

**GARTH BROOKS CENTERFOLD**

# COUNTRYMUSIC

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2000  
Issue 205

## THE NEW VINCE GILL

*Singing a  
Different Tune  
Thanks to the  
Power of Love*

**KATHY  
MATTEA**  
*A Life  
In Bloom*

*Fashion  
Face-Off*  
**COUNTRY vs.  
WRESTLING**

*Political  
Party Boy*  
**COLLIN  
RAYE**

**KICKIN'  
GRASS**  
*Bluegrass  
Gets Hip*

**25  
SONGS  
THAT SHAPED  
COUNTRY**

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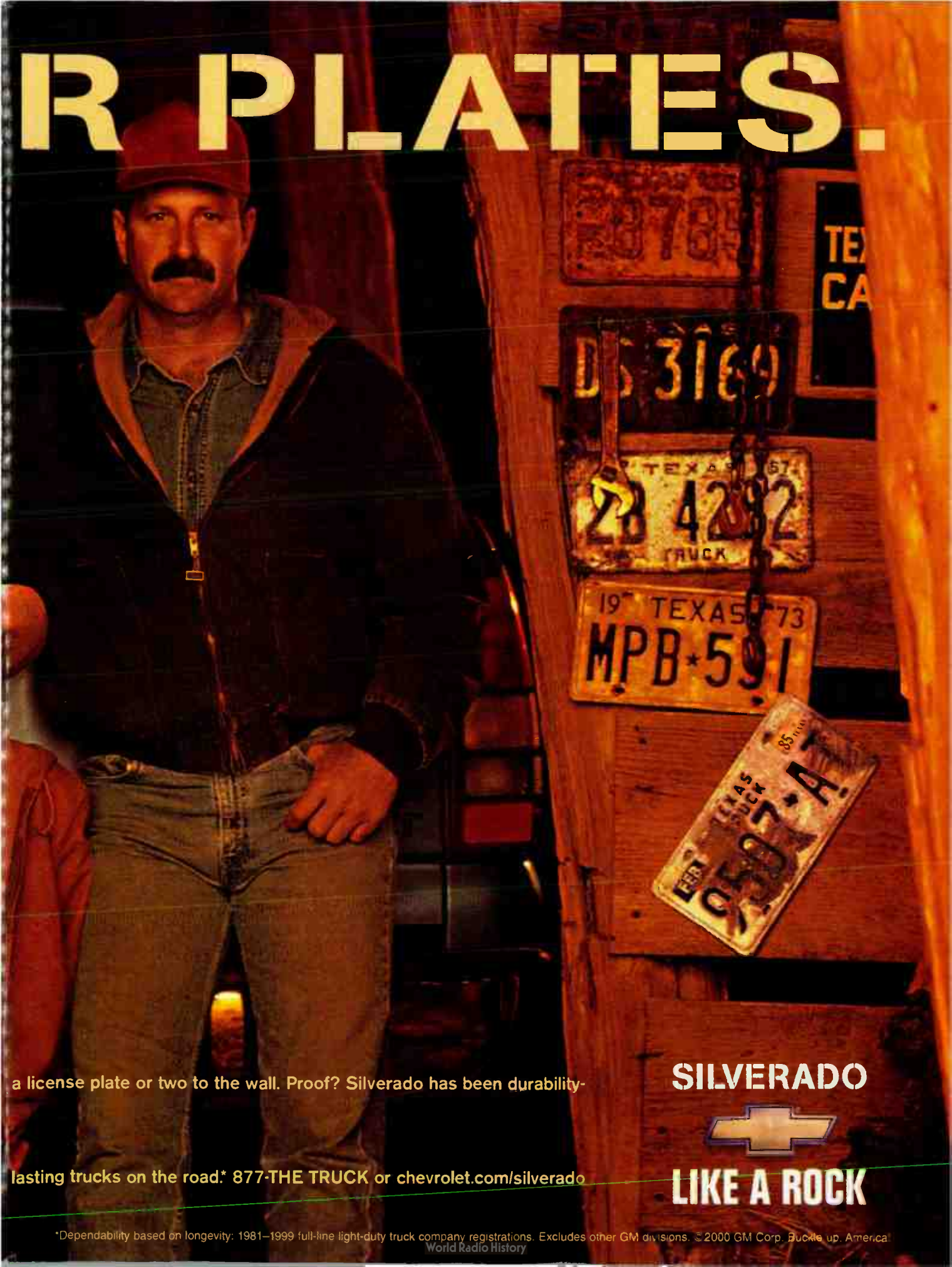
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World Radio History

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To turn romantic balladeer Vince Gill into the world's happiest guy, all you need is love.

*By Deborah Barnes*

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*By Michael McCall*

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*By Charlene A. Blevins*

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*By Tamara Saviano*

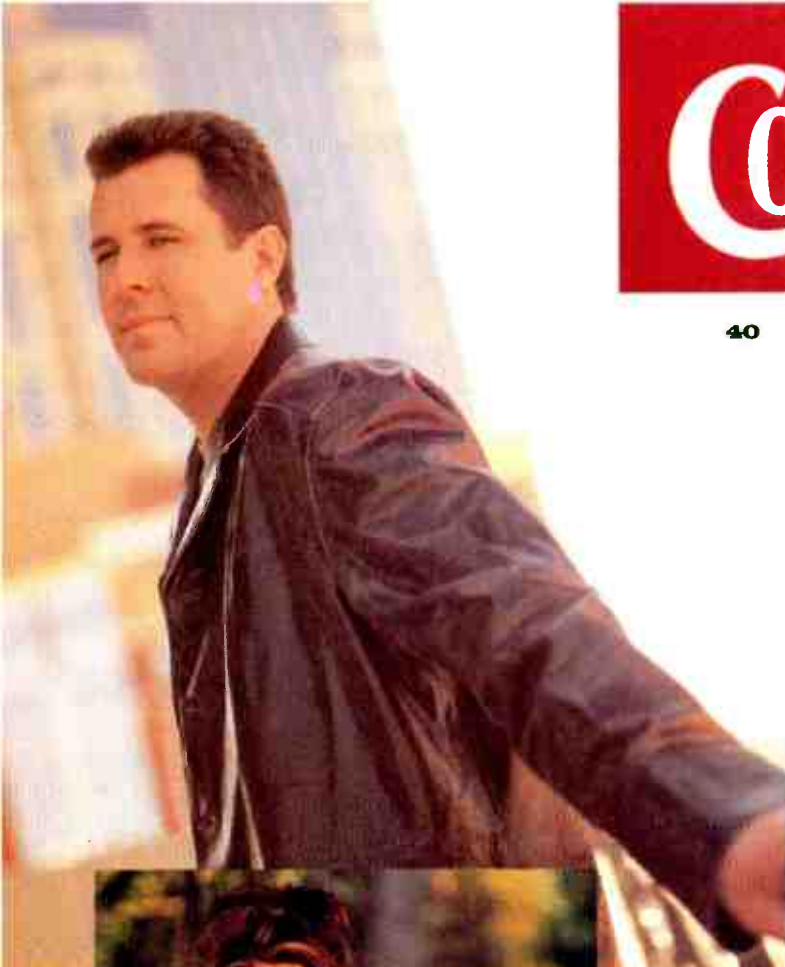
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Don't look now, but bluegrass is hip—and turning on a whole new generation of fans.

*By Jon Weisberger*



Clockwise from top: Gill is lovestruck; Mattea cultivates a new outlook; Earl Scruggs (left) and Marty Stuart enjoy a bluegrass revival; Raye has a political party.

TAMARA REYNOLDS



58



64

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World Radio History

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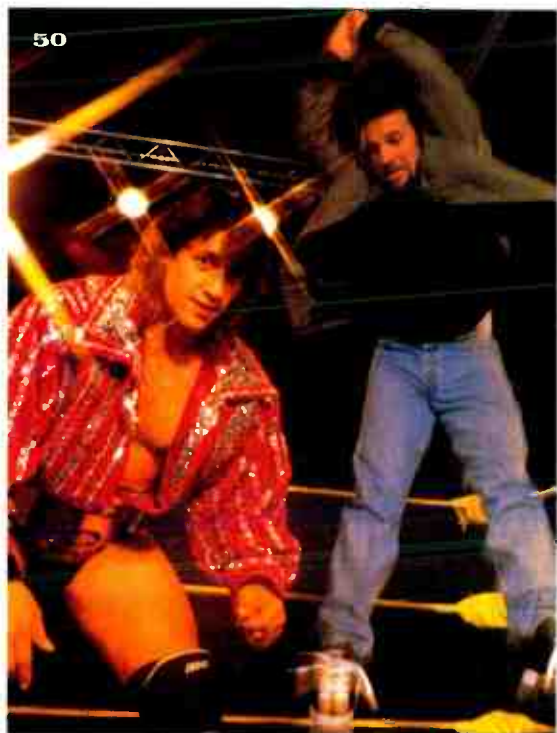
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NANCY LEE ANDREWS: ASH-WORTH BLACK TURTLENECK; BANANA REPUBLIC JACKET; LEVI'S 560 JEANS; VANS SNEAKERS



MATTHEW BARNES PHOTOGRAPHY

From top: It's a fashion free-for-all for Wills (right) and the Kid; Jennings is still outlaw cool.

## REVIEWS

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## EDITOR'S NOTE



ED BRODE

**Change.** Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad, a lot of times it's a little of both. To say country music has changed over the past century is an understatement. Listen to the Carter Family next to Shania Twain and it's hard to believe they're even in the same ballpark, let alone on the same team. But looking back, it's possible to trace the winding path of country through its earliest recordings of simple but eloquent folk tunes right up to the ubiquitous "positive love song" that permeated the radio waves in the '90s.

**ALL ALONG THE WAY,** certain seminal songs were the signposts to what lay ahead for country music, paving the airways for imitators that would define the music for years to come. In this issue, we examine the 25 songs we deem most responsible for shaping the country sound and why they became touchstones for country music as it evolved. There are songs on the list from every decade, proving that it doesn't necessarily have to be old to be influential.

One artist who has contributed his share of great songs to the country landscape is Vince Gill. The perennially popular singer/songwriter/musician has also had his share of changes lately. For our cover story, he told me how his idyllic relationship with bride Amy Grant not only inspired the songs on his new album but, in short, transformed his life—in the best possible ways. Why, the new Vinny has even drastically cut back on his tee time. (And if you know anything about Vince, you know that in Music City his name is nearly synonymous with golf, so he's made some major changes indeed.)

And change is in the air these days as election time draws near. With politics on the minds of most Americans, we naturally wanted to talk to artists about their presidential choices and the issues close to their hearts. But we found very few willing to go on record about their political beliefs—except for Collin Raye, who didn't hesitate to share his views on major issues with managing editor Tamara Saviano. We don't necessarily agree with everything he says, but we admire his willingness to take a stand in print—a gutsy move for a public figure.

And it took even more guts for Mark Wills to take part in our semi annual fashion feature. That's because he had to climb into the wrestling ring with National Wrestling Alliance's Colorado Kid and be batted around like a hacky sack, all for the sake of style. You just have to see it to believe it.

Also in this issue, we catch up with fan favorite Ricky Van Shelton, critical darling Kathy Mattea and ideal outlaw Waylon Jennings. No matter how things change, as long as there are characters like Waylon in the mix, the future of country music is secure.

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## LETTERS



### STRAIT TALK

**A MILLION THANK YOUS FOR** slapping the handsome face of George Strait on the cover of your August/September issue. Every time I see George on the cover or inside your magazine it just makes my day, and all I want to do is stay in my room and read it over and over. It's just too bad he refuses to do any interviews. I really would like to see more of him.

**Ashley Legg**

San Acacia, New Mexico

**BEFORE I PAY HOMAGE TO** King George (Strait), may I remind you of the man who brought true country music out of its urban cowboy daze in the '80s: Randy Travis. Despite almost no support from country radio these days, Randy continues to release wonderful songs. Randy works hard to promote country music, not hesitating to spend countless hours on interviews and personal appearances. He gives his all in each live performance and does not hesitate to reach out to his fans. In my opinion, the "King" is dead. Long live Randy Travis.

**Connie Fellows**

Pelzer, South Carolina

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR** the wonderful article and pictures of George Strait in the August/September issue. I think he's one of the best performers in any music format, a cute guy

and a wonderful role model for young people. I hope to see more about him in your magazine. George is the best.

**Monte Ess**

Seguin, Texas

### THIN COUNTRY

#### THOSE POOR SKINNY COUNTRY

[women]. Get real. It will always be the singer and the song, not the size of the singer! Sizes 2 and 4—this is not normal for any person. They all look like concentration camp victims. What's in their little size-2 hearts? Not much.

**Sandra K. Lewis**

Omaha, Nebraska

#### IF THE TV IS ADDING 10

pounds to Faith Hill, I'd hate to see her in person. Fit and healthy is one thing, but Faith looks like someone from a World Vision photo.

Please, someone feed Faith! When I see artists I admire become too thin, I start getting Karen Carpenter flashbacks. Must we learn this lesson again?

**Lisa Ann Cawyer**

San Diego, California



**WHAT IS WITH** the lady country stars, that they are trying to go naked? Do they think they are Playboy bunnies? They look like they are starved to death. How sad that their talent isn't enough for them.

**Emogene Baker**

Russellville, Alabama

### REED READERS REACT

**BOBBY REED SOUNDS LIKE** another macho man who can't stand it when a real man chooses to tell it like it is. Vince Gill's new CD is wonderful. Just because he is an emotional boy, this reviewer thinks there is something distasteful about it? Give me a break. If there were only more men like Vince



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Gill, we women would be very happy. This album is exciting to me. I have read several reviews and this one is the only bad one. Thank goodness. And thank God for Vince Gill, and his talent and boldness to give of himself.

**Georgia Harley**  
Argos, Indiana

## JUST READ YOUR REVIEW OF

Vince Gill's new album. I have always loved his music. My wife and I love "Look at Us" because it reflects our marriage. I love all of Vince's albums, even the old material when he was with RCA. What a disappointment his new album is, especially coming on the heels of *The Key*, which was one of the best pure country albums of the '90s. It seems like he is so blinded by love that he forgot what his music, especially the arrangements, is all about. Where was steel virtuoso John Hughey on this record? Producer Tony Brown should be shot. This album sounds like all the other pop junk that is being passed off as country these days. I hope your CD reviewers will continue to blast the albums and artists who deserve it and ignore the comments of letter writers who wouldn't know real country music if it kicked them in the teeth.

**Bill Hausler**  
Summerville, South Carolina

**WHERE DO YOU FIND SOME OF** the country music-haters that you use to write reviews? I would like to narrow that down to one individual—Bobby Reed—and his reviews of both the new Vince Gill CD and the initial release by Rebecca Lynn Howard. I feel like Vince Gill's new CD is one of the best he has recorded. Also, I have thoroughly enjoyed the CD by Rebecca Lynn Howard.

**Paul W. Thompson**  
Weaverville, North Carolina

**IT JUST SO HAPPENED THAT I** slipped Rebecca Lynn Howard's debut into my computer drive yesterday and listened several times, cranking up the cuts Bobby Reed highlighted—"Here in the Water," "Jesus," "Daddy and You,"



and my favorite, "Was It as Hard to Be Together." I had the pleasure of hearing this young lady sing live, and she blew us away! Some of the comments Bobby Reed made in his review were valid, but may I suggest readers buy the CD just for the cuts mentioned. I can't wait to hear what else this gifted young lady has in store for us.

**Scott Walker**  
Lynchburg, Virginia

## TRITT RETORTS

**I'M WRITING ABOUT THE** article on Clay Davidson [Horizons, June/July]. Where do you get off saying Clay Davidson is hands-down a better singer than Travis Tritt? I've listened to Clay's new CD and I'll admit he's good, but he's no Travis Tritt (no offense toward Clay).

**Steven Metz**  
Mansfield, Ohio

**I'M A CLAY DAVIDSON FAN** and should have enjoyed the article about him, but had a very serious problem with the writer, Craig Havighurst, comparing him to Travis Tritt. I'm also a Travis Tritt fan and feel this was totally unnecessary, and the space should have been used telling us about Clay rather than trying to tear down Travis.

**Elizabeth Forbes**  
Springfield, Illinois

## A VOTE FOR VINCENT

### THANKS FOR THE BRIEF

report on Rhonda Vincent [Horizons, June/July]. For both Rhonda and her fans, perhaps it is best that she is blessed with real talent, something that today's radio and record executives can't seem to recognize. It is refreshing to know that someone will not compromise their music and ideals just to be played on radio. Obviously Rhonda Vincent knows who she is and what she stands for, and didn't allow the Nashville executives to brainwash her. Lucky for Rhonda and her fans that she escaped with her music and dignity intact.

**Jim Rhodes**  
Knightsville, Indiana

## THE COUNTRY QUESTION

### AS A LIFETIME COUNTRY MUSIC

fan I am increasingly frustrated by country radio ignoring not only classic country, but the best of today's country as well, in favor of the "Top 40" sound. Three of today's new country singers rate with the all-time greats, yet you never hear them on the radio. Mandy Barnett has a spectacular voice and a style comparable to Patsy Cline. Allison Moorer writes songs with the feeling of Hank Williams, and has a remarkable sensitivity of delivery. Danni Leigh is equally terrific at hard-driving honky-tonk and power ballads. Is there any way that these great artists can be heard by the public?

**Christian Blom**  
Arlington, Virginia

### I ENJOY YOUR MAGAZINE VERY

much. I love the articles and photos of the older stars. People just love the old traditional music, and I, for one, feel that Nashville turned its back on true country music fans.

**Billy Mitchell**  
Roxboro, North Carolina

**AFTER READING YOUR TWO** most current issues I just have to say I am really tired of this squabble over

what is country and what is not, and the derogatory comments made toward the artists. An artist, whether it be a musician, a sculptor, a painter, etc., will for the most part branch out and experiment and expand their craft. Sometimes they try something new and find it was the wrong way to go, so they try again. Why can't people just listen to the type of music they prefer and *gracefully* let the rest go? As for the comments on the cost of Martina's clothing [Letters, June/July]...no, I can't afford those prices either. But in all fairness, most of us couldn't afford what Loretta or Tammy wore in the past, not to mention Porter Wagner's jackets!

**Sharon R. Pryor**  
via e-mail

**I ENJOY READING YOUR** magazine, but am a little frustrated by the many disdainful comments about country songs crossing over to pop. This is not a new phenomenon. I can't

name the first country artist who got airplay on another format, but several names come to mind: Dolly, Kenny, Patsy, Willie, etc. I'm sure this is not the decision of the artist and should not be taken out on them. Nor is it solely the fault of radio or the labels. The public must assume some of the accountability since they are buying the records and reinforcing the labels' belief that this is what the public wants. Radio stations play it because



Patsy Cline



Shania Twain

MORELLO, GHERGIA

the product is selling, and therefore people must want to hear it.

I love traditional country music and own an extensive collection of it on compact disc. I appreciate the efforts of some artists who "keep it country." I'm thankful that I can turn off my radio when there's something I don't want to hear and play a CD of songs I *do* want to hear. More people should exercise that option and quit complaining. If we all put our money where our mouth is and start buying traditional country music, it would certainly send a message to Nashville. Now for the irony...I'm the music director for a country radio station in a large market.

**Robin E. Duff**  
via e-mail

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- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

Preheat oven to 375°. Shred cheese and mix all ingredients. Form into 1" balls. Bake 15 minutes on ungreased cookie sheet until golden brown. Makes about 6 dozen. Sausage cheese balls can be frozen uncooked.

For a firmer texture, add an extra 3 cups of baking/biscuit mix and an extra 2 cups shredded cheese to the ingredients listed above.



# Country on the Town

By Robert K. Oermann



## HEY, LORETTA

When Loretta Lynn was at the Country DJ Hall of Fame ceremony she got a hug from host Charlie Monk, above, and picked up a lifetime award after being serenaded by Chely Wright and Pam Tillis, below.



## BONDING AT THE BENEFIT

▲ Dolly Parton, top, joined an all-star recording session featuring Ty Herndon and others, center. Their "Wave to the World" record benefits the Paralympics. Lynn Anderson and Danni Leigh, bottom, are ready for that Aussie event.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: C. J. SHELKER; MORELLO/CHERGA; J. C. J. SHELKER 2



**GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNIN', HEAD OUT ON THE HIGHWAY**

▲When a Nashville radio station offered 98-cent gas, it enlisted sisters to pump it. The Osborne siblings of **SHeDAISY** joined the twin **Kinleys**, above. **Anita Cochran**, inset, checked the oil. Meanwhile, **Mandy Barnett** let her tootsies do the walking in Walkway of Stars wet cement, above right. ▶Over at the Opry House, 12-year-old **Billy Gilman** got words of encouragement from **Gomer**, er, **Jim Nabors**, far right. ▶**Jack Greene**, **Ricky Skaggs** and **Charley Pride** share plans for the Opry's 75th anniversary celebration, right. Down in Montgomery, Alabama, **Mark Wills** (bottom right) was as hot on the links as he is on the charts at the Price Oil Plainsmen Celebrity Golf Tournament. Even pro golfer **John Daly** agreed. ▼**Neal McCoy** meets finny fan Shamu at SeaWorld Orlando in Florida.



**OFFSTAGE ANTICS**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MURILLO; GHERGIA; 13 PLUS INSET: COURTESY BILL THORUP; PRICE OIL PLAINSMEN, COURTESY SEAWORLD ORLANDO; RANDI; RECLIP

## COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

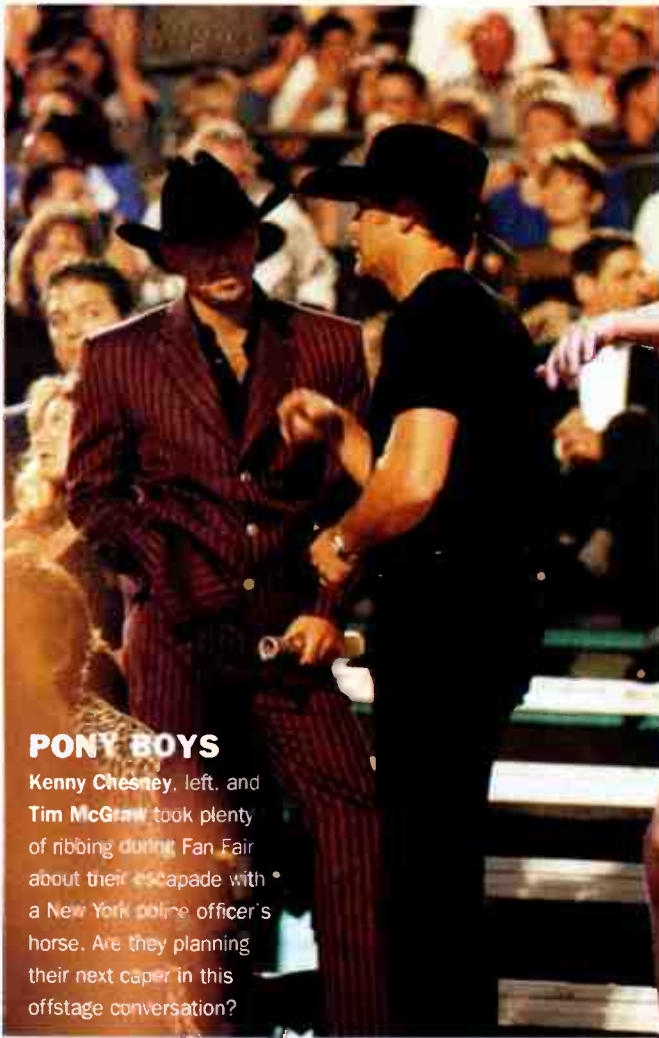


## AT COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE'S BOOTH

Clockwise from top left, **Danni Leigh** and **Terri Clark** swapped stories. **Paul Brandt** posed for snapshots. **Mark Wills** clowned with wrestler **the Colorado Kid** (you can catch them both in our fashion spread on page 50). **Lee Ann Womack** signed so many photos she ran out...until our own Robert K. ran for more.



## FAN FAIR PARTYERS

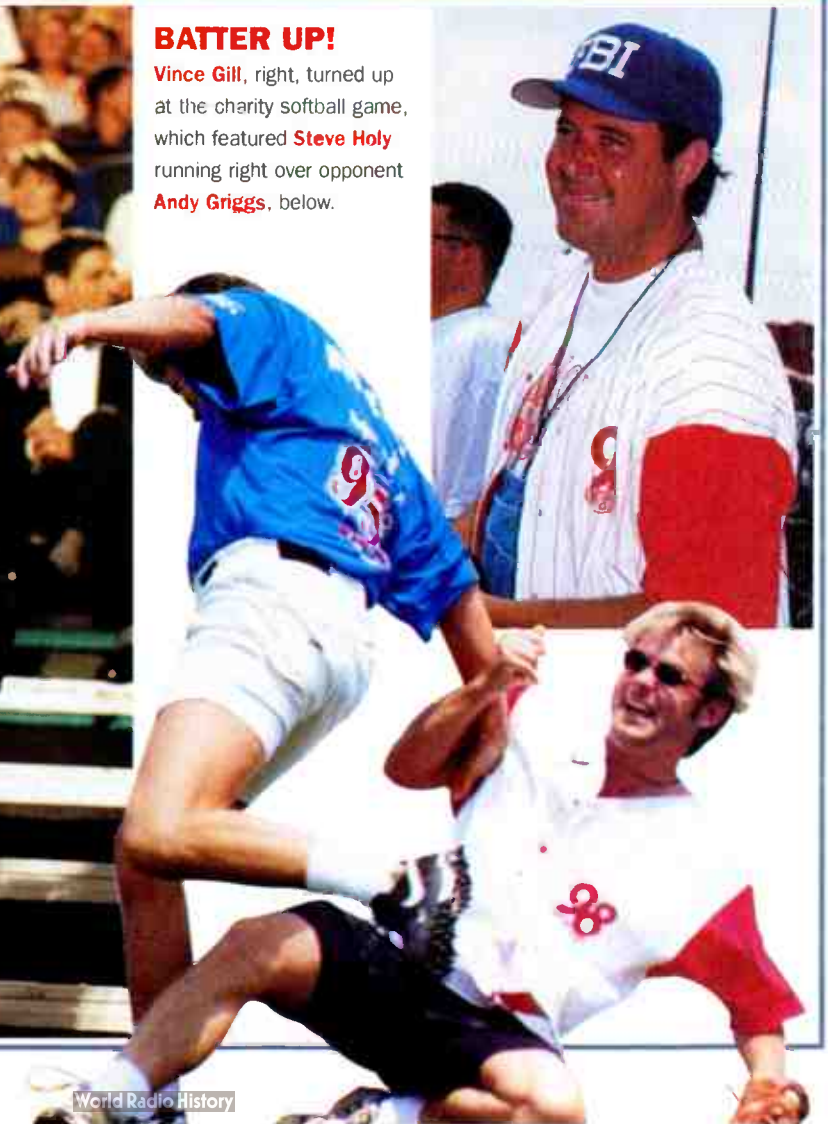


### PONY BOYS

**Kenny Chesney**, left, and **Tim McGraw** took plenty of ribbing during Fan Fair about their escapade with a New York police officer's horse. Are they planning their next caper in this offstage conversation?

### BATTER UP!

**Vince Gill**, right, turned up at the charity softball game, which featured **Steve Holy** running right over opponent **Andy Griggs**, below.



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# THE BUZZ

BY HAZEL SMITH



Party animals  
Hank Williams Jr.  
(left) and Kid  
Rock join forces  
onstage.

CHRIS WHITT

## Junior and the Kid

Hank Williams Jr. was performing at Pine Knob Amphitheater in Detroit when **Kid Rock** surprised him by leaping onstage. The duo closed out their jam session with **Hank Sr.'s** "Kawliga." Kid invited Junior and manager **Merle Kilgore** out to his mansion, where they continued picking with Kid's friends and family.

## Bubble Bus

Should you see bubbles seeping out the window of a customized bus, don't be alarmed. My guess is it's **Lorrie Morgan** taking a bath. Lorrie has the very first bathtub ever installed in a bus. Lorrie says she hates showers. Says when she shaves her legs in the shower she ends up cutting herself. Wonder if this is why Lorrie is calling her tour the "Naked Truth Tour"?

## Shania-less Holiday

I've learned there will be no Yuletide CD by

**Shania Twain** under the tree this holiday season, and maybe never. Last year's plans to record standards was changed when Shania and hubby/producer, **Robert J. "Mutt" Lange**, decided to write the songs for a festive 2000 release, which did not culminate. They're now writing for her next CD, due 2001.

## Billy Bob

While a lot of hillbillies are trying to cross over to acting and/or doing soundtracks, the Academy Award-winning **Billy Bob Thornton** is in Music Town recording an album. I've always suspected Billy Bob is one of us.

## Is Pam Fickle?

**Pam Tillis**, who just became the newest member of the Grand Ole Opry, was invited to sing harmony by former Beatle **Ringo Starr** when he appeared in Music Town. Said Pam, "Twenty years ago I admit I had a crush

on **Paul McCartney**. Now I have a new favorite Beatle." Sounds fickle to me, Pam! The Liverpudlian knows his country. Ringo claims his favorite country female singer is **Kitty Wells**. Favorite male country singers: **Merle Haggard** and the late **Hank Snow**.

## OFF CAMERA AT FAN FAIR

### Country Music Closes a Door

Eleven years ago **Alan Jackson** scored a No. 1 hit with "Here in the Real World" and put Arista/Nashville on the map. Visibly moved, Jackson sang the song to close the label at the last Arista Fan Fair show. People wept. Jackson presented a plaque with his photo and a thanks to all label employees. The little label that could folds into the RCA/BNA group.

### Loverboy Clint

**Clint Black** wouldn't tell us the title but says he has written another duet love song on his kitchen table to record with wife **Lisa Hartman-Black**. Added Clint, "More than cooking goes on in our kitchen." Wonder if they

saw the movie *Bridges of Madison County*?

### Graceful Trace

Accident-prone **Trace Adkins** sneaked backstage to one of the shows and told me he broke his big toe. According to Trace, his wife **Rhonda** has him take off his shoes at the door of their new house (Rhonda denied this). Trace dropped his guitar on his big toe and broke it. No real harm done; the guitar is OK.

### You're Wright

During **Chely Wright's** fan club party, a fan spent \$14,500 to have supper with the star. Money collected from the auction went to Chely's Reading, Writing and Rhythm charity that buys musical instruments for public schools. Good for Chely! I say, give those kids guitars, then they won't want guns. Don't shoot—pick! Speaking of Chely, she and **Brad Paisley** were Fan Fair champions for 2000. Definitely they put in the most hours for the fans.



Tim McGraw and Faith Hill

### Faith and Tim

**Faith Hill** and **Tim McGraw**, a.k.a. the **George** and **Tammy** of 2000, signed autographs in the same

booth, causing a frenzy with fans and media. The couple would sign a photo, put their arms around each other, pose and do it all over again. Togetherness must be working for the couple. They plan to tour together with a "Soul 2 Soul Tour 2000" this summer. **Gracie** and **Maggie** go along with **Mama** and **Daddy**.

### Judd Red

**Naomi Judd** hosted the Mercury show. Her too-red hair blowing in the wind favored an upside-down bird's nest. The wind almost blew up the skirt of her orange polka-dot dress with shoes dyed to match. Had Naomi used orange/red hair color instead of burgundy/red, her hair would've matched her polka dots and shoes. Ain't showbiz grand?

### Fans Say Goodbye

The 21,627 true-blue country fans from around the globe said goodbye to the Tennessee State Fairgrounds, where Fan Fair has convened for 18 years. Like the Dodgers left Brooklyn, Fan Fair has left the Fairgrounds. Even as hot as it gets, as rainy as it gets and with all the tornado threats through the years, I didn't want Fan Fair to change. But it would make sense to me if it moved to the air-conditioned Nashville Convention Center or Gaylord Entertainment Center, which could house all events in comfort. Both are convenient to accommodations, restaurants and bus stops. And Music Row is fairly close. \*



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World Radio History



## GEORGIA MIDDLEMAN

**A petite Texan finds success in Nashville by way of Paris. *Oui!***

**G**EORGIA MIDDLEMAN MOVED TO Paris once because she thought it'd be easier to find an apartment there than in New York City.

"Oh, this sounds so bad!" she sheepishly grins, trying to explain herself. The Texas native was then a drama major at New York University, there on scholarship (and partly because of a man, she admits), when after her sophomore year she decided to take a year off to focus on her songwriting. "I went back to Texas to write," she says, "but I didn't get any-

thing done. I worked hard and made some money but I just wasn't feeling creative. And I missed school. So I went back, and suddenly, there was no dorm space." Faced with the near impossibility of finding an affordable apartment in the Big Apple, Middleman came upon an audition to study for a semester in Paris. "So I thought, maybe it'll be easier to find an apartment there!" she laughs from behind the palest hazel eyes you've ever seen. Middleman was accepted to the program, and off went the apart-

ment-less, monolingual actress. "It was a big challenge to live somewhere that you can't speak the language," she says, "and to be able to get what you need."

But it's just that sort of fearlessness that has marked the life—and songwriting—of Middleman. She began singing professionally at age 10, and opened for Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard at the famed Billy Bob's nightclub in Fort Worth, Texas, in her teens. She even braved the daunting streets of Music Row

*(continued on p.19)*

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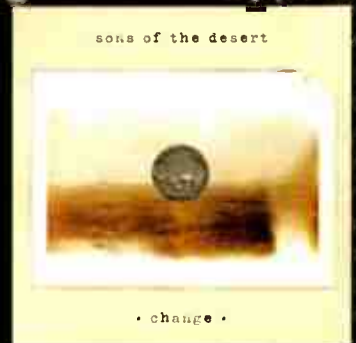


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## TOO YOUNG TO BE THIS GOOD

**Barely twentysomething, Nickel Creek can outpick most veterans.**

**A** year ago in Louisville, Kentucky, about 50 people packed into a hotel suite around midnight at the International Bluegrass Music Association convention to hear Nickel Creek the way acoustic music was meant to be heard: up close and unamplified. Mandolinist Chris Thile, guitarist Sean Watkins and his fiddling sister Sara Watkins launched into the slick and speedy "Through the Gates" by bluegrass guitarist Russ Barenberg, and an hour later, the assembled sat stunned by the musical craftsmanship, technical facility and beautiful singing they had heard. Now Nickel Creek is moving on to bigger venues with a debut album produced by Alison Krauss and a video in rotation on CMT. "Youthgrass," some call it. Whatever. It's beautiful and original.

Although none of the members of Nickel Creek are more than 22 years old, they've been a band for a decade. Thile's father Scott, the band's bass player, organized the group as a way to help his son and his friends learn bluegrass in southern California. The Watkins siblings were gifted musicians, but Chris Thile proved to be a true-blue prodigy, composing intricate instrumental music before turning 10 and utterly mastering the mandolin at a ridiculous age. All three studied rigorously with members of a noted California bluegrass ensemble. "Technique was hammered into us," Thile remembers. "That was a great foundation."

Thile's solo albums on Sugar Hill, recorded at ages 13 and 16, respectively, are friendly and fantastically played sessions with Nashville pickers. Nickel Creek's group dynamics produce something richer—a bold statement about where acoustic music, from bluegrass to country to Celtic, can go in

when she was a mere 13. Though only one Nashville publisher would meet with her, she remembers sitting in her hotel room dialing up a list of Music Row executives, asking for appointments.

The little girl grew up, graduated college and set out for the Los Angeles music scene, where she was told she was "too country" and should move to Nashville. She did. In Nashville, they told her she was too pop. Somewhere along the way, though, she had developed a strong spiritual foundation,



the years to come. Thile's fluid, imaginative and tonally rich playing is still the centerpiece of the new album, but all three contribute to Nickel Creek's dazzling instrumental interplay, funky edges and sweet-as-whipped-cream harmony singing.

That pleasing vocal blend, heard distinctly on "Out of the Woods" and the first single "Reasons Why," bears the mark of producer Krauss, who heard Nickel Creek at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville and gushed over their sound. The band, starstruck and shy, asked Krauss a few months later if she'd work with them and were "blown away" when she agreed, Thile reports.

The project blends the smooth bluegrass and jazz of southern California with the creative pop of Toad the Wet Sprocket or the Dave Matthews Band and a classical sensibility that puts a strong emphasis on musicianship and intensity. Those who follow bluegrass will recognize echoes of Thile's heroes—bassist Edgar Meyer and banjoist Bela Fleck. "They're doing new music, and they're virtuosos at their instruments, which are weird instruments, like mine," Thile says. You can call the mandolin weird if you like, but when he plays for audiences large or small, jaws always drop.

—Craig Havighurst

which included believing in her own artistry. She decided to honor that. "I said to myself, 'OK, just do what you do, and maybe it'll fit in somewhere.'"

The people at Giant Records think she fits in there quite nicely, thank you. Her debut album, *Endless Possibilities*, showcases both her beautiful, fluid voice and considerable writing skills. A little bit country, a little bit pop—in an organic, Joni Mitchell/Bonnie Raitt sort of way—the album's title could be used to describe Middleman's life, according to the artist.

It's about being honest, she says, overcoming your limitations, remembering the power of the song and trusting the process.

"This record is something I've been working toward for a long time, but there are elements that can't be controlled. I have a purpose, and I don't know where or when it's going to come out. I hope it's with this record. If not, it's meant to come out somewhere."

We should believe her, because she was right about that apartment in Paris.

—Charlene A. Blevins

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**2. WHERE TO MAIL YOUR COMPLETED ENTRY FORM:** Mail your completed entry form in a hand-addressed 4-1/8" x 9-1/2" #10 (business-size) envelope, with a first-class postage stamp affixed, to: Basic Part 2 Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 5321, Blair, NE 68009-5321. Limit one entry per outer mailing envelope. Entries must be received by 1/5/01.

All entries must be on official entry forms only. No photocopied or mechanically reproduced entry forms accepted. For each additional sweepstakes entry form you would like to receive, send a separate, self-addressed, stamped #10 (business-size) envelope to: Basic Part 2 Entry Requests, P.O. Box 4201, Blair, NE 68009-4201. Limit one request per outer mailing envelope. Residents of the states of VT and WA only need not affix postage to return envelopes. Participation limited to residents of the U.S. who are smokers, 21 years of age or older. Entry form requests must be received by 12/8/00.

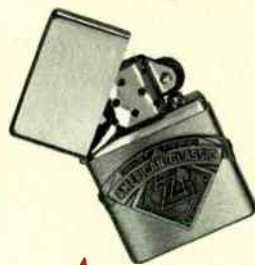
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# 25 SONGS THAT SHAPED COUNTRY

**C**ountry music may have changed dramatically over the past century, but country still wouldn't be country without honest, emotion-filled, heart-tugging songs. A number of groundbreaking, seminal songs have served as signposts for those very changes in country, inspiring imitators that defined the music for years to come. On the following pages, *CM* examines what we call the 25 songs that shaped the country sound, from the earliest folk tunes through the heydays of the dark murder ballads, the singing-cowboy odes, the suave Nashville Sound ditties and all the points along country's winding path. We also list our 10 favorite songs among country's most revisited themes—love, heartache, home and family, gospel and the honky-tonk life—plus the all-time favorites of an array of artists (designated by ★★★). It's a collection that confirms that in country, it's always been about the song. (continued on page 26) ▶▶▶

BY MICHAEL McCALL



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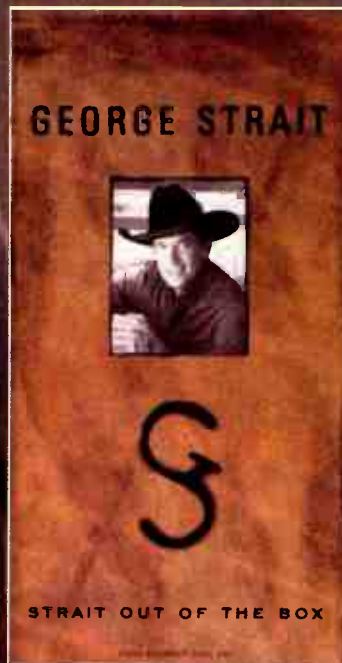
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A large, close-up photograph of George Strait wearing a black cowboy hat and a blue and white plaid shirt. He is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. His hands are clasped in front of him.

name.

A smaller, square portrait of George Strait wearing a brown cowboy hat and a brown shirt, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

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### JIMMIE RODGERS

The Father of Country Music combined blues, Dixieland and hillbilly music with a spirited touch that emphasized personality and his own exploits. In 1927, "Blue Yodel" became Rodgers' first hit, selling a million copies and transforming him into country's first national star. Rodgers would create a series of Blue Yodel tunes, presenting them in a rowdy, freewheeling style that greatly influenced the advent of honky-tonk music.



### "WILDWOOD FLOWER," THE CARTER FAMILY

The seminal country trio changed the course of popular music by putting a powerful, austere shine on mountain folk music. "Wildwood Flower," recorded in 1928, sold a million copies and ranked among the trio's most popular tunes. Just as important, it's the classic example of the groundbreaking guitar style of Mother Maybelle Carter. Her nimble use of her thumb and fingers created a beautiful, melodic sound that played a significant role in the development of the guitar as a popular instrument.

## 10 BEST SONGS TO FALL IN LOVE TO

"I Love You a  
Thousand Ways"  
LEFTY FRIZZELL (1951)

"Please Help Me,  
I'm Fallin'"  
HANK LOCKLIN (1960)

"Waltz Across Texas"  
ERNEST TUBB (1965)

"Walk Through This  
World With Me"  
GEORGE JONES (1967)

"My Woman, My  
Woman, My Wife"  
MARTY ROBBINS (1968)

"Kiss an Angel  
Good Morning"  
CHARLEY PRIDE (1971)

"Easy Loving"  
FREDDIE HART (1971)

"What a Difference  
You've Made  
in My Life"  
RONNIE MILSAP (1978)

"Forever and Ever,  
Amen"  
RANDY TRAVIS (1987)

"When You Say  
Nothing at All"  
KEITH WHITLEY (1988)

★★★★ HEATH WRIGHT (RICOCHET):

"I'M SO LONESOME I COULD CRY" BY HANK WILLIAMS ★★★★★

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"THE SILENCE OF A FALLING STAR  
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DONE IN A WAY THAT FEW WRITERS  
COULD MAKE WORK:

"THAT MIDNIGHT TRAIN IS  
WHININ' LOW AND I'M SO  
LONESOME I COULD CRY."

[AND] THE MUSIC IS HAUNTING."

### "SAN ANTONIO ROSE," DOB WILLS AND HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS

In 1935, during Wills' first recording session with Columbia Records, producer Art Satherley liked the Texas Playboys instrumental "Spanish Two Step" so much that he asked the fiddling bandleader if he had another like it. Wills played the same song backward and crowned it "San Antonio Rose," and it went on to become the band's first substantial pop hit, thereby introducing the Playboys' groundbreaking, highly influential western swing sound.





**"THE GREAT SPECKLED BIRD," ROY ACUFF**

In 1938, Acuff performed "The Great Speckled Bird" during his first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry. His emotive, theatrical style proved an immediate hit, elevating him into one of the most popular entertainers of his time—and helping build the Opry into an enduring representative of country music. With its ominous tone and passages of biblical reckoning, "The Great Speckled Bird" represented the dramatic howl of God-fearing rural folk whose worship was fueled by both dread and hope.

**"BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN," GENE AUTRY**

The most successful recording artist among Hollywood's singing cowboys, Autry set the musical style for commercial western music. That style—smooth vocals backed by jaunty fiddle, a strummed acoustic guitar and a loping rhythm—is best represented by Autry's theme song, the 1939 hit "Back in the Saddle Again." Its references to the pleasures of riding the range is a fine example of what makes cowboy music so romantic and appealing.



★★★★ LEE ANN WOMACK:  
"IF YOU'RE GONNA DO ME WRONG (DO IT RIGHT)" BY VERN GOSDIN ★★★★★

**"I LOVE THE PAIN IN HIS VOICE,  
THE HOPELESSNESS OF IT ALL. IT JUST  
GIVES ME CHILLS."**



**"BLUE MOON OF KENTUCKY," BILL MONROE**

The bluegrass pioneer originally recorded his most famous song in 1946 with his classic Blue Grass Boys lineup: banjoist Earl Scruggs, guitarist Lester Flatt, fiddler Chubby Wise and bassist Howard Watts. Of Monroe's vast catalog, stunning tunes like "Blue Grass Breakdown," "It's Mighty Dark to Travel" and "I'm Going Back to Old Kentucky" exerted more influence on the legions of pickers who followed the master's lead. But "Blue Moon of Kentucky" wielded a wider influence, playing a primary role in the development of rock 'n' roll and growing into an American standard familiar to music fans of all tastes.



*"I like to give each piece a chance."  
(Carrie Bell, Student)*

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**"I'LL HOLD YOU IN MY HEART (TILL I CAN HOLD YOU IN MY ARMS)," EDDY ARNOLD**

In 1947, when Arnold's tender love song spent a staggering 21 weeks at No. 1, it established the career direction of country music's most popular crooner. When it climbed the pop charts as well, it showed how Nashville artists could reach larger audiences by smoothing their rural edges and removing the twang from their sound. Nashville has produced crossover artists ever since. Most of them follow Arnold toward the middle of the road, but few of them display his elegance and naturalness.

**"IT WASN'T GOD WHO MADE HONKY TONK ANGELS," KITTY WELLS**

Wells just wanted to earn some household spending money before retiring from performing when she recorded this answer song to Hank Thompson's "Wild Side of Life." Instead of retiring, though, Wells became a country star with this 1952 smash that also threw off Nashville's sexist blinders by disclosing the commercial potential of female vocalists. J.D. Miller's lyrics voiced the pent-up feelings of women in a way country songs hadn't previously, and before long a broad range of female viewpoints enriched the country soundscape.



★★★★ MARTY RAYBON:  
"1982" BY  
RANDY TRAVIS ★★★★★

**"THIS SONG WAS THE START OF A TURN-AROUND FOR COUNTRY MUSIC IN A TIME WHEN WE REALLY NEEDED IT."**



**"YOUR CHEATIN' HEART," HANK WILLIAMS**

As with many country legends, hanging Williams' enormous influence on one song is a difficult proposition. But "Your Cheatin' Heart," released in 1953 shortly after his death, is more than one of Williams' most popular and influential tunes. It also perfectly represents how far he employed dark, haunting imagery to probe the emotional turmoil of his life. By succinctly plumbing a mysterious human condition—the pain lovers brandish on each other—Williams set a standard that would be emulated for decades by repentant songwriters using music to explain their suffering and exorcise their demons.

**"CRAZY ARMS," RAY PRICE**

A shuffle rhythm fits a down-home country bar like a jukebox and a cold beer; there's not another sound that will fill a Texas dance floor faster. "Crazy Arms" is the preeminent country shuffle, a four-four beat with fiddle and steel guitar that dominated the hard-country sound of the late '50s. The song stayed at No. 1 for 20 weeks in 1956, keeping traditional country music alive amid the onslaught of rock 'n' roll. Today, any traditional country band playing for a two-stepping crowd must bow at the feet of Price and his great band, the Cherokee Cowboys.

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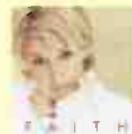
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- METAL Limp Bizkit, Korn
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## "FOLSOM PRISON BLUES," JOHNNY CASH

Of all of country's prison songs, Cash's 1956 classic best expresses the silent torture a once-free man feels behind bars; it also conveys the unremitting anguish he experiences as he repeatedly relives his crime in his mind. The stark, chugging rhythm sets an ominous tone, perfectly setting up Cash's spooky baritone and doomed lyrics. At that point, Cash set the bar for communicating the emotions of the voiceless American.



## "KING OF THE ROAD," ROGER MILLER

Roger Miller kicked open the margins of what a country song could be. Not as inventive as "Dang Me" or "Chug-a-Lug" "King of the Road" nonetheless stands as Miller's crowning achievement. A No. 1 adult-contemporary and No. 4 pop hit, it was characteristic of Miller's brilliance, striking a jaunty tone to tell a downbeat tale in an upbeat manner. It also broadened the palate for country artistry, opening the gate for such individualists as Tom T. Hall and Kris Kristofferson.

◆◆◆ DANNI FIGH: "SEVEN SPANISH ANGELS" BY WILLIE NELSON AND RAY CHARLES ◆◆◆

**"WITH THAT SONG, RAY CHARLES AND WILLIE NELSON UNITED COUNTRY AND SOUL—TWO OF MY FAVORITE KINDS OF MUSIC."**

## "CRAZY," PATSY CLINE

"Crazy" ranks as the ultimate Nashville crossover song. Released in 1961, it places an emotional country voice in a twang-free, orchestral setting to create a stirring, timeless song that touched people of all cultures and tastes. Cline's voice—a one-of-a-kind instrument of strength and intimacy cut with a heart-tugging, emotional throb—was never better showcased. In subsequent years, nearly every female country star would cite Cline's influence, but few would equal the powerful effect she had on listeners.



◆◆◆ EDDIE KILGALLON (RICOCHET): "THE DEVIL WENT DOWN TO GEORGIA" BY CHARLIE DANIELS ◆◆◆

**"IT EMBODIES THE EVER-POPULAR FIGHT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, AND IT'S STILL AS MUCH FUN TO HEAR TODAY AS IT WAS IN THE MID-'70s."**



## "ACT NATURALLY," BUCK OWENS

As much as any artist, Buck Owens characterized the Bakersfield sound—a high-griped, raved-up barroom cyle with the guitars and vocals cranked up a notch in tone and tempo. (Although he'd enjoyed previous hits, it was 1963's "Act Naturally," his first No. 1, that coined Owens' distinctive style: a combination of hardcore country and good-time rock 'n' roll powered with an exaggerated voice, down-home charisma and wit. Owens would score 18 more No. 1 hits through the '60s, many of them cast in the mold of "Act Naturally.")

## 10 BEST SONGS FOR CRYIN' IN YOUR BEER

"I'm Walking the Floor Over You"

ERNEST TUBB (1941)

"Slipping Around"

FLOYD TILLMAN (1949)

"I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"

HANK WILLIAMS (1949)

"Faded Love"

BOB WILLIS (1950)

"Singing the Blues"

MARTY ROBBINS (1956)

"I Can't Stop Loving You"

DON GIBSON (1958)

"He'll Have to Go"

JIM REEVES (1960)

"There Goes My Everything"

JACK GREENE (1967)

"He Stopped Loving Her Today"

GEORGE JONES (1968)

"When I Call Your Name"

VINCE GILL (1990)

★★★ EDDIE MONTGOMERY (MONTGOMERY GENTRY):  
"WHAT AM I GONNA DO WITH THE REST OF MY LIFE" BY MERLE HAGGARD ★★★

"MERLE HAGGARD AND SONGS LIKE THIS... THAT'S WHY COUNTRY MUSIC IS STILL HERE! IT JUST FEELS RIGHT WHEN HE'S GOT A CIGARETTE IN ONE HAND AND A JIM BEAM IN THE OTHER, JUST TAKING IT ALL IN."



**"MAMA TRIED,"  
MERLE HAGGARD**

In 1968, Haggard managed to tap several country touchstones in this classic: family, prison, and the tortured guilt of a country boy gone bad. Yet, in his typically earthy way, Haggard molds the themes into an artfully conceived tune about a poor, fatherless boy caught in a struggle between the values instilled into him at home and the rebellious, angry spirit pumping through his veins. Like Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and Johnny Cash, Haggard presented songs about his experiences and those of working-class rounders in a crisply poetic manner that comes across as honest and entertaining.



ALAN MAYOR

**"DON'T COME HOME A-DRINKIN' (WITH  
LOVIN' ON YOUR MIND)," LORETTA LYNN**

Lynn's first No. 1 hit came in 1967—seven years into her career—with this outspoken outburst of willful pride. Coming at the start of the feminist movement, Lynn's self-written song elucidated in no uncertain terms her desire to be respected in her home. Delivered in an unrepentant rural twang, it was a revolutionary cry from the trenches of tradition-bound wives. Along with "You Ain't Woman Enough," which preceded it, the song established Lynn as a down-home, plainspoken representative of those women whose voices are rarely heard.

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## 10 BEST SONGS FOR GETTIN' THE SPIRIT

"Will the Circle Be Unbroken"

THE CARTER FAMILY (1935)

"The Great Speckled Bird"

ROY ACUFF (1939)

"I Am a Pilgrim"

MERLE TRAVIS (1941)

"Dust on the Bible"

THE BAILES BROTHERS (1943)

"I Saw the Light"

HANK WILLIAMS (1948)

"(There'll Be) Peace in the Valley"

RED FOLEY (1951)

"I'll Fly Away"

JIM AND JESSE (1951)

"Wings of a Dove"

FERLIN HUSKY (1960)

"Daddy Sang Bass"

JOHNNY CASH (1968)

"Why Me, Lord"

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON (1972)

### "STAND BY YOUR MAN," TAMMY WYNETTE

Wynette's performance, a combination of vulnerability and resolve, speaks of owning the personal strength to maintain a marriage amid adversity. Released in 1968 during the feminist movement, some heard the song as a stubborn retrenchment into subordination. Instead, it was a powerful reiteration of the importance of family—an ongoing theme in country music during the social upheavals of the latter half of the 20th century.



★★★★ TERRI CLARK: "WHY NOT ME" BY THE JUDDS ★★★★★

"THERE IS JUST THE SIMPLISTIC, HONEST BARE-BONES ACOUSTIC PRODUCTION AND SEAMLESS HARMONIES THAT MAKE IT A NO-BRAINER IN THE CLASSIC COUNTRY CATEGORY, ESPECIALLY FOR MY GENERATION."

### "COAT OF MANY COLORS," DOLLY PARTON

Part of the appeal of many country stars is their iconic stories of overcoming difficult circumstances to live out the American dream. There's no greater story than that of Dolly Parton, who rose from a hardscrabble mountain upbringing to gain international renown. By writing songs that emphasized her background, Parton helped construct her own larger-than-life persona. And she never wrote more compassionately than on this inspiring tale of an impoverished mother who turns a dire situation into a fable about love and self-worth.



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**"MAMMAS DON'T LET YOUR BABIES GROW UP TO BE COWBOYS," WAYLON JENNINGS AND WILLIE NELSON**  
Both men created more substantial and distinctive work, but the two Texans scored their greatest cultural and commercial impact as a pair of outlaw buddies singing a series of winking songs that referenced (and mythologized) their offbeat lifestyle in all its rowdy, mischievous glory. This Grammy-winning No. 1 hit—along with companion pieces "Good Hearted Woman" and "Luckenbach, Texas"—aligns rambling, rough-living singers with the romantic notion of the American cowboy. In warning against the life they lead, they portray themselves as hard-loving, good-time guys embracing a hedonistic existence most nine-to-fivers only dream about.

★★★★ LEE GREENWOOD "HE STOPPED LOVING HER TODAY" BY GEORGE JONES ★★★★★

**"THE MESSAGE IN THIS SONG IS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, COMBINED WITH THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF SOMEONE WHO HAD PLEDGED HIS LOVE FOREVER. COUPLED WITH THE GREATEST VOCAL PERFORMANCE OF GEORGE JONES, THIS SONG GETS MY VOTE."**



**"HE STOPPED LOVING HER TODAY," GEORGE JONES**

Jones is considered the ultimate hard-country singer. However, some of his most glorious work used grand, sophisticated arrangements to bring out the best in Jones' phrase-bending, emotion-drenched voice. "He Stopped Loving Her Today" blends bombast and heartbreak with brilliant effectiveness. The 1980 release set the standard for a form of relentless despair that has always been a hallmark of country music.

**"THE GAMBLER," KENNY ROGERS**

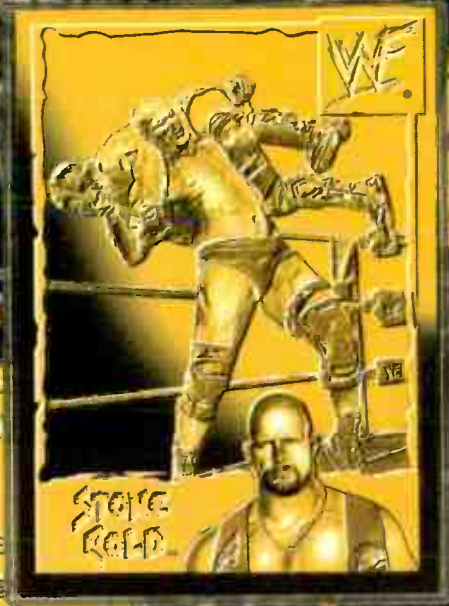
In the late '70s, Nashville's sleek professionalism crested to create a middle-of-the-road sound that proved widely popular. At its best, it told compelling stories and probed modern relationships. The 1978 hit "The Gambler," one of the most distinctive songs of the era, brought together an aging pop storyteller and a young songwriter with a fresh perspective. Rogers' mature voice imbued Don Schlitz's morality tale with the right touch of weight and warmth, giving Rogers his first million-selling album—a rarity in country music then. More than that, the way the song wrapped tidy moralism into a smoothly dramatic arrangement has been a part of country music ever since—but rarely was it done as effectively.

**10 BEST SONGS TO MAKE YOU HOMESICK**

- "Foggy Mountain Breakdown"  
FLATT AND SCRUGGS (1949)
- "Uncle Pen"  
BILL MONROE (1950)
- "Detroit City"  
BOBBY BARE (1963)
- "Green, Green Grass of Home"  
PORTER WAGONER (1965)
- "Sing Me Back Home"  
MERLE HAGGARD (1968)
- "Rocky Top"  
THE OSBORNE BROTHERS (1968)
- "Homecoming"  
TOM T. HALL (1969)
- "Coal Miner's Daughter"  
LORETTA LYNN (1970)
- "Daddy's Hands"  
HOLLY DUNN (1986)
- "Chattahoochee"  
ALAN JACKSON (1993)



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## “MOUNTAIN MUSIC,” ALABAMA

Alabama grafted the slickness of '70s pop-rock with a sanitized take on country traditions. “Mountain Music,” a 1982 smash, revamps the hand-clapping hoedowns of fiddle tunes and the soaring harmonies of bluegrass into a simple tune about turning nostalgia into a blithely good time. The band’s musical formula and image of friendly ol’ boys having fun set the stage for a majority of Nashville bands that followed.

★★★ TAMMY COCHRAN: “THE DANCE” BY GARTH BROOKS ★★★

“IT WAS THE SONG MY BROTHER ALAN [WHO DIED OF CYSTIC FIBROSIS] REQUESTED BE PLAYED AT HIS FUNERAL, AND IT STILL MAKES ME CRY ANYTIME I HEAR IT. IT’S TRUE, EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON, EVEN IF WE DON’T KNOW THE REASON.”

“DOES FORT WORTH EVER CROSS YOUR MIND,” GEORGE STRAIT

“Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind” marked the moment when Strait stopped struggling with the Nashville system and started mastering it. His best characteristics shine in this 1984 hit: The sly naturalness of his phrasing, the intimate drama of his tone and the subtle smoothness he instills in a barroom tune all make this a modern masterpiece. He’s been imitated endlessly, but he remains that rare Nashville commodity: his own man.



“ANY MAN OF MINE,” SHANIA TWAIN

In collaboration with her producer and husband, Robert “Mutt” Lange, Twain saved her career and ultimately became one of the most popular country artists of her time by tapping into a revolutionary sound that was new to country radio yet familiar to those with any connection to '80s rock and pop. Her first No. 1 hit, 1995’s “Any Man of Mine,” set her direction. Engagingly danceable, sweetly spirited and coyly flirtatious, Twain’s statement of a fun-loving woman’s desire to have a lover make her fickle needs his priority captured the attention of a cash-flush youth culture. Suddenly, a majority of country music stars wanted to strike a pose and dance. ★

ty captured the attention of a cash-flush youth culture. Suddenly, a majority of country music stars wanted to strike a pose and dance. ★



“THE DANCE,” GARTH BROOKS

In 1990, Brooks barged his way into the national consciousness with a one-two punch: as the rowdy, lovable loser of “Friends in Low Places” and as the sensitive confidant of “The Dance.” The latter tune hit first, and its epic sweep of empathy and daring became the big red button Brooks would punch again and again. The pose of the compassionate martyr with a rowdy streak would be mimicked by a decade’s worth of male country performers, but no one else would achieve Brooks’ wild-eyed grasp of how to make a grand statement while espousing himself as an average guy weighted down by everyday concerns.

## 10 BEST SONGS FOR HONKY TONKIN’

- “Born to Lose”  
TED DAFFAN (1942)
- “Dim Lights, Thick Smoke, and Loud, Loud Music”  
JOE MAPHIS (1951)
- “Honky Tonk Blues”  
HANK WILLIAMS (1952)
- “Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young”  
FARON YOUNG (1955)
- “(I’m a) Honky Tonk Man”  
JOHNNY HORTON (1958)
- “A Six Pack to Go”  
HANK THOMPSON (1960)
- “The Bottle Let Me Down”  
MERLE HAGGARD (1966)
- “She’s Actin’ Single (I’m Drinkin’ Doubles)”  
GARY STEWART (1970)
- “Whiskey Bent and Hellbound”  
HANK WILLIAMS JR. (1979)
- “Friends in Low Places”  
GARTH BROOKS (1990)



# Mark Chesnutt

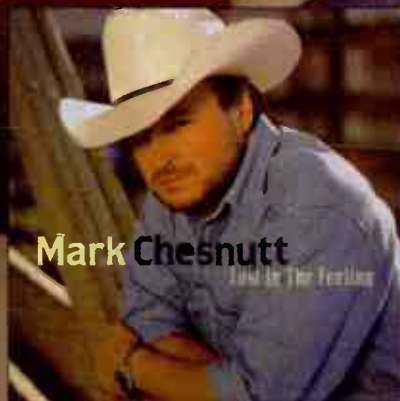
Ten years ago, George Jones contributed to the liner notes of a green, young kid from Texas. "This boy from Beaumont is the real deal," Jones said.

The kid was Mark Chesnutt.

A decade later - with eight best-selling albums, and 12 chart-topping singles - he's still the real deal.

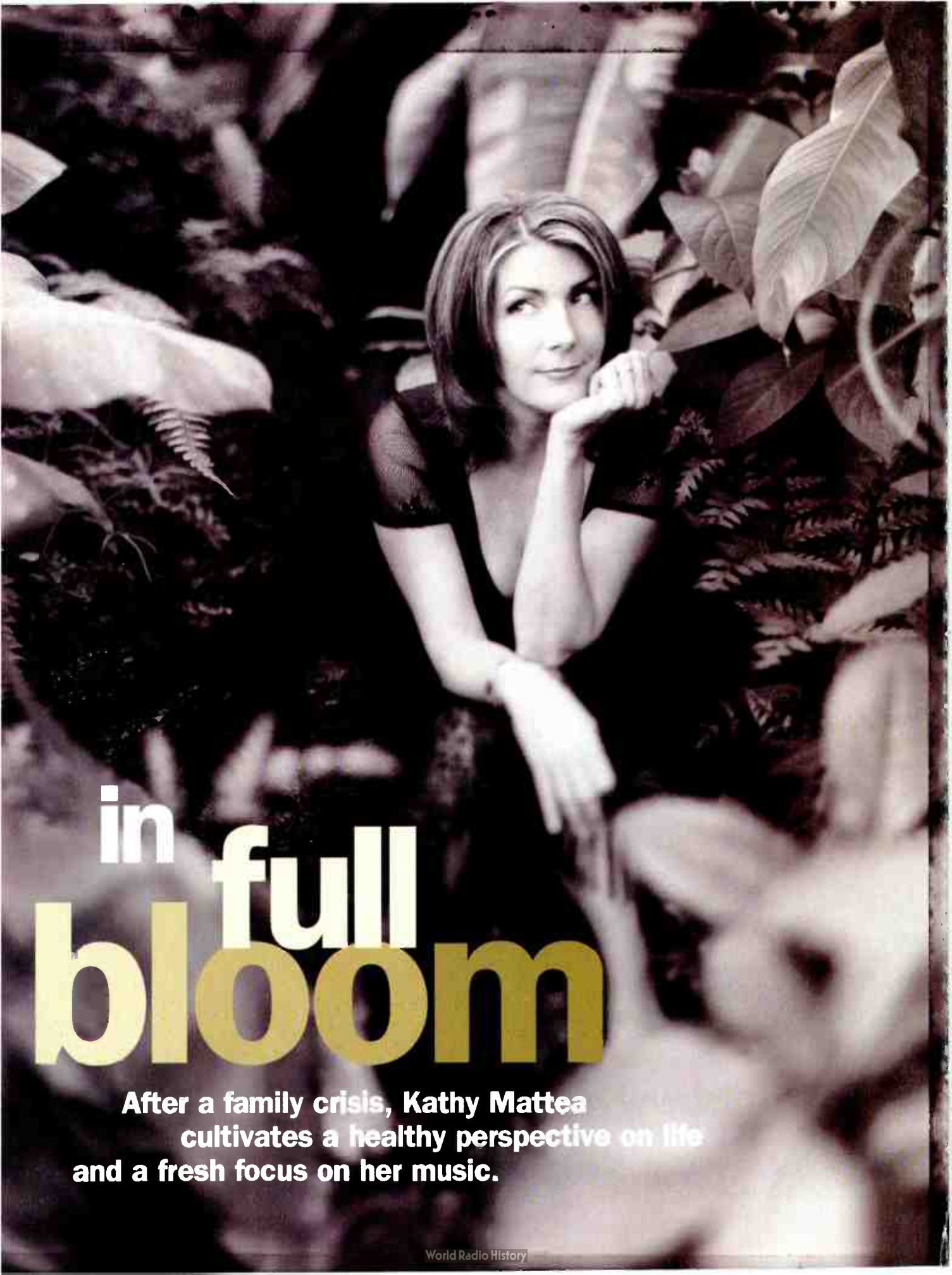
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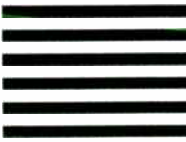
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**K**ATHY MATTEA IS STANDING BAREFOOT IN A COLD STREAM in the side garden of Nashville's Cheekwood mansion, wearing a long red velvet dress. In one hand she has the dress gathered up to keep it from getting wet—she's held it that way for 30 minutes now—and in the other hand she holds a metal watering can, full and heavy. It's near the end of the third hour of a photo shoot in which she's been tucked into the foliage in a greenhouse. Mattea's had to swat gnats and avoid spiders, been perched precariously atop plastic boxes and poked, prodded and primped, and now she waits while the photographer changes film—again. When someone comments on her patience, without a beat she shoots back, "Hey, I could be flippin' hamburgers!"

It's just that sort of humility, that connection to a grander perspective, that informs the life—and music—of one of country music's most enduring and respected artists.

Mattea didn't so much burst on the scene with her 1984 self-titled debut album as she sneaked onto it, not getting much notice until 1986's *Walk the Way the Wind Blows* blew in like a storm, unleashing four Top 10 hits and shedding overdue light on one of Music City's purest voices. Since then, Mattea's garnered six No. 1 songs and 20 Top 10 singles, won two Grammys and numerous CMA and ACM awards, sold gold and platinum, had dinner with the President and gained a reputation as a fearless, forward-thinking individual. She's also accomplished something few artists have ever done: spent her entire career at the same record label, winning accolades and success on her own terms.

Mattea has always been known for her personal and artistic integrity, but the past couple of years have led her down paths that would test even the strongest resolve.

In late 1998, Mattea began working on her eleventh studio album, and had enough material down to make a record. Her mother became increasingly ill and doctors couldn't find the problem. "I realized she was afraid she was going to die. We wound up going to the Mayo

Clinic over Christmas and they got her straightened out; figured out what the problem was and got a handle on the big picture," Mattea says. She brushes off discussing further details of the illness, explaining, "It's very complex because she had two or three things going wrong at the same time, working against each other. And it stabilized out beautifully."

After having some time away from recording, Mattea was ready to go back in the studio. Then her record company was sold. Recording was again suspended, but as soon as the corporate issues were sorted out, and just as Mattea was preparing to go back into the studio to finish up, the biggest test of all came: Her father was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

"The doctors told the family, 'With no chemo, he'll last maybe four months,'" relays Mattea. "And even with chemo and the best case scenario, 18 months is the outside, and that's if he's lucky.' So my

family just kind of circled the wagons."

Mattea spent every spare moment at her parents' home. She passed many nights sitting up with her dad, who'd sleep all afternoon after chemotherapy, then awake at bedtime, in need of conversation. "He'd be unable to sleep because he was worried about who's going to hose off the patio come springtime, who's going to change the oil," she says. "Everything from that, to clearing up your affairs, to talking about God, to getting a perspective on a life. And living with death sitting on your shoulder. Helping someone go through that can't help but make you reassess your own life." And somewhere in there, she turned 40.

The good news is, as Mattea puts it, "through a series of miracles, great doctors and a lot of prayers—and sheer will and strength—he pulled through and has no cancer right now. He's in complete remission." But in helping her father process his

life and mortality, she faced her own. "My dad looked up one day and said, 'I have no regrets. I've had a great life and I'm ready to go if it's my time.' And I thought, *Wow! How many people can say that?* It makes you think, *Life is a finite thing. What have I*



Baby Kathy with mom Ruth and dad John. Below, Mattea (far right) jams at a show in Anaheim, California, last July.



**"I've spent a lot of energy learning...to shut out those voices that tell you what can't be and why you can't do something."**

*done? What have I not done? How do I spend my day? It also makes you think every day is such a gift. Every day!"*

On this day, Mattea is jovial, self-effacing, honest. And a little silly, in the best possible way. When the photographer, who has Mattea posed in a particularly body-revealing stance, reminds her to suck in her stomach, she jokes: "I'm sucking, I'm sucking now! I am Shania! I have no belly!"

She has more humor than belly, to be sure. Mattea's lean physique doesn't need a lot of "sucking." What she does have an abundance of, though, is self-awareness. "I want to make the music I want to make," she says matter-of-factly. "I'm happy to go work hard around the release of an album, but I want a life."

With her father's clean bill of health firmly in hand, Mattea returned to the studio to finish what critics are now calling her most cohesive album ever. Again, she was almost done. Or so she thought.

"I looked at the album and realized I felt surer about some cuts than others. There was a consistency to those I felt strongly about. And here I was at this place in my life, how could I not challenge myself to make a record that was more focused? I felt like I was going through so much, and I wanted to articulate that."

Songwriting became one of Mattea's coping mechanisms, and "The Innocent Years" (which she cowrote with her husband, Jon Vezner, and Sally Barris) naturally came out of that. The song quickly became the centerpiece and title track for the album.

"Calling My Name," about a soul link with those you

love, came next. "Those two songs got added to the mix and became a real picture of what was happening. As soon as I made the decision to try to go to a different level with the album, things just began to fall into place."

The first few cuts deal with personal, social and spiritual consciousness, and

then the material moves into issues of adult love. Every song touched something inside Mattea. "Out of the Blue" is about the moment you realize love has come. "I remember that feeling with my husband. It was just a little comment he made on our first date. I remember having this feeling like some little part of my heart cracked open," she says. "(Love Is) My Last Word," about weathering the hard times, spoke to a difficult time in her marriage. "Jon and I, as wonderfully compatible as we are, have had some tough times. A while back we were having a really bad



"better turns to worse," a reality she had just seen transpire between her parents.

Mattea emerged from this eye-opening ordeal with renewed focus, which naturally extended to her art. Though she's always been involved in her album production, this time she took it a step further, serving as coproducer and recording some of the tracks in her home studio without anyone else present. She also mastered the record, the final technical part of the process, and seems to be well on the way to mastering her own path, her happiness. Fearlessly.

"I think the surest way to stifle creativity is to put fear into the mix. I've spent a lot of energy in the last few years learning how to shut out those voices that tell you what can't be and why you can't do something, and I've gone through a lot about finding an inner space in which to listen to the voices that steer me into the way I want to go. And if I can quiet everything down and get a little time, it always makes things clear." Kathy Mattea is nothing if not clear.

"It's a leap of faith every day," she says. "It's been 17 years since I got my record deal, and I'm still doing it, I'm still vital, I'm at the top of my game in many ways. I'm singing better, I have more of a vision of who I am; I have more confidence in myself. That's something I've really taken away from this experience. What do I want to do in the next 10 years? I have a sense of urgency, a real, 'If not

**"...I have more of a vision of who I am; I have more confidence in myself. That's something I've really taken away from this experience."**

fight. We were at an impasse. And I just looked up in the middle of it and said, 'You know, as hard as this is, you're still my favorite person on the planet. And I'm not going anywhere.' That got us back around full circle." The album comes full circle too, with "That's the Deal," a sad, sweet tale about a commitment fulfilled when

now, when?" point of view. So in the next 10 years I hope to make a Celtic album, a gospel album, a bluegrass album and another Christmas album." Mostly though, Mattea wants to make a family album. "I want to try to have a kid," she says with a smile. "That's become a real focus for me. It hasn't happened yet, but we'll see."\*

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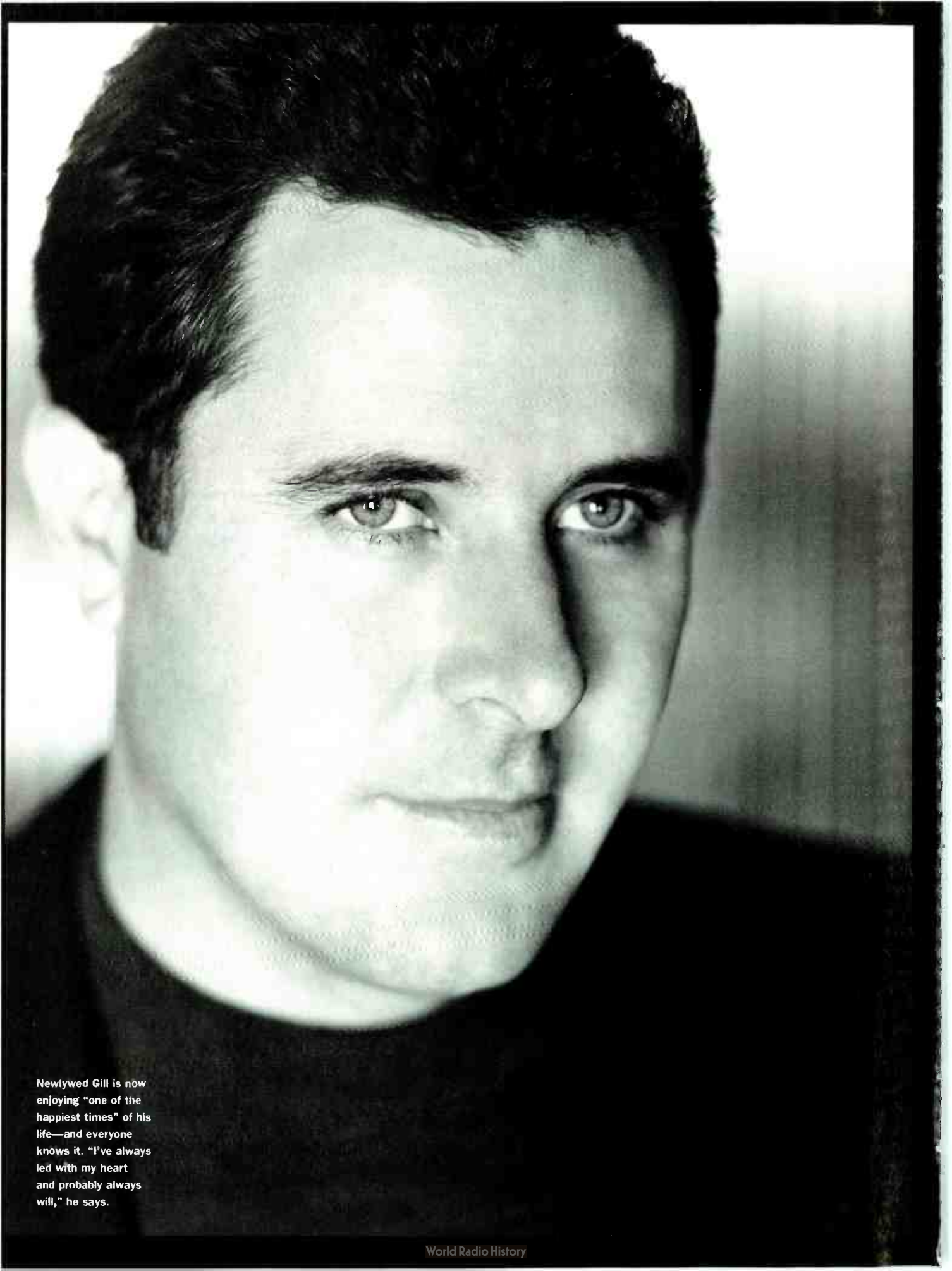
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Newlywed Gill is now enjoying "one of the happiest times" of his life—and everyone knows it. "I've always led with my heart and probably always will," he says.



# Brand

Want proof of the power of love?  
Just talk to Vince Gill.

# Man

VINCE GILL DOESN'T LOOK ANY different. Well, there's the ensemble: trim black crew-neck, billowing black slacks and chunky black shoes. It's a somewhat striking choice for such a jovial, laid-back country boy. As he steps out of a shiny black Audi, with his black hair neatly cropped and styled, the genial country superstar could pass for one of those hipsters hanging out in a Manhattan hotel lobby—or an unusually fashionable mob capo. But as he saunters through the door of his manager's Nashville office and greets everyone with a warm smile and/or bear hug, he appears to be vintage Vinny. Certainly there's nothing to suggest that the multiple-award-winning, immensely popular artist has undergone a life-altering transformation.

But according to those close to him, there's been a change in Gill during the past year, and it's as distinctive as the mellifluous tenor that has made him famous. "I've been with Vince since 1985," reveals his friend and manager Larry Fitzgerald, "and he seems more grounded and happier in every way than

I've ever seen him. I think he's going through a personal growth spurt—I see him opening up to life experiences, and it's a wonderful metamorphosis."

The source of the transformation is easy to pinpoint, say his pals: It's that old black magic, that crazy little thing called L-O-V-E. If love can move mountains, it's the one force of nature strong enough to put a giddy smile on the face of a 43-year-old showbiz-seasoned musician and inspire him to write an album full of life-is-wonderful tunes. Since Gill became romantically involved with 39-year-old pop/gospel singer/songwriter Amy Grant last year—and especially since their marriage in March—he is, as they say, a new man.

"I noticed the difference when he told me at the Grammys this year that he and Amy were getting married," says his producer and friend, MCA president Tony Brown. "The look on his face was amazing. It felt good to see his eyes just sparkling."

A twinkle in the eye is one thing, but for real evidence of the transformation,

look no farther than the golf course, where friends say you'll see a lot less Gill around the greens lately. "I'm not playing as much golf," the singer admits with a bemused smile, settling onto a sofa in Fitzgerald's office. "I used to play every day. I still do love it, but I had to look at it from a healthy perspective and say, 'Let's look at this and see if [love of the game] is really why you're out here.' And I think truthfully, a lot of the time it wasn't why I was out there. I think it was a place to escape to."

A scratch golfer giving up the game? It must be love. And what exactly would a rich, popular, five-time CMA Male Vocalist of the Year need to escape from? Gill is quick to stress that his life B.A. (before Amy) was nothing to complain about. He's long been regarded as one of Music City's finest vocalists and guitarists—literally dozens of artists from Randy Scruggs to Barbra Streisand have sought him out to contribute to their projects. He's also one of Nashville's most community-minded citizens, freely donating his time to charities and civic

b y d e b o r a h b a r n e s

events. His magnetic personality has won him a long list of friends—and fans, thanks to his crackling, witty turns as host of the annual Country Music Association awards show (a gig he'll be repeating through 2002, according to his new CMA contract). And his record 18 CMA awards, 13 Grammys, and numerous gold and platinum albums don't exactly inspire pity. But, Brown explains, "It wasn't that his life was awful, it's just that his personal life was not as much of a dream as his career was. Now he has more than music to make him happy."

These days, Gill can sing authoritatively on what happens "When Love Finds You." "I've changed a lot," he admits, nodding speculatively. "I've just got some peace at the end of the day—it's as simple as that. You get through all the day-to-day

seemed to be writing from a different place lyrically." No kidding. With not a single one of the heartbreak ballads that serve his high lonesome tenor so well—no "When I Call Your Name" or "Never Knew Lonely" or "Trying to Get Over You"—the album contains just one somber number, a tribute to Gill's friend, the late pro golfer Payne Stewart. Instead, it's a collection of joyful songs about the wonders of being head-over-golf-spikes in love, dedicated to his "lifelong companion, Amy" (who duets with her husband on one of the two songs she cowrote). And could that possibly be Gill (joined by his bride) in the video for the single "Feels Like Love," making faces and silly gestures in a funhouse mirror?

"We were joking that nobody's gonna recognize me [on this album] because all the songs are happy," Gill laughs.

reviews: "He was a much better artist when he was miserable."

His relationship with Grant also brought about a change in Gill's perspective on his legendary temper (often evident on the golf course) that had him playing, at the suggestion of his golf-pro buddies, with a sports psychologist. "I'm a club breaker and a club thrower and all that," Gill says with a sigh. "I'd always tease my friends and say, 'You'd break your clubs, too, if you wouldn't get fined [by the PGA] for it.' But they said to go play golf with this guy, so I played a few holes with him and said, 'What do you think? I know you've heard all these horror stories from my buddies.' And he said, 'The kind of life you lead, you live in such a fishbowl, I think it's good for you to have a place to go and uncork a



**LOVE LIFE** The popular CMA host (center) is "full of joy" over his new life with Grant, who shares his fondness for golf (left) and his passion for music (right). "Life is progressing as it should," he says. "It gets better every day."

LEFT TO RIGHT: MORELLO/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY CMA; BILL THORUP

stuff—sing and play and travel and do all that—but when you lay your head down, if you don't feel at peace...I don't know, it just doesn't feel right."

Perhaps it's the power of suggestion, but there does seem to be an almost Zen-like calm about Gill as he sinks into the vast leather sofa, explaining another change he's made in his life: a year off from touring. "You're talking to a guy who's lived on a bus basically for 25 years," he says with wonder. "I don't miss the road at all.

"I'm really trying to reevaluate everything," he sums up. "Right now I'm coaching one of Amy's girl's softball teams, helping with school functions and all that."

Gill is also singing a new tune on his latest album, *Let's Make Sure We Kiss Goodbye*. Says Brown, "I could tell the difference in the songs on this album. He just

Romantic ballads are nothing new to the singer/songwriter, but the songs on *Kiss Goodbye* all come from the perspective of a guy who is winning at love, and they're not so much about confessing feelings to a woman as they are exalting the magic of love to the world. Typical are lyrics from "The Luckiest Guy in the World": "I've found somebody that really does love me/And I know that she'll always stay/I'm the luckiest guy in the world/Cause my heart feels this way." Gill explains matter-of-factly, "I'm just full of joy and full of wonder, and I'm celebrating."

Some critics have not been enamored of the new Vinny from a musical standpoint, calling the album "tepid" and "mushy." But Gill has never owned up to sweating critical opinion. In a recent interview, he jokingly summed up his latest

little. Better out here with a steel shaft—at least you can fix a golf club."

After a thoughtful pause, he adds, "You know, Amy's the first person who ever said anything positive [about the anger]. One of the first times I kind of lost it—I think I broke a club—she said, 'Well, that's just you. That's no different than when you're moved by a song and you cry. You wear your emotions on your sleeve—you can't control the rest of them; how do you expect to control anger?' It was the first time anybody mentioned all the emotions instead of taking [anger] and going, 'It's OK if you don't control these other [emotions]—because it's kind of sweet when you cry—but you can't get mad.' It was the first time that a light went on for me."

Grant's grasp of Gill's emotional landscape hints at the couple's reputedly excep-

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tional compatibility. Friends rave about their similarities, such as their well-known generosity. Both were involved in community projects before they were married; they now often make contributions jointly. This year the pair kicked off the Music City Marathon, as well as hosting an LPGA tournament and the Vinny, Gill's annual charity golf tournament. When a local children's charity conducted a radiothon and came up \$10,000 short of their goal, Gill and Grant phoned in and ponied up \$5,000 each. "They're so similar in character," raves Fitzgerald. "They belong together."

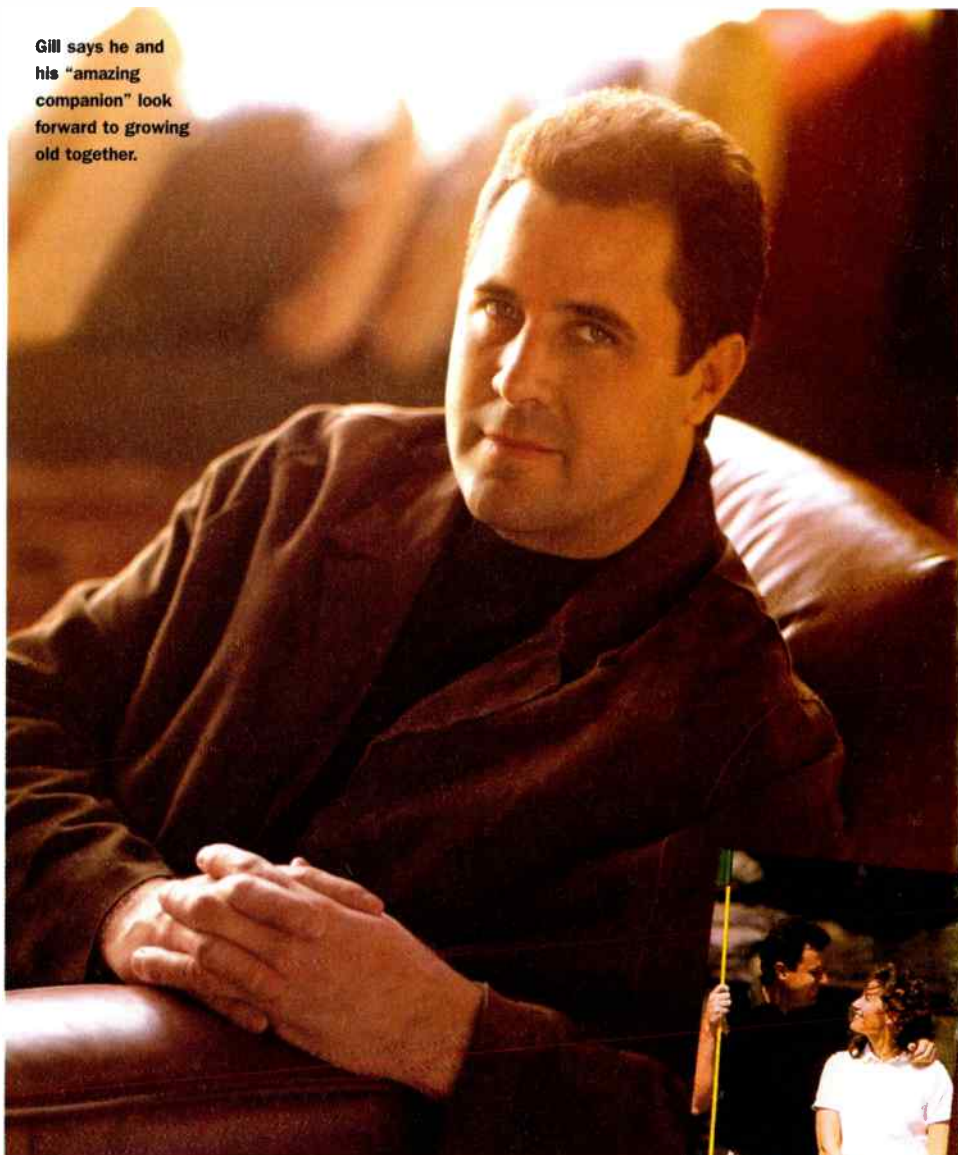
Ah, but you can't hurry love, and the couple's enviable relationship was years in the making. "The sweetest part about us being together is the friendship we've had for a long time," Gill observes. "We felt like old souls, like old friends since childhood or *something*. It feels natural, it feels timeless, like it could be 500 years ago or 500 years from now. We truly do love and crave each other's companionship all the time. We're just amazingly compatible, and it's neat to have had that great base of friendship to go on. I feel like I'm married to my best friend."

Both Gill and Grant have denied persistent rumors that their long friendship brought about the end of their previous marriages. (Gill and his first wife Janis split up in 1997; they have an 18-year-old daughter, Jenny. Grant, who divorced husband Gary Chapman in 1999, has three children: Matt, 13; Millie, 10; and Sarah,

7.) Appearing with his wife on CBS-TV's *The Early Show* in May, Gill was asked by interviewer Bryant Gumbel whether it felt good as newlyweds to finally silence the whispers. Gill joked, "They weren't whispers, Bryant, they were yelling...real loud."

"The friendship seemed to cause them both pain because people were speculating this and speculating that," says Brown. Today Gill shrugs off the controversy. "A lot of people looked at it and thought the worst of our friendship, and you can't stop that. But I know what the truth was, and I'm proud of that friendship. I was not about to end it because of what people thought."

Gill says he and his "amazing companion" look forward to growing old together.



BILL THORUP (INSET)

## "It's going to be sweet to live the second half of life feeling this way."

Rapidly putting the tongue-wagging behind them, the couple is taking their collective future as it comes, says Gill—and not ruling out further musical collaborations. "It's not like we're going to become Donny and Marie or Sonny and Cher, but those things are possibilities, and they're very appealing to me," he says. "So maybe we could tour together, record together, I don't know. It's all just full of wonder right now."

That sense of wonder may be the most obvious change in the soft-spoken singer's demeanor. And with the benefit of middle-age wisdom, he's aware that wonderment in a relationship is rare and to be appreci-

ated. "This is personally one of the happiest times [in my life]," he says. "The age we are, we've learned something. We've made some mistakes. It's not about posturing ourselves up to be perfect; we're not. It just feels good today, and I'm really grateful. It's going to be sweet to live the second half of life feeling this way."

For a moment, the familiar CMA-host jokester Vince seems far away, done in by the bite of the love bug. But as he rises to leave, his knees creaking, Gill makes a wry comment about his age, then quips, "That's about 1,000 in musician years."

Fortunately, some things never change. \*



GARTH BROOKS

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2000

COUNTRYMUSIC



# Garth Brooks

**G**arth. No last name necessary. Fans love him—to the tune of 100 million records, an astonishing milestone for any artist, certainly undreamed of for a country star. So what's the secret to his longevity?

"If you truly believe it is a gift from God, then it's truly going to last as long as you're supposed to be doing this," he says. "The day that it's over, no matter how much money you've accumulated, you can't buy one more day."

Let's face it, this country boy will always be somewhat of an enigma. But here's a glimpse of Brooks as we know him—so far.

they could be near his father. "That's where I feel I should be," says Brooks. "I want to help him figure out what he's going to do with his life."

Brooks is extremely competitive. Although it is a major factor behind his success, it has also been a source of considerable criticism. For example, much was made of Brooks' desire to sell 100 million records by the year 2000, thereby pushing him ahead of the Beatles as the best-selling artist of all time. As brother Kelly notes, "He's always wanted to try to do the best he can. It's nothing to do with others, it's just a competition with himself."

**RAVES**

**MUSICAL INFLUENCES**

Rockers KISS, Queen, Kansas, Journey and Billy Joel are faves, as are tunesmiths James Taylor and Dan Fogelberg. But it's George Strait who turned this rock 'n' roller country. Other country faves are Merle Haggard and George Jones.

**RECREATION**

Brooks' love of baseball is well-known. Spring training stints with the San Diego Padres and New York Mets left fellow players and fans alike impressed



with his work ethic. A sports nut, Brooks also played football and basketball in high school, and in college participated in track and field events such as the javelin throw.

**CHARITY**

Brooks cofounded the Touch 'Em All Foundation in 1999 with motivational speaker Bo Mitchell. Touch 'Em All raises funds for selected children's charities, and has raised more than \$5 million so far. "Touch 'Em All refers to a player hitting a home run, but in this case the phrase has a double meaning," says Brooks. "We wanted a charity to touch as many kids as possible—we wanted to touch them all."

**WHAT'S NEXT**

The future of his film project *The Lamb*, which spawned his Chris Gaines character, is in limbo. Brooks continues to talk retirement, mentioning the possibility again last spring. Meanwhile, a long-discussed duet album with pal Trisha Yearwood seems to be off as well. As for touring, Brooks won't hit the road without a new album to promote, so who knows when we'll see his famous live show again. "My mom was such a big part of music and touring for me that I don't know if it's there anymore," he says. "I would hate to book a tour and step on stage the first time and think, *It's not here.*"

—Compiled by Lisa Zbito

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**BORN**

Troyal Garth Brooks in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on February 7, 1962, the son of Colleen Carroll and Troyal Raymond Brooks. When Garth was 4, his family moved to Yukon, Oklahoma.

**FAMILY**

Brooks lost his beloved mother to cancer last August, but his father lives in Oklahoma. Brother Kelly Brooks serves as Garth's tour manager. There are also four stepsiblings from both parents' previous marriages. Brooks married Sandy Mahl in 1986. They have three daughters: Taylor Mayne Pearl, born July 8, 1992; August Anna, born May 3, 1994; and Allie Colleen, born July 28, 1996. Family life has always been extremely important to Brooks. "I don't know if I'm getting old or what, but music is starting to take a place in my life now where it must fit in with what I do, and what I do is being a dad. This year for the first time all three of my girls were in school. We walk to school every morning and it takes about 30 minutes to go a hundred yards, and it's the greatest 30 minutes of my day."

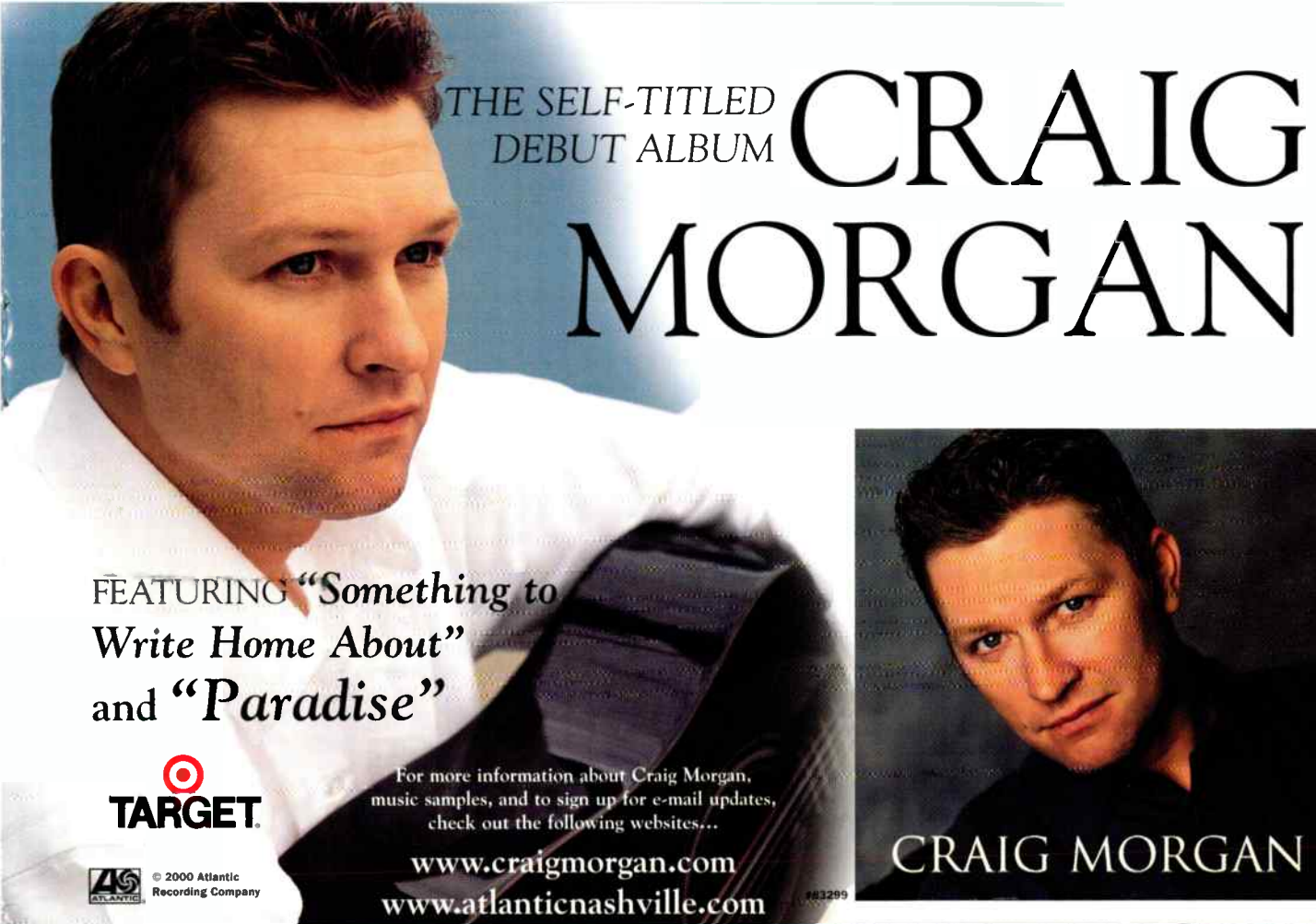
**RESIDENCE**

Brooks and family have left Goodlettsville, Tennessee, and moved to Oklahoma so

PATRY HUTCHINS/AUTICHINS PHOTO AGENCY



THE SELF-TITLED DEBUT ALBUM **CRAIG MORGAN**



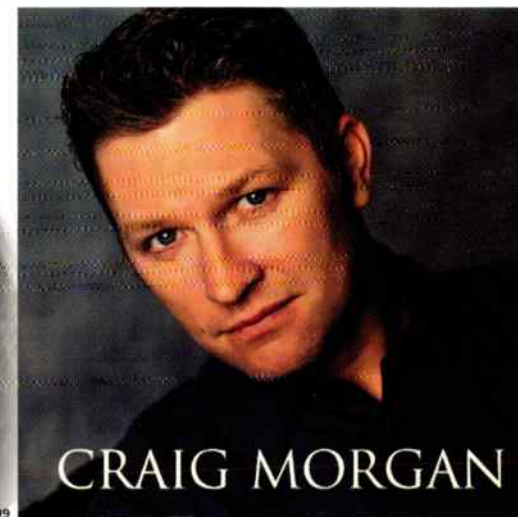
FEATURING "Something to Write Home About" and "Paradise"



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For more information about Craig Morgan, music samples, and to sign up for e-mail updates, check out the following websites...

[www.craigmorgan.com](http://www.craigmorgan.com)  
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Coming in October 2000!

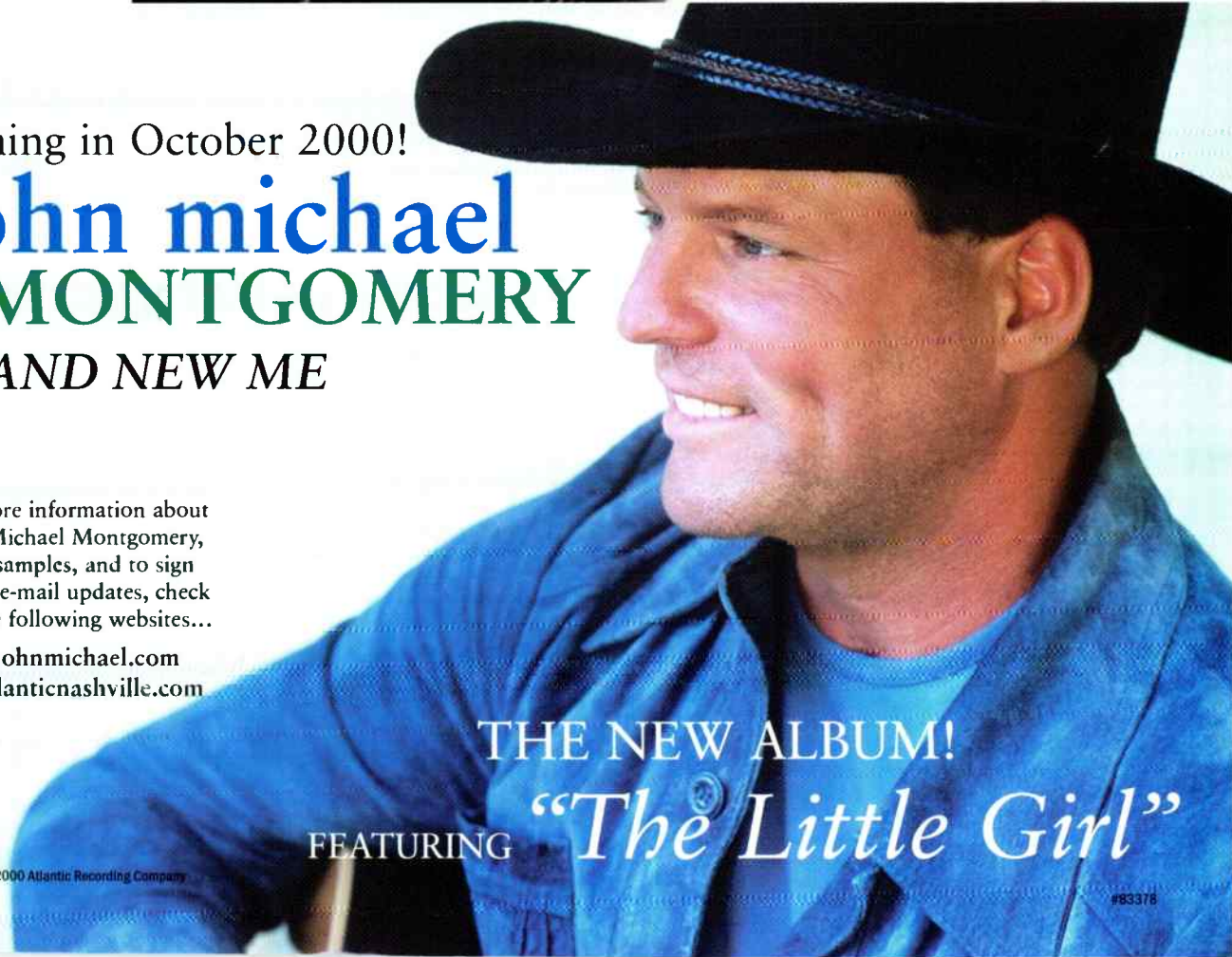
**john michael MONTGOMERY**

**BRAND NEW ME**

For more information about John Michael Montgomery, music samples, and to sign up for e-mail updates, check out the following websites...

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THE NEW ALBUM!

FEATURING "The Little Girl"

# Tiny Tears™



*Special Edition  
Porcelain  
Collector Doll*

*Doll shown approximately  
actual seated size of 7".*

*The Newbury Mint*

47 Richards Avenue • Norwalk, CT 06857

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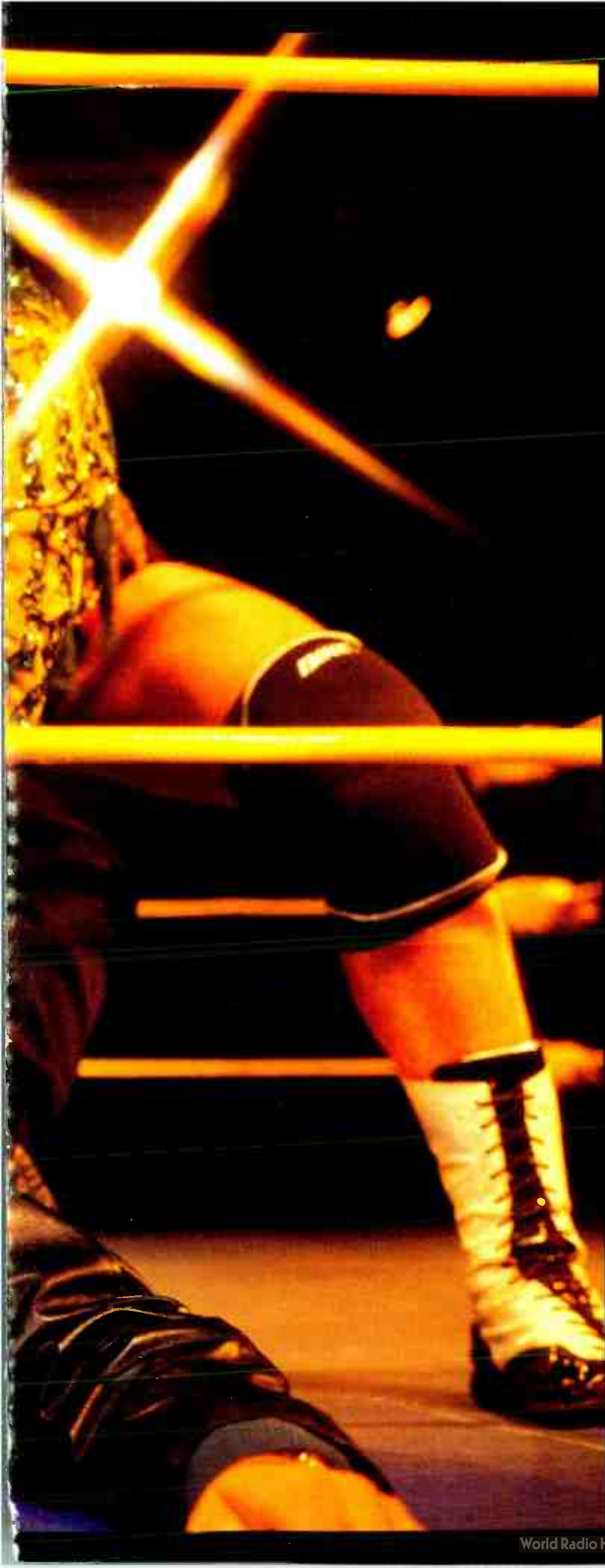


**ROUND 1**

**THE KID INTIMIDATES EARLY, FORCING WILLS TO ADMIT, "I HAVE NO **FASHION SENSE!** MY WIFE TELLS ME THAT ALL THE TIME." FOR MENTIONING HIS WIFE IN THE RING, WILLS AUTOMATICALLY LOSES THE ROUND.**

PARAM BLACK CHINGS, \$19, WALMART; BURLINGTON COAT FACTORY; JARMAN SHOES, \$40, BROADWAY; SHIRT, \$10, TARGET; GEOFFREY BEANE SWEATER, \$6, BURLINGTON COAT FACTORY; JARMAN SHOES, \$40, BROADWAY; JACKET, \$100, WILSON'S LEATHER. FOR BUYING INFORMATION, SEE PAGE 86.





# STYLE WARS

**IN AN EPIC STRUGGLE OF CLASS VS. FLASH, WRESTLING FAN **MARK WILLS** TAKES ON THE NWA'S **COLORADO KID** IN A BATTLE FOR WARDROBE DOMINANCE. THE KID HAS SIZE, STRENGTH AND THE POWER OF THE MIGHTY RHINESTONE ON HIS SIDE. BUT WITH **CM'S** FASHION EXPERTS IN HIS CORNER, THE COUNTRY CROONER JUST MIGHT TEACH THE RING KING A FEW STYLISH MOVES.**

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY NANCY LEE ANDREWS**  
**STYLING BY KATHERINE LEPORE**  
**GROOMING BY MICHELLE BABBITT**

**ROUND 2**

**WILLS BOUNCES BACK WITH A LOOK THAT PACKS A PUNCH.** "I'M SINGING MORE GROWN-UP SONGS NOW, AND I'M WEARING MORE SLACKS INSTEAD OF JEANS," HE SAYS. **FOR UPSCALING HIS WARDROBE, WILLS WINS THE ROUND.**



LIMITED PANTS, \$15, WAL-MART; GEORGIO BISSON METALLIC PURPLE DRESS SHIRT, \$20, BURTON COAT FACTORY; STOUGES TIE BY COMEDY III PRODUCTION, \$15, SEARS.

# A Very Pooh Christmas

Introducing velvety-soft, hand-flocked porcelain ornaments featuring Winnie the Pooh and his friends!

Special Value Price!

**\$12<sup>95</sup>**

for each flocked porcelain ornament shipping included

Each ornament is approx. 3½" to 4½" high. Your collection begins with the three ornaments pictured here.



"Bouncin' With Tigger"



"Holiday Hug for Pooh"



"We're Staying Up for Santa"

Feel the softness of flocked porcelain!



You'll fall in love with these adorable toddlers as they share a magical Christmas with that delightful, curious bear, Winnie the Pooh (and Tigger, Piglet and Eeyore too!). They'll touch your heart with the special love children feel for their dear Winnie the Pooh toys—and open your eyes to the innocent wonder of *A Very Pooh Christmas*. And each is only \$12.95!

- The *first-ever* Heirloom Ornaments to feature the lovable Winnie the Pooh and his friends.
- Individually crafted of hand-painted porcelain, then hand-flocked for a warm, velvety texture that's irresistible to touch!
- Unconditionally guaranteed for one full year.

Order now!

**Heirloom Ornaments**  
from Ashton-Drake

collectiblestoday.com

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© Disney. Based on the "Winnie the Pooh" works.  
© A.A. Milne and E.H. Shepard.  
Ashton-Drake Galleries,  
9200 North Maryland Ave.,  
Niles, Illinois 60714-1397  
43454-CC2A

## A Very Pooh Christmas flocked porcelain ornaments

PLEASE RESPOND PROMPTLY

YES, please enter my reservation for the *A Very Pooh Christmas* ornament series. I need SEND NO MONEY NOW. I will be billed \$38.85\* for each set of three ornaments with shipment. Subsequent sets will be automatically shipped once the previous set is paid.

X \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\*Includes \$4.94 shipping and handling. Sales tax additional on shipments to Illinois. Please allow 10 to 12 weeks for delivery, pending credit approval. Price is higher in Canada. **43458-D90301**

**HEIRLOOM ORNAMENTS from Ashton-Drake**  
9200 North Maryland Ave., Niles, Illinois 60714-1397

ROUND 3

WILLS IS ON THE ROPES—OR IN THEM. IT'S LOOKING BAD FOR THE BOY...BUT THE BOY IS **LOOKING GOOD**, AND THAT'S WHAT COUNTS. THE ROUND GOES TO WILLS.

CARGO PANTS: BOB; STRUCTURE: GRAY COTTON SHIRT: \$11; STRUCTURE: NIKE FLIP FLOPS: \$15; FAMOUS: NIKEAR: SOCKS: \$4; TARGET.

World Radio History

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THERE ARE SUPERSTARS  
AND THEN THERE ARE  
**LEGENDS...**



LORETTA LYNN **STILL COUNTRY**

An album of all new songs  
from one of the  
*true legends* of country music

Featuring the single,  
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**AUDIUM**  
records

"True To Life Country"



THE CHAMP

THE FIX WAS IN FROM THE BEGINNING. BUT AS THE KID  
NOW KNOWS, WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING—LOOKING  
LIKE **A WINNER** IS.

DOCKERS BURRI-ORANGE SHIRT, \$45. LEVI'S OUTLET, LEVI'S 560 JEANS, \$40. GOODY'S, VANS SNEAKERS, \$40.

TOP

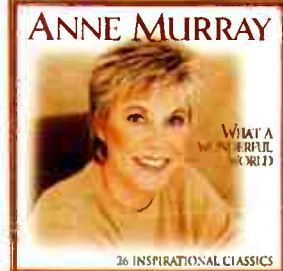
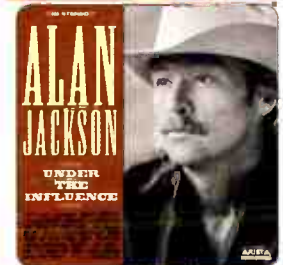
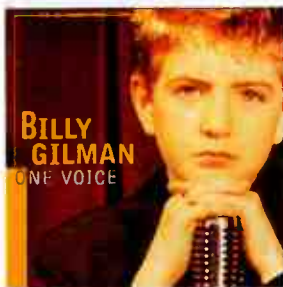
25

ALBUMS

The hottest hits on the country charts



MCA Nashville and the Recording Industry Association of America present George Strait with a platinum celebrating his 15 platinum albums. From left: John Henkel, RIAA Hilary Rosen, RIAA Strait, Royce Risser, MCA Nashville and Jennifer Bendall, Seagrams/Universal Studios.



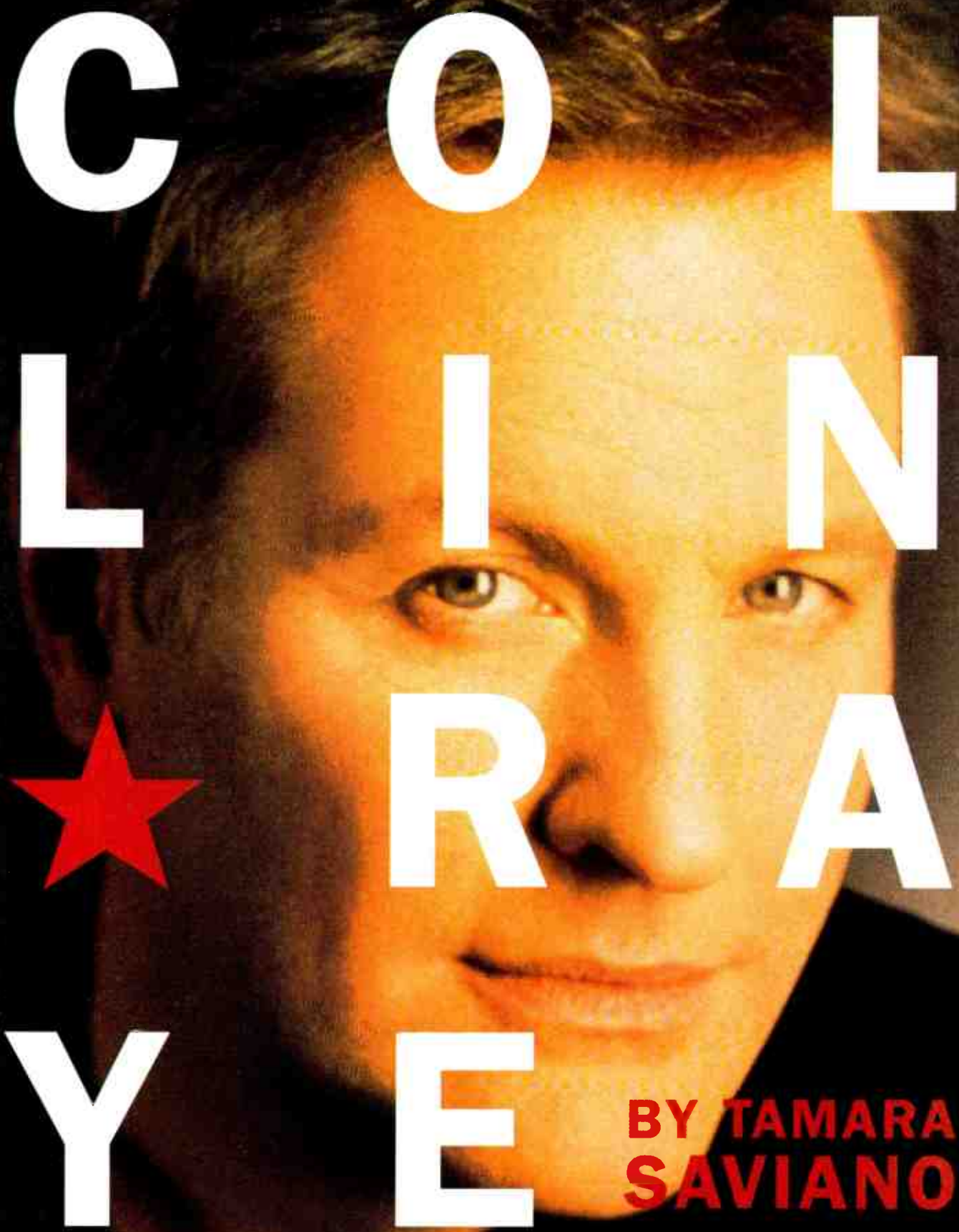
- 1. DIXIE CHICKS Fly (Monument) Ⓢ
- 2. FAITH HILL Breathe (Warner Bros.) Ⓢ
- 3. LEE ANN WOMACK I Hope You Dance (MCA) ✦
- 4. BILLY GILMAN One Voice (Epic)
- 5. SHANIA TWAIN Come On Over (Mercury) Ⓢ
- 6. TIM MCGRAW A Place in the Sun (Curb) Ⓢ
- 7. DIXIE CHICKS Wide Open Spaces (Monument) Ⓢ
- 8. GEORGE STRAIT Latest Greatest Straitest Hits (MCA) Ⓢ
- 9. LONESTAR Lonely Grill (BNA) Ⓢ
- 10. SHEDAISY The Whole Shebang (Lyric Street) Ⓢ
- 11. TOBY KEITH How Do You Like Me Now? (Dreamworks) ✦
- 12. ALAN JACKSON Under the Influence (Arista) Ⓢ
- 13. KENNY ROGERS She Rides Wild Horses (Dreamcatcher) ✦
- 14. KENNY CHESNEY Everywhere We Go (BNA) Ⓢ
- 15. REBA MCENTIRE So Good Together (MCA) ✦
- 16. RASCAL FLATTS Rascal Flatts (Lyric Street)
- 17. ERIC HEATHERLY Swimming in Champagne (Mercury)
- 18. STEVE EARLE Transcendental Blues (E Squared/Artemis)
- 19. MARK WILLS Permanently (Mercury) ✦
- 20. ANNE MURRAY What a Wonderful World (Straightway)
- 21. COLLIN RAYE Tracks (Epic)
- 22. CLAY WALKER Live, Laugh, Love (Giant)
- 23. GARY ALLAN Smoke Rings in the Dark (MCA)
- 24. TRISHA YEARWOOD Real Live Woman (MCA) ✦
- 25. CHAD BROCK Yes! (Warner Bros.)

Compiled by Country Music magazine. Based on a combined tabulation of sales and airplay data for the four weeks prior to publication.

✦ Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certification for net shipment of 500,000 album units (Gold); Ⓢ RIAA certification for net shipment of 1 million units (Platinum); Ⓢ RIAA certification for net shipment of 10 million units (Diamond).

THE COUNTRY MUSIC INTERVIEW

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BY TAMARA  
SAVIANO



# BENEATH THIS SENSITIVE-GUY EXTERIOR BEATS THE HEART OF A RIGHT-WING WARRIOR.



**A**S ELECTION DAY APPROACHES, THE MINDS OF MANY Americans turn to the presidential race and the issues that are important to them as voters. Except, perhaps, on Music Row, where it's often difficult to find artists who are willing to go on the record about their positions on controversial issues. But Collin Raye, who has used his music to tackle social issues like alcohol abuse ("Little Rock"), interracial relationships ("Not That Different"), battered women ("I Think About You") and child abuse ("The 11th Commandment"), is one artist who isn't afraid to take a stand. As his latest album, *Tracks*, climbs the charts, Raye sat down with us to discuss a few major election issues—and as we discovered, he has some pretty strong opinions.

*Country Music: Do you support any gun control measures? Things like child safety locks, closing the gun show loophole, photo licensing, bans on assault weapons?*

**Collin Raye:** This is a touchy subject, but I think it's one of the most important issues facing our nation today. I do support mild gun control. Child safety locks, that's a no-brainer. Should gun shows have to follow the same stringent requirements that Wal-Mart would in selling you a gun? Absolutely. There should always be an adequate, thorough check of the person's criminal record. Assault weapons? There is no reason any one in the private sector needs an assault rifle. So I guess that's saying that I do support some gun control.

In the larger picture, I'm very anti-gun control because it's the wrong message. I feel for everyone who has lost a child to a gunshot wound. Columbine, Jonesboro... those are horrible tragedies. But I've got news for everyone: Guns didn't kill anybody, people killed people. A gun is a tool like an ax or a hammer or a saw, and you can kill people with those tools too. We've had guns in this country since Lexington and Concord, and only in the last 10 years have you heard about kids shooting each other in school. It is not about the gun availability. The problem

is, we have moral issues that are much bigger than taking the guns away from people. As a nation, we are teaching the next generation that life is cheap. We allow things like Marilyn Manson, or we applaud a director like Oliver Stone for making a piece of filth like *Natural Born Killers*, and then wonder why kids pick up guns and shoot someone.

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**"WE HAVE MORAL ISSUES THAT ARE MUCH BIGGER THAN TAKING GUNS AWAY....AS A NATION, WE ARE TEACHING THE NEXT GENERATION THAT LIFE IS CHEAP."**

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*CM: Are you pro-choice or pro-life?*

**CR:** Absolutely pro-life. The pro-life movement is based on one question: Is that a human being or is it an inanimate piece of goo? When is a human being pronounced dead? When their heart stops beating. So, if there is a heart beating in there, that's a person. I don't care if it's the size of a pin. The size of the person doesn't matter. Where does that end—should we kill dwarfs? The other argument is that the baby's brain isn't working yet. OK, should we kill mentally retarded people because they're not up to snuff?

There is no argument there to me. This is an innocent human being.

You know, I'm very proud to say my daughter is pregnant right now. She's 17, and it was a huge shock to all of us, but I'm so proud of her. Would I have planned it this way? No, but the point is, it happened. And I'm so proud of her because it never even crossed her mind to abort this child. Her attitude is that if God didn't want her to have this baby, she'd have a miscarriage. She didn't have a miscarriage, so we're having a baby and I'm proud as hell of her because she's listened to me all these years. Every time I'd get in an argument about abortion with someone they'd say, "Well, if it was your daughter...." And now I can honestly say it is my daughter and we've talked the talk and now we're walking the walk.

*CM: Since you're pro-life, do you believe in capital punishment for heinous crimes?*

**CR:** It's good to go from that subject into this one because they are closely connected. This is where I think my Catholic faith and my church are so important to

me. The Pope thinks on a different level than the rest of us. When he came out a couple of years ago saying he was just as against capital punishment as he was abortion, I had a big problem with that. Still to this day, I think there is a huge difference between killing an innocent fetus and killing someone who's taken the life of another. The death penalty is usually reserved for the very heinous—the real losers out there who are enjoying taking people's lives away from them. I've struggled greatly with the Pope's position on this. But I understand what he means. He's

saying that life is precious, period. You do anything you can to preserve life. I guess I could never vote for a capital punishment measure. I can't be a hypocrite; I've got to stick with the whole shooting match. I guess I have to say I'm against it, but it's something I struggle with.

*CM: Did you know that the United States has executed 70 people who were later found to be innocent? And in the last three years in Illinois, a professor at Northwestern University and his class have gotten 12 men off death row because they found evidence that they were innocent.*

*CR:* Oh my God. No. I didn't know that. When you hear those kinds of statistics, it makes sense. The whole point of being a Christian is about forgiving each other. That's where we're asked to take the high road and step above our worldly beliefs. It's a tough one because I've got just enough redneck in me where I want to see someone pay up, but I think the good Lord will do that on his own. That doesn't mean let the guy go and let him do it again. Lock him up and throw away the key. I do believe in a life sentence without parole. The bureaucracy has watered things down to where it appears that it's a lot cheaper to just kill them. But all it takes is a little persuasion and hearing those statistics and I'm right back on the right side.

*CM: Let's talk about gay rights. Do you support partner benefits or same-sex marriage?*

*CR:* No, and let me start this by saying that I have some very good friends who are homosexuals, and they are great people. I don't treat them badly or make jokes about them behind their back because I'm not doing the kingdom of God any good to walk up to someone who obviously has problems and tell them they're going to go to hell because they're homosexual. I will be friends with that person because I like him. But anyone who says they are born that way, I don't believe that. I think it's a product of environment and something in how you were raised.

God says very clearly in the Bible that it's a sin. It's a perversion. But I am not

going to sit here and be self-righteous. Sin is sin is perversion is perversion, and perversion has many different faces. If any of my gay friends were to ask me what I thought of the way they lived, I'd be honest with them and in the most constructive way I could, say, "I pray for you because I wish you would straighten this out, because it's wrong. It's very unholy and you offend God just by existing this way. I would do anything in the world to help you." But it's

of any gay person and trace it back far enough and you're going to find the problem. I'm not saying everyone was sexually molested, but there was something that wasn't quite right. Maybe the mother was domineering and bossy and maybe the father was feminine-acting, who knows, but something wasn't right. And I know some gays will say, "I had it perfect growing up." Well, no you didn't. Something went wrong. It's an impossibil-

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**"I THINK IT'S A BUNCH OF MALARKEY THAT THERE IS SOMETHING BIOLOGICALLY DIFFERENT ABOUT HOMOSEXUALS. SCIENCE COMES UP WITH ALL KINDS OF THINGS TO JUSTIFY BAD BEHAVIOR."**

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not my job to judge them. And if one of them reads this article and is surprised that I said this, I will back it up. I cannot be Christian and say that I applaud what they do, but we're still friends.

When it gets to the legislation, I don't support same-sex marriage because it is a perversion. It's lowering the bar to what our kids have to live up to. If that perversion is worth the rights of a married couple, well, what about pedophiles? That's an even sicker perversion, but should we give them a tax break, too? I'm sorry, but somewhere along the line someone's got to stand up and say what's right and wrong.

*CM: But these are consenting adults, not pedophiles who prey on children.*

*CR:* As long as people are consenting... what if I want to walk out into the middle of a public place and drop my pants and have the person I'm with perform sex with me? It's not a matter of opinion, it's wrong. We have to make the lines clear again between right and wrong.

*CM: What about the scientific evidence that suggests homosexuality is genetic?*

*CR:* To be honest with you, I think it's a bunch of malarkey that there is something biologically different about homosexuals. Science comes up with all kinds of things to justify bad behavior. I just refuse to believe that. You look at the case history

ity to me that anyone is born with a desire to have sex with his own gender. That's an absolute moral impossibility to me.

*CM: I guess you don't have to tell me which presidential candidate you're voting for. My guess would be Bush.*

*CR:* This country was based on a God-fearing nation. Whether you're religious or not, you have to accept the historical fact that if you're American you were born into a nation that is founded on godly principles. That does not mean that a hundred years ago we were doing everything right, but the idea was one nation under God. Read the Preamble to the Constitution. I believe in separation of church and state, but this country has always honored those values it was founded on, until lately. What's moral anymore? We had our President commit a felony and no one even cares. He didn't even lose his gig over it. And the worst thing about it is nobody seemed to care. That is apathy. Apathy is the order of the day. That's what's wrong with this country. We need someone in the Oval Office who will try to inspire some values back in this country again as Mr. Reagan did. For all his faults, Ronald Reagan was pretty good at that. I'm not saying George W. Bush can be Ronald Reagan. I don't think he can, but I'll damn sure take him over the alternative. \*

# STATEHOOD QUARTERS: THE MOST IMPORTANT NEW COIN COLLECTION IN U.S. HISTORY



*The United States has started to issue an unprecedented series of 50 coins celebrating the 50 states of the Union. These new coins represent the first change to the quarter-dollar design since the 1976 Bicentennial.*

Authorized by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton, this is the most ambitious coin series ever issued by the United States. Every state in the Union will be honored on a different commemorative quarter showing George Washington on the obverse and a unique statehood design on the reverse.

The quarters will be issued in the sequence that the states became part of the Union. Coins for the first states are already in circulation; they are being produced by both the Denver and Philadelphia Mints. The mintage period for each coin is limited to approximately 10 weeks and every coin may not be released for circulation in every state.

Therefore, collectors face an especially difficult challenge putting together

er a complete set of these quarters in uncirculated condition.

## PRIVATE ISSUE COLLECTOR PANELS CAN NOW BE RESERVED.

In conjunction with this historic coin series, a special series of Collector Panels bearing these magnificent Statehood Quarters will be issued by PCS (a private agency not affiliated with the U.S. Mint). One Panel for each state will feature two uncirculated specimens of the Statehood Quarters: one each from the Philadelphia and Denver Mints. The coins will be protectively encased in the Panel to preserve their high quality. An expertly-written narrative will describe the unique coin design and history of each state.



*Common design on the obverse of each coin.*

Each Collector Panel will also include up to three mint-condition U.S. stamps honoring the featured state, or a person or event associated with that state.

*(continued on back)*



*The unique designs on the reverse of the 1999 statehood quarters.*



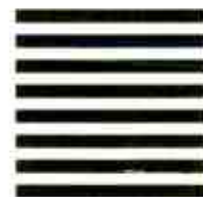
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# STATEHOOD QUARTERS: THE MOST IMPORTANT NEW COIN COLLECTION IN U.S. HISTORY



(continued from front)

These historic stamps — issued up to 60 years ago and most no longer available from the U.S. Postal Service — will also be protectively encased. A scenic photo will capture each state's unique beauty or an historic landmark.

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The Postal Commemorative Society's Statehood Quarters Collection can be reserved now for just \$14.95 per Panel (plus \$2 shipping, handling, and insurance). Panels will be sent to subscribers timed with the issuance of the quarters (approximately one every other month). Subscriptions may be canceled at any time.

Each subscriber will receive, at no additional charge, a deluxe Collector's Album (shown at right) to safely house and display the entire collection. The album may be personalized, if desired.

## RESERVATION PROCEDURE — PROMPT ACTION RECOMMENDED.

This historic collection is available for a limited time only. The uncirculated quarters are in high demand, and are sure to be hoarded by collectors, much like the Bicentennial coinage of 1976 which disappeared from circulation shortly after being issued. When



*A Collector's Album is included at no additional charge.*

combined with mint-condition U.S. stamps and historical narrative to create beautiful Collector Panels, they represent an excellent opportunity for children and adults to learn about the unique cultural and historical diversity of our 50 states!

Subscriptions will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and can be guaranteed only to those collectors whose reservations are received promptly. To avoid disappointment, reservations should be made now.

### SUBSCRIPTION RESERVATION

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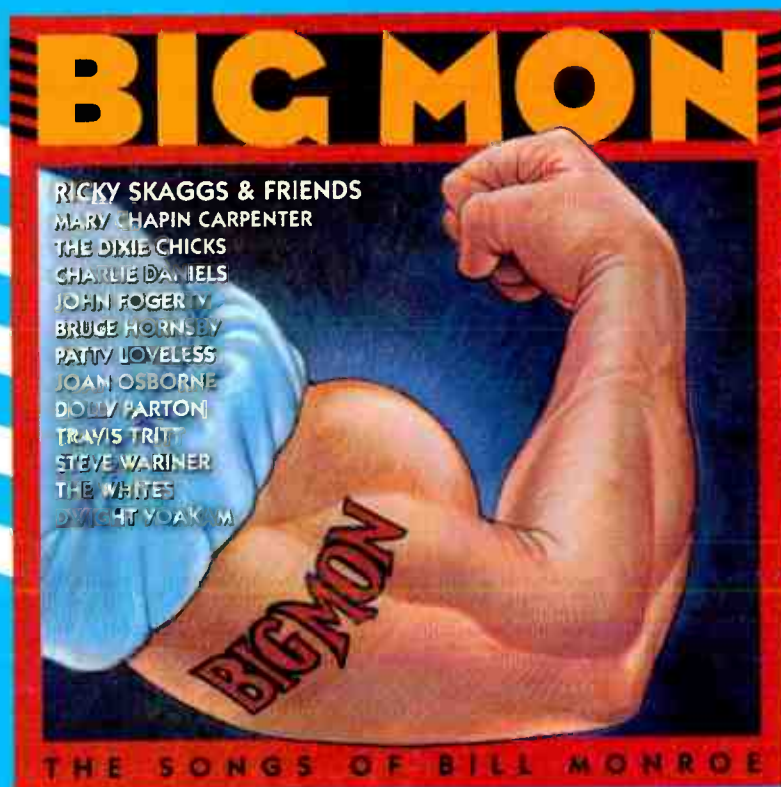
*The first quarters issued in 2000 honor Massachusetts, Maryland and South Carolina.*

STQ/724/

# The Man Who Put The Muscle in Country Music

*"His contribution to the musical world in general is unprecedented. His influence from rock-a-billy to country, to bluegrass, to rock and roll... it's all over the map!"*

—Steve Wariner



A celebration of Mr. Bill Monroe's Music, the man who created bluegrass and profoundly influenced rock and country music, featuring Ricky Skaggs & Friends: Mary Chapin Carpenter • Charlie Daniels • The Dixie Chicks • John Fogerty • Bruce Hornsby • Patty Loveless • Joan Osborne • Dolly Parton • Travis Tritt • Steve Wariner • The Whites • Dwight Yoakam.

Produced by Ricky Skaggs



[www.skaggsfamilyrecords.com](http://www.skaggsfamilyrecords.com)

World Radio History

The 34th annual Country Music Association (CMA) awards will be broadcast live October 4 on CBS-TV. Test your CMA savvy: Choose your favorites on the ballot below and watch the show to see how your picks compare with the real winners.



PATRICIA PRESLEY

### ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

- Dixie Chicks
- Faith Hill
- Alan Jackson
- Tim McGraw
- George Strait

### SINGLE OF THE YEAR

- "Breathe"  
Faith Hill | Warner Bros. Records  
Produced by Byron Gallimore and Faith Hill
- "Buy Me a Rose"  
Kenny Rogers | Dreamcatcher Records  
Produced by Kenny Rogers, Brent Maher and Jim McKell
- "He Didn't Have to Be"  
Brad Paisley | Arista Records  
Produced by Frank Rogers
- "How Do You Like Me Now?!"

Toby Keith | DreamWorks Records  
Produced by James Stroud and Toby Keith

- "I Hope You Dance"  
Lee Ann Womack | MCA Records  
Produced by Mark Wright

### ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- *Breathe*  
Faith Hill | Warner Bros. Records  
Produced by Dann Huff, Byron Gallimore and Faith Hill
- *Fly*  
Dixie Chicks | Sony Nashville  
Produced by Blake Chancey and Paul Worley
- *I Hope You Dance*  
Lee Ann Womack | MCA Records  
Produced by Mark Wright and Frank Liddell
- *Under the Influence*  
Alan Jackson | Arista Records  
Produced by Keith Stegall
- *Who Needs Pictures*  
Brad Paisley | Arista Records  
Produced by Frank Rogers

### SONG OF THE YEAR

(Award to Songwriter and Producer)

- "Amazed"  
*Marv Green/Aimee Mayo/Chris Lindsey*  
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp./Golden Wheat Music/Careers-BMG Music Publishing Inc./Silverkiss Music/ Songs of Nashville Dreamworks
- "Breathe"  
*Holly Lamar/Stephanie Bentley*  
Cal IV Songs (ASCAP)/Universal-Songs of PolyGram International Inc./Hopechest Music
- "He Didn't Have to Be"  
*Brad Paisley/Kelley Lovelace*  
EMI April Music Inc./Sea Gayle Music/Love Ranch Music, Inc.
- "I Hope You Dance"  
*Mark D. Sanders/Tia Sillers*

Universal-MCA/Sonda Creek Songs/ Choice is Tragic Music/Ensign Music Corp.

- "Murder on Music Row"  
*Larry Cordle/Larry Shell*  
Pier Five Music/Wandachord Music/Shell Point Music

### FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

- Faith Hill
- Martina McBride
- Jo Dee Messina
- Lee Ann Womack
- Trisha Yearwood

### MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

- Vince Gill
- Alan Jackson
- Tim McGraw
- Brad Paisley
- George Strait

### VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR

- Alabama
- Asleep at the Wheel
- Diamond Rio
- Dixie Chicks
- Lonestar

### VOCAL DUO OF THE YEAR

- Bellamy Brothers
- Brooks and Dunn
- Montgomery Gentry
- The Kinleys
- The Warren Brothers

### VOCAL EVENT OF THE YEAR

- George Strait (a duet with Alan Jackson)  
"Murder on Music Row" | MCA Records
- Asleep at the Wheel/ Dixie Chicks  
"Roly Poly" | DreamWorks Records

- Clint Black (with Lisa Hartman Black)  
"When I Said I Do" | RCA
- Faith Hill with Tim McGraw  
"Let's Make Love" | Warner Bros. Records
- Lee Ann Womack (with special guest appearance by Sons of the Desert)  
"I Hope You Dance" | MCA

### MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- Paul Franklin
- Dann Huff
- Brent Mason
- Hargus "Pig" Robbins
- Brent Rowan

### MUSIC VIDEO OF THE YEAR

- "Breathe"  
Faith Hill | Lili Zanuck
- "Goodbye Earl"  
Dixie Chicks | Evan Bernard
- "He Didn't Have to Be"  
Brad Paisley | Deaton Flanigen
- "How Do You Like Me Now?!"  
Toby Keith | Michael Salomon
- "I Hope You Dance"  
Lee Ann Womack | Gerry Wenner

### HORIZON AWARD

- Sara Evans
- Montgomery Gentry
- Brad Paisley
- SHEDAISY
- Chely Wright



BETH GWINN

# LEE ANN WOMACK

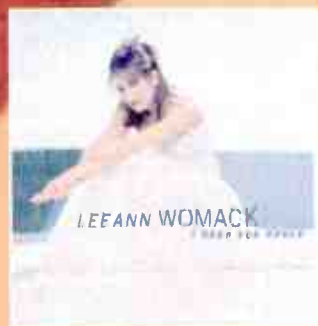
"This is a triumph of musical integrity in a mainstream world."

**Entertainment Weekly**

"You're unlikely to hear a more dizzyingly beautiful song in any format this year..."

**Rolling Stone Online**

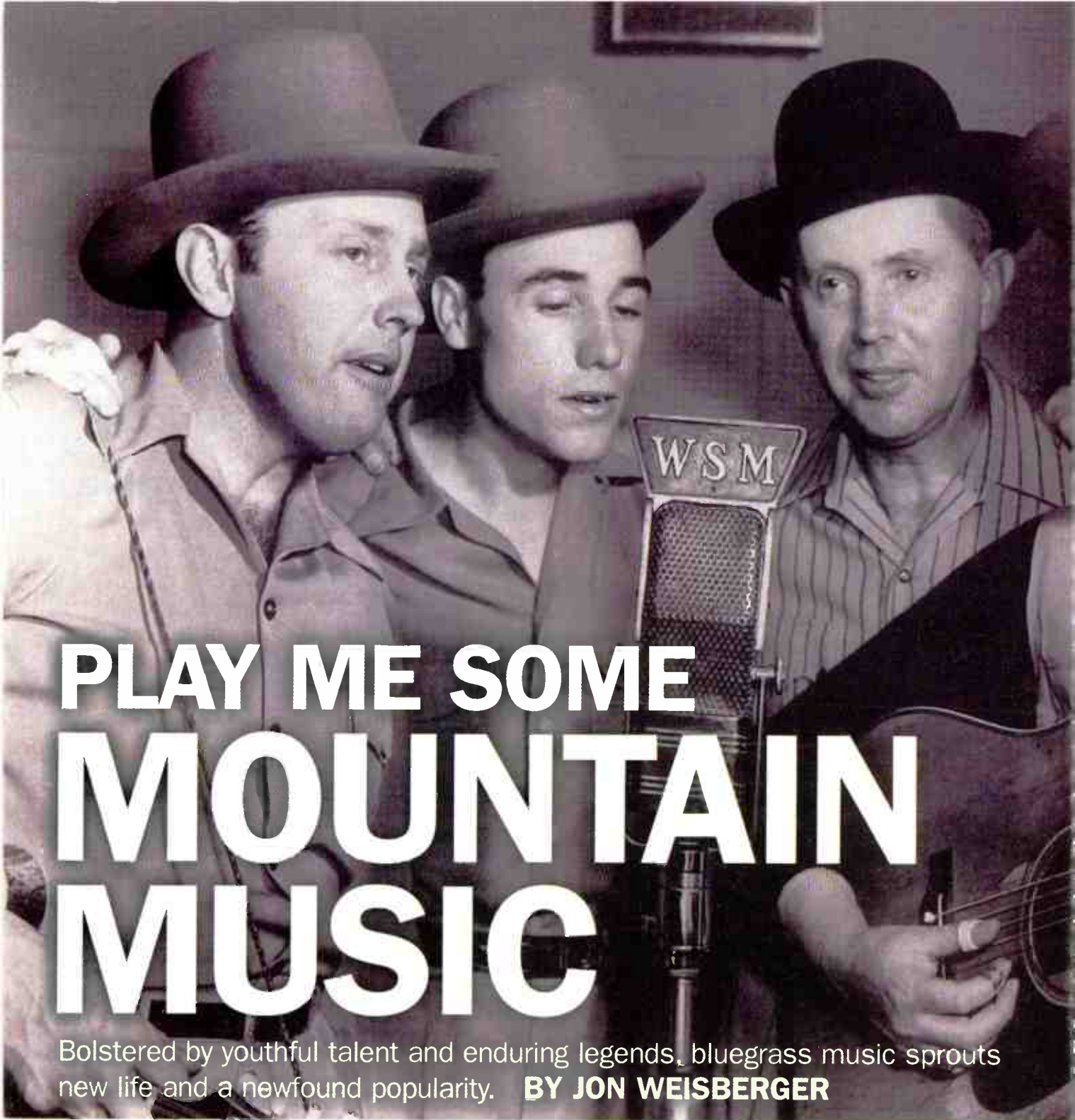
*i hope you dance*



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# PLAY ME SOME MOUNTAIN MUSIC

Bolstered by youthful talent and enduring legends, bluegrass music sprouts new life and a newfound popularity. **BY JON WEISBERGER**

**B**LUEGRASS MUSIC'S REALLY GONE TO town," the Osborne Brothers sang back in 1963. It was true at the time—in the early '60s, bluegrass enjoyed a surge in popularity thanks to the national success of Flatt and Scruggs and other acts. And it's true again today—after a long period of cult status, bluegrass music is enjoying another explosion in interest and critical acclaim. Thanks to the emergence

of several outstanding young performers, as well as growing recognition of the importance of legendary pioneers like Ralph Stanley, new listeners are enthusiastically discovering bluegrass' tangy mixture of mountain soul, jaw-dropping musicianship and down-home informality.

While the bluegrass sound often conjures up images of misty Appalachian ridges and pioneer days, it's actually a

modern musical idiom that's only a few years older than rock 'n' roll. Created in the late '40s by Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys (when Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs were band members), bluegrass music is young enough that some of its earliest practitioners are still on the road and in the studio.

"It's kind of a unique age for bluegrass," says Dan Hays, executive director





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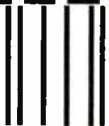
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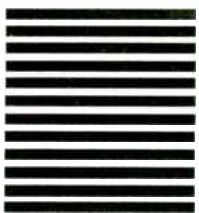
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**FOUNDING FATHERS**  
From left: Bill Monroe,  
Earl Scruggs, Birch  
Monroe and Lester Flatt  
in harmony in the original  
Blue Grass Boys band.

LANCIE LEROY

of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA), a trade organization celebrating its 15th anniversary during its annual October convention and awards ceremony in Louisville, Kentucky. "You can hear the whole array of generations and styles on the radio, on recordings and at festivals. It's got the full spectrum of fans, too—not just old folks, but teens, people in their 20s, everyone."



**BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN**  
The Del McCoury Band raises the roof (left). Below, left to right: First-generation bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley; country star Ricky Skaggs, back in the bluegrass fold; bluegrass award-winner Del McCoury and country rocker Steve Earle; the great Earl Scruggs and country singer/bluegrass acolyte Marty Stuart.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ADAMI CARLOS, MORELLO/GHERGIA (2)

Not surprisingly, many new listeners are country music fans looking for an organic alternative, or at least supplement, to the slickly produced, pop-leaning sounds dominating the country airwaves. Larry Cordle, a bluegrass singer/songwriter whose work has been recorded by Garth Brooks and George Strait, says, "I think that people who like our kind of music realize that it's heart stuff, rather than perfection being the thing."

"Country music is starting to fold in a little," adds Ron McCoury, an award-winning mandolinist and mainstay of one of bluegrass' most popular groups, the Del McCoury Band. "There's always that core of people who don't want to go with commercial music, and they're looking for something different."

The McCoury group, led by family patriarch Del McCoury and featuring Ron's brother Rob on banjo, tapped into that new audience last year when they recorded an album with popular alternative country performer Steve Earle. The album, *The Mountain*, sold well enough to make the *Billboard* album chart, as did recent bluegrass albums by Dolly Parton (*The Grass Is Blue*) and Ricky Skaggs, whose *Bluegrass Rules!* marked a return to his own musical roots.

Like Skaggs, who performed with bluegrass leaders Ralph Stanley and J.D. Crowe before ascending to country stardom, other country performers also have apprenticed in the demanding style.

Vince Gill began his career playing bluegrass, including a stint with Skaggs' Boone Creek band, and the country star insisted that the country segment of the 1997 Grammy Awards include a musical tribute to Bill Monroe, who had died the previous year.

The Dixie Chicks also started out in bluegrass, and the trio's concerts still occasionally feature classics like Bill Monroe's fierce instrumental, "Wheel Hoss." Other former bluegrass performers include Joe Diffie, Marty Raybon and several members of Diamond Rio, all of whom appeared on Ralph Stanley's star-studded *Clinch Mountain Country* album in 1998.

"It was such a thrill to have the opportunity to record with Ralph," says Diffie, who grew up singing along with records by Ralph and his late brother Carter. Marty Stuart, who spent his teenage years as a member of Lester Flatt's band, included guest appearances by Stanley and Earl Scruggs on his critically acclaimed *The Pilgrim*.

With figures like Skaggs, Alison Krauss and Del McCoury leading the way, other bluegrass artists have been able to make new fans, too. "I see some younger audiences, younger people," notes Russell Moore, lead singer for the IBMA's reigning Vocal Group of the Year, Illrd Tyme Out. "When they say this is a cool music, then their friends start coming along too, and they enjoy it."

It's not just the bluegrass audiences that are younger. The music's current growth in sales encompasses a healthy

**WOMEN'S CIRCLE** Guitarist Mark Newton onstage with a gathering of female bluegrass stars, including Laurie Lewis (far left), Lynn Morris (center, banjo) and Rhonda Vincent (far right, autoharp).



## Bluegrass opens its gates to a wave of talented women.

Although not yet 40 years old, Rhonda Vincent has spent more than 30 years performing on the bluegrass circuit. So the talented singer knows what she's talking about when she declares, "This is the greatest time

for women in bluegrass."

Recently, Vincent joined an impressive list of female bluegrass artists, including IBMA Female Vocalist of the Year winners Lynn Morris and Claire Lynch, in a special album honoring the increasing presence of women in bluegrass. Organized by musician Mark Newton, the album, *Follow Me Back to the Fold*, is subtitled *A Tribute to Women in Bluegrass*, and it serves as a powerful testimony to the remarkable range of talented women working in what once was an almost an all-male field.

Newton, a genial but intense man who fronted several influential bands in the 1980s, says the CD came from a desire to correct an oversight on his first

solo album, 1998's *Living a Dream*. That album, which also featured a high-powered lineup of guests, was billed as a tribute to Newton's "biggest influences." But after it was completed he realized there were no women at all on it. "I needed to do something about that," he says, so he launched the *Follow Me Back to the Fold* project.

Backed by an all-star cast of pickers—including banjoist Kristin Scott and two-time IBMA Bass Player of the Year Missy Raines—singers range from veteran Gloria Belle (who worked with the legendary Jimmy Martin in the 1960s) to newcomer Valerie Smith. The title track, penned by Tom T. and Dixie Hall and performed by the entire cast, is a tribute to country music pioneer Mother Maybelle Carter. The album's final cut, "Follow Me Back to the Fold," is a fitting close to a collection that proves the women of bluegrass are here to stay. —J.W.



# WOMEN IN BLUE



**ALL IN GOOD TIME** Bluegrass has always mixed youth and veterans. Clockwise from above: Country music hall-of-famer Lester Flatt (far right) tutors a young Marty Stuart (second from left); the members of Nickel Creek; groundbreaking singer Alison Krauss.

"In bluegrass music today, you can hear the whole array of generations and styles." —Dan Hays, IBMA

dose of young musicians, including Krauss, the McCoury brothers, Moore and CMT favorites Nickel Creek, a group of dazzling players who are all under the age of 22 (see *Horizons*, p.19).

Nevertheless, the growth in bluegrass has not been without controversy. Bluegrass loyalists are notoriously prickly when it comes to change. Whether it's a young

jazz influence to show or a female singer who changes the key of a classic song to suit her voice, anyone tinkering with the formula established by Monroe is likely to be blasted by some fans for diluting "real" bluegrass.

Still, for every disgruntled fan, there are many more newly attracted to the music. They're drawn by its core values—tradition, musicianship and emotion, to name a



few—and because they identify with the earthy values and appearances of the performers.

Bluegrass changes slowly, but that doesn't mean it doesn't change. Back in 1954, Bill

Monroe rerecorded his "Blue Moon of Kentucky," originally a stately waltz, in a faster-paced manner strongly influenced by Elvis Presley's rockin' version. It was no accident that his second crack at the song proved more enduring than the first. Though it's filled with the echoes of days past, bluegrass continues to be a modern style, shaped by the world around it.

Today's vibrant bluegrass scene has a lot of pleasant surprises in store for folks who haven't kept up with the music, or who are discovering it for the first time. Though it's never likely to be as popular as mainstream country—and in the eyes of many of its fans and artists, that's a good thing—it is, indeed, going to town. And if it's finding some new tastes there, it's bringing plenty of its own down-home flavor along. \*



*"She sings her face off..  
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Robert K. Oermann,  
Music Row Magazine

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# Off the Charts

The country buzz outside the music biz

## A GUITARIST BARES HIS SOUL

**Brent Rowan steps out from the shadows of the stars with an album of his own.**

**I**N THE SALT MINES OF Nashville's top recording studios, few musicians rise to the coveted level of first-call player. Guitarist Brent Rowan is one of the fortunate few. Turn on a country radio station for 15 minutes and odds are Rowan's guitar work will be featured—sometimes on song after song.

In the studio, Rowan gets work because he's a talented, adaptable chameleon who plays what the song requires. However, on his new solo CD, *Bare Essentials*, he presents himself as he would like to be heard.

Sitting and listening to a playback of the CD, Rowan comments, "That's what I do. This is who I am. It's what's down deep inside me—unfiltered by radio, labels, producers."

Rowan's reason for taking time from his lucrative schedule is as simple and as heartfelt as the sparkling guitar work on the album: He did it for his 3-year-old son, he says. "I wanted to leave Marlin something other than a list of hit records I played on."

A warm, personable guy, Rowan's compositions reflect his personality. *Bare Essentials* presents simple melodies superbly



recorded, with lots of open space. It takes a listener to a peaceful place, which is where Rowan wanted to take his tunes.

Beautifully packaged in a case designed to look like an old, tweed guitar case, the CD features spectacular photos of the West, as well as Rowan's thoughts about his inspiration for composing each of the tunes. It would be a pleasant gift for anyone who, as Brent says, "eats too fast, drives too fast and gets on an Internet that's too slow." The record is available at [www.brentrowan.com](http://www.brentrowan.com) or 1-877-693-7848.

—Ken Spooner

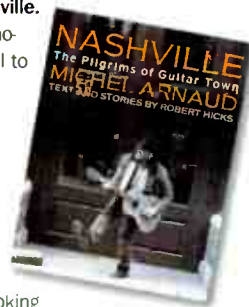
## Dreamers and Schemers

A new photo book offers a realistic portrait of modern Nashville.

Most famous photographers travel to Nashville to add to the entertainment capital's emphasis on glitz. However, acclaimed French photographer Michel Arnaud came looking for the grit behind the poses. What he came away with reveals a human element of the music business rarely seen by outsiders.

Arnaud's book, *Nashville: The Pilgrims of Guitar Town*, features portraits of the stars who populate Music City, including Chet Atkins, Billy Ray Cyrus and Naomi Judd. But Arnaud gives equal time to behind-the-scenes workers (including our own columnist Hazel Smith). He also goes beyond Music Row to picture the politicians, novelists, nightclub workers and non-country musicians who make Nashville a more diverse city than most people realize.

With a well-informed text by insider Robert Hicks, *Pilgrims* is a fresh look at the nerve center of country music. It'll help you see Music City in a new light.



**CHECK THESE DATES** A year's worth of country music stars have pitched in to pose for a calendar designed to increase awareness of the abilities of children and adults with Down Syndrome. The Down Home Country calendar features Dolly Parton, Naomi Judd, Patty Loveless, Mark Wills, Marty Roe of Diamond Rio, Chely Wright, the Wilkinsons, Sammy Kershaw, Delbert McClinton, the Kinleys, Little Big Town and Shane Minor. The stars each appear with Middle Tennessee residents with Down Syndrome. For example, the cover photo of Parton and five children was shot at the Dollywood theme park in East Tennessee.

The Down Home Country calendar is available from the Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee for \$15 by calling 800-733-5315.

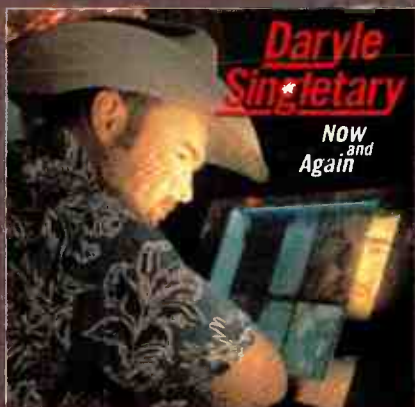


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## Old Music From a New Film

**A documentary captures modern performers singing old-time country and gospel tunes.**

**T**HE MUSIC CREATED FOR THE FILM *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* proved so good that those involved in its production decided to make another movie to showcase the musicians who worked on the soundtrack.

Oscar-winning filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen (*Fargo*, *Raising Arizona*) assembled a powerful cast of traditional musicians to record period music for the comedy, which is based in Mississippi during the Depression. After finishing the film, the Coen brothers decided to help produce a documentary concert featuring performances by the artists involved with the soundtrack. To shoot the documentary, the Coens and Mercury Records hired the acclaimed team of D.A. Pen-



**AMEN, BROTHER**  
From top: Krauss with choir; bluegrass legend Stanley sings a cappella; Harris with partners Rawlings and Welch.

BETH GWINN (3)

nebaker and Chris Hegedus, best known for the intimate, behind-the-scenes feel found in *Don't Look Back* (about a Bob Dylan tour of England) and *The War Room* (about Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign).

The filming took place on a stormy May night at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. Pounding rain and tornado-warning winds raged outside, but inside the atmosphere was

## Overnight Express

**Radio veteran Dave Nemo keeps truckers rolling to a country beat.**

Ten-four, good buddy, got a road-tested tip for you: Should you find yourself burning the midnight oil on the highway or the homefront and you get a hankering for some real country music, turn your radio to the AM side and tune into *Dave Nemo and the Road Gang Show*. Appearing seven nights a week on the syndicated Interstate Radio Network, Nemo beams good tunes and sound advice from midnight to dawn, keeping you company with a friendly voice and timely tidbits of news, weather and trivia.

"In 28 years on the air, this is the only show I've done," Nemo says while sipping from an ever-present cup of coffee. "That's pretty unheard of in radio."

Although designed for an audience of overnight truckers, Nemo and the Road Gang play a broad spectrum of country music that would appeal to most fans who enjoy traditional country music. Even the commercials are entertaining, mostly featuring products you probably didn't know existed. The Road

quiet and soul-stirring. Under the watchful eye of famed music producer T Bone Burnett, the diverse cast of musicians presented a tender yet rousing collection of gospel, blues and old-time country tunes.

Emceed with low-key charm by John Hartford, the lengthy concert featured mostly gentle but spirited readings by Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss, the Fairfield Four, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, the Cox Family and many more. Judging by the audience's reaction, the most compelling performance was by bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley, who sang the chilling "O Death" while standing alone in a spotlight.

The producers hope to put out the documentary in October to coincide with the

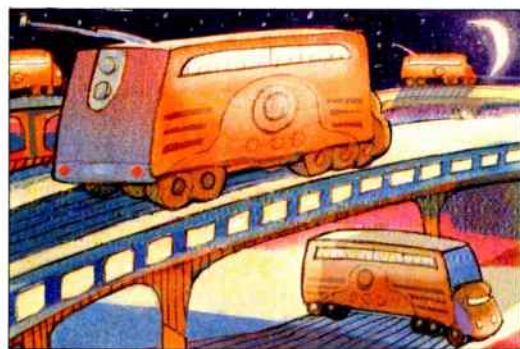


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN FOSTER

Gang also features regional information on traffic and weather, as well as listener calls that talk about road conditions and other travel updates.

As for the music, besides a concentration of steel guitars and fiddles, there are segments devoted to bluegrass and gospel. Nemo also regularly invites in special guests, such as Nashville songwriters, who drop by to play and talk about the well-known tunes they've written.

Originally created by legendary New Orleans deejay Charlie Douglas, the Road Gang show is now produced in Nashville and broadcast by five 50,000-watt, clear-channel stations on the Interstate Radio Network. In the South, it's available on WWL-870 and WLAC-1510; out West on KSL-1160; in the Midwest on KXEL-1540; and in the Northeast on WWKB-1520.

—Ken Spooner

film and a soundtrack CD. Then everyone will be able to step back in time and sample this magical music for themselves.

—Jon Weisberger

### OAK BRANCHES OUT

William Lee Golden of the Oak Ridge Boys has created a multimedia boxed set that spans his 35-year career, most of it with the famous country quartet.

The collection includes a 65-minute documentary, *The William Lee Golden Story: The Golden Oak*; a CD, *My Life's Work*, featuring 11 new recordings; and an autographed photo montage.

The boxed set costs \$39.95 and is available at book and music stores, at Oak Ridge Boys concerts and at [www.williamleegolden.com](http://www.williamleegolden.com).



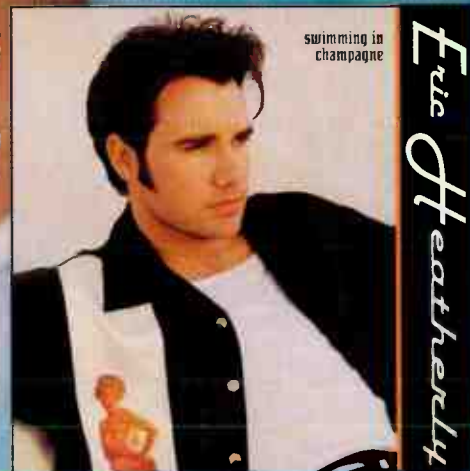


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Jennings wound up in Nashville pursuing a career as a country singer. After a few years of promising but inconsistent recordings, Jennings found his own voice, singing country music without mincing words. Could anyone else deliver “Lonesome, On’ry and Mean” with as much conviction?

Settled into a chair in a dressing room of the Ryman Auditorium, Jennings is more reserved than you’d expect—and friendlier, too. For two nights in January, he packed the Nashville landmark to record a live album. His special guests included several artists he influenced—Travis Tritt, John Anderson and Montgomery Gentry. Nevertheless, Jennings owned the show, commanding the stage with a distinctive swagger and effortless confidence. At age 63, he still sounds for all the world like an outlaw.

**Country Music: When you perform, do you use a set list?**

**Waylon Jennings:** Yes I do, but I change it. It changes about every night. I do something else. or I

move [the songs] around. We’re so free [onstage] and have so much freedom.

**CM: You’ve got such an extensive collection of work to choose from. How do you choose the songs for a show?**

**WJ:** I’ll check it with the band to see what they think. It’s what really moves, you know? There’s one song—I won’t tell you which one—but there’s one song we’ve been having trouble with. At rehearsal, we got together and played a few things. I said, “OK, we’re gonna try this again. If it doesn’t work, I’m taking it out.” But it worked. It was something I hadn’t looked into, and the rest of the band hadn’t either.

**CM: Does a situation like that make you nervous?**

**WJ:** I ain’t been nervous since 1956, what are you talking about?

## Ramblin’ Man

**From Buddy Holly to the *Dukes of Hazzard*, Waylon Jennings shows up all over the musical map.**

**W**AYLON JENNINGS WILL NEVER SHAKE THE IMAGE HE picked up as a leader of country music’s outlaw movement. Although he had many partners-in-crime—Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser and Jessi Colter among them—Jennings’ booming baritone best personified the description.

At 17, Jennings moved from Littlefield, Texas, to Lubbock, and joined Buddy Holly’s band. When Jennings recorded his first single, Holly produced it. And when Holly’s plane

crashed in 1959, Jennings felt he should have been on it. (He had given up his seat to the Big Bopper.)

By the ’60s, thanks to the encouragement of Bobby Bare and Chet Atkins,

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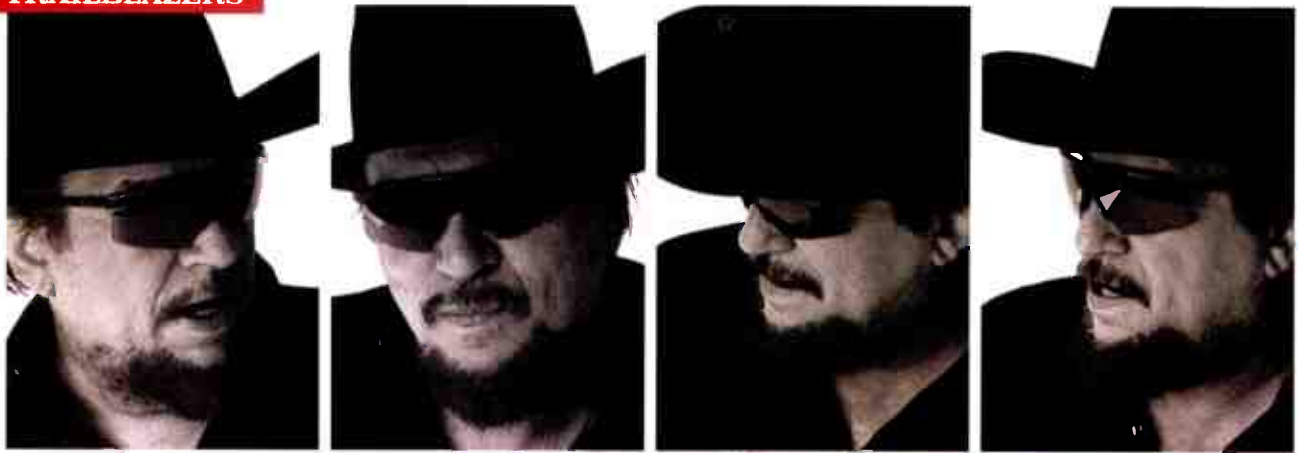
# THE HARDEST PART

Is the new album from Allison Moorer, and features the single "Send Down An Angel"

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World Radio History



**CM:** What do you remember about that time in your life?

**WJ:** I can remember being very young, and I would get nervous. But you know what? Buddy Holly told me something one time. He said, "You're the only one who knows when you're right. You can turn a mistake into something funny, or you can turn it into something soulful." The whole thing is, through the years, I've realized those people [in the crowd] are on my side, or they wouldn't be there. And they're very forgiving.

**CM:** How did your early work as a deejay prepare you for a career as an entertainer?

**WJ:** I don't know that it did. Maybe it got some of the fear out of the way.

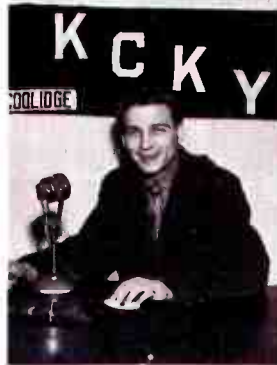
**CM:** Did it give you a better ear for a song?

**WJ:** I'll tell you what radio did for me exactly. I worked at a station that had block programming: 15 minutes of jazz, 15 minutes of country, 15 minutes of pop. And I learned to like a lot of different kinds of music.

Before Elvis, I remember talking to my dad one time, back when I was working at the radio station. I said, "What if you mixed blues and country together? What do you think that would do?" He said, "That might be a good idea." And I swear, it wasn't too long until here comes Elvis, and that's what he did.

But radio got boring to me, because I couldn't just turn the record on and turn down the volume. I listened to everything I played and sometimes you get a little bored with some of it.

**CM:** I don't know anyone who didn't watch the *Dukes of Hazzard*. What's it like to be associated with that show?



**WJ:** That was a great, great time in my life. When I first got into it. I wasn't really happy about doing it, and I wanted to quit, but they kept raising the money.

I got to know the people—Denver Pyle [Uncle Jesse] became one of my dearest friends in the world. And I just talked to John Schneider the other day; he called me. They call me periodically. And if I'm around where they are, I'll call them. The people who are putting those things on now, those movies or what have ya, they're pure jerks. But you rise above all that, and the camaraderie that comes out of it never goes away.

I had a great time doing that show, because I learned so much. I learned about energy and where the energy should be. You could never be low, because you couldn't keep the audience's attention: there was too much going on. You're at the point where you're almost yelling.

And I got to play with the words. They



**MAN OF MANY FACES** (clockwise from top left): The outlaw still speaks his mind (top 4 photos); Jennings (left) harmonizes with Buddy Holly (center) and Tommy Allsup in 1958; Travis Tritt joins his idol onstage earlier this year; Jennings at the deejay post he sometimes found "boring."

would try to write in a dialect, like a hillbilly, and I would get on them bad about that. They would try to come up with those old country sayings and they'd get 'em wrong. I'd change 'em around and get 'em the way they were said. [He gestures to himself.] I mean, how country can you get?

—Craig Shelburne

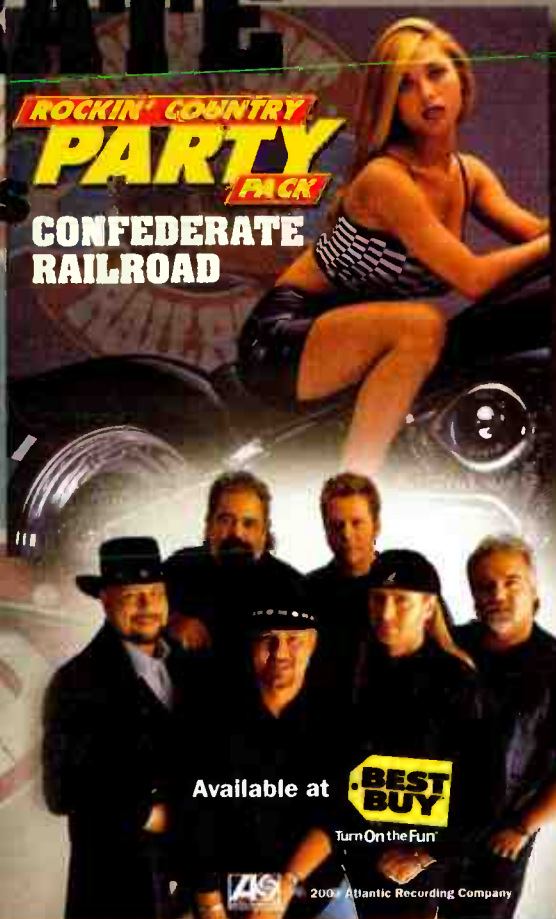
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MATT BARNES PHOTOGRAPHY (4); COURTESY WATSON JENNINGS; PATRICIA PRESLEY; COURTESY WATSON JENNINGS

# CONFEDERATE RAILROAD'S ROCKIN' COUNTRY PARTY PACK

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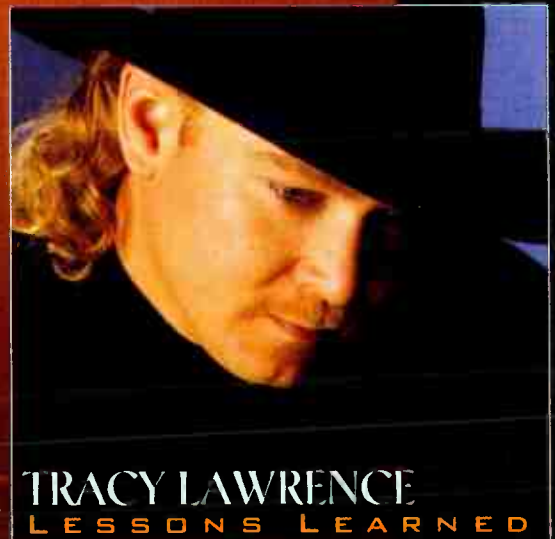


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**JOE ELY**  
**Live at Antone's**

ROUNDER  
★★★★★

One of the true pioneers of alternative country, Joe Ely made his self-titled first album when Jimmy Carter was president. But the Texas native has barely lost his stride. On his third live album (the first two were also released in years ending with 0—*Live Shots* in 1980 and *Live at Liberty Lunch* in 1990), Ely rocks and hypnotizes the revered Austin roadhouse with a fiery mix of career-spanning material, though the lion's share of the set list comes from his most recent albums, particularly 1995's exotic *Letter to Laredo*.

That album was a turning point, with its gypsy spirit (thanks, in part, to the addition of Dutch flamenco guitarist Teye) wafting organically through Ely's big-sky west Texas musical landscape. That spirit is everywhere on *Live at Antone's*, recorded during two dates in late January of last year. You can almost smell the beer and taste the smoke as Ely and his crack band—including Teye and longtime musical compadres Jesse "Hercules" Taylor (electric guitar) and Lloyd Maines (steel guitar)—give it up on 15 electrifying songs as if their lives depended on it.

Ely opens the show with one of the coolest outlaw story songs of all time, Robert Earl Keen's lusty "The Road Goes on Forever." Beginning with just Ely and his guitar, the song slowly builds to its sweltering climax, and though he's performed it zillions of times, it sounds as fresh and spontaneous as if this were the first. Ely's own songs often exude a sense of mystery and searching.



"Ranches and Rivers," for instance, with its Spanish guitar and elegant accordion flourishes courtesy of Joel Guzman, has a sweet, Tex-Mex feel as it tells of a poor, tired laborer who'd do anything to escape to the border with the boss's daughter. Even more hopeless is the plight of the singer in "Workin' for the Man," who's been breaking his back all his life "in a Louisiana gravel pit" and now his woman's about to leave him. Sonically, it's like a summit between Bruce Springsteen and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

And the crowd is definitely into it. On "Gallo del Cielo," Tom Russell's cinematic song of Carlos Saragosa and his warrior rooster, you can hear the pained cry of one of Antone's patrons as Ely sings the song's heartbreaking climax. As good a storyteller as Ely is, he's an equally convincing rocker, and by the last note of "Oh Boy!"—a tribute to his musical and hometown hero, Buddy Holly—the crowd is begging for more.

Over the last few years, there have been only a small handful of really good live albums, but *Live at Antone's* is absolutely the best of the batch.

—David Sokol



**ALLISON MOORER**  
**The Hardest Part**  
MCA NASHVILLE

★★★★★

Give executive producer Tony Brown and MCA credit: They've let Allison Moorer, her husband Doyle Primm and producer/guitarist Kenny Greenberg keep hold of the reins on her second album, despite the lackluster commercial response to her critically acclaimed debut, *Alabama Song*. The result is an album that takes the earlier one's left-of-center country music to an even higher plane.

Though the opening track is a simple, bluegrass-flavored tale of lost love, *The Hardest Part* swiftly moves into territory that mostly plays Moorer's full-bodied yet intimate voice against hard-edged electric guitars, keyboards, pedal steel and a rock-and-r&b-tinged contemporary sound. The production is detailed and polished, but never gets in the way of the feelings explored by Moorer and Primm's devastating songwriting. With few exceptions, the pair favor moody portraits of loneliness, tempered with a strength that's all the more powerful for being subdued. She may be sad, but in these songs, Moorer's no doormat: "I can't replace your warm embrace, but it's time I tried," she sings on "It's Time I Tried," and her voice rings with both regret and self-knowledge, as it does throughout the album.

That's a bold move, given

**Country Music rates all recordings as follows:**

- ★★★★★ **Excellent.** A classic from start to finish.
- ★★★★ **Very Good.** An important addition to your collection.
- ★★★ **Respectable.** Recommended with minor reservations.
- ★★ **Fair.** For loyal and forgiving fans.
- ★ **Poor.** Seriously flawed.

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**THE JUDDS**

Reunion Live

December 31, 1999

Phoenix, Arizona

CURB/MERCURY

★★★★

Out of all the possible places they could have been, a throng of thousands chose to spend New Year's Eve 1999/2000 in Phoenix, Arizona, at a Judds concert. Many more undoubtedly would have been there if they could, for it was not only a celebration of a new millennium but of the reunion of one of the most beloved duos in country music history. The event is captured here apparently in real time, with the new year countdown climaxing the set near the end of the second CD. And in addition to being a key collector's item for any Judds fan, it's a rich set of live music, a relative rarity in

the country music album release schedule.

Sister Ashley kicks off the festivities with a long, syrupy introduction that recounts mother Naomi's battle with hepatitis that forced the breakup of the duet eight years earlier. (Somebody might have told the screaming girls in the front rows to treat the setup with its intended solemnity.)

After that, it's a collection of greatest hits from the duo days and from Wynonna's solo career. "Girls Night Out," "Love Is Alive" and "Mama He's Crazy" all sound great. Appropriately, the recording places the vocals vividly up front, clearly defined against a spare, muted instrumental mix.

The girls ham it up quite a bit. Wynonna's entrance on a motorcycle for "The Wyld Unknown" doesn't communicate very well on record. But this is a big event after all, so when Naomi waxes philosophical about the new year, it's forgivable even if it's corny. When they're really focused and feeling it, however, Naomi and Wynonna's blue Kentucky pipes are as locked in and as soulful as anybody in the business. Wynonna's take on the Fabulous Thunderbirds' "Tuff Enuff" is another highlight, where her snarling blues gives the song the perfect surge of energy. Rounding out the richness of the record's sound is the silky, gospel-choir background singing of Robert Bailey, Kim Fleming and Vicki Hampton.

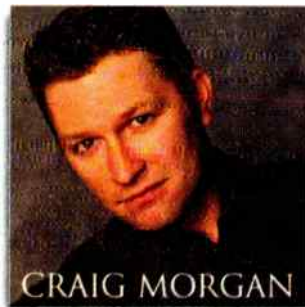
Live recordings should either be about capturing a vivid performance, enhanced by that irreproducible feedback loop between artist and audience, or about commemorating a historic slice of time. This new Judds recording offers some of the first and a whole lot of the second.

—Craig Havighurst

that this album is strictly autobiographical; rather, she has drawn from her own life to speak eloquently to the constant tensions between art and family, morning coffee and adult dreams. And, as she suggests on "Eloda," an homage to her grandmother, not so much has changed.

It is all rendered beautifully. McWilson has a glorious, supple, subtle voice that owes much to the fine country singers of the 1960s. A number of gifted younger women—notably Neko Case and Tift Merritt—are mining similar territory. McWilson can sing with any of them, but she alone can write with a sure hand and such restless maturity. The results are extraordinary.

—Grant Alden



**CRAIG MORGAN**

Craig Morgan

Atlantic

★★★★

Newcomer Craig Morgan is a throwback to the '60s, when country's male singers came up the hard way. Men's men, they more than likely matured in the army, grew up fast, assumed the responsibilities of family, and wrote and sang of the reality and hardships of life. Then the '70s ushered in the singer/songwriter movement in pop music, and country, looking to John Denver and his ilk for guidance, began to go soft in the middle.

Morgan, who came of age during 10 years in the army,

country radio's preferences these days; there's not a single celebration of how fun love is, nor any melodramatic wails of feminine helplessness in the face of desertion. Instead, the album depicts a woman whose painful recognition of just how bad things can be is balanced by a quiet resilience that refuses to surrender in the face of adversity. With a hidden track that starkly recounts the tragedy that left Moorer and her sister (singer Shelby Lynne) orphaned while still in their teens, *The Hardest Part* is an emotionally compelling collection that will richly reward any listener brave enough to take the plunge.

—Jon Weisberger



**CHRISTY MCWILSON**

The Lucky One

HIGHTONE

★★★★

Somehow Christy McWilson's career usually ends up framed by parentheses noting that she is the wife of Scott McCaughey, a supporting musician with R.E.M. Her first solo outing

comes with similar parentheses: Dave Alvin produced and R.E.M.'s Peter Buck and Mike Mills played.

McWilson has, in fact, been the ideal musician's wife, raising their daughter, making her own music when possible, and understanding why her husband might be gone for months at a time.

But all along she has been a fine singer, a gifted songwriter and a well-respected musician. Even so, her debut is a revelation.

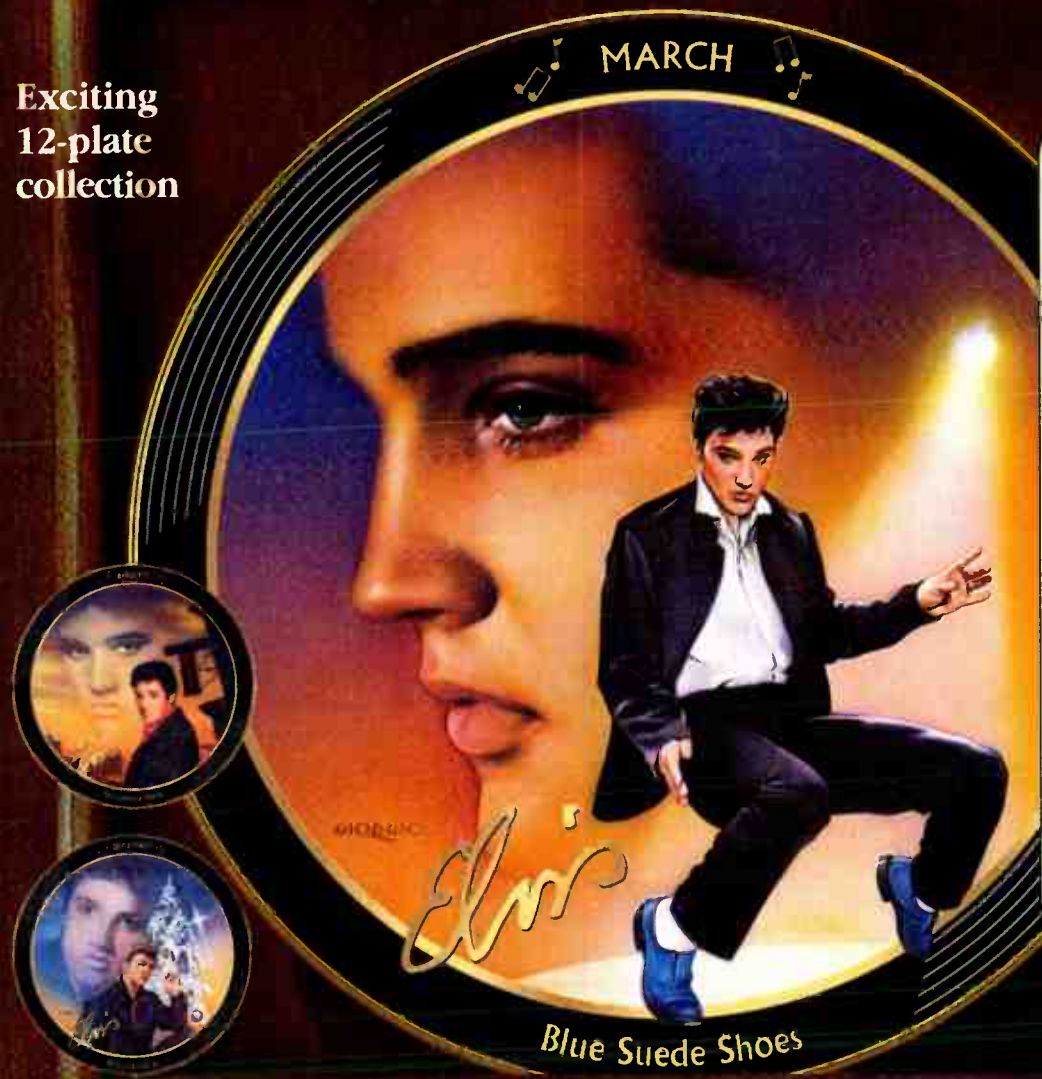
*The Lucky One* suggests how difficult it has been to manage. McWilson's carefully written songs are full of longing, disappointment, frustration, deep respect and carefully modulated anger. Not, it should be added,



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isn't so macho he'll need sensitivity training, as evidenced by the album's first track, "Paradise," about his combat experiences in Panama. At 18, he recalls in the song, "I was a soldier and not afraid to die/Now I'm a little older and not afraid to cry."

The Tennessee native makes his concessions to mainstream radio, of course, particularly with "Something to Write Home About," where his heartfelt delivery and *joie de vivre* sells an average song. But it's an anomaly. Morgan is into writing about things that matter—paying homage to a role-model dad ("Walking in My Father's Shoes"), examining a life lived with dignity and love ("302 South Maple Avenue"), giving a tip of the hat to his musical influences—George Jones on the novelty love song "It's Me" and Tommy Collins on the poignant "I Wish I Could See Bakersfield," where Merle Haggard, in a performance too obviously dubbed in from another session, makes a guest appearance.

The great surprise is that there, as on other cuts, Morgan isn't reluctant to embrace old-style honky-tonk. "When a Man Can't Get a Woman Off His Mind" swaggers out of the gate with a drop-dead fiddle, piano and pedal steel guitar. In this day of Shania's pop and Garth's rock, it takes nerve to do such a gut-bucket country song with no apologies or compromise.

Confidence is something Morgan has in spades, taking the concert stage with the bravado of a veteran, writing like a man who can't wait to spill his thoughts on the page and singing, in a back-of-the-throat baritone, like a man possessed to communicate.

—Alanna Nash



**STACEY EARLE**  
**Dancin' With Them That Brung Me**

GEARLE RECORDS

The thoughtfully constructed simplicity of Stacey Earle's latest release *Dancin' With Them That Brung Me* is a welcome compliment to the production tidal waves rampant through so many country releases. Not to say that Earle's folkiness should be placed comparatively against any Nashville chart goddesses (nor will it be the perfect gift for those awash in the commercial country vein). But she serves to remind us just how well organic songs

can often breathe within a decorative minimalism.

Ironically, the production is notably a notch up from her 1998 debut, *Simple Gearle*. Yet the overall ethic of being able to duplicate all the music onstage as well as in a living room certainly holds firm. (Earle admits that she and her mostly family band, the Jewels, should indeed sound tighter, having played 274 dates in 1999 alone.) The result is focused on verse and melody, and on acoustic and percussive touches that compliment the high tremble of her voice.

The album opens with the upbeat "Promise You Anything," an interesting choice as it was Earle's first-ever recording when she joined her brother Steve on his 1990 album *The Hard Way*. "Makes Me Happy" expresses an artistic humility by paying tribute to the rewards of recognized creative dreams, while the delicate warning against taking love for granted in "Kiss Her Goodnight" is colored with harmony and piano touches by Sheryl Crow. Overall, the often introspective takes on life, love and family are bound by a drum-brush style and vocal lilt which should appeal to fans of Emmylou Harris and Julie Miller.

In the instantly appealing "Is It Enough (I Luuv You)" Earle asks atop a 12-string saunter: "I have no gold for you/But right now will my silver do?" With the quest for gold frequently outweighing the artistic process, silver will do just fine.

—Ivey Lindsey



**ERIC HEATHERLY**  
**Swimming in Champagne**

MERCURY RECORDS

Six years ago, struggling singer Eric Heatherly could often be spotted at Kinko's in south Nashville. Like many wannabe stars, he spent a lot of time at the copy shop, having promotional materials done up or getting color prints of his headshot.

Well, years of hard work, a couple club tours and countless gigs at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge

later, the Nashville music industry finally has given him a chance. *Swimming in Champagne* is how a Nashville record should sound. Heatherly sings, cowrites and plays the stuffing out of his Ventures-meets-Vince Gill guitar stylings.

Better yet, Heatherly's gig-proven band actually appears on the record. In a nutshell, producer Keith Stegall let Heatherly do his thing with his guys. Anyone who knows anything about the Nashville music factory knows how unusual that is.

Ultimately it all comes down to the songs—which Heatherly and crew certainly know how to deliver.

"Wrong Five O'clock" juxtaposes a Stevie Ray Vaughan-type guitar riff over a rockin' roadhouse romp. The title track submerges the listener in reverb-drenched nirvana (think

Chris Isaak's "Wicked Game"). "She's So Hot" somehow fuses the vibe of Dick Dale's surf music with Golden Earring's rock classic "Radar Love."

But beneath the eclectic exterior, Heatherly is country to the core. The best evidence of this is his vocal performance on the Statler Brothers hit "Flowers on the Wall." Heatherly and background vocalist John Wesley Ryles effortlessly nail a traditional high harmony during the second verse. Throughout the song, Heatherly's relaxed vocal performance perfectly complements the dark lyrical theme.

In fact, every bit of Heatherly's performance is effortless and confident. It's as if he knew he was going to make it all along...no matter how many color copies he had to make.

—Brett Ratner

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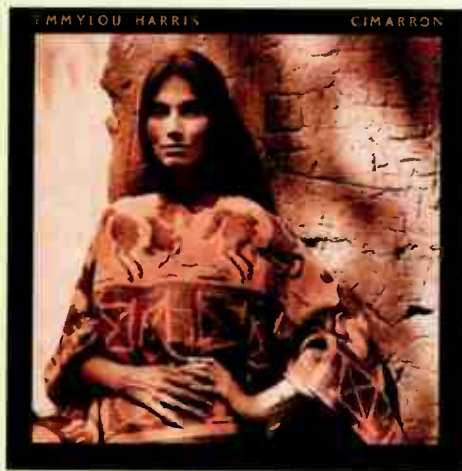
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## EMMYLOU HARRIS

### Cimarron

EMINENT

Fifteen years ago, when a certain newfangled technological device was growing in popularity, a commonly asked question was "Do you think this record would sound good on compact disc?" That query comes to mind again with the reissue of Emmylou Harris' 1981 album *Cimarron*. The rerelease marks the first time that this album has been available on CD in the United States. For Harris' fans, the arrival is long overdue. *Cimarron* contains three of Harris' biggest hits: "Born to Run," an uptempo Paul Kennerley composition that would become a Harris concert staple; the angelic "Tennessee Rose"; and a heartbreaking duet with Don Williams on Townes Van Zandt's "If I Needed You." This trio of tunes alone makes the disc essential. The other eight cuts are succulent grooves, especially the previously unreleased reading of Rodney Crowell's "Colors of Your Heart."

Harris still has a magnificent voice today, but two decades ago—or, in performer's terms, thousands of gigs and gigs ago—her instrument was a miraculous wonder of nature, as sublime as the White Cliffs of Dover. Harris has always been obsessed with harmony singing, and this release pairs her with a handful of outstanding

vocal partners, including Ricky Skaggs and Fayssoux Starling.

The Desert Rose Band's Herb Pedersen contributes jaunty banjo picking and a masterful vocal nuance to the mesmerizing "Rose of Cimarron." Harris and Barry Tashian generate memorable sparks during the climax of "The Price You Pay." And the duet with Williams is a certified classic, thanks to his velvety, vulnerable baritone. On "Son of a Rotten Gambler" and the standard "Tennessee Waltz," Harris' lead vocals are sweetly augmented by one of the best harmonizers in the business—Harris herself.

As powerful as the disc is, a marring inconsistency makes it a less than ideal starting point for novice fans. (The newly reissued *Last Date*, one of the best live country albums ever recorded, serves that purpose quite nicely.) But for gray-haired Harris followers, it's time to set aside that scratchy old *Cimarron* LP for your next garage sale. Hearing the digitally remastered clarity of Steve Fishell's exotic, hypnotic Weissenborn guitar licks on "Born to Run" leads to a realization. The pristine sonic presentation we take for granted nowadays more than compensates for the CD booklets, which can be damn near impossible to remove from those annoying little plastic cases.

—Bobby Reed

## EMMYLOU HARRIS

### Last Date

EMINENT

Before metamorphosing into a larger-than-life Nashville diva in the '90s, Emmylou Harris was the quintessential roots singer. She had impeccable taste, sniffing out great songs from miles away. She lived for musical adventure, to doodle in the margins of country music. Though that holds true today, her choice of material back in the '70s and '80s was truly unorthodox, especially for a country artist. Finally, Harris lived and played by her own rules in a

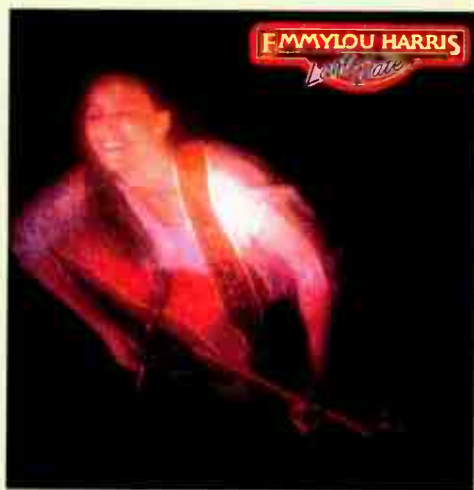
place—Nashville—where many rulers reside.

Back in 1982, when this live recording was made, she was still pushing against convention, making it all the more satisfying to hear her buck the system as she covered Bruce Springsteen ("Racing in the Street") and Neil Young ("Long May You Run") alongside Hank Snow ("I'm Movin' On") and Don Everly ("So Sad" [To Watch Good Love Go Bad]).

*Last Date* features Harris at her songbird peak, bridging her early years with the self-conscious artistry of albums like *Wrecking Ball*. Her voice is in top form, especially on brilliant, near-definitive renditions of intimate Gram Parsons tracks—"Return of the Grievous Angel," "Juanita" and "Devil in Disguise." Her Hot Band, one of Nashville's best-ever roots units, moves effortlessly along with Harris, kicking up a racket on Carl Perkins' "Restless," reining it in on Floyd Cramer and Conway Twitty's "(Lost His Love) On Our Last Date." Of Harris' three live albums, it's the only one with her Hot Band—which featured bassist Mike Bowden, pedal steeler Steve Fishell and guitarist Barry Tashian, among others.

Reissued, remastered and repackaged with new liner notes, *Last Date* is an important moment for Emmylou Harris, for her fans and for country music.

—Bob Gulla



## DWIGHT YOAKAM

### Dwightyoakamacoustic.net

REPRISE

Dwight Yoakam has released seven albums since 1993: a live disc, a Christmas album, a set of cover songs, a greatest hits anthology, an unplugged project, and two—count 'em, just two—

albums of new material. This trend would be a lot more worrisome if these releases weren't so enjoyable. The greatest hits disc was impressive, *Under the Covers* was wonderfully weird, and *Dwight Live* may be the best recording this neo-Bakersfield hero will ever cut.

Yoakam's latest release,

*Dwightyoakamacoustic.net*, is the unplugged project—a generous helping of 25 Yoakam singles and album cuts rerecorded with just his voice and acoustic guitar. The results might have been more interesting if Yoakam had recast the songs with more intimate vocals to fit their reduced circumstances, but he

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**KIMMIE RHODES**  
**Rich From the Journey**  
 SUNBIRD RECORDS

★★★  
 If your introduction to Austin-based songwriter and artist Kimmie Rhodes was her last record, *West Texas Heaven*, the one in which she did duets

with Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Townes Van Zandt and others, you may think of her as something of a honky-tonker. You'd be wrong, as her most recent CD release attests.

So many of the Austin types of the past 30 years have been lovable rounders, ranging from sweet, thoughtful, jazzy bluesman Walter Hyatt to Jerry Jeff Walker, the patron saint of overdrawn bar tabs. Breaking that mold convincingly, Rhodes is more a voice for New Age nonsectarian religious types. Think of Rhodes as a southwestern spiritual seeker who in middle age has her own interesting style and a lot of commercial covers in her catalog by Trisha Yearwood, Wynonna Judd, Emmylou Harris, Amy Grant, Willie, Waylon and others.

Life is a journey into the unknown tomorrow, where there lurks love, loss and the panoply of emotions in between, opportunities for gaining wisdom enough to become comfortable with yourself. Listen to Rhodes' soft, lilting Emmylou Harris-like voice in such melodically pleasing pieces

of positivity as "Thank You for Another Day," "There's a Place (Heaven's Not That Far Away)" or "Shine All Your Light" and see if you don't feel better, even on a Monday morning. Compositional pairing with Nashville hitwriter Bob Regan gives her a beautiful, country-folky story song in "Big Ol' Train," a gently careening tale of travel for its own sake from the "City of New Orleans" bag. Texas independent star Walt Wilkins also cowrote with Rhodes here for the hauntingly beautiful "Espiritu Santo Bay," a place of ancient shipwrecks that she explains as "the stillness of the infinite new world/I hear the whispers of the souls who have come to rest on your shores."

With radio giving us little more than the foot-wide, half-inch deep tripe of positive romance, I relish evermore the quirks, scars and furrows of the singer/songwriters. *Rich From the Journey* would be worth the toll to call Sunbird Records at 512-264-2407 in Austin to order this CD if you can't find it at your local record shop.

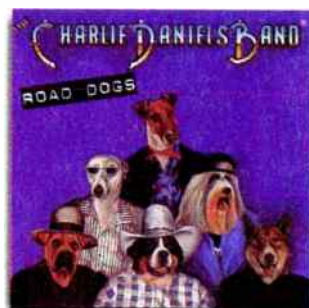
—Bob Millard

belts them out with gusto as if he were trying to command the attention of a noisy bar—or a 10,000-seat pavilion.

It's a pretty remarkable voice nonetheless, rich and vibrant even when unprotected by a band. And when Yoakam tackles story songs such as "1,000 Miles," "Johnson's Love," "Two Doors Down" and "Buenas Noches from a Lonely Room," the stripped-down format forces him to lean on the words more and make the narrative matter. On the other hand, producer Pete Anderson (who is merely an engineer here) and Yoakam's all-star California band added a lot to these songs, and the originals are better in almost every case.

Here's the bottom line: If you already have most of Yoakam's earlier albums, you're a true believer and you need *Dwightyoakamaoustic.net* for its fascinating variations on the theme. If you don't already own the earlier catalog, that's where you want to start.

—Geoffrey Himes



**THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND**  
**Road Dogs**  
 BLUE HAT RECORDS

★★★  
 Because he's immune to today's pop trends, big-hatted Charlie Daniels exists in a parallel musical universe, a stop-time place full of longtime fans who wear big belt buckles and who have never forgotten the Bearded One's greatest moments: southern anthems like "The South's Gonna Do It Again," "Long-Haired Country Boy" and "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." Now on his own label, Daniels is safe from the danger of losing that core audience and guaranteed respectable draws wherever he goes.

But what has he done for us

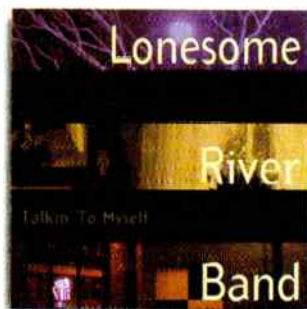
lately? Though he keeps on putting out albums, and only the Lord knows how many miles he puts on that big bus of his, has he written the kind of music worthy of his current reputation? If *Road Dogs*, his new album, is any indication, the answer is a lukewarm "Not really." On its 11 cuts, Daniels tries desperately to recapture the glory of prime southern rock. But mediocre, clichéd songwriting coupled with a sterile production turns the album into a bland affair.

It's not that his band has lost its crackle: Daniels has always had a hot live act worthy of its reputation. But songs like "Road Dogs," the Stonesque "Ain't No Law in California," and the inane "Wild Wild Young Men" come off sounding like Skynyrd outtakes. When Daniels veers off the expected path, as on the sincere but cheesy love song "How Much I Love You" and the ambitious closer "Sail Away," the results are mixed and not worth repeated listens. Only the smoking instrumental "Sidewinder," a song suggestive

of prime Santana, flickers with an impressive spark.

With a large, built-in audience, Daniels may be immune to the vagaries of today's pop charts. But that audience—faithful as they may be—deserves a "Dog" friskier than this one.

—Bob Gulla



**LONESOME RIVER BAND**  
**Talkin' to Myself**  
 SUGAR HILL

★★★  
 Other bluegrass acts may get more attention outside of the world of bluegrass, but none is more popular within it than the Lonesome River Band. Delivering a dynamic sound that fuses mountain soul and traditional



MCG1 Tim McGraw 4 designs



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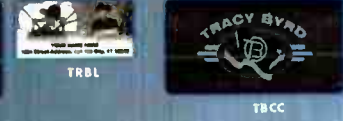
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BYWL BWCC



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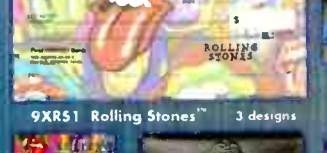
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skills with a kind of rock 'n' roll spirit, they're favorites with everyone from the teenage girls who squeal each time bassist Ronnie Bowman steps up to sing lead to the professional peers who have handed banjoist Sammy Shelor and guitarist Kenny Smith awards for being the best on their respective instruments.

With mandolinist Don Rigby and new fiddler Rickie Simpkins rounding out the roster, the LRB's new release marks a return to their trademark sound after 1998's more contemplative *Finding the Way*. From the first notes of the album's opener, Kentucky tunesmith Bill Castle's prison song, "Swing That Hammer," *Talkin' to Myself* is full of the band's signature driving rhythms, tight harmonies and first rate songs. Though there are a couple of vintage numbers, like "Down in the Willow Garden," one of the best-known of the old murder ballads, and the Jimmy Martin favorite, "Mary Ann," the emphasis is on new material with a classic flavor. The guys put their own spin on all of them, respecting the simple country outlines of a tune like "Are You Ashamed to Call Me Darlin'" even while putting the hammer down to turn it into a rockin' bluegrass rave-up.

In the hands of less sensitive, talented and traditionally grounded musicians, that could be a disaster (just check out some of the permutations of "punk-grass" out there today). Here, though, it's exactly the kind of fresh energy bluegrass needs, making this album a perfect introduction to bluegrass for the 21st century. Hit it, boys!

—Jon Weisberger



## KEVIN GORDON

### Down to the Well

SHANACHIE

★★★★

There are songwriters who can startle you with their indelible imagery and wonderful wordplay, and there are songwriters who can put you at ease with the conversational flow of their lyrics, but there are few who can do both at once. Kevin Gordon is one of those songwriters.

The title track from *Down to the Well* evokes a small, exhausted southern town ("mud-colored dogs guarding shotgun shacks, a red door on a green Cadillac"), Gordon and Lucinda Williams duet on the song, written by Gordon and Canadian guitarist Colin Linden. Gordon's arrangements boast a roadhouse kick, and when he declares, "Ain't going down to the well no more, I believe I've had my fill," the ache of leaving something behind is balanced by the hope of finding something new.

Louisiana's Gordon has written songs for Scotty Moore and Sonny Burgess, so his rockabilly credentials are impeccable. But rather than simply resurrect the music, he transforms it into a

vehicle for his spooky, southern-gothic stories about an alcoholic arsonist ("Burning the Church House Down"), a 17-year-old girl with a gun ("Marina Takes Her Aim"), an obsessed but uncertain lover ("Water or Gasoline"), and an Oklahoma girl with more desires than means ("Oil City Girl").

Gordon has the good sense to cover Earl King's "Time for the Sun to Rise," perhaps the best song to ever come out of New Orleans. Gordon also has a new producer, Bo Ramsey, who captures the vividness of Gordon's live performances in a way the previous albums never did. As a result, this is the best introduction to a major alternative country artist.

—Geoffrey Himes

## THE KINLEYS

### The Kinleys II

EPIC

★★★★

It was more or less clear from the Kinleys' first album that they could really sing. Saddled as that

project was with lightweight songs and a heavy production gloss, one could tell that Heather and Jennifer love what they do and that their genetically identical voice boxes blend in a mesmerizing way.

When the Kinleys sing harmony, each with the same full, buttery tone, and with an uncanny read on each other's phrasing, they sound like some beautiful new instrument.

This follow-up project really lets us hear how good that instrument could be. Coproduced by the sensitive and talented Radney Foster, *Kinleys II* is an engaging vocal showcase. The songs remain safely cloistered in the church of love, romance and inspiration, but they are uniformly better than those on the Kinleys' debut. The opening cut "She Ain't the Girl for You" looks at a familiar topic from a fresh



point of view, and Steve Fishell's Dobro leads over a spare rhythm section makes this single crackle. Next is Foster's collaboration with Georgia Middleman, the lovely "I'm In," with a sensational call and response in the chorus. The sisters just keep on entertaining, raising the roof in the climax of "You're Still Here" and almost rapping through the inter- or rhymes of the funky "That's Gonna Mess You Up."

The sisters cowrote five of the 13 songs, and although they're not striving for lyrical sophistication, they sometimes strike upon a turn of phrase or a melodic hook that really lets their voices shimmer, especially on "Here." The song is pure, luscious pop. The Everly Brothers vibe is alive in it, and it would make for perfect summer radio music.

Foster, who knows something about vocal harmonies from his days dueting with Bill Lloyd, shows how profound the influence of a roots-oriented producer can be on a pop-oriented country act. The cuts he produced are the best on the album, and they hint at how spectacular the Kinley sisters could sound singing rawer, deeper material. So here's a suggestion: If the Kinleys would dedicate just three selections from their next album to a really spare country sound and would sing their hearts out on some classic songs, they could make themselves heroes on both sides of the country divide.

—Craig Havighurst

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# On the Road Again...

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Clint Black

TERESA HENDERSON/NEON DREAMS

### ALABAMA

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/16 YORK, PA  
York Inter-State Fair
- 9/21 BATON ROUGE, LA  
Louisiana St. University  
Horseshoe Casino
- 9/22 BOSSIER CITY, LA  
Horseshoe Casino
- 9/23 BILOXI, MS  
Grand Casino
- 9/28 BLOOMSBURG, PA  
Bloomsburg Fair
- 9/29-30 MASHANTUCKET, CT  
Foxwoods Casino

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6 LITTLE ROCK, AR  
Arkansas State Fair
- 10/8 CHARLOTTE, NC  
Charlotte Speedway
- 10/20 MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
Alabama Theatre
- 10/26-28 MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
Alabama Theatre

### GARY ALLAN

- 9/23 DENVER, CO  
Elitch Gardens
- 9/30 HILLSDALE, MI  
Hillsdale Cty. Fair

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1 LANCASTER, PA  
Longs Park Amphitheatre
- 10/7 ASHEVILLE, NC  
Ingles Food Fest

### JOHN ANDERSON

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6 POCAHONTAS, AR  
James Ranch
- 10/7 BROUSSARD, LA  
Stockyard Saloon

- 10/8 SPRING, TX  
C.W. Mitchell Pavilion
- 10/12 PORTLAND, OR  
Mem. Coliseum
- 10/13 BOISE, ID  
Boise State Pavilion
- 10/14 WEST VALLEY, UT  
E Ctr.
- 10/21 HIWASSEE, GA  
Anderson Music Hall

### ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6 FRYEBURG, ME  
Fryeburg Fair
- 10/7 WESTBURY, NY  
Westbury Music Fair
- 10/13 MANITOWOC, WI  
Capitol Civic Centre
- 10/14 FISH CREEK, WI  
Door Community Aud.
- 10/15 OSHKOSH, WI  
Grand Opera House
- 10/18 RALEIGH, NC  
North Carolina St. Fair
- 10/19 NEWARK, DE  
Carpenter Sports Bldg.
- 10/22 HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA  
Pier Plaza
- 10/28 CLEARWATER, FL  
Ruth Eckerd Hall
- 10/29 SARASOTA, FL  
Van Wezel Perf. Arts Hall

### CLINT BLACK

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/22 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Sam's Town
- 9/23 DALLAS, TX  
Starpix Amphitheatre

- 9/25 FORT SMITH, AR  
Arkansas-Oklahoma  
State Fair
  - 9/28 ERIE, PA  
Erie Civic Ctr.
  - 9/30 EASTON, PA  
State Theatre
- OCTOBER
- 10/1 WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA  
Eastern States Exposition
  - 10/6 BOSSIER CITY, LA  
Horseshoe Casino
  - 10/7 LAKE CHARLES, LA  
Isle Of Capri Casino
  - 10/11-12 CHEROKEE, NC  
Harrah's
  - 10/14 FELLSMERE, FL  
Mesa Park
  - 10/15 MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
Palace Theater
  - 10/21 MERRILLVILLE, IN  
Star Plaza Theatre
  - 10/22 DULUTH, MN  
DECC Auditorium

### CHAD BROCK

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/19 JONESBORO, AR  
N.E. Arkansas Fair
- 9/21 DOVER, OH  
Tuscarawas Cty. Fair

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1 MARIETTA, GA  
North Georgia State Fair
- 10/4 WINSTON-SALEM, NC  
Dixie Classic Fair
- 10/10 JACKSON, MS  
Mississippi State Fair
- 10/13 LIVE OAK, FL  
Country Jam USA
- 10/14 FELLSMERE, FL  
Mesa Park

### BROOKS & DUNN

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/17 PUYALLUP, WA  
Western Washington Fair
- 9/29 BURGETTSTOWN, PA  
Post-Gazette Pavilion  
@Star Lake
- 9/30 WILKES-BARRE, PA  
First Union Civic Arena

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1 WESTBURY, NY  
Westbury Music Fair

### TRACY BYRD

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/21 HINCKLEY, MN  
Grand Casino Hinckley
- 9/29 SPRINGFIELD, IL  
Open Air Arena
- 9/30 HIWASSEE, GA  
Anderson Music Hall

#### NOVEMBER

- 11/17 KINDER, LA  
Grand Casino Coshatta

### KENNY CHESNEY

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/20 ASHLAND, OH  
Ashland Cty. Fair
- 9/21 FREDERICK, MD  
Great Frederick Fair
- 9/22 DURHAM, CT  
Durham Agricultural Fair
- 9/30 VALDOSTA, GA  
Wild Adventures  
Theme Park

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6 BURGETTSTOWN, PA  
Pepsi Cola Roadhouse
- 10/7 ELKINS, WV  
Forest Fest

- 10/13-14 HARRIS, MI  
Chip In's Island Resort  
& Casino

### MARK CHESNUTT

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/20 DOVER, OH  
Tuscarawas Cty. Fair
- 9/22 JOLIET, IL  
Rialto Square Theatre
- 9/27 HOUMA, LA  
Terrebonne Civic Ctr.
- 9/29 COLEMAN, OK  
Sundowner Sports Arena
- 9/30 WICHITA FALLS, TX  
Lucy Park

#### OCTOBER

- 10/5 MCALLEN, TX  
Villa Real Conv. Ctr.
- 10/7 MABANK, TX  
Mabank Pavilion
- 10/13 LIVE OAK, FL  
Country Jam USA
- 10/14 MARYVILLE, TN  
Sharp's Chapel Park
- 10/21 ST. PAUL, MN  
State Fair Coliseum

### CHARLIE DANIELS

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/27 MARIETTA, GA  
North Georgia State Fair
- 9/29 BOSSIER CITY, LA  
Casino Magic
- 9/30 FORT WORTH, TX  
Billy Bob's

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1 OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
Oklahoma State Fair
- 10/6 MARKSVILLE, LA  
Grand Casino Avoyelles
- 10/8 VICKSBURG, MS  
Isle Of Capri Casino
- 10/12 CUMMING, GA  
Cumming Country Fair
- 10/13 RICHMOND, IN  
Tiernan-Richmond  
High School
- 10/20 PENSACOLA, FL  
Interstate Fair
- 10/21 ROME, GA  
Ridge Ferry Park
- 10/26 LADSON, SC  
Coastal Carolina Fair
- 10/28 WINONA, MS  
Montgomery Cty. Coliseum



Chad Brock

MORELLO/CHERUBA

### DIAMOND RIO

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/23 NASHVILLE, IN  
Little Nashville Opry

- 9/24 SOUTH BEND, IN  
Michiana Regional  
Transport Ctr.
- OCTOBER
- 10/14 ARLINGTON, TX  
Arlington Convention Ctr.
  - 10/20 MORTON, MN  
Jackpot Junction Casino

### JOE DIFFIE

#### OCTOBER

- 10/2 COSHOCTON, OH  
Coshocton Co. Fair
- 10/4-5 TOPSFIELD, MA  
Topsfield Fair
- 10/7 FRYEBURG, ME  
Fryeburg Fair
- 10/12 WACO, TX  
Heart O' Texas Fair
- 10/14 FORT WORTH, TX  
Billy Bob's
- 10/20 AIKEN, SC  
Aiken Cty. Fair
- 10/21 OCOEE, FL  
Ocoee Founder's Day
- 10/23 JACKSONVILLE, FL  
Agricultural Fair
- 10/28 HAGERSTOWN, MD  
Maryland Theatre

### DIXIE CHICKS

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1 JACKSONVILLE, FL  
Jacksonville  
Veterans Mem. Coliseum
- 10/6 MOLINE, IL  
Mark Of The Quad Critics
- 10/7 AMES, IA  
Hilton Coliseum
- 10/8 LINCOLN, NE  
Bob Oveyan Sports Ctr.
- 10/10 VALLEY CTR., KS  
Kansas Coliseum
- 10/12 COLUMBUS, OH  
Schottenstein Ctr.
- 10/13 STATE COLLEGE, PA  
 Bryce Jordan Ctr.
- 10/14 CLEVELAND, OH  
CSU Convocation Ctr.
- 10/15 PITTSBURGH, PA  
Mellon Arena
- 10/19 CINCINNATI, OH  
Fistar Ctr.
- 10/20 KNOXVILLE, TN  
Thompson-Boling Arena
- 10/21 CHARLESTON, WV  
Civic Coliseum
- 10/22 INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
Conseco Fieldhouse
- 10/26 EVANSVILLE, IN  
Roberts Stadium
- 10/27 ST. LOUIS, MO  
Kiel Ctr.
- 10/28 MEMPHIS, TN  
The Pyramid
- 10/29 NEW ORLEANS, LA  
New Orleans Arena

### ANDY GRIGGS

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/18 JONESBORO, AR  
N.E. Arkansas Fair
- 9/22 RINGGOLD, VA  
Danville-Pittsylvania Fair
- 9/24 SOUTH BEND, IN  
Michiana Regional  
Transport Ctr.
- 9/29 BURGETTSTOWN, PA  
Post-Gazette Pavilion  
@Star Lake
- 9/30 WILKES-BARRE, PA  
First Union Civic Arena

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1 WESTBURY, NY  
Westbury Music Fair

# On the Road Again...

- 10/8 GREENSBORO, NC  
City Stage Celebration
- 10/14 NASHVILLE, IN  
Little Nashville Opry
- 10/20 ROCKDALE, TX  
Rockdale Fair
- 10/21 CROSBY, TX  
Crosby Fair

## MERLE HAGGARD

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/21 PLYMOUTH, CA  
Amador Cty. Fair
- 9/22 SALINAS, CA  
Sherwood Hall
- 9/23 HENDERSON, NV  
Sunset Station  
Hotel/Casino
- 9/24 HANFORD, CA  
Fox Theatre

### OCTOBER

- 10/10 BURGETTSTOWN, PA  
Pepsi Cola Roadhouse
- 10/11 SOUTH BEND, IN  
State Theatre
- 10/12 MT. PLEASANT, MI  
Soaring Eagle Casino
- 10/14 KANSAS CITY, MO  
Station Casino
- 10/15 GRAND FORKS, ND  
Chester Fritz  
Auditorium
- 10/17 VALENTINE, NE  
Rosebud Casino

## WADE HAYES

### OCTOBER

- 10/7 TROUP, TX  
Downtown Square
- 10/21 COLLEGE STATION, TX  
Texas Hall Of Fame

## ERIC HEATHERLY

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/22 FORT WORTH, TX  
Billy Bob's
- 9/23 BILOXI, MS  
President Casino
- 9/24 HUNTSVILLE, AL  
Big Spring Jam
- 9/29 CHARLOTTE, NC  
Coyote Joe's
- 9/30 MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
The Beachwagon

### OCTOBER

- 10/6 ASHEVILLE, NC  
Ingles Food Fest
- 10/13 DAYTONA BEACH, FL  
Seafood Fest
- 10/14 LIVE OAK, FL  
Country Jam USA
- 10/15 FELLSMERE, FL  
Indian River  
Country Jam
- 10/20 NICEVILLE, FL  
Mullett Fest

## TY HERNDON

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/17 CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA  
Downtown Amphitheatre
- 9/23 HEMPSTEAD, TX  
Waller Cty. Fair
- 9/25 MARIETTA, GA  
North Georgia State Fair
- 9/29 LUBBOCK, TX  
South Plains Fair
- 9/30 OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
Oklahoma State Fair

### OCTOBER

- 10/13 JACKSON, MI  
Potter Ctr.
- 10/14 TIFFIN, OH  
Ritz Theatre
- 10/15 N. PHILADELPHIA, OH  
New Towne Mall
- 10/20 DALLAS, TX  
Country 2000
- 10/21 ROCKDALE, TX  
Rockdale Fair
- 10/24 JACKSONVILLE, FL  
Agricultural Fair
- 10/28 WARSAW, IN  
Wagon Wheel Theatre



Dixie Chicks

## GEORGE JONES

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/23 FREDERICK, MD  
Great Frederick Fair
- 9/24 WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA  
Eastern States Exposition
- 9/29 RENFRO VALLEY, KY  
Ent. Ctr.
- 9/30 MARIETTA, GA  
North Georgia State Fair

### OCTOBER

- 10/11 PRIOR LAKE, MN  
Mystic Lake Casino
- 10/13 BRANSON, MO  
Grand Palace
- 10/14 JACKSON, TN  
Skull Bone Music Pavilion
- 10/16 RALEIGH, NC  
North Carolina St. Fair
- 10/20 BAY ST. LOUIS, MS  
Casino Magic
- 10/21 CUMMING, GA  
Concert in the Hills
- 10/27 PENSACOLA, FL  
Interstate Fair
- 10/28 HOUSTON, TX  
Arena Theatre

## TOBY KEITH

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/17 KNOXVILLE, TN  
Homer Hamilton Amph.

- 9/22 ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
New Mexico  
State Fair
- 9/24 HUNTSVILLE, AL  
Big Spring Jam
- 9/27 BLOOMSBURG, PA  
Bloomsburg Fair
- 9/28 BAKERSFIELD, CA  
Kern Cty. Fair
- 9/30 RED BLUFF, CA  
Tuhama District Fair

### OCTOBER

- 10/6 COLUMBUS, GA  
Uptown Jam
- 10/7 ASHEVILLE, NC  
Ingles Food Fest
- 10/14 VENTURA, CA  
Ventura Cty. Fair
- 10/15 PALMDALE, CA  
McAdam Park
- 10/22 MOBILE, AL  
Greater Gulf  
State Fair
- 10/27 KANSAS CITY, MO  
Kemper Arena
- 10/28 HOUSTON, TX  
KILT KIKK Radio Fest

## SAMMY KERSHAW

### OCTOBER

- 10/6 DALLAS, TX  
Country 2000
- 10/9 LANCASTER, OH  
Fairfield Cty. Fair
- 10/14 WHEELING, WV  
Capitol Music Hall
- 10/21 CROSBY, TX  
Crosby Fair
- 10/27 COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA  
Harvey's Casino

## HAL KETCHUM

### OCTOBER

- 10/6 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Boulder Station Hotel
- 10/21 LOUISVILLE, KY  
Louisville Gardens
- 10/22 FRANKFORT, KY  
Dudgeon Civic Ctr.

## TRACY LAWRENCE

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/21 BAY ST. LOUIS, MS  
Casino Magic
- 9/22 MEMPHIS, TN  
Mid-South Fair
- 9/29 HAMEL, MN  
Medina Ent. Ctr.
- 9/30 WISCONSIN DELLS, WI  
Crystal Grand Theatre

### OCTOBER

- 10/8 CICERO, IL  
Hawthorne Racetrack
- 10/13 BELLVILLE, TX  
Austin Cty. Fair

## LONESTAR

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/17 PUYALLUP, WA  
Western Washington Fair
- 9/18 GRAND RONDE, OR  
Spirit Mountain Casino
- 9/22 FORT SMITH, AR  
Arkansas-Oklahoma  
State Fair
- 9/23 EUREKA, MO  
Six Flags St. Louis
- 9/25 LUBBOCK, TX  
South Plains Fair
- 9/26 OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
Oklahoma State Fair
- 9/29 BURGETTSTOWN, PA  
Post-Gazette Pavilion  
@Star Lake
- 9/30 WILKES-BARRE, PA  
First Union  
Civic Arena

### OCTOBER

- 10/7 DALLAS, TX  
State Fair Of Texas
- 10/14 PERRY, GA  
Georgia National Fair

## LORETTA LYNN

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/16 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Boulder Station Hotel
- 9/22 FREDERICK, MD  
Great Frederick Fair
- 9/23 SEVIerville, TN  
Governor's Palace

### OCTOBER

- 10/11 COLUMBIA, SC  
South Carolina State Fair
- 10/12 PERRY, GA  
Georgia National Fair
- 10/21 PENSACOLA, FL  
Interstate Fair
- 10/26 NEENAH, WI  
Pickard Theatre
- 10/27 SUTTONS BAY, MI  
Leelanau Sands Casino
- 10/28-29 NASHVILLE, IN  
Little Nashville Opry

## KATHY MATTEA

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/30 GREENSBORO, NC  
Carolina Theatre

### OCTOBER

- 10/1 BALTIMORE, MD  
Meyerhoff Symp. Hall
- 10/7 WESTBURY, NY  
Westbury Music Fair
- 10/28 CLEARWATER, FL  
Ruth Eckerd Hall
- 10/29 SARASOTA, FL  
Van Wezel Perf. Arts Hall

## NEAL McCOY

### OCTOBER

- 10/6 BRANSON, MO  
Grand Palace
- 10/7 MONTGOMERY, AL  
Alabama National Fair
- 10/12 SAULT STE. MARIE, MI  
Vegas Kewadin Casino
- 10/13 HAMEL, MN  
Medina Ent. Ctr.
- 10/14 WISCONSIN DELLS, WI  
Crystal Grand Theatre
- 10/15 JOLIET, IL  
Rialto Square Theatre
- 10/19 FRANKLINTON, LA  
Washington Parish Fair
- 10/20 ARLINGTON, TX  
Cowboys
- 10/21 CROSBY, TX  
Crosby Fair

## JO DEE MESSINA

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/21 ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
Tingley Coliseum
- 9/22 LUBBOCK, TX  
South Plains Fair
- 9/28 MEMPHIS, TN  
Mid-South Fair
- 9/29 OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
State Fair Arena

### OCTOBER

- 10/7 YUMA, AZ  
Yuma Cty. Fair
- 10/8 SAN BERNARDINO, CA  
Couscouls Arena
- 10/11 THOUSAND OAKS, CA  
Civic Arts Plaza
- 10/13 FRESNO, CA  
Big Fresno Fair
- 10/14 KELSEYVILLE, CA  
Konocit Harbor Resort
- 10/16 GRAND RONDE, OR  
Spirit Mountain Casino

## JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/16 BEREA, OH  
Cuyahoga Cty. Fair
- 9/22 PIGEON FORGE, TN  
Dollywood

### OCTOBER

- 10/21 WHEELING, WV  
Capitol Music Hall
- 10/26 SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
Cow Palace

## MONTGOMERY GENTRY

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/16 ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
New Mexico State Fair
- 9/17 SALT LAKE CITY, UT  
Utah State Fair
- 9/27 BLOOMSBURG, PA  
Bloomsburg Fair
- 9/29 ATLANTIC CITY, NJ  
Tropicana Casino

### OCTOBER

- 10/1 LANCASTER, PA  
Longs Park Amphitheatre
- 10/6 DOTHAN, AL  
Dothan Fair
- 10/13 RALEIGH, NC  
North Carolina St. Fair
- 10/20 NORFOLK, VA  
Naval Base
- 10/23 JACKSONVILLE, FL  
Agricultural Fair
- 10/28 KANSAS CITY, MO  
Kemper Arena



Loretta Lynn

## LORRIE MORGAN

### OCTOBER

- 10/6 BRIDGEWATER, NJ  
Somerset Park
- 10/11-12 MINOT, ND  
Norsk Hoeffest
- 10/21 MYRTLE BEACH, SC  
Palace Theater

## WILLIE NELSON

### OCTOBER

- 10/5 AUSTIN, TX  
The Backyard
- 10/7 CUTHRIE, OK  
Squires Baseball Field
- 10/8 SPRING, TX  
C.W. Mitchell Pavilion
- 10/12 COLUMBUS, OH  
Schottenstein Ctr.
- 10/13 STATE COLLEGE, PA  
Bryce Jordan Ctr.
- 10/14/15 CLEVELAND, OH  
CSU Convocation Ctr.
- 10/18 GREENVILLE, SC  
Peace Ctr.
- 10/20 DANVILLE, KY  
Norton Ctr.
- 10/21 ATHENS, GA  
Classic Ctr.
- 10/22 RALEIGH, NC  
North Carolina St. Fair
- 10/25 BOSSIER CITY, LA  
Horseshoe Casino
- 10/27 ST. LOUIS, MO  
Kiel Ctr.
- 10/28 MEMPHIS, TN  
The Pyramid
- 10/29 NEW ORLEANS, LA  
New Orleans Arena

## BRAD PAISLEY

### SEPTEMBER

- 9/26 FORT SMITH, AR  
Arkansas-Oklahoma Fair

DALE WOODMAN (3)

MORELLO/GREGGIA

## On the Road Again...



Part 11's

PATRICIA PRESLEY

- 9/27** OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
State Fair Arena
- 9/29** WINSTON-SALEM, NC  
Dixie Classic Fair
- 9/30** MARIETTA, GA  
North Georgia State Fair
- OCTOBER**
- 10/6** SOUTH BOSTON, VA  
Halifax Country Fair
- 10/15** KUMAMOTO, JAPAN  
Country Gold Fest
- 10/21** RALEIGH, NC  
North Carolina St. Fair
- 10/29** KANSAS CITY, MO  
Kemper Arena

### LEE ROY PARNELL

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/15** SEARCY, AR  
White City Fair

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1** SHREVEPORT, LA  
Red River Revel
- 10/9** HIAWASSEE, GA  
Georgia Mountain Fair

### SAWYER BROWN

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1** LANCASTER, PA  
Longs Park Amphitheatre

- 10/8** ASHEVILLE, NC  
Ingles Food Fest
- 10/14** LIVE OAK, FL  
Country Jam USA
- 10/15** FELLOSMERE, FL  
Mesa Park
- 10/21** SAN ANTONIO, TX  
San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo

### RICKY VAN SHELTON

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/23** MEMPHIS, TN  
Mid South Fair
- 9/30** MILTON, IN  
Old Milton School

#### OCTOBER

- 10/5** JACKSON, MS  
Mississippi State Fair
- 10/15** MARYVILLE, TN  
Sharp's Chapel Park
- 10/21** VINELAND, NJ  
Cumberland Cty. College

### DARYLE SINGLETARY

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/18** EL DORADO, IL  
Town & Country Days
- 9/24** LUBBOCK, TX  
South Plains Fair

#### OCTOBER

- 10/7** WINNIE, TX  
Texas Rice Fest
- 10/14** HATTIESBURG, MS
- 10/15** LITTLE ROCK, AR  
Arkansas State Fair
- 10/28** HALEYVILLE, AL  
High School

### RICKY SKAGGS

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/24** ASHEVILLE, NC  
Diana Wortham Theatre
- 9/24** NORRIS, TN  
Tennessee Homecoming

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6** CHICAGO, IL  
Did Town School
- 10/7** JEFFERSON, WI  
Performing Arts Ctr.
- 10/12** SPRINGFIELD, OH  
Performing Arts Ctr.
- 10/14** JASPER, IN  
Community Arts Theatre
- 10/19** CINCINNATI, OH  
Fistar Ctr.
- 10/20** KNOXVILLE, TN  
Thompson-Boling Arena
- 10/21** CHARLESTON, WV  
Civic Coliseum
- 10/22** INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
Conseco Fieldhouse
- 10/26** JACKSONVILLE, FL  
Agricultural Fair
- 10/27** ELLIJAY, GA  
Glimmer Arts & Heritage Association
- 10/28** CEDARTOWN, GA  
Cedartown Civic Auditorium

### CONNIE SMITH

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/17** GRATZ, PA  
Gratz Fair
- 9/30** KANSAS CITY, MO  
Northtown Opry

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6** RENFRO VALLEY, KY  
Ent. Ctr.
- 10/7** MILTON, IN  
Old Milton School
- 10/21** CUMMING, GA  
Lanierland Music Park

### PAM TILLIS

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6** LAC DUFLAMBEAU, WI  
Lake Of Torches Casino
- 10/7** MAHNOMEN, MN  
Shooting Star Casino

- 10/12** JIM THORPE, PA  
Ramblers Ranch
- 10/13** VERONA, NY  
Tuning Stone Casino
- 10/28** UNCASVILLE, CT  
Mohegan Sun Casino

### AARON TIPPIN

#### OCTOBER

- 10/15** FELLOSMERE, FL  
Mesa Park
- 10/20** ST. PAUL, MN  
State Fair Coliseum
- 10/27** BILOXI, MS  
Grand Casino
- 10/28** ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Grand Casino Fair

### TRAVIS TRITT

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1** RICHMOND, VA  
Virginia State Fair
- 10/8** DOTHAN, AL  
Dothan Fair
- 10/8** MOBILE, AL  
Mobile Bayfest
- 10/13** LIVE OAK, FL  
Country Jam USA
- 10/15** COLUMBIA, SC  
South Carolina State Fair

### CLAY WALKER

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/24** SAN JOSE, CA  
San Jose Arena
- 9/30** ATLANTA, GA  
Phillips Arena

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6** LEXINGTON, KY  
Rupp Arena
- 10/12** PHOENIX, AZ  
Arizona State Fair
- 10/20** FAYETTEVILLE, NC  
Cumberland Co. Civic Ctr.
- 10/21** BALTIMORE, MD  
Baltimore Arena

### KITTY WELLS

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/15** MCCLURE, PA  
Bean Soup Fest

#### OCTOBER

- 10/6-7** BOWLER, WI  
Mohican No. Star Casino
- 10/26** FLANDREAU, SD  
Royal River Casino
- 10/28-29** SANDSTONE, MN  
Midwest Country Theater

### BRYAN WHITE

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/21** RINGGOLD, VA  
Danville-Pittsylvania Fair
- 9/22** MARIETTA, GA  
North Georgia State Fair

#### OCTOBER

- 10/1** ROCKFORD, IL  
Rockford MetroCentre
- 10/2** CEDAR RAPIDS, IA  
Five Seasons Ctr.
- 10/3** DES MOINES, IA  
Veterans Mem. Aud.
- 10/4** LINCOLN, NE  
Pershing Auditorium
- 10/5** OMAHA, NE  
Omaha Civic Auditorium
- 10/22** KANSAS CITY, MO  
Kansas City Aud. Arena
- 10/23** ST. LOUIS, MO  
Kiel Ctr.
- 10/25** PEORIA, IL  
Civic Ctr. Arena
- 10/26** LANSING, MI  
Breslin Events Ctr.
- 10/28** SAGINAW, MI  
Saginaw Civic Ctr.
- 10/29** MADISON, WI  
Dane Co. Expo Ctr. Col.
- 10/30** GREEN BAY, WI  
Brown Cty. Expo Ctr.

### HANK WILLIAMS JR.

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/22** SANTA ANA, CA  
Galaxy Theatre

#### OCTOBER

- 10/7** GRETTNA, LA  
Gretna Heritage Fest
- 10/8** SPRING, TX  
C.W. Mitchell Pavilion
- 10/13** NEW BRAUNFELS, TX  
Gruene Hall

### MARK WILLS

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/25** OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
Fair Arena
- 9/28** ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Bluesville Showcase Night Club

#### OCTOBER

- 10/7** WHEELING, WV  
Jamboree USA
- 10/14** MONTGOMERY, AL  
Alabama National Fair
- 10/28** SPRING, TX  
C.W. Mitchell Pavilion

### LEE ANN WOMACK

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/24** SOUTH BEND, IN  
WBTV Fan Appreciation Show
- 9/29** HANFORD, CA  
Fox Theatre

#### OCTOBER

- 10/7** DECATUR, IL  
Borg Warner Sports Complex
- 10/14** MARYVILLE, TN  
Sharp's Chapel Park
- 10/27** HANFORD, CA  
Fox Theatre
- 10/28** SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
Cow Palace

### CHELY WRIGHT

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9/16** BEREA, OH  
Cuyahoga Cty. Fair
- 9/23** VERONA, NY  
Turning Stone Casino
- 9/24** WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA  
Eastern States Exposition
- 9/28** AUBURN, IN  
DeKalb Cty. Fair

#### OCTOBER

- 10/7** ELKINS, WV  
Forest Fest
- 10/13** JACKSON, MI  
Potter Ctr.
- 10/14** TIFFIN, OH  
Ritz Theatre
- 10/20** STILLWATER, OK  
Tumbleweeds
- 10/21** OKANASAS CITY, KS  
W. S. Scott Auditorium

Dates are subject to change without notice, and we recommend contacting the venue before traveling. For complete ticket and show information, contact the venue directly. Call information (area code + 555-1212) for a venue phone number. If they don't have a listing, try the local TicketMaster office. If that doesn't work, try contacting the nearest Chamber of Commerce to the venue. *Country Music* magazine is not responsible for where an artist performs, nor does the magazine have any control over their schedules. Tour dates provided by Sheri Rettew.

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# The MartyLine

Chat master Marty Raybon has an answer to even the most offbeat questions.

As the lead singer of Shenandoah, Marty Raybon's stellar voice made hits of songs like "I Want to Be Loved Like That," "Two Dozen Roses" and "The Church on Cumberland Road." Raybon recently released his first self-titled solo country album and has been singing new songs to audiences around the country. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand the music on this album," says Raybon. "I believe the biggest and the best hits that ever were are songs of simplicity."

**How do you feel about singing the National Anthem?**

It's a difficult song to sing because it's not structured like a song. I thought Faith Hill sang the stew out of it during the Super Bowl.

**What's your favorite thing about your hometown?**

Well, I'm from Sanford, Florida, and my favorite thing would have to be the orange trees in my daddy's yard. I didn't think about it when I lived there, but I'll never forget the first winter I was away from Florida—I would have given anything to have an orange from one of my daddy's trees.

**What gives you more satisfaction, vacuuming or mowing the yard?**

Vacuuming, because then my wife wouldn't have to do it. I used to lay block and brick for a living, and it was always the best thing in the world to come home tired, hungry, exhausted—and then you smell the supper on the stove. If I could make my wife feel that good about coming home, that would be the satisfaction for me.

**What do you look forward to most in a typical day?**

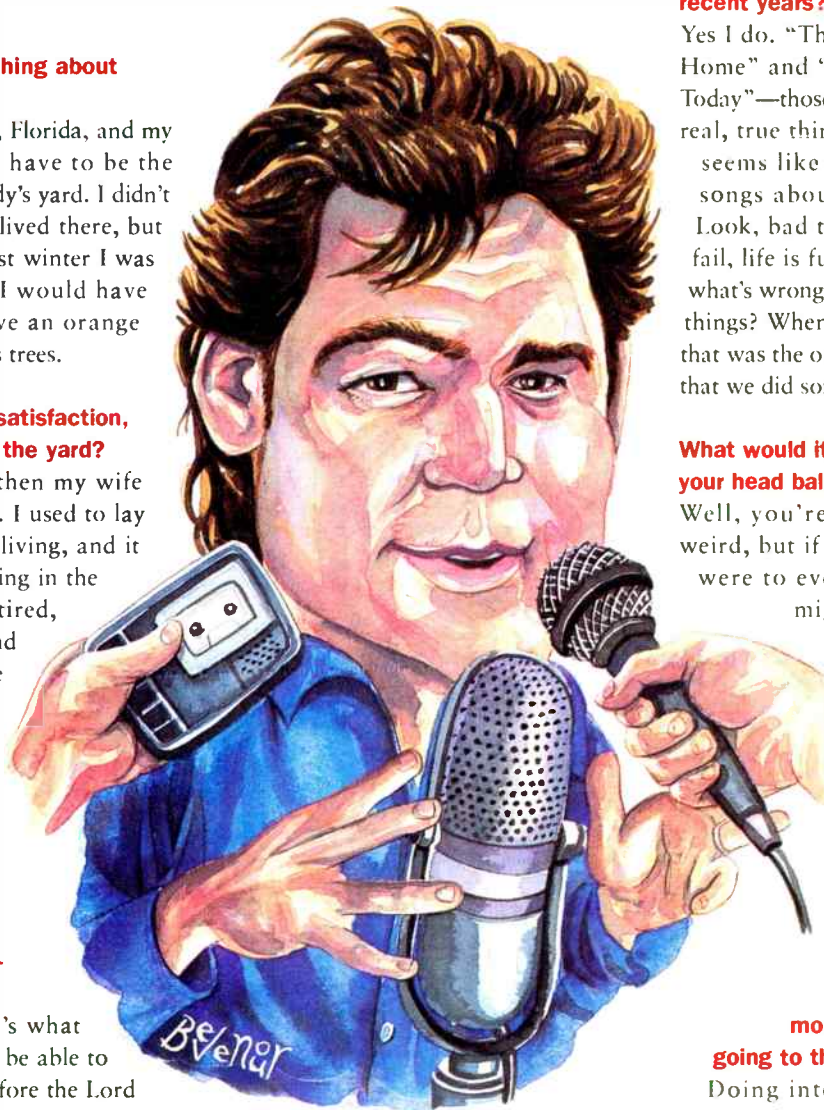
My prayer time. That's what gets me out of bed—to be able to seriously bow down before the Lord and Savior.

**What's the first thing that pops into your mind when I say *skateboard*?**

Maxwell. My son just got a skateboard.

**Midget?** Persecution.

**Brains?** Sense.



**Olive loaf?** Oscar Mayer.  
**Woolly mammoth?** Bigfoot.

**Have you ever driven a motorcycle?**

Yes, and I loved it. But I had one once, and I drove up to a stop sign one morning and hit an icy patch. As careful as I am, I slid right through that stop sign. I drove that motorcycle to work, but I did not drive it home. It's like, I love the feel of wind against my face, but I don't think I'd love the feel of steel so much.

**What was the first record you bought with your own money?**

Merle Haggard's *Live From Muskogee*.

**Do you feel like the lyrics in country music have been dumbing down over recent years?**

Yes I do. "The Green, Green Grass of Home" and "He Stopped Loving Her Today"—those were songs that spoke of real, true things people experience. It seems like nobody wants to write songs about real things anymore. Look, bad things happen, marriages fail, life is full of ups and downs—so what's wrong about writing about those things? When I was with Shenandoah, that was the one thing I was proudest of, that we did songs about real, true things.

**What would it take for you to shave your head bald?**

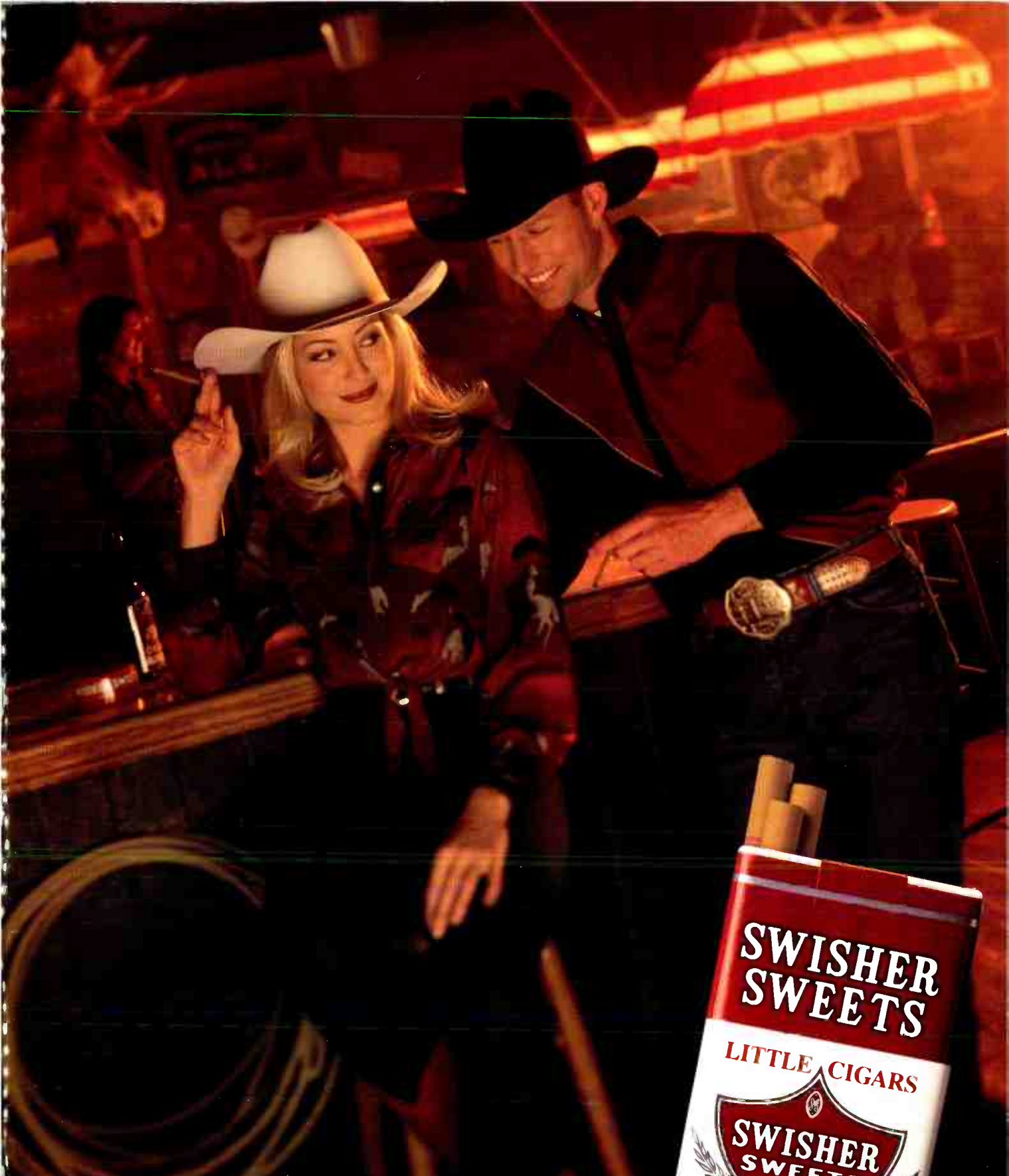
Well, you're going to think this is weird, but if my wife or my children were to ever need treatment that might make their hair fall out, I would lose my hair for them.

**Do you miss vinyl records?**

Yes. But I still listen to the ones I have. In fact, I just put a Clarence Carter record back in the sleeve yesterday.

**Which do you enjoy more, doing interviews or going to the dentist?**

Doing interviews. I love talking to people. \*



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