Hal Durham, Opry publicist Jerry Strobel, Emmylou Harris, Billy Walker, Kyle Lehning, Tony Gottlieb, Harlan Howard, Fred Foster, Steve and Rudy Gatlin and hundreds more

GREAT PHOTO



Thought you'd enjoy seeing this marvelous foto. Seated is the world's greatest singer, Mr. George Jones, beside another great singer, Mark Chesnutt. Standing are MCA head man Bruce Hinton and Chesnutt's producer, Mark Wright. George dropped by Javelina Studios to sing with Mark on a song for his forthcoming album. Mark's first album, *Too Cold at Home*, was certified Gold recently.

People

ANDY WILLIAMS DROPPED IN

Jimmy Bowen produced a country album on **Andy Williams** for Curb, titled *Nashville*, so naturally there was a party. I'm telling you, the parking lot at Union Station looked like a used car lot for hillbilly cars. There was a Rolls Royce owned by **Buddy Killen**, a chauffeur-driven Cadillac owned by Jimmy Bowen, a couple of limos, a half-dozen Cadillacs, half a dozen Jaguars and sports cars out the kazoo. Around the party table I spied both Bowen and Killen along with **Crystal Gayle**, **Ronnie McDowell**, **Eddy Arnold**, Curb Records' **Mike Borchetta** and every Andy Williams fan in the music biz in Nashville.

On the subject of Andy Williams, he joins the list of **Mel Tillis**, **Ray Stevens**, **Moe Bandy**, **Jim Stafford**, **Mickey Gilley**, and **Roy Clark** as a Bransonite in May 1992, along with **Johnny Cash**, **June Carter** and **Willie Nelson**. In the summer of '92, **Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers** also plan to open a 50-acre entertainment complex in Branson. The Gatlins' complex will feature a hotel, restaurants, retail outlets and two theaters. The cost of Williams' theater reportedly is set at 8 million. A hotel and restaurant are in the planning stages there as well. It is happening in Branson, like I told you before.

As much as I love Branson, I can foresee traffic problems if something isn't done soon with the roads. They will need a public transit system, or six lanes on the main drag, to take care of all the fans heading out there next summer.

PARTY PARTY ME

Polygram's brand new songster, **Sammy Kershaw**, was honored at BMI following the release of his album, *Don't Go Near the Water*. Folks, do yourself a favor and give a listen to this man's vocalizing. "Awesome" best describes him. He sings as honest as **George Jones**. If you are a lover of real country music, you will fall for Sammy Kershaw. He is a keeper.

EYE SAW

The dark green Jaguar with Oregon tags cruised up to valet parking in front of Faison's, and the driver, the great songwriter **Mickey Newberry**, entered the restaurant to enjoy lunch.

The **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's Jimmy Fadden** was dining at the prestigious Cakewalk. The rations dished out by **Rick Bolson**, owner and former editor/



Crystal Gayle and Eddy Arnold welcomed Andy Williams to Nashville.

writer for *Country Song Roundup* and other mags, were wonderful. Rick does give his clientele a tad more, if I say so myself.

Also at the Cakewalk was Warner Brothers Records' VP, the inimitable **Martha Sharpe**, the gal with the best-trained ears in town. Martha sniffs out them hits like it's the last day on earth.

Eye also saw **Rodney Crowell** at the

Slice of Life, and we both lived till they waited on us. It takes a while to get your rations there.

Eye saw **Eddie London** at Panama Red's. Eddie was eating and drinking lunch with his producer, **Ronnie Rodgers**, and a songwriting buddy, **Ron Peterson**.

Eye saw **Ray Pillow** (Capitol A&R) at the Wild Boar.

ANOTHER VIDEO SHOOT



Ricky Van Shelton with **Kyle Hudgens**, the child actor in Ricky's video for "Keep It Between The Lines." Ricky sings about bringing up the child alone and family stuff like dads and moms. It's a sad one, that one, kinda pulls at the heart strings.

GOODBYE TO A PRECIOUS FRIEND

Jo Walker-Meador is the only Executive Director the Country Music Association has ever known in its 33 years of existence. December 31, 1991, was Jo's last day with the CMA. This first lady of the CMA will be sorely missed. She is every inch a lady and truly loved by all who know her. Jo is a friend to the biggest star and the newest beginner in the business. She's been a friend of mine. Matter of fact, I have cried on her shoulder. **Ed Benson**, Jo's assistant for many years, will take over the Director's spot and will continue in the fine form that Jo has set for the CMA.

LIONEL TOPS THE CHARTS

When I first heard "Leap of Faith" by **Lionel Cartwright**, I thought, "The boy has got himself a hit." And he did. Following the chart-topping single, Lionel was honored with a Number One party co-hosted by BMI and MCA. Some of the MCA people honoring Lionel were **Bruce Hinton**, **Shelia Shipley**, **Renee Bell** and **Lorie Hoppers**. BMI was represented by **Joyce Rice**, **Ellen Woods** and **Patsy Bradley**.

People

HANK EXCLUSIVE AT WILLIAM MORRIS

Hank Jr. has signed an exclusive contract for bookings worldwide with the William Morris Agency. Sure hope they book him in your area soon.

BLUEGRASS EDDIE

Eddie Adcock recently was gifted with a Gibson Sunburst guitar. Larry Perkins of the Gibson Company made the presentation to Eddie.

I'M ALREADY TEARY

The Judds' goodbye show took place near where it all began. Naomi and Wynonna performed for the last time at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in December. It makes me cry every time I think about the end of this wonderful country music duo. I pray Naomi's health won't prevent her from having lots of happiness with her doting husband, Larry Strickland. More on the final concert next time. Wynonna's new music will be awesome, with Tony Brown producing her.

WOW

He is, ladies, just too handsome for words! That doll, Tony Brown, with the guys from The Desert Rose Band. All you gals out there that go for the stars can have them. I'd take Tony any day of

REBA'S SECRET WEAPON



It's no secret that Reba McEntire is a star and Tony (wow) Brown is a star producer. But they decided to keep their hit-making formula to themselves when in the studio. Reba's current album, *For My Broken Heart*, is out now.

the week. Tony produced the new music on Desert Rose. The album's titled *True Love*. There ain't much of that around these days. I'd wager that true love is might' nigh as scarce as hen's teeth.

CONWAY

Conway Twitty continues to cut good records. His latest MCA album, *Even*

Now, is no exception. The music is as good as ever, as is Mr. Twitty, even now, after all these years.

PIRATES OF THE MISSISSIPPI

"Rollin' Home," by The Pirates of the Mississippi, is painted on the side of a semi being driven across the U.S. of A. by fan Rex Stover. Stover was in California when he first heard the song, and it made him lonesome for his wife. So he put the lyrics on the truck. Johnny Griffin, of Antioch, Tennessee, also a trucker, has the lyrics printed on his truck too. Maybe it'll get trendy, and The Pirates can start charging a royalty and make some extra bucks.

IT'S SNAKE TIME AGAIN

The annual Snake, Rattle and Roll Jam featured the festival organizers, The Bellamy Brothers, and their guests, The Desert Rose Band and Pam Tillis. This is the third year of this annual event. The monies raised go to a variety of organizations which work to protect the environment, feed the hungry, help the homeless and improve education. Recipients for this year's Jam include The Children's Miracle Network and the Nashville-based branch of the Earth Communications Office. Since 1989 the Jam has raised over \$200,000. Thanks, boys. You know of course that The Bellamys reside in Florida near Dade City.



Tony (wow) Brown (again), Desert Rose's Steve Duncan, Chris Hillmon, Bill Bryson, John Jorgenson, Herb Peterson and studio musician, Skip Edwards.

Twins so precious you'll want to
sweep them into your arms!



*Meg and Michael shown smaller than actual size.
The dolls' seated height is 9½ inches;
their length is approximately 14 inches.*

Tennessee Ernie Ford

1919-1991

The night Tennessee Ernie Ford died, 40-year-old rock superstar Tom Petty, a child of the 60's whose music invokes that rebellious era, was in Nashville for a concert with his band The Heartbreakers. During the show he paused to pay tribute and sing "Sixteen Tons" and talk about Ernie's influence on him.

After nearly a decade of semi-retirement, and the death of his wife Betty in 1989, Ford returned to the limelight in 1990. The Nashville Network broadcast a special celebrating his 50th year in show business, and that fall he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. On both occasions he looked frail, a result of chronic liver disease. A performance late that year in Buffalo, New York, was his final live show.

Ernie and second wife Beverly attended a State dinner at the White House in late September 1991. Two days later, enroute to Dulles Airport for a flight home, Ernie became ill and was hospitalized in Reston, Virginia. A perforated ulcer relating to his liver trouble left him in grave condition. Within a day he dramatically improved, and soon his doctors considered releasing him to a California hospital. A relapse followed, and this time he couldn't rally. On the morning of October 17, Ernie's battle ended.

Some 600 people, including his sons Buck and Brion, and manager Jim Loakes, attended the funeral services in Palo Alto, California. Though few from the music business attended, Cliffie Stone, Ernie's discoverer and former manager, and himself a Country Music Hall of Famer, gave the eulogy.

In the days after Ernie died, TV news dutifully trotted out video clips of him singing "Sixteen Tons," singing with The Everly Brothers on his TV show and clowning on *I Love Lucy*. Newspaper headlines read, "Tennessee Ernie Ford, Ol' Pea-Picker, Dead at 72" or some variation. But they only scratched the surface, for Ernie's influence went beyond what could be covered in any headline.

It is not uncommon today for a country singer to host a network television show, but that wasn't always so. In the early 50's, country performers typically hosted local shows and did guest shots on network programs. Television executives underestimated the music's appeal and didn't believe that people in suburbs or cities would accept a country singer as a host. Ernie proved them wrong by becoming a household word. On network radio, then on tele-



vision, he was invited into the homes of millions who had barely heard of the Opry. And he paved the way for every country singer who's hosted a network show since.

Why Ernie? Because his experience made him versatile. He could sing everything from blues and hillbilly to show tunes and gospel; his years as a disc jockey and announcer made him comfortable in the role of host. His experience on the L.A.-based *Hometown Jamboree* taught him the rudiments of comedy and helped him develop his "Pea Picker" persona. And his dapper, polished image easily transferred to the medium of television.

Born in Bristol, Tennessee, February 13, 1919, Ernest Jennings Ford's home life was both religious and musical. At age 18 his deep rich voice landed him an announcing job at WOPI in Bristol. He went on to work at stations in Atlanta, then at WROL in Knoxville, announcing the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941—and enlisting in the Army Air Corps a few weeks later.

Stationed in California, he met and married Betty Heminger. After being discharged as a Captain in 1945, Ernie settled in California where he joined KFXM in San Bernardino as a sassy country DJ. KXLA in Pasadena hired him away for a similar show, on which he occasionally sang along with the records he played.

Cliffie Stone, announcer and host of the *Dinner Bell Round-Up*, KXLA's live country program, liked Ernie's voice and offered him a spot on the show. Reluctant to

abandon the security of announcing, he did both. By the time the show evolved into the popular *Hometown Jamboree*, Ernie was one of its stars. A contract with Capitol Records followed, and his first release, "Tennessee Border," went Top Ten, an impressive debut.

From there came the country boogie hits, as well as "Mule Train," "Cry of the Wild Goose" and "I'll Never Be Free," his bluesy duet with pop singer Kay Starr, which exposed him to the pop market. Cliffie Stone became his manager, and by 1952 Ernie had his own CBS radio show. In 1953 he became the first country singer to play the London Palladium.

In the mid-50's he emceed an NBC-TV quiz show, then began hosting a daytime variety show. He'd also worked up a jazzy arrangement of "Sixteen Tons," the coal mining song written by his friend Merle Travis. Under pressure by Capitol to record more, he cut his version of the song. Eleven days after its release, it sold 400,000 copies, and by early 1956 was the nation's biggest song; a Number One country hit for ten weeks and a Number One pop hit for eight.

NBC moved Ernie to prime time in 1956 with *The Ford Show*, an hour-long variety program that lasted until 1961. His guests varied, but he was among the few TV hosts to treat rock acts like The Everly Brothers with respect. He so loved gospel tunes that he closed each show with one, exposing many Americans to Southern gospel for the first time and creating a demand for a sacred album. His 1957 Capitol album, *Hymns*, remained on *Billboard's* Top Album charts for five years.

In the 60's Ernie continued doing television guest spots and live shows, hosted an ABC daytime show, and emceed some of the early CMA Awards shows. In 1974 he headlined the first country music show to appear in Russia. Through the late 70's, he wound down, doing occasional spots on *Hee Haw*, a return to the comedy of his early years.

In the end, Ernie's legacy is here to stay. He was truly country music's first real ambassador—and not just to the Iron Curtain. He brought both country and gospel to mainstream Americans who wouldn't have gone across the street to watch the Opry. He took Merle Travis' coal miner's classic and made it the anthem of every working person. And he proved—once and for all—that one could have dignity, style and integrity and still be an ol' Pea Picker at heart.

—RICH KIENZLE

America's greatest living bird artist captures the beauty of songbirds!



Shown smaller than actual size of 8 1/2" in diameter.

Bluebirds

by
Roger Tory Peterson

the Danbury Mint
© Roger Tory Peterson

A numbered limited edition collector plate lavishly decorated with 23kt gold.

Renowned wildlife artist Roger Tory Peterson has done much to make bird watching a fascinating hobby. He pioneered his unique system of bird identification in *The Field Guide to the Birds*—the most popular bird book in history. Often called “the second Audubon,” Peterson’s paintings are treasured in collections everywhere.

Roger Tory Peterson has dedicated his life to observing and painting birds. Now, you can share his unique vision of nature with “Bluebirds,” a magnificent, true-to-life painting now available on a limited edition plate.

A Numbered Limited Edition Lavishly Decorated with 23kt Gold

Your “Bluebirds” plate will be trimmed with two bands of precious 23kt gold and a beautiful green and gold border framing the delicate beauty of this American songbird. Each serially numbered plate will be accompanied by a matching personalized Certificate of Authenticity. The edition of “Bluebirds” will be forever limited

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“Bluebirds” is the first in a series of limited edition plates called *The Songbirds of Roger Tory Peterson*. Each plate will portray a beautiful Peterson songbird painting, meticulously reproduced in full color and framed with a gold border just like “Bluebirds.” And each is available for only \$27.

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Reply Now for Lowest Serial Number

We expect the demand for “Bluebirds” to be enthusiastic since this magnificent songbird painting was created by the world’s foremost wildlife artist. Serial numbers will be assigned as orders are received, so mail yours today!

PHP Please Reply Promptly 53

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two plates
per collector

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please print clearly

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State/Zip: _____

Name to Print on Certificate(s) (if different from above): _____

Allow 4 to 8 weeks for shipment.

*Any applicable sales tax will be billed with shipment.



GEORGE JONES

Mature & Mighty

AFTER YEARS OF STRUGGLING



WITH INNER DEMONS, GEORGE JONES IS



FINALLY AT HOME WITH HIMSELF.

BY MICHAEL M'CALL



George Jones is sitting in one corner of a 12-foot, cream-colored leather couch arranged to cut at a 90-degree angle in the middle of a large, comfortable living room in his new home in Brentwood, a swanky suburban community just south of Nashville. He points toward a series of small, uncovered windows that line the top of a 12-foot-high wall separating the living room from the pool and concrete patio area behind the house. "I've got to do something about that," he says, referring to the midday sunlight streaming harshly through the glass. "We keep saying we're going to put some curtains up there."

As it is, the angle of the sun reaches just far enough to soak the 60-year-old singer in natural light. It's an appropriate image, for life has never seemed as sunny or as easy as it does now for George Jones. After three decades of struggling with inner torment and dark impulses, the man many consider the greatest country singer alive appears relaxed, settled and happy. For the next hour or so, he sits in the afternoon's warm glow, drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes and talking about how content he feels about his career and his personal life.

Returning to Nashville and buying his expansive, tastefully decorated manor seemed to symbolize to Jones, his wife Nancy, his friends and the music business that, by George, the legendary "No Show Jones" had finally rejected his demons. The house, which looks like an estate that might be found on a California winery, is perched regally on a man-made hill on a exclusive street dotted with the homes of bank company presidents and millionaire industrialists. Jaguars, Mercedes Benzes and Cadillacs shine in driveways next to manicured lawns. The Jones home has a steep driveway that leads to a steep stairway that leads to an intimidating doorway. Knocking can seem futile with a door this thick and a house this large. But, within seconds, the door swings open, and, what do



George with Tamy Wynette and Billy Sherrill in the studio.



Country music's greatest singer and the King of Country Music face off on the Opry.



Ask Randy Travis and Alan Jackson who their favorite country singer is. Both have recorded with him.



Onstage with Loretta Lynn, backstage with the late Ernie Ford.



you know, the singer answers his own door.

"Hey, there, come on in," he says, gesturing to the living room. "You know Alan Jackson, don'tcha?" Alan slowly pulls his lanky frame from the leather couch to offer his hand. The young, blond singer is enjoying a few days off and has brought his wife Denise and 16-month-old daughter Mattie by to visit. Alan calls for Denise, who is in a back room with Nancy.

As the Jacksons prepare to leave, Nancy invites them to return later for dinner; she's planning on making stuffed bell peppers, and she'd enjoy cooking for them, too. Denise says it will make the perfect birthday dinner for her husband, who was born 33 years earlier on the same day. "That does it," Nancy says. "You're coming back, and we're going to have us a birthday party."

As they talk, Mattie has picked up a phone and started playing with it. "I want to hear some Jones," she sings into the receiver, mimicking the chorus line from her father's hit, "Don't Rock the Jukebox," which pays lyrical homage to the man standing beside her father. Everyone in the room laughs, and Mattie responds with a puzzled look. "Honey, do you know who this is?" Denise asks the child. "This here is George Jones." With that, George leans toward Mattie. "Don't rock the jukebox," he sings, then drops his voice into a register low enough to tremble the earth, "I want to hear some Jones." The room ripples with laughter once again.

Jackson is only one of a long line of new, young country stars willing to acknowledge a stylistic debt to Jones and a deep admiration of his past work. Years ago, Waylon Jennings commented on the standing Jones enjoys within country music's inner circle by saying, "If we could all sing like we wanted to, we'd all sound like George Jones." In the last few years, it seems like nearly every up-and-coming male singer *does* sound like George Jones—or at least is trying awfully hard to come close.

Randy Travis led the way, citing Jones and Haggard every time someone asked him about influences or heroes. When Travis started plans to record a series of duets a couple of years back, Jones and Haggard were at the top of his list of desired partners, leading to the album's title, *Heroes and Friends*.

Garth Brooks, in one of his first interviews as a solo artist in 1989, was asked by a Georgia newspaper reporter what would be the greatest award he could achieve as a performer. He said any award given to him by George Jones. Two years later, when Capitol Records lugged out several Gold and platinum album certificates to present to Brooks onstage at Fan Fair, Garth dutifully maintained a humble manner until he saw George come around a corner carrying a platinum album. The emotional impact on Garth was physical: He immediately lost his composure, turning his back for a few seconds as tears streamed down his face. A few months later, as Garth accepted his Entertainer of the Year award from the Country Music Association, he dedicated it to the two Georges—Strait and Jones—whose music meant so much to him.

The list goes on: From Mark Chesnutt to Patty Loveless, from Vern Gosdin to Emmylou Harris, from Dolly Parton to Sweethearts of the Rodeo, they all say George is their idol. He has a voice perfectly designed to bring out all the complex emotions packed into a simple country song. He's what Michael Jordan is to basketball, what Joe DiMaggio was to baseball. George Jones is the natural.

"These people have really helped me out," George says. "It's come during a slack period for me, too. They've put my name out there at a time when people might have been forgetting about me, and they're telling the young fans about me. It's little things, but I think it's caught by the public."

His record company, for instance, said several radio stations and retail stores reported that the phone lines lit up the

day following the CMA Awards show with requests by young country fans wanting to know about or hear this guy George Jones.

Note Jones' reaction to this adulation. He refers to it in terms of promotion, of how it makes fans aware of him. He is, after all, an active country music recording artist, a veteran whose first Top Ten hit, "Why Baby Why," came out in 1955. Record chart historian Joel Whitburn ranks Jones second behind Eddy Arnold on the list of country music performers who have enjoyed the most radio hits.

Jones is the only country artist who started in the 1950's who is still scoring chart hits in the 1990's—Conway Twitty doesn't count, since his 1958 hit was a pop song, and he didn't start recording country music until the mid-1960's. Johnny Cash and Bill Monroe are the only other veterans of four or more decades to still command a recording contract with a major record company. As much as country music is drawing on tradition these days, few radio stations or record companies seem willing to allow the legends equal time with those they've influenced.

A couple of years ago, this situation bothered Jones, primarily at the record company level. He had been with Epic Records for two decades. He was healthier than ever, as willing to work as anyone, and his voice had matured into an instrument as striking and expressive in its own way as it had been any time in the past.

But Jones didn't think the executives at CBS Records/Nashville—the company that ran Epic—were giving his music a fair shot. "We just didn't know what was wrong," he says. "Nobody would really tell us. But, over time, Nancy and I started figuring a lot of it out." Jones wanted to keep working with Billy Sherrill, who had helped arrange and record songs for George since 1972. A one-time vice president at CBS, Sherrill had been locked in an angry dispute with company brass since he left the label in the mid-1980's. Jones had been the last artist he produced for them.

"As close as I am to Billy, he never offered to volunteer anything that was between them, and I never pried. I just knew there was some bad, bad feelings. He hated their guts, and I guess they hated him. It put me in the middle. There at the last, they just didn't do anything with my records. I got no help at all."

To make matters worse, Jones had signed a contract with CBS a couple of years earlier that was set to start in 1991. "I was beginning to think it was over," he says. "They say every good thing must come to an end, and I thought maybe I was there. I didn't know if anything would ever happen for me again."

The Jones of previous years might have reacted by going on a tear with alcohol and drugs. But the new Jones decided he wasn't going down without a fight. He contacted his attorney in Atlanta and said he wanted out of his contract with CBS/Epic (which by this time had been bought by Sony). The attorney discovered that MCA Records and Capitol Records were interested in working with Jones. As it turned out, MCA bought out Jones' contract, which included covering a \$600,000 signing bonus.

Has he noticed a difference? "Oh, my Lord, you just don't know," he says. "These people at MCA call me constantly to tell me what they're working on for me. They're everywhere we go, rolling out the red carpet. I've never been treated this well since I've been in this business. These people are working constantly. Bruce Hinton (MCA/Nashville president) told me they were going to treat me like a new artist and work as hard for me as for anyone on their label. That's all I ask for. I just want a chance to compete."

For his first MCA album, Jones worked with Kyle Lehning, a young, hot Nashville producer who has guided the million-selling recordings of Randy Travis, as well as working

Today George Jones is content. Wife Nancy, family and friends like Tanya Tucker help make his world complete.



George hobnobs onstage and off with Randy Travis, Waylon Jennings and Ricky Van Shelton.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEORGE JONES

with Dan Seals, Baillie and The Boys and others. Jones had worked briefly with Lehning when he recorded a duet with Travis, and the singer admired the Travis albums. But Jones is a shy man, and it's hard for him to grow comfortable in new settings. He remembers his first day in the studio with Kyle Lehning as "one of the roughest recording sessions of my life."

"I really didn't know Kyle," he recalls. "I'd been working with Billy for about 20 years, and we'd been using the same pickers throughout those years, and we worked in the same studio and all that. On this new album, I walked in and I didn't know a picker there. I didn't know the engineer, and I didn't know Kyle, really. They were nice guys and all. We started talking a little bit and I started to relax some. But I'll have to admit it was scary. I'd never been in a position where I didn't know someone in the room."

Again, however, Jones coped. In years past, he likely would have reacted by disappearing for a few days as he tried to erase his fear with quarts of whiskey. This time, he went home and talked to his wife about it.

"It's funny," he admits. "I came home that day and told Nancy that I just had one of the oddest days of my life. I told her I didn't know a damn soul there, and I couldn't get my heart into my singing." In the end, he says, the two songs recorded that first day were the two that didn't make the album.

Since the release of *And Along Came Jones*, the singer's first album on MCA, he has worked almost daily to promote the disc, he says, often surprising disc jockeys and radio programmers with personal phone calls to check on the progress of his new songs. "You'd be surprised, really, how making a few phone calls helps," he says, sounding much like



The Joneses have a special relationship.

the new artist MCA claims he is. "They'll tell you they've neglected your song, but that's there's no real reason for it. A lot of them put it right on."

Meanwhile, he has a few bags filled with tapes in another room. When he heads out of town every weekend for his shows, he takes the tapes along, searching for new songs to record.

"It's become a year-round thing, this looking for hits," he notes. "I used to wait until it was time to make a record. But you can't do that anymore. The only way we can compete with these new artists is to look for songs all the time. I want to handpick the songs and try to come up with one hell of a damn album next time."

The song has always been the difference in country music, he says. Even back when he started, he observes. "Frank Sinatra was singing about love and all this real easy listening kind of stuff.

"Those songs didn't have the nitty-gritty hardships," he muses. "That's what makes country music. Still does. It's the difference in the songs. People feel the songs are about their lives."

Nancy walks in from a side room she has transformed into a small office. She's headed for the supermarket to buy some ground chuck steak for the stuffed peppers she's planning. By this time, the interview has shifted into talk about singers, music and music business. As we head to the door, George tells Nancy to wait a second, he'll go with her to the store.

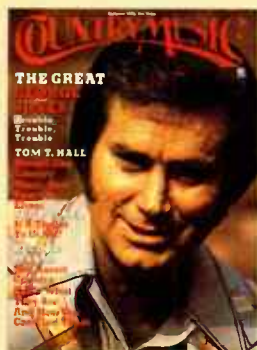
Outside, he admires how well his yard has held up. A few of the neighbors had been having trouble with dying grass, but so far the problem hasn't affected his lawn. "If you have any more questions, just call," he offers. "We'll be here."

Then George Jones walks back inside and calls his wife's name. ■

George Jones in Country Music Magazine

DECEMBER 1975:

"Loneliness and sadness is going to occur in your life many times. That's the reason country music is so successful...If you can catch that many people in those moods, you're bound to have a hit."



JUNE 1980:

"They might be walking a country mile to get to the show...They save up their money, and they get there and—no George. No George. I'm sure these things really bug the fans, and it breaks my heart now that I realize this and think about it."



AUGUST 1977

"I've been told that I have a different sound, though I can't see it myself. If you have that, it's pure luck. The other part of it is just loving what you're doing, loving your music."



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1984:

"Nancy has been a tremendous help to him through it all. Every idea and dream that he has, she helps him and encourages him...I've never seen him getting along anywhere near this good."—Jimmie Hills, George's close friend.

CMSA Newsletter

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1992

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Letter From A New Editor

Ever since I came to *Country Music Magazine* in June of 1990, I have had the privilege and pleasure of working on the *Newsletter* as well as *CMM*. And the time I've spent learning the ropes from Helen Barnard and getting to know you members has been a great experience. As the new Editor of the *Newsletter*, I'm looking forward to getting to know even more of you—through your comments, letters, opinions and photographs, and your songs, poems and artwork. And I'll continue to draw on Helen's wisdom and experience, as she remains nearby as Executive Editor.

We, the staff, and you, the members, are all bound together

by a common thread—a love of and respect for country music. And you members are the reason for the *Newsletter's* existence. Its contents are dictated by your input, so don't hesitate to drop a line saying what you like (or don't like) about it. After all, comments, suggestions and criticisms are always welcome among friends. By the way, next issue marks the *Newsletter's* eighth anniversary. We'll talk more then.

One last note, my thanks to Russell and Helen Barnard for giving this kid a shot. As the *Newsletter's* Editor (and *CMM's* Associate Editor), I'll do my best to live up to their confidence and expectations.

Concert Comments

We've had an amazing response to our call for concert reviews. You've apparently seen a lot of shows lately, from Mark Chesnutt to Merle Haggard, Matraca Berg to Ricky Van Shelton and many others. Keep 'em coming.

MARK CHESNUTT

After having the privilege of seeing Mark Chesnutt in the Dallas-Fort Worth area three other times, I thought I knew what to expect when I went to see him a fourth time—a great show. Right? Wrong! What I saw was a *fantastic* show.

He played at Cowboy's the night after Labor Day, and had the place stompin' and hollerin'. He entertained the audience with cuts from his first album like "Too Cold at Home," "Brother Jukebox," "Blame It on Texas," "Your Love Is a Miracle," "Broken Promise Land," "Too Good a Memory" and "Danger at My Door." He also did some songs from his upcoming album, and a couple of George Jones songs, "The Race Is On" and "White Lightning." Bassplayer Mike St. Clair joined him for a duet at one point. Mark really got the crowd going when he demonstrated his ability to play the drums.

The only downside to this fantastic evening was that he did not close the show with "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," as he's done at past shows. Mark is a very talented man, and he'll go far in the country music business and will be performing for a very long time.

Sue Raye
Dallas, Texas



Mark Chesnutt, a native of Beaumont, Texas, at Cowboy's in Dallas. Sue Raye's husband, David, took the photograph.

MATRACA BERG, MERLE HAGGARD AND CLINT BLACK

It was my first time at the gorgeous Breslin Center at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. You

never saw four such excited ladies in one small Ford truck in all your life. Opening things up was Matraca Berg. She did a great job and got a nice reception from the crowd, for a newcomer. Sad to say, at a lot of concerts the opening act is not treated that well.

Next up was Merle Haggard. The audience (mostly young college students) cheered and treated him with respect. The only complaint I had with his set is that he didn't do "Mana Tried." A few others said they wanted to hear that, too.

Then came the highlight of my evening—Clint Black took the stage. The excitement was intense, and I did not act my age (30-something...ok, 40-something...). I screamed right along with the other gals. To the delight of everyone who buys his records, Clint did lots of songs from *Put Yourself in My Shoes* and *Killin' Time*. He also did some new songs, my favorite being one he co-wrote and sang with guitarist Hayden Nicholas. This was the best concert I've ever been to.

Connie Welch
Sand Lake, Michigan

In This Issue

- Record/Video Reviews
- Concert Reviews
- Living Legend Loretta Lynn
- Readers Create

Editor: George Fletcher
Executive Editor: Helen Barnard
Art Director: Katheryn Gray

MISSOURI CONCERT TRAIL

My friends and I started the summer concert season in June when we went to see Travis Tritt in Sullivan, Missouri. Then in July we travelled to Branson to see Billy Joe Royal and Ricky Van Shelton at the Ozark Amphitheater. The shows were terrific. Next was Aaron Tippin at the Cole County Fair. It was our first time seeing him and won't be

REVIEWS & FEATURES

the last. His show was fantastic—he can sing, he has a lot of energy, and he was having as much fun as we were.

August was just as busy. We started with Ronnie McDowell at the Moniteau County Fair. Ronnie has a great relationship with the audience, and he can sing any and everything. Next was the Missouri State Fair. They had a great line-up this year, and we made several trips. First was Patty Loveless and Garth Brooks. Patty is a delight and Garth was something else. Then we saw Alan Jackson and Randy Travis. They were both dynamite! Randy just keeps getting better and better, and Alan's quiet charm won everyone over. We made our third trip to the fair to see Lorrie Morgan and Ricky Van Shelton. (If Ricky is *anywhere* in the central part of the U.S., we go!) Lorrie was super. Of course, Ricky was his usual terrific self.

Topping things off was George Strait (the handsomest man in country music). Trisha Yearwood opened for him, and what a delightful surprise. She did a superb job. Seeing George in concert is understanding why he has been a CMA Entertainer of the Year. He sang one great song after another for an hour and 40 minutes. It was over much too soon.

We really had a ball this summer and are now suffering "concert withdrawal." We are busily lining things up for the winter.

Linda Shahangian
Jefferson City, Missouri

MORE MARTY STUART

On a crisp, clear October night, Marty Stuart brought his thumping hillbilly music to the Dixie Classic Fair in Win-



ston-Salem, North Carolina. Stuart and his fine-tuned band carried audience members on a ride far more thrilling than anything on the fair's midway. From the time his boots hit the stage, Marty was electrifying. During his 90-minute set, Marty rocked, twanged, twisted and strutted his way through gems such as "Western Girls," "Burn Me Down," "Little Things" and "Tempted." On "Blue Train" he paid his respects to former boss and eternal friend, Johnny Cash. The highlight of the entire evening, to this country girl's ears, was a trip back to Stuart's basic bluegrass roots with the classic "In the Pines." Nowhere does his talent shine brighter than on this raw and earthy style of music.

During his 20 years in the music busi-



ness Marty Stuart has obviously spent his time well, learning from the industry legends while honing his own exceptional talents. The fruits of these labors are now being realized as this dashing young performer is the most refreshing and entertaining artist on stage today. He has the stage presence of one who was put on this earth for the purpose of entertaining others. And in the process, the sheer delight that sparkles on his face proves that he's getting back as much as he's giving.

Janet G. Price
Stokesdale, North Carolina

Video Views

Brenda Ashcroft picks up the ball on video reviews. She gives us her take on Becky Hobbs' "Talk Back Trembling Lips." Seen a good video lately? Tell us about it.

BECKY HOBBS

"Talk Back Trembling Lips"

Curb Records

Let's hear it for the Beekaroo's latest video, "Talk Back Trembling Lips," a remake of the Ernie Ashworth classic from 1963. Ernie even appears in the video. Both he and Becky are dressed in their "lip suits," and it is definitely one of the best videos on TNN and CMT. The Beekaroo and her band blow kisses, and Becky dances with Ernie. A very good video!

Brenda Ashcroft
Lansdale, Pennsylvania

Member Record Reviews

In addition to concert and video reviews, members have also taken the plunge and worked up their own record reviews. Julie Yocum fills us in on Wild Rose's latest, while Robin Sue Lehmann sheds some light on Chris LeDoux.



Wesley Fields, Moo-Moo and CMM.

Remember Moo-Moo?

In the March/April 1991 issue, we heard from SSgt. Wesley Fields, who was serving in Desert Storm. He talked about Moo-Moo, the plywood cow that kept him and his fellow servicepeople from getting too homesick for the country while stationed in the desert. Now back at home, SSgt. Fields writes.

To follow up on my previous letter, here's the cow I told you about. I had so many responses from your readers, and I'm happy to report that I'm back at home now (Fort Walton Beach, Florida). I would like to thank everybody who wrote me, and for everyone who wanted to see Moo-Moo, here she is.

Wesley Fields
Fort Walton Beach, Florida

CHRIS LEDOUX

Western Underground
Capitol (CDP 7 96499 2)

It took one line in Garth Brooks' song, "Much Too Young (To Feel This Damn Old)," to bring Chris LeDoux's name to national attention. Now, after nearly 20 years as an independent label artist, Chris LeDoux has his first major label album, *Western Underground*. And all those years of experience have paid off, because this album is darn near perfect.

LeDoux was the bareback bronc riding champion in 1976, so when he sings about ranching and rodeoing in songs like "County Fair" and "Cadillac Cowboy,"



Chris LeDoux, singer and rodeo champ.

you know he *knows* what he's singing about. He's also a fine songwriter, as the lovely "Riding For a Fall" and the gritty "Working Man's Dollar" show. The only weak song is a remake of "Settin' the Woods on Fire." Here he sounds uncertain, and isn't helped by the "country muzak" arrangement.

If there is a theme to all these songs, it's about knowing what's important and holding onto it. People in this part of the country have known how good Chris LeDoux is for a long time. It's good to see him getting his big break. And for his new fans, Capitol has reissued several of his older albums along with this new one.

Robin Sue Lehmann
Aurora, Colorado

NOVEMBER 1991 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

Alan Jackson *Don't Rock the Jukebox*

Travis Tritt "Anymore"

Jackson's *Don't Rock the Jukebox* is the Number One album for the third consecutive poll. Alan also holds the Number Five spot with *Here in the Real World*. In between are Vince Gill, George Strait and Ricky Van Shelton. Travis Tritt's "Anymore" is your favorite single, with Alan's "Someday" in second and Ricky Van's "Keep It Between the Lines" in third.

WILD ROSE

Listen to Your Heart
Capitol/Nashville

Wild Rose's third album could be the one to finally bring this fantastic group the recognition they deserve. Paul Worley, Ed Seay and the band shared production duties and came up with a collection of songs that capture the magic sound Wild Rose's live performances are noted for. All of the high-energy, straight-from-the-heart picking and singing are here. Lead singer Pam Gadd's voice is stronger and more emotional than on previous releases. She tears it up on the fast songs, and sings the ballads so well that it makes you feel she's really going through the heartbreak she sings about.

Much has been written about Wild Rose's musical ability, and rightly so—they are excellent players. The group consists of Kathy Mac on bass; Nancy

Given-Prout on drums; Pam Gadd on acoustic guitar and banjo; Wanda Vick on electric, acoustic and steel guitar, along with fiddle and dobro (to name a few!); and, in my opinion, the musical highlight of this album, Pam Perry on mandolin.

Wild Rose also show off their writing talent. The title track and "Hidden Hollow" were co-written by Nancy, Wanda and Pat Bunch; the touching "Circle of Love" was composed by Pam Gadd, Jeff Pennig and Michael Noble; and the beautiful "I'll Always Love You" came from Pam Perry and Jan Buckingham. Watch for "Hillbilly Twist" (co-written by Pam Tillis) to be a single. It's a fun, high-energy song that's almost impossible to sit still through. This may be the song to make Wild Rose a household name (it already is in my house!).

Julie Yocum
Mapleton Depot, Pennsylvania

Memories of a Friend

Mary Dofner of McClelland, Iowa, sends in this song written by her son, Andy, in tribute to a friend who passed away after contracting the HIV virus through a blood transfusion. Mary tells the story below, and Andy's lyrics, inspired by times spent with Vern and other childhood friends, follow.

My son, Andy, recently wrote this in memory of his young friend, Vernon Nickles, who, like Ryan White, was a hemophiliac victim of the HIV virus. Andy and Vern were born four days apart in February 1969, and they grew close as young kids, as we are close friends with Vern's parents. When Vern became ill in 1984, his friends stood by him, phoning and taking him out when he felt up to it. When he passed away in January 1988, it left a void in the lives of all who knew him. This song helped all of us grieve for a fine young man. Andy attends college in Illinois. He's a music major, and he hopes to go to Nashville after graduation and find work in the recording studios. We are very proud of him. By the way, your Iowa correspondent, Dennis Devine, is a good friend of ours.

Mary Dofner
McClelland, Iowa

Childhood Memories

Lightnin' bugs in a mason jar;
ridin' in Daddy's car,
Those were big things back then.
Flyin' our kites in the fields out at
Grandpa's farm,
Do you remember when?
We were young and we were free,
runnin' wild just you and me,
How big we thought the little things were
back then.

Sling shots and marbles, and hide and go seek,
We thought we knew it all,
We flew to the moon, we rode buckin' broncos,
We even played Big League ball,
Ridin' bikes and climbin' trees,
Catchin' snakes and frogs and "things,"
How big we thought the little things were
back then!

How big we thought the little things were
when we were young,
Every day a new beginning, every night
a battle won!
We braved the roughest waters,
together we were strong,

I think of you in my memories, remember us
in my song.

Most of our days were spent as
Cowboys and Indians,
And nights dreamin' of the same,
Cops and Robbers in a nine car chase,
And a sandlot football game.
These childhood memories mean more
than anything,

I'll never forget you, and I'll never be the same,
I'll never forget you, and I'll never feel the same.

Campin' out in the backyard, tradin' baseball cards,
Whittlin' sticks with our knives,
Fishin' 'til dawn, fireworks on the lawn,
Those were the times of our lives,
We were young and we were free, runnin' wild
just you and me,
How big we thought the little things
were back then.

These childhood memories mean more
than anything,
I'll never forget you and I'll never be the same,
I'll never forget you, and I'll never feel the same,
I'll never forget you, and I'll never feel the same.

—Andy Dofner

COLLECTIONS

Collecting the Magazine

Complete your collection of *Country Music Magazine*.

●I would like to purchase back issues of *Country Music Magazine* to complete my collection. The issues I need are: Sep., Nov., Dec. 1972; Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Jun. 1973; Jul., Oct., Nov. 1974; Nov., Dec. 1981. Jim Kingsley, 6102 Raymond Rd., Madison, WI 53711.

●For Sale: Several years of *Country Music Magazine*. Also *Music City News*. Send SASE for list. Jean Motsinger, N.E. 27 Lake Cherokee, Longview, TX 75603.

Information, Please

Members write each other directly about information and items they need. Please include a SASE if you must correspond.

●Wanted: Crystal Gayle *Straight to the Heart* CD. Offering double the price listed, plus articles and interviews. Make offer! Niklas Wahlstrom, Mannerheimintie 138 A 18, 00278, Helsinki, Finland.

●Wanted: VHS video of the October CMA Awards from 1985 to 1989. Also, I would like to find a copy of Bobby Gentry's *Ode To Billy Joe* album or cassette. Does anyone know whatever happened to Joe Sun, John Conlee, Bonnie Tyler, Freddie Hart, Johnny Paycheck, Tommy Overstreet, Cal Smith and Billy Crash? Jody Thomas, 710 Norell, Channelview, TX 77530.

●Looking for any materials which Olivia Newton-John is involved in. If you have anything at all, please contact: Bill Zemanek, 68 East Pine St., Gloversville, NY 12078.

●Wanted: Any movies or videos of Sonny James. Will pay whatever price for copies. Please write to: Hazel Rumer, 7334 Shelvourne, Philadelphia, PA 19111.

●Wanted: albums, cassettes and 45's by Reba McEntire—*Reba McEntire* (1978), *Out of the Dream* (1979), *Feel the Fire* (1980), *Heart to Heart* (1981), *Unlimited* 1982 and *Behind the Scene* (1983). Also, any pictures, articles, collectibles and VHS videos of Reba. Buy, trade or sell. Send detailed list and prices to: Laurita, P.O. Box 2131, Christiansburg, VA 24068.

●Wanted: Looking for anything on Ricky Van Shelton. Will buy anything you have to sell. Would also like to buy a video copy of last year's CMA awards. Contact: Angela Canari, 109 Bay 34th St., Brooklyn, NY 11214.

●Wanted: Record or tape of The Statler Brothers containing song entitled "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight." Please contact Lora Raybern, Rt. 1, Box 97-A, Seward, KS 67577.

●Looking for words and music to "Only Believe" by Rador and "At the Roll Call" by James Weatherington. Please write to: Avis Lampert, 133 Pkwy., Poplar Grove, IL 61065.

●Help! I'm desperately in search of Reba McEntire's cassette, *Heart to Heart*. If you've got it, I want it. Willing to pay top dollar for new or used cassette in good condition. Please help me complete my collection. Send price, condition and SASE to: Jody Gyles, 2640 NE 51st, Des Moines, IA 50317-7042.

●Looking to obtain more memorabilia on

Ernest Tubb. I have been searching for the following albums: *Another Story*, *Just Call Me Lonesome*, *Sings Hank Williams*, *Saturday Satan*, *Sunday Saint* and *Let's Turn Back the Years*. I am also interested in obtaining any of his 78 rpm recordings. I am a 21-year-old disc jockey trying to round out my collection. Contact: Tracy Pitcox, 1308 South Bridge #7, Brady, TX 76825.

●For Sale: cassettes—*Tim Ryan* by Tim Ryan, *Columbia Historic Edition* by Roy Rogers, *The Golden Era* by Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, *An Old Time Christmas* by Randy Travis, *Retrospective Vol. 2* by Ernest Tubb. Also, cassette singles: "If Tomorrow Never Comes," Garth Brooks; "I Sang Dixie" and "Turn It On, Turn It Up, Turn Me Loose" both by Dwight Yoakam and 45's: "Leona" and "Step That Step" by Sawyer-Brown. In excellent condition. If interested write: Gail Pickerill, 901 North 29th St., Lincoln, NE 68503.

●Please help! Looking for albums/tapes of *Down in Tennessee* and *Midnight Fire* by Steve Wariner. Julie Guthrie, 174 Elm St., Wabash, IN 46992.

●Help! I have been looking for the song "Rawhide" by Frankie Laine. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find it. If anyone out there knows where I may find or order this song, please send information to Dennis Henry, HCR 63, Box 165, Melrose, NM 88124.

●Searching for the following albums: *Best of Marty Robbins*, *Best of Marty Robbins Singing the Blues*, *Carl/Lefty* and *Marty* (10-inch LP, Columbia CL-2544), *Legendary Music Man* (2 LP's, Col S RB 17206 and Col S FC 37501), *Castle in the Sky*, *Country Hymns* (Col S KC 30324) and *Marty Robbins and George Morgan* (Col #2069). Evelyn Hedlund, 4539 Knollwood Dr., Allendale, MI 49401-9449.

●For Sale: Thousands of records specializing in country. I will also buy Johnny Cash and related records and other items. Please send a SASE with your wants. All letters will be answered. Paul Neil Anderson, 7411 Walmer Ln., Overland Park, KS 66204.

●Help! I've looked for years for copies of "I Just Dropped In to Say Good-bye" and "What Am I Going to Do With You?" These were hits in the early 50's for Carl Smith. He is my all-time favorite ballad singer. Happy to pay all cost. Would like to correspond with any Carl Smith fan. Thanks! Mrs. Dale Gayken, 1070 Jasmine St., Eustis, FL 32726.

●I'm trying to locate a copy of the book *Country Music Buyer's Seller's Reference Book and Price Guide*. Send price and condition information to: Pat Kannianen, 2338 County Rd., Calumet, MI 49913

●Looking for photos, posters, magazines, videos, albums and cassettes by Holly Dunn. Please send information to Doug Hendricks, R.R. 1, 21692 T.R. 175, Mt. Blanchard, OH 45867.

●For Sale: Country-western tapes. For free list, send long SASE. Thank you. Art Brink, 7 Hollywood Dr., Whitesboro, NY 13492.

●Looking for the album *Stacked Deck* by Amazing Rhythm Aces. Please contact: Regina Carroll, Rt. 3, Box 306-A, Conway, SC 29526.

●Country albums for sale. For list, send long SASE to: Melba Waller, 224 N. Covington St., Hillsboro, TX 76645.

●Help! I am looking for the following 45's of very early 1960's material: "What Am I Living For," Conway Twitty; "What's It Like to Be Lonesome," Ray Price; and "Battle of the Blue and Gray," Lefty Frizzell. Hope someone can help me out! Larry Novak, Box 624, Neepawa, Canada ROJ 1H0.

Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail.

●Hi! My name is Gloria. I am a 26-year-old, single, old-fashioned country girl who loves country music. Some of my favorites are: Clint Black, Mark Chesnut, Randy Travis, Travis Tritt, Reba McEntire and many more. I also enjoy cooking, sports, animals (especially dogs and horses), poetry, freelance writing, rodeos and Western clothing. I would especially like to hear from country fans from other countries. Gloria Abrahamson, 201 W. Richmond St., Shawano, WI 54166.

●Howdy! I'm a Montana cowboy and songwriter. An avid Reba McEntire and Hank Williams Jr. fan. Also a traditionalist—like country's greats such as George Jones, Kitty Wells, Patsy Cline and a whole lot of others. Teach western dancing and enjoy the outdoors. Wondering if there are still any of fashioned cowgirls from age 24-30, interested in a romantic cowboy of 31. Dave Lavelle, P.O. Box 4525, Butte, MT 59702.

●Hello, my name is Tim. I'm a single, 24-year-old Christian. I like country and soft rock music. Some favorites: Clint Black, Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, Chicago, Billy Joel, Barry Manilow and many more. Interests include: movies, poetry, kids, animals and the beach. Would like to correspond with females, age 17-29. Religion and nationality don't matter; friendship does. Please write and send photo. Will answer all. Tim Hamel, 7427 Canaveral Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32210.

●Hi! My name is Gail. I am 34 years old and would like to correspond with male pen pals, age 34-36. I am a nurse's assistant. One of my hobbies is reading and I love country music. Some favorite artists are Aaron Tippin, Patty Loveless, Tanya Tucker, Loretta Lynn, Ricky Van Shelton and Alan Jackson. Gail Ross, 911 N. Trade St., Tryon, NC 28782.

●Howdy! I am a 19-year-old, "misplaced" country girl from up north. I'm real lonely and would love to hear from real country ladies and gents. I love all country music. Some of my favorites are George Strait, Clint Black, Alan Jackson and Dolly Parton. Will answer all letters. Send photo. Margaret Scallone, 314 Allen Pl., Ridgewood, NJ 07450.

●Hello there! I'm a country music fan forever and always, and I go to every concert I can get to. I'm 66 years old and love to get mail. I'd love to hear from country music fans especially senior citizens. My favorite stars are Vern Gostlin and George Jones. Please write. Lucille O. Whiteley, Rt. 1, Box 338-B, Pendleton, SC 29670.

●Hi! My name is Terry. I like country music and a few of my favorite artists are Patty Loveless, Ricky Van Shelton

and Hank Williams Jr. Would love to hear from women only. Terry Edwards, 218 Marley Ln., Apartment 27, Seymour, IN 47274.

●My name is Mario T. Lugod. I am 30 years old, single, Filipino and Roman Catholic. Being a lover of music, I dig country, mellow rock and all love songs. I like Kenny Rogers, Michael Bolton, Neil Diamond, Lionel Richie, Dan Hill, Elton John, Joe Cocker, Europe and INXS. I love writing people, singing and composing poems. Mario Lugod, 17 Pamaong Ext., Cogon, Tagbilaran City 6300, Bohol, Philippines.

●Hey there! My name is Christine. I'm a 20-year-old, single mom who would like to make friends with someone understanding and sincere. Country music is great. Some of my favorites are George Strait, Randy Travis, Garth Brooks and Clint Black. Would love to hear from ya! Christine Fife, 5600 Hamilton Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82009.

●I'm a 41-year-old country music lover. Some of my favorites are Ricky Van Shelton, The Judds, Reba McEntire and many more. My favorite things besides country music are cabins in the mountains, rainy Sundays and reading thrillers. Would like to hear from guys and gals, ages 30-40, with similar interests. Kathy Mann, 1285 Centre Pkwy. #19, Lexington, KY 40517.

●Hi, I'm a 26-year-old native American Indian looking for a pen pal. Hobbies are country music and bluegrass, rodeos and horseback riding, etc. Would love to correspond with all those "country bumpkins" out there. No inmates, please. Age doesn't matter. Denee Walters, General Delivery, Ganado, AZ 86505.

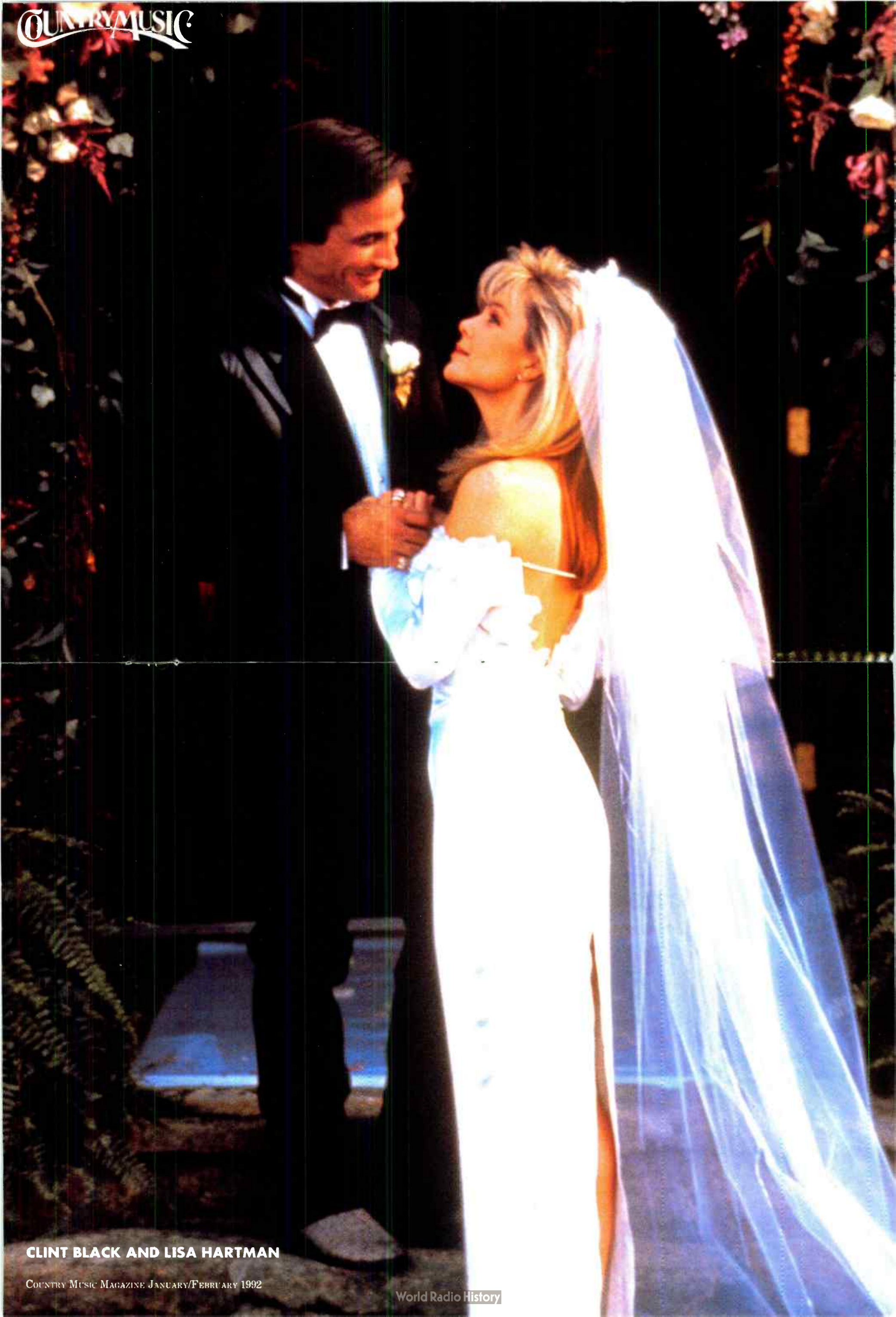
●Hi there! My name is Kim, and I'm 26 years old. I would like to hear from anyone of any age who likes country music. Some of my favorites are Alabama, Sawyer Brown, Restless Heart, Ricky Van Shelton, Hank Jr. and Patty Loveless, just to name a few. I enjoy hockey and Motorcros, dancing, horses and just about anything that includes good friends. Kim Clark, Crown, PA 16220.

●Hi there, country fans. My name is Barbara Hardwick, and I'm 22 years old. Would like to hear from Reba McEntire, Alabama, Shenandoah, Sawyer Brown and Marty Stuart fans. Barbara Hardwick, 507 W. Laurel Ave. Apt. A, Hattiesburg, MS 39401.

●Hello, my name is Ronnie Reagan and I am 17 years old. I love country music. Some of my favorites include Hank Williams Sr., Garth Brooks and Clint Black. Looking for pen pals between the ages of 13-21. Will try to answer all letters. Lookin' forward to hearin' from ya! Ronnie Reagan, Rt. 3, Box 344, Steele, MO 63877.

●Hi My name is Lisa Hill, and I'm 32. I love country music, big band, old rock 'n' roll, pop and soft rock. I'm looking for pen pals from Florida and all over New England. Some of my country favorites are Alabama, George Strait, Randy Travis, Reba McEntire, Clint Black, Garth Brooks, Crystal Gayle, Barbara Mandrell, Hank Williams and The Judds. Will answer all. Lisa Hill, 6301 Balboa Ln., Apollo Beach, FL 33572.

●My name is Jodi and my nickname is Odie. I am 15 years old, and I love coun-



CLINT BLACK AND LISA HARTMAN

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF THE MONTH

CLINT AND LISA'S WEDDING DAY



The bride and groom cut the cake.



The newlyweds with their proud families.



Clint's brothers were all smiles.

Wedding Date: October 20, 1991
Bride: Lisa Hartman, 35
Groom: Clint Black, 29
Place: Houston, Texas
Matron of Honor: Terri Footnick
(Lisa's sister)
Best Man: G.A. Black (Clint's dad)

The traditional wedding took place at Clint's 180-acre farm outside of Houston, with just family and close friends in attendance. The location was kept secret and was closed to all members of the press. The wedding was a Protestant ceremony with Lisa walking down the aisle to the accompaniment of a solo harpist. Clint wrote the wedding vows. The wedding rings were Eternity Bands inset with princess cut diamonds that match Lisa's engagement ring. They were designed by Clint himself.

After the honeymoon, the couple returned to their careers. They will divide their time between homes in Nashville and Los Angeles and the Texas farm.



The groom throws the garter.

STERLING

It Only Tastes Expensive.

4 NEW KING STYLES



LIGHTS: 9 mg. "tar", 0.8 mg. nicotine, LIGHTS 100's,
LIGHTS MENTHOL: 10 mg. "tar", 0.9 mg. nicotine, FULL
FLAVOR, FULL FLAVOR MENTHOL: 15 mg. "tar", 1.0 mg.
nicotine, av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

COLLECTIONS

try music. Would love to hear from fans of Anne Murray, Reba McEntire, Clint Black, Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers and Ronnie Milsap. Also love sports such as volleyball, softball and track. No prisoners, please. **Jodi Rupert, Rt. 1, P.O. Box 452, Towanda, KS 67144.**

●I am a former C&W dance instructor from Amarillo, Texas, currently serving 36 months in the Federal Bureau of Prisons for use of a false Social Security number. I am 40 years old and a graduate of West Texas State University. Would like to correspond with women 29-55 that want a very unique, motivating cowboy. **Eric Nelson Bertram, 12204-077 Beale Unit, P.O. Box 34550, Memphis, TN 38184-0550.**

●Hi there! Don't pass by me before checking this out. I'm a 34-year-old, single male who'd love to hear from any country girls out there. Presently, I'm incarcerated but I'm hoping that's not held against me. I'm a sincere, fun-loving, lonely man who loves driving, camping, NASCAR, country and rock music, to name a few. Hope we can be friends. Will send photo if you do. **J.P. Jones #155458, P.O. Box 1000, Craigsville, VA 24430.**

●Correctional Institute Inmate—non-violent offender, soon to be released. Handsome male, 33 years young, seek attractive woman to correspond with. Age not important. Photo appreciated. **C.W. Graham, #415968, P.O. Box 16, (8-Dorm), Lovelady, TX 75851.**

●I'm 50 and married. I love music, but I spend my money on country, 50's collections and some new wave jazz. I buy all country releases that come out if I can find them. My Number One artist is, and has been since 1965, Miss Connie Smith! I attend country music concerts, bowl, go camping, read and do crossword puzzles—always with country music by my side. If anyone has like interests, please write. **Robert J. Barnes, Box 295, McDermitt, NV 89421.**

●Hi, from California! I'm a 57-year-old female who loves country music. I have been singing and playing in a band for 11 years. I like dancing, traveling and camping. Would like to hear from and meet nice, clean-cut gentlemen, age 50 to 60. Will answer all letters. **Judy Beard, 7975 Williamson Rd., James-town, CA 95327.**

●My name is Lisa, and I'm 23 years old. I really love country music and listen to it every chance I get. My favorites include Randy Travis, George Strait, Ricky Van Shelton, Dolly Parton, Clint Black, Lionel Cartwright, Sawyer Brown, Alabama, The Judds and Marie Osmond. I'm still trying to get my friends to listen with little success. I'm excited to hear from any pen pals since this is my first time. **Lisa Louie, 439 14th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118.**

●Hi! My name is Eddie, and I'm 35 years old. I like all kinds of country music. Some of my favorites are Garth Brooks, Randy Travis and Reba. Looking for one real nice lady, 23-40. Send photo and/or letter to **Eddie Saunders, 124388, Rt. 4, Box 600, Pikeville, TN 37367.**

●My name is Carla, and I'm a big country music fan. Some of my favorites are Steve Earle, Dwight Yoakam, Clint Black, Waylon and Willie, Tanya Tucker,

Travis Tritt and the list goes on and on. I have 201 country music tapes. I would love to hear from all you country music fans out there. So grab that pen and write me. **Carla Stacey, P.O. Box 747, Chiloquin, OR 97624.**

Attention Members:

We are trying to locate copies of *The Illustrated History of Country Music*, published by *Country Music Magazine* in 1974. If you have a copy of the book available, please write: **Country Music Magazine, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880. Attn. George Fletcher.**

●I am a 30-year-old, single, female country music fan. Some of my favorites are Clint Black, Travis Tritt, Patty Loveless and many more. I enjoy collecting key chains, flea markets and reading. I would like to hear from male or female country music fans from anywhere. I'll answer all. **Kathy L. Harmon, P.O. Box 103, Alexandria, IN 46001.**

●Hi, my name is Gil. I'm a disc jockey at a country/western dance bar. I enjoy country music and dancing. Some of my favorites are Tanya Tucker, Emmylou Harris, Dwight Yoakam and George Strait. I spin country music and do dance instruction. Let me hear from you—male, female, all ages. I will answer all. Also, does anyone have a copy of "Sing Me An Old Fashioned Song" by Billie Jo Spears? I will pay a fair price. Let's visit. **Gil Leon, 5584 N. Via Girasol, Tucson, AZ 85715-1151.**

●I would like to correspond with single gentlemen, 30-40 years of age, with interests that coincide with mine. I am 40 years old and enjoy country music. Some of my favorites are Chris LeDoux, Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire and Kathy Mattea. Other interests include rodeos, horseback riding, bowling, country living, photography and reading fiction and biographical novels. If you are an eligible real life cowboy/francher, I would love to hear from you. No inmates, religious, chain or junk mail. **Vicki L. Siegrist, 3939 Russell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63110-3709.**

●Hi, I'm a 36-year-old married female who listens to country music all the time. I go to concerts as often as I can. Anyone, anywhere who would like to share any of their concert experiences can write. Send photo and I'll do the same. **Vickie Ziel, 404 South Tama St. Manchester, IA 52057-2239.**

●Hi, I'm a 30-year-old, small-town girl and I work on a large grain and produce farm. I love country music, and I'm a die-hard Hank Williams Jr. fan. I collect anything and everything on Bocephus! Some other favorites are Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Travis Tritt, The Kentucky Headhunters and lots more. So ya'll write soon and send a photo if you can. I'll send one, too. **Melinda Sanders, Box 225, Alvordton, OH 43501-0225.**

●You lady fans of George Strait out there, I'd love to correspond with those of you from age 50 up. I am Peggy, 58 years old and enjoy writing and receiving letters. My other interests are crossword puzzles, Diana Palmer novels, ACC football/basketball/A.A. Dodgers and Cubs baseball, pro football (Cow-

boys) and, of course, going to George Strait concerts. I am a new subscriber to *CMM* and enjoy it much. I like other country singers like Conway Twitty, Dean Dillon, Earl Thomas Conley and Merle Haggard. **Peggy Ferguson, 3132 Ruxton Dr., Walkertown, NC 27051.**

●Hi, my name is Scotty Hypes. I'm a 37-year-old country music fan. My favorite is Johnny Cash, also like Rosanne Cash, Carlene Carter, Dwight Yoakam, Pirates of the Mississippi and many more. I collect record albums and Johnny Cash VHS and cassette tapes. I would like to hear from Johnny Cash fans who are interested in selling/trading cassette and VCR tapes, albums, posters, pictures, etc. **Scotty Hypes, Box 965, Jones Branch, Summersville, WV 26651.**

●All-American, single, 28-year-old country boy would like to hear from country ladies who are single, between 21 and 40 years old, in all 50 states. My hobbies are sports, traveling, nature, camping, the beach and country and state fairs. My favorites are Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Randy Travis, George Strait, George Jones, Reba Entire, Dolly Parton and Tanya Tucker. No prisoners, please. **Mark McFadden, 3229 Agate Dr., Santa Clara, CA 95051-1107.**

●Hi! Male in mid 40's would like to become pen pals with country music fans. Would like to hear from ladies, 38-48, to exchange letters and photos. Please write: **R. Haden, Rt. 1, Woolwine, VA 24185.**

●Hi, I'm a 39-year-old lady who enjoys country music. My favorite singers are K.T. Oslin, Sawyer Brown and Loretta Lynn. My interests are cooking, walking, farming and, of course, country music. Would love to hear from fellow country music listeners. Will answer all. No prisoners, please. Write soon and often. **Linda Songer, 3400 Ridgeway Dr., Ashland, KY 41101.**

●Hi, my name is Cindy, and I am single. I love country music. My favorites are The Statler Brothers, Oak Ridge Boys, Garth Brooks, George Strait and Reba McEntire. I'd love to hear from anyone, any age, who is interested in making a new friend. Will answer all. Please, no inmates. **Cindy Jones, 108 Phillips Loop Rd., Swansboro, NC 28584.**

●Hi, my name is Melissa. I am 18 years old and I love country music. Some of my favorites are Shelby Lynne, Patty Loveless, The Judds and Travis Tritt. I would like to hear from anyone who loves country music. **Melissa Durham, Rt. 6, Box 192, Liberty, KY 42539.**

●Hi, my name is Lisa. I'm single, 27 years old and a very devoted country music fan. Some of my favorites are: Randy Travis, George Jones, Clint Black, Alan Jackson, Keith Whitley and Hank Williams Sr. Would love to hear from single males, age 25-35, to make some new friends. **Lisa K. Bryant, 608 Elm St., Greenup, KY 41144.**

●Hi, my name is Janice, and I'm a single country music gal. I like all the artists, but partial to Ronnie Milsap, being from his territory. Other favorites are Ricky Van Shelton, Garth Brooks, Marty Brown, Aaron Tippin, Alan Jackson and Billy Joe Royal. I collect postcards, paint, go to concerts, watch all football games and am a NASCAR fan. Would

love to receive postcards from country music fans from the North, Canada and Midwest but all are welcome. Will write to country guys age 40 to 50. No inmates, please. **Janice C. Edwards, P.O. Box 15, Marble, NC 28905.**

●Hi, my name is Kim and I'm a 22-year-old country girl from Texas. I would love to hear from fans who love Alabama, Garth Brooks, Ricky Van Shelton, Clint Black, George Strait, Travis Tritt and more! I enjoy going to country music concerts and collecting anything on my favorites. Will answer all. Please write soon. **Kim Valek, 617 Chatham NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504.**

●Hi! I'm a dedicated country music fan and my favorites are Reba McEntire, Steve Wariner, Clint Black, Sawyer Brown, Ricky Van Shelton, Randy Travis, Tammy Wynette, George Strait, George Jones, Haggard, Tanya Tucker, Alan Jackson and Keith Whitley. Write and tell me your favorites. All ages welcome, will answer all. **LauRita, P.O. Box 2131, Christianburg, VA 24068.**

●Hi, my name is LaVonna and I'm a 27-year-old, single mother of one. I love country music. Favorites are George Strait and Mark Chesnut, but I love most country singers, young and old. I love rodeos. Would like to correspond with cowboys, age 25 to 45, or any country music fans. **LaVonna D. Hill, 831 E. Date, Apt. B, Porterville, CA 93257.**

●Hello, my name is Gloria Cooper. I am a 45-year-old female and I would like to hear from someone age 40 to early 50's. I like all country music including some of the old songs. My hobbies and interests are many—I will tell you in writing. I'm looking for a pen pal friendship, so fill up my mailbox. Thanks. **Gloria Cooper, P.O. Box 871, Booneville, AR 72927.**

●Hello, my name is Holly Ann Nicom. I'm 15 years old, and I'm a diehard Willie Nelson fan. Other favorites are The Kentucky Headhunters, The Pirates of the Mississippi, The Highwaymen and Garth Brooks. I am very athletic, artistic and lonely. I seem to be the only teenager in my town who likes country music. I will write to anyone who takes the time to write to me. **Holly A. Nicom, 7 Hillbrook Cr., Malvern, PA 19355.**

●Hi, my name is Johnnie Beaty, and I love country music! I'm 15 years old and have enjoyed country music for quite a while. Some of my favorites are Randy Travis, Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, Clint Black and many, many more. I am looking for pen pals of any age and I would also like to hear from guys in Australia! Please write. Will answer all. **Johnnie Beaty, 12305 A Furrow Cove, Austin, TX 78753.**

●Hi, all you country music fans! I am 50 years old, twice widowed and love all country music and bluegrass. Also like going to concerts and the Grand Old Opry. Would love to hear from guys and gals near my age, but will answer all letters. Please write soon. **Nancy L. Sellers, 314 W. Butler St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802.**

Send requests to *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880. Mark envelope: Attention: Collections. Entries sent without membership number will be discarded.

Loretta Lynn

Nothing stopped Loretta Lynn. She went from barefoot and pregnant to superstar on sheer grit and talent, and changed the way women saw themselves in music.

.....
by Rich Kienzle

If Loretta Lynn had never sung another note after the release of the film version of her autobiography, *Coal Miner's Daughter* starring Sissy Spacek, her legend would have been set in stone.

Kitty Wells was always a superstar among country fans; Patsy Cline, another country superstar, might have broken through to non-country fans had she lived. Dolly Parton got a mainstream audience but had to compromise her music to do so. Loretta did the same, and didn't compromise a bit.

The story of her early days is, of course, well known by now. Loretta Webb was born on April 14, 1935, in the remote coal mining area of Butcher Hollow, Kentucky, to a poor but close-knit family headed by her father, Melvin "Ted" Webb and her mother, Clara. Ted Webb worked the mines at night, caught some sleep in the morning, then tended the family crops. Loretta helped her mother take care of younger brothers and sisters, singing the entire time. Music was always a part of their family life.

In 1948, when Loretta was 13, she baked a pie for a local social. Tradition dictated that pies were auctioned and that whoever bid highest for the pie got to take home the woman who brought it. Doolittle "Mooney" Lynn, a 21-year-old Army veteran who had had his eye on Loretta for some time, bid five dollars and walked her home. There were problems related to Mooney's reputation and the age difference between them, but after Mooney convinced the Webbs his intentions were honorable, he and Loretta married in 1949.

She became pregnant almost immediately, though the naive mountain girl didn't know it for several months. Seven months into the pregnancy, Mooney—who'd promised her father he wouldn't



Duets by Conway and Loretta were big hits in the 1970's.

take her far from home—took her from Kentucky to Custer, Washington, where he began working in the logging business. By the mid-50's she had two sons and two daughters to care for.

Loretta's interest in playing guitar and writing songs continued while she was raising a family. Despite the ups and downs of their marriage, Mooney pushed her to develop her talents and encouraged her music. She won amateur shows and sang with a band in local honky tonks. She also got the chance to sing on a Tacoma TV show hosted by a then-unknown Buck Owens.

Norm Burley, a businessman from nearby Vancouver, British Columbia, saw her on television. After meeting the Lynns, he started Zero Records—mainly to launch her career. In February of 1960, Loretta and Mooney drove to Los Angeles to record. She had two original songs, one of them "Honky Tonk Girl." Loretta enjoyed the records of steel guitar virtuoso Speedy West, and they made contact with him in L.A. After Speedy heard the mediocre backup band they had hired, he called some of L.A.'s A-

Team country pickers and booked a better studio. Within a day they had recorded "Honky Tonk Girl" and "Whispering Sea."

Some 3500 copies of the single were initially pressed. At that point the Lynns began writing letters to disc jockeys, sent out thousands of photos and records, then drove around the country eating baloney sandwiches between Loretta's visits to local radio stations to promote the single. On June 13, 1960, "Honky Tonk Girl" entered the *Billboard* charts, eventually peaking at Number 14. That first glimmer of success sent Loretta, Mooney and their four kids to Nashville, where Mooney took a day job while Loretta tried to establish herself. As a guest on the Ernest

Tubb *Midnight Jamboree*, then as now an outlet for new talent, she sang Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces" for her idol, who was then recovering from a near-fatal car crash. Patsy heard her, and shortly afterwards the two met, beginning a friendship that lasted until Patsy's death.

Ernest Tubb, who liked and encouraged Loretta, got her a guest spot on the Grand Ole Opry that turned into 17 guest shots in a row. Her songwriting came to the attention of The Wilburn Brothers, Opry stars and Decca recording artists, who signed her to their Sure-Fire publishing company in 1961 and had her cut a demo tape of her songs. Doyle Wilburn took the tape to Decca's Nashville producer, Owen Bradley, asking him to sign Loretta to the label. Bradley wanted Loretta's song, "Fool Number One," for Brenda Lee but insisted he didn't need another girl singer. When Doyle in turn insisted that Owen sign Loretta or lose the song, he signed her (Brenda Lee subsequently had a huge pop hit with "Fool Number One"). In 1962 Loretta's single, "Success," became her first Top Ten hit. That same year she joined the Opry.

LEGENDS OF COUNTRY MUSIC

Over the next few years, working closely with The Wilburn Brothers on their syndicated TV show and recording for Decca, her unvarnished, direct, sassy singing and writing stood her in good stead despite the pop-oriented Nashville Sound, which was riding high throughout the 60's. The Top Tens came one after another—"Blue Kentucky Girl," "Mr. and Mrs. Used to Be" with Ernest Tubb, "You Ain't Woman Enough" and, in 1965, her first Number One, "Don't Come Home a-Drinkin' With Lovin' on Your Mind," which she wrote with her sister, Peggy Sue.

Loretta had touched a chord with working-class women dealing with hell-raising husbands and their temptations—after all, she had the same problems with Mooney at times. Where Kitty Wells was the demure, prim and proper wife, taking the high road in her songs, Loretta's songs featured women who were unafraid to get to the point and give as good as they got. She further explored that point of view in "What Kind of a Girl Do You Think I Am" and in two unabashedly witty and belligerent songs, "Fist City" and "Your Squaw Is on the Warpath." From 1963 to 1969 all but one of her singles made the Top Ten.

Then in 1970 she recorded "Coal Miner's Daughter." A proud, honest memoir of her childhood, its title became her stage nickname; the song even broke into the pop charts. At that point, Owen Bradley teamed her with Conway Twitty, who was becoming a formidable presence on the country charts. Beginning with 1971's "After the Fire Is Gone," the pair had five Number One records in a row, including "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man" and "Feelin'."

Meanwhile, Loretta was still hitting her stride as a solo artist with numbers like "You're Lookin' at Country," a Number Five record in 1971, and Shel Silverstein's evocative look at working-class life, "One's on the Way," which fit perfectly into her musical view. It was Number One for two weeks in 1971. "Hey Loretta," another Silverstein tune, went to Number Three in 1973.

Through the 70's, her star rose even higher. In 1972 she became the first woman to receive the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year Award. Her 1975 hit, "The Pill," an ode to birth control, upset some of the more prudish radio stations, but it became a Number Five hit nonetheless. (She didn't write "The Pill," but it sounded like her own compositions.) These songs and her outspoken personality made her a favorite on TV talk shows and led to profiles in newspapers and magazines. In 1973



she appeared in the Gallup Poll's list of the world's most admired women.

In 1976 her autobiography, written with George Vecsey, became a best-seller, in part because it captured her outspoken, feisty and indomitable spirit in her own language, with much the same tone reflected in her best songs. It is little surprise that the acclaimed film version of the book, starring actress Sissy Spacek, is now considered one of the best country music biographical films of all time.

Through it all, Loretta's success continued, and she and Mooney bought the entire town of Hurricane Mills, Tennessee, where they make their home. She's owned western stores, a booking agency and other business interests, but she's never lost touch with her fans—even at the expense of her peace of mind.

By the early 80's, Loretta's string of big hits began to fall off, and today you don't see Loretta Lynn records on the

Top Ten (at least for the moment). But it doesn't matter. She inspired an entire generation of younger female artists, and her songs and voice captured the life of the everyday housewife, fed up with being subservient, barefoot and pregnant. Indeed, she had much to do with making that stance acceptable. Much as Kitty had broken the barriers for women in the early 50's, Loretta furthered the cause with her own success.

Some 30 years after her first hit, she was the subject of a recent TNN special, *The Seasons of My Life*, and is working on a sequel to *Coal Miner's Daughter* covering the past 15 years. Loretta Lynn has become an icon. Her 60's and 70's recordings endure as some of the greatest of any era. She began by idolizing Kitty and Patsy. Today she's earned a place alongside them.

Albums Available
See For Members Only Page.

Readers Create

Working to Save the Earth

Linda Heath-Edwards, a member in Franklin, Virginia, has hopes of becoming a professional songwriter. She tackles a topic that, of late, has been front-page news—the environment and the future of our planet. Many country stars are getting involved in this cause.

No One Will Be Left to See Tomorrow

Just look into the eyes of a child.
Then look into the eyes of the wild.
You'll see a certain message
in the fears that they share,
They're crying to us, begging us to care.
Remember that this is their home too,
There is so much for them we should do.
To help preserve the nature
and the children of the world,
Let's join our hands and save this planet
Earth.

There's so many things we're doin',
That could bring this world to ruin.
It's time we put back what we have borrowed;
'cause if we stay this way,
It will all be gone someday.
And no one will be left to see tomorrow.
Let's not disappoint the ones in need,
The hungry and those living in the street.

This country has a lot
that we can be proud of,
Let's don't forget to take some pride in love.
—Linda Heath-Edwards

Of Home and Hearth

Katie Ruberti hails from Sudbury, Massachusetts, near Boston. Her poem, "Little House," touches on the difference between a house and a home.

Little House

There's a little house that's standing
in the woods upon a hill
with geraniums and pansies
in its tiny window sill.

Its walls are made of plywood
just a simple little shack
with four rooms and a big old porch
a front door and a back.

The strong walls keep the cold out
on those windy winter nights
and they're there to hold the love in
when we're turning out the lights.

And I doubt it'd bring much money
to my world if it were sold
but the love inside is priceless
'cause it's made of solid gold.

And sometimes we sit on the porch
late at night and rock
the moon shines on the river
and the air is filled with talk.



Clint Black a Favorite

Annette Taylor of Salem, Virginia, says that her two favorite artists are Clint Black and Randy Travis. Here's her take on Clint.

And it doesn't feel like anything
I've ever felt before
I know there'll never be a time
I'll ever ask for more.

The walls are made of plywood
it's a simple little shack
with a welcome sign hung in the front
and a garden in the back.

—Katie Ruberti



George Strait Profiled

Robin Sue Lehman discovered country music in 1986, and since that time, she says, George Strait has been her Number One favorite. Currently a resident of Aurora, Colorado, Robin is originally from New England.

Country Stars and Their Nicknames

Almost every country star has a title of one sort or another. Member Teresa Wooddell gave this some thought and came up with this puzzle. Just match up the country star on the left with the nickname on the right. Teresa is from Piqua, Ohio.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Roy Acuff | A. Coal Miner's Daughter |
| 2. Bill Anderson | B. 80's Lady |
| 3. Johnny Cash | C. Father of Bluegrass |
| 4. Tennessee Ernie Ford | D. Father of Country Music |
| 5. Tom T. Hall | E. First Lady of Country Music |
| 6. George Jones | F. First Lady of Country Comedy |
| 7. Loretta Lynn | G. Hillbilly Rocker |
| 8. Bill Monroe | H. The Man in Black |
| 9. Willie Nelson | I. The King |
| 10. Jimmy C. Newman | J. The King of Country Music |
| 11. K.T. Oslin | K. Number One Cowboy |
| 12. Minnie Pearl | L. The Ol' Pea Picker |
| 13. Elvis Presley | M. The Possum |
| 14. Marty Robbins | N. Queen of Country Music |
| 15. Jimmie Rodgers | O. Ragin' Cajun Man |
| 16. Hank Snow | P. Red Headed Stranger |
| 17. Marty Stuart | Q. Bocephus |
| 18. Ernest Tubb | R. The Singing Ranger |
| 19. Kitty Wells | S. The Story Teller |
| 20. Hank Williams Jr. | T. The Texas Troubadour |
| 21. Tammy Wynette | U. Whisperin' Bill |

By Bob Allen

It's a blustery, bright Saturday afternoon in middle Tennessee. The annual Country Radio Seminar, perhaps the single most eventful week in the country record industry, is winding down at the Opryland Hotel. Ricky Van Shelton, Alan Jackson, Randy Travis, Clint Black and Mark Chesnutt are just some of the stars who've been sighted around the hotel in the past few days, hobnobbing and politicking with the radio folks who spin their records and thus keep their careers on track. But Joe Diffie, one of the newest and hottest of Nashville's latest wave of honky tonk singers, who just the night before opened a show for Garth Brooks down in Knoxville, sits, somewhat unnoticed, on a sofa in the center of the large lobby, wearing sunglasses and clutching a briefcase.

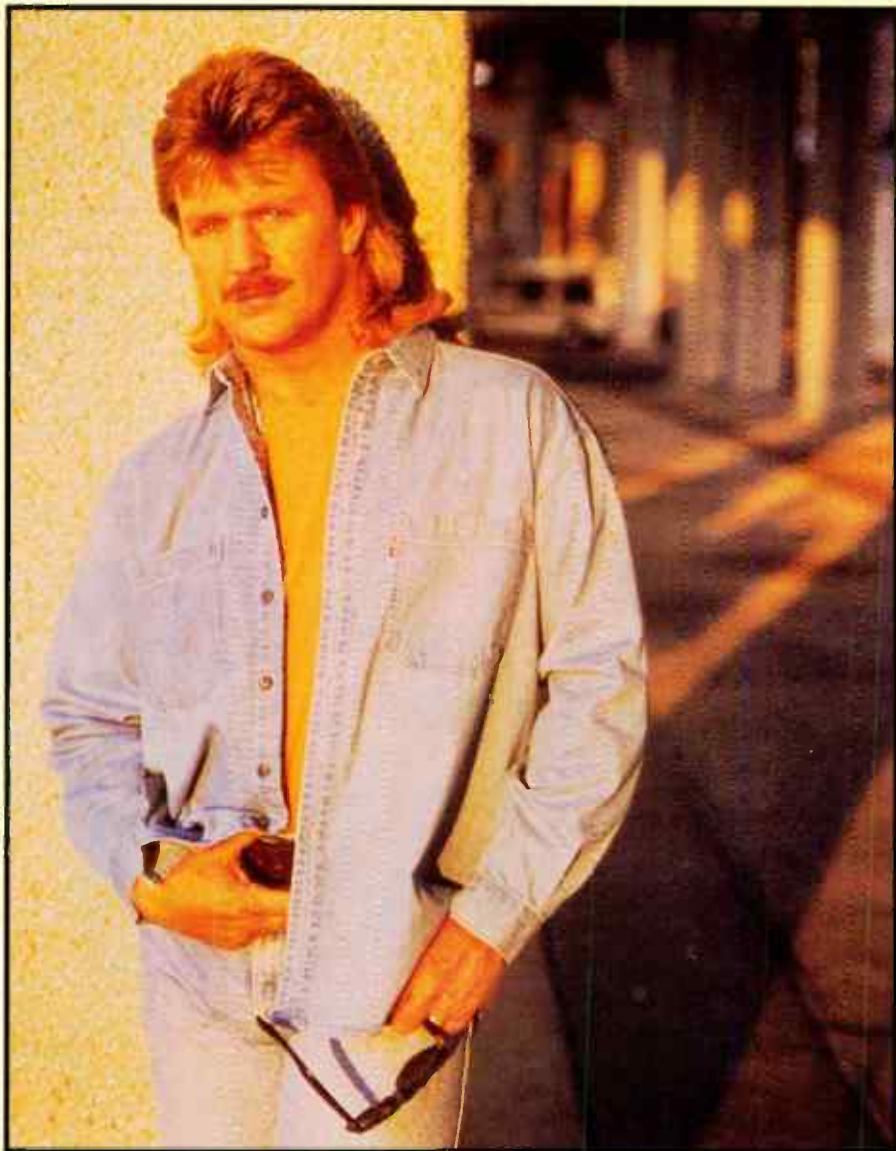
Only later, as Diffie strolls around the hotel's huge atrium and settles down at a table in the Cascade Lounge next to the large indoor waterfall, with his publicist and a visiting reporter in tow, do several college-age girls size him up as someone they *should* recognize and politely stalk him and take aim through their camera view finders.

Diffie, an unassuming, affable and often downright funny guy, seems to savor the last of his rapidly fading cloak of anonymity—which, at the rate things are happening for him career-wise, he won't be able to hold on to for much longer. He's graduated from the anonymous life of a marginally successful Nashville songwriter and behind-the-scenes demo singer to fledging stardom of his own.

A Thousand Winding Roads, Diffie's debut album, released in the fall of 1990, resulted in four Number One singles: "Home," "If You Want Me To," "If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets)" and "New Way (To Light Up an Old Flame)."

"Home" made history by becoming the first debut single to simultaneously reach the Number One spot across the board in all three country charts—*Billboard*, *The Gavin Report* and *R&R*. Meanwhile, Diffie's second album, *Regular Joe*, is due out early this year. The first single and video, "Is It Cold in Here," has been out since November.

Up until a year ago, Diffie, who spent his first few years in Nashville working for the Gibson Guitar Company (first trundling boxes in the shipping and receiving department, later as a quality control inspector), hadn't performed live for nearly half a decade, except for an occasional impromptu appearance at a "writer's night" at a local club. But of late, the 32-year-old Oklahoman, who's been hailed by more than one Music Row veteran as "the best country singer since George Jones," finds himself routinely



Joe Diffie:

A Regular Joe

With his unassuming style and personality, Joe Diffie could be the boy-next-door, but his talent and Number One hits tell a different story.

performing for audiences in the 10-to-20,000 range, opening shows for headliners like Hank Jr., George Strait and Garth Brooks.

"Yeah, it all caught me by surprise, it happened so quick," Diffie laughs giddily over the roar of the waterfall. "Having been around Nashville for a little while, you hear a lot of people that are great

singers, with songs that are so great that you figure there's no way they *can't* be a hit," he adds with a sip of coffee and a contemplative drag on a cigarette. "Yet they don't do anything, and it surprises you. So, as far as my own career went, I was hopin' for the best and prepared for the worst."

Cautious words for a man whose debut

“Having been around Nashville for a little while, you hear a lot of people that are great singers, with songs that are so great that you figure there’s no way they can’t be a hit. Yet they don’t do anything, and it surprises you.”

met with such a dramatic reception during a year when the country record business literally found itself overrun with both talented and telegenic new male singers. He’s wowed the industry with his songwriting, too. The four songs that he penned with various co-writers on *A Thousand Winding Roads*—“Liquid Heartache,” “New Way (To Light Up an Old Flame),” “If You Want Me To” and “I Ain’t Leavin’ ’Til She’s Gone”—have

the provocative, show-stopping resonance of instant honky tonk classics.

Diffie spent nine years punching the clock and operating a machine that made metal castings in an iron foundry back home in Duncan, Oklahoma. “If the foundry hadn’t shut down, I’d probably still be there today,” he confesses.

But his infatuation with country music has been lifelong. “My dad had a huge record collection....His favorites were all

country—George Jones, Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell. They were my favorites, too. When I got a little older, I was one of those guys who knew every dad-gum song on the radio and would run people crazy singing them all,” he laughs. “I’d sing ‘em all, whether they were men’s or women’s songs—whether I liked ‘em or not! I didn’t have any idea how good I was, but I could always match their licks. It was almost like I couldn’t help it,” he shakes his head. “It was like an obsession with me.” Yet he put his interest in music on the back burner while he attended Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma, and was uncertain at the time whether he’d ever pursue it.

“Then I fell in lust...er, I mean *love*,” he recalls with a self-effacing guffaw. “I dropped out of school and got married and worked in the oil fields for a while. Then I moved up to Alice, Texas, and got a job driving a pump truck, and went around pumping cement out of oil wells. The first week I worked about 108 hours,” he rolls his eyes. “About two months of that was all I could stand. That’s when I moved back to Oklahoma and went to work in the foundry.”

In Duncan, during his spare time, Diffie did begin dabbling in music again. He joined a gospel group called Higher Purpose, then later hooked up with a bluegrass band called Special Edition. They played clubs around Oklahoma, Kansas, Louisiana and Arkansas, and recorded a couple of albums at their own expense. “Terrible-soundin’ things now that I look back on it,” Diffie chortles again. “Back in those days, I’d often have people tell me that I oughta go to Nashville. I’d just think to myself, ‘Yeah, *sure!* Right!’”

For a while, until the oil crunch put him out of business, Diffie also operated his own eight-track studio in Duncan, making demos of the songs he was writing and turning out custom records for other local acts.

But then, in 1986, Diffie’s comfortable, if somewhat harried, middle-class existence came tumbling down around his ears. The foundry shut down, casting him suddenly out into the ranks of the unemployed. Around the same time, his first marriage came undone, and he found himself making the singles scene again. Only by now, he’d become a veritable “round pound of sound”: at 264 pounds, he was dangerously—worse yet—unde-



Joe’s career and home life are both in full swing. In 1990 he and Debbie celebrated the birth of Joshua Drew. In 1991 they celebrated Joe’s Number One hit, “New Way (To Light Up an Old Flame).” His new album’s due out soon.



sirably overweight.

"I thought I was at the end of the world," he confesses sadly. "I'd lost my job, lost my wife and my three kids. I was pretty down at the mouth. I stayed on in Oklahoma for about six or seven months trying to find another job, but I didn't." He adds with a grin, "I guess it's like they say: Blessings come in disguises."

Before the layoff, Diffie had had a couple of minor successes with his songwriting. Hank Thompson recorded a song called "Love on the Rocks" that Diffie and a friend had co-written and sent along to Thompson's company. After he and the same friend sent another song called "Love's Hurtin' Game" to a Nashville publisher, Diffie got a phone call informing him that the song was on hold by Randy Travis.

Even though Travis never did get around to recording "Love's Hurtin' Game," this was encouragement enough to prompt Diffie to borrow some money from his parents and leave for Nashville in December 1986, joining a buddy who'd moved there a few months earlier to play in Bill Monroe's band.

"I remember how intimidated I was when I first drove into town. I didn't know where to go or what to do. It seemed like the big city compared to what I was used to. It was the dead of winter. Real cold and ugly lookin', no leaves on the trees. I didn't know if I wanted to stay or not."

But Diffie did stay on. He landed the job with Gibson Guitars and began writing songs in earnest. Eventually he talked his neighbor, a successful songwriter named Johnny Neal, into co-writing with him. As time passed, he landed a publishing deal of his own with Forest Hills Music, Neal's publisher. Within a couple of years he'd co-written songs that ended up as album cuts for Doug Stone, The Forester Sisters and others.

Gradually, because of his unusually powerful voice, Diffie found himself in a lot of demand to sing on demo records. "It got to where I was doing demos all the time, on weekends, at night, until I finally left my day job in June 1989, and started doing it full time," recalls the singer. "It was a great training ground as far as getting familiar with the studio atmosphere, and I got to meet and sing on demos for songwriters like Don Schlitz, Harlan Howard and Hank Cochran—people who a lot of new writers in my shoes would have given their eye teeth to meet. I also learned a lot about how to put emotion into the songs—not just to sing the words, but to get somebody to believe that you're actually living that situation.

"I'd demo as many as 12 songs a day sometimes. Thousands of 'em, bunches of 'em. A few of 'em ended up as album cuts



Filming the video for "Is It Cold in Here," the first single from *Regular Joe*.

"But this business is real image-oriented. You gotta compete with the Clint Blacks and Alan Jacksons, and those are some real handsome guys. So you've got to look as best you can."

by Garth Brooks, George Strait, Keith Whitley and Doug Stone. But out of them all, only one was a Number One record: 'I've Cried My Last Tear for You' by Ricky Van Shelton. And only one other was a hit, 'There Goes My Heart Again,' which I co-wrote and which went Number Four for Holly Dunn. So that kind of gives you an idea of the ratio for success in the songwriting business."

Along the way, Diffie also managed to shed some 80 pounds. "It was tough losing it, but I found out back when I got divorced that women don't like to look at big guys very much," he explains with a sly grin. Now remarried, Diffie and his wife Debbie have two children, including son Joshua Drew Diffie, born last May.

"I still fight my weight all the time," confesses the calorie-counting honky tonker as he picks gingerly at a sandwich. "It's tough, because every time you go to see somebody in this business they wanta show you their hospitality by taking you out to the fanciest restaurant and

buyin' you a big ol' dinner. But this business is real image-oriented. You gotta compete with the Clint Blacks and Alan Jacksons, and those are some real handsome guys. So you've got to look as best you can. I'd hate to screw up a career being overweight."

The hundreds of demo records floating around Music Row offices with his voice on them proved the ultimate marketing device for Diffie. One Nashville publisher, Charlie Monk, recalled how he first heard Diffie singing on a demo tape through two walls and immediately went running over to the next office to find out who that fantastic voice belonged to. Some of Diffie's associates eventually presented some Diffie-made demos to veteran Sony (then CBS) producer Bob Montgomery. Some months later, Montgomery signed the singer to the label.

"I'm not trying to blow my own horn or nothing, but I worked hard to get where I am," Diffie points out. "I remember before I came here, my dad told me that the key to meeting any goal was to work at it every day. So that's what I did the first five years I was in Nashville: I worked on my music every day, whether it was writing a song or singing a demo. I became a real workaholic about it. I was busy all the time. If I ever had a day off, I just felt like I was wasting time.

"One of the nicest things about all this is that when I came to Nashville, I didn't know anybody," he grins as he prepares to hurry off for a sound check and rehearsal in preparation for an appearance that night on a radio seminar music showcase. "But now I've got more friends—close friends that I just love—than I've ever had. And that's a pretty neat feeling." ■



Right from the start, it was plain that Shelby Lynne was different. The average teenager doesn't get to sound like she did—like a sophisticated, sensual, soul-deep, thoroughly blues experienced woman—by living “normally” and going with the peer group flow. The average young Nashville hopeful doesn't freely express opinions about the music business unheard in public since the rebel days of Tompall Glaser and David Allan Coe. The average provider of ammunition for country radio's conquest of middle-of-the-road America doesn't look like she might steal your Harley.

All these descriptions fit young Shelby Lynne, though, as she hurtled from nowhere to Nashville in no time at all and proceeded to knock some of the biggest of the country big-timers clean out of their socks. Ralph Emery gave her a guest spot on *Nashville Now* after hearing a demo tape she'd made in Mobile; the legendary Billy Sherrill called her immediately after watching that show, and wound up co-producing her first album; George Jones recorded a duet with her and called her “my little adopted daughter”; Reba McEntire named her as her favorite young country singer; Randy Travis called her “an incredible singer” and chose her as his

opening act for singers of significantly less than superstellar status: Doug Stone, Billy Joe Royal, Ronnie McDowell. Sadly, if not very surprisingly, her difference seemed to have become a career liability.

* * *

My first impression of Shelby as she follows her personal manager into my motel room is one of great fragility laced, perhaps, with anger. Petite and pale, her youth accentuated by very short hair, she doesn't shake hands or otherwise greet me, and she goes on wearing her dark, stylish sunglasses even after she's seated on the couch—a redundant degree of protection, since she's not looking in my direction anyway, and actually a stratagem more revealing than not: Only a very shy, hung-over, hostile or inexperienced show business person begins an interview by refusing eye contact.

The mood is somewhat uncomfortable, then, but that's hardly unexpected in Shelby's case. I've been warned about her shyness, and I'm aware of the background to it. Maybe you are too, but in case you aren't, the bare facts are that Shelby and her little sister Allison grew up as victims of their alcoholic father's violent abuse, and were witnesses to the final act in that long sickness. In 1985, when Shelby was 17, her

WHO IS Shelby Lynne?

The interview is quiet, subdued and a bit strained. The stage show, however, is knock-your-socks-off terrific. The 22-year-old from Alabama lets her music do the talking.

by Patrick Carr

opening act; Willie Nelson chose her as *his* opening act; and of course the critics went nuts.

So it really seemed that being different worked very well for young Shelby. Her depth, her soul, her blues power, her rebelliousness, even the edge of darkness about her—those qualities seemed like attention-getting assets, and Shelby seemed headed straight for the top. I myself saw enormous potential in her; apart from doing very well for herself, I saw her bringing new depth to the charts and perhaps even spurring a revival, however limited, of outlaw musical values.

None of that happened, though, because radio didn't cooperate. Shelby's music was judged inappropriate for country airplay: disqualified, basically, for precisely the elements which had made a raving fan of virtually every fellow artist and real live record buyer who'd ever heard her; judged too gloomy for the modern major marketplace (*Nice tune, Hank—the robin thing was beautiful—but sad don't sell Subarus, son. Got anything more up?*) And so she didn't get hits, and so her initially rocketlike career leveled out at an altitude well below its natural ceiling, and in time the tug of gravity began asserting itself. By late 1991, four years and three albums after her breakthrough, she still hadn't had a hit, and while she was still touring with Willie Nelson from time to time, she was also working as an

mother broke free and moved herself and her daughters from their home in Jackson, Alabama, to nearby Mobile. But the man of the house followed. He argued with his wife in the driveway, and then he shot her dead, and then, as his daughters watched, he shot himself.

Via her management, Shelby has made it clear that she doesn't want to talk about this subject, and so I won't raise it. In the past, though, she has said that “I have accepted it. I go on. My music gets me through the bad days, and I do have bad days” (*USA Today*, 1991). She has also revealed that “the accident” released a flood of emotion into her singing. Before, “I sounded like everybody else.” And that's as far as she'll go.

That's far enough, then, but our interview is happening in Mobile, on the afternoon before her first public appearance in the city since she left for Nashville three years ago, and so you'd think there might be reverberations about today—childhood echoes, teenage ghosts, reunions of all sorts—which might distinguish it quite sharply from other days in her shifting parade of places to sing.

But no, Shelby doesn't volunteer anything along those lines. Although she is indeed expecting “a bunch” of family and friends at her show, that's all she has to say about that. And although Mobile is indeed a place of great significance in her life, “I didn't grow up here. I

never hung out here. I'm from Jackson. Mobile doesn't mean anything to me. It's just another show, y'know?" She sounds as closed as her words.

Okay. Another subject. I'm wondering what Shelby thinks of her most recent album, *Soft Talk*. In the past she's been unusually frank about her recording work, complaining for instance that many of the creative decisions involved in the making of her second album, *Tough All Over*, weren't hers and she didn't like them. Was that also the case with *Soft Talk*?

Evidently not. "I love it. I think it's my favorite of the three I've done," she says. "What more can I say?"

Well, quite a lot, even if she'd really rather not be talking at all (which does appear to be the case), and so I ask her about the three producers she's worked with: Billy Sherrill (*Sunrise*), Bob Montgomery (*Tough All Over*), and James Stroud (*Soft Talk*).

She thinks for a moment, then begins to emerge a little from her shell. "Well...Billy Sherrill, to me, is a genius. He can make a mediocre piece of music into a masterpiece. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him and hope I'll get to do it again one day. I had total free rein with him—what free rein I wanted at the time, 'cause I was just 18 and didn't know what the hell I was doing anyway. But yeah, as far as my choosing songs and having input and that kind of thing, Billy was with me all the way. I really liked being around him as a person, too; he's a great guy.

"Bob Montgomery is a great producer, as we all know from his success with Janie Fricke and Vern Gosdin and everything, but I wasn't too thrilled with some things about *Tough All Over*. But that's all over with, and I feel I've made a giant leap forward with *Soft Talk*. James Stroud let me have as much to do with the production of the album as he did, and that's what I wanted. I went in with James and told him how it was going to have to be in order for this thing to work: I was going to have to choose the songs and choose the pickers, and have free rein, say whatever I need to, or felt I needed to."

This isn't exactly the kind of speech most singers, let alone 22-year-old women with no hits, feel free to make to Nashville producers. It seemed perfectly natural to Shelby, though, and so did the process that led up to it.

"I was going to make sure that the things that made me unhappy about my last album never happened again. I was determined to do the record I wanted to do, whether I had a whole lot of support or not. So I interviewed several produc-

ers, and James and I just hit it off, and I got to do my record with support."

When Shelby says "support," I take that to mean record company backing.

"Yup, I went to Epic," she confirms. "I went to the head of the company and said, 'This is what I do. In order to make it work for me, and you, I have to be happy with it. I'll do whatever it takes to be happy with it, 'cause I can't be miserable doing the only thing I love to do.'"

According to Shelby, "he understood," and so she made *Soft Talk*, which to my

ken outlaw sentiment and are reminded that she and Willie Nelson share an attitude as well as a stage and a manager.

I read her one of her own quotes—"Record companies try to mess with everything that's natural about you"—and ask her why she thinks that is.

"It's because they have a hard job," she says. "They have to turn everything into a marketing scheme, just like with every other product. If you're on a record label, you're a product. If you're a detergent, you're a product. If you're a car, you're a product. And to sell a product you have to have a gimmick marketing scheme. It's hard to market talent, see. It's easy to market a hat and tight jeans and a nice ass, but it's hard to market talent. That's what I'm faced with."

Has she, I ask somewhat redundantly, buckled under yet to Epic's policy of sending its artists to media school? A ghost of a grin flits across her face. "That's one of the things where I follow Willie's advice about how to deal with record companies: 'Just say No.'"

How about radio, I wonder. Is she doing anything to make herself more radio-programmable?

"No. I'm not gonna cut what it takes to get on the radio. That's the bottom line. I'm just not interested in sacrificing my music in order to be heard on the radio for a song that lasts six months. I want my songs to last 60 years.

"That's the difference. I'm not criticizing anyone else's music at all. If you can get to Number One every time and still do your thing, then more power to you. It's just that my thing isn't necessarily what radio is playing right now. Or at least the stations that report to the charts: A lot of stations do play me, but sometimes a lot isn't enough.

"But you know, it's like I say over and over again, it doesn't matter. People are buying my records. I'm appealing to a lot of people, somehow. *Soft Talk* has been out three weeks and it's sold 90,000. That's not bad, considering I've had no hits."

Indeed it's not. It's pretty damn good, actually, a powerful testament to Shelby's effect on people who have seen or heard her, and it's no real mystery. As she says, "It's my concerts that do it; them and The Nashville Network. They play my videos a lot, and they've always supported me, radio airplay or none."

These are refreshing comments, both for their candor and for the view that the increasingly restrictive playlists of major-market country radio programmers don't necessarily control the destiny of a modern country recording artist: good news, and a fitting note on which to end



On stage, Shelby Lynne is in complete control.

ears (and those of a couple of other people I trust) sounds somewhat less passionate, significantly more mainstream-conventional and considerably less interesting, involved and exciting than *Tough All Over*. Which is weird. Maybe Shelby's taste, founded on her grandmother's Mills Brothers and Les Paul and Mary Ford records as well as Merle, George, Waylon & Willie and the Top 40 music of her teenage years, runs towards smoother edges and lighter touches than those of *Tough All Over*. Or maybe she's fooling herself.

So I don't know, and Shelby's endorsement of *Soft Talk* and rejection of *Tough All Over* are so forceful ("I despise it," she says of *Tough All Over*. "It's the most commercial record anyone's ever gonna hear out of me.") that I don't ask. Shelby herself volunteers that "most people don't agree with me" about which work is her best. That includes, she adds, a lot of radio and record company people. And so we arrive in the area of her record company relations, where we find her bristling with good old-fashioned outspo-

the business-related portion of our talk.

Now it's appropriate to move into the past, to try for a sense of what kind of kid Shelby was and where and how her music started. All that's been published is that her father was a sometime semi-professional singer and songwriter, that she and her mother and sister sang together and had thoughts of working as a trio, and that she herself has been passionate about singing since she was little.

"I've *always* wanted to do this," she says. "Heck, I was singing into a hairbrush when I was five. My first public appearance was at a Shakey's Pizza here in Mobile right around then; I sang 'Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue' and 'You Are My Sunshine'. As soon as Daddy put me up on that table to sing, I was hooked."

As a teenager she was "mostly off on my own. I had some friends, but I wasn't, you know, part of the clique. I hated school. I felt like I was smarter than everyone else, and I felt like school was just taking up my time. It wasn't like I was a bad kid or anything; I was a pretty good kid, really. It was just that I'd rather be doing music, even if it was just listening to it."

She started into a musical career as soon as she could, singing the hits and whatever fit at weddings, parties, funerals and clubs that would hire under-age talent. "I was getting into doing it for a living, just like I always knew I would, and I knew I'd make it somehow or other," she says. "I just didn't think it would all happen so fast."

Now it's happened, I ask, is it what she expected?

"Yeah. It's *exactly* what I expected. It's real hard work, which is what I like. It's a real good game if you're lucky enough to play."

What's the worst part?

"Well, I don't enjoy playing for people who are...How can I say this?"

A bunch of drunks?

"Right. And, you know, sometimes this life is very lonely, and it's hard. In a way, being a performer is like a disease, an addiction."

So what's the pay-off?

"Doing my music. Giving myself treats musically and hoping someone else will enjoy it the way I do. And you know, sometimes that happens. When I have a crowd that's there to listen, I'll give them a night they'll never forget."

"And how are you doing, yourself? Are you okay?"

She gives me a sudden direct look, her face still, her eyes flat. "I'm here."

* * *

It's mid-evening in Mobile, the venue a country fair-type event with a talent contest run by the local country radio station drawing to a close against a backdrop of barbecue smoke and carnival lights. I watch the usual pre-show moves: the

stage apron filling with friends and family and others, the techs making last-minute adjustments, the band plugging in and flexing up. It's all pretty low-key and routine, and that's also true of my expectations. I'm figuring that a person wound as tight and private as Shelby, and as committed as she seems to be to relatively mellow music, is going to have a tough time with an outdoor, free-admission, fair crowd, sort of hometown or not.

Wrong. Never wronger, in fact. From the moment she zooms onstage, a streamlined, energized, black-and-silver pixie, and kicks into a much more moderately bad-ass, soul-funk-ized version of "Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line" (Waylon's old outlaw-anthematic signature tune), Shelby Lynne is absolutely-no-doubt-about-it *in charge* of every set of eyes and ears receiving her. She de-

his kind of raw, funky, funny, friendly manner she adopts with her crowd when she's not shaking their souls loose.

By the time it's all over I'm just flooded: more confused than ever about Shelby's recording career, but in no doubt whatsoever that this young woman could evolve into an artist as profound and satisfying as any woman I've ever heard sing. I stand there shaking my head in pleasure, and also in surprise. The way Shelby steps out of the tightly defended circle of her self when she hits the stage may be classic, psychologically—the world's full of shy crowd-pleasers—but I've never seen it happen so dramatically, or so wonderfully.

For more than an hour after the show she sits at a table signing autographs, and all that while she's as friendly and animated as she was on stage. Only when

CHRIS BRADEN



Shelby and Tammy Wynette performed at last year's Cinco de Mayo Festival in Phoenix, Arizona. It was the first time the two had met. After the concert, Shelby asked someone to take this picture.

fines the term "owning the stage" the way very, very few performers in any field can claim to. She moves and acts and talks, let alone sings, with absolute confidence and perfect poise; she is, simply, dynamite. The transformation of her personality is so dramatic that from experiencing her show, you could never even begin to imagine the person I interviewed this afternoon. There isn't even a hint of her; the Shelby Lynne out there under the lights isn't only smiling, but cracking jokes and laughing and having fun. She's great.

She's also not the singer you hear on *Soft Talk*, or for that matter *Sunrise* or the calmer moments of *Tough All Over*. Rather than recalling the lightly sophisticated balladeers of the 1940's and 50's, she brings to mind much more raucous, red-blooded country-rhythm-and-blues types; an unfettered Sammi Smith, perhaps, or a latter day Tracy Nelson, or, even more precisely, a female Delbert McClinton. It's *his* kind of repertoire she sings (plus the Greatest Hits of outlaw country) and his kind of band she fronts ("The Turbans of Soul," no less); it's even

the last fan goes away happy, and she turns for the short walk to her bus, does she lose her fire. And in that moment her aura changes so suddenly that you can almost hear her windows slam shut, her door bolts thud home. It's really something.

Her guitar player, Bill Shaw, has the last word.

"Yeah," he's telling me after Shelby is secure inside her bus, "she's a good boss. A great boss, in fact. She always compliments the band, and thanks us if we've played well. That's not as common as you might think in this business."

He pauses for a moment, then adds a thought. "You know, I grew up in a middle-class home, church on Sundays, a pretty nice mom and dad, the normal things, and most of the time, that's how I see the world. So sometimes I look at Shelby and try to imagine what it was like for *her* growing up, and—well, I just can't. That kind of stuff is just too...too much. But here she is, man, out here doing all this and doing it real well. It's like a miracle. She's *really* something, you know?"

Letters

Emotion-Filled Judds

Thank you, *Country Music Magazine* and Bob Allen, for the wonderful article, "Farewell to The Judds," in the November/December issue. No one's voice has ever impressed or pleased me as The Judds have. The emotion and tone control they put into their singing and music is one of the many reasons they have been chosen to be the Top Vocal Duo in country music. I wish Naomi the best, and have all the confidence in the world that Wynonna will continue to do an excellent job as she continues her career as a soloist. Thanks for all the wonderful years of great music.

Jamie Wigley
Aragon, Georgia

Waiting for Wynonna

Thank you for the "Farewell to The Judds" article in the November/December issue. We were one of the lucky few to see The Judds perform for the first time anywhere at Ak-sar-ben Auditorium here in Omaha. Since then, we have been to four concerts in the heartland. The fifth and last was to be in Lincoln, Nebraska, but an ice storm closed the interstate, so I have the ticket waiting for Wynonna to come back to start her tour here. Omaha will always be where it all started.

Alison Ward
Omaha, Nebraska

Naomi Will be Missed

Thank you for putting The Judds on the cover of the November/December issue of *Country Music*. The article by Bob Allen was great. Naomi Judd sure will be missed. It will be nice if your magazine will let us know how she's doing from time-to-time. As for Wynonna, please include her in your magazine when she ventures out on her own. After all, she is going to be the best female vocalist out there!

Cheryl Kwiatkowski
Buffalo, New York

Can't Get Enough of Emmylou

Just had to write to give my appreciation of the article, "Emmylou Harris Live at the Ryman," in the September/October issue. She warms my heart, relaxes my tension and makes my love of her music flare up. Everything I have of her music I've almost worn out. Don't worry, Emmylou, this fan hasn't died.

J.R. Gibson
Bridgeton, Missouri



Emmylou is Country Music

Thank you for the article on Emmylou Harris in the September/October issue. It's nice to see that someone is still paying attention to this great lady and performer. To me, she is country music.

As for the stations not playing her music anymore, my solution is simple. I don't listen to them anymore. When I want to hear great country music, I just put on an Emmylou tape. Let the stations play who they will, but Emmylou will always be Number One with me.

Mike Merandino
Salem, Massachusetts

The Ryman Tabernacle

In your article on Emmylou Harris in the September/October issue, Bob Allen states that The Ryman Auditorium was built as a Mormon Tabernacle. This is not true. The Ryman was first called Gospel Tabernacle, and was built by a riverboat captain for the Methodist Evangelist, Sam Jones. If you check me out on this you'll find that The Ryman never had any Mormon ties. Just thought you'd be interested in clearing this up.

Country Music is a fine publication. I enjoy reading it.

Reverend Franklin Lynch
Monticello, Georgia

From Harris to Wright

I'm writing to thank you for the features on Emmylou Harris and Canada's Michelle Wright in the September/October issue. Your magazine is to be commended!

I am referring to the Letters section. What other magazine has so many? Count them...six pages! It's nice to know your editor takes the time to listen to the readers, and they also provide lots of information. I hope you provide a feature on newcomer Shelby Lynne soon. She received the Academy of Country Music's Top New Vocalist award for 1991! Congratulations, Shelby!

Virgie Warren
Flushing, Michigan

See feature in this issue.—Ed.

Gorgeous Travis Poster

I was really excited and happy when I opened the November/December issue of *Country Music*. A dream came true when I found the pull-out poster was Randy Travis! Wow! What a gorgeous picture! I'll cherish it forever. He is my absolute favorite and has been since the first time I heard him sing.

Peggy Oakes
Pittsfield, Maine

Travis—What a Hunk!

Thank you, thank you, for the gorgeous centerfold of Randy Travis in the November/December issue. What a hunk! And so sweet and humble! I was so disappointed, however, that you didn't review his new album, *High Lonesome*. I think it is wonderful, and probably his best ever.

Jean Pulliam
Stone Mountain, Georgia
See Record Reviews in this issue.—Ed.

More Travis Number Ones

Thank you for the Randy Travis poster and the Facts of Life in the November/December issue. However, when you listed his Number One songs, you forgot "Hard Rock Bottom of Your Heart" and "He Walked on Water." I enjoyed reading about The Judds, Doug Stone, Carlene Carter and Ricky Skaggs, but I would love to read about Travis Tritt and The Kentucky HeadHunters.

Julia Mercer
White Pigeon, Michigan
Add his most recent Number One, "Forever Together," to that list.—Ed.

Garth—A Little Bit of Home

How lucky can one get? I'm a big Garth Brooks fan, and would you believe my first issue of *Country Music Magazine*

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righteous men...wronged women...
and lonesome cowboys...*

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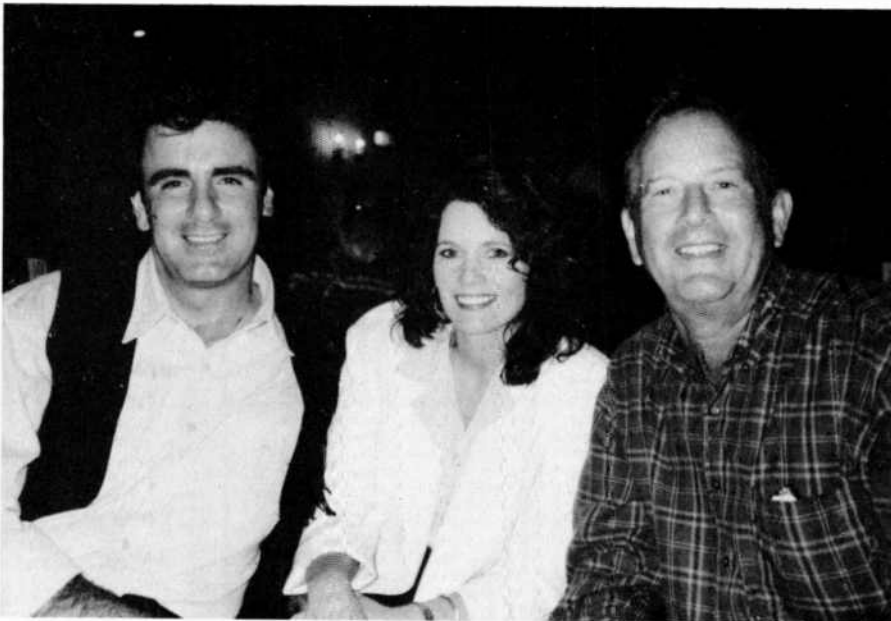
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Associate Publisher Leonard Mendelson with Baillie and The Boys (Michael Bonagura and Kathy Baillie) at the recent Academy of Country Music Celebrity Golf Tournament for the T. J. Martell Foundation. This is an annual event that raises funds for children's leukemia, cancer and AIDS research.

had a pull-out poster of him!

Garth first caught my attention with his voice and style. Him being from Oklahoma and born in Tulsa like my husband and me, makes us feel a little of home when we hear his songs. But what I really admire about him is that with all the success and awards, he's still there to lend a hand. His performance at F.A.R.M. '91 in Tulsa is just one more in a long list of performances he's done out of the goodness of his heart.

M. Thompson
Fort Bliss, Texas

Spectacular Garth Brooks

Thanks for the poster of Garth Brooks in the September/October issue. I also want to thank Garth for the spectacular show he did at Great Woods in Mansfield, Massachusetts, in early August. Never have I felt as good after a concert as I did that night—and I'm sure the other 4,000 attendees would agree. In an area of the country that sorely lacks in country music, it's nice to know that such a big name isn't playing to only the big crowds. Garth, *you're* the reason God made Oklahoma!

Christine Buford
Waltham, Massachusetts

Skaggs—A Class Act

Thanks so much for the 20 Questions with Ricky Skaggs in the November/December issue. He is really a class act! My family and I were able to see him in concert at the Celebrity Theatre in Dollywood on October 18th. That weekend was American Music weekend at Dollywood. The night we saw Ricky was bluegrass night. On stage with Ricky

were his wife Sharon White, Doc Watson, Ralph Stanley and The Clinch Mountain Boys, The Dillard's, Mark O'Connor and Jerry Douglas. The concert was sold out, with standing ovations for every act. The best part was knowing that these concerts were benefits for an organization called Teens in Trouble, founded by Ricky and his wife—75% of the proceeds went to help teenage alcoholics and teenage pregnancies.

Jessie McKinney
Bakersville, North Carolina

Incredible Carlene Carter

Thank you very much for the article on the incredibly wonderful Carlene Carter, in the November/December issue. Her *I Fell in Love* album has to be one of my all-time favorites. Also, I felt it very appropriate that Garth Brooks received Entertainer of the Year, as I honestly feel that's all he is, an entertainer. Naturally, this is why Vince Gill was voted Male Vocalist of the Year. Now there's a talented voice to make all us full-blooded country music fans proud. Way to go, Vince!

Jon Quick
Ada, Minnesota

Tribute to Dottie West

Thank you, *Country Music Magazine* and Rich Kienzle, for the extraordinary memorial to Dottie West in the People section of the November/December issue. Dottie has contributed so much to country music and deserved so much more recognition than any of the other country music oriented magazines gave her. It was truly heartwarming to see the full-page memorial to Dottie. I believe

her family and her fans will be very proud of this write-up.

James Hooper
Muscle Shoals, Alabama

A Triple Treat

In the September/October issue, I really liked the 20 Questions with Bill Monroe. I was raised on bluegrass and Bill Monroe. He's definitely a great man. I also enjoyed the story on Michelle Wright. I saw her in early summer, and she's great. She's come a long way and can really touch folks with the words of her songs. And, thanks for the story on Aaron Tippin. My son really loves him. He goes around singing his songs. Sure would love to see a poster of Aaron.

Lora Small
Jackson, Michigan

Easy-Going Aaron Tippin

I enjoyed the Aaron Tippin article in the September/October issue. I was lucky enough to chat with Aaron at Fan Fair for a minute or two, and found him to be exactly what Bob Allen said he is—friendly, easy-going and down-to-earth. He truly seemed to enjoy meeting his fans!

I have to admit something, though. "You've Got to Stand for Something" wasn't the song that made me run out and buy the cassette. "I Wonder How Far It Is Over You" was! That song brings out the old-fashioned Jones/Haggard cry in his voice that's pretty rare these days. And he sure has a way with words! Hats off (no pun intended) to the Aaron Tippins, the Marty Stuarts and the Jann Brownes who care enough about the old stuff to keep it alive.

Roxanne Johnston
Hibbing, Minnesota

Traditionalist Aaron Tippin

Thank you, thank you! The article, "Aaron Tippin Looks to His Roots," was just the thing to brighten my day. What a talent this man has. As your article mentioned, he's a new traditionalist. A much welcomed one, too. I enjoy listening to all of the new artists of today, but Aaron has that mix of the old that influenced his music as well as the style that audiences of today want to hear—it's a great blend. Though he's been a songwriter for years, his star is just beginning to shine, and I know it's going to get brighter as the years go by.

Connie Miller
East Bend, North Carolina

Humorous Tippin

I realize many people think of Aaron Tippin as the guy who sounds like a hill-billy, but I am very country-sounding and although people laugh at us sometimes, we're proud of our natural country voice. The article on Aaron in the Sep-

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COUNTRY MUSIC QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the March/April 1992 issue.

1. In what Nashville suburb does country legend George Jones make his home?
2. What is the title of Joe Diffie's second album?
3. This 22-year-old singer hails from Alabama and has become a favorite among critics and peers. Name her.
4. How many awards did Garth Brooks win at the 1991 CMA Awards show?
5. Name the man who has served as Randy Travis' producer since his first album, *Storms of Life*.
6. Name the new duet by Clint Black and Roy Rogers.
7. Chevy's S-10 has the biggest V6 engine you can get. How much horsepower does it produce?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Johnny Cash
2. Bill Anderson
3. Garth Brooks
4. Newnan
5. Murfreesboro
6. *Up Against My Heart*
7. Sharon White
8. Chevrolet



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tember/October issue was great! I think he is down-to-earth, open and very humorous. Hey, if he has a fan club, please let all of us fans know where to write. Keep up your hillbilly ways!

Donna Bean

Union Grove, Alabama

Reach the Aaron Tippin Fan Club, c/o Cindy Owen, at P.O. Box 121996, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.—Ed.

Any Hearsay on Tim Mensy?

I would like to know what happened to Tim Mensy? Does he still record? Tim Mensy had a great album out titled *Stone by Stone*. I hope he makes a comeback. Is there any place I can write him?

Rita Tkaczyk

Baldwinville, Massachusetts

Mensy no longer records for Columbia, but he's an active songwriter and may resurface on another label.—Ed.

More on Carl Story

How come we never hear about the legends like Carl Story and The Ramblin' Mountaineers—good singers and real good music. You hear about Bill Monroe and The Bluegrass Boys, but nothing about Carl Story or even Don Reno and Red Smiley—they were good also. Bluegrass is the best. I listened to Carl Story during the war. I was born in June of 1937. I used to listen to Carl Story on a battery-powered radio, back in Parkin, Arkansas.

Sidney Barnes
Belvidere, Illinois

Carl Story retired in 1986. We heard he was running a radio station in Greer, South Carolina.—Ed.

Hooray for Hazel

Hats off to Hazel Smith. I want you to know how much I enjoy *Country Music Magazine*—I love it! Finally, I read a small write-up in the September/October People section on one of my favorites, Gene Watson. I agree with every word Hazel said. This man should be seen and heard.

Sally Tilson

Davison, Michigan

Recognition for Billy Joe Royal

While I was really excited when my husband gave me a two-year subscription to *Country Music Magazine*, it was really in the hopes of reading about Billy Joe Royal. While I enjoy most of today's country music singers, my favorite, since I was 14 years old, has always been Billy Joe. I'm now 39 years old, and it's still just as frustrating trying to find any articles on this great singer. I don't understand. He has a very unique voice, equal to if not greater than Roy Orbison. To watch him perform at concerts is really a thrill of a lifetime. I think Billy Joe has always been put on the back burner.

Ida Mason

Parrottsville, Tennessee

Leave Country, Country

After having played country music—also know as hillbilly music in the 40's and 50's—for almost 40 years, I believe I speak for the true fans of our music. I feel the word superstar is being overused. I cherish my original records of the real superstars—Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, Ernest Tubb and Lefty Frizzell. I can't condone the way country music is being changed and integrated. Let's leave country, country. 'Nuff said!

Ralph Jackson

Hixson, Tennessee

Moved by the CMA Awards

I couldn't help but write about the CMA Awards held in October. It was the most moving ceremony I have seen in years. I used to go to Saturday matinees at the Rio Theatre in Billings, Montana, and watch Roy Rogers when he was "Ridin' High." His appearance with Clint Black was really great.

Also, Dolly Parton did it again! When she came out with "Coat of Many Colors," I could relate. I, too, had one. My 86-year-old mother made me one when I was young, and she was the world's worst seamstress, next to myself—God bless her. I cried every time I heard it. That night when Dolly sang her tribute to womanhood, I cried again.

Deloras Glenney
Perris, California

Hank Locklin Found at the Opry

In reply to the letter in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine* about Hank Locklin, he does not record anymore, but does appear on the Grand Ole Opry often. He lives in Alabama and for a while he was in real estate, but I'm sure he is retired now. He was 73 last February 15th.

Rachel Jones
Decatur, Illinois



Hank Locklin at the Grand Ole Opry Birthday Celebration in Nashville.



Luella Edgington getting a big hug from her King, Roy Rogers.

Roy Rogers—the King

Enclosed is a photo of my 80-year-old mother, Luella Edgington, of Hillsboro, Iowa, and her hero, Roy Rogers. What a King, and a grand human being. Recently, we visited the Roy Rogers-Dale Evans museum in Victorville, California—Roy was there. He was so wonderful, he gave my mother a big hug and was gracious to everyone. Roy will be 80 on November 5, 1991. We wish him many more happy birthdays.

Shirley Yurth
Lincoln, Nebraska

Strong-Voiced Cissy Lynn

I've heard Loretta Lynn's daughter, Cissy Lynn, on a tape from a Wheeling Jamboree show and on the *Nashville Now* show. She has a strong, voluminous voice, and can really belt out a song. Where is she and why isn't she out there getting with it? She sounds somewhat like Loretta. Loretta's twins can belt out a song, too. What's wrong with them? The fans are missing out. Why aren't Loretta and Mooney pushing all three, and especially Cissy?

Bettye Bridges
Sherman, Texas

Superb Vern Gosdin

I just had to write this letter to say that I had viewed Vern Gosdin's video, "A Month of Sundays." He never ceases to amaze me with his talent and entertaining capabilities. This is a great song, and a very successfully done video. Vern sure is a superb artist.

Josephine Furtado
Tiverton, Rhode Island

Sing Your Heart Out, Chesnutt

On October 1, 1991, I had the honor of seeing Mark Chesnutt in person at the Coshocton County Fair here in Ohio. It's

a small town, but it didn't matter. He sure sang his heart out for us.

I can't normally get my husband to go to these types of things, but I finally talked him into it for my birthday. When Mark started talking about Louisiana and playing that Cajun style music, my husband was out of his seat! He loved it! How about a pull-out poster?

The Wilsons
Chandlersville, Ohio

Pleasing Paul Overstreet

I recently saw Paul Overstreet perform in Bonifay, Florida. Mr. Overstreet is the most talented man I have ever met in my life! He writes and sings the most beautiful songs ever. He even took the time to give advice against drug and alcohol abuse and to introduce his wonderful family. Mr. Overstreet, if you're reading this, I want to thank you for being a Christian. Through your talent of writing and singing, you have helped this 15-year-old live a life pleasing to the Lord. I pray that one day I'll have a husband that loves me like you so obviously love your wife.

Jennifer Riley
Wausau, Florida

Talented Vince Gill

I love *Country Music Magazine*, but I'm getting really upset with you folks because you haven't done a centerfold, cover or feature story on the absolutely most gorgeous and talented guy in country music—Vince Gill. How about it?

Monty Tinch
Enterprise, Alabama

We've tried....—Ed.

Congratulations, Vince Gill

Congratulations, Vince Gill, for being Male Vocalist of the Year at the CMA Awards show! I was very pleased to have him give credit to Eddy Arnold and Jim Reeves as two of his idols. Jim is my favorite with Marty Robbins being a close second! The country radio stations are being unfair to the fans who like classic country music also. It's so sad that an old star has to be sick, injured or die before they will play their music!

Ruby Daniels
Rossville, Georgia

Bob Allen Should be Stoned!

I am writing to tell Bob Allen he is way off base in his review of Doug Stone's album, *I Thought it Was You*, in the November/December issue. Doug puts a lot of feeling in his music, and he can sing his romantic ballads to me anytime, anyplace. I have seen Doug in concert several times this summer, and he puts on a terrific show. He really has some smooth moves. Now we need a centerfold of Doug for all of us Stone Age fans.

Anna Bauerbach
Beverly, Ohio



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ALAN JACKSON

Here In The Real World - 25 mins.

Here are Alan's three #1 smash hits, *Wanted/Here In The Real World/Chasin' The Neon Rainbow*. Plus, a pair of live performances: *Dog River Blues* and *Home*. There's also his first big song *Blue Blooded Woman*. *Here In The Real World* clearly reveals Alan's humble, unpretentious manner combined with genuine talent and striking good looks—all the elements that have made him one of country music's hottest stars. Item No. V3L - \$19.95.

RANDY TRAVIS

Forever And Ever - 45 mins.

NEW!

He has sold millions of records, won numerous awards. He is one of the youngest performers to be invited to join the Grand Ole Opry. And now this country music superstar comes to you on what promises to be one of the hottest videos of the year. Eight great hits in all: *Forever And Ever*, *Amen/I Told You Sol/Promises/I's Just A Matter Of Time/He Walked On Water/Point Of Light/Cool Water/The Storms Of Life*. Item No. V4K-\$29.98

MARTY ROBBINS

Super Legend - 120 mins.

This memorable video features 18 performances: *El Paso/White Sports Coat/Devil Woman/Ribbon Of Darkness/Singing The Blues/I Can't Keep From Cryin'/Don't Worry Bout Me/This Time You Gave Me A Mountain*, and many more, including Marty's Grammy winning song, *My Woman, My Woman, My Wife*. It also includes rare appearances from early television shows and the big screen. **PLUS A LOT MORE!** Item No. G2A - \$39.95

MARTY ROBBINS

A Man And His Music - 55mins.

This additional Marty Robbins video was recorded live at the Opry in 1980. "Funnin' around" was what he called it. And that's precisely what this video is all about. It includes his version of Elvis' *That's All Right (Mama)*, plus these other great selections: *Ribbon Of Darkness/Devil Woman/Big Iron/Among My Souvenirs/Don't Worry/A White Sports Coat/My Woman, My Woman, My Wife/El Paso*. Item No. G1G - \$39.95

ANNE MURRAY

Doing Some Of Her Best - 29 mins.

NEW!

She has been a country music of sorts for years. Few can match her distinctive voice and stage presence. Now you can meet this special lady through rare interview footage and hear her perform these great hits: *Time Don't Run Out On Me/Who's Leaving Who/Are You Still In Love With Me?/I Now And Forever (You And Me)/Flying On Your Own/I'll Ever Fall In Love Again (Duet With Kenny Rogers)*. Item No. V6R-\$19.95

ROSANNE CASH

Interiors Live - 80 mins.

NEW!

It was a critically acclaimed live acoustic performance. Now you can be there with this critically acclaimed new video which includes: *On The Surface/Halfway House/What We Really Want/Hold On/Real Me/Seven Year Ache/Real Woman/Dance With The Tiger/Second To No One/On The Inside/Bedroom Lies/Private Moments/Lover Is Forever/This World/Sleeping In Paris/I Don't Know Why You Don't Want Me*, AND MORE! Item No. V5I - \$29.95

KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS

Pickin' On Nashville - 20mins.

NEW!

There have been plenty of southern bands in the last decade, but the Kentucky Headhunters are genuine. Their boisterous style of country rock harks back to the boogie heyday of the seventies. *Pickin' On Nashville* features videos from their platinum selling debut LP including: *Walk Softly On This Heart Of Mine/Dumas Walker/Oh Lonesome Me*. Pick it up and have yourself a good old time. Item No. V9A-\$14.95

CLINT BLACK

Put Yourself In My Shoes - 19 mins.

Many have called him today's hottest new country music performer...winner of the 1989 Horizon Award and the 1990 CMA Male Vocalist of the Year. Meet this country music phenomenon up close. Hear Clint's frank interview with *Country Music Video Magazine*. Listen to all his great hits, including: *Killin' Time/A Better Man/Walkin' Away/Put Yourself In My Shoes*. Clint fans will love it. Item No. V4M-\$19.95

REBA

In Concert - 71 mins.

NEW!

Now enjoy all the excitement and charisma of perhaps today's number one country music lady. Included are: *Love Will Find It's Way To You/Can't Even Get The Blues/Somebody Should Leave/One Promise Too Late/Let The Music Lift You Up/Whoever's In New England/Sweet Dreams/You Lie/Cathy's Clown/Oklahoma Swing/Rumor Has It/What Am I Gonna Do About You/I Know How He Feels*, AND MORE! Item No. V3E-\$19.95

RICKY VAN SHELTON

To Be Continued... - 35 mins.

Ricky has topped the album charts in three out of three tries, and he's scored seven #1 singles-so far. *To Be Continued...* features every one of his videos plus two live performances and a fascinating interview. Included are: *Crime Of Passion/Someone Lied/Life Turned Her That Way/I'll Leave This World Loving You/Hole In My Pocket (Live)/Living Proof (Live)/Statue Of A Fool/I Meant Every Word He Said*. Item No. G5W-\$24.95

HIGHWAYMEN LIVE

Willie, Waylon, Cash, Krls - 98 mins.

Here, captured on this memorable 98-minute video, is one of the truly historic country music tours to ever take place. Four of the greatest talents of our time performing 26 great hits, including: *Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys/Trouble Man/Ring Of Fire/Folsom Prison Blues/Always On My Mind/Silver Station/Last Cowboy Song/Desperados Waiting For A Train/Luckenbach, Texas*, AND MORE! Item No. V2A-\$39.95

MERLE HAGGARD

The Best Of Merle Haggard - 60 mins.

"I have selected some of my favorite songs for this video...and I hope they will be your favorites too." -Merle Haggard. You be the judge: *My Favorite Memory/Stay Here And Drink/Mama's Hungry Eyes/Today I Started Loving You Again/Old Man From The Mountains/Kern River/If I Could Only Fly/When Times Were Good/Honky Tonk Night Time Man/Big City/Okie From Muskogee/Footlights*, AND 7 MORE! Item No. G3F-\$19.95

GEORGE STRAIT

Live - 52 mins.

Now, this platinum-selling country superstar is captured for the first time on video cassette. Backed by his famed Ace In The Hole Band, he whips up the audience performing all his greatest hits, including: *The Fireman/The Cowboy Rides Away/Amarillo By Morning/All My Ex's Live In Texas/Any Old Time/Hot Burning Flames/Dance Time In Texas/A Six Pack To Go/Marina Del Rey/You Look So Good In Love*, AND MORE! Item G2G-\$29.95

PATSY CLINE

The Real Patsy Cline - 48 mins.

She had the voice of an angel, a career fraught with triumph and disaster and a private life that exceeds any scriptwriter's imagination. This is her complete story, from her brilliant rise to stardom to her tragic death. This memorable video biography features rare, classic performances of such hit songs as *Crazy* and *I Fall To Pieces*. Plus, there's heartfelt commentary by the people who were closest to Patsy and lived it all with her. Item No. G5C-\$24.95

GEORGE JONES

Same Ole Me - 60 mins.

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Stone Review Well-Written

I love Doug Stone! I didn't care what the reviews said on his first album—I loved it beyond reason. I never thought of the second album, *I Thought it Was You*, as being better or worse—it was Doug Stone—I was going to love it—I couldn't wait to hear it. But you know what, Bob, it fell flat as an uncapped Pepsi left out on the sink all night. I felt so sad. I kept playing it hoping it would get better—maybe I was wrong, or maybe I didn't like him as much as I thought. Until I read your review in the November/December issue, I still wasn't sure. I couldn't put my reaction into words, but you did perfectly.

You people at *Country Music Magazine* are the best. The writing is so good!
Joan Guidice
Bronx, New York

Jones Still Fills His Shoes

George Jones once asked the question, "Who's gonna fill his shoes?" Well, after listening to his debut MCA album, *And Along Came Jones*, it appears he isn't through wearing his yet. This album is great. It has to be his best in 10 years. I love every song on this album, and after you listen to him sing "Angels Don't Fly" and "She Loved a lot in Her Time," you'll see why George is still "King of the Mountain" in country music.

Allan Blair
Gretna, Virginia

Fan Votes for Desert Rose

I had almost decided to cancel my subscription to *Country Music Magazine* after reading the ridiculous record review by Mr. Kienzle on The Desert Rose Band's latest album, *True Love*, in the November/December issue. However, when I finally got over my initial anger, I realized that he is only one very small fish in a large bowl. Lucky for your magazine! The Desert Rose Band writes and performs music with substance, not a lot of meaningless mumbo-jumbo, and they do it better than anyone else out there. By the way, I am 34 years old and don't consider myself to be an old hippie!

Laura Lane
Pinebluff, North Carolina

Patrick Carr is Ropin' the Wind

Could you hear the earth shake all the way from San Angelo, Texas, on November 7th? That was the day I read the record review on Garth Brooks' album, *Ropin' the Wind*, in the November/December issue, and I was mad enough to cause an earthquake. The entire album takes my breath away, and surely other country music fans think the same way. No doubt, you will be receiving many negative letters on this review. You missed the notes on this one, Patrick!

Donna Aylor
San Angelo, Texas

Agree With Brooks Review

I'm probably the only person in the United States who doesn't think that Garth Brooks is the salvation of country music. Don't get me wrong, I think he is okay, but the media is so Garth-crazy that I get tired of hearing, seeing and reading about him!

I agree with Patrick Carr's review of Garth's album, *Ropin' the Wind*, in the November/December issue. I, too, think that Garth Brooks has talent and has been a phenomenal success so far. But it has all happened so fast, and so much at a time, that it may have affected his work and his listeners' desire to keep hearing more.

Lynette Harris
Franklin, Tennessee

Shocked Over Brooks Review

Patrick Carr's review of Garth Brooks' album, *Ropin' the Wind*, in the November/December issue came as a total shock to me. At the time I purchased Garth's first album, I thought, now here's an entertainer! Then came *No Fences*, and again, I was even more impressed with this fine artist. How could Garth Brooks possibly top this? In *Ropin' the Wind* he has done just that.

Kim Noon
Buckley, Washington

Perfect Brooks Review

I always look forward to my *Country Music Magazine*. I read it from cover-to-cover. The record review by Patrick Carr on Garth Brooks' album, *Ropin' the Wind*, in the November/December issue, was perfect. There has been a lot about Garth being Number One on the pop charts. Everyone to their own choice, but for me, I'll still be buying George Strait's albums, videos, and going to his concerts. George Strait is still the White Knight of Country Music at this household.

Gladys Fulton
Leesville, Louisiana

Many Sides of Shelton

I love *Country Music Magazine*; however, I have to disagree with Rich Kienzle's review of Ricky Van Shelton's latest album, *Backroads*, in the September/October issue. I bought the album the first day it came out. I think this album shows Ricky's versatility and ability to sing any type of song, and sing it well. Ricky still has the best voice in the business. Also, as a woman, I would like to tell Rich that Ricky does not have to be in concert to sing "Call Me Up" to create excitement; women feel the excitement even on the tape. I feel on this album Ricky wanted to show the different types of music he could sing, and I think he accomplished this.

Barbara Bennett
Antioch, Tennessee

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No Fun With Shelton Review

I would like to offer my review on Rich Kienzle's record review of Ricky Van Shelton's album, *Backroads*. He was right on only one comment—"This isn't going to be fun." For Ricky's fans, this was the understatement of the year. It was definitely not fun, and very unfair. I personally think *Backroads* is some of the best material Ricky and Steve Buckingham have put together to date. I have bought everything Ricky has recorded, and I have attended nine of his concerts—he just gets better and better. As for his music "fast becoming an empty glossy shell," some of the other singers around today should be so lucky.

Billie Keeten
Sedley, Virginia

Tippin a Pleasure to Meet

I just had to write and tell you about the time my husband and I met Aaron Tippin. In May of this past year, while on our way to Florida, my husband and I were talking and he said to me, "Beth, you have to hear this new song called 'I Wonder How Far It Is Over You'."

Then, while we were lying by the pool at our hotel, my husband jumps up and says, "Wow! That guy looks like Aaron Tippin." So he looked again and said, "That is Aaron Tippin." So when he walked by, we said hello, and he sat down and talked to us for a while and we took some pictures together. It was great—and quite a coincidence since we were just talking about him. He had the best personality and was very friendly to us. It was a wonderful experience, one we won't soon forget.

Beth Salatino
West Liberty, West Virginia

But, But, Butt

I've always enjoyed your magazine for its meaty articles and gutsy album reviews. Lately, however, those elements have become overshadowed by your nauseating, near-comic ogling of male country singers.

The worst offender is Hazel Smith, whose hormones appear to be as unruly as her prose. In the last few issues alone, she's informed us that Mark Chesnutt is "as cute and sexy as they come," that Alan Jackson is "tall, lanky, sexy and handsome," and that Billy Dean "fills out his jeans in all the right places."

At one point, she referred to the current crop of new male country singers as "tight-fanned young studs." Please, Hazel, hit the showers—and turn up the cold.

The rest of the magazine often doesn't fare any better. Good writing on country music is scarce. In the future, I hope you won't waste valuable space and talented writers on fanny worship and superficial drivel.

Doug Erickson
Mounds View, Minnesota

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A Poem for The Judds

Thank you for such a wonderful farewell feature on The Judds in the November/December issue. It was refreshing to feel a writer's emotions.

Voices so sweet and full,
reach to the core of your soul,
Blessed with a gift to sing,
they were born to touch
our very beings.

Two country girls singing
around their table,
allowing no one to tell them
they're not able,
It was a joy watching them
catch their star,
A scared little girl, her mamma
and an old guitar.

Now Wynonna must go on alone,
while Mamma prays for her from home,
Her "Queen of Everything,"
while not standing beside her,
will be whispering, "It's okay,
we're still together."

A lock without a key is how
she will feel,
but she'll be okay—the love of
her fans is real,
while her mamma's presence
can't be replaced,
she'll handle all this using
the strength of God's grace.

Marcia Wilson
North Las Vegas, Nevada

Where's Gus Hardin

During the early 1980's, some very fine female singers emerged in country music. Some are still active, while others vanished like musical Amelia Earharts. One I remember with special fondness was a gutsy, bluesy country rocker from Tulsa, Oklahoma—Gus Hardin. She had a few good albums (good in quality and sales) and then seemingly vanished out of sight. What happened to her? Has she dropped out of the music business entirely?

I once heard on the radio that Garth Brooks had been a member of Gus Hardin's band, Blue Streak. But I've never heard anything more about that connection (if it is true). Does anyone have some more information?

Joe Harder
Charlottesville, Virginia

Gus Hardin fans and friends, come in please.—Ed.

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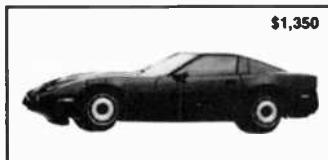


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COUNTRY MUSIC CLASSIFIED

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SONGWRITERS! LYRICS needed for recordings! Royalties possible. NWC Studio, Box 171101, Nashville, TN 37217.

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LYRICS, poems for musical setting and recording. \$1,000 for best poem. Satisfaction guaranteed. Talent (CM), P.O. Box 31, Quincy, MA 02169.

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AWARD WINNING RECORD COMPANY screening country singers to record. (615) 883-5349.

SINGERS, SONGWRITERS NEEDED. Free! Applications: United Agency, Box 862-D, New York, NY 10009.

PROFESSIONAL DEMO \$75. Free information. Sample \$1.00. Hollywood Recorders, 603 First, #138-CM, Oceanside, CA 92054. (619) 757-7446.

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The classified ad rates are: \$4.75 per word for one issue - for three prepaid issues, the rate is \$4.45 per word, per issue. Minimum ad ten words. All classified advertising must be prepaid by either business check or money order. Sorry, no credit cards are accepted. The next available issue is March/April, which closes Monday, January 20th. To place your ad in this issue, just complete the information below and mail this coupon with your payment today.

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Mail your copy and payment to: Country Music, P.O. Box 570, Clearwater, Florida 34617.
Telephones: National (800) 762-3555, Florida (813) 449-1775

FOR **CMSA** MEMBERS ONLY



Loretta Lynn Special

Loretta Lynn's long recording career includes many classics, as Rich Kienzie explains in the Legends of Country Music feature in the *Newsletter*. A few of these are still available. The premier reissue at the moment is the Loretta Lynn volume of MCA's Hall of Fame series, *Loretta Lynn* (MCA 10083). Available on CD or cassette, its 16 tracks include "Success," "Blue Kentucky Girl," "Don't Come Home a-Drinkin'," "Coal Miner's Daughter," "Fist City," "Your Squaw's on the Warpath" and more. The CD is \$19.98, the cassette \$12.98. Available on cassette only are *I'll Just Call You Darlin'* (MCA 20509)—eight duets with Ernest Tubbs), *Two's a Party* (MCA 20263)—eight duets with Conway Twitty, including "You're the Reason Our Kids are Ugly," "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man" and "The Letter") and *Blue-Eyed Kentucky Girl* (MCA 20261)—eight numbers, most of them hits like "The Pill," "Coal Miner's Daughter" and "Rated X"). Each cassette is \$8.99. CMSA members deduct \$2.00 off prices listed. Include membership number, and see instructions below for ordering.

Buried Treasures Special

The Columbia Country Classics series is going strong, with new items on Carl Smith, Ray Price and Marty Robbins. MCA has a Patsy Cline boxed set, and Bear Family has one on Hawkshaw Hawkins. Plus, there are reissues on Roger Miller and Bill Monroe. Read all about them in *Buried Treasures*. Members may deduct \$2.00 off for each of these items.

Essential Collector Special

CMSA members also may deduct \$2.00 off the price of each item covered in this section. Rich has a number of books, cassettes and videos up this time around, including ones on Conway Twitty, Eddy Arnold, George Jones,

Merle Haggard, the late Tennessee Ernie Ford and more. Include your membership number, and follow ordering instructions in the box on the Essential Collector page.

John Anderson Stops By

One of the original New Traditionalists, John Anderson, stopped by the Connecticut headquarters of *Country Music Magazine*, *The Journal*, and the *CMSA Newsletter*. He visited with Publisher Russ Barnard and spoke with *Journal* Managing Editor George Fletcher for *The Journal's* New Traditions/Old Traditions column (see photo above). You'll notice "Waylon Jennings" in the background, listening in on the interview, just as he did when Marty Stuart dropped by recently (see FMO last issue). Bet you didn't know "Waylon" lived in Russ Barnard's office. Actually, the cardboard stand-up of Waylon has been a fixture in the CMM offices for many years. Check your back issues, it's (he's?) made a number of appearances in these pages....

You'll find Anderson's comments in the December issue of *The Journal*. To join the Academy and get a year's subscription to *The Journal*, send check or money order for \$10 to: American Academy for the Preservation of Old-Time Country Music, P.O. Box 2000, Marion, Ohio 43306. In addition to your subscription, you'll get *The Journal's* special Premier Collector's Edition and the 1992 Legends calendar.

How to Order

To order any of the items listed on this page, send your check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 1292N, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880. Include \$1.95 postage and handling for first item ordered, \$.95 for each additional item. Include membership number if taking discount.

MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1992

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, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____
- Which ones did you like best? List performers and album titles.

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

- List the numbers of your top five favorites from the Top 25 in this issue.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Who Does Your Automobile Repairs?

Please tell us where you have each of the following automobile services performed. Check appropriate box and specify establishment (i.e.—Meineke, Midas, Sears, Gulf, Exxon, Lee Miles, Mr. Goodwrench, AAMCO, etc.).

Type of Service:	Dealer	Gas Station	Specialty Shop	Do It Myself
Oil Change/ Lubrication				
Tires Replaced/ Rotated				
Shock Absorbers				
Mufflers				
Transmissions				
Tune-up				
Brake Service				
Batteries				

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, write your membership number here. _____

If you are not a member but would like to join and vote immediately, fill out the poll and enclose your check for \$16 for one-year CMSA membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

Fill out poll and mail to: January Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 14th Floor, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

THE JUDDS: LOVE CAN BUILD A BRIDGE

We are all saddened that Naomi and Wynonna must split up because of health reasons. Everyone loves The Judds, particularly their dedication to their fans and their compassion as portrayed through their music. At this point in time, The Judds have completed their farewell tour, *Love Can Build a Bridge*. I have seen this concert on three separate occasions, and they are fabulous!

Their song, "Love Can Build a Bridge," expresses the philosophy that has underlain Naomi's and Wynonna's lives and music for years. For their new video, *Love Can Build a Bridge*, The Judds and the film makers spent 16 months creating the world's first three-dimensional music video, with love and devo-



tion to their audience and music in mind. Follow The Judds as they pack up their crew, equipment, friends and loved ones, and set off to the beautiful desert of Sedona, Arizona, to shoot their 3D video—they had to ride a chopper up a mountain! The finished product also includes interviews and scenes from their last tour together. Featured songs include: "This Country's Rockin'," "Born to be Blue," "Rompin' Stompin' Blues" and in 3D, "Love Can Build a Bridge." Furthermore, Naomi shares video moments from her recent wedding—you get to see her walking down the aisle! That's not all! You also see Wynonna sing her mother a special wedding song, observe dancing at the reception and are present for the good ole family photo session. *Love Can Build a Bridge* is 60 minutes long and costs only \$29.95, #V8V. Don't miss The Judds in this final performance—it will be a wonderful, lasting memory!



CHET ATKINS: GET STARTED ON GUITAR VIDEO

Just think, Chet Atkins teaching you how to play the guitar! Do you know how many people would die for that opportunity? With the *Chet Atkins: Get Started on Guitar* video course, beginners can have fun learning the basics, and advanced players will discover a goldmine of helpful hints and ideas. In his *Get Started on Guitar* video course, Chet is assisted by John Knowles. As Chet describes John, "Dr. John Knowles is a dear friend and one of the smartest and best teachers I have seen work. There would be no book or video without him."

Chet Atkins: Get Started on Guitar video course includes a one-hour videocassette, a 112-page instruction book and a 40-minute audio-cassette—all three components cross-referenced to each other and packaged in a handsome case for easy carrying and access.

The instruction book will guide you through the music Chet and John play in the video. Each tune has its own chapter

which contains basic information and advanced tips. There are also special reference sections on "Playing Chords," "Finger-picking Chords," "Playing Melodies" and "Playing by Ear." The video shows split-screen close-ups so you can see exactly how the techniques are done. Also included are on-screen chord symbols that let you play along as you watch and an on-screen clock to help you locate specific places in the video. *Chet Atkins: Get Started on Guitar* video is a must for all guitar and music lovers. You receive the video, audio-cassette, the instruction booklet and the binder case all for only \$69.95, #B2G.

NEW COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE LOGO T-SHIRTS

We've finally got them! Just look at our new *Country Music Magazine* logo T-shirts. These stylish shirts are available in a designer color, iced heather, with our *Country Music* logo nicely displayed in turquoise with purple highlights—the look is

great! What's more, the shirts have those sporty roll-up sleeves which are so popular now, in your choice of color: turquoise or purple—they handsomely accent the logo. That's me, Robin, in the turquoise sleeve T-shirt, and my brother, Michael, in the purple—isn't he a cutie? Don't worry, these T-shirts are made over-sized, so you don't have worry about them shrinking out of shape. To top it all off, the new *Country Music* logo T-shirt is 100% combed cotton—the softness is so incredible, I sleep in mine! The bottom of the shirt has slits so you can follow the fashion and wear yours outside your jeans or tucked in. Gear for Sports makes these A-1 quality T-shirts for us, as they do for many professional sports teams. The turquoise roll-up sleeve T-shirt is #G7C, and the purple sleeve is #G7A. Each T-shirt costs only \$21.95. Offered in medium, large and x-large sizes, please indicate which when ordering—don't forget, these T-shirts are over-sized!



Nashville Warehouse

LORETTA LYNN: HONKY TONK GIRL

This authorized video biography, *Honky Tonk Girl*, is a lively and personal portrait of Loretta Lynn, touching on everything from her early life of poverty in Butcher Holler to the peak of her career. You'll follow Loretta from rural Kentucky—where you see old photos and live scenes of her homeplace—to the clubs of the Northwest, from her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry to her acceptance as the 1972 Country Music Entertainer of the Year at the CMA Awards Show. Loretta helped change attitudes in our society by singing and writing about women like her who married too young, got pregnant too often and never had enough money to make ends meet. Through hit after hit and superstardom, Loretta never changed much from the sweet, innocent, spunky honky tonk girl heard on her first record. She remains one of the most respected and loved entertainers in the world. If you've ever seen Loretta interact with her fans at Fan Fair, you'd know what a



warm, personal individual she is. She just about stopped and talked to everyone who passed her way! *Honky Tonk Girl* features Loretta singing "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl," "Coal Miner's Daughter," "Don't Come Home a-Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)," "Wings Upon Your Horns," "You Ain't Woman Enough," "Fist City," "One's on the Way," "I Lie," "You're Lookin' at Country" and lots more. Besides Loretta, you'll see Patsy Cline singing "Walking After Midnight" and a duet by Loretta and Conway Twitty. Special guests include: Mooney (Loretta's husband), Charlie Dick (Patsy Cline's husband), Waylon Jennings, Ernest Tubb, Minnie Pearl, The Wilburn Brothers, Patty Loveless, Justin Tubb, Duane Allen (of The Oak Ridge Boys), Grant Turner (of WSM radio) and Owen Bradley (Loretta's record producer). See Rich Kienzle's review (July/August 1991 issue, *Country Music*). *Honky Tonk Girl* costs only \$29.98, #V8A, and is 60 minutes long. This is an outstanding video!



COUNTRY VIDEO HALL OF FAME

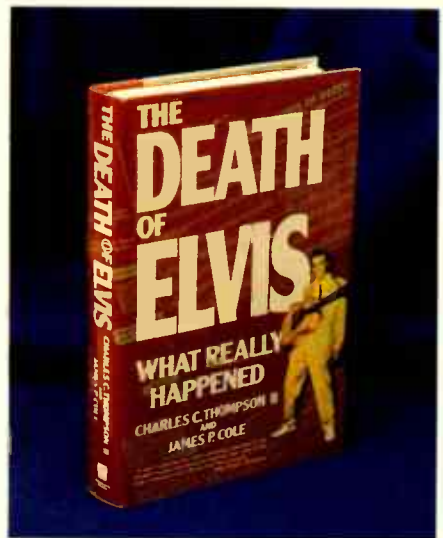
Imagine, four legendary stars host four different Hall of Fame videos. Ernest Tubb sings "Two Glasses, Joe" and "Letters Have No Arms" (#V3B) and hosts performances by Webb Pierce, George Morgan, Marty Robbins, Old Hickory Quartet, Grandpa Jones, Minnie Pearl, Rod Brasfield, North Carolina Cloggers, Johnny & Jack and Faron Young. Next, Little Jimmy Dickens (#V4C) hosts Jim Reeves, Ernest Tubb, Cowboy Copas, Minnie Pearl, Marty Robbins, the Solemn Ole Judge, Cousin Jody, Lonzo & Oscar, North Carolina Cloggers and Okie Jones, plus performs "Hillbilly Fever." On the third video, Faron Young (#V5F) is host; his guests include Ernest Tubb, The Wilburn Brothers, Goldie Hill, Rod Brasfield, Jim Reeves, Marty Robbins, The Carter Family and the World's Champion North Carolina Cloggers. You'll also see Faron doing "If You Ain't Lovin'." The fourth video, hosted by Carl Smith (#V6G), includes performances by Faron Young, Marty Robbins, Jim Reeves, The Carter Family, the Solemn Ole Judge, Rod Brasfield, World's Champion North Carolina Cloggers and Dr. Lew Childre, plus Smith on "Satisfaction Guaranteed" and "Darling, Am I the One." All these legends are in their prime. You can order each video separately for just \$9.99, or you can save \$4.00 and buy all four at only \$35.99. Now that's a deal! Please don't forget the product codes.

THE DEATH OF ELVIS BOOK

In 1979, Charlie Thompson II and Jim Cole produced an hour-long program for ABC's *20/20* titled "The Elvis Cover-Up," which established that Elvis was a prescription-drug addict and inevitably put his personal physician, Dr. George Nichopoulos, in hot water. The program stirred up a hornet's nest of hearings and criminal investigations, but for Thompson and Cole, it was only the beginning. Thus, the book, *The Death of Elvis*, evolved.

The Death of Elvis represents a decade of follow-up investigation by Thompson and Cole, during which time they tracked down important sources of new information, including interviews with Colonel Tom Parker (Elvis' manager), assorted aides from Elvis' entourage, and the mystery girlfriend who came on the scene at the end of Elvis' life. Also revealed are autopsy documents, suppressed until now, which were obtained by the authors after ten years of legal maneuvering, and a detailed account of the autopsy itself, which from the beginning had raised doubts about the official ruling that Elvis had died of heart trouble.

Here at last is the definitive account of Elvis' final days, his death, his autopsy and the cover-up that followed. *The Death of Elvis* proves once and for all that the King



of Rock 'n' Roll did not commit suicide, nor was he murdered. The truth is sadder by far: that a performer of such stature died as a result of multiple drug ingestion (known as polypharmacy). See Rich Kienzle's review in *Essential Collector* (July/August 1991 issue, *Country Music*). *The Death of Elvis* is 407 pages long, contains 20 pages of photos and autopsy reports and sells for \$19.95, #B8X.

Nashville Warehouse

HANK WILLIAMS: THE ORIGINAL SINGLES COLLECTION

The intensity of Hank Williams Sr.'s singing and the longing expressed in his music made him an absolute idol to many. Hank is captured on a three-volume set in which you get to hear all his old classics, such as: "I'm Not Coming Home Anymore," "Never Again (Will I Knock on Your Door)," "I Don't Care (If Tomorrow Never Comes)," "I Heard You Crying in Your Sleep," "My Sweet Love Ain't Around," "Honky Tonkin'," "I'm a Long Gone Daddy," "Six More Miles (To the Graveyard)," "A Mansion on the Hill," "Mind Your Own Business," "There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight," "Lost Highway," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "May You Never Be Alone," "Long Gone Lonesome Blues," "A House Without Love," "Nobody's Lonesome for Me," "Hey, Good Lookin'," "Lonesome Whistle," "Crazy Heart," "Honky Tonk Blues," "Half as Much," "Let's Turn Back the Years," "Jambalaya," "You Win Again," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "House of Gold," "Fool about You," "I'm Free at Last," "Someday You'll Call My Name" and "There's a Tear in My Beer," to name only a few! *The Original Singles Collection* comes with a booklet featuring Hank's life and career from the 1920's through the 1950's. You get to see rare photos of Hank with other greats, in addition to photos of his marriage, his release from jail and his funeral. For only \$59.95 (#847-194C) on cassette or \$69.95 (#847-194CD) on CD, you get three volumes comprising 84 of his greatest songs, plus the 20-page booklet! See Rich Kienzle's review in *Buried Treasures* (March/April 1991 issue, *Country Music*).



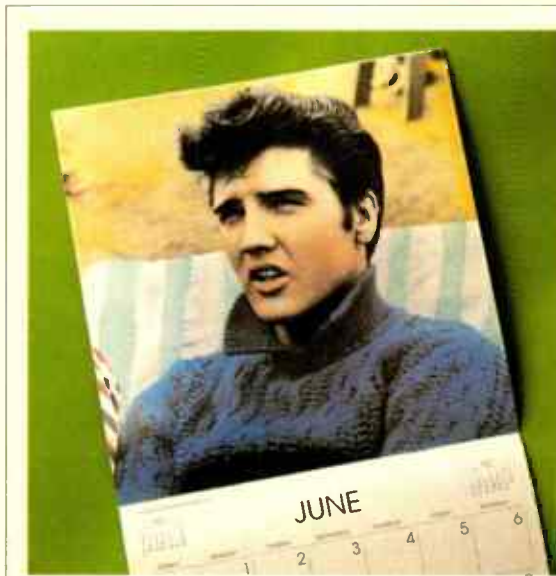
LORETTA LYNN: COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER

Coal Miner's Daughter is a spectacular autobiography written by The Queen of Country Music, Loretta Lynn. Loretta expresses her true emotions in tell-it-like-it-is language, taking you back in time to experience her life from Butcher Holler, Kentucky, to present-day stardom. Loretta shares the depressed times she lived in—her father couldn't afford to buy her shoes, her mother had to insulate the walls with Sears catalog pages, and they'd go weeks eating only bread and gravy. Yet all these hardships brought her family closer together.

As Loretta continues her story, you'll find yourself captured by the emotions of a 13-year-old bride on her honeymoon night, the confusion of a deserted 14-year-old sent home pregnant, and the anger of a child, very close to her father when he died of black lung disease. In addition, Loretta goes into detail about her very close relationship with Patsy Cline. Loretta also included her own 16-page photo album. *Coal Miner's Daughter* sells for \$7.95, #B8W.

DIAMOND CHIP WATCH

Move over, Gucci! Here is a gorgeous, 24-karat, gold-layered watch with a *real diamond!* We have proudly displayed our *Country Music Magazine* logo in gold, contrasting nicely with the black face and pebble-grain, genuine leather strap. The diamond and gold-color hour, minute and second hands add a handsome touch to the highly accurate, quartz electronic analog movement. This watch is so handsome that Tony Bunting, a Vice President of *Country Music Magazine*, wears it daily, and I must say it looks sharp! The *Country Music* diamond watch is for both men and women and only costs \$19.95, #G4L.



ELVIS 1992 WALL CALENDAR

Wow! Look at dreamy-eyed Elvis Presley captured on 12 months of the 1992 Elvis Wall Calendar. All 12 glossy, close-up pictures of Elvis are 12" x 12", and the entire calendar opens up to 12" x 24". Scattered throughout the calendar are facts about Elvis' life and career. For example, do you know when Elvis performed four sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden or when he graduated from high school? Find out the answers to these questions on your Elvis 1992 Calendar. It sells for only \$9.95, #G6X. Don't miss out on all the great collector's photos!

Nashville Warehouse



COUNTRY MUSIC ON BROADWAY

Filed in 1964, in New York City, *Country Music on Broadway* is the first feature-length, all-country-music motion picture ever filmed on Broadway. Ralph Emery introduces you to some of the greatest country music stars in the world. You'll see legendary Hank Williams Sr. in his only filmed appearance, uncut and crystal clear. You'll also see George Jones, Hank Snow, Hank Williams Jr., Audrey Williams, Buck Owens, Bill Anderson, Porter Wagoner, Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs, Stonewall Jackson, Ferlin Husky, Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper, Skeeter Davis, Roy Drusky and Merle Kilgore. This film has over 30 hit songs, including: "Hey, Good Lookin'," "White Lightning," "Waterloo," "Cold, Cold Heart," "I'm Moving On," "There's a Big Wheel," "A Fool Such as I," "Poor Folks," "Jambalaya" and "Long Gone Daddy." This video is in color with better picture quality than the original. You'll just love it, especially if you enjoy seeing super-stars early in their careers. *Country Music on Broadway* runs 96 minutes and costs \$49.95, #G8F.

KITTY WELLS & JOHNNY WRIGHT FAMILY SHOW

Kitty Wells & Johnny Wright Family Show video is 60 minutes of live entertainment which will delight your entire family. You'll see Kitty sing many of her greatest hits, such as: "Back Street Affair," "Crying Steel Guitar Waltz," "Making Believe," "I Heard the Jukebox Play" and more. Johnny Wright (Kitty's husband), of the famous duo, Johnny & Jack, sing your favorite Johnny & Jack songs, along with Bobby Wright (Kitty and Johnny's son), of *McHale's Navy* fame. Johnny's songs include: "We Live in Two Different Worlds," "Ashes of Love," "Poison Love" and more. Bobby solos on "Walk On Out of My Mind," "Long Tall Texan" and "Heartaches by the Number." You will also see performances by Ruby and Carol Sue Wright (Kitty and Johnny's daughters) and Decca recording star, Bill Phillips, singing "Make the World Go Away," "When Two Worlds Collide" and more. *Kitty Wells & Johnny Wright* video is only \$39.95, #G3A.



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Essential Collector

by Rich Kienzle

■ Videos ■

Minnie Pearl: Several months ago, Minnie Pearl had a stroke and has not yet returned to performing. *Old Times*, a video recorded in her museum in Nashville, is perhaps the best portrait you'll ever find of the legendary lady from Grinder's Switch. Intertwined with old



film clips of Minnie in action on the Opry and TV shows are her own insights and reminiscences from 50 years of working with the greats. She even discusses the reasons for her famous price-tagged hats and costumes. She's particularly poignant discussing her family, her first Opry performance and her friendships with Roy Acuff, Hank Williams and fellow Opry comedian Rod Brasfield. Minnie's comedy style was so compatible with Brasfield's that together onstage they were formidable, yet so innocent that Brasfield could sneak raunchy double-meanings into the jokes and get away with it.

Discussing Henry Cannon, her husband of 45 years, she reveals that the former pilot (who shuttled Minnie and other Opry stars to gigs for years) is as big a fan of Minnie as he is of the real Sarah Cannon. Her idyllic view of Grinder's Switch also says

much about Minnie's perspective. Even if you have her autobiography, seeing her telling her story adds a lot. Given her current illness, this video takes on an even greater poignancy. It's fortunate for us that she made it, for what it says about both Minnie and Sarah.

■ Books ■

Jerry Lee Lewis: Two major biographies chronicling the turbulent life of Jerry Lee Lewis have appeared in the past decade: Nick Tosches' *Hellfire and Great Balls of Fire*, written by Jerry Lee's one-time teenage bride, Myra Gail, with Murray Silver. The former was a wild, highly stylized biography while the latter book, a decent one, inspired the abominable 1989 Dennis Quaid movie of the same name. That film reduced Jerry Lee to a raunchy, piano-pounding, gum-snapping Gomer Pyle as it whizzed through sequences that were often glorified rock music videos. Author Jimmy Guterman was also disgusted with that film (which thankfully flopped at the box office) and went a different direction with *Rockin' My Life Away: Listening to Jerry Lee Lewis*.

While much has been written about The Killer's juicy personal life, Guterman focuses on the music. After laying out essential biographical detail, he chronicles The Killer's earliest surviving recordings, two numbers recorded during his 1954 audition for Slim Whitman at KWKH in Shreveport (home of the *Louisiana Hayride*) that anticipated the sound of his late 60's country hits. From there, Guterman covers Jerry's Sun, Smash, MCA and Elektra eras, easier to do since labels like Bear Family have reissued virtually all the Sun and Smash material.

The book begins and ends with a firsthand account of a recent Jerry Lee session that shows him as cocky as ever, though he's not with a major

label. While there aren't any extraordinary revelations here—and I'm not sure how much explanation of Jerry's music is needed, as it speaks for itself—Guterman is quite perceptive. He's also light years ahead of the many Europeans who pass themselves off as Jerry Lee "experts" when they don't understand the culture that nurtured him. The errors are minor, though it's not true that Jerry "wrote" a song called "Yo Yo." When Guterman quoted the lyrics, I ran for my CD collection, and it turns out that with a couple of word changes, Jerry Lee's "original" is actually "I Love My Little Yo Yo," a song recorded by harmonica player Wayne Raney in 1950. Though not for the casual fan, the book delves deeply into Jerry Lee's music as opposed to his life.

Ralph Emery: I expected *Memories: The Autobiography of Ralph Emery* to be as bland as his TNN show, *Nashville Now*, but actually, Emery's life, as Jerry Lee Lewis once sang, "would make a damn good country song." In fact, one incident actually inspired a Roger Miller song. Born in McEwen, Tennessee, Ralph's childhood was complicated by an alcoholic father and an irresponsible stepfather. He admits going into radio because he "wanted to be somebody." Along the way, he married young and knocked around various Tennessee stations before joining WSM.

Emery's stories about live radio are often hilarious. One involves a small town preacher who was nearly electrocuted by his electric guitar while broadcasting, another relates how Ralph and fellow announcers broke up another announcer on the air—not realizing he was discussing traffic deaths at the time. During Emery's stint as WSM's all-night deejay (where he first gained national fame), co-host Tex Ritter set his shirt afire after falling asleep with a lit

pipe. Emery is rough—and at times petty—on ex-wife Skeeter Davis, remarking that her real name isn't Davis (everyone knows, Ralph), but candid in admitting he altered WSM radio airplay sheets that may have helped inflate estimates of her popularity (which also acts as a jab at Davis). After the book's publication, Skeeter angrily countered in a Nashville newspaper that, among other things, Emery never really liked country music. Judge for yourself. He paints telling portraits of Jimmy Dean, whose integrity and gutsiness is swathed in arrogance, and captures a chilling, pitiful image of an over-the-hill Red Foley hurt that his time had passed and drowning his pain in booze. As bland as I find the on-air Emery, I found myself respecting him more through this book. He's as proud of the early morning local WSM-TV show he's done for years as he is of *Nashville Now*. He's blunt in discussing the problems with his old syndicated show, *Pop! Goes the Country*, and his syndicated radio shows. Though he gushes when discussing longtime friend Barbara Mandrell (Ralph and his wife are close friends of Barbara and her family), overall, the image he paints of Nashville is more honest than TNN's.

Guitar History: Britisher Terry Bacon's *The Ultimate Guitar Book* is a handsome, coffee-table volume loaded with information and beautiful color photographs of a variety of vintage guitars from around the world, including some that have long been associated with country performers. An entire section, complete with detailed photos, deals with Merle Travis' 1940's Bigsby solidbody guitar (which directly influenced Leo Fender's early Fender Broadcaster, later the Telecaster). The Bigsby's now in the Country Music Hall of Fame. Likewise, there's a

photo of Elvis' Martin D-18 which he used (and scratched up) extensively in his early days of recording for Sun Records, and a beautiful shot of the original Gibson J-200 guitar built for Ray Whitley. Also from the Hall of Fame is a blow-up of Les Paul's "Log." Not all the guitars shown are vintage favorites, though. Newer models are also profiled. Among them are the round-backed Ovation guitars, the new Gibson Chet Atkins electric classical models (like the one Willie Nelson often uses onstage), the earlier Gretsch Chet Atkins models and the famous Gibson Byrdland, created with input from guitarists Billy Byrd and Hank "Sugarfoot" Garland. I think the steel guitar section is sadly incomplete (for example, no early Fender multinecks are shown—a major omission). Still, Bacon created a beautiful work for any guitar fan of any musical preference.



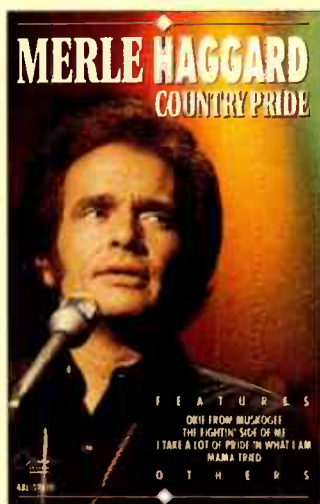
■ Cassettes ■

George Jones: As we stand amid the great George revival (he's gotta go in the Hall of Fame sometime!), it's nice to know there are packages available like the 12-song *At His Best: He Stopped Loving Her Today* (HT-380). Despite the title, only the hit title track is from Epic. Everything else is earlier material, focusing on George's versions of *other artists'* songs, which wound up as filler on his Musicor albums. Among them are "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town,"

"There Goes My Everything," "Am I That Easy to Forget," "Saginaw, Michigan," "All My Friends Are Going to Be Strangers" and even long-ago hits like Webb Pierce's 1952 "That Heart Belongs to Me," Merle Haggard's "I Threw Away the Rose" and an earlier version of George's "A Day in the Life of a Fool." Whether this is "George Jones At His Best" is debatable, but then the folks that put cassettes together rarely come up with accurate or witty titles.

Conway Twitty: Conway's fans have a fair number of compact discs to choose from, but a good chunk of his best early MCA and later Warners material turns up in one place (on a great-for-driving cassette) on *The Best of the Best of Conway Twitty* (FED 6502). The titles speak for themselves: "Hello Darlin'," "It's Only Make Believe" (the MCA, not the MGM version), "You've Never Been This Far Before," and from Warners, "Don't Call Him a Cowboy," "Between Blue Eyes and Jeans," "Ain't She Something Else," "The Legend and the Man," "Three Times a Lady" and "Heartache Tonight." The lack of filler and emphasis on hits is refreshing.

Merle Haggard: *Country Pride* (Capitol 4XL-57420) is by all counts the best eight-song, all-hits Hag package from the Capitol years that's available now (and probably the only one...). Nothing more need be said except the titles: "Okie From Muskogee," "The Fightin' Side of Me" (both of which sound pretty antique these days), "Sing Me Back



Home," "I Take a Lot of Pride in What I Am," "Workin' Man Blues," "Mama Tried," "Hungry Eyes" and "Roots of My Raising." 'Nuff said.

Another Haggard reissue, *It's Been a Great Afternoon* (MCAC-20304), brings together eight of his best-known MCA hits from the 70's, including the title track, "The Bull and the Bear" (with Leona Williams) from 1978, his 1977 Elvis requiem—"From Graceland to the Promised Land"—and "Ramblin' Fever" from the same year. Some non-hits are also included—"Wake Up," "Sky-Bo" and "I Can't Get Away."

Mel Street: When Alan Jackson was still in junior high, King Malachi "Mel" Street of West Virginia was one of the foremost exponents of the George Jones style. But unlike George, who survived his demons, Mel's troubled side prevailed; he fatally shot himself in 1978. Street largely recorded for small labels,

though he was signed to Polydor (his first major label) not long before he died. *Mel Street's Greatest Hits* (DLX-7824) brings together some of his hit (and non-hit) small-label performances, beginning with his first chart entry: 1972's "Borrowed Angel." From there it runs through "The Town Where You Live," "Smokey Mountain Memories," "I've Hurt Her More Than She Loves Me" (not a hit but a great performance nonetheless), "Forbidden Angel," "Lovin' on Back Streets," "Even If I Have to Steal," "I Met a Friend of Yours Today," "This Ain't Just Another Lust Affair" and covers of "Big Blue Diamond," "Today I Started Lovin' You Again" and "Love Me Tender." Street might have been a major star without his demons.

Eddy Arnold: I've always felt Eddy Arnold's best and most lasting RCA material were his earliest recordings. Alas, *One More Time* (RCA 2471-4-R) consists of slick re-recordings of some of those early hits with the Anita Kerr Singers oohing and aahing in the background. If you prefer your Eddy Arnold smooth, fine. But if you love the original versions, you'll be disappointed. You get remakes of, among others, "One Grain of Sand," "That Do Make It Nice," "I'm Throwing Rice," "Don't Rob Another Man's Castle," "The Richest Man (In the World)," "Just Call Me Lonesome," "The Kentuckian Song" and a decent version of "What a Fool I Was." RCA's reissue division keeps their poor track record intact with this one.

Tennessee Ernie Ford: There's little doubt that with Ernie's recent death, Capitol Records will be probing their vaults to reissue more material in 1992. *Sweet Hour of Prayer* (Capitol 4XL-9169) consists of ten hymns, more standard hymns than Southern gospel, including "Whispering Hope," "Sweet Hour of Prayer," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "In the Garden." One Southern gospel standard is here—"Precious Memories."

How to Get These Collectibles

Videos: Minnie Pearl, *Old Times* (V1F) \$39.95. **Books:** Jimmy Guterman, *Jerry Lee Lewis: Rockin' My Life Away* (B8D) \$16.95/Ralph Emery with Tom Carter, *Memories: The Autobiography of Ralph Emery* (B5S) \$19.95/Tony Bacon, *The Ultimate Guitar Book* (B6J) \$35.00. **Cassettes:** Conway Twitty, *The Best of The Best* (FED 6502) \$9.98 (Note: This item only is also available on LP for \$9.98 or CD for \$14.98. Be sure to specify format.)/George Jones, *He Stopped Loving Her Today* (HT 380) \$9.98/Mel Street, *Greatest Hits* (DLX 7824) \$9.98/Tennessee Ernie Ford, *Sweet Hour of Prayer* (4XL-9169) \$9.98/Merle Haggard, *Country Pride* (4XL-57420) \$9.98/Haggard, *It's Been a Great Afternoon* (MCAC-20304) \$9.98/Eddy Arnold, *One More Time* (RCA 2741-4) \$9.98. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 010292EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, TN 37229. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional.

Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Bill Monroe: Almost everyone would agree that Bill Monroe's most important bluegrass recordings were his post-World War II Columbia sides done when Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs worked as part of his Blue Grass Boys. However, it may not be well known that Monroe made his first recordings with the origi-



nal Blue Grass Boys for Bluebird Records in 1940 and 1941. *Mule Skinner Blues* (RCA) reissues all 16 songs from those sessions, when bluegrass as we know it was only beginning.

Here is his original version of Jimmie Rodgers' "Mule Skinner Blues," the song that remains Monroe's opening number half a century later. "Six White Horses" features singer-guitarist Clyde Moody, known in later years for his own hit, "Shenandoah Waltz." There are also fiddle showcases like "Katy Hill," mandolin instrumentals like "Tennessee Blues," Jimmie Rodgers' "Blue Yodel No. 7" and the haunting "In the Pines." This isn't Monroe's most essential material, nor is it always great ("The Coupon Song" was awful 40 years ago), but it is where bluegrass music began.

Patsy Cline: For years Patsy's legacy was spread over various recordings, often released with no rhyme or reason. MCA should have done right by her long ago, instead of relying on a mishmash of reissues. Their latest package, *The Patsy Cline Collection* (MCA 10421), a four-CD or

four-cassette, 104-song collection, does it right. You can hear her style evolve, beginning with her version of Webb Pierce's hit, "I'm Walkin' the Dog," and "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" on Jimmy Dean's Washington, D.C.-based *Town and Country* TV show in 1954. On her early recordings for Four Star (released on Coral, Decca's subsidiary label), she sang plenty of upbeat Western swing, but these songs also showed her feel for pop music phrasing.

Decca's Paul Cohen and Owen Bradley, her producers, made a respectable effort to do their best for her and came through with "Walkin' After Midnight" in 1957. They didn't stop there. The obscure follow-up, "Hungry for Love," is an underrated performance. The first hint of her ballad skills comes on a taped radio show starring Faron Young that features Patsy, as a guest star, singing Webb Pierce's "Yes, I Know Why."

In the late 50's Owen Bradley, who took over as sole producer when Patsy signed with Decca, correctly tilted her to the neutral Nashville sound, minus fiddles and steel. Her vocals gained greater authority, and by the time she recorded her signature songs, "I Fall to Pieces," "Crazy" and "Sweet Dreams," she'd be-



come one of America's greatest ballad singers in any style.

The packaging here is outstanding, and the sound is excellent. Some of the best moments are the live recordings

(a few of these were previously released on two other MCA albums). The booklet is beautifully done with complete discographical data and rare color photos. I am annoyed, however, at MCA's over-reliance on beginning some selections with the last few seconds of studio chatter before the recording started. This is interesting occasionally, but not as often as it is done here. I suspect some unreleased recordings still exist (they tend to show up with artists like Patsy), but this is one way to get nearly all of it in one place, and done right. Now if MCA would only give Webb Pierce his due...

Marty Robbins: We reviewed an awful lot of Marty Robbins last issue, what with all the CD's from Bear Family which dealt with his rock, Tex-Mex, pop and Hawaiian recordings. Next month we'll review Bear Family's new comprehensive Marty boxed set. But for now, Columbia Classics' new set of releases leads off with a double cassette or CD Marty box, *The Essential Marty Robbins 1951-1982* (Columbia/Legacy CK 48537).

I annotated this one, so we'll stick with the basics. This collection brings together 51 selected songs covering all the hits and more, beginning with his first recording, "Tomorrow You'll Be Gone," through "Some Memories Just Won't Die," released in 1982, the year he died. It also covers his "Mr. Teardrop" phase, his brief flirtation with rockabilly (Elvis' "That's All Right," Chuck Berry's "Maybelline" and Marty's own "Tennessee Toddy"), the Mitch Miller era when he cut "A White Sport Coat (And a Pink Carnation)" and his Western hits from "El Paso" and "Big Iron" to "Song of the Bandit." Two Hawaiian ballads, "The Hawaiian Wedding Song" and "Beyond the Reef," are here, the latter featuring Jerry Byrd's Hawaiian steel guitar. Later hits such as

his "Ribbon of Darkness," "I Walk Alone," "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife," "El Paso City" and "Among My Souvenirs" round it out.

Carl Smith: Some years ago CBS Records released a Carl Smith collection under their Columbia Historic Edition banner. Now Sony Music's Columbia Country Classics goes a step further with *The Essential Carl Smith: 1950-1956* (Columbia/Legacy CK 47996). Most of Carl's early hits are here—20 songs in all on a double-length release—including "I Overlooked an Orchid," "Don't Just Stand There" (co-written by Ernest Tubb and given to Smith to record by E.T. himself) and "Let's Live a Little." There's also his version of The Louvin Brothers' "Are You Teasing Me," "Hey



Joe!" and the rocking "Go, Boy, Go."

Note that a surprising number of Carl's hits were written by other singers. There's Freddie Hart's "Loose Talk," Leon Payne's "You Are the One," Carl Butler's "If Teardrops Were Pennies" and "Trademark," co-written by Porter Wagoner. Five songs, including the aforementioned "Hey Joe!," "It's a Lovely, Lovely World," "Just Wait Till I Get You Alone," "Back Up Buddy" and "This Orchid Means Good-bye," were written or co-written by the late Boudleaux Bryant, newly inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Ray Price: It's a fact of life that Price fans often split down the middle between

those who love his honky tonk shuffles of the 50's and early 60's and fans of his buttoned-down, pop crooning of the late 60's and beyond. Happily, *The Essential Ray Price 1951-1962* (Columbia Legacy CK 48532), concentrates on the period where Price made his greatest contributions. Price started in the style of his friend Hank, but quickly



found his own voice by adding overtones of Western swing and a danceable shuffle beat to his music.

Many of these songs are the ones Price fans have long hoped to see reissued the right way: "Crazy Arms," "I'll Be There," "I've Got a New Heartache," "My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You," "Release Me" and his recording of Bill Anderson's "City Lights," which gave Anderson his break as a songwriter. Price also helped Mel Tillis' career by covering "Heart Over Mind." Clint, Garth, Strait and other hat acts would be the first to tell you of Price's importance—and, I suspect, would enjoy this 20-song, double-length album.

Various Artists: Gregg Geller, producer of the Columbia Country Classics series, has another different concept with *The Hank Williams Songbook* (Columbia/Legacy CK 47995): this double-length release features 20 Hank songs recorded by various Columbia artists from the 50's and beyond. Some numbers are extremely obscure, or were never commercially recorded by Hank.

Molly O'Day's compelling versions of "When God Comes and Gathers His Jewels," "On the Evening Train" and "I Don't Care (If Tomorrow Never Comes)" hold up well

and explain why Molly herself was known as the "female Hank Williams." Roy Acuff's original recording of "I Saw the Light" is here. So are three Hank numbers by the underrated Curley Williams (composer of Hank's hit, "Half As Much") and his Georgia Peach Pickers: "No Not Now," "When You're Tired of Breaking Other Hearts" and the super-obscure "Honey, Do You Love Me, Huh."

Hank's onetime roommate, Ray Price, does "Weary Blues From Waiting," "I Lost the Only Love I Knew" and "I Can't Escape From You." Little Jimmy Dickens movingly performs "I Wish You Didn't Love Me So Much" and "I Can't Help It If I'm Still in Love With You," reaffirming what a great ballad singer he is. George Morgan, Lorrie's dad, performs another rarity, "A Stranger in the Night." There are also Hank covers by Anita Carter, Marty Robbins, Johnny Cash and Marijohn Wilkin and The Jacks.

Hawkshaw Hawkins: No question, Hawkshaw's best work was his King recordings done from 1946 to 1953. After he left King in 1953, he joined RCA. This release from Bear Family, *Hawk* (BCD 15539), is a four-CD boxed set that concentrates on the RCA material and shows how spotty things got for Hawkins with that label. Steve Sholes and Chet Atkins produced the 50 songs, and Hawk was backed by some of Nashville's best studio musicians, but the material was often lousy, or in-

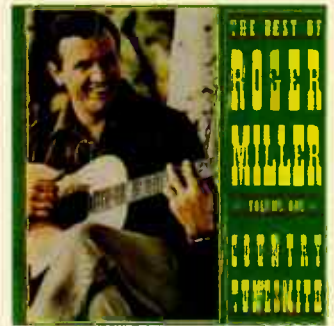
compatible with Hawkins' clear, clean style of singing. He did best with numbers written by other artists who sang as he did, songs such as Bob Newman's "Why Don't You Leave This Town" written under his pen name, Lee Roberts, plus Don Gibson's "Oh, How I Cried" and Hank Thompson's obscure composition, "Car Hoppin' Mama." Things got hairy, however, when he tried recording rhythm and blues numbers like "Ko-Ko-Mo" and "Ling Ting Tong," which came off so bad they're almost laughable.

Most of the tracks were simply flat, even though the instrumental work was often outstanding. Also included are 16 songs Hawk recorded for Columbia from 1959-1961, but only one, "Soldier's Joy," was any sort of hit. His final hit, "Lonesome 7-7203," on Starday Records, isn't here because it's owned by the same company that owns the King material. It's sad that leasing this material is so difficult, for a



King/Starday Hawkins box would be a barn burner.

Roger Miller: Another project I'm involved in, so... *The Best of Roger Miller Volume 1: Country Tunesmith* (848 977)



Country Tunesmith (Polygram 848 977-2) is different from the usual greatest hits packages in that its 20 selections deal with material that Miller wrote which became hit records for others.

Few realize that Roger, part of the same generation of songwriters as Willie Nelson, Hank Cochran and Harlan Howard, was a successful composer of hits for others long before he had hits of his own. The set begins with a song from his first Mercury recording session in 1957. Most of the material is in the same honky tonk style he learned firsthand as drummer for the bands of both Faron Young and Ray Price. Eleven numbers come from his well-regarded 1970 disk, *A Trip in the Country*, a honky tonk album done after his own run of stardom that reverted to twin fiddles and steel (out of fashion for that time).

Roger sang some hits he wrote for others, including "Tall Tall Trees" (a George Jones hit which he wrote with George), "When Two Worlds Collide" (co-written with Bill Anderson—a hit for Roger, for Jim Reeves and, in 1980, for Jerry Lee Lewis), "Don't We All Have the Right" (a hit for Roger and for Ricky Van Shelton) and others. Two of his later hit songs, "Train of Life" (a hit for Merle Haggard) and "Old Toy Trains" (a hit back in 1983 for the children's vocalists, Raffi), round things out.

One error in the notes: Roger's song "Less and Less" was not the Charlie Louvin hit as indicated. That's what happens when two songs come along at roughly the same time and someone (me) doesn't double-check.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Bill Monroe, *Mule Skinner Blues* (RCA 2429), cassette \$11.98, CD \$19.98/Patsy Cline, *The Patsy Cline Collection* (MCA 10421) 4-cassettes \$49.98, 4-CD's \$79.98/Marty Robbins *The Essential Marty Robbins 1951-1982* (CK 48537) 2 cassettes \$18.98, 2 CD's \$29.98/Carl Smith, *The Essential Carl Smith 1950-1956* (CK 47996) cassette \$12.98, CD \$19.98/Various Artists, *The Hank Williams Songbook* (CK 47995) cassette \$12.98, CD \$19.98/Ray Price, *The Essential Ray Price 1951-1962* (CK 48532) cassette \$12.98, CD \$19.98/Hawkshaw Hawkins *Hawk* (BCD 15539) 4-CD boxed set \$85.98/Roger Miller, *The Best of Roger Miller Volume 1: Country Tunesmith* (848 977) cassette \$14.98, CD \$21.98.

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Riders in the Sky:
Tao Slim, Woody Paul
and Ranger Doug.

—by Michael Bane—

20 Questions with **RANGER DOUG**

The Great Trail Ride has been going on for fourteen years now, and it shows no signs of heading for the Big Bunkhouse anytime soon. Riders in the Sky—Ranger Doug, Too Slim and the hapless Woody Paul—have done more than their share of making the world safe for cowboy music. As if the non-stop touring, the records and the widely praised Riders Radio Theater for National Public Radio weren't enough, The Riders now have their own Saturday morning children's program, perhaps the ultimate thrill for kids who dreamed of riding the big screen range. We lassoed Ranger Doug at his hacienda in Nashville, where we corralled him for 20 Questions.

1 *Where's Woody?*

Woody comes with the dust and goes with the wind; he not only marches to a different drummer, he marches to a whole different band!

2 *You guys have been interviewed hundreds of times in your career. What is the question most frequently asked?*

Where's Woody?

3 *This is going to be a long interview, I can tell. Question least frequently asked? Is that the guitar player's new Jaguar parked out front?*

4 *Concerts, the Opry, cable TV, NPR radio series, 12 albums for Rounder, MCA and now CBS, finally a television show on Saturday morning...Just another overnight success?*

You know, some guys take a rocket to the top; with us, it's been more like a hot air balloon—slow, steady and totally improbable....

5 *The TV Riders is not at all like the stage show or like the NPR show. Did CBS television give you any guidelines to follow?*

No, not really. The one thing they did ask, in the wake of the Pee Wee Herman debacle, was that we keep our pistols in our holsters!

6 *Eeech! So, which record company did you say you were with originally? Sorry...no personal questions.*

7 *Let's get gritty, then. What is the Cowboy Way?*

Well, in this year of situational ethics and difficult moral places, when you're caught between the rock and the hard place of bad ideas, just ask yourself, "What would Gene, Roy, Tex or Ranger Doug do?" That's the Cowboy Way.

8 *Do you remember exactly when you made that fateful decision to follow the Cowboy Way?*

No answer there.

9 *Never mind, we'll shift gears. On the Riders Radio Theater, what is that perpetual bad guy, Slocum, really up to?*

Well, Michael, there are some people who are born evil, born to do evil. Evil is in their heart. It's nothing they can help. In fact, we should celebrate those people. Where would the western, or, indeed, any melodrama, be without a villain? How would we know what good is without evil? Slocum is evil, the same way I am good.

10 *Gee, Ranger Doug, thanks for clarifying that. Who, then, is your favorite western villain?*

Slocum.

11 *Nice try, Cowboy, but that doesn't cut any slack with me...*

After all I said about him, how could I answer otherwise? Actually, in the movies, I. Stanford Jolly comes awful close. The guy I really liked, although he was a hero more than a bad guy, was Tris Coffin. He starred in *The Rocket Man* and a bunch of others. But when he was a villain, he was the worst. Little pencil-thin mustache. Totally insincere. Ingratiating.

12 *Can you remember the first cowboy movie you ever saw?*

Yes. It was Gene Autry in

Riders in the Sky. Then the second one, which really stands out in my mind because it was the first one I ever saw in color, was *The Lone Ranger and the Lost City of Gold*, which I rented recently to show my kids, and I couldn't believe what a piece of junk it was! Boy, it was important when I was a kid!

13 *When you saw Autry's Riders in the Sky, did you have an epiphany; did you suddenly realize that this was your life?*

No, of course not. But in the movie, when the old timers are dying, and Gene looks out the window to the sky and—in the cheesy way of those old westerns—sees cattle thundering through the sky, that moved me. Slim says it was *Red River* for him.

14 *What about Woody?*

He's not here, so...

15 *I remember the first time you told me you were giving up writing to become the Idol of American Youth and a Singing Cowboy. I recall thinking a few of your manifold bolts had worked loose. At what point did you guys think, "Hey, this might work!"*

Well, you know, I'm not convinced of it yet! Slim claims that the first night we played—it was November 11, 1977—it was so much fun. We laughed so hard, and we were laughing days later. He said he knew we had something people would want. I can't say that I had that feeling, honestly.

16 *You have to admit it's pretty far-fetched...*

Incredibly far-fetched! People ask me what are my dreams and goals, heck, I exceeded those years ago! I'm doing exactly what I love. What better goal could I have?

17 *Tell me the difference between cowboy movie music and cowboy music.*

I think most of the music, before the movies was...well, if you know the songs, you'll know what I mean—"Little

Joe the Wrangler," "Strawberry Roan," "When the Work's All Done This Fall." They were all about the ranch. All about work. Some of them were kind of tragic, or some deed of heroism. I think that what Bob Nolan and Tim Spencer—the two great writers of our genre—essentially did was give the West a vision that America believed in. Suddenly, it wasn't just a work song, only about horses. It was a song about being free—like the Cowboy National Anthem says, "Lonely but free I'll be found, drifting along with the tumbling tumbleweeds..." That song encapsulates everything. It's the Cowboy Way. It's a code of honor. It's a love and appreciation of nature and of the West. If that sounds serious, by golly, it is!

18 *There's a lot to be said for the whole idea of a "Cowboy ethos..."*

Yes, there is. You feel it in the West, and you feel it in the music.

19 *Is the Cowboy Way creeping East?*

I would hope so. But we don't play the East much. Sometimes in the East, we're anomalies or weirdos or guys who forgot it wasn't Halloween anymore. You cross the Mississippi, and suddenly, people begin to get it. In the East, a lot of people think we're making fun of the music; in the West, they understand. We're having fun with it, sharing a lot of laughs about something we all love...When we played a lot of colleges, people would come up and ask what the real cowboys thought of us, didn't they hate us making fun of them. But all the real cowboys, and people like The Sons of the Pioneers, they said, "This is great! You're bringing it back with a sense of fun and anybody can understand it."

20 *Can Woody ride a horse?*

Woody is such a gifted athlete that he could ride, but Woody just doesn't like horses. ■

TOP 25

Singles

1. Randy Travis *Forever Together*
2. Garth Brooks *Shameless*
3. Reba McEntire *For My Broken Heart*
4. Billy Dean *You Don't Count the Cost*
5. Alabama *Then Again*
6. George Strait *Chill of an Early Fall*
7. Trisha Yearwood *Like We Never Had
a Broken Heart*
8. Patty Loveless *Hurt Me Bad (In a Real
Good Way)*
9. Brooks & Dunn *My Next Broken Heart*
10. Travis Tritt *Anymore*
11. Little Texas *Some Guys Have All the Love*
12. Vince Gill *Look at Us*
13. Davis Daniel *For Crying Out Loud*
14. Suzy Boggus *Someday Soon*
15. Restless Heart *You Can Depend on Me*
16. Alan Jackson *Someday*
17. Collin Raye *Love, Me*
18. Steve Wariner *Leave Him Out of This*
19. Keith Whitley and
Earl Thomas Conley ... *Brotherly Love*
20. Tanya Tucker *(Without You) What Do I
Do With Me*
21. Rob Crosby *Still Burnin' for You*
22. The Remingtons *A Long Time Ago*
23. Sammy Kershaw *Cadillac Style*
24. Mary-Chapin
Carpenter *Going Out Tonight*
25. Ricky Van Shelton *Keep It Between the Lines*

Albums

1. Garth Brooks *Ropin' the Wind*
2. Garth Brooks *No Fences*
3. Reba McEntire *For My Broken Heart*
4. Travis Tritt *It's All About to Change*
5. Garth Brooks *Garth Brooks*
6. Trisha Yearwood *Trisha Yearwood*
7. Vince Gill *Pocket Full of Gold*
8. Alan Jackson *Don't Rock the Jukebox*
9. Ricky Van Shelton *Backroads*
10. The Judds *Greatest Hits, Volume 2*
11. Dolly Parton *Eagle When She Flies*
12. Tanya Tucker *What Do I Do With Me*
13. Reba McEntire *Rumor Has It*
14. Clint Black *Put Yourself in My Shoes*
15. Randy Travis *High Lonesome*
16. Alabama *Greatest Hits, Volume 2*
17. Lorrie Morgan *Something in Red*
18. Vince Gill *When I Call Your Name*
19. Roy Rogers *Tribute*
20. Diamond Rio *Diamond Rio*
21. Travis Tritt *Country Club*
22. George Jones *And Along Came Jones*
23. George Strait *Chill of an Early Fall*
24. Alan Jackson *Here in the Real World*
25. The Judds *Greatest Hits*

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