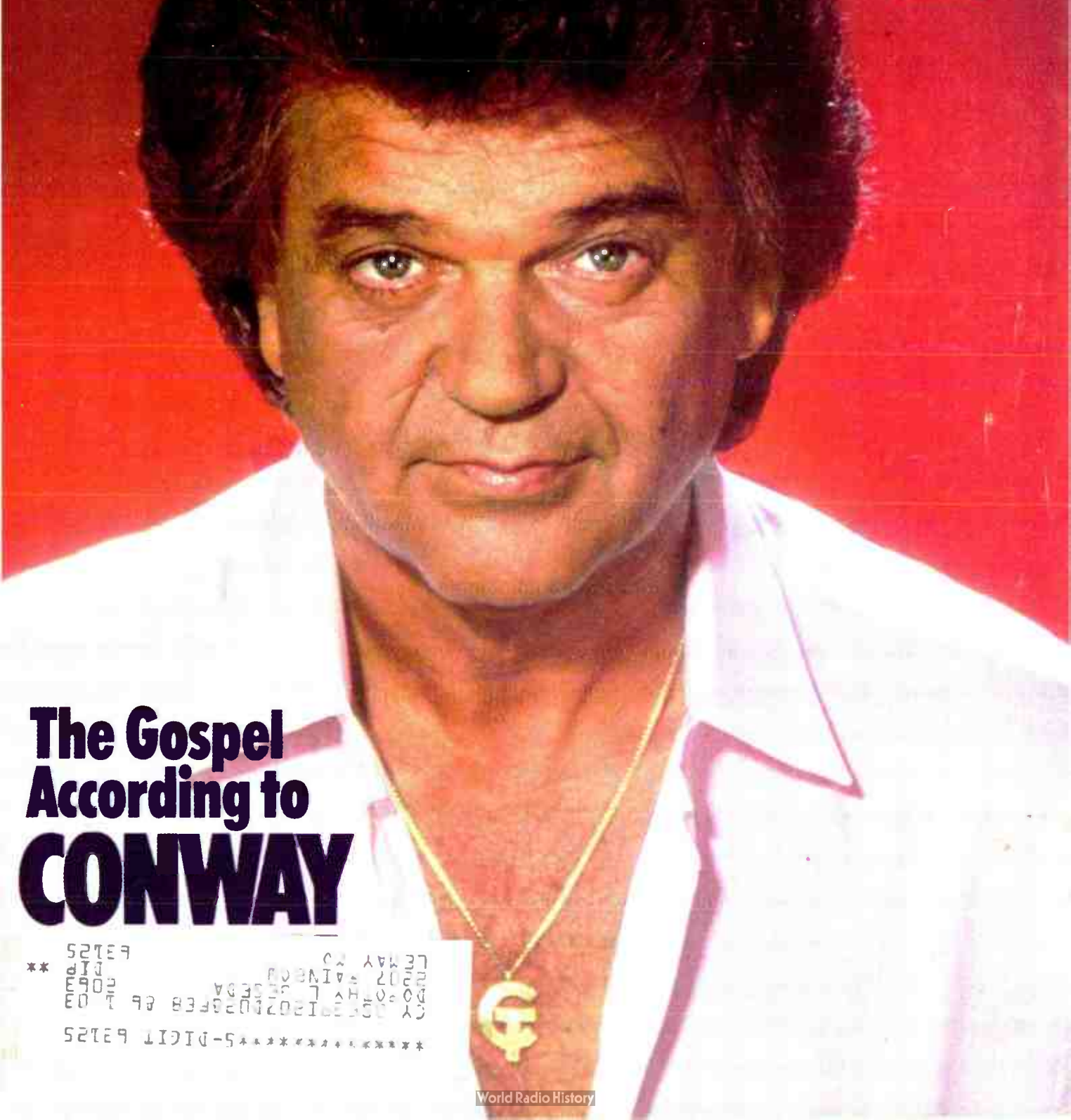


Roy Acuff/Reba McEntire/Moe Bandy
Book Bonus: The Day George Jones Met Hank Williams

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1984/\$2.25

COUNTRY MUSIC™



The Gospel According to CONWAY

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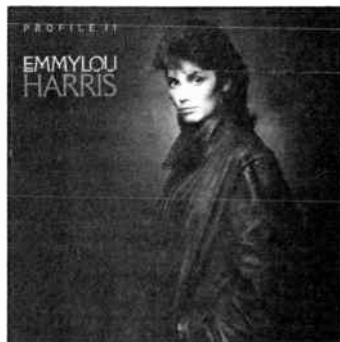
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Mister Sandman
Pledging My Love
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COUNTRY MUSIC

NUMBER 110, NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1984

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After a long career, Roy Acuff still relishes performing at the Opry, keeping an eye on his fans and on the music world. A modest man tells how he copes with loneliness, old age and fame.

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The master of the cheatin' song talks about life in the honky tonks, touring Europe and why he decided to wear a dress with Joe Stampley.

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33 Nashville's Secret Ingredient: Rodney Crowell

A successful producer and songwriter behind the scenes is now ready to take his own show on the road. If past history is any indication of things to come, Rodney may become a show stopper.

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by Rich Kienzle

64 Ernest Tubb: The Texas Troubadour 1914-1984

As this issue went to press we learned of the death of Ernest Tubb. Time would not allow us to devote a full tribute to the Texas Troubadour, but we will do so with articles and photographs in our next issue.

Letters

Fans Won't Quit; Still Hitting on Hickey

What in the wide world of Texas is Dave Hickey's problem? OK, so he doesn't like Elvis. I can forgive him for that if he doesn't commit any other sins. But it would appear that his reasons for not liking Elvis would be of more interest to a psychiatrist than to a simple country music lover like me.

Why get so upset because Elvis sang his love songs to the girls? Maybe he should have dressed up like Boy George and sung love songs to the boys, especially to Hickey.

Glen Barr
Dyersburg, Tennessee

Dave Hickey says he expected strong reactions from Elvis fans. However, when asked to comment on the storm of mail following his Elvis review in our May/June issue, he replied, "I'm sorry. I take it all back." —Ed.

Rhinestone Review

I went to see *Rhinestone* because the critics said it wasn't any good. I *knew* any movie the critics panned had to be good. I was, of course, correct. It was fantastic!

I have to admit I couldn't—in my wildest imagination—imagine Dolly Parton and Sly Stallone together in any way, not TV, not concerts, not movies. But it worked! And Sly looked *sooo* good in that black outfit he wore at the end of the movie. I like Sly more and more every time I see him, and I've liked every Dolly movie I've seen.

Judy L. Richards
South Arlington, Virginia

Tammy Triumphant

It should have been "The Life and New Looks of Tammy Wynette"! She really looks great with all of that long hair gone. When will she be in the Atlanta area? Can't wait.

Max Yancey
Atlanta, Georgia

Thank you for the article on Tammy Wynette in the July/August issue. She is a great performer and down to earth person. I saw her in concert not long ago and she put on a terrific show before a



This copy of Country Music was rushed from the press to Tammy in her hotel room at Las Vegas. The two singers on the back cover aren't quite as pretty as the one on the front...but they all have nice clothes.

packed house. Look out! Tammy is going strong.

Judy Vleck
Niantic, Connecticut

Thank you so much for the wonderful article on Tammy Wynette. I have always been a fan of Tammy's and missed hearing about her.

John K. Johnson
Newark, Ohio

Loretta is Betta

I was very upset when I read the story on Tammy Wynette. I have always enjoyed her music, but in my opinion the First Lady of Country is and always has been Loretta Lynn.

Kim Lensch
Atlantic, Iowa

Stay tuned...we're planning a story on Loretta soon. —Ed.

We Dare You to Read This

First off, congratulations on simply a very fine publication. However, I've often wondered how it's possible that a magazine that's number one in the field ig-

nores the true country music figures of ten, twenty, and thirty years ago, simply because the major record labels decided to drop them in favor of singers and groups that are more pop than country.

Why is it that you don't regularly carry stories about one Stonewall Jackson, "old-timer" Ernest Tubb, "has-been" Hank Locklin, "ex-queen" Kitty Wells, "ancient" Hank Snow, Don Gibson (remember him?), "poor ol'" Carl Smith, etc., etc., etc.

I realize you can't drastically change your present style of publication, since the modern fan "digs" Alabama and thinks Razy Bailey is "real cool," but how about at least two articles per issue on singers who were never ashamed to dress in a western outfit and sing true country songs? Want some more examples (reminders?): Charlie Walker, Connie Smith, Ernie Ashworth, Charlie Louvin, Jack Barlow, Carl Butler, Jimmy Dean, Billy Walker, Warner Mack, Jimmy C. Newman, Joe Maphis and so on. At the end of each story, you could list all their singles and albums ever, along with the years they were released. This way your publication wouldn't only be a current events affair, but a history of the music as well.

Perhaps you can also carry a "Whatever became of" or "Where are they now" sort of column on those who no longer perform, but are still alive: Bill Carlisle, Fiddler Tommy Jackson, Bob Gallion, Marvin Rainwater, Stuart Hamblen, Johnny Bond, Jimmie Driftwood, Tommy Collins, etc., etc. And a "Hillbilly Heaven" column remembering those deceased performers will be quite welcome, believe you me!

I dare you to print this letter. You'll get so much response in favor, you'll have no other choice than to follow my suggestions.

James M. Ahles
Carolina, Puerto Rico

O.K., Jim. Here's your letter. We dare you to agree to read and answer all the mail for us. Seriously, Country Music Magazine has published major stories on nearly every person mentioned in your letter. So we agree with your sentiment.

Unfortunately, space in any given issue is limited, but letters like yours and others help us in planning future stories. For

Nipper's **Believe It or Not!**

On July 28, 1984,
**EARL THOMAS
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with 4 #1 hit singles from
his album, "Don't Make
It Easy For Me",*

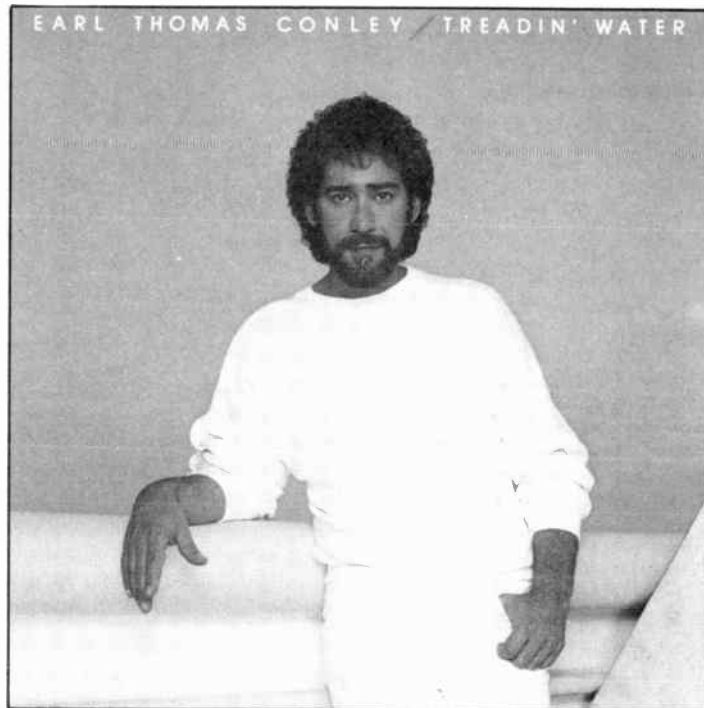
On August 24, 1984,
**EARL THOMAS
CONLEY**

*released another #1
bound hit, "Chance
Of Lovin' You"*

...and on

September 15, 1984,
music history was
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CONLEY'S**
"Treadin' Water".



CMA NOMINATIONS
Single Of The Year
"Holding Her And Loving You"
Horizon Award

CASHBOX AWARDS
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"Holding Her And Loving You"
1984 Top 5 Country Album
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Carl Smith

example, we will be doing something on Carl Smith soon. Also, if you are a member of the Country Music Society of America, you know we cover "old-timers" regularly in the Newsletter, for example, Lulu Belle and Scotty in this issue. And our CMM Update in the People section is something like your "Whatever became of" suggestion. —Ed.

Ask Emmylou, Ah, Gail

My grandmother is 82 years old and is a real Oregon pioneer. She crossed the country in a covered wagon (how many can make that claim nowadays?) and damn near founded the city of Ashland. Her name is Marie Freeman. If a copy of Emmylou's record, "The Grandmother's Song," could be forwarded to my pioneer grandmother, I would be willing to pay for it!

We listen to good ole country music on KICE/FM 100, Bend, Oregon or KRCO/AM 96, Princeville, Oregon. There's a bunch of (rebel) country boys here in central Oregon, on the high desert. Loggers and cowboys!

Eric L. Sedlock
La Pine, Oregon

Sounds pretty wild up there, Eric. I think the song you're thinking of is "Grandma's Song," written and recorded by Gail Davies. Emmylou hasn't recorded it. It is on Gail's terrific album, I'll Be There (Warner Bros. BSK-3509). Ask your local record store to order it for you. If they can't, send us \$8.98 plus \$1.95 postage and handling, and we'll get it for you. Regards to Grandma. —Ed.

Peace at Last, Hatchet Buried

Dear Russ:

I really enjoyed the interview with Kip Kirby published in your July/August issue. I think she did a wonderful job and

I appreciate the opportunity to express myself without editorial comments. Speaking of editorial comments, why don't we just bury the hatchet? After all, we're both on the same side and that's the side of good country music.

I do feel like this interview was the best one I've ever done. Kip asked great questions and I sounded almost human (just kidding).

Thanks again. Keep the faith.

Larry Gatlin
Brentwood, Tennessee

Larry, as I've said on the phone, you and I have no hatchet to bury...but we both better watch out for some of these wild readers. Read the letter below. —R.D.B.

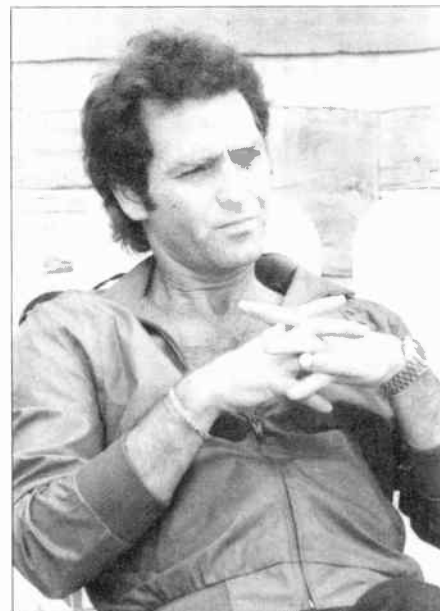
Back on the Warpath

I'm writing about the interview with Larry Gatlin in the July/August issue. Was it one of his bad days or is that him? The language he used and his attitude in answering questions made me think he's conceited. By the time I got halfway through the interview, I could care less what he thought or had to say—we all have to bend once in a while!

Lois Hugo
Hawthorne, California

The more things change, the more they remain the same! However, other readers came away with a different feeling. —Ed.

Lining Up with Larry



Thank you for the excellent interview with Larry Gatlin. Ms. Kirby seemed to know just the right questions to ask. I had wondered about the producer and other songwriters on his *Houston* album. Ms. Kirby forgot to ask about the absence of the band members, who for many of us are an important part of Larry's music.

Ms. Kirby's question about what

makes Larry cry received a beautiful answer: "I think that I must cry when I sing." That sounds like the perfect subject for a Gatlin song.

Finally, about that epitaph, "He Made Us Think a Little Bit." That's a wonderful and truthful statement, except Larry makes me think more than a little bit, and that's why his music means so much to me.

Keep the Faith.

Beverly Leventry
Stoystown, Pennsylvania

Thank you for the interview with one of my favorites, Larry Gatlin! I also enjoyed Twenty Questions with T.G. Shepard.

As for the people complaining about not editing out the "not-so-nice" words, I agree with you—if they say it, print it! I noticed a few words in the Larry Gatlin interview that some people may consider offensive, but I'm glad you printed it like he said it. It doesn't lessen my respect for either of you—I admire the courage to say it (and print it) like it is.

How about more on some of my other favorites like Lee Greenwood, Steve Wariner, and Johnny Rodriguez? I like what Karen Feagley of Plainview, Texas said about Johnny in her letter in the July/August issue. He is one of the sexiest men to ever put on a pair of Levi's!

Belinda Tompkins
Beckville, Texas

Some "Dear John" Letters

I really enjoy reading the different letters from fans and all the articles. You cover a lot of ground, past and present.

You say you did an article on Johnny Rodriguez (and Tanya Tucker) back in 1974. Well, I think it's high time you brought it up to date.

As for John being the sexiest thing in Levi's—shoot fire, just wrap a towel around him. He'd look great in anything!

Kay W. Walker
Lawndale, Illinois

I don't think Johnny Rodriguez' years on cocaine and booze had anything to do with his new album, good or bad. Johnny told about his drug use himself. I don't think it should have been used in a record review.

Betty J. Clark
Lenoir City, Tennessee

O.K. Enough of this about Johnny Rod... we confess, a story is in the works. —Ed.

Call for the Killer

I enjoyed John Morthland's review of Jerry Lee Lewis' latest album *I Am What I Am*. With all the negative publicity the Killer has received in the past year, it was nice to read an objective critique of his music.

However, I am not without criticism. Why not have a feature story on Jerry Lee or arrange to have him as the subject of your Twenty Questions column? There has not been adequate treatment of the man in *Country Music* since "The Greatest Live Show on Earth" article years ago. The only attention has been record reviews.

Lastly, when will the Killer make cover caliber?

Steven Rogstad
Racine, Wisconsin



We thought he was a long time ago. The Killer was on our fifth cover (January 1973), right after Johnny Cash, Loretta, Haggard and Charley Pride. —Ed.

Move Over, Hank Jr.

I'm amazed. Hank Williams, Jr. has gone out of his way to explain himself in his songs, and country music people just aren't getting his point.

Major Moves isn't an angry album, as suggested by Michael Bane in his review in the July/August issue, and it doesn't suggest Hank is bitter either. It's laced with blues, but done in a positive way. How can Michael Bane claim Hank is angry or bitter, when Bane *obviously* doesn't understand blues music, or the feeling of singing blues music?

If I were in Hank's boots, my next album would be pure Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Lightning Hopkins, B.B. King, Billy Gibbons, and original Hank Williams, Jr. blues songs, just to spite Bane and the other ten billion people just like him, and then I'd rock my next one so hard that the tamest song would make "LaGrange" off the *Strong Stuff* album sound like the song "Old Habits."

Hank should go rock and roll, where he would be understood and appreciated. It's a shame, with all his country soul and

country sense, that I would end up writing something like that, but I'm afraid I'm not so strong inside as Hank, and would consider hanging up the "country and western fits."

Mark Chisenhall
Champaign, Illinois

Michael Bane replies: It's gratifying, I suppose, to know someone is reading my stuff, even if that someone hates it. Still, I stand by my review. As far as understanding the blues, maybe I don't. Like Hank Jr., though, I know the blues has the power to save you or kill you, and that there is no person closer to the "edge" than a bluesman. A bluesman takes risks that would ice the blood of your basic rock and roll singer. What can I say, Mark? If you think Hank Jr. would be appreciated as a rock singer, you probably haven't listened to the radio since about 1974. Hank Jr. don't wear sequined underwear or little skinny ties, you know. There's no place in rock and roll for a bluesman. Sorry you didn't like my review. —M.B.

Editor's Note: Some readers may not know that Michael Bane collaborated with Hank Jr. on his autobiography Living Proof. This was living proof of their mutual respect and friendship. I can also tell you that Michael is Hank Jr.'s biggest fan! But, Michael also wrote a book entitled White Boy Singing the Blues which shows that he is an objective critic, too, especially regarding the blues. —R.D.B.

All About Osmonds

What can I say except *Country Music* impresses me every time I read it! The article Michael Bane did on Tammy Wynette was excellent. Now for his review on the Osmond Brothers' new album *One Way Rider*: that did not impress me at all. I'm sure the Osmonds can improve a little, but for just starting out in the country music business, they really aren't doing too badly.

At least he does seem to enjoy Marie Osmond's country music. Hopefully I can count on a good review when she releases an album. By the way, has Marie ever appeared on one of your older covers?

Andrew Sego
Camp Sherman, Oregon

Michael tried to put Marie on the cover when he was editor, but no one else voted for it. —Ed.

Boss Mama Bops Bane

This letter is in reference to the last line in Michael Bane's David Allan Coe/Hank Jr. record review in the July/August issue: "Kinda makes you wonder if men and women are really members of the same species."

Michael, you ignorant, misguided hack.

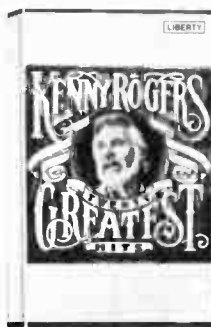
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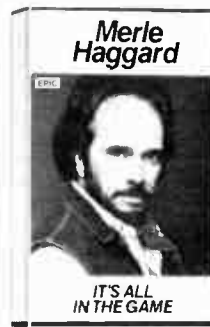
324434. #1 title hit and You Look So Good In Love; much more.



323002. #1 title Grammy-winner; Just Another Woman In Love; many more.



23774. Lucille; Coward of the County; Lady; The Gambler; much more.



326892. Hits Let's Chase Each Other...; title song; plus Natural High.



325704. They sing together!: Candy Man; Paradise Tonight; more.



328658. #1 To All The Girls... (w/W. Nelson); All Of You (w/D. Ross); etc.

325985 RAY CHARLES DO I EVER CROSS YOUR MIND	328302* TINA TURNER PRIVATE DANCER	323840 CHARLY McCLAIN THE WOMAN IN ME	323865 SHELLY WEST RED HOT	324293 The Oak Ridge Boys DELIVER
327817 CONWAY TWITTY BY HEART	323883* ARTHUR FIEDLER AND THE BOSTON SYMPHONY GREATEST HITS	328351* PEABO BRYSON STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART	328435 PURPLE RAIN PRINCE AND THE NEW POWER GENERATION	328450 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK GHOSTBUSTERS
318717 PETER DINKlage Peter Goes Pop	328294 THE WHITES FOREVER YOU	321307 AIR SUPPLY GREATEST HITS	321067 THE CHARLES DANIELS BAND: A DECADE OF HITS	321018 BILLY JOEL An Innocent Man
321598 ROBYN SIBERT FROM THE BOTTLE SINGIN'	321992 MOE BANDY OF WOTED TO YOUR MEMORY	328443 NEIL DIAMOND PRIMITIVE	323973 TOM JONES DON'T LET OUR DREAMS GO AWAY	325993 LARRY GATLIN & THE GATLIN BROTHERS BAND HOUSTON TO DENVER
327304 THE JACKSONS VICTORY	321802 JUICE NEWTON DIRTY LOOKS	318113 JANIE FRICKE GREATEST HITS	319378 CONWAY TWITTY CONWAY'S #1 CLASSICS VOLUME TWO	322917 38 SPECIAL TOUR DE FORCE
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326900 REBA McENTIRE Just A Little Love	313106 KENNY ROGERS TEN YEARS OF GOLD	224758 LYNN ANDERSON'S Greatest Hits, Vol. 1	220491 CONWAY TWITTY'S GREATEST HITS	324319 TERRI GIBBS OVER EASY
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323410 JOHNNY LEE GREATEST HITS	248958 JIM CROLIE PHOTOGRAPHS & MEMORIES HIS GREATEST HITS	290155 THE MARSHALL SUPERSTAR GREATEST HITS	SELECTIONS WITH TWO NUMBERS ARE 2-RECORD SETS OR DOUBLE-LENGTH TAPES. AND COUNT AS TWO SELECTIONS - WRITE EACH NUMBER IN A SEPARATE BOX	
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323334 JOHN ANDERSON ALL THE PEOPLE ARE TALKIN'	295139 THE BEST OF DON WILLIAMS	314443 NEIL DIAMOND 12 GREATEST HITS	243741 THE PATSY CLINE STORY	321356 MARTY ROBBINS 391359 (20TH ANNIV.) A Lifetime Of Song
321414 DOTTIE WEST NEW HORIZONS	243642 LORETTA LYNN'S GREATEST HITS	318238 LES AND LARRY BROTHERS SINGLES	312488 THE BEST OF THE BEATLES GREATEST HITS	221937 RAY PRICE'S ALL TIME GREATEST HITS
327967 DON WILLIAMS CAFE CAROLINA	304279 STATLER BROTHERS 10TH ANNIVERSARY	306599 LINDA RONSTADT ONE AFTER THE OTHER	325991 COLLECTOR'S BECORDE 396964 OF THE 50'S & 60'S	276630 THE BEST OF ANDRAE CROUCH
319283 JOHNNY PSYCHECK BIGGEST HITS	314682 CRYSTAL GAYLE CLASSIC CRYSTAL	292912 THE BEST OF Barbara Mandrell	211373 LENA HORNE THE LADY AND HER MUSIC	312546 PLATT'S SONGS OF ALL TIME GREATEST HITS
323598 Michael Martin Murphy The Heart Never Lies	328237 RAY CHARLES FRIENDSHIP	294843 ZZ TOP The Best Of ZZ Top	323030 24 of Hank Williams 390303 Greatest Hits	324053 OLIE'S BUT GOODIES 394056 FROM THE RADIO
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319301 GEORGE JONES SHINE ON	323261 LIONEL RICHIE Can't Slow Down	319228 DAVID ALLAN COE BIGGEST HITS	320595 LAWRENCE WELK AND HIS ORCHESTRA ALL TIME BIG BAND FAVORITES	324048 HANK WILLIAMS, SR.
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Any educated, self-respecting fool knows that women evolved from porpoises and men—from monkeys.

Marshall Chapman
Nashville, Tennessee



It is about time, and we are delighted that a woman of Marshall Chapman's caliber has set Michael straight. Michael reports having to eat 50 pounds of quiche and drink a drum of Perrier water since receiving Marshall's letter. —Ed.

Allen's March on Atlanta

Dear Mr. Allen,

It has been two weeks since I read your review of Atlanta's *Pictures* album in the July/August issue, and I think I have 'cooled down' enough to write you a letter.

Somewhere lurking in the depths of your personality, I see a very strong bias against the 'old South' (note the capital "S"). If Hank Jr., Merle, the Statlers, Alabama, and virtually every other country singer can praise the old South and unfurl the American flag, why can't Atlanta?

You really should take in an Atlanta concert. These nine "unwieldy" men happen to be college-educated, multi-talented gentlemen. Their music appeals to all ages and to people who don't even like 'country music.'

You state, "I could be wrong about Atlanta—dead wrong." You are. If you don't believe me, turn over two pages in your magazine, and read where this "bizarre" album is—at number 11 in the Top 25 in our great country.

Colleen B. Clark
Lizella, Georgia

*Bob Allen replies: I read your letter and I re-listened to Atlanta's *Pictures* and I waited two weeks—and I still don't like the album. I have no bias against the 'old South.' I am intrigued by its history and myths as much as anyone. What I don't*

like is when someone seems to be exploiting the history and myths for what to my ears sounds like crassly commercial purposes. —B.A.

Dear Mr. Allen,

I can't help but wonder if you and I listened to the same Atlanta *Pictures* album. Larry McBride seemed to be at the root of your criticism, which has nothing to do with the record, since he certainly isn't singing on it.

As for the songs which you tore apart as being either too southern or too simple, we are speaking from a "country music" point of view. I could list dozens of smash country hits which were so simple that a child could understand, such as "I Love" by Tom T. Hall and practically all of the great Hank Williams songs.

You made no comment about the beautiful title song, "Pictures." It makes me wonder whether, since you couldn't find anything bad to say, you just said nothing. I thought it was supposed to be the other way around.

It is about time that someone reviews the reviewer. I only wish I had a magazine such as yours to air my grievances.

Elizabeth Hallman
Marietta, Georgia

Well, now you've reviewed the reviewer and aired your grievances. That's one purpose of the Letters section. As soon as Atlanta records a song as simple as "all the great Hank Williams songs," you can be sure of a rave from our reviewer. —Ed.

The Perfect Picnic

Willie's Fourth of July Picnic was one of the greatest concerts I have ever attended. Everything was so well organized, and Willie and his musical friends put all they had into it. They started performing at 9:30 A.M. and ended at midnight with Willie singing "Amazing Grace"—which was so beautiful I'll never forget it. I'm looking forward to next year.

Rose Marie Poulitzi
St. Paul, Minnesota

Michael Bane and Leonard Kamsler were there also. Michael's report and Leonard's photos appear in an upcoming issue. —Ed.

Three Cheers for the Army

I was part of the Army for 24 years, from 1943 to 1967. While in Germany, we looked forward to hearing country music every afternoon on the Armed Forces Network, and to seeing the stars who came to perform in the NCO clubs. One DJ over there, who went by the name of "Uncle Willie," used to organize a "Grand Ole Opry" type live show every Saturday night in Frankfort with talent mostly from the Armed Forces stationed

in Germany. Bill was from the Nashville area. I wonder what he is doing now?

Armed Forces families contributed Emmylou Harris and Kris Kristofferson to country music, and Carl Smith and Johnny Cash both served in the Armed Forces. Carl is my all-time favorite.

How about a TV special in which country music salutes the Armed Forces?

Andrew C. Evans
Elizabethtown, Kentucky

How about Johnny Cash as the producer? —Ed.

Wrangling with Wrangler

I thank Wrangler and Dodge Trucks for the Wrangler Country Showdowns that take place every summer. However, I think there are a few things they should consider and change.

First, Wrangler should offer two competitions, one for bands and one for solo artists. My husband was in two competitions in Ohio. He placed 1st runner-up in one and 2nd runner-up in the other. Bands won both contests. The poor solo artist struggling with a staff band just does not have a chance against bands who work together all the time.

Second, I wish the radio stations would keep the bands that enter "country." The majority that were competing played rock—they call it "inter-city country." Country music is just that, *country* music, not crossover. Good job to George Jones, Merle Haggard, Reba McEntire, Connie Smith, and artists like them for keeping country "country."

Carole F. Martin
Greenfield, Ohio

We think you've made some good points, so we've forwarded your letter to Wrangler. We agree that Wrangler and Dodge Trucks deserve thanks for supporting country music. (Marlboro and Wild Turkey are also supporting country music activities again this year.) —Ed.

Looking for Lew

The March/April issue of *Country Music* promises info on Lew DeWitt, a much loved former Statler Brother. I'm looking forward to reading about him, and hope it will be soon.

I've seen Lew perform recently, and am glad to let Lew's fans know that he's sounding great. I bought a cassette tape, also, entitled *Here to Stay*, by Lew, and it's really good!

It's so nice to have Lew back again, and I'm glad he's *Here To Stay!*

Barbara Rowzee
Levels, West Virginia

A Statler Brothers story is in the works right now. Thanks for the tip about Lew. Many readers have asked about him. —Ed.

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Produced by Bob Montgomery, it's another candidate for every award in the book! Including the new hit "Your Heart's Not In It,"

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JANIE FRICKE, "THE FIRST WORD IN MEMORY"
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People



GATLIN'S DRAMATIC DEBUT Larry Gatlin has been getting around these days. He made his dramatic acting debut in a guest star role in a new fall episode of *Hardcastle & McCormick*, marking the first time the show has ever cast a country music artist. Larry plays a country singer who has served time in prison. Larry wrote two original songs for the show, including the title song "Pennies From a Dead Man's Eyes." You might recognize two other Gatlin tunes in the episode, his hits "Broken Lady" and "Statues Without Hearts."

TV TIME

Ronnie Milsap is receiving acclaim for being the first Nashville based entertainer to appear on MTV cable channel with his video "She Loves My Car." But, word has gotten around that a clip of Eddie Rabbitt's single "Step by Step" was shown on MTV from October 1981 through June of 1982. Don't know who is right, but it's about time some country entertainers are breaking into that rock videochannel. Remember when Rosanne Cash couldn't get on because she was

considered too country?

There's a new syndicated show, *Pat Boone USA*, taped at Knotts Berry Farm. This 60-minute talk and variety show began airing weekdays in September. Hosted by Pat, one of his special guests was Lee Greenwood recently.

Larry Gatlin, along with his brothers Steve and Rudy, taped *The Gift of Song*, a 60-minute Christmas special hosted by Dick Van Patten and his wife Pat. The program will be syndicated nationally by Multimedia and also features performances by Marilyn McCoo, Juice Newton, Neil Sedaka and Menudo.

MOVIES, MOVIES, MOVIES

Did you see the film *The Bear*? It's about the life of legendary Alabama football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant. The film, starring Gary Busey, features a soundtrack recorded by Alabama. The soundtrack album should be on the market soon.

Don't know who will do the singing in the upcoming *Sweet Dreams* movie, the biography of Patsy Cline, but we do know that Jessica Lange will play Patsy in the film. Filming is to take place in middle Tennessee and California, and rumors are that some of Patsy's relatives might have roles in the film. The film is being produced by Bernard Schwartz of *Coal Miner's Daughter* fame, so it should be a hit. Hope Jessica does as good a job as Beverly D'Angelo did when she played Patsy in *Coal Miner's*.

FUN, FUN, FUN

We told you about The Record Game a few issues back. Well, now there's another one that's bound to keep country music fans on their toes. It's Louise Mandrell's Country Music Trivia Game, and is supposed to be country music's answer to the popular Trivial Pursuit board game that is currently in vogue. And, if you are Louise Mandrell fans, a special reduced-price offer of the game is included in her album *The Best of the 80s...So Far*. It will be available in stores soon.

When Steve Wariner found himself in Phoenix, Arizona recently, he called his friend Glen Campbell. Campbell, who lives there, invited Steve to spend the day at his estate and take part in swimming, sunning and jamming on their guitars. So, even with the day off, Steve spent the best part of the day playing music. As a matter of fact, Steve says it was the most fun he had.

And the Oak Ridge Boys' road crew were treated to a concert by their favorite entertainer. No, it wasn't the Oaks. It was Bruce Springsteen. The Oaks gave them tickets to a Springsteen concert in appreciation for the crew's years of hard work and loyalty.

by Rochelle Friedman

People



MEL & SON Couldn't be the m-m-m-milkman. The resemblance is too striking. Mel Tillis, Sr. and Mel Jr. got together at a recent reception to celebrate Mel Sr.'s signing with International Creative Management in Nashville.

Sammy Davis, Jr. recently at the grand opening of the new Harrahs Plaza in Atlantic City. She then teamed up with **Eddie Rabbitt** at a concert at the Universal Amphitheatre. But, perhaps her most interesting duet was when she and her daughter **Catherine Claire Gatzimos** appeared in a photo spread in the September issue of *McCall's Magazine*.

You don't see **Anne Murray** teaming up to record with many people. The last time she did it was her duet with **Glen Campbell** in the early seventies. Well, now she and singer/songwriter **Dave Loggins** ("Please Come to Boston") have teamed up to record "Nobody Loves Me Like You Do." Although it's the first time the two have sung together on vinyl, Anne did record one of Loggins' tunes not too long ago.

Eddie Rabbitt is keeping some good company lately. He and newcomer **Hilary Kanter** recorded a duet, "Every Night I Fall in Love With You," which is on Eddie's *The Best Year of My Life* album.

When **Ricky Skaggs** decided to add a remake of the **Bill Monroe** instrumental song, "Wheel Hoss," to his upcoming *Country Boy* album, he invited none other than Bill Monroe to pick on the session. Bill agreed to play the mandolin part, and Ricky discovered it was the first time that the father of bluegrass had ever recorded a track using an electric mandolin.

The Beach Boys and **The Gatlin Brothers**? Well, why not? Stranger things have happened. At a recent stopover in Fargo, North Dakota, The Gatlins dropped in to take in a show at the State Fair given by The Beach Boys. They

FAMILY TIES

Sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, husbands and wives—everyone is getting into the act these days. And, the act is country music.

Remember Opry favorite **George Morgan**, famous for his hit "Candy Kisses?" Well, his daughter **Lorrie** has just signed with MCA Records. Lorrie is no newcomer to the country scene; she started her professional singing career at age 13, when her father introduced her on the Opry. Now, at 23, Lorrie is the newest cast member of the Grand Old Opry and is a regular on the Nashville Network's *Nashville Now* program.

Another famous daughter, **Shelly West**, has taken her daughter **Tess Marie** onto TV. They have taped a series of television commercials for Channel 4 Nashville. The "Hello Nashville" campaign features Tess Marie in her first speaking role.

If you're a dancer and your husband is a hot country star, what better way to merge both talents than to tape an instructional video of popular country dances. **Melanie Greenwood's Hot Country Dancing** will be available in retail stores in time for Christmas. **Mrs. Greenwood**, a choreographer/dance instructor for the Nashville Network's *Dancin' USA* show, narrates the 40-minute clip and demonstrates four dances, The Sweetheart Shottishe, The Country Polka, Country Swing and The Texas Two Step. The music will be that of four top country artists, including of course, **Lee Greenwood's**.

And, if singing or dancing is not your specialty and you happen to be the brother of a famous singing star, then there is always room for you in the show. **Ricky Skaggs** just hired his brother **Gary** as assistant stage manager for Ricky's touring show.

DOUBLING UP

The trend goes on. And now in the never-ending series of duets, comes more news of country artists hitting the road, headlining and recording with other singers.

First, **Crystal Gayle** performed with



PRESIDENTIAL DUET

Tammy Wynette recently got a chance to share the spotlight with the President of the United States at a Republican fund raising party in Daytona Beach, Florida. The two got rave reviews from the crowd, but we have not yet heard whether a duet album is in the works.

People



WELCOME FRIENDS

"All My Rowdy Friends are Coming Over Tonight," Hank Williams, Jr.'s song, became a video recently. Some of his rowdy friends who showed up are from left to right, Dickie Betts, Porter Wagoner, Willie Nelson, Bobby Bare, Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter, Kris Kristofferson, Hank Jr., Jim Varney and George Thorogood.

didn't go unnoticed, and were invited up on stage to join The Beach Boys in singing their famous hit "Barbara Ann." The crowd loved it, and also loved Larry, Steve and Rudy's impromptu dancing, which led to turning the grandstand into a country disco.

And, lastly, but of course not leastly, the premier duet team of **Moe and Joe** has been hitting the road lately, in support of their hit single "Where's the Dress?" This is their first single in three years, and now when they tour, they are backed with a ten-piece band called Country Club.

COMMERCIAL COMMERCIALS

When they are not singing their own songs, many artists can be found singing the praises of everything from soft drinks to chewing tobacco. Take **Vince Gill**, he's doing radio commercials for Dr. Pepper.

Hank Williams, Jr., revised the lyrics to "Country Relaxin'," a single he wrote for his *Major Moves* album. It's now a 60-second radio commercial for Redman Chewing Tobacco, titled "Redman Reaction." The spot will be used in conjunction with a Redman-sponsored radio promotion where contest winners are flown to

the Hank Jr. concert of their choice.

If you've been wondering whose voice is on the Beatrice Foods commercial "You've Known Us All Along," it's **Lane Brody's**. Beatrice Foods report that they have gotten many phone calls from people asking the name of the singer they heard on the commercials shown during the 1984 Olympics. Lane is also singing the new Old Style Beer commercial. "I Love Country and Old Style."

We don't know where he gets the time, but **Jerry Clower** is the corporate spokesman in yet another advertising campaign. Sonny's Real Pit Bar-B-Q has chosen him for their marketing and advertising campaign for the next five years.

PROFITABLE PURCHASES

Hank Williams, Jr. bought a club he calls Hank Williams, Jr. Beach Club in Panama City, Florida. It's a 1500-seat bar/disco where Hank and his Barna Band perform when their schedules permit. On the opening night, 3000 people crowded into the club to help **Merle Kilgore** celebrate his 50th birthday. Hank was on hand for the event and performed several songs. While on stage,

Merle said, "I'm glad I lost weight recently, it's crowded enough in here."

You'll never believe it, but guess who has a new line of designer clothes? It's beach lover **Jimmy Buffett**. Word has it that he'll have his own line of Caribbean leisure wear on the market soon.

Speaking of selling and buying, **Ronnie McDowell** has opened a new restaurant in his hometown of Portland, Tennessee, also known as Richland. The restaurant, Richland Station, is an exact replica of an old railroad train that was built in the late 1800s. Ronnie gets behind the stove and actually does some of the cooking, which includes entrees like the Engineer Special, the Hobo Special and the Brakeman Special.

Finishing touches are being added to the new home that **Eddie Rabbit** just bought. Two of the main features in the home are a fully-equipped gymnasium and an observatory to house the telescope his wife gave him for Christmas last year. The gym will certainly be put to good use, as Eddie is continuing extensive workouts he began several months ago under the direction of a west coast trainer.

Also getting in shape is **Tammy Wynette**. You've seen how wonderful

People

she's been looking lately. Well, some of it is due to the new exercise room she had built in her house. When she's off the road, she works out on a treadmill, stationary bicycle and rowing machine.

COUNTRY IN THE CITY

Where would you expect a special auction of articles from top country stars to be held? Tennessee? Texas? West Virginia? Well, you may be surprised to learn that the New York Metropolitan Country Music Association sponsored a country music festival, featuring nine local bands, and an auction, with the proceeds going to the Statue of Liberty Restoration Fund. No small deal, the auction featured many mementos from very famous country singers. Some of the treasures up for bidding included a performance dress worn by **Barbara Mandrell**, a pair of suede boots owned by **Emmylou Harris**, two of **Merle Haggard's** fishing poles, **Conway Twitty's** hat, four shirts donated by **The Bellamy Brothers**, **Janie Fricke's** headband, **Tammy Wynette's** dress and various articles of clothing from **The Oak Ridge Boys**. Each item was accompanied by a letter of authenticity.

The festival was sponsored by New York radio station WHN, as part of their continuing efforts to save the Statue of Liberty.

REFERENCE FRICKE Whitley County, Indiana is proud of their hometown girl, **Janie Fricke**. So proud, that they decided to feature her on the cover of their 1984-1985 telephone book. **Janie** became the first female country singer ever to grace their cover.

The Phone Book
 "The Official Directory of United Telephone System"
 UNITED TELEPHONE OF INDIANA PROUDLY SALUTES ONE OF WHITLEY COUNTY'S MOST FAMOUS CITIZENS:
Janie Fricke!

COLUMBIA CITY AND VICINITY
 OCTOBER 1984
 AREA CODE 319

EXCHANGE LAYWELL
ARCOLA SAUND
COLUMBIA CITY SOUTH WHITLEY
ETNA TRI LAKES

GARDNER BRADSHAW
 1972 1st Street
 1922 1st Street

WILSON BRADSHAW
 1972 1st Street
 1922 1st Street

MUSIC CITY 8078
 1922 1st Street
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BARNEY BRADSHAW
 1972 1st Street
 1922 1st Street

COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION
 1922 1st Street
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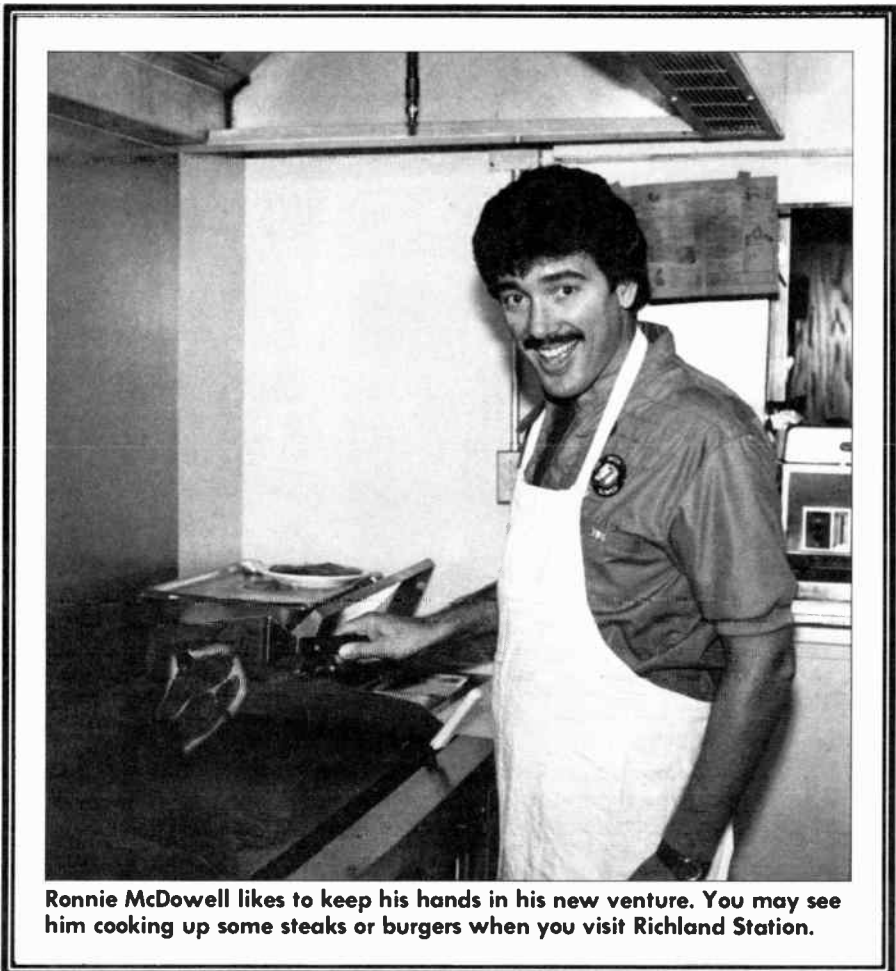
CLAYTON BRADSHAW
 1922 1st Street
 1922 1st Street

JOHN B. BRADSHAW
 1922 1st Street
 1922 1st Street

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 AND SPORTS pages in this issue
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Ronnie McDowell likes to keep his hands in his new venture. You may see him cooking up some steaks or burgers when you visit **Richland Station**.

HOMETOWN HONORS

When they are not spending their time entertaining others, it's nice to know that some singers are being recognized by their hometowns. One such lady is **Deborah Allen**, who received the Songwriter of the Year award from the Memphis Songwriters Association. The award is given to a Memphis songwriter who has achieved national status in the music industry through professional songwriting. **Deborah** joins such Memphis writers as **Sonny James** and **Tony Joe White** as recipients of the award. The mayor of Shelby County also named August 5th **Deborah Allen Day**.

Leona Williams was behind bars recently, to receive her honors, but it was well worth it. During a recent concert at the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, **Leona** was made an honorary convict by the inmates there. More than 1,200 prisoners had signed a book inviting her to perform at her homestate facility.

We told you about **Jerry Clower** and

his sponsorship duties. Well, he also found time to be honored by the Mississippi Pavilion officials at the New Orleans World's Fair. The celebration marked the first salute to a *country* music entertainer, although **B. B. King**, another Mississippi native, did receive the award sometime back. The festivities included a reception, luncheon, a parade with **Clower** as Grand Marshall, autograph sessions and an evening performance.

Famous picker **Roy Clark** was honored by his hometown of Meherrin, Virginia with a birthplace marker. The four-by-six-foot-marker, which was unveiled by his parents, was erected in front of the Meherrin Post Office in recognition of the city's most famous native. **Roy** and his family band, including his father, uncles, cousins and friends, performed at the event for the entire town.

SAILING, SAILING

Since **George Strait** had to have knee surgery, he couldn't make his scheduled

CMM Update

Freddy Fender

trip to Ireland where he was set to tape *Country Sportsman* for the Nashville Network. **Gary Morris** was happy to step in and go fishing in Irish waters. In fact, fishing is one of Gary's favorite pastimes.

Speaking of off-shore activities, **George Jones** and **John Anderson** joined forces for a four-day cruise to the Bahamas aboard the S.S. Emerald Seas. It seems that last year the two took a cruise for relaxation, but were soon discovered and asked to perform for the passengers. The cruise line got so many letters requesting the two come back, that this year's voyage features George and John in concert aboard the ship.

The **Osmond Family** also embarked on a shipboard journey. They took over the S.S. Norway on a Silver Jubilee Celebration Cruise. The week-long voyage is the culmination of the Osmonds' 25th anniversary celebration as professional entertainers. Portions of the shows the Osmonds performed aboard ship were taped for a TV special to be aired later this year.

BENEFITS

Did you ever wonder how difficult it must be for an artist to choose which charity to support? **Hank Williams, Jr.** has many favorites; one that is close to his heart is world hunger. He recently held a benefit picnic in the Duluth Auditorium before his concert where over two tons of food were donated for the needy of Northern Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. To show its appreciation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO gave Hank a jacket embroidered with the salutation "From the People of Steel to the Man of Steel."

The **Oaks** are another group famous for their charity work. They recently hosted The Cooper River Star Trek, a 10-kilometer run and a one-mile run in Pennsauken, New Jersey where they helped raise \$12,000 for the South Jersey Chamber Foundation. The proceeds are being distributed to area high schools to promote technical and scientific education.

Tennessee's endangered wildlife is on the minds of many country singers. **William Lee Golden** of the Oaks, **Jerry Reed**, **John Anderson**, **Gene Autry**, **Rosanne Cash** and **Eddie Arnold** have all adopted and named a bald eagle at the Cumberland Bird Rehabilitation Foundation. Save the Eagle Productions hopes to market a fifty-song country album, proceeds of which will be given to programs to preserve our national symbol. ■

The big problem **Freddy Fender** faces, says long-time manager **Huey Meaux**, is his dual appeal. Finding a record company set up to handle distribution to both Latino and country markets is almost impossible.

Despite the absence of a recording contract, Freddy (best known for hits like "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" and "Before the Next Tear-drop Falls") has hardly disappeared from sight.

"Freddy's been touring all over the world," says Meaux, "from Reno and Las Vegas, to England and Australia and New Zealand. He's one of the few acts who hasn't had a record out in five years, but still is booking very, very well. And that is unusual, because for an act that hasn't had a record out in five years, it would usually be 'Freddy who?'"

Meaux attributes the appeal to Fender's dual audience. "Whites love the Spanish part of him, and the Spanish people love the country side. It's a thing he has going that nobody's been able to come behind him and do. Freddy Fender is the white man's version of the real Mexican dude—the Chicano guy, pinto bean-eating little boy. And he's a big-hearted fool..."

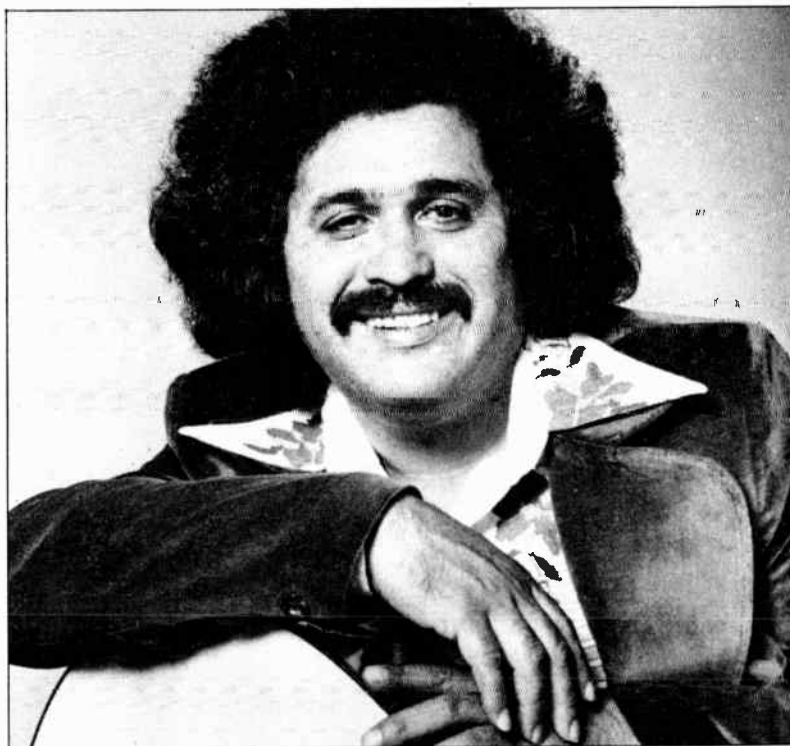
"Freddy went through a bad karma period a few years ago, when all his musicians got killed on the bus. He went on a drinking binge and just about destroyed himself for about two or three years. He's coming out of it now, although it still messes with him some."

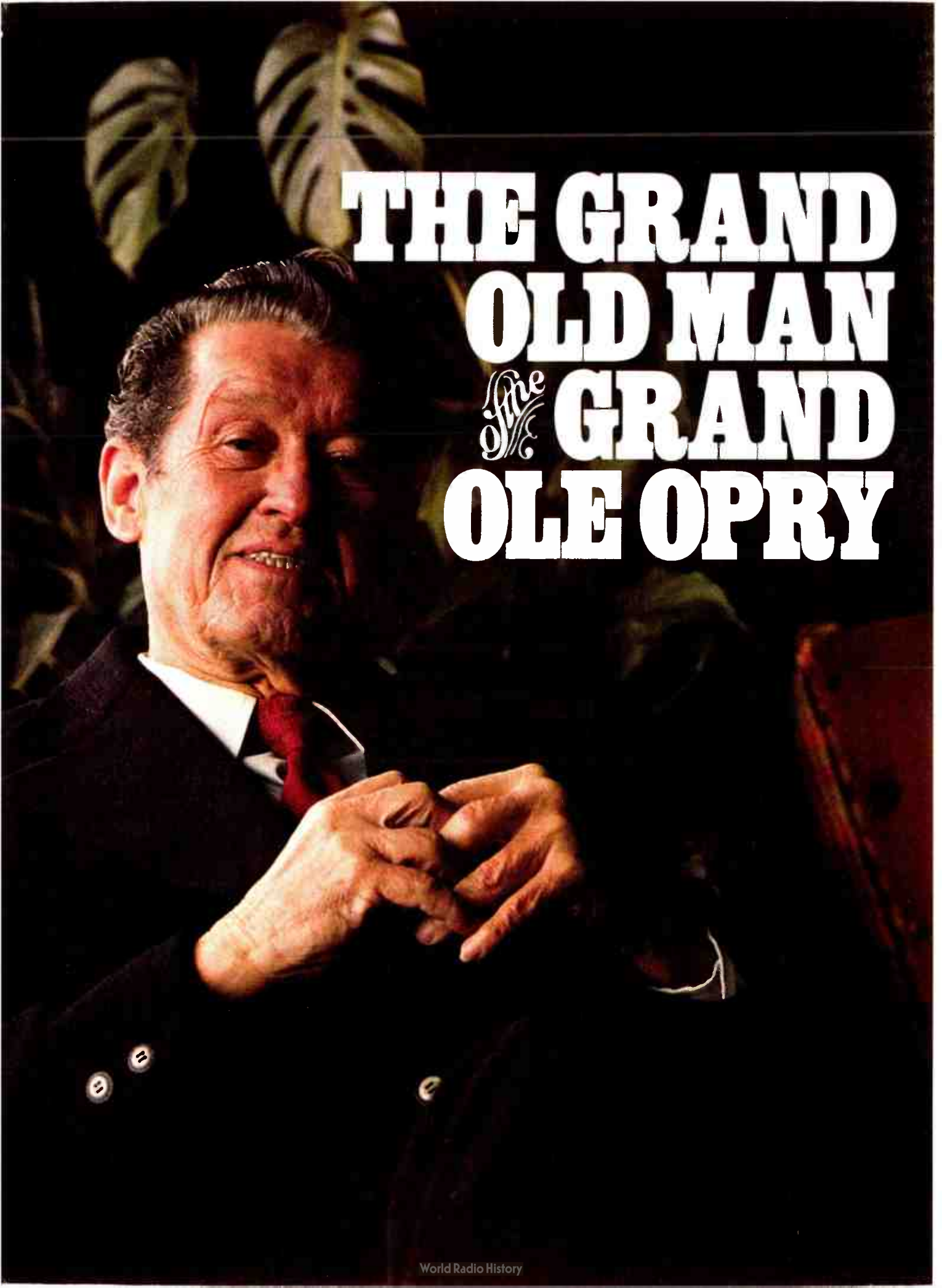
At 47, Fender lives in Corpus Christi where, according to Meaux, he loves to cook hot Mexican food, fish, ride his old Indian motorcycle, and "fight with his old lady, who he's been fighting with for twenty years."

In addition to seeking out the perfect record deal, Meaux and Fender are talking movies and videos, relying on Fender's cinematic charisma. "He's a born actor," Meaux laughs, "because he had to run back and forth between that border all his life."

Does he ever miss the high-rolling days?

"Freddy never loved to be at his peak," says Meaux. "He's the kind of guy who's happier with a little one room shack by the railroad track and no money. He's a guy that if you give him a guitar and a local cantino with four or five of his beer drinking buddies sitting around listening to him playing for free, that's Freddy." —MARY ELLEN MOORE





**THE GRAND
OLD MAN
of the GRAND
OLE OPRY**

ROY ACUFF

The familiar voice, the familiar stance, the familiar songs—Roy Acuff is as big a part of the Grand Ole Opry as the WSM microphone. Like a star in twilight, his music and his style still shine. Acuff's professional life follows the course it has for years, while his personal life has changed... an active mixture of loneliness, old age and fame. —By Bob Allen

On a chilly autumn evening, just a few weeks past his 80th birthday, Roy Acuff strides onstage at the Saturday night Grand Ole Opry to turn in what may well be his 2,000th performance on that time-worn and venerated show.

Though emcee Hairl Hensley's introduction is an elaborate one, it is hardly necessary. To the country fans in the audience, Acuff's profile—his aging, craggy countenance, his jutting chin and his thick, curly shock of snow-white hair—is familiar. A roar of applause and a blinding spray of igniting flashbulbs sweep through the Opry House like a wave of thunder and lightning.

Dressed in a white sport coat, a white dress shirt with clip-on striped tie, black dress slacks with white belt and matching white shoes, Acuff steps up to the microphone with fiddle in hand. Then, like a priest offering benediction, he launches into his gospel-flavored classic, "The Great Speckled Bird," the very song he first performed on the cold, rainy February night in 1938 when he made his debut on the Opry stage.

As Acuff sings, his gruff, plaintive voice—a voice originally honed on the mountain ballads, gospel hymns and sacred harp songs that he learned as a child in the east Tennessee foothills—carries out through the night across 38 states via the 50,000-watt clear-channel

signal of WSM Radio. And as always Acuff makes the song ring with a soulful fervor and conviction, almost as if he were singing it for the first time:

*What a beautiful thought I am thinking,
Concerning the great speckled bird.
Remember her name is recorded
On the pages of God's Holy Word....*

In an era when Nashville's music industry has become increasingly obsessed with churning out pop-flavored pabulum with a twang, Acuff survives as one of country music's last, frail links with its past. For nearly half a century now, Acuff and his band, the Smoky Mountain Boys, have clung with the tenacity of mountain goats to the traditional guitar-fiddle-harmonica country music style. And Acuff still performs the same handful of hits—"The Great Speckled Bird," "Wabash Cannon Ball," "Wreck on the Highway"—that first catapulted him from obscurity to stardom.

It is more than just his longevity that has earned Acuff an exalted station as country music's elder statesman and the Opry's most esteemed senior citizen. As the first major national singing star ever to launch a career from the stage of the Grand Ole Opry, Acuff came to enjoy a degree of popularity and to wield a measure of influence that have proven to be enduring. In his heyday, in the early 1940s, his fame rivaled that of more

urbane musicians such as Benny Goodman and Frank Sinatra.

Acuff's popularity in his native state was overwhelming. In 1948, he won the Republican nomination for the governorship of Tennessee without so much as giving a single speech. Though he lost the general election, he nonetheless received more votes than any previous Republican candidate had ever garnered in the traditionally Democratic state.

But it was to the people of America's heartland, those who suffered the hardest during the Depression and toiled the longest during the years of World War II, that Acuff meant the most. It was his chesty voice that most often held them in thrall as they gathered around their radios on Saturday nights in rural hamlets and backwoods settlements everywhere to hear the Opry's weekly broadcasts.

In recent years, the lionization of Acuff, as one of the last living cultural heroes of a fading rural American tradition, has been impressive. A 1983 salute to him in Nashville drew such luminaries as Senator Howard Baker and Vice-President George Bush. Later, in May 1984, Acuff was honored at a \$500-a-plate benefit at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

I still get the same thrill as always when when I play the Opry," Acuff says in his soft speaking voice. It is a few days later, and he is sitting quietly in Dressing Room Number One backstage at the Opry House. "I'm not anywhere as nervous as I was when I was younger," he adds. "When you first come to the Opry, it's as big a nerve-wreckin' job as anybody's ever done. I've seen some of the biggest ones go out there and shake all over. But after a while, you just get seasoned, you just get the feeling and you just walk out there like you're part of it."

Dressed in a large straw hat, bib overalls and bright plaid shirt, Acuff is waiting patiently between takes of an all-day taping of the TV show *Hee Haw* that is under way in a nearby studio. The hallway outside his dressing room echoes with the banjos and guitars of practicing musicians, but Acuff makes a point of leaving the door open. And as he idles the hours away between camera calls, he is visited by fans, friends and Opry colleagues such as Minnie Pearl, who wanders by to say hello. Acuff smiles and chats with everyone. But his gaze frequently turns in the direction of a large color TV set in the lounge just across the hall, on which a baseball game is in progress.

At age 80, Acuff's eyes still possess a hawk-like sharpness. But his hearing is failing, and he must take medication for a chronic heart ailment. And with the slowness of old age, there are sometimes long pauses as he responds to questions



and struggles to shape his thoughts into words.

Even so, when he bounds across the hall to take a closer look at the game, he moves with spry agility. His 140-pound, five-foot-eight-inch frame still possesses a sinewy toughness that reflects his “bantam rooster” disposition. At such moments it is still easy to envision him as the man whose athletic prowess once landed him a spot in a New York Giants baseball training camp. And even though the passage of time and the power of myth have succeeded in rounding out the rough edges in his character, it is still easy to picture him as the Baptist minister’s son whose hair-trigger temper and quickness

with his fists earned him a few nights in jail back on his youthful stomping grounds of Union County, Tennessee.

“I never was a sissy or a pretty boy,” Acuff says sternly. Then he flashes a grin that proves that, for a moment at least, the old pugnaciousness is still intact. “I sowed my wild oats! I may not look it, but I’ve always been a rough one.”

There is an unpolished quality to Acuff’s dressing room. The furnishings are minimal—a small table and a few chairs, a sink, toilet and shower. The only testimonials to his fame are the walls themselves, which are papered with hundreds of photographs and mementos that offer up a collage of memories from his illus-

trious career. There is a movie poster from the 1940 Republic movie *The Grand Ole Opry*, in which he starred. There is a faded publicity photo of him with the Smoky Mountain Boys in the late 1930s. And there are dozens of autographed pictures: Acuff with Ronald Reagan. Acuff with Richard Nixon. Acuff with Roy Rogers. Dolly Parton. Johnny Cash and just about every other politician or show business superstar who ever strutted across the Opry stage.

Perhaps most telling, though, is the photo of Acuff with Charlie Daniels bearing a handwritten dedication from Daniels that mirrors the sentiments of dozens of modern country stars: “To

"I ain't the king of country music. I'm just Roy Acuff."

my first idol," Daniels wrote, "and to the man who started it all. God bless you!"

At midafternoon, a couple of middle-aged women who've been wandering in awestruck silence through the Opry's backstage corridors knock shyly on the dressing room door and ask Acuff if they may have their picture made with him.

"This is the high point of my life," one of the women whispers as she stands with her arm around Acuff while her friend snaps a picture of them. "I come from North Carolina, so far back in the hills they had to pump in the sunlight. But on Saturday nights we always got the Grand Ole Opry on the radio, and we always heard Roy Acuff."

"You're mighty young to be sayin' that," Acuff teases the woman, who is at least 50.

"Oh, no, Mr. Acuff. As far as I'm concerned, you're the king of country music, and you always will be."

"Aw, naw, I ain't the king of country music." Acuff smiles, blinks and looks once more in the direction of the TV where the baseball game is still in progress. "Naw, I'm just Roy Acuff."

It is late afternoon before the *Hee Haw* taping is finished. Acuff removes his loose-fitting costume of plaid shirt and bib overalls, underneath which he has on pressed slacks and a blue dress shirt. He quickly clips his tie back in place. "Even though I live alone, I've got a tie on even before I come outa the bedroom in the mornin', and it'll be one of the last things I take off at night before I go to bed," he says. "I can't help it. I was just raised that way."

Acuff walks briskly through the maze of backstage passageways, through a fire exit, across a large unloading dock and then through another doorway that opens into the main lobby of the Opry House. Past the Opry's front doors, Acuff's own little house, which was recently built for him on the edge of the 480-acre Opryland entertainment complex, is only a 30-second walk away.

With the sun sinking, the air has a chill to it and the shadows are beginning to deepen in a nearby stand of oak and hickory trees. Opryland is closed for the season and twilight brings a silence and sense of solitude to the park. The encroaching darkness seems to engulf the two-story Colonial-style brick house that has been Acuff's home since last year, when he sold his mansion on the high bluffs overlooking the nearby Cumberland River.

At first it seemed odd to some people

that a man of Acuff's stature and immense wealth (he has made many shrewd real-estate investments through the years and is also a founder and co-owner of the Acuff-Rose Publishing House) would choose to make his home in a theme park. It seemed almost comical that he would allow himself to be ensconced, like a living relic on display for tourists, next to the Roy Acuff Museum. But for Acuff, whose beloved wife of 44 years, Mildred, died in 1981, the move was not only a natural one but quite possibly a lifesaving one as well.

"I'm leading a very lonely life right now, in a big house all by myself," he said when his plans to move to the park were first announced. "I come in at night and it's lonely. I wake up in the morning and it's lonely....I'm just completely lost.... Now, I'll be someplace where there'll be people. I want to straighten out my life. It'll help me get out of this loneliness I live in."

Acuff walks past the mailbox bearing his name and turns the key in the front door of his house. "Even when I lived across the river, I'd come over here most every day for the purpose of signing autographs and letting people take my picture," he continues. "I enjoy being here. I've never been one to shun an audience. All my life I've been among crowds. I like to go over to my museum and talk to people and then sit on my bench in front of the house and sign a few autographs. After a while, I'll go back in the house and rest awhile."

But isn't privacy a problem?

"Well, sometimes when I'm laying in bed, tryin' to take a nap, I can hear that train whistle [from The Chattanooga Choo Choo, a popular ride in the park]. But it don't bother me much," he replies. "And people knock on my front door maybe a dozen times a day when the park's open. I'd like to answer it, but I can't always." He shakes his head. "You can't let 'em in the house. If I let one in they'd probably go and tell the others, and I'd end up making enemies rather than friends."

Acuff's house is furnished with an assortment of antiques and souvenirs from his career along with modern devices like a microwave oven, a video recorder and an elaborate phone system with direct lines to Opryland's private security force. Drawing himself a glass of distilled water from a bottle in the small kitchen, Acuff switches on the large color TV and sinks into a comfortable chair to catch the last inning of the baseball game. As he does, the fading

sunlight of the afternoon streams in through the shuttered windows and gleams off the hardwood floors, the chrome and glass coffee table and the bric-a-brac.

When the game is over, Acuff gives a guided tour through the rooms of his house. He shows the antiques, the small balcony overlooking a grassy yard and the small kitchen. "I still wash my own dishes. I even did that when my wife was livin'," he says softly, moving into the spare bedroom. "Nobody's ever slept in here. I guess they won't as long as I'm livin' here. I stay by myself most of the time.

"I'm gettin' used to bein' alone, I guess," he adds as he heads back to the living room. But he doesn't say that he likes it.

Outside, the shadows finally dissolve into darkness. As Acuff leads his visitor to the door, mentioning his plans to go out later and dine alone at a nearby Shoney's restaurant, he gathers his thoughts to respond to one last question.

What about all the years on the Opry, the decades in the national spotlight? Now that they're gone, does it seem as if they all flew by like freight cars on a fast-moving train?

"No, it was all a slow, gradual process," he says. "Of course, I never got into the big money like these boys today. If I hadn't been the type of person I am, I would have never stayed with it, because there were too many times in the early days when I was down to my last dollar. There were a lot of nights on the road when....But Mildred stayed with me, and I just saw it through." He sighs. "I don't know. I'm fortunate, I guess, to still be livin'."

As Acuff says good-bye, his handshake is firm, and one is reminded again of how much of the old toughness and tenacity he still seems to possess. Acuff leaves little doubt that as long as he's physically able, he will still be up on the Opry stage every Friday and Saturday night. And he will still be singing those songs that are destined to echo through the years:

*From the great Atlantic Ocean
To the wide Pacific shore,
From the queen of glowing mountains,
To the south belle by the shore,
She's mighty tall and handsome
And known quite well by all.
She's the combination
On the Wabash Cannon Ball...*

20 Questions with

1 What is your personal definition of a redneck?

That's an ole boy that throws his beer can in the back of the truck instead of out in the weeds.

2 Do you consider yourself a redneck?

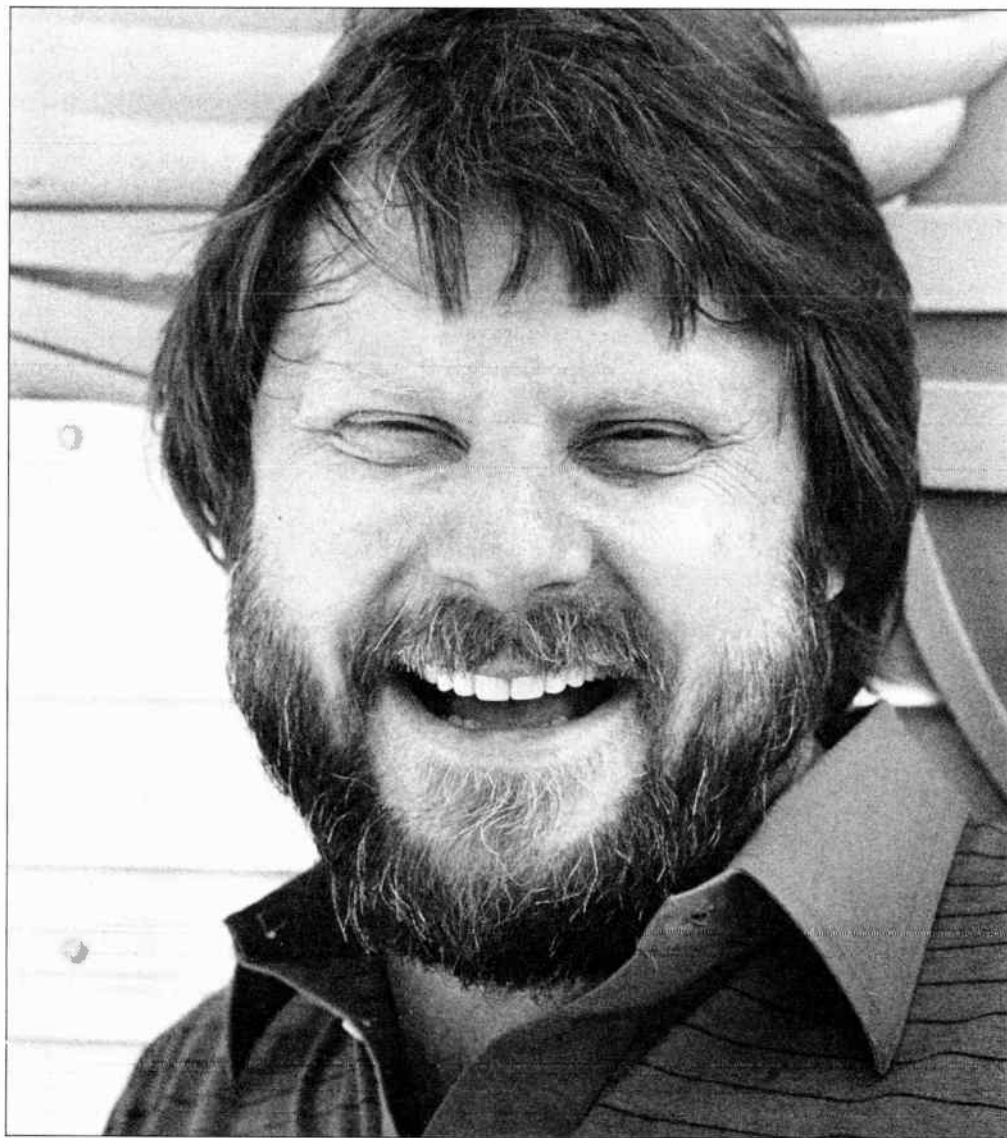
Oh, I don't know if I am or not. I don't know.

3 How did you first get together with Joe Stampley?

Joe and I did a tour of Europe years ago. At the Wembley Festival, he and I got to talkin' and Joe said, "Moe 'n Joe, that sounds like Waylon 'n Willie." So when we got back to the United States, I had a recording session set up and we went in the studio and recorded. It was perfect...like we'd been recording together for years.

4 Tell me a little about the song, "Where's the Dress?"

Well, Joe and I hadn't recorded together for about three years, we'd kinda backed off that deal. Then we decided to record a new album, but when we went in the studio we only had nine songs. We needed another song. So, we got to thinking...we only had a couple of songs on the album that were funny, like "Holding the Bag." So, I was trying to write a song called "Where's the Beef?" Joe and I tried to write it and couldn't quite get it written. Then we heard that someone else had already written it. Joe went home and told his son, Tony Stampley, about that, so Tony went out and got George Cummings and Bucky Lindsey, and they wrote "Where's the Dress?" We went back next morning and recorded it and had it on the streets in about two weeks.



Ol' Moe Bandy has come a long way since the days of busting broncs and riding the rodeo. Since his "I Just Started Hating Cheatin' Songs" hit back in 1973, Moe Bandy has cut a wide swath through honky tonk music. In addition to his solo successes, he teamed up with fellow honky tonker Joe Stampley to do a free-wheeling series of duets, beginning with "Good Ole Boys." Their recent lampoon of Boy George and the Culture Club, titled "Where's the Dress," has kept Moe pretty tightly laced up, so to speak. We caught up with him in his tour bus, just after he'd finished a rollicking set in the 97-degree heat of Willie Nelson's Fourth of July Picnic in Austin.

Moe Bandy

by Michael Bane

5 What did you think when you first heard it? Did you crack up?

Oh, I thought it was great. And the session...you ought to hear the outtakes. It was great.

6 What was the Playboy photo session like?

Man, I'm telling you, gettin' in that dress was a project. I didn't want to do it. I just flat didn't want to do it. Finally, when I saw Joe gettin' all up...I said, well, if he's gonna do it, I'll do it.

7 Did you think your fans would have trouble with Moe Bandy in a dress?

Yeah...my brother's a bull rider and I thought, uh-oh, what's he gonna think, me wearing a dress? Anyway, that whole thing has just been fun. It's a cute song, and we've had a ball with it.

8 Did you work the rodeo before you started country music?

Yeah, I used to ride bulls and bareback broncs.

9 If you could isolate a single thing that you learned from being in the rodeo, what would it be?

Well, rodeo is a sport, and it's show business just like anything else. You're performing in front of fans, in front of people, and I learned how to deal with the public, how to fall on my head in front of the public. But it's similar, it's show business.

10 What's your definition of a good honky tonk?

Oh, man, a good honky tonk's where everyone's having a good time and just dancin' and drinkin' and raisin' hell.

11 What is your favorite honky tonk?

I can't say, there's so many, I'd hate to say just one. I've played so many honky tonks. I started in South Texas and I played for ten years in South Texas before I ever got a hit record. And man, I played some honky tonks that you hear about but seldom see. Skull orchards.

12 Did you ever get thrown out of a honky tonk?



No, but I played some that were so bad that they threw people in 'em. That's rough.

13 When you first started playing country music, you did some really great cheating songs, and you still do. You seem to be the master of the cheating song. Did you do that intentionally?

No, the first hit record I ever had was "I Just Started Hating Cheatin' Songs Today." It seemed like every song I got, from writers or whatever, had to do with cheating. So all of a sudden here, I'm known as the Big Cheater. It just happened that way, and it seemed like a lot of good songs, well-written songs, dealt with cheating.

14 You've been married 21 years. What does your wife think about living with the world's greatest cheating song singer?

Oh, she don't mind. She understands it's like acting, you don't live out your songs. If I lived my songs, I'd be dead. There's no way, cheatin' and drinkin' and all the things I sing about.

15 Why do you think cheating songs strike such a responsive chord in people?

Because there's so much cheatin' going on. (*Sounds incredulous.*) So many people can relate to it. It's out there. Y'know, country music is about life, and there's people out there cheatin', and we sing about it.

16 Do you have a favorite cheating song?

"Cheatin' Situation" has got to be my favorite, because that one paved my drive and bought me a piece of land and a TV and a refrigerator and this and that. It was song of the year.

17 What's your opinion of strings in country music?

I think it's good in spots. I don't use a lot of them, but they've been here lately, sneaking a few little strings in every once in awhile. I think it adds a certain feel to a record. I don't think you need an acre of fiddles, like some people call it, but if you use it right, it's all right.

18 What's it like to play in Europe?

It's great. The European audiences are really into traditional, hard country. So man, I got an "in," right there.

19 You did a couple of songs like "Hank Williams, You Wrote My Life," which is one of my favorite songs. There's a really great line, in that song: "You wrote 'Your Cheatin' Heart, about a gal like my first ex-wife," a classic country line. What does Hank Williams mean to you now?

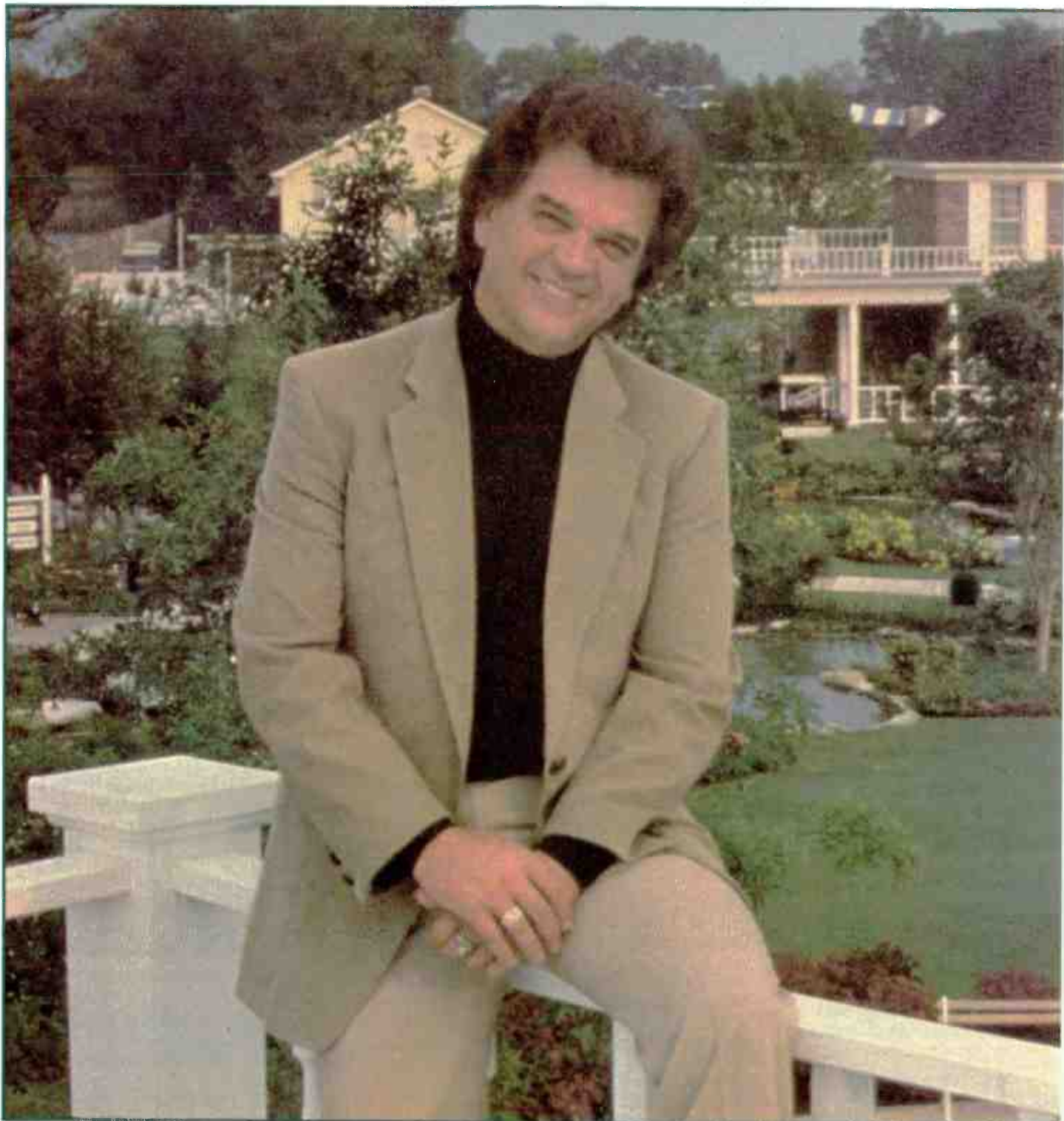
Hank Williams means a lot to me because my dad really likes Hank Williams. My dad plays guitar and sings. The first songs I ever heard were Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers, especially Hank Williams. My dad just loved Hank. So I knew Hank's music through my dad before I ever heard of Hank Williams, and it inspired me a lot. As a matter of fact, I did a Hank Williams album a few years ago. It's one of the most fun albums I've ever recorded.

20 One last thing. If you took Joe Stampley out dancing, who would lead?

(*Loud laughter.*) Oh, no! My goodness! Well, I think I'd have to lead because I know Joe would wanna wear that dress. He'd be too busy stumbling over it. ■

The Gospel According to Conway Twitty

by Michael Bane

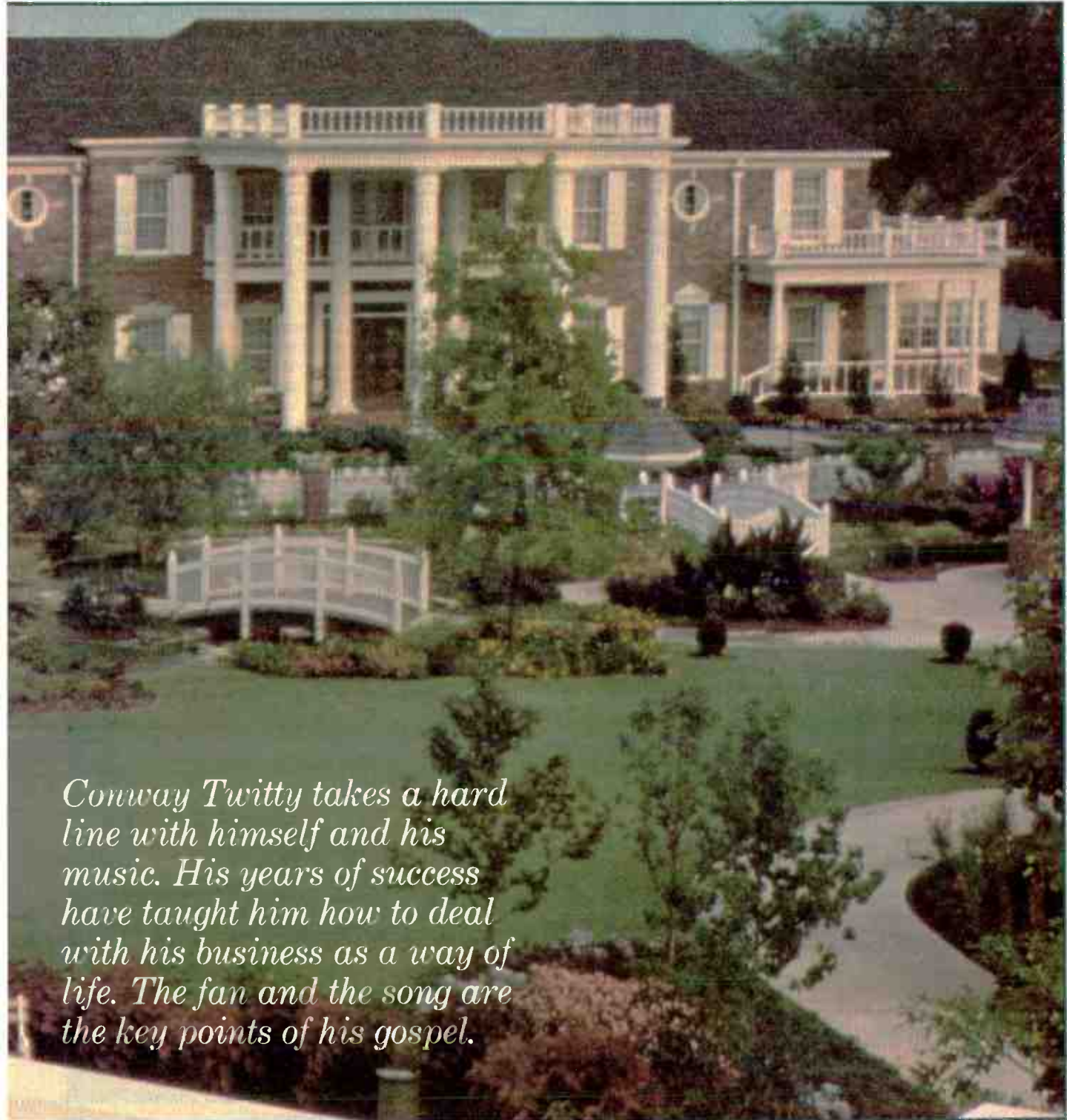


Against my will, I am taken to a Yuppie—that is, Young Urban Professionals—bar in Memphis. The theme is the 1960s, with a little of the 1950s thrown in for good measure. The music is good, the floors are tiled and the drinks are watered. There is a dance floor, upon which a hula hoop contest is enthusiastically under way, and a red Studebaker convertible, which I would probably kill to own. Everybody seems to be having a wonderful time, with the possible exception of our waitress in her little red cheerleader's outfit, who confides that she hates all that old music.

The disk jockey, grey suit, narrow tie, pomaded hair, hits

the button for the next turntable to start rolling, and the Yuppie bar fills up with another blast from the past...*It's only make...believe.*

Even after all these years, even surrounded by people who can barely remember Fonzie on *Happy Days*, much less the 1950s, Conway Twitty still sounds, well, so like *Conway Twitty*. In a world where being famous for five whole minutes now seems a bit optimistic; where whole decades, like aluminum cans and old newspapers, are endlessly recycled, Conway Twitty, son of a Mississippi riverboat captain, is a rock. Of the white boys who, in the mid-1950s in the river town of



Conway Twitty takes a hard line with himself and his music. His years of success have taught him how to deal with his business as a way of life. The fan and the song are the key points of his gospel.



George Jones: an early Starday Records publicity photo, around 1956.

er's Mountaineers in 1936), and he'd even make a bunch of crazy mule noises to go along with it. Every so often, he'd bring his new guitarist—"Little Glennie Boy," he called George—up to the microphone and let him warble out a tune or two of his own.

As the teenaged George Jones frequented the various and sundry Beaumont beer parlors and dance halls, he constantly kept his ears open. He could not help but notice that many different strains of music, both old and new, could now be heard in these rude establishments.

During this uneasy postwar era, Beaumont and the greater "Golden Triangle" (which the extreme southeastern Gulf Coast region, which also encompassed the nearby cities of Orange and Port Arthur, had come to be called) had gradually become a melting pot of all sorts of itinerant musicians. People of disparate tastes and dispositions were beginning to collide, interact and leave their indelible marks and fingerprints all over each other's music.

Among the dozens of singers and instrumentalists who'd gravitated to the area (in search of paying work, like everyone else) were Cajun ("Coonass") artists like Harry Choates ("Jole Blon"), Link Davis ("Big Mamou") and Huey Meaux (who would later gain notoriety as the producer of singer Freddy Fender and Doug Sahm)—all of whom had crossed the Sabine River from southern Louisiana, bringing with them their

lively French-Acadian fiddle and accordion music. Numerous veterans from the groups that had earlier forged the big-band sound of Texas swing (a unique hybrid of Dixieland jazz, blues, pop, cowboy music and 1930s dance-band music) had also begun to filter into the area. Two of them were fiddle player Cliff Bruner (who played with Milton Brown and his Musical Brownies before forming his own influential Texas swing ensemble, the Texas Wanderers) and Rusty McDonald (who later, in 1950, would sing the lead vocal on Bob Wills' original recording of "Faded Love").

There were other stylists at work as well: men whose music spanned various categories without fitting neatly into any of them. There was Moon Mullican ("I'll Sail My Ship Alone"), a cantankerous old piano player whose bluesy bawdy-house style foreshadowed the work of Jerry Lee Lewis and other rockabilly artists. There were Floyd Tillman and Arlie Duff and rock-'n'-rollers like J.P. ("the Big Bopper") Richardson and many, many more. They were then, most all of them (with the exception of a few, like Mullican), merely bit players in the huge transfusion of broke and hungry musicians who'd come streaming out of the hinterlands and into teeming coastal cities like Beaumont, where they proceeded to bounce haphazardly from one makeshift band to the next in rough-and-tumble sawdust-floored clubs like the Railroad Cafe, Shorty's on Voth Road and Yvonne's out on the Port Arthur highway.

The music that these men played had begun to echo with ever-clearer expressions of the general insecurity and turmoil which abided within them and swirled around them in this new, ever-changing environment. It was a music that spoke of the collective fears and restlessness of thousands of displaced men like George Washington Jones, George Jones' father, men who found themselves unwillingly trapped in these new urban settings for which they cared so little. Such men had been robbed of the strong sense of place that they'd known back in the boondocks like the Big Thicket, where life—even though harsh—was at least slower, more predictable and, most importantly, their own. These men knew that, back up there in the country, if the thoughts swirling round in a man's brain got too dark or twisted, he could always wander back into the forests and fields, way from other men, and let these thoughts soften, until they were not thoughts anymore, but just feelings and colors that blended and flowed sweetly with the sound of the water in the creeks and the wind in the trees. Here in the city, far from the fast-flowing streams and the tall pines, a man's dark confusion was merely rendered darker by the constant assault of man-made obstructions like traffic lights, time clocks and car horns. Here, the streets were filled with a multitude of strangers whose cold eyes merely confirmed and multiplied a man's solitary fears and confusion and reflected them back at him. The labor of a man's hands was no longer his own anymore, but merely an insignificant and largely expendable part of the huge centrifuge of activity around him.

There were other things for a man to worry about now, too, like black people, alcoholism and divorce, and there were wives and children who, every day, seemed to pay less and less attention to the old-time religion and country ways, while becoming increasingly obsessed with fast cars and fast dancing. All in all, it was just too much for a man to think about. Many a good man merely ended up seeking refuge on the barstools in the dives along Sabine Pass Avenue or Crocket Avenue, trying his best *not* to think about it; trying to squeeze a few hours of reckless, drunken euphoria out of the fleeting bit of freedom that existed between the Friday-afternoon punch of the time clock and the cold, nauseous hammerblows of the painful Sunday-morning hangover.

A new kind of music was born that spoke directly about the

COUNTRY MUSIC BOOK BONUS

This was a freshly mongrelized music, bred and whelped in the sawdust and grime of the dingy oil field, shipyard and factoryside cafes. It was hard core, gutbucket hillbilly, devoid of romanticism, full of bitterness, betrayal, guilt and disillusionment.

fears and worries that these men harbored silently in their hearts. This new music, which had come to be called "honky-tonk," was a far cry indeed from the wholesome, otherworldly mountain-style music of Roy Acuff or the Carter Family. Instead, this was a freshly mongrelized music, bred and whelped in the sawdust and grime of the dingy oil field, shipyard and factoryside cafes. It was hard core, gutbucket hillbilly music devoid of romanticism and full of bitterness, betrayal, guilt and disillusionment; it was songs with titles like "Born to Lose," "The Wild Side of Life," "Slippin' Around" and "Headin' Down the Wrong Highway." It was music that was played to the raucous accompaniment of electric guitars, fiddles, steel guitars and drums, which, when sounded in unison, created an insistent beat that cut through the din of drunken laughter, fistfights and flying bottles. A patron at Yvonne's Club (which today still stands, like a forlorn ghost relic of this wild area, out in the shadows of the elevated interstates, on the Port Arthur highway near the edge of the salt marshes where the huge oil refineries belch fire into the night sky) once committed the faux pas of asking piano plucker Moon Mullican to play one of the old Carter Family songs.

"Hell, no!" the mean-assed old piano player replied, looking

at the patron as if he had mild brain damage. "We gotta play music that'll make them goddamn bottles bounce on the tables!"

Around this same time another poor white boy, this one from rural Alabama, was beginning to rise like a dark phoenix out of the rubble of the dispossessed, and cast a long shadow across the face of country music. The boy's name was Hank Williams, and though he was just seven years older than George, he was already well on his way to becoming a legend as the first major national singing star since Roy Acuff to launch a career from the stage of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry (where he made his debut on June 11, 1949).

From the time Williams first hit the national charts, in February 1949, with a song called "Lovesick Blues," his music left an impression on George that was as profound as it was enduring. "He's my only hero but God," the prodigal singer would confess some thirty years later, long after his doomed idol was dead and buried.

George had no way of knowing it at the time, but the parallels between Williams' life and his own were uncanny. Both men had been born into the relative poverty of remote

**Yvonne's Club, one of the tough clubs
where George Jones learned his trade, still stands among Beaumont's refineries and Interstates.**



"I was so dumbfounded that my fingers just froze to the neck of my guitar. I never even hit a lick."

lumber settlements (where both of their fathers had, at various times, driven log trams). Both men had shaped their raw talents singing in primitive hard-shell Baptist churches and on city street corners, and both had, in their early years, fallen heavily under the musical influence of Roy Acuff. Both had fathers who were—each in his own way—rather weak and shiftless figures. (Williams' father's "disability" was said to have resulted from shell shock he'd sustained in World War I, whereas George Washington Jones' "shell shock" seemed to come in quart and pint bottles.)

One thing that George did know for certain, though, was that those things that he heard in that troubled, plaintive voice of Hank's rang painfully true to him. In songs like "Long-Gone Lonesome Blues" and "Lost Highway," he could hear the anguish of the defeated and the dispossessed, and he could hear the abiding sadness for which he had no name—tempered as it was by the harsh realities of early death and hard times. He could hear also the dark echoes of mortal confusion, and he could hear the painful conflict of the footloose balladeer caught up in the fast-turning wheels of a worldly success which he could not come to terms with and which would eventually mangle him to death. He could hear the horrible conflict of a tortured soul caught in the act of being torn to pieces in the struggle between the corruptibility of the flesh and the harsh demands of an unappeasable Old Testament God.

Though he could not put all this into words, these things that he heard in Hank's voice moved him no end. Still, he had no way of knowing, just then, that the seeds of this same mortal conflict were already beginning to take root in his own soul.

George Jones' introduction to the music of Hank Williams was propitious in yet another way. Now that he was approaching his late teens, he found that his voice had dropped and that it was increasingly difficult for him to sing comfortably in the high tenor range that was so often affected by his idols, Roy Acuff and Bill Monroe. He discovered that these new songs of Hank Williams' fit almost perfectly into his new vocal range, almost like a hand in a glove.

He had also come to realize by this time that he could save considerable wear and tear on his voice during a long night of singing in a smoke-filled bar if he occasionally backed off from his usual all-out "full throat" delivery and changed things up by singing, instead, with his mouth partially closed or even with his teeth slightly clenched. He discovered that this allowed him to dramatically bend, twist and otherwise embellish individual notes, with all the power and precision of a woodwind player. Even more important, he found that this also enabled him to hold back the full power of a melody and let it resonate eerily in his throat, giving the impression of barely controllable emotions swirling wildly around inside of him, held in fragile, temporary abeyance. When he did this, he also noticed that it not only tingled his own spine but seemed to send cold chills through all those who listened as well.

With these newfound discoveries, George set about learning every one of Hank Williams' songs just as fast as they were released. When he performed in the dingy bars and taverns, it was often these lonesome songs of Williams' that he sang all night long.

Not long after May 13, 1949, when "Wedding Bells," Hank

Williams' second chart single on M-G-M Records, was released, the doomed singer himself came through Beaumont to promote his new record. It was at station KRIC, where George was doing his usual 4 p.m. show with Eddie and Pearl, that he met Williams—who, though only twenty-five years old, would be dead in just three and a half more years, leaving behind him the dark legacy of the sacrificial lamb offered up on the altar of country music.

Hank, who happened to be a friend of Neville Powell, KRIC's program director, had agreed to come by and sing his latest hit song over the air to help promote a personal appearance he was making that night out at the Blue Jean Club on the Port Arthur highway. Eddie and Pearl, along with "Glennie Boy" Jones, were called upon to serve as Williams' impromptu backup band.

As George stood behind his idol and heard the music begin, his reverence and awe faded to cold fear. "He made me mad!" he later recalled. "I wanted to kick the song off with the guitar, but he didn't let me. He just started singin' it cold. And as soon as he started singin', I was so dumbfounded that my fingers just froze to the neck of my guitar. I never even hit a lick."

After the song was over, the doomed country idol and the awestruck prodigal singer actually had a few fleeting moments to talk with one another. "It seemed impossible," George later remembered, "like a miracle." In his deep-voiced East Texas brogue, with his words tumbling nervously out on top of one another (as if racing to keep up with his jumbled thoughts), George quickly owned up as to how much he thought of Hank and how he sometimes played his songs all night long. Hank smiled at him, and George was amazed when he found that his idol did not talk down to him, as George says, "like some of them will do when they've had a little success," but instead spoke to him man to man. Speaking softly, Hank explained to the boy how, when he was scratching around, trying to get his own career started, he had idolized Roy Acuff and gone around trying to sound just like him and trying to be just like him, until finally one day somebody had sat him down and pointed out to him that the people who bought records and went to shows already had one Roy Acuff, and it was doubtful that they was gonna spend their money on another one when they could have the real thing for the same price. After all this had sunk in, Hank had finally gotten wise and started concentrating on sounding more like Hank Williams.

This made sense to George, who had no way of knowing that his hero—even as he spoke to him—was already moving much too fast down a lost highway of alcohol and drugs, from which he would not return. As George shyly said his goodbyes and stood there, nervously fidgeting and shifting his weight jerkily from one foot to the other, at the end of this brief encounter (which would be their first and last), he promised that he would keep Hank's advice in mind. What he could not have fathomed, even as he stood there so awestruck that dreary afternoon, was that it was already too late: that he was already caught up in the dark Hank Williams legend, far deeper than he could ever imagine. ■

If you would like to order a copy of Bob Allen's new book on George Jones send \$15.95 plus \$1.95 postage and handling to: Saga, c/o Country Music, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Country Music on the Radio

In this issue, we focus on a matter of concern to many of you: what gets played on country radio and why and what that means for country music in general. Opinions vary, but one thing seems certain. There is power in the CMSA to make things different. Filling out the Members Poll in this issue is an important first step.

So, check out your fellow members' opinions, catch the news of Tammy, enjoy the story of Miss X and an earlier day in country music and country radio, and be sure to read about the legendary Lulu Belle and Scotty, who first hit it big on WLS out of Chicago.

But don't forget the Poll. Send it to us today.

Radio is Big Business

There are 2000 radio stations in the United States and Canada broadcasting country music full-time. An additional 1000 or so broadcast country music five hours or more per day. Not counting the stations that broadcast country music part-time, that means that out of the total of approximately 8000 radio stations here and in Canada, one out of every four is full-time country.

There are about 47 million listeners in the country music radio audience, which means the average station has 23,500 listeners. The largest single audience is WHN's in New York City.

This gives us an idea of the number of stations and the size of the audience we are talking about.

Missed a Newsletter?

Due to a printing error, approximately 800 members received copies of the September/October issue of *Country Music* without the *Newsletter*. If you were one of them, please let us know. We will send you a copy.

Here's what to do: send name, address and your CMSA membership number to Newsletter, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Sorry to have made you wait.

"Country" Radio

Obviously, a lot of people feel that much of the music played on modern "country" radio stations really isn't country. But, there are a lot of others who are delighted with the way country music has "expanded."

Many of us country music fans of long standing think of "country" as music with a basically rural sound, or at least with a lot of guitars or other traditional instruments. There are exceptions, of course, such as unaccompanied mountain music vocals or honky tonk music with more of an urban flavor. Lately, however, many people are thinking of "country" music as anything that is played on "country" stations. And this can be *anything!* Or so it seems.

In the past couple of decades, country music—even the traditional kind that Roy Acuff would be proud of—has experienced considerable growth, due, at various times, to people and trends like Jimmy Carter, redneck chic, Waylon and Willie, the outlaw bit, and movies like *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Urban Cowboy*.

This has inspired many radio stations to "go country." However, a lot of programmers have been dragged into this reluctantly, and have resolved not to be "too country." What many of them have done is to adopt formats that feature just enough George Jones and Merle Haggard to appeal to us "billies," and the rest is padded out with records that only have a remote identification with real C&W.

This type of approach has worked well, from a ratings standpoint. It has drawn new listeners who don't care a whole lot about fiddles and steels, but rather prefer "relationship" songs backed by large-scale violin sections, concert pianos and heavy percussion.

These new fans call themselves "country," and the radio stations to which they listen call themselves "country," and thus, all the records with which they are involved are categorized as "country," no matter how they sound.

It's hard to argue with this. After all, a person should be free to listen to whatever kind of music he or she prefers, and choose the labels he or she prefers. The legitimate



George Strait

complaint we "hard hillbillies" do have is that we are the ones who supported country music through its hard times, and now *our* needs are not being met.

We (and there are a lot of us) are the ones who were proudly "country" when country wasn't cool" and bought country music records and attended country music concerts back when the words "country music" were in danger of extinction. We had to endure ridicule and scorn, but we kept it going until a new generation of real country artists, Loretta, Tammy, etc., became popular.

Loretta and Tammy have now been replaced by those who more readily appeal to those who would previously have been identified as "middle-of-the-road" fans. Vernon Oxford is considered "too country." Ernest Tubb appeals to the "wrong demographics." Bluegrass has been blackballed. Etc., etc., etc.

And when we "billies" need our fiddle-and-guitar fix, as necessary to us as coffee is to some, we often have to sit through 30 minutes or so of alien sounds before we finally get to spend a few glorious moments with Ricky Skaggs or George Strait.

It's ironic. Once upon a time, it was hard to find a country music station, but when

REVIEWS & FEATURES

we did find one, we knew we'd get solid country music, the way we define it. Now, it's easy to find country music radio stations, but we never know what kind of music we'll get.

Most of the records of what I call "pseudo-country" are really very good, and the singers and producers involved with them are talented people. But they don't meet the needs of us "hard hillbillies." We need honky tonkin', cheatin', goin' to Heaven, truck drivin', ramblin' man, cryin' in beer, goin' back to the old home place-type pickin' and grinnin', backed by flat-tops, banjos, fiddles and steels, and sung with country soul.

Oh well, this is the age of the portable tape recorder. I'll just get me a ghetto blaster and make tapes of my Moe Bandy and Bill Monroe records, and who needs radio, anyway?

Jerry Barney
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Lucky Enough to Tune in True Country

Dear CMSA,

I've read recent letters in *Country Music* about the format change at WKHK, away from country music, and about WHN being the only country station in the New York-New Jersey area. I could not let it pass without a comment about my favorite

"real country" station, WKMB of Stirling, New Jersey, at 1060 AM dial. This station is within the central to northern New Jersey area, and they play true country. You will hear songs by Hank Williams, Sr., Ernest Tubb, the Osborne Brothers and others that you certainly will never hear on WHN.

Donald H. Anthony
North Brunswick, New Jersey

Dear CMSA,

If you'd like to hear some *real* country music, of a kind which is seldom broadcast over WHN, give a listen sometime to these: *Honky Tonkin'*/Tuesday 9:30 P.M./WKCR FM 89.9 and *Let There Be Country*/Thursday 8 P.M./WFUV FM 90.7, broadcast from Columbia and Fordham Universities in New York City. I've been all over America, both in and out of prison, and have never heard anything as pure as this.

Jesse Michael Turner
New York, New York

Dear CMSA,

Up here, we get our country music from WEAV AM 96 in Plattsburgh, New York and WPTR AM 1540 in Albany, at night only. I would like to congratulate both of these stations on their programming philosophy: they keep the chatter to a minimum.

I would also like to comment on the state

of the industry. I am extremely sorry to see former favorites of mine like Conway Twitty and Charley Pride go to a more pop-oriented sound. I stopped buying their records about three years ago. Thank God for Ricky Skaggs, John Anderson, Delia Bell, Moe Bandy, The Whites, George Jones and of course the great Merle Haggard. They've kept it country.

I bought Emmylou Harris' *White Shoes* album despite your bad review; you were right.

Robert De Lasalle
Montreal, Canada

Country Music on the Air

Dear CMSA,

We listen to WCXI AM Country out of Detroit. Some of the DJs also subscribe to *Country Music* and talk about it on the air with listeners who call in. You are well represented in this area.

Iris Herald
Drayton Plains, Michigan

We are delighted to hear this and have written to WCIX directly. All stations mentioned in these letters are receiving copies of this Newsletter. We would like to strengthen connections between Country Music and country radio stations. —Ed.

Whose Radio Station Is It Anyway?

Dear CMSA,

For reflection: Look at the average age of the DJs and program directors. They determine what we hear. We fans cannot buy records or request songs unless we get a chance to hear them first. Could this explain what we are hearing on radio today as country music?

I would like to know what type of country music the following groups of fans like: 1) Those who cannot afford to buy records. 2) Those who are in their 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's. 3) Those who won't or don't feel it's worth the effort to call radio stations requesting songs they like.

Are the voices of these groups of country music fans being heard? I suspect not. If the type of country music being played on country radio stations today is an accurate poll of what these groups of country music fans like, then maybe I shouldn't be complaining about our modern country sound.

Harold Krogstad
Reserve, Montana

Actually the program directors dictate what is played. The DJs usually don't have much say.

There's a rotation list which program directors give to each DJ. The DJs must play certain records during the day, night, etc. If a record is requested that is not on the rotation list, chances are it will not get played. —Ed.

A Word about Polls

The response to our first Members Poll in the March/April *Newsletter* was fabulous...almost overwhelming, in fact. The response to the September/October Poll has been modest. Why?

Let us say a word about the purpose of the Polls. Many people in business listen to numbers: number of listeners to radio stations, number of subscribers to a magazine, number of records bought in a year...or a month...by those subscribers, number of owners of video cassette players, number of videos rented or bought in a month or a year. The numbers can be quite surprising. It will not surprise you, probably, to hear that you, as a group, buy an *amazing* number of records per year, but it can be surprising...and impressive to some.

It helps us when speaking with record executives, station executives, network executives, public relations people, people at the Opry, other journalists, advertising people and stars to have numbers at our fingertips—numbers about you.

So that's why we ask you to fill out these Polls. We are concerned that it may seem to you that we are asking you to do *our* homework for us. It is

homework; there's no doubt about that! But it's *our* homework in the joint sense that we are working together to accomplish something. And you have something that we need, which is the facts about you.

Just a word about words, because they are important too. Sometimes we quote your actual words to these people from your actual letters. That has tremendous impact, too, but it's a different kind of impact. We need both.

Here's what one of you wrote us about the first Poll.

Dear CMSA,

I hope you appreciate the fact that I gave you the facts of my life in writing by answering your questionnaire, and thought enough of your inquiry to spend twenty cents for a stamp to mail it to you.

How about that? ...If this becomes a habit, I may just start mailing them collect!

John R. Hurt
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

We appreciate it, we appreciate it!
—Ed.

REVIEWS & FEATURES



COURTESY LEONARD KAMSLER

Where's the Country?

Dear CMSA,

What is happening to country music? We have a bunch of singers who do not necessarily sing country songs but are billed as country. Our real country singers, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, Mel Tillis, Ernest Tubb, Hank Snow, to name a few, are being pushed out by the radio stations and record companies, and it looks as though nobody gives a hoot.

To quote Johnny Cash when he appeared on a Barbara Walters special, what we are hearing now is "watered-down country." Some singers start out sounding like country and along the way end up with a sort of soft rock sound. If the trend doesn't stop soon, we will only be remembering what true country songs and singers were like.

I tuned in to watch *Hee Haw* to find Vic Damone singing "country," dressed western, but it didn't make him sound or look any different than Vic Damone. We also find Annette Funicello, Dean Martin, George Burns and Tom Jones singing "country music." These people aren't country, do not sound country, and never will be country. Why doesn't someone *do something* to keep country music what it started out to be—*country*. Can't we, the members of the Country Music Society of America, do something? Can't the Country Music Association do something?

The record companies seem to promote the new singers regardless of what they sing. Loretta Lynn has had some very good *country* songs out and they never got promoted, radio stations never played them, fans never heard them!

Thank goodness we still have Loretta, Tammy Wynette, Merle Haggard, Moe Bandy, George Strait, Conway Twitty, the Statler Brothers and Ricky Skaggs. Ricky vowed on TV to keep country music country. There are more who are true

country and not middle of the road, but these names come to my mind.

In the future, I hope we will hear more country singers do country music and will not push aside the singers who have been with us for many years. They can still sing and deserve to be heard by all.

Gail E. Stafford
Lockport, New York

Yes! We intend for CMSA to do something... We are not organized enough to do it yet, but there seems to be tremendous potential in the CMSA to influence what gets played on the radio and what gets recorded. Let's begin by filling out this month's Poll. Depending on how many responses we get, we may be able to start something big with it.
—Ed.

Country with a Passion

Dear CMSA,

As one of those fans—and there are thousands and millions of others like myself—who are deeply concerned about the pop-rock influence in country music that seems to be taking over, swallowing up the more traditional sounds, styles and country artists, I want to express my feelings and just say, please, let's keep country music country.

With a burning passion I love country music and all those great C&W artists who love it too. I want to see it kept alive and thriving and not be crushed by the pop-rock stuff that's being pushed on us, that some people consider country.

I love country singers like George Jones, Merle Haggard, Gene Watson, Vern Gosdin, Loretta Lynn, Bill Monroe, Roy Acuff, Jimmy C. Newman, Ricky Skaggs, Tammy Wynette and all the new and older country music artists who really love their music and their fans, country artists who are in the business for the love of what they are doing, who really care and are not just in there cutting records and doing concerts just to make a buck, or jumping on the band wagon because country music so-called has become so wide spread and popular. It is really watered-down enough now to make it acceptable to just anyone who wants to cash in.

All of us fans who really love country music and want to keep it country have a right to be heard, and hopefully some others will listen to what we have to say.

Marie Deslongchamps
Allouez, Michigan

Fill out the Poll and send it in. That's a good start to making your opinion heard.
—Ed.

Beyond the Dollar

Dear CMSA,

Little by little "crossover" and "modern" country music have been pushing their way in until very little good old C&W remains. Where is the loyalty these days to something other than the all-mighty dollar?

Loren Stieg
Traverse City, Michigan

MEMBERS POLL/NOVEMBER 1984

WANTED: YOUR OPINION

You can influence what gets played on the radio, sway record executives, and reward the singers and the songs you like. Fill out this Poll.

Heard Any Good Country Radio?

1. How many hours a day, on the average, do you listen to the radio? _____
2. What is your country station? (call letters, city, state) _____
3. Who is the DJ or DJs? _____
4. Have you met or spoken with him/her? _____
5. Do you have a favorite program? if so, what is it? _____
6. What is your general opinion of the station? Do you like what they play? Any suggestions for changes? _____
7. Have you ever called to request a song? _____
8. Was it played? _____

Mail to: November Poll, CMSA, 10th floor, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Photocopies acceptable. Please fill out both sides.

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Where Does the Loyalty Lie?

Dear CMSA,

Country music is not country anymore, and it is sad that the rock stars have taken it over, and are now calling themselves country. A few country stars are even changing the way they sing, like Dottie West, who used to be my favorite...she doesn't sound like Dottie anymore. There are also others.

I guess they record what sells. I guess those of us who really like old time country music have let them down by not buying their records anymore.

Frank E. Robinson
Ooltewah, Tennessee

Divide and Play Country Music

Dear CMSA,

Why are so many country artists recording pop music these days? True country music is not altogether how the song is written. It is how it is sung. We might not need more country songwriters as much as more true country singers and true country bands.

Country producers are scared to put the good ole fiddle, banjo or steel guitar on the records. Here, I believe, is the solution.

We should divide country music into two categories—"pop" country and "real" country. We can put all the pops on one side and the handful of true ones on the other. Even the true ones are starting to

stray away from the true country sound.

This way both categories could play on separate radio stations.

Mark Prather
Baldwyn, Mississippi

Academy of What Awards Show?

Dear CMSA,

We waited for two hours during the *Academy of Country Music Awards Show* one night last May to hear country music. At least that's what we thought.

If what we did hear is some sort of trend, we'll be using our record player much more than our radio. We'll also be very grateful for the records we have collected over the years, as there won't be much to buy.

Of the new people, not one of the nine, male or female, seemed to have much to do with country. What do they call that sort of music?

Even Charley Pride—was *that* country? We have several of his albums that are.

Maybe this is one lone letter of disagreement—but I hope it is part of a roar loud enough to change this—whatever it is.

Ann Manus
Palo Verde, California

Vote for the Record of the Month in the Members Poll. Make it a roar. —Ed.

Back Where They Belong

Dear CMSA,

Everyday as I turn on my favorite

country radio station, I hear more crossover and pop-rock music than I do real country music. And when the country awards are given out, they're given to crossover artists. The *Billboard* chart had less than twenty *real country* songs on it one week last June.

Where has the real country sound gone? Why is this un-country music being allowed to invade—and pollute—our country stations and charts and award shows?

Good country artists are being deprived of what is rightfully theirs.

I think it's time we gave the stations and charts and awards back to the real country artists, artists such as George Jones and Loretta Lynn. Let's clean this situation up before the real country sound dies. To me that would be a real tragedy.

Kathy Hixson
Huntsville, Arkansas

Preserve and Protect

Dear CMSA,

I do not want what I consider real country music to fade away. The music that is played today is not pure country music. There was and I hope still is something between the singers and the fans that you didn't and still don't find with the music that is trying to be passed off as the music we really love. It's a closeness, a love for a down-to-earth music.

I hope that there are more people out there that feel as I do.

Jeanne Billmeyer
APO, New York

Send in those Polls. Let's find out. —Ed.

Short Stack

Dear CMSA,

I feel a great deal of country music has been polluted so much with what is called "crossover" that it just isn't country anymore. I've been a country fan for fifty years, so I feel I know the difference in music.

When DJs do get a hold of a good country tune, they play it to death. I think radio stations only have just so many records, and when one DJ ends his shift and another one takes over, the new DJ just turns the stack over and starts it again. At least that's the way it seems.

Burnie Flinn
Shingle Springs, California

There is some truth to what you say. See what we said above about station rotation lists. —Ed.

DJs are People, Too

Dear CMSA,

Glad to have *Country Music Magazine* back again. You know, most DJs that really care about the music they play are fans too and are always looking for info to

MEMBERS POLL/NOVEMBER 1984

- Is there listener-participation on this station? if so, what type? _____
- Has the station sponsored a Wrangler/Dodge Truck Country Showdown? _____
- Has it sponsored other contest activities? if so, what? _____

Bought Any Good Records?

- How many albums did you or anyone in your household buy in the last month?
records _____ cassettes _____
- What were your two favorites? _____
- If you didn't buy any in the last month, how many in the last 12 months?
records _____ cassettes _____

Your Choice for Record of the Month

- To vote, list the numbers of your top five favorites from the Top 25 in the November/December *Country Music*. Your votes here will elect a CMSA Album of the Month and Single of the Month. Winners will be announced.
albums (list 5 numbers) _____
singles (list 5 numbers) _____

REVIEWS & FEATURES

pass along to listeners about the performers. It used to erupt into a free-for-all here at WONE over who was going to see *Country Music* first, and I'll be glad to see the pattern repeated.

One of the things we really like about *Country Music* is that you cover not only the current superstars but the whole range of country performers.

I'd like to suggest that you do some short features on Country Radio Stations and DJs from around the good ol' USA. We all feel that country music is the greatest thing going and will do our best to bring you the best of the old and new.

All of our jocks have been here for a number of years (Butch Brown, Jon Reed, Lee Riley, Dan O'Brian, Lora Lewis and myself) and we all agree that the bond between country listeners and air personalities is much stronger than in any other type of radio.

David G. McFarland
Dayton, Ohio

So, all you readers out there, while there's life, and DJs like McFarland, there's hope.

Dave, we like your suggestion about short features on DJs and stations. We'd like to do some here or in the magazine. This special issue focusing on country radio may help get us started. Hope to hear more from all of you at WONE.

Other radio personnel interested in the magazine or in the CMSA that we know of so far are Martin J. Vota of WTJY FM in Taylorville, Illinois; George Lovell of WJTH AM 900 in Calhoun, Georgia; Dave Anthony at KIKF FM in Los Angeles; and Carl Drake of KRPT AM in Anadarko, Oklahoma. Carl is programming director and music director at KRPT. —Ed.

Singing Blind

In the days when country music and country radio were young, the Mysterious Miss X tried to break into a professional career. She and her singing family lived on the same road, back in the same Kentucky hollow, as Ricky Skaggs' family. Now she lives in Texas and sings to her grandchildren.

One day, when my brother's band was practicing at our house, Brother Jimmie called me into the room and said, "Joanne here kin sing 'bout as well as Patsy Montana or Lulu Belle; but she can't stand to sing in front of strangers." Well, the band weren't strangers to me anymore, so I agreed to sing a song or two for them.

When I finished, the band boys all said, "Why she's as good as Kitty Wells or the best of 'em. Let her join our band."

I was so excited! My secret ambition had always been to be a country singer with a band. I was already having visions of reaching Nashville. Maybe someone like Lester Flatt or Roy Acuff would discover

me, like they did Connie Smith. She was from around our parts, and so was Loretta.

I did pretty good my first day singing with the band on the radio. Brother wouldn't allow no audience, saying, "Let her git used to singing on the radio afore we let strangers in. Maybe she won't git so scairt."

More fan mail came in than the band had ever gotten before: "We like your girl singer. Have her to sing 'I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes,' and such songs." Then we started getting bookings for personal appearances at schools and clubs in the surrounding area and I started getting scared. I was afraid I'd lose my voice if I had to face strangers.

Brother Jimmie came up with what he thought was a good idea: he decided to put a mask on me. I would be billed as the "Mysterious Miss X." I guess he figured you can put blinders on an old horse and it won't shy off or be so skittish. So, why couldn't it work on me?

Well, I was so excited. Brother Jimmie gave me instructions, all the way to the school auditorium. "Now ye jist remember, them's jist people out there just like back home. They like air kind of music or they wouldn't be there. Jist stay calm."

We went to the back door of the auditorium where a custodian with a toothless smile let us in. When he saw me, he smiled knowingly and said, "I bet yer Miss X."

I slipped the mask over my eyes and let Brother Jimmie start leading me toward the stage. He suddenly stopped and said, "Ye stand right here. When they pull them curtains, don't ye go ter moving around or ye might stumble over something." I could hear the screeching sound of the stage curtains being drawn. The guitars, banjos and fiddle started playing "Orange Blossom Special." I could tell by the clapping and whistling that the crowd was quite large. I stomped my new white boots and clapped my hands to the beat of the music, not feeling a bit scared behind my black mask. I was blind as a bat.

After a few songs by different members of the band, Brother Jimmie announced, "Well, folks, here's the moment ye've been a waiting for...the one, the only, Mysterious Miss X!"

A thunderous roar of applause followed. Amid the whistling and hissing, someone thrust a mike in my hands.

"Git ter singing, ye idiot," Brother Jimmie hissed. He was always hissing at me.

"I wanna be a cowboy's sweet-h..." That's as far as I got. I don't know if it was my head swelling from all the applause or what caused it, but the rubber band holding my mask snapped. There I stood on-stage, with my blinders gone. All I could see were those strange faces staring at me



Tammy Wynette, caught by member Dennis Devine, in her new show.

from out there in the auditorium.

I stared back at 'em for a minute, I guess. Then I turned and ran for the dressing room door. As I passed the sweating face of Brother Jimmie, he hissed again, "Yer fired."

That ended my career as a singer. Now, when I hear Loretta Lynn and Connie Smith wailing away, I feel sorry for myself. Instead of writing something no one may ever read, I could have been right up there with the best of 'em. 'Course, if I really thought this would be read by strangers. I probably wouldn't be able to write another line.

Garnett Young
Houston, Texas

Tammy Wynette: Country with a Flair

Dear CMSA,

On Sunday, August 19 my friend Doris, her son Robert, and I saw Tammy at the Douglas County Fair in Waterloo, Nebraska. Our seats were right up front, and I got a lot of good photos of Tammy during the performance. Tammy has been working with a choreographer, and it shows!

After the performance, she signed more than 200 autographs, including our own. Doris and Robert were lucky enough to have her autograph the picture of herself on the cover of the July/August issue of *Country Music*.

Tammy looks tremendous, performs beautifully, and her band and back-up singers all do an excellent job, to make one of the best shows I have ever seen!

Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Dennis, you are really getting around! Other readers may remember Dennis, who took part in our recent Wish Upon a Star feature on Johnny Cash. —Ed.



Love, marriage and close-harmony singing. Their true-to-their-roots Southern mountain sound rang out over WLS. With personal touches thrown in, they lived a life-time of their music, augmented by songs flowing from Scotty's pen.

Lulu

In many ways, they were like the dozens of other kids who had come up to Chicago from the Depression-ridden South to get work on WLS, the big Sears and Roebuck station that sent the *National Barn Dance* into millions of homes around the country. They were polite, ambitious, wellscrubbed, and a little naive, but they were able to take the tough mountain songs they had grown up with and turn them into comfortable, singable melodies. Unlike the others, though, these two fell in love. And got married. And decided not to keep it a secret. And when they did this, they launched a twenty-year career that would make them country music's first really successful husband and wife act. Yet for years and years, their fans knew them only by their first names: Lulu Belle and Scotty.

His last name was Wiseman, and hers was Cooper (Myrtle Eleanor, to be exact), and they had been born within thirty miles of each other in the North Carolina mountains. Lulu Belle was only eighteen when she joined the WLS staff in 1932, specializing in comic songs like "Daffy Over Taffy." At first she teamed up with a young man named Ramblin' Red Foley, and made her first records with him, in 1934. But soon she was attracted to a lanky, suspender-snapping banjo player named Skyland Scotty. He was fresh from taking a bachelor's degree at Fairmont State College in West Virginia, and was packing an old notebook of songs he had gathered in the mountains. The chemistry was there, and when Lulu Belle and Scotty began to feature a song called "Madam, I've Come to Marry You" on the show in late 1934, the old matchmakers in Ohio and Illinois cuddled up to their Philcos and grinned with approval.

Lulu Belle and Scotty were married in December 1934, but there were problems. "The radio station was at first reluctant to announce our marriage," she recalls. "They were afraid it would take away from our appeal. So we didn't announce it until later, until our first baby was on the way. Then, when I was about five or six months along, we started singing a little song called 'Somebody's Coming to Our House,' and the next day the presents started arriving." Daughter Linda Lou

Belle & Scotty

was born one night during the *Barn Dance* and Scotty went out and announced it on the air. Such personal touches endeared Lulu Belle and Scotty even more to their huge radio audiences, and they responded in kind. "I got closets full of baby clothes," says Lulu Belle, "quilts, pillows, hand-work. I never got around to thanking them all." That same year *Radio Guide Magazine*—the equivalent of today's *TV Guide*—announced that its readers had voted Lulu Belle National Radio Queen in a nationwide poll. The good times were rolling.

Except for a short defection to Cincinnati in 1940, the Wisemans worked for the next two decades from their home base at WLS in Chicago. Though the WLS brass insisted on seeing them as a comedy act, the fans loved their harmony duet singing and songs that had what Scotty called "an old-time flavor." Because Lulu Belle's voice was a little low, Scotty often sang above her, creating a delightful blend; the two would occasionally switch parts in a song, when a part got too high or low, pioneering a technique that would later become commonplace in singing. Between 1938 and 1944 they went to Hollywood for a series of six musical films with titles like *Hi*, *Neighbor* and *Village Barn Dance*. On October 30, 1935, they began a recording career that spanned labels like Okeh, Vocalion, Conqueror, Columbia, Bluebird, Vogue, Mercury, London, and in later years, Starday. They never had any monster hits—their enduring fame came from weekly radio and personal appearances—but they did record early and influential versions of several country standards, including "Turn Your Radio On" (1939), "Mountain Dew" (1939), and "Get Along Home, Cindy" (1936).

Meanwhile, Scotty's songwriting was earning the duo another niche in country history. A 1936 promotional book noted that Scotty "occasionally writes a song," but before long he was doing more than that. Using the old folk songs he had collected as patterns, Scotty created a roster of songs that included some of the most familiar country standards. Like many songwriters of that time, though, Scotty had to watch his best songs become hits at the hands of other singers; even

today, many fans who know and love these favorites associate them with other singers than Lulu Belle and Scotty. Though the pair recorded Scotty's reworking and arrangement of "Mountain Dew" in 1939, it was not until Grandpa Jones did it for King in 1947 that the song became a nationwide hit. "Remember Me" was in fact a hit for Lulu Belle and Scotty in 1940, but is better known through versions by later singers such as T. Texas Tyler, the Bailes Brothers, and even Willie Nelson (who featured it on his classic *Red-Headed Stranger* album). "Tenderly He Watches Over Me" was picked up by George Beverley Shea with the Billy Graham crusades, "I'm No Communist" became a Cold War anthem of the 1950s, and "The Brown Mountain Light" was adopted by the folk revival in the 1960s. In 1944, when Scotty was in a hospital in Chicago, Lulu Belle got ready to leave his bedside and casually whispered, "Have I told you lately that I love you?" The phrase began working on Scotty, and when his wife returned the next day, he sang her a new song by that title. "That's pretty good," she said. Gene Autry agreed, and rushed out a recording of it in 1946; so did Red Foley and Kitty Wells; later everyone from Jim Reeves to Elvis had a crack at it, running up total sales of over 10 million.

By the time the Wisemans retired in 1958, Scotty had his master's degree from Northwestern University, and the two headed back to North Carolina where he planned to teach. Instead he went into real estate, ran an Angus farm, and became president of the local bank; Lulu Belle, on her part, ran for State Representative, and won two successive terms as a Democrat in a Republican area. Scotty continued to write songs—there are some twenty-five yet unpublished—and even started writing his autobiography. They kept their hand in the music, too, doing occasional guest shots and albums for Starday and Old Homestead; their last public appearance was in October 1979 at Nashville's Fan Fair. Scotty died in 1981.

Today Lulu Belle still lives a full, active life in the mountains of North Carolina. She still listens to the local all-country radio station, and approves of George

Jones and Ricky Skaggs and gospel singer Cristy Lane. "They need to bring it out of the bedroom and make it so you can understand the words," she says of modern country. Yet she knows fans have not forgotten Lulu Belle and Scotty: she still gets fan mail after all these years, and a professor from a nearby college is working on a book about the Wisemans' career. Someday she hopes to find a publisher interested in Scotty's unpublished songs, but meanwhile the older chestnuts continue to find new admirers as the legacy of Lulu Belle and Scotty lives on.

Charles Wolfe

Available Albums

Most of the early original recordings by Lulu Belle and Scotty are still out of print, though "Remember Me" and "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You" are available in the Time-Life set *The Duets* (TLCW-05), and two 1935 cuts, "Prisoner at the Bar" and "Get Along Home, Cindy" appear on *Early Country Harmony* (Anthology of Country Music, ACM-1). The single best album of their work is *Sweethearts of Country Music* (Starday/Gusto SLP 206), done in the late 1950s just after they retired. It contains most of their favorites, done with uneven accompaniment. A second Starday effort, *Sweethearts Still* (Starday/Gusto SLP 351), teams the pair with crack Nashville studio men like Little Roy Wiggins and Pete Wade; the songs are all chestnuts like "When I Yoo Hoo in the Valley," this time with modern country backing. The last album the pair did was *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You* (Old Homestead OHS 90037), a 1974 effort with Tommy Failes.

If you would like to order any of the following Lulu Belle and Scotty albums (special CMSA price \$6.98 is \$2.00 off), send your check to Lulu Belle, c/o Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one record and \$.95 for each additional. *Sweethearts Still* (Starday SLP 351) \$6.98; *The Sweethearts of Country Music* (Starday SLP 206) \$6.98. (Both of these are available in LP, 8-track or cassettes, specify which you want.) *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You* (Old Homestead OHS 90037) \$6.98 (no 8-track or cassettes).

TRAVEL & COLLECTIONS



Al Downing

Mississippi Moment

Dear CMSA,

I go to the Jimmie Rodgers Festival in Meridian, Mississippi every year in May. I have to say this was the best year ever. Big Al Downing was there for the first time this year, and I hope it will not be the last. Believe me, he was the hit of the week.

You could have heard a pin drop when he sang "Mr. Jones." When he finished the song, I have never seen or heard an ovation like the one he got. It was beautiful.

Deanna Busby
Chicago, Illinois

Collecting the Magazine

Dear CMSA,

I want to thank you for putting my letter in the July/August *Newsletter*. The response has been tremendous. I now have all of the issues I was missing and also some extras that I wanted.

I also would like to thank some of *Country Music's* readers for helping me complete my collection. They are: May King, Howard Silver and Janice Smith.

I love getting the CMSA *Newsletter*. I really enjoy reading them. They get better and better all the time.

Please do another issue on Elvis Presley.

Ernest Sabins
Waco, Texas

Ernest, thanks for writing. We were curious about whether people were responding to the requests for magazines and other items on this page.

What do you other readers think? Shall we ask Dave Hickey to edit an Elvis issue? By the way, if you want a copy of the special Collector's Edition of Country Music Magazine about Elvis, send \$5.95 to: Elvis Edition, Country Music, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. —Ed.

Dear CMSA,

I have extra copies of the following issues of *Country Music*: January 1973, April 1973, February 1974 and the special January/February 1980 Collector's Edition of Elvis Presley. I need October 1974 and November 1980.

I also need information. September 1981 is the last issue of the magazine I have for 1981. If copies were printed in October, November and December, I need these. I have a copy of the January/February 1982 issue. When was the last issue printed by the publisher who quit? **Bobby R. Knight, 804 W. Jackson St., Mayodan, North Carolina 27027.**

September 1981 was the last issue in 1981. The last issue by the publisher who quit was January/February 1982. —Ed.

Dear CMSA,

I would like to get a complete set of *Country Music Magazine* from December 1972 through December 1981. I would be willing to pay half price; I can't really afford full price. Anyone willing to sell theirs, please contact me. **Ford Howard Willett, 9251 E. Colby Road, Crystal, Michigan 48818.**

Keep It Neat

Dear CMSA,

Enclosed find a picture of my collection of *Country Music* magazines. I have every issue ever printed and I had them bound in years. I'm very proud of them and wanted to share my idea with you.

Perhaps other readers who have all the other issues would want to have theirs bound too. It keeps them clean and neat for everybody to enjoy.

Jan Genshe
Madison, Wisconsin



Information, Please

Contact these members directly if you have the items or information they need.

• Anyone who took photos of Elvis' 1954-57 concerts and still has the negatives, please write me. I would also like to have the words of these Elvis songs, recorded in

September 1956: "Any Place is Paradise," "First in Line" and "Paralyzed." **James M. Ahles, FF-4 Yunquecito St., Carolina, Puerto Rico 00630.**

• If any members have any info to share about Charlie Monroe, Bill Monroe's brother, I would be very thankful. I would also like very much to locate some of his records. Bill went to the bluegrass style when he formed his band, but Charlie stayed with what I call country music and was one who helped get it started in this country. **Bobby R. Knight, see address above.**

• Where can I get the music of the song "That's the Man I'm Looking For"? Roy Acuff sings it, and I think it is as pretty a song as I have ever heard. **Ralph E. Hubble, Rt. 1 Box 85, Victoria, Virginia 23974.**

• Is the RCA Collectors Album *60 Years of Country Music* available any place that I can get it? Would like to have it as I am a great fan of the older records. **Doris Birney, 43555 Rumley Road East, Jewett, Ohio 43986.**

• Anyone know where I can obtain the following albums: David Houston and Barbara Mandrell, *A Perfect Match*; and Barbara Mandrell, *This Time I Almost Made It*. **Mary E. Fichter, Box P, Milnesville, Pennsylvania 18239.**

• Am looking for two Louise Mandrell/R.C. Bannon albums, *Inseparable* and *Love Won't Let Us Go*. Interested in buying records or cassette tapes. If used, please state condition. **Elvin Moore, Jr., RR3 Rd. B 9-531, Leipsic, Ohio 45856.**

• Where can I find an old album by Dolly Parton called *Dolly—Live*, recorded about 1970? Any information would be greatly appreciated. **Carla Sherman, P.O. Box 470, Fairhaven, Massachusetts 02719.**

• I heard a record of John Duffy and Charlie Waller called *Blue Grass Country*. Now I don't ever hear of them. What happened? **Amy Otom, 709 Cohn St., Belzoni, Mississippi 39038.**

Like to Write Letters

• Would like to hear from Dolly Parton fans who are interested in swapping pictures and articles. **Carla Sherman, see address above.**

• I would love to send David Sanford some photos of Ricky Skaggs if I could get an address. Skaggs should be honored to have someone like David care about him so much. Hang in there, David, we are on your side. God bless you. **Deanna Busby, Chicago, Illinois.**

Here's David's address: David Sanford, Apt. #1, 100 Magnolia St., Harrodsburg, Kentucky 40330. David's letter about Ricky appeared in the May/June Newsletter. —Ed.

Nashville's Secret Ingredient

RODNEY CROWELL

His name may not be as familiar as Willie Nelson, Eddie Rabbitt or Larry Gatlin, singers who write their own songs, but Rodney Crowell has written many a country song for many a country singer. Consider "Ain't Living Long Like This," by Waylon Jennings, "Leavin' Louisiana in the Broad Daylight," by The Oak Ridge Boys, "Till I Gain Control Again," recorded by Willie, Waylon, Bobby Bare, Emmylou Harris and Crystal Gayle, "On a Real Good Night," by Gail Davies and "Shame on the Moon," most recently recorded by Bob Seeger & The Silver Bullet Band. These are just a sampling. Over forty of his songs have been performed by other notable artists. As a producer he's sat in the control booth for his wife Rosanne Cash and singers like Bobby Bare, Guy Clark, and Sissy Spacek.

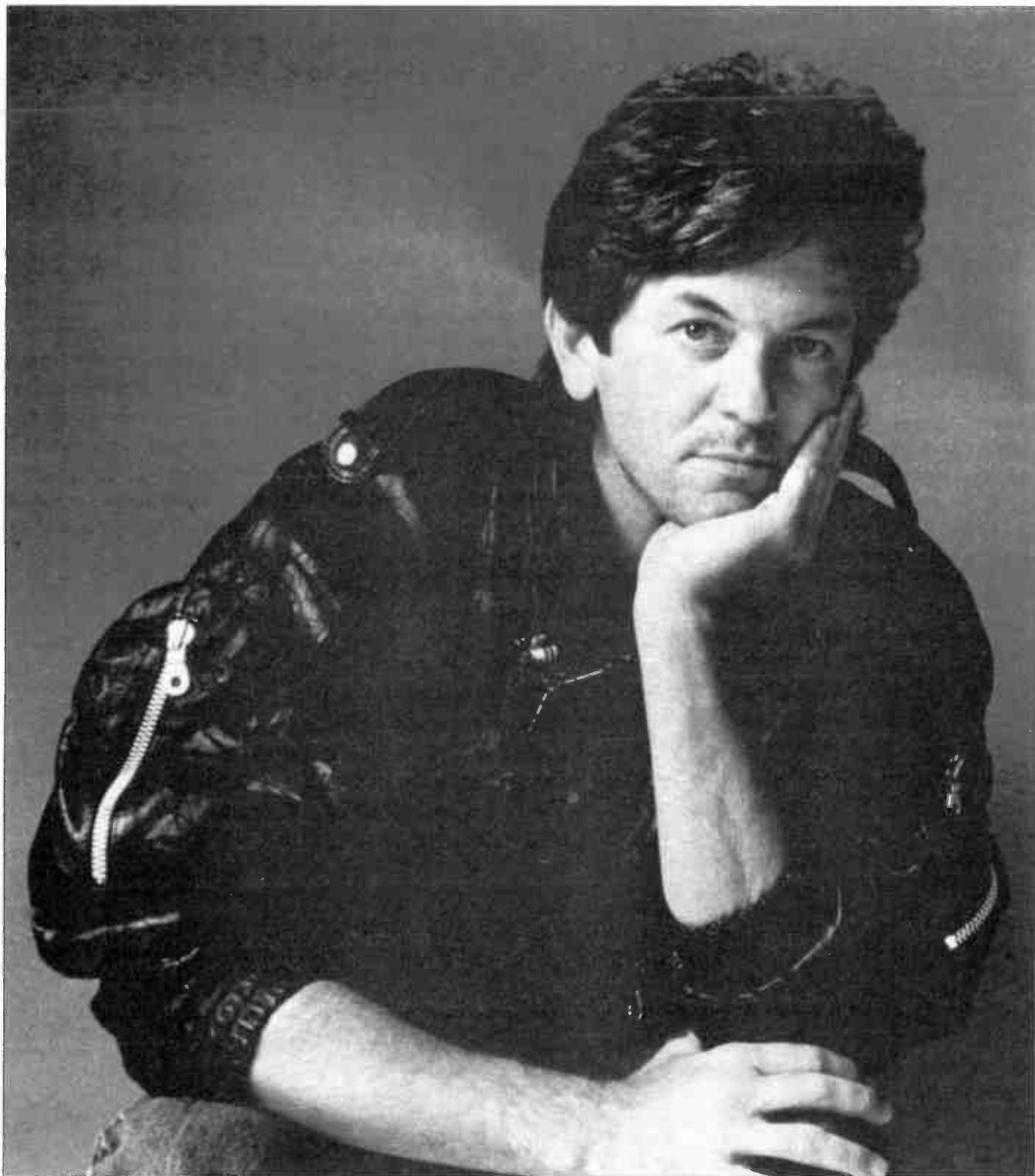
As successful as he's been behind the scenes, Rodney now has his eyes on the road, ready to take over the spotlight with his own band and his own songs.

BY PATRICK CARR

It's happened to me so many times over the past decade that by now it's almost a joke; I hear a particularly smart, original new country song which is obviously destined to be a hit (the singer and the style do not matter), and rather than have somebody tell me, I tell them: "That's a Rodney Crowell song."

The song at issue may or may not in fact be a Rodney Crowell song, but nobody who is familiar with modern country music ever questions the call. They know all about Rodney's highly elastic hit potential and his function as the secret ingredient in good-taste Nashville record making, and they also know that while his touch is always dynamic, it very rarely leaves prints; while they can usually identify a Guy Clark song or a Jack Clement production within the first few bars, just about any hot record (with the exception of recitations about courageous teddy bears, ditties about broken-

ROY NIKIN



hearted paraplegics and the like) could well have Rodney behind it.

Consider, if you will, the diversity of just a few of his successes: "It's Only Rock & Roll," Waylon's amusingly burned-out, highly sardonic comeback hit; "Angel Eyes," the epitome of delicate melancholy in the hands of Emmylou Harris; "I Can't Resist," sung by Rosanne Cash to its fully lush romantic potential; "Ain't Livin' Long Like This," wailed home at full 'billy throttle by Gary Stewart in

honked-up, hot-rodding bad-boy gear. These songs, each of them a gem of its type, have practically nothing in common save a level of craft which is quite extraordinary and consequently a permanent impact on the ear. They are so good and so original, such "instant classics," that you can imagine the interest payed by a highly diverse collection of country singers to news of writing activity on the part of Mr. Crowell; their next number one hit, just right for their

kind of treatment, could spring loose at any time, so while they must of course keep one eye on their own style's stable of regular songwriters, it behooves them to keep the other firmly pointed in Rodney's direction. And if they can sign up for a Rodney Crowell production job on their next album—admittedly a difficult proposition unless, like Johnny Cash and Bobby Bare and Guy Clark and a few others, they are already his friend—then so much the better; the album is likely to

He is tired of being absurdly successful behind the scenes and is hankering after the more direct rewards of performance.

hang a lot tougher than most.

Strangely enough, this level of desirability is a problem of sorts for Rodney Crowell. I say "of sorts" because it's not the kind that can really ruin a person's weekend: basically, the truth is he is tired of being absurdly successful behind the scenes and is hankering after the more direct rewards of performance. Commuting the easy eighteen minutes between his comfortable country home and the downtown Nashville studio, he hears that old wild honky tonk call of the open road.

His response to this problem when it first arose was what one might expect of a person in his unique position; he made plans with no further ado. He really had nothing to lose—what were they going to do? refuse to buy his new hits if he didn't out-draw Alabama at the Municipal Auditorium? repossess his royalties?—so the matter was simple. Now at this point in time his plans (ironically involving a great deal of studio drive time in the cause of making his own album) have been implemented. While this is an unfortunate happening for those top-rank singers denied access to his new material until he has given it his best shot himself, it is pleasant for Rodney. He enjoys scratching his itch, and is finding life in general quite tolerable.

Rodney Crowell is a well endowed fellow, and his resources run deep. The son of a Houston construction worker who played the country music bars on weekends for tips, Rodney did not have a hard time finding his way into music, and once there his considerable wits ensured that he flourished as if to the manor born.

He is a college boy, though not a college graduate—majoring in English literature and political science in the late 1960s was, after all, more a social than an academic pursuit—and the experience did not turn him from his chosen path. He was already writing songs before he went to college (he thinks the talent came from his mother, who expressed it by making up limericks), and shortly thereafter he was writing them for a living. His is not the usual story of years of unrewarded toil and hundreds of slammed doors. Jerry Reed caught one of his songs during Happy Hour at a Nashville lounge shortly after he graduated to Music City, knew a good thing when he heard one, and signed him up as

a writer.

Three years later, another singer with an ear for talent secured the services of young Rodney. That was Emmylou Harris, who hired him as a member of her Hot Band (thus placing herself in close proximity to his writing Muse on a daily basis), and took him away from it all to the Southern California life and the honky tonks of the whole wide world.

Emmylou's Hot Band of the middle 1970s was pretty much the epicenter of where it was at in popular music. Country-rock was very much the trend of the time, and Los Angeles was the home of the trend, and while Emmy's outfit never generated the enormous popular following of a band like the Eagles, its members had something equally satisfying; the Hot Band, as any country-rock musician or dedicated fan of the form could tell you, was the state of the art, the professionals' choice, a collection of picker's pickers.

Ironically but not unusually, the fact that mega-stardom eluded the Hot Band made for more fun. Drawing sufficient but not unmanageable numbers of fans and playing venues where the laws of scale did not render acoustic integrity or spontaneity in performance impossible from the outset, they got to boogie without serious impediment. I caught them one night on Long Island in '76 or so—I remember Rodney and Emmy of course, and I think I remember James Burton, but I'm not too sure about Albert Lee or Ricky Skaggs or any of the other boys—and it really was rather marvelous. The "Too much ain't enough" directive was in force that night, and everyone in the place (including at least some members of the band) was working on that problem as energetically as they knew how, but through four hours of it, Emmy and the boys just knocked it dead. You could have understood if their performance had been within only heavy-industrial tolerances on such a night—maybe only twice as cohesive as Willie Nelson's band when they're really on—but their tightness was within a hair's breadth of the hotshot Bill-Monroe-and-His-Bluegrass-Boys end of the spectrum, and oh, my, did they ever have the ideas to go with it! They were at that level of playing where the instant before the band embarks upon some wonderful twist of the music (that is, in improvised playing, the moment they decide to do it), you know exactly what it's going to be, so that when

it happens it's a marvelously intense little rush—and then they do it again and you're in heaven.

Now, that kind of thing happens most fully when you know the form in which the band is playing as well as you know the way to your bathroom, and such familiarity was certainly true of me and country-rock in 1976 (in fact, if I'd had to take it to the limit at the Hotel California one more time, I'd have had to live in the bathroom). Believe me, then, when I tell you that the music that night on Long Island was so good that for me it was the peak of the whole country-rock deal, all the way from Gram Parsons on down. I never heard better before or since.

Rodney was in the center of the Hot Band as a guitarist, songwriter and *de facto* bandleader, and in those roles his performance was well up to par. Clearly, his touch was dynamic—I don't think the band would have been nearly as interesting without him—and I remember thinking how lucky Emmylou was to have him in her employ. But then, it was such a great night that the next day I felt compelled to ask my music critic self if by any chance the experience had stirred him to see the future of country-rock. It had, he told me, but the future he had seen did not include that particular incarnation of the Hot Band; it was too good to last.

He was right, of course, and Rodney's ascension from that heavenly unit occurred in the fall of 1978. He had decided to make his own albums and be his own star.

The Crowell residence, shared by his wife Rosanne Cash and the couple's three daughters, is an unpretentiously handsome natural-wood affair set back off a highway south of Nashville proper, and from there Rodney leads the kind of civilized life common among saner, more sophisticated middle-level pop personnel everywhere. Rodney chose Nashville as his home over the world's three other great recording centers (New York, Los Angeles, and London, where Rosanne's half-sister Carlene Carter and her husband Nick Lowe pursue a more urban but otherwise uncannily similar version of the writing/singing/producing/child-rearing life) because the size of the city made it an easy place to work while raising children; the Crowell/Cash clan can live in the country, and Daddy's job is just eighteen minutes away.

While he was raised on country and he loves it dearly, much of his music has little to do with country forms.

Rodney did not, then, pick Nashville because it is the home of country music. While he was raised on country and he loves it dearly, much of his music has little to do with country forms and he considers himself more of an international pop musician who lives in country musicland than a country musician with pop potential. Neither is he "country" in personal style. He and Rosanne travel frequently to New York City, for instance, staying in Johnny Cash's apartment overlooking Central Park and enjoying the multi-ethnic madness of New York's streets which so horrifies many of the denizens of deeper Nashville. You won't find Rodney Crowell poking around central Tennessee's Civil War battlefields with a metal detector—a Sunday sport quite common among the hard-core country crowd—in search of lost simplicities; he is much more likely to be reading some moderately classy novel or otherwise finding out something he doesn't already know.

Which, by the way, does not mean that he is a wimp (though it does mean that he is something of a liberal). A nice picture of his place in the scheme of things emerges when he tells the story behind "Ain't Livin' Long Like This," his delinquent classic which begins, "I looked for trouble and I found it, son/Straight down the barrel of a lawman's gun..."

That song, says Rodney, reflects some aspects of his teenage years in Houston ("We used to do stuff, get in trouble," he remembers, noting that he was once privileged to find out exactly what the business end of a loaded Colt Python looks like), and it represents a hot-rod style close to his heart. Such is life and the influence of accumulated years, however, that while he was writing the song some years later on a Hermosa Beach, California park bench, he was arrested for a backlog of fifteen unpaid dog-leash violation tickets and taken off to jail. His first wife (not Rosanne) bailed him out, of course, and he went back to writing the song with a whole array of criminal imagery right up front where it needed to be. "I mean, Jesus, isn't that ridiculous?" he asks. "Jailed for leash violations? It was embarrassing—handy, though."

All that is behind him now, and Rodney today is a mild-mannered sort of fellow, casually elegant and well-informed and secure with his position and his Muse. Writing, he says, still comes easy and he's

doing what he wants to do. While his first three albums were self-produced and in his opinion lacking in commercial oompah—and they did indeed end their shelf lives either as items in the collections of the discerning few or Cadillac-



Rodney and daughter Chelsea

class demos of his songs through which well-established singers could conveniently browse to their profit—his new one is a concentrated, carefully conceived and finely tuned speedster of an album, classily built for a combination of maximum acceleration off the line and depth in the long haul.

"I always just lived with the mistakes I made on my records," says Rodney, "but not this time." By enlisting the services of producer David Molloy, he freed himself to concentrate on writing and performance, and he thinks that this one crucial change has made all the difference. I agree with him: the new record is as great and as diverse as you might expect in terms of its material, but its late-70s-progressive-rock-Eagles-to-the-melodic-max production (in some ways a throwback in this age of all-highs-and-lows-and-contrasts sound mixing) gives it the extra power of a dramatic edge which simply wasn't there before. This effect

comes through most clearly on the album's most electric number, "King Richard." Rodney says that in this song, a celebration of stock car racing demigod Richard Petty, he was trying for "a real folk song about a real modern-day hero with a real modern-day high-tech sound." Well, he and Molloy made it: the piece is a wonderfully loud, rich, revved-up romance with the electric guitar and the drama of risk, speed and competition. The lyrics would have made Marty Robbins drool (the whole number, in fact, is highly suggestive of an impossible but ultra-funky collaboration between Marty with more than his share of adrenaline going and Link Wray with his guitar plugged into a full array of modern techno-junk), and it would play through the P.A. system at Daytona just perfectly, distortion and all.

Really, this song is a monster. Rodney is into stock car racing to a fairly serious degree, and he has nailed it with a combination of knowledge and spirit which just knocks you on your bootie. There will, of course, be a video to accompany the single (Rodney and Rosanne are as involved in video as you would expect an international pop couple to be), and that should be a lot of fun.

Rodney has put a significant amount of effort into his new album, even going back into the studio, thus delaying its release, rather than issue it with two tracks which didn't fully satisfy him—and of course he is hoping for a significant payoff. He has given up producing other people's records, too, for the time being, even handing the production of Rosanne's new album over to David Molloy, and he stands with voice in tune and band on notice, ready to go out there and boogie. While he knows that writing is his strongest suit, he also knows that there are other fields in which a man should dally to achieve a full life. "I keep thinking back to people like Chuck Berry," he says. "They got their whole thing together on the bandstand. A steady diet of that just *has* to be good for you...performing is *always* a joy."

There is no reason except arbitrary fate why Rodney should not get to do exactly what he wants—at the very least he sees himself and a band much like his and Rosanne's Cherry Bombs of yore trucking out frequently to Memphis and Atlanta and (a radical notion, this!) even Nashville itself—and that's a pleasing thought. Rodney is not worried. ■

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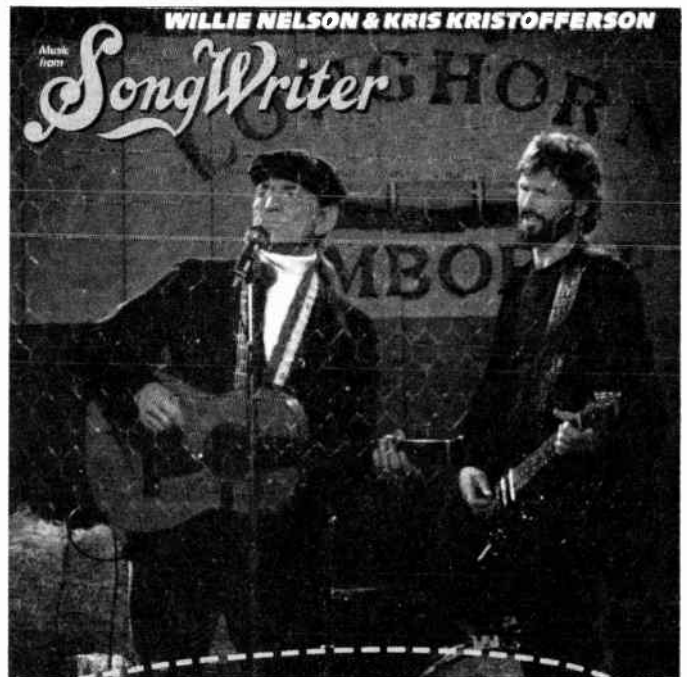
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World Radio History

Rodeo Girl

Reba McEntire

From the backseat of her parents' car following the rodeo circuit to the front lines of today's country music, Reba McEntire has always been in charge—a straightforward lady who knows her own style and speaks her own mind.

by Michael Bane

Here is Reba McEntire, all freckles and curls in a pink sundress, looking exactly like the cheerleader who wouldn't go out with you in high school, talking about the things she wouldn't do.

"Later on down the line," she says, her hands crossed primly in her lap, "the record people took me to Chicago, where Mercury's headquarters were. They told me I needed to change my hair, get somebody to help me with my makeup, move to Nashville..."

She pauses for a moment, glances back at her husband Charlie Battles, a three-time World Champion steer wrestler who, stretched out on the bed of a Howard Johnson's in Jacksonville, Florida, looks more like an elemental force than a mere mortal.

"I said no, of course," she continues. "I told them that if Willie and Waylon had to leave Nashville to make it, why should I move there?"

Besides, she adds, the people who knew her didn't think Reba McEntire needed to be "fixed."

"They knew that I was going to be what I was, and that if I wanted to improve, it would be with time—not an overnight changeover," she says. Charlie gives a small nod of agreement. Reba takes a deep breath and keeps going... "Because I'm just an old kid from the sticks, and that's the way I am today—a kid from the sticks. And I don't think I need to change that."

So *there*. No one would ever say Kid-From-the-Sticks Reba McEntire Battles is short on either opinions or the spunk to deliver them. The sticks, in this case, is Stringtown, Oklahoma, about as far from glittery Nashville—spiritually—as you can get and still be on the same planet. But Stringtown, Oklahoma was only home base, because the real world she



grew up knowing was the rodeo.

"Grandpap—Daddy's daddy—was the 1934 world champion steer roper. My daddy, Clark, was world champion steer roper in 1957, 1958 and 1961. My brother, my sister and myself, we all rodeoed. My little sister never did, but she married a cowboy, too. He's still competing."

With the beginning of each rodeo season, Clark McEntire would load the family up and hit the road, from rodeo to rodeo, across Oklahoma and Texas, to Colorado and north, to the high country of Montana and Wyoming. When there was money, times were good; when there wasn't, the McEntire family got by.

"I didn't know anything else," Reba McEntire says. "I thought everybody did it. It was Daddy rodeoing, Grandpap rodeoing and us four kids taking out with Momma and Daddy in the car, pulling

horses behind us. It was four kids in the back seat wrestling and fighting and staying in hotels and getting five hamburgers for a dollar."

Even rodeos were different then, lasting a week or more in one place. In fact, one year the rodeo did 50 performances in New York City's Madison Square Garden.

"You could rope, you could get three calves a day," she says, remembering. "Daddy had a chance to make some money then."

Unlike some of the big-dollar rodeos today, where rodeo stars endorse their own line of designer wear, prize money wasn't astronomical. "The year Daddy won the world championship, I think his total earnings were around \$3000 from rodeos."

But every cent Clark McEntire won, he put into land. Once he even won a car calf roping and promptly traded it for some acreage. He also encouraged his children to take up anything, *anything* but rodeoing.

"He wanted more out of life for us," she says, "like maybe banking or law, or even driving some old bus! So when we took to singing, that tickled him to death."

In fact, Reba McEntire's singing career began in the back seat of her parents' car, making its dusty way from rodeo to rodeo. Four kids can get more than a little bored on long trips, and to pass time Reba's mother got all the kids to sing.

"Please Mr. Custer, I Don't Want to Go,' 'Wake Up, Little Susie,' 'Walk Right Back to Me This Minute,' religious songs like 'How Great Thou Art,'" says Reba. "Those are the ones I remember most."

And in the rough and tumble world of the rodeo, singing was a way to get noticed, to rise above the crowd.

"I'm the third kid out of four," Reba



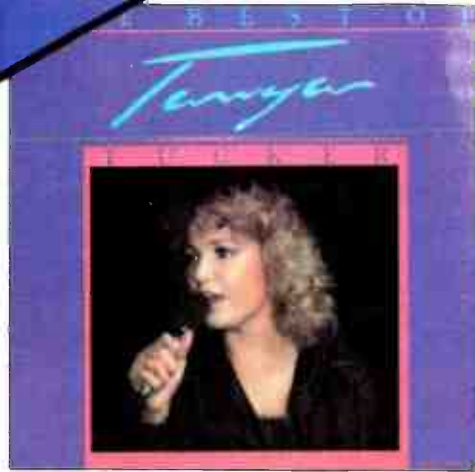
**Reba with husband Charlie Battles
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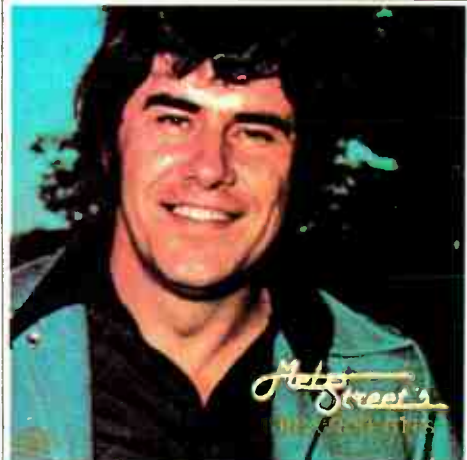
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**TOM JONES
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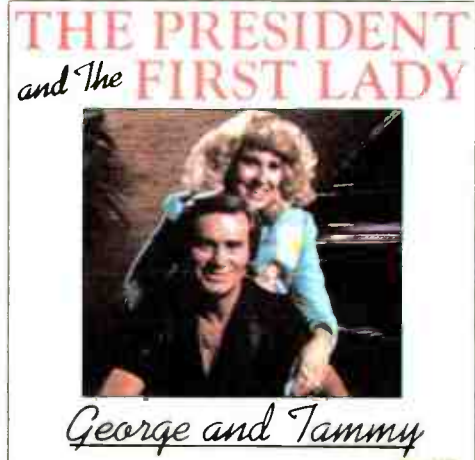
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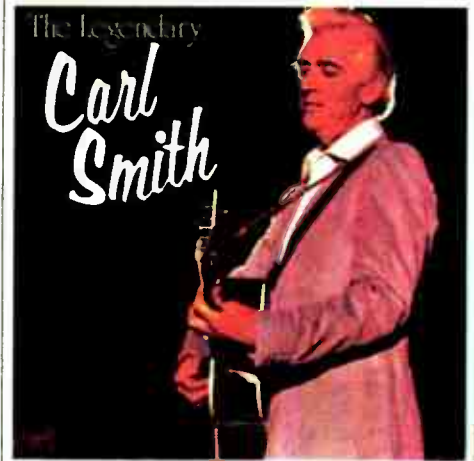
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The Legendary
Carl Smith

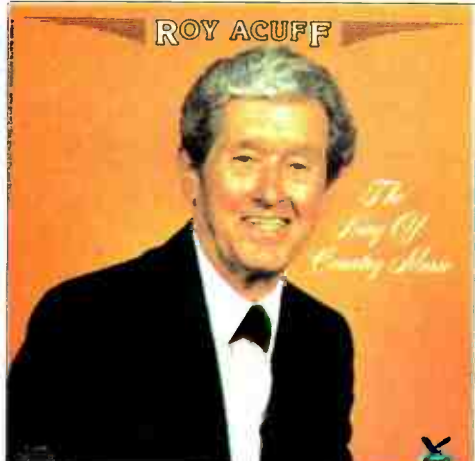
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ROY ACUFF

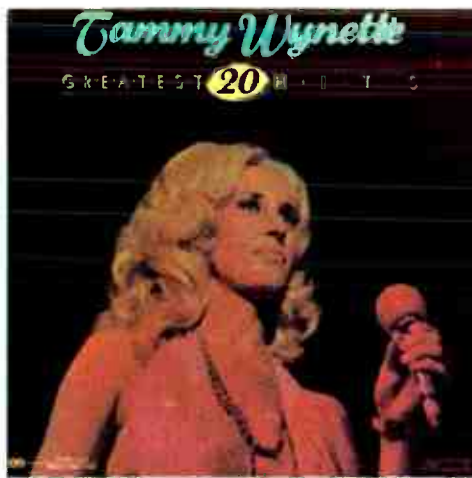
ROY ACUFF

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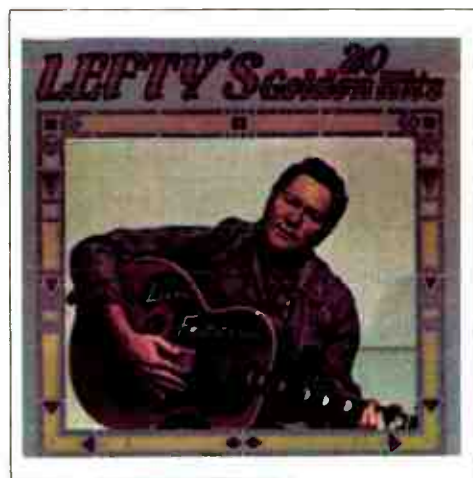
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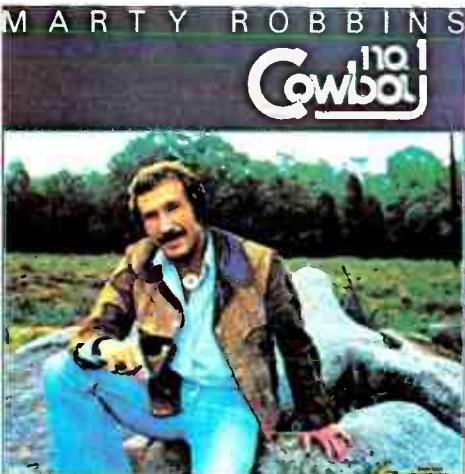
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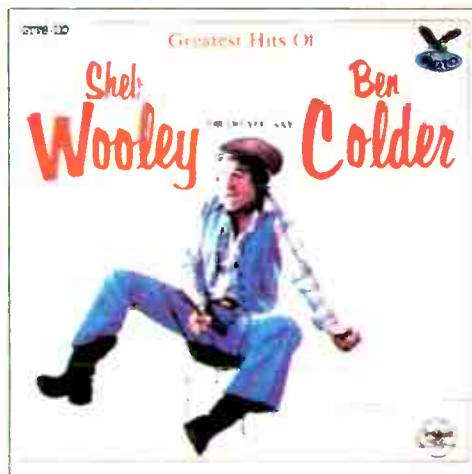
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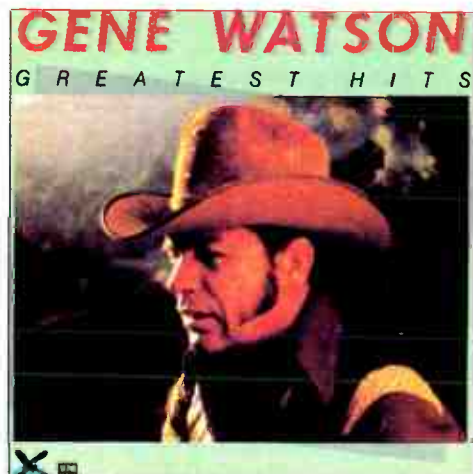
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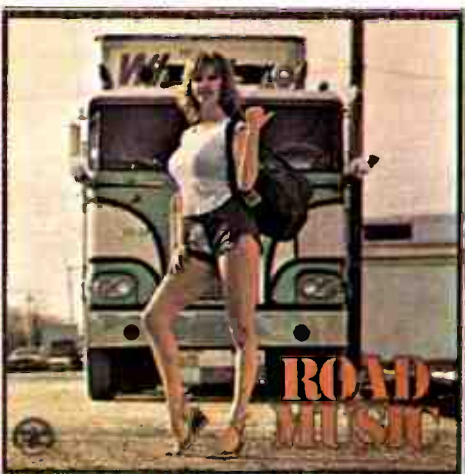
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says, “so that’s where I got the attention. When friends of Momma and Daddy would come over and play dominoes or something, me and Pake would get in, and they’d get Pake to sing a song, and I’d do my best to beat Pake out for attention by singing, too. I used singing in a lot more ways than just making money. I like attention.”

Reba McEntire beams. Charlie Battles just grunts, a sound suspiciously like a bull.

Three of the four kids—brother Pake, Susie and Reba—went on to sing in school, joining, in fact, the local high school’s equivalent of a marching band, a country and western group.

“All three of us were in that,” she remembers. “Pake sang lead, Susie and me sang harmony.”

In addition to playing school functions, the band also worked the local clubs and dance halls—“They didn’t say we *couldn’t* go out and make money”—playing from nine in the evening to one in the morning for the princely sum of \$9 each. If folks were willing to pass the hat, the band would stay until 3 A.M. closing time.

“Momma used to take us to every one,” she remembers. “Then we’d crawl in the back seat and just sleep all the way home. Our feet were killing us; our throats were hurting; our eyes were burning from the smoke in those little clubs... we were just little kids.”

They played everything from Dolly Parton to Creedence Clearwater Revival, and traces show up in Reba McEntire’s music today. Eventually, Red Steagall heard her perform and invited her back to Nashville to record a couple of tracks, which eventually got her signed with Mercury Records.

What Reba McEntire brought with her to Nashville from Stringtown, Oklahoma, was a powerful, individualistic voice, a voice that defied Music City’s almost overwhelming urge for homogenization. Just as Reba McEntire refused to be restyled, reshaped, reclothed and refitted for racing, she also refused to bend in her musical style. Her voice, reminiscent of Brenda Lee with just a hint of Loretta Lynn, was at home with waltzes and upbeat dance tunes or just plain cheatin’ songs. She wasn’t willing to throw it all over for crossover.

The urge for a pop crossover—the totally justifiable urge to make buckets of money—sometimes makes it hard to distinguish one new female vocalist from another. But Reba McEntire stayed true to Oklahoma, and with songs like “There Ain’t No Future In This” and “Why Do We Want (What We Know We Can’t Have),” people began taking notice.

“Well, that’s where the money is, in crossover,” Reba says. “But I kinda figured, you’re talking to me, you know I’m country. I got country roots, country

“I got country roots, country background. I live in the country and I don’t particularly want to go rock and roll.”



background; I live in the country and I don’t particularly want to go rock and roll... I just think it would be better to go country. There’s not going to be many people left, especially female singers, for the country audience.”

There is, she adds, a major problem in finding good country songs nowadays. Nobody seems to be writing them.

“Yeah, and we’ve been lookin’ and hollerin’ and screamin’ and beggin’ for them, too,” she says. Charlie shakes his head yes. I would, personally, not refuse this man a country song if he asked for it.

And just what is a good country song? No problem there:

“It’s simple. It’s something that would make you say, ‘Boy, I wish I’d thought of that!’ A real good melody; something that you’d want to grab somebody and start dancing to. And something you figure everybody in the whole world has gone through. Something they can relate to. Either a waltz or a swing, 4/4 or 2/4 time. And, oh yeah, it’s got to have harmony.”

Given, in fact, the present state of country music, Reba’s probably got an advantage by staying country.

“It wouldn’t hurt my feelings to be another Loretta Lynn or Tammy Wynette or Conway Twitty or Statler Brothers,” she says, laughing. “Man, I won’t get filthy rich quick, but maybe we’ll stick around longer.”

The good thing, says Reba McEntire, is that the music business is so much more secure than rodeoing. I am momentarily shocked—the music business is called many a thing, but “secure” is

never one of them.

With rodeoing, she says, every time the car pulled away from the house, it was a gamble. Maybe you’d come home with money in your pocket, or maybe you’d have to borrow gas money to make it back to Oklahoma. Now, she says, when she leaves home, she knows she’s probably going to get paid.

“Besides,” she adds, “I was never very good at rodeoing. I ran barrels—barrel raced, and to tell the truth I was terrible at it. I never even had a horse of my own—I always rode rejects, Pake’s calf-roping horse or Daddy’s steer-roping horse... I made more selling horses I worked with than by winning.”

Charlie Battles still rodeos a little, but most of his time is spent managing both Reba’s business affairs and their 250-acre ranch in Stringtown. Did you, I ask, know what you were getting into when you married Reba?

“No,” Charlie says, rather emphatically. “Not really.”

“Oh, you knew!” she says. “You knew I was going to be a country singer, you just didn’t know I was going to get this far. Because the night we got married—it was Monday night, 6 P.M.—the next morning we were promoting the first single, ‘I Don’t Want To Be a One Night Stand.’ We spent our honeymoon promoting that record in Houston.”

Charlie Battles looks pained, but it’s anguish tinted with an undeniable fondness.

“Oh yeah,” he says. “We knew she was going to sing. We just didn’t know how far she’d get.”

Book Reviews

George Jones, Willie Nelson, Grandpa Jones—a pre-Christmas review of these biographies and other new country music books.

by Rich Kienzle

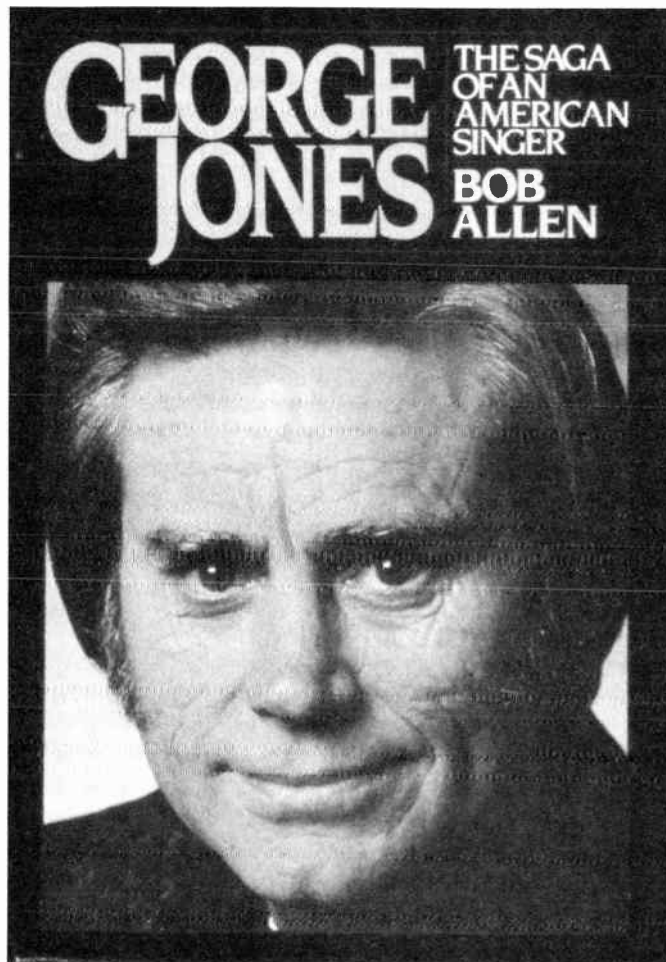
Seven new country music books have hit the marketplace in the past few months. Three are by *Country Music* editors: Bob Allen, Michael Bane and John Morthland. And all things considered, most are truly excellent. Note that I said *most*, not "all."

Two are George Jones biographies, and both appeared in the stores within months of each other. But the difference between Dolly Carlisle's *Ragged But Right* (Contemporary) and Bob Allen's *George Jones: The Saga of an American Singer* (Doubleday) is like night and day.

Carlisle researched her subject thoroughly, yet the end results of her labors read more like so many pasted together gossip columns: long on flash, short on substantive insight. Written in a breezy *People/US Magazine* style, it reveals an author who understands little about country music in general (a problem with far too many celebrity writers covering Nashville today) and Jones' music in particular.

It's hard to doubt her sympathy as she discusses George's problems, which began early in life with an alcoholic father. But she ignores other aggravating factors, such as his struggle to maintain his country purity in a Nashville that was becoming increasingly phony in the Seventies, emphasizing broad appeal and manufactured image over honest, simple music. For a plain East Texas kid who just wanted to sing raw country songs, this was no help. But to discuss it would tramp on a number of Music Row toes, which she seems reluctant to do.

Carlisle also appears reluctant to deal directly with George as a musician. Most of



the substantive comments on country music and George's own style come from other people. I honestly wonder just how much of the 30-year George Jones recorded legacy she really listened to. The end result is a simplistic, thoroughly unsatisfying book far more ragged than right.

By contrast, Bob Allen's book, despite the controversy it surely will generate, is actually one of the strongest, most moving and vivid books ever written on a living country singer, excluding autobiographies like *Coal Miner's*

Daughter and Hank Jr.'s *Living Proof*. Allen has, for one thing, done his homework, evidenced by the wealth of detail.

The tales of his early life, his East Texas lineage, his difficult childhood and his early career are skillfully combined to drive home the many contradictory facets of Jones' highly complex personality, such as his totally hedonistic lifestyle contrasted with his insistence on complete silence from his listeners when singing sacred material—even for his own family. A man who

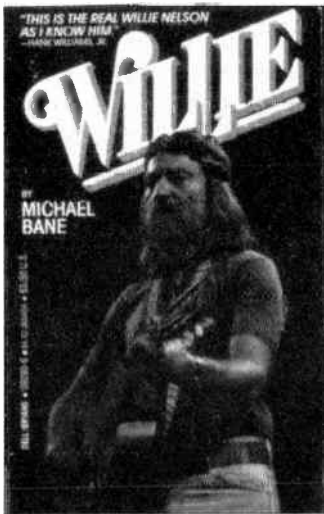
freely gives away huge sums of cash out of generosity, then savagely destroys every stick of expensive furniture in his home clearly has demons pulling him many ways. Allen's research reflects this, for he really has gotten *inside* Jones' torment.

Still, this doesn't preclude some outrageously funny anecdotes, such as the Alexandria, Virginia show recalled by promoter Carleton Haney, who remembers a thoroughly besotted George (fueled by two fifths of whiskey) who "...in front of seven thousand people, ... just fell right off the stage, on top of his *gih*-tar, and just smashed plumb hell out of it." Haney dusted him off, sent him back on, and remembered with considerable pride that Jones "ended up playin' one of the best damn shows he's ever done in his life."

The book documents the near-tragic turn in Jones' life as well, as the failed marriages, worsening alcoholism, drug abuse and missed shows sent George's career and personal life reeling despite his many musical triumphs. His marriage to Tammy Wynette had storybook promise, but both had far too many personal problems for it to ever succeed. In the final few chapters, Allen's research captures Jones spinning wildly out of control in some truly frightening incidents that show just how close he was to preserving the Hank Williams legend before straightening up a couple of years ago.

There are some weak spots in the text. Allen doesn't cover Jones' final rehabilitation in any sort of detail (though nobody will probably ever know what really happened during that period). Occasionally he

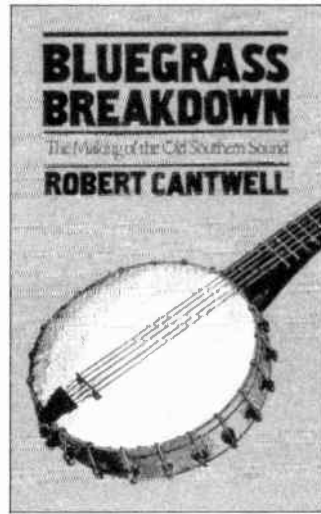
Book Reviews



gets carried away with flashy metaphors, but only occasionally. In the end, *George Jones will stand with Nick Tosches' Hellfire: The Jerry Lee Lewis Story*, which clearly influenced Bob's approach, as a classic.

Michael Bane has taken on a task that few journalists (one, to be exact) have attempted: a substantive biography of Willie Nelson. Lola Scobey tried and blew it badly with her celebrity journalism approach. Bane's authority is far greater. Having covered Willie and the boys for this magazine since 1974, having authored *The Outlaws*, the first and still definitive work on that decade-old phenomena (does it really seem like a decade??), he has a considerable edge in the insight department.

Willie (Dell) contains little in the way of surprises or startling revelations. However, it is a highly readable, entertaining work filled with some interesting Bane revelations on Willie's struggles, successes and musical roots. It is here that Bane excels, as he discusses the set of circumstances that made it possible for Willie to rise to the top after nearly two decades of frustration. He does make a few errors, such as stating the fire that destroyed Willie's home and spurred his move to Texas occurred in '69 (it was 1970), but aside from that, this is probably the best book that



will be written on Willie in his lifetime.

Writing a guide to the best country recordings requires real woodshedding. Such a volume must be both selective and comprehensive, exploring enough styles and substyles (rockabilly, bluegrass, honky-tonk, Cajun western swing) to at least sample everything. That means it's not easy. But John Morthland's *The Best of Country Music* (Doubleday/Dolphin) succeeds admirably.

Regular Morthland readers know his opinionated nature. You will not find a historian's neutrality in his work, nor the feigned reverence of the average fan. Morthland has been around too long to fall into those traps. Instead you get his views of everyone from the Carolina Tar Heels, the 1920s stringband, to Joe Ely, and he doesn't honor every note an artist has ever played or sung. About *The Best of Hank Locklin*, for example, he says, "He's so sentimental you might not be able to take him for long, but this...album is the best place to start (and for most, to finish)." Some fans don't go in for this kind of comment (read *Country Music's Letters* section after everyone's favorite gets a bad review). Still, this is the sort of writing that all too many so-called critics will never dare to try, lest they offend someone. Morthland does it, and informs in the process.

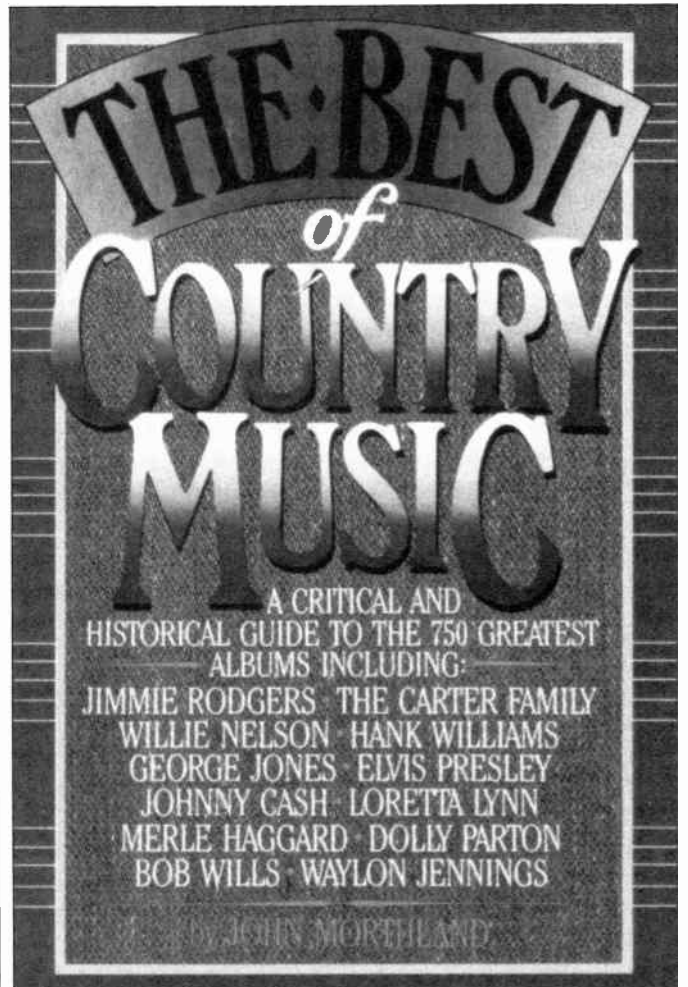
The book is highly informative, with a stunning degree of accuracy considering its 436 pages. I read it in manuscript form and was amazed and delighted at the absence of factual errors. The worst I found was his mention of Barbara Mandrell's "uncle," Joe Maphis (it's a term of endearment, John, not a blood relationship), and that's an impressive track record. I doubt anyone will be writing anything like it anytime soon, and it's fun to compare your opinions with his. You won't agree with him all the time (I didn't), but you'll learn something in the process.

Meanwhile, while everyone waits for Neil Rosenberg's definitive history of bluegrass, due sometime in the next year or so from the University of Illinois Press, the same organization has given us Robert

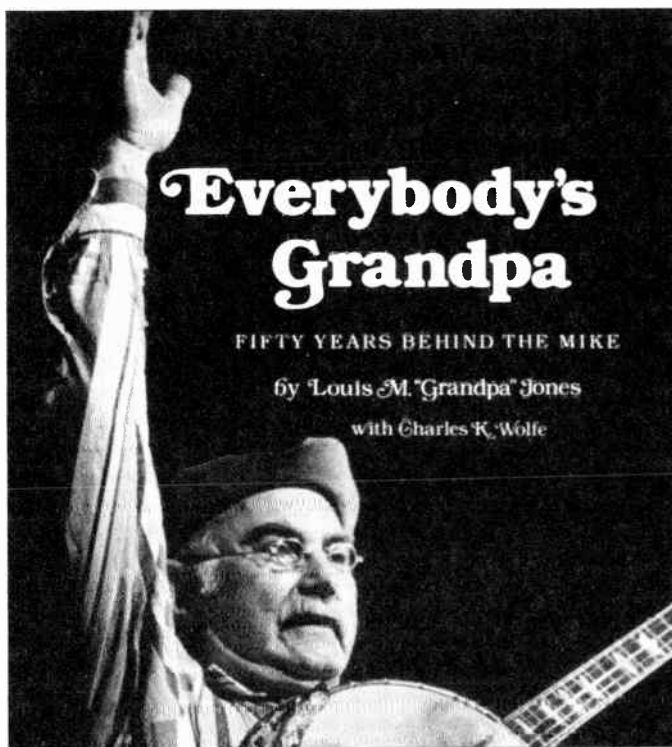
Cantwell's *Bluegrass Breakdown*.

Intellectuals and particularly academics (of which Cantwell is one) love writing books like this. The sad thing is that more often than not they turn out to be so self-indulgent and short on facts that they wind up more boring than enlightening. Cantwell may enjoy making lofty comparisons, but they wind up reading more like pretentious pop sociology than substantive, authoritative musicological analysis. Rock writers in the past have fallen into this trap, and I hate to see the same thing happening with any popular music form. We desperately need substantial historical works on various country music subjects, not more overblown creations like this.

If autobiographies of country artists have one serious



Book Reviews



flaw, it comes in the selection of a co-author. A good deal of misinformation winds up in such books due to the fact the artists are trying to reconstruct decades-old events, and some co-authors aren't informed enough about country music history to help. Even the best works are usually afflicted. One artist who got lucky was Grandpa Jones. *Everybody's Grandpa* (University of Tennessee Press) has no raw scandal or shocking revelations about Grandpa's past. Indeed by the standards of most contemporary artists (and many older ones) his life is scandal-free. He did get a divorce from his first wife.

But the book is a gem for a number of reasons. First, Grandpa himself made every effort to get the facts straight. Secondly, he has enough amusing and fascinating anecdotes to hold your interest, about the days when touring meant performers and instruments crammed into a large automobile, long before custom buses and tractor trailers of sound equipment. Thirdly, his collaborator was Charles Wolfe, whose skill as a re-

searcher enhanced Grandpa's own dedication. The book is exhaustively researched; Wolfe checked facts; the discography at the end is nearly complete (Grandpa even went back and listened to many of his early records to confirm who backed him up), making this a valuable reference work as well.

Grandpa seems eager to put some myths to rest, such as the one that Uncle Dave Macon was the primary influence on him. They sounded similar, but Grandpa's style was defined long before he joined the Opry and met Uncle Dave in the late Forties. His recollections of his friend Stringbean are wistful yet spiced with humor, and he's far more honest about *Hee Haw* than you might expect, as well as his involvement with the ill-fated Association of Country Entertainers (ACE) in the Seventies. Record buffs will love the descriptions of his early King recording sessions, and *Hee Haw* regulars will find that there's more to Grandpa than that "what's for supper?" business.

For record collectors of pre-

World War II country music, the John Edwards Memorial Foundation has just published *Country Music Recorded Prior to 1943: A Discography of LP Reissues* compiled by Willie Smyth (JEMF Special Series No. 14). *Buried Treasures* regulars whose musical preferences extend to this era will find this an excellent compendium of both available and out-of-print reissues. Smyth's introductory history of early country album reissues is fascinating. I learned a lot from it. The book is helped by cross-indexes of both songs and artists with each album. Granted, this is a work with limited appeal, but the academically-oriented JEMF knows their audience. You probably won't see a similar set for postwar country (it would be the size of the Encyclopedia Britannica); however, this one is an invaluable asset, especially for those who like the pre-war country and want to know what's available.

Finally, did you know that Bobby Darin's 1958 rock and roll hit "Splish Splash" was in the country top-twenty in July of that year? Did you know that Leona Williams' second appearance on the country charts came in 1971 with the

utterly forgettable "Country Girl with Hot Pants On" (I imagine Leona would probably like to forget it as well)? Did you realize that Barbara Mandrell's earliest hits were recordings of rhythm and blues hits? No? Well, if you had Joel Whitburn's highly informative listings of the top country hits, you would.

Whitburn bases his listings on *Billboard Magazine's* country charts using a system too complicated to explain here. He nails down the top records of any given year (1949 to the present) and calculates the number of hits every artist has had. The master volume, *Top Country and Western Records: 1949-1971* (Record Research) covers all of those years, and each subsequent year is covered by a comprehensive supplement. Though radio stations are the primary market for these books, the interesting little tidbits I mentioned earlier make them interesting reading for fans as well. Everything is cross-indexed, and you are guaranteed to win any arguments on the subject if you are armed with these books. The complete Whitburn series isn't cheap, but you always find something interesting. ■

How to Order These Books

Prices for the above books are as follows: *Ragged But Right* by Dolly Carlisle (Contemporary) \$14.95; *George Jones: The Saga of an American Singer* by Bob Allen (Doubleday) \$15.95; *Willie* by Michael Bane (Dell) \$3.50; *The Best of Country Music* by John Morthland (Doubleday/Dolphin) \$14.95; *Bluegrass Breakdown* by Robert Cantwell (University of Illinois Press) \$19.95; *Everybody's Grandpa* by Grandpa Jones with Charles Wolfe (University of Tennessee Press) \$14.95; *Country Music Recorded Prior to 1943: A Discography of LP Reissues* by Willie Smyth (JEMF Special Series No. 14) \$7.95; *Top Country & Western Records 1949-1971* by Joel Whitburn (Record Research) with yearly supplements for each year 1972 to 1982. These are \$125 if bought separately, but if you buy the complete set the special price for *Country Music* readers is \$85. To order: send your check to Country Music Library, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one book, \$.95 for each additional book.

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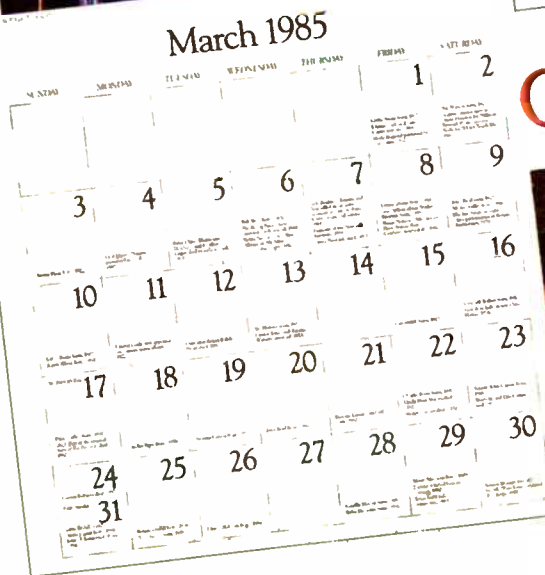
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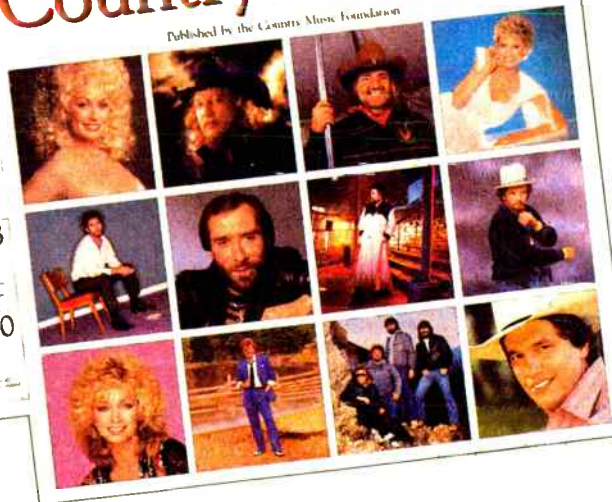
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- **BILLY CRASH CRADDOCK** *Greatest Hits*, Volume One MCA 662 (\$3). Knock Three Times; Dream Lover; Don't Be Angry; Slippin' And Slidin'; 'Til the Water Stops Runnin'; Sweet Magnolia Blossom; You Better Move On; Afraid I'll Want to Love Her One More Time; I'm Gonna Knock on Your Door; Ain't Nothin' Shakin'.
- **RAY PRICE** *Somewhere in Texas* Dimension 5006 (\$3). Somewhere in Texas; Something to Forget You By; Easy Come Easy Go; This Ain't Just Another Road Day; Wait Till Those Bridges Are Gone; The Last Thing She Said; Angel in My Heart (Devil On My Mind); Gettin' Down; Gettin' High; Your Just Another Beer Drinking Song; When Will Forgetting Begin.
- **WAYLON JENNINGS** *Dreaming My Dreams* RCA 4072 (\$3). Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way; Waymore's Blues; I Recall a Gypsy Woman; High Time; You Quit Your Low Down Ways; I've Been a Long Time Leaving (But I'll Be Here When the Time Gone); Let's All Help the Country (Sing the Blues); The Door is Always Open; Let's Turn Back the Years; She's Looking Good; Dreaming My Dreams with You; Bob Wills is Still the King.
- **FREDDY FENDER** *If You Don't Love Me* Dot 2090 (\$3). We'll Take Our Last Walk Tonight; Louisiana Woman; How Are Things With You; If You're Looking for a Fool; If That's the Way You Want It (That's the Way It's Gonna Be); If You Don't Love Me (Why Don't You Just Leave Me Alone); Think About Me; I Don't Want To Be Lonely; Faking the Feeling; Love Rules the Heart; Your Loving Couldn't Take the Walking Out of My Shoes; I Don't Dream About You Anymore.
- **SLIM WHITMAN** *The Very Best* UA 1005 (\$6). Indian Love Call; North Wind; Secret Love; Rose-Marie; Cattle Call; More Than

Yesterday; The Twelfth of Never; Guess Who; Something Beautiful to Remember; It's a Sin to Tell a Lie.

- **KITTY WELLS & RED FOLEY** *Golden Favorites* MCA 83 (\$4). Together: One By One; As Long As I Live; Make Believe; You and Me; I'm a Stranger In My Home; No One But You; Red Foley: Just Call Me Lonesome; Candy Kisses; I'm Throwing Rice (At the Girl I Love); Kitty Wells: A Wedding Ring Ago; Memory of Love; I'm Counting on You.
- **PATSY CLINE** *Let The Teardrops Fall* Accord 7153 (\$4). I Love You Honey; Never No More; Walking After Midnight; I Don't Wanna; Let the Teardrops Fall; I've Loved and Lost Again; Fingerprints; I Can't Forget; Just Out of Reach; Hungry for Love.
- **HANK THOMPSON** *Brand New Hank* ABC 1095 (\$3). I'm Just Gettin' By; Dance With Me Molly; Signs of Love; Through the Bottom of the Glass; Have A Good Time; I Hear the South Callin' Me; Point of No Return; Tony's Tank-Up, Drive-In Cafe; That Want You, Need You, Got to Have You Feelin'; World's Greatest Feelin'.

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- **DOLLY PARTON** *The Best of Dolly Parton* RCA 4077 (\$4). Muldner Blues; Down From Dover; My Tennessee Ridge Mountain Boy; In the Good Old Days; Gypsy, Joe and Me; In the Ghetto; 'Cause I'm a Woman; Daddy Come and Get Me; How Great Thou Art; Just the Way I Am.
- **BILL MONROE** *Greatest Hits* MCA 17 (\$3). Molly and Tenbrooks; In the Pines; New Mule Skinner Blues; Uncle Pen; Cheyenne; Footprints in the Snow; Y'all Come; Gotta Travel On; Danny Boy; Roanoke; Four Walls.
- **WEBB PIERCE** *Greatest Hits* Koala 14721 (\$3). Wondering; Why Baby Why; Back Street Affair; I Ain't Never; More and More; Slowly; Memory No. 1; There Stands the Glass; I'm Walking the Dog; Don't Do It Darling.
- **PATSY CLINE** *Country Great!* MCA 736 (\$4). That Wonderful Someone; Hungry For Love; Too Many Secrets; Don't Ever Leave Me Again; Ain't No Wheels on This Ship; I Can't Forget; I Don't Wanna; Three Cigarettes; Fingerprints; Then You'll Know.
- **ERNEST TUBB** *Greatest Hits Vol. 2* MCA 24 (\$4). Tomorrow Never Comes; Warm Red Wine; Little Ole Band Of Gold; Filipino Baby; Thoughts of a Fool; Missing In Action; Fortunes In Memories; Seaman's Blues; Pass the Booze; Hey La La; Answer the Phone.
- **MEL TILLIS** *Greatest Hits* MCA 66 (\$3). Something Special; Life Turned Her That

Way; Destroyed By Man; Goodbye Wheeling; Stateside; Normally (Norma Love Me); All Right (I'll Sign the Papers); Ruby (Don't Take Your Love to Town); At the Sight of You; I Haven't Seen Mary in Years; All the Time.

- **JACK GREENE** *Greatest Hits* MCA 291 (\$4). Don't You Ever Get Tired (Of Hurting Me); There Goes My Everything; All the Time; Wanting You but Never Having You; What Locks the Door; You Are My Treasure; Love Takes Care of Me; Until My Dreams Come True; Statue of a Fool; Back in the Arms of Love; Lord Is That Me.
- **WEBB PIERCE** *Greatest Hits* MCA 120 (\$4). In the Jailhouse Now; Slowly; I Ain't Never; Wondering; There Stands the Glass; If the Back Door Could Talk; Tupelo County Jail; I Don't Care; Alla My Love; Don't Do It, Darlin'; Missing You.
- **DONNA FARGO** *The Best Of Donna Fargo* MCA 37108 (\$5). Don't Be Angry; The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A.; You Can't Be a Beacon (If Your Light Don't Shine); Funny Face; How Close You Came (To Being Gone); It Do Feel Good; A Song I Can Sing; Superman; You Were Always There; Little Girl Gone; U.S. of A.
- **THE EVERLY BROTHERS** *20 Greatest Hits* 2-LP Set Barnaby 66004 (\$7). Bye Bye Love; That Silver-haired Daddy Mine; Poor Jenny; Maybe Tomorrow; Little Girl of Mine; Claudette; Oh, Pearlyanna; A Feeling; Be-Bop-A-Lula; Devoted to You; (Til) I Kissed You; Wake Up, Susie; I Wonder If I Care As Much; Rip It Up; When Will I Be Loved; All I Have To Do Is Dream; Bird Dog; Take A Message to Mary; Like Strangers; Problems; Let It Be Me.



- **WAYLON JENNINGS** *Crying and Waylon* Koala KOA 14280 (\$3). Crying; Sally Was a Good Old Girl; Burning Memories; Big Mamou; Don't Think Twice; Dream Baby; It's So Easy; Love's Gonna Live Here; Abilene; White Lightning.
- **WAYLON JENNINGS** *Don't Think Twice It's Alright* MCA MFP 50517 (\$3). Sally Was a Good Old Girl; Big Mamou; Burning Memories; Jole Blon; Crying; Money; It's So Easy; White Lightning; Love's Gonna Live Here; Abilene; Dream Baby; Lorena; When Sin Stops Love Begins; Don't Think Twice. It's All Right.
- **WAYLON JENNINGS** *Waylon Jennings* MCA 731 (\$4). Don't Think Twice, It's All Right; Burning Memories; Big Mamou; Crying; Money (That's What I Want); Abilene; Lorena; Love's Gonna Live Here Again; Sweet Dreams (Of You); White Lightning Cherokee.

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● **WAYLON JENNINGS** *Black on Black* RCA AHL1-4247 (\$4). Women Do Know How To Carry On; Honky Tonk Blues; Just To Satisfy You; We Made It As Lovers (We Just Couldn't Make It As Friends); Shine; Folsom Prison Blues; Gonna Write A Letter; May I Borrow Some Sugar From You; Song For The Life; Get Naked With Me.

● **WAYLON JENNINGS** *I've Always Been Crazy* RCA AFL1-2979 (\$4). I've Always Been Crazy; Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Out Of Hand; Billy; A Long Time Ago; As The 'Billy World Turns; Medley of Buddy Holly Hits (Well All Right, It's So Easy, Mayby Baby, Peggy Sue); I Walk The Line; Tonight The Bottle Let Me Down; Girl I Can Tell (You're Trying To Work It Out); Whistlers and Jugglers.



● **CONWAY TWITTY'S** *Honky Tonk Angel* MCA 406 (\$3). There's a Honky Tonk Angel; Pop a Top; Somewhere Just Out Of Her Mind; Making Plans; Don't Let It Go To Your Heart; A Bad Seed My Daddy Sowed; Before Your Time; Love is the Foundation; Pick Me Up On Your Way Down; Amazing Love; A Simple Country Girl.

● **MERLE HAGGARD** *Serving 190 Proof* MCA 3089 (\$3). Footlights; Got Lonely Too Early This Morning; Heaven Was a Drink of Wine; Driftwood; I Can't Get Away; Red Bandana; My Own Kind Of Hat; I Must Have Done Something Bad; I Didn't Mean To Love You; Sing A Family Song; Roses In The Winter.

● **LORETTA LYNN** *I Lie* MCA 5293 (\$3). I Lie; If I Ain't Got It (You Don't Need It); There Stands the Glass; I Wanted You To Leave (Until You Left Me); Stronger Than You Ever Thought I'd Be; Step Right Up And Break My Heart; Save Me; Going's Been Coming; Where Love Goes When It's Gone; A Motel Match.



● **BARBARA MANDRELL** *Lovers, Friends and Strangers* MCA 673 (\$4). She's Loved Me Out Of You; Married But Not To Each Other; This Is Not Another Cheatin' Song; How Long Does It Take?; Bedroom Reunion; Hold Me; We Are The One; After The Lovin'; Lovers, Friends And Strangers; Let My Man Go, Jesus.



● **THE KENDALLS** *Heart of the Matter* Ovation 1746 (\$3). You'd Make An Angel Wanna Cheat; Put It Off Until Tomorrow; Gone Away; Everlasting Love; I'll Be Hurtin' Either Way; Heart Of The Matter; I'm Already Blue; I Take The Chance; I Don't Drink From The River; I Don't Do Like That No More.

● **TOM JONES** *The Very Best Of* EMI MFP-50459 (\$4). Daughter of Darkness; If; Letter to Lucille; Brother Can You Spare A Dime; If I Ruled The World; My Way; Try A Little Tenderness; Puppet Man; Proud Mary; She's A Lady; Ebb Tide; Ballad Of Billy Joe; Nothing Rhymed; The Young New Mexican Puppeteer; The Resurrection Shuffle; I (Who Have Nothing); The Impossible Dream; Something 'Bout You Baby I Like.

● **WILLIE NELSON** *Red Headed Stranger* Columbia KC 33482 (\$6). Time Of The Preacher; I Couldn't Believe It Was Time; Time Of The Preacher Theme; Medley: Blue Rock Montana/Red Headed Stranger; Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain; Red Headed Stranger; Time Of The Preacher Theme; Just As I Am; Denver; O'er The Waves; Down Yonder; Can I Sleep In Your Arms; Remember Me; Hands On The Wheel; Bandera.



● **CHUCK BERRY** *Greatest Hits Surprise* JTV-AL-39 (\$3). Roll Over Beethoven; Johnny B. Goode; Sweet Little Sixteen; School Days; Maybellene; Rock and Roll Music; Ramblin' Rose; Carol; C.C. Rider; Memphis, Tennessee.

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Record Reviews

Keith Whitley *A Hard Act to Follow* RCA MHL1-8525

This long-awaited debut album by one of the most celebrated singers to emerge from the bluegrass and bluegrass-country farm leagues comes as what may well be the stylistic surprise of the year. It is, to say the least, a noble and bold effort, even if it is not an entirely successful one.

Whitley's celebrated bluegrass roots go back to his teenage years in Kentucky when he played alongside Ricky Skaggs as a member of Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys. It was more recently, while he was a member of the outstanding country-bluegrass fusion group, J.D. Crowe and The New South (where he turned in some devastatingly on-target renditions of Merle Haggard and Lefty Frizzell tunes which can be heard on the several J.D. Crowe albums recently released on Rounder Records) that his exemplary vocal talents came to the attention of Nashville's music industry.

When Whitley was recently signed to RCA, the predictable expectation was that the label envisioned him as their own Ricky Skaggs: that is, someone who would manage to streamline and update his traditional bluegrass instincts and reach the same mass audience that Skaggs has reached by doing this very same thing over on RCA's arch-rival, CBS Records.

But to their credit, Whitley and producer Norro Wilson—as *A Hard Act to Follow* clearly demonstrates—obviously had something else in



mind all along.

A long-time admirer of the late Lefty Frizzell (who is arguably the most influential country singer since the late Jimmie Rodgers), Whitley is eerily adept at reproducing Frizzell's hardcore Texas honky tonk vocal style with haunting and uncanny accuracy. And that is just what he does on *A Hard Act to Follow*.

In that regard, his new album is, in many ways, a heartfelt trip down memory lane. It is, in fact, the *hardest* hard country album released by a major Nashville label in years. It's hardly an exaggeration to say that Whitley makes Moe Bandy sound like Perry Como! With its bold sweeps of weeping, wailing steel guitar (updated and sweetened only slightly by soft background vocals and other more recent "Nashville Sound" instrumental embellishments), the music on *A Hard Act to Follow* seems

to consciously fly in the face of today's trendy, contemporary tastes, which have made heroes out of pabulum artists like Kenny Rogers and Lee Greenwood. Instead, Whitley and producer Wilson shoot straight for the heart of the good old gutbucket, hard-country, honky tonk sound.

Whitley does an amazingly convincing job of molding each and every one of the songs (some of which are written by contemporary Nashville writers like John Scott Sherrill, Bob McDill and Wayland Holyfield, and others of which are old Frizzell standards written by his own contemporaries like Harlan Howard and Hank Cochran) into the spirit of the Frizzell style. It is with almost chilling detail that he resurrects all of Lefty's trademark vocal quirks: the whimsical, high-register whines and slides, and the shadowy, moaning low-regis-

ter slurs.

If there is one problem with Whitley's debut album, other than the fact that it seems to go so steadfastly against the grain of what contemporary country radio is playing these days, it is simply that there is way too much of his hero Lefty Frizzell on the tracks and far too little of Keith Whitley himself. Though *A Hard Act to Follow* stands as a fine and worthy tribute to Lefty as well as an admirable—if somewhat commercially risky—debut outing, it would be far more exciting the next time around to see what Keith Whitley can really do on his own when he steps all the way out from behind Frizzell's shadow.

—BOB ALLEN

Barbara Mandrell Lee Greenwood *Meant For Each Other* MCA 5477

Have you heard the one about the Chinese dinner? You know: you eat ten courses and an hour later, you're hungry again.

Meant for Each Other is a lot like a Chinese dinner: filling on the turntable, but an hour later, totally forgotten.

The title might make you believe that this project was pure fate from the start. Actually, it's the latest—and the hottest—in Nashville's headlong rush into duetdom. It's certainly no accident that both artists happen to record for the same label. If they didn't, we'd probably never hear them together like this.

However, both are consummate entertainers—and vocally, they're an inspired match. In fact, sometimes it's almost impos-

Record Reviews

aged babysitter. About to come unraveled completely over his passions for this young girl, he seeks professional help. He is advised to take up woodworking as an emotional panacea for his sexual obsession—which he does, with remarkable success.

On listening closely to Tom T. Hall's new *Natural Dreams* album, I am reminded of this story for two reasons. Number one, I just read in a press release somewhere that Tom T., middle-aged renaissance man that he is (singer/songwriter/novelist/traveler/part-time Democratic politico/some-time TV show host), has recently taken up woodworking. I'm also reminded of this story because, judging from many of the songs on the album, Hall, in perhaps a somewhat more benign manner, is also struggling to come to terms with his own middle-aged restiveness and the quiet sense of loss that surely must come when a once carefree and footloose balladeer watches all his dreams come true, only to realize that he has become something of a prisoner in the gilded cage of his own fame and affluence.

Most of the best songs on

Natural Dreams are, in fact, about loss, regret and resignation over the kind of dreams, hopes and promises that time so often takes away from us and does not give back. The everyday characters who populate them are, more often than not, men whose opportunities or years have merely run out on them. "Famous in Missouri," for instance, (not a Hall original, but it sounded so much like one it fooled me) is a haunting song (once you get past the overly-drippy strings in the intro) about a burnt-out small-time entertainer who finds himself at the end of the line in the bleakness of South Dakota. In "My Heroes Have Always Been Highways," a perennial traveling man explains with bitter-sweet resignation his inability to cope with family life and domesticity. Others of Hall's down-and-out anti-heroes survey the grim purview of their lost youth, defeated idealism or dashed hopes from jail cells ("They Captured the Outlaw Last Night") or skidrow bars ("Before Jessie Died").

It is in these thin, fleeting vignettes of good people attempting to come to terms, in their own frail ways, with bad

spins of fate's roulette wheel, where Hall, the middle-aged woodworker, most effectively confronts feelings of loss, regret, and even sorrow that may indeed be his own.

Then, of course, there is a healthy sampling of the *other* Tom T. Hall on *Natural Dreams*—the one with whom we've come to be more familiar in recent years. That is Tom T. Hall, the low-energy crooner of pleasant but eminently maudlin and forgettable homilies and syrupy love songs. You can hear this Tom T. Hall in all his bloated glory on tracks like "Blackberry Dreams" and his rendition of the old Fifties hit, "P.S., I Love You."

Fortunately, it is the first and most essential Tom T. Hall—the one who paints evocative pictures of everyday people struggling with circumstances and quirks of destiny that are far bigger than they are—which prevails on *Natural Dreams*, if only just by a hair. This side of Tom T. Hall is, in fact, distilled almost perfectly on "I See." In this beautifully understated song of sorrow, wonderment and compassion, he succeeds at the near-magic of using a handful of starkly simple images to make a statement about the redemptive power of hope in the human heart which says much more to listeners than words alone could ever say.

Admittedly, even the best songs on this album are mere bold-stroke sketches when compared with Hall's immaculately detailed, intricate, fine-line etchings of yesteryear like "The Year That Clayton Delaney Died" or "The Ballad of Forty Dollars." But then again, I suppose this is part of what the undercurrents of loss and mild regret on *Natural Dreams* are all about. And while these new songs may not be his greatest, they are certainly good enough to make us hope that Tom T. doesn't get too far into his woodworking, doesn't get too far afield from his natural restlessness. —BOB ALLEN

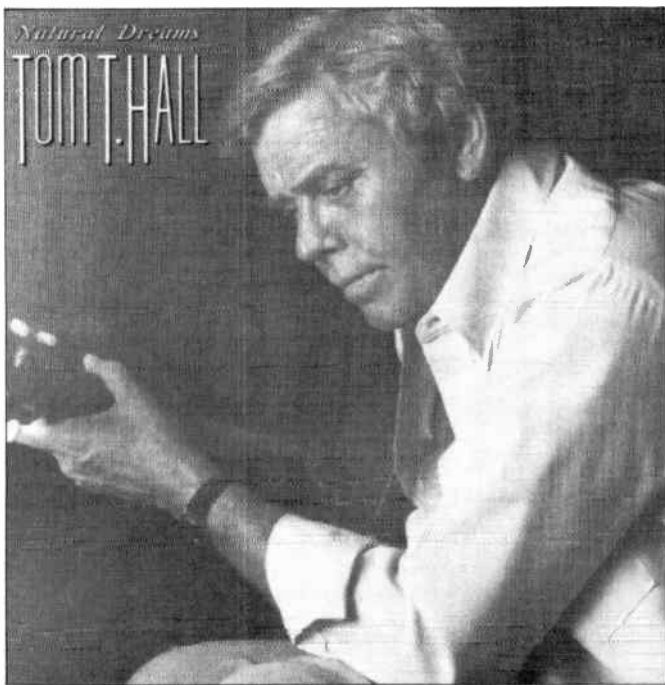


Eddie Rabbitt
The Best Year of My Life
Warner Bros. 1-25151

It's hard to forget the excitement that ran rampant up and down Music Row upon the mid-1980 release of Eddie Rabbitt's landmark album *Horizons*. That album, as you might recall, was wonderfully charged with the bristling, electric neo-rockabilly of fine hits like "Drivin' My Life Away" and "I Love a Rainy Night" (both of which, like the album, hit the number one spot).

I recall how even one of the chief execs at a rival record label gathered his staff in his office to play *Horizons* for them, announcing Nashville's consensus that, in so many words, the future of country music was about to arrive, and his name was Eddie Rabbitt.

Nothing Rabbitt has recorded since then, unfortunately, has rekindled this excitement; and none of the handful of albums which he's since released have come close to delivering on the promise first offered by *Horizons*. It seemed that as Rabbitt himself drew nearer to middle age, as he became a father and started adding some extra girth of his own around his midriff, the youthful, bristling drive in his music also seemed to slowly become watered down and dissipated. And, more and more, his recordings seemed to waver dangerously close to the center line of Nashville's flaccid "bubblegum-country" mainstream.





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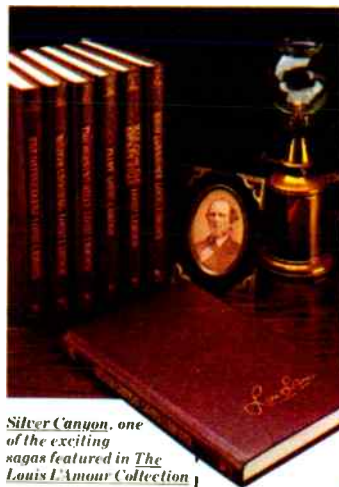
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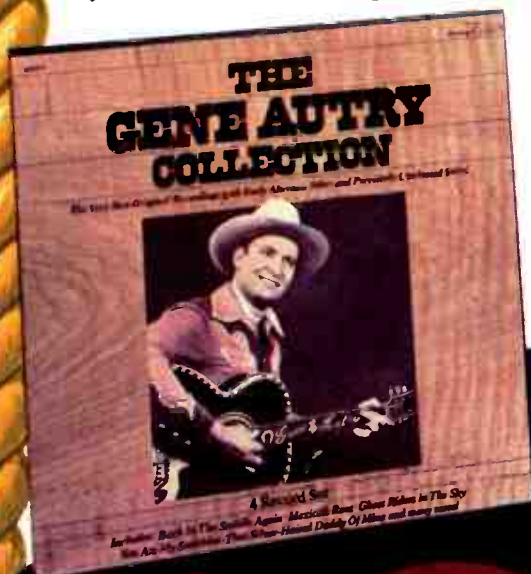
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Record Reviews

It's reassuring to report that Rabbitt's new album, *The Best Year of My Life*, is one of the strongest efforts he's turned in in the years since then. On tracks like "B-B-Burnin' Up With Love" and "Go to Sleep Big Bertha," he's once again rockabillying with a subtle, powerful, and beguiling vengeance. (On this latter song Rabbitt pokes musical fun at the perils of having a 200-pound woman for a bedmate. But he still better be careful, because, musically speaking, he's not out of the woods yet: at the rate he's going, it's ladies like this who could end up being his main constituency!)

On the other hand, this new album has its low points. Listening to sappy, silly-sweet tracks like "Big Brown Eyes" and "Over There" is a sticky exercise at best—roughly akin to trying to pry a fresh wad of Fleeer Double-Bubble off the roof of your mouth with your tongue.

Finally, one is still left wondering about Rabbitt's musical future. Will he ever return to the high-water mark that he set for himself with his classic *Horizons* album of yesteryear? Or will he merely continue to make a slow slide towards the underbelly of softcore cutesy ballads for the housewives?

Though *The Best Year of My Life* is one of Rabbitt's strongest efforts in quite some time, it still leaves this an open question. —BOB ALLEN

Janie Fricke *The First Word in Memory* Columbia FC 39338

There is an art to singing jingles. But the very skills that go into making great jingles singers work in reverse for solo artists.

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Janie Fricke spent years in studios singing the glories of airlines, theme parks and soft drinks. She has a resolute cheerfulness in her voice that solo singing hasn't yet erased; and unfortunately, it works against her on songs requiring depth or emotional reserve.

When you listen to Fricke records, you don't hear heartbreak. You don't hear soul-wrenching anguish. You hear style—but not a lot of substance.

On her newest album, *The First Word in Memory*, this problem becomes glaring because of the material. Producer Bob Montgomery has come up with a great group of songs for her, songs which require hot pepper rather than vanilla.

Take, for starters, the stunning title cut, "The First Word in Memory Is Me," written by Pam Rose, Mary Ann Kennedy and Pat Bunch. A song this powerful cries out for—no, *deserves* and *demand*s—a heartfelt vocal performance, by a singer who can give the impression that she understands pain and despair. Anyone fortunate enough to have heard Rose and Kennedy do this song themselves knows exactly what I mean. Fricke's will not be the definitive version of this instant copyright.

However, given the fact that Janie's strength is slick, polished treatments, this album works. There's evidence that Montgomery may have toned down the high-energy pop direction of her last album; there's plenty of spunk on this one—"Talkin' Tough," "Your Heart's Not in

It," "In Between Heartaches," but he's also given her softer things—"Take It From the Top," "One Way Ticket," "First Time Out of the Rain."

Fricke's signature is her sweet, silky sound, but it can interfere at times with the power of her performance. Hopefully, she will concentrate on more sincerity and more personal conviction in her records. In the long run, it would make her a much more interesting singer, and give her needed dimension. —KIP KIRBY

John Hartford *Gum Tree Canoe* Flying Fish FF 289



It is tempting after listening to *any* performance by John Hartford to conclude that he is unique, even curious. The image projected in his personal appearances only seems to reinforce that view. His usual solo performance on stage presents the audience with a tall lanky frame with matching banjo seated under a cocked derby singing lyrics that to the uninitiated give pause before applause. This is certainly no Larry Gatlin or Jesse McReynolds. Many see him set apart (some would say removed) from what we know as country music.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that John Hartford has consciously positioned himself, not on the edge, but smack in the middle of the oldest and most enduring traditions of country music. To see him as on the fringe is to have the sock turned inside out.

What is unique here on *Gum*

Tree Canoe is that the talents of John Hartford, usually seen and heard in isolation, are integrated with many others. The producer, Jack Clement, grasps perfectly the essence of the Hartford charm and then surrounds it with the likes of Sam Bush and Marty Stuart on mandolins, Jerry Douglas on dobro, Roy Huskie Jr. on bass, Jeannie Seely on the back-up vocals, Mark Howard and Mark O'Connor on lead guitars, and himself on rhythm guitar, dobro, and, yes, ukelele. The hand of Jack Clement is also apparent not only in the arrangements, which add much and detract nothing from the Hartford appeal, but in the selection of material as well. Where else would you find on a single album a collection of songs introduced by such varied artists as Doc and Rosa Lee Watson, the Rolling Stones, Uncle Dave Macon, and Don Williams?

But with any album the bottom line is 'how well does it turn out?' The answer here is 'beautifully.' There are some true high spots of vintage Hartford on "I'm Still Here" and "Jug Harris" and on the title song, which most listeners will be singing before they have heard it through the first time. Then there is the rendition of "Wrong Road Again," an Allen Reynolds song that leaves you wondering what else John Hartford might be capable of adding to his bag of surprises.

Maybe not so curiously, the only flat spot in the album is the Mick Jagger/Keith Richards number, "No Expectations," but it is well to remember that this song is in very fast company.

With all its individual elements, it is the album as a whole that leaves us, not with a memory of a good song or a clever banjo maneuver, but with a visceral feeling about what country music was, is, and will continue to remain not on the great sound stages of our nation, but in our living rooms, kitchens, and most of all, in our hearts.

—GEORGE MCCENEY

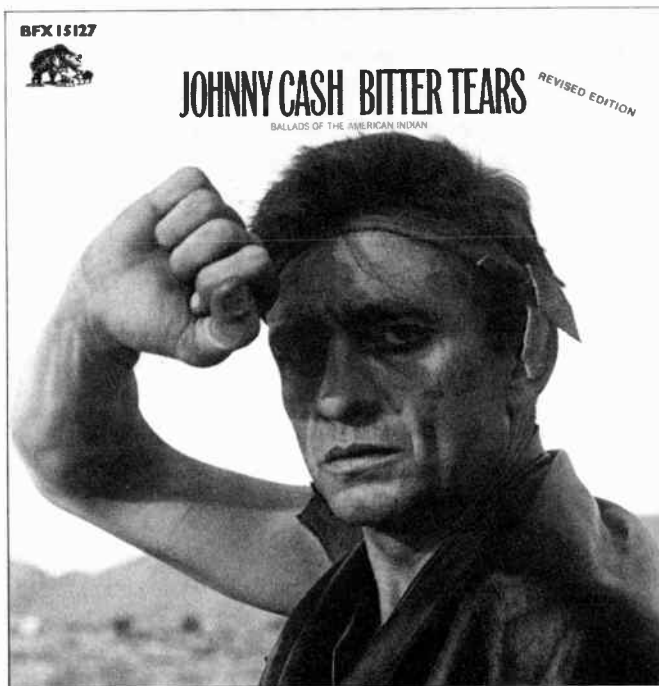
Buried Treasures

Reissues, Rarities and the Hard to Find
by Rich Kienzle

This year Johnny Cash's *Bitter Tears* album is 20 years old. Though by today's standards the subject matter, protests against the neglect and mistreatment of America's Indians, seems relatively mild, it created a minor furor at the time. Civil Rights protests around the country, and the inherent conservatism of country performers and audiences (Charley Pride was still a couple of years away) made disc jockeys nervous. The album's single, "Ira Hayes," an acid-tongued protest against the mistreatment and tragic death of the World War II hero who helped raise the flag at Iwo Jima, was an introspective, yet hard-hitting song written by Indian folksinger Peter LaFarge.

But disk jockeys wimped out and ignored it. Cash took flak from not only the Ku Klux Klan, but also from some fans who took him to task for being "too intelligent" for plain country folk (those who said this weren't bright enough to realize they were insulting themselves). He blasted back with a full-page ad in the music trade publication *Billboard* that upbraided the disk jockeys and vigorously defended the album. As it turned out, the album's sales were respectable, anyway.

Richard Weize's Bear Family Records have not only reissued *Bitter Tears*, but have added two additional Indian-related numbers as well, plus detailed liner notes by Charles Wolfe, a reproduction of the famous *Billboard* ad and full song lyrics. The impact of the album still holds strong, and the additional numbers fit well. Cash has always been proud of this one, and rightfully so.



I'm particularly proud of the large group of Carl Smith 78s in my own record collection. It would not cause the Country Music Foundation's Bob Pinson to lose any sleep, but I enjoy every one of them, which made the Columbia Historic Edition's *Carl Smith* (FC 38906) that much more appealing. Smith, one of the Opry stars who, like Ray Price, really came into his own in the wake of Hank Williams, had a tightly drawn voice perfect for the honky tonk material he did so well.

Happily, this is not strictly a "greatest hits" sampler, though most of the 12 tracks (1950-1955) were highly successful. Two were never issued, including the 1954 rocker "Baby, I'm Ready," recorded when Elvis was still an obscurity on the *Louisiana Hayride*. Johnny Sibert's slashing, dense steel sound remains amazing nearly 30 years later. Carl tackles the Lefty Friz-

zell-like "Don't Just Stand There" with great gusto and his searing vocal on "You're Free to Go" anticipates George Jones' later sound. "Amazing Grace," sung with Maybelle and the Carter Sisters in 1955, remains a gospel performance of singular beauty.

Paul Howard was one of the Grand Ole Opry's pioneer musicians. Leader of the Western Swing-oriented Arkansas Cotton Pickers from 1940 to 1949, Howard was another who shattered the show's provincial attitudes toward electric guitars and drums. A heart attack claimed him this past June at age 75 in Little Rock, and hardly anyone paid him tribute.

But a new album on the German Cattle label reminds everyone of his true importance. *Western Swing at Its Best* (Cattle LP 57) is an entertaining, definitive overview of his best recordings from Col-

umbia and King.

Howard brought to prominence two of Nashville's most legendary guitar heroes, Hank Garland and Grady Martin, and pioneered the famous Bob Wills "twin guitars" sound on the Opry, often using the great unknown lead player Robert "Jabbo" Arrington as one of the guitarists. Little Jimmy Dickens later made twin guitars an integral part of his sound, as it remains today. The band's sound was nowhere near as sophisticated as Wills', but the hot twin guitars, Slim Idaho's romping, slashing steel and Hank Horner's funky piano created an infectious combination of honky tonk and swing.

"Cotton Picker's Special" and "Texas Boogie" are hot, stomping instrumentals. Garland and Arrington knock off some appealing hot guitar licks on "Oklahoma City," and the band's pithy version of "There's No Room in My Heart (For the Blues)" holds up well. This was respectable music at the time, every bit as entertaining as anything being played in the Southwest. I hope Howard got to see the album before he passed on.

As some of you well know, I caught some flak a few issues back by taking an honest look at the music of a certain group of ex-Bob Wills sidemen whom I felt weren't doing the music justice. My opinion hasn't changed. But I have found an album where it was done right: Hurshel Clothier's *The Jam Session* (MRI OK-405-918). You will find none of the big-name Playboy stalwarts here, and it matters not. For ex-Playboys like saxophonist Glenn Rhees, guitarist Benny Garcia, steel guitarist Gene Crownover, and fiddler

Frankie McWhorter all remain excellent players. This is a big band—14 musicians in all: four fiddles (including Clothier himself), guitar, trumpet, sax, trombone, bass, drums, piano and three vocalists. And their sound is tight, cohesive and still swinging, with the sort of light rhythms that Wills himself loved.

Particularly outstanding is the swinging arrangement of "Golden Slippers," a kicking "San Antonio Rose" with Ash-

ley Alexander's hot trumpet obligatos paying tribute to the late Wills trumpeter Alex Brashear and a Dixieland free-for-all toward the end. Clothier's engaging vocal on "Deep Water" is complimented by a free-flowing backup and some impressive guitar from the badly underrated Garcia. "On the Trail" is the sort of western jazz we hear far too little of, managing to sound western while still swinging like hell. Like the prewar Playboys, horns and fiddles dart in

and around each other. Nothing I have heard better exemplifies the Bob Wills sound than this, and I suspect that Bob himself would be delighted. I know I am.

Joe Carson's name never became a household word, but he was an excellent Texas singer/composer who died all too young in a traffic accident in the 60s. *In Memoriam* was a posthumous album issued by American Liberty shortly

after his death and has just been reissued by French EMI (EMI 1550761). Carson's engaging performances of "Fraulein," "Release Me," "Forbidden Wine" and, ironically enough, "The Last Song I'm Ever Gonna Sing" (actually a jaunty, if bitter, look at failure in breaking into Nashville stardom) are strong and well focused. He may not have hit the top ten, yet that fact doesn't detract from the durable honky tonk songs on the album. ■

The Essential Collector *The Editors' Guide to Classic Country Albums*

When I was about four years old, my Aunt Annie took me as a guest to her church. The custom was that guests be introduced to the congregation, so when our turn came, Annie said, "This is my nephew, Russell Barnard."

I stood up on the pew and said sternly, "My name's *Gene Autry*." And so it was much of the time, in those days. That's one reason why I'm breaking my own rule against reviewing records; the other is that the most recent recording in this fabulous four-record set, *The Gene Autry Collection*, was recorded in 1952. So, no one should be too sensitive to my remarks.

Here is my unbiased, objective, critical review: Terrific! A must! Incredible! Amazing! Wonderful! Buy it today!

Yes, folks, Gene Autry is back in the saddle again. If you are a Gene Autry fan, you better ride along with this fabulous four-record package from Murray Hill Records which is loaded with great music, forty songs in all, including eight previously unissued.

Early in his career, Autry was a devoted Jimmie Rodgers fan and imitator. In fact, Autry's first recording in 1929 was Rodgers' "Blue Yodel No. 5," which is included here along with "The Life Of



Jimmie Rodgers" and "The Death of Jimmie Rodgers," both sung by Autry in Rodgers' style. These are excellent. Autry was a better singer and yodeler than Rodgers, so it is a pleasure to hear these songs done so well. Also, any of you who may have old 78s of Autry will be amazed at the high quality of the sound reproduction on these records.

Many of Autry's biggest hits are included: "That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine," "Back in the Saddle Again," "Take Me Back to My Boots and My Saddle," "South of the Border (Down Mexico Way)," "Jingle, Jangle, Jingle" and "Mexicali Rose," which was recorded in 1935, after Bob Wills' version, but is every bit as good. And, Jack and Woody Guthrie's

"Oklahoma Hills."

These, you might expect. But have you heard Autry's "Blueberry Hill"? Yes, the very same "Blueberry Hill" that rocketed Fats Domino into the history of rock 'n' roll

in 1954, fifteen years after Autry recorded it. Or, "Riders in the Sky"? Later a hit by Vaughn Monroe under the title "Ghost Riders in the Sky," Autry's version provided the title for one of his movies. Johnny Cash, an Autry fan since childhood, first heard this version in 1980 and was immediately inspired to record what, I think, is the definitive version on his *Silver* album. And I mustn't forget, Autry's version of A.P. Carter's "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes" will make you weep.

The only bad news is the sparse information on the liner notes. This set cries out for a booklet. Even so, this collection is a winner . . . or should I say a Champion?

Don't look for it in stores; it's only available by mail. See page 58 for more information. —R.D.B.

How to Get These Treasures

To buy any of the albums mentioned in *Buried Treasures*, make your check payable to Treasures, Country Music Magazine, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. (Country Music Society of America members, deduct 10% and include your membership number.)

Gene Autry, *The Gene Autry Collection* (Murray Hill M61072) \$24.95; **Johnny Cash, *Bitter Tears*** (Bear Family BFX 15127) \$9.98; **Carl Smith, (Columbia FC 38906)** \$8.98; **Paul Howard, *Western Swing at Its Best*** (Cattle LP 57) \$9.98; **Hurshel Clothier, *The Jam Session*** (MRI OK-45-918) \$11.98; **Joe Carson, *In Memoriam*** (French EMI 1550761) \$8.98.

For all orders add \$1.95 postage and handling for one album, \$.95 for each additional. No cassettes.

A black and white photograph of Ernest Tubb, a country music legend. He is wearing a white cowboy hat and a suit, smiling broadly. He is holding a guitar, and the body of the guitar is a large, dark, heart-shaped sign with the word "THANKS" written in white, bold, capital letters across it.

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