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# COUNTRY MUSIC

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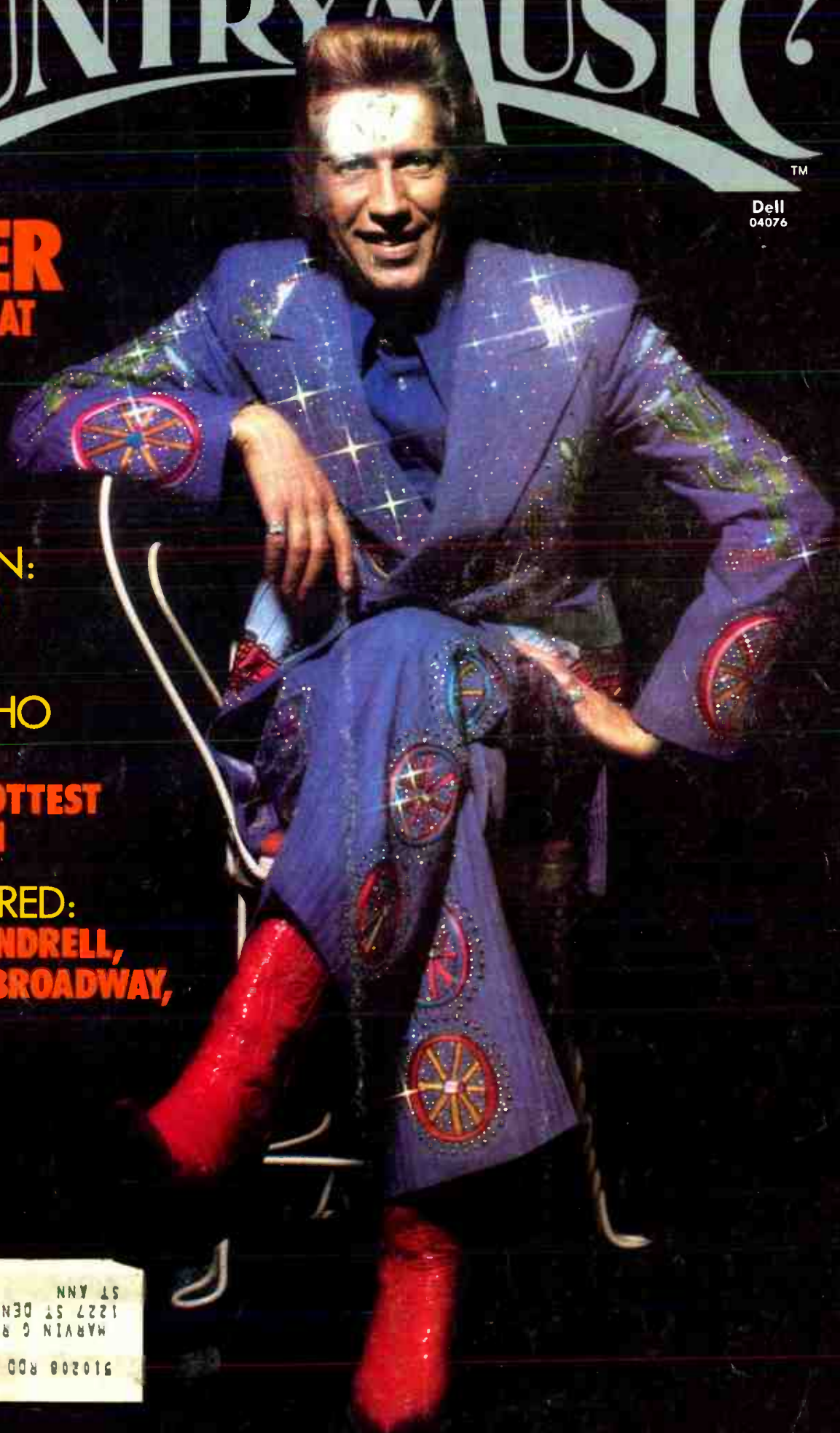
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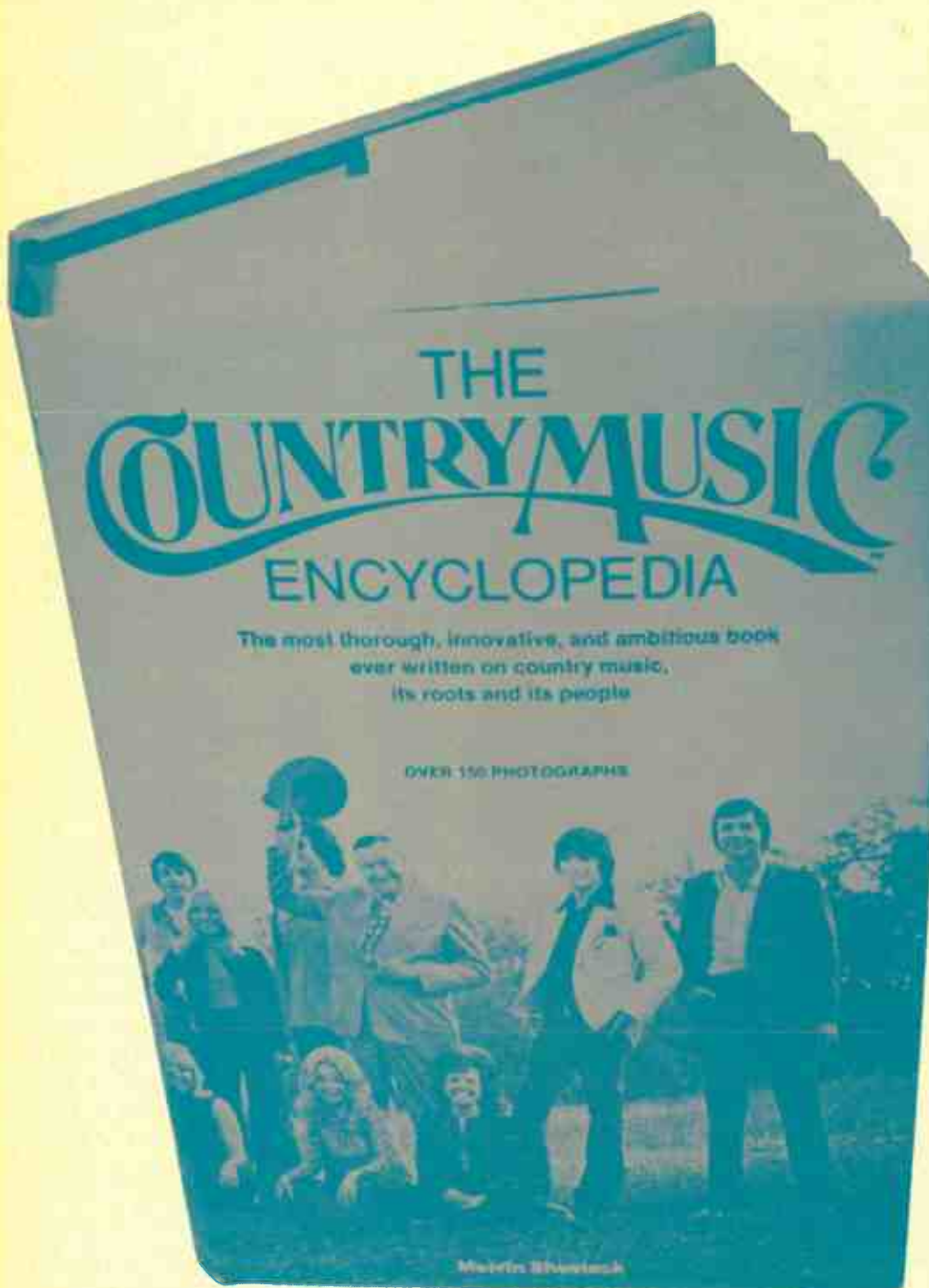


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# COUNTRY MUSIC

Volume Three, Number Eight, May 1975

LETTERS .....	4
PEOPLE ON THE SCENE .....	AUDREY WINTERS 6
WHAT DO YOU KNOW? (Country Nicknames Quiz).....	DON HUMPHREYS 10
GREAT MOMENTS IN COUNTRY MUSIC .....	13
COUNTRY NEWS .....	14
PORTER: THE LAST GREAT HILLBILLY? DAVE HICKEY	22
<i>Porter Wagoner is almost frighteningly good at what he does—from turning on a Louisiana crowd to running a business empire to producing records that show a master's touch—and today he stands almost alone. The fact is, Porter makes them nervous at the Opry these days. He's a hillbilly.</i>	
DIAMOND STUDS!.....	28
<i>Finally, country music goes to Broadway. Well, not quite Broadway... and not quite just country music.</i>	
SPECIAL INSTRUMENTS ISSUE .....	31
STARS AND STRINGS	
Famous Pickers and What They Pick .....	
	32
THE JOY OF PICKIN'.....	BILLY EDD WHEELER 36
<i>How does it feel? What is the mystery and joy hidden in the strings of a guitar? Billy Edd Wheeler, the famous songwriter, knows all about it, and he's written it down for you, all the way from the backwoods to Johnny Cash's living room.</i>	
THE PICKER'S PROGRESS THE GREASE BROTHERS	42
<i>At 26, Barbara Mandrell is indeed an unusual case of musical development. She plays steel, saxophone, banjo, bass, guitar, fiddle... and so on. Here are some notes from her musical diary.</i>	
RECORD REVIEWS .....	45
MEL TILLIS BUYS A BULL.....	JIM McGUIRE 54
<i>Here's how Mel turned gentleman farmer, found a great way to put his money to work, and gave the cows of Tennessee something to think about.</i>	
THE STAR WHO NEVER WAS.....	JOHN PUGH 57
<i>Have you ever heard of Marshall Barnes? You haven't. But once he hits that Opry stage, they all know the man is the greatest. Why isn't he a star?</i>	

COVER PHOTO: THE GREASE BROS.



# Letters

I have just finished reading Tom Miller's article on Raymond Hall in the February issue. I received a letter from Mr. Raymond Hall calling my attention to your article. I recall when I visited Mr. Hall at Huntsville almost two years ago, he mentioned writer Tom Miller had been there. Hall seemed to have the impression that he would contact me. Of course he never did.

It is unfortunate that he did not contact either Mr. Jim Evans of The Jimmie Rodgers Society or myself. If he had, perhaps your article would not have been so vague.

You seem to doubt that Mr. Hall wrote some of Jimmie Rodgers's songs. Let me tell you the story behind just one of them. Hall wrote the original version of "Moonlight and Skies" and Jimmie Rodgers considered recording it. He decided he didn't like it and made some suggestions for changes to Mr. Hall. After Hall had made the changes J.R. suggested, he did record it. He did indeed send Hall a check, in payment for "Moonlight and Skies," which Hall promptly returned to J.R. because he wanted a royalty agreement, rather than a one time payment. Jimmie died before this verbal agreement could be put into effect, and his heirs have refused to honor the agreement.

Many years ago, the mortuary at Huntsville prison was used for solitary confinement—"The Hole" as the prisoners called it. Shortly after J.R. told Hall of the changes he desired in "Moonlight and Skies," Mr. Hall got himself thrown in "The Hole" for some reason which I do not recall.

James Charles Rodgers, America's Blue Yodeler and Singing Brakeman—never knew that the version of "Moonlight and Skies" that he recorded was written on a mortuary slab in Huntsville prison.

Mr. Hall tells me that he later wrote a third version of "Moonlight and Skies" and that it was recorded by Jimmie Davis. I have been unable to confirm this. However a record collector in Fresno, Calif., told me that he had a copy of that recording.

One thing that even Mr. Hall agrees with is that if Jimmie Rodgers had lived a little longer, he, Mr. Hall, would not have been cheated out of his financial interests in the songs recorded by him. J.R. was a member of The Shrine Lodge, San Antonio, Texas. Most people agree that Masons do not cheat people out of what is rightfully theirs.

CLENTON SANDERS  
CERES, CALIF.

*Mr. Sanders is a historian and researcher who specializes in studying Jimmie Rodgers' life. He works in cooperation with the Jimmie Rodgers Society of Lubbock, Tex.—Ed.*

This is to inform you that Hank Williams was born September 17, 1923, not September 15, 1923. In your March issue on Page 52 the birthdate is incorrect. And it's incorrect in the Country Music Encyclopedia.

BUZZ RABIN  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

*You're right, Buzz. Our proof reader checked the story out by referring to the encyclopedia, which also had the wrong date, because it was on the printing press before Mel Shestack's error was caught.—Ed.*

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for only a year and look forward to it each month. I enjoyed your March edition on Hank Williams. No mention was made of Mrs. Williams No. Two. Was he

living with her at the time of his tragic death? If so how come Mrs. Williams No. 1 (Audrey) is the only one we ever hear about?

ETHEL E. VIGNA  
NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO,  
CANADA

*For more information on Billie Jean Eshilman, Hank's second wife, see page 17 of this issue, Ms. Vigna. So far as Audrey Williams being the only one of Hank's wives you hear about, that's because she's more outspoken than Billie Jean. She was also married to Hank for a longer time, and is more closely identified with his life and his songs.—Ed.*

I want to tell Country Music Magazine readers that country is rocketing to the top here in the Midwest. It appeals to a larger audience every year. The best way to prove this is to see the number of radio stations going to all country music formats. Chicago now has three full time country music stations playing twenty four hours a day. WJJD, WMAQ-AM, and WJOI-FM bring happiness to millions of people. In fact, one of the reasons for WMAQ and sister station WJOI going country this year is the popularity of Country Music Magazine in Illinois, Ohio, and other Midwest states. (This was stated by the station manager of WMAQ after their first few days of country.) I feel that this is a great compliment that has to be told. I'm sure many others will join me in wishing Country Music Magazine the best for helping to spread the joy that country music brings.

JOE GOSCHY  
NORTH OAKLEY

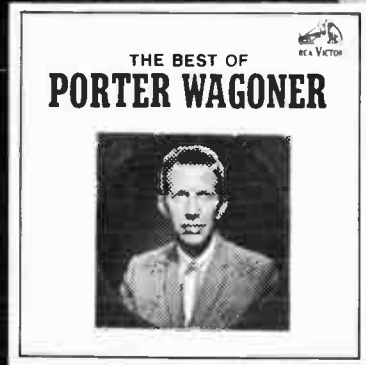
*Thank you, Mr. Goschy. And welcome aboard the country music wagon, WMAQ and WJOI!*

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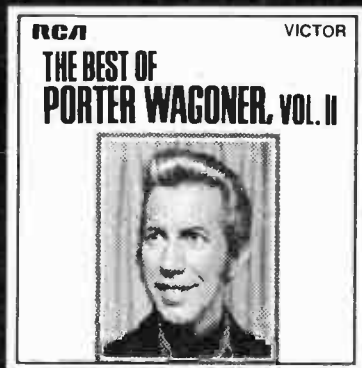
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# People on the Scene

Jazz Drummer Blows His Cool...  
Jeannie C. Riley Re-marries Hubby...  
Billy Jo Spears Is Back

by AUDREY WINTERS



Jeannie C. Reilly and daughter, Kim: A family.



Jean Shepard: Plain talk.

PHOTOS: MARSHALL FALLWELL

Jazz drummer **Buddy Rich** caused a hassle when he appeared at the Exit /In club in Music City and blasted country music. Rich, in his 50's, said, "Country music is comprised of 'no-talents' and appeals to intellectuals with the minds of four-year-olds." He also stated that country music is most of the time out of tune and just a bunch of glitter. **Jerry Bradley**, president of the Country Music Association, termed Rich as "narrow minded" and added, "If he's so hot, why is he appearing here instead of some big jazz club somewhere?" **Jean Shepard**, known for her plain talk, said, "He's full of hog manure. I've run into Buddy Rich before and he's a chronic complainer."

**Jeannie C. Riley** re-married her husband Mickey on January 26 at

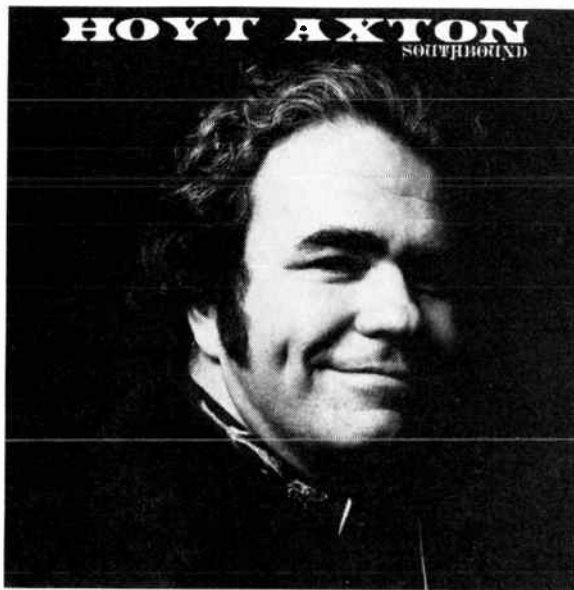
the Lord's Chapel in the Brentwood area. She is very excited and happy and said, "The Lord just worked it out for us and we've really always loved each other even though we couldn't make our marriage work." They have been divorced five years and have a daughter, Kim, who is nine. The Riley's will live in the modern two-story house in Oak Hills that Jeannie and Mickey bought after she recorded "Harper Valley P.T.A."

**Waylon Jennings** and wife **Jessi Colter** went to Jamacia for their second honeymoon. The trip was a gift from Waylon's manager, **Neil Reshin** of New York. Jessi is highly excited over her first record for Capitol. She wrote the song titled "I'm Not Lisa." Capitol in Hollywood mailed her a red sweater with

a blue-and-white Capitol logo on the front.

Last month we reported **Hank Williams, Jr.** had disbanded his band and sold his bus to take a leave from the road for six months or more. He showed up recently for a taping of "In Concert" with his bus and a band of musicians from Muscle Shoals, Ala., where he's had been recording. He looked like a "hoss" all dressed up in a black cowboy shirt complete with long white fringe and rhinestone musical notes on the back of the yoke. He wore a silver-dollar belt, black-and-white Western boots, and topped it off with the brown hat he wears most of the time. His hair was styled and very blond on the sides. His outfit looked very much like the ones his





My name is Hoyt Axton. I'm a guitar pickin' songwriter and sometime singer. I was born in Oklahoma and reared in a number of places in the U.S. of A.

This is the thirteenth album I've had the good fortune and good time to be on as a mini-star.

I'd like for you to know that we all had a good time and I don't really care whether or not I am a famous man but it is very important to me that my music is heard.

I've always loved music – listening to it, making it – live or recorded – in any language – at almost any time of the day or night.

I also love women and children, rainbows, pick-up trucks, wild animals, snow, clean rivers, lightnin' bugs, mountains, almost all musical instruments and the people who play them and take care of them, peanut butter & jelly, sex, television, radio, laughing, working, hangin' out, adventure, popcorn, good ideas, singing, motorcycles, antiques, most anything made by human hands, the Christ Spirit, cloudy skies on Lake Tahoe, my dog "Fearless," my family and friends and you.

I've made a lot of records and each new one is my favorite one.

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Hoyt

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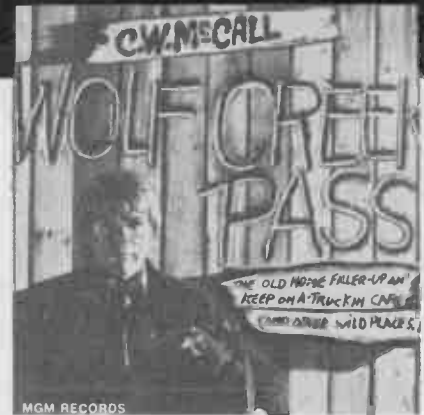
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Album: H3G 4517 / 8 Track: H8H 4517

### RECENT RELEASES



## MARIE OSMOND

Who's Sorry Now

Album: M3G 4979 / 8 Track: M8H 4979

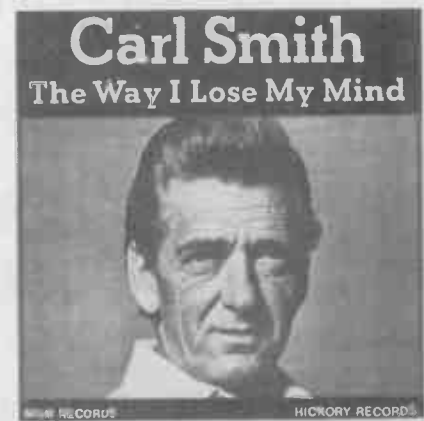
Cassette: M5H 4979



## TOMPALL

Tompall

Album: M3G 4977 / 8 Track: M8H 4977



## CARL SMITH

The Way I Lose My Mind

Album: H3G 4518 / 8 Track: H8H 4518



famous father used to wear on stage.

**Conway Twitty** has been known to change his mind in the past, but this one is a topper! He has shopped for over two years for just the perfect house for his family to move into when they leave Oklahoma City and become Nashville residents. He finally found a beautiful house located on a center point overlooking Old Hickory Lake, and bought it. Construction had already begun to enlarge the house, but Conway decided he wasn't ever going to move to Nashville. "I love to visit Nashville, and if I move, I won't have anyplace to go," he said. Conway's daughter Joni lives in Nashville and is going to high school here. His son Mike, a brother, a sister and members of his band have moved here in the last two years.

**Tommy Cash** has been signed to Elektra Records, and will be working with steel player/producer **Pete Drake** . . . **Bobby Bare** has taken on a producer's job for **Gary Buck**, Canada's top recording artist. The two have known each other since 1963, when Bobby wrote Buck's hit, "Happy To Be Unhappy" . . . **Lynn Anderson** had quite a chore recently: she sang the National Anthem without musical accompaniment at the Tennessee Governor's Inauguration . . . **Jean Shepard** is doing a whole album of **Bill Anderson's** songs. Bill gave her the original worksheet of "Slippin' Away," framed . . . **Jeannie Seely** has become the first female in country music to speak out for Schlitz beer. She has taped radio commercials for the company, and you'll be hearing from her . . . **Billy Jo Spears** ("the female George Jones") is back on the recording scene after a long time away. Her big hit in the past was "Mr. Walker, It's All Over," and now she's recording for United Artists. Billy Jo hails from Beaumont, Texas, and now she lives in Nashville. Merle Haggard's oldest daughter Dana, 17, married Alan Stevens, 20, in Lake Tahoe. The groom is brother-in-law to Merle's secretary.

**Earl Scruggs** recently recorded a special album. Cut at Quadrophonic Studios in Nashville, it is Earl's 25th Anniversary album, and it features virtuosos from every musical field—among them **Leonard**

**Cohen, Buffy St. Marie, Tracy Nelson, Delaney Bramlett, Roger McGuinn, Alvin Lee and Charlie Daniels** . . . **Johnny Russell** got a nasty surprise recently when his Colorado Springs hotel room was robbed. The thieves took about \$160, but left Johnny with enough change to pay the bellhop, and promised to catch his show if they had time . . . **Del Reeves** is wearing a huge ring these days. It's shaped like a horse's head, and it was a gift from his wife Ellen. "One of my friends asked me 'How much does that thing eat every day?'" said Del . . . There's an unlikely new single by New York disc jockey **Don Imus**. The single, written by ex-Tulsan **Norman**



Billy Joe Spears: Female George Jones?

"Greek" **Dolph** and New Yorker **Paul Di Franco**, manages to catalogue everyone and everything in country music in 2 minutes and 59 seconds. It's called "Play That Country Jukebox," and it's wild. Another New York story concerns **Donna Fargo**. She was up there for a "Country In New York" concert recently, and she ran into a problem New Yorkers have to face every day—parking. Donna eventually found a spot for her \$160,000 Grayhound, but the tab ran to \$25 per night . . . **Chet Atkins** just returned to town after touring with **Arthur Fiedler** and the **Boston Pops** during March. ■



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# What Do You Know?

## Country Names and Nicknames

Traditionally, show business has altered family names to fit theater marquees and built careers on press agent ballyhoo. Even though there is a general trend away from this show business supersale today, aliases, nicknames, and titles will always remain a part of show business. This quiz is designed to test your knowledge of the *nom de plumes* worn by the stars of country music.

1. They call him "The Silver Fox" and he has won every country music award available to him. Who is he?
2. His real name is Harold Jenkins, but under his recording name he was a rock and roll smash. The name was even parodied in a Broadway musical. His name?
3. This country star came to the United States from Canada and picked up the name, "The Singing Ranger." Who is he?
4. Jimmie Rodgers was known as "The Singing Brakeman," but he was also recognized by another descriptive title. What is it?
5. Which country star and former beauty queen is known as "The Queen of the Rodeos?"
6. His real name was Whitey Ford, but to Grand Ole Opry fans this rural comedian was known by what other title?

7. A great singer of saga songs, he was billed, "The Singing Fisherman." Who is he?

8. The great Hank Williams often recorded his philosophic monologues under another name. What was it?

9. Donald Lytle is the name of this hit-maker. He is also sometimes called "The Ohio Kid," but what is the recording name for this former front man for George Jones' band?

10. She wears the name Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon, but as the number one citizen of Grinder's Switch she wears another name. What is it?

11. Jerry Lee Lewis is known in music circles and often in the lyrics of his songs by a nickname. What is it?

12. What is the name of the RCA

recording artist billed as "The Round Mound of Sound?"

13. What is the pseudonym for Ferlin Husky's comedy creations?

14. The smooth singing Country Music Hall of Fame member, Eddy Arnold, has been known for years under what billing?

15. This major singing star on the Grand Ole Opry before Roy Acuff was Uncle Dave Macon. He was known fondly to his fans by what other name?

16. "Mr. Teardrop" is a fitting description for this clear-voiced singer of cowboy ballads. Who is he?

17. Her name is Mary Frances Penick, but as the recording star of the million seller "The End of the World" she is known by another name. What is it?

18. "Possum" is the nickname of one of country music's purest singers, and he is also married to another pure singer of country songs. What is his real name?

19. "The Southern Gentleman" is a fitting title for the honey sweet delivery and manner of this country balladeer.

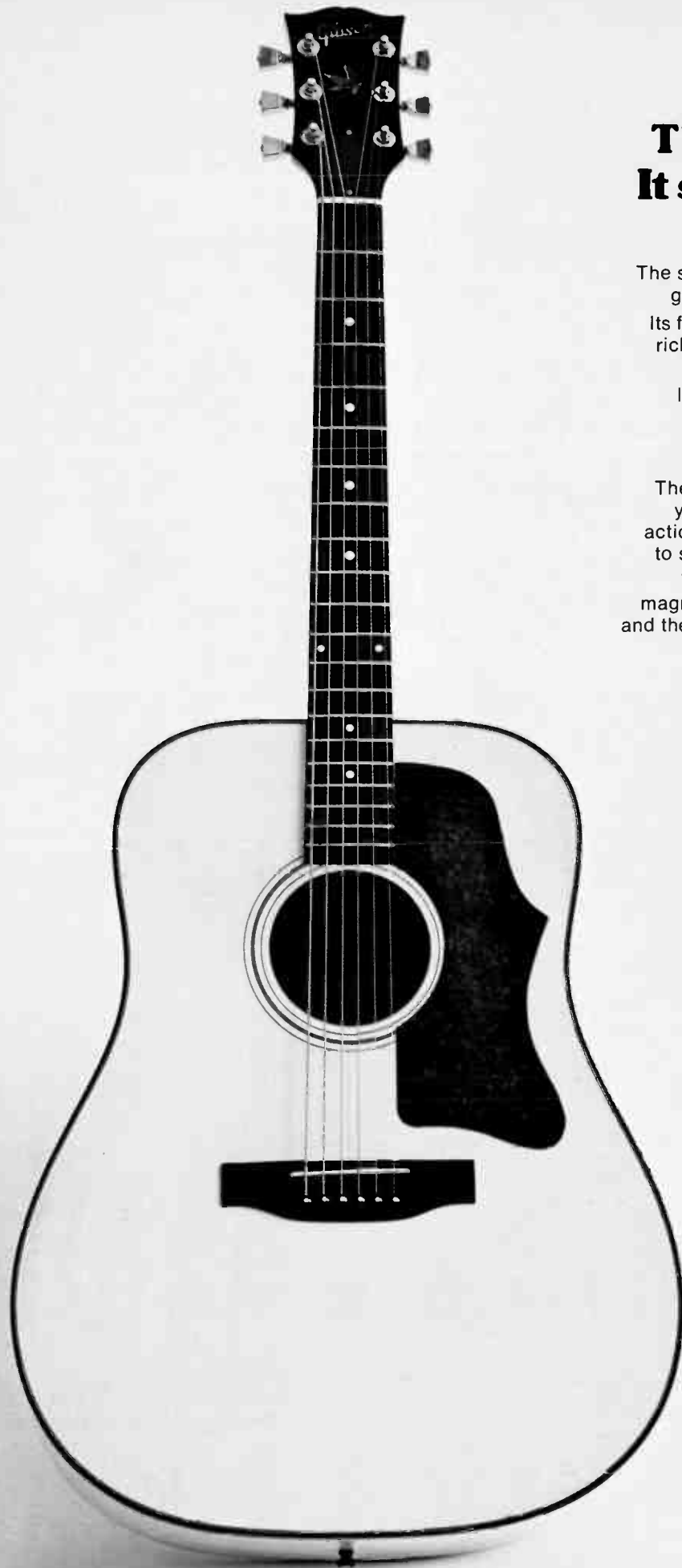
20. He is called "The Jolly Green Giant," and is a former drummer with Ernest Tubb and singing partner with Jeannie Seely. Who is he?

DON HUMPHREYS

## ANSWERS

1. Charlie Rich
2. Conway Twitty
3. Hank Snow
4. "The Blue Yodeler"
5. Judy Lynn
6. "The Duke of Paducah"
7. Johnny Horton
8. "Luke the Drifter"
9. Johnny Paycheck
10. Minnie Pearl
11. "Killer"
12. Kenny Price
13. Simon Crum
14. "The Tennessee Plowboy"
15. "The Dixie Dewdrop"
16. Marty Robbins
17. Skeeter Davis
18. George Jones
19. Sonny James
20. Jack Greene





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# Great Moments In Country Music

The main event in country music this month was, of course, Waylon Jennings' valiant but unsuccessful attempt to cross the Andes on an antelope, but no less important were certain happenings at the funny farm. It began one dark night when two inmates bearing striking resemblances to certain country music stars (right) ran amuck in Cell Block Number Nine, stripping off their pants and wailing something about a "Streak." The Authorities, thinking fast and knowing real country music to be soothing, sent for the Warden's daughter (top right). Though the lady is no mean picker, the female nature of her voice served only to drive the two wretches to worse excesses. That's when the Warden himself (bottom right) took over and saved the day with a horribly mournful version of "Bonaparte's Retreat," and everyone fell asleep.



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## *Opry Launches Massive Talent Search For Its 50th Anniversary Celebration*

As part of its upcoming 50th anniversary celebration, the Grand Ole Opry has launched a nation-wide talent search in cooperation with radio stations in the United States and Canada.

Lucky winners will receive a recording contract, an appearance at the Opry's October birthday party, and several television appearances. About 200-300 radio stations will conduct regional talent contests throughout the spring and stage semi-finals in the summer. The stations will carry out the contests on a local level, according to Mike Slattery, talent search coordinator for the Opry.

"The only guidelines that we've put on the stations is that they pick someone 16 years of age or older and that they not be under a recording contract," Slattery said. "It's up to the stations. They can select whoever they think is the best talent and who has the best chance of going on to the Opry. Then we'll just select from among the station winners."

Contestants are being asked to obtain entry blanks from local radio stations that are participating in the contest.

Applications from contestants will be due by May 30. Stations will have to pick winners by June 10 so the semi-finals can begin. The semi-finals will be staged by the Opry in Ft. Worth, Tex., San Diego, Calif., Atlanta, Ga., Philadelphia, Pa., Indianapolis, Ind., and Omaha, Neb. Opry officials advise that aspiring Opry stars stay closely tuned to their local country radio stations.

"They shouldn't have any problem finding a participating station," Slattery told Country News, "be-

cause we'll have a station in every major market in the U.S. and Canada."

"We're even hopeful that at least one of the acts eventually gets a chance to become a member of the Opry somewhere down the road," he added.

The Grand Ole Opry's Saturday night show, broadcast live over Nashville's WSM, is the oldest con-

tinuous program in the history of American radio.

The current talent search isn't the first in the Opry's history, either. At least twice before, Pet Milk, one of the Opry's long-time sponsors, hosted a similar search. Among the winners were Margie Bowes, Johnny Tillotson and Ray Pillow, all of whom went on to some degree of stardom.



Loretta Lynn's new single, "The Pill," might be hard to swallow for some folks, but it's proving to be one of her biggest records ever, despite the controversy it's caused. Quipped Ms. Lynn: "I recorded it for poor little Tanya Tucker. There she is just 16 years old and singing, 'Would you lay with me in a field of stone...' She needs to know about the pill." Loretta has six children of her own, incidentally.

## **Fan Fair Set For June 11-15**

Fan Fair's coming up June 11-15 and spokesmen for the annual get-together expect a record crowd of about 15,000 this year.

More than 12,000 fans flocked to Nashville last year for four days of performances, autograph-signing sessions and general pandemonium. Organized as a joint venture by the Country Music Association and the Grand Ole Opry, it gives fans the opportunity to meet top country stars as well as attend concerts hosted by record companies in the Municipal Auditorium.

The \$25 registration fee includes tickets to the Hall of Fame, Opryland, the Ryman Auditorium, admission to more than 25 hours of concerts, two celebrity softball games, a fiddlers' contest, four lunches, and much more.

For information on how to register, write:

**Fan Fair**  
P.O. Box 100  
Nashville, Tenn.  
37202.



# University Offers Songwriting Course

The Nashville Songwriters Association and the University of Tennessee periodically sponsor a course in songwriting at the university's Nashville campus. The course is called Advanced Techniques In Commercial Songwriting and details may be obtained from the university registrar's office.

The Songwriters Association is a non-profit organization, open to all songwriters. To qualify as an active member the writer must have had at least one song contracted by a publishing company that is affiliated with a recognized performance agency. Associate membership is open to writers who have not achieved such professional status.

The NSA is chartered by the State of Tennessee. Members receive a monthly newsletter containing, among other things, a listing of artists who are preparing to cut an album and their tentative recording schedule. An annual awards banquet is held and members vote on who will receive honors at the affair.

The songwriting courses are offered each year at the UTN campus and are taught by prominent Nashville songwriters along with professors of music at the university.

## Cash Prizes Up For Song Fete

Songwriters interested in entering the 1975 American Song Festival could find it a profitable move. Malcolm C. Klein, president of the American Song Festival announced the opening of the 1975 competition with an increased prize structure of \$129,776. The only international songwriting competition held in the United States, the Festival is an attempt to provide an open, musical forum for aspiring writers. Anyone interested in application blanks and more detailed information, write: The American Song Festival, 5900 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90036.



Challenger Johnny Russell, right, looks stuffed after losing a chicken eating contest to fellow singer Kenny Price, left, in Akron, Ohio, recently. Price ate 18 pieces of fried chicken in 16 minutes. Russell wolfed down only 15. Akron's WSLR sponsored the bout.

## Chicago Stations Switch To Country

Chicago's 50,000 watt station WMAQ went country Jan. 15. The playlist will be based heavily on "attitudinal research about what records people like rather than what's selling in the market." Lee Sherwood, program director, says

the playlist will be limited to 34 songs. Generally, 50-70 records is considered a limited list—country radio stations in major markets sometimes go as high as 100 records. Sherwood describes the format as "Mass Appeal Country." He adds that with a station's signal like theirs, they "cannot afford to be just a country music station."

WJOI, Stereo FM and sister station of WMAQ, also switched to a country format but "will be strictly on its own... with its own music, own style and own Country Music identity." It's programmed for a younger country music audience and will have a more modern sound than WMAQ.



Augusta, Ga., disc jockey Rick Weeks (WFNL) peers out of his doorway 30 feet above ground after spending 272 days in a camper trailer perched atop a steel pole. He broadcasted regularly, broke the world's flagpole sitting record, and gave his daughter's hand away in marriage atop the pole.

### Country Quote

"Instruments get people talking, giving and sharing... we're a nation of pickers. If you took away our instruments I don't think we'd survive."  
—Billy Edd Wheeler

PHOTO: BOB SCHANZ



Music City, U.S.A., was the scene of the world premier of *W.W. And The Dixie Dancekings* and everybody showed up.



PHOTO: BOB SCHANZ

Ronnie Stoneman arrives for the opening. Although she only has a bit part, she steals the show.

## STARRY NIGHT

*W.W. And The Dixie Dancekings*, starring Burt Reynolds and some of Nashville's most popular country stars, was premiered in Music City amidst the usual Hollywood hoopla.

The picture is a spoof that centers around Reynolds, who plays a con man who convinces a local country band that he can make them big stars. To keep them all

solvent during slack periods, Reynolds occasionally resorts to robbing gas stations when he isn't trying to book them on the Grand Ole Opry.

The cast includes Roni Stoneman, Mel Tillis, Jerry Reed, Connie Van Dyke and blues singer Furry Lewis. It sounds like fun. And there's plenty of country music, according to 20th-Century Fox.



Mel Tillis plays a gas station attendant who gets robbed by Burt Reynolds.

## Send Us Your News

If you or a community group are planning a country concert or festival, and you know about it two months in advance, or if you know of some newsworthy event related to country—write and tell us about it. Write to COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE, c/o NEWS DESK, 475 Park Ave. South, New York, New York 10016.



PHOTOS: COURTESY 20TH-CENTURY FOX

Left to right: Jerry Reed, Don Williams, Reynolds, James Hampton, Connie Van Dyke and Richard Hurst. They're "The Dixie Dancekings."





# Watch This Face

When Gary Stewart signed a recording contract with RCA Records in 1973, everybody predicted his first release, "I See the Want To in Your Eyes," would be a smash. Nothing happened, except that Conway Twitty covered the song, so airplay was split with the B-side, "Drinkin' Thing." Next came "Ramblin' Man." Still nothing. Then RCA figured that if everyone liked "Drinkin' Thing," they'd make it an A-side. Result: It zoomed to number five on the charts.

Gary's latest, "Out of Hand" by Tom Jans and Jeff Barry, went all the way to number one. Now "She's Acting Single and I'm Drinking Doubles," from Stewart's first album, is coming on strong.

"I got started listening to the Opry at home, way back in the hills of Kentucky with my eight brothers and sisters," Gary said recently. "My daddy was a Watkins Products salesman and he traded some stuff with a hardware store owner to get me a guitar. I was about seven then. I did my first thing in the fifth grade at an old three-room schoolhouse in which all eight grades were crowded.

"We did a little Grand Ole Opry. I imitated Ray Price and sang 'Crazy Arms.' It cost a dime to see it. Everybody seemed to like me. I guess that's when I decided on being a country performer."

Years later in Florida, where the family had moved, Gary played cowboy music with a band he organized in Okachobee, a weekend cattle town.

"There were so many cowboys around," he laughed, "you thought you were in Texas. Mel Tillis was still a songwriter. He and my steel player were friends and Mel came by to see us. One night he pulled me over and said 'I think there's a place for you in Nashville.' He told me the way to get there was to write. So I started writin'." Songs went to publishers and were returned but in 1965 Stonewall Jackson recorded Gary's "Poor Red Georgia Dirt" and it was a hit. In 1968 Stewart



## GARY STEWART

finally moved to Nashville.

Between guitar and piano gigs where Gary also lent his voice to lead vocals, he worked at Bradley's Barn "cleanin' up the studio, makin' the coffee, fillin' the candy machines, and settin' up."

"But I was homesick for Florida," he explained, "and indifferent about getting into first gear over a singing career. I missed Mary Lou (his wife of 13 years) and was tired of going back and forth to Ft. Pierce (Fla.) to be with the kids (Joey, now 12, and Shannon, 5). The thing I wanted to be—a writer—I became, and after having a number one song the novelty wore off. Back home I sat around in the sun and took it easy—thinking of new areas to conquer. It had to be singing, so I went back into the clubs and got myself and an act together."

Before he left Nashville Gary did a demo session and the tape found its way to Mercury's Roy Dea. He caught up with Gary and asked if he wanted to do more records. By the time Gary made up his mind Dea was with RCA and ended up bringing Gary with him.

The nearly six foot Stewart, who is 30, is not making any special plans now that an album is on the market.

ELLIS NASSOUR

## Colorado CMF Sets Festival Date

The Colorado Country Music Foundation will hold its 13th annual convention and festival in Denver's Merchandise Mart this year.

Scheduled to run from June 23-28, the event will feature business seminars, recording sessions, and talent shows designed to showcase local performers before an audience that will include booking agents, and executives from music publishers, record companies and radio stations.

More information can be obtained by writing to The Country Music Foundation of Colorado, P.O. Box 19435, Denver, Colo. 80219.

## Willie Nelson Forms New Label

Willie Nelson has finally done something about consolidating his musical holdings in Texas. Together with his manager, Neil Reshin, Willie has formed Lone Star Records. The company is based in Texas, and will concentrate its efforts on promoting local talent like Kenneth Threadgill, Milton Carroll and Ray Wylie Hubbard—the Austin-based axis of musicians and songwriters who don't want to give up their homes or musical interests by trying to make it through the Nashville talent mill. Distribution of Lone Star Records' products will be national with a heavy emphasis on the Texas area.

The label's first album release will probably be a Willie Nelson Gospel album which was cut mainly in New York for Atlantic Records, but never released.

Meanwhile, Willie himself has signed a recording contract with Columbia Records, who will get all his new material, and both United Artists Records and RCA Records are planning releases of unreleased or re-packaged Willie Nelson albums. So watch out for a glut of Willie Nelson material, and watch out for the first recorded offerings of the "new" Texas sound.



## Country Show Thrills TV Execs

Optimism is high for a full go-ahead on a new NBC television series dealing with the lives of country music entertainers. Being developed on the West Coast by MGM, March 5 is the tentative start date for filming in Nashville. An MGM spokesman, John Strong, believed the series "to have viable potential because of widespread popularity of country music and the lack of television exposure the entertainers have received."

He added, "Country music is the single biggest moneymaking entity in the music world. If you exploit certain areas of it to show people that the entertainers are also real people, subject to the same pressures and pain that we feel in our daily lives, I think you've got a shot at letting everybody in the country relate to it."



Hours after finishing the mural in the background, artist Thomas Hart Benton, 85, collapsed and died in his Kansas City, Mo., studio. Commissioned by the Country Music Association, the mural will hang in the Hall of Fame museum in Nashville.

Wide World Photo

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- It's Only Make - Believe\* . . . Conway Twitty
- Six Days On The Road . . . Dave Dudley
- Tell Me A Lie . . . Sami Jo
- Hey Good Lookin' . . . Hank Williams
- Dang Me . . . Roger Miller
- Walk On By . . . Leroy Van Dyke
- Gonna Find Me A Bluebird\* . . . Marvin Rainwater
- It's All Over But The Crying . . . Hank Williams, Jr.
- Neon Rose . . . Mel Tillis
- That's The Way Love Goes . . . Johnny Rodriguez
- The Year That Clayton Defaney Died . . . Tom T. Hall
- Leavin' And Sayin' Goodbye . . . Faron Young
- Almost Persuaded . . . Ben Colder
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- Mohair Sam . . . Charlie Rich
- Lonely Blue Boy\* . . . Conway Twitty
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- Ridin' My Thumb To Mexico . . . Johnny Rodriguez.



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# COUNTRY NEWS

## A Reader States Her Own Views

I would like to offer an opinion, admittedly entirely personal, on the formation of the ACE and country music's "identity crisis," as you so aptly put it. I honestly feel that in its apparent desire to exorcise "pop" influences from country music, the ACE fails to come to grips with the reality of second and third generations of country listeners. As a 32-year old housewife, I grew up listening to country music because my southern-born parents loved it, but through the fifties and sixties I also was exposed to rock and roll and folk music. Those amalgamations of musical influences form *my* roots. Many of the present exponents of "new country" are my contemporaries in age and we share the same roots and influences; I love their music because it is my music, too. I listen to "country" music stations because that is where they are playing my kind of music, and I have also been exposed to people I had never listened to before, like Dolly

Parton, and I have liked what I heard. I don't believe that country music has gained expanded listenership because millions of people suddenly discovered George Jones. Whether the ACE admits it or not, it is the country-pop sound that has brought millions of new listeners to country music, and all country music entertainers have benefitted. I am rather cynically inclined to believe that the ACE members would like to hang onto that increased listenership, while denying any "country" identity to the crossover artists who may very well have made it possible. This much I know for certain; when my country music station stops playing Charlie Rich, Waylon Jennings, Kris Kristofferson and even Olivia Newton-John, I will cease to listen. I think a spirit of tolerance for the full spectrum of country music, which can encompass everything from Ernest Tubb to the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, is definitely in order. When the day comes that Dolly Parton is named CMA female vocalist on 'the one hand, and on the other, the duo award is won by Kris and Rita, I will know the millenium has arrived. Fondest regards; your magazine is tops.

ANITA LAY

(Ms. Lay is a reader from Schenectady, N.Y.)

## Old Dominion Show Revived

RICHMOND, VA.—Versatility Productions has revived the Old Dominion Barn Dance, a country variety show once popular in Virginia.

Begun in 1946 as a Saturday night live radio show, the Old Dominion Barn Dance was a showcase for local country talent and a sort of regional Grand Ole Opry for Virginians. The new show isn't being broadcast yet. Its producers will first take the show around to various cities within the Old Dominion, as Virginia is known, before establishing a set format.

Shows will be given on weekends for the time being and will feature top country stars and local talent.

Auditions can be arranged by writing Versatility Productions, 10 East Belt Blvd., Richmond, Va. 23224.

## Send Us Your View

If you have something to say about country music that might be too long for our letters page, and you think it would be of interest to other readers, put your remarks down on paper and send them to COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE, c/o NEWS DESK, 475 Park Ave. South, New York, New York, 10016. Type-written entries only, and no more than 300 words, please. The editors will select contributions on the basis of good writing and subject matter that appeals to our audience.



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# PORTER

## The Last Great Hillbilly?

by DAVE HICKEY

I was sitting in an empty battle-ship-gray auditorium in Kansas City, Kansas, slid down in one of the folding chairs which filled the area usually allotted to basketball, and I was feeling ashamed of myself. Up on the stage Porter Wagoner and the Wagonmasters were jamming, playing for the fun of it, loosening up after the bus ride from Joplin. Porter was finger-picking a gut-string guitar, perched on a low metal chair, looking for all the world like a half-opened carpenter's rule, his lanky frame folded up around the guitar—knees, elbows, shoulders, toes jutting out in every direction. Maybe it was the quality of the playing, or the intensity, or maybe it was the complete unself-consciousness of Porter, up there on the stage wrapped awkwardly around the instrument and lost in the music. Whatever it was, I realized that I had fallen for a brain-wash job about Porter Wagoner. I remembered the day that the brain-wash began.

It was about ten years ago in Fort Worth. I was listening to WBAP when the station break came. Usually the station break was a jangling cowbell and a distinctly local voice shouting, "*Yer lis'nin' to WBAP... the station that has Fort Worth by the... ears!*" Occasionally, to avoid subtlety, this was followed by a few bars of Bob Wills' "Big Balls in Cowtown," but *today* there was a tone which sounded like something you hear in a hospital corridor, and an accentless network voice crooning, "*You are listening to WBAP—Countryopolitan radio for the Dallas-Fort Worth listening area.*"

And never, to my knowledge, was the word "hillbilly" uttered during prime time. It disappeared as completely and as quickly as Stalin disappeared from Russian history.

*Hillbilly* was a bad word, even worse than *Rockabilly*. A hillbilly, you see, was this guy in a garish-

spangled suit who talked country, told jokes about laxatives and out-houses, and sang songs of naked sentiment, who expressed himself much too openly for the people who had moved to the city after the war and were now on their way up the social ladder, heading for a barbecue pit and a ranch-style house. They didn't want to be reminded of their roots or the country tradition which valued shared emotion more than success. They could tolerate the same sentiments expressed by black singers of course, but *hillbillies* were embarrassing. Good executives don't cry.

And who was the archetypal hillbilly? Why, it was Porter Wagoner, of course, with all those crazy suits and all those songs that expressed emotions with such embarrassing clarity. There were others too—there was Ray Price and Buck Owens and Tex Ritter—but gradually the sequins disappeared. I'll never forget my wife coming from a Ray Price concert, almost in tears. "He had on a *tuxedo!*" she said. "You can't sing 'Crazy Arms' in a *tuxedo!*" You can't sing "Satisfied Mind" in a tuxedo either—and to his credit, Porter has never tried to do it. So now, whenever some network television show decides to parody country music, it is usually Porter who is the model for some Brooklyn comedian in a Nudie suit singing "I got tears in my ears from lying on my back in bed crying over you."

So there I was sitting in that drafty Kansas auditorium, feeling ashamed of myself for having, almost subconsciously, bought the stereotype, because nothing could have been farther from the true Porter Wagoner. I wish some of those network zanies could have been there when Porter came down off the stage and slid into a chair beside me. This soft-spoken, reserved man was a long ways from the Martins-and-McCoys image. In fact, he was a long way from the grinning, high-energy performer I had seen work in Joplin the night before.

When I told him that I admired his production of his own, Dolly's and their duet albums, and wondered why he did it anonymously under the name of the executive producer Roy Ferguson, he bridged his hands before him and paused for

a long moment, looking at the toes of his boots, as if composing his answer in his head.

"Well," he said finally, "I'm not really interested in paper-credit. I just want to get them right. It's very hard to get a live feel from a studio recording, but that's what I want. For instance, with Dolly. She has a natural concert voice, but the volume that is so effective in performance is hard to handle in a studio, especially since she is a perfectionist and doesn't like to miss notes or times. It really took three or four years before we could find the right mixture of microphone and board settings, and Dolly got used to singing at studio volume. Now all of that's settled. She can concentrate on singing the meaning of the song. Also I have gradually reduced the amount of reverb and limitation on our voices. So, on the newer records, the singing isn't so perfect, but it's much more real. It's the accidents and irregularities that let you know there's a *person* there singing to you. But we could only do that after everything else was set."

Porter went on to talk about the Wagonmasters, about Mack Magaha, his fiddler who had climbed out of bed last night with a full case of the 'flu and performed with maximum energy and his usual Irish ebullience, about Bruce Osbon his new lead guitar player, who had replaced the legendary and recently departed Buck Trent.

I just sat there mildly stunned. I have interviewed a lot of performers, and it was refreshing to be given adult answers, to be treated like a professional rather than a tape recorder with legs, and even more refreshing to meet a performer as self-consciously and thoughtfully aware of what he was doing and who he was doing it for. I don't think I asked Porter one question to which he hadn't already given considerable thought.

That night in Kansas, Porter did his usual tight-bright, mile-a-minute *hillbilly* show. The Wagonmasters opened the show, followed by Dolly (this was her last trip), followed by Porter, who sang "George Leroy Chickashay" and "Katy Did," among other sentimental favorites. Speck Rhodes came out in his funny hat, told jokes and traded lines with Porter on the subjects of mini-skirts, laxatives, and out-houses.







Porter at the mixing board of his studio: absolute mastery of the art.

Then Porter and Dolly came out and did a duet set and sang "Jeanie's Afraid of the Dark," which brought tears to the eyes of all adjacent spectators. Everybody played well, and performed well, and Porter—in addition to singing and playing guitar—played the audience like a toy trumpet.

The night before, I had watched the show with a kind of anthropologist's distance, miles away from my roots. Tonight I just had a good time and I began to see things. I discovered that the show, which the night before seemed so good-natured and casual, was *meticulously* good-natured and casual, moving effortlessly through an exact replica of the previous night's show and running, almost to the minute, the same length, without a hint of mechanical coldness. Later I would realize that the show was just one manifestation of what is the guiding principle of all of Porter Wagoner's enterprises: *You are reaching for the feeling, but this is only possible after all the mechanics and techniques are so meticulously planned and rehearsed that they become instinctive.*

Nearly a year later in Porter's neo-

Arabian Nashville office, we picked up the conversation almost where it had broken off in Kansas. I had heard stories of Porter's brevity and abruptness in his dealings with journalists, but on subjects that interest him, which include nearly everything having to do with music and the music business, he was genuinely enthusiastic and eager to share the things he liked and the things he had learned.

We sat there most of the afternoon with Porter playing unreleased tapes and commenting on them. He played a sequence of his own songs that he was in the process of producing (that night he was going into a studio to put on the steel guitar), then he played me a tape of a young California artist. It was to be his first single and it was called "Sing Me a Love Song, Porter Wagoner."

"I hope the record does well," said Porter. "At least, I hope my name doesn't hurt his chances."

Then he played rough mixes of ten of the *thirty* unreleased singles he has cut on Dolly, and the effect was overpowering. The songs were all first-rate quality, and the production was as daring and original as production can get while still

sounding country.

"If you released those ten songs as an album, you could make Dolly a pop star overnight," I said. Porter just grinned his catfish grin and said, "Come on, I'll show you the studio."

He got up quickly from his desk, sliding a small notebook from under the blotter, and headed through a back door into a full sixteen-track studio recently built behind his offices. As we entered, he gestured around the room.

"I took everything I knew about recording and put it into this place, and I'm still not happy," he said. We toured the room and he showed me how the instruments were isolated from one another and how he could control the overlap of sounds within the room to give the session and the tape a more "live" feel. Then he held up the small notebook.

"This is my Bible," he said, flipping pages crammed with arcane figures. "This has the mike and board settings for every singer, musician and instrument we use here. This way I can come in here and have everything absolutely ready to go before the session starts. So we can make music during a session and not wrack everybody's nerves doing tests for half an hour. With Lea Jane—you know, the girl who's replaced Dolly in the show?—we must have tried twenty-five different microphones and a thousand board settings before we got just what we wanted. But now we got it, right down here." He waved the book and grinned. "We don't do master sessions in here, of course, not for the albums. But we usually work everything out in here so when we go into a studio at RCA we know what we're . . ."

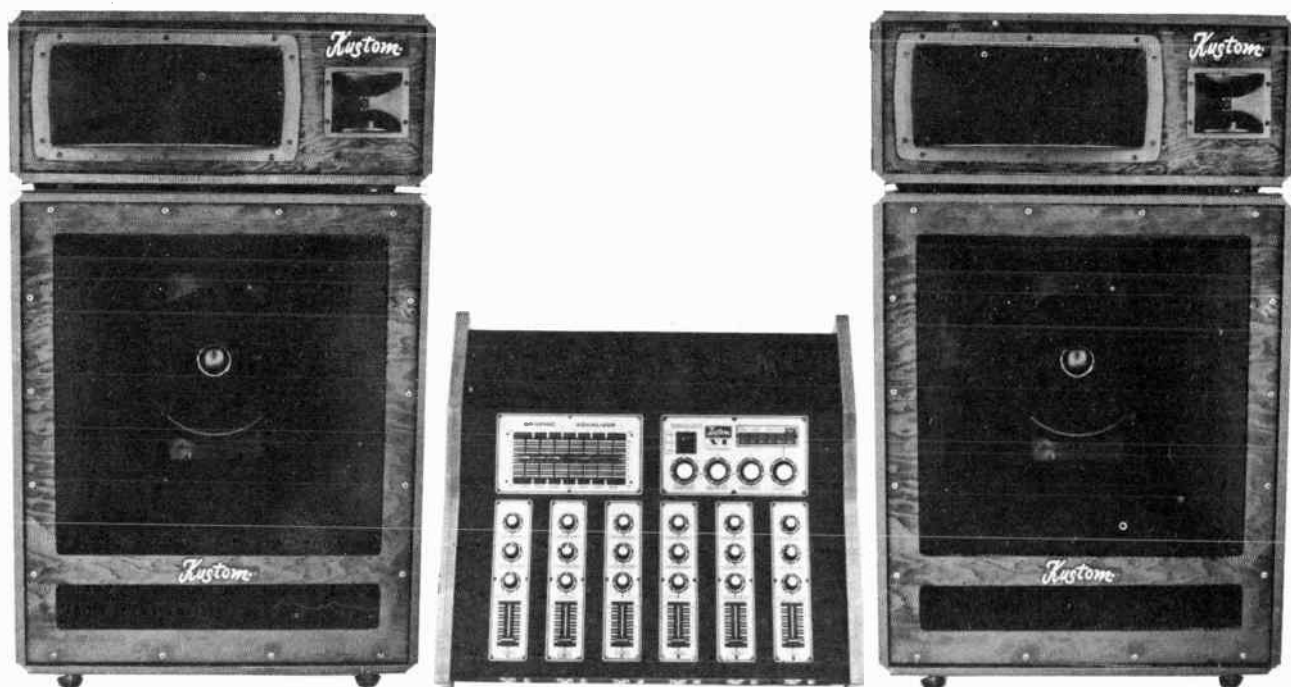
"In other words," I said, "You do detailed preparation to prepare for sessions here, which then prepare you for sessions at RCA?"

Porter grinned, a little embarrassed. "Yeah, I guess that's what we do."

There was something in the look he gave me which revealed, I thought, the source of the stories about Porter's social abruptness. For all his success and expertise there is still an insecure country boy from Missouri underneath, not quite sure of how to act around city folks. It was easy to see why he shunned the Nashville social



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rounds. I couldn't imagine him being comfortable at something so unstructured as a cocktail party, or in the erratic flow of cowboy pinball nightlife. Socially, he would only be comfortable on the golf links, or fishing—involved in some kind of activity where there is something to do with your hands when polite conversation fails. He probably prepares as meticulously for a dinner-party as he does for a recording session.

But I had a demonstration of the effectiveness of this method later that night when Porter was putting some steel guitar on his new album tracks. We walked into studio B at RCA, and with no technical fiddling except for tuning, began putting

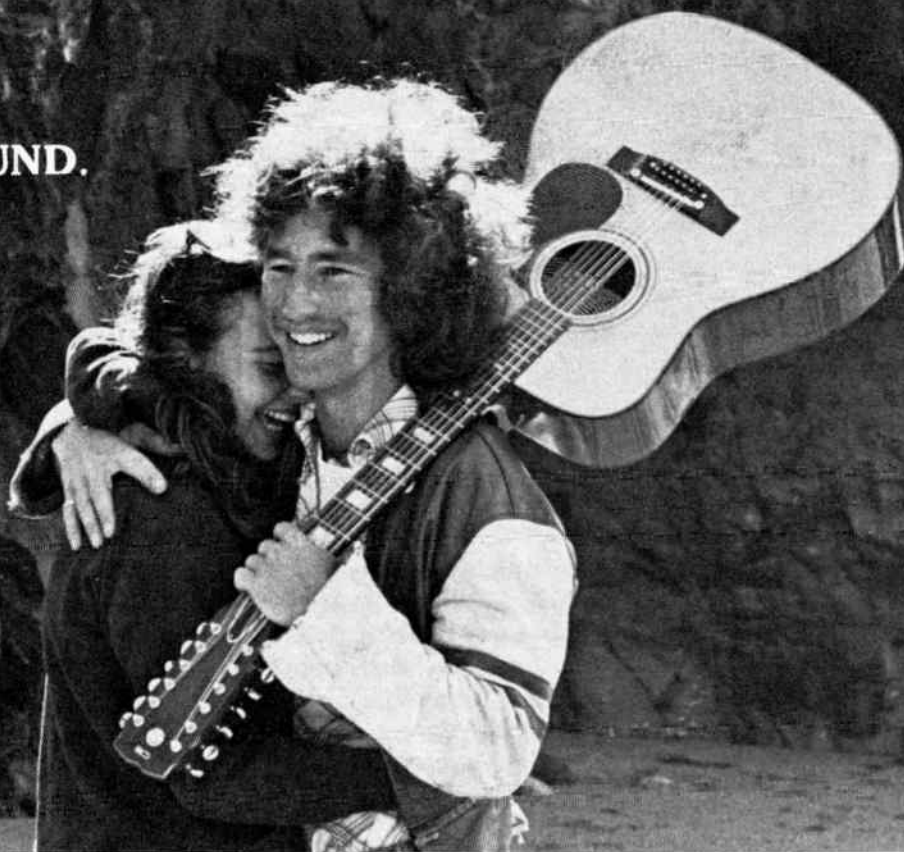
down the tracks. There was no discussion at all about recording. Porter would play the track and the steel player would play. Then Porter would go into the studio and, crouching in ghostly semi-darkness before the steel guitar, like a father discussing something with his son, he and the steel man would discuss the nuance of effect or emotion he was trying to capture in this particular song. It was the most sensitively run session I have ever seen. Driving back to his office, I mentioned that I like the bright sound he gets from the acoustic rhythm guitars.

"Part of it is the players of course, and part of it is the instrument. But mainly I use the limiter

on the board to take out the boom that acoustic guitars have. It's not necessary since that bass rumble is cleaner from the bass and drums alone. It's a technique that a lot of rock producers use, but most hard country producers frown on it. I like it though. That brilliance of tone is the one thing that only an acoustic rhythm guitar can give you."

Suddenly I thought, *This man is happy doing what he is doing. He is a real country boy. He can't not be doing something.* All this advance work and preparation, in addition to six albums, fifty-two television shows, running a publishing company, a studio, and traveling one hundred days a year! I asked him if that didn't seem a bit much.

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"Well, I guess. But you see I only had a sixth-grade education so I have to work at things, to be real careful."

I almost laughed out loud. Here is a man concerned about his lack of education, who has, in effect, a PH.D in singing, performing, writing, publishing, booking, management and production; and who has done more homework than an entire graduate faculty. It makes you wonder how much you do because of what you *are*, and how much you do because of what you *aren't*. If Porter had a college degree, would he have felt obligated to master every facet of the music business? If he looked like Rock Hudson, would he have designed those

Fourth of July suits which so delight his fans?

On the way home from his studio, Porter told me about his start in the music business in West Plains, Missouri. "Now, West Plains," Porter was saying, as we glided through Nashville in his Cadillac, "is not much; just a little farming community south of Springfield, not quite Ozarks, or plains, just normal country. I had a job singing on a show which was broadcast live from the grocery store there in town. I was on from 5:30 to 6:00 AM every morning. I'd sing a couple of songs and announce the grocery store specials and such. Now, the station didn't reach more

than five or six miles, and the only outsider that ever heard it was the bus driver who came through every morning on his way to Springfield. But without telling me, he told the guy at the radio station in Springfield to come down and give me a listen.

"So one morning I come up the road lugging my guitar, and there is this big Cadillac parked outside the store. I thought somebody had died or been arrested, but I went on in and nobody knew who he was. So I did my show, and unbeknownst to me, he was sitting out in the car listening on the radio. After I finished, he came in and offered me a job in Springfield singing on his

(Continued on page 60)

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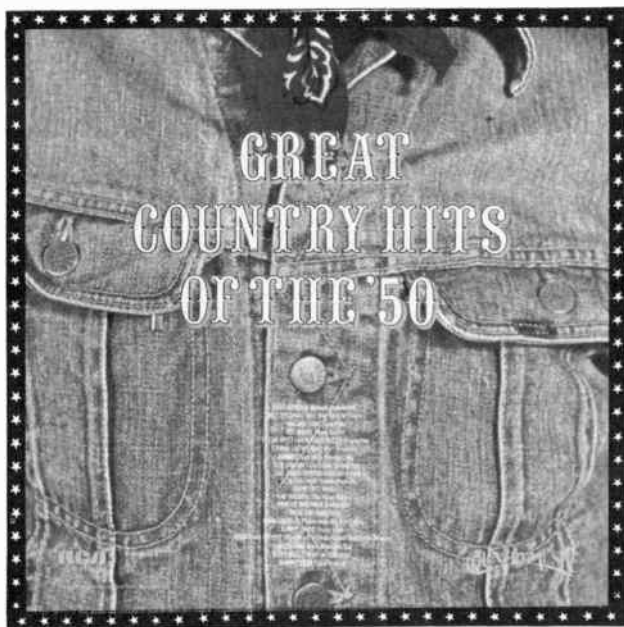
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# STARS & STRINGS

## Famous Pickers and What They Pick

Mother Maybelle Carter, the first of the big-time lady pickers, invented "the Carter lick" — a whole style of country guitar playing. Now, troubled by arthritis, she doesn't pick guitar much. Now she's mistress of the autoharp, seen here.



Bill Monroe works out on his ancient mandolin — a Gibson F-5 which has been his favorite for almost 50 years. Jimmy Martin is the man at his side. Vassar Clements (top) is often hailed as the greatest living country fiddle player. Here he bows his German-made copy of a Stradavarius. It's old, but Vassar doesn't know the exact date.

On the right are two custom-made guitars: Joe Maphis' bright red double-neck and the late Ira Louvin's short-neck, which he built himself. Ira called it his "Hi-G" guitar. It's tuned like a regular guitar but the scale is shorter, so it's pitched an octave higher — like a mandolin. The short-neck on Maphis' is tuned likewise, while the long neck is tuned regularly. Semie Mosely designed it for Maphis in 1954. Both guitars are in the Hall of Fame collection.

PHOTOS: GREASE BROS. and MARSHALL FALLWELL









On the left, a National Duolian model steel and wood resonating guitar, built according to the Dopera Brothers' patent around 1920. It's on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville.



The Doperas made the original resonating guitar under the Dobro trademark. Here Basful Brother Oswald Kirby, an expert Dobro player, picks on one he donated to the Roy Acuff Museum at Opryland Park, where there are hundreds of rare and unusual instruments on display, including the Acuff family organ in the background.





John Hartford, often acclaimed as the most gifted of today's young banjo pickers, plucks his favorite instrument. It's a rare old Orpheum 5-string, slightly larger than standard (it's a 12" model) and open-backed.

Pete Drake, the man who first made the pedal steel guitar "talk," astride the steel he uses for recording at Pete's Place in Nashville. It's a double-necked, customized Sho-Bud with which he rightly claims he can "do it all."



For his electric work, Chet Atkins puts his trust in his Gretsch Country Gentleman. He should—he designed it himself, and it's the source of that inimitable sound.

His favorite acoustic guitar, however, is this Spanish-style hand-made European model.



Charlie McCoy plays more record sessions than most of us have had hot dinners, and he does it with a whole battery of Hohner models. The Marine Band is the one he considers the most useful, and recommends to beginners.





# *The **Joy** of Pickin'*

*by* **BILLY EDD WHEELER**



*"I said I know this may sound  
funny  
But Money don't mean nothing  
to me  
I won't make my music for money,  
I'm gonna make my music for  
me."*\*

The big yellow GMC bus rolled into my mountain yard from Nashville, and behind the tinted glass sat Alex Harvey, a recording artist who's written hits for everyone but himself. I took him and three musicians up to my studio behind the house, to practice for a concert the next night in Beckley, West Virginia. We'd share the bill, the bus and the band.

I was dead tired when we got through rehearsing, so I told Alex good night. "But wait," he said, "we've got to run over Billy Joe's stuff. I invited him to do the show with us."

"You mean Billy Joe Shaver, the guy that wrote those nice things for Waylon Jennings?"

"Yeah, he's asleep in the bus."

You get over being surprised in this business. I knew I was going to stay up and hear Billy Joe's bag of songs. I remembered meeting him once but he'd come in late and hadn't gotten his pull on the guitar. Shaking his hand came back to me: he had some fingers off. Tonight he walked in yawning, looking the same, a little bedraggled, a waking twinkle in his farmer-next-door face, an easy smile. We shook. Yep, the fingers were still off. By two o'clock he'd done his five songs, including "Old Five And Dimers Like Me" (which I love), and he and Alex decided to go look for Edsel Martin, a dulcimer maker and woodcarver friend of mine down at Old Fort. Lives way back in the woods. A real mountain man.

"You guys ought to get some sleep. We leave at eight in the morning. It's a seven hour drive."

"Aw, we'll be right back."

I was helping load the bus next morning at eight when Alex and Billy Joe drove up. Billy Joe's eyes were red as bird blood. "We had the most wonderful time!" Alex said, while Billy Joe staggered toward a bed in the bus.

"We woke up Edsel at 2:30." Alex

continued. "He strapped on his leg and put the coffee pot on. I asked him if he'd mind playing a tune for us—he's kinda bashful, you know—so he reached up and took his fretless banjo off the wall and started pickin. Pretty soon this pregnant woman in her nightgown came from a room with a dulcimer and she and Edsel played together. Then her husband came out with his guitar and before you know it we had a real shindig going, passing the guitar back and forth, drinking coffee (Edsel would put a little moonshine in his) and singing. Billy Joe'd never seen anything like it."

Who has?

Actually there is nothing like it. I've been there other nights. Any sort of music lover, fan, or people-watcher would be enchanted by it. It is folklore, sociology, history, art all rolled into one. But it is more. There is a magic in it. And love. You cannot go there and expect to find it. You just hope the mood will be right, the vibrations good and the proper magnetism of the stars in their crossings. If it is right, you have an unforgettable night. Your heart sings, and in singing is recharged. You know you are sitting at the real table of the gods, feasting on the real bread of life. You wish the public, masses of music lovers could experience it, that you could lift it up and take it to them. But you cannot and they cannot. Even you don't find it that often. Some nights the banjo doesn't come off the wall. Some nights it comes off the wall and everybody sings and strains to make the magic happen. And it doesn't.

\* \* \*

*"I woke up this morning,  
I was tired as I could be,  
I think I was counting my money  
When I should have been count-  
ing sheep,  
My agent had just called me  
And told me what I could be  
If I would make my music for  
money  
Instead of making my music for  
me."*\*

\* \* \*

There is a joy and satisfaction in sitting by a fire or by the kitchen table and picking with friends that's different from stage picking. This is not to say that magic doesn't happen on stage at concerts or nightclubs or coffee houses. It does. But it's a performance and no

matter how you slice it, to most pickers it's hard work.

But when professional musicians leave the stage and studio, when they casually start picking for each other, look out. Not many guitar pickers I know can ignore a guitar for long. If there's one in the room, they'll pick it up. That's why I wouldn't dream of turning down supper at Johnny Cash's house. Some time after supper Johnny is going to pick up his guitar and sing something he just made up. Then he is going to pass the guitar around the room to Bob Dylan, who can raise the hair on your neck, or to Mickey Newbury who can put you in a trance singing better than anybody's dreams and playing in that D tuning of his. Then it'll go to Harlan Howard, Dallas Frazier, Dick Feller or to Mother Maybelle.

Mother Maybelle will complain that her fingers are too stiff. Harlan Howard will complain that he's a writer, not a singer. But you know what? I'd rather hear Harlan sing Harlan than anybody else in the world. Burt Bacharach does his own things better than anybody because there is so much friendship between him and his piano. You feel it standing next to him. His cheeks glisten as if tiny suns of enthusiasm exploded from them, set off by a crescendo of melody and meaning. Who cares about his voice? It is right because it is springing out of the mind that made up the song. Informal, full of personality, alive with fun that overrides any technical imperfection, it sails above and in friendly conjunctive companionship with those hands and fingers on the keys below, drawing Burt up and down out of his chair, lost in the joy of picking.

One old mountaineer at Gatlinburg, Tennessee didn't have any buddies to teach the banjo to him. So he watched Earl Scruggs on TV every week. This was back when Flatt & Scruggs were a team. I had been sent to his house by a friend who knew I'd appreciate him. His cheeks glistened too.

"I watch Earl's fingers, buddy, and when he does something new, aye-gollies I run to the TV, turn it off, grab up my banjer and do it jist like 'im. If I don't git it, back to the TV! Bam, on she comes! Most generally, though, I git it the first time."

\*All song lyrics in this article by Alex Harvey, from the song "Making Music For Money," © 1973, United Artists Music, Inc. & Big Axe Music. Used by permission.

I'm not saying that this old boy could out-Scruggs Earl Scruggs, which pickers will claim all over, but I will say I never heard anybody with more showmanship. He'd throw his head back, laugh, then start a comical shuffle while he was playing an intricate breakdown. Then he'd face me and throw out his left hand while his right executed some incredible double-clutching, mind-breaking syncopation in the middle of which he would smile broadly and say, "Ain't that something!" Then he'd swing his left in, ending the piece, clawing up the neck till the notes were pieces of ice breaking off into an iron bucket, little shrill nothings of sound, and then nothing... though in your mind you kept hearing the progression into untold infinities of ice and iron buckets.

\* \* \*

You don't have to be able to read music to enjoy picking a guitar.

Chet Atkins in his earlier days was picking on a high-budget session with an imported New York producer who walked by Chet's music stand, bent down and asked,

"Do you read music?"

"I do," Chet replied, "but I try not to let it get in the way of my pickin'."

And it's true. Chet could pick before he could read. I mention Chet not because his agent bills him as Mister Guitar or because Segovia said he is the only guitar player in America, but because he has contributed to that small handful of magic moments I carry in a bag in my head like a kid with his treasured marbles. It was May, 74, and I drove to Knoxville to hear Chet in concert with the Knoxville Symphony. He sent word out that he might call me up for a number or two. I said OK, and started getting jittery. "Just relax," I told myself, "he probably won't do it."

Then he sent for me to come backstage. Orchestra people were unshelling pedigreed violas and there was a crowd near Chet's dressing room. The manager ushered me through, paused near the men's room to show me my name on its door, then let me in. Chet didn't get up but held up a hand partly closed on a guitar pick. I squeezed the

fingertips.

"You really wanna sing one?"

"If you want me to. Don't call me up, though, unless the show gets draggin' and they get bored with you."

He laughed. He gave me a cigar and started playing. Just for me. He played "Maleguena" and "Love Theme From Romeo And Juliet," then he played some obscure Spanish things so lovely I almost cried. They were not easy. He just made them look easy. Even in their light beauty they called for strong fingers, disciplined fingers that raised and lowered with unseen force, quivering and crossing each other like the thousand legs of a centipede rendering motion, ordering form out of chaos. Sometimes his bottom fingers played trills while the forefinger and thumb of the *same hand* plucked out the melody at the same time. Then the melody in harmony! Then the melody in *harmonics*, tiny bells of overtones!! It seemed impossible. It *is* impossible the way Chet does it.

Instruments call the impossible out of humans and give lucky listeners rare pleasures that never die in them.

Chet told me about growing up in a small town near where we sat, but he didn't say much. He didn't have to. Chet's fingers say far more than he could ever articulate, and the vocabulary is growing because the fingers keep searching. I have been told he picks nearly all the time, even while talking on the telephone. I wondered if he would take it with him if he had to visit my dressing room!

\* \* \*

*"He said the people only buy love songs,  
Rock and roll and not too long  
He said son you've got to be commercial*

*If you want to turn the people on  
I said, turning on the people  
That's a beautiful place to be  
But if I spend my time making  
them up a rhyme,  
Who's gonna turn on me?"\**

\* \* \*

Many fans have discovered that the real picking goes on *behind* the City Auditorium at the annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford festival in Asheville, where bands and individuals wait to get on stage, so the alleyways are full. People come from New England, even *England*, to see



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Country Music Magazine

# Rusty Young on Sho-Bud



"In the years that I've been playing Sho-Bud guitars in Poco concerts and recording sessions, I've come to rely on their dependability and great sound. Sho-Bud is what we country folk call 'The Chile Relleno' of steel guitars."

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musicians from eight to eighty-eight cut a shine, and if they've come that far they don't want to miss anything by stopping short 150 feet, so they go around the building to the back to be close in case a duel shapes up between a banjo and guitar or a juice harp and dulcimer or a mandolin and fiddle.

Being close, seeing the faces and fingers, that's the trick. Little dramas of personality flash and flare. A lanky mountaineer listens to a picker until his eyes pop and the banjo strings in his neck stand out throbbing, his toes turning in as if he's about to go to the bathroom. Then his bony hand snatches the instrument from the picker with, "Let me have that-tere thang. Now you watch chis." The picker is impressed and soon *his* toes are curling in.

I've had guitars snatched from me by the best.

Burl Ives did it in a motel room after I'd spent considerable time working up nerve to accept the box from Fred Carter, Jr., who took me there. I didn't want to take any chances, so I played "The Coming Of The Roads," one of my best songs. "That's a piece o' crap," Burl said, purloining the guitar and launching into an old favorite in that unique high mellow baritone. Fred Jr. humped his shoulders and said, "it's his room, hoss."

Pickings are not always sweetness and light. But you almost always learn *something* picking with peers—a new tuning, a new chord, a run. Everytime I learn a new chord I write a dozen new songs. That's one reason I do it.

But some pickers don't write songs. Like the old mountaineer at Gatlinburg. Why does he work so hard getting good, only to pick for an occasional visitor? It must be that getting good is an end in itself.

I knew a guy named Billy Patella in West Virginia who could make a Martin D-28 talk. In a singular way he was as good as Chet. Once he let me hold a chipmunk he pulled out of his pocket with a string. It bit me. Billy said if I wouldn't squeeze him, just let him sit in my hand, he wouldn't bite. (You see, I learned something else!) Billy would seldom pick for people. He took his guitar to the woods and charmed animals with it. He had a way with snakes and squirrels.

There are hundreds of pickers like

Billy, though most are gregarious and not at all jealous of each other. Why do they pick, if not for money or fame? Are they after magic without even knowing it?

Magic. No hovel is safe from it and no host may depend upon it, whether the fare is beer and pretzels or fancy wine and liver pate.

Instruments make it happen. Instruments get people—who normally wouldn't bother—talking, giving and sharing. The instruments might be Romanian pipes-of-pan or a banjo made from a Buick brake drum, a cat gut stretched across a gourd or hand crafted glockenspiels or mutallaphones by German Carl Orff. I know a young banjoist doctor who murders "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" while his wife thumps a washtub bass, accompanied by a dentist whose flattop Gibson is never quite in tune. They are usually urged on by a houseful of young professionals who clap and sing along and end up kicking off expensive shoes to clog to a shaky, ragged out-of-time version of "Down Yonder."

The clappers and cloggers don't give a hoot whether the Gibson is in tune. They have fun. And you know what? Nine out of ten times they find the magic.

We are a nation of pickers. If you took away our millions of instruments, I don't think we'd survive. Don Light told me he didn't think Chet would last six weeks.

I am no Chet Atkins. I cannot play even *one* harmonic. But if I try to think how empty my life would have been without my guitar, it seems . . . unthinkable. My guitar has been a friend when I was lonely, an ear when I was spilling over with things to say and nobody to say them to.

Out of that scarred shell I've plucked joy and tremendous satisfaction. Also some fortune. Who would think that in a few hours' time I would yank enough words and notes out of that six string-covered hole to buy fifty cars, a big house, a studio, a thousand bottles of charcoal-mellowed moonshine and a trash masher! And buddy, you can too. But I'll warn you—she's a fickle somebody. Court her for riches and she'll maybe only give you a good time (which is riches, but I guess you knew that).

Go at her easy like you don't care. Be tender and true to her until you





Billy Edd Wheeler: Picking joy and magic from "a six-string covered hole" is his life's work.

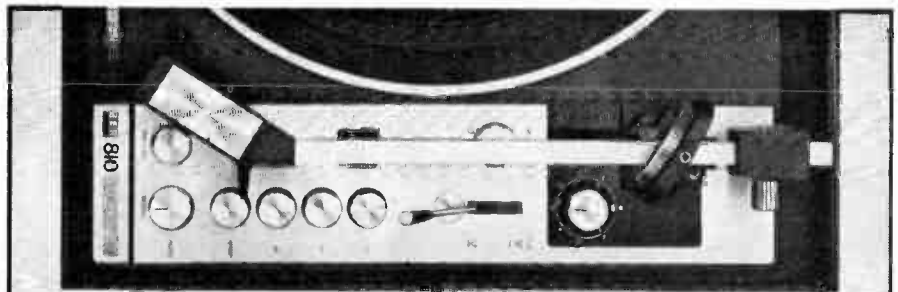
bygolly *don't* care about gold and ... presto, looky there, she's laid it in your lap! She won't be used.

She's a poor boy's passport over the rainbow and a rich one's escape to happiness around hobo pie. She'll stand there in the corner and sulk, not say a word. But, son, let her know you need her and she'll mother you to death. No dog was ever the friend you've got in her.

Treat her good. Shine her up. She can't cure a common cold but she can rub salve on an aching soul. I know. She's an old, old buddy of mine. And I love her.

*"I went up the country and  
I'll tell you about the scene  
I found a place with much charm  
and much grace  
That wasn't touched by the mu-  
sic machine  
The people were having a good  
time  
Making music all the day long  
And nobody cared if they ever  
got paid  
A penny for playing a song.*

*I said I know this may sound  
funny  
But money don't mean nothing  
to me  
I won't make my music for money  
I'm gonna make my music for  
me."*\* ■



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# THE PICKER'S PROGRESS



## *Barbara Mandrell's Golden Road*

### *11 Years Old*

"Norm Hamlet, the steel player, was a good friend of dad's, and he'd come to the house and play. I used to sit there and watch him, and I just fell in love with the steel guitar. He'd show me a lick, and it came rather easy to me, so I told my dad, 'I've got to learn this thing.' My parents were so good about it. They didn't even question it. It wasn't that we were rich people, 'cause we weren't.

"About six months after I started playing, I got my first job. My dad at the time was a representative with the Standell amp company. He took me down to the factory to get a new amp, and the president of the company, Bob Crooks, heard me play and asked my dad if I would demonstrate for Standell at the big trade convention in Chicago.

"Well, it was great. Chet Atkins was there to demonstrate for the Gretsch people, and Joe Maphis was doing it for Ecophonic. My room was right next to Joe's, and the novelty of it . . . Being a ham at heart, and playing in the room with all these great people coming by to hear me!

"Joe was going on from the convention to a two-week date in Las Vegas, and he told my dad that he wanted me on a show that also included Tex Ritter. Well, I went, and everything was so nice . . . According to my dad, the convention was my first job, but I consider my first job the one in Vegas, 'cause that's the first time I ever got paid. Matter of fact, I got my first \$100 in silver coins, and carried them back to my room in a paper bag."

### *13 Years Old*

"Just after my birthday, I did some cross-country tours with the Johnny Cash package. I remember that it was the winter, and it was cold. See, back then, Johnny didn't have the self-contained show that he has now. I remember that on these shows I used to precede George Jones, and y'know, there's the old saying about the only two acts that were impossible to follow were a dog act or a kid act . . .

"At that time, I really had everything going for me. Here was this 13-year-old girl, playing guitar and singing, and it *really* went over. I used to encore a lot. I remember the first show, and I really tore them up.

"I really did have one great advantage as a girl, I guess, because every great steel player I ever met would always be more than willing to show me things, even when I was very little."

### *15 Years Old*

"At this point in my life I became interested in the five-string banjo. Well, I never did have a banjo teacher, and that's unfortunate, because if you're a steel player trying to learn the banjo, you can pick up some pretty bad right hand techniques. I had a pretty good ear, so I could hit the right note at the right time, but it wasn't the way it should have been. I just really learned to play by ear good enough to begin playing things on stage.

"I'd learned to play the sax in my school band, and started out with the simple things like any other kid. I'd come home and practice my lessons, and eventually I started picking things up by ear. I remember the first tune I learned by ear was 'Milk Cow Blues' . . . My dad would sit by me with the rhythm guitar and throw out all these jazz tunes, and I'd learn the melody and then try to jazz it up with ad-libbed lines. That's pretty much how the sax developed.

"But I think steel guitar is just about the most versatile instrument there is. It's not only that there are so many different styles, but that every year they find new things and new ways and different sounds. Like Julian Tharp and Buddy Emmons and Curley Chalker and Maurice Anderson and Ralph Mooney, they've taken the instrument a step further and shown us all that the steel is not limited in any way.

"I thank the Lord that I don't have to carry that steel by myself any more, though. I only weight 94 pounds.

"I guess another of the reasons I picked up steel is that I've always been very mechanical. For that matter, I've always been very athletic. I ran track and played on the boys' softball team. I used to beat them a lot in races—until I found out that they didn't like it."


### *Today*

"Y'know, for a long time the old-fashioned way of doing things was for a girl to come on a show and sing and say 'thankyou' and not open her mouth otherwise. If she played a little rhythm guitar, why, that was all right . . . But the great instrumentalist in our field was Mother Maybelle Carter. She really opened it up."

"I think my band gets a kick out of my playing. When they do something that's outstanding, I know it, and when they make mistakes I know it too. There's not one thing happens on that stage that I don't hear.

"Y'know, in a way it sounds like this all happened so fast, but in case there are some aspiring young musicians out there, the practice is all it was. It had to do with that, plus the fact that I'm a firm believer a person can be taught music without being gifted.

"How old am I? I turned 26 last Christmas." ■



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Memphis artists have always had an ambiguous status in country music, for if Nashville with its Grand Old Opry has come to stand for the strength and integrity of pure country music, Memphis, home of Sun Records, has come to stand for the vitality of mongrelization; in its early days it was

passed for Nashville sound. Today hardly anyone would deny the contribution of such old enemies as Conway Twitty, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Ivory Joe Hunter to country music as it is played today.

But regardless, I have four records here that, five years ago, would have sent a country reviewer into the happy house; each of them was made in Nashville, but they all have their roots in Memphis: Elvis Presley's *Promised Land*, Charlie Rich's *Silver Fox*, Ronnie Milsap's *Legend In My Time*, and Billy Swan's *I Can Help*. They are all four, by the standards of the present market, very good albums, by gifted artists who have scored well in the country charts, and taken together you couldn't ask for a better survey of the richness, variety and peculiar politics of country music today. Strangely enough, however, their relative listening merits, at least to me, are almost in inverse proportion to the "star status" of the artist.

The best record of the four, as an album, is Billy Swan's *I Can Help*. The two years Swan and producer Chip Young put into the album shows in every cut, not so much in what is *there*, as in what has been *left out*. They have taken the time and care to capture each song with a maximum of feeling and a minimum of musicians. The "big" production effects of Elvis' and Rich's albums seem very pretentious and overblown when played after Swan's. So, although Swan is the least known of these four musicians, his personality as an artist is more clearly

projected than any of them. *I Can Help* is very much a personal statement, a good natured, intimate, slightly goofy celebration of good-time music. There are homages to the past in renditions of "Don't Be Cruel (Slow Version)" "Shake Rattle and Roll" and "Wedding Bells,"



plus a fine collection of Swan's own songs beginning naturally with "Lover Please," the hit he wrote for Clyde McPhatter when he was sixteen, followed by "I Can Help," the super-hit he wrote for himself last year, and including "I'm Her Fool," which in my book is one of the funkiest, most good-natured teen-age songs ever written. I never thought I'd ever hear a song that would make me want to play in a "combo" again. Dear hearts.

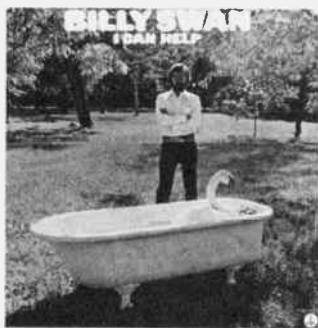
Ronnie Milsap's *Legend In My Time*, doesn't have the personal feel of Swan's record, but it does have the talents of Milsap, who is probably one of the most gifted and consummate musicians and singers to cut a country record in many a year. Before he began singing country full time, Milsap was acknowledged by all those who should know as the best rock-and-roll singer

in the world. Unfortunately, his underground reputation didn't pay the rent. Now he is acknowledged by nearly everyone as a country singer in a class with Haggard, Jones, Jennings and Rodriguez—which is *first class* to say the least. And it is a credit to Milsap's versatility that as a singer only several years away from rock-and-roll, his album is by far the most "country" of the albums under consideration. There are two uptempo hill-billy jams and the rest of the album is a collection of stone jukebox-hook country ballads, sung with real soul. Don Gibson's title song, and Barker-Quillen's "She Came Here for the Change" are ready-made standards. The only cut on the album which doesn't get off is his rendition of the pop-ish "I Honestly Love You."

Charlie Rich's album "Silver Fox" is the most schizophrenic album I have heard in years. The front side is a collection of ballads given



full Billy Sherrill strings and things production, and the second side is a portion of Rich's stage show during which he moves thru examples of all the kinds of music he's been involved in from blues to jazz to rockabilly to country, but the effect is strangely unconvincing be-



anathema, the home of the enemy, the rock-and-rollers. It took nearly twenty years of popular music from New York, Liverpool, London, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Muscle Shoals, to illuminate what Memphis artists knew all along: that the roots of Memphis' so-called rock and roll were more country, and more firmly rooted in America's tradition of rural music than a lot of the noise that

cause Rich is not really a versatile artist, he is a synthesizer. There is a little bit of jazz and blues and rock and country in everything he does. He can't, like Milsap, turn off Mick Jagger and turn on Merle Haggard. He is finally, like Sinatra, a gifted pop singer who has molded all of his influences into a master's style. Unfortunately, on the studio side of this album he is literally buried in ostentatious production.

To a certain extent this is a problem with Elvis' *Promised Land* as well. It is by far the best of Elvis' recent albums, but the better cuts: Chuck Berry's "Promised Land," Troy Seals' "Honky Tonk Angel (Who'll Take Me Back In)," and Waylon Jennings' and Billy Joe Shaver's *You Asked Me To*, have all been better done elsewhere, often in several places. And even though the production has been cut back from the extravagance of recent Elvis releases, the studio doctoring is still irritating. As in the case with Rich—a lot of electronics has gone into enhancing a voice which is better than anybody else's to begin with.

Finally, he begins to look

like the real enemy of country music is not Memphis but Las Vegas, where no lilly goes unglided, where the excesses of over-production are synonymous with success. Rich and Elvis have come a long way from three pieces in a little Memphis studio, but you have to wonder whether they are really going anywhere, if *more* is really better, or more *country*. But who am I to quibble; Colonel Parker and Billy Sherrill stand as living proof that everything I know is wrong.

DAVE HICKEY

**Roy Clark**  
Family and Friends  
ABC-Dot DOSD-2005

Roy Clark's had a lot of success lately, and we're all proud of him. But his rhinestones and his Lear jets don't fool this ole boy. Roy Clark is still somewhere downwind of the barn. He ain't made it to the house yet. And that's meant as a compliment.

*Family and Friends* is an album of old favorites—"Corina, Corina," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Silver Bells," "John Hardy," "Salty Dog Blues"—in which Roy and

family prove that they may well be new favorites themselves sometimes in the dim future. And part of that legend will be Roy himself, no matter how hard they tell us



that he's more Johnny Carson's meat than his real fans! Let's face it: Roy's salty tenor makes Vic Damone sound like a wind chime, but Roy's so *country*. Bless his heart. He tries.

*Family and Friends* features, besides Roy, Roy's daddy, two uncles, one cousin, a "good friend," Buck Trent, Shot Jackson, Pete Wade and Bob Moore. The liner notes describe the music as a kind of Virginia bluegrass, except that bluegrass is definitely Kentuckian. And the notes go on to say that perhaps the style should be dubbed "Old Dominion Music." OK. But, I seem to recall from my youth a wonderful thing called Virginia ham. Maybe that's what this music is. Anyway, like Virginia ham and bluegrass, it's simply beautiful. It beats everything I've heard described as "cross-over," meaning both pop and country. This is the real thing, and I don't mean Coke.

MARSHALL FALLWELL

**Statler Brothers**  
Sons Of The Motherland  
Mercury SRM-1-1019 6.98  
MC8-1-1019 (tape) 7.98

More than just a collection of four voices, The Statler Brothers have made an important contribution to country music by writing and recording songs that paint a vivid picture of America through a candid and con-

tinuing canvas of its prime commodity—people.

Although not quite the strict concept album its title implies, *Sons of The Motherland* is another album in a long and successful list of lp's issued by the Statlers that captures this important aspect of America.

Part of getting at the heart of the country today is tracing the heartbeat of its history. So the Statlers wisely choose to let Grandpa Jones—country music's banjo pickin' answer to Will Rogers—sing his own song, "Eight More Miles To Louisville." A living example of country song history is a hard act to follow and the Statlers give us some slack on nostalgic flashbacks after that. The album is all brand new sentiments.

Patriotism is part of this country's pride and that's documented here with their version of "The Star Spangled Banner" and "You've Been Like A Mother To Me."

The opening tune, "All American Girl," takes an inventory of the composite



charms of sweet young things from coast to coast and furthermore, details their vision of the All American lass on a *state by state* basis. Again, their combined talents for songwriting—for capturing the essence of the popular song form—is wonderfully realized here.

The Statlers bring to life a variety of characters, some fictional, some from their own lives, and they make us see a bit of each of us in them. It's funny, you know, when I hear some uptown sophisticates knocking The Statlers (and many other country

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Artist	Title	LP/Tape No.

MO55



groups) for being "tacky." Hell, tacky is true. Everyday life is tacky. Ninety nine percent of the people in this country don't belong to the jet set, they just live life every day—up and down, joy and sorrow, life and death, pay your taxes and stand in line. The Statlers just tell it like it is, like it was—and like it could be. And that makes for one helluva album!

ROBERT ADELS

amply displayed on *Expressions*. Nine of the tunes are Griff originals, all of them given the tasteful care in arrangement and production that is a Griff hallmark. They're all good, but for the record my favorites are "The Hill," "Wasted Years" and "That Doesn't Mean That I



Don't Love My God." The real test, though, comes on Gordon Lightfoot's "Sundown" and Ray Pennington's "I'm A Ramblin' Man," both of which were extremely pop-

ular in other versions. Ray brings them to life anew in his renditions.

This album shows the difference careful production can make. Background voices, string sections, unusual instruments (for country) like harpsichord and french horn and trombone in less sure hands have overwhelmed the songs they were meant to illustrate. But Ray's touch is flawless and the instrumentation never gets in the way of the music.

It is his voice, a smoky excuse that never gives in to the temptation to be Dean Martin, that sets Ray Griff off clearly from the pack. It is an instrument itself, capable of sighs and sobs and shouts. It almost always has a smile. I thought Ray Griff's *Songs for Everyone* was one of the best records released last year. *Expressions* is one of the best of this.

FLOYD DIETZ

**Brian Collins**  
That's The Way Love Should Be

ABC Dot DOSD-2008 \$6.98  
8150-26017H (GRT) (tape) \$7.98

**B**rian Collins new album comes closer than any of his previous releases to ful-



filling the promise of this talented young star. Collins has everything going for him: voice, looks, personality and a reputation as one of the nicest guys in the business.

**Ray Griff**  
*Expressions*  
ABC Dot DOSD-2011 \$6.98  
GRT 8150-2011 (tape) 7.98

I await new Ray Griff albums more expectantly than I do those of almost any star. Most people know that Ray is a dynamite songwriter. Many have missed that he is also a performer with a singular talent.

Both kinds of skill are

## Turner mikes it

Turner is finding a home in the warm sounds of country, RCA recording artist-writer Dickey Lee found the smooth, crisp response he wanted in the new Turner TC-20. Now the TC-20 mike is as much a part of Dickey Lee's stage performance as his guitar.

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Unfortunately his handlers keep trying to force him into grooves that he doesn't quite fit.

Collins is a natural rocker. Not a rock and roller, but a down-home gut-basic country rocker. Twenty years after Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison and Johnny Cash this kind of music should need no justification. But for a lot of acts the search for the elusive "country" sound, defined as falling somewhere between Chet Atkins and Billy Sherrill, leads away from a strong rockabilly statement.

By far the best moments on *That's The Way Love Should Be* are the funkier. "Come A Little Bit Closer," the old Jay and the Americans tune; Jim Croce's

"Workin' At The Car Wash Blues;" "Six Days on the Road," the Dave Dudley hit; and "Used To Be," by E.J. Businelle and Joel Johnson, which surely would be a hit if released as a single. They make an interesting contrast to the ballads—which are dull by comparison, and over-arranged and over-produced despite the fact that Collins can sing his butt off.

Please don't let me scare you off this album. Collins is one of the better things country music has going for it these days and this is his finest lp yet. It's just that he is so much better than this record indicates. Joe Stampley and Crash Craddock have demonstrated again, if there was any need to, that there is an audience for the kind of

music Brian Collins makes best. And nobody looks more like a superstar, so let's hope he gets to be one.

BYRON FODOR

### Ray Price

Like Old Times Again  
Myrrh MST-6538 \$6.98

The old media rule of thumb, "What has he done lately?", is applied nowhere more strenuously than in the record business. Last year, for example, CBS honored Ray Price, the man who produced such hits as "City Lights" to "For The Good Times," by dropping him from its catalogue. Now Ray has turned up with a new album on Myrrh, an outfit out of Waco, Texas. What he's done lately is one hell of an

album, his best in years.

Ray Price never had the best voice in country music, but he has known how to use his instrument like a virtu-



oso, picking songs that suit him and milking them for all their emotional worth by skillful performance. Ray can still sing circles around most other performers, especially on the ballads which have become his specialty. Here he tackles ten tunes, all of them written by Jim Weatherly who knows how to turn out the kind of sad lyric Ray prefers. And though it sounds sometimes like Ray has gritted his teeth to hang on to a note, he brings just the right tension to songs like "My First Day Without Her," "Where Do I Put Her Memory" and "All That Keeps Me Going."

*Like Old Times Again* was produced in Hollywood by Larry Gordon and Larry Muhoberac, with the latter arranging. JOHN GABREE

### Elvis Presley

Promised Land  
RCA APL1-0873 6.98  
APS1-0873 (tape) 7.98

The king is back and his latest album, *Promised Land*, proves that age hasn't diminished his ability to rock 'em and sock 'em like he used to when he was just getting started.

Leave it up to Elvis to celebrate his 40th birthday by dusting off a long-neglected Chuck Berry classic like "Promised Land" and turn it into the sort of Memphis rockabilly teeth-rattler they started the whole damn rock

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and roll craze way back when we were all wearing peg pants. Chuck Berry has been covered by so many country cousins it ain't funny but in all honesty, and due respect for Chuck, I do believe Elvis' current version is even better than Chuck's original.



There is an excitement generated on Elvis' cut of "Promised Land" that awakens all those old feelings that set the music biz on fire.

And that's not all. Elvis' taste is improving with age.

## CHARLIE LOUVIN'S GREATEST YET

**Charlie Louvin**

*It Almost Felt Like Love*  
United Artists UA-LA248-G  
\$6.98

Charlie Louvin has been in the country music business almost forty years. With his late brother Ira he was half of the foremost group in gospel music (last year Capitol assembled *The Great Gospel Singing of the Louvin Brothers*, ST-11193, an lp that should be in every country fan's collection). For the last decade, he has pursued a solo career and *It Almost Felt Like Love* is its crowning achievement. What an album! There aren't superlatives enough to describe it. It is quite simply one of the greatest country records ever made.

Actually *It Almost Felt Like Love* is more like a volume of short stories than a record album. Charlie's weary voice creates a narrator whose implicit wisdom binds together his observations about life and love.

Charlie Louvin has done the hardest thing imaginable

His selection of songs is much better than on some of his more recent albums. He's dipped into Troy Seals' and Danny Rice's songbook for "There's A Honky Tonk Angel" and he's done it to perfection. Elvis is not only a great singer. He's among the greatest song interpreters. He gets down and feels it. Just listen to "If You Talk In Your Sleep." He hasn't lost a drop of his snake-hipped hillbilly cool. His version of Larry Gatlin's "Help Me" can draw tears. Billy Joe Shaver's and Waylon's "You Asked Me To" becomes a torch song when the king croons it. (And we thought nobody could sing that song except Waylon!)

If you recall, I blasted Elvis' *Live In Memphis* album a while back as being a throw-away lp. Well, the king has redeemed himself in my eyes. Many happy returns!

MARSHALL FALLWELL

for a performer, worked and reworked a very narrow emotional and musical range, and achieved, not boredom and repetition, but depth and a sharpening of perception. Every song but one on this lp is about the sad side of loving, and even the exception, "Honeymoon Feeling," has a bittersweet edge to it.



The others are about cheating and being cheated, about empty marriages and empty beds, about the loneliness after love is gone.

Charlie's performance is extraordinary. The narrowness of the focus—the tempo vary little, the content not at all—only intensifies

the overall effect. It is Variations on a Theme, until what emerges is not just a series of vignettes, but the character of a man played with such conviction by Charlie Louvin.

Kelso Herston deserves applause for production. The arrangers and musicians, unfortunately not listed on the jacket, are perfect. The ele-

ven songs, all excellent, are the product of eleven different songwriters or songwriting teams. Nobody said sit down and write me a unified album. It is bound together by the strength of Charlie Louvin's performance. This is one of the dozen or so best recordings of the last decade. Don't miss it.

JOHN GABREE

## OUR LADY OF SORROWS?

**Tammy Wynette**

*Woman to Woman*  
Epic KE33246 5.98  
EA33246 (tape) 6.98

Knowing Tammy backs up the notion I've always had from hearing her on record, that she is a remarkable woman. I've thought, "only a fine human being could communicate pain and hope and joy and despair the way she can." I think this album proves me right. Tammy is the embodiment of every woman whose only weapon against life—and love gone bad—is her own vulnerability, the ease with which she is hurt and betrayed. *Woman to Woman* is a song about that vulnerability which often makes her our lady of sorrows.

She is not all soft and accepting, however. Her strength is the same openness that causes all her unhappiness. She communicates, though not very often, a warning. Listen to her voice. Rich and full, it is most often quiet. But once in a while, there is a real threat there, an edge ("For The Kids," on this album, is a good example). For these reasons—her vulnerability and her uncommon strength when the chips are down—she becomes a better symbol for the women's movement than anyone else could be. Our lady of sorrows emerges triumphant in the end.

*Woman to Woman* is one of my favorites of Tammy's albums. There is a tension here between songs of love exultant ("What's A Little Rain") and love thwarted for

one reason or the other ("This Time I Almost Made It") that mirrors all our lives. In one song "things just can't go wrong," and in the next, love is like "poison red berries that die on the vine." At one moment "trouble's



just a season that time will change," and in the next, she's fighting like a she-wolf "for the kids."

*Woman to Woman* may be one of Tammy's best albums. But then again, it's hard to believe that she could be bad under any circumstances, even the one that's torturing her now. We wish her good luck in a future we hope is more certain than any she's known.

MARSHALL FALLWELL

**Dick Feller**

*Dick Feller Wrote...*  
UA LA094R 6.98  
UA EA094G (tape) 7.98

This is an old album which has been re-released by United Artists to include the novelty hit, "The Credit Card Song," and it should do a lot toward establishing Feller's position as one of Nashville's most solid young songwriters. He moves comfortably



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through an impressive array of country material, ranging from an old-fashioned lament about the passing of trains to his own brand of funny, up-tempo protests about such modern evils as computers, credit cards and gas-



guzzling automobiles.

The best-known cuts were written for other artists: "Orleans Parish Prison" and "Any Old Wind That Blows" for Johnny Cash and "Lord,

Mr. Ford" for Jerry Reed. Feller's own performances on all three songs are considerably less memorable than either Reed's or Cash's, but his pleasant, low-key style is particularly suited to narrative songs such as "Biff, The Friendly Purple Bear."

This song, like most country material, deals with a simple subject—a little boy growing up—but it treats it with almost astonishing sensitivity and originality. Many of the same qualities are also present in a melodic ballad called "Daisy Hill"—the story of a drifter who falls in love with a prostitute—which Feller manages to lift from maudlin melodrama and transform into a poignant commentary on friendship.

Feller is a good musician,

a glib-fingered guitar-picker whose idol is Chet Atkins, but his strong suit is writing. His lyrics may not be as consistently mind-bending as those of such new-country geniuses as Kris Kristofferson or Mickey Newbury, but he is one of a growing number of more recent arrivals who will push them hard.

His latest album, all in all, is a competent musical package, which further supports the theory that new songwriters are offering not a betrayal of the country tradition, but a renewal.

FRYE GAILLARD

**O.B. McClinton**

*If You Loved Her That Way* Enterprise ENS-7506 6.98 (no tape information available)

O.B. McClinton's new lp, like all his previous ones,

is a collection of well chosen songs given skillful production and flawless musicianship. The material is terrific, varying from "Hallelujah," a reworking of the old folk tune "Hallelujah, I'm A Bum," to a pure country version of



Bill Withers' hit "Lean On Me." One sequence moves from "Goodbye," a lament by Larry Butler, into a jukebox stomper, "I Still Go To Memphis In My Mind," through another ballad, "It Gets Lonesome," and into another rocker, "Slippin' Away." Someone connected with this album also had the good sense to include Chip Taylor's "Clean Your Own Tables," a song that is long due for chart exposure. It would be hard to put together a better list of songs.

The sessions were packed with Music City's studio All-Stars: Pete Drake, Weldon Myrick, Jerry Shook, Buddy Spicher, Charlie McCoy to name the most prominent. But you can't make an omelet without an egg, no matter how good the mushrooms, cheese, onions and ham you're adding for flavor. O.B. McClinton has an attractive if off-beat voice and a winning manner, but he seems to be plagued by a lack of confidence that leads him to reach too hard for effects.

The sorriest part is that O.B. continuously demonstrates just how good he is. He gets you involved in a song only to let you down with a descent into self-parody. You may want to get *If You Loved Her That Way* anyway; it has a lot going for it. But for O.B. McClinton himself it is still a record of unfulfilled promise.

JOHN GABREE

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UA-LA363-G/8 TRK. UA-EA363-H

## Sunday Sharpe

They're talking about Miss Sunday Sharpe who, after a year's absence, returned to UA with a hit in her reply to Paul Anka's "You're Having My Baby." This song is the title of an album now, from which another hit, "Mr. Songwriter," has been taken.



UA-LA362-G/8 TRK. UA-EA362-H

## Crystal Gayle

They're talking about Crystal Gayle who came from one of country music's first families to become one of its first ladies with her smash hit "Wrong Road Again" and her debut album for us, "Crystal Gayle."



UA-LA365-G/8 TRK. UA-EA365-H

## Billie Jo Spears

They're talking about Billie Jo Spears, who has had two number one country hits and is on her way to another, with the red hot title song from her new album, "Blanket On The Ground," now bulleting up the charts.



UA-LA390G/8 TRK. UA-EA390-H

## Del Reeves

They're talking about Del Reeves' phenomenal popularity — every one of his UA singles has made it to the charts and his latest, "But I Do" is no exception. "With Strings And Things" is the new album for this country giant.



UA-LA364-G/8 TRK. UA-EA364-H

## Dave Dudley

And they're talking about Dave Dudley's first album for us and the single from it, "How Come It Took So Long." It's an honor to have a star of Dave's stature recording for UA. The new album is called "Special Delivery" and it's first class all the way.



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Mel Tillis and his 2200-pound, \$13,000 Limousin breeding bull.



The bull is now called "Stutterin' Boy."



Mel's "townhouse:" A mere 10-acre spread.



# MEL TILLIS BUYS A BULL

by JIM McGUIRE

About 20 minutes from Mel Tillis Enterprises and the downtown Nashville traffic, the house sits on a long, sloping hill just off the same Franklin Park Circle which Bobby Russell made famous with his song. Even at first glance, the house is impressive. Standing on a 10-acre plot of prime land, it is Mel's "town" house. He has another place—a 386-acre farm—out of town on the banks of the Cumberland River, but this is his Nashville address.

The house is Spanish in style, as spacious as it could be while still being livable-in, with an enormous combination living room/den at its center. Double doors lead out from the massive stone and wood of this room onto a patio and swimming pool, and beyond them lies the farm. To the right, there's a scenic pasture with horses and cattle grazing in solitude at the far end; to the left there is activity in the small modern barn. A new arrival is expected, and preparations are well under way.

It all began a couple of years ago when Mel was on his way to play a date at what he thought was a limousine convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Except that it wasn't a limousine convention. It was a *Limousin* convention. The participants were not auto dealers—they were ranchers and breeders of a rather exotic brand of cattle, called Limousin.

That must have left a lasting impression on Mel, because at this year's prestigious Denver Stock Auction, he layed out \$13,000 for a prize three-year-old, 2200-pound Limousin bull. He swears he could have gotten away with the bull for \$8000 if he'd been able to get his bid out sooner, but that's beside the point. He bought the bull.

"Stutterin' Boy" as Mel has named him, is the only one of his breed in Tennessee and is one of only fifty such bulls in the entire country. That's a cause for celebration, and so, on a recent Spring-like day, a press party was held at the spacious Tillis household to introduce "Stutterin' Boy" to his new surroundings and the media.

On hand, aside from the local newspaper and television crews, were representatives from a number of breeders and livestock journals.

Also present was friend and fellow-picker and rancher Carl Smith, along with Bob Vantrease, Executive Vice-President of the North American Limousin Foundation, the Denver-based organization that imports and promotes the breed. It was Bob who sold Mel on the idea. He was along to celebrate the event, and to make sure that "Stutterin' Boy" got off on the right foot in his new surroundings.

When the time came, the proud new owner led the bull from the barn to the yard like a child leading some new, overgrown household pet. It was easy to see by the reaction of the experts that "Stutterin' Boy" was truly an impressive animal.

According to the information published by the Limousin Foundation, the breed does indeed have an interesting history. Although this particular bull was brought from Sweden, the breed originated in the green rolling hillsides outside Limoges, France. For centuries they were confined to the ancient province of the old French Aquitaine region, an area isolated for many centuries from the rest of Europe by continuing political strife. This area was also the center of the his-

toric 100 Years War, and was ruled by Richard The Lion-Hearted, King of England.

The breed was raised in an area where very little feed grains were available and the principle agriculture production was mainly cattle, sheep and horses, and as a result the breed has long been range animals bred to rustle for themselves. According to Bob Vantrease, the Limousins are the most efficient breed ever in terms of converting feed to beef. And in the cattle business, that's what it's all about.

For Mel Tillis these are the beginning steps towards enjoying all that his efforts have gained him through the years. For several years now he has been buying adjacent small farms in the hill country north-east of Nashville. Already he has some 75 mixed head of cattle, and he has plans to continue building her herd and eventually build a house on the property. And then get down to some *serious* ranching.

One of his next steps involves cutting down the number of days he spends on the road from some 200 to a more sensible number like 80 or 90.

Aside from the improved quality of the herd that "Stuttin' Boy" will provide, the purchase of livestock represents substantial tax advantages in many cases. While it's true that this was certainly a consideration and a valid selling point, Mel states, "A lot of people invest their money in different ways to take advantage of tax shelters, but as long as I'm doing it, I feel like it's better to do something that will benefit the country . . . this bull is going to breed more and better cattle cheaper, and it's the first one in this area—and that's no b-b-b-bull . . ."

"Make no mistake about the breeding capabilities of these cattle," Mel continues. "These bulls are rugged, fertile, aggressive and tireless breeders. There's no hanging around in the shade for *these* bulls."

As the sun set over the Southern pasture, Mel led the bull to the gate and released him with the cows for the first time since his importation. With great, wild leaps into the air, the bull headed toward the cows, and it was difficult to judge from the smile on Mel's face just who was happier—Mel or the bull. ■

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# the STAR who never was

by JOHN PUGH

The question may take several forms, but its meaning is always the same.

"With your talent, why have you never become a big star?"

"The way you can tear up an audience, why aren't you a major headliner?"

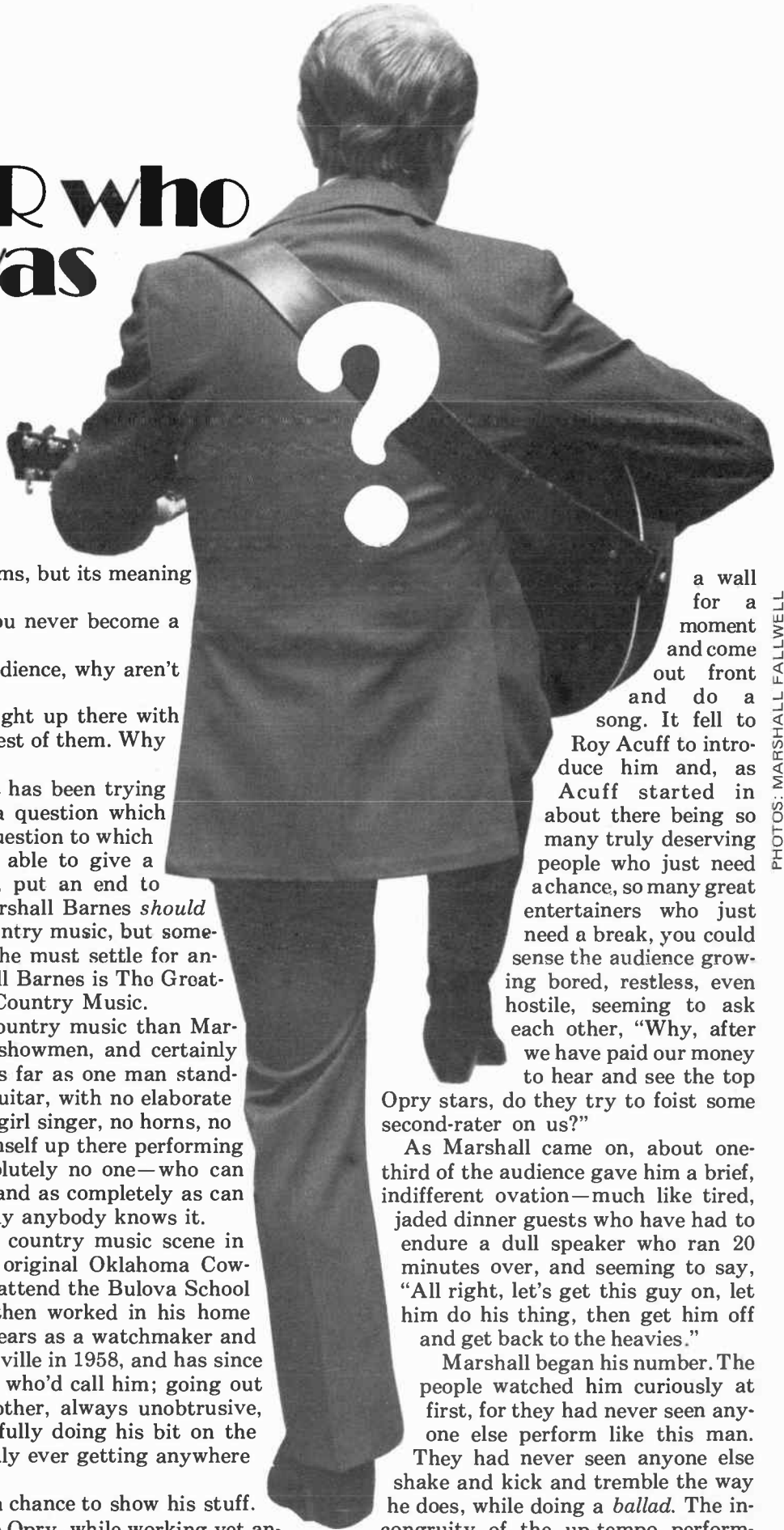
"Your act ought to have you right up there with Cash, Haggard, Pride and all the rest of them. Why hasn't it?"

It's a question Marshall Barnes has been trying to answer for the last 17 years, a question which has plagued and haunted him, a question to which he'd give almost anything to be able to give a satisfactory reply—or better yet, put an end to once and for all. By all rights Marshall Barnes *should* be one of the biggest names in country music, but somehow it has eluded him. Therefore he must settle for another, more dubious title. Marshall Barnes is *The Greatest Undiscovered Personality In Country Music*.

There are stronger talents in country music than Marshall Barnes, and more dynamic showmen, and certainly hundreds of bigger names. But as far as one man standing up at the mike with just his guitar, with no elaborate show, no choreography, no pretty girl singer, no horns, no impersonations—just the man himself up there performing his songs—there is no one—absolutely no one—who can incinerate an audience as quickly and as completely as can Marshall Barnes. Trouble is, hardly anybody knows it.

Marshall first appeared on the country music scene in 1946 as one of Cowboy Copas's original Oklahoma Cowboys. He left Nashville in 1948 to attend the Bulova School of Watchmaking for two years, then worked in his home area of Columbia, S.C. for eight years as a watchmaker and car salesman. He returned to Nashville in 1958, and has since worked as a sideman for anybody who'd call him; going out on the road with one band or another, always unobtrusive, workmanlike, off to one side dutifully doing his bit on the guitar or upright brass—and hardly ever getting anywhere near a microphone.

Occasionally, however, he gets a chance to show his stuff. On a recent night at the Grand Ole Opry, while working yet another sideman gig, he was permitted to lean his bass up against



a wall for a moment and come out front and do a song. It fell to Roy Acuff to introduce him and, as Acuff started in about there being so many truly deserving people who just need a chance, so many great entertainers who just need a break, you could sense the audience growing bored, restless, even hostile, seeming to ask each other, "Why, after we have paid our money to hear and see the top Opry stars, do they try to foist some second-rater on us?"

As Marshall came on, about one-third of the audience gave him a brief, indifferent ovation—much like tired, jaded dinner guests who have had to endure a dull speaker who ran 20 minutes over, and seeming to say, "All right, let's get this guy on, let him do his thing, then get him off and get back to the heavies."

Marshall began his number. The people watched him curiously at first, for they had never seen anyone else perform like this man. They had never seen anyone else shake and kick and tremble the way he does, while doing a *ballad*. The incongruity of the up-tempo performances coupled with the tear-jerker

song had an almost hallucinogenic effect on the audience, making them laugh and cry at the same time, as this incredible, non-stop vaudevillian bled every last drop of their emotions. They watched and, like a locomotive picking up steam, they began to respond; slowly, tentatively at first, then louder,

more noisily and, then, as Marshall ended his number quivering and shaking and twitching like a giant tuning-fork run amuck, they built to an unrestrained crescendo worthy of New Year's Eve in Times Square.

Naturally, he had to encore. They wouldn't let him off. They couldn't get enough of him. They couldn't believe what they were seeing. Four thousand people had just discovered The Greatest Undiscovered Personality in Country Music! Everything else would be an anticlimax.

Nobody knows quite why Marshall Barnes has been in Nashville for nearly two decades and has never become a star, though nearly everyone takes a stab at explanation. Some say that, though he is an unrivalled singer, he is still primarily a visual act, one that cannot be captured on record. Others say that since he has been around so long as a sideman, he is now typed into that category and cannot escape it. A few offer the usual banalities about never quite having been in the right place at the right time, or never having gotten that "Big Break," or

never having found the right song.

Marshall is as much in the dark as anyone else. "A lot of people wonder why I'm not bigger," he said. "I get asked this everywhere I go: 'Why don't you have a bigger part on the show?' It's hard to explain to them. They don't understand. I've had people yelling and screaming for me to do another song, and not been allowed to. I've worked with stars who wouldn't even let me do *one* song. There's so much about this business I don't understand."

He does admit, however, that perhaps personality eccentricities may have played a part. For Marshall is admittedly a strange being: a perplexing mix of hotblooded

Southern pride and almost obsequious humility. Both traits have proved major stumbling blocks.

He adamantly protests the kind of second-rate treatment many stars give their sidemen while on the road, and even more stubbornly refuses having to defer to and flatter many artists in order to hold a job. Many stars, not knowing quite how to take this nonsense attitude and outspoken independence, prefer not to take it at all. This same pride—not to be mistaken for ego or arrogance, but rather just a matter-of-fact certitude—also leads him to assert, "I'll go up against the biggest talent in the world, and I'll get more encores than any of them."

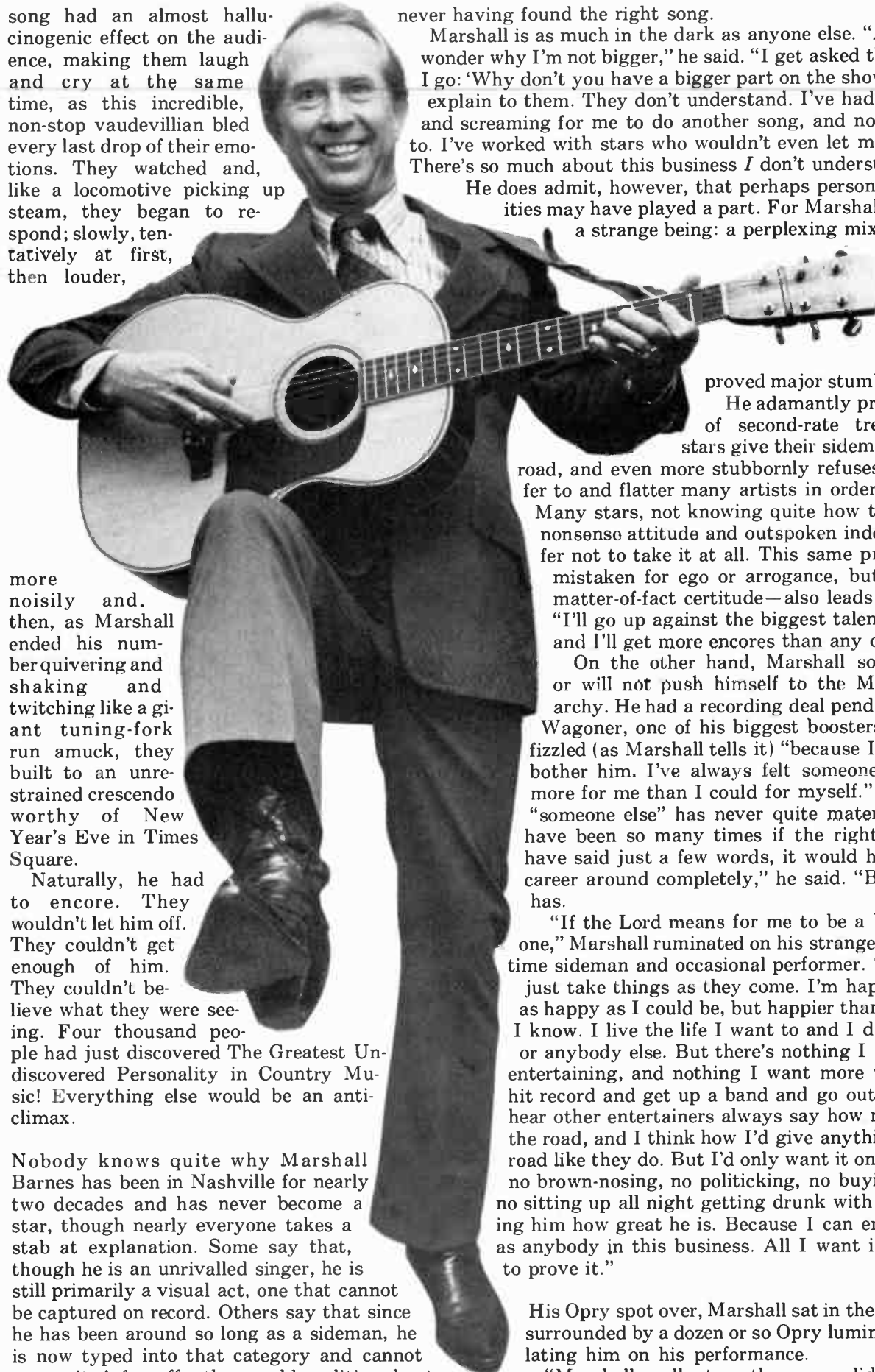
On the other hand, Marshall somehow cannot or will not push himself to the Music Row hierarchy. He had a recording deal pending with Porter Wagoner, one of his biggest boosters, but the deal fizzled (as Marshall tells it) "because I didn't want to bother him. I've always felt someone else could do more for me than I could for myself." Somehow that "someone else" has never quite materialized. "There have been so many times if the right person would have said just a few words, it would have turned my career around completely," he said. "But no one ever has."

"If the Lord means for me to be a big star, I'll be one," Marshall ruminated on his strange limbo of sometime sideman and occasional performer. "Otherwise, I'll just take things as they come. I'm happy, maybe not as happy as I could be, but happier than a lot of people I know. I live the life I want to and I don't kid myself or anybody else. But there's nothing I love more than entertaining, and nothing I want more than to have a hit record and get up a band and go out on the road. I hear other entertainers always say how much they hate the road, and I think how I'd give anything to work the road like they do. But I'd only want it on the up and up: no brown-nosing, no politicking, no buying my way in, no sitting up all night getting drunk with a star and telling him how great he is. Because I can entertain as well as anybody in this business. All I want is just a chance to prove it."

His Opry spot over, Marshall sat in the dressing room, surrounded by a dozen or so Opry luminaries congratulating him on his performance.

"Marshall really tore them up, didn't he?" asked Bill Carlisle.

"Just tore them up," Billy Grammer replied. "I'd





have hated to follow him.”

“Did you catch Marshall’s number?” Ernie Ashworth asked. “He really had them going to town.”

“Yeah, I saw it,” a sideman eagerly answered. “He really had them going to town.”

And so it went around the room, one to the other, with each new arrival being asked afresh if he saw Marshall’s performance and what did he think of it, much the way Monday morning commuters ask each other what they thought of yesterday’s thriller between the Giants and the Raiders, and what about that last-second touchdown?

“We were right on schedule until you came on. Now we’re ten minutes behind. Man, you just destroyed them,” said Opry announcer Hal Durham.

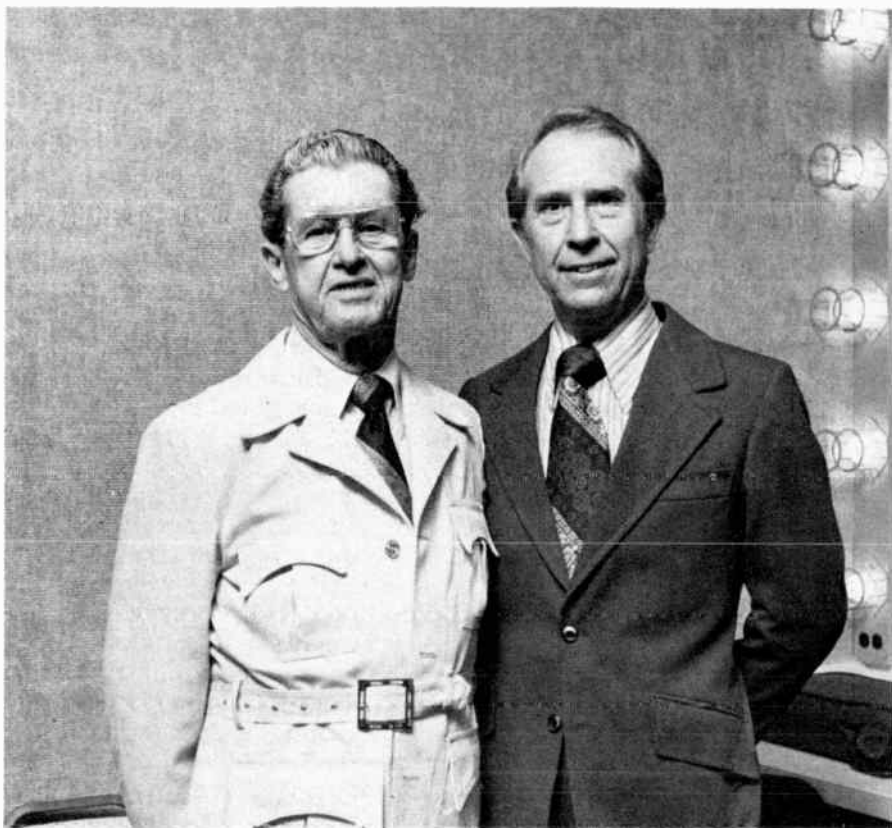
“Did you hear that?” Carlisle jumped up. “*destroyed* them! You should have seen those people.”

And for the next two or three minutes these men again affirmed that, sure enough, Marshall really *did* destroy them just like Hal said he did, and he’s got one of the best acts in the business, and there’s hardly anybody who can follow him, and there is no disputing it one bit, by damn, he’s one of the greatest talents in country music.

Marshall was somewhat overwhelmed by it all. He said little, feeling a little awkward and out of place as the center of so much adulation. Still, he grinned from ear to ear like a prize-winning jack-o-lantern, and looked at times like a king granting an audience to a few favored subjects—again exhibiting that curious combination of pride and humility.

Later, after everyone had given his last testimony to Marshall and his amazing powers, the assemblage drifted away, and all the hubbub ceased. As Marshall packed his guitar, Roy Acuff said to him, “You know, Marshall, I watched you tonight and I couldn’t help but think, with your talent, how come you’ve never become a big star?”

It was inevitable that after all the tumult and shouting, all the cheers and victory, that someone would, for the hundredth time, thousandth, *millionth*? time ask that question. And Marshall Barnes, The Greatest Undiscovered Personality in Country Music, gave the only answer he can. “I wish I knew,” he said. ■



Roy Acuff and Marshall Barnes, The Greatest Undiscovered Personality In Country Music: “You know,” Roy said one night after an Opry show, “I watched you tonight and I couldn’t help but think, with your talent, how come you’ve never become a big star?” Said Barnes: “I wish I knew...”

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# PORTER

(Continued from page 27)

station for forty dollars a week. It might as well have been four thousand. And could I be up there the next morning? Well, I was gonna be there come hell or high water,

which is nearly what came. I took our old Ford and nearly got drowned in the rain, then stuck in the mud, then I had a flat tire, which I had to have fixed on credit, but I got there. And I went on with a thirty-minute show that day. I planned to stay in Springfield forever. I mean, I didn't even think about being rich, I was so damned happy just to be poor.

"At that time the station air time was divided up into about six different shows like mine with different live singers or groups. Now, your popularity was gauged by the amount of mail you got from the surrounding communities, and there was a big row of mail-boxes, with each performer's name on his box, so everybody could see how much mail the others got. Well, they put my name on a box and I started on a Monday. Tuesday I came in and there was no mail, but that was all right, there hadn't been time; then Wednesday there was no mail. It bothered me, but I thought, well, it takes a little time for them to get to know me.

"Thursday, though, when my box was the only empty one, I began to get worried. After Friday and Saturday with nothing in my box, I thought my heart was gonna break. I wasn't sleeping. I couldn't speak to anybody. I had visions of going back to West Plains washed out at eighteen. Sunday was just hell. Then I came in Monday and the box was still empty. There was the sign, plain as day, PORTER WAGONER, on an empty box. I was just standing there with my hands shaking and the bottom falling out of my stomach, when the secretary stuck her head out of the office. 'Aren't you ever gonna pick up your mail?' she said.

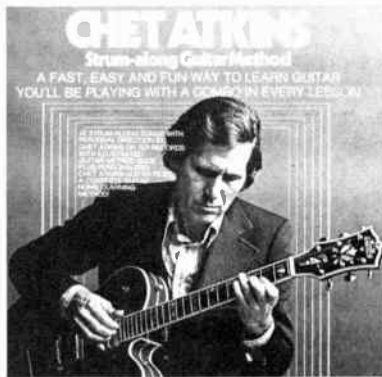
"I just pointed at the empty box and she said, 'Ah, Hon, you come with me.' And she took me down to the basement, and there in the dark was three cardboard shipping boxes full of mail. There had been too much for my box and nobody told me! I guess I cried or laughed or something. It was the best thing that I'd ever seen. Hell, I thought I was fired. And here were these boxes of mail from people I'd never even seen. It was the best thing I'll ever see. That was the top, right there—everything else is just frosting. Nothing in my career could ever be better than seeing those boxes of mail in that damned dark basement. Those were my fans, my people. And they still are."

Thinking about those boxes of mail, it's not hard to understand why Porter sticks to his suits and his so-called "corny" songs, why he has never donned a tux and crooned for suburban housewives. He owes those people. They took him in. Sixth grade education, gawky frame and all.

The night before I left Nashville, I rode out with Porter to watch his performance at the Grand Old Opry. The new Opry House is a great musical theatre, and the backstage is considerably more comfortable, although it's kind of like an airport waiting room from which the planes never depart. But there was something strange about the atmosphere that I couldn't put my finger on as we retired to the television studio to do the photo session for this article.

The session was very casual, and the poses were being selected by

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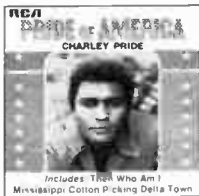
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Porter and his protege Dolly Parton: His suits make the Opry folks nervous.

Jim McGuire, the photographer. Porter was very friendly and helpful, but it was the only time during my stay that he seemed ill at ease and self-conscious. He wasn't running the session, hadn't planned it, so as far as he was concerned, it was out of control. He didn't know *exactly* what Jim wanted, and so, just for a few minutes, he was once again an anxious country boy, eager to please, pleasant, but awkward and unsure in the presence of professionals who knew exactly what was going on.

As we strolled back into the backstage area, I suddenly realized what was so strange. Porter and the Wagonmasters were the only group in colorful Nudie's garb. I couldn't believe it. The Grand Ole Opry? And the attitude of the backstage biggies was also a little strange.

I had just finished a story on Waylon Jennings, and I knew that my paranoia level was way up, so I found a girl I knew who works with Charlie Pride's organization and pulled her aside.

"Am I crazy?" I said, "Or does Porter's Nudie suit make these peo-

ple as nervous as Kristofferson's bluejeans?"

The girl grinned at me. "To tell the truth," she said, "I think it makes them *more* nervous. They don't really *know* Kristofferson's audience, but they know Porter's. Porter's people are the ones they're all trying to leave behind, because they can't afford to buy enough records. I think he makes them feel guilty."

Just at that moment, Porter, his guitar held high above his head in one hand, came running past us onto the stage. There was an explosion of light as the spots hit the spangles on his powder blue suit, with sound provided by a roar of applause. As he ran across the stage he brought the guitar down, and just as he reached the mike he swung the guitar into playing position. He was singing the second he stopped.

"On a highway headed south somewhere in Dixie . . . ."

And he was grinning as he sang. It was something to see. It always is; and always will be, if Porter has anything to say about it. ■

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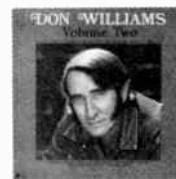
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**Billy "Crash" Craddock** - You Better Move On - including: You Better Move On/What He Don't Know Won't Hurt Him/Seventh Son/Jeanie Norman/The Fool/Treat Her Right, and many more!  
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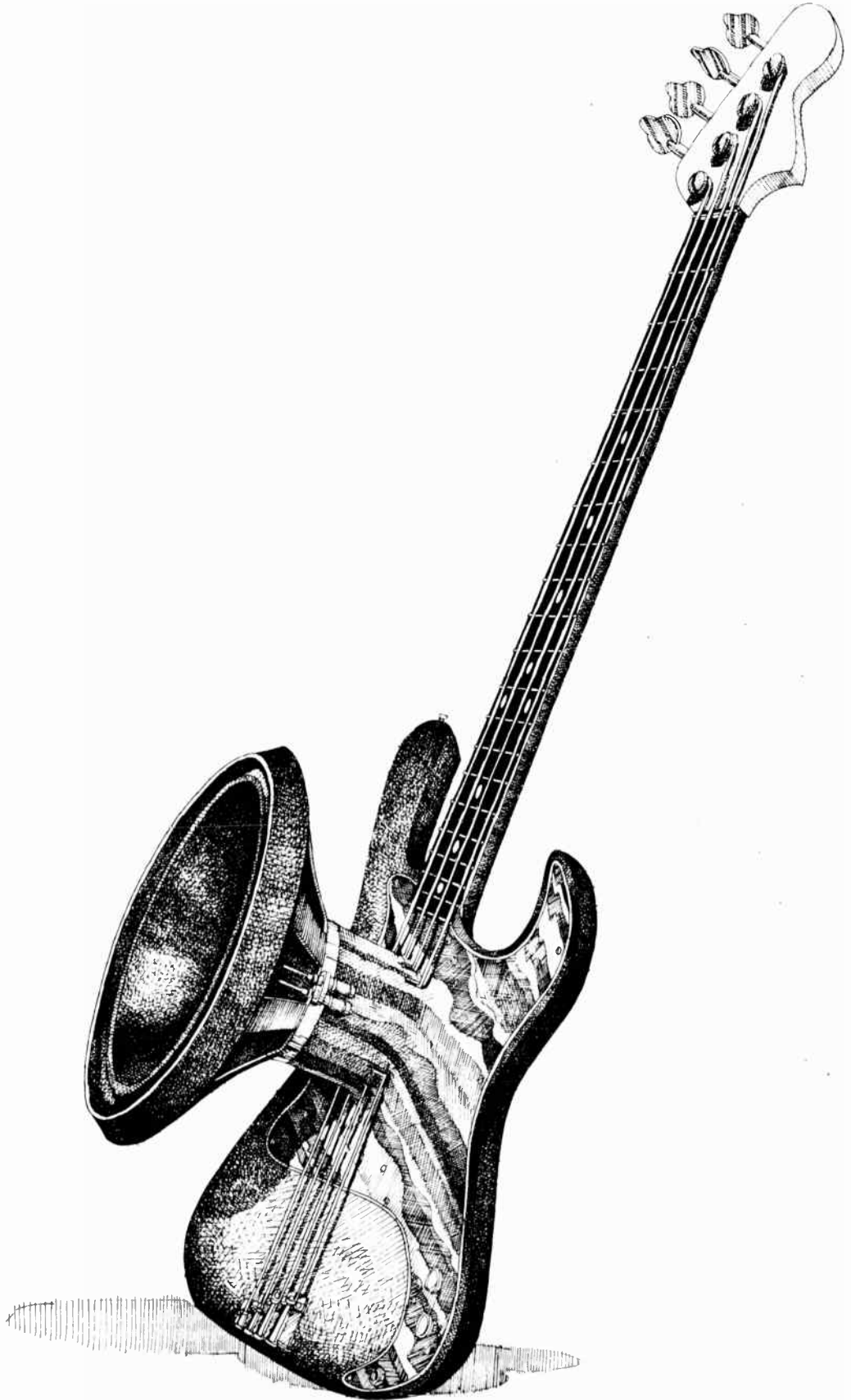
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\*Source: National Marketing Research of California, 1974.

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