

MAY/JUNE 1988

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COUNTRY MUSIC



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Hillbilly Cats

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Hometown Heroes

DUANE EDDY
Rebel Rouser

DAVID LYNN JONES
Prodigal Son

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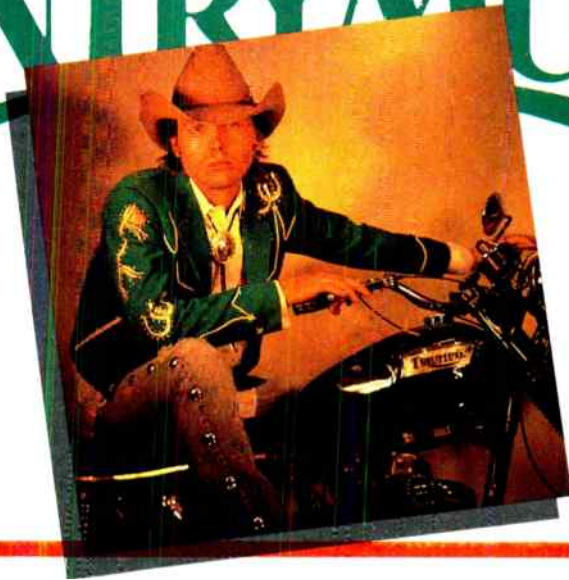
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COUNTRY MUSIC™



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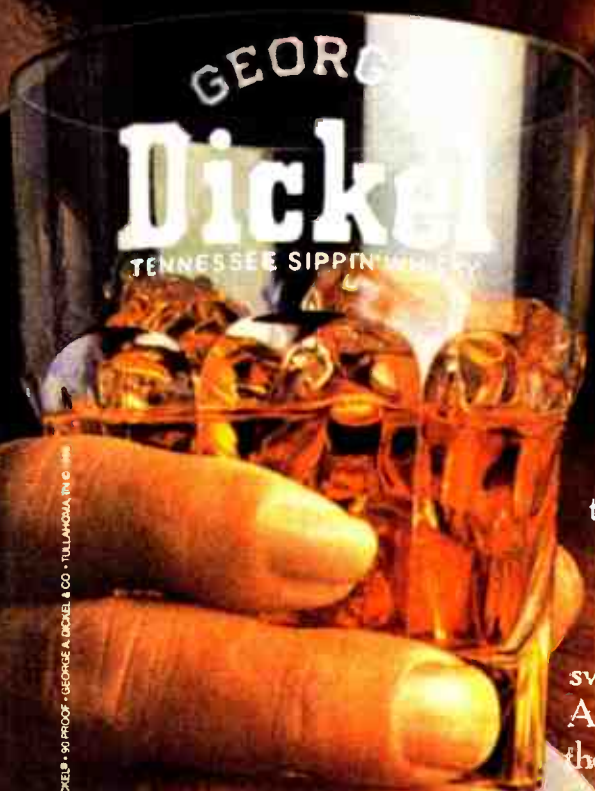
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Cover photo: *Alan Messer*

"Ain't Nothin' Better."

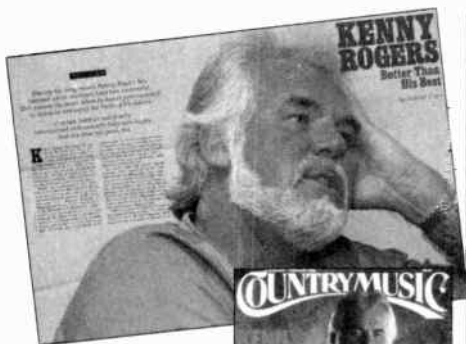


“When it comes to whisky, I’ve been known to leave one and take up with another. Not anymore. Not since I found this smooth sippin’ whisky from Tullahoma, Tennessee. George Dickel.

Whatever it is they do down there turns out the sweetest sour mash this country boys ever tasted. And in my humble opinion, there aint nothin’ better.”

Alvin Karpis

Letters



Star and Carr

Dear Patrick:

Thanks so much for the article you wrote in the January/February issue of *Country Music Magazine*. I don't normally read reviews or articles about myself, but this was put in front of me as an article I must read. In the 25 years I've been in this business, I don't think any article, including the *Playboy* interview, which incidentally took three days longer, was ever more objective and yet at the same time flattering.

Thanks again for all the kind words.
Your friend,

Kenny Rogers

Idol of Youth

Very much enjoyed your Kenny Rogers article in the January/February issue. In my opinion, he is the epitome of country music. He is also my 15-year-old son's idol. In this day of fast drugs, fast sex and fast music, for a 15-year-old boy to idolize Kenny Rogers is something very special. I encourage him all the way!

My son and I both wanted to go to Kenny's concert at the Fox Theater in Atlanta in December, but we could not make it because of finances. Could you please send an address when my son can write to him?

Mary A. Niemann
Alpharetta, Georgia

Write to Kenny at Kenny Rogers' Special Friends, 8265 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90048.—Ed.

Impressed by Kenny's Concert

I enjoyed your feature article on Kenny Rogers in the January/February issue.

Then I saw him perform to a sell-out crowd with The Forester Sisters and Exile. All three were great, but Kenny Rogers was fantastic. He had such an ability with the audience. His light show was great and his singing, of course, was out of this world. I was very impressed.

Jeanette Smiley
Amarillo, Texas

More Kenny Hits

The article was great, but I'd like to correct you on one thing. You stated that Kenny had not had a Number One hit since 1983 with "Islands in the Stream," a duet with Dolly Parton. In fact, in 1985 Kenny recorded an album, *The Heart of the Matter*, which produced two Number One country hits. They were "Morning Desire" and "Tomb of the Unknown Love."

But I think Kenny has enough devoted fans (like me) who will always attend his concerts, buy his merchandise and albums. He won't have to worry about being Number One.

Thank you very much for doing the feature on Kenny. I had been waiting for it.

Wilma Williams
Belpre, Ohio

Thanks for the correction.—Ed.

Friends and Relations

The *Country Music Magazines* are better with each issue. When I get the magazine, I first read the Letters. I look carefully to see if any remarks are made by R.D.B. Then I go to the *Newsletter*.

Why do I look for these first? Because Russell D. Barnard is one of my favorite nephews, and there is no one who can compare or come up to his lovely wife, Helen, my niece. I am always so pleased to see Russell's picture with a country music star.

I was especially thrilled to read a letter written by Pam Smith of Saint George, Kansas, in the January/February issue. I plan on writing to her.

A proud uncle,

Cecil Gyer
Saint George, Kansas

We have learned a lot from you, Cecil, and we try to put it into practice in the magazine.—H.P.B. and R.D.B.

30th Anniversary Bust

Saturday night, January 23rd, we turned on the Country Music Association's *30th Anniversary Celebration* taped January 7th at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville with great anticipation. It soon became apparent that we were to be disappointed. Except for the last 15-20 minutes of the show with the appearance of Eddy Arnold and "friends," we all agreed it was one of the worst country music showings in our memory.

Why? Rock music was prevalent, the camera work terrible, the show was peppered with too many unrecognizable names, and we think the performers were vying to out-do each other with weird hairdos and outlandish attire.

This 30-year anniversary gala set back the prestige of country music for as many years and was a waste of airing time.

Marilyn R. Cryan
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania
Next time we're going to ask the CMA to let us produce it.—Ed.



Good on Juice But Two Corrections

On behalf of all the Juice Newton Fan Club members, thanks a million for your article on Juice Newton in the January/February issue. Finding a picture or article in a magazine on Juice is rare, and I commend you. However, I have two comments: First of all, Juice is going to be 36 in February, not 38. Second, Juice's husband's name is Goodspeed, not Goodstead.

You've made many Juice Newton fans very happy.
K.L.I.
Oops! Sorry! Thanks for the corrections.—Ed.

Foresters Fan Consoles Bane

Hello, out there, ya'll!

First, let me say "thanks" to Michael Bane for the excellent review of The Forester Sisters latest album, *You Again*, in the November/December 1987

issue. A lot of music critics will listen to the first song on an album and base their entire review on just that certain song, but that was not the case with Michael Bane. You could tell he's really been studying his "Forester Facts." A friend just sent me the May/June 1986 issue of *Country Music Magazine* in which Michael wrote an entire article on the girls, and it was super! When do we get the honor of seeing another article (and *maybe* cover) featuring this fabulous four?

This is my second year as a subscriber, and from what I've read so far, there's *no way* I'm going to let my subscription run out! You've printed articles and pictures of all my favorites except one, Exile. These guys are as talented, not to mention down to earth, as they come, yet they always seem to go unnoticed.

Thanks, ya'll! Here's hoping our younger fans will have another 15 years or more of your magazine to look forward to.

Ray Lynn Hammer

LaHarpe, Kansas

P.S. Don't worry, Michael, my daddy's a June Forester fan, too, and he's *still* hoping for an encouraging look!

For more on *The Foresters* and tour-mate *Kenny Rogers*, see *People* in this issue.—Ed.



Kris Kristofferson, Politics, Religion and Good Old Country Music

Enjoyed your interview with Hank Snow in the January/February issue. He's always been one of my favorites. I also like *Buried Treasures* and a few other features.

However, the general tone of country music seems to be deteriorating. Kristofferson is absolutely disgusting. His abysmal ignorance of politics revealed in your article on him in the January/February issue is bad enough (where was he when Col. North testified?), and when he went to Nicaragua, I'm sure Kris saw and heard only what the Sandinistas wanted him to.

Also I don't believe Kristofferson has ever read the Bible (the Christian's manual) to see what is expected of a Christian. A good place to start would be Deuteronomy 5:11, "Thou shalt not

take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

Juice Newton's baby is cute, in the article on her in the same issue, but who is she showing off in the picture, herself or the baby?

R. Severns

Kalispell, Montana

P.S. In the name of honesty and fair play, I challenge you to print this letter. I don't ordinarily criticize a person's religion or politics. However, when that person is a public figure, and uses the media and their own popularity to try and "sell" their own personal views, then it becomes open season on those views and comments.

You don't like his politics. O.K. You don't believe he's read the Bible. You're wrong. What do you think of the many Christian songs he has written? I think "Why Me, Lord" is simply the most powerful of modern gospel songs, and it makes my spirit soar to hear it.—R.D.B.

Wrong Forum for Kristofferson?

I fail to understand why you would give a political forum to Mr. Kristofferson. This is a man of obvious genius who has admittedly spent most of his life under the influence of alcohol and illegal drugs. He chooses to honor governments who do not believe in personal liberty. He has also stated that America is responsible for international tensions. Country music fans are basically freedom loving. I just don't think this story fits in your magazine.

Ron Shaw

Decatur, Georgia

Kristofferson fits in our magazine just like anyone else who happens to be a country music songwriting legend. We publish his opinions, Hank Snow's, Ray Price's and yours...whether we agree or not.—R.D.B.

What's Popular or What's Correct: Bravo Kristofferson

As a longtime subscriber to many country-related magazines, I must say yours is far superior in all departments that count. Especially in beauty, good taste and reporting.

This January/February issue was especially appreciated because of the article on the greatest Songwriter of the 20th Century, Kris Kristofferson. It's rare nowadays for someone to disregard what's popular for what's correct. I know. I've been there, having been for many years an Elected Public Servant. I was in Nashville when Kris first arrived. We did not become friends because we traveled in different circles. And yet from the first I knew he was special—that rare talent that most of us somehow can never quite develop, yet we keep trying.

Bob Payne

Georgetown, Illinois

Kris Kristofferson's Views

This letter is to thank you for Patrick Carr's great article on Kris Kristofferson in the January/February issue. I was so glad to see someone take the time to really talk to Kris and have the courage to print Kris' views for country music fans to see.

Having had the privilege of attending 19 of Kris' concerts in the last year, I know how sincere he is in his beliefs. As he states at each show, "I know not everyone agrees with everything I sing off this stage, but I appreciate your having the courtesy to let us communicate it. It's real important to us. Don't make the mistake of thinking I'm not a patriotic American. I believe in every single principle this country was founded on, especially liberty and justice for *all!*"

Carol Ristan

Miramar, Florida



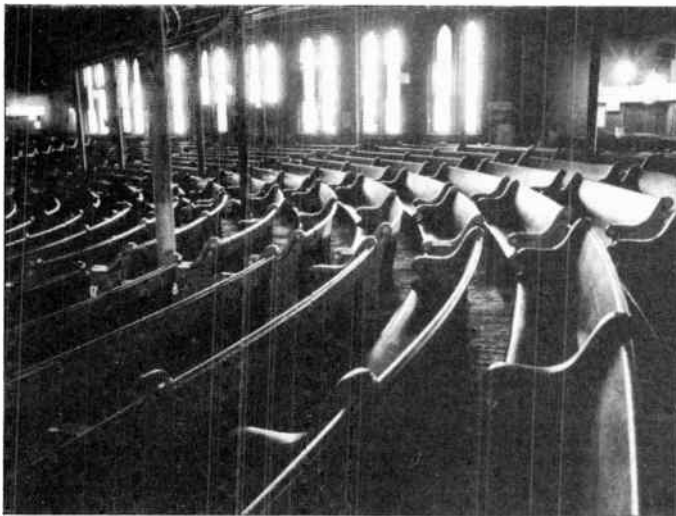
Snow's Right About Opry Audience

This past fall, in September and again in October, my family and I attended the Grand Ole Opry. It had been 18 years since we had been to Nashville and the Opry. The last time was in 1969 when the Opry was at the Ryman.

The Opry is just as good now, if not better, than it has ever been in its 62-year history. But Hank Snow is correct when he talks about the audience in 20 Questions in your January/February issue. I've never seen so many "sour pussies" in one place in my life. While I clapped, yelled and enjoyed myself, people sitting around me sat as if they were waiting to see the doctor or something. I caught a couple of people looking at me in disgust, as if I were disturbing them with my enjoyment. I drove over 300 miles to get to the Opry. I spent hard-earned money for a motel, tickets, etc. I enjoyed myself. If these other people didn't want to have fun, why did they even bother to come?

Could the answer be as Hank says? Are these people only curiosity seekers? Maybe they expected Kenny, or Dolly. Maybe they are tired from the trip. Are they upset because it is costing them money? Is it because a large part of the audience is made up of "senior citizens"? Whatever the reason, I wish they would just stay home, and

Deserted seats at the Old Ryman. In 1974, the Opry left downtown Nashville for the Opryland complex out on Briley Parkway.



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Marvin Christmas
Martinsville, Indiana

P.S. I'm going back to the Opry this spring. If you listen to the Opry on the radio, you will probably hear me. I'll be the one clapping my hands, yelling for more, and enjoying myself. By the way, how about a story in your magazine about one of the greatest of them all? Cowboy Copas!
We'll try.—Ed.

Opry Talk

I agree with Hank Snow that the Grand Ole Opry lost something when it became Opryland, U.S.A.

I've listened to country music from the time it started on radio with the Solemn Ole Judge through my courting years holding hands and listening to the little "box" on Saturday nights. Now after fifty-one years together, we're still holding hands and listening to country music, but after three trips to Nashville, we're disenchanted with the change.

The first time we went, we stayed at an old hotel called The Sam Davis, in walking distance of the Old Ryman Auditorium and Music Row where we could stroll around, meet and shake hands with the artists and feel they were our friends. In 1984 we went to Opryland, U.S.A., stayed at the Opryland Hotel, and didn't see one star, nor shake hands with one person we knew. To us it is just another theme park.

Yes, things have changed, what with the suggestive songs, that are really not "country," and the atmosphere of friendliness and good foot-stomping music that disappeared when the real Grand Ole Opry became "Opryland, U.S.A." Incidentally, Hank Snow was one of many country music artists we met on our first trip to Nashville.

Louise Ingram
Kershaw, South Carolina

Hank Snow, Author?

In October of 1986 we were at the Opry. What a thrill! That night Hank Snow said his book would be out in the summer of 1987. Can you please tell me if it has been released and the name of it? We are real fans of his.

Barb Lynn
Wyoming, Minnesota

Hank is writing his life story. It will probably be another year or so before it's ready for the publishers.—Ed.

Furious Father: Does Reba Care?

I have been trying to get a picture of Reba McEntire for my 15-year-old daughter. My daughter is broken-hearted. We have over \$100 in tapes of hers, and I am sure she could spare one picture. I am an 8th grade teacher. It took The Juds one week to return a picture. Those three are the only ones my daughter likes. Are they so blind to their success they don't realize who is buying their tapes? I thought country people were different. I wonder. They don't realize who they could be hurting. Miss McEntire better wake up before her balloon bursts.

Matthew Van Wagener
San Jose, California

Reba has a new fan club address: it is P.O. Box 121996, Nashville, Tennessee 37212. Try that. Maybe your previous letter got lost in the move.—Ed.

SKB Song Hits Home

I just wanted to compliment Schuyler, Knoblock and Bickhardt on their latest song, "This Old House." It's such a sad song. We are now in the process of selling my grandpa's house that my grandma's parents built in 1927. Since then, four generations of people have lived in it, including me. If you could find some kind of mailing address of theirs, I would love to write a letter to them.

Jeremiah Galley
Caledonia, Wisconsin

Write SKB at *The Tangerine Music*

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Editor and Publisher
Russell D. Barnard

Vice President/Managing Editor
Rochelle Friedman

Editors-at-large
**Michael Bane, Patrick Carr
Bob Allen**

Art Director
Jan Foster

Associate Editor
Helen Barnard

Art Associate
Germaine Egan Cassidy

Contributing Editors
**Peter Guralnick, Paula Lovell Hooker,
Leonard Kamsler, Rich Kienzie,
Kip Kirby, Mary Ellen Moore,
John Morthland, John Pugh,
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Associate Publisher/Advertising Director
Leonard Mendelson

Associate Publisher
Beatrice J. Hanks

General Manager
Olos Pitts

Vice President/
Circulation and Promotion
Anthony Bunting

Accounting Director
George Mankes

Publisher's Assistants
**Annemarie Jocka
Norma Segarra**

Editorial Assistant
Jeanine Morley

Office Assistants
Anne Barnard, Bernadette Collins

Mascot
Margie

Editorial and Executive Offices

342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118,
New York, New York 10173
Telephone (212) 503-0770.

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West Coast, Leonard Mendelson,
P.O. Box 5489

Santa Monica, California 90405
Telephone (213) 207-4948

Ohio/Michigan, Pete Kelly,
Peter Kelly Associates
725 South Adams Road,
Birmingham, Michigan 48011.
Telephone (313) 642-1228.

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Kansas Calling Waylon Jennings

Could you please see if you have an address on file for Waylon Jennings' fan club? He has been on the top of my list now for a long, long time. Also I'd like to know if he will be anywhere near Kansas or the surrounding states anytime soon.

I'm really pleased with the way your magazine tells the stories of all our nation's outstanding country music performers. "Cowboy, Don't Sing the Blues" in the November/December 1987 issue was my favorite.

Jan Burenheide
Neosho Rapids, Kansas

*Waylon has no fan club—sorry to disap-
point you. He does have an itinerary
hot line, 615-327-0823.—Ed.*

Alabama's Just Us Review

I am an Alabama fan, but first and foremost I am a country music fan, and I can't stand to see it misused. I don't know how your last Alabama review went, but as far as this one in the January/February issue is concerned, maybe you'd get a more realistic review if you didn't give the job to such a professed fan.

You see, the last two projects by these guys left me sorely disappointed. When I heard "Tar Top" on the radio, I thought, "Great—these guys are back on the track." I loved the tune so much, I bought the whole album, but, alas, all I heard was more of the same Alabama as before.

It seems that recently a lot of the band's music has been put out simply to make the young ladies "ooh" and "aah." It's not that I have anything against "oohing" and "aahing," it's just that there is so much more to life and certainly to music than that. Their love songs have lost that simple beauty and emotive spirit that they once had.

Alabama is made up of four very talented musicians, vocalists and songwriters who seem not to be trying anymore. They're not pushing those limits and that, to me, is really sad.

By the way, did Paddi Carr appear in that movie they made a few years ago about Valley Girls? She sure sounds like it, like, totally.

Donna Henry
Warren, Pennsylvania

*Did you mean "professed" or "pos-
sessed"?—Ed.*

Looking for Paddi Carr

Since "Paddi" Carr isn't listed under the credits for *Country Music Magazine*, he/she must be an imposter hiding behind the name of someone who is—Patrick?! At any rate, the review of

Alabama's *Just Us* in the January/February issue was as repulsive as most of their music—so disgusting it was almost funny! There is nothing that makes me turn the radio off quicker than an Alabama song, though Lee Greenwood's and Exile's latest efforts are competing for the honor!

Marge Belth
Bloomington, Indiana

Ode to Paddi Carr

It was soooo wonderful to read a "review" by a true believer. You capture the essence of Alabama-ness like nobody I've ever read before, or hope to read again. It's really neat that you managed to explain what makes Alabama so...well...great, so that even the musically retarded can grasp the magic of...well...just them.

Your review was a real eye-opener for me, it truly was. I hadn't realized reviews could be written with such wit and charm. It will doubtless inspire me, and all other loyal Alabama fans with aerial photos of Ft. Payne in their wallets, to renew subscriptions and be loyal *Country Music Magazine* readers, too. Yes, sir, any magazine that would print your "review" is high on my list, let me tell you.

I'll remember your name every night as I kneel (facing Ft. Payne) and pray for the Fab Four to be protected from floods, tornadoes, moronic reviewers, and things.

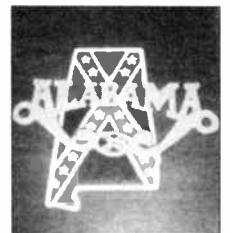
Maybe we'll even meet in Ft. Payne some day. Ye gods, I'm so excited.

Cheryl Powers
Hayesville, North Carolina

Do you need a job, Cheryl!—Ed.

Inspired by Alabama

Recently in my Art II class at my high school, we had the choice of doing a painting of whatever we wanted. Naturally I picked Alabama, and did an acrylic portrait of their logo. They are quite an inspiring group!



Tammy Moore
Otway, Ohio

*For more on Alabama, see People in
this issue.—Ed.*

The Age of Randy-Mania

I have just one big question—how in the world can the American people be so blind as to think Randy Travis is a better entertainer than George Strait, by any means? Randy Travis has had a few good songs, but, come on! He has gotten almost every award, on every award show, for the last two years. *That's ridiculous!* He isn't that good yet!

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Playgirl Poll: Country Music's 10 Sexiest Men



NELSON GILL FOSTER LLOYD THE O'KANES EARLE TRAVIS YOAKAM MURPHEY

KZLA Poll: Los Angeles Listeners' 10 Sexiest



STRAIT MORRIS SCHNEIDER YOAKAM OWEN TRAVIS ROGERS WARINER VAN SHELTON WILLIAMS JR.

There are countless numbers of entertainers in country music that he can't even compare to!

Randy has had one fantastic album, *Storms of Life*, which is deserving of awards. His second album, *Always & Forever*, was and is greatly overrated. I have seen his live shows—they are at best “amateur,” especially his band. Also, his stage personality could use a lot of work.

I am so sick of “Randy Mania”! Will it ever end!

By the way, I enjoy *Country Music Magazine* so much! Especially the album reviews—bad or good!

Renee Wallace
Altha, Florida

We are taking bets on which is going to be more controversial, your opinion of Travis or your response to our record reviews.—Ed.

Fabulous Fiddler with Travis

I went to the Memorial Coliseum in Portland, Oregon, this past October to see Randy Travis, Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty, and during Randy's performance there was a violin player in his back-up group who beat anything. He was just great. Now, what I want to know is, is he a regular studio back-up player or is he strictly a Randy Travis man?

I hear what sounds like him playing with so many different performers while I'm listening to my favorite station, KUPL, Portland, Oregon (just had to throw that in).

Dorothy Harlan
Oregon City, Oregon

David Johnson was trained as a classical violinist at the University of Iowa. He is strictly a Travis man and has never been a studio player.—Ed.

Waiting for Lightning to Strike

I've been a musician since I was seven years old. I started playing and singing in church and gatherings. After many years of listening and playing country

and bluegrass music, I feel like it's time for me to be climbing the ladder a little. Seems everywhere I go to perform for people, they always say I should be discovered by someone. *Please* tell me where to start.

Billy Wiley

Goldsboro, North Carolina

Almost every story we publish tells how someone was discovered. Mostly it's in Nashville.—Ed.

Country Music's Sexiest Men

The January 1988 issue of *Playgirl Magazine* featured an article on Country Music's 10 sexiest men. *Playgirl's* listing, in no particular order, is as follows: Willie Nelson, Vince Gill, Foster & Lloyd, The O'Kanes, Steve Earle, Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam and Michael Martin Murphey.

Women in Los Angeles had a very different opinion. Barbara Barry, of KZLA Radio/93.9 FM, ran a week-long telephone poll asking for our favorites. The 10 sexiest men in country music according to her poll, in order, are: George Strait, Gary Morris, John Schneider, Dwight Yoakam, Randy Owen, Randy Travis, Kenny Rogers, Steve Wariner, Ricky Van Shelton and Hank Williams Jr.

Would you please print these results with pictures?

Jody E. Seal

Northridge, California

What, no centerfolds?—Ed.

Welcome News on Webb Pierce

I've been wanting to write you, Hazel, and just say “thanks”—thanks for writing such a great section in *Country Music Magazine*.

Thanks also for the mention of Webb

Correction

The photo of Emmylou Harris in Letters last issue was taken by Piet Milane, not Mike Farrell.

Pierce's recovery in the People section of the January/February issue. He was and still is my favorite in country music. Many years ago I had the pleasure of knowing him and, believe me, they just don't come any nicer. Sure miss seeing him perform.

When I was younger, my dream was to be a part of the *Country Music World* and its greats, but somewhere along the way I goofed, so I stay in touch by reading your magazine.

Pat Kennedy
Dumfries, Virginia



Charlie Louvin and fan Nicole Reynolds at The Louvins Park.

Louvins Revisited

In your Buried Treasures section, you have written some beautiful reviews on The Louvin Brothers. We would love to see an article about them in your magazine.

Charlie is still very active. He plays the Grand Ole Opry on weekends, and lives on the grounds of the Louvin Brothers Music Park in Henagar, Alabama. Every Mother's Day weekend in May, he has the Annual May on the Mountain Bluegrass Festival at the park. I have attended every one and enjoy them tremendously. The Louvin Brothers Museum is also there and is very interesting to see.

My five-year-old granddaughter, Nicole Reynolds, has been there several

ROSANNE CASH

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times with me. She is very much a Charlie Louvin fan.

Shirley Harrison
Memphis, Tennessee

For more on the Festival, call 205-657-5700. Watch *Legends of Country Music* in the CMSA Newsletter for an article on *The Louvins*.—Ed.

Tracking Dwight Yoakam

Re: Dwight Yoakam... He is on the right track, but he needs to either fire or have a serious talk with that drummer. Drums in country music are bad enough under any circumstances, but a loud drum line is unbearable.

Also ole Dwight is almost as pretty as Emmylou Harris—he ought to make up his mind which gender he aspires to. He's been looking at too many heavy metal magazines.

Tony Redden
Kodiak, Alaska

P.S. Love old country. Hate new country. Love Old Grand Ole uproar. Hate new "Opryland b.s."

Must be cold up there in Kodiak.—Ed.

Date of Death, Please

I enjoy country music, and I collect all country music stars and dates of their birthdays and deaths. So could you please help me on these—Wynn Stewart and The Duke of Paducah. I read in your magazine that they had died, but you didn't give the dates.

Ann Lempke
Troppe, Maryland

Wynn Stewart died at his home in Hendersonville, Tennessee, on July 17, 1985. The Duke of Paducah died in Nashville on June 20, 1986. For country music stalwarts who died in the last months of 1987, see *People in this issue*.—Ed.

The Singing Sanders

In the January/February issue of *Country Music*, a lady from Virginia wanted to know about Steve Sanders, now a member of the Oak Ridge Boys.

I have a record of Little Stevie Sanders put out by Songs of Faith, a single, Number 8006. Titles are "I've Been Changed" and "Because of Him," gospel songs, by Little Stevie Sanders and The Sego Brothers. I saw him in person with Naomi and The Sego Brothers at Tate's Creek Baptist Church, about 10 miles east of Toccoa, Georgia. He was probably eight or nine years old.

I am sending a picture of him. The resemblance is there. It is *the* Steve Sanders.

Love your magazine. Keep up the good work.

Christine Hughes
Demorest, Georgia

More good sleuthing. The single is one



Little Stevie Sanders before he became Big Steve and joined The Oaks.

of the first, if not the first that Steve recorded. He recorded *This Is My Valley*, mentioned in *Letters in the January/February issue*, when he was 15 or 16.—Ed.

Calling All Amateurs

I have played pedal steel a good many years and have played in a number of country bands. I find it difficult to locate other musicians and groups to get together with. Maybe some kind of listing of groups looking for lead, steel, bass and rhythm players and vocalists would be a success in your magazine.

I am sure there are many talented people around who could benefit from such a list. It's great to read about the stars, but all of us struggling musicians could sure use a hand too!

Pete Shaw
Stuart, Florida

This might work for the Newsletter. Stay tuned.—Ed.

Found: Charlie Hodge

I saw the letter titled "Whatever Happened to..." in your May/June 1987 issue, asking for info on Charlie Hodge. Charlie is a friend of mine, so I thought I'd let you know he is doing well and living in Decatur, Alabama. Thanks for asking!

D. Denney
Huntsville, Alabama
Stay tuned, friends. We'll find 'em for you! Thanks, D. Denney, for writing in.—Ed.

Whatever Happened to Clark Kessinger?

A couple of years ago I was in a hospital recovering from my second bypass operation. Someone left a *Country Music Magazine* on my bed. I am not much of a reader, but I am a lover of country music. I read it and liked it and ordered it the same day. Have it a couple of years advanced so I won't miss a copy.

I like it all from cover to cover, so keep it coming. Now, I am hoping you can help me. I am trying to find out what happened to an oldtime country fiddler, Clark Kessinger. I know he made some recordings as far back as the 1940's on a Kanawha label. Would like to know where I could find his albums or a copy of same. Some of your readers will know him—you reach a lot of people. He made his music in the Carolinas, Virginia, West Virginia. Anywhere musicians got together, Clark was there.

Virgil Turley
Fernley, Nevada

Clark Kessinger friends and fans, come in, please.—Ed.

And, What Happened to David Wells?

I am a country music fan and have been all of my 28 years.

I would like to know what has happened to David Wells? The last time I remember hearing of him was November 1974 when he had a Top 10 hit out called "Song on the Juke Box."

Where is he, what has he been doing and where can I pick up an album of his from the early 1970's?

Garry L. Coldiron
North Judson, Indiana
Mailbox open on David Wells too.—Ed.

Thanks for Hank Thompson and How About Martha Carson?

I have just received my second issue of *Country Music Magazine*, the January/February issue. What a great magazine. In the first issue I received, I was pleased to open it and find a letter on a friend of mine, Hank Thompson. My wife Vi and I had the pleasure of spending some time with Hank and his wife Ann when Hank appeared at Travis Air Force Base in September 1986. The day after the show we took them to the Oakland Airport to catch a plane to L.A. I've met several country artists, but Hank and Ann are down-to-earth, warm, friendly people. And Hank's voice is like a bottle of fine wine, "It keeps getting better with time." The man will always be the king of country swing.

The other reason I wrote was, and this is for your "Whatever Happened to..." column, how about a lady who sang gospel music for many years, Martha Carson? I have one of her albums on Capitol records.

Jerry R. Moose
Suisun, California
Martha Carson, where are you?—Ed.

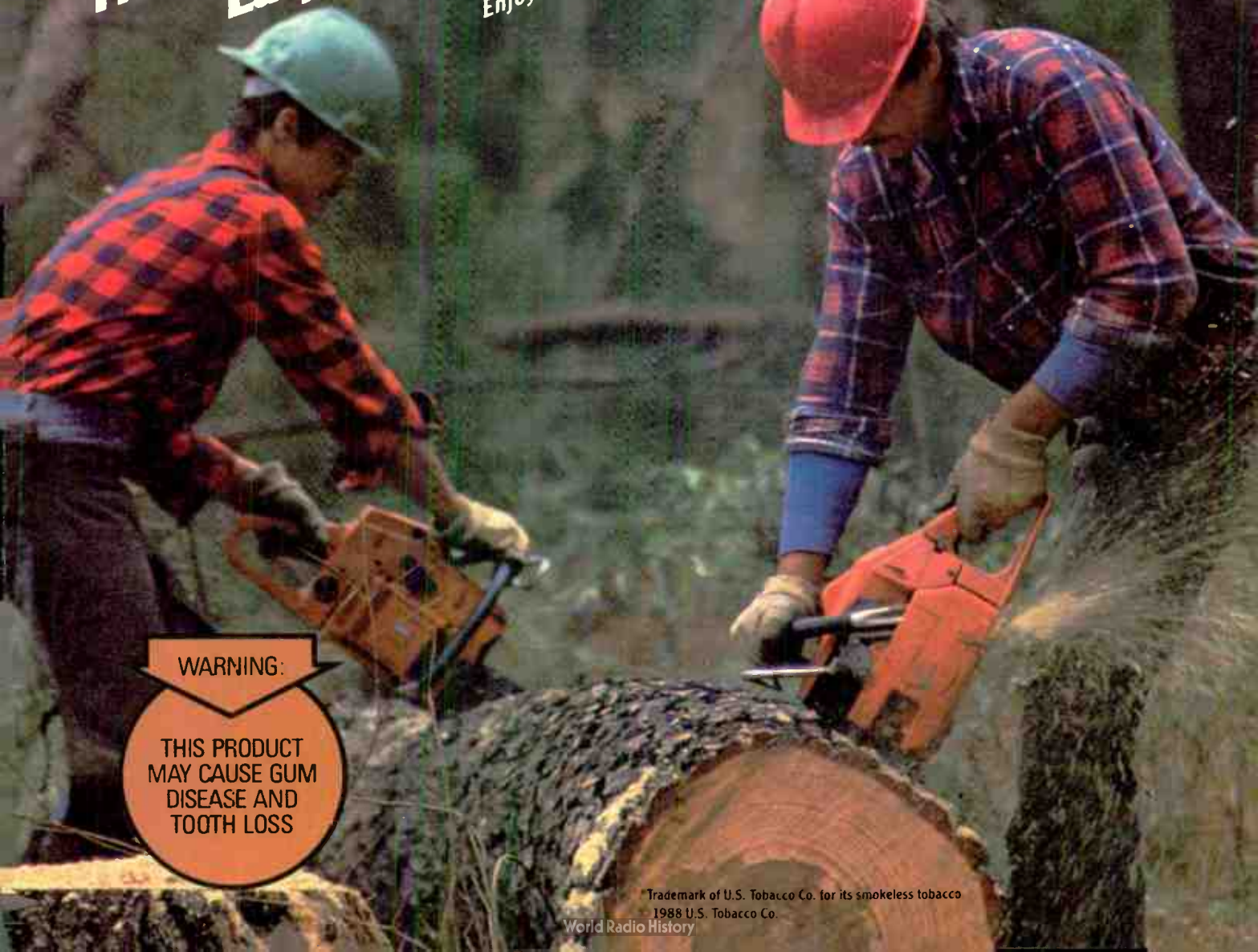
Here's What Happened to Jerry Wallace

Jerry Wallace is back! For every Jerry Wallace fan who takes out his albums or 45 rpm records from the 1950's, 1960's

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DISEASE AND
TOOTH LOSS

and 1970's and then thinks to themselves, "Why isn't he making more records?"—the answer is, he's back, with a new release, a love song, "I Bought the House," which he co-wrote with Kevin Young.

Jerry had been doing some songwriting during the last ten years, but he said he missed recording and his fans. That's all it took for engineer and producer Rick Thomas to decide to release that pause button, roll tape and let Jerry's smooth voice start the magic again. Jerry has told us, "You have to express feeling in a song, for it to be a good song, and when you have experienced love and heartache, you can express that feeling."

Jerry's single is out on Southwind Recordings.

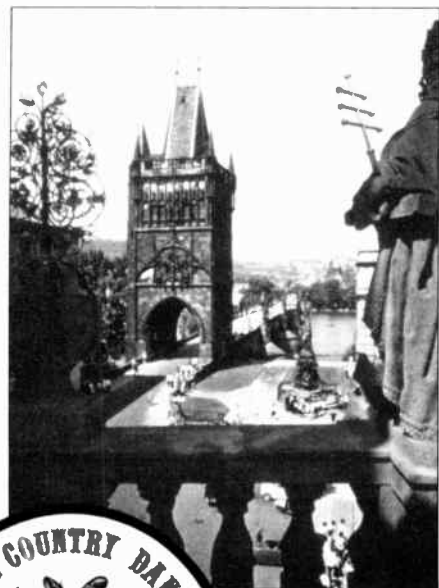
Donna Thomas
Sylmar, California

Thanks, Donna, for this update, and good luck, Jerry.—Ed.

Swing Your Partner, Czechoslovakian-Style

We are a group of young people, dancers, who are keen on your Country and Square Dances. We have some information on square dances and about 30 country dances with description and music on tapes from one of our experts on country dances, Prog. Frantisek Bonus.

We perform these dances at so-called "country balls" for the public with live music of country music bands or with playback from the tape. However, we



Friendly greetings from the Square Dance Club Caramella, located in the center of Europe, in the capital of Czechoslovakia, Prague.

have never seen your dances—we only imagine them. We would naturally like to see how they are danced in their home country. We would even be grateful for addresses of clubs performing Square and Country Dances.

We believe the long distance dividing us should be overcome by friendship.

Our group is called Country Dances Club Caramella. We are sponsored by the Factory Committee of the Trade Unions of Tesla Strasnice comp.

Dr. Jiri Vasak

Prague, Czechoslovakia

Our address is Dr. Jiri Vasak, tanecni skupina Caramella, ZV ROH Tesla Strasnice, Slezska 103, 130 00 Praha 3, CSSR, Europe.

Readers, any suggestions?—Ed.



Exile stopped and snapped with the Yeagers and radio station people Lori Gray and Sam Van Zant in San Mateo.

Exile Excitement

Had the opportunity to win tickets to see Exile in concert at Circle Star Playa, San Mateo. They sure put on a fantastic show. They opened for Kenny Rogers, and he was great. Our granddaughter, age 17, got to come along too. She was just so excited and loves country music.

Our radio station, KNEW in Oakland, plays nothing but country music 24 hours a day non-stop. The promotion director, Lori Gray, and disk jockey Sam Van Zant were also around that night.

Keep the good stories and pictures coming this way.

Barbara Yeager
Dillon Beach, California

Sounds like the same show Jeanette Smiley saw in Texas. See her letter above.—Ed.

Rewarding the Reviewers For Their Oaks' Reviews

I have been a subscriber to *Country Music Magazine* for nearly 10 years—I'm also a charter member of CMSA—and have seen your magazine get better and better every year.

I always read the record reviews to see what is new in records. Over the years I have observed that your record reviewers seem to have a great preju-

dice against some of my favorite acts, The Oak Ridge Boys in particular. I haven't read a single positive review of an Oaks record in over five years. The review of their *Heartbeat* album in the January/February issue is no exception. What is the reviewers' problem? I have that record and I think it is absolutely super! It is the *best* one they have made in years. I'm no music expert, but I know what I like, and I love that one.

Come on, guys, give The Oaks a break. They have some great talent there, and they sure know how to entertain an audience.

Okay, all you Oak Ridge Boys fans, let's get together and give the *Country Music Magazine* record reviewers a great big raspberry!

Linda Nellen
Rock Springs, Wyoming

And no whipped cream, either.—Ed.

The Mighty Mellencamp—or, Bane, Take a Bow

I would just like to say thank you to Michael Bane for a brief but well-written update on John Cougar Mellencamp's latest album, *The Lonesome Jubilee* in Record Reviews in the January/February issue. Like Bane, I agree that what makes this album is a "gut-level understanding and appreciation of what makes up American Music." Let's face it, recognition for John Cougar Mellencamp as a singer and as one of our greatest songwriters is long overdue. And what better way to do it than for *Country Music Magazine* to give him a good review.

DeDe Lyle
Moreno Valley, California



Conway Twitty was Jenkins.

Harold Jenkins/Conway Twitty

In the early 1950's, I went to Fort Smith Junior High in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

A friend of mine, James (Jimmy) Jenkins, went to school there too. At Jimmy's home were several pictures of a



man named Harold Jenkins whom Jimmy said was his older brother. The pictures looked a lot like Conway Twitty. Could they be the same person?

Every time I look at a picture of Conway, I can see Jimmy Jenkins.

By the way, I love your magazine! It's great! Where can I write to Conway Twitty?

Bob Roberts

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Conway Twitty's real name is Harold Jenkins. You can write to him at Twitty City, 1 Music Village Boulevard, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37075.—Ed.

Direct Me to Demo

I'd like to get started in the music business. I heard once on TV that you could go to a place at Opryland and record your own demo. If you have any information to help me find out more about this, I would appreciate it.

L.L.

Camden, Tennessee

The Opryland studio is just for fun. If you're serious about making your own demos, there are professional outlets in Nashville.—Ed.

My Hero, Ed Bruce

I guess it's true what they say...everybody has a hero. Mine is Ed Bruce. I had the honor of meeting him at the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo in February. He is such a great singer, and he has given so much to country music with little publicity or recognition in return.

I am 26 years old and have admired his music for years.

Vicky Mosher
McQueeney, Texas



Vicky Mosher caught up with hero Ed Bruce at the Rodeo in San Antone.

Who's Writing Those Record Reviews, Anyway?

I just received my *Country Music Magazine*. I'm a fairly new subscriber. I really like your magazine a lot except for one thing. I'd like to know where your magazine got the jerks who do the



Bags of Mail

Since the first of the year, we have received the most wonderful mail—not only lots and lots from our U.S. readers—the mailbags are groaning and the postmen are charging overtime—but also more letters than usual from interested fans across the sea. We have had inquiries of various kinds, including American cash sent

through the mail for a back issue, from The Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Italy, England, Nigeria, Spain, Sweden and Norway. And we've got the stamps to prove it. Thanks to all our European and African friends for their interest. We're getting to all their requests little by little.

record reviews? I mean, ever since the first copy I've received, I have never seen them say anything good about my favorite performers.

Like Hank Jr., Willie, Waylon and George Jones—just to name a few, although their opinion doesn't mean anything. Performers like Hank Jr. and Willie have more talent in their little finger than most of the others have in their *whole body!* I'd rather quit listening to country music than ever listen to the ones those jerks give good reviews to, people like Alabama and George Strait.

Craig Turner
S. Cle Elum, Washington

In trouble again.—Ed.

Review's Right About Rosanne Cash

I had to write because I couldn't agree more with Rich Kienzle's review of Rosanne Cash's *King's Record Shop* in the January/February issue. The album is the best I've heard in years, but that doesn't really surprise me. Rosanne has always done everything top notch. She is definitely the best singer around. But I feel she has been somewhat underrated. I think Rich Kienzle was right when he said she is ahead of her time.

I also just read two reviews of her in concert in *Rolling Stone Magazine* and *Cashbox Magazine*. Both were great.

Maybe everyone is catching on to something we already know.

Keep up the great work, Rosanne. Everyone's talkin' about you.

Chuck Walter
Staten Island, New York

Back in the ballgame.—Ed.

Boogie Down, Hank Jr.

I just want to say that John Morthland really tore up Hank Williams Jr.'s *Born to Boogie* album in your November/December issue. Are you sure this guy knows anything about good music? My husband and I are big fans of Hank's. We bought *Born to Boogie* and love it. We put it in the car stereo and keep listening to it over and over again. It happens to be one of our favorite tapes.

Christine Graham
Gelnhausen, West Germany
We can't win. But thanks for writing all the way from West Germany. Hank, your fans love you.—Ed.

Send Letters to the Editor to Country Music Magazine, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters. Sorry we can't answer each individual inquiry. We do read every letter and answer those which are representative here.

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Steve Wariner/"I Should Be With You"

Reba McEntire/"Reba"

Conway Twitty/"Still Your Dreams"

This is a record year for MCA Nashville. We're celebrating our 30th Anniversary.

And we're happy to say that the hits just keep on coming.

Take a look at this year's line-up. Hot new releases from today's country stars. And everyone's favorite classics now in CD. [World Radio History](#)



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FROM MCA NASHVILLE



George Strait "If You Ain't Lovin' You Ain't Livin'"

This hit doesn't feature any country singers. There are no drums or guitars. And it's not available on LP's, CD's or cassettes.

But it could end up making you a million bucks!

THE SWING FOR A MILLION SWEEPSTAKES.

It's your big chance to strike it rich.

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If your name is picked as a Grand Prize Winner, we'll whisk you off on American Airlines to Nashville for three days and two nights.

You get three fabulous days of entertainment at Opryland USA, "America's Musical Showplace"SM, and a baseball game at the Nashville Sounds stadium.

That's when things get really exciting.

Picture yourself up at bat. The crowd's cheering. You get three pitches.

Drive the ball out of the park and you'll drive away with a brand new Dodge Dakota Sport truck.

Hit a second home run and you'll bat in a million dollars!

And to show you that we're real sports, we'll give away a Dodge Dakota Sport Truck, even if there are no heavy hitters. And you also have a chance to win one of these other fabulous prizes:

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SECOND PRIZE

10 Pioneer PDM 50 Multiplay CD Players. This should be music to your ears. They're loaded with remote control, 32 step programming and 6 disc selection.

THIRD PRIZE

200 home videos. And not just any home videos. We're talking about George Strait—Live, featuring George Strait in concert, brought to you by MCA Home Video. It's like having George right in your living room.

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World's Best

People

A GIFT FOR MAMA

Young and gifted, **Randy Travis**, the Golden Boy of the Country Music Charts, has a heart as big as his talent. All of Marshville, North Carolina, probably knows that Travis presented his mama with a new car for Christmas. This made me prouder of Randy than any and all of his Number One records. I like mamas a whole lot. And I've had a lot of practice being a mama.

THANKS TO COUNTRY RADIO FROM HERE TO HOME

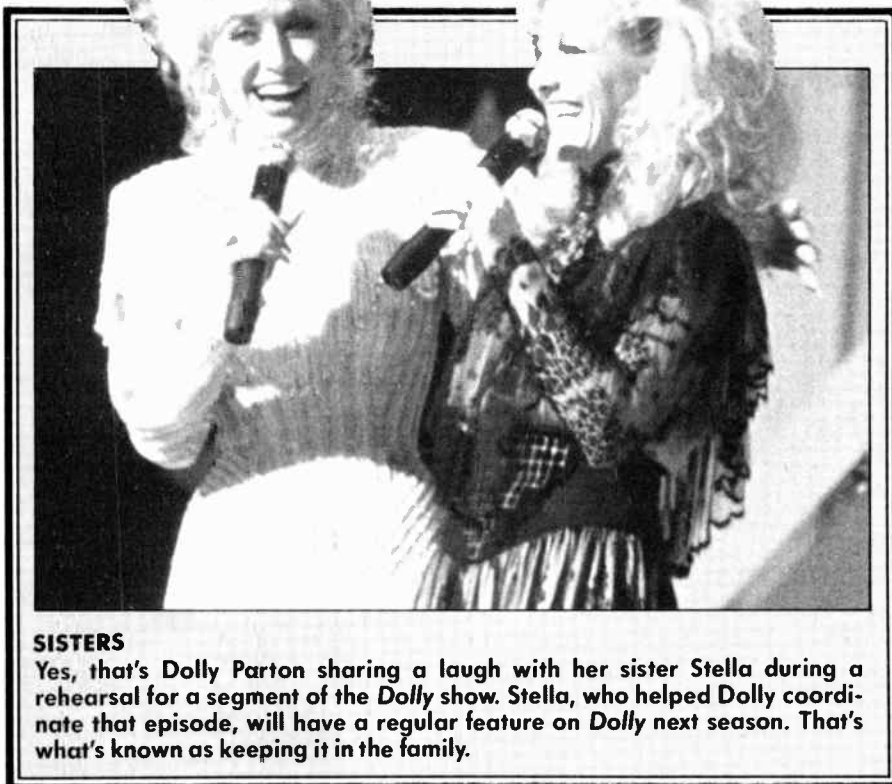
I gotta start in Music City and go to Knoxville, Asheville, Hickory, Statesville and Winston Salem, North Carolina, to say thanks for all the great country music between here and home in Caswell County, North Carolina. Hope I didn't miss nobody. One thing for sure, the babies will sleep as long as the music is playing. Even when our babies are awake, if music is going they don't cry. Of course, all kids aren't *that* perfect!

ROY CLARK STILL AFTER THE BIG ONE

Don't you know that **Roy Clark** is well off? It don't matter if he is, he hasn't stopped reaching and stretching. Last August he was made a member of the Grand Ole Opry, and I reported it in this column in this magazine. That is not the last thing on Clark's mind. He's just signed a recording contract with Capitol Records. Aren't you proud that some of the labels still have sense enough not to let these big fish go before their time? And aren't we all happy to have some more Roy Clark music fixing to come on the air.

WHEN THE LIVING DIES, YET STILL LIVES

It was a sad day for us in country/bluegrass music when the **Johnson Mountain Boys** hung up the fiddle, bow and five-gallon hats in exchange for computers and real estate. Yes, you read me right. Can you believe it? There's got to



SISTERS

Yes, that's **Dolly Parton** sharing a laugh with her sister **Stella** during a rehearsal for a segment of the *Dolly* show. **Stella**, who helped Dolly coordinate that episode, will have a regular feature on *Dolly* next season. That's what's known as keeping it in the family.

be a zillion folks in the U.S.A. who can work computers and sell real estate, but there was just one **Johnson Mountain Boys Band**. And they disbanded. No offense to realtors and computer operators, but when folks entertain that good, it just seems a sin to me for them to turn in their guitar, banjo, bass, fiddle and mandolin and stop playing. It was good while it lasted. About the only thing left is the records and the memories of one of the greatest bluegrass bands to come down the pike in many a moon. Friends, I beg, beseech and dare you to support your favorites. Do not allow them to have to stop picking in order to make a living.

CLOWNS HANGING OUT WITH THE JUDDS? WHO'D A-THOUGHT IT?

The Greatest Show on Earth meets the Greatest Show on Earth when **The Judds** act as ringmasters for a forthcom-

ing **Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus**. I knew that mother and daughter duo could strut their stuff, but I never once thought about them clowning around with horses or horsing around with clowns. That's show biz, I reckon.

A GAL NAMED K.T.

Early on in her career, I was a **K.T. Oslin** fan. I attended her first party, and I attended a *New Country* taping at **The Cannery** which was her first live performance of *80's Ladies* album songs. The *80's Ladies* video killed me and I thought, this is like the wind. It will pass and like the rest of 'em, she will slough off...the next one will be lesser. Not true. "I'll Always Come Back" is another classic video, and the song is right up there with "80's Ladies" and "Do Ya." I have no idea how far **K.T.** will go with her music. But I got a feeling she will go as far as she wants to.

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editor: *Rochelle Friedman*

"k.d. lang is a rare talent with a great voice and an imagination to go along with it. Producing this album was not work but a constant amazement. As a singer, k.d. is anything she wants to be!"

Owen Bradley



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"I'M DOWN TO MY LAST CIGARETTE"

Produced By Owen Bradley



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World Radio History

People

TOO MANY COOKS



Sylvia, host of the new TV show *Holiday Gourmet* on *The Nashville Network*, talks with the audience as The Whites prepare for their Memorial Day outing. Sharon and Cheryl on either side of their dad, Buck White, are obviously amused at the getup on every side of Buck. The Whites prepared barbecued chicken on the grill and a seven-layer salad, and Buck never even had to use the fire extinguisher!

LEONARD, THE PICTURE MAKER

My good friend, Leonard Kamsler, perhaps the world's greatest picture taker, was in Music City for a session with the beautiful Miss Barbara Mandrell. Of all the folks in Nashville that he knows, he only asked one person to lunch. Me! My sons were really impressed that Leonard is also the official photographer for the Harlem Globe Trotters and will go with the group to both Russia and China in 1988. Leonard Kamsler has taken many a great cover for *Country Music Magazine* and that's why he is one of our Contributing Editors.

WE BENEFIT FROM BENEFITS

One of the more worthwhile benefits in this City of Music is the Fraternal Order of Police benefit for under-privileged children. They have a wonderful camp in Mt. Juliet where my buddy Det. Mark Garafola and a bunch more of the good guys in blue spend time without pay during the summer to see that children get to go to camp that otherwise couldn't. Folks on the row that have helped with this very worthwhile char-

ity are CBS-ers Joe Casey and Kay Smith, BMI-er Harry Wariner, hillbillies Ricky Skaggs and Jerry Reed, Merit Music's Norro Wilson and Mercury/Polygram's Debbie Banks. Let's give a hand to these good folks and everyone who helps a child smile, swim, laugh and enjoy these benefits.

GRIFFITH TO IRELAND

MCA's Nanci (with an i) Griffith crosses the big pond for Ireland. Her second trip in a year. I gotta learn to swim or sing so I can go someplace.

WHITLEY ALA FRIZZELL

Hopefully the Keith Whitley/Garth Fundis pairing in the recording studio will be the answer to the question I've been asking: "When is somebody gonna produce Keith the way I want to hear him?" From what I hear, the song they're banking on is the old Lefty Frizzell classic, "I Never Go Around Mirrors." Know what? They used Allen Frizzell, Lefty's baby brother, to sing the harmony. This one should buy the farm for Keith.

AN ANGEL IN THE FAMILY

Vanessa Mandrell Boyer made her debut in the world recently. Daughter of Irlene Mandrell and Ric Boyer, Vanessa joins brother Deric, who was two on Christmas Day. All the fans will know that young Deric was born on the birthdate of his famous aunt, Barbara Mandrell. Irlene is the dingy Mandrell on *Hee Haw* each week. Grandparents Irby and Mary Mandrell are awfully proud, so I hear.

EYE SAW

Yep, I saw that cute Mark Miller of Sawyer Brown at O'Charley's having lunch. Girls, that guy *must* have to go to the bathroom just like the rest of us. He did, in fact, walk by my table (I might' nigh touched him) and into the door marked *Men*. The first time I ever saw a door that said *Men*, why I went in to get me one, and got throwed out!

And I saw Ronnie McDowell having dinner at one of my favorite restaurants, El Chico, where they serve wonderful Mexican food. Plus I saw that pretty Ricky Van Shelton coming out of the Welk Building and into my dreams.

I saw K.T. Oslin going into the Music Mill, where she records with my good friends Harold Shedd, Jim Cotton and Joe Scaife.

And I saw Don Williams. The Gentle Giant was on Music Row. We talked about the old days when he was as poor as I am now. Now, friends, that was long ago and far away.

I saw Eddie Rabbitt with flying colors! White, Gray and Greene! Eddie was hosting *Nashville Now* for vacationing Ralph Emery, and his musical guests were The Whites, Dobie Gray and Jack Greene. Wouldn't you call that a colorful show? I did and I saw the show.

I saw Marty Stuart at CBS. He should be there. That's where he makes records.

I saw Mr. Roy Acuff and a carload of folks driving across the back of the Harvey's parking lot in Madison and later I saw them dining at Morrison's. The drive across the parking lot was to avoid traffic on busy Gallatin Road. The rations were at Morrison's because they are good.

I saw Cheryl White of The Whites backcombing her hair backstage at the Opry.

I saw Wilma Lee Cooper getting out of her Cadillac in the Opry parking lot.

I saw Johnny Russell driving down 17th Avenue in an alley! Why did I see

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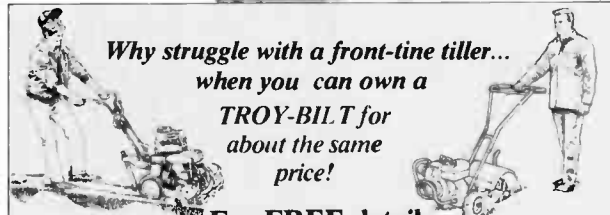
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People

him in an alley? I was in the alley too! Avoiding traffic.

I saw Little David Wilkins at Bellshire Grocery. He has lost a 'person' in weight! I think he said about a hundred and a quarter pounds.

UNTAPPED MOTHERLODE

Producer **Richie Albright** assures me that Polygram up-and-comer **David Lynn Jones**, who topped the Top Ten with his "Bonnie Jean (Little Sister)" single, has got a suitcase filled with uncut jewels—meaning more songs like that one—in Arkansas where he hangs his hat. We will see, Richie, when we hear them. So far he has recorded all good 'uns.

THE VERY IMPORTANT MEDIA-RADIO

When the mighty powers of the airwaves convened in Music City in 1988 as part of The Country Radio Seminar, they were introduced to a well-known face—**Hank Williams Jr.**, who entertained. Earlier in the proceedings, executive director **Frank Mull** and his radio execs had attended the New Faces Show, which is a way of introducing new talent to the DJ's of the airwaves. In the past, the New Faces show has been credited with the boosting of now-major stars like Ala-

bama and **Ricky Skaggs**. Those who performed on this year's New Faces show were **Foster & Lloyd**, **Nanci Griffith**, **David Lynn Jones**, **Patty Loveless**, **Tim Malchak**, **New Grass Revival**, **K.T. Oslin**, **Ride the River**, **SKB** and **Ricky Van Shelton**.

May we never forget our friends in radio. So let us appreciate **Frank Mull** and staff for the great job they do annually for the DJ's. Radio and fans are the two main ingredients that put the food on our tables. We appreciate both. And also all the new faces who keep our music fresh and exciting.

TWINNING

40-year-old **Rex Allen Jr.** and his wife **Judy**, who is pushing the same age, are anticipating twins most any day now. Also, **Craig Bickhardt** and wife **Eileen** are the proud parents of **Jacob Wilson Bickhardt** and **Aislinn Julia Bickhardt**. Craig is the "B" of the MTM Records group **SKB**. The "S" of the group, **Thom Schuyler**, and his wife **Sarah** are also expecting but not twins. The "K" is **Fred Knobloch**.

AIRBORNE RECORDS LAUNCHED

Airborne Records, Nashville's newest independent label, means to be in competition with the biggies. President



SEEING DOUBLE

Remember country music's love affair with duets some years back? Time was that you couldn't turn on your radio without hearing at least one pair of country artists every hour. Well, two of the most successful duets are reuniting and taking their shows on the road again. **Jim Ed Brown** and **Helen Cornelius** (above) have announced plans for a national tour, marking the first time they will appear together since 1980. They had many hits, including "I Don't Want to Have to Marry You," and won the CMA's Duo of the Year Award in 1977.

The CMA's Duo of the Year in both 1981 and 1982 was **David Frizzell** and **Shelly West**. With hits such as "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma" and "Texas State of Mind," they were another couple who made headlines and topped charts for a while. They have also announced plans to reunite for a select number of dates this year.

Who knows, with all the cycles in country music, these two acts might be starting another trend. Anyone hear from **Willie Nelson** lately?

FINAL BOW

We lost a number of legends and gifted performers in the last months of 1987, all of whom will be missed—and remembered—for their contributions.

Two major performers, both known for their work on *Hee Haw*, died in August of 1987. **Kenny Price**, also known for his 1960's hits for RCA, "Walkin' on New Grass" and "Sheriff of Boone County," and his TNN Travel series *Wish You Were Here*, died suddenly of a heart attack August 4th. He was 56.

Also claimed by heart trouble later that month was veteran *Hee Haw* performer and mainstay **Archie Campbell**. One of the world's best known country comedians, Archie died August 29th at age 72, following a lengthy hospitalization. After years of working on WNOX radio in Knoxville, Tennessee, he joined the Opry in 1958 and was with *Hee Haw* when it started in 1969. Archie was long considered one of the pillars of the show, as both performer and writer.

Charline Arthur, 58, star of the *Big D Jamboree* and RCA Victor recording artist, died in November. Her tough onstage image (in the era of **Kitty Wells**, she wore western pants outfits, unheard of at the time) and snarling, bluesy records predated **Wanda Jackson** and **Patsy Cline**.

Molly O'Day, 65, whose soulful traditional voice earned her a reputation as the "female Hank Williams," died December 5 in Huntington, West Virginia, of cancer. She and husband **Lynn Davis** had led the Cumberland Valley Folks and recorded for Columbia in the late 1940's. Among her best-known numbers were the classic "Tramp on the Street" and "Poor Ellen Smith." O'Day and Davis eventually became exclusively gospel artists and by 1952 left music to become fulltime evangelists.

H.W. "Pappy" Daily, co-founder of Starday Records and **George Jones'** longtime musical mentor, also died December 5.

Tiny Moore, 66, gifted electric mandolinist and arranger with **Bob Wills** and his **Texas Playboys**, **Billy Jack Wills** and, in the 1970's, **Merle Haggard's Strangers**, died December 15 of a heart attack while performing in Jackpot, Nevada. Moore was slated to be a part of "Playboys II," the new Texas Playboy alumni band led by steel player **Herb Remington**, before his untimely death.

—Rich Kienzle

John Jossey has announced the signing of superstar **Mickey Gilley**, who will be produced by Grammy-winning producer **Larry Butler**. The company has also purchased the tracks of a **Mickey Newbury** album titled *A Legend in a New Age*. **Frank Jones**, former head of both Capitol and Polygram Records, is associated with the new conglomerate, as is my personal friend **John Lomax**, who is just as famous as me!

People

T GRAHAM TAKES THE CAKE



You never know what to expect when you are on the road and it happens to be your birthday. For T Graham Brown, his band members decided to celebrate in style. Their idea, present the cake a la Brown, instead of a la mode. Pictured together are Joe McGlohon, saxophone player; guitar player Michael Thomas, T Graham Brown and keyboardist Garland Craft. Not pictured is keyboard player Greg Wetzel who threw the cake. Incidentally, T Graham turned 33.

guitars and jugs for blowing and drinking from (but not necessarily in that order). Acuff's first song on the Opry was "The Great Speckled Bird." He encored four or five times, according to the 84-year-old legend from East Tennessee. When asked how he felt about being a member of the Opry for half a century, Mr. Acuff replied, "Fifty years is a pretty long time."

GOING ON 90

Herman Crook, the only original member of the Grand Ole Opry, will be on the top side of 90 next birthday. Retiring? Nope. He's still on the Opry each and every Saturday night.

CLOWER WRITES BOOKS AND LEAVES 'EM LAUGHING

Jerry Clower, funnyman, author and deacon in the Baptist Church, has a new book out titled *Life Ever After*. You can buy the book in your local bookstore, according to Clower, who is, by-the-by, also an Opry member.

RESTLESS IS ONLY A NAME FOR A GROUP WITH HEART

Restless Heart has a right to brag these days. Their album *Wheels* has been certified Gold...meaning the record has sales totaling over 500,000. Congratulations and keep 'em coming.

CHET HAGAN WEARING A DIFFERENT HAT

Famed for his work in producing country music television, Chet Hagan has embarked upon another "horse farm." If this statement makes no sense, it will when you read Hagan's forthcoming novel titled *Bon Marche*. It's an American dream with a cute twist. The book deals with life or existence during the 1700's and 1800's. It must have been a blast during those times to have lived in the big house with servants to fill your wash basin and empty your potty. As I daydreamed on this way of life, reality hit me like a ton of bricks. Had I lived during that time, with my luck I probably would have been a field hand. A hoe handle always did fit my hands!

AN ITEM

According to my sources, record producer Emory Gordy and starlet Patty Loveless are an "item." If those two can make love like they make music, I am here to tell you they will have heaven on

AN ALABAMA RECORD

That Southern Foursome Alabama have scooped the bankroll for 1987, thank you. Boasting ticket sales of over 17 million dollars, they were Number One in the country field and Number Ten in the overall concert field. Congratulations to Randy Owen, Teddy Gentry, Jeff Cook and Mark Herndon.

HANGING OUT AT THE OPRY

Boxing great, Randall "Tex" Cobb, showed up backstage at the Grand Ole Opry. A country music fan, Cobb was definitely in Hillbilly Heaven as he walked among the stars. Course, nobody didn't try to start no junk with the king-sized Tex.

110,000!

I wish The Statler Brothers would give me their mailing list and I could sell each address for a dollar. I'd stop work for a couple of years and go to Florida and un-lax. Can you believe that the talented four sent out 110,000 holiday greetings? That's what I call fans.

20% AND SMILING?

Talking with super-songsmith Paul Overstreet about some gospel songs for The Whites, he allowed as how he was glad I called. Said he had some new gospel material that he hadn't put on tape and would since I called. Being the

aggressive lady I am, I immediately asked for the 20% norm that managers usually ask of their artists. After laughing, Paul said this classic line, "Hazel, ain't it something. When folks used to tell us what to do, we would tell them where to go. Now when they tell us what to do, we pay them 20%!"

LYNN ANDERSON HORISING AROUND

The talented singer took two first places in national celebrity horse competitions. Ms. Anderson would have to promise me a rose garden and an unhurt backside for me to even consider riding a horse.

2nd GENERATION HAGGARD MIGHT CONNECT WITH THIS TUNE

The song "I Wonder Why Trains Make Me Lonesome" could be the signature song for Marty Haggard, son of Merle Haggard—the singingest hillbilly that ever wrote "Mamma Tried." Written by Paul Overstreet and Thom Schuyler, the song must appeal to the young Hag. He sings it like it was his.

HALF A CENTURY AND STILL SINGING

On February 19, 1988, the King of Country Music, Mr. Roy Acuff, celebrated 50 years as a member of the world-famed Grand Ole Opry. Roy was the first singer on the Opry. Before him, there was string music only—fiddles, banjos,

earth. Ain't no use of them going to heaven when they die. I almost spilled the dishwasher the night I heard Patty belting "If My Heart Had Windows" on the *Nashville Now* show on TNN.

'CORDING TO BILLBOARD

Yep, 'cording to *Billboard Magazine*, MCA Records is the Number One label of the year...ain't nothing new. They've been Number One for three years running. Ever since Jimmy Bowen moved in, they've been Number One.

CONDOLENCES

Condolences to two friends—**John Lomax** on the loss of his brother and **Frank Mull** on the death of his mother.

BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS COMES TO NASHVILLE

Our own **Jeannie Seeley** is starring in the role of Miss Mona, made famous by our own **Dolly Parton**. Of course Dolly played Mona in the movie version, and Jeannie is at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. Jeannie's first acting job delighted everybody. She is a natural, and when it comes to singing, there is just none better.

ANTICIPATION

Dolly Parton's little sis **Rachel Dennison**, star of TV's *9 to 5*, and hubby **Richard Dennison**, who sings with the *a capella* singing group on Dolly's TV show, are expecting their first child. Word I get is sister Dolly just can't wait. Rachel is the youngest Parton and has spent a lot of time with her famed sis and sis' husband, the elusive **Carl Dean**. Matter of fact, Rachel met Richard when both were singing backup with Dolly a few years back.

ON THE DOLLY SUBJECT

Look closely at the screen when Dolly and her show are on...see the piano player? He sits to the left of Dolly. Handsome as a movie star. That's **Gary Smith**, husband of **Christy Forester** of The Forester Sisters. Christy is also a good-looking doll.

HONKY TONK ANGEL FOR REAL

One of the televangelists exclaimed, after much deliberation, that angels are without sex, to which I replied, "I been an angel for years." Now somebody write a song about that!

GMM UPDATE: JAN HOWARD



"**T**here was a piece in the paper this morning—it said 'Jan Howard, author-singer,'" says Jan Howard. And, since she's taken acting lessons, she may someday add a third title. In any case, 'singer' is currently taking a back seat to 'author,' the result of *Sunshine and Shadows*, her autobiographical book dealing with the loss of two sons. "It isn't a showbiz book," she cautions. "That's not the focal point. It could be any woman's story. I'm writing a fiction novel now," she adds. "I love to write.

"For a while I just wanted to curl up and die," she says, speaking of the period following the 1968 death of her son Jimmy in Vietnam. "But...I knew...I couldn't do that to my other sons. Then David died (a suicide in 1972) and I couldn't do that to (surviving son) Corky. And I couldn't do that to myself." Writing the book, she says, was a catharsis. "You can't begin to heal until you face something. I've found it's a lot easier to talk about it. The grief is still there, but it's inside me and it's personal.

"I'm not recording at the moment," she explains. "My life has just been so taken up with this book. I'm kind of thinkin' about (recording) now, but it would have to be a very special project and a real hit song. I don't work the road that much. I do some. I never liked the travelin', gettin' there, this and that. But I do love to sing. Of course I'm at the Opry every week I'm in Nashville."

But Jan Howard is a strong woman, and her gentle, thoughtful demeanor aside, her views on today's Nashville are surprisingly blunt. "I really don't know how young artists and beginning songwriters get heard now," she declares. "Everybody has a closed-door policy and it's lousy." She cites ex-husband and songwriting legend Harlan Howard, who "got heard because he sent a song to a publishing company. Now they don't accept outside songs. They have in-house writers. It shuts all the others out.

"The record companies are not

interested in anyone that's known or has a track record. That's why I really haven't even approached anybody about recording. They want people that no one has ever heard of, and they've got to have the bucks, the band and everything before they ever record. It's totally backward. They want an artist that they can build. Connie Smith has one of the greatest voices I've ever heard, and she's not recording."

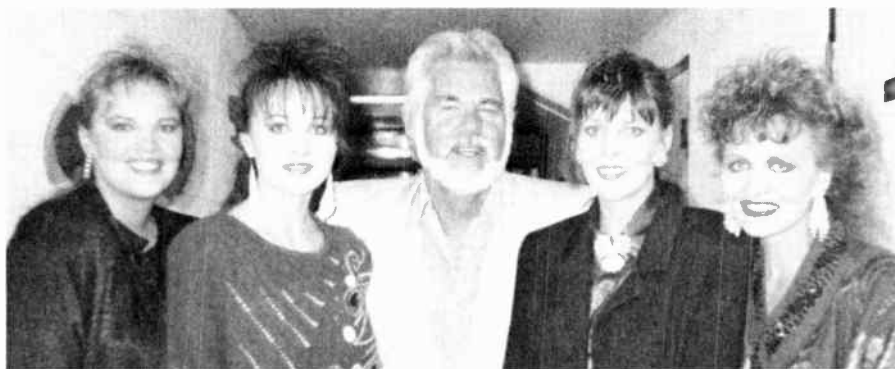
Anger flares as she complains, "Today's record executives and promotional people don't know *anything* about country music. I heard one call Ray Price, Ray Pierce. That shows ignorance. They shouldn't even be in the business. People are not people (to them). They're just dollar signs."

As far as country radio is concerned, she recalls touring with Bill Anderson, doing live interviews at stations along the way. "Now," she complains, "you can't do a live interview. They cannot play your records even if they're huge fans. They have to play what some consultant said they could play. That's why the Grand Ole Opry is filled every show, every time, because the people cannot hear basic, good country music in their hometown and on the radio stations.

"I'm not talking from sour grapes because I've had a lot of wonderful years in the business, but I hate to see it turn its back on the people who are the mainstays of country music, and I'm not just talkin' about myself. I'm talkin' about the Stonewall Jacksons, Jimmy Dickens and Jack Greenes." She is, however, enthusiastic about many younger traditionalists, particularly Holly Dunn, Highway 101 and Ricky Skaggs.

"I feel like good wine, I've gotten better with time. I've grown as a performer. I've grown to where I love the audience instead of bein' scared to death of them. There comes," concludes Jan, "a time when you need to look forward to something else. I hope I'll be singin' the rest of my life, but you never know." —*RICH KIENZLE*

People



New Warner Bros. star Kenny Rogers and The Forester Sisters gather backstage to kick off their 1988 tour. From left to right are Kim, Christy, Kenny, June and Kathy.

ROGERS LABEL HOPPING

Superstar Kenny Rogers has hopped over to Warner Brothers Records where his friend for nearly 20 years, Jim Ed Norman, is at the helm. No word at this writing who will produce the Rogers recordings, but if time allows I'd bet the house and the farm that young Kyle Lehning might lay his heavy hand on this little project. I've told you before, Kyle produces Dan Seals and Randy Travis.

RCA/BARRY BECKETT/LORRIE MORGAN TEAM

Let's hear it for the big man from Muscle Shoals as he goes into the studio with the beautiful Miss Lorrie Morgan. Recently signed with RCA, Mr. Barry Beckett will fill the producer's chair when the lovely Lorrie goes into the recording studio. Lorrie sings her buns off. If you don't believe me, ask Keith Whitley if she can sing. He knows. He's her husband.

THE BIZ OF PROMOTING SHOWS

Pro Tours, a new promotion company, has some very talented owners. I mean, Naomi and Wynonna Judd. The mother/daughter duo needed someplace to put their money that counted, and management apparently thought promoting shows would count. Their first multi-city tour stars the red haired Judds, the blonde Tammy Wynette and the most wanted man in show biz, Randy Travis.

I DIDN'T LIE—SOMEBODY LIED

The first Number One single for Ricky Van Shelton is "Somebody Lied" from his *Wild Eyed Dream* album. Now, girls,

leave that one alone. He is mine. Anything that pretty belongs at my house. Don't you know his hometown of Grit, Virginia, is just bursting at the seams what with the success of their son? Grit is so small, it's not even on the map, but I hear it's near Roanoke. I just wish Ricky Van was near me!

THEY'RE GONNA PUT ME IN THE MOVIES

Multi-talented Randy Travis is going to appear on the big screen come August. Randy will portray a bartender in the film *Young Guns* which stars Charlie



Number One artist Ricky Van Shelton

Sheen, Emilio Estevez and a host of others.

SORRY I MISSED THAT JAM SESSION

Vacationing Nashvillians Johnny Cash and Tom T. Hall were in Jamaica, each at his own place, as was Paul McCartney. Somehow the three got together for a little informal passing of the guitar and sing-along. The trio ended up at the Cash island home, Cinnamon Hill, and co-wrote a song. What a way to have a vacation. Why, I've dreamed of winning a vacation to Hawaii and running into Willie Nelson on the beach. He has a home there. And I am sorry I missed the above mentioned jam session. I'm always at the wrong place.

FAN FAIR BEGINS JUNE 6

Now, everybody who has written to me, the magazine or the stars, you have the answer in living black and white!! Fan Fair starts June 6, 1988. If you plan to come, be sure you have reservations for a room. There will be *no* empty rooms that week. Be sure you wear loose, comfortable clothing and shoes. Ladies, leave your high heels at home. Sneakers or any comfortable flats are suitable. There is no use heading for Nashville without advance ticketing for Fan Fair. You must have tickets in hand or you will be left in the sunshine or rain, no matter who you know.

The price of the ticket includes a couple of meals daily. The food is adequate and sometimes delicious. There's cold drinks, sandwiches and knick-knacks on the grounds. Please, do not depend on anyone for anything during this week. All of us in the music business are tied up in some fashion with work. Our families don't see us or hear from us unless it is the crack of dawn or midnight. All the shows are held outside, so bring an umbrella in case the old master decides the angels need to cry on country music fans.

This week will be one that you will want to encore and encore, if you are a country music fan. You will never be closer to your favorites. Also, you will be well entertained all week long. Get all the information before leaving home. Read it. Know before leaving home which show you want to attend. Read the map and figure the closest route to your destination. It sounds harder than it is. If I can do it, anybody can. You all come.

For ticket and all other info, write to Fan Fair, 2804 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37214. ■



DWIGHT Y

It may look like Dwight Yoakam is capitalizing on his looks and his salty conversation, but in fact, the boy is sincere. He loves the music he makes, and it comes in a pure, genuine stream out of his past.

I'm sitting in what I imagine to be just Dwight Yoakam's kind of place, the lobby of an artfully renovated old Hollywood Boulevard hotel positively reeking of the kind of ruling-class *chic* for which the status-crazed Yuppies of our times pay gladly through their surgically reconstructed noses. It's far, far away from the world of Dwight's music, but just down the hill from his home.

I've been here a while now, swilling \$3-a-cup coffee under the snooty scrutiny of the hotel staff, because this is where Dwight's manager has suggested we meet before going to see Dwight himself. And Dwight's manager, after repeatedly rearranging my schedule these past few days, is of course late for this final date.

I say "of course" because the flavor of our negotiations so far has suggested that the Commandments of Cool, not the courtesy of country, are in force over the project. And Cool's First Commandment, obeyed religiously by all cool artists in their dealings with everybody but their bankers, is *Keep 'Em Waiting*. You're just not hip if you're on time.

I'm not surprised, therefore, but I am irritated. And gradually that irritation escalates. By the time my coffee bill reaches double digits I'm just plain offended by the whole *idea* of Dwight Yoakam. I've gotten to where a lot of other country music professionals have been ever since he first started making noise; the boy's cool pictures, hot words and borrowed music just plain piss me off. Consider first the cool pictures, those calculated studies in quintessential cowpunk chic; they're so perfectly

by Patrick Carr

YOAKAM

Remembers The Hillbilly Cats



“Musicians shouldn’t really have to be good politicians, y’know?”

late-80's *Vogue*-Western hip, affairs of such moody, hollow-cheeked, cooler-than-thou 1950's-retro rebel-without-a-cause trendiness, that unless you're one of the MTV-fixated bimbos at whom they seem to be aimed, you just want to puke. Splatter stale Schlitz and half-digested chili and less mentionable hard-core country commodities all over the stuck-up little fashion plate's skintight custom-kneeholed Levi's.

Then there's the borrowed music, Dwight's Retro Country style. It sounds good—in fact it sounds *real* good, a pause which refreshes mightily between all the bright whitebread pseudo-rock and lounge-lizard ballad schmaltz that passes for “country” radio these days—but don't you wonder why that's the music he's chosen? Could it not be that one day a few years ago in Tinseltown young Dwight was sitting around his Hollywood Hills apartment, wondering how to break out of his poverty rut, and all of a sudden it hit him with all the force of a macrobiotic vegetables *à la denté* high: *Hip Retro Country! That's The Ticket!*

Yes...Could he not have decided to adopt the classic sound of post-World War II honky tonk because *a*) it would be a novel new ingredient in the local hip music scene, where the Hollywood purple-hairs had already demonstrated their appetite for Retro rock, blues and just about every other form of recycled American music *but* country; and because *b*) it had crossover potential? Might he not have realized—Oh, yeah, Bingo!—that he could sell this stuff not only to the hipsters of the young urban leisure class, but to a potentially much bigger market of hicks and squares, all those frustrated real-country record buyers strangling out there in the hinterlands on a force-fed diet of schmaltz and pseudorock? In other words, might this borrowed music not mean *Goodbye, low budget; hello, hillbilly heaven?*

All of which is bad enough—so far in this scenario what we've got is that despicable commodity, your basic big-city carpetbagger ripping off our roots—but the hot words are even worse.

Really now: where the hell does this Hollywood Hills hipster think he got the right to sit around out there in Tofuville, moaning about Nashville's middle-of-the-road, audience-expanding, tradition-neglecting way of doing things? Where was *he* when country wasn't cool, when all those hardworking music business executives he's always slandering were doing whatever they had to do to make our industry grow?

And doesn't he realize that in country, no matter how

nontraditional the music's gotten, certain old-fashioned rules of social behavior still apply? In country, for instance, you don't even *think* of calling somebody a “(male appendage)” in public, especially not the Nashville boss of a major recording label, even if you *do* happen to be in dirty-mouthed England at the time and the gentleman in question has just fired Johnny Cash for not selling enough records.

Really, what's this boy's problem? He doesn't like progress? He doesn't believe in manners? Where's his gratitude? He's got a recording contract; he's selling records; why doesn't he keep his opinions to himself, just shut up and pick like everyone else? Do what he's told and love it?

We've got an answer for that. Controversy begets publicity, doesn't it? Free advertising. Enhanced consumer curiosity. And just as Dwight could have realized that the Retro music angle was already a proven ticket to high record sales (thank you, Ricky Skaggs *et al* in the mid-1980's), he might also have figured out that Nashville system-and-executive-bashing was a surefire method of attracting as much press as he could ever want (thank you, Waylon and Willie and the boys in the mid-1970's). Nashville's bosses are so unaccustomed to criticism from the creators of their product, you see, that if they get it, they're going to overreact. The wires are going to hum, the gossip mill's going to go into overtime, and the critic's going to get famous.

Ultimately, then, what we have here might be an unusually smart, expertly manipulative big-city carpetbagger, a deft exponent of the sucker punch. When for instance Steve Earle voiced the feelings of a significant proportion of the Nashville music business community by scrawling the words *Dwight Yoakam eats sushi* on the walls of an MCA Records elevator, and that quote double-timed it straight through the gossip mill to every country music pressperson in the world, it's quite possible that Steve and everyone else involved might have been doing exactly what the sushi eater wanted them to.

All of the above is wrong. Sick, twisted, paranoid piffle. About as far from the reality of Dwight Yoakam as it's possible to get.

Dwight's reality dawns on me personally in stages. First, after his manager has whisked me upwards through the chic little curves of the Hollywood Hills streets to his home, there's the sudden shock of how he really looks and acts.



This can't be the moody, arrogant, ultracool hipster of the album covers. The man before me, simultaneously trying to control his dog, answer his telephone and brew me a cup of tea in his bare, scruffy, no-frills little one-bedroom apartment, acts like any good ole friendly boy and looks like he pumps gas for a living. The scuffed boots, the worn jeans, the black T-shirt, the black leather biker's jacket, the baseball cap with the hair straggling out this way and that; *this* image suggests the very reverse of urban trendiness, your basic smalltown Hank Jr. fan keeping his manners about him through a busy swing shift. Either that, or some sort of skinny, awkward, overgrown puppy tripping over his own enthusiasm. So forget Mr. Cool; he's an image in the purest sense, existing only in the camera's eye.

Forget too any suspicion that Dwight might have borrowed his music with impure intent. That possibility disappears pretty quickly once the tea's brewed and he and I settle down to talk.

We get to the question by an indirect route starting at the subject of material security; whether or not, after first album sales of some 850,000 and figures for *Hillbilly Deluxe* still climbing almost as high, Dwight Yoakam's career is firmly established. Dwight's opinion is "Hell, no. No way do I have it made."

Basically, the present satisfies him, but he doesn't count on the future at all. "You see," he says, "I've been very successful because a lot of people who work for a living have thought enough of the music to spend an hour's worth of their pay on a Dwight Yoakam record. That's afforded me the luxury of buying a real bed instead of just the mattress I slept on for nine years. It's moved me out of one room into this place, and it's provided the security to buy my own house up the hill here. But I'd be naive to think all this will continue. The music business is fickle enough as it is, and then too I may have done a great disservice to the music by my overzealous stating of my opinions. Politically, I'm not at all in good standing with the powers that be.

"So really, I have no idea how my career will go from one day to the next. That's why I bought the house. I figure that if nothing else, I'll end up with a place to live."

He laughs at himself. "I guess that's my working class background, y'know? *Get a house, get a mortgage, put the shotgun up over the front door so they can't rush you, take it away from you...* that's a big part of me, all that stuff. It's like really wanting to help my folks. Both my parents are still working, and one of my great hopes for my career is

that I'll be successful enough to help them quit early."

More or less accidentally, we've hit on something essential here; if you really want to know what makes Dwight Yoakam tick, what makes him make the kind of music and say the kind of things he's famous for, you ask him about his folks. Let him go back to Kentucky and Ohio in the 1950's and 1960's, remember the special world into which he was born. Let him tell you, for a start, about his father.

"My dad had a Texaco station, but before that he had a career in the Army," he begins. "He'd probably have stayed in if it hadn't been for me and my mother. He'd gone in right after World War II and he was a staff sergeant, y'know, a lifer, and he dug it. He was a hillbilly cat that saw the world; he was out there hittin' the juke joints, havin' the G.I. blues.

"So really, he was one of *them* guys. The black gabardine pleated pants with the little thin belt, the two-tone shoes, the pink and black gabardine shirt with the rolled-up sleeves—I mean, he had a pompadour with the curl, he had it all. And really, those were the cats. They were the beginning of White 20th Century Cool in America; the white curators of cool were the hillbilly cats. All those guys. Roy Orbison—I got to meet him on a plane a while ago, and you want chill factor? That guy had it, man! Carl Perkins. Johnny Cash with that gassed-back prison haircut, trembling and sweating out them bennies. Cash writing 'I Walk the Line' when he was on guard duty in the Army in Germany, man, pacing out them steps...That's it, man! That's it!"

Obviously, these images cut right to the quick of Dwight Yoakam. Expressing them, he's so excited that he's stamping his boots on the boards of his porch, bumping around in his chair. The tape from this moment sounds like a stampede of Fender-crazed hillbilly elephants.

He calms down and explains more clearly. "You see, all those Okies who jumped in the Navy to get away from Oklahoma, the guys like my dad who wanted to get out of the Ohio Valley; they changed the world. They were the first generation in this country—and the last—who could buy a house and a car on factory wages, and that affluence, and the spirit those guys had, is what made rock 'n' roll possible, and everything else—the space age, everything. And of course it's what produced *us*, my generation. It's what gave us everything we have.

"So why do I make the kind of music I do? It's because I remember my dad, the hillbilly entrepreneur, being the first guy to bring home one of them aluminum foil Christmas trees, man! It's from remembering when Mom finally got wall-to-wall carpeting. It's from listening to all those Johnny Cash and Johnny Horton and Buck Owens records my dad played. Stonewall Jackson, too, like when Dad bought 'Don't Be Angry' for Mom; you know, like, *Here you go, darlin', listen to this, here's the way I feel*. I mean, I wrote 'Readin', Rightin', Rt. 23' because I remember standing outside the house on a Friday night, watching all those Ohio and Michigan license plates heading for their old homes in Kentucky, then watching them all heading back north to the factories again on Sunday night. I know what it was like for all those families who went north to find work after World War II, left their whole world behind them. We used to joke that people like us, who ended up in Columbus, were the ones who ran out of gas before they got to Detroit. Hillbillies, man, out there struggling to get their kids a better life..."

He pauses a moment, gazing out at the fairytale lights of the Hollywood Hills as he gropes for the best way of expressing himself.

"It's not like I'm living in the past exactly," he says. "It's more like why I called the first album *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.*; as a real fond remembrance of my parents' desire to have an outward sign of their success, like owning

a Cadillac. We couldn't afford one—my aunt and uncle got the Cadillac, we had Buicks, big ole Electra 225 convertibles—but that's the world I'm talking about in my music, with as much affection as I can bring to it. I see the beauty of my people's lives, and the greatest debt I owe is to them. They're who gave me the spiritual fire that allowed me to recreate the images of that world in music."

It's unusual, but certainly not unheard of, for a man's creative imagination to remain under the spell of his childhood memories, either positive or negative, throughout his life. In Dwight's case, obviously, those memories are exceptionally positive, and then too there's the fact that the soundtrack of his early life, the music of those first hillbilly cats his father loved so much, is strong stuff. The country and rockabilly records of the late 1940's through the mid-1960's still reverberate powerfully in millions of record collections, mine included; they have something—fire, originality, perhaps just an essential rightness of form and content and expression—that just isn't there in a lot of older or newer popular music.

As Dwight puts it, "It's tough to define what that quality is. It's easier to say what a lot of later country music, the post-1970's stuff, lacks: emotional austerity. I mean, I get a lot of criticism along the lines of *Your music's too simple; it's not sophisticated enough*, but man, it's that real simple, austere stuff that moves me! You start sophisticating it, and you lose its heart! I mean, I do this music because I love it, and I love it because it gets to me."

The bottom line, then, is very clear. Dwight Yoakam's no Tinseltown Carpetbagger. He hasn't borrowed his music. His father gave it to him, and he's owned it ever since.

As we've all gotten a bit tired of being told one way or another, Dwight Yoakam's had a problem getting his music accepted most of his life. This, it is said in the country music biz, has produced a chip on his shoulder, which in turn has caused him to say rude things about Nashville. In other words, his criticisms of Music Row individuals and practices are the result of personal sour grapes.

Let's talk about that.

Yes, it's true that Dwight's music was never very popular until it actually became available to large numbers of record buyers (at which point it became very popular indeed). When he was a kid in Ohio, tuned in to Buck Owens and The Stanley Brothers and Stonewall Jackson and all that other hard-line hillbilly stuff, his friends at school made fun of his tastes the same way the local adults mocked his parents' country accents. He'd be raving on about the echo effect on Hank Jr.'s cut of "Endless Sleep," they'd be wrinkling their noses, running for their Led Zeppelin records. When he first tried to sell his songs in Nashville, the best advice he got was that his stuff was just too country to record, he should take it to California, make a living on the Okie bar circuit. When he moved to California, nine years ago, he found that sure, he could make a living in the bars, but not with *his* kind of songs; he had to do covers of "Looking for Love" and all those other Urban Cowboy tunes. Even when Ricky Skaggs' success inspired Dwight to try Nashville again, in 1983, the message was the same: You're just too country, boy. People don't want that no more.

That's when he almost gave up. He'd been supporting himself with furniture-moving and delivery truck-driving jobs, the meanwhile trying to advance his music, for years, and he was tired, frustrated; going nowhere. He started thinking about giving up the music, ending up a teacher or something.

But he didn't. He'd fallen in with Pete Anderson, another hillbilly-cat worshipper from a transplanted country family, and together with their band, those two finally



"I see the beauty of my people's lives, and the greatest debt I owe is to them."

Dwight at 6 months with mother Ruth Ann. At age two and with family.



found a receptive audience: the roots-retro club kids who'd launched a fascinating variety of bands like The Blasters, Los Lobos, X, Lone Justice and others. So ironically, the first time Dwight Yoakam heard himself on the radio, singing a stone country song from the \$5,000, five-track E.P. which became the core of *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.*, it was part of a set which included songs by The Dead Kennedys, It Won't Hurt and The Butthole Surfers.

You know the rest. Dwight and Pete and the band got hot on the L.A. scene, Warner Brothers Records signed them to a national deal, allowing them to record exactly what they wanted exactly how they wanted (those were Dwight's terms), and the resulting album sold more than 850,000 copies.

That's a lot. One hell of a lot. Those sales did more than prove the point Dwight had been trying to make in Nashville for years: that a very large number of people out there share his memories and his taste in country music. The numbers also suggested that that audience is bigger than the audience at which the marketers of modern country music routinely set their sights; contemporary chart-topping country albums quite often achieve sales no higher than 100,000.

So really, Dwight Yoakam has nothing further to prove. He's been right all along, and all the career executives who've been refusing to let him into the Nashville family have been plain, no-doubt-about-it, absolutely, embarrassingly, incompetently *wrong*. By sending Dwight packing to California they passed on the opportunity to a) expand the marketplace for Nashville music, and b) earn their parent companies a big fat wad of money.

That's something to think about when the subject of chips on the shoulder arises, isn't it? If you were a Nashville music business executive, wouldn't *you* be inclined to bear a grudge against somebody who's just demonstrated that basically, you don't know which way is



His dad, David, and grandfather Luther Tibbs.

*“They were the first generation
in this country—
and the last—who could buy
a house and a car on
factory wages.”*

up? Might there not perhaps be a chip on *your* shoulder? Might *your* grapes not be somewhat less than sweet?

Dwight's attitude towards his own big mouth is complex. The first thing he's going to tell you is that all the remarks that have gotten him in trouble with the Nashville brass have been about treatment of artists other than himself, like his daddy's hero Johnny Cash.

Another point he'll make is that many of his views are shared by many other country artists; they've told him as much since he's been on the circuit among them. His hero Buck Owens, for instance, is squarely in his camp, and has become his buddy; Buck went through a lot of bad stuff in the 1960's very similar to what Dwight's going through in the 1980's. And then too (though it's not Dwight, but me who makes this point) there are in fact many, many people outside the offices of the major Nashville record companies who agree wholeheartedly with Dwight. The nation is full of musicians, both legendary and otherwise, who would sound a whole lot more pleasing on the radio than many of the pseudorockers and lounge lizards on the major record companies' "country" rosters.

But oh, well, as Dwight himself admits, "Dwight Yoakam's opinion has little or nothing to do with what goes on in the music business at large," and personally, he has very powerful reservations about saying another word on the subject of country music politics. He's become a lightning rod for journalists looking for controversial-copy-voltage, and he's getting tired of the flak he takes for giving in to the temptation to speak his mind. That's why he's quit giving interviews.

Dwight thinks the controversy has probably hurt him more than it's helped. It's kept him off some radio playlists, which means that even though he sells more records than five or six other big country stars put together, he doesn't

get to the top of the charts. Then too, he suspects it's closed him out of contention for CMA Awards. (The California-based Academy of Country Music loves him, but the bigger, more influential Nashville body has ignored him since he hit it big.) Dwight says he would accept a CMA award with no hard feelings and "appear on the Award Show with all the graciousness I could possibly bring to the occasion, because the fans watching deserve my respect," but most pundits agree that most likely, he won't be given such an opportunity. That's how the powers-that-be get their revenge.

Dwight recognizes this problem, and says that "the combination of opportunistic writers and my mouth has hurt the success of my music. Things I've said have ended up being interpreted as attacks on the Nashville music community as a whole, when I never meant to insult Nashville; everything I've said has been about specific issues and specific individuals. And really, nothing I've said in defense of the music or my own musical heroes has helped anyone at all."

He recognizes, then, that he really was naive. "I spoke out purely as a fan," he says, "and I guess I thought that people would understand the spirit behind what I said; what an enthusiast, what a zealot for the music I was. But they didn't.

"I don't know," he sighs. "It was all very disheartening, very disillusioning. Musicians shouldn't really have to be good politicians, y'know?"

Personally, I'm pretty interested in finding out *exactly* what Dwight thinks of the state of the country music business these days. I want to match it up with my own opinions. So I start asking him to tell me. But then we scramble to shut each other up. It really won't help, publishing this stuff.

"Yeah," says Dwight. "Really. I mean, I'm just not getting paid enough to say all that. You know as well as I do what's wrong with Nashville, and what's wrong with New York and L.A. If someone wants to hire me as a consultant...But no. People are gonna pick up on even *that* remark, say it's arrogant. Let's talk about something that can't be sensationalized. Let's talk about music, man. Let's talk about Stonewall Jackson! Let's talk about Faron Young!"

So that's what we do. Stonewall and Faron, Lefty and Hank, Buck and Merle (and Bill and Charlie, Lester and Earl, Jim and Jesse and Skeeter and Webb), all the great records we both grew up on. We talk about Emmylou and Willie and Gary Stewart in the 1970's, Waylon in the 1960's: "Those were the hillbilly cats then, man. I mean, late-60's Waylon, that hair, that leather vest, that leather guitar..." Then we branch out from music into books, politics, drugs (Dwight, a lifetime teetotaler, sees drug abuse as the death of the American dream); religion (he grew up in the Church of Christ listening to gospel ballads like "The Old Rugged Cross" and "In the Garden"); and whatever else comes up. Eventually, long after I've realized that Dwight in reality is not just the ultimate fan and a nice guy, but a person of considerable intelligence and great creative energy who's a hoot to talk to (people who get carried away easily often are, just as they often trip over themselves and worry about it too much), we both get tired and need to go to dinner.

Before we leave Dwight's apartment, though, the boy just has to pull out his family photo album. He has to show me the places and people his music's all about, detailing each of them with pride and love in his bare little California kitchen.

They're your usual kind of mementos, a few semi-formal portraits and lots of fuzzy snapshots of beat-up guitars, Buicks that should have been Cadillacs, and hillbilly music fans. ■



The Statlers bought their old schoolhouse for \$133,000. It serves as their world headquarters and museum. The Wurlitzer on the opposite page is full of Statler hits and memories.

Staunton, population 21,500, a small, stately city nestled in Central Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, seems to have more to do with some previous decade than it does with the current one.

Staunton's (pronounced *Stan-ton*) past is visible everywhere. The skyline is dominated by the tall steeples of Victorian churches; the immaculately restored downtown district is flanked by staid, old middle-class neighborhoods full of aging brick and wood frame houses with rambling porches and shutters painted in Williamsburg colors. Along the city's main boulevard there is a refreshing shortage of fast-food outlets. Just up the hill, almost within sight of the dilapidated old Stonewall Jackson Hotel, is the Greek Revival-style house where Woodrow Wilson was born in 1856. And just across the way is the old Trinity Episcopal Church which served as the capitol building for the twenty-four hours or so during Revolutionary War days when Staunton became the nation's capital.

But from the country music fan's per-

spective, Staunton is also the embodiment of more recent history—a day and time they've come to know and love through the music of The Statler Brothers. This durable gospel quartet turned country legend has, in the past two and a half decades, made its evocative, nostalgic musical images of Main Street and small-town America synonymous with the sleepy little city which the group has always claimed as its hometown.

The Statlers' presence is felt in countless ways—some subtle and some not so subtle. The standard "Stop in Staunton" Chamber of Commerce brochure found in rest stops along nearby Interstate 81 sports The Statlers' familiar mugs and touts their museum. "Open to the public for tours every weekday at 2 P.M." A map of the tiny downtown grid reveals a "Statler Boulevard," a "Statler Plaza," and a "Statler Complex." And up on the northwest end of town, across from the old renovated school house that serves as the group's world headquarters/museum, is Gypsy Hill Park, where their annual charity

fund-raising Fourth of July bash drew some 89,000 people last year—about two and a half times the town's real-life population! Scattered around town are also numerous office buildings, apartment complexes and other real estate holdings in which The Statlers hold vested interests.

Finally, of course, there is "Statler Central" itself, where The Statlers, in their own sentimental, yet thoroughly practical way, have managed to keep their own personal pasts at a convenient arm's reach: the old Beverly Manor Elementary School. Founding Statlers Harold and Don Reid attended this school as boys, as did some of Harold's five children. Don's present-day office is in the room which was his seventh-grade classroom. The entire building is now the group's world headquarters.

It seems appropriate that The Stats were actually riding on their float in the town's annual Fourth of July parade when they first noticed the "For Sale" sign in front of their old *alma mater*. Discussions about purchasing the two-building complex began right then and

THE STATLERS



Staunton's Hometown Heroes Roll On

Ask The Statler Brothers who they play for and they'll each say: the fans. And the fans have rewarded them with loyalty, adulation and acclaim. Bob Allen visits them in their offices and gets a behind-the-scenes look at how they make it in the music business without compromising their hometown values.

by Bob Allen

there. Several months and \$133,000 later, it was theirs.

For another half-a-million dollars they had it refurbished in keeping with its original charm. The polished wooden floors and old steam heaters still creak and clank delightfully. The gymnasium gleams, its painted brick walls done up in the school colors, and the basketball hoops still hang forlornly, as if waiting for the class of '57 to return and replay their championship game. Outside in the courtyard, the American flag waves atop its flag pole just as it did way back when. One entire room in the large brick building has even been set aside and restored as a replica of an early twentieth-century classroom, complete with straight-backed old wooden desks and a Bible on the teacher's desk right alongside a formidable-looking wooden paddle.

But one of the most intriguing rooms of all is the one where all four Statler Brothers decide to convene for an interview on this brisk, sunny early spring morning: the old school library, which now serves as the conference room. The

walls of the large, airy, second-story room are still jammed with shelves full of the basic geography, math, science and adventure books that you'd expect to find in an elementary school library.

The Statlers have made relatively few changes to the old library and those in order to accommodate their present-day needs. Part of the room has been partitioned off as a video library. And an ornate gold chandelier hangs down over an 18-foot-long conference table surrounded by a platoon of tall-backed, red velvet-upholstered chairs worthy of a world superpowers summit meeting.

One by one, the four Statlers file in and take their appointed places designated with little inscribed gold place markers bearing their names.

"We modernized this building, but kept it like it was," explains the soft-spoken Phil Balsley as he glances affectionately around the room. "Even the shelves in here are exactly like they were when Don and Harold went to school."

"Sometimes I feel like I should still *whisper* in here," Harold shouts instead



with a playful burst of laughter that all but shakes the fancy chandelier. "About half the time when I leave home to come in here and work I still tell my wife, 'I'm goin' up to school.' When you spend seven very impressionable years of your life in a place, it's hard to get it off your mind."

"Some days you forget about it entirely," adds Don, who seems to be the most intellectual and literary-leaning of the four. He is an avid reader and book collector, and is particularly fond of the works of American novelist John O'Hara, whose thoughts, he says, have often found their way into his songs. "But other days, it's all you think about."

The Statlers are quick to point out that this old building, and this particular room with its physical and emotional ties to the Reids' own personal histories, is also where much of their music begins.

"Our albums start right here at this table," says Harold. "We sit down, just the four of us. We go over the songs—some of which even get written in here, and we talk about 'em. If anybody's got any new ones, we sing 'em to each other. Then a couple of weeks before the recording session, we sit back down here again and work out all the arrangements, so that when we walk in the studio in Nashville, we're fully prepared, and we're of one mind as to what we want."

"People in Nashville have said The Statler Brothers cut the cheapest sessions in town," he adds with a mild touch of disdain. "We take that as a compliment, because we do. We don't believe in wasting a lot of time or money."

Considering where their music all begins, it's not surprising that the past is so important in The Statler Brothers' music. Their four-part harmonies have specific links to the tradition of the rural white gospel quartet.

"Our earliest influences? That's easy," says Don. "The Blackwood Brothers, The Statesmen, The Harvesters: those groups would come through the area when we were kids. We bought every album, we learned every song. Those groups were our idols, and they were our education. Later, our whole objective was to take those gospel harmonies, and the structure of that whole thing which we found so appealing, and adapt it to country music. We thought we could bring the excitement of gospel over into country and open a whole new wave."

Even a Statlers' hit like their 1985 revival of Gene Pitney's "Hello, Mary Lou" seems to consciously vibrate with nostalgia—nostalgia for both the 1950's and the late Ricky Nelson's original ver-

sion of the song. And in The Statler Brothers' memorable original material—even that as recent as selections from their current album, *Maple Street Memories*—it is the past that most often stands as a yardstick against which present-day dreams and expectations are sometimes painfully measured. There is also a yearning for a return to the basics, to the innocence of small-town life.

"There's most definitely a yearning," Don agrees. "People do want to go back to the basics. I think everybody's scared of what's in the future, and certainly nobody knows. So that's the real comfort: to look back and enjoy the memories."

"People identify with small-town life even if they grew up in the slums of a large city," adds Harold. "Even if it's not in their background, they can identify with it. They see picnics in the park on a Sunday afternoon, and even if they've never been on one, they can identify with it."

"That's one of the most fulfilling parts of all this," Don intercedes. "Our mail is full of comments from people about what the sentiments of our music mean to them. Our music has been compared to Frank Capra's movies, and what greater compliment can you get than that? I'm sure that some see it as schmaltzy and corny, but most see it for what it really is. And we're glad that people can get that kind of comfort from it."

Sometimes though, as Don explains, their music is cut from whole cloth. Don, along with Harold, wrote "The Class of '57." But he readily admits that he's never been to a class reunion, and actually graduated from high school himself in the 1960's. "We saw the title in *TV Guide*," he remembers. "It was the name of an old *Ironsides* episode. We loved the title so much we just wrote the song and used our imaginations about going back to a reunion and all the feelings that come with it. You can put any year on it, and the lyrics still work."

The Reid brothers also concede that the mythical world which they sometimes invoke in their songs (which really is much like the imaginary Lake Wobegon of the radio show, *Prairie Home Companion*) is admittedly a different, more innocent place than the real-life world of Staunton, Virginia, which in its own small way, is susceptible to the same blights—unemployment, crime, drugs—that plague larger metropolises.

"Our songs have a tendency to convey the idea that Staunton is an island, a place set apart that is untouched by the rest of the world," says Harold. "But that certainly is not true. Whatever is happening in L.A. or New York is cer-



More than 89,000 people attended their 4th



The Statler Complex—one of many business interests.

tainly happening here on a smaller scale."

Later the four Statlers informally gather down in the first-floor hallway. As they put on their coats and prepare to scatter in four different directions for lunch—Harold has a 60-acre spread within the city limits, Don lives nearby, Balsley and Fortune live a ways out in the county, off in the other direction—there is a fleeting moment of reverie as we all glance up and down the walls and cases full of awards, trophies and mementos of a career that has now spanned nearly two and a half decades and thirty albums.

"But for the grace of God," Harold



of July celebration last year.



The museum is open for tours every weekday at 2 p.m.

had pondered earlier. "There are a lot more people out there with more talent than us, but we happened to be in the right place at the right time, and God saw fit to smile on us...."

Which leads one to ask, do the four of them ever stop and think about where they might be if The Statlers *hadn't* come to be....

Don: I think about it a lot. I would have liked to have been an English teacher. *Laughs.* But this got in the way of it. I'm not sorry...but it is one of those little unfulfilled dreams.

Phil: An accountant, perhaps. I did the books for the group for quite a while. Or maybe a teacher. I had a

teacher once that I greatly admired, and I wanted to do that, but...

Harold: To general laughter. He's in prison now, right!?

Jimmy: I've done about everything. I've always been interested in cars—working on them or whatever. I've always felt I had a talent for carpentry work.

Harold, as always, has an answer that is all his own and totally unexpected: "I'd probably be somewhere starving to death. I've got a real strange feeling I'd be begging, probably

"People identify with small-town life even if they grew up in the slums of a large city."

standing on the street with a real heavy coat on in the middle of summer, wearing an old slouch hat and needing a shave, begging alms for the stupid. *Outrageous laughter from all four.* I'm not kiddin'! I have no idea what I'd be doin'."

Of course, Harold's probably putting the world on...or then again, maybe he's not. Beneath his boisterous humor there's an intense drive, an overwhelming need to put his own dreams into action—a need which, the other founding members readily concede, is really what first turned The Statlers' own dreams into reality.

"Now, I don't wanta piss off the Chamber of Commerce, because I know just about anybody you ask around here today will tell you how they helped us get started," Harold's booming laughter again seems to rattle the windows and shake the pictures in their frames. "But the truth is, when we first started out, we received a lot more discouragement than we did encouragement. There's a little plaque in this gymnasium right down the hall, which is where we won our very first talent contest. Well, that's one side of the story. But I also had teachers and guidance counselors in my senior year, and they'd take me in for a meeting and say, 'Okay, Harold, you're gettin' ready to graduate, what are you gonna do?' I told 'em, 'I'm gonna sing.' They said, 'Well, okay, that's nice. You can sing in church on Sunday, but what are you gonna do...for a living?' I just said, 'That's what I'm gonna do.' So they'd immediately book me for another

session the next day with the school psychologist! *Again boisterous laughter from all four.* I remember this one lady told me, 'You know your odds must be a million to one?' I just said, 'Well, that's close enough for me.'"

A few years later, The Statlers—the two Reids, Phil Balsley and Lew DeWitt—were out there hitting it hard in pursuit of that dream. They were, most all of them, married by then and holding day jobs. They recall how they'd jump in the car, play dates all over two or three states, and often return home just in time to watch the sun come up as they changed clothes and went back to work. Times were tough, and exhaustion and desperation began to set in.

But all agree that it was Harold's aggressiveness which put the dream into action. With the help of an acquaintance, a local promoter, he had the nerve to slip backstage at a concert in Roanoke and introduce himself to Johnny Cash. He informed Cash he had a group that he'd like for him to hear.

Harold picks up the story from there:

"John agreed to come hear us that Sunday at a place called Watermelon Park in Berryville, Virginia. By the time the sun came up, we were already comin' into Berryville. Cash showed up, and we started playing. He just sat down on the edge of the stage and watched. We did well, and he came over and shook hands and said, 'Man, that's great, I think we can do somethin' together.' Then he just said, 'See you,' and got in his car and left. We were standin' there in the dust, just kinda thinkin', 'Well, that's great, but *what* did we get here?'"

Don continues the oft-told tale:

"From there, Harold pursued it. He somehow managed to get Cash's home phone number, and...*(Laughs uneasily.)* I don't wanta teach anybody else bad habits, but...he started running him down at recording sessions in Nashville. It was in August when Cash had first heard us, and by the following March, we still hadn't heard back from him, and we were at the end of our rope. We quit our day jobs, got us a little home-made trailer built, and took off. We said we're either gonna make it, or we ain't gonna make it. Our first stop was Canton, Ohio. Cash had a show there. We made contact with him and he said, 'Yeh, you can open for me.' So we took off. We didn't know if we were gonna get paid, we didn't know if we were gonna last more than one show with him. But we went out there anyhow, and we played. Afterwards he asked us to finish out the tour with him. We shook hands with him, and we were with him for eight years on that handshake."

As I listen to The Statlers' laughter

It's been six years since Jimmy Fortune joined The Statlers. Their popularity was never in doubt.



JIM FREY

and these affectionate, shared recollections of hard times so long ago, I detect the genuine appreciation they harbor for each other's sense of humor. These guys, despite—or may because of—all the years, all the millions of road miles and thousands of stage and studio hours, genuinely enjoy each other's company, and genuinely count on each other as good friends.

"Yeh," says Harold. "That's one good thing we've got going for us. And we *do* things for each other. For instance, I'm the only one who doesn't fly—it scares me to death. So these guys waste a lot of time riding on the bus with me. We went to L.A. about a month ago. Everybody got on the bus, and we rode out and rode back. They all made a two-and-a-half-day trip out of something which, by plane, could have been over in four and a half hours. Now, that's a big bite out of your life. But—yeh, we do those things for each other."

No question, The Statlers *do* have fun together; and nobody can tell you better than Jimmy Fortune that time *does* fly when you're having fun. Unbelievable as it seems, he's been with the group for six years now.

Already, he's written two Number One songs—"Elizabeth" and "My Only Love"—for the group, their first chart-toppers in quite some time, and has lent the quartet's graying respectability a new and youthful edge. "He's sure pulled his load," says Don. "He's brought a new freshness to us, and we're sure glad he did."

Fortune, who was working in a car

dealership in nearby Charlottesville, Virginia, playing clubs by night, and barely making ends meet when it all happened, seems to have taken it all in stride.

"I think if you'd asked me about all this seven years ago, I would have never dreamed it," Fortune shakes his head and smiles bemusedly as he leans back in his velvet-upholstered chair. "It was really weird: when I was working at the car dealership, this friend of mine came up to me one day and said, 'Hey listen, Lew DeWitt's been real sick and everything, and I've got a feeling that The Statlers are gonna call you.' I don't know to this day how he had any idea of what was going on, because at that point I don't think The Statlers even knew themselves. I just said to myself, 'There's no way that's gonna happen.' And when they *did* call, it was like, 'Am I dreaming?'"

Though he's told the story many times, Fortune still seems a bit awestruck when he recalls how he wrote "Elizabeth," which he figures was only the third or fourth song he'd ever written to completion in his life:

"We were on our way to a show, and we were watching a movie on the bus one night," he recalls softly. "It was *Giant*—with James Dean, Rock Hudson, and Elizabeth Taylor. And Elizabeth Taylor really got to me: she's just so beautiful, and I've always loved her anyway. Then I came back home, and I was in the supermarket, and it seemed like every little kid that was running around, their mothers would say, 'Eliz-

abeth,' or 'Beth, stop that!' That name just kept comin' to me. Later, we were on our way to Oklahoma City, and I had that melody and that harmony line in my head. I just said, 'Fellahs, I'm gonna go back and try and write me a song.' A little later, I came out and played it for them. And—thank goodness—they liked it."

Later in the day, after The Statlers have returned from lunch, you can catch glimpses of them wearing their other hats as small-town businessmen who oversee nearly every aspect of their own incorporated multi-million-dollar-per-year entertainment and investment complex. There's Harold sweating over a desk cluttered with computer printouts and phone messages. And there goes Don down the hall carrying a briefcase stuffed with documents. "A lot of people can't understand that they're *businessmen*, too," says Ann Peters, the trusty office manager who is one of their four full-time office employees. "People think they just come home from their tours and lounge around their pools. But most days they're here in the office, working like everybody else."

Much of their activity on this particular afternoon has to do with the tour on which they will embark in a few more days. It will take them to the Houston Astrodome, where they will provide the entertainment for a livestock show. Then there are concerts in Austin and in a couple of other Texas cities. Then they swing over to Florida to play at a giant strawberry festival. There are also upcoming trips to Nashville to continue work on their *thirty-first* album and do some TV tapings.

"You're gonna ask us, do we ever get *weary*?" Harold jokingly anticipates the next question. "Well, let's put it this way: my wife wrote me an excuse from the last tour. But they wouldn't accept it."

Don pipes up, "We gave him an *unexcused*. And then when we got back home, we gave him a 'zero' for the tour." (*General laughter from all four.*)

"The *getting there*, the same hotels, the same highways, that does get weary," Harold confesses. "But the fun part is always when they say, 'Ladies and gentlemen, The Statler Brothers!'"

"We don't think anybody is an authority on this business expect the fans," says Harold.

"I don't claim to know that much about the music business myself," he adds. "I don't buy that many albums, I don't buy that many concert tickets. But the fans do. They know what they want. And if they don't think something's okay, then it's probably not, because they've got the last word."

"And it's those people we're trying to please, and only those." ■

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

What's In a Photo

This is a mixed bag, this *Newsletter*, but many of the items in it are built around photos. Time and space are conquered by photos. They make what's far away seem here and what's long ago seem now. Family photographs, fan photos taken with stars, photos of public figures, events or landmarks, all make the past and the present change places for us. What's ordinary today will have that spooky, other-world quality to those who see it years from now. In that sense every photo in this issue is a historic photo.

We have one photo of Lefty Frizzell that looks as if he's going to speak to us at any moment. We have several of member Alice Van Camp and the stars and her daughters

that give us a peek back through time and show us that famous warmth between fan and star that has lasted so long in country music. We have the bayou spirit of a Cajun restaurant caught in a photo of Doug Kershaw at Mulate's. We have a public figure, George Bush, and Dennis Devine with a little bit of *Country Music Magazine's* history in hand. We have Eddy Arnold's movie still back again for the experts in country music entertainment trivia, plus steel guitarist Pete Drake on an historic occasion. We have the camera record of a young man's mural that he painted to commemorate a country music event he never saw. The camera's eye preserves all.

More Memories Through Photos

A cousin gave Alice Van Camp of Magnolia, Ohio, a subscription to Country Music Magazine for her 71st birthday last year. Now Alice has sent us, to share, copies of some of her historic photos. They remind us of Letha Freed's photos, featured in the November/December Newsletter.

Alice Van Camp has been around country music for years. As a young girl, she would go to her neighbor's house on Saturday nights to listen to *The Grand Ole Opry*. Later, when she was grown and married, she still listened to the Opry on radio, and began collecting albums.

In the 1950's, when the first two of her five children were old enough, she began taking them to see all the great stars of

country music at various shows. Wheeling, West Virginia, was a favorite of hers, since that's where she and her daughters, Shirley and Dorothy, met Stoney Cooper, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Doc and Chickey Williams, Marty Robbins, Gene Autry, Little Jimmie Dickens, Lash LaRue, Hank Snow and Minnie Pearl. "I enjoy all of them...I always consider them my friends and I still write to Stoney's wife, Wilma Lee," she says. Alice always kept a memento of these shows by getting snapshots of herself and her daughters

with the performers.

Although she turned 71 this past September, Alice doesn't give any indication that she's slowing down when it comes to meeting country stars. Recently, she received a surprise birthday gift from a friend—a trip to Nashville! There she and her youngest daughter, Vivian, were able to meet Johnny Cash and his family, John Schneider, Bill Anderson and his band, David Allan Coe and Loretta Lynn and her band.

Her photo collection is a wonderful way to remember all the greats of country music and the times she shared with her family. Of course, her collection keeps growing all the time. Alice was very generous to share some of her photos (old and new) with the *CMSA Newsletter*, so now we can all enjoy them.

—Jeanine Morley

In This Issue

- Historic Photos
- Response to Past Issues
- A Look at Lefty Frizzell
- Collections



Memories: Hank Snow and Alice, Hawkshaw Hawkins and Shirley, Dorothy and Jimmie Dickens and Alice and Lash LaRue.



Pete Drake in Steel Hall of Fame

Back in November/December 1986, the *Newsletter* ran a feature by Betty Kellison on the 15th Annual Steel Guitar Convention. The 1987 Convention, held again in St. Louis, Missouri, featured the induction of Pete Drake, steel guitarist and producer, into the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame. Drake, seated above, receives the congratulations of (l. to r.) Speedy West, Hal Rugg, Jimmy Crawford, Leon McAuliffe, Shot Jackson and Buddy Emmons.

Sales Pitch

John Jehoich follows up with an item for sale.

After the nice write-up you folks gave me in your July/August 1987 *Newsletter*, I thought I should write and tell you that I have been busy with my harmonica and now have some tapes ready to sell! I tried some of the big music producers here, and they don't think there is enough of a market for this type of music to put my stuff out. They don't even want to listen to it, so I decided to do it myself. I think there is a market for harmonica music, so I put together ten tapes and played them for the neighbors, and they agree, so here goes.

I have the tapes and if any of your readers want a tape of old songs by harmonica without a lot of back-up musicians, they can write me at 3621 39th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406, sending me \$10.00, and I will send them a tape postpaid. They won't have to wait the usual six to eight weeks to get it either!

**John S. Jehoich
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

P.S. As I said before, I don't consider myself a singer, but when I saw George Burns sing on TV recently, I said, "What the hell. If he can do it, I can too." So I did vocals on all the songs too....

JANUARY 1988 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Randy Travis | <i>Always & Forever</i> |
| Randy Travis | "Always & Forever" |
| Ricky Van Shelton | "Somebody Lied" |

In the January Poll, you CMSA voters, as usual, know what you like. Randy Travis wins Album of the Month with *Always & Forever*, and he and Ricky Van Shelton are tied for first in singles with "Always & Forever," the Grammy-award-winning song, and "Somebody Lied." Reba McEntire, George Strait and Ricky Van Shelton are the runners-up in albums, with *The Last One to Know*, *Ocean Front Property* and *Wild-Eyed Dream*. Reba and Hank Jr. are the runners-up in singles with "The Last One to Know" and "Heaven Can't Be Found." Votes are concentrated in big clusters around these artists with all others falling far behind.

MARCH 1988 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Randy Travis | <i>Always & Forever</i> |
| Rosanne Cash | "Tennessee Flat Top Box" |

Randy Travis wins again in albums. Reba McEntire is second with *The Last One to Know*. George Strait third with his *Greatest Hits, Vol. 2*. Rosanne Cash takes first in singles—that's a new face. Randy is second with "Too Gone Too Long" and Merle Haggard third with "Twinkle, Twinkle, Lucky Star." Ricky Van Shelton, The Statlers, Tanya Tucker and Alabama also ran.

MEMBERS POLL / NOVEMBER 1987

VOTE

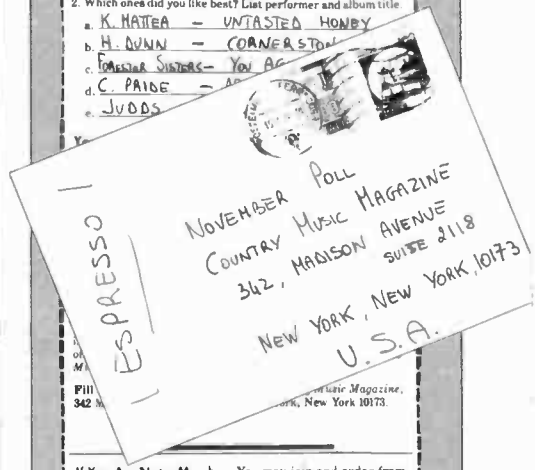
Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out the Members Poll. We forward the results of the Polls to those involved in the business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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month?
 Yes No
 How many records? 12 How many cassettes? 2

2. Which ones did you like best? List performer and album title

- a. K. MATTEA - UNTASTED HONEY
- b. H. DUNN - CORNERSTONE
- c. FORESTER SISTERS - YOU AGAIN
- d. C. PRIDE - AFTER ALL THIS TIME
- e. JUDDS - HEARTLAND



If You Are Not a Member: You may join and order from this page at the same time at member's prices. Just include a separate check for \$12 (one-year's dues, includes an additional year's subscription to *Country Music*) payable to Country Music Society of America and follow member's ordering procedure above.

Polls Across the Sea

This month CMSA received a Members Poll from a member named Riccardo in Milan, Italy. We were so excited, we decided to print it here. Mr. or Ms. Riccardo purchased 12 albums in the last month. His or her favorites were Kathy Mattea, *Untasted Honey*; Holly Dunn, *Cornerstone*; The Forester Sisters, *You Again*; Charley Pride, *After All This Time*; and The Judds, *Heartland*. His or her choices for Album of the Month, based on the November/December Top 25, were Randy Travis, *Always and Forever*; Highway 101, *Highway 101*; K.T. Oslin, *80's Ladies*; Dolly, Linda and Emmylou, *Trio*; and The Forester Sisters, *You Again*. Thanks, Riccardo, and please send us your full name.

We also received a poll from a new subscriber in Birmingham, England, named Martin Young, and requests of various kinds from Norway, Spain, The Netherlands, Czechoslovakia and Nigeria.

Radio Waves

The past two issues of the Newsletter have focused in depth on Country Music Radio. Here are a few more squeaks and wobbles related to the same topic. We're still tuned in, and so are you readers.

"HOPE YOU'RE PLAYING MINE"

Dear Buddy Owens,
Regarding the article in the January/February Newsletter, congratulations on your twentieth year in radio and the honor by the Academy of Country Music bestowed on KNIX as Radio Station of the Year in 1987. A while back, I mailed to you my record album, *The Two Sides of Ginny*, with country songs (side one) and gospel songs (side two). I sincerely hope that you're playing it. It's people like you who help people like me...gain artist popularity.

I have an hour-long gospel radio show at radio station WBZB, Selma, North Carolina, now in its eighth year. One other person and I play all the music, sing and record for our own program, called *Home Folks*. I'm also a DJ. I am all for traditional country music....

**Ginny Wicker
Kenly, North Carolina**

Hope you caught the call numbers and address of KJAA in Mesa, Arizona, in the March/April Newsletter. They're looking for material. Address is 65 E. First Avenue, Mesa, AZ 85202, Attn: Al Ferguson. -Ed.

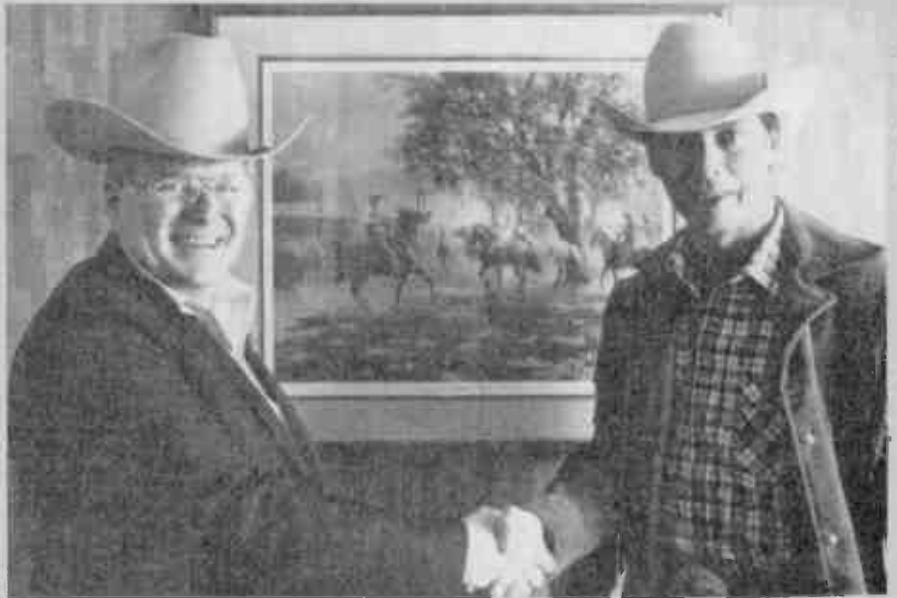
"NEVER LOST TOUCH"

Buck Owens' Bakersfield stations, KUZZ/AM and KKXX/FM, announce the return of broadcaster Mark Howell to the stations after sojourns at Fresno, San Francisco and Cincinnati. Howell is a hard-news person, ready to keep country music listeners up-to-date before and after the songs. "I never lost touch with my friends in Bakersfield, and I'm really glad to be back home," Howell says. "I intend to make KUZZ and KKXX the leading news stations of the Southern Valley." But can he clog?
-H.B.

"ANYONE LIKE A SONG?"

Our old time country music radio program, *Repeat Performance*, airs on Sundays from 9:00 until noon on station WTMA in Charleston, South Carolina. During that time we receive 50 to 60 telephone calls for requests, as well as several pieces of mail.

We have had promotions made for us by Bob Kingsly, Bill Anderson, Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash, Claude King, Jack



Disk jockey Lonnie Bell and program director and morning man Johnny Williams join forces at Billings station KBSR/FM. Lonnie's on the left.

Greene, Kitty Wells, Dottie West and Lynn Anderson. It is our desire to keep old time country music alive, and if any of your many readers would like a tape of any old song, we will try and oblige them.

"Harley E and Bette B"

Harley and Bette Etchison Charleston, South Carolina
You can reach Harley E and Bette B at 12 N. Basilica, Hanahan, South Carolina 29418. Let us know if you catch their program. -Ed.

"PEOPLE LOVE LONNIE"

Disk jockey Lonnie Bell and his *Country Classic* radio program have moved from station KGHL to KSBF/FM in Billings, Montana. According to KBSR General Manager George J. Beaudet, "People just don't like Lonnie, they love Lonnie, and we at Big Sky Radio are elated, delighted and thrilled that Lonnie decided to make the move from KGHL to be with us."
-H.B.

Any Lonnie listeners out there? -Ed.



VP Listens to WMCQ

When Vice President Bush made a campaign swing through Council Bluffs, Iowa, member Dennis Devine was there to greet him, along with many others. Dennis and the Veep are both *Country Music Magazine* readers and country music fans. Mr. Bush told Dennis he listens to WMCQ/FM when he is home in Washington, D.C. WMCQ was featured in the March/April Newsletter.

Correction:

In our write-up on KNCQ FM in Redding, California, in the March/April issue, we mistakenly said that Gary Popejoy, KNCQ's Operations Manager and disk jockey, was featured as ABC's "Person of the Week" in a TV feature last November. The "Person of the Week" in that feature was Bernie Rosen. We apologize for the error.

Here's Yet Another Honky Tonk

In the July/August 1986 Newsletter, we printed a call for favorite honky tonks across the States. Responses came in and appeared in the November/December 1986 and May/June 1987 issues. Here's more word on Mulate's, mentioned in November/December 1986. Thanks to N. Broussard for providing the information on behalf of Mulate's.

"The Louisiana Man," Cajun Country's own Doug Kershaw, stopped by renowned Cajun restaurant, Mulate's, in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, last August, and what happened—an impromptu jam session with members of the Cajun band Nous Autres, Randy Champagne and Keith Dupuis. "This is an inspiration," Kershaw remarked on the occasion, "I need to hang around here a little more."

Mulate's features traditional Cajun music by such artists as Beausoliel, Dewey Balfa, File and Wayne Toups seven nights a week and every day at noon. Mulate's draws artists of all types who, like Kershaw in this case, are entertaining in the region. Visitors in the year leading up to last August include John Fogerty, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Huey Lewis, Steve Wariner and French Superstar Francis Cabrel.

—N.B.

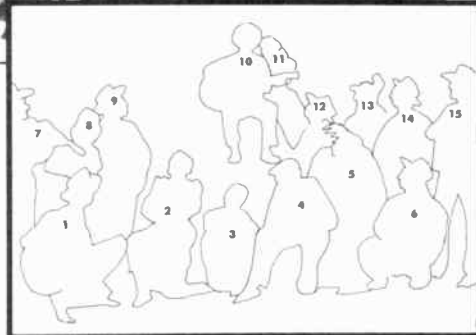


Doug Kershaw jamming at Mulate's in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana.



Members Spot Faces in Eddy Arnold Photo

Back in January 1987, the Newsletter ran a feature in our Legends of Country Music section on Eddy Arnold. In that feature we ran the photo above, from Eddy Arnold's own collection, showing Eddy and some other musicians and actors in a movie he made in the 1950's entitled *Feudin' Rhythms*. Eddy himself could not identify everyone in the photo, so we asked our members. Here's what we found out: 1) Guy Willis of The Willis Boys 2) Isabel Randolph 3) Fuzzy Knight 6) Roy Wiggins 7) Skeeter Willis of The Willis Boys 9) Kirby Grant 10) Eddy Arnold 11) Carolina Cotton 12) Mustard, of Mustard and Gravy, real name Frank Rice 13) Chuck Wright of The Willis Boys 14) Gravy, of Mustard and Gravy, real name is Ernest Stokes



15) Vic Willis of The Willis Boys. We're still missing numbers 4, 5 and 8.

Thanks to all who wrote in. One member added that Frank Rice now owns a men's clothing store in North Carolina and Ernest Stokes is deceased. Special thanks to Gene Hedrick of Louisville, Kentucky, who was the first of several to point out that we mistakenly identified Isabel Randolph as Isabel Wiggins.

—H.B.

Response to Robbins Legend

Donnie Jennings helped us with a recent feature in Legends.

Thanks for printing the credit line for my photo of Marty that you used in the Legends feature in the November/December 1987 Newsletter. People often say they will give you a credit line and then don't do it.

In the article, Rich Kienzle mentions that Marty came from a family of nine children, seven brothers and one sister. According to a photographic journal of

Marty done by his twin sister Mamie, there were six brothers including Marty and three sisters. They were: a half-brother Robert and a half-sister Ann, two older brothers Johnny and George and an older sister Lilly, a twin sister Mamie Ellen and twin younger brothers Harley and Charley. Thought this might help clear things up.

Donnie Jennings
Blackwell, Oklahoma

Donnie's photo is special and has drawn praise since she took it in 1982.—Ed.

Mural Marks the Start of Recorded Country Music

Roots...everyone likes to go back to their own. Recorded country music has its roots in Bristol, Tennessee. A present-day resident, artist, sign-painter and musician Tim White, recently "recorded" the event in paint. We covered this mural briefly in Letters in the January/February issue, and Rich Kienzle reviewed The Bristol Sessions Album in Buried Treasures in March/April.

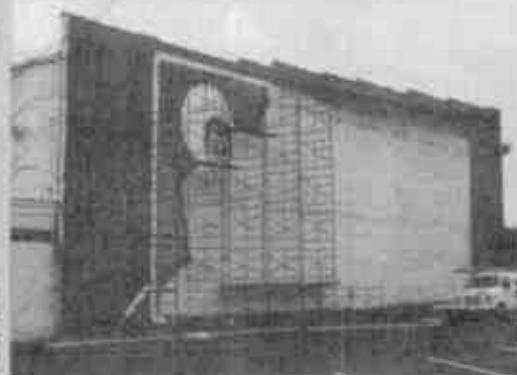
Local radio station WXBQ/FM in Bristol, Virginia, interviewed Tim White twice a day, live from the site, while he was painting the mural. Designed by White, and first worked out in 3 ft. x 7 ft. form, the 30 x 100 ft. scene depicts The Original Carter

Family, Mom and Pop Stoneman, Jimmie Rodgers and Ralph Peer of the Victor company. Scaling the original drawing to the large wall took several months, including preparation of the surface for the final artwork, done in oil-based enamels.

On September 26, 1987, Bristol held a celebration to honor the recordings made by Peer and the various artists 60 years ago, now out on a CMF album entitled *The Bristol Sessions*. Bill Ivey of the Country Music Foundation was present to receive a print of the mural from Tim. Tim has more prints for sale. To re-coup his expenses, he had 1,200 signed and numbered copies made up. For a brochure giving

details of how to purchase a copy, write to Tim at Rt. 5, Box 639, Blountville, Tennessee 37617. Cost is around \$50. A number of copies have sold already, including—to Tim's amazement and delight—seven to fans in France.

In addition to running his sign painting business out of nearby Blountville, Tim picks banjo with a local bluegrass group, Tennessee Hollow. He believes living in an area still saturated with some of the best traditional country music that can be heard today has helped him accomplish what he has so far. He has a new project in mind for Nashville, but he's not saying what it is right now...
-H.B.



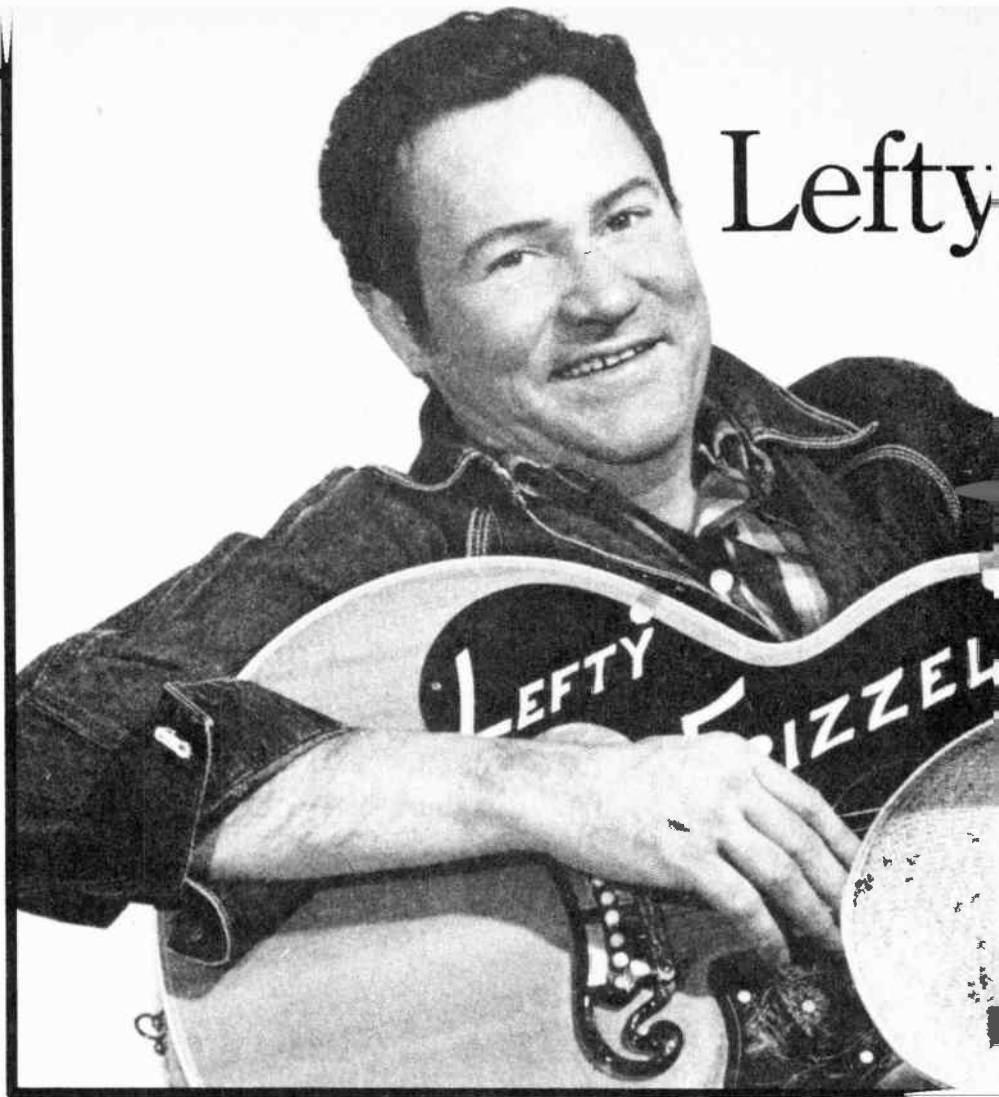
Tim White in front of the Bristol mural which went up over a period of months; right, the mural stage by stage.

In the fall of 1973 Merle Haggard came to Nashville to plug his new song "If We Can Make It Through December." He was riding high on the charts, and one night asked a few friends up to his hotel room for some easy talk, informal singing and a little Jack Daniels Black Label. Johnny Rodriguez was there, fresh from three Number One hits in a row, and Kenny Seratt, fresh from a new MGM contract. The fourth man in the room was older: he was a big, easy-going man with a Texas drawl who wore his graying hair long and swept back. After the four had traded songs and gossip, Haggard sat back, pointed to the big man, and said, "Right there. That's where all the Haggards, Rodriguezes and Seratts come from." The big man looked startled, then embarrassed, and folded his hands in front of him. A big ring sparkled on his left hand, a ring with diamonds that formed the initials "L.F." Everybody knew what that stood for—Lefty Frizzell.

"No one, not even Hank Williams, was as hot as Lefty," Haggard said later. "Lefty was ninety percent of the reason that I'm in the business. He was my inspiration, and I feel that he was the most unique thing that ever happened to country music." The list of modern singers who agree would take pages. George Jones was turned down at an early recording session because he sounded too much like Lefty; Willie Nelson offered an entire album as tribute, *To Lefty From Willie*. Mickey Newberry summed up a lot of feelings when he said, "Wasn't Lefty always right?"

Only Lefty himself, it seemed, had any doubts. A few months before his death, he visited a songwriting pal on Music Row and got to talking about the glory days back in the early 1950's, when he burned up the charts and produced, within a ten-month span, four of the music's best-known songs: "I Love You a Thousand Ways," "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time," "Always Late," and "Mom and Dad's Waltz." "That was an incredible achievement, Lefty," said his friend. "No, not really," Lefty countered. "I'm no better than a dozen other writers in this office. All that back then—it was nothing but dumb luck. Dumb luck. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Such cynicism may be understandable in Lefty's case. Few rags-to-riches stories are as explosive or as dramatic as his, and few singers had the kind of instant success Lefty did back in 1950, when he was a 22-year-old roughneck from the Texas oilfields whose very



first trip into the recording studio yielded one of the fastest-selling hits in country music history. For years afterwards, Lefty was being compared to his own first-year record, and challenged to repeat it: it was a tall order, probably impossible, but along the way—from 1950 to his death in 1975—Lefty carved out his niche in country music history and helped change the way people sing country music. Haggard wouldn't sound like Haggard if there had been no Lefty, nor would George Jones, nor would John Anderson, nor would Randy Travis. Hank Williams may have defined country songs, but it was Lefty who taught people how to sing them.

It all started in Corsicana, Texas, in 1928. The center of oil-rich Navarro County in north central Texas, Corsicana was a boom town full of oil drillers and riggers. One of them was Naamon Frizzell and on March 31 of that year, his wife A.D. presented him with their first son, William Orville Frizzell. The Frizzells would have eight more children over the years, including three more who would make a mark in music, Billy, David and Allen; none would have

quite the success as the first, though, the one they called "Sonny." It would be Sonny who would grow up sticking his head over the speaker of the family Victrola so he could hear the voice of Jimmie Rodgers yodelling "T for Texas"; it would be Sonny who would, at age eleven, borrow a set of his mother's boots to dress up for a schoolhouse performance of Gene Autry's *South of the Border*. It would be Sonny who, a year later, would win a regular radio spot over station KELD, at El Dorado, Arkansas, where the family had moved; "I knew when I was twelve years old what I was gonna do," Lefty recalled years later. "I was gonna sing."

In later years, press agents made much of the fact that Lefty got his famous nickname during this time from becoming a Golden Gloves boxing champion. It is only one of many Lefty legends that don't hold up. "Lefty never did any Golden Gloves boxing," recalled his wife Alice, whom he married in 1945, when he was seventeen. The real basis of the nickname was a schoolyard fight. Though Lefty picked the guitar with his right hand, he was also very capable

Frizzell

Out of the oilfields and into the pages of country music history—Lefty took Texas honky tonk music and made it immortal.



with his left. A schoolyard bully picked a fight with him when he was 14 or 15. Naamon Frizzell recalled: "He forgot that Sonny was left-handed, and the first thing you know, he was laying over there, and from then on, it was *Lefty Frizzell*."

During his teenage years, he continued to sing; by now the family had moved to Paris, Texas, and Lefty began to hear more of the new Texas music that was starting to be called "honky tonk." Ted Daffan, Floyd Tillman, and Ernest Tubb became new models—not only for his singing style, but for the new kind of "real life" song about divorce, drinking and hard loving. By 1947 he had his own radio show over KGFL in Roswell, New Mexico, and was singing cover versions of Ernest Tubb songs, Jimmie Rodgers songs, and new Frizzell originals like "Please Be Mine, Blue Eyes." A brush with the law landed him in jail at Roswell, and brought an end to his radio career there; while in jail, though, he did write (on the cell wall, they say) the words to "I Love You a Thousand Ways," with its pointed line, "So darling, please wait,

please wait 'til I am free." He temporarily quit singing after his release and worked for a time as a "rod rancher" before landing a job at the Ace of Clubs in Big Spring, Texas. There, in 1950, he began to attract the attention of a huge club audience, and of a Dallas talent scout named Jim Beck.

Jim Beck's recording studio in Dallas was fast becoming a center for the new music boiling up from the Southwest. The old giants who had dominated country music in the 1940's—Gene Autry, Roy Acuff, Bob Wills—were fast losing their appeal in post-war America, and Jim Beck's Dallas studio was headquarters for the new breed: singers like Marty Robbins, Ray Price, Sid King, even Fats Domino. Beck cut some demos of Lefty, and a few weeks later took them to Nashville, where he played them for Columbia A & R man Don Law; Beck thought "If You've Got the Money" would be good for Jimmy Dickens, then one of Columbia's hot acts, but Law kept asking, "I want to know who the kid is singing that." Two weeks later Law was in Big Spring offering Lefty a contract; by July 25, 1950, he had Lefty in Beck's studio cutting a Columbia master of "I Love You a Thousand Ways" and "If You've Got the Money." When the record was released on September 4, it took off like a West Texas dragster; despite the fact that Columbia did no advertising for it, and despite the fact that *Billboard* mistakenly listed it in its "Rhythm and Blues" section, the record sold a cool half million copies within two months after its release. Lefty had arrived.

Unlike Hank Williams, who had an experienced professional like Fred Rose to help guide his career, Lefty never really found any one person to help him capitalize on this early success. For a time Texas promoter Jack Starnes (who would later help George Jones get started) worked with Lefty, and for a time harmonica player-songwriter Wayne Raney would work with him. He did a series of brutal one-night stand tours, and experimented with radio jobs on the *Louisiana Hayride* at Shreveport and a *Columbia Country Caravan* show over KRLD in Dallas; in June 1951, he did join the Grand Ole Opry, where he shared a dressing room with Hank Williams. He even toured with Hank for a couple of weeks in April 1951, and the two became friends. But

Lefty sensed his audience was really more in the West and Southwest, and quit the Opry in early 1952.

Throughout the 1950's, Lefty managed to produce a consistent string of chart hits, including his tribute to Jimmie Rodgers, "Travellin' Blues" (1951), "Don't Stay Away" (1952), "I'm an Old, Old Man" (1952), "Cigarettes and Coffee Blues" (1958) and "Long Black Veil" (1959). He never had a year as good as 1951, but he performed consistently and with his style of "bending" notes and ornamenting the melody, enchanted a generation of singers. By the end of 1952, he had moved to California, found a new booker in Steve Stebbins, and a TV show in *Town Hall Party*. There he weathered the rock 'n' roll storm that shook Nashville, wrote songs, and even experimented with doing pop arrangements of some of his hits. But by 1961 he had returned to his roots—"Long Black Veil" was considered a folk song by many then—and had moved back to Nashville, where he signed with booker Jim Denny. In 1964 he had his first Number One hit since 1951, "Saginaw, Michigan."

Lefty spent the 1960's trying for the elusive hit, and though he managed a few masterpieces like "Honky Tonk Stardust Cowboy" (1971), his Columbia producers seemed to think his strength lay in silly novelties like "Watermelon Time in Georgia." But in the early 1970's things started turning around. Lefty got a new record deal with ABC, and found a sensitive producer in veteran Don Gant, who produced two fine albums for him in 1973 and 1974. Best of all, Lefty started writing again, collaborating with Dallas Frazier and Whitey Shafer; with the latter, he wrote the haunting "I Never Go Around Mirrors" and "That's the Way Love Goes." Another song from this era, "It Hurts to Face Reality," was never recorded by Lefty, but was used as the theme song for the 1983 Academy-Award winning film *Tender Mercies*.

Lefty never saw that film, nor did he really see the kind of hit "That's the Way Love Goes" would become when later recorded by his friend Merle Haggard. On July 19, 1975, as he was getting ready to leave Nashville to play the Delaware State Fair with Skeeter Davis and Stonewall Jackson, he suffered a massive stroke. Rushed to a local hospital, he died that evening. His old songwriting buddies, including Shafer, Doodle Owens, Dallas Frazier, Abe Mulkey and Rusty Adams, were there to see him off, and to bid farewell to a chapter in music history. —CHARLES WOLFE

Albums Available
See For Members Only page.

COLLECTIONS

Collecting the Magazine

Write to these members directly. If you need more information, enclose SASE. Thanks to Mark Focke for this suggestion. He was swamped with replies, thanks those who sent SASE and apologizes to those who did not—some he answered, some he didn't.

- For sale: *Country Music Magazine*, October and December of 1973, January, February, April, May, June, July, August of 1974, May, July, August, November of 1975, March, July, August, October, November of 1976, November/December of 1984, all of 1985, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December of 1986, all of 1987. Also have a country/western album collection for sale. Alice Pence, Rte. 3, Box 416-A, Mineral Wells, TX 76067.

- I have most issues of *Country Music Magazine* from 1974. Will sell the lot. Mrs. Bernard L. Painter, 230 Chestnut St., Litchfield, IL 62056.

- I am selling my entire collection of *Country Music Magazine*, *Country Music Life*, and *Country Music Review*, plus autographed song and picture folio #2 of Johnny Cash and more. Doris Spillman, Box 623, Hoxie, KS 67740.

- I have *Country Music Magazine* like new from 1973 through the present. I would accept any reasonable offer for the whole collection. Allen Lampman, Lot 361, 3331 Gall Blvd., Zephyrhills, FL 34248.

Information, Please

Write to these members directly. If you're asking for more information, enclose SASE.

- I am looking for the following songs: "Bell Bottom Trousers," artist unknown; "Seven Years With the Wrong Woman," Eddy Arnold; "You Played Love On the Strings of My Heart, Dear," Hank Snow; "Which One Should I Choose," Jim Reeves. Charley Burnett, Box 1277, Pearl City, HI 96782.

- I am trying to find a record called "Randphull, the Red Necked Reindeer." Linda Hedrick, Box 894, New Market, VA 22844.



- Wanted: VHS tapes of Barbara Mandrell, *Something Special*; Louise

Mandrell, *Diamonds, Gold and Platinum*; episodes of *Barbara Mandrell and The Mandrell Sisters*. Elvin Moore Jr., 9-531, Rt. 3, Leipsic, OH 45856.

- Wanted: Two albums of Connie Smith to complete my collection: RCA 4474, *Where is My Castle*, and KC 324492, *God Is Abundant*. Leon Minor, 788 North St., Ogden, UT 84404.

- I am interested in obtaining any information, materials and records of Jim Reeves. Mrs. Mildred Guillet, 26 Maple St., P.O. Box 76, Hardwick, VT 05843.

- Looking for the following albums by Kitty Wells: *Lonesome, Sad and Blue* (DL 74656), *Country Music Time* (DL 74554), *Kitty's Choice* (DL 78979), *Singing on Sunday* (DL 74270), *Kitty Wells Family Gospel Sing* (DL 74679). Hubert W. Lafleur Jr., 4614 Harwich Drive, Waldorf, MD 20601.

See also the Kitty Wells box set in *Buried Treasures* this issue.—Ed.



Pen Pals

We're catching up on Pen Pals in this issue. Make new friends by writing these members directly.

- Looking for pen pals (men and women) interested in country music, like to travel, in their 50's. Anyone in the South. Also, would like to know when Stringbean and his wife died. Did they ever find out who killed them? Thought Stringbean was the best on *Hee Haw*. Write: Jenny Brigham, Box 576, Kenmore, NY 14217.

Stringbean and his wife died November 10, 1973.—Ed.

- Would like to correspond with country and western fans. I attend Fan Fair every year—have met so many nice people there. Also attend the Grand Ole Opry and Little Nashville Opry in Nashville, Indiana. My special interests are my children, traveling, antiques, collecting book matches and biking. I'm female, divorced, 44 years of age. Write: Linda Hollingsworth, Box 165, Marshall, IL 62441.

- It could be said that I have made a complete circle as far as music goes, and there is none better than the great country sounds I grew up with. I love all country music, but the traditional sound is still the best.

I would enjoy hearing from any and all country fans. Kelly Chambliss, Rt. 3, Box 59, Rosharon, TX 77583.

- Hi! I am a 15-year-old John Schneider fan. I'd love to write other female John Schneider fans. All ages welcome. Michelle Rader, St. Rt. 3, Box 410, Mt. Nebo, WV 26679.

- Hello, I am a devoted Ronnie Milsap fan and would love to hear from other Ronnie Milsap fans of all ages and sexes. Sheila Kinstrey, Box 83, Ulster Park, NY 12487.

- I'm a country music fan, 30 years old, who would love to hear from men or women of any age. I work part-time as a kennel technician and am also a big animal lover. This job gives me lots of time to write. So if there's someone out there who loves country music, animals and writing, I'm looking forward to hearing from you. Linda Karppinen, 19751 Nalle Rd., N. Ft. Myers, FL 33917.

- Would like to write to single women and men, ages 24 to 27. I'm a male, age 27, also single. I love country and western music and the Grand Ole Opry. I like Alabama, Sylvia, Barbara Mandrell, Marie Osmond, Roy Acuff, among others. Please send picture with pen pal letters. Benton Kennedy Jr., Rt. 3, Box 424, Angie, LA 70426.



- Hello, my name is Dennis Southers. I am a 27-year-old male who would love to hear from any and all Tanya Tucker fans. I collect albums, news articles, pictures, etc. If it's Tanya Tucker, I love it. Dennis Southers, Step-Up, 983 Ingleside Road, #2, Norfolk, VA 23502.

- Hello, y'all! I'm 16 years old. I'd love to hear from anyone who is crazy about Exile, The Forester Sisters, The Judds, Reba, T Graham Brown and Ricky Van Shelton. I'll answer all sincere fans. Also, where can I find recordings by Cheryl Handy or 1985 issues of *Country Music* featuring groups of today, including Exile? Write: Rae Lynn Hammer, Rt. 1, Box 126, LaHarpe, KS 66751.

- I'm a 22-year-old female. I love country music, skating, reading and



traveling. I would like to hear from anyone with the same interests or different. Some of my favorite artists are: T Graham Brown, Gary Morris, Bellamy Brothers and The Charlie Daniels Band. But my favorite is Alabama. Cynthia Brewer, Laintree Apts., Apt. 8A, Anderson, SC 29621.

- Hi. I'd like country music fans, guys and girls of all ages, to write to me so we can be pen pals. I love country music. My favorites are Dwight Yoakam, Alabama, Dwight Yoakam, Reba McEntire, Dwight Yoakam... I think you get the idea. Donna Nickels, Rt. 2, Box 360, Tomah, WI 54660.

- Hi. I have been a subscriber to your wonderful magazine now for years. I just can't put it down till I read it all. But first I look through it to see if there are any stories or pictures of Waylon Jennings. Any lady my age or close (60 years old) who is a Number One Waylon fan, please write: Lotus Roberts, Rt. 4, Box 88, Harrison, AR 72601.

- Hi. I'm a 16-year-old male who loves country music. My favorites are George Strait, Reba McEntire, Dwight Yoakam, Randy Travis and more. Anyone my age or older, please write. I'd love to be your pen pal. Wesley LeMaire Jr., Box 213, Gueydan, LA 70542-0213.

- I'm a country music fan. My favorite entertainer is Kenny Rogers. I would love to hear from other Kenny Rogers fans. I will answer all letters. Jan Higuera, 20321 Olmstead Rd., Aurora, OR 97002.

- My name is Bob Selheimer. I would like to hear from other country music fans, female or male, any age. I do like the old country music stars like Hank Williams Sr., Webb Pierce and many more. Also Randy Travis, Ricky Skaggs. I have a lot of 45 rpm's that go back to the late 1950's. I do tape a lot of it for my tape player that I have in my truck. Please write, I'd love to hear from you. I will answer all sincere fans. Bob Selheimer, R. D. 1, Box 83-3B, Marydel DE 19964.

Send material for Newsletter to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, NY 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Newsletter.



TOM BERT

DUANE EDDY

Rebel Rouser's Song

Duane Eddy's music has always appealed to country listeners who liked a little tinge of rock 'n' roll to their music. And in the world of rock 'n' roll, he was a big hero. The master guitarist's upcoming album reflects both those strains.

□□□□□□□□□□ *By John Morthland* □□□□□□□□□□

Duane Eddy doesn't come up in too many discussions of country music. The man with the twangy guitar has always been perceived as a rock 'n' roller, period. But go back and look at the charts from his 1958-63 heyday and you'll see that country fans had no trouble embracing him—"Rebel Rouser," his calling card, rose to Number 17 on the country charts in 1958 despite the fact that it was released on a Philadelphia pop label with no promotional clout in the country field; several

other Duane Eddy instrumentals came close to crossing over onto the country charts as well. The affinity between Duane's brand of twang and several country guitarists of that era is too obvious to miss. And his influence on contemporary country is apparent enough, too, in any number of guitarists, most especially Richard Bennett, who plays with Steve Earle.

So it does not seem entirely inappropriate that Duane Eddy has been living happily in Nashville since the fall of

1985, even if his current comeback has again been in the pop field so far as chart-watchers are concerned. Or that he has played a few country sessions since coming to town. Or even that Duane himself always considered his Arizona instrumentals to be "country with drums." Duane Eddy is one of those musicians who always emphasized the similarities, rather than the differences, between popular forms. And he may not be insecure enough that he feels compelled to give the "I've always been country" litany, although his music speaks volumes on that subject. When prodded, he'll do the same.

"I was working with country groups in Phoenix from the time I started playing professionally at 15, but from the very beginning we had drums in Arizona because that was the influence of West Texas," he says today. "But the main influence was always Nashville, until Elvis and Jerry Lee came along and the drummer was added to everything.

"I always felt that rock 'n' roll grew out of country music basically, with a little rhythm and blues and gospel thrown in it. I kind of think Hank Williams influenced rock 'n' roll inadvertently by influencing Bill Haley and Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis. If you listen to some of Bill Haley's early stuff, it's just like 'Move It On Over.'"

Even Duane's recollections of those heady days of early rock 'n' roll suggest that for him the music represented not so much a threat to, but an extension of, country music. Speaking of the kind of audiences he was playing to in the Arizona clubs when he made his first record, he emphasizes, "Working people. That's the thing—everybody said it was kids' music but there were a lot of older people that liked it just as much. I don't know why the industry perceived it as a threat, that's just the way they thought about it. It was new and different and a lot of people perceived it as a threat in those days. Rock 'n' rollers were not exactly welcome in a lot of places in those days—it was keep 'em away from your daughters and keep 'em out of hotels, keep 'em as far away as you can.

"But it was kinda like being a safe rebel. You were rebelling against something that wasn't really gonna hurt you. It wasn't like you were out there fighting some kind of battle, but you were being a bit of a rebel by playing rock 'n' roll," he adds.

As a child, Duane identified with country music first and foremost. Sitting in the Capitol Records conference room on Music Row last fall, the burly, bearded 49-year-old guitar-slinger recalled listening to WWVA, the trucker's station out of Wheeling, West

Virginia, when he was growing up in Corning, New York. His father was a decent musician, though strictly an amateur, and Duane took up guitar at age five. By the time his family moved to Arizona—first Tucson, then Coolidge, then Phoenix—when he was in his early teens, he was already playing like Chet Atkins and Merle Travis, as well as session men like Grady Martin and Hank Garland whose names he hadn't learned yet. When he settled into the Phoenix club circuit for good in 1955, the typical country band there was using drums, bass, piano, steel and guitar; with this lineup, his own group did everything from "There Stands the Glass" to "Hound Dog" to "Bye, Bye, Love." In those days, Duane even sang a little—Louvin Brothers tunes were his favorites.

But Duane was a product of both his age and his environs. His take on country music came out just a little bit different from what people were doing in the Southeast, or even in Texas and California. Writing in the Phoenix weekly *New Times*, homeboy Jimmy Magahern pinned Duane's sound down wonderfully: "Slow-handed, ballsy, and couched in enough echo to fill the Grand Canyon, Eddy's patented guitar licks were reminiscent of what might have happened if a Scotty Moore solo had wandered out of a car radio on Route 66, got lost in the Arizona desert for a couple weeks, and then came crawling back into the city dirtier, more ornery and twice as big, fattened up on a steady diet of rattlesnake meat and cactus juice... Duane Eddy's guitar melodies always seemed to move around a beat the way most Arizonans move around a back yard in July: slowly and sparingly, growling all the while."

Duane Eddy and the Rebels were the first to turn instrumental rock 'n' roll into a hit-making style of its own, and he has his own description for how he did so. "The first time I went into the studio I knew from the little experience I had that bass strings recorded better. And I knew I had to have a melody, not just a bunch of hot licks, to put an instrumental together," he explains. "So I just got a couple good riffs to go along with the melody and played it all on the bass strings, and that's what I came up with. Simple, actually. Then we added the background and the use of what effects we had in those days like tremolo, and we used the whang bar on the guitar. A lot of guitarists played on the bass strings—there was nothing new about that. I got the idea mainly from Johnny Horton records, but there was Merle Travis too. I just doctored it up a bit and focused on it."

"Ramrod," a one-riff tune that was the first thing Duane recorded, was a

"I always felt that rock 'n' roll grew out of country music basically, with a little rhythm and blues and gospel thrown in."

stiff. "Movin' 'n' Groovin'," the followup, was kicked along by both a high and low riff, which turned the trick to the tune of 100,000 copies sold. "Rebel Rouser," which came next, caught the exact sound Duane Eddy was looking for, and went on to sell a tidy three million copies.

Duane's accomplice in all this was producer Lee Hazelwood, a local disk jockey who had won the young guitarist's friendship by filching him country records from the station's library. It was Hazelwood, hot off his success producing Sanford Clark's neo-rockabilly "The Fool," who suggested that Duane cut instrumentals, and while it's impossible to say at this point exactly who was most responsible for which aspects of the sound, Eddy gives the man more than token credit: "I'd say he knew exactly what he was doing. He'd sit there as a deejay and listen to those records and he wasn't listening to them the way I was—he was listening to how they were made. He was training himself as a producer by sitting there night after night and listening to those Top Ten records. The deejay job was definitely a stepping stone."

Hazelwood, in fact, stayed with Eddy through most of the glory years, adding partner Lester Sill and eventually moving the team's operation out to Los Angeles and expanding into areas like publishing, continuing all the while to produce Duane's records. He went on to write hits for people like Nancy Sinatra and Dean Martin. Duane and his trusty red Gretsch, meanwhile, stayed on the road; a 1959 trip to Nashville stands out strongly in his mind.

"I came through on a rock 'n' roll package show and met Hank Garland, and he took me down to meet Chet Atkins. Chet was playing in Printer's



TOM BERT

Alley then. Later on, Chet took me backstage at the Grand Ole Opry and I met Mother Maybelle. They invited me to be on that night but in those days they wouldn't allow a saxophone or drums on the Opry. They said I could take a set of cocktail drums out there but absolutely no saxophone, and I didn't wanna go out and play 'Rebel Rouser' without the sax because the fans would be disappointed that it didn't sound like the record," he says. "I opted to pass on it, even though it was a childhood, lifetime dream."

By the early 1960's, Duane was indulging his lifelong love for westerns and doing the teen idol bit as well for TV and movies. In 1960, he formed his own company to produce a series called *The Quiet Three*, which would feature himself, Sill and Hazelwood; those plans were squelched when Hazelwood and Sill dropped him temporarily to pursue other projects. He still appeared in such movies as *Because They're Young* (the title song was his biggest hit to date) and either wrote or recorded the theme music for *Pepe* and *Gidget Goes Hawaiian*. In 1961, he co-starred with Richard Boone in *A Thunder of Drums*, which led to some guest spots on Boone's *Have Gun, Will Travel* TV series, which had been the inspiration for Duane's first album title: *Have Twangy Guitar, Will Travel*.

In 1962, by which time the singles weren't charting quite as high, Duane and Hazelwood were reunited and the guitarist moved over to RCA. "(Dance With the) Guitar Man" became his biggest hit ever, and the album named after it was cut in Nashville. (So was the subsequent *Twanging a Country Song*, which spotlighted Buddy Emmons.) In 1962, Eddy also married for the second time, to one of his backup

singers, Mirriam Johnson—known today as Jessi Colter.

By 1964, however, Duane, like his entire generation, was being eclipsed by the English Invasion and Motown. He pulled back to concentrate on writing and publishing—with 15 Top Forty singles, about 20 albums, and some 100 million records sold worldwide, he could afford the break.

For years, he was unable to mount a comeback (except in England and Australia, where his popularity never waned). He had the occasional hit such as the 1970 "Freight Train," which topped easy-listening charts, but they were few and far between. He produced Phil Everly's first solo album, also some sides with Waylon and the original Crickets. In 1976, around the time he moved to Lake Tahoe, Nevada, he even cut a version of "You Are My Sunshine" with Waylon and Willie that managed to make little noise at a time when everything those two men touched was turning to gold. It's a period he now dismisses as quickly as he can. "I got into real estate and that sorta thing for a while," he mumbles, "just sorta made a living..."

Then in 1985, Don Randi, a jazzman who also works pop sessions in Los Angeles, invited Duane to play his club, The Baked Potato, out on Ventura Boulevard near Universal City. When Duane declined because he didn't have a band, Randi put one together for him with Steve Douglas (an original Rebel) on sax, sessions whiz Hal Blaine on drums and Ry Cooder on guitar. Terming it "an offer I couldn't refuse," Duane took the gig. It went so well that in no time he was back on the road, paired with guitarists like Albert Lee and playing before crowds that included adoring fans like rock stars Jeff Beck,

Eric Clapton, Lindsey Buckingham, Tom Petty and Ron Wood.

In 1986, the British rock group Art of Noise asked him to play on their dance-club remake of his "Peter Gunn." The best way to describe this band is to confirm that they are arty and they are noisy, relying on computers for their sound, but their brand of musical distortion jibed well enough with Duane's that the record won a Grammy in 1986. Surprisingly, it didn't alienate Duane from his old fans, most of them now into country or soft pop—even if they weren't real keen about the Brits. Duane capped the first stage of his comeback by opening a Huey Lewis tour, and then playing New England on his own before doing a huge show at the New Jersey Meadowlands with Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis.

On his way back to Tahoe, he stopped by Nashville to look up some old friends, particularly Jim Horn, another original Rebel and now the backbone of the Don Williams band. Nashville looked good. "I got to looking in my address book and I realized I knew more people here than I did in L.A. and Tahoe combined," he chuckles.

When it came time to record his 1987 album, called appropriately *Duane Eddy*, help came mainly from the generation of rockers he had originally inspired. It is not a bad little roll call of names. Art of Noise wrote and produced two cuts, and Duane did two more on his own. Paul McCartney produced a remake of his "Rockestra," and Jeff Lynne of Electric Light Orchestra produced three more sides. Cooder produced and played on two cuts. Among the guitarists joining in were James Burton, Steve Cropper, John Fogerty, George Harrison and David Lindley.

Now you might take this to mean Duane Eddy is back as a rock star, and you wouldn't be entirely wrong—but you wouldn't be entirely right, either. The way Duane Eddy sees it, he is back as a musician, period. He's done a session with Emmylou Harris and leans towards cutting an all-country album of his own one day soon. When he throws a record on the turntable at home, it's usually someone like Connie Smith or George Jones—but he's also partial towards Whitney Houston, jazz flash Stanley Jordan, even heavy metal band Bon Jovi.

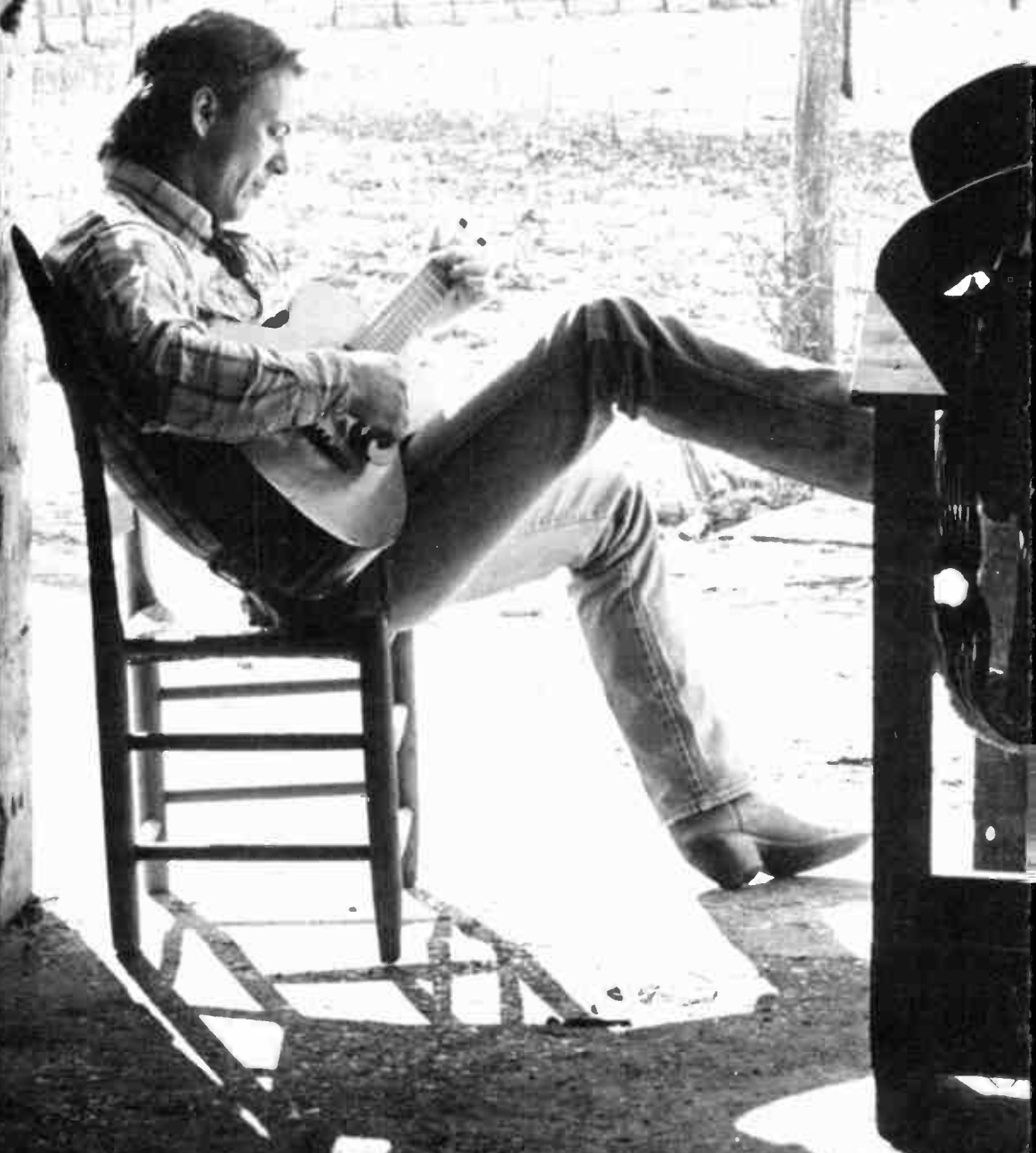
"Everyone who picks up the guitar, whether it's rock, country, rhythm and blues, even heavy metal, they all have something to say, and it's all slightly different. I mean, Eddie Van Halen—it's the same damn instrument, but it's being played so differently," he concludes. "I guess it's just one of the all-time best instruments for people expressing themselves."

And he should know. ■

D DAVID LYNN JONES

The Prodigal Returns

After some years of searching for what truly makes him happy, David Lynn Jones has come full circle. He now spends most of his time working at home on his music. His debut album gives a glimpse of what he has learned.





As a "newcomer," David Lynn has had some very impressive backing. Waylon Jennings picked him as a leader of the new generation of country artists.

Here he comes, hot as a pistol, packed with power and loaded for bear, a future of substance set in his sights. We're not talking cute here (though cute he is, or at least handsome); we're not talking catchy (though yes, he's that too, his songs hook with the best of them); we're talking smart, strong, stirring, soul-searching; we're talking Significant.

That's what David Lynn Jones' hype says—prominent mention of events like Waylon's characterization of him as "the leader of the new generation" and the use of his "Living in the Promiseland" song in the dedication of the renovated Statue of Liberty set the general tone—and gee, for once the hype might really be on the money.

Consider the content and quality of his debut album, *Hard Times on Easy Street*. Comparable in idea-for-dollar and surprise-per-track value with the fertile first works of groundbreaking writer/singers like Guy Clark or Joe Ely or Billy Joe Shaver, even Kris Kristofferson, it also has prime-time production values, real full-scale sock-it-to-you professional-class *music*; you can crank this sucker up the decibel scale, just as you can the late Gram Parsons' *Grievous Angel* or Steve Earle's *Guitar Town* or John Cougar Mellencamp's *The Lonesome Jubilee*, and really have yourself a ten-track time.

That combination doesn't come along very often, even in these adventurous days when a brand new hillbilly semi-genius is motivating at you down Music Row every time you stick your head out the window, so certainly *Hard Times on Easy Street* is significant; any album this good is. What makes it and its

maker Significant with a capital 'S,' however, is something else. It's the content, the words, the (yes) 'message.'

Well, messages. There aren't that many of them on the first side of the album, which deals mostly in the small scale of clever, sometimes funny, often very moving character studies and life stories—the truck-driving little sister in "Bonnie Jean," the sad old cowboy in "High Ridin' Heroes," the adult remembering his raising with thanks in "Home of My Heart" and his honky tonk road with humorous irony in "The Rogue"—but once you hit Side Two, you're into the wide and heavy. You're out there in the dark blue yonder of things it hurts to think about: war, for instance ("Tonight in America"), and a land of plenty trouble ("Hard Times on Easy Street" and "Living in the Promiseland"), and man as a blight upon a perfect earth ("Valley of a Thousand Years").

This is powerful stuff, and moreover it works. All of it is so beautifully rendered—each song such a differently and appropriately set gem of image and music and idea—that listening, you're on that old creative knife edge where the pain of what's expressed meets the pleasure of *how* it's expressed in a trance as subtle and ambivalent as a moment of reality. When the last chord fades away, then, you find yourself feeling something like you might after a beautiful requiem or a particularly dire but eloquent sermon: not quite sure if you're very disturbed or very much at peace, but dead certain that one way or another, you're moved.

You might also find yourself sort of stunned. As a rule, you really don't

by Patrick Carr

expect a spiritual experience when you drop the stylus on a modern commercial country album. Music Row coughs up plenty of clowns and cuties and posers and puppets and rounders and rebels, all sorts of good ole girls and bad ole boys (and also, to its credit, more than its share of wise old birds of all ages and sexes), but really now: how often does the brand new semi-genius motivating at you down that solid gold hillbilly boulevard turn out to be a real-life writing, singing, seeking, git-down preaching pilgrim?

Two kinds of essential impressions of David Lynn Jones. First is something he says about himself when I call him on the telephone to find out what kind of fellow he is: "I've never had much of a problem forming or expressing opinions; whenever I get a chance to bombard someone with 'em, I let 'em have it." Second is a quote from his high school yearbook: "He never let his studies interfere with his education." Together those two quotes give you a fair idea of where the man's at today, and how he got there.

The 37 years' worth of biography-so-far describe a circle beginning and ending in the (very) small town of Bexar, Arkansas, where 20-plus years ago Pop was a farmer, Mom was—yup—a preacher, and David Lynn, one of five kids, was bored. Restless. At times argumentative, somewhat distracted, more than somewhat inattentive to his schooling; a born musician, in short. On those nights when Mom thought young David Lynn was staying over at a friend's house, perhaps studying, young David Lynn was in fact writing tunes and entertaining drinkers of beer and spirits down at the Blue Moon.

He resisted his calling, but not very

strongly and not for long. Married at 17 and inserted into a large dairy business with his father, he nonetheless made his first song-pitching trip to Nashville at the age of 19. Nothing much came of that initiative, but one year later (the word 'finally' doesn't quite fit here, but 'permanently' does) he opted out; traded a quarter of a million dollars in dairy business debt and a day job selling cars in Fayetteville for a bass guitar and life on the road with Freddy Morrison and the Bandana Blues Band. What happened to his marital status is unclear; he talks freely about his current five-year-old union and his two young children, and

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"I've quit looking for songs; whenever they come, I work on them."

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about the 19-year-old daughter from his first marriage who lives with him, but on the subject of himself and marriage in the intervening years—specifically how many times he took the vows—he ventures that he'd "better not say."

Whatever; now he's back in Arkansas, in the center of three generations of Joneses, and from there he says he isn't of a mind to wander either geographically or in matters of the heart. "I don't want to go to the moon, I don't want to go to Saturn," he says. "Everything I want to do is right here on this earth. I don't want to be a cosmic cowboy, float

on a cloud somewhere; I want to be riding my horses when I'm 95, seeing my great-grandson."

There are very definite echoes of the prodigal son theme, and of the years-in-the-wilderness theme, in David Lynn's recounting of his time away from home. You hear them not so much in the facts of geography and occupation—his years in Houston as a successful steady-working songwriter, studio musician and honky tonk bandmember; his multiple criss-crossings of the nation on the road with this outfit and that—as in his account of how he approached life then as opposed to how he approaches it now.

His songwriting, for instance. "I used to think I had to do it, so at times I'd sit down every day—ten, twelve hours a day—and just write," he says. "But now they either come or they don't. I've quit looking for songs; whenever they come, I work on them. I see that as growth. It's not a chore anymore. Now I enjoy it more than anything I've ever done."

That change of attitude and method went hand in hand with a more essential change: a radical shift in what he wrote about. "I used to write a lot of negative, lost-love kind of songs, because I grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry and Hank Williams, and I guess I got the idea that that's what music was," he says. "But I didn't really like those songs much. I knew they were pretty good—they were better than what the average Joe was writing at the time—but apart from that and the fact that they made money, they didn't give me a whole lot of satisfaction; they weren't knocking me out."

Why not? I ask.

"Well, simple. I've been around a lot of heartbreak, you see, but I personally have never had my heart broken. So I wasn't writing what I was feeling. I only started to take real pride in my work when I started writing the truth. Saying something I really believed. Writing what I really felt. Now that's all I do. My songs are my opinions; there's a statement in every one of them. There aren't as many of them as there used to be—maybe there'll only be ten a year—but those few songs have a whole lot more value than all the other kind."

All of which begs another question: Why (and how) did this shift in approach take place?

But first the where, which was in the attic bedroom of a house in Fairbanks, Alaska, where David Lynn and his fellow bandmembers spent six weeks playing a club after a whole winter of touring.

He remembers it well. "That was probably the first time in my life when I was forced to live with myself in a situation I couldn't get out of," he says. "I mean, when it's forty below outside, you



Along with music, working with cutting horses is David Lynn Jones' favorite pastime. He was able to incorporate both in his video of "High Riding Heroes," which features Doc Guffee and Jim Gideon, both famous cowboys.

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ain't gonna be playing softball. So I spent a lot of time up in that attic trying to figure out why I was so unhappy, what I was looking for. It took a few years after that to finally get it figured out, but it turned out to be peace of mind. I needed to be able to look myself in the eyes in the mirror every evening, and say, 'You did something better today than yesterday.'"

He explains further. "You see, I'd had a bad attitude all along, and things just weren't happening. Like in the mid-1970's, I was making a lot of money—I'd never had any before in my life, and here I was getting \$25,000 checks—but I didn't get any satisfaction out of it. I didn't like myself that much. I made too many bad decisions for selfish reasons." He doesn't detail such decisions or reasons, just says they were "Oh, what everybody does, the usual kind of thing"—but he is very clear indeed about the conclusion he reached about what was wrong with himself: "I wasn't living by God's law, and that's what I had to do. I had to start living by the Ten Commandments."

Which he did, as much as he could, and does now as much as he can. "I ain't no saint, but whether you're religious or not, you can't argue with the ideas that you shouldn't kill somebody, you shouldn't take things which aren't yours, you can't disrespect the land and the people who love you—all those laws work for everybody, even the atheist. The Ten Commandments are the ten laws of nature, and you can't fight them. If you do, you pay one way or another. When you break God's law, you're on your own, buddy."

It was this change in attitude towards himself that necessitated a change in David Lynn Jones' music. As he explains it, "I started working on the way I was pursuing my career, rather than working on the career itself. I started trying to develop myself as a human being, and then develop myself as a writer. No matter what I was writing about, I'd ask myself, 'What is the real truth of this situation, and how does it relate to me? How would I *really* feel about this?' At that point, there's no excuse for not saying what you really think in your songs—and the truth is always right; the truth is always knowledge; it's wisdom. It takes a lot of trouble to make stuff up—you can waste a lot of time trying to manipulate things into a place they're not supposed to be—but the truth is usually real obvious; the right thing to do is usually the obvious thing. And that's how it works."

Such are the core beliefs of the prodigal son after his years in the wilderness, and they have served him well; virtue has been rewarded. After writing a whole new generation of songs



David was one of the "new faces" at this year's Country Radio Seminar.

stuffed with his personal truth, then connecting with effective people who saw their worth—a partnership quarter-backed by producer Richie Albright, Waylon's ex-longtime-drummer—Mr. Jones is now equipped with an eight-album contract from Polygram Records. As he puts it, "That pretty much cuts out what I'll be doing for the next seven or eight years."

Bolstered by the security of his situation and by long experience of how *not* to do things, David Lynn goes about his work with an unusual degree of common sense. Rather than spending energy on the action in a large and lively "scene" like Nashville, for instance, he has arranged to eliminate distractions and simplify logistics by constructing his own little music world in Bexar; his rehearsal space, his pre-production studio, the beginnings of a full recording studio, and his band members (most of them old friends) are all within five minutes of where he and his family live in his grandfather's old house. So whenever he's ready to move a song out of his mind and into others' ears (which happens whenever it happens), or if he wants to crank up a new one by riffing with his musicians and seeing what comes of it, he just picks up the phone and he's there. And then, whenever he doesn't want to be doing that kind of stuff, whenever his Muse calls time out, he can walk out of the house and work with the cutting horses which are his main nonmusical passion, or just go fishing.

This kind of arrangement tends to work rather well for writer/singer/bandleaders—Bob Dylan's old setup near

Woodstock with the members of The Band, the famous "House at Big Pink," comes to mind—and together with the fact that David Lynn Jones already has somewhere between one and two hundred songs he considers worthy of recording, it promises well for both the artist's and the consumers' future. Second- or third-album burnout shouldn't be this particular semi-genius' problem.

As he and I talk on the telephone in the first days of 1988, David Lynn notes that *Hard Times on Easy Street* was "an introduction"; Side One featured older songs mostly concerning his personal life experiences, while Side Two conveyed newer ideas and preoccupations. The new album he is almost ready to begin recording, he says, will be somewhat different: "It'll be more of a band album, more the way I hear my music sounding." It will be produced by Richie Albright and Mick Ronson, the English guitarist/bandleader/producer whose superb sense of rock 'n' roll style so enhanced *Hard Times on Easy Street's* decibel potential; David Lynn figures that this time, given the "band album" approach, Ronson's contribution will be greater.

Which sounds good, sounds good; seems like we can expect some hotter, harder, funkier and perhaps even more beautiful trances from the new pilgrim on the block. And as to subject matter, for a while at least we don't have to worry about it getting too cute.

"I truly believe that what we're supposed to be doing here is developing the species and purifying the soul," says the pilgrim, "and I'm probably still in the mode of promoting human awareness of the condition we're in. Maybe I'm into it too much—I don't know—but I see an onslaught of destruction going on around us all the time, all because of greed, and it seems that what I want to say right now is, *Wake up!*"

I ponder the import of these words for a while, trying to align the concepts of country music, spirituality and social conscience, and then, since the pilgrim isn't your holier-than-thou kind of fellow—despite his essential seriousness, he's not stuck up at all—I figure it's okay to tell him, "Gee, David, that's a shame. I was kinda hoping you'd write some good songs about golf. That's what's on most big country singers' minds most of the time, and I've always figured it's kind of a crime they don't write about it."

He laughs. "Yeah," he says, "I could write some great songs about golf. That'd be fun. But oh, hell, I don't know. I hope there'll come a time when I can quit saying 'Wake up!' and start saying, 'Okay, buddy, relax.' But we certainly haven't reached that place yet. And I *have* to write what's on my mind." ■

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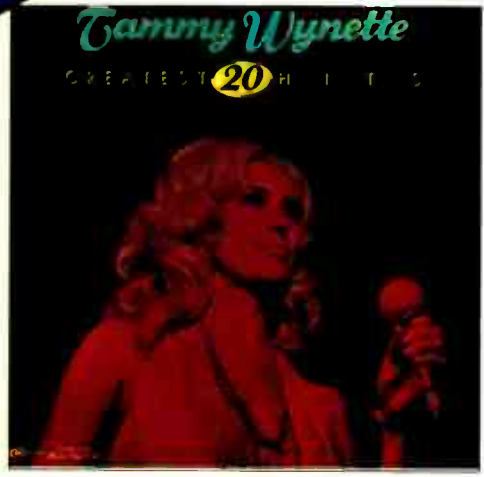
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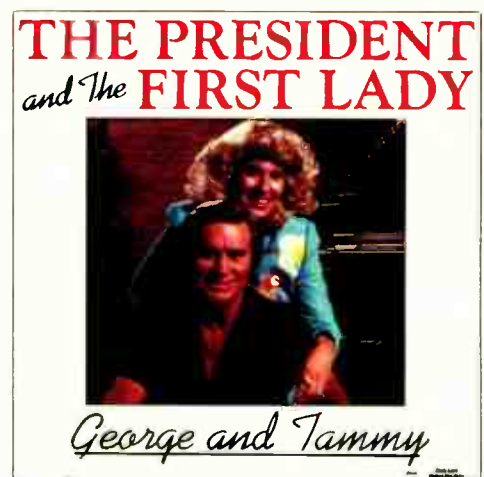
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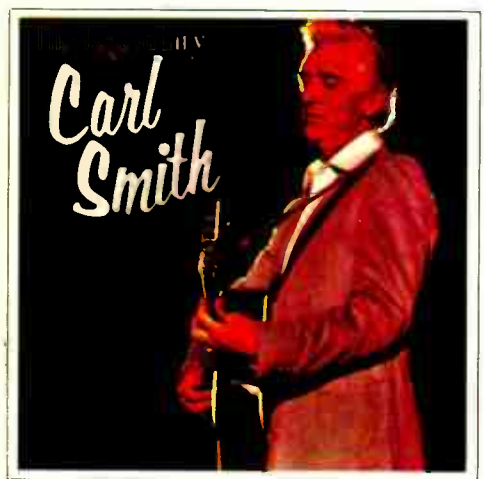
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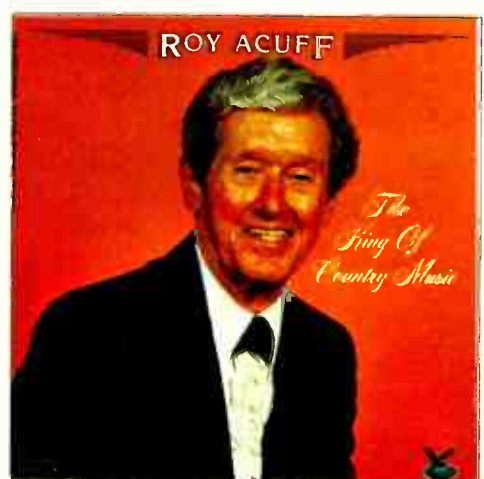
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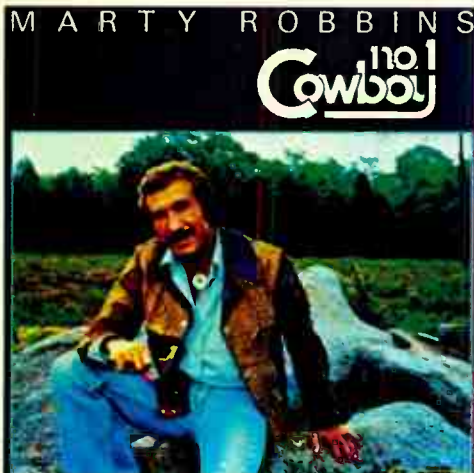
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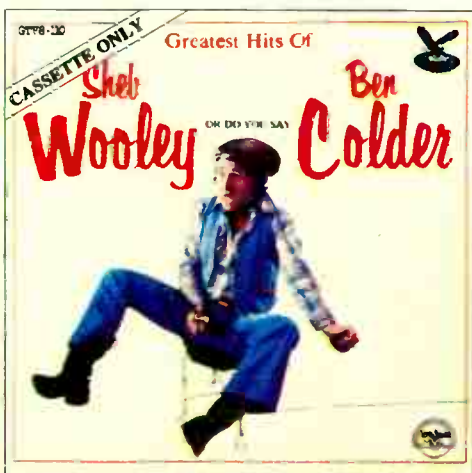
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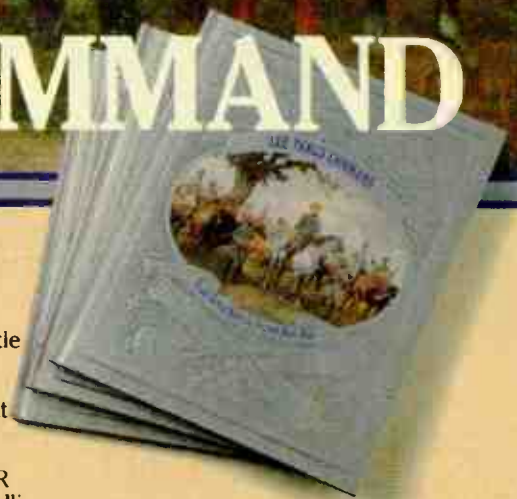
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Record Reviews

Nanci Griffith
Little Love Affairs
MCA 42102

For those familiar with Nanci Griffith's independent label releases, *Lone Star State of Mind*, her 1986 major label debut, was a mild disappointment because it had so few top-flight original songs and it lacked emotional focus. But disappointment is a thing of the past now that *Little Love Affairs*, Griffith's newest—and possibly best—album has arrived.

Never before has Griffith (with the occasional help of duet partners like John Stewart and Mac McAnally) used her voice, with all its charm and eccentric power, with such effectiveness. Plus, the songs she's come up with are among the best she's ever written—memorable, original songs such as "Anyone Can Be Somebody's Fool," "I Wish It Would Rain" and the title song, "Little Love Affairs." Her co-writers this time around are Tom Russell, Danny Flowers and James Hooker.

As a writer, Griffith is undeniably one of the chosen few. She is one of those narrow geniuses like, say, Tom T. Hall or John Prine, who is capable of packing an entire novel's worth of character development, mood, emotional shading and time and place into a few short song verses with utter clarity. You can hear what I mean on her own "Love Wore a Halo (Back Before the War)" or "Gulf Coast Highway" co-written with Danny Flowers and James Hooker.

Nor has Griffith (who co-



Nor has Griffith (who co-produced *Little Love Affairs* with Tony Brown) ever come up with so many provocative little brush strokes and subtle flourishes designed to rise above the limitations of her voice (specifically, its tendency towards shrillness). In addition to her wonderfully out-of-left-field duets with McAnally and Stewart, Griffith also duets beautifully with herself. Check out the exquisite double-track vocals on "So Long Ago" and "I Wish It Would Rain."

There are fine non-original songs on the album as well. Griffith manages, one way or another, to make almost every one her own: Harlan Howard's "Never Mind," John Stewart's "Sweet Dreams Will Come" and Robert Earle Keen Jr.'s "I Would Change My Life."

If I sound like I'm gushing, I am: *Little Love Affairs* is a knockout. It's a powerful, almost thematic exploration of all the crazy, hurtful, exhilarating romance, idealism, disillusionment and rejuvenation present in love in today's world. With its intelligence and emotional strength, it feels like the album Griffith has been waiting her whole career to make. She's certainly never made a better one. —BOB ALLEN

Joe Ely
Lord of the Highway
Hightone HT8008

Joe Ely, supremely talented Texas roadhouse-style country-rocker that he is, had the misfortune to get

tangled up with the Nashville record industry in the wrong decade: the 1970's.

Even when Ely more or less on his own laid down such major career-building cornerstones as one or two critically acclaimed albums and got a write-up in *Time Magazine* and a fan following that included Linda Ronstadt, the boys at MCA—then his record label—who seemed to carry their musical tastes in their wallets either could not, or would not, do much with Ely. They chose instead to devote their modest talents to promoting the records of more socially acceptable acts like Barbara Mandrell and The Oak Ridge Boys. "What d'ya wanta do a story on Ely for?" a publicist at the label—a good friend of mine, actually—replied with irritation to my queries one day. "Why don'tcha write about Mandrell: she sells records!"

So then a new decade rolled around. And, as luck would have it, just as Ely's contract ran out, Nashville woke up from its long sleep, and raw-edged artists like Steve Earle—a man who, to my taste, covers similar musical territory as Ely, but with considerably less finesse—became the new darlings.

But Ely was not to be counted out, even though he went three years without an album. It was six years if you disregard his very disregardeable 1984 *Hi Res* offering. He kept right on slugging it out on the road, where he has long been acclaimed as having one of the most high-energy, pull-out-the-stops live shows of anybody in the business.

And what goes round comes round. At least, with

Record Reviews

Lord of the Highway, his new self-produced album for the small but highly regarded California independent label, Hightone, Joe Ely is back, and back with a vengeance—brasher and bolder (at least on record) than ever before. *Lord of the Highway* is simply a great album—one which sizzles and crackles like static electricity, and burns with such raw energy that it threatens to melt the vinyl that contains it and make your turntable smolder.

One of the key elements here is that Ely, the *songwriter*—so heartily in evidence on classic early albums like *Joe Ely* and *Honky Tonk Masquerade*—is back. “Me & Billy The Kid,” for instance, is a classic convoluted Ely story-song, full of comic surrealism and seedy wild west romanticism, rendered in the “Pancho & Lefty” vein. “Silver City” (Ely almost sounds like Tom Petty on this one) is about a young pilgrim’s hard knocks, and coming-of-age in some mythical wild west boom town. “Everybody Got Hammered” is an unrepen-

tant, hard-rocking anthem to a well-earned swing-shift hangover.

Then, too, there’s the great title song, written by long-time Ely associate Butch Hancock: it’s a restless, devil-may-care road song so full of reckless gusto that Ely will probably have no choice but to include it in his road show for years to come. Another standout, where the band really gets to strut its stuff, is Eddie Beethoven’s haunting “Don’t Put a Lock on My Heart.”

Lord of the Highway is essentially a “live” studio album. It was recorded on a shoestring in an Austin studio, and evidently Ely just let the tapes roll while he and the band burnt the barn down. Ely’s phenomenal band is the driving force behind each and every cut on here. Bobby Keys’ rhythm-and-blues-driven sax can be heard throughout, and he makes it sound like he’s the man who wrote the book on the instrument. Keys is a former Rolling Stones side and session man. Likewise with David

Grissom, the young, hotshot world-class electric lead guitarist whom Ely found somewhere. These two, with the equally inspired accompaniment of drummer Davis McLarty, bassist Jimmy Pettit and keyboardist/guitarist Mitch Watkins, really make the sparks fly and the bottles bounce. This bunch manages to make a top-notch band like Earle’s Dukes sound positively *geriatric* by comparison!

And all the while, there’s Ely himself, singing—or as is more often the case, shouting—with the abandon of a man so possessed by the runaway energy of his music that you fear he might actually pop a blood vessel or something.

What can I say, except that here, on vinyl for the first time, are the shades of greatness that almost anybody who’s seen Ely live or listened closely to his earlier albums knew were there all along. Listening to the fervor, the musical commitment one hears so clearly on *Lord of the Highway*, I am

reminded of any number of other great artists, past and present—Waylon Jennings, Tom Petty, Roger McGuinn, Buddy Holly—when they were in their respective musical heydays.

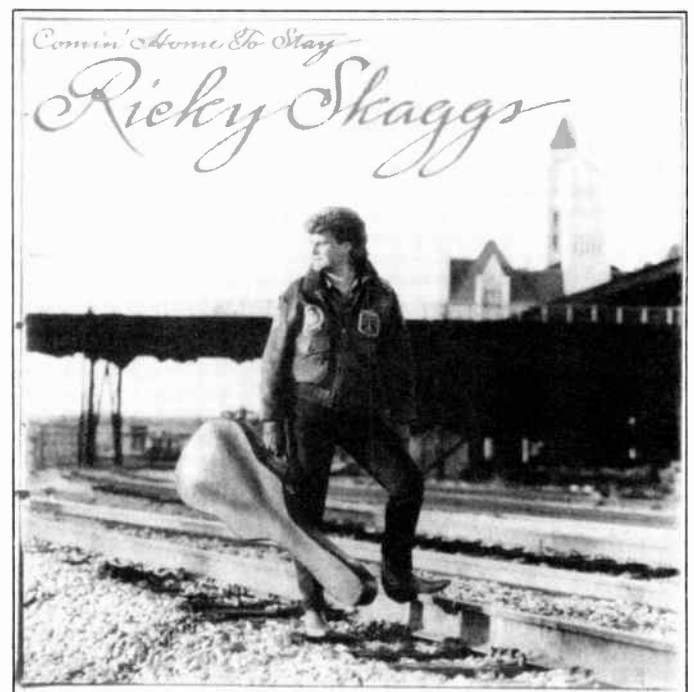
Lord of the Highway is so raw, so damned fine and so damned satisfying, that it makes me want to stand up and dance on the table tops, kick over the beer bottles with my pointy-toed cowboy boots and shout at the top of my lungs: “Ooooooh—wheeee!! Joe Ely’s back! Back with a vengeance!”

—BOB ALLEN

Ricky Skaggs

Comin’ Home to Stay
Epic FE-40623

When I first started writing about music, maybe because I lived in North Carolina, I got sent to about a million bluegrass festivals. That’s when I first conceived of the theory that mandolins cause brain damage. I came



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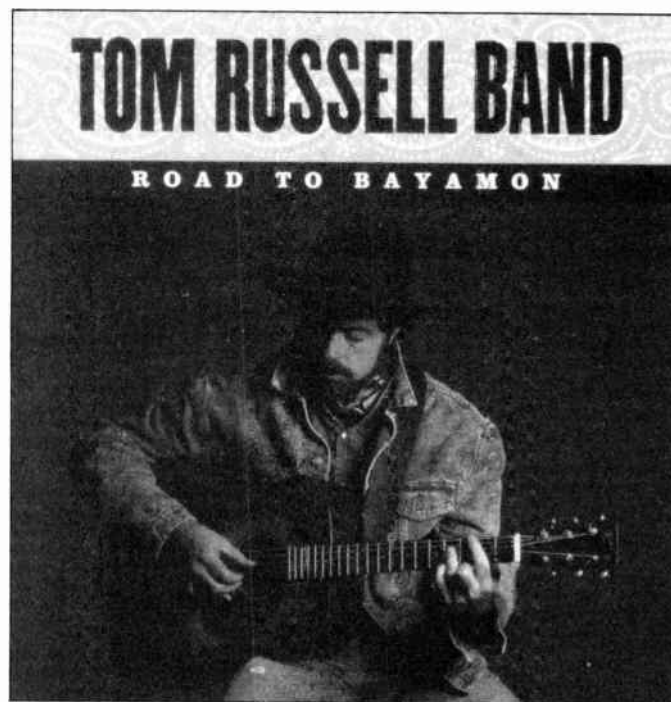
to believe that somewhere along the line I had sinned grievously and that my punishment was to listen to "The Orange Blossom Special" and "Uncle Pen" until my teeth fell out and I got a graduate degree in American Folk Music.

As you might guess, I've never been a particularly big fan of Ricky Skaggs and the bluegrass side of the family.

I've got to tell you, though, *Comin' Home to Stay* has its moments. Ricky continues in the vein he's mined so well—bluegrass traditionalist (well, let us say a bluegrass-styled traditional country music singer, as long as we're sifting categories).

I don't know—call me a cry-in-your-beer kind of guy—but sometimes I like music without any redeeming social value. Ricky thoughtfully included a couple of songs for me on *Comin' Home to Stay*. "Hold Whatcha Got" and "(Angel On My Mind) That's Why I'm Walking" are good songs. They're about cheating and women and being on the road and stuff like that. And I like them a lot. "Hold Whatcha Got" is a trucking song, sort of. I mean, it's got a truck starting up on the front and a truck winding down at the end and a pretty good tinkling piano in the middle. I like hearing trucks on country records, because trucks are so relentlessly out of style these days. Remember "Roll On, Big Mama"? Remember "Phantom 309"? More trucks, less sensitive men, *puh-lease!* "(Angel)..." I like because I like song titles in parentheses, something that Cowboy Jack Clement used to specialize in. It's also a straight-ahead weeper, beginning with fiddles and giving Ricky a chance to work out his voice a bit. It sounds like it was recorded around 1955, and it could suit your mood perfectly on a rainy afternoon with a couple of shots and a beer chaser.

The rest of the album, sad to say, is full of Jesus, true



love, the nuclear family, sensitive men and enough sincerity to gag a pony. I wish there were an attachment for a stereo that kicked in a David Lee Roth record whenever sincerity and true love reached a certain level.

—MICHAEL BANE

Tom Russell Band *The Road to Bayamon* Philo/Rounder PH-1116

Singer/songwriter Tom Russell has long been a presence on the national folk scene. He is also one of those die-hard musicians who has helped keep country music alive and kicking in the lower Manhattan bar and club scene during the last decade.

More recently Russell has begun to make a name for himself as a songwriter. Nanci Griffith, who wrote the liner notes to this album, has covered his tunes; Ian Tyson has had major hits with them in Canada. Russell himself is something of a star

in Scandinavia, where he has had Number One records of his own. On the side, he's also made a name for himself as a journalist, covering music and literature for various American publications. Nevertheless, Russell—who has been influenced by artists as varied as Lightnin' Hopkins and William Faulkner—is, so far, an unknown quantity to mainstream American country music audiences.

Road to Bayamon, Russell's fine new album, may be the first step toward remedying this situation. On it, all of his undeniable assets as an artist—his leathery yet emotionally compelling voice, his poetic edge as a lyricist and his razor-sharp band, which delivers both country and nuts-and-bolts rock 'n' roll with equal verve and confidence—have been brought into focus as never before. *Road to Bayamon*, recorded in Oslo, Norway, of all places, may be the best small-label release of late 1987.

First off, The Tom Russell Band proves it can hold its

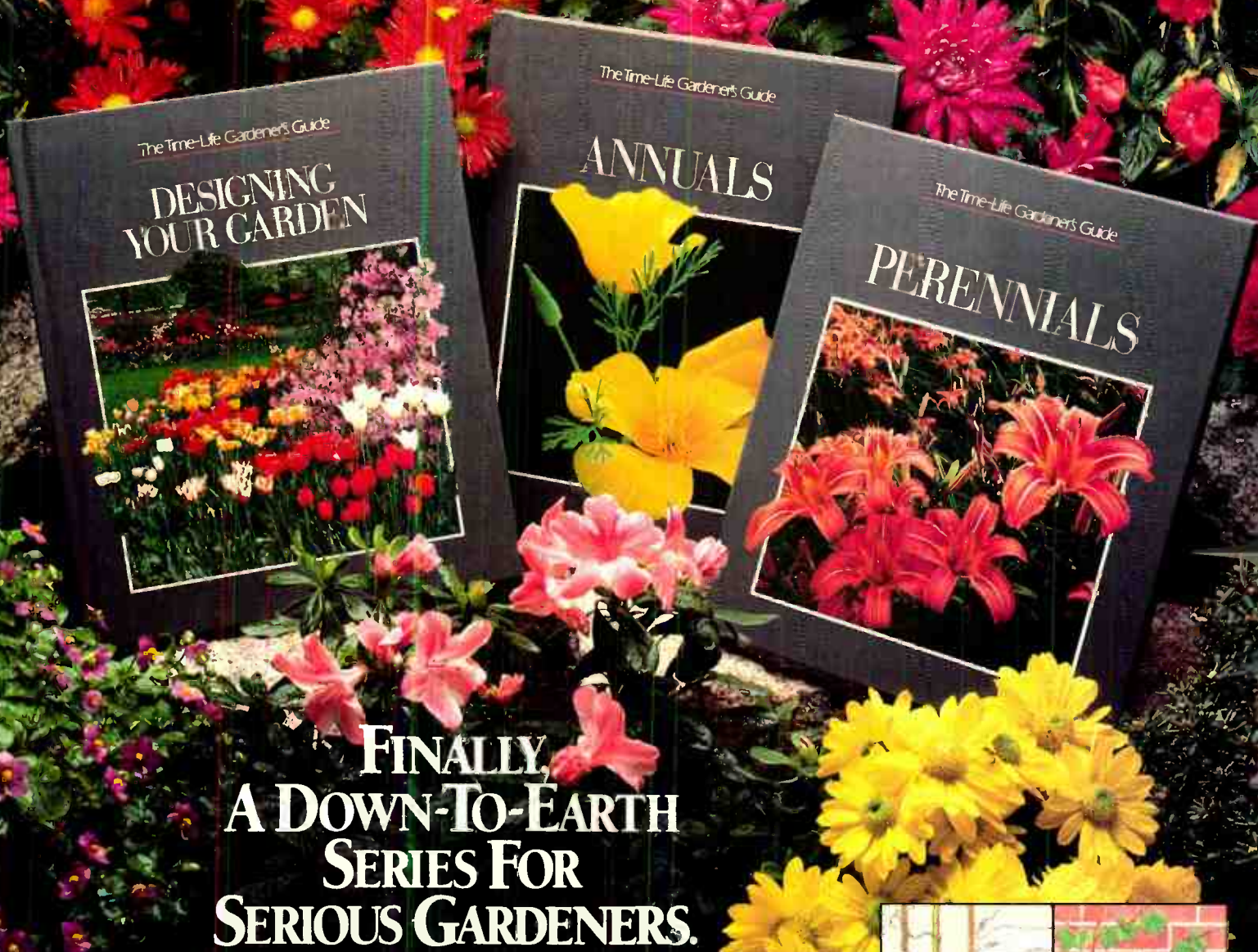
own against the best in the business. Its ability is strikingly apparent on cuts like "Home Before Dark," "Downtown Train" (a wonderful cover of a Tom Waits song, and the only song by a writer other than Russell included) and "Definition of a Fool." On these selections, the band locks into a lean, muscular musical groove that is as grittily convincing as anything done by Steve Earle and The Dukes. Andrew Hardin's crisp electric lead is dominant. Then there are the added touches, like Fats Kaplin's tasteful accordion fills on "Definition of a Fool"—on this song the band particularly shines.

"U.S. Steel," quieter in style, is a flat-out country ballad, complete with steel guitars and a twangy, deadpan Johnny Cash-style vocal. The song deals with the grim blue-collar realities of poverty and despair in a depressed Pennsylvania steel town.

After several listens, Russell's poetic subtlety begins to reveal itself on moody, atmospheric ballads like "Alkali," a lyrically complex depiction of fatalism and death in the Arizona desert. "Wise Blood" is also fine—a gutsy, provocative tribute to the pain, suffering and truth at the heart of good Southern roots music. "William Faulkner in Hollywood" is a sad tale of an artist being ground up in the gristmill of commerciality, lifted directly from the life story of America's most gifted novelist:

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Sippin' bourbon and starin'
through the trees
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money dream
Has taken Bill away
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Brought him to his knees...*

Road to Bayamon is proof positive of a starkly original talent at work—one that deserves a wider hearing than it's had so far. Now that



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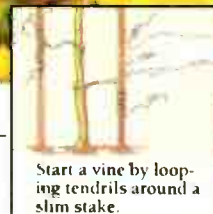
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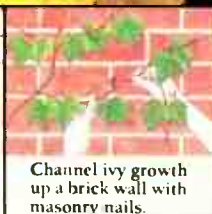
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the country mainstream has loosened up enough to accommodate such diverse artists as Lyle Lovett, Steve Earle and Nanci Griffith, it's time to make room for Tom Russell. —BOB ALLEN

The O'Kanes *Tired of the Runnin'* Columbia B 44066

It took Jamie O'Hara and Kieran Kane over a year to put together this new album, and that's understandable, especially since the debut album yielded so many hits. Naturally, as one of their early boosters, I wondered if they could do it again. They did. Direction's the same, all but one song original, the band unchanged except for bassist Roy Huskey being replaced by veteran Nashville studio bassist Henry Strzelecki, who was playing on hits when Kane and O'Hara were in junior high.

Love songs are still the focus, no drinking songs, no remade classics or wimpy-sounding folk-pop numbers. The melodies are weird and often haunting, their bluesy overtones and odd rhythm shifts giving them the same hazy, mystical integrity as last time.

"If I Could Be There," with its Appalachian feel, is the best example of this style. Framed by fiddle and banjo, it sounds for all the world like something on the Country Music Foundation's recent *Bristol Sessions* anthology of 1928 mountain music, though Kane and O'Hara didn't consciously attempt to copy.

The playfulness of "Blue Love" likewise conjures up the Cadence-era Everly Brothers without trying. "All Because of You" celebrates joy and redemption from darkness. "Rocky Road," full of lost-love/desolation imagery, is abbreviated but compelling. The haunting mystery of "Bluegrass Blues"



from the first album is evoked in "Highway 55," a masterpiece of despair and anxiety. When did you last hear a country song with a line about kudzu? That's *real* Southern music.

"Tired of the Runnin'," a novel in miniature, combines sweet harmonies, a rocking arrangement and on-the-run/Death Row lyrics, dramatic yet understated. "In My Heart" is a stark drama of loss and pained acceptance. The weakest link is "I'm Lonely," an inferior throwaway. Jesse Winchester's "Isn't That So," a different (*very* different) type of gospel number, has an element of mystery heightened by its infectious Caribbean/Latin arrangement.

The band sounds like it used to, but as featured here in some breathtaking extended instrumental workouts, is more creative than ever, proving that less is more and that breaking the rules can work. I once loathed accordions, having taken guitar lessons from Henry Casale, who taught both

instruments and occasionally had me playing Johnny Cash boom-chuckas behind his squeezebox, but Jay Spell cuts any string section or synthesizer I've ever heard. If these guys don't get the 1988 "Instrumental Group of the Year," the CMA can... You get the point.

Look sharp, gang. O'Kanes imitators are probably right around the corner. But they'd damn well better be able to write—and pick—this good. No sweat, guys.

—RICH KIENZLE

John Anderson *Blue Skies Again* MCA-42057

I'd often wondered why John Anderson has had so few hits in the past few years. After all, he started Nashville in the direction it's currently going. Back in the early 1980's when he was with Warners, he soared. "I'm Just an Old Chunk of Coal" and "Swingin'" remain two

of this decade's finest records by anyone, records that broke the Lefty imitator stereotype that many hung on John.

More recently, things haven't been so lustrous. His 1986 hit, "I'm Countrified," was so superficial it reminded me of the time in the early 1970's when Merle Haggard, discussing *Hee-Haw* with an interviewer, recalled telling the show's producers, "Why don't you just get the pigs in here and let 'em s_____ on the floor?" Hit or miss, however, Anderson was still comfortable with that sound.

But this time, the direction is a mess, because there *is* no direction. Much as I admire Jimmy Bowen's work, he has tried to put Anderson into styles that simply don't fit. So long as they stick to his own sound, as they do on three numbers, everything falls into place. The title track is excellent honky tonk, with good lyrics and a lilting melody similar to 1930's pop songs. It fits him like an old shoe, as reflected in his spirited vocal.

Yet the Anderson-Lionel Delmore collaborations that were so successful a few years ago are overlooked or ignored. "There's Nothing Left for Me to Take For Granted" is an unsettling reminder of how special their songs can be—and how badly more of them were needed this time. "Just For You," written by Anderson and his wife, is less profound but still in character for him.

The operative word here throughout, however, is *mellow* and Anderson, never much for yammery pablum, has to slog through too much of it. Mark Germino's "I Make It Hard to Lose" is utterly forgettable. "Quittin' Time," a perfect song for Kenny Rogers, has a saccharin sensitivity that annoys more with each listen. "Lying in Her Arms," which Anderson co-wrote with Paul Kennerly, whose songs can jump from brilliant to tedious, mines old

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ground for the umpteenth time and comes up empty. Paul Craft's "His and Hers" is terminally trite.

And let's face it: a 1970's Outlaw Anderson isn't. "Somewhere Between Ragged and Right," a pretentious duet he shares with Waylon, may be great p.r., but musically it's a bad idea. Waylon's voice might be suited to such overblown melodrama, but Anderson's clearly isn't. If that weren't mistake enough, we then get "It's Hard to Keep This Ship Together," an Anderson/Fred Carter collaboration built on heavy-handed metaphor and a dumb bathroom pun.

In the duet with Waylon you'll hear a line mentioning "a busload of taxi drivers learnin' how to fly." That one line sticks with me, and I think I know why. Because except for the three songs I mentioned early on, that's about the best evaluation of the whole album, and reason enough that next time, Bowen had best let Anderson be Anderson.

—RICH KIENZLE

Kathy Mattea
Untasted Honey
Mercury-Polygram
832 793-1 Q-1

Kathy Mattea, a West Virginia native, has been one of the hottest new "bubbling-under" contenders on the country scene for several years. Her first two albums were promising efforts which somehow failed to fully capture the arresting charm of her husky, mid-range vocal style.

But then came her 1986 *Walk the Way the Wind Blows*, which was a real winner. Done with her long-time producer Allen Reynolds, it succeeded brilliantly where their earlier efforts had failed. It defined Mattea's strengths and charms as a middle-of-the-road stylist. It also propelled her, via her cover of Nanci Griffith's "Love at the Five & Dime," into the Top Five on the singles charts for the first time. *Walk the Way the Wind Blows*

was the first step in transforming Mattea from a mere contender to a major player.

Untasted Honey, Mattea's latest, is not quite as powerful as *Walk the Way the Wind Blows*. Where *Walk* bristled with a sort of free-wheeling "newgrass" vitality supplied by pickers like Pat Flynn, Ray Flacke, Bela Fleck, Jerry Douglas and Tim O'Brien—many of whom also play on *Untasted Honey*, *Honey* moves at a slower pace and is ballad-oriented.

Nevertheless, there are a number of wonderful songs here, where Mattea turns in some of her strongest vocal interpretations ever. "Goin' Gone," which recently became her first Number One single, may not be as bitersweet or as touching as Nanci Griffith's version of it. Yet Mattea manages to fill it with a more open, accessible feel which, in its own way, is nearly as satisfying.

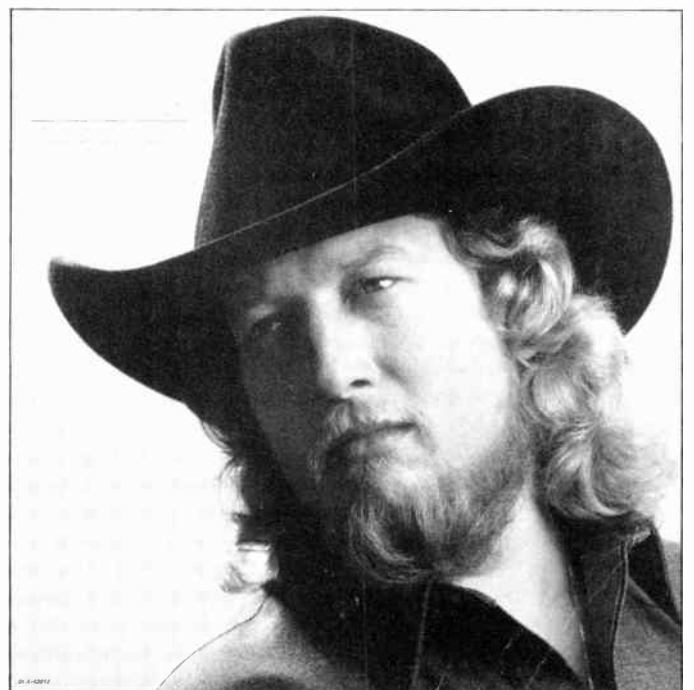
Untasted Honey is also a bit of a showcase for fellow West Virginian Tim O'Brien, the multi-talented leader of the newgrass group, Hot

Rize. Mattea reprises two of O'Brien's outstanding originals here. One of them, "Untold Stories," is a particularly compelling song which has already been a bluegrass hit for Hot Rize. O'Brien (who plays mandolin and acoustic guitar on a few of the tracks) also joins her for a rousing duet on Schlitz and Overstreet's "The Battle Hymn of Love."

This album's major weakness lies in the one or two songs that hardly seem to work at all. Though Mattea has never sung with as much passion—and assurance—as she does on the title song or on the magnificent "Like a Hurricane" (by Patrick Alger and Mark D. Sanders), she falls flat on "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses." Schmaltzy, lukewarm performances like this are better left to Anne Murray or some other play-it-safe crooner.

Imperfections aside, *Untasted Honey* is a solid, commendable album. It's a building block in a career rapidly on the rise.

—BOB ALLEN



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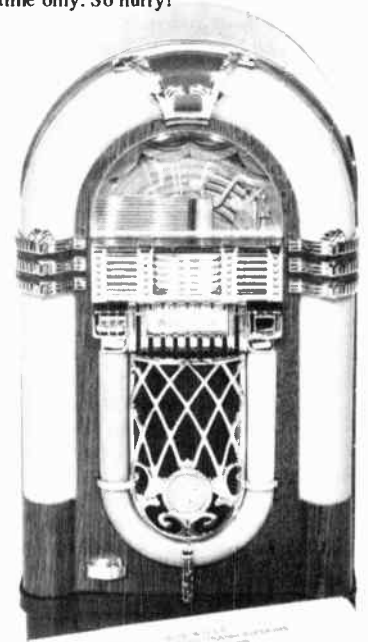
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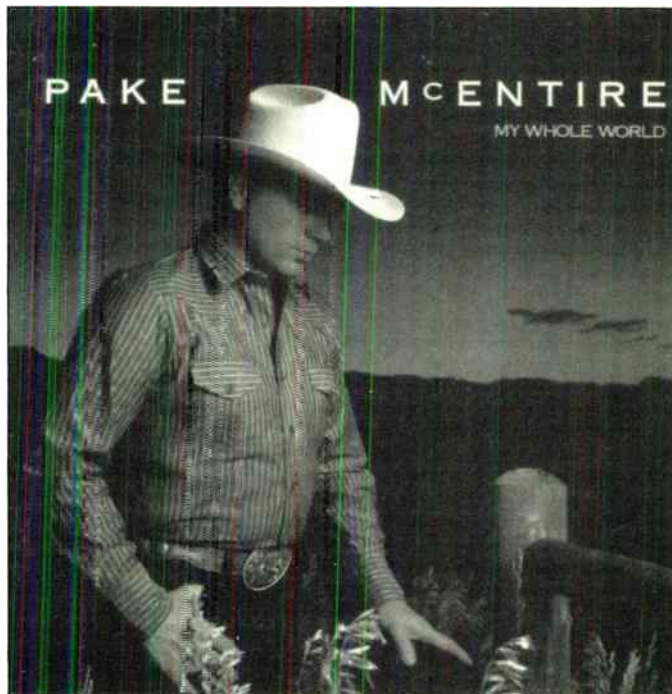
I Want You, I Need You, I Love You

Record Reviews

Pake McEntire
My Whole World
RCA 6607-1-R

Pake McEntire reminds me of any number of journeyman country singers a few years back, say Johnny Duncan or Ronnie McDowell or someone cut from that mold. Give him the right song, and he's going to climb the chart and you're going to be humming him for a couple of weeks. But he's not—to me—the kind of singer to inspire you to go out and search for his next album or call your favorite station and threaten suicide unless they play Pake for five hours straight.

My Whole World doesn't do much to change my opinion. Pake's voice lacks the depth and range of some of



the better known singers, but that's not necessarily a major negative. What it means is that song choice and arrange-

ment become even more critical than usual. Too many of the songs on *My Whole World* are a little too pedestrian, a little too safe, I think, to work for Pake. Where he really shines is when he's getting ready to kick some butt, like with the Leiber and Stoller warhorse "Ruby Baby." Pake tackles "Ruby Baby" like he was an opening act in a West Texas honky tonk, which is exactly the way it should be.

Pake also shines with Dave Loggins' "Hard To Be True," which is straight-ahead country with a good backbeat. "House Full of Love," a Glenn Frey and Jack Tempchin number, has a real nice George Jones feel to it that Pake carries off well.

On the whole, though, we're looking at too much filler and too little *oomph*.

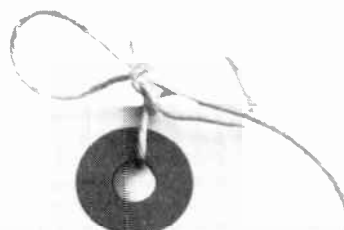
—MICHAEL BANE

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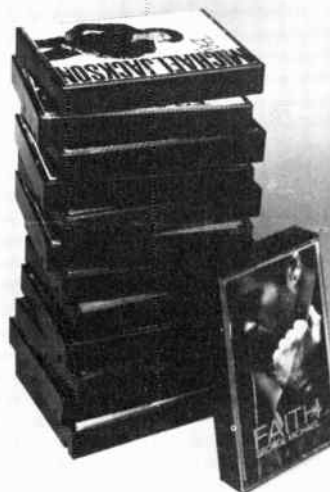
363465. Dolly Parton—
Rainbow. The River
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361303	LYNYRD SKYNYRD BAND LEGEND	346478	MADONNA TRUE BLUE	345777	PETER GABRIEL SO
356808	STEVE EARLE & THE DUKE EXIT O	356279	GLORIA ESTEFAN & MIAMI SOUND MACHINE LET IT LOOSE	353946	BRYAN ADAMS INTO THE FIRE
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347161	AMY GRANT THE COLLECTION	362152	ROBBIE ROBERTSON	346510	THE FORESTER SISTERS PERFUME, RIBBONS & PEARLS



361006	George Strait— Greatest Hits Volume Two. <i>At My Ex's Live In Texas</i> ; etc. (MCA)	358077	Hank Williams, Jr.— <i>Born to Boogie</i> . Title hit: <i>Honky Tonk Woman</i> ; etc. (Warner Bros./Curb)	364042	Dan Seals— <i>The Best Three Time Loser</i> . One <i>Friend: I Will Be There</i> ; etc. (Capitol)	354035	Dwight Yoakam — <i>Hillbilly Deluxe</i> . <i>Little Sister</i> ; <i>Little Ways</i> ; more! (Reprise)	356824	Rosanne Cash — <i>King's Record Shop</i> . <i>The Way We Make A Broken Heart</i> . (Columbia)	361097	Reba McEntire — <i>The Last One to Know</i> . Title c/w. <i>The Stairs</i> , <i>Someone Else</i> . (MCA)
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361584	JOHN SCHNEIDER GREATEST HITS	361576	STEVE WARINER GREATEST HITS	3576161	THE BEST OF THE DOORS	321067	THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND A DECADE OF HITS	363655	BARRY MANILOV SWING STREET	365494	GEORGE HARRISON CLOUD NINE
351478	THE O'KANES	364018	FOREIGNER INSIDE INFORMATION	397612	REPRISE	318493	LYNYRD SKYNYRD BEST OF THE BEST	356444	DIONNE WARWICK RESERVATION FOR TWO	361592	RAY STEVENS GREATEST HITS, Vol. 2
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334391	WHITNEY HOUSTON	357939	LA BAMB A ORIG. SOUNDTRACK	291278	THE DOOBIE BROTHERS BEST OF THE DOOBIES	287003	THE INK SPOTS GREATEST HITS	344614	DWIGHT YOAKAM GUITARS, CADILLACS, ETC.	359075	AEROSMITH PERMANENT VACATION
257279	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN BORN TO RUN	363820	BILLY JOE ROYAL THE ROYAL TREATMENT	353573	STEVE WARINER IT'S A CRAZY WORLD	357582	THE GATLIN BROTHERS LARRY STEVE RUDY PARTNERS	336669	STING THE DREAM OF THE BLUE TURTLES	321307	AIR SUPPLY GREATEST HITS
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355255	MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHEY AMERICANA	335539	MERLE HAGGARD HIS BEST	337643	MADONNA LIKE A VIRGIN	357475	RAY STEVENS CRACKIN' UP	3363961	BILLY JOEL GREATEST HITS VOLUMES 1 & 2	353250	GEORGE STRAIT Ocean Front Property
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344697	THE WHITES GREATEST HITS	335067	WAYLON JENNINGS, WILLIE NELSON JOHNNY CASH, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON HIGHWAY MAN	361134	R E M DOCUMENT	293589	THE DRIFTERS THEIR GREATEST RECORDINGS	345587	VARIOUS ARTISTS MILLION DOLLAR MEMORIES	3115731	LENA HORNE, THE LADY 391371 AND HER MUSIC LIVE ON BROADWAY
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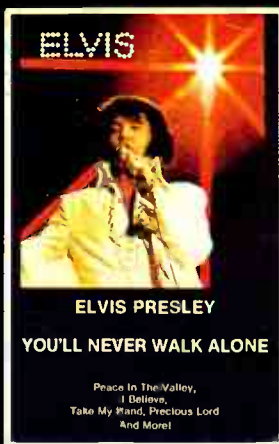
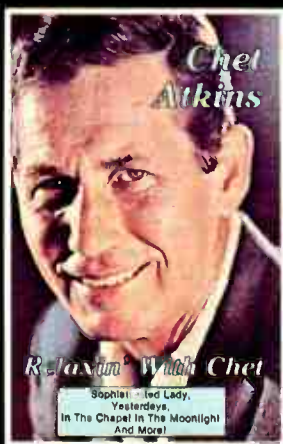
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ELVIS PRESLEY—ELVIS SINGS HITS FROM HIS MOVIES: Down By The Riverside And When The Saints Go Marching In/They Remind Me Too Much Of You/Confidence/Frankie And Johnny/Guitar Man/Long Legged Girl (With The Short Dress On)/You Don't Know Me/How Would You Like To Be/Big Boss Man/Old MacDonald—No. CAK2567

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The Mandrell family dynasty has wound its way through country music for the better part of thirty years. Barbara, Louise and Irlene have picked and sung (or, in Irlene's case, drummed) their way through everything from the Grand Ole Opry to regular network television. We caught up with the intrepid Mandrell sisters at the taping of the 20th Anniversary Hee Haw show in Oklahoma, where sister Louise agreed to sit still for a quick 20 Questions.

1

So what's the middle Mandrell sister up to these days?

Well, I'm working at being a mommy and an entertainer, and I'm extremely busy with the two.

2

How old is the object of your affections these days?

Meegan Nicole is four years old. We call her Nicole, and she's in several of the commercials I've done on TV. God really knew what he was doing when he sent us Nicole.

3

Isn't it hard to handle a precocious four-year-old out on the road?

No, not at all. It's even more of a joy than being by yourself. We like the same movies; we like the same food. She likes to entertain with Mommy. So it actually works out great.

4

What's going to happen when she starts to school?

I guess I'll start to school, too! Oh, really, I don't know. I try not to think about it. I guess Daddy will get to see her more. We thought about a tutor, but I believe kids need to be in school.

5

Is she going to grow up to be a singer?

She says she is now. And I'm not trying to discourage her.

20 Questions with LOUISE MANDRELL

by Michael Bane

MARIA CASILU



I just keep telling her that a woman can be other things as well, such as the President of the United States. I guess I just want to teach her the same priorities that my family taught me: God, family, then business. When you can have all three, great.

6

Do you take Nicole with you a lot?

All the time. She calls herself my road baby. She loves it. And we both seem to get homesick at about the same time. . .

7

When is that?

About three weeks into the tour. Or if it's boring. We both like to do something to break up a boring stretch. Today we went horseback riding.

8

Anything else on the mommy front?

Well, you know R.C. and I are still trying to have a child — Nicole is adopted. They say when you adopt a child, you get pregnant right away. Well, Nicole sleeps close to us, and nothing happens (*laughs*).

9

How long have you and R.C. Bannon been married?

(*Laughs*.) We're celebrating our tenth anniversary next February 6. We're going to re-do our vows and have a ceremony for the whole family. In fact, we feel that people should re-do their vows at least once every ten years.

10

We hear the three sisters are getting a bit competitive on the sports front, something about a golf game.

R.C. now has his own golf show starting on *The Nashville Network*, and guess who three of his first guests were? You know, he's a big time golf fan, and now he says he can get paid for it. Barbara and Irlene and I played, and we weren't great,

but we weren't bad. I can't tell you who won — we're all sworn to secrecy until the show airs. But you can probably guess from this much that it wasn't me.

11

Golf's not the only sport you three are competing in.

Well, there's Barbara's celebrity softball tournament coming up. I'm going to be there, and I'm really excited, although Barbara hasn't told me which team I'm going to be playing on. If I'm playing really good, I'll be on her team.

12

Who's the better softball player?

I am. Barbara will tell you she can run faster, so she doesn't have to hit the ball as far.

13

You've gained a tremendous amount of visibility through television commercials, especially White Rain shampoo. Do you use the products?

Of course. I love commercials, but I'll only do them if I'm proud of the product. I wouldn't do some product I didn't like, because one of my fans might buy it and be mad at me.

14

How did you end up doing a duet with Eric Carmen?

Actually, I'd recorded a couple of his songs, and he kept calling the house to see how they were doing. He kept calling and calling, and finally I just asked him if he'd like to record one of them with me.

15

This isn't your first duet, right?

The only other one I've done was with R.C., and R.C. produced the record with Eric Carmen.

16

This *Hee Haw* special is the



KELLY SHIPLEY



first time that all three sisters have been together on stage in a while. Any particular reason?

Well, we agreed to do it because Irlene is a regular on *Hee Haw* and Barbara is hosting the show. Normally, you know, we don't perform together. In fact, when we all get together at one of our homes, the last thing we even talk about is music. Barbara has a two-year-old; Irlene has a two-year-old and a three-month-old and I have Nicole.

All our effort and energy go into watching the kids.

17

You perform together on the show?

Yes. In fact, we do a song about sisters that R.C. wrote.

18

You wrote a successful history of the Mandrell family a few years back. Are there any other writing plans in the future?

Believe me, I have discovered that having a four-year-old cuts down pretty heavily on your writing plans! I have written a couple of stories, fiction, and I really think that when Nicole starts to school, that's something I'd like to pursue.

19

Do you have any time off the road?

Not much. At this point, I'm on the road all the time. But I love it, even the road.

20

Okay, okay, we're bowing to pressure here — let's hear about a certain embarrassing moment that happened to you recently on the road.

Okay—I'm on stage in Vegas doing a big dance number, wearing this big white flowing dress and moving across stage. All of a sudden, one of my shoulder pads came loose and fell out, right there on stage. I mean, it was a shoulder pad, but the audience thought it was something else. When I was done singing, I picked it up and tossed it to a guy in the audience. I told them that if it *had* been something else, I would have been sure to pin it in. ■

Buried Treasures

*Reissues,
Rarities and the
Hard-to-find*

Kitty Wells: Everyone knows Kitty Wells opened the door for Patsy, Loretta, Dolly and every other female country singer since. She wasn't the first successful female solo vocalist. Others had isolated hits before her, but Kitty was the first woman to become a permanent presence on the country charts of the 1950's. Now, with the same extraordinary care and attention that went into their magnificent Bob Wills box sets, Bear Family Records in Germany has compiled everything from Kitty's peak years with Decca/MCA into *The Golden Years: 1949-1957* (BFX 15239).

Kitty's early experience and first solo recordings came singing with her half of Johnny and Jack. It's here with that legendary duo that the album begins in 1949, with her early country and gospel records for RCA, these take up half of the first record. Her delivery is competent enough, but this material is valuable mainly as a way of hearing her style take shape. As you quickly discover, she really didn't have to evolve all that much.

Record One, Side Two features the original 1952 Decca recording of "Honky Tonk Angels," a response to Hank Thompson's hit "The Wild Side of Life." Here begins her true golden period. Her early Decca recording, built around Shot Jackson's keen ing steel guitar, was close to the Roy Acuff sound apparent on her two 1955 duets with Acuff. It worked so well for her that producers Paul Cohen and Owen Bradley didn't attack for over three years.

"One By One," her 1955 hit duet with Red Foley, a more sophisticated vocalist, and her enduring 1955 hit version of Jimmy Work's "Makin' Believe," hewed to that basic sound. Not until 1956 did



Owen Bradley begin to broaden her style slightly by adding twin fiddles and piano. Her 1956 duets with fellow Decca megastar Webb Pierce were every bit as good as the duets with Acuff, though Kitty and Webb didn't have a hit together until 1964.

As with Ernest Tubb, Decca fostered an admirable consistency in recording Kitty, no screwball experiments—even in the 1956-1957 era there was nary a stab at rockabilly. Some might complain the ballads get repetitious. Indeed, anyone this stylized is vulnerable to such criticism. However, it's a measure of her popularity that of the 95 songs on these five LPs, recorded over a period of six years, only four were unissued.

Charles Wolfe, nominated for a Grammy for his notes on the CMF's recently released *Bristol Sessions* album, has done an outstanding job on the enclosed booklet, which combines rare photos with a comprehensive history of Kitty's peak years. Assisted by Kitty and Johnny, who gave their bless-

ing to the project, Wolfe provides some fascinating insights into the early days of recording in Nashville. My sole gripe is that Wolfe's comprehensive presentation of how Kitty came to record most songs, often explained in her own words, should have been included in the booklet itself, and not on the album covers.

The Louvin Brothers: If we wait long enough, I suspect Stetson will eventually get around to reissuing all The Louvin Brothers' classic Capitol albums. *Ira and Charlie* (HAT 3057), originally released in 1960, is as exquisite as the two previous Louvin Capitol reissues, *Tragic Songs of Life* and *My Baby's Gone*, reviewed in Buried Treasures in the January/February 1988 and March/April 1987 issues. Covering other artists' hits with an emphasis on ballads, the material ranges from The Louvins' own composition, "Are You Teasin' Me" (a hit for Carl Smith), and Jimmie Davis' "Nobody's Darling But Mine" to Jimmy Work's "Makin' Believe" and an exquisite

"Tennessee Waltz" that for my money equals anybody's.

This album compares well to the brothers' earlier albums. Their compelling harmonies and sparse, clean instrumentation (one electric guitar, Ira's mandolin, Charlie's acoustic guitar, brushed snare drum and bass) remain consistently fine. If you liked the other Stetson albums, you'll definitely want this one. (What about the Louvins' *Tribute to the Delmore Brothers* next, Stetson?)

Rose Maddox: Stetson also just released another magnificent Rose Maddox Capitol album. *The One Rose* (HAT 3056), her 1960 debut for the label, features Rose backed by her brothers Cal and Henry, singing 12 of their superb 1940's-early 1950's numbers associated with their old act, the legendary Maddox Brothers and Rose. They reprise their hot versions of Hank Williams' "Honky Tonkin" and "Move It On Over" (arranged to sound like George Jones' "White Lightning"), ballads such as Woody Guthrie's "Philadelphia Lawyer" and upbeat arrangements of traditional tunes like "Sally, Let Your Bangs Hang Down."

The instrumentation is even sparer than what you'll find on the original recordings, with only mandolin, bass, snare drum and lead guitar. Rose's laserlike vocal intensity on ballads like "At the First Fall of Snow" and "Tramp on the Street" is still impressive 28 years later. These recordings lack the rawness of the original late 1940's 4-Star 78's, but the energy is still there.

Wanda Jackson: Wanda Jackson was the greatest female rockabilly of all time, bar none. But her hits for Capitol were solid country. *Wonderful Wanda*, re-

released on Stetson's sister label Jasmine (JAS 304), was released originally on Capitol in 1962. It chronicles her early country hits. The hard-edged sound of her Decca recordings is replaced here by Nashville Sound strings, ooh-ah choruses and Wanda's toned-down singing, closer to Brenda Lee. The upshot is radically different and to her rock fans may be a letdown of sorts.

Two of her early hits—"In the Middle of a Heartache," Number Six in 1961, and "If I Cried Every Time You Hurt Me," Number 28 in 1962—are included, along with a cover of "A Little Bitty Tear" and Don Gibson's "We Could." I prefer her rockabilly material and the early Decca sides, but if you like her more mellow, toned-down sound, this is a good sampler.

Roy Acuff: In the mid-1950's after leaving Decca and MGM, Roy Acuff signed with Capitol Records, where he remained for about two years until he signed with his own Hickory Records. Enough Capitol sessions took place to provide album material well into the 1960's including, in 1964, *The Great Roy Acuff*. Reissued by Stetson (HAT 3055), the material is obscure but raw country that constituted some of Acuff's last really good recordings.

Roy was in excellent voice when these records were made, and his performances on the largely moralistic numbers—titles like "Don't Judge Your Neighbor," "Sweep Around Your Own Back Door" and "Please, Daddy, Forgive" are a pretty good indicator—were some of his best later work. Likewise, the Smoky Mountain Boys were solid during this time, with Jimmie Riddle on piano, Onie Wheeler's harmonica, Howdy Forrester's fiddle and of course Oswald's dobro. Since only Os survives today from the old band, this is a valuable document of its sound at its peak.

Eddie Adcock & Talk of the Town: Eddie Adcock, former sideman with the legendary bluegrass band The Country

Gentlemen, and, in the mid-1970's, leader of his own band The Second Generation, has been a solo recording artist long enough to know what he's doing. His current touring act, Talk of the Town, includes his wife Martha on rhythm guitar, bassist Missy Raines, fiddler Susie Gott and drummer Jody Maphis, Joe's son.

Eddie Adcock & Talk of the Town (CMH-6263) is a good indicator of the talents of Adcock, a legendary 5-string banjoist and acoustic and electric guitarist. Known for his eclecticism, the material here is consistent with that, ranging from Peter Rowan's "The Hotter She Burns" to old standards like "Long Black Veil" and The Louvin Brothers' "Give This Message To Your Heart." It also includes Adcock's own "Windy Woman," "Renaissance Man" and "Dreams Are Made to Remember."

But he goes further, freely mixing in Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'," Arthur Gunter's "Baby, Let's Play House" (an Elvis Sun recording), 1940's rhythm-and-blues legend Louis Jordan's "Saturday Night Fish Fry," Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Matchbox Blues" and even John Fogerty's "Up Around the Bend." If the mix of modern bluegrass and acoustic rock seems unsettling, rest assured it won't after the first few plays.

Asleep At The Wheel: A few readers took issue with my review last year of *Asleep At*

The Wheel's Epic album *10*, which I compared unfavorably to their previous Capitol albums. Whether you agreed or disagreed (I stand by my comments), it's worth checking out *The Very Best of Asleep At The Wheel* (SEE 81) from See for Miles Records, an anthology culled from their 1973 debut album for United Artists and their 1975-1979 Capitol albums.

From the United Artists album comes Hank's "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive," Moon Mullican's "Cherokee Boogie," featuring leader Ray Benson, and "Space Buggy," featuring former vocalist Chris O'Connell. Among the four highlights from their 1975 Capitol masterpiece *Texas Gold* are Benson's "The Letter That Johnny Walker Read" and the brilliant "Runnin' After Fools," featuring the sadly underrated singer-composer Leroy Preston.

From later Capitol albums come such gems as Preston's original 1977 version of his composition "My Baby Thinks She's a Train" (Rosanne Cash's first big hit), done up Sun Records style. The Wheel's stomping boogie interpretation of "Route 66" and their 1978 Grammy-winning version of Count Basie's big band classic, "One O'Clock Jump," round things out nicely.

Hank Williams: Polygram recently released the final half of their comprehensive Hank Williams reissue series of eight 2-record sets. Since

this material is essential to everything that's happened in the past 40 years, any regular reader of this magazine owes it to himself or herself to get the complete set. The final four include *Long Gone Lonesome Blues* (831 633-1 Y-2), *Hey, Good Lookin'* (831 634-1 Y-2), *Let's Turn Back the Years* (833 749-1 Y-2) and *I Won't Be Home No More* (833 752-1 Y-2).

The material covers all Hank's issued recordings, including his Luke the Drifter recitations (an acquired taste for many), together with a few alternate versions of existing numbers (not the big deal they seem) and some newly-issued demo recordings thrown in. Among the never-formally-released highlights on the final volume is "Apology," a morbid spoken recording made when Hank couldn't make a 1951 gig in Baltimore due to back surgery (really).

The importance of Hank's music is beyond question and having it in one place is a relief, since this material has been spread across any number of albums in the past. Despite some rare photos, the packaging remains the weakest link. Though trumpeted as "chronological" (in the order the original records were released), the inclusion of undated recordings still leaves the listener up in the air in some respects.

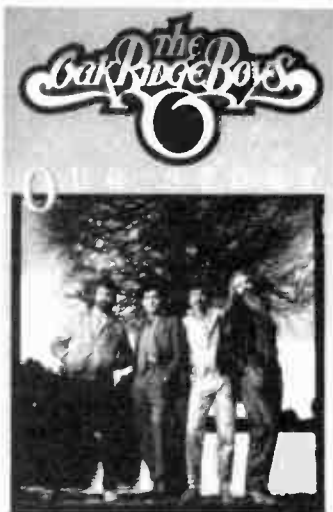
Annotators Colin Escott and Hank Davis, best known for their rockabilly research and notes on foreign reissues, are way out of their element in country, a fact evident in their liner notes. I do credit them, however, for finally acknowledging some sources, such as, for example, the CMF's Bob Pinson, the authority on Hank's music, uncredited on previous volumes. These and the two CMF sets, *The First Recordings* and *Just Me and My Guitar*, give you nearly all the Hank material that's known at this time, save a few radio shows. Don't be surprised, however, if more rarities surface as time goes on. They always do. —RICH KIENZLE

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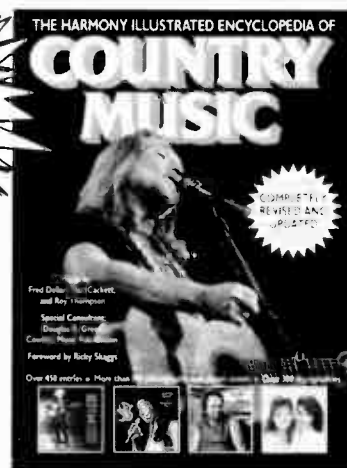
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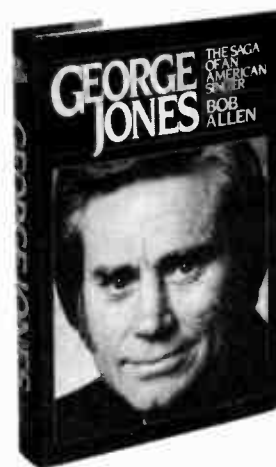
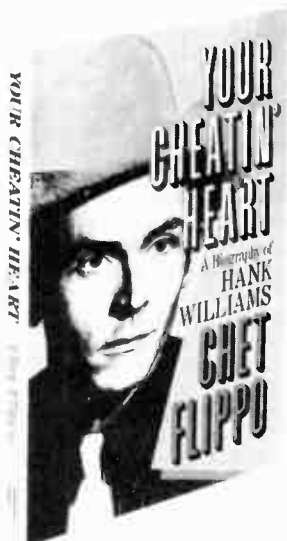


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TOP 25

Singles

1. The Judds *Turn It Loose*
2. Reba McEntire *Love Will Find Its Way To You*
3. Eddie Rabbitt *I Wanna Dance With You*
4. George Strait *Famous Last Words of a Fool*
5. Charley Pride *Shouldn't It Be Easier Than This*
6. Ricky Van Shelton *Life Turned Her That Way*
7. K.T. Oslin *I'll Always Come Back*
8. The Bellamy Brothers .. *Santa Fe*
9. The McCarters *Timeless and True Love*
10. Rodney Crowell and
Rosanne Cash *It's Such a Small World*
11. Ronnie McDowell *It's Only Make Believe*
12. Johnny Rodriguez *I Didn't (Every Chance I Had)*
13. Highway 101 *Cry, Cry, Cry*
14. Holly Dunn *Strangers Again*
15. T. Graham Brown *The Last Resort*
16. Lee Greenwood *Touch and Go Crazy*
17. Vince Gill *Everybody's Sweetheart*
18. Eddy Raven *I'm Gonna Get You*
19. Tom Wopat *A Little Bit Closer*
20. Hank Williams Jr. *Young Country*
21. Waylon Jennings *If Ole Hank Could Only See
Us Now*
22. Steve Wariner *Baby, I'm Yours*
23. Moe Bandy *Americana*
24. Lyle Lovett *She's No Lady*
25. Patty Loveless *If My Heart Had Windows*

Albums

1. Randy Travis *Always & Forever*
2. Ricky Van Shelton *Wild-Eyed Dream*
3. George Strait *Greatest Hits, Vol. 2*
4. K.T. Oslin *80's Ladies*
5. Reba McEntire *The Last One to Know*
6. Hank Williams Jr. *Born to Boogie*
7. Rosanne Cash *King's Record Shop*
8. Merle Haggard *Chill Factor*
9. Billy Joe Royal *The Royal Treatment*
10. Alabama *Just Us*
11. Highway 101 *Highway 101*
12. Randy Travis *Storms of Life*
13. Dwight Yoakam *Hillbilly Deluxe*
14. Vern Gosdin *Chiseled in Stone*
15. Reba McEntire *Greatest Hits*
16. Lyle Lovett *Pontiac*
17. The Judds *Heart Land*
18. Tanya Tucker *Love Me Like You Used To*
19. George Jones *Too Wild Too Long*
20. Dolly Parton,
Linda Ronstadt,
Emmylou Harris *Trio*
21. Dan Seals *The Best*
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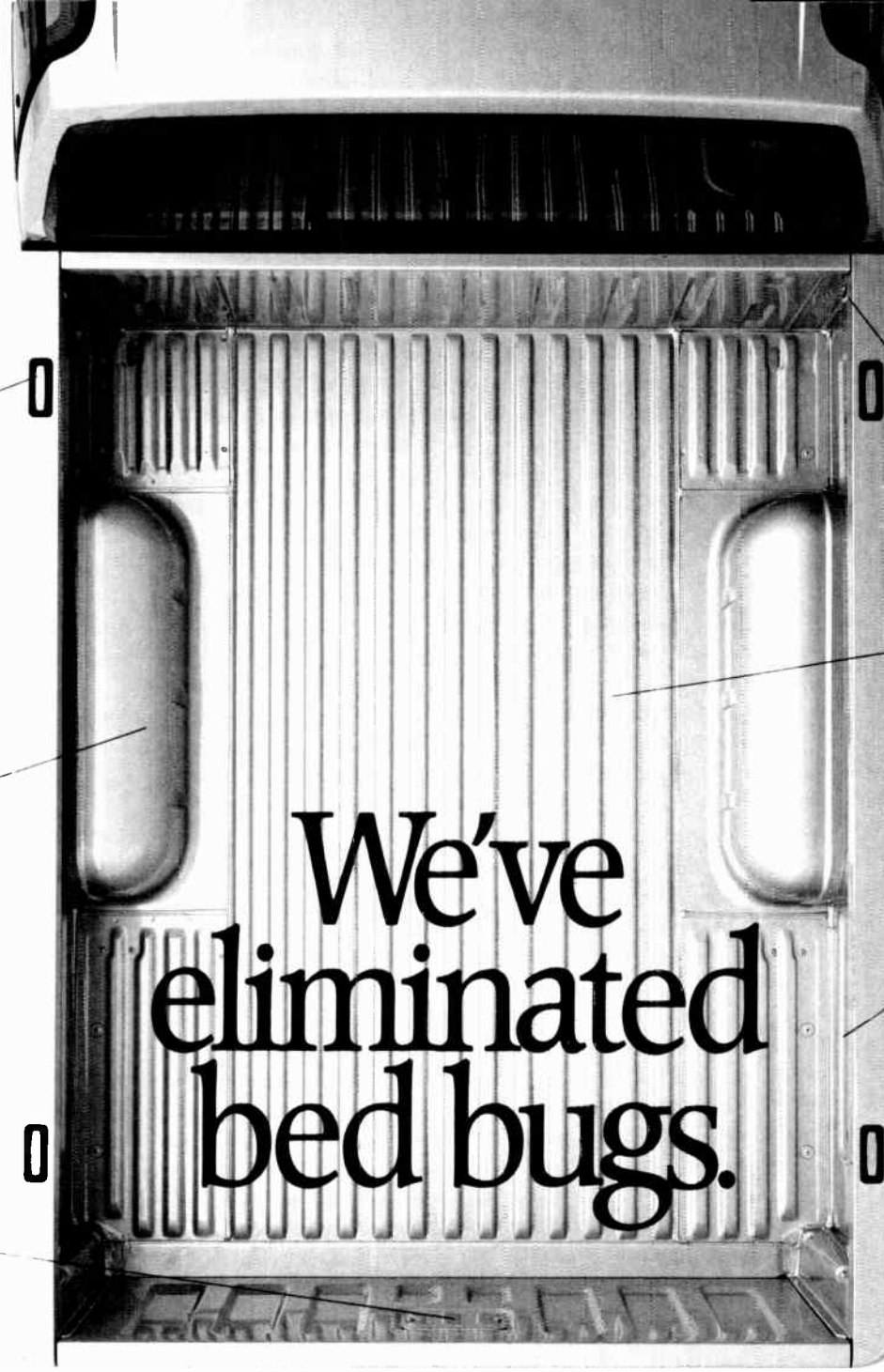
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