

JON RANDALL, THE DERAILERS, PAUL BRANDT, JO DEE MESSINA

ALAN JACKSON *The CM Interview*

COUNTRYMUSIC

HAPPY HOLIDAYS! INSIDE: MERLE HAGGARD, LONESTAR, TRACE

COUNTRY'S
10
ESSENTIAL
CHRISTMAS
ALBUMS

HOLIDAY 1999
Issue 200

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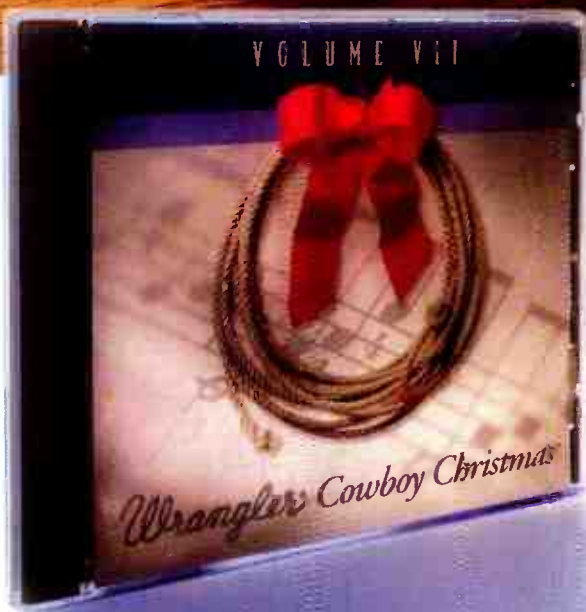
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COUNTRYMUSIC

Holiday 1999

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By Bill Friskies-Warren

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By Hazel Smith

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Lonestar finally finds big-time success—and hard-won respect—on the strength of an “amazing” hit.

By Michael McCall



From top: A Bacall-esque LeAnn Rimes strikes a glamorous pose; a down-home Alan Jackson plants his roots firmly in the country; a take-charge Emmylou Harris is no *Grievous Angel*.

THE BEST THINGS IN
LIFE ARE BASIC



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GLEN DINE
DANIEL LEE ANDREWS



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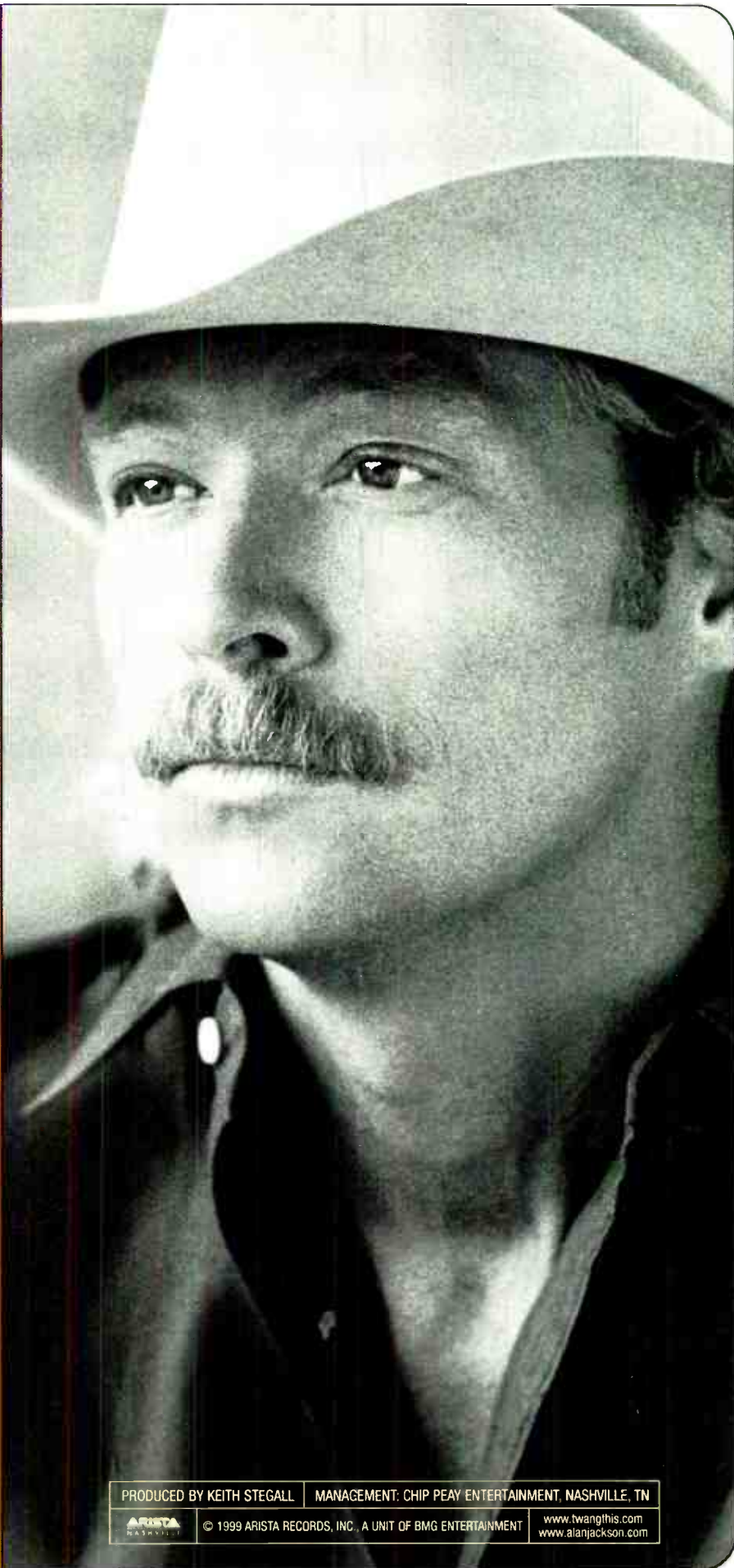
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'Tis the season! For many of us who work in and around the country music industry, it seems as if the holiday season begins around the time of the CMAs. After all, for a few lucky artists, winning a Country Music Association award is like an early Christmas gift. And during CMA week, we all get dressed up in our festive best to attend various awards dinners, which sort of puts us in the holiday mood. And then in the weeks right after the awards, a sleigh full of new albums hits the record stores (perfectly timed for the gift-buying season)—an early gift for fans hungry for new music.



Editor-at-large Robert Oermann (top) and columnist Hazel Smith (above) were my partners-in-schmooze at the BMI awards during CMA week.

THAT'S WHY IT WAS REALLY EASY to get in the spirit of this holiday issue. We finished it right after CMA week, and we were already breaking out the eggnog.

LeAnn Rimes is spending at least part of her holidays in Hollywood, her home base for nearly a year. If you did a double-take when you saw her glamorous photo on our cover, join the club—and wait till you see the other shots in our story. Little LeAnn has certainly grown up. She spoke to us about her life in L.A., her hopes for a film career and her other ambitious goals. But she definitely wants her fans to know music will always be a big part of her life.

Our rambunctious columnist Hazel Smith sat down with Alan Jackson to talk about the music in his life, namely his latest album of country classics. A week or so after he spoke with Hazel, Alan did his now-famous unscheduled "tribute" to George Jones on the CMA show. His obvious allegiance to traditional country is music to our ears. "Alan is the carrier of the country torch," Hazel declared.

We also visited Lee Roy Parnell's Texas ranch and took some gorgeous exclusive photos. He told us why the land is in his blood, and how he considers himself a caretaker of the earth. It's a poetic side of the fun-loving, redheaded honky-tonker that we hadn't seen before.

And we couldn't help but make a nod to the holiday season with our selection of 10 essential country Christmas albums. These classics are guaranteed to bring out the holiday spirit in everyone—even Scrooge would get holly-jolly.

On a lighter note, we also created our not-entirely-serious holiday wish list for country music—things we'd like to see more of, things we'd like to change and so on. It's totally fantasy, of course, but isn't fantasy a great part of Christmas?

Speaking of Christmas (warning—shameless promotion ahead), a subscription to *Country Music* makes a wonderful! Christmas gift for the country fans on your list!

Happy Holidays!

DEBORAH BARNES
Editor-in-Chief



Lee Roy Parnell poses for photographer Glen Rose during our shoot at his ranch.

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OTHER "VOICES"

YOUR COUNTRY'S GREATEST

Voices story was interesting and pretty much on target. The choices, including honorable mentions, are very good. However, one name was missing that should definitely have been there—Hank Snow. His unique style, list of hits and longevity should have surely placed him on this list.

Bobby Smasal
San Antonio, Texas

YOU HAVE A HELL OF A LOT

of nerve saying that Vern Gosdin has a better voice than Bill Monroe or Ralph Stanley (or Carter Stanley for that matter), or that Dolly Parton has a better voice than Wilma Lee Cooper or Molly O'Day or Rose Maddox. How can you ignore Jimmie Rodgers or Tommy Duncan? I do have to give you credit for trying to pick a Top 12 list. I couldn't

do it. My opinion would change every day. I do know this: None of the current crop would even come close. But I've still got my old 78s.

Lou Curtiss
San Diego, California

I ENJOY YOUR MAGAZINE

very much but how could you leave Hank Thompson off your list of 12 great voices? With his rich, clear voice, Hank is not only the best at interpreting upbeat and honky-tonk songs, he is unsurpassed even by the great George Jones at singing a beautiful country ballad. Just listen to "Yesterday's Girl" and "Tears Are Only Rain." No songs have ever been any better. I think you have done this great performer and his millions of fans a disservice by not recognizing his great vocal talent.

Marvin Foss
Louisville, Kentucky

I ENJOYED YOUR FEATURE

on country music's greatest voices. But why did Bob Cannon, in his salute to Hank Williams, feel it necessary to gratuitously slur Frankie Laine as a "greasy pop songster"? Laine is still going strong at 86 and recently released the fine album *Wheels of a Dream*. He has one of the best pop voices of the post-World War II era. Frankie Lane influenced—and was admired by—Elvis, Haggard and Marty Robbins. These country stalwarts' opinions about Laine count for a lot more than any vicious remarks from Bob Cannon.

Ben Sharav
New York, New York

THE OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

issue of *Country Music* broke my heart. I was so happy when it came in the mail and I saw the cover "The 12 Greatest Voices of All Time." I had no doubt at all that my lifetime favorite, Jim Reeves, would be there. I just couldn't believe it when he wasn't there at all! He was a big-time country music star back in the '50s and '60s and sold millions of records. Reeves still has countless loyal fans around the world. I know there has to be a reason he wasn't included on your list. Please help me understand. I have read the magazine from cover to cover and I still feel like crying.

Betty Bendig
Willoughby, Ohio

I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED

with your article "Country's Greatest Voices." I understand why the artists selected were picked, but I do feel one very important person was overlooked. Where exactly did Randy Owen of the supergroup Alabama land? I feel that Randy's voice defines country music by the way he sings so many different types of songs from "Mountain Music" to "There's No Way" to "I'm in a Hurry." After 42 No. 1 singles and winning an Artist of the Decade award, wouldn't you think he deserves to be mentioned somewhere in the article?

Christine Esposito
Bloomington, Illinois

YOUR LATEST ISSUE selected Johnny Cash, Ernest Tubb and Hank Williams as members of your list titled

"Greatest Voices of all Time." Really? No disrespect intended toward those men, but in their dreams could they ever sing as beautifully as men such as Eddy Arnold or Jim Reeves. I do commend you for selecting George Strait as one of the new generation of defining voices. But, again, you missed the point and a good opportunity. Mr. Strait deserves to be in the "All Time" list. His record over the last 20 years has earned him that honor.

Sylvia Council
South, Florida

"GORGEOUS" GEORGE

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, thank you for putting gorgeous George Strait on your October/November cover. George is a true southern gentleman and deserves every honor he gets. He represents country music like nobody else could right now. As far as I'm concerned—and I'm sure a few thousand other women would agree—you could put that handsome face on the cover of every issue! Love your magazine, keep up the good work.

Brenda Brock
Washburn, Tennessee

COUNTRY'S MULTITASKER

THANK YOU FOR YOUR STORY on Marty Stuart. His new album, *The Pilgrim*, and writing the score for Billy Bob Thornton's movie is drawing some much-deserved attention to this renaissance man! I've been following Marty's career since the very beginning and I'm happy to see he is getting the respect and attention he deserves. Marty, you're the best and we love you!

Pamela Stoughton
Woburn, Massachusetts

'BAMA BOOSTER

I HAVE READ Craig Havighurst's review of Alabama's *Twentieth Century* CD and I have to disagree with Mr.

Havighurst about the CD being neither pop nor country music. This CD is definitely country music performed by a legendary group. The only song that sounds pop is "God Must Have Spent a Little More Time on You." The rest of the songs sound like the old Alabama style of country music. This album is fun and sounds like the Alabama music I grew up with all my life.

Nicole Hattrich
Newington, Georgia

STYLE WATCHERS

WHILE IT'S INTERESTING

to read the blurbs about the new artists in your fashion special, I don't understand why you waste all of those pages on clothes, hair and makeup. If I want to read *In Style*, I'll buy *In Style*. I get *Country Music* to read about country artists. Why are you wasting our time with this fluff?

Andie LaCroix
New Orleans, Louisiana

I LOVE YOUR FASHION SECTION!

Just one question—where can I find a guy like hunky Clint Daniels?

Jeri Anderson
St. Louis, Missouri

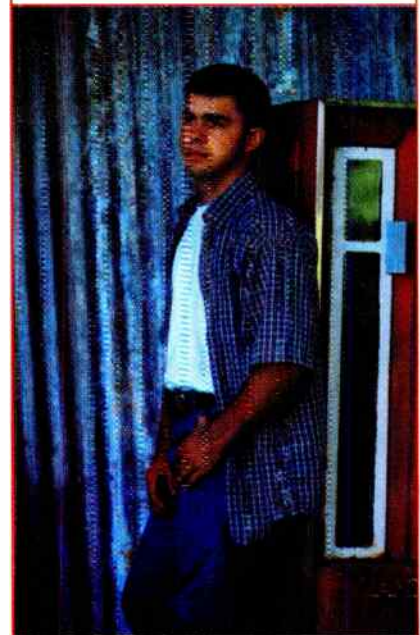
THE PETERSON PRINCIPLE

JUST WANTED TO SAY I thought the article on Michael Peterson in the August/September issue was great. Having met Michael at Fan Fair and another concert, I think he is one of country's greats. He is such a nice person and a great entertainer. I wish a long life and success for this fantastic person and entertainer. He truly cares about his fans and other people.

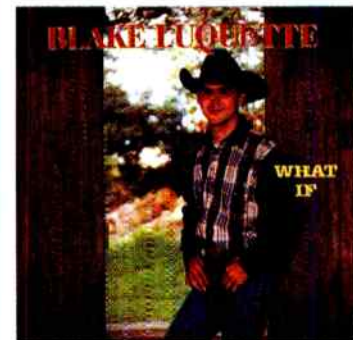
Donna Callahan
New Port Richey, Florida

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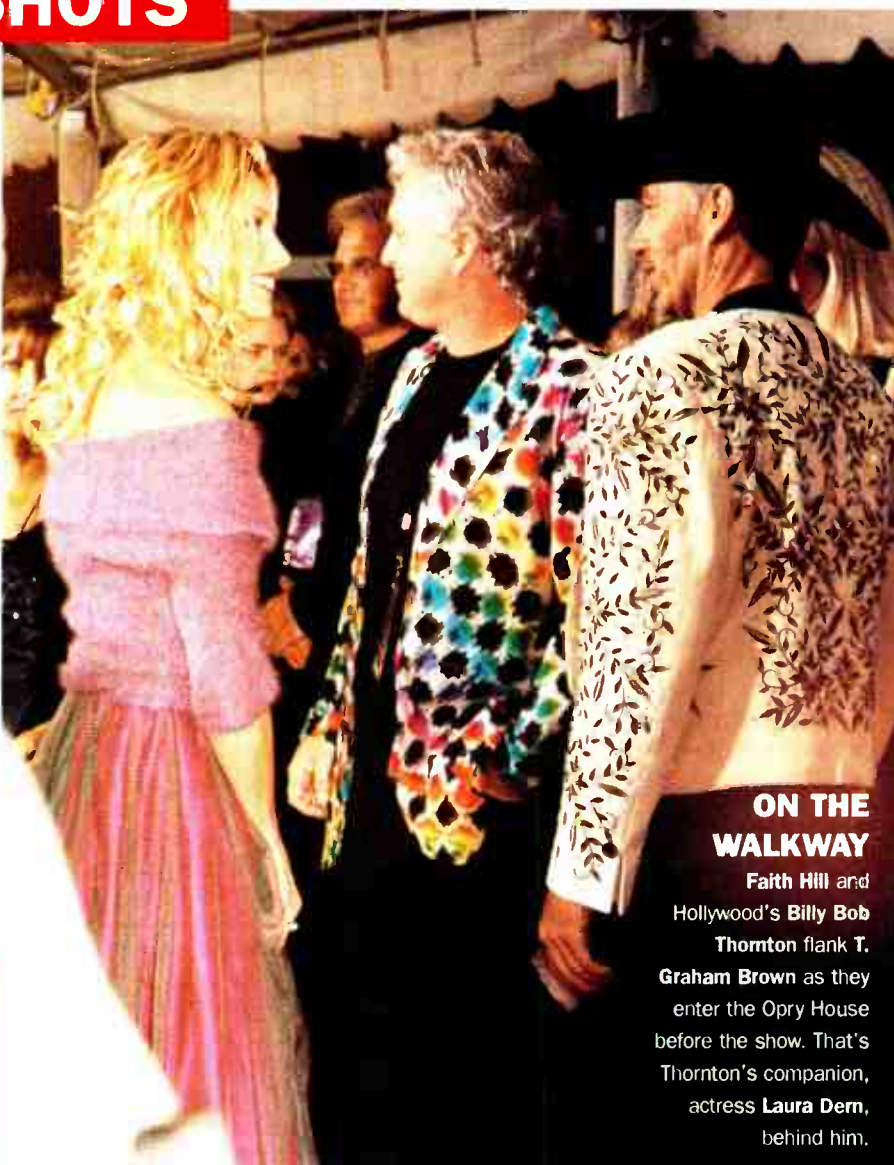
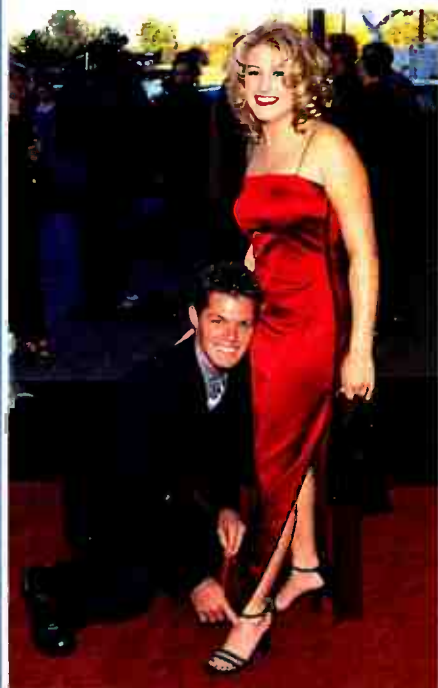
Country on the Town

By Robert K. Oermann



CMA SNAPSHOTS

Country's most glamorous night is the CMA awards. At this year's show, pop stars **'N Sync**, **Jewel** and **Britney Spears** glimmered alongside **Kenny Rogers**, **Reba** and **Brooks and Dunn**. ▲ "I'm no **Patty Loveless**, but you're no **Porter Wagoner**," joked **Dolly** to **Vince**, the show's geriatric host. **Alan Jackson** drew a standing ovation when he inserted **George Jones'** "Choices" into his performance (top right). Photographers had a field day before the show, as stars emerged from limousines in their finery. ▼ **David Kersh** obliges **Lila McCann** with some footwear adjustment.

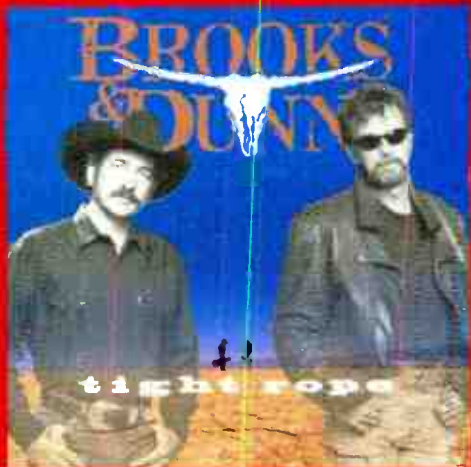


ON THE WALKWAY

Faith Hill and Hollywood's **Billy Bob Thornton** flank **T. Graham Brown** as they enter the Opry House before the show. That's Thornton's companion, actress **Laura Dern**, behind him.

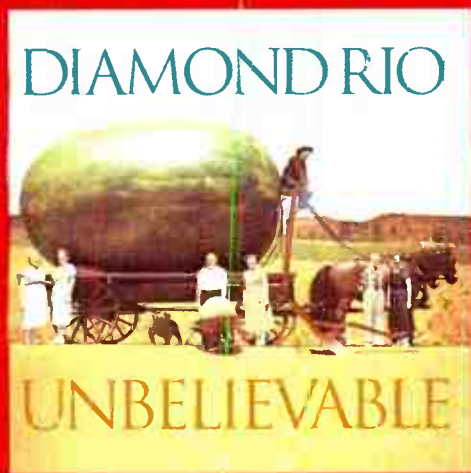


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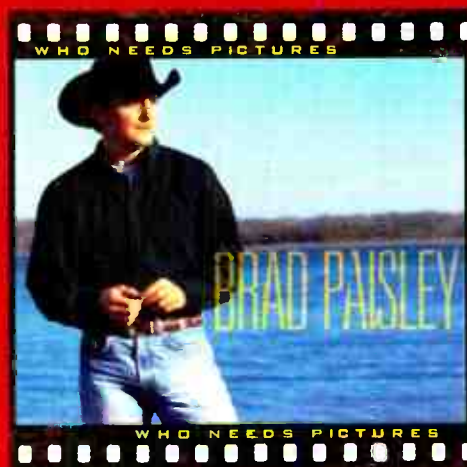


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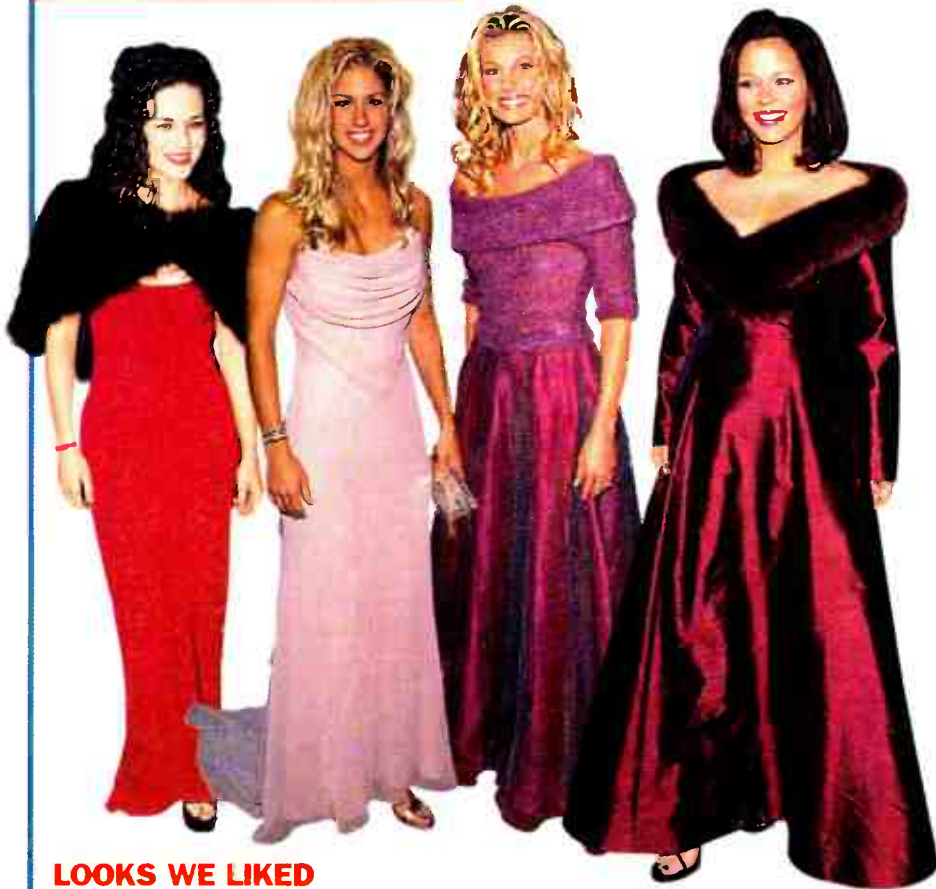
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enhanced CD

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LOOKS WE LIKED

▲ Faux-fur trim was everywhere at the CMAs, as **Sherrie Austin** demonstrates in her stole over dramatic crimson. **Shannon Brown** glows in classical pink drape. **Faith Hill**'s off-the-shoulder ensemble radiates shades of rose and lavender. Just weeks after delivering her first child, **Sara Evans** is a Victorian vision in mauve.



STAR SHINE

IN THE WINNERS CIRCLE

► From top right: **Tim McGraw** discovers a CMA trophy makes an excellent head-scratcher; **Vince Gill** extends his lead as the most awarded CMA artist; **Martina McBride**'s win takes her breath away; **Dixie Chicks** earn Single, Video and Group honors. Below, pink-clad **Shanla Twain** clutches her International Award, grins in her red ribbon as BMI's Songwriter of the Year and displays her trophy as CMA Entertainer of the Year.



TWO GREAT GENERATIONS

▲ Papa **Mel Tillis** shows off daughter **Pam** on the walkway. Always a terrific dresser, Pam combines this lavender velvet evening coat with a pale turquoise gown and ultra simple jewelry for a stunning effect.

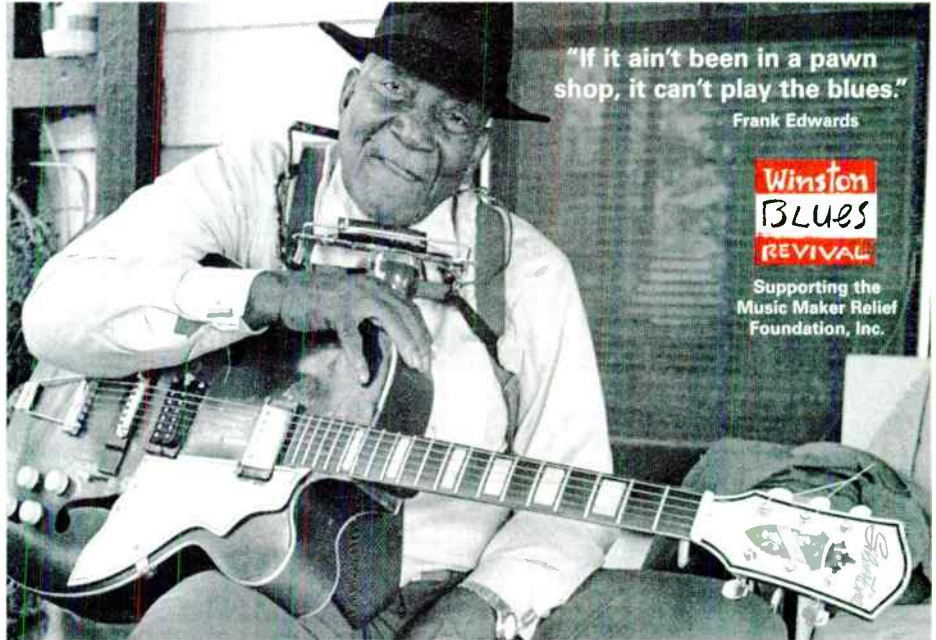


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CURTIS HILBON; 4A: MURPHY/GERBERA; C: PT'S HILBON; 6: PATRICIA PRESLEY; NOBBELO; GERBERA

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PAR, POLITICS & PARTIES



▲ **Tracy Byrd** supports the well-funded presidential candidacy of fellow Texan **George W. Bush** by going "on the stump" with him in Iowa. ▲ **Mark Wills** takes to the links to benefit the T.J. Martell Foundation. ◀ **Lee Ann Womack** juggles the tenpins for the same organization's fight against leukemia, cancer and AIDS. ▼ Our own **Hazel Smith** was among the attendees of Country Music Week's most lavish label party under the big BMG tent on Music Row. Here she greets Arista Records' hot newcomer **Brad Paisley** and top executive **Strauss Zelnick**, who is the president and CEO of BMG Entertainment.



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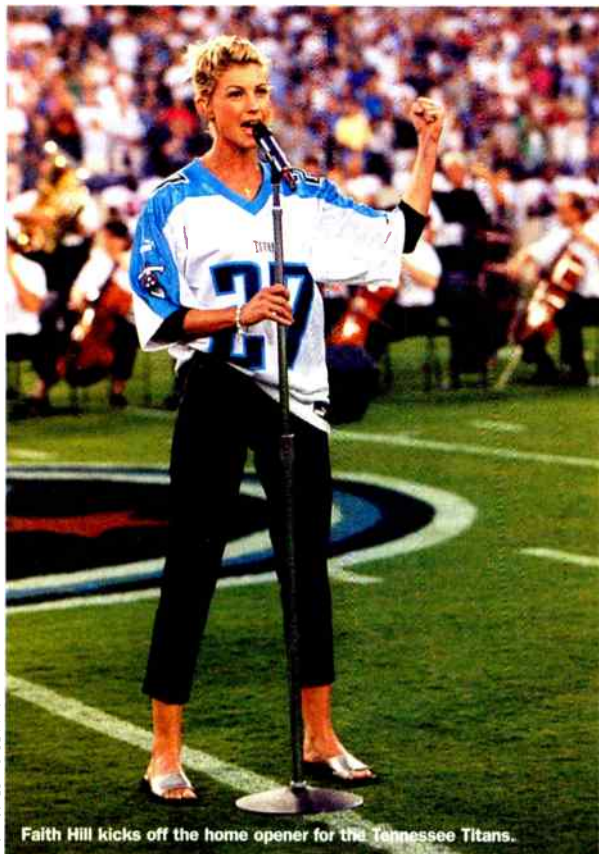
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THE BUZZ

BY HAZEL SMITH



Faith Hill kicks off the home opener for the Tennessee Titans.

DONNY JONES PHOTOGRAPHY

Oh, Say Can...

Faith Hill and 67,000 more people turned out at the brand new Adelphia Coliseum in Nashville and saw the Tennessee Titans whip the socks off the Atlanta Falcons during the first-ever NFL game played at the stadium. Faith sang the National Anthem wearing an oversized Titans T-shirt and even looked good in it. Lady that she is, Faith and youngster **Jessica Andrews**, who was her opening act, wrapped up their summer show with a party that ended up in a cake fight. Meanwhile, fans are taking books to

Faith's concerts in support of her literacy program, to the tune of 30,000 a month. The books go to underprivileged kids.

Aubrie Doll The blue-eyed doll **Jason Sellers** takes in his arms and places in the convertible in his video "A Matter of Time" is his beautiful 8-year-old daughter, **Aubrie**. Aubrie's mom is **Lee Ann Womack**.

Golf's Good Guy Plumb perfect **Vince Gill** raised an incredible \$400,000 for Junior Golf in Tennessee with his

annual Vinny tourney. Vince, one of the most loved stars in show biz, brought the house down at the Grand Ole Opry recently when he stormed the stage and sang harmony with **Little Jimmy Dickens** on "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose." Wish you'd been there. The crowd went ballistic.

Martina Matinee

Martina McBride was honored by RCA when her album *Evolution* was certified double platinum. All six singles released

from the CD went Top 5, with three songs going all the way to No. 1. Have you seen the movie *Rumatawy Bride* and heard Martina sing her huge hit, "I Love You," while **Julia Roberts** and **Richard Gere** make out? Martina, **John** and their two girls went to see the movie. Martina said she wanted to stand up in the theater and say, "Hey, that's me singing!" Friends, they don't come no nicer than Martina.

Busy Dolly Dolly Parton completed the made-for-TV movie *Blue Valley Songbird*, and went right into the

recording studio and recorded a bluegrass album with pal **Alison Krauss** harmonizing. Check your local listings for the time the movie will be aired on the Lifetime channel. You will want to see Miss Dolly in the movie wearing a wig of trashy red. If you're scratching your head about Dolly recording a bluegrass album, just stop. Let's not forget the late Bill Monroe's standard "Mule Skinner Blues" was Dolly's first big hit record.

Help George Strait needs your help. He wants to know in which cities you fans would like him to appear in 2000, and who you would like to be his opening act. Here's what you do to be a part of choosing next year's lineup: Get on your computer. Punch in www.georgestrait.com and help George. I know lots of ways I'd be willing to help the Strait man.

Tons of Fun Tons of fun hanging out with **Brooks and Dunn** talking about *Tight Rope*, their new CD with a lucky 13 songs aboard. There's six by Brooks, six by Dunn, and "Missing You," the first single, which they didn't write. Where did the title come from? "There's a circus tightrope," explained Kix. "And a cowboy tightrope." They couldn't fool me, 'cause I'd done my homework. The best line in the entire album is from a song Dunn cowrote titled "You'll

Always Be Loved By Me." The line: "Trust is a tightrope we all have to walk." Now that is some songwriting by one Mr. Ronnie Dunn.

Hillbilly Hearts

When the **Dixie Chicks** headlined their first concert in Charlotte, North Carolina, the trio donated the entire \$100,000 to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

Another Good Heart

Kenny Rogers grew up in a Houston ghetto. Rogers presented a check for \$5,000 to start a scholarship fund in his name for some lucky kid who lives in the old neighborhood.



Bryan White and Erika Page

KATHY HUTCHINS PHOTOGRAPHY

Hide and Find Cutie **Bryan White** says when his fiancée, soap star **Erika Page**, leaves after a visit, he finds notes she's written hidden all around the house. Bryan thinks it's sweet of Erika, but sometimes he gets a little embarrassed when one of his buddies finds a scrap of paper with sweet nothings written by his betrothed. Hey, Bryan: Let's be enterprising. Let's me and you put the notes in a book and sell 'em. *

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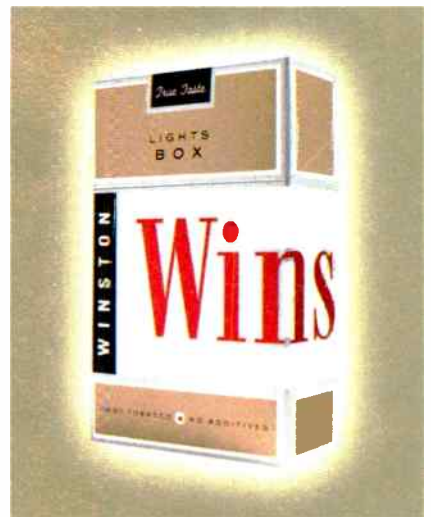
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Some

Country's girl-next-door is now an L.A. woman, all set to become a movie star. LeAnn Rimes is ready for her close-up—and much more.

By Bill Friskics-Warren

LEANN RIMES FIRST CAPTURED THE WORLD'S ATTENTION three years ago with her multi-octave range and soulful-beyond-her-years voice. It was that voice that brought her phenomenal fame in both country and pop music, and won her legions of fans young and old, especially among the ever-loyal country music audience. But after settling into a new home in Los Angeles, and making no secret of her ambition for film and television roles, Rimes has some fans wondering whether their down-home singing sensation has gone Hollywood.

No mistake about it, Rimes is hoping to turn heads on the silver screen. Just after the first of the year, she will begin filming an as-yet-untitled movie for Warner Bros. in which she will have the starring role. "We're just rewriting

LeAnn Gem

the script and getting it all finished up to start casting," says Rimes, speaking by phone from Dallas. Although the singer demurs from sharing any details about the movie's plot, she confirms that it will be a drama and that the film will have music in it. She adds that she will also be active at every stage of the creative process.

Rimes' Hollywood move may have surprised some of her fans, but the singer says that she has always viewed acting as one of her creative outlets. At age 6, she auditioned for, and almost won, the lead in *Annie II* on Broadway. She made her stage debut at age 7 in Dallas, in a musical production of *A Christmas Carol*. More recently, she was a guest on the hit series *Moesha*, and has appeared on several other TV shows.

"I've always loved to act, and now I'm getting more into that part of the business," Rimes explains. "I had two offers on films that were great movies, but I didn't think they were right for me to start out with, so I waited for this film to start next year.

"It's kind of hard for me because I already have a career," Rimes continues. "I have to build on that. I'm not just a normal actor or actress coming up from the bottom. I have to choose the

Nashville for L.A. played a major part in creating the speculation that she's abandoning country music for Hollywood.

"A lot of people have asked me about that," Rimes admits. "But I think that once I do a film and they see that I'm still out there singing they won't be as worried. I'm not gonna stop touring or stop making records."

Rimes does, however, concede that she plans to curtail her concert schedule. "I'll definitely be slowing down my touring," she says. "I'll probably do 30 to 50 shows next year, compared to the

118 I did last year. I'll never tour like that again. But I'm not going to quit touring or putting out albums, either.

This film will take place in between all of that. My music is definitely gonna come first, because that's who I am."

The biggest impact that Rimes' upcoming movie will have on

Leaving," the theme for the movie *Anywhere But Here*.

Now that her disc is done, though, Rimes' mind is back on her movie career, something that she's given plenty of thought. Witness, for example, the people she hopes to emulate as an actor. Rather than citing such starlet-come-latelys as Kate Winslet and Ashley Judd, the first name that comes out of Rimes' mouth is that of veteran actor Tom Hanks. "He's amazing," gushes Rimes. "I would love to work with Tom Hanks at some point.

"I just saw *Philadelphia* for the first time," she adds. "I never realized how great an actor Tom Hanks was until that movie. *Forrest Gump*, every movie he's picked, whether it be comedy or drama, always has some great meaning. He's just an amazing actor. It's really heartfelt with him. You can really tell it's coming from inside of him."

Rimes also numbers Jessica Tandy, Meryl Streep and Shirley McLaine as role models—and not just for their acting prowess, but for their business acumen as well. "There are a lot of great young

have always loved to act, and now I'm getting more into that part of the business."

right thing for me. So if I do this film, and I don't do another one for a year or two, that's fine with me. But I am gonna continue. I want to see how this first movie goes, but I can tell you, I'm loving it. I'm really enjoying it."

Life in Los Angeles seems to suit Rimes, as well. "I love it there," she enthuses. "L.A. is such a big place. There's always something to do. I love Dallas and I love Nashville, just because they're so hometown and so laid-back. It's always wonderful to come home to them because that's how I've grown up. But I also love big cities. I'm a little bit of a country girl, and a little bit of a big-city girl."

Until Rimes and her mother started leasing a house in L.A. nine months ago, they were building a home in Nashville. The two have since sold their Music City property and now divide their time between L.A. and Dallas, where Rimes was raised. Her decision to leave

her music, she says, stems from the album's soundtrack, which may stretch her a bit stylistically as a singer. "The music in this film is more rock 'n' roll and pop because that's what the script calls for," she explains. "So it's gonna take me to a different level as far as that goes. But besides that, making this movie definitely won't affect my music."

Rimes is certainly no stranger to the pop mainstream: Among other things, her 1997 single, "How Do I Live," spent a record-setting 69 weeks on the *Billboard* pop chart. But her new album includes mostly traditional country material. The album title and complete track listings weren't available when this story went to press, but according to Rimes' publicist, 10 of the disc's 13 songs will find her interpreting country chestnuts. The first single, the Al Anderson/Jeffrey Steele-penned "Big Deal," is twang-friendly as well. The only song on the album that promises to take Rimes into pop-diva territory is Diane Warren's "Leaving's Not

actors coming up today, but I tend to go for the older actors, I guess for the choices they've made."

But not even these women—or Hanks, for that matter—can eclipse Barbra Streisand in Rimes' eyes. "She has done film and been able to handle everything else; she's been a great businesswoman and a true artist," says Rimes. "And she always seems to surprise people with what she does.

"She's had the kind of career path I want to take, to be able to do a little bit of everything," Rimes continues, alluding to Streisand's work as an actor, director and singer. "I mean, I'd really love to do Broadway one day. I started in theater when I was young. I'd love to do that again. I would also love to sing every kind of music anyone would let me sing, because I've grown up listening to everything. In that sense, Barbra Streisand is probably the person that I most admire."

As prescient as they are ambitious, these comments are born of the whirlwind





HOLLYWOOD AND FINE "I love it [in L.A.]," says Rimes, who regularly makes the photo-op rounds with other Hollywood types. Clockwise from above: Rimes at a Beverly Hills fundraiser; at K-Mart's Kids Race Against Drugs in L.A.; at Vanity Fair's Oscar bash; with Elton John at Andre Agassi's Grand Slam for Children press conference in Las Vegas.



KATY HUTCHINS PHOTOGRAPHY (4)

Rimes has been riding since 1996, when, as a 13-year-old, her retro smash "Blue" took the country music world by storm. Her breakthrough album of the same name has

Early Years—the latter a collection of odds and ends recorded when Rimes was still unknown outside Texas—have gone multi-platinum as well. *You Light Up My Life* was also the first album ever to debut at No. 1 on the *Billboard* pop, country and contemporary Christian charts.

Rimes also has won awards from most sectors of the music industry,

some of its song titles right), were hardly artistic triumphs. Perhaps because of this, Rimes wants to make sure that her acting career is both commercially and artistically unassailable.

"I've reached all the goals I've wanted to reach these past four or five years, but I'm always striving for more," she admits. "Every day something new pops into my mind: I could do this next or I could do that next. I want to grow more and more and show people different sides of myself, whether it's different kinds of music, different kinds of movies or different kinds of television.

"Hopefully, people will grow with me, because I'm definitely not gonna be stuck in one place all my life," Rimes adds, not defensively, but as someone who senses that the sky's the limit and isn't about to settle for anything less. "The reason I got into this business was to be creative.

've reached all the goals I've wanted to reach these past four or five years, but I'm always striving for more.'

since moved nearly 7 million units. Its successors, *You Light Up My Life: Inspirational Songs* and *Unchained Melody: The*

including CMAs, ACMs, *Billboard* awards and Grammys. But despite these triumphs, some of her projects, such as the anachronistic hodgepodge *You Light Up My Life* (an album that didn't even get

Sometimes people get lost in the business part of it and they really don't get to be creative anymore. I want to be able to continue my career, and more than anything, I want to be a true artist." *

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BUCK WITH A BANG

With a little help from Buck Owens, twangy hipsters the Derailers add sauce to the Bakersfield sound.

IT SOUNDED TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE. Country legend Buck Owens had decided—after booking Austin swing-ably upstarts the Derailers several crowd-pleasing times at his Bakersfield nightclub, the Crystal Palace—to cut one of his originals with the spunky quartet. Unfortunately, when the band dropped by the Palace for a New Year’s ’98 gig, a frustrated Owens reported that—after weeks of cubbyhole searching—said song was lost, MIA, nowhere to be found. The group was chagrined, to say the least. Especially frontman Tony Villanueva, whose booming baritone and retro-etched compositions would have provided the perfect compliment to the big Buckaroo’s seasoned picking and singing. Alas, the union was not fated to be.

Or was it?

A publishing house pal of Villanueva’s had an idea. He’d co-penned a track a few years back, a real vintage-styled little number called “Play Me the Waltz of the Angels” that, the writer believed, demanded an old voice tandem-coupled

to a young one. The Derailers heard it and were stunned. And it calls for a bit of background, explains Villanueva, already an ardent Opry archivist. “‘Waltz of the Angels’ was a song Wynn Stewart recorded, then Lefty Frizzell covered it.” Impromptu, he warbles the first few heartbreaking bars. “Anyway,” he carches himself, “it’s a really beautiful song and it was a big hit for Lefty—like everything else was. But the *new* track starts out with a little of the melody from ‘Waltz,’ and it tells the story of a guy playing a party for some older folks, and one older man seems very unhappy to be there. So the young musician asks him, ‘Is there something I could play for you to help you have a good time?’ And the older man stands up and says, ‘Play me the waltz of the angels/So I can close my eyes and pretend/So I can dance with my angel again.’ It was the song that his former sweetheart, who passed away, fell in love to.” Villanueva sighs placidly. “I just thought it was a pretty universal and ultimately *beautiful* song.”

Fingers crossed, the undaunted Derailer passed the demo tape on to Owens. Days, weeks passed; the band had put the finishing touches on their own version of “Waltz.” Then: the call they’d been waiting for. Owens was moved, was eager to lend his voice to the dirty, which—at the 11th hour—was tacked on to the Derailers’ new *Full Western Dress* sock-hop for Sire Records. “But Buck said, ‘There’s something you may not know. I played guitar on the first “Waltz” on Wynn Stewart’s original record,’” Villanueva recalls. *Kismet*, he thought; this was meant to happen. Not that you could tell oldies apart from the Derailers’ reverent *Full Western* catalog. “Long on Love,” “The Lost and Found” and leadoff single “The Right Place” sound as tangy, twangy and lyrically gosh-dang-y as Owens’ definitive “Tiger By the Tail” chestnut. Forays into ‘60s pop—“Just to Spend the Night With You” and a shiny rake on “Then She Kissed Me”—sound just as assured and fit their echoed schematic as nicely as simple jigsaw pieces. The album title, in fact, bounced back to Buck as well. An elderly acquaintance, while studying the obit photo of hallmark Buckaroo guitarist Don Rich, mentioned to the members, “There’s nothing more beautiful than a man in full western dress.” The term stuck.

All this serendipity still flabbergasts the overtly humble Villanueva. “I feel good about having those connections,” he sighs. “I feel good that Buck played the original guitar part on ‘Waltz of the Angels.’ I feel good that he’s been so supportive of us over our five-year career. And I feel a connection to Don Rich by using that *Full Western Dress* title. These things just all add up to make a really good deal.” The crooner had just returned from playing—with fellow Derailers Brian Hofeldt (guitar, co-vocals), drummer Mark Horn and bassist Ed Adkins—Owens’ 70th birthday bash in Bakersfield. And a 15-minute short (and, in edited form, a video clip for “The Right Place”) had just been wrapped, starring the Derailers as a small-town combo that unwittingly foils a bank robbery.

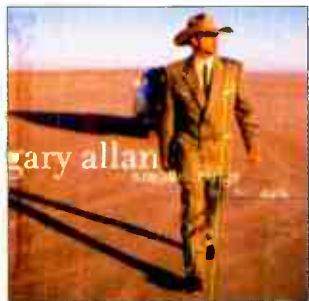
“We kinda goof things up like

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World Radio History

(continued from p. 26)

Scooby-Doo," Villanueva says. But one question remains: How was it, finally logging session time with Owens?

There's a dramatic pause. Clearly, things didn't go exactly as planned. "Unfortunately, we had to send Buck a tape," Villanueva concludes. "But he

was with us in the studio. We had a picture of him up when we recorded our part, although it wasn't quite the same. But I'm just thrilled to have him on there—he put so much heart into it, I was blown away the first time I heard it. And I can't tell you how much of an honor this is, him sharing with us that talent, that gift, that wisdom." —Tom Lanham



READY AND WILLIN'

A model of persistence, Jon Randall hopes the third time is the charm.

JON RANDALL'S BEEN AROUND AWHILE. Although most country fans don't know it, his latest CD, *Willin'*, on the independent Eminent Records label, is the Texas native's third attempt. He released *Greater Need* on BNA in 1996 and recorded *Cold Coffee*

Morning for Asylum Records in 1998. On the surface it seemed Randall had the goods to be a superstar: provocative songs, soulful delivery and boyish good looks. Unfortunately, artist development being what it is in Nashville these days, both of Randall's previous projects languished at the bottom of the charts.

The good news is that *Willin'* is Randall's best work to date. This time, the former member of Emmylou Harris' Nash Ramblers says he had the creative flexibility to do the record *his* way.

"It is kind of interesting that it actually became a record because it wasn't supposed to be," Randall admits between bites of a cheeseburger at Nashville's Brown's Diner. "I have this buddy that was building a studio. We've been friends and played music together in every way, shape and form for the past 10 years. After I left RCA, I would just go over to his studio and play around because he was trying to learn how to use all this new gear he

bought. I'd call some other musician friends of mine and say, 'You know, I've got a couple songs I've written. Could you guys come over and play on them?' I never thought about having boundaries on what I could record. We were just doing it for us."

When Randall's deal with Asylum fell through, his manager, Monty Hitchcock, had just released Harris' Grammy-nominated *Spyboy* on his new Eminent label. Hitchcock loved Randall's new album so much, he decided to release it.

One listen to *Willin'* immediately evokes feelings of pain, fear and loneliness. It's country the way country is meant to be. "Welcome to my self-consciousness," the Grammy-winning artist (for his work on *At the Ryman* with the Nash Ramblers) says with a wry smile. Randall leans forward in the worn booth seat and whispers loudly, "I love sad songs—love them. I grew up listening to a lot of bluegrass and those old folk tunes that are all really negative. In most of those old songs your lover breaks your heart. Then you kill her and you throw her in the river and you go turn yourself in. I mean, there's 50 songs about killing your girlfriend! I grew up singing these beautiful melodies and it took me until I was in my teens before I thought, *You know, these songs are morbid! These are really, really morbid!* When I started working with Emmylou I found out she's the same way. We fed off of each other all the time, you know. We'd just try to make each other cry and that was the deal."

Harris lends her rich voice to "Can't Hurt Anymore." *Willin'* also features guest vocals by Kim Richey ("Can't Find the Words," "Blew Me Away") and Randall's wife, Lorrie Morgan ("Lonely Street"). Radio airplay is tough to come by on an independent label, but Randall doesn't care.

"I've tried the major label deals, and during that time I tried really hard to stay on this integrity-ridden high horse," he says. "If you're going to be on a major label in Nashville you're going to have to compromise what you do. There's no way around it. I don't care who you are; there's no way around it. And I just got to a point to where I wasn't willing to do that anymore. It was a joke. It makes much more sense for me *not* to spend a half-million dollars trying to break myself into radio." Randall smiles happily. "This is what I'm supposed to do, and it feels good." —Tamara Saviano

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Unfettered Angel

Shedding management, label and status quo, Emmylou Harris is soaring with a prolific burst of creative energy.

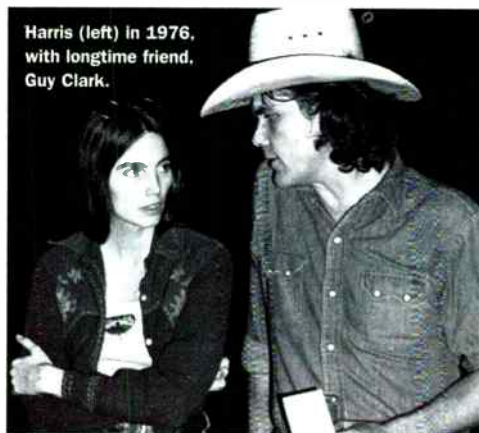
By Bobby Reed

WHEN GUY CLARK SPEAKS, people listen. Just ask his fans, who take the Texas troubadour's achingly honest, worldly wise lyrics to heart. Or ask friend and folk icon Emmylou Harris, who took a recent word of advice from Clark as the inspiration to reevaluate her entire career.

"It was Guy who said, 'You need to write your next record, and I don't care if it takes you five years to do it.' And I knew he was right," Harris explains. "That's why, a year and a half ago, I said, 'OK, I'm going to let my band go, I'm going to leave my management, I'm going to leave my record company, and I am going to just put myself in a different place and think differently about what I want to do.'"

That declaration of independence and outside-the-box thinking is paying off in spades creatively for Harris. She's already written several songs for the album Clark inspired, and although she has no plans to enter the studio anytime soon, she has no shortage of projects to occupy her time. "Oddly enough, I've ended up being busier than I've probably ever been," she says.

Busy, indeed. Within the past two years, Harris has added an impressive number of projects to her resume, including *Trio II*, the follow-up to the classic 1987 *Trio* album with Linda Ronstadt and Dolly Parton, and *Western Wall: The Tucson Sessions*, a duet album with



Harris (left) in 1976, with longtime friend, Guy Clark.

ART: FEN AMBER WAVES

Ronstadt. Harris also served as co-executive producer and contributed to four cuts on *Return of the Grievous Angel: A Tribute to Gram Parsons*, and added her inimitable vocals to a host of projects by other artists.

Despite all the collaborations, Harris has changed her modus operandi. "I want to focus on my writing. That's really the only thing, artistically, that I'm interested in right now," says the never-complacent music veteran. Her classic renditions of such songs as "Together Again" and "If I Could Only Win Your Love" are the stuff of music legend, but with the exception of the semi-autobiographical 1985 album *The Ballad of Sally Rose*, which she cowrote with Paul Kennerley, the 52-year-old vocalist has spent her entire career as a stylist and interpreter of other writers' songs. She's now absorbed with the challenge of penning her own material—but not with what might happen once she's ready to record it without a major label deal.

"I'm concerned about the writing. I'm not worried about the recording. I'm not

even worried about labels," she says matter-of-factly. "There are all kinds of people in my life who can make records. I think the days when you have to have a major record label are gone, especially for an artist that has sort of lived in the trenches, like I have. Major labels have difficulty knowing how to market an act like myself.

"Nowadays, if you don't sell a couple of million records, the major labels don't have a clue how to market you. They depend on radio, and right now, radio is not my friend," Harris states emphatically. "[But] I'm living proof that there is life and career—and music to be made—after radio, thank the Lord and my incredible fan base."

In the meantime, Harris has plenty of other projects to advance. The new tribute disc is the latest example of her tireless promotion of Gram Parsons' material and musical outlook. Parsons, who died in 1973, was a mentor to the young Harris, who toured with him and contributed vocals to his two solo records, 1972's *GP* and the posthumously released *Grievous Angel*.

The Parsons tribute includes alternative country stalwarts Lucinda Williams and Whiskeytown, as well as rockers like Beck and the Pretenders. Harris is obviously pleased with the eclectic lineup she assembled.

"I felt that these are artists who know what they're doing, and they travel their own path. And that was one of the criteria for wanting them to be involved, because I think that's what Gram did," she notes. "Even if you don't see an

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d



Rethinking her career has given Harris freedom to work on a variety of projects. "I've ended up being busier than I've probably ever been," she says.



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obvious musical similarity between Gram and these other artists, what they have is a unique sound and a unique musical vision." A sharp edge creeps into Harris' Alabama lilt. "In fact, I wanted definitely to keep it from being an obvious thing. I mean, maybe it could have been *Nashville Pays Tribute to Gram Parsons*, but I felt that that would've been a bit hypocritical." In other words, why ask Nashville's stars to pay tribute to a musician who couldn't get arrested on Music Row, and who colored outside the lines in a way that's eschewed by most mainstream country artists?

In the initial stages of the project, Harris had mixed feelings about adding yet another tribute disc to the already glutted marketplace. Her reservations dissipated when she heard the artists' creative interpretations of Parsons' tunes.

"You get to hear people who normally do nothing but their own songs sing somebody else's song. You get to hear even more what makes them a unique singer, because they're required to take one step away from those songs that are so connected at the hip with them and sing somebody else's phrasing, somebody else's melody, and somebody else's life, and make it their own. And yet, you've got this marriage of two completely different entities. It was wonderful because, obviously, the songs on this album retain their Gram-ness, but they're married to these people who are so recognizable in their own sounds."

The past year has also been noteworthy because it marked Harris' return to the charts. *Trio II* peaked at No. 4 on the *Billboard* country album chart and is well on its way to going gold. Fans waited 12 years for the sequel to the groundbreaking *Trio* album, which had yielded three

enormous hit singles and added a Grammy, an ACM and a CMA award to the singers' trophy shelves.

Harris isn't completely surprised by the album's success. "I don't mean to sound arrogant, and I'm not, it's just that every time I was out and in touch with fans, that's what everybody wanted to know—if there was going to be another *Trio* record," she says with amazement.

The disc received airplay on Americana stations and National Public Radio, but mainstream country stations shunned it. To see Harris get really animated, just ask her about the state of contemporary radio.

"I miss turning on country radio and hearing something *great*," she says, biting off the last word. "The best thing that's happening right now is the fact that George Jones is actually getting

played on the radio." Harris' voice fills with emotion as she recounts the experience of listening to Jones' *Cold Hard Truth* album. "I found myself starting to cry because I remembered what it was like to listen to George Jones on the radio, and how I could be so affected and so moved, and why I got into country music in the first place—how it moved me. And that's why I'm so offended by a lot of the stuff on country radio, which is not washed in the blood and has nothing to do with the dark side of life, or grown-up feelings or the sanctity of what it's like to be alive on this planet."

A new work chock-full of grown-up feelings is Harris and Ronstadt's *Western Wall* album, on which the singers interpret serious works by such songwriters as Jackson Browne, Sinead O'Connor and Bruce Springsteen. The disc was recorded by noted rock producer Glyn Johns, who took a laid-back approach to the recording.

Top: Several members of Gram Parsons' band, the Fallen Angels, during a 1973 rehearsal. **Left to right:** Harris, N.D. Smart II, Kyle Tullis and Parsons. **Below:** Harris and Ronstadt pair up for *Western Wall*.

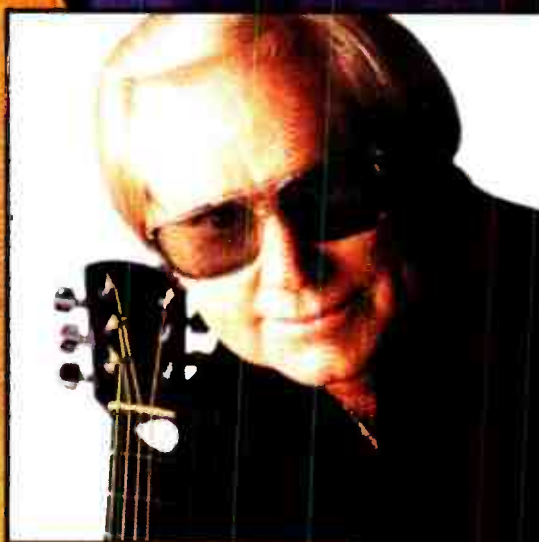


CAROLINE GREYSHOCK / SYLVIA RECORDS

"[*Western Wall*] just evolved over the years," says Ronstadt. "When we finally got to it, we just picked songs that we loved so much, we didn't care if we could sing them or not. We figured we'd sing them somehow, and we did."

GEORGE JONES PULLS
OUT ALL THE STOPS...
AND TREATS HIS FANS
TO TRACK AFTER
CLASSIC TRACK OF THIS
COUNTRY MUSIC HALL
OF FAME'S LEGENDARY
CAREER HITS ON HIS
BRAND NEW ALBUM...

THE GREATEST
WAY TO HEAR
"COUNTRY'S GREATEST
LIVING SINGER" IS...
LIVE!



"LIVE WITH THE POSSUM"

ALBUM INCLUDES THE RACE IS ON • HE STOPPED
LOVING HER TODAY • BARTENDER'S BLUES • THE CORVETTE SONG •
A PICTURE OF ME WITHOUT YOU • NO SHOW JONES • ONCE YOU'VE
HAD THE BEST • WHO'S GONNA FILL THEIR SHOES • ONE WOMAN MAN
• SHE LIVED A LOT IN HER TIME **AND A MEDLEY OF**
I'LL SHARE MY WORLD WITH YOU, THE WINDOW UP ABOVE,
THE GRAND TOUR, AND WALK THROUGH THIS WORLD WITH ME
PLUS PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED BONUS TRACKS



GEORGE JONES

"We rented a bed and breakfast house on the grounds of the Arizona Inn in Tucson, where Linda is living now," Harris explains. "All of us, except for Linda, stayed in the house. We would get up, have our coffee, read the paper and have a little breakfast. Then we'd sit

said, 'Do you want to be in the Everly Sisters with me?' But I could see that she was very involved with what she was doing musically. Then when Gram died, she was still involved, trying to continue what she and Gram had started."

Although *Western Wall* was 25 years in the making, the evolution of the album wasn't a well-thought-out process.

"We talked about it for so long, and in all the times we talked about it, if you could've had a thought balloon over our heads, I'm sure it would've looked like a castle one day and a corral the next day and a rocket ship another," Ronstadt says. "It just evolved over the years. When we finally got to it, we just picked songs that we loved so much, we didn't care if we could sing them or not. We figured we'd sing them somehow, and we did."

Following a fall tour with Ronstadt to promote *Western Wall*, Harris will continue writing new material.

In December, she'll receive the prestigious Century Award during the televised *Billboard* Music Awards. How long does the silver-haired maverick see herself performing? "As long as I've got something to sing about, as long as I don't feel like

I'm treadin' water, and as long as I don't end up in Branson," she quips. "Bill Monroe is an inspiration for anybody. He never rested on his laurels. He was writing, going out there and rocking until the very end. You never felt that you were seeing somebody rehashing something he did back in 1950. You were seeing a vital artist, somebody who could surprise you."

For Harris, the decision to continue performing is more of an obligation than a choice. She says, "If God gives you the ability to sing, it would be a sin not to sing." Amen, sister. For Harris' fans, the silencing of her angelic soprano would be a mortal sin. ★



EmmyActivity

Never one to rest on her laurels, Harris has been especially busy during the past two years. A few of her recent accomplishments:

- ★ Released her live *Spyboy* disc (1998).
- ★ Coproduced and contributed the track "Golden Ring" (a duet with Linda Ronstadt) to the *Tammy Wynette Remembered* album (1998).
- ★ Did a promotional tour for *Trio II* (released winter 1999).
- ★ Performed on TNT's *An All-Star Tribute to Johnny Cash*, one of the most successful concerts in cable TV history (spring 1999).
- ★ Recorded and did a promotional tour for *Western Wall* (released summer 1999).
- ★ Served as co-executive producer and contributed to cuts on *Return of the Grievous Angel: A Tribute to Gram Parsons* (released summer 1999).
- ★ Contributed the track "Ordinary Heart" to the soundtrack for the film *Happy, Texas* (released fall 1999).
- ★ Contributed vocals to recent projects by dozens of artists, including Willie Nelson, Steve Earle, Rodney Foster, Julie Miller, Marty Stuart, John Prine, Lucinda Williams, Luscious Jackson, Jon Randall, Marianne Faithfull, Neil Young and Kieran Kane, to name a few.



SHERRY BARNETT

For years after Parsons' death, Harris performed with her own group, the Hot Band.

"[I'll continue performing] as long as I've got something to sing about, as long as I don't feel like I'm treadin' water, and as long as I don't end up in Branson."

around the living room, which Glyn had set up with mikes, and start tracking."

The two vocalists took turns, with each singing lead and then harmony on the 13 cuts. "Linda is a more sophisticated singer," says Harris. "She's more knowledgeable than me, so she could come up with some more unusual harmonies. But what's great about Linda is that she also understands and believes that the simplest, and the thing that comes naturally, is usually the best thing, especially in the type of music that we do."

Harris and Ronstadt met in the mid-'70s and talked about creating a duet album for 25 years. Ronstadt recalls, "The minute I met Emmy, I would've

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Heart's Desire

By Tamara Saviano

"Living here is all about getting down to the basics. It's about man, earth, God and our responsibility as mankind to care for this place," says Parnell of his beloved ranch (right).

Lee Roy Parnell's passion for music is equaled only by his love of the land.

LEE ROY PARNELL IS CONTENT. AS THE sun dips below the horizon on his ranch—nestled deep in Texas hill country—it casts a warm glow across the green fields and carefully tended oak trees. Parnell closes his eyes and breathes deeply. "If you're here two days, it'll change you," he promises in his easy Texas drawl. "It's tough to take it all in—that's why I just became a part of it."

Parnell is spending a week away from his house in Nashville to tend the ranch he purchased four years ago near Fredericksburg. His son, Blake, 18, and daughter, Allison, 15, are relaxing on the porch as Parnell walks the land he has been connected to since his birth.

Life is good for the redheaded Texan. He just released his sixth album for Arista Records, a greatest hits collection called *Hits and Highways Ahead*. His family is happy and healthy. And he's home.

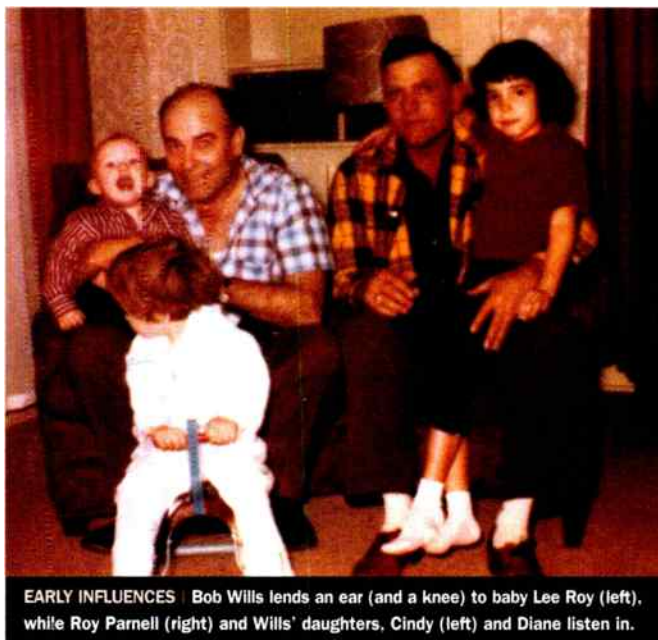
"My ancestors settled two counties west of here in 1852," Parnell explains as he walks toward a quiet pond down the hill from his 150-year-old ranch house. "We lived in a little community called School Hill, which was just a bunch of ranches in one area. My mother wrote for

the little newspaper in our hometown. Every week she would write a column for the *School Hill News* about who was visiting whom that week. And she did it with such a humorous slant. She was a very well educated woman and went to Texas

Tech as a voice major. In her senior annual they called her the 'girl with the golden throat.' Annabelle was her name.

"My father was 18 years older than her and was quite the opposite," Parnell continues as he sits on an overturned rowboat and pulls a weed from the ground. "He was the last of a breed of Texans that just aren't around anymore. He was born in a half-dugout on the plains of northwest Texas. A half-dugout is a little hole in the hill that they dig out. It has sod on three sides and a wooden wall on the south side so it would be cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

"The only two ways of life I've ever known are ranching and music. And those two things you never get out of your blood."



EARLY INFLUENCES | Bob Wills lends an ear (and a knee) to baby Lee Roy (left), while Roy Parnell (right) and Wills' daughters, Cindy (left) and Diane listen in.

Anyhow, my father had a sixth-grade education. He had run off with a medicine show when he was 12 or 13 to do blackface comedy."

Roy Parnell met legendary swing master Bob Wills during his touring days, and they became lifelong friends.

"In my early years, I was introduced to music through the Wills family," Lee Roy recalls with a smile. "I tagged along to many dances with my dad and Bob. I *would not* let those guys leave without me. Bob would always let me go. Dad wouldn't always want me to, but he never argued with Bob. Bob was about the only guy he wouldn't argue with. They would actually have dialogue—everyone else just had a monologue when it came to my father," Parnell laughs.

"My father worked in the oil fields of west Texas until he finally got his own





TEXAS STATE OF MIND | "When I was on the road 200-plus days a year, my kids and I would talk about the day when we would have our own ranch out here," Parnell says of the land he loves (top). "That dream is what kept me going during those long days on the road."

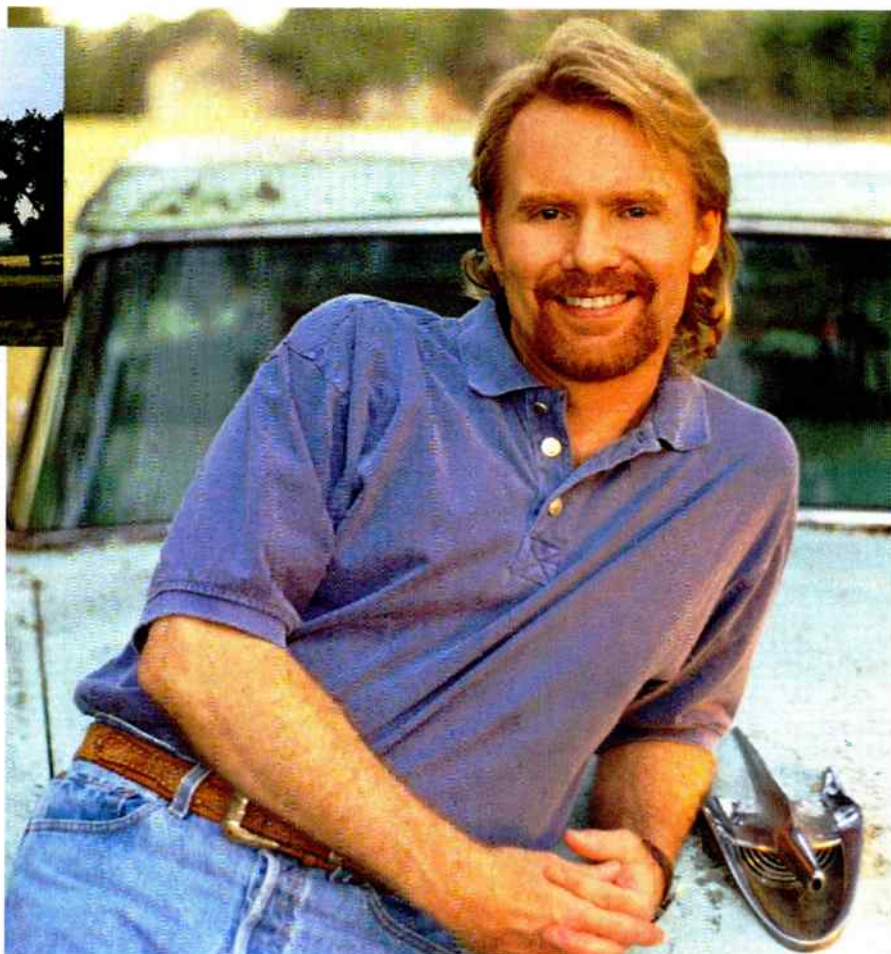
trucking company. He built it up to be the biggest trucking company in west Texas, moving oil rigs all over the state. We sold out in 1959 and moved to the ranch and lived there most of my childhood. The only two ways of life I've ever known are ranching and music. And those two things you never get out of your blood."

Parnell continues, "The music bug bit me early. I sang my first song on the radio live with Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys. I was 6. From then on I never wanted to do anything else. But I never lost the love of the land. It's a real passion to me just as music is a passion."

Parnell worked the family's ranch until he moved to Austin full-time in 1977 to play the club circuit. In a town teeming with talent, his soulful approach to music made him a popular entertainer along with other Texas singer/songwriters like Lyle Lovett, Steve Earle, Guy Clark, Nancy Griffith and Parnell's cousin, Robert Earl Keene. Parnell finally took his cousin's advice and made the move to Nashville 10 years later.

"I knew when I came to look at this ranch that I was *supposed* to live here. My sole purpose of being here is to provide a home for my family and restore this land back to the way God intended it to be."

"Those Texas singer/songwriters were making a hell of a run on Music City. They were being heard on country radio at that time, thanks to a few visionaries



GLEN ROSE

who saw an opportunity to pull country music out of its *Urban Cowboy* slump. My friends truly felt I could find a way during this little opening of the gate to make my mark. I was skeptical, but I knew things weren't going to get any better in Austin. I had been playing those same clubs for years and it seemed the only ones who were getting ahead were the ones who left for L.A., New York or Nashville. I decided to give it a shot."

Parnell immersed himself in Nashville's songwriting community and finally landed

Jennings. But his big break came when Parnell opened for Bonnie Raitt at a little club in downtown Nashville.

"I knew there were label heads in the audience, but I wasn't nervous," Parnell recalls. "My little band was lean and mean and we were out to draw blood. The show went great. After we finished, Tim DuBois (president of Arista Records) came backstage and shook my hand and said, 'I don't exactly know what kind of music I just heard, but we've got to record it.'

"The whole idea behind what I was doing was taboo," Parnell says. "I was sort of an enigma because the slide guitar was as much a part of my music as my voice was. Every record company in town told me it wouldn't work. But I was lucky. Tim believed in me."

DuBois wasn't wrong. Parnell's first five albums spawned hits like "Heart's Desire," "Love Without Mercy," "On the Road," "Holdin' My Own" and "When a Woman Loves a Man." All are included on *Hits and Highways Ahead*, along with two new tracks, "Long Way to Fall" and "She Won't Be Lonely Long."

a publishing deal with Polygram. He honed his skills as a songwriter working with veterans like Bob McDill, Rory Bourke, Gary Nicholson and Will

"I think I'm closing a chapter and starting a new one. That's why I named this album *Hits and Highways Ahead*," Parnell explains. "As we close this chapter I wanted to put a little bow around the work we've done and give everyone a little taste of what's ahead."

Parnell recorded the new songs in Jackson Browne's studio in Santa Monica with his new producer, Ed Cherney.

"Ed's work with Bonnie Raitt and the Rolling Stones had always floored me," Parnell says. "I had a new band of musicians I had always wanted to work with, and we did the session live. We were all in one room. It was the way we used to do it when I started recording more than 20 years ago. We were right back to where we started. No one was watching the clock; we just played until we got it right."

In spite of his success in Nashville, Parnell always dreamed of going back home to Texas.

"I was originally thinking of moving back to Austin. It was never my intention to stay in Nashville," Parnell says. "But when I got ready to move back to Austin, it had grown so much that it just wasn't right for me. I loved it when I lived there in the early '70s and '80s, but it was a small town at that time. The whole atti-

ready to make a move, but I knew when I came to look at this ranch that I was *supposed* to live here," Parnell says with conviction. "And my sole purpose of being here is to provide a home for my family and to restore this land back to the way God intended it to be. It's a commitment to take care of the land. I don't look upon it as a hardship, although it can be a tough life. People who work the land for a living never quit working. There is something to do every day to keep the place up.

"I want to create a better place for my kids. I don't want them to have to learn just how to live in the city," he continues. "I want them to learn the value of hard work. Being on the ranch really gets down to basics—man and earth and God and our responsibility to care for the land. I've not broken ground on anything new—like building a house—because I feel like I have to take care of the land first.

"I've got all these beautiful oak trees," Parnell says, sweeping his arm toward the horizon. "We're in a region of the country where we have a disease called oak wilt that is crumbling all these beautiful 500-year-old trees. We have to remove the juniper trees that drink up so much ground water that there isn't enough left over for the oaks. The oaks are indigenous to this area, but the junipers were brought in with the cattle drives as they came north. Unfortunately, you can't just go in and start clearing these trees. You have to be careful not to tear up the soil as you do it, and you have to do it slowly. The best way to prevent oak wilt is to have healthy trees to begin with.

"It's amazing to watch the oaks spring up after the land is cleared. They actually become green and healthy."

As the oaks grow healthier, Parnell, too, feels like he is just hitting his stride.

"I'm 42 years old and I'm like a kid in everything I do," Parnell says. "When my dad was 75, he'd say, 'I can't believe I'm 75.' He had the same fervor and vigor that I do now. I'll probably be that way the rest of my life. I look forward to the years ahead to be my best musically and personally. And I plan to live my life wide open." *

The People... The Business... The Music...

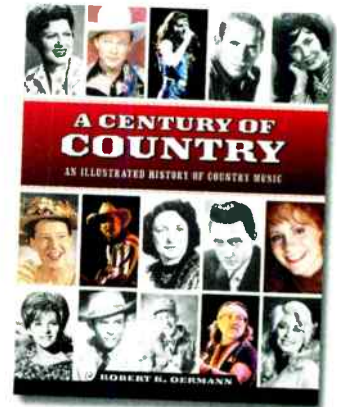
A Century of Country

An Illustrated History of Country Music

Robert K. Oermann

With more than 200 photographs and the stories behind the music, *A Century of Country* is the definitive account of all things country.

A Century of Country is based on the acclaimed 13-part **TNN** documentary series.



“A Century of Country is a marvelous overview of country music that chronicles its journey from birth to its present state as it looks in the eyes of a new century.”

— Marty Stuart



PICKIN' AND GRINNIN' Parnell, son Blake (left) and daughter Allison (second from left) jam with friends in Luckenbach.

tude of the city has changed so much. You can't blame people for wanting to live in a place where they can better their lives, but Austin isn't for me anymore. Here I'm only an hour away from Austin or San Antonio. Fredericksburg is just far enough away that it's not a bedroom community and that's what I needed."

Parnell knew the moment he set foot on the ranch that it would be his new home. "It usually takes me a long time to make life-changing decisions. I have to really think about things before I'm

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CM's Holiday Wish List

Dear Santa: We've been good this year—well, at least we've tried. And we're really not asking for much....

COUNTRY MUSIC IS AS PACKED WITH talent as Santa's sack is loaded with toys, and there's no doubt that some of the best music made comes out of Music City. But we do think there's room for improvement. Here's what we're asking the jolly old elf to bring us—and all our music industry friends—this year.



What We Really, Really Want

Radio stations that play a hit by the Dixie Chicks next to a standard by Bob Wills after a new release from Lee Ann Womack and a classic by Gary Stewart.

More songs like "Who Needs Pictures," "Ready to Run," "My Kind of Woman, My Kind of Man" and "Hillbilly Shoes."

Fewer songs like "You Had Me From Hello" and "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!"

A country autobiography that's actually candid, revealing and well-written.

More classic comebacks like George Jones'.

That the days are over when new country artists brag about all their rock and pop influences just so you know they're not *too* country.

That the Internet music sales and distribution boom continues, so artists without major-label deals can still sell records, and fans have more music options.

More generous artists like Vince Gill and Emmylou Harris, who rarely refuse when asked to contribute to other artists' projects.

More truly original music videos that aren't derivative of what the pop world was doing last year.

Platinum Sales for...

Lyle Lovett
Robbie Fulks
Jack Ingram
Guy Clark
Steve Earle
The Mavericks
George Jones
Stacy Dean Campbell
Emmylou Harris
John Prine
BR5-49
Dolly Parton
Gary Allan
Jim Lauderdale

For the CMA to recognize older pickers like bass player Bob Moore and the late steel guitar master Roy Wiggins.

More artists who take the kind of creative chances the Dixie Chicks take.

Record Deals for...

Jonelle Mosser
Chris Knight
Rodney Crowell
George Ducas

James House
Buck Owens
The Delevantes
Marty Brown

Get a Clue for Christmas

Labels: The primary criterion for signing a new group should not be that they're three pretty young things in MAC lipstick and chunky shoes. By that standard, TLC is a country act.

Producers and artists: Adding a fiddle part to a pop song does not make the song country.

Labels and management: The next insider who repeats the pervasive phrase "People don't buy records from fat chicks" should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

New artists: A hit song is not a license to cultivate an ego the size of Idaho.

Video producers: Here's a thought: How about

a music video that actually showcases a female artist's *talent*?

The industry: Country is a *sound*, not just a radio format or part of a marketing plan. It's also not whatever kind of music sells the most records.

Lumps of Coal to...

Radio consultants and the people who listen to them.

TNN for dropping country music programming in favor of shows like *Extreme Wrestling*, apparently targeting the 18-to-44 moron market.

The ACMs for again making country look as cheesy as Velveeta in front of a national TV audience.

Radio for ignoring Rodney Crowell's version of "Please Remember Me" in 1995 but embracing Tim McGraw's version in 1999.

CMT for its dubious video-banning policies and for flagrantly ripping off MTV with shows like *Hit Trip*.

Programmers who dismiss new singles for being "too country."

The entire industry for its abandonment of the loyal, mature country music audience to cater to the whims of the trendy, fickle youth market. *

The Best Gifts We Got This Year

The Mountain from Steve Earle and the Del McCoury Band

The Pilgrim from Marty Stuart

Ashes of Old Love from Stacy Dean Campbell

For the Record: 43 Legendary Hits from Merle Haggard

Party Doll and Other Favorites from Mary Chapin Carpenter

Awaiting Redemption from Hal Ketchum

Cold Hard Truth from George Jones

Songs From the Mountain from Tim O'Brien, Dirk Powell and John Herrmann

Fly from the Dixie Chicks

Who Needs Pictures from Brad Paisley



10
ESSENTIAL

HOLIDAY

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT CHRISTMAS TIME AND COUNTRY MUSIC. Maybe it's that this most sentimental of seasons fits so perfectly with a style that deals with heart-tugging feelings all year long. Maybe it's that country is still so family oriented.

For some, the holidays are a sad and lonely time, and nothing can wring those emotions from you better than a country song like Ernest Tubb's "Blue Christmas." For others it is a warm homecoming—and what evokes that special tingle better than a tune like Bill Monroe's "Christmas Time's a-Comin'" or Alabama's "Christmas in Dixie"? For many this is a time of parties and fun, and country provides a soundtrack for that, too, with Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree." The season stirs compassion for the less fortunate, an emotion captured in Roy Orbison's "Pretty Paper." It is a time for children, which is why country brought us Gene Autry's timeless "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Here Comes Santa Claus" and "Frosty the Snowman."

I'm assuming that every household owns copies of the classic Christmas compilations by Autry and Elvis Presley. Here, in order of their appearance on the marketplace, are 10 more guaranteed to evoke the sentiments of the season.

BRENDA LEE

Merry Christmas From Brenda Lee (1964)



Lee's collection has remained in print consistently since it was first issued in 1964. How can you argue with an album that includes "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," which Lee introduced in 1958? That tune alone has sold a reported 8 million copies, was featured in the blockbuster movie *Home Alone* and is a seasonal standard.

Other highlights include "Jingle Bell Rock" and Lee's treatment of the light-hearted "Frosty the Snowman," "Winter Wonderland," "A Marshmallow World" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." Other Country Music Hall-of-Famers with highly listenable Christmas collections include Eddy Arnold, Loretta Lynn, Jim Reeves and Tammy Wynette. But somehow this is the one that lands on the turntable year after year.

MARTY ROBBINS

Christmas With Marty

Robbins (1967)

10 GOLDEN THROAT," as Ralph Emery once dubbed Robbins,



could sing just about anything—rockabilly, Hawaiian, pop, honky-tonk, whatever. Recorded in 1967, this is a marvelous showcase of the Nashville Sound at its peak.

It will come as no surprise to "Marty's Army," as his many fans are known, that he pours honey over "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." The more surprising delights of this are the many new songs that he recorded, including the harpsichord-laced "Christmas Is for Kids," a terrific weeper called "Merry Christmas to You From Me" and the stirring "Many Christmases Ago."

ANNE MURRAY

Christmas Wishes (1981)

HERE IS A REASON that this 1981 treasure has sold more than 3 million copies and ranks as one of the best-selling seasonal LPs of all time. Anne Murray's flawless phrasing and crisp, wintery tone is perfectly suited to the Christmas standards.

She wisely "played it straight" on her readings of "Silver Bells," "Away in a Manger," "Silent Night" and the like. This remains one of the most perfect holiday albums ever recorded. The



Snowbird's 1988 follow-up, *Anne Murray Christmas*, is good, but not as good as this.

CHET ATKINS

East Tennessee Christmas (1983)



FIRST ISSUED IN 1983, this remains the definitive Nashville instrumental album to accompany gift-giving, egg-nogging and holiday partying. Atkins' deft touch on the guitar strings makes lovely ornaments of "Do You Hear What I Hear," "The Little Drummer Boy," "Let It Snow" and the like.

Another fine instrumental choice is an album called *A Smoky Mountain Christmas*. Originally issued in 1990 on the Brentwood label, it features traditional favorites performed by Grandpa Jones' daughter Alissa Jones Wall and Craig Duncan on hammered dulcimer, Ekim Beau on zither, Ron Wall on autoharp and David Schnauffer on Appalachian dulcimer. The sound is enchanting.

KENNY ROGERS AND DOLLY PARTON

Once Upon a Christmas (1984)

HIS DOUBLE-PLATINUM success continues to sell each year. Let's face it: Parton's voice sounds like Christmas bells anyway, and Rogers looks just like Santa.



Although they often toured and recorded together, this 1984 collection remains their only duet album.

It's a glittering, glistening confection of guitars, chimes, synthesizers, rhythms and vocal harmonies that's bound to make you smile. This glossy gift of melody includes standards like "White Christmas" and "Sleigh Ride" as well as lovely new tunes such as the video-popularized "Christmas Without You" and John Jarvis' oft-recorded "The Greatest Gift of All."

B.J. THOMAS

All Is Calm, All Is Bright (1985)



LIKEN-VOICED B.J. Thomas pretty much stuck to the traditional standards on this 1985 outing. Backed by the quartet har-

monies of the Jordanaires, he performs versions of "The First Noel," "Away in a Manger," "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" and other familiar carols. His marvelously inventive vocal dips and swirls make them all sound newly inspirational.

RONNIE MILSAP

Christmas With Ronnie Milsap (1986)

MILSAP'S RESONANT pop-country voice is backed by lush David Clydesdale choral and vocal arrangements on what is one of Nashville's biggest Christmas LP productions of all time. Among the other stars who have tackled orchestral Christmas collections are Crystal Gayle, Gary Morris and Lee Greenwood. But Milsap's is the one to have.



The new songs are all on-the-money in terms of sentiment. Oldies like "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and "Joy to the World" are faithfully executed. Also included is the deeply moving Mike Reid/Troy Seals tune "We're Here to Love." And only Greenwood among Music City's artists ever went after "O Holy Night" with this much passion.

RANDY TRAVIS

An Old Time Christmas (1989)

FELL IN LOVE WITH THIS IN 1989 BECAUSE much of it is so wistful and sad. Christmas can be a downer for the lonely, and no one sings so effectively for those left out in the cold as Randy Travis.



The other reason I like it is that there are lots of good, new Christmas songs on it. And, mind you, they're not all depressing. "Meet Me Under the Mistletoe," "Old Time Christmas" and "How Do I Wrap My Heart for Christmas" are wonderful hillbilly toe-tappers.

Travis does frisky, country versions of "Winter Wonderland," "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" and other standards here. But it's when he moans "White Christmas Makes Me Blue," "Pretty Paper" and "Oh What a Silent Night" that he really gets to you.

ALBUMS

By Robert K. Oermann

ALAN JACKSON

Honky Tonk Christmas (1993)



AMONG THE neo-traditionalists, the two finest holiday collections are George Strait's 1986 *Merry Christmas Strait to You* and this.

Jackson's 1993 collection gets the nod because, unlike Strait, he doesn't try to mess with standards. Instead, he does what he does best. He's a hardcore country artist, so he sings country songs.

The title tune, "A Holly Jolly Christmas" and "I Only Want You for Christmas" all got significant radio airplay. But they are just the tip of a winter iceberg of delights. Jackson duets with Keith Whitley on "There's a New Kid in Town" and with Alison Krauss on "The Angels Cried." He revives Merle Haggard's "If We Make It

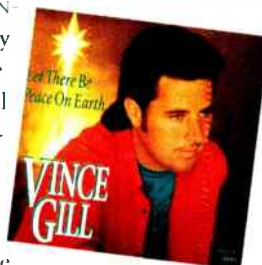
Through December" and John Denver's "Please Daddy (Don't Get Drunk This Christmas)," both of which are superb compositions. You can "drop the needle" anywhere on this and hear something great.

VINCE GILL

Let There Be Peace on Earth (1993)

THIS IS A CON-temporary Nashville masterpiece. Gill tugs at the heart-strings with "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "It Won't Be the Same This Year" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas," and is beautifully devotional on "What Child Is This" and "Do You Hear What I Hear."

In 1998 Vince did a second Christmas album. Titled *Breath of Heaven*, it is a more orchestrated collection of stan-



dards. It is equally brilliant and equally recommended.

THERE ARE ALSO A NUMBER OF EXCELLENT country Christmas compilation albums on the market, notably RCA's *A Country Christmas* (two volumes) and *Best of Christmas*, Columbia's *The Nashville Christmas Album* and Warner's *A Christmas Tradition* (two volumes).

Pride of place among these goes to a 1988 gem on Rhino Records called *Hillbilly Holiday*. In fact, it may rank as the all-time best country Christmas compilation. Every track is a delight, from Bill Monroe's standard "Christmas Time's a-Comin'" to Buck Owens' novelty "Santa Looked a Lot Like Daddy."

Particularly nifty are Loretta Lynn's "To Heck With Old Santa Claus," Hank Snow's "Reindeer Boogie," Brenda Lee's "I'm Gonna Lasso Santa Claus" and Ernest Tubbs' "I'll Be Walking the Floor This Christmas." Highly endorsed to any true-blue country fan. *

'TIS THE SEASON

Country is the only musical genre that seems to consistently issue new Christmas collections every year. Here are some highlights down through the decades.

1955 Gene Autry, *Merry Christmas* (Columbia) ★
 Eddy Arnold, *Christmas Greetings* (RCA)
1957 Elvis Presley, *Elvis Christmas Album* (RCA)
1958 Tennessee Ernie Ford, *The Star Carol* (Capitol)
1961 The Louvin Brothers, *Christmas With the Louvin Brothers* (Capitol) ★ Chet Atkins, *Christmas With Chet Atkins* (RCA)
1962 The Everly Brothers, *Christmas With the Everly Brothers* (Warner Bros.) ★ Kitty Wells, *Christmas With Kitty Wells* (Decca)
1963 Johnny Cash, *Christmas Spirit* (Columbia) ★ Jim Reeves, *12 Songs of Christmas* (RCA)
1964 Hank Thompson,

It's Christmas Time (Capitol) ★ Ernest Tubbs, *Blue Christmas* (Decca)
1965 Buck Owens, *Christmas With Buck Owens* (Capitol)
1966 Loretta Lynn, *Country Christmas* (Decca) ★ Sonny James, *My Christmas Dream* (Capitol)
1967 Roy Rogers, *Christmas Is Always* (Capitol) ★ Hank Snow, *Christmas With Hank Snow* (RCA)
1968 Glen Campbell, *That Christmas Feeling* (Capitol)
1969 Slim Whitman, *Christmas Album* (Imperial) ★ Ray Price, *Christmas Album* (Columbia)
1970 Tammy Wynette,

Christmas With Tammy (Epic) ★ Charley Pride, *Christmas in My Home Town* (RCA)
1971 Lynn Anderson, *The Christmas Album* (Columbia)
1973 Merle Haggard, *Christmas Present* (Capitol)
1974 Charlie McCoy, *Christmas* (Monument)
1975 Connie Smith, *Joy to the World* (Columbia)
1978 The Statler Brothers, *Christmas Card* (Mercury)
1979 John Denver and the Muppets, *A Christmas Together* (RCA) ★ Willie Nelson, *Pretty Paper* (Columbia)
1980 Emmylou Harris, *Light of the Stable* (Warner Bros.)
1981 Mickey Gilley, *Christmas at Gilley's* (Columbia) ★ Kenny Rogers, *Christmas* (Liberty)
1982 Larry Gatlin, *A Gatlin Family Christmas* (Columbia) ★ The Oak

Ridge Boys, *Christmas* (MCA)
1983 Conway Twitty, *Merry Twismas From Canway* (Warner Bros.)
1984 Barbara Mandrell, *Christmas at Our House* (MCA)
1985 Lee Greenwood, *Christmas to Christmas* (MCA)
1986 Alabama, *Alabama Christmas* (RCA)
1987 Cystal Gayle, *A Crystal Christmas* (Warner Bros.) ★ The Judds, *Christmas Time With the Judds* (RCA)
1988 Gary Morris, *Every Christmas* (Warner Bros.)
1989 Ricky Van Shelton, *Ricky Van Shelton Sings Christmas* (Columbia)
1990 Dolly Parton, *Home for Christmas* (Columbia) ★ Charlie Daniels, *Christmas Time Down South* (Epic) ★ Skip Ewing, *Following Yonder Star* (MCA)
1992 Garth Brooks, *Beyond the Season* (Capitol) ★ Doug Stone,

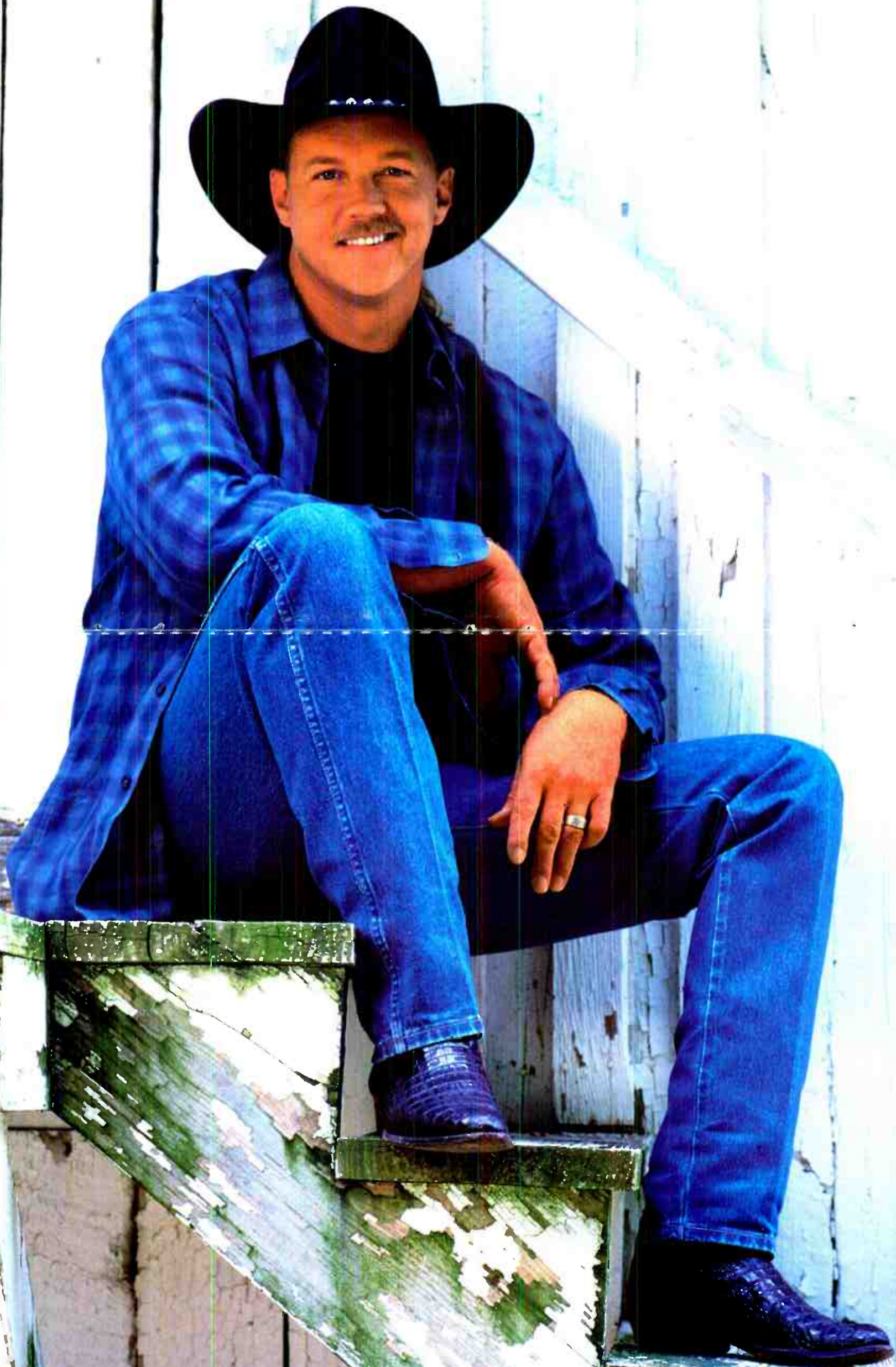
The First Christmas (Columbia) ★ Travis Tritt, *Loving Time of the Year* (Warner Bros.) ★ Steve Wariner, *Christmas Memories* (MCA)
1993 Kathy Mattea, *Good News* (Mercury) ★ Lorrie Morgan, *Merry Christmas From London* (RCA)
1994 Sammy Kershaw, *Christmas Time's a-Comin'* (Mercury) ★ Trisha Yearwood, *The Sweetest Gift* (MCA)
1995 Clint Black, *Looking for Christmas* (RCA) ★ Joe Diffie, *Mr. Christmas* (Epic) ★ Toby Keith, *Christmas to Christmas* (Mercury)
1996 Collin Raye, *Christmas the Gift* (Columbia)
1997 Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, *The Christmas Album* (Rising Tide)
1998 Martina McBride, *White Christmas* (RCA)
1999 George Strait, *Merry Christmas Wherever You Are* (MCA) ★ Reba McEntire, *Secret of Giving* (MCA)

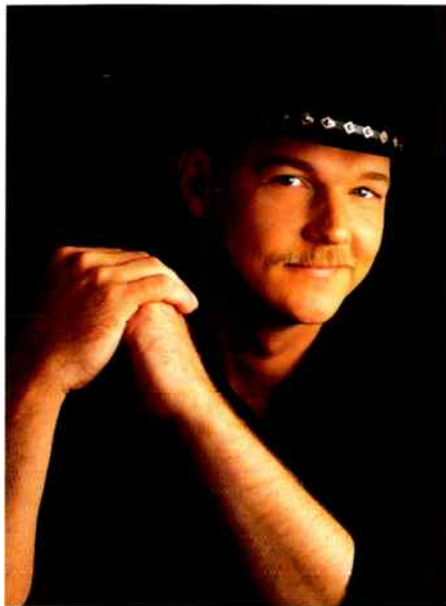
—R.K.O

T R A C E A D K I N S

H O L I D A Y 1 9 9 9

COUNTRYMUSIC





Trace Adkins

The release of his third album, *More...*, finds a more mature and introspective Trace Adkins. He says, "Having kids, you just want to grab 'em sometimes and go, 'Listen to me! You don't have any idea how precious youth is! If I could just take that piece of my brain that appreciates youth and put it in your head, you would live every day like it was your last, and you would savor every second.' It's so precious, and we don't realize that until it's gone."

PERSONAL INFORMATION

BORN

Tracy Darrell Adkins was born January 13, 1962, in Springhill, Louisiana. (He changed his name to Trace to avoid confusion with Tracy Lawrence and Tracy Byrd.) Adkins comes from a musical family: His grandfather, mother and sisters all sang in church, his uncle J.W. has recorded gospel albums, and another uncle plays piano.

CURRENT RESIDENCE

Brentwood, Tennessee. Adkins also has a 60-acre farm outside Nashville where he and his wife hope to build a house someday.

FAMILY

Adkins credits his wife, Rhonda, with his success. "She's probably more responsible than anybody, including me. I've always had this self-destructive problem: When things start going real good, for some reason I find some way to sabotage it. She has been able to keep me from doing that as much." Adkins has two daughters from his first marriage: Tarah, age 14, and Sarah, 11. He and Rhonda had daughter Mackenzie in January 1998, and they expect another at the end of March. "If it's another girl," he jokes, "I'm just going to build my own house to live in!"

MUSICAL INFLUENCES

Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, Waylon

Jennings, Ronnie Milsap, Don Williams, "and my grandfather."

CURRENT READ

A biography of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

FAVORITE TV SHOW

Everybody Loves Raymond

FAVORITE NON-COUNTRY MUSIC

"If I'm not listening to country music then I'm probably listening to classical. I bought a bunch of those CDs off the television—*Quiet Moods* and all that stuff—it soothes the savage beast! It's good stuff to relax and unwind to."

DREAM DUET

A passionate love song with Shania Twain—"so we can do a video," he jokes. "And my wife can't come to the video shoot!"

LEAST FAVORITE FOOD

Anything healthful. Adkins' idea of a good breakfast is a pot of coffee and a bunch of cigarettes, and he admits he's a lost cause when it comes to a healthy lifestyle. He likes greasy, fried foods—then works out to keep his weight in check. "That's the deal," he advises. "You can eat anything you want if you just work it off!"

MOST ANNOYING HABIT

Smoking. "It doesn't annoy me but it annoys everybody else."

FAMILY HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

His mother's fruit salad. "Nobody ever eats it, and she makes it every year! It's just gross-looking—white, Cool Whip-looking stuff with pieces of junk in it. I'm not going to eat that!"

CHRISTMAS GIFT TRADITION

"You get to open one on Christmas Eve and the rest on Christmas Day. My parents started that a long time ago, I guess to whet your appetite."

BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT RECEIVED

A Yamaha guitar at age 10, from his parents. "It was my first real guitar, a good one."



COURTESY TRACE ADKINS/PERSONAL COLLECTION

CURRENT PROJECT

Third album, *More...* Adkins says this project is edgier than his previous efforts. "I told (producer) Trey Bruce, 'Man, I want this one to be rough, I want it to be edgier, deeper, nastier! I want it to reflect *me* more than the other two, because I'm a crusty, rough kind of guy.'"

CONTACT INFORMATION

Trace Adkins Fan Club
P.O. 121889
Nashville, TN 37203
Web site: traceadkins.com



Differenteight.



It's easy to tell Dodge Dakota from other standard compact pickups. First, there's that distinctive grille that says this truck is every inch a Dodge. Second, Dakota's just plain bigger—with more interior room, a bigger bed, a wider track, and a longer wheelbase than anything in its class. What really sets Dakota apart, though, is its choice of available Magnum® V-8 engines: a 250-horsepower Magnum 5.9L V-8, or the new Next Generation 4.7L Magnum V-8, with best-in-class payload, torque, and towing.* And here's icing on the cake: J.D. Power and Associates ranked Dodge Dakota as the "Best Compact Pickup in Initial Quality."** So if what you want is a little more of everything, don't say "compact." Say "Dakota." There's a big, big difference.

Dodge Dakota  Different.

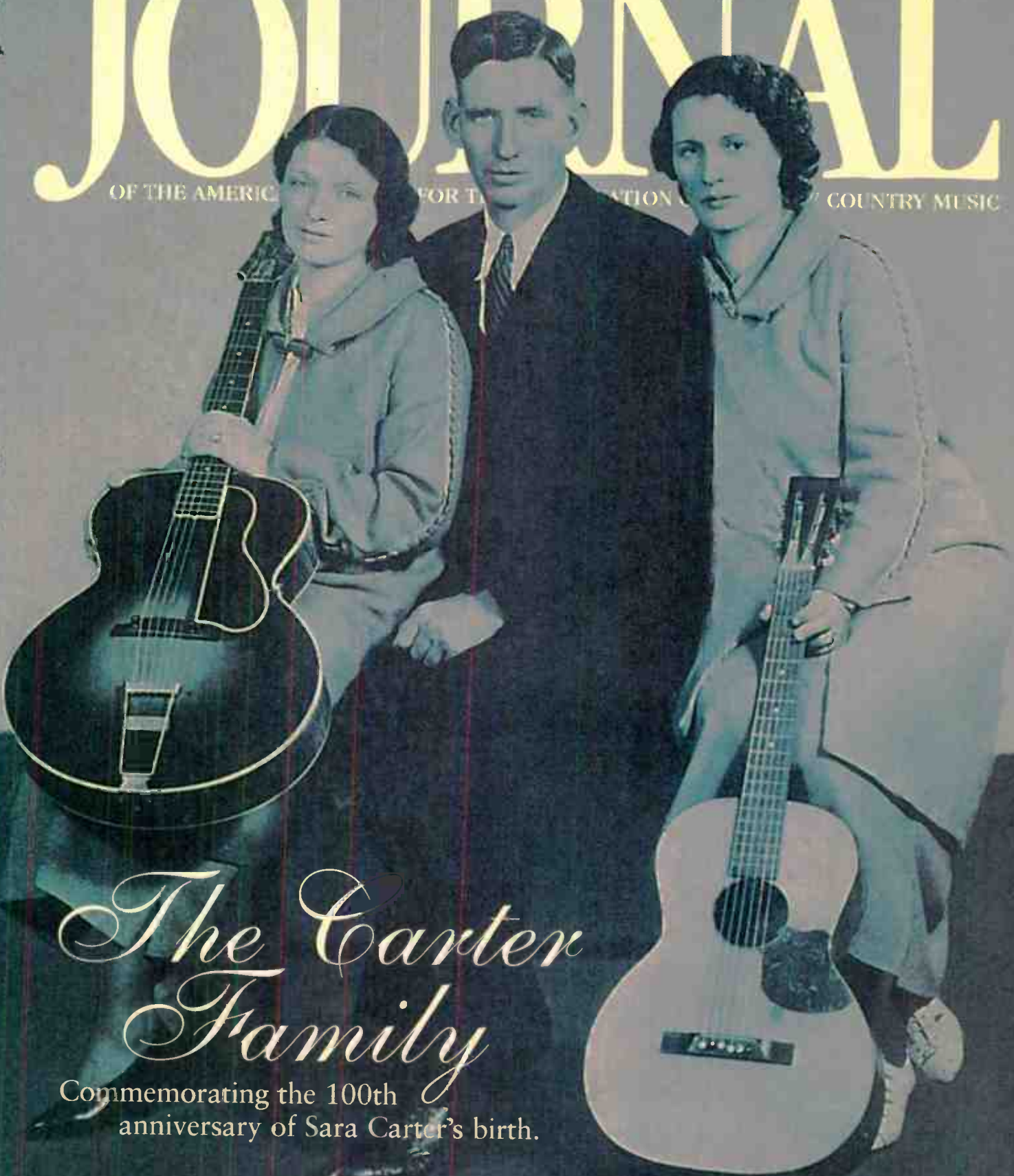
800-4-A-DODGE or www.4adodge.com

*When properly equipped. **The Dodge Dakota was the highest ranked Compact Pickup in J.D. Power and Associates 1999 Initial Quality Study 2.™ Study based on a total of 41,004 consumer responses indicating owner reported problems during the first 90 days of ownership. www.jdpower.com

Issue Number 52
December 1998

THE JOURNAL

OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF COUNTRY MUSIC



The Carter Family

Commemorating the 100th anniversary of Sara Carter's birth.

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Test your knowledge of a legendary country music entertainer.
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The Queen of Country Music celebrates a landmark birthday.
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- 7 This Date in Country Music**
Every day is special in country music, and here's why.
- 8 The Story Behind the Song**
Felice Bryant recalls how she and her husband Boudleaux came up with the immortal "Rocky Top."
- 10 Second Generation**
June Carter Cash carries on her family's illustrious legacy and has brought its sound into the 1990s. She reminisces about A.P., Elvis, Elia, Johnny Cash and more.
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The archive of country's shrine unveils some of its most rare and collectible record labels.
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A marketplace for sellers, buyers and traders, and a forum for historical comments from our readers.

Editor: Robert K. Oermann

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Who Am I?

How much do you know about your country music favorites? Here's your chance to find out. Test your trivia knowledge about one of the greats.

CLUE #1 In 1993 I got my own U.S. postage stamp.

CLUE #2 There is a bell carillon dedicated to me in the mountains of Virginia.

CLUE #3 I was born a Hensley, but used neither my real first nor last name for my stage billing.

CLUE #4 Since 1980 my "duet partners" have included Jim Reeves, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings.

CLUE #5 My best girlfriends were Dottie West, June Carter, Brenda Lee, Barbara Mandrell, Loretta Lynn, Pearl Butler and Jan Howard.

CLUE #6 Jan's husband wrote a song for me that I hated, but it turned out to be one of my biggest hits.

CLUE #7 I survived a head-on car collision in 1961.

CLUE #8 I played Carnegie Hall in New York with Grandpa Jones, Minnie Pearl, Jim Reeves, Bill Monroe and Faron Young.

CLUE #9 I was the first female country star to headline in Las Vegas.

CLUE #10 My classics include "Crazy," "Sweet Dreams," "I Fall to Pieces," "Walkin' After Midnight" and "She's Got You."



* Answer on page 16



Clockwise from upper left are Chet Atkins and Bill Carlisle, who knew Kitty Wells in Knoxville in the 1940s. Connie Smith is just one of many female singers who idolized Kitty and followed her footsteps. Opry stars Jim Ed Brown and Jimmy Dickens relax with their wives, Becky and Mona, at the birthday party. Kitty reminds the crowd of her groundbreaking hit "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels." The birthday cake spiraled in four tiers and included pink roses and edible frosting portraits of the star. Kitty's birthdate is Aug. 30, 1919; and she is that rare person, a country star who is a Nashville native.

FIT FOR A QUEEN

Kitty Wells turned 80 in style at the Nashville Nightlife Dinner Theater with an all-star party that included a who's who of country legends. Guests represented all phases from the career of the Queen of Country Music, from her days as radio barn-dance singer to her superstardom in Nashville. Patricia Presley offers this photo essay from the memorable day. —Robert K. Oermann





SARA CARTER:

“THE MOTHER OF COUNTRY MUSIC”

BY CHARLES K. WOLFE

YEARS LATER, WHEN HE WAS AN OLD MAN SITTING ON the porch of his country store with the October wind ruffling his white hair, he could still remember the first time he saw her.

It had been 1914, the first year of the Great War, and he had hiked up and across Clinch Mountain into the valley to the north, carrying a bundle of fruit tree saplings he was trying to sell to the mountain farmers. It was an odd, foggy day, the landscape shrouded in a dream-like mist, a setting right out of a Hollywood film about legendary First Encounters. He was 23, a lean, hawk-faced man with an intense stare and a habit of pursing his lips. His name was A.P. Carter. On that day he was visiting the home of his great-uncle Milburn Nickels.

Also visiting with his uncle that day was a 16-year-old relative named Sara Dougherty, from nearby Copper Creek. She was a tall girl, fond of wearing her hair tied back with a band, her eyes flashing with wit and irony, and she spoke with a strong, laconic voice that was the opposite of the Daisy-Mae-type of southern accent that bad movies use.

Sara had been born in Flat Woods, a hamlet in this corner of Virginia's Appalachians, but her mother had died shortly after her birth. She had been reared by her aunt and uncle Milburn in Copper Creek. Many of the Dougherties played music and sang the old songs that the mountain folk had known for years. Young Sara had learned many of these, and had learned to play the banjo, the many-stringed autoharp, and the new-fangled instrument that was becoming so popular, the guitar. She was singing the first time A.P. saw her. He recalled years later, “Sara was singing a song about George Allen, and was playing the autoharp.” He had no way of knowing then that

the song, under the title “Engine 143,” would become a best-selling phonograph record 14 years later, nor that he and this young woman would become the founders of country music's most famous singing group, the Carter Family. He only knew that she was a stunning vision.

A.P. soon found that he was not the only salesman present: Sara was also selling, in her case mail-order dishes. A.P. didn't think he needed any dishes, but he loved the way Sara described them, and soon he was signing an order form for a bowl. “It turned out,” he recalled, “that I got the dish and the girl too.” Now, 40 years later, in the twilight of his years, he had no idea what had ever happened to the dish; but he did know what had happened to the girl.

It's a little late in the game to try to explain just who the Carter Family was. Let us say that they are country music's first family, and that they are to the music what the Kennedys are to politics. Let us say that country music would not sound the way it does today if there had been no Carter Family.

But when most people think of the Carter Family, they think of A.P. himself, the titular leader of the group, the one who did the emcee work and the one who roamed the hills finding their songs. Or they think of little Maybelle, whose innovative guitar playing helped assure

that instrument a place in country music, and who was the member of the trio who made it into the Nashville era, touring with the likes of Elvis and Johnny Cash.

Sort of in the background is Sara, A.P.'s wife and Maybelle's cousin, the tall one, the quiet one, the one with the little autoharp, the one who tended to business and sang, and who walked away from the music more than once when she thought it was getting out of hand. Yet in many ways, she was the center of the



The Carter Family's fame was spread via songbooks. Among their classics: “Wabash Cannonball,” “I’m Thinking Tonight of My Blues Eyes,” “Are You Lonesome Tonight” and “Will the Circle Be Unbroken.”

Carter Family. On most of their early records, it was Sara who sang the lead, and it was her voice that got them their recording contract.

When the family went to their audition for Victor Records on August 1, 1927, in Bristol, Tennessee, the A&R man in charge, Ralph Peer, perked up only when he heard Sara. "As soon as I heard Sara's voice," he remembered, "that was it. I knew it was going to be wonderful."

And it was. Sara had an unbelievable range. She could yodel; she could sing blues; she could do the lead for a complex old gospel song like "Little Moses"; she could play a rock-solid rhythm guitar to Maybelle's lead. And it was Sara who actually arranged many of the songs, although A.P.'s name appeared on virtually all them as composer. It is Sara alone you hear singing on the original Carter Family classics like "Wildwood Flower," "The Wandering Boy," "John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man," "Engine 143," "Bring Back My Blue Eyed Boy," "The Wabash Cannonball" and "Carter's Blues." On almost all the others, Sara sings lead with the others joining on the chorus, or she sings duets with Maybelle.

Depending on which source you use, this fall marked the 100th or 101st anniversary of Sara's birth, and we need to honor her. She was not technically the first woman to record country music, but she was the first one to really make a difference. The records she made—eventually more than 300 of them between 1927 and 1941—sold better than any other records of the times except those of Jimmie Rodgers. If there is such a title as "Mother of Country Music," Sara Carter owns it. She had been there and done that when the Kittys and Jeans and Dollys and Patsys of the world were still learning to tune their guitars.

You can read the list of Sara's recordings and accomplishments in any of several encyclopedias and in numerous sets of liner notes. What is noteworthy here is the kind of person she was: strong, independent, willing to break the mold. She was a devoted mother to her three children, Gladys, Janette and Joe, and struggled when the family reached its greatest commercial success at the very time the kids were starting to enter school.

The children grew up impressed with their mother's style. "She was the most beautiful person I ever saw," recalls daughter Janette today. Sara at times served almost as a single parent, when A.P. wandered off unexpectedly on song-hunting trips, or when he would occasionally go north to find work in places like Detroit. A breaking point came in 1933, when Sara decided she had had enough and moved out, leaving her children in the care of A.P. and his mother.

She moved back to Copper Creek, though she came back routinely to stay with the kids or take care of them when they were sick. But she was fed up with A.P. and fed up with the music—when A.P.

asked her to get ready for their annual recording session that June, she refused to come. When he reported this to Victor boss Ralph Peer, he became alarmed; without Sara's voice, there would be no Carter Family. Peer asked his own wife Anita to intervene, and she wrote Sara a letter trying to persuade her to at least do some more recordings.

"I wondered if there was anything I could do to help things along," she wrote. "I realize it would be distinctly awkward for both you and A.P. to work together again, but on the other hand the 'Carter Family' has become well known and there is a chance to make some more money, even in these days of Depression." She noted that Hollywood stars who were divorced still made films together.

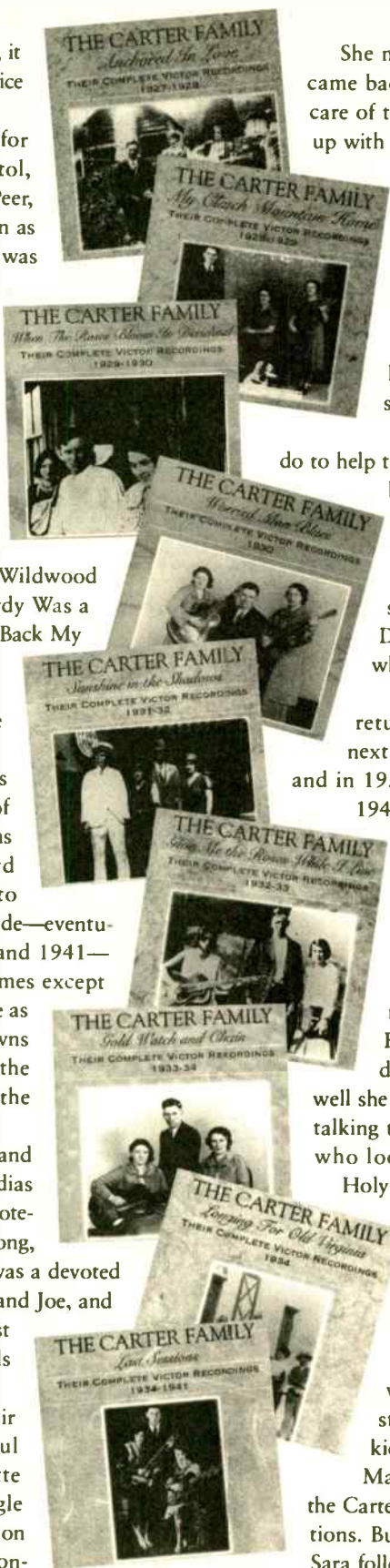
For whatever reason, Sara did decide to return, and worked with the Family for the next 10 years, even though she did divorce A.P. and in 1939 married his cousin Coy Bayes. But in 1943, she walked away from the music again,

moving to California to live in retirement. A.P. lured her back to do a series of later records for the independent label Acme (in 1952 and 1956); then in 1966 Maybelle talked her into coming to Nashville to cut a reunion album, and to make a few folk festival appearances. Everybody—including the album's producer, Johnny Cash—was amazed at how

well she could still sing and play, and Sara enjoyed talking to a new generation of Carter Family fans who looked at them as something akin to the Holy Grail. She was there with Maybelle when the Carters were elected to the Hall of Fame in 1970.

As far as we can tell, Sara made her final bow on stage in 1976, at the Second Annual A.P. Carter Memorial Festival at Maces Spring, Virginia. (This was the prototype for the weekly concerts still held today in Maces Spring by Sara's kids Joe and Janette.) Sara continued to visit Maybelle in Nashville, and was happy to see the Carter dynasty continuing into the next generations. But in October 1978 Maybelle passed, and Sara followed her two and a half months later.

They brought her back to Maces Spring, where her long, winding journey had started, and where the circle, in the words of the old Carter song, became, once again, unbroken. ●



Rounder Records reissued all of the Carter Family's classic Victor Records performances on these nine CDs, but they will soon be out of print.

THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

DECEMBER

December 1

1954 Death of Fred Rose

1966 Carter Stanley dies

December 2

1898 Opry star Herman

Crook born

December 3

1916 Birth of Rabon Delmore of the Delmore Brothers

1927 Ferlin Husky born

1968 Elvis Presley's "comeback" TV special airs on NBC

December 4

1942 Birthday of Chris Hillman (Byrds/Flying Burrito Brothers/Desert Rose Band/Laurel Canyon Ramblers)

1952 Death of Rabon Demore

1956 "Million Dollar Quartet" records at Sun Records (Presley, Lewis, Perkins, Cash)

1981 Lila McCann born

December 5

1901 Singing cowboy Ray Whitley born



Ray Whitley

1997 Molly O'Day dies

1996 Death of Canada's Wilf Carter, "Montana Slim"

December 6

1955 Foster and Lloyd's Bill Lloyd born

1988 Roy Orbison dies

December 7

1931 Birth of Bobby Osborne of the Osborne Brothers

1948 Birth of Gary Morris

1977 Death of Bill Boyd

December 8

1914 Floyd Tillman born

1982 Marty Robbins dies

December 9

1938 David Houston born

1957 Sylvia born

1970 David Kersh born

1979 Fiddler Tommy Jackson dies

December 10

1952 Johnny Rodriguez born

1970 Kevin Sharp born

1996 Faron Young commits suicide

December 11

1944 Brenda Lee born

1946 Hank Williams makes his first record

1949 Death of Fiddlin' John Carson

1957 Jerry Lee Lewis marries cousin Myra, creating a scandal

December 13

1934 Wedding bells ring for LuluBelle and Scotty

1949 Alabama's Randy Owen born

1954 John Anderson born

December 14

1899 Deford Bailey born

1934 Charlie Rich's birthday

1961 "Big Bad John" becomes a gold record for Jimmy Dean

December 15

1891 Birth of A.P. Carter of the Carter Family

1914 Red River Dave born

1928 Ernie Ashworth's birthday

1933 Jerry Wallace's birthday

December 16

1937 Birth of Jim Glaser of the Glaser Brothers

1997 Death of Nicolette Larson

December 17

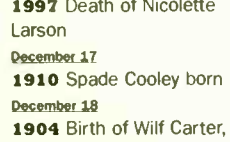
1910 Spade Cooley born

December 18

1904 Birth of Wilf Carter, "Montana Slim"

December 19

1966 Tracy Byrd born



Tracy Byrd

December 19

1908 Bill Carlisle born

1920 Jimmy Dickens born

1947 Janie Fricke born

1988 Death of David Cobb, the man who named Nashville "Music City U.S.A."

December 20

1966 A gold record goes to Johnny Horton's "The Battle of New Orleans"

December 21

1928 Freddie Hart born

1956 Lee Roy Parnell born

December 22

1921 Hawkshaw Hawkins born

1937 Red Steagall born

December 24

1913 LuluBelle (Wiseman) born

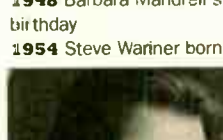
December 25

1908 Birth of Alton Delmore of the Delmore Brothers

1946 Jimmy Buffett born

1948 Barbara Mandrell's birthday

1954 Steve Wariner born



Steve Wariner

December 26

1911 Brother Oswald (Pete Kirby) born

1971 George and Tammy's first duet record hits the charts

December 27

1931 Birth of Elvis' guitarist Scotty Moore

1944 Tracy Nelson born

1978 Bob Luman dies

December 28

1932 Dorsey Burnette born

1922 Rose Lee Maphis born

December 29

1939 Ed Bruce born

December 30

1931 Skeeter Davis' birthday

1944 Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys debut on Opry

1956 Suzy Bogguss born

December 31

1924 Rex Allen's birthday

1947 Roy Rogers marries Dale Evans

1985 Rick Nelson dies

1997 Floyd Cramer dies

JANUARY

January 1

1953 Hank Williams found dead

1958 Johnny Cash performs at San Quentin with Merle Haggard an inmate

1937 Death of Townes Van Zandt

January 2

1926 Harold Bradley born

1936 Roger Miller born

1974 Death of Tex Ritter

January 3

1917 Birth of steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe

1970 Fiddler Clayton McMichen dies

January 4

1953 25,000 attend Hank Williams funeral in Montgomery, Ala.

1957 Patty Loveless born

1966 Deana Carter born

1969 Dolly Parton and George Jones both join Opry cast

January 5

1923 Sam Phillips of Sun Records born

January 6

1924 Earl Scruggs born

January 7

1930 Jack Greene born

1933 WWVA's Wheeling Jamboree begins

1950 Hank Snow debuts on Grand Ole Opry

January 8

1935 Elvis Presley born

1979 Sara Carter dies

January 9

1951 Crystal Gayle's birthday

January 10

1948 Marriage of Loretta and Oliver "Moonie" Lynn

1956 Elvis begins recording in Nashville

January 11

1911 Western swinger Tommy Duncan born

1933 Goldie Hill born

1946 Naomi Judd's birthday

January 12

1905 Birth of Tex Ritter

1926 Ray Price born



Ray Price

1939 Oak Ridge Boy William Lee Golden born

1952 Ricky Van Shelton's birthday

January 13

1948 WLW's *Midwestern Hayride* goes on TV in Cincinnati

January 14

1929 Billy Walker born

1937 Billie Jo Spears born

January 15

1915 Birth of folklorist Alan Lomax

1950 David Lynn Jones born

1995 Death of Vic Willis

January 16

1946 Ronnie Milsap's birthday

January 17

1955 Birth of Steve Earle

January 18

1941 Bobby Goldsboro born

1956 Mark Collie born

January 19

1939 Phil Everly born

1946 Dolly Parton born

January 20

1924 Slim Whitman's birthday

1965 John Michael Montgomery's birthday

January 21

1942 Birth of Mac Davis

1997 Death of Col. Tom Parker

January 22

1952 Alabama's Teddy Gentry born

January 23

1940 Johnny Russell born

January 24

1936 Doug Kershaw born

1941 Ray Stevens born

January 26

1900 Fiddler Clayton McMichen born

1942 Birth of Dave Rowland of Dave and Sugar

January 27

1937 Steel guitar pioneer Buddy Emmons born

1956 RCA releases "Heartbreak Hotel" by Elvis

1968 Tracy Lawrence born

January 28

1958 Joe Diffie born

1984 Honky-tonk great Al Dexter dies

January 29

1928 Birth of Little Jimmie Sizemore

January 30

1937 Jeanne Pruett's birthday



Jeanne Pruett

January 31

1996 *Mouth of the Mississippi* goes Gold for Jerry Clower

THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG

“ROCKY TOP”

(Written by Boudleaux and Felice Bryant)

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE’S fight song came about because Felice Bryant was going stir-crazy. A resulting tiff with her husband and collaborator Boudleaux Bryant led to the creation of “Rocky Top.”

“We were working on songs for an album for Archie Campbell called *The Golden Years*, and I was getting old working on *The Golden Years*,” Felice recalls with a chuckle. “We’d been trapped in that hotel room at the Gatlinburg Inn for three weeks.

“I said, ‘I’ve gotta do something else. I can’t handle this. I’ve gotta get out in the air and walk around the town.’ Boudleaux said, ‘Come on. Don’t be such a prima donna.’ He was getting miffed. I wasn’t going to get in an argument with him, but I wasn’t going to sit there a minute longer.”

There was tension in the air. The stress of the Bryants’ confined work space was beginning to show. Tempers started to flare. Boudleaux hit the guitar and slammed out a chord angrily.

“He said, ‘How’s that?’ I could see we were going to have a ‘match,’ so I just said, ‘That’s fine.’ He said, ‘We’ll call it “Rocky Top.”’ I said, ‘That’s fine.’ I asked if he was calling me a hard head.

“And then the song kind of wrote itself. What a relief that song was. Because I wanted to write something upbeat, mountain-y, hillbilly, bluegrass. I needed some pep. So ‘Rocky Top’ was a good break.”

The couple continued to work on songs for Campbell’s album and pretty much forgot about their little bluegrass interlude. It wasn’t in keeping with the old-folks theme of their other songs for the project, so it didn’t seem particularly important.

“As soon as we got back to Nashville, Sonny Osborne calls up and says, ‘Bobby and I have a session tomorrow. Do you



Boudleaux and Felice Bryant

have anything?’ Boudleaux said, ‘Well, yeah, I’ve got something.’ Boudleaux never said no. In fact, he’s written songs on the way down to sessions when he knew he didn’t have anything. The man was a genius. So after he hung up the phone he said, ‘Honey, do we have anything for the Osborne Brothers?’ I said, ‘How about that bluegrass thing that we wrote in, Gatlinburg?’”

Neither of them could remember the title, but Felice thought she could find the song in one of their still-unpacked suitcases. She fished out “Rocky Top” and Boudleaux taught it to Sonny Osborne later that night. The Osborne Brothers recorded it the next day.

“I felt good after we wrote it,” says Felice. “And after I heard the Osborne Brothers record, I knew it was a hit.”

The Osbornes’ single appeared in early 1968. Bluegrass wasn’t a priority at Decca Records, so nobody at the label paid much attention to it. Then a bookkeeper alerted label boss Owen Bradley to the fact that “Rocky Top” had sold more than 100,000 copies without Decca doing much promotion. Bradley promptly scheduled a session for Dinah Shore to record a pop version of the tune.

Lynn Anderson issued her version of “Rocky Top” in 1970 and scored an even bigger hit with the song. It remains the singer’s favorite.

“Whenever I’m asked what my favorite is, I always say ‘Rocky Top,’” says Anderson. “Some people are surprised at that, because ‘Rose Garden’ was a bigger hit for me. But



The Osborne Brothers (top) released "Rocky Top" in 1968. Its success led Dinah Shore (center) to record a pop version of the song. It was a Top 20 hit for Lynn Anderson (bottom) in 1970. "Rocky Top" has brought so much happiness to so many people," says Anderson. Hundreds of artists now perform and record this bluegrass standard.

Living" and "Penny Arcade." More than 1,500 recordings of their songs have been made, and they are said to be responsi-

'Rocky Top' has brought so much happiness to so many people."

Next, the band director at the University of Tennessee worked up an arrangement of the tune. At the time, the Knoxville school wasn't prominent.

"It was a hit at the University of Tennessee before Boudleaux and I even knew it," says Felice. In 1998, UT claimed the national college football championship, blaring "Rocky Top" all the way.

"Rocky Top" became one of the state songs of Tennessee and has been recorded by Otis Williams, Jo Ann Sweeney, Boots Randolph, Tracy Miller, Gary Paxton and dozens of other artists. It is, needless to say, a standard in the bluegrass repertoire.

"Archie Campbell did make his album *The Golden Years*," Felice Bryant reports. "Did it do anything? I have no idea. But Archie always felt that 'Rocky Top' should have been his, and was surprised that we never showed it to him."

The song catalog of Boudleaux and Felice Bryant is an American treasure. It includes "Love Hurts," "All I Have to Do Is Dream," "Raining in My Heart," "It's a Lovely Lovely World," "Bye Bye Love," "We Could," "Hole in My Pocket," "Wake Up Little Susie," "Country Boy," "Hey Joe," "Devoted to You," "Let's Think About

"ROCKY TOP"



By Boudleaux and Felice Bryant

WISH THAT I WAS ON OL' ROCKY TOP
Down in the Tennessee hills
Ain't no smoggy smoke on Rocky Top
Ain't no telephone bills

ONCE I HAD A GIRL ON ROCKY TOP
Half bear the other half cat
Wild as a mink, but sweet as soda pop
I still dream about that

ROCKY TOP YOU'LL ALWAYS BE
Home sweet home to me
Good ol' Rocky Top
Rocky Top, Tennessee

ONCE TWO STRANGERS CLIMBED OL' ROCKY TOP
Lookin' for a moonshine still
Strangers ain't come down from Rocky Top
Reckon they never will

CORN WON'T GROW AT ALL ON ROCKY TOP
Dirt's too rocky by far
That's why all the folks on Rocky Top
Get their corn from a jar

ble for more than \$250 million in record sales.

But "Rocky Top" is arguably their most beloved composition. The couple was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1972, into the National Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1986 and into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1991.

Boudleaux Bryant died in 1987. Felice Bryant lives in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, where she owns and operates the Rocky Top Inn. ◊

June Carter Remembers Her Family's Legacy

ROBERT K. OERMANN

THE DEATH OF ANITA CARTER LAST July leaves June Carter Cash as the last second-generation member on her branch of the family tree left to "carry the torch."

After the breakup of the original Carter Family in 1943, Maybelle Carter, the act's lead instrumentalist, formed a new group with her daughters Helen, June and Anita. It was this "Carter Family" (usually billed as "Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters"), that took the family name to stardom in Nashville.

Original lead singer Sara and her husband, A.P., had children Gladys, Janette and Joe. The latter two survive in the Clinch Mountains of Virginia, Janette as the driving force behind the bluegrass/old-time music venue the Carter Family Fold, which has operated since 1974. She remains distinctly a mountain musician, making no concessions to Nashville commercialism or modern country music. She is also fiercely protective of the family's name.

"I don't know what it will do to me, losing Anita right this quickly after Helen," says June, recalling Helen's death in 1998. She is acutely conscious of the fact that the Carter Family's saga is slipping away.

"It is history. It should be talked about. It is important. I wrote a film script called *The Wildwood Flower*. It was fiction, but it was about the Carter Family. Robert Duvall was going to do the movie with me. He said if I'd do his [1998's *The Apostle*], he'd do mine.

"There needs to be a book. The Carters are so important; maybe I'll write one."

The difficulty in such an undertaking is the 1933 separation and subsequent divorce of Sara and A.P. Although they continued to perform together, they often did not even speak to each other over the next 10 years. Historians have tried to probe this relationship. But



The Carters, top, as they appeared when they arrived at the Opry. From left, above, are Anita, June and Helen in one of their last photos together.

Janette and Joe, who remained at A.P.'s side until his death in 1960, have adamantly refused to discuss it. And June respects their wish for privacy.

"They cannot handle it," says June. "I wouldn't be afraid to talk about it, but they would be very sad with me if I do. They are closer than just first cousins. I couldn't offend them in any way, nor would I.

"Uncle A.P. was the one who encouraged me. He would say, 'Well, we could use a little comedy.' When I first went on stage with the Carter Family I was so tiny. We would be playing in the coal-mining district, back up in West Virginia, and he would say, 'You need to do some kind of joke.'

"He was very straight when he told a story about where the song came from or why he wrote it. And he seldom talked about why Mother wrote a song, or Aunt Sara. He never said they wrote anything, but they wrote a lot of stuff. At the last recording sessions [1940-41], he put Sara's name on one ["You've Got to Righten That Wrong" is credited to "Carter Family"] and Mother's name on three ["My Home Among the Hills," "I'll Never Forsake You," "It's a Long Road to Travel Alone"]. I don't know what made him do it. They would never have asked him to. He was the head of the household."

By 1939, Janette (born in 1923), Joe (1927), Helen (1927), June (1929) and Anita (1933) were all performing alongside their parents, initially over the megawatt Mexican border radio station XERA. June remembers vividly the impact that radio had on her as a little girl.

"The room was full of bushel baskets of mail and I thought, *These are an awful lot of letters somebody's got to answer*," she recalls. "And I looked and they were all to the Carter Family!"

In 1943 the clan staged its last performances, six months of daily shows for WBT radio in Charlotte, North Carolina. Seeing how glum his wife was after the end, Ezra suggested to



Maybelle that she continue performing with their daughters. Helen followed her illustrious mother as a top instrumentalist and songwriter. Anita matured to possess the loveliest voice of the Carter women. June became the act's comedian.

"It was the very last days of vaudeville. People have asked me about Aunt Polly, which was a character I used to do. She was much more rural than June Carter was. June could talk about anything she wanted to. She had a whole lot more sense than Aunt Polly had. Aunt Polly had no sense at all."

The women moved to Richmond, Virginia, for a radio job on WRNL in 1944. Two years later they joined the cast of the *Old Dominion Barn Dance* on the city's WRVA. In 1948 they moved to Knoxville for work on WNOX. There they picked up guitarist Chet Atkins as a sideman. After a 1949 stint at KWTO in Springfield, Missouri, they arrived at the Grand Ole Opry in 1950 with him in tow.

They were recording for RCA Victor by then. In fact, June had scored a Top 10 hit in 1949, "Baby It's Cold Outside" (with Homer and Jethro). In 1951 Anita followed suit with "Bluebird Island"/"Down the Trail of Aching Hearts" (duets with Hank Snow). In 1952 Maybelle, Helen, June and Anita accompanied Roy Acuff and Hank Williams to *The Kate Smith Show* for national TV exposure from Manhattan.

"We did all three of those shows. They gave me time to talk. We had more time [on screen] than anyone. Hank was funny. But when he was using, it was so painful for my sisters and me."

In 1953-54 they filmed a widely syndicated TV series called *Stars of the Grand Ole Opry*. In 1955 they began touring with Elvis Presley. The Carters, as well as June individually, were managed by Colonel Tom Parker during this period.

"Elvis had a big crush on Anita, but then he got a crush on me. Elvis got a crush on whoever was handy. It was just his thing. He liked women. I decided I wouldn't touch him with a 10-foot pole. Lord only knows where he'd been. He

was a sexy man and he really thought he could have any woman that he saw. But he couldn't, and I think that was a big shock to his ego."

When her marriage to honky-tonk singer Carl Smith broke up (after producing daughter Carlene Carter in 1955), June rejoined Elvis on the road as his opening act. Screenwriter Budd Schulberg saw Elvis and June in concert



Johnny Cash married June in 1968. Since then her solo output has included a 1975 LP, above, and a 1987 autobiography, left.

in Florida and contacted director Elia Kazan, who was then casting the film drama *A Face in the Crowd*. Kazan arranged for her to go to New York for acting lessons.

June appeared in such TV dramas as *Wagon Train*, *Bonanza*, *Jim Bowie* and *Gunsmoke*, as well as in skits on the variety series of Jack Paar, Tennessee Ernie Ford and Gary Moore. She's remained active as an actor on such programs as *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* and *Little House on the Prairie*, as well as in *The Apostle* and a

series of TV movies in the 1980s.

But her recording career waned. Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters joined the Johnny Cash road show in 1961. June realized she was falling in love with the superstar and cowrote his 1963 hit "Ring of Fire" as a result. They married in 1968. She sang hit duets with him—memorably 1967's "Jackson" and 1970's "If I Were a Carpenter"—but her solo recordings became fewer and fewer.

The original Carter Family went into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1970. Mother Maybelle retired in 1977 and died in late 1979, followed by Sara in early 1980. By this time the Carter repertoire had been embraced by both the folk and bluegrass communities. The sisters continued to record, and Anita made several acclaimed solo LPs, but June never "cashed in" as a solo act.

Her 1971 single "A Good Man" fared fairly well on the charts. In 1975 Johnny Cash produced a fine June LP called *Appalachian Pride*. After that she seemed content to record with her sisters and sing backup on his records, TV shows and tours. In 1974 the Carter Sisters won Top Country Group at the *American Music Awards*.

"I was very busy just being John's wife," June says. "I wanted to be the best mother I could be. I worked with him, but I had enough sense to walk just a little ways behind him. I wanted to have a marriage."

"They only pressed 20,000 copies of *Appalachian Pride*. If you can find a copy now it's worth about \$30. I could have made more records, but I just didn't."

Marty Stuart and Rodney Crowell pestered her to make another record for years. She finally relented and issued *Press On* in 1999. It was coproduced by her son, John Carter Cash (born 1970), who also backed her on the TV shows of *Regis and Kathie Lee*, *David Letterman* and the Opry, and at showcases at the Bottom Line and the Troubadour.

The disc includes songs that illuminate all the phases of her career. And the spirit of the legendary Carter Family is in every note. ●

NEW AGAIN NOTEWORTHY DISCOVERIES

The big news of the month is the launch of a series of albums by Sony/Legacy, "American Milestones." These are digitally remastered CD versions of classic works, including new liner notes and extra tracks recorded during the original recording sessions. Here are the first five:

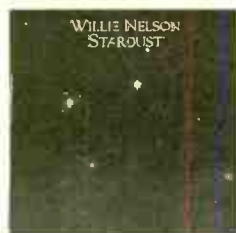


TAMMY WYNETTE
Stand By Your Man

Epic Legacy

The title tune of this LP sold more than 6 million records and became the signature song of Tammy Wynette. It also earned her a 1969 Grammy and her first CMA Female Vocalist of the Year honor. The bonus tracks included are "I'm Only a

Woman" and "There's Quite a Difference." Producer Billy Sherrill offers new liner notes.



WILLIE NELSON
Stardust

Columbia Legacy

Given how prolific Nelson is in the studio, is it any surprise that there were "extra" tracks recorded for 1978's 4-million-selling

Stardust? These tunes—Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now" and the Browns' "Scarlet Ribbons"—were doubtless dropped because they were of more recent vintage than the rest of the Tin Pan Alley chestnuts that comprise the set. Its hits, "Blue Skies," "All of Me," "Georgia on My Mind" and "September Song," gave Nelson a new image as an interpreter of the Great American Songbook. Album producer Booker T. Jones and harmonica player Mickey Raphael provide insights with new liner notes.



MARTY ROBBINS
Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs

Columbia Legacy

This landmark cowboy concept album initially appeared in 1959 and spawned the Robbins successes "El Paso" and "Big Iron." The remastering throws a spotlight on Robbins' golden vocals and the brilliance of the Nashville Sound session musicians known as "the A-Team." Added to the original 12 tracks is Robbins' 1959 single "The Hanging Tree," which was the title tune of a Gary Cooper movie. "Saddle Tramp," the B-side of "Big Iron" has also been added. Both the original version and a previously

unissued longer version of "El Paso" are included.



JOHNNY CASH
At Folsom Prison

Columbia Legacy

This famed live recording from 1968 crackles with excitement. Named the CMA's Album of the Year, it included the immortal "Folsom Prison Blues." June Carter, Carl Perkins and the Statler Brothers are on board, but it is Cash's charisma that burns brightest. His original handwritten liner notes won a Grammy and are reproduced here. Additional notes have been added by Cash and Steve Earle. Three tracks not included on the original LP have been restored—"Joe Bean," "Busted" and "The Legend of John Henry's Hammer." The new package also includes a number of previously unpublished photos taken that day.

Another highlight of the month is the appearance of two major boxed sets from Germany's Bear Family Records. These are available via mail from the Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Nashville.

TEX RITTER

Blood on the Saddle

Bear Family



This extraordinary four-CD set compiles all of this singing cowboy's recordings from 1932

to 1947. Those

were the days when Tex Ritter was on the charts with "There's a New Moon Over My Shoulder," "Jealous Heart," "You Two Timed Me One Time Too Often," "You Will Have to Pay," "Christmas Carols by the Old Corral," "Long Time Gone," "When You Leave Don't Slam the Door" and "Rye Whiskey," all of which topped the hit parade in 1944-48, and all of which are included.

So is "Green Grow the Lilacs," the title tune of the play that brought Ritter fame on Broadway (it later became more famous as the musical *Oklahoma!*). In Hollywood, he recorded an abundance of singing-cowboy material. Unlike most of his peers, Ritter knew a lot of traditional western songs, so his sides for Capitol included "Ridin' Old Paint," "Get Along Little Doges" and "The Chisolm Trail," as well as Hollywood cowboy songs. In all, 52 of the 111 tracks are western numbers. As with all Bear Family products, the illustration-packed biographical booklet is as enjoyable as the music itself.

ERNEST TUBB

Another Story

Bear Family

This six-CD set is a



heaping helping of Tubb's final recordings for Decca/MCA, 1966-75. By 1966 Tubb's chart heyday was well behind him. But he still had some memorable performances in him, notably the Loretta Lynn duets "Sweet Thang" and "Who's Gonna Take the Garbage Out." As a solo act, he made the Top 20 for the last time in 1966 with "Another Story." "Saturday Satan Sunday Saint" (1969), "I'm Gonna Make Like a Snake" (1968, written by Loretta) and "I've Got All the Heartaches I Can Handle" (1973) were his final charting MCA titles.

These are included, as are the contents of his *Ernest Tubb Sings Hank Williams* LP and some instrumental numbers by the Texas Troubadours.



MERLE HAGGARD
Big City

Epic Legacy

"Are the Good Times Really Over," "My Favorite Memory" and "Big City" emerged as hits from Haggard's debut Epic album of 1981. This reissue adds "Call Me" and a duet with Roger Miller called "I Won't Give Up My Train," both previously unreleased. Haggard himself provides updated liner notes.

—Robert K. Oermann



PRECIOUS MEMORIES

FROM THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Vintage Records

The Country Music Foundation houses the largest country record collection on earth. Among its 125,000 LPs, tapes, CDs, 78 r.p.m. and other recorded formats are a number of prized 45s. Some of the rarer singles are pictured here.



WILLIE NELSON
"Man With the Blues"
Betty Records (1958)

As a young Texas performer, Willie Nelson recorded two singles for the tiny, Houston-based Betty Records label in the late 1950s. He moved to Nashville in 1960 and signed with Pamper Music after Hank Cochran gave up his \$50-a-week raise, insisting the money go to Nelson instead.



MERLE HAGGARD
"Skidrow"
Tally Records (1962)

Tally Records owner Lewis Talley first met Merle Haggard at the Lucky Spot nightclub in Bakersfield. That was in 1960 when Haggard was performing there, fresh from a prison stint at San Quentin. The performer's first few 45s appeared on Tally; then he signed with Capitol Records.



THUMPER JONES
"Rock It"
Starday Records (1956)

George Jones first recorded for the Texas-based Starday Records in 1954. Following his hit for the label with "Why Baby Why" in 1955, he decided to try his hand at the then-emerging rockabilly style. His self-penned "Rock It" was released under the pseudonym "Thumper Jones."





LORETTA LYNN
 "I'm a Honky
 Tonk Girl"
 Zero Records (1960)

This is the famous debut single that Loretta and Mooney Lynn hawked at radio stations on their cross-country auto tour. Their "homemade" style of promotion worked, for the single rose to No. 14 on the charts and led to Lynn's Grand Ole Opry debut on Sept. 17, 1960.



BARBARA MANDRELL
 "Queen for a Day"
 Mosrite Records (1963)

Billed as the "Princess of the Steel," Barbara Mandrell was just 13 years old when she recorded her first single for Mosrite. This effort, her best-known from those days, appeared a year later. Mosrite became one of the most enduring of all the small, independent labels.



CORKY JONES
 "Hot Dog"
 Pep Records (1956)

Just as George Jones did, Buck Owens experimented with rockabilly music in the mid-'50s. His rockabilly pseudonym was "Corky Jones." Owens also backed rockabilly star Gene Vincent in the studio. He later revived "Hot Dog" by making it the title tune of his 1988 comeback LP.



INTERNATIONAL SUBMARINE BAND
 "Luxury Liner"
 LHI Records (1967)

Florida native Gram Parsons (Cecil Ingram Connors) formed the International Submarine Band in Boston in 1966. The group was short-lived, and original copies of its few recordings are extremely rare. By 1967 Parsons had moved on to the Byrds, then the Flying Burrito Brothers.



DOLLY PARTON
 "Puppy Love"
 Goldband Records (1960)

Parton was already a TV and radio veteran in east Tennessee when she made her recording debut with this single at age 13. Goldband was headquartered in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Chaperoned by her Grandma Rena, Parton took her first bus trip so she could tape this peppy rockabilly number.



GEORGE STRAIT
 "(That Don't Change)
 The Way I Feel
 About You"
 D Records (1978)

Strait and his Ace in the Hole band paid their dues in Texas honky tonks during the 1970s. They recorded three singles for D Records, owned by Dallas businessman Pappy Dailey. This one was reissued on 1995's *Strait Out of the Box*, the largest-selling country boxed-set of all time.



RANDY TRAYWICK
 "She's My Woman"
 Paula Records (1973)

Randy Travis' debut 45 was billed under his real name, Randy Traywick. It was produced by singer Joe Stampley and went to No. 91 on the *Billboard* country chart in early 1979. Travis also recorded as "Randy Ray" before adopting his permanent stage name.

For more information about the Hall of Fame or to contribute to fundraising for the new Hall of Fame, please contact the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, 4 Music Square East, Nashville, TN 37203; 615-256-1639; www.halloffame.org.



COLLECTIONS

ATTENTION, MEMBERS! The Collections page is your source for buying, selling or trading country music-related merchandise and memorabilia. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when submitting your entry: 1) Entries must be kept to 40 words or less. 3) Only one entry per member per issue. 4) We reserve the right to edit for space and style. Please write each other directly about information or items.

COMMENTS

I ENJOY YOUR MAGAZINE.

I would like to see these stars—Buffy Sainte Marie, Anne Murray, Cristy Lane. **Judy Rhoads, 3114 Redlick, Omaha, NE 68112.**

I'D LIKE TO SEE a long story on Wanda Jackson. Also, please do a long-overdue story on Rose Maddox. I always look forward to the next issue. **Barbara Estes, P.O. Box 355, Walls, MS 38680.**

SEEING ROSALIE ALLEN on the cover of *The Journal* quickened my heartbeat. Yet it was another hatchet job on Hall of Fame-worthy Elton Britt. Rosalie richly deserves the tribute, but not at Elton's expense. Once known as "Champagne Britt," in his later years his use of alcohol was limited to cooking sherry. *Country Music* needs to do its homework. **Don Brown, 108 Orchard Dr., Boonsboro, MD 21713-1121.**

I LOVE THE JOURNAL. Please do an article on a true living legend, George Hamilton IV. **Phillip W. Paulson, 2517 E. 10th St. Apt. 3, Indianapolis, IN 46201-2154.**

QUESTIONS

I'D LIKE TO HEAR from anyone who remembers a song from the early '50s titled "Filthy Old Bottle of Gin." Tune is identical to "The Girl in the Blue Velvet Band." Can't remember the singer's name. Anyone help me track this down? **Richard Burr, 25 Abbey Ct., Carlisle, PA 17013.**

I AM LOOKING FOR a song from the 1940s called "Nineteen Years

Old" by Jimmie Lawson. **Roger A. Jolley, 3191 S West Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84115-3757.**

I WOULD LIKE TO CORRESPOND with anyone who has purchased the CD boxed set of Lefty Frizzell. **Herbert W. LaFleur, 4614 Harwich Dr., Waldorf, MD 20601-3228.**

COULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME where I can order the Roy Rogers CD *Happy Trails* that was in the last issue of *The Journal*? **Etta Smith, 2310 Idlewood Dr., Albemarle, NC 28001.**

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Rhino, the label, is distributed by WEA. Any record store can order it. The Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Nashville is the world's largest mail-order source for country music. The number there is 1-800-229-4288.*

WANTED

I AM IN SEARCH OF the book *The Life & Times of Hank Williams* by Arnold Rogers and Bruce Gidall. **John E. Rushing, 2108 23rd Ave., Gulfport, MS 39501.**

WANTED: 1950s and early 1960s country, rockabilly and early rock picture discs, reasonably priced. **Wanda Wiedmann, 509 East Kemp, Watertown, SD 57201-3722.**

AM LOOKING FOR PHOTOS taken at Farm Aid 1999 of Steve Earle, John Mellencamp, Willie Nelson, Deana Carter. Can anyone help? **Kim Lester, 4116-D, Highway 15, Oxford, NC 27565.**

I NEED A CASSETTE or 78 r.p.m. record of the 1920s tune "The

Little Ford Rambles Right Along." Will pay any reasonable price. **Mrs. Albert G. Clark, 26 Colby St., Keene, NH 03431-4303.**

FOR SALE

GOSPEL LPS by Loretta, Conway, Cash, Emmylou, Willie. Country LPs by Hag, Jones, Tammy, Janie, Loveless, Reba, E.T., Buck, Connie, Strait, Loretta and many more. Enclose SASE for reply. **Wilfred J. Lerche, 3123 West Larsen Rd., Neenah, WI 54956.**

LPS OF ARTISTS Sonny James, Ernest Tubb, Cal Smith, Jack Greene, others. Send \$1 for list. **Ronald Rumer, 7334 Shelbourne, Philadelphia, PA 19111-3012.**

70 COUNTRY MUSIC magazines, 1979-1999, not consecutive. Also eight separate issues of *The Journal*, 1976-77. \$150 plus shipping. **Robert D. Johnson, 914 Larson St., Knoxville, IA 50138.**

I HAVE LPS, CDS, cassettes, photos, books, misc. items of country artists, legends to new artists. Send a SASE with wants to **Vikki Madden, 2054 New Era Rd. #3, Sevierville, TN 37862.**

COUNTRY MUSIC mags, 16 issues, April 1980 to Feb. 1982. Incl. are "Johnny Cash Silver Anniversary" and 10th Anniversary. **Edwin C. Gardner, 29 Sweetbriar Pk., Lewes, DE 19958. Phone 302-645-2602.**

BLUEGRASS AND COUNTRY LPs from Acuff to Wiseman, \$5-\$10 ea. **Bob Rowland, 537 N. Syracuse Ave., N. Massapequa, NY 11758.**

COPY OF 1940S PURINA Opry picture. Incl. Deford Bailey, Eddy Arnold, Uncle Dave, Minnie, Roy, Monroe. \$10. **Imogene P. Hardison, 541 S. Wooldridge Rd., Hopkinsville, KY 42240-1677.**

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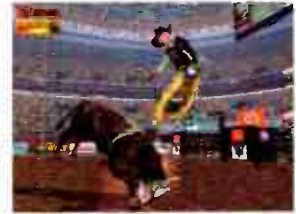
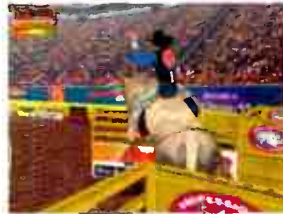
TRIVIA ANSWER: PATSY CLINE

- * If you guessed after hint #1, consider yourself a country-music authority.
- * If you guessed by hint #5, you're a bona fide country expert.
- * If you guessed by hint #7, you're a fan.
- * If you had to go all the way to #12, you need to go buy some Patsy Cline records immediately!

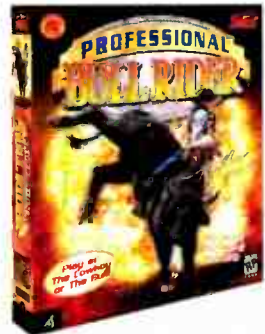
LARGE SELECTION of records, '50s through '80s. Please send SASE. **Linda R. Weyandt, RR #1, Box 196, Imler, PA 16655-9301.**

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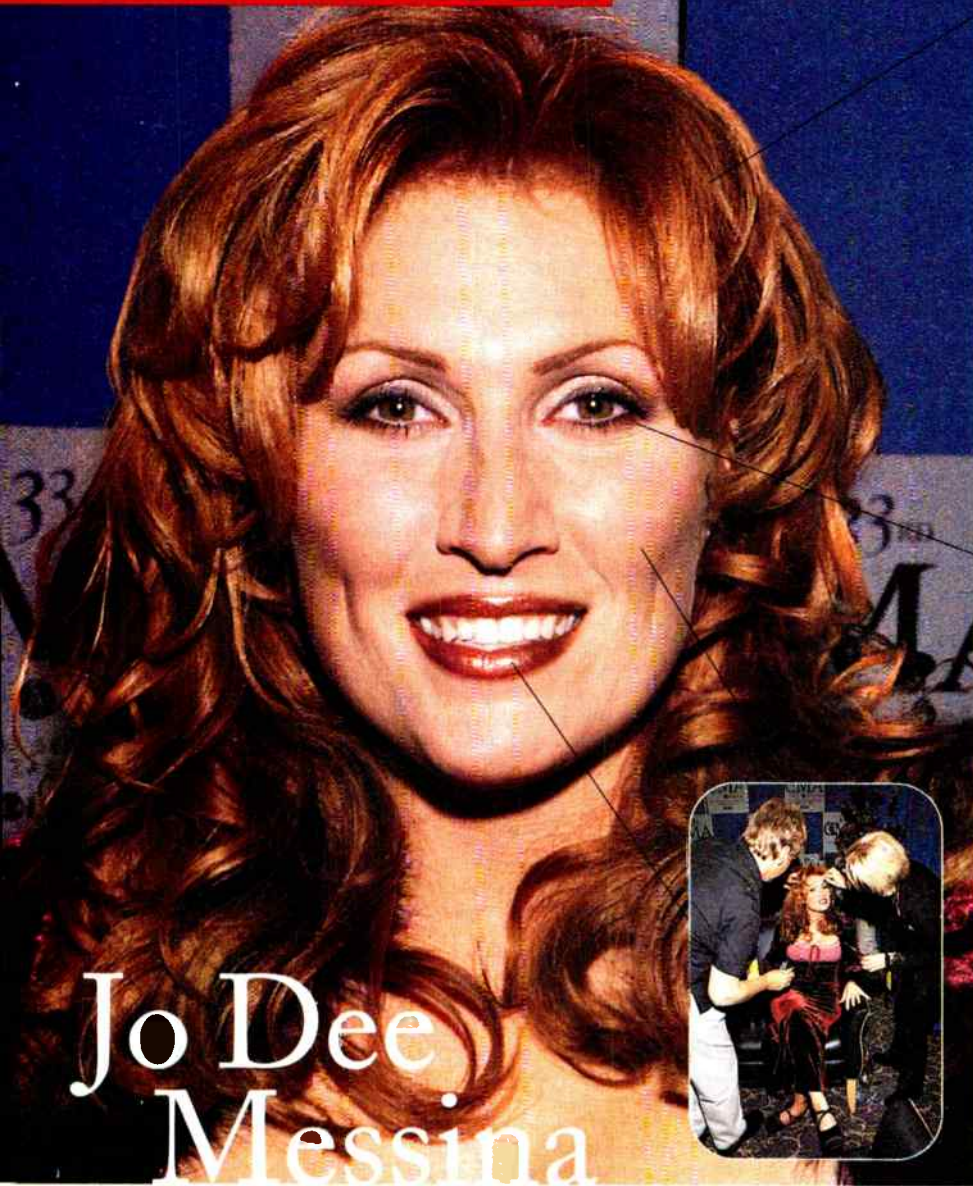


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Jo Dee Messina



Award-Winning Elegance

JO DEE MESSINA WAS ONE BUSY GIRL. CMA night: In addition to performing her latest hit, “Lesson in Leavin’,” and picking up the night’s Horizon Award, she also worked as a correspondent for *CBS This Morning*.

With all that action, the effervescent singer changed clothes no less than four times and sported two different hair styles. Still, her look was always classy elegance. Here’s how Messina pulled it together for her big night.



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• **HAIR** Stylist Earl Cox of Nashville’s Trump’s Studio reveals Messina’s hair is naturally “bone straight.” To create a headful of curls, he applied AR Tec Volume Gel on freshly washed hair, then blew it dry naturally.

Sections of hair were spritzed with ISO Hot Curl Set, then curled with two different curling irons—one an inch wide, the other an inch and a half wide.

The curls were clipped with pin curls for more than an hour. Cox then removed the clips and ran his hands through her hair to loosen the curls—“never use a brush,” he says. He back-combed the roots at the crown for lift.

Messina’s up-do was achieved by pinning up a section at the crown. For her performance, he took the pins out and let the hair fall naturally.

• **EYES** Nashville makeup artist Mary Beth Felts started with Scream, a peachy-shimmery shadow, on the lids and Ice on the brow bone. On the eye crease she first applied Ony, a reddish-brown shadow, blending carefully. She topped that with a small amount of Cocoa, a darker shadow, to add definition. The eyes were then lined with Coffee pencil.

Felts took a straight eye brush and applied a thin line of black powder right at the lash line, blending it to create a smoky look. She curled the lashes with an eyelash curler, then applied two coats of black mascara (curling the lashes first prevents eyelash breakage). Three flared lashes were added to the outside corner of each eye. Messina likes a sparkly look, so as a finishing touch Felts applied silver fairy dust on each eye.

• **FACE** Felts applied Kiehl’s Ultra Face moisturizer on Messina’s clean skin. She then groomed her brows, which Felts says is essential for a polished look. She started with Light Trio Concealer under the eyes, then applied Porcelain liquid foundation with a sponge. Powder blush in Georgia was brushed on the apples of the cheeks.

• **LIPS** Messina’s lips were lined with Spice pencil, topped with Dish lip color and a clear gloss for shimmer.

• **CLOTHES** Messina’s black taffeta gown (far left) with a side train was from Calvin Klein in New York, says stylist Claudia Fowler. “We chose that because Calvin Klein is sleek and simple but very high fashion without being overdone. That dress is glamorous but still young and stylish.”

Completing the look was a necklace of smoky topaz briolette with diamond cap and matching earrings, on loan from Cindi Earl Fine Jewelry of Nashville. Like the dress, Messina’s jewelry was simple but added a touch of glamour and sparkle to the look. —Lisa Zbito

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Now that's a great idea!



Alan Jackson is a man of few words, but *CM*'s inimitable columnist Hazel Smith gets the scoop on the long tall talent as only she can.

Alan Jackson

By Hazel Smith

TEN YEARS AGO I WAS SITTING IN THE OFFICE OF ASCAP representative Shelby Kennedy, who was singing the praises of a long-legged, hat-wearing newcomer who had just been signed to Arista Records. "You gotta hear Alan Jackson. He's country and he's so goooood," he said. It was Kennedy who had played the tape that turned Arista head Tim DuBois on to Jackson's singing and songwriting talents. When he played "Here in the Real World" for me that day in his office, I distinctly remember saying, "Yes, yes, yes."

Right off the bat I knew Alan Jackson was a keeper, but I wasn't sure if Arista was the best place for him. After all, it was a brand new label. I believe I said something clever like, "That boy is so good he deserves a major label."

Several platinum albums and No. 1 hits later, the quiet 6'4" lad from Newnan, Georgia, is a superstar—and he hasn't abandoned his traditional country roots. As one radio programmer put it, "Alan Jackson is traditional, but he is so hip any country station can play him."

With all his success, Jackson leads what appears to be a fairytale life in Nashville with his wife, Denise, and three daughters: Mattie, 9, Ali, 7, and Dani Grace, 2. He collects classic cars, antique boats and Harley-Davidson motorcycles. But he's still every bit the down-to-earth country boy, and he continues his love affair with traditional country on his latest album, *Under the Influence*, a collection of some of his favorite classics. I met with Jackson at his manager's office on Music Row recently to talk about his new project, among other things.

CM: *What's it like to be the carrier of the traditional torch?*

AJ: I don't know. I didn't start out to be the torchbearer. I've kinda been labeled that a lot lately. A lot of artists try to do country but haven't been

able to get played too much. I've just been real lucky. I sing it 'cause it's the kind of music I like.

CM: *Where do you see the music going, or do you think about it?*

AJ: I try not to think about it (laughs). I probably don't stay on top of the industry enough to make an educated guess at it, but I don't think the format will ever be real traditional-heavy again. There's going to be a mixture of all the stuff out there, the way it's always been. There'll be pop and a lot more southern rock—I've always liked southern rock. I think there'll be a diverse sound out there.

CM: *What do you think about the changes at TNN?*

AJ: I hate to see TNN cut out some of the shows that have been the foundation of country music for the last 10 or 15 years. Things sometimes seem weird or hard at the time they happen, then later on it works out for the best. I hope this works out like that, too.

CM: *Traditional country fans should be impressed with your new album. Let's talk about some of the songs. We got this song written by Bob McDill and recorded by Don Williams, "It Must Be Love." That song influenced you, I'm sure.*

AJ: I tried to do most of the songs, the ones I used to sing a lot back in the

early days, when I was thinking about getting started. And that's one of 'em. I didn't know who Bob McDill was then, of course, but I learned so much about his writing. I could do a book of his songs. I love his stuff.

CM: *Where did you first hear "Pop a Top"?*

AJ: You know, I don't remember where I heard that song a long time ago. What got me interested in it, I heard Jim Ed Brown do it out there at the Opry a lot. When we started looking for songs for this album it just popped into my head. I thought it was a good one, a classic a lot of 'em might not remember.

CM: *"Farewell Party"—you and I have been talking about that song for years.*

AJ: Yeah, I've been doing that song forever, probably since the early '80s. I used to do a lot of Gene Watson stuff when I first started with my little band back home. That's one of the songs I've always admired.

CM: *And the great Charley Pride's "Kiss an Angel Good Mornin'."*

AJ: Yeah, I just always loved that song. I've always been a fan of his and thought maybe I could bring the song back to life a little bit.

CM: *"The Blues Man." Do you think Hank Williams Jr. wrote that about his papa?*

AJ: Actually he wrote it about himself. He wrote it in first person. He wrote it about himself when he fell off that mountain...was going through all that stuff, and I think he was almost at the end of his row there. He met this girl, and I think he wrote it about one of his wives. I've been a huge fan of his for years, and I think people overlook his talent as a songwriter. They always think he's a big party man, but he's written some great songs, and that's one of them.

CM: *I'm impressed that you included two songs penned by Johnny Paycheck, the first one being "Revenooer Man," by George Jones.*

AJ: Yeah. I don't know if that song was that big of a hit by George. I had this collection by George for the last 10 years or so with that song on there, and it's kept haunting me. I always thought if I ever got to do an album of old stuff I wanted to put that on it. It reminds me of the moonshine song "White Lightning." I didn't even know Paycheck was the writer on it until we went to the studio. Then we got the copy of it and it said "Donny Young." That's Paycheck's real name.

CM: *The duet by you and Jimmy Buffett of "Margaritaville"... I predict the song of the summer of 2000 at every resort from Maine to Mexico will be "Margaritaville" by Alan Jackson and Jimmy Buffett.*

AJ: Probably would be a good summer song. I mean, I've always liked Jimmy Buffett, his whole career. I've sung that song in bars. Everybody has—everybody who's ever sung in a place like that. I was honored he'd do a duet with me. I don't know if he'd done that before.

CM: *Who is your all-time favorite songwriter?*

AJ: All-time favorite songwriter? (Laughs.) I'd have to put Merle Haggard up there on that, I think.

CM: *Who is your favorite new male singer?*

AJ: Golly. The newest one I've heard that I like is Brad Paisley, and it's not because he's on my record label. I didn't even know he was on Arista. He's had that "Who Needs Pictures" out. I thought that was a well-written song. Of all the voices I've heard lately, I like his.

CM: *Do you have a favorite new country female singer?*

AJ: The last female I liked was Lee Ann Womack.

CM: *What is your all-time favorite song?*

AJ: Golly, I'd pick "He Stopped Loving Her Today." You can't hardly beat that.

CM: *Where do you write songs?*

AJ: Nowhere in particular. The last 10 years, though, I've found I write mostly in my bus on the road. I don't write at home.

CM: *You know, I went to Newnan, and while I was in town I asked the people at the Cracker Barrel and Home Depot what they think about you. They're crazy about you back home.*

AJ: (Laughs.) Yeah, it's funny, you know that "Little Man" song that's out? I wrote that not really about my hometown, but the visual idea came from that. Those busi-



Jackson can often be found collaborating with his friend and hero, George Jones.

CM: *Then you've got this "Once You've Had the Best." I think you sing this song good as Jones.*

AJ: You better go back and listen to his version (laughs). I've always loved that song. My wife's always loved that song. I had this CD—actually it's a cassette—on the bus for a long time. It's one of his collections. It was *Ten Years of Hits* or something. I don't know what 10 years it was, but it had stuff all the way back to the '60s. That cut was on there. Riding that bus every night and day, that's one of the cuts we'd listen to a lot. That steel intro would start on that thing, and it'd just raise the hairs on the back of my neck.

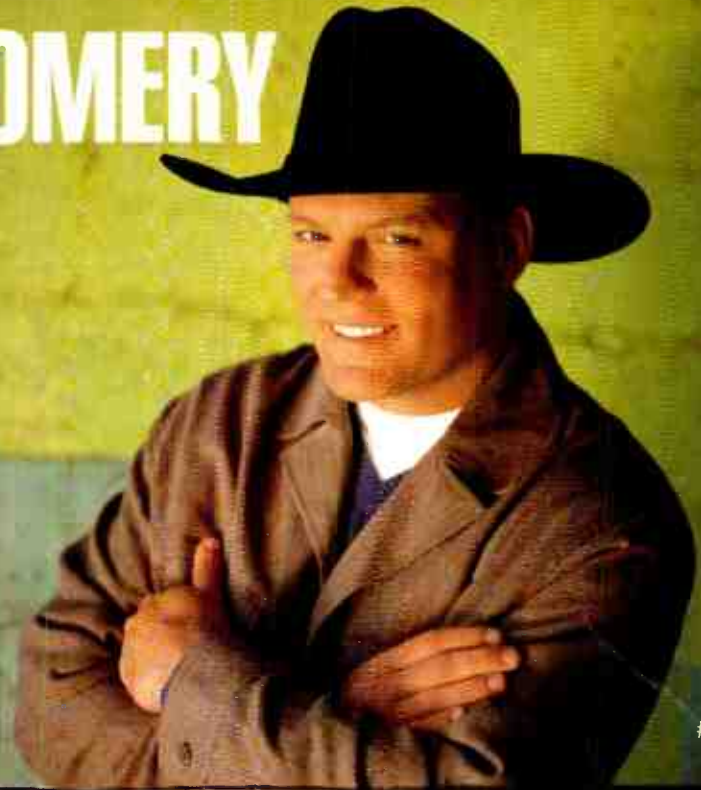
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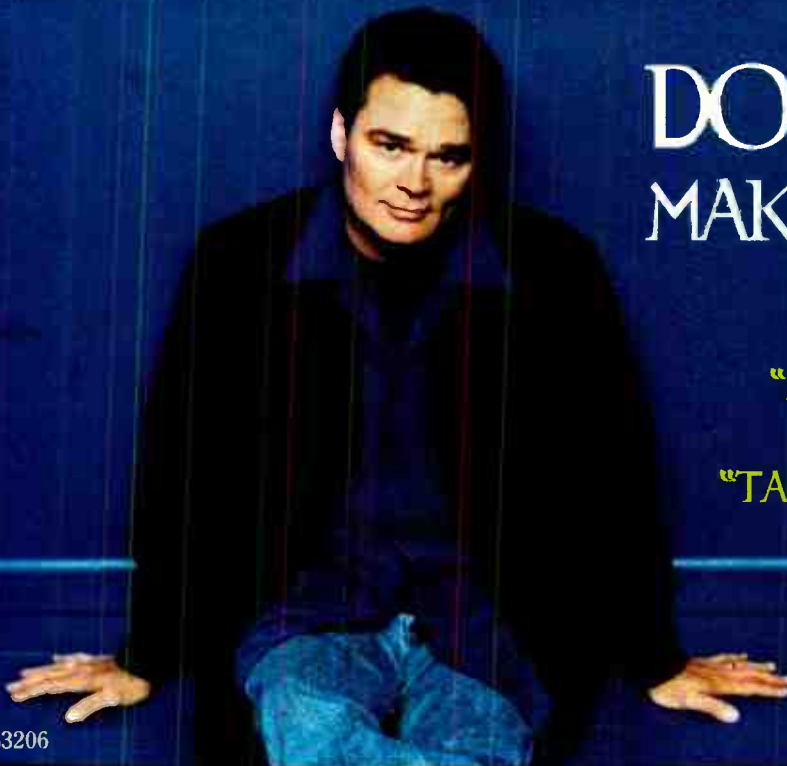
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nesses I named there were real businesses. One of 'em's still in business. That guy who still owns that jewelry store down there called my mother-in-law and said he'd got calls from all over the world asking if he's the Morgan's Jewelry in that song.

CM: *Since your daddy worked all his life for Ford, would you sell a Dodge truck?*

AJ: It'd be hard to. I wasn't real comfortable doing commercials for Ford, but it's always been a part of my life. Daddy worked there and he always drove a Ford. I'd have to stick with Ford.

CM: *Can you go out to eat without being bothered?*

AJ: We don't go out to eat that often, mainly because I'm so picky about what I eat (laughs). Here in Nashville when we do go out, people are so used to seeing music people they don't bother you. It depends on the restaurant. If you go to the Cracker Barrel you will sign some autographs.

CM: *Who cooks for you?*

AJ: Denise mostly. We have a couple people who work there at the house that'll cook a specialty dish or two once in a while. But Denise does most of the cooking. She knows what I like.

CM: *Who is your best pal?*

AJ: Don't know if I have one (laughs). My wife is my best pal.

CM: *What do you do for fun?*

AJ: I've got my cars, my boats, motorcycles, fishing. I fly a small plane. But I have the most fun playing with my girls. Me and Denise have a lot of fun these days.

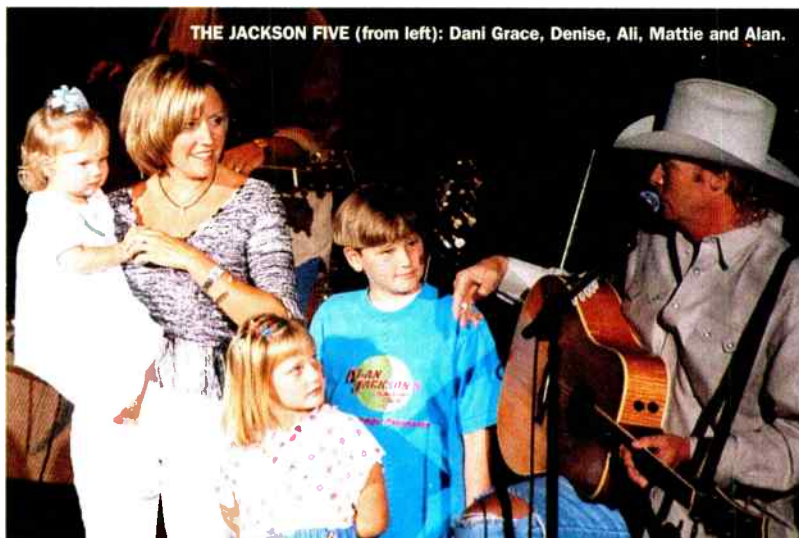
CM: *I saw your girls backstage at Fan Fair. Ali was standing there with her foot patting the Alan Jackson pat... middle to right, middle to right, in time with the music. Did you know she knows all your songs?*

AJ: All of 'em do, and they all sing—even the baby, and she's just 2 years old.

CM: *What are the girls into?*

AJ: They're real different. Mattie's always been a little more tomboyish. She loves sports. She loves school. She plays soccer and basketball. She never has been a prissy kind of girl. Mattie is like me. Ali is more like her mama. She's sweet like Denise. Ali loves dressing up, and she has real good taste for her clothes and her hair. She's not prissy with it, she just enjoys it. Then she'll get out there and play football. She's tough like her mama, but real sweet too.

CM: *Which daughter has you wrapped around their finger?*



AJ: I think all three of 'em do. That little baby is mighty special right now. She's so sweet and smart. She just turned 2 last week and she talks more and better than anyone I've ever seen at that age.

CM: *Does Denise still exercise to stay in shape?*

AJ: She works hard. We both like to eat fattening stuff and all, and we both have to watch that. We try to walk or do something to burn off the excess. We got a trainer that works with us. I try to work out three days a week when I'm in town. Lift weights to tone up. And I walk a lot. I never had to exercise in my life until the last couple years.

CM: *We were all concerned about you and Denise during your much-publi-*

cized separation last year. Anything you want to say about that?

AJ: Yeah. We're doing really good. I think we're both happier than we've ever been in our lives. It's a totally different feeling at home now. We're both glad it worked out that way. All that stuff was hard to go through all those years. It was pain but it was worth it, I guess, 'cause we survived all that, the separation and all, and we are closer than we've ever been.

CM: *If you could choose any dinner guest, alive or dead, who would you like to have dinner with?*

AJ: Hmmm. Hank Williams Sr. is right there at the top of the list. And John Wayne.

CM: *That's about as American as you can get. But I'm surprised you didn't pick Gary Cooper. You look so much like the late Coop. The way you walk and move. Has anyone ever told you that?*

AJ: They used to tell me that a lot. I don't see it. But I've seen all his movies. He's one of my favorites.

CM: *Do you sing in the car when you drive?*

AJ: Yeah, I do. You know, I used to drive a whole lot more than I do now. And I'd get song ideas and hope I'd remember them. I'd remember the words but I couldn't remember the melody. I'd have this great melody going and forget it. I tried using a tape recorder, and the battery would be dead or I'd tape over something I wanted to keep.

CM: *What are your plans for five years down the road?*

AJ: Gosh, I don't know. I'm in a real comfortable place in my career right now. I've slowed down a little to what I was five years ago. I still make records and sell a few. Go on the road but not as much. I don't have to work as much as I used to. We've just got a wonderful life. *

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High Tim



Lonestar is the "toast" of the town. From left: Michael Britt, Richie McDonald, Dean Sams and Keech Rainwater.

After years as a "baby band," Lonestar finally hits the jackpot with a career song that has everyone "amazed."

BY MICHAEL McCALL

RICHIE McDONALD SHUFFLES OUT OF a restaurant men's room, his face beaming a cockeyed grin. From the waist up, the lead singer of Lonestar sports a classy white dress shirt and crisply tailored tuxedo jacket. But below the flapping tails of his shirt stand two bare, hairy legs. At his feet, the waist of his tux trousers gathers in a heap of material tangled about his ankles.

"How do they fit?" he shouts, holding out his arms and modeling his half-dressed self to a closed dining room that's been taken over by assistants, a photography crew and band personnel. As the room explodes in laughter, McDonald cracks the wise-guy smile that his band members know well and shuffles back to the rest room to finish dressing for a photo shoot.

Such shenanigans could be attributed to the dizzying schedule Lonestar has faced since the release of their monumental hit single "Amazed," which, after spending eight weeks at No. 1 on the country radio charts, measures up as one of the most successful country songs of the year. Truthfully, though, these guys have always been a bunch of cutups. Shortly after McDonald returns to his makeshift dressing room, drummer Keech Rainwater walks out elegantly appointed in his tux, holding something in his upright hand. "You know, I thought I knew how to put on a suit," he says. Then he extends a palm packed with shining studs and cuff links and asks, "But, um, what do I do with all this hardware?"

Minutes later, keyboardist Dean Sams waddles out like a duck, announcing in a squeaky, high-pitched voice, "I think maybe these shoes are just a little too tight." In the midst of this mayhem, the band's quiet member, guitarist Michael Britt, stands laughing and waiting, his tuxedo correctly buttoned and zipped.

Photography by
NANCY LEE ANDREWS

HAIR/MAKEUP: LORRIE TURK; TUNES PROVIDED BY AMERICAN TUXEDO, NASHVILLE

e

Listening to Lonestar's album, one might get the idea that the foursome consists of thoughtful, serious romantics who only occasionally break out into a little good-time fun. Behind the scenes, though, it's a rolling comedy show packed with

"It was just enough time to wash your underwear and leave again. It's like, 'Hi, honey, I'm home! Is the washer empty? Good, gotta clean my shorts! OK, see ya!'"

Their success also proves the power of a song—in this case, a ballad with a soaring melody and a simple message that captures the public's attention, much as the Tim McGraw/Faith Hill duet of "It's Your Love" did in 1998. "When we heard it, we thought it was an incredible song with a great message in it," McDonald says. "We thought there would be a lot of people out there who would love to have this said to them or would love to say it to someone. It's the perfect song for any kind of relationship, whether it's a wedding or an anniversary or something just to play for your boyfriend or girlfriend. We thought it would work well for us, but we

baby act," says Britt, using a music-industry term for performers who are still developing artistically and commercially. "Even though we've had some No. 1 records, I think people had still looked at us as a relatively new act. We had something to prove, and we really wanted this album to make a statement. We feel like this album is the first true representation of what the band is."

With two albums under their belt, the members of Lonestar began to assert themselves and initiate some changes before beginning work on *Lonely Grill*. Former member and co-lead vocalist John Rich left to pursue a solo career, which allowed the spotlight to focus on McDonald. The group also changed producers, bringing in Dann Huff, who had worked on recent albums by Faith Hill, Bryan White and SHeDAISY. Those changes, as well as the confidence that comes with experience, helped Lonestar create a sound and image they feel suits them better than what they've done in the past.

"When you're starting out, you feel really humble," Britt says. "We were working with people who'd been in the business for years and years, so we wanted to learn as much as we could from them. When Dann came aboard, he gave us the freedom to take what we've learned and to be ourselves." Adds McDonald, "It's proba-



"Even though we've had some No. 1 records, I think people had still looked at us as a relatively new act. We had something to prove, and we really wanted this album to make a statement." —Michael Britt

bawdy high jinks and plenty of ongoing in-jokes. For instance, as they sit down for an interview at a table inside Nashville's Morton's steakhouse, McDonald picks up an enormous knife from the place setting and dangles it at his interviewer. "Now then," he says, his eyes lowering the boom in mock seriousness, "there won't be any difficult questions now, will there?"

Of course, success makes it easy for the band to joke. On the strength of "Amazed," Lonestar's third album, *Lonely Grill*, has sold in numbers previously unattained by the quartet from Texas. It's also led to packed theaters, screaming crowds and a backbreaking schedule—all of which has the band running harder than anything it's experienced since releasing its first album in 1995.

"We were home for 12 hours last week," Sams says with a smile and a shrug.

had no idea it would become what it has."

Lonestar has enjoyed big hits before. "No News" spent three weeks at No. 1 in 1996, and the memorable "Come Cryin' to Me" and "Everything's Changed" also topped the country charts. But nothing has had the impact of the recent hit. "'Amazed'—that's the word of the year for us," McDonald says. "We're totally amazed at what's happened."

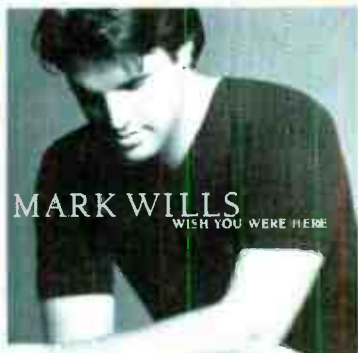
Lonestar's popularity isn't all that's changed. They believe they have gained a new measure of respect from their peers and from the music industry. The recent nominations at September's Country Music Association awards marked the first time Lonestar had been nominated for anything at a major awards show, which suggests that the recent hit song has elevated the quartet's industry status. "We'd kind of considered ourselves a

bly the most fun we've ever had making a record, because we were more confident than we've ever been. We felt we had some good songs and we could make a good record, and Dann gave us the energy and support to do that."

They also took steps to look and feel more like themselves onstage. The band originally put on hats because an adviser thought they needed "a look," as McDonald puts it. Because they were from Texas, that look involved cowboy hats. However, now the hats have come off. Only Sams wears a cowboy hat onstage, because he's the only member who wears a hat offstage. "We feel like we're finally being ourselves in every way," McDonald says. "We feel like the music has evolved, as has our look." Then he flashes that playful grin and adds, "Besides, now I don't have hat hair anymore." *

"To me, it's a song about life. That's what the *Wish You Were Here* album was full of, songs about real life..."

Mark Wills, talking about the hit single
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A Mad, Mad Merle

Take cover, Nashville—Merle Haggard is one artist who’s never heard of media training.

LAST APRIL MERLE HAGGARD TURNED 62, well past the age when most men slow down and mellow out. But the Hag is busier and ornerier than ever. In 1999 alone, the ex-con, country superstar, swing musician, political commentator and poet of the common man has released three different albums on three different labels: a concert album, *Live at Billy Bob’s Texas*; a gospel album, *Cabin in the Hills*; and an ambitious double-disc set, *For the Record*.

For the latter project, Haggard rerecorded 43 of his older hits, including all 38 of his No. 1 hits, with his long-

time road band, the Strangers. The album includes duets with Jewel (“Silver Wings,” “That’s the Way Love Goes”), Alabama (“Ramblin’ Fever”), Willie Nelson (a new version of “Pancho & Lefty”) and Brooks and Dunn (“Movin’ On”).

Tied in with the album is a new autobiography from Harper Collins, *My House of Memories: Merle Haggard for the Record*. And on October 2, he was scheduled for a three-hour, pay-per-view special, also dubbed *For the Record*, from the Las Vegas Hilton.

Rather than settling into the role of the elder statesman, Haggard remains as blunt and caustic as ever. He feels uncomfortable in the brave new world of country music, and he’s not afraid to bite the hand that feeds him if it takes any liberties. He was in a particularly feisty mood during a recent conversation.

Country Music: Why did you decide to rerecord your older songs on *For the Record*?

Merle Haggard: They offered me a lot of money. And money talks. Had I evaluated the conditions a little closer, I would have turned it down.

CM: Why would you have turned it down?

MH: It’s like asking Sugar Ray Leonard to go out and beat Roberto Duran three more times in a row. It would be like asking you to rewrite that article you wrote 28 years ago but using all the experiences you’ve gained along the way. You say, “Wait a minute. It’s easy for you to say that, but I’m the guy who has to do it.” So you do it, and they say, “We like that one. Why don’t you rewrite all the articles you’ve ever done?” If you ask why, they

tell you there’s another company that wants their own copyright on all these articles. It sounds pretty simple from their point of view, but from your point of view, that might be pretty tough.

How can I record a new version of “That’s the Way Love Goes” to compete with the version that won a Grammy in 1985? I’m competing with myself. I asked someone if anyone else ever had to rerecord 38 No. 1 songs. They told me, “No one’s ever lived long enough to have 38 hits.” They say Conway had one more, but Conway’s dead and I should be.

CM: How has your singing changed since you first recorded these songs?

MH: My singing has gotten deeper; I don’t sing as high as I did when I was a little boy. An older singer is like an older fighter, like George Foreman. You’re not as slick and quick as the guys you fight, but you can outmaneuver and outthink them. That’s the only thing an older guy like me has going for him, that intelligence. I didn’t understand the word philosophy when I wrote “The Bottle Let Me Down.” I was just singing from the heart. Now I’ve thought about that song and analyzed it, and that comes through in my singing.

CM: How has the recording process itself changed?

MH: Perfection is necessary nowadays. It doesn’t matter if the performance has any soul or not; there can’t be a fly in there anywhere. That’s not the way it was when I started recording. We only had two tracks; I even recorded on one track. There were mistakes on those records, but they had soul.

CM: Why did you choose to do the duets you did on *For the Record*?



Pop princess Jewel joined the Hag for a performance at this year's CMA Awards show.

BRITONIA PAPERLEY

We are what we are. We're not something that's cloned and stamped out by someone in Nashville. We're someone you can talk to. We're not yes-men; we might not say what you want to hear. We represent reality and there's no reality in country music anymore. Willie Nelson will get on his jet and come and whip your ass if he doesn't like what you say. A lot of these younger people don't have the cuds to even argue on the phone.

MH: Jewel knocks me out. I like the fact that she plays the guitar, writes her own songs and doesn't sound like anyone else. She's like a younger version of Iris DeMent. Brooks and Dunn are friends, and they wanted to participate. The song of theirs I like the most is "Neon Moon," which reminded me of myself in my younger years. That's something I would have done if I were a kid again. And, of course, I always enjoy doing things with Willie. I like the way he sings and the way he writes. I think the feeling is mutual.

CM: What makes that generation of singers—you, Willie, Waylon Jennings and George Jones—different from the current generation of young country singers?

MH: Me and Willie Nelson write our own songs. Me and Willie Nelson have our own bands. We're our own producers. We don't take advice from record executives while we're making our records.

CM: Some of us feel that your three Curb albums [*Blue Jungle*, 1994 and 1996] contained some of your finest work. How do you feel about them in retrospect?

MH: Like a man who's been robbed. I worked hard on those albums and delivered them to Mike Curb, and he said they were some of the best music he had ever heard. Then he didn't even put my picture on the cover and hardly put them out. Why would he do that? Why would he lie to me? Maybe it was so he could get Tim McGraw to sign to his label. Curb evidently didn't think they were very good, so why did he tell me he thought they were? I think a lot of the things we did during the '90s were as good as or better than the older stuff. That Iris DeMent song, "No Time to Cry," is one of the best songs I ever heard. After having them degraded by not being played, I ignored those albums. Maybe I should go back and listen to them.

CM: How did you end up recording and touring with Iris?

MH: I heard her on that tribute album [1994's *Tulare Dust: A Songwriters' Tribute to Merle Haggard* on Hightone Records]. I was particularly struck by the version she did on "Big City." Her voice didn't sound like anyone else; it sounded sincere. If I were a girl, I'd probably sing like that, or at least I'd try. She didn't sound like one of the slick girls of today. We don't get along; she doesn't like me, but that's our own personal problem. As an artist, I think she's great.

CM: Are you still writing new songs?

MH: I write for the exercise of it, and once in a while something makes it all the way to a recording. I think I write just as well as I used to do. I've recorded almost 200 songs the world has n't heard, and some of them are pretty good. If I live long enough, they'll come out. And if I don't, someone else will put them out.

CM: Why did you decide to do *Live at Billy Bob's*?



Haggard on stage at Billy Bob's Texas.

TERRI KELLY/LIVE AT BILLY BOB'S TEXAS

MH: That went to No. 2 on Amazon.com. There are 18 songs on there, including one new song, "Motorcycle Cowboy," and live versions of some of the same songs as on *For the Record*. My

fans always seem to like the live versions better. My best-selling CDs are the live ones.

CM: Why is that?

MH: There's a lot more energy in the live versions than there is in the studio versions. The band doesn't care about being perfect; they're instructed to play with soul and play whatever is required by the moment. In the studio it's a different story; we must be pitch-perfect and computer examined. It doesn't even sound like music to me; it's more like perfect noise, without any humanity.

It used to be when you went to see the artist, it was close to what you heard on the record. Nowadays, the records are a lie. No one can sing that good. Even the person who made the records can't sing that good.

CM: Why are the Strangers so important to what you do?

MH: Some of the greatest people in my life have been in the band. We have our own particular sound because we've decided to stay together so long—since 1965 for some of us—and we haven't changed the approach. We never work off a list; we're ready to play anything at the drop of a hat. The worst thing you can do to an audience is give them something they don't want to hear. And not all audiences want to hear the same thing, so you've got to be ready to give them what they want. The last time I used a list was 1969.

CM: How do you feel about not being played on country radio these days?

MH: They say they won't play my records the same time they play Shania Twain's? I'm glad, because I don't want anyone mixing me up with that crap.

—Geoffrey Himes

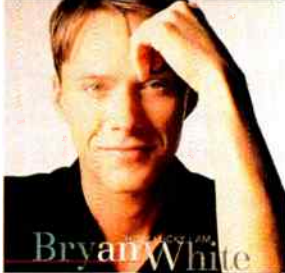
25

ALBUMS

The hottest hits on the country charts.



Celebrating Martina McBride's multiplatinum *Evolution* (left to right): Paul Worley, coproducer; McBride; Joe Galante, chairman of RCA Label Group; Butch Waugh, senior VP/GM of RLG.



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. DIXIE CHICKS | Fly (Monument) |
| 2. SHANIA TWAIN | Come On Over (Mercury) ♦ |
| 3. DIXIE CHICKS | Wide Open Spaces (Monument) ● |
| 4. TIM McGRAW | A Place in the Sun (Curb) ● |
| 5. LINDA RONSTADT & EMMYLOU HARRIS | Western Wall/The Tucson Sessions (Asylum) |
| 6. LONESTAR | Lonely Grill (BNA) ♦ |
| 7. JO DEE MESSINA | I'm Alright (Curb) ● |
| 8. CLAY WALKER | Live, Laugh, Love (Giant) |
| 9. ALISON KRAUSS | Forget About It (Rounder) |
| 10. LYLE LOVETT | Live in Texas (Curb) |
| 11. KENNY ROGERS | She Rides Wild Horses (Dreamcatcher) |
| 12. FAITH HILL | Faith (Warner Bros.) ● |
| 13. BRYAN WHITE | How Lucky I Am (Asylum) |
| 14. GEORGE STRAIT | Always Never the Same (MCA) ● |
| 15. KENNY CHESNEY | Everywhere We Go (BNA) |
| 16. GEORGE JONES | Cold Hard Truth (Asylum) |
| 17. DWIGHT YOAKAM | Last Chance for a Thousand Years: Greatest Hits from the '90s (Reprise) |
| 18. MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER | Party Doll and Other Favorites (Columbia) |
| 19. SHEDAISY | The Whole SheBANG (Lyric Street) |
| 20. ALAN JACKSON | High Mileage (Arista) ● |
| 21. GARTH BROOKS | Double Live (Capitol) ♦ |
| 22. MARK WILLS | Wish You Were Here (Mercury) ● |
| 23. LILA McCANN | Something in the Air (Asylum) |
| 24. SHERRIÉ AUSTIN | Love in the Real World (Arista) |
| 25. CHELY WRIGHT | Single White Female (MCA) |

Compiled by *Country Music* magazine. Based on a combined tabulation of sales and airplay data for the four weeks prior to publication.

♦ Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certification for net shipment of \$30,000 album units (Gold); ● RIAA certification for net shipment of 1 million units (Platinum); ○ RIAA certification for net shipment of 10 million units (Diamond).

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World Radio History

Off the Charts

HOLIDAY EDITION

GIFT IDEAS WITH COUNTRY STYLE



Wall of Fame Deck the walls with some of country music's brightest stars: Country Music: The Official 2000 Calendar of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum (\$10.95) features colorful photos of such popular artists as Vince Gill, Tim McGraw, the Dixie Chicks, Faith Hill, Shania Twain and many others. The large (12" x 12") wall calendar also includes dozens of historic photos from the Hall of Fame's archives, plus historical country music facts for each day of the year. Available in bookstores, or order from the Hall of Fame at 615-256-1639 or the web site at www.halloffame.org.

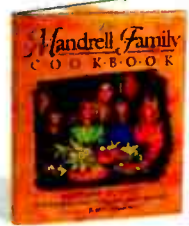
Hot Pocket Tech-heads take note: The RCA Lyra (\$249) is a new pocket-sized personal audio unit that plays compressed music files from your PC, so you can download music from the Internet. And because it's just 4 1/2 inches long, 2 1/2 inches wide and 1/4 inch thick—and weighs just over 5 ounces—you can take your tunes with you wherever you go. Lyra comes with everything you need to download and transfer music files, plus headphones and batteries. It plays MP3 and Real Audio G2, and can be updated for those future formats you know will come along any day now.



Splashy Flash Rainy days will never be the same with Donald J Pliner's rubber ranch boots (\$65). They're cowboy-inspired versions of the galoshes you wore as a kid, in bright colors that let you splash through puddles in style. Available at department and specialty stores nationwide.



Mandrell Munchies OK, so it's not the Great American Novel, but for those who'd rather eat than read, *The Mandrell Family Cookbook* (Rutledge Hill, \$19.95) satisfies. With help from Barbara, Louise, Irlene and Mary Mandrell, Barbara's oldest son Matthew Dudney (a professional chef) has compiled favorite Mandrell family recipes and divided them into 10 specific chapters: "Mandrell Family Christmas," for example, includes recipes for "Louise's Holiday Greeter" and "Mary's Pumpkin Pie." Also included are more than 80 family photos and personal stories—icing on the cake for Mandrell fans.



Redneck Redux If you *still* haven't had enough of those redneck jokes, Jeff Foxworthy has the perfect Christmas gift for you. It's his (ostensibly) last edition of redneck ribaldry, *The Final Helping of You Might Be a Redneck If...* (Longstreet, \$8.95). The 90-plus page illustrated softcover joke book includes more than 200 new laugh lines, such as "You might be a redneck if your Christmas tree came from an interstate median" and "You might be a redneck if your daughter's Barbie Dream House has a clothesline in the front yard."



SANTA'S LITTLE HELPERS



SOME OF COUNTRY MUSIC'S BIGGEST STARS TAKE THE TERM "season of giving" seriously. All over the country this time of year you'll find examples of artists visiting children's hospitals, volunteering at food drives and donating their time for fundraisers.

Reba McEntire, for one, has her own personal "giving" Christmas tradition. Every year she and her husband, Narvel Blackstock, buy gifts for a needy family in their area.

"It's not a secret, but it's not something we publicize," McEntire once confided. "The Christmas present Narvel and I give to each other is to give to others. We take that money and we buy for someone else—people that we know around our community that need a little help, that might not get presents. It's people that we don't know personally but that friends tell us about, and we help them out. That's our Christmas present."

Now *that's* the Christmas spirit.

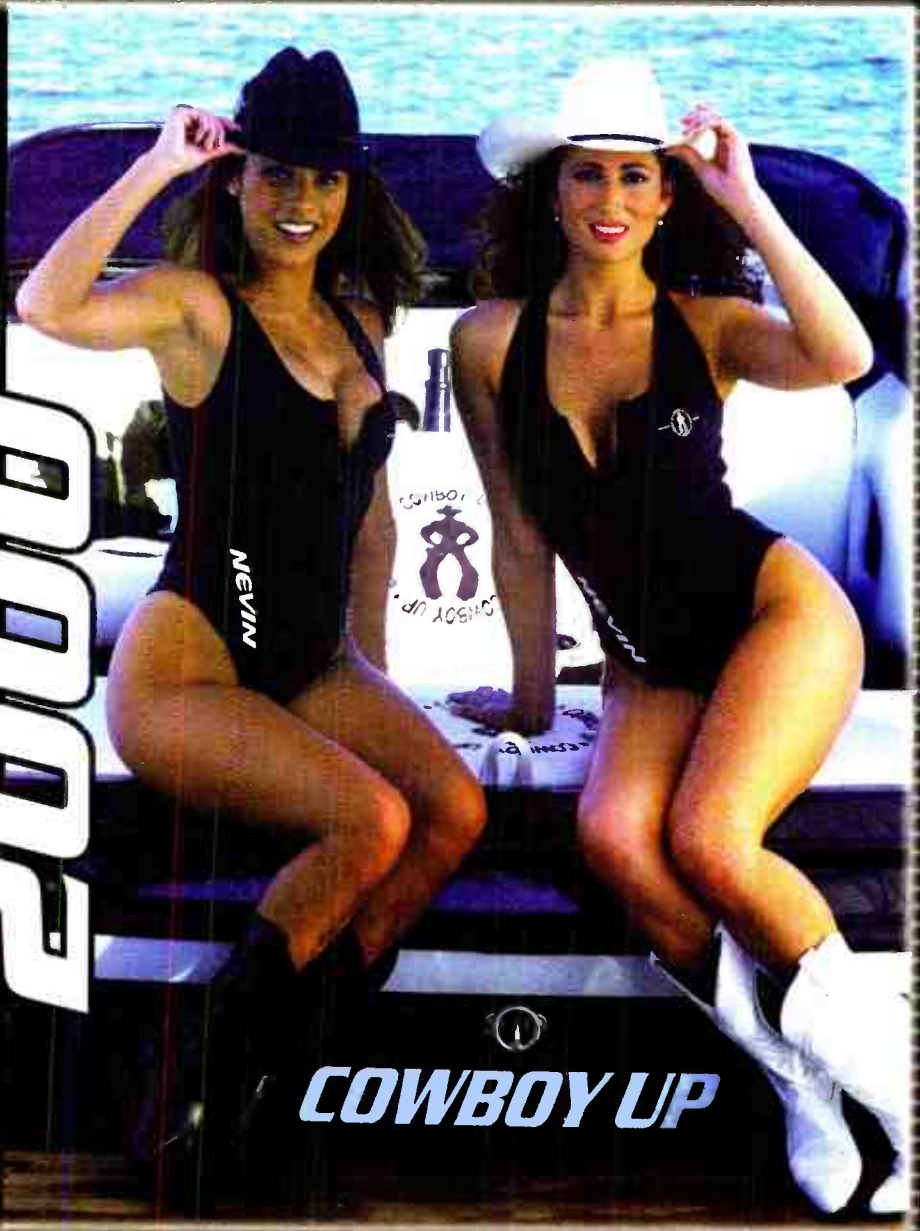
Left: McEntire and husband, Narvel Blackstock.

Hole Lotta Love Steve Wariner's hit "Holes in the Floor of Heaven" inspired hundreds of fans to write the singer/songwriter with stories about how the song affected their lives. Wariner has collected some of the most heart-tugging of those letters in an inspirational book, not surprisingly titled *Holes in the Floor of Heaven* (J Countryman, \$12.99). It comes with a CD single, and is perfect for the sentimental on your list—just be prepared for a few tears in your egg nog.



Cyber Shopping Amazon.com is taking some of the hassles out of holiday shopping. In addition to music and books, the web site offers electronics (including camcorders, televisions and phones) and more than 10,000 toys and games. And how's this for convenience: Shoppers can order anytime, 24 hours a day, and have their selections gift-wrapped and shipped to any location.

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BOOKBEAT

One Man's Music

Vince Bell (*One Man's Music*, \$20)

In 1982, 31 year old Vince Bell, a promising Texas singer/songwriter who'd shared the bill with Stevie Ray Vaughn and Delbert McClinton, was leaving an Austin recording session when an illegal alien slammed into his car and sent him sprawling 50 feet outside the vehicle, face-first into a pool of gasoline and a coma. He spent his next dozen years on a deluxe, customized tour of hell, struggling to recover from a catastrophic array of injuries, including brain damage, a bisected liver and a mangled right arm.

Vince Bell died that night, only to be born again, largely through sheer will. After learning to walk and talk again, he returned to his music, releasing the critically acclaimed album *Phoenix* in 1994 and the meditative *Texas Plates* in 1999.

As a writer, Bell is better at songs than books; his autobiography is repetitive and lacks an artful, interweaving construction. Yet his story is a powerful one, inspiring awe for the man who found his way home, and a self-revelatory strength in his readers. "This is the world of the undead," Bell writes at one point. With such a fine lesson for the living.

—Alanna Nash

For information, *One Man's Music*, 8809 Highway 100, Nashville, TN 37221, 615.646.3103, www.vincebell.com



Will Rogers, Performer: An Illustrated Biography With a Filmography

Richard J. Maturi and Mary Buckingham Maturi (*McFarland and Co.*, \$60)

It's amazing that Will Rogers, the Okie humorist, columnist and unofficial ambassador, spent 17 years in Hollywood making movies and dealing with the fantastic egos of studio heads and directors and somehow, as he insisted in his now famous statement, never met a man he didn't like.

But a fella can put up with a lot if, above all else, he really just wants to perform. "I tried about everything to make a living, outside of work," said Rogers, who died in a 1935 plane crash. "Writing and play acting, and trying to appear foolish...and smart."

It's Rogers the entertainer that the Maturis profile in this splendidly illustrated volume, starting with his 1905 capture of a



runaway steer in the stands of Madison Square Garden, which led to his break in vaudeville, roping a horse onstage.

"I started out to show the world what a cowboy looked like," he later recounted in a Fox film press release.

And in a day when too many "big hat, no ranch" cowpokes continue to dominate country music, this book is a reminder of why Rogers, and the cowboy image, remain both icons and role models for their day and ours.

—Alanna Nash

Liar's Moon: A Long Story

Philip Kimball (*Henry Holt*, \$23)

Philip Kimball waited 15 years between his first novel, the much-heralded *Harvesting Ballads*, and his second, *Liar's Moon: A Long Story*. The protracted wait was worth it for fans of the well-turned 19th-century Western, especially one with such a curious beginning: Two toddlers—Will, who's white, and Sojourner, who's black—fall from a wagon on its way to Kansas, and come to be reared by coyotes. Years later, the two are recovered and reintroduced into civilization. But they never quite tame their wild streaks, craving raw meat and loping around on all fours when the spirit moves them. Will and Sojourner's strange odyssey casts long shadows across the lives of nearly every other major character, from Will's older brother, a backwoods preacher who loses everything in his frantic search to find him, to the proud Indians and luckless blacks who try to make a place in the changing West. By the end, the book takes both a tragic and comedic tone, as the myth and reality of the frontier merge, and Will and Sojourner, symbols of a land that will never completely give up its feral ways, become part of its ever-alluring past.

—Alanna Nash



Songbuilder: The Life and Music of Guy Clark

Nick Evans and Jeff Horne (*Amber Waves*, \$25)

Songbuilder: The Life and Music of Guy Clark, a new book from the British musicians Nick Evans and Jeff Horne, wasn't so much written as it was assembled. For this biography of the legendary Texas singer/songwriter, the two authors taped extensive interviews not only with Clark himself but also with his wife, son and such musical buddies as Jerry Jeff Walker, Emmylou Harris, Nanci Griffith, Lyle Lovett and Rodney



Crowell. Evans and Horne then threw the unvarnished transcriptions onto the page with a minimum of connecting commentary.

What commentary there is betrays a fawning attitude and an awkward grasp of the English language. As a result, the book is unlikely to connect with any readers who aren't already devoted Clark fans. But for those of us who are already enamored of the man who wrote "L.A. Freeway," "Heartbroke," "Randall Knife," "She Ain't Goin' Nowhere" and "Desperados Waiting for a Train," *Songbuilder* is a treasure chest of details. Especially evocative are the tales about Nashville in the '70s, when Clark anchored a tight-knit circle of struggling Texan songwriters such as Lovett, Crowell, Townes Van Zandt, Steve Earle, and his wife, Susanna. There's a hilarious story about Clark getting so mad at Susanna and Townes that he nailed himself into his bedroom, but there are also poignant tales about Susanna's illness and Townes' funeral.

—Geoffrey Himes

Merle Haggard's My House of Memories: For the Record

Merle Haggard With Tom Carter (*Harper Collins*, \$24)

"The stupid things we think and do when young, occasionally drunk, and usually drugged," Merle Haggard writes in his new autobiography, his second since 1981's *Sing Me Back Home: My Life*.

Haggard and cowriter Tom Carter mean the statement to be a throwaway line. But it neatly sums up the book's contents. Never before has the Hag, who became a San Quentin inmate at age 19, offered such gritty (and amusing) details about his life of crime, writing that he once buried himself up to his nostrils to evade police, and was another time rattled out of his hiding place by a toddler.

Although too much of the narrative concerns the singer's preoccupation with women, gambling and substance abuse, country fans will appreciate his take on modern country music and vignettes of other stars: how he carried the romantic torch for Dolly Parton, how Garth Brooks rejected a clutch of Haggard songs, how Buck Owens screwed him out of half of a hit, and how Johnny Cash, who often became a firebug when high on pills, once tried to roast a hot dog in the back of a limo.

Writer Carter is no Boswell, misspelling the names of Jimmie Rodgers and Chris LeDoux, and putting his own name in the text at every opportunity. But Haggard's life is too riveting—if sometimes nearly R-rated in this telling—to derail even a mediocre biographer.

—Alanna Nash



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World Radio History

FAVES

HOLIDAY EDITION

Christmas seems to make everyone a bit nostalgic. Here, some of today's brightest stars share their favorite recollections of Christmases past.

Bryan White



FAVORITE HOLIDAY MOVIE

A Christmas Story


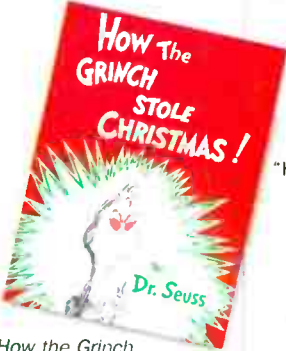







FAVORITE HOLIDAY SONG

"I'll Be Home for Christmas"

FAVORITE HOLIDAY GIFT

Steve Wariner and his wife, Caryn, framed all the rough drafts of his song, "Our Savior Is Born," from when he was writing it. They gave it to me because they knew that was my favorite of Steve's songs.

That's one of the things I'll always treasure and say, "My hero gave me this."

ARTIST	MOVIE	BOOK	SONG	GIFT
 <p>Doug Stone</p>	<i>The Santa Clause</i>	<p><i>'Twas the Night Before Christmas</i></p> 	"The First Christmas"	It was a gift I gave: The year before my mother died, I gave her a shih tzu puppy. She named it "Sugar" because it was the first song I ever wrote.
 <p>Sherrié Austin</p>	<i>It's a Wonderful Life</i>	<p><i>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</i></p>	"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"	A brand new red Ovation mandolin.
 <p>Mark Wills</p>	<i>National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation</i>	<p><i>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</i></p>	"New Star Shining"	A set of drums I got when I was 12.
 <p>Terri Clark</p>	<i>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</i>	<p><i>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</i></p>	Nat King Cole's "Chestnuts Roasting" ["The Christmas Song"]	My first guitar when I was 11 from Mom and my stepdad, Peter.
 <p>Keith Urban</p>	<i>A Christmas Story</i>	<p><i>'Twas the Night Before Christmas</i></p>	"White Christmas" and "Winter Wonderland"	I got two Beach Boys albums for Christmas when I was 10 and I couldn't stop listening to "Good Vibrations."
 <p>James Prosser</p>	<i>It's a Wonderful Life</i>	 <p><i>Christmas Guest</i></p>	"O Holy Night" and "Blue Christmas"	An ATV from my wife, Mindee.
 <p>Wynonna</p>	<i>Holiday Inn</i> (with Bing and Fred!)	<p>The book of Matthew in the Bible (the birth of Jesus)</p>	"Mary, Did You Know?"	A guitar with plastic strings that Mom gave me!

TOP: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; BOTTOM: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; MIDDLE: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; RIGHT: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; BOTTOM: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

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World Radio History



DREAMING OF CHRISTMAS

Bryan White
ASYLUM

Bryan White's Christmas CD offers a mixed holiday blessing. The album hits its highest mark when it capitalizes on the singer's stylized pop vocalizing, and falls short when forcing that same vocal style into unsuitable material.

White's best performances have been on songs that are barely country, owing more to the acoustic music of early Dan Fogelberg and Kenny Loggins, and the haunting solo efforts of Don Henley, than to any of his Nashville predecessors. For a young artist he has remarkable vocal character and confidence, especially when showcased in songs that he can make his own.

Unfortunately, he gets little opportunity to shine here. The

most wrongheaded song on this project is the first track, "I Can't Wait Till Christmas." The production by White and Derek George is fatally overblown with strings and a retro, reverb-drenched sound, and the song's busy lyrics are just barely squeezed into the forgettable melody by White's rushed and breathless phrasing.

Track 2, "Holiday Inn," is the album's one great find under the Christmas tree. Written by Don Henry and

Garry Schiera, it fits White's pop sensibility like a mitten. White sings it with assurance, ease and, unlike the other tracks, feeling. There's beautiful instrumental interplay between pianist John Hobbs and acoustic guitarist B. James Lowry, and even the Nashville String Machine is put to good use. A great Christmas song will get you in the mood for a fireplace and a cup of hot chocolate. "Holiday Inn" does this and more: It puts you where the singer is, in a hotel room by himself at the most social time of the year. A nice counterpart to Elton John's mandolin-laced song by the same name.

For some inexplicable reason, White breaks the spell by attempting to dabble in Harry Connick Jr. territory. There's not one but two jazzed-up versions of a couple of old standards, "Winter Wonderland" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." Again, White is clearly out of his musical domain here, and the cheesy arrangements make you want to dust off the originals, or at the very least, skip back to track 2.

—Ned Andrew Solomon



CHRISTMAS THE COWBOY WAY

Riders in the Sky
ROUNDER

During the Christmas holidays, most of us revel in tradition. We bask in the familiar, drawing comfort from customs passed from generation to generation. Those customs include music: Few things evoke the Christmas spirit better than putting on a familiar song, be it an ancient folk song ("Silent Night"), a hymn ("O Come All Ye Faithful"), or one of many holiday classics created in the dawn of the American popular song (Irving Berlin's "White Christmas").

For those reasons, artists steeped in tradition often create the most memorable holiday music. And who rides the range of classic American mythology better than the cowboy trio Riders in the Sky?

Of course, the Riders—Ranger Doug, Too Slim and Woody Paul—like to kick a bit of boisterous color into the sounds they love. They employ humorous skits and clever lyrical twists to spur some irreverent fun into their reverential revivalism, giving character and dimension to the cowboy ballads and snappy western swing they do so well.

They take the same approach to Christmas music, mixing tender, earthy ballads like "Corn, Water and Wood" and "Virgin Maria (Why Are You Weep-

ing)" with jumping, joyous tunes that bear the markings of the Riders' special brand, as in "The Twelve Days of Cowboy Christmas," "The Christmas Yodel" and "The Prairie Dog Christmas Ball." Not to be missed is the Woody Paul showcase fiddle number, "Let It Snow (The Last Christmas Medley You'll Ever Need to Hear)," which makes a case that nearly every upbeat Christmas song is based on the sprightly melody of "Let It Snow."

As with any good holiday gathering, *Christmas the Cowboy Way* blends respect with humor and warmth. It's a fine gift from an enduring and highly entertaining group.

—Michael McCall



A PAUL BRANDT CHRISTMAS: SHALL I PLAY FOR YOU?

Paul Brandt
REPRISE

Paul Brandt's *Shall I Play for You?* illustrates two aphorisms about Christmas albums. First, they're primarily designed for hardcore fans only. Garth Brooks' *Beyond the Season*, for example, only sold 2 million copies in 1992—impressive numbers for almost any other act, but extremely low for Brooks.

Secondly, these discs are often dispensable because they mismatch overly familiar songs with artists who aren't particularly well suited to sing them.



An obvious reverence for such compositions as “O Holy Night,” “Silent Night” and “What Child Is This” doesn’t compensate for Brandt’s inability to do them justice. He unfortunately tends to favor bravado over vocal nuance. This is all relative, of course. The 27-year-old Canadian can sing circles around, say, your grocer, but he’s no George Strait.

The album’s opening cut is an arrangement of “The Little Drummer Boy” that’s reminiscent of David Bowie’s famous duet version with Bing Crosby. It begins with Brandt accompanied solely by subtle percussion before climaxing with a graceful mixture of fiddle, drums and pedal steel guitar. The musicianship is superb throughout this disc, especially the two cuts featuring Union Station.

A few uptempo numbers designed to liven up the party are more perfunctory than inspired. This version of “Jingle Bells” is about as exciting as getting shiny new school supplies for Christmas. “Run Run Rudolph” should have been called “Crawl Crawl Rudy,” especially when compared to the fiery renditions by Chuck Berry, Dave Edmunds and Keith Richards. Not even guest Kim Richey’s talent can save it from being a yawner. The title of Brandt’s duet with Terri Clark, “Santa Looked a Lot Like Daddy,” gives away the punch line. Once you know the joke, this track becomes tedious with repeated listening.

“Six Tons of Toys,” however, is a stroke of genius that almost makes up for all the mediocrity. The track marries the melody of “Six Days on the Road” with a new set of lyrics that paint a portrait of Santa as a high-flying, gift-toting trucker: “Everything’s lookin’ so

white/Housetops are comin’ in sight/I’ve got six tons of toys for the girls and boys tonight.” Brandt’s fluid, Haggardesque delivery would even bring a smile to Mr. Scrooge’s lips.

This is the perfect album to put on as background music when you’re cleaning up after a big Christmas dinner—pleasant but not engaging. Selfish shopping tip number 101: Buy this disc for a distant relative, and then borrow it just long enough to record “Six Tons of Toys” onto a mix tape of your favorite road songs.

—Bobby Reed



**THE SECRET OF GIVING—
A CHRISTMAS
COLLECTION**

Reba McEntire
MCA

For many country stars, a Christmas album usually involves stirring up several holiday standards with a few new seasonal tunes from Nashville songwriters. However, Reba McEntire decks the halls with a powerful, heartfelt collection that reclaims the talent and musical depth that had sometimes slipped during her inconsistent recordings of recent years.

For the most part, McEntire takes the opportunity to explore the value and meaning of Christmas. As the well-written title song suggests, late December is a time for people to rekindle the rewards of generosity

and understanding toward others. Pairing gently swaying tunes with tastefully arranged symphonic ballads, McEntire makes the pledge to be a better person while confirming the strengths an individual can get from family, friends and spiritual beliefs.

She occasionally steps aside to acknowledge other aspects of the holidays as well. Her swinging version of “I Saw Mama Kissing Santa Claus” nicely underscores the magic that Christmas contains for children, while the melancholy understatement of the new “Santa Claus Is Coming Back to Town” explores how this season of joy can become emotionally burdensome for families that have been severed by divorce.

Best of all, McEntire provides the best vocal performance she’s offered in years. Laying aside the trills and ties that had become an increasing part of her mannered vocal style, she relaxes and lets her warm tone, powerful pipes and clear enunciation convey the messages of her songs. By ditching the histrionics, she proves that she can be a subtle yet potently effective interpreter of sensitive, meaningful material.

—Michael McCall



HELL, IT'S X-MAS

Trailer Trash
INDEPENDENT

This once (and future) bar band from Minneapolis has

carved up the season’s true Christmas turkey with a well-intended, but ultimately failed, attempt at bringing low-brow sensibility to the holidays. *Hell, It’s X-mas*, a title that surely speaks to the Grinch in everyone, is neither clever enough to count as parody nor musically proficient enough to be taken seriously.

Trailer Trash comes up with some interesting ideas, but they bog down in the execution. Their version of “Little Drummer Boy” is done to a surfing-style melody that’s certainly different, but why not let the drummer go nuts with a solo or plain reckless thrashing? Other aims at left field, such as “Daddy’s Drinkin’ Up Our Christmas,” “Mele Kalikimaka” and the superbly titled “Walkin’ in My Winter Underwear” suffer from poor mixing and inebriated lead vocals, rendering the

lyrics incomprehensible. Whatever humor may have existed, and the latter particularly does not live up to the promise, is hopelessly lost. The vocals on most of the cuts, in fact, are amazingly off-key in certain spots (and it doesn’t sound intentional, either), simply monotonous in others. But you can’t totally trash Trailer Trash, mainly because there is a decent level of musicianship. “Black Midwinter Polka” throws in some nice accordion licks and “Run Run Rudolph” does the Chuck Berry chestnut proud. If you’re into genre-blending, “Here Comes Santa Claus” starts with a guitar riff right out of Wilson Pickett’s “Funky Broadway,” then proceeds to a pedal steel solo. But when you’re talking percentages, the band still falls on the short end, seeing as how *Hell, It’s X-mas* includes 21 cuts.

**HOLIDAY
ALBUM
REVIEWS**

**HOLIDAY
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HOLIDAY REVIEWS

These folks might be a barrel of laughs in a live setting, preferably after multiple beers. On record, they're like a cola that's lost its fizz.

—Bob Payton



MERRY CHRISTMAS WHEREVER YOU ARE

George Strait

MCA

Country Christmas albums are a little like holiday stockings: You know they're going to be filled with something, but it's more likely to be stale Twinkies than sparkling jewels.

That's only one reason George Strait's new entry into the familiar format shines under the tree like a gift from Tiffany's among the K-Mart clutter. The other? Strait approaches this seasonal record—ostensibly one that will find its way onto the CD player

only a month out of the year—with all the care, taste and artistry he affords his regular albums. At times, as on the nostalgic "Old Time Christmas," in which he idealizes a Christmas past at home with his family—"a living Christmas card captured in our hearts forever"—he summons more emotion and yearning than he does with his mainstream hits of love and loss.

But then Strait has a natural affinity for many of the Yuletide standards: Such chestnuts as "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow" have a built-in swing factor that easily translates to Strait's love for the western swing of his native Texas. And the singer's deliberate phrasing—his impeccable sense of timing and his habit of letting his words breathe without unnecessary ornamentation and gloss—put him in remarkably good stead to attempt a Mel Tormé classic like "The Christmas Song."

But all is not tuxedos and brandy here. "Noel Leon," about a man who leaves his Christmas lights up all year round, is the kind of blue-collar tearjerker that should resonate with the common man. And while Strait goes for the rockabilly thrill of "Jingle Bell Rock," it's impossible not to compare his rendition with Brenda Lee's rawer, more invigorating version and have it come up short—despite this remake's seductive pedal steel solo, only one of the album's sterling instrumental passages.

Merry Christmas Wherever You Are is the singer's second holiday album, after 1993's *Merry Christmas Strait to You*. This, like the first, is an easy mix of the familiar and of songs that seem custom-made for the cowboy crooner. But there's a maturity to this performance that lifts Strait out of the ranks of mere country stars and positions him, perhaps for the first time, as a singer who one day may be considered among the great American popular entertainers. Now that's a gift that keeps on giving.

—Alanna Nash

HOLIDAY
ALBUM
REVIEWS



the Dixie Chicks' new album, *Fly*, singer Natalie Maines repeats a line just to make sure it wasn't lost amid the musical chaos. "That's right, I said 'mattress dancin'!" she pointedly states, enunciating the ribald innuendo with the wild-eyed gleefulness

individuals have used for centuries when standing up to someone who attempts to bully them or hold them back. In the song—cowritten by Maines, fellow Chick Emily Robison and Nashville songwriter Stephony

Smith—the protagonist turns the tables on someone who has betrayed her love one too many times. But the trio may as well be speaking to anyone who would dare restrain a woman's right to be herself.

In many ways, that colorful little phrase, and the way Maines reveals in saying it, represents how country music's hottest new act uses its new album as a call of musical independence.

Shunning formula and market calculation and instead emphasizing their eclectic musical strengths, the Dixie Chicks indeed let it fly on their follow-up to 1997's across-the-board smash, *Wide Open Spaces*. The result is an album that's bolder, fresher and even more entertaining than its 6-million-selling predecessor.

Of course, it takes nerve for a superstar act to jump headlong into new territory, and Maines, Robinson and Martie Seidel flash the kind of exhilaration that comes with wholly unleashing their talents in

several directions at once. Embracing honky-tonk, country rock, acoustic balladry and brash pop-country with equal confidence and unbridled energy, the Chicks are that rare act that sees success as a license to become bolder and truer to themselves. To their credit, veteran producers Blake Chancey and Paul Worley help the Chicks emphasize originality rather than fall back on safe formula.

Fortunately, they wear freedom with the same brash pizzazz that they wear cutting-edge designer clothes. The threesome realize listeners will come to this album with loads of questions and expectations; the answer they give signals that they're ready to push the pedal and forge ahead without worrying or looking back. They've already led fans on a wild ride, and it sounds as if it will get even more interesting as they keep barreling down that road, feeling free.

—Michael McCall

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LOVE TRIP

Jerry Kilgore

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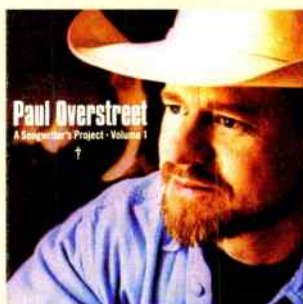
It's no piece of cake being a new country artist these days. With so many soundalikes, it's easy to get lost in the crowd. But unlike most of his flashier counterparts, Jerry Kilgore has the goods to sustain a career long after the initial media hoopla dies down. For starters, the Tillamook, Oregon, native doesn't sound like anyone else on the radio these days. Although *Love Trip* has a contemporary feel and features some of Nashville's best musicians—pianist Matt Rollings and drummer Eddie Bayers, for starters—Kilgore is clearly steeped in the traditional sound of heroes like Buck and Merle.

And though it's unlikely that he'll pen the next "Cravin' Time" or "Mama Fried," Kilgore writes songs (he's credited on seven of the 12 here) that are soothing as a sea breeze. A first listen to "I Just Want My Baby Back," the album's opening song, just might have you wondering if you've discovered a great lost Glen Campbell hit from the late '60s. But the copyright reads "1999." The title track and first single follows; while its theme of leaving the bills and drippy faucet behind is hardly new, Kilgore delivers it in a way that'll have you longing for a cool mountain stream or the smell of bar

becue, not the glitter of Vegas or the Big Apple.

Kilgore's voice, an exotic blend of sirloin and molasses, recalls some of the best singers of yesteryear. "All I've Got to Say," a simple love testimonial with the album's catchiest melody, is sung with the laid-back charm of vintage Don Williams. And there's a hint of Rodney Crowell on "It's Dangerous With You on My Mind" and Hag on the danceable "All Hell's Breakin' Loose." But don't get the wrong idea: Kilgore's his own man and he's chosen his influences wisely. While most debut albums are hit-and-miss affairs, Kilgore's is a smooth ride from start to finish. This is one *Love Trip* that will transport you not just to another place, but to another time as well.

—David Sokol

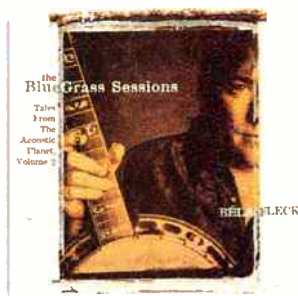


A SONGWRITER'S PROJECT: VOLUME 1

Paul Overstreet

SCARLET MOON RECORDS

Paul Overstreet is like Big Brother: He's all around you, but you just don't know it. If you've tuned into country radio, ridden on an elevator or been to see the latest Julia Roberts movie, chances are you've heard a Paul Overstreet song. The Ronan Keating version of "When You Say Nothing at All" (written with Don Schlitz) from the *Notting Hill* movie soundtrack recently hit the No. 1 spot on the British charts,



THE BLUEGRASS SESSIONS: TALES FROM THE ACOUSTIC PLANET, VOLUME 2

Bela Fleck

WARNER BROTHERS

In 1988, Bela Fleck and his exceptionally talented friends made a CD called *Devote* that became a standard for progressive bluegrass instrumental music. Those players, including mandolinist Sam Bush, guitarist Tony Rice, fiddler Stuart Duncan

and Dobro master Jerry Douglas, have become the perennial headliners at the festivals where new generations of fans are being turned on to bluegrass and new acoustic music. At the same time, Fleck, working with his trio called the Hecktones, has built a sizable fan base in the jazz world, underscoring his versatility and skill as a composer.

With all that under their belt, and with this CD—one of the finest albums ever made with a string band—this *Bluegrass Sessions* ensemble may be poised to break through to mainstream country music audiences and to a kind of artistic legitimacy reserved for classical or jazz musicians. These 18 tracks represent musical collaboration at the highest level and music that can be enjoyed at many levels, whether in the background of a party or as the

making it the third time that song has reached the coveted position. (Keith Whitley and Alison Krauss scored the other two).

Throughout most of the late '80s and early '90s, Overstreet ruled Music Row, both as a songwriter and recording artist. With a few dozen hits and several CMA, ACM, TNN, BMI, Dove and Grammy awards to his credit, it would seem as though he has done it all. But Overstreet still has a few tricks up his sleeve.

A Songwriter's Project is the latest release by the soft-spoken Mississippian. For the album, Overstreet recorded his own renditions of the hit songs he wrote for other artists, plus four new tracks.

Ricky Skaggs contributes a verse and some classic bluegrass harmonies on "I Won't Take Less Than Your Love" (originally done with Tanya Tucker and Paul Davis). Overstreet and company have way too much fun with "Diggin' Up Bones." After adding an extra

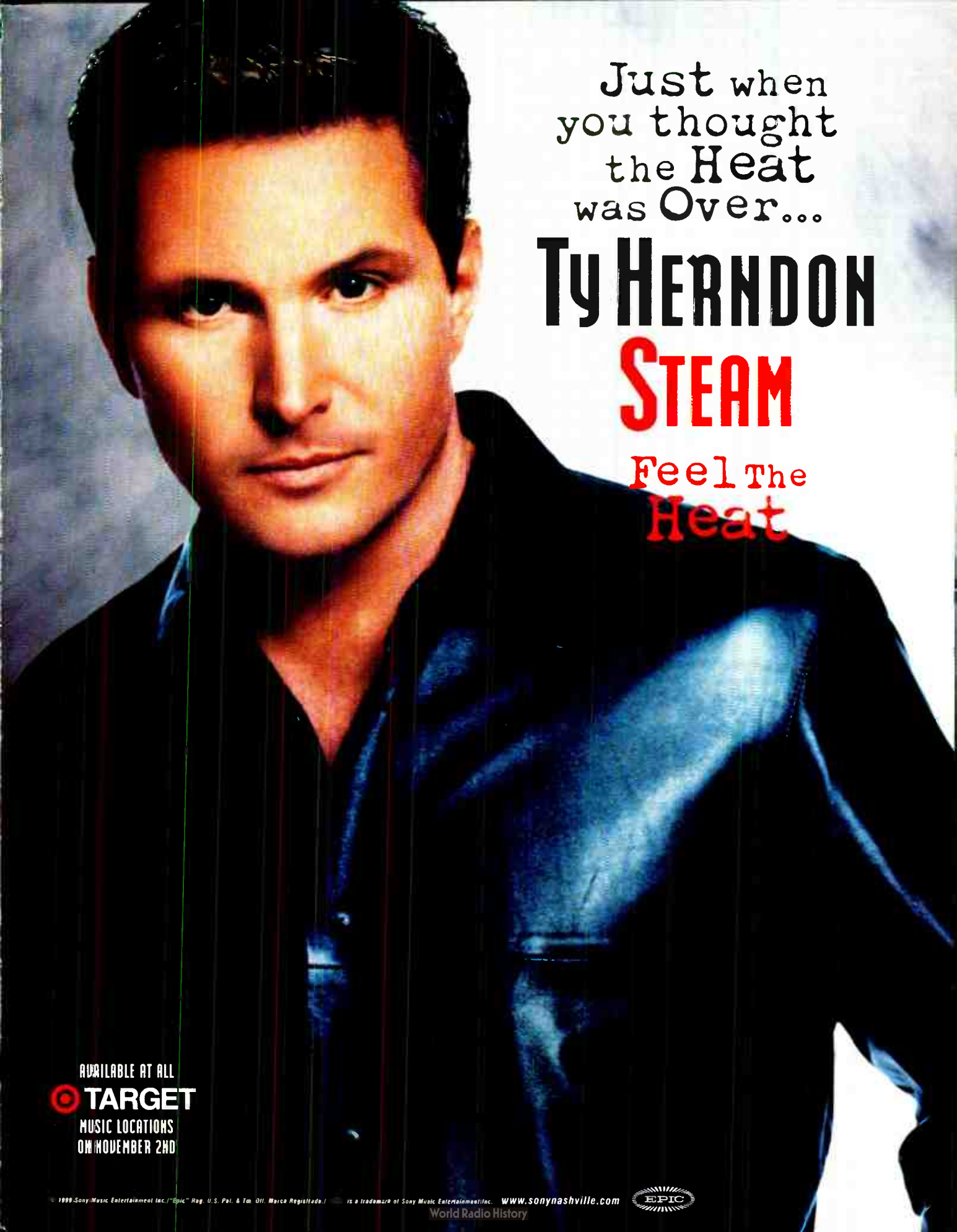
verse ("I went into the kitchen/To get a bite to eat/But I just kept on wishin' I could taste your kisses sweet/I came out with a turkey leg that I've been gnawin' on/Yeah, tonight I'm sittin' alone diggin' up bones"), Overstreet closes the song by breaking into a blues riff that would make B.B. King jealous.

Travis' "Forever and Ever, Amen" and "On the Other Hand" are included on the project, along with "Long Line of Love" (Michael Martin Murphy), "I Fell in Love Again Last Night" (the Forresters) and "Same Ol' Me" (George Jones). Overstreet's effortless vocal stylings on "When You Say Nothing at All" are pure country, accented by the Dobro prowess of Dan Dugmore and Larry Knight.

A Songwriter's Project is a must-have collection for country fans who love songwriters. Overstreet is one of the best.

—Randy Rudder

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focus of critical listening.

"When Joy Kills Sorrow" is a swirling fiddle tune, embroidered by graceful breakdown sections in which the warm tone of the banjo, Dobro and Mark Schatz's bowed bass are put on display. That segues into Tony Rice's solo introduction to "Spanish Point," a tune that encapsulates the contributions this great guitarist has made to string music over the years; his touch, timing and tone are incomparable. Next comes a bit of comic genius, an old Flatt and Scruggs number called "Polka on the Banjo" on which

Fleck proves that no matter how far out his playing gets, it always remains firmly rooted in the percussive, rolling style Earl Scruggs invented under a tree in North Carolina many years ago.

Indeed, Mr. Scruggs is one of many distinguished guests on the CD, as are fiddler Vassar Clements, John Hartford, Vince Gill, Ricky Skaggs and Tim O'Brien. It's truly bluegrass royalty, young and old, and they're proving once again how moving and adventuresome this music can be.

—Craig Hawighurst



EMOTION
Martina McBride

RCA

The Catch-22 for an established Nashville act is that the suits want you to sound like everybody else but also be a little different. Numerically obsessed label executives crave a familiar-sounding disc, something that will be instantly recognizable to radio programmers, many of whom are fearful of being replaced by ratings-tracking software. A disc can't be too generic, however, or album buyers won't know the purveyor of the product. This "similar but distinctive" paradox is particularly intensified when an artist is recording the follow-up to a smash album.

Martina McBride's double-platinum disc *Evolution* has stayed on the charts for more than two years, catapulting her to superstar status. Her highly anticipated new album

Emotion is a satisfying listen, but too often it mines the same rich vein of gold that has been so profitable for McBride. Collaborating once again with longtime coproducer Paul Worley, the petite diva has basically created *Evolution II*, emphasizing bouncy, midtempo tracks that showcase her muscular voice.

The highlight is a sweeping ballad courtesy of Gretchen Peters, who wrote the hits "My Baby Loves Me" and "Independence Day," both from 1993's *The Way That I Am*. The topic of "This Uncivil War" is, of course, a decaying marriage, and it opens with fiddles and the rat-atat of marching band drums—just in case anybody was unclear about the song's obvious metaphor of love as war. It closes with a penny whistle playing a few bars of "Amazing Grace." The presence of these ancient instruments is an unintentional reminder of how far, sadly, Music Row has strayed from traditional music.

When McBride isn't embodying her signature sound, she's grasping for the brass ring of pop music. "Anything and Everything" is a tasteless adult contemporary tune that's not even remotely close to country. An ethereal interpretation of Patty Griffin's "Good Bye" veers dangerously close to the territory occupied



HEY YOU
Jack Ingram

LUCKY DOG

If Tom Petty drove a battered pickup instead of a TransAm, he'd be Jack Ingram, a termi-

nal witness to the human condition at its most brutal and willfully naïve. With guitars that twine themselves around tenuous melody lines and beats that fall just behind the moment, there's a languid terror to these arrangements' sting that snaps one to attention and offers insights most will never need.

If Tom Petty drove a battered pickup instead of a TransAm, he'd be Jack Ingram, a terminal witness to the human condition at its most brutal and willfully naïve. With guitars that twine themselves around tenuous melody lines and beats that fall just behind the moment, there's a languid terror to these arrangements' sting that snaps one to attention and offers insights most will never need.

by Sarah McLachlan's whispery angels. The first single, "I Love You," seems directly molded after Faith Hill's megahit "This Kiss." The melody may be different, but the cut's theme, structure, wordy chorus and sonic textures are all informed by that famous lipsmack. "It's My Time" is a requisite Martina tune about a woman fleeing a bad relationship. This track, along with the made-for-weddings weeper "There You Are," give McBride the opportunity to show off her vocal firepower. Drenched in the latter tune's piano and strings, McBride's stratospheric voice sustains a note for a mightily impressive 13 seconds, the same length as that athletic vocal feat concluding her hit "A Broken Wing."

—Bobby Reed

nal witness to the human condition at its most brutal and willfully naïve. With guitars that twine themselves around tenuous melody lines and beats that fall just behind the moment, there's a languid terror to these arrangements' sting that snaps one to attention and offers insights most will never need.

Whether balancing the sweet pop come-on of the title track or recounting the sad tale of "Inna From Mexico," a manicurist who misses her child back home, Ingram never surrenders to the obvious. He twinkles when he's randy; he's balanced when he's examining hard truths. And he's smart enough to know that although the hardest truths forge character, it's levity that keeps life going.

"Biloxi," a languorous bit of sinew and raw guitars, is a tribute to transitions that acknowledges youth's moth-to-a-flame impulses even as it embraces the diminishing returns of adulthood, while the ravaged "Mustang Burn" swaggers with a fed-up disgust. That someone capable of the feel-good "How Many Days" or the biting exuberance of "Barbie Doll" can balance these extremes is cause for hope that today's country can still embody substance and the sublime thrill of radio-friendly confection without impugning the other.

—Carey Shannon



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WORD OF MOUTH

Mac McAnally

DREAMWORKS

In his 22 years of recording, Lyman "Mac" McAnally Jr. has pursued a fractured career of sorts—first as a solo performer in the pop and country vein, and later as a session musician and songwriter, selling "It's My Job" to Jimmy Buffett, "Old Flame" to Alabama and "Two Dozen Roses" to Shenandoah, among others. Though his own records never sealed the highest peaks of the *Billboard* chart, the Alabama native nonetheless garnered enormous respect in the industry as a gifted presenter of consistently well-crafted songs.

Like Tony Joe White, Jesse Winchester and his old pal Buffett, McAnally is most at home with a style of music that bears the crescent tattoo of the Memphis/Muscle Shoals/New Orleans sound, a deft interweaving of rock, r&b and country, which he alternates with a reliable James Taylor-ish brand of soft, acoustic and intensely personal folk.

However, on his latest album, *Word of Mouth*, McAnally shows a more mature and sophisticated progression to his melodic writing, venturing more into jazzy storms and whirlwinds of sound and emotion and letting loose of the story-song format to concentrate on lyrics that leave more to the imagination. "Things to Do Today" employs a nervous,

hopped-up melody with a blues harp underscoring the writer's scattershot state of mind, while "Against the Odds" again uses jazz-blues to ruminate on the challenges of love. "Pop Top Hop," the most memorable cut, works a slight, morning-after-the-party lyric, set to a faux jazz treatment that lends it a silky elegance and afterglow reminiscent of Michael Franks.

The poems to James Taylor are still largely in evidence, especially on "Better Than the Good Old Days," a sweet song of romantic infatuation with Kim Richey on background vocals, and on the first track, "Looking Back," with its understated vocal, gauzy harmonies and never-in-a-hurry beat. But here, McAnally scales back the narrative to communicate only the barest of facts: A young woman, devastated by failed love, climbs in her car to outrun her pain, and then snaps, ramming a church and taking out walls and plumbing. No hidden symbolism there, but instead a fine distillation of rage, revenge and self-loathing.

Elsewhere, McAnally makes allusions to his influences and friends—"The Ass and the Hole" sounds custom-made for the irreverent Buffett, and "Just One Forever," which he cowrote with Bryan White, blends folk, country, Celtic and jazzy pop into a sprightly musical cocktail.

As his own producer, McAnally has surrounded himself with some of Nashville's finest young pickers, among them guitarists Stuart Smith and Richard Bennett. This record probably doesn't stand a chance on the current so-called country charts, but it goes a long way toward reaffirming McAnally's reputation as a man who makes good music, and for all the right reasons.

—Alanna Nash



THE ONE AND ONLY

Kim Lenz and the Jaguars

HIGHTONE

At least one thing to cheer about in '99—the long-overdue death of that Brontosaurus-lumbering, fey-fashioned fad called the "swing movement." Praise the Lord! On the "out" list: Neckerchiefs, pegged slacks, and those acrobatic '40s dances that only served to annoy everyone else in the club who hadn't learned them yet. The whole scene was about as deep as a Jim Carrey flick, and ultimately just as laughable. But the surviving outfits—and there are a talented few—are the ones who know their vintage roots, not their silly suits. Setzer, of course, will pull through—his Stray Cats pedigree is beyond dispute. But there are equally classy, true-blue combos bubbling just beneath the surface, artists who sing and play like their lives depended on it. Like Texas titan Kim Lenz, for example.

You don't get a clear picture of this spunky singer from her sophomore album artwork—the cover photo is pure cheesecake, Lenz all decked out in her Bettie Page/Ellie Mae Clampett skimpiest. Uh-oh—one more empty image? Nix, nix—this chick from the sticks has got wicked licks. Her choice of producer is clue number one: Cali cool-cat Big Sandy, whose less-is-more mix puts his subject right up front, right in the echoed, hiccupy spotlight. Make no mistake. Lenz

is pure, dyed-in-the-poodle-skirt rockabilly, as in love with its imagery ("Choctaw Boogie," "Howl at the Moon") as she is with its vibrant slapback riffs (the Johnny Burnette-ish "Dancing Me to Death," adoring retro covers "If You Don't Like My Peaches (Don't Shake My Tree)" and "Rock and Roll Guitar"). Standup bass,

standup drum kit, intricate lowbodied fretwork from Lenz and co-guitarist Nick Curran—it's more than surfacey homage. This, like most of the similarly reverent Cramps' catalog, is pure heartfelt homage, i.e., the Real McCoy in a mountain of mock hillbillies.

The great thing about rockabilly was always its punk-feverish energy level, its subtly *outlaw* feel (which is how/why the Cramps discovered it anyway). So it's no aesthetic surprise that Lenz attacks every number here with lynx-minx ferocity. Her "Fit to Be Tied" shuffler finds her growling one minute, purring the next, then soaring up into the near-yodel stratosphere after that. "Got ants in my pants and butterflies/You better kiss me quick or I just might die/'Cause I'm fit to be tied over you," she warbles, and it feels anachronistic, as if you might be spinning some old "Haunted House" 78 instead of hearing a spanking-new high-tech effort. Unlike most of her fading swing contemporaries, Lenz has an uncanny knack for catapulting listeners back to the past with no thought of the present or future, like she truly believes she's rocking in another, more innocent era alongside Wanda Jackson. Sure, she dresses the rockabilly filly part, to the nines. And it more than complements her revisionist outlook. But this is one kitten who doesn't need some appearance-obsessed movement to keep her claws sharp.

—Tom Lanham

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THE FRANKLIN MINT



JIM LAUDERDALE RALPH STANLEY
AND THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS



I FEEL LIKE SINGING TODAY

ONWARD THROUGH IT ALL

Jim Lauderdale

RCA

I FEEL LIKE SINGING TODAY

Jim Lauderdale and Ralph Stanley

REBEL

If Jim Lauderdale can write hits for George Strait and Mark Chesnutt, why can't he write them for him-

self? The problem isn't his singing, for he, too, has a terrific honey-toned and convincingly personal baritone. The problem isn't a lack of hit material, for his new album, *Onward Through It All*, is overflowing with 16 originals, most of them begging to be covered by other singers. In the past, Lauderdale's problem was his eclecticism; his country songs were either too rocking (as on 1995's *Every Second Counts*) or too traditional (as on last year's *Whisper*). There's no such problem on the new disc, which aims right down the middle of modern country-pop.

Onward Through It All proves just how smart and catchy country-pop can be; it recalls such albums as *Diamonds and Dirt* by Lauderdale's ex-producer, Rodney Crowell, or Patty Loveless's *The Trouble With the Truth*, which included two Lauderdale compositions.

Whether he's cowriting with Dixie Chick Emily Erwin ("Please Be San Antone"), Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter ("Trust"), fellow critics' favorite Kim Richey ("It's Just Like You") or Music Row veteran Frank Dycus ("As If We Would Never Love Again"), Lauderdale dominates every song

with his hooky chorus melodies, his irrepressible energy and his down-to-earth storytelling. Here's an album that should be accessible to every country fan, for who can resist a ballad as gorgeous as "Lost Sunset" or an uptempo tune as bouncy as "Almost Next to Nothing"?

Lauderdale, who grew up playing bluegrass in North Carolina, hasn't lost his traditional itch. He included a collaboration with Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys on his last RCA album, *Whisper*, and has now released an entire 15-song album, *I Feel Like Singing Today*, with Stanley and his band. Like Steve Earle's recent collaboration with the Del McCoury Band, the Lauderdale/Stanley project injects some much-needed new material into the bluegrass community; one can easily imagine such songs as "Joy, Joy, Joy" and the title tune becoming staples at bluegrass festivals. Unlike Earle, Lauderdale is quite comfortable with the demands of bluegrass vocal harmony and smoothly blends with Stanley in that high, lonesome sound that never loses its thrill.

—Geoffrey Himes

former, but her album, *Sunday Morning to Saturday Night*, disappeared with the demise of the Rising Tide label.

Now comes a remixed compilation of her "best of" work, titled *Lying to the Moon & Other Stories*. Through the years, Trisha Yearwood, Linda Ronstadt, Pam Tillis and the late Dusty Springfield have covered many of the songs, but only a woman who lived those words could sing them with the passion and conviction evident here. From the sly, come-hither sexuality of "I Got It Bad" to the unspeakable heartache of "Lying to the Moon," these are tender-tough nuggets of remarkable music, at once poetic and accessible and uncommonly well-turned-out, the rhythm numbers and cocktail jazz as original and provocative as the ballads.

Without exception, these performances are as vibrant and thrilling now as they were the first time around, which makes *Lying to the Moon & Other Stories* a must-have for anyone who cares about literate writing, or for that matter, uncompromised journeys of the heart.

—Alanna Nash



LYING TO THE MOON & OTHER STORIES

Matraca Berg

RCA

In 1990, as country music sat poised for another big boom, singer-songwriter Matraca Berg seemed destined for major star-

dom. Her debut album, *Lying to the Moon*, signaled the arrival of a fully developed and surprisingly fresh songwriter, one who delivered her material in an equally mature and artful soprano, and who insisted on a smart, progressive, country-hybrid production.

Nashville had already accepted Matraca as a songwriter—her first No. 1 hit as a writer was T.G. Sheppard and Karen Brooks' "Faking Love" in 1982—yet success as an artist eluded her. Berg's first two singles, "Baby, Walk On" and "The Things You Left Undone," both peaked at No. 36, and introduced her to

female fans, especially, as a self-assured and attitudinal woman who knew how to take care of herself, even as her vulnerability showed beneath the confident exterior. Yet her follow-up releases never reached the Top 40, and a career that had seemed so certain suddenly fell between the cracks.

Berg went on to become one of Music City's most successful songwriters, crafting hits for Patty Loveless, Reba McEntire and nearly every other female performer, and winning the CMA Song of the Year award in 1997 for "Strawberry Wine." That same year, she again tried to establish herself as a per-



LOVE IN THE REAL WORLD

Sherrie Austin

ARISTA NASHVILLE

I'm not sure it's fair to ask a man to review this record. Sherrie Austin gazes out at me with

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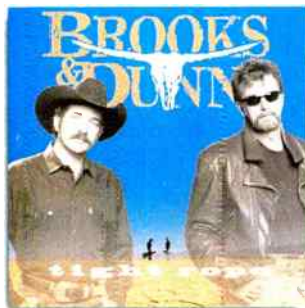
her oceanic eyes, inviting me into her cozy, slightly psychedelic little universe, and I'm supposed to stay detached? To say something critical? I would keep this angst to myself, but for the fact that this bewitching power is what the big record labels mean to achieve when they package their photogenic artists. The thing about Austin, a 28-year-old Australian with one CD already under her belt and a growing fan base, is that she pulls it off in such a breezy and unaffected way.

The music matches the persona—bright and bubbly yet with enough substance and emotional range to keep it interesting. Austin's crystalline vocals don't have the fullness of Trisha Yearwood's or Sara Evans', but she makes up in spirit what she lacks in power. Producers Will Rambeau and Ed Seay capture her at her beguiling best, layering Austin's voice above a tapestry of mandolin, pedal steel and acoustic guitar. Combined with seductive grooves and fresh melodies, the project represents state-of-the-art country pop, laced with cuts that sound positively inspirational over a car stereo, even when the lyrics get drippy.

A perfect example is the first single and opening cut, "Never Been Kissed," which pulls all of Austin's tricks at once: big, barbed hooks, abundant romance and clever chord changes, meshed with nice instrumental textures. Other strong tunes include the swinging "Little Bird," "Dreaming Out Loud" and the big, splashy "All the Love a Heart Can Hold." Austin wrote or cowrote all but one of these 11 songs, and while there are some nice turns of phrase throughout, a clichéd dud like "Heart to Heart" suggests that Austin, a seemingly obser-

vant and engaged person, will profit as a writer from more time working, reading and living in the real world.

—Craig Havighurst



TIGHT ROPE
Brooks and Dunn

ARISTA NASHVILLE

If you check the sales figures and the critical babble on Brooks and Dunn records over the years, you'll notice something. Both have been in steady decline since their smash debut, 1991's *Brand New Man*. Their heavily marketed duet with Reba in 1998 produced a bit of

a spike, but if their hope was to follow up that modest commercial success with something anybody should pay attention to, it's hard to imagine even their fans hearing it here.

Tight Rope hits a high note with the first cut, but it proves an aberration. "I'm Going Under Getting Over You" has the hard-country sound and crisp resolutions that mark B and D's better work. It should have been the first single, but Arista instead released track 2, "Missing You," a cover of an utterly forgettable 1980s soft-pop hit that pushes Ronnie Dunn into dicey vocal territory for no good reason. The CD never recovers.

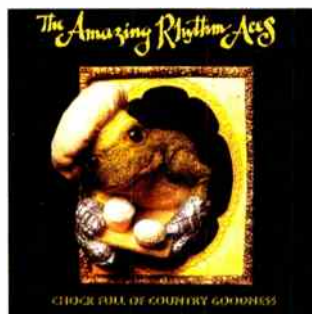
"Temptation #9" is a ghastly pick-up song in which the horny protagonist runs out of reasons to say no. All we learn about the woman is her number—and that she has pretty eyes. Kix Brooks sings this one, and let's just say his is a far cry from his colleague's big, if artless, voice. The

trademark honky-tonk show-stopper, "Beer Thirty," sounds forced. The lesson here: There's a big difference between being clever with language and slapping words that rhyme around a hot cultural catch-phrase.

Speaking of writing, I had seen the title of one of the CD's big ballads before—in a writing class (yes, they have such things). There on the blackboard was the awkward "You'll Always Be Loved By Me" (found here as track 7) and the much more direct, evocative and compelling way to say exactly the same thing: "I Will Always Love You." Yes, that title is taken...because it's much, much better.

The "Tight Rope" in the title of this soggy album might refer to a precarious situation on a high wire or to doom itself on the gallows. One way or the other, Brooks and Dunn may have unwittingly described their own predicament.

—Craig Havighurst



CHOCK FULL OF COUNTRY GOODNESS
The Amazing Rhythm Aces

ARA

Russell Smith, leader of the country-by-the-way-of-Memphis-and-Muscle Shoals Amazing Rhythm Aces, has one of country's most affecting voices—raw like a torn emotion, strong with an oaken resolve and quivering with the weight of a life lived in real time.

Capable of writing honest yet

painful songs, Smith can stop you in your tracks. "The Rock," a '94 single for Lee Roy Parnell, witnesses the tugging realization of the cast-away cornerstone who's still willing to do whatever it takes. As James Hooker's glistening piano rises and falls beneath that faltering moment, one glimpses a man whose pride allows him to weather the wreckage of being discarded.

The same is true for the gentle plea of "A Heart to Come To," the brave struggle of "Fake It 'Til You Make It" and the cautionary "Makin' Nothin' Outta Somethin'." Simple wisdom + honest emotions = little atom bombs.

When Smith is content to bear witness to the shards and splinters of life as it's lived, he's a compelling poet who brings dignity to the everyday grind. But Smith, like many toiling in today's Nashville, isn't content with touching hearts.

Attempting to pander to country

radio makes *Chock Full* a frustrating project. Relying on cartoon material, the Aces destroy the intimacy. The worn "Hot Rod Lincoln"-retread "Guardian Angel," a lesser "Bubba Hyde"-redux "Yippee Yi Yo Yo" and the musical roll call of "Rednecks Unplugged" may be clever live, but they collapse under the weight of cliché and concept.

Swinging into the high-jinks tale of "Jerry Fontaine and His Jammin' Guitar," the Aces blend a romping freewheeler with some wicked glint successfully. Ditto their steamy blues-drenched "If I Could Call You Mine."

A fine band, a great singer—and with discernment, material that's their equal. Unfortunately, *Chock Full of Country Goodness* is a split personality that touches a deep, emotional place as often as it thwarts with sub-redneck reductions.

—Carey Shannon

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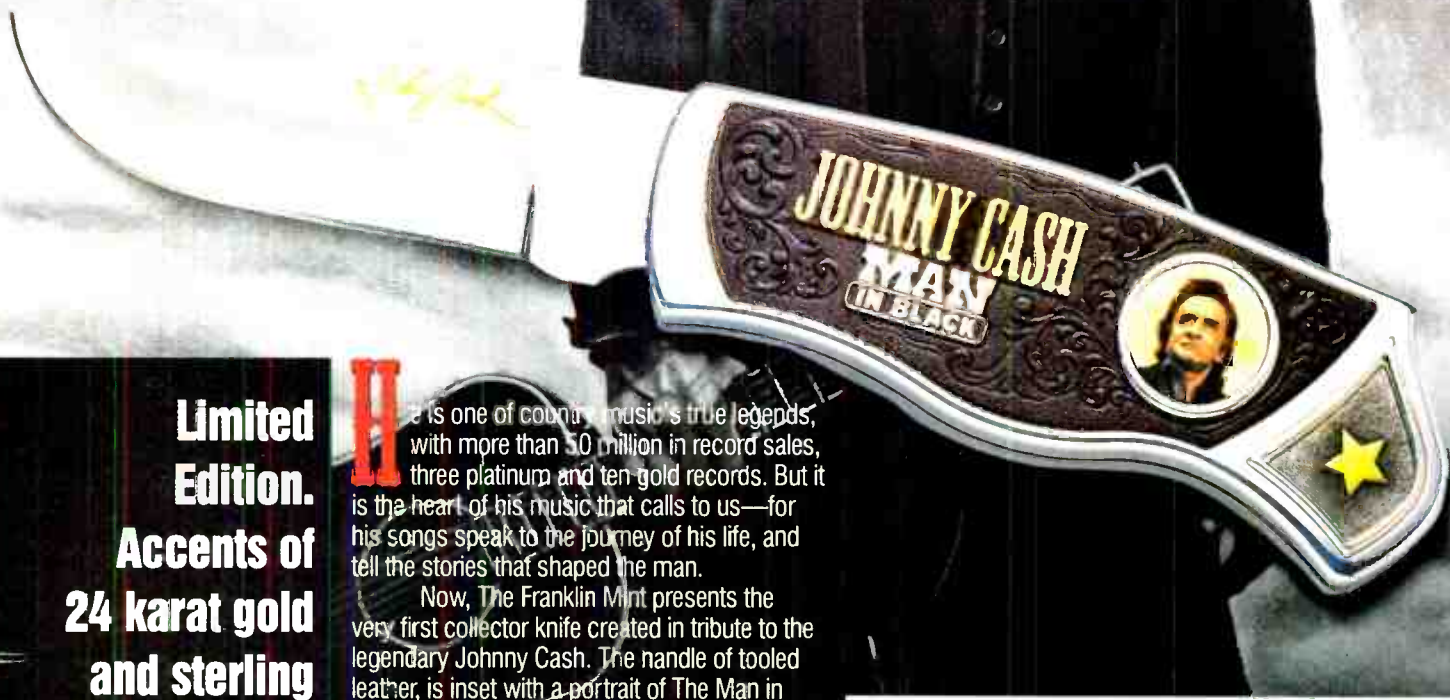


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University of California

- 12/31-1 SPARKS, NV
John Ascuaga's Nugget

OAK RIDGE BOYS

- 11/12 ZANESVILLE, OH
Secrest Aud.

- 11/13 NASHVILLE, IN
Little Nashville Opry

- 11/19-20 LINCOLN CITY, OR
Chinook Winds Casino

- 11/26 TORRINGTON, CT
Warner Theatre

- 11/27 WILMINGTON, OH
Murphy Theatre

- 11/28 WHEELING, WV
Jamboree USA

GREELEY, CO

- 12/3 MONTFORD CONCERT HALL

- 12/4 COLORADO SPRINGS, CO
Arnold Hall Theatre

- 12/7 SUTTONS BAY, MI
Leelanau Samis Casino

- 12/8 MT. PLEASANT, MI
Soaring Eagle Casino

- 12/10 NORTH CHARLESTON, SC
No. Charleston Performing Arts Ctr.

- 12/11 VALDOSTA, GA
Wild Adventures Theme Park

- 12/12 PANAMA CITY, FL
Marina Civic Ctr.

- 12/17 MUNCIE, IN
Emens Aud.

- 12/18 SANDUSKY, OH
State Theatre

- 12/20 MEMPHIS, TN
Mississippi Queen

- 12/31 MERRILLVILLE, IN
Star Plaza Theatre

JANUARY

- 1/1 ORANGE BEACH, AL
Gulf State Park

- 1/15 WARSAW, IN
Wagon Wheel Theatre



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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

Statement required by 39 U.S.C. 3685 showing the Ownership, Management, and Circulation of COUNTRY MUSIC magazine, published bimonthly (6 issues annually), for October 1, 1999. Publication number 441-890. Annual subscription price \$15.98. 1. The location of known office of publication is 49 East 21st Street, N.Y., NY 10010. 2. Location of the headquarters or general business offices of the Publisher is 49 East 21st Street, N.Y., NY 10010. 3. The names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor are COUNTRY MUSIC LLC, 49 East 21st Street, N.Y., NY 10010; Editor, Deborah Barnes, 49 East 21st Street, N.Y., NY 10010; and Managing Editor Michael Seeber, 49 East 21st Street, N.Y., NY 10010. 4. The owner is John P. Colman, 49 East 21st Street, N.Y., NY 10010. 5. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities. None. 6. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: October/November, 1999.

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Michael B. Albert, CFO, October 1, 1999

On the Road Again...

LEE ROY PARNELL

November
11/12 SANFORD, FL
Sanford Heritage Fest.

EDDY RAVEN

December
12/5 FORT MYERS, FL
Lee Cty. Sports Complex
12/10 SAN ANTONIO, TX
Farmers Daughter

January
1/13 PASADENA, TX
Bayou City Nites
1/14 McALLEN, TX
Villa Real Conv. Ctr.
1/15 ABILENE, TX
Ponderosa Ballroom

SAWYER BROWN

November
11/19 WARSAW, IN
Wagon Wheel Theatre
11/20 WHEELING, WV
Capitol Music Hall
11/21 HAGERSTOWN, MD
Maryland Theatre
11/23 NASHVILLE, TN
Gaylord Entertainment Ctr.

December
12/2 SPRINGFIELD, OH
Performing Arts Ctr.
12/4 NASHVILLE, IN
Little Nashville Opry
12/5 EAST LANSING, MI
Wharton Ctr.
12/9 KALAMAZOO, MI
Wings Stadium
12/10 CHAMPAIGN, IL
Virginia Theatre
12/16 LA CROSSE, WI
La Crosse Ctr. Arena
12/17 JOLIET, IL
Rialto Square Theatre
12/18 DAVENPORT, IA
River Ctr.
12/19 SPIRIT LAKE, ND
Spirit Lake Casino
12/31 GATLINBURG, TN
Park Vista Hotel

KEVIN SHARP

November
11/21 ST. JOSEPH, MO
St. Joseph Civic Arena
11/22 TOPEKA, KS
Kansas Expocentre
11/23 WICHITA, KS
Century II Conv. Ctr.
11/24 LITTLE ROCK, AR
Barton Coliseum

December
12/4 FAYETTEVILLE, NC
Cumberland Cty. Civic Ctr.
12/7 OCALA, FL
Ocala Jai Alai
12/12 SARASOTA, FL
Roberts Sports Arena

RICKY VAN SHELTON

November
11/19 KINDER, LA
Grand Casino Coshata
11/25 HARRIS, MI
Chip-In Casino

December
12/2 JIM THORPE, PA
Ramblers Ranch
12/3 WHEELING, WV
Jamboree USA
12/4 SUTTONS BAY, MI
Leelanau Sands Casino

DARYLE SINGLETARY

December
12/3 TAMPA, FL
Tampa Conv. Ctr.
12/31 EARTH CITY, MO
In Cahoots

RICKY SKAGGS

November
11/19 CONCORD, NH
Capitol Ctr.
11/20 KEENE, NH
Colonial Theatre
11/21 NORTH BRANCH, NJ
Raritan Valley Community College
12/4 GERMANTOWN, TN
Germantown Performing Arts Ctr.
12/10 SOMERSET, KY
Ctr. for Rural Development
12/17 BOSSIER CITY, LA
Casino Magc

CONNIE SMITH

November
11/21 NIAGARA FALLS, NY
Niagara Falls Civic Ctr.

DOUG STONE

November
11/20 LUBBOCK, TX
Memorial Civic Ctr.

GENE WATSON

December
12/2 KNOXVILLE, TN
Knoxville Civic Coliseum
12/3 CHATTANOOGA, TN
Memorial Aud.
12/4 FAYETTEVILLE, NC
Cumberland Cty. Civic Ctr.

BRYAN WHITE

November
11/19 DALLAS, TX
Country 2000
11/30 PALM DESERT, CA
McCallum Theatre
12/3 LAS VEGAS, NV
Boulder Station Hotel
12/4 CERRITOS, CA
Cerritos Ctr.
12/5 RIVERSIDE, CA
Municipal Aud.
12/8 KLAMATH FALLS, OR
Ross Ragland Theatre
12/9 RED BLUFF, CA
Tehama Fairgrounds
12/10 SANTA ROSA, CA
Luther Burbank Ctr.
12/11 JACKSON, CA
Jackson Rancheria Casino

MARK WILLS

November
11/20 DURHAM, NC
Carolina Theatre
11/26 ATLANTA, GA
Fox Theatre
12/4 ATLANTA, GA
Cobb's Galleria Ctr.

December
12/31 WINSTON-SALEM, NC
Lawrence Joel Complex

January
1/15 MIAMI, FL
SS Norway

CHELY WRIGHT

December
12/31 SALT LAKE CITY, UT
Delta Ctr.

WYNONNA

November
11/12 BILOXI, MS
Grand Theatre

TRISHA YEARWOOD

November
11/18 ROBINSONVILLE, MS
Horseshoe Casino
11/20 BILOXI, MS
Grand Casino

December
12/8-9 BOSSIER CITY, LA
Horseshoe Casino



Marty Stuart

MARTY STUART

November
11/26 SUTTONS BAY, MI
Leelanau Sands Casino
11/27 MILTON, IN
Old Milton School

PAM TILLIS

December
12/2 OROVILLE, CA
Feather Falls Casino
12/3-5 LAS VEGAS, NV
House of Blues

January
1/15 MIAMI, FL
SS Norway

AARON TIPPIN

November
11/27 TAYLORVILLE, IL
Nashville North

December
12/11 PADUCAH, KY
Executive Inn

TANYA TUCKER

December
12/31 SHREVEPORT, LA
Riverfront Park

STEVE WARINER

January
1/1 NASHVILLE, TN
Opryland Hotel

Dates are subject to change without notice, and we recommend contacting the venue before traveling. For complete ticket and show information, contact the venue directly. Call information (area code) + (555-1212) for a venue phone number. If they don't have a listing, try the local TicketMaster office. If that doesn't work, try contacting the nearest Chamber of Commerce to the venue. Country Music magazine is not responsible for where an artist performs, nor does the magazine have any control over their schedules. Tour dates provided by Sheri Rettew.

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Brandt Identification

Canadian crooner Paul Brandt has some unique answers to our most unusual questions.

Paul Brandt's honey-smooth baritone has a calming effect, and it's showcased on his latest album, *That's the Truth*. But these days the energetic Canadian himself is far from calm. "Really, I've had every major stressor you can have over the last four years," he says. "I moved 2,500 miles away from home, started a career in the music business, got married, bought a house, and I had to learn to speak American!"

Have you ever taken things from hotels?

One time, we stayed at a less-than-reputable hotel in Missouri. I think it was hunting season, because there was a sign in the bathroom that said *Please do not use our towels for cleaning engine parts, bottoms of shoes, fishing equipment or guns*. We had to have that sign. It's in our bathroom at home.

Do you talk to your pets?

Of course. But what's really sad is I've started to give them their own voices. One of our cats swears a lot.

Which song would you secretly like to cover?

A James Bond theme song. An entire album of them, maybe.

Do you carry a Palm Pilot?

No, but I have a Macintosh PowerBook.



Would you ever go platinum blond?

Sure. I'm pretty adventurous with my hair. I just had it all cut off, you'll notice.

Which do you prefer, race cars or racehorses?

NASCAR is great, but in Canada, it was something I was never really exposed to. Where I grew up in Calgary, they have the Calgary Stampede every year. I used to perform there a lot. One year, I remember at 2:00 it was Paul Brandt, and at 2:20 it was the pig races.

What was the most unexpected thing that happened to you this year?

I went to Bosnia. I was asked to perform

for the troops during the conflict. These men and women are over there putting their lives on the line to try to help stabilize that country; it was really inspiring.

But something funny happened while we were in the helicopter. My wife, whose dad is a former fighter pilot, was talking to the pilot over the headset. I was half asleep, and I heard her say to the pilot, "Why don't you open this bad boy up and see what it can do?" Next thing I heard was the pilot laughing, then we dropped 300 feet and started doing a maneuver called yanking and banking. My hat almost became an air sickness bag!

Can you grout tile?

I'm an incredible grouter. My parents decided their entire basement needed to be tiled the week my youngest sister was getting married. I was handed a trowel and a bucket of grout. Now I'm a mean tiler.

Do you have any good moose stories?

I know more about elk, actually. I think around .05 percent of traffic accidents in Canada are caused by elk. They're a lot bigger than horses.

Who do people say you look like?

I must have one of those faces that looks like everybody. The weirdest one was, I walked into a sushi place in California where the sushi chefs all sing along to '70s songs on headset microphones while they work. It's a California thing. Anyhow, one of these chefs comes up to me and says, "You look just like Julian Lennon."

Which is more fun, sweeping or vacuuming?

Vacuuming. I'm mesmerized by that TV commercial for the Vortex vacuum. But I have to say, vacuuming does suck.

Who would win in a fight, Jackie Chan or Jean-Claude Van Damme?

Jackie Chan. I think Jean-Claude is a poseur. But don't tell him I said that, because if it was between me and him, I'd definitely lose! *

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