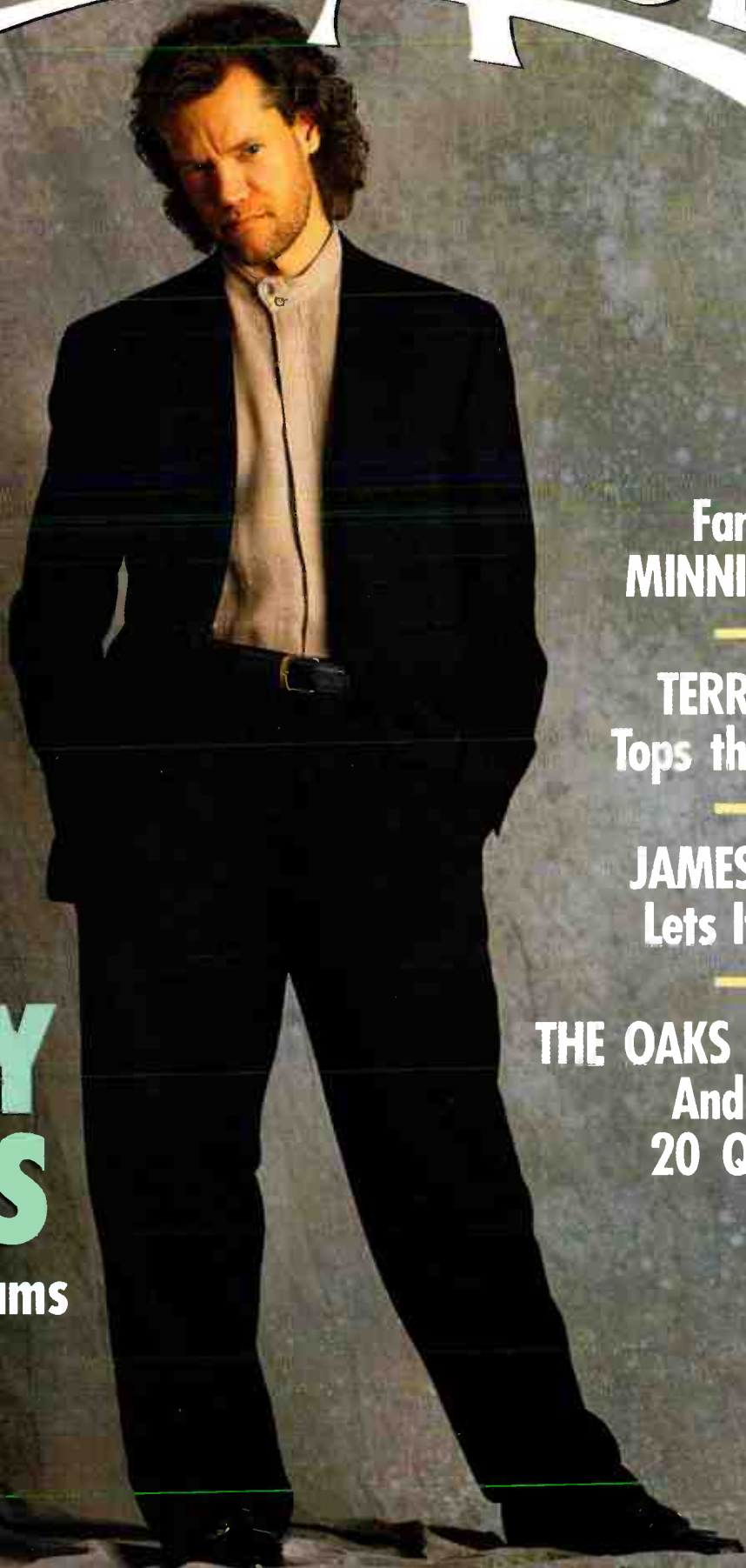


COUNTRY MUSIC



BILLY DEAN
Pull-Out Poster

RANDY TRAVIS
Technicolor Dreams

Farewell to
MINNIE PEARL

TERRI CLARK
Tops the Charts

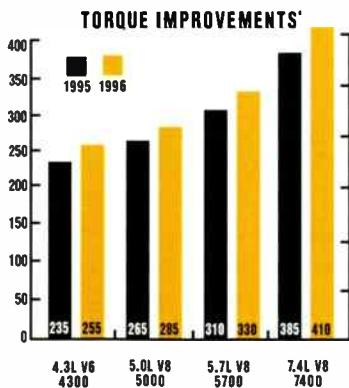
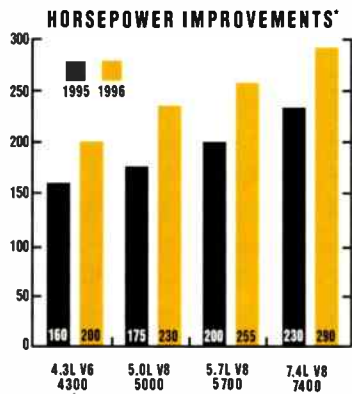
JAMES HOUSE
Lets It All Out

THE OAKS REUNITE
And Answer
20 Questions

THE NEW VORTEC LINE: ENGINES IN CHEVY

THE NEW POWER IN TRUCKS.

A truck can only be as good as its engine. The engine is the guts and soul of a truck.



NO SCHEDULED TUNE-UPS FOR UP TO 100,000 MILES.†

Hopefully, the only time you're ever going to have to open the hood of your new Chevy Truck is when you want to refill windshield fluid. Or check or change the oil. Or proudly show off your new Vortec to your friends.



How your engine performs really dictates how your truck will perform. How it accelerates. How it tows. How it hauls.

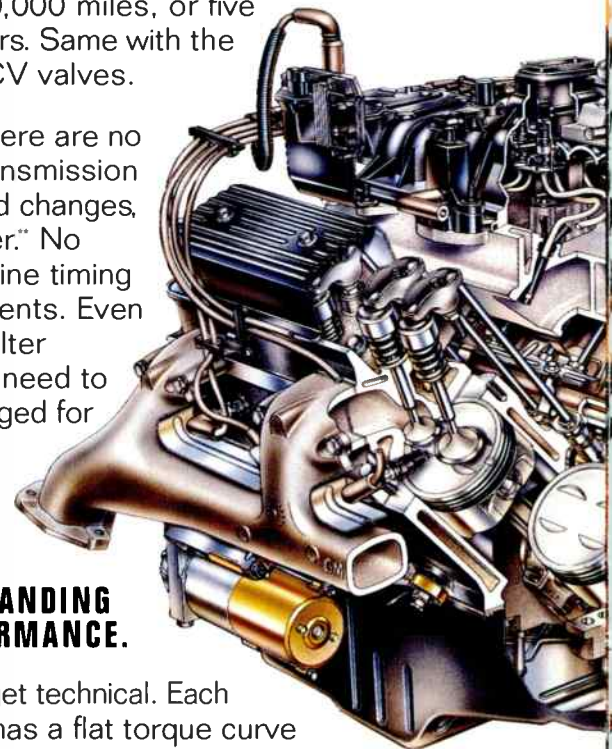
We can confidently say that the new Vortec line rocks. Take a real close look at the horsepower and torque comparison charts here.

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Let's get technical. Each Vortec has a flat torque curve that translates into stomp-pulling, trailer-towing power. Smooth off-the-line acceleration. And outstanding passing power.

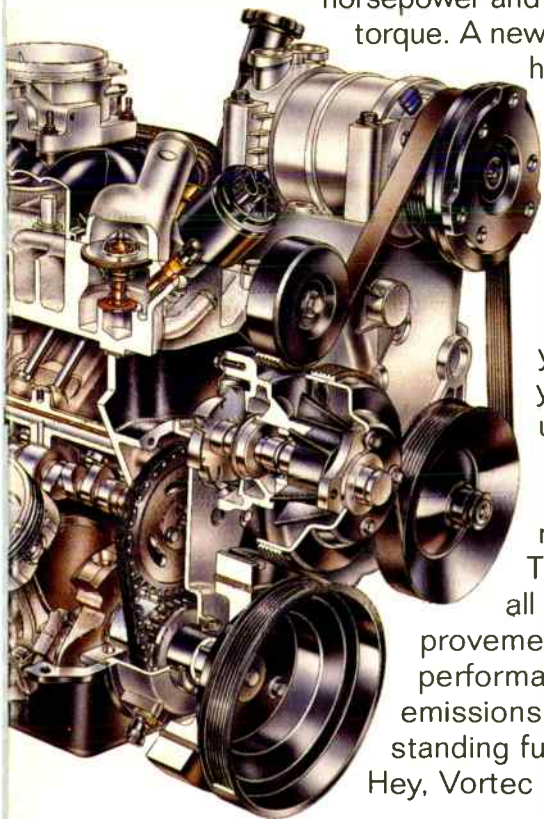
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and temperature. From Yosemite and the Mojave to Frostbite Falls. Lightweight pistons move quickly and more silently than before. We've increased compression ratios and added high-flow ports. Translation: Stamped horsepower and 4th-and-goal torque. A new steel camshaft



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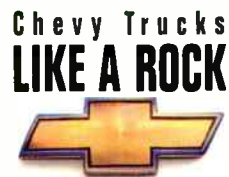
MOST DEPENDABLE. LONGEST-LASTING.

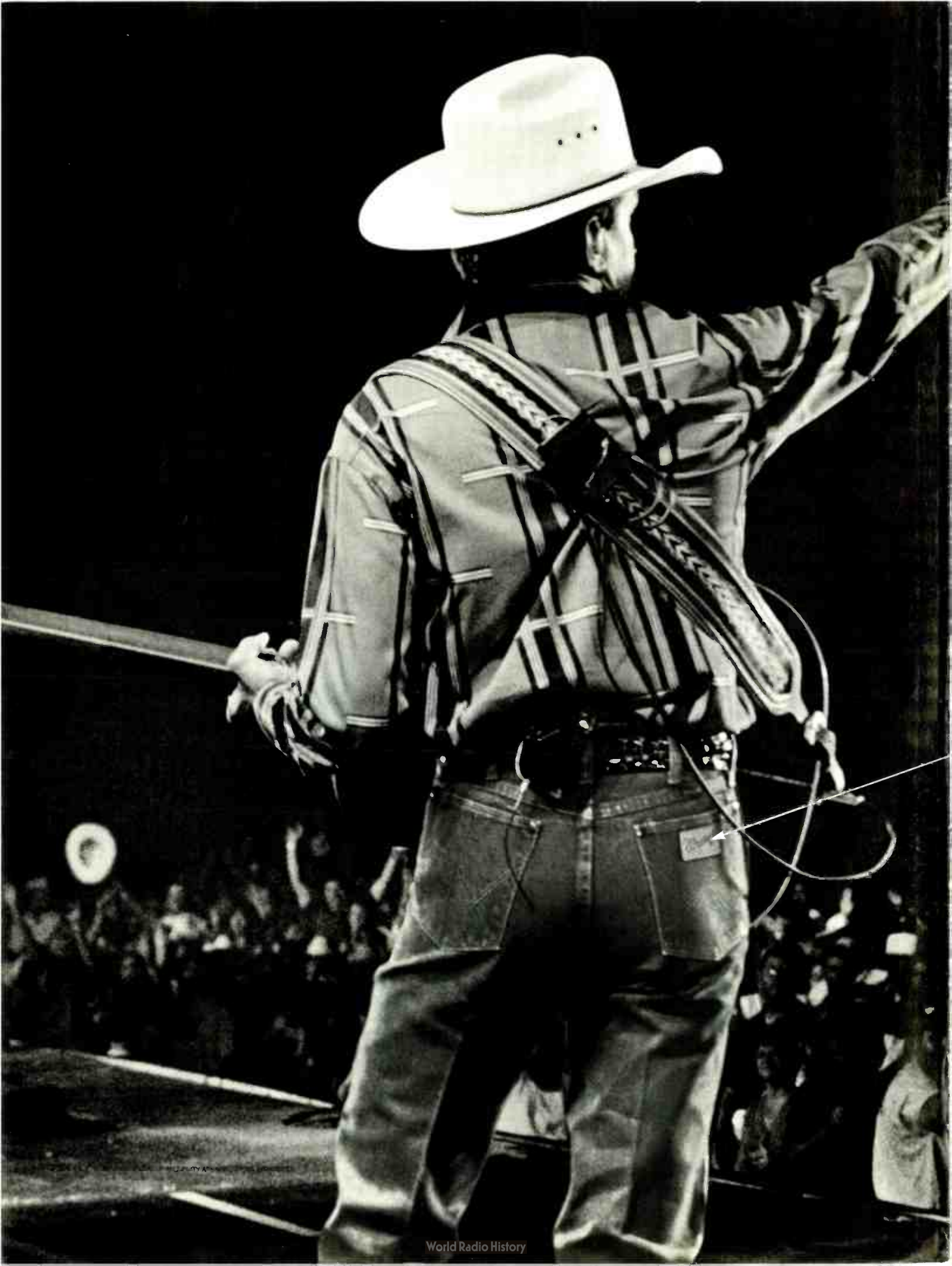


Chevy Trucks are the most dependable, longest-lasting trucks on the road.^{††} We feel the new Vortec engines will further this remarkable legacy. For this powerful, fuel-efficient engine marks a bold, proud, definitive moment in our history.

Get over to your Chevy dealer and take a look beneath the hood of a new Chevy Truck. Then take one for a spin.

You'll open up a whole new chapter in Chevy history.





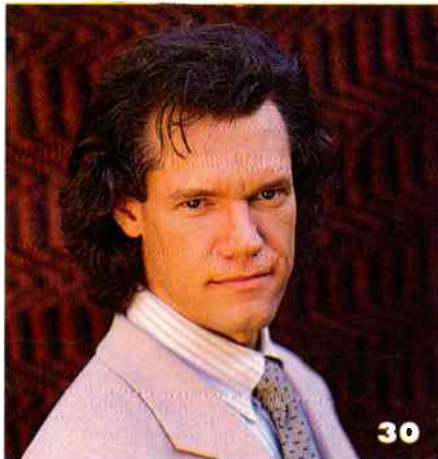
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Texas Stadium. 7/1/95.
Cowboy Cut® Jeans.



The Western Original™

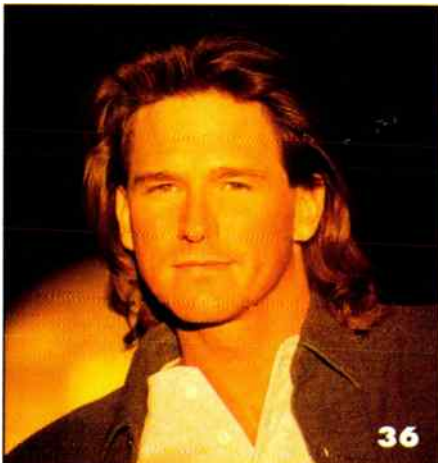
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COUNTRY MUSIC



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The photos and the facts on "Billy the Kid." He's got a new album out too.
- 40 Terri Clark: From Tootsie's to the Top** *by Bob Allen*
She hung around Nashville long enough to learn the ropes, and land a recording contract. This young lady looks like a winner.
- 44 James House Lets It All Out** *by Geoffrey Himes*
Geoffrey Himes went into the studio with James House and saw first hand how this man creates his music. Rich emotion and the ability to show it is setting him apart from the rest.
- 50 Minnie Pearl: 1912-1996** *by Rich Kienzle*
On March 4, 1996, country music lost a legend and the world lost a friend. A farewell to Cousin Minnie Pearl.
- 68 20 Questions with The Oak Ridge Boys** *by Bob Millard*
The Boys are back; as we knew them best, that is. Here's how Joe Bonsall, Duane Allen, William Lee Golden and Richard Sterban reunited.



COVER STORY

- 30 Randy Travis: Technicolor Dreams** *by Michael Bane*
Follow Randy Travis on location to Canada and Salt Lake City. Acting in movies and TV shows sure is different than singing your heart out on the concert stage. The fact is, Randy Travis already is a star. What Randy wants now is to be a successful actor, one who is respected by his peers. With grit, determination and talent, he's on his way.

DEPARTMENTS



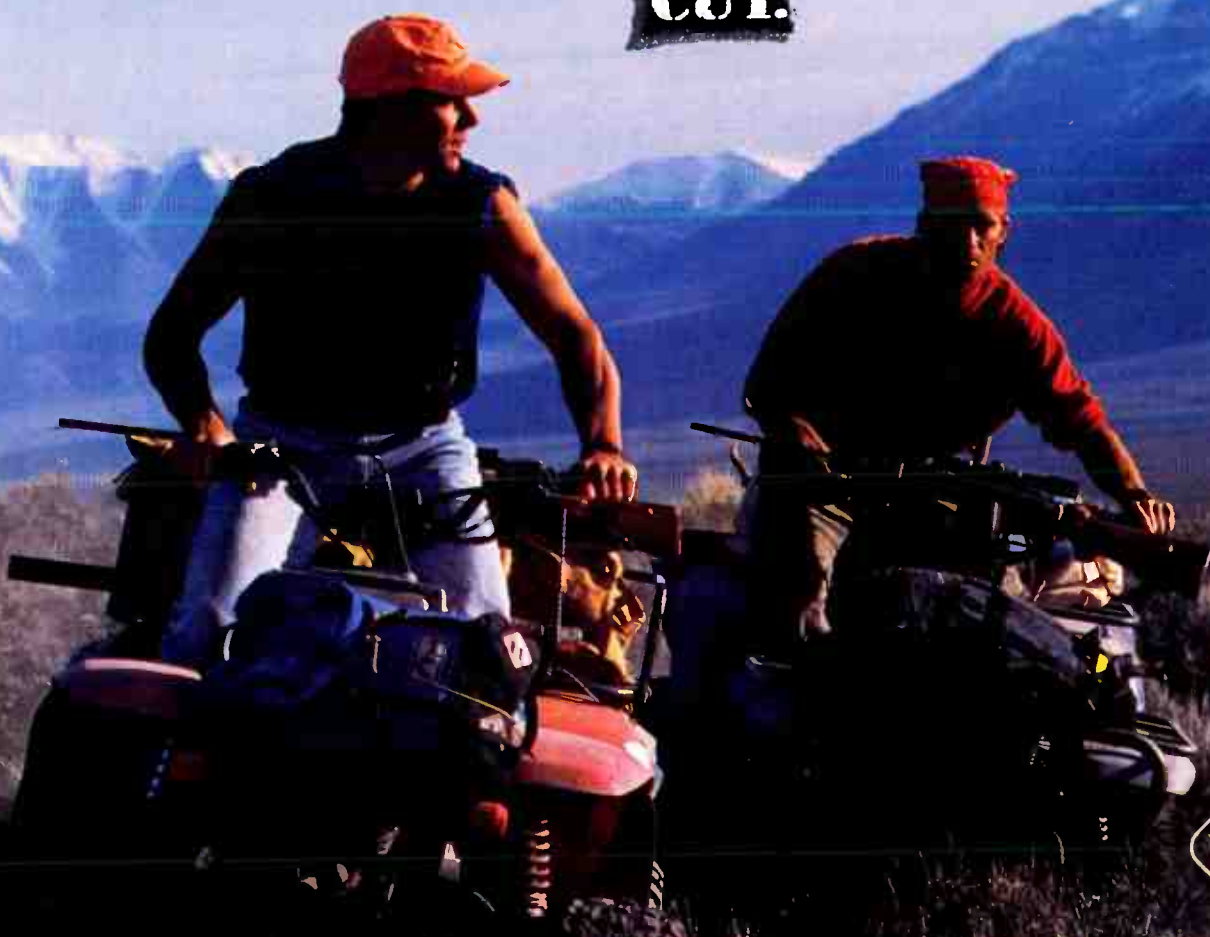
- People** *by Hazel Smith*
Hazel says goodbye to her cousin; Chapin gets to *Sesame Street*; Willie, Waylon 'n' Steve; Shania sells; St. Jude and Porter Wagoner get support; legends are honored; Lyle gets dirty; plus, weddings, babies and more.
- Records** **21**
John Anderson and Steve Earle are back, and Paulette Carlson and Highway 101 reunite. Brooks & Dunn are at it again, so are Chris LeDoux and Cheryl Wheeler. An fine debut from Mandy Barnett, a hot new one from Rhonda Vincent and Steve Wariner goes instrumental.
- 6 Country Connections** **48**
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People

THE NIGHT MY COUSIN DIED

My son **Terry Smith** called at 10 P.M. on March 4th and gave me the news that **Minnie Pearl** had just died. For a moment I felt relief for Minnie, because she had suffered a stroke on June 17, 1991, leaving her partially paralyzed. And, too, a week or ten days ago, she'd suffered another massive stroke and was hospitalized. When Terry called, I was on the phone with my friend **Fletcher Foster**, VP at Arista Records, and we both wept and babbled, making no sense. My friend **Julie** called, and I couldn't talk to her.

I was made to remember a piece I'd written about Minnie for this magazine titled "A Diamond Called Pearl" and how she called to thank me and quoted several items from the article, and how when she saw me, she mentioned that she could tell I wrote it from my heart. **Sarah Ophelia Cannon** was Minnie Pearl, but Governors of the State of Tennessee who've lived next door called her Miss Minnie, as did every snotty-nosed kid, toothless hillbilly, man of the cloth and congressman. She will be remembered as long as there's time for her endless hours of humor and joy and love she's given the fans. From her straw hat with a \$1.98 price tag on her head to the Mary Jane shoes on her feet, Minnie Pearl was the single most entertaining and most original comedian that ever lived.

Joining the Opry in 1940, Minnie was the only female in a world of mostly redneck men, and she figured out a way to fit right in. She toured with **Pee Wee King** and **Roy Acuff**. When TV was young, Minnie trailblazed the 50's on shows with **Jack Paar**, **Tennessee Ernie Ford**, **Jimmy Dean** and **Dinah Shore**. She became a *Hee Haw* regular during the 70's and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1975. During the 80's Minnie became a favorite of *Nashville Now* on TNN with **Ralph Emery** on their weekly segment, "Let Minnie Steal Your Jokes." When she'd appear on Fridays, ratings would soar. During her lifetime, she received many honors and awards, a special one in 1994 when she became the first female inducted into the National Comedy Hall of Fame along side of **Bob Hope** and others.



Minnie and friends in the early 90's: at home on the Opry stage with **Roy Acuff**, and, as **Sarah Cannon**, congratulating **Tennessee Ernie Ford** on his win of the **Minnie Pearl Humanitarian Award** at the 1990 **TNN/Music City News Awards**.



"The best thing you ever did was marry your driver," friend **Bill Monroe** told Minnie after she married **Henry Cannon** in 1947. Henry owned a flying service, and Minnie married him three months after they met. Roy Acuff was her best friend and her mentor. But Minnie was loved by everybody on the Grand Ole Opry. She didn't have an enemy. It was Minnie Pearl's shoulder a stoned **Hank Williams** cried on and said, "Minnie, there ain't no light," referring to his self-penned song, "I Saw the Light." The one shoulder where Hank knew he could always rest his lonely head. She treated sidemen with the same respect as stars, and she knew them by name. Her philosophy was to be grateful for what God had given and look for good, not bad, in people and in life.

Charitable activities were second nature for Minnie. She lent her name to

Centennial Medical Center where the **Sarah Ophelia Cannon Cancer Center** is located. Her list of charitable contributions are endless. "Howdeee! I'm just so proud to be here," her signature greeting, is silenced, but the memory of Minnie Pearl will be around for time immortal. We use the term genius loosely,

but I believe I can use the term genius to describe this unselfish woman. She gave her all to entertainment, and she did it in such a tender way that the country people from whom the character "Minnie Pearl" came, could laugh with the star...because the star never laughed at them. She became one of them. Minnie told me once that Sarah Ophelia Cannon enjoyed a cocktail but "she" doesn't drink. "She?" I dumbly asked. "Minnie Pearl doesn't drink," said the lady named Sarah at birth. You know her, don't you? She's your Cousin Minnie Pearl. Last night your cousin died. Mine, too.

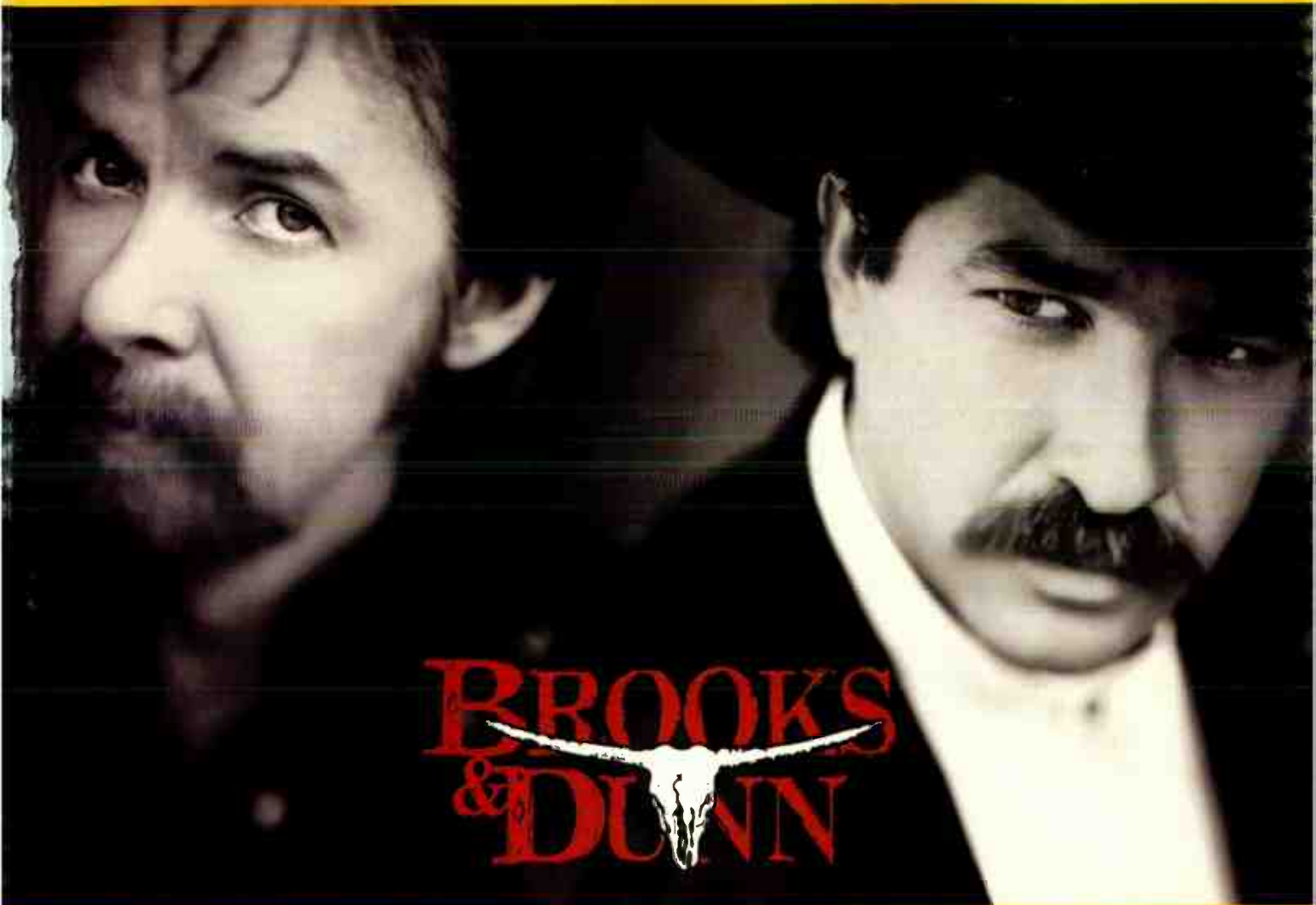
WOW, HAROLD

No, **Harold Shedd** doesn't have a brother named Wood. Nor does he have a woodshed off Franklin Road where he and

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editor: *Rochelle Friedman*

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&
DUNN**

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World Radio History

People

HOW TO GET TO SESAME STREET



Columbia Records' Mary Chapin Carpenter recently paid a visit to the fuzzy (and feathered) residents of Children's Television Workshop's *Sesame Street*. Chapin, who's spoken out on behalf of funding for the arts (including public television), is seen here with The Count, Telly and Big Bird. The segment will air on PBS stations on August 27th.

other beautiful people reside in houses of seven-figure proportions. My friend Harold is Prez of A&M Records/Nashville, formerly known as Polydor. When he issued an invitation for me to visit his home for a cocktail reception for **Al Cafaro**, newly named A&M Chairman and CEO, why I said heck, yes, I'll be there, dressed in my purple suit and big, hussy-looking earrings to match. Course I wasn't the only star to come out that night. Also present were the label's **Toby Keith**, **Chely Wright**, **Mark Luna**, **The Moffatts**, **Amy Comeaux**, **The Oak Ridge Boys**, **4-Runner** and **Davis Daniel**. The Moffatts were staring at Harold's many awards, so I asked which they liked best and they quickly pointed to the **Billy Ray Cyrus** nine-million sales plaque. Their favorite artist? "**Garth Brooks**," said all four brothers. Did I schmooze Al Cafaro, you may ask. "Can a duck float?" I respond. Harold's house of many windows, with none of the same shape (honest to God!), was featured on the cover of the local trendy magazine, *Boulevard*, in the winter edition. A mansion beside the road, but very well deserved by the man who brought the music of **Alabama** and **K.T. Oslin** to the atten-

tion of the world and signed **The Kentucky HeadHunters**, **Sammy Kershaw**, **Billy Ray Cyrus**, **Toby Keith** and **Shania Twain** to their recording deals.

CAN'T WAIT FOR THE BOOK

George Jones got drunk and wrestled with **Faron Young**, got drunk and needed 83 takes to record "White Lightning" in 1959 (which was a mega-hit) and got drunk before a show and sang all of headliner **Buck Owens** hits before Buck went onstage. All this "hysterical history" is recorded in **George Jones'** forthcoming book. *I Lived to Tell It All*, says Jones in the title.

BYE, GUS

A memorial service was held on Music Row's Belmont Church for the late **Gus Hardin**, who was killed in a car accident near her Tulsa home. Gus is best known for her RCA hit, "All Tangled Up in Love." **Betsy Smittle** (**Garth Brooks'** sister), who used to play in Hardin's band, was joined by **Lee Roy Parnell**, **Earl Thomas Conley** and others in song honoring Hardin. We send our condolences.

BEVY OF BABIES

Must-a been lots of loving going on last Easter or thereabouts. Living proof is in the young'uns. There's a bevy of babies to report: **Little Texas'** **Tim Rushlow** and his wife **Mary Jane** had their first, a daughter named **Bailey Nicole**; **Clay Walker** and wife **Lori** named their daughter **McClay Darlene**; **Doug** and **Debbie Supernaw** named their son **Jesse Douglas**; and **Richie McDonald** of **Lonestar** and his wife **Lorie** named their baby son **Rhett**. Congratulations to all you little kids of music.

BATTLE PAST THE FUNERAL

The battle between the widow of the late **Conway Twitty** and his children does not end. **Dee Henry Jenkins**, Conway's widow, asked a judge in Sumner County, Tennessee, for permission to have her husband's body exhumed and cremated, so she could have the ashes to take with her wherever she goes. She asked the chancellor to remove Twitty's body from the family mausoleum in Gallatin where he was interred upon his sudden death in June 1993 from an aneurysm of the stomach. Knowing she'd add fuel to the already fiery rift between herself and his kids, Dee asked the chancellor to keep the matter quiet. You probably recall reading in this magazine about huge battle between Dee and Conway's grownup children from a previ-

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Editor and Publisher
Russell D. Barnard

Vice President/Managing Editor
Rochelle Friedman

Editors-at-Large
Michael Bane, Patrick Carr, Bob Allen

Art Director
Katheryn Gray

Senior Editor
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George Fletcher

Contributing Editors
Peter Guralnick, Leonard Kamsler, Rich Kienzle, Bob Millard, John Morthland, Hazel Smith

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Leonard Mendelson

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Marketing Director
Warren Beardow

Circulation Director
Wanda Augustyn

Administrative Assistant
Joyce Brown

Editorial, Executive and Advertising Offices
329 Riverside Avenue
Westport, Connecticut 06880
Telephone (203) 221-4950
FAX (203) 221-4948

Subscription Service
Telephone (203) 221-4950

Advertising Office, West Coast
Leonard Mendelson
P.O. Box 5489
Santa Monica, California 90409
Telephone (310) 207-4948 (Advertising Sales)

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THE 1996 NOMINEES

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- All I Want—Tim McGraw
- Lead On—George Strait
- Waitin' On Sundown—Brooks & Dunn
- When Fallen Angels Fly—Patty Loveless
- The Woman In Me—Shania Twain

SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR

- Any Man Of Mine—Shania Twain
- Check Yes Or No—George Strait
- I Like It, I Love It—Tim McGraw
- It Matters To Me—Faith Hill
- You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone—Brooks & Dunn

SONG OF THE YEAR

- I Like It, I Love It—Tim McGraw
- The Keeper Of The Stars—Tracy Bryd
- Standing On The Edge Of Goodbye—John Berry
- You Don't Even Know Who I Am—Patty Loveless
- You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone—Brooks & Dunn

TOP MALE VOCALIST

- John Berry
- Vince Gill
- Alan Jackson
- Tim McGraw
- George Strait

TOP FEMALE VOCALIST

- Faith Hill
- Patty Loveless
- Reba McEntire
- Pam Tillis
- Shania Twain

NEW MALE VOCALIST

- Wade Hayes
- David Lee Murphy
- Bryan White

NEW FEMALE VOCALIST

- Terri Clark
- Alison Krauss
- Shania Twain

TOP NEW DUET OR GROUP

- 4 Runner
- Lonestar
- Perfect Stranger

TOP VOCAL GROUP

- Alabama
- Blackhawk
- Diamond Rio
- The Mavericks
- Sawyer Brown

TOP VOCAL DUET

- Baker & Myers
- Brooks & Dunn
- George Jones & Tammy Wynette
- Shelby Lynne & Faith Hill
- Dolly Parton & Vince Gill

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

- Garth Brooks
- Brooks & Dunn
- Alan Jackson
- Tim McGraw
- Reba McEntire

TOP COUNTRY VIDEO

- My Wife Thinks You're Dead—Junior Brown
- Not That Different—Collin Raye
- Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)—John Michael Montgomery
- Tell Me I Was Dreamin'—Travis Tritt
- The Car—Jeff Carson





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ergonomics and comfort of its interior.

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Clearly, the J.D. Power and Associates APEAL award is good news to all of us here at the New Dodge. But it's also a powerful incentive to keep looking for rules that need changing. And to keep building cars and trucks that change them.

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HOLLYWOOD & FLORIDA



HOSTED BY



BROOKS & DUNN



FAITH HILL

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People

ous marriage, so much disagreement in fact, Twitty's personal belongings had to be auctioned off to settle the estate. When the news of the planned exhumation hit the media, there were four livid children and a livid brother. Dee withdrew her request, but said she would probably try again. Poor Conway, such a peaceful, quiet man. May he rest in peace.

SHANIA KEEPS STIRRING CHAOS

Shania Twain spent four hours at the Mall of America in Minneapolis. Officials said it was the biggest event ever for the largest mall in the U.S. Over 20,000 persons passed through the lines to get an autograph. Back home again, we partied with the star at Naomi Judd's Trilogy on Division. There were so many people you could barely breathe, but who ended up pictured with Shania in the *Nashville Banner* newspaper on Betty Banner's gossip page, in color? Eye did, along with Mercury's Kevin Lane and Country Club's Wynn Jackson. Fabo party honoring the lady with country music's sellingest studio album ever, what with five million sales, and hillbillytown's best known navel! We were celebrating the former, thank you. Quint-platinum, I said to a bevy of my media subjects who gathered around as we dined on the B-E-S-T rations: piles of huge shrimp, roast beef, primo pasta with pesto, cheeses and fruit, desserts to die for, and all prepared on the premises by a new chef with a name I cannot say nor spell. Congratulations to Shania, Muff Lange (her hubby/producer) and all my friends at Mercury for breaking an old record with a new record, *The Woman in Me*.

100 FRIENDS

I personally want to thank all 100 people, whoever they are, who turned out to help Porter Wagoner record an album. Much water has rolled out to the Gulf since Porter did any recording, but that all changed this week when stars like Dolly Parton, Alan Jackson, Waylon Jennings, Little Jimmy Dickens, Holly Dunn and George Jones gathered in the studio to sing with the "thin man from West Plains." Others who turned out for Porter were superstars like Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Patty Loveless, Billy Ray Cyrus, Randy Travis, Joe Diffie, Trisha Yearwood and Little Miss Dynamite, Brenda Lee. This is a very cool act for a very cool man, Mr. Porter Wagoner.

The West Plains, Missouri, native came to Music Town in 1957 after Minnie Pearl told him two years earlier he should move to Nashville. His singing and songwriting career is outstanding. Perhaps he is best



At the platinum-times-five do for Shania Twain's *The Woman in Me*, our own Hazel Smith (at left) schmoozes with the Mercury mega-seller. That's Mercury publicity whiz Kevin Lane at rear.

MORGAN AND DEAN TEAM UP

Always heavily supported by Music City entertainers, *Country Cares*, the annual St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Radiothon, got an assist this year from, among others, Lorrie Morgan and Billy Dean, who bring a little cheer to eight-year-old leukemia sufferer Jaime Adkins. The fundraiser helps defray operating costs for the Memphis hospital which specializes in caring for children with cancer and other catastrophic diseases. Many others donated time and talents as well.

known, however, for giving Tennessee's celeb-extraordinaire, Dolly Parton, her start. Porter had the hottest syndicated TV show in this town. He not only put Dolly on the weekly TV show, he featured her on the Grand Ole Opry and on his road dates and got her a recording deal with RCA Records.

ROUND THE TRACK

Pretty boy David Lee Murphy rode "round the track" at Daytona in Joe Ruttman's Ford Thunderbird at the Daytona 500. MCA's logo is on the car along with cover graphics of Murphy's *Out With a Bang* recording. Driver Jeff Purvis came in 12th while David Lee applauded.

RCA Records joined forces with John Andretti and NASCAR 96. Their logo will appear on the car for millions to see this year. Diamond Rio and Arista Records have John MacDonald driving a purple (bassist Dana Williams' favorite color) racer for the upcoming season. Hanes is the sponsor. Diamond Rio, Arista and Hanes are all over that purple car. Another major underwear maker gearing up for a country music tie-in is Fruit of the Loom, who plan to hold the "Fruit of the Loom All-Star Country Fest" in Atlanta on July 13th. The free event will include performances by Alan Jackson, Alabama, Hank Jr., Pam Tillis, Patty Loveless, Tracy Byrd, Charlie Daniels, Lee Roy Parnell and Kenny Chesney. Tickets are available by sending in UPC symbols from specially-marked packages of Fruit of the Loom drawers.

People

OUTLAWS, OLD AND NEW



In honor of the 20th Anniversary of the release of their classic album, *Wanted: The Outlaws*, Willie and Waylon hit the studio with the next generation outlaw, Steve Earle, to record a new track for the album, Earle's "Nowhere Road." The reissue—first time on CD—will also include previously unreleased cuts. It's due out about the time you read this. Watch for it.

RVS

Ricky Van Shelton is flying high on his own these days. Ricky took up flying, bought his own plane and has gotten his pilot's license. This is all well and good, however, Ricky still sings as good as anybody and better than most on the air. As for me, I'd like to hear RVS on the airways. Don't fans have any say anymore about what's on the radio?

BRC

Billy Ray Cyrus was chosen as one of the 97 Tennesseans who will carry the Olympic torch through the state in June on its way to the games in Atlanta. He was the only entertainer chosen from the state for this honor. The torch will be passed across the country by 5,500 people including President Clinton, Shaquille O'Neal and Garth Brooks, who was chosen to pass the torch in his home state of Oklahoma.

EYE HAVE

Eye have a "Platinum + 2—Presented to HAZEL SMITH" on my office wall, a gift from my friend, the marvelous Pam Tillis, one of the singinest females ever to walk on a hillbilly stage. Eye have a denim jacket that has Lee Roy Parnell's name big

as life on the back that the star sent to me. I mean, on my back it's a walking billboard for precious Lee Roy! Eye have roses sent to me from Lee Roy Parnell and Arista/Nashville CEO Tim DuBois. Eye have flowers sent to me from Nancy Russell and all those trendy folks at Force, the PR place to have PR done. Eye have



Riders in the Sky members Woody Paul, Ranger Doug and Too Slim with Gene Autry at the do honoring Hall of Famers recently. At right is another partier, Joey Miskulin.

a beautiful painting of Jerusalem from Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter. Just call me Name Dropper. Just call me grateful and lucky.

CELEB-GREATS OUTDO EVERYTHING

Evening of Country Greats: A Hall of Fame Celebration they called the black tie event, taped to be televised on April 30th on TNN. When I waltzed into the Opryland Hotel, Gene Autry, Bill Monroe, Hank Thompson and Grandpa Jones were just inside the door. I saw my friend Robert K. Oermann, pad in hand, tear in eye, smile on face, and our hearts touched, for we both recognize greatness with the same level of respect. Hall of Famers were a-plenty: my friend Earl Scruggs with his lovely wife Louise, Little Jimmy Dickens, Roy Horton, Owen Bradley, Chet Atkins, Jo Walker Meador and Eddy Arnold. Honoring the "country greats" by singing their hits were lovely Emmylou Harris, fabo Joe Diffie, Shelby Lynne (who sang the finest rendition of Floyd Tillman's "I Love You So Much It Hurts Me" I've ever heard), multi-talented Ray Stevens, the marvelous Mark Chesnutt, wonderful Trisha Yearwood escorted by handsome hubby Robert Reynolds of *The Mavericks*, honky tonking David Ball, mighty Aaron Tippin, cool Steve Wariner, those loverboys Riders in the Sky, and pickin' marvel Thom Bresh. Also at this fabulous do were Brenda Lee, the Opry's Hal Durham and Bob Whittaker, Jim Ed Brown, Jack Greene, Porter Wagoner, Carol Lee Cooper, Billy Walker, Rose Maddox, Jerry and Connie Bradley, David and Karen

I THINK ABOUT YOU

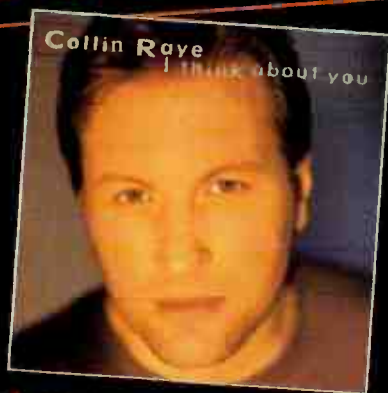
Sure, Collin Raye's already had three platinum albums and 2 #1 hits from *I Think About You*.

People respond to songs that say something about how they live - - and Collin Raye only sings songs about the way people feel.

With "Not That Different," "One Boy, One Girl," and now "I Think About You," he reaches into his own life to offer some insight into all our lives.

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COLLIN RAYE

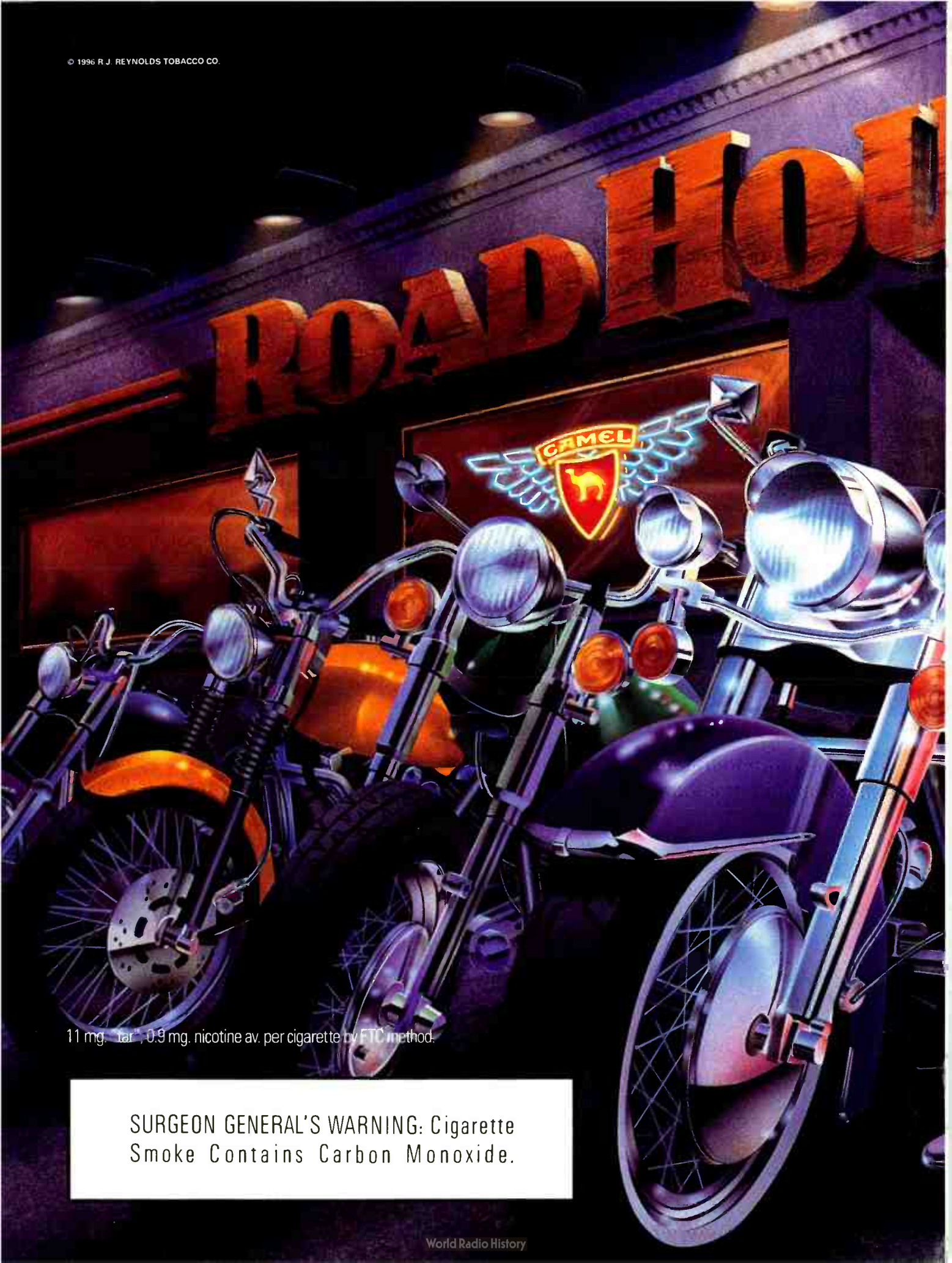


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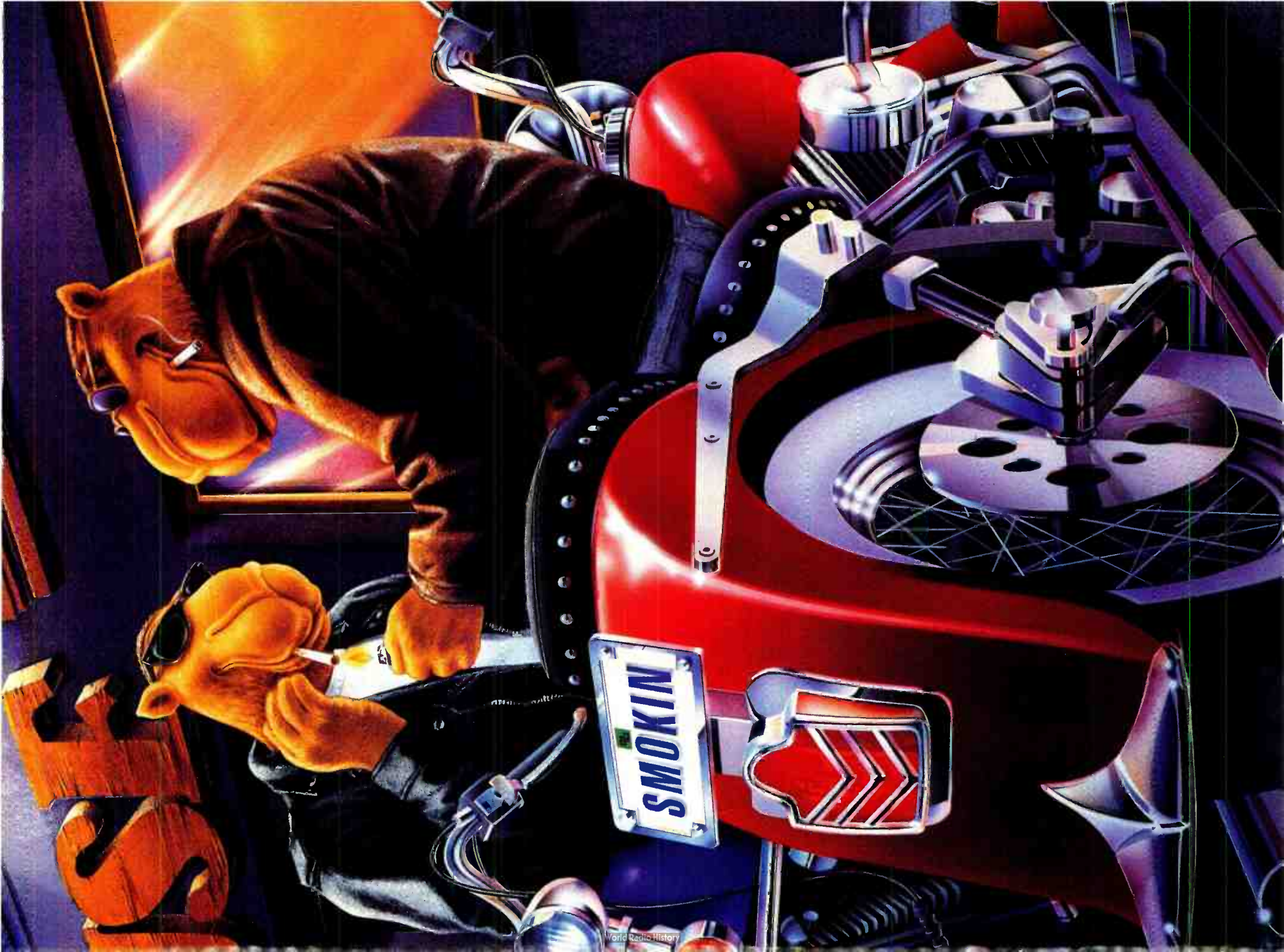
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People

EMMY AND FRIENDS AT THE OPRY



When Emmylou Harris made an appearance at the Grand Ole Opry recently, she invited along a host of friends/music makers. Back-in-the-game Steve Earle took a turn on the hallowed stage, as did Sam Bush and Jon Randall (both members of Emmylou's former Nash Ramblers band).

Conrad, Roger and Shirley Sovine. The event was hosted by the Country Music Foundation's **Bill Ivey**. During the bluegrass/cocktail hour Bill Monroe and I, both show-offs, just couldn't help but dance a little jig. Somebody took our picture, and it ended up in the *Tennessean*. Me, being the social butterfly that I am, ended up with my photo in both Music City newspapers in the same week.

A TRUMPET FOR PRIDE

One of this year's Trumpet Awards, saluting African-American achievements in medicine, education, literature, politics, sports, business and entertainment, was bestowed on the great **Charley Pride**. The ceremonies, named for the late **Martin Luther King Jr.**'s "Trumpet of Conscience" speech, aired over cable network TBS.

VERN UPDATE

Vern Gosdin is out and about singing again. "The Voice" suffered a stroke about a year ago. Following therapy at Baptist Hospital, the 61-year-old Gosdin is almost good as new. Well enough, he was, to tape a TNN special at the Ryman with **Ray Price**, **Ricky Skaggs**, **Joe Diffie** and **Mark Chesnutt**. Talk about singers, son, that's five of the best on Planet Earth. And the show was a killer.

her hair in an up-do and her makeup just perfect was Faith. I wondered if Hollywood had come trolling. A week later I had the chance to ask her at her Number One party for "It Matters to Me" at ASCAP. "Just bit stuff," she allowed. By the way, the song, penned by **Mark D. Sanders** and **Ed Hill**, remained at the Number One slot for three consecutive weeks on the country charts. It was published by Starstruck, so the publishers naturally showed up for the occasion...we're talking about publisher **Reba McEntire** and her hubby/manager/publisher, **Narvel Blackstock**. Also present was Faith's producer, who may be her hubby by now, **Scott Hendricks**. It was Faith who gave the most talked-about performance at the Country Radio Seminar, during the Warner Bros. show at the Opry House. Sang her heart out, she did, and changed clothes three times! And when Hollywood does come trolling, I hope Faith says no. We are shy of good girl singers.

EYE SAW

Eye saw **Reba McEntire** and **Linda Davis** having lunch at Houstons. Without hair extensions and makeup, the two songbirds looked as normal as me and you. It made me feel "heart-to-heart" as I talked with them. What we talked about was Linda's hit single, "Some Things Are Meant to Be." You know what, Reba was as excited and as grateful for Linda's chart success as Linda was. Readers, I like that in a star.

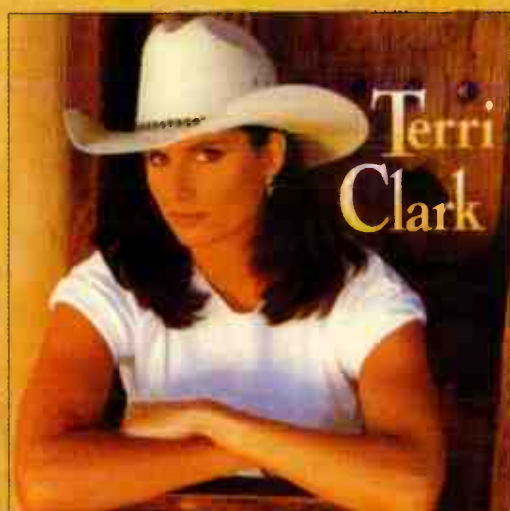
HAVE FAITH

I'd fallen asleep in my recliner, and awakened just as **Faith Hill** walked on the set of **David Letterman's** CBS-TV show. Breath-takingly beautiful like **Grace Kelly** with



Celebrating Faith Hill's Number One single, "It Matters to Me," are co-writer Ed Hill, producer (and fiance) Scott Hendricks, Faith, co-writer Mark D. Sanders, head-of-all-things-Starstruck Reba McEntire, and ASCAP's Connie Bradley.

Terri Clark



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6/26	Atlanta	GA
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6/29	Irving	TX
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7/7	Dover	OH
7/13	Allegan	MI
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People

DIRTY LYLE



Lyle Lovett, a dirt bike enthusiast, was among the celebrity participants in this year's annual off-road motorbike testing competition for *Dirt Rider Magazine*. Lovett's flanked by representatives of bikemakers KTM and Husaberg. Lyle's lucky—his helmet doesn't seem to have messed up his hair.

CMT STARFEST COMING UP

L.A.'s annual Fan Fest has linked up with Country Music Television and changed its name to Star Fest. The West Coast event will be held May 9-12, sez the powers that be on Cumberland River Coast. Mainliners like **Joe Diffie**, **Billy Ray Cyrus**, **Ricky Skaggs**, **Asleep at the Wheel**, **Martina McBride**, **Tim McGraw**, **Tammy Wynette**, **Tracy Lawrence**, **Doug Supernaw** and **Faith Hill** will join newcomers **Rhett Akins**, **Daryle Singletary** and **Bryan White** for the big event. Sounds to me like it's West Coast Fan Fair. Somebody send me tickets!

WE DO

We hear that the wild child **Tanya Tucker** may finally go to the altar with her "yard boy" **Jonathan Cummings**. Cummings owns a lawn service and apparently spread a little more than manure around the Tucker ranch. The couple is engaged and have plans to wed in the spring.

The other wild child, twice-wed **Travis Tritt**, has fallen all over himself and fell in love. This time Travis walks the aisle with **Theresa Nelson**, a model he met, thanks to pal **Marty Stuart**. Theresa appeared in one of Marty's videos and was hanging out for a *Marty Party* TV taping at the Ryman. Later the whole gang, including Tritt, went out to a local watering hole, where

Travis was introduced to the gorgeous Theresa. Theresa is sporting a six-carat diamond. Travis and pal **Marty Stuart** are planning another "No Hats" tour.

Good guy **Radney Foster**, who appeared in his hometown of Del Rio, Texas, to benefit the school where his mom teaches to the tune of \$36,000, has placed a good-sized diamond ring on the third finger, left hand of **Cyndi Hoelzle**, Country Editor/Nashville Bureau Chief of trade paper *Gavin*.

We wish all the above much happiness. If they don't stay happy, I'd wager there's a whole bunch of alimony at stake with all these money-making hillbillies.

WORST WINTER

We had the worst Tennessee winter that I've ever seen. Snow, ice, record-breaking cold. Through all this the show must go on. **Kenny Chesney's** bus driver was blinded by slush splattered on the window from a passing truck as the band headed north on I-65. It was 2:30 A.M. when the vehicle careened out of control and hit a snow bank near Park City, Kentucky. Fortunately no one was injured, and they reached their gig destination in Toledo, Ohio, in time to perform the next night.

In another incident, songwriter **Jim Rushing** ("Nothing Sure Looked Good On Her," "Cajun Moon") slipped on the ice and broke his arm in several places.

Buddy Jim was ready to kiss that ice good-bye, and so was I.

WILL WILLIE

Sources tell us that my hero, **Willie Nelson**, has recorded a reggae album, country flavored, for Island Records. Don't count Willie out until "Amazing Grace" is sung and flowers cover the mound. He was counted out when he recorded *Stardust*, and that album of big band standards stayed on the charts for ten years. He was counted out when he started acting, and he became respected by the entire entertainment industry. And he was counted out when the IRS tried to rape him in broad daylight, claiming he owed something like 17 mill in back taxes, but he overcame. This could very well be another "Willie Run Away Hit." Island Records thinks so. Will Willie? Has a cat got a tail?

GOOD GUY GARTH

When a \$45,000 donation came in to the local United Cerebral Palsy telethon in memory of veteran booking agent, **Joe Harris**, there was no doubt who the donor was. The generous benefactor was friend and colleague, **Garth Brooks**. Joe befriended Garth early in his career, and tried to book him when nobody else would give him the time of day. Garth never forgot: On Garth's current album, *Fresh Horses*, the song "The Old Stuff" refers to "Uncle Joe," which was Garth's way of referring to his friend. This gesture was from Garth's heart. And at the memorial for Joe, Garth sang "The Dance." Joe Harris is sorely missed.

ARISTA HONORS

Mayor **Phil Bredesen** said it was **Diamond Rio** Day, and there was a noontime press conference at the Wild Horse Saloon to prove it. Then there was dinner and hanging out with the group, hearing their new album, *IV*. Lastly, we paraded over to the Ryman, where the group generally blew the crowd plumb out of their seats with their new songs. This year's tour is called "Fast, Fast, Fast." The music should be called "Good, Good, Good." Superstardom is in sight for Diamond Rio.

Brooks & Dunn hosted a do at Tree for a chosen few of the finest few (me included) to play their new music. The award-winning duo hasn't had a single out in six months. It's worth the wait. Their single, the old **B.W. Stevenson** tune, "My Maria" will no doubt become their biggest ever. Ronnie Dunn just outsings himself.

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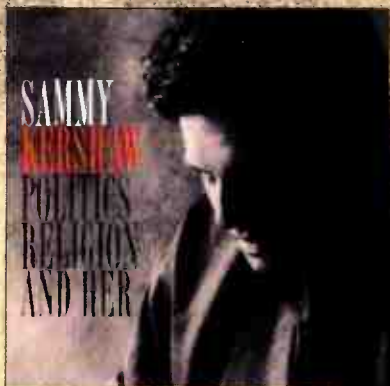
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Record Reviews

John Anderson

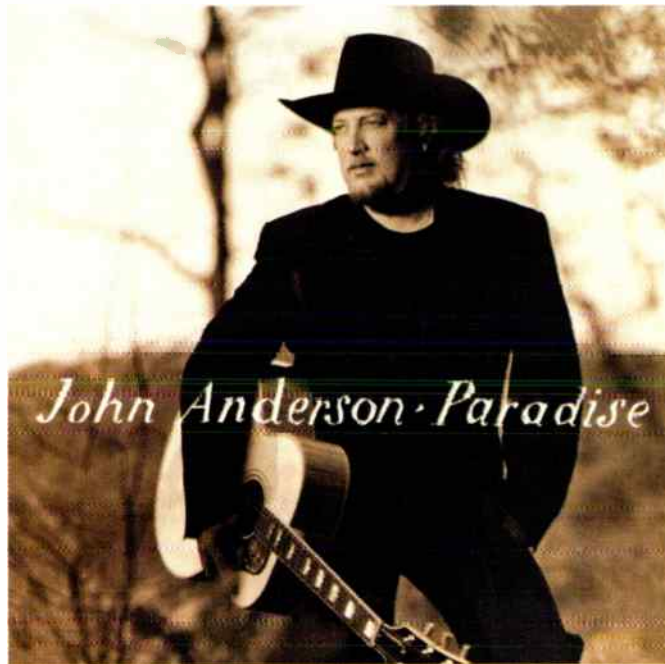
Paradise
BNA 66810

Near as I can tell, John Anderson and Alabama are the hitmakers of longest standing on current country charts. (I have no doubt someone will correct me if I'm wrong; maybe even if I'm not.) Anderson's no college boy on a marketing tear; he's genuine country. And, man, for my money, Anderson is just the chunkin'est, earthiest, honestest dirt road Daddy of 'em all. His latest album, *Paradise*, is full of the usual good stuff and a few surprises.

By now, everyone is familiar with the hit single, "Paradise." Hank Jr. and Charlie Daniels used to sing about being the chip-kickin' kind of long-haired country boys, but Anderson simply goes about the business of being one of the vaster majority of hat-tippin', 'possum-grinnin', quiet, comfortable real ones. Who else but a real-live rural son-of-a-somethin' would sing "You always use a bucketful when a half a cup would do" about a girl of exuberant excesses in the Delbert McClinton/John Jarrard/Gary Nicholson ditty, "My Kind of Crazy." John doesn't have to howl to make his rowdy, rockin' boogie-woogie point on "Let the Guitar Do the Talkin'."

Surprise guests include Levon Helm taking lead segments and harmonies on the aptly chosen "The Band Plays On." Notting Hill-billy Mark Knopfler sits in on guitar on "Let the Guitar Do the Talkin'."

Anderson co-writes about half of these offerings. Several of them I feel are among the best he's provided in the comeback era. He has a light and mildly humorous take on



"From a Distance"—that numbing anthem of 80's middle-brow seriousness—with his own "30,000 Feet." "We all look the same to the big man looking down," intones Anderson, accompanied by rambunctious slide guitar that makes sure no one mistakes this for a Unitarian sermon.

If you're an inveterate reader of liner notes, you may remember Lionel Delmore—son of Alton Delmore of The Delmore Brothers—as co-author with Anderson of "Swingin'," among others. Delmore and Anderson team up for one of the album's standout tracks, the bluesy/jazzy "Bad Weather." They also collaborated on the rather more pedestrian "They Spent Forever." It's the weakest cut on the CD, and it's not really bad, which tells you how high the quality is overall.

This is a worth-the-money effort; no doubt. It's driving to work, washing your car, digging in the backyard gar-

den music. Real music for real people. Good stuff, as we've come to expect from this neo-traditionalist's neo-traditionalist. —BOB MILLARD

Highway 101 & Paulette Carlson

Reunited
Willow Tree/Intersound 9173

This band has been through several incarnations, the last being under the lead vocals of Nikki Nelson ("Bing Bang Boom"), but it was never quite the same as when Paulette Carlson fronted. Paulette made a couple of solo efforts that nobody ever heard. The band ground to a halt and split apart piece by piece (and pretty messily) after Nikki's one hit in the early 90's. That pretty much left drummer Cactus Moser out there at the stage front by himself—where some contend he always wanted to be anyway.

Now Paulette and fellow originals Curtis Stone and Jack Daniels are back together, minus Moser. Their new effort bears those excellent signature Carlson vocals, and I welcome them back. This package is a multi-bonus deal; a 12-song LP, and country's first interactive CD-ROM.

Musically, it's a mixed collection of eight new tunes and four former hits, the former hits being "Setting Me Up," "The Bed You Made for Me," "All the Reasons Why" and "Walkin', Talkin', Cryin', Barely Beatin' Broken Heart." Of the new tunes, my personal faves are the medium tempo ballad, "She Don't Have the Heart to Love You," the Spanish-styled, softly questioning "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman" (the Bryan Adams pop hit from a couple of years back), and the rollicking "Where'd You Get Your Cheatin' From." Truth be told, there's no fluff or filler here.

The CD of this record offers something extra in the way of a technological step forward for country. It is sold as an enhanced CD, meaning you can stick it in your computer's CD-ROM port, and if you have a sound card, you will not only hear the music, but be able to see video elements, access an interview and look at photographs. Those of us still celebrating our old eight-track players, however, can only marvel at the promise. Furthermore, for Internet web-surfers, Paulette and Highway 101 announce a web site where you can e-mail them: <http://www.hiway101.com>. (My, how times have changed. Used to be when you wanted to find a country star, you just went down to Tootsie's Orchid Lounge and hung out.)

Usually, when a group

Record Reviews

breaks apart, it's for a combination of personnel clashes, musical divergence, or simple exhaustion of the core concept. In this case it was a bit of the first two, but the gathering of Carlson, Daniels and Stone into a unit once more offers a stunning rediscovery of a still-vital sound that produced four Number One singles and six Top Tens in just three short years in the late-80's.

Comebacks are hard to pull off today. One can only hope that such a distinctive sound and these fine new tunes can earn Paulette and the boys another shot at the success and high-profile recognition they deserve. It all boils down to good songs and a sound that people can identify without a DJ telling them who the act is—DJ's rarely do that anymore. Sounds like this were never a dime a dozen, either. This record, with its nice platform of oldies, should please Highway 101's many fans. By rights, it ought to earn them some new ones, also.

—BOB MILLARD

Brooks & Dunn

Borderline

Arista 18810

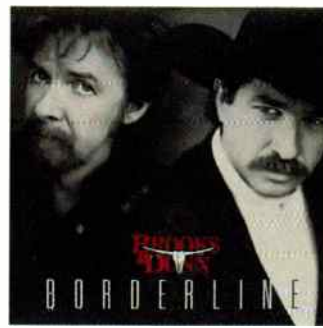
What I like about Brooks & Dunn is they never pretend to be anything more than what they are—entertainers whose main goal in life is to come up with a chorus so catchy that it will grab your attention through the tinniest radio speaker ever stuck in a pick-up. Unlike, say, Garth Brooks or John Michael Montgomery, Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn never pass themselves off as profound philosophers or social commentators. For this dynamic duo, lyrics are just an excuse to belt out a big, juicy chorus hook, usually over a kick-up-your-heels dance beat. Anyone who was ever 15 years old has known the delight of such a simple-minded radio single, and only a fool would pretend to be too sophisticated to enjoy it.



It's no easy trick to come up with a single that sticks in the mind like chewing gum on the bottom of a school boy's desk—or else a lot more people would do it. Brooks & Dunn's singles may be low on meaning, but they are high in pleasure. It helps, of course, that both men are fine singers and seem to have a natural instinct for dance rhythms, but just as important is their restraint in shutting out everything from a song that might distract from the seduction of the hook. They have raised this restraint to a high discipline on their fourth album, *Borderline*. Ten of the 11 songs on the album each contain a terrific melodic chorus and almost nothing else that might get in the way.

Typical of the duo's approach is the album's first single and lead-off track, "My Maria," a remake of the 1973 Top Ten pop hit by Texas country-rocker B.W. Stevenson. It's an extremely silly song about a "gypsy lady" who sets "my soul free like a ship sailing on the sea," but it has such an ear-grabbing acoustic-guitar riff and such a delirious, yodel-filled chorus that you find yourself singing along in spite of yourself. Brooks & Dunn do an even better job with it than Stevenson did, especially on the dizzying falsetto yodels.

It isn't the only song that harkens back to the mindless pleasures of 70's radio. "More Than a Margarita" recalls the Southern Florida, Caribbean-country sound of The Bellamy Brothers and Jimmy Buffett and offers the sort of sing-along chorus that turns Buffett's summer tours into monster



campfire sings. "Redneck Rhythm & Blues" recalls the slide-guitar-powered Southern rock of Charlie Daniels and Lynyrd Skynyrd, although Brooks & Dunn make sure their vocals are mixed way up above the guitars. In the same vein is "White Line Casanova," a rocking road song recycled from 1989 when Ronnie Dunn was a staff writer for Tree before he hooked up with his current partner.

The duo hasn't forgotten the genre it helped invent—country disco—and "Mama Don't Get Dressed Up for Nothing" is so single-minded in its devotion to the slam-bang beat that it should keep lines dancing wherever there's a parquet floor. Even the sentimental ballads on *Borderline*—most notably "A Man This Lonely" and "I Am That Man"—boast pretty melodies which are more likely to lift a listener's spirits than sink them. Best of all is "One Heartache at a Time," a bouncy country-rock number so infectious it reminds one of The Mavericks.

"My Love Will Follow You" is the only song on *Borderline* that doesn't really work, and that's because it's too complex a song for the album's ready-for-radio approach. Written by Buddy and Julie Miller, the song is full of moody, minor-chord harmonies and lyrics that walk a fine line between romantic pledge and vengeful threat. It demands a subtlety and irony that aren't among Brooks & Dunn's strengths. This is a hit-making machine, and they need material as streamlined and focused as their arrangements.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Steve Earle

I Feel Alright

E-Squared/Warner Bros. 46201

Steve Earle started a revolution in Nashville, but he left it unfinished.

In 1986, the rough-and-tumble 31-year-old protege of Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark released *Guitar Town*, a debut album so powerful it could not be denied. It topped the country album charts and laid down the gauntlet for everyone else in the field to make music as loud and as irreverent. Well, Music Row grasped the "loud" part, but not the "irreverent" part. Today crackling snare drums and cranked-up electric guitars are as common in Nashville as fiddles and steel guitars once were, but genuine rebellion is as rare as black faces on TNN. Today when people credit Earle with the New Country movement, he tells them, that's not what I meant at all.

It's partly Earle's own fault. After making two brilliant albums, *Guitar Town* and *Exit 0*, he abandoned the country battleground for a fling at rock 'n' roll stardom. Then he abandoned music altogether for a dance with heroin that landed him in jail and almost in a grave. When he reemerged last year with the gorgeous acoustic-string-band album, *Train a-Comin'*, no one minded that he hadn't rejoined the battle with Nashville. Everyone was just glad he was alive and still capable of such marvelous music. It was the acoustic recording Earle had always wanted to make, and it served as the perfect halfway-house for his return to the business.

With his new album, *I Feel Alright*, however, Earle is back in the trenches. This is the country-rock album he should have released back in 1988, for it is the natural successor to *Guitar Town* and *Exit 0*. Earle picks up the regimental colors he dropped then and waves them before the



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by Renate Höckh

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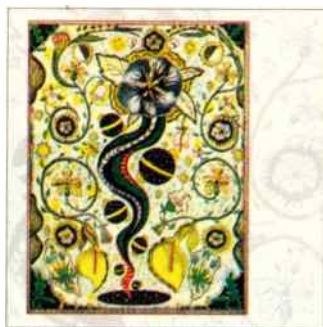
Record Reviews

ramparts of Music Row. On the opening cut, the title track, he bellows defiantly, "Some of you would live through me, lock me up and throw away the key/Hope that I'll just go away. Ha!/Now I'm back again!"

Indeed he is. *I Feel Alright* not only reintroduces Earle to the country audience but once again reminds them just how ambitious a truly modern country music can be. This extraordinary record covers a broad spectrum of swaggering rock 'n' roll broadsides, chirpy rockabilly romps, desolate blues moans and sweet tender love songs. Earle writes about poverty, drugs, crime, outlaws and romance with a blunt honesty unseen since the heyday of Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash. Holding it all together is Earle's raspy tenor voice, belting out his contagious melodies with reckless abandon.

On "Hardcore Troubadour," he takes a look at himself in the third person. To a twangy popabilly riff borrowed from Buddy Holly's "Words of Love," he examines both the roguish appeal and the inevitable disappointment of the outlaw from a woman's perspective. It sets the tone for an album which resists simplification but insists on the full complexity of the non-conformist life—the creativity as well as the self-destruction, the originality as well as the irresponsibility, the pleasures as well as the pains.

Earle refuses to turn his recent personal problems into the sentimental formula of the celebrity comeback. He's not the kind to go on the TV talk shows, wring his hands over his addiction and promise to be a good boy from now on. Although he's been sober since he went to jail, Earle wants his listeners to feel both the thrill and the terror that come with drugs and alcohol. On the ghostly acoustic blues of "Cocaine Can't Kill My Pain" and "South Nashville Blues," he drags us down to hell with him, forcing us to contemplate the kind of pain that would



make a syringe full of morphine look attractive.

On the title track and "The Unrepentant," both built atop the classic riff from Van Morrison's "Gloria," he declares he is just as much a rebel as ever, no matter how many mistakes he has made in the name of rebellion along the way. "Now She's Gone," built around a Dylanesque harmonica blast, and "Billy and Bonnie," built around a choppy mandolin riff, are both story-songs about crime sprees which end in betrayal, but Earle manages to fill them with equal amounts of excitement and doom. Lucinda Williams joins him for a duet on the bouncy folk-rock number, "You're Still Standin' There," which expresses astonishment that anyone would still love him after all he's been through.

The high points of the new album, though, are a pair of slow songs where Earle faces up to the price paid for an outlaw's behavior by the people around him. "Hurtin' Me, Hurtin' You" is a soul ballad in the style of Solomon Burke or Otis Redding, and over the spare, stunning melody, Earle cries, "I never meant to be cruel or untrue; I'm just hurtin' me when I'm hurtin' you." Even better is "Valentine's Day," a whispery country confession that he forgot to buy his lover a card or roses but still loves her nonetheless. The simple, gorgeous melody is backed by a string quartet and The Jordanaires, but it's the abject apology and authentic affection in Earle's vocal that make the song so special.

It's gratifying to learn that Earle can still write the sort of country-rock anthems he made his reputation on in the late-80's. It's an unexpected bonus to learn that he is also writing ballads far better than any he ever wrote before. He's back, and one can only hope he'll finally finish what he started.

—GEOFFREY HIMES



Rhonda Vincent

Trouble Free

Giant 24630

Since Alison Krauss' success, it's inevitable that Nashville labels have been signing any female singer even remotely similar. Some will fade. Rhonda Vincent, a bluegrass veteran who once placed third in a fiddling contest that Krauss won, won't fade. To Vincent's credit, her label, Giant, has refrained from trying to fit her into a Trisha pigeonhole. The feel of her performances is closer to the New Traditionalism of a decade back, with undeniable echoes of Emmylou and Ricky Skaggs, though Vincent's straightforward, no-frills style, unfailingly solid and expressive, is clearly hers.

Vincent doesn't claim to be a strict traditionalist. "What More Do You Want From Me" could get radio airplay amid today's best (and outshine the biggest part of it) without sounding like it was done strictly for radio. It's no surprise Krauss puts in a guest appearance on "Somebody," a pleasant Al Anderson-Robert Ellis Orrall number. Krauss is

not the only high-powered talent involved here. Randy Travis duets with Vincent on "It Ain't Nothin' New" while Dolly sits in on "The Blues Ain't Workin' on Me."

Two numbers, the powerful ballad, "You Beat All I've Ever Seen," and the bouncing "An Old Memory," were partly created by veteran hard-country singer Melba Montgomery. Kostas and Kathy Louvin were her collaborators on the former, Jerry Salley her co-writer on the latter. The edgy, direct sincerity found in Montgomery's songs fits Vincent perfectly: Melba was combining bluegrass with mainstream country over 30 years ago, in her early 60's duets with George Jones. An honest, moving performance of the John Jerard-Kenny Beard ballad, "At the Corner of Walk and Don't Walk," would sound great in any era, as would the jauntier "When I'm Through Fallin' Apart."

I've never been totally enamored of the work of the album's co-producers, James Stroud and Richard Landis, who tend to either turn out masterpieces or fodder—nothing in between. To their credit, however, they allow Vincent to be herself while giving her what she needs to appeal to an audience unfamiliar with new, old (or anything) traditional. The operative words here are quality and integrity, and this album's got 'em.

—RICH KIENZLE

Mandy Barnett

Mandy Barnett

Asylum 61810

People are raving about this 20-year-old queen of classic retro Nashville Sound. There is more individuality and contemporary edge to her voice on her debut recording effort than was evident during her critically acclaimed two-year run as the singing star of the Nashville stage play, "Always, Patsy Cline," but the comparison is still too wonderfully ob-

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The Story of a Legend—50 mins.

This is the Jim Reeves story from his deep rural roots and his years as an aspiring baseball player, to his years as one of the most universally popular singers of the late 50's and early 60's. This program also features Jim singing hit songs like "Four Walls," "Am I Losing You," "He'll Have to Go" and "Welcome to My World." Item No. V2P - \$19.95

DWIGHT YOAKAM

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Dwight's first video features "Honky Tonk Man," "Guitars, Cadillacs," "Streets of Bakersfield," "Long White Cadillac" and more. There's an interview and performance footage from the I.R.S. label production "The Cutting Edge." Item No. G1E - \$19.95

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This is Randy Travis' newest home video release, and it's a must for every fan. It features eight of his best hit songs including "Heroes and Friends," "Better Class of Losers," "If I Didn't Have You," "Look Heart, No Hands," "An Old Pair of Shoes," "Cowboy Boogie," "Wind in the Wire" and "Before You Kill Us All." Item No. V9T - \$19.95

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War Point—31 mins.

Here are both of Lorrie's Number One video hits, "Something in Red" and "Watch Me." It also features "I Guess You Had to Be There," "Half Enough," "My Favorite Things," "My Night to Howl" and "If You Came Back from Heaven." Item No. V2Y2 - \$16.95

HANK WILLIAMS

Hank Williams Tradition—60 mins.

In the *Hank Williams Tradition* traces Hank's life story through rare film clips, music and revealing interviews with friends and fellow performers such as Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl and Clet Atkins. Included are performances of many of Hank's greatest songs by today's top country artists, who also tell how Hank inspired their careers. There are also five hit songs performed by Hank himself. Item No. V2M - \$19.95

GEORGE JONES

Some Ole Me—60 mins.

They call him "Possum." They also call him "Country Music's Living Legend." *Some Ole Me* is the story of George Jones, finally told his way with the help of such great stars as Roy Acuff, Loretta Lynn and Johnny Cash. It includes hits like "He Stopped Loving Her Today," "Bartender's Blues," "The Race Is On," "She Thinks I Still Care," "White Lightning," "Why Baby Why" and "Some Day My Day Will Come." Item No. G4Z - \$19.95

NEW! DOC WATSON

GUITAR JAM—60 mins.

Recorded at the 1992 Merle Watson Festival, this incredible jam session brings together five masters of flatpicking guitar—Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Dan Crary, Jack Lawrence and Steve Kaufman. Featured are such great songs as "Ragtime Annie," "Blue Ridge Mountain Blues," "St. Anne's Reel," "More Pretty Girls Than One," "Walk On By," "Little Sadie," "Black Mountain Rag," "Lime Rock," "Ramshackle Shack," "Billy in the Lowground" AND MORE! Item No. V20B - \$29.95

WAYLON JENNINGS

Waylon—60 mins.

From his early days as Buddy Holly's protege to his battles with the Nashville system, good times and bad, *Waylon: Renegade, Outlaw*, *Legend* features never-before-seen footage and over 20 songs and performances. Songs include "Honky Tonk Heroes," "Good Hearted Woman," "Luckenbach, Texas" and "Amanda." Item No. V3Q - \$29.95

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

Kris Kristofferson—90 mins.

Here is the extraordinary career and life of the actor, songwriter and performer. It includes interviews with such notables as Willie Nelson, Dennis Hopper and Johnny Cash and features such songs as "Me and Bobby McGee," "Sunday Morning Coming Down" AND LOTS MORE! Item No. V6H - \$19.95

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Filmed in New York—96 mins.

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MERLE HAGGARD

The Best of—60 mins.

Here are 16 of Merle's personal favorite songs, including "My Favorite Memory," "Mama's Hungry Eyes," "Today I Started Loving You Again," "When Times Were Good," "Okie from Muskogee" AND 12 MORE! Item No. G3F - \$19.95

COUNTRY OUTLAWS

LIVE—23 mins.

Here is a rare look at eight of country music's best, live in concert, with such hits as "I Always Get Lucky With You"/George Jones, "Louisiana Saturday Night"/Porter Wagoner, "You're Out Doin' (What I'm Here Doin' Without)/Gene Watson, "Behind Closed Doors"/Charlie Rich, "It's a Cheatin' Situation"/Moe Bandy, "Don't the Girls All Get Prettier at Closing Time"/Mickey Gilley AND MORE! Item No. V3W - \$14.95

NEW! MERLE TRAVIS

Sixteen Tons: More Rare Performances 1946-1981—60 mins.

The many facets of Travis' career are all present in this second offering of rare footage spanning his West Coast postwar prime to his last days as a rediscovered legend. Included are "Silver Spurs," "Texas Home," "Why Did I Fall for Abner," "Old Chisholm Trail," "Nine Pound Hammer," "John Henry," "Sixteen Tons," "Cannonball Rag," "Who's Sorry Now," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" AND MORE! Item No. V20C - \$29.95

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GARTH BROOKS

Live TV Special—85 mins.

Here is Garth's first NBC special complete with additional interview and backstage footage. There are 15 hit songs, including "Not Counting You," "Two of a Kind," "The Dance," "Rodeo," "We Bury the Hatchet," "The Thunder Rolls," "The River," "Papa Loved Mama," "Friends in Low Places" AND MORE! Item No. V3H - \$29.95

MARTY ROBBINS

Super Legend—120 mins.

Here is the best-selling home video on Marty Robbins ever released. And it's no wonder when you consider that it features 18 performances including "El Paso," "White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Ribbon of Darkness," "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "This Time You Gave Me a Mountain" plus Marty's Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." It also includes rare appearances from early television shows and movies. Item No. G2A - \$39.95

NEW! REBA McENTIRE

Live—60 mins.

This video from her tour includes "Respect," "Is There Life Out There," "The Greatest Man I Never Knew," "Walk On," "For My Broken Heart," "Why Haven't I Heard From You," "Does He Love You" (with Linda Davis), "Take It Back," "Till You Love Me" and "Fancy." Item No. V10X - \$24.95



ALAN JACKSON

Live'n', Lovin', and Rockin' That Juicebox—28 mins.

Here are seven Number One videos from two double platinum albums including "Don't Rock the Juicebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "She's Got the Rhythm (And I Got the Blues)," "Tonight I Climbed the Wall," "Chattahoochee" and "Mercury Blues." Item No. V6K - \$19.95

NEAL McCOY

You Gotta Love That!—45 mins.

This young star's career really took off with his RIAA Gold *No Doubt About It*, which yielded two Number One country singles (the title track and "Wink") and the Top Five hit, "The City Put the Country Back in Me." This video also includes "If I Built a Fire," "This Time I Hurt Her More (Than She Loves Me)" AND MORE! Item No. V4N - \$19.95

NEW! LIGHT CRUST DOUGHBOYS

Texas Swing—40 mins.

At last, the long-awaited history of Texas swing as told around the story of The Light Crust Doughboys. This just-released video includes rare film footage of Bob Wills and W. Lee O'Daniel, plus uncut musical performances and celebrity interviews never seen before. Item No. V10Z - \$19.95

THE STATLER BROS.

What We Love to Do—40 mins.

This 30th anniversary special features "Elizabeth," "My Only Love," "What We Love to Do," "Atlanta Blue," "Maple Street Memories," "Sweeter & Sweeter," "You've Been Like a Mother to Me," "Let's Get Started" AND MORE! Item No. V6A - \$19.95

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Record Reviews



Mandy
BARNETT

vious to avoid. Mandy Barnett is something new and exciting in country music today. She's a sincere female 60's neo-traditionalist—and then some.

Barnett has been bubbling under on Music Row pitch sheets for a couple of years now. The only question seemed to be who would get to produce her. Bill Schnee and Kyle Lehning copped the honors here, and they deliver a record that would have done Owen Bradley (Patsy Cline's producer) proud. "Planet of Love," while a little bit strange, nails a pure Patsy Cline melody with genuine loving imitation. "What's Good for You" is also so Patsy-esque that I'd be surprised if Charlie Dick didn't get goose bumps.

"Rainy Days" conjurs Connie Francis to me, but then I'm just that old. Younger radio listeners will only hear great, timeless, lilting heart-break. God, it's great! "Three Days" is a signature original by Faron Young, released from the pen of Willie Nelson in the mid-60's and briefly revived in 1989 by k.d. lang. "Baby Don't You Know" is neo-traditional in a way that no other contemporary country female has tried, as that bastion has been solidly male since Randy Travis invaded it.

Yet, this isn't strictly a tour de force of Nashville's early 60's pop classicism: There is a good deal of Faith Hill fronting The Travelling Willburys on "Now That's All Right with Me," and more than a touch of The Mavericks in the treatment of "Maybe." Her songs are by and large terrific in a deep, viscerally emotional vein that we don't get much of

these days. "I'll Just Pretend" is the kind of melody that Reba might warble the bejesus out of, but it's Mandy's tension-and-release restraint that whacks your heart strings with a feather and resonates more poignantly than the Rebster's vocal baseball bat would do. As my friend and fellow-critic Michael Bane once said of another fave, "What a voice! I want to marry that girl and have her babies."

Well, we all know that isn't going to happen—my wife takes a pretty dim view of the whole idea; not to mention the faulty biology—but I can guarantee I'm gonna wear out my copy of this before the corn comes in this summer. *Mandy Barnett* earns my highest recommendation—it's worth skipping two lunches to pay for. Go get it now.

—BOB MILLARD

Cheryl Wheeler

Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar

Philo CDPH 1192

Aside from being a fine singer, country-folky Cheryl Wheeler is a painfully incisive songwriter who's never afraid of taking on the big issues. With unflinching candor and often caustic wit, she writes and sings about our post-modern age where nothing's for certain. She anguishes over a world where the ground is constantly shifting under our feet, the rivers are poisoned, our heartfelt emotions are as capricious as the summer winds, and love, as often as not, proves a fragile and tentative thing, not to be trusted.

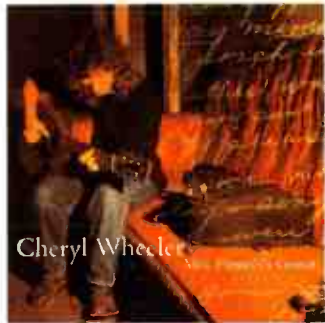
Wheeler's original ballads on *Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar*, her latest album (on which she wrote all 14 songs), are shot through with such moody, angst-ridden preoccupations. Again and again she displays a lyric brilliance when it comes to articulating those deepest, scariest concerns which most of us are hard-pressed to put into words at all.

"School Girls (Lost in Time)," a duet with Jonathan

Record Reviews

Edwards, is one such haunting song. Here Wheeler depicts a middle-aged woman who's undone, or at least perplexed by, love and finds herself longing for the days of youthful abandon when lust overruled sensibility and passions ran wild: "And all around me I can see/ Those who ran from the night/ for warmth and company/ Until they woke/ to the strangers they could be/ And the passion they no longer knew."

"Does the Future Look Black" is a contemporary country lament that would be right at home on a Patty Loveless album—though I doubt even Patty could sing it with all the understated, inspired anguish and soul-searching Wheeler summons up. The



Cheryl Wheeler

song grapples with the dilemma of trying to reach an estranged lover who, in his mind, has drifted off to some black, angry, unfathomable place. "Your broken heart," she sings, "is breaking mine." For all its sadness and desperation, though, "Does the Future Look Black" drives and kicks with a powerhouse arrangement and some beautiful chord changes.

"The Rivers" is a similarly forlorn and somewhat angry commentary on humankind's seeming determination to trash our own backyard and ultimately sow the seeds of our demise. Yet Wheeler's certainly not all hand-wringing and wounded wrath: The title tune is a wistful, affirmative reflection on the power of friendship. "Howl at the Moon" is an absolutely beautiful love song...to her dog.

Anyone who's ever seen Cheryl Wheeler in concert

knows that her "funny" songs are a big part of her appeal. So naturally there are a couple of them on *Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar*. Even though these tracks aim for belly laughs, they often put just as sharp a point on contemporary issues. "Is It Peace Or Is It Prozac?" casts a skeptical eye on the notion of attaining a tranquil inner life through altered brain chemistry. "TV," on its surface, seems a total goof. Yet it expresses obvious contempt for the slack-jawed masses of chronic cable watchers and microwave popcorn munchers who've been robbed of imagination and lulled into slothful inanity by all the conveniences of the electronic age.

The only real dud on *Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar* is one of these tongue-in-cheek numbers. "Makes Good Sense to Me" is a shallow, artless polemic against arch-conservatism. Yet it's so full of clichés and stereotypes that you can't help but wonder if Wheeler's mind isn't just as closed as the bigots she parodies.

Other than this one sloppy, ill-conceived track, *Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar* is a dark gem of a record. Unless you happen to be in a total state of denial about life's and love's perils, it'll probably hit home with you, too. —BOB ALLEN

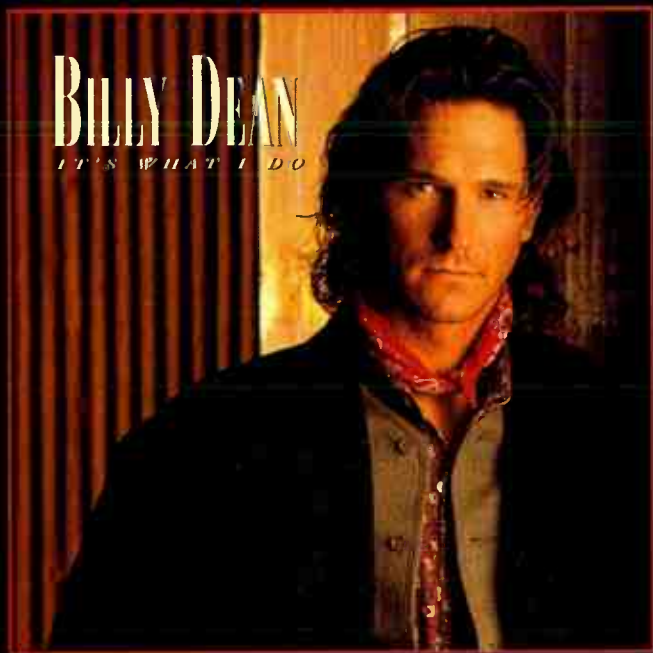
Chris LeDoux

Stampede
Capitol 34071

Chris LeDoux may never achieve the multi-platinum success of his friend Garth Brooks, though for my money, his worst records outdo Garth's best. He doesn't intermittently yammer about quitting the business if he sells too few millions like someone else we all know either. As with his voice, experience shows on LeDoux's face, one more reason he stands apart from today's youth movement. On most current releases by newcomers, the artists appear to have done the cover shoot for

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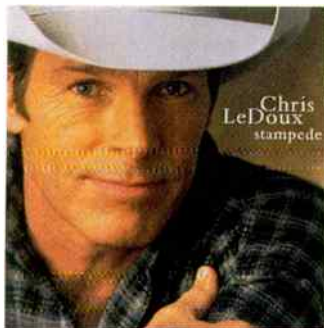


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Record Reviews

their albums about an hour or so after having their high school graduation pictures taken.

For many, LeDoux's always been an acquired taste that takes a while to accept and enjoy, but tough to let go of once it happens. The difference comes down to one thing: rodeo successes aside, LeDoux has a clear, undeniable style. Nothing about him is conventional or traditional. His records are not genetically engineered for maximum airplay. He knows how to use humor, and does so nicely on songs like the first two here: the Butch Curry-Ray Methvin "Gravitational Pull" (with some slashing slide guitar from Larry Byrom) and Alex Harvey's clever "Five Dollar Fine" involving honky tonk penalties for whining (Garth, take heed!). His own numbers overflow with his particular brand of cynical humor. One such is "Take Me to the Ro-



deo," with its Bo Diddley-Buddy Holly beat and a few wiseacre, gross-out lyrics involving roadkill and being stuck along a blazing hot Southwestern road.

LeDoux's approach to romance reveals a light sensuality best exemplified by "Now That's All Right with Me," a Kostas-Tony Perez number that's both breezy and vivid. He's serious and direct on the John Jarvis-Gary Nicholson ballad, "Fathers and Sons," a paternal tribute that may not break any new ground, yet de-

livers a powerful message of connection between generations without waxing pretentious. "I'll Get the Job" is churning, rocking filler that makes enjoyable listening.

The foreboding drama in "Stampede" features an atmospheric arrangement that enhances his stream of consciousness lyrics about a cattle drive and a cowboy's worst nightmare that turns real too suddenly. It's little surprise that his rodeo experience makes the difference. One can feel the tension and smell the sage. Dennis Linde's "When I Say Forever," a ballad of fidelity, and Gary Vincent and Doug Gill's more restrained and sensitive "Calico Moon" are both beautifully performed. The many obvious, cliched phrases of devotion in the Al Anderson-Craig Wiseman "That's What Loving You Means to Me" aren't there simply to fill space, but to reiterate devotion.

I don't know that LeDoux

will ever be a huge mainstream superstar. It's doubtful, given his aversion to hook songs and dance fare. That doesn't matter. We need artists like him who make solid, modern music on their terms, consistent with their own visions and to hell with the demographics. The only thing that mattered here was quality, and *Stampede* overflows with it. —RICH KIENZLE

Steve Wariner

No More Mr. Nice Guy
Arista 8814

You see 'em in rare record auctions, or contemporary small specialty labels where sales totals of 2,000 are cause for celebration: non-bluegrass instrumental albums. These have been out of favor in recent years, though their near-extinction will almost surely result in a revival someday

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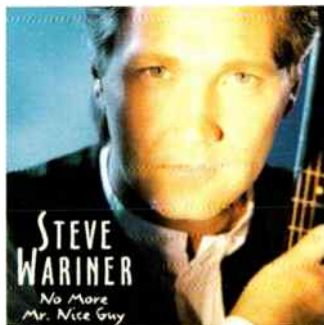
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"CHURCH ON CUMBERLAND ROAD" • "TWO DOZEN ROSES"
and the new smash hit, "ALL OVER BUT THE SHOUTIN'"

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Record Reviews

soon. If so, Steve Wariner may well deserve some of the credit. Wariner's vocals have never particularly grown on me, yet judging him strictly on his singing would be short-sighted. After all, his original aspirations were to pick. Before anyone knew of him as a singer, he was playing guitar as a sideman (playing bass in Dottie West's band) and working with, among others, Chet Atkins. Since then, his instrumental side has taken a back seat to his singing career.

That's happened several times in popular music. Nat "King" Cole was one of the greatest jazz pianists of his time before he was ever taken seriously as a singer. Likewise, George Benson was a jazz guitar virtuoso before be-



coming an immensely popular singer. Jerry Reed was an A-Team session picker in Nashville, as was Charlie Daniels, before either had any hit records in their own right as vocalists.

Wariner's success has never dulled his love of playing. These 12 songs show him at ease with a variety of material and an equally eclectic group of pickers. He and another great picker turned vocal star, Vince Gill, kick things off with the fierce "No More Mr. Nice Guy," a number full of hurricane-like lick-swapping and hot lick duels. "Big Hero, Little Hero," pairs him with Chet, allowing Wariner to pay homage to his mentor and allowing Chet to play brilliantly, as he always does when he's picking with another gifted player. And Wariner is not afraid to push the envelope and twist it around. Jamming with

Mark O'Connor and mandolinist extraordinaire Sam Bush, Wariner heads into a swirling mix of mountain fiddle tune and and free-flowing acoustic jazz in the Django Reinhardt tradition on "Prelude/Practice Your Scales Somewhere Else."

Things take an edgier turn on "The Theme," which pairs him with fusion-jazz player Larry Carlton and Nashville songwriter-keyboard whiz Randy Goodrum, kicking into a groove suspiciously reminiscent of 70's jazz-rockers Steely Dan (one of the few acts from that era I can still stand to listen to). "Forever Loving You" features Wariner alone, playing brilliantly, even if the melody sounds like something off the Weather Channel background music. Another solo performance, "For Chester B.," again pays tribute to Atkins and his more introspective work. Wariner and progressive banjoist Bela Fleck explore jazz fusion adeptly on "Next March." "If You Can't Say Something Good," with Mac MacAnally, takes a welcome move into acoustic blues, showing MacAnally in a mode his own records have seldom reflected.

"Hap Towne Breakdowne" features guests Carl Jackson, Mark O'Connor and Jimmy Olander. The performance has a feel reminiscent of Chet's earlier work. "The Brickyard Boogie" pairs Wariner up with four hot young players. Leo Kottke, the acoustic instrumental virtuoso known for his 12-string guitar recordings, has no trouble working with Wariner on "Don't Call Me Ray." "Guitar Talk," a blues shuffle (with the only vocal on the record), ends the proceedings just right as he swaps licks with keyboardist Goodrum, Bon Jovi guitarist Richie Sambora and Lee Roy Parnell.

Wariner should make a deal with Arista: for every couple of vocal albums, they should let him to do an instrumental album like this one. There's no reason a hit singer who plays his butt off can't make good in both fields. —RICH KIENZLE

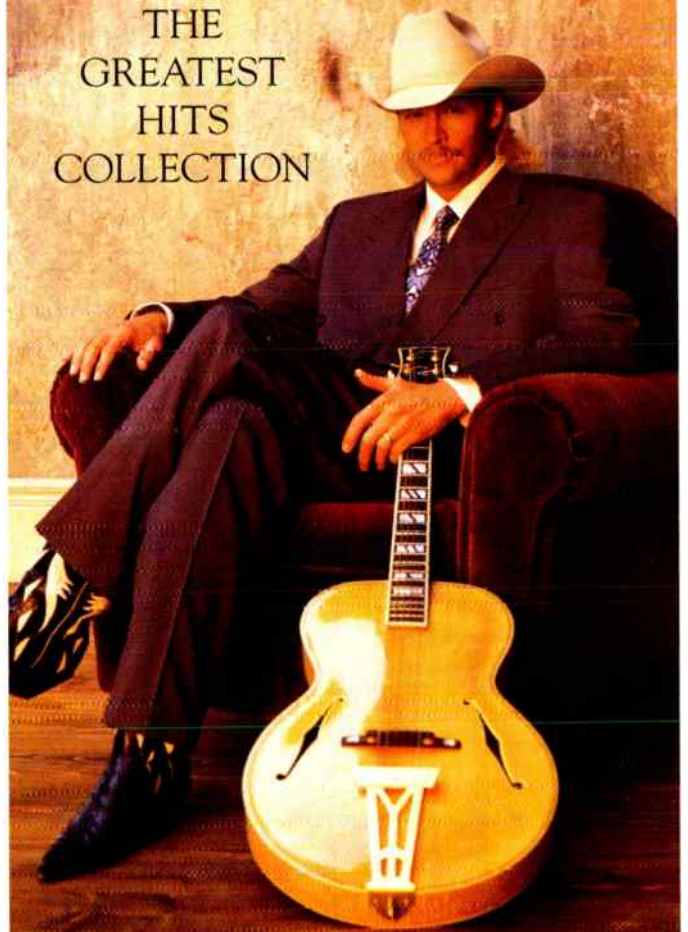
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Randy Travis

TECHNICOLOR
DREAMS

We find Randy Travis, the actor, on location—hard at work chasing the most elusive of dreams. ★ By Michael Bane

It is cold and snowing in Toronto, the temperature hovering at that precise nasty point between slush and mud. And the movie set, on the outskirts of downtown Toronto, is indeed about ankle deep in freezing, slushy mud and something called—honestly—“Real Artificial Snow,” white, fluffy stuff that doesn’t at all resemble what’s coming down from the sky.

Randy Travis is grinning. Raising his hands to encompass the soggy landscape, he turns toward me.

“Well, Michael,” he says wryly. “What do you think of Maui so far?”

Excuse me?

Randy laughs.

“I keep reading that I’m in Maui, lying on the beach or something,” he says. “People will call Lib and ask what it’s like to spend the winter in Hawaii. I wish I knew.”

Instead of his spectacular house overlooking Lahaina harbor, or even home in Nashville, Randy Travis is spending his second month in chilly Canada, chasing the most elusive of dreams. Randy Travis longs to be a serious actor. Not a country music superstar playing bit parts; not a cameo walk-on, but a *real* actor, one with range and depth. He’s in Canada filming a two-hour television movie (which aired this December), and for the first time, his name is not among the “Also Starring.” Instead, he’s the male lead, across from veteran television actress Connie Sellecca.

Randy and I shiver in a corner of the set, destined to be a television vision of rural South Carolina, while a bunch of guys with long brooms beat the snow out of the trees.

“Continuity,” Randy says. “Too much snow; not enough snow; snow in the wrong places. Hurry up and wait.”

For the uninitiated, movie sets resemble anthills seconds after you kick them, when the ants are swarming all over the place, running in every crazy direction. There are hordes of people, most with hand-held radios, earphones and no apparent jobs. There are at least a dozen people whose solitary function is to yell, “Quiet, people! We’re rolling!” Another dozen or so flutter around the stars, adjusting hair, touching up make-up, passing cups of hot coffee or heavy coats between shots. Huge bulks of cameras

are manhandled through the mud; electrical cables are dragged hither and yon; Real Artificial Snow is either sprayed from tanks or rolled out like giant rolls of pristine cotton batting. Cops control street traffic. Vans are constantly running between the crew area, including the stars’ buses, the make-up and wardrobe trailers and other administrative stuff and the set itself. An equal number of people seem to have a job title that reads, “Stand Around And Look Bored.”

One of the masses separates himself from the crowd and walks toward us. His radio is buzzing.

“We’re ready for you, Randy,” he says.

“Back to work,” Randy says to me as he heads for the cameras.

I hike across the mushy cornfield to Randy’s tour bus, where I find Lib Hatcher Travis, on the telephone, as usual. The bus has a look that only a lived-in tour bus or an ocean-going sailboat can achieve, the sense of a full household crammed into a small space. To achieve this effect, pick a room in your house, then start stuffing it with everything you’ll need for a couple of months—clothes, food, diversions, anything you can think of.

Lib puts the phone down.

“I don’t know what’s going on,” she says emphatically.

She sighs.

“Remember the old days?” she asks. “You could look at our schedule and know where we were going to be, what we were going to be doing, any day of the week, of the month. Heck, we even knew what we were going to eat. When Evelyn Shriver, our publicist, couldn’t think of anything to cook, she’d call us up and ask what was on the menu for that day. All that’s over with, now.”

She sighs again.

In fact, Lib and Randy haven’t been home to Nashville in seven months. They show me photographs, which is as close as they’re likely to come to it—Randy’s horses exercised by their trainer. The house in Maui also sits empty, the perfect blue waves rolling unwatched onto the beaches.

How, I ask Lib, did this happen?

“The movies happened,” she says. “Movies aren’t like the

music business. In music, you have a tour schedule, and you can plan around that schedule. But when we decide to take a movie part, it's all of a sudden drop everything and get on the set, sometimes working 10 or 12 hours a day. You're barely able to catch your breath, much less plan something."

But like the music business, you have to move when you're hot. After the *Frank and Jessie* HBO movie, where Randy played outlaw Cole Younger, more and better offers started coming in. While the movie itself garnered bad reviews, Randy, who also served as the movie's narrator, came off extremely well. After that, the next biggest catch was this movie he's working on now, *A Holiday to Remember*.

Randy troops in for lunch break, which gives the crew a chance to manhandle the camera back into the farmhouse.

Does he, I ask, feel the pressure of being on-screen more?

"Yes, I do," Randy replies. "And a lot of that pressure is never having played this type of role before. Most of what I've done is be a cowboy, you know. And that's pretty easy for me. That comes pretty natural. And, you know what, Michael? I've discovered that it's a lot easier playing a mean guy! When you've got to be somebody with a heart, that's kinda hard to play."

Randy is talking about director Judd Taylor's excellent instructions when there's a knock at the bus door.

"Randy?" says a person at the door with a radio. "We need you in make-up. Right now."

He stands up, grins and shrugs, then heads for the make-up trailer.

"See what I mean?" says Lib. "It's all out of control."



DENISE E. JACKSON

Once again, Randy Travis, ne: Randy Traywick, has arrived at a strange and unlikely point in an even stranger and more unlikely career.

I'm always reminded of the police officer who showed up at a Randy Travis show in North Carolina years ago to present Randy, "with the last pair of handcuffs I ever took you to jail in." A blushing superstar accepted the chrome-plated handcuffs with his characteristic grace.

"You know," the officer told me as Randy headed off for the stage, "of all the possible futures I saw for that boy, this one is sure as heck the least likely."

Perhaps more than any other young—he is, in fact, still in his 30's—singer, Randy Travis embodies not just the music of a different era, but that era's sense of style and stardom as well. In a sense, he has more in

common with a "Gentleman Jim" Reeves or Eddy Arnold than a Garth Brooks. It has to do, I think, with the relationship between the artist and the audience. When country music was younger, there was clearly a different relationship between country stars and country fans than between pop stars and pop fans. Country stars were never that far from "real life"; the audience perceived the stars as people just like themselves, with real lives and loves and problems and joys. As the country market has grown, the nature of the country star has changed, becoming the larger-than-life caricature that has always been the signature of the rock star or mega-actor. I have sat at a bar and traded drinks with Willie Nelson, but, somehow, I can't imagine doing the same thing with Mick Jagger, or Harrison Ford. I've tried to quantify that difference, and the best I can come up

with is it's the difference between adulation and love. Now that country is and has been the biggest music in America, and country stars are no different from rock stars, there's plenty of adulation, but not much love.

The great gift of Randy Travis, aside from that voice, is his ability to straddle the eras, to be a star in the contemporary sense while, at the same time, retaining a unique, and old-fashioned, bond with his audience. That really came home to me on ... other set, where Randy was, as usual, signing autographs for the other actors, crew, caterers, all the people on the set. I'd been talking to the guest star, and we paused in our conversation to watch Randy have his picture taken with yet another group of people.

"They love him, don't they?" the actor said, shaking his head with something like wonderment.

Or the crew person, who told me about working sets all over the country, with hundreds of different "celebrities."

"Randy's different," he said. "He's...well, he's real."

He's working the lunatic schedule because he wants to be an actor; he already is a star. Not surprisingly, acting represents a long-term commitment—not a turn away from music, but an addition to an already sterling career.

Eventually, he and I pick up where we left off, talking about his three-year apprenticeship in front of the cameras.

"Actually, the more I think about it, it's closer to four years," he says. "That first thing on *Matlock* was about three years ago, and



In Toronto filming *A Holiday to Remember* with Connie Sellecca (above and below, right), Randy ran into the usual delays, but bad weather, fake snow and even his wife Lib's broken foot (below, left) didn't stop the filming. Writer Michael Bane (left) took it all in.



PHOTOS: DENISE E. JACKSON

that bit on *Young Guns* was before that. You know, you have a name in the music business, and that doesn't mean a single thing when you go in to the movies or television. You say, 'I want to act,' and they say, 'Big deal. Lot of folks out there want to act.' So you have to kind of accept what comes your way for a while. I mean, you don't want to go out and do a slasher movie or something like that, or *Cheerleaders 17*, but your roles are limited."

Finally, though, the roles are getting juicier. He's reading for a part in the new film by action director Renny Harlin, who contacted Randy and asked him to read for the part. Should he get it, he'll have to hold actress Geena Davis (also Mrs. Renny Harlin) hostage.

Just tell me where I need to be, Randy...

We also talk about his most recent album, *This Is Me*. Critics hailed the record as definitely his best album since the first, legendary *Storms of Life*, and several critics placed *This Is Me* as Randy's best album ever. Despite two Number One singles off the album and impressive sales, *This Is Me* didn't dominate the overheated, Hunk-of-the-Week radio market as some earlier Travis hits had.

I tell Randy that, to me, *This Is Me* was a very personal album, a statement.

"Well, it was," he says. "I thought it was one of the best albums we've had since *Always and Forever*. And it was a Gold record, but that's nowhere near the four or five million we've been having for a while. Still, maybe that's the nature of the business. I'd have loved to have seen a couple of more singles come off it, but, you know, record companies are funny about that sort of stuff. It aggravated me a little bit, that they wouldn't put out another single. We just came right out and said we want to see this happen. I don't know. I think there were a couple of other cuts on there that could have been Number One hits..."

But, he continues, there's no way to figure the business. The two Number One hits off the album didn't drive sales, but the third release, "The Box"—a classic Randy Travis song if there ever was one—kicked album sales into high gear.

"But 'The Box' didn't get to Number One," he says. "Explain that to me."

Unfortunately, he adds, too much boils down to the politics of the business.

"There's just no way of getting around it," he says.

Did you, I ask, ever figure you'd be the Grand Old Man of country music at age 36?

"No," he says, "but it's kind of funny, though. I just think it's humorous. You know what, though, Michael? I take it as a compliment, because I think it's meant that way."

The movies, to me, make sense, but what does Randy Travis want to do musically?

"Well, you know, I can't do too many different kinds of music," he says. "I'm a traditional singer, and there's not much else you can make out of it. I'd sound like a nut trying to do anything else. What I want to do is make another great album and see how it does. Sounds simple, doesn't it?"

There are other ideas floating around—an album of 50's and 60's hits, similar to "Just a Matter of Time."

"I'm not totally dismissing that," Randy



PHOTOS DENISE JACKSON



Next stop Salt Lake City for *Touched By an Angel*. There Randy appeared with William Moses (above right) and director Gene Reynolds of *M*A*S*H* fame (above left). His next venture will be *Edie & Pen* co-produced by Victoria Tennant (below).

says. "Not the next album, but maybe the one after that. When you listen to a lot of that stuff, the Brook Benton songs, for instance, that was great music, and I wasn't really aware of that until, gosh, these last eight years—you know the music I grew up with. Daddy would've shot the radio if he'd heard stuff like that on it. 'We play Ernest Tubb here, boy!'"

Randy lights up, though, at the mention of songwriting.

He has an extensive catalog of songs he's written or co-written, although you wouldn't know it from reading the fine print on record albums.

"Now that's something I'd really like to do," he says. "An album of all my own songs. And I might have that already. We did a deal with Sony/Tree Publishing recently, and I sent 75 of my songs over there, and that was just a drop in the bucket."

I have to admit that number surprises me, because Randy has never been the fastest of songwriters.

"Well, that's over the past 10 or 15 years," he says. "I discovered there are probably 200 songs in the publishing company, and I don't even remember most of them! I'll bet I remember maybe a quarter of them. The others were just like new material to me. Man, I



couldn't even remember the titles... Nope, don't remember this one...Nope, don't remember that one, either...For some reason, over the last ten years, I haven't sat down and weeded through the catalog."

Could it be, I suggest, that Randy's been moving too fast?

"Ha! That could be it," he says.

There's the ubiquitous knock on the bus door, followed by an apologetic head.

"Five minutes, Randy."

Lib rolls her eyes.

If anything, the weather the next morning is even worse, big fat snowflakes that miraculously turn into mud upon hitting the ground. Lib starts the day by stepping out of the bus, slipping on the wet ground and breaking her foot. We manage to lift her into the bus, and arrange for someone to meet us at the set. Lib, who recently went through knee surgery, is in a lot of pain. Not to make a Lib joke, but she's in so much pain that she can't talk on the cell phone, which worries Randy and me a lot.

When we get to the set, all those people who have radio and carsets are racing around looking for Randy. Obviously, he wants to stay with his wife.

"Go," she says to Randy.

"Stay with her," Randy says to me. And so we're off to the hospital. Here is the difference between Canadian and American hospitals—nobody asks us how we are going to pay. After a bout of x-rays, the doctors announce that Lib's foot is indeed broken in no less than two places, and that means a cast and crutches.

"Great," she says. "Just great."

When she's at her most contorted, with the doctor slathering on the plaster, I peak around the curtain.

"Lib," I say. "I have a camera. This one's for the *Enquirer*."

"Someday, Michael," she says darkly, "I'm going to kill you."

Later, however, I get to sign her cast.

When we get back to the set, they're frantically trying to shoot about a million pages of dialog in a single afternoon. Guys are unrolling fake snow like there's no tomorrow.

"It's hopeless," Lib says. Randy agrees. "What are you doing next week? We'll be in Salt Lake City, filming an episode of *Touched By an Angel*. Things will be a lot calmer then. Really."

It is snowing in Salt Lake City, and the whole place looks amazingly like Toronto. Another set; another zillion people milling around.

"Guess what?" says Randy. "It's almost as hectic as Toronto."

Why, I say, am I not surprised?

Lib hobbles down the narrow aisle of the bus and gives a weak grin.

"This," she says, indicating her still-swollen leg, "is not fun."

"Five minutes, Randy!"

He grins, shrugs and grabs his jacket. Lib sighs and props up her foot. "Control," she says. "Everything is still out of control."

When, I ask, are they headed back to Nashville?

"I don't know."

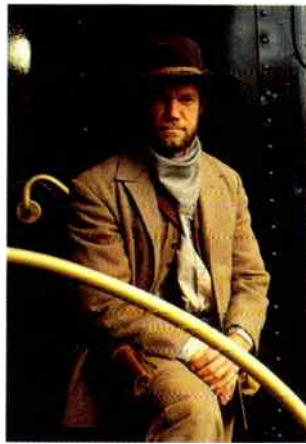
How about Maui?

"I don't know."

Want to go to dinner tonight?

Lib sighs. "I want to, but I just don't know."

Touched By an Angel, starring Roma Downey and Della Reese, has been something of a surprise hit. Randy starred in



When he first started acting, Randy's roles were mostly cowboys, as in *Frank and Jesse* (left) and *Wind in the Wire* (below) with Chuck Norris and Melanie Chartoff. Now offers of other types are coming in, and Randy's excited.



STEVEN WINIKOWSKI

an episode last year, and he's been asked back for a special.

Randy comes back in from the set, and we sit down for the on-again, off-again interview.

"The movie stuff, it might come around," he says. "I don't see myself as being a great actor by any means, but I want to learn to be a competent actor. And I feel like I'm getting more comfortable with each project I work on."

You've come a long way, I say.

"I had a long way to come," he says.

You know what's hardest, he asks?

"Learning to say lines that someone else has written for you," Randy continues. "When we talk, we think nothing about the way we sound. But once you take a script that someone has written for you and you read it, you start hearing every word you're saying, and you start saying, 'Would I really say this that way if I was in my house saying this?'"

How about emotions, I say. Not just words, but emotions that people have written for you?

"Yep. You're mad at this point," he says. "You know what I've figured out? I'm never going to be an Al Pacino or a Robert DeNiro, but I want to try and make each part work

for me. People like Pacino, DeNiro, Robert Duvall, I'm just in awe of the talent these guys have. Watching them on film is remarkable. But, at the same time, I really love the guys who are basically themselves, the Eastwoods, Burt Reynolds. There's such a genius in what they do. I hope that's the line I can go in."

We drift off into favorite movies, then favorite performances in favorite movies, then favorite actors in obscure movies. Every so often, Lib says, "Hey, you guys want to get back to the interview?"

So here is Randy Travis, once again at a turning point. As an actor, he has come very far, using persistence, dogged intelligence and a willingness to learn from everyone around him.

As a country music singer, he changed the world. Say what you will about the artists who followed him, but it was Randy and his music that redefined the very concept of country music. He is a singer and writer of classics, and it's hard to ask for more.

Perhaps more importantly, he remains the same person I met so many years ago at a honky tonk in Chattanooga, his voice shredded from too many long nights in smoky bars, trying one more time to make it singing not the music Nashville wanted to hear, but the music he heard in his head. The music Lib Hatcher believed in. It's hard to go through the star-making machinery and remain true to yourself. But if you do, I believe your audience, your fans, will know. And they will reward you not with adulation, but love.

It's late, and we're starting to get punchy. The filming's over; the zillions of people have hugged and kissed and gone home, the Real Artificial Snow packed up for the day.

"I hope I have a few good years of recording left," Randy Travis says, laughing. "I hope I have a few good *shows* left."

"You're not going to keep us up until four in the morning like you did that time in the bus in Tampa," Lib says sternly. "Randy's got to sleep."

Randy is beyond laughter, just giggling now.

"Well," I say, "that's what happens when you start young..."

"You *end* young!" laughs Randy Travis. Lib just rolls her eyes. ■



BILLY DEAN

World Radio History

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

BILLY DEAN

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Given Name: William Harold Dean
Birthdate: April 2, 1962
Birthplace: Quincy, Florida
Family: Father, William Sr.; mother, Odean; wife, Cathy; son, William Eli; daughter, Hannah
Musical Influences: Merle Haggard, James Taylor, Billy Dean Sr.
Hobbies: All water sports, basketball, reading

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'4"
Weight: 215
Color eyes: Green
Color hair: Brown

Recording Career

Record label: Capitol Records, 3322 West End Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Album	Release Date
<i>Young Man</i>	1990*
<i>Billy Dean</i>	1991*
<i>Fire in the Dark</i>	1993*
<i>Greatest Hits</i>	1994
<i>Men'll Be Boys</i>	1994
<i>It's What I Do</i>	1996

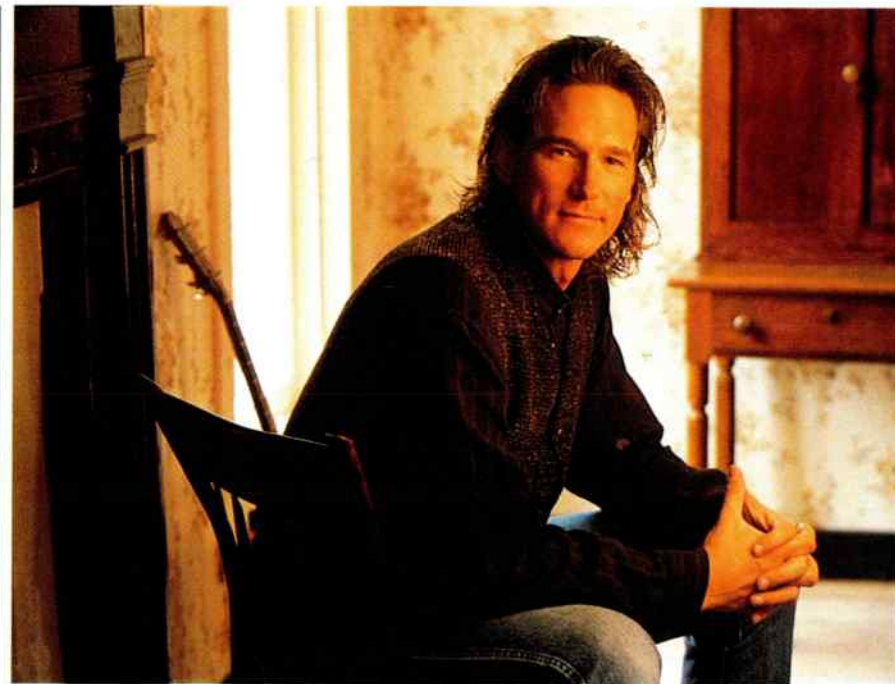
*Gold album (sales of 500,000 units)

Other Album Appearances

Duet with Dolly Parton, "(You Got Me Over) A Heartache Tonight," *Slow Dancing with the Moon*.
"Saturday Night," *Common Thread: The Songs of The Eagles*.
"Once in a While," *8 Seconds Soundtrack*.

Singles

"Only Here for a Little While"
"Somewhere in My Broken Heart"*
"You Don't Count the Cost"
"Only the Wind"
"Billy the Kid"*
"If There Hadn't Been You"*
"Tryin' to Hide a Fire in the Dark"
"I Wanna Take Care of You"
"I'm Not Built That Way"



"We Just Disagree"
"Once in a While"
"Cowboy Band"
"It's What I Do"
*Number One single

Awards

1996: Grammy, Best Country Gospel Album, *Amazing Grace* (Various Artists), (Duet with Susan Ashton on "In the Gardens")
1993: CMT Rising Star Award; TNN Songwriter Award, "Billy the Kid"; BMI Country Songwriter Awards, "Billy the Kid" and "Somewhere in My Broken Heart"; BMI Million Airplays Award, "Somewhere in my Broken Heart"
1992: Academy of Country Music Song of the Year, "Somewhere in My Broken Heart"; Academy of Country Music, Male Vocalist of the Year

Fan Club

Billy Dean Fan Club, P.O. Box 870689, Stone Mountain, Georgia 30087.

TV Appearances

ABC *In Concert* (hosted 1994 season), *One Life to Live* (guest appearance), *Lois & Clark* (guest appearance), *Tonight Show*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS This Morning*, CNN, *Live with Regis & Kathie Lee*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *John & Leeza*, *TNN Country News*, *Music City Tonight*, *Wildhorse Saloon*, *Nashville Now*

Quotable Quotes

"I will never forget the big words of wisdom my father gave me about my desire to be an entertainer: 'Son, it won't surprise me if you make it, but it would surprise me if you didn't.'"

"I know now what my priorities are. My family matters above all else, but I know that my music is a part of me just like my family is. I'm really enjoying myself now. I love what I'm doing."

I Watched My Next Door Neighbor Dispose Of Half Of Her Husband's Body ... And I Didn't Call The Police

By Jackson W. Trumball, Jr.

Did you ever notice that when you're fat, people actually stare at you while you eat. It's as if they want to tap you on the shoulder and say, "If you wouldn't eat that stuff, you wouldn't be so fat!"

Hello. My name is Jack Trumball. You don't know me from Adam. But I'm a real person. I live near Sandy Springs, Georgia. And, up until two years ago, I was the fat guy that everyone was staring at.

I was too tired to go out with my friends at night. I waddled when I walked. I'd sweat while I ate. My stomach hung out from under my shirt. I wasn't just "overweight." I was fat. I was 5'11" and weighed 271 pounds.

My next door neighbors both suggested that I see a doctor. And I agreed. But I wasn't optimistic. I'd tried 16 different diets. One by one. And I failed at all of them.

When I went for my appointment, the doctor listened carefully. Then, he recommended an entirely different program. This wasn't a "diet." It was a unique new weight-loss program researched by a team of bariatric physicians — specialists who treat the severely obese. The program itself was developed by Dr. James Cooper of Atlanta, Georgia. It works well for both men and women.

I started the program on May 17th. Within the first four days, I only lost three pounds. So I was disappointed. But during the three weeks that followed, my weight began to drop. Rapidly. My "beer belly" began to disappear. I felt great! Within the next 196 days, I went from 271 pounds to 198 pounds.

The reason the program worked was simple: I was *always* eating.

I could eat *six times every day*. So I never felt deprived. Never hungry. I could snack in the afternoon. Snack before dinner. I could even snack at night while I was watching TV.

How can you eat so much and still lose weight?

The secret is not in the amount of food you eat. It's in the *prescribed combination* of foods you eat in each 24-hour period. Nutritionally dense portions of special fiber, unrefined carbohydrates, and certain proteins that generate a calorie-burning process that continues all day long ... a complete 24-hour fat-reduction cycle.

Metabolism is evened out, so fat is burned away around the clock. Not just in unhealthy spurts like many diets. That's why it lets you shed pounds so easily. Without hunger. Without nervousness.

And it's all good wholesome food. No weird stuff. You'll enjoy a variety of meats, chicken, fish, vegetables, potatoes, pasta, sauces — plus your favorite snacks. Lots of snacks.

This new program must be the best kept secret in America. Because, up until now, it's *only been available to doctors*. No one else. In fact, the Clinic-30 Program has been used by 142 doctors in the U.S. and Canada to treat more than 9,820 patients. So it's doctor-tested. And proven. This is the first time it's been available to the public.

There are other benefits too ...

- There are no amphetamines. No drugs of any kind.
- No pills. No powders. No chalky-tasting drinks to mix. Everything's at your local supermarket. No special foods to buy.
- There's no strenuous exercise program.
- You don't count calories. Just follow the program. It's easy.
- You eat the foods you really enjoy. Great variety. Great taste.
- You can eat out.

But *here's* the best part ...

Once you lose the weight, you can keep it off. Permanently! Because you're not hungry all the time.

Let's face it. We all have "eating lifestyles." Our eating habits usually include three meals a day. Plus two or three snacks. We all love snacks. Especially at night.

But most diets force us to change all that.

And that's why they fail!

The Clinic-30 Program lets you *continue your normal eating lifestyle*. You can eat six times a day. You can snack when you wish. So, when you lose the weight, you can keep it off. For good. Because no one's forcing you to change.

Here are some of the women who benefited from the Clinic-30 Program just as I did —

• Mary Beth Kaminski is a 42-year-old school bus driver.

"I've lost almost 50 pounds in 4 1/2 months. I'm not having a rebound gain. There's almost too much food ... I can hardly eat it all."

• Karen R. is a nurse who went from 212 to 148 in only 196 days.

"I believe I was a participant in every weight-reducing plan there ever was — even hypnosis. About two years ago, I

started the Clinic-30 Program. I lost 64 pounds and I haven't regained a pound."

And then there's me.

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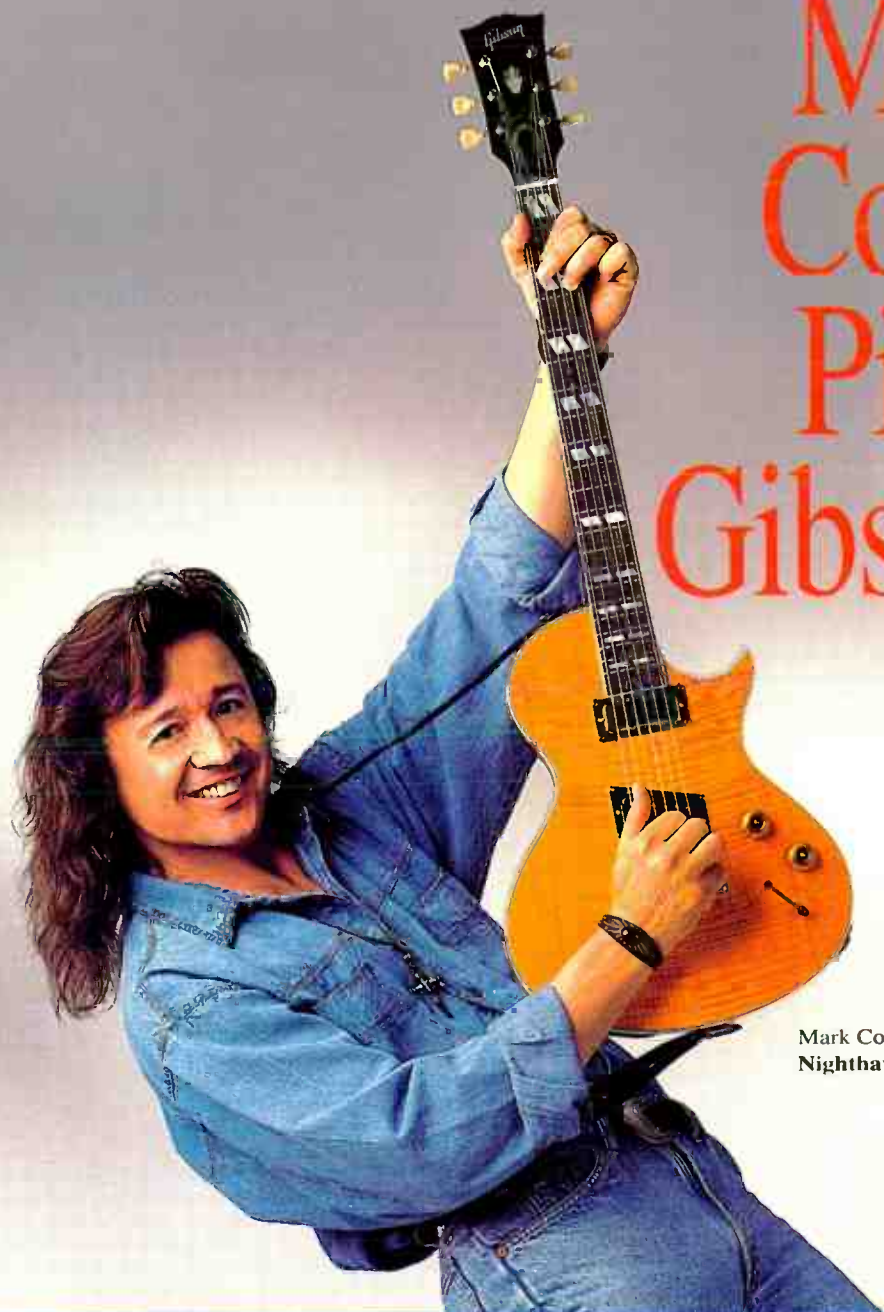
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Terri Clark

From Tootsie's to the Top of the Charts

*She's bright, she's articulate, she's talented, she has a hit record and she wears a hat, too. * By Bob Allen*

When it comes to picking newcomer Terri Clark out of country's newest brigade of fresh female faces, there's a simple trick: Just look for the hat.

"It's funny," Clark, 27, laughs hesitantly when this is mentioned. "I wonder if Clay Walker or Garth Brooks get asked that very much? But because I'm the only one wearing a hat these days, I guess I sort of understand."

As she mulls over the persistent "hat" question, the Canadian-born Clark is sitting—sans white Stetson—in the Music Row offices of Mercury, the label that recently released her fine debut album, *Terri Clark*, with much fanfare. This afternoon, Clark is evidently taking a break from her cowgirl persona. She's clad in black boots, black Wranglers and an elegant looking black leather jacket bearing the official Harley Davidson insignia.

With "When Boy Meets Girl," the second single from *Terri Clark*, giving both Faith Hill and Shania Twain stiff competition at the top of the charts, Clark has had a long day of interviews and promotional calls to country stations. Yet, as dusk gathers outside on 17th Avenue, she pauses, glances out the window and considers this matter of the hat a little more.

"I wore hats a lot as a kid when I was growing up in Medicine Hat, Alberta," she says. "I wasn't a cowgirl or anything—I sort of grew up in suburbia...but I helped my dad dig out the basement," she adds with a hearty guffaw. "Does that count for anything?"

"Later, after I moved to Nashville out of high school and was working selling boots, I wore one. And I do remember that I had one on one day when I went into [producer] Don Cook's office. He just said, 'That looks cool, you oughta keep that.' So I took his advice, ya know," she adds with a shrug. "I'm not well known yet, and it does kind of set me apart." She considers this and chuckles. "I'm sure,

to just about anybody, all of us new artists tend to blend together after a while."

Maybe the Stetson, as natural as it looks, is part affectation: a clever visual "hook" to help her grab a little toehold in today's fiercely competitive, talent-heavy country market where, now, as always, the key to building a fan base is getting the public to match up your face with your songs on the radio.

If indeed that's what it takes to get a toe in the door, then the music on *Terri Clark*, her fine debut, is already making it swing wide open. Clark's first album is a dead-on success with its vibrant, neo-traditionalist groove tempered with savvy, inspired original songwriting and high-spirited vocal performances. (Clark wrote or co-wrote nearly all of the 12 cuts on *Terri Clark*.) It's the sort of confident, consistent beginner's effort that easily won her last year's *Billboard* Top New Female Vocalist award, along with a spot as George Strait's new opening act. On her first two singles, "Better Things to Do" and "When Boy Meets Girl" (both of which hit the Top Five), Clark sounds a bit like Patty Loveless. Or an earlier, fresher version of Reba McEntire—before she retired her cowboy hat.

"I wanted to keep the musical side of it traditional, with some contemporary elements thrown

in." Clark explains of her album, which was co-produced by Keith Stegall (Alan Jackson's long-time producer) and Chris Waters. "And to get that, Chris spent the better part of a year with me in pre-production and co-writing songs. I wanted the lyrics to be very bareboned and earthy. If I wouldn't say something in conversation, then I wouldn't say it in a song."

Co-producer Keith Stegall, head of Mercury's A&R department, who also recently released a fine solo album of his own, helped Clark come up with the somewhat goofy handle for her sound: "Turbo Country." To the unschooled, the term might suggest Clark's music has some affinity with the raun-

chy country-blues of ZZ Top, or some vague similarity to Motley Crue doing the hits of Hank Williams. Yet Clark likes the term and has decided to run with it.

“Keith and I were flying home from a showcase one day, and we were talking about [fellow Mercury artist] Wesley Dennis and how traditional his sound is,” Clark recalls. “And I asked Keith, ‘What would you call my music?’ He looked out at the jet engine and said, ‘Turbo Country.’ It sort of stuck, and I’ve got it on the back of my T-shirts now. What it means is, traditional music with an edge, a flair and an attitude that’s just me.”

An abundance of this “edge” and “attitude” is also captured in Clark’s earliest publicity photos and the cover shot of *Terri Clark*. In these pictures, she scowls sternly but provocatively out at the world from beneath the brow of her white Stetson. She’s wearing a white T-shirt with the sleeves rolled up, revealing biceps that would no doubt be the envy of Clay Walker or Bryan White. (*USA Today* referred to the 5’ 11” singer as a “biceps-baring country Amazon.”) She looks—as an anonymous somebody at her record label once slyly joked—“like she’d bleep your eyes out, then beat the bleep out of you.” (Fill in the bleeps as you like.)

“I wanted to look great in my first photos and videos that went out to the public. First impressions are very important,” says Clark, who dropped 30 pounds and spent many weeks in the gym in preparation for her official coming out. “But the truth is, I’m no tough girl,” she adds with a cackle and an embarrassed toss of her head. “I’m very soft-hearted. I’m really just a big, goofy baby. I’m not into arm-wrestling, and I’ve never even been in a screaming match. If something goes wrong, rather than fight, I’d go into a corner and cry.”

In person, Clark does indeed come through in softer focus. In fact, she’s downright beautiful—even though she frets over the five or six pounds she insists she’s put back on since that first photo shoot. She’s tall, rangy and slightly gawky, and she’s got this hearty, endearing laugh—actually something between a breathy giggle and a guffaw—that breaks loose in giddy peals when the discussion gets too self-serious.

Yet, make no mistake about it: beneath the “aw shucks” demeanor and goofy laugh there’s a streak of determination that’s about a mile wide and seven years long. And she’s needed every inch and every minute of that streak since she came to Nashville in the late 1980’s.

“There was a point, after I’d been in Nashville quite a few years and had been turned down by most labels and had been promised the moon, then lied to and told no by others, that it was starting to get really hard,” she recalls, gently biting her lip. “It got to where I’d been in town for eight years and nothing much had happened, and for the first time I was kind of borderline wondering if I was really supposed to be doing this.”

Up until then, Clark had been more or less blessed by a dreamer’s naiveté and had seldom harbored such self-doubts. At least not since she was nine years old back in Medicine Hat, in Western Canada and picked up her mother’s guitar for the first time. From then on—at least until these later heartbreaks in Nashville—she let her music set the course.

A lot of her confidence, she explains, came from a very supportive family in which music went back at least two generations. Her mother was a self-styled folk singer. (“A child of the 60’s, she loved Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, The Beatles.”) Her grandparents, Ray and Betty Gauthier, were fixtures on the Canadian country music circuit for years. During the 50’s and 60’s they frequently opened shows for Nashville stars of the day like Johnny Cash, George Jones and Little Jimmy Dickens.



“Nanny, my grandmother, sang a whole lot of Kitty Wells, and later, when I moved to Nashville and started singing at Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge for \$15 a day plus tips, that’s all I’d sing. My grandpa liked to sing that old blues song, ‘Frankie and Johnny,’ that Jimmie Rodgers used to sing. He’s 80 years old, and still singing it today. They’d retired from performing before I was born, but I used to go over to these jam sessions at their house. They’d sing and play guitar with all their musical friends, and I’d just watch for hours.”

When she was a little older, Clark became such an avid Barbara Mandrell fan that as punishment when she was naughty, her mother would take the knobs off the TV so she couldn’t watch *The Barbara Mandrell Show*. Clark spent all her money buying fan magazines with articles about Mandrell, The Judds and other favorites—all of which she diligently pasted into her scrapbook. By the time she was a teenager, her parents had divorced, but her mother encouraged her with her singing, driving her to local talent contests and laying plans for her eventual move to Music City.

“I didn’t know a soul in Nashville,” Clark recalls. “It’s a long, long way from Medicine Hat, about 2,000 miles. It’s not like I could go home for dinner! I rode down there with my mom and a family friend, with all my stuff packed into our friend’s Honda Civic, and we made a vacation of it.”

She sighs and slowly shakes her head. “The day I walked into Tootsie’s cold and got my first job singing was the day Mom and our friend went home. God, it was awful. Back then, Lower Broadway, where Tootsie’s is located, was so rough that I’d tie my purse to my wrist so it wouldn’t get snatched. That first day, on my way home to the place I’d rented, I got off at the wrong bus stop on Nolensville Road. It was, like, a hundred and two degrees, I was out there in my cowboy duds, and all these buses just kept passing me and wouldn’t stop. I just bawled my eyes out, thinking what have I done? It was a real leap of faith.” She grimaces at the memory. “I’m glad I was so young and stupid, or I’d never have done it.”

For the next six or seven years, Clark played clubs, waited tables and worked a variety of other day jobs. She’d only been in town a few weeks when she met her future husband, Ted Stevenson, another struggling musician, whom she married in 1990. (“From the first time he met me, he believed in me; he’s always believed I could do this.”) In 1988, she also met manager Woody Bowles, a Music Row veteran who’d been instrumental in launching the career of The Judds, one of Clark’s major, major influences. Bowles stuck with Clark through many years and many label turn-downs before finally attracting the attention of Mercury a couple of years ago.

“Woody never rushed things, because he knew I needed time to grow up and get better as a writer and singer. Which, in retrospect, was just what I needed.

“The best advice I can give anybody who’s trying to do this is, know exactly what you’re gonna do when you finally get a chance to make that first album,” Clark offers as she looks back at her own mistakes. “Because if you don’t know, it’s gonna show. There’s got to be some sense of direction, because in this business you’re going to end up listening to five million people, all giving you different advice and direction.

“The secret is finding people like Woody, and Keith and Chris—whose heart and soul went into this album,” she adds. “You need people like that to help you find out who you are and what you need to be doing. People who will help you find yourself.” ■

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JAMES HOUSE

Lets It All Out



The Soundshop Studio is located just down the road from the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. On a chilly afternoon James House is inside the wood-shingled building working on the follow-up to his breakthrough album, 1995's *Days Gone By*. Today's song is "Harder Than a Man Should Fall," but something is missing on the early run-throughs. Producer Don Cook, a balding man in horn-rim glasses with the warm, moustache-topped smile of a favorite uncle, calls House and the musicians into the control room. Sitting or standing, they arrange themselves in a circle as if they were a basketball team surrounding the coach during a time-out to plot the next play.

Cook wants to know if the verse of the song should come first or the chorus. House, his reddish-brown hair flowing out from under his black Harley Davidson cap and over the collar of his Indian-print flannel shirt, says, "It should start out big, then become small and then big again. The way we're doing it now, it's the same all the way through." Cook says they should try it with the chorus first and the dynamics House has suggested.

Everyone in the circle nods and returns to their positions: Cook at the mixing board, the musicians on the studio floor, and House in the glass closet which is the vocal booth. The singer taps his tan cowboy boots along with the intro and then belts out the chorus with the larger-than-life tenor that's his trademark. He pulls back for a conversational, intimate verse, but then cranks it back up for another chorus. By the time House reaches the bridge, Cook has closed his eyes and is quietly singing along.

It's no wonder House and Cook have returned to the philosophy of "big-little-big"; it worked so well for them on last year's *Days Gone By*, which yielded three Top 40 singles, "Little By Little," "This Is Me Missing You" and "Anything for Love." For example, "This Is Me Missing You," which went to Number Six, starts out with a big, melodic intro, then subsides into a simple guitar strum and House's heartbroken murmur, "If you hear teardrops falling like rain on the rooftops ... this is me missing you." It then builds to a dramatic bridge, where House cries out in big, sustained syllables, "This is the only way to let you know!" It reminded more than one observer of Roy Orbison.

"The reason I've always loved Roy," House says back in the Soundshop lounge area, "is he was never afraid to go over the top. He was never afraid to say he was cry-

ing. That was totally juxtaposed to the John Wayne attitude. Men do cry; they do fall hard. Why hide it? A guy says, 'Yeah, I'm over her,' and the next thing you know he's out in the median strip in his bathrobe screaming her name. It's a great release to let it all out in a song, to just scream it. Hopefully in key.

"Now I don't even pretend to have Roy Orbison's voice," House adds. "I've tried to keep up with 'Crying' by singing along with the radio, and I got left in the dust. But that doesn't mean I can't let out all my feelings the same way. When I do 'Missing You' live, I'll finish the regular arrangement and then I'll do it again with the B-3 organ real quiet behind the last verse. Then I'll really open up on the last chorus; I'll hold out the notes as long as I can and really emote on them. The audience reaction has been great."

Helping House pump up the vocal harmonies on "Take Me Away" from the last album was another noted Orbison fan, Raul Malo of The Mavericks. Malo was first introduced to House when MCA president Tony Brown suggested The Mavericks record "O What a Thrill," the Jesse Winchester composition from the 1989 album, *James House*, which Brown had produced for MCA. The producer had always thought the song should have been a hit, and he wanted to give it another shot with The Mavericks. Not only did the Mi-

ami band follow House's arrangement note for note, but they also invited House to sing background harmonies. So it was only natural that Malo should return the favor.

"That's how I met Don Cook," House explains, "by singing with The Mavericks. I was so impressed with the atmosphere of the session that I picked Cook as my producer when I got my deal with Epic. He kept everything loose, but in a creative sense. His attitude was, 'Let's all work together until we get this right.' Plus, if you're stuck, he's real musical, so he comes up with great ideas to get you unstuck.

"The Mavericks and I love to tease each other," House adds. "They say they did 'O What a Thrill' because my version was so bad, and I say they did it because they didn't have a sound of their own. The truth of the matter is we're all great friends. Raul and I share not just the Orbison influence but that whole 50's-60's country and rockabilly sound."

House first absorbed that sound growing up in Klamath Falls, Oregon, on a 2,500-acre cattle ranch run by his dad and three uncles. When they weren't herding cows, the four older men performed as The

*Influenced by
Roy Orbison
and the 50's and
60's country
and rockabilly
sound, House's
music has the
emotion that sets
him apart
from the rest.*



by Geoffrey Himes



House Brothers, even landing on *The Arthur Godfrey Show* a few times. Forced to choose between hitting the road to pursue a music career and staying at home with their families, the men chose the latter. Many years later that decision inspired House to write "Anything for Love" for his last album. The lyrics describe how his father and uncles "came up five miles short of paradise" and instead invested "their hopes in a wishing well, a white picket fence and a yard full of kids."

"I wrote that while I was sitting on my parents' porch out in Oregon," House explains. "I was thinking how my dad had had such big dreams, how my folks had ended up where they are, and how they're OK with that. It made me realize that paradise is what you make of it. You start off with these impossible goals when you're a kid—you want a hundred million dollars—but eventually you realize you can live on a whole lot less than that."

When House, born in 1960, would play his Beatles records around the house, his uncles would put on Buck Owens' *Live at Carnegie Hall*, and the youngster soon realized one was as good as the other. He soon found himself listening to Owens, Merle Haggard and the other Bakersfield stars on Sacramento's KRKA as often as he listened to the Top 40 rock station. So it was a dream come true this past December when House was invited to sing harmonies on Owens' next album.

After the usual high-school bands and solo gigs in restaurants, House moved to L.A. He found lots of work there, everything from singing harmonies behind Dustin Hoffman in "Ishtar" to recording R&B demos. He landed a production deal with Warner/Curb and actually released *James House* for Atlantic ("It should have been called 'Don't Ever Play This Record,'" House now says). He landed a publishing deal with UNI/MCA, and when his country influences began to resurface in his writing, his publisher sent some demo tapes to Tony Brown in Nashville. Brown was so impressed he invited House to Tennessee.

"I heard Steve Earle and Randy Travis in 1986," House remembers, "and I realized Nashville was where I should be. So I packed up my '65 Mercury Comet with everything I owned and drove east. I walked away from a million-dollar-a-year jingle-singing business, but it was definitely the right move."

Brown soon signed House to an MCA contract and produced 1989's *James House* and 1990's *Hard Times for an Honest Man*. The albums didn't exactly shake up the charts, but they did impress a lot of critics and fellow musicians. Not only did "O What a Thrill" from the first album become a hit for The Mavericks, but "That's What I Like About You" from the second became a hit for Trisha Yearwood.

"I'm still proud of those records," House claims, "but it was a tough time to release a first album, because 1989 was the year Garth Brooks, Clint Black and Alan Jackson all made their debuts. Plus MCA was going through a period of transition from Jimmy Bowen to Tony Brown, and I wasn't their priority. The same thing happened to Vince Gill at RCA. Finally I decided I'd rather not have a record deal than have one that wasn't working."

House was released from his deals with MCA Records and MCA Publishing and signed a publishing deal with Sony/Tree Publishing to support himself while he looked for a new record deal. His only



"You start off with these impossible goals when you're a kid—you want a hundred million dollars—but eventually you realize you can live on a whole lot less than that."

goal was to write songs for himself ("I don't write for anybody but me," he explains, "because I know my voice better than any other"), but he wound up accidentally writing hits for Dwight Yoakam and Diamond Rio. Those singles kept House's name alive in Nashville between his MCA and Epic releases.

"Kostas and I were working on another song one day," House recalls, "when we started joking about old girl friends. He asked me if I was going to go back to this one girl, and I said offhandedly, 'I ain't that lonely yet.' We immediately realized that was a song title, and we were off and running. A little while later Kostas went out to California to write with Dwight and played him about 20 songs. Dwight said he really liked 'Ain't That Lonely Yet' and wanted to record it. I didn't even think about turning him down."

He did think about turning down Diamond Rio's request to record "In a Week or Two," because he was already working on *Days Gone By* by that time. Only when Arista's Tim DuBois promised to make it the first single off Diamond Rio's new album did House relent. "They did it as an Eagles-type song," House points out, "but I've always done it as a ballad. When I do it that way live, I get a good reaction, so I may record it myself some day."

Losing his MCA deal forced House to stop letting life just happen to him. "I shed a lot of distractions around that time," he remembers. "I got married again and had a baby, and being a dad focuses you real quick. I became more disciplined and started going after music five days a week. I got an office, and I was there every day from nine o'clock till three—either writing songs or practicing guitar or making demos or reading books or listening to old records by the masters—anything that would help my career. I wasn't satisfied just cutting a demo of a song; I'd cut it in three different keys with three different arrangements. If it were a shuffle, I'd do it in half-time; if it were in half-time, I'd do it as a shuffle."

House co-wrote seven of the 10 songs on his new Epic album, and the other three "are songs I wish I'd written," he says. He promises that the new songs will have more positive lyrics, because he's feeling better about his own life. But he also says they'll have a harder edge musically, a direct result of playing more than 200 live dates in 1995.

"When you have a band," he notes, "you can come up with grooves that you can't come up with by yourself on acoustic guitar. This past year I've been writing a lot of stuff at sound checks. For example, I'd been playing this one groove for a couple months, and then one afternoon at a sound check at the Tin Hall in Houston, I realized how it could be a song. I rushed to the bus and wrote a verse and a chorus, then I rushed back to the sound check and we played it. It's called 'One Beat at a Time,' and I'm hoping it will be a single."

Now it's time for House to return to the glass closet at the Soundshop and record some vocal overdubs. As he rises from the couch and shakes a reporter's hand, he says, "You know, you can't try to write a big-sounding song, because if you do, it'll end up pretentious. What you do is try to write about the little things in life, and sometimes that unlocks a real big emotion. When you hit that feeling, you have to get as much out of it as you can while you got it." He flashes a quick smile and disappears through a soundproofed door. ■

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KEITH RICHARDS

of The Rolling Stones on his

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Robbie Robertson of The Band once said that rock 'n' roll is really a combination of blues and country. As one of the 20th century's leading practitioners of the style, as defined by Robertson, The Rolling Stones have certainly made their mark as electrifying, hook-laden interpreters of the blues tradition that was pioneered by powerhouse legends such as Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Son House and Elmore James. But their unique interpretation of American country music—as well as their subsequent influence on it—has been just as significant.

An important synthesizer and catalyst of the latter tradition in the band has been their flamboyant and gifted guitarist/songwriter, Keith Richards. As a youngster, Keith took an early interest in country music. For starters, he idolized singing cowboy Roy Rogers, and when he received his first guitar as a teenager, he earnestly tore into the guitar stylings of country and rockabilly greats such as The Everly Brothers, Elvis Presley and Gene Vincent. And even as early as 1964, Keith and The Rolling Stones were recording country-flavored tunes such as "It's All Over Now" and Hank Snow's "I'm Movin' On." A Jagger-Richards composition, the melodic "Sittin' on a Fence," followed in 1965.

But in 1968, Keith's interest in country music was taken to an even higher level. The folk-rocking Byrds, with newest member Gram Parsons, had just released a full-tilt country album called *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, and Keith was absolutely floored by it. In fact, during the fall of 1968, it was one of the most frequently played albums in The Stones' office.

When The Byrds came through London en route to a tour of South Africa, Keith and Mick caught up with them, wine-dined them and dined them. What's more, Gram and Keith hit it off extremely well. They connected not only musically, but psychologically, emotionally and spiritually as well. Like brothers. In fact, Keith talked Gram out of accompanying The Byrds on their tour of racially torn South Africa, and within weeks, Gram was living at Keith's country estate in Sussex.

That's when Keith really began receiving his country music education. "I've always loved country music," Keith says. "It was always a part of my consciousness. But Gram brought out how much I really loved it.

"He started to turn me on to certain classic tracks and certain styles of playing things—George Jones, Merle Haggard, Jimmie Rodgers," he says in Ben Fong-Torres' book, *Hickory Wind: The Life and Times of Gram Parsons*. "We used to sit around at the piano for ages, trying to figure out little licks, and he'd show me the different ways that Nashville will play it from Bakersfield. But not all country. That was the overwhelming impression, but also blues; Robert Johnson...He kind of redefined the possibilities of country music for me, personally."

That redefinition gave Keith and The Rolling Stones a new burst of creative energy. Among the many country-tinged tunes that flowed from Keith's and Mick's pens during this period—1968-1972—were "No Expectations" from *Beggar's Banquet*, "You've Got the Silver," "Country Honk," "Love in Vain" and the title track from *Let It Bleed*, "Wild Horses" and "Dead Flowers" from *Sticky Fingers*, and "Sweet Virginia" from *Exile on Main Street*. Critics, fans and musicians alike agreed that The Stones were experiencing a musical renaissance during this period. In fact, upon hearing *Let It Bleed*, The Band's Robbie Robertson told *Time Magazine* in 1970: "The new Rolling Stones album sounds like a bunch of blues-oriented cowboys, man, no doubt about it..."

So did their classic, twangin'-and-bendin', whiskey-soaked, Number One single during that period, "Honky Tonk Women."

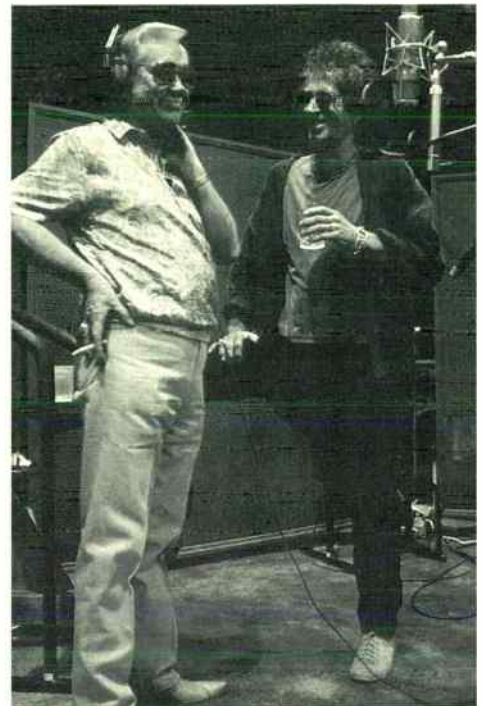
"Mick and I did that on the veranda at a Brazilian ranch in early '69," Keith recalls. "You know that song called 'Country Honk'? That was how it was originally written. All I had was a little guitar I bought off of some guy in Rio. A beautiful little Dobro thing. And we were on the veranda, and there were gauchos. We were in deep country. And that was the way it was written. The next day we polished it up. 'You met her where?' Most of the time we were just kidding around."

Throughout the 1970's, Keith continued to mine the country treasure trove that Gram Parsons had opened up for him. He began experimenting with Nashville-style open tunings on the guitar, and there was even talk of a possible Keith and Gram duet album. Hectic touring schedules prevented the two from formally sitting down in the studio, although Keith recalls more informal, chemically-enhanced sessions between the two musical soul mates at Keith's estate in the south of France.

"Gram and I were so out of it that we wouldn't even know if a microphone was set up or not," Keith says. "We did most of our singing trying to clean up our acts. We'd go through cues together. They always failed. We would do it by trying to sing ourselves out of our misery. 'Excuse me while I throw up...' I've no doubt that there's some stuff [recordings] around. But really, most of it for me—whether it's on tape or not—is up here (points to his head)."

Some of those recordings did resurface in 1977 when Keith entered Interchange Studios in Toronto with Stones keyboardist/confidante Ian Stewart and laid down five gut-wrenching country tunes that Gram had taught him: "Worried Life Blues," "Say It's Not You," "Apartment No. 9," "She Still Comes Around" and "Sing Me Back Home." Although never officially released, the tunes have appeared on a number of bootleg tapes and CD's and are definitely worth seeking out.

In 1978, The Rolling Stones released *Some Girls*, which contained another country gem called "Far Away Eyes"—com-



In the 60's Keith Richards and Gram Parsons explored the heart of country music. Already a fan, Richards went a step further by collaborating with Parsons on various occasions, mostly just for fun. Years later, in Nashville, he came full circle, recording with his hero George Jones, and playing in the studio with Marty Stuart.



plete with a strong hint of Bakersfield in Mick's vocal delivery. Keith adds that his partner has always been a huge Merle Haggard fan, and that could explain the heavy country accent on the track. Even in the 1990's, Keith and The Rolling Stones' affinity and passion for country music never let up. In 1994, after a five-year hiatus, the band regrouped and recorded *Voodoo Lounge*—one of the strongest and most musically dazzling albums in the group's 30-year history. Keith's impassioned ballad, "The Worst," features some stellar pedal steel work courtesy of Ron Wood. And once again, Mick's Bakersfield influence shows. "That's very country, isn't it?" Mick notes about the tune. "Keith sings very pretty on that. I do his backgrounds, and it sounds so Okie. When I listened to it, I said, 'Is that really me singing?' It's really strange."

While in the middle of recording *Voodoo Lounge*, Keith received a telephone call that nearly knocked him for a loop. It was George Jones, one of Keith's country music idols, and he asked Keith to play on his *Bradley's Barn Sessions* album. Keith jumped at the opportunity.

"I had a great time with George," Keith recalls with fondness. "What a guy. It was my first real legit country session, and it took me back to my days with Gram Parsons."

"And one of the songs George and I did on the album is 'Say It's Not You,' a tune that Dallas Frazier wrote and that George had done before. And Gram and I loved it. So now 20 years later, George Jones calls me up and says, 'I'd like to do a track

with you.' It was 'Say It's Not You.'

"I'm in the middle of *Voodoo Lounge*. I said, 'Boys, don't ruin the record while I'm away, but this one I gotta do.'

"I flew to Nashville. And there I met James Burton. And Leon Russell's up there, and Emmylou [Harris]. Plus [Ricky] Skaggs on fiddle, Marty Stuart and Travis Tritt. All the cats.

"It was a privilege for me to play with the guy, and I treasure it. It's a beautifully played album, and we had a ball. I did it for Gram, I did it for George, and I did it for me. And I got the chance to play with James Burton, king of the Telecaster."

Mick also tipped his hat to the country music tradition by dueting with the Irish group The Chieftains on "Long Black Veil"—the title track of their latest release. What's more, The Stones have come full circle with the release of *Stripped*—a 14-track killer featuring acoustic versions of the band's blues- and country-tinted classics, recorded live at club dates in Paris and Amsterdam and during rehearsals for the *Voodoo Lounge* tour. Among the standout tracks spanning more than three decades are "I'm Free," "Wild Horses," "Let It Bleed," "Dead Flowers," "Sweet Virginia" and "Love in Vain," which features an excellent acoustic slide guitar solo by Ron Wood.

"I think the new record is a good way of touching base—kind of like, if you didn't catch it the first time around," Keith says. "...And to the people who gave me the possibility to do this—I ain't gonna let you down. I'll take it as far as I can take it. I can't get off the bus now." ■

Minnie Pearl

1912-1996

When Sarah Ophelia Colley first came to the Opry in 1940, no one, including Colley herself, had any reason to assume she'd be doing any more than a guest spot. A 28-year-old college-educated female with background in drama, classical literature and classical music was a far cry from the rural working class background of most Opry acts.

Before going onstage that first night, she was nervous. Opry founder George D. Hay asked if she was scared. She said that she was. Hay reassuringly replied, "Just love them, honey, and they'll love you back." After her spot, she asked her mother, who was in the audience, how she did. Her mother replied, "Several people woke up." In time, many more did.

Within two years, Minnie Pearl, her unforgettable "*How-Deee!*" and a straw hat with a \$1.98 price tag were trademarks. For the next 49 years she used innocent, authentic country humor to immortalize an unforgettable character.

How she created that character is as fascinating as her success. She was born October 25, 1912, in Centerville, Tennessee, the fifth daughter of Tom Colley, a well-to-do owner of a lumber business. The household was urbane and educated, her mother, Fannie, steeped in the virtues of propriety. But like her father, Sarah also had a feel for earthy humor. Tom Colley even listened to the Grand Ole Opry, though Sarah paid it little mind.

In her teens, her dramatic aspirations grew. In 1930, she enrolled in upper-crust Ward-Belmont College in Nashville, an exclusive women's school, that produced polished, proper Southern women able to teach or perform other tasks in a time when women's options were few.

After graduation, she taught dramatics, dance and piano in Centerville. Then, in 1943, she joined the Wayne P. Sewell production company as a show director. This Atlanta firm produced amateur theater, mostly musical comedies, in local communities with local citizens playing roles. The job threw Sarah Colley into a world far from Nashville's uppercrust institutions, where she came in contact with rural, working class Southerners. During one trip in 1936 she spent time with a fascinating elderly Alabama woman who told her local folk tales in colorful, rural dialect. Sarah drank it in, and as she did, a potential character—one she could use her dramatic skills to portray—developed. As time passed, she added



ideas from her own childhood memories of a local railroad switching station, Grinder's Switch. It would become her fictitious hometown, and the character would become "Minnie Pearl."

When her father died, Sarah went home to be with her mother. There, in 1940, she produced a show for a banker's convention. When a speaker was late, Minnie Pearl filled in, and so impressed a Nashville banker that he suggested that the Opry give her an audition. She only made \$10 that first time at the Opry, but George Hay asked her to come back the next Saturday. When she arrived, she found 300 pieces of fan mail waiting for her. That day she was offered a permanent slot on the Opry.

Minnie wasn't the first Opry comic. Jamup and Honey were on the show, and Sarie and Sally had been there for awhile. Roy Acuff had several comics among The Smoky Mountain Boys. But Minnie filled a need. The innocent country spinster not quite sure about anything except the fact she was so proud to be there, she had ample stories about Grinder's Switch and she desperately wanted a "fella" struck a chord. Touring with Roy Acuff, who gave her frank advice and criticism, Sarah became comfortable with Minnie and refined her act. By 1943 she was a star, on the road with other Opry stars entertaining the troops at U.S. military bases as part of the Camel Caravan. She even had her own Opry newsletter.

When Rod Brasfield, a hometown friend, joined the Opry, he and Minnie began to perform together, though each

also did separate routines. Their comedy clicked. Nearly forgotten in Opry history, Brasfield used an innocent hillbilly personality that allowed him to get away with double-entendre (racy for that time) that no one else would have dared to try. Minnie, who played straight man to Brasfield, was in awe of him. She would work with Brasfield until he died in 1958.

In 1947, the same year she appeared at Carnegie Hall with an Opry troupe, Sarah Colley married Henry Cannon, a former Army Air Corps pilot who became her right hand, piloting her on tours with other Opry stars. A lot of country music history occurred on Henry's plane, including the time Hank Williams and Moon Mullican co-wrote the classic "Jambalaya" in the back seat.

Never really a singer, she nonetheless recorded for King, RCA and Starday. Only one single, a 1966 answer to Red Sovine's "Giddyup Go," made the charts. In 1967 she lent her name to a chicken franchise that lasted a few years before going under, one of her few failures.

Offstage, Sarah Cannon was the urbane, well-educated Southern lady she'd been raised to be. Never did she have a problem deciding where Minnie ended and Sarah began. Rarely was she afforded the opportunity to show off the depth of her drama training, one exception being a straight, non-Minnie role as a crippled evangelist in the 1967 B-movie *That Tennessee Beat*. With an awful script, and Merle Travis and other Nashville singers making attempts at acting that would shame a high school drama club, Minnie's understated performance gave the film its only credible moment. One wonders if she might have achieved even more as a serious character actor had she so desired.

In 1975 she was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. In later years, Minnie rarely toured, but her many years as a star on *Hee Haw*, a show modeled on her style of humor, were a monument to her acceptance by mainstream America. The Opry remained her top priority, and with Brasfield long gone, she often traded quips with others, particularly Acuff, who had helped her polish her original act.

Only the likes of Jimmie Rodgers, The Carters, Hank, Bob Wills, Roy Acuff, Elvis, and a handful more, leave shoes that can't be filled. So it will be with Cousin Minnie. —RICH KIENZLE

Letters

W-W-W-Wynonna

I just wanted to say thanks for finally doing a story and for once a cover on the one and only Mrs. Wynonna Judd-Kelly. The woman is the most talented woman in *music* today. She has a voice that comes along once in a lifetime. We would like to see more on her. I, for one, am sick of that Chihuahua with a red wig on, Reba. Everytime you turn around, there she is. She's good, but, please, All Hail Queen Wynonna. The woman is more of an entertainer than most of those wannabes out there. She should be Entertainer of the Year, but since she doesn't do fancy gowns and Broadway shows for concerts, I guess she'll have to forget it, huh?

Dean Davis
Union, South Carolina

Wy and Revelations

I am writing to let you know how much I appreciate you featuring my favorite country artist, Wynonna Judd, on the cover of your March/April 1996 issue. I also liked the interview written by Bob Allen. Wy's new album, *Revelations*, is, in my opinion, a true blessing from God. I hope all her other devoted fans found as much comfort and peace in this album as I did. Also, many thanks for the nice centerfold on Mark Chesnutt, too.

Kari Celestine
Diboll, Texas

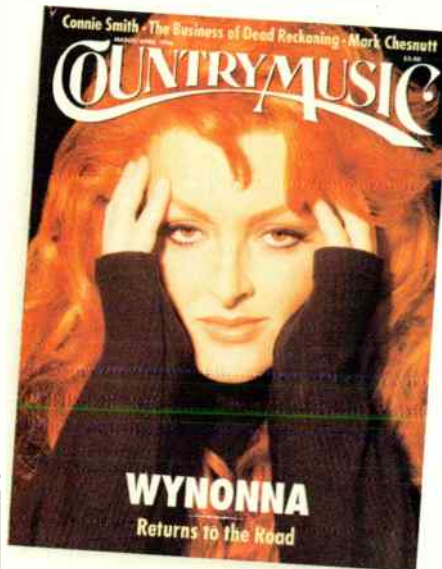
Trisha Rules

Thanks so much for the story on Trisha Yearwood in the January/February issue. I like the Billy Ray Cyrus pullout poster. I also like your magazine a lot. You cover good stories with the Steve Earle article and some of the country music singers' Facts of Life. I am a 14-year-old from North Davidson Middle School "Home of the Rednecks." I am working on becoming a country music singer. I am writing songs and putting them to music with my miniature band that comes to my house wanting to play even at six o'clock in the morning. My band is called Dale and The Outlaws. What do you think about that, CMM?

Dale Heniger
Lexington, North Carolina

Trisha Sticks to Her Guns

Thank you so much for the cover article on Trisha Yearwood in the January/February issue. She's been one of my favorite



artists since I first started listening to country music. I really admire her for having the courage to pick songs that she believes in instead of songs that are guaranteed a reward. However, I don't think it's fair that she's shut out from receiving awards just because she doesn't play the same music as everyone else. That's what makes it so special. I'm glad she hasn't become "another Reba" because that just isn't her style. Keep up the good work, Trisha!

Rachel Moskowitz
Langlois, Oregon

Earle on Fan's Best List

I really enjoyed Patrick Carr's interview with Steve Earle in the January/February issue. He is definitely at the top of my best list. I admire him so much for staying true to his music and not letting Nashville dictate it or him. This leaves one to wonder how many other artists out there are willing to make the sacrifices in order to put the music first and not just seek the Number One song or all the awards and stardom. Steve has proven it can be done, and without country radio. This is a major step that could lead to a different era in country music.

But part of the interview really bothered me: where Steve was referring to Tony Brown's comment. I think Tony was being way too judgmental. Steve, thank you for such wonderful songs and for your determination to remain drug free.

C. Bengel
Huntington, Texas

Forgive and Forget

First of all, that was a great story on Steve Earle in your January/February issue. I love Steve. It's about time people give him a break. And to Tony Brown, who does he think he is, saying Nashville never forgives junkies? What was George Jones, Waylon, Hank Jr. and Willie (still is)? Also I'd like to see a story on Gary Stewart. To me he's right up there with George Strait. He is in a class all by himself. I grew up listening to and loving country music. I started loving Hank Williams, and now today I love George Strait, but there's a lot of good music out there. But give guys like Steve Earle, Gary Stewart and Gene Watson a break. We all make mistakes.

Lisa Long
LaBelle, Florida

Biker to Biker

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your article on Steve Earle. I've been a fan of his writing for 10 years now. I've seen him perform many times, in many venues: Billy Bob's at Ft. Worth, the Arcadia Theatre in Dallas, Forest Park Outdoor Theatre in St. Louis. I even drove from central Missouri to Dallas a few years ago when he did his acoustic tour and performed at Poor David's Pub. He always does an excellent show. I'm pleased to see that other performers are supportive of him—Marty Stuart, Emmylou Harris, etc., and I'm extremely glad that his peers are acknowledging his incredible take on life as expressed in his words.

I'm an older fan—I'm 50. My friends and family laugh because some years ago when I was facing surgery, I made the comment that if I appear to be too far out of it for too long, put the headphones on me, pop in a little Earle: If I don't at least smile, then I am, in fact, dead. It's evolved into a standing order now.

When we ride the cycles, I always wear my skull and crossbones *Copperhead Road* shirt. I'll continue to watch his career with interest and look forward to someday actually meeting him.

Beverly Watson
Ardmore, Oklahoma

Tot to Teen with Earle

I would love to be Patrick Carr! I just got the January/February issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and he did an interview



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QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the July/August 1996 issue.

1. Name the TV movie that Randy Travis was filming when Michael Bane interviewed him.
2. Where in Canada did newcomer Terri Clark grow up?
3. Who recently rejoined The Oak Ridge Boys?
4. Which James House song did Diamond Rio cover?
5. In what year did Minnie Pearl make her Opry debut?
6. The new Chevy Trucks include their most powerful engines ever—the Vortec line. How many miles can you drive one before your first scheduled tune-up?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Arch Kelly III
2. Waylon Jennings
3. Marty Stuart
4. The O'Kanes
5. "Old Enough to Know Better"
6. The bucket seats on Chevy's S-Series Pickup include manual lumbar adjusters for a custom fit that cradles your back.

Chevy Trucks
LIKE A ROCK



with a singer whom I have loved since I was six years old. Steve Earle has changed a lot, but his music still means the same as it did ten years ago. I turn 16 January 30th, exactly two weeks from Steve's birthday.

Please do more stuff on him and don't dis' him for the past he's trying to put behind him.

Tami Sanderson
Watts, Oklahoma

Seekin' Shelby Lynne

Re: your article on Shelby Lynne, January/February issue. I recently purchased Ms. Lynne's *Restless* and *Temptation* CD's and became an instant fan. Your article on her was very insightful, but I am hoping you can provide some additional information. I cannot seem to locate *anyone* who can give me Shelby's concert schedule. Could you help?

Anna E. Williams
Clarksville, Tennessee

Send a SASE to Speer Artists Management, 3201 Dickerson Pike, Nashville, Tennessee 37207.—Ed.

McCall—0/Brooks—50,000,000

Michael McCall, you can just eat every word you said in your review of Garth's album, *Fresh Horses*, in the March/April issue. Do you know Garth personally? Do you know his desires, feelings, thoughts and emotions? Because that is what his music is, him! Do you call yourself a writer? Where do you get off comparing Garth's music to other people's music? Garth Brooks cares about his music and his fans also. You made it sound like Garth threw *Fresh Horses* together in one hour. No! It took a heck of a lot more work than that! I'd love to see you go out there and try to be a very popular singer, and have to watch every move that you make, scared that people like you don't rub your name and music into the ground like dirt. Garth does great music that has special meaning to it. And he's an awesome performer! You give me a call when you sell over 50,000,000 albums, and sell out your very first concert of your tour, 86,000 tickets in two and a half hours for the *Fresh Horses* Tour in Atlanta. I was there, were you? Maybe you just need to go back and change your record review or let me do it!

Brianna Kaiser
Ringgold, Georgia

Memo: To Record Reviews Staff

I was quite taken aback by a reader of your magazine who had written and angrily criticized your record reviews staff for being too "opinionated" and so on.

A record review is essentially that: an editorial of the topic being discussed. It is a collection of personal opinions and objective analysis of the artist's present and past albums. Even if I don't agree with a reviewer's column, I respect and appreciate another person's outlook. Bottom line:

it wouldn't be a "review" if the reviewer's thoughts weren't included. I am a big fan of country music, but I'm also a consumer and wouldn't want to waste my money. To the record reviewers, stick to your guns and always give the most honest review. You have earned my respect.

P.S.—Reviewer Michael McCall, on Clay Walker's *Hypnotize the Moon*: The first paragraph of your review made me smile, and I agree 100 percent.

Wing-Sze Au
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Clay Lover

I can't help writing you about Michael McCall's review of Clay Walker's *Hypnotize the Moon* in the January/February issue. I'm glad his opinion of this album is in the minority! Just look at the Top 25 Albums in the same issue! Clay's album in Number 17, and his single, "Who Needs You Baby," is Number Two!

I'm glad I never go by what a review says anymore. I have all three Clay Walker albums, and, in my opinion, they are wonderful! And, Michael, when I see a record review, I want to read about that album, not your own personal opinions of the album. That was wasted space. Stick to the subject at hand: the artistic merit of the album!

Stacy Johnson
San Antonio, Texas

Another Unhappy Camper

I've seen a lot of my favorite artists cut down by the record reviews of Bob Allen, but never had the urge to write in until I read the review of Tim McGraw's *All I Want* in the January/February issue. I know this album isn't as good as his first (sorry, Tim), but it's really hard to top perfection!

And what about this Michael McCall? I can't say much for him either. His review of *Hypnotize the Moon* by Clay Walker, to put it nicely, sucked. He trashed a very good singer who didn't have anything to do with Clay's album. Rick Trevino was called "a big-selling young cowpoke." Don't you think "goofy novelties" goes a little far?

And I don't see what's wrong with having two great singers, George Strait and Garth Brooks, influence his music. Stick to the subject, guys. I think you should show more respect for these people—without them you would not have a job. I guess you just don't know much about good music.

P.S.—What is a cowpoke anyway?

Brooke Martin
Clarks Hill, Indiana

The Billboards Have It

Country Music is a topnotch magazine, but critic Bob Allen should receive his walking papers. His review on Tim McGraw's album, *All I Want*, in the January/February issue, is atrocious. Tim's

first release off the album, "I Like It, I Love It," was named *Billboard's* Number One Song of 1995. "Not a Moment Too Soon" was Number Three. Mr. Allen obviously hasn't done his homework. He presented Tim as a below average artist with little hope for a future in country music. Mr. Allen obviously can not see talent even when it's flashed all over the billboards.

Charlotte Speir
Lafayette, Louisiana

Back to Crook & Chase

In the January/February issue of *Country Music Magazine*, "The Final Note" by Patrick Carr led me to believe that he has a personal problem with Crook and Chase. He took so many shots at Lorianne that his article sounded more like "The Sour Note." I stayed up several nights a week to watch *Music City Tonight*. I found Crook and Chase to be very entertaining, and in touch with their audience. One of the main strong points of the show revolved around the mix of established and new talent (i.e., George Jones, Asleep at the Wheel and Shania Twain). I am not fond of Wopat's new show because most the entertainment is made up of new "talent" that I have never heard of. I'd rather hear new talent on the radio first. Then, if I like them, I would look forward to learning more about them.

In the meantime, I believe Carr is out of line, and I wish TNN would bring *Music City Tonight* (hosted by Crook & Chase) back.

C.M. Harper
San Ramon, California

"Lost in the Flickering Glow"

I'm writing in regard to your article, "Lost in the Flickering Glow" in Final Note in the January/February issue. First and foremost, I resent the term "boot." Show some respect!

The "dear old" depicts their past audience. We were older and loved Lorianne's clothes and Charlie's attitude. We are beyond the age where we need to impress and be "cool." They were likable people, and I miss them! So do others!

Tom Wopat is obviously trying to be "cool." Is the purpose to market to a younger audience? TNN better consider the needs of middle-aged middle America. I have been conducting my own survey, and my feelings are shared by many. Wopat does not fit the bill.

This sounds like "downsizing" to me, in another form. Wake up, TNN; do not forget us. You may regret it. Many are turning the channel.

Carolyn Johnson
Kencheloe, Michigan

To: Patrick, Re: Ralph

I am a longtime reader of *Country Music* and enjoy it, but "The Final Note" January/February 1996 upsets me since I don't remember any such editorial when *Nashville Now* was dropped.

I have met Lorianne and Charlie several times and was present at the first show that they invited a live audience. They're a nice couple and very entertaining; however, compared to Ralph Emery, they're only pretenders. Ralph is still the best.

Arnold Waltz
Jackson, Michigan

Where Are Crook & Chase?

Please, put in *Country Music* where Crook & Chase are. Certainly hope they have another show. TNN's airways will not be the same. I was a faithful listener. Tom Wopat's show is too far out. Nothing country about it. He won't last.

P.S.—Miss the good band, also.

Clara Kelly
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

The new syndicated Crook & Chase show is already airing in several markets around the country. Hunt and peck on your TV dial.—Ed.

Alternative Suzy

I'm glad to see that someone on your magazine finally recognizes the talents of Suzy Bogguss even though it was an after-thought by Patrick Carr in his January/February Final Note column.

This girl has been grossly ignored by your publication. To my knowledge she has never graced a cover or had a

centerfold; yet she is one of the most photogenic female country stars. Maybe she is too squeaky clean for your readers, unlike cigar smoking Shelby Lynne or drug addict Steve Earle. I like to think of Suzy Bogguss as the female counterpart of Dwight Yoakam. She is an excellent singer and in addition writes some terrific songs for her albums.

P.S.—Have to agree with Patrick on Crook & Chase. I think Tom Wopat will be a welcome change.

Julie Cramer
Davenport, Iowa

About That Wrap...

I've just gotta ask. There has to be a reason to confuse all us hillbillies the way you do. So I've gotta just come right out and ask. Why do you put that cardboard cover on your magazine upside down and backwards?

If you look at the top front of the cardboard cover, and open it, you see the rear of the magazine but upside down. If you turn the magazine so the cover is showing right side up, then close the cardboard cover, you see the rear of it, but upside down. I know you have an excuse. I can't wait to hear it!

Don Brown
Boonsboro, Maryland

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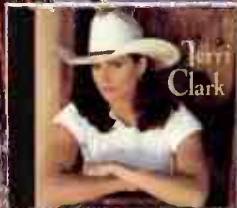


Shania Twain—The Woman In Me (Mercury/Nashville) 119•788



COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Clark Gable—The Last Days of Clark Gable (Mercury/Nashville) 136•291



Patty Loveless—The Trouble With The Truth (Epic) 148•874

David Ball—Thinkin' Problem (Warner Bros.) 487•066
 Rodney Foster—Lahor Of Love (Arista) 489•070
The Tractors (Arista) 488•551
Diamond Rio—Love A Little Stronger (Arista) 487•611
 Kathy Mattea—Walking Away A Winner (Mercury/Nashville) 481•663
 Travis Tritt—Ten Feet Tall And Bulletproof (Warner Bros.) 480•244
 Linda Davis—Shoot For The Moon (Arista) 480•095
 Pam Tillis—Sweetheart's Dance (Arista) 479•683
 Johnny Cash—American Recordings (American) 477•489
 Randy Travis—This Is Me (Warner Bros.) 477•463
Great Wedding Songs—Various Artists (Warner Bros.) 477•448
Best Of Pirates Of The Mississippi (Capitol Nashville) 476•077
 Suzy Bogguss—Grt. Hits (Capitol Nashville) 476•051
Best Of Chris Ledoux (Capitol Nashville) 476•044
 Billy Dean—Grt. Hits (Capitol Nashville) 476•036
 Jeff Foxworthy—You Might Be A Redneck If... (Warner Bros.) 474•833
 Carlene Carter—Little Love Letters (Giant) 461•079
 Tanya Tucker—Greatest Hits 1990-1992 (Capitol Nashville) 458•935
 Sammy Kershaw—Haunted Heart (Mercury/Nashville) 456•541
Brooks & Dunn—Hard Workin' Man (Arista) 454•025
 John Michael Montgomery—Life's A Dance (Atlantic) 453•746
 Randy Travis—Greatest Hits Vol. 2 (Warner Bros.) 448•662
 Kathy Mattea—A Collection Of Hits (Mercury/Nashville) 424•622

Billy Ray Cyrus—It Won't Be The Last (Mercury/Nashville) 463•240
 Dwight Yoakam—Just Lookin' For A Hit (Reprise) 389•718
 Mary Chapin Carpenter—Stones In The Road (Columbia) 101•543
 Joe Diffie—Third Rock From The Sun (Epic) 489•260
Charlie Daniels Band—All-Time Greatest Hits (Epic) 456•608
 Patty Loveless—Only What I Feel (Epic) 454•637
 Joe Diffie—Honky Tonk Attitude (Epic) 454•629
 Collin Raye—In This Life (Epic) 447•268
 Mary Chapin Carpenter—Come On, Come On (Columbia) 440•560
 Doug Stone—Faith In Me, Faith In You (Columbia) 122•739
 Collin Raye—All I Can Be (Epic) 431•445
 Dolly Parton—Something Special (Columbia) 135•822
 James House—Days Gone By (Epic) 118•232

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 Toby Keith (Mercury/Nashville) 458•315
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 Neal McCoy—No Doubt About It (Atlantic) 474•619
Pam Tillis Collection (Warner Bros.) 473•744
 Faith Hill—Take Me As I Am (Warner Bros.) 473•728
 John Michael Montgomery—Kickin' It Up (Atlantic) 473•157
 Lee Roy Parnell—On The Road (Arista) 470•450
Confederate Railroad (Atlantic) 439•158
 Randy Travis—Greatest Hits, Vol. 1 (Warner Bros.) 448•654
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 Clay Walker (Giant) 467•449
 John Berry (Capitol Nashville) 463•265
 Alan Jackson—A Lot About Livin' (And A Little 'Bout Love) 447•458
 Travis Tritt—T-R-O-U-B-L-E (Warner Bros.) 445•767
Freddy Fender Collection (Reprise) 430•334
Brooks & Dunn—Brand New Man (Arista) 423•969
 Billy Dean (SBK/Liberty) 428•987
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 Sawyer Brown—The Dirt Road (Capitol/Curb) 433•656
 Alan Jackson—Here In The Real World (Arista) 406•785

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 Alabama—Greatest Hits (RCA) 123•471
 Sawyer Brown—Greatest Hits (Liberty/Curb) 411•363
 The Judds—Why Not Me (Curb/RCA) 123•679
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 Chet Atkins/Mark Knopfler—Neck And Neck (Columbia) 413•666
 Vern Gosdin—Chiselled In Stone (Columbia) 365•155
 George Jones—Super Hits (Epic) 362•699
 Johnny Cash—Columbia Records 1958-86 (Columbia) 352•765
 Ken Mellons—Where Forever Begins (Epic) 142•240
 Highwaymen—Jennings, Nelson, Cash, Kristofferson (Columbia) 335•067
 Tammy Wynette—Anniversary 20 Years Of Hits (Epic) 352•427
 Ty Herndon—What Mattered Most (Epic) 127•779
 The Highwaymen—Highwayman 2 (Columbia) 401•976
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 Alan Jackson—Who I Am (Arista) 486•233
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name and address. The printing part only works from one side of the machine. The cover of the magazine has to face the other side. So, to get your name to print on the "front" of the mailing wrapper, it has to be "backwards" and "upside down," positioning it next to the "back" of the magazine. Got that? Clear as mud? Take a look at other mags you receive. Sometimes you'll see your name and address printed upside down. That's the way they handle the same problem.—Ed.

Dark Days and Bright Lights

How embarrassing it is having to admit being a country music fan these days. In the past few years, the music I have listened to all my life has been ravaged from top to bottom. The great singers that carried the industry torch for so many years have seen their careers rot away like yesterday's trash, victims of the mass lynching masterminded by sleazy Nashville record executives and feel-good Top 40 radio programmers. Meanwhile, an endless parade of cookie cutter cowboys pollute the airwaves with an insipid barrage of tacky party tunes and mindless novelty songs.

Your magazine is one of the bright lights, however, in the dismal morass of 1990's country music. My friend calls your magazine *The New Yorker* of country music publications, and after reading the work of your talented writers, I must wholeheartedly agree. How refreshing to know that such a fine publication can exist in these, the darkest days of country music.

John W. Waelti

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Throw, Threw, Throwed

This is in response to a letter in the November/December 1995 issue. The letter said, "George Jones didn't learn how to spell worth crap" because he made a statement that said "the older singers had been *throwed* to the wolves." Mr. Jones was not at a spelling bee, he was being interviewed and just telling it like it is! The letter also said George Jones was insulting to the younger generation. Evidently Tim McGraw hasn't been insulted. The first verse of his song, "I Like It, I Love It" says "I *threwed* out my shoulder last night at the county fair." Finally, about the word *throwed* not being in the dictionary. It probably used to be, and somebody didn't understand how country folks talk, and they *threwed* it out. The "Possum" could *sing* that dictionary and make it a hit if he could get some air time to play it.

Betty Aylor

Melbourne, Arkansas

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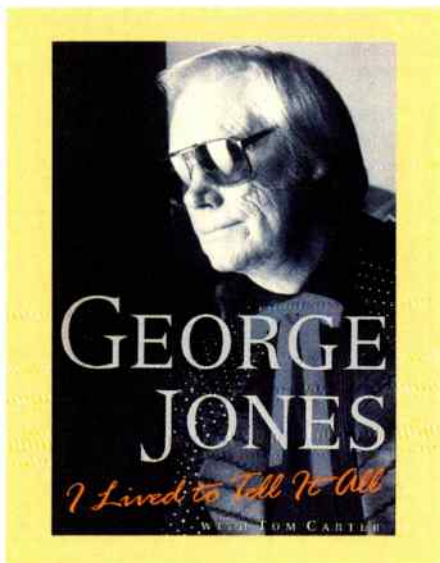
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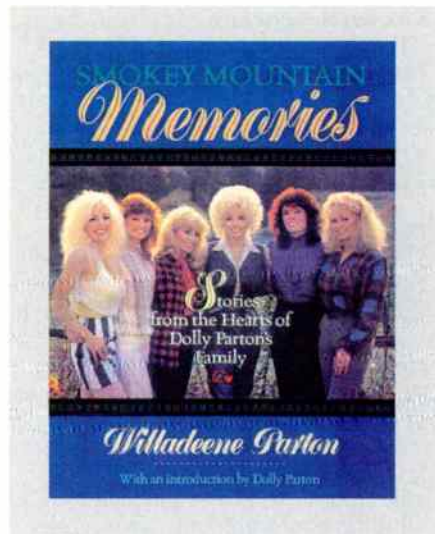
Boozing. Womanizing. Brawling. Singing. For the last 40 years, George Jones has reigned as country's king—the singer many have called the Frank Sinatra of country music. And for most of that time, his career has been marked by hard-living, hard-loving, and hard luck. From his early East Texas recordings through his marriage to

Tammy Wynette to his latest acclaim as solid citizen and “high-tech redneck,” Americans have been fascinated with Jones, never even knowing whether he'd show up for his next concert performance.

For the first time, in his new autobiography, *I Lived to Tell It All*, Jones delivers a no-holds-barred account of his excesses and ecstasies. How alcohol ruled his life and performances. How violence marred many friendships and relationships. How money was something to be made but never held on to. And, finally, how the love of a good woman can ultimately change a man, redeem him, and save his life.

Notorious for evading the press, the subject of two unauthorized biographies and countless cover stories that have offered little in the way of first person revelations, George Jones finally comes forward with his own story, told to Tom Carter (highly respected co-author of books with Ralph Emery, Reba McEntire and others). Complete with never-before-seen personal photos, George Jones' memoir is a classic, candid story of an unforgettable star.

Scheduled for a May release...reserve your copy now and you'll **SAVE OVER \$2.00!** Ask for Item #B10A. Regularly \$23.00, NOW just \$20.95. This is a **ONE-TIME-ONLY** discount offer, so don't miss it. If you read only one biography about one personality this year, make sure it is this fascinating George Jones autobiography.



**SMOKEY MOUNTAIN MEMORIES:
STORIES FROM THE PARTON FAMILY**

This new paperback release is an engaging collection of stories from the Parton family that Dolly's sister Willadeene has been collecting throughout her life. She not only tells of the Parton history, but also reveals the penetrating wisdom and remarkable joy of their current lives. Willadeene's stunning verbal portraits are complemented by favorite pictures from the family albums. Humorous, touching, and remarkably candid, this is an intimate glimpse of a remarkable family, with a special introduction by Dolly Parton. Item B10F, \$14.95.

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE'S ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF COUNTRY MUSIC



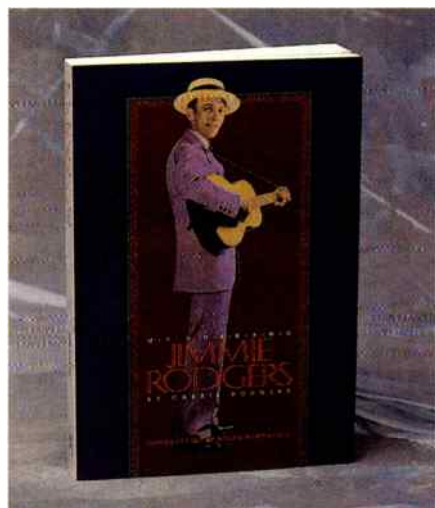
This highly-anticipated edition is an unparalleled look at country music—the music of America's rural working class. And who better to tell this colorful story than the people who have brought you America's favorite country music magazine for over 20 years? With over 650 photographs, some rare and never 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 Magazine* bring to life the voices, sounds and feelings characteristic of

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, Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, and Hank Snow, to today's stars like Dwight Yoakam and Garth Brooks. Just released,

your copy is ready now—**YOU SAVE OVER 10%!** Pay only \$19.85, Item #B2T.

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

Also published by the Editors of *Country Music Magazine*, this is the best country music reference you'll find anywhere. This fully illustrated answer book 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. You pay only \$22.95—**SAVE OVER \$2.00!** Item #B1S.



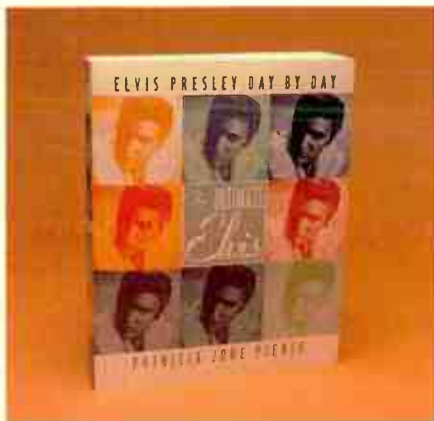
MY HUSBAND JIMMIE RODGERS

For years, *My Husband Jimmie Rodgers* (first published in 1935) offered the only detailed account of the life of this influential musician. It remains a fascinating firsthand account of the Father of Country Music. It also includes a fine introduction by noted country music historian and author, Nolan Porterfield. Published by the Country Music Foundation. Item B10L, \$14.95.

Nashville Warehouse

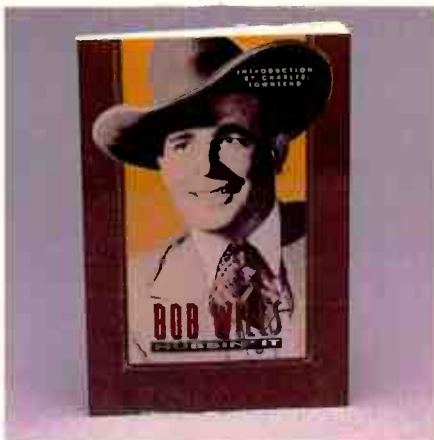
NEW! THE ULTIMATE ELVIS: ELVIS PRESLEY DAY BY DAY

We are happy to announce the much anticipated release of the expanded softcover edition of perhaps the bestselling Elvis reference of all time. With *The Ultimate Elvis*, author Patricia Jobe Pierce presents the most sweeping and comprehensive chronicle of Elvis' life ever published. It features an extraordinary day-by-day calendar of the King's life and times that tells Elvis' story as no other "conventional" biography has. Pierce's exhaustively detailed and introspective daily account draws you in as witness to the events, large and small, that shaped the legend of rock 'n' roll and led to both triumph and tragedy. Dozens of photos from Elvis' personal and professional life, some never before seen, accompany the fascinating text. Item # B6D-PB, \$14.



BOB WILLS: HUBBIN' IT

In 1938, when Wills was 33 and nearing the height of his fame, author Ruth Sheldon chronicled the rags-to-riches rise of this talented Western swing musician, showing remarkable foresight in her choice of subject. Working with the complete cooperation of Wills, she produced a biography that fully captures the ebullient personality of Wills and reflects the bandleader's vision of himself. Noted country music historian Bill C. Malone has praised *Hubbin' It* as a "pioneering biography." Item #B20G, \$14.95.



NEW! THE LIFELONG BABY BOOM BOX AM/FM RADIO



To begin with, it features two built-in speakers to deliver the kind of big two-speaker sound you want to hear. It brings you both AM and FM tuning and click-on volume control. There is a telescopic antenna to ensure the very best reception. Plus, there's a convenient fold-in carrying handle. And the best part is, all this fabulous high quality sound comes from a Baby Boomer that measures just 7 1/4" x 3 1/4" high.

There are two colors to choose from, traditional black or sport-yellow. It operates on four "AA" batteries (not included). And the price—well, that has to put a smile on your face. For a limited time only you can get this unique radio for just \$12.95. Order two and you'll SAVE \$3.00! You pay just \$23.90 for two. Be sure to order by color. For a Baby

Boom Box in traditional black, ask for Item #G10D. For our popular sport-yellow model, ask for Item #G10E. Remember, when you order a second for a friend, you SAVE \$3.00!

Boom Box in traditional black, ask for Item #G10D. For our popular sport-yellow model, ask for Item #G10E. Remember, when you order a second for a friend, you SAVE \$3.00!

COUNTRY MUSIC PEWTER AND ENAMEL BUCKLE, KEY CHAIN AND PIN

Here is the most popular buckle we have ever offered. It features a brown fiddle and white banjo inlaid over an outline of the U.S.A., with a deep blue background. Now, for the first time, we are offering it, separately or together, with our new matching Key Chain and Lapel Pin. For the new Lapel Pin ask for Item #G1T, \$2.95. For the new Key Chain ask for Item #G1K, \$5.95. For the Country Music Buckle ask for Item #G7L, \$9.95. Order the Country Music Buckle and Key Chain together and you get the Lapel Pin...FREE!



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

Produced in cooperation with Graceland and Elvis Presley Enterprises, here is one of the most famous cars in the world and the only authorized die-cast model of Elvis' 1955 pink Cadillac. Designed in cooperation with the Cadillac Motor Car Division of General Motors, this 1/18 scale model is nearly a foot in length and comes complete with the history of this famous car. Item #G2G, \$49.95.

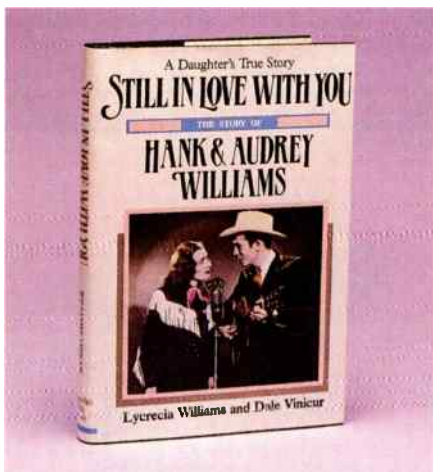
NEW! ELVIS PRESLEY WATCHES

The Elvis Musical Wrist Watch (top) plays "Love Me Tender." Item #J2E, \$49.95 (male size only). The Elvis Profile Watch (bottom) features a unique second hand—a rotating guitar. Item #J2B, \$49.95 (specify male or female size).

NEW PAPERBACK RELEASE! STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU: THE STORY OF HANK & AUDREY WILLIAMS

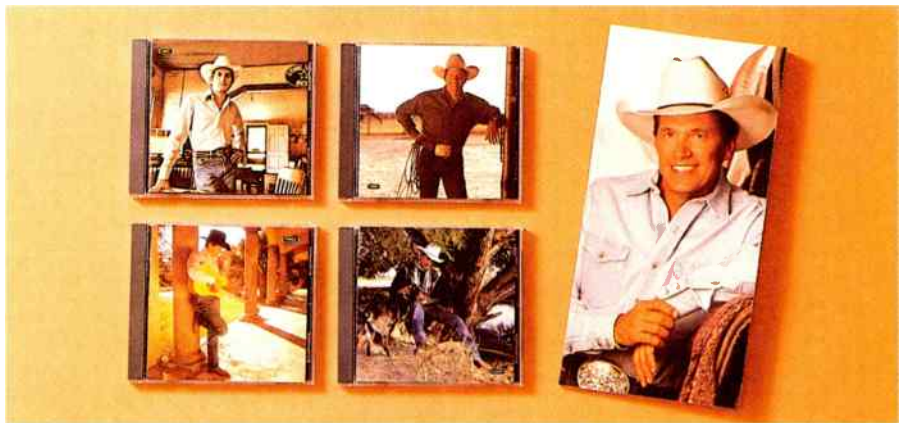
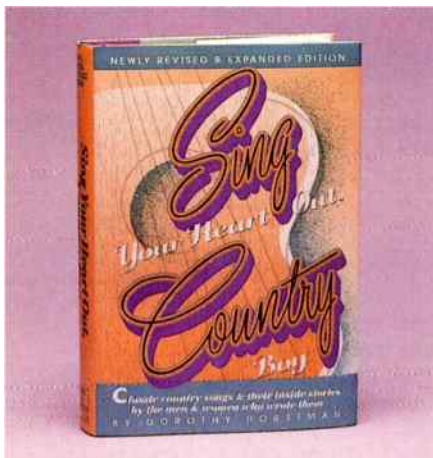
Still in Love with You is unlike anything ever written about Hank and Audrey Williams. For the first time someone who knew both of them intimately has opened their lives so that the real Hank and Audrey Williams can be known. In this touching story, daughter Lycrecia recounts the previously untold truth of their lives, interprets it in light of what is known today about alcoholism and co-dependency, and with tenderness and humor shares the love that Hank and Audrey had for each other.

Still in Love with You corrects errors accepted as true and undoes the often unkind characterizations. Containing stories that have never before appeared in print, it re-introduces Hank and Audrey as they were, with all their flaws and beauty. Item #B4F-PB, \$9.95.



NEWLY REVISED! SING YOUR HEART OUT, COUNTRY BOY

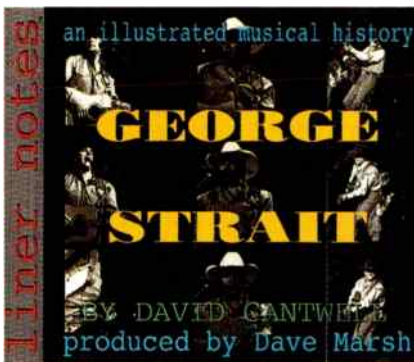
Revised once in 1986, the Country Music Foundation has just published the third edition of this great Dorothy Horstman book. Here are the inside stories behind the classic country music songs, by the men and women who wrote them. No country music fan should miss this fascinating hardcover edition. Item #B20E, \$24.95.



NEW GEORGE STRAIT FOUR CD/CASSETTE SET: STRAIT OUT OF THE BOX

This *Billboard* Top Ten set is the ultimate George Strait collection. Its four CD's or cassette tapes feature 72 songs and a 72-page illustrated booklet. Just some of the songs featured include "Right or Wrong," "Let's Fall to Pieces Together," "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," "The Cowboy Rides Away," "The Fireman," "The Chair," "You're Something Special to Me," "Haven't You Heard," "Wonderland of Love," "I Cross My Heart," "Heartland," "When Did You Stop Loving Me," "Overnight Male," "The King of Broken Hearts," "Where the Sidewalk Ends," "Easy Come, Easy Go," "I'd Like to Have That One Back," "I Just Can't Go Dying Like This," "(That Don't Change) The Way I Feel About You," "Unwound," "Amarillo by Morning," "I Thought I Heard You Calling My Name," "Milk Cow Blues," "Baby Blue," "If You Ain't Lovin' (You Ain't Livin')," "Bigger Than Me," "Ace in the Hole," "If I Know Me" AND MUCH MORE! **SPECIAL BONUS: ORDER THIS MULTI-SET AND GET THE GEORGE STRAIT BOOK BELOW...FREE!** Item #MCAD-11263, cassette \$49.98, CD \$59.98.

NEW COMPACT BOOK! GEORGE STRAIT: AN ILLUSTRATED MUSICAL HISTORY



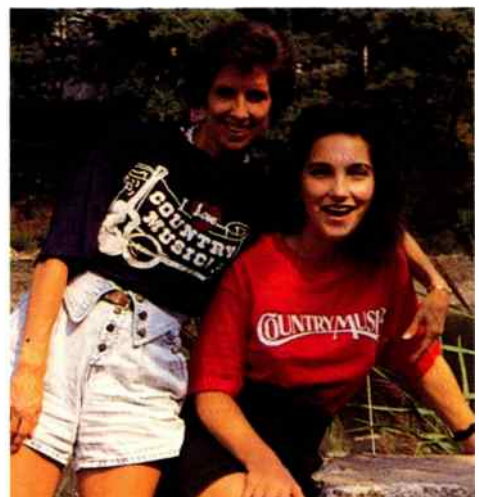
This is one of the first releases in this brand new series of compact books from the Putnam Publishing Company. Edited by *New York Times* bestselling author Dave Marsh and authored by David Cantwell, the book lets fans follow the story of this boy from a small Texas town who made it big in Music City. Photos, timelines, historical data and music criticism combine to make it absolutely indispensable for the serious George Strait fan. And the unique CD package design is a perfect touch. This compact gem is scheduled for a spring release. Reserve yours now so you're sure not to be left out. Item #B10B, \$7.95.

COUNTRY MUSIC T-SHIRTS

With the warmer months just ahead, now is the perfect time to get the widely recognized *Country Music* logo on a 100% cotton Champion T-shirt in navy blue or red. The logo is in white. Or pick our "I Love Country Music" T-shirt. This navy blue shirt features a guitar and banjo with red and white lettering. They are \$10 each. For the *Country Music Logo T-shirt* in navy blue, ask for Item #G2P. For red, ask for Item #G2Q. The "I Love Country Music" T-shirt is Item #G2O. Order sizes S, M, L, XL and now, XXL.

I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC CAP (NOT SHOWN)

Also get our popular adjustable "I Love Country Music" Cap. The message on the cap matches the design on the T-shirt in the picture. Ask for Item #G2N, \$8.95.





DOLLY PARTON DOLL

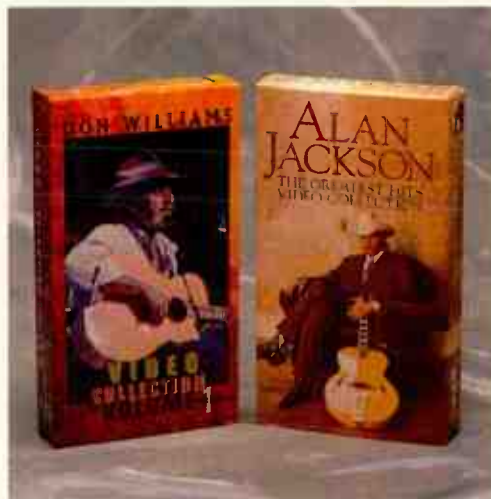
This replica of Dolly Parton stands one-and-a-half feet tall. She's wearing a red leatherette dress accented with gold and white lace. In her gold-toned belt is a red, ruby-like stone, and the whole ensemble is topped with a gold-tone necklace. Of course, it wouldn't be complete without Dolly's trademark 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.

NEW VIDEOS!

TWO COUNTRY MUSIC LEGENDS

Here are two of country music's most celebrated stars on two separate new home videos. Order both and you can **DEDUCT \$3.00 FROM THE PRICE!**
DON WILLIAMS VIDEO COLLECTION, VOL. ONE—55 MIN.

This new video collection features 14 of Don's favorite songs, including "Good Old Boys Like Me," "The Ties That Bind," "That's the Thing About Love," "Till the Rivers All Run Dry," "It Must Be Love," "I'm Just a Country Boy," "Fever," "Amanda," "Lord I Hope This Day Is Good," "Tulsa Time," "I Recall a Gypsy Woman," "Lay Down Beside Me," "I Believe in You" and "You're My Best Friend." Item #V10E, \$19.95.



ALAN JACKSON: THE GREATEST HITS VIDEO COLLECTION—75 MIN.

This video features 18 Alan Jackson songs. Included are "Blue Blooded Woman," "Here in the Real World," "Wanted," "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," "Don't Rock the Jukebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "Tonight I Climbed the Wall," "Chattahoochee," "Mercury Blues," "(Who Says) You Can't Have It All," "I Don't Even Know Your Name," "Tall, Tall Trees," "Summertime Blues," "Livin' on Love," "Gone Country," "Song for the Life" and "She's Got the Rythm (And I Got the Blues)." Item #V10J, \$29.95.



COUNTRY MUSIC PHOTO T-SHIRTS—VINCE GILL AND ALAN JACKSON

These popular high-quality country music T-shirts are Hanes 100% cotton, which makes them all-American, sturdy and guaranteed to last. The Vince Gill T-shirt is white with Vince's name in hold letters on the back. Ask for Item #G5A. The Alan Jackson T-shirt is black with *Who I Am* and Alan's name on the back. Ask for Item #G5J. Each T-shirt is \$15.95. Each shirt is concert quality—without the typically high concert price. When you order, specify the item number. Ask for Medium, Large and X-Large only. Bear in mind, these are men's sizes.

NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE EDITOR'S CHOICE ORDER FORM

050696-1

MAIL TO: Nashville Warehouse, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, TN 37229

NAME	ITEM #	QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION/COLOR/SIZE	ITEM PRICE	TOTAL
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CITY					
STATE	ZIP				
ENCLOSED IS A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER FOR \$ PAYABLE TO NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE OR CHARGE MY: <input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCARD <input type="checkbox"/> VISA <input type="checkbox"/> DISCOVER					
ACCOUNT #	This Offer Expires On 8/31/96! ALLOW 6 TO 8 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY!				
EXP. DATE:					
SIGNATURE	Add \$3.00 postage and handling for first item and \$.95 for each additional item.				
TN residents add 8.25% Sales Tax/Canadian orders add \$3.00 extra.					
Amount due \$					

FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY

VOTE

MEMBERS POLL/MAY 1996

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.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Vacation Travel

5. Did you travel on vacation in the last 12 months?
 Yes No

6. Which means of transportation have you used for vacation travel in the last 12 months?

- Automobile Airline Train
 Bus Cruise ship RV

7. Have you travelled to any of the following states for vacation in the last 12 months?

- Tennessee Missouri Texas
 S. Carolina N. Carolina Alabama
 Other (Specify: _____)

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: May Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.



Jimmy Wakely in Legends

Currently, none of Jimmy Wakely's material is available in any form, except for one cut: his version of "One Has My Heart, The Other Has My Name." As Rich Kienzle details in *Legends* in this issue of the CMSA Newsletter, the recording was a huge hit, soaring to Number One on the country charts and reaching the Top Ten in pop. It's available on Rhino's *Hillbilly Fever Vol.4 Legends of the West Coast*. (Rhino R 71903). This package, available on cassette or CD, includes a total of 18 tracks by nearly all of the best-known names in West Coast country: Buck Owens, Merle Haggard, Rose Maddox, Wynn Stewart, Tommy Collins, Tex Ritter, Jean Shepard, Ferlin Husky and many more. Regular price \$9.95 cassette, \$15.95 CD. Members' price \$7.95 cassette, \$13.95 CD.

Capitol Nashville's Vintage Collections, a series about to end after too few releases (the result of changes in the handling of the label's back catalog), is planning to finish the series with a Wakely collection that will include most of his hits and a number of rare and unreleased performances, to appear this summer. Keep an eye on *Buried Treasures* in this magazine, along with Reissue Tipsheet in our sister publication, *The Journal*, for updates.

Buried Treasures Special

CMSA members are entitled to a discount on all of the products featured in this section. This time out, take \$2.00 off the new reissue packages from Dottie West, Owen Bradley (a various artist compilation of classic hits he produced), The Browns, Rose Maddox (her classic bluegrass album, the recording of which is detailed in the April issue of *The Journal*), and the set on Emmett Miller. On the Bear Family boxed sets, members get a hefty 25% discount: Take \$55.00 off the price of the Dick Curless and George Hamilton IV boxes—pay just \$165.00 each, and deduct

\$34.00 off the Osborne Brothers set—member cost is \$103.00. Include membership number if taking discount. See ordering instructions in *Buried Treasures*.

Essential Collector Special

Due to last-minute space constraints, we had to drop Essential Collector from this issue's line-up. Fear not, it'll be back next time, and Rich will have uncovered plenty of must-have books, videos and more.

10 Years Ago in CMM

Barbara Mandrell, at that time just recovered from serious injuries sustained in a car wreck, graced the cover of the May/June 1986 issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Barbara made her first post-accident concert appearance on February 28th of that year, and in the interview spoke about her nervousness in taking the stage, and the emotional turmoil she and her family went through as a result of the accident. We also got first looks at Dwight Yoakam and The Forrester Sisters—at this point the soon-to-be-named New Traditional movement was off and running! Updates on Waylon and Webb Pierce rounded out the feature section. Waylon's candid talk with Bob Allen focused on the "new" Waylon—he'd recently kicked a cocaine habit and was rebuilding his life and career. In *Record Reviews*, Steve Earle debuted with his now classic *Guitar Town* album. Calling the album "perfection," reviewer Rich Kienzle added "it must be heard to be believed." The Number One album was Alabama's *Greatest Hits*, and Gary Morris had the Number One single with "100% Chance of Rain." In the poll, CMSA members placed The Statler Brothers at the top of the picks for favorite single and album. "Too Much on My Heart" was the single and *Partners in Rhythm* was the album. The news, as rounded up by Hazel Smith in the People section: a bunch of Outlaws starred as outlaws in a TV movie—Willie, Cash, Kris and David Allan Coe filmed *The Last Days of Frank and Jesse James*. The Opry celebrated 60 years, and Reba McEntire filmed her first video.

How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 050696N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Include \$3.00 postage/handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional.

TILLER USERS!

JUST ONE HAND![®]

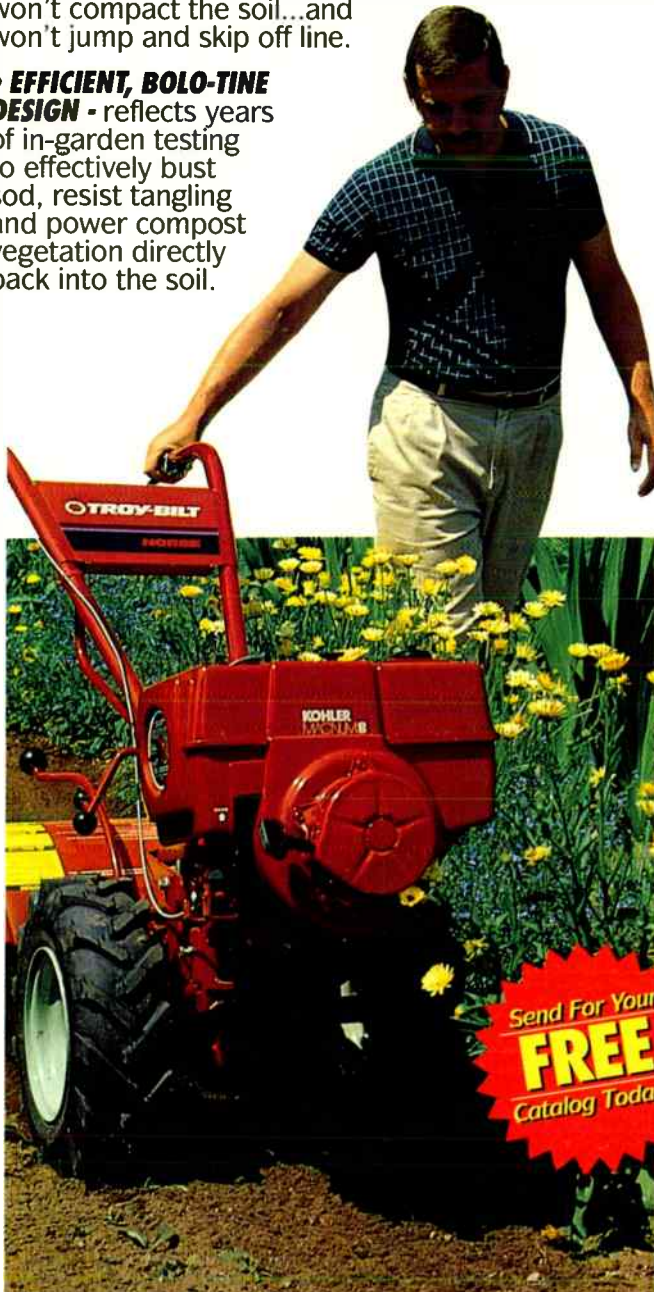
The TROY-BILT[®] Tiller is so easy to handle, you really can guide it with JUST ONE HAND[®]!

• **REAR-TINE/POWERED WHEELS DESIGN** - powered wheels pull you along at a steady pace as the tines turn 1 3/2 times faster, thoroughly breaking up even stubborn soil. Unlike front-tine tillers, the rear-tine TROY-BILT[®] Tiller won't tangle in thick vegetation... won't shake you nearly to death... won't compact the soil...and won't jump and skip off line.

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• **AMERICA'S LARGEST TILLER LINE-UP** - with models for every size property, from the economical 3HP TUFFY[®] Model to the full-featured 8HP PROFESSIONAL HORSE[™] Model with 4 forward speeds, 2 reverse speeds and PTO drive for power-driven attachments!

• **TIME-PROVEN DURABILITY** - of the exclusive cast-iron, bronze-gear-driven transmission; precisely machined, fitted and assembled by hand in Troy, New York. No cheap plastic or stamped metal parts; no chains to stretch, wear or break loose.



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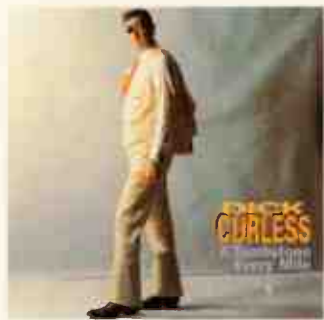
Product Available In Canada

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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Dick Curless: The appearance of Dick Curless' *Traveling Through*, recorded in 1994, just months before his untimely death in May 1995, refocused attention on an artist wrongly stereotyped as a singer of trucker songs. Few realized he made many fine and underrated recordings for Maine's Event Records a decade before his 1965 hit, "A Tombstone Every Mile." Bear Family's seven-CD *A Tombstone Every Mile* (BCD 15882) covers the first 16 years of his



career, beginning with his first, tentative recordings in 1950. After being drafted, he grew as a performer, singing as "The Rice Paddy Ranger" over Armed Forces Radio in Korea. Six samples of his radio work appear on disc seven.

By and large, his mid-to-late 50's Event recordings featured Lenny Breau picking juicy lead guitar behind Curless' engaging vocals. Many of them were later purchased by Capitol and issued on his Tower LP's. Less consistent were his later recordings for Tiffany (some also reissued on Tower). Curless' 1964 Allagash single, "A Tombstone Every Mile," the Dan Fulkerson composition about a treacherous stretch of Maine highway, got him signed to Tower. In California, backed by Bakersfield pickers, Curless recorded a duet LP with obscure singer Kay Adams and a solo LP including "The Baron" (his nickname) and stunning versions of Merle Haggard's "House of Memories" and "All of Me Belongs to You." *Journal* con-

tributor Kevin Coffey's notes prove Curless truly achieved his stated goal of showing what a country singer from Maine could achieve.

George Hamilton IV: Nowadays, outside of the Opry and occasional TNN appearances, George Hamilton IV's name carries more clout overseas than here. Like Brenda Lee, he began his career as a youthful pop-rock act doing such teen-idol fare as "A Rose and a Baby Ruth" until he made a successful move to mainstream country with his 1960 hit, "Before This Day Ends." Bear Family's Hamilton collection, *To You & Yours, From Me & Mine* (BCD 15773), covers the first nine years of his career: 179 songs on six CD's. Hamilton, a North Carolina native, started out making demos and recording in 1956 for the tiny North Carolina-based Colonial Records which led to an ABC-Paramount contract.

His musical direction changed considerably when Chet Atkins brought him to RCA in 1961. Recording in Nashville brought him solid success with the crossover smash "Abilene," along with "Three Steps to the Phone," "If You Don't Know, I Ain't Gonna Tell You" and "Fort Worth, Dallas or Houston." Hamilton, who cooperated on the project, opened up his own archives to provide demo recordings, live Opry performances and TV appearances. To many, Hamilton may be an acquired taste. Only dyed-in-the-wool fans will want this much material. The set, which undoubtedly will sell well in Europe, features yet another lavish, photo-rich hardcover book, a biographical essay by Dale Vinicur based on new interviews with Hamilton and some musicians who worked with him, along with a complete discography covering the music within.

Emmett Miller: A warning: Emmett Miller, the legendary yodeling minstrel of the 1920's

and 1930's, is not country by any conventional standards. Nonetheless, Miller's influence on Hank Williams, Bob Wills and Merle Haggard was immense. An element of mystery has long pervaded his music, mostly recorded in the 1920's (with a few cuts done later in the 1930's), recorded with topflight jazzmen of the era including trombonist Tommy Dorsey and his saxophonist brother Jimmy and pioneer jazz guitarist Eddie Lang. Among the Miller tunes that wound their way into country singers' repertoires were "I Ain't Got Nobody," "St. Louis Blues," "Anytime," "Lovesick Blues" and recently, "Right or Wrong." Unauthorized reissues of Miller's material was available on LP in the past. Now, Sony Legacy, through executive Larry Cohn, a longtime Miller fan, has issued most of Miller's Okeh material, all superbly mastered in the 20-song *Emmett Miller: The Minstrel Man From Georgia* (Legacy CK 66999).

All the songs previously mentioned are included, and Miller's vocal influences are obvious. The music will be pal-



atable to anyone who enjoys Dixieland (or Western swing), or anybody who liked Merle Haggard's *I Love Dixie Blues* LP. Charles Wolfe's liner notes are based on his extensive research on Miller. The only thing not here is the promised Miller endorsement by Merle Haggard (others come from Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson, Hank Williams Jr. and Nick Tosches). Audio engineer

George Morrow deserves special credit, since his remastering of the original recordings was nothing less than outstanding.

The Osborne Brothers: Bear Family concludes their comprehensive coverage of The Osborne Brothers' recording career with *The Osborne Brothers: 1968-1974* (BCD 15758), covering 109 songs recorded for Decca/MCA from 1968 to 1974. Unlike most Bear releases, this set contains no unreleased songs, though the Osbornes recorded seven during this period. The brothers own those masters and refused to license them to Bear. The set encompasses all their charted singles from those years, starting with "Cut the Cornbread, Mama," "Tennessee Hound Dog," "Ruby, Are You Mad," "Georgia Pineywoods," "Muddy Bottom" and so on. As usual, the Osbornes pushed the envelope of bluegrass, using pedal steel, electric bass, drums, piano and, on sessions beginning in 1970, string sections, which continued to show their intention to play bluegrass in their own way.

Like other progressive bluegrass acts, they were unafraid to broaden and to experiment with their repertoire, drawing from Boudleaux and Felice Bryant of "Rocky Top" fame, Merle Haggard ("Shelly's Winter Love"), Tom T. Hall ("Ballad of Forty Dollars" and "I Washed My Face in the Morning Dew") and even the psuedo-country folk of John Denver ("Take Me Home, Country Roads"). The material was of uneven quality, typical of the Osbornes, though they fought every step of the way to do things as they wished. After Owen Bradley retired from MCA, things changed. The Osbornes left the company during the same period the label dropped Kitty Wells and Ernest Tubbs. The packaging is excellent except for annotator Marty Godbey's shallow liner notes, which be-

gin by telling us what bluegrass is (a lame idea on a set marketed to hardcore fans) and provide precious little insight into what was actually going on in the Osbornes' music.

Dottie West: Recent changes at RCA have meant changes in their Essentials reissue series and decidedly mixed results. Even before she died in 1991, Dottie West merited a decent RCA reissue. *The Essential Dottie West* (RCA 66782) assembles 20 released numbers, starting not with her first chart single "Let Me Off at the Corner" (which should have been included), but with "Love Is No Excuse," her Top Ten duet with Jim Reeves from 1964. The remainder runs



through her solo hits and duets. "Here Comes My Baby," her first Top Ten single, appears, as does "Would You Hold It Against Me" and "Paper Mansions." The Don Gibson duets, "Rings of Gold" and "There's a Story (Goin' Round)," belong here. It's a matter of opinion whether her minor-league duet on "Slowly" with Jimmy Dean does. The set ends when her RCA career ended in the mid-70's with "Country Sunshine," "Last Time I Saw Him" (one of her early attempts at covering other singers' pop hits) and "House of Love." There are no previously unreleased tracks on the record.

Owen Bradley: Having produced country and pop masterpieces by everyone from Red Foley to Brenda Lee, Patsy Cline and Conway Twitty, Decca/MCA producer Owen Bradley, who began his country career as a session musician and assistant to Decca's Paul Cohen, replaced Cohen in 1958. As a Decca Vice-President, Owen ran Nashville op-

erations until his 1974 retirement. Boxed sets have never examined careers of producers, yet Bradley, who made millions for the company, clearly merits such an effort.

Instead, Decca gives us *The Nashville Sound...Owen Bradley* (Decca DRND-11330). The ten-song collection assembles "Don't Come Home a Drinkin'" by Loretta, Conway's "Hello, Darlin'," Kitty Wells' "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy" by Red Foley, Patsy's "Crazy" and "Sweet Dreams," "I'm Sorry" by Brenda, E.T.'s "Thanks a Lot," Webb Pierce's "I Ain't Never" and Jack Greene's "There Goes My Everything."

To sum up such a varied career through ten token hits is almost insulting. Not only was Bradley a producer, he himself recorded instrumentals for Decca, and led his own pop dance band over WSM. What Decca could have done was to examine his pop roots and how they influenced his country and pop producing. They could have shown samples of his own work, as well as his biggest hits (including the ten here) and other less well known Bradley productions, including his work with Buddy Holly and the pop vocal group The Four Aces. This would have been both enjoyable and educational. A ten-song set can't even begin to pay proper tribute.

Rose Maddox: I annotated the next album, so no commentary, just fact. Rose Maddox's

most recent Arhoolie album *\$35 and a Dream*, was nominated for a Grammy. For years, she's been among the most honored and acclaimed female vocalists, not only for her work as a West Coast country pioneer with The Maddox Brothers and Rose but also for her work in bluegrass. The idea of Rose singing bluegrass goes back to 1962, when at Bill Monroe's prodding, she actually made the attempt to record a bluegrass LP for her label, Capitol. Capitol Nashville has just reissued the results of those efforts, *Rose Maddox Sings Bluegrass* (Capitol 35160), with the original cover art and sequence.

Backed by her own pedal steel guitarist and the Don Reno-Red Smiley band, she recorded four Monroe songs: "Uncle Pen," "Molly and Tenbrooks," "My Rose of Old Kentucky" and "Blue Moon of Kentucky" with the Master sitting in on mandolin. Because of contractual problems (he recorded for Decca), Monroe's playing wasn't credited on the original LP. He wasn't back for the next session, so they tracked down Donna Stoneman to play mandolin on a repertoire that ranged from folk ("Cotton Fields") to gospel ("The Old Crossroad is Waitin'" and "I'll Meet You in Church Sunday Morning") to mainstream country including Tommy Collins' "Down, Down Down." The album helped open the door for women bluegrass

singers. There's more to the sessions than was previously known. For diehard Maddox fans, the April issue of our sister magazine, *The Journal*, includes a Classic Album piece by Dave Samuelson on the making of this album that reveals far more than my own notes, since Samuelson talked with Rose and other participants. Recent layoffs at Capitol Nashville leave the future of their reissue series in doubt.



Jim Ed Brown & The Browns:

Also from the Essential series is *The Essential Jim Ed Brown & The Browns* (RCA 66783), a 20-song sampler of material from both The Browns era and Jim Ed's RCA solo career. The choices are obvious. From the group come the Jim Ed-Maxine Brown duet, "Looking Back to See," and The Browns' "The Three Bells," "Scarlet Ribbons" "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow" and "Send Me the Pillow That You Dream On." The remainder focuses on Jim Ed's solo hits, starting with "Pop a Top" and running through "Bottle, Bottle," "Morning," "Southern Loving" and one unreleased song, "Gently Comes Love," from 1974. His duets with Helen Cornelius were omitted, a wise move since that music is a far cry from most of the other material here.

Both this set and the Dottie West set above have packaging deficiencies involving the notes. Bob Oermann could've done a far better job on the Dottie West essay and Nashville writer Chris Skinker, a Browns expert, should have annotated The Browns set. What's here reads like a mixture of term paper research and gushy, shallow press release.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Dick Curles - *A Tombstone Every Mile* (BCD 15882), a seven-CD boxed set, \$220.00/George Hamilton IV, *To You & Yours From Me & Mine* (BCD 15773), a six-CD boxed set with hardcover book, \$220.00/Emmett Miller: *The Minstrel Man From Georgia* (Legacy CK 66999), \$11.98 cassette, \$19.98 CD/The Osborne Brothers, *1968-1974* (BCD 15758), a four-CD boxed set, \$137.00/Various Artists. *The Nashville Sound...Owen Bradley* (DRND 11330), \$11.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD/Rose Maddox. *Rose Maddox Sings Bluegrass* (Capitol 35160), available on CD only, \$18.98 CD/Dottie West. *The Essential Dottie West* (RCA 66782), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD/Jim Ed Brown and The Browns. *The Essential Jim Ed Brown & The Browns* (RCA 66783), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 050696, 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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20 Questions with The OAK RIDGE BOYS

by Bob Millard

Nine years ago, mounting problems finally split the old Oak Ridge Boys like a lightning strike, leaving William Lee Golden to a solo career and the stink of bad feelings all around. The Oak Ridge Boys went on, with Steve Sanders filling the baritone part until last autumn, when personal difficulties made it necessary for Sanders to quit the group. With concert dates on the books, Duane Allen, Richard Sterban and Joe Bonsall did the one thing no one expected (though we all secretly hoped). They renewed friendship and musical association with Golden, putting the group as we knew them best back on line.

Last time I drove out to Hendersonville to talk to all

four Oaks, it was 1985. The animus was already so bad that they wouldn't all sit in one room together. This time, as the last gray remnants of winter snow hugged the shade of hackberry trees and concrete block buildings, I waited in the conference room, playing their personal pinball machine like a rank amateur. A smile grew on my face as I heard them arriving one by one and greeting each other with genuine pleasure and affection. Somehow, watching old friends patch up long-standing differences and restore one of the most distinctive vocal sounds in modern country music lightened my spirits considerably. Now, they are set to move forward with a new record deal (re-

portedly with A&M/Polygram Nashville), a busy tour schedule, and many prime television appearances to confirm their place as one of the most exciting vocal groups—the voices you heard on all the hits—in country music of the last 20-something years. You can't help but smile.

1 Well, hard questions first: How is everybody?

Joe: (speaking with humorous over-projection) I think I can report, Bob, that we are all fine, fabulous and having a good time...

2 William Lee, is it true that you loaned Arch Kelley your teepee so he could propose to Wynonna?

William Lee: Uh, no, that's

not true. They must have their own teepee, or they could've borrowed Randy Travis' teepee. I think he has one, too.

3 You've done seven or eight shows together since reuniting for a New Year's Eve show; are the fans glad to see this lineup again?

Duane: I think we're enjoying it more than anyone. I think the greatest thrill is to go back and sing some songs that the three of us (Duane, Joe and Richard) haven't even sung in nine years. It's also fun to go back and learn the songs like the radio records. We never did that before because we usually didn't have enough musicians to do that. Now, we've got a stage full of musicians and it's the best band we've ever had in our life and so we're going back to the original sound the fans heard on the radio of every song. We do the first couple of verses and choruses like that and then we let them reinvent themselves; see where they go. We're just having a ball doing it.

4 What other changes did you make right away?

Joe: We've rearranged our whole show—top to bottom. If people have seen The Oak Ridge Boys in the past couple of years, this is a whole new show from the front to the back that runs real close to two hours. There's more songs that we want to do, if we can figure out where to put 'em. That's where we're really fortunate. When we go back and look into that old well of songs, it's a pretty deep well.

5 So, how has it gone in the past few weeks?

Joe: Man, gettin' out there on the stage and singing this stuff again has been a real thrill. We've done eight shows in seven cities so far, and we're fixin' to get busier and busier as we go right here.

6 How about you, Richard? What do you think?

Richard: To answer your original question, the response from the fans has been tre-

mendous. Like today, and every time we walk into the office here, there's another new stack of pictures we've got to sign. The mail has just been unbelievable. Response has been almost overwhelming.

7 *You know, any time a group that has had success and has been as well known as you have been, has to make personnel changes, as you did in '87, the new guy is never quite the same for the fans.*

Joe: Well, I think that's true. But the cool thing is that we've been able to get back together as friends and as musicians and singers. Golden said the other night that it's like we got out that old tape and spliced it back together.

And it's nothing against Stevie. Stevie did a good job here; he sang good; he was there and dependable; we survived and stayed in the big-time. But, nevertheless, singing like we are now, it's almost like it never stopped. It's a great feeling; it really is.

8 *Since you bring it up, let me ask: When it was obvious that something had to give, who said, "Hey, what about William Lee?"*

Duane: Well, Steve left on the 4th of November, and we were in a meeting on the 7th or 8th and we still had three dates to do. So, we were talking about everything and wondering what to do. The "William Lee Golden factor" came up. I don't know who brought it up; I may have, but somebody did. But the whole purpose of me and Joe and Richard and William Lee to get our friendship and act back together was so that we could have a positive approach to our career. We knew that we were going to get a lot of questions, but at that point we were just trying to renew our friendship.

9 *No kidding? Tell me more about that.*

Duane: Very honestly, at that point, we didn't know if we wanted to sing together again; or if we could. We were just trying to rebuild our friendship so that when people asked us, we could say, "Yeah,

we talked to him just last week." Just so we'd have a positive answer to that.

10 *But it went farther than that, huh?*

Duane: Working out the friendship has been the best part of it all. I had no idea. I never dreamed that we'd get to sing together again. I never dreamed that what happened with Steve would happen like that either. But, it did and I thank God that he helped us work it out. A lot of times we get in the way of ourselves trying to make things happen the way we want them to happen, but in this case we just got out of the way and it has worked out better than we could have hoped.

11 *It's great that the friendship thing has come together again, because I know you all had a lot of anger within the group for a couple of years before William Lee left.*

Duane: Well, we had a lot of trouble with communication because we just didn't communicate. When you get started on different roads and you don't make any effort to get it back, and other people do your talking for you—when it gets to lawyers and you go to court... well.

12 *And did you ever notice how few lawyers can really sing baritone well?*

Duane: (Laughs.) I tell you one thing now: the four of us are doing our own talking. We have no problem communicating. We never did when the four of us were talking, and that's where the magic of The Oak Ridge Boys extends beyond the music and that's what we lost, which affected drastically our music.

We've made mistakes and we know it. We've admitted it and we've dealt with it. We all had our own careers separately, but the magic of The Oak Ridge Boys is something that you just can't duplicate—it takes the four of us.

13 *Do you remember what the disagreements were?*

Richard: We just don't remember what they were any

more. They are just let go on the sea of forgetfulness, if you want to say it that way.

14 *William Lee, how does it feel to be back?*

William Lee: Hey, I'm excited about it, you know. It's been a thing, you know? Like everyone says, it's something that we all thought might never happen. For it to come around and happen the way it has and for us to be friends is the main thing. We made so much great music together and had so much fun doing it. I'm just excited that we're all friends again.

15 *Is that the key to something special in all this?*

William Lee: That's the main thing, and when we're friends that makes the music so much better. It seemed like once we started singing together that it healed any other feelings that we might have had... And, you know, when you start out in a career, to have one hit is a goal, and then when you are fortunate to have more than just one—well, I think we all have a lot to be thankful for.

16 *I imagine that when you are really happy, even before you pump up to hit the stage, that it makes it all better.*

Joe: You're right, man. That's the way it is; that's the whole key. Music is supposed to be an emotional, uplifting experience. If it isn't, an audience isn't gonna get nothin' out of it. And I'm not afraid to tell you, this has been an emotional thing for us.

17 *So, how did you all get it back together?*

Joe: We went in there (pointing to a room at the end of the hall) and started singin' around that piano at the end of the year just to see what we had. We got our keyboard player up—he was on vacation—and said, "Hey, let's just sing; let's sing 'One in a Million.'" That was the first song we sang together. Man, it got us all emotional because you realize, like, oh my gosh, this is The Oak Ridge Boys! It's that sound!

18 *So getting those harmonies back together after all that time was pretty emotional then?*

Duane: When Golden got to the verse, "If I can't be the favorite son I'll be the prodigal one!" Cause I've been gone too long..."

William Lee: ... "Oh, how the years have flown by/I realize how much of me is gone."

Duane: When he got to that part, his voice got to quivering. We all literally broke down, and I think Golden is the only one who finished it. The rest of us were just out to lunch. We got to the end of the song, and nobody said a word.

19 *That's something, all right. It must have been...*

Joe: That's five guys in there all alone, just us around the piano. Nobody—not the fans, the associates, the families or friends, or even the reporters saw that... And when it was finished, our piano player, Ronnie Fairfield, looked like he was sick. I asked him, "Ronnie, are you okay?" And he said, "Man, do you know what it was like for me to be surrounded by that sound? That's it, man. That's The Boys."

20 *So, you're about to sign a major label record deal. Is it nothing but onward and upward with The Oak Ridge Boys again?*

Joe: Well, every show we've ever done, even in the last nine years, at the end we've gotten a standing ovation no matter who we are because we're The Oak Ridge Boys and we put on a doggone good show. But, since Golden's come back, we're getting like six standing ovations in the middle of the show. I don't mean that that will always be there, but, honest to God, we'll sing a song that they love that they ain't heard in a while, and they're up.

Duane: The secret of how big you are and how long you last is three minutes long. And the next best thing to that first three minutes is three more minutes of magic. Now the magic is back, and man, we like it.

TOP 25

Singles

1. Patty Loveless *You Can Feel Bad*
2. Garth Brooks *The Beaches of Cheyenne*
3. Diamond Rio *Walkin' Away*
4. Tracy Lawrence *If You Loved Me*
5. Wynonna *To Be Loved by You*
6. Clay Walker *Hypnotize the Moon*
7. Daryle Singletary *Too Much Fun*
8. George Strait *I Know She Still Loves Me*
9. Alan Jackson *I'll Try*
10. Lonestar *No News*
11. Neal McCoy *You Gotta Love That*
12. Lee Roy Parnell *Heart's Desire*
13. Shania Twain *You Win My Love*
14. Linda Davis *Some Things Are Meant to Be*
15. Martina McBride *Wild Angels*
16. Mark Chesnutt *It Wouldn't Hurt to Have Wings*
17. Ricochet *What Do I Know*
18. Tracy Byrd *Heaven in My Woman's Eyes*
19. Alabama *It Works*
20. Faith Hill *Someone Else's Dream*
21. Lari White *Ready, Willing and Able*
22. Aaron Tippin *Without Your Love*
23. Tim McGraw *All I Want Is a Life*
24. John Michael Montgomery *Long As I Live*
25. Billy Dean *It's What I Do*

Albums

1. Shania Twain *The Woman in Me*
2. Wynonna *Revelations*
3. Alan Jackson *The Greatest Hits Collection*
4. Neil Diamond *Tennessee Moon*
5. Garth Brooks *Fresh Horses*
6. Vince Gill *Souvenirs*
7. Garth Brooks *The Hits*
8. Faith Hill *It Matters to Me*
9. Tracy Lawrence *Time Marches On*
10. Tim McGraw *All I Want*
11. Clay Walker *Hypnotize the Moon*
12. John Michael Montgomery *John Michael Montgomery*
13. The Mavericks *Music for All Occasions*
14. Diamond Rio *IV*
15. Vince Gill *When Love Finds You*
16. Reba McEntire *Starting Over*
17. Alison Krauss *Now That I've Found You: A Collection*
18. Travis Tritt *Greatest Hits—From the Beginning*
19. Jeff Foxworthy *Games Rednecks Play*
20. Lonestar *Lonestar*
21. Patty Loveless *The Trouble with the Truth*
22. Terri Clark *Terri Clark*
23. Collin Raye *I Think About You*
24. David Lee Murphy *Out with a Bang*
25. Martina McBride *Wild Angels*

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Garth's Worst Nightmare

I'm sitting in a thick blue fog of cigarette smoke in a joint in Texas, mesmerized. Now, calling the place a "joint" might be gilding the lilly a little, because really it's just the most basic possible kind of bar, an ugly little cinderblock shed astride a minor crossroads near a two-bit farm town, and inside it's nothing but a bartop, three long fiberboard tables, a halfsize pool setup, a bathroom that'd make an Iraqi conscript feel right at home, about 15 variously drunk, dusty patrons who look to have been living in each other's pockets *way* too long, and a corner just big enough for a five- or six-piece band, depending on how they've been eating lately. All the same (excuse me a moment, I just got an elbow in the ear), this is for damn sure one magic night.

It's the music. A weepy, steel whiney "Fraulein," a mournful "Invitation to the Blues," a spunky "Steel Guitar Rag," a slurry "Candy Kisses," a raucous "You Never Even Called Me by My Name," a horribly funny, sad, true-to-life original called "I Cry, Then I Drink, Then I Cry"...and all of it done exactly the way it should be, the steel and the guitars weaving together seamlessly, the drums and bass slapping along, the bandleader a big, strong-looking guy with a king-sized cigar, a hefty belt buckle, and a manner intriguingly suggestive of Lester Moran, the (sadly) now retired "Ole Roadhog," except of course this guy's younger and slimmer and, naturally, not half as homely...

Wow. This is living: Right here, right now, there's nothing whatsoever Eagles-inspired, tushy-fixated, sensitive-songwriterly, or otherwise Anti-Hank-ish in the air: just country music, the real stuff. I'm blown away. I haven't heard *this* in—what? Years? Yes, years. It's The Cornell Hurd Band, says the big guy, "from the bowels of South Austin, Texas...Garth Brooks' worst nightmare!"

Let's have the details, or as they'd say in Hollywood, the back story. All right. I've come to Austin, which these days calls itself "Live Music Capital of the World" (though I prefer to keep thinking of it as "The Buckle of the Slacker Belt"), on *Country Music* business—been interviewing musicians and catching their acts for a couple of days now—and this trip to the shed at the crossroads, D.J.'s, 40 miles and several culture/class borderlines out into cowboy country, is my night off.

My connection is John Morthland, the writer and *CMM* contributing editor, one local legend among many, who settled in

Austin a decade-plus ago after a career in New York, and *his* connection is Cornell Hurd himself, also a local legend among many, who settled in Austin in 1989 after a career which started in the same Bay Area country-revival scene that launched Asleep at the Wheel and Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen. Now Cornell works as a headhunter in the high-technology industry when he's not making ever-so-slightly twisted country music (which, naturally, isn't available on

anywhere between his breath and my hair, I'm frightened. I'm having one of those "What's going to happen to country music?" moments which afflict me all too often, probably more than anyone I can think of except George Jones. I mean, there's nobody filling those shoes, you know? All the cute, famous little Nashvillians just aren't cutting it ('cause if they were, they wouldn't have recording contracts), and *nobody else can get on the damn radio!* The vast majority of musi-



Keepers of the flame, The Cornell Hurd Band: They and other Austin legends keep alive real country music, which is why you never hear them on radio. Cornell himself is third from right with branding iron.

any major label, but can be had from P.O. Box 150532, Austin, TX 78715, or by calling (512) 894-0734—his latest album, *Cool and Unusual Punishment*, offering among other marvels four duets with Johnny Bush). For his part, Cornell's connection to D.J.'s is former club owner James Henry, yet another local legend who left Austin five years ago after losing his lease on Henry's, a classic hard/hip country joint now sorely missed by Cornell, Don Walser and other keepers of the flame. These days, D.J.'s is like a Saturday night living room for Mr. Henry and his wife, while for Cornell it's "Hey, you need a gig" (that's a joke, sort of). The Cornell Hurd Band will be back at D.J.'s within the month, following Don Walser.

As far as I'm concerned, then, this joint at this moment is the center of the whole country music universe, and the fact that almost nobody back in Austin (and *absolutely* nobody in Nashville) knows it even exists is just their bad luck.

Well, actually, it's not bad luck, is it? It's their bad judgment. Which is a frightening thought, and sitting here listening to Cornell do "It Was Either the Whiskey or the Wife," ducking sprays of beer and hoping the old cowpoke swaying on his bootheels behind me doesn't get his Zippo

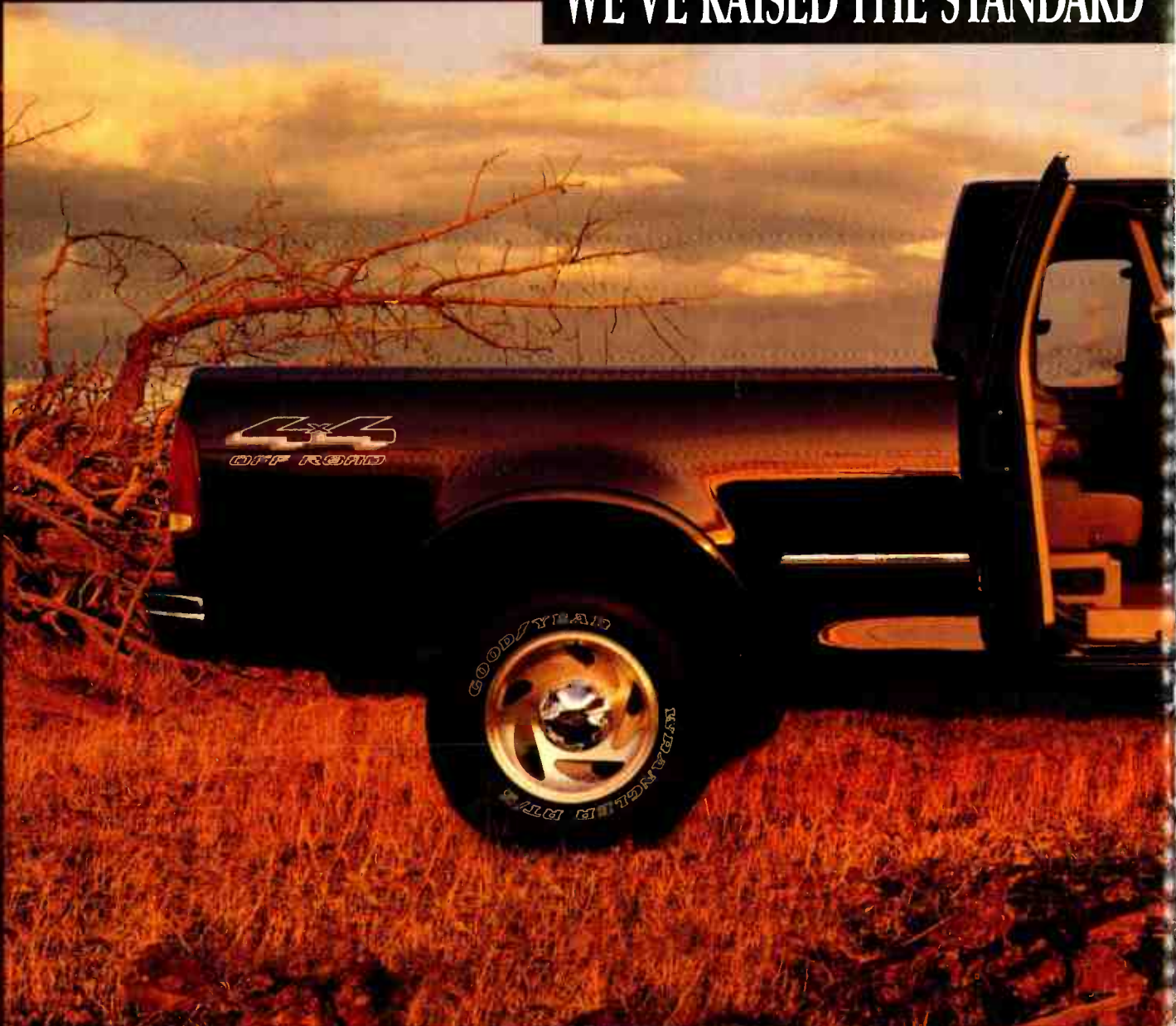
cians who insist on playing real country music are stuck playing just joints, often just joints in Texas.

But man, that tune's getting so old, and I'm getting so tired of singing it (even though it seems I just can't help myself). I've got to remember that the wheel may be turning (even if it also may not), that the flame hasn't died completely yet: that Merle Haggard and Steve Earle and The Derailers have just come out with great new albums and Johnny Cash and Connie Smith are in the studio as I write, that yesterday I heard Junior Brown's new work and loved it, that today I heard Dale Watson's and loved it even more (yes, folks, that's *DALE WATSON*, the only one I've ever heard yet who really *could* fill their shoes). And of course right now I'm hearing Cornell Hurd and his band, and they're taking me where I've always belonged and love to be. "My Window Faces the South," "Fools Like Me," "Bubbles in My Beer," "The Cold Morning Light," "Each Night at Nine," "Crazy 'Cause I Love You," "Time Changes Everything"...

Does it?

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

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