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In a short time, John Michael has racked up an armful of multi-million selling albums. Get the photos and the facts on this new country hitmaker.
- 40 Joy Lynn White And The Matter of Promotion** *by Patrick Carr*
Critics rave about her, and fans who know her love her. But mainstream success has so far eluded her. What will become of the talented singer/songwriter? Nashville image makers, take note.
- 44 Aaron Tippin Rolls Up His Sleeves** *by Bob Allen*
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- 48 Book Bonus: Last Train to Memphis** *by Peter Guralnick*
Forty-one years ago, on the evening of July 5, 1954, when Sam Phillips brought in a young singer to audition at his Sun Records studio, he and the assembled musicians had no idea that, before the night was done, they would forever change the face of American music. The singer was Elvis Presley. A CMM exclusive from Peter Guralnick's award winning book.

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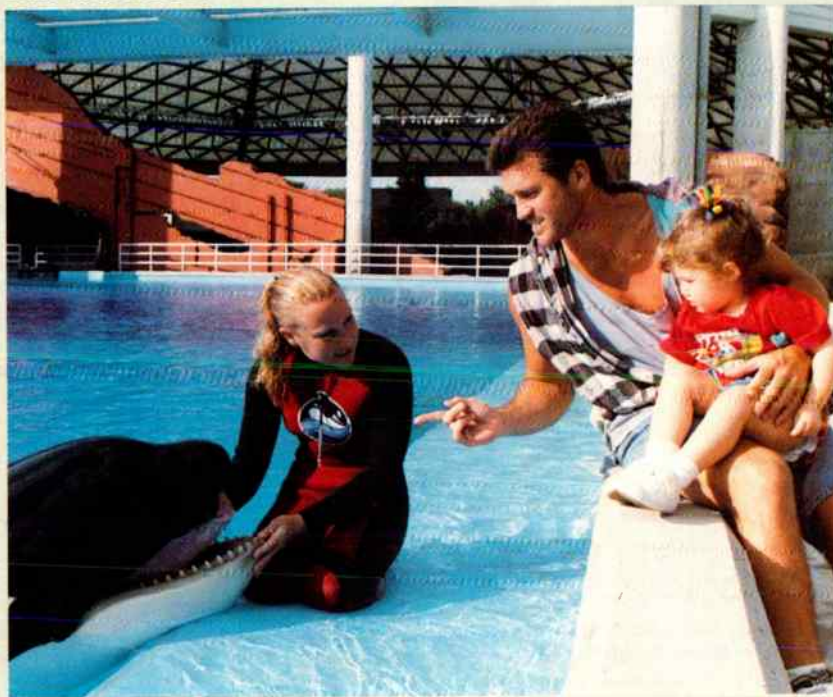
WHEN IT'S MAGIC...IT'S MAGIC

Talking with me while he was still in the studio producing the **George Jones/Tammy Wynette** duet project, **One, Tony Brown** told me, "Hazel, when they sing, it's magic." When the duo performed live at Fan Fair, it was the first time they'd sung together publicly in 15 years. You could hear the whispers, "It's magic." The first concert starring the two great artists was held in Tupelo, Mississippi. Some 5,000 screaming fans came to see Hillbilly History. Sadly, I report, there were no big screens so fans could see the stars up close. While they dueted on their classics, wouldn't classic photos or videos on the screen have thrilled the audience to tears? After all, isn't that what country music is supposed to do? Reportedly, George was nervous, which is understandable, and decided he didn't want to open the show singing together with Tammy. So he asked Tammy to open the show, which she did. She sang great. George went on and did his show, and he sang great. Then the two came onstage together. When they talked, they interrupted each other—more clatter than chatter. But when the two of them sang together, "it's magic" was heard all over the building. They only performed four songs, however, and just one classic, "Golden Ring." To that I say, wind them up, let them sing those duets. And thank God for George Jones and Tammy Wynette.

SPECS AND ALL

Eye saw **Barbara Mandrell**, sister **Louise Mandrell**, daddy **Irby Mandrell** and the prettiest one of all, mama **Mary Mandrell**, at Applebee's having supper. Specs and all, I say, for that's what Barbara discreetly slid on her nose to read the tab and pay the bill. Eye saw **Mark Collie** at McCabe's Pub doing lunch. I was dining with **Karen Tolley**, who assists **Barry Coburn**, manager of handsome singer **George Ducas**. Eye saw **Beeb Birtles** (formerly with **Little River Band**) and **John Dietrich** (formerly with **Restless Heart**) with ASCAP's **Shelby Kennedy** at the Cooker. Beeb and John have formed a trio with **Ron Hemby** (former lead singer of **The Imperials**) and

BILLY AND MOLLY, MEET SHAMU



Billy Ray Cyrus took time out to show daughter Molly a killer whale up close and personal at Sea World in San Antonio, Texas, recently. Cyrus performed as part of the park's 1995 concert series. At left is Shamu with her trainer, Teri Corbett.

are being produced by powerhouse **Barry Beckett**. No name for the trio as yet. Eye saw **Shelby Kennedy** (again), **Bryan Kennedy**, **Dan "Rodeo" Roberts** and ASCAP's leading lady, **Connie Bradley**, at the Cooker (again). Bryan and Rodeo built a deck on Bryan's house. His neighbor, **Garth Brooks**, also helped with the hammering and nailing. See what you learn by reading my column. Now you know Garth can hammer.

8TH ANNUAL MUSIC ROW LADIES GOLF TOURNAMENT AND TUPPER...

It didn't rain on the parade! Computers and females serve the same purpose in Hillbillytown. Both are indispensable. It is, however, males who get all the perks—like time off for golf. It makes the company look good that 114 men are putting and slamming, and the press is writing.

Or the need to impress a record producer, A&R rep, manager or even artist arises; off to the golf course then, too. Females knew those numbers for decades, so now it's their turn: For eight years, Music Row's best have staged the famous Music Row Ladies Golf Tournament and Tupperware Party. If you think it's a joke, don't. This year those gals raised over \$100,000 for United Cerebral Palsy.

BATTER UP

Well, sorta batter up. What it was, was—**Michelle Wright** performed the Canadian National Anthem and **Lyle Lovett** sang our wonderful National Anthem at the major league baseball All-Star Game. The event was televised live on ABC-TV. Thanks, ABC, for the exposure, and batter up. No more strikes unless you're at the bat. You hear!

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People



Marty Stuart finds inspiration for his contribution to *Silent Witness*.

NOT-SO-SILENT WITNESS

Marty Stuart is among the country stars lending their voices and talents to a new gospel compilation, *Silent Witness: A Tribute to Country's Gospel Legacy, Volume 1*. Available on video, *Witness* features country stars performing gospel numbers and talking about the songs. Involved in the project are Tammy Wynette, Sawyer Brown, Johnny Cash, Ricky Skaggs, The Gatlins, Shenandoah's Marty Raybon, Glen Campbell, and more. The tape can be found in retail stores, or ordered through an 800 number.

FARM AID VIII

It was ten years ago that co-founder Willie Nelson held the first Farm Aid concert, in Champaign, Illinois. Since then, seven all-star concerts have been held, raising more than \$12 million for the American farmer. And now it's time for Farm Aid VIII. Scheduled for October 1st at Cardinal Stadium in Louisville, Kentucky, this year's event takes a different tack: Instead of a large line-up of stars each doing just one of two songs, this year the three headliners will be Willie, John Mellencamp and Neil Young. They'll play full shows, and each will invite a guest (or guests) of their choice to jam with them. At press time, the guests were still being determined. Tickets for the event are available through the Ticketmaster network. Check your phone book for a local number.

HOLLYWOOD GOES OPRYING

When *TV Guide* cover girl and star of *Grace Under Fire*, Brett Butler, came to Music City to perform her stand-up routine at Tennessee Performing Arts Center, she called the Grand Ole Opry and asked if they would please allow her to visit backstage after her Friday night performance. "Yes," said they. When Opry star Bill Anderson introduced Brett to the audience, the gal's Southern roots showed through clear as day—she got all teary.

THUMBS UP FOR CAPITOL HEADS



It's a thumbs up from Ms. Tanya for the latest Music City executive duo, Scott Hendricks and Walt Wilson. Hendricks, brand new President/CEO of Capitol-Nashville (formerly known as Liberty), is at left, and Walt Wilson, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the label, is at right. Guys, you know Ms. Tanya is single. Well, gals, so are Scott and Walt. And I am after both of them. So there!

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Subscription Service

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COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE

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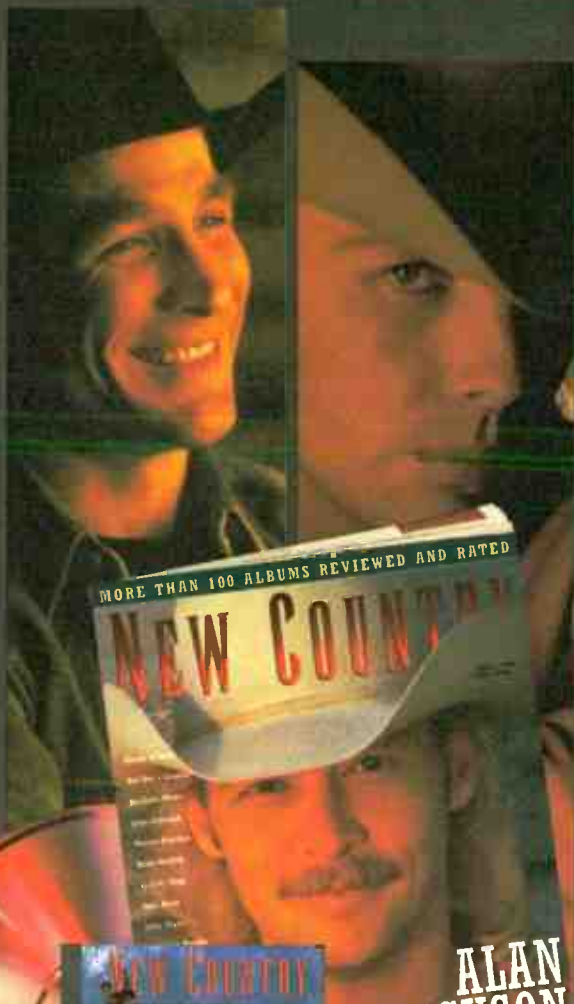
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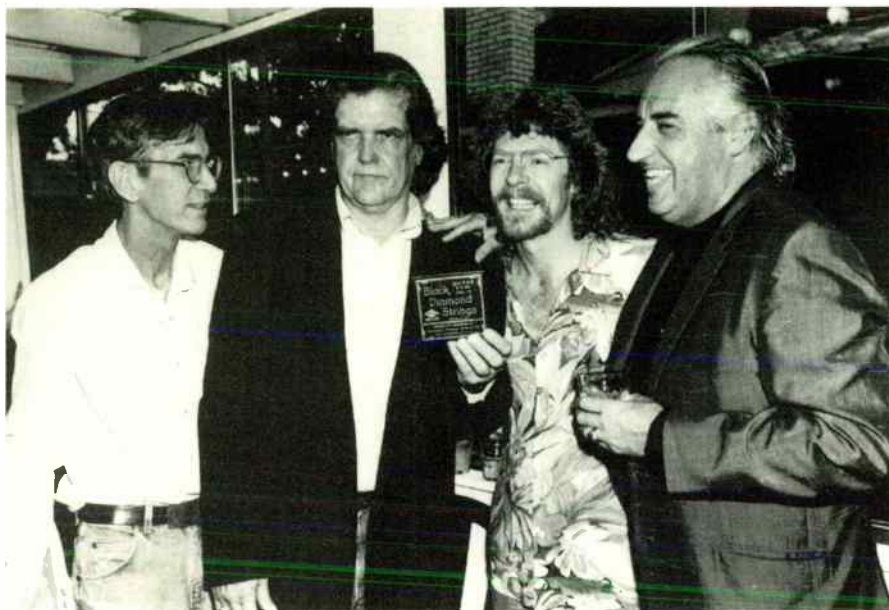
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People



Look at the hillbilly Mount Rushmore look on these four faces—the great Townes Van Zandt, Mr. Guy Clark, the incredible Sam Bush and Jim McGuire, aka Senor McGuire, who goes around taking great photos—at the party to celebrate Clark's Number One.

THANK AMERICANA

Remember I told you about the Americana chart started by *Gavin*? Well, one of our all-time heroes chart-topped, all because of Americana. Let's hear it for *Gavin* and the great **Guy Clark**, whose wonderful *Dublin Blues* was Number One, at the top of the Americana page! During the party to celebrate, **Emmylou Harris** presented Guy with a set of "Black Diamond Strings"—because that is the title of one of Guy's songs on the record, silly.

RALPH'S DO

Last issue I told you that **Ralph Emery** would be back on TNN. This issue I'll tell you about the party in his honor. Ralph's morning TV show will originate live from Rhett's Restaurant at Opryland Hotel at 9 A.M. E.S.T, so naturally we celebrated there. All the "suits" from TNN turned out to honor Ralph. CEO E.W. "**Bud**" **Wendell** was there. Except for **Ed Gaylord**, who owns the whole kit and caboodle—TNN, CMT, Grand Ole Opry, Opryland, Opryland Hotel, the General Jackson, etc.—Wendell is the most powerful of all the powers. He leads. Others follow. It was a happy occasion for Ralph with many friends in attendance, like **Tom T. Hall**, the Opry's **Jeannie Pruett** and **Ray Stevens** along with his manager, **Bill Carter**, to celebrate the event. Opryland Hotel knows how to lay out a feast; the biggest

and best shrimp, wonderful rolls with either turkey, ham or beef roast, tasty homemade dips served with veggies, cheese or fresh fruit, desserts and, naturally, any liquid refreshment your little heart desired. One of the finest parties of

the year for a fine man of country music. Welcome home, Ralph. Every morning it's gonna be me and you until you or I take that last train to Glory.

MRS. CLAY'S PARTY FOR MR. CLAY

The celebrating was for **Clay Walker's** second platinum record for Giant Records, *If I Could Make a Living*. Held at Bluegrass Yacht and Country Club in Hendersonville, the event, hosted by Mrs. Clay, aka **Laurie**, was, according to the invitation, "given with love" by herself and a "Special Surprise Guest." Since Mr. **Erv Woolsey's** company manages Clay, and since Mr. **Danny O'Brien** serves as the manager, I deemed it a necessity to support these two war-horses who have managed the career of Mr. **George Strait** since day one. There we were, a room full of us, and Mrs. Clay is explaining that she'd surprised hubby with the long green Chevy truck parked just outside the door—the one that's as long as a hillbilly bus—and then she reads the names off the platinum records for Clay to present to his band, management and others in his employ. After the hugging and thanking, Clay thanked those of us who were going home without wall platinum. Then he proceeded to say how the songs, music, fans and even money was important,

TWO BALLPLAYERS



If you believe these two are real ballplayers, I've got some ocean front property on Music Row for sale. No, this is **Clint Black** and **Vince Gill** backstage at the **Celebrity Softball Game**, which was first telecast on TNN on August 23. If you missed it, check listings for repeats. Look closely on the counter...there's eight **medicine bottles** and a coffee cup. Wonder who needed what.

People



Epic-and-ASCAP-ers came out in force to honor Patty Loveless' Number One, "You Don't Even Know Who I Am." Emory Gordy Jr., Loveless and songwriter Gretchen Peters are holding plaques. Connie Bradley and Rob Dalton are at right with a picture of Gretchen.

but, he added, the most important of all was love. "More than money," he added. (I didn't believe him.) Anyway, he said when you love somebody, you do things. Getting himself in a bind, he yelled, "C'mere Laurie, this is your party. Help me out with this." Well, Clay kissed Mrs.

Clay, and they smiled, and Clay explained that the Special Surprise Guest was they are expecting a baby. Everyone applauded in unison. Congratulations to the obviously happy couple.

HELLO RADIO

Last issue we ran a photo of yours truly with some of the wonderful folks at WFMS Radio in Indianapolis. At that time I couldn't make the announcement about "Hazel's Hotline," but now I can. Every Friday morning at 8:45, I'm live, on the air, at WFMS, with **Charlie Morgan** and **Jim Denny**, telling all I know and hear. My sponsor is dance club A Little Bit of Texas. Don't they have great taste to sponsor me? Hey, let's go to Indianapolis where they have A Little Bit of Texas!

MORE TRACY BYRD

The Special Olympics World Games, held this summer in New Haven, Connecticut, selected **Tracy Byrd** as their spokesperson. Tracy performed at the event on behalf of the Country Music Association. **Michelle Wright** and **The Moffatts** also performed during the week-long games.

LET'S PARTY

The Platinum Byrd flies. We celebrated with red beans, rice and lots of Cajun goodies in honor of **Tracy Byrd's** record, *No Ordinary Man*. Tracy, black hat and tight jeans, was all smiles as he accepted his platinum award. He also received a Gold plaque for his first MCA record, titled simply *Tracy Byrd*. Beaumont, Texas,

strikes again! As I've told you before, **George Jones**, **Billie Jo Spears**, **Mark Chesnutt** and **Tracy Byrd** all hail from Beaumont, as do the late **Big Bopper** and **Johnny and Edgar Winter**.

Next party was at ASCAP honoring **Gretchen Peters**, who penned the **Patty Loveless** chart-topping single, "You Don't Even Know Who I Am." Patty attended and made Peters very happy when she thanked her for the Number One hit. Some singers think all the thanks should go to them, but Patty gives the writer credit. Patty's producer/hubby **Emory Gordy Jr.** attended the presentation. If you're a fan of Patty's music, as I am, I know you join me in saying thanks to Emory and Patty for making a difference in country music.

There we were, me and **Fletcher Foster**, Vice President Artist Development Arista Records, sipping and supping at Ole Sole Mio on renovated First Avenue, when we spied CMA Executive Director **Ed Benson** at one table and attorney **Jim Zumwalt** at another.

At first I didn't even recognize **Tracy Lawrence** at the Tree Publishing do honoring **Bobby Braddock**, who penned Lawrence's Number One song, "Texas Tornado." Tracy was traveling incognito in baseball cap and roundish glasses. Braddock is such a great songwriter, with songs like **George Jones'** "He Stopped Loving Her Today," and "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" (which is still one of my favorite **Tammy Wynette** songs), to his credit. Unlike these Johnny-Come-Lately music row execs, **Donna Hilley**, CEO/Tree Publishing,

holds on to her stars: **Braddock** has written for **Tree** for 20 years, and **Curley Putman** has been a **Tree** writer for 37 years. **Braddock** thanked Tracy for the great job he did on his song before thanking God and **Donna Hilley's** a Music Row treasure. 'Nuff said.

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People

DICK CURLESS: 1932-1995

Dick "The Baron" Curless, New England-bred and a master of trucker tunes, died May 25 in Togus, Maine, after being diagnosed with a swift moving terminal stomach cancer. He had just finished a new album, produced by Peter Guralnick, for Rounder Records.

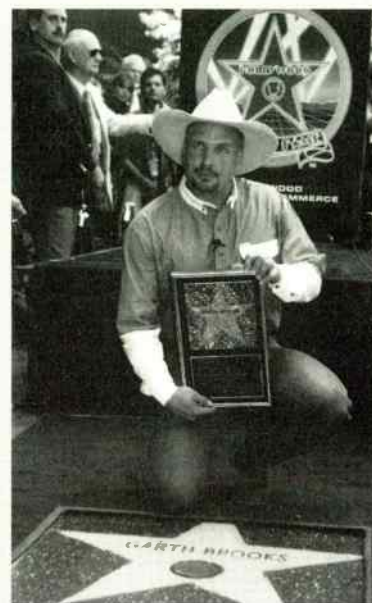
Born in Fort Fairfield, Maine, Curless had a deep voice and a tough, yet dignified stage presence. He started singing as a teenager, idolizing Ernest Tubb and Eddy Arnold and was so set on singing he quit high school in his senior year to tour with family friend Yodeling Slim Clark. In 1950 he made his first record. In the army two years later, stationed in Korea, he performed as the "Rice Paddy Ranger" over Armed Forces Radio. Five years later, like Patsy Cline, he saw a triumphant appearance on *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* show boost his career. He found no hit until 1965, after trucker songs became popular. Curless found his hook with the 1965 trucker tune, "Tombstone Every Mile." Originally

issued on Allagash, a tiny label Curless co-owned, Capitol Records' Tower label picked it up, and it reached Number Five nationally.

Curless, who remained a Maine resident, toured and recorded extensively in the 60's and 70's. Transferring to Capitol in 1973, he maintained his momentum with good-humored trucker-honky tonk singles like "Hard, Hard Traveling Man." His LP *Live at the Wheeling Truckers' Jamboree* is among the better live LP's of the 1970's. Even after Curless quit drinking, stomach problems hindered (though never ended) his performing career from the 70's on. He recorded for the small Interstate label in 1975 and in 1980 recorded an album for the Belmont label. The Rounder album would have undoubtedly raised his profile. He's survived by his wife Pauline, son Rick, daughter Terry and her husband, singer-actor Billy Chinnock.

—RICH KIENZLE

GARTH'S FAME CEMENTED



This summer Garth Brooks received a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame, conveniently located in front of the Capitol Records Tower. Capitol-Nashville (which went by the name Liberty for several years) is Brooks' label. In a first, Brooks buried the master tapes to his limited-time-only best-of album, *The Hits*, which won't be available much longer. Hollywood Walk of Fame folks say no one else has ever buried anything under their star.

HAPPIEST MAN IN MUSIC CITY

My wonderful son, Terry Smith, introduced me to Eddie Stubbs, who was at the Grand Ole Opry auditioning to become an Opry announcer. He did a fine job that night. As we walked out the backdoor together, I told him I hoped he got the job. Well, I'm happy to announce that 33-year-old Eddie Stubbs, a native of Gaithersburg, Maryland, has joined Kyle Cantrell, Hairl

Hensley and Keith Bilbrey as an announcer on the Grand Ole Opry. Many of you will recognize Eddie's name, especially in the Washington, D.C., area where he hosted a radio show bearing his name, featuring music from the 40's, 50's and 60's. Bluegrass fans will also recognize Eddie from his work as fiddle player with *The Johnson Mountain Boys*, which is how he and Terry became friends. Eddie Stubbs, happiest man in Music City, just got his lifetime dream fulfilled. He'll do great.

SHELBY LYNNE AND FRIENDS



At the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFar) "Two-Steppin' for a Cure II" benefit in Los Angeles are sitcom star Scott Baio, Liza Minnelli, Shelby Lynne and Herbie Hancock. Shelby, who has new music out on Magnatone Records, performed at the fundraiser, which also honored Minnelli, Greg Louganis and Clint Black for their efforts in the fight against AIDS.

I'M NOT YOUR DADDY

Michael Ciminella, father of Ashley Judd (I think), has announced that he is not the father of Wynonna Judd. In a newspaper story picked up by the Associated Press, Ciminella, first hubby of Naomi Judd, allows as how he is tired of being depicted as a horrible person by Naomi...the woman he was "tricked" into marrying. Ciminella admits he and Naomi were teen lovers. At the time she came to him pregnant, he said he never once thought she was not telling the truth about the child being his. Later he changed his mind. He added that Naomi's reason for marrying him, rather than the real father of Wynonna, was that she (Naomi) thought the Ciminella family had more money. Michael Ciminella's family owned the Ashland Oil Company in Kentucky. In her best-selling autobiography, *Love Can Build a Bridge*, Naomi "avoids directly naming Ciminella" as Wynonna's father,

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People



Signing on as songwriters for Major Bob Music are Terry Smith, Bobby Wood and Billy Smith. Execs Lana Thrasher, Shannon Myers and Bob Doyle watch 'em as they sign.

according to the news report. Since Ciminella's announcement, Naomi Judd's publicist, **Ray Crabtree**, has said that Naomi "doesn't deny" that someone else "is Wynonna's biological father." Read it in the *Tennessean* if you don't believe me.

PLAYING THEIR SONG AND MORE

The Tuesday night Bluegrass Series at the Ryman Auditorium opened this season with **The Del McCoury Band** performing "Lonely Side of Love," a song penned by **Billy and Terry Smith**. The song appears on McCoury's *Deeper Shade of Blue* CD. The Grammy-nominated record also received an Album of the Year nomination by the IBMA and most recently was named Bluegrass Album of the Year by NAIRD. I am humbly proud to report that the Smith Brothers also wrote the album's title cut, and Billy and Terry just signed as songwriters to Major Bob/Rio Bravo Music, a **Bob Doyle** company.

Following McCoury's wonderful performance, Mr. **Bill Monroe**, took the stage. Bill required help getting to the mike, but once the music started, he picked, sang and danced all over the stage. Music is what keeps the 83-year-old Master alive and well. The second bluegrass show was a total sellout for **Alison Krauss**. With her platinum-plus album, *Now That I've Found You: A Collection* and sellout shows all across the country, Alison is riding high. She and CMT's **Tracy Todd**, who also serves as producer for *Monday Night's Bluegrass Show* on WSM Radio, have done more to preserve and further

the music than any two females since its beginning in 1939. Let's mention Alison's wildly accepted appearance on **David Letterman's** TV show. Sang like an angel, that girl did. Now back to Billy and Terry Smith just a jiffy...they performed for Vice President **Al Gore** at Tennessee State University recently. Mrs. **Tipper Gore** was also in attendance for the event. I am honored that my sons performed for the Vice President of the U.S.A.

WORTH THE PRICE

Carlene Carter's brand new music, titled *Little Acts of Treason*—wow, it's been a couple, maybe three years since she had product—is worth the cost of the record with just one song. "Loose Talk" is the song, a duet with Carlene's honky tonk father, the fabo **Carl Smith**, whose single of that same song chart-topped in the 50's. Smith was Grand Ole Opry King when Carlene's mama, **June Carter**, married the handsome Maynardsville, Tennessee, native. I've always deemed it a shame that Carl Smith retired from the biz of music. He was one of the greatest singers in his time, and the man still sings like a bird. Just listen to the track...you will agree.

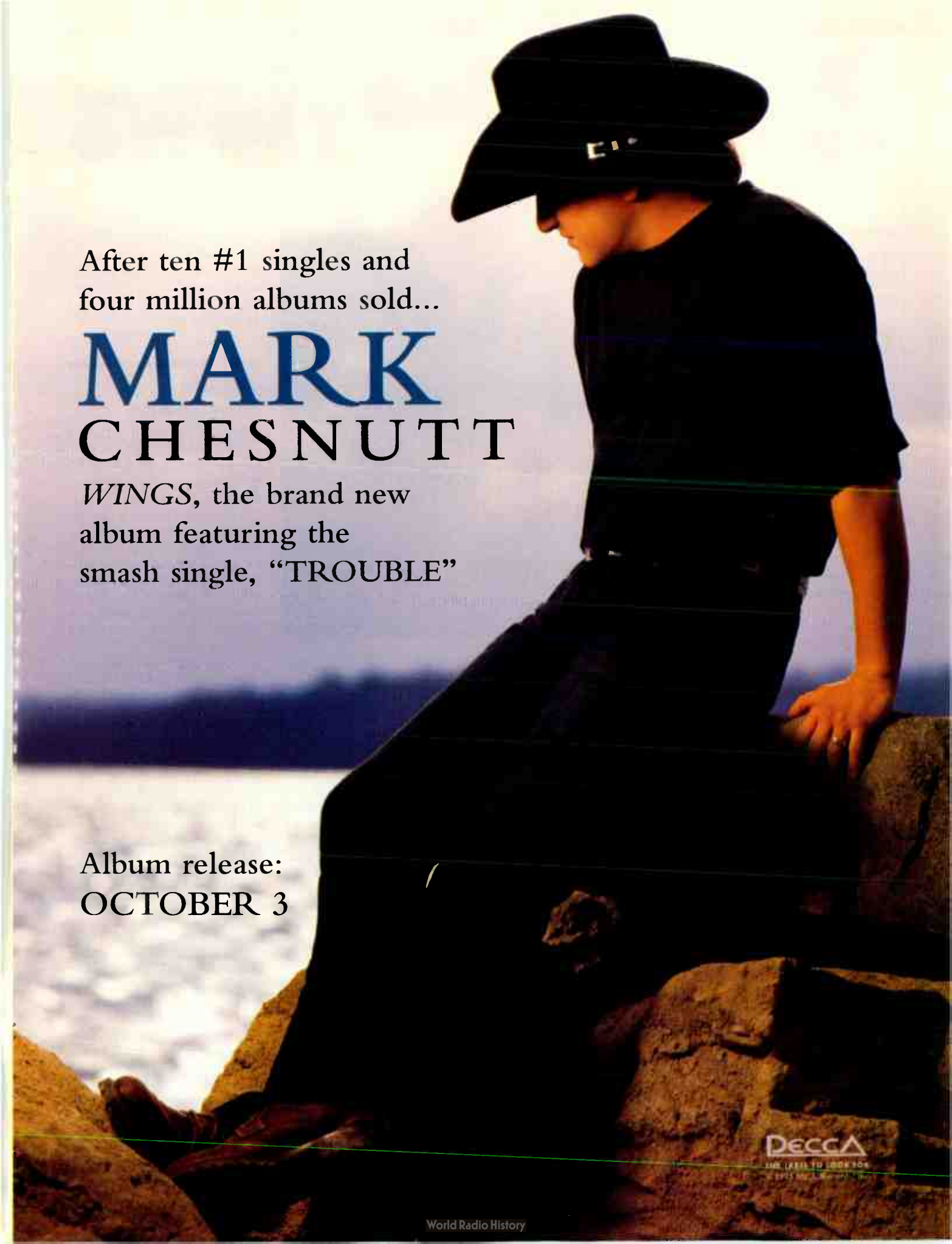
THE ANNUAL LEWIS DO

Why, heck, yes, I went to the annual **Luke and Betsy Lewis** do held at their majestic spread just off trendy Otter Creek. Luke, Mercury's Prez, had the same crew from last year bring the same wonderful Cajun chow right out of the Gulf to Music City. Mmmmm good. It was chicken gumbo, jambalaya, fried alligator, crawfish, red beans and rice plus all the trimmings, including liquid to suit the palate of kings and queens like me. Stars who attended were **Sammy Kershaw**, **Shania Twain**, **Kathy Mattea**, **Terri Clark** and **Kim Richey**. And naturally, if you call me a star, I was in attendance.

OUT ON THE TOWN



Accompanied by their spouses at a recent music industry function are **Steve Wariner** and **John Anderson**. Keeping the boys in line backstage at the Opry are **Caryn Wariner** (left) and **Jamie Anderson** (right).



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WINGS, the brand new
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Decca
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Record Reviews

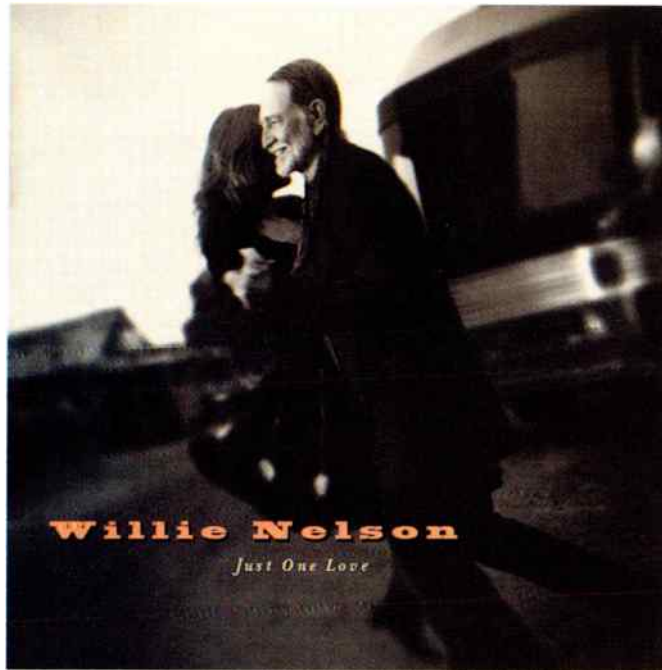
Willie Nelson

Just One Love
Justice JR 1602

You could make the argument that Willie Nelson and his contemporaries deserve to be shoved off the country charts by a new generation. After all, they had their day, and there's no reason to prevent younger singers from having theirs just because Nelson and his cronies are still cranking out respectable records.

There's one flaw in this argument, however. Nelson, for one, isn't just releasing reasonable facsimiles of his best work. He's making some of the very best music of his entire career right now. *Across the Borderline*, from two years ago, is one example, and this year's *Just One Love* is another. He's not writing many new songs any more, but he's singing better than he ever has. If in his teens Nelson dreamed of one day becoming a combination Lefty Frizzell and Frank Sinatra, he has finally achieved it in his 60's.

His new label, Justice Records, has been claiming that *Just One Love* is Nelson's first country record in over six years, a legitimate boast only if you hold a very narrow definition of the field. Nonetheless, it's an old-fashioned honky tonk album, featuring 10 well-aged standards plus two tunes by modern Nashville songwriter Kimmie Rhodes. Rhodes, who has written cuts for Wynonna Judd and Trisha Yearwood, joins Nelson for vocal duets on her two tender love songs, "I Just Drove By" and the title tune. Singing her enchanting melodies in a breathy soprano, Rhodes tries to match Nelson's taffy-pull phrasing, but no one can liquefy a song line quite like the old Texan.



Grady Martin, the Nashville session legend and Nelson's longtime road guitarist, is the album's producer, and he gives the arrangements a quiet restraint and a slippery swing which seem to echo the leader's smoky, fluid vocals. When Martin takes a brief electric guitar solo or Nelson an acoustic one, the jazz-like lines stand out like jewels against the restrained background. The bulk of *Just One Love* is devoted to old country standards. The best known is Hank Williams' "Cold, Cold Heart," and it receives the same refurbishing as the others. Instead of trying to outsize the original, Nelson illustrates how relaxed and effortless the song can become and still retain its captivating melody and confessional intimacy.

Nelson sings two numbers by his early Texas hero, Floyd Tillman, and captures the romantic longing of "Each Night at Nine" and the marital troubles of "This Cold, Cold War with You." The Cold War

wasn't the only military term turned into a honky tonk song in the 1950's; Pee Wee King had a hit with "Bonaparte's Retreat," and Nelson reprises it with a lilting bounce that's infectious. "Four Walls," the 1957 Jim Reeves hit which perhaps inspired Nelson's own "Hello Walls," is slowed down and given a quivering shimmer. Grandpa Jones, the 81-year-old veteran of a 65-year career as a professional musician, joins Nelson for a spirited duet on Jones' 1946, banjo-powered hit, "Eight More Miles to Louisville."

The Fred Rose song, "It's a Sin," becomes so fatalistic in Nelson's live-and-let-live vocal that the tortured doubts of Eddy Arnold's 1947 original are turned into calm acceptance. That philosophical acceptance of life's vicissitudes is the key to Nelson's new vocal style. He has become the honky tonk Buddha who has seen everything and embraces it all in a voice as fluid and mesmerizing as a bubbling

creek. There has never been anything like it in country music, and fans of classic hillbilly singing would be fools to miss out on it just because radio has decided Nelson is over the hill.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Tammy Wynette & George Jones

One
MCAD 11248

If Loretta and the spirit of Conway will forgive me, George and Tammy were *the* male-female duet team of the 1970's. Lord, nobody invested a song with more fire and passion than they did. You might wonder if maybe Conway and Loretta were more than just friends, but Tammy and George actually wore their lives on their record sleeves. "Epic" wasn't just the name of the label they recorded for, it was also an apt description of their pairing. "Take Me," "The Ceremony," "We're Gonna Hold On," "We Loved It Away," "Golden Ring" and "Near You" were widely seen as the story of their crazy love and legendary breakup.

It's been 15 years since this pair recorded, and all I can say is it's about time. No matter that I had several other deadlines staring me in the face: I couldn't stop myself from playing this album over and over the whole morning. This is country music at its retro best. Producer Norro Wilson was "the kid" those decades ago at Al Gallico's song publishing empire (whence lodged many of those great Jones, Wynette and Billy Sherrill songs of the 60's and 70's). He knows, perhaps better than anyone still in the record game, how to make a record with these two legends. Drawing on veteran country writers such as "Doodle" Owens, Max D.

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Record Reviews



Barnes, Merle Haggard, Dallas Frazier, Ed Bruce and a handful of worthy newer cleffers, the George and Tammy flame was relit in the ashes.

I'd have named this CD after the cut titled "Look What We Started Again," because the power, the blend and the emotions are still there. "I could have sworn it was over/That there'd be no more you and me/ But I guess we were made for each other/'Cause each other is all that we need," they sing in that tune. Amen, brother.

There never were two voices better suited to wrap around a song in harmonies together than George and Tammy, Phil and Don, and Lennon and McCartney, and time has added a patina to the timbre. Listening to the straight-ahead love song, "Solid as a Rock," and "All I Have to Offer You Is Me," you'd almost think George was crazy enough to leave Nancy and Tammy was going to throw over Richey for a romantic rematch with each other. Only one tune is self-conscious, and it is deservedly self-congratulatory about that whole generation of legends. "They're Playing Our Song" tells it like it is about the neo-traditionalists who still hew to the line, striving to update the old time country furrow. "I hear some Hank, I hear some Cash/A little Loretta and a whole lot of Hag/I've even heard a few that sound like me and you..."

Here they are country fans, as good as ever, the original First Lady and Rolls Royce of Country Music; the real thing, the hard stuff. And it is well worth the wait. —BOB MILLARD

Carlene Carter *Little Acts of Treason* Giant 24581

I haven't been that impressed so far with Giant Records' output. Too many of their artists strike me as generic New Country and little else. Carlene Carter has been the one exception, proven by her first album for the label. This one overflows with her gutsy, relentless intensity, not only in her original material but throughout its 13 flawless, totally focused performances running a wide gamut of emotions.

Co-producing with James Stroud, Carlene the producer gave Carlene the artist ample space, none of it wasted. "Hurricane," which she co-wrote with ex-NRBQ guitarist Al Anderson, fuses modern



rockabilly with a contemporary sound and a sexy, assertive vocal. "Go Wild" follows in the same pattern. The obscure Kennedy-Rose single, "Love Like This," gets a soaring, compelling treatment in Carter's hands. "Little Acts of Treason" takes a slightly different look at the time-honored subject of troubled relationships. "He Will Be Mine," another Carter-Anderson effort, succeeds through economy in both lyrics and arrangement.

"Come Here You" burns with blues and R&B feel, allowing Carter to vamp in a totally natural way, without indulging in the forced posturing that too many singers of both genders often turn to. The next number, the stark, sobering confessional "Change,"

brings the listener to earth to take stock. Optimism reigns on "The Lucky Ones," and brings things back up through a bubbly, joyous fusion of lyric and arrangement. The subject of cheating, getting caught and figuring how to put it right inspires "All Night Long," another Carter-Anderson masterpiece. The simple sentiments of Carter's own "You'll Be the One" prove that today's love songs don't need syrupy metaphor and flowery, greeting card sentiments.

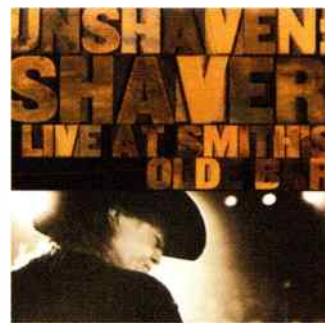
Carlene's dad, Carl Smith, was a megastar of the 1950's, when he was married to Carlene's mom. Smith was a rarity in Nashville, a singer who retired when he chose to, not when the business retired him. Here, father and daughter revive his 1954 hit, "Loose Talk," one of his biggest, recorded the year before Carlene's birth. Backed by a modern arrangement, based closely on the original, Carl's voice may be a bit worn, yet his spirit is as buoyant as 40 years ago. "The Winding Stream" captures The Carter Family side of Carlene's musical roots as she and daughter Tiffany revive that old favorite with stateliness and reverence. A reprise of "Come Here You" closes things out.

If you agreed that Lorrie Morgan's *Something in Red* was among the landmark albums for the new generation of women in country, rest assured, *Little Acts of Treason* belongs on the shelf right next to it. Not only does it reaffirm Carter's individuality, it's an unforgettable experience for all listeners. —RICH KIENZLE

Billy Joe Shaver *Unshaven: Live at Smith's Olde Bar* Zoo Entertainment 72445-11104

Whenever I wax nostalgic for the long-gone golden era of the Nashville singer/songwriter, there's usually one album I pull out. It's not an

early Kristofferson collection or a vintage Tom T. Hall platter. Rather, it's a more obscure release from a lesser known but vastly talented ex-sawmill worker from Corsicana, Texas, who influenced both of the aforementioned masters. I'm, of course, talking about Billy Joe Shaver's 1973 *Old Five and Dimers Like Me*, which was, in fact, produced by Kristofferson and sports liner notes from Tom T. Hall.



Old Five and Dimers Like Me is a timeless album. Its dusty realism, its hardscrabble poetry of hard knocks, its wistful fatalism, all made it a major influence on the soon-to-come Outlaw movement. (Waylon Jennings would record an entire album of Shaver's songs, and Hall would also borrow the title tune from *Old Five and Dimers* and make it the title song of one of his own albums.) The best songs on *Old Five and Dimers Like Me* have a roughhewn beauty and purity of sentiment which, in my estimation, put them on near-equal footing with the works of an earlier master of Americana, Stephen Foster.

After too many years of recording mostly overlooked albums for a half dozen or so different labels, Billy Joe Shaver re-emerged in a big way a couple of years back with his critically acclaimed *Tramp on Your Street*. Now, as a follow-up of sorts, he's released *Unshaven: Live at Smith's Olde Bar*. This is a delightful and often rowdy retrospective which is weighted toward Shaver's oldest and best material. Yet listening to revved-up and retro-fitted versions of Shaver classics like "Georgia on a Fast

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adj. **1.** Dearest; beloved **2.** [Informal] Charming; adorable

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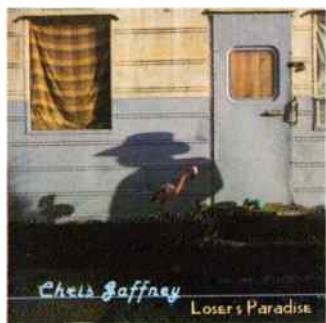
DECCA
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Record Reviews

praise and mainstream neglect, Gaffney, who issued his first album in 1986, has yet to break through. His wild, unfettered musical diversity and rough, weathered voice give him enormous appeal, and he's just made the album that should be that breakthrough.

Produced ably by Dave Alvin, *Loser's Paradise*, Gaffney's fourth album, reveals its treasures slowly. Gaffney mixes Mexican influences with honky tonk, blues, 60's R&B, alternative country, Western



Beat and anything else that fits, creating a musical crazy quilt both compelling and satisfying. Beginning with Tom Russell's brilliant "The Eyes of Roberto Duran," which has the feel of Los Lobos' best work, Gaffney then jerks 180 degrees around with the tough, snappy Texas shuffle, "Loser's Paradise," a Gaffney original. Gaffney's reflective "The Man of Somebody's Dreams" captures the emptiness of one able only to remember old loves, complimented by Ponty Bone's sensitive accordion and Rosie Flores' harmony vocals.

"East of Houston, West of Baton Rouge," mixes Cajun and Norteno in a typically Texas style. Gaffney's off the wall "Azulito" is both weird and likable at the same time. Another type of weirdness permeates "My Baby's Got a Dead Man's Number," Gaffney's story of a woman's obsession with a deceased boyfriend. He does equally well with the straight-ahead country ballad, "Glasshouse."

As for covers, he delivers a credible rendition of the Ed Bruce composition, "See the Big Man Cry," which in 1967

became Charlie Louvin's biggest solo hit. The closing track, a stomping cover of Eddie Shuler's Cajun blues-rocker "Sugar Bee," is itself potent. Good as they are, however, the true magic emerges on Gaffney's remarkable duet with Lucinda Williams on, of all things, "Cowboys to Girls," originally a 1968 hit by the Philadelphia-based R&B group, The Intruders. It underscores the quality and integrity of Gaffney's musical mindset as well as anything else on the record, purists (or radio programmers) be damned.

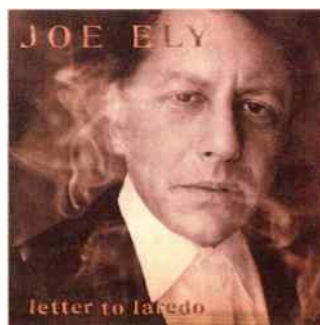
In past, years, eclecticism like Gaffney's (or, for that matter, Jim Lauderdale's) has proven too much for the mainstream to comprehend. If trends change, as they inevitably will, the mainstream's ripe for a new direction. In Gaffney's case it's time to let everyone else in on the secret. This may be the album to do it.

—RICH KIENZLE

Joe Ely *Letter to Laredo* MCAD 11222

As a long-time Joe Ely fan, I had trouble admitting to myself that his last couple of albums didn't quite make it. Technically, everything was still there. Everything, that is, except the incendiary abandon of his great over-the-top Texas roadhouse rock albums of the early and mid-80's like *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta* and *Lord of the Highway*, or the stark backstreet surrealism of 70's masterpieces like *Honky Tonk Masquerade*. It was as if Ely, in his mid-40's, had finally lost that incredible spark that had made him a sort of a Texas-rock Bruce Springsteen—and had found no new inspiration along the way.

Well, whatever was lost has been more than regained on *Letter to Laredo*. Ely's new album, which he produced himself in Austin's Spur Studios, is nothing short of a tour de force. It's his best album in



years, and one of his best ever. Hats off not just to Ely, the singer/songwriter/bandleader, but also to Ely, the producer. The real magic is the way he's deftly fused his surrealistic Texas rock 'n' country roots with a heavy dose of Tex-Mex Conjunto music, which has always been a subtle influence in his sound. The results are spectacular.

"Gallo Del Cielo" (written by Tom Russell, another immensely gifted singer/songwriter who has long worked the same fringes as Ely) is the cream of these 11 outstanding tracks. The song's arrangement, with its poly-rhythmic layers of percussion and acoustic and electric guitars, is as intricate as a hand-embroidered quilt. Yet it gathers and sustains relentless momentum as this haunting South-of-the-Border story-song plays out to its semi-tragic denouement. Some great accordion playing from the Cajun master, Ponty Bone, and some soaring harmonies from The Mavericks' Raul Malo stir the musical mix to perfection.

"Run Preciosa," one of several intriguing Ely originals, has similar force. It's a tale of lost love and tragedy that blends haunting imagery of Old Mexico's stark beauty with its contrasting spiritual tensions of devout Catholicism and grim fatalism. Aided by Teye on flamenco guitar and El Gato on harmonies, it weaves a dark, irresistible spell. (Elsewhere on *Letter to Laredo*, Ely is joined by other guests, like Bruce Springsteen, his old friend Jimmie Dale Gilmore and his sidekick and erstwhile guitarist, the brilliant David

Grissom.) On "Saint Valentine" Ely revisits the vaguely Dylanesque, semi-comic mood of early works like *Honky Tonk Masquerade*. The anti-hero here is a seedy martyr for forsaken love who "drove a red Continental with a headlight out and a dent in the side... You never saw his eyes but you knew deep down inside he was yearning for a long, lost love."

A final stand-out on *Letter to Laredo* is a song called "She Finally Spoke Spanish to Me." It's an obvious sequel to an early Ely classic called "She Never Spoke Spanish to Me." Both were written by another long-time compadre, Butch Hancock. This inspired hook adds to the notion of Ely having come full circle. This isn't just a great record. It's damn near a work of art. —BOB ALLEN

Tim O'Brien *Rock in My Shoe* Sugar Hill 3835

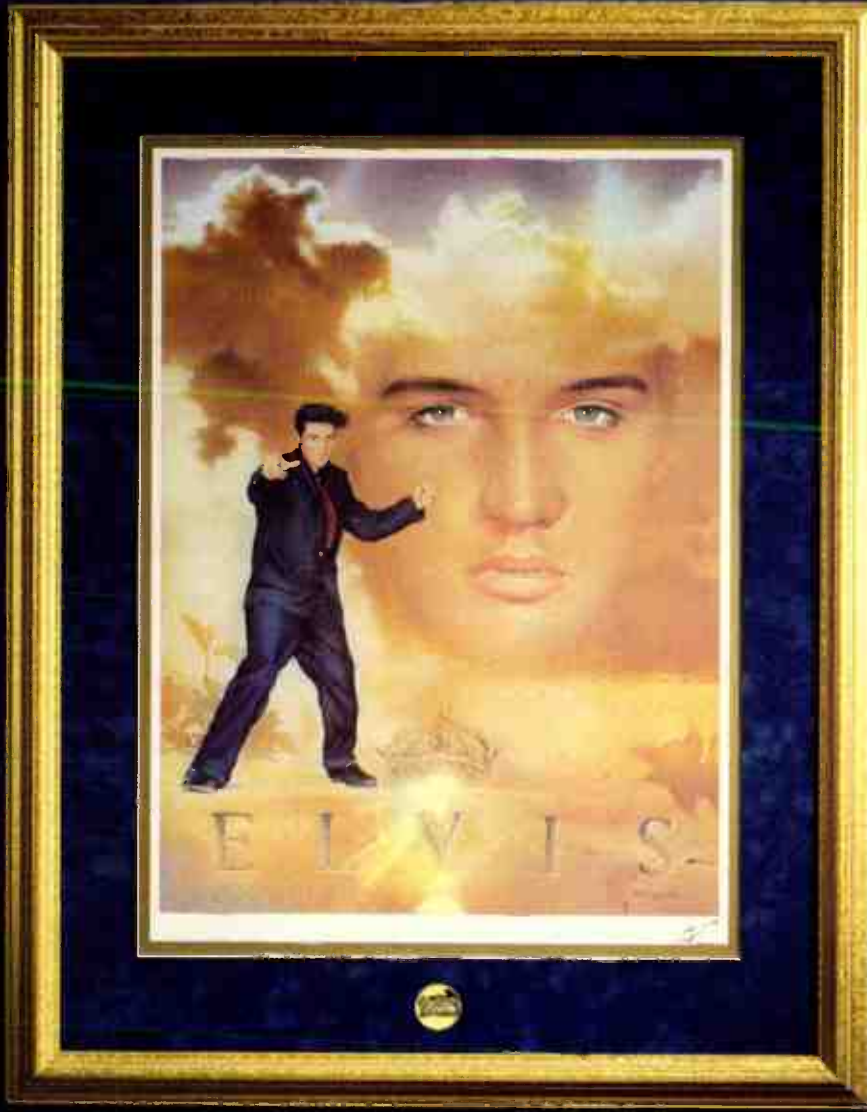
Even though their voices don't quite occupy the same register, I find that comparisons between Tim O'Brien and Vince Gill sort of naturally keep popping up when I sit down and try to describe Tim O'Brien's music. Like Gill, O'Brien is a compelling singer, an eminently gifted picker (he can play the fire out of the guitar or practically anything else with strings on it), and a songwriter whose powers of insight and empathy seem to mature with each new album. And like Gill, O'Brien started out in the somewhat eclectic and nebulous field known as "New Grass." But while Vince Gill has since risen to mainstream superstardom, Tim O'Brien, despite a couple of brief brushes with the country charts (most notably a Top Ten 1990 duet, "The Battle Hymn of Love," with his pal Kathy Mattea), has more or less stayed put.

But the Gill/O'Brien parallels, at least in my mind, run deeper still. O'Brien, like Gill, has a power that goes far, far

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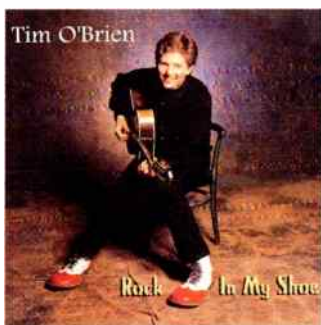
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Record Reviews

beyond his mere polish and musical accomplishment. He's the kind of artist who makes you trust, makes you believe. A fierce sense of integrity and earnestness, along with occasional flashes of warm, wistful humor, inform the 13 cuts on *Rock in My Shoe*, O'Brien's latest album. The characters in O'Brien's songs—the hopeful young woman about to leave home for a new life in “The Edge of the Storm,” the forlorn, abandoned lover in “She's Runnin' Away,” the solitary



wanderer in “Brother Wind” and the mixed-up, confused family man who can't quite come to grips with his own life in “Daddy's on the Roof”—are all hauntingly familiar. They are us.

Rock in My Shoe was recorded in O'Brien's home state of Colorado and produced by Jerry Douglas, the ace dobro-player who, as a producer, has recently had successes with Alison Krauss, among others. Douglas, along with O'Brien's equally gifted sister, Mollie (on harmonies), are just two of the stellar musicians assembled here.

Too often the problem with newgrassers is their tendency to emphasize eclecticism and technical virtuosity at the expense of emotional accessibility and directness. Not so with O'Brien. Maybe you can get through the all-encompassing loneliness of “Brother Wind,” the emotional awakenings of “One Girl Cried” or the high-onesome heartbreak of “She's Runnin' Away” with both eyes dry. Well, if so, then I guess you're just a lot rougher and tougher than me.

—BOB ALLEN

Kevin Welch *Life Down Here on Earth* Dead Reckoning 0003

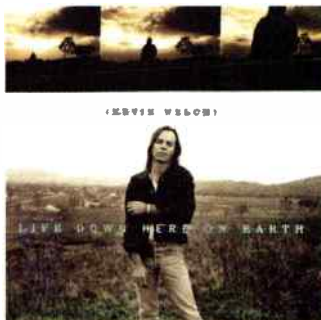
A funny thing happened to Kevin Welch in the three years since his last album—he became more traditional and more original at the same time. On his first two albums for Reprise (1990's *Kevin Welch* and 1992's *Western Beat*), the Oklahoma singer/songwriter was trying so hard to be alternative that his cleverness got in the way of his music. Since being dropped by Reprise, however, Welch has stopped looking for the next new thing in progressive-country and has dived into the source musics of bluegrass, Celtic, Dixieland, folk, blues, gospel and honky tonk. The unexpected result is the freshest, freest music of his career and one of the year's best country albums, *Life Down Here on Earth*.

You can hear the difference on the album's very first song. “Pushing Up Daisies” has the gentle lilt of a Celtic folk song, thanks to Tammy Rogers' fiddle and Fats Kaplin's accordion, and Welch sings with a natural ease unheard before. It's as if leaning on the sturdy old forms has taken the pressure off and has paradoxically allowed Welch to sound more personal, more original than ever. The writing boasts the same low-key approach; every time he ponders his tough-luck-laden life, he concludes that whatever it is, it's better than pushing up daisies. Instead of trying to come up with a profound statement a la Garth Brooks, Welch opts for the sly humor of a John Prine.

Welch brings the same understated, tradition-rooted approach to the rest of the album, whether the tradition in question is country-blues (“Troublesome Times”), cowboy-narrative (“Wilson's Tracks”), bluegrass (“The Love I Have for You”) or

Dixieland gospel (the title track). This approach is reinforced by a terrific band of like-minded pickers, including Rogers, Kaplin, drummer/co-producer Harry Stinson, mandolinist Kieran Kane and guitarists Mike Henderson and Al Anderson. Frustrated by the major labels' narrow definition of commercial country music, Welch, Stinson and Kane co-founded Dead Reckoning Records this year as a home for country music too old and/or too new for the mainstream. The label has already assembled a marvelous house band, and Welch's new release is one of the best products yet from Nashville's burgeoning indie-label scene.

Best of all is the title tune, which sounds like a Lyle Lovett outtake, thanks to its gospel vocals (provided by The Fairfield Four), Dixieland fiddle and bluesy piano. Taken at a lazily swinging tempo, the charming melody seduces the listener into hanging on Welch's every word. And he responds with such Prine-like mottos as “There's gonna be



two dates on your tombstone—all your friends will read 'em, but all that's gonna matter is that little dash between 'em.”

Zealous critics over-praised Welch earlier in his career, but you shouldn't let those exaggerations spoil the pleasures of his company today. He has matured tremendously in the three years since his last release and has grown into every claim ever made for him. *Life Down Here on Earth* may be his third album, but it's his first as a major talent.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Lee Roy Parnell *We All Get Lucky Sometimes* Career Records 07822-18790

When Lee Roy Parnell gets to the words, “Every gambler knows to win you have to stay in the game,” he seems to drolly downplay the line. He slows it down, letting his register drop as he draws out the words, which are taken from the title cut of his fourth (and best) album, *We All Get Lucky Sometimes*. It's the way a lot of men say something that they know is true, but that they've learned the hard way. For the red-headed Texan, it's surely a line that hits home. Parnell knows all about staying in the game and sticking with a good hand. He's been a full-time, working musician for more than 22 years, and he didn't get to make his first album until he'd toiled for 17 years in clubs and on the road. Through it all, he's continued to find ways to instill extra heart and a new sizzle into greasy, roadhouse rhythm-and-country, a blend he's been exploring since his start.

His ballads are less sappy—er, I mean less sentimental—than the fare filling the airwaves these days. “Saved by the Grace of God” and “When a Woman Loves a Man” show Parnell honing this specialty to particularly good effect. The former, written by Parnell and Mike Reid, sounds like a potential classic that could end up an across-the-board hit. The latter, with a beautiful harmony vocal by Trisha Yearwood, is a somber tribute to good love performed with low-key grace and featuring the kind of lyric that will sound especially good when holding a loved one close on a dancefloor.

But there are other songs I'll punch up on the CD player more often. Parnell's matured into one of country's most compelling rockers, as well as an expert at adding an extra bit of spice to mid-tempo tunes.

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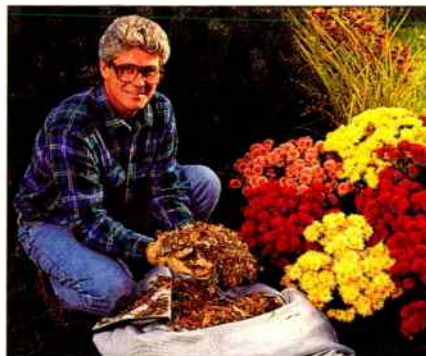
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"Knock Yourself Out" is reminiscent of a great Bob Wills or Louis Jordan song, and it proves that a country singer doesn't have to resort to silly novelty lyrics about pickup trucks or country bumpkins to have fun and provide listeners with a smile. "If the House Is Rockin' (Don't Bother Knockin')"—though not the Stevie Ray Vaughan song of the same name—ranks as an outstanding party song and one that should help carry



people through a few hot summer nights.

The title cut has a wonderfully loose-jointed jump to it that's reminiscent of Chuck Berry or early Rodney Crowell in its mix of country energy and wry lyrical color. Mary Chapin Carpenter helps out, bringing the same kind of vibrancy to the song that made "Shut Up and Kiss Me" so much fun. With "Squeeze Me In," Parnell delivers a new song co-written by Delbert McClinton, one of Parnell's heroes and primary influences, and the singer makes sure he gives it the lively reading it deserves. And while Carpenter and Yearwood get higher billing, Jonell Mosser adds a soulful vocal shadow to many of Parnell's best performances on the album.

With *We All Get Lucky Sometimes*, Parnell maintains his consistent run as a country-rocker and tender balladeer. Lee Roy knows that a few big scores don't make a career; he's looking to provide consistent, timeless winners that he can draw on for the long haul. That's not luck; that's intelligence and talent.

—MICHAEL MCCALL

John Michael Montgomery

John Michael Montgomery
Atlantic 82728

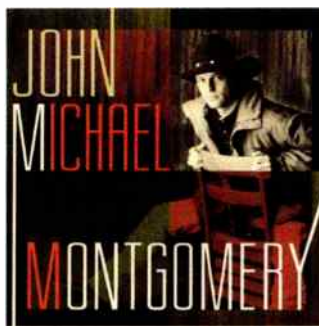
Now, I gotta keep tellin' myself that John Michael Montgomery has not committed any crimes against humanity, has not perpetrated atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina or stood up in support of Japan's Om-John Rickyo (obviously a phonetic spelling) cult. I gotta remember that mediocrity is not, in and of itself, a felony punishable by public stoning. If today's audiences want their "Young Country" music packaged and served up like Wonder Bread, then Nashville would be stupid not to give it to them.

See, I also gotta confess that I quite innocently struck a major critical strike against JMM even before I sat down to write this review. I accidentally stuck the good ol' boy with three names' latest disk—which is dramatically titled (are you ready for this?) *John Michael Montgomery*—on my CD turntable right after some vintage Thelonious Monk and the thrilling debut album by the newgrass band, Chesapeake. To translate the resulting experience into a culinary metaphor, it was like having lunch in Harlem's best rib joint, dinner in Louisiana's finest Cajun restaurant, followed by breakfast at McDonald's.

In all fairness, if I'd stuck The Big Mikester's latest between similarly generic releases like a Billy Ray Cyrus platter and Garth's *In Pieces*, it would have fared much better.

But, hey, don't get me wrong. I like Billy Ray Cyrus! I like eating at McDonald's—once in a blue moon, anyway.

You see, *John Michael Montgomery* does have its moments—one, or even two of them at least: accidental flashes of spontaneity that suggest an original talent may be lurking in here someplace. "Sold (The Grundy County



Auction Incident") is a lively shuffle on which JMM's spirited performance nearly prevails over the silly subject matter. "I Can Love You Like That," a recent smash single, is actually a finely sung ballad—though listening to it too many times in a row is like drinking a cup of coffee with half the sugar bowl emptied into it. Barry Manilow could really make hay with this one. And he may yet.

Oh, yeah, and there's the album finale: A real, real deep-thoughts-for-today song called "It's What I Am." It's a sort of 90's sequel to Barbara Mandrell's "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool." Herein, JMM lets us know, "I'm the real thing/I sing songs about real life....Country ain't what I sing/It's what I am."

Well, gee, John, you nearly had me fooled! Thanks for setting me straight! —BOB ALLEN

Mark Collie

Tennessee Plates
Giant 24620

Not too many years ago, Mark Collie appeared ready to turn his promising early albums into an enduring country career, thereby living up to all the critical accolades showered on him from the start. He put together a string of hits—"She's Never Comin' Back," "Even the Man in the Moon Is Crying," "Born to Love You"—that blended the laconic quality of his gruff, blue-collar voice with catchy, well-crafted songs that infused a touch of grit into radio-friendly arrangements. His

tracks always made the airwaves sound a little more down-to-earth. But just as he was picking up speed, Collie was overrun by the rocketing ascension of fresh-faced hat acts. His last album, *Unleashed*, was about as popular as a Clinton aide at a Rush Limbaugh rally. Despite its worthiness, it was roundly ignored, with insider politics bearing the guilt more than the quality of the artist in question. Now with a new record label, Collie is in a position where he must score another hit or see his road grow much rougher.

Tennessee Plates is a measured move, packed with quiet



quality, one rockin' gem and a couple of forgettably pat songs that rely on wordplay that's not quite clever enough to make up for the lack of true heart.

At his best, Collie suggests more is at play than what he bares in his words. On "We'll Never Say Goodbye," "There's Just You" or "Memories (Still Missing Her)," he wears his sentiments with a raw, real-life quality. This same quality uplifts "Those Days Are Gone," "Steady as She Goes" and "Chasin' a Dream Called Love," all mid-tempo songs that display an assured maturity. The lyrics are thoughtful, the arrangements catchy, and the production displays a sympathetic depth and distinctiveness. This is about as good as mainstream country-pop gets, and it deserves recognition.

What is rarely displayed on Collie's new album is his sly sense of drama and humor. When he does flash it, as on the winking blue-collar rock of

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John Hiatt's fine title song, Collie reveals that he could be one heck of an independent country outlaw if he cared to take the dare. His audience may lie in the fringes of the country world, where rawer sentiments, stouter rhythms and gnarlier themes are valued. But in these conservative times, he instead chose to go for the big game and try to play by Nashville's stringent rules. He proved good at it, even if he hasn't been fully appreciated.

For now, he's fighting for another chance at the big time by banking on quality.

—MICHAEL MCCALL

Tracy Byrd *Love Lessons* MCA D-11242

Three albums into the game, Tracy Byrd is still searching for his niche. He came out of the chute bucking a couple of years ago with a Number One single, "Holdin' Heaven," and a promising debut album, *Tracy Byrd*. Somewhere around his second album, *No Ordinary Man*, things seemed to level off a bit, and his unembellished, neo-Texas honky tonk charms got misplaced among all the other boyish-looking singers with smooth faces and drawling baritones who are a dime a dozen in today's country charts. For that reason, I'm sure a lot is riding on *Love Lessons*, Byrd's third and newest album, which was produced by the ubiquitous Tony Brown. I'm sure Byrd and Brown both saw this as a chance to go for all they were worth, yet to keep it all strictly between the lines.

That's more or less why *Love Lessons*, as a musical statement, is both satisfying and irritating. Strictly from the perspective of craftsmanship, it's probably Byrd's best work yet. His singing is strong and assured, and his confident performances are bolstered by Brown's savvy, energetic and



close-to-the-bone country arrangements. Yet *Love Lessons* is also a case study in the sort of blatant artistic compromise that a floundering young artist is compelled to make these days in order to crack through the brain-dead conformity of contemporary country radio play lists.

The best moments on *Love Lessons* come when Byrd is given free rein with his rock solid instincts for old-timey Texas dancehall music. There's a rugged, unadorned elegance in the way he serves up no-frills country weepers like "Have a Good One" (written by Max D. Barnes, Paul Craft and David Kent), "Don't Need That Heartache" (Kostas and Melba Montgomery) and Bill Anderson's "You Lied to Me." On "Down on the Bottom" (one of two cuts Byrd co-wrote), he captures the delightfully raunchy, super-macho "Country Boy Can Survive" spirit that used to be Hank Jr.'s trademark.

But too much of the rest of *Love Lessons* is eaten up with the kind of trite, up-tempo, "boot-scootin'" line dance fodder (in Nashville they just call 'em "ditties") that country radio can't seem to get enough of these days—a major symptom of what some critics are already calling Nashville's "post-Garth Brooks era."

"Walking to Jerusalem," the opening cut, falls into this category. It's a real toe tapper; but if you scrape away Byrd's playful, rousing vocal, the kick-ass arrangement and the clever word play, there's really nothing much left. "Honky Tonk Dancin' Machine" (also co-written by Byrd) is even sil-

lier crowd-pleasing drivel than its title suggests. (I'll bet even Brooks & Dunn wouldn't have touched this with a ten-foot pole!)

Byrd does manage to imbue "Heaven In My Woman's Eyes," a working class lament written by Mark Nesler, with a fervor worthy of early Haggard. But ultimately the song itself is a let down, as it eschews any real social commentary in favor of a moon-in-June, puppy love punch line.

Thus *Love Lessons*, depending on what cut you're listening to, can either be exhilarating or disillusioning. Though it represents a major step forward for a gifted young singer, it also reeks of blatant compromise and conformity—the artistic pound of flesh that the contemporary country market place so often demands.

—BOB ALLEN



Bellamy Brothers *Son of Beaches* Intersound 9150

There has always been a slightly seedy side to The Bellamys, like the guy in high school who used to come back to the party after parking with your favorite cheerleader. And this album proves no exception. On one cut, when David Bellamy sings about dancing, the song devolves into a loathsome paean to dry humping: "All you Wrangler butts—get in line/Tell you what comes next/My baby starts to tease me/And we make them buckles shine."

After hearing "Shine Them Buckles," I really wanted to

hate this whole CD, but I just couldn't in the end. It's vintage Bellamy Brothers—for better or worse—with Caribbean flavors, smoothed out Everly Brothers-style harmonies, laid-back feeling and enough cleverness to keep it out of the ditch.

Giving the devil his due, these guys can be as off the wall and funny as ever on such songs as the swampy "Pit Bulls and Chainsaws," which Howard likens to "something akin to Pee Wee Herman meets Elvira."

As for "Twang Town," it mixes musical nods to "Summer Time Blues" with nods to "Let's Dance" and Chuck Berry; it even reaches back and borrows a melody/harmony groove from Jimmy Clanton's classic "Claudette," all to good advantage. "Gotta Get a Little Crazy" is hardly original, either, but it's fun. "Feel Free" is a sweet one with that Gulf Coast islands lope and tremolo guitar that is classic Bellamys at their best.

And you have to give 'em credit for cranking out new stuff. The Bellamys aren't going into that dark night of Branson after-life retreads without a fight. Of course, I don't know that there was any great ground swell of demand for the sequel to "Old Hippie" that they dish up here, or the lush but stupid "She's Awesome," or the usual revisionist history lesson of "Native American" or the low brow bemusement of "Elvis, Marilyn and James Dean." And then there's the goofy, crypto-gospel waltz, "Jesus Is Coming," with its refrain, "Jesus is coming/and boy is he pissed." But no one is dishing up 14-song CD's like this these days, and you gotta fill it with something.

These Florida swamp cowboys may have outlived radio's interest in their generation of artists, but they haven't lost the ability to faithfully extend their legacy. *Sons of Beaches* should please their many fans.

—BOB MILLARD





REBA

Celebrates Twenty Years

Near the end of 1994, someone surprised Reba McEntire by informing her that she hadn't achieved a Number One hit that year. The news came as a shock. She had considered 1994 a landmark year in many ways: She'd appeared in two big-budget Hollywood films (*North, Little Rascals*), starred in a CBS-TV movie-of-the-week based on one of her hit songs (*Is There Life Out There*), hosted her own NBC-TV network variety show (*Reba!*), put out a best-selling autobiography (*Reba: My Story*), released a million-selling album (*Read My Mind*) and performed 120 concerts that put her tour alongside Garth Brooks' and Alan Jackson's as one of country music's biggest moneymakers.

By year's end, she was exhausted. "I was burned out there for a while," she says. "If anybody just looked like they had an idea for me, I was ready to strangle them. I was ready to take them to the floor."

But the knowledge of her lack of a top hit provided the challenge the determined redhead needed to get herself in gear once again. For 1995, she set out to right two wrongs. She pledged to stick to her scheduled vacation time to keep from running herself so ragged; and she set her sights on getting back on the top of the country charts. She accomplished her goals, employing the same steely determination that has driven her to become one of America's best-known personalities. She enjoyed two Number One hits early this year, then another at the start of summer. In the meantime, she spent the Christmas holidays skiing in Aspen, Colorado, with her husband and business partner, Narvel Blackstock, and their son Shelby. She took off five days in March and the entire month of June, finding time to leave on a Caribbean cruise just after learning that a greatest hits album had gone quadruple platinum.

Now, as she prepares to release an album of cover songs to celebrate her 20th year as a recording artist, she craves more—"more of everything," she says. She's reading movie scripts and meeting with top movie executives; she's readying a new stage

show featuring several new songs; she's contemplating writing books, both fiction and non-fiction; she's looking forward to opening her new high-rise, 29,000-square-foot office building on Music Row; and she wants to sell more than five-million copies of an album, a feat only Patsy Cline has achieved among women in country music. As for 1995, her year of leisure, there has been only one movie appearance (as Annie Oakley in the CBS-TV mini-series *Buffalo Girls*) besides working on her album and completing her usual schedule of concerts. Now she's ready to get back to work.

"In this business, the sky is the limit," she says. McEntire answers questions with snappy directness. She's friendly, poised and at ease, but, like many busy people, she speaks to the point, much like an executive might while negotiating a

business deal or conducting an important staff conference. She's dressed in emerald-and-black business clothes, sipping a bottle of mineral water and sitting up straight in a polished chair in a wood-and-mirrors meeting room on the first floor of Starstruck Entertainment, the company she owns and runs with her husband.

The room resembles any corporate conference meeting room, and rightly so, for Starstruck has grown into an entertainment conglomerate. It's by far the biggest and farthest-reaching company headed by a Nashville-based entertainer. "Narvel runs it," she says. "I'm like the executive producer. My shows are the thing that funded it. But as each branch continues to grow, they bring back in money to help run the office. I'm the girl singer, and that's a great job."

McEntire started the company as a matter of control, to assume responsibility for all aspects of her career. She had begun co-producing her records with Jimmy Bowen in the mid-1980's, then continued when she began working with producer and MCA Records president Tony Brown a few years later. After marrying Narvel Blackstock, a steel guitarist who had become her road manager, she bucked Nashville tradition and separated herself from the standard practice of allowing others to take care of



How does a top-grossing, million-selling, super country music star celebrate her 20th year in the business?

Well, with hard work, of course.

by Michael McCall



“Starstruck has thrived and bloomed and blossomed by people coming in and saying, ‘Know what we can do?’ and Narvel saying, ‘Go try it.’”

business for her. She fired her manager, her concert booking agency and her publicity firm, absorbing those duties in-house under one roof. Realizing her hits earned big income for music publishing companies, she started hiring songwriters to work for her. Starstruck now runs four publishing companies with dozens of staff writers. Blackstock and his staff did such a good job managing Reba's career that they began taking on other performers as clients; they now work with The Tractors, Aaron Tippin and Linda Davis. She bought her own airplane to fly to concerts, and after a tragic crash killed most of her band, she expanded her fleet and its capabilities to make sure she didn't have to charter other flights. Now her jets are leased not only by other entertainers, but by corporate executives, doctors, lawyers and others. Rather than hire a trucking firm to move her massive stage show from city to city, she started her own

transportation division. Now many other entertainers rely on Starstruck for their trucking needs, and the firm has expanded into transporting produce and other goods. She likes horses, so she began a farm that has grown to include 30 horses, including five brood mares and several top racehorses. One of them, Rich Man's Gold, came one good race away from qualifying for the Kentucky Derby this year, and she has other top candidates now in training. Her construction company was formed when she needed a house gutted and renovated; when it came time to construct her high-rise, she and Blackstock decided to allow Starstruck Construction to be the builders, planning to make it a top quality structure while keeping costs down. Starstruck Construction is now building other homes and office complexes as well.

“People who work for us know that there are no limits to what we can do,” she says, sounding very much like a CEO of a Fortune 500 company, even though she says she only concerns herself with records and concerts and leaves the day-to-day business to her husband. “Starstruck has thrived and bloomed and blossomed by people coming in and saying, ‘Know what we can do?’ and Narvel saying, ‘Go try it.’ That’s how Starstruck got into everything.” Now she’s ready to find more fields to conquer. She’s moved up the ladder of the movie industry quickly, becoming country music’s most successful film star since the 70’s launched the careers of Dolly Parton, Kris Kristofferson, Kenny Rogers and Willie Nelson. Other current country stars have appeared in movies—including George Strait, Dwight Yoakam, Travis Tritt, Randy Travis and Doug Stone—but McEntire has shown more range and received more offers for roles. But, to her, she’s still a novice. That’s not something she plans on staying.

She spent the week prior to our interview in Los Angeles, meeting with top executives at Fox, Paramount, Warner Bros. and Disney. “Usually we go in and they say, ‘We’ve got an idea about this for you,’” she says. “Usually it’s a book that they’re real interested in doing as a movie. They’ll say they’re going to find a writer to make it into a script the way they want it. Then they’ll start the casting.” She returned home with material the movie studios wanted her to consider. “I’ve got three books that I’m looking at, and five other scripts—two I haven’t read, three I have,” she says matter-of-factly. When she’s read them, she’ll contact the studios and let them know if she’s interested. “That’s when you have to fight, politic, and beg and plead for the part you want,” she says. “I’m not an established artist. I’ve only done six movies, and there’s a great big line waiting outside that producer’s door.”

Her priority, she says, isn’t necessarily the size of the role. It’s the quality of the production. “I would like to be a lead or

PHOTOS: IVAN GORDSMITH



Reba at home in Nashville and with her son Shelby. Time at home is precious.

supporting actress, but mainly it's the script. I just want to be a part of a great script. Nothing that's fluffy, nothing that's goofy, nothing that's stupid. I want something that people walk away from like I did when I saw *Braveheart* and *While You Were Sleeping*. Those were two great movies. So I'm waiting for the right one now."

She won't accept certain roles, she says, not because of her country music image, but because she's a mother and a member of a family with old-fashioned values. "Nudity, violence, crude language—I won't do those," she asserts. "I'll go see one of those movies, but that doesn't mean I want to be a part of it. There were some bad words in *Tremors*"—her first movie—"and I sure wish they had taken them out. Then I wouldn't be so paranoid about Shelby watching it—or my mother-in-law."

She supports recent political movements pressuring Hollywood to control or restrict the subject matter of films, saying, "I'm glad there are people standing up for that. If we can just leave out that four-letter word and cut some of the raunchiness out of it, then it'll be a show we can take our kids to. That's the kind of movie I'm looking for."

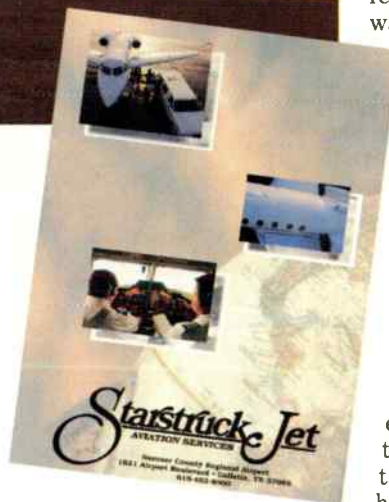
In the long run, she explains, she seeks the same quality in a screenplay that she looks for in a song. "It's got to be something that touches my heart," she says, her Oklahoma twang ringing out clearly as she speaks. She cites *Is There Life Out There* as her favorite film thus far, "mainly because it touched so many lives. The song touched a lot of people. Then the video did. Then the movie did. I like to touch people's lives and make a difference in some way. *Is There Life Out There* made a big difference. Tons of women went back to college because of it, and it made people feel good. I was really proud of that movie."

Her interest in expanding her career in movies is obvious. An ongoing problem is that it's the one aspect of her career that she can't manage or own—at least not yet. "I have absolutely no control as an actress of how I end up on screen," she told me in 1994 after finishing her work in *Is There Life Out There*. "When I make records, I sing and then I listen to it. If I don't like it, I can fix it right there. But when I'm acting, I have somebody, a complete stranger, telling me how to act. Then when they go and edit it, they might edit out the thing that drew my reaction. Then my reaction looks so overboard and blown out of proportion, and I cringe. That's the only thing I hate about movies, having absolutely no control." About her acting, however, she added with a smile, "I feel better about my acting, I mind well."

David Jones, an Englishman known for working with classical actors, directed McEntire in *Is There Life Out*



Starstruck jets now carry other stars and professionals, not just Reba and her bond. Everything the entertainment complex does seems to turn to gold. Rebo says the sky's the limit.



There and praised her natural ability. In an interview in 1994, he admitted he initially was worried that a country singer might present a challenge for him. "But we hit it off very well, right from our first meeting," he says. "She was terrific to work with. She's extremely direct as a woman and honest about her fears." He described her way of working as "instinctive," comparing her

lack of pretense to that of the child actors who played her children in the film. "She had the same kind of directness they had. She didn't pre-plan very much. She wasn't method oriented," he explained, referring to a specific style of preparing for a movie role used by Marlon Brando, Robert DeNiro and other actors. "She doesn't have that kind of training. She has more of an intuitive approach. But I think she surprised herself a few times, to be honest. She became very emotionally involved in the moment."

One such moment came when she got slapped by another actor. "She was very upset, very tearful, in that scene," he recalls. After it happened, he asked her if the slap was too powerful. "She said that it wasn't that it was too violent. She said she'd forgotten how her elder sister used to beat her up. The minute she was hit, it all came back to her."

McEntire now refers to *Is There Life Out There* as her favorite for another reason. Because she was in nearly every scene, she remained busy throughout the filming. That hasn't been the case in her other roles. On *Buffalo Girls*, the afore-mentioned Emmy-nominated movie in which she co-starred with Anjelica Huston and Melanie Griffith, she sat in a trailer for five or six hours at a time in wintry London waiting to be called to do a scene. "All you could do was sit there and freeze in your trailer," she says. "That's the kind of movie I hate to do, regardless of the script, because I hate to be bored. I have to be busy. I thought maybe I could get a catering job or start concession sales. Anything!"

As for her upcoming album, she decided to record songs made famous by others as a tribute to those artists and those songs that influenced her the most. "I never did this before because I always wanted to make my own classics," she says. But she wanted to do something different, something special, for her 20th anniversary. "I decided to do music that influenced me in the fact that it gave me goals to reach for. When I listen to



ERIK FERRELL

Reba and her "family" in *Is There Life Out There?*



“When I realized I hadn’t had a Number One song last year, it made me fighting mad. My claws came out. I said, ‘By golly, that will change.’”

songs for my albums, these are the songs I compare them to. I ask myself, ‘Is this song I’m choosing as good as that one?’” The selections include “500 Miles Away from Home,” a Bobby Bare hit in 1963; “By the Time I Get to Phoenix,” a Jimmy Webb song that Glen Campbell made into a radio staple in 1968; “Talking in Your Sleep,” a Crystal Gayle hit in 1978; “Ring on Her Finger,” a Lee Greenwood song from 1982; “Starting Over Again,” a Dolly Parton hit from 1980; “I Won’t Mention It Again,” a Ray Price oldie from 1971 (Price is an artist McEntire has covered in the past); “You’re No Good,” the Linda Ronstadt pop hit, as well as “Heatwave,” a Martha and The Vandellas classic that McEntire sings in the manner of Ronstadt’s 1975 remake.

“Narrowing down the list was the hard part,” she says. “I started off with a huge stack of lyrics.” As she went back through the past to search for songs, she noticed how some hits become classics, while others quickly become dated. “It’s really the progressive songs of the time that stand up best,” she says. “Ray Price recorded ‘I Won’t Mention It Again’ with an orchestra, which was a big deal then. ‘Starting Over Again’ and ‘Talking in Your Sleep’ were kind of crossover songs. They were pop and country, and that’s the kind of songs I want. ‘By the Time I Get to Phoenix’ was very, very progressive.” When listening to other versions of these tunes, she found an Eddy Arnold cover of “By the Time I Get to Phoenix” that she hadn’t previously heard. “It was so contemporary,” she says. “Eddy Arnold was 50 years ahead of his time.”

To prepare for the album, the singer listened to country radio much more intently than she had been in the last few years. She also brought in pop producer Michael Omartian, who has worked with Rod Stewart, Christopher Cross and Amy Grant, to join Tony Brown and herself in the studio and to help with the arrangements of the songs. She went to all this effort and trouble because, even as she pursues Hollywood, she wants to make sure she doesn’t leave country radio behind. “I had somebody ask me the other day, ‘Why are you still on the radio? Once you hit 40 you’re not supposed to be on the radio anymore,’” she says. “That kind of shocked me. I never quit trying to stay on the radio, and I never quit trying to find the best songs I can. When I realized I hadn’t had a Number One song last year, it made me fighting mad. My claws came out. I said, ‘By golly, that will change.’ I got back in there and really started listening to radio again. This time, I made sure we didn’t sacrifice nothing.”

That’s the way she’s always been, she says. If someone told her she couldn’t rope steers, she went out and learned how to do it. If someone told her women couldn’t produce records, she went out and learned how. It’s a spirit she learned in Oklahoma watching her parents. “It all goes back to how I was raised,” she



How time flies: Less than 10 years ago belt buckles and short curly hair were still Reba’s trademarks. Today elaborate costumes and stage sets fill her shows.



CW says when answering a question about what drives her to want to keep pushing her career and her business to greater heights. “My daddy and my momma always put everything they made back into the ranch, into cattle, into something they know about. You get to a point where you’re making money, and what do you do? Buy another car? I’ve got a car, what do I need another one for? Buy a bigger house? It’s just something else to worry with. That’s something that’s never really intrigued me. But to put it back into a business, as we have done, that intrigues me. That’s what I was taught. Take care of what you know. My mommy and daddy, they’re my heroes.”

In country music, she readily cites two other multi-faceted entertainers as role models. “I’ve always admired Dolly and Barbara,” she says, speaking of Parton and Mandrell. “They’re great business-

women. They’re always hungry. Barbara is still hungry. Dolly evidently is still hungry. I don’t know Dolly as well as I do Barbara, but you can see it in their eyes. They’re still hungry. That’s how I want to be.”

It shows in her eyes, too. There’s a drive, a desire, that shines through. But does she ever truly relax? Does she enjoy her fortunes? Does she take time to enjoy aspects of life that have nothing to do

with fame or business success? She says she does. She and Narvel have a standing Wednesday night date, usually going to dinner or a movie. In the last year, she tried para-sailing for the first time. “My hands still break out in a sweat when I think about that,” she says. “I was scared to death. But I did it.” She loves to snow ski as well. And she enjoys digging in the garden. “When I retire, I’m going to have a garden that I vacation in all the time,” she says. I like to stay at the house and piddle around.”

She stops for a second, thinking of other ways she relaxes. What she comes around to saying is more philosophical, that, to her, gratification and pleasure still comes back to controlling her own fate and managing her own success. In the end, there’s little difference between work, life and pleasure. “There are so many things I like to do, and I don’t have to do many things that I don’t like to do,” she says. “I’m happier than I ever imagined or prayed or wished I could be. I never thought it could get this good. Never in my wildest dreams. I couldn’t have imagined this business being like this. I don’t think anybody could have written it down this good. I’m a very, very lucky person.” ■

COUNTRYMUSIC



JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY
COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1995

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Full Name: John Michael Montgomery
Birthdate: January 20, 1965
Birthplace: Danville, Kentucky
Resides: Nicholasville, Kentucky
Family: Father, Harold Montgomery, died August 1994; mother Carol Hasty, brother Eddie, sister Becky.
Influences: George Strait, Keith Whitley, Merle Haggard, father Harold Montgomery, Lionel Richie, Bob Seger

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'2"
Weight: 180 pounds
Color eyes: Blue
Color hair: Sandy blond
Marital status: Single

Recording Career

Record label: Atlantic Records, 1812 Broadway, Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Albums:	Release Date
<i>Life's a Dance</i>	1992
<i>Kickin' It Up</i>	1994
<i>John Michael Montgomery</i>	1995

All three albums are multi-platinum.

Singles:
"Life's a Dance"
"I Love the Way You Love Me"*
"Beer and Bones"
"I Swear"*
"Rope the Moon"*
"Be My Baby Tonight"*
"If You've Got Love"*
"I Can Love You Like That"*
"Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)*"
(* means Number One)

Videos:
"Life's a Dance"
"I Love the Way You Love Me"



"Beer and Bones"
"I Swear"
"Rope the Moon"
"Be My Baby Tonight"
"If You've Got Love"
"I Can Love You Like That"
"Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)"

Awards:
1994 Country Music Association/Horizon Award
1994 Country Music Association/Single of the Year: "I Swear"
1994 American Music Award/Best New Country Artist
1994 Academy of Country Music/Top New Male Vocalist
1994 Academy of Country Music/Song of the Year: "I Love the Way You Love Me"
1994 Grammy/Best Country Song: "I Swear"

Trivia

John Michael Montgomery was discovered while performing at the Austin City Limits Saloon in Lexington, Kentucky. He was signed to Atlantic Records in 1991.

Quotable

"I want to show 'em a good time, a sad time and something in between. I just look forward to one thing, and that's getting up on that stage and singing for the people. Anything else—from songwriting to golf—comes after."

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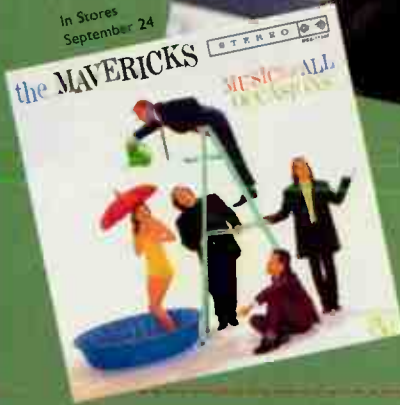




In Stores
October 3

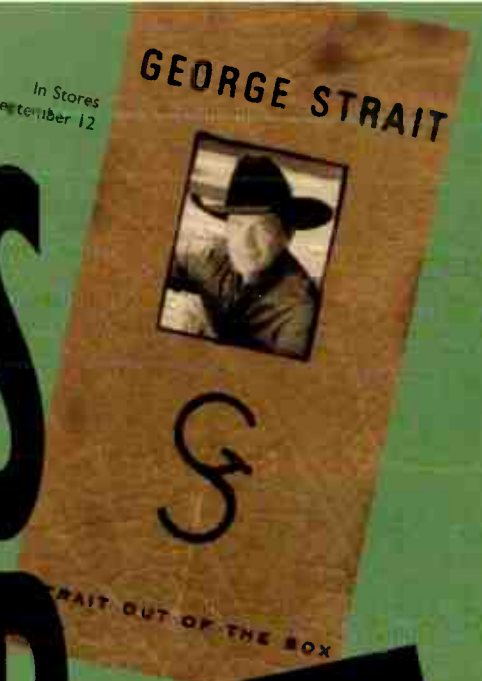


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Who is this singer critics and fans are raving about? Will mainstream country ever get to know her, or will the powers that be in Nashville keep her a secret? • By Patrick Carr

JOY LYNN WHITE

And The Matter of Promotion

The voice of Joy Lynn White has been coming as a shock to people for a long time. Powerful, passionate, and rich with spirit and intelligence, it knocks you back. In sound it's somewhere between Linda Ronstadt and Paulette Carlson, an almost ideal instrument for country/rocking honky tonk and heart songs, while in quality it's up there with the best of the contemporary best—Jann Browne, Kelly Willis, Shelby Lynne, Bobbie Cryner, Trisha Yearwood. It's well used, too. Ms. White does not record dull songs. Only the richest veins of the Southern motherlode run through her material, including the songs she writes herself.

There's a problem, though, and it's not a new one. What critic Rob Tannenbaum wrote about Kelly Willis in *Country On Compact Disc* applies equally to Joy Lynn White: "At a time when most girl singers sang demurely, with a thin, pretty tone, Willis' throaty, boiling passion recalled Janis Martin, Wanda Jackson, and the Patsy Cline of 'Turn the Cards Slowly.' Thus, her career turned into an

ironic dilemma: how to promote a singer whose notion of traditionalism has been eradicated from Nashville's vocabulary."

Except for the fact that White's boiling passion isn't throaty so much as supple—she sings in a kind of exquisitely controlled, sinuously tremored rush, what another critic has described as a "force field soprano"—Tannenbaum's analysis hits home. If it didn't, and country radio's market researchers and corporate programmers were giving Joy Lynn White access to their airwaves, all this description of her fabulous voice would be unnecessary; you'd already know how good she sounds.



That's just the way of things, though, and it's not as if music business professionals haven't been *trying* to figure out how to promote Joy Lynn White. That much is plain when, equipped only with CD covers and publicity photos, you first encounter the woman in person. In reality she's a very attractive, intelligent 32-year-old with her own life, her own house, and 13 years of Nashville experience behind her. In her pictures, though—particularly those shot for *Wild Love*, the more recent of her two Columbia albums—she's something else entirely, a pouty young thing you'd guess to be somewhere between 16 and 21, with a

hard-core case of the Brassy Baby Bombshell From The Boonies look. Some makeover. She's been market-positioned every bit as firmly as a Hunk of the Month.

She herself is aware of all this, and gets to the heart of the matter by noting that when she first started working in Nashville, in 1982 at the age of 19, "they didn't really like to sign anybody that was real young...Now I'm getting to



Joy Lynn as herself at home with her dogs and cats. Below, her image on the *Wild Love* album cover.

where I might be too old."

She laughs heartily, as she does quite often—this is no stranger to either pleasure or irony—then adds, "No, not seriously. I look at how old the women in country today are, the ones that are successful, and they're older than me, or my age, or maybe a couple of years younger. So it's okay...and you know, country radio doesn't make or break my happiness. I'm in music because it's what I am. I will



always cut albums, I'll always sing. I'll always play. If it ever gets to be really big, then that's cool. If it just stays like it is, I've got enough. Material things, anyway. And I don't want to jeopardize what I do as an artist just to try to get on the radio—although I *do* think my stuff is plenty good enough to be on the radio.”

She delivers that last remark with a laugh, but also with conviction; hearing her, you have no doubt that she

has no doubt. There's another such moment in our interview, too, when I venture the opinion that *Wild Love* has a very real, “live” feel to it—it sounds much more like someone actually standing in front of a microphone and singing than most recorded music does. She grins at that like a cat with a canary supper inside her, and says, “Well, they don't use harmonizers when I record. All those little machines they have that make

people sound great in studios, they don't have to rent those for me.” (We won't say who they *do* have to rent them for. It would take too long.)

Her confidence is solidly based. For one thing, her native talent has been honed by far more experience than most of her peers. She began as many of the greatest country and blues singers have done, with gospel music in her childhood, but in her case she wasn't just singing from the

pews: At the age of five she took on the job of lead singer in The White Family band, and spent every weekend thereafter taking music to churches and radio stations around Indiana and Michigan. Her father, Arkansas-born singer/writer/guitarist Nathan “Gene” Eugene White, led the band, and encouraged young Joy Lynn's musical career until he died suddenly of a heart attack just before the release of *Between*

“Nothing was very important, because I had been doing it just for my dad, ’cause he was so into it...Now, the only way I can look at it is, well, that is life. We’re not here forever, and it’s not ever fair the way it happens...There is no control.”

Midnight and Hindsight, her first album. Although he never saw his daughter’s CD, he did hear the finished music on a pre-release tape.

One of the difficult aspects of Gene White’s death was that like her friend Iris DeMent, whose father’s death was similarly timed, Joy Lynn White had to go out and promote her first album while her grief was very raw.

“I went through the time that first year when I didn’t care, just really didn’t care,” she remembers. “Nothing was very important, because I had been doing it just for my dad, ’cause he was so into it...Now, the only way I can look at it is, well, that *is* life. We’re not here forever, and it’s not ever fair the way it happens. You want them to go through these certain things with you, but you just have no control in that. There is no control.”

Joy Lynn says she’s grateful for the unusual childhood her father gave her, though at the time she didn’t realize how unusual it was. “I thought everybody was like us ’til I got up older and realized that we were a strange lot, we were *musical* people,” she laughs. “But really, the kids in school didn’t even know about what I did on weekends. Most people didn’t, in fact, unless they lived down the street from us—‘Oh, those crazy hillbillies, the Whites, down there.’ See, we always had all my mom and dad’s friends come over on Friday and Saturday nights, and they’d all have Dunkin’ Donuts and coffee. I’d be in the bedroom playing with the other kids while they were in the livingroom playing guitar music and recording it, and it would be like ‘Lynn, come in here and sing these songs!’ I’d go, ‘Just a minute!’ and I’d go running and sing the song real quick,



JOHN LEE MONTGOMERY III

then go back and keep playing with the rest of the kids.”

Her absorption with music continued in her teenage years, when she discovered “...oh, Neil Young and Linda Ronstadt; Emmylou, Bonnie Raitt, Maria Muldaur, Carly Simon, Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Karla Bonoff, all those people” and sang their songs in a rock ’n’ roll band. That’s also when she began gaining experience in the recording studio, making commercial jingles (which she still does today, from time to time; she’s one of the folks telling you that the best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup).

When she moved to Nashville, her combination of talent, experience and studio skills got her work very quickly, at least by ’82 standards. Within eight months she was singing on demo records, the basic recordings that writers and publishers use to pitch their songs to stars. Within ten years she was working her own full-scale recording sessions with producers Paul Worley and Ed Seay, who first took note of her when she demo’d some of the songs Paulette Carlson recorded during that lady’s brilliant but all too brief Highway 101 days (which

must rank as one of Nashville’s best ever matches of demo singer to client). Along the way, her voice has also graced some superior recordings by other artists: Iris DeMent’s album, *My Life*, The Mavericks’ *What a Crying Shame*, Bob Woodruff’s *Dreams & Saturday Nights*, and albums by Jamie O’Hara and Marty Brown, among others. All of which, from the music lover’s perspective, adds up to a cool deal: an already considerable body of very fine, smart, heartfelt work, with a high probability of more to come.

From Joy Lynn’s perspective too, the deal computes quite nicely: great co-workers, satisfying work, and okay money. She lives in a pleasant Nashville neighborhood just minutes from Music Row, in a comfortable little house roughly equidistant between Jack’s Tracks and the Cowboy Arms Hotel & Recording Spa (not at all a bad location in the cosmo-musical scheme of things), and if it’s unavoidably true that the nation’s country radio programmers don’t favor her, she’s in good company, and she’s valued elsewhere. CMT has done her proud, and she makes all the better critics’ Top Ten lists, and they love her in Europe, and she leaves little pockets of ardent fans wherever she plays.

For myself, I like something she says when we’re talking about her not needing those fault-hiding gizmos in the studio.

“If I couldn’t sing like I sing, I wouldn’t do it. I’d do something else. That’s the only reason that I do this, because it’s easy. I mean, it’s hard, too—I’ve worked and worked for years and years to get my voice the way it is—but this is the best thing I can do.” It sure sounds like it. ■

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AARON TIPPIN

Rolls Up His Sleeves



Aaron Tippin has been snooping around the elegant Opryland Hotel where his management company, Starstruck Entertainment, has rented a suite for him to do press and radio interviews during the annual Country Radio Seminar. He's found something that doesn't sit quite right with him. No, it's not the slow room service, or the ridiculously tiny soap bars in the bathroom. It's the welds on the water pipes in the stairwell. They just don't make the grade.

"That would never flush where I used to weld pipe," he shakes his head and frowns in stern disapproval. "I still got a lotta pride in bein' able to put a good cap pass on a weld. I just finished building my new log house. I put in 12-inch I-beams on 16-foot centers all the way across the basement. Did all the welding myself." He shakes his head again and adds in his twangy Carolina brogue. "But if I'd have put my stencil on a weld like that one out in the stairwell back when I was welding pipe for a living, the next day I would'a been turnin' in my tools!"

With a string of hit records with defiantly proud working class themes ("You've Got to Stand for Something," "Working Man's Ph.D.," "I Got It Honest") behind him, Aaron Tippin's fervent "Made in America" devotion to the blue collar ethic has more or less become his musical trademark.

And after you sit down and talk with him a while, it becomes obvious that all his celebrated sweat-of-the-brow, honest-dollar-for-an-honest-day's-work anthems aren't just a cynical pose, or a musical flag waved merely to stir the self-righteous support of his work-a-day audience. These songs are about the way Tippin lives. There are no white Resistol hats or lint-free starched Western shirts for this ol' pick-up driving South Carolina boy. Nosirree: Whenever "Tip" (as his buddies call him) shakes loose and goes home to the 315-acre farm where he recently finished building his new 2,800-square-foot log house, you won't catch him wearing anything that he's not afraid to

splatter with a little mud and motor oil. Busted knuckles, dirt under the fingernails and axle grease on the elbows....That's what Aaron Tippin is all about.

Thus it comes as no surprise when Tippin kicks off his boots and sprawls on the bed in the fancy hotel suite to take a breather from a hectic day of glad-handing radio programmers and doing interviews to sustain the career momentum that's enabled him to sell more than 2,500,000 albums in the past few years. Now he lets slip that there's someplace else

he'd rather be today: Back at his farm rebuilding the engine on an antique dump truck he just bought.

"It's frustratin' sometimes," yawns the singer, whose day began, as usual, with a 5:45 A.M. wake-up call and an intensive 6:30 A.M. weight training session. "Like yesterday, after writing songs in the morning, I went and bought me another old dump truck—I got about a dozen of 'em now. This one's an old 1949 Mack LJ, which is a classic old truck. I towed it home to the farm and was gonna try and crank it, get it to turn over. But we ran outa fuel and the water pump blew the line plumb off the engine. So I had to shut it down. Had to leave it there and come in here and go to work." He slams his fist into his palm and wearily pulls the brim of his baseball cap down low over his eyes. "Why can't I ever finish anything?" he moans with

comic exasperation "I got more stuff, old trucks and bulldozers, tore down than I got put together!"

"My farm, and my collection of old trucks and dozers, that's all just somethin' to keep my hands in the world of the same folks I go out and play for," Tippin insists as he stuffs a wad of mint leaves in his mouth. As part of his almost Zen-like devotion to physical fitness and a 16-hour-a-day work ethic, he recently gave up his beloved snuff; nowadays the former South Carolina hellraiser won't even crack a beer, except on his day off. And between building his new house, building his career and rebuilding truck engines, he hasn't had many of those. Finishing the

**Here's a man who
won't ever forget
where he came from.
After years of
success, he's still
a hometown boy
who's not afraid to
jump right in and get
his hands dirty.**



By Bob Allen





new house has itself been like a second fulltime job.

Tippin, with the wide-eyed irrepressible enthusiasm of a kid who just got a new train set for Christmas, goes on to explain that he served as his own general contractor on his house. His homestead is situated on a splendid piece of high ground overlooking some river bluffs in De Kalb County, Tennessee, a good 60 miles out of Nashville. He takes special pride in the fact that his involvement in nearly every phase of construction—from bulldozing out the basement to doing his own finish painting and trim carpentry work—was strictly a hands-on deal.

“See, I don’t wanta ever get so far away from the people I sing to that I can’t remember what a broke thumb feels like,” the 37-year-old Florida-born, South Carolina-raised former welder/farm hand/truck driver/heavy equipment operator/airplane pilot grins and proudly holds aloft his swollen, crooked thumb. “I did that on the house. Broke that baby! Got a nice little curve to it now! Got it with a hammer. Yeah, it hurt! Still hurts! But I’m real proud of it! It’s my souvenir from the house!”

Talk a while longer with Tippin and you find out he’s a guy who doesn’t do much of anything halfway. He doesn’t have vocations and avocations; he has passions, obsessions. Like...body building (“fightin’ the bear,” he calls it). And restoring old 37-ton bulldozers (“I got six of ‘em now; found three of ‘em in an abandoned coal mine in Crossville, Tennessee; loaded ‘em on my truck and brought ‘em back to the farm.”) And performing. (“Every night when I hit that stage, I make sure I come out squawlin’ tires!”)

And as he breathlessly rattles on...and on...and on about his vintage 40’s, 50’s and 60’s dump trucks, you realize there’s little fear that he’ll ever drift away from his working class roots and into the rarified world of country clubs, stock brokers, Mercedes Benzes and Neiman Marcus catalogs. His idea of a fun Saturday afternoon is casing a junk yard in search of truck parts.

“How many trucks do I have?...” He grins from ear to ear when you pop the question—like a kid who’s been waiting eagerly all day for you to ask to see his baseball card collection. “I

Shortly after this interview, Aaron and girlfriend Thea were married, with Thea’s brother Tom and Aaron’s daughter Charla in attendance. Below, Tip and RCA/BNA labelmate Ken Chesney at Fan Fair this June.



got a B-61, a wrecker, a 1963....Got another that’s a single axle, and another that’s a tandem dump truck, and another that’s a road tractor. I got a B-42 that’s a tandem dump truck, with some heavy suspension. Got a B-67 road tractor. Those are just the “B” models. The “H” models, I’ve got three—they’re the first cab-overs that Mack ever brought out. So...let’s see....That’s nine trucks...Then I got a Ford single-axle dump truck. I got a 1961 Mustang single-axle dump truck that’s a masterpiece, a cool old truck....Then I left out the most important Mack of all: my 49 LJ....So that’s ten Macks and the Ford. The whole thing started when I bought one old dump truck to haul gravel when I was buildin’ the house, and I just fell in love with it. The next thing I know, I’m huntin’ all over the country for ‘em!”

Recently, Tippin managed to put his love of heavy equipment to work in his music career. When his record company was looking for a novel way to promote the release of *Lookin’ Back at Myself*, he came up with the perfect scheme. With a Nashville Network film crew and some other media in tow, he personally helped load a 425-horsepower Peterbilt truck with a 40-foot trailer (emblazoned with his picture and logo) with thousands of freshly pressed copies of the new album.

Manning the 18-wheeler himself, he hit the road. En route to his hometown of Greer, South Carolina, he stopped at truckstops, Walmarks, K-Marts to sign autographs and hawk albums. He capped off his not atypical 13-hour workday with a free rooftop concert for 6,000 of his hometown fans.

That’s just the kind of guy Tippin is. Not only is he not bashful about rolling up his sleeves and getting his hands dirty; his sleeves are seldom rolled down. He’s just as focused and obsessed with perfection when he’s changing the transmission in a bulldozer or welding I-beams in his basement as he is in the recording studio. Later the same day, we both end up on the General Jackson riverboat cruise/dinner/showcase which RCA, his record label, sponsors every year to promote its artists with the radio seminar attendees. At one point during the evening’s festivities, an RCA executive introduces Tippin to somebody and proclaims, half in jest, “Here’s a guy who not only sings, but if his bus breaks down, he can grab a flashlight and adjustable wrench and crawl under there and fix it!”

Tippin, who is indeed, country music’s answer to Mr. Fix It, enthusiastically replies that he can even go one better than that. Always one step ahead of the game, he explains how he recently bought and rebuilt a second engine for his bus. Thus, if and when the old engine blows (and putting several hundred thousand miles a year on the bus, it inevitably will), all he has to do is haul the new engine out to the broken down bus, pull the old one and drop the rebuilt one in.

Somehow, that’s Tippin in a nutshell: easygoing, yet hard driving; a perfectionist, yet as down to earth and practical as a jar full of nuts & bolts: Always doing his best to size up the next hill before he’s even finished climbing the one he’s on. Always

going the extra mile and then some—whether it's a matter of getting up at 5:45 five or six days a week for a pre-dawn breakfast of coffee and vitamin pills before hitting the weight racks, or taking the time to put one more "cap pass" on those welds in his basement, just so, "one of my welding buddies won't come in and say, 'Uh, ya need ta finish that up!'"

Yet, these days, Tippin's good-natured perfectionism is tempered a little; and he admits that he's feeling a lot more settled and happy than he has in years. At long last, he explains, he's found a potential life partner in his sweaty, heavy-lifting, thumb-bruising enterprises and obsessions: Thea Corontzos, his fiancée. He'll gladly tell you that most of the tender self-written ballads like "She's Got a Way (Of Makin' Me Forget)" and "You Are the Woman" on *Lookin' Back at Myself*, his fourth and latest album (on which he co-wrote nearly all of the ten tracks) are true-to-life reflections of the fact that, "I fell in love while I was writing songs for this album, and I think it shows.

"Uh-hum, never had a relationship this good!" Tip nods, stuffs a pillow under his head and chomps thoughtfully on a cheekful of mint leaves when I read back to him the above quote from his official record company bio. "Mc and Thea both came to town the same year, but it was six years before we ever met. She's a singer and sings on demos, and she's a songwriter. Plus now she manages my office for me, and she's part of my management team. She's always considerate of the fact that I don't have a lot of personal time, and ninety percent of the time I do have, we spend together, because the things I love to do, she loves doin' 'em too.

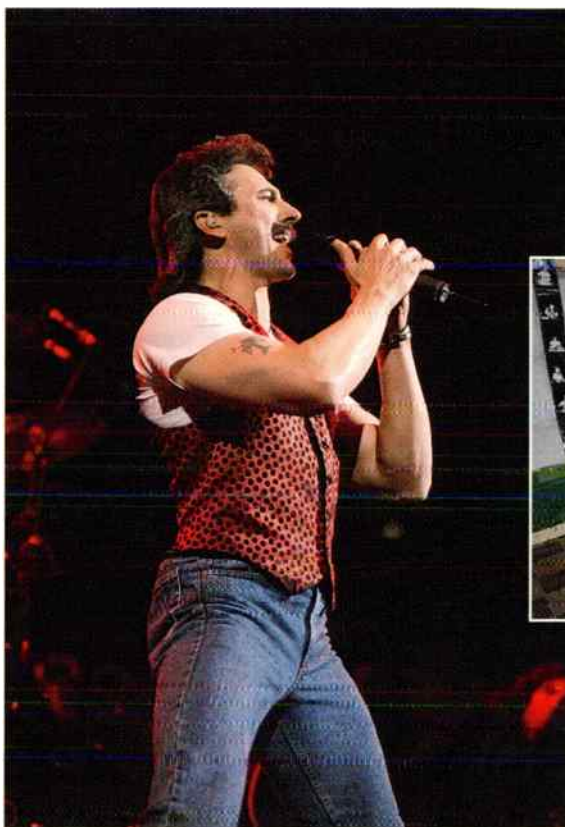
"Her bein' in the business too gives us a lot more in common already," he points out. "Nobody who's ever been my lover ever understood or had an inkling of what I was up against in this business. Most of 'em think it's a party out there on the highway. And it can be. But that ain't how I do business, man, and Thea knows that. She knows it's business and not some happy go lucky, woopy-doo thing. When I'm not liftin' weights, buddy, I'm workin' on this career!"

"I met her over at Starstruck," he continues. Starstruck is the corporation owned by Reba McEntire that manages Tippin's career. "Thea worked for Reba. Lo and behold, next thing you know we were weight training together. She had gotten divorced, and she was always interested in weight training but had never gotten into it. And meeting me kind of got her started. She would talk to me about it, but I didn't know how interested she really was. So I finally told her, 'Look, come on down with me, and I'll show ya how to do it.' Well, she became very interested, and, lo and behold, next thing ya know she's my training partner. And there's a saying: once you fight that bear together, boy it puts a bond on ya! it's not unusual at all to see two athletes meet in a gym and fall in love. I can feel that same feelin' that I feel about her every time I watch her train. And she likes to play golf, too! She's a gun enthusiast! So am I. I'm an N.R.A. member, and so is she. I'm a sports shooter and a hunter, so we enjoy that together. She's never above it when I ask her, 'Hey, honey, I'm gonna tear the engine outa this bulldozer. Would you mind comin' down and holdin' the flashlight?' She just says sure!"

"I been out here ten years, maybe longer than that, since I got divorced—I can't remember exactly. I've met a lot of girls and thought about this marriage thing quite a bit. But Thea is the one who has the qualities I've been lookin' for: someone to be a pal. I always tell her, man, there's no place she can't go that I'm goin' to. Get in the damn truck, we'll go together!"

Tippin recalls that building his dream house, with Thea by his side, strengthened the bond even more. "When it was nearly finished, we ran everybody off and did all the nitpickin' stuff ourselves: the trim carpentry, the painting. It was fun.

"All through my career I've been the kind of guy who doesn't seem to be satisfied very often," he insists. "I'll come to a milestone, and before I can pop the cork on that champagne bottle I'm already settin' it down, goin' (points out the window,



PHOTOS: GUY

Aaron identifies with the blue-collar dreams of his audience. He wants to give them their money's worth, so he comes out tires squawlin' every night. Signing autographs is just part of the deal when he's on tour.

toward the horizon) "That's where we need to be! Right over there!" And onward we trudge, without stoppin' to smell the roses. But this house was the first event in my life, when me and Thea finally got in it, that I stopped and really basked in the accomplishment of what we had done. There for a few days I wouldn't do anything," he laughs. "I just laid on the couch! Just happy in my little house!" But, predictably, after a couple of days in his new pad, Tippin was right back out there on the concert trail, hitting the boards with his usual git-in-ya-face, jackhammer physical intensity. (His performances could easily double as an aerobic workshop; he sometimes warms up by running up and down stairs before or after sound check.)

"I make sure that I come out squawlin' tires every night!" Tip grins, with a rowdy gleam in his eye. "And then, once the fire's goin', it's just a matter of time before it burns the whole place down! That's how I approach it: Those first two or three songs, I have to get out there and throw my hardest knock-out punch! Anybody who's never seen me before will go, 'Whoa, this is fun! He's havin' fun! We're havin' fun!' They pay good money, and they deserve nothing but a hundred and fifty percent from me.

"Sure, I get stage fright every time I hit the stage," he shrugs. "But it's overpowered by my concentration, and by my determination to win at what I do: To overwhelm an audience.

"See, what I want is 20 years outa this thing," he grins again and springs up off the bed to go change his clothes for the General Jackson boat cruise. "I don't think you can party your tail off and slough off your job if you wanta hang on to it for 20 years. I think you have to give it your best every single day that you do it. And that's exactly what I try to do." ■

That's All Right Mama

By Peter Guralnick

On the evening of July 5, 1954, Sam Phillips, proprietor of Sun Records and the Memphis Recording Service at 706 Union Avenue, turned on his tape machine to begin an audition of an unknown singer named Elvis Presley. Before the night was over, something different would happen that would change the face of American music forever.

Sometimes he simply blurted out the words, sometimes his singing voice shifted to a thin, pinched, almost nasal tone before returning to the high, keening tenor in which he sang the rest of the song—it was as if, Sam thought, he wanted to put everything he had ever known or heard into one song. And Scotty's guitar part was too damn complicated, he was trying too damn hard to sound like Chet Atkins. But there was that strange sense of inconsolable desire in Elvis' voice, there was *emotion* being communicated.

Sam sat in the control room, tapping his fingers absentmindedly on the console. All his attention was focused on the studio, on the interaction of the musicians, the sound they were getting, the feeling that was behind the sound. Every so often he would come out and change a mike placement slightly, talk with the boy a little, not just to bullshit with him but to try to make him feel at home. It was always a question of how long you could go on like this, you wanted the artist to get familiar with the studio, but being in the studio could take on a kind of mind-numbing quality of its own, it could smooth over the rough edges and banish the very element of spontaneity you were seeking to achieve.

For Elvis it seemed like it had been going on for hours, and he began to get the feeling that nothing was ever going to happen. When Mr. Phillips had called, he had taken the news calmly to begin with, he had tried to banish all thoughts of results or consequences, but now he could think of nothing else. He was getting more and more frustrated, he flung himself desperately into each new version of "I Love You Because," trying to make it live, trying to make it new, but he saw his chances slipping away as they returned to the beginning of the song over and over again with numbing familiarity.

Finally they decided to take a break—it was late, and everybody had to work the next day. Maybe they ought to just give it up for the night, come back on Tuesday and try it again. Scotty and Bill were sipping Cokes, not saying much of anything, Mr. Phillips was doing something in the control room, and, as Elvis explained it afterward, "this song popped into my mind that I had heard years ago, and I started kidding around with it." The song was "That's All Right [Mama]," an old blues number by Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup.

"All of a sudden," said Scotty, "Elvis just started singing this song, jumping around and acting the fool, and then Bill picked up his bass, and he started acting the fool, too, and I started playing with them. Sam, I think, had the door to the control booth open—I don't know, he was either editing some tape, or doing something—and he stuck his head out and said, 'What are you doing?' And we said, 'We don't know.' 'Well, back up,' he said, 'and do it again.'"

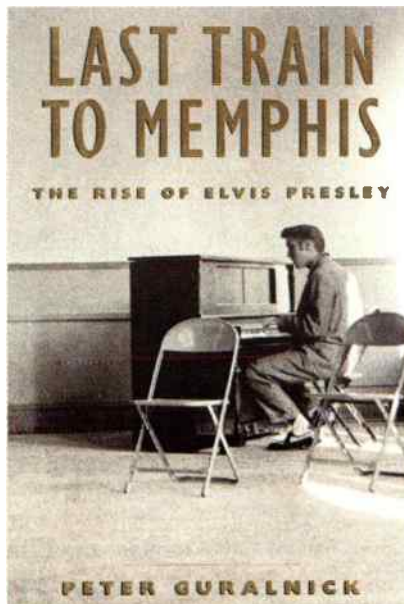
Sam recognized it right away. He was amazed that the boy even knew Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup—nothing in any of the songs he had tried so far gave any indication that he was

drawn to this kind of music at all. But this was the sort of music that Sam had long ago wholeheartedly embraced, this was the sort of music of which he said, "This is where the soul of man never dies." And the way the boy performed it, it came across with a freshness and an exuberance, it came across with the kind of cleareyed, unabashed *originality* that Sam sought in all the music that he recorded—it was "different."

They worked on it. They worked hard on it, but without any of the laboriousness that had gone into the efforts to cut "I Love You Because." Sam tried to get Scotty to cut down on the guitar flourishes. "Simplify, simplify!" was the watchword. "If we wanted Chet Atkins," said Sam good-humoredly, "we would have brought him up from Nashville and gotten him in the damn studio!" He was delighted with the rhythmic propulsion Bill Black brought to the sound. It was a slap beat and a tonal beat at the same time. To Sam, "Bill was

one of the worst bass players in the world, *technically*, but, man, could he slap that thing!" And yet that wasn't it either—it was the *chemistry*. There was Scotty, and there was Bill, and there was Elvis scared to death in the middle, "but sounding so fresh, because it *was* fresh to him."

They worked on it over and over, refining the song, but the center never changed. It always opened with the ringing sound of Elvis' rhythm guitar, up till this moment almost a handicap to be gotten over. Then there was Elvis' vocal, loose and free and full of confidence, holding it together. And Scotty and Bill just fell in with an easy, swinging gait that was the very epitome of what Sam had dreamt of but never fully imagined. The first time Sam played it back for them, "We couldn't believe it was us," said Bill. "It just sounded sort of raw and ragged," said Scotty. "We thought it was exciting, but what was it? It was just so completely different. But it just really flipped Sam—he felt it really had something. We just sort of shook our heads and said, 'Well, that's fine, but good God, they'll run us out of town!'"



And Elvis? Elvis flung himself into the recording process. You only have to listen to the tape to hear the confidence grow. By the last take, there is a different singer in the studio than the one who started out the evening—nothing had been said, nothing had been articulated, but everything had changed.

Sam Phillips sat in the studio after everyone had gone home. It was not unusual for him to hang around until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, sometimes recording, sometimes just thinking about what was going to become of his business and his family in these perilous times, sometimes mulling over his vision of the future. He knew something was in the wind. He knew from his experience recording blues, and from his fascination with black culture, that there was something intrinsic to the music that could translate, that *did* translate. "It got so you could sell a half-million copies of a rhythm and blues record," Sam said in 1959. "These records appealed to white youngsters. But there was something in many of those youngsters that resisted buying this music. The Southern ones, especially, felt a resistance that even they probably didn't quite understand. They liked the music, but they weren't sure whether they ought to like it or not. So I got to thinking how many records you could sell if you could find white performers who could play and sing in this same exciting, alive way."

The next night everyone came to the studio, but nothing much happened. They tried a number of different songs—they even gave the Rodgers and Hart standard "Blue Moon" (a 1949 hit for Billy Eckstine) a passing try—but nothing really clicked, and both that evening and the next were spent in more or less getting to know one another musically. Nonetheless, Sam had little doubt of what had transpired in the studio that first night. There was always the question of whether or not it was a fluke; only time would tell. But Sam Phillips was never one to hold back, when he believed in something he just plunged ahead. And so, on Wednesday night, after calling an early halt to the proceedings, he telephoned Dewey Phillips down at the WHBQ studio in the Hotel Chisca.

Dewey Phillips in 1954 was very nearly at the peak of his renown and glory. From a 15-minute unpaid spot that he had talked his way into while managing the record department at W.T. Grant's, he had graduated to a 9:00-to-midnight slot six nights a week. According to the Memphis papers he would get as many as 3,000 letters a week and 40 to 50 telegrams a night, a measure not just of his audience but of the *feror* of that audience. When, a year or two later, he asked his listeners to blow their horns at 10:00 in the evening, the whole city, it was said, erupted with a single sound.

WDLA DJ and R&B singer Rufus Thomas referred to

Dewey as "a man who just happened to be white," and he never lost his Negro audience, even after the white teenage audience that Sam sensed out there made itself known. He went everywhere in Memphis, paraded proudly down Beale Street, greeted the same people who, *The Commercial Appeal* reported in 1950, had flocked to Grant's "just to see the man 'what gets hisself so messed up.'" He had several chances to go national but passed them up—or allowed them to pass *him up*—by remaining himself. There were two kinds of people in Memphis, the *Press-Scimitar* declared in 1956, "those who are amused and fascinated by Dewey, and those

who, when they accidentally tune in, jump as though stung by a wasp and hurriedly switch to something nice and cultural, like Guy Lombardo." "He was a genius," said Sam Phillips, "and I don't call many people geniuses."

Dewey stopped by the recording studio after his show. It was well after midnight, but that was as good a time as any for Dewey. Ordinarily, when he stopped by the studio, all he could talk about at first was the show. "Oh God, he loved his show," Sam Phillips said. And he loved to argue with Sam. To Sam's assistant Marion Keisker, Sam and Dewey were so close that she couldn't stand to be in the same room with the two of them—and it wasn't just that she saw Dewey as a bad influence. She was also, she admitted, jealous; she saw Dewey as a threat. "Dewey loved to argue with Sam, just for the sake of arguing," recalled the singer Dickey Lee. "Sam would get so mad at Dewey, but he loved him. Dewey always referred to Sam as his half brother, even though they weren't related at all."

That particular night, though, there wasn't any arguing. Sam had something he wanted to play for Dewey, he said right off, and he was uncharacteristically nervous about it. Sam Phillips didn't like to ask a favor of anyone—and he didn't really consider that he was asking a favor now—but he was asking Dewey to *listen*, to consider something that had never previously existed on this earth; this wasn't just a matter of sitting around and bullshitting and letting Dewey absorb whatever happened to come his way. "But, you know it was a funny thing," said Sam. "There was an element of Dewey that was conservative, too. When he picked a damn record, he didn't want to be wrong. 'Cause he had that thing going, 'How much bullshit have you got in you, man, and when are you gonna deliver?' It so happened, by God, that people believed Dewey, and he delivered. 'Cause when he went on the air, he just blabbed it right out, 'It's gonna be a hit, it's gonna be a hit, it's the biggest thing you ever heard. I'll tell you what, man, it's gonna knock you out.' And, you know, as much as he respected me and loved me, Dewey had some real hangups about what could be done locally—he wanted to make you prove it to him



SHOWTIME MUSIC ARCHIVES



Elvis Presley, Bill Black and Scotty Moore with Sam Phillips. Phillips kept telling them to "simplify, simplify."

unequivocally. He was so into the finished product he didn't care how it came about, it was just: what did you deliver for him to make his show great?"

Dewey opened a Falstaff and sprinkled some salt in it, then sat back and listened intently as Sam played the tape over and over. Dewey knew the song, of course; he had played the Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup version many times on his own show. It was the sound that puzzled him. For once there was not much conversation as the two men listened, each wondering what exactly the other thought. "He was reticent, and I was glad that he was," said Sam. "If he had said, 'Hey, man, this is a hit, it's a hit,' I would have thought Dewey was just trying to make me feel good. What I was thinking was, where you going to go with this, it's not black, it's not white, it's not pop, it's not country, and I think Dewey was the same way. He was fascinated by it—there was no question about that—I mean, he loved the damn record, but it was a question of where do we go from here?"

They stayed up listening and talking in comparatively muted tones until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, when both men finally went home. Then, much to Sam's surprise, the phone rang early the next morning, and it was Dewey. "I didn't sleep well last night, man," Dewey announced. Sam said, "Man, you should have slept pretty good, with all that Jack Daniel's and beer in you." No, Dewey said, he hadn't been able to sleep, because he kept thinking about that record, he wanted it for his show that night. In fact, he wanted two copies, and he said, "We ain't letting anybody know." His reticence, Sam said, was over on that day.

Sam cut the acetates that afternoon and brought them down to the station. He called Elvis after work to tell him that Dewey would most likely be playing the record that night.

telegrams?—he played the record seven times in a row, 11 times, seven times over the course of the rest of the program. In retrospect it doesn't really matter; it seemed as if all of Memphis was listening as Dewey kept up his nonstop patter, egging his radio audience on, encouraging them to join him in the discovery of a new voice, proclaiming to the world that Daddy-O Dewey played the hits.

For Gladys the biggest shock was "hearing them say his name over the radio just before they put on that record. That shook me so it stayed with me right through the whole song—Elvis Presley—just my son's name. I couldn't rightly hear the record the first time round." She didn't have time to think about it for long anyway, because almost immediately the phone rang. It was Dewey for Elvis. When she told him Elvis was at the movies, he said, "Mrs. Presley, you just get that cotton-picking son of yours down here to the station. I played that record of his, and them birdbrain phones haven't stopped ringing since." Gladys went down one aisle of the Suzore No. 2, and Vernon went down the other—or at least so the story goes—and within minutes Elvis was at the station.

"I was scared to death," Elvis said. "I was shaking all over, I just couldn't believe it, but Dewey kept telling me to cool it, this was really happening." ■



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**PRE-PUBLICATION SPECIAL!
COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE'S
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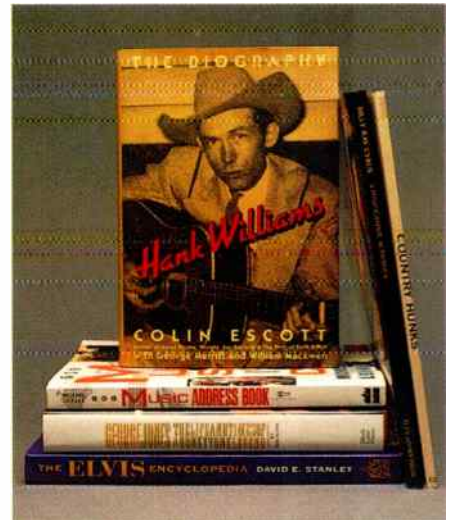
This highly-anticipated edition is an unparalleled look at country music—the music of America's rural working class. And who better to tell this colorful story than the people who have brought you America's favorite country music magazine for over 20 years? With over 650 photographs, some rare and never seen, some so familiar they've become classics, this account traces the music from its origins through to its present blossoming into a billion-dollar industry. The Editors of *Country Music* bring to life the voices, sounds and feelings evoked by the music of each era, from the Great Depression, through the World War II boom to the Nashville Sound. They revisit the folk revival of the

60's, the Outlaw movement, the Urban Cowboy craze and beyond. Hundreds of artists are here, from The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and Kitty Wells, Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton, to today's stars like Dwight Yoakam and Garth Brooks. In the foreword Johnny Cash says, "To me, *The Illustrated History* is a valuable document. Through it I touch my roots and, in

doing so, find a strong kinship with the minstrels and troubadours of old." Essential for any fan of traditional or new country music. Reserve yours now and SAVE OVER 10%. Pay \$19.85, Item #B2T.

**AND DON'T MISS OUR BESTSELLING
ENCYCLOPEDIA!**

Also published by the Editors of *Country Music Magazine*, the *Comprehensive Country Music Encyclopedia* is the best country music reference you'll find anywhere. This bestselling answer book is a completely different book from the one we published way back in 1974. This all new volume gives you over 600 alphabetically arranged entries—from Acuff to Zydeco—covering the people, places and events that have made country music what it is today. With more than 600 photographs, this hardcover edition usually sells for \$25.00. You pay just \$19.95. Item #B1S.



THE COUNTRY MUSIC BOOK CORNER

Hank Williams: The Biography

Based on years of research and interviews, this bestseller discards the myths created by heirs and fellow performers. An artist whose basic lyrics expressed worlds of truth, Williams emerges here as a "pure product of America"—driven, unsophisticated, intelligent, weak. It is a book that should be read by any Williams fan. Item #B2A, \$22.95.

NEW! The 1996 Songwriters Market

Get your songs into the right hands, and do it the right way, with this newly revised edition containing 2,500 lists of the most complete and current information. Item #B2N, \$22.99.

The Elvis Presley Encyclopedia

This is the complete and definitive reference book on "The King" of rock 'n' roll with over 250 great photos. This 287-page, over-sized hardcover edition is a must for every serious Elvis fan. Item #B1V, \$29.95.

NEW! The All-Star Country Cookbook

Here are great recipes and reminiscences from America's favorite country music stars, including Randy Travis, Vince Gill, Wynonna Judd, Clint Black, Lisa Hartman, Patty Loveless and more! Item #B5J, \$14.95.

The Music Address Book, 2nd Edition

This is the latest edition of Michael Levine's acclaimed bestseller with over 3000 singers, groups, musicians, managers, record companies, agents and more. It's the ultimate sourcebook for anyone who wants to write to the right person. Item #B1C, \$12.

Country Hunks

Get an intimate, inside look at today's top young stars like Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks and Dwight Yoakam. Each photo-packed chapter is an up-close, personal look at the man behind the music. Item #B4R, \$7.95.

The Billy Ray Cyrus Scrapbook

When describing this book, Bill Ray says, "Man you really hit the nail right on the head." It has over 325 photos. If you're a fan, you won't want to miss it! Item #B4J, \$19.95.

CHET ATKINS VIDEO INSTRUCTION COURSE: GET STARTED ON GUITAR

Here is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn to play the guitar (or sharpen your existing skills) with one of the grandmasters of guitar pickin'. With the acclaimed Chet Atkins Instruction Course, *Get Started on Guitar*, beginners can have fun learning the basics, and advanced players will discover a goldmine of helpful hints and ideas. The set includes a one-hour video cassette, a 112-page instruction



book and a 40-minute audio cassette—all three components cross-referenced to each other and packaged in a sturdy plastic case for convenient carrying and access. The instruction book will guide you through the music Chet plays in the video. Each tune has its own chapter complete with advanced tips and basic information. There are also special easy-to-read reference sections titled "Play-

ing Chords," "Finger-Picking Chords," "Playing Melodies" and "Playing By Ear." The video shows split-screen close-ups so you can see exactly how the techniques are done. You receive the video, audio cassette, instruction booklet and the binder case all for only \$69.95. It makes a great gift for the coming holiday season. When ordering, ask for Item #B2G.

TWO OF A KIND—DOLLY PARTON AND PORTER WAGONER CD

This budget-priced, 20-song package will thrill fans. It includes most of their biggest hits, such as "Fight & Scratch," "Daddy Was an Old Time Preacher Man," "Holding on to Nothin'," "We'll Get Ahead Someday," "The Right Combination," "Jeannie's Afraid of the Dark," "Better Move It on Home," "We Found It," "Two of a Kind," "I've Been Married Just as Long as You Have," "In Each Love Some Rain Must Fall," "You & Me—Her & Him," "Something to Reach For," "Please Don't Stop Loving Me," "The House Where Love Lives," "Before Our Weakness Gets Too Strong" AND MORE! Item #PDC 2-1335. CD, \$15.95; cassette \$11.95.

Porter Wagoner: A Satisfied Mind

Now's your chance to move beyond myth to discover the real Porter Wagoner. It's a revealing biography. Item #B1K, \$19.95.

Dolly Parton Autobiography

My Life and Other Unfinished Business is a funny, honest look at this dynamic diva. Don't miss it. Item #B40, \$25.



HOT NEW CALENDARS FOR 1996!

First, there's the always popular, official 1996 Elvis Presley Wall Calendar, featuring twelve high-gloss photos of "The King." Each picture measures 12" x 12", and the entire calendar opens to a big 12" x 24". Ask for Item #G6F for only \$10.99. Next, we're offering the all new Country Music Hall of Fame Day-By-Day Desktop Calendar with fascinating country music trivia for each day of the new year. That's Item #G1H, \$9.95. And finally there's the official Country Music Foundation Wall Calendar with color photos of stars like George Strait, Alan Jackson and Garth Brooks. Ask for Item #G1B, ONLY \$8.95.



FIVE GREAT COUNTRY MUSIC ALBUMS FOR ONLY \$10!

Here is perhaps the best country music bargain of the year. You get five top, major label country music LP's for the LOWEST price around. If you are putting that turntable to use, this is an offer you should not pass up. There are headliners like Hank Williams Jr. and The Statler Brothers. We can't give you the titles because demand for this offer has been so heavy that we are continually shopping around for new albums just to keep up. But we back this offer up with a money-back guarantee if you're not delighted. You're getting over \$40.00 worth of country listening for just \$10. Ask for Item #R6R.



THE BEST COUNTRY MUSIC T-SHIRTS

These high-quality, popular country music T-shirts are guaranteed to last. The first four are 100% cotton. We currently have five T-shirts available. One features Travis Tritt in black with his name and tour itinerary on the reverse side. The Tritt T-shirt is Item #G5X. Alan Jackson comes in black with *Who I Am* and his name on the back. The Alan Jackson T-shirt is Item #G5J. Also available, but not shown, is the top-selling Dwight Yoakam T-shirt in black with the album cover shot from his popular 1993 release, *This Time*,

on the front. The album title is on the back with a schedule of cities from that tour. The Dwight Yoakam T-shirt is Item #G5Z. You can get each of these T-shirts for \$15.95. For these three T-shirts choose from men's sizes Large or X-Large only. Don't miss our popular *Country Music Logo* T-shirt from Champion either. For red ask for Item #G2Q, for navy blue Item #G2P. They come in sizes S, M, L, XL and XXL and sell for \$10 each. Finally, there's the I Love Country Music T-shirt in S, M, L, XL and XXL for \$10. Ask for Item #G2O.



HILLBILLY FEVER!

This is the definitive showcase of classic country music on five separate CD's or cassettes. *Hillbilly Fever!* was the brainchild of *Country Music's* own contributing editor and respected music authority, Rich Kienzle, who co-produced these five sets for Rhino Records. Each volume spotlights the artists, some stars and some lesser known, who made the music that you remember and still love today. Some cuts have never been reissued on CD, or at all, since their original release. Each album includes a rare written record of the times, places, people and sounds that make the unique styles featured so enduring. We are not exaggerating when we say that this is one of the best comprehensive collections for serious country music fans. Each CD has 18 songs (12 on cassette). Each cassette is \$9.95; each CD is \$15.95.

Volume One

Legends of Western Swing features Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys, Spade Cooley, The Light Crust Doughboys, Tex Williams and His Western Caravan, Leon McAuliffe and other Western swing players. Cassette #R271900CA/CD #R271900CD.

Volume Two

Legends of Honky Tonk features Lefty Frizzell, George Jones, Ernest Tubbs, Hank Williams with His Drifting Cowboys, Red Sovine, Al Dexter, Johnny Bond and other significant honky tonk artists. Cassette #R271901CA/CD #R271901CD.

Volume Three

Legends of Nashville features Patsy Cline, Hank Williams, Marty Robbins, Little Jimmy Dickens, Eddy Arnold, Kitty Wells, Faron Young, Ray Price and more "Music City" legends. Cassette #R271902CA/CD #R271902CD.

Volume Four

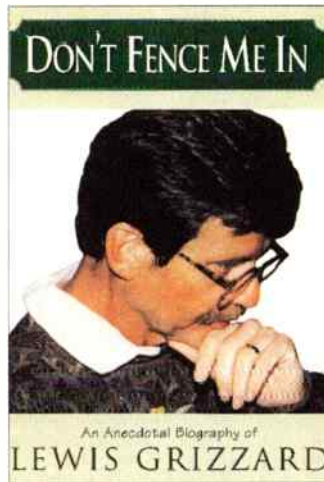
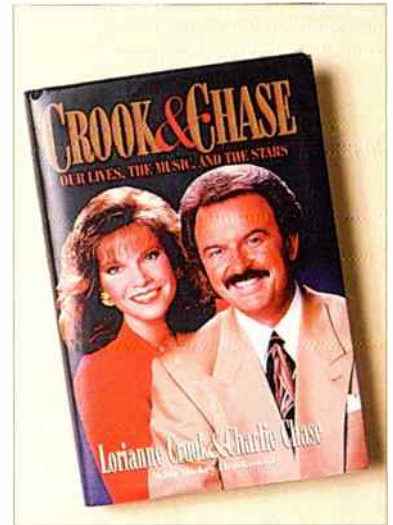
Legends of The West Coast features Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Jimmy Wakely, Tex Ritter, Joe Maphis & Rose, Ferlin Husky and more. Cassette #R271903CA/CD #R271903CD.

Volume Five

Legends of Country Rock features The Everly Brothers, The Byrds, Bob Dylan, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, New Riders of the Purple Sage and other country rock artists. Cassette #R271904CA/CD #R271904CD.

NEW OCTOBER BOOK RELEASE! CROOK & CHASE: OUR LIVES, THE MUSIC, AND STARS PRE-PUBLICATION SPECIAL— SAVE \$2.00!

Lorianne and Charlie, the enormously popular hosts of *Music City Tonight*, The Nashville Network's nightly prime-time show, talk about their careers and share their favorite anecdotes about the biggest stars in the country music universe. Following in the tradition of such bestsellers as Ralph Emery's *Memories*, and the Reba and Dolly autobiographies, *Crook & Chase* is a fun-filled look at the most popular music in the world by way of up-close and personal stories about Vince Gill, Wynonna, Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, Billy Ray Cyrus, and the many country stars who regularly appear on the show. This is a book that country music fans and the millions of viewers of *Music City Tonight* do not want to miss. Hardcover, 6 1/8" x 9 1/4", two 8-page black and white photo inserts. Item #B7T, regularly \$22—NOW ONLY \$19.95.



NEW OCTOBER BOOK RELEASE! LEWIS GRIZZARD BIOGRAPHY: DON'T FENCE ME IN PRE-PUBLICATION SPECIAL—SAVE \$2.00!

At the time of Lewis Grizzard's death in 1994, he was one of America's best-known and most beloved humorists. Despite Lewis' constant self-examination and his open style of writing, his fans actually knew little about the man behind the laughs. *Don't Fence Me In* is a unique biography written by the people who knew him best and were closest to him at various stages of his life. It is not intended to be a critical biography with all the specific dates and events; instead, it is an anecdotal biography that illustrates the man through stories about the good times and bad by those who shared them. Filled with humor, pathos, and inside stories, not to mention a cache of previously unpublished photos, *Don't Fence Me In* is essential reading for any Lewis Grizzard fan. Hardcover, 224 pages, 30 black and white photos. Ask for Item #B7V, regularly \$19.50—NOW ONLY \$17.50.



NEW! ELVIS PRESLEY 1955 PINK CADILLAC—A LIMITED EDITION COLLECTOR'S MODEL

Produced in cooperation with Graceland and Elvis Presley Enterprises, here is perhaps the most famous car in the world and the only authorized die cast model of Elvis' 1955 pink Cadillac. This collector's model was designed in cooperation with the Cadillac Motor Car Division of General Motors and is produced by the renowned Model Rectifier Corporation. This 1/18 scale model is nearly a foot in length and comes complete with the history of this famous car. Ask for Item #G2G, \$49.95.

NEW! ELVIS PRESLEY WATCHES

First, there's the Elvis Musical Wrist Watch. Push the button and it plays "Love Me Tender." Ask for Item #J2E, \$49.95 (male size only). Then there's the unique Elvis Profile Watch with a unique second hand—a rotating guitar: Ask for Item #J2B, \$49.95 (specify male or female).





**FREE DOLLY ALBUM
WHEN YOU ORDER ANY
DOLLY PRODUCT!**

DOLLY PARTON DOLL

This replica of Dolly Parton stands one-and-a-half feet tall. She's wearing a red-leatherette dress accented with gold and white lace. In her gold-toned belt is a red, ruby-like stone, and the whole ensemble is topped with a gold-tone necklace. Of course, it wouldn't be complete without Dolly's trademark big, beautiful blonde locks, decorated with a red lace bow. The Dolly Parton Doll makes a great gift for both young and old—plus it's an invaluable collector's item! And if you order right away, we'll give you an early Dolly album, *Just the Way I Am...* FREE! You'll receive this Dolly favorite on cassette. The Dolly Doll costs \$49.95, Item #D1A, and includes a stand. The FREE cassette is Item #R4A. When ordering, include both codes.

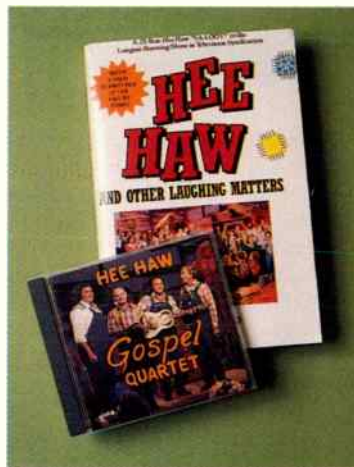
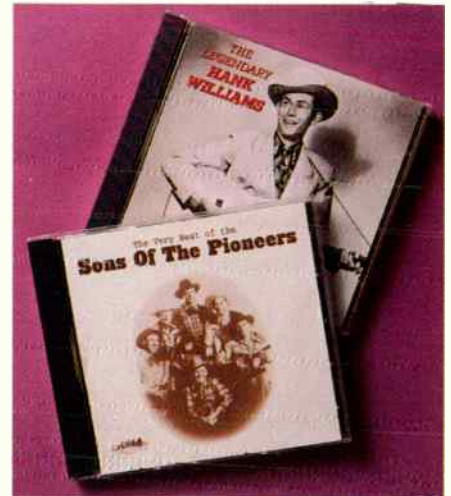
CLASSIC COUNTRY MUSIC ALBUMS— HANK WILLIAMS & SONS OF THE PIONEERS

The Legendary Hank Williams

Here is a classic collection that no serious country music fan should be without. It features 22 hit songs including "Jambalaya (On the Bayou)," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "Kaw-Liga," "Hey Good Lookin'," "Your Cheatin Heart," "Honky Tonkin'," "Cold, Cold Heart," "I Saw the Light," "Half As Much," "Wedding Bells," "Move It on Over," "You Win Again," "Take These Chains from My Heart," "Lovesick Blues," "Why Don't You Love Me," "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive" AND MORE! Two cassettes, Item #HC1137/38, \$12.98. One CD Item #HD1137/38, \$16.98.

The Very Best of The Sons of The Pioneers

You should not miss this other memorable collection either. This nostalgic treat features 24 selections including "Cool Water," "Pecos Bill," "Chant of the Wanderer," "The Last Roundup," "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," "Riders in the Sky," "Whoopie-Ti-Yi-Yo," "The Timber Trail," "Red River Valley," "A Penny For Your Thought," "Let Me Share Your Name," "No One to Cry To," "Blue Shadows on the Trail," "Wind," "Trees" AND MORE! Two cassettes, Item #HC2010, \$12.98. One CD, Item #HD2010, \$16.98.



BRAND NEW BOOK! HEE HAW AND OTHER LAUGHING MATTERS

Author and *Hee Haw* producer Sam Lovullo says, "*Hee Haw* was the Grand Ole Opry of television, with a little bit of something for everybody." Get the real story behind Roy Clark and Buck Owens, Minnie Pearl, Junior Samples, Grandpa Jones, Lulu Roman, The Wonder Dog, The Hee Haw Honeys, the music, the big-name guest stars, the jokes and more! Don't miss this 25-year tribute to the longest-running show in syndicated history. (More than 50 behind-the-scenes photographs!) Item B4Z, \$15.00.

THE BEST OF THE HEE HAW GOSPEL QUARTET

delivers 24 of the Quartet's best, including "Dust on the Bible," "Love Lifted Me," "Amazing Grace" and "Shall We Gather at the River." Two LP's, Item HL3162; two cassettes, Item HC3162; or one CD, Item HD3162. Only \$11.95 each.

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Letters

Praise for George and Tammy

I just had to write again and thank Patrick Carr for the wonderful stories he did on George and Tammy in the July/August issue. Thanks a million, Patrick, for this wonderful coverage on these two legends of country music. I think you do a super job with your interviews and with presenting them to your readers!

I have told it many times, but I want to say again that George Jones has done so much for country music, and he just keeps getting better. Also, Tammy Wynette is a great singer, and I want to tell anyone who hasn't already gotten Tammy and George's new album that you are really missing something if you fail to buy it. I thought George and Tammy were wonderful with their duets in earlier years, but they have really outshined them all with this new "one." I am excited about their reunion tour and can hardly wait to see them in concert.

Judy Wilson
Lafollette, Tennessee

George Speaks His Mind

Thank you for the interview with George Jones, and a great big thank you to George for speaking his piece about the new country music. At our house we seldom listen to the country radio stations because we can't stand the music, but we sure play our CD's. This past June we attended Fan Fair for the fourth consecutive year—what a disappointment the shows were at the fairgrounds. The record companies used to present favorite, established artists on their label shows, but what did we hear this year—mostly upcoming hopeful artists. We heard gimmick songs and screaming, and we saw people running and jumping around the stage. (And, of course, lots of wriggling.) What is wrong with an artist standing still and singing? So many fans left the shows before they were completed, and they were shaking their heads, plugging their ears and saying if this is country music, they can keep it. Thanks again for the good article.

Barbara and Bob Hutsler
Ravenna, Ohio

No Second Chance Here

I just received the July/August 1995 issue and read it cover to cover. The story of George Jones and Tammy Wynette was interesting. Glad they are getting



back together, but the "great" George Jones makes me sick whining because his records are not played on the radio. Sorry, but he blew it when he had his chance. I wonder if he knows how he got the title of "No-Show Jones." I have been a country music fan for over seven decades and have enjoyed most of the new stars as they came along—they seem to get better and better.

Mrs. L.B. Ralston
Louisville, Kentucky

The Best

Just finished reading my latest CMM. The story about George Jones was the best. We saw George and Tammy a few weeks ago when they started their new tour together. They came to Tupelo, Mississippi, first. It was great. We agree with him all the way—the older singers don't get the notice they should. We have one station that plays them more than others, but not near enough.

Mrs. Rose Wallace
Mantachie, Mississippi

Can Live Without 'Em

Only two articles (Sammy Kershaw and Rick Trevino) saved the July/August issue from being a complete gag. P-l-e-a-s-e, spare us any more on George and Tammy. It's singing and singers like this that prompted a mass exodus of listeners from country music years ago. Our new crop of singers (Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, RVS, to name a few) have

brought most of us back. Let's agree to leave George, Tammy, Waylon and Willie back in the outlaw stage that nearly killed country music. George and Tammy may be a "never ending story," but I can live without it.

Alice J. Gore
Denton, Texas

Are you trying to break our mailman's back?—Ed.

Ronnie Dunn Checks In

Bob, I truly wish I could write like that. The best article I've read about us. Thanks so much.

Ronnie Dunn
Brooks & Dunn

Brooks & Dunn cover story by Bob Allen ran in our March/April 1995 issue.—Ed.

Enjoyed Carpenter and Strait

I'm writing to say thanks for the gorgeous George Strait poster in your May/June issue. It is the reason I bought the magazine, and the reason I subscribed. I bought two issues of the magazine to make sure I have a back-up if anything were to happen to it. I also enjoyed the article on Mary Chapin Carpenter in your May/June issue. She is one of the most impressive live acts I've ever seen. We're very lucky to be the ones to enjoy her talent.

Elizabeth Mathews
Denver, Colorado

Three's Good, Tippin's a Charm

I'd like to give *Country Music* a triple "thanks" to show my appreciation for the July/August issue: Bob Allen's great story on the very young and talented Rick Trevino, the 20 Questions with Tim McGraw and Michael McCall's commentary on Wesley Dennis' debut release. The only thing I could see making a better CMM issue would be a feature story on my number one country muscle man and traditionalist, Aaron Tippin.

Rhonda S. Andrews
Palmerton, Pennsylvania

You're on!—Ed.

No Points Scored Here, Ole Sammy

After reading your interview with Sammy (the Samster) Kershaw (July/August), I was disgusted and wishing I had never bought his CD's. All I could think of was how to get rid of them. This is the type of person who gives human

beings a bad name, constantly referring to himself in the first person ("Ole Sammy") and so full of himself. Who does he think he is?

Richard L. McGuire
Vermillion, Ohio

Actually it's third person, but that's OK. See letter below for another view.—Ed.

What's a Samster, Bobster?

I really enjoyed Bob Allen's story in the July/August issue about Mr. Sammy Kershaw, and I fully agree that he has staying power. He's no fluke and he is definitely going to be a round for awhile. There's only one thing that has me puzzled, "What is a Samster?" You would think that for someone who has worked as hard as he has to get to where he's at today, Bob would have the common decency to call him Sammy or Mr. Kershaw. Sorry, Bobster, but the true fans prefer to keep it simple.

K.T. Ericson
Hardwick, Georgia

Just a Bad Day

I was under the impression that *Country Music* was a reputable magazine, but after the July/August issue, I have my doubts. I am a big Sammy Kershaw fan, and I was appalled at the way Bob Allen wrote his story on Sammy. I have met Sammy several times backstage at his concerts, and he has always been very nice, appreciative and humble about his career and admits that a lot of it was luck. But isn't there a little luck involved in everyone's career? Sammy Kershaw is a great entertainer and country music singer, and he probably has more intelligent ideas and opinions than Bob Allen ever thought about having. And if I was Sammy, I wouldn't have granted Bob Allen an interview after his review of *Feelin' Good Train*, which in my opinion is a terrific album. I don't think Sammy is as cocky and egotistical as Bob Allen made him out to sound. And besides that, under the conditions, isn't everyone allowed a bad day once in a while?

Robin Harrison Psajdl
Carterville, Missouri

Sammy the Grouch

I was pleased to see an article on one of my favorite performers, Sammy Kershaw. Mr. Bob Allen obviously did not understand that on a media day an artist can grow weary of journalists hounding them with questions, loud noises outside and no coffee to get them moving along. Wouldn't you be grouchy, too?

Prescilla Rene Dickson
Union City, Tennessee

Covering Her Man

Certainly enjoyed the latest issue. All the great things about my man (George Strait (July/August 1995). Liked the article on

Rick Trevino. I'm glad my subscription is paid up until '99. Keep up the good work.

Mildred E. Combs
Pryer, Oklahoma

Short and Sweet

I love your magazine! I want to thank you for the 20 Questions interview with Tim McGraw in your July/August issue.

Brandi McDougal
Beallsville, Ohio

Language Is Lacking

In regards to the interview by Patrick Carr with Mark Chesnutt (May/June 1995), I was disappointed in the article. Mark used very bad language. His whole attitude was way off base. He called Garth Brooks a liar, for one thing. In my opinion, he sure don't measure up to other country male singers. Enjoy your magazine.

Barbara Smith
Dallas, Texas

If he says it, we print it. But look again on him calling GB a liar.—Ed.

Truth or Consequences

I, and I'm certain many of Garth's millions of fans, were incensed by the article on Mark Chesnutt in your May/June issue. Why all the overt Garth-bashing when the article was about Mark Chesnutt? And worse, to cast aspersions upon the integrity of Garth's word; his good word is legend. The fact that the article was touted as "Mark Chesnutt Speaks the Truth" makes it all the more insulting.

Lucy Whisler
Alexandria, Virginia

Operative word was "doubt."—Ed.

Big-Hearted Tracy

As a member of the Tracy Lawrence Fan Club, I would like Bob Allen to know what a fantastic job he did with his article on Tracy in the May/June issue. Being a veteran follower of Tracy's music, I already knew about most of what was in the article. But it's nice to know that someone took the time to let the "newer" country fans know what all Tracy's been through to get where he's at today. If it's not obvious yet, please let it be known that this is one heck of a guy. And one of the best entertainers in country music. But one thing Bob didn't mention is Tracy's great concern for others. He has a heart the size of Texas. I really enjoy your magazine and being a member of CMSA. Keep up the good work.

Ricky Robbins
Graysville, Tennessee

A Little of This, a Little of That

I want to thank you for the centerfold of George Strait on his horse with his dog in the May/June issue. It sure is good. (But, of course, he is my favorite.) Also like the



CHEVROLET presents the COUNTRY MUSIC QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the November/December 1995 issue.

1. Name the TV movie based a recent Reba McEntire hit song.
2. Joy Lynn White credits which member of her family with getting her started in music?
3. Who built Aaron Tippin's new house?
4. How many Number One singles has John Michael Montgomery racked up?
5. What 1994 CMA award did Pam Tillis win?
6. Chevy's new S-Series ZR2 Extended Cab Pickup is big and tough. How many horsepower are available in its powerful V6?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. One
2. South Louisiana
3. Two
4. Tug McGraw
5. Female Vocalist of the Year
6. Chevy's new S-Series Extended Cab Pickup has an extra notch of seat travel to give you more leg room.

Chevy Trucks LIKE A ROCK



Premiere issue in the
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fell over it. I am sick and tired of the BRC bashing. He is one of the the most talented performers to come along in a very long time. What an insult to Billy Ray and his fans.

Beverly Jones
Black Mountain, North Carolina
Back to square one. See also below.—Ed.

Rich Redeemed

After reading Rich Kienzle's opinions about Lorrie Morgan's CD's (*Something in Red and War Paint*), I must say, he is a very intelligent man with very good taste in music. If he says your favorite artist put out a lousy CD, well, your favorite artist put out a lousy CD. Write your favorite artist and tell them to put out a better CD; don't write this magazine griping about Rich's review.

Tim Mourle
Gran Valley, California

The Marcias Know

I have always been a fan of Maureen McCormick for the obvious reasons. I was glad to see her in People in your July/August issue. I was excited to hear about her music career. But I was really surprised that your staff made such an error. The character Maureen played was named "Marcia" Brady. If you don't believe me, watch the ending credits of *The Brady Bunch*. You'll see.

Marcia Crowley
Van Horn, Texas

Sorry, Marsha.—Ed.

Crook & Chase Bite the Dust

I just read that you are cancelling Crook & Chase (People section, July/August issue). I can't imagine who in your management, or should I say "mismanagement," could be so stupid. I am watching Ralph Emery right now, or I am trying to. Outside of wonderful Connie Smith and one and only Chet Atkins, it is boring, boring, boring. I like Ralph Emery, but up against Crook & Chase...? Who will watch? There is so much filth on the tube. Crook & Chase are a breath of fresh air. Ralph Emery will not fill the gap. I hope everyone who takes *Country Music* writes and complains. Give you something to think about.

Mrs. Wynema Yocum
Hanford, California

OK, Wynema, don't shoot the messenger. TNN is responsible for all its own programming decisions. We were just reporting the news. Write them at 2806 Opryland Dr., Nashville, TN 37214.—Ed.

Ja, das ist ein Misunderstanding

In your September/October 1994 issue (page 16), Hazel Smith wrote I told her that Vince Gill has played here in Hamburg, Germany, and some 20,000 fans had a wonderful night. In the May/June 1995 issue, you printed a letter of a girl from

Berlin, writing that there were only 200-300 people listening to Vince Gill, and that the place he played is in the red-light district. Yes, the concert hall is in the red-light district, but this is nothing special. It is very close to the place where the world famous Star Club has been, and I'm pretty sure that you know The Beatles started there, right in the middle of the red-light district. And it is true that there were not 20,000 people, but there were more than a thousand. This was a misunderstanding between Hazel and me because of the language.

The market for country music in Germany is growing, and DJ's like me try to push newer artists, like Vince Gill. So, these are the facts about the Vince Gill concert in Hamburg, the biggest town after Berlin in this fine country. And I'm going to tell Hazel more of what's going on in the second biggest market for music in this world.

Bernd Glodek
Hamburg, Germany

Bitte.—Ed.

Ms. Lorrie Morgan

I am appalled that you employ writers that would call someone such as Lorrie Morgan a hillbilly girl singer. I refer to your May/June issue (People section). I beg your pardon, Lorrie Morgan is a lady and not a hillbilly. She is a wonderful singer and has paid her dues to become a country music star, not a hillbilly. I think she deserves an apology.

Cynthia Morris
Quincy, Florida

When Hazel says hillbilly, believe me, it's a compliment.—R.D.B.

Reba Rules

I'm very sick and tired of people downgrading Reba! She may not stand in front of a microphone stand and play the guitar and sing hillbilly songs for an hour, but she is still country. She wants to entertain people and have them leave happy, although I disagree with her statement to "just make money." But as far as I'm concerned, Reba deserves more credit than the 1994 vocalist Pam Tillis.

Lynsey Young
Maryville, Tennessee

Reba has her day in the cover story in this issue.—Ed.

Fab Final Note and More

About three years ago on KROW-78 in Reno, Nevada, there was a deep-voiced disc jockey from South Dakota named Theresa Thompson. Does anyone know where she is now? It would really make my day if someone could help me find out. Also, I want to praise Patrick Carr for always writing a fabulous Final Note. I agree with every Final Note I've ever read. And to those of you who are fed up with the new country radio format, keep

writing those letters to CMM. It's good to know there are many readers who feel the same way I do.

Katie Robinson
Anderson, California
TT fans, let us hear from you.—Ed.

Keep Watching White

She's bound for the Country Music Hall of Fame...real country music and unique, pure talent, singer and a songwriter. She is country music's greatest artist, who has earned her place in Nashville. So, how about some articles on Joy Lynn White. She has been overlooked. Take notice, country fans, she's great country, real country music. Kenny Newton-John

Ina, Illinois

Okay, Kenny, here she is.—Ed.

Waiting for Why

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoy reading your magazine. I would like to suggest that you do a cover story interview, a colorful on-stage shot centerfold picture or a 20 Questions with Wynonna Judd. Her new single is due this month, and her next album will be out this fall. I am really looking forward to her tour starting in February 1996. She is gonna be awesome and better than ever!

Kari Celestine
Diboll, Texas

No Soul?

Enough already! It seems every time we open your magazine, there's a slam against Collin Raye—two in the July/August issue. We've personally introduced many friends and acquaintances, in and out of the music business, to Collin's recordings and live performances, and they all agree: Collin's singing reaches to the depths of one's soul. But, of course, one must have a soul to experience it.

Rae Pica, Richard Gardzina
Center Barnstead, New Hampshire

Tiresome Nashville Darlings

It could be the heat, with too much TV. Is it just me, or is anyone else getting a little weary of seeing Nashville's over-rich, pampered little darlings on TV? Just what the world needs too—more rich, spoiled brats. Thanks, I feel better.

Leila Faremen
Lexington, Kentucky

Help!

I sure hope you can help me! During my trip to Fan Fair I lost a roll of film. Maybe a fellow *Country Music* reader will see my letter and know the whereabouts of my film. It will have Fan Fair pictures and Wednesday night Superstar Spectacular pictures on the roll.

Vickie L. Samuelson
Sunbury, Pennsylvania
Definitely a long shot, but we'll forward any found film.—Ed.

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Reba Write-up Overdue

I love your pull-out posters, but I'd really like to see Reba McEntire. A well-written article is also long overdue for this redhead! (Please send me any info you have on where to send my Reba fan mail.)

Wesley Harriss

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

See cover story. Reba's fan club; P.O. Box 121996, Nashville, TN 37212.—Ed.

Highwaymen and More

Found a subject that made me pick up the pen. I want to thank ABC-TV's *Day One* for their recent report on the fact that movers and shakers are ignoring the performers over 40 and for using The Highwaymen as their example. They brought to the attention of the public what we have known for a while. I recently had the pleasure of seeing The Highwaymen in Fairfax, Virginia, and as I sat there listening to the absolute wealth of talent and music, I had to wonder just how many of the younger people in attendance had any idea just what they were watching and listening to. The blood, sweat and tears of their combined years on the road—and they are better than they've ever been. It was an awesome two hours. Too bad experience doesn't count. Just when you get really good at what you do, they want you to hang it up. We "old" fans are still here. We still want to hear

and see the stars we love, and we still spend money on their product. Since we are becoming a fairly large portion of the population, maybe "they" should take a look at how much money they are losing by ignoring us. I've been enjoying *Country Music* since 1975. Thanks, Russ, and Hazel Smith for your timely comments and opinions.

Millie Unterberger
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

One's Best Yet

Well, well, well, it's happened again: the number George Jones and Tammy Wynette have done called "One." It's the best song I've heard in 60 years, and I thought I heard them all. There has never been such beautiful harmonizing. That one tops them all.

R. McKenzie
Soldotna, Alaska

See Bob Millard's review this issue.—Ed.

Dwight Needed

I've been reading your fine magazine consistently for the past two years and want to send you my compliments. I'm sure that you must receive thousands of letters with requests for coverage on one artist or another, and here's my request. It appears that the music media as a whole is ignoring Dwight. What's the story? Give me some Dwight Yoakam!

Tracy Fisher
Wheatridge, Colorado

More Aaron, Please

I always look forward to receiving your magazine and hope that I will see a really great article on Aaron Tippin. I would appreciate if you would print a nice, lengthy article on him with some great photos.

Rita M. Bryant

Louisville, Kentucky

You got it! With wedding photos!—Ed.

Cover JMM

I really enjoy your magazine. I am a big JMM fan. We think he's great, and we appreciate you giving him time in your magazine. I think he deserves a lot more than he's getting. We would like more stories on him.

Martha Robbins

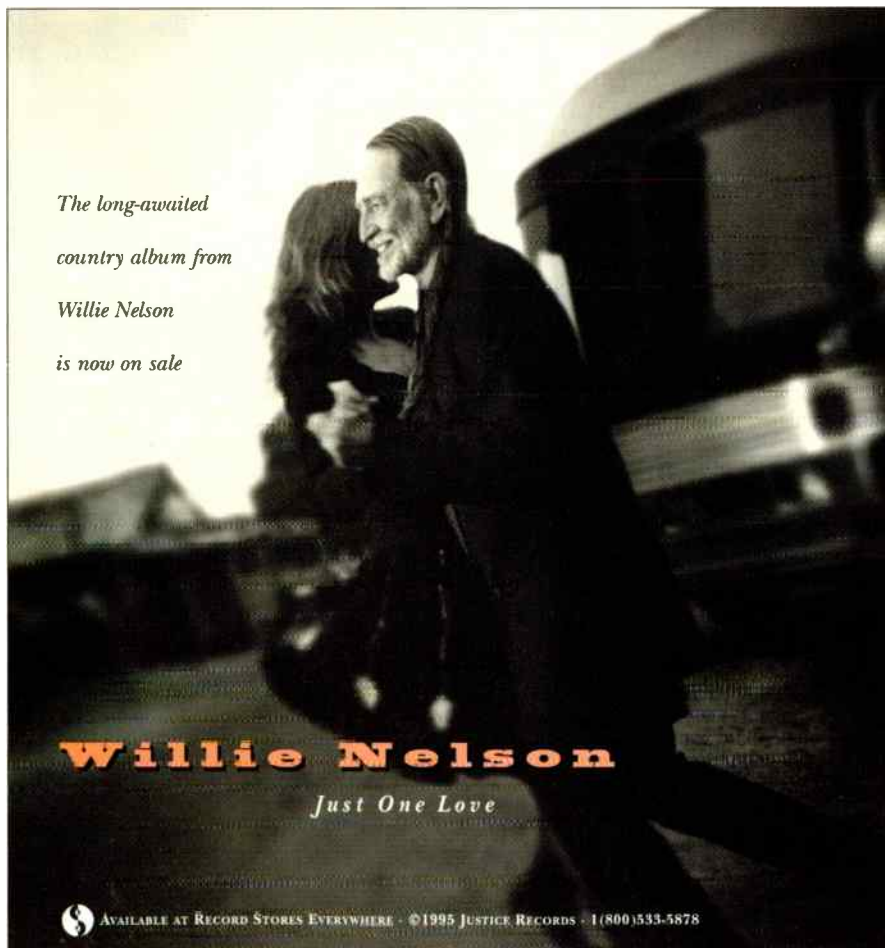
New Albany, Mississippi

Centerfold okay?—Ed.

Sweepstakes Winners!

Our congratulations to Betty S. Rains of Cabool, Missouri, the February/March 1995 \$1000 Renewal Sweepstakes winner and Donald H. Lint from Johnston, Iowa, the April/May 1995 \$1000 Renewal Sweepstakes winner. Another Blazer winner coming soon, and this one is purple. Fondly known as The Grape.

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Little Texas—First Time For Everything (Warner Bros.) 435-438

Holly Dunn—Life And Love And All The Stages (River North Nashville) 127-019

Little Texas—Big Time (Warner Bros.) 460-204

Billy Ray Cyrus—It Won't Be The Last (Mercury/Nashville) 463-240

Mark Collie—Unleashed (MCA) 488-106

Billy Dean—Men'll Be Boys (Liberty) 486-365

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Best Of Pirates Of The Mississippi (Liberty) 476-077

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Johnny Cash—Columbia Records 1958-86 (Columbia) 352-765

David Allan Coe—For The Record/The First 10 Years (Columbia) 229-813/399-816

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George Jones & Tammy Wynette—Super Hits (Epic) 127-605

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TOP 25 ALBUMS

1. Shania Twain *The Woman in Me*
2. John Michael Montgomery *John Michael Montgomery*
3. Jeff Foxworthy *Games Rednecks Play*
4. Garth Brooks *The Hits*
5. Alison Krauss *Now That I've Found You: A Collection*
6. Tracy Byrd *Love Lessons*
7. Lorrie Morgan *Greatest Hits*
8. Jeff Foxworthy *You Might Be a Redneck If...*
9. Tim McGraw *Not a Moment Too Soon*
10. Reba McEntire *Read My Mind*
11. Tracy Byrd *No Ordinary Man*
12. Brooks & Dunn *Waitin' on Sundown*
13. Alan Jackson *Who I Am*
14. Perfect Stranger *You Have the Right to Remain Silent*
15. Tracy Lawrence *I See It Now*
16. Travis Tritt *Ten Feet Tall & Bulletproof*
17. George Jones & Tammy Wynette *One*
18. Rick Trevino *Looking for the Light*
19. Dwight Yoakam *Dwight Live*
20. Blackhawk *Blackhawk*
21. George Strait *Lead On*
22. Alabama *Greatest Hits Volume 3*
23. John Michael Montgomery *Kickin' It Up*
24. Joe Diffie *Third Rock from the Sun*
25. Wade Hayes *Old Enough to Know Better*

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Here it is, folks! Your quick and easy order form for your choice of the Top 25 Albums currently on the charts. Anyone may order, but members of *Country Music Magazine's* own Country Music Society of America get 25% off list price. Albums listed on this page are available on CD or cassette. **Sorry, no singles, LP's or 8-track tapes available.** To order, fill out coupon and include your check or money order. Be sure to specify format. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery. To join the CMSA and save 25%, send \$16 to cover membership dues and use members' prices. Dues entitle you to an additional year of *Country Music Magazine*, the CMSA Newsletter with every issue, membership card, discount coupons, other merchandise discounts and more.

Send check payable to *Country Music*, Top 25, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, TN 37229
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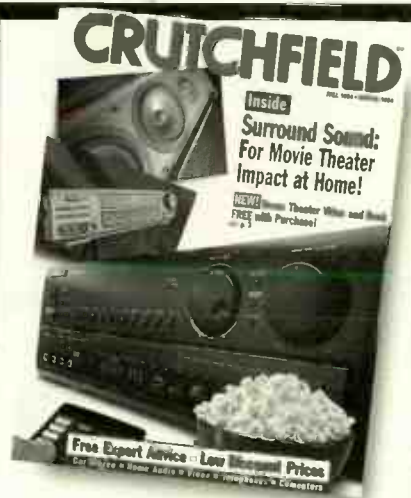
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MEMBERS POLL/SEPTEMBER 1995

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____

2. In the boxes below, write the numbers of any of the albums on the Top 25 list in this issue which you bought in the last month.

3. For any albums you bought in the last month not on the Top 25 list, write performer's name and album titles in the space below. (Attach a separate sheet if you need more room.)

Your Choice for Album of the Month

4. List numbers of your five favorites from Top 25 in this issue.

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Do You Plan to Visit These Places?

5. Do you plan to travel to any of the following country music-oriented vacation spots in the next 12 months? (Check all that apply.)

- Nashville, Tennessee Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
 Branson, Missouri Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

6. If you do plan to visit any of these places, how will you travel?

- Independently (alone or with family/friends only)
 With an organized tour group

7. Have you visited any of the places listed in Question 5 in the past 12 months?

- Yes No

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, write your membership number here _____

If you are not a CMSA member but would like to join and vote immediately, enclose your check for \$16 for a one-year CMSA membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

Fill out poll and mail to: September Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.



Tom T. Hall Special

Without question, Tom T. Hall deserves some sort of definitive boxed set treatment. Till then, though, much of his early material for Mercury—the songs that made his reputation—are available in both domestic and import configuration. Bear Family has reissued Tom T.'s earliest and best Mercury LP's on two CD's. *Ballad of Forty Dollars* (BCD 15631) features material from his earliest Mercury recordings, including "That's How I Got to Memphis," "Cloudy Day," "Shame on the Rain," "Highways," "Forbidden Flowers," "Ain't Got the Time," "Ballad of Forty Dollars," "I Washed My Face in the Morning Dew," "A Picture of Your Mother," "The World the Way I Want It," "Over and Over Again," "Beauty Is a Fading Flower," "A Week in the Country Jail," "Strawberry Farm," "Shoeshine Man," "Kentucky in the Morning," "Nashville Is a Groovy Little Town," "Margie's at the Lincoln Park Inn," "Homecoming," "The Carter Boys," "Flat-Footin' It," "George and the Northwoods" and "I Miss a Lot of Trains." CD only. Regular price \$24.95. Members' price \$22.95.

I Witness Life and 100 Children BCD 15658 combine two of his Mercury LP's with their complete songs, among them "Salute to a Switchblade," "Thank You, Connersville, Indiana," "Do It to Someone You Love," "The Ballad of Bill Crump," "All You Want When You Please," "Chattanooga Dog," "Girls in Saigon City," "Hang Them All," "Coming to the Party," "America the Ugly," "That'll Be All Right With Me," "One Hundred Children," "I Can't Dance," "I Want to See the Parade," "Sing a Little Baby to Sleep," "Mama Bake a Pie (Daddy Kill a Chicken)," "Ode to a Half a Pound of Ground Round," "Pinto the Wonder Horse Is Dead," "I Hope It Rains at My Funeral," "I Took a Memory to Lunch," "The Hitch-Hiker" and "Old Enough to Want You." CD only. Regular price \$24.95. Members' price \$22.95.

A good all-around look at Tom T.'s career, conveniently reissued

on one compact disc (or cassette) is Mercury/Polygram's *Tom T. Hall's Greatest Hits, Volume 1 & 2* (810-462). Containing 22 songs that had previously been available on two separate releases, most of the high points are here: "Homecoming," "Shoeshine Man," "I Miss a Lot of Trains," "Salute to a Switchblade," "I Washed My Face in the Morning Dew," "Ballad of Forty Dollars," "The Year That Clayton Delaney Died," "That's How I Got to Memphis," "A Week in a Country Jail," "One Hundred Children," "Me and Jesus," "Country Is," "I Love," "The Little Lady Preacher," "Sneaky Snake," "I Like Beer," "Ravishing Ruby," "Old Dogs, Children and Watermelon Wine," "Deal," "Who's Gonna Feed Them Hogs," "That Song Is Driving Me Crazy" and "I Care." Regular price \$9.95 cassette, \$15.95 CD. Members' price \$7.95 cassette, \$13.95 CD. See ordering instructions at the end of this page; include membership number when taking discount.

Buried Treasures Special

Members may deduct \$2.00 off the price of any item in this issue's Buried Treasures column, except the Willie Nelson boxed set on Rhino—deduct \$5.00 off that item. Include membership number if taking discount. See complete ordering instructions in Buried Treasures.

Essential Collector Special

CMSA members also get a discount on all items in Essential Collector—deduct \$2.00 off regular price of each item featured this time. Include membership number and see ordering details on the Essential Collector page.

10 Years Ago in CMM

In the September/October 1985 issue of *Country Music Magazine*: Marty Stuart penned a cover story on Johnny Cash wherein Cash discusses how his Great Planet Earth Tour led to the first album by The Highwaymen; George Jones shoots his first video; songwriter Harlan Howard celebrated 25 years with BMI; Alabama was Number One on the album charts with *Forty Hour Week*, and the title track was the Number One single; CMSA members' favorite album of the month was The Judds' *Why Not Me*, and favorite single was "Hello, Mary Lou" by The Statlers.

How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 091095N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Include \$3.00 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional postage.

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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

I annotated a fair amount of the material that will be released this time around (though not all), so here's what they are and no more.

George Jones: Among other reissues of vintage 60's LP's, Razor & Tie recently reissued four of George Jones' 12-song early 60's United Artists LP's (produced by Pappy Daily) with original cover art and sequencing.

George Jones Sings the Hits of His Country Cousins (RE 2064) was issued in 1962. It featured George singing songs



that were hits for other singers, beginning with Hank Snow's "Beggars to a King," moving along to Red Foley's "Peace in the Valley," then to "I Could Never Be Ashamed of You" (Hank Sr.), "Silver Dew on the Blue Grass" (Bob Wills), "Precious Jewel" (Roy Acuff), "It's a Sin" (Eddy Arnold), "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" (Skeets McDonald), "Give My Love to Rose" (Johnny Cash), Hank Locklin's "The Same Sweet Girl," Webb Pierce's "Yes I Know Why," Ferlin Husky's "On the Wings of a Dove" and the Burl Ives hit, "A Little Bitty Tear."

Another 1962 LP, *Homecoming in Heaven* (RE 2065), features a mix of gospel material, some of it from off-the-beaten-track songwriters like J.P. Richardson and Darrell Edwards, who wrote for Pappy Daily's publishing houses. Only "Wings of a Dove" and "Peace in the Valley" are well known songs. Among the other tunes George

recorded was a very obscure early Willie Nelson gospel number, "Kneel at the Feet of Jesus."

In recent years Little Jimmy Dickens, known for his raucous novelty tunes, has received belated recognition for his long-admired but publicly underrated skills as a ballad singer in the Roy Acuff tradition. George paid homage to this side of Dickens over 30 years ago when he recorded *George Jones Sings Like the Dickens!* (RE 2071). On it, he tackled 12 little known Dickens recordings, mostly ballads from "We Could" and Felice and Boudleaux Bryant's "Where Did the Sunshine Go" to "A Rose from a Bride's Bouquet," "My Heart's Bouquet," Roger Miller's "When Your House is Not a Home," "Just When I Need You" and The Louvin Brothers' "I'm Just Blue Enough."

1965's *The Race Is On* (RE 2070) includes his hit version of the Don Rollins song along with a mix of other material, from "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" (same version as on the *Country Cousins* album), Harlan Howard's "Your Heart Turned Left," "It Scares Me Half to Death" (also on the Dickens LP), "World's Worst Loser," Bob Wills' "Time Changes Everything" and Leon Payne's "They'll Never Take Her Love From Me."

Jimmie Rivers: Jimmie Rivers & The Cherokees were a San Francisco-area Western swing band of the mid-to-late-50's led by country-jazz guitarist Rivers, a disciple of both Jimmy Bryant and 1930's amplified jazz guitar innovator Charlie Christian. By the late 50's The Cherokees' home base was the 23 Club, a wild, brawling honky tonk in Brisbane, California, just south of San Francisco. In the band were pedal steel virtuoso Vance Terry and singer-guitarist Gene Duncan. Vance sometimes taped the music, and in 1983 those tapes led to an LP titled *Brisbane*

Bop, which I annotated, on the now-defunct Western label. Jeff Richardson, producer of the original LP, has reissued it on CD on his new Joaquin label with six additional tracks (Joaquin 2501).

The original album's mix of material included old big band favorites ("Tippin' In" and "Back Bay Shuffle"), jazz favorites ("After You've Gone"), Western swing tunes ("Stealin' Home") and bebop jazz ("Swedish Pastry"). On the new album, some of Rivers' between-songs announcements are included, as are six more songs, including Rivers' trumpet showcase "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie," "How High the Moon," the modern jazz number "Surf Ride," and a lengthy version of Bob Wills' "Twin Guitar Special." Both the notes and booklet have also been expanded.

Bryant & West: The early 1950's West Coast country-jazz recordings of guitarist Jimmy Bryant and pedal steel pioneer Speedy West have long been out of print. Since Bryant died 15 years ago and West can no longer play due to a stroke, their particular style



is fast becoming a lost art. Capitol Records planned a Bryant-West collection four years ago, then cancelled it. Razor & Tie picked up the idea, and the result is *Stratosphere Boogie: The Flaming Guitars of Jimmy Bryant and Speedy West* (RE 2067). Among the 16 songs recorded from 1951-56 are the title song, which Bryant recorded on a 12-string doubleneck "Strato-

sphere" electric guitar. Also featured are such Bryant-West favorites as "Bryant's Bounce," "Comin' On," "Midnight Ramble," Speedy's own trademark song "Speedin' West," "Flippin' the Lid," "The Night Rider" and "Cotton Pickin'." Also included is their landmark version of "Arkansas Traveler" that in turn inspired country-rock wizard Albert Lee and Speedy's version of the Bob Wills-Leon McAuliffe favorite "Blue Bonnet Rag." I wrote notes, provided session information and sequenced the set. One correction: the contributor of a photo on the back of the booklet asserted that the photo of Jimmy and Speedy at a jam session came from 1959. It was actually taken several years earlier.

Willie Nelson: In 1993, the home shopping channel QVC began working with Rhino Records and Willie Nelson on a special compilation of rare and unreleased Willie material. The 60-song, three CD (or cassette) *Willie Nelson: The Classic, Unreleased Collection* was exclusively available from QVC in 1994, and Willie even appeared to promote the set, including a memorable hour with the very knowledgeable Molly Daly shortly before she left the network. With the year exclusive having passed, Rhino has now made the set available to retail buyers as *Willie Nelson: A Classic Unreleased Collection* (Rhino 71462).

The set begins with the first Willie Nelson record: "No Place for Me" and Leon Payne's "Lumberjack," which Willie recorded in 1957 during his days as a disc jockey at KVAN in Vancouver, Washington. This rare 45 (on the "Willie Nelson" label) has never even been bootlegged. A dozen songs from the 1961 demo recordings Willie made for Pamper Music, his first Nashville song publisher, have been previously released in various budget LP and CD packages. Among these are early ver-

sions of "Face of a Fighter," "Slow Down Old World" and "Healing Hands of Time," all recorded with A-team session pickers of that day.

Since Rhino handles extensive reissues from Atlantic records, a large body of that material, including 11 previously unreleased alternate takes and unissued songs, is featured here. Floyd Tillman's "I Gotta Have Something I



Ain't Got," "I'm So Ashamed," "Under the Double Eagle" and "Both Ends of the Candle" were never-issued numbers recorded during the 1973 *Shotgun Willie* sessions. Other numbers, like "Slow Down Old World" and "So Much to Do" are alternate takes of songs from the same album and from *Phases and Stages*. Few realize *Phases* wasn't Willie's final Atlantic session. He recorded several live shows at Austin's Texas Opry House late in 1974. Eleven never-heard performances from those shows are included, as are many Willie favorites like "Good Hearted Woman," "Truck Drivin' Man" and "Take Me Back to Tulsa."

Sugar Moon is a mid-1980's album done at Willie's Pedernales Studios in Austin with Merle Haggard's Strangers, which at the time included guitarist Clint Strong. Working live, Willie recorded ten Western swing, pop and jazz favorites including "Sugar Moon," "Rosetta," "Till the End of the World" and "I'll Take What I Can Get." Four songs featuring Willie alone with acoustic guitar were done around the same time as *The IRS Tapes*. The final set of ten songs, once the album *Willie Sings Hank Williams*, was also recorded at Pedernales, with Willie, setting aside his usual vocal phrasing, singing Hank favor-

ites in Hank's keys. He's accompanied by longtime steel guitar cohort Jimmy Day, who backed Hank on the *Louisiana Hayride*. The booklet is based on a 1993 interview I did with Willie about the songs.

Hank Thompson: *Journal* readers may recall that some time ago, we profiled Hank Thompson's 1961 *Hank Thompson at the Golden Nugget* as a Classic Album, being the first live country music LP by a single artist. Recorded live at the legendary Vegas club in March of 1961, Thompson, accompanied by his Brazos Valley Boys with Merle Travis on lead guitar and Bobby Garrett on pedal steel, put together a searing mix of 13 songs, both Thompson favorites and country standards. Capitol Nashville (formerly Liberty) has just reissued the LP on compact disc and cassette (ST 1632) for the first time ever. I wrote the new notes on this one, so facts only. Thompson not only sang his own hits like "Honky Tonk Girl," "I Didn't Mean to Fall in Love," "She's Just a Whole Lot Like You" and the honky tonk anthem "A Six Pack to Go," he also performed country favorites such as "Nine Pound Hammer," "Lost Highway," "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You" and "I'll Step Aside." Brazos Valley Boys instrumentals include "Orange Blossom Special" and Bobby Garrett's frantic "Steel Guitar Rag."

Buck Owens: The upstate New York-based Sundazed label, known for its compilations of 60's rock music, licensed ten classic Buck Owens Capitol LP's now owned by Buck himself. The first five were recently released, and the other five will be available by the time you read this. All have the original sequencing and artwork, the original notes, new notes written by me, session information by Buck discographer Patrick Milligan and two bonus tracks for a total of 14 songs per disc.

On the Bandstand (SC 6044), originally released in 1963, had only one big hit, "Kickin' Our Hearts Around." The rest of the album featured Buck-style covers of country favorites like Mel Tillis' "Saw Mill," "Diggy Liggy Lo" and "Touch Me." The two bonus tracks are his hit duets with Rose Maddox on "Sweethearts in Heaven" and "We're the Talk of the Town."

1964's *Together Again/My Heart Skips A Beat* (SC 6045) featured both sides of that legendary two-sided hit single along with his version of Red Simpson's "Close Up the Honky Tonks," his non-hit but well-loved versions of "A-11" and "Hello Trouble" and his original non-hit recording of "Ain't It Amazin', Gracie." Bonus tracks include two of Buck's biggest hits: "Act Naturally" and "Love's Gonna Live Here."

I Don't Care (SC 6046), from 1964 features Buck on his hit single of the same name and his ballad "Don't Let Her Know." As was common with his albums during this time, the rest of the band was spotlighted as well. Buck and Don Rich sang a duet on Roger Miller's "Dang Me." Buck's hit duet with Rose Maddox on "Loose Talk" was also on the original LP, along with vocals from Doyle Holly and Don Rich, the instrumental "Buck's Polka" and steel guitarist Tom Brumley's version of "Bud's Bounce." The bonus tracks are The Buckaroos' instrumental versions of "I Don't Care" and "Don't Let Her Know" featuring Don and Brumley.

I've Got a Tiger by the Tail (SC 6047) from 1965 also fea-



tured both Buck and The Buckaroos. Aside from the title song, Buck's "Cryin' Time" and "Trouble and Me" were included along with vocal and fiddle performances from Don and Doyle Holly. The bonus tracks are rare live recordings of Buck singing "Act Naturally" and then-Buckaroo Bob Morris singing "This Ol' Heart" recorded in 1963.

Before You Go/No One But You (SC 6048), also from 1965, featured the title song, "Gonna Have Love," "(I Want) No One But You," "There's Gonna Come a Day" and The Coasters' "Charlie Brown" along with Don's version of "Number One Heel." Tom Brumley performing "Steel Guitar Rag" and Buck doing his own guitar instrumental, "Raz-Ma-Taz Polka." The two bonus tracks are Buckaroo instrumental versions of "Love's Gonna Live Here" and "Before You Go," both featuring Don on lead guitar.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Willie Nelson, *The Classic, Unreleased Collection* (Rhino 71462), a 3-CD or 3-cassette boxed set, \$39.95 cassette, \$49.95 CD/Jimmie Bryant & Speedy West, *Stratosphere Boogie* (RE 2067), CD only, \$19.95/Jimmie Rivers, *Brisbane Bop* (Joaquin 2501), CD only, \$19.95/Buck Owens, *On the Bandstand* (SC 6044), *Together Again/My Heart Skips a Beat* (SC 6045), *I Don't Care* (SC 6046), *I've Got a Tiger by the Tail* (SC 6047), *Before You Go/No One But You* (SC 6048), cassette or CD, \$7.95 each cassette, \$13.95 each CD/George Jones, *Sings the Hits of His Country Cousins* (RE 2064), *Homecoming in Heaven* (RE 2065), *Sings Like the Dickens* (RE 2071), *The Race Is On* (RE 2070), cassette or CD, \$11.95 each cassette, \$19.95 each CD/Hank Thompson, *At the Golden Nugget* (ST 1632), cassette or CD, \$13.95 cassette, \$21.95 CD. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 091095, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

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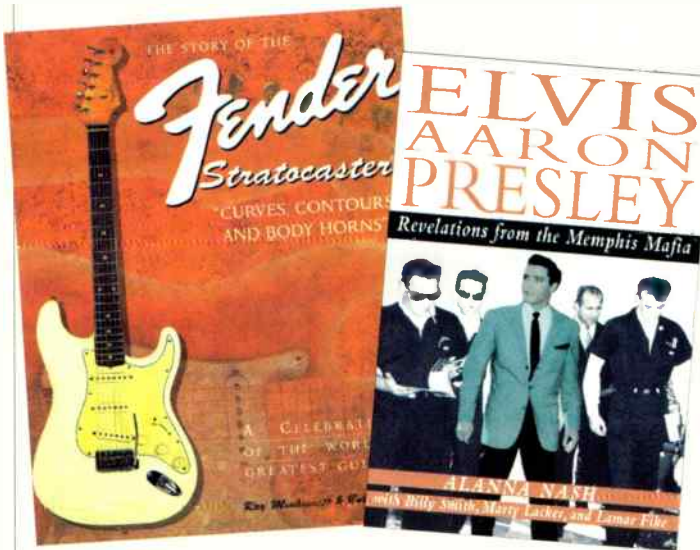
Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

▪ Books ▪

Elvis Presley: Nobody will argue we've been through a glut of Elvis Presley books in the past five years. Few of these works maintain a level of quality equal to that of Peter Guralnick's *Last Train to Memphis*, volume one of his definitive two-volume Presley biography (see Book Bonus in this issue for more on this fine work), though such outstanding examples as *Private Elvis* and one or two photo books have been done nearly as well.

The other books fall into two main categories: either screwball theories or reminiscences from people who either worked for Elvis, knew him, or pretended to know him. Trash biographies like the late Albert Goldman's have become clichés among the vast parade of Presley literature. Often times, authors of such memoirs are people who know less than they'd have you believe, or were involved with Presley for only short periods of time. Other onetime Elvis associates, like stepbrothers Dave and Rick Stanley, have made careers out of reminiscences and sometimes dubious suppositions about Elvis' career.

Add to the handful of credible Presley books *Elvis Aaron Presley: Revelations from the Memphis Mafia*. This oral history of Presley's life centers on three of the Memphis Mafia closest to him: Billy Smith, Marty Lacker and Lamar Fike. Ably compiled and edited from interviews done by veteran journalist Alanna Nash, this book stands close to Guralnick's for the sheer vividness of the narrative. It begins at the beginning of Elvis' life, and ends 700 pages later after his burial. Along the way are stories about Elvis' decency, some of them not previously recounted, as well as horror stories about Elvis at his worst that are more chilling



than any of the innuendo in Goldman's book. Other Presley intimates' books and accounts are at times dissected by the trio, often coming out the worse for wear. Positive and negative remarks about Colonel Parker, Priscilla Presley and other longtime Elvis associates abound.

Albert Goldman's book likewise receives justified criticism for some inflammatory remarks and inaccuracies. Fike, a paid consultant for Goldman's book, defends his involvement due to financial woes but also describes his distress at Goldman's snide contempt for Presley and how that contempt increased as the book progressed.

All three of these men prove to have far more depth than the "good ol' boy" stereotype that characterized Elvis' inner circle. Lacker and Smith prove to be sensitive, caring men who sacrificed much (to their later regret) to be part of Elvis' life. Fike has a formidable intellect (and far more music business savvy) than most realize. One Fike comment about Elvis says much: "His life was equal to Greek tragedy...I used to look at him when he was acting strange, or when he was so out of it and think, 'You couldn't dream up

a situation like this if you tried.' And I'd remember Elvis when he was so straight and happy-go-lucky, sitting over on Audubon Drive, playing 'Name that Tune' on the piano." That summarizes this vivid, moving and at times upsetting, but utterly worthy, memoir.

Fender Stratocaster: The legendary Fender Stratocaster is largely viewed as a rock guitar. After all, it was played by Buddy Holly, by many surf guitarists, by Jimi Hendrix and other psychedelic guitarists, by blues rock legends like Eric Clapton and by giants of heavy metal guitar. Not everyone realizes that the Strat began 41 years ago as a new, improved guitar developed in part by a West Coast country guitarist named Bill Carson.

Ray Minhinnett and Bob Young's *The Story of the Fender Stratocaster*, a British book reprinted in America, takes a detailed look at the instrument's history and development. Chapter One deals with Fender's early history, and makes clear Leo Fender's strong connections with country performers from Bob Wills to Roy Acuff. While much of this is old hat to collectors and Fender enthusiasts, it makes an effective anchor for the rest of the book.

California Western musician Bill Carson, who worked at Fender, and another Fender employee, steel guitar master Freddie Tavares (who played on many West Coast country sessions), were Fender's major partners in developing the Strat. Carson, still alive, discusses his feelings that the Telecaster's slablike body wasn't comfortable for players. He played a role in developing the Strat's contoured, more comfortable body. One rare photo shows Eldon Shamblin, who received a gold-finished prototype Strat from Leo Fender in 1954, getting it adjusted at the factory a year later. Shamblin played the instrument until he sold it in the early 1990's. Rare photos depict early Fender catalogs and publicity photos. Though the remainder of the book deals with various models, variations, finishes and rare custom models, the point about the instrument's country roots makes it well worth reading. Undoubtedly Richard Smith's definitive Fender history, years in preparation, will tell even more of the tale whenever it appears.

▪ Videos ▪

Louisiana Hayride: In 1984, Louisiana Public Television produced a documentary on Shreveport's legendary *Louisiana Hayride*, a Grand Ole Opry-style radio barn dance that began on KWKH in 1948 and lasted a decade before fading from the airwaves. The *Hayride* quickly became a farm club for the Grand Ole Opry, giving Nashville many of its biggest stars of the 40's, 50's and 60's, as well as a number of gifted studio musicians. Hank Sr., Webb Pierce, Faron Young, The Wilburn Brothers, The Bailes Brothers, Kitty Wells, Johnnie and Jack, Red Sovine, Merle Kilgore, Johnny Cash, George Jones and Elvis all got their starts there.

Kultur Video has issued the PBS special as *Cradle of the*

Stars. It is, without question, among the most important historical video releases to come along in many years. Narrated by Hank Williams Jr., whose daddy got *his* start toward the bigtime on the show (and returned after the Opry canned him in 1952), the excellent script benefits further from Bocephus' candor. Another clear advantage is the fact that the documentary was produced when many of the show's big names were still active and well. Webb Pierce and Nat Stuckey, both now dead, had worthy insights on the show that launched both of their careers.

Horace Logan and Frank Page, two of the show's most important driving forces, provide excellent background and enlightening explanations of the show's beginnings. The show's original pre-World War II incarnation is examined for the first time anywhere. Likewise, the story of the *Hayride* itself, which started in 1948, is told through reminiscences from others who worked there. Johnny Wright and wife Kitty Wells, Faron Young, Merle Kilgore, Goldie Hill (now Mrs. Carl Smith) and obscure singers like Tibby Edwards all tell stories about their days as part of the show's cast.

Even more of a reason to have this video are the rare still photos taken at the show. Some are rare offstage shots of Hank Sr. and Elvis. Quite a few tantalizing live broadcast recordings are heard in the background, making one ponder whether live *Hayride* CD's might someday be in the offing. Silent color home film of various *Hayride* acts performing on the show aren't all. Black and white film, some of it with sound, also appears. Insights from members of the *Hayride* backup bands also tell much, considering that Floyd Cramer, James Burton, Tillman Franks, Fred Carter and D.J. Fontana all started there. It ends with a look at the "new" *Louisiana Hayride* stage show that surfaced in the 1970's, not affiliated with the radio station. Without

reservation, this is one of the finest, most accurate and most well-rounded historical videos ever done.

Western Swing Instruction: Instructional videos on Western swing instrumental styles have been rare in recent years, compared to, say, bluegrass instructional videos. Companies like Homespun Video, who've explored bluegrass, country and rockabilly well, have done comparatively little with swing. However, Texas Music & Video has dipped deeper into swing than anyone with four videos.

Western Swing Guitar Styles, Volume 1 and *Volume 2* are both taught by Texas guitarist Joe Carr. The 55-minute *Volume 1* emphasizes the basic guitar accompaniment style developed by Eldon Shamblin during his days with Bob Wills. This technique is built around chords and a "moving bass" that Shamblin used to compensate for The Texas Playboys' frequent lack of good bass fiddle players. This was not so much a "hot lick" style as a rich, full-bodied bass-and-chord style that was often the musical glue holding The Playboys together.

Shamblin didn't invent these ideas, but the self-taught musician put them together into a style of his own. Joe Carr capably explains these points to guitarists, but this is not a video recommended for beginning pickers. Only intermediate to advanced players can hope to absorb Carr's use of musical theory (which Shamblin has

always relied on). Carr plays accompaniment to fiddle tunes, explains such techniques as Shamblin's moving bass and chord ideas. While the Bob Wills-style fiddle plays, he carefully takes the student through each song, with chords shown on the screen for easier reference.

Volume 2, which runs roughly 46 minutes, deals with accompanying waltzes. At times he's joined by fiddler Ed Marsh. He also tackles numbers like "San Antonio Rose," and explains how to use the lessons in the video in various types of songs. Since Shamblin was (and is) also a formidable chord soloist, Carr deals with that aspect of his technique as well.

For those who have digested Carr's two-volume video, the *Eldon Shamblin Guitar Instruction* video serves as a sort of master class from the man who created the style. In his 80's, Shamblin, called "the world's greatest rhythm guitarist" by *Rolling Stone* over 20 years ago (not "world's greatest guitarist" as this video suggests), has continued playing.

Eldon tackles nine Wills songs, explaining his accompaniment step-by-step, beginning with "Faded Love," "Take Me Back to Tulsa," "Right or Wrong" and "San Antonio Rose" and moving along through "Stay All Night (Stay a Little Longer)," "Deep Water," "The Kind of Love I Can't Forget" and "Cherokee Maiden." He ends by teaching a version of the jazz favorite, "Misty."

This is far from a perfect production. Much of the camera work comes off as amateurish, nor are helpful chord symbols flashed on the screen, as with Homespun's tapes (Homespun should have done a video with Shamblin years ago). Nor are any musicians heard playing with Eldon. In all fairness, some of these weak spots are balanced by Eldon's articulate, down-to-earth explanations of his style. He also threw in anecdotes about his Texas Playboy days and discussed his guitar choices and how he holds his pick. Experienced musicians will have no trouble following him, and Western swing fans will enjoy hearing his discussions. Unless someone else begins a video project with Shamblin, this will probably serve as the definitive document.

Swing fiddle has rarely been taught on video. We couldn't obtain Johnny Gimble's video instruction tapes for this column, but hope to in the future. Paul Anastasio's *Swing Fiddle with Paul Anastasio* features lessons from a young swing fiddler whose driving swing style conjures up memories of Western swing legends Joe Holley, J.R. Chatwell and jazz legend Stuff Smith. With good humor, Anastasio, accompanied by Texas guitarist Slim Richey, focuses not on breakdown fiddling, but swing improvisations. Again, beginners should avoid trying to play any of this until they really know the basics; this set's meant more for experienced country and bluegrass players interested in swing.

He concentrates largely on old swing favorites, using chord changes to such standards as "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Honeysuckle Rose," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Exactly Like You," "I Found a New Baby" and "Take the A Train." A booklet with the fiddle leads in standard notation is included with the video. Frankly, hearing just a little of Anastasio makes me anxious to hear an entire instrumental album with a full band. He's clearly an underrated musician.

How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Anna Nash with Billy Smith, Marty Lacker and Lamar Fike, *Elvis Aaron Presley: Revelations from the Memphis Mafia* (B8F), \$25.00/Ray Minhinnett and Bob Young, *The Story of the Fender Stratocaster: Curves Contours and Body Horns* (B2X), \$24.95. **Videos:** Various Artists, *Louisiana Hayride: Cradle of the Stars* (V8W), \$14.95/Joe Carr, *Western Swing Guitar Styles, Volume 1* (V4V) and *Volume 2* (V4W), each tape \$29.95/Eldon Shamblin, *Eldon Shamblin Guitar Instruction* (V4X) \$39.95/Paul Anastasio, *Swing Fiddle with Paul Anastasio* (V4Y), \$29.95. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 091095EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

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At What Price Glory

I've been obsessing about George Jones. That's not by any means an appropriate activity for a serious fan of country music, and moreover it's natural, since I recently had my first extended, up-close encounter with George (for last issue's cover story), but it's been hard. He's puzzling.

The problem, as many others down his 37 years of fame have noted, is that there seems to be such a gap between him as a singer and him as a man. Nick Tosches put it well in a recent article written for *Vanity Fair* but published in the Country Music Foundation's *Journal of Country Music*:

"His was, and is, a voice capable of imbuing the commonplace joys and sorrows of the human universe with poignance and puissance...In his best performances, the songs have served merely as skeleton keys to loose the vague, rhymeless shades of deeper and more mysterious feelings. Without a song, those feelings—all feeling, it seemed—remained hidden. He was a cipher: in song, a well of emotion and creativity; in life, an erasure of personality evincing but the barest traces of sentience. He seemed friendly, shy, and vacant."

George made that same impression on me when I went to his house: a polite little gent sunk into his armchair in front of his extra-mega video screen, offering answers as bland as TV dinners. It was almost impossible to imagine him as the most emotive singer of popular music alive today.

I didn't leave with that quandry, though, because I touched his anger (about the bastardization of his beloved country music) and so I got to watch him come alive. Anger, the hardest of all emotions to hide no matter how much you need to, lit him like a torch flaring in a cave, and suddenly there he was, vividly visible, the original George Glenn Jones of Saratoga, Texas, circa 1944. And if you think that man doesn't believe to his soul in the value of suppressing his feelings, guess again. Here's Tosches on the flavor of family life in Saratoga:

"My daddy always got my sister and I to sing when I was a kid,' George remembered. These were not pleasant performances for George or his sister Doris, who were roused from sleep by their father when he came home drunk in the middle of

the night, alone or with his cronies, demanding entertainment and threatening violence if he did not get it."

There's more about the elder Jones' parenting style, but it doesn't really need telling; you get the drift. The relevant fact is that George coped by hiding and disappearing—staying away from home as much as possible, "wandering from one night to another among his scattered kin" as Tosches put it—until he himself discovered booze, and coped that way. But the booze quit working after two or three decades and started to kill him the way it does, so he had to quit. And now he just copes: keeps his

wellbeing and they die young, middle-aged, broken, insane, drunk, drugged, lost, alone, almost never old and/or happy; leaving this world with an A-plus in creativity and crowd appeal and an F in family, love, and life.

None of this is news, but all the same I think it needs re-stating in the context of country music, for let's not forget that the greatest artists, the people most powerful in driving country's very history—Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Gram Parsons, and of course George Jones—have all led troubled if not outright

tragic lives. And let's not forget either that their subject matter has been real life in the raw, at its hardest and deepest (and yes, at its most ecstatic too). Country music—the genuine, enduring kind, *their* music—has always been about the human extremes of lament and celebration, and not much in between. They called it "the white man's blues," not his entertainment.

Note the past tense. George is still singing today, and singing well, perhaps better than he ever has, and so is Cash (and both of them—no small point—are disproving once and for all the frightening notion that "their music gets boring when they get sober"). In mainstream country circles, though, their deal is over, fini, kaput. Since the mid-'80s, when the phrase "hard to work with" became the kiss of mainstream death for the true heirs to their wayward spirit (Steve Earle et al), more reliable, compliant, less passionate souls have been more welcome on Music Row, their comparatively modest talents regardless. Too many people have too much money to make, you see. The trains have to run on time. You can't count on geniuses.

Is this okay? I don't know. I'm not unhappy, I guess, because enormously creative, difficult people who have to make music are still doing so in the country form, and I know where to find it (on community radio and the independant labels, in the alternative music stores). On the other hand, I'm getting awful tired of telling people I'm a country fan, and them assuming I like my music bland.

Editor-at-Large Patrick Carr has been with CMM since September 1972.



Hank Williams and George Jones: lament and celebration.

head down, sticks close to Nancy, watches TV like it might blink off forever any instant. Maybe he needs therapy, or religion, or a twelve-step program; maybe he needs more Western movie channels and cornbread; maybe he's just fine, he doesn't need anything; I don't know.

What I do know, and he does too, is that he needs to sing. That's the piece of the puzzle, the simple and essential truth, that's been getting away from us: the purely old-fashioned fact that there are and always have been powerfully troubled souls on this earth who make music, or paint or dance or write, because that's how they express their feelings, how they get it all out. And often these people are the greatest artists of all, the ones whose work touches us most deeply, the ones we love the best. We feel the echo of their pain and passion on demand, in doses brief enough to handle—from a tape or CD, in an art gallery—and it feels wonderful.

The rub, of course, is that art isn't enough for them. Much more often than not they live travesties of health and



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