

November 1975, One Dollar

COUNTRY MUSIC

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ELVIS AMERICA AND US

**Lefty
Frizzell
The Last
Interview**

**Nashville
Reacts to
'Nashville'**

**Hank
Williams
And The
Hadacol
Caravan**

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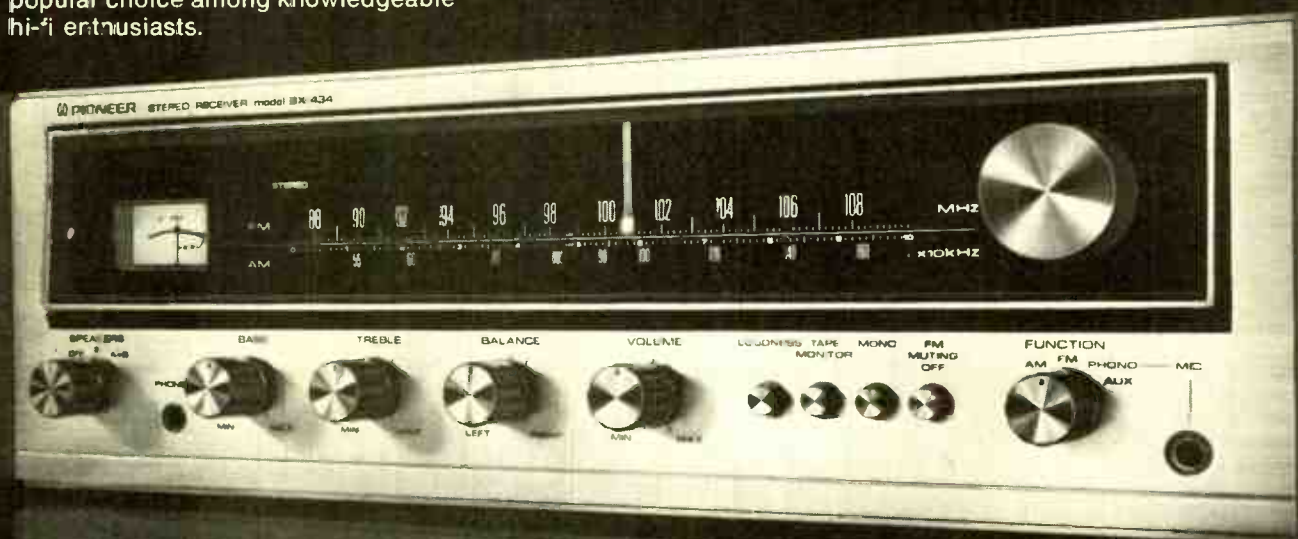
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Publisher:
John Killion

Associate Publisher:
Spencer Oettinger

Editor:
Patrick Carr

Art Director:
Cheh Nam Low

Managing Editor:
Martha Hume

Reviews Editor:
Nick Tosches

Designer:
Gail Einert

Contributors:
Audrey Winters
J.R. Young
Dave Hickey

Advertising Sales Director:
Steve Goldstein

Eastern Advertising Sales Manager:
Ralph Perry

Circulation Director:
John D. Hall

Circulation Assistant:
Lynn Russolillo

Director: Direct Marketing:
Anthony Bunting

Direct Marketing Assistant:
Eileen Bell

Administrative Manager:
Gloria Thomas

Administrative Assistants:
A.L. Hall, Mimi Fox, Frieda Dazet

Executive, Editorial and
Advertising Offices, 475 Park Avenue
South, 16th Floor, New York, New
York 10016
(212) 685-8200
John H. Killion, President
Spencer Oettinger, Treasurer
Russell D. Barnard, Secretary

Texas (Advertising)
Media Representatives
8383 Stemmons St. #335
Dallas, Texas 75247
214-631-4480

West Coast (Advertising):
The Leonard Company
6355 Topanga Canyon Blvd., #307
Woodland Hills, California 91364
213-340-1270

Chicago (Advertising):
National Advertising Sales
400 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(312) 467-6240

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COUNTRY MUSIC

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ELVIS AND AMERICA GREIL MARCUS 22
Elvis is immense. He is a great singer, a great rebel, a great ham, a great myth, a great American. Would we be the same today if it weren't for the revolution Elvis began back in the early 50s? Probably not. In this excerpt from Mystery Train, his recent book about America and its popular music, author Greil Marcus explores what Elvis means to the blues, country music, the South, America, and us.

THE SOURCES OF COUNTRY MUSIC 32
On July 8th, 1975, a great work of art was unveiled in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Its title is "The Sources of Country Music," and it is a depiction of all the cultural influences that went into today's country sound. The painter was Thomas Hart Benton, America's most distinguished muralist, and he died only hours after finishing this, his last work.

THE LAST MEDICINE SHOW JERRY RIVERS 34
It was a magnificent show: America's premier performing talents brought together for a great sweep across the nation, and all in the cause of a patent medicine called Hadacol. It was, in fact, the last great medicine show, the end of an era. And the star? None other than Hank Williams. Hank's fiddle player, Jerry Rivers, was a member of the Hadacol Caravan. He remembers it well.

THE LEGENDARY LEFTY FRIZZELL GEOFF LANE 38
Like Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers and Bob Wills, Lefty Frizzell was a man who created a style of country music, and stayed true to it until it killed him. In this article, written just before Lefty's death and researched in the last personal interviews Lefty ever granted, Geoff Lane reveals the truth of Lefty's last, hopeful days.

The Editors wish to thank Mr. Michael Ochs of the Michael Ochs Archives for his assistance in the preparation of the Elvis Presley sections of this issue.

Letters

I seen the wright up on good ole Lister Moran and the Caddylack Cowboys. I think you done swell, those guys sound o.k. to me. They dont have a big head eather which is nice.

I really liked the artikle on how to becomb a big country star. All asspiring singers or musicians should of red *that*, on account of lots of them dont pay no atenshen to good avice like that, and never do amount to nothing but they dont know why.

The Statten Bros. has got class I think even if they dont give nobody there home phone nummers. They probly want some piracy. (The musical bussnes can make you tarred.)

SONJA PEASLEY
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

Good things come in little packages. It has been said time and time again and it's never been more true than in the case of Pee Wee King. I was so glad to see your article on him in your August issue. For so many years this great master had been overlooked.

I have known Pee Wee King all my life and half of his. My late father and he worked together at WAVE in Louisville, Ky. in what I believe was both of their first jobs in TV. I would just like to add a few things about Pee Wee that were overlooked in your article.

Pee Wee not only starred in movies, but has produced one of his own, "Country-Western Hoe-down." I wonder if anyone in country music has ever started more people in the business. Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys have seen the likes of many of today's super stars, people like Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, Grandpa Jones, and the Late Cowboy Copas. One of Pee Wee's latest endeavors is ground floor work with the new idea of the DJ Hall of Fame.

If it has anything to do with country music, Pee Wee King has done it. With no offense to Roy Acuff I truly feel Pee Wee is the King of country music. I mean, after all, it's in his name. It has been my pleasure to have him for a friend. Keep it up Pee Wee. Country music needs you.

JAN WALTMAN
PROGRAM DIRECTOR, KYSM-FM
MANKATO, MN

As an ex-country music entertainer and former member of the Grand Ole Opry

(The Poe Sisters, Ruth and Nelle, 1944-46), I, Nelle, would like to voice my opinion of what is "country."

Some of the people in country music who paved the way for this generation are Jimmie Rodgers, The Carter Family, Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams, Buck Owens, Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard. These are just a few of the most famous of the country stars that have "kept it close to the ground," as Judge Hay used to say. Now Judge Hay has gone from their midst, but these stars, past and present, are good examples of what country is.

Times change and people change, but you don't have to ask country people what country is. They know! And country people make country stars.

Country people are humble, sincere, honest and religious. The country songwriter is often an entertainer who uses common sense, true life experience, truth and beauty to write a song, and nothing is harder to write than the truth. The best entertainers are those whose souls are afire with the desire to create beauty.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the famous poet Arthur William O'Shaughnessy:

*One man with a dream at pleasure
shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
can trample an empire down!
For in each age is a dream that is dying
or one that is coming to birth.*

And so it is with country music.

NELLE POE YANDELL
THE POE SISTERS
GRAND OLE OPRY 1944-46

I would like to congratulate you on your critique of the film "Nashville" that appeared in the September issue of your magazine. It is by far the best article I have yet read on the film.

It was most encouraging to read a commentary showing that it is possible to recognize "Nashville" for being the excellent film it is, without in any way losing one's appreciation and fondness for country music.

ANN LEVACK
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

I've been an avid reader of *Country Music Magazine* since its inception, and I'm delighted to observe its popular acceptance.

Besides the opportunity to express my

enthusiasm over the magazine, I am writing to correct two "errors" I noticed in recent issues. First, in your May 1975 issue... in his review of Ray Price's *Old Times Again*, writer John Gabree states that Price was "dropped" from Columbia records. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth! Price's contract was up with CBS and, for reasons of his own, he chose not to re-sign. Had Mr. Gabree seen fit to check his facts, I am certain both CBS and Ray Price would have been happy to confirm this fact.

And, in your July 1975 issue... in his otherwise superb article on Hank Thompson, writer Nick Tosches stated that Thompson has had "some 35 songs in his career on *Billboard's* Country Chart. This is also incorrect, as I'm certain *Billboard* would agree, when, in fact, Thompson's current single "That's Just My Truckin' Luck" is his 54th record to make the *Billboard* Country chart.

Thanks again for the first class magazine!

PAT SHIELDS
STUDIO CITY, CA

In the summer of 1973 while on vacation in Alexandria, Minnesota, I happened upon a magazine rack in a drug store. There smiling back at me was none other than Tex Ritter, well, having been a country music fan for a number of years I decided to see what this was all about. I picked the magazine up and soon found myself engrossed in the many interesting stories and articles. I turned the magazine over and saw that the name of it was *Country Music*. I had never run across it before, but boy was I glad I happened upon it. Needless to say I bought the magazine and to this day I consider that decision to be the best I ever made, for soon after, I sent in my subscription which I have since renewed and will do so again when the need arises. One of the main reasons I have enjoyed your magazine so much is that in this world of technology the material in your monthly issues retains that touch of human concern and caring. The people on your staff should be commended for their fine work, which I hope they keep up. Not too long ago I also purchased the *Country Music Encyclopedia*, which I found to be done equally as well as your magazine.

CAROL J. CHRISTOPHERSON
MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Are you missing half the joy of your guitar?

IF YOU'RE LIKE a lot of people who've taken up the guitar, you went out and bought your guitar with high hopes. You probably bought a little instruction book to go with it, figuring all you had to do was to learn a few chords... and that with a bit of practice, you'd sound pretty good.

But maybe now you're finding that what you've learned isn't enough. Being able to strum some chords and sing a few songs is nice, of course—but you get tired of the same few songs after awhile. You'd like to be able to play other, harder songs... to play melody along with chords... to say things with your guitar that you feel inside, but haven't got the musical skills to express.

If this is the way you feel, we'd like to help you get the skills you need. We'd like to teach you to play the guitar the right way... by note as well as by chords, and by notes and chords in combination.

We'd like to teach you to read music, too—so you won't be limited to just a few simple songs that you've memorized. We'd like to help you get the freedom and fulfillment you *should* be getting from your guitar—instead of frustration from not being able to play the way you want to.

In short, we'd like to teach you the same kind of things you'd learn if you went to a good, thorough private teacher. The big difference is that we teach you with lessons we send you by mail.

You learn at home, on your own schedule. And it costs you a whole lot less.

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People on the Scene

Hank Williams, Jr. Is Seriously Hurt in Hunting Accident
Stella Parton Deals With Kidding About Big Sister Dolly
Lester Flatt Is Back In The Saddle Again

by AUDREY WINTERS



Photo: Michael Bane

Lester Flatt: recovered from surgery.



The Statler Brothers: in Who's Who.

Lester Flatt is on the mend again. Lester was admitted to Nashville's St. Thomas Hospital in July for open-heart surgery after a medical team discovered that the 61-year-old Bluegrass star had two completely blocked arteries, and one which was partially obstructed. Flatt came through the surgery with flying colors, but had to be re-admitted a few days later for more treatment. Now, however, the doctors consider the operation to have been a complete success, and Lester will soon be on the road again . . . Meanwhile, Danny Davis, King of the Brass, ran into some trouble recently. He and some friends were dining in Cypress, Fla., when Danny found himself choking on a potato lodged in his throat. One of his friends knew what to do, and Danny's life was saved. Unfortunately, the treatment was so violent that Danny emerged from the incident with three broken ribs . . . And R.W. Blackwood, leader of The Blackwoods, did himself in recently, too. Blackwood was shaking hands with fans through a wire fence when he was hit with a heavy electric charge which knocked him out of his shoes and split his clothes before he was able to kick himself away from

the fence. 16 stitches for a head wound were the result, but Blackwood is now OK.

The Elvis rumor mills keep on grinding. The latest has it that E.P. is considering purchasing a pre-Civil War estate in the North Carolina mountains near Flat Rock. The estate includes 205 acres with a three-story, 18-room mansion which was built 136 years ago by Andrew Johnson. A Hendersonville real estate man said, "Nothing is in writing or in contract form. It's all rumors so far." Meanwhile, in Norfolk, Va., three members of The Sweet Inspirations, Elvis's backup group, walked off the stage when Elvis accused them of having bad breath. Then he apologized, but added "If you can't take it, get off the pot." With that, three Sweet Inspirations walked out, leaving only one backup singer. The remaining Sweet Inspiration kept right on singing.

Nashville's Exit-In, the city's financially troubled talent showcase, is reported to be on the road to recovery. New chairs with padded backs have been added as well as an electrostatic air

filter which removes 90% of the smoke from the air, and the lighting and sound systems have been renovated . . . Martha White Foods, Inc., whose Martha White Flower is believed to be the oldest continuing sponsor of the Grand Ole Opry (Goodness gracious, it's good!) has been acquired by Beatrice Foods Co. for stock valued at \$25 million, reports the *Tennessean*. Founded in 1899 by Richard Lindsey, the company was bought in 1941 by Cohen E. Williams and his two sons. Lindsey's 3-year-old daughter, Martha White Lindsey, was the inspiration for the brand name and her name and picture will continue to be used . . . Buck Owens has announced that his annual Invitational Golf Tournament will not be held this year. "We have many reasons for not wanting to sponsor a tournament this year," said Buck. "Two of them are the inflation and the recession. The other reasons don't matter" . . . Lynn Anderson has been cast in Columbia Pictures' to-be-released movie, "The Earth Is Ours." Lynn's voice will be heard on two songs in the ecology-oriented cartoon feature . . . And Atlanta James has signed up to co-star in the movie "Ballad Of Billy

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PORTER & DOLLY



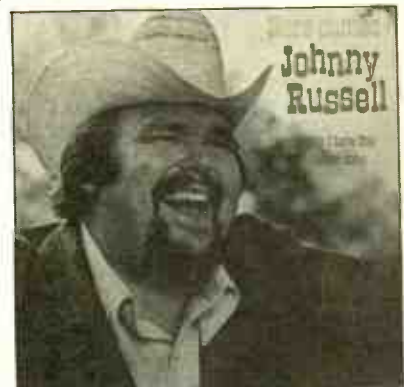
PORTER & DOLLY - APL1-1116
Featuring: "SAY FOREVER YOU'LL BE MINE", "SOMETHING TO REACH FOR", "IF YOU WERE MINE".

DOLLY PARTON



DOLLY PARTON - APL1-1117
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RCA Records and Tapes

Bugle." **Joe Heathcock**, who played the sherriff in "The Last Picture Show," is the leading attraction of the movie . . . **Waylon Jennings**, **Jessi Colter** and **Tompall Glaser** are now travelling in a package show together. They call themselves—you guessed it—"The Outlaws." . . . The **Statler Brothers**, meanwhile, have just been granted the status of anything but outlaws. They were notified that they will be included in the 1975 edition of *Who's Who In America*. **Harold Reid**, **Don Reid**, **Lew DeWitt** and **Phil Balsey** will each have a separate entry . . . **George Jones**, who opened one club in Nashville recently, just opened a second establishment, the George Jones Entertainers International Supper Club. On opening night, several hundred music business personalities turned out. The event was marred, however, when word of **Lefty Frizzell's** stroke began to spread through the audience. At 11:15, the bad news came: Lefty had passed away. The festivities broke up, and George, very upset, went home.

Remember **Anita Kerr**? Well, she is coming back into the country music business, this time with RCA Records.



Photo: Don Foster

The late Lefty Frizzell's wife Alice grieves at her husband's graveside.

Anita is living in Switzerland, but will soon be back in Nashville. Anita and a group now called **The Nashville Edition** were once one of the most sought-after backup singing groups on the scene, **The Anita Kerr Singers** . . . **Laurie Morgan**, the late **George Morgan's** young daughter, has signed a recording contract with Four Star Records, the same label on which her father recorded . . . **Roy Head**, who used to record pop songs like "Treat Her

Right," is now recording country with **Mary Reeves' Shannon** label . . . **Jack Green** is "hitting the bottle" these days—but in a good cause. One of his Black Angus cattle gave birth to twin bulls recently, and the mother favored one at the other's expense. Therefore, Jack and his farm hands are taking turns at hand-feeding the calf . . . **Tammy Wynette** just became the first female entertainer to set foot inside the summer training camp of the Atlanta

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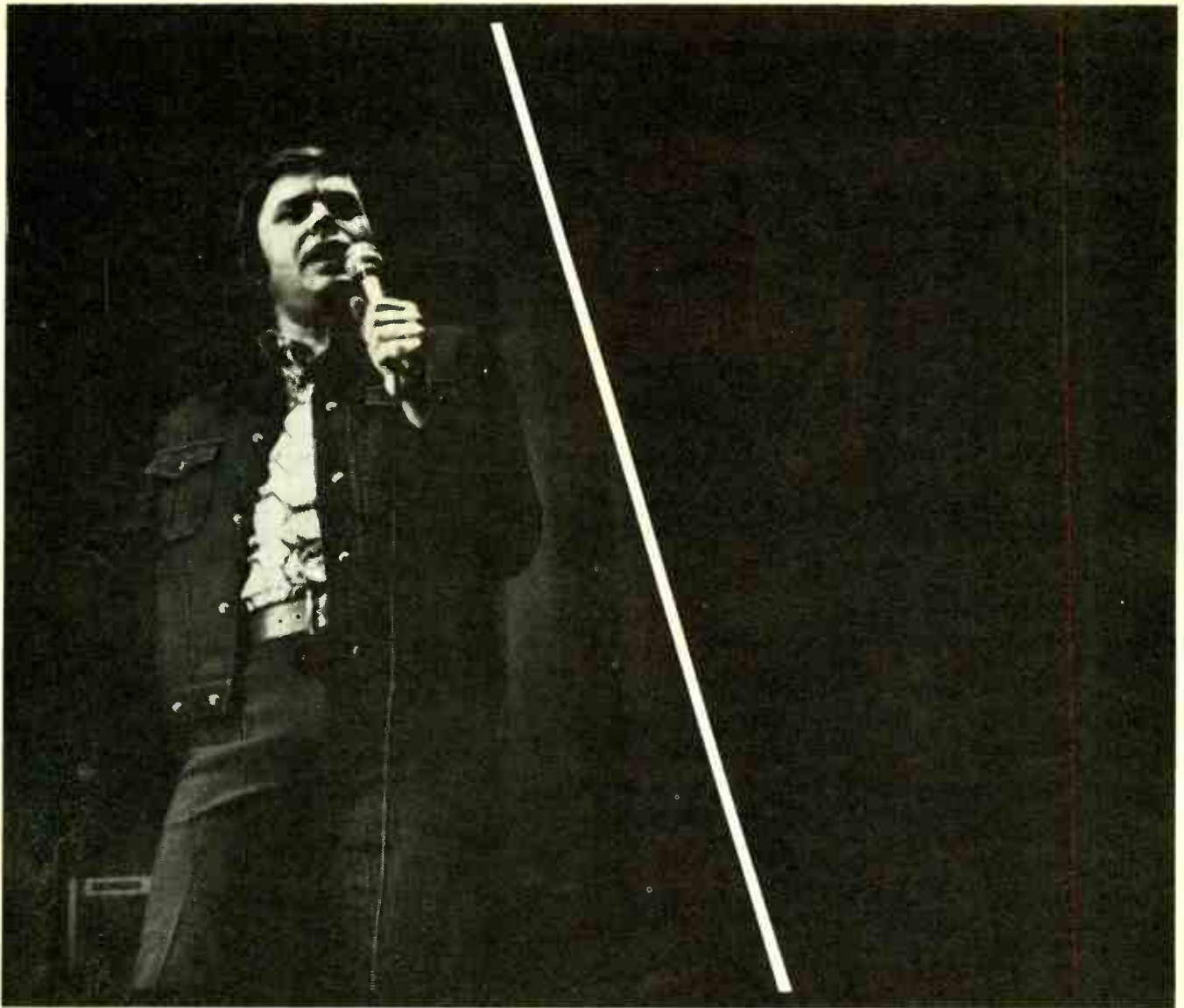
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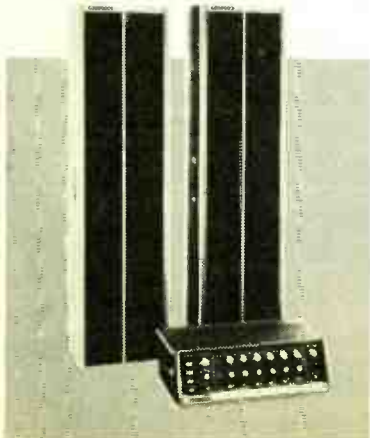
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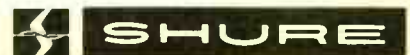


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Falcons. Tammy, who is currently going out with a Falcon, entertained nearly 400 players, coaches, executives and their wives on the Furman University campus in Greenville, S.C. . . . **Stella Parton**, sister of **Dolly**, takes a lot of kidding about the size of her big sister's bust, so at a recent concert, she walked out and announced "I'll bet you all were expecting to see someone in the 40s walk onstage—but I'm only in the mid-30s." Whereupon a wag in the crowd called out "You'll never fit Dolly's shoes!" Stella's reply was to the point. "It's not her shoes I'm worried about," she said.

Ernest and Olene Tubb are now officially legally separated. Tubb will pay \$2,500 per month to his estranged wife,



Barbara Mandrell: another baby.

who will keep the couple's \$150,000 home on Edmundson Pike in Nashville. The judge refused to rule on another issue involving Mrs. Tubb's visits to the Ernest Tubb Record Shop on Broadway. Finally, Olene was given possession of a number of recordings which Ernest considers to be valuable. **Justin Tubb**, E.T.'s eldest son and a member of the Grand Ole Opry, is also getting divorced. He and his wife Carolyn have one son, Carey . . . But not everyone is getting divorced. For instance, **Billy Jo Spears** (whose "Blanket On The Ground" and "Stay Away From The Apple Tree" established her as a major country singer) recently married Mike Edlin, her steel player and musical arranger. This is Billy Jo's third marriage . . . **Porter Wagoner** has entered the grandfather lists with a granddaughter from his daughter Debbie . . . And **Barbara Mandrell** is expecting her second child soon. Her sister **Louise**

Mandrell, recently divorced from RCA's **Brian Shaw**, has married **Gary Buck** of the Four Guys . . . **Jerry Clower** is now a grandfather, too. His daughter Amy gave birth to a healthy son, Jayree Dudley Elmore . . . but while Jerry celebrated the event, the editor of a Kentucky Baptist newspaper was criticizing the hierarchy of the Southern Baptist Church for including Clower and **Vonda Kay Dyke** on the program of the Southern Baptist Convention in Miami Beach. **C.R. Daley**, editor of the *Western Recorder* in Middletown, Ky. complained that "Messengers (delegates) with issues they considered vital to discuss were cut off to make way for a Grand Ole Opry star." The editor continued: "The local newspaper in which it was hard to find any reports of the Convention ran a front page story on the clowning Jerry Clower, a former fertilizer salesman who is now a Grand Ole Opry star."

As we went to press, we got news of **Hank Williams, Jr.'s** near-fatal hunting accident. Hank, 26, was out hunting mountain goats near Missoula, Montana on the Great Divide, when he slipped and fell down 500 feet of rock. It was reported that the fall smashed his face almost completely, knocking out his teeth and ripping his nose off. After work by a team of three plastic



Hank Williams, Jr.: seriously hurt.

surgeons and one neurologist at Community Hospital in Missoula, however, Hank was said to be on the mend. He did not lose his left eye, as was originally feared.

Dick Willey, who was with Hank when he fell, went for help after the accident, leaving his 11-year-old son Walt with Hank. The boy wrapped Hank's head in a coat to stem the bleeding and kept him talking to prevent loss of consciousness until his father arrived in a helicopter six hours later. The doctors said that "quite an extensive job" was performed on the star, and that he should be free of medical care in the near future. ■

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COUNTRY NEWS

TINSELTOWN IN MUSIC CITY



Spotlights, limousines, country bands, the Tennessee Twirlers, stars -- two months after it opened to extravagant praise from New York critics, Robert Altman's "Nashville" finally premiered in Music City. Reviews from the home folk ranged from Webb Pierce's "Whoever put this out must have had a nightmare the night before" to Minnie Pearl's "I just couldn't say whether I could recommend it or not," to Buddy Killen's "I loved it... it's a great piece of work." But the real show of the night was outside the Martin 100 Oaks Theater where onlookers gaped at the country and movie stars. They saw Ronnee Blakley (upper left) get a bouquet of roses from Little Miss Georgia, Cindy Burns, and they saw Henry Gibson (top center), Roy Acuff (top right), Ronnie Milsap (above center), Minnie Pearl (above right), and Keith Carradine (left). It was a big evening, at least.

Photos: Chris Ford

Jana Jae: the story of Don Rich's successor



Photo Courtesy Buck Owens Ent.

Jana Jae: She shared the spotlight with Don Rich at his last concert with Buck Owens.

"Jana Jae is the world's only Buckarette, and when you have the only species in captivity in your possession, you've a rare treasure," says Buck Owens about the first female Buckaroo.

"And it's really fun to be the original Buckarette," responds the lady fiddler extraordinaire. "Something very wonderful was taken away from Buck when Don Rich died. Musically, Don was the band leader, the fiddler, the harmony singer—just everything—it took several people to replace him, but Buck says he feels like he got something in return."

For almost 15 years, Don Rich was more than fiddler, friend, and fellow traveler to Buck Owens and the Buckaroos—he was family. When he died in a motorcycle accident in July, 1974, no one knew exactly how to fill the space. Yet, an eerie thing happened just a few weeks before Don's death. The last concert Don played with Buck was at the Redding California Civic Auditorium and Buck's manager, Jack McFadden, permitted a local music teacher on-stage for an "Orange Blossom Spe-

cial" duet with Don. So teacher Jana Jae and Buckaroo Don Rich shared the same spotlight.

"The fact that I met Buck and Don and played with them on their very last concert I think makes Buck realize there's something special here," says Jana.

But Jana wasn't hired immediately. "Jack McFadden took his time for six months because he didn't want to make a quick decision," she explained. "Then the first of the year I went down to Bakersfield to audition. Buck was sick so I waited three days and on the third day everyone was supposed to leave for Denver. It was 11 o'clock in the morning, they were due to go at two, and I thought, 'Oh well, this is never going to happen,' when Buck walked into the studio and heard me play. Then he said, 'We'll take you to Denver and try it.'"

Owens and McFadden reasoned that any man would have a difficult time succeeding Rich. "Don was so loved by the people, so thought of in one breath with Buck," says Jana, "that they felt a male replace-

ment would not be readily accepted. I'm so completely different that I can't be compared quite so much." Now Jana and singer Susan Raye, who is married to Buckaroo drummer Jerry Wiggins, are the only women in a company that includes six Buckaroos. "I think the guys were a little bit shocked that Buck hired a woman, but they've been terrific," she says.

Jana is a smiling brunette who looks more like a teenager than a mother of two, and since she started playing the fiddle at age 2, she really knows her stuff. "My granddaddy was a good old barn dance fiddler and both of my folks studied at Juilliard, so I had classical violin and fiddle right from the time I was hatched," she says.

Jana was born in New York City while her parents were still in school, but they all moved out to Fruitland, Idaho, a little town near Boise, after her fifth birthday. "My ma plays both violin and fiddle and she kept me going all those years until I got into high school and college where I studied music." Jana grew up fiddling at dances, luncheons, just anywhere anyone would let her play. She finally wound up teaching fiddle in California, but performing was her passion, so she joined a bluegrass band in Redding—and Redding was where she met Buck.

As a Buckarette, which, by the way, is Buck's name for a lady Buckaroo, Jana isn't just a member of a band, she's part of that amorphous organization called Buck Owens Enterprises in Bakersfield, California. There, in the West Coast's Music City, Buck's empire includes a booking agency, music publishing company, recording studios, radio stations, his ranch, and Lord knows what else Buck's planning.

All Buck's people live around Bakersfield and Jana's moved herself and her children there too. She has to be nearby because Buck gives her lots to do—concert tours, recording gigs, (since whenever Buck's studios are used, so are his Buckaroos) and television shootings for "Hee Haw."

Jana Jae couldn't be happier. "I do feel that the one concert where Don and I played together sort of gave me a sendoff," she says, "something I'd like to live up to."

EILEEN STUKANE

Hi Ho Silver! Duke? Storm? — Who's in the saddle?

Shortly after J.R. Young's article on Roy Rogers and his equally famous horse, Trigger appeared in *Country Music* (July, 1975) many a friendly argument took place in our neighborhood as to whether or not Hoppy was on Tony or Topper; if the Lone Ranger rode out of town on Silver or Dusty; and if Tarzan had a mare named Ken Maynard or Maynard had a horse named Tarzan. To help settle the arguments, we hereby present the definitive listing of just who was in which saddle.

The Lone Ranger and Buck Jones both saddled up horses named Silver (actually the Lone Ranger tontoed about on Dusty until Silvercup bread became his radio sponsor) while Eddie Dean was riding Copper and Hoot Gibson, Goldie.

Rex Allen had Koko; Gene Autry, Champion; Bob Baker, Apache; and Johnny Mack Brown was atop a Rebel. Rod Cameron had a good Knight; Bill Cody enjoyed Starlight; and Tim Holt tried to contain Lightning.

Of course Hoppy was with Topper; Tom Mix and Tony saddled up; Ken Maynard was on Tarzan and *not* vice-versa; not to mention Roy and Trigger.

A round of drinks on the house to those who could match up Buster Crabbe and Falcon, Monte Hale and Pardner, and Scout and Jack Hoxie.

Tim McCoy's stewball was named Baron and later Ace, while Tom Tyler's Ace was later a Baron.

Color-wise, Alan Lane galloped about on Black Jack, Tex Ritter had a White Flash, and Bob Steele, Brownie.

Lash LaRue was on a Rush, but the best name of all probably belonged to George O'Brien's Mike.

We all know that Duncan Renaldo



Reminders of the day when cowboys loved their horses as much as their leading ladies.

rode Diablo; Tonto and Scout were pretty close; and we could always count on Zorro to make his mark on Tornado. Still, how many of us could name John Wayne's pony? What else but Duke.

In this day of heavy metal Mustangs, Pintos, and Chargers it's rather nice to recall the days when cowboys often kissed their horses as well as their leading ladies.

DENNIS METRANO

Vic Willis named ACE Chairman

Vic Willis, a member of the Grand Ole Opry's Willis Brothers, has assumed the chairmanship of the Association of Country Entertainers (ACE) in the wake of the death of George Morgan, ACE's first chairman. Morgan had suggested that Willis be interim chairman of the year-old group when he went into the hospital for open heart surgery.

Willis says that his objectives as chairman will be to work for more airplay of all country music artists on country radio stations; to regulate unethical bookers; to enforce a newly adopted Code of Ethics for performers; and to work on several special projects which ACE members are planning.

"Most (country) stations today are only playing from a stack of 40 or 50 top-of-the-chart records," Willis said. "The fans want to hear you sing whether it's a hit or not. A country artist can have one hit and fans

will stay with him for years, but few of us live off record royalties. We depend on personal appearances."

To help remedy the tight playlist situation, Willis is urging fans to write or call local stations and complain and to request that artists' records which they like be added to the playlists. ACE also plans some sort of special appeal to disc jockeys during this year's DJ Convention.

Willis and his brother Skeeter first joined the Opry in 1946, when they were known as the Oklahoma Wranglers. Later, they left the Opry to become regulars on the early Eddy Arnold radio and touring show and backed Hank Williams on his first recordings. The brothers rejoined the Opry in 1960 and have been regulars ever since.

Fans who are interested in the work of ACE may write the association at P.O. Box 895, Hendersonville, Tenn., 37075.

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Conjunto!- Country Salsa

Country music has always borrowed from other musical cultures. It began as an American variant of English and Scottish folk tunes, exemplified by the mountain singing of the Carter Family, and moved from there to borrow from the black man's blues, with Jimmie Rodgers leading the way. Bob Wills certainly fiddled more than a few jazz licks in his day, and now there are signs that still another musical culture may be entering the country music mainstream.

Its called "conjunto"—pronounced "ca-hun-to" with the emphasis on the "hun"—and it comes from the Texas-Mexico border, where chicanos have created three distinct types of music,



Bajo Sexto: heart of the Conjunto sound.

with conjunto being the closest to the Anglo's country music. Johnny Rodriguez was the first chicano country singer to emerge from that culture and now we have Freddy Fender. The chicano musical heritage is coming into its own.

Traditionally, conjunto has been performed as live dance music, and polka is the favorite beat, having been appropriated from the Germans

(Continued on page 20)

Watch This Face:

Until 1973, Larry Jon Wilson was pretty much your average family man. He lived with his wife, Lois, who is a registered nurse; their two daughters Kim and Sissy; and one son, Bertrand, in Augusta, South Carolina, a small town right across the line from Augusta, Georgia. He had attended the University of Georgia for a couple of years, worked for a television station in Augusta, been a research chemist in Florida, and had traveled as a sales technician for the fiberglass reinforced plastics industry. Then, one night in 1970, he stopped at a nightspot called The Bistro on his way home from work.

"I was sittin' there in a suit and tie, with a company station wagon outside," says Larry Jon. "Alex Harvey was up there on stage in jeans and I heard him sing 'Bobby McGee' for the first time and that's when the thought (to become a songwriter and performer) first crossed my mind. Then my father died. He had a mail haulin' business and I took it over until the contract ran out in 1973. On July 1, 1973, I had the choice of going back to the company car or signing a management contract. I signed right then."

Since then, in Larry Jon's case at least, "it ain't been easy, but then it ain't been all that hard either," as the Ole Roadhog would say. Two years after he decided to embark on a new career, Larry Jon has his first album, *New Beginnings*, out on Monument, a writing contract with Combine, and has just embarked on his first official tour. He has managed to practically mesmerize a super-sophisticated New York City crowd and reports have it that he also wowed the company executives at CBS's recent convention in Toronto.

Larry Jon sings and writes what only can be called Southern music. He's got a good deep warm voice for it, a voice that evokes a breeze on a hot summer night. Even though he's a solo act at the moment, he has a stage presence which commands attention, but is friendly enough to make the audience feel comfortable with music which is very much a sharing of experience.



LARRY JON WILSON

His style is derivative—which is different from imitative—coming from the music he grew up with—black blues, country, southern rock. As a teenager, Larry Jon favored the blues sounds of Lightin' Hopkins, Josh White and Furry Lewis. ("I turned off my radio when Bill Haley came on," he says, "and I didn't turn it back on until I saw Alex Harvey.") He also has a touch of that funky southern rock sound which comes from musicians as disparate as Greg Allman and Tony Joe White. And, Mickey Newbury is his favorite writer and that shows up in the country lyrics on songs like "Russian River," which is the first song Larry Jon wrote.

None of these comparisons are really worth anything, however, because Larry Jon's music is very individual. He likes to quote the description an Augusta newsperson wrote: "the songs are sort of, but not quite, country; sort of, but not quite rock; sort of, but not quite pop or blues. They are simply Larry Jon Wilson." And that is as good a description as any.

"I don't write in any one bag," says Larry Jon. "I just write what I want to write. I write songs about things I'm preoccupied with."

The things Larry Jon is preoccupied with mainly center around his

family and his life. "Russian River," his first song, is to his wife. "Bertrand, My Son" is a moving song to his son Bertrand who was born with twisted feet and has been in casts and braces almost ever since. "The Truth Ain't In You," is a whimsical, semi-serious work about the time Larry Jon got turned down by a campus beauty when he was attending the University of Georgia on a football scholarship. "Ohoopie River Bottomland" tells about the Southern boy who leaves home to seek excitement, only to return, happily, to that same home to stay. While the themes are not uncommon, Larry Jon's lyrics are compelling enough to hold the attention of the rowdiest audience.

And Larry Jon just doesn't have that I'm-a-pore-lonesome-artist-who's-seen-alot-of-pain syndrome so common among many of Nashville's newer writers. He enjoys singing and writing and working and making friends. He's got the voice and the intelligence to write and perform good songs. And he has the self-confidence and the maturity to be able to give to an audience, to share his life with them. That's what makes the difference between a mere performer and an artist.

MARTHA HUME

Burglars beware!

Even Nashville burglars have to play percentages to make a hit. Nashville's Music Row is only eight blocks long by four blocks wide, but within it are the offices of all the major recording companies and many other businesses which derive their existence from the music industry. High-priced cars which sit lazily in the parking lots give subtle evidence of the complex's 100 million dollar a year business, and so it's no wonder that the row was hit by a number of robberies in 1971. Many offices were broken into, some more than once. One publishing company which had been victimized by burglars three times solved its problem by placing a sign in the office window which read, "There's a guard armed with a shotgun on duty here three nights a week. You figure out which three nights."

PAUL LESSAW

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Truckin': Hot licks, cold steel

Trucks and country music got together in 1939, when Cliff Bruner and His Boys recorded Ted Daffan's "Truck Driver's Blues" for Decca, a tune that moaned of the never ending grind of the road. During and after World War II, trucks began to rival the railroads as primary mover of America's goods. Soon the songs about Casey Jones and the Southern Cannonball gave way to "Gooseball Brown" and "Alcohol and #2 Diesel." Dave Dudley brought trucker songs to a wider audience in 1963, when "Six Days on the Road" flew to the top of the country charts.

Nashville's Starday Records recorded and released a prodigious amount of trucker material starting in the early sixties. Some was recorded by their stars (Johnny Bond, Red Sovine, and the Willis Brothers), and some by near unknowns (Lonnie Irving, Tom O'Neal, and Frankie Miller). Most songs were issued in LP anthologies that became as legendary for their packaging as for the music within. Each album featured a cover photo depicting truckers leering at shapely, bouffanted waitresses or female hitch-hikers against a background of shiny rigs and shiner truckstops. Apparently the audience for these records wasn't restricted to the gearjammer crowd, for Commander Cody's second album, *Hot Licks, Cold Steel & Truckers' Favorites*, featured original trucker songs rivaling any on Starday, cover versions of older trucker hits, and that whining steel and funky Telecaster sound characteristic of truck music. A gleaming, sun-baked Peterbilt graced the cover.

Truck Driver Songs (King 866), a pre-Starday King LP, is a mix of recordings from the mid fifties to the early sixties. Some deal with the adversary relationship between truckers and the law. Swanee Caldwell's classic "Radar Blues Part 1" is about an unsuccessful attempt to beat the then new radar traps.

The high point of *Truck Stop* (Nashville NLP-2052) is Johnny Bond's five-minute epic recitation of "Gears," easily one of the greatest trucker songs ever written. It's the life story of a wild, hotheaded truck-

er on Death Row for offing his jilted girlfriend after she tells all to his wife. "Pinball Machine" is the lament of one John James Wall who loses money, family, and friends to the lure of a "big old truck and a pinball machine."

Truck & Country (Nashville NLP-2066) features two of Ray King's trucker-as-stud tunes: "Big Wheel" and "Curves and In-Betweens," the latter about a trucker who "wouldn't trade jobs with LBJ" for the women on his runs.



Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun (Nashville NLP-2082) is the best of the Nashville series. The title song was written by Dixie Hall and Ray King and is sung-growled by Red Sovine. Red also sings "Ten Days Out, Two Days In," a complaint about long hauls with the beautiful line: "I took so many pills, I betcha when I die they won't ever get my eyes to close." The Willis Brothers' "Convoy in the Sky" is an interesting trucker variation on "Ghost Riders in the Sky."

Faults notwithstanding, all these sets are worthwhile. "Gears" alone is worth the price of *Truck Stop*. Unfortunately, these records are out of print along with the rest of the Starday-King catalogue. But there's hope, for Gusto Records has purchased and plans to reissue much of their material. Till then, there are still copies around for those who take time to search them out. Today's country trucker hits owe a lot to this vintage stuff, and so does country music in general. If truckers never existed, country music probably would've had to invent them.

RICH KIENZLE

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Conjunto

(Continued from page 16)

and Bohemians who have been in central and south Texas since the 1840's. Conjunto bands today generally are made up of an accordion, drums, bass, and a totally unique instrument called a bajo sexto. The bajo ("ba-ho") is at the center of the conjunto sound.

So what is a bajo sexto? "Bajo" means "bass" and "sexto" means "six" and refers to the six extra bass strings on the bajo sexto. In other words, it is an acoustic twelve-string guitar pitched as low as an electric bass, going from a low E to a mid-range F sharp. There are six pairs of strings with the strings in each pair tuned one octave apart. The combination of octave pairing and deep pitch and resonance is uncanny. The bottom string sounds like an idling B-29. Tuned in fourths all the way up, the bajo makes chords and runs very easy to play, since there is

no break at the fourth string as there is with the guitar.

It is this versatility that makes the bajo such an amazing instrument. When conjunto music was performed by duets in the '30's (bass and drums were added later), it was up to the two musicians to provide rhythm, bass, chords, and lead. Accordion is good for lead and chords, so the other instrument had to be able to play bass and rhythm.

The bajo sexto was tailor-made. The bottom two pairs of strings are rumbly and sound like a cross between a bass fiddle and a bumblebee while the top four pairs are perfect for rhythmic chording.

Bajo sextos can be found in Texas pawn shops and stores but are usually of inferior quality. The strings exert 150 or more pounds of pressure on the neck and unless it is built well, the bajo will not last. Good bajos are made in Mexico and San Antonio, and most Texas conjuntos use a bajo made by a publicity shy 80-year-old craftsman who refuses

to let himself or his work be photographed and who is now in the process of retiring. He did not teach his art to anyone else so the beautiful bajos he has created are the only ones of their kind. One of the last instruments was bought by Ry Cooder, session picker and Reprise artist who is in the process of making a conjunto-flavored album for fall release. Another of these handmade jewels is featured on Doug Sahm's Atlantic albums.

While you probably won't be seeing copies of *Living Bajos in Superb StereoRama* in your favorite bargain bins right away, it wouldn't be surprising if bajo sextos don't start showing up in the strangest places. Their totally unique sound has already started catching the ears of producers and musicians looking for something new.

And all you'll have to do is look smug and say "That's a bajo sexto," to hear the inevitable reply "Bajo what?"

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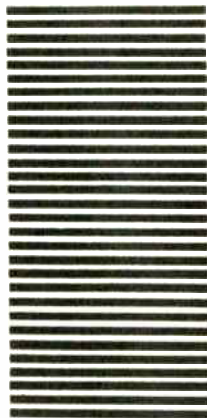
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ELVIS AND AMERICA

by GREIL MARCUS

Elvis Presley is a supreme figure in American life, one whose presence, no matter how banal or predictable, brooks no real comparisons. He is honored equally by long-haired rock critics, middle-aged women, the City of Memphis (they finally found something to name after him: a highway), and even a president.

If other performers define different versions of America, Presley's career almost has the scope to take America in. The cultural range of his music has expanded to the point where it includes not only the hits of the day, but also patriotic recitals, pure country gospel, and really dirt blues; reviews of his concerts, by usually credible writers, sometimes resemble biblical accounts of heavenly miracles. Elvis has emerged as a

great artist, a great rocker, a great purveyor of schlock, a great heart throb, a great bore, a great symbol of potency, a great ham, a great nice person, and, yes, a great American.

Twenty years ago Elvis made his first records with Sam Phillips, on the little Sun label in Memphis, Tennessee; then a pact was signed with Col. Tom Parker, shrewd country hustler. Elvis took off for RCA Victor, New York, and Hollywood. America has not been the same since. Elvis disappeared into an oblivion of respectability and security in the sixties, lost in interchangeable movies and dull music; he staged a remarkable comeback as that decade ended, and now performs as the transcendental Sun King that Ralph Waldo Emerson only dreamed about—and as a giant contradiction. His audience expands every year, but Elvis transcends his talent to the point of dispensing with it altogether. Performing a kind of enormous victory rather than winning it, Elvis strides the boards with such glamour, such magnetism, that he allows his audience to transcend their desire for his talent. Action is irrelevant when one can simply de-

light in the presence of a man who has made history, and who has triumphed over it.

At best, when the fans gather around—old men and women who might see their own struggles and failures ennobled in the splendor of one who came from the bottom; middle-aged couples attending to the most glamorous nightclub act there is; those in their twenties and thirties who have grown with Elvis ever since he and they created each other years ago (and who might have a feeling he and they will make their trip through history together, reading their history in each other)—at best, Elvis will confirm all who are there as an audience. Such an event, repeated over and over all across the land, implies an America that is as nearly complete as any can be. But what is it worth?

When Elvis sings "American Trilogy" (a combination of "Dixie," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "All My Trials," a slave song), he signifies that his persona, and the culture he has made out of blues, Las Vegas, gospel music, Hollywood, schmaltz, Mississippi, and rock 'n'

This article is an excerpt from the "Elvis: Preslaid" chapter of Greil Marcus's recent book "Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music," published by E.P. Dutton & Co.

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roll, can contain any America you might want to conjure up. It is rather Lincolnesque; Elvis recognizes that the Civil War has never ended, and so he will perform *The Union*.

Well, for a moment, staring at that man on the stage, you can almost believe it. For if Elvis were to bring it off—and it is easy to think that only he could—one would leave the hall with a new feeling for the country; whatever that feeling might be, one's sense of place would be broadened, and enriched.

But it is an illusion. A man or woman equal to the song's pretension would have to present each part of the song as if it were the whole story, setting one against each other, proving that one American really could make the South live, the Union hold, and slavery real. But on the surface and beneath it, Elvis transcends any real America by evading it. There is no John Brown in his "Battle Hymn," no romance in his "Dixie," no blood in his slave song. He sings with such a complete absence of musical personality that none of the old songs matter at all, because he has not committed himself to them; it could be anyone singing, or no one. It is in this sense, finally, that an audience is confirmed, that an America comes into being; lacking any real fear or joy, it is a throwaway America where nothing is at stake. The divisions America shares are simply smoothed away.

But there is no chance anyone who



ABOVE: Frankfurt, Germany, December 1958. Elvis accepts the keys to his newly bought BMW sports car, formerly the property of a German racing ace. Elvis had the car's huge engine replaced with a "tame" touring motor.

RIGHT: Jackson, Miss., May 5th, 1975. Elvis hands over a check for \$108,860 to aid tornado victims. Governor Bill Waller accepts.



Black & White Photos: United Press International

wants to join will be excluded. Elvis's fantasy of freedom, the audience's fantasy, takes on such reality that there is nothing left in the real world that can inspire the fantasy, or threaten it. What *is* left is for the fantasy to replace the world; and that, night after night, is what Elvis and his audience make happen. The version of the American dream that is Elvis's performance is blown up again and again, to contain more history, more people, more music, more hopes; the air gets thin but the bubble does not burst, nor will it ever. This is America when it has outstripped itself, in all of its extravagance, and its emptiness is Elvis's ultimate throwaway.

There is a sense in which virtually his whole career has been a throwaway, straight from that time when he knew he had it made and that the future was his. You can hear that distance, that refusal to really commit

himself, in his best music and his worst; if the throwaway is the source of most of what is pointless about Elvis, it is also at the heart of much of what is exciting and charismatic. It may be that he never took *any* of it seriously, just did his job and did it well, trying to enjoy himself and stay sane—save for those first Tennessee records, and that night, late in 1968, when his comeback was uncertain and he put a searing, desperate kind of life into a few songs that cannot be found in any of his other music.

It was a staggering moment. A Christmas TV special had been decided on; a final dispute between Colonel Parker (he wanted twenty Christmas songs and a tuxedo) and producer Steve Binder (he wanted a tough, fast, sexy show) had been settled; with Elvis's help, Binder won. So there Elvis was, standing in an au-



Elvis sits quietly undergoing makeup tests for TV in Hollywood, October 1956. Three weeks later, he made his Ed Sullivan Show debut.

ditorium, facing television cameras and a live audience for the first time in nearly a decade, finally stepping out from behind the wall of retainers and sycophants he had paid to hide him. And everyone was watching.

In the months preceding Elvis had begun to turn away from the seamless boredom of the movies and the hackneyed music of the soundtrack albums, staking out a style on a few half-successful singles, presenting the new persona of a man whose natural toughness was tempered by experience. The records—"Big Boss Man," "Guitar Man," "U.S. Male"—had been careful, respectable efforts, but now he was putting everything on the line, risking his comforts and his ease for the chance to start over. He had been a bad joke for a long time; if this show died, little more would be heard from Elvis Presley. Did he still have an audience? Did he still have anything to offer them? He had raised the stakes himself, but he probably had no idea.

Sitting on the stage in black leather, surrounded by friends and a rough little combo, the crowd buzzing, he sang and talked and joked, and all the resentments he had hidden over the years began to pour out. He had always said yes, but this time, he was saying no—not without humor, but almost with a wry bit of guilt, as if he had betrayed his talent and himself. "Been a long time, baby." He told the audience about a time back in 1955, when cops in Florida had



forced him to sing without moving: the story was hilarious, but there was something in his voice that made very clear how much it had hurt. He jibed at the Beatles, denying that the heroes who had replaced him had produced anything he could not match, and then he proved it. After all this time he wanted more than safety.

"I'd like to do my favorite Christmas song," Elvis drawls—squeals of familiarity from the crowd, the girls in the front rows doing their job, imitating themselves or their images of the past, fading into an undertone of giggles as the music begins. Elvis sings "Blue Christmas," a classically styled rhythm and blues, very even, all its tension implied: a good choice. He sings it low and throaty, snapping the strings on his guitar until one of his pals cries, "Play it dirty! Play it dirty!"—on a Christmas song! All right! But this is re-creation, the past in the present, an attempt to see if Elvis can go as far as he once did. Within those limits it works, it is beautiful. The song ends with appropriate, and calculated screams.

"Ah think Ah'll put a strap around this and stand up," Presley says. AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA, God, what's that? Nervous laughter from a friend. Slow and steady, still looking around for the strap no one has bothered to hook onto the guitar, Elvis rocks into "One Night." In Smiley Lewis's original, it was about an orgy, called "One Night of Sin" (with the great line, "The things I did and I saw/Would make the earth stand still"); Elvis cleaned it up into a love story in 1958. But he has forgotten—or remembered. He is singing Lewis's version, as he must have always wanted to. He has slipped his role, and laughing, grinning, something is happening.

*... The things I did and I saw,
could make...
these dreams—Where's the strap?*

Where's the strap, indeed. He falls in and out of the two songs, and suddenly the band rams hard at the music and Elvis lunges and eats it alive. No one has ever heard him sing like this; not even his best records suggest the depth of passion in this music. One line from Howlin' Wolf tells the tale: "When you see me runnin', you know my life is at stake." That's what it sounds like.

Shouting, crying, growling, lust-

ing, Elvis takes his stand and the crowd takes theirs with him. no longer reaching for the past they had been brought to the studio to reenact, but responding to something completely new. The crowd is cheering for what they had only hoped for: Elvis has gone beyond all their expectations, and his, and they don't believe it. The guitar cuts in high and slams down and Elvis is roaring. Every line is a thunderbolt. *AW, YEAH!*, screams a pal—he has waited years for this moment.

UNNNNNNN! WHEW! When...
I ain't nevah did no wrong!

And Elvis floats like the master he is back into "One night, with you," even allowing himself a little "Hot dog!", singing softly to himself.

It was the finest music of his life. If ever there was music that bleeds, this was it. Nothing came easy that night, and he gave everything he had — more than anyone knew was there.

Something of that passion spilled over into the first comeback album, *From Elvis in Memphis*; into "Suspicious Minds," the single that put him back on top of the charts; into his first live shows in Las Vegas; and then his nerves steadied, and Elvis brought it all back home again. You can still hear the intensity, the echo of those moments of doubt, in the first notes of most songs Elvis sings on stage—just before he realizes again that the crowd cares only that he is before them, and that anyway, the music would be his if he wanted it, that his talent is so vast it would be demeaning to apply it. So he will revel in his glory, acting the part of the King it has always been said he is; and if that is a throwaway, it is at least thrown at those who want it. A real glow passes back and forth between Elvis and his audience, as he shares a bit of what it means to transcend the world of weakness, failure, worry, age and fear, shows what it means for a boy who sprung from the poor to be godly, and shares that too.

I suppose it is the finality this performance carries with it that draws me back to Elvis's first records, made when there was nothing to take for granted, let alone throw away. Those sides, like "One Night," catch a world of risk, will, passion, and natural nobility; something worth searching out within the America of mastery and easy splendor that may well be Elvis's last word. The first thing Elvis had to



Elvis in action: With Mother (top photo); with a lucky fan in 1958 (above right); with a German girlfriend (above left); with stripteaser Tempest Storm in Hollywood, 1957 (opposite page). Below, Elvis and the Colonel run the girl gauntlet in 1960.



learn to transcend, after all, was the failure and obscurity he was born to; he had to find some way to set himself apart, to escape the limits that could well have given his story a very different ending. The ambition and genius that took him out and brought him back is there in that first music—that, and much more.

They called Elvis the Hillbilly Cat in the beginning; he came out of a stepchild culture (in the South, white trash; to the rest of America, a caricature of Bilbo and moonshine) that for all it shared with the rest of America had its own shape and integrity. As a poor white Southern boy, Elvis created a personal culture out of the hillbilly world that was his as a given. Ultimately, he made that personal culture public in such an explosive way that he transformed not only his own culture, but America's. I want to look at that hillbilly landscape for a bit—to get a sense of how Elvis drew on his context.

It was, as Southern chambers of commerce have never tired of saying, A Land of Contrasts. The fundamental contrast, of course, could not have been more obvious: black and white. Always at the root of Southern fantasy, Southern music, and Southern politics, the black man was poised in the early fifties for an overdue invasion of American life, in fantasy, music, and politics. As the North scurried to deal with him, the South would be pushed farther and farther into the weirdness and madness its best artists had been trying to exorcise from the time of Poe on down. Its politics would dissolve into night-riding and hysteria; its fantasies would be dull for all their gaudy paranoia. Only the music got away clean.

The North, powered by the Protestant ethic, had set men free by making them strangers; the poor man's South that Elvis knew took strength from community.

The community was based on a marginal economy that demanded cooperation, loyalty, and obedience for the achievement of anything resembling a good life; it was organized by religion, morals, and music. Music helped hold the community together, and carried the traditions and shared values that dramatized a sense of place. Music gave pleasure, wisdom, and shelter.

"It's the only place in the country I've ever been where you can actually drive down the highway at night,

and if you listen, you hear music." Robbie Robertson once said. "I don't know if it's coming from the people or if it's coming from the air. It lives, and it's rooted there." Elegant enough, but I prefer another comment Robbie made. "The South," he said, "is the only place we play where everybody can clap on the off-beat."

The Carter Family, in the twenties, were the first to record the old songs everyone knew, to make the shared musical culture concrete, and their music drew a circle around the community. They celebrated the landscape (especially the Clinch Mountains that ringed their home), found strength in a feel for death because it was the only certainty, laughed a bit, and promised to leave the hillbilly home they helped build only on a gospel ship. Jimmie Rodgers, their contemporary, simply hopped a train. He was every boy who ever ran away from home, hanging out in the railroad yards, bumming around with black minstrels, pushing out the limits of his life. *He* celebrated long tall mamas that rubbed his back and licked his neck just to cure the cough that killed him; he bragged about gunplay on Beale Street; he sang real blues, played jazz with Louis Armstrong, and though there was melancholy in his soul, his smile was a good one. He sounded like a man who could make a home for himself anywhere. There's so much *room* in this country, he seemed to be saying, so many things to do—how could an honest man be satisfied to live within the frontiers he was born to?

By the late forties and early fifties, Hank Williams had inherited Jimmie Rodgers' role as the central figure in the music, but he added an enormous reservation: that margin of loneliness in Rodgers' America had grown into a world of utter tragedy. Williams sang for a community to which he could not belong; he sang to a God in whom he could not quite believe; even his many songs of good times and good lovin' seemed to lose their reality. There were plenty of jokes in his repertoire, novelties like "Kaw-liga" (the tale of unrequited love between two cigar store Indians); he traveled Rodgers' road, but for Williams, that road was a lost highway.

Hank Williams was a poet of limits, fear, and failure; he went as deeply into one dimension of the country

world as anyone could, gave it beauty, gave it dignity. What was missing was that part of the hillbilly soul Rodgers had celebrated, something Williams' music obscured, but which his realism could not express and the community's moralism could not contain: excitement, rage, fantasy, delight—the feeling, summed up in a sentence by W. J. Cash from *The Mind of the South*, that "even the Southern physical world was a kind of cosmic conspiracy against reality in favor of romance:" that even if Elvis's South was filled with Puritans, it was also filled with natural-born hedonists, and the same people were both.

To lie on his back for days and weeks (Cash writes of the hillbilly), storing power as the air he breathed stores power under the hot sun of August, and then to explode, as that air explodes in a thunderstorm, in a violent outburst of emotion—in such a fashion would he make life not only tolerable, but infinitely sweet.

In the fifties we can hardly find that moment in white music, before Elvis.

Country music (like the blues, which was more damned and more honestly hedonistic than country had ever been) was music for a whole community, cutting across lines of age, if not class. This could have meant an openly expressed sense of diversity for each child, man, and woman, as it did with the blues. But country spoke to a community fearful of anything of the sort, withdrawing into itself, using music as a bond that linked all together for better or for worse, with a sense that what was shared was less important than the crucial fact of sharing. How could parents hope to keep their children if their kids' whole sense of what it meant to live—which is what we get from music when we are closest to it—held promises the parents could never keep?

The songs of country music, and most deeply, its even, narrow sound, had to subject the children to the heartbreak of their parents: the father who couldn't feed his family, the wife who lost her husband to a honky-tonk angel or a bottle, the family that lost everything to a suicide or a farm spinning off into one more bad year, the horror of loneliness in a world that was meant to banish that if nothing else. Behind that uneasy grin, this is Hank Williams'

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Elvis trades coats and props with Liberace in Las Vegas. "We may be characters," said Liberace, "but we can afford to be."

America; the romance is only a night call.

Such a musical community is beautiful, but it is not hard to see how it could be intolerable. All that hedonism was dragged down in country music; a deep sense of fear and resignation confined it, as perhaps it almost had to, in a land overshadowed by fundamentalist religion, where original sin was just another name for the facts of life.

There are four of them in the little studio: Bill Black, the bass player; Scotty Moore, the guitarist; in the back, Sam Phillips, the producer; and the sexy young kid thumping his guitar as he sings, Elvis Presley, just nineteen. 1954.

Sam Phillips is doing all right for himself. He has been among the first to record men who will be giants in the world of postwar blues: B.B. King. Junior Parker, and the Howlin' Wolf himself. The names on Phillips's

roster show his willingness to try anything: wonderful names like Big Memphis Ma Rainey, the Ripley Cotton Choppers, Dr. Ross, Hardrock Gunter, Rufus "Bear Cat" Thomas Billy the Kid Emerson, the Prisonaires (a vocal group from the state pen), the immortal Hot Shot Love. There are plenty more knocking on the door, and with no more than this, Phillips's place in the history of American music would be assured—not that a place in history is quite what he is looking for.

In the records Phillips makes you can discern something more than taste, something like vision. He has cooked up a sound all his own: hot, fierce, overbearing, full of energy and desire, a sound to jump right out of the jukebox. But Phillips wants money, a lot of it, and he wants something new. Deep down in a place not even he sees clearly, he wants to set the world on its ear.

The kid with the guitar is . . . un-

usual; but they've been trying to put something on the tape Sam keeps running back—a ballad, a hillbilly song, anything—and so far, well, it just doesn't get it.

The four men cool it for a moment, frustrated. They share a feeling they could pull something off if they hit it right, but it's been a while, and that feeling is slipping away, as it always does. They talk music, blues, Crudup, ever hear that, who you kiddin', man, dig this. The kid pulls his guitar up, clowns a bit. He throws himself at a song. *That's all right, mama, that's all right . . . eat shit.* He doesn't say that, naturally, but that's what he's found in the tune; his voice slides over the lines as the two musicians come in behind him. Scotty picking up the melody and the bassman slapping away at his axe with a drumstick. Phillips hears it, likes it, and makes up his mind.

All right, you got something. Do it again, I'll get it down. Just like that,

don't mess with it. Keep it simple.

They cut the song fast, put down their instruments, vaguely embarrassed at how far they went into the music. Sam plays back the tape. Man, they'll run us outta town when they hear it, Scotty says; Elvis sings along with himself, joshing his performance. They all wonder, but not too much.

Get on home, now, Sam says. I gotta figure what to do with this.

They leave, but Sam Phillips is perplexed. Who is gonna play this crazy record? White jocks won't touch it 'cause its nigger music and colored will pass 'cause it's hillbilly. It sounds good, it sounds sweet, but maybe it's just... too weird? The hell with it.

Sam Phillips released the record; what followed was the heyday of Sun Records and rockabilly music, a moment when boys were men and men were boys, when full-blown legends emerged that still walk the land and the lesser folk simply went along for the ride.

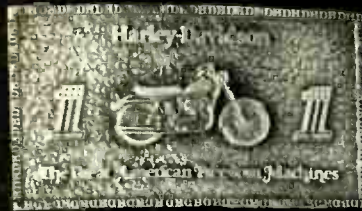
Rockabilly was a fast, aggressive music: simple, snappy drumming, sharp guitar licks, wild country boogie piano, the music of kids who came from all over the South to make records for Sam Phillips and his imitators. Rockabilly came and it went; there was never that much of it, and even including Elvis's first Sun singles, all the rockabilly hits put together sold less than Fats Domino's. But rockabilly fixed the crucial image of rock 'n' roll: the sexy, half-crazed fool standing on stage singing his guts out.

Most important, the image was white. Rockabilly was the only style of early rock 'n' roll that proved white boys could do it all—that they could be as strange, as exciting, as scary, and as free as the black men who were suddenly walking America's airwaves as if they owned them. There were two kinds of white counterattack on the black invasion of white popular culture that was rock 'n' roll: the attempt to soften black music or freeze it out, and the rockabilly lust to beat the black man at his own game.

For Carl Perkins and the rest of the rockabilly heroes, the liberation of the new music must have been a bit like a white foray into darktown, a combination of a blackface minstrel show and night riding—romantic as hell, a little dangerous, a little

(Continued on page 59)

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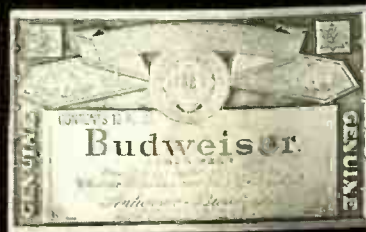
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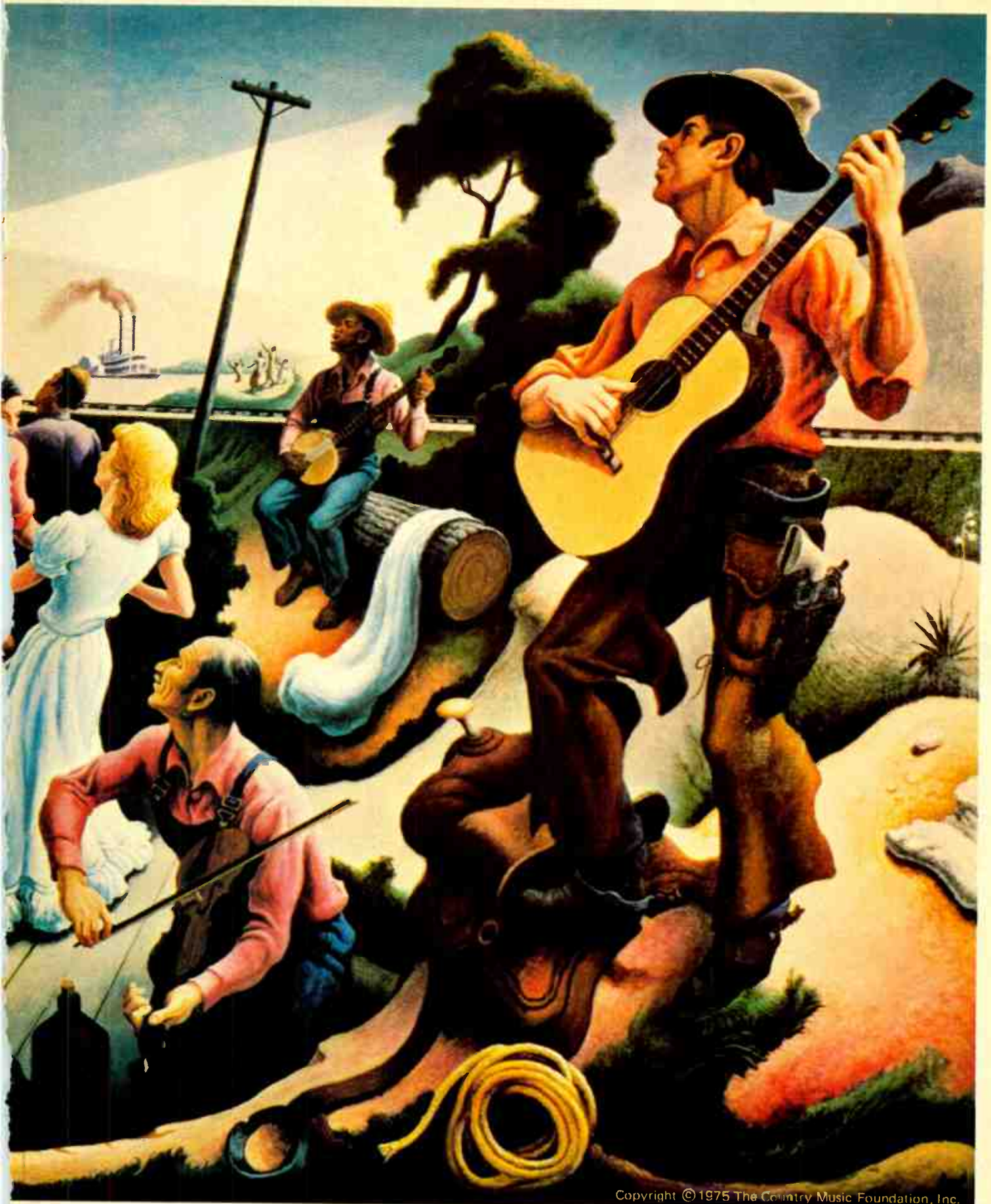
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THE SOURCES OF COUNTRY MUSIC

In January of 1973, the late Tex Ritter and Norman Worrel, executive director of the Tennessee State Arts Commission, visited Thomas Hart Benton at his home in Kansas City. The great muralist had announced



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that he would paint no more murals, but this proposal interested him. The work would be a depiction of the sources and spirit of country music, sponsored by the Country Music Foundation and Hall of Fame, and

when completed it would hang in the Hall of Fame in Nashville. Benton—a musician and artist steeped in the folk traditions of the Ozarks—gave in and agreed to begin the painting. In the fall of 1973, he started work.

World Radio History

By January of 1975 the work was finished, but Benton never signed it. He died only hours after completing the last detail. It was his last work.

In its final form, "The Sources of
(Continued on page 64)



*Familiar
Formula*

HADACOL

VITAMIN SUPPLEMENT

16-070

World Radio History

THE LAST MEDICINE SHOW

by Jerry Rivers, Drifting Cowboy

By the end of World War II, most Americans had had enough education or experience with medical advances not to be duped by promises of a magic elixir that would provide the answers to the aching back, the aging body, the waning emotional drive—but despite all this, in 1951 drug store shelves were still stocked with all manner of magic potions. Chief among them was Hadacol, a concoction of mineral water, alcohol and various other ingredients patented by one Senator Dudley LeBlanc of Lafayette, Louisiana.

Either by a fortunate set of circumstances or by use of some clever advertising gimmicks, the general public took a humorous attitude towards the testimonials of Hadacol users, and sales soared. The public generated its own reference to Hadacol's stimulation of sexual potency, and "Hadacol jokes" became the rage of school recess period. The spit-and-whittlers around the courthouse square liked the one about the farmer who spilled a bottle of Hadacol in the well and couldn't get the pump handle down for a week.

Dudley Le Blanc liked all these jokes, and as a politician he picked the best possible methods to reach potential Hadacol users. In the pre-television 1940's, most radio stations programmed live country music groups in the early morning hours, and Hadacol became one of their best sponsors. One "hillbilly" musician said that Hadacol users were dedicated because the tonic had enough alcohol to make them feel good, and enough laxative that they were afraid to cough anymore.

Even after a considerable mark of success, Senator Le Blanc still desired to expand in two directions—firstly to increase Hadacol sales coverage from the relative confinement of the South, and secondly to reside in the governor's mansion in the state of Louisiana. By 1950, Hadacol promotional funds were plentiful, and Le Blanc planned a

venture he hoped could accomplish both of his goals. He decided to launch the Hadacol Caravan, the most fantastic medicine show ever imagined. Starting in Lafayette, Louisiana, it would tour from the South in a swing to the East, North-east, and through the Midwest, singing the praises of Hadacol to 40 major cities of the U.S.

Dudley Le Blanc thought big, and in a few weeks the Hadacol Caravan began to take shape: emcee-comedian, Candy Candido; Tony Martin and his great band from Houston, Texas; Dick Haymes; Carmen Miranda and her Latin group; Jack Dempsey; Sharkey and his Dixieland Band; dancers Pork Chop and Kidney Stew; Caesar Romero; the Acro-Bats; Jack Benny's Rochester; the Ringling Brothers clowns. For major city stops, Bob Hope, Milton Berle, Jimmy Durante and Jack Benny were booked for one or two-day appearances. Chicago's famous Dorothy Dorbin Adorables and the teenage Hadacol Queens (selected in contests all over the nation) kept the stage graced with beauty during most of the three-hour performance. And for the country music fans, Le Blanc picked the obvious best—Minnie Pearl, and Hank Williams and his Drifting Cowboys.

On August 15, 1951, Hank Williams and the Drifting Cowboys drove their long Packard limousine onto the football field in Lafayette and joined the pandemonium in assembling the world's greatest medicine show, the Hadacol Caravan.

I had been Hank Williams' fiddle man for the Drifting Cowboys since July of 1949, shortly after Hank moved to Nashville and joined the Grand Ole Opry, and this was not our first experience with Hadacol—late in 1949, we recorded four fifteen-minute "Health and Happiness" radio shows for Hadacol, and these were played on many radio stations. (After Hank died, selections on these transcriptions, including some

of the monologue, were put into two LP albums by MGM entitled, *Hank Williams On Stage*, Volumes One and Two.)

We arrived in Lafayette with the following personnel: Don Helms, steel guitar; Howard Watts (Cedric Rainwater), bass fiddle; Jerry Rivers, fiddle; and "Big Bill" Lister, front singer and rhythm guitar. Nineteen Pullman cars, plus a diner and club car, were assembled in the Lafayette switchyard to transport over 150 entertainers, musicians, and equipment. In addition, five Hadacol tractor-trailer trucks were loaded with portable stage, scenery, lighting and sound equipment.

The shows were fantastically successful, with full stadiums or buildings every night, and two performances were held in some locations where seating capacity was limited. Hadacol box-tops were required for admission and sales were booming so that in some cities the Hadacol supplies were exhausted, and box-tops for show admission were "scalped" at premium prices. In a few of the locations where adequate Hadacol distribution had not been established, Le Blanc opened the gates free of admission to create interest in his product and break the ice for future Hadacol sales.

The Hadacol Caravan Show opened like a Hollywood Premier with a rolling of kettle drums and a stirring rendition of "Wagon Wheels" by Tony Martin's orchestra. After some quick laughs from comedian Candy Candido, the pace moved rapidly from Latin rhythms by Carmen Miranda and her Brazilians to "Old Man River," performed excellently by Dick Haymes. Jack Dempsey and Rochester quipped between performances by Sharkey Bonano and the Dorothy Dorbin dancers. Each act was the very best in its field... the black New Orleans tappers... Pork Chop and Kidney Stew... the Acro-Bats... Caesar Romero... all the others.

Toward the end of the show, following a great routine by Minnie Pearl, the audience burst into excited applause for the introduction of Hank Williams. The fourteen-man orchestra sat quietly, awed by the audience response to the simple honky-tonk sound of the Drifting Cowboys, and particularly the magnetic appeal of an Alabama country boy's songs.

Usually, it was Hank who closed the Hadacol Shows, except when superstars like Bob Hope or Jack Benny were on the bill as one-nighters, and I remember when Bob Hope was booked for two days in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky. There were more than 25,000 people in the ballpark in Cincinnati when Hank sung the last notes of his "Lovesick Blues," and the roar from the crowd was unbelievable. His three necessary encores were embarrassing to producers waiting in the wings to bring on Bob Hope. When Hank finally left the stage, the ovation must have lasted five minutes before subsiding enough for Hope to be introduced. Like the real pro that he is, Bob Hope took things in stride. He walked on stage with a "ten-gallon" cowboy hat pulled down on his ears, walked to the microphone and spoke his opening line.

"Hello folks, this is Hank Hope..."

The next day, Hank was informed that Bob Hope told the producers Hank Williams earned every right to close the show, which he did every performance thereafter.

Although it was obvious on stage who the stars were, there were no stars on The "Hadacol Express" as it rolled across hundreds of miles of track each night after our performances. Musicians, singers, dancers, clowns, stage hands, all gathered in the club car, discussed the day's performance, joined in sing-along tunes, and generally had a good time. On August 25th, I mentioned that I would be having a birthday far from home, and that night I was surprised when I entered the club car to the refrain of "Happy Birthday" sung by Dick Haymes, Carmen Miranda and all the troops, with Rochester at the piano.

After fifteen or twenty days on the road in the same train, we became like a large family with no prestige or "star" status. Dick Haymes engaged the Drifting Cowboys in a game of baseball when the train arrived at our destination early in the day. Cedric Rainwater, our bass man, joined the Barnum clowns and Caesar Romero in their nightly poker game.

Most of the show personnel were big-city dwellers, and we were unique in our bluejeans and cowboy boots. Drums were unheard of at that time in Grand Ole Opry bands, and we were surprised when Tony Martin's accomplished percussionist

started bugging Hank for a job because he loved the simple music and was infatuated with our lifestyle. For many of the performers, this tour was their first visit into the deep South, and we were besieged with questions about the area, the people, the catfish and hushpuppies, and the almost unbearable heat. During the few hours our train was stopped before and after shows, we wandered about large and small towns in a carefree group of boisterous adventurers, visiting the famous jazz joints in New Orleans, Jack Ruby's strip club in Dallas, and once local musician Howard White took a large group of us to a remote fishing camp in some North Carolina wilderness, where we ate catfish and listened to a country music band most of the evening.



Dudley J. LeBlanc: The Hadacol King.
Photo: UPI

It began as a rumor while we were dressing and setting up for our Dallas, Texas, performance. The Hadacol Caravan had almost completed its vast circle, having swung east from Lafayette up through the Carolinas, across the mid-nation, and south into Oklahoma and Texas. The remaining scheduled stops would dump the unit right back into Louisiana to complete the circuit. I first heard some small talk that Dallas might be our last show... with a possibility that Le Blanc and Hadacol might be broke.

The Dallas performance went over big as usual, but there was noticeable tension in the performers as the rumors spread... and immediately upon completion of the show,

the rumors became a reality. Everyone was officially advised to report to the paymaster's car for their final paycheck and transportation home. We moved like robots, packing our gear and scurrying about like misplaced war immigrants. We said hurried goodbyes to everyone we passed, those who had been such an intricate part of our own little world for the past few weeks. The lady who took our laundry in the service car... a stage hand... the staff photographer... a Hadacol Queen from Long Beach... a dancer from Chicago. Bill Lister headed for home in San Antonio. Don Helms and Sammy Pruitt caught a plane to Lafayette so they could drive our road car back to Nashville. Hank Williams and Minnie Pearl boarded Henry's Beechcraft Bonanza for a quick flight to Music City.

Within a few hours, Cedric Rainwater and I lay in comfortable berths on a fast diesel train speeding toward home. Though totally exhausted, I had difficulty sleeping. Although I tried reconditioning my mind to normal home life in Nashville, the clicking of steel wheels on the tracks kept taking me back to that unique piece of history called the Hadacol Caravan. I remembered a catfish and hushpuppy supper we had in North Carolina, a friendly smile and greeting from Jimmy Durante, a day of fishing in the Gulf, Jack Dempsey telling us the story of "the long count." I remembered the stillness among 20,000 fans when Hank Williams sang "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and the thundering ovation which followed. Hank would be dead within three years.

And I recalled the moment after that surprise birthday party. I was standing on the rear observation deck while the train sped through the darkness at nearly 90 miles an hour, and for a moment I was homesick for Tennessee, for June, and for our little log house on the Harpeth River. There is something about the sound of a steam locomotive late at night... the whine of the whistle... the smell of the coal smoke. These characteristics stimulated the senses of many lonely men, and stirred the soul of Hank Williams to write some of his best creations.

After the Hadacol tour I never rode another train, and in a few years the sounds and smells of the steam locomotive were gone forever, except in song and story. ■

Loretta Lynn "Home"



Home brings special things to mind: warmth, happiness, family and friends. When the "Home" you're thinking about is by Loretta Lynn, it's special in other ways. Whether you're thinking of Loretta's new album or her hit single of the same name, "Home" is also what country music is really all about.

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The Last of Lefty Frizzell

by GECFF LANE

As you will know by now, Lefty Frizzell is dead. He was taken ill suddenly at his home just outside Nashville on Saturday the 19th of July, and he died at 11:20 p.m. the same day in Nashville Memorial Hospital. The cause of death was a massive stroke. Lefty was buried on July 22nd in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Goodlettsville, Tenn., close to the graves of Hawkshaw Hawkins and Stringbean. The six pallbearers were Lefty's closest friends—Rusty Adams, Dallas Frazier, Whitey Shafer, Doodle Owens, Abe Mulkey and Tommy Smith. Lefty was 47.

Four days later, I wrote this introduction to my article on Lefty, which was completed just before his death. I believe that mine were the last interviews Lefty gave. My story stands unaltered. It has not been changed to an obituary. But now, I

would like to add these thoughts.

Greatness and success do not necessarily go hand in hand. The finest artists are not necessarily the biggest stars, the best-known names, or the biggest record sellers. After his success in the early 1950s—when his name was up there with that of Hank Williams—Lefty did not have a "successful" musical career, but his fellow artists know his greatness. They know who he was and what he meant. Now, I am not mourning the death of a country star; I am deeply saddened by the passing of a great man who was as true to country music as was Hank Williams. And Lefty's own words, spoken of Hank, are his own eulogy: "He's one who won't be coming back through."

Like Hank, Lefty died with his work unfinished. He was singing with





more feeling than he had ever sung, and the songs he was writing with Whitey Shafer. Rusty Adams and a couple more of his friends were deceptively simple. They were honest, real songs—Lefty had so much to write about—and the fact that he did not record many of them before his death is our loss.

Again like Hank Williams, the same things that drove Lefty—that made him sing the way he did—also killed him. You could say that it was the fast living, the booze, the pills, but to say that is to be blind to the real truth.

"Joe, don't let your music kill you," wrote Tom T. Hall. Hank and Lefty really had no choice in the matter. Like Judy Garland, Janis Joplin—the few great ones—they were driven, desperate. They could barely handle their own talent. They did not have easy lives to live.

Lefty told me that every song he wrote was for his wife, Alice. At the end they were not happy songs—one of his finest is "I Can't Get Over You To Save My Life"—but they were true. The first time I visited Lefty for this story, we stayed up all night drinking Bloody Marys. Lefty was not living at home. He talked about it most of the night: it filled his mind. That night, he called his wife, and they talked for a long time. The second night I spent with him, a month later, the same thing happened. They were in love but they couldn't live together any more. After thirty years, that's hard.

When I met him, it seemed that Lefty was facing the last of the hard, bad days. I came away from him feeling that he had survived, that it was going to keep on getting better for him. I thought that he had overcome, one by one, those things in life that had held him down. He had overcome so much, he was almost home, he had almost found peace and a life of his own choosing. He could write, record and fish, and do very little else, surrounded by the close circle of friends who helped him more than I know. He still had much to say, and all he knew to do was write it and sing it. But the body he had used so hard, though it was still strong to all outward appearances, failed him. He paid for his past with his life.

Lefty Frizzell was country music's link from the past to the present, from Jimmie Rodgers to Merle Haggard. I guess that only a precious few country stars will live on to be

legends—Roy Acuff for his mountain singing, A.P. Carter for his mountain songs, Hank Williams and George Jones for their country soul, Bob Wills for his Western Swing, Jimmie Rodgers for his hard-time blues and sweet-sung sadness. I would add Lefty Frizzell for singing with a depth of feeling like nobody else before him and setting a style you can still hear today—in the voices of Merle Haggard and Johnny Rodriguez, for instance.

Lefty, rest in peace. The hurtin's over.

He first hit in 1950 with "If You've Got The Money, Honey, I've Got The Time" and "I Love You, I'll Prove it A Thousand Ways," and by '51 he was as big a name as Hank Williams, at one time having four songs in the Top Ten at the same time. Lefty continued to sparkle through '52 with four more smash hits, including "Give Me More, More, More Of Your Kisses" which he wrote with Ray Price. Then, suddenly, almost as suddenly as they had arrived, the golden years passed, the magic faded, and Lefty worked his way through twenty hard, hard, years, brightened in '59 by "The Long Black Veil" and later by "Saginaw, Michigan" and "Watermelon Time In Georgia." That's all until his recent renewed success with ABC Dunhill.

Today, Lefty makes his home by Old Hickory Lake, just north of Nashville, living very quietly. He has learned—he has had to learn—to slow down, to take his time.

His face is scarred—he was once in a serious automobile accident—but the scars you notice come from inside, and they're there in the pain lines etched deep in his forehead, and around his eyes.

Yet he is no old man. He looks forward for all he loves to talk about old times. He still has a lot to do. He's just seen more than his share of the road, and all that means, and has learned there is a better way. He's been ill, at times very ill, often pushing and punishing his body too hard—he's had his bouts with the bottle—but he's remained strong. He has a powerful physique—not a tall man, certainly not heavysset, light on his feet, broad-chested, with exceptionally strong arms. Though he's very gentle and generous to a fault, I would not want to cross Lefty Frizzell when he was angry.

He is good looking, and old photos suggest he may then have been aware of it—irrelevantly, he may have been the model for Bill Haley's kiss-curl—yet if he played to the ladies then, who could blame him? He's older than that now.

He wears one ring, and he bought it the year he hit. It's huge, yet somehow he has the fingers to wear it for it is impressive—heavy, but not cheap. The diamonds sparkle, spelling out the initials "L.F." against a solid gold setting, with one final single diamond—a stone his father gave him. It's one of the few things Lefty has left from those first, crazy years—"And I'm lucky to have that," he will tell you, "when I consider all the back alleys it's been up and down." One other surviving memento—a superb pair of Texas boots—stand squarely on his close friend Whitey Shafer's mantelpiece. Whitey knows what they mean. He's very proud to have them, telling me "Merle (Haggard) would kill for 'em."

Asked where his career began, Lefty replied, "In the county jail where I wrote 'I Love You, I'll Prove It A Thousand Ways'." Where that county jail was, I forgot to ask. Lefty was 18 at the time, and every line of that song (recorded four years later) was written for his wife:

*So Darling, please wait, please
wait until I'm free*

*There'll be a change, a great
change made in me*

*I'll be true, there'll never be blue
days*

*I love you, I'll prove it a thousand
ways.*

Peer Int. Used with permission.

I asked if he wanted to say what he was in for. "No. Not really," he replied. Then, "Might as well be truthful, fightin' and carryin' on." "Later, I was in Big Springs, Texas," he continued, "working at the Ace of Clubs, and I wrote 'If You've Got The Money, Honey, I've Got The Time'—which only had three chords in it. However it got me five years with a three-year option on Columbia that lasted 23 years!"

I asked Lefty about Hank Williams, for they were THE two country singers of the era. Did they see anything of each other, being on the road so much? "A.V. Bamford was a booking agent and he had Hank and I together for two weeks," he replied. "We flipped coins to see

LEFTY FRIZZELL

March 31, 1928-July 19, 1975

THE MAN IS GONE NOW, BUT HIS MEMORY CONTINUES TO LIVE ON!

On July 19th, Lefty Frizzell passed away at Nashville Memorial Hospital after suffering a stroke. Behind him he left one of the biggest success stories in the country music industry. Now, you can remember this great performer, and his unique sound, with these 3 great all-time hits.



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M0115

who'd go on first. Dad was still driving for us and there's enough stories for a book there. All Hank thought about was writing. And he had such a great, deep love for Audrey."

Hank never did record any of Lefty's songs—"No. We argued because he wanted two or three of my numbers. I think he would have. He *did* record a number he wrote because I was having trouble with my better half, called 'I'm Sorry For You. My Friend.' We shared the same dressing room at the Opry and we'd swap songs we'd written. I loved him, like everyone else. He was the kind of guy that won't be coming back through."

Lefty's first musical awakening was to Jimmie Rodgers: "We had an old victrola that my Dad had traded for a milk cow when I was about six and I remember some old thick records of Jimmie Rodgers. It was an inspiration.

"I'm about the first one that slurred," said Lefty, delicately, "but I'd trade all my yea-yeahs and slurs for his yodelling anytime. Jimmie Rodgers, absolutely, just his voice, the guitar and the yodel shaped my part in life. And it still works today. I knew when I was twelve years old what I was gonna do, I was gonna sing. I'd come in frustrated from school and it'd help me. It has always helped me. I loved his voice and I'd yodel and harmonize with him and it gave me peace. I can truly say he was the biggest influence on my life. Frustrations you can't talk about, you can sing about, and that's the story of my life.

"Jimmie was known for the blues because he had some hard times. He was sad. I become sad too, we all do. We may not always recognize or hear it in ourselves, but others do. I'd give anything if I could yodel and sing like Jimmie Rodgers... I did yodel, but I'm like Ernest Tubb, my voice changed till I couldn't yodel good no more. Course," Lefty added to lighten the atmosphere, "I can still yodel better than Merle Haggard!"

Lefty and Merle have been close friends and mutual fans for years, dating back to the time when Lefty threatened to leave a performance at the Rainbow Gardens in Bakersfield, California, unless "this good-looking kid wanting to sing a song" got his chance. He found out that it was Merle Haggard several years later when Merle and Bonnie

dropped by the house and happened to mention the incident. They share a love of the type of country blues Rodgers brought on the scene. In fact, Lefty's "Haggard-sounding" hit of 1970, "Watermelon Time in Georgia" was written for Lefty by Harlan Howard precisely because Harlan knew that that country blues could only be sung—really sung—by Lefty, just as his "No Charge" had to be by Melba Montgomery. In keeping with the times, the backing sounded like Merle's Strangers. So there were three generations of country tradition in that satisfying record. It's no wonder Harlan once found Merle and Lefty scrabbling on his office floor, almost fighting over who was to have the guitar and sing the next Rodgers song.

Lefty was honest, but cautious, as he tried to explain what changed after the eleven hits between '50 and '52.

"It wasn't so much the traveling, though that got to me," he explained. "It wasn't so much the drink and it wasn't so much the rock n' roll. It was private problems at home. Too much success too soon probably played its part—it's really hard to look back after all these years. I don't want to blame nothin'. It so happens I had the chance to work TV—'Town Hall Party'—and I wasn't ready to settle down—I'll be the first to say that. I was too young to be a husband or a father. That was the hardest thing and I couldn't take care of it." Lefty ended abruptly, not wishing to talk about it further.

Lefty stopped writing hits but he didn't stop writing. His early songs were very simple, but with good internal rhyming and beautiful, easy flowing melodies. "Mom & Dad's Waltz" is an excellent example—

*I'd walk for miles, cry or smile,
for my Mommy and Daddy.*

*I want them to know I love them
so.*

Hill & Range, BMI, Used with permission.

Lefty also had to cut bad songs—"Gang of them, gang of them," he said sourly—but that's not the only reason for so many lean years.

"I got into a rut of trying to write in detail, and explain in detail," Lefty told me. "People have to understand or you can get in a spot. I've been hung up with that.

"Whitey Shafer and I,"—Whitey is Lefty's current writing partner and long-time friend—"we've written some numbers that are pretty good, but I ain't never gonna go round a mirror again and the same goes for Whitey." This oblique reference to the almost surrealistic '74 hit for Lefty—"I Never Go Around Mirrors"—hints at what Lefty may really mean. He had become so good at writing simple country songs that he began to reach deeper and further.

Significantly, a Guy Clark tape lay amongst tapes of his old records at his house, and Guy writes way beyond simple country songs. Though Lefty added, "Everybody gets in a rut sometime in their life and you've just got to be able to climb up and out of it. I'm happy now." I'd very much like to hear some of those "detailed" songs.

Merle Haggard's first records sounded a lot like Lefty; Buck Owens' first records sounded a lot like Wynn Stewart and Tommy Collins. Wasn't it sadly true that in country music, the men who led the way went mostly unrewarded, beating a path for others to follow?

"You just answered the question yourself," replied Lefty immediately. "It's easy to sit back and watch somebody else make mistakes before you make a move." But was what I said the truth? "Absolutely. That's the way it works, I guess."

Entertainers are so often taken for granted, people having so little idea of the pace of their lives, that I suggested to Lefty maybe he'd run far enough: "I certainly have," he answered promptly, "And I appreciate you knowing about it. I wouldn't be unhappy to know I didn't have to go back for awhile."

But he did go back—at least, into the recording studio—and his small, close circle of friends and writing partners helped him through and now they're all prospering—writing the best country songs you're hearing: Dallas Frazier, Doodle Owens, Shorty Hall, Rusty Adams and Whitey Shafer; but it was Don Gant who put it together for Lefty with ABC Dunhill Records. Two exquisite albums resulted.

"Lefty," Don told me, "is the most natural, soulful singer I've ever worked with. He just opens his mouth and his beautiful soul comes out. I worked with Acuff some when I

(Continued on page 63)

Exclusive True Story of...

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*His own story
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I'm Johnny Cash and my life has got a lot to do with God... an awful lot... and it's all here in my new book."

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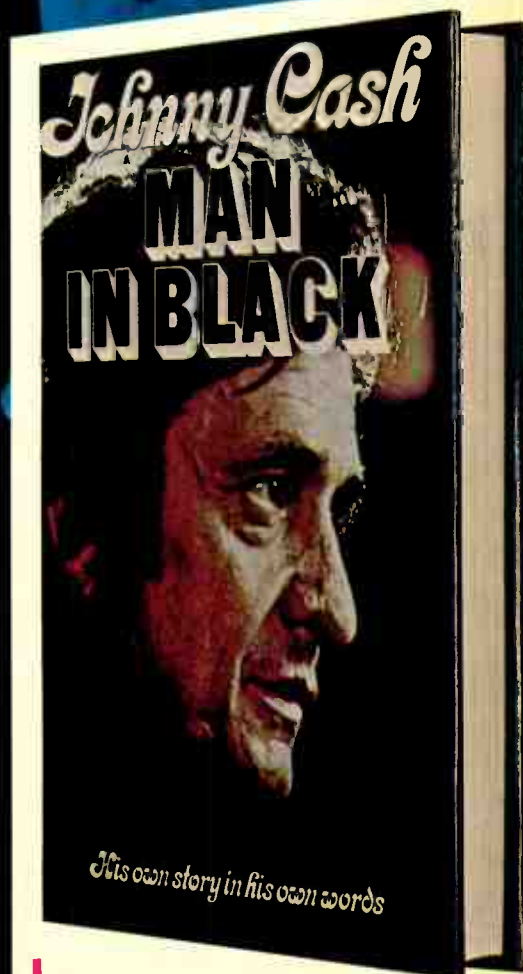
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	King of Country Music	HIC	H8G-4504	HR-4504		So Many Ways	MGM	SE-4878	M8G-4878	"For The Good Times" & Other Country Moods	RCA	LSP-4464	P8S-1663	
	Back In The Country	HIC	H8G-4507	HR-4507		Cattle Call	RCA	LSP-2578	P8S-1363	Pickin' My Way	RCA	LSP-4585	P8S-1802	
	Roy Acuff & Smoky Mountain Boys	CAP	OT-1870			My World	RCA	LSP-3466	P8S-1088	AUTRY, GENE				
	All Time Greatest Hits	MGM	H8G-4504	HR-4504		The Best Of	RCA	LSP-3565	P8S-1185	Gene Autry's Country Music Hall Of Fame	• COL	CS-1035		
	Back In The Country	HIC	H8G-4507	HR-4507		The Best Of Eddy Arnold, Vol. 2	RCA	LSP-4320	P8S-1566	Melody Ranch	RAD	MR-1048		
	Smoky Mountain Memories	HIC	H3G-4517	HR-4517		Welcome To My World	RCA	LSP-4570	P8S-1787	BARE, BOBBY				
						The Best Of Eddy Arnold, Vol. 3	RCA	LSP-4844	P8S-2127	"I Hate Goodbyes" / "Ride Me Down Easy"	RCA	APL1-0040		
ANDERSON, BILL	Still		MCA-100	MCAT-100		This Is Eddy Arnold	RCA	VPS-6032	P8S-5087	This Is Bobby Bare	RCA	VPS-6090		
	I Love You Drops		MCA-109	MCAT-109		The World Of Eddy Arnold	RCA	APL1-0239	APS1-0239	Bobby Bare Sings Lullabys, Legends, and Lies	RCA	CPL-2-0290		
	Greatest Hits	MCA	MCA-13	MCAT-13		The Wonderful World of Eddy Arnold	MGM	M3G-4992	M8G-4992	Singin' In The Kitchen	RCA	APL1-0700	APS1-0700	
	Greatest Hits, Vol. 2	MCA	MCA-40	MCAT-40		All-Time Favorites	RCA	LSP-1223(e)		The Best Of	RCA	LSP-3479		
	All The Lonely Women In The World	MCA	MCA-48	MCAT-48		Pop Hits From The Country Side	RCA	LSP-2951		The Real Thing	RCA	LSP-4422		
	Oon't She Look Good	MCA	MCA-59	MCAT-59		Lonely People	RCA	LSP-4718	P8S-1955	Hard Time Hungrys	RCA	APL1-0906	APS1-0906	
	Bill	MCA	MCA-320	MCAT-320		Loving Her Was Easier	RCA	LSP-4625	P8S-1853	CARTER FAMILY, THE				
	For Loving You (With Jan Howard)	MCA	MCA-265	MCAT-265		Eddy Arnold Sings For Housewives And Other Lovers	RCA	LSP-4738	P8S-1994	The Best Of The Carter Family	• COL	CS-9119		
	Singing His Praise (With Jan Howard)	MCA	MCA-143	MCAT-143		ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL				Three Generations	• COL	KC-33084		
	The Rich Sound Of Bill Anderson's Po' Boys	MCA	MCA-337	MCAT-337		Comm'n' Right At Ya	UA	LA038F	EA038F	CASH, JOHNNY				
	Whispering	MCA	MCA-416	MCAT-416		ATKINS, CHET				Blood, Sweat And Tears Carryin' On With J. Cash & June Carter	• COL	CS-8730		
	Everytime I Turn The Radio On/Talk To Me Ohio	MCA	MCA-454	MCAT-454		Guitar Country	RCA	LSP-2783	P8S-1047	Everybody Loves A Nut	• COL	CS-9528		
						The Best Of	RCA	LSP-2887(e)	P8S-1562	The Gospel Road	• COL	KG-32253	GAX-32253	
ANDERSON, LYNN	Cry	• COL	KC-31316	CA-31316		Chet Atkins Picks On The Beatles	RCA	LSP-3531	P8S-1103	Greatest Hits, Vol. 1	• COL	CS-9478	18-10-0264	
	Greatest Hits	• COL	KC-31641	CA-31641		The Best Of Chet Atkins, Vol. 2	RCA	LSP-3558	P8S-2000	Greatest Hits, Vol. 2	• COL	KC-30887	CA-30887	
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	Keep Me In Mind	• COL	KC-32078	CA-32078		Chet Atkins Picks The Best Class Guitar	RCA	LSP-3818	P8S-1261	Any Old Wind That Blows	• COL	KC-32091	CA-32091	
	Listen To A Country Song	• COL	KC-31647	CA-31647		Solid Gold '68	RCA	LSP-3885	P8S-5056	At Folsom Prison	• COL	CS-9639	10-0404	
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	Top Of The World	• COL	KC-32429	CA-32429						Hymns From The Heart	• COL	CS-8522		
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She's In Love With A Rodeo Man	RCA	APL1-0542			Hank Snow Sings Your Favorite Country Hits	RCA	LSP-3317	P8S-1041		Mel Tillis And The Statesiders On Stage At The Birmingham Municipal Auditorium	MGM	SE-4889	M8G-4889	
Rednecks, White Socks And Blue Ribbon Beer	RCA	APL1-0345	ASP1-0345		Hank Snow Sings In Memory Of Jimmie Rodgers (America's Blue Yodeler)	RCA	LSP-4306	P8S-1565		I Ain't Never/Neon Rose	MGM	SE-4870	M8G-4870	
SCRUGGS, EARL					SOUTH, JOE					TONI AND TERRY				
Earl Scruggs Revue	• COL	KC-3246	CA-32426		Joe South's Greatest Hits	CAP	ST-450			My Hand (With Sherry Bryce)	MGM	SE-4800		
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Him Family And Friends (With Baez, Dylan, Byrds)	• COL	C30584	CT-30584		Jim Stafford	MGM	SE-4947	M8G-4947		The Award Winners	MGM	SE-4775		
I Saw The Light (With Linda Ronstadt)	• COL	KC-31354	CA-31354		STAMPLEY, JOE					CROSS-COUNTRY				
Live At Kansas State	• COL	KC-31758	CA-31758		If You Touch Me (You've Got To Love Me)	DOT	DOS 26002	26002M			CAP	ST-11137	8XT-11137	
Nashville's Rock	• COL	CS-1007			Soul Song	DOT	DOS 26007	26007M		SONS OF THE PIONEERS				
Where The Lilies Bloom	• COL	KC-32806	EA-32806		I'm Still Loving You	DOT	DOS 26020	26020M		Cool Water	RCA	LSP-2118	P8S-1062	
Anniversary Special Vol 1	• COL	PC-33416	PCA-33416		STATLER BROTHERS, THE					THE AWARD WINNERS				
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					Country Music Then And Now	MER	SR 61358	MC8-61358		Stamp Them Grapes	MGM	SE-4960	M8H-4960	
					The Statler Brothers Sing Country Symphonies In E Major	MER	SR 61367	MC8-61367		Mel Tillis' Greatest Hits	MCA	MCA-66	MCAT-66	
					Thank You World	MER	SR 61374	MC8-61374		Mel Tillis & Bob Willis "In Person"	MCA	MCA-550		
					The Big Hits	• COL	CS-9519	MC81-707		Mel Tillis & The Statesiders	MGM	M3G-4987	M8G-4987	
					Flowers On The Wall	• COL	CS-9249			TONY AND THE GLASER BROTHERS				
					The World Of The Statler Brothers	• COL	KG-31557	GA-31557		Charlie	MGM	SE-4918		
					The Best Of The Statler Bros.	MER	SRM1-1037	MG8-1-1037		Greatest Hits	MGM	SE-4946	M8G-4946	
					STAGGALL, RED					TASK, DIANA				
					Somewhere My Love	CAP	ST-11162	8XT-11162		Miss Country Soul	DOT	DLP 25920		
					If You've Got The Time	CAP	ST-11228	8XT-11228		From The Heart	DOT	DLP 25957		
					STREET, MEL					TERRI AND TERRY				
					Smokey Mountain Memories	GRT	8004	8185-8004		Diana's Country	DOT	DOS 25989		
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					Take Time To Love Her/ I Used It All On You	RCA	APD1-0080	APSI-0080		Lean It All On Me	DOT	DOS 26016	26016M	
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										Can She Stand				
										I Wonder What She'll Think				
										About Me Leaving				
										Look Into My Teardrops				
										Conway Twitty Country				
										Darling, You Know I Wouldn't Lie				
										I Can't See Me Without You				
										Greatest Hits, Vol. 1				
										Linda On My Mind				
										Feelins' (With Loretta Lynn)				
										The High Priest of Country Music				

Artist	Title	Label	LP No.	8-Track Tape No.	Artist	Title	Label	LP No.	8-Track Tape No.	Artist	Title	Label	LP No.	8-Track Tape No.
I Can't Stop Loving You/Lost Her Love On Our First Date	MCA	MCA-53	MCAT-53	WEST, DOTTIE	The Best Of Dottie West	RCA	LSP-4811	P8S-2098	The History Of Bob Wills And The Texas Playboys	MGM	SE-4866	M8G-4866		
She Needs Someone To Hold Her	MCA	MCA-303	MCAT-303	Country Sunshine	RCA	APL1-0344	APS1-0344	Greatest String Band Hits	MCA	MCA-152	MCAT-152			
Only Make Believe (With Loretta Lynn)	MCA	MCA-8	MCAT-8	House Of Love	RCA	APL1-0543	APS1-0543	The Best Of Bob Wills	MCA	MCA-153	MCAT-153			
Lead Me On	MCA	MCA-9	MCAT-9	WHITMAN, SLIM	I'll Walk With God	UA	LP-12032	Bob Wills And His Texas Playboys	MCA	MCA-526				
Louisiana Woman—Mississippi Man (With Loretta Lynn)	MCA	MCA-335	MCAT-335	Country Hits, Vol. II	UA	LP-12100		King Of Western Swing	MCA	MCA-543	MCAT-543			
Clinging To A Saving Hand/Steal Away	MCA	MCA-376	MCAT-376	Song Of The Old Waterwheel	UA	LP-12102		Time Changes Everything	MCA	MCA-545	MCAT-545			
You've Never Been This Far Before/Baby's Gone	MCA	MCA-359	MCAT-359	Yodeling	UA	LP-12235		The Living Legend	MCA	MCA-546	MCAT-546			
Honky Tonk Angel	MCA	MCA-406	MCAT-406	Irish Songs	UA	LP-12245		Mel Tillis & Bob Wills "In Person"	MCA	MCA-550				
VAN DYKE, CONNIE				Love Song Of The Waterfall	UA	LP-12277		WILLS, BOB						
Connie Van Dyke Sings For You	DOT	DOSD-2019	DOSD-2019M	15th Anniversary Album	UA	LP-12342		Sings And Plays	UA	LST-7303				
WAGONER, PORTER				It's A Sin To Tell A Lie	UA	UAS-6819	U8327	WILLS, BOB AND DUNCAN, TOMMY						
The Best Of Porter Wagoner And Dolly Parton	RCA	LSP-4556	P8S-1770	Best Of Slim Whitman, Vol. II	UA	UAS-6832	U8458	Together Again	UA	LST-7173				
Tore Down	RCA	APL1-0496	APS1-0496	I'll See You When The Very Best Of	UA	UAUA046G	UAE046G	A Living Legend	UA	LST-7182				
I'll Keep On Lovin' You	RCA	APL1-0142	APS1-0142	WILBURN BROTHERS, THE				Mr. Words And Music	UA	LST-7194				
Love And Music (With Dolly Parton)	RCA	APL1-0248	APS1-0248	Take Up Thy Cross	MCA	MCA-217		Hall Of Fame	UA	UAS-9962	04032			
The Farmer	RCA	APL1-0346	APS1-0346	A Portrait	MCA	MCA2-4011	MCAT2-4011	WILSON, JUSTIN						
Porter 'N Dolly	RCA	APL1-0646	APS1-0646	WILLIAMS, HANK				I Gawr-On-Tee	CAP	DT-5008				
Sing Some Love Songs	RCA	APL1-1056	APS1-1056	14 More Of Hank Williams' Greatest Hits, Vol. 3	MGM	SE-4140		Wilsonville U.S. And A. The "Wondermus" Humor Of Justin Wilson	CAP	DT-5010				
WALKER, BILLY				The Very Best Of Hank Williams	MGM	SE-4168	M8G-4168	Just Wilson Says, "Me, I Got A Frien'!"	CAP	DT-5011				
All Time Greatest Hits	MGM	SE-4887	M8G-4887	Insights Into Hank Williams In Song And Story	MGM	M3HB 4975		Whooooo Boy	CAP	DT-5039				
The Billy Walker Show (With The Mike Curb Congregation)	MGM	SE-4863		The Very Best, Vol. 2	MGM	SE-4227		How Ya'll Are Across The U.S. & A. Humorous World Of Justin Wilson	CAP	ST-5090				
The Mike Curb Congregation)	MGM	SE-4938	M8G-4938	Lost Highway And Other Folk Ballads	MGM	SE-4254			CAP	ST-5179				
Too Many Memories	MGM	SE-4908		Hank Williams Sings I Saw The Light	MGM	SE-3331			CAP	ST-5183				
The Hand Of Love	MGM	SE-4908		The Unforgettable Hank Williams	MGM	SE-3733		WISEMAN, MAC						
WALKER, CHARLIE				The Legend Lives Anew Again	MGM	SE-4377		Concert Favorites	RCA		P8S-2128			
Break Out The Bottle—Bring On The Music	RCA	APL1-0181	APS1-0181	Luke The Drifter	MGM	SE-4378		WRIGHT, JOHNNY						
WALKER, JERRY JEFF				I Won't Be Home No More	MGM	SE-4481		Heart Warming Gospel Songs (With Kitty Wells)	MCA	MCA-142	MCAT-142			
Viva Terlingua	MCA	MCA-382	MCAT-382	The Essential Hank Williams	MGM	SE-4651								
WALLACE, JERRY				Life To Legend	MGM	SE-4680	M8G-4680	WYNETTE, TAMMY						
This Is Jerry Wallace	MCA	MCA-2	MCAT-2	24 Of Hank Williams' Greatest Hits	MGM	SE-4755-2	M8G-4755	Bedtime Story	EPI	KE 31285	EA-31285			
To Get To You	MCA	MCA-50	MCAT-50	Hank Williams/Hank Williams Jr.—The Legend Of Hank Williams In Song And Story	MGM	SE-4755-2	M8G-4755	Divorce	COL	BN 26392	N18-10124			
Do You Know What It's Like To Be Lonesome	MCA	MCA-301	MCAT-301	Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits	MGM	SE-4755-2	M8G-4755	The First Songs Of First Lady	COL	KEG-30358	EGA-30358			
Primrose Lane	MCA	MCA-366	MCAT-366	Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits	MGM	SE-4755-2	M8G-4755	Greatest Hits	COL	BN-26846	N18-10230			
For Wives & Lovers	MCA	MCA-408	MCAT-408	Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits Vol. II	MGM	2SES-4865		Greatest Hits Vol. 2	COL	E-30733	EA-30733			
Greatest Hits	MGM	M3G-4990	M8G-4990	Eleven Roses	MGM	SE-3918	M8G-3918	Inspiration	COL	BN-26423	N18-10156			
Comin' Home To You	MGM	M3G-4995	M8G-4995	Send Me Some Lovin' /Whole Lot Of Loving (With Lois Johnson)	MGM	SE-3955		Kids Say The Darndest Things	EPI	KE-31937	EA-31937			
WATSON, DOC				The Spirit Of Hank Williams	MGM	M3G-4991		Let's Build A World Together (With George Jones)	EPI	KE-32113				
Elementary, Dr. Watson	UA	PSY-5703	11103	A Home In Heaven	MGM	M3G-4991		Me And The First Lady (With George Jones)	EPI	KE-31554	EA-31544			
Then And Now	UA	PP-LA022G	PP-EA022G	WILLIAMS, HANK JR.				My Man	EPI	KE-31717	EA-31717			
Two Days In November	UA	PP-LA210G	PP-EA210G	Hank Williams Life Story—Music From The Motion Picture "Your Cheatin' Heart"	MGM	SE-4260		Stand By Your Man	COL	BN-26451	N18-01718			
WAYNE, JOHN				The Best Of Hank Williams Jr.	MGM	SE-4513		Woman To Woman	COL	KE-33246	N18-10084			
America, Why I Love Her	RCA	LSP-4828	P8S-2112	A Time To Sing	MGM	SE-4540		Take Me To Your World	COL	BN-26353	N18-10264			
WELLER, FREDDY				Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits	MGM	SE-4656	M8G-4656	Tammy's Touch	COL	BN-26549	N18-10252			
Too Much Monkey Business	COL	KC-32218	CA-32218	Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits Vol. II	MGM	SE-4656	M8G-4656	The Ways To Love A Man	COL	BN-26519				
The Roadmaster	COL	KC-31769	CA-31769	Eleven Roses	MGM	SE-4822		We Go Together (With George Jones)	EPI	KE-30802	EA-30802			
Sexy Lady	COL	KC-32958	CA-32958	Send Me Some Lovin' /Whole Lot Of Loving (With Lois Johnson)	MGM	SE-4843	M8G-4843	We Love To Sing About Jesus (With George Jones)	EPI	KE-31719				
Freddy Weller	ABC	DOSD-2026	DOSD-2026M	The Last Love Song	MGM	SE-4857	M8G-4857	The World Of Tammy Wynette	COL	EGP-503	N88-10270			
WELLS, KITTY				After You Archetypes	MGM	SE-4862	M8G-4936	Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad	COL	BN-26305	N18-10042			
Greatest Hits	MCA	MCA-121	MCAT-121	Bocephus	MGM	M3G-4954	M8G-4954	We're Gonna Hold On (With George Jones)	EPI	KE-32757	EA-32757			
Pledging My Love	MCA	MCA-296	MCAT-296	Again	MGM	M3G-4988	M8G-4988	Another Lonely Song	EPI	KE-32745	EA-32745			
Heart-Warming Gospel (With Johnny Wright) Songs	MCA	MCA-142	MCAT-142	WILLIAMS, HANK, JR. AND THE CHEATIN' HEARTS				YOUNG, FARON						
Sincerely	MCA	MCA-501	MCAT-501	Just Pickin'—No Singin'	MGM	SE-4906		The Best Of Faron Young And Sayin' Goodbye	MER	SR 61267	MC8-61267			
Dust On The Bible	MCA	MCA-149	MCAT-149	WILLIAMS, MENTOR				It's Four In The Morning	MER	SR 61354	MC8-61354			
Kitty Wells Story	MCA	MCA2-4031	MCAT2-4031	Feelings	MCA	MCA-404	MCAT-404	Just What I Had In Mind	MER	SR 61359	MC8-61359			
I've Got Yesterday	MCA	MCA-509	MCAT-509	BOB WILLS & THE TEXAS PLAYBOYS				Some Kind Of Woman	MER	SRM-1-674	MC8-1-674			
Yours Truly	MCA	MCA-330	MCAT-330	Anthology (2 records)	COL	KG-32416		VARIOUS ARTISTS						

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Buzz Busby & Leon Morris

Honkytonk Bluegrass
Rouder 0031 \$6.98
RT-0031 (tape) \$7.98

Like other forms of music, country music has entertainers who live a kind of shadowy existence, unknown to the general public, but admired by a small circle of fans and other musicians. Fate, circumstance, or perhaps a tragic law in the entertainer him-

HONKYTONK BLUEGRASS



Buzz Busby and Leon Morris

self, prevents him from being either rewarded or recognized. Such is the case of Buzz Busby, born Bernarr Busbice in Monroe, Louisiana, a fine, sensitive singer and a dynamic, inventive mandolin player who has been too rarely recorded.

The liner notes obliquely depict Busby as a tragic figure, a highly gifted and intelligent man whose life and career have been wasted by periodic brushes with the law and confinement in prison. The most melancholy statement in the notes is one which casually mentions that at the time of the album's re-

lease, Busby was once again in trouble with the law.

The album is misnamed; it does not represent the fusion of two divergent strains of country music. The honky-tonk designation may come from the fact that some of the songs, such as "Me and the Jukebox" (probably Busby's best known song) and George Jones's "Life To Go," suggest the dancehall world or a set of values supposedly alien to the domestic image that bluegrass partisans have of themselves. Busby's music, rather, is good, clear, classically pure country music, and it's my favorite album of the year.

There are a few instrumental cuts, essentially reworkings of old songs like "Listen to the Mockingbird," but the main strength of the collection lies in the vocal renditions. Most of the songs reflect Busby's unhappy personal experiences and his own tragic conception of life. "At the End," for example, is a song of unrelieved despair, while "I Stood on the Bridge at Midnight" is a beautiful, haunting song of loneliness, almost suicidal in tone.

But as interesting as the songs might be, it is the singing which makes this an outstanding album. Busby teams up with Canadian-born singer and guitarist Leon Morris on most of the songs to produce some of the best duet singing you're going to hear anywhere. Morris is a very capable singer in his own right, and, like Busby, has long been part of the flourishing bluegrass scene in and around Washington, D.C. I just can't say enough about this album. I wish only that Busby could put his personal life in some kind of order, because the whole world needs to become acquainted with his talent.

BILL C. MALONE

Moe Bandy

Bandy the Rodeo Clown
GRC GA-10016 \$6.98
8T-G-10016 \$7.98

Talk about your honky-tonk heroes. Three albums on, Moe Bandy sounds stronger than ever.

That's not just a convenient expression of speech, either. This is another LP of gutsy East Texas boozing and dancing music. There are no fancy strings, the use of vocal chorus is restrained, and arrangements



are refreshingly uncluttered—just hard, clean country music pared down to the essentials. That's Moe's style, and there's no reason for him to change it.

The songs on *Bandy the Rodeo Clown* have the same brooding themes as before, but the arrangements on the whole are a little perkier. Moe's vocals are more expansive and more expressive. He seems to have settled fully into his style, so fully that he can even take a few liberties with it.

That Texas moan of a voice has developed a most welcome bluesy edge heard best on "Somewhere There's a Woman," "Stop and Get Up," and especially the haunting "I Sure Don't Need That Memory Tonight." The loping Western rhythm and Spanish guitar of "Bandy the Rodeo Clown" and the swirling Cajun fiddles of "Fais Do Do" add some spice to the basic Bandy style. But

the capper is his version of "Oh Lonesome Me." Its tricky rockish intro and instrumental break are nice enough, but Bandy sings the sweet Jesus out of this song; I'd rate it one of his very best performances.

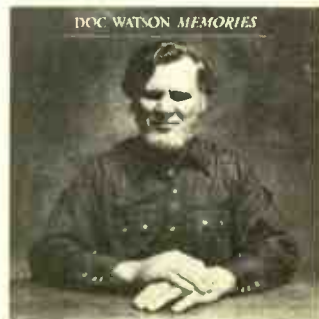
Bandy is seldom hurting for good songs, but that's understandable. By now, writers must be lining up at his door. He's got an impressive collection of new (and old) material here, and he does it all justice. There are those who would try to tell you that this kind of music is obsolete, but if that's true I'd sure like to know why his records invariably spend more time on my turntable than anyone else's, and why he continues to have hit after hit after hit. In the hands of a master, nothing is obsolete.

JOHN MORTHLAND

Doc Watson

Memories
United Artists UA-LA423-H2
\$7.98
UA-EA423-H2 (tape) \$8.98

The harnessing of virtuosity is a problem for many skilled artists. Some, feeling trapped in their indigenous medium, produce efforts in other musical forms, undertakings born



of exploration that usually die of gimmickry.

Doc Watson has never locked horns with the gotta-broaden-my-horizons problem. Ever since he was discov-

ered on a Carolina field trip by Ralph Rinzler some fifteen years ago. Doc's growth has been vertical rather than horizontal. He has grown within his own framework, rather than picking up his clear as a mountain stream guitar and trying to speak in alien yet commercially lucrative tongues. True, the Union Gapper has shared vinyl with Nitty Gritty, but momentary folly does not a sinner make.

Like *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, this is a stab at Folklore. Yet while *Circle* is at best a folk-country all-star game (three innings and go to the bench), the four sides afforded Doc and band on *Memories* is a large enough laboratory for the mixings of Doc's many talents.

The sightless picker's legendary skills are combined in several different beakers: honky blues ("Wake Up, Little Maggie"), fiddle-flattop transposition ("Double File and Salt Creek"), bluegrass ("My Rose of Old Kentucky"), swing ("Hang Your Head in Shame"), and even round-robin hilltop jamming ("Mama Don't Allow No Music").

The definite, encyclopedic Doc Watson.

RUSSELL SHAW

James Talley

Got No Bread, No Milk, No Money, But We Sure Got a Lot of Love

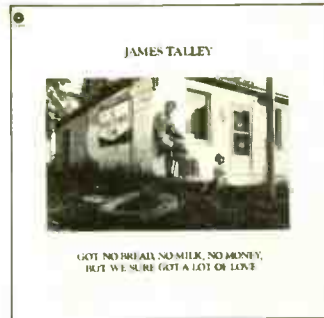
Capitol ST-11416 \$6.98

85T-11416 (tape) \$7.98

The music some people are still calling progressive country is a strange blend. While some of it can be considered avant-garde, like Willie Nelson's *Red Headed Stranger*, some of it is just plain reactionary, an almost literal redoing of earlier forms. I've had a hard time raking up much interest in that kind of music. I figure Bob Wills did "Take Me Back To Tulsa," and I'm not likely to buy any covers of it, either old or new.

I first tended to think this album was reactionary. While it contained no covers as such, it seemed to be in that same spirit. But even then, I was

knocked out by one fine song (and the closest to a cover), a rewriting of "Red River Valley" called "Red River Memory." It's a plaintive, articulate mourning for the past, and I've spent such an inordinate amount of my own time mourn-



ing for the past that I quickly recognized the real thing.

When I first heard the album it had not been picked up by Capitol and was still on Talley's own Torreon label, which had been financed, production and pressing, by his carpentry and construction work. I was intrigued by the labor and commitment he'd put into getting the record out. Partly because of that, and because I liked "Red River Memory" so much. I listened to the album a lot.

I began to realize I had on my hands not just a recreation of past musical styles, but an explanation of why he chose to recreate them. It's something of a concept album, though not quite so tight as *Red Headed Stranger*. The past it harks back to is the Depression era (James Talley is immersed in the Depression and its poets).

The album opens with "W. Lee O'Daniel and the Light Crust Dough Boys," which is about going to Tulsa to hear the future Texas governor play. It's snappy enough to cause some jumping and high-stepping, but at the same time it's an honest evocation of that late Depression period, both musically and lyrically.

Talley is a literary individual (the author of at least one unpublished book, he was once in a graduate American Studies program). He knows what he's doing. Musically, this is a successful album, and, because

of the intelligence that went into its formulation, it is one of the very few progressive country albums, progressive in the real sense of the word.

ROXY GORDON

Joe Stampley

Greatest Hits, Vol. I

ABC-Dot DOSD-2023 \$6.98

DOSD-8-2023 (tape) \$7.95

I'm not saying that Joe Stampley is the best thing to happen to country music since Hank Williams. I doubt if he'll be setting many new trends, and I don't expect to ever see his mod shirts hanging in the Country Music Hall of Fame. But for a couple of years now, Stampley's been cutting consistently solid singles, and when you put them all together, you come up with an indisputably solid album.

Actually, there are lots of singers like Joe Stampley out there working the state fairs and high school auditoriums. They deliver mainstream country music, and they can continue working that circuit for just as long as they deliver the goods. They don't have the distinct identities of superstars, and when their records come on the radio, you don't always recognize instantly whose voice it is (though it often sounds similar to one of the big guns—Stampley's singing reminds me of Conway Twitty). Now and then, they're given exceptional material (like "Soul Song"), and it sells accordingly. More often they score with a song ultimately



associated with a headliner, and it doesn't really matter who did it first. "Too Far Gone" and "If You Touch Me (You've Got To Love Me)" are exam-

ples. A similar route involves reviving an old pop hit, like soul singer Percy Sledge's "Take Time To Know Her."

Ask five different people their favorite singer in this category and you'll probably get five different answers. (If everyone agreed, after all, we'd be talking about a much bigger star.) Stampley is one I'd vote for. Producer Norro Wilson is a little too heavy-handed with the strings, and there's one outright clunker here in "Penny," but this album is as comfortable as a pair of well worn boots. So three cheers for the journeyman pro.

JOHN MORTHLAND

Glen Campbell

Rhinestone Cowboy

Capitol SW-11430 \$6.98

8XW-11430 (tape) \$7.98

Rhinestone Cowboy is basic Glen Campbell. Catchy, down-to-earth tunes, selling backups, and the familiar sugary voice. But this time around, there's an irritating catch. The tunes are pushy pop. They scream for the top of the charts with too much chorus and cooing and not enough song.



Except for one or two love songs, most of the tunes take their cue from the title cut. Campbell sings about down and out country boys, the usual assortment of drunks and losers, and about successful guys like himself who long for the good old days back on the farm.

None of the songs are exceptional; a few are disappointing. Some sound like a combination of everything we've heard come over the car radio in the last few years.

One, Johnny Cunningham's "Pencils for Sale," is suspiciously set to the tune of Jerry Jeff Walker's incomparable "Mr. Bojangles." The only real high is a sensitive, no-

gimmick version of Randy Newman's "Marie."

Most everything Glen Campbell does is competent, and this is no exception. It's not inspired, but it's slick. Campbell didn't choose material to stretch his abilities; instead of aiming for the knockout with real feelings, he settled for formulaic mediocrity. So, instead of being something special, the album comes across like a tired alternate score for *Midnight Cowboy*.

NANCY NAGLIN

"Salty Dog Blues" is given a juicy treatment, and Bob Morrison's "Stone Crazy" is a cinch to be Freddy's next single. Chris Gantry's "Three Legged Dog," the best cut on

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Connie & Babe	<i>Bluegrass</i>	(Rounder 0043)
*Buddy Emmons	<i>Steel Guitar</i>	(Flying Fish 007)
Billy Grammer	<i>Billy Grammer Plays</i>	(Stoneway STY-152)
Heartbeats	<i>Freddy Hart Presents the Heartbeats</i>	(Capitol ST-11431)
*George Jones	<i>The Best of the Best</i>	(RCA APL1-1113)
Last Mile Ramblers	<i>While They Last!</i>	(Blue Canyon BCS-406)
Lonzo & Oscar	<i>Traces of Life</i>	(GRC GA-10014)
Dale Miller	<i>Finger Picking Rags</i>	(Kicking Mule KM-123)
*Dolly Parton	<i>Best of Dolly Parton</i>	(RCA APL1-1117)
Jim Ringer	<i>Any Old Wind that Blows</i>	(Philo 1021)
*Statler Brothers	<i>The Best of the Statler Brothers</i>	(Mercury SRM-1-1037)
*Gary Stewart	<i>You're Not the Woman You Used To Be</i>	(MCA 488)

*Denotes recommended new releases



Freddy Weller

Freddy Weller
ABC DOSD-2026 \$6.98
DOSD-8-2026 (tape) \$7.95

You can dismiss all that talk about Freddy Weller's wheel rolling off the track when he parted with producer Billy Sherrill. Judging from his first ABC album, *Freddy Weller*, Atlanta's smooth talking, slow walking Roadmaster knew exactly what he was doing.

Gone are the puddles of orchestration that plagued Freddy's last Columbia sessions, and, on the surface, this set has enough going for it to please his legion of hard-core fans, and then some.

However, if we are to believe what the liner notes say about Freddy communicating through his music, we can assume a good deal of his thoughts direct themselves to the snuff queen factor. The message may be fornication (let's hear it for our national pastime), but Freddy's formula of cute lyrics and catchy phrases which worked with Elgin precision in the past, has taken on a ring of familiarity that is often both distracting and confusing.

It's virtually impossible to distinguish songs such as "Still Making Love to You," "That's You," and "Let's Get Back in Touch" from many of Weller's previous efforts, but, like I said, loyal fans are gonna eat this stuff up, and there's enough good things going on to satisfy us hardnoses.

the album, contracts a lifetime of emotion into less than three minutes of song. "Have You Ever Done It" is a ham-bone version of the Beatles' "Why Don't We Do It in the Road" that's guaranteed to get your feet off the linoleum and put a grin on your face.

It all makes for a fine, easy to listen to experience, and leaves no doubt that Freddy Weller knows more than anyone else that it's the skinny guys with hairy chests that get the girls. Go get 'em, Freddy.

ALVIN COOLEY

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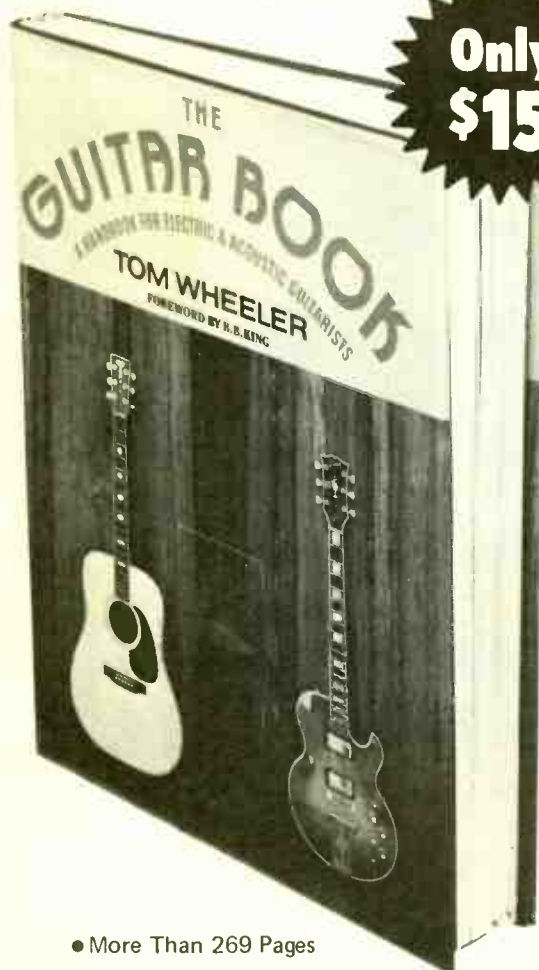


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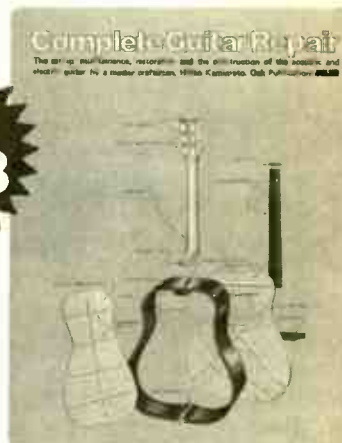
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(Continued from page 31)

ridiculous. At the start, Elvis sounded black to those who heard him; when they called him the Hillbilly Cat, they meant the white Negro. Or as Elvis put it, years later: "... made a record and when the record came out a lot of people liked it and you could hear folks around town saying, 'Is he, is he?' and I'm going, 'Am I, am I?'"

Well, I can't hear that anymore. I hear a young man, white as the whale, who was special because in his best music he was so much his own man, one who took the musical and emotional strengths of the blues as a natural and necessary part of the world he was building for himself—one part of that world, no more, but clearly the finest stuff around at the time.

Real white blues singers make something new out of the blues, as Jimmie Rodgers, Dock Boggs, Elvis and Bob Dylan have. For Elvis, the blues was a style of freedom, something he couldn't get in his own home, full of roles to play and rules to break. In the beginning the blues was more than anything else a fantasy, an epic of struggle and pleasure, that he lived out as he sang. Not a fantasy that went beneath the surface of his life, but one that soared right over it.

If Elvis drew power from black culture, he was not really imitating blacks: when he told Sam Phillips he didn't sing like nobody, he told the truth. No white man had so deeply absorbed black music, and transformed it, since Jimmie Rodgers; instead of following Rodgers's musical style, as so many good white singers had—Lefty Frizzell, Ernest Tubb, Tommy Duncan, and, in his more personal way, Hank Williams, following that style until it simply wore out—Elvis followed Rodgers' musical strategy and began the story all over again.

Elvis didn't have to exile himself from his own community in order to justify and make real his use of an outsider's culture (like the Jewish jazzman Mezz Mezzrow, who would claim that his years on the streets of Harlem had actually darkened his skin and thickened his lips; like Johnny Otis and so many real white Negroes); as a Southerner and white trash to boot, Elvis was already out-

side. In 1955 he had at least as much in common with Bobby Bland as he did with Perry Como. Which is to say that Elvis was also hellbent on the mainstream, and sure enough of himself to ignore the irony that it would be his version of the backdoor freedoms of black music that would attract the mainstream to him, giving him the chance to exchange his hillbilly strangeness for acceptability.

Elvis's blues were a personal Declaration of Independence and a set of sexual adventures, and as a blues-singing swashbuckler, his style owed as much to Errol Flynn as it did to Arthur Crudup. It made sense to make movies out of it.

Elvis's blues are music of drama, humor, escape, and risk; the country tunes are very different. At their most vital, they capture the kind of beauty and peace of mind that can be found only within limits, when a lot has been given up, and you know exactly how far you can go.

Elvis gives us respect—for the musical form, for the established country music audience these songs were aimed at, for his mother, who was sure to be listening to *this* music—in place of resentment and personal authority. The music flows with the kind of grace the Allman Brothers found in their incandescent "Blue Sky": a sense of value that seems to come not from a feel for the open possibilities of life, but from a pretty deep understanding of its fragility.

There is a modesty of spirit. In this world you will hope for what you deserve, but not demand it; you may celebrate your life, but not with the kind of liberation that might threaten the life of someone else. The public impulse of the music is not to break things open, but to confirm what is already there, to add to its reality and its value.

This is the kind of freedom D. H. Lawrence had in mind when he wrote about America in an essay called "The Spirit of Place."

Men are free when they are in a living homeland, not when they are straying and breaking away. Men are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying from within. Men are free when they belong to a living, organic, *believing* community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose. Not when they are escaping to some wild west. The most unfree souls go west, and shout of freedom. Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom. The shout is a

rattling of chains, always was.

Men are not free when they are doing just what they like. The moment you can do just what you like, there is nothing you care about doing.

So speaks the stern English father to his rowdy American children: it's not a message America has ever had much time for. We much prefer Elvis's shout of freedom, sure that what chains there are in our world must be applied by other men. Something close to Lawrence's idea, though, that sense of staying at home in a place where one belongs, is part of what Elvis has always offered America—on the flipside, as it were.

Elvis's country sides, like his later gospel records for RCA, reveal how deeply he felt a pull at odds with the explosions of his new rock 'n' roll and the frenzy of his first stage shows. They let us on the secret that his little blues drama of breaking loose could take on the extremes that gave it power because he knew he had a home to which he could always return: even as he set out to win his independence, he prepared his accommodation. The America that Elvis brings to life in this music grew out of his willingness to accept the limits of a community, and his desire for the pleasures of familiarity. It's a place of gentleness, and restraint.

Elvis was a rebel in the music that made him famous. But he knew, and has always told anyone willing to listen, how hard it is to break away, and how much you have to give up to make it—more than he has been willing to part with. So Elvis lives out his story by contradicting himself, and we join in when we take sides, or when we respond to the tension that contradiction creates. The liveliness of that tension is as evident in the best of Elvis's country sides as it is in his blues.

When Elvis sings Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky" as if he's going to jump right over it, he isn't, as has always been said, singing the blues on a country song, any more than he was really singing hillbilly on a blues with "That's All Right." What Elvis is doing is both more complex and more coherent.

When I listened to an early take of "Blue Moon of Kentucky" (on a rockably bootleg that includes studio dialogue as well as music), I heard Elvis lost in the song, touching each line gently, playfully, bringing every word to life. The singing is rough

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even though Elvis is clearly a long way past the first tries; Scotty Moore has trouble following the vocal. Scotty drops back, and then there is just Elvis, drawing out an unbelievably sensual portrait of his Southern landscape.

It sounds so primitive to me; music out of the Mississippi woods, a hundred years gone. Sam Phillips hears something else.

PHILLIPS: Fine, *fine*, man, hell, that's different!

That's a *pop* song now, little guy!
That's good!

SCOTTY MOORE: Too much vaseline!

Elvis laughs, nervously, proudly.

MOORE: I had it too!

ELVIS: Y'ain't just a-woofin'!

MOORE: (Imitating an eye-rolling black falsetto): Please, *please*, please—

ELVIS: What?

MOORE: *Damn*, nigger!

By the time Elvis reached the fast, confident version that appeared on the flip of his first record, most of the primitive feeling had disappeared, but not the vaseline; Elvis was celebrating a classic piece of white country music, but more than that he was celebrating himself. He was keeping the old song alive by bringing something new to it, pulling some life back into his community by telling an old story in a way that no one had heard before—and he was reaching beyond his community, with the “pop song” Sam Phillips knew he had to make.

There is a delight in adventure and novelty here that we can't touch with pure musicology: Elvis's affection for a song he's heard for years combined with the exuberance and satisfaction of a kid who's worked for months to make a record, and who is now actually pulling it off. And there are the rhythms of “That's All Right,” cut a few nights before—not “blues” now, but Elvis's music, Scotty Moore's music—Southern energy that blacks had trapped and put into the air where anyone could get it.

Elvis could not have sung “Blue Moon of Kentucky” as he did without the discoveries of “That's All Right”—but what he discovered was not his ability to imitate a black blues singer, but the nerve to cross the borders he had been raised to respect. Once that was done, musical—ly those borders dissolved as if they

had never existed—for Elvis. He moved back and forth in a phrase. But Scotty Moore might well have been speaking for the audience waiting outside the studio when he called Elvis a nigger—for many, it was the *fact* of a white boy singing a black man's song without clothing it in fiddles and steel guitar that they heard, not the strange ambiguities of the music. Perhaps if Phillips had put out the “country” side without the “blues,” it would have warmed the community; the combination thrilled some and threatened others. There were country stations that refused to play any Elvis records, no matter how white they seemed to be. He was too complicated, this Presley boy; you couldn't tell what he might be slipping over, could you?

Yet “You're a Heartbreaker,” another country side, is a masterpiece of reassurance. It is one of the most affecting records Elvis ever made; it gives us a young man who takes comfort, and pleasure, from a sure sense of all that he has to fall back on when something goes wrong: his self-respect (the rounded edge of the new superiority of the blues-boy); the steady, ongoing patterns of life that never range too far in one direction or the other. If the impulses of community were at odds with the extremes of Southern life, here Elvis captures the soul of the one just as he acted out the other side. It is a tribute to his range and his honesty that he can do this without making one feel he is offering less than the whole story.

“I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone” brings together a superb vocal, an unforgettably clear guitar solo, and a good rhythm—no rave-up, but just over the line into rock 'n roll. There is a happy ending—Elvis finds a new girl—and maybe that's the real clue to these sides. Everything works out, in the lyrics, in the music (even the guitar parts are neatly resolved, while those in the blues tempt chaos), in the commercial and cultural context the singer can take as close to a given. What is missing is the suspense of a man creating himself, by the pure force of his will and desire, that one can hear in Elvis's blues.

There is an alternate version of “I'm Left,” usually called “My Baby Is Gone,” that shows how naturally Elvis's flair for this kind of material evolved into his later—and present-day—ballad style. All the manner-

isms are there. The performance is stunning: every line is measured out as if it costs the singer his soul to confess his loss. Elvis drops down so low on the scale he can barely get the words out; he blows up the subtleties of his phrasing into shameless melodrama, and it works. The song tells us what Elvis was after and where he was going as well as anything. The tune was written as a conventional country tear-jerker, but in this version Elvis stepped gently away from his community even as he gave that community something it could accept: a Hollywood movie, a Valentino love scene complete with heavy breathing.

This music is good enough, committed enough, to make you almost forget Elvis's Wild West. He played both ends against the middle; in the good moments, he escaped the deadening artistic compromise the middle demands. This seems to have worked because both sides of his character, at this point in his career, were pulling so hard.

The problem was that the shallowness of the poorest of the music that captured Elvis's restraint, and the in-offensiveness of the best of it, opened up the I Walked Like a Zombie saga that Elvis would act out in the long years before his comeback in 1968—a saga that, in a much more extravagant way, he acts out today.

Elvis was very comfortable with his country music, and with the romantic ballads that were its mainstream equivalent; so were his first teenage fans. This was mother's milk; the responses the music elicited were virtually automatic. Elvis's ability to sing this music and to like it—to put it across without lying to himself or to anyone else—would never have brought him fame nor burst any limits. But that ability was crucial to his power to hold onto his success, and to keep at least that part of his original audience (and to attract so many more) who didn't grow with the musical culture Elvis founded: those who, all through the sixties, lived in an America that was ignored or damned by the Rolling Stones and the counterculture; those who put the endless movies into the black; who made the soundtrack to *Blue Hawaii* the best-selling Elvis album of all (over 5 million copies at last count); those who bought reassurance tinged with a memory of excitement and independence. When all this proved too dull and predictable even for Elvis—when

he came roaring out in the explosion of vitality and commitment that was his comeback (returning, then, as a King of Rock 'n' Roll who was also a definitive Middle American)—there were plenty from every sort of white rock 'n' roll audience who were glad to leave whatever they had made of the sixties behind and join him in his pageant. Elvis's accommodations, all larger than life, and brilliantly orchestrated on stage to preserve the thrills that were once discovered in his blues, make a very glamorous home for our own retreats.

The country sides, the later music that derived from them, the shining acceptance of the great stage show, give us the contradictions that have kept pace with rock 'n' roll from the beginning (contradictions that are, of course, much bigger than the music): The desire of the rebel to conform; the wish for quiet despite allegiance to an ideology of noise; the need for rest after excitement; the retreat that replaces ambition, be that ambition personal, cultural, or political. But this aesthetic—of rest, of quiet, of retreat—so convincing in those first country records, grows easily into a

riskless aesthetic of smooth-it-away. Breaking loose and starting over cost more every time, and in the America that Elvis has come to symbolize so powerfully, in an America that only wants to applaud, to say Yes and mean it, the risks are hard to find.

These days, Elvis is always singing. In his stage-show documentary, *Elvis on Tour*, we see him singing to himself, in limousines, backstage, running, walking, standing still, as his servant fits his cape to his shoulders, as he waits for his cue. He sings gospel music, mostly; in his private musical world, there is no distance at all from his deepest roots. Just as that personal culture of the Sun records was long ago blown up into something too big for Elvis to keep as his own, so the shared culture of country religion is now his private space within the greater America of which he has become a part.

And on stage? Well, there are those moments when Elvis Presley breaks through the public world he has made for himself, and only a fool or a liar would deny their power.

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It might be that time when he sings "How Great Thou Art" with all the faith of a backwoods Jonathan Edwards; it might be at the very end of the night, when he closes his show with "I Can't Help Falling in Love With You," and his song takes on a glow that might make you feel his capacity for affection is all but superhuman. Whatever it is, it will be music that excludes no one, and still passes on something valuable to everyone who is there. It is as if the America that Elvis throws away for most of his performance can be given life again at will.

At his best Elvis not only embodies but personalizes so much of what is good about this place: a delight in sex that is sometimes simple, sometimes complex, but always open; a love of roots and a respect for the past; a rejection of the past and a

demand for novelty; the kind of racial harmony that for Elvis, a white man, means a profound affinity with the most subtle nuances of black culture combined with an equally profound understanding of his own whiteness; a burning desire to get rich, and to have fun; a natural affection for big cars, flashy clothes, for the symbols of status that give pleasure both as symbols, and on their own terms. Elvis has long since become one of those symbols himself.

Elvis has survived the contradictions of his career, perhaps because there is so much room and so much mystery in Herman Melville's most telling comment on this country: "The Declaration of Independence makes a difference." Elvis takes his strength from the liberating arrogance, pride, and the claim to be unique that grow out of a rich and commonplace understanding of what "democracy" and "equality" are all about: No man is better than I am. He takes his strength as well from the humility, the piety, and the open, self-effacing good humor that spring from the same source: I am better than no man. And so Elvis Presley's career defines success in a democracy that can perhaps recognize itself best in its popular culture: no limits, success so grand and complete it is nearly impossible for him to perceive anything more worth striving for. But there is a horror to this utopia—and one might think that the great moments Elvis still finds are his refusal of all that he can have without struggling. Elvis proves then that the myth of supremacy for which his audience will settle cannot contain him; he is, these moments show, far greater than that.

So perhaps that old rhythm of the Sun records does play itself out, even now. Elvis has gone to the greatest extremes: he has given us an America that is dead, and an unmatched version of an America that is full of life.

All in all, there is only one remaining moment I want to see; one epiphany that would somehow bring his story home. Elvis would take the stage, as he always has; the roar of the audience would surround him, as it always will. After a time, he would begin a song by Bob Dylan. Singing slowly, Elvis would give it everything he has. "I must have been mad," he would cry. "I didn't know what I had—Until I threw it all away."

And then, with love in his heart, he would laugh. ■

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Lefty Frizzell

(Continued from page 42)

was at Hickory, I've worked with Roy Orbison—people who really are the creators of vocal styles, and Lefty's one of these. It's very exciting to work with performers like that. I know, when we'd finished the first album, *The Legendary Lefty Frizzell*, he listened to it and he cried—openly—he was just overcome that it could be that good."

I remember one of those last nights with Lefty, when he was talking about the writing he was doing.

"Dallas has a place up there on the farm—no telephone—you go up there and it's a beautiful thing," he was saying. "It happened to me. To write with Doodle would be a beautiful feeling, to write with Dallas would be an experience. I love 'em all, we're all very close. It's a love I don't believe anyone's ever written a song about. You don't write from the mind, you write from the heart-beat. With the hardships in the lives we've lived, things that happened come to mind, to heart. You look off so nobody will see a teardrop or you choke up and can't speak.

"Sometimes, the only way you can express your feelings is in the form of a song. But you're still trying to get how you feel across to someone you love.

"When I sing, to me every word has a feeling about it. I had to linger, had to hold it, I didn't want to let go of it. I want to hold one word through a whole line of melody, to linger with it all the way down. I didn't want to let go of that no more than I wanted to let go of the woman I loved. I didn't want to lose it.

"And you've finally brought out the truth of it. Who wants to let go of something they love? I linger with it and ride it all the way down and still hang on to it—linger with it because it's gonna leave quick enough.

"For years I've been saying 'I love you, I love you, I love you.' Sometimes it takes a long time so you can go through life not being understood. Some people can't talk and express themselves, with me expression comes in the form of a song, and it makes me very happy. So I'd lose my blues, hang on to what little I had, and it became a style.

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BENTON MURAL

(Continued from page 33)

player, fiddlers, hymn singers, and square dancers represent the Anglo-American folk culture which underlies country performance. The black musician represents the impact of Afro-American culture, and the singing cowboy, the train, and the riverboat depict the influences of occupation and technology upon the themes of country songs. The prominence of the cowboy singer reveals the importance of the Western image throughout country music, and also stands as a reminder that the painting is dedicated to Tex Ritter, who died during the time Benton was working on the mural. Tex and veteran record producer Joe Allison were the first two individuals to urge the Country Music Foundation to commission the work from Benton.

The mural—varnished after the artist's death but still unsigned—was unveiled on July 8th at the Coun-

try Music Hall of Fame and Museum, with Frank M. Jones, President of Capitol Records and Chairman of the Board of the Country Music Foundation, presiding over the ceremonies. Jones noted that "The Country Music Hall of Fame is not a fine art museum . . . but the artist's knowledge of his subject makes this work an important contribution to the museum's educational efforts." Jones continued: "The presence of this work will increase the ability of this institution to communicate with the American public."

Jones also noted the fact that Thomas Hart Benton was himself a musician who played his beloved harmonica on a daily basis. In fact, Benton was a recording artist. It is a little-known fact that he once recorded six cuts for Decca Records. Recorded in New York City, the sessions were released as a 78rpm set under the title "Saturday Night at Tom Benton's" (Decca 331).

Though the painting has been installed in a permanent manner, it will remain in its present location—in a stairwell towards the rear of the Hall of Fame building—little

more than a year. Bill Ivey, Country Music Foundation executive director, noted that "The Museum will be involved in a million-dollar expansion program within the next few months, and the mural will have a new home." The expansion will double the size of the Hall of Fame and Museum, and "The Sources of Country Music" will hang in its own specially-designed area.

The six-by-ten-foot mural was Benton's last work, but it may also have been his masterpiece. Though the artist's style changed dramatically over the course of his long career, by the middle 1930s his work had moved toward a "realistic" style often associated with the American Regionalist school of painting. That is, Benton drew heavily upon the traditional folk painting styles of "unknown" backwoods artists during the latter part of his career. Though his major works have often been the cause for artistic (and political) debate, they always reflected his close ties to the people of the land. In "The Sources of Country Music" he found the ideal expression of a lifelong romance with his roots. ■

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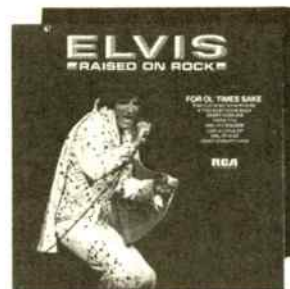
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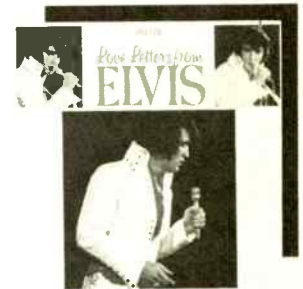
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I have checked my choices: A B C D

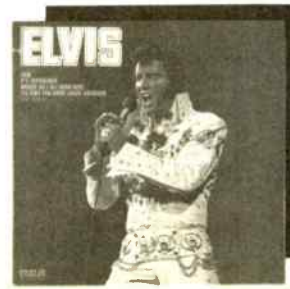
New York State residents add sales tax. Canadian and all other foreign orders add an extra \$2.50 postage.



RAISED ON ROCK A



LOVE LETTERS FROM ELVIS B

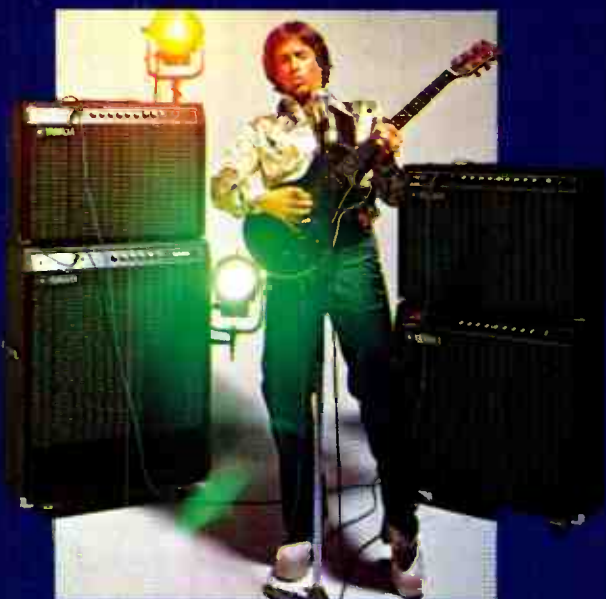


ELVIS C

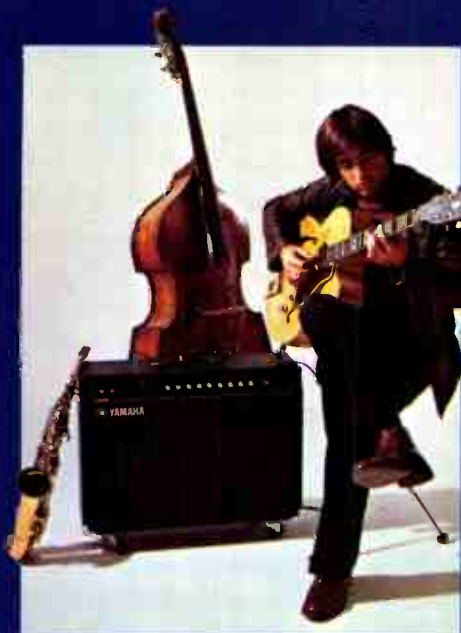


HE TOUCHED ME D

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Take care of business from Newport to Monterey. Because Yamaha's built for traveling from gig to gig.



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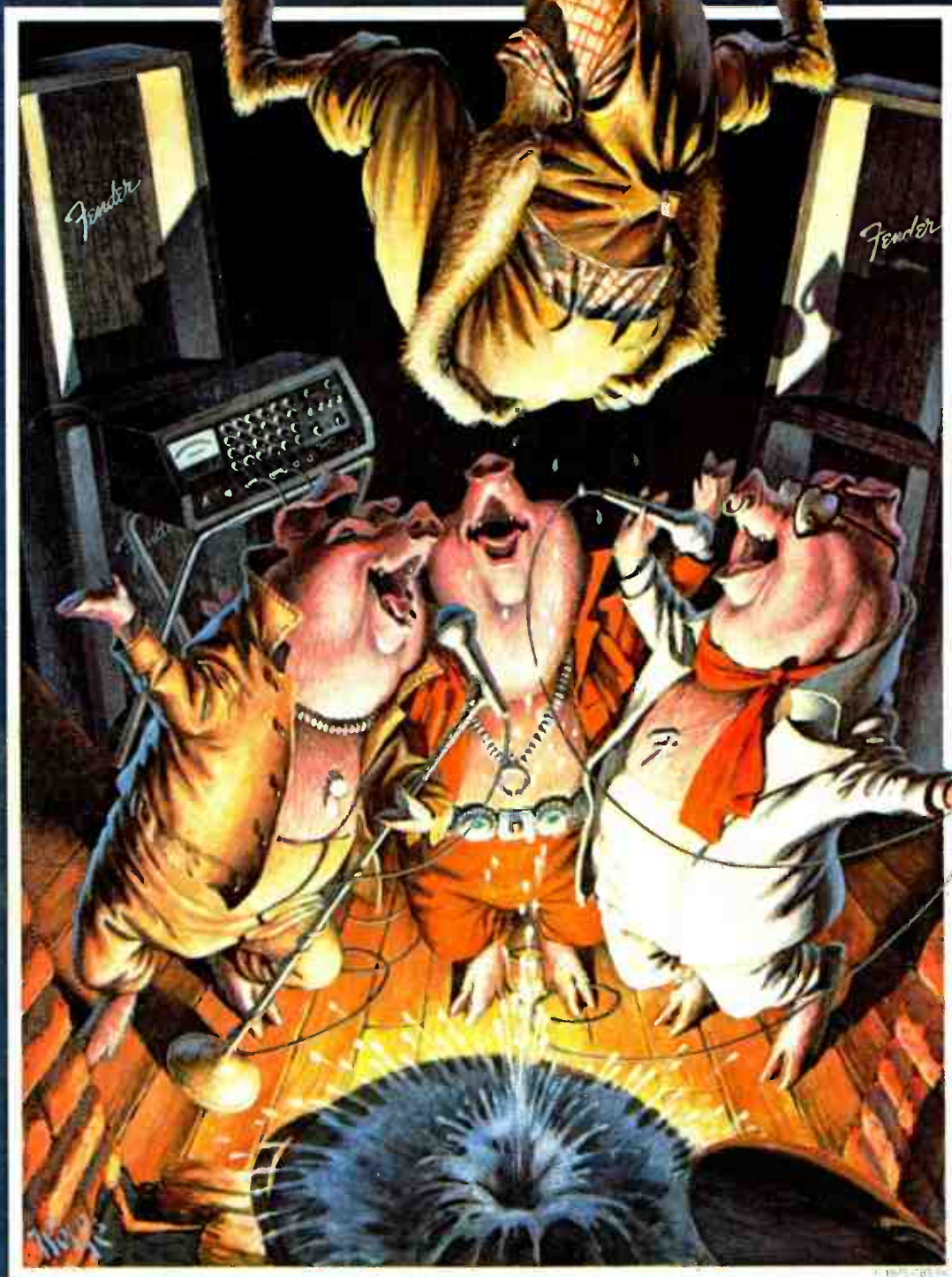
Wherever music is going, you'll hear it note-for-note perfect on each of the nine Yamaha amps.

YOUR MUSIC KEEPS GROWING. SO SHOULD YOUR AMP.



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"Little pigs, little pigs," crooned the Wolf, "let me join in!"
 "Not by the hairs of our chinny-chin-chins!" harmonized the Pigs.
 "Then I'll huff and I'll puff..."
 "Can't hear you," soloed the third Little Pig as he spotted the Wolf slyly heading down the chimney. "The only way you'll ever bring the house down is with a Fender sound system."

In a flash, the Three Little Pigs laid down a searing lyric and lit an enormous blaze beneath the kettle. "I never heard power and range like that before!" shrieked the Wolf heatedly.
 "Well, when you want to light a fire under a vocalist," chorused the Pigs, "you go whole hog."
 "And of course," the Wolf sang out...

"You get an extra boost from a Fender!"[®]
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