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Levon, Charlie, Emmylou and Cash Rob The Northfield Bank**

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Stephen Foster



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Volume Nine: Number Seven, March 1981

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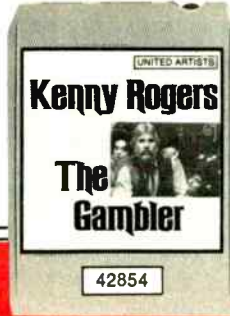
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Waylon Jennings

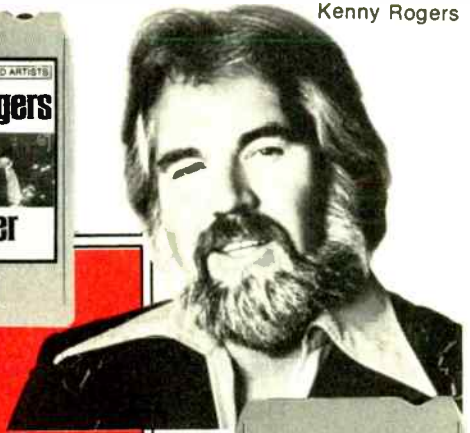


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Letters

Of Johnny Cash

I haven't seen much artwork on Johnny Cash, except for a few album covers—there may of been, of course, a lot more than I realize! After reading your special edition on Johnny Cash, I felt compelled to do one. If, at an appropriate time it could be used, I sure would be thrilled. Whatever happens, though, I *do not* want it back. As



soon as you receive it, it is yours. If you cannot use it, just put it on the wall or give it to someone who would appreciate it.

Whatever does become of it, I would like to know as I won't be kept in suspense. As you can see, it's just a simple pencil drawing—it doesn't have to be complicated to be enjoyed. Sort of like the boom-chicka-boom.

MICHAEL JOHN
SHERBROOKE, QUEBEC, CANADA

An Issue Rundown

I've been reading *Country Music Magazine* for several years—I enjoy keeping up with the very latest in Nashville, and in turn passing the information along to our listeners. However, the November issue has been the only one thus far that's made me want to throw my two cents worth in. There are things I want to praise and things I would like to express my "professional programming" standpoint on.

I found Jean Butler's letter with regard to Waylon's *Music Man* album interesting. I agree with her, yet she forgot one very important point! Have you noticed how so many people think that Willie left Waylon behind to "eat his dust"? Ah ha! Give the public two more years of silly movies with insipid soundtracks (*On the Road Again*

could very well have been written by elementary school students), tons of Willie Nelson jeans, Willie Nelson remakes of standard tunes, zillions of TV appearances, more feature articles in publications such as yours, and what do you get? SICK! America is going to get sick of ol' Willie, and he's going to be burned out (either the tequila/reefer syndrome, or too much work—I haven't decided). Now don't get me wrong, until this monopolization of the music/movie industry occurred, I was one of Nelson's biggest fans. Now, I just wish he'd take a vacation.

Waylon, on the other hand, knows and realizes his limitations. He records and performs, and those appear to be the most important facets of Waylon's career. Yes, he has appeared on, and has hosted TV specials—but that's the extent of his media campaign. Waylon is not spreading his career too thin, he's getting better. He's the king. Willie will be sorry.

I was greatly disturbed by the letter condemning the Charlie Daniels Band. Those women who claimed that he was as far from country as they were from Hollywood should do their homework before preparing to place their feet in their mouths. It is all too sad and true that much of the "country" music we hear today is in fact "pop." But that's what's selling, and we (radio stations) have an obligation to play the most popular music. When a songwriter comes up with a song, he of course wants to make a hit of it. Why start at the bottom? He'll go to the biggest performer he can find, and this is why the Tommy Overstreets, the Marty Robbins, and others are "getting the shaft." Kenny, Don Williams, Barbara Mandrell, etc. get the first pick, or so it seems. The women from Mobile who spoke out cruelly against CDB are staunch supporters of Marty Robbins. Well, I love Marty Robbins; he is superb. But folks, I've heard his latest singles, and they're not worth this radio station's air time! And it's not his fault—blame those performers who seem to have the corner on the country music market.

As far as Charlie Daniels goes . . . he lives country, he breathes country, HE IS COUNTRY! Everyone in this industry is indebted to that man and his band for the popularization of country music. He, like the Marshall Tucker Band, has turned the younger generation on to the sounds that we've loved for years. He taught pride for

country music with *Devil Went Down To Georgia*. He taught many to love this country; loyalty to our country brought the young and the old together under the common bond of country music. Ladies, if that ain't country—may you all disco to death! Incidentally, Charlie Daniels and his band, along with the Marshall Tucker Band, provided immense support for our beloved "Bocephus" during times of trouble, and were in part responsible for his re-entry into country music.

I loved the letter about Margo Smith's recent concert appearance near Pittsburgh. I hosted the show! Margo is perhaps one of the most underrated performers in this business. I've seen her four or five times, and she just gets better each time.

And while I'm on the subject of underrated—thanks for the nice articles and album reviews on two of my main men, Gene Watson and Razy Bailey! Gene Watson is superb. *No One Will Ever Know* is destined to become a classic. Why is it that singers like Gene never make it to CMA award nominees or finalists? Need I say why I did not renew my membership with the CMA?

Razy Bailey is on the way up, and there's no coming down for that boy!! By the way, what in the world is Razy's real name? Razzamatazz? Erazzmus? I'm dying to know!

And finally, we sure did get a chuckle out of the "Country Music Will Drive You to Drink" article. What kind of music do we blame the crime rate on? And the recession? And certainly, some form of music is responsible for President Carter's election defeat! For that was a real loss for all of us. We may never again have a president who likes country music.

MARTIE GRAY
MUSIC DIRECTOR, WIXZ RADIO
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Correcting A Correction

I have just read Jill Adelsberger's letter regarding Emmylou Harris in your November issue. When the article initially appeared in your magazine, we remarked to a number of friends that there did appear to be only one bit of misinformation in the entire article. No inconsequential feat of writing accuracy in an article that long. Ms. Kirby is to be congratulated. However, the one point was that *Blue Kentucky Girl* was not Em-

mylou's first Grammy. She won in 1976 for **Elite Hotel**.

Now, either your "little" checking should have been a whole lot more (accurate), or the Grammy we've been looking at for the last four years is really someone else's. You figure (or check) it out.

BOB HUNKA
HAPPY SACK PRODUCTIONS, INC.
NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

We "figure" that we better "check" such things "more accurately" in the future. Making a mistake is not so bad, but sticking to it is embarrassing! So, we are almost as embarrassed as Warner Bros. who reconfirmed our error when we "checked" our answer to Ms. Adelsberger. (This is almost as embarrassing as last year's Emmylou goof, when we announced that her daughter's name was Brian Ahern.)—Ed.

Trucking . . .

I particularly enjoyed an article entitled "Song of the American Trucker" which appeared in the December *Country Music*. I wasn't a bit surprised with it's success—after all country music and truck driving go together like two peas in a pod.

I am not a truck driver nor is my husband, but I have been sharing many a conversation with several hundred of those 18-wheelers as "Little Peach" on channel 15 for the past six years.

May I say those drivers are a special breed for sure. Those 18-wheelers are out on the road doing one terrific job. That's why I was glad to see that article—it shows in a small way how very much we appreciate the man behind the wheel of the big rig.

SHIRLEY A. FRANTZ
PALMERTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Charlie Louvin

I wanted to drop you a line immediately to let you know how much I appreciated the article on our honorary Charlie Louvin. So seldom it seems that magazines pay tributes to the artists who so richly deserve the recognition, but that may not have a current Number One record.

Charlie has been a member of the Grand Ole Opry for over 25 years now, and not one year or one moment during that time has he ceased to be a great country entertainer, as well as a really down to earth human being.

I am so proud to be at the helm of a fan club for such a fine artist over the past seven-and-a-half years, and I look forward to many more years promoting him and staying in touch with all his many fans.

PAT SULLIVAN
PRESIDENT, CHARLIE LOUVIN FAN CLUB
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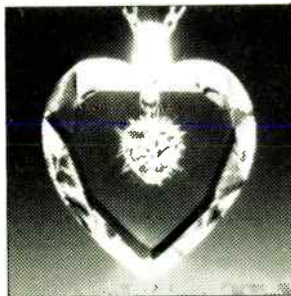


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More on Music and Politics

I happened to see in the January/February '81 issue of your magazine letters from *Country Music* readers who deeply resent country stars getting involved in the endorsement of political candidates. I think all Americans, be it a country star or an obscure citizen like myself, should actively participate in our democratic processes. We are fortunate indeed that we live in a nation where we can voice our opinions and elect our authorities. I recently read an article published by the Freedoms Foundation which, country by country, listed which ones were totalitarian and which ones were active and semi-active democracies. Every year there is a dwindling number of democracies. So, more than ever, it is our duty as freedom-loving men and women of the United States to get out there into the political arena and promote those candidates whose opinions most correlate with our own.

I did take the article in the November issue to mean that your magazine supported Jimmy Carter, but I certainly didn't resent it. I was just glad that *Country Music* was taking a stand, along with the country stars who supported Carter's presidential bid. To keep a free press, magazines and newspapers should endorse candidates. Active participation is the only way we will remain a democracy. And I might add: I think we should have more

respect for other people's opinions. If we lived in a communist country we'd be told what to think, who to vote for, and there wouldn't be any freedom of the press. I wish people would consider these things before criticizing.

GAIL HABBYS
MERCER, PENNSYLVANIA

In answer to Richard "I Dare You To Print This" Popovich's letter in the January/February issue: Mr. Popovich sure missed the point of "Presidents, Pickers and Politics." It just shows how little he knows and understands country music and what it's all about.

Love your report on Merle Haggard.
NOVA TOON
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

I've never written before, but suddenly felt the urge to expound on my views after reading some of the mail you received and printed in the January/February issue.

I was amazed that one gentleman actually dared you to print his letter, but even more astounded that he dare write with such narrow-minded flare. He could have disagreed and cancelled his subscription just as easily without the explosive display. I didn't agree with the political thing either, but merely considered it someone else's point of view. I, personally, love your magazine and think you do a superb job covering just about every facet of country music—both old and new.

I do think a lot of the original stars have unfortunately been pushed to the background. However, all the new people (who have probably been in the business 10-15 years) deserve the credit they get too. Whether you especially like them or their style is immaterial. The fact is, they're working their tails off to entertain us.

Double thanks to Michael Bane for the article on the fabulous Brenda Lee. Your magazine came exactly one week after I'd had the pleasure of attending her concert in St. Joseph, Missouri. WOW!! I've always loved her records, but to see her in person was a definite high.

Just remember . . . your magazine has at least one lifetime fan out here who's willing to read about anyone you care to write about.

MARCIA STINNETT
OREGON, MISSOURI

Gary Stewart

I would like to say thanks very much for the article on Gary Stewart (December *Country Music*). As far as Gary Stewart finding his second wind, I don't think anybody has to worry about that. I really believe that if he ever wants to be the winner of the Entertainer of the Year award, he could do that too. When it comes to writing songs or singing, I don't think anybody could beat him unless he wanted them to.

JEANETTE DECKER
MONTICELLO, KENTUCKY

Mandrells Are First Priority

I am writing you in thanks for the super article on Barbara Mandrell and her sisters. But at the same time, I want you to know that you also succeeded in partially ruining my day. I had waited for this day for more than a week since I fell in love with Louise when I saw the advertisement for the *Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters* show on NBC. I arrived home after a long day at graduate school in time to see the show, and was greeted with the latest issue of *Country Music*. So, I quickly turned the TV on and tried to read the article while watching the show at the same time. I was as happy as a tick on an old hound dog until I read that Louise is married. Well, my heart sank. So, as soon as I finish this letter I'm going to study some more and listen to Barbara sing *If Loving You is Wrong (I Don't Want to be Right)*.

RONNIE WAVER
OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

An Independent Promoter

When are you going to give us the chance to hear about Tom T. Hall again? It's about time you gave him some of the publicity he deserves, and has not gotten.

I have been doing all I can to "promote" his albums on my own by playing cassettes in people's cars that I hitch rides with from Northern Canada to New Orleans, and on into Mexico. People are turned on, and they want an alternative to the flood of boring and insipid music put out by Emmylou, Kenny Rogers, and other fakes posing as "country" singers. I want you to know that there's still sentiment out there for the great ones who you have neglected of late.

TINA WESTMORELAND
ADDRESS UNKNOWN

Bugs in the Recipe!

Upon receiving the December issue of *Country Music* and reading the article, "Christmas Cookin' Nashville Style," I felt it necessary to write and question the accuracy of one of the recipes—namely, Jeannie C. Riley's Candy Fruit Cake. I believe some ingredient(s) must have been omitted. The result of my wife's efforts certainly did not resemble the picture, nor did it look or taste like any cake we've ever experienced.

RONNIE L. MARTIN
PERRYTON, 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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PEOPLE

By Bob Campbell

Somehow or another a big rumor started blowing in the wind that **Tanya Tucker** and **Glen Campbell** were heading for a split. One story had it that Tanya had tried to kill herself. But **Jerry Bailey**, a reliable man who heads up MCA Records' artist relations department in Nashville (Tanya's record label), says nothing could be further from the truth. "That's all bull," Bailey says. "That's stuff put out by *The National Enquirer* and *The National Star*. It is as fictional as anything you can imagine. In the case of her slitting her wrist, Tanya had a small cut on her arm and somebody saw it. I talked to her brother and he said Glen has been after Tanya constantly to marry him. But I don't think Tanya has decided yet." Speaking of Glen Campbell . . . while in Nashville a while back, he checked into a Dickson, Tennessee hospital for a couple of days due to pain from a broken rib suffered in a fall. It seems as if he totally charmed the nurses and staff at the hospital.

Lana Nelson Fowler, Willie's oldest daughter, has written a book about her famous father titled *Willie Nelson Family Album*. The book contains some little-known information and old photographs of Willie playing basketball in high school and so forth. Lana, 26, says she remembers Willie as "a normal daddy who worked in nightclubs instead of an office."

Hee Haw's **Roni Stoneman** married banker **Richard Adams** of Mansfield, Ohio. **Chet Atkins** and singer **Dianne Sherill** provided music. Stoneman has moved from Nashville to Mansfield.

On the **Eagles'** recent double-disc live album, the only song on the record not

written by the group is *Seven Bridges Road* by **Steve Young**. A reclusive and somewhat mysterious person, Young is a remarkable singer and writer whose best songs probe the heart and mind of the South with the same eloquence of a **Tennessee Williams** or **William Faulkner**. Young has lived in Nashville for several years, and in some quarters is considered the father of progressive country music. **Waylon Jennings** is a great Young admirer, and Waylon's version of Steve's *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* was called "Waylon's best single ever and the finest moment of the outlaw movement" by writer **Chet Flippo** in *Rolling Stone Magazine*. *Seven Bridges Road* has been recorded by **Joan Baez**, **Eddy Arnold**, **Ian Matthews**, **Tracy Nelson**, **Rita Coolidge** and Young himself on three different albums. **Hank Williams, Jr.** has recorded two or three of Young's songs and has said Steve's *Long Way To Hollywood* is the best song he has ever heard about his daddy. Having overcome some serious personal problems in the past year, Young said he is now in good shape and feeling great these days. His albums are a treat.

A new restaurant in Nashville called *The Stockyard* is attracting a music clientele and it looks right out of the old days. On a recent night in the *Bullpen Bar* downstairs from the restaurant, **Paul Anka**, music publisher **Buddy Killen**, **Larry Butler**, **Kenny Rogers'** record producer, **Bobby Goldsboro** and producer **Norro Wilson** were spotted enjoying themselves.

Harmonica player **Terry McMillan**, was named *Entertainer of the Year* for the second year in a row by the *Grapevine Opry* in Texas at their fifth annual *Susie Awards Show*.

Alabama Governor **Fob James** saluted the group **Alabama** with a day in their honor. The group performed at their new nightclub, *The Home of Alabama* in Birmingham.

Here comes another book on country music. Music critic **Martha Hume** has written a biography of **Kenny Rogers** titled *Kenny Rogers: Gambler, Dreamer, Lover*. The book looks into Rogers' early life before he hit it big with **The First Edition**. The book contains a few facts not revealed in interviews. For instance, Kenny dropped LSD with **Mickey Newbury** right after the First Edition recorded Newbury's *Just Dropped In*. On Kenny, Ms. Hume says, "He presents the image of being a comfortable person to be with. You feel that you could have Kenny at your house . . . have

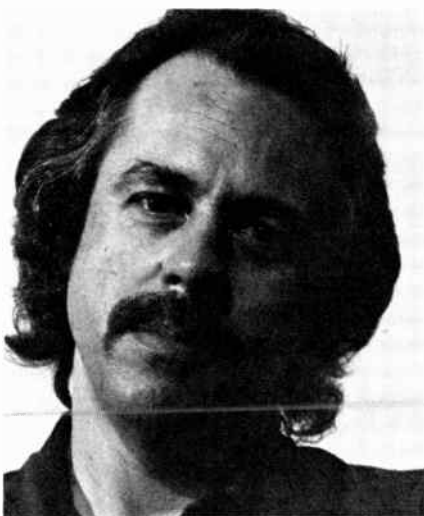


Tom T. Hall

him over to play cards or watch the game on TV. And you probably could—he's really like that."

Tom T. Hall recently performed in Houston, Texas as the guest artist with the Houston Pops Orchestra. The show was a first for Hall, but the positive response prompted the Ft. Worth Symphony to approach Hall about a special guest shot appearance sometime this year. Tom T. has also been named spokesman for the 1981 *Smokey Bear* fire prevention campaign by the Southern Cooperative organization. Hall's *Old Dogs, Children and Watermelon Wine* has been selected as the musical theme for the fire prevention program.

A Nashville folk club, *Wind In The Willows*, was the setting for a listening party for country/folk artist **Annie McGowan's** newest album, **Rattlesnakes and Rusty Water**. A purist, Annie writes most of her own material and her work reflects an authentic love for people and the land. McGowan grew up poor in Tennessee and claims Mother Maybelle Carter as her strongest influence. She is highly respected by her peers in the music business, and is on good speaking terms with folks like **Willie Nelson**. In fact, in Willie's General Store in Nashville (a souvenir shop on Gallatin Road), the only album the shop carries besides Willie's own is Annie's **Rattlesnakes and Rusty Water**.



Steve Young

MCA Records has signed a 13-year-old singer who the company feels could be the new **Tanya Tucker** or **Brenda Lee**. **Rebecca McElroy**—or **Taffy**, as she likes to be called—moved to Nashville last year from West Memphis, Arkansas. According to her parents, Taffy decided to become a singer when she was nine after seeing the movie *A Star Is Born*. An MCA spokesman said she is a normal teenager, but when she sings, “she’s got more range and control than almost any adult I have ever heard. She just knocked us out.”

Veteran **Don Gibson** is experiencing a surge of popularity in Europe. Gibson, who wrote the classics *I Can't Stop Loving You*, *Oh Lonesome Me* and *Sweet Dreams*, capped a tour in Europe last summer. “I’m sure why I’m hitting over there and not here so much these days,” Gibson said, “but it is something. One night in Killarney, Ireland, the audience was so attentive and so emotional that I found myself crying onstage for the first time in my life. I think audiences over there are more appreciative. Here, they are more spoiled and used to live enter-



Rebecca McElroy (Taffy)

tainment.” Gibson wants to go in the studio and record songs the way he used to: almost live with no overdubbing. And he wants another American hit. “My goal right now is to come back as a recording artist in this country. I had it made once before, and I’d like to hit it again one more time. I’d like to record another *Oh Lonesome Me*. I think I can do it.”

Jody Payne, guitarist and backup singer with Willie Nelson’s band, has recorded his first album on the Kari Label. Willie’s band backed Payne on this new untitled album. Payne appeared in *Honeysuckle Rose* and is in the forthcoming film *Barberosa*, a western starring Willie. ■



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Pickers

The Piano is a Stringed Instrument

On the surface it might seem unusual, these country singers, sitting instead of standing, their fingers gliding across black and white keys instead of the strings of a guitar. And it seems like right now there are more than ever. Count 'em: Jerry Lee Lewis, Gary Stewart, Ray Griff, Mickey Gilley, Ray Stevens, Ronnie Milsap, Charlie Rich, Jessi Colter, and Marty Robbins all perform a considerable chunk—in some cases all—of their music while seated at a piano.

In a music where fiddles, guitars, banjos, mandolins, and pedal steels have been dominant for decades, where portability has been a virtue for the performer, pianos are anything but that. Sure, it's been a part of rock music ever since the days when Jerry Lee came motha-humpin' onto the scene with *Great Balls of Fire* and *Whole Lotta Shakin'* over 20 years ago. But what's behind the fact that more singers are using them? Is all of this something new?

Not at all. There are undoubtedly people who think that piano is something new, another alien instrument brought in to dilute the "purity" of country music. That view pops up from time to time. Pianos, however, have been around ever since the music itself. In the rural South, the piano was a parlor instrument for years, just as it was in the rest of the country an instrument perfect for playing the popular songs of the day. Yet as the early rural string

authority on early country music, points out that few guitars in the early 1900s were well made, and with their smaller bodies, lacked the sort of volume that could provide a strong rhythm, especially for the string band playing for dancers. The piano, on the other hand, could provide a strong, pounding rhythm that provided a perfect beat for such functions. It had more volume, and was used rather routinely. But portability was a problem. It was obviously more difficult to drag a piano to a barn dance someplace. In many cases, Wolfe



Del Wood

adds, musicians solved this problem by toting along the old, inexpensive pump organs that were prevalent in many households at the time.

And there was plenty of interaction between non-piano playing country musicians and pianists. The legendary singer/banjoist/entertainer, Uncle Dave Macon, learned popular songs of the '20s and '30s from listening to them being played on piano. Sam McGee, the incredible fingerpicking guitarist on the Grand Ole Opry from the '20s to the mid '70s, learned many of the ragtimey instrumental numbers he was renowned for from ragtime numbers he heard on a player piano. The first string band ever to play on Nashville radio in the 1920s, long before the Grand Ole Opry ever existed, was Dr. Humphrey Bate's Possum Hunters, led by a harmonica-playing physician from rural Tennessee. In that band, Dr. Bate's daughter, Alcyone, served as pianist. On the first WSM barn dance broadcast, before the "Grand Ole Opry" name was conferred by George D. Hay, octogenarian

fiddler Uncle Jimmy Thompson was accompanied by his niece on piano. In the '30s another legendary act, Arthur Smith & His Dixieliners, also featured Smith's niece playing piano. It even found its way on to some early country recordings in the 1920s.

But pinning down when it was used to accompany singers on records is another tough question. Charles Wolfe says it might have been in 1927 when an obscure Virginia group called the Shelor Family String Band recorded, at the same time both the Carter Family and Jimmy Rodgers did their first recording sessions. On that recording, Clarice Shelor did some energetic singing and piano playing, which may have been the first instance that a country act recorded in this manner. But though there wasn't much prejudice, if any, against pianos by musicians themselves, other industry people were less flexible. One of the great old-time players, banjoist Charlie Poole, was once ejected from a recording session when he insisted on using a piano because the record company felt it compromised his rural sound; in other words, that it wasn't "country" enough!

The string band tradition began to change after Jimmie Rodgers and Vernon Dalhart had suddenly made solo singing fashionable. Rodgers, for example, was using piano on some of his recordings since 1929 (usually along with some horns and drums). In 1930, he did a session with Louis Armstrong and his pianist wife, Lillian Armstrong, doing the backing, resulting in some fine jazz-tinged music. But perhaps the biggest boost to country



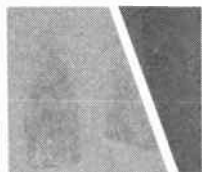
Moon Mullican

bands organized in the South, they almost, without flinching, included the piano when it was possible. Dr. Charles Wolfe, an



Jerry Lee and cousin Mickey Gilley

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piano came in the mid '30s, when western swing began to emerge as a serious form of music in the Southwest. Even when Bob Wills was a child fiddle prodigy in Texas,



Ronnie Milsap worked the R&B circuit before coming to Nashville.

he and his family had played dances using a piano. But it was Milton Brown who brought the piano into a western swing band when he hired jazz pianist Fred "Papa" Calhoun in 1932 for his Musical Brownies group.

Calhoun brought a new dimension to country piano. Up until then it was an accompaniment instrument, but his inventive and freewheeling abilities soon made him one of the Brownies' top soloists. When Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys signed their Columbia recording contract in 1935, Wills immediately hired a similar-sounding musician for the band: Al Stricklin. And by the time other western bands began popping up in Texas and Oklahoma, so did piano players, including one who would have a profound effect on its future: Aubrey "Moon" Mullican. A native Texan, Moon grew up listening to black musicians, and began freelancing with a number of groups like The Modern Mountaineers and Cliff Bruner's bands. He brought a strong bluesy piano sound to these groups, and even more important, he began singing lead vocals, including his memorable vocal on Bruner's 1939 recording of *Truck Driver's Blues*, the first country trucker tune. With boogie-woogie becoming a national craze, as it was played by black pianists, Moon was one of the first white country players to even attempt it.

The years after World War II brought the recording industry back into business, and spawned numerous small, independent labels. Moon was signed to Cincinnati's King Records, the first C&W singer/pianist to land a solo contract. He had a massive hit in 1947 with the Cajun classic *Jole Blon*, and as he began touring the country, struck up a friendship with Hank

Williams, who in 1949 began pushing the Grand Ole Opry management to add Moon to the cast. One obviously new member of the Opry management with little musical knowledge reportedly balked, saying that since the Opry featured stringed instruments, the piano obviously didn't qualify. Moon pointed out that "there's over 200 strings in a piano," and joined the Opry shortly after that. He later had other hits, like *I'll Sail My Ship Alone* and *Cherokee Boogie*, and was known as the "King of the Hillbilly Piano Players" until his death in 1967.

Naturally, his success spawned a number of other singer/pianists, and cleared the way for instrumentalists, as well. Some, like Roy Hall, were straight country singers who just happened to play piano. There was Merrill Moore, the Iowa-born singer/pianist who worked the honky-tonks of San Diego, California in the late '40s and in 1952 began turning out some incredible country-boogie recordings for Capitol like *House of Blue Lights* and *Down The Road Apiece* that actually preceded Jerry Lee by several years.

There were also some fine instrumentalists around, most notably Del Wood, whose ragtimey, barrel-house style was best heard in her 1951 hit recording of *Down Yonder*, which established her on the Opry. Though there wasn't any real mass movement to piano, it had begun showing up in Nashville sessions by the late '40s. Fred Rose, who'd gotten his start as a singer/pianist before abandoning pop songwriting for country, played on many of Hank Williams' recordings. Owen Bradley, veteran MCA producer (now independent) got his start playing both on sessions and on WSM, where he served as music director from 1940 to 1948.



"Papa" Fred Calhoun brought a new dimension to country piano.

It was obvious a change was coming by 1955. Roy Hall cut a rhythm and blues hit by Big Maybelle, titled *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*, in a loping blues style different from Jerry Lee's recording two years later. Strangely, Jerry Lee, according to a 1970 interview, did a number of auditions in Nashville around 1954 and was told to switch over to guitar, and with characteristic bluntness, told the Music Row muckey-mucks where they could put their guitars. But by 1957, all that was

forgotten as Jerry Lee made uninhibited, mad music that drew on Mullican, Moore, Hall, and black pianists like Cecil Gant, which he continued doing well into the '60s on Sun Records. It seemed outside of Del Wood, Mullican (who also did some fine rock records in the '50s) and Roy Hall, who was working with Webb Pierce as his regular pianist during that time that pianos were going to be associated closely with rock. The rock music hurricane sent Nashville reeling, and for a time after Elvis, producers frantically searched for a way to regain their balance as record sales and personal appearances for country acts began sliding. Their solution was the pop-flavored "Nashville Sound," and in the vanguard of that sound was a pianist who'd set trends for many years.

Floyd Cramer began his career in 1951, playing with the Louisiana Hayride staff band in Shreveport and came to Nashville around 1955 to work sessions. Ironically, he was on many of Elvis's sessions (he played that threatening little riff in the instrumental break of *Heartbreak Hotel*). In 1958, he had his first instrumental hit with RCA. Then, around 1969, when he was scheduled to do a session with Hank Locklin, Chet Atkins played him the demo, sung and played by co-writer Don Robertson. Robertson was playing piano in what became known as the "slipnote" style. Both Chet and Hank liked the style and felt it would work on the future classic, *Please Help Me I'm Falling*. On Chet's suggestion, Floyd composed an instrumental around that style, and the result was *Last Date*, with a sound that became so popular that it's now considered as integral to country instrumental styles as Merle Travis' finger-picking.

Of course there was one country singer/pianist who was able to walk the thin line between country and rock rather well in the early '60s. Charlie Rich came from a jazz, gospel and R&B background and parlayed it into early successes with *Lone-ly Weekends* in 1960 and *Mohair Sam* a couple of years later, though it would be another decade before he got the recognition he'd long deserved.

Piano was not common on country recordings, and even Roy Acuff, known for his purist attitude in many areas of music, had used Jimmy Riddle's piano playing with the Smoky Mountain Boys since the '50s. And after Jim Reeves formed the Blue Boys, who toured with him until his death, his pianist, Dean Manuel, was an important part of his onstage sound. On occasions, Reeves would back out of a show if the piano provided by a promoter wasn't in playable shape.

It seemed that by the '60s most country pianists were coming out of blues and R&B backgrounds similar to that of Charlie Rich, Ronnie Milsap, for example, worked the R&B circuit for some time, and Ray Stevens had considerable roots in


that music when he first came to the Nashville studios. At the same time he was hitting the charts with songs like *Ahab The Arab* he was busy playing piano and organ in the studios. Yet there were few country singer/pianists making consistent hits until 1967, when Jerry Lee made his dramatic return to the top with *Another Place, Another Time* in 1968, and reincarnated himself as a country singer.

The piano had reestablished itself as the '60s ended. Marty Robbins, who traditionally closes the last set of the Opry, began playing as much piano as guitar when he sang. Then, in 1973, Charlie Rich came back with *Behind Closed Doors*, sitting behind a grand piano as restrained as Jerry Lee was uninhibited, while Milsap was establishing himself with *Pure Love, I Hate You* and *The Girl Who Waits on Tables*. The next year Billy Swan and Gary Stewart, both of whom played guitar and piano onstage, also became popular. Jessi Colter did likewise with *I'm Not Lisa*, and Mickey Gilley, who had tried for years to equal his cousin Jerry Lee's success, finally did so with *Roomful of Roses*. Through bands like Asleep At The Wheel, both Papa Calhoun and Al Stricklin were rediscovered and received at least some credit for their contributions in the heyday of western swing. And in 1976, one of the great—and unheralded—pianists of country music was honored.

Hargus "Pig" Robbins, winner of the CMA Instrumentalist of the Year award in 1976, joined Local 257 of the Musicians' Union in Nashville in 1957. George Cooper, then the president of the local, took a liking to him and discouraged him from joining, feeling that his blindness might be a hindrance. But Robbins would hear none of it, and after he started showing up on a slew of hit records (and some Bob Dylan sessions in the late '60s) that was the end of that. His ability to play in literally any style as if he'd done it all his life has stood him in good stead for years. And other sessionmen, like Randy Goodrum (who wrote *You Needed Me*), David Briggs, Larry Butler, Bill Pursell, Bobby Wood and Bunky Keels, to name a few, follow in the tradition of Cramer and Robbins.

It isn't likely you'll ever see a huge defection to the piano by country singers, now or in the future. But the fact remains that more popular performers today are using the piano than ever before, all owing a debt to people like Roy Hall, Moon Mullican and Jerry Lee, who made the whole idea marketable. And if you ever hear anybody wondering out loud what a piano is doing in a country band, or complaining it doesn't belong there, tell them about those old barn dances, about Aleyone Bate and Papa Calhoun. *That'll teach 'em to mess with tradition!!!* ■

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Spending \$1,000 Will Make Your Stereo Hard To Beat

Just as last month we tried to put together an ideal five hundred dollar stereo system, this month we've upped the ante. Is the best stereo system you can get for a thousand dollars twice as good as what five hundred will buy? If not, is it at least good enough to justify spending twice the bread? Read on, music lovers; the stereo oracle answers these and other questions.

We assembled three systems, costing about \$1,000 each and each consisting of a turntable, a receiver, and a set of speakers. There are other possibilities for an upgraded system, such as adding a tape deck and/or other components such as headphones or better phono cartridge. Or—and this gets really way out—extra speakers such as subwoofers for added bass, an additional pair of small speakers attached to a time delay, or other “signal processing” (meaning, anything that changes the music from what it was meant to be to better fit one's taste) like equalizers, expanders, limiters, analyzers—the endless list goes on to fulfill all sorts of imaginary needs. But any of these items can be added to a thousand dollar basic system as well as to a five hundred dollar one—making either into somebody's idea of an ultimate music system. So in the coming months we'll talk about several of these add-ons; certainly about headphones and cartridges and tape decks, which are pretty useful things to know about and have around. Yet the first choice should, I think, be with the basic system. How much better than last month's can we get and still make the bills this month?

As with the lower priced system, we start with speakers—because they are simply the most important component in determining the ultimate quality of the system. Many people would argue with me on that, but I think I can prove it. Just hook up any of these speakers, the JBL L-40s, the Altec Lansing Model 6, or the Acoustic Research AR-93s. All are excellent speakers; all retail for around five and six hundred dollars a pair. And they all sound very different.

The design JBL L-40s are a few years old. They have been praised by *Consumer Reports* as one of the best speaker values

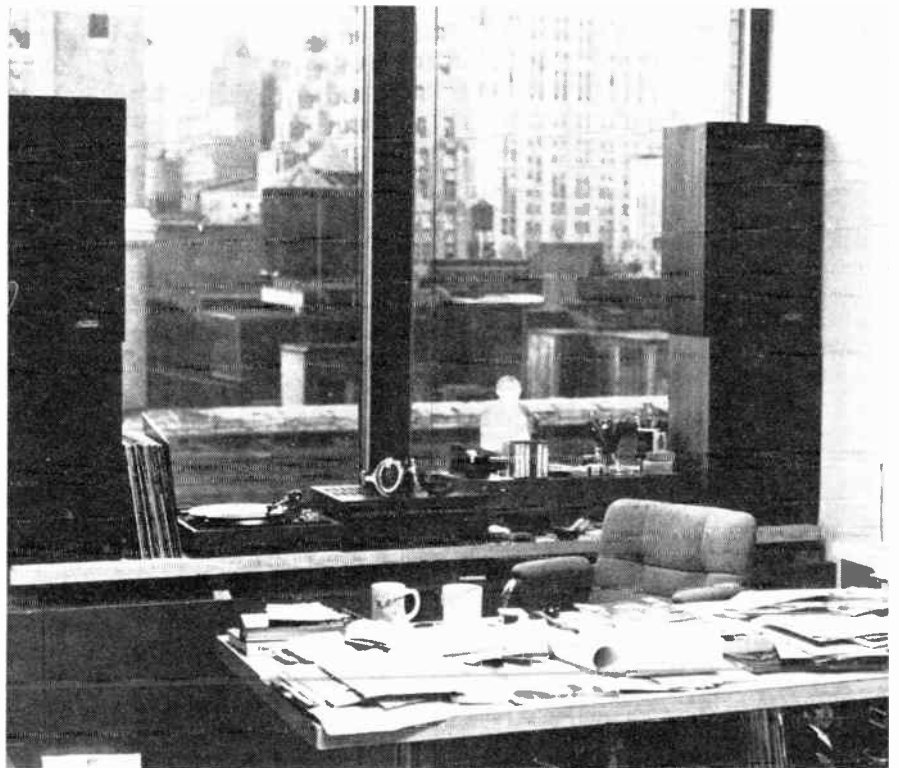
they know of. They are a very convenient size, only about two feet high by one foot wide, but produce a fuller sound than the size would lead you to believe. However, to achieve such full bass, we had the feeling that JBL pushed a little farther than their materials could deliver: the bass did tend to get a bit fuzzy or murky when faced with much of any challenge. This is pretty typical. There isn't a small speaker made that doesn't have the same problem, to some extent.

The Altecs are brighter sounding speakers, meaning that they seem, at least to us, to sound just a little sharper with more shrill high notes than normal. Through most of our speaker testing, we happened to be playing a Johnny Cash album (*Rockabilly Blues*) and no, they did not make Johnny Cash sound like June Carter. What they did was to make him

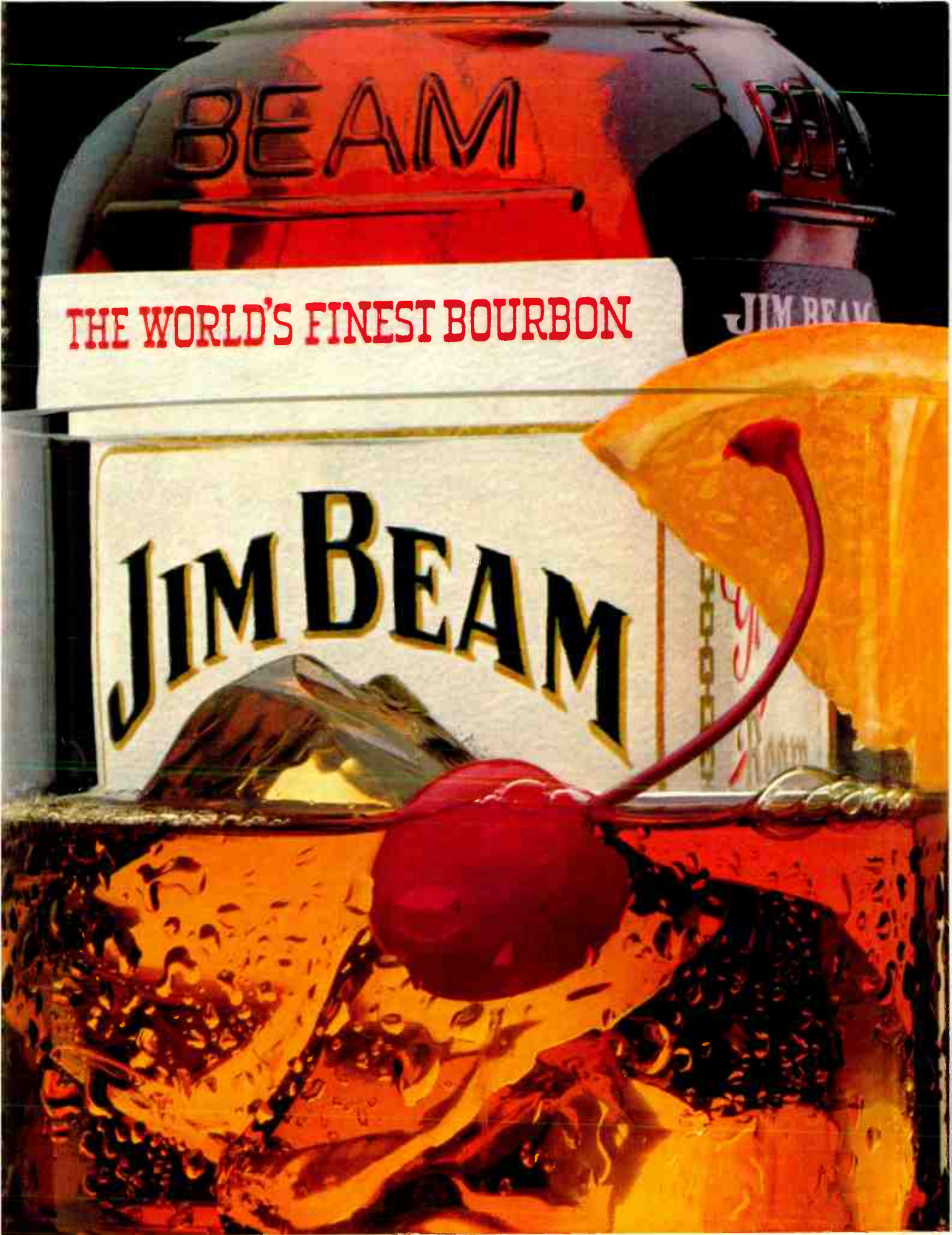
sound like maybe he'd seen a few less years than implied by the songs he was singing.

This is very arbitrary, now remember, but anybody who doesn't tell you that choosing speakers is only a matter of your own arbitrary likings, isn't telling it true. That is perhaps the main reason that speakers are the most important component choice to make. You can be objective about everything else, and speakers are where the chooser shows his or her personality. For example, many people in the office seemed to prefer the JBLs even though the Altecs probably look better on pure numbers.

That said, we absolutely loved the Acoustic Research AR93s more than we have any affordable loudspeaker in a long time. AR calls these “no frills” speakers: they are encased in plastic and a non-removable cloth bag, and at \$500 a pair



After picking the VR-5000 and the Dual 1264, the editor had trouble choosing between the Altecs (top) and the JBLs, so he's using both.



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The AR 93s, definitely a "best buy," are shown with the Mitsubishi DP-5 (front) and the Philips AF-829 turntables; and the JVC R-S55 (on top) and the Mitsubishi DA-R7 receivers.

they cost less than any of the speakers we tested for this system. There are no controls on them (most speakers have some sort of treble knob, and some have bass and midrange controls, just like a receiver) and they don't look like furniture, but they don't look bad. But the sound can best be described in only one word, to my ears: accurate. There are two bass drivers while almost every other speaker in this price range has only one, and a very smooth midrange and tweeter. They don't try and push out too much bass, and don't sound bright or hissy; they merely sound like they should. To me, there isn't much to compare at even twice the price. To me, Remember, it's a subjective business.

Objective though it may be, buying a receiver is not strictly a logical decision. Even the way the box looks is important, and then you may want to spend money on digitally synthesized tuning with preset buttons—which makes tuning in a radio station a little easier, but does not make

that station sound better once you've got it tuned. Of the three we tested, the JVC R-S55 has faultless digital tuning, with preset stations like a car radio, only a whole lot more accurate. Then there was the Vector Research VR-5000, which has standard tuning, a very helpful midrange control, making its total tone control more effective, and, with its sleek black finish, it is a perfect match for the AR speakers. Still, we must admit that the Mitsubishi DA-R7 most caught our fancy.

First of all, the cosmetics. This receiver has a radio dial that actually is a radio dial: it's round, like they used to be. It also comes in a wooden cabinet, which is getting pretty rare at this price (all of these receivers have list prices from three hundred to four hundred dollars). More importantly, the amplifier, at 33 watts per channel with negligible distortion, turned out a very smooth, mellow sound. This was very much preferable, to our ears, than the typical hard-edged digital sound of the

JVC. There's no denying the convenience of digital tuning, but JVC (or any manufacturer of such a receiver) does not deny the slight audible increase in FM distortion, either. In the end, it's a value judgement.

The amplifier section (and the part that matters most if you don't listen to the radio much) of the VR-5000 is the most powerful of all these receivers at 45 watts per channel, but power ratings alone are not the mark of the best amplifier. Each of these has enough power for even the least efficient of our three speakers (which happen to be the AR93s). All of these receivers tested out so well, in fact, that strictly judging the way they amplify a record, I'm not sure that even the trained ear of an engineer could tell the difference between these and a much more expensive amplifier. It would be an interesting experiment.

Finally, the turntables. This month we chose the Mitsubishi DP-5, the Dual CS 1264, and the Philips AF-829. All performed well, but plainly put, last month's best turntable, the Technics SL-B2, performed as well as two of them at half the price. One of those two turntables has an excuse—the Dual CS 1264 is a multiple player, and you'd expect to pay a premium for a fine turntable that also can stack records, so we feel we can recommend this one highly. In fact, if you want both record changing capability and hi-fi performance, *Stereo Review* says the Dual is your *only* choice. Unfortunately, the Philips AF 829 showed no more resistance to external vibration than that company's lower priced model. It has a pitch control, if you like to play along with the record, and its controls are all outside of the dustcover, but we don't see much reason to choose this over the lower priced Philips of last month.

The last unit, the Mitsubishi DP-5, turned out to be one of the finest home turntables we've ever used. Rock steady, with incredibly smooth movement, we'd guess this one is as good as you could ever want a turntable to be.

In the end, is the best thousand dollar system twice as good as the best for half the price? Only if it sounds that way to you. To me, it is—I love this stuff so much I write about it every month. But, as the head of one of the companies whose products were reviewed this month once told me, "Every musician I've ever known has a terrible stereo system compared to what you'd think they'd have. They know it can never sound exactly like it's live, so when they want live music they go out and get it. When they listen to a stereo, they supply what's missing with their imagination."

He's a pretty good trombone player, that executive.

Next time, we'll get into a couple of minor components that can assume major importance—cartridges and headphones. ■

Editor and Reporter:
Bob Campbell
Nashville, Tennessee

All the news that fits the
space we have.
Weather: Variable, Seasonal

Bushwackers Band: Female Quartet Sings Bluegrass



BUSHWACKERS BAND — From (l-r): Ingrid Reese, fiddle; Susie Monick, banjo; Ginger Boatwright, rhythm guitar and lead vocals; and April Barrows, bass.

Bushwackers, a Nashville-based country bluegrass female quartet, are helping to dispel the myth that an all woman musical unit has less talent than novelty appeal.

Put together a little over a year ago by Ginger Boatwright, former lead singer with the critically acclaimed Red, White and Bluegrass Band, and banjo picker Susie Monick, the group has just recorded its first album for Flying Fish Records and plays the college club circuit with the likes of Doc and Merle Watson, John Hartford and Vassar Clements.

"We put on a show and we try to entertain," says Boatwright, who has the distinction of having cooked a huge Southern dinner for Paul and Linda McCartney when they visited Nashville a few years back. "We have had tables full of women who came up to us after the show and said, 'We heard there was an all-girl group and we wanted to see if ya'll were worth a darn. We were sure surprised. One college group asked us to play, and afterwards a guy came up and told us, 'we just invited you because you were an all-girls group. We didn't even think you could play.' But when Susie gets up there and blisters that banjo, a lot of folks are shocked, and that makes it all worthwhile."

Boatwright, who was the only female in male dominated groups all her career says she is not trying to make any political points, but that she just enjoys working with women more than men.

"We just go out and make our music," said Boatwright, whose own songs have been recorded by Kitty Wells, Moe Bandy and Red, White and Bluegrass. "A lot of women's groups make a big deal about women's lib and so on, but we have no axes to grind. We don't want to alienate men or women. When I said Susie was our straight man, I have actually had women come up and take offense because I didn't say she was a straight person or straight woman. I feel like I am very feminine. I know who I am and have no doubt I am a woman. So I don't feel like I have to grind any axe.

"We even had one woman who picketed a club for some sexist joke she thought I made one night," Boatwright added. "When I heard about it I said fine, if

that's what she wants to do. I say a lot of things on stage that come off the top of my head and I'm not going to worry about what I say."

A strong musical heritage supports Boatwright, whose stint as bluegrass vocalist with Red, White and Bluegrass established her own creditable merits. Growing up in Alabama surrounded by musical parents and grandparents, she began playing gigs in college on weekends with her future husband, Grant Boatwright. With the addition of a banjo picker named Dale Whitcomb, the combo started touring as Grant, Dale and Ginger.

During that same time, she became ill with a very rare form of cancer. She eventually recovered, and the trio evolved into Red, White and Bluegrass. The group recorded four albums before disbanding in 1979, with their first LP causing quite a few ripples in the staid world of bluegrass.

"We got an awful lot of criticism from reviewers in bluegrass magazines," Boatwright says. "It was a departure from normal bluegrass albums. We had Norman Blake and the Atlanta Symphony on one song. Norman wrote a piece for mandolin called *Nine Year Waltz* that is one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard in my life. We used the symphony on it. It scared Norman to death. The mandolin is originally a classical instrument and he just took it back where it started. The bluegrassers were screaming 'sacrilege, sacrilege.'"

The band's second album, *Red, White and Bluegrass Jammer's Journal*, earned them the most promising vocal group honors in trade magazines in 1974, and the album was touted as one of the best bluegrass albums of the year. As with many successful groups, personal problems finally destroyed it, a situation which rankled Boatwright, who views the

music business with a practical mind.

"Mama told me a long time ago, if you treat music like a 9 to 5 job, you can be successful at it," Boatwright relates. "If you pull some of the tricks some of those guys pulled on a regular job, you would be fired on the spot."

Bushwackers consists of Boatwright, who plays rhythm guitar and sings lead vocals; Monick, who plays banjo, fiddle, mandolin and guitar; April Barrows, bass player and harmony singer; and Ingrid Reese, who plays fiddle and guitar and sings harmony. Reese's father, famed bandleader Woody Herman, played on the album.

The album, *Bushwackers*, was produced by veteran fiddler Vassar Clements, and although they are often billed as a bluegrass group, and do play many bluegrass clubs, Boatwright insists the album is not really bluegrass. They are, she says, trying to escape that image.

"I love bluegrass instrumentation, but we want to get away from it," said Boatwright, who doesn't listen to much music these days, but names Riders In The Sky, a western group, as a favorite band. "You can't sell bluegrass. I am going to keep doing it, but move on into other things. Our album is not a bluegrass album. It is more progressive country. There is only one bluegrass song on it. The album is made up of original songs and I wrote seven of them."

At this point, Boatwright says she is satisfied with the progress of the group because they are working regularly. She likes the other women and they get along well. Eventually, she hopes Bushwackers will evolve to the point the group is playing only concert dates and performing all original material. But for now, Boatwright is content "to make my house payments and feed my child."

Bradley's Barn Studio Burns Down

Bradley's Barn, one of the most historic recording studios in country music, burned to the ground recently, destroying over \$500,000 worth of recording equipment along with priceless master tapes of recording sessions and mementoes of some of the artists who have recorded there over the years. Built in 1964 by veteran producer Owen Bradley, the studio in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee was converted from an old pole barn. "I remember when we shoveled out the manure and poured the concrete floor," said the 65-year-old Bradley.

A faulty light fixture caused the blaze which destroyed the facility that for years was the recording home for such artists as Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty and Brenda Lee. Almost every country artist has at one time or another recorded at the studio known for its down-home, warm atmosphere. "It was a legend," said Joe Mills, a recording engineer who worked at the barn for 14 years. "The studio's most cherished item was the log book which contained every name and every song recorded here. You wouldn't believe the number of million sellers that were listed in that book."

Bradley, who has produced Lynn since the beginning of her career, echoed Mills' sentiments. "I don't know where to begin," Bradley said. "The building can be replaced, but I've lost some things that are absolutely priceless to me. I can't believe it is gone. Everybody should have been here when Bradley's Barn fell in. What a spectacular fire it turned out to be."

Jerry Reed, who recorded there and played guitar as a session man for Bradley, expressed sadness over the loss of the studio and remarked on the atmosphere of a recording session at the barn.

"Owen was a giant in my eyes," Reed said. "I actually worked for him with shaking hands. It wasn't a session. It was a get-together in a barn out there with the people you love most on earth and respect. The barn itself—I don't have a flowery enough vocabulary to describe the aura—just down-home friends and neighbors getting together to see if we can create some magic with no pressure. This is horrible news."

Bradley is definitely rebuilding the studio.

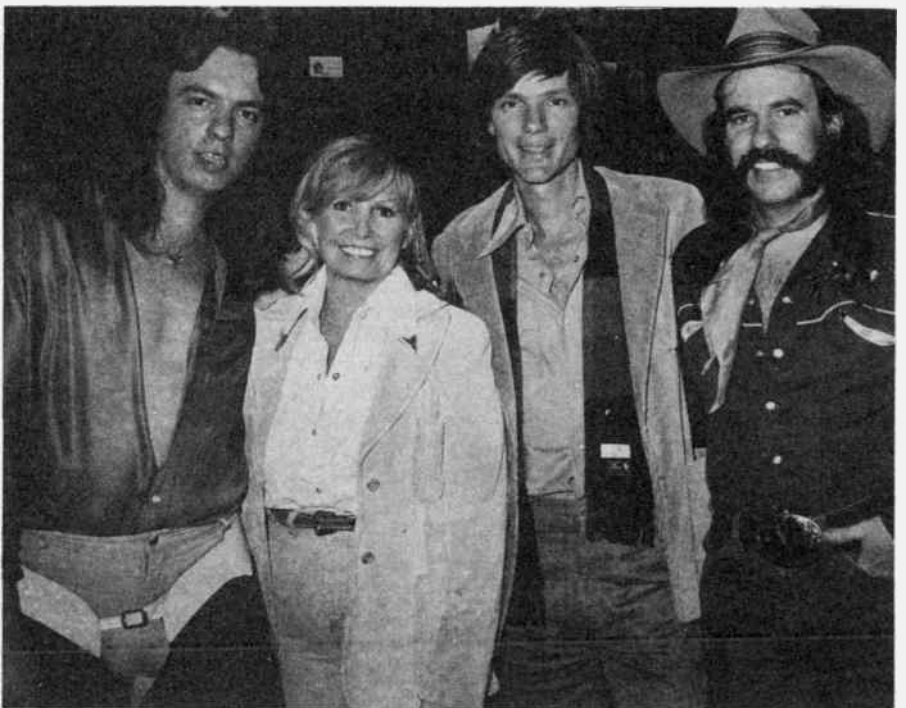
Hollywood Producer Influenced by Nashville Sounds

Producer/arranger Michael Lloyd has packed a full, distinguished career in his 30 years. At 19, he took over as vice president of A&R (artist and repertoire) at MGM Records in Los Angeles. At 20, he produced *Natural Man* for Lou Rawls, and the single won a Grammy Award. In the past ten years, Lloyd has produced Shaun Cassidy, Leif Garrett, the Osmonds, Debby Boone, and Maureen McGovern, among others, and his production work has earned Lloyd some 58 platinum and gold singles and albums. In the past few years he has moved slowly into the country field and now produces The Bellamy Brothers, Susie Allanson and The Burritos, formerly known as The Burrito Brothers. Lloyd visited Nashville for the first time in nearly ten years recently, and expressed his admiration for country music and its popularity. An articulate, youthful man, Lloyd views country music from a unique perspective, having of course been involved with pop and r&b for

most of his career.

"I am coming here to learn," said Lloyd over breakfast in the Spence Manor Hotel on Music Row. "There are a lot of great records that are done here. I am looking for tunes and it is much better coming here where all the songs and writers are. I think Nashville has a distinctive sound if you are looking for it. I think the music has become much more sophisticated and broader in its appeal. I think producers are capable of doing many, many different things now. I have heard Ronnie Milsap records that sound as if they could have been recorded anywhere. Don Williams gets an incredible sound. I love his records. I have tried to capture his sound, and haven't been able to do it.

"I think some of the more inventive things are done here," added Lloyd, who produced Boone's *You Light Up My Life* and The Bellamy's *If I Said You Had A Beautiful Body Would You Hold It Against Me* and *Sugar Daddy*. "It is that



BELLAMYS PLAY PALOMINO — Following an appearance at Hollywood's famous Palomino Club, The Bellamy Brothers visit with their producer, Michael Lloyd. Pictured (l-r) are David Bellamy, Patty Bellamy, Michael Lloyd and Howard Bellamy.

COUNTRY Gazette

undefinable thing that is occasionally lost. I have always tended to think in Nashville, they think more about if it is gonna sound good first, and then is it gonna be a hit. I try to cut records I could imagine being cut here. Because of logistics, I live with my family in California and I have my own studio. I record out there, but I try to use the influences and ideas I hear coming from here."

Lloyd has watched the growth of country music with sharp interest, and he feels it has basically replaced pop music as a mass appeal sound. He also believes the current wave of popularity might subside in the future, but many people who have been exposed to the Waylons and Willies and Crystal Gayles will remain lifelong fans.

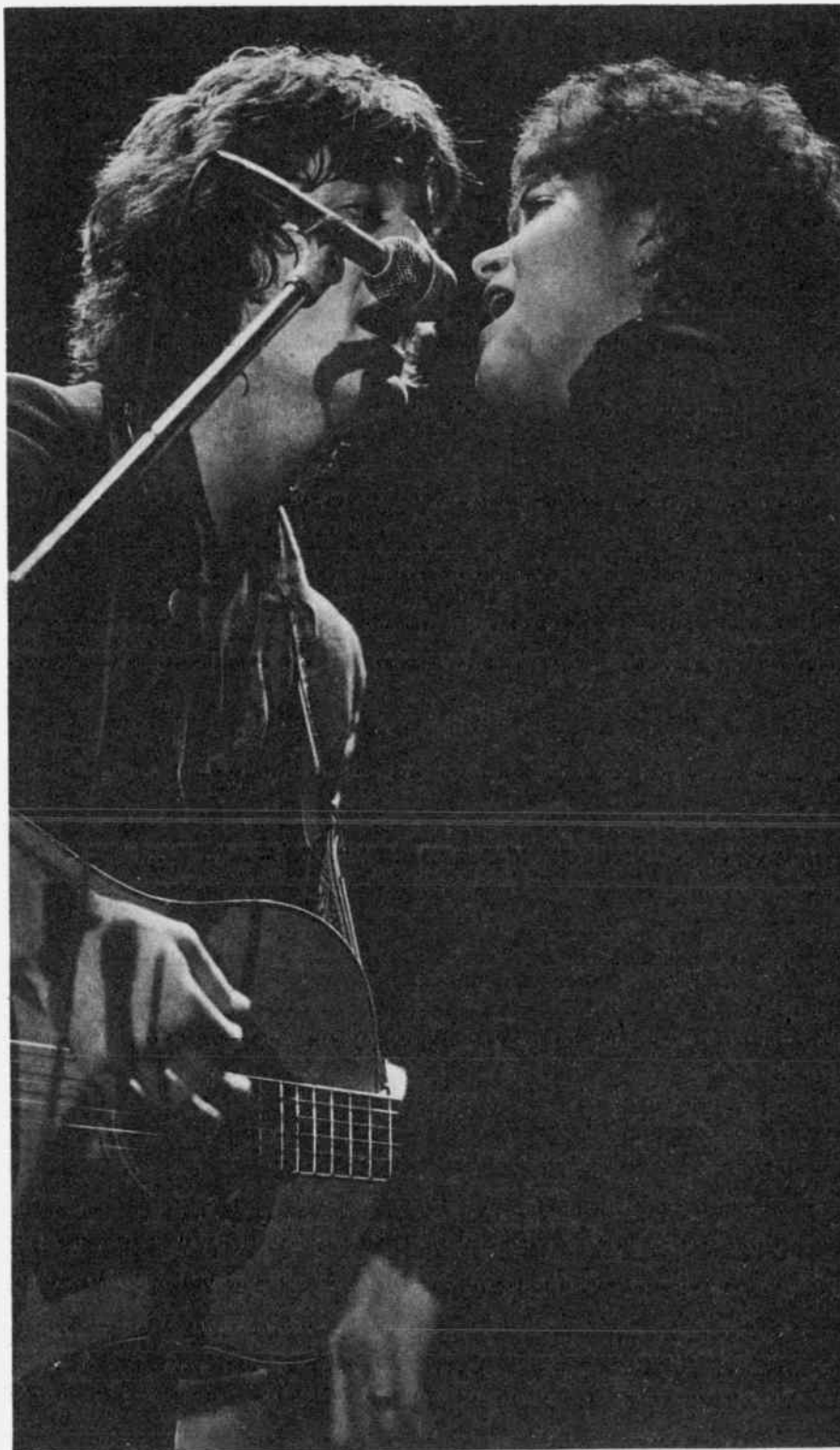
"The thing about country music right now, and what attracted me a few years ago, is that country is what pop music used to be," Lloyd said. "Country has a certain basic emotional musical appeal—factors that attract a lot of people. I feel people want to be entertained and want to hear emotional songs; a you and me kind of relationship in the song, and it will bring back memories.

"Country music is very fashionable now, and it is being exposed to people who wouldn't ordinarily hear it through movies, TV shows, commercials," Lloyd added. "I think that is good. Some of those people will go on to something else, but some will stay because they like it. Country is not trendy like disco, it is just fashionable now."

In case his colleagues and fans may get the idea that he is simply jumping on the country bandwagon, Lloyd is quick to point out that he has actually been producing country records off and on for some time. It just so happens he is only now beginning to have success in the field.

"I have always cut all types of music, and I started getting involved in country music in the early '70s," Lloyd said. "I just didn't have any success. I cut some country records on Kenny Rogers in 1973 at MGM that didn't sell. It wasn't until the last two-and-a-half years that it started coming together when I began producing The Bellamy Brothers, Debby Boone, and now Susie Allanson.

"A guy from a pop magazine asked me once, 'Why are you doing country?' He was almost derogatory," Lloyd added. "I told him I was doing it because I liked it. When I first started, I was making no money at it. I couldn't give the records away. I'm in it because I like the songs and the artists."



STARGAZING AT EXIT/IN — Some famous faces graced the stage at the newly renovated Exit/In Club in Nashville recently. Rodney Crowell and Rosanne Cash gave a stunning show for a full house of fans, press and music industry people.

WJRB Radio Airs New Series

Nashville country radio station WJRB, located on Music Row, has been named flagship station for a new nationally syndicated radio concert series.

Called *Nashville Live*, the series will be heard weekly on more than 100 country music radio stations around the country. Each show will feature four top artists recorded in concert. *Nashville Live* is produced by PM/TD Productions and Metro Communications of New York City, with local recording by Fanta Productions.

WJRB also airs the *Live From The Lone Star Cafe* series, recorded at New York's famous country nightspot, and the *Country Greats in Concert* program from the ABC Radio Network.

HBO Mining Country Music Talent

With country music continuing its explosive rise in popularity, it should come as no surprise that Home Box Office (HBO), the largest and oldest cable television network, is devoting more and more time to country programming. HBO, which reaches some five million viewers, has aired country shows since its inception in 1972, but the network is now giving greater care and attention to country music specials.

Some ten programs, with airtime of at least an hour, have been shown on HBO. The first program involving country music was a jamboree program originating from the old Ryman Auditorium in 1973 that featured Johnny Paycheck, Tom T. Hall and Jerry Lee Lewis. Another HBO country program was not taped in Nashville until June, 1980, when the network produced the *Nashville Pop Special*, starring Barbara Mandrell, Larry Gatlin, Lynn Anderson, Jim Stafford, Johnny Paycheck, Johnny Rodriguez and Rosanne Cash.

GALLATIN ROAD STORES LURES COUNTRY FANS —

Although country music fans flock to the Country Music Hall of Fame and the many souvenir shops laced in and around the Music Row area on their visits to Nashville, there are at least three good roadside attractions on the other side of town on Gallatin Road up by Hendersonville and Madison. Right outside of Hendersonville, Johnny Cash maintains a studio, souvenir shop and museum which contains a huge collection of old guitars, guns and memorabilia that Cash has collected over the years. An old train station depot sits on the grounds and in front of the office is a Cadillac made "one piece at a time" after Cash's hit song. Down the road toward Madison, Merle Haggard and Gordon Terry own a souvenir store that also includes some of Haggard's personal possessions. The newest attraction is Willie Nelson's General Store, which opened in the summer of 1979. In addition to the normal albums and t-shirts available, a pair of Willie's jogging shoes, size 10½ B, hang on the wall

behind the cash register. Below is Johnny Cash's office/studio/souvenir store with the Cadillac out front (left); Merle Haggard's shop (center); and Willie's General Store in Madison (right).



HBO is now incorporating country music in its unique series of Standing Room Only specials, and a concert on Linda Ronstadt aired in August, 1980. In addition, HBO aired Glen Campbell and Tanya Tucker in concert from Harrah's in Reno, Nev. in October, and Kris Kristofferson in Monte Carlo (with guest Anne Murray) will soon air.

Two more specials are set for airing early this year. Taped at The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville last November, *Country Music: A Family Affair*, stars Tammy Wynette and Roger Miller and features a variety of guest stars. HBO went on location to Independence, Ka. and filmed a special outdoor downtown concert which was hosted by Roy Clark and features Merle Haggard, Charlie Rich, Ronnie Milsap, Johnny Lee and Lacy J. Dalton. Barbara Bitterman, head of HBO variety programming, visited Nashville during the taping of *Country Music: A Family Affair*, and she emphasized HBO's continuing interest in country music.

"Country music is very hot all over now, and everybody is interested in the music," Bitterman said. "We have several shows in production now and more in the works. We have Mac Davis coming up and others."

A big difference in HBO programming and regular network programming is a lack of commercials to break the mood

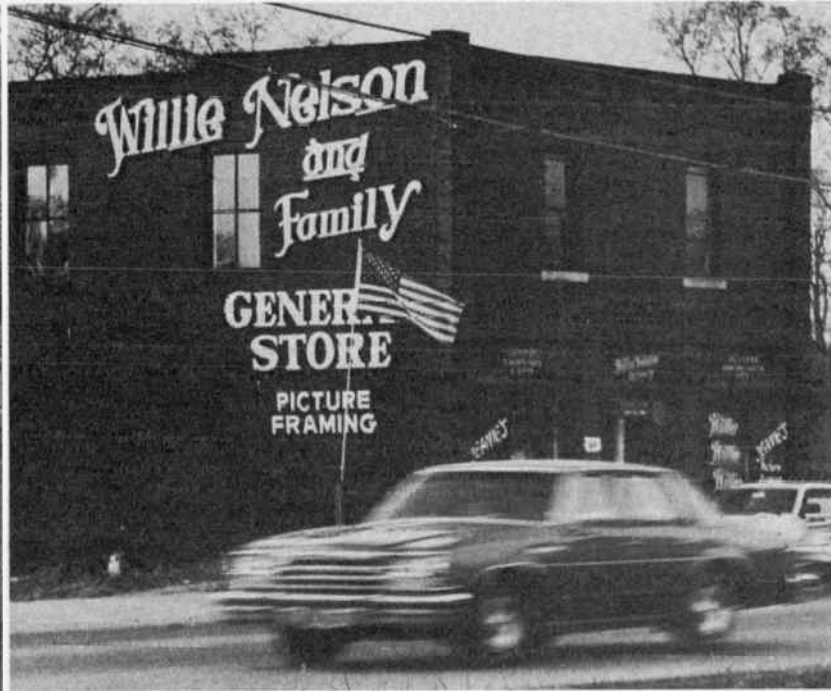
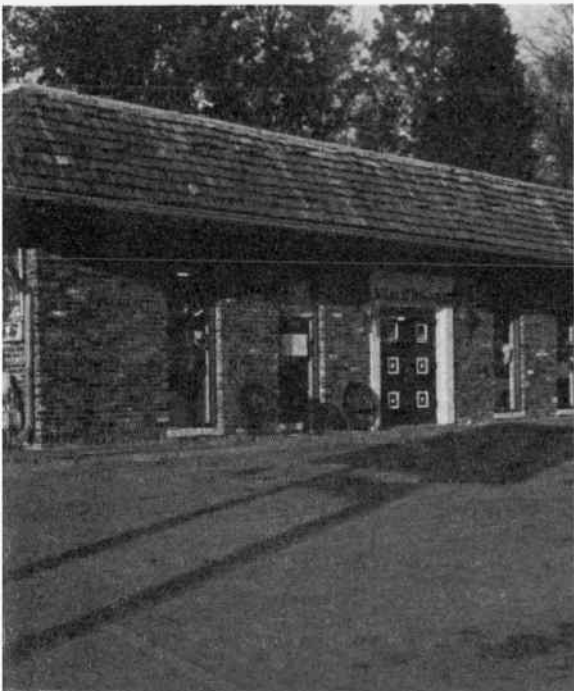
and flow, and a more natural feel to the programs. As an example, Bitterman cites the country show filmed in Independence, Ka.

"We are uncensored, unedited and we try to make our shows an event," Bitterman said. "We want the viewers to say, 'Gee, I wish I could have bought a ticket.' Well, they can still see the whole show. For instance, we wanted to do a show in mid-America, the kind of things that happen in small towns everywhere. So we staged a concert downtown in Independence. We built a stage in the middle of main street. We had Roy Clark hosting. We have over 90 minutes of that show, but will probably end up with a one-hour special. At the end of that show, Roy Clark and Charlie Rich jammed on some old tunes and soon everybody joined in. We caught that on tape and it should be the best part of the show.

"We aren't tied to exact times like the networks are," Bitterman added. "We can go longer if it works. We are developing more complicated ideas for HBO. These are concept shows we put together. They weren't existing concerts we went out and shot. We put them together for HBO."

Bitterman said surveys reveal country shows are received very well by HBO subscribers. She also said Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers are two artists she would love to film in special HBO concerts.

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WAYLON MEETS BAD MAN J.R. EWING — A couple of outlaws got to know each other recently when Waylon Jennings got together for a chat with actor Larry Hagman, who plays the notorious J.R. Ewing on the TV series *Dallas*. Hagman met Jennings backstage after the singer performed a benefit concert which raised \$250,000 for the Screen Actors' Guild Union in Hollywood, California. Shown backstage are RCA's Carson Schreiber, Hagman, Jennings and KHJ Radio's Charlie Cook.

Jerry Reed Named Chairman of Tennessee Film Commission

As an initial step in a concerted effort to attract major film productions to Tennessee, Governor Lamar Alexander has appointed Jerry Reed chairman of the Tennessee Film Commission. Reed heads a 50-member honorary commission that includes prominent lawyers, businessmen and representatives from the music industry. Reed will work closely with Pat Ledford, the newly appointed film and TV production director. Rather than coast on his celebrity status, Reed will use his contacts in enticing companies to work in Tennessee.

"We are going to put together a presentation and take it out to California," said Reed, who is devoting more and more of his time to acting these days. "The governor is going with us. Part of the job is making people know in this state what needs to be done. Hollywood has to know the state is really behind them.

"That is not going to be hard at all," Reed added. "When they leave here all they leave behind are dollars. They don't leave any pollution or junk like the fac-

tories. Everybody who comes here loves our people, loves our country and our scenery. We have left some bad tastes in some people's mouths, but part of it has been their fault. We have got to completely erase all that."

Ledford will be responsible for much of the nuts-and-bolts work of the commission. A former member of the governor's staff, she will direct her efforts towards publicizing the many and varied geographical sites Tennessee offers, as well as the assistance the state will readily provide to production teams.

"We have a great state with a diversity of locations," Ledford said. "For instance, an area called Copperhill looks like a miniature Grand Canyon. We have to convey this to film producers and show them a positive attitude. We plan to provide a 24-hour service to film crews while they are here. We have a special phone line that they can call any time of the day for help. For instance, *Concrete Cowboys* is being shot here now, and we are putting a parade together for them.

They need permits to get in certain buildings, and we are helping them. If they need a helicopter, we get it for them. If they need legal advice, I go to one of the lawyers on the commission."

Aside from the glamour of the industry, the added revenue to the state is a prime motivation in Tennessee's drive to lure productions here. Citing *Concrete Cowboys* as an example, Ledford explained that if the TV series which was filmed here late last fall is successful, it would mean film crews would be here for extended periods of time. "If the crews were here five months, that would mean a 12 million dollar budget," she said. Six to seven million dollars would be left in the state and 2.7 million dollars would go to tax revenues."

— But the fact that most states now have film commissions, the competition is fierce, especially in similarly scenic states.

"It comes down to attitude and the energy of the film commission and state—who is more convincing in attracting the film companies," she concluded.

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Country Stars Relax on Nashville TV Talk Show



MILLER & COMPANY — Dan Miller (left) shares conversation with Jerry Reed on the late-night talk show that airs each Saturday Night on WSM's Channel 4.

Imagine sitting in a comfortable restaurant booth late at night after a good meal, drinking coffee and chatting on a first name basis with your favorite country music star. Maybe that will never happen, but Nashville television viewers are getting darn near the same thing each Saturday at midnight when WSM Channel 4 airs a relaxed and informal talk show called *Miller & Company*.

Hosted by Dan Miller, the show is not geared specifically to country music—it features personalities from many fields—but a good 90 percent of the guests are country stars and people in the country music business. Miller, an affable man with a winning smile, is an 11 year veteran of the WSM news department and currently anchors the station's 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. newscasts, in addition to his latest television venture.

An admitted late night person himself, Miller felt a need existed in Nashville for a talk show geared to people home alone, or who simply wanted to relax with an entertaining, leisurely paced show in the wee hours. Since its debut last May with Charlie Daniels as the first guest, Miller has worked to create a program in which conversation replaces the traditionally formal interview.

"I am a late-night person and I like late-night programming," said Miller, who started his career in 1960 as a film editor on a television station in Augusta, Ga. when he was a college student. "I thought there was a void in Nashville of a late-night talk show. I wanted a talk show that would treat the audience at home like a third person. We don't have an audience, and we have a closed set. Also it is an open-ended show. It is a 30-minute show that usually runs 45 or 50 minutes. We run

until I feel like the interview is ended. We tape about 11 o'clock at night on Tuesdays. When you tape a late-night show in the afternoon, you get a different feel . . . Little things like looking around the building and seeing daylight coming in.

Although the show is taped, Miller tries to keep the show "live" and he refuses to edit the tape. Even if a mistake is made while filming, Miller prefers to let it stay on tape in order to preserve the "feel" of the show. "I want it to be as live as possible, warts and all," Miller said. When a country artist appears on the show, Miller avoids discussing the artist's new record.

"A lot of interviews are centered around a star's latest record and where they will be appearing next week," said Miller, leaning back in a chair in his cluttered, small office, for which he apologized. "Some of that comes up, but I purposely try to work around cliché questions. As far as I know, we are the first show to let an artist come on and just talk and not hype their record."

In the first few months Charlie Daniels, Anne Murray, Brenda Lee, The Gatlin Brothers, Ralph Emery, Jerry Reed, Dorothy Ritter, (the late Tex Ritter's wife) Mooney Lynn, John Conlee, Bobby Bare, B.J. Thomas, Janie Fricke, Allen Reynolds, who produces Crystal Gayle, and Larry Butler, who produces Kenny Rogers, have appeared on the show. Miller said Dolly Parton is set for an upcoming show, and Emmylou Harris and Crystal Gayle are tentatively set to appear. Miller is hoping to get Johnny Cash, Roy Acuff "and some of the legends like Bill Monroe and Ernest Tubb" on the show.

In looking back on some of his country guests, Miller related a few interesting stories. He was a little surprised by Reed's

demeanor on the show. The staff felt Reed would be hyper and energetic, but Miller said Reed "was very laid back, very philosophical and soft spoken. In fact some of the people behind the cameras couldn't hear him. He really got into the late night conversation."

The first show Miller taped with Charlie Daniels as a guest remains a favorite, and Miller said of Daniels: "He is a nice guy. I just like him." On the program with Mooney Lynn, Loretta's husband, Miller said Mooney told him that in arguments, Loretta would sometimes bring up the fact that she was the breadwinner and that it really bothered him. The show with B.J. Thomas as guest was unusual because a comment from Thomas on his days as a drug user prompted the Memphis, Tenn. District Attorney to use Thomas as a witness in the trial against Dr. Nick Nichopoulos, the doctor who prescribed medication for the late Elvis Presley.

"We talked about Thomas' problems with drugs," Miller said. "In the drug discussion, he talked about his relationship with the doctor who was involved with Elvis. We never even mentioned his name. Since that show, the D.A. out of Memphis contacted Thomas, and he is going to testify against Nichopoulos. Some of the things he said were new revelations. They called us for a copy of the show."

Since Miller is dealing with so many country stars, is he a fan of country music? You bet. He particularly likes the new sophistication in country music.

"It's funny. I never really thought of myself as a country music fan, but all of a sudden I realized that I am a fan," Miller said. "I like an awful lot of the music. I liked it as a kid and then got away from it for a while. I did a show with Eddy Arnold and talked with him how I bought some of his records when I was a kid. I like the new country music. I like the way they produce it now. I like the melodies. With the new wave of singers, I don't think it is really country music anymore. It is just nice music.

"Allen Reynolds said as a producer, it made him mad to be restricted by labels," Miller added. "A lot of people in the industry never wanted it to change, but it is progressing now. Go to a country concert on the road and it is a big setup now. The artists are experimenting with new things. I don't know the difference between country and pop. It is a gray area. Almost every country artist we get on the show will say, 'I defy anybody to give me a definition of country music.'"

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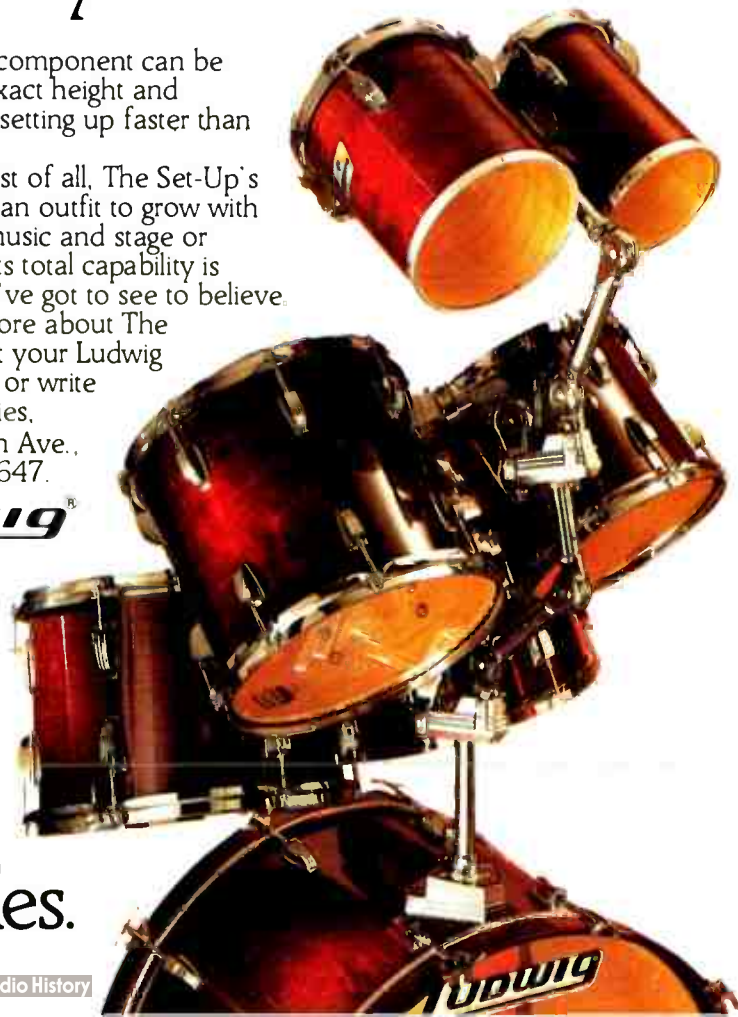
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Carlene Carter Goes to England, Brings High-Bred Country Punk Back to the USA

By Patrick Carr



Carlene in New York, supporting her latest (and best) album by granting interviews hither and thither. The interview opens nicely, casually (there are family connections: I know her stepfather, Johnny Cash, and she knows my brother, Peter Carr). We chat about England, where she lives now and I lived then.

Carlene lives in Chiswick, an almost genteel outer neighborhood of London, with her husband Nick Lowe (English, famous, the rocker/pure-pop/rockabilly singer/writer/producer/Rockpile co-leader) and her daughter Tiffany, the result of her first Nashville marriage. Nick Lowe is Carlene's third husband, and she's already ventured the thought that now that she's sure of herself and 25 already and at last genuinely in love, he'll probably be her last. The couple and the daughter appreciate the quiet curved rainsoaked streets of Chiswick, with their big detached houses and small wooded gardens and high private hedges and top-quality local schools and courteous store-proprietors known locally as "shop-keepers" (butchers, grocers, greengrocers, chemists, what-have-you). Carlene says that Tiffany is already "sounding like a little Limey" and that Chiswick is nice because not much happens there, and she can send Tiffany off to school all by herself with no worries about whether or not she'll get there safely. With their varied rock 'n' roll schedules, Carlene and Nick most often meet in the bedroom or kitchen in the early hours of the morning, when even the mice in London have given up trying to stir (London, unlike New York, is an early-night town). They stay up long enough to send Tiffany off to school, and then they go to sleep. When Nick's not there—when

he's becoming obsessive in the studio or he's out on the road somewhere in England or the rest of the world—Carlene goes to bed by herself between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m., the rocker's witching hour. Carlene says that she loves England in general and Chiswick in particular, and that she has no plans to leave in any foreseeable future.

* * *

A description of Carlene and her history: First, the woman herself.

She is obviously, instantly, beautiful. She has the tight, clear Carter complexion, the high and prominent Carter cheekbones, the steel/sky-blue uncanny Carter eyes, and the strong funny Carter mouth. You can see the mother in the daughter (at times, you can even see the daughter in the mother); overall, the face is not so much Southern Belle-serene as bad-girl-exciting; it's a character's beauty she has. If the arrangement of planes and colors and textures weren't so almost-perfect she could perhaps be one of the boys. This is not to say that she is not classically gorgeous (she is); the point is that Carlene's intelligence, her humor and her funk, emerge quite obviously through

her classic Anglo-Saxon complexion, her rangy bodily lines. Today, in character at the interview, she wears an *ersatz* leopard-skin semi-mini dress and a creased-up old leather bomber's jacket. Her hair, straw blonde with darker traces, is banged and wild and long and shaggy in an individualistic adaptation of the Anglo-American *au courant Vogue* new wave mode. She looks for all the world like a smart Gene Vincent groupie, a college girl slumming in the motorcycle dives, a high-bred country punk.

Her history is similarly startling. Born the daughter of Carl Smith and June Carter, she went to live in the Cash/Carter empire when she was almost a teenager. Life in the Cash/Carter household was odd but relatively normal. There were stepsisters all over the place (Rosanne Cash was the closest to Carlene), and while June Carter was able to be a real mother by dint of working the road only ten days a month at most, Carlene's main grownup friend was Mother Maybelle Carter. In the eternal tradition of the Fun Grannie, Maybelle taught Carlene how to play poker, how to bowl, how to fish, and how to use a guitar. In the eternal tradition of the teenage daughter-daddy, Johnny Cash had very little to do with it all.

At the age of fifteen, having become pregnant by her first boyfriend, Carlene got married and left the nest. The marriage did not last ("I hardly remember it at all," says Carlene), and by the age of eighteen she was once more married, this time to Jack Routh, a House of Cash songwriter. A son, Jackson, resulted.

During her second marriage, despite certain jealousies on the part of her husband, Carlene became more and more involved

in the art and business of songwriting. The marriage did not last, but the songwriting did. At first, her concern was to sell songs to other artists, but after a taste of the performing life in Nashville joints such as the Exit/In and a fortunate hookup with Emmylou Harris's management, she procured a recording contract with Warner Brothers Records and set about the business of becoming a full-fledged writing/recording star.

Her first album, **Carlene Carter**, was something of a surprise to those who didn't



know her. Recorded in London with members of The Rumour, English rocker Graham Parker's band, it was not a country album. It featured, for instance, the rock-vamp classic, *Never Together But Close Sometimes*. Eyebrows around Nashville were elevated considerably, the press corps scuttled towards their typewriters, and two standard classes of headlines—standard images—were perpetrated. The first was "Daughter Of Country Dynasty Deserts To Limey-Land"; the second, prompted in part by promotional films for the record and Carlene's slightly outrageous stage show, read "Daughter of Dignity Does The Dirty Boogie."

This type of thing offended Carlene somewhat, but at least it got her name in the papers and formed some sort of image, which in the music business is infinitely preferable to no image at all. She continued to live in Nashville, running with

the young, semi-radical "Elliston Place set" and doing quite well for herself. Her second album, **Two Sides To Every Woman** was, like many second albums, something of a fiasco, but by the time her third, **Musical Shapes**, arrived on the marketplace, she had married Nick Lowe, settled into the Chiswick life, pulled various elements of her personal and professional life together, and became almost a fixture on the music scene in her own right.

Musical Shapes is a tough album, and

it's also revealing. Produced by Nick Lowe with most of his usual English buddies (including his rockabilly alter-ego Dave Edmunds) in tow, it features no less than seven songs written by Carlene herself. Her previous albums were mostly written by others. Together with Nick Lowe's extremely sympathetic production, this fact leads to the notion that perhaps **Musical Shapes** is a much more accurate account of what Carlene wants to do with her music than either **Carlene Carter** or **Two Sides To Every Woman**.

"Yes," says Carlene, "that's what it is. The first one was OK, but it was the producers' first production job, and I think it kinda got away from us. The point was to make a country record with a rock band, which is a really *hard* thing to do, and it didn't work too well. The second—well, it was a mess. I did it in New York with a bunch of session people, and it seemed to me like it was one of those 'oh,

let's cross her over' deals. I can't even listen to it now. But this one was different. First, Nick's a *great* producer—he knows country and he knows rock, and he's totally obsessive about getting things right. Then, he really gave me my head, y'know? I mean, I was as much in control as he was. Also, he never worried about 'Is this song country or is it pop or is it rock?' He just *did* it."

The album is quite a joy. Nick and the boys, Englishmen infatuated as only the English seem to be with the lost sounds and textures of classic American late-rockabilly music, went nice and easy on the instrumental backup but stayed very much on the rhythmic ball, supporting Carlene to a T. Carlene, in turn, sophisticated her songs, injected far more country-type feeling than ever before, and sang with greatly enhanced control and subtlety. Many of the songs are tight, incisive, and highly intelligent, revealing a fine eye for both female and human concerns.

All this said, then, we must turn to other matters. As Carlene asks, "Don't you want to hear any gossip, Patrick? *Country Music* is kind of a gossip magazine, isn't it?"

Well, yes, it is, so let's have some gossip.

The obvious gossip starter is, of course, the subject of Carlene, marriage and men. One hardly knows where to begin, so one begins at the beginning. Why did Carlene get married at the age of fifteen?

She gives me a pitying look. "Well," she says, "there's only two reasons why a fifteen-year-old girl gets married—she's either stupid or pregnant. I was both." She adds that it was her first serious sexual experience which got her pregnant.

"How did Mom and The Man in Black take the news?" I ask.

"John took it pretty well," she says. "He was the first one I told. I couldn't tell June. I just couldn't, so I told John first, and *he* told June. In many ways, Momma's really naive. Like, after she knew, she went out and got all this information about birth control for me. It must have been real hard for her, but she did it. I dunno—maybe *she* learned more than *I* did from it."

Oh. Yes, maybe. We already know about the fate of that first marriage—Carlene says that she hardly remembers it—but what about the marriage with Jack Routh? Is it true that the marriage dissolved because of professional rivalry?

"It was partly that," says Carlene, "but it sure wasn't because *I* was jealous of *him*. It was just weird. I mean, *he's* weird." She adds that Southern men tend to want their wives to stay home and be humble, and she snorts disdainfully when she remembers her first meeting with Ralph Emery, the famous big-time radio personality and Nashville hotshot. His greeting to her was, "Oh, yes, you're the girl that did Jack wrong."

She also remembers the scene in the courtroom when, once married to her little sister Cindy, Jack Routh won custody of his and Carlene's son, Jackson. Here was a situation in which the ex-husband of the big sister was fighting her for custody of her-and-his child so that the child could live with him and the little sister. Carlene says that the judge didn't know about the big sister-little sister arrangement until the decision was made, and recalls the pain of listening to Cindy testifying against her.

Carlene wrote a song about it all, *Too Bad About Sandy*. Some of the lyrics go like this:

*Sandy lost her head to
a man with no heart
Believe me I know
'cause I inflicted his scar
I'm not ashamed
'cause I'm not to blame
It was purely self-defense that shot
that sucker down in flames.
Love that cold cash
Love that cold hard cash
Why mess around with
American Express?
I'm in the low life
Love that sweet low life
Glad I'm not mad
It's just too bad about Sandy.*

Another line asks the question "Who would've thought that lightning could strike this family twice?" Carlene notes that the song was "a way of expressing my



feelings from a distance" and adds that this kind of complication was one of the reasons why she was so glad to leave Nashville behind her. "There's just too much family stuff going on," she says. "Life's complicated enough without all that."

Now, of course, she's out of it. After she and Jack Routh broke up, she spent a while "doing the boys—I'd never really



done that before, and it was crazy," and then fell in love with Nick Lowe. Now she's leading the Chiswick/on-the-road life. Though she and Nick don't get to see a whole lot of each other, and somehow she regrets that, she realizes one of the subtler points of modern marriage: absence makes the heart grow fonder, while also allowing it the freedom it needs for itself. It is tacitly admitted during the interview that just a little is enough. These days, she says, she's genuinely in love with Nick, and she doesn't want to compromise that situation, and so she doesn't mess around when she's on the road. She's just put together a new band, and "one of the requirements is that they all have to be real cute. That's for the girls in the audiences, but it's also for me. Not to touch, though—just to look at." She remembers going to a Linda Ronstadt concert once. "I was listening to Linda," she says, "but I was looking at the band."

All of this raises the question of the bad-girl image, which to some extent she seems to encourage, both onstage with her patently punk-sexy show and offstage with much frank talk and frequent use of naughty words (which have been deleted from this article in view of *Country Music* readers' delicate sensibilities). It doesn't really matter a lot—the double standard for men and women raised in the South is, after all, a double standard, and sex appeal is three-quarters of the whole music/celebrity game anyway—but, for instance, was she a bad girl when she was a teenager?

"Well, no," she says, "not really. I

mean, I smoked in the back of the bus and wore real short skirts and cussed a lot, but I didn't fool around. First time I did, I got pregnant, didn't I?" She adds that these days, she doesn't cuss quite as much as she used to—"though it's kinda hard not to when you're always around a bunch of musicians, especially English ones"—and she remains mortified by one of her more spectacular *faux pas* in the cussing regions. It happened at New York's Bottom Line club when right up there in public, from the stage, she introduced a song by saying "let's put the c—t back into country!" This was just peachy—really got a laugh—but the problem was that both Johnny Cash and June Carter were in the audience. Carlene says that she didn't know they were there, and almost fainted when one of her band members told her. John, she says, seemed quite upset even though she apologized profusely, while June, in response to Carlene's "Momma, I'm sorry I said that word," replied, "what word?"

That's the gossip, then. The interview proceeds along less questionable lines—Carlene misses Rosanne Cash a lot, she wants to have a baby with Nick, she despises "crossover" artists, she feels that she's religious but she doesn't go to church, and she's real glad that John made the Hall of Fame at long last—and then we part on good terms.

Later that night I see Carlene hanging out at the Lone Star Cafe, where her friend Rick Danko is playing. She's bopping around, having lots of fun, being more or less one of the boys. ■

The impression of Jerry Reed that one is left with is of a man who can't sit still for long. The tall, skinny "Alabama Wild Man's" restless and indefatigable energy seems to continually drive him to make changes and take new risks. And he usually succeeds.

In recent years, Reed has been most visible through his work in films. As a recent graduate of the "Good Ole Boy," "Just Act Naturally," school of drama, he has guffawed, fist-fought, romanced, squeeled wheels and fast-talked his way through more than half a dozen films. Further, he is starring in the newly debuted CBS-TV series *Concrete Cowboys*.

Four of the films he has done with Burt Reynolds, including *W.W. And The Dixie Dance Kings*, *Gator*, and the low-budget box office smash, *Smokey And The Bandit*, which became the 11th highest grossing film in Hollywood history, second only to *Star Wars* in 1977. In its recent sequel multi-million-dollar budgeted *Smokey And The Bandit II*, Reed carried the ball particularly well, playing a large supporting role with nearly as much time on camera as Reynolds or co-star Jackie Gleason. Says Reynolds of Reed, "He's the most natural actor I ever worked with."

"I ain't no actor," insists Reed, who, in 1978 won the *People's Choice Award* for his dramatic work. "I just play myself, and they write scripts that let me keep on doing just that."

All the exposure that Reed has received by way of his film roles and by way of his association with Burt Reynolds has, however, had one negative aspect: it has tended to obscure his impressive accomplishments as a musician: first as one of Nashville's hottest and most innovative studio guitarists; later as the writer of more than 400 songs which have been recorded by everyone from Tom Jones and Porter Wagoner to Johnny Cash and Elvis Presley (Reed remains the only writer to have had four songs recorded by Presley); and finally, as the artist who, with his unique guitar work and distinctive vocals on hits like *Amos Moses*, *When You're Hot You're Hot*, *Lord Mr. Ford*, and *East Bound And Down*, has won himself two Grammy Awards and two *Instrumentalist Of The Year Awards* from the Country Music Association.

COUNTRY MUSIC

INTERVIEWS

Jerry Reed

by Bob Allen

On the rare occasions that Reed—who is an admitted "workaholic"—is not immersed in some musical or film project, he unwinds on his 47-acre spread outside Nashville where he lives with Priscilla, his wife of 20 years, and his daughters Seidina, 20 and Charlotte, 10.

That's where we caught up with Reed one cold, overcast afternoon just a few days before Christmas. His house, a huge, one-story wood and stone manse, sits atop a hill overlooking miles of lush, rolling Middle Tennessee farmland.

Reed, dressed in green sweatpants, a gray cotton pull-over sweatshirt, and slippers, came to the door looking visibly tired. As it turns out, he had been up till almost 5:00 A.M. the night before, writing songs for his next album. He leads the way into his spacious living room which is ornately decorated with thick bearskin rugs over the hardwood floors. A tall Christmas tree stands in one corner. Flopping down in a reclining easy chair near the roaring fireplace, he chews on a chocolate mint, lights a cigarette and reflects on his life and his career.

The Jerry Reed that emerges from this conversation turns out to be a far cry from the rompin'-stompin' good ole boy of the Burt Reynolds movies. Maybe it is the time of year, or maybe it is the fact that he has been at home now for several weeks, spending hours on end writing songs and practicing long hours on his guitar, trying to break new musical ground. Maybe it has something to do with his deep concern for his old friend Felton Jarvis, the man who produced Elvis Presley for so many years and who also helped Reed immeasurably in his early years. Jarvis was in the hospital following a heart attack, and Reed was getting frequent telephone reports on his condition from his manager Harry Warner and other friends. (A couple of days after this interview took place we were saddened to learn that Felton Jarvis had died.) Whatever the factors were, Reed seems to be going through a period of year-end reflection and introspection.

CM: So you were up last night, writing and practicing for your next LP?

Reed: Yeh. When I get into the studio I want to know where I'm going. I don't like to spend time huntin' routes for places I want to go when I can do it here. (grins) I'm awful slow!

Dick Feller (a Nashville songwriter who works with Reed's Vector Publishing Company) and I are working on a couple of songs, and I'm working on a couple on my own. So when I get into the studio next month, I should have a head start on it.

CM: I understand you're going through a period of experimentation with your guitar playing.

Reed: Yeh. I'm trying to pay more attention to theory than I used to. And some people are helping me. Like Earl Hogan, the musical director of *Concrete Cowboys*, a TV show we're doing for Ernie Frankel Productions. And some other people are helping me, too. I've been goin' at it hard for about a year and several months now where I've been picking and studying a lot. I figure if you're gonna pick the damned thing, then pick the hell out of it! I don't like *not* knowin'. I don't like goin' into the studio and tryin' new things and prostitutin' myself through my own ignorance. So I'm trying to take care of that with my guitar playing.

CM: Have you actually changed your style?

Reed: Yes, I have. Totally. I've quit playing finger-style and I've gone to the straight pickin'. It gives you a lot more versatility. It gives you more directions to go in. It's something that's always been in my craw to learn how to do. So I got after it. And I'm still gettin' after it—real hard.

CM: Are you back to practicing a lot of long hours?

Reed: Yeh. Since I've been home these last several weeks, I haven't hardly been out of this house except to go down to my office (on Music Row) for a little while and then come right back to the house and pick. I guess you could say I'm a driven man right now. It's just that I love music so much and I love the guitar so much that it bothers me that I'm still not as good as I can get. And getting better always means lots of long



hours and time and frustration and backaches. But that's the only way you *can* get better. But then again, that's what makes it sweet! Sometimes it seems like I'll pick forever and not come up with anything, and then all of the sudden, I hit on something new and I think, "Hey, that's neat!"

CM: Just how much have you been practicing?

Reed: I'd say I've been averaging about nine or ten hours a day for the last year and a half. Even when I'm on the (movie) set, I'm always pickin' between shots, or whenever I get a chance to. And if I'm ever gonna make my music sound like I want it to, I've got to keep doing that.

CM: How long have you had this sort of incredible drive to go at it like that?

Reed: I've always had it. It's not a competitive thing. I feel like I was born wanting to do this, because I don't remember ever wanting to do anything else. So I guess it's pretty close to a correct feeling. It's not work to me. It's more like love. I love it so much, in fact, that sometimes I wish I never had to put the guitar down. So it's not really work, even though it is work in the sense that it wears me out. My God! If I'd a worked this hard at somethin' I'd hated, it'd probably have killed me!

CM: And you're also back to doing quite a bit of songwriting as well?

Reed: Yeh, particularly with Dick Feller. I particularly love writing with him, because he's like a jazz writer in the sense

that he can do with words the same thing that a lot of great musicians can do with musical notes; he knows how to take a phrase and twist it around and come at you from the left side of the bench. I'm an idea man. I always have a lot of ideas. And we get together and have rap sessions and come up with things, and sound off of each other. Then he goes off and finishes the words, and I hole up in my office here and work on the music.

CM: You seem so quiet and thoughtful today, I can't help asking, are there really two sides of Jerry Reed?

Reed: Well, let me ask you: whenever you sit down and talk to a dude, is he ever what you totally expected him to be? Hey, I can't be on stage all the time! If there are two sides to me, that makes it a little more interesting, doesn't it? Well, I don't think anybody is really what you see in public, and I think we've all got sense enough to know that. But then again, maybe some people don't, because sometimes it shocks people to see that you're not just totally one-sided. That character, that good ole boy that you see in the movies is a character that's in me and comes out. It is a side of me, and I love that character. But that ole boy's got a brain in his head too, and he knows how to use it! (grins). And I use it a lot. I push myself. I push *thoughts*. You see, if you crowd thoughts and allow room for new thoughts, you don't become complacent or stagnant. So really, I push all the time, and I

study. My long suit is the things that I hear. The music that I hear in my head.

CM: But is there a part of Jerry Reed that's just like the guy in the Burt Reynolds movies, a guy that likes to raise hell and drive fast and have a wild time?

Reed: Oh Yeh! (laughs) Oh shit, yeh! What are ya talkin' about! Oh Lord, yes! I can be the biggest clown that ever hit the street, son! I enjoy peekin' around the corner at the right time. I take my life and my business very seriously. But when it's time to clown around, you're lookin' at one of the biggest! I don't drive fast, though. I mean, sometimes I'll lose my cool and get a little too fast, but I don't keep it that way for long. The older I get, the more sense I got! No, I don't pull some of those crazy stunts you see in the movie. No sir! You can get killed doin' that! But that attitude of mine that you see in those movies, that's real, because when I'm up there in front of that camera, all I can be is what I am.

CM: How did you come to get a part in the first movie you were in, *W.W. And The Dixie Dance Kings*? Did you know Burt Reynolds at the time.

Reed: No, at that time, I had never met him. I just went over and read for the director who was in Nashville doing auditions. It just all started with that. I tend to believe that these things come about as they're supposed to, if you believe that they will and if you work at it. I just got after it and I've been after it ever since. And I've been lucky.

At this point films are a very vital and necessary part of my life and my scheme of things. They've allowed me to broaden my base and express myself better. (Reed has performed all of, and written some of the title songs of the four films he has been in with Burt Reynolds.) It seems like if you're country and you're from the South, people expect you to be a certain way and only know a certain number of chords on the guitar. And therein lied my troubles for so long. But then it finally dawned on me that I'm Southern, and I'll always be Southern, and all I can be is what I am and do it the best I know how, and do it as honestly

as I know how.

CM: Were you nervous the first time you got in front of the movie cameras?

Reed: Hey, I've been scared most of my life! (grins) And I hope I never get all the way over it. Because when you've got all that adrenaline pumpin' you've got to shake! If you care about doing it right, and especially if you're in a new environment, sure you're scared. Like TV studios. I despise TV studios. It's such a sterile environment.

But I can get into drama, or rather dramatic comedy, much more than I can get into variety-type musical shows. Because you don't have to look at the damned red eye (on the live TV camera). It's the worst damned thing to try to look at that red eye like it's a window, and you're seeing the whole world through it, and at the same time, to try to concentrate on what you're doing. I have trouble concentrating on both things at once.

CM: You seemed particularly confident and relaxed in your latest role in *Smokey And The Bandit II*. It seems like you really hit a stride with what you were doing.

Reed: Well, you find that when you're successful, you're also confident and happy at the same time. And naturally, that allows you to be more comfortable with it. And part of it, too is being *exactly* what you are. It seems like too often, the last thing we learn about ourselves is that it's smarter to be honest than it is to be anything else. Believe me, it's true. Now, I mean being honest with yourself and *about* yourself on camera. You can be as good as the part of yourself that you are willing to show. Those things that you see of me in the movie are really what I'm feeling at the time. It's not something I've contrived or manufactured. It's real and it's honest, and it *is* a part of me.

CM: What's it like working on a set with Burt Reynolds?

Reed: It's really a joy for me, mainly *because* of Burt. To me, he is one of the rare thinkers. He has such a flair for comedy and comedic situations. He understands people so well. He's got that part of it pretty well lined up. It's a lot of fun being in his movies. We worked for

12 weeks filming *Smokey And The Bandit II*, and we had a great crew. Hal Needham (the director of *Smokey* and *Smokey II*) is a super dude to work with. Those guys want it to be fun, or they won't fool with it.

I've really been lucky to come to know and love Burt . . . or Bud, as I call him. He is one of the most considerate people I've ever met. The only time I've ever seen people get in trouble with Bud is when they get downright insensitive. That's one thing that I've noticed that he won't tolerate, not towards the people that he



loves and the people that he works with. Insensitivity gets him hotter than anything. I've seen him really tear people's heads off, really get on to their cases over that. So consequently, he doesn't have people like that on his set. He won't tolerate them.

CM: Has Reynolds actually helped you develop your technique as an actor?

Reed: As the star of the picture, he usually has his hands pretty full with his own role. But still, he always finds time to help. Especially if he knows you're tryin' really hard, but you're still really off base, maybe because you don't understand the concept behind a particular scene, or how it relates to something else in the script further down the road. It's all part of that deep quality of consideration that he has toward others.

CM: Because of the films and

because of your other projects, you've been away from touring for over a year now, haven't you?

Reed: That's right. I don't even have a band right now.

CM: Are you going back?

Reed: Yeh, I'll go back. But when I do, I'll go back the right way. What I'm doing now is allowing myself the time to do the things that will enable me to have the kind of live show that I want. But I'm tellin' ya, I'm through being anything but what I really am . . . *forever!* (grins) And I'm putting the whole world on notice, that from now on what they're gonna see onstage is what I am.

CM: Is this a real turning point for you?

Reed: Yeh, I guess it'd have to be. Moreso, a realization for me. I've been turning for a long time, but I finally realized, hey, *this* is what I think. *This* is what I am. *This* is what I'm all about. I'm tired of fightin'. And now I'm gonna pull down and be like I really am. (grins) And if you don't like it, duck!

CM: How's this change of transition going to be reflected in what you're doing a year from now?

Reed: Who knows! I wouldn't even venture to guess. But I will say this: from now on, God willin' and this skinny cowboy willin', neither him or me neither one, is gonna be ashamed of what I do.

And besides . . . if I told you what it was gonna be like a year from now, it wouldn't mean as much as it will if I didn't tell you. If I don't tell you, then

your curiosity is going to bring you out to see, ain't it? Well, I'd like for that to happen. So for now, I'll just say I don't know what movies I'm going to be in or where any of this stuff is going to go. I haven't even known up to now, really. All I've done is just kept my head down and run as hard as I could. And right here's where I've wound up . . . so far.

CM: So your music is going to change too?

Reed: Yes. My records are going to change. They're going to be what Jerry Reed *really* is, and not somebody's impression of what Jerry Reed *should* be. Because I'm the only man who knows, and I'm fixin' to let it out. I'm getting ready to make some serious records, records that I can be proud of. I haven't always been as honest as I know how in the studio, and I've put some bad stuff out. But now, I'm going to do the best I know how, and be as honest as I know how.

CM: What do you mean when you say some of your previous records haven't been honest?

Reed: Well, sometimes when you're recording, you're tired and in the dark. (yawns) And you're not in tune with what's going on around you in the studio, and you're only running at two-thirds of the throttle. And that's when you have to step back and say, hey, what the hell is going on! Let's get in there and *make* some records! (laughs) I told ya I was slow!

CM: There's a song called *Guitar Man* which you wrote and which Elvis Presley recorded back around 1966. You also played guitar on the original Presley session. Now they've released a new version of that Presley single and you've added a brand-new guitar track to the song yourself. How did that come about?

Reed: Well . . . (He gets up from his chair and walks over to the coffee table.) Here, ya want a gum drop? Or a chocolate mint? Splurge! It's Christmas time! (He lights a cigarette and sits back down in the reclining chair.) Felton Jarvis produced the original session on *Guitar Man*; and recently, Felton got the idea of re-releasing this and some other Elvis Presley material. I've known Felton for a real long

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time, and I don't think there is anybody who loved and idolized Elvis as much as Felton did. Felton is also a very old friend of mine, all the way back from the days when I was still in Atlanta. He had originally planned an album of duets where certain people like me would add their voices to the original tracks of Elvis singing. So he recorded tracks of me singing vocals to *Guitar Man* along with Elvis's original vocal track. But at that time, I had really been workin' hard on my guitar and I got Felton to let me add a new guitar track, too. He eventually ran into some kind of problem with the original idea of releasing an album of duets, but he did end up putting this single out with just Elvis's voice and with my new guitar track.

CM: Did you ever meet Elvis?

Reed: Just the two times I worked with him in the studio. And that was all, really. But I have known Felton for many, many years, and I never asked Felton, but I'm sure he was just doin' me a favor gettin' me on those Elvis sessions and gettin' Elvis to record *Guitar Man* and *A Thing Called Love* and *U.S. Male* and *Talk About The Good Times*. Only through Felton would Elvis have had those songs laid in his lap, because Felton was the only one in that whole bunch that really knew me. So there, again, I was just lucky to have known him.

CM: Looking back at your childhood, how did your involvement with music start? Did anybody in your family pick?

Reed: Oh yeh! Mama and Daddy both picked. I come by it kind of honest, you might say. Mama taught me my first three chords on the guitar when I was eight or nine, and that's how it all got started.

CM: Were there any other musicians that influenced you back at that time?

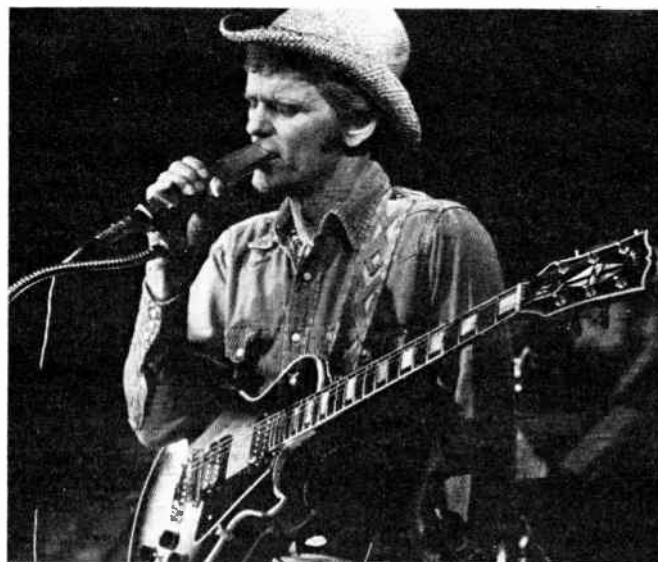
Reed: Oh yeh! Lots of 'em. One of the biggest thrills I've ever had in my whole life was one time when I was a kid, I saw Hank Thompson play in Atlanta, and after the show, he let me hold his guitar. Hank wouldn't remember that. Why should he? But that was one of the biggest cases of the shakes I ever had! My hands were shakin' so bad, I couldn't even play it! But that

was one of the biggest thrills I've ever had: seein' that man and that 12-piece band of his, and holdin' that guitar!

CM: You started playing music professionally after you left school in the 11th grade, didn't you?

Reed: Yep! I went on the road, and I've been there ever since! (grins) Because I had always wanted to do that. Don't ever make the mistake of givin' me the opportunity to try something, because I'll damned sure get up there and do it!

CM: After you came to Nashville several years later, didn't Chet Atkins have a big impact on the course of your career?



Reed: Yes, Chester was magnificent to me. He was really a major influence on my development. He saw something in me before almost anybody else saw it. But then I got closer to Chet than I did to almost anybody. My association with him has been vital throughout the years. I mean, any time you hang around a big reservoir of creativity like Chet, you can use a big dipper! (grins) I look at Chester as the man who took the lid off me and started me thinkin' in a whole lot of new ways.

CM: How did you two meet?

Reed: I wrote him an instrumental and he liked it. I was getting into playing finger guitar style around that time, and I was just into a little bit different kind of bag, and he was able to apply some of it to what he was doing and make it work. Eventually, we became very good friends.

CM: Did it take you a while to establish yourself as a session player?

Reed: Sure. I didn't have the confidence at first. Not to mention, I didn't really have the savvy or the technique or the knowledge either. But I did have an awful lot of guts. I swallowed my pride a lot of times and got up and got at it again.

CM: How so?

Reed: (Laughs) A lot of embarrassing things happened. I was so nervous once, Chester took me off the guitar in the studio because I was so intimidated by all those pickers that I couldn't even play a simple run down the neck! I just

this period right here. And the personal side of it is I want to be satisfied with myself. So I don't have much time to fish now. Besides, if I work real hard for a week, like fifteen or twenty hours a day for seven days, then I feel more like goin' fishin' for a couple of days. I just sort of have to *earn* my time off.

CM: You've described yourself as a "renegade," in that even though you are active in both the music and the film industries, you don't like being a public figure. And you don't like going out to film premieres and similar functions. Why is that?

Reed: Well, it's like eatin' a pound of chocolate candy: it's just *too* good! (laughs) I really have a very low threshold for that kind of thing. I get sick of bein' under a microscope. (yawns) And besides, what do I need to be there (at a premiere) for? I knew when we was filmin' it if I did bad or good, I don't need no critic tellin' me nothin'. I mean, I do like to hear people's response if they like it, and it's always nice to be part of something that is successful. But I really can't stand to look at myself (on the screen). It makes me very uncomfortable. And I'm gettin' worse every day! (grins) I'm just really uncomfortable at those things. People come up and say that was good or this was good, and I just don't know what to say.

CM: It would seem like the most difficult thing for someone like yourself, someone who's accomplished all these different things and has achieved the level of success that enables you to live like you live, would be the fight against becoming complacent.

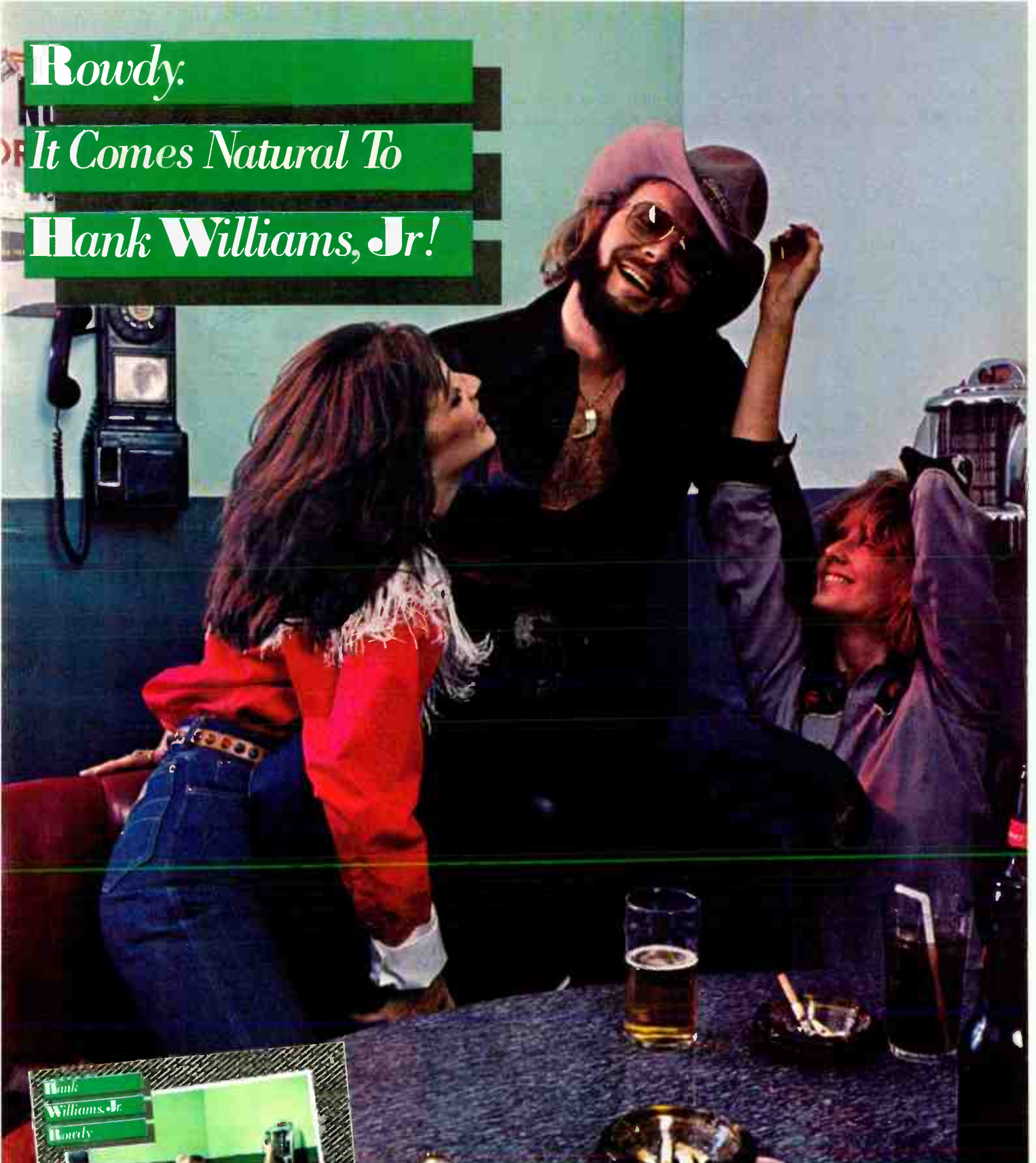
Reed: You really do have to fight it sometimes.

You'll never find me standing on the center line, at point-zero, saying "This is it! I've found it. It can't get any better than this! Leave me alone!" As far as I'm concerned, it may take me all my life to get where I want to go. There'll be no retirement for this cowboy! I want to work hard and play hard all the days of my life. I want my life to be full and rich, and that's what I'm working for. There's really no reason why things in life should be anything but *good, great* and *better*. I really believe that! ■

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The Statler Brothers

How the Class of '57 Wins Eight CMA Awards

by Patri

An air of evenness—of calm precision, of obstacles and problems long ago reduced to insignificance, of plans successfully executed—is immediately apparent. In the modest house in their then-and-now home town which the Statler Brothers use as an office, the boys are on the beam, and the schedule is rolling softly forward.

First, of course, are the introductions. There is Don Reid, the younger of the two real-life brothers, the lead singer and public representative of the group, a steady but sociable fellow sucking on an unlit pipe, his mind a multi-purpose computer of all the angles fit to print; there is Harold, Don's senior, the humorist, the Ole Roadhog himself, the bass voice with the belly and the bloodhound eyes, always mock-dyspeptic and mugging it up, another born sharpie; there is Lew DeWitt, the resident musician and keeper of the video vaults, gray-bearded, light-voiced and slightly dreamy in the manner of men who think mostly of music and private, curly jokes; finally there is Phil Balsey, thin and angular and earnest and true, a bottom-line regular individual entrusted with responsibility for the financial end of things. Each of these men seems, in his own way, efficient, pleasant, and presentable. Sipping Dr. Pepper and chatting easily, they make a person feel at home.

We mess around for a while, looking at photographs taken by the Statlers' hometown biographer and discussing details of yesteryear's Ole Roadhog projects (it was I who published the Roadhog's infernally magnificent "How To Git In Country Music" *Country Music* article back in the Bicentennial year), and then Don, ever schedule-conscious, suggests a House Tour, the beginning standard item for Statler-following journalists.

The House Tour is very nice. We see each Statler's individual office from which each Statler conducts six-hour-a-day business when he isn't recording, touring, or spending time with his family. Every office except the Conference Room has a nameplate—"Don," "Harold," "Lew," "Phil"—facing outwards from the desk, and behind each nameplate there is a rich-leather high-backed swiveling chair, the



Brothers: Buys a Schoolhouse, in an Air of Complete Calm

(Harold)
in Old Beverly
movies



kind of chair which is almost a cocoon. Each Brother's chair, though constructed exactly like all the others, boasts an individual color and grain. We also see the gold records, the sundry mementos, and the photographs which spill out of the offices and creep along the hallways, down the stairs, and into the ground-floor spaces. There are signed portraits of Roy Rogers, movie stills of Tom Mix and Rex Allen and Gene Autrey, out-takes from Statler Brothers publicity and album cover photo sessions. Overall, the office/house conveys a deep impression of nostalgia, communality, and a determination to keep what went before while moving relentlessly, rationally, and sensibly onward.

At the end of the House Tour, Don goes off to take a telephone call, and Harold sidles up with a message. Booming at me in that instantly, unavoidably humorous hillbilly-basso of his, he tells me that "I really shouldn't be saying this to a professional journalist, but we just don't have no *hook*. We're patriotism and nostalgia and Mom and Apple Pie, and that's *it*. What more can you say? We'll try to do something daring, but I don't guarantee it, you understand. We're The Bland Brothers."

"Thanks for the hook, Harold," I say. The Statler Brothers are very smart.

At this point in their careers, the Statler Brothers have achieved a number of significant aims and ambitions. The first and most professionally important achievement is, of course, that they have become a monumentally successful recording and touring act *as a quartet*. They won the Country Music Association's *Best Vocal Group* award seven years in a row, and last year they became the first vocal group ever to be nominated for that organization's *Entertainer of the Year* award. This year, of course, they garnered their eighth CMA *Best Vocal Group* award. Besides all that, they have the distinction of being country music's highest-grossing road act, bar none.

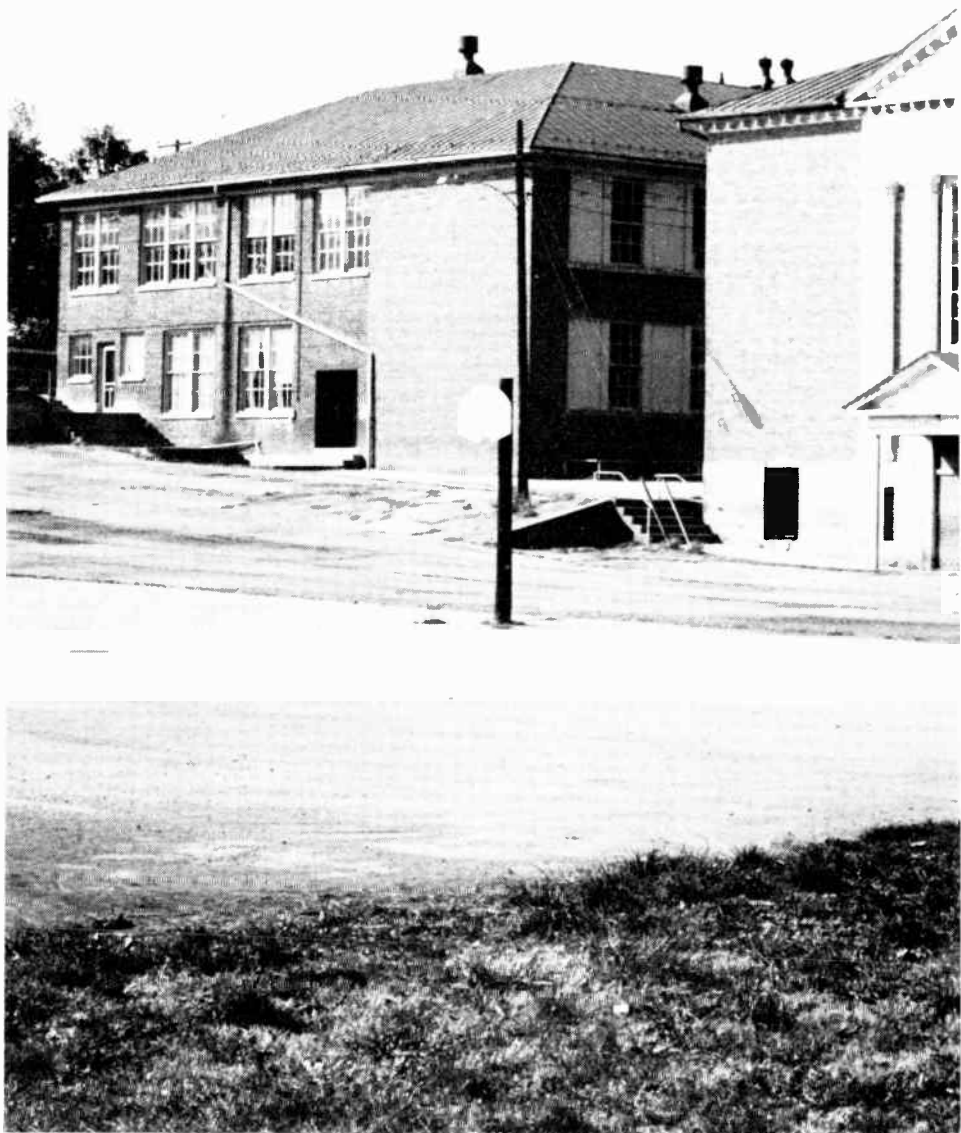
When they began to penetrate the big time as Johnny Cash's backup vocal team back in '64, the idea that a quartet could compete with a solo act was pure heresy. Don Reid remembers with some bitterness

how Columbia Records "allowed" them to record simply because Johnny Cash insisted on it, and how, after the massive country and pop success of their third single, *Flowers On The Wall*, the Columbia executives refused to let them record their own material, choose their own producer, or have any say in the course of their recording career. "We were their albatross," he says. "They didn't know what to do with us, and they didn't care." This situation persisted until 1970, when their Columbia contract expired. At that point they moved to Mercury Records, where producer Jerry Kennedy gave them the freedom they needed--and with freedom and another self-penned song, *Bed Of Roses*, they proceeded to hit it big again for the first time since *Flowers On The Wall*. From that point on, as we all know, they never looked back.

Cash exposed them to the people, encouraged them, taught them by example how to deal with the road and the fans, proved to them that it was possible to "keep it country."

The years with Cash were not wasted, though. Cash exposed them to the people, encouraged them in their quest, taught them by example how to deal with the road and the fans, proved to them that it was possible to "keep it country" and still be big time, and demonstrated how, by keeping control of all professional areas close to home, maximum success and effectiveness could be achieved. Thus it was that once a certain level of popularity had been achieved, the Statlers branched out from the Cash show, consolidated the hard core of their operation under one or two familiar roofs, and set out to prove that by working hard and being reliable and staying true to their friends and the country people, they could score bigger, more consistently, and for an infinitely longer period of time than any gadfly or opportunist you'd care to mention. They made it: they proved these things.

There were, of course, personal elements which made the successful application of this philosophy possible, if not inevitable. The Statlers are boyhood friends—they were singing together in grade school. The Statlers don't drink or take drugs—they never did, not even when they were teenagers. The Statlers never left their home town, Staunton, Va.—they never even *wanted* to. The Statlers, it seems, never wanted to rebel, to bust out from the ideas and institutions with which they were raised; for them, making money through music—not giving up and going to work for The Man—was evidently enough. The Statlers are intelligent conservatives with a gift for communication and a respect for



They bought their grade school!

their conservative audience. Their song lyrics, close to the blue-collar heart yet distinctly sophisticated as to construction, breadth, humor and emotional flow, illustrate this point completely. The Statlers have taken their existing assets and subsequent education, and have combined it all into something they know will sell, and have rammed the whole kaboodle straight to the top. The Statlers, as smart and determined as they are set in their ways, aren't really The Bland Brothers at all.

All right. Item Two on the Statler

Brothers' standard visiting-journalist tour coming right up: a guided trip around Staunton, source of much of their pride and stability and not a little of their recorded material. We pile into a big black Lincoln and go to it.

It's a strange place, Staunton. Relatively old and history-ridden (it's the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson and was once, for two days during the Revolutionary War, the temporary capital of pre-Constitutional America), it is, unlike other historical centers, neither precious nor tacky. Enclosed by the tight



Virginia hills, it has the kind of physical compression common to the old industrial towns of New England and England proper; there is a distinct lack of urban and suburban sprawl, yet (even more unusual), the center of the town is occupied by a large, landscaped urban park featuring baseball diamonds, picnic areas, tennis courts, a miniature zoo, children's playgrounds, a duck pond, a gazebo bandstand, and a full-sized public swimming pool—all of this is in one large area featuring old trees and rolling meadows untouched by either the natural ravages of

time or the mercenary grasp of realty subdividers. Staunton, in fact, must be one of the only small towns in America to have both fully developed and retained such a pleasant public facility.

The Statlers guide me around this place—Gypsy Hill Park, so named because it's where the gypsies used to camp in the old days—with an air of pride, nostalgia, and genuine enthusiasm. They talk about how it's changed since they were kids (very little) and about how it's used today (a lot), and the Ole Roadhog points out with some emphasis that not only here but all over

town, a parent can turn his kids loose without having to worry about any kind of harm but the usual scraped knees, bloody noses, etc. "The town's conservative," he says. "That may be good or bad, depending on how you look at it, but it works." The Statlers use Gypsy Hill Park for their annual Fourth of July benefit concerts, and they're proud of the fact that those affairs traditionally leave very little litter, result in very few arrests, and have never—*never*—featured any kind of riot whatsoever.

The tour proceeds—to the parking lot where the Strand Theater, scene of Saturday morning Western movies, used to stand; to the alley where the brothers once saw Tex Ritter's horse being unloaded from its horsebox; past the gracious old mansions now serving as college buildings; to each Statler's house, where there is much evidence of kids and hobbies and general domesticity—and ends up at the deserted grade school where each of them got his primary education.

The school, totally undistinguished, a yellow-brick hump long gone to seed but obviously never attractive, even in its heyday, is a big item with the Statler Brothers. The reason isn't just the almost fanatical sense of nostalgia for which they are famous, it's more than that: The Statler Brothers just bought the place, and are planning to move their entire office operation into it—*They bought their grade school!*

The Statlers never leave a gig until every fan who wants an autograph has got one—and then the bus routine starts clicking back into gear.

The first point about this wonderful venture, this boy's dream, is made when the Statlers, now perhaps the richest and certainly the best-known self-made men in town, pile out of their big black carriage, and Phil Balsey, dressed like all of them in the maverick's uniform of shirt, jeans, and cowboy boots, stoops casually, picks up a stone, and heaves it straight through what used to be the Principal's office window. His smile is something else.

The second point arises upstairs, after we've been all the way through the building. The Brothers, who have up to now concentrated on showing me the sights, drift slowly off together, and I overhear them discussing how the renovation should take place. They have, it seems, decided that no matter what other changes they make to the structure, they will restore the Principal's office and one full classroom to their exact boyhood condition. Now they're talking animatedly with each other, trying to remember just what color the walls were, just how far apart the desks were, just what it was that



The Statlers at their desks in their newly owned grade school.



...on their float during the 1980 July 4th celebration.



...at a TV show taping.

Miss Marsh kept in that closet none of the kids was ever allowed to see . . . at this moment they seem to be experiencing something very close to bliss.

The third point is made as the Lincoln pulls away from the building. Don Reid has been explaining that one of the great benefits of the Statlers' continued hometown residence is that each of them is constantly reminded of both the personal feelings of his youth and the nature, the texture, the details of how things really were back then, how the society functioned in everyday life, so that nostalgic subjects for those hot-selling, super-popular songs just arise naturally, they don't have to be groped after. This is a good point, and I think about it for a moment until its implications sink in.

The Statlers are boyhood friends—they were singing together in grade school. The Statlers don't drink or take drugs—they never did, not even when they were teenagers. The Statlers never left their home town—they never wanted to.

"Why did you buy that school?" I ask. "I mean, did you buy it just to *have* it, or to make sure that it didn't go away, or what? Would you have bought it just to preserve it, without making use of it?"

"Oh, no," Don Reid replies. "If the deal hadn't been right or the place had been too far gone to renovate for use, we'd never have touched it. Nostalgia by itself is real nice—it gives you a warm feeling and everything—but you can't eat it."

In the early Virginia morning those big bus wheels drum softly on the highway northwards. Dale the driver hums a country melody, the CB crackles, and the Statlers settle down to the old and relatively painless familiarity of the road. This time it's a five-day swing through Pennsylvania and Ohio, playing the last round of county fairs before winter settles in and the gigs are all auditoriums and concert halls. On hand are plenty of Cokes and Dr. Peppers, lots of snacks and candy bars, a quite decent selection of cowboy-movie videotapes from the communal vaults, and the day's fresh batch of crossword puzzles and newspaper word-games.

Don Reid, all thought and business as usual, seems alert. Phil Balsey, though recovering from a big biscuits-and-gravy home breakfast, is likewise wakeful. Harold and Lew, on the other hand, don't really have it yet; Lew goes off to the back of the bus to sink some winks in his bunk and The Hog passes out, snoring quietly in

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character, on the couch. Not a hard life, really.

An hour or so rolls by—Don solving puzzles and fussing with his pipe. Phil up front watching the road with Dale, the Hog snoring fitfully, Lew securely in snoozeville, me formulating questions—until The Hog bestirs himself and everybody seems to agree without saying it that it's time for The Interview. Item Three on the Statler—journalist schedule. Nobody minds that Lew is still a-snooze back there; Lew after all is the musician, and therefore has a special kind of status.

The interview is pretty standard. The Statlers know what to say and how to say

it, and they've done it all a couple of thousand times before. They know how to boast—the first-ever big quartet act in country music, the highest-grossing road act in country music, one of the only groups in country music to feature a 100 percent repeat-booking record—but they know too how to explain their achievements in terms of logical steps and applications of method, nothing mysterious, just common sense used correctly. They know how to push their pure-country angle without stepping on impure-country toes—they say that country artists should just let “crossover” hits happen because if you're looking for something in between, you'll end up missing both camps

—and, in a similar vein, they steer away from statements about Iran or the Presidency or America Now with an expertise that is positively enviable. The only new items which emerge are: 1.) The fact that not even under extreme business pressure did The Brothers even *consider* moving away from Staunton, and 2.) the Hog's determined contention that “I believe in musical labels. Everybody's always saying that music should go beyond labels, but I don't think that way. I think that people want something secure to hear and identify with. Nobody wants to keep twisting that dial to hear something they like. Our whole professional life has been built on that principle, and it's worked. So

America's Poets

by KURT VONNEGUT

I now confess that the American poems which move me most are those which marvel most, simply and clearly, at the queer shapes which the massive indifference of America gives to lives. So *The Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters seems a very great book to me.

That is a barbarous opinion. So I have nothing to lose by blurting moreover that I find much to celebrate in the shrewd innocence of many of the poems now being set to country music.

Pay attention, please, to the words of *The Class of '57*, a big country hit a few years ago:

*Tommy's sellin' used cars,
Nancy's fixin' hair,
Harvey runs a groc'ry store
And Marg'ret doesn't care.
Jerry drives a truck for Sears
and Charlotte's on the make.
And Paul sells life insurance
And part-time real estate.*

*And the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.
But we all thought we'd changed
the world
With our great works and deeds;
Or maybe we just thought the world
Would change to fit our needs.
The Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.*

*Betty runs a trailer park,
Jan sells Tupper Ware.*

*Randy's on an insane ward,
And Mary's on welfare,
Charley took a job with Ford,
Joe took Freddy's wife,
Charlotte took a millionaire,
And Freddy took his life.*

*And the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams,
But livin' life from day to day
Is never like it seems.
Things get complicated
When you get past eighteen,
But the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.*

*Helen is a hostess,
Frank works at the mill,
Janet teaches grade school
And prob'ly always will,
Bob works for the city,
And Jack's in lab research,
And Peggy plays the organ
at the Presbyterian Church.*

*And the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.*

*But we all thought we'd change the
world
With our great works and deeds;
Or maybe we just thought the world
Would change to fit our needs.
The Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.*

*John is big in cattle,
Ray is deep in debt,
Where Mavis jin'ly wound up
Is anybody's bet,
Linda married Sonny,
Brenda married me,*



From left: Lew DeWitt, Kurt Vonnegut, Harold Reid, Phil Balse by writer-photographer Jill Kremetz, who is married to Vonnegut

*and the class of all of us
Is just part of history.*

*And the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams,
But livin' life from day to day
Is never like it seems.
Things get complicated
When you get past eighteen,
But the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.
Ah, the Class of Fifty Seven had its
dreams.*

The authors are Don and Harold Reid, the only actual brothers in the country music quartet that calls itself the Statler Brothers. Nobody in the quartet is named Statler. The quartet named itself after a roll of paper towels.

My wife Jill and I admire the Statler Brothers so much that we went all the way to the Niagara

Falls International Convention Center in April of 1980 to hear them and to shake their hands. We had our pictures taken with them, too.

Yes, and they announced from the stage that they were honored that night to have in the audience “the famous writer Kurt Vonnegut and his wife, Jill Kremetz, the famous photographer.” We got a terrific hand, although we did not stand up and identify ourselves, and although nobody, I'm sure, had ever heard of us before.

A woman came up to us afterward, and she said that we must be the famous people the brothers had mentioned, since we didn't look like anybody else in the auditorium. She said that from now on she was going to read everything we wrote.

Jill and I stayed in the same

there." Don and Phil second this opinion with feeling.

There is some more talk about "Keeping it country" and standing by the fans—for instance, The Statlers never leave a gig until every fan who wants an autograph has got one—and then the bus routine starts clicking back into gear. Don finds a videotape of *Iron Mountain Trail*, a late Forties Rex Allen movie, and the boys settle back for some sleepy viewing; a truck stop is visited, and small items are purchased for various Statler children; more crossword puzzles are consumed with impressive expertise; there is an animated discussion of the relative merits of Warner Brothers and Walt Disney car-

toons; the Dr. Pepper supply dwindles slowly, and Don smokes two full pipes of Baccy before the bus pulls into Bloomsburg, Pa. It's been a quiet and seemingly journey, bland but interesting.

The energy level gears up somewhat at showtime, but not much. There are visitors to the bus, there are technical problems to be discussed, there's the shift from casual to stage clothing, but even amid all this activity, the Statlers remain remarkably mellow. There is no apparent tension, and a complete absence of stage fright. Only when they hit the stage—the Ole Roadhog hamming for all he's worth while the others pump up those artful Statler Brothers hits around his antics—does the

real dynamism of these men become obvious.

The first show, though expert and successful, is relatively low-key, but the second's a killer which winds up into standing ovations and a crowd of four or five hundred eager fans pressed around the front of the stage, waiting for the promised autographs. "Now for the *real work*," says Don, and he and the others troop back out onto the stage to sign and chat until demand is satisfied completely.

Back in the bus on the way to the Holiday Inn, even after the emotional high of the show's finale and the exhausting but obviously rewarding autograph session, there is an atmosphere of complete calm. ■



Don Reid; photographed

I can see Americans singing in a grandstand at the Olympics somewhere, while one of our athletes wins a medal—for the decathlon, say. I can see tears streaming down the singers' cheeks when they get to these lines:

*Where Mavis fin'ly wound up
Is anybody's bet.*

When I was a child, and playing with Sammy Goldstein, I used to wish the American flag was one our forefathers had used during the Revolutionary War—depicting a rattlesnake with these words written underneath it: Don't Tread on Me. Now that I am a grown-up, I wish our flag showed a pair of tumbling dice—with these words written underneath them:

ANYBODY'S BET.

The Class of '57 could be an anthem for my generation, at least.

* * *

If the story of an American father's departure from his hearth is allowed to tell itself, if it is allowed to wag tongues when he isn't around, it will tell the same story it would have told a hundred years ago, of booze and wicked women.

Such a story is told in my case, I'm sure.

Closer to the truth these days, in my opinion, is a tale of a man's cold sober flight into unpopulated nothingness. The booze and the women, good and bad, are likely to come along in time, but nothingness is the first seductress—again, the little death.

To the middle-class wives and children across the land whose male head of household has recently departed, learn the truth of his present condition from yet another great contemporary poem by the Statler Brothers, *Flowers on the Wall*:

*I keep hearing you're concerned
About my happiness.*

*But all the thought you've given me
Is conscience, I guess.*

*If I were walkin' in your shoes
I wouldn't worry none.*

*While you 'n' your friends are
worryin'*

'Bout me

*I'm havin' lots of fun:
Countin' flowers on the wall,
That don't bother me at all,
Playin' solitaire till dawn
With a deck of fifty-one,
Smokin' cigarettes and watchin'
Captain Kangaroo.
Now don't tell me
I've nothin' to do.*

*Tonight I dressed in tails
Pretending I was on the town;
Long as I can dream it's hard to
Slow this swinger down.*

*So please don't give
A thought to me,
I'm really doin' fine,
And you can always find me here.
I'm havin' quite a time:
Countin' flowers on the wall,
That don't bother me at all,
Playin' solitaire till dawn
with a deck of fifty-one,
Smokin' cigarettes and watchin'
Captain Kangaroo.
Now don't tell me
I've nothin' to do.*

It's good to see you,

I must go,

I know I look a fright;

*Anyway my eyes are not
Accustomed to this hard concrete,
So I must go back to my room
And make my day complete:
Countin' flowers on the wall,
That don't bother me at all,
Playin' solitaire till dawn
With a deck of fifty-one,
Smokin' cigarettes and watchin'
Captain Kangaroo.
Now don't tell me
I've nothin' to do.*

This was written by Lew DeWitt, the only one of the four Statler Brothers to have been divorced. It is not a poem of escape or rebirth. It is a poem about the end of a man's usefulness.

The man understands that his

wife deserves the tragic dignity of being a widow now.

Or so he feels.

And much of what any human being feels is oceanic. The wife of a man counting the flowers on the wall may not yearn so much to be a widow, and yet the culture in which the man is floating may be telling him that it is right for her to yearn for that.

He is no longer needed as a father, and no longer useful as a soldier who could stop a bullet winging toward his loved ones, and he has no hope for being honored for his wisdom, for it is well understood that people only become more tiresome as they grow old.

The man is experimenting with the Christian idea of heaven without actually dying, and more and more women, of course, are doing it, too. In heaven, you see, or so the childish dream goes, people are liked and honored simply for having been alive. They don't have to have any utility up there.

The man counting flowers on the wall has no appreciable utility anymore. He probably wasn't all that good in earning money even when he was in his prime. What is he waiting for?

For an angel to knock on his door. Angels love anybody who has simply been alive.

Kurt Vonnegut is a country music fan who grew up in Indiana and now lives in New York City. He makes his living writing untrue stories which tell the truth. These stories are so popular in America that there has seldom been a time in the past ten years that a Vonnegut novel hasn't been on the New York Times Bestseller list. They are also popular in other countries (even in the Soviet Union where they have no bestseller list) with total worldwide sales exceeding 15,000,000 books.

The preceding two excerpts are from Vonnegut's autobiography Palm Sunday, soon to be published by Delacorte Press.

Country Cooking

Fried Chicken Dinner a la Kitty Wells

By Paula Lovell Hooker

Kitty Wells doesn't really like to talk about herself. And unfortunately, her shyness and reserve have sometimes been mistaken for snobbery and conceit.

"I just generally let my husband (Johnny Wright) do most of the talking for us both," Kitty, who has been performing with her husband since the early Forties, when they were billed as Johnny Wright and the Harmony Girls, and Kitty was known by her real name, Ellen Muriel Deason.

"Some people have thought I snubbed them, I think," Kitty explains in her gentle and soft-spoken manner. "I'm kind of shy in person, really, but it never seems to bother me on stage. I don't have much to say, I guess."

Kitty didn't have much to say about her career or her private life on the day I visited her ranch-style home in Madison, Tennessee (just outside of Nashville), but she did let me into her kitchen. And while coaxing her to talk about herself is a real chore, convincing her to teach me how to cook up a few of her Southern-style specialties was a piece of cake.

"In 1970, we had a fire at the



house," explains Kitty quietly. "so we had to re-decorate the whole downstairs." It was her idea to knock out the walls in the den, the dining room and the kitchen and combine them into one big family room. The idea works well for the Wright family who, like most families, seem to congregate in the kitchen or around the dining room table with a cup of coffee. The Spanish red and black den and the kitchen are subtly separated by a semi-circular kitchen bar, so Kitty can visit with her family while cooking dinner every night.

"I think the kitchen is the hub of the family," says Kitty. "The women, especially, can always be found in the kitchen. It just seems to be the place everybody comes to when they want to talk."

"Most of the time when we're not on the road, there's just me and Johnny and I'm not too crazy about cooking for just two people," confesses Kitty. "It's much more fun when the whole family gets together and I fix a big dinner."

Kitty first learned to cook from her mother when she was only six years old and she can still recall standing on a chair

to do the dishes after supper every night.

"The other girls (her sisters) hated it, but I always enjoyed helping out in the kitchen," says Kitty, who has written two cookbooks that she occasionally sells on the road when she goes on tour.

"Daddy used to work for the railroad, and he had to stay in the city at a boarding house during the week. Me and my sisters and brothers lived out in the country with our mother, and Daddy would come home every weekend.

"One weekend when I was

about six I decided to bake him a cake, and Mama helped me. I don't remember if I broke the eggs or not . . . I think that lesson came later . . . but I did bake my first cake for my Daddy. And it turned out pretty good!"

Kitty calls herself a "plain

old Southern cook" and confesses she serves lots of fried foods, homemade breads and rich, fattening desserts. Her favorite meal is also one of her more simple menus and she shared her recipes with me and her *Country Music Magazine* fans:

SOUTHERN-FRIED CHICKEN

(for eight)

2 fryers, cut up
1 C. buttermilk
2 C. flour
salt and pepper
1 C. oil

Dip chicken pieces in buttermilk, poured out into a saucer. Roll in flour. Season to taste. Fry in skillet with 1 cup cooking oil on medium heat.

GREEN BEANS

(for eight)

3 pounds green beans
salt
½ onion, chopped or sliced
¼ lb. hog jowl
1 T. sugar
water

Place beans and all other ingredients in stewer or dutch oven and add enough water to almost cover beans. Bring to boil for 15 minutes. Turn down heat and simmer about two hours.

FRIED CORN

(for eight)

12 large ears white corn
3 C. water
dash pepper
8 T. butter
1 T. salt

After scraping the pulp from the cobs with a knife, melt butter in an iron skillet. Add corn and water. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook for about 45 minutes or until kernels are tender. If necessary, add more water.

KITTY'S EASY CHICKEN GRAVY

(to go over minute rice)

2 cans cream of chicken soup and enough water to make the consistency of gravy (about ¾ of a can.)

FRUIT PIE

1 C. flour
1 t. baking powder
2 C. hot fruit (blackberries, peaches, apples, etc.)
1 C. sugar
½ C. sweet milk
1 stick butter

Melt stick of butter in Pyrex dish. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and milk to make the batter. Pour batter into melted butter. Add the hot fruit over the batter. Bake at about 375 degrees until batter rises to the top and is browned.

ANGEL BISCUITS

5 C. all-purpose flour
1 t. baking soda
2 pkg. dry yeast, dissolved in ½ C. warm water
3 t. baking powder
¼ C. shortening
2 C. buttermilk
2 t. coarse salt
3 T. sugar

Sift dry ingredients together. Cut in shortening, then yeast and milk. Mix with large spoon real good. This makes a large bowlful. You can pinch off each day just the amount you want to cook. It keeps a week to ten days. Keep remainder of dough covered in refrigerator. Bake at 400 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes.



"I think the kitchen is the hub of the family," says Kitty, pictured here with Paula Hooker making Angel Biscuits.

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How Levon and Charlie, Emmylou and Cash Robbed the Northfield Bank

By Suzan Crane

The James Gang rides again. The exploits of the notorious band of outlaws, led by Jesse Woodson James, who trouped the wilds of a post Civil War-torn nation, have been immortalized in countless factual and fictional tales over the years. The legend of the hero-criminal Jesse James (aka Howard, Woodson, Dingus), both feared and awed by a victimized country, is a staple of American folklore, as much a part of our heritage as Plymouth Rock, speakeasies, and burger joints. And what more appropriate way to re-tell this saga of blood, guts, money, greed, and humanity than with another symbol of Americana: country music?

At a time when the United States is at odds with other powers of the world; when many Americans are reclaiming their roots and reaffirming their pride in this country; when the Charlie Daniels Band is charting with a patriotic song like *In America*; when in a spoof recorded by local L.A. band Vince Vance and The Valiants lyrics such as "Bomb bomb bomb, bomb bomb Iran" have replaced the original words of the Beachboys' classic *Barbara Ann*—A&M's release of *The Legend of Jesse James*, the account of a desperado similarly at odds with his world and enemy forces (the Yankees) seems timely, indeed.

Whether the album emerges as a classic—as judged by artistic significance, not sales—remains to be seen. Surely, the starstudded cast of characters, quality of the music, verity of the story, and fine production at least qualify it for such status.

Often in literature—and this album is such—accuracy is lost to sensationalism. Of course, the truths in this epic are about as fantastic as one could possibly imagine, and by sticking to the facts, creator/composer Paul Kennerly has constructed a monumental work in which each song represents a chapter in the story, and each character an animated replica of the original. With Levon Helm (*Coal Miner's Daughter*, former Band member) as Jesse James; Johnny Cash as his older brother Frank; Emmylou Harris as Zerelda, Jesse's first cousin and later his wife; Charlie Daniels and Albert Lee (formerly

of Emmylou's band) as Jesse's comrades, the Younger brothers; and a supporting cast which includes Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash, Jody Payne, Donivan and Martin Cowart, and Paul Kennerly taking a small role for himself—a comparable billing of actors in a film would certainly be a box-office draw.

The backup music was by some top studio players, as well as former Eagle and Poco member Bernie Leadon on banjo and acoustic guitar. Producer Glyn Johns' impressive credits list work with the Rolling Stones, the Who, and the Eagles, among others.



Producer/engineer Glyn Johns (left) shares a humorous moment with Emmylou Harris and Levon Helm during the recording of *Jesse James*.

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Writer/composer Paul Kennerly

Making this project unique and rather special were the lack of legal and personal hassles usually inherent in securing artists contracted to one label to record for another. Of all the performers involved, only one, Paul Kennerly, is signed to A&M Records. However, it was the artists themselves who maneuvered the affair into such smooth sailing. As Mike Gormley, an A&M vice president, explained: "It wasn't a situation where A&M or somebody called managers and got artists together. As a matter of fact, some of the managers were not involved at all. They (the artists) wanted to do it, and they told their record companies that. And then they started telling their friends about it. Like Johnny Cash got involved because Brian Ahern, Emmylou's husband, called him up, and I think Emmylou got involved when she was in London and had lunch with somebody, and got to hear the music. So these musicians came from either friends of Glyn Johns or friends of the artists involved."

What most intrigued the performers, it seems, is the insight and accuracy with which Paul Kennerly, an Englishman, perceived such an integral chunk of America's heritage. "I was taken with its authenticity, basically," Charlie Daniels related over the telephone one afternoon. "I'm kind of a western buff, and I've read quite a bit on the lives of Jesse and Frank James. A lot of the movies you see and the stories you hear are completely fictitious, and this was not. I was really fascinated that a guy from England would write something that would be that authentic on American folklore." Charlie was first approached to play the part of Cole Younger last summer, while in the studio recording his most recent album, *Full Moon*. "Glyn Johns came to town and brought a demo tape of the thing, and I listened to it and agreed to be involved," Charlie recalled.

While many "concept" albums tend to lay heavy under the weight of their own pretension, Charlie, as are all the other principals, is pleased with the outcome of *Jesse James*. "Its number one on our bus," he said. "It's well done and the characters

are well chosen."

Similarly, Johnny Cash has nothing but praise for the work. "I heard the album and I love it," Cash said during DJ Week in Nashville. "I think its very different. I've always loved this kind of thing—concept albums, that is. Brian Ahern called me and asked me if I would play the part of Frank James. When I heard it I just loved it, and decided to do it. I'm really proud to be a part of it."

Some thought has been given to a possible film or television adaption of the album, although it has not, at this point, progressed beyond few passing discussions. The idea it seems, does not unanimously appeal to everyone. While Johnny Cash would be eager to repeat his role as Frank in a movie, Charlie Daniels was decidedly less enthusiastic about such a prospective venture. "I'm basically a musician," he insisted, "and I don't take detrimental time away from my profession to do anything, really."

By all accounts, Emmylou was so excited about the LP she had mentioned a potential road show long ago. But that, neither, has gone past the talking stage. For Charlie, both of these proposals would depend, as did the recording, on the people and time involved. Obviously, with everyone's busy schedules, corralling all the principals into one stable for an extended commitment might never be feasible. Although completed in less than three weeks, recording the album required that only the studio band be present the entire time. Charlie's story was typical: "It fell into a very busy time for us. I was touring real heavy," he said. "Part of the tour took us to California, and I had part of two days to do my part."

While a few hours each for two days isn't much, 20 minutes is merely the time it might take to get to the studio. But that's about all Rodney Crowell needed to do his small role as the officer. "I wasn't involved very much at all. I mean, I was around, I knew what was going on, but . . . They just needed someone to sing the part of the officer, and I was available," Rodney explained long-distance from his home in California. "I didn't have any creative input, really. Paul Kennerly and



Levon Helm

Glyn Johns had it the way they wanted it, and they had all the tracks cut when I came in. It's just lucky for Rosanne and I, and Rosanne's dad—we weren't there for the tracks, but when we got there to do our parts, I guess it was just foresight or



Charlie Daniels

something, they had picked the right keys for us."

The appearance of Rodney's wife on the album was even more spontaneous. "It was an accident that I became involved at all," Rosanne Cash said during the same cross-country conversation. "They had asked Rodney to do the first song, *The Ride of Redlegs*, and I just went to the studio with him that night, and Glyn Johns said 'Well, all we have left is these four lines of the mother, and we were wondering if you would do it'—so I did. I thought it was too low for me at first, but I was real happy with it when I did it. I was real proud to be involved."

Compared with Kennerly's first album in 1978, *White Mansions*, another American episode about the Civil War South which featured Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter and Eric Clapton, Crowell feels the composer's latest effort is superior. "I think that Paul just refined his art a little more."

Echoing the sentiments of the others, Rodney marvels at the educational merits of this work. "Paul's one of the few journalistic songwriters around today—that's your factual account of the James Gang. That's what's great about the album. Musically it's really nice, you know, but what's really great is if you keep on listening to it over and over again, you can really absorb the story."

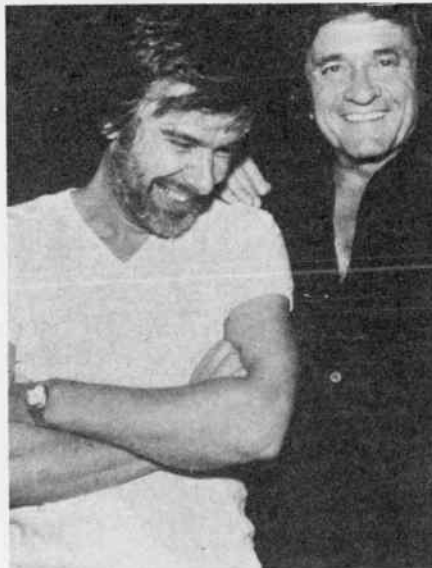
"It's absolutely true, and that's the one thing that will help it a lot. It's like *Coal Miner's Daughter*—a true story," Levon Helm flatly stated between shows during his recent performance at New York's *Lone Star Cafe*. And he's one man who should know, having played Loretta Lynn's father in the phenomenally successful film version of her autobiography, as well as the title role in *The Legend of Jesse James*. "I first talked to Paul and Glyn long distance back in the early spring, and it sounded good at that time. And naturally I hate to miss anything that's good, and I volunteered

right off the bat. And it turned out, for once, that everybody else felt the same way, too. Emmylou and Charlie and Johnny Cash . . . everybody," the affable ex-Band drummer said, recounting the story of how he became to be Jesse.

As a featured character who also played on all the music tracks, Levon was present during all the sessions and described the actual recording of the LP. "We got together every day around two o'clock. We weren't all there, but there was more of us together than just coming in and overdubbing, so it had more of a family feeling to the album. They dubbed Johnny Cash on *One More Shot*, and they overdubbed the string section on Emmylou's tunes. Outside of that, overdubs were at a minimum. So it ain't a damn workshop job—it's a real live damn album is what it is! Levon emphasized.

"It was so well done, in fact," he added, "that we only maybe changed a tad here and there arrangement-wise and switched just a word or two. It all happened pretty quick due to the preparation of Paul and Glyn."

"It was fun. Ya know, the great thing was working with Emmylou. Everybody knows how pure and beautiful her voice is, but they forget what kind of guitar player she is. Boy could she play finger-style



Glyn Johns and Johnny Cash

guitar. She's so damn good, they forget that she's one of the best damn guitar players around!" the good ole boy exclaimed passionately.

Levon, for one, would probably be right up at the front of the line for a chance to be Jesse on the screen. "I'd sure hate to not be involved," he said. "I don't know what's gonna happen with it, but I think it would be a nice show."

He jumped just about that fast when offered the role of Jesse on the record. "I don't know who they started with," he quipped, "but I probably said yes the quickest. I wouldn't have missed it for nothing!"



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Stephen Foster The First Country Songwriter

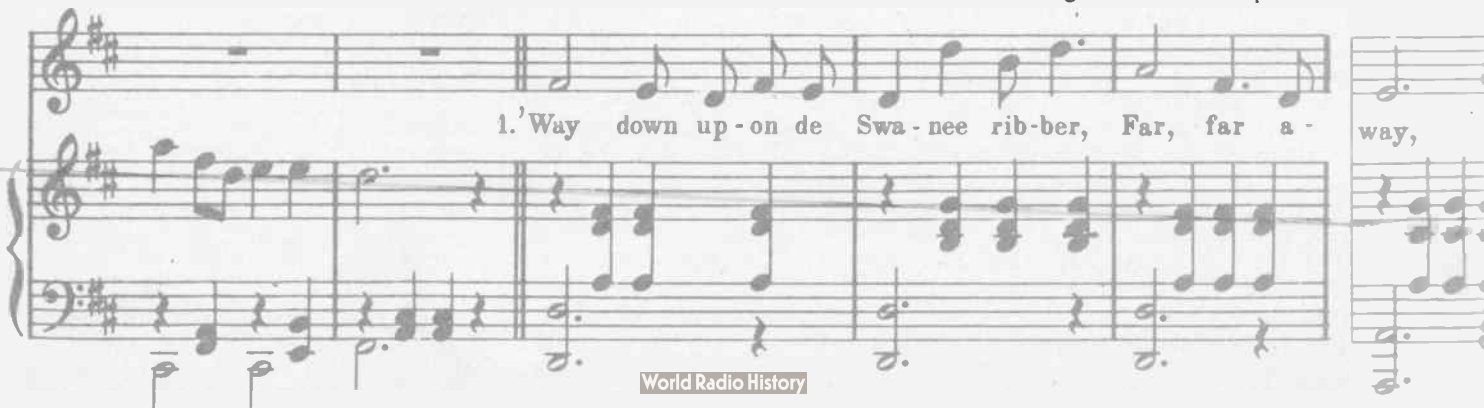
By John Pugh



How's this for a scenario for a new movie based on the life of a country music songwriter? Boy grows up displaying unusual musical talents even as a preschooler, matures into a songwriter of exceptional genius, has hit after hit and becomes one of the most popular, revered composers of his day. But gradually his marriage becomes more tempestuous and he struggles with financial reverses and acute alcoholism. Finally, at what could have been the height of his career, he dies in a strange accident, a neglected, tragic figure. Though all this may seem to be a modern-day melodrama based on the life of Hank Williams or Jimmie Rodgers, it is actually the synopsis of the man whom many regard as the first country songwriter—and 120 years later, still the greatest. In his 38 years Stephen Foster wrote more preciously timeless songs, achieved both more instant popularity and lasting acclaim, and in the end, suffered more loneliness and heartbreak than any other American musical personality. In many ways it is a pattern that has been repeated throughout many performers' and songwriters' lives: everyone from Cole Porter to Elvis Presley. With one exception. No one else has ever been able to duplicate the beauty and universality of Stephen Foster's music.

Historian Bernard De Voto wrote in *Harpers*, 1941: "Art is mysterious, it is the miraculous and undefined, but if that should chance to be art which a people takes most closely to their bosoms and hold there most tenderly and longest, then Stephen Foster is incomparably the greatest American artist. He made the Americans members of one another . . . They were an inchoate people between two stages of the endless American process of becoming a nation . . . They were a people without unity and with only a spasmodic mutual awareness, at this moment being pulled further asunder by the expansion of the frontier and the equal explosiveness of developing industry. The way to understand the people who were about to fight an unprecedented war and simultaneously push the nation's boundary to the Pacific is to steep yourself in Stephen Foster's songs."

Though this legend rests almost entirely on his songs of the pre-Civil War South, Stephen Collins Foster was born in Pittsburgh in 1826. His parents were a



prominent first family of the region, his father serving in several appointed and elected political offices and the family owning several lucrative transportation lines. When Stephen was age two, he would lay a guitar on the floor and pick out little melodies on it. At age six he marched around the house and yard constantly singing and playing on a toy drum. At age seven his father took him to a music store where he picked up a flute off the counter and began playing it with such skill that it astounded everyone present. It was, of course, the first time he'd ever had a flute in his hands. By age 15 his future calling was very evident. His father wrote to Stephen's brother, "... his leisure hours are all devoted to musick, for which he possesses a strange talent." At that time "strange" was an apt word. In the finer families music was something reserved for young ladies to learn at finishing school in order to politely entertain future suitors. It was a frivolous feminine pursuit, unfit for a growing, responsible boy who should have been preparing to take his place in the family business. But his love for music was not the only trait that separated Stephen from other boys. His brother Morrison wrote, "He preferred to ramble among the roads and upon the hills by the beautiful rivers of his home with his books and pencils, alone and thoughtful.

Later he would develop another habit that caused his family even more consternation: frequenting the traveling minstrel shows that came in on the Ohio River and played the local theatres. From his exposure to these performances, he became attracted to the docks and wharves where the Negro shipworkers sang their days away as they loaded and unloaded the giant paddle-wheelers. He listened for hours, fascinated by the songs and tales of the romantic, far off, El Doradoish South. In time he formed a little theatre group which copied the minstrel format. His performances of the Negro songs were "so inimitable and true to nature that ... he was greeted with uproarious applause and called back again and again every night," read one account of his performances.

He grew up a shy, gentle, sensitive boy, not really interested in school, business or a trade. His family became increasingly dismayed with him, particularly his father and older brothers, and searched frantically to find a niche for him. They even con-

sidered securing him appointments to both the Naval Academy and West Point. At last they set him up as a bookkeeper in a



Stephen Foster Center White Springs, Fla.

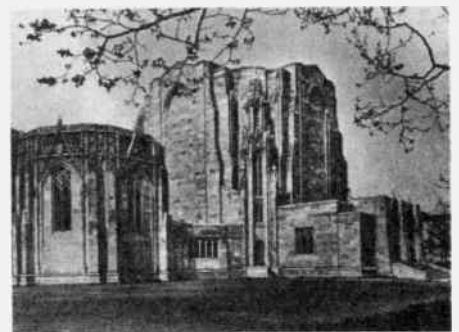
branch of the family business in Cincinnati. It only increased his longing for music. His brother Morrison remembers, "He would sit in the evening at the piano and improvise by the hour beautiful strains and melodies ... Occasionally he would vary his occupation by singing in plaintive tones one of his own or other favorite songs. At times tears could be seen on his cheek ... so sensitive was his nature to the influence of true poetry combined with music."

He had his first song published in 1844 when he was 18, and then had what we would call today his first "hit" with *O! Susannah* in 1848. He thereupon quit the family business and informed them of his intention to make his living from music. But even then came the first indication of the problem that would plague him all his professional life. At that time there was no copyright that protected a manuscript before publication. Thus, publishers gave out a copyright to the first person who walked through the door with a lead sheet. Not only did many minstrel performers take copies of Foster's manuscripts to publishers in their own names, but dozens of others wrote out slightly different versions and presented them as original works. It is estimated that 20 different copyrights on *O! Susannah* alone were issued to various "composers."

Despite such plagiarism, Foster's fame and reputation were unexcelled in the late 1840s and throughout the 1850s. Even in a time of no electronic communication, his

songs were on everyone's lips in a matter of weeks; spread via sales of sheet music, word of mouth and performances at minstrel shows and concerts. *Dwight's Journal of Music* reported in its issue of October 1852: "*Old Folks At Home* ... is on everybody's tongue ... Pianos and guitars groan with it night and day, sentimental young ladies sing it, young gentlemen warble it in midnight serenades; volatile young bucks hum it in the midst of their business and pleasure; boatmen roar it out at all times; all the bands play it; the street organs grind it out at every hour; the singing stars carol it on the theatrical boards and at concerts; there is not a live darkey, young or old, but can whistle, sing, dance and play it. ..." There is one report—perhaps apocryphal, but no less indicative—that a mere four days after the song was first performed at a Pittsburgh minstrel show, it was being sung in California.

Foster's songwriting talents bore the traits that stamp most successful country songs today. His melodies were simple, without being repetitious; monotonous or amateurish. His lyrics touched on universal human emotions and, though they contained a heavy dose of sentiment, never descended to the mawkish or trite. An anonymous reminiscence in the *Pittsburgh Press*, July 1895, related: "Foster's mind seemed to be full of melodies and I never saw him sit down to a piano that he did not play or sing something we had never heard before. He was continually evolving new songs and new melodies; some of them strange, yet peculiarly sweet and pathetic. Often when we were spending an evening with friends, he would suddenly dart to the piano, unmindful of all about him and seemingly unconscious of his surround-



Stephen Foster Memorial on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh.

World Radio History

dings, and pick out on the keyboard the notes of some new melody that seemed to be passing through his brain. He would play it over until he familiarized himself with the air, then jot the notes down on paper . . . His friends and acquaintances were never offended by this conduct, as they never went out with him that they did not expect by the close of the evening to hear some new songs from his lips."

As the old bromide goes, however, it appeared that only the people liked him.

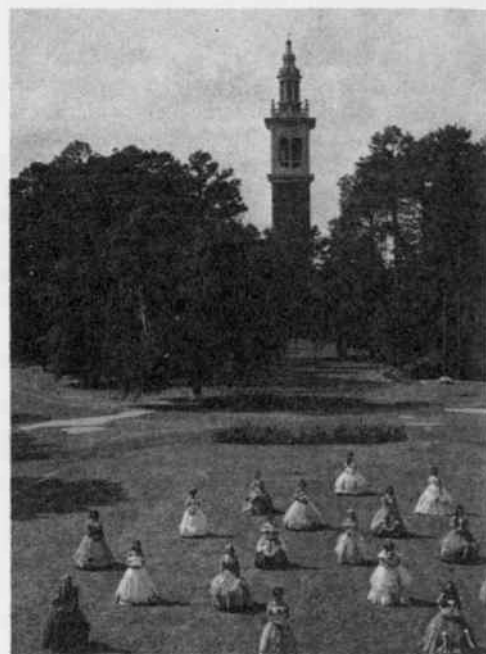
that they are hummed and whistled without musical emotion; that they persecute and haunt the morbidly sensitive nerves of deeply musical persons, so that they too hum and whistle them involuntarily, hating them even while they hum them; that such melodies become catching, idle habits, and are not popular in the sense of musically inspiring, but that such a melody breaks out every now and then like an irritation of the skin."

World magazine opined in February 1852 that, "Mr. Foster possesses more than ordinary abilities as a composer and we hope he will soon realize enough from his Ethiopian melodies to enable him to afford to drop them and turn his attention to

The critics scorned him for what they saw as his condescending to popular tastes and not making the most of his talent.

the production of a higher kind of music. Much of his music is now excellent, but being wedded to Negro idioms, it is discarded by many who would otherwise gladly welcome it into their homes."

Another, less easily dismissed criticism of Foster that lingers even today is that, because he made only one trip to the Deep South during his lifetime, his songs are somehow fraudulent, unauthentic, tainted by the lack of first-hand knowledge and experience. As Hank Williams once said, "You have to have smelled a lot of manure to sing like a hillbilly." Foster never smelled a single honeysuckle. But let one matter be realized. The Nashville stereotype of the anguished tormented cowboy pouring out his grief into a song that will someday take its place among the country classics because the public will somehow *know* that ole Tex really felt that heartbroken, that close to the brink when he penned it: that stereotype will never die. But in truth, most country songwriters rely on their ability to interject themselves into a situation, a story, an emotion so strongly and so vividly that they can write about it as if it actually happened to themselves. As one person said, on learning of this reality,



Stephen Foster Carillon Tower in White Springs, Fla. features Foster melodies.

"Man, these cats can really fool you." It would seem, then, if Foster is guilty of anything in this regard, it would be simply that he has inadvertently fooled countless millions over the years who had originally thought he must have been born in a white linen suit, sipping on a mint julep.

Foster's glory years continued unabated for more than a decade. He might not have always gotten his deserved royalties, but he was making a comfortable living, and happy and secure in his music.

The first leaks in the dike appeared shortly after he married Jane McDowell in July 1850. Though he wrote five songs with the name Jeanie or Jenny in the title in a thinly disguised tribute to her, theirs was a stormy marriage. She apparently never cared much for music and disapproved of his songwriting career. She even had the thoughtless audacity to chatter during concerts, which greatly irked her husband. She was said to be very brisk, efficient and businesslike, the exact opposite of the dreamy, poetic Stephen, driving him even further into moodiness and introspection. Of course, Stephen also contributed his share to the discord. One of the most common speculations about Foster's marital difficulties is that there was too much

MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME, GOOD NIGHT
 Christy's Minstrels
 STEPHEN C. FOSTER

My Old Kentucky Home—first edition published in 1853.

The critics scorned him for what they saw as his condescending to popular tastes and not making the most of his talent. These same charges—although greatly muted—have been leveled at such contemporary performers as Roy Clark, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ronnie Milsap and others. But it is interesting to note that whereas today most fans and critics look askance at a singer's "going pop," Foster received his biggest rips for, in effect, being "too country." *Dwight's Journal of Music* wrote of Foster in November 1853: "We wish to say that such tunes, although whistled and sung by everybody, are erroneously supposed to have taken a deep hold of the popular mind; that the charm is only skin deep;

whole cre-a-tion, Sad-ly I roam, Still long-ing for de old plan-ta-tion, And

“family” in his life. For example, when he and Jane returned from their honeymoon, they moved in with five of his relatives. (And by then he could have well afforded a separate residence.) Once, when living quite well in New Jersey, he abruptly decided to move back to Pittsburgh. Within 24 hours he had sold all their household goods at a huge sacrifice and he, Jane and their small daughter caught the next train home, arriving in the dead of night. They separated at least twice, and she finally left him around 1860, though her reasons were more financial than personal; by then he had become unable to support her and their daughter, and she had to leave to make her own living.

It was also sometime during the 1850s that Foster began to drink. Again, we can only speculate why. Most conjecture centers around his marital problems, the injustice of not receiving his full royalties and, perhaps foremost of all, to fortify his sensitive nature against a cold, uncaring world. A friend from his last years related an observation that would indicate why Foster could have easily turned to the bottle. “He entered the office of one of his Broadway publishers one evening and asked him personally for a few copies of one of his songs. They were refused him, and he left the store with tears rolling down his cheeks, for he was very sensitive, and weeping came to him far more easily than smiling.”

(Lest all the talk of this teary-eyed, sentimental post conjure up images of a limp-wristed effeminate, two incidents should be related. In his youth, Foster set upon two muggers who were beating an old man and put them both to flight in a matter of minutes. In his middle years he slugged it out with two punks who had insulted his daughter on the street, and again caused both of them to quickly show their heels. It is interesting to contemplate what he might have done had he gotten sufficiently mad at the penurious publisher.)

Sometime around 1860 Foster moved to New York, apparently to be near his publishers. It was the worst possible move he could have made. He was completely out of place in the rough and tumble of Gotham and, after his wife left him, soon came to land on the Bowery, which then as now was New York’s skid row. By then his

drinking dominated his life and he soon lost all interest in such matters as personal appearance, health habits and proper diet. One acquaintance remembers him as, “. . . a man utterly careless of his appearance, having apparently lost the incentive of self-respect.” His brother, shocked at how far he had fallen, asked why he went around so ragged and unkempt. Foster replied, “Don’t worry about me. No gentleman will insult me and no other can.”

He spent his days in a saloon in back of a grocery store, his nights sleeping wherever he could. He still wrote songs, but by then he had become a hack, grinding them out and selling them for desperately needed cash. Once he had sold them for a lump sum, of course, he relinquished all claim to future royalties. The one exception to the mediocre quality of those years was *Beautiful Dreamer*, still generally thought to be his most beautiful song. Unfortunately, it was not even published until after his death.

Foster was so average, so unremarkable in appearance and features that it is difficult to describe him. He had thin lips, heavy black eyebrows, a strong, aquiline nose and somewhat largish ears. He was neither handsome nor homely. His eyes, however, say much about his sufferings as they stare out of portraits with an almost unbearable poignancy. A friend describes him in his last days as having “soft brown eyes, somewhat dimmed by dissipation, shaded by downfalling eyelids full of dreams and slumber. His appearance was



Foster Hall, Indianapolis, Ind.—original home, Foster Hall Collection.

CHORUS

old folks at home. All de world am sad and drear-y, Eb-ry-where I



Broadside of “Beautiful Dreamer.”

at once so youthful and so aged, that it was difficult to tell at a casual glance if he were 20 years old or 50. An anxious, startled expression hovered over his face that was

His appearance was at once so youthful and so aged, that it was difficult to tell at a casual glance if he were 20 years old or 50. An anxious, startled expression hovered over his face that was painful to witness.

painful to witness. He seemed as embarrassed as a child in the presence of a stranger, and he would walk, talk, eat and drink with you, and yet always seem distant, maintaining an awkward dignity.”

Mercifully, Foster’s torment was ended in early 1864. On a cold January morning in a cheap hotel he apparently stumbled

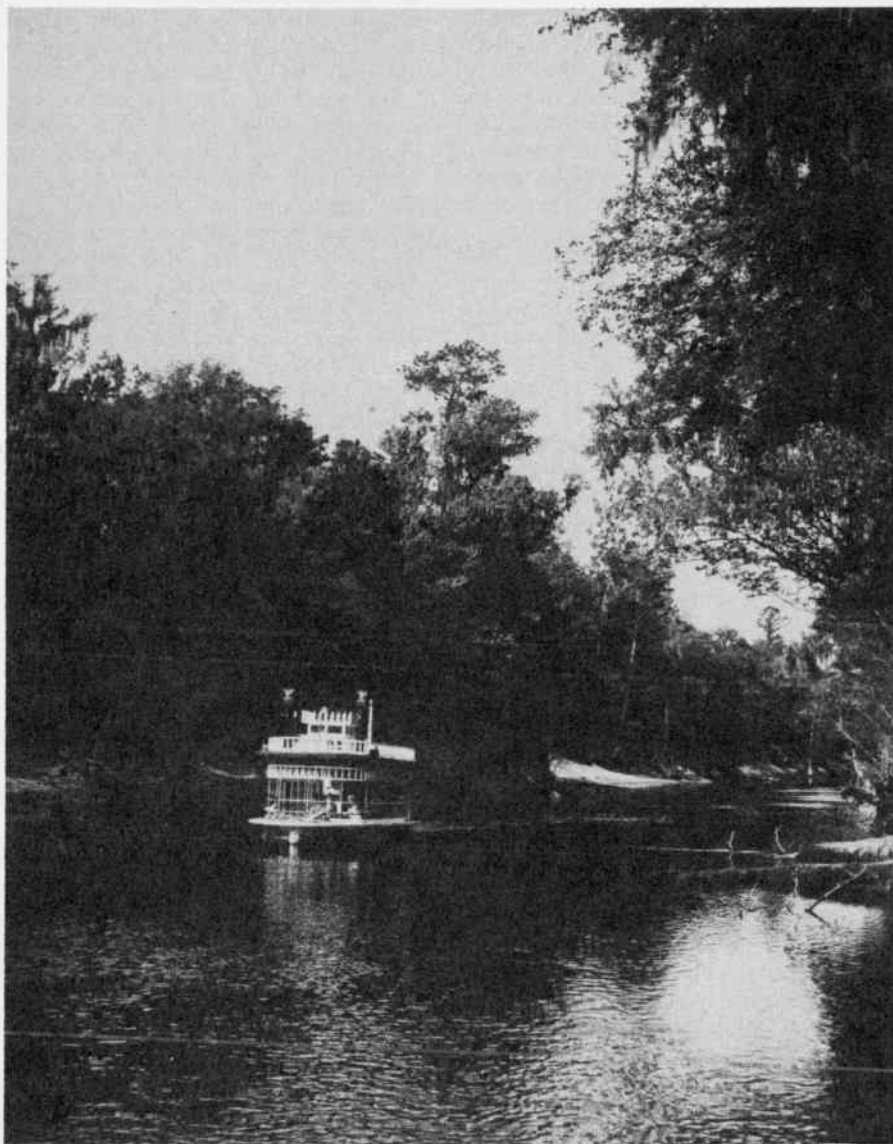
and fell across a broken water pitcher, cutting his head and/or neck. A doctor was summoned and quickly bandaged the wound and Foster was taken to Bellevue Hospital. Though it seemed he would recover, three days later he died from his debilitated system's not being able to withstand the loss of blood. The hospital inventory of his personal possessions read: "coat, pants, vest, hat, shoes, overcoat." In other words, the clothes on his back. In his pockets were 38 cents, the oft-mentioned "penny for every year of his life," and the apparent title of his next song, *Dear Friends And Gentle Hearts*. He had known very few of either in New York. His wife, whom he had still written to often in the four years since their parting, rushed to New York from Pittsburgh and, on arriving at the hospital, knelt by his corpse for nearly an hour. If she made any comment on her feelings for him or their past life together, it went unrecorded. His body was taken back to Pittsburgh and buried.

Almost immediately Foster began receiving the tributes and honors which had been denied him in his lifetime. After the inevitable flood of "last" songs, the proclamations and editorials spewed out their belated homages. Down through the years many statues have been erected and busts sculpted, and everything from bridges and highways to ships to Pullman railroad cars to wrist watches have been named for him. The glee clubs and singing societies founded to preserve his memory are too numerous to mention. Both a coin (1936) and a stamp (1940) were issued in his honor, and in 1951 Congress declared January 13, the date of his death, as National Stephen Foster Day. Two of his songs *My Old Kentucky Home*, *Good Night* and *Old Folks At Home* (often called *Swanee River*) have been declared the state songs of Kentucky and Florida, respectively. There are major museums at the Foster Hall Collection at the University of Pittsburgh and at the Stephen Foster Memorial at White Springs, Florida, in addition to several smaller memorial rooms and exhibits around the country. The hamlet of Bardstown, Kentucky features an outdoor drama of his life every

summer. Also, even in death he was denied the full measure of his just desserts. The standard copyright law was not written until 1909, and ASCAP, the first songwriter's collection agency, was not founded until 1914. By then almost all his songs had passed into public domain.

Perhaps biographer John T. Howard

gave the most quietly effective tribute to what the music of Stephen Foster has meant to each succeeding generation of Americans. "The real *Swanee River* does not rise in any part of Georgia or Florida," he spoke at the dedication of the White Springs museum in 1950. "It rises in the highest mountains of the human heart." ■



Miniature replicas of steamboats at the Stephen Foster Center in White Springs, Fla., take visitors on a ride that was once commonplace on the Swanee.

roam, Oh! dark-eyes how my heart grows wea-ry, Far from de old folks at home.



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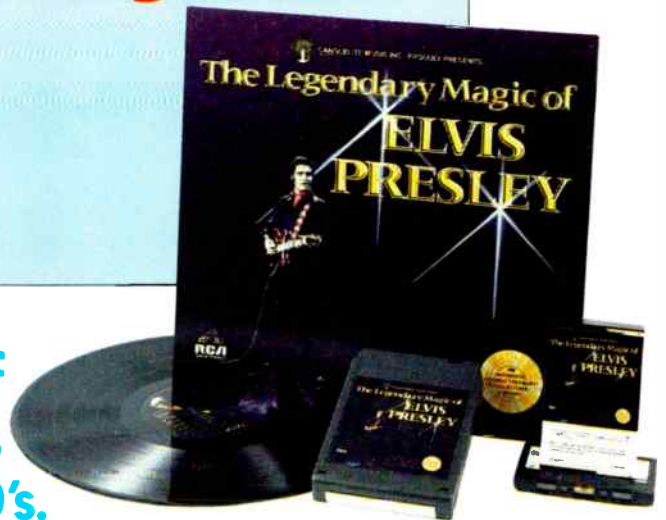
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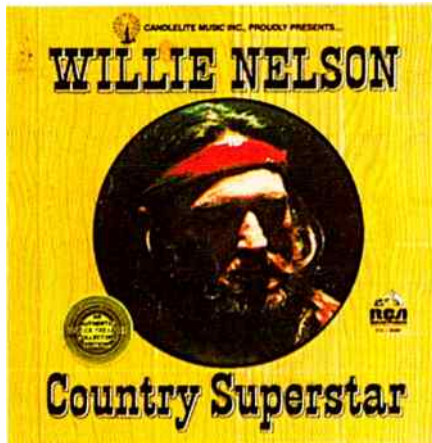
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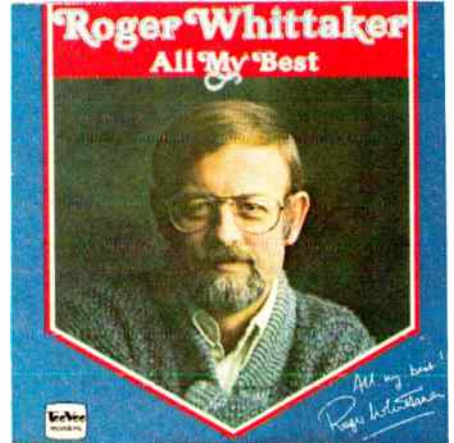
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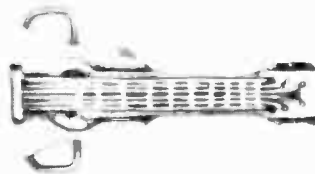
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Record Reviews

Chet Atkins & Doc Watson

Reflections

RCA Victor AHLI-3701

Somebody should've thought of this a long time ago. After all, Chet previously cut albums with Hank Snow, Jerry Reed, Merle Travis and Les Paul, while Doc recorded with Merle Travis and Maybelle Carter on the now-classic *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* LP. But for all their common roots, they've never gotten together.

And the fact that their roots are common has generally gone unnoticed. As the liner notes state, both grew up in the Smoky Mountains. But also, while Doc grew up on an appetite of the Delmore Brothers, early bluegrass, old time string-band music and liberal doses of Merle Travis, Chet was listening to much the same thing, meeting Travis, hanging out with the Delmores when he worked in Cincinnati, and had gotten his start playing



old-time country as a kid in Tennessee. Of course both went different paths, Chet going from country picker to country-politan (and legitimizing the

entire country guitar sound in the process) while Doc became one of the shining lights of old-time country, bringing it to folk audiences who'd previously

heard it on old 78s.

Aside from two original tunes, the rest are tried and true standards: the Delmores' *You're Gonna Be Sorry*, the instrumental standards *Tennessee Rag*, *Old Joe Clark*, *Texas Gales* and *Dill Pickle Rag*, the latter featuring some truly scary crosspicking. *Flatt Did It* is a tribute to the famous Lester Flatt G-Run. The old Karl and Harty chestnut *Don't Monkey 'Round My Widder* gets a perfect, offhanded treatment with rough vocals. And through every song, Doc's steel-string Gallagher guitar and Chet's resonator and classical models compliment each other as if they'd been playing this way for years.

I got a chance to speak with Chet shortly before this album was released and he said, "It's just pure country... just about four instruments (including bass, rhythm guitar and drums), no strings or anything." Amen to that.

RICH KIENZLE



Mel Tillis

Southern Rain

Elektra 6E-310

I don't know about you, but I generally find myself listening to albums with one

hand poised on the needle, ready to skip over that dread stuff we call "filler." Well, no need for that with *Southern Rain*. What's exceptional about Tillis' latest effort is not only the fact that there is no filler, but—at least to these ears—just about every cut sounds like a potential single.

Tillis' formula is really pretty simple. He picks material with simple melody lines and good solid hooks. Rather than floating away into the ozone when they're over, the tunes stick rather nicely in your cranium; you'll walk away humming them. Seems to me

that that's the stuff that hits are made of.

Standout cuts here are the title song—which features Tillis singing over some great gospel-style background vocals. Then come the honky-tonkers—*One Night Fever*, and my favorite, *Pyramid of Cans* (sort of a countrified look at pyramid power).

Things get a bit schmaltzy with *A Million Goodbyes*, which seems made for the Vegas lounge set. But they pick right back up again with *Forgive Me For Giving You The Blues*, a Ray Price-style number right down to the

Cherokee Cowboys-like steel and fiddle breaks. *Louisiana Lady* is what I guess we'd have to term "modern Cajun"—but that doesn't mean it's hokey. This one would do Doug Kershaw proud.

Tillis' forte is his non-nonsense vocal style. He doesn't do anything really fancy, but that's just what draws one to him. In these days of everyone looking for that great-crossover-in-the-sky, Tillis is sticking to what seems to be fast becoming a rare commodity—the stuff we call straight country.

STUART GOLDMAN

Record Reviews

Various Artists

Any Which Way You Can

Viva (Warner Bros.) HS 3499

While Clint Eastwood's recent and continuing embrace of country music must be considered non-violently pleasant (every little bit helps), this latest soundtrack offering from the *Any Which Way* saga is not, as they say, up to Snuff.

Snuff, in this case, is Snuff Garrett, the Musical Supervisor of *Any Which Way You Can* and the producer of the album; of his efforts on this par-

ticular project, let it be said that *Any Which Way You Can* is, given a not-quite-top-of-the-line budget and various other factors, rather too apt a title.

First up is *Beers To You*, a duet between Ray Charles (!) and Clint himself (!!) which boggles the ears most amazingly. If Ray Charles is to the blues what Hank Williams is to country music, then Clint Eastwood is to country music what Waylon Jennings is to needlepoint: the attempted meeting of these two giants must be heard to be believed. Clint sings like Bob Dylan (in

his *Nashville Skyline* period) with a very bad cold and a terminal hangover. Lovely! In the same vein, though not quite so spectacularly awful, are Sondra Locke's two contributions. Sondra's singing style, almost on-key, is best described as "breathless." In contrast, the aging Fats Domino's weary rendition of *Whiskey Heaven* and Cliff Crofford's bizarrely dreadful *Orangutan Hall of Fame* sound almost professional, and the other filler material by Johnny Duncan and Gene Watson and John Durrill, while essentially bor-

ing, seems relatively inspired.

The news, however, is not *all* bad. Glen Campbell's title track is blandly appealing. Jim Stafford's self-written *Cow Patti* (about a girl called Patti who sets off to revenge her slain father in a deluge of puns) is one of Jim's more hilarious recent songs, and David Frizzell and Shelly West's duet on *You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma* lives up to the promise of their surnames. Still, three presentable songs do not an album make.

PATRICK CARR



Hank Cochran Make The World Go Away

Elektra 6E-277

The term "classic song" is so often bandied about—particularly in country music—that sometimes we're unable to recognize the genuine article

when we hear it. One listening to this LP should take care of that malady permanently—and when it's over you'll have to agree that Cochran is, indeed, a writer of "classics." What else can you call tunes like *I Fall To Pieces*, *He's Got You*, and *Make The World Go Away*?

We've heard these tunes not

only from the performers who've made them hits: Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Merle Haggard and Jim Reeves, but from almost every house band in almost every club in almost every city in the U.S. So, though Cochran is a man who's chosen to stay out of the limelight most of his life, we know him from his writing; his tunes have become a part of our collective consciousness.

For some, it may take more than one listening to accustom themselves to Cochran's voice. Like Willie Nelson, Cochran's no technician, yet there's a warmth and a spirit in his style that no amount of vocal training could ever buy. There seems to be many similarities between Cochran and Nelson (who sings on five of the tracks here). Whether it's due to a long standing friendship which dates back to the early '60s (when Cochran helped Nelson land his first record deal) or something less tangible is hard to say.

Cochran's approach here is, for the most part, straightforward. Still, there are a few surprises—like a chugaluggin' rock 'n' roll version of the old Burl Ives hit *A Little Bitty*

Tear. Or the heartfelt rendition of Willie's *Angel Flying Close To The Ground*, which—for my money—surpasses Willie's own version.

And as the tunes play, the memories come flooding back: an old girlfriend, some honky-tonk in anywhere U.S.A., driving alone late at night with the country station turned up full blast. In that sense, for each listener, this LP should prove to be an extremely personal experience. My emotional button really got hit during *All* a song which I consider to be nothing less than the best barroom/jukebox tune in existence. It also happened to be—back in my days playing guitar in clubs—the very first tune I was forced to sing. And though at the time it was a horribly traumatic experience, I realized how much I missed those times.

Instrumentally the LP is the antithesis of the slick, Nashville fare. The playing is lean, economical, and punchy when it needs to be. It has the feeling of being cut live, though word has it that the project took nearly a year. If that's truly the case, it was time well spent.

STUART GOLDMAN

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Record Reviews

Dolly Parton 9 To 5 and Odd Jobs RCA A111-3852

About the time I sat down to write up this review, a letter arrived from a California friend whom I respect and admire. Among other advice, she told me not to smooth too many rough edges, otherwise there wouldn't be anything left to get a grip on. It struck me that this same logic ought to apply to making records. In essence, Dolly Parton's last few records, while polished to a high shine, lack that interesting edge. But she's given us something to grip on **9 To 5 And Odd Jobs**.

Basically, this is a transition album in the long recording career of Dolly—a cross-breed of her L.A.-styled music of the past three years mixed with a hint of where she is heading in 1981. She recorded **9 To 5 And Odd Jobs** in Nashville, her first recording sessions in Music City since the brilliant **New Harvest, First Gathering** LP of 1977. And she has confided in interviews that her next album will be more country and filled entirely with new, original songs that she will also cut in Nashville.

The thread weaving in and around the texture and tone of this album is sympathy for plain working folks. To

paraphrase ol' Waylon, I ain't sure Hank would've done it this way, but then that's not the point. Dolly's heart is in the right place and with all the pressure of Hollywood, record company demands and the realities of superstardom, Dolly has done well. Four of the ten songs were written by Parton, but they are average songs. The title song is the theme song of Dolly's new movie *9 To 5*, and taken in the context of the movie, is a fine tune.

Dark As A Dungeon, the old Merle Travis classic, stands out as the highlight and saving grace on the LP. All of Dolly's talent, sensitivity and creativity as a vocalist is caught in the song's first line. Her phrasing and originality on those first few words is magical and reflects pure artistry. Also, the clean production perfectly supports the beauty of the melody and lyric. *Deportee (Plane Wreck At Los Gatos)* nearly measures up to the brilliance of *Dark As A Dungeon*. One of the finest songs in the catalogue of folk-genius Woody Guthrie, *Deportee* is as graphic as life and death, and Dolly moves through the song with conviction and strength.

The House Of The Rising Sun and *Detroit City* make interesting choices. Both tunes are produced and sung well,



which basically proves Dolly can sing any song well if she puts her mind to it. *But You Know I Love You* is probably the most commercial song and holds up well against the original hit version by Kenny Rogers and The First Edition. Another highlight of the album is the beginning harmony on *Hush-A-Bye Hard Times*, written by Dolly. She is helped by bluegrass greats Sonny and Bobby Osborne.

9 To 5 And Odd Jobs is more

varied and down-to-earth than what we have heard from Dolly in some time and she gives us our money's worth. But I suspect her next album will be the real killer. Blessed with a kinetic talent, Dolly's mind runs in a deep and subtle current. I, for one, would love to slap an album on the turntable that is pure Dolly and captures the full range of her unusual sensitivity and intelligence.

BOB CAMPBELL

Tanya Tucker Dreamlovers MCA 5140

The success of this album will be watched closely because it is the first release for Tanya since her reunion with producer Jerry Crutchfield, and her abandonment of the L.A. hard rock sound. **Dreamlovers** is not a radical shift towards hard country, as some might have expected, nor does it bring back the exact flavor of the former sounds associated with Tanya. This is yet another phase of the continuing outreach for this artist into unexplored territory.

As Tanya has often said, she just wants to be a singer without a label. Listening to this album does not make it easy to put her current phase into a category, which is precisely what she is aiming for. And yet, if someone were to ask me for a description of the style of the album, I would want to be able to come up with something. Perhaps the only word to describe it is contemporary.

Glen Campbell's influence is felt throughout the album, although there are only two actual duets, *Dream Lover* and *My Song*. He sings harmony and backup on several other

cuts. The feel of the music is much closer to Glen's heritage than Tanya's. Her Top Ten single, *Pecos Promenade*, is not included.

If the purpose of the album is to showcase the potential of Tanya as a country singer capable of expanding beyond her roots, it succeeds very well. *Can I See You Tonight* and *Don't You Want to Be a Lover Tonight* are the best examples of fine, catchy melodies set to arrangements that are uplifting without being overdone. One ballad that would stand on its own without identification with any singer is *Love Knows We Tried*. It is at the same time, an

exception to the change in Tanya. That song does remind us of her pre-California style.

Tanya and Glen were right when they determined that their voices blend well together. They each have followings from a variety of backgrounds and geographic locations. As long as Tanya's fans are patient enough to find out where she is going musically, she'll come through the changes all right. This record proves that she can handle the contemporary, modified country sound. Who knows where she'll be next year. Maybe in Texas.

BILLOAKY

Record Reviews

Roy Acuff Roy Acuff Sings Hank Williams For The First Time

Elektra 6E-287

Sure it's heresy, but the fact is that you can get overdosed on Hank Williams. This is especially true at a time when virtually every voice in the Western Hemisphere is raised in trendy adulation to country music and its flashier pioneers. Williams is undergoing such a resurgence of popularity that recently three of his songs, each by a different artist, were on *Billboard's* "Hot Country Singles" chart at the same time.

Roy Acuff certainly can't be lumped among the latecomers to Williams' music since he was one of Williams' first champions. Still, Acuff's renditions have to be listened to amid the echoes of a lot of earlier versions of *Cold, Cold Heart*, *You Win Again*, *Mansion On The Hill*, etc. Heard this way, the album is only moderately successful.

Two of the selections of this Wesley Rose production are simply bad choices for Acuff's style. To be fun, *Jambalaya* has



to be sung with an almost juvenile sense of abandon—a quality Acuff had lost (if he ever had it to begin with) by the time he left Knoxville for Nashville in the late '30s. *Kawliga*—which has probably done nearly as much for Indian relations in this country as *Running Bear*—is another ethnic cliché which must be either delivered tongue-in-

cheek or else turned down by a performer. But Acuff plows through it as if it were serious.

Take These Chains From My Heart moves along as briskly as if the chains were there for traction, and Acuff sings the lyrics with the kind of unstressed regularity one might expect from a fifth-grader forced to recite Tennyson. The same criticisms apply to *You*

Win Again.

However, the cuts just cited are the only major disappointments in the album. Williams himself couldn't improve on Acuff's mournful handling of *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*, and *Cold, Cold Heart* elicits an authentic cry of agony from Acuff. *There'll Be No Tear Drops Tonight* is nicely balanced, as it should be, between unconvincing bravado and gnawing self-pity.

Although the backup musicians are not listed, they sound like Acuff's own band, the Smoky Mountain Boys. And a representative for Wesley Rose confirmed that SMB Onie Wheeler provided the harmonica touches which add so much old-fashioned soulfulness to the album, particularly on *You Win Again* and *There'll Be No Tear Drops Tonight*. The harp work deserves special mention.

If your awareness of country music predates the advent of Barbi Benton to its ranks, then this album will probably afford you no new delights. But it could be a treasure to newcomers, for it exhibits the best writer and the most urgent voice this genre has to offer.

EDWARD MORRIS

Joe "King" Carrasco Joe "King" Carrasco and the Crowns

Stiff 940 837

Look, this really isn't a country record. The reason it's being reviewed in this column is that I like it so much, I convinced Rochelle, my editor, to let me review it here. I had all these great reasons for letting Joe "King" Carrasco into the column—this is a Tex-Mex band with rockabilly roots (among others), it's honky-tonk music if ever there was any—and if I can't do it, I'll jump out

the window and hold my breath.

What's here basically is a four piece band. Joe wears a tacky crown and a tatty cape, sings and prances all over playing a guitar with a cord that seems to be half a block long. Kris Cummings, all-woman organist, plays in the style of the organs in the Swinging Medallions' *Double Shot of My Baby's Love* and Question Mark and the Mysterians' *96 Tears*. That is, her organ parts are always as simple as they are memorable. And always at least a little bit silly. The main

feeling Kris' organ playing produces is that of trash going to heaven. Brad Kizer and Mike Navarro round things out on bass and drums.

This is dance music, which is to say it's very hard to not dance when you hear the band live. But the groove is not funk or disco; it's a white beat with heavy Mexican influence. The Carrasco sound is mainly mid '60s rock 'n' roll. At least half the songs the band does live are non-originals like (yes!) *Double Shot of my Baby's Love* and *96 Tears*. They also do material from the late '50s and early

'60s.

A lot of music makes me happy, but almost none makes me as happy as this music. I mean grin-to-bust-your-face happy. Honky-tonk indeed, but instead of getting carried away and crying in your beer, you get carried away and knock your beer over.

Here is, among much else, a world class party band and a world class party record. Try it out on your next party and even the faces of the most dedicated country purist will grin a notch or two brighter.

PETER STAMPFEL



Dolly Parton



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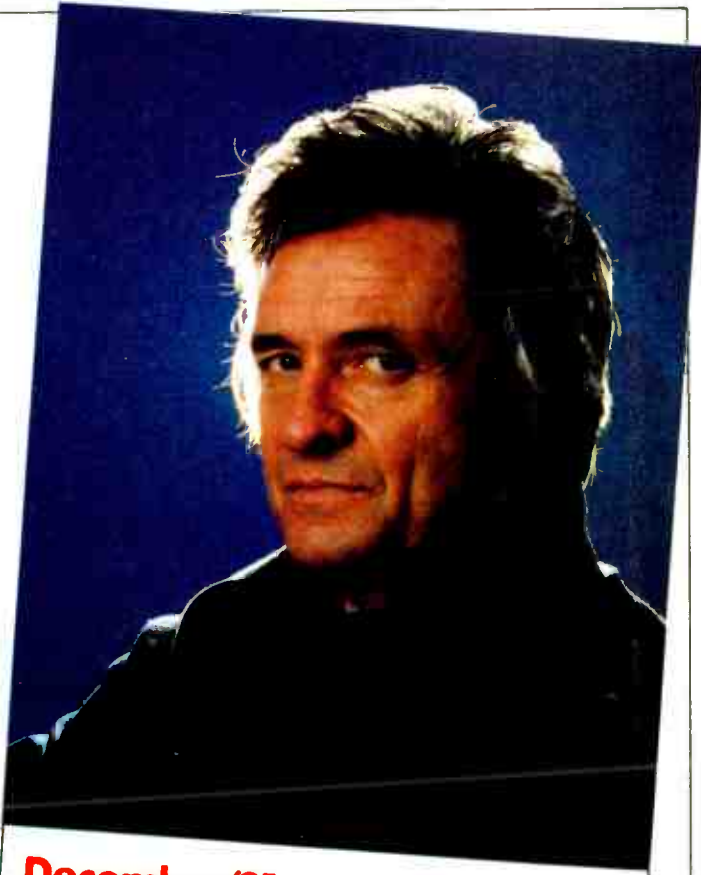
Calendar

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December '81



Record Reviews

Moe Bandy Following The Feeling

Columbia AL 36789

When I heard the fiddle intro to this album's title cut, which is also its first cut, I felt as though I were back in the early 1950s. I half expected the nasal voice of a young Webb Pierce to emanate from my stereo. But I can't say that Moe Bandy's voice disappointed me, for he can render a '50s honky-tonk song as well as anyone, and that's what the title cut turned out to be. True, there was a smoothness to the instrumentals that wasn't always there 30 years ago, and the backup singers were doing more of a '70s thing than a '50s thing, but the honky-tonk feeling predominated, complete with short solos by the steel guitar and fiddles. Rounding out the vintage feel of this number and others on the disc, were a dobro and harmonica. While these instruments weren't really part of the original honky-tonk approach, they fit into this record beautifully.

The vintage sound is carried through most of this record—tingling dobro licks in one number (*Liquor Emotion*), acoustic guitar licks in another

(*It's You And Me Again*). Once in a while the backup singers verge on the melodramatic, but by and large they are held in tasteful restraint. And through the entire disc, the tasty steel licks of old Weldon Myrick—God bless him—ring honest and clear at their country best.

In the lyrics department, this album is on an unusually high level. You find earthiness, sophistication, raw emotion and generally good taste. The themes are pretty much spelled out in the titles—*It's Better Than Being Alone*, *My Woman Loves The Devil Out of Me*, *It's You And Me Again*, *I've Got Your Love All Over Me*, and *If I Lay Down The Bottle Would You Lay Back Down With Me*.

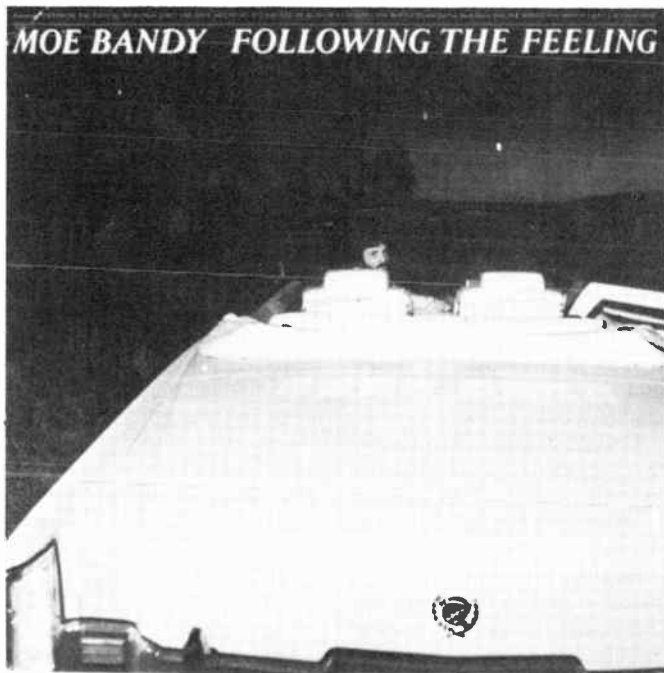
One cut—*Would You Mind If I Just Call You Julie*—asks that question of a woman whose name is obviously not Julie. Moe promises in return that she can call him anything she likes. Although the song never says what she ends up calling him, I suspect it's only semiprintable at best, and not calculated to warm the heart of your average minister or Girl Scout troop leader.

Alas, one cut is disappointing. *Mexico Winter* has a con-

temporary Latin beat that seems inappropriate to the rest of the album, and strings together a few clichés like tequila, rum and the-boss-can-go-to-hell into a nonmemorable tribute to a warm-weather vacation in good ole Mexico. Let's see, now. They've done Santa Barbara and Jamaica, and now Mexico. How 'bout the Virgin Islands, fellas?

They've got sunshine, sands, pretty girls and booze, not to mention moonlight, star-filled nights and a few other things. True, the setting might not lend itself to a cheatin' song—the Virgin Islands, after all—but you can't have everything.

All seriousness aside, the one weak song constitutes a minor flaw at most. Essentially, the album is great. ART MAHER



Reba McEntire Feel The Fire

Mercury SRM-1-5029 (6337 139)

Reba McEntire has one of



those fine, versatile voices that is still in search of a style. While this album contains several memorable cuts, it doesn't bring her any closer to a territory that is distinctively hers.

Nor is there much here for the fan of authentic country music to rejoice over. McEntire revives such '50s pop hits as *Tears On My Pillow*, a giant for Little Anthony and the Imperials; *Suddenly There's A Valley*, which topped the charts for Joe Stafford, Gogi Grant, the Mills Brothers, and Julius LaRosa; and *A Poor Man's*

Roses (Or A Rich Man's Gold), a winner for Patti Page.

Two of the selections have already done well in the country category for McEntire: *(You Lift Me) Up To Heaven* and *I Can See Forever In Your Eyes*. Both are textbook examples of what imaginative production and a good voice can do to transcend painfully banal lyrics.

The lyrics support their own weight, however, in *If I Had My Way*, a lament from the viewpoint of "the other woman," and *My Turn*, a paean to female sensuality that

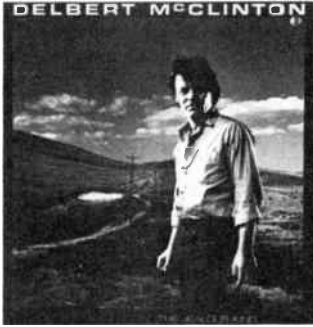
somehow still manages to sound country.

The remaining cuts that merit commendation are *I Don't Think That Love Ought To Be That Way*, a Kendall-style sally into moral instruction, and *Look At The One (Who's Been Lookin' At You)*, a provocative little rocker.

While one could hope for the development of a more distinctive vocal style and the assimilation of more country sounds and images, this Jerry Kennedy production stands up well under repeated listenings.

EDWARD MORRIS

Record Reviews



Delbert McClinton
The Jealous Kind
Capitol/EMI St-12115

For some years now, Delbert McClinton and Joe Ely have shared a small area of country music with no one else. They're both from Texas and about the same age; they both record for big labels, but are not big sellers; they both play honky-tonk/barroom country-rock. And they both have a lot of fans who believe they represent all that is real, true, tough, and honest about Southern country-rock 'n' roll.

Delbert has leaned a little too much towards boogie and blues to thrill me as much as he thrills a lot of my friends, but more recently he's been moving in the direction of more modern black music, exchanging the '50s boogie blues for '70s soul.

This record was made in Muscle Shoals, and produced by Barry Beckett and the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, emphasizing the shift towards soul. Another difference in this record from McClinton's earlier work is there are no original songs here. There is much variety, however. My favorite is Van Morrison's *Bright Side of the Road*, which sounds like something from Dylan's *Nashville Skyline*. Al Green's classic *Take Me to the River* is another high point, and *Giving It Up For Your Love* has the most modern soul sound here.

Bonnie Bramlett was the wise choice made for background vocals—more soulful than

country, but unmistakably white. Which is the feel of this record. More soulful than country music tends to be, but unmistakably white. Modern soul influence is seldom found in country music. Too bad. As this record shows, country

music can absorb just about any musical influence and still stay country.

All is not soulful here, however. Two songs, *Going Back To Louisiana* and *My Sweet Baby* have an old time raggy quality. And though none

of the songs here are straight ahead country, the total effect is. You can take McClinton to Muscle Shoals, but you can't take the country out of him. Rather, he brings the country to Muscle Shoals.

PETER STAMPFEL

BURIED TREASURES

by Rich Kienzle

Five years ago Shelby Singleton, who bought the Sun Records catalog from Sam Phillips back in 1969, joined with England's Charly Records in an ambitious reissue series of Sun blues, country and rockabilly. Unlike American Sun LP reissues that concentrated on their biggest artists, these well-packaged, annotated albums also looked at uncommon and unreleased material. Though some of the unissued songs and obscure artists have more historical than musical value (which is why Phillips never released them) the best collections afford strong insights into the label that spawned Presley, Cash, Perkins, Lewis, Rich and Orbison—and in the process, changed American music forever.

The most impressive and complete collection is **The Sun Box** (SB 100), a three LP collection with a fantastic 20 page book that includes complete information and some rare photos of Elvis and other Sun artists. Record one concentrates on the music Elvis and the others may have heard as kids: the black blues Sam Phillips recorded in the early '50s. It includes the original recordings of two later Elvis classics: *Tiger Man* by Joe Hill Louis and *Mystery Train* by Little Junior's Blue Flames. The raw, firey guitar work on these and other tracks inspired Scotty Moore, Carl Perkins and other Sun rockabilly guitarists. Record two details

Sun's hardcore country recordings, including Doug Poindexter's Lefty Frizzell-styled *My Kind of Carryin' On*, which features Scotty Moore and Bill Black in their pre-Elvis period, as well as six of Johnny Cash's greatest Sun tunes, including *Folsom Prison Blues*, Jerry Lee Lewis's *Breathless* and *Dixie Fried*, Carl Perkins' timeless tale of honky-tonk violence. Record three concentrates on the Sun rockabilly and rock hits, including Jerry Lee's *Milkshake Mademoiselle* and Roy Orbison's *Ooby Dooby*.

Tennessee Country (CR 30150) compiles some of Sun's best obscure country recordings, including Earl Peterson's delightful yodeling tune, *Boogie Blues* and the rocking country boogie of Malcom Yelvington's Star Rhythm Boys (an obscure, but excellent band), Onie Wheeler's *I'm Gonna Jump Right Out of This Jukebox* and Carl McVoy's fine rendering of *Born To Lose*. It's easy to see what was happening before Elvis in Memphis's country music community and how it reacted and changed afterward.

Nearly all of Carl Perkins' classic Sun recordings are on two LPs. **The Original Carl Perkins** (CR 30110) features all his Sun singles, including his first country record, *Turn Around* (on Flip, a short-lived Sun subsidiary), *Boppin' The Blues*, *Honey Don't*, *Matchbox*, *Glad All Over* and, of course, *Blue Suede Shoes*. **Sun Sound Special** (CR 30152) brings together the remaining

16 recordings Perkins did for Sun, including the hillbilly bop of *Right String Baby*, the whining honky-tonk of *Sure To Fall* and *Tennessee*, a jumping, engaging tribute to his home state. There are a couple of duplications, but that's minor. Both these LPs show Perkins at his peak.

The Original Charlie Rich (CR 30112) can only be called a perfect collection. Here is the cream of his work for Sun and the Phillips International label from 1958 to 1962, 16 classics from *Lonely Weekends*, *Who Will The Next Fool Be*, his wistful yet brooding *Sittin' And Thinkin'*, the Presleyish *Whirlwind* and *Red Man*, an instrumental showing his jazz influences.

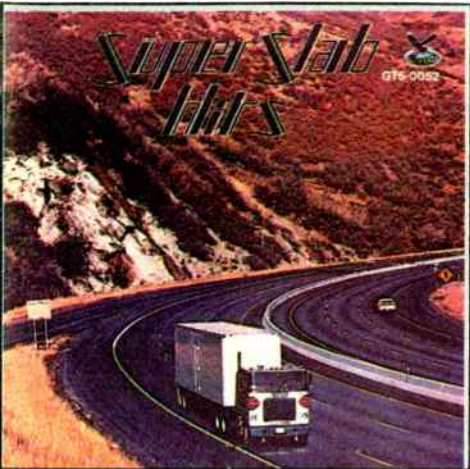
The Best Of Sun Rockabilly Volumes 1 & 2 (CR 20123-30124) compiles many of the obscure and classic rockabilly music from the Memphis area, including Roy Orbison's *Domino*, the close harmony *Ten Cats Down* by the Miller Sisters, Warren Smith's classic *Ubangi Stomp* and *Uranium Rock*, the primitive *Let's Bop* by Jack Earls and *Sweet Woman*, a 1958 recording by a teenaged rocker named Edwin (*Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys*) Bruce, making his recording debut.

The Sun Box is \$23.50, all other albums are \$7.98 each from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Ave. El Cerrito, CA 94530. Add \$2 for postage. Their new C&W catalog is available for \$1.

BIG RIG BONANZA

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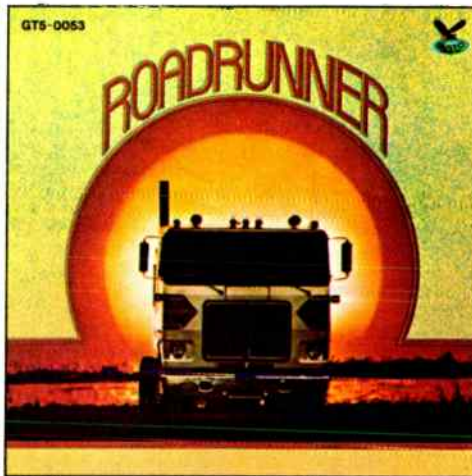
LP R20A 8-TRACK T20B CASSETTE C20C

TEDDY BEAR (Red Sovine) - A DIME AT A TIME (Del Reeves) - GIVE ME FORTY ACRES (Willis Brothers) - WOLVERTON MOUNTAIN (Claude King) - SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD (Dave Dudley) - CONVOY (Tommy Hill Music Festival) - COUNTRY ROADS (Nashville Harmonica) - SITTING IN AN ALL NIGHT CAFE (Warner Mac) - PINBALL MACHINE (Lonnie Irving) - HONKY TONK (Bill Doggett)

ROADRUNNER

LP R20D 8-TRACK T20E CASSETTE C20F

TRUCK DRIVIN' SON OF A GUN (Dave Dudley) - TIE A YELLOW RIBBON 'ROUND THE OLD OAK TREE (Johnny Carver) - THE BRIDGE WASHED OUT (Warner Mac) - KING OF THE OPEN ROAD (Red Sovine) - KANSAS CITY (Wilbert Harrison) - HOW FAR TO LITTLE ROCK (Stanley Brothers) - WHITE KNIGHT (Tommy Hill Music Festival) - ENDLESS BLACK RIBBON (Tiny Harris) - AWAY OUT ON THE MOUNTAIN (Billy Walker) - GIDDYUP-GO ANSWER (Minnie Pearl)

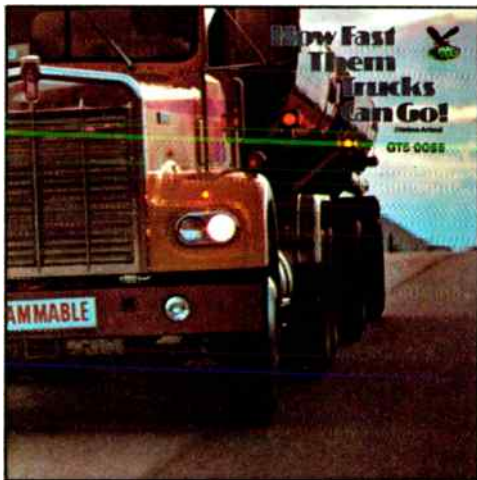


TRUCKIN' ON

LP R20G 8-TRACK T20H CASSETTE C20I

GIRL ON THE BILLBOARD (Del Reeves) - THE GEAR JAMMER & THE HOBO (Red Sovine & Johnny Bond) - TRUCK DRIVER'S QUEEN (Moore & Napier) - ONE IS A LONELY NUMBER (George Jones) - I'LL HAVE ANOTHER CUP OF COFFEE (THEN I'LL HAVE TO GO) (Claude Gray) - LOOKING AT THE WDRLD THROUGH A WINDSHIELD (Del Reeves) - GIDDYUP-GO (Red Sovine) - EIGHT MORE MILES TO LOUISVILLE (Grandpa Jones) - TRUCK DRIVIN' MAN (Jimmy Martin) - WOMAN BEHIND THE WHEEL (Red Sovine)

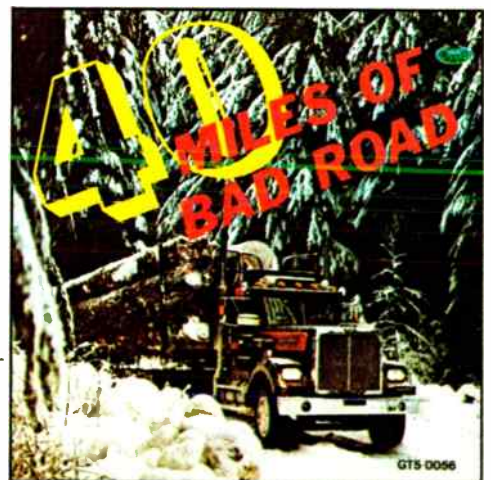
HOW FAST THEM TRUCKS CAN GO (Claude Gray) - 18 WHEELS A HUMAN HOME SWEET HOME (Mac Wiseman) - TRUCK DRIVIN' SON OF A GUN (Red Sovine) - MOVIN' ON (Mike Lunsford) - TOMBSTONE EVERY MILE (Charlie Moore) - SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD (Red Sovine) - ALABAM (Cowboy Copas) - TRUCK DRIVIN' BUDDY (Frankie Miller) - LITTLE JOE (Red Sovine) - SNEAKIN' ACROSS THE BORDER (Hardin Trio)



HOW FAST THEM TRUCKS CAN GO

LP R20J 8-TRACK T20K CASSETTE C20L

40 MILES OF BAD ROAD (Duane Eddy) - TRUCK DRIVER'S PRAYER (Red Sovine) - PASSING ZONE BLUES (Coleman Wilson) - FREIGHT LINER FEVER (Red Sovine) - CROSS THE BRAZOS AT WACO (Billy Walker) - PHANTOM 309 (Red Sovine) - OVERLOADED DIESEL (Jimmy Griggs) - WIDOW MAKER (Jimmy Martin) - DIESEL SMOKE ON DANGER (Willis Brothers) - BURNING BRIDGES (Jack Scott)



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Record Reviews



Bellamy Brothers Sons Of The Sun

Curb (Warner Bros.) BSK 3491

Since their success with *If I Said You Had A Beautiful Body Would You Hold It Against Me* the Bellamy Brothers seem to be on a continuing search for catchy sayings, headlines, epigrams,

whatever, on which to base country songs. In this album, *Lovers Live Longer* seems to fill that need. And with its mildly Latin beat, good lyrics and tasteful instrumentation, it fills the need quite well.

Do You Love As Good As You Look is in a similar vein, and is equally tasteful. Then we come to the third cut, *It's Hard*

To Be A Cowboy These Days, and we know for sure where these brothers are coming from—they're specializing in tongue-in-cheek country, and doing a nice job of making fun of country without belittling it. In this song they point out that, what with a Holiday Inn standing where their cattle used to graze, the high cost of fuel, needing a permit to wear a six-gun, and so forth, it is, indeed, hard to be a cowboy.

In the cut *Spiders And Snakes*, a hit for Jim Stafford some years back we find an amusing approach to—shall we say—unconventional sex. The lady says, "Do what you wanna do" and he waves a frog in her face. She indicates that his approach is not the best she's encountered and the two live separately ever after, although not before he tries something equally dumb the second time they get together.

Dancin' Romance is a clinker in that it gets monotonous. The same is true of *Givin' Into Love Again*. But in both numbers there's a strong element of experimentation, and the experiments don't fall very short of the mark.

They represent a minor negative.

A Classic Case Of The Blues is a delightful spoof of low-down, sad classic country songs. The hero loses his favorite lady in a card game. To make matters worse, it was she who stacked the deck against him. As a result, he's down so low he's got to reach up to tie his shoe. All this, and more, to a catchy tune done in a nice traditional country vein.

Illusions Of Love, which closes the album, is another experiment which actually has a chamber-music-like opening suggestive of childhood and music-boxes in the nursery. It continues in a contemplative way to talk about the illusions of life and love.

Of special note is the cut *Endangered Species*, which has been recognized by the World Wildlife Fund, and from the proceeds of which contributions will be made to the fund. It mourns the combined plight of the various endangered species but in a lackluster way. Still, the cause is worthwhile, as is this entire album. There's a lot of tasteful music here.

ART MAHER

Steve Goodman Hot Spot

Asylum 6E-297

Let's be kind. Let's dwell on the fact that Steve Goodman is a wry and funny and energetic songwriter with a uniquely observant turn of mind. Let's mention his partnership with John Prine, which resulted in some of the greater ironically deep songs of the Seventies. Let's give the man his due; let's say that he's intelligently witty and absolutely sincere.

Let's list some of the great songs he's written. There was *City of New Orleans*, recorded by Arlo Guthrie, which voiced definitively (more effectively, for instance, than Johnny Cash or any of the other traditionally sad boys could) the passing of America's great railroad age and everything which went out

the window with it; there was *My Old Man*, a genuinely understanding and loving remembrance of his father; there were *It's A Sin To Tell A Lie* and *Banana Republics*, both songs funny and poignant; and in the purely country sphere, Steve Goodman wrote (with John Prine) the most humorous song which ever graced the genre. *You Never Even Called Me By My Name* was recorded by David Allen Coe, the most outrageous outlaw of them all, and the resultant ludicrous amalgam of country music themes (outlaws, mother, pickup trucks, prison, alcoholism, cheating, pains 'n' trains) was a superbly subtle and instantly amusing anthem. In Steve's best work, irony and passion go hand in hand.

Hot Spot, unfortunately, is not . . . hot, that is. Recorded in



Los Angeles, it has all the faults which routinely mar the products of that city's recording mills. The musicians don't care, the producers are too mellow, the artists had a boring day, and the guiding light is often far too commercial: Let's do some love songs boys, let's banish the bass player, let's not be offensive, let's aim for Kansas and hope it sells. Los Angeles casts a blanket under

which creative people try to sleep easy while also figuring out their "relationships," and so love songs from the region tend to be vague, smoggy, and ultimately soporific no matter how keenly they are felt by the writer.

Steve has no fewer than five of these L.A. love songs on *Hot Spot*, and it's a shame. Even without the L.A. drawback, he's never been a great love-ballad writer (or, for that matter, much of a singer) and so *Hot Spot* doesn't even make a splash in terms of material. Only *SdrawkcaB Klai* (*Talk Backwards*), which is funny and lively, and *Hit And Run Lover*, which is unusual, relieve the monotony. Steve is much better (almost the best) when he goes after something completely different.

PATRICK CARR



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