

August 1973, 75¢

# COUNTRY MUSIC

©  
02308

**TANYA  
TUCKER**  
THE FEMALE  
ELVIS,  
THE  
FAMILY GIRL

**FREDDY FENDER**  
THE WILD,  
WILD TALE OF  
EL BEBOP KID

**PEE WEE KING**  
THE LEGEND TALKS

**VASSAR CLEMENTS**  
FIDDLER SUPREME

**TROY HESS**  
A CHILD  
ON THE STREETS  
OF NASHVILLE

**GOODBYE,  
KINGSTON  
SPRINGS**  
THE END OF  
A PICKER'S  
PARADISE



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COVER PHOTO: KIT LUCE



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# Letters

Joan Dew's article entitled "Tammy's Story" (June issue) was published in poor taste. The best person to talk about George Jones' problem with alcohol is no one but George himself. Until such time as he sees fit to publicly discuss his personal problems, I suggest that you request your staff writers to focus their energies on the monumental contributions this man has made to the country music industry.

KEN FAIRLIE  
ARCADIA, CALIFORNIA

*Agreed, Mr. Fairlie. Nashville editor Richard Nusser should be huddling with George Jones right about now, getting a cover story together for the near future. —Ed.*

First of all let me congratulate you on a really fine publication relating to country music. As a voracious reader of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, etc. it's nice to see a literate magazine dealing with the subject. Too often C & W publications have been of the Shucks and Holler variety which serve only to embarrass Country Music fans and perpetuate the myth of C & W fans as hog-calling hillbillies with a mean IQ of 44. Now let's get into a subject that really makes me mad, the continuing bitch within the country music industry regarding the "old" country music and the "new" sound of country music. As a C & W disc jockey, radio station owner and music programmer, I am personally sick to death with all of the moaning and groaning that continually splits the industry wide open. When people ask me if we are an old line station or a whatever station, I tell them we are a country music station. That means we play George Jones, Roy Acuff, Linda Ronstadt, Waylon Jennings, Asleep at the Wheel, Dolly Parton... and the Grateful Dead when they play country music—and they do play it!!!!

The point is gang, that like all things, country music is changing. Our whole society is catapulting through changes and C & W music is moving right along with it. Now, that is no reason to be upset. Progress in any field calls for new ideas, new thoughts and new direction. Without change we become stagnant and everything stops. It is interesting to me

to note the high influx of young hip musicians into the country music bag. Now whether the old guard of country music likes it or not, the John Prines, Randy Scruggs and Jerry Garcias are the vanguard of where country music is going. They are also the future preservation of country music's history. The fact that they also rock out occasionally is irrelevant to me.

So let me make my final point. Dear country music artists, get off your goddamn high horses and get on with the business of pouring out more music regardless of its direction and just be thankful that C & W is as powerful as it is today... more powerful than ever before in its history. Remember this. Without the changes which have occurred and the ones upcoming in the future, it would not be so.

ED LAFRANCE  
STATION MANAGER  
KURE AM/FM  
SANTA ROSA  
CALIFORNIA

Having been a subscriber since your magazine's inception, I have found only one instance of wasted paper, ink, and time... your June story on Barbi Benton.

Remarking that her friends confuse her voice with that of Newton-John's wins her the MOST IDIOTIC STATEMENT OF THE YEAR Award. Too bad Hefner's money can't buy her some talent, for her futile attempts at singing country music offend me. I trust others don't consider country music a "last resort."

Yours is a great publication and my subscription is paid until '77 and if you're still around after that, I'll renew.

D. RISTAU  
DAVENPORT, IOWA

I usually really do enjoy *Country Music Magazine* and find the articles interesting and informative, but your May article on instruments is a notable exception. It is full of inaccuracies that spoil it for anyone who loves musical instruments.

The fiddle pictured with Vassar Clements is labeled as a Stradivarius copy, which it certainly is not. This particular fiddle is one I used to own, and it has a very interesting history. It is a copy of a

Vuillaume copy of a Duiffoprugar, a German viol maker, the so-called "inventor of the violin," and is a pretty nice instrument. The mandolin Bill Monroe plays, while it was made in 1923, was bought second-hand by Monroe in the mid-40's, and has certainly not been played by him for 50 years. The National Duolian pictured, which the caption claims was made around 1920, is more likely from the early 30's, since the Dopera Brothers had not made the first Duolian until well after 1920. John Hartford is shown playing his A.A. Farland banjo, which incidentally he bought from me, and not his Orpheum, which he also bought from me.

It seems evident that the musicians themselves were not consulted in the preparation of this article, because some of them surely would have corrected the errors. I realize most of your readers are not as fussy as I am, but I still feel they deserve to have accurate information. This article is definitely an exception to your usual careful writing.

GEORGE GRUHN  
GTR, INC.  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

*Our writer consulted the musicians, but the facts got mixed up between his notes and actually writing the story. We're sorry about that. Information on the Duolian came from the Country Music Foundation's Hall of Fame Museum. They estimated its manufacture to be in the 1920s, so we weren't far off. —Ed.*

Just finished your May issue, from cover to cover, and it gets better every month. I especially enjoyed the article by Billy Edd Wheeler. Being a sometimes picker and would-be writer, this article really turned me on. I believe everyone will agree that Bill Edd has a way with the written word, as well as being a master songwriter. I knew exactly what he meant when he said sometimes the magic is there, and sometimes it isn't.

Keep up the good work. I operate a small independent recording studio, where I keep *Country Music Magazine* readily available, for all the pickers to pick up, and enjoy, and they do.

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# People on the Scene

Johnny and June Put Their Lives on Paper  
Billy Swan Gets Elvis Presley's Socks  
George Morgan Gets an Unexpected Bath

by AUDREY WINTERS

**Johnny Cash** and wife **June Carter** have been doing some writing recently. Cash has completed his autobiography, "The Man In Black" and June has begun to pen her memoirs. Cash's book will go on sale in mid-August and it is written all by himself. He describes it as "tell-all with a happy ending." June will finish her book this year. Watch for an excerpt from "Man In Black" in next month's COUNTRY MUSIC.

Cash bought an ad in a Nashville newspaper recently, praising the **Oak Ridge Boys**. The ad read: "Thanks Oak Ridge Boys. You have performed 50 concerts with me at the Las Vegas Hilton. You were better than ever at our most recent engagement. The fact that you never compromise, that you sing the gospel wherever you are, is commendable. I am proud of you, as is, I am sure, the entire gospel music industry."

**Dolly Parton** will be featured in an upcoming Candid Camera Show. The camera came to Nashville and filmed Dolly at a Krispy Kreme Doughnut shop, wearing a brown wig and playing the part of a waitress. Her first customer was an elderly man who ordered a glass of milk and two doughnuts. Dolly brought his order and took a sip of his milk. He said, "Alright lady, you can just pay for that damn milk." After it was on film, the producer tried to explain that it was a Candid Camera scene and she was Dolly Parton. The man was angry and said he "didn't care who she was. She could pay for the damn milk." After they paid him a fee for being on camera, he got in a better mood. The show will be aired this September. Also, Dolly has a new fan club, headed by her sister Cassie.



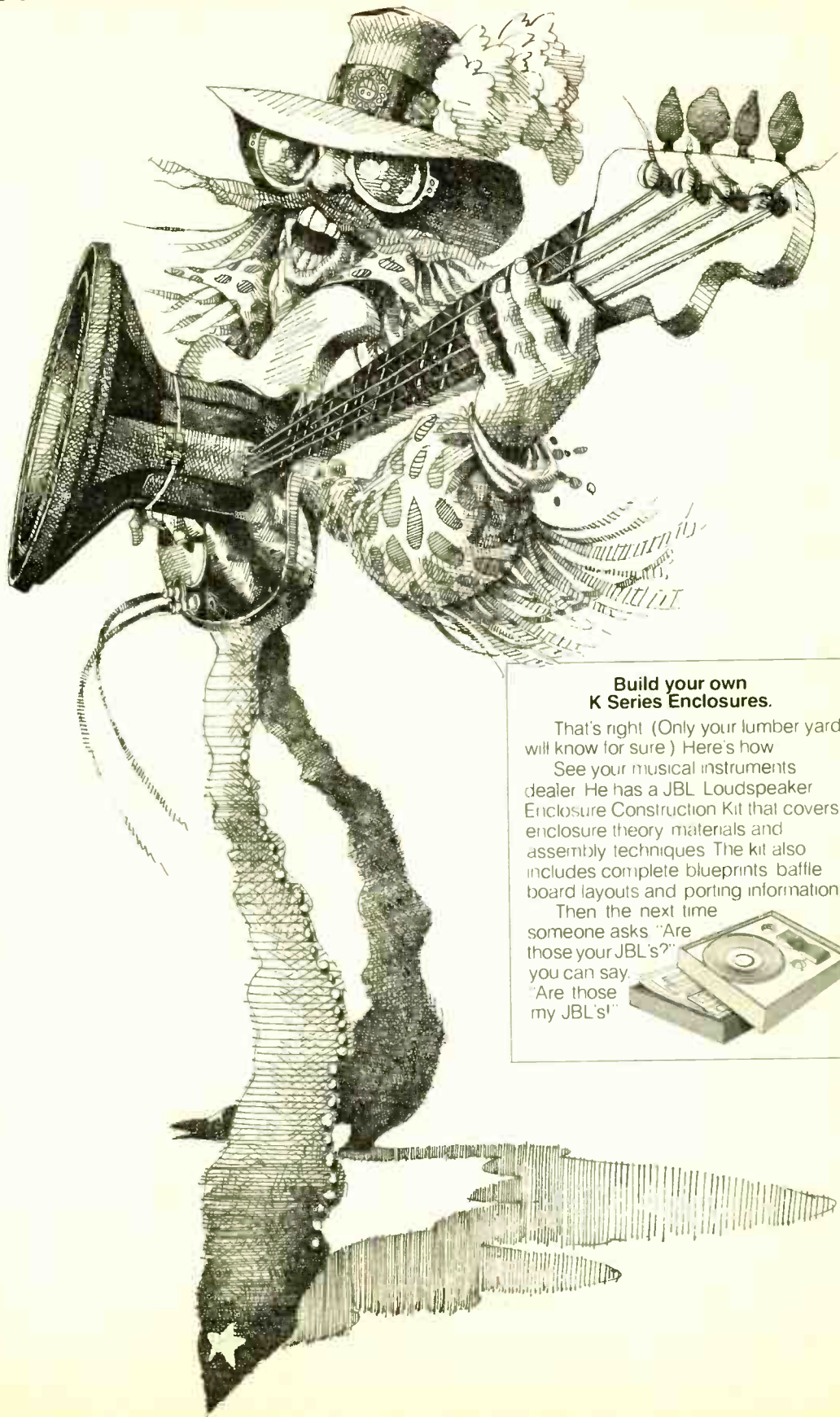
Here's Billy "Golden-Socks" Swan.

**Billy Swan's** "I Can Help" has been an international hit—topping the hit parades in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, New Zealand and France. It has also been recorded by **Elvis Presley**, who sent Billy the pair of socks he wore while recording the song (What???). Billy says he'll wear them just once to show them off, then have them framed for posterity. Billy used to guard the gate at Graceland, Elvis' Memphis mansion.

**Jerry Lee Lewis'** fourth marriage has gone on the rocks. Mrs. Jaren Elizabeth Gunn Lewis said in her legal suit that she and the Killer have been separated since March 30th, 1974. The grounds are cruel and inhuman treatment. Mrs. Lewis also sought an injunction against Jerry Lee, saying that he had threatened her with bodily harm if she filed for divorce... More happily, **George Jones** has become a grandfather for the first time. His daughter Susan Smith presented him with a granddaughter, naming her Jennifer Wynette Smith after George's ex-wife. Tammy accompanied Susan to the hospital, and stayed with her until after the baby was born... **Doug Kershaw** has announced his intentions of marrying Pam Eason and throwing a Cajun wedding party at their newly purchased home in Evergreen, Colo.... **Roy Clark** is in the midst of moving from Maryland, his home for the past fifteen years, to Tulsa, Okla.... **Jan Howard** has become a grandmother... **Marie Owens**, Four Star recording artist, has announced that she and her husband are expecting a baby in October... **Billy Gray**, 50, died after undergoing heart surgery in Dallas, Texas. Billy worked with **Hank**



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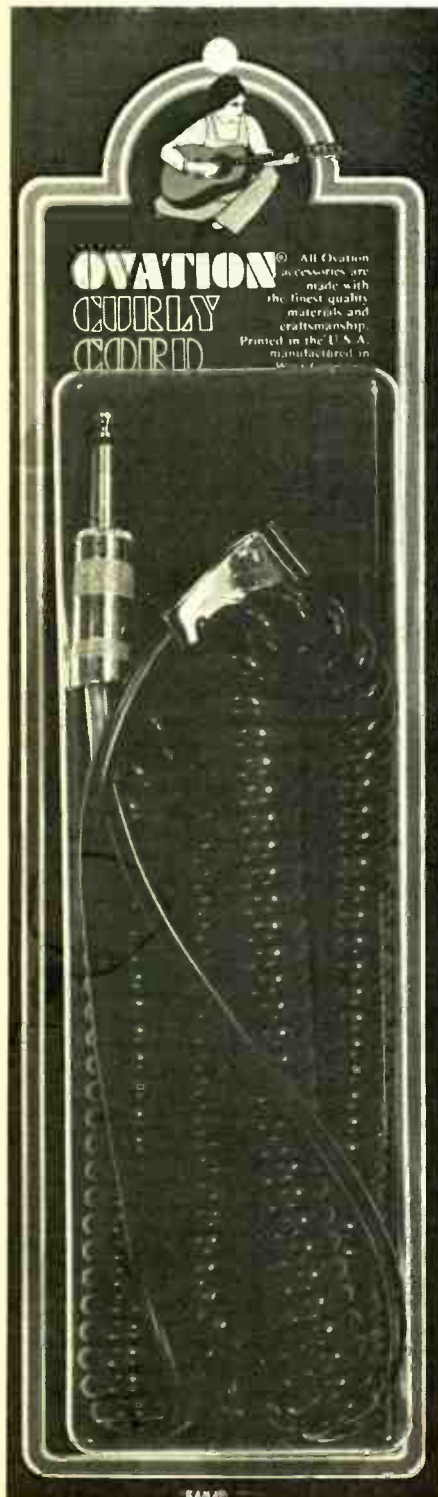
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A KAMAN COMPANY

Thompson for twelve years and for a similar period with **Ray Price**, fronting his band and booking Ray in Texas. More recently, he worked with **Johnny Rodriguez**...and **Neil Merritt**, long-time deejay and songwriter, passed away recently. He died suddenly in Waco, Texas. Neil wrote "May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose" for **Little Jimmy Dickens** and many other songs, including "It Ain't No Big Thing (But It's Growing)" recorded by the **Mills Brothers**, **Jack Barlow**, and **Elvis**.

**Frank Sinatra**, believe it or not, is all set to make a country album. More than that, he has opened up a publishing operation in Nashville, headed up by **Billy Strange**. Frank seems to have decided that Nashville is where it's at...MCA Records has signed Nashville singer/songwriter **Tracey Nelson**. **Bob Johnson** will continue to produce Tracey's work...the 1975 American Song Festival has secured some heavy talent for its judges' panel. Country personalities include **Loretta Lynn**, producer **Billy Sherrill**, **Merle Haggard** and Tennessee **Ernie Ford**...**Dorothy Ritter**, widow of **Tex Ritter**, has joined the public relations staff of Opryland and the Grand Ole Opry. She leaves a post with the State of Tennessee to take the Opry position...The Rodeo Cowboy Association has made **Moe Bandy** an honorary member. Moe's brother, Mike, holds the second-place world's title for Brahma bull riding...**Tammy Wynette** has added a group of backup singers to her show. She chose Larry Gatlin's sister, brother and brother-in-law...**Asleep At The Wheel**, Epic Records' "Western Swing '75 Band," are filming Lone Star beer commercials and appearing with **Tom T. Hall**, **Melba Montgomery** and **The Hughes Corporation** this summer...**Porter Wagoner** has re-signed with RCA Records after being with the label for over twenty years. He and Dolly have finished another duet album.

**Jack Greene** has become a working farmer, getting his pastures plowed and sown, and building corrals for his cattle. Now he's shopping for a deluxe pickup truck—with cruise control...**Jimmy C. Newman** received an unusual gift recently. Jimmy got the fifty-millionth motor (a washing machine model) produced by General Electric at their plant in Murfreesboro, Tenn., Jimmy's home...**George Morgan** got an unexpect-



Dorothy Ritter: a new post.

ed bath a little while ago. He was on his way to an important engagement, and he decided to get his car washed for the occasion. Unfortunately, he forgot to wind up his car window, and the inevitable happened. George went on wet that evening, since he didn't have time to change his clothes. That'll teach him to say all those unkind things about the CMA...**Stonewall Jackson** was on the ball recently, too. Finishing his song during an Opry appearance, he announced **Skeeter Davis** as **Dottie West**. Earlier in the evening, he had announced Skeeter as **Jean Shepard**. Skeeter swears that her name is Skeeter Davis...**Loretta Lynn** was forty on her last birthday (April 14th). She became a grandmother for the fifth time when daughter Cissy presented her with a little boy named Harold Wayne Lyelle. Cissy was in the hospital for three days prior to the birth of her child, and as a "thank you" to the nurses, **Moony Lynn** gave each of them a bottle of Jack Daniels. Attached to each bottle was a baby-bottle nipple.



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# The Country Hearth

by ELLIS NASSOUR

"I'm afraid to sing," said Jim Stafford. "Isn't that something! Five hits in a row and I still haven't sung a lick yet." Actually Jim is very proud of the success he has had over the last three years in both country and pop. This is just his way of joking about the way he "talks" his songs.

One creature comfort Jim's string of hits from his debut MGM album and now his *Just Another Pretty Foot* LP has allowed the singer is a two-story, 1920s-vintage Spanish house tucked away up in the Hollywood Hills. It was built by those silent movie actresses, The Wayne Sisters, and it sits just across from the house Valentino built for Pola Negri.

There are two outstanding highlights: A spacious music room with a carved wooden harp gracing the entry way, an old standup Victrola, and a priceless black grand piano imported from Vienna. The other is a huge, antique-cluttered, and well-equipped kitchen where Jim practices that other art he is so fond of: cooking.

"I have a secret I'll share with *The Country Hearth*," Jim whispered. "A secret is something you tell one person at a time—then they go and spread it all around. But I'll tell you about my secret corn puddin' recipe. I also have a secret recipe for a corn dish you can drink, but you'd spend half the day buying the equipment to make it and the rest of the day tryin' to find a place to hide it from the Feds."

## STAFFORD'S SECRET CORN PUDDIN'

6-8 ears of corn  
1 tbsp. butter  
1 tbsp. flour  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1/4 tsp. pepper  
1/4 tsp. sugar  
1 cup warmed milk  
2 large (3 small) eggs

Wash corn ears and grate them. Place kernels in a bowl. Melt butter. Add



salt, pepper, baking powder, sugar, and flour to the corn, and mix. Warm a cup of milk and add this to mixture. Beat two large eggs and blend in also. Pour melted butter into corn mixture and stir. Place mixture in baking dish. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes, then raise temperature to 400° for another 25 minutes. When this is done, turn oven off, open door, and let corn puddin' sit and cool on oven rack til you're ready to serve it.

"The perfect thing to go with this," Stafford added, "is country fried steak with biscuits and a big glass of iced tea."

## COUNTRY FRIED STEAK

4 pieces cubed steak  
1 medium onion  
3/4 cup flour  
3/4 cup cooking oil  
1 1/2 to 2 cups milk  
salt and pepper

Sprinkle steak with salt and pepper, roll lightly in flour. Set remaining flour aside. Heat oil in heavy skil-

let, brown meat on both sides, and remove from pan. Lower heat, add flour and onion to pan and cook slowly until the flour and onion are brown. Add milk, stirring until mixture is as thick as desired for gravy. Return meat to gravy, reduce heat to a simmer for 20 minutes, turning meat once. Serve over hot biscuits.

## PEACH COBBLER A LA STAFFORD

1 large can Freestone peaches  
(drained)  
1 cup flour  
1 cup sugar  
1 cup milk  
1 stick butter (or oleo)

Mix flour, sugar, and milk until you have a smooth mixture. Melt butter in a small pan. Put flour mixture and peaches in an 8x8 (or thereabouts) Pyrex dish and stir mixture slightly. Now pour the melted butter over this mixture. Bake in 350° oven 45 minutes or until nicely browned on top. Serve warm with a whipped cream topping. ■



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# COUNTRY NEWS

## Opry fans welcome Skeeter home

Skeeter Davis ended her 16-month suspension from the Grand Ole Opry with a Saturday night appearance in April. She sang "I Can't Help It If I'm Still In Love With You."

Her suspension resulted from remarks she made on stage criticizing the arrest of 15 members of the *Christ Is The Answer* religious group for allegedly harassing customers of a Nashville shopping mall. Opry officials didn't like the controversy being brought to the Opry stage and a suspension resulted.

Opry manager Hal Durham said: "All I can say is the differences have been resolved, and we're very happy



to have her back."

Skeeter was warmly received backstage and by the Opry audience when she took the stage to sing the Hank Williams' classic. "This is a song I'd like to dedicate to all of you because I love all of you so much," she said.

"It's hard to realize it's been 16 months," she said later. "It's interesting to find that people were concerned all along about when I would be back."

She said the suspension hurt her career in some areas, but caused an increase in bookings for gospel and religious concerts and television appearances. ■

## The Baron scattered stars across the USA

Oscar W. Davis, country music's "Baron of the Box Office," and a man whom some called "the greatest promoter this side of P.T. Barnum," died in Nashville April 7 of a heart attack. He was 72.

A blue serge suit, a white carnation, and a shock of silver-gray hair were the trademarks of the man who was among the first "entrepreneurs," ("I'm actually a promoter, but that sounds too much like a con man," said Davis) to move country music into the major metropolitan markets. During a career which lasted over half a century, the Baron handled a wide assortment of super talents, ranging from Wallace Beery, Howard Hughes and Tom Mix to Jerry Lee Lewis, the late Hank Williams, Ray Price, Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold, Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, George Morgan, and swivelhips himself, Elvis Presley.

Davis spent his early days as a Hollywood press agent, handling promotion and publicity for the likes of Wallace Beery and Howard Hughes. Hollywood was followed by shows,

dances, marathons, walkathons, and country music radio and television shows. There was the first country music concert ever held in Carnegie Hall. And there was the famous C&W show which Davis helped put on on the roof of New York's ritzy Astor Hotel. The show pulled turnaway crowds and the Baron became known as the man who brought C&W to the Big Apple.

The Baron was full of stories, and he loved to tell them. In an interview before his death, this writer asked Oscar which artist made the most money for him.

"Elvis Presley," he replied quickly. "He grossed more than anyone else for me—but I played to more people with Roy Acuff back in the early 1940s." For the record, Davis was the man who introduced Elvis to Col. Tom Parker.

"I went to hear this boy in some joint in Memphis one night," the Baron recalled. "I saw about 80 women screaming over him. It figured that if 80 women were screaming in a place that small, he was

bound to have a fantastic appeal if exposed to a far greater crowd. I was committed to a talented young star who was very hot at that time, so I decided to introduce this other young singer to my friend Col. Tom Parker."

The talent the Baron was committed to was Jerry Lee Lewis, who was hotter than a firecracker at the time. But Davis did get to work with Elvis, handling bookings for Col. Tom and lining up the first network TV shots. Meanwhile, however, trouble came with Jerry Lee, whom Oscar had brought through the early Sun Records days to stardom.

He had the Killer set for a big money tour of Britain, but when the blond bomber showed up at the boat with a new bride, his whole career nearly fell through. The tour was met at the other side of the Atlantic by a corps of British press who crucified Jerry Lee for what they interpreted as him marrying his own teenage cousin. The tour fell apart and had to be cancelled. Oscar was left holding the (empty) money bag.

(Continued on page 20)

## Cowtown honky tonk is back in action



Fort Worth Panther Hall: from bowling alley to country music showcase.

PHOTO: VINCE FOSTER

There've been good times in Cowtown again since the reopening of Fort Worth's legendary Panther Hall, the wide open ballroom/beerjoint that was home for the "Cowtown Jamboree" for 10 years.

Willie Nelson, one of the hall's old regulars, kicked off the new Panther Hall in February. The place still looks the same—the sign on the stage welcomes you to the Cowtown Jamboree, and those two roaring panthers still scream out from the wall—but the hair on the heads of the audience is a little longer. New manager Bronson Evans, formerly with the Texas Opry House in Austin, says the wild audience enthusiasm that prompted Willie, Charlie Pride and Jerry Lee Lewis to record live here earlier in their careers remains intact.

"Crowds here are fifty times more rowdy than anything I saw in Austin," he said. "I couldn't believe it. The first time Willie played, I had to stop the show twice, they were so crazy. But I tell you, I'd have Willie every Saturday night if I could."

In addition to old standbys Willie, Jerry Lee, and Waylon Jennings, who've already performed at the Panther again, Bronson is actively seeking out the younger country fans by booking popular area "progressive" talent such as fiddler Alvin Crow, Rusty Weir, and Ray Wylie Hubbard.

Panther Hall opened in 1961 as a tournament bowling arena for the Fort Worth franchise in the short-lived National Bowling League. After the team folded, the Panther's builders and owners, the Kuykendall

family, took over the management and for ten years brought the finest in country and western swing to North Texas.

It was a non-country star, however, who set the attendance record at the old Panther. Corky Kuykendall told us Fats Domino was contracted to play a benefit for the Sheriff's Department Golden Gloves Boxing Team, and the joint was packed tighter than a can of vienna sausages. "It must have been twenty times oversold," he said. "We never could have done it ourselves, but nobody's gonna argue with the sheriff if they can't get 'em all in."

JOE NICK PATOSKI

## Dick is country's most happy Feller

Dick Feller is getting to be one of the best song writers in Nashville. a town he was determined to crack when he left Bronaugh, Missouri eight years ago. Back then he had a wife and \$800 in a cocoa can; now, living near Nashville, he has money in the bank and a solid track record: "Any Old Wind That Blows" and "Lord Mr. Ford" have been chart-topping singles for Johnny Cash and Jerry Reed respectively, and other Feller originals have appeared on albums recorded by Cash, Reed, Mac Davis, Kenny Price, Warner Mack, June Carter, and even Burt Reynolds. When Feller does Feller he doesn't do so badly either. "Credit Card Song" and "Makin' The Best Of A Bad Situation" both broke into coun-

try's top ten last year and United Artists recently released Dick's own version of "Any Old Wind That Blows."

"Johnny Cash was the first person to make me feel like a songwriter," explained Dick, as he picked over a salad at New York's Ginger Man restaurant. "He took me to his publishing company, House of Cash, and he said, 'I really like your songs, they're not just a bunch of words,' and that did me more good than anything else anybody ever did for me in Nashville. I'd been there three or four years before that happened." During those early days, Dick picked for Mel Tillis, Warner Mack, and Skeeter Davis. "I believed then that country should be freer sounding, more than the hard 4-4 sound that it had been, but I couldn't convince anybody of that until I ran into Kris Kristofferson and he believed in,



Dick Feller

PHOTO: RUTH BERNAL

well, a 'country-folk' sound too. That's what my songs are like, folksy, and I think there is that sound in country now. Tunes like 'Gentle On My Mind' made it happen."

(Continued on page 16)



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## Dick Feller

(Continued from page 14)

"I like to tackle things that haven't been written to death. I feel sorry for all of us and I try to write about things that make us all mad, like 'Lord Mr. Ford'—everybody knows what it's like to be on the expressway at

five o'clock in the afternoon and just wonder what you're doin' settin' there, and I really hate cars."

About his talking blues "Credit Card Song," he says, "I don't know anyone who has written about a credit card but everyone's had a hassle with one, so it's gotta be a good subject."

Feller can also create childlike fan-

tasies like "Biff, The Purple Bear" and "A Room For A Boy. Never Used" from his current Elektra-Asylum album *Some Days Are Diamonds*. Those songs are a direct result of his voracious reading of science fiction, especially authors Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein. Actually, Dick reads anything he can get his hands on. He has dissected the works of great wordsmiths from Shakespeare to e. e. cummings. "All that was effective, made me watch my steps in songs. I don't make 'em too rough by using too many consonants now," says Dick.

"What I really would have liked to have been is John Steinbeck, but that was already taken . . ."

EILEEN STUKANE

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## N.Y. singles try country weekend

Milton Berle once described the audiences an entertainer encounters at the Catskills Mountain resorts in Upper New York state as "the very toughest you'll find anywhere. They'll even get up in the middle of the best acts in show business—like mine—and walk out."

And so it was with considerable bravery that Bill Kelley, promotion director of New York City's modern country music station WHN, Lee Arnold, WHN's premiere disc jockey, and the management of Grossinger's, the Catskills' most famed resort, pioneered a "modern country weekend" on the weekend before Easter and Passover.

ABC-Dot Records artist Johnny Carver headlined the weekend entertainment backed by Tim Gillis and The Country Heritage featuring Doty Holden. Carver mixed country standards, Hank Williams medleys, and Merle Haggard tunes with such pop-oriented fare as "Tie A Yellow Ribbon," his hit on the country charts.

"We will certainly have no fear of booking country acts," added hotel manager Howard Berne. Johnny and the band put on two of the very best shows we've ever seen here. It is most unusual for guests to stop you in the lobby and dining rooms and tell you how much they enjoyed the shows. That was very nice for a change!"

ELLIS NASSOUR



# COE FINDS 'PERFECT' SONG

One thing that has helped make country music so popular is the fact that the songs usually stress certain themes common to everyday life: lost love, Mama, traveling, romance, hard times, good times. Now, most country songs have only one theme; but what would happen if someone wrote a song that included *all* these themes? Obviously, you'd have the perfect country and western song.

Well, David Allan Coe thinks he's found that song. It's called "You Never Even Called Me By My Name," by Steve Goodman, and the Mysterious

Rhinestone Cowboy likes it so much that he included it on his latest album, *Once Upon A Rhyme*. Of course, a story goes with it.

As Coe tells it on the album, Goodman sent him the song because he thought it was the perfect country and western song. In the first part of the song, Goodman mentions cryin', standin' in the rain, Waylon Jennings, Charlie Pride, Merle Haggard, bars and heaven. But Coe thought something was missing and wrote Goodman back to say that the song wasn't perfect because he hadn't

said anything about Mama, or trains, or trucks, or prison or getting drunk. Goodman obliged with another verse, and, says Coe, "After reading it, I realized it was the perfect country and western song, and I felt obliged to put it on this album."

Here are the lyrics to that last verse:

*I was drunk the day my mama got out of prison*

*And I went to pick her up in the rain*

*But before I could get to the station in my pickup truck*

*She got run over by the D\*\*\*\* 'ol train\**

Like it? Think you can do better? Well, get out your pen and your guitar and go to work. The search is on.

\*by Steve Goodman, © 1971 Kama Rippa Music Inc/Turnpike Tom

## And now, heeere's Martha!



PHOTO: DALE ERNSBERGER

Martha Mitchell always was unpredictable. Now she's country's newest star, sharing the Opry stage with Minnie Pearl and Roy Acuff during a taping of the Mike Douglas Show. Go get 'em, Martha!

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# RADIO FORUM KOKE-FM country trailblazers



PHOTO: S. CHERNIKOWSKI

KOKE-FM Music Director Steve Gary, left, and d.j.'s Rusty Bell and Joe Gracey, right

KOKE-FM is a rather small radio station in Austin, Texas. It programs something called "progressive country music" for an audience which includes a good number of The University of Texas's 40,000 students, a loose community of working class longhairs, lots of "rednecks," and lots of ordinary people. The staff is small, the ratings are middling; but the sound is something else.

KOKE's "progressive country" format won *Billboard* Magazine's "Trendsetter of the Year" Award this year, and the "Austin Sound," fathered by yodeler Kenneth Threadgill and spearheaded by Willie Nelson, is being heard all over the country. The only way to define "progressive country" is to listen to it. If you listen to KOKE, you'll hear Ernest Tubbs followed by Freddy Fender. You'll hear Waylon Jennings followed by Buddy Holly. You'll hear Loretta Lynn followed by Jimmie Rodgers. The list of artists may seem hopelessly mismatched, but it works, and more importantly, the audience likes it.

"We have the most individual format since the days of regional breakouts," says d.j. Joe Gracey. "We played Freddy Fender on September 20—we were the first station in the world to play Freddy Fender. But it doesn't particularly matter who a singer is. We try to look for quality. It may be a smash hit in *Billboard*, but if we don't think it's quality, we don't play it. Our programming depends a lot on the value judgments of each d.j."

Predictably, the d.j.'s are young and so is the station's management. Ken Moyer, who started at KOKE as a d.j., became station manager in 1969. Moyer is considered to be the first radio executive to become interested in programming country music within a looser format—one that could encompass George Jones and The Rolling Stones in the same program. He was joined by d.j. Rusty Bell from San Antonio and later by Gracey, who had come to Austin to go to law school but got interested in music instead. Then came Fermin Perez (who is no longer with the sta-

tion, but helped get it started), and Steve Gary, who is music director. Unlike most radio stations which make their d.j.'s fit a mold, KOKE lets each disc jockey have his own style—another element in making progressive country work.

The third element, of course, is Austin itself. The town is the center for the new wave of longhair country musicians—people like Willie Nelson, Billy Joe Shaver, Waylon Jennings, Asleep at the Wheel. Of that group only Nelson actually lives in Austin, but the others, and the music they make, are closely identified with the town. Austin also harbors a large number of local country musicians and KOKE includes local artists on its playlist. And, as the local music scene changes, KOKE tries to change with it.

"We've backed off the lighter weight programming," says Gracey. "We're playing less music from the soft-core Austin Scene—B.W. Stevenson, Jerry Jeff Walker, Michael Murphey—and more Merle Haggard, Asleep at the Wheel and Alvin Crow. In the last year we've moved toward hard country, but in a progressive manner. We play the best cuts off albums and we don't play the hits to death. Now we're playing about 30% hard country; 30% progressive; 15% low-key rock and roll; and 15% oldies, both country and rock and roll."

While the members of ACE might not approve of KOKE, Austin listeners do. Ratings and ad revenues are up and the station is getting national recognition. Nelson Allen, a writer for Austin's *Pickin' Up The Tempo*, notes that Willie Nelson once said that he thought all radio stations would someday be like KOKE-FM—that they would just be playing American music without worrying about the labels too much.

As this issue of *Country Music* was going to press, we learned of the death of Bob Wills in Fort Worth, Texas. Wills's passing is a loss not only to country music, but to the nation as well. The staff of *Country Music* extends its deepest sympathy to the Wills family. We will miss him.



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# 45 revelations per minute

Musical tributes are not rare in country music. When Jimmie Rodgers died, both Ernest Tubb and Bradley Kincaid released tribute records. There are at least two dozen recorded tributes to Hank Williams, done by Jimmie Logsdon, Arthur Smith, Jimmy Swan, Johnnie and Jack, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Ernest Tubb, Ferlin Husky, Freddie Hart, Hank Williams, Jr., and others.

Well, Stella Parton (yes, she's Dolly's sister) has just done a record called "Ode to Olivia" (Country Soul CS-333), and, as you might guess, it's a tribute to Olivia Newton-John. The song, written by Stella and her producer Bob Dean, defends Olivia's right to be called a country singer, and praises her musical accomplishments. Ironically, Stella's sister Dolly is a member of the screening committee of the Association of Country Entertainers, which was founded in

part as a response to the Country Music Association's voting Olivia Newton-John the Top Female Vocalist of 1974.

Charlie Rich and his manager Sy Rosenberg share producers' credits on a strange little record called "Almost Degraded" (Capitol 4047), performed by a collection of anonymous pranksters using the name of the Cornball Express. The song's a parody of Billy Sherrill and Glenn Sutton's "Almost Persuaded," the 1966 David Houston hit. "Almost Degraded" is the second parody of the song (a few months after the original came out, Ben Colder took a friendly jab at it with "Almost Persuaded No. 2"), and a pretty tasty item. It transforms Sherrill and Sutton's romantic vision into the tale of some half-drunk slob who comes close to letting himself be seduced by a woman who "had greasy red lips and elephant hips/

And her face had been caught in a fan." His wife shows up flailing the air with a gun, and our hero thanks her for saving him from degradation.

And, from young Melody Allen's delightful debut single, "May You Rest in Peace" (Mercury 73674), our lyric of the month:

*I went uptown today and I bought  
a see-through negligee./  
Hopin' it might perk you up to see  
me dressed that way./  
With the kids in bed, I put it on and  
turned the lights down low/  
To find out all you wanted was to  
watch the Star Trek show./  
Well, honey, all I've got to say is—/  
May you rest in peace, 'cause you've  
been dead now for some time...\*/*

\*Words and music by K. Jean; copyright © Milene Music, Inc. (ASCAP)

## The Baron

(Continued from page 13)

How did he handle it? The Baron shook his head and explained with a half smile, "I refuse to panic. I have made it a policy over the years never to worry about anything that is beyond my control. So, my wife and I took a little side cruise to France and then came back home to get things going again."

This bit of philosophy was brought into play time and again over the years. Connie B. Gay, a broadcasting tycoon and longtime friend of Oscar's told this story which illustrates exactly what Oscar Davis was saying:

One time the Baron was caught in one of those situations of "going broke," in this instance, in Pittsburgh. Connie B. Gay got word of Oscar's predicament and flew to Pittsburgh to bail his old friend out of the financial hot water. He squared Oscar away in a hotel and stuck a twenty dollar bill in his hand to take care of minor expenses while Oscar arranged transportation back home. As they went into the hotel, Oscar handed the bellhop his air-

line bag. Once in the room, as the bellhop started out the door, Oscar snapped the \$20 into the boy's shirt pocket and dismissed him with his warmest thank you. Connie flared up at Oscar and bawled him out for showboating away his last twenty bucks. Oscar held up his hand and said, "Connie, now wait a minute. You may not realize it, but I just established my credit at this fine hotel. In a moment my phone will ring and it will be the front desk."

Sure enough the phone jangled and Oscar answered. It was the front desk. They wanted to know if the room was alright, did he like the view and was there anything the management could do to make his stay more enjoyable. Oscar was quite fluent in explaining that the room and the view were just fine and that yes, there were a couple of things... a suit needed to be pressed, some shoes needed to be shined. And, oh yes, would room service please send up a couple of steaks?

The management could not do enough for the fine guest from Nashville. And the management would not think of billing him for anything until he checked out. Oscar checked out three weeks later.

But not until he had gotten with a radio station, put together a show, promoted and staged it. When he left Pittsburgh on that airliner, The Baron had a tidy \$500 in his pocket.

Oscar has had another kind of magic touch that gave his career that special flair that has set him aside from the many others who have shared his field of endeavor.

For instance, there was the time while managing the great Hank Williams when the great man fell in love with a young girl named Billie Jean Horton after divorcing his first wife Audrey Williams. It was one of those whirlwind affairs and when Oscar sensed the couple planned to marry he urged them to tie the knot onstage. To let him promote it as the marriage of the King of Country Music. The affair was set for the Lake Pontchartrain Auditorium just outside of New Orleans. Oscar gave it all of his heaviest promotional artillery.

When he told this reporter of the promotion and the actual wedding, he gave me a little self-satisfied smile, shook his head wistfully and said, "It was a beautiful wedding, son... matinee and evening!"

ROGER SCHUTT



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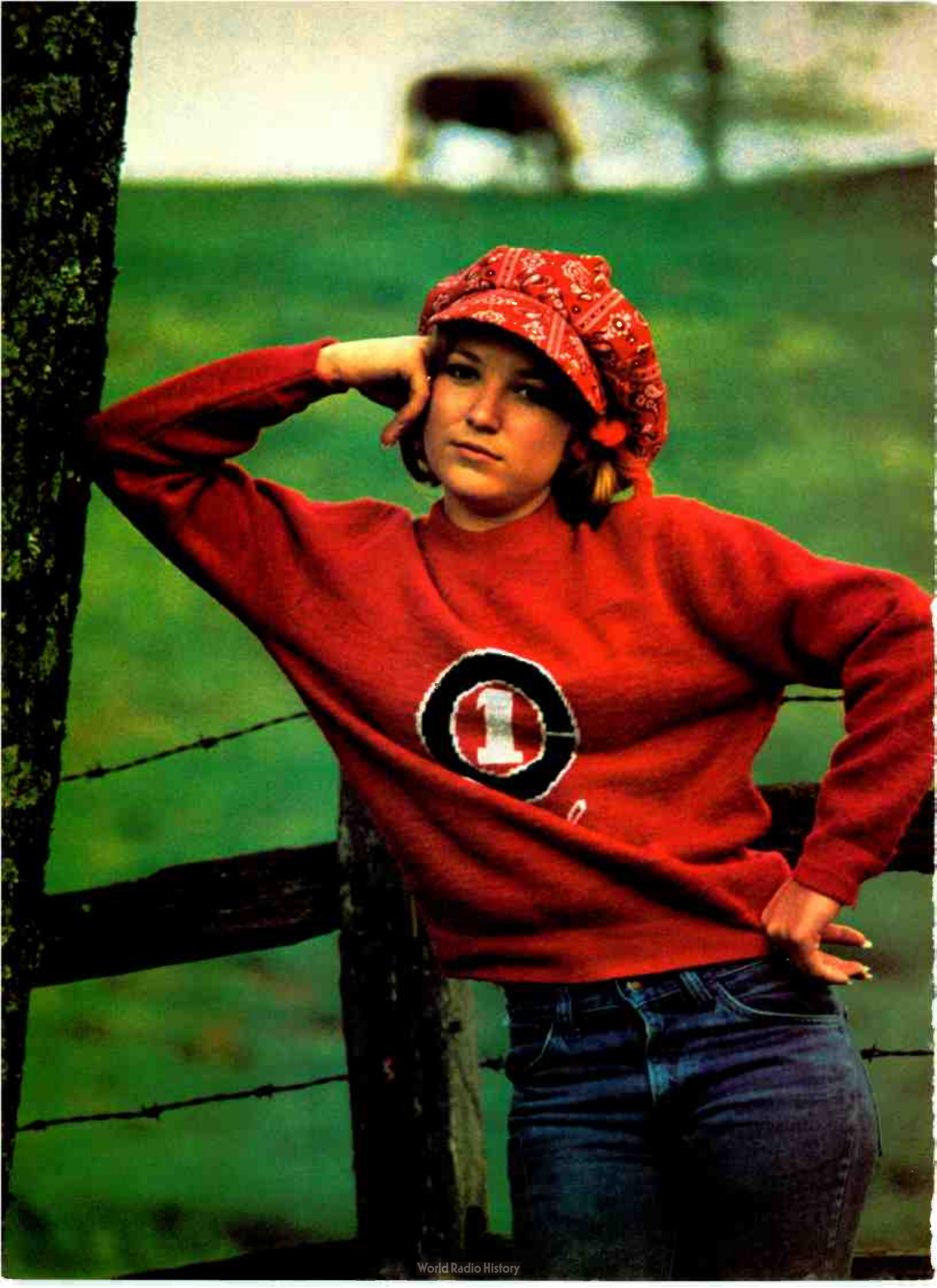
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Yours absolutely free (with the longer term subscription). It's a 128 page collection of the best articles and photos from COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE, on such greats as: Charlie Rich, Connie Smith, Ronnie Milsap, Tanya Tucker, Johnny Rodriguez, Roy Clark, Jeanne Pruett, Eddy Arnold and lots more.









# TANYA

## The Teenage Queen and the Family Affair

by RICHARD NUSSER

The sun was high and hot above Opryland on the first day of outdoor shooting for the Timex television spectacular, *A Circus of American Music*, starring Dennis Weaver, Sandy Duncan, Jonelle Allen, and Tanya Tucker. Spring wasn't pushing hard enough for the TV schedule, so cartons of plastic flowers were moved strategically to each location to keep it colorful and gay. The whole scene had a surreal, larger-than-life quality: The sun very bright, the high-glare TV lights. Sandy and Dennis (it was hard to imagine "Gun-smoke's" old Chester doing this, but there he was) were sitting, scrubbed and pressed, on a checkered picnic cloth alongside a nice new wicker basket, surrounded by plastic flowers set in a real garden and a chorus of singers and dancers in color-coordinated outfits. It was getting muggy, and the cast and crew were perspiring and happy to see the last take completed.

Then Tanya appeared, off to the left of the hubbub, gently brushing blond silky hair from her face as she strolled coolly and confidently down a grassy knoll. She wore a blue denim jumper, and a gingham blue blouse with a matching gingham scarf around her neck. She wore high-heeled brown boots with platform soles but managed to walk elegantly down the slope. She could have been a heroine in a western romance—or in a Thomas Hardy novel. She was a classic picture of womanly grace and a sudden breath of cool breeze in the TV mania. At that point, I remembered that she was just 16, and could belt out a song with a feeling most women twice her age have never even possessed.

I thought, also, of something her father, Beau Tucker, had mentioned the day before. "It hurts your feel-

ings to see a girl who's been so straight, so obedient to her family, when things are written about her," he said, and here he paused. "You know, I'm not trying to build her as a sweet girl, I mean, she rides wild horses and drives tractors, but she's barely started going out with guys, and guys have written these things about her and you just know, they don't really *know* what Tanya Tucker's like..."

Later on that day, Beau and I were sitting in the Winnebago camper where Tanya, Dennis Weaver and Jim Stafford were resting between takes, and Tanya and Jim were discussing the songs they'd sing on a duet guest appearance that night on the Grand Ole Opry. Stafford suggested "Spiders and Snakes." Someone else suggested "Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms." Tanya glanced up from her thoughts, grinned shyly and suggested: "Would You Lay With Me?" the title of one of her biggest hits. Her father blanched slightly, grinned, frowned, and solved everything by taking a long draw on his cigarette. Stafford laughingly decided that the song might be a little too much for the Opry audience, or him, and began running through "Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms" to make sure they knew the words. Tanya sat at the table, putting as much effort into the song as someone else might have put into a full performance, her hands gripping a pencil and a piece of tissue. She sang just like she delivers the line about "Lay With Me"—with a seemingly impossible mix of straight-laced sexiness. I was beginning to see why people, men especially, get confused about where Tanya is at. Most women in show business are blatantly sexual or not sexual at all. It's either there or it isn't. But the great ones, Dietrich,

Garbo, or even Lily Langtrety, managed to command respect besides. They were virtuous, morally sound dance hall girls. Tanya, at 16, is already batting in the big leagues.

Tanya had told me she didn't mind being compared to that other popular example of country sensuality—Elvis Presley. It made sense, in fact. Elvis was always the good boy with a knowing wink, and his charm was his low-key, almost shy, country approach to the ladies. But underneath it all you knew the Devil was lurking and Elvis could *smolder*. One of Tanya's most popular numbers in concert, in fact, is Elvis' "Burning Love" (... "Lord Almighty, I feel my temperature rising... my body is burning a hole where I lay..."). Strong stuff, indeed, for the Opry audience, but some of the most torrid and out-front sexuality in American literature has been set in the South. ("It's all that heat, darlin'." I once heard a Southern lady drawl before she retired mysteriously behind her fan again.)

But sometimes it's hard to believe that Tanya is *really* Tanya Tucker—the female Elvis of the 1970s, the child-woman superstar with the million dollar contract and the lusty, dynamic, *mature* voice rising out of her pretty throat.

On stage Tanya generates what nearly every typically American female teen-engine feels—or *wishes* she could feel. On stage Tanya is *woman*—stalking cat-like in the spotlight, winking mischievously, shaking her rock and roll equipment, and generally acting out, for us all, the allure of the eternal female.

Off-stage, Tanya Tucker is your typically American 16-year-old of the old and *ideal* variety: Cute as a button, fresh as milk, bright as a daisy, smart as a whip and cucumber

onel Parker, the greatest promoter ... I want to say, when I go out of this business, I'm the best daddy in the world."

The ranch that Tanya and her family recently purchased outside of Nashville represents more than the material accomplishments of success. The entire Tucker family will occupy the four comfortable houses laid out around the 220-acre spread. It had been owned by a retired Nashville financier and used as a breeding farm for a French species of bulls and cattle. It is an elegant country place, a sort of Sunnybrook Farm with rolling pastures, horses and bulls gently grazing, the Cumberland River rolling lazily along one side, and the Tennessee hills on the other. Stately old oak trees, fruit trees, and border plants dot the rich, green landscape. Tanya loves to spend time there riding, walking around, and playing with the dogs, who flock to her side whenever she appears.

Beau and Donald, Tanya's brother, were browsing around the place the first day we visited, checking out pieces of power equipment and horses' hooves. Beau operated heavy equipment for years and can tell the difference between a Ford tractor motor and a John Deere just from the sound of the engine. (He proved accurate over a half-mile's distance.) Donald and he were concerned about a mare whose hooves badly needed trimming. Neither one even remotely resembled your usual show biz entrepreneur as they went about the business of sizing up their new home, lock, stock and barrel.

Juanita Tucker was in the kitchen, dressed in jeans, a cotton top and sneakers, helping the former owner's wife prepare dinner. Tanya was off somewhere in the house washing her hair. I asked Mrs. Tucker if she'd mind telling me a little about the family and herself. She was reluctant at first, claiming she didn't have very much to say, really and that she wasn't a conversationalist.

She relented and we went into a small room, furnished with antiques, with deep pile carpet and drapes. She sat on a chair near a desk and I sat on a blue couch across from her. We talked for about a half hour.

She told me how she and Beau were married in Texas when they were 15 years old. He had come down from Oklahoma with his family looking for work, picking cotton.

They went to grade school together, until Beau dropped out to work. Juanita didn't like him at first. "He stole cookies out of my lunch pail," she recalled. "I didn't like him at all." Then he went away, at age 14, by himself, to work in a production plant, and when he returned he was different. ("He was a man," she said flatly.)

Mrs. Tucker keeps a low profile, but she's an important part of the Tucker family saga. "I'm like that song," she said. "'I Gotta Be Me,' no airs or put-on, shoot no! I'm just trying to live and treat people like I wanna be treated... Me and Beau? It's just like we were when we first married... He's got such a deter-



mination to do good. He was a poor boy, and he got this drive... Beau went to the fifth grade but he sure can out-figure us all... I believed in Beau... I believed he could do anything...

"I just want the family to be close no matter what happens—money or anything else. Money is to make you happy, you know? I have fun just walking down by the river. I love Mother Nature. I like to cook... I don't ever like to shop for clothes but, once, in Wilcox (Arizona), La Costa got this new dress, you know, I bought it for her, and it just thrilled me to death. She just looked so pretty... things like that..."

Tanya was the "out-going" child,

she said, while La Costa is "reserved" and Donald is "just a friendly guy." She said they all had their moods like anybody else, and mentioned that "in the mornings, Tanya don't say much." Tanya was a lot of fun, she said at one point. I asked her if she was referring to the characterizations that Tanya used to accompany her descriptions of certain people. I had heard about these private family moments when everyone would roar while Tanya mimicked someone they had all seen in action. "Yeh, she's pretty good at that," Mrs. Tucker winked. "She's a good girl."

The strong family ties seems to have given Tanya things the world promises but never seems able to deliver—inner peace, security and self-confidence.

"I think I was always like an out-cast when I was growing up," Tanya once recalled. "I didn't fit in with the so-called low class or the so-called high-class... I dunno... I just didn't enjoy talking about the things they did... I had other things... horses... well, I was into my music already, too." Her family went along with her desire to sing.

"I had my mind made up that she'd be a singer 'cause she convinced me," Beau said. "Of course you always worry, will the public see what I see? It's always hard to make other people see what you see in an artist."

In Tanya's case, that's doubly hard because she's relatively uncomplicated as a person. She doesn't leave herself open to a lot of talk among industry people, and her strictly professional approach to performing, recording, or just meeting people offers few clues to what's inside her head. I once asked La Costa to help me describe her. "Tanya has a tender heart," La Costa said immediately. Then, she added: "She has that star look, that magnetism, that charisma. It is hard to describe," she laughed. "I just love to watch her perform, though."

During an autograph-signing session in the parking lot of a Nashville Krispy Kreme drive-in, I asked some of Tanya's fans for their opinion.

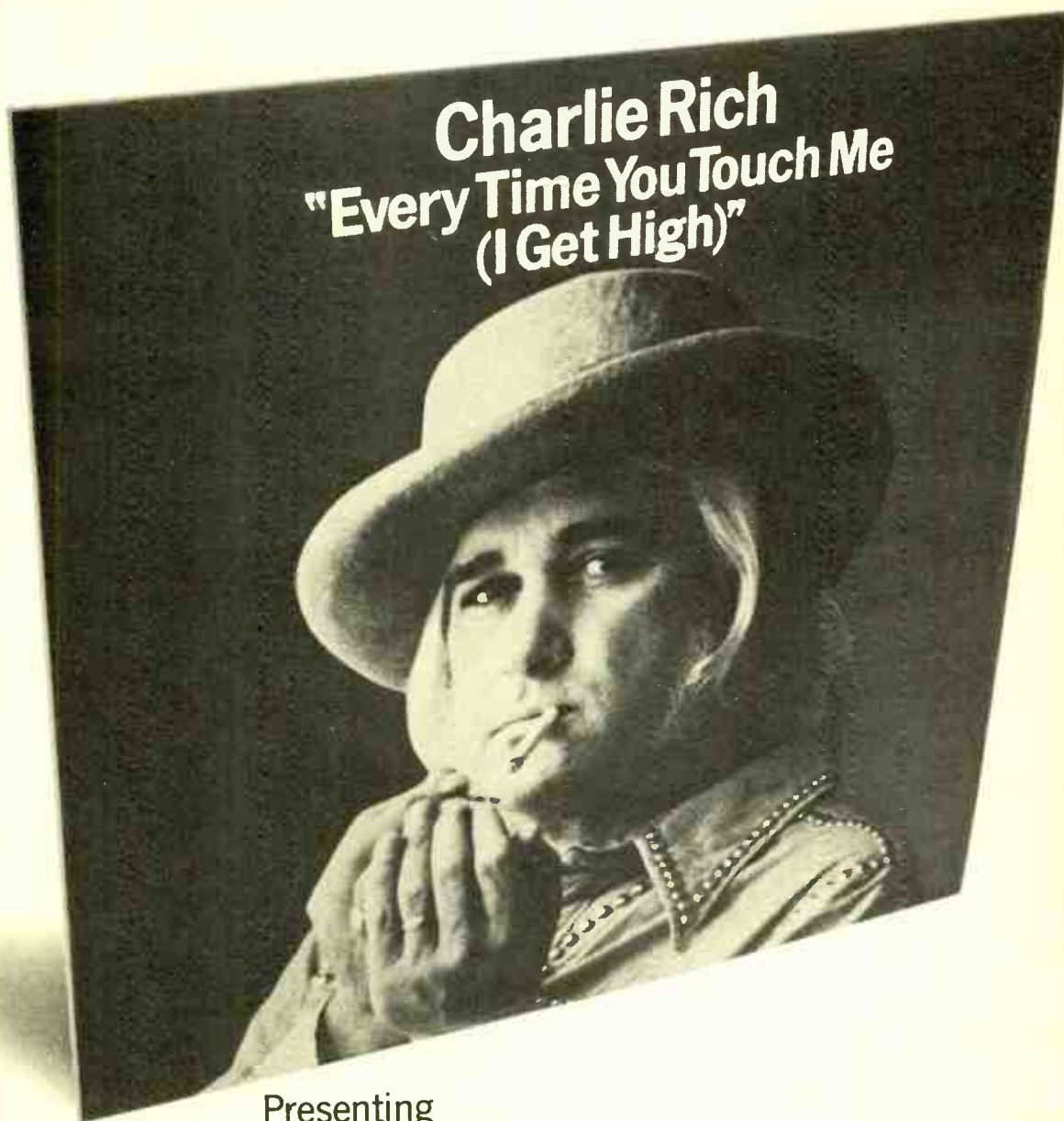
One fan, Judy Baker, 16, told me she liked Tanya's singing style and the fact she was pretty. "It sounds like she puts a lot of feeling into her singing," Judy said.

Tammy Binkley, 13, just shrugged and said: "Her personality."


Tammy's mother admitted she was



# Charlie Rich: Friend to Friend.



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also a Tanya fan and offered her appraisal. "It's the fact she's so young and fresh but when she sings there's maturity coming out. It's a combination you don't find—the little girl next door with a voice like *that*." Tammy Binkley looked at us with wide-open brown eyes and silently nodded her agreement.

It wasn't until later, though, that I began to understand Tanya's appeal. It happened in a rather respectable beer joint outside Nashville one night, where I had stopped for a burger and beer. It was moderately crowded with extremely good-looking and—judging from the flow of their conversation—acutely intelligent females, none of whom looked any older than 18. Their boyfriends, amiable lugs who had just come in from a softball game, were clowning for each other and generally acting much younger than the ladies. One of the girls reminded me of Tanya a bit and I watched as she shot a disdainful glance at some amiable jerk, rose gracefully, and moving in a world of her own, went over to the jukebox. She played a song called "Rock On" that went something like this: "Still waiting for . . . ah . . . blue-jean . . . teen-age queen . . . prettiest girl I've ever seen . . . James Dean." The song went on and on in this spooky, 1950's soft rock tempo, ghostly and evocative of all those dreams I grew up on in the 1950s. I thought of Tanya, cutting through the night somewhere to meet her girlfriends to catch a movie, gliding along in her brand new Jensen Interceptor, a really ritzy sport-car, singing along to that song, having fun and digging it all without any pretense . . . a woman of the 1970s.

And I remembered Tanya telling me: "I don't need dope and things like that to make me happy 'cause I've got other things on my mind that'll make me a lot happier . . . I think being yourself—your true self—being satisfied with yourself. There's people I know who're not satisfied with that. I'm not that way. I'm happier riding horses and stuff like that. I like being different. My parents have always brought me up to be different, not to follow along with everybody but to be the leader."

The day we first met, Tanya, myself, MCA Records' Joan Bullard and photographer Gerald Holly had lunch together at a Mexican restaurant in a shopping center near Opryland. We talked about her family's travels and

the fact they were all settling down, now that Tanya and La Costa were on the road to success.

"My idea of living is where you can have horses and things," Tanya said. "That's the biggest thing wrong with kids today, I think. You know, just having streets and things like that to grow up with, you're bound to have troubles. They really should all have things like the 4-H and FFA. I mean, if you go out and have to care for a baby calf, you take care of it. Boy, I just love getting out there and cleaning horses, cleaning stuff out of their eyes, or cleaning their nose. I love to get outside and shine on them horses, you know, curry them and take care of them . . . it relaxes me to work on horses like that . . . the fun of it, you know, is not buying a \$30,000 horse or something like that. The whole thing is making something out of it. Making the horse into something, starting from the ground up and working with those things."

Her attitude toward her career shows the same determination. After playing hard with the dogs one day around the pool, tossing aside a monstrously huge St. Bernard named Wendell (a gift from Kentucky Gov. Wendell Ford), and breaking up snarling fights between Pumpkin, her personal mutt who guards her jealously, and Tuck, a big yellow farm dog, she settled down wearily for another round of questions. She probably would have preferred playing with the dogs, but she sat down quietly, took a couple of breaths and relaxed completely. She hardly budged after that, except to look at her fingernails or shift around in the chair from time to time. I asked her what contributions her mother had made to her upbringing.

"Everything, I guess, except how to cook and sew," she laughed. "But that's because I don't have time . . . but everything about morals . . . my family is basically an old-fashioned family, you know, and she's taught me a lot . . . you know, things mothers and daughters talk about . . . I think that's lacking a lot these days, that mothers and daughters don't talk about things. They don't know how to communicate. Parents nowadays, like the young parents, I wonder what their kids'll be growing up to be like? It depends, I guess, on how the parents were raised . . ." She paused and looked me straight in the eye, as if to say: "Does that answer

your question?"

Tanya arrived late the night she and Jim Stafford were to appear on the Opry together. Stafford was visibly disappointed as he went on stage alone to start "Spiders and Snakes." He was just getting into it when Beau, Juanita and Tanya rushed in, all smiles. Tanya threw off a fur jacket, which her mother grabbed, and ran out on stage. She was wearing a skin-tight leather suit, laced in brown. She grabbed Stafford from behind, startling him. The audience sat up wide-eyed, slowly realizing who it was. Stafford stopped the music, introduced her and they went right back into the song. He had his arm around Tanya, but as soon as he let go, she took the mike off its stand and pranced away into the spotlights by herself. About a dozen shutterbugs scampered down the aisle, flash cubes twinkling. Tanya looked them right in the eye, grinned, winked, cavorted, and never even came close to missing a line. So far as I know, she and Stafford had not prepared anything for this moment besides the brief run-through in the camper that day. Tanya was smiling and excited when she came off, hugging Stafford and signing autographs.

I asked Beau what had happened, why were they so late? He smiled and shrugged. Then he said, "Tanya . . . she was getting ready, you know. She don't like to talk to people or anything right before a show . . ."

There was to be a party at a nearby motel for the cast and crew of the Timex special that night, but Tanya had decided not to go, although she had expressed an interest in one of the young men from the chorus (the dark and handsome stranger) and told him she'd "probably" be there.

I understood why she wasn't going. She told me earlier that she didn't like talking with certain people, "like television people, because you don't know what they want to hear." In comparison to the nearly frantic, sometimes strained and artificial qualities the TV cast had demonstrated while they were performing, Tanya performed with a quality all her own. There was no point competing with them. I think Tanya knew that.

"There are so many people in the business now, you know, who are so mediocre, she said later. "And I don't want to be just one of the crowd."

That's Tanya. ■

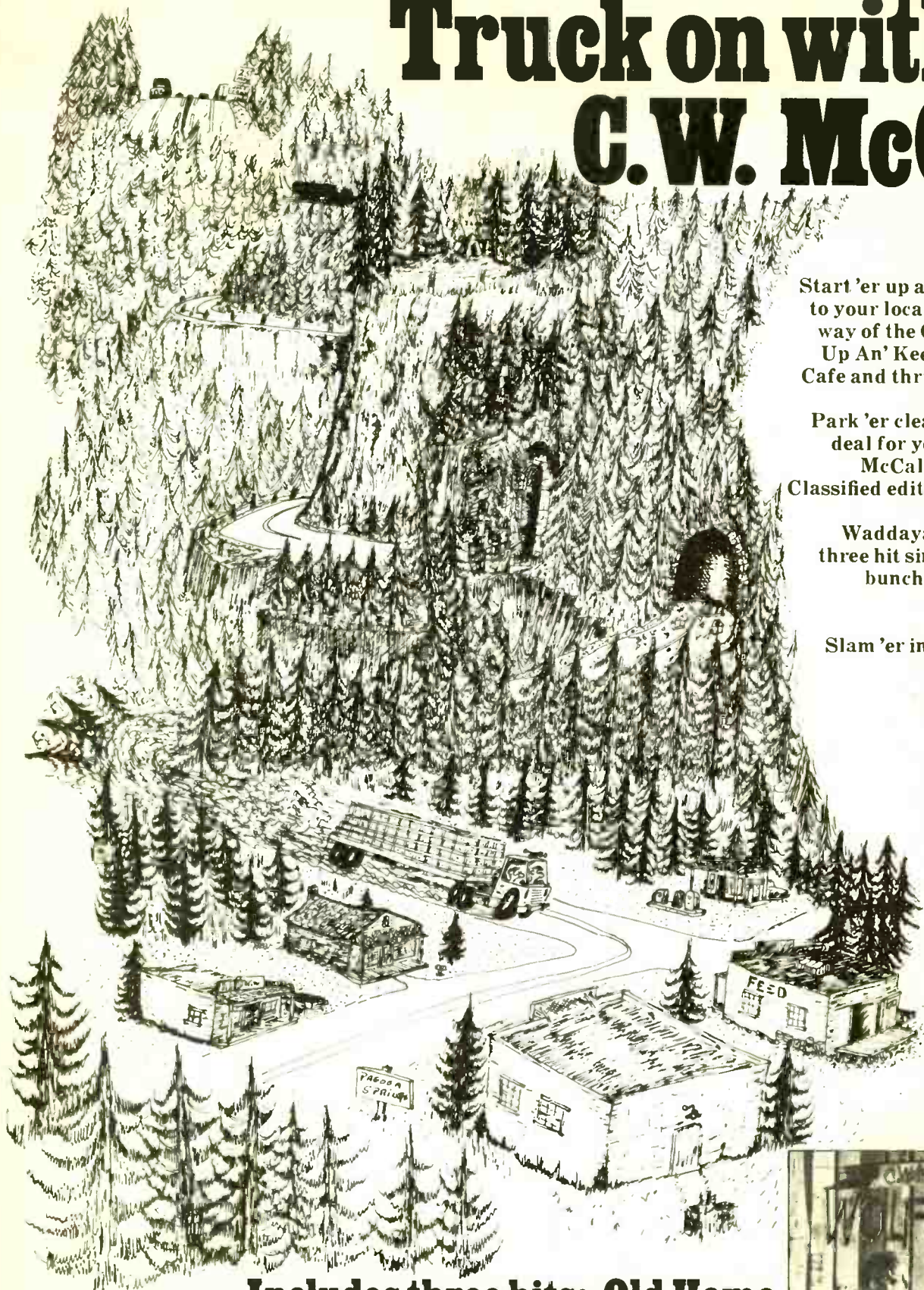


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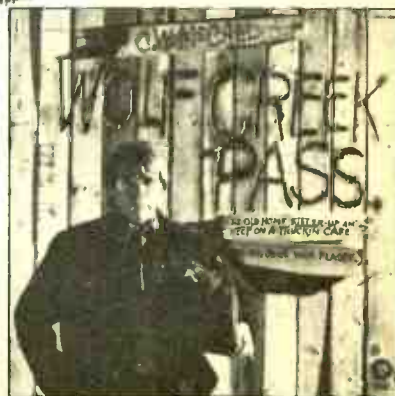


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# FREDDY FENDER

## EL BEBOP KID

by J.R. Young

It was a dreary afternoon in Los Angeles, gray and shiny from the rain that had continued for more than a week. The freeways were slow and littered with broken glass from rear-enders, and the sidewalks were populated only by a few distraught boulevarders looking askance towards the low and ever-present clouds. Nobody was having much fun—nobody, that is, but those folks in from Texas.

Yes, Freddy Fender and his entourage were in town, and man, they were in hog heaven, on top, and getting on with the business of getting on. Oh yes. The show at the Palomino has been a killer: there were more press interviews than there was time to do them; and, more than anything else, that song was *still* at the top of the country charts. "Before The Next Teardrop Falls." Hot-damn! Good times.

While Freddy Fender, singer of the monster hit, was making himself useful by hobnobbing and backslapping with the KLAC country jocks on the Miracle Mile, his other half was killing time in the quasi-Polynesian coffee shop of the Hollywood Holiday Inn. Freddy Fender's other half is Huey Meaux, producer, middle-

side of Tar Junction" or, slightly more respectable, "a real *character*, but a guy you gotta reckon with."

That day in Los Angeles, Huey was drinking iced tea, picking his teeth with a matchbook cover, and telling libelous stories (and

are unprintable. Huey's a hustler, and Freddy Fender is his biggest score since he told Doug Sahm to let his hair grow long, call his band The Sir Douglas Quintet and write "She's About A Mover," thus providing America with an answer to the Beatles, and Huey with considerable riches.

But Freddy's the Big One for Huey, and naturally Huey sees Freddy's current success as only the beginning.

"Listen." Huey said slowly, "when I look at Freddy, up on stage or even in a picture, I see everything. A movie star. You know? The fat Mexican with a belt of bullets crossing his chest?" Huey drew an imaginary line across the paunch inside his chocolate brown shirt to illustrate

man and "crazy Cajun" of great repute.

Depending on who you talk to, Huey Meaux is either "the sleaziest bastard this

coming to even more libelous conclusions) about the domestic doings of Jerry Lee Lewis. Huey's stories are as interesting as they

(Continued on page 60)

Photo courtesy ABC Records



# THE FIDDLER SUPREME

by Elkin Brown

Vassar Clements should shine as a beacon of inspiration to musicians truly dedicated to their art. For almost three-quarters of his forty some-odd years, this soft-spoken, unassuming master of the fiddle has been bracketed into the obscurity of the country music sideman, kept alive by the sheer love of music and the encouragement of his friends. But now the Kissimmee Kid has paid his dues. Vassar seems to have bypassed the image-makers, the under-assistant-West-Coast promotion men, and is simply floating to the top on a cloud of fiddle rosin.

Vassar ain't nothing to look at—except for a bowing technique that's so smooth it's nothing less than sheer poetry to watch, and an occasional grin that breaks out on his face when he plays a real fine lick (or, more often, when somebody in his new band gets off a good 'un). It's all in the music. And I really wonder if there is such a thing as "Vassar on a good night" or "Vassar on a bad night." My reactions to Vassar's performances fall into three categories: high, higher, and totally blown away.

Until recently, Vassar's awesome reputation has been a word-of-mouth process. It probably started in earnest when John Hartford asked Vassar to join him in a down-home venture called The Dobrolic Plectral Society, which tickled ears and also a lot of folks who thought that pickin' had something to do with your nose. John told me that Vassar was the best fiddle player he'd ever heard. Naturally enough, the word got around on Vassar, until he was stealing the limelight (unintentionally, of course) on *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*, the Roy Acuff/Nitty Gritty Dirt Band/Everyone Else album, then touring with the Earl Scruggs Revue, then the Grateful Dead, then the Dicky Betts American Music

Show, then—finally—making his own album for Mercury Records.

Vassar comments on his work with Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead and Dicky Betts of the Allman Brothers Band: "They're good," he says. "They're good people, and they play all the time. That's what I like. Old Garcia, he's gonna be playin' somethin' twenty-four hours a day, unless he's just got to get a little sleep, y'know? *That's* what I like." Vassar didn't even know who Garcia and Betts were until he'd been picking with them for a while—and that's interesting in light of the fact that an endorsement from either rock superstar is a break bigger than most "unknown" pickers could even begin to hope for.

Vassar keeps refusing to let it go to his head. He comments on his reputation as the best fiddle player around: "I really don't think about it," he says. "Those people that say that, they're just prejudiced towards me, but there are a lot of real good fiddle players, and they all play different. They've all got different feels, and I don't see how you can compare me with them, or them with me, because we're just doing it the way we feel it."

Vassar's way of feeling it is a unique phenomenon. His style has a strong jazz orientation uncharacteristic of most bluegrass fiddlers or Western Swing fiddlers. "Well, you see, I grew up in Florida," he explains, "and the only music that you'd call 'country' was what I heard on a Saturday night when I'd listen to the Opry. And when I was a kid starting out, there weren't any fiddlers around to learn from, and most of what I listened to was horns."

"You mean jazz?" I asked. "Well, not so much jazz as little quintets and things. Artie Shaw, the Gramercy Five, and things like that. I don't think I was really trying to learn how to play like them or anything, but I think that music stayed with me, and some of the licks come out from time to time when I play."

Vassar began playing at the age of seven, and developed that unique style of his. Professionally, though, he operated as a sideman for many years behind acts like Bill Monroe, Faron Young, Jim and Jesse and many other Opry acts. All of those people had their own distinctive styles and Vassar, like any sideman, had to fit into them, which he did.

"You know how it is," he says.

"When you love music so much, you'll do anything. You'll work with anybody, and do what they tell you to do because you love music so much, and you want to play, and you know that when you *get through*, you can do what you want to do. Practice, jam, and so forth. But really, the first time I got to cut loose on stage was with John Hartford, and then from him I went to Scruggs, and then that Dirt Band album, and that's what did it. And I've been playing like I want to since."

Vassar was playing what he wanted at Nashville's Exit/In recently, along with his new band. And make no mistake about it—it's a *band*. They play *together*. Doug Jernigan on pedal steel and dobro. Clay Caier on drums, Bill Kenner on bass vocals and mandolin, Mike Dowling on guitar and bass, and Bob Hoban on five-string banjo, piano, and vocals. Together they went from "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" to an old Hank Garland jazz number, to a funky version of "Night Train." (the James Brown instrumental). With Vassar and Doug taking leads, the old soul classic sounded like something Bob Wills should have done. You couldn't say it was really country, but it sure wasn't pop. It was real, down-home *music*. Dicky Betts' "Jessica" managed to sound country than Dicky ever did it on account of Vassar and Doug's thematic lead, and at the same time funkier than Dicky ever did it because of Bob Hoban's Ray Charles-cum-Jerry Lee piano. It was one hell of a set.

"You know, these boys are just really fine," Vassar said after the set. He was obviously excited. "I'd rather play with them than anybody. You take that pedal steel joker over there," he said, pointing to a fatigued but smiling Doug Jernigan, laid back at the opposite side of the room. "I remember when his daddy used to bring him around and he used to have a Fender 1000, I think it was, and his feet could barely reach the pedals. He was good then, but he's just gotten unconscious since then." I looked over at Doug, who seemed to wake up at that moment, and Vassar, noticing, went on. "you know what I mean by unconscious? That's when you're playing stuff that ain't even there! They play stuff—notes chords—that ain't there! I know, I've looked for it on the fiddle!"

That's the kind of thing that makes Vassar Clements happy. ■

PHOTO: THE GREASE BROS.



# GOODBYE, KINGSTON SPRINGS

Before the developers moved in, it was just a little country town.  
It was a laid-back picker's Paradise.

by VINCE MATTHEWS

*Detroit is damned. Chicago's gone  
Cleveland baby bye-bye so long  
The L.A. freeway ain't the way  
It ain't free  
Oh, Good Lord. can you find  
In Your heart to be kind  
Can You spare/  
Kingston Springs, Tennessee\**

**D**riving west from Nashville on Highway 70, it's easy to miss the Kingston Springs turnoff. Just a small sign and an arrow pointing towards a blacktop road that bounces over the railroad tracks, cuts through a hill and crosses the Harpeth River bridge.

My wife Melva said it was a magic pass, only special people could find it, and all the people who lived in Kingston Springs were hobbits and had hairy feet.

Paul Fahle was the first one to show us the place. He discovered it one day while driving around. Knowing we were looking for a place to live he took us there. "I've found this little town," he said, "way out in the middle of nowhere. It's almost like it has no reason to exist."

I related to it immediately.

I lived in Kingston Springs, Tennessee, for six years. When I settled there in 1967, it was just a little country town. When I left in 1973, it had changed. Progress had come to Kingston Springs. Kingston Springs is like a lot of American small towns.

Place yourself in 1967. You are driving south down the blacktop past perfectly placed cows grazing in rolling meadows with old settled farmhouses on either side. You

are entering the timelessness of the Harpeth River Valley.

Historians are in doubt as to the origin of the name "Harpeth." Since there are two tributaries, the Big Harpeth and the Little Harpeth, some maintain it was named after the two outlaw brothers, Big Harp and Little Harp, who terrorized this region around the time of the settlement of Kingston Springs. Others say it is an old Cherokee Indian name. It was one of the last scenic rivers in the state of Tennessee.

On your left, laid back in the hills, you pass the old hotel built on the site of the mineral springs now owned by the Beard family. It is surrounded by guest cabins and a log building, still standing, that was used as a medical aid station during the Civil War. Although the hotel is a mid-Victorian architectural gem, it is badly in need of restoration. The cabins show the years, and weeds hide the springs that were dammed long ago.

Around the turn of the century this place was a health resort and fashion spa. Special passenger trains out of Nashville would pull into the siding for the weekend. Horse drawn hacks would carry the ladies and gentlemen to the hotel to dance, talk, play croquet and take the waters. Squint your eyes and you can see the gaslights flickering across the stage built in front of the hotel for the plays. You can hear the music, the laughter and see the dancing.

The image fades. The era passed.

You are now entering Kingston Springs, population 510, settled in the 1830s by ol' man Samuel Kingston, who married into the Dunn family and disappeared into history.

On your right is the Tinsley homeplace, a huge log home as warm and charming as the Tinsleys themselves. On your left is the patriarchal Billy Beard's estate, brooding on the hill overlooking the town that Billy swore would remain small and

country as long as he lived. You pass the general store that Billy ran for fun, turn right, pass the original one-room schoolhouse and Nig Whited's dirt-floor garage where his hounds sleep beside the wood-burning stove while he repairs school buses, lawnmowers and sports cars, then—don't blink, you'll miss it—two stores, a post office, and Mr. Bruce's cafe and garage. Before it burned, another hotel stood where Robert Harris and Clarence Sullivan run the new post office now, and just this side and to the left of the railroad tracks, you can still see the outlines of the old depot.

If you go straight across the tracks you're in the Lovell's driveway. Just go up on the back porch, open the refrigerator door, leave an empty gallon jug and a dollar, and take home a gallon of sweet milk with two inches of cream and a pound of freshly churned butter.

Turn right and you'll pass Mr. Sam Ament's home on the left. Mr. Sam worked on the L&N for fifty years and now lives with his lovely wife, Lorene, in a sprawling white frame house beside the same lines he served for so long. His yard is full of railroad treasures, some of which he'll sell, some of which he won't, dogs, cats, and a pick-up truck painted red so it'll go faster.

Driving east now, then a left turn onto a gravel road, and you're going up Pinnacle Hill, overlooking the town behind you and the Harpeth River way down below.

Main U.S. Highway 70, which runs from Memphis to Nashville, would have gone through the center of town, but one of Mr. Ernest Page's ancestors wouldn't sell them a favorite tree of his, so that bit of commerce passed us by.

That's about it. That's Kingston Springs. Melva and I rented a large white farm-style house from Jesse Eden right in the center of town. I wrote songs while she worked at

Vince Matthews is a songwriter and singer whose songs have been recorded by Johnny Cash, Charley Pride and many other country artists. His concern for Kingston Springs led him to compose an entire album, *Kingston Springs Suite*, about the small town. As yet, the album is not commercially available. That's Vince in the photo, floating the Harpeth River.

\*From "God Save Kingston Springs" by Vince Matthews and Jim Casey. © Jack Music, Inc.

Peabody University. Down the street was a community center where we played baseball, drank Cokes and rode horses. A hundred yards behind the house ran the Harpeth River, where you could fish, float, loaf, swim, wade or day-dream while hiding from your chores.

The first friend we made in town was Mr. Vernon Newsome. He pulled up in front of our house one morning in his buggy with his good horse, Will, resplendent in pink tassels. Bouncing up the steps and whipping off his hat, he said to Melva, "Good mornin' missus! I'm Vernon Newsome, yo' blacksmith! Where's de bull?"

The bull—me—was sick, sober and sorry, sleeping on a mattress on the floor in the next room. I heard him as in a dream.

"Vincent is resting, Mr. Newsome. Won't you come in please?"

"Thank you kindly, Missus. Here, I've brought you something. Something to make you feel good! Yes sir!"

Reaching into his old denim jacket pocket, he pulled out half an angel food cake, six double-yoke fresh eggs and two pounds of home-cured country ham.

Mr. Newsome is the real thing. As a young man he heard the calling and his house became a church



In Kingston Springs, there was Sam Ament, who used to work the L&N...

filled with happy shouting people led by his own free spirit. This faith gave him the courage to start over after losing his life's savings in a fire. It gave him the wisdom of a true philosopher that he'll share for free with anyone who'll take the time to listen. It gave him a family of two wives, countless children, grandchildren, great and great-great grandchildren. His years as a traveling blacksmith gave him his incredible physical strength. As he says,

"why if that hoss, lissen to me now, if that hoss don't want to give me his foot to shoe I just takes his leg and bends that gentleman to my will!"

I'll always see him in my mind's eye driving down the road in his rubber-tired buggy with his wife Mattie sitting beside him, both of them draped in the natural dignity



...and Jim Casey, who used to float the Harpeth, with the Cardinal kids.

of an ancient king and queen.

The fourth of July had been an annual tradition but for some reason had been discontinued. One year we got it back with a bang!

Jim Burroughs and I drove to Pittsburgh, Tennessee and brought back a ton of fireworks complete with mortars and a United States flag that would light the heavens. Jim, being a blasting expert, would do the honors.

Someone donated a flat-bed trailer and Captain Midnight exceeded a show of pickers and politicians. Fred Boyd and the Young Country played beautifully all day in the broiling sun. Bobby Boyd brought the Oklahoma crew and Bobby Barnett (one of the greats) delivered a masterful set. Billy Roberts brought the house down with his french harp.

The pickers would draw a crowd and the politicians would run them off.

Year after year we blocked the streets off and square danced. Fiddles and banjos and guitars wailing in the night. Virginia Harris trying to teach me the steps with Wayne Walker choosing to play the wall-flower. But the real star of the show was always the barbecue. Ben Pack and Marshall Green were given up to be the best barbecuers in the county.

First you buy a couple of fifths to make it through on, then kill and dress the hog, leaving the back skin intact. Lay the hog face down above a

two-foot pit on a fence nailed to a couple of cross ties. Build a hickory fire well off to the side and shovel coals under the hog. The heat should never be greater than to allow you to hold your hand above it for ten seconds without burning. Otherwise you'll sear the meat. Throw a few chickens and a couple of shoulders on there for good measure. Keep the coals comin' and pass that damn bottle, Ben, sing a few songs, relax, keep the coals comin'. About 14-16 hours later the skin will pop up. Time to turn the hog over, Marshall. Now put the soppins on! Homemade sauce in a 25-pound lard stand. Lots of it! Sing some more, drink a little, eat some chicken and let 'er cook for another few hours. Happy 4th of July, boys.

We had become good friends with Nana and Jr. Oakley who ran the grocery store across the street, and since they wanted to move "downtown" to be closer to their store, we rented their homeplace. A neat white house a block from the grammar school with a long sloping lawn



...and Mr. Newsome and his wife Mattie, both of them the real thing.

and a giant oak tree in the front yard that we promptly named Clarence. The place was, as Jr. assured us, "as quiet as a graveyard." We settled in for the happiest and most productive years of our lives.

Our neighbors were the Jim Burroughs, the Charlie Smiths, the Sweeneys and the Linders. Kind, helpful neighbors with neat yards, prize winning flowers, muscadine wine, happy dogs and kids, and daughters so pretty they could make a songwriter lay down his guitar when the school bus came back from the Ashland City High School.

Oakley's Grocery was more than a store. Jack Liles would tell you when and where the fish were bitin'. Bobby (the "mayor") Benefield would



hold forth on county politics, tell you where a secret patch of polk salad could be found, or give you ideas for songs like, "Run to the Roundhouse Mable, They Can't Corner You There." It was a community message center, rental office, employment agency and gossip circle.

Or on some given morning you might find Eddie Rabbit singing while sitting on the coke machine sign that read "Please Do Not Sit On The Coke Machine." Or Glen Sherley or Shel Silverstein sitting on the bench out front in the sunshine swapping lies with the old timers.



... and the Burroughs family, with daughters so pretty ...

Or Jack Clement, trying to relax, whittlin' on a small piece of cedar, chopping at it with a jack knife.

One morning Nana gave Melva a recipe for corn cob wine. It was a Pennsylvania Dutch recipe handed down in her family.

First you need a five-gallon earthen crock and 15 ears of corn. Scrape the corn off and then chop up the cobs. Add water and let ferment. Strain, add sugar and grape juice to the water. Let ferment 10-12 days and bottle.

Serve chilled.

The biggest day of our lives was when John and June Carter Cash came to dinner.

I had called John and asked him to float the river with me. He didn't have time. I held my breath and invited them to dinner.

"Why, Vince," he said, "I'd love to eat Miss Melva's cooking."

After jumping up and down, I met them at Kathy Gregory's house in Nashville. I drove us out in their big black Cadillac. We talked about the Louvin Brothers, Virginia, picking cotton and Kingston Springs. As I wheeled off the Interstate, June clapped her hands and exclaimed, "Oh, I've dreamed this before! I really

have! But, Vince, in my dream, you were driving on the right side of the road!"

We pulled into the driveway, and John said, "I love it! I love it!"

I had to run an errand, so while Melva and June chatted, John and I got in my old hillbilly Cadillac, kicking beer cans out of the way. I was mortified.

I'll always remember when we came back home and parked under Clarence you looked over and said, "If I hadn't had fifteen years experience shaking hands with just about every man, woman and child in the United States, I could never have handled that T.V. show when it hit."

I'll bet.

We got June and I took them to see the temple mounds just north of Kingston. They're still there like the ancient builders left them for some mysterious reason centuries ago. The Harpeth curves, making a natural amphitheater with the bluffs guarding them while the river sings.

We sat in silence for a moment in the hot Tennessee sun, hearing only the river, the breeze and the birds.

Back home now to a huge country dinner. It fell upon John to go to the front porch and make ice cream. I'd sit on the freezer and he'd crank, then I'd crank while he sat.

The little Baker girl was walking down the road, recognized him and



... and the Fourth Of July, when the politicians' people would come.

walked over. "I'm not going to bother you," she said. "And I won't tell anyone you're here. I just want to thank you for all the help you've given people." John simply said, "Thank You."

Even though he was on a diet, he did justice to Miss Melva's cooking. "Thank you for having us" June said. "It's the simple things that please John and I so." After ice cream June took off a fortune in diamonds and helped wash dishes

while John and I walked outside.

I introduced him to Clarence and we walked out back. He lay down on the ground and looked up through the sun-dappled branches. "I'm at peace with the world and myself," he said. So was I. They left then. Much too soon. As they left he leaned out and hollered, "You'll make it, Vince!"



... and the law, which was always kind of small-town friendly-like.

PHOTOS: YVONNE HANNEMAN

Nearly seven years of memories. Most good. Some bad.

You remember Tommy Dorton shinnieing up Clarence to tie Miss Melva's swing.

Jack Clement swinging in it all night at a wiener roast.

All the kids standing by the fire trying to get you to go soap Halloween windows.

Glen Sherley, Harlan Sanders and Earl Green dropping by for the first time.

Lazy Sunday morning breakfasts with Shel. Long drives in the country with Shel writing "Rosalie's Good Eats Cafe."

Being snow bound.

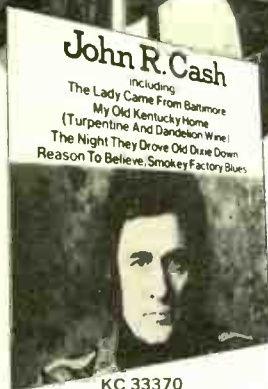
The cold nights. (Kingston has a temperature inversion and is one of the coldest spots in the nation.)

Jim and Beth Casey's wedding. Harry and Barbara Coble's wedding. Formally set tables in the front yard. The Reverend Will D. Campbell saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," signing the license with a flourish and adding, "There! that gives you the legal right to sue each other!" Then picking up the guitar and singing "Walk through This World With Me."

Johnny Darrell's dog giving our rug the fleas.

The Fourth of Julys. Beer, beans and barbecue. Fiddles and banjos wailing all night. The pickers drawing a crowd and the politicians running them off again. Myrtle Hall,

# Three men who make our country great.



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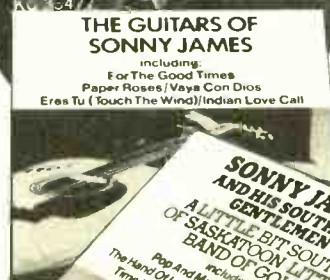
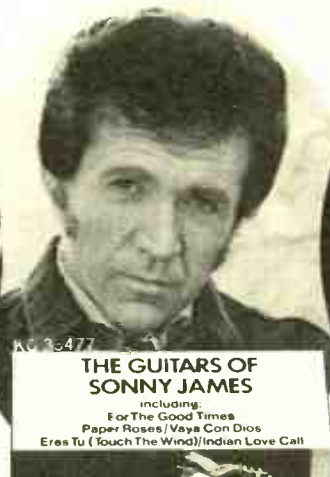
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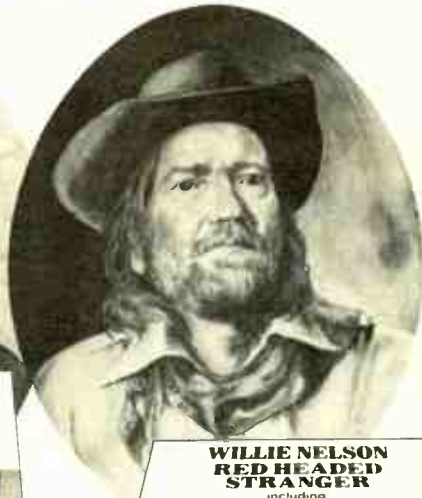
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## Clarence The Tree by JOHNNY CASH

Now Old Clarence is an oak tree. I think he's a Pin Oak tree. I really didn't look real close. Maybe he's a White Oak tree. Anyway, Clarence is one of the biggest trees I ever saw, not counting the Redwoods and Sequoias in California, which you don't need to count anyway.

Clarence ain't only big, he's a wise tree, because Clarence stands in Vince Matthews' front yard in Kingston Springs. Old Clarence was there when them Indians was building them mounds just across the Harpeth River. The smoke from their campfires floated through Clarence's limbs. Old Clarence was there when James Robertson and Isaac Bledsoe and Casper Mansker came floatin' down on a long hunt. Clarence was there when Andy Jackson was riding his race horses on the Gallatin meadows and the Belle Meade hills. Clarence shook in his roots at the sound of gunfire from the Battle of Nashville.

But most notably, Clarence was there, standing tall and strong, shading the bedroom of Vince Matthews, so he could sleep all day after the long night's goings on, creating, writing, composing, unfolding, weaving and singing. Old Clarence was there, his leaves rustlin' and gigglin' in the cool midnite air while Kris and Shel and Cowboy and Vince and Casey and Glen and Sandy and who in the name of goodness knows who, doing what in the name of goodness knows what.

But the one thing Vince was doin', he was gleanin', he was meddlin' in marvelous minds, his own mind being the most marvelous, 'cause he had long ago conceived *Kingston Springs Suite*. And he don't ask you to pardon the word "suite" 'cause that's what it is. A laid-out slice of life as lived and learned by a laid-back country picker who knows and loves and understands the people like you'll find at Kingston Springs.

I think "Melva's Wine" is the greatest contemporary American folk song I ever heard.

Yep, Old Clarence saw it all and he heard it all, and as I said, Old Clarence is wise. He knows and he's standing taller and prouder and waving his arms harder and making more noise than ever before. Old Clarence knows that Vince has got it all together. He heard old Vince break pencil and pencil, guitar string after guitar string. Old Clarence even saw me come and go a few times. Saw me tastin' Melva's wine, checking out Melva's chili, wavin' farewell to Vince and Melva till another time, heard me holler 'You'll make it, Vince!' Yep, Old Clarence is proud and I am too.



PHOTO: JOHN GALLAGHER

You can't really be sure about when the changes started to come to Kingston Springs, but they came. First the bulldozers, then the new houses...

Melva's mother, and Melva cooking for days.

Jeannie Bare's beauty and graciousness.

The music. The songs.

Always the music, always the songs.

Zal Yanowsky and Rusty Kershaw literally playing the strings off.

Tracey Nelson, Even Stevens and Gary Scruggs singing in the living room. Guy Clark guarding the moonshine.

Bobby Neuwirth singing "Brand New Tennessee Waltz."

Bob Webster trying to keep time.

Eric Anderson coming out for Thanksgiving.

Long walks with walking sticks.

Kris Kristofferson scaring the local moonshiners half to death when he came looking for me in a helicopter. His daughter Tracey thinking the rain hitting the Harpeth was fish jumping. "Look at the fishes, Daddy! Look at the fishes!" Kris doing "Me And Bobbie McGee" one last time, but only because Tommy Dorton asked him to.

Sammi Smith hiding out in the hammock.

The kids and dogs running everywhere.

The Dickie Lee fish fry when Don Rich showed up as an unexpected but welcome guest.

Alan Reynolds, Jim Casey and Bob McDill singing at the table.

Brother Dave Gardner calling at two in the morning from Ralph Emery's radio show to ask me "Does

your lovely wife Melva still raise sheep?"

John, June and family coming to a grammar school show, getting stuck in the driveway and later John singing "I Still Miss Someone" in the kitchen.

Tompall dropping by at six in the morning to work on his album. He is a *bad* cowboy!

The dogwoods and catching the little basses.

The day we wrecked the train.

The ol' swimming hole.

The sweet taste of success and the nervous breakdown of failure.

I'm not sure when the changes came. Maybe it was the day Boyce Steel bought the old baseball field. Or when the Harpeth River was removed from the Scenic Rivers act. Maybe it was when the new houses came to the old blacktop road or the day we saw the first heavy machinery going past the house, or the graveyard silence being broken by the hum of industry.

Maybe it started years ago when Terry Moore drove me to a grassy spot by the Interstate and showed me where he planned to build a service station, where later all of Kingston Springs would follow. Or maybe it was the day Billy Beard died. Maybe we changed it ourselves as much as anyone or anything.

Anyway, the era passed. We moved out of our house. Melva and I separated. The factory moved in.



Little Troy Hess duets with Daddy while his sister skips rope alone

"We got permission to take him over to Checko- and Yugo-slovakia," he says. "At first, I was kinda took back by it because I read, you know, that we might get over there and they might keep us. But they told me 'Oh, no! They'll love him over there. I'm tellin' you, they'll roll out the red carpet for him and he'll just have a great time.' I don't know when he's gonna go over there, but I look for it to be just any time now."

Bennie speculates on the future for Troy, the Hess family and himself: "Well, I figger we can get \$10,000 a night," he says. "We can afford to travel anywhere in the United States for that kind of money, and then pay everybody good..."

But tonight, like every Saturday night, Troy's van is parked on Broadway near Nashville's famed row of country music record stores. And Troy is wandering the grimy sidewalks, singing and chording songs on a gold chrome guitar for people who have never heard of him. Most of the people are drunk.

In his white cowboy boots and hat, Troy has even tried to climb up on the stage and play at Ernest Tubb's jamboree, like in the old days. But he is not scheduled to perform there anymore.

"We don't have any plans to book Hess here in the near future," said David McCormick, the store manager. "I believe we had him play here once or twice when he was just a little tiny kid."

Troy has cut a lot of records, but only one Nashville record store stocks them, and, the manager says, "we sell one or two every now and then."

On the records, Troy's clear voice suffers from mundane arrangements and sloppy production. They sound like home tape recordings made by proud parents who hope their son might be famous someday.

That's what they are, and Bennie Hess recalls how it all started.

"We took him out to Houston and bought him a guitar," says Bennie. "He was two years old. And about three weeks later, why, he said, 'Daddy, I want to make a record.'"

"I said, 'Son, it takes a lot to make a record.'"

"'Oh,' he said, 'I bin composin' and I got two numbers and I want to record 'em.'"

"Well, we staggered him along, you know, as long as we could, just out of fear he couldn't do it, you know. And he kept on sayin' 'Daddy, you take me to a good studio, I've heard you talk about 'em, don't take me to no bad ones. I want to go to a good studio and good musicians.' So we took him a hundred miles down to Houston and we got the finest studio they had there and got the best musicians around.

"By riding that far in the country he was just knocked out asleep, and I said, 'Son, we're here. Time to record.' And you know, we had to bathe his face with water, and he got up on that stool there... and I'm tellin' you, Troy cut one, then started to fall off to sleep, and so we bathed his face again and he said, 'Daddy, bathe my face good. Put some cold water on it so I can make it.' So we did, and so he cut the other side then, and then he had his recordin' made, and at that time he was two years and nine months old. His first record was

'Precious Memories Of Your Daddy' and 'I Want Daddy For My Birthday.'"

An awful lot of the songs Troy Hess sings are about Daddy, who writes them. There are songs about Mama, too—"Mama Please Don't Go Topless," and "Mama Take Me Back To Daddy (You're Only Keeping Me For Spite)."

Today, Troy can be seen playing for and peddling records to tourists on a sightseeing bus that stops in front of his little brown brick house on Music Row twice a week. Nobody bought albums on the bus I rode. Instead, the tourists gaped at the house plastered with hand-made Troy Hess posters, the pastel porch steps, and the bogus \$1,000 bills wrapped around the branches of a tiny tree in the front yard. It's called "The Money Tree" after the first song Troy wrote.

"Troy doesn't like to play for those buses," remarks Troy's eight-year-old sister Colleen, who has a less intense parent-promoted career of her own. "He likes to watch TV cowboy shows."

Troy dressed up in his golden cowboy outfit when we went out for hamburgers. He is a charming child who loves music, enjoys show business and adores cowboys.

"Out of all the people on television, I like the Lone Ranger best," he mumbled, gobbling his cheeseburger like a harried businessman. "I guess he is my hero. In Texas, I used to have a white stallion and I had an outfit just like the Lone Ranger's. I had a mask and the prettiest set of guns you ever saw. They had pearl handles. I used to ride that horse through the woods in Texas. And I used to say 'Hi-Ho Silver! Away!'"

"I'd rather any day of the week be back in Texas. I go out in the woods and I go out in the mornin' and I don't come back til time to eat. Just spend my hours in the woods."

Of being a star, he says, "Oh, sometimes it interrupts me sometimes when I'm doin' something, but it's great."

But others have a darker view of Troy's situation. "It's really sad that Troy grew up," said a clerk in a downtown Nashville record store. "The novelty of his act has worn off, but his parents keep on pushing him. Troy's father never made it as a country musician, so I guess Troy is going to have to make it. That's a big price for Troy to pay. Too big." ■



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In the hands of less talented performers, "artistic freedom" means the freedom to indulge in excess. Willie Nelson has been pursuing artistic freedom for some time, and when he gets it he never comes away with less than a masterpiece. It goes without saying that *Red Headed Stranger*, his first Columbia album, is a masterpiece.

Like *Phases and Stages*, this is a concept album. The concept this time seems to revolve around that time-honored Nelson theme, loss. Nobody in the world of country music writes about loss like Willie, and he has made it the theme of most of his great



est songs. Sometimes the way his characters deal with their loss is sick, pathological. The absence of love festers like an untreated sore, the abandoned lover's mind dwells unhealthily upon it, he becomes lost in thoughts of revenge.

Thus we have the first side, where the red headed stranger discovers his love gone and sets off to find her and the man who took her, and kills them. The side is unified by "The Time of the Preacher," a tale set in the West of 1901, where such acts of revenge could happen without too much interference from the law, the attitude being summed up perfectly in the song "Red Headed Stranger." The stranger is crazy with grief. Let him do what he must, and maybe he'll leave town.

But the reality is different. Side 2 takes a different point of view. The stricken lover follows the man and woman to Denver, where he finds them dancing in a bar. Kill them? No, he decides. Let them be. Wandering the streets, he takes love where he can find it, and eventually finds the new love, ending the tale on an optimistic note.

No less remarkable than the story is the way Willie tells it, intertwining his own songs with country classics, vocals with instrumentals. After outlining "The Time of the Preacher," he sings the classic "I Couldn't Believe It Was True," goes back to a verse of "Preacher," adds the short narrative "Blue Rock Montana," and follows that with another classic, "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain." On Side 2, "Denver" leads off by telling the new version of the tale, and Willie leaves the dancers dancing to two chestnuts, "O'er the Waves" and "Down Yonder." He returns to the lonely man with a remake of "Can I Sleep in Your Arms," and follows him through to the assertive instrumental album closer, "Bandera."

Even the production is unusual, with no other musicians on most tracks but Willie, bass player Bee Spears,

and drummer Paul English, with occasional harmonica wails from Mickey Raphael. Bobbi Nelson, Willie's sister, plays some stomping piano, and Bucky Meadows and Jody Payne contribute their talents on guitar and piano, but for the most part it's just Willie and his famous gut-string guitar.

This album reveals its treasures very slowly. As likely as not, you won't like it the first time through, but stick with it. It'll stick with you for a long time. Masterpieces are like that.

ED WARD

## Merle Haggard

*Keep Movin' On*  
Capitol ST-11365 \$6.98  
8ST-11365 (tape) \$7.98

I don't think I've ever heard a Merle Haggard album that I didn't like. Not that I'm the Will Rogers of record reviewers or anything like that. It's just that Merle's reliable, so to speak. Whenever I get a new Haggard LP, I feel a sense of comfortable prescience. I don't fret over whether it'll be good or bad, whether I'll



like it or dislike it. The man just doesn't make bad records. It's as simple as that.

First off, there's his writing abilities. Offhand, I can't think of another living country songwriter, save perhaps Willie Nelson, who has wrought so many modest miracles with

word and chord. That many people, especially in the pop market, think that "Okie from Muskogee" represents the sum and substance of Haggard's writing skills is no less foolish than remembering Albert Einstein as the man who brought the Dry Look to America.

There's also the music itself. I'd be hard-pressed to come up with a more capable, musically perceptive band than the Strangers. When Merle and the Strangers record, there's an obvious sense of synergy. They're a working unit, not a bunch of rented session pickers churning out I-IV-V progressions with one eye on the clock. And Fuzzy Owen, who produces Merle's records with Ken Nelson, certainly knows what Merle's music is all about. He's been producing Haggard since their Tally Records days in the early sixties, and his instincts have always paid off.

*Keep Movin' On*, like the thirty Merle Haggard albums that came before it, is a fine piece of vinyl. The songs, the quality of musicianship, the production—tight, right on target. There are a couple of weak songs: "Here in Frisco" is one, I think, and Dolly Parton's "Kentucky Gambler," which seems just a little too cute, too neatly homiletic for Merle. Most of *Keep Movin' On*, though, is sheer Haggard. "September in Miami" is a perfect song, and so is Merle's recent hit "Always Wanting You." "Life's Like Poetry" stands out not only for its audacious barroom metaphor, but for its raw lyric: "Life's too short to think about right or wrong." And "Movin' On," the theme song Merle wrote for the TV series of the same name, sounds a whole lot better by itself than it does in the context of that show. And

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## Records

who would refuse to be thankful for the pith and wisdom Merle offers in "A Man's Got to Give up a Lot": "It don't take much to take 'em home with you/But it takes a whole lot to keep 'em there with you," he sings of the skirted sex. Like I said, the man just doesn't make bad records. It's as simple as that.

NICK TOSCHES

**Doug Kershaw**  
Alive and Pickin'  
Warner Brothers BS-2851  
\$6.98  
B8-2851 (tape) \$7.97

The spontaneity and barely restrained abandon of a good Doug Kershaw performance has, with the release of *Alive and Pickin'*, finally been captured on record. Recorded live in the coonaise flesh at Atlanta's Great Southeast Music Hall, the evening turned

bayou fever. The same goes for "Dixie Creole," "The Battle of New Orleans," and "The Cajun Stripper." And throughout it all, there's that indescribably eerie quality which never lets us forget that this man is from the mangrove swamp, not the honky-tonk.

There are some moments of special magic here: the chant at the start of "The Battle of New Orleans" is pure crickets-and-rattlesnakes-and-new-moon-over-the-cypress; the railroad whistle effect on a maniacal "Orange Blossom Special"; low minor key notes sustained like threatening storms in "Cajun Joe (the Bully of the Bayou)."

Doug Kershaw has been making records for more than fifteen years. *Alive and Pickin'* may very well be his best.

RUSSELL SHAW

**Tanya Tucker**  
Tanya Tucker  
MCA MCA-2141 \$6.98  
MCAT-2141 (tape) \$7.98



the venue's usually laid-back audience of burgundy sippers into a whooping, hell-raising collection of joyous rowdies.

Kershaw's fiddle emulates the buzz saw block-chordings of the authentic Cajun artists. Complemented by an amplified rhythm section, his music is a mixture of down-home fun and Big Beat energy. The ragin' Cajun's stage antics, marked by strong doses of infectious enthusiasm, add further electricity. There's a little part of the brain which tells your feet when to stomp time. In live performance, Doug rarely has trouble tickling that little spot.

"Diggy Liggy Lo" and "Louisiana Man," Kershaw's two most well known tunes, are included here; the versions are expanded, bouncy and full of

The first time I heard her sing "Delta Dawn" I felt Tanya Tucker was going to be a star. No one had made me feel so musically refreshed since Brenda Lee sang her way into my soul when I was fifteen. When Tanya left Columbia Records, there was much talk about her going pop and leaving country music altogether. Being a friend of Tanya, as well as the writer of her biggest hit to date, I



was probably as curious as everyone else about what this album would sound like.

There are songs on the LP that hint very strongly at new directions ("The Serenade that We Played" is one such





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# Records

song). But producer Snuff Garrett seems to be afraid to stray too far from the Sherrill-Tucker formula of teenage sex symbol vs. innocence, and songs like "Traveling Salesman" counterbalance the material less typical of Tanya's sound. But, new directions or old, when it all comes down, this little girl is as country as Minnie Pearl's fried chicken, and just as good.

One question I find myself asking is why, with so many fresh writers and good songs around, did Snuff Garrett choose to have Tanya do so many cover versions of other singers' hits? Garrett was undoubtedly under a lot of pressure to show that he could make hit records with Tanya. He can; the evidence is in Phil Everly's "When Will I Be Loved," which would be a fine single to follow "Lizzie and the Rainman." The production is great, and Tanya's voice has never been better.

I can't say that this is a great album, but it is a good one. Billy Sherrill made some great records with Tanya, and it's going to take a while, or at least some drastic musical changes, to make people forget that. Oddly, this album seems to have been rushed together. Maybe they'll take their time on the next one. But, all in all, I would have paid the price of this album just to hear Tanya sing "When Will I Be Loved."

DAVID ALLAN COE

**The Blue Sky Boys**  
Bluegrass Mountain Music  
RCA Camden ADL2-0726(e)  
\$4.98  
No tape available

This is an outstanding collection of old-time country and gospel music, but, despite its title, bluegrass it ain't! The Bolick Brothers themselves have consistently denied that they were ever a part of the

bluegrass world, and a comparison of their recordings with those of, say, Bill Monroe, would confirm their judgment. Perhaps a good set of liner notes would have clarified the fact that the Blue Sky Boys' influence on bluegrass has come through their familiar songs and rather unique harmony style rather than



Everly Brothers have drawn heavily upon the Blue Sky Boys for both songs and styles, but the Bolicks always suggested an earlier phase of country music.

It is a much overworked cliché to say that the Blue Sky Boys were in a class by themselves, but they were. Their style and choice of songs reflected the church, parlor, and schoolhouse circuit era of pre-World War II country music, and although they were only one of several brother groups who featured mandolin and guitar, their smooth, sweet, and ultra-close vocal blend has never been surpassed and rarely equaled in any field of country music.

The reissued selections here, which date back to their first Bluebird session in 1936, run the gamut from such famous old ballads as "Story of the Knoxville Girl" and "The Hills of Roane County" to gospel songs like "The Sunny

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# Records

Side of Life" and country and western tunes like "The Last Letter." To the average country fan, the most recognizable song on the album will be "Kentucky," the biggest hit the Bolicks ever recorded. Most of the songs are in the nostalgic, sentimental, or tragic veins, with the only real exception being "Are You From Dixie," which was used as the Blue Sky Boys' radio theme. The Bolick Brothers' melancholy approach to song was no doubt shared by their Depression-era listeners who made them one of the most popular radio groups in the Southeast in the years before World War II.

My only objection to this album, aside from the misleading title, is the fact that most of these songs have been reissued before and are still available on the Starday and Rounder labels. A hard-core Blue Sky Boys fan, such as myself, can hardly be anything

but disappointed to find that a very large portion of the Bolick repertory still remains unissued, especially that sizable portion of post-World War II material which, though less interesting as folklore than the earlier songs, finds the Blue Sky Boys at the peak of their vocal powers, and with their sound at its clearest and sharpest.

BILL C. MALONE

**Johnny Cash**  
John R. Cash  
Columbia KC-33370 \$5.98  
CA-33370 (tape) \$6.98

As far as Johnny Cash albums go, his last one, *Johnny Cash Sings Precious Memories*, left a lot to be desired. Following that LP, Cash went into the studio and recorded an album with Jack Clement producing. Clement had worked with Cash in the old days at Sun Records, and the reunion seems to have been

fairly exciting musically. I was disappointed when I found out the album wasn't going to be released, but *John R. Cash* helped ease the situation a bit.

This is certainly Cash's most interesting album in quite a while. Basically, the album



consists of Johnny's versions of already familiar songs. Two of the cuts provided recent hits for Cash: Tim Hardin's "The Lady Came from Baltimore," which was a pop hit for Bobby Darin back in 1967,

and Randy Newman's "My Old Kentucky Home (Turpentine and Dandelion Wine)." Other performances include the Band's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" (the song has been on the country charts twice, once done by the late Don Rich and again by Alice Creech), Billy Joe Shaver's "Jesus Was Our Saviour (Cotton Was Our King)," and another Tim Hardin tune, "Reason To Believe," that supplied a modest country hit for Suzi Jane Hokum a few years back.

The most effective piece here is without question "My Old Kentucky Home." Randy Newman is a genius of sorts, and this is one of his strongest compositions. Listening to it here, it seems to have been written for Cash's voice—the archetypal country singer singing what has to be one of the strangest country songs of all time. I'd be interested to know whether Johnny came to

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Connie Cato	Good Hearted Woman	Capitol ST-11387
Billy Crash Craddock	Still Thinkin' 'Bout You	ABC ABCD-875
Lefty Frizzell	The Classic Style of Lefty Frizzell	ABC ABCD-861
Sonny James	The Guitars of Sonny James	Columbia KC-33477
Lois Johnson	Lois Johnson	20th Century T-0698
Jerry Jordan	Phone Call from God	MCA MCA-473
LaCosta	With All My Love	Capitol ST-11391
Hank Locklin	Hank Locklin	MGM M3G-4986
Charlie Monroe	On the Noonday Jamboree, 1944	County 538
Jerry Reed	Mind Your Love	RCA APL1-0787
Ronnie Reno	For the First Time	Tally MCA-472
Charlie Rich	Greatest Hits	RCA APL1-0857
Johnny Rodriguez	Just Get Up And Close the Door	Mercury SRM-1-1032
Various Artists	W.W. and the Dixie Dancekings	20th Century ST-103
Doc Watson	Memories	United Artists UA-LA423-H2
Dennis Weaver	One More Road	Ovation OVQD-1440
Hank Williams, Jr.	Bocephus	MGM M3G-4988

the song through Newman's original recording or the Osborne Brothers' version of it. Either way, it's a musical marriage made in heaven. And speaking of strange country songs, I never thought I'd see the day when Johnny Cash sang about how heroin has it all over cocaine, as he does on David Allan Coe's "Cocaine Carolina" (Coe sings harmony on the cut).

*John R. Cash* is a reassuring album, for it shows that Cash is just as interesting, and just as good, today as he was twenty years ago.

NICK TOSCHES

**David Allan Coe**  
Once upon a Rhyme  
Columbia KC-33085 \$5.98  
CA-33085 (tape) \$6.98



**D**avid Allan Coe writes interesting lyrics and memorable melodies. He has the kind of resonant, crackling voice that makes for distinctive country singing. He shows the kind of insights into types of people and problems that we might expect of someone who's spent much of his life behind bars. (How else does one keep the mind sharp in a dulling prison but by observing fellow inmates closely and doing a lot of thinking?) And he can strike a pose with the best of 'em.

Why, then do I equivocate so much over his albums? Mostly because I think he's been done wrong production-wise. Take the female chorus. It can be used as a special effect, to highlight a certain part of a certain song, or it can be used as part of a formula. Nashville usually opts for the latter; so do Coe and his producer Ron Bledsoe on much of this album. Too many strings can undercut a song sometimes also, and that too happens here (as on "Jody Like a Melody," which can stand just fine by itself, thank you). More isn't necessarily better.

That said, I hasten to add that there's an admirable variety of songs here, and Coe handles them with style. At his best, Coe may be our strongest link between coun-

try music's past—he even does "Fraulein" here—and 1975—his own version, for example, of "Would You Lay with Me (in a Field of Stone)," with its blend of physical and metaphorical imagery. There is, throughout Coe's work, respect for the past, acknowledgement of the present, and expectations for the future. He is one of the few who have mastered the craft of writing

personal songs that possess wide appeal, that don't sink into an abstrusity only a few can comprehend. He may experiment with pop modes and techniques, but his work is always firmly anchored in country. He can, by virtue of spirit and energy, get you up and singing along with a number like "Sweet Vibrations (Some Folks Call It Love)," or get you to just sit back and listen to an eerie ballad about his guitar called "Piece of Wood and Steel."

To sum up, *Once upon a Rhyme* is a wieldy album, but a worthwhile one. I'd like to hear Coe with sparser production and a simple band, because he can carry a song on the basis of just voice and feeling. But I'm always eager to hear what he puts out; he has too much going for him to be passed over lightly.

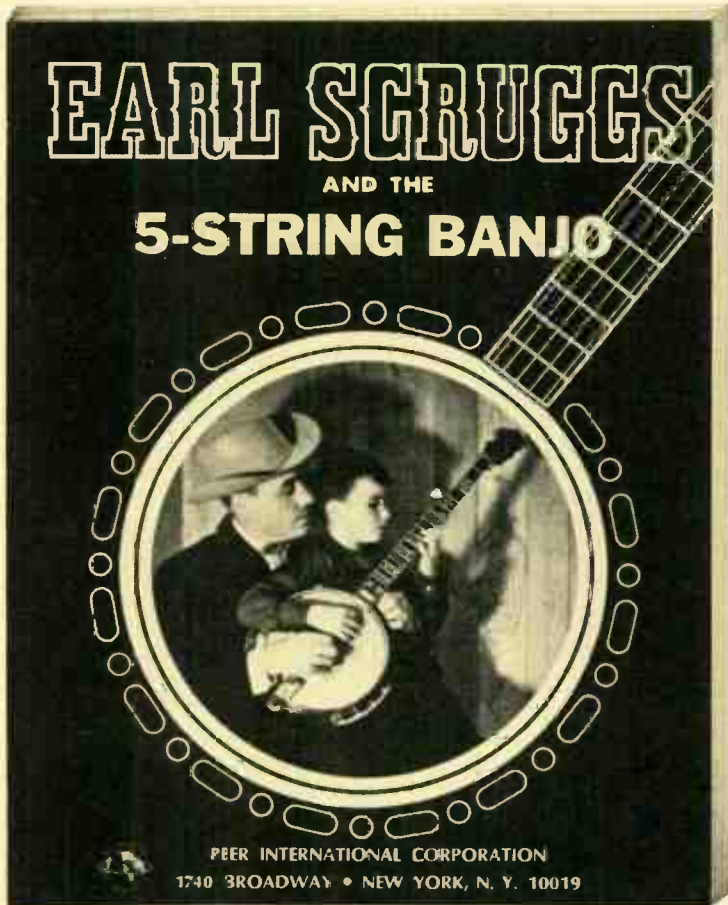
JOHN MORTHLAND

**Melba Montgomery**  
Don't Let the Good Times Fool You  
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**E**lektra Records has dipped its corporate toe into the waters of country music, and the results have been pleasant for both Melba Montgomery



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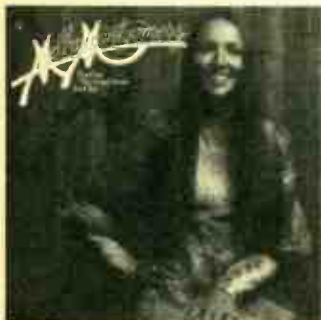
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and Elektra. *Don't Let the Good Times Fool You* is Melba's third consecutive country charter for a company more at home handling Carly Simons and Harry Chapins than Dolly Partons and Ernest Tubbs.

Montgomery has again packaged an even and tasteful album that blends the best of



Music Row's tunesmiths and the younger Nashville poets. It is the rich variety of the songs that gives much of the energy to Melba's staccato voice and producer Pete Drake's fine session people.

At times, especially on the spunky "I Hope I Never Have To Sing that Song" and her already established Jerry Foster hit, "Your Pretty Roses Came Too Late," Melba's delivery is very close to what Linda Ronstadt is doing musically these

days. The only song that doesn't click for country's Divine Miss M is her and hubby Jack Solomon's soapy "It Sure Gets Lonely" (Solomon, a Music Row pro, can do far better; he was responsible for her smash "Wrap Your Love around Me" single). The relaxed professionalism of the album as a whole is captured on Montgomery and Drake's texturing of Harlan Howard's "If You Want the Rainbow."

*Don't Let the Good Times Fool You* is an excellent representation of Melba's brand of country soul. Someone should tell the Elektra execs to take the country plunge.

DENNIS METRANO

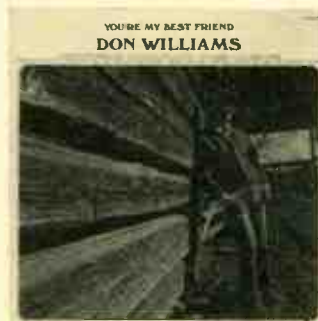
### Don Williams

*You're My Best Friend*  
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Don Williams' fourth Nashville album sneaks up on you like a tomcat wearing tennis shoes. On first listening you're lulled by the loping beat of the title tune and the sweet simplicity of Williams' largely acoustic arrangements. On second hearing, the catchy refrains of songs like "Sweet

Fever" and "(Turn Out the Lights and) Love Me Tonight" begin to sink into your inner ear. It's not until maybe the third time around that you realize this Texan has entered the front rank of Western crooners.

Once the founding leader of the Pozo-Secco Singers, a folk-pop trio, Don Williams has certainly come a long way as both a songwriter and a performer. The three tunes he's written for this album ("Where Are You," "You're the Only One," and "Reason To Be") are every bit as wistful as his modest disc personality, yet Williams is one of the most evocative of young country



singers. Each of his albums has been more accomplished than the last. This LP and his film debut in *W.W. and the Dixie Dancekings* should make him known to a wider audience, and may even be a step toward another Williams joining the Country Music Hall of Fame.

STEVE DITLEA

**Gordon Lightfoot**  
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This, Gordon Lightfoot's Tenth album, is his finest offering to date. Everything he has been striving for and searching for in years of dragging himself around the concert circuit comes together here.

The songs are universal, the tunes simple. After years of long involved ballads full of shifting trees and mists, Lightfoot has managed to sing about what is on his mind. *Cold on the Shoulder*, as the title sug-

gests, is about growing older, making use of time, and getting on with it.

Perfection of craft has always been a Lightfoot trade-

### GORDON LIGHTFOOT



mark, but here a new air of resignation and truthfulness cuts through the slickness of his past albums. "Cherokee Bend," a beautiful tale of Indian revenge, makes up for all those preachy sagas on Gordon's previous albums. And in what may be the best song on the LP, "Rainy Day People," a newly contrite Lightfoot sings, "There's no sorrow you can't rise above."

In Gordon Lightfoot's case, simpler is better. After years of cranking out tunes, he may at last be on to some genuine feelings. *Cold on the Shoulder* is direct, tight, and his best album.

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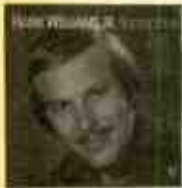
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Today, the modern Pee Wee King (left) looks back on decades of country music influence. In the top photo (above right) he is pictured (with the ever-present accordion) on the set of the Republic movie "Gold Mine In The Sky" with Gene Autrey (extreme right), Smiley Burnette (bottom foreground), and the Stafford Sisters. Jo Stafford is the one in the middle, holding the fiddle. Below right are two shots from Pee Wee's Opry days. In the top picture, he stands in with Judge Hay ("The Solemn Old Judge") and Ernest Tubb for an RC Cola commercial, sometime during 1945. In the bottom picture, he poses with the original Golden West Cowboys. They are, left to right, Pee Wee, Abner Simms, Daisy Rhodes, Jack Skaggs, Milton Estees, and Curly Rhodes. This shot is dated 1937. The solo portrait (bottom left) is from 1938.





The newest inductee to the Country Music Hall of Fame stood in the wings of a Louisville-produced country music television show, waiting to tape his introduction with the show's host, Stu Phillips.

A man who had brought his young daughter to the show spotted him, and wishing to share the thrill with his daughter, leaned over and whispered, "There's Pee Wee King over there all dressed up!" Expecting an extraordinary sight, the little girl looked in the direction in which her father pointed. There she saw a short, silver-haired man dressed not in dazzling sequins, as were other of the show's guests, but in a plain pale-blue suit. He stood alone, hands clasped in front of him, and stared at the floor.

The child sat studying King and saying nothing. Finally, she squinched up her face, turned to her father and innocently inquired, "Is he a star, Daddy?" Her father seemed not to believe what he had heard. Then he looked as if he were about to explode. "Hell, yeah!" he replied.

The little girl is not alone in failing to recognize Frank Anthony "Pee Wee" King for all that he is, but those who know the history of country music are certainly aware that King is a singer/songwriter/bandleader/promoter, who, along with his vocalist Redd Stewart, wrote over 400 songs, including "The Tennessee Waltz," "Slow Poke," "Bimbo," "You Belong to Me" and "Bonaparte's Retreat," promoted country music tirelessly, and brought many changes to the sound of the music.

Pee Wee King was born Feb. 18, 1914 on an Abrams, Wis., farm, and while a small child, learned to play the fiddle from his father, the leader of a country band often in demand for barn dances in the Wisconsin farming community. But although he enjoyed the fiddle, it wasn't until his sister got an accordion that he began his life-long love affair with music. "The accordion fascinated me because I thought there was so much more music to it than to a single string-stringed instrument," he says. "I liked the idea of chords and I was too lazy to play a single string and study very much."

He loved playing and performing, but, as he says, "I didn't care how good I got at it. I always wanted to promote music." And that he did. While a drafting student at a Milwaukee trade high school, he organized an eight-piece band called "The King's Jesters," and patterned his material after Spike Jones. In 1933, when word spread of the group's prowess, Racine's WJRN "Badger State Barn Dance" invited 19-year old King and his band to perform.

One of the show's listeners was Gene Autry, in town on a Midwest tour. Autry was impressed with the group, and, being in need of a few extra musicians, hired King for what he thought would be just one engagement. It didn't turn out that way, though Autry hired the accordion player—with one change. "When I told Mr. Autry my name, he said, 'Well, we've already got four

# PEE WEE KING

by ALANNA NASH

Frankies in the group. Since you're the smallest one, we'll just nickname you Pee Wee." The association was a profitable one. King established a life-long friendship with Autry ("Mr. A—he's still the greatest"), married J.L. Frank's daughter, Lydia, and found that by playing in Autry's band, he had gained the necessary experience to form a professional band of his own.

In 1934, on tour with Autry, King found himself in Louisville. When Autry announced he was going to Hollywood to try to make it in the movies, King decided to stay in Kentucky ("These were lean years, and I didn't see much in Hollywood"), where he joined the Log Cabin Boys. Shortly after, he left the group to form his own band, the Golden West Cowboys. Soon they had their own radio show over

WHAS, which led to an appearance on the Grand Ole Opry. That one appearance in 1937 grew into a ten-year stint as Opry stars.

From the outset, the Golden West Cowboys were unlike any other of the Opry's performers. First, King played the accordion, then a foreign instrument at the Opry. The Opry stars of that time were the Fruit Jar Drinkers, the Gully Jumpers, the Possum Hunters and Arthur Smith and the Dixieliners. "They were good," says Pee Wee, "but they were all string bands, and they played the old songs. There I was with an accordion, playing quite different songs. I didn't understand what they were doing any more than they understood what I was doing."

There was another big difference between King's group and the Opry regulars. The Golden West Cowboys were professionals. "We were the first Grand Ole Opry group to be union members," King says. "We came to Nashville and deposited our transfer cards at the musician's union and the president of the Local said he was surprised because nobody at the Opry carried a musician's card. Most of the performers—I wouldn't say all of them—were farmers or had jobs and just did Saturday night as a barn dance."

Professionalism was not the only thing the Golden West Cowboys brought to the Opry. In their suitcases were several fancy western outfits, inspired by none other than Gene Autry, who had gotten the idea from watching Tom Mix movies. If the Opry audiences were surprised by gaudy garb, however, they had a bigger shock coming in 1940, when Clell Summey toted an electric guitar onstage to play the Cowboys' rendition of "Pistol Packin' Mama." "To bring the first electric amplifier on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry was almost like putting American soldiers on foreign soil," King says. "The Solemn Ole Judge (George D. Hay, the Opry's founder) didn't appreciate that at all, and the engineers weren't sure what they were hearing. But it was accepted by both the musicians and the audience."

Seven years later, another of King's brainstorms was not so widely tolerated. "We had to be funny on the

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stage in those days," King recalls. "So when 'Open the Door, Richard' came out, I got a boy to play snare drum for us. The Judge said, 'Now, you can do that in the studio on your daytime show (in Knoxville), but I don't want this on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry.'" That, of course, failed to deter King, and when "Slow Poke" became a hit, King brought Golden West Cowboy drummer Sticks McDonald to duplicate the song on the Opry. McDonald, also of Louisville, remembers that the Solemn Ole Judge informed King that his drummer was not to go on. "Pee Wee just said, 'I can't go on if my drummer doesn't go on,'" McDonald recalled. And that was that. The drums went on, McDonald says that by insisting on using the drums. King brought some of the western traditions to the Opry. Others say that was the night the Nashville Sound was born.

Upon leaving the Opry, King and the Golden West Cowboys, featuring vocalist Redd Stewart, toured the country in King's luggage truck. On a night trip from Tulsa to Nashville, King listened to the radio while making out his itinerary under the overhead light. "When Bill Monroe came on the radio with 'The Kentucky Waltz,' Redd and I said, 'Here's a song about Kentucky. Why don't we just dedicate a song to Tennessee?' Redd busted open the back of a matchbox and on it we wrote the original words to 'The Tennessee Waltz' and set them to an old tune of mine."

Pee Wee recorded his version of "The Tennessee Waltz" in 1948, and what began as a way to pass the time on a long drive ended up not only as the official song of the State of Tennessee, but also as the top song ever licensed by BMI. It has sold over forty million records by various artists.

Upon the success of "The Tennessee Waltz," King received an offer from Louisville's WAVE-Radio-TV to do a local radio broadcast five days a week and a weekly television show.

"The Pee Wee King Show" enjoyed a successful run on WAVE-TV for 16 years, and in 1956, King had his own network show on ABC. He disbanded the Golden West Cowboys in 1968 to concentrate on promoting and packaging acts, although

he still tours 80 or 90 days a year with Redd Stewart, his partner for 37 years. King's career was admittedly in a lull until 1970, when, at the age of 56, he began to receive much long-overdue recognition. In 1970, he and Stewart became the first two country songwriters to be admitted to the Songwriters Hall of Fame. Then, in 1972 and again the following year, King was nominated for induction to the Country Music Hall of Fame. But double honor came in 1974, when Glen Campbell's recording of King's "Bonaparte's Retreat" reached the top of the charts, and King, along with MCA Records Vice-President Owen Bradley, received the biggest honor of their careers: membership in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

But King is not just *respected* by his peers. Sticks McDonald calls King "the most wonderful boss I ever had in my life. I saw him give Hank Williams \$50 once to pay his hotel bill and get something to eat when Hank didn't even have a record out. Pee Wee just understands people." Roy Acuff says, "You couldn't work with a finer fella than Pee Wee. And musically, he's very versatile. I'd call him the Lawrence Welk of country music."

But perhaps the finest tribute comes from Redd Stewart. "Pee Wee has got to be one of the greatest promoters to ever come down the pike, whether it's a show, a recording session or an individual record. He's been to country music what Bach and Beethoven were to the classics. If they ever get around to writing a book about the people who have contributed the most to country music and its promotion, they'd have to start with the K's, for King."

Pee Wee King wrote his songs when country music was frowned upon and associated with illiterate hillbillies and drunks, and he spent his entire career working to upgrade the music's image and enlarge its audience, trying, as he says, "to make country music bigger and better." He was instrumental in taking what was then called "country-western" from community barn dances to and beyond the Opry, and putting it, through network television and radio, into millions of American homes. And that's not bad for a man whose accordion teacher told him, "King, you'll never make it as a musician." ■



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# Hi-Fi Corner

Good Sound Means Clean Records

by MICHAEL MARCUS

In the past we've talked about the kind of audio equipment you should look for, your options on add-on units for your systems, and other hi-fi related matters, but we've never touched on the one piece of equipment that really matters more than anything else—the record or tape itself. That's where your music comes from, and it's the most vulnerable part of sound reproduction. If your record or tape is in bad condition, there's no way you're going to get good sound out of it. What that means is that you have to take care of your records and tapes. Keep them away from heat, stack them so they don't warp, and *keep them clean*. The most basic accessory to your system—one that should be regarded as a necessity by anyone with a record player—is a decent record cleaning tool.

First, a warning: Stay away from those chemically-impregnated record-cleaning cloths they sell in the five-and-dime stores and some record shops. They can leave a sound-destroying scum on the record surface—and if you use enough pressure to do any real cleaning, you'll probably do some real scratching, too. Aerosol sprays are also bad luck; they'll leave behind more junk than they'll pick up. Besides, anyone who knows how to handle a record (*never touch the grooves or pick it up by the outer edge and the center label*) should never have to resort to such drastic measures.

For routine dusting, the little brushes that clip onto the tone arm and sweep the grooves just ahead of the stylus are pretty good. Just make sure that you lower your record player's tracking force by a gram or so to compensate for the added weight on the stylus. And if you are in the market for a new phono cartridge, you might want to



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## FREE INFORMATION

One of the best short courses in Hi Fi is Pioneer Electronic's pocket-size book, *UNDERSTANDING HIGH FIDELITY*. Although it's technically thorough and accurate, it's written in language anyone can understand. It covers all the components, including Quad, tells you what the specifications mean, gives you the numerical values that represent high performance in the various specs, and includes a glossary of 190 audio terms. You can get a copy free by writing to Donald L. Kobes, Dept. CM, U.S. Pioneer Electronics Corp., 75 Oxford Drive, Moonachie, New Jersey 07074.

tonearm attachments that carry dust brushes and rollers which can be treated with a special fluid. Many hi-fi purists prefer them to the brushes that clip on to the tonearms for various technical reasons. I'm sure a lot of their appeal is just sex appeal, but they can do a very good job. In operation, you set the brush in the first groove of the record, and it works its way over the disc's surface, picking up junk that could get caught by the stylus. At the end of the record you have to move the brush by hand, so if you use a record changer rather than a manual turntable, get a clip-on brush.

For a super cleaning job there are two velvet-like pads that the hi-fi pros recommend. The Cecil Watts Preener (about \$5) and the Disc-washer (\$12), do a great job of removing dust or finger-tip grease, and many music lovers use them before playing *any* record. Either of the units can do a good job.

In addition to cleaning your records, it's also a good idea to keep the dust off your stylus point. A couple of strokes every now and then with a soft camel's hair brush (under \$1 at most record, hi-fi, or electronics stores) will keep your music sounding clean. Just make sure you brush *along* the length of the stylus rather than across the point, or you might bend or break a very expensive bit of metal. You can get a stylus brush to attach to the turntable base in such a way that the stylus gets cleaned automatically as the tone arm swings on and off each record. If you use one of these, or a turntable with a built-in brush, make sure it is properly adjusted so that the stylus touches only the hair, and not the plastic or metal tube that hold up the hair. ■



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that are a part of a musician's career. Outside, the cabinet is built for heavy road use and is reinforced by special chrome corners that are screwed on. Inside, you find the power amp in a single block, easily removed for service by two screws. (Just about 90% of all amp problems happen in the power amp stage. With Yamaha's modular construction, any problem can be fixed in a few minutes.) Each amp was designed to be highly serviceable, because we know what kind of knocking around they get.

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# FREDDY

(Continued from page 33)

the point. "And a big sombrero, and those eyes. He could be a movie star! That's how I see him, kind of a Pancho Villa type. Man, he could be a *big* star."

Now, the business end of the entertainment business involves a somewhat clinical approach. You do things step by step. You *build* careers. You make your conclusions *after* the fact. And Freddy Fender has had one hit—*one* hit. So how come Huey is talking like that about Freddy Fender? The answer is that Huey doesn't work by the book. Huey works instinctively. He hears a hit in his head, and he takes it from there. Like "Before The Next Teardrop Falls." Huey heard "*hit for Freddy*" in his head when he first heard that song. And he was the only one that did. Freddy thought the song was a dog. Huey had to talk him into it.

"For me, Freddy," Huey said. Freddy shrugged, recorded the song, and

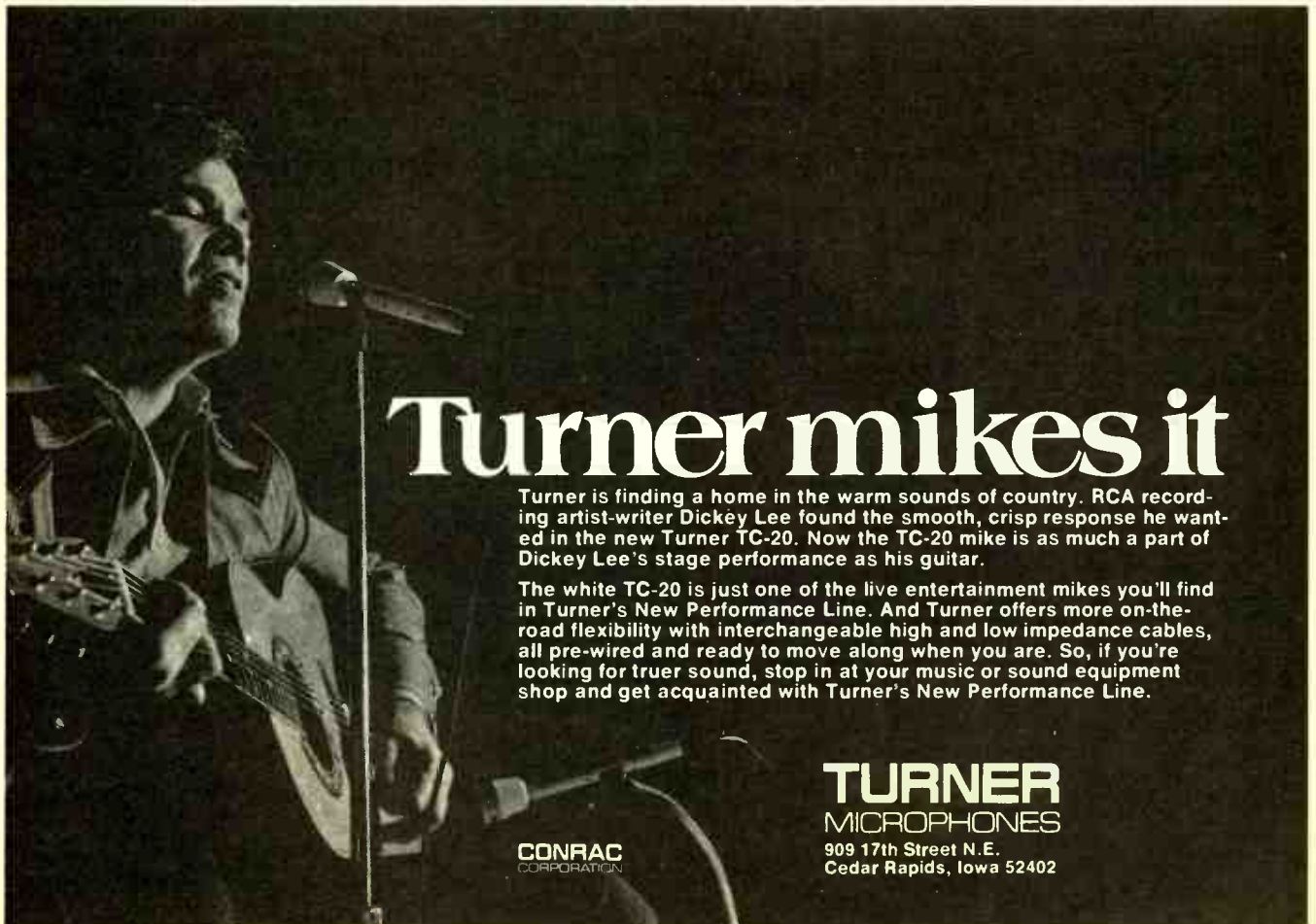
promptly forgot about it.

Not Huey. Huey owns his own small label, Crazy Cajun Records, and Freddy had been on that label for years, selling albums to a small but faithful Chicano audience, but he hadn't had the kind of song which Huey could sell to a record label with more clout in promotion and distribution. Huey's always looking for a record like that. It's his game, and it's what makes him happy. Huey loves to make hits for the corporate bigwigs of the major labels. They've got the money, the promoters, the advertising, the publicity—in essence, they own the gameboard. But mavericks like Huey can come in off the street with a hit record, and win like the big companies never can. Huey loves the game. When ABC Records took "Teardrop" off Huey's hands and put it to the top of the country charts (and, at press time, almost to the top of the pop charts, too, with Lawrence Welk and Al Hirt and Percy Faith getting ready to record it). Huey had played again, and won.

But for Freddy Fender, this is

no game. Freddy's had a hard road to hoe. He's tasting the first real success he's ever known. In fact, it was only eight months ago that Freddy was ready to give up music altogether. It isn't a game for Freddie. It's his life.

Late in that same Los Angeles afternoon, Freddy lay across his bed at the Hollywood Holiday Inn, dressed in a bark-brown western suit with skinny white piping that stretched tight across the considerable girth of his midriff. His long, neatly trimmed, salt-and-pepper hair was combed back in place, ready for more DJ meetings later on. For the moment, he was resting and smoking Kools, and still savoring the success of his Palomino engagement. He had had the crowd eating out his hand with his brand of sharp-edged Texas blues that belied both the sweetness of "Teardrop" and the syrup of the new album. His voice was sweet and pure all right, but wrenched out of some secret spot deep in the confines of his soul that touched the raw collective consciousness of all who had gathered. He was



## 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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real, something that is all too lacking in the slick, computer-like presentations of so many acts today. The spic-and-span clean house band backing Freddy in his Palomino stint started off the first set almost lackadaisically, but soon, under Freddy's soulful eye and ear, they picked up a little raw funk and steam, and when Freddy punched out a stinging guitar lead on "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights," the lead guitar player behind cocked an eyebrow at the bass player and nodded in recognition of the soulful riff. From that point on, Freddy pushed them into the best set they'd ever played, and they loved it. And the crowd loved it. And Freddy loved it. "Tell it like it is, brother," Freddy said again and again as he backed out of the spotlight in favor of the steel or the lead. But he never left center stage.

"Yeh, they were a nice band." Freddy nodded, his drooping eyes alert. He has more than a trace of a Chicano accent that touches a warm, relaxed center, and makes him look all that much more comfortable as he buries his elbow in a pillow. "A lot of bands don't like to play behind me because they think the music I make is old-fashioned. They don't like to play it, but that's the kind of music I like. Old rock and roll. Blues. That's the music I love."

Love? Love's not the word for the way Freddy feels about rock and roll and blues. Freddy *is* the blues. Back in Texas, he's a local legend to the cult of long-haired hippies, redneck cowboys and Chicano rockers who frequent the smoky little honky tonks where he was playing not more than six months ago. For them, Freddy will always be El Bebop Kid, the man who can sing you right into Nirvana. It doesn't matter whether he's singing "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights," or "Your Cheatin' Heart"—if Freddy sings it, it's so soulful, you'll think you never heard it before. Put him together with his old Texas *compadres*—Doug Sahm, Augie Meyer, Flaco Jimenez, Rocky Morales—and Freddy will blow you right out of the room.

"It scares me, his voice does," Huey Meaux once told a Texas writer. "There's something in the quality that's so blue to it that I can only think of Hank Williams and Jimmy Donley to compare it with. And both of them are dead."


Maybe it was growing up in a '47

Chevy on the migrant worker tour, maybe it was two years in Angola, or maybe it was all that time he spent singing in bars in South Texas where his music provided the accompaniment for flying beer bottles and knife fights. Whatever, El Bebop Kid sings it—it's all there in his music.

Freddy Fender (born Baldemar Huerta) was born in the small Texas border town of San Benito in 1936, and he spent his childhood growing up in the neatly-kept *barrio* of the predominantly Mexican-American town, or on the road with his parents as they migrated seasonally throughout the South and Midwest, picking crops. His family spoke no English, and lived exclusively within the Mexican-American environment. When Freddy wasn't in school in San Benito, he was out working in the nearby fields, or swimming, or stealing hubcaps. The only communication with the outside world (other than for a very early TV that ran all night long in the window of the Western Auto) was through the household radio that beamed in stations from Mexico, which meant Mexican music and Mexican soap operas. The radio, however, was only secondary to the life of the family and neighborhood. It was in San Benito that Freddy remembers his first music: the festive music of the neighborhood, of dances in people's backyards and the informal get-togethers after a day's work.

"There were no lamp posts on the street," Freddy recalls, "and as the music floated through the night, the only thing you could see were the red glowing tips of cigarettes as the men played. It was always Mexican music, *rancheros* and *boleros*, and you could always tell who was playing by the sound of it. That's the first music I remember. *period*. Music by people I knew."

The world of the *gringo* remained closed off to Freddy until he was ten, and even at that, he was the first family member to take an interest in that other world. That event began during the yearly migrations north out of San Benito. At the time, the migration seemed like a lot of fun to Freddy and the other kids ("We used to stand in the back of the truck and try and look at girls in cars and holler something, you know?"), but in retrospect, he



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realizes it was hell for the adults. Early each spring, four or five families would get together (after boarding their houses up), and travel north in a car and truck caravan to the beet fields of Michigan, and then on to the tomato and pickle fields of Ohio before heading South again. It went on and on.

By the time Freddy was eleven, he had become the spokesman for the families in dealing with the field foreman, simply because he was the only one who could speak some semblance of English.

"I worked hard at it. I enjoyed saying things like "Let me have a hamburger with mustard on it!" Freddy laughed. "The other kids couldn't say that."

In the early 1950s, Freddy began locking himself into the old '47 Chevy after a long day's work in the field. There, sitting in the front seat, he began tuning in radio stations from Nashville. Eddy Arnold. Hank Thompson. Hank Williams. Hank Snow—Freddy fell in love with the steel guitar. Country music impressed him a lot. He also began sneaking off to the field camps of the blacks, and visiting "colored joints" where the juke boxes blared Muddy Waters, Elmore James, and Big Joe Turner. The blues impressed him, too, and he began to work both blues and country into his guitar style.

In 1954, on a whim, Freddy joined the Marines, but the quick change from his San Benito and migratory life was almost too much for him, and he was barely able to handle it. As Freddy says, "I fouled up." There were drinking bouts, general rowdiness, and, although not officially AWOL, he was definitely overdue on base more than once. Finally the brass gave him the choice of being mustered out unceremoniously or serving overseas. Freddy chose Japan.

It was in Japan, in the brig ("Yeah, more trouble") that Freddy heard his first Elvis Presley record, and it was like the sound he'd been dreaming about. Then he heard Fats Domino, Bobby Bland, Earl Bostic, and before he knew it, he too was singing that new hard-edged blues style. He was into rock without even thinking about it. The guys who heard him singing in the shower said he was good, but Freddy didn't give it much thought. Music was just something to kill time with. Maybe escape with.

"I never looked over the hill." Freddy nodded. "I lived from day to day. No real direction. No set goals. I was never that kind of person. Just day to day."

After Japan, Freddy went back home to San Benito and Texas. He also began taking his guitar to the local beer joints and playing for drinks and a few bucks. When he got married in 1957, however, he still found that the steady money came from his stoop labor.

For his first recording date, Freddy slipped in the back door. A friend had got a recording contract with a local label, and he asked Freddy to sing harmony. Freddy agreed, but halfway through the session



El Behop Kid picks it in L.A.

the producer sidled up out of the control booth and whispered in Freddy's ear, "We'll call you." That bit of chicanery led to "Holy Song" (backed by "Don't Be Cruel" in Spanish), which made a slight dent in the local charts, but still didn't get him out of the fields for good. But his next record, "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights," did. It was a Texas blues number that got national attention, but still left Freddy with no great expectations.

"My manager was just a friend who didn't know anything about the business. He didn't give me any guidance like 'Don't smoke so much weed,' or 'Don't get carried away,' or 'We'll have to get a lawyer.' No-

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thing. It was like the blind leading the blind. But he still managed to get me a contract with Imperial Records." Freddy laughed. "When the Imperial guys in Hollywood saw my picture, they said, 'My God, cut his sideburns! He looks like a Mexican.'"

Then came Baton Rouge. It was supposed to be a nice two-week engagement, but it proved to be disaster.

"They busted me, man. A very smooth set-up."

In Freddy's past, marijuana was a fairly common commodity. "Weed was used by a lot of people in San Benito," he says. "Young people. Old people. And nobody bugged anybody about it. It was no big thing. But in Louisiana, the only mercy they showed was by not hanging me on the spot."

Sentence? Five years in Angola Prison.

"Five years meant 4-1-5. Four years, one month, five days. That's what everybody got who was busted. Nothing less. I saw murderers, rapists, burglars come and go. But not us. No pardon, No parole. We were like the worst. Because of a little weed, a little fun." Freddy shook his head. "I mean, I never thought I'd do time for a little weed, you know. But they put us away. *War* away. I couldn't believe it."

The 4-1-5, however, turned into "only" two plus years when the Louisiana legislature turned lenient. In July of 1963, over 700 "dopers" were suddenly released, and given bus tickets home. Freddy headed back to San Benito, after a short stop in Houston to get "drunk on my ass."

For the next ten years, around the South, music was never too far from the center of Freddy's life, but as he got older and began looking around at his chances of making it, his aspirations got fewer. In fact, he was about ready to "hang up my gloves."

Then came "Teardrop."

"Surprised?" Freddy let his head fall lazily back on his shoulder as if stunned. "Sure did, man. God-damn! Like someone whopped me on the head."

There's still an aura of disbelief when Freddy talks about the meteoric rise of the song and his fortunes. The small club audiences for whom he was used to playing on an ir-

regular basis not more than six months ago were a peculiar mixture of a few young longhairs, chicanos wanting to hear *boleros*, and an older crew into the "oldies bag." Modern country music definitely was not a part of Freddy's bag of tricks.

"Country music is new to me, I'm ignorant about it all, but that's because I didn't care... I wasn't part of the picture so I didn't care. But now it seems to have made a full cycle from country R&B to hard rock, and back again to country R&B. So I'm just getting on the train again, I mean, I was used to making records and nothing happening. This is a brand new movie for me."

"Hey, Freddy," the ABC man said, sticking his head in the door. "We've got to go in about ten minutes."

"Yeh, man. Ten minutes." Freddy nodded. He started to get up. "You know, nobody expected me to do rock at the Palomino, but I do what I want live. I'll include four or five songs from the album, because that's what the audiences will be expecting,

And I'll be sweet because that's what they hear on their record player and the radio. But that's not all of me. Maybe later I'll be able to put forth some funky ideas I have in my head on an album. But for now, I guess the sound of "Teardrop" is what they want."

Freddy straightened his well-cut suit as he looked at himself in the mirror. "It's strange man, but the Palomino was just like playing a club fifteen years ago, except that last night somebody blew a whistle and said, 'Okay, everybody quiet! We're going to listen to Freddy now.' And that's what happened. But the material hasn't really changed except for the few new things, the country things. That's been the only change." He shrugged, and shook his head. "It's hard to figure out, but I'm trying."

A few minutes later he walked out of his room and was on his way to meet more country DJs as country music's latest superstar. And down in the coffee shop, Huey Meaux was still drinking ice tea and still picking his teeth and still scheming, still looking for the next angle. ■

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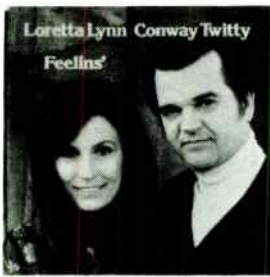


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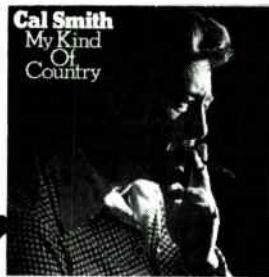
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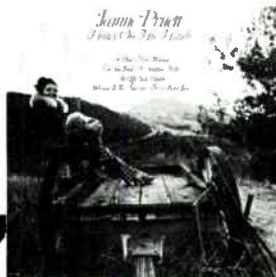
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