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LYNN:

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Volume Seven, Number Two
November, 1977

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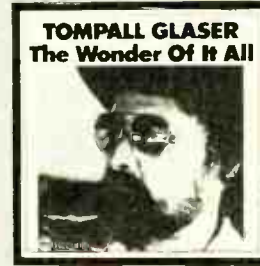
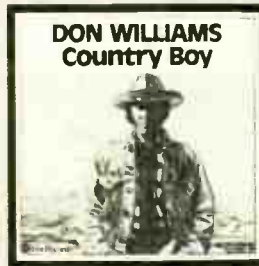
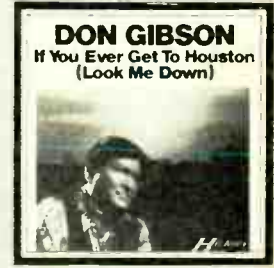
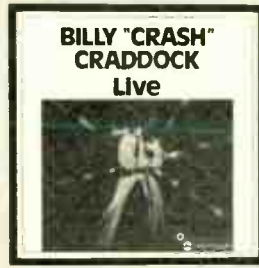
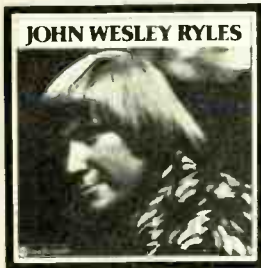
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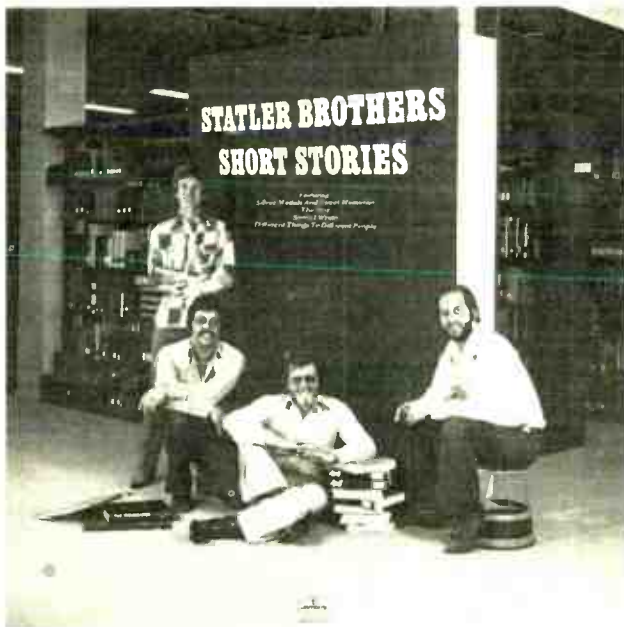
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Letters

Want "Outlaw Blues" Music?

I have just recently seen a movie with the most outstanding country music I have ever heard. The movie was called *Outlaw Blues* starring Peter Fonda and Susan St. James.

I would appreciate any information you could give me on how I could acquire a soundtrack of the music used in the movie.

MEL ERVIN
TIPTON, OKLA.

Capitol Records released the album, Music From Outlaw Blues on August 15, Ed.

Oy!

I noted with interest the reference in Nelson Allen's review that *Fargo Country* is "her latest and first for Warner Bros. . . ." Don't know where Mr. Allen was last year but lots of folks bought an album called *On The Move* which, at the time was Fabulous Fargo's "latest and first for Warner Bros." The album included two legit hits, *Mr. Doodles* and *I've Loved You All Of The Way*, which lots of Country Music Magazine readers have heard on their neighborhood radio stations.

Just thought I should set the record(s) straight.

BOB MERLIS
PUBLICITY DIRECTOR
WARNER BROS. RECORDS

P.S. Have sent under separate cover, a copy of *On The Move*; can you see to it that Nelson Allen gets a listen?

Ya sure know how to hurt a guy, Robert. Ed.

How Many Fans Has Jim Reeves?

It was good to see the Great Jim Reeves mentioned in your magazine. How about a nice article now? The anniversary of his death is July 31. His birthdate is August 20. My husband and I go to Carthage twice a year to visit his grave.

I knew Jim and Mary when they lived in Longview, Tex. in 1952. My husband is a real fan in every sense of the word. Last year we have planned to go to Carthage on July 31 as we usually do; however, we were delayed—our son was born at 4:30 that morning.

Neither of us have the hang ups of Maureen Marsh. Jim would be disappointed in a fan like that. He believed in family, wholesomeness, not breaking up homes.

In 1952 I was six years old when I knew Jim Reeves personally. At that age he was just a nice man who cared about me. Now as an adult I see him as a fine man who cared about mankind. That year I was to have a baby brother. Jim thought that was the greatest thing for me to have a baby brother. That is the kind of man he was, not the man Mrs. Marsh thinks she is communicating with. Jim believed in God. He sure would not want someone saying he had been contacted through a spiritualist. . . Mrs. Marsh needs to know what Jim Reeves was really like. We are not members of any of his fan clubs. If this is what they support, I don't think I want to join.

LOYCE ELAM
LONGVIEW, TEXAS

How Many Legs Has Tammy?

... Does Tammy Wynette have an artificial leg?

JACK ROGERS II
FLORENCE, ARIZ.
No. Ed.

Praise For The Hag . . .

... just loved the gorgeous centerfold of Merle Haggard. Merle is really an outstanding artist—we saw him perform in Harrisburg, Pa. recently—he was great.

Would like to see a feature article in your magazine on this No. 1 man in country music.

CAROL & SUSAN WALKER
SPRING MILLS, PA.

Praise For June Carter . . .

... Special congratulations to you for the September 1977 issue. . . with your article on a fine lady, June Carter Cash.

I can't think of anyone in country music more deserving of praise than June, unless it would be other members of her family. . . if not for the Original Carter Family, country music might never have happened.

Besides being a fine part of the Carter Family, your article gives her the credit she deserves for saving a country music superstar, Johnny Cash. He credits her

himself.

Thanks for the great article, Joan Dew, and thank you, Country Music, for printing it. You can bet you will sell at least one copy of "Singers and Sweethearts," and that's to me.

VICKI LANGDON
DENISON, TEXAS

I just received my September issue and want to thank you so much for the article on June Carter Cash. I have been a Johnny Cash fan for some time, but when I was able to meet June, I found her to be a very real and friendly person. I was really glad to be able to read about her as it's really hard to find much on June.

I wanted to let you know what a really great magazine you put out each month, the pictures and articles are all first class. JUDY PETERSEN
EL MONTE, CALIF.

And A Definite Boo For Mike Bane

This is in response to Michael Bane's article in your Sept. issue on Olivia. . .

If any, I would like to know Mr. Bane's qualifications to expound upon Country Music. Judging by his cutesy pie article I would venture he knows as much or as little as the case may be, as Ms. John.

Mr. Bane would have done Hollywood of the 30s & 40s proud. What he has done here is pure hype 'n' tripe. Unfortunately many readers who will have seen his fairy tale will take it as gospel. . .

Mr. Bane further stated (incorrectly) that Country Music was not delicate. I suggest sir you attend a Don Williams or Johnny Rodriguez concert the next time either one is in your area.

As to what is and what is not Country, if you know or understand what it isn't first, you won't have any trouble with what is. You'll know. . .

JAY DIAMOND
KWYO, PADUCAH, KY.
KEEPIN' IT COUNTRY
(CAUSE SOMEONE HASTA)

Jay, you forgot to mention whether you liked the article or not. Ed.

Jimmy Dean Fan Remembers

I have been a subscriber to Country Music since its first publication and when I received my August copy and saw an article on Jimmy Dean you made my day for me.

Recognizing Song Sharks

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Neil Sedaka — An Interview

Neil details his beginnings, his brand new career, how he works with his lyricists, and how he goes about composing his melodies.



Mel Tillis — An Interview

Country Music's Entertainer of the Year describes his early experiences in Nashville and describes how he develops his ideas into songs.



How Much You Earn With A Top-10 Record?

A detailed account of writer's earnings from a big hit song. How much you can expect and the sources of income.



Bobby Goldsboro — An Interview

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Royalties, conditions and safeguards. Terms you should ask for and what the norm is.



Belly Up To The Bar

Copyright infringement and the songwriter. When are you potentially liable?



Breaking Into The Country Market

An inside discussion of the country music market including the three themes most often used in country song hits.



What Is A Copyright?

The top music attorneys tell you how to protect your creative ideas and what rights you really own.

Maybe there's a song inside you just waiting to be written, maybe you've already set one down on paper — now what? How do you get a copyright... a publisher... a foot in the door? Will anybody listen? Whether you're a composer or a lyricist, just starting out or well on your way in the business — you'll find the vital, hard to track down information you need to know to succeed — every month in Songwriter Magazine. • To find out what you've been missing, just mail the coupon to enter your trial subscription. Send no money, we'll bill you later. Or, if you enclose payment now, we'll send you FREE our new Music Directory which lists the top music publishers, producers, managers and much more. • Full Guarantee: If you're not delighted with the first issue, just return our invoice marked "Please Cancel" and that's that. You keep the issue free. Or, if you've paid in advance, we'll refund your money in full and you keep both the directory and issue free. Send in the coupon today. You're gonna love it!



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CIRCLE READER INFORMATION NO. 14

World Radio History

I really enjoyed reading the article. It was really great. The article brought back memories when my parents and I met him in person when he played in *Destry Rides Again*.

I have been a fan of Jimmy's for the past 20 years and you can bet that this is one fan who has never forgotten or will ever forget Jimmy Dean. He is the greatest.

JUDY KAYSER
HEMPSTEAD, N.Y.

Fans Show Good Taste . . . In Fact, Excellent Taste . . . In Fact, Superlative Taste . . .

I've just received my first copy of Country Music and just the cover convinced me of what I've been missing. As I read through the articles I knew I finally found the "perfect" magazine.

Thanks much.
SGT. MIKE ASH
FT. MEADE, MD.

I just received my September issue of Country Music. Each issue gets better and better. You are doing everyone a favor by putting this magazine out . . .

NANCY JOSEFOWICZ
YUMA, ARIZ.

I just received my first copy of Country Music and I think it's great. I'm a great country and western fan, so I'm sure I'll enjoy your magazine . . .

MRS. JOHN HOVLAND
RAPID CITY, S.D.

Like Our Spade Work . . . Also Our Red Work

We always enjoy the articles on older western artists such as Red Foley and Spade Cooley and were pleased to finally see Spade Cooley mentioned again. He seemed to almost be a "non-person" after his personal problem. We always enjoyed his music and missed ever hearing any of his records played. We have written the "Club of Spade" for information on his available records . . .

MR. AND MRS. DON WILSON
PORTLAND, ORE.

More Merle

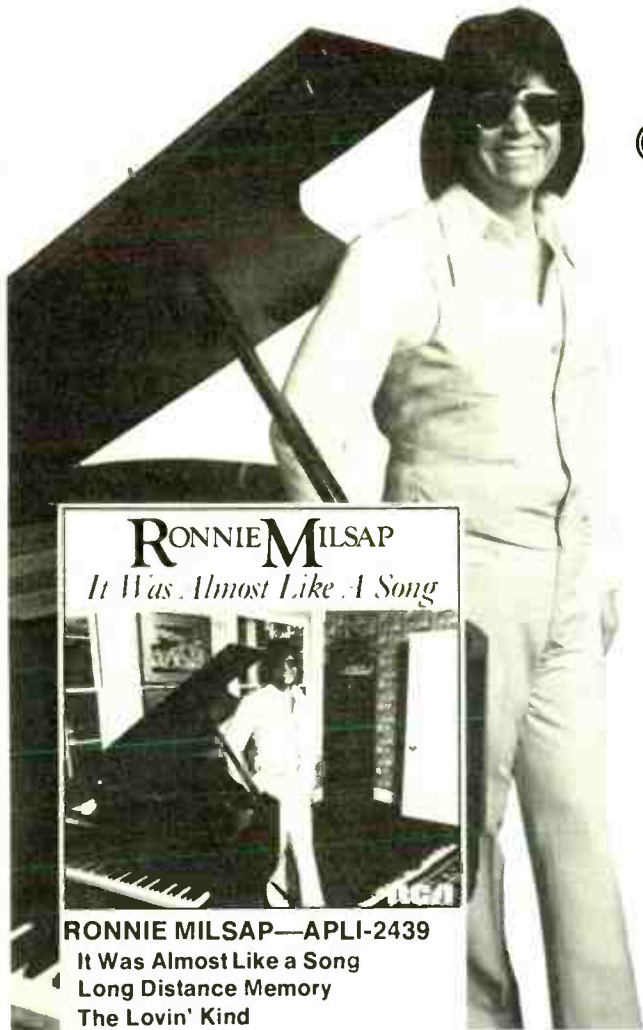
I attended a Merle Haggard concert in San Carlos, Calif. and there is no way to describe the pleasure I felt as I watched Merle sing the fantastic songs that have made him one of the greatest singers of all time, and I am sure many of the Hag's fans agree with me.

But, Country Music Magazine hardly has had anything on the Hag except for a few small paragraphs or pictures and that's not enough . . .

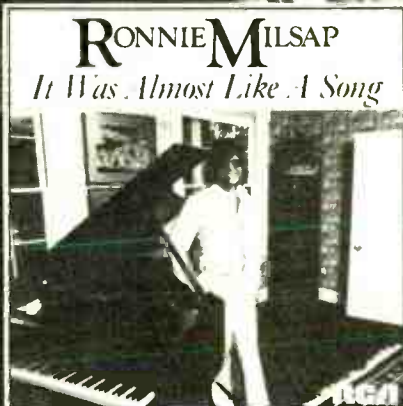
R. SANTOS
SALINAS, CALIF.

Have faith, a story on Merle is in the works. Ed.

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Statler "Magic"

I recently received the back issue of Feb. 1977 Country Music and I have to tell you what a terrific job I think John Pugh did on his Statler Brothers article. He truly captured the essence and, in his word, the "magic" of the Statlers.

I first saw the Statler Brothers perform at Pittsburgh in March of this year for a crowd of over 12,000. We enjoyed the show so much we took our 3 year old son and went to Johnstown last month to see them again. When I compared the two shows, I could see why the "magic" the Statlers generate is returned to them as love.

The Statlers performed at Johnstown in an un-air conditioned auditorium for an audience of barely 2000. Despite the ninety degree plus temperature, the Statlers bounced onto the stage immaculate in

three piece summer suits, their professional status obvious, as the only concession they made to the sweltering conditions was a quick dab at a glistening brow.

While the Pittsburgh audience had been enthusiastic, they were more subdued, perhaps more sophisticated, at least more restrained than this at Johnstown. This was definitely a "Statler crowd." They cheered, whistled, anticipated the jokes with great "aahs" and hooted and stomped with appreciation when Don finally "caught on" to Harold's innuendos. I'd seen this routine twice before, yet I found myself as delighted by it as the rest of the audience. This is when the difference in the shows started and became progressively more evident. The Statlers RESPONDED! It wasn't just another show, it wasn't a small town get-it-over-

with quickie, it wasn't even what they had expected or deserved. It was a communication. And the Statlers responded. Harold flirted outrageously with the girls in the front row, while Don reprimanded them for encouraging him. They sang three more songs than they had in Pittsburgh, did encores on three as compared to one, and came back on stage three times to acknowledge the standing ovation, once to sing the chorus of a hit. All in all, they expanded the show to more than twice its normal length. This in response to their fans.

After the show, they were back on stage within five minutes to sign autographs. They were being deluged with waving hands and paper, yet they made smiling contact with the eyes at the end of the hands.

JUDY S. TRUBIC
CARLTON, PA.

We Finally Found Some Who Don't Think Michael Bane's So Bad

I would like to thank you for the September 1977 cover story on Olivia Newton-John. It is past time for Nashville to realize how much she has helped broaden the appeal of country music. I, for one, was not a country fan until Ms. John's influence became apparent, but I have been converted. Thanks again for the very informative article.

B. LITTLE
HEMINGWAY, S.C.

I'm very much in love with Olivia Newton-John and your articles really brighten up my life. You indeed know how to tell it like it is without the distortion, bias, and repetition some other publications thrive on.

In particular, I would like to thank Michael Bane for your Sept. 77 interview. Olivia is one of our finest singers and more attention should be placed on her music. It just isn't right to bother her with a bunch of personal questions. Thanks again for being on the right track.

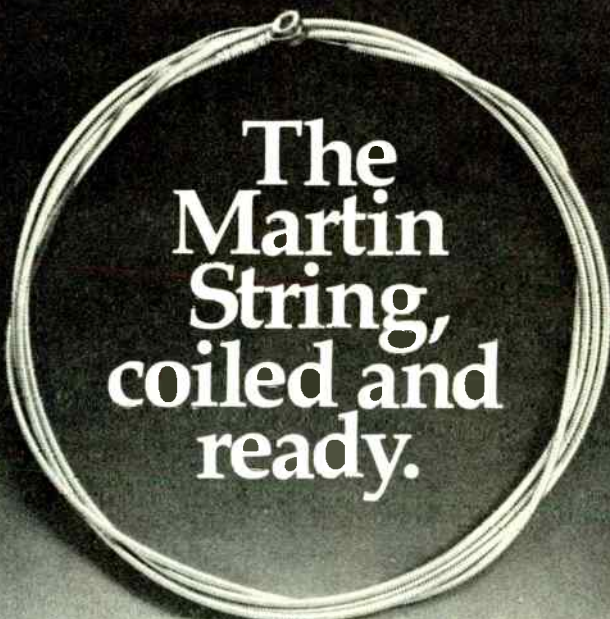
WARREN SINDLINGER
SULLIVAN, MO.

Doesn't Like Elusive Reviews

I felt I had to write and let you know that John Morthland's review of Hank Williams, Jr.'s latest album *One Night Stands* was a bit elusive. I would like to say that *One Night Stands* is a sensational album, one of Hank, Jr.'s greatest. . . Let's hear it for Bocephus!

TERI LaROCQUE
FT. STOCKTON, TEXAS

Due to our great volume of mail, we regret we can't answer all letters individually. We welcome your opinions, and will publish the most representative letters in this column. Let us hear from you.—Ed



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Nazareth, Pennsylvania

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TANYA TUCKER YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL

including:
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DAVID ALLAN COE TATTOO

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Country Scene

RAMBLIN'

Edited by
Rochelle
Friedman



Who Is This Man?

Not many people know about Dolly Parton's mystery husband, Carl Dean, a 35 year old asphalt contractor. Few are willing to admit that he even exists. But, Country Music was fortunate to obtain a picture of him and to get some insight into their marriage.

"I know that's a big rumor, a lot of people think that," responded Dolly when asked if she invented Carl. "He's a real mystery person to the public. That's good though. That's fine with me and fine with him. He loves me good, and my career being separate from my marriage is perfectly natural for us." When asked for a statement about her marriage, Dolly answered, "...We've both only been married once. It's a good marriage, it's solid and firm and I'm sure it will last forever."



Happy 30th!

Jerry Clower and wife Homerline celebrated their 30th Wedding Anniversary this past August. The happy couple have four kids, Ray, Amy, Sue, and Katy.

A New Face At The Opry

Vice President Walter Mondale made a surprise appearance on the Grand Ole Opry on a recent visit to Nashville. He was welcomed on stage by Roy Acuff. The Vice President told the Opry audience that as a child he listened to the Grand Ole Opry over WSM Radio. He mentioned he was a true country fan as is President Carter.



Overstreet Sports Overgrowth

Notice anything different? Well, Tommy Overstreet returned from Europe with a new image. Sporting a well trimmed beard, he's now causing quite a sensation. Although he hasn't changed his show, everyone is saying that the new show is great. One wonders what would happen if he shaved his head.



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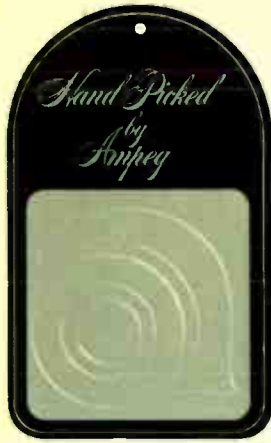
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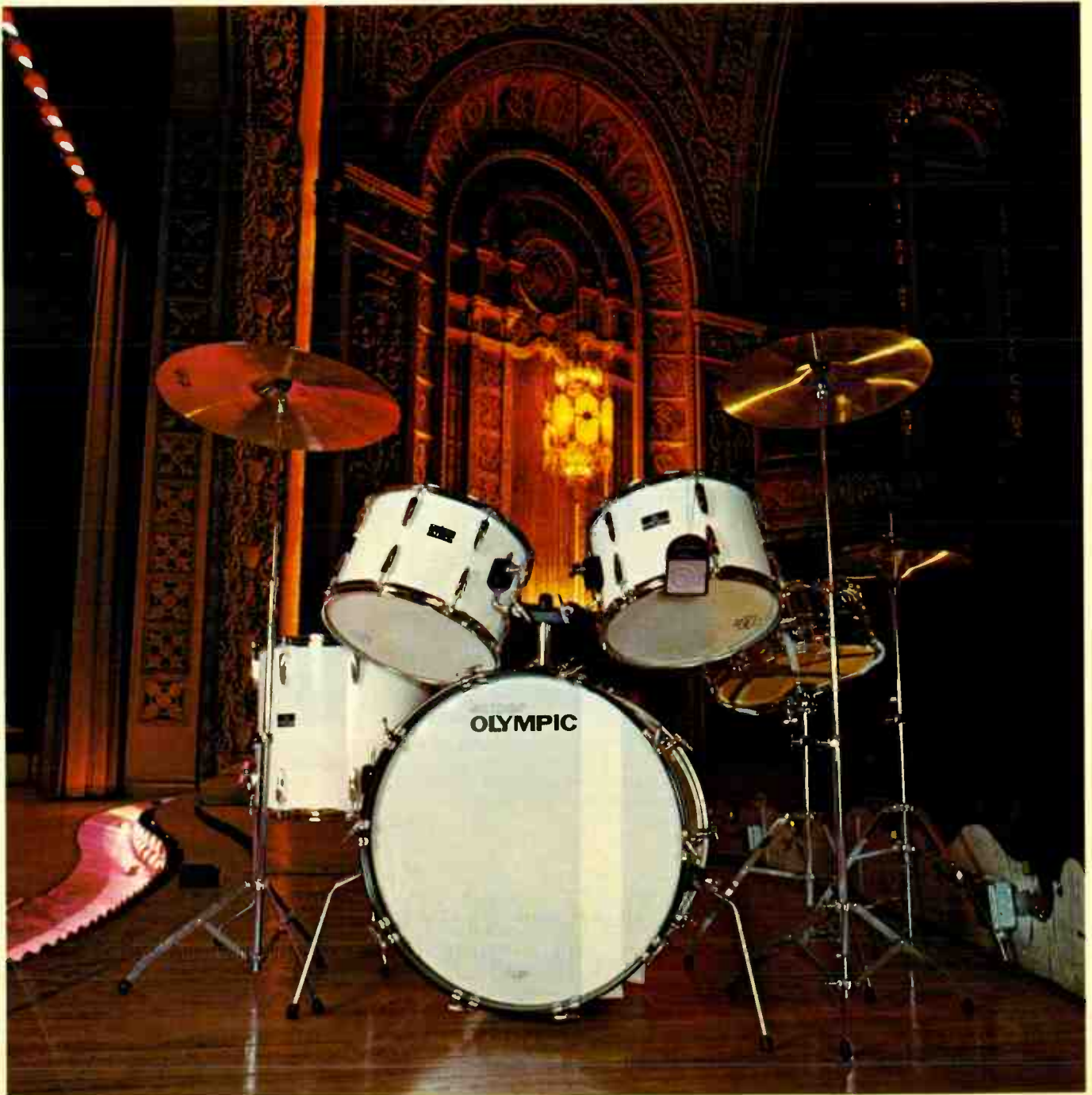
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What to look for when you visit your Ampeg dealer.



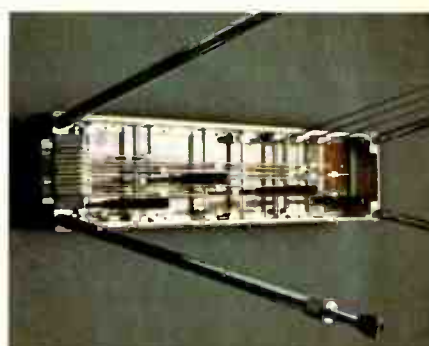
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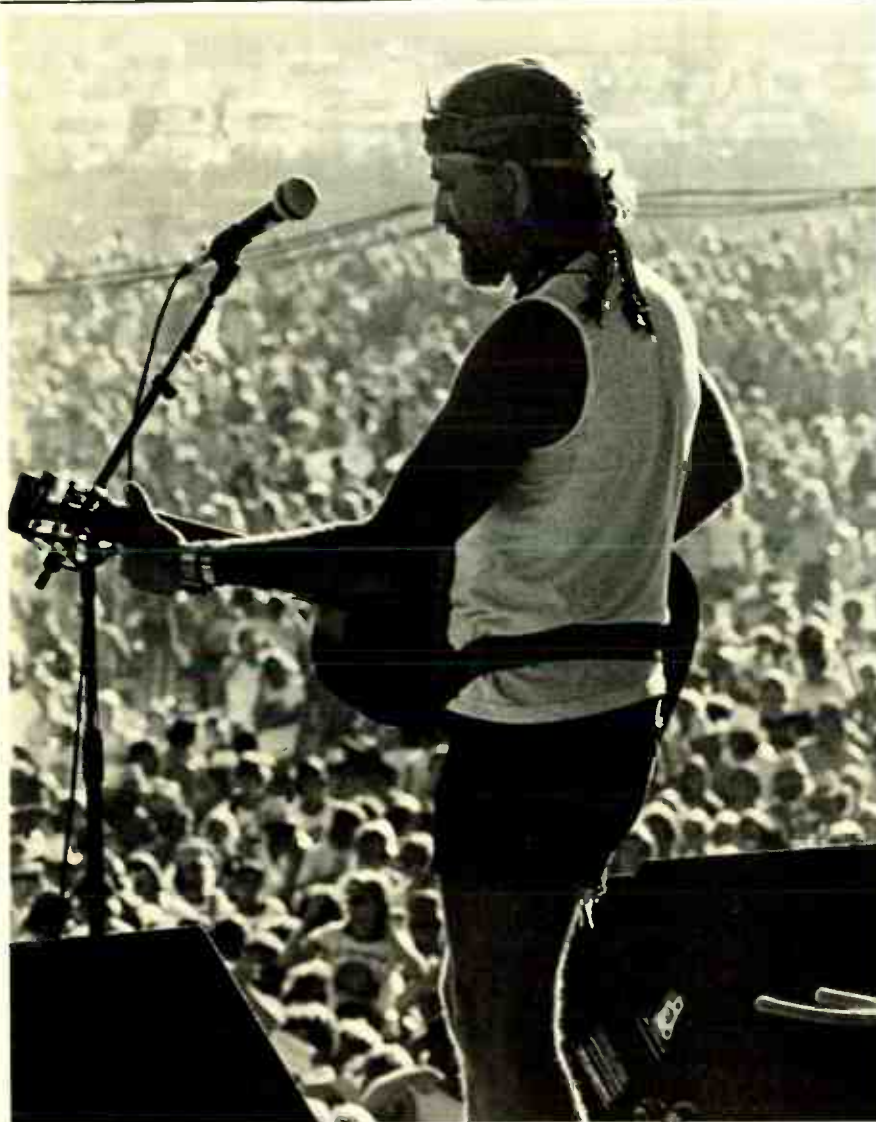
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Country Scene

NEWS Tuckers get pie-eyed; Willie's moving again; Picnics to be held where?



No Nix on Willie's Picnic

Once more, with feeling. The most denied event of the year came off as scheduled this July, as the fourth annual Willie Nelson Picnic ground into history. Willie, Waylon, Jessi, Jerry Jeff, Asleep at the Wheel and Lynyrd Skynyrd made the one-day event, long

denied by Willie, at the Tulsa Expo Center. We suspect that Willie's going to have to keep moving the picnic north each year, like Indians following a shrinking buffalo herd. In fact, we've already made hotel reservations in Montreal for the eighth annual Picnic.

Pickin' A Little On The Side

When you plop down your hard-earned bucks for a record, the last thing on your mind is who's backing the singer, right? That's the way most

everyone feels, too. But through the years, country records have had their share of illustrious sidemen, almost never credited. Maybe they were a

friend of the singer or they just happened to answer the phone when he needed pickers. They might have just been starting out in the business. It's hard to tell.

Still, some sidemen on hit records became stars with hits of their own. Johnny Bond, a member of Gene Autry's band in 1942, lent his rhythm guitar to Al Dexter's *Pistol Packin' Mama*. Lawrence Welk was the accordionist on Jimmie Davis' original recording of *You Are My Sunshine*. When Hank Penny did a 1947 session in Nashville, Red Foley assisted with both guitar and backing vocals. A few months later, Homer and Jethro played on a Penny record date. To go back to the early days, both Louis Armstrong and another jazz legend, pianist Earl "Fatha" Hines played behind Jimmie Rodgers on *Blue Yodel -9*.

George Jones is thought to be a bastion of country purity, but that's him picking lead guitar on Johnny Carroll's recording of *Rock It* (he later recorded it himself as "Thumper" Jones). Jerry Lee Lewis is considered to be a blur on the old 88's, yet it was none other than Charlie Rich who pounded the keys on the Killer's *I'll Sail My Ship Alone* on Sun. But Jerry Lee did get into the act, playing pumping backup on both Carl Perkin's *Matchbox* and Billy Riley's *Flying Saucers Rock And Roll*. Delbert McClinton's pungent harmonica on Bruce Channel's 1962 hit *Hey Baby* inspired John Lennon to add harmonica to the Beatles' *Love Me Do*.

Finding out who plays on records today is a lot easier, since most new albums list the sidemen. Knowing who they are won't necessarily improve the sound of a record, but it gives a fascinating view of how a lot of the greats of both the past and the present learned from each other. And besides, you've got an instant edge in any country trivia quizzes that might come up.

RICH KIENZLE

October is country music month at Kings Dominion, a sprawling 1,300 acre amusement park near Doswell, Virginia. The park will feature such acts as Tammy Wynette, "Crash" Craddock, Ronnie Milsap, Johnny Russell, Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, Bill Monroe, Mac Wiseman, the Osborne Brothers, Lester Flatt and the Nashville Grass and The Country Gentleman.

On Oct. 29 and 30, the park will feature the finals in the East Coast country music championships.



by JOAN DEW



What happens to an old-fashioned marriage when the wife unexpectedly becomes the breadwinner—and wealthy, to boot? It's all here in this excerpt from *Singers & Sweethearts*, a Country Music Magazine Press/Doubleday book, on the stands now.

Loretta had been married for twelve years and her youngest child was already in school when Mooney got the idea to get her on a show at the local grange hall.

"The grange hall was like a farmer's co-op," Mooney says, "where you could take the family on Friday and Saturday nights. The kids played in the basement while the grown-ups drank beer and danced and listened to music. A bunch of us couples used to hang around down there and I told them Loretta could

LORETTA'S LIB

sing as good as the girls on the radio. I had bought her this little guitar for her birthday and she had learned to play it, so I asked the band leader if she could sing and he said 'yes.' They all liked her singing, and that made me real proud. Before long she'd been offered a seven-night-a-week job at a real club and we'd gotten together a little band

of our own."

During that first year in show business, Loretta was torn between excitement and terror. "I was scared to death to get up and sing in front of people. The only thing that gave me the nerve was Doo making me mad, calling me a 'dumb hillbilly' when I said I couldn't do it. But I also thought it was fun working

in a club and meeting all the people. I'd been a housewife since I was thirteen and had never gotten out like that before."

Within a few months Mooney had traveled to Tacoma and persuaded Buck Owens to let Loretta sing on his television show, which was broadcast to Canada. Norm Burley, a lumber tycoon from Van-

“It all happened so fast. We never had time to really sit down and think about it before Loretta was already on her way to the top.”



Loretta Lynn, Mac Davis and John Denver at a recent Academy of Country Music show.

couver, saw the show, thought she had potential, and offered to send Mooney and Loretta to Hollywood so they could record a song she'd written. Burley financed the pressing of 3500 singles, and Loretta mailed them out to disc jockeys all across the country from a list given to her by a radio station. Deejays played "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl," listeners requested it, juke box owners bought it, Loretta and Mooney toured the country in a beat-up Mercury to promote it, and the unheard-of happened: The record made it to number fourteen on the charts. Before anybody got around to telling them it's not done that way, Loretta and Mooney had already done it. They were headed for Nashville, a Decca contract, and the Grand Ole Opry.

"It all happened so *fast*," Mooney says, in a tone that implies he still can't quite believe it. "We never had time to really sit down and think about it before Loretta was already on her way to the top.

"Lord, in the beginning all I had in mind was for her to do a little singing around Washington for a few extra dollars. We thought it was great when she got ten dollars for a night. It was kinda fun, but the furthestest my thinking ever went was that if she got a few breaks, maybe she could record some. I knew absolutely nothing about the business, or how much money was in it. If somebody had told me I wouldn't have believed them." Nor would he have believed that a few years later his wife would be the biggest female star in country music and *he'd* be the one staying home with the kids while *she* went out and brought home the

bacon.

"When I first realized what was happening to Loretta, it scared me to death. At first, you know, you can't see it 'cause you're too close to it and you're working, going all the time. Then one day it hits you. 'God a-mighty, what have I done? Here I had this sweet, pretty little wife, a good homemaker, wonderful mother to our children, and the next thing you know I've got a *star!*' It wasn't her fault. She didn't ask to get in it. That was my idea. But once she was in it, she took to it like she was born for it.

"Loretta and I were always together a lot in the old days. She liked the outdoors as much as I did. She was a great cook. . . could cook a better meal on two dollars than most women on ten. She made everything from scratch. And she had fun with her kids. They never got on her nerves. I was very proud of her. We didn't have much, but I thought we had a pretty good life. Then I saw all that slipping away. Don't get me wrong. I love the money we have now. I'd be a fool and a liar if I said I didn't. But I'd give anything in the world if we could go back like it was, and still have some of the money. But you can't have both. And there's no going back. Life don't work that way.

"A couple of times I came close to asking her to quit. But I knew if she did she'd be miserable 'cause she'd had a taste of it then. It was in her blood. It gets in their blood, you know, like dope, or a disease. And Loretta's the type of person that no matter what she does she wants to do it the best. So once she got started, if she hadn't been allowed to take it all the way

to the top, it would have killed her. Now she lives to entertain those people. The money don't mean nothing to her. She's never been a big money spender. But I've seen her when she was wore out from traveling, sick with a cold or the flu and just about on her last leg. And she'd walk out there on a stage and that applause . . . well, no doctor in the world could give her medicine that would do her near as much good."

Most husbands of stars find living off their wives' income the most difficult adjustment. Mooney was no exception. "It was real hard at first because I had always been the provider, and done it with my own two hands 'cause that's all I knew, so when people started saying 'Mr. Loretta Lynn' it would really get to me. But bless Loretta, she made that a lot easier. The money was a tender subject with me, but when it come up she would say, 'If you hadn't started me, helped me and been behind me, we wouldn't be making all this money, so you've earned it as much as I have.' So she made me feel like I had contributed. And of course I'm proud of her and her success and proud to be her husband.

"Since we've had the farm I feel like that's my part of the work now. If I go out and buy a pair of mules for \$1500 and trade them for \$2500, I feel like I've really done something great. I know that can't compare to Loretta making \$15,000 in one night, but for me it's just as big a thrill. I can't lay down on work. I'd go crazy. I've worked all my life. And I'm not a very good supervisor, so if there's a fence needs mending at home, or a tractor needs fixin', I get out and do it. I take a lot of pride in that place."

The fact that Loretta doesn't share Mooney's pride and interest in the farm is a point of contention in their marriage, especially since she's the one who wanted it so badly. . .

"We'd been out driving, looking at another piece of property near Nashville, and we got lost coming back," she remembers. "We rounded a bend on this old dirt road, and there up on a hill sat this beautiful old southern mansion, just like Scarlett O'Hara's house. There was a mill and a millstream across the road with pretty trees and a mossy bank leading down to the water, and it looked like the most peaceful place on earth. I told Mooney we *had* to get it."

"They wanted \$250,000 for the place, including the cattle and the tractor," Mooney recalls, "and they insisted on \$80,000 down. All we had in the world was \$10,000, so I went to our bank to see if they'd loan us the balance with Loretta's lifetime recording contract as collateral. They turned us down. I found

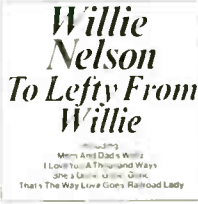
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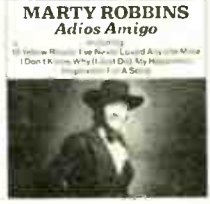
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JESSE WINCHESTER'S

Southern Nights

BY MARY ELLEN MOORE

Memphis in May.

Hordes of army worms have invaded suburbia, browning the lawns before they have a chance to green. The sun is already busy bleaching the other greenery and wilting the citizens—a mere prelude to the hot and sticky summer ahead. The citizens, when not trying to save their lawns from the hordes, whisper about the latest murders and muggings; in Memphis, there's always a murder to whisper about.

The whispers reach even Overton Square. The restaurant and shop-inundated stalking grounds of rich Memphians and bored tourists, the Square is



no longer bustling with money-weilding crowds. Desperate merchants try one gimmick after another to bring back business.

So it is that a mammoth, inflated rubber rainbow straddles Madison Avenue at Overton Square.

Memphis in May, the rainbow declares. As if it wasn't obvious enough.

And somewhere beyond that rainbow is the Ritz, once a porno-flick theater, now a music hall. Tonight, more than 800 people have brushed aside those warning whispers to pack the Ritz for a special reunion.

Jesse Winchester has returned.

Jesse had left Memphis ten years before,

not knowing whether he would ever see the city, the South or even the country again. He'd headed toward Canada and away from the draft and the Vietnam War. He was one of thousands, but, like the others, his reasons were his own.

"I sure do appreciate your making my homecoming to Memphis such a wonderful, warm evening," Jesse tells the crowd, an enthusiastic group of young people—some so young that Vietnam and draft evasion must surely be historical terms, not a reality which they themselves faced. To them, Jesse is a Memphis legend, maybe not as big as Elvis or Jerry Lee or Al Green, but there's still that potential.

So they greet him with resounding cheers, ovation after ovation and a plethora of "Welcome Home, Jesse" t-shirts.

"Welcome home, Jesse."

Earlier, Jesse had told an interviewer he felt awkward when Americans greeted him this way. "I know they mean well," he said, "but my home is in Canada now."

The son of a prominent Tennessee family with roots going back to the founding of Memphis, Jesse is even related to Robert E. Lee. His late father hated World War II, became a Mississippi farmer until Jesse was 12, then moved to Memphis where he practiced law. Jesse

went north for his education, to Williams College in Massachusetts, where he graduated in 1966. In 1967, motivated by his draft notice, Jesse took a plane to Canada.

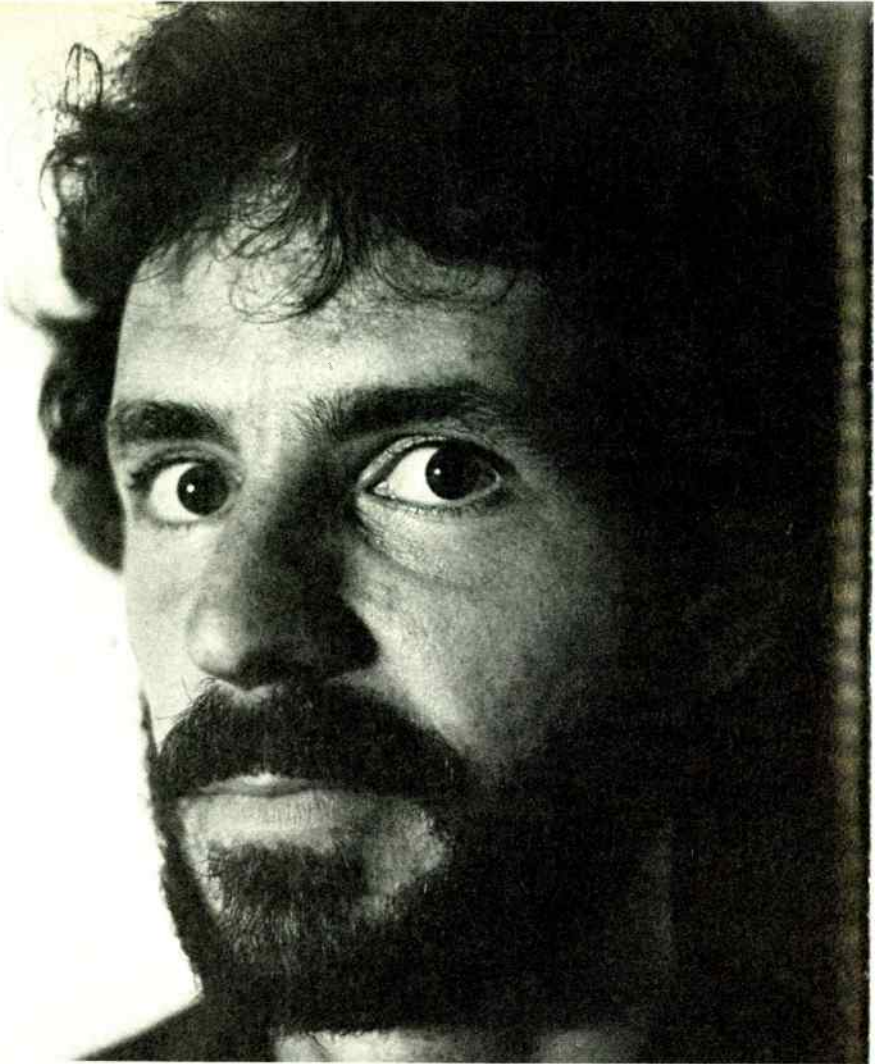
"The draft thing is just a completely personal thing with me," Jesse says now. "Some people believed in fighting and some didn't."

Rather than look at the move in negative terms—as running away—Jesse chose to look at it positively, as a move toward something. And gradually, he came to regard Canada as his new home, becoming a citizen in 1973.

He developed his interest in music, and in 1969 was discovered by Robbie Robertson of the Band, who produced Jesse's first album, *Jesse Winchester*. The album was the first of several well-received by the critics and established the music that Jesse has become associated with—heartfelt songs about the Deep South, with a few references to the North. Despite the critical praise, however, the albums were not commercial successes, something which his record company blames on his inability to tour the states.

So now, with President Carter's pardon as a ticket back to the country, Jesse's waiting to see if his touring will—if not shoot him into the ranks of Elvis, et al—at least give him the same success as his own songs have given others, among them Jimmy Buffett, Joan Baez and Stoney Edwards.

Denials aside, there's something in-



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tensely personal, intensely Southern, in Jesse Winchester's music. His very best songs—like *Delta Lady* or *Mississippi, You're On My Mind*—evoke a sense of place without pandering to sentimentality; a sense of loss without the cloying sweetness of manufactured heartbreak. In a word, *real* songs about *real* people—some of whom happen to be from the South.

So far, his stateside fans were giving him a warm welcome.

"I feel great about it," says Jesse in his very soft-spoken voice which—despite 10 years in Canada—still retains more than a touch of drawl. "I'm waiting for the roof to fall in."

No longer able to blame his inability to tour for the limited success of his records, Jesse and the record company are holding their breaths, and despite the initial success of the tour, even he admits that much of his attraction is the "Singing Draft Evader" label.

"Now that's really the whole source of the pressure that I feel," he sighs. "I have to make sure that the music is so good that it stands completely by itself without any sort of journalistic hook... political hook. I don't believe politics ever sold a concert ticket or a record, but I have to make sure it stays that way."

His determination to rid himself of the label makes him hesitant to talk about his draft evasion and the reasons he's finally allowed back. But he doesn't mind sing-

 EPIC MARCA REG © 1977 CBS INC. 

ing about it.

*Tell me why you like Jimmy Carter?
Why do you like Jimmy Carter?
Tell me why you like Jimmy Carter?
Good God Almighty, tell me where I
should begin.**

He tacked this simple thank you on to the traditional *Tell Me Why You Like Roosevelt*, a song he revived from the Depression and turned into an equally moving commentary on the '70s.

Politics aside, he doesn't mind talking about Canada as his home or Memphis, his former home.

"I love the South and I'm proud that I'm from it, proud that I have a little bit of Southern accent left...well, I've lost quite a bit, I really have...I still love Southern cooking the best. But I don't think that makes me any less a good Canadian. There's lots of Canadians who still cook their Ukrainian dishes or their Italian dishes and still are good Canadians. That's one of the beauties of Canada; there's room for you to maintain your traditional ties and still love your new country.

"So no, I don't allow myself to regret anything or want things that I can't have."

Like anyone else who's been away for awhile, Jesse enjoys becoming reacquainted with his home town, despite the few surprises.

"What are all these *young kids* doing here?" was his first thought when he revisited his old high school, Christian Brothers, now in a new building. And "They look at you and say 'You mean you went to the *old school*?' like it was in 1890 or something," Jesse laughs.

His wife Leslie, whom he met and married in Canada, and their two children got the full tour, too, although Jesse admitted that the kids were too young to understand his commentaries... "See that, that's where your Daddy went to school when he was your age."

He grimaces at the thought of what's happening to Beale Street, once the center of Southern music, now boarded up and awaiting urban renewal.

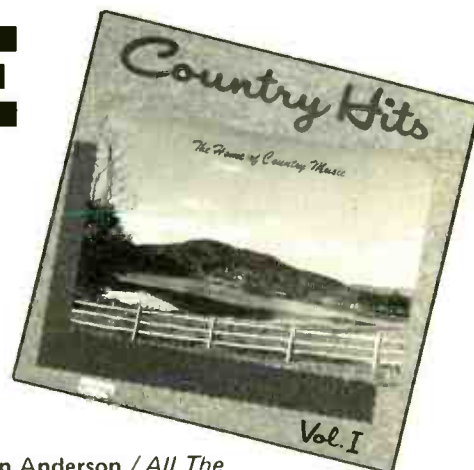
"All the good North American music has been heavily influenced by Southern music. Blues and country music are just about the foundation of everything. Jazz started here. Southern music...everybody's familiar with it, no matter where they live."

Memories aside, Memphis is just another gig, except "I may clean up the act a little for Mom," Jesse smiles. His mother, her friends and his, showed up for the first show at the Ritz and Jesse, whether nervous because of "Mom", or the pressure of the "Homecoming" or whatever, did a straight show, no in-between song banter, no silly patter, just one song right into the next.

Unlike a recent New York audience who, although enthusiastic, was more

*Tell Me Why You Like Roosevelt, public domain, arrangement by Jesse Winchester.

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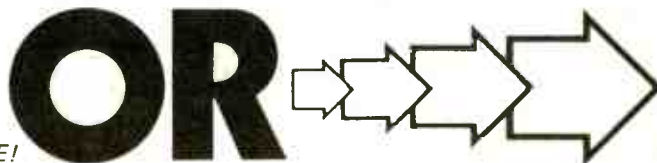


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controlled, the Memphis audience showed a true recognition of where his songs were coming from. They yelled in all the right places, gave standing ovations to all the right songs and wouldn't let him off the stage.

Mississippi, You're on My Mind, that heart-breaking, realistic portrait of Mississippi earned an ovation, when the New York audience—and critics—had simply overlooked it.

Obviously Jesse was playing to his own people.

Unfortunately, the entire South is not yet aware of what it has spawned. He was forced to cancel a date in Knoxville, because of poor ticket sales, couldn't even set up a date in Nashville where he's legend among the numerous songwriters, and Atlanta, his first southern date, was disappointing.

"Atlanta," he mused. "The people don't really know about me. It's the first place we've been that wasn't really sold out, which is kind of disappointing. I'd kinda hoped Atlanta would be sold out. The audience was very receptive, warm, and I think next time it will be sold out."

Next time.

Jesse and his band have already begun the endless circle of touring... north, south, out west, rest a few weeks, then north, south...

Does he think the contact with the States will change his music in any way?

"I don't know. In the last year, however, I've undergone a sort of personal change in my life, and I would expect that would show up in my music. This is really completely apart from the amnesty. This happened before the amnesty was dreamed of.

"Ummmm, I just kinda got happy," he grins widely. "There's an old 'Love, American Style' episode I remember seeing with Mel Tillis in it starring as a country singer who couldn't write his songs unless he was miserable, so his manager, agents, everybody conspired to make him miserable so he could keep writing hits. I hope that's not the case with me.

"I don't know what stepped in. I tend to put things in religious terms, and I suppose that I kinda got religion, but I don't want to belabor that or make a big thing about it—at least not in public. I just sorta decided that I wanted to give up everything that was getting in the way of music, getting in the way of my putting on the *best* show, writing the *best* song that I possibly could. So I just put everything aside that was distracting to me and it just made me like myself a lot more, and it just made me... very happy."

With a new outlook and an open door, Jesse's waiting to see what happens. His initial entry is history, and he hasn't made any other big splashes, but that doesn't mean he's not going to.

And until he does, he still has those memories of a hot but happy Memphis welcoming him "home" to keep him warm on those cold Canadian nights. ■

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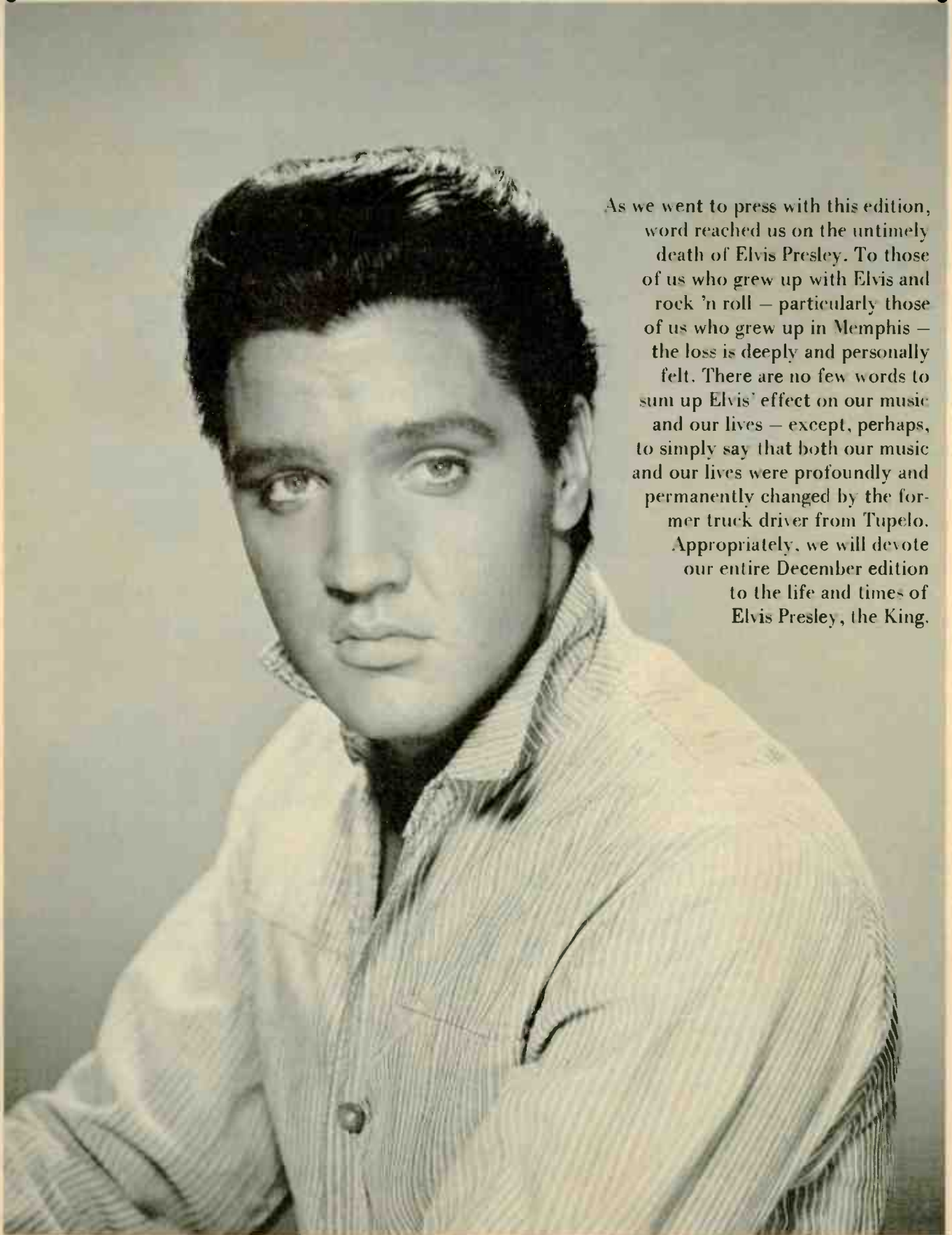
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ELVIS PRESLEY 1935 ~ 1977



As we went to press with this edition, word reached us on the untimely death of Elvis Presley. To those of us who grew up with Elvis and rock 'n roll – particularly those of us who grew up in Memphis – the loss is deeply and personally felt. There are no few words to sum up Elvis' effect on our music and our lives – except, perhaps, to simply say that both our music and our lives were profoundly and permanently changed by the former truck driver from Tupelo. Appropriately, we will devote our entire December edition to the life and times of Elvis Presley, the King.

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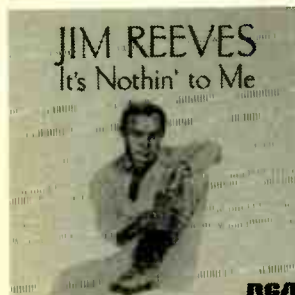
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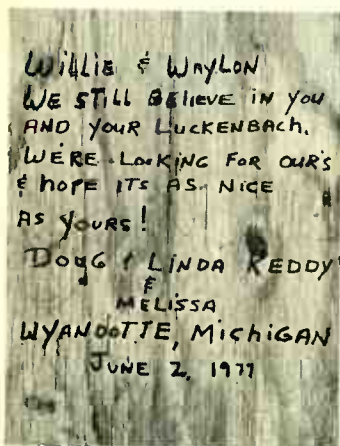
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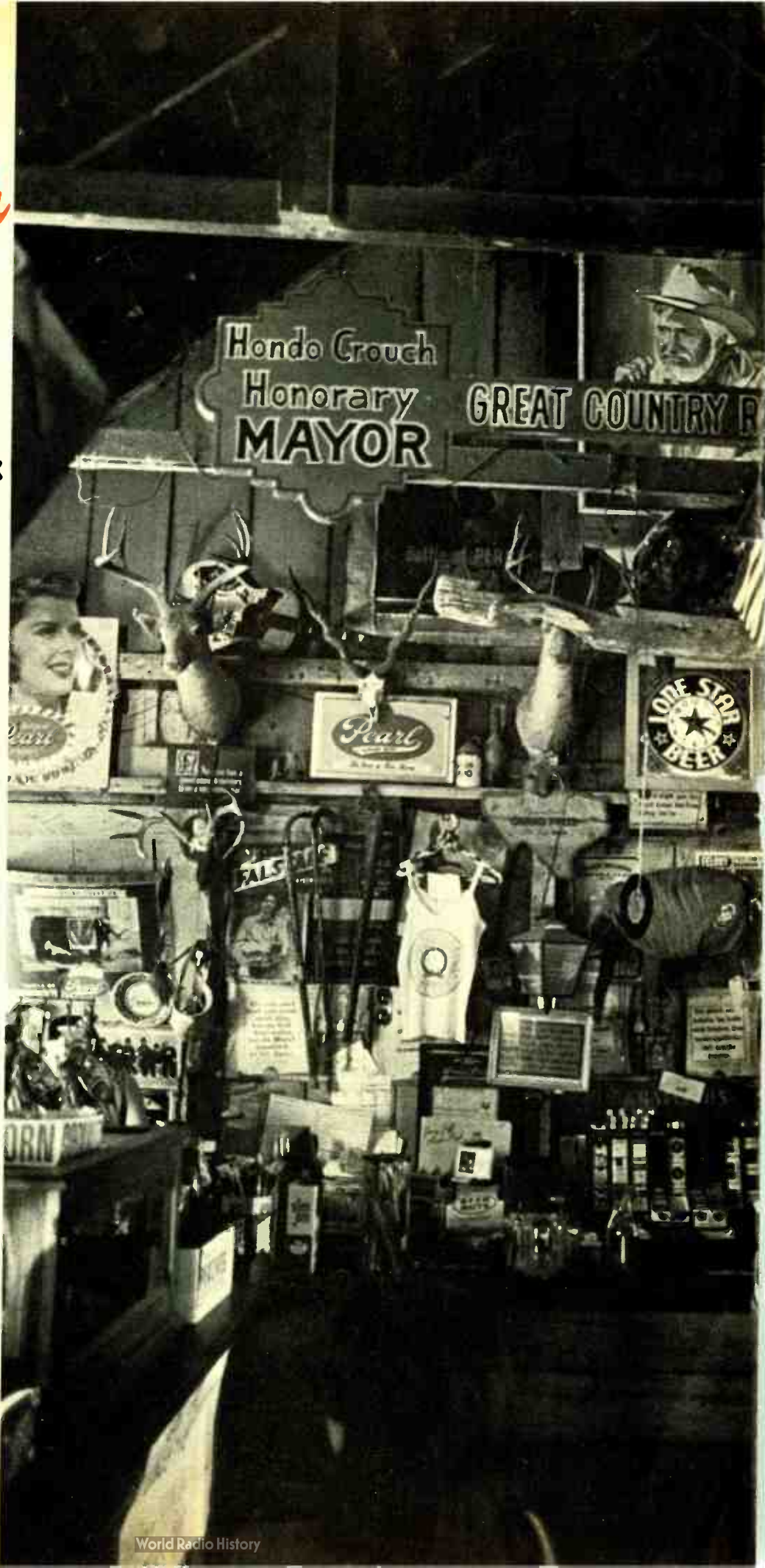
BY LUCKY LENNOX



Back in 1849, infamy for Albert Luckenbach was already guaranteed, at least, as far as folks in the Texas hill country between Stonewall and Fredricksburg were concerned. They all knew the town of Albert, just south of Hye, was named in his honor, and were further impressed by the fact the small trading post opened by his wife's family some ten miles from Fredricksburg bore his last name. While little is known about the ensuing history of Albert, it is recorded that for the next 122 years, Luckenbach served as a kind of rural 7-11 store for ranchers and farmers nearby, providing them with essential supplies, good conversation and a cool spot to rest.

It still isn't much to look at—there's a general store, a few storage sheds, a dancehall and a couple his n' her sets of out-houses—but thanks to an entrepreneur named Hondo Crouch and a few country musicians like Jerry Jeff Walker,

The bar in Ol' Luckenbach (right) and bits of graffiti wisdom (above).





Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, the tiny (pop. 3) hamlet with Albert Luckenbach's family name has become sort of a spiritual holy center for both authentic and aspiring Texans, a tourist attraction the equal of the Astrodome or the Snake Farm on IH-35.

Luckenbach's rebirth began six years ago when Crouch, an ageless old coot with a propensity for weaving tall tales, pooled his money with a younger coot named Guich Kooch and a lady rancher named Cathy Morgan and bought the town. Crouch gradually assumed the titles of Mayor and Chief Imagineer and held court in the town, attracting a sizeable audience by telling whopper stories, reciting poems about Luckenbach's peculiar lifestyle (the potato chip man's weekly delivery is a big event) and occasionally singing an impassioned Mexican romantic ballad in impeccable
(Continued on page 63)

Picking seems to be the major fun pastime (above and right), but for thrills there's the county fair (top).

Records

ANNOUNCING : As part of Country Music Magazine's continuing effort to bring our loyal readers the very best purchasing bargains, I am proud to announce a brand new price policy for our mail order record department. Starting this issue, we are reducing our prices on current major label records and tapes by as much as 30% off retail list prices. Until further notice, you can buy any major label single record in this review for only \$4.98, any tape for only \$5.98. In addition, from time to time, we will be featuring catalogs and single

page offers of current albums. We will continue to offer these great low prices there too. In some cases we will reduce prices even more. Look for these great bargains every month and take advantage of the savings. Start now by using the ORDER BLANK on page 40 to get the new releases in this November Record Review. It's our way of saying thanks for reading Country Music Magazine.

JACK KILLION
Publisher

Chet Atkins

Me And My Guitar

RCA APL1-2405 \$4.98 (List \$6.98)

APS1-2405 (tape) \$5.98 (List \$7.98)

Star Rating: ★★

Reviewing Chet's albums isn't easy. His consistent virtuosity, with every note in

place and an impeccable sense of touch and timing is beyond reproach. And though he's comfortable, as always, in all musical styles, this is a curse as well as a blessing. As much as I hate to admit it, many of Chet's albums, including *Me And My Guitar* opt for a pat formula of a few bouncy

Travis-style numbers balanced by "legitimate" pop and classically oriented pieces, a formula that's becoming a bit stiff.

This kind of approach is far too safe for one with the innovative ability of a Chet Atkins. Only a few of the tunes really have any of the guts that characterizes his finest work, with none of the dynamics of Superpickers nor the unaffected informality of his collaboration albums with Hank Snow, Merle Travis and Les Paul. Surely he can cut things more adventurous than this totally safe set, much of which resembles nothing less than elevator Muzak.

A few tracks do stand out, particularly Bobby Braddock's after-hours *West Memphis Serenade*, Jerry Reed's *Struttin'*, the Travisque *Cascade*, and *David's Dance*, an ethereal original by another Nashville guitar legend, Odell Martin. Equally pleasant is his dubbing of electric and classical guitar on the Cole Porter standard *You're So Nice to Come Home To*.

Chet's not diminished an iota as the greatest instrumentalist to emerge from country music, but he can do far better than this. Don't misunderstand, there's nary a bad note to be heard here, but not many inspiring ones, either.

RICH KIENZLE

Conway Twitty

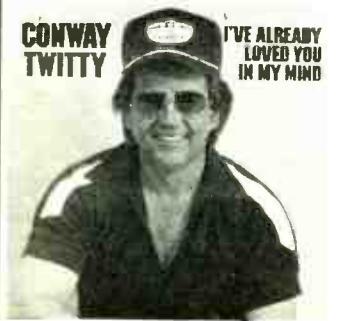
I've Already Loved You In My Mind

MCA MCA-2293 \$4.98 (List \$6.98)

MCAT-2293 (Tape) \$5.98 (List \$7.98)

Star Rating: ★★★

Though spiced up perhaps a little more than usual, this is basically a typical Conway Twitty album; it ignores trends and puts together ten tracks of



mainstream Nashville C&W in the familiar mold. In other words, he is not about to go Outlaw on us; but then, he's doing fine as is, so why should he?

The variations are minor. *Judge of Hearts* is a rockabilly ballad of the type he's been doing since the beginning of his career; *Talkin' 'Bout You* has a bigger beat; *I'm Used to Losing You* is as much a showcase for the John Hughey steel style as it is for Conway; *The Reason*



Why I'm Here offers some interesting interpretations of the Johnny Cash beat; *My First Country Song* relies on touches of swing, right down to quoting the fiddle line from *Faded Love*; *Leona* leans toward old-timey instrumentation and mountain harmonies. But my own favorite is *Come See About Me*, as fine a down-and-out song as I've heard re-



cently. Like all but two selections here, Conway wrote it.

In sum, a few might find it a bit *too* samey, but what all these cuts have in common is the patented drawn-out Conway Twitty singing. For most, that alone is enough, because Conway represents the very pinnacle of mainstream Nashville C&W.

JOHN MORTHLAND



Various Artists

The Nashville Bar Association
Chimer NBA 10011 \$6.98

8TK NBA 10011 (tape) \$7.98
(available on page 38)

Star Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

No wonder steel players are such a clanish lot. The few who've reached the top spent years learning a difficult instrument only to find themselves still sidemen, playing what and when they're told in order to survive. A few cut solo albums, but even these had their drawbacks—those that don't rehash Nashville hits are either loaded with easy listening schlock or consist of pointless jam sessions, hardly the way to bring the steel to a wider audience.

The Nashville Bar Association, a loose alliance of Buddy Emmons, the master of modern pedal steel; John Hughey of Conway Twitty's organization and Nashville

studio stalwarts Jimmy Crawford, Russ Hicks and Sonny Garrish avoided all those pitfalls to create a true pedal steel orchestra, relying on formal arrangements that reflect the daring experimental attitudes of all concerned (the overdubs alone must have taken months!) Massed steel guitars play against massed dobros; everyone plays duets with each other and weaves individual solos throughout and except for a rhythm section and occasional trumpet, the horn and string sections are mimicked by the steels. The material is varied (though I could have done without the voices on some numbers) and spotlights the pickers nicely.

Not one of the ten songs are stiff. Outstanding are *Devil's Dream*, the old fiddle tune with its difficult group ensemble work, Emmons's *Horn on The Cob*, a complex



rocker, the unbelievable *Ghost Riders in The Sky*, and the soaring leads of *The Big Hurt*. Even NBC's *Mystery Movie Theme* is here, sounding better than it ever did leading into *Columbo* or *McCloud*.

I've always felt that in the right hands the pedal steel could be Nashville's answer to the Moog synthesizer; this record proves my point ten times over.

RICH KIENZLE

Jim Ed Brown & Helen Cornelius

Born Believer

RCA APL1-2399 \$4.98 (List \$6.98)

APS1-2399 (Tape) \$5.98 (List \$7.98)

Star Rating: ★ ★ ★

Musically speaking, Helen Cornelius is the best thing that ever happened to Jim Ed Brown. Their flawless vocal duos are a winning combination, with Helen's fragile,

trebly delivery fitting over Jim Ed's self-assured low-register ramblings like a glove.

Though their duets lack the hard-hitting soulfulness of George's and Tammy's or the raw excitement of those of Johnny Duncan and Janie Fricke, Jim Ed and Helen aim for a more low-key smoothness and perfection, and they seldom miss. Whether they're singing a sad song like *If It Ain't Love By Now*, or a happy



one like *Born Believer*, it comes out sounding polished,

assured and sugary—often a clear triumph of vocal delivery over lyric content.

In the songs on *Born Believer*, Jim Ed and Helen take on the role of lovers, at times comforting each other, and at others, exchanging laments. And at times the album becomes a bit syrupy and sentimental, but throughout *Born Believer*, the singing remains immaculate, thoroughly professional and highly pleasing.

BOB ALLEN

How We Rate The Albums: 5 Stars...Album of the Month 4 Stars...Excellent 3 Stars...Very Good
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Records

Billy "Crash" Craddock

Live!
 ABC DO-2082 \$4.98 (List \$5.98)
 8-2082 (Tape) \$5.98 (List \$6.98)

Star Rating: ★★★★★

Crash" Craddock represents the best of several worlds. Besides his record of solid country hits, he has the macho voice and sex appeal of a Twitty or Rich and a rockabilly background that gives his onstage guitarhumping real authority. He kids with the audience, stretching things out if the spirit moves him. Now his live wildness has been captured on disc, and the result is pure success.

Most of the material consists of all-stops-out rockers, including a few that even Allman/Tucker/Daniels fans could clutch to their T-shirted bosoms, particularly Chuck



Berry's *Promised Land* and *Ruby Baby*, the old Dion hit, as well as the *Whole Lotta Shakin'/Blue Suede Shoes* medley. Though the *Rock & Roll Medley*, covering everything from *Blueberry Hill* to *Your Mama Don't Dance* has become a ubiquitous, and often half-baked part of many country singer's shows, Craddock's comes off well because of his command of the material. This same spirit contributed to the success of *Rub It In*, his hit of a year or so ago that's also on *Live!*, along with *Easy As Pie*, *Broken Down In Tiny Pieces* and *Walk Softly*. The album is only marred when someone's bad judgement prompted an insert of the studio-cut *A Tear Fell* into the middle of side two, lousing up the live continuity.

RICH KIENZLE

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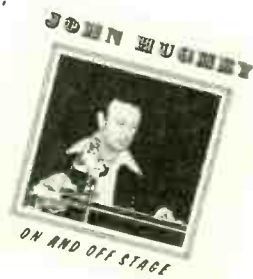


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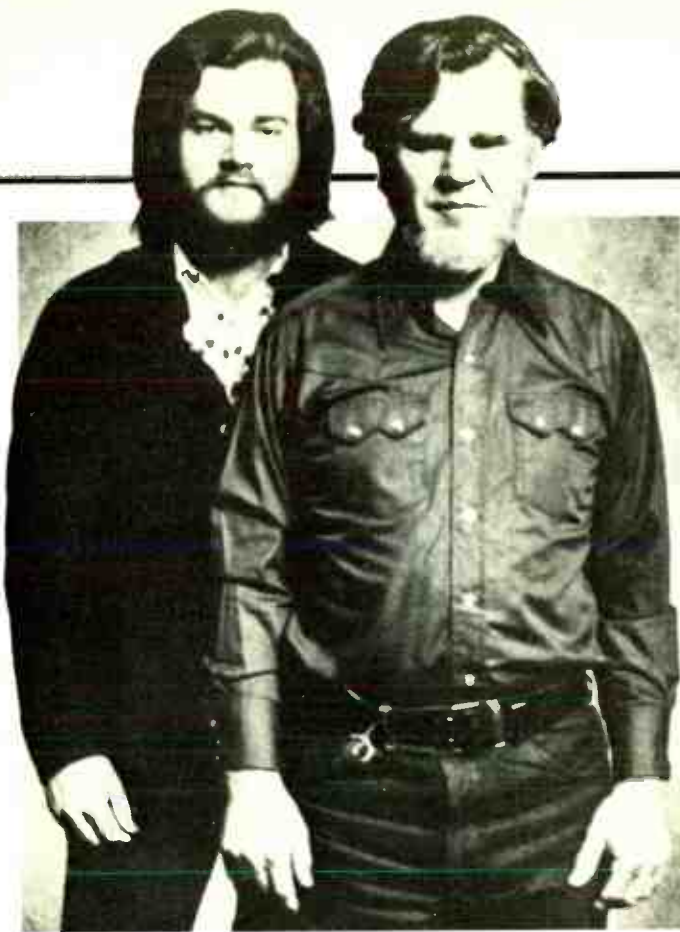
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Doc & Merle Watson

Lonesome Road
 UA-LA 725-G \$4.98 (List \$6.98)
 LA 725-H (Tape) \$5.98 (List \$7.98)

Star Rating: ★★

I'll never forget the day I stood in my local record shop transfixed by machine-gun guitar licks cascading from the store's speakers. Who was it, I wondered. My friend Fran, the manager, handed me the sleeve of **Doc Watson on Stage** and in a flash I handed him my last ten spot, got my change and headed home with my discovery. Over the years I wore out two copies of the record as I tried to emulate Doc's instrumental brilliance on my lowly Yamaha, but soon discovered that I might as well have been trying to outwrite

Hank Williams. In fact, I wasn't bothered a bit, though some purists griped, when Doc moved from Vanguard to UA and began recording regularly with a full band.

All this is by way of saying that I have mixed emotions about *Lonesome Road*, an unbelievably lethargic set compared to Doc's best work. On the other hand the material, ranging from the old jug band standard *Minglewood Blues*, the traditional *Lonesome Road*, and Jimmie Rodgers' - *Mean Mama Blues* to Bob McDill's *I Recall A Gypsy Woman* and Ernest Tubb's *I Ain't Goin' Honky Tonkin' Anymore* is excellent. The execution is another matter. The band simply runs through the changes, competently, but routinely. And aside from his peerless picking on *Creole Belle* and the Delmores' *Blue Railroad Train*, Doc hardly plays a lick, concentrating on vocals and leaving most of the leads to Merle's dobro and Duane Allman-influenced slide guitar (which is excellent). But the overall sound is thinner than when Doc and Merle recorded alone, with none of the fire of his best Vanguard and UA work. RICH KIENZLE



Vern Gosdin

Till The End
 Elektra 7E-1112 \$4.98 (List \$6.98)
 E8-1112 (Tape) \$5.98 (List \$7.98)

Star Rating: ★★★★★

One of the most exciting new male vocalists to come into prominence in the past year or so with a solid string of hit singles (all of them are on this album) is Vern Gosdin.

Songs like *Hangin' On, Yesterday's Gone, The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face*, and the title song (written by his wife, Cathy) hint at all the soul-shaking extremes encountered in our emotional involvements with each other. Gosdin, with his low-key vocal delivery, can plumb the depths of a song and

pull out more pathos than many of the most fervent practitioners of high-octave vocal overkill can deliver in a whole album.

VERN GOSDIN
TILL THE END



There is ample vocal assistance and embellishment on *Till The End* from both Emmylou Harris and Janie Fricke. Gary S. Paxton, the producer, can be commended for coming up with the distinctive, unusual arrangements that make most Vern Gosdin cuts almost instantly recognizable.

BOB ALLEN

Tom Bresh

Kicked Back
 ABC Dot DO-2084 \$4.98 (List \$6.98)
 8-2084 (Tape) \$5.98 (List \$7.98)

Star Rating: ★★★

Tom Bresh has one of those deep, husky-raspy, up-north type baritones, full of clear enunciations. He sounds a bit like Gordon Lightfoot with maybe just a touch of Kenny Rogers thrown in, but that's not really hitting the nail on the head either... Suffice to say his vocal style is refreshing, with a slight folksiness to it that hints of log cabins, clear mountain mornings, pancakes for breakfast and all sorts of other symbolic wholesomeness. It's also very nice to listen to.

Bresh's vocal clarity and his wide range of material, which includes Paul and Linda McCartney's *Heart Of The Country*, and Sterling Whipple's *That Old Cold Shoulder* (featuring one of Whipple's usual O'Henry type surprise endings), along with five original songs, suggest that we

have here the makings of a very successful pop artist who, with the right breaks, could have a significant impact beyond the country field.

Bresh's own material, as he approaches standard topics



like love (won, lost, real, imagined or merely anticipated) with candor and directness, offer a refreshing change from the standard Nashville formulas.

Tom Bresh does not fall easily into discernible country music categories, but what he does, he does very well indeed. He is a fine singer, well worth a listen.

BOB ALLEN

Records

Roger Miller

Off The Wall
Windsong BHL-1-2337 \$4.98
(List \$6.98)
BHF-1-2337 (Tape) \$5.98
(\$7.95 List)

Star Rating: ★★½

Roger Miller doesn't release albums very often anymore. And since he did drop out almost entirely there for a while, which indicates a clear breakoff point, I imagine he doesn't fancy his more recent work being compared to the stuff that made him famous in the mid-Sixties. But comparisons are pretty hard to avoid—*Baby Me Baby*, *Some People Make It* and *Ain't Gonna Work No More*, to name the three most obvious choices, all conjure up memories of songs like *King of the Road* and *Atta Boy Girl*. They are very similar, stylistically, but the new ones just don't measure up. They don't have that brilliant wordplay, those sharp turns of phrase, the unpredictable arrangements and singing.

Still, there are three more excellent songs here that do make it all the way. *There's Nobody Like You* conveys some fairly



complex ideas and emotions with fairly simple language, which has always been one of Miller's special gifts. *Dark Side of the Moon* is a spectacular and moving vocal performance. And *Roll Away* has all the characteristics (musically and lyrically) of a spiritual except that it doesn't mention any deities.

There's another utterly conventional song here (*Oklahoma Woman*) that someone else might pick up on; it sounds like it could be a hit, maybe

even for Roger, though it is not particularly representative of his direction on this album. But the overall tone might inadvertently be set by Miller's tribute song: "I think Stephen Foster was ahead of his time/ That's all I got to say." Which may well be true, but it's too bad Roger himself doesn't have more to say, because his wild imagination is welcome now more than ever, and on this album he has fought himself to a draw.

JOHN MORTHLAND

Joe Venuti/Curley Chalker/ Jethro Burns/Eldon Shamblin

'S Wonderful
Flying Fish FF-035 \$4.98 (List \$6.98)

(No Tape Available)

Star Rating: ★★★★★

The songs on this record really aren't country unless you consider Duke Ellington and George Gershwin to be members in good standing of the Nashville Songwriters Association, but that's really not the point. It's the musicians who count. It was Joe Venuti's jazz fiddle in the twenties that begat the style of Jesse Ashlock in the thirties and on up to Johnny Gimble today. Eldon Shamblin pioneered his complex rhythm guitar style with the Texas Playboys.

The virtuosity here is frightening, with few of the stock licks that render such projects, like the recent Texas Playboy reunion album, boring. Now in



his seventies, Venuti rips off one complex solo after another, particularly on *Limehouse Blues*. then as the song stumbles to an unexpected end asks, amid much laughter, "Why the hell did we end it that way?" *C Jam Blues*, 'S Wonderful and the churning version of *Caravan* are all firey. Though the treatments of *Satin Doll*, *Summertime* and *Sophisticated Lady* are masterful, they don't change my opinion that such songs are the domain of cocktail pianists.

'S Wonderful obviously wasn't an attempt to cash in on the Playboys/Asleep At The Wheel audience, but a first class effort by three master country instrumentalists jamming with a jazz legend. A good time was had by all.

RICH KIENZLE

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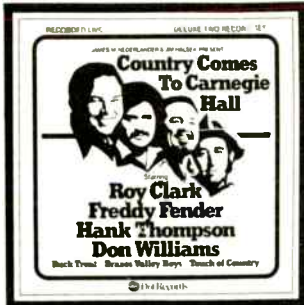
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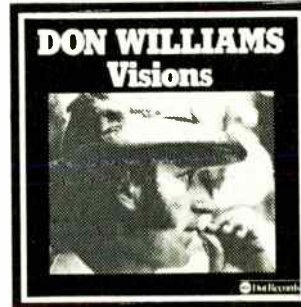
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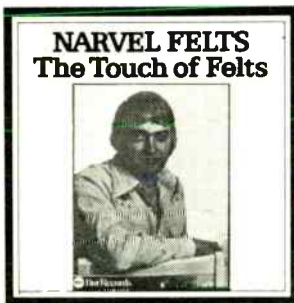
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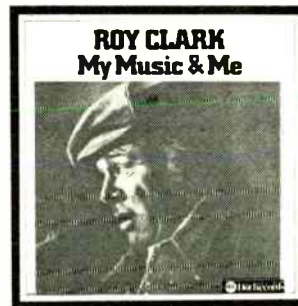
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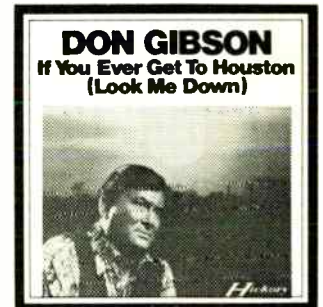
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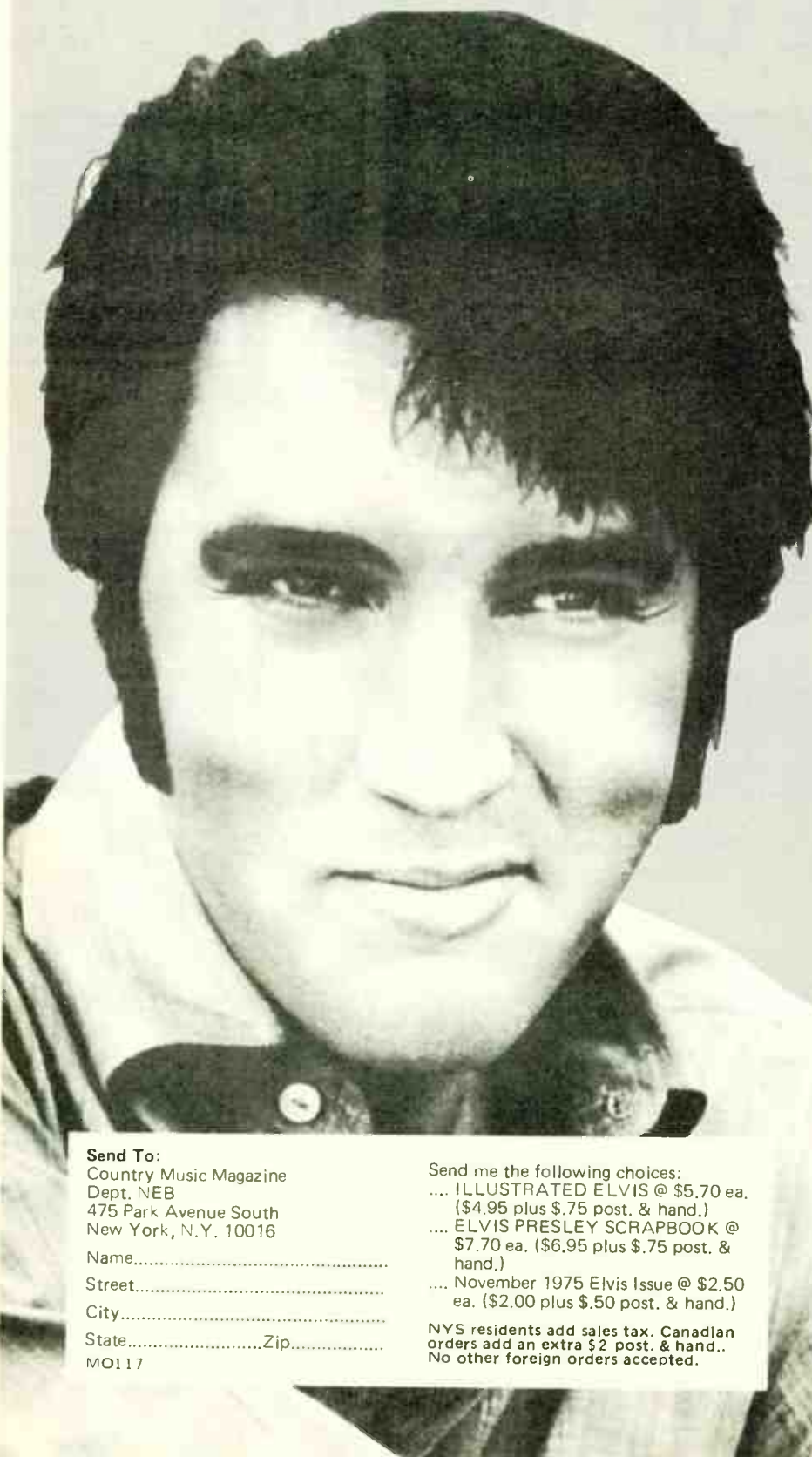
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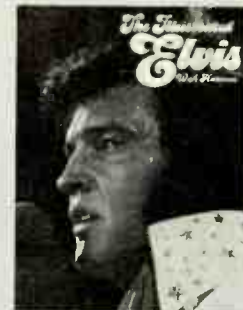
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by Hans Fantel

AUDIO

Kit Kraft for Kountry Kousins

Short of outright larceny, one of the cheapest ways to acquire a sound system is to build it from a kit. Labor is expensive these days, so you can save a neat percentage—anywhere from 25 to 30%—on the cost of stereo equipment if you do your own assembly work. These savings may enable you to get equipment of a quality that would otherwise be beyond your budget. And aside from saving money, there's the satisfaction of having built your stereo rig with your own hands—not to mention all the fuss and admiration from your friends and relatives when you give them an earful of

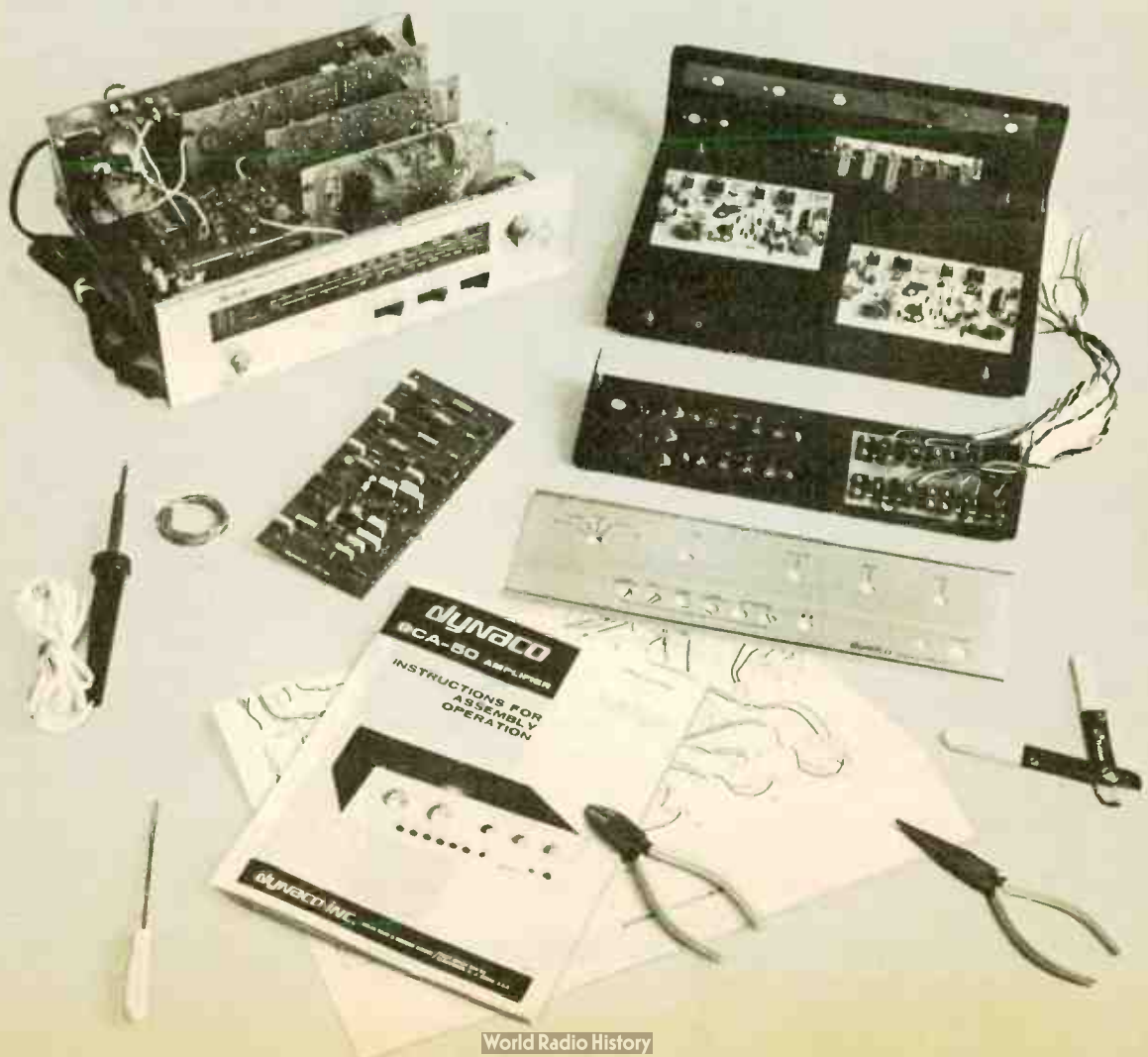
your homemade sound system.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was helping my friend Jim Chapman, who also works for *Country Music*, put together a new sound rig from kits. Jim had never done any kind of electronic assembly before, but he was pretty good at building ship models. So he knew he had some basic manual skill, and the idea of saving about \$150 to \$200 on his new stereo system was a pretty strong incentive to spend about twenty hours at the workbench.

Jim had picked two top-quality kits from Dynaco. One was the SCA-50 stereo

amplifier (\$149), which delivers 25 ultra-clean watts per channel and keeps distortion down to an inaudible 0.5 percent. Because Jim's favorite FM station is located nearly 70 miles from where he lives, he had to get a highly sensitive tuner to pull in a clean-sounding signal. The obvious choice was the Dynaco AF/6 (\$199) which matches the amplifier in looks and has a sensitivity of 1.75 microvolts among other excellent specs.

When Jim opened the package with the two kits, his first reaction was "Omgigosh!" But it didn't take him long to get things sorted out, especially since the



If you can wire up a desk lamp, you'll have no trouble with a hi-fi kit.

difficult parts were already pre-assembled on circuit boards and the main job was just soldering the connecting wires. Since Jim had never done any soldering before, I suggested a little practice first. We hammered some finishing nails into a board, and Jim was soldering wires to the nail heads. It took him about fifteen minutes to get the knack, and from then on all went smoothly.

In recent years, kit building has become a lot easier than it used to be. In the early days of high fidelity, you had to be fairly familiar with the basic anatomy of amplifiers and tuners if you wanted to build

them yourself. By contrast, most kits sold today are so well planned that even if you've never held a soldering iron, chances are you will be able to put any component together without mishap. All possible doubt about what goes where has been removed, and on many kits even the connecting cables are color-coded and pre-cut to the right length. And if you manage to make a mistake despite all this, a self-checking routine that is part of your instructions will help you spot and fix your error. Virtually nothing is left to chance.

Should you take a crack at kit building? Your odds for success and satisfaction

depend mainly on what kind of person you are. It's not so much a matter of skill, for there is nothing mechanically tricky about putting together a kit. If you are handy enough to wire up a desk lamp, you'll have no trouble with a hi-fi kit. What's more important is your personality and temperament. If you have never before built a kit, ask yourself these three questions: 1. Do I like working with my hands? 2. Do I have the patience to sit still for a couple of hours, for several evenings, slowly assembling small parts in a step-by-step procedure? 3. Do I have a quiet, well-lighted place to work where I will be free from distractions? If your answer to each of these questions is an honest, yes, consider yourself a prime prospect for kits.

Incidentally, you don't have to think of kit-building as a chore. For many audio fans it has become a hobby in itself. After completing their own kits they found that they really enjoyed the fun and relaxation of disciplined manual work and started building kits (sometimes at a neat profit) for their less venturesome friends. Neither do you have to lock yourself up in grim solitude to do the job. Jim, for example, had his kids help him—identifying the pieces and handing them to him as he wielded his soldering iron to link them up. That way, he turned the task into a family project that proved educational for his youngsters, taught them systematic work habits, and was a lot of fun besides. And you should have seen them at that thrilling moment when the metal contraption they had been so laboriously piecing together finally lit up and burst out in song!

Just a few dollars worth of tools is all you need to assemble an audio kit. A pencil-type soldering iron, some rosin-core solder, long-nose and side-cutting pliers, and a screwdriver is all that's necessary. But be sure you use rosin-core solder rather than acid-core solder! Otherwise all the joints will come apart again.

Dynaco and Heath are the two leading companies making high-quality audio kits, and between them they offer equipment in every price range, from simple stereo amplifiers rated at 15 watts per channel (Heathkit AA-1219, \$110) to Dynaco's juggernaut Stereo 400 power amplifier, which pumps out a staggering 200 watts per channel and sells for \$499. Heathkit also offers complete stereo receivers (tuners and amplifiers combined) with prices starting at \$190 for the AR-1219.

Jim already owned a good pair of speakers and a turntable, so when we finished the amp and the tuner, we hooked them up and the whole rig was complete and sounded great the first time out. It put Linda Ronstadt right in the room with us. We liked that.

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MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS SPECIAL

In this, our Annual Pickers' issue, we salute the musicians who have helped make country music not only a great industry, but a great American art form. But, this year, we go a step further by also saluting the instruments which, in the hands of great pickers and singers, wrought permanent changes in country music.

Our pickers' salute starts on the next page with an article on Benny Martin. Because he doesn't seek publicity, you may not have heard of Benny. But catch his act once and you'll know why we call him the world's greatest unknown fiddler. He is one of the greatest you'll ever hear. We heard him at a bluegrass festival, where he brought a New York crowd roaring to its feet three times. Unlike too many country fiddlers, he's so at home in the high positions of that instrument that you'd think he was born there. And while so many country fiddlers merely dazzle you with speed, at the expense of tone, intonation and everything else, Benny not only retains excellent tone, he makes that fiddle sound like a sensuous, soulful being. Playing fast or slow, he gets a full toned, poignant quality that will tear your heart out. No other fiddler we've heard sounds quite like him. Welcome, Benny, to the ranks of the recognized greats.

Our instrument story starts on page 48 with the Gibson J-200 guitar, which was favored by many country singers of the 1940's and 50's, especially Singing Cowboys, and a Vega Banjo that typifies those found in old-time string bands. Page 49 shows the solid-body guitar made for Merle Travis by Paul Bigsby. It started a revolution in guitar design.

The twin fiddles on page 50 symbolize the early childhood of modern country music, which was born with a fiddle recording in the early 1920's. With the fiddles, there's a dobro like the one popularized by old Jimmie Rodgers himself, while on the facing page you'll see Fender's version of the lap steel guitar, which largely replaced the dobro, only to be replaced in turn by the pedal steel, like the Sho-Bud shown. Then there's a twin to the Gibson Mastertone banjo used by Earl Scruggs.

On page 52 is a pair of Martin guitars like those toted by country performers of yesterday and today. On page 53 is a trio of country mandolins. Then, there's the grand daddy of country solo guitars—the Gibson L-5. Maybelle Carter used one.

We are indebted to the Country Music Hall of Fame for lending us the instruments on pages 48 and 49, to Bill Kenner for lending us the Gibson F-5 mandolin, Charles Hardiman for lending us the Martin D-45 guitar, Sho-Bud for loan of the pedal steel, Nashville's Old Time Picking Parlör for lending us the Mastertone banjo and George Gruhn, Nashville instrument dealer, for loan of all other instruments.

Last, but not least in this special section, pages 56 and 57 give you the stories on four of Nashville's best young pickers. We chose them after quizzing people in the know around Nashville.

So that's it for this year's pickers' section. We hope you like reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

ARTHUR J. MAHER
EDITOR



The Greatest Unknown Fiddle Player In The World



Sure, you've heard of Vassar Clements and Johnny Gimble, but Benny Martin? If you haven't heard of Benny, it's about time you did.

by **DOUGLAS B. GREEN**

There is a naive, intense quality about fledgeling professionals, a youthful optimism that assumes the best is not only yet to come, but, indeed, is just around the corner. Age and experience usually temper this exuberance with a certain professional reserve, a psychological withdrawal from the chronic ups and downs of a professional musician's life.

Not so with Benny Martin. Despite a career spanning three decades, having been on and off the Grand Ole Opry twice; despite a long dry spell after cutting records for three major labels; despite long problems with the bottle and with his health, "Big Tige" is as eager to play and as optimistic as any twenty year-old. "Somebody, somewhere, whether it's me or somebody else, is going to hit big with the fiddle," says Benny, "I really believe that. I believe there is going to be a superstar with the fiddle."

He says this with an infectious, out-front, almost vulnerable openness; a touch of ego without coyness, an enthusiasm that's refreshing in a town of hardened professionals.

Funny thing is, despite Benny's impressive credentials and his infectious optimism, he is one of the greatest unknown musicians in America today. Oh, he still has a few fans from his salad days on the Grand Ole Opry, and bluegrass devotees are well aware of his stints with Bill Monroe and with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs—especially his recordings with Lester and Earl, which are simply magnificent. The instrumentals are virtuoso displays which have helped set the style of bluegrass fiddling, while the breaks on the songs display a sensitivity, a depth of expression and feeling and a richness of tone rare indeed, especially in bluegrass, which is dominated by aggressive, athletic musicianship.

There are those who are aware of Benny Martin, those who remember him, and those who revere him, holding him in considerable awe. When you come down to it, though, few of today's country music fans have ever heard of one of the best country fiddlers who ever lived, even in an age where other fiddlers like Johnny Gimble can record for major record labels and win awards as Instrumentalist of the Year, and others, like Vassar Clements and Buddy Spicher, become familiar names, recording for big labels and, in the case of Vassar, touring with a country rock band. The reasons for this are both subtle and obvious; like Benny Martin himself, an enigma.

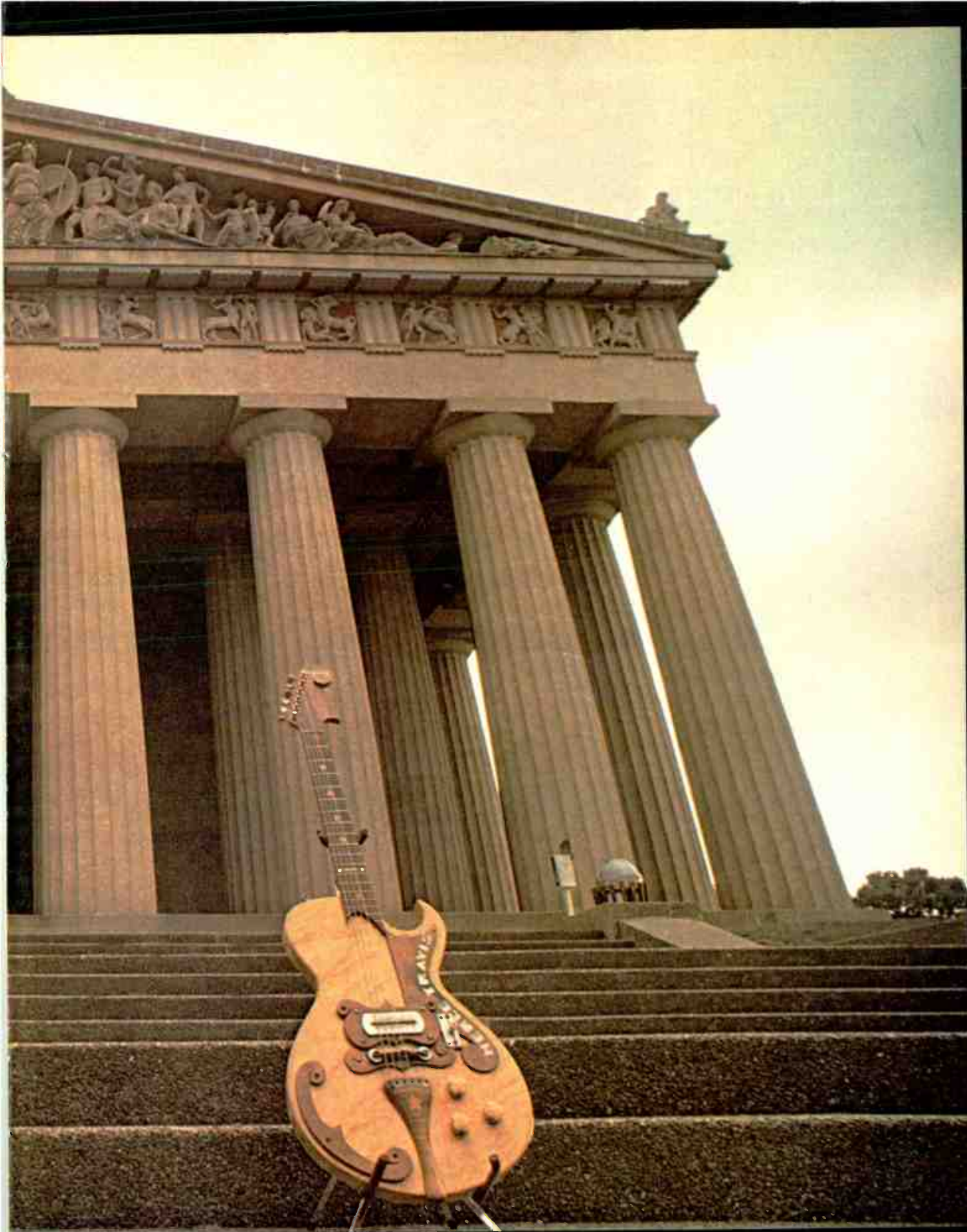
(Continued on page 62)



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS SPECIAL

COUNTRY'S M.I.I.I.*

World Radio History



Here at Nashville's Parthenon we assembled three of the most important instruments in country music, compliments of the Country Music Hall of Fame. The Gibson SJ-200 guitar (left) was the guitar most closely associated with country during the 1940s and 50s, riding west from the Singing Cowboys to the Grand Ole Opry. This SJ-200, the first one made, was designed by Ray Whitley in 1938. Stringbean's 1920 Vega Tu-Ba-Phone banjo No. 7 (center) is a classic old-time banjo, while Merle Travis' solid body electric guitar (right), made in 1947 by Paul Bigsby, revolutionized the electric guitar.

From fiddle to pedal steel,
country music
evolved into the 1970s . . .





From the early sounds of the country fiddle (facing page), country evolved with the help of the dobro (above, left), variation of the Hawaiian guitar by the Dopera Brothers, the lap steel guitar (this one's a Fender, center), which replaced the dobro with its electrified simplicity, to the pedal steel guitar (left), represented here by the Shot Jackson-Buddy Emmons creation, the Sho-Bud Steel. The Gibson Mastertone banjo (right) came into its own as a lead instrument in the talented hands of Earl Scruggs, who moved the banjo into the forefront of country music.

The Martin 000-45 and its younger brother, the classic D-45, were the country guitars for a generation of musicians . . .





The classic country guitar, a Martin D-45 (facing page, right). This one belonged to Charlie Monroe. The earlier 000-45 (facing page, left) found favor with the likes of Jimmie Rodgers, Ernest Tubb and Gene Autry. Mandolins have long been a staple of country, from the old-time Gibson F-4 (above, right) to the Gibson F-7 (center) to the bluegrass Gibson F-5 (left). Bill Monroe used first an F-7, then an F-5. Mother Maybelle Carter used an archtop Gibson L-5 guitar (right) in the early 1920s, while making the guitar into a country solo instrument.



Picker's Progress

by **BOB ALLEN**

In the fluid world of Nashville's session scene, pickers come and go. But here are four young session musicians who we think are going to be around for some time—they've already started making waves. These men are the cream of the new crop—our choices for the four best up-and-coming pickers.

Randy Goodrum

Unlike many Nashville session pickers, 29-year-old Randy Goodrum had extensive formal training on his instrument, the piano, before coming to Nashville. Growing up in Hot Springs, Ark., he studied piano for a number of years and developed an interest in improvisational jazz and blues playing.

"After the army, I sort of hung around Little Rock and began mailing my original tunes out to publishers, trying

to get something recorded," Randy recalls. "I was all set to move to L.A. when, at the last minute, this friend of mine in Nashville who ran a jingle company became interested in my tunes. So in 1973 I came to Nashville as a writer. I began



Tommy Jones

One of the best of Nashville's as-of-yet unknown guitar prodigies is Tommy Jones. Originally from Florida, this 22-year-old picker has already put in a decade on the outskirts of Nashville.

At age 12, after moving to Nashville with his family, Tommy became a regular on *Country Music Holiday*, a local television presentation, and later moved on to *The Noon Show*, another weekly television production where he appeared for three years. This guitarist has also been featured on *Hee-Haw*, *The Porter Wagoner Show* and *That Good Ole Nashville Music*.

Over the years, Tommy's local television exposure has helped to put him in touch

with some of the right people. One of them was Chet Atkins, who helped him get his first recording contract with Ovation Records.

"I've known Chet for seven or eight years," says Tommy. "We're real good friends. We sit around once or twice a week and pick. He's helped me a lot."

Tommy is hard-put to describe his own style except to say, "It's a little different, but you can hear some other people in it. Everybody's going to sound a little bit like somebody else."

Black Mountain Rag.

Tommy's first single on Ovation, was released about six years ago and it garnered a considerable amount of air-play. An album was also released on Ovation. Since then Tommy's had two more single releases on October Records, *Dixie Humming Bird*, and *Pick It, Tommy Jones*. A second album is on the way.

Tommy, who plays an Aria Pro II and also a Fiascal-Haile classical guitar ("custom-made by a man up in Kentucky") feels that Nashville offers an excellent atmosphere for developing guitarists to trade their licks and expertise: "There's just a lot of good players to learn from. It's a good place. I think a player can learn just about anything here."

doing jingle sessions, and right away I loved it. I felt I could contribute something to the scene here."

Shortly after his arrival in Nashville, Randy began doing road work with Roy Orbison and Jerry Reed, and before long was also appearing on their recording sessions. "Jerry Reed's sessions are some of the best I've ever worked," says Randy. "He's one of the most unbelievable geniuses I've ever met."

Since then, Randy has played sessions for Tanya Tucker, Perry Como, Dave Loggins, Gary Paxton, Harry Neilson, Jerry Wallace, Johnny Tillotson and with Chet Atkins and Les Paul on the Grammy Award-winning *Chester and Lester*.

"I grew up as an improviser," he adds, "and often that's what a session is like. You have to play things off the

top of your head. You have to come up with a riff or a fill that hopefully is new and hasn't been done before.

In the meantime, Randy has also enjoyed some success as a songwriter. His composition, *Sad To Belong* was a recent hit single for England Dan and John Ford Coley. He and Jerry Reed also collaborated on a tune recently recorded by Floyd Cramer. Randy now has his own artist contract with Springfield Records, and a single, *Durango*, has been released.

"To me session playing is a respectable business," says Randy.

"You're paid well, but you have to earn your money. You have to know your instrument inside-out, in every key, and you have to accept the pressures and learn to live with it."



Steve Gibson with ace picker Grady Martin

Steve Gibson

At the ripe old age of 25, guitarist Steve Gibson, who arrived in Nashville a little over five years ago from his home town of Peoria, Ill., has already made his mark as both a first-string session player and as a producer.

Steve's guitar work has graced the sessions of Olivia Newton-John, Mac Davis, Tanya Tucker, B.J. Thomas, Tammy Wynette, Ronnie Milsap, Dr. Hook, Lynn Anderson and Red Steagal. A fellow session man described Steve as "born to be an A-team session picker—

he just has the knack."

In the past year, Steve has made his advent as an independent producer. He has produced Lynn Anderson for Columbia Records, and he's recorded Gene Cotton for ABC.

"The way I got started producing was really pretty

simple," Steve explains. "I was the session leader at one of Gene Cotton's sessions, and at the last minute, he had problems with his producer. So we just sat down and said, 'Why don't we do it ourselves.'"

"It's hard for me to pinpoint my musical influences," says Steve. "But I grew up listening to country and traditional music, as well as the Beatles. Buddy Holly, I think, was my biggest single influence. He was really something different back then: a white singer with his own four-piece rhythm section."

Steve feels that one key to success he's found for session work is the ability to take to the sidelines and blend in with the surroundings. "You don't try to go in and impress them with your expertise," he explains. "Instead, you must be able to give up your own identity for each particular session and artist. You go in and listen and try to apply yourself in a manner that best fits the particular needs of that session."

Bob Gelotte

26-year-old Bob Gelotte, originally from the Boston area, first came to Nashville in July, 1974, with every intention of breaking into the business as a songwriter. Since then, he has come into his own as one of Music City's most promising session drummers. Within a year of his arrival, he began working the road with Dave Loggins and later toured with Chet Atkins and Gene Cotton. He's also done session work with Ray Griff, Shot Jackson and others.

"Even though I've been here for three years, Nashville is still a new town to me," says Bob. "It's very much a growing place. It's going through some creative growing pains right now, but the musical ideas here are getting more and more progressive all the time."

Gelotte has been drumming "since I was a kid." Back in Boston, he took lessons at an early age. Later he moved with his parents to the Baltimore-Washington area and cut his teeth working the local club scene in various rock bands.

Gelotte successfully made the

transition from rock drumming to country drumming, one that is very difficult for some. "It's a very different technique—more laid-back and subdued. The simplification that country music drumming is trademarked by is a very hard thing for some drummers to get used to.

"It's necessary to practice and experiment," adds Bob. "The more sessions I work, the more serious I become and the more I want to learn. I mostly try to keep my ears

open for new licks and new approaches to keep ahead of the game.

"When you're first starting out, development as a drummer means physical practice. But as you progress,

it becomes more like mental gymnastics: you're able to think out new approaches in your head."

"Mostly though, I'm still concentrating on studio work. I do have some other irons in the fire, but I have to be realistic. Most important to me right now is building up a good reputation as a picker. I think I have something to offer this town, and it, in turn, has a lot to offer me."

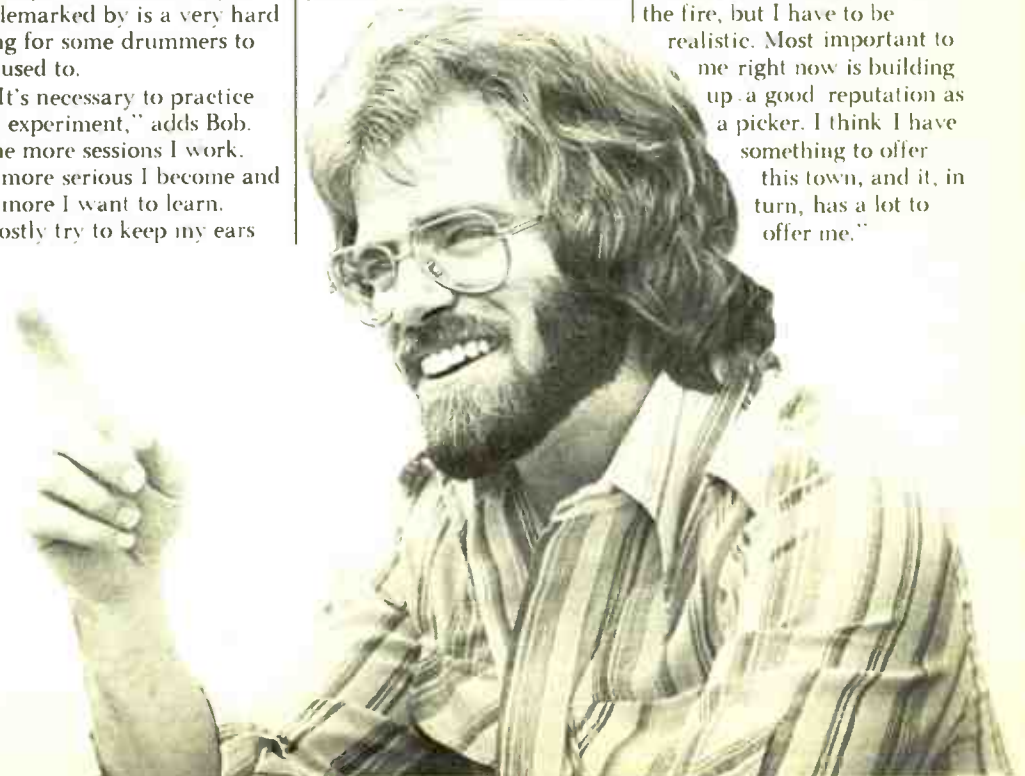


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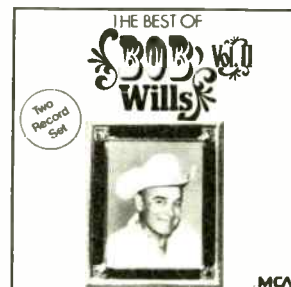
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MCA-411—If You Love Me, Let Me Know
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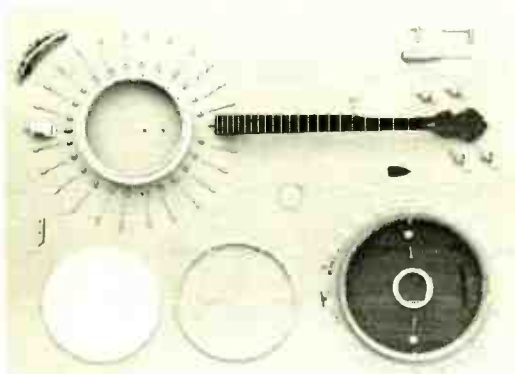
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MCA RECORDS

PICKERS

NEW PRODUCTS

by ARTHUR J. MAHER



Big-Time Banjo Building

You can save a lot of money by making your own musical instruments. But many, like the guitar, are not easy to make. Others are damn near impossible. But with relative ease, you can make a banjo, because that instrument can be assembled by almost anyone from a kit. The one shown here is from Saga Musical Instruments, P.O. Box 2841, San Francisco, Cal., 94080. Price is \$98 for an open-back model, \$129 for a resonator model. (A resonator can be added later to an open-back model.)

Everything in the kit is pre-shaped. You do the final sanding, finishing and assembly. The assembling is simplified by a tool kit provided and an 8-page instruction booklet. Manufacturer says you end up with a \$500 or \$600 banjo.

Yamaha's Jumbo

Yamaha's latest guitar is the Jumbo Folk (FG-375S), at \$330.95. The Jumbo Folk features rosewood sides, back and fingerboard; reshaped heel and recontoured neck and permanently lubricated machine heads with a high ratio to give easy and precise tuning. Yamaha Guitars, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, Ca.

Mandolin Madness

Guild is importing a new luxury-detailed mandolin in Florentine double-cut-away design. Called the Maderia M-300, it's got a natural spruce top, rosewood sides and back. Priced at \$230. For literature, write Guild Guitars, 225 W. Grand St. Elizabeth, N.J. 07202.



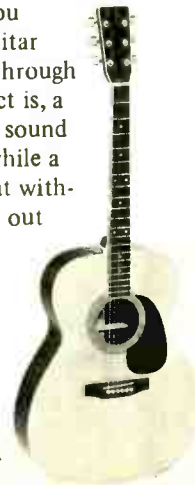
Sounds For Tired Ears

Putting a band together? Altec offers a new bunch of portable loudspeaker systems you might look at. Each speaker can handle 125 watts, and is designed to withstand rugged handling on the road. Several speakers are built with a new radial phase plug that enhances high frequency response — a critical factor in quality sound reinforcement. Styling of all units is attractive and modern.

The speakers are engineered for large concert performances, discos, nightclubs, etc., and sell for \$398 to \$698. Altec is located at 1515 South Manchester Ave., Anaheim, Calif. 92803.

New Studio Martin

It's surprising how few know that you need a different sound from your guitar if you play in a recording studio or through an amplification system. But the fact is, a thin-sounding guitar can be made to sound fuller by adjusting the electronics, while a full-sounding guitar that sounds great without amplification cannot be thinned out adequately. Hence, the need for arched-top guitars. But now Martin's coming out with the M-38 (\$1200), a flat-top with a thinner sound engineered for sound systems and recording. It's got rosewood back and sides, spruce top with scalloped bracing and abalone inlay around the sound hole.



Truth Or Fantasy

LORETTA

(Continued from page 24)

another bank just a few days before escrow was supposed to close. I was so worried about getting the money that I really hadn't checked the old place good. The day after we got it I crawled under the house because I'd seen a sag in the parlor and I thought maybe something had broken loose. Nobody had lived in the place for twelve years. The house was supported by eighteen-inch, hand-hewn oak beams and they looked okay. I was laying under there on my back, trying to figure out what was causing the sag, and I lifted my leg up and kicked at one of those beams. The damn thing crumbled right in two under my foot, rotted through from termites. A bushel of that dried old brown honey comb fell on me, and I lay there and cried like a baby. Then I got my cigarette lighter out and debated about burning the dadburned place down. But then I thought, 'Hell, as hard as Loretta works and as bad as she wants this place, I'll fix up the sonofabitch if it kills me.' That was ten years ago, and I ain't done yet!

"I couldn't get nobody to go under the house with me to re-build the foundation 'cause it was too dangerous. So I cut down trees for the beams and dug 'em under there and mixed my concrete and poured it for support. It took me six months of working under there every day to get the house safe enough to move my family in. We've put four times as much as we paid for it into fixing it up, and we're still making improvements.

"It's a beautiful, valuable place now, and me and the babies love it. But Loretta, well she comes in off the road and she's tired and she don't pay much attention to what's been going on there. I want to show off things I've done and take her out and show her the cattle, stuff like that, and she wants to talk about the crowds at her last show, or some song she's gonna record. She loves the road; I can't take it. I love the farm; she gets restless there after a few days. We live in different worlds."

Loretta says the same thing in a different way. "Mooney and me have about as much in common as liquor and lovin'. I don't care about his old cows and he don't care about what's going on in my work. Oh, when I need his advice he's always there to give it, and I do ask his opinion on anything that's important because I trust his judgement more'n anybody else's. But what I'm saying is, we don't have anything to talk about. If we talk about our older kids there's always something he's mad about with one of 'em. If we talk about the babies, the twins, I get upset 'cause it reminds me of what I'm missing by being away all the time. So mostly we talk about what we'll do in the future when I slow down. Or we don't talk at all."

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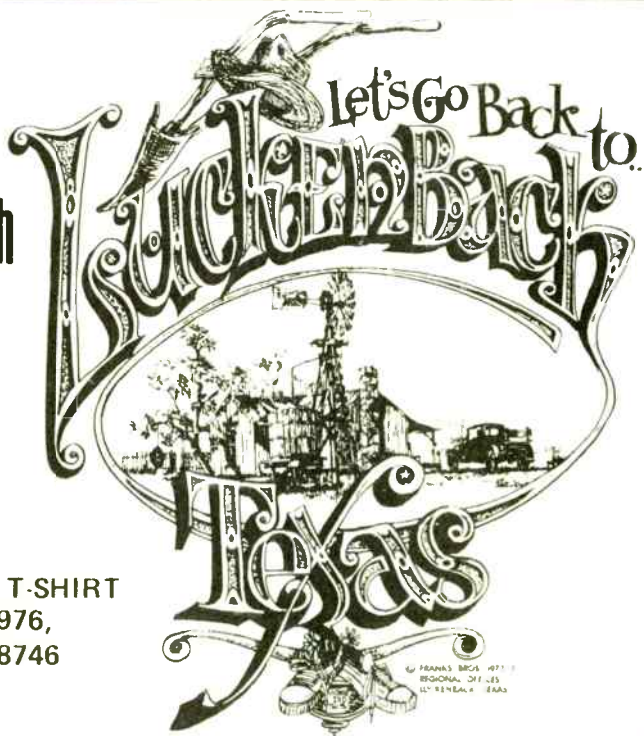
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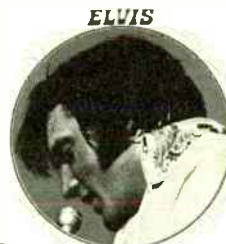
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C'mon Everybody: Angel/A Whistling Tune/Easy Come, Easy Go/Follow That Dream/This Is Living/King Of The Whole Wide World, plus many others!



Frankie & Johnny: What Every Woman Lives For/Hard Luck/Come Along/Down By The Riverside & When The Saints Go Marching In, plus many more!



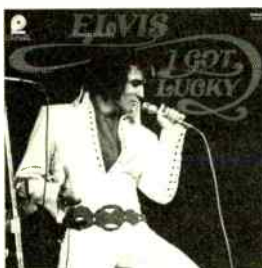
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MANY ELVIS MEMORABILIA ITEMS IN THIS MONTHS XMAS SHOPPER'S GUIDE. DO NOT MISS THEM. TURN TO THE CENTERFOLD OF THIS ISSUE. PAGE 32!

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BUCK'S BLUES

by J. R. YOUNG

Buck Owens called the other day, exactly at 11 a.m., exactly as his press agent said he would. Buck wanted to explain exactly what was going on with his recent marriage, his recent annulment suit and his recent attempt at reconciliation with his recent wife, Jana Jae Owens.

"Let me say this to you. This ain't no . . . whatta ya call it . . . PR thing! This is nothing but an absolute concerted honest put-forth effort. What the hell do I have to spend all this time and money and effort for, because I could easily do it another way. The way I view it, and the way I hope Jana's viewing it, is that I have made a total commitment. This is a total commitment in front of the whole damn world."

Exactly what Buck was talking about was the series of ads that he had placed in strategic newspapers up and down the West Coast pleading for reconciliation with his fiddler and wife of less than three weeks, Jana Jae Owens.

Buck and Jana had been married in Las Vegas on May 2, and then on May 5. Buck filed for an annulment in Bakersfield on the grounds that his wife of three days was insane. Two weeks later, however, Buck changed his mind and dropped the suit, but within that short time Jana had dropped out of view. That's when Buck conceived of going public with his personal pleas. The simple block ads, appearing in the *LA Times*, the *LA Herald Examiner*, the *Santa Monica Outpost* and more than a few others, read "Jana Jae Owens, I need you, Matt, and Kathy. Buck." Matt and Kathy are Jana Jae's children from a previous marriage. Buck's press agent had also contacted the press informing them that Buck was available for interviews.

Buck first met his second wife Jana in Redding, Cal., and later hired her on as the fiddle player for the Buck Owens Show. Shortly after she joined the show, Buck began actively courting the pretty 33-year-old brunette. The courtship lasted for almost two years.



Buck admits that he and Jana had quarreled before a recent trip to Chicago, but upon his return home he made up his mind to make the plunge. He bought a ring, rented a plane, picked Jana up at her place and flew to Las Vegas, where they were married. Unfortunately, a recent rodeo accident in which "my horse rolled and stomped on me" put Buck temporarily into a hospital. He sent Jana home to Bakersfield, and

while in the hospital developed "cold feet" and forty eight hours later had her served with annulment papers.

"Anyone cut to the bone, well I don't blame her for not talking to me, but I've still got to plead with her just to talk with me. I've lost my inner peace. That's what Jana was to me . . . in addition to being the greatest fiddle player I've ever worked with."

I asked if all this wasn't a bit expensive.

"When it comes to peace of mind, which is more important?"

Is she aware of the campaign?

"She couldn't miss it!"

Is she pleased with it?

"I have no word, but it's the only way I know to make the total public commitment to the world. I am optimistic, and I'm going to continue to be optimistic until she tells me it ain't gonna work. If it does work out, I'll give you a call."

The day after I talked with Buck, Jana Jae Owens served Buck with a restraining order to halt all media advertisements seeking reconciliation with her, claiming that his actions subjected her to humiliation, embarrassment, ridicule, harassment and invited public scorn by implying that she was "a cruel, unfeeling, and heartless person." She also filed for an annulment of the marriage on the grounds of fraud regarding promises Owens made concerning her contract on his show in return for her agreement to marry him. She was also quite emphatic that she did not wish to return to Owens as wife or fiddler.

Needless to say, Buck hasn't called back. ■

The OLD WEST As It Really Was!



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Published bi-monthly (True West one month, Frontier Times the next), they are crammed with dramatic TRUE adventure stories about the GOLD RUSH, BADMEN, GHOST TOWNS, INDIANS, RANGE WARS, ACTION-PACKED HISTORY—THE WORKS!

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CIRCLE READER INFORMATION NO. 11

FIDDLER

(Continued from page 47)

Benny Martin was born August 8, 1928, in Sparta, Tenn., also the home of Lester Flatt. In fact, one of Benny's early influences was Lester's fiddling father, Ike. Benny's own father led a family band, which Benny began appearing in on mandolin and bass at the tender age of eight.

Benny left Sparta at thirteen, embarking on a full time professional career with a local Nashville legend, Big Jeff and his Radio Playboys. In later years he worked as a sideman with Curly Fox and Texas Ruby (as a guitarist), Robert Lunn, Milton Estes, Bill Monroe, Roy Acuff, Flatt and Scruggs and, finally, Johnny and Jack, before signing a solo recording contract with Mercury Records in 1954. He concentrated increasingly on his singing—his rich bass voice was and is powerful and distinctive, although his material has tended to be uninspired—and shortly thereafter joined the cast of the Grand Ole Opry and engaged an eminently successful manager, an ear-ner by the name of Colonel Tom Parker. His fiddle playing took a back seat to his singing career—though he did invent his distinctive and strangely tuned

eight-string fiddle during this era. Strangely, he even made an appearance on American Bandstand.

These heady days didn't last, however. He left the Opry, returned, and left again; had to break up his band in 1961 and began label hopping. From Mercury he went to Decca, then to RCA, then to Starday, then to no label at all. The reasons, basically, were two: rock and roll and the bottle.

Like many—most, in fact—country musicians of his era, Benny was dumb-founded by the phenomenon that took their thriving music and nearly wiped it off the map, watching helplessly as records went nowhere, and both the number and the price of show dates nose-dived: "I was just peaking, really getting off the ground, when Elvis hit it real big. It got so huge it just knocked me out of the bucket." It was a tough blow, and the fact that most of his contemporaries were suffering the same slump was little consolation.

Then, too, there was the other problem, "the days of wine and roses" as he calls it. There seems to be something about many great fiddlers, something in their sensitivity or intensity or high-strung nature, that makes them susceptible to excessive drinking, and Benny was no exception to that rule. He is not quick to bring up the subject, but once it's been broached he speaks frankly about the problem which has dogged him for two decades: "At one time it was very detrimental. No one could trust me to make a show date sober, and I don't blame them. If I was a promoter and the word Benny Martin came up, no matter how much I liked him, if I had to take a chance on losing my crowd and money on him I wouldn't have booked him. But I don't believe that would affect me now. I belong to an organization that I think is great, Alcoholics Anonymous, and I don't attend like I should, but it's been awful great to me. It's worked. In my own crazy way it's working."

The 1960s and 1970s have been rough years for Big Tige—he sustained a number of broken bones in an automobile accident, and broke a finger when, as he put it, "some lady sat on it"—as he tried to make a go of it as a single, alternating with a partnership with Don Reno, for a time, then stints in Roy Acuff's and Lester Flatt's bands. Things have picked up recently, however, thanks in part to John Hartford, who as an impressionable teenager first saw Benny fiddling with Flatt and Scruggs in St. Louis and never forgot Benny's powerful impact. John recently arranged for (and played on) Benny's recent album for Flying Fish Records with Lester Flatt, which led, in turn, to a lavish double album **Benny Martin: The Fiddle Collection**, on the aggressive bluegrass-oriented CMH label. He has formed a new band of young musicians, recorded a soon-to-be released vocal

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album for CMH, and even appeared on several dates with Hartford, including one at Nashville's prestigious Exit/In.

Of course Benny is enthusiastic and optimistic about the future, particularly with the general resurgence of interest in the fiddle—an instrument that ten or 15 years ago was virtually dead in country music. "The fiddle is going to hit big some day, going to be real big. I hope it's in my life span, to where I can see it happen." Nor has his inventive spirit failed him. Benny is close to unveiling (a few bugs are yet to be worked out) his electric double neck—a four-string neck and an eight-string neck—fiddle with a pitch-changing device hidden in the chinrest *a la* the steel guitar.

Whether the big break he awaits is around the corner or not, one gets the distinct impression that it matters little to Benny Martin. He'll go on waiting for that big break no matter how long it takes—he's been there once and liked the feeling and he'll go on making magnificent music simply because, like so many other great musicians, he has to: "Fiddle playing is my life; it's a medicine. I can get real nervous, depressed, down in the dumps and feeling low as a snake; I get my fiddle out and hit a lick or two on the strings, and it's like a tranquilizer and an upper. That's my world. That's my life." □

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LUCKENBACH

(Continued from page 35)

Spanish. Crouch also had a geiger-counter knack for attracting television cameras and microphones, so at the same time Jerry Jeff was recording his album *Viva Terlingua* there in 1973 because of its charming remoteness. Hondo was promoting his town like a big city chamber of commerce with a flair for the unusual. He dreamed up such illustrious civic events as the Luckenbach Every Other Annual World's Fair, the Susan B. Anthony Memorial Hell Hath No Fury Like a Woman Scorned Chili Cookoff (for women only, natch), the annual spring rites celebrating the Return of the Mud Daubers to Luckenbach and last year's memorable Non-Bicentennial Non-Celebration.

Knock had already departed for the brighter lights of Fredricksburg and Hollywood after placing second in ABC TV's *Search for the Singing Cowboy* contest when Crouch suddenly passed away in September, 1976, leaving Morgan holding the reins and the town's future in doubt.

That question was resolved this spring when Jerry Jeff Walker's album tribute to Hondo, *A Man Must Carry On*, and Waylon Jennings' *Luckenbach, Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)* hit the charts almost simultaneously. Morgan credits those pieces of music for the record crowds that have flocked to Luckenbach this year. "There's always a handful of 'em waiting around for someone to open the general store in the morning." Eyeing a weekend crowd that approached a thousand, she marvelled, "Hell, you'd think we were having a festival today." The town has been making a profit for the past two years, mostly off beer sales, but the overflow of people has had its bad effects, too.

A few tourists have taken some of the town home with them, tearing down signs, billboards, even Hondo's old guitar, given to him by Gary P. Nunn of the Lost Gonzo Band. Camping is no longer permitted due to the tourist explosion. But Morgan emphasized she's proud of the songs and the musicians. "There isn't a day that goes by without someone asking for Willie and Waylon. Some people were even asking if this year's Fourth of July Picnic was going to be here."

Despite its discovery by the masses, the old place still manages to fulfill the promise of certain creature comforts not to be found anywhere else in the world: Plenty of shade, a cool river nearby, tubs full of iced beer, games of horseshoes and washers, a Western dance every Saturday night. And if some city slicker gets homesick, there's even a cure: one lone parking meter to pull up to when the basics of love aren't enough. ■

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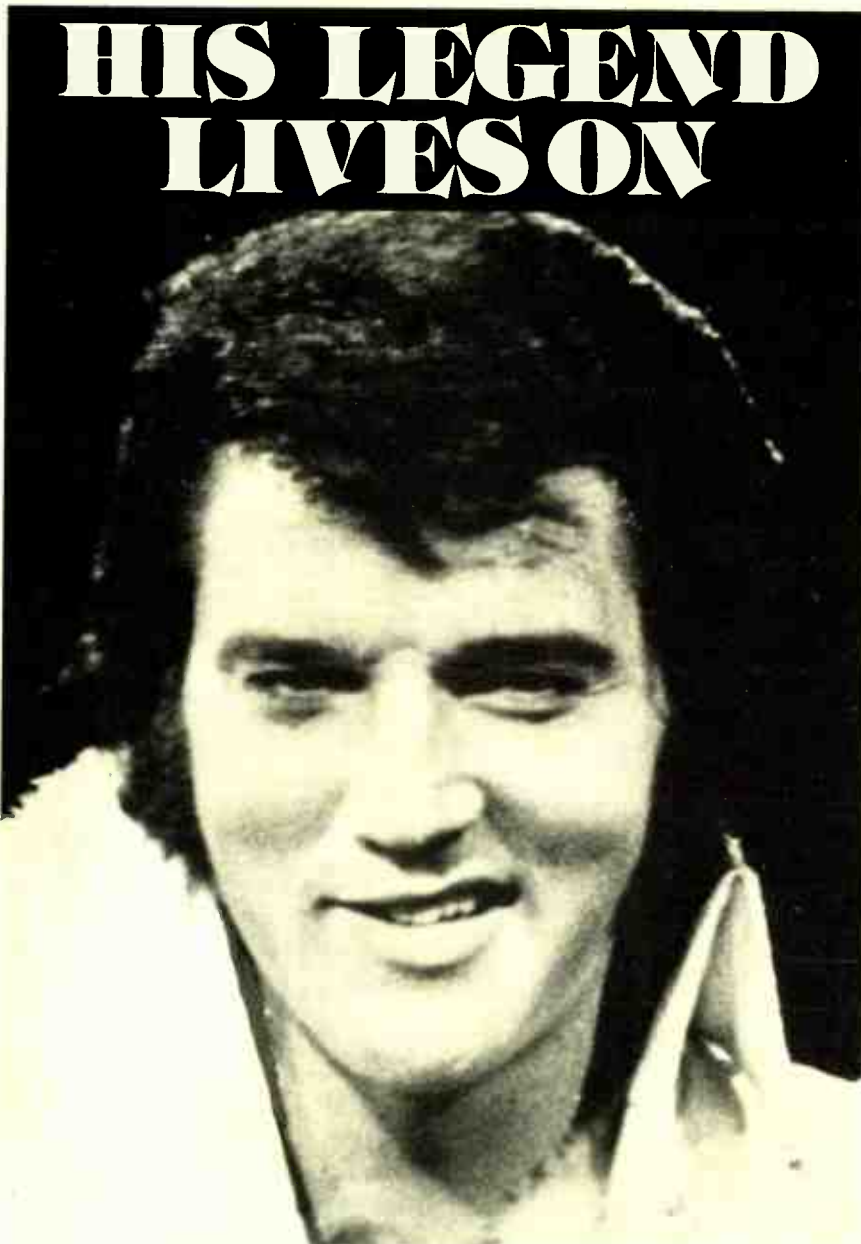
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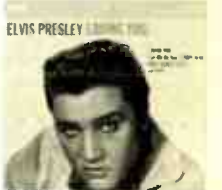
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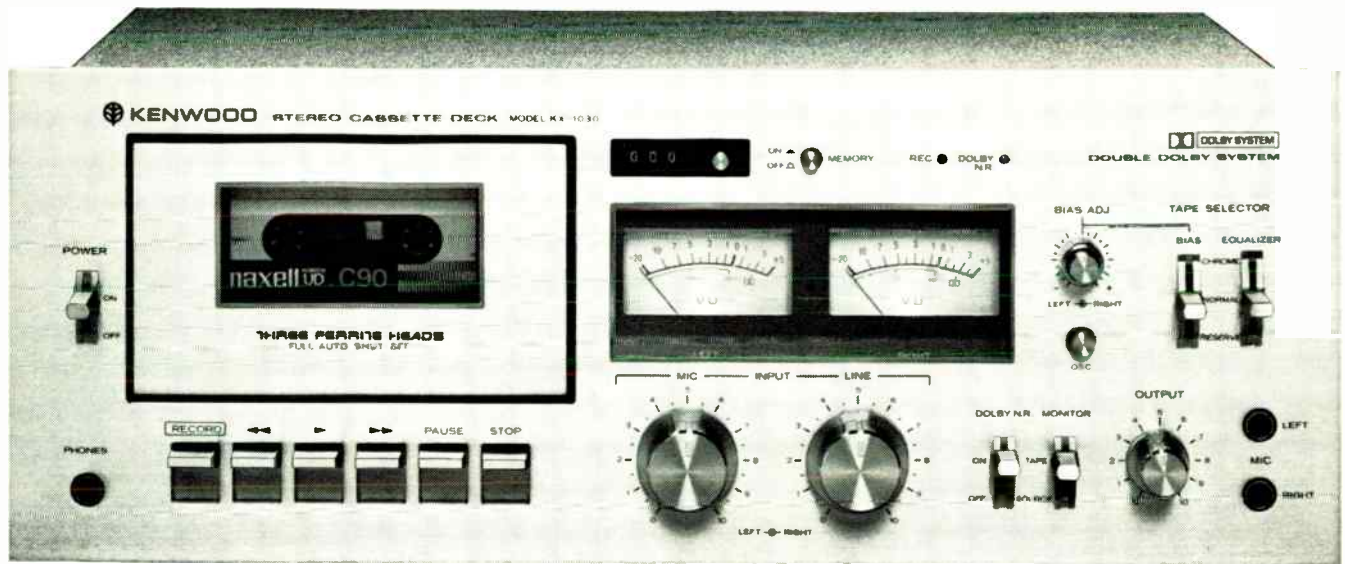


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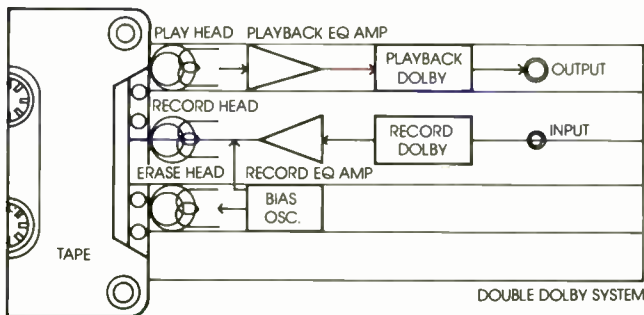
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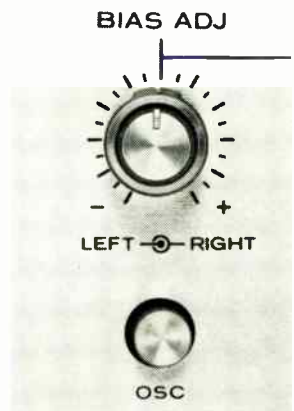
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