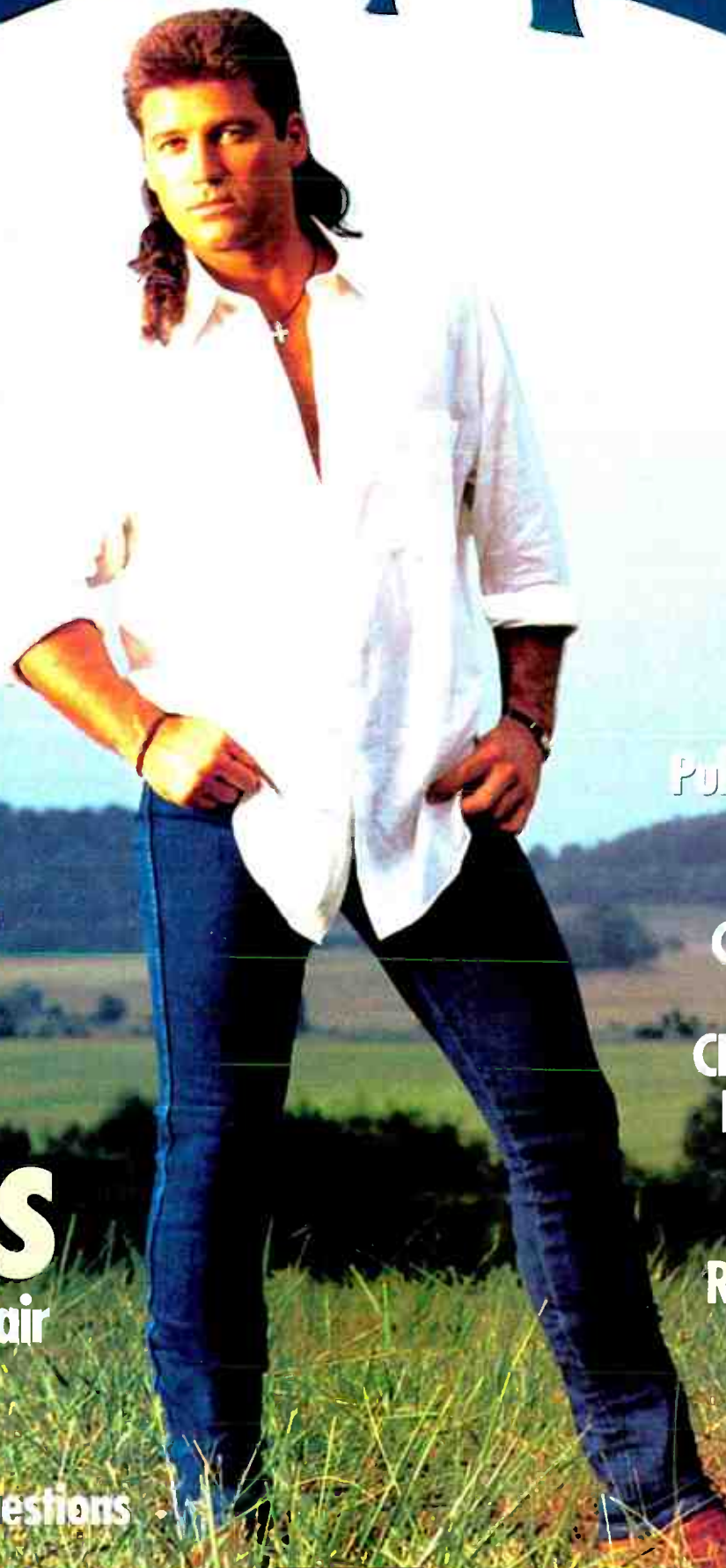


COUNTRY MUSIC



VINCE GILL
Pull-Out Poster

PAM TILLIS
Counts Down

CLAY WALKER
Looks Ahead

DAVID BALL
Reaches Back

**BILLY
RAY
CYRUS**

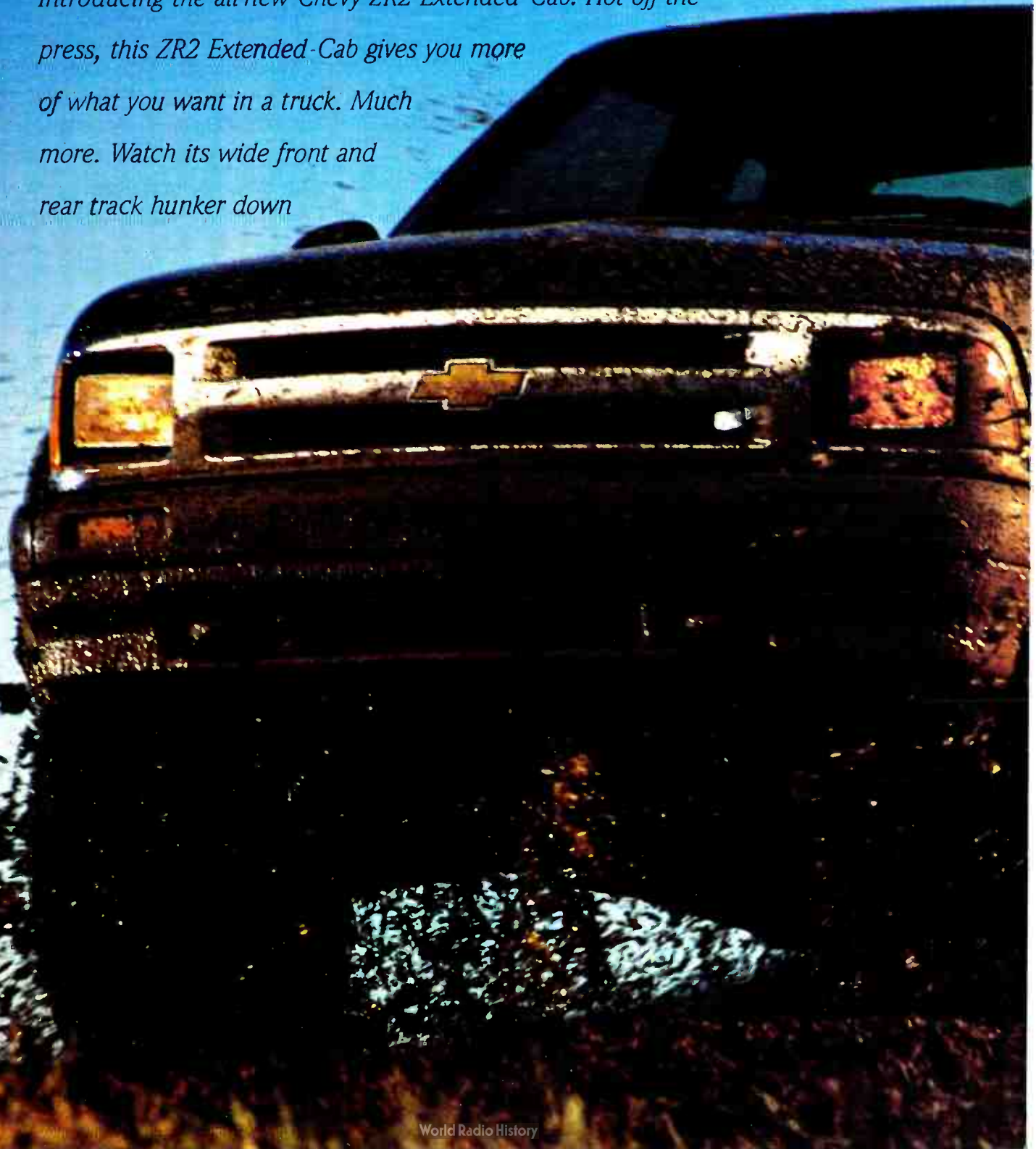
Goes to the Fair

SAM PHILLIPS
Answers 20 Questions

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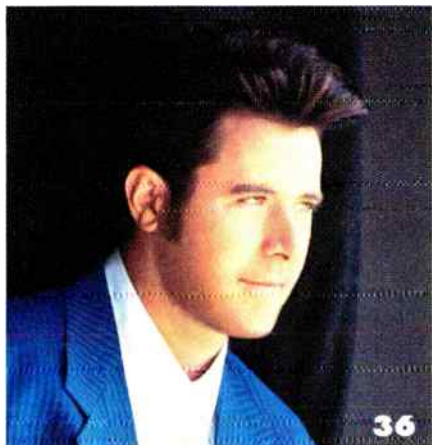
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COUNTRY MUSIC



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Forty years ago, Sam C. Phillips, owner of a modest Memphis record company known as Sun Records, produced Elvis Presley's first record. Phillips had been recording black blues and a few white country singers since 1950. But it was the 1954 Elvis single, "That's All Right (Mama)" and "Blue Moon of Kentucky," that made everyone involved—Elvis, Phillips and Sun Records—legends in American music. Phillips caught lightning in a bottle several times, discovering Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison and Charlie Rich. After doing some of their definitive work in Phillips' tiny Memphis studio, most of them went on to greater things with other companies. Phillips eventually sold Sun in 1969. At age 72, he continues to speak with pride about what he started. Rich Kienzle caught up with him on the occasion of the release of Rhino Records' *The Sun Records Collection*. See *Buried Treasures* for a review.



20 Questions with SAM PHILLIPS

by Rich Kienzle

1 What was the appeal of the Sun sound?

I think that even the person that knew the least about music, with music's ability to make you feel things that you normally might not feel, and even though you might not be a real music fan, I think that these things were the things that made it possible for us to attract some attention.

2 Why did Sun avoid following the norm?

For better or for worse, I'm not a follower. I don't mean I'm a great leader or anything like that, it just simply means in my mind that I care very little about already well-done, trodden paths. I'm not tryin' to change the world for better or worse. I knew that, good God almighty, all of this music was never recognized, and we got off into some orbit of nothin' but Broadway stuff. And the hinterlands weren't heard from and at least exposed. The display of their talents is so basic and elemental, as far as I was concerned, and the emotional aspects were in-

volved in us all, especially some of us old-timers that came through the Depression.

3 A lot of Sun artists weren't fancy pickers yet the material packs a wallop even today. Did you try to make the performers' rough edges work for them?

I appreciate that comment more than anything because that is exactly what we did, and I knew that if we tried to attempt to dress up for commercialism's sake—and don't misunderstand, we had to sell records, and we hoped that we would, otherwise we

wouldn't have been in business long, and it was a long, drawn-out thing before we did get acceptance—but that's absolutely a fact.

4 What made Sun such a comfortable place to record?

There was nobody I wouldn't audition. You knew the artist was at home, and yet the artist was still ready to come out of the gate.

5 What was the main factor in relaxing the artists?

They still had in their mind that since they'd never been in a studio before, or in a ra-

dio station, that maybe you wanted to do something more with them than they naturally wanted. So I tried my best to impress upon them that we really did want what they felt most comfortable with, so that was true with Elvis, and the same is also true with Roy Orbison. Had we come out with ballads and tried to copy some of the great singers—Perry Como, and all these people at that time—I don't think we would have ever been heard.

6 When you teamed Elvis with Scotty Moore and Bill Black, did you ever think of adding more musicians?

We would have made a real mistake with Elvis, same thing with Johnny Cash, same thing with Carl Perkins, or Roy Orbison, but no, if we'd have gotten away from our fundamentals, the things that we wanted to do, if we'd have had all the money in the world, I don't think I would have changed the approach of what we did at all. I certainly would not have added a whole lot of instrumentation. That would have been totally counter to what I thought I heard.

7 Before Elvis' Sun records, didn't The Carlisles on the Grand Ole Opry use a similar sound, with the fingerpicked guitar and slapped bass?

Jumpin' Bill Carlisle is who you're talkin' about. That is right, but that was done because basically they were a great show group. And they slapped the bass in order to really show off, which was fine. But we did it actually as a part of the real musical content rather than a show from the stage.

8 The minute Elvis got into "That's All Right (Mama)," did you realize you had something?

Oh, yeah. I don't think there's any question I knew that a long time before, but keep in mind I'm a one-man band, so to speak, and I had to get around to everybody.

9 Sun wasn't a wealthy label in the early days. Was it hard to resist following the

crowd to get more acceptance? I think that's the toughest thing to do. I was starving to death, financially—to not be tempted to say, "Well, man, I've just got to try to make this commercial." And certainly we wanted to. If I'd have done that, I don't think I'd have been heard from to any great extent.

10 *Do you really think it would have limited you?* It doesn't mean I couldn't have cut some pretty decent records, but it would have kind of defeated what I had in mind when I was attempting to do this.

11 *You grew up in Alabama. When did you first come to Memphis?*

I was living in Florence, Alabama, at the time. I came through here in 1939 on a rainy Saturday morning, going to Dallas, Texas, to hear Dr. Pruet of the First Baptist Church in Dallas preach. I went down to Beale Street. I saw the Delta of Arkansas and Mississippi, and all the cotton rows, some of them as far as you could see, man. I never seen cotton rows that long in my life, 'cause we didn't have farmland that good in Northwest Alabama. And I knew where you have a river like the mighty Old Muddy, and you have to live with that river, when that floods, it takes your crops with it, and disappointments go along with all of that... I saw things indigenous to what I thought was the forgotten stories and experiences in life that just wasn't exposed that much. This is what I felt even as a very young person in '39. Of course, when I returned in '45, this was totally the way I felt.

12 *Do you think Sun could have succeeded in any other Southern city?*

It would have been much more difficult. I wouldn't categorically say it couldn't have been done anywhere else, but I can assure you that this environment was very helpful—not only for the blacks but for the whites. It is one thing to say that it couldn't happen anywhere else, but nonetheless I know that this had a very deep influence on me wanting to attempt it here.

13 *What was the greatest challenge?*

You have to kind of chart in your mind, maybe as best you can, like Columbus, how long it's gonna take to see land once you put out to sea. And that, I think, was probably my biggest challenge, that to think that I would get so close and maybe drown off of the shore, knowing that I had a carload of cargo that I felt was valuable, that people should hear and enjoy. I had already prepared myself mentally a long time ago, many, many years before I even started this, that if I ever got the opportunity to

raised on country and blues and Southern gospel, that held no interest for me. There was a few things country that I produced that had that blues feel, that Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers sound—otherwise I wouldn't have recorded them.

16 *The only label doing anything similar to Sun was King in Cincinnati, where owner Syd Nathan had black artists recording country songs and vice versa.*

That is true. The difference was Syd had money, and there's nothing wrong with

were things that I thought were very delicate, so far as keeping us in kinship with what we all were. And so the echo just kind of rung true.

18 *Johnny Cash was been rediscovered again by young audiences. What in Cash gives his music such a timeless quality?*

Number one, he got back to doin' the things just on his last album that we did, and also Johnny has a certain type of universal believability. Whether you would like his music or not—if you listen to Johnny Cash, you're gonna find it hard, you say, "Well, I don't like that tone of voice, I don't like his almost soundin' a little flat," and this sort of thing— but I can just tell you unequivocally, Johnny Cash had all of the ingredients to be a long sustained artist... That's why I didn't try to make a rockabilly out of him.

19 *You kept him natural and basic like the others?*

We tried to keep people in their elements. And even though some could do things like Elvis showed later on, great ballads, Roy Orbison, many others, we tried to keep 'em in their element at that time in order to attract attention...because as the old saying goes, you gotta hit the mule between the eyes to get his attention before you can get him to do anything.

20 *What do you think the Sun Sound says to today's country and rock performers?*

I think it will probably say to 'em, these are roots. Sometimes we make ourselves artificially get away from our roots, but you don't have to. When something is based in a part of a person's soul, and indigenous to mankind and his hardships and his joys, when you get close to what mankind is all about and stay there, you can have fun with it, you can make a lot of people happy, and today you can make an awful lot of money doing it. I think they're gonna see that the rudiments of simplicity will never be out of vogue.



Phillips in the 50's. Sun had Jerry Lee Lewis as well as Cash and Elvis.

do it, that I would be more satisfied if I tried and failed than if I didn't try at all.

14 *Was starting Sun tough on you personally?*

The thing that disturbed me the most was that I knew I had a limited amount of money, a limited amount of time, and two children, a deaf mute aunt, older mother and just a lot of things like that. And I was workin' about 18 hours a day between WREC radio and the Skyway puttin' the big bands on every night from 10:30 to 11 P. M. on CBS. And all of these things. I guess the biggest concern was putting all of that together and not being able to assure myself that I could hold on long enough.

15 *Why didn't you push Sun as a country label?*

Nashville was doing a great job, the West Coast was doing a great job with country. And even though I was born and

that. But I think good as what he did was, it was much more commercial—nothing wrong with this, either. I think if I had looked at this thing as a commercial enterprise as much as Syd, I don't think I could have done as much as he did. But I think by honestly taking the approach that I did take—and when I say all of this I don't mean, man, I did it all for the good of humanity, but basically I think I deep down did.

17 *Some say slapback tape echo was the secret of Sun.*

The tape echo was something that you didn't dress things up that much. People's ears back in those days, especially the type of thing that I was cutting, if you get too far afield from the things they heard in the little clubs they were playing and the little juke joints and this sort of thing and the types of things that you would hear in a little old black church or a little country white church or whatever, these

People

JOCKEY GEORGE

On hand to lead the post parade at the All American Futurity horse race at Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico, experienced horseman **George Strait** couldn't resist the urge to get in on the race himself. He and Cowboy Hall of Famer **Roy Cooper** broke ranks with the parade and battled it out, with Strait winning by a nose. Cooper's demanding a rematch next season. The Texas singer wins again.

CARPENTER'S STONES

Singer/songwriter **Mary Chapin Carpenter**'s latest release, *Stones in the Road*, debuted at Number One on **Billboard's** Country Album chart, and held that position for five weeks straight, going platinum in the process. She's only the second country female to hold the Number One album slot for five consecutive weeks—**Wynonna** being the first.

JIM BEAM PICKS A WINNER

Jim Beam's Country Caravan Talent Contest has finished up its second year, and the winner is **Troy Lee Gentry** of Lexington, Kentucky. His prize is a private showcase in Nashville with various music business execs in attendance. In conjunction with the talent hunt, Jim Beam sponsored a 10-city tour with **The Gibson-Miller Band**.

AN UNPRINTED GARTHISM

Susan Ashton opened shows for **Garth Brooks** overseas and used **Gordon Kennedy** on guitar. While he was gone from wife and two kids for six weeks, Gordon's 10th wedding anniversary came up. Somehow Garth found out. The flower truck pulled in front of **Tracey** (Mrs. Gordon) **Kennedy's** house on anniversary day and unloaded two vases with a dozen roses in each. "Who are these from?" asked Tracey, as the driver unloaded two more dozen and two more. Finally, at the end of 10 dozen roses, there was a card that read, "Thanks for allowing Gordon to be with us on this tour. Love, Garth and **Sandy Brooks**." Gordon is the son of producer **Jerry Kennedy** (**Stallers**, **Tom T. Hall**, **Jerry Lee**



George Strait and Roy Cooper battle it out at Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico.

Lewis, etc.) and brother of **Bryan Kennedy**, who penned "American Honky Tonk Bar Association" for Garth with **Jim Rushing**.

Just so all the Kennedy boys are mentioned, ASCAP's **Shelby Kennedy** and **Sheri Collins** were honored for their recent marriage at the beautiful Brentwood home of **Bebe** and **Donna Birtles**. Bebe was lead singer for **The Little River Band**. The Birtles, Australian natives, love Music City and are proud to call it home. Shelby and Sheri were married in Aspen, Colorado, in November.

THE CONWAY ESTATE SALE

It was not a pretty sight. The late **Conway Twitty** was a kind man, a quiet man, a private man. Now his belongings have been auctioned off. A bit of history is needed to set the scene. Conway was married four times. His first marriage, as a teenager, produced **Michael Jenkins** (Twitty's real name was Harold Jenkins). Conway's mother, **Velma Jenkins**, raised Michael. Conway's second marriage, to **Mickey**,

produced three children: **Kathy**, **Joannie** and **Jimmy Jenkins** (aka Twitty). Conway and Mickey divorced, then married a second time. So both his second and his third marriage were to Mickey. Conway's fourth marriage was to **Dee Henry**, who worked in his office and later co-produced his music. Dee and Conway were married for six years, prior to Conway's untimely death in 1993. Apparently during those years, Dee and Michael became good friends, while Mickey and Conway's three children were not so friendly. After Conway's sudden death outside Branson last year, the warring began. After everyone's "day in court," Conway's three children by Mickey could not reach agreement on division of Twitty's estate with eldest son Michael and fourth wife Dee. Therefore, in order to settle the estate, there was a sale at Twitty City in Hendersonville, Tennessee, where Conway's mother, Velma, and the children resided. People came from everywhere and bought everything that belonged to the late singer. To complicate

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

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People

matters, Twitty City and the surroundings were purchased by Trinity Broadcasting, a charismatic religious television network. Amongst the "everything" were two marriage certificates and two sets of divorce papers of Harold and Mickey Jenkins, along with some postcards Conway had written to his ex while they were still man and wife. Mickey grabbed the items and tried to run out of the tent where the auction was being held, only to be apprehended. Television was on hand, and into a microphone Mickey said, "I was married to Conway Twitty for 28 years, and if he knew what was going on here he would...he would...die." Sad but humorous. But the saddest part of all is this: Two weeks before the sale, Velma died. They say her heart was broken.

MATTEA IN JEOPARDY

King World, syndicators of the long-running game show, *Jeopardy!*, just wrapped up another *Celebrity Jeopardy!* Tournament, with the proceeds going to charities of the stars' choice. Country music was represented by **Kathy Mattea**, who played for AMFAR (American Foundation for AIDS Research). The *Celebrity Jeopardy!* Tournaments have raised about \$400,000 for various charities over the years. Mattea "walked away a winner," beating out soap actors **Doug Savant** (*Melrose Place*) and **Michael Sabatino** (*The Bold and the Beautiful*). She racked up more than \$10,000 for her charity.

BELMONT BENEFITS

Also on the benefit front, the fifth annual *Celebrity Basketball Game and Concert*, benefiting scholarships and program enhancement at Belmont University, took place recently. **Vince Gill** hosted, and dozens participated.

REMEMBERING KEITH

Keith Whitley: A Tribute Album, produced by **Randy Scruggs/Blake Mevis** (executive produced by **Lorrie Morgan**), is so wonderfully sentimental, I wonder if it will even play at radio. The nostalgia is overwhelming as you hear a friend like **Ricky Skaggs** singing a tribute to his late pal, or listen to guys like **Alan Jackson**, **Diamond Rio**, **Tracy Lawrence**, **Mark Chesnutt**, **Shenandoah**, **Joe Diffie** and **Daron Norwood** sing their favorite **Keith Whitley** song. The angelic vocals of **Alison Krauss** and the moving performance of **Lorrie Morgan** duetting as only a wife can do,

add to the thrills. Awesome, friends. The **Larry Cordle/Randy Scruggs** tribute song, "A Voice Still Rings True," gives me chills. Course, I don't know how radio will feel about the song, nor do I know how TV will feel about the video, which tears me up. But then, I'm all heart, maybe with not that much smarts. I like remembering Keith, and so do all the stars who sang his hits and fans who bought his music. Three unreleased songs by Keith are also included.

DOLLY'S BOOK

Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business is one of the finest books of its kind, and that's probably because **Dolly** wrote it herself. She covered her 30-year career as well as anyone from "our side of the mountain" has ever done. Her honesty about songs, salvation and sex is overwhelming and entertaining. "If you don't want to know, don't ask," has pretty much been Dolly's theory all along anyway. Still, the dire poverty and the dire need she and her 11 siblings were in made me ache at times. Nobody ever told her she couldn't overcome her roots, and she just, by the grace of God, did it. During a TV interview about the book, Dolly said there would be a movie.

RESURRECTING TOOTSIE'S

When **Tootsie Bess** was alive and the music was young, everybody's favorite hangout/watering hole was Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, with a backdoor that faced the backdoor of the Ryman Auditorium, where the Grand Ole Opry was held on Friday and Saturday nights. **Willie Nelson**, the late **Patsy Cline**, the late **Roger Miller**, **George Jones**, **Bill Anderson** and **Kris Kristofferson**, plus all the Opry performers who'd drunk a cold one, went to Tootsie's. Tootsie was the kind of good ole girl who loaned starving songwriters money to get by, but she expected them to behave in her bar. In memory of this, producer/director **Bayron Binkley** and company invited the friends and neighbors to the kick-off party for the forthcoming syndicated television special, *Tootsie's Orchid Lounge: Where the Music Began*. Some on hand were **Bobby Bare**, **Buddy Killon**, **Patsy Cline's** husband **Charlie Dick**, **Faron Young**, **Harlan Howard**, **Justin Tubb**, **Merle Kilgore**, Tootsie's son **Steve Bess**, **Marijohn Wilkin**, **Captain Midnite** and **Danny Dill**. The show, hosted by **Willie Nelson** and **Jimmy Dean**, promises to spotlight younger stars as well as the seasoned singer/songwriters. It will also trace the history of some of country's most classic songs.



Jeopardy! host **Alex Trebek** with big winner **Kathy Mattea** at the *Celebrity Jeopardy!* Tournament. **Mattea**, at bottom left, beat out soap stars **Doug Savant** and **Michael Sabatino**, in her quest for bucks for AIDS.



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By *Sam Butcher*

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People

The fact that Bayron (aka Bink) is putting the world-famed bar back in the spotlight is a plus for the biz of music. Like the Ryman, if those walls could talk....

GOLDBERRY

Liberty Records celebrated with **John Berry** honoring his first Gold record. His self-titled debut album has sold over 500,000 copies. And I call that a GoldBerry. Have some. You'll like it.

MORE ACTING FOR DWIGHT

After a number of small movie roles, **Dwight Yoakam's** set to take the lead in the upcoming feature, *Half a Dog's Life*. Dwight plays a rodeo clown who returns to his hometown after a long absence to find himself accused of murder. It's currently filming in Texas, and due out in the spring.

1,200 GO TO THE DOGS

One of the most popular events "on the Row" is the jolly good "dog day" at EMI Publishing. The annual hot dog fest continues to get bigger and better. This year VP **Celia Froehlig** and her crew really "put on the dogs."

And it's a darn good thing they did, what with 1,200 hungry-faced hillbillies showing up to graze. Eye saw Mercury Records Prez **Luke Lewis**; **Mark Collie**;

FRIENDSHIP



Friend **Alan Jackson** showed up for a cameo appearance in **Hank Williams Jr.'s** latest video, "I Ain't Going Peacefully," which is also **Hank's** first Curb single from his *Hog Wild* album. On her dad's shoulder is two-year-old beauty **Katie Williams**. **Hank's** crazy about that kid.

Arista Prez **Tim DuBois**; Liberty Prez **Jimmy Bowen**; EMI New York big shots **Martin Bandier** and **Bob Flax**; **Marc Beeson**; members of **Blackhawk**; **Kennedy-Rose**; **Guy Clark**; **Desmond Child**; **Randy Bachman** (of

Bachman Turner Overdrive); **Bob Mather**; **Hazel Smith**...oh, that's me. A bevy of dog-gitters. You get mustard from your nose to your toes. 'Kraut is so good it makes the taste buds hurt behind your ears, and your mouth waters. Heck, the schmooze and the booze is worth the walk over. Truly fun, fun, fun.

ROYAL JEWELS

Tammy Wynette, The First Lady of Country Music, has announced her own line of jewelry. She launched the "fine crafted jewelry" on the Home Shopping Network, with the promise she was looking at other outlets as well. Whatever Tammy sells, I will buy. I've been buying her music since "Apartment #9," and that's old as the hills. The First Lady is royalty.

SAWYER SUPPORTS

Among the artists kicking in to support the America in Concert program of Very Special Arts, which promotes the educational and cultural benefits of art for people with disabilities, was **Sawyer Brown**, **Mark Miller** and the boys held receptions before their concerts at participating venues, talking about the importance of music and presenting some of the artworks done by disabled persons. We all know, music can make a difference. So can people who care.

HAG ON THE TOWN



Following his induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame, the great **Merle Haggard** really had good reason to smile. Shown with his publisher **Donna Hilley** (CEO of Sony/Tree Publishing), his label Prez **Mike Curb** and friend/fan **Richard Scrusby** is the Hag and a 1994 Lincoln Town Car given to the star by those present.

People

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

With a headful of hair, **Haley Marie Dunn** made her debut into the world a-squalling and a-bawling. She's the new daughter of **Janine** and **Ronnie Dunn** (he of **Brooks & Dunn** fame). When the Nashville Country Club folks faxed me the news about their 200-seat restaurant opening, with Nashville Mayor **Phil Bredesen** and **Kix Brooks** (the other half of Brooks & Dunn) hosting the evenings events, I knew Ronnie was busy rocking Haley while Kix and the mayor hosted. You know, the mayor ran for Governor of the State of Tennessee, but he lost. Welcome to our world, Haley. Keep your music country, and your crying light.

A GOOD MAN RETIRES

Dick Heard, camera on shoulder, smile on face, was *Entertainment Tonight's* man on the spot in Music City for 14 years. When Dick told me he was taking time off to write a book on **Elvis Presley**, it made me wonder. Later, when he whispered "retirement," it made me sad. At every award show, every party, every "do," Dick was a Music City fixture, as am I. He and I were amongst the small crowd of media folks **Naomi Judd** personally summoned to her retirement announce-

ment after learning of her illness.

The Country Music Hall of Fame and *Entertainment Tonight* hosted the event announcing Dick's inevitable retirement. **Reba McEntire** sent a huge flower arrangement, **Naomi Wynonna** and **Ashley Judd** wired thanks, adding that Dick was like "family." Friends gathered, including BMI Queen **Frances Preston**, funnyman **George "Goober" Lindsay**, Sony/Tree Publishing's Princess of Songs **Donna Hilley**, **Joe Diffie**, **Pam Tillis**, **Merle Kilgore**, MCA VP **Fletcher Foster** from Hollywood, **Rick Trevino**, **Patsy Bruce**, **Evelyn Shriver**, MCA's new signee **Bobbie Cryner**, **Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson**, PR mavens **Ronna Rubin** and **Susan Niles**, **Michael Campbell** (who manages **Ricky Van Shelton** and makes me laugh), and a bevy of others famed and near famed. Thanks to Dick Heard, country music is better known, and thanks to *Entertainment Tonight*, we continue our trail of fame.

IF YOU LOVE VERN

If you love **Vern Gosdin's** music as much as I do, you will thank me for letting you know about American Harvest's *The Truly Great Hits of Vern Gosdin*. The first song on the CD is "If You're Gonna Do Me Wrong (Do It Right)," a CMA nominee for Song of the Year a while back. Just look in the stores, it's there.

Frank Sinatra

Duets II



Sinatra returns with sixteen musical superstars to create new renditions of his time-honored classics. The best is yet to come... hear it for yourself on Duets II.

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COUNTRY MUSIC 11

PATTY PRETTIER ALL THE TIME



The proof is in the picture that Patty Loveless gets prettier all the time. I think she sings better all the time as well. Surrounding the pretty songbird are Sony Distributing's John Murphy, Sony Distributing's Danny Yarbrough, who is the by-God Prez, and Allen Butler VP/GM Sony/Nashville.

People

BABY BYRD HATCHED

Congrats to MCA's **Tracy Byrd** and his wife, **Michelle**, on the birth of their baby Byrd. **Eve Elisabeth Byrd** debuted on October 9th, weighing in at 7 lbs., 5 oz. Tracy was out on the road when labor started, but made it back to Beaumont in time to do his part. In other Byrd watching news, Tracy recently completed filming a small role as a singing cowboy in the upcoming **George Lucas** movie, *Radio Land Murders*.

NEWS FROM BRANSON

My friend **Jane Gallagher** has been named manager of the Americana Theater in Branson. Branson businessman **Bill Dailey** purchased the theater, which will feature the popular show *Jennifer in the Morning* in the morning and **Moe Bandy** at night, starting in '95. Branson performer **Jennifer** has been at **Roy Clark's** theater.

MONROE MOMENT

Some 55 years ago, on the last Saturday in October, **Bill Monroe** debuted on

the Grand Ole Opry with "Mule Skinner Blues." At the time, nobody had ever heard anything like him and The Blue Grass Boys. He enored three times. The last Saturday in October this year, 1994, Bill performed "Mule Skinner Blues" to the cheering Opry audience. He played the same instrument that he played on his debut...not his signature mandolin, but a Martin guitar. It's weird seeing Bill onstage with a guitar. One seldom sees it.

FROM THE SANDY LINE

From the mouth of **Billy Ray Cyrus**, through the partyline named **Sandy "Ms. Perfect" Neese**, to me and on to you. The word is "da-da." The speaker is 7-month-old **Braison Chance Cyrus**, son of **Billy Ray** and **Leficia Cyrus**. His first words according to BRC via the Sandy Line.

GOLD LORRIE

Adding Gold to Gold, **Lorrie Morgan's** fourth album, *War Paint*, has been certified Gold, joining previous Golds and platinum *Leave the Light On*, *Something in Red* and

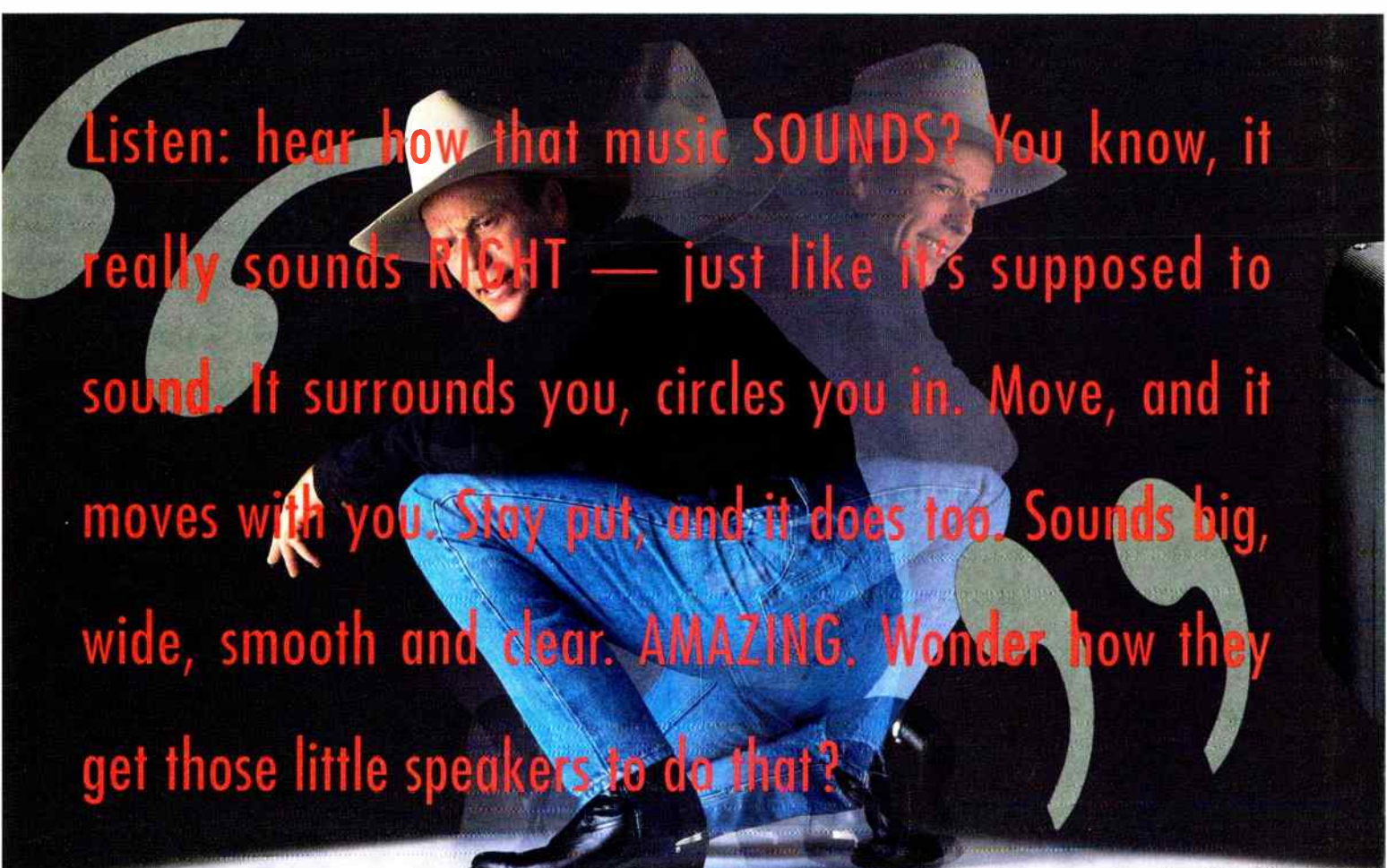
Watch Me. *War Paint* was also certified Gold in Canada, and *Watch Me* was certified platinum. And to hell with all who say girls can't sell country records!

MARTY B-DAY PARTY

Marty Stuart took his country/bluegrass self and his country/rocking partner in song, **Travis Tritt**, to Memphis, giving himself a bus trip birthday present. The award-winning duo visited backstage with Rolling Stones **Keith Richards**, **Ron Wood** and **Charlie Watts**. A happy birthday for Marty.

MS. HOLLINS

After much speculation, **Barrie Hollins**, female that she is, was named Manager of Primetime Programming for TNN, The Nashville Network. Barrie will be responsible for the development and implementation of all primetime series on the network, including the current programs. She comes to her position from RedDog Productions, where she developed programs for the U.S. and Canada.



Listen: hear how that music SOUNDS? You know, it really sounds RIGHT — just like it's supposed to sound. It surrounds you, circles you in. Move, and it moves with you. Stay put, and it does too. Sounds big, wide, smooth and clear. AMAZING. Wonder how they get those little speakers to do that?

People

SYMPATHY

Love and sympathy to **Luke Lewis**, President/Mercury Records, on the loss of his father.

VICELESS JONES

Following triple bypass surgery, everybody's favorite hillbilly singer, the inimitable **George Jones**, has announced he's given up all his vices. His ever lovin' cigarettes are a thing of the past. He is a smokeless wonder. He exercises on a treadmill, and wife **Nancy** is watching his diet. She has requested fans to send her salt-free recipes. The 63-year-old Hall of Famer is back on the road doing what he does best: picking and singing. George bragged about his boxes of fan mail. He also bragged about friends who visited and cheered him up and lent support: Among the well-wishers were two fellow bypasseses, **Johnny Cash** and **Waylon Jennings**, also **Jessi Colter**, **Connie Smith**, **Little Jimmy Dickens** and two guys who count George Jones as their mentor—**Alan Jackson** and **Mark Chesnut**.

NAOMI SINGS AGAIN

For the first time in three years, **Naomi Judd** is in the recording studio. The occasion is the recording of the soundtrack for the forthcoming mini-series based on Naomi's best-selling book, *Love Can Build a Bridge*. While she and daughter **Wynonna** were in the studio together, they were visited by actress **Viveka Davis**, who will portray Wynonna in the series. Wynonna allowed that Davis had to be thinner than she, pregnant as she is.

MANSION IN BRANSON

Glen Campbell has released a new single titled "Mansion in Branson." Co-written by songwriter giants, **Paul Overstreet** ("On the Other Hand") and **Bobby Braddock** ("Golden Ring"), the song tells about how Nashville doesn't need Glen anymore and how he's building a mansion in Branson, and has his own theater and record label. As the song says, from the sales of records from his own label, Glen now gets 99% instead of the 2% he used to receive on a major label. According to the song,

folks are clapping louder than they've ever clapped before. I know **Mel Tillis**, **The Osmonds** and a bevy more Bransonites have mansions in Branson. So the song may be more fact than fiction.

SAFE AND SOUND

John Conlee and Band were flying back from a bunch of concerts in Alaska when the engine failed on the airplane. The plane swung out over the ocean, dumped its fuel and made an emergency landing amidst screaming sirens, fire trucks and TV cameras. Thank God, John and the band arrived back in Music City safe and sound. But it was a scary time, they said.

READING AND COORS

A new cassette, *Banding Together for Literacy*, is a joint project between Liberty Records and Coors' "Literacy—Pass It On" campaign. The cassette features **John Berry**, **Tanya Tucker**, **Suzy Bogguss**, **Chris LeDoux** and **Charlie Daniels**, with the proceeds benefiting adult literacy programs in the U.S.

it's the TWEETER, Kevin.

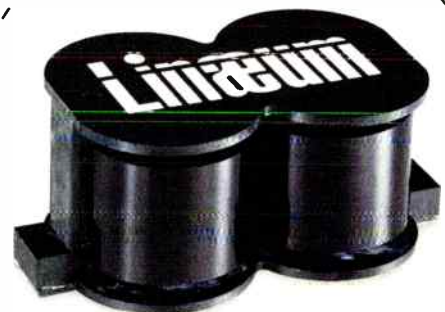


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People



Shown with MCA/CEO Bruce Hinton, George Jones and wife/manager Nancy hold Gold awards for George's *Walls Can Fall* album.

GEORGE'S COMEBACK

George Foreman went into the ring with about three people betting on his butt, but when contender **Michael Moorer** came up for air, he knew he'd been hit by the big fist of Comeback George, George Foreman. Meanwhile, our Comeback George, the great **George Jones**, is out driving that fancy white car with license tags that read "NO-SHOW 1" down Music Row. What's more, George's MCA album, *Walls Can Fall*, was recently certified Gold. Isn't it wonderful that Jones records go Gold with no help from radio?

FUNDRAISING FOR T.J. MARTELL

The annual T.J. Martell fundraising efforts in Music City broke all records this year, with some \$210,000 raised for research on leukemia, cancer and AIDS through the various celebrity events—tennis, golf and bowling tournaments, billiards, the Grand Ladies Luncheon, a benefit concert and more. Of course, the country stars come out in support of these efforts in droves. Among them, **Vince Gill, Radney Foster, Faith Hill, Billy Dean, Tracy Lawrence, Marty Stuart, Billy Dean**, and many more.

BMI, ASCAP, SESAC HONOREES

Each of the major songwriting organizations held their annual awards recently. ASCAP's Songwriter of the Year was a

four-way tie with **Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson, Kim Williams** and **Bob McDill** each penning an incredible three hits each. Song of the Year was "Chattahoochee," co-written by Jackson and **Jim McBride**. **Connie Bradley** is Executive Director/ASCAP.

BMI's Song of the Year was penned by the Old Master Painter of Songs, **Harlan Howard**, along with the Montana man with the miracle pen, **Kostas**...the **Patty Loveless** sensation, "Blame It on My Heart." BMI's Songwriter of the Year, with an unbelievable four hits to his

credit, was EMI's **Dennis Linde**. Dennis doesn't go to award shows. Last year he sent his son to pick up an award. This year he sent his wife and daughter. The lovable **Roger Sovine** oversees the Nashville office of BMI, and, of course, our own **Frances Preston** oversees the world.

The lovely **Dianne Petty**, Senior VP and Keeper of the Key to SESAC, was hostess of SESAC's "do," which honored songwriters and songs. Songwriter(s) of the Year for SESAC are **Karen Taylor-Good** and **Amanda Hunt-Taylor**. Songs of the Year were Taylor-Good's "How Can I Help You Say Goodbye," recorded by **Patty Loveless**, and Hunt-Taylor's "Your Love Amazes Me," recorded by **John Berry**. Most recorded songwriter was **Susan Longacre**.

MORE DOLLY

Heartsongs is the title of **Dolly Parton's** new album. And as I listened, the thought came to my mind that this music is a continuity of the late, great Mr. **Roy Acuff**. It's the songs of the hills of home, done acoustically and in a manner that homefolks will love and young folks will respect. I beg of you fans to seek and find this wonderful recording...as fresh and uncluttered as the hills of Tennessee from where Dolly and Mr. Acuff got their raisings. *Heartsongs* is real country music in its finest and truest and rarest state. Time brings change. Change brings and adds dimensions to music that sometimes makes us frown. This music is a Dolly-come-home music, all



Grabbing a cue stick and racking 'em up for charity are **Faith Hill**, billiards legend **Minnesota Fats**, **John Michael Montgomery**, **Billy Dean** and T.J. Martell Events Chairman **Paul Jankowski**. Over \$200,000 was raised for research on cancer and AIDS.

People

heart, with no thought of radio or commerciality. The kind of music that made the Grand Ole Opry, the kind that made country music. Stoke the fire, Dolly, I want to get a little closer. You've hit a home run with me.

A MILLION SMART PEOPLE

It sure does my old country heart good to report that there's a million smart people in this country, and with good taste at that. A million of you country music fans bought **Mark Chesnutt's** *Almost Goodbye* CD/cassette. I know this will be one record that you will play over and over. I do. I've loved Mark since before he recorded his first note. So do 999,999 more. Friends, sales of a million make a platinum record. This is Mark's first. You know, a year ago **Garth Brooks** and I were in the green room at the *Crook & Chase* TV Show watching videos. While watching one of Mark's, he and I agreed that Chesnutt should be, and hopefully would become, a super-super star. Maybe that is the inevitable.

GEORGE'S BAND

The members of the **Ace in the Hole Band** that back Mr. **George Strait** are now recording artists on their own. The award-winning band has a CD/cassette on the market on Texas World Records. I bet you can dance to that music.

STRAIT TRUTH

Thanks to promoter extraordinaire, **Ben Farrell**, my friend **Susie French** of Kissimmee, Florida, had the best seat in the house at the **George Strait** concert in Orlando. "Eyes to Wranglers," according to Susie who wrote to say that George's concert was the best she had ever seen by anybody. She further added that I was right again. With eight butts onstage wearing Wranglers, George had the best looking posterior. We've known that for years. And for those of you who worry about my hormones....well....it ain't just me, folks. And that's the Strait truth.

POLYDOR'S FIRST NUMBER ONE

The babe on the block, Polydor Records, scored their first Number One single with **Toby Keith**. "Who's That Man" chart-topped on the eve of Toby's second album (his first on the Polydor label), *Boomtown*. Here's wishing Toby, Polydor Prez **Harold Shedd** and GM/VP **Steve Miller** the best under this new umbrella. Congrats are in order to all my friends at Polydor.

RICE AND RICE

The award-winning husband and wife songwriting duo, **Bill and Sharon Rice**, signed a new contract with MCA Music Publishing. The most award-winning songwriter in the history of ASCAP, Bill wrote "Someone to Give My Love To" and "The Easy Part's Over," while Sharon boasts of "Ya'll Come Back Saloon" and "My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys."

BY GEORGE

I just received my 20th record by **George Strait**. For 14 years this man has continued to cut quality records. His latest, titled *Lead On*, is as good or better than his first. He's sold over 25 million records in his career. This one will raise the figure a couple million more, The no-frills real cowboy is still the best around. He's forgot more about cool than any 15 hat wearers a-twisting and groaning today ever knew.



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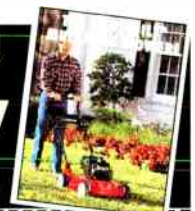
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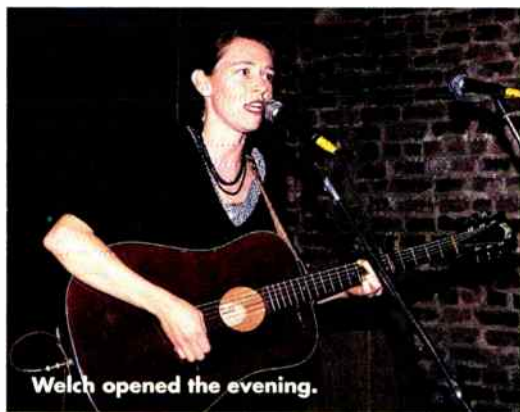
Nashville. Nine o'clock Wednesday night. Raining. Ultimately it rained like hell. The Bluebird Cafe. My first visit to this legendary cradle of songwriting stardom. A \$10 cab ride from the center of town. Serious line forming outside. I ask the guy in front of me, "Who's on?" He responds, "The Mavericks! The lead singer/writer of The Mavericks."

Fair enough, I think, though still in the dark. First show empties out. Line moves slowly. I just make it in under the wire. The joint is chock-a-block. I stand, wedged into a cranny by the service bar but with an eyeball-to-eyeball, straight-on view.

Lot of buzz in the air. Big night. Music business heavies, devotees, cognoscenti, fill the tables down front. Fill every table in fact. There seems to be a little warm-up duet tuning up acoustic guitars on stage.

This is where the story begins...

Quiet, nearly silent, amongst this urban buzz stood a woman: Gillian Welch. Unprepossessing. If country music has an image spectrum with Dolly Parton at one end, Gillian Welch is the other. Words like plain, simple, honest even fall short. The vision is one of those Walker Evans 1940's dustbowl hero-



Welch opened the evening.

ines. Simple shift dress of general store cotton yard-goods. Small, almost dwarfed by the serious Martin guitar she was tuning. I didn't know whether to expect a camp, retro, throwback, circle-be-unbroken medley or what. Frankly I don't think the audience lined up for The Mavericks did either.

She nodded for silence. Soon she got it. The "amazings" began before she strummed a note. To explain: you've



David Rawlings and Gillian Welch onstage at the legendary Bluebird.

seen instrumentalists, Latin drummers for example, who, trancelike, set themselves into a physical "groove." The motion of the body is the rhythm. You can "hear" their music even with the sound turned off. Gillian "grooved off" about 16 slow steady beats, counted off eight, then strummed that sucker—and that was it.

Let me pick some words: riveting, mesmerizing, hypnotic, intense, fierce, focused, unyielding, targeted... nay... wondrous sounds. Wondrous.

She writes. She has a publishing deal with AlmoIrving Music. Like all Nashville writers, she's trying to get cuts. However, nobody is ever going to sing her songs like she does. Interpret them maybe, but not *deliver* like she herself does. Song and singer are truly one.

She sings of Wichita, a failed marriage, retracing, re-starting... "goin' back where the grass grows tall—and the fields burn in the fall... back in Wichita." If Walker Evans were a songwriter not a photographer, this is what his pictures would sound like.

"I am an orphan on God's highway... I am an orphan girl." It looks so feeble on paper. When she sings it, it is the human dilemma—short and sweet—bitersweet. You haven't heard such "honesty" since day one of Emmylou Harris

or day zero of The Carter Family.

I'm standing there too speechless to lift the bottleneck to my lips. For this to be a complete picture, attention must be paid to the other half of the duet: David Rawlings. An extraordinary guitarist in a town teeming with extraordinary guitarists. We chatted briefly. Very nice young guy. You'd enjoy having him as a friend. (And if you need a collaborative guitarist...you should be so lucky!)

The two of them play as though a 20-fingered person were unleashed on one instrument with 12 strings. David provides the fire, fury, embellishment, joy and mind embogglment. Gillian provides the rock steady heart-warmth.

One minute into this deal, the audience knew that the management knew what it was doing. You don't open for a hot act with just anybody. Audience, me included obviously, went wild.

Set was over. Couple of encores. Handshakes around with friends in the audience. Setting up for the main attraction. Right then and there I make a basic decision. Nothing could top this and the way I feel now having seen something truly remarkable. So I exit into the pounding rain. Shaking my head slowly from side to side. Muttering under my breath, "Unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable..."

—NORMAN DOLPH
CMM contributor Norman Dolph visited Nashville's Bluebird Cafe recently. This was his take on the scene.

Record Reviews

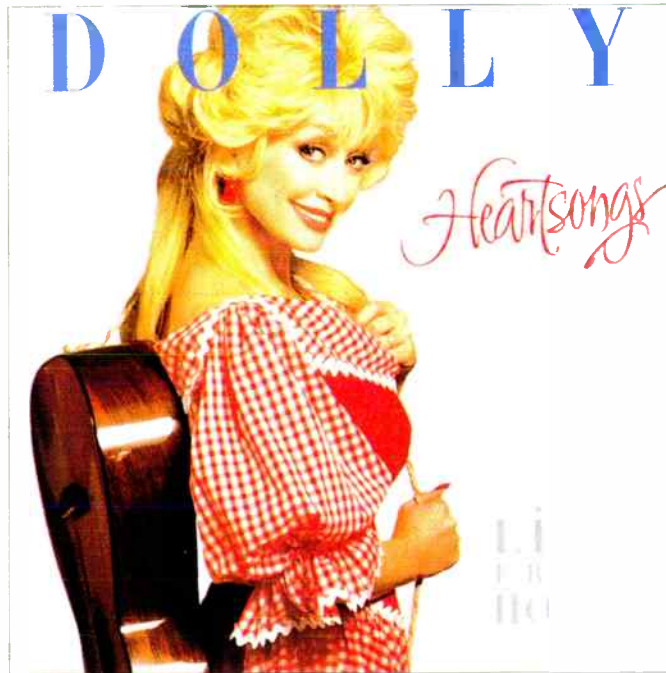
Dolly Parton

Heartsongs
Columbia CK 66123

I wish I had a buck for every time in the past few years that someone has said, "Guess what? Dolly's gonna cut a country album!" She never really did until now. I'm all for artists branching out, if they can keep their soul in the process. That isn't easy to do, however, with so many people telling you to can the hillbilly crap to broaden your audience. Some artists who go this route not only forget their roots, they express contempt for them, like the Hall of Fame vocalist who so despises the 40's and 50's hits that made him that he opposes any reissues of them. Dolly was never that way. And though her song, "I Will Always Love You," is now a pop standard, bear in mind her original recording of it appeared near the end of her days with Porter.

For this double-length collection, recorded live at Dollywood, she uses top flight acoustic musicians, among them Alison Krauss and Rhonda Vincent on harmonies, Carl Jackson and Randy Seruggs on guitars, multi-instrumentalist David Lindley, legendary Nashville session pianist Pig Robbins and dobroist Jerry Douglas, and on one song, the Irish acoustic band Altam.

This is indeed the music of her youth, and she sings it with more conviction than she's had in years. The numbers include such traditional chestnuts as "In the Pines," "Wayfaring Stranger" and "Barbara Allen" (the latter backed by the Irish musicians), as well as Dolly standards like "My Tennessee Mountain Home," "Coat of Many Colors," "Smoky Mountain Memories" and "Apple-



jack." The gospel numbers, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and "Hold Fast to the Right," are equally magnificent. Dolly's steaming version of the Roy Acuff favorite, "Night Train to Memphis," has more soul in its first ten seconds than "9 to 5" and "Islands in the Stream" had the entire way through. Mixing these numbers together also illustrates a point many newer Dolly fans may miss: The Appalachian folk tunes she heard as a child so influence many of her own compositions that her songs fit seamlessly among these centuries-old tunes.

Her encore features a recreation of two theme songs, the first from her days singing on supermarket owner Cas Walker's radio show in Knoxville. She then reprises the Black Draught laxative theme from her days with Porter. A few remarks follow about the requirement she do ads on Porter's show for Cardui, a female time-of-the-month elixir. That's a shrewd segue

into the newest song, her raw, delightfully satirical women's number, "PMS Blues," a song Porter would never have let her sing on TV.

"I spent many years trying to make a living doing this kind of music, and I couldn't," Dolly says in her introduction, "Now that I don't need the money anymore, well, maybe I can."

Boy, does she.

—RICH KIENZLE

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Stones in the Road
Columbia CK 64327

You almost have to go back to Rosanne Cash's 1990 *Interiors* to find a country-marketed album as resolutely introspective as Mary Chapin Carpenter's new *Stones in the Road*.

Carpenter's new CD is almost completely devoid of the rowdy, radio-friendly tunes like "Down at the Twist &

Shout" and "I Feel Lucky" that were sprinkled throughout her last few albums. There's only one such rave-up on *Stones in the Road*, a thing called "Shut Up and Kiss Me," and compared to the richly textured lyrics and thematic density of the rest of the songs, it seems almost an afterthought—perhaps an 11th-hour antidote to nagging self-doubt: "Hey, we're maybe getting a little too heavy here..." But not to worry: When Carpenter digs down into her deepest, darkest preoccupations, she usually manages to tap into the collective angst and new-age soul-searching of an entire generation of over-achievers at life and under-achievers at love—and does so with the penetrating insight of your family dentist. Or family therapist, as the case may be.

The title cut is a dark, meditative soul-searcher—as are most of the songs on *Stones in the Road*—in which Carpenter agonizes over the issue of personal integrity and whether or not it's even possible to maintain honesty amidst the crushing demands of the material world. She raises the possibility that guilt is merely the acceptable price we pay for selling out our best instincts to the pressing demands of the moment. Thus the "stones in the road" become metaphorical pieces of our conscience that are strewn along the wayside as, "We pencil in, we cancel out, we crave the corner suite/ We kiss your ass, we make you hold, we doctor the receipt." "House of Cards," written and sung in a similarly compelling vein, deals with life-long insecurity and how it becomes both a shaping and a disruptive force in our adult lives.

Love, of course, is a central preoccupation here. Through Carpenter's eyes it's like a fierce tidal wave: Occasionally

Record Reviews

we manage to ride its crest for a brief season of ecstasy; but mostly we spend our years either yearning for its arrival or digging out from the emotional rubble left in its wake. "Time Stands Still," one of the loveliest songs Carpenter has ever written, expresses the painful longing that lingers after love has come and gone, leaving its once-intimate participants facing each other like two stunned, embarrassed and apologetic strangers who've run their cars into each other at a four-way stop sign. "Outside Looking In" also addresses the helplessness of watching love disintegrate despite your best and most honest efforts to hold on to it.

Yet Carpenter, as in the past, stretches far beyond mere self-absorbed romantic woolgathering. In "Why Walk When You Can Fly" she celebrates compassion and sharing as avenues of personal salvation: "In this world you've a soul for a compass and a heart for a pair of wings." In "Jubilee" she sings wistfully of a mythical Promised Land that shimmers on the horizons of both the past and the future like some distant mirage.

Musically, *Stones in the Road* is marked throughout by brilliant restraint. Carpenter, surrounded by co-producer/guitarist John Jennings and a core of musicians who've served her well in the past (and some new ones, like jazz

master Branford Marsalis), turns in some hushed, utterly convincing performances.

Admittedly, there's a certain futility in searching for absolutes in a world that offers only uncertainty, or in posing questions which you know in advance have no answers. Yet with *Stones in the Road* Carpenter has harnessed this tension and irresolution to make a record which is mature, honest, and probably her best yet. By the way, there are 13 cuts on the CD, and that's a lot more for the money than you usually get. —BOB ALLEN

George Strait *Lead On* MCA 11092

Younger country fans who kick themselves for missing the glory days of Lefty Frizzell and Merle Haggard should thank their lucky stars they're living through the glory days of George Strait. In the year 2014, when a whole new generation of critics are complaining that "these young Nashville stars can't begin to compare to the old guys like George Strait" and when a whole new generation of bands are recording tracks for yet another George Strait tribute album, you'll want to be able to say, "Oh, yeah, I still have the original issues of all those classic George Strait albums."

One of those classics you'll want to have is *Lead On*, Strait's latest. This son of a Texas rancher has matured into the finest country singer of his generation. It's not just that he has a handsome voice, smooth as expensive whiskey with the same sort of kick; it's that he knows how to use it to capture the most specific emotions. He's not a showy singer like so many Nashville stars who huff and puff as they push and pull at every phrase just to prove how hard they're working. Strait, by contrast, is in such superb control of his craft by this point in his career that he hardly seems to be working at all.

Thus it's easy to miss the point of his performance on "You Can't Make a Heart Love Somebody," which leads off the album. The story is a simple one: A man asks a woman to marry him, but she declines as gently as possible, saying she likes him very much but just doesn't love him. The song represents a major temptation for melodrama—just think what Conway Twitty would have done with it—but Strait resists the bait and captures the delicacy of the situation. Singing both sides of the relationship, he suggests both the romantic infatuation and burning pain of the man as well as the embarrassed sadness and sisterly affection of the woman.

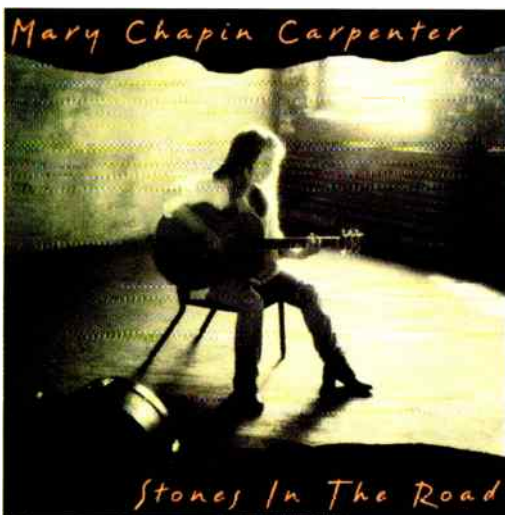
In much the same way,

Strait brings a new depth to Mel Street's 1976 hit, "I Met a Friend of Yours Today." When the singer accidentally overhears a man discussing his affair with the singer's wife, Strait captures the burden of unwanted knowledge; he wishes he had never discovered the truth, but he's helpless to change the results. The album's title track is a pop ballad delivered with similarly stylish understatement. In describing two strangers who meet on the rebound, Strait evokes both the trepidation and the anticipation of starting over again.

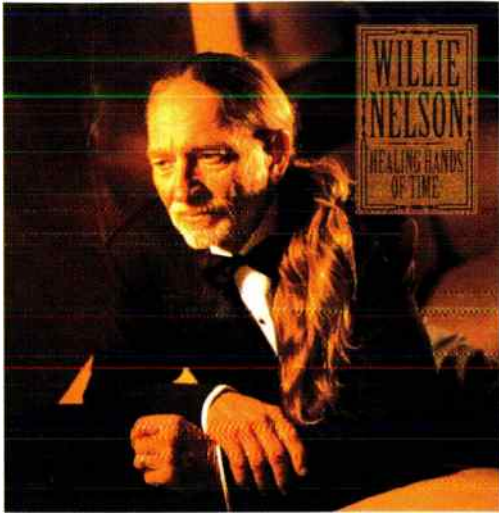
Ballads like these have provided Strait with most of his big hits, but his best songs have often been non-singles which capture his gift for uptempo Texas swing. In fact, no one was better prepared for Nashville's recent shift towards dance music. Five years ago, this album's first single would have been one of the ballads, but in 1994 the first single is "The Big One," an infectious honky tonk two-step. The lyrics describe the realization that a new relationship may be more than a temporary infatuation—it might be "the big one"—and that giddiness is captured in a stomping chorus that goes, "Beat, beat, beat, my heart's sending out a message." The tune even includes a Bob Wills-like "Ah, yes" cry from Strait.

Strait has long been an expert at Texas swing and Texas honky tonk, but on this new album he stretches out to prove he's just as good with dance music from Louisiana and California. "Adalida" is a surprisingly authentic Cajun two-step with lively fiddle fills by Stuart Duncan, while "I'll Always Be Loving You" sounds like classic Bakersfield with Brent Mason adding the bright electric guitar fills. Two Jim Lauderdale songs combine funny lyrics and twitchy dancehall rhythms, and an old Max Barnes number, "No One But You," is given a seductive swing arrangement.

Like Merle Haggard and



Record Reviews



Willie Nelson, Strait leads one of the best road bands in the business, and his inspired singing throughout is the direct result of a musicality which gives him unusual rapport with his musicians. Co-produced by Strait and Tony Brown, *Lead On* proves that country music doesn't have to sacrifice great vocals to keep the dancers happy.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Willie Nelson

Healing Hands of Time
Liberty/SBK/EMI 7243-8-30420

Leave it to Willie. He's baffled folks before, and he'll no doubt baffle them again. This one here is a real doozy in that department. It's a collection of ten songs—six written by Willie, most of them old and previously recorded, and four standards. He's backed by a 60-piece orchestra and a core country band that's seldom actually discernable. The music is produced by Jimmy Bowen, the head of Willie's new label, and arranged and conducted by David Campbell, who has done likewise for Elton John and Aaron Neville.

Willie and Bowen both know what they're doing here. Between the time his career as a rock 'n' roll star ended and his career as a Nashville exec began, Bowen was out in Holly-

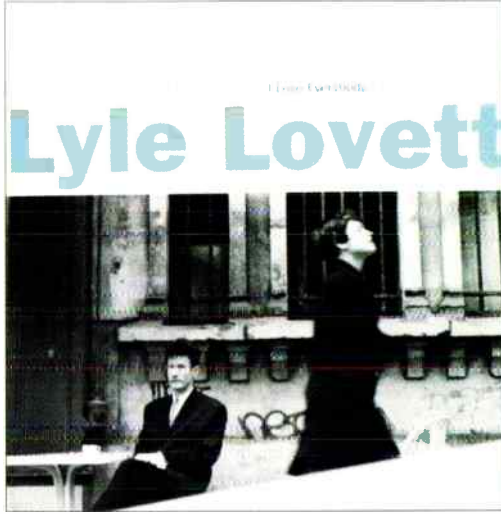
wood doing this kind of work with, among others, Frank Sinatra. And Willie is, well, he's Willie. He was told *Red-Headed Stranger* would never fly because it was too barebones and *Stardust* would never fly because nobody wanted to hear tuxedo'd Tin Pan Alley standards performed by an unkempt country singer. He prevailed both times, and won big both times.

Who can say whether he'll do so again this outing—it's a radically different time and audience. Willie's last few efforts, whether they embraced his classic sound or attempted to change direction, fell largely on deaf ears, especially at radio, where commercial-life-and-death decisions are made these days more than ever. I doubt that I'll be playing this one much in the future, because it's not to my tastes—I'm not the orchestra-music type to begin with, and this orchestra is given far too much time to play without the singer, with those interludes providing more dreck than I care to endure on a Willie Nelson album. But I must add that Willie himself comes across fine—when he is there, his voice rides across the Mantovani-does-Stephen Foster arrangements with real clarity and purpose; in that regard, the set doesn't undermine his talents so much as it simply doesn't give him enough space to show how

compatible he and the orchestra can be. The originals he's chosen to remake are melodically rich enough to support a whole orchestra; it's especially interesting to note in this light that they span pretty much the entire era when Willie was a songwriting fool, from early gems like "Crazy" and "Night Life" and "Funny How Time Slips Away" all the way up to "(How Will I Know) I'm Falling in Love Again," which first appeared on his mid-70's masterwork, *Phases and Stages*. Plus the new "There Are Worse Things Than Being Alone" is quintessential Willie—a very sad-sounding song that actually conveys a hopeful thought and leaves you feeling good all over. And if he staggers a little vocally coming down on some of the words to "All the Things You Are," he usually acquits himself as handsomely as ever on the other standards.

A schizophrenic appraisal? Sure, but it's not the first time Willie has left me or many of the rest of us feeling that way. As surprised as I am to hear myself saying it, I think this Willie Nelson album is a lot more Willie Nelson than, say, 1993's much ballyhooed *Across the Borderline*, with producer Don Was and various pop superstars. At the same time, I hope that Willie's gotten this particular bug out of his system, and will move on.

—JOHN MORTHLAND



Lyle Lovett

I Love Everybody
Curb/MCA 10808

There are those who know Lyle Lovett as the subject of countless tabloid articles since his marriage to Julia Roberts, and there are those who noticed his brooding presence and rickety shelf of hair in Robert Altman's last two movies. Still others know him from successful tours and TV appearances with his richly textured country-swing "Large Band." And then there are those of us who have followed Lovett from the very beginning when he was just a skinny kid from backwater Texas with an acoustic guitar, a batch of very funny songs and ambitions to become a country star.

He never became a Nashville hero, even though he has remained one of the most impressive country music songwriters of the past decade. Though his career is now run by MCA's pop division, country music continues to inform everything he does, and his new album, *I Love Everybody*, is a return to his early Texas-cowboy-poet style. In fact, it's a return to those earlier songs.

While all 18 tracks on the new album are previously unreleased, most of them date from the 1980's when he was writing far more high-quality material than anyone was interested in recording. This is sure to please his longtime fans, who believe Lovett has never written a better song than the early efforts, "If I Had a Boat" and "God Will." In any case, Lovett has raided his attic trunk and has found a surprising number of lost treasures.

One of those gems, "Skinny Legs," kicks things off with a confession of jealousy. If he only had skinny legs, a new Toyota and a cute rear end, the singer laments, he'd have a girlfriend like that boy over there. Lovett's dry, deadpan



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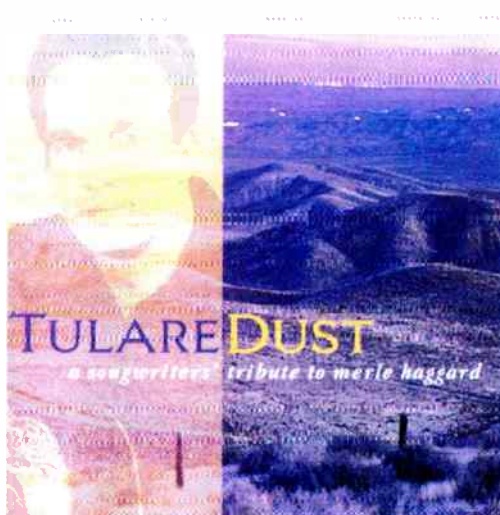
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Record Reviews



drawl falls on the bouncy, catchy melody with enchanting ease, and he refuses to use a single word more than he needs. Thus the song's real message—it'll take a lot more than a blue Tercel to solve this singer's women problems—is only implied.

The same combination of deadpan singing, minimalist writing and self-deprecating irony marks the best songs here. In "Fat Babies," Lovett turns the usual logic of love songs on its head; he proves his love for a woman by listing, for contrast, all the things he detests. On "They Don't Like Me," he complains his prospective in-laws don't like him, but his whining tone suggests the likely reason for their attitude.

In "Sonja," he makes the ultimate singer-songwriter confession by admitting that his most sensitive love songs are actually calculated attempts to get a waitress into bed. Best of all is "Creeps Like Me," where Lovett's character brags of taking his grandmother's gold tooth and turning it into a shiny new ring. "You look surprised," he sings. "You shouldn't be; this world is full of creeps like me." The sweet melody and laid-back vocal only reinforce the dark humor.

The lightly swinging arrangements are as simple as the songs; Lovett and his acoustic guitar are backed by John Leftwich on stand-up bass and either Kenny Aronoff

or Russ Kunkel on drums. Cellist John Hagen is added to five cuts, fiddler Mark O'Connor to six, the Tower of Power Horns to one, a gospel quartet to three, and a choir featuring Rickie Lee Jones and Julia Roberts to two others. At least half a dozen songs are slight one-liners which didn't deserve revival, and they dilute the album's impact. Nonetheless this is a welcome reward for all those who believe the funny Lyle Lovett is the best Lyle Lovett.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Various Artists
Mama's Hungry Eyes:
A Tribute to Merle Haggard
Arista 07822-18760

Various Artists
Tulare Dust:
A Songwriter's Tribute to Merle Haggard
HighTone HCD 8058

Common Thread, the successful if soulless tribute to the music of The Eagles, has spawned tributes as an entire product line. Every label has one or more in planning, so if your favorite legend hasn't been so honored, give it time. Kinky Friedman and C.W. McCall tribute sets probably aren't far off. Seriously, these

kinds of sets have their place. They can focus attention on an important artist by introducing his or her music to younger fans via current artists, and certainly new Hall of Famer Merle Haggard merits two tributes. Both of these have two things in common: Neither features covers of "Okie From Muskogee" or "The Fightin' Side of Me," and in both cases, the results are mixed.

The highly commercial Arista set has its share of triumphs. "Silver Wings" becomes sublime in Pam Tillis' hands, and Randy Travis' "Everybody's Had the Blues" fits him like the proverbial old shoe. Only Vince Gill's soulful spin on "The Farmer's Daughter" and Willie's "Today I Started Loving You Again" equal Tillis' and Travis' performances. Two artists sound better here than on their own recent efforts. Clint Black's vibrant "I Take a Lot of Pride in What I Am" succeeds despite his tendency to imitate Hag vocally, while Alabama's "Sing Me Back Home" leads one to ponder what might result if they sought quality songs instead of their usual radio-configured mush. Fans of Lorrie Morgan's contemporary sound will be startled to hear her awash in fiddles and steel for a fine "I Threw Away the Rose," and Rodney Foster's jangly arrangement of "The Running Kind" is respectable, if not earthshaking.

The failures are just as spectacular. Alan Jackson's flat, disappointing reading of "Trying Not to Love You" and Emmylou's "Mama's Hungry Eyes" with the reunited original Hot Band are major let-downs. Brooks & Dunn's "The Bottle Let Me Down" falls into instant line dance cadences, which pose a question: Can't these two record any other way? Hag songs seldom succeed as committee efforts, so teaming artists was a bad idea, particularly the oil-and-water collaboration of Diamond Rio, Lee Roy Parnell and Steve Wariner on "Workin' Man Blues." John Anderson and Marty Stuart's "Mama Tried" is only marginally better.

The rootsier HighTone collection better captures Haggard's vision and essence, aided by the fact that all participating artists are writers, many with an alternative perspective. Of these, only Dwight Yoakam is a household word. Tom Russell's medley of "Tulare Dust" and "They're Tearin' the Labor Camps Down" makes a fine statement about the paving over of America. Iris DeMent's "Big City," Peter Case's acoustic blues spin on "A Working Man Can't Get Nowhere Today," Steve Young's "Shopping for Dresses" and Yoakam's "Holding Things Together" are succinct and effective. Barrence Whitfield revives the little-known "Irma Jackson," a thoughtful 70's Hag number about inter-racial romance. Lucinda Williams' smoldering arrangement of "You Don't Have Very Far to Go" is outgunned only by Billy Joe Shaver's power-packed rendition of "Ramblin' Fever." John Doe's "I Can't Hold Myself in Line" is strengthened by its primitive sound, featuring only Doe's guitar, electric lap steel and percussion. Dave Alvin's dreamy "Kern River" brings things to an unpredictable close.

Failures are few but somewhat surprising. Robert Earl Keen's remake of "Daddy Frank" seems stale, and Katy

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Record Reviews

Moffatt's "I Can't Be Myself" is disappointingly tame. Worse is Joe Ely's ridiculous transformation of the ballad, "White Line Fever," into a burning rocker, which undermines Haggard's road-wearied lyrics. Rosie Flores' usual cuteness ruins "My Own Kind of Hat," and rock artist Marshall Crenshaw's guitar-heavy, dull "Silver Wings" (the only song duplicated on both sets) wasn't even worth including.

No such collection can be a total success or failure. And so it is with both of these. Like the stars? Check the Arista. Like the offbeat? The HighTone may be your cup of tea. If either one interests more fans in Haggard, that's what really matters.

—RICH KIENZLE

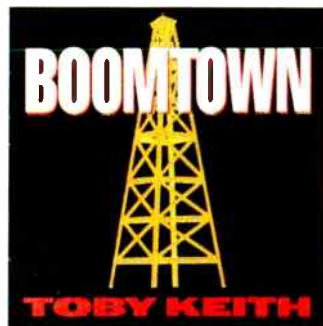
Toby Keith

Boomtown

Polydor 314-523 407

Toby Keith carved a slender niche for himself with his self-titled 1993 album and the accompanying Number One hit, "Should've Been a Cowboy," one of several impressive original songs on his debut record. On *Boomtown*, his sophomore release, he holds his own without really gaining or losing much creative ground. While his abilities as a singer and his limited thematic range as a songwriter make him a modest talent compared to someone like a Haggard or a Randy Travis, he nonetheless seems like a grizzled musical genius when measured against the flock of baby-faced teenyboppers in cowboy hats who've recently stormed the country charts.

Keith's songwriting, showcased in conjunction with various co-writers this time around, has taken on a new polish. Admittedly, songs like "Victoria's Secret" (about a respectable family woman with a neglectful husband whose only emotional lifeline is her secret affair) and "Who's That Man" (a moving portrait of a di-



voiced man struggling to come to grips with his loss) don't cut very deep. Yet they do weave some clever and evocative word pictures. Keith's real problem, though, is that he makes the whole thing sound too damned easy, and sometimes even a little contrived. On "In Other Words" (one of the few songs on here he didn't write or co-write) he speaks of wearing his heart on his sleeve. Yet, as a singer, he seldom does. He's comfortable keeping his distance and hides behind a variety of nonchalant musical poses—the good ol' boy buffoon in "Big Truck" and "You Ain't Much Fun," the detached, cynical observer in the title track and "No Honor Among Thieves." Even as he serves up some predictable odes to true love ("In Other Words," "Woman Behind the Man"), he continues to play it safe, giving up so little emotional ground that he sounds like he's pulling the whole thing off with a sly wink and a nod.

Keith's nonchalance occasionally works to his advantage, as on "Boomtown," the rowdy, rocked-up title cut on which he also excels as a songwriter. It's also a plus on "You Ain't Much Fun," the light-hearted testimonial of a man who discovers that life without alcohol is healthier, safer and saner, but also more mundane. But his standoffishness is mostly a liability. And it's only on those rare occasions on *Boomtown* when he does set aside his John Wayne swagger and puts a little more of himself into his music that he sounds more than just ordinary.

—BOB ALLEN



Ricky Van Shelton

Love and Honor

Columbia CK 66153

What to make of Ricky Van Shelton these days. The man who emerged in 1986 as one of the freshest new voices in country music had within the space of a couple of albums reduced himself to the most radio-friendly clone on the airwaves, someone whose simple formula for hits was, typically, to revive instantly-recognizable, sure-fire tunes that had already been hits for another artist. It worked commercially, but it's been a long time since Ricky did much to distinguish himself as an artist.

Yet *Love and Honor* is a step back in the right direction—maybe only one step, agreed, but still a most welcome one. It helps to be working with new producers, Blake Chancey and Paul Worley. Through expert, limited use of instruments like dobro and harmonica, they've given his music fresh new shadings. You can hear his response in the very first track, "Wherever She Is," where his own increasingly-formulaic baritone suddenly is used again to maximum effect. "Been There, Done That" turns one of the day's more popular catchphrases into a hook that he attacks with energy and conviction; though it's not the first single from the album, it's gotta be one before long. Merle Haggard's "Love and Honor" is one of those can't-miss ballads, while Ricky sings and swings "Baby, Take a Picture" with winning impudence.

On the other hand, the sardonic tone Ernest Tubb brought to "Thanks a Lot" some three decades ago simply doesn't translate into the chipper, upbeat swing sound Ricky gives it today. Nearly all the ballads here receive formulaic, instantly-forgettable readings, while on "Complicated" he doesn't sound very sad or confused or any of the other emotions the lyrics insist on; and as much of a rep as he's developed of late for rockabilly, his performance on "Lola's Love" shows as little urgency or rhythmic flair as he musters for "Complicated."

Ultimately, it may take more than new producers to turn things around for Ricky. But *Love and Honor* reveals a willingness to try something different, in spite of past successes, that is most encouraging. It would be great to see Van Shelton complete the transition before he's become a victim of his old formula.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Various Artists

Keith Whitley,

A Tribute Album

BNA 66416

Despite the glut of half-baked tribute albums that Nashville has recently been spewing out, *Keith Whitley, A Tribute Album* is one I had high hopes for. Whatever else might be said about it now that it's here, it is a heartfelt project, even though it's also a woefully uneven and unfocused one. Produced by Whitley's widow, Lorrie Morgan, along with Randy Scruggs and Blake Mevis, one of Whitley's former producers, it includes contributions—some of them inspired, some of them not—from Alan Jackson, Tracy Lawrence, Diamond Rio, Mark Chesnut and a host of other young stars—most of whom have made their marks in the half decade since Whitley's death.

As is too often the case with such talent-heavy tribute



*Ian shown smaller
than actual size of
approximately 18" tall.*

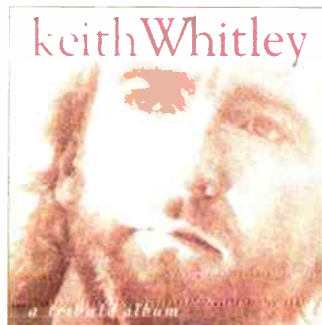
Record Reviews

records, the end product adds up to something considerably less than the sum of its star-studded parts as these guest artists tee off on a collection of songs written by, formerly sung by, or merely dedicated to, the late Whitley.

The record opens with Alan Jackson's rendition of Whitley's 1988 chart-topper, "Don't Close Your Eyes." Brilliant singer that he is, Jackson merely ambles stoically through the song, recapturing little of the aching, almost pleading vulnerability that made Whitley's version so unforgettable. Next up is Diamond Rio, which simply sounds out of its league on "Ten Feet Away," a minor hit for Whitley back in '86. Tracy Lawrence is a little more convincing on the sardonic "I'm Over You," originally a Top-Five hit for Whitley in 1990. And the remarkable Alison Krauss turns in a moving, though overly-restrained rendition of "When You Say Nothing at All," which Whitley took to the top of the charts in 1988.

Mark Chesnutt shines on "I Never Go Around Mirrors," a Lefty Frizzell classic that Whitley, a devout Frizzell disciple, covered in his time. And Joe Diffie is simply magnificent on the haunting "I'm No Stranger to the Rain," a Number One single for Whitley in 1989, just a few months before his death. Diffie's performance is one of the few on here that even comes close to matching the intensity of Whitley's original.

Keith Whitley, A Tribute Album also includes some previously unreleased tracks from Whitley himself. Most of these were culled from an album Whitley recorded (with Blake Mevis) and then ultimately scrapped back in the mid-1980's, when he was still struggling to find his own style. This material is interesting but, predictably, second-rate. "Charlotte's in North Carolina," for instance, is a clumsy word pun that must have been intended as an ill-conceived follow-up to Whitley's 1985



breakthrough hit, "Miami, My Amy," "I Just Want You" has a similar out-take feel to it. Even though Lorrie Morgan pours her heart into her overdubbed duet, she simply can't transcend Mevis' turgid pop arrangement and the song's second-hand ordinariness.

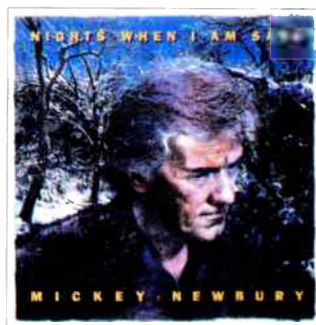
Despite unevenness, *A Tribute Album* does have its moments. One of my favorites is Ricky Skaggs' and Shenandoah's spirited outing on "All I Ever Loved Was You." The song, written by Skaggs' mother, Dorothy, has no direct connection to Whitley, except that it recaptures the rustic vitality of the grassroots Kentucky bluegrass scene from which Whitley and Skaggs both sprang.

When it's all said and done, *Keith Whitley, A Tribute Album* probably will enhance Whitley's slender but influential legacy. Yet for my own memories, I prefer to turn back to Whitley's final and best two studio albums—1988's *Don't Close Your Eyes* and 1989's *I Wonder Do You Think of Me*—and the posthumously released *Kentucky Bluebird*. These records still capture Keith Whitley at his best—probably better than anything else, including this well-meaning tribute, ever will.

—BOB ALLEN

Mickey Newbury *Nights When I Am Sane* Winter Harvest WH 3301

Mickey Newbury may well be the most enigmatic and elusive member of the Nashville Songwriter's Hall of



Fame. By the time he was inducted in 1980, Newbury had already written hits for Don Gibson ("Funny, Familiar, Forgotten Feelings"), Kenny Rogers ("Just Dropped In") and Jerry Lee Lewis ("She Even Woke Me Up to Say Goodbye") and had arranged "An American Trilogly," a hit for himself and a concert staple for Elvis Presley. By 1980, Newbury had released 11 albums and was hailed by critics and fellow songwriters as the equal of his good friends Kris Kristofferson and Townes Van Zandt, but he never enjoyed any success recording his own compositions.

Since 1980, Newbury has only released four albums. As a hard-to-classify country-folk-pop-cabaret singer who hates to tour, he often seemed more a rumor than an actual presence in the music industry. *Nights When I Am Sane* is his first release since '88, and ironically, this notorious recluse recorded it before a live audience at the Hermitage Ballroom in Nashville. The performance was filmed by four cameras and is also available as a home video from Winter Harvest.

The new recording is divided between seven of his best older songs and six new ones (plus a new version of the old standard, "Easy Street"). Because his earlier albums haven't resurfaced on CD (rumor has it the master tapes are lost), *Nights When I Am Sane* may have to serve as his introduction to a whole generation who may have heard of him but have never actually heard *him*. As

such, it fulfills the purpose admirably.

Newbury is famous for revisiting his old songs; the latest album contains his third recorded version of "Heaven Help the Child" and his fifth of "San Francisco Mabel Joy." This might sound like the desperate gesture of a songwriter whose well has run dry, but Newbury's new songs hold their own with their predecessors, and he continues to discover additional nuances in his old songs each time he tackles them. The arrangements on "Nights When I Am Sane" consist of nothing more than two acoustic guitars (Newbury's and Jack Williams'); Newbury's voice, much darker and smarter at age 54 than it was in his early 30's, has plenty of room to explore the nooks and crannies of these older songs.

"Heaven Help the Child," for example, uses Ernest Hemingway's life story to explore the feelings of a person separated from his home by more than miles. In this latest version, the emphasis has shifted from the burning desire to get back home to the stoic acceptance of permanent rootlessness, thus making it a very different story. Newbury's fifth take on "San Francisco Mabel Joy" is his best, for he now brings an inescapable fatefulness to this tale of the doomed-before-it-started romance between a Georgia farmboy and a California prostitute.

The six new songs rank with Newbury's best—and also with his most despairing. Most of them refer to former lovers remembered with a mixture of fondness and pain. "What Will I Do" is a slow, yodeling blues about the difficulty of falling asleep in a cold, empty bed when you can still remember a warmer, more crowded one. "East Kentucky," which compares a man fleeing the memory of a love gone wrong to a bluebird searching for shelter in a blizzard, has the deceiving simplicity of an ancient folk song.

Record Reviews

Best of all is the title track, a mesmerizing meditation on the thin line between love and hate, pleasure and pain, sanity and despair. In a gravelly baritone which refuses the temptations of self-pity or cheerful platitudes, Newbury describes how the road back from heart-break must travel through a stretch of agony. Few are the singer-songwriters who can evoke within the same song this inevitable torment and ultimate redemption as powerfully as Newbury does here.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Chet Atkins and Suzy Bogguss

Simpatico

Liberty C2-29606

This is one collaboration that can hardly be called surprising, considering the fact that Chet and Suzy have been guesting on each other's records for some time now. The two have a certain musical rapport that comes across on their records, and there's no question that rapport has deepened as time has gone by.

Not surprisingly, however, such an album is a showcase for both their strengths and weaknesses. Atkins, trying at age 70 to remain a contemporary force, remains at his best when he sticks to the playing styles that made his reputation in the 50's, any of which work as well today as they did back then. In those styles he sounds timeless—in contrast to the way he comes across playing the slick jazz fusion/new age muzak he stresses so determinedly to demonstrate that he's up with the times. Though Chet often denigrates his early playing, like it or not that work, particularly on records, remains the music that defines him.

Bogguss, for her part, debuted as a New Traditional singer and still does her best work in that field, being one of the few younger female artists who yodel. Unfortunately,



Jimmy Bowen, her Liberty producer, has diverted her from that noble path in favor of trying to move her into a kind of Trisha Yearwood-styled blandness. That move may sneak her past the short-sighted gatekeepers of country radio, but it doesn't fit her musically.

So, not surprisingly, the best moments this time result when both keep it basic, vocally and instrumentally. The finest moments are chestnuts like Jimmie Rodgers' "In the Jailhouse Now" (a 1955 hit for Webb Pierce) and Johnny Cash's "I Still Miss Someone," material with which they're both comfortable.

Newer material in the same vein also gives both artists the opportunity to shine. Bogguss does some of the best work she's ever done on the blues-drenched "Wives Don't Like Old Girlfriends." The churning "One More for the Road," a Bogguss-Atkins-Doug Crider original, works well, as does Pat Donohue's "This Is the Beginning" with its Tex-Mex arrangement. Throughout the album, Chet functions largely as a featured accompanist, sliding a few harmonies or vocal asides here and there, and anyone doubting he can still pick need only listen to his exciting work on these numbers.

Things turn for the worse when the songs turn back towards the fluffy 70's pop fare some call "New Country," such as the excruciatingly bad Michael Johnson-Jonie Beeson ballad, "When She Smiled at Him." "You Bring Out the Best in Me," "Two Shades of Blue" and "Forget About It" fall into the same category.



Skeptical? Check out "Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word," a string-laden mess written by two down-home 'billies, 70's popsters Elton John and Bernie Taupin. On such material, Bogguss quickly buries her own voice in Trisha/Ronstadt cliches while Chet efficiently regurgitates his note-perfect, soulless fusion licks.

I'm glad that Chet and Suzy did at least half a great album though it's depressing to hear them surrender the other half to Nashville's worst current instincts. Nonetheless, on the best moments it's good to hear them bridge the generation gap so successfully.

—RICH KIENZLE

Shenandoah

Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart

Liberty C2-31109

Shenandoah, whose sentimentalized, harmony-driven vision of life down in the country was epitomized by late 1980's and early 1990's hits like "The Church on Cumberland Road," "Next to You, Next to Me" and "Sunday in the South," is one of those mainstream bands which seldom startles yet seldom disappoints. They are neither as adventurous as Alabama has proven to be on its last few albums, nor as slick as high-energy newcomers like Diamond Rio.

Above all, Shenandoah's music tends to be insistently—at times even cloyingly—optimistic. Even their songs of heartbreak tend not to sound

bitter; and the loss of love, in their emotional lexicon, seldom means loss of innocence. And like Alabama, Shenandoah waves the flag for such fail-safe causes as true love, fidelity, honest work for honest pay and Mom's apple pie.

Like their last few albums, *Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart* is a predictably solid effort—alas a little too predictable. The band, as always, is in top form with its harmonies, even when undercut by less than spectacular song selections and droll arrangements from producer Don Cook. But what *Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart* lacks, and lacks most sorely, is the irrepressible exuberance that made songs like the aforementioned Number Ones such stand outs.

All is not lost, however. The title tune (written by Bill LaBounty and Rick Chudacoff) is a gem. On it Shenandoah's gifted lead singer, Marty Raybon, shines in a duet with Alison Krauss. (Krauss could sing the menu at Pizza Hut, and it will still come out sounding as wonderful as...as wonderful as Alison Krauss.) Raybon and the boys also find their groove on uptempo, tongue-in-cheek fare like Ronnie Dunn's and Dean Dillon's "Darned If I Don't (Danged If I Do)," a clever reworking of the old adage about being old enough to know better but too young to resist. They also serve up an intriguing vocal arrangement on Dennis Linde's "Heaven Bound" that almost transcends the song's trite lyrics.

Really, there are only two things missing from *Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart*—yet without them it's like being without the stars and moon. There are no exciting live-sounding tracks like those that made *Under the Kudzu*, Shenandoah's last album, so impressive and no great songs like "The Church on Cumberland Road" and "Next to You, Next to Me." Without these, Shenandoah is merely marking time.

—BOB ALLEN

On the surface it looks like any outdoor stage where fans push and shove to get close to their idol. But on closer inspection, the performer is Billy Ray Cyrus who thrives on the exchange as much as his fans.



BILLY RAY CYRUS Goes to the Fair

By Patrick Carr

Billy Ray gets at it right from the jump. Speaking fast and forcefully, "I think it's the best album I've ever recorded," he says about his new one, *Storm in the Heartland*. "I think it's one of the most versatile albums probably ever recorded in the history of man."

Wow. That rocks *me* back. Billy Ray, though, doesn't even blink. We're perched atop the rail of a racetrack at the Broward County Fair in Hallandale, Florida, with the Atlantic Ocean out beyond the community at our backs and a world of humanity in our faces—Billy Ray's concert crowd filling the stands, the backstage bustle of cops and techs and handlers—but his intensity is such that we could just as well be all alone together in some silent, intimate little space.

He plunges on. "I think that versatility is good. I think that anytime that you try to just limit yourself to one thing, you narrow the possibilities. I think that versatility is...that's what I'm all about. This album's more *me* than any album we've recorded yet. It's based on my Pentecostal background, my country background, my rhythm & blues background, my rock 'n' roll background. It's all right there, it's all right in that album, everything that I am is in that album."

He's traveling fast, and I'm already in his dust—I'm still back there thinking of versatile albums by artists other than Billy Ray Cyrus—but I'm ready when he stops abruptly and gives me the ask-me-another-question look. I agree with him that *Storm in the Heartland* is indeed very versatile, and better than his previous albums. I also note that it sounds a little looser. Does he agree?

"I think the whole feel of the album is a special album," he replies. "I think that with 14 songs on there, the whole spectrum of music that you cover. I mean it's got just everything. It may feel a little looser. I think there was less pressure on this al-

bum. *It Won't Be the Last* [his follow-up to the nine-plus million-selling *Some Gave All*] was made under huge amounts of pressure. This one here was just really more for the fun of it and just makin' music to be makin' music and doin' what me and my band love to do.

"Still, we wasn't goin' to let it out 'til we felt like it was right. I wanted this album not to have any holes in it. I wanted it to have something for everybody. I wanted it to have everything that country radio would need, all the things that all my listeners would need. Our fans don't have any age barriers, race barriers, sex barriers. Our music is people's music."

Okay. Now we've got answers for two of the questions that some of the people—my neighbor Debbie, Alma over at the bank, Steve my shooting buddy—have been asking about Billy Ray. The first, "What's he doing now?" gets a simple answer: He's out there promoting his third album, and despite both his own claim to universal appeal and the general public's impression that he fell off the planet shortly after "Achy Breaky" faded away, he is in reality a strong contender in the country market, nothing more and certainly nothing less.

The other question, from Debbie, is tougher: "Is he as conceited as he seems?"

Beats me. In the first three minutes of our interview he *has* displayed extraordinary grandiosity—"the history of man," "people's music"—but does that translate to conceit? What do you think?

Whatever the answer, Billy Ray is really surprising me. My impression of him, formed by print and TV features, has always been of a person as modest as his talent: While the boy would never come close to competing with Merle Haggard or even Garth Brooks as an artist, neither would he finish first in the big-head race. Some people found him offensive because, in Travis Tritt's deathless words, he was







"turning country music into an ass-wiggling contest," but otherwise he was cool, perhaps even cooler than most. Humble.

That isn't the man before me, though. In this fellow there's the heat of something special, that extra added ingredient you find in preachers, prophets and politicians of the charismatic kind. He's one of those people whose thing is fire: He's got it (or it's got him), and he *really* wants you to get it, too. Then you can all have something together, or change something, or go somewhere. You can even make your own world together, separate from the place outsiders live in.

None of that should have come as a surprise, really, given Billy Ray's story. There are, after all,

politicians and preachers in his bloodlines, and he does say that he bought his first guitar at the age of 20 because "I had a vision to make music, that music and my life could be used to be something positive in this world." Now, at 33, he says his mission is going well. "I'm doin' what I'm supposed to be doin', man. I hear all these stories about how the music affects people's lives and makes changes in people's lives, and I feel like I'm right on target for what I'm supposed to be doin'. I'm glad I traded in my catcher's mitt for a guitar [professional baseball being young Billy Ray's first target] 'cause this is my destiny."

"I hear all these stories about how the music affects people's lives... and I feel like I'm right on target."

Time is short—an hour has been promised, but only 20 minutes on the racetrack fence is being delivered—and so we go straight to the questions on my 'A' list.

"Billy Ray, you once said that you've lost love for music. Is that still true?"

"I've lost a lot of things. 'Some Gave All' is the very

definition of what I've given to be who I am. But nothing in this world comes easy and nothing comes for free, and the things in life which are worth the most are the things you work the hardest for, and definitely I've given every ounce of heart, body, mind and soul to get to this point. Now, though, I'm just enjoying—enjoying makin' the music, enjoying bein' with my family, bein' with the fans—and I think I've got a pretty good balance of all those things now, where before it was just all career. I've just vowed to myself I'm just going to enjoy bein' who I am, enjoy makin' my music and have a good time, love my family, love the Lord and count my blessings."

"Are you spending enough time with your kids?"

"Yeah. That's goin' pretty good. I'm makin' enough time for that. I mean, that's one thing that's not going to get away from me. I'm not going to miss those babies growin'. Every day they learn new tricks, every day they'll do something else that's a new thing, something funny. I'm not going to miss them babies growin' up. They grow fast. My little boy just learned the patty-cake, man. Eight months old now. That's a pretty big event."

"Sure is. So these days you get time by doing a lot of fly-in dates rather than traveling by bus, right?"

"Right. That helps."

Okay. Now I'm wondering about Billy Ray and the country music establishment: how he feels, for instance, about the fact that the CMA has been notably lacking in respect for his achievements, giving him only one award, its 1992 Song of the Year for "Achy Breaky."

You can see him bristle. "We sure earned that one, didn't we?" he says. "Other than that, when you're talkin' about an album that did as much as *Some Gave All*, and you look, and it didn't get *nothin'*! There again, man, the things that this music did, the boundaries that it crossed..."

He seems like he's finished, but he's not. "I know what the deal is," he adds. "And I know that *they* know, and they know that *I* know. *You* know. When you asked me that question and you smiled like that, you know what the deal is. Shoot, man. There again, I'm just proud of the music and what it's done, and I really don't need somebody to hand me a trophy and tell me that this music did something big. I could see that for myself."

I'm wondering if I *do* know what the deal is, exactly, but for some reason I don't request clarification. Instead I ask, "Were you always that way? Did you always get it about how things are?"

"Absolutely," he says. "I've always been very perceptive. I always knew what the deal was. I *always* knew. I knew when the whole deal was goin' down, every single bit of it. I just had to, you know, I had to look at people that had lived before me and gone through what I went through as far as that type of acknowledgment goes, and I just took it as a compliment."

I mention the names of some noted singers snubbed by the Nashville establishment over the years: Hank Williams, Hank Williams Jr., Johnny



Cash, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson..."

"Elvis," he adds. "Elvis. All of them, I mean, all of them. That's okay. I make my music for people that like it, and *that's* the deal." And as a capper on the subject of his detractors in the country music business, he notes that "those same people, they sure are accepting the benefits of what my music did for country music. They're sure out there tappin' into all those markets that 'Achy Breaky' opened up. I think that in itself kind of makes a little statement of its own." He's got a point there.

He gives me his ask-me-another-one stare. I scan the list. "Yeah. You were a wild kid. How wild?"

"I had a wildness. I'd say juvenile delinquent, vandal, hoodlum. But yet I always had a good heart and I always tried to be as good as I could be. I was kind of a, er, conservationist. I thought that I was Geronimo, and I tried to stop a lot of the progress in Flatwoods [Flatwoods, Kentucky, his home town]. Like where they'd go and tear down the woods and stuff, I tried to stop that where I could by, like, vandalizing. A lot of times I tried to vandalize their tractors and bulldozers by putting dirt in their gas tank and all this stuff to keep them from tearing down the woods and tearing down nature. But it was a losing battle."

"Was it just you alone, or a bunch of you?"

"Really me and my brother, we were the best at it. But I was a good kid at heart. I tried to do as many good things as I could."

"Were you into drugs?"

He thinks about that for a long moment. "I tried to just...In this society, how do you grow up and not see drugs? So I'd say I was just very much an average kid."

"So it was never a big problem for you?"

"No."

I'm looking for another essential question—the handlers are pressing, time's running out—when he comes back on that last point.

"Let me say this, though. I've battled the demons. I've battled the demons of alcohol. You make your life in a bar five nights, six night a week, you battle the demons. I'm just glad to say I lived through it. Keith Whitley probably kept me alive. Keith Whitley through his life saved mine."

"I was on the edge, no doubt about it, and Keith Whitley saved my life."

"You mean by dying an alcoholic death?"

"Yes. It was really through living, though. It wasn't through dying, it was through his life. The last time he was on the *Nashville Now* show, he said, 'Maybe there's some kid out there that's struggling, that's playing these bars and honky tonks, and thinks he needs that shot of whiskey before he gets up on stage. Well, I'm here to tell you that you don't need it.' And I felt like that he was talking straight to me, and he saved my life."

"Anything else you want to talk about?"

"Yeah. 'Enough Is Enough,' a song I wrote about child abuse, probably the most important song I've sang since 'Some Gave All.' 'Some Gave All' I feel like was a real important statement. It represented a time era [the Vietnam war] that needed an anthem, and I think it has become that anthem. Just like last night, a man that was driving the limousine in Nashville gave me the Purple Heart that his dad had won in World War I. He wanted me to have it. And you know, just those kind of gestures and those things: 'Some Gave All' means a lot to a lot of people, and I'm real proud of that song. I think 'Enough Is Enough' is that kind of song. It's a powerful social statement. I think the song



has an important message, and it sounds great on the radio. I love hearin' it played."

"Where did the song come from?"

"I'd always vowed that I was going to write a song about this little girl called Mary Magdalen Pitts that was murdered in eastern Kentucky in the late 1920's. I found out about that when I was a kid, and I went to her grave. This was before I bought a guitar, but I knew the day I went to her grave that some day I'd be able to tell her story, and that's why I'm tellin' you right now about Mary Magdalen Pitts. And I think that the song 'Enough Is Enough' has a way of adding a little meaning to her life, because perhaps through this song she can live and tell people her story."

"How old was she when she died?"

"One. She was killed by her stepfather and her mother, hung from the fireplace and mutilated with a hot poker."

My heart freezes when I hear that, and suddenly I find myself feeling the passion that probably drives



"I'm proud of what I've been through. I'm proud of where I've been, where I'm at and where I'm going," Billy Ray tells Patrick Carr.



Billy Ray has told me that “the most important part of the Billy Ray Cyrus show is the rapport, the rapport between myself, the band and the fans. I hope that’s what you will really concentrate on most, the rapport.”

I do that, and here’s what I see. A lot of what goes down is the usual deal: people moved by an untouchable figure, a professional entertainer, in ways they don’t allow themselves to be moved by people they *can* touch: people letting go, screaming and swooning and pleading; people in ecstasy, beyond themselves, some of them ready and willing to do or give anything. It’s wild in the crowd, really wild—but then again, it’s no wilder than I’ve seen it a couple of dozen times before, for everyone from Elvis and The Beatles to Garth Brooks and Vanilla Ice.

What’s different is the behavior of the central figure, particularly after the show itself. At the end of his performance, after his staged encore and his rabble-raising sortie into a contained, tightly policed section of his crowd, Billy Ray stays onstage for a good ten minutes after his band has left. He isn’t singing or talking (though his music is playing through his sound system); He’s teasing. As he has done at various points during his show, he begins to strip off his shirt, then stops at the crescendo of the screaming surging back at him from the women at his feet, and pulls the shirt back on. He slinks forward up the runway jutting from the stage and makes as if to bend down and give some lucky girl a kiss, then pulls away and trots back to the main body of the stage. He poses. He pouts. He wiggles his ass.

It’s very strange. Happening as it does without words or any other real contact between desirers and desiree, it has the flavor of something even less personal than its prototypes, the traditional female strip and the more contemporary, Chippendale’s-style male sex show. From the outside, in fact, it doesn’t feel at all like rapport. It feels like the opposite: control, manipulation, power-tripping; Billy Ray making them jump, and watching them do it, just because he can, and he likes it.

It probably feels very different from the inside, though. In the light of the fire it’s probably more like love or gratitude or maybe even respect, and definitely like inclusion; there’s belonging available here, big time. And probably, Billy Ray is doing what all sorts of other fans wish *their idols* would do (and more than a few idols probably wish they had the nerve to: blatant, prolonged crowd-basking must really be fun). Then too, the man *has* been sold from the start as Mr. Musical Beefcake, sort of a fevered-up cross between Michael Bolton and the Diet Coke dude, so he’s just doing his job. All the same, this aspect of Billy Ray’s act, and indeed his whole Pentecostally stripping, country-metal-rocking, goody-goody bad-boy, super-sincere, underdog-demagogue deal, *is* very weird.

My best guess, moreover, is that should the fickle spirits of country radio permit Mr. Cyrus to remain very visible among us for any substantial time, it’s likely to get even weirder. Billy Ray, I believe, has some serious potential. He’s scary, and I sorta like him. ■

On stage, he struts, he pouts, he teases, he poses, he cajoles and he lets go. Through it all, the crowd eats it up.

Billy Ray as he pursues his mission in life: as he does his bit for AIDS awareness, as he greets the crippled children, as he works at his various charities, as he writes his earnest songs of peace, love, patriotism and whatever other sometimes contradictory impulses move him. His work doesn’t offer much in the way of originality, subtlety, or intellectual depth, but it’s rich in emotion, and the emotion is honest. There’s no doubt whatsoever about that.

We talk a little more about Mary Magdalen Pitts and her mommy and stepdaddy, until someone tells Billy Ray that he has to stop, it’s time to record a Public Service Announcement. I solicit a final comment.

Referring to his decade of beating down doors in Nashville before getting his break from Mercury Records, I say, “It must feel pretty good to have had a goal like yours, and to have finally achieved it after so many years of struggle...”

He seems happy to respond. “I’m proud of what I’ve been through. I’m proud of where I’ve been, where I’m at, and where I’m goin’. I thank God that He allowed me to keep a piece of my sanity through this whole 33 years that I’ve been on this earth, and give me enough of it that I can enjoy who I am. I’m very proud. I was the one person

who was in these shoes through the whole trip, and I’ve seen the whole thing go down, from the day I bought the guitar and had a dream and a vision of sitting here talking to you right now. I could give you a big depressing scenario here of all the whole thing that I’ve witnessed and the abuses I’ve went through, but just understanding that I’ve done this for this long kind of says it. I’ve been to the fair and seen the bear.”

“Did you ever give up, even for just a while?”

“No. I would have never made it here if I would have give up. I burned all bridges and said that there’s no other way but through, and it was either do or die for me.”

I believe him. I think this man means every word he says.



Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

A Look at the Charts

Happy New Year to all CMSA members! I hope your holidays were all you expected them to be, and that the new year brings you peace and happiness. That said, I'd like to focus once again on country radio. We all know that country is the biggest format at radio right now. It's big business, and lots of money is at stake. We also know that country radio has all but given up on the people who built the format. The George Joneses, Tammy Wynettes, Willie Nelsons and Merle Haggards of the world—all of whom are still making valid, inspired records—just won't get played. And those are just the few "veterans" who haven't given up on recording. Even not-so-old artists like Emmylou Harris and Randy Travis are barely heard on country radio these days. Your letters indicate that this is true all over the country, and our writers have made the same gripe often enough. But, says radio, "Hot/New/Young Country" is what people want to hear,

and in order to compete, country radio has to take on a rock and pop mentality: out with the old and in with the new. Is that how it's done in other formats? A quick look at the *Billboard* charts indicates otherwise. On the R&B singles charts, for instance, one finds Barry White, Gladys Knight and Patti LaBelle with top hits. All of them are well over 40, and are still relevant to their audiences. Ditto for the album rock tracks chart: one finds Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, Eric Clapton, The Rolling Stones and numerous other veterans in the upper reaches of the chart. The adult contemporary chart lists long-time record makers like Elton John, The Four Seasons and Joe Cocker. And many of these names also appear on the pop singles charts. So then, if every other form of music can give airplay to its legends who are still making fine records (Barry White's new single, by the way, is awesome), why can't country? It appears that the format that was for years known as the most loyal is now the least.

Backstage with Alan Jackson

Sandra Toney is a CMSA member in Plymouth, Indiana. She's a freelance writer, and a fan of Alan Jackson. Meeting him backstage recently held special meaning for her.

His honky tonk tunes play on every country music station across America. They call out his name at many country music award shows. His videos blast across CMT practically every hour. He is a *major* country music celebrity! So, imagine my pleasant anxiety when I walked in a small, empty room and was approached by this very man, holding out his large, guitar-picking hand for a handshake, saying, "Hi. I'm Alan Jackson."

At a recent concert at the Fort Wayne Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne, Indiana, a backstage pass made all this possible for me. About a dozen of us were taken backstage to meet Mr. Jackson and get his autograph and photo. While we were nervously waiting, one of his people told us all, quite definitively, that we were allowed one photo and one autograph. He then handed out complimentary 8x10 photos of Alan for him to autograph. The whole process was very well organized and obviously planned well in advance. No room for deviation!

As a contributing writer at *Beat USA*, I had a slightly different agenda when I got into that room. Alan was the reason that I got into the music reviewing business in



Member favorite Alan Jackson.

the first place. My first music review was accepted at *Beat USA* for his *Honky Tonk Christmas* album. Listening to that album over and over really made me appreciate his unique style of music.

Once I was in the room, I shook his hand and introduced myself to him. And then (defiantly disobeying orders), instead of giving him the photo to sign, I decided to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for myself. I pulled out a copy of my review and asked him if he was interested in reading it. It was, of course, an excellent review with nothing but praise for his album. Not knowing if I was going to get thrown out for not following the instructions I had been given earlier, I held my breath awaiting his reply.

His answer was very gracious. He wanted to read my review and actually thanked me for writing it. Luckily I brought two copies—one for him to keep, and one for him to autograph. Sure, it would have been nice to have an autographed photo of Alan Jackson, but he was signing those by the dozen. What he gave me that night is something no one else on earth has. I have a copy of a published article I wrote signed by the actual star it was written about. For this night that I will never forget, I thank Alan Jackson. My cherished copy reads: "Thanks, Sandra. Love, Alan Jackson."

Sandra L. Toney
Plymouth, Indiana

In This Issue

- Reviews and Features
- Members' Top Ten Lists
- Uncle Art Satherley in Legends
- Collections and Readers Create

Editor: George Fletcher

Executive Editor: Helen Barnard

Art Director: Katheryn Gray



Spain's *Todo Country Espana* magazine.

Country Music in Spain

The U.S. isn't the only place where country music is coming on strong. Europeans have been tuning in to country music in increasing numbers of late, with more than a few publications springing up to cover the artists and music. One of the most interesting we've been receiving here is *Todo Country Espana*. Published in Madrid, Spain, the three-year-old Spanish-language magazine looks at both American country artists and local Spanish performers. Features cover both newcomers and veterans like George Jones. They also publish news from Nashville and charts from *Billboard* and CMT Europe. Also included in each issue is a caricature of a well-known country performer drawn by Jordi Guasch (a CMSA member whose drawings have also appeared in Readers Create). *Todo Country Espana es una revista buena.* —G.F.

David Allan Coe Records Again

Over the past few months, several members and letter writers have inquired about David Allan Coe, wondering if he's still recording, and where he is. Wonder no more: Tom Weaver, a CMSA member in Wilmington, Delaware, has the answer with his review of two new albums from Coe.

DAVID ALLAN COE

Standing Too Close to the Flame

(DAC 008)

Granny's Off Her Rocker

(DAC 009)

Coe, who ended his 13-year association with Columbia Records in 1987, has released two new albums on his own DAC label. These are the followups to his 1990 effort, the spotty *Songs for Sale*, a 20-song collection also on DAC.

Standing Too Close to the Flame has nine songs, clocks in under 28 minutes, and is mired in mediocrity until halfway through when the Southern boogie of "Desperate Man," a Coe-penned tune, leaps from the speakers. In it, Coe equates an unstable armed robber, a soon-to-be abandoned husband and himself in the music business. All are portrayed as desperate men in their own lives. "When a Fool Becomes a Man" is a heartwarming ballad about an adult growing up. In it a man changes his priorities from late-night partying to caring for his wife and children. "Revelation" is downright spooky as it recounts a near-death experience. The album closes with "Did You Know Elvis" (co-written by Coe and Jimmy Velvet), a humorous novelty song that never means The King.

Granny's Off Her Rocker features ten songs (all written or co-written by Coe) and gets started with the double-meaning title cut, which contains some fine steel guitar and fiddle. This track has all the ingredients for a hit single. "Rings Around Rosie" is another winner about giving someone time to heal their wounded heart before engaging in another relationship.

There's top-notch session work on this album, and it's never more evident than it is on the bluegrass "I'd Swear I Was in Heaven." Extra special kudos to the fiddle player on this cut. "Drink Canada Dry" is the type of hard-core honky tonk song sophisticated country radio wouldn't program today. That's a shame.

November 1994 Poll Results

Alan Jackson

Who I Am

Alan Jackson

"Livin' On Love"

Ten in a row now for Alan Jackson at the top of the album heap. His current album, *Who I Am*, is followed by Vince Gill's *When Love Finds You* in second and Travis Tritt's *Ten Feet Tall and Bulletproof* in third. Patty Loveless grabs fourth place with *When Fallen Angels Fly* and Brooks & Dunn take the fifth with *Waitin' On Sundown*.

In singles, Jackson's "Livin' On Love" nails first, while Mark Chesnutt takes second with "She Dreams." Your third favorite single is Patty Loveless' "I Try to Think About Elvis." Patty is coming on strong this time around.... In fourth is Pam Tillis with "When You Walk in the Room." And your fifth favorite single for the month is "Watermelon Crawl," the latest novelty single from Tracy Byrd.

Towards the end of the session, some tunes fall into the just average category, but overall this album is close to what David was recording during his earlier hit-making days. He still has something to say, and for the most part, it's worth a listen.

To obtain either of these albums, contact: The David Allan Coe Fan Club, P.O. Box 1387, Goodlettsville, Tennessee 37070. Include a SASE and they'll return ordering information.

Tom Weaver

Wilmington, Delaware



Helen Benning and her collage.

Fan Fond of Phelps

Member Helen M. Benning of Springfield, Ohio, is a big fan of Brother Phelps, and feels they don't get the attention they deserve. They inspired her artistic side.

I'm sending you a picture of a collage I made as a tribute to Brother Phelps, because I think so much of them. I've seen them in concert three times, and they do a fantastic show. I've also been lucky enough to meet them backstage twice. Ricky Lee and Doug are absolutely the nicest and most sincere guys you could ever meet. Because of the way they treated me, I was left with a special feeling that made me a Number One fan. They're great and really care about their fans. I hope you can use this in your excellent magazine.

Helen M. Benning
Springfield, Ohio

Attention All Members:

Several months back, a member wrote us a letter concerning his Gibson L-5 guitar. We've unfortunately lost track of your name and address, but would very much like to hear from you again. Please drop another line to Russell Barnard at *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880.

More Members' Favorites

The popular feature returns with another batch of your lists of favorite albums and singles.

TOP TEN ALBUMS

KAREN OAKLEY
Loves Park, Illinois

For all-around excellence:

Emmylou Harris
Roses in the Snow

Gram Parsons
Grievous Angel

Tony Rice Unit
Manzanita

California
Traveller

Emmylou Harris and The Nash Ramblers
At the Ryman

For virtuoso musicianship:

Dan Crary
Bluegrass Guitar
(guitar)

Mike Aldridge
Dobro
(dobro)

Doug Dillard
The Banjo Album
(banjo)

Sam Bush
Late as Usual
(mandolin)

Byron Berline
Jumping the Strings
(fiddle)

Also check out solo albums by any of the Strength in Numbers guys (Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas, Bela Fleck, Edgar Meyer and Mark O'Connor). Even the weird ones are usually worth it.

TOP TEN ALBUMS

PAT E. HICK
Rising Sun, Ohio

Waylon Jennings
Ol' Waylon

The Outlaw movement all started here, a great collection.

Randy Travis
Storms of Life
"On the Other Hand" and others started the New Traditional movement. A career collection.

Rodney Crowell
Diamonds and Dirt
Six Number Ones, including the classic, "After All This Time."

Merle Haggard
Songs I'll Always Sing
This 1977 collection features many Haggard standards, songs of life, love and loneliness.

Alabama
Feels So Right
The sophomore effort by the "artists of the decade" started the explosion.

Carlene Carter
I Fell in Love
A fresh collection of feel-good music to brighten any day.

Lynn Anderson
Greatest Hits
Contains the classic "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden" and others. The passion of her voice is legendary.

Willie Nelson and Family
Honeysuckle Rose
The classic soundtrack to the film of the same name. It's magic when you hear the music and visualize the film.

Alan Jackson
Here in the Real World
This is the first album from an artist who'll be around for a long time.

Garth Brooks
No Fences
Ten-million seller of songs of life and love.

**BAKER'S DOZEN:
1970-1993**

DAVID T. SANTILLANES
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Roger Miller
Golden Hits
Dang everybody that doesn't have this album.

John Prine
John Prine
The American Storyteller from Muhlenberg at his best.

The Flatlanders
More a Legend Than a Band
The boys from Lubbock, Texas, did it right a long time ago.

Jerry Jeff Walker
Viva Terlingua
It's a good night for singing in Luckenbach, Texas.

David Allan Coe
The Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy
The greatest singer/songwriter in country music.

Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter, Tompall Glaser
Wanted: The Outlaws
The first country album to be certified platinum. Enough said.

Merle Haggard
Songs I'll Always Sing
Songs I'll always listen to.

Moe Bandy
The Best of Moe Bandy
Rodeo, Cadillacs, cowboys, honky tonks, Hank Williams.

Tish Hinojosa
Culture Swing
Tex-Mex, country and folk, all in one great album.

Billy Joe Shaver
Tramp On Your Street
The old chunk of coal takes a ride on a fast train.

Nanci Griffith
Other Voices, Other Rooms
The best voices I've heard on one album.

Townes Van Zandt
Rear View Mirror
Everybody should have a copy of this album. Texas folk music at its best.

THE FEMALE SPECTRUM

LISA POWERS
Whitehall, Montana

Mary Chapin Carpenter
Shooting Straight in the Dark

Mary Chapin Carpenter
Come On Come On

Shawn Colvin
Fat City
Chapin's friends are cool, too.

Wynonna
Tell Me Why

Madonna
The Immaculate Collection
There are two ends to a spectrum!

Mary Chapin Carpenter
State of the Heart

Tanya Tucker
What Do I Do with Me
Her best work to date.

Tina Turner
Anything by her!

Rosanne Cash
Hits: 1979-1989

The Pretenders
The Singles
Okay, let the guys in a little bit.

Mary Chapin Carpenter
Hometown Girl
Start and end with the best!

PERSONAL TOP TEN

TOM TAYLOR
Cockeysville, Maryland

Mary Chapin Carpenter
Come On Come On

Rob Crosby
Solid Ground

The McCarters
The Gift

Scott McQuaig
Scott McQuaig

Anne Murray
Highly Prized Possession

Dave Loggins
One Way Ticket to Paradise

Skeeter Davis
The Hillbilly Singer

Sammy Kershaw
Haunted Heart

Dave Mallet
This Town

Honeytree
Pioneer

ELEVEN FAVORITES

MARGARET BARNETT
Rocky River, Ohio

Waylon Jennings
Full Circle

He is my greatest favorite, and I'd like to list everything he's done!

Conway Twitty
Final Touches

This was the last one, and was terrific.

Merle Haggard
5:01 Blues

Willie Nelson
Phases and Stages
An early concept album.

George Strait
Holding My Own

Guy Clark
All of his infrequent releases are fantastic.

Johnny Russell
Almost Alive
Nobody sings better than Johnny, and he writes also.

Alan Jackson
Don't Rock the Jukebox

Vince Gill
Pocket Full of Gold

John Prine
The Missing Years

Alison Krauss
I Know Who Holds Tomorrow
Alison is unique and wonderful.

Collecting the Magazine

Members help each other complete their magazine collections.

•For Sale: *Country Music Magazine*: Nov/Dec 1990-Sept/Oct 1991, Jan/Feb 1992-Nov/Dec 1992, Jan/Feb 1993-Nov/Dec 1993, Jan/Feb 1994-Sept/Oct 1994. *Music City News*: Oct. and Nov. 1990, Jan. and March, April and May, 1991. *The Journal*: Premier Collector's Edition to December, 1992, and the complete first two years. **Robert Brothers Sr., 141 Birnesser Dr., Beaver Falls, PA 15010.**

•For sale: country magazines: *Country Music*, *MCN*, *Country Fever*, *Country Weekly*, etc. Send 2 stamps with names of who you collect...four-page listing. Also, country albums, graded collectibles, 5,000+ catalog (5 stamps). Lists available: Reba, Dolly, collectible CD's and magazines (2 stamps each). Send requests SASE to: **Rick J. Cunningham 134 Berwick St., Berwick, ME 03901-2702.**

Information, Please

Please write each other directly about information or items listed. When corresponding, include SASE. We reserve the right to edit for space and style.

•Wanted: Vince Gill cassettes, *The Things That Matter* and *The Way Back Home*. Also looking for autographs and fan club items. Will pay reasonable price if in good condition. **Cheryl Mills, P.O. Box 680421, Houston, TX 77268.**

•For sale or trade: 2,000 mint country LP's, autographed photos, magazines, T-shirts and memorabilia. I collect CD's (full albums and singles), and radio shows on CD. Send SASE requesting list, with three stamps to: **Tom Weaver, 406 Winston Ave., Wilmington, DE 19804-1855.**

•Trading cards for sale or trade. Country Classic and Country Gold '93, and '92 Branson and Elvis, and Marilyn Monroe cards to trade. SASE to: **Trecia Floyd, R#2, Box 61-B3, Monticello, KY 42633.**

•Wanted: Mary Chapin Carpenter memorabilia (not CD's), and any articles. Also looking for the second and third issues of *Country Weekly Magazine*. **Lisa K. Powers, P.O. Box 39, 43 McCloud, Whitehall, MT 59759**

•Wanted: video tape of country music awards where Willie Nelson received a tribute by Kris Kristofferson. (from March or April, 1992) Also looking for Willie Nelson doll. Will pay. Call 800-785-6656, ask for Mary.

•For sale: press kits on various country artists, including Garth, Clint, Randy, Shelby, Dolly. Autographed 8x10's on various artists, Anne Murray tour books, matted photo autograph and radio shows. Wanted: Judd items. Serious Judds collector looking for Fan Club merchandise, fan club newsletters 1984-1985 and a couple from 1986 and 1987, foreign picture sleeves/recordings, colored vinyl, *Family Album Tourbook*, promo posters for LP's or tours, original issues of sheet music and any VHS recordings from 1984-1987. Send all details of items with price list w/SASE to: **Dana Stein, 345 E. 80th St., #10B, New York, NY 10021**

•Looking for fans of Garth Brooks from Europe, Asia, Australia, Canada and U.S. to sell or trade memorabilia. Also have memorabilia on many other artists to trade. **Anita Adkison, 11822 Varnell, Houston, TX 77039-6135.**

•For Sale: Dolly Parton albums, CD's, cassettes—*Girl Left Alone*, *Golden Favorites*, *Both Sides of*, *Just the Two of Us*, *Best Of*, *Honky Tonk Angels*, *Golden Hits*...lots more! **Jimmy Wallace, 913 S. Beech St., #10, Winnsboro, TX 75494.**

•Wanted: anything on Little Texas, including VHS tapes of TV appearances. Send SASE w/description & cost, will pay reasonable price. For sale: VHS tape, 25 minutes, Billy Ray Cyrus *Some Gave All*. Never opened. Best offer: **Sylvia Mayfield, 5802 Everhart, Apt. 7G, Corpus Christi, TX 78413.**

•K. T. Oslin fans! You've heard of the Die Hards. Would you like to join us? We share our expansive collections, pass on information on K.T.'s activities and relate stories. **Marilyn A. Hibb, P.O. Box 4106, Arlington Hts., IL 60006.**

•Wanted: looking for the record that contains the Elvis song, "Singing in the Chapel." **Thomas Lang, N. 4771 Glanders Rd., Black River Falls, WI 54615.**

•For sale: great shots of your favorite country artists. Lorie, Reba, Garth, Wy, Vince, Trisha, Clint, Martina, Doug Supernaw, and many more. Reasonably priced. Send SASE and list favorites. **Todd Fussy, Route 2, Box 153, Royalton, MN 56373-9588.**

•Wanted: anything concerning Wynonna. Concert photos, candids, or videos of her live performances. Will supply tape. Especially looking for a video copy of *Late Night with David Letterman w/ Wy*. **Isaac Brantner, S-83 County Rd. J, Durand, WI 54736-8305.**

•Wanted: Anything concerning George Strait. Articles, newsletters, Sept/Oct '93 magazine, videos, photos...would like to see a picture of Jennifer. Please send list and prices to: **Tina Snell, P.O. Box 54, Pitkin, LA 70656.**

•Wanted: VHS copy of Minnie Pearl's 50th Anniversary Special on TNN. Also, Dorothy Shay records (78's). Will pay for tapes and postage. **Mary R. Clevenger, 20620 E. Covell, Luther, OK 73054.**

•For sale: country albums and 45's. Old and new artists, including: Bob Wills, Hank Williams Sr. and Jr., Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, Homer & Jethro, Ray Price, Charley Pride, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Kitty Wells, Marty Robbins, Jim Reeves, (Conway Twitty, Ernest Tubbs, and many others. SASE w/2 stamps to: **Mary Barker, 306 Young St., Nocoona, TX 76255.**

•George Strait fans, help! Looking for pictures of his April 16th Murrefreesboro, TN, and Aug. 4th Indianapolis, IN, concerts. Will either borrow negatives, or pay for a set of reprints. Especially want pictures of the band. Also, looking for a tape of ABC's *In Concert* show from May 28, 1994. **Carolyn Banks, 10478 N. 500 W. Rd., Wheatfield, IN 46392.**

•Wanted: Garth items! CMA video 1990, or *Tonight Show*, Oct. '91. Also *Forbes Magazine* and state magazine *Oklahoma*, with Garth on covers. **Tonja Booher, 3111 W. National Rd., Dayton, OH 45414.**

•Wanted: *Oui Magazine* with Dottie West on the cover. Emmylou Harris 1981 videos: "Mr. Sandman," "I Don't Have to Crawl," and singles, "Back in Baby's Arms" and "My Blue Tears." Will pay or trade. **Michael Merandino, 94 Boston St., Salem, MA 01970-1421**

•Wanted: Hank Williams Sr. memorabilia, MGM 78 RPM #'s 12332 up, and any in the 300 series. **Bob Vogel, 80 Beaver Grade Rd., McKees Rocks, PA 15136.**

•Wanted: Charly McClain memorabilia from 1977 to '83, such as TV show *Chips Patrol* on VHS, candid photos, TV clips, interviews, posters, fan club, newsletters, concerts on VHS, and Large or X-Large T-shirts. Will pay reasonable price, and send blank video tapes. **Marc Taylor, 217 Starling Way, Hercules, CA 94547.**

•Wanted: good copy of *The Roots of Country: Celebrating the Ryman*. Also, rare items of Sawyer Brown...press kits, autographs, interviews on records, etc. **Heather R. Burgett, 85484 Jasper Park Rd., Pleasant Hill, OR 97455.**

•For sale: On stage photos of Dwight, Tanya, Pam, PATT, Martina, Toby, Doug, Little Texas, CRR, David Ball, Shelby Lynn, Kenny Chesney, Neil McCorty, Chris LeDoux, Willie, Joy White. Also magazines and LP's of your favorites. Reasonable prices. Send two .29 stamps for list. **Pam Loftis, 709 Tulip Circle, Gallatin, TN 37066.**

•Attention serious collectors: let our personalized Collectors Connection help with your collection of your favorite artist. SASE for details: **Harry R. Wells Jr., RR #1, Box 32A, Noble, IL 62868.**

•For sale: Pictures of Conway, taken in Jamestown, NY, about 12 yrs. ago. Also, early albums of Reba (*Heart to Heart*, etc...). Best offer or trade for anything on Jeannie Seely. **Jan Moss, 837 Prince St., Olean, NY 14760.**

•For sale: VHS six-hour tape, S/H \$25. Award shows (CMA, ACM, TNN, Song Writers), No Hats Tour, *Nashville Now* Anniversary, Alan, Garth, Dolly, Reba, Randy, Loretta. **June E. Miner 517 Edward Rd., Melbourne, FL 32904-7403.**

•For sale: concert and off-stage photos of all your favorite country performers, 1975-1994. Also have a large collection of LP's, posters, trading cards, and magazines. SASE for list. **Galen Duncan, 3517 Nursery Rd., Street, MD 21154.**

•Wanted: I designed navy & white crescent moon & stars boots for Lee Roy Parnell. Does anyone have pictures of him wearing these boots? **Lisa Sorrell, 1224 W. Logan, Guthrie, OK 73044.**

•Wanted: anything on Brooks & Dunn, Travis Tritt and Confederate RR, especially posters and concert photos. Will pay reasonable price. **Jennifer Weaver, P.O. Box 325 Tate, GA 30177-0325.**

•Wanted: Anything and everything on John Michael Montgomery. I have photos to trade, or will buy yours. Also collect photos of all country stars. Looking for Fan Fair photos also. **Terri Jennings, 20-C Airport Rd., Freedom, CA 95019.**

•For sale: Close-up concert photos of Billy Dean, Martina McBride, Joe Diffie, Carlene Carter, Tanya, Reba and many more. SASE for list and photocopies of your favorite artist. **Richard D. Moore, 20 Maple St., Hopedale, MA 01747.**

•For sale: Two photos of Travis Tritt and one photo of Travis with his band. One XL Travis Tritt official fan club member T-shirt. Also, six old Travis Tritt fan club newsletters from the summer of 1991 to the fall of 1992. Willing to trade for anything on The Judds or Wynonna. **Ginger Davenport, 5160 Rice Rd., Apt. 351, Antioch, TN 37013.**

•Wanted: VHS tapes of Dwight Yoakam movie, *Roswell*. Also tape of Pay-Per-View Mark Chesnutt concert from Houston Rodeo, No Hats Tour and the two episodes of *Matlock* with Randy Travis. Also looking for the first two issues of *Country Weekly* and the issue with Hal Ketchum on cover. **Beverly Sheffer, 716 B.N. Jackson St., Arlington, VA 22201**

•Wanted: Little Texas TV appearances. Also interested in any close-up photos of them, especially Fan Fair, or the Fan Club Breakfast Cruise. Will supply VHS tape. **Carolyn Shepherd, W3745 Wilson School Rd., White Lake, WI 54491**

•For sale: Keith Whitley merchandise. Including T-shirts, hats, photos, rare video and audio recordings. If interested in merchandise and/or joining his fan club: **Troy Elder—Keith Whitley Rep., 596 East 2nd St., Chillicothe, OH 45601**

•Wanted: Merle Haggard cassette, *The Way I Am* (MCAC 1681), which contains the song "It Makes No Difference Now." I will send blank tape or pay reasonable price for the original. **Virginia Nowell, P.O. Box 4005, Alamogordo, NM 88311**

•Wanted: anything on Dwight Yoakam. Especially looking for a VHS copy of the *Whoopi Goldberg Show* with Dwight as a guest. Also, a copy of this past year's Grammy Awards. Will pay or provide blank tape. **Rebecca Freeman, 1530 E. Chesterfield, Ferndale, MI 48220.**

•Wanted: photos of George Strait, Clay Walker, Reba, **Angie Horsley, 1123 N. Center, Arlington, TX 76011**

•I have a few articles on Alan Jackson, Clint, Tammy, Brooks & Dunn, Dwight, Aaron Tippin and more. Would like to trade for anything on Loretta, Conway or Tracy Lawrence. **Thelma Johnson, Rt. 4, Box 284, Corinth, MS 38834.**

•Wanted: lifsize or table-top figures of Lorrie Morgan, Faith Hill, Pam Tillis advertising new albums. For sale: sets of country cards ACM, CMA, featuring stars such as Tracy Lawrence, Sawyer Brown (together & separately), Wanda Jackson, Oak Ridge Boys (together/separately) and others. **David Berens, 1000 Orkana, Topeka, KS 66604.**

•To sell: on/offstage close-ups. Most new/old country stars in LA, NY, etc. No lists (over a million poses). Send your want lists & SASE. **Nancy, 506 Windermere, Interlaken, NJ 07712.**

•For sale: Dolly Parton memorabilia collection, including picture disc, 45's and several 8x10's. Many items autographed. SASE for list to **Stacey Sorensen, Route 2, Box 336, Menomonie, WI 57451**

Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail. *Pen Pals* is a means of introducing CMAA members who wish to correspond. It is not a "personals" column. Physical descriptions and requests for romance will not be printed. We also reserve the right to edit for space and style. Parent's permission required for those 16 and under.

•Hi, y'all. Lost track with Pen Pals due to temporary move to KY. Back in NY now. Looking for new pen pals. Adults only, please. I write, sing, breathe country. Love outdoors, camping, biking, fishing, gardening etc. Love Patsy Cline, George Strait, Randy Travis and more. I'm 53, a "young country" rebel. **Ms. Cher Ann**

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF THE MONTH

VINCE GILL

Facts Update

Personal Data

Given Name: Vincent Grant Gill
Birthdate: April 12, 1957
Birthplace: Norman, Oklahoma
Family: Wife Janis; daughter Jenifer; father Stan; mother Jerene; sister Gina
Hobbies: Golf, basketball
Favorite Film: *Lady Sings the Blues*

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'3"
Weight: 190
Color eyes: Hazel
Color hair: Brown

Recording Career

Record label: MCA Records, 1514 South Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

Albums	Release Date
<i>Turn Me Loose (RCA)</i>	1984
<i>The Things That Matter (RCA)</i>	1985
<i>The Way Back Home (RCA)</i>	1987
<i>Best of Vince Gill (RCA)</i>	1989*
<i>When I Call Your Name (MCA)</i>	1989**
<i>Pocket Full of Gold (MCA)</i>	1991**
<i>I Never Knew Lonely (Greatest Hits) (RCA)</i>	1992*
<i>I Still Believe in You (MCA)</i>	1992**
<i>Let There Be Peace on Earth (Christmas)</i>	1993
<i>When Love Finds You</i>	1994**

*Gold album, 500,000 sold. **Platinum album, 1,000,000 sold.

Awards Highlights

Grammy Awards:
1993: Best Country Instrumental Performance (Collaboration with Asleep at the Wheel for "Red Wing")
1992: Best Country Performance, Male (*I Still Believe in You* album)/Best Country Song ("I Still Believe in You")
1991: Best Country Vocal Collaboration (for "Restless" with Steve Wariner and Ricky Skaggs from the *Mark O'Connor and The New Nashville Cats* album)
1990: Best Country Vocal Performance, Male (for "When I Call Your Name")



CMA Awards:

1993: Entertainer of the Year/Album of the Year (*I Still Believe in You*)/Song of the Year ("I Still Believe in You")/Male Vocalist of the Year/Vocal Event of the Year (with George Jones and others for "I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair")
1992: Male Vocalist of the Year/Song of the Year ("Look at Us")
1991: Male Vocalist of the Year/Song of the Year ("When I Call Your Name")/Vocal Event of the Year (with Mark O'Connor and The New Nashville Cats)
1990: Single of the Year ("When I Call Your Name")

ACM Awards:

1993: Top Male Vocalist
1992: Song of the Year ("I Still Believe in You")/Top Male Vocalist of the Year
1984: ACM New Male Vocalist of the Year

Selected BMI Awards:

1993: (Most performed songs): "I Still Believe in You," "Don't Let Our Love Start Slippin' Away," "Take Your Memory With You"
1992: Songwriter of the Year

Charity and Benefit Events

T.J. Martell Foundation
The Vinny Pro-Celebrity Golf Invitational (Junior Golf in Tennessee)
The Ear Foundation
Belmont College
Make a Wish Foundation
Lose Your Blues (Perry Ellis promotion/ National Coalition for the Homeless)
Easter Seals
Feed the Children (Midwest Flood Relief)
Sara Lee Classic
Mercy Homes
Baptist Hospital, Nashville
Walden Pond Project (Rain Forest Fund) with The Eagles and others
The Jimmy Everest Cancer Center Special Care (Children's Disabilities)
Pregnancy Crisis Center (Nashville)

Special Honors:

1993: Minnie Pearl Award
1993: Nashville Symphony's Harmony Award

RHETT AKINS

"I don't know if the world is ready for this boy. My prediction is Rhett Akins is going to be hotter than Georgia asphalt in the middle of July. He's refreshing and he's a natural."

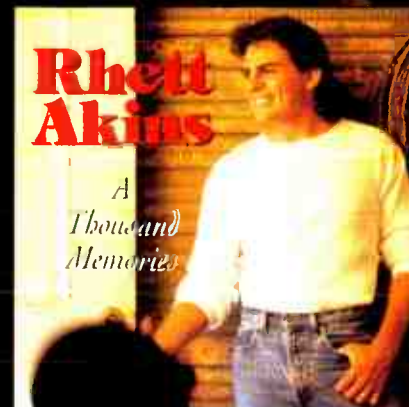
-Rhubarb Jones, WYAY-Atlanta

"It's been a while since such high expectations were placed on a debut artist, and Akins has the goods."

-Billboard

A Thousand Memories

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COUNTRYMUSIC



VINCE GILL

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1995

Charron, 276 Manchester Rd., #59, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603.

•An interesting, personable (and modest) 48-year-old guy, widowed. I've been lucky enough to lead a fascinating life in country music, broadcasting news. Would love to write some ladies. I'm working on a travel book and would especially like to hear about fascinating, little-known places to visit in the South. **Don Baird, 2604 Midway Rd., Decatur, GA 30030.**

•Country gals: I'm 41 and single, so don't pass me by. I'm a country man who loves most all country music! Just to name a few: Reba, Tammy and Tanya, and many more. It's sad to say that I'm presently incarcerated, but we all make mistakes. I love kids, long walks in the woods and horseback riding. I collect stamps to pass time. So country ladies, fill my mailbox. Will answer all. **Donny Davidson #196-7790, P.O. Box 511, Orient, OH 43216.**

•I'm an 18-year-old single woman who loves country music, especially Travis Tritt, Tracy Byrd, Reba and Linda Davis. Will answer all who write. I'd like to stay between the ages of 17-30. **Crystal Burtworth, P.O. Box 439, Springville, UT 84663-0439.**

•I'm 46, married and mother of three, all big country fans. Favorites are Suzy Bogguss, Lorrie, Vince, JMM and Little Texas and others. I like to do crafts, including cross-stitch, plastic canvas, crocheting, and I make T-shirts by transferring pictures to them. I like to watch CMT and TNN. Would like to hear from anyone, especially anyone in Tennessee, who may have ties or knowledge of any Borings or Potters to help with my family research. Also have two children, 15-year-old male and 9-year-old female who would like pen pals, so anyone who has children write. No inmates, please. **Dianne Tate, 112 Sixth St., Waynesville, NC 28786.**

•Hi, I'm 24 years old and single. My all-time country faves are Alan Jackson, George Strait, BRC, Reba, Clay Walker and more. I enjoy movies, concerts, writing letters and more. Will try to answer all who write. **Sharon Wilson, Rt. 4, Box 168, Brewton, AL 36426.**

•I would like to hear from pen pals of all ages. I'm a female, birthday February 9, 1936. I am also a widow. I am a country fan. I like Dolly, Reba, Randy Travis, Johnny Cash, George Jones, Billy Ray Cyrus, etc. I love animals, music, dancing and going to shows. I will be very happy to start hearing from the from all over the countryside. **Malinda Rivers, 35 Boston Ave., Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada P6B3J5.**

•Country gentleman, university educated, fit, but make no crow about it. However, am currently serving a short incarceration for business crime. If this doesn't bother you, would like to hear from those ladies 21 and up with a love for the heart of country music as best demonstrated by Reba, Lorrie, Faith, Patsy, etc. **James Edwards #862604, P.O. Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46360.**

•Hi, I'm age 47 and married. I love country music. Favorites: Alan Jackson, Reba, Vince, Brooks & Dunn, Travis Tritt, Tanya and a lot more. I also enjoy reading, fishing, working in our garden, canning, walking on the beach. Enjoy

meeting new friends, so drop me a note. **Linda C. Mills, 3702 Eagle Ln., Panama City, FL 32404-2029.**

•I am an inmate. I made a mistake and am now paying for it. I have less than two years left. I would really like to correspond with anyone who loves country music as I do. I am 47 years old, divorced and a grandpa. I love Patsy, Hank, Hank Jr., Confederate Railroad, horses, dancing, working hard and writing letters. Answer all. **Larry Neilsch, #21726 A-Block, Box 14, Boise, ID 83707.**

•Hello there! I'm 37 years old. I'm a bonafide country music fan all the way! I'm in Tracy Lawrence's fan club and love Tim McGraw, Garth, Travis Tritt, etc. Females are Reba, Pam Tillis, Dolly. I collect all country music magazines, have 8-tracks on Elvis, Dolly Parton. Will answer all letters. **Shirley Martinez, P.O. Box 985, Quinlan, TX 75474.**

•Hi, I'm a 22-year-old single female. Love country music, dancing and singing. Favorites include Reba, John Michael, Doug Supernaw, to name a few. Would love to hear from both males and females between 20-30 years of age. Will answer all. Please, no inmates. **Lou Ann Wright, 2604 Holland Rd., Lot 8, Suffolk, VA 23432.**

•Hi, I'm 19 years old and love country music. Alan Jackson and Doug Stone are from my hometown. I really like Collin Raye and Garth Brooks. I collect comic books and baseball cards, adore animals and have many other interests. I'm a devoted pen pal and will answer all. Photo gets mine. **Kari Boettcher, 190 Ebenezer Dr., Newnan, GA 30265.**

•Hey! I'm a 22-year-old college girl looking for friendly conversation. Love to meet new people, especially country fans—a rarity out here. I enjoy traditional twang as well as new country. Favorites include John Anderson, Hank Jr., Willie, the late C.T., Alan, Aaron, Randy and Reba. I like bicycling, watching movies and just plain listening to country while talking and dancing. If I caught your attention, drop me a line. **Natalie M., 8048 NW Tenth Ct., Plantation, FL 33322.**

•Hello, I would love to have some pen pal friends like you. I am 30 years young but feel like 20. I like Stephen King novels, crocheting afghans, miniature golf, letter writing and much more. I love just about every country artist. Favorites are Billy Ray, Confederate Railroad and Alabama. Let me warn you, I'm not a Garth Brooks fan. If you are between the ages of 9 to 100, I would love to hear from you. Both boys and girls are welcome to write. If there are any of my old pen pals out there from when I was 16 (they knew me as Lisa), I would ask them to please drop me a line. Please no inmates or chain mail. **Elizabeth A. Zabinsky, P.O. Box 9706L5, Ypsilanti, MI 48197.**

•Hello, I'm 34, single and have enjoyed country music since I was a child and "when country wasn't cool," also folk and easy listening. Wish to hear from the ladies only from all over the USA, but mainly in the Great Lakes area. Inmates, solicitors will not be answered. **Darell Williams, 417 E. Lincoln Ave., Reed City, MI 49677-1250.**

•Hi from America's Dairyland! I'm a 42-year-old woman seeking pen pals in

other countries. My interests include rodeoing, travel and gardening. I enjoy the older country singers—Owens, Haggard, Robbins, etc. No inmates, please. **Jan Genske, 1818 Helene #4, Madison, WI 53711**

•Hi to all. I'm a 22-year-old single female who just loves country music. Some favorites include Reba, Mark Chesnutt, Tracy Lawrence, Vince Gill plus lots more. Would love to hear from both guys and girls, 18 and older. Will try to answer all. No inmates or chain letters, please. **Marnie Frank, Box 185, Ear Falls, Ontario POVHO, Canada.**

•I'm a 50-year-old widow. I am looking for some new pen pals to add to my list. I hope that you will consent to becoming a new friend. I have five sons, four stepchildren, eleven grandkids and one great grandchild on the way. I collect cassettes, recipes and movies. I like to garden, read, fish, etc., and I am an avid John Wayne fan. I do some volunteer work with the marching band at our local high school. I just plain enjoy being alive and being around young people when I can. Hope to hear from some soon. **Joyce Burrough, 858 Orville, Kansas City, KS 66101**

•Hi, I am a 22-year-old single country boy looking to make friends. Love anything country. NASCAR, rodeos, outdoors, animals, photography, writing letters, classic rock, custom vehicles and just plain having fun. Make this country boy happy and drop him a line or two. Will write all who write me. **Joey West, 411 W. 13th Street, Laurel, MS 39440.**

•Hi from New Hampshire! I'm new to country music and eagerly looking for friends to write. My two favorites are Sammy Kershaw and Michelle Wright. Besides country music I enjoy all sports like baseball, basketball, hockey and NASCAR. Please write and I'll write back. **Lisa M. Morse, 4 Essex Ave., Hudson, NH 03051**

•Hello, I am a 32-year-old country music lover. I'm presently incarcerated but hope for release soon. I would like to hear from anyone interested in writing. Some interests include traveling, country concerts, outdoor sports and motorcycles. Will answer all. **John Street 892438, P.O. Box 1111-WVCI, Carlisle, IN 47838.**

•Hello, I'm a 27-year-old single male who loves country music, playing drums, writing poetry and music, dancing, boating, horseback riding, camping, traveling, sharing quiet talks, long walks, sunsets and bodies of water. I'd like to hear from anyone, and will answer all who write. **Charles Street, Wabash Valley Correctional Institute, P.O. Box 1111, #854769, Carlisle, IN 47838.**

•Hello, country gals. Don't pass me by. I'm a country man, 33, who just loves most all country music and some old soft rock. Just a few favorites: Tammy, Reba, Tanya, Garth and many more. Yes, I'm at the lowest part of my life, but we all make mistakes. I'm presently incarcerated. I love walks and horseback riding. Will answer all. **Jeff Talbott #184-864, P.O. Box 56, Lebanon, OH 45036.**

•Would like to hear from country fans, male/female, any age with view to exchange news, views and anything else to make this world a better place for the next generation of country fans. I'm in late 50's and for 30 years was in the coun-

try music business, met many of the old-timers (E. Tubb/M. Robbins/T. Ritter/G. Jones, etc.), but also like many of the newcomers. All mail replied to. **Mr. A. Griebler, 23D Lawrie Park Rd., Sydenham, London SE26 6DP, UK.**

•Hello. I'm a 24-year-old single female who loves country and race cars. Some favorites are Neal McCoy, Travis Tritt, Little Texas, Tracy Lawrence and Confederate Railroad to name a few. Looking for pen pals ages 22-31 (no inmates) to correspond with. **Jennifer L. Barrett, 526 Hwy 246 E, Cove, AR 71937.**

•This Jewish cowgirl would like to hear from any Jewish cowboys 27-37, especially from Maine and Alaska, who enjoy country and folk, from Reba to Loretta to Chapin to honky tonk. **Leslie Beth Green, 330 Parkview Dr., Phoenixville, PA 19460.**

•I am 25 years old and single. My favorite country singers are: Tracy Lawrence, Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw, Little Texas, Toby Keith, Aaron Tippin and many others. I would like to write to all you people in the military. Will write to anyone who is 24 years and older. **Suzanne Vieaux, 8290 Federal Blvd. #66, Westminster, CO 80030.**

•Howdy, I'm a 27-year-old college student, single country guy. I really enjoy country music. Some of my favorites are: Garth Brooks, Clay Walker, Randy Travis, Alan Jackson, John Michael Montgomery to name a few. Hobbies include: rodeos, ranching, racquetball, photography, tennis, bicycling, running, the outdoors, traveling, etc. I would like to hear from male and female fans of all ages with similar interests. Will answer all. **Claude J. Smasal, 12959 Old Corpus Christi Rd., Elmendorf, TX 78112-9601.**

•This 36-year-old married woman would love to have pen pals of all ages (sorry, no inmates please). My favorites are: Reba McEntire, Brooks & Dunn, Aaron Tippin, Waylon Jennings plus a whole lot more. Who are yours? Be sure to write me now. **Terri Dralla, Sunset Acres #20, Schuyler, NE 68661**

•Hi, I am in prison. I made mistakes. I am 41 years old. I love country music, animals, race cars and horses. Age, I don't care. I'll write to all ladies. **Robert J. Spears Jr., A-East-Wasatch, 20884-R 116, P.O. Box 250, Drape, UT 84020.**

•Single, 32-year-old country gentleman would like to hear from single ladies from 18 to 45 from all 50 states, Canada, England and all branches of the military and Australia. Hobbies are sports, traveling, the beach, the outdoors and more. Favorites are Asleep at the Wheel, Patty Loveless, Tim McGraw, John Michael Montgomery and more. Please send photo. Will answer all. No prisoners, please. **Mark McFadden, 3229 Agate Dr., Santa Clara, CA 95051-1107.**

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By Rich Kienzle

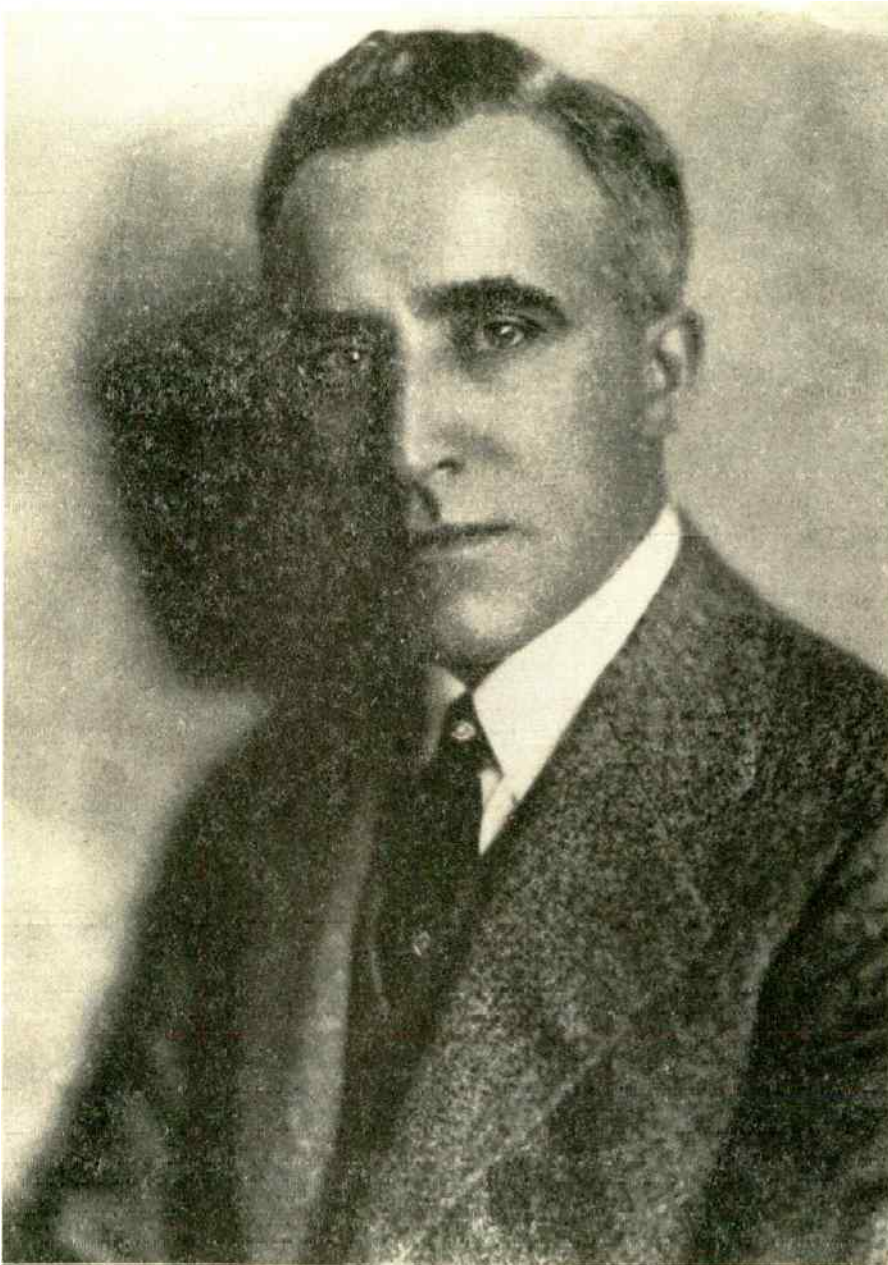
In 1938, Hank Penny was in Atlanta leading The Radio Cowboys, one of the few Western swing bands operating in the Southeast. Hoping to record for the American Recording Company, Penny made some records of the band at their home base, WSB Radio, to send to a New York record producer he knew about, hoping to land a contract. Heading for the Atlanta post office in the band's car with their name emblazoned on the side, the bandleader parked in downtown Atlanta and stopped to get a haircut. When he returned, he found a dapper Englishman standing by the car. The gentleman asked if Penny "knew these people." Penny introduced himself. "This is rather strange," said Satherley. "I came all the way to Atlanta to talk to Hank Penny about making records. My name is Art Satherley."

"You think that's strange," Penny responded, "here's your mail," he said as he handed Satherley the recordings.

British-born Arthur E. Satherley discovered and recorded some of the greatest country artists of all time. The names say it all: Bob Wills' "New San Antonio Rose," Gene Autry's "Back in the Saddle Again" and "You Are My Sunshine," "Great Speckled Bird" by Roy Acuff, "Blue Moon of Kentucky" by Bill Monroe, Al Dexter's "Pistol Packin' Mama," Patsy Montana's "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart." Add to that Little Jimmy Dickens' "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed," Ted Daffan's "Born to Lose" and records by Hank Penny and The Radio Cowboys, Adolph Hofner, The Prairie Ramblers, The Hoosier Hot Shots, Bob Atcher and Bonnie Blue Eyes and many more. He also produced a number of the great blues musicians including Brownie McGhee and Big Bill Broonzy.

The idea of an educated, urbane Brit committing himself to the recording and promoting of music so far removed from his roots is not so uncommon today. In the 1920's it was virtually unheard of. Art Satherley wasn't afraid to champion such music, and to do so at a time when many looked down upon it. He never tried to be anything but what he was, but at the same time he rarely made the artists come to him. He went to them.

Satherley's style of production was light years away from the way current Nashville producers handle things. Hank Penny, who recorded for Satherley from



Art Satherley

A legendary producer, record company executive and Hall of Fame member, this British expatriate was an instrumental figure in moving country music into national prominence.

1938 through 1940, summed him up years later this way. "Uncle Art would bring talent in and let them do what they damn well pleased. The only thing he ever did is help you with anything you wanted to do. There were numbers of times that I would ask him, 'Do you think I ought to do it this way?' And he'd say, 'M'lud, don't ask me. You have to work to your fans.'" In the process, he produced a body of music that went far toward making country a major form of American music by the 1940's.

He was born October 19, 1889, in Bristol, England, and as a boy, loved British folk music and admired America's frontier image. In 1913, at age 23, he came here and never left. His first job in the States, at the Wisconsin Chair Company, had little to do with music. He did a little of everything, trying to get a handle on manufacturing American-style. When Thomas Edison bought the company, Satherley became his assistant secretary for a time. He later moved to Wisconsin Chair's new record company: Paramount Records. Paramount recorded many jazz and blues artists, and Satherley worked most of the jobs and wound up running the entire plant, until he became their roving talent scout.

He recorded a number of blues and hillbilly artists, and took ample flak when he initially tried to interest record distributors in primitive music that, to their ears, was little more than garbage. In the 1920's, the era of jazz, George Gershwin and Broadway musicals, the very idea that anyone wanted to hear the crude music of rural blacks and hillbillies, usually the butt of jokes, was ridiculous—to everyone but Satherley. He convinced enough people at Sears, Roebuck to sell them, and the sales figures were startling.

Later in the 20's he joined Plaza Music, owned by a movie company. That company purchased the American Recording Corporation, or ARC, which included the Columbia label. Satherley took over ARC's "Country Dance and Folk" recording activities, and returned to the road, discovering and recording black blues singers and hillbilly artists through the early 1930's. It wasn't easy. Portable recording equipment was not like today's miniature tape recorders. It took a lot of mechanical equipment, wax discs and adapting a variety of buildings into makeshift recording studios. In at least one instance he had to record Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys in oppressive heat with everyone in their underwear and fans blowing across blocks of ice. Still, he found location recording

worked better. When he signed The Carter Family in the mid-30's and brought them to New York, A.P. Carter became so caught up in starting at Manhattan's skyline that the session came to a halt. He hit his stride in mid-decade, signing Autry, Wills and Acuff, all of whom began selling a lot of records.

He wasn't so sure the first time he recorded Wills in Dallas in 1935. The Texas Playboys traveled there from their home base in Tulsa, and Satherley expected a hillbilly string band like others he'd recorded. Faced with a large band that included horns, drums and piano along with guitars and fiddles, he said he didn't need the horns. Wills replied he'd rather not record if he was going to be dictated to. As they started recording, Satherley stopped a take and chastised Bob for talking and hollering over top the music.

That did it. Wills told The Playboys to pack up. Satherley tried to calm him. "Bob Wills," the bandleader declared, "sings and hollers whenever he feels like it. If you want to accept that, Mr. Satherley, fine. If not, we're goin' home!" Satherley wisely backed off. After seeing strong sales figures for the first Wills records, Satherley rarely questioned the bandleader's judgment, though he personally preferred the fiddle aspects of The Playboys.

When the Columbia Broadcasting System purchased ARC in 1939, Satherley continued doing what he always did, though he now carried the title Vice President. He had enough clout to stand by artists even when they weren't selling on the hunch they had a hit in them. He'd started recording singer Al Dexter in 1936, and kept on with him even though few of his records sold. Finally, under pressure from his superiors to drop Dexter from the label, Satherley heard Dexter sing a new song called "Pistol Packin' Mama" and knew he had something special. He brought Dexter to Hollywood so he could record the song with Gene Autry's own smooth backup band. The song became one of the biggest hit records of World War II, making a star out of a singer who undoubtedly would have been dropped. When he produced Tex Ritter's "Rye Whiskey," he told the singer, "This is a hit. You'll never have to worry about money again."

Satherley's relationships with Wills (despite the early awkwardness) and Autry were particularly warm. It was he who named a Wills fiddle instrumental "San Antonio Rose." Wills gave him his longtime nickname of "Uncle Art." When the two reunited in 1945

after two years (a nationwide recording ban and Wills' brief Army service kept them from recording together), both Wills and Uncle Art celebrated by getting drunk. The session was unusable. Satherley also signed other Western singers such as Gene Autry sidekick Johnny Bond, Patsy Montana and Roy Rogers. Though he generally remained in the control room, when Bond recorded his 1951 hit drinking song, "Sick, Sober and Sorry," Satherley came into the studio and conducted the musicians as they sang the vocal chorus. As time went on, he grew more broadminded, signing Spade Cooley to Columbia even though his Western swing unit had a classical harp player. Satherley also picked up Bill Monroe at a period when Monroe was making some good music, producing all of his classic recordings with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs at the helm. He later angered Monroe by signing The Stanley Brothers to Columbia, which led to Monroe's departure for Decca.

Even modern country owes Satherley a debt. He signed smooth-voiced George Morgan in 1949, and discovered Lefty Frizzell for Columbia in 1950 and Marty Robbins in 1951, and produced their first sessions. Unfortunately, Columbia had a mandatory retirement age of 62 for everyone (except its then-chairman, William S. Paley) and with great reluctance, Satherley took his leave. His longtime assistant, Don Law, took his place, and in the 50's and 60's, produced some of Columbia's greatest country: everyone from Lefty and Marty to Cash, Carl Smith, Ray Price and The Statler Brothers. Law also became an architect of the Nashville Sound.

In retirement with his wife Harriet, Satherley kept a low profile. In 1971 he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Despite his advancing years, he remained in relatively good health, looking years younger than his age, living in Fountain Valley, California. He remained deeply proud of his legacy, and realizing that despite his good health, time was getting shorter, in 1982 he and longtime friend, former Fender Guitar executive Forrest White, secretly taped comments to accompany an anthology of some of the classic country hits he produced, to be released only after he died. He died February 10, 1986, at age 96. The recording was issued in 1991.

Albums Available

See For CMSA Members Only page.

Readers Create

Looking Back to See...

CMSA member Charles E. Coffee of Portsmouth, Ohio, has come up with this look at, in his words, "a lonely person thinking of how things are, and maybe how they could be, if only tomorrow could bring back yesterday."

If Only Tomorrow (Could Bring Back Yesterday)

They say you have my picture,
turned my face against the wall
And like our love, in time will fade away
There's nothing left for me now,
but memories to recall
If only tomorrow,
could bring back yesterday.

The happiness we used to know,
has drifted like the wind
There's nothing now, that I can do or say
I'm like a lonesome traveler,
alone without a friend
If only tomorrow,
could bring back yesterday.

Those happy days together,
we shared, dear, all alone
I'll just keep remembering every day
The love we built together,
to make a happy home
If only tomorrow,
could bring back yesterday.

Chorus:

If only tomorrow,
could bring back yesterday
And erase the things,
that seem to hurt us so,
If only tomorrow,
could bring back yesterday
Our hearts again,
would beat as one, I know.

—Charles E. Coffee

Singing Her Song

Italene Gaddis, a member in Medina, Washington, has been writing songs and poems for years. She performs her songs and plays autoharp at concerts throughout her local area. She's even recorded her



A Look at Alan

As evidenced by your Poll votes over the past couple of years, Alan Jackson is a CMSA member favorite. That's certainly true for 18-year-old Marcia A. Garcia, of Glendale, Arizona, who contributes this sketch of Jackson.

own album, and Seattle radio stations picked up on her topical tunes, "Seattle Traffic" and "Seattle Weather." Italene performs at local clubs, fairs, senior centers, schools and more.

Feelin' the Way I Do

How many people are lonesome tonight
Wishing they had someone to hold tight
How many people are blue;
Feelin' the way I do.

How many songs that are written are
sad
Telling about a love that's gone bad.
All of them singing the blues
Feeling the way I do.

How many days will it take to forget
It's been a thousand and I haven't yet
I just wonder if you
Are feeling the way I do.

How many times will it take till I learn
There's very few winners where love is
concerned

If you've loved and lost then you...
Are feelin' the way I do.

Feelin' the way I do
Lonesome hearted and blue
I'm sorry if you
Are feeling the way I do.

—Italene Gaddis



One Member's Take on Vince Gill

Tammy Frederiksen is a CMSA member in Portage, Wisconsin, and counts Vince Gill as one of her country music favorites. Gill's "I Never Knew Lonely" video inspired Tammy to do this acrylic painting. She says she's hoping to get the original signed by Vince: "I've been trying to get Mr. Gill to sign it. No luck yet, but I'm going to keep trying!" Tammy also says that she's a big fan of *Country Music Magazine*—perhaps even more so this month, with Vince in the centerfold!

THE CHEYENNE

BY FREDERIC REMINGTON

Racing the wind, crouched low as his horse's powerful body carries him forward with frightening speed, the determined Cheyenne brave heads into the hunt, his mighty spear poised to strike.

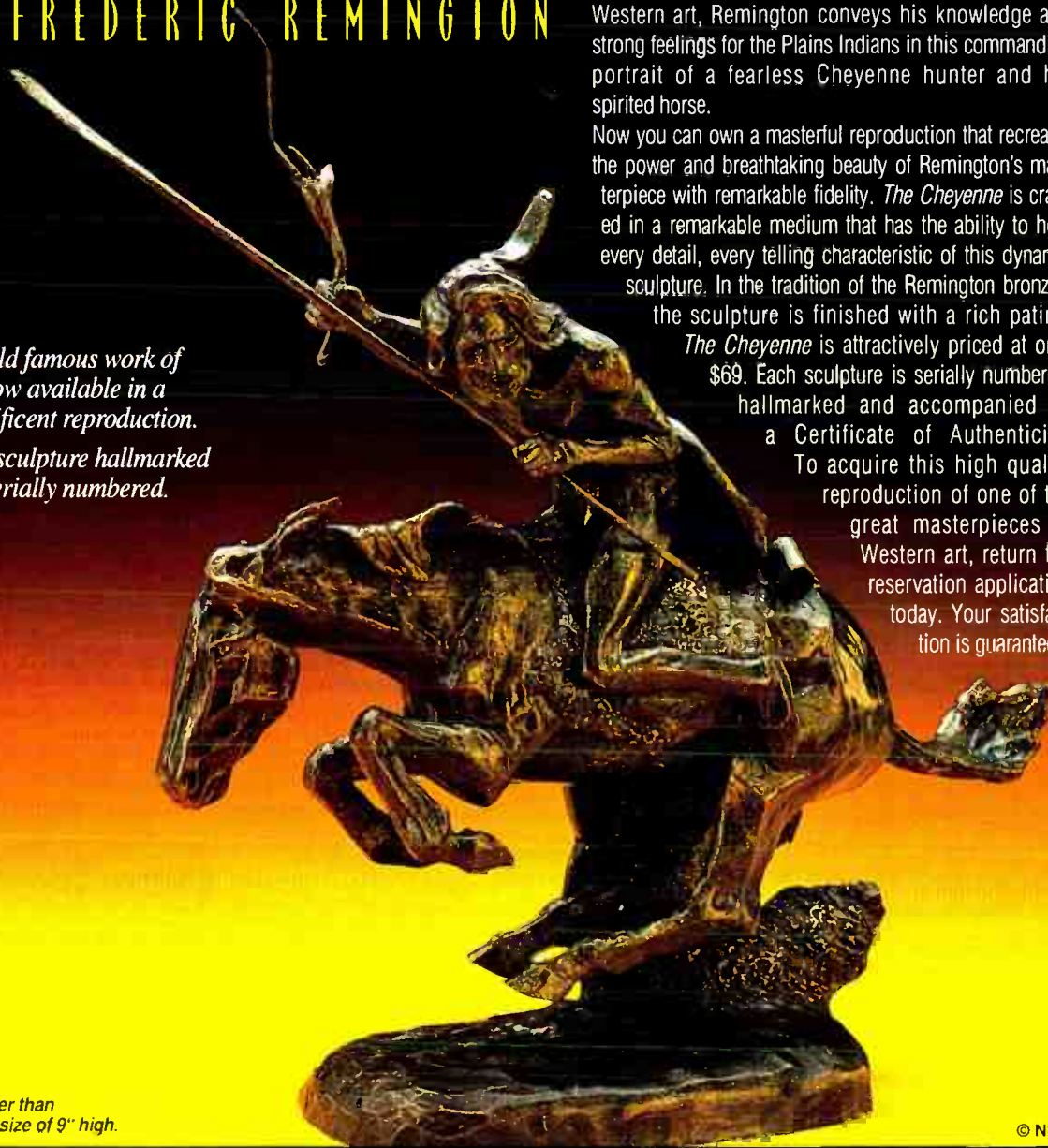
This dramatic moment on the Plains is captured with extraordinary realism in Frederic Remington's dynamic sculpture, "The Cheyenne." Acknowledged master of Western art, Remington conveys his knowledge and strong feelings for the Plains Indians in this commanding portrait of a fearless Cheyenne hunter and his spirited horse.

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Shown smaller than approximate size of 9" high.

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At a point in her career where she's more focused and more successful than ever, Pam Tillis knows what works for her. She's hoping to make it last.

Pam Tillis

Counts Down to Success

By John Morthland

How's this for a few days in the life of a contemporary country superstar? She plays a private party in Waco, Texas, then makes it back to her Dallas hotel room at a quarter to four that morning. At seven, she's up to catch a plane for Nashville, where she gathers up her 15-year-old son and their fishing poles and heads for a lake about an hour outside town. "just making time to spend with him, boy, I was carving it out." In less than 24 hours, she's back on her way into Nashville for a full day of assembly-line interviews, beginning at ten in the morning.

"I raised my son pretty much by myself, and I was thinking about this as I was driving into town this morning, because I knew I was going into a round of interviews, and one of the things everybody always asks me is, 'What took you so long?' But you know, it's really a difficult thing to be a single mom in show business," Pam Tillis, who is now married to ace songwriter Bob DiPiero, understates with a huge laugh. "I'm sure that slowed me down a bit. Not that I'd trade it for anything."

We are sitting in the writer's room of her manager's office, where Pam's portrait shares space on the walls with those of Lee Roy Parnell and Marty Brown. She is wearing blue jeans and a blouse the same color, along with a white hat, quite simple and relatively anonymous, except for a stunning pair of blue and white boots that command attention. It is a drab, overcast day early last summer, when *Sweetheart's Dance*, Pam's third album, is enjoying its tenth week in the Top Ten, but well before its continuing potency leads her to be

named the CMA's Female Vocalist of the Year.

Today, it's a pretty good bet that interviewers will have something more to ask Pam Tillis than what took her so long. But when you look at the timeline, it's at least somewhat apparent why so many might have asked the question to begin with.

After all, this is a 36-year-old woman who first began performing more than two decades ago, and began playing Songwriter's Night gigs at the Exit/Inn in Nashville when she was 16. "I went to lunch the other day with my son, and I was telling him that right around the corner was the little bar where I started when I was 15. I said, 'I wonder if they serve food in there so I could walk you in the door and show you where I started.' It's a little place called The Villager, down there in Hillsboro Village," she begins. "My son said, 'Mom, you were playing bars when you were 15, you weren't supposed to be in there,' and I said, 'Well, if they serve food or if you have permission from your parents, I don't know how it works, but somehow we got around it.'"

In college in Knoxville, she had a band with her boyfriend and others. "We thought it was more rock 'n' roll, but looking back on it now, it was real consistent with what's happening in radio today. The Eagles, Little Feat, that kind of stuff. So it feels now like I have gone full circle."

But first there were a couple more diversions. Being the daughter of Mel Tillis, of one of stone country music's top writers and singers from the 60's and 70's, and being at the very least an independent sort and at the most a "rebel without a pause," as she likes to put it, she entered the mu-



“You wait all your life for something to happen, and then when you’re not even trying...it just all fell into place. And then I suddenly felt like, here I’d been thinking I’ll just hang out for a year and not worry about a direction, but I’ve got a direction, darn it, I’m gonna make a country album.”



sic business as a pop artist, out of Nashville, back in 1984. One album on Warner Brothers went nowhere—“Nobody’s ever broke pop out of here, still. Isn’t that amazing? It’s not like there isn’t a lot of rock and pop talent here”—and so she switched to country with the same label. She had the first recording of “Five Minutes,” which likewise stiffed, though Lorrie Morgan then took the song to Number One in 1990. She couldn’t even click with her own first version (in 1985)

of “One of Those Things,” which she re-cut for a Top Ten hit in ’91 (it was released as the followup to her breakthrough single, “Maybe It Was Memphis”). Now, she can look back on those inexplicable failures with a shrug and a laugh and the mocking statement, “That’s show biz!” At the time, she wasn’t so sure.

She and Warners had just come to a mutual agreement to give up on each other, and she was looking for a

songwriting deal to keep her going, when she got a call from Paul Worley of Sony/Tree. He wanted to sign her to a publishing contract, an offer she snapped up immediately because “it meant I wouldn’t have to go knocking on doors, crawling on my hands and knees. But I guess you could say I had an ulterior motive, too, because I knew Paul’s production work, and he was saying maybe we could also do some kind of production deal on the side, he’d put some tapes together on me and we’d shop them. So I said okay, but I wasn’t in a big rush, I’d be happy to just chill out for a year, write some songs, figure out what I was doing.”

She was in the studio demo-ing one of her songs not that long afterwards when Worley phoned to say he’d gotten her a deal with Arista-Nashville, which at the time still existed only on paper. “You wait all your life for something to happen, and then when you’re not even trying...it just all fell into place. And then I suddenly felt like, here I’d been thinking I’ll just hang out for a year and not worry about a direction, but I’ve got a direction, darn it, I’m gonna make a country album,” she recalls, “I’m gonna make the most true-to-my-roots country album I can make.”

That was 1991’s *Put Yourself in My Place*, which yielded five hit singles, and spared a lot of people, including the artist herself, from continuing to wonder why it had taken so long. (It also did wonders for her sense of humor, natch.) “A couple things made me come back to country,” she notes. “One was that I started liking what I was hearing on the radio at that time. Number two, I thought I could contribute something, I felt like I could fit in. Number three, the pop thing just wasn’t happening out of here and number four”—this one brings on another big laugh—“I wasn’t gonna move my son to L.A., I wasn’t gonna leave here, I thought this was the best place for me to raise my child. So there was a lotta stuff that went into it.”

Today, Pam Tillis tends to talk like that, assigning her points a number and lining them out one by one. It’s very methodical, very organized, and it gives the impression that she has absolutely clear thoughts about what she is doing. But it took her a while to sort all that out. Having appeared in a local production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* during her fallow period, she was flirting with the idea of



EMIL BEARD

acting. She'd also been doing steady sessions work, demos and commercials. "I was really thinking seriously about getting into commercials, it's really big money, so I was spending a lot of time going to Chicago. Right before things broke for me, there was a couple little avenues I could have gone off on, little tangents I could have taken. But I think that that was the one thing I learned with my pop deal and all the different things I'd done. Going off on tangents gets you nowhere," she says. "It does in terms of life experiences, but what I lacked all those years was kind of a focus. Everybody told me that, but it's one thing to have people tell you that and another to figure it out for yourself.

"So when I left Warners, the new, focused me made a list of the ten worst mistakes I'd made with my career. Number one was not having a manager," she continues. "In my dad's day, you didn't need a manager; but country music was changing. I see lots of other artists as good as me not doing as well because they don't have the right team. Nobody gets to the top by themselves. I know that's what they always say, but it's so true; there's so many potholes in the road, and so many ways you can mess up."

But it helped at least as much that the music was changing as radically as the business. "It was just a new sound in country music, and a lot of people that I knew, my peers, we liked it, we got it. It starts with the songwriters, it starts with new sounds filtering into the music and radio opening up to new styles. A few years back, Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers came to town to play, and a month later you heard this Petty influence in all the new songs around town," she remembers. "People that liked to rock, that liked some of the influences from pop, we started thinking, let's take what's greatest about country music and infuse it with a little bit of energy, and it was just an idea that got into the air and everybody got into it. I always credit Dwight Yoakam, but Foster and Lloyd were making good records. Randy Travis was a shot of energy even though it was strictly traditional...It was just sheer luck for me, I've never been good at following trends, I just had to reach the same conclusion as everybody else kinda simultaneously."

Look at the evolution over her own three albums, climaxing with *Sweetheart's Dance*. "I think accidentally some really neat things happened on that first real country record. The second album kinda took a little bit of a left turn



Tillis is the CMA's current Female Vocalist of the Year.

stylistically—not that I think that's bad, I'm proud of that album. But I knew that there was some things, number one, that I hadn't accomplished on either one of those albums; number two, that I wanted to get back to things that had happened on the first album; and number three, there was things I knew that I'd done right on both albums, and I don't want to lose those," Pam explains.

"I knew I wanted to make a rockin' uptempo album—there's only two ballads on this album. I believe in ballads, don't get me wrong; ballads sell records. I like a big power ballad, I call them a moving ballad, it's like a ballad with a backbeat. 'Maybe It Was Memphis,' or 'Spilled Perfume' on the new one is kinda like that. But I wanted a high energy record like I like my show to be. That way when we went to put the show together, we wouldn't suddenly say we don't have anything uptempo for this slot; I wanted to make sure that never happened to me again, because I didn't want to have to resort to uptempo cover songs," she adds, going right back into a countdown.

"So that was number one. Number two, I really wanted it to be back to the country a little bit more, like the sound on the first one. And number three, the thing I did new on this album, I co-produced it. I was trying to move into a more unique sound, a more unique style. I wanted it to have a feminine stamp. Not that it couldn't rock and have

energy, but there's something about some of my favorite albums by female artists that's definitely got a feminine edge to it. A Bonnie Raitt record, that's a woman's record, a Wynonna Judd, a Mary Chapin Carpenter. There was something that was happening with some of the production on my records that wasn't totally supporting me vocally the way I wanted. I think we came closer this time just being a little less heavy-handed with the guitars and drums, and supporting the vocal. The production on the first two albums was that big, muscular, jumps-off-the-radio sound, like the sound of 'Don't Tell Me What to Do' and 'Maybe It Was Memphis,' and it was perfect, because at that point in my career I had to get people's attention. At this point, I feel like I've got their attention and can lighten up a bit, I don't have to beat people over the head with my music."

Those are clearly the words of a much more confident woman—yes, a woman with a strong sense of direction, even—and the feeling clearly rubbed off on the music, and on the people who vote on awards. Pam promises the next album "will be more me-heavy," meaning it will have more of her original songs on it. This last one turned out to be mostly by other writers, not so much by design as because she picked songs more carefully than ever, and did too good a job of it, winding up with "all these outside songs I felt I had to record because if I didn't, somebody else would, and I'd have to listen to them on the radio by another artist for the next 15 months."

But it's not like she doesn't have a few more items on her list of things to do. "There's not enough female producers in this town, so that interests me. I'd like to get successful enough that my name means something and I can use it to do some good works; I really admire Vince Gill for using his success in such a positive way. I think everybody wants to do...to me, a real motivating force is to do something that's timeless, to write a classic like a 'Green Green Grass of Home' or record an album like Willie Nelson's *Stardust*, just something that lasts forever. I haven't done that yet. I think my albums are gonna hold up well, but I don't think I've recorded my masterpiece. So that keeps me going, that pushes me, makes me stretch and grow as an artist and be the anxiety-ridden perfectionist that I am," Pam Tillis concludes, unable to resist mocking herself one last time. "I'd also like to buy a farm and have chickens and grow cabbage." ■

CLAY WALKER

A Work in Progress

BY GEORGE FLETCHER

“My goal in this business is to get it right the first time,” says Clay Walker, the latest Beaumont, Texas, native to come barreling out of that East Texas city and into the top of the country charts. And it appears that he *has* gotten it right, so far anyway. In a remarkable year, his debut single, “What’s It to You,” reached Number One, as did its follow-up, “Live Until I Die.” Add to that a Top Five (“Where Do I Fit in the Picture”), a third Number One (“Dreaming with My Eyes Open”) and a platinum-selling album, *Clay Walker*. With a second album—*If I Could Make a Living*—now in the racks, and its title track becoming his fourth Number One hit, he’s been hitting it hard to support that success, chalking up more than 200 days on the road, and making the media rounds.

Despite all of this, when I met with Walker at his publicist’s hotel suite in New York City, he was relaxed, friendly, and ready to talk about his music and his business.

The 25-year-old, good-looking Walker grew up on a farm near Beaumont, the oldest of five children (three sisters, one brother), and was surrounded by an extended family throughout his early years. “We were there with my grandmother, my aunts and uncles, and all of them had children my age. It was like our own little community,” he says. It was then that music became a passion. “My father and my uncle taught me how to play guitar. My grandfather taught them, so it’s been handed down. So many people in my family sing, and we just made good music together. I just decided to take it a little further than the living room.”

During his school years, sports competed with music for Walker’s attention, especially football. “I had a lot of wonderful moments...I was a playmaker, but I just didn’t have the size for the big leagues,” he says. Music won out eventually, and he began playing the clubs of Beaumont, holding a steady gig at the Neon Armadillo. He’d spent seven years in the clubs when producer/Giant Records president James Stroud came to see him and talked to him. A contract with Giant followed, and Clay credits his focus and business sense with helping him get signed. “I think that meeting had as much to do with me getting signed as my actual talent. He saw that I was focused and I was ready...in that meeting I was already talking about my third album! I think that was really impressive to him that an artist had enough sense to look ahead.”

That foresight led Walker to choose George Strait’s manager, Erv Woolsey, to be his own manager. “I’ve always been a big fan of George Strait, and I think Erv Woolsey helped George Strait get in some key places...I like the way they went about developing his career, and that’s what I want—that longevity.”

Walker also speaks highly of Stroud, who produced both his debut album and his current project. “James is a wonderful person on top of being a great producer,” says Walker. “It’s a wonderful chemistry... James may have different ideas than I do, but when we compromise, we make great music together.”

Both albums have been a mix of Walker’s own tunes, and those selected from other writers (Alan Jackson, for instance, co-wrote “If I Could Make a Living”). Selecting those outside songs, says Walker, is the hardest part of his job. “That’s probably the toughest thing for me because I’m so picky. Although I’m not the best writer in the world, I feel like I have a good ear for a song, especially when it’s for me.

Finally, I had to quit listening as a singer and a songwriter, and I had to start listening as a country music fan...I listened for songs I’d want to sing along to.”

Keeping your thoughts on radio airplay throughout the process is another key when choosing songs, Walker maintains. “If you want ‘em to play you, you have to make sure the song has a good hook. The hook factor is the most important thing in a song—be it the melody or the lyrics. Radio is the greatest thing that ever happened to country music. It’s heard every-

where, and to be a part of that is an awesome feeling. I also get a lot of feedback from fans. These are the people that are going to buy my music, these are the people that I’m trying to reach with my music. When I write, I’m not writing for me, I’m writing for somebody else.”

Nevertheless, Walker says, his writing comes out of personal experience, and though he’s been happily married for two years now, he’s nursed a broken heart or two. “‘Where Do I Fit in the Picture’ is one of those love-gone-bad kind of things where it was nobody’s fault. It just didn’t work out. But I think I learned a lot from the relationship,” Walker pauses and grins, “and I also got a great song out of it.”

Walker turns more serious when I ask which of his songs means the most to him. “Without a doubt, ‘Live Until I Die.’ I wrote that for my grandmother. She means

WITH A
REMARKABLE
YEAR OF SUCCESS
BEHIND HIM, CLAY
WALKER LOOKS
FOR STEADY
GROWTH.





everything to me. That's what makes being where I am so great—that that person who influenced my life so greatly is still alive to see it. Gold albums and platinum albums don't really mean much to my grandmother. Her happiness is because of my happiness, and when I go home and see grandma there's no difference, she loves me just as much as she always has. And when I wrote 'Live Until I Die,' the words came easy. I wrote it in approximately 20 minutes. It was a life experience, a true story. And when that song reached Number One, I had reached every goal that I had in my career.

"I was happy when 'What's It to You' reached Number One, but when 'Live Until I Die' did, I really got emotional, because I know that one of these days she's gonna be gone, and I know that when I hear that song, I'll know what it's about. And 20 years from now, or 50 years from now, if I ever have children, they're gonna know, too."

His close-knit family ties come up again when he talks about his heroes. "My daddy was a big influence on my life, not just musically, but everything. I just learned so much from him," says Clay.

In addition to his father, who exposed him to the music of Hank Sr., Jimmie Rodgers and Buck Owens, Walker's other musical heroes are those of many of his contemporaries: Merle Haggard, George Jones, George Strait, James Taylor and Dan Fogelberg. The Taylor influence is especially noticeable in such Walker-penned numbers as "The Silence Speaks for Itself," but all of his heroes, he says, play a role in his writing.

"Merle is more of a black and white kind of writer. It's easy to listen to, easy to understand. And James Taylor and Dan Fogelberg are similar in their writing in that they're using more imagery. I meant for 'Silence Speaks for Itself' to have that JT sound. Now, I'm not trying to compare myself to him—I want to make that clear right now (*laughs*)—but in most of my writing I try to do a combination of everything."

Our talk turns now to Walker's rapid, out-of-the-box success, and he is eager to make a point about that success. "I don't want to take all the credit for that," he insists. "In this business you learn real quick that you won't survive by yourself. The people around me that are not in the spotlight—my band, all those guys, they work hard, the road manager, the crew, the publicity, my manager, my attorneys (*laughs*)—everybody has to work hard for this to happen. It's really cool to be the focal point of that. I'm the product of their hard work."

The modest-but-driven Walker has shown that side before. In an interview he gave about a year ago, Walker spoke about needing to find his musical identity. Where, I ask him, do you stand on that now?

"About the same," he laughs. "I think I'm coming to understand myself better, but it's like making one big circle, because I'm still searching for that same thing. I feel like I'm finding songs that are a level above the first album, and I feel like I'm progressing as an artist and singer. I think I'm better than I was a year ago."

And Walker's own assessment is borne out by the facts: *If I Could Make a Living* is already Gold, and with more singles on the way, it, too, seems destined for platinum. Also on tap for 1995 is a tour with Lorrie Morgan. Not bad for an artist who, just over a year ago, was slugging it out in the clubs. So, what's next for Clay Walker?

"It's hard to predict, but I hope to *maintain*. Keep taking baby steps. I'm not looking to be Garth Brooks overnight. Steady growth is acceptable to me, and right now we're heading on a really good pace." ■

David Ball: Doin' the Music He Likes to Hear

His plain and simple, no-frills honky tonk makes you think Ball just stepped out of a time machine.

At noon the Cumberland River, where it skirts downtown Nashville's First Avenue, is the same dull iron gray as the sky. The Shelby Street Bridge is shrouded in thin wisps of chilly fog.

But, a block or so away, inside the Wild Horse Saloon, a dance/concert hall on Second Avenue where The Nashville Network tapes many live shows, the stage is lit up with a neon-like intensity that gives the effect of midnight at noon. Rehearsals are under way for *The Marty Party*, a TNN music special hosted by Marty Stuart which will be taped in the evening in front of a live audience.

Stuart, dressed in Levis and a black sweatshirt and looking like he just woke up, blinks into the camera lights and runs lazily through a couple of tunes so the cameras can get their angles. Then he introduces special guest, David Ball.

Ball, wearing a plaid flannel shirt, hat and boots, saunters on stage and plants his lanky frame behind the microphone. He gives his band the high sign, bends slightly at the knees and seems to go up on his toes like a pitcher going into a wind-up. Clenching his teeth, he launches into the song which, after half a lifetime on the fringes of the music business, has recently put him in the top of the charts. "Yes...I...admit...I got a thinkin' problem...."

With his band kicking in behind him, Ball serves up "Thinkin' Problem," a beer-soaked, face-down-on-the-bar anthem, like there's no tomorrow. As he runs through the song a second time, then a third time for the camera crew, he's so intense about it that you tend to forget this is just a rehearsal and that the actual taping is still hours away. It's clear that this is one ol' boy from South Carolina by



way of Austin, Texas, who's mighty glad to be here. Mighty glad indeed.

And judging by the brisk, Gold sales of *Thinkin' Problem*, Ball's major label debut album, there are quite a few fans of 50's and 60's-style honky tonk dancehall music who are mighty glad to have him here, too. "I can remember back in the mid-80's, I'd already been playing different kinds of music for years, in South Carolina and Austin," says Ball, a 39-year-old veteran of Uncle Walt's Band, a celebrated, eclectic, Austin-based, folk-blues-swing-pop-country harmony trio that made quite a splash in the Lone Star State in the late 70's and very early 80's.

"Then I heard Randy Travis' 'On the Other Hand' for the first time, and that song was it for me. It was simple, yet brilliant. And musically that's where I've been trying to get to ever since."

On *Thinkin' Problem*, which was produced by Blake Chancey, Ball does in fact come awfully close to capturing the power of that classic Randy Travis hit. The ten finely crafted and impeccably delivered honky tonk tunes (he wrote all of them, except Wayne Walker's "A Walk on the Wild Side of Life," which was recorded by Webb Pierce years ago) cast Ball in a resolute, no-frills, retro-honky tonk vein. With titles like "Blowin' Smoke," "Honky Tonk Healin'" and "Down at the Bottom of a Broken Heart," Ball sounds like he came of age in some tin-roofed, sawdust-floored Texas jukebox joint and just stepped out of a time machine. "The music I'm doing now is just the kind of music I like to hear when I turn on the radio," says the plain-spoken singer who first turned on to Texas dancehall music in a big way when he

BY BOB ALLEN

moved from Spartanburg, South Carolina (he was born in Rock Hill in 1953), to Austin, Texas, in the mid-1970's. "I'm just glad there's some people out there who still like to hear this stuff."

For some musicians the road to success lies not so much in expanding and developing their talents as in narrowing them down and focusing them. This can certainly be said of Ball, who through the years, has played everything from bluegrass to pop harmony music. He recalls that even back in his Carolina high school days, when he first hooked up with Champ Hood and Walter Hyatt, his bandmates in what would soon become Uncle Walt's band, his influences already ranged from Doc Watson and the folk duo Ian & Sylvia, to Webb Pierce and Jimmie Rodgers.

Yet Ball, a minister's son, tends to downplay his contributions to the musically free-wheeling Uncle Walt's Band, an ensemble with which many fans will forever associate him.

"Champ was just one of the best guitar players in Spartanburg," he recalls. "He played real primitive rock 'n' roll. Walter's background was really different—his parents had all these Louis Armstrong records and all this folk stuff. And when Champ and Walter got together, they had a huge repertoire. They were both the best guitar players I'd ever heard, and even back then they were writing these great songs. I started learning to play string bass just to be around them. Southern rock was the big thing back then, but we were more into Doc Watson. We even opened for him at the South Carolina Folk Festival. We loved the way Doc does everything from old Scotch ballads to blues and even old pop tunes."

Fresh out of high school, Ball, Hyatt and Hood headed to Nashville. ("We just wanted to play, to be discovered. We spent about four months there, just working for absolutely nothing.") But they found the pastures greener in Austin's thriving live scene. "We were just kids. We had an apartment for \$75 a month, we put about three or four of us in there, and all we did was play music. It was great, it was a good time." Uncle Walt's Band eventually released two critically acclaimed albums—*Girl On the Sunny Shore* and *An American in Texas Revisited*, both of which were reissued on CD by the independent Sugar Hill label a few years ago. But Ball insists that even back then he was already charting a course of his own, playing occasional solo gigs and drifting more toward the basic Texas swing and honky tonk music that he fell in love with in Austin.

"After the move to Texas I started singing a lot of traditional Texas dancehall music: 'Faded Love,' 'San Antonio Rose,'" Ball grins, breaking momentarily into a verse or two of an old Ernest Tubb favorite. "It was great music, and it worked well in our little folk trio. I also started playing on my own," he adds. "I just wanted to play dancehalls, totally different venues from the listening rooms where Uncle Walt's Band played. I'd had a steady diet of that, and I wanted to try something different. I'd go out and see these big bands in Austin, like Alvin Crow. That's what I wanted to do." (Crow and his band were one of the leading lights of the Austin Western swing scene.)

In spite of numerous trips to Nashville, Ball ended up back in South Carolina after Uncle Walt disbanded in the early 1980's. ("I just wasn't quite ready to go move to Nashville. That knocking on doors, nobody knows you....I'd been in and out of there enough to know it was really hard.") Based in Isle of Palms, a resort town near Charleston, he concentrated on writing songs

and played upright bass in a free-form "country-rock 'n' roll-bluegrass" band called The Groove Diggers. They played resorts up and down the Carolina coast, but The Groove Diggers' favorite venue was the Texaco Station on Isle of Palms. "The only problem was that playing with that bluegrass band at the beach was getting in the way of my songwriting," Ball laughs. "I'd sit down to write some country stuff, and all I could hear was this bluegrass banjo clangin' around in my head!"

Ball continued running up the interstate to Nashville now and then to make the rounds of the publishing houses and record labels. In 1987, he landed his first major label deal with RCA on the strength of a showcase he did in a Nashville club. But what appeared to be his big break quickly degenerated into every novice recording artist's worst nightmare. At RCA, he cut nearly two albums' worth of material in 1988 and 1989, but only a couple of singles were ever released. They sank



Taping for TNN: Merle Haggard, Marty Stuart, Pam Tillis and Ball.

more or less without a trace.

"I remember thinking, 'Jesus Christ, who's in charge here?'" Ball grimaces and fingers the brim of his cowboy hat. "It seemed like the head of the label was sitting there waiting for this product from me, and between me and him and everybody else at the label, we could not find our ass. The more I tried to deliver a hit to him, the crazier it got." RCA's label head during this frustrating time was Joe Galante.

After RCA pulled the plug, Ball licked his wounds for a while and wondered what to do next. But by now his wife and daughter had joined him in Nashville, and he resolved

to stay. He divided the next few years between intense songwriting sessions in Music City and occasional trips to Austin where he still had a following as a live performer.

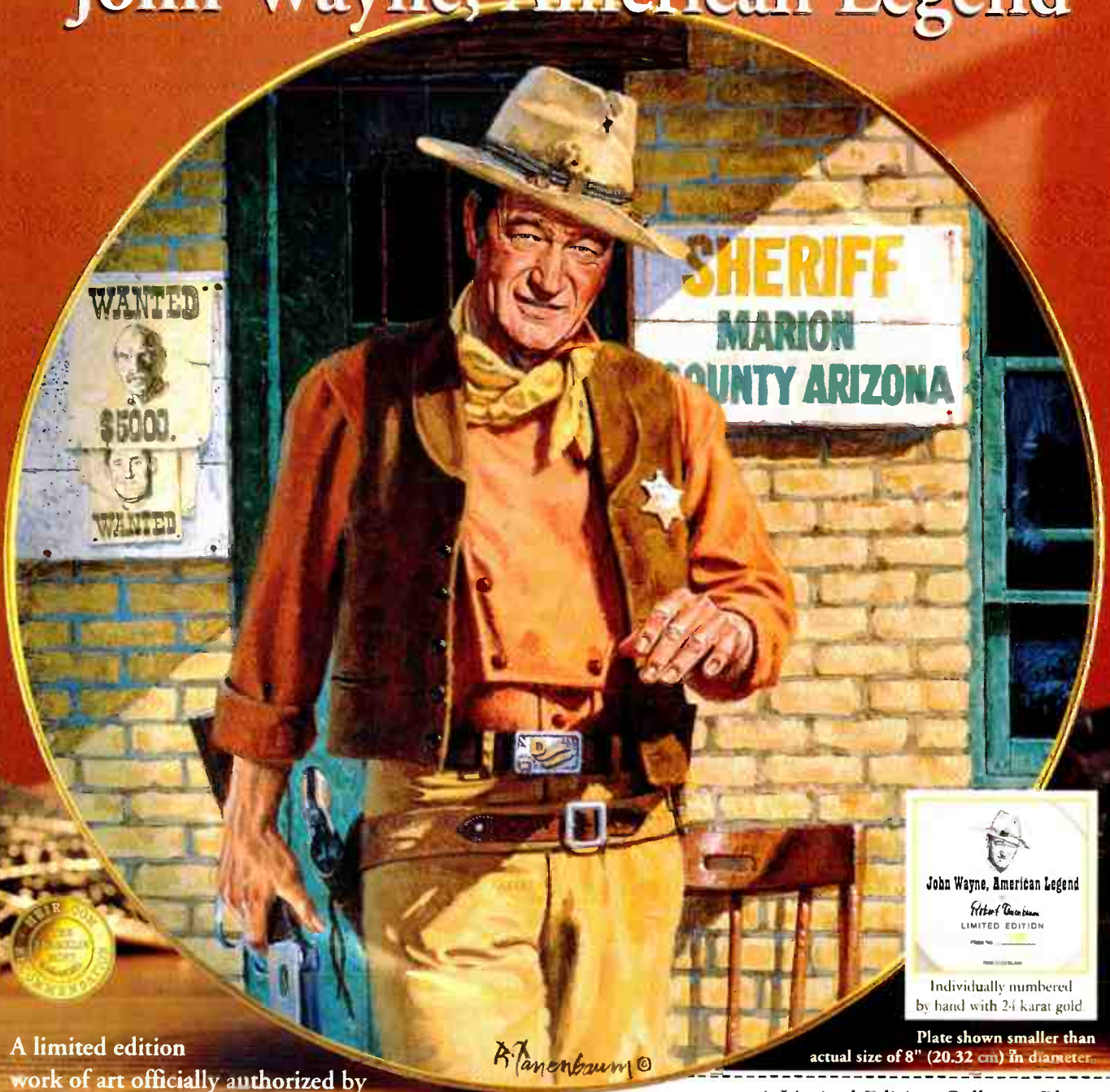
During the long months that he labored away in Nashville's songwriting mill, he found he missed the live shows. So just for kicks he started playing now and then at the Idle Hour, a run-down little hole in the wall just across the street from his publishing company's Nashville office. Once frequented by the likes of Willie Nelson and Roger Miller, the Idle Hour is today one of the few old-time jukebox beer joints left on Nashville's increasingly high-rise dominated landscape.

"Ain't nothin' glitzy about the place," Ball laughs. "It's just a little trailer with yellow stucco stuck all over it. A lot of days around five or six o'clock, when we were done writing for the day, we'd go over there and shoot pool, and I'd sit in the corner and sing for a couple hours. Blake Chancey, who was producing my demos, called Doug Grau one day, and he came over and saw me."

Grau was head of Warner Bros. A&R. Eventually, on the strength of Grau's recommendation, Warner signed Ball, and Chancey became Ball's album producer. The two of them knew they'd hit on a winning formula when "Thinkin' Problem," Ball's debut single, roared all the way up to Number Two in *Billboard*. And Ball, just a year shy of 40 and a veteran of more than two decades in the business, suddenly found himself in the top of the charts, surrounded by a passel of "Young Country" hipsters half his age. "A lot of those young guys are real serious," Ball grins and rolls his eyes when this age difference is pointed out to him. "I don't do that. I just do what I do and hope it's kind of timeless in a way."

"I sure don't think of myself as this grizzled, hardened veteran," he laughs. "Oh, sure, I've been knocked around. But I'm still smilin'."

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Letters

Willie Feature Fabulous

Thank you for the great cover story on Willie Nelson. Russ Barnard did a wonderful job. The photos—absolutely fabulous. I swear Willie gets more handsome with each passing year. I've been a fan of Willie all my life, quite literally. I'm only 25. I can remember going to sleep listening to Willie when I was a little girl growing up in Indiana. *Red Headed Stranger* is my favorite album. I could never see too many Willie shows, read too many Willie articles or hear too much of Willie's music. He's not only super-talented—he's a wonderful human being.

Melody Vanosdol
South Pasadena, California

Willie's Family Ties

Yours was a really great article on Willie Nelson's family and friends. Few have told the tale so accurately. You forgot to mention two of Willie's closest friends, Frank and Jeannie Oakley. They live in Nashville and have run Willie's General Store for him since the very beginning. When the IRS took Willie's personal belongings, they cared enough to buy them back. Now they share them with all of Willie's fans at his museum right across the street from the Opryland Hotel. You can't mention family and friends without mentioning Frank and Jeannie Oakley. And, by the way, some of his fans still have the black "Family" jackets too.

Sally Ann Connell
Indianapolis, Indiana

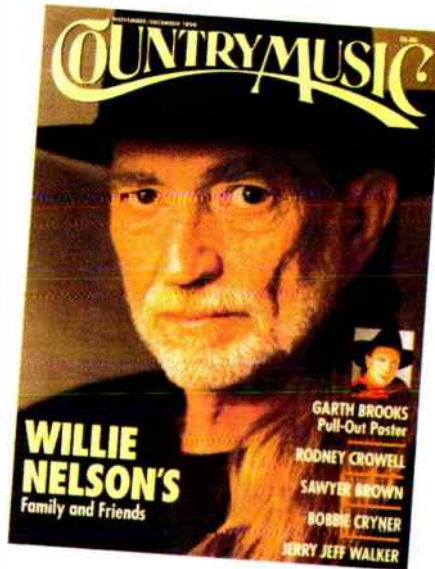
Willie Who?

I was thrilled to see Willie on the cover of the November/December issue, and I enjoyed the article. My introduction to Willie was when I was working in Alaska on the pipeline in the 70's. A friend asked me if I liked Willie, and my reply was "Willie who?" Since then I've been a big fan and have been to many of his concerts. Have yet to meet him in person, but know someday I will get the chance. I think radio should give the older artists airplay. Without Willie, George Jones, etc., where would country be?

Sheila Finwall
Yreka, California

Greater Than Great

I just received my November/December issue of *Country Music Magazine*. As usual, it was great. Russ Barnard did



write a great article. "Willie Nelson's Family and Friends." Thanks for a great magazine. Keep up the great work.

Mary Shaull
Pottersville, Michigan

Dedicated Willie Fans

I have been a fan of your magazine for more years than I care to admit. I love country, and we fans of Willie are the most dedicated fans on the country scene. I actually have in my possession the issues of *Country Music Magazine* from July/August 1985 and January/February 1987 which both have our hero on the cover. In the November/December issue of my favorite magazine, you did another great article on Willie, and his new release.

Edith Perry
Ellenville, New York

Waiting for Marty

Thanks! The September/October 1994 issue is the one I've been waiting for. I thoroughly enjoyed the fantastic cover story on Marty Stuart. John Morthland did a good job of capturing Marty's playful, entertaining personality that the public usually sees as well as his serious side. Although I enjoy reading about Marty's earlier days with Lester Flatt and Johnny Cash, it was nice to see an article from a different perspective. The pictures were great, too. Keep up the good work. I know a lot of readers complain because they think you cover some artists too much. I think you give fair cov-

erage to all the performers—older, newer, mega-popular, not so popular—and I appreciate that.

Marcia Ballard
Winchester, Kentucky

Marty Cover Sells Issue

Your September/October issue had the best cover ever. Marty Stuart is an outstanding musician, singer, songwriter and entertainer, and your cover was superb. Besides being talented, Marty is the best looking guy in the country music field. His neatness in appearance and dress gives country music someone to be proud of. Before I buy a magazine, I always check the table of contents to see if there is anything about Marty in it; of course, with your September/October issue I didn't have to do that. The cover sold your magazine.

Tina Thomas
Hazard, Kentucky

Stuart an Original

Thank you for the great cover story on my favorite country singer, Marty Stuart. I wish country radio would sit up and take notice of his talent. They seem to prefer playing songs by guys who all sound virtually alike these days. Marty Stuart is an original who will be around long after most of those other guys have been forgotten.

Becky McElrath
Charlotte, North Carolina

A Different Angle on Marty

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed reading your cover story on Marty Stuart (September/October 1994). Like Marty, I too was getting tired of reading the usual started-with-Lester-and-then-Johnny Cash stuff. It was nice to read something about Marty that I didn't already know. I've also heard that Marty and Tritt will continue to do projects together but only real quality things. I can't wait until (hopefully) they decide to tour together again! I'd pay an outrageous amount of money to see those two guys perform together.

Sharlene Roy
Mansura, Louisiana

Mixed on November/December

The November/December issue left me with mixed emotions. I was disbelieving that Russ Barnard, who should know better, did not mention Jody Payne in "Willie



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QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the March/April 1995 issue.

1. How many songs are included on Billy Ray Cyrus' new album?
2. Sam Phillips founded which legendary record label?
3. Name the nightclub where Clay Walker got his start.
4. What was David Ball's recent Number One hit?
5. Where did Dolly Parton record her new live album?
6. How many horsepower does Chevy's powerful new S-Series ZR2 Extended Cab 4x4 Pickup Truck put out?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Paul English
2. *Let the Picture Paint Itself*
3. two
4. Fan Fair
5. Don Was
6. 97% of all Chevy Trucks sold in the last 10 years are still on the road.

Chevy Trucks
LIKE A ROCK



Nelson's Family and Friends," though Jody was in some of the photographs. Jody not only is a great guitarist, he provides Willie with beautiful backup harmony vocals. And he's a great guy—I have had the pleasure of talking with him at every Willie concert I've attended over the past 12 years.

The good news was the review of *Waymore's Blues Part II*. Waylon is simply the greatest, period. And as for what Hazel Smith said about Waylon—well, if I never agreed with anything else she ever wrote (but of course I do), I would have to say, "Well said, Hazel. Nobody could have said it better."

A.M. Jones
Paoli, Indiana

Loves Sawyer Brown

I love your magazine. I'm on my third subscription. Finally, an article on Sawyer Brown (November/December 1994). I loved it. Mark Miller is great, even though he doesn't think so. Recently, I saw them in concert. Their stage act was awesome, the show was excellent, not to mention Mark's energetic dancing. He's easy on the eyes, too.

Jeanne Whitehouse
Augusta, Maine

Feeling Good with Sawyer Brown

I continually look through my country magazines for articles on Sawyer Brown, only to find them few and far between. So I was delighted to see they were to be included in the November/December issue. I've followed this group from the beginning, and they've always been good to their fans. I have attended many concerts through the years, but Sawyer Brown were the ones who would stay after a show and sign autographs. That extra effort on their part created a group of fans who love them as entertainers and as friends. I like the mature boys too, but when I really need a boost, I still go back to my early SB music. It's feel good music.

Brenda Summerlin
Montgomery, Alabama

Waiting for Sawyer Brown

You couldn't have chosen a better title for the Sawyer Brown article in your November/December issue. Last spring, I wrote and requested to see more of the group in your magazine, and now my wait is over! The article was great. Thank you.

Dorothy S. McFarland
Indianapolis, Indiana

Growing Up with Sawyer Brown

I'm a big Sawyer Brown fan, so thank you for finally showing them some respect and doing an interview with them. I'm close to the same age as Mark Miller and feel as if I've grown up listening and maturing with this band and their music. Their stage show may be "over the top" in some people's eyes, but I find them

entertaining and fun without having to swing from ropes or smash up guitars like some other bigger names out there.

Oh, and regarding their earlier "fluff" music, take a good listen to some of the songs being played on country radio today (and even making it to Number One), for an idea of what "fluff" really is.

Robin Wilchenski
Rochester, New York

Super Alabama

Thank you for having the 20 Questions with Alabama (Randy Owen) in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Alabama is a super group, and anyone who has ever seen them knows why they are definitely the "Artist of the Decade." I'd like to see more of them in your magazine. A centerfold would be great.

Christine Duncan
Whitesburg, Louisiana

Never Enough Garth

I've been subscribing to your magazine for almost a year now, and you've had some really great articles and illustrations on all my favorites except one, Garth Brooks. The November/December centerfold was great! Now how about a cover story on him. Oh yeah, thanks for the cover story on Willie. I've been waiting for it for a while.

Jeremy W. Foster
Bastrop, Louisiana

Where's Ty England?

I recently bought your magazine for the first time (November/December issue), and I must congratulate you on a very interesting and well-written publication. I especially enjoyed the Letters section, and the Garth Brooks poster. I noticed some of your readers are not fans of Garth, but I certainly am.

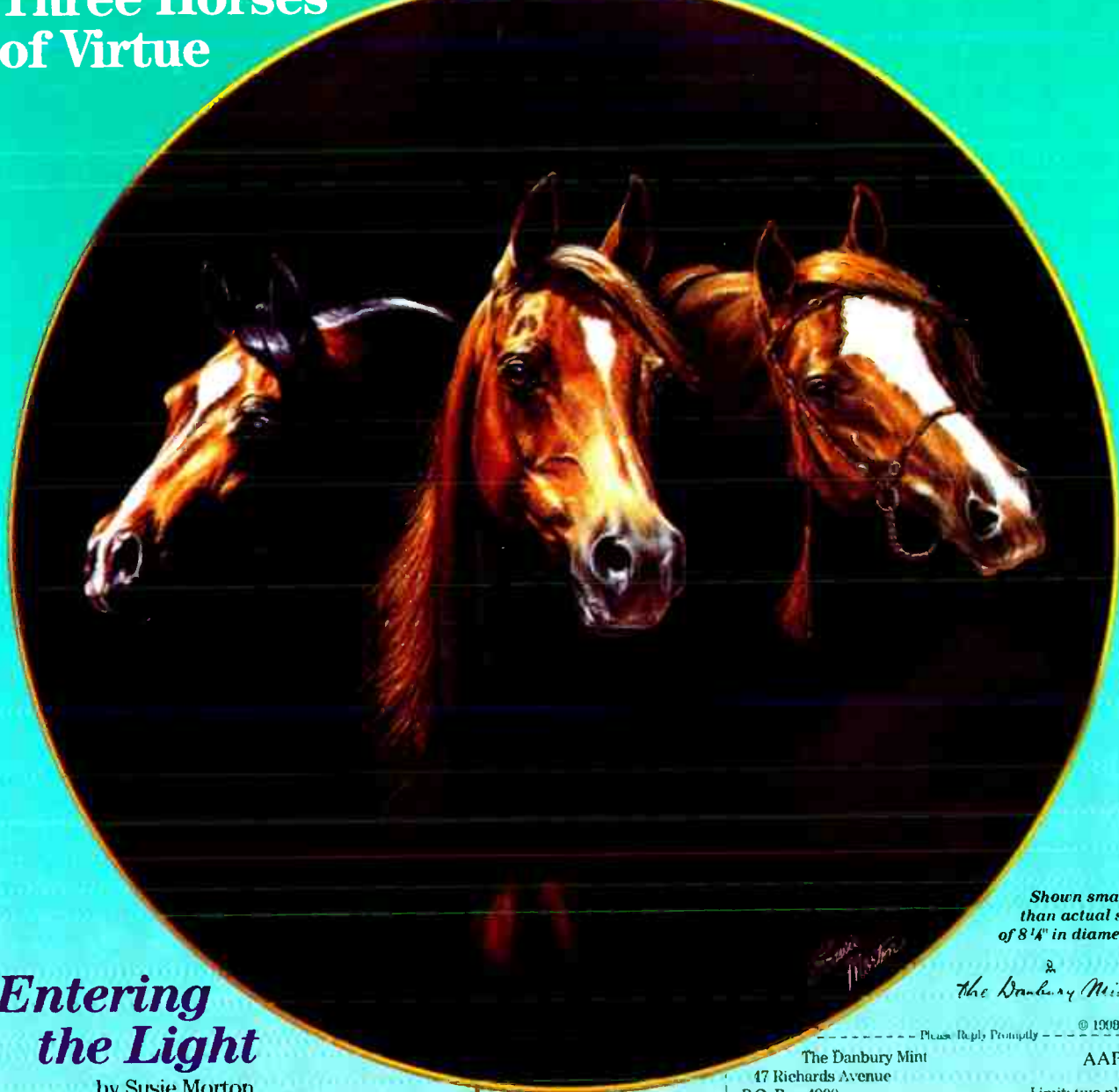
Actually, I'm as much of a fan of the Stillwater band as I am Garth himself. I have a question on the Facts of Life page. You have Mark Greenwood as the guitar player, and the liner notes in the albums list Ty England as the guitarist. Has there been a change in the line-up, or was it an error in your poster?

Shelley McKibbin
Newcastle, New Brunswick, Canada
Our information is correct. Ty England has left Garth's band for a solo career. He's signed to RCA Records with a release due in spring of this year.—Ed.

Billy Ray's Accent

I really enjoy your magazine. Your articles are very informative and the photos are great. But, in the People column of your September/October issue, under the heading "Elvis Standard Time," you mentioned an incident where Billy Ray Cyrus stopped and asked three of his fellow artists if they'd like a ride and would like to

Three Horses of Virtue



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If you want to flatten your stomach and trim your waist, you should know about a new book, *3 Simple Steps to Flatten Your Belly!* The book shows you a simple and fast way to give yourself a flat, firm stomach—even if other attempts to lose your pot belly failed.

Why It's So Hard to Get Rid of a Pot Belly

Incredibly, some stomach programs only make your pot belly worse. You see, some stomach programs may actually build up and swell the muscles in your stomach without removing the fat—making your stomach appear larger and puffer. What's more, exercises that work on your "love handles" (the sides of your waist) can actually build muscle and increase the overall size of your waist. Even worse, some so-called stomach exercises don't even work your stomach—they can merely strain your back and neck.

Why This Program Will Flatten Your Belly

This book shows you a simple program that won't bulge out or puff up your stomach but actually flattens it out, so your stomach becomes slimmer, trimmer and firmer. And this program is designed to flatten your stomach without straining your back or neck. What's more, this program shows you how to remove layers of fat around your belly. The book tells you about "fat melting" foods that work in conjunction with the exercise program to break down and flush away pockets of flab and fat around your midsection. This program launches an all-out attack on the bulging fat cells around your waistline.

Following this program should transform your pot belly from unsightly flab to a flat, trim and sexy waistline. A firm, flat belly makes you look and feel better. Your posture often improves while nagging back problems often disappear.

Forget about expensive exercise equipment, health spas and starvation diets. This belly-flattening program must work for you or you pay nothing. This book is being made available for only \$12.95 (plus \$3 postage and handling). To order, send name and address with payment to United Research Publishers, 103 North Highway 101, Dept. CMF-4, Encinitas, CA 92024. You may return the book anytime for refund if not satisfied.

see his children. You twisted his goodwill gesture by making fun of his Southern accent by printing his remarks to them as "Know'd y'all lived 'round here somewhere..." Billy Ray was just trying to be friendly and share a part of his personal life. What's so wrong with that concept?

Lu Ann Custer

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Hazel speaks the King's English exactly like Billy Ray and many of the rest of us do. So, we can assure you, she was not making fun.—R.D.B.

Fighting Diabetes

In the People column of the September/October issue, you printed an item on Mark Collie and his fundraising for diabetes. I'd like to thank Mark for his efforts. Diabetes is a forgotten disease. I am an insulin-dependent diabetic, like Mark. I was a fan of his way before I found out that he was a diabetic. I hope the celebrity race was a huge success, and that a cure can be found real soon. Thanks, Mark, and everyone involved!

Cheryl A. Hildreth

Millerton, Pennsylvania

Aliens Deliver Steel Belted Radials

In People in your September/October issue, regarding the photo of Dwight Yoakam leaning against an old, rusty truck in the movie *Roswell*, I noted another cover up besides the UFO incident. Take a good look at those steel-belted radial tires on the truck. It always seems that the government is hiding something! The tires on the convertible look authentic, but I could be wrong! Your magazine is great! Keep us informed of more "secrets of the past."

Rick L. Hagerich

Mesquite, Texas

Where's Dr. Hook?

I read in your magazine some time back that People columnist Hazel Smith had written songs for Dr. Hook, among others. I am a big fan of Dr. Hook, and so are my children. I am wondering what ever happened to them. Maybe Hazel could shed a little light on the subject.

Deborah Rosales

Saugus, California

Yes, she can. Ray Sawyer is living in Florida, still actively performing as Dr. Hook. Dennis Locorriere is writing/producing/performing an upcoming syndicated children's radio show to be called Panarooterama Radio.—Ed.

Patrick for Prez/Carr as Candidate

I tip my hat to you! I salute you! I will even vote for you for the presidency of the United States (if you've completely lost your mind)! Your last two Final Note columns have been absolutely fantastic. Finally, the truth starts to emerge. I must take exception, though,



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to your comment that Joy Lynn White is the best female powerbilly artist since Paulette Carlson's Highway 101 days. Becky Hobbs owns that distinction, with no one even close to her.

What's really amazing to me is that these ten major record labels really think they can herd (like sheep) millions of country music fans into listening only to artists from their labels. There are only 400-500 major country radio stations in the U.S. that the major labels are even interested in. That leaves approximately 2000 stations that really care what the people want to hear. I say find those stations! They are looking for you! These small and medium-size stations will play, or try to play, both independent and major label artists, because they don't have to report to anybody but their listeners. Well, I've raised enough hell for now. Keep up the great work, *Country Music Magazine*.
Ron Rentschler
Tecumseh, Michigan

Here's a Solution for Country Radio

Thank you, Patrick Carr, for your superb piece in the November/December issue on the decline of independent labels and their shameful invisibility on radio. I am as sick of country radio and the major labels as you are. The suppression of creativity is nauseating. Some of my favorite singers are Willie and Merle; my son is into off-the-wall sounds like those on Diesel Only Records. I'd give up on hearing any of them on the radio.

There's still hope, though. A radio station in Kansas City (WDAF) is a few notches above "Young Country." They will play oldies once in a while, but they do have one DJ who is the only person I know of on radio that openly criticizes the system. Maybe you two could start your own station, playing modern, classic and "alternative" country. "Less Crap, More Music" would be a good slogan!

Emmagean Evans
Kansas City, Missouri

In Defense of New Country Cowboys

The fact is, we who used to listen to Top 40 have come over to country music because—truth be told—the music is a combination of country and Top 40. The good-ole country listener is being replaced by the "new" listeners, and if country music is to survive the year 2000 mark, they must not—hear us—must not go back to twang city, and you'll just have to put up with it. We don't want it. Sorry.

Why are the albums selling Gold, platinum and multi-platinum? It's because of this blend that's going on. And the minute country radio goes back to its old sound, it's dead. So, instead of crying in your beer, listen to the stations that play "old" country. We new listeners want the 90's sound.

A "Today's Country" Fan
Madison Heights, Michigan



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A Few Thoughts on Recent Issues

I applaud your editorial position on the vapidness of "hot new country." Your November/December issue also contained some album reviews with truth in them. It's a shame that someone as talented as Clint Black is squandering his talent on double-entendre and pop schmaltz. I appreciate your features on the legends of country music still contributing a quality product. (By the way, it's about time for a comprehensive update on Merle Haggard). Lastly, Russ Barnard's article on Willie mentions dreaming of driving a Mustang in the 50's. This was true pre-cognition since the first one wasn't built until 1964.

Steve Dossey

Santa Fe, New Mexico

My point exactly.—R.D.B.

Skaggs & Diffie Related?

I have been a country singer fan all of my 66 years. I love your magazine. My sister and I have an ongoing disagreement about Joe Diffie and Ricky Skaggs. She says they are brothers, and I say they are not. Who's correct?

Millie L. Brewer
Sagle, Idaho

You are.—Ed.

Where's Brady?

My question is about Little Texas keyboardist Brady Seals. Where is he? I've been watching CMT, and Little Texas was recently the featured artist. They show videos and Brady is there, but during interviews he isn't. Has he left the band? Is he sick? Or is he on vacation?

Scott Foster

Portales, New Mexico

Seals has gone solo.—Ed.

Believing in Walker

I first noticed CMM on the newsstand because of an article on Brooks & Dunn. I subscribed and was recently among the sold-out crowd at their concert in Hunstville, Alabama. They were fantastic, so much energy! Martina McBride opened the show, and we all got chills when she sang "Cheap Whiskey" and "Independence Day." I was a little skeptical about the other act on the bill—Clay Walker. Sure, he's very good looking, and he's got a few good songs, but could he entertain? Boy, can he! I'm no longer skeptical. Maybe we could see something on Clay—maybe a centerfold?

Rhonda Ford

Lawrenceburg, Tennessee

Will this feature hold ya?—Ed.

Swamp Dog Survives

How is everything with you? I just wanted to keep in touch and let you know what's going on with me.... I was in a bad car accident on November 3rd. I was going down Old Hiway 90 to watch Ben play in his football game in Hull-Daisette when suddenly the road ended. It had washed

out and left a 30-foot ditch. My car hit the other side of the continued part of the freeway. Luckily, I had on my seatbelt and was able to crawl out of the hole. But my nose wasn't so lucky. I had major reconstructive surgery on it November 4th. Since then, I've been home recuperating. I can't even get out of bed without the help of my housekeepers! I'm still in lots of pain and on medication. But I will survive it. Just sore as hell. You just can't kill an old swamp dog, but you sure can make a believer out of him.

Huey P. Meaux
Houston, Texas

Cajun producer Huey P. Meaux is best known for his work with Freddy Fender. Hello, Huey. Get well soon.—R.D.B.

Cover Clay

My favorite country singer is Clay Walker, but the trouble is he's nowhere to be found. I don't think anyone would object to an article on him, or better yet, seeing his gorgeous face on the cover or the centerfold. Thank you!

Tara Cockriel
Cannon Falls, Minnesota

Will this feature hold ya?—Ed.

Begging for Vince

Please, please, please, pretty please put in an article about Vince Gill. I have got a year's worth of this magazine and no Vince. I can't ever get enough of him. Please, a centerfold or something!

Derek Bittner

Kennells Mills, Pennsylvania

All you have to do is ask!—Ed.

Here's to the Underdogs

I meant to write a note of appreciation after receiving your September/October issue—which included features on no less than three of country's "Top Ten Most Underrated Artists" (Marty Stuart, Hal Ketchum and the wonderful Suzy Bogguss). This week, I pulled the new issue from the mailbox. There's Willie Nelson and Rodney Crowell. You know, I'm beginning to think you guys just don't listen to contemporary country radio. And I'm going to have to resubscribe a third time if you keep this up.

I'd be very interested to know which medium the greatest percentage of your readers turn to for new artists and new songs: radio or television. For me, the source is TV. I tape TNN's *Video PM* a couple of times each week, then sit down in the evening and fast-forward through things I've already heard. That's how I became a Mavericks fan, and heard Joy Lynn White's "Bad Loser."

So what about radio? Well, I've also been conducting a totally unscientific experiment. It consists of tuning in the local country radio station whenever I walk past the radio, just to take note of what's being played. And the results are...if I

hear "Root Scootin' Boogie" one more time, I'm selling the radio and buying another TV.

Wally Armstrong
Champaign, Illinois

Another Call for Hobbs

I am writing in regards to Becky Hobbs. I am a fan of hers and would like to see some articles on her, as her life can be an inspiration to us all. I read your magazine and would like to think that you are willing to have a piece on her. She truly writes great songs with feeling and sincerity. She is a dynamic little gal that just needs good recognition. She's a good person also, just go and talk with her. Please give us some Beckaroo news!

Shirley Brinson
Thompson Falls, Montana

Waiting for Loretta

How happy I have been recently to see legendary country stars like Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings on your covers. Now, how about a few of the lady legends? My all-time favorite, Loretta Lynn, is long overdue!

Rick Cornett
Toledo, Ohio

Stand Up for Branson

I was prepared to mail the card in and extend my subscription for another year. However, I was reading my November/December issue as I took my coffee break, and was highly offended by the petty remark made about Branson in the record review on Waylon. I doubt that Mel Tillis, Andy Williams, Charley Pride, Bobby Vinton and numerous other entertainers that are cleaning up here in Branson would consider this a fate worse than a small gig in never-never land. We are quite proud of Branson here.

Mrs. David J. Meeker
Branson, Missouri

Clint's True Mentors

I've got to hand it to John Morthland for a very perceptive review of Clint Black's new album, *One Emotion*, in the November/December issue. Even with Merle Haggard co-writing, it's the fondness for 70's pop singer-songwriters that defines Clint Black. Clint's true mentors are Jimmy Buffett, James Taylor, Dan Fogelberg, Jim Croce and Loggins & Messina. He doesn't hide these influences either. You'll notice there isn't a true country artist among the bunch. Clint Black is really a pop-folk singer in honky tonk drag.

Walter Daniels
Austin, Texas

Bob Allen Has Taste

Thanks to Bob Allen for his very positive review of *Wild Love* by Joy Lynn White in the November/December issue. At least someone has good taste, even if the almighty radio programmers don't, and consistently prove it by ignoring quality

music (right, Mr. Carr?). I mean, when was the last time you heard anything on mainstream radio by the likes of Joy Lynn, Kelly Willis, Jamie O'Hara, Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris or Merle Haggard. Hey, these people are putting out some excellent work. Let's hear it!

Scott M. Hart
Clyde, North Carolina

Old Folks Can Dance

Upon reading Geoffrey Himes' review of the Brooks & Dunn album, *Waitin' on Sundown*, in the November/December issue, I could hardly wait to start typing a response. Himes' comment, "Today country fans often seem divided between an older crowd that likes to sit in its seats and listen to a heartbreaking ballad and a younger crowd that prefers to jump out of its seats and scot their boots across the dance floor," brought me out of my seat for sure! Where have you been living, Geoffrey? It's us "older crowd" who do the *dancing*. I mean dancing, of course, not this pseudo-mock-almost, well sorta-but-not-quite dancing, formation marching stuff the "younger crowd" calls "line dancing." Here in Big D (I mean Denver, not that other Big D), we can honestly boast of owning some of the best dancers in the country. We have produced some of the hottest dance couples in this area, long before the "young'uns" got into this act and began usurping our floor space for this mindless, talentless stomping to and fro.

Ellie Bryant
Denver, Colorado

Nudging on New Country

This just might come as a great surprise to those people who are constantly complaining about pure country. There are many fans now who love the change in country music. They never listened before, as much of what is now called pure country they did not like. My husband worked the country/western bars, and I couldn't stand most of the music. New country is good music and has attracted many fans who were turned off before. Let the purists enjoy what they idolize and keep quiet. Very few fans really care what they think. We just enjoy.

Elaine Calli
Carson City, Nevada
Mailman, get ready.—Ed.

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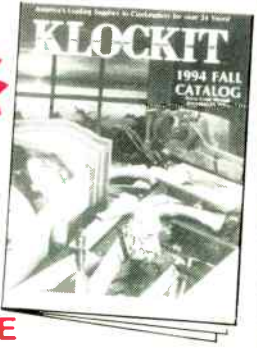
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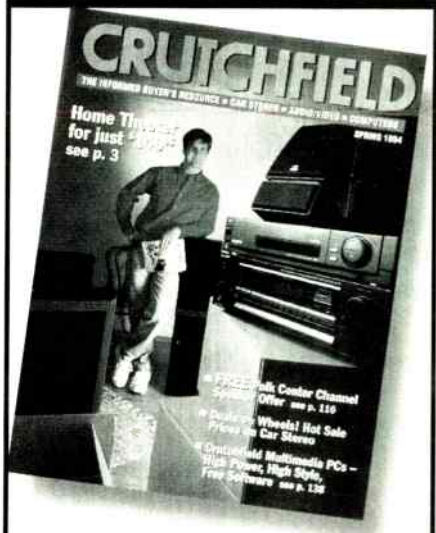
record label is he with? Please give me all the good scoop on the fabulous James House.
Marilyn A. Hilb
Arlington Heights, Illinois
House's new album, Days Gone By, is due out on Epic early this year! No word on fan club yet!—Ed.

Basic Black
Why do so many entertainers wear black? I chose to ask you for no special reason. Don't entertainers realize their clothes reflect their personality? Do they wear black because it does not show soil or wrinkles? I don't like to see so much black. It depresses me. And, it does not show a caring attitude toward their fans. Can you suggest someone to whom I can express this opinion? Someone who will be listened to?

Opal O. Smith
Fort Myers, Florida

We're stumped.—Ed.

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Gabbin' 'Bout Glaser Brothers

Last issue, a lady commented on how much she would like an update on The Glaser Brothers. I can't say enough about how much we enjoy them. We have named our dog "Tompall" in honor of the great Tompall. He is aware of this "honor" and has made a few comments on this subject. They are all fine fellows, and your "crack" writers are being thanked in advance for looking up The Glasers and writing an update for their many fans.

Mrs. Virginia Engh
Silvis, Illinois

Rooting for Radney

What's up with Radney Foster? I never hear anything about him. I loved his *Del Rio, Texas 1959* CD, but *Country Music Magazine* hasn't had anything on him since then. I love to read about the other country stars, but Radney Foster is great, too. Please find out what's going on, and do an article on him.

Rick Noland
Stockport, Ohio

Radney's current single is "The Running Kind," which is his contribution to the Mama's Hungry Eyes Merle Haggard tribute. He'll have a new album out early this year. Stay tuned for more.—Ed.

A Fan From Way Back

I just wanted to let you know I have most all of my *Country Music Magazine's* for 20 years. I am 83 years old, and I go back and read them over and over. I enjoy them so much. Thank you for a wonderful magazine—just keep up the good work!

Kathryn L. Doss
Roanoke, Virginia

Letters Is the Best

My family just subscribed to your magazine, and I think it is one of the best around. I am 14 years old and have read many different magazines. I think *Country Music* is the most informative by far. My favorite section is Letters.

Stacey Moore
Charleston, West Virginia

Personalized Calendar

Let me tell you about my rearranged 1994 *Country Music* Calendar. For January, I covered Dwight Yoakam with the photo of Ricky Van Shelton. February with Alan Jackson was great, also used him for the months of March, April, May, June, July (he was starting to look a mite warm in July wearing that duster!). Garth Brooks was fine for August, and George Strait is doing the honors for September through Decem-

ber. Thank God for paper clips and tape, or my year would be all over the floor by now.

Thanks for an entertaining magazine and a calendar I can arrange to satisfy me. Please put that "ole" Kaycee, Wyoming, cowboy, Chris LeDoux on a calendar (or in your magazine) real soon. Looking forward to your 1995 calendar so I can start rearranging it!

Alice J. Gore
Denton, Texas

Corrections

In the November/December cover story: Willie Nelson wrote "Hello Walls" for Faron Young, not "Four Walls" as reported. Also, "Healing Hands of Time" has been recorded before, on the 1976 album *The Sound in Your Mind* (it has also appeared on subsequent reissues). On the Garth Brooks Facts page, Garth's birthdate is incorrectly listed as February 2. The correct date is February 7. In People, Dan Roberts' name was incorrectly listed as Dan Robertson.

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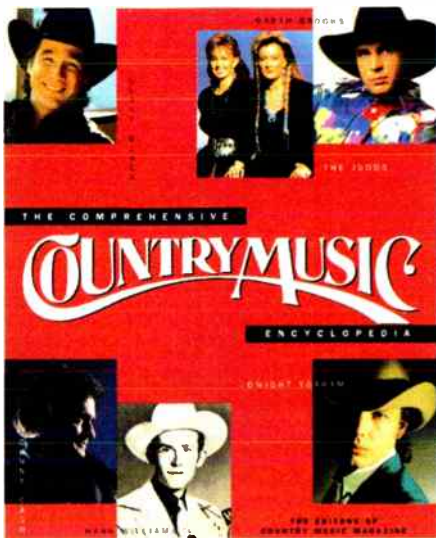
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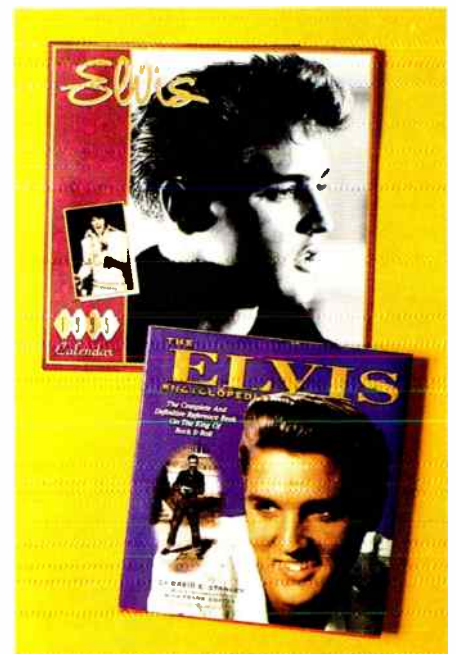
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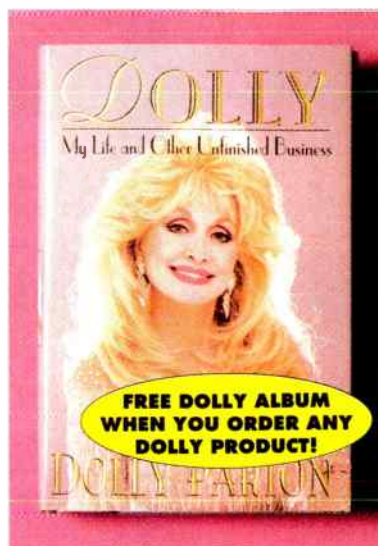
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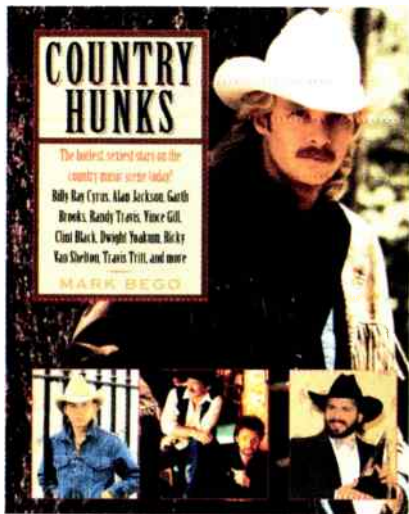
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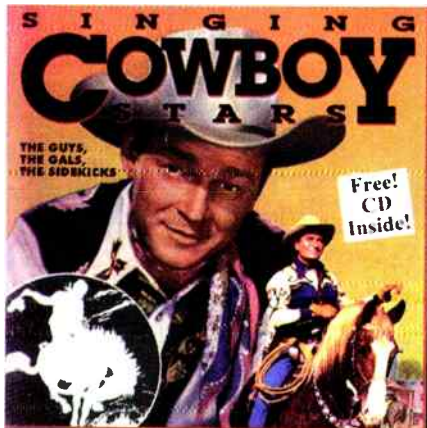
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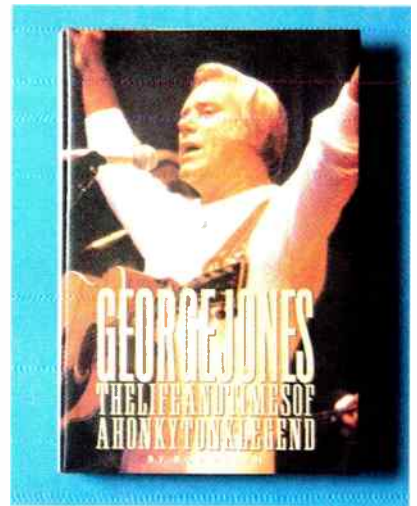


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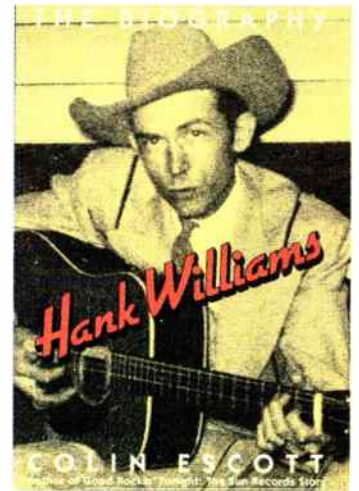
George Jones has been like two men running in opposite directions. He's the only country singer to have had a Number One hit single in each of the last four decades, and a voice, some say, has a quality so powerful that it's "felt," and not just heard. The other Jones is a man who drank whiskey like water and destroyed his home in a fit of rage. This revised book, written by *Country Music's* Contributing Editor, Bob Allen, explores both sides of this complex man. We follow him through his boyhood in Texas, his stint on the honky tonk circuit, his rise to stardom and descent into alcoholic hell, and his stormy relationship with Tammy Wynette. This book reveals a Jones who, in the end, stays sober, marries the woman of his dreams and achieves the status of a Grand Old Man of country music. Hardcover, illustrated. Ask for #B2Y, \$19.95.



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You'll also want the video, *In the Hank Williams Tradition* (not shown), which traces Hank's incredible life story through rare film clips, music and revealing interviews. Featured are such favorites as "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "I'm So Lonesome, I Could Cry." There's also Hank singing "Hey, Good Lookin'" and four others. This video has been rated a country music collectible. Select Item #V2M, \$19.95.



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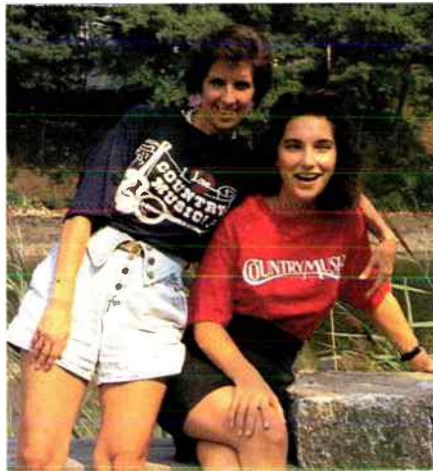
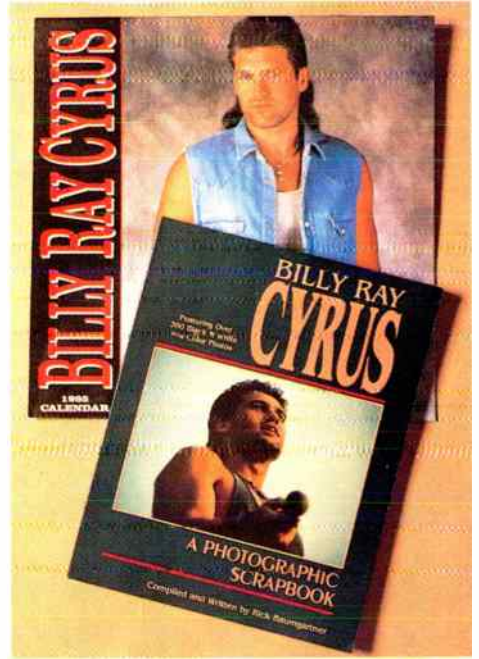
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This photo-filled book is the most intimate look at Billy Ray that you'll find anywhere. The author traveled to Billy's hometown of Flatwoods, Kentucky, and visited with the friends and family who know him best. There's over 325 photos (some even taken from BR's old bedroom walls) and personal, detailed captions chronicling his life and career. Fans are calling it "the bible on Billy Ray." Billy Ray says, "Man you really hit the nail right on the head. You really did. Pictures don't lie!" Softcover, 159 pages. Ask for #B4J, \$19.95.

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MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1995

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____

2. In the boxes below, write the numbers of any of the albums on the Top 25 list in this issue which you bought in the last month.

3. For any albums you bought in the last month not on the Top 25 list, write performer's name and album titles in the space below. (Attach a separate sheet if you need more room.)

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

4. List numbers of your five favorites from Top 25 in this issue.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Western Wear Purchases

5. Do you currently own, or do you intend to buy, any of the following items of Western clothing?

Own		Plan to Buy		Own		Plan to Buy	
Boots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shirt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jeans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports Coat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skirt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dress slacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. a. How many pairs of Western boots do you own? _____

b. When do you wear your boots? Work Going Out

Do You Do These Things?

7. How many times did you or anyone in your household do any of the following in the last 12 months?

Attend country music concerts, shows or fairs. _____
Go to country music dance clubs. _____
Take line dance lessons. _____

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 CMSA member but would like to join and vote immediately, enclose your check for \$16 for a 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*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.

C O L U M B I A
COUNTRY CLASSICS



THE GOLDEN AGE

Art Satherley Special

Regrettably (but not surprisingly) the Uncle Art Satherley anthology, issued on Columbia in 1991 and featuring his comments on 11 songs he produced, is already out of print. One alternative, featuring more Satherley productions is Volume One of the Columbia Country Classic series. That volume, *The Golden Age* (CK 46029), features 27 songs, nearly all of them from the Satherley era, beginning with The Carter Family's "Can the Circle Be Unbroken" and Roy Acuff's "Great Speckled Bird" and ranging through classic selections by Bob Wills, Al Dexter, Patsy Montana, Gene Autry, Spade Cooley, Ted Daffan, Wiley & Gene, Bill Monroe, The Stanley Brothers, The Chuck Wagon Gang, Texas Ruby, Molly O'Day, Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper, Flatt and Scruggs (post-Satherley) and more. The liner notes to the set are by our own Rich Kienzle. Available on CD only. Regular price \$19.95, Members' price \$17.95.

Buried Treasures Special

CMSA members are entitled to discounts on all products offered in Buried Treasures. Members may deduct \$10.00 off the price of the Jimmy Martin boxed set and the Sun Records boxed set on Bear Family. Deduct \$2.00 off the price of the Rhino Records Texas Music volume and the Spade Cooley CD on Columbia. And take \$5.00 off everything else. Featured this time are boxed sets on Conway Twitty, Loretta Lynn, Sun Records (the Rhino set) and Tennessee Ernie Ford. Include membership number if taking discount. See complete ordering instructions in Buried Treasures.

Essential Collector Special

CMSA members are also entitled to a discount on items featured in Essential Collector. Take \$5.00 off the regular price of the Cindy Cashdollar dobro video, the Ralph Stanley banjo video, the Johnny Cash book and

the Gibson guitar book. Members may deduct \$3.00 off the *Elvis Up Close* book, and \$2.00 off all other items, including Bob Allen's book on George Jones and trading cards on old-time country string bands. Include your membership number with your order. See ordering details on the Essential Collector page.

Forrest White Dies

As Rich Kienzle was researching the Legends piece on Uncle Art Satherley, he found that a longtime friend of Satherley, Forrest White, had died. White was a retired executive of Fender Guitar, and during his friendship with Satherley, had become the keeper of all of Satherley's archives, including a large collection of photographs. Earlier this year, he wrote a book about his years at Fender called *Fender: The Inside Story*. Condolences to the family of Forrest White.

Astronomy in Music

In researching the Clay Walker piece, Senior Editor George Fletcher discovered an interesting fact about Clay's music: The song "White Palace," from Walker's debut album, contains the only known usage of the words "aurora borealis" in country song. The more common name for this phenomenon, northern lights, doesn't rhyme with Alice, Dallas or palace.... Credit song writers Zack Turner and Byron Hill for this bit of astronomy in song.

How to Order

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TOP 25

Albums

1. Tim McGraw *Not a Moment Too Soon*
2. The Tractors *The Tractors*
3. George Strait *Lead On*
4. Mary Chapin Carpenter.... *Stones in the Road*
5. Brooks & Dunn *Waitin' on Sundown*
6. Alan Jackson *Who I Am*
7. Jeff Foxworthy *You Might Be a Redneck If...*
8. Reba McEntire *Read My Mind*
9. Joe Diffie *Third Rock from the Sun*
10. Vince Gill *When Love Finds You*
11. John Michael Montgomery . *Kickin' It Up*
12. Tracy Lawrence *I See It Now*
13. Billy Ray Cyrus *Storm in the Heartland*
14. Clint Black *One Emotion*
15. Garth Brooks *In Pieces*
16. Various Artists *Skynyrd Frynds*
17. Reba McEntire *Greatest Hits Volume Two*
18. Little Texas *Kick a Little*
19. Clay Walker *If I Could Make a Living*
20. Trisha Yearwood *The Sweetest Gift*
21. Faith Hill *Take Me As I Am*
22. David Ball *Thinkin' Problem*
23. Blackhawk *Blackhawk*
24. Alabama *Greatest Hits Volume Three*
25. Tracy Byrd *No Ordinary Man*

Singles

1. John Michael Montgomery . *If You've Got Love*
2. George Strait *The Big One*
3. Vince Gill *When Love Finds You*
4. Faith Hill *Take Me As I Am*
5. Clint Black *Untanglin' My Mind*
6. Alabama *We Can't Love Like This Anymore*
7. Joe Diffie *Pickup Man*
8. David Ball *When the Thought of You
Catches Up With Me*
9. Lari White *Now I Know*
10. Tim McGraw *Not a Moment Too Soon*
11. The Tractors *Baby Likes to Rock It*
12. Mark Chesnutt *Goin' Through Big D*
13. Randy Travis *This Is Me*
14. Clay Walker *If I Could Make a Living*
15. Reba McEntire *Till You Love Me*
16. Rick Trevino *Doctor Time*
17. Little Texas *Kick a Little*
18. Brooks & Dunn *I'll Never Forgive My Heart*
19. Tracy Lawrence *I See It Now*
20. Mary Chapin Carpenter.... *Shut Up and Kiss Me*
21. The Mavericks *There Goes My Heart*
22. Diamond Rio *Night Is Fallin' in My Heart*
23. Pam Tillis *Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)*
24. Alan Jackson *Livin' On Love*
25. Mark Collie *Hard Lovin' Woman*

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Here it is, folks! Your quick and easy order form for your choice of the Top 25 **Albums** currently on the country music charts. Everyone may order, but members of *Country Music Magazine's* own Country Music Society of America get 25% off list price.

Albums listed on this page are available on CD or cassette. **Sorry, no singles, LP's or 8-track tapes available.** To order, fill out coupon on this page and include your check or money order. Be sure to specify format. Allow six to eight weeks for delivery. To join the CMSA and save 25% on every CD or cassette you buy, send \$16 to cover membership dues and use members' prices. Dues entitle you to an additional year of *Country Music Magazine*, the CMSA Newsletter with every issue, membership card, discount coupons, other merchandise discounts and more.

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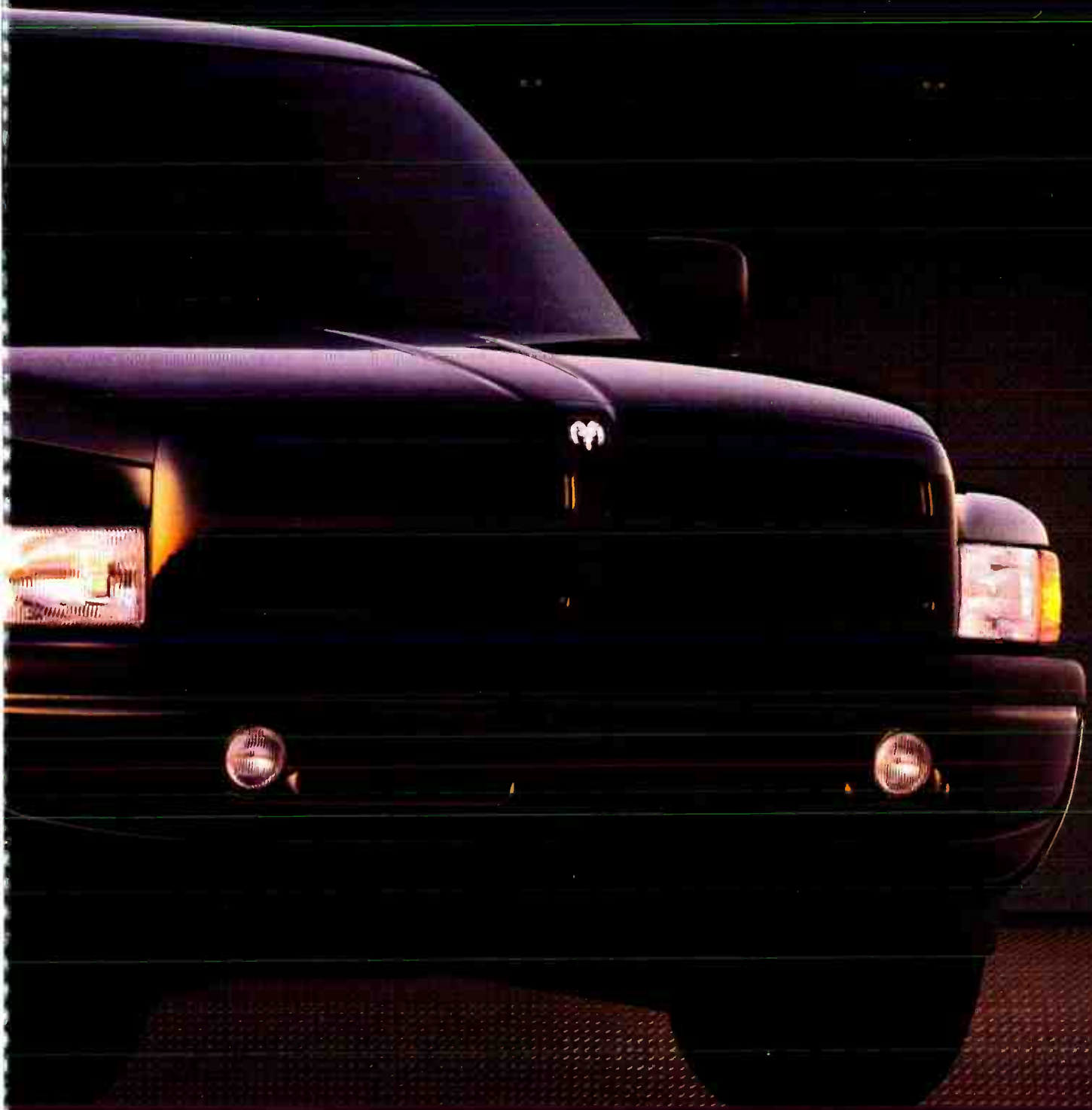
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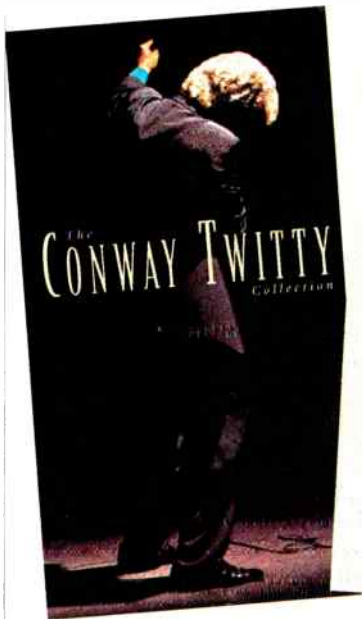
A DIVISION OF THE CHRYSLER CORPORATION

Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Conway Twitty: Conway Twitty deserved a box set long before his death in 1993, and why MCA never bothered doing one until now is a mystery. One only wishes that he was here to see *The Conway Twitty Collection* (MCAD4-11095). This one consists of 89 songs (four hours and 13 minutes) covering his entire career on four CD's or cassettes. The compilers, Conway's widow Dee Henry and Bob Oermann, even included his version of "Hello Darlin'" sung in Russian. The set begins at the beginning, with a home recording of 12-year-old Harold Jenkins with his first amateur band, The Phillips County Ramblers, singing "Cry Baby Heart." Oermann and Henry say it's 1946, but that can't be the right year since George Morgan's hit version of this Leon Payne song didn't come until 1949. Just as interesting is an amateur 1956 recording of Conway playing Chuck Berry's "Maybelline" with a band of fellow soldiers on a troopship enroute home from Japan. His first formal recording is a 1956 demo of "Rock House," a Twitty original Roy Orbison recorded for Sun. Eight songs from MGM including "It's Only Make Believe" and "Lonely Blue Boy" cover his late 50's-early 60's teen idol period. The never-released demo of his song, "Walk Me to the Door," a 1963 hit for Ray Price, reflects his first moves toward his own country career.

The Decca/MCA period begins with his first demo for Owen Bradley. Anything that qualified as a hit is here, and that's a lot of material, including six of his hit duets with Loretta Lynn and five hits from his brief period with Warner Brothers, among them "The Rose" and "Slow Hand." Material from his return to MCA closes out the collection, including the unreleased "I Will Always Find My Way to You," recorded as a present to Dee. The final three songs are



gospel, one his rare 1973 Decca recording of "Clinging to a Saving Hand." The other two unissued numbers are "Sweet Sweet Spirit" and a 1991 version of "Why Me, Lord" recorded live at Branson. The packaging is outstanding, as is Oermann's essay.

Sun Records: It's been nearly 20 years since serious reissues of the rockabilly and blues material from Sam Phillips' Sun first appeared in England. American LP's of Sun hits by Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis flooded the market after Shelby Singleton bought Sun from Phillips in 1969. Today, more Sun product is available than in the label's heyday. Many gems lay unreleased for years, but by now various labels have reissued nearly everything Phillips recorded (including some that should have remained unreleased). Rhino Records' *The Sun Records Collection* (R2 71780) is the perfect introduction to the label's legacy via 74 songs that cover its entire lifespan.

It begins with the gutbucket black blues that Phillips started recording in 1950. Around 1954 the first country material shows up with Doug Poindexter and The Starlite



Wranglers, a group that included Scotty Moore and Bill Black. Rhino enhances the box greatly by including four Sun numbers by Elvis, Scotty and Bill ("That's All Right," "Baby, Let's Play House," "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "Mystery Train") that were later purchased by RCA. Hearing these singles in the context of other Sun recordings makes it easier to understand what Phillips was doing. Eight gems by Jerry Lee Lewis, six by Carl Perkins (both rockers and ballads), five by Johnny Cash and three each by Charlie Rich and Roy Orbison appear, as does a Million Dollar Quartet selection (actually Elvis, Lewis and Perkins). The best work of rockabilly crazies Sonny Burgess, Warren Smith and Billy Lee Riley likewise reflects the label at its best. For someone just beginning to explore this unique incubator of Memphis genius and madness, the set is essential. Jimmy Guterman's essay, combined with comments from a recent interview with Sam Phillips, provides an excellent overview.

For those who want Sun's entire story, the blues, gospel, rockabilly and country in chronological order, Bear Family

has begun issuing all of Sun's 45 rpm singles (no LP cuts or unissued material) from beginning to end in multiple box sets. *The Complete Sun Singles Vol. 1* (BCD 15801) covers both sides of the first 57 Sun singles (114 songs in all) on four CD's, material released from 1952 through 1955. All the Elvis Sun singles appear in order of release. Disc one consists of blues (many country fans will love this raw, primitive stuff, which Cash, Conway, Perkins and others also enjoyed). Disc two begins moving into hillbilly music with The Ripley Cotton Choppers, Doug Poindexter, Hardrock Gunter and Earl Peterson and gospel singer Howard Seratt. Disc three mixes more blues with the first Elvis Sun recordings and material by Slim Rhodes. Disc four mixes more blues with the final Elvis singles and the first Carl Perkins material. Volume Two will pick up there. One curiosity is a beautiful booklet totally lacking session information.

Loretta Lynn: MCA is also way overdue on a decent Loretta Lynn collection. *Honky Tonk Girl: The Loretta Lynn Collection* (MCAD3-11070) brings together three hours worth of her best material, 70 songs from 1960 through 1988. It begins with both sides of her first single, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl" and "Whispering Sea," which appeared on Zero Records, then picks up the Decca years with "Success." All of her biggest hits are included, along with three duets with Ernest Tubb (not including the best one, "Sweet Thang"), some selected album cuts and six of her duets with Conway Twitty. Also included are complete singles and album listings, session information (recording dates, locations and musicians) and other relevant data. There's no question she deserved this. The only question is why it took so long.

Sadly, Producer Jimmy Guterman's notes are less satisfying than they were on the

Sun box. Guterman, a rock music critic trying to establish himself as a country expert, simply lacks the knowledge to handle this set. His notes, based on an interview with Loretta, provide little information about the music that such a collection requires and too often read like a frothy magazine article. Occasional wrong information shows up, such as not acknowledging the well-known fact that steel guitarist Speedy West actually produced Loretta's first single, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl." This doesn't take away from the music, but it needn't have been this way.

Jimmy Martin: Bluegrass legend Jimmy Martin's career has been overlooked on record for years. Bear Family's *Jimmy Martin and The Sunny Mountain Boys* (BCD 15705), a five-CD, 146-song collection, ends that inequity once and for all. Martin, who cut his teeth with Bill Monroe (working two different stints as a Blue Grass Boy), made his first recordings in 1954 when he linked up with Sonny and Bobby Osborne. All six numbers from their only Victor session, done in November of '54, appear here, and their quality remains high 40 years later. After he and The Osbornes parted ways, Martin formed The Sunny Mountain Boys and signed with Decca in 1956 (this was after RCA's Steve Sholes declined to record Martin without The Osbornes). The complete 1956-1974 Decca sessions make up the bulk of the set.

Being a bluegrass, Martin didn't have many big chart hits. His two best-known chart singles, "Rock Hearts" and "Widow Maker," are among the 140 Decca recordings (most of which were LP cuts). Other Martin numbers popular with his fans, such as his version of Hylo Brown's "Grand Ole Opry Song," "My Walking Shoes" and, of course, "Sunny Side of the Mountain," can be heard for the first time in years. All the gospel material appeared on two LP's, *Singing All Day and Dinner on the Ground* and *This World Is Not My Home*. Only two Martin Decca recordings remained

unissued. Both appear for the first time on this set. The booklet contains well-researched notes by Chris Skinker and a reproduction of the rare songbook published by Martin and The Osborne Brothers during their days in Detroit.

Texas Music: Rhino Records' *Texas Music*, co-produced by our own John Morthland, is a three-volume anthology (sold separately). One set is Texas blues, the other Texas rock; a third, the one relevant to this column, is titled *Western Swing and Honky Tonk* (R 71782). This 18-song collection brings together some of the most important Texas material, as well as some obscurities that warrant reissue. The obvious selections include Bob Wills' original "Take Me Back to Tulsa," Ted Daffan's "Born to Lose," "Slippin' Around" by Floyd Tillman, Lefty's "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time," "The Wild Side of Life" by Hank Thompson and Milton Brown's "Taking Off."

Many may not have heard The Light Crust Doughboys' "Knocky-Knocky" (featuring pianist Knocky Parker), Cliff Bruner's "Milk Cow Blues" or The Saddle Tramps' "Hot as I Am" (with the amazing fiddle of J.R. Chatwell). These are known to Western swing fans, and deserve the exposure they get here. Al Dexter's "Wine Women and Song" and Cajun-swing wildman Harry Choates' "Harry's Blues" are likewise worthy of inclusion. These obscure but important recordings make their CD debuts

here. The latest cuts come from the mid-70's, featuring Austin favorite Alvin Crow's "Nyquil Blues," Asleep at the Wheel's "Roll 'Em Floyd" and Johnny Gimble's "Bosque Bandit" from his out of print Columbia/Lone Star live LP, *Texas Dance Party*. Morthland provides brief but appropriate notes putting each song in the proper context.

Tennessee Ernie Ford: Earlier this year, Liberty Records took over Capitol Records' back country catalog. This was a good move, since Capitol certainly didn't bother doing much with it. I wrote the booklet for this collection, so no commentary other than what it is. *Masters: 1949-1976* (Liberty 30292) is a three-CD collection of high points from Ernie's career. Many of the selections come from Ernie's boogie period, when he recorded such early favorites as "The Shot Gun Boogie" and "Blackberry Boogie" with backing by both Jimmy Bryant and Speedy West—this was several years before "Sixteen Tons." Two versions of that number appear: the original and a live performance from the 1961 Indiana State Fair.

One rarity is a version of "Blue Canadian Rockies," a ballad recorded in 1950 and released under Cliffie Stone's name; another is an unreleased 50's version of the pop tune, "It's the Talk of the Town." Later songs include his version of the jazz number, "Work Song." Several numbers were culled from his 1975 *Ernie*

Sings and Glen Picks LP with Glen Campbell. Other material came from his final Capitol LP. **Spade Cooley:** Despite several big hits in the 1940's, Spade Cooley earned more national headlines following his arrest in 1961 for the murder of his wife than he had during his performing heyday. Musically, he was always primarily a California artist who did only minimal touring elsewhere in the country. His bands ranged from excellent to overblown and schmaltzy. Most experts agree that his 1944-46 Columbia recordings were the best. (Most of this particular band left to join Cooley vocalist Tex Williams after Cooley fired Williams in 1946. Under Williams it became known as The Western Caravan.) It was, without question, a Western swing band vastly different from Bob Wills'. Spade's classical training made for a tighter fiddle section, while Spike Featherstone's classical string harp added flash and glitz, giving the outfit more Hollywood trappings than any other similar group. Johnny Weiss' electric guitar and Joaquin Murphey's and Noel Boggs' steel guitars also made the band stand out; 20 of its 21 Columbia recordings are compiled on *Spadella! The Essential Spade Cooley* (Legacy/Columbia 57392).

All of Cooley's hits, vocals sung by Tex, appear, from "Detour" and the biggest, "Shame on You," to "A Pair of Broken Hearts," "Hide Your Face," "Crazy 'Cause I Love You," "You Can't Break My Heart," "Troubled Over You" and "You Never Miss the Water." The instrumentals reflect the band's unusual sound, particularly Murphey's showcase, "Oklahoma Stomp," Boggs' "Steel Guitar Rag," the electric guitar ensemble on "Three Way Boogie" and the strange, minor-key "Spadella," unlike any other swing instrumental. Bob Irwin's remastering on this collection is phenomenal, and as owner of some scratchy Cooley 78's, I can tell you that hearing the versions here, taken from the original acetates, is like night and day.

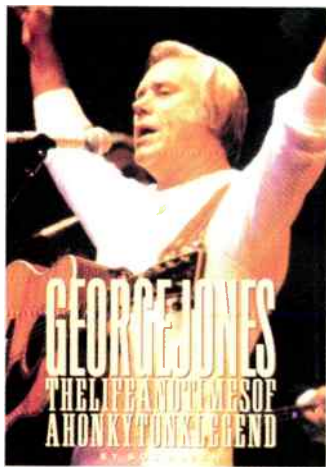
How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Conway Twitty, *The Conway Twitty Collection* (MCA 11095), a 4-CD or 4-cassette boxed set, \$49.95 cassette, \$59.95 CD/Various Artists, *The Sun Records Collection* (R 71780), a 3-CD boxed set, \$49.95/Various Artists, *The Complete Sun Singles, Volume 1* (BCD 15801), a 4-CD boxed set, \$139.95/Loretta Lynn, *Honky Tonk Girl: The Loretta Lynn Collection* (MCA 11070), a 3-CD or 3-cassette boxed set, \$39.95 cassette, \$49.95 CD/Jimmy Martin, *Jimmy Martin and The Sunny Mountain Boys* (BCD 15705), a 5-CD boxed set, \$149.95/Various Artists, *Texas Music: Western Swing and Honky Tonk* (R 71782), \$11.95 cassette, \$16.95 CD/Tennessee Ernie Ford, *Masters: 1949-1976* (Liberty 30292), a 3-CD boxed set, \$49.95/Spade Cooley, *Spadella! The Essential Spade Cooley* (Legacy/Columbia 57392), CD-only, \$21.95. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 010295, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

■ Books ■

George Jones: Bob Allen's 1984 book, *George Jones: The Saga of an American Singer*, the only credible Jones biography so far, has been out of print for years. Since George has become an icon, the ultimate honky tonk singer, to several generations, the book's taken on greater importance. Birch Lane Press recently reissued



the book as originally published, with a new foreword and a final update chapter by the author as *George Jones: The Life and Times of a Honky Tonk Legend*. Allen effectively captured the flavor of George's early days in the rough and crazed Thicket of East Texas better than anyone else could have except, perhaps, George himself. In doing so, he detailed George's crazier side along with his early introductions to booze and the dark underbelly of honky tonk living. He didn't ignore the music, and some of the recording session anecdotes are positively priceless, as were the more haunting stories of George's late 70's deterioration.

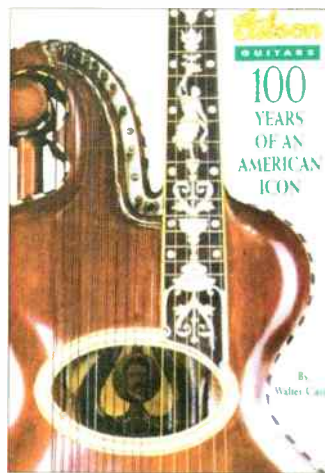
In the foreword to the new edition, Allen, with great candor, points out some of the original book's legitimate shortcomings, such as his tendency to overwrite and overdramatize in spots. He's apologetic about comments made

then about certain Nashville personalities (though I'm not sure his views were always wrong then or now). My big gripe is that Birch Lane didn't give Bob enough latitude to *really* redo the book, smoothing out the parts that bothered him and allowing him to expand sections with new research. Most importantly, he could have explored the past ten years of Jones' life in detail. In 1984 the book truly covered Jones' first 53 years. That's lacking for the last ten of the update. What Bob does is fine, but all too brief. As he hints in the update, it took more than luck to pull Jones back from the abyss that swallowed Hank, Lefty and Keith Whitley. This will probably be the definitive work until the autobiography George has reportedly been working on appears.

Gibson Guitars: 1994 was the 100th Anniversary of Gibson Guitars, and Walter Carter, who's done such an outstanding job of chronicling guitar history in two recent books with vintage guitar authority George Gruhn, has done an excellent job on *Gibson: 100 Years of An American Icon*. Using multiple contributors, he traces the company's overall history beginning with its eccentric founder, Michigan's Orville Gibson, through its expansion into a significant stringed instrument manufacturer. The focus here isn't on a particular style of music, but on the company's history and increasing influence on American music. Gibson instruments' importance to country artists ranging from Bill Monroe (mandolin), to Earl Scruggs (banjo), to Merle Travis, Little Jimmy Dickens, Chet Atkins, Ray Whitley and Hank Garland (guitar) all receive mention in the larger context of the company's history. Gibson went through numerous presidents before the company began changing ownership. The company's future was uncertain when three young inves-

tors bought it for \$5 million in 1986. No longer based in Kalamazoo, Gibson nevertheless is thriving in its second century, issuing new instruments, building custom instruments and reproducing classic models, the latter at prices equal to that of a new car.

As you'd expect for a coffee-table book, the production is outstanding. The illustrations run the gamut from vintage instruments and old photographs (coupled with plenty of old company photos, ads, catalog pages and instruction books) to breathtakingly beautiful new color shots of priceless vintage banjos, mandolins and guitars and other rare instruments the company produced. Despite some occasional typos, most essays are well-done, though the quality of writing by certain authors is sometimes not up to snuff and a few essays are unnecessary. One surprising omission is the fact that Carter, a lap steel guitar collector, almost totally bypasses discussing Gibson's



electric steels. Perhaps that will be another book. Gibson more than merits such a work, and it would be nice to see a similar lavish color book on, say, Martin.

Elvis Presley: More Elvis books... *Elvis Up Close*, by Rose Clayton and Dick Heard, takes an oral history approach to Presley's life, and on the sur-

face, this isn't a bad idea. The book has some good moments, though there's little here that isn't already known, and those who've read the better books on Presley may be disappointed. Some of those interviewed are intimates like Memphis Mafia vets Joe Esposito and Lamar Fike. Others are childhood friends from Tupelo, Memphis school buddies, Sun records associates, music business acquaintances, some who worked with him in Hollywood and others only on the edges of things. Even the paramedics who responded to Graceland when Elvis died are heard from yet again. Some stories aren't necessarily bad. Owen Bradley's account of meeting Colonel Parker when Parker was trying to secure a new recording deal for Elvis in 1955 is interesting. But difficulties remain. Even one so masterful as Peter Guralnick admittedly couldn't resolve all the inconsistencies in various accounts for his book, *Last Train to Memphis*, which covered only the first 23 years of Elvis' life.

A further problem is Clayton and Heard weren't terribly discriminating in who they interviewed. Someone who met Elvis one or two times may have something worthwhile to say, though there's no way of telling whether these stories haven't been "spruced up" by those who tell them. Someone who's been interviewed often in the past like Steve Allen, who hosted Elvis on an installment of his 1956 NBC variety show, has been over-interviewed on the subject and long ago ran out of things to say. Certain anecdotes told by individuals are hearsay, told by people who heard about them, not eyewitnesses. Things truly get out of hand in the final chapter when several doctors analyze what killed Elvis, among them the notorious Dr. Nichopoulos. There's speculation that Elvis may not have died of drug problems, though

his drug abuse is well-chronicled in the book. At some points the detail in this section becomes a bit much, such as one doctor's graphic description of how Elvis might have had a coronary while sitting on the commode "straining down." Really now.

Johnny Cash: It's appropriate that, in 1994, four decades after Cash started recording for Sun, his most recent album would win him new fans and great acclaim at a time when most 62-year-old recording artists don't even have a record label affiliation. It's likewise appropriate that Cash discographer John L. Smith has created the 272-page *Johnny Cash Record Catalog*. In this volume, Smith, author of two editions of Johnny Cash recording session discographies (also known as "sessionographies"), chronicles more than 2200 Cash single and album releases by label, including American and foreign releases. It begins with a section on singles, then 45 rpm Extended Play releases, then LP's and finally CD's. It runs from his first material up through the acclaimed 1994 *American Recordings* CD, so it's as current as possible. He also lists Cash music videos. Cash-written liner notes on other artists' are also listed.

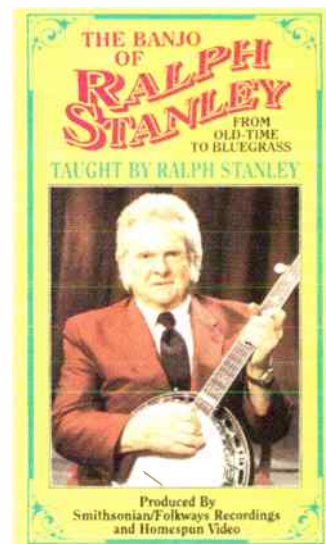
Smith, who has Cash's cooperation on these books, doesn't just cover the official releases. He also includes a section of bootlegged Cash recordings, as well as anthologies where Cash recordings appear with the records of other artists, including the encyclopedic Bear Family Cash reissues. For checking on what albums certain Cash songs appeared on, this set is essential, and if you have the earlier Smith discography, this is an essential addition that complements it nicely, though Cash's revitalized recording career will probably require a revision in a few years.

• Videos •

Ralph Stanley Banjo: Until someone can get Earl Scruggs to do an instruction video, *The Bluegrass Banjo of Ralph Stanley: From Old-Time to*

Bluegrass will have to suffice. And anyone who loved Homespun's Bill Monroe video which, like this one, had much to interest non-picking bluegrassers, will want this one too. On it, Stanley, assisted by folkie-old timey musician Mike Seeger, traces his evolution as a player, from the oldtime "frailing" or "clawhammer" banjo technique he started with through the three-finger banjo picking style he made famous with his late brother Carter in The Stanley Brothers. All the musical examples feature a split screen, with Ralph's picking hand shown up close.

Stanley doesn't just demonstrate; he breaks it down and explains *how* he plays each

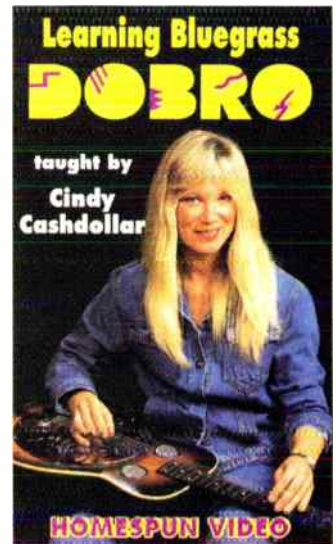


tune. He performs most of the Stanley favorites with his Clinch Mountain Boys (including fiddle legend Curly Ray Cline), among them such classics as "Little Maggie," "Dickenson County Breakdown," "Train 45," "How

Mountain Girls Can Love," "Man of Constant Sorrow" and others. He picks with his teenage son Ralph, a guitarist, and also does some fiddle-banjo duets with Curly Ray. Just as interesting are his discussions of his early musical influences, including his five-string "Stanleytone" banjo and some of the tricks he uses to create his distinctive picking style.

Dobro Instruction: Cindy Cashdollar currently plays non-pedal electric steel guitar as part of Asleep at the Wheel and has recorded and played dobro with a number of folk and bluegrass artists. She serves as the low-keyed but engaging instructor in Homespun Video's 90-minute instructional volume, *Learning Bluegrass Dobro*. On this one, she sticks closely to a program of material including rolls, licks, scales and chords that should help any beginning to intermediate player. Such essential areas as tuning and bar techniques are covered, along with hints on pick choices, bar choices and a bit of information about strings and dobro construction.

Cashdollar's lessons are all incorporated into the four songs she plays on the video with Homespun owner Happy Traum on guitar, and an electric bass player—"Wildwood Flower," "Sailor's Hornpipe," "Fire Ball Mail" and "Wayfaring Stranger." These performances are set up so that anyone studying at home can play a couple of choruses on their own. She does a fine job, and Homespun should seriously consider not only having her do an advanced dobro



video, but also a much-needed course in the Western swing lap steel she plays with Asleep at the Wheel.

• Trading Cards •

Pioneers of Country Music is certainly a different type of collector's item. These are 40 "trading cards," each featuring a different pre-World War II string band of the 1920's or 1930's. On the front of each card is a color illustration of the band, usually taken from photographs, drawn by former 60's underground cartoonist R. Crumb. Someone named Rich Nevins wrote an informational blurb about each group that's on the rear of each card. The better known names include The Carter Family, Ernest Stoneman, Charlie Poole and The North Carolina Ramblers, Al Hopkins and The Buckle Busters, Eck Robertson, Fiddlin' John Carson, Uncle Dave Macon and The Fruit Jar Drinkers and Gid Tanner and The Skillet Lickers. Many others are far more obscure, like Virginia's Shelor Family, Mississippi's Narmour and Smith, Fiddlin' Bob Larkin and His Music Makers (Larkin was from, of all places, New York City!), The South Georgia Highballers and the North Carolina group known as Red Patterson's Piedmont Log Rollers. Crumb's illustrations are nicely done, and in a few cases, Nevins' information constitutes much of what little is known about these more obscure bands.

How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Bob Allen, *George Jones: The Life and Times of a Honky Tonk Legend* (B2Y), \$19.95/George Gruhn, *Gibson: 100 Years of An American Icon* (B7C) \$40.00/Rose Clayton and Dick Heard, *Elvis Up Close* (B7G) \$22.95/John L. Smith, *The Johnny Cash Record Catalog* (B2Z) \$49.95. **Videos:** Cindy Cashdollar, *Learning Bluegrass Dobro* (V7F) \$49.95/Ralph Stanley, *The Bluegrass Banjo of Ralph Stanley* (V7C) \$49.95. **Trading Cards:** *Pioneers of Country Music* (G1C), set of 40 cards, \$11.95. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 010295EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Offer expires April 30, 1995



George, Merle and the Cyrus Virus

Blasting through the South Florida night, on my way across the state from Tampa towards a date with Billy Ray Cyrus on the southern Atlantic coast, I'm time traveling again. George Jones is on the rental car tape deck, singing all those songs of grief and loss and alcoholic resignation—you know, "if drinking don't kill me, her memory will"—and while I have the presence of mind to note that the new Legacy/Epic collection to which I'm listening really is the *Essential George Jones* (you gotta have it), I'm also disappearing from the here and now. I'm back there.

I don't know. Sometimes, listening to George or Merle, it gets so strange: Those fellas have been a big part of my trip through this world, and for about a decade they were actually singing my life as it was happening. You know, "These days I barely get by. I want to give up, lay down, and die..."

It's pretty intense, having those old tapes on the deck and in my head, but suddenly it changes, and I'm in another place entirely. I've stopped for gas in some two-bit agribusiness town somewhere south of Sebring in that great swath of former swamp the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers long ago de-naturalized for the sugar companies, and as I climb out of the car into the thick wet heat, I hear chords from further back in time—way further; from the days when Merle was a migrant tyke in the Tulare dust or maybe just a gleam in his momma's hungry eyes. I look around for the source of the music, and there across the street, set up in the parking lot of a closed auto parts store, is a three-piece gospel revival band—it looks like Mom on guitar, Pop on bass and testimony, and their almost-grown daughter on tambourine and lead vocals: she's a little shaky around the edges of the keys, but there's a pure, hard light in her voice as it floats across the street and echoes off the darkened storefronts, and it gets to me.

Nobody else pays any attention at all. A few souls are gathered outside the Circle K, idly watching a middle-aged woman bulging out of a halter top argue with a clean-cut young deputy, but other than that, the revivalists might as well be bringing their mission to an unpopulated planet. Saturday night in rural South Florida, and the place is beyond dead: No way is "The Old Rugged Cross" going to wake it.

I'm certainly listening, though—maybe

I'm the one who's supposed to hear—and the deep old beauty of the song lights me on my way as I plunge down the highway into the heart of the canefield darkness: nothing out there but mosquitos, toads, alligators, migrant workers, and outlaws, at least until the lights of the Gold Coast stripopolis start glowing on the eastern horizon, then suddenly I hit the cloverleaves and subdivisions. Way down here at

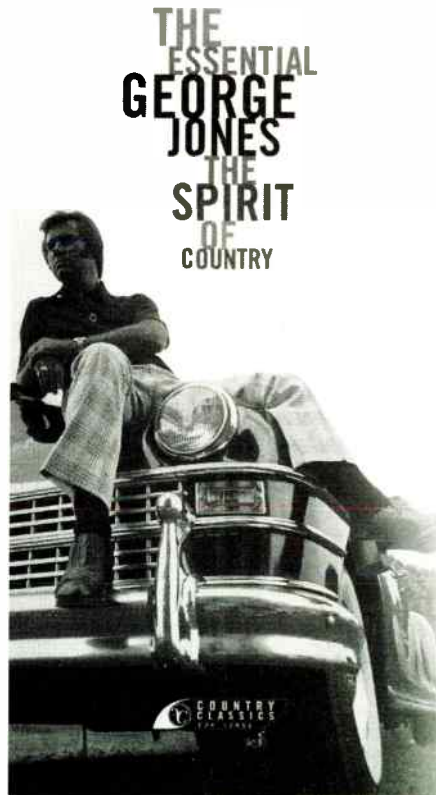
rounded by a lot of cities.

Anyway, country thinking seems to me to be about directness. In the country, and in country music as I've known it most of my life, people tend to talk and sing without too much posing. George and Merle are the perfect examples: they've always sung about stuff they pretty much care about, they've never dressed or talked as anything but themselves, and they've never gone to any great lengths to put themselves over. That hasn't translated into much of a show, of course, but these men *have* been one hell of an inspiration. Merle Haggard in particular has prompted me to ponder the nature of life and love more often than any writer I can think of; much more often than any musician.

Billy Ray Cyrus, whose show bears down on me once I've actually penetrated the stripopolis, gets me thinking, too, but not about love or life. Mostly he forces me to concentrate on *him*, and watch his crowd doing likewise with the steam coming out of their drawers. This shift of focus, from music and meaning to pose and personality, makes me realize something: that Billy Ray (and a lot of other modern Nashville-based singers) isn't country in exactly the way Elvis wasn't country. The cultural demarcation between country and rock 'n' roll isn't located in anything musical, you see, or even in the roots of the musician, but in the fact that a rock 'n' roll star, unlike a country singer, is an actor. He strikes a pose, he does a dance, he performs an *act*. His art *has* to be at least half artifice, or at least exaggeration. So really, Billy Ray, who works the country market, isn't country, but The Allman Brothers (for instance), who never worked the country market, were. Unless, of course, we change the definition of country from "the white man's blues" to, oh, say, "Western/rural imaged, anti-urban rock 'n' roll."

Glad I got that cleared up. Now I can hurtle back through six or seven culture zones (including The Allmans') to Tampa, where, just as in most other American cities, middle-class high school boys in baseball caps are shelling out hundreds of bucks for Garth Brooks tickets, rolling the 4x4's their daddies bought them, and figuring that country's so cool, it just might get them laid.

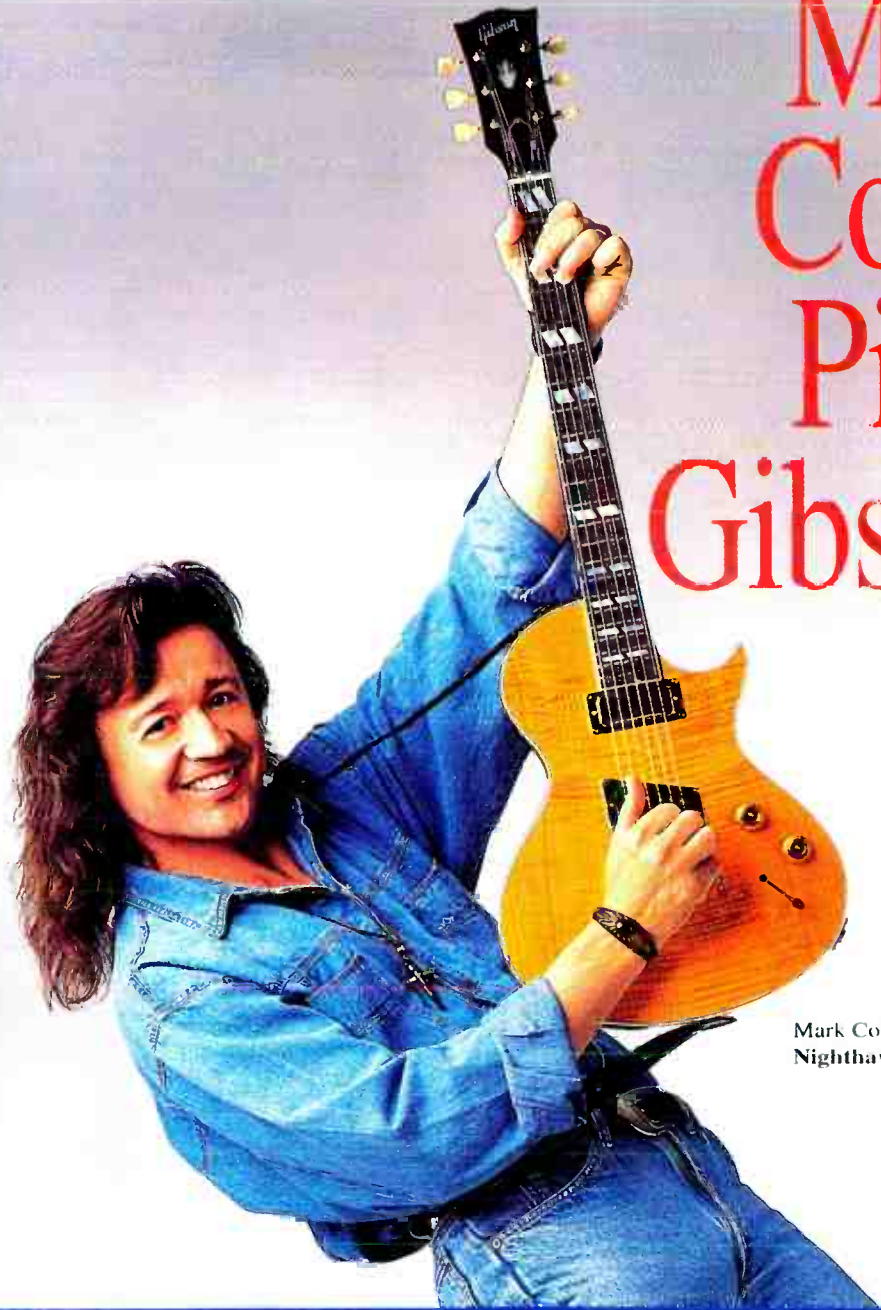
Editor-at-Large Patrick Carr has been with CMM since September 1972.



the bottom of America, you see, there's nothing to divide the swamp from its concrete future but a chainlink fence. Now and again a gator climbs over and goes poodle hunting, and the subdivision people call the cops; they're so far removed from country thinking that they imagine the shotguns under their beds are just for crackheads.

Which gets me thinking about country thinking, and also reminds me to tell you, in case you don't already know and might want to, that Florida is sort of the reverse of the usual geographic deal. Most places, you have a city surrounded by a lot of country; in Florida you have country sur-

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