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World Radio History

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE COUNTRY PUBLICATION

April, 1979 - \$1.25

COUNTRYMUSIC

JOHNNY CASH

Regains His Freedom

CHARLIE RICH

Just Playin' It By Ear

RAY STEVENS

The Mad Genius Of Music Row

CHARLY McCLAIN

1981 CMA Award Winner???



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SS 100



SR 301



SR 330



SR 2400

COUNTRY MUSIC



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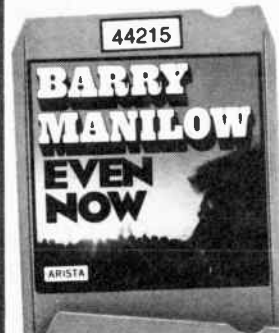
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LETTERS

Gone Girl

I would like to compliment your magazine and in particular, Michael Bane for the remarkably fine review of Johnny Cash's latest album, *Gone Girl*, which appeared in your Jan/Feb issue.

Mr. Bane's comments on this album seem to echo my own sentiments so perfectly, that if I were able to write a record review, I would have put it all down exactly the same way.

I believe this album to be one of Johnny's best ever, and I am very grateful to your magazine for giving this record the recognition it deserves. The only comment I might have added to those given by Mr. Bane, concerns the fine rendition John gives that *Gambler* song which has been riding high on the charts in the Kenny Rogers version. With all respect to Kenny Rogers, I think if Johnny had gotten there first with the song, he would have hit the top too, maybe more so even than the Rogers version did. Thanks again for this, and many other excellent articles you have

printed on Johnny Cash since your first issue—and also just generally speaking, thanks for the best country music magazine anywhere.

MRS. N. HAMILTON
CLEARWATER, FLA.

George Jones

Thank you very, very much for the story on George Jones. He is so fantastic and there is no one to compare with him. I realize he has heavy problems weighing him down, but if he could just realize there are people everywhere praying and hoping he'll never leave country music, I'm sure he'll beat those problems.

If only I could tell him how I constantly search for more of his records, pray that he'll appear somewhere close by, and watch for any word of him in your *Country Music* magazine. Not only do I care about him as a performer, but as a person. I hope things will straighten out for him and he will be happy.

Please let us hear more news about George Jones. Thank you again, and thanks for your great magazine.

MRS. ANN NANCE
RICHMOND, VA.

Have been thinking of writing this for awhile in fact ever since I read Bob Allen's article in your magazine, about the tragedy of George Jones's life. And it is a tragedy. I think he's a man that's been unjustly tried in magazines and by the disc jockeys. He's been played up as Nashville's bad guy. But I think people in all parts of life have really took him for all they could, especially Tammy Wynette. He married her, gave her everything, made her a star and kept quiet about their married life, through trouble and good times, while she has told so much and laid the blame on him. Of course, I don't know the cause of their break up, and it's really no one's business but theirs, but I bet it was fifty-fifty. I like him as a singer, no one can touch him there, and if I meet him I'm sure I'd like him as a man.

He has problems, don't we all, alcohol seems to be his biggest, but I have faith in him that he will lick it. I hope so.

Your story is the best I have read about him, at least he did some of the talking, it wasn't all guess work in part of the reporter. I hope there'll be more about him and that it will be good news for the many fans I'm sure George has.

A WORRIED JONES FAN,
VERDA HAGNER
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Rex Allen, Jr.

There is no question that Rex Allen, Jr. is a super entertainer. He has the ability to win an audience that is nothing short of magic. From oldest to youngest, we were hooked the first time we saw him and our friends were too.

There are all kinds of awards these days, but, without a doubt, your Entertainer of the Year award was right on target.

THE BROWN FAMILY
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Brenda Lee

I was very happy to find a story about my favorite singer Brenda Lee in the Jan/Feb issue but I cannot understand the remarks that were made about the *LA Sessions* album.

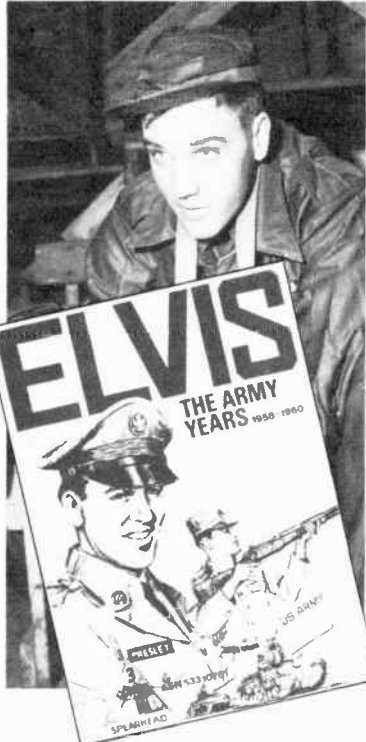
LA Sessions is certainly different from Brenda's other albums, but she still comes through as only she can—with the beautiful voice and style that are hers alone.

Maybe the songs are about insanity,

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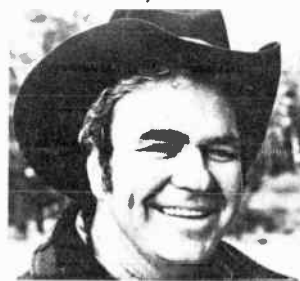
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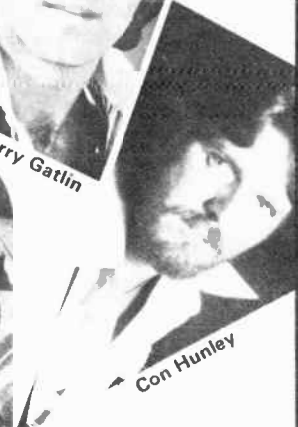
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cheating, etc., but that's all part of life. All the other artists sing about it, so why not Brenda? Anyway, nothing could be as bad as the cover of Tanya Tucker's TNT album. I'm glad Brenda Lee has remained a lady.

Brenda has been my favorite singer ever since I heard her sing *Dynamite*. I have 18 of her albums. She has a way of delivering a song that can bring me to tears one minute and make me feel real happy the next. I can never just sit and listen to Brenda, I have to get up and sing right along with her. To me, she is the number one singer of all time.

All I know is that I love Brenda Lee and

I like L.A. Sessions and everything she has ever recorded. I hope I and all of her many fans will see more of her on television and hear more of her on many more albums in the future.

JULIE JOHNSON
PIPESTONE, MINN.

Janie Fricke

Thank you so much for the article on Janie Fricke. I'm very happy that she's won the Rising Star Award which she deserves among a few other awards.

She's a great talent and I'm glad to see her as a solo. Hope it won't be long before she travels on her own.

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MARTIN & SIGMA GUITARS ARE THE OFFICIAL INSTRUMENTS OF OPRYLAND U.S.A.

Janie's music is terrific and I enjoy her singing ability. Her latest single, *Playing Hard To Get* is fantastic and getting lots of air play.

I really enjoyed the article on Janie and I hope to see more on this bundle of talent.
LORIE HALL
VALLEY STATION, N.Y.

Moe Bandy

I wish to thank you and congratulate you on the article on Moe Bandy in the Jan /Feb issue. I am an area rep for Moe's fan club, and I believe I am his number one fan in the world. I have followed him for four years and have even been a guest in his home near San Antonio. He is as gentle and soft-spoken as Bob Allen describes him, and always has time for his fans. Country Music needs more artists like Moe.

ERIN FARRELL
WOLCOTT, CONN.

The Oaks

Recognizing you as being the nation's best music publication, I decided what better way to air my opinion of the Oak Ridge Boys than write you.

I have seen the Oaks perform twice since they have gone "Country"; once at an outdoor festival and then at the Roanoke Civic Center. Never have I been more impressed by the enthusiasm, style, and unsurpassed talent in a group. Vocal Group of the Year was well judged this year and I applaud the Country Music Association for awarding the Oaks.

Aside from the professional group the public sees on stage, I had the honor of meeting and discovering unspoiled, sincere men. Being recognized as Country Music's Vocal Group and Instrumental Band has not put a dent in their "down-home" genuine personalities.

SANDY DUKE
WBLB RADIO
PULASKI, VA

Kissing Cousins

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for a year and I approve of your letters column. I don't approve of the way the readers are using them. I have been keeping tabs on the debate between Mickey Gilley and his cousin Jerry Lee Lewis. I am convinced all they want is to share their talents with us. Some of you people are making it a battle between the two. If you will stop and think you may realize that they are only human and are capable of making mistakes.

You are not only ruining the careers of two very talented performers, you are ruining the bond between the two as relatives. I am not saying it is wrong to voice your opinion. However, think who you are hurting before you do it.

KARIN GAISKI
HARRISBURG, PA.

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All over the country, music fans are going for highway hi-fi in a big way. And it's not really surprising. Americans have always regarded their cars as extensions of home. And since good sound has become a standard item in the living room, it's only natural that people now want it in their cars, too.

But until a short time ago, there was no way to get that kind of sound in a car. The skimpy radios Detroit sticks in the dashboard as standard equipment certainly didn't satisfy music-minded listeners. In fact, those plain AM radios didn't provide stereo at all, their fidelity was zilch, and what with all the static on the road, they usually drowned Emmylou in howls and crackles.

FM sounds a lot better, is fairly free from static, and gives you genuine stereo. But it only works over short distances. If you happen to be driving beyond 30 miles or so from the transmitter, the FM fizzles out.

Tape was the answer to some of these problems because of its independence of what's on the air. It put the signal source right inside your car. The sound quality no longer depended on outside factors. Besides, you could take your favorite music along with you and no longer have

to play catch-as-catch-can with the radio stations along your route.

But there was still room for improvement—still another step to go—and the new breed of sound equipment now sounding off on U.S. highways is something different from anything you may have heard before. The older car radios and tape players usually were tinny-sounding and underpowered. They barely put out enough sound to override the engine and road noise without literally shouting themselves hoarse—that is, giving you shrill and gritty distortion instead of the real sound of music. Another bottleneck was those typical car speakers—raspy and foggy sounding, swallowing up all those crisp highs that spell out the true character of voices and instruments. And they didn't do much in the bass either, except rattle and grunt.

All that has changed with the latest high-quality autosound equipment. For one thing, many of the better rigs now use stereo cassettes rather than the old 8-track cartridges. Cassettes deliver better highs and also have less of the "flutter and wow" that makes the musical pitch of many 8-track players sound wobbly. Aside from that, cassettes are a lot more compact than 8-track cartridges, so you can stash more of them in the glove compartment. Also, if you already own a cassette deck as part of your home stereo, you can record your own cassettes (either by copying your records or taping music off the air) and thus make your own collection of traveling music. That's probably the cheapest and most satisfying way of taking music for a ride.

Even more important for better sound is the development of hi-fi car speakers featuring separate woofers and tweeters, just as you would find in home sound systems. Thanks to these drastically improved speakers, the highs are no longer lost but can be projected clearly enough to be heard above road and motor noise. And since these speakers come equipped with woofer cones capable of deep thrusts, they also pump out an astounding amount of bass if they are properly mounted—enough to make the music realistic.

Of course, quality speakers are seldom cheap, and you have to shell out upward of \$40 for a really good-sounding car speaker from such leading companies as Jensen, Sparkomatic, Motorola, Panasonic, or Kriket. De-luxe models capable of playing at high power levels without distortion may cost considerably more. But from what I have heard, car speakers in the \$40-\$70 range do very well musically. The best way to mount such high-performance speakers is on the rear deck behind the back seat, which yields the best sound-projection pattern within the typical car interior.

To get the most from such high-quality speakers you should drive them with a radio and tape unit of matching merit. The highest-powered deluxe units—such as Jensen's top-rank Model R-430, use a separate power amplifier that can be stashed in the trunk. But you can also get compact in-dash designs with ample power output. Some of these ultra-compact models combine an AM/FM stereo radio with a cassette player and amplifiers rated up to 20 watts per channel, with Sparkomatic, Jensen, and Motorola all offering excellent in-dash units of this kind. But you can save yourself a bundle of money by opting for lower-powered units which still provide all the sonic refinements—good tape performance and fine FM reception—within their power limits. Unless you insist on playing your music loud enough to drown out the siren of the patrol car that's chasing you, you may be quite happy with a unit like Sparkomatic's 301, selling for \$119.95—minus whatever dealer discount you can wrangle. Its 5-watt-per-channel output is quite enough for listening while driving at normal highway speed. Other high-quality contenders in the new field of hi-fi autosound include Pioneer, J.I.L., Craig, Sharp, Sanyo, and Sony. Among them, you can surely find just the kind of stereo that turns your car into a pleasure dome on wheels without wrecking your budget. ■

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Ludwig



Country Scene

CAN IT BE THE END OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY?

With 53 years of continuous service, WSM's Grand Ole Opry is the oldest and longest-running live show in radio broadcast history. Each weekend, it is beamed out on WSM's AM frequency, and

reaches listeners in 34 states, as well as parts of Canada.

But pending certain measures that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is studying, and certain proposals

that have been afoot in the U.S. Congress, all this could come to an end. There is a distinct possibility that WSM radio—along with the other approximately 25 "clear-channel" stations in the U.S.—could lose its clear-channel status; and its night-time broadcast coverage, including the live Grand Ole Opry, would no longer be heard beyond a hundred-mile radius around Nashville.

"What this means," says Len Hensel, WSM's general manager, "is that the Grand Ole Opry will be heard . . . *halfway* to Louisville, Kentucky, *halfway* to Memphis, *halfway* to Chattanooga, and *maybe* as far South as the Alabama-Tennessee line and Huntsville."

As Hensel points out, this ominous possibility raises a number of serious questions about the Opry's future, since over half the fan mail and requests for Opry tickets come from North of the Ohio River. "Should this proposal be accepted (by the FCC), we would visualize—and let me stress this as a *possibility*—the end of the Grand Ole Opry," says Hensel.

The FCC's reasoning for considering such a proposal is this: Today, in the U.S., there are simply not enough AM radio frequencies to accommodate those who want them; and breaking down the clear-channel stations is one way of making room for more local stations. Across the U.S., there are many—sometimes up to 170—stations that share the same AM frequency. Currently, WSM shares its frequency with a number of other stations, but at night, when radio waves travel further, these other stations are required to shut down, and WSM is given dominion over the airwaves—hence, the term, *clear-channel*.

WSM has not taken the impending FCC measures and Congressional proposals lightly: they have launched a massive public relations effort to alert their listeners to the situation, through spots on the Opry broadcast, and by directly contacting Opry fans through the fan clubs of the various Grand Ole Opry stars. They are urging listeners to write the FCC and voice their opinions on the matter.

(Continued)

Dolly Parton: Heavenly Body Among The Stars



When a performer has a schedule as hectic as Dolly's, one wonders if she ever gets the time to catch what other country artists are doing? Well, our roving pho-

tog found how the songstress solves that problem as she was deeply engrossed in a recent copy of *Country Music* on a flight from Nashville.

Sonny Throckmorton: A 14 Year Overnight Success

It took roughly 14 years, but songwriter Sonny Throckmorton has finally become an overnight success. Of the more than 90 Sonny Throckmorton songs recorded in the last two years, eight have been Top Ten records. They have included two number one songs, *Knee Deep in Loving You* (Dave and Sugar) and *Thinking of a Rendevous*, (Johnny Duncan and Janie Fricke); *If We're Not Back in Love by Monday* (Merle Haggard and Millie Jackson) which was



number two on the country charts and number three on rhythm and blues charts; and, of course, the powerful and sensitive, *Middle-Aged Crazy* (Jerry Lee Lewis) which rose to the number four spot. As if this wasn't enough, Sonny is now becoming a recording artist, too.

Mercury Records released Sonny's first album, *Last Cheater's Waltz*, not too many months ago. The album is a showcase of some of his most popular songs, and a few tunes which he had to keep hidden away especially for himself. The first single release, *I Wish You Could've Turned My Head (And Left My Heart Alone)*, had been held back for some time for Sonny to record himself and it still almost turned out to be the big one that got away.

"I played it for Bobby Bare one night at a party," Throckmorton explained

with a chuckle, "and he liked it right off. He kept after me to let him record it and I kept saying no because I wanted the release on it myself. I may never get another Bobby Bare cut after that."

Sonny went on a 26-city rap tour to promote his second single, *Last Cheater's Waltz* in January. He visited with local radio and TV personalities to rap about the record. He also was looking around for "listening rooms" where he might later play.

"I can't see why people would go and pay six dollars or more to see George Jones or somebody and then hoot and holler at him all night," says Sonny.

It seems funny, but all of Sonny's success as both a writer and a singer came only after he had given up on the music business a few years ago and gone home to Texas. He had always promised himself that if he hadn't made it by the time he was 35 years old, he would quit, and in 1975 that's exactly what he did. Returning home with his wife and two daughters after 12 years of trying, he found that most of his friends had moved away and really didn't know anything but the music business.

He recalled his six-month stay in Texas this way, "I fished a lot and watched TV a lot and really just did a whole lot of nothing."

Meanwhile, back in Nashville, Sonny's friends kept right on pitching his songs to artists. As country-rock groups like the Eagles began changing the face of country music, Sonny's songs began to be accepted by traditional country artists such as George Jones and Tammy Wynette. This helped friends talk him into returning to Nashville and his success has grown steadily ever since. Now, after 14 years, Sonny Throckmorton has reached the top. I'm sure he would agree that it's about time.

BOB MILLARD

Opry (Continued)

"The Commission, by its actions, seems to feel that not many people listen to the clear channel stations anymore," says Dave Hilliard of Kirkland and Ellis, the Washington D.C. law firm that is representing WSM in this matter. "So I think it's important that the listeners let the FCC know. Often a well-written letter from a member of the public who says he listens to one of the clear-channels, and depends on it not only for

entertainment, but for news and weather, can often mean more than statements by lawyers and engineers. As trite as it sounds, these airways do belong to John Q. Public; and for the most part, it's the public that's going to suffer the detriment if they disappear."

"If there is no public response to this," adds WSM Manager, Len Hensel. "then we are *dead* . . . quite literally. . . . So if listeners have a comment, they should by all means, make it."

BOB ALLEN

Circle Unbroken With Death of Sara Carter Bayes

Sara Carter Bayes, last of the original Carter Family, died January 8 in her home in Lodi, California, of a heart condition, less than three months after the death of her sister-in-law, Maybelle Carter.

Sara Dougherty (her maiden name) was born in Wise County, Virginia, on July 21, 1898, and as a young woman was proficient on guitar, autoharp, and possessed a deep, lustrous voice. She married tall, taciturn A.P. Carter on June 18, 1915, and in August of 1927, she, her husband, and Maybelle Carter began a long and influential recording career.

Sara and A.P. divorced in 1933, and she remarried Coy Bayes in 1939; regardless, the Carter Family survived intact up through 1943, recording for Victor, the American Record Company (ARC).



Decca, Columbia, and RCA, and were one of country music's most popular groups during the Depression.

The least driven to perform, Sara left music for good with Coy Bayes, (except for a handful of appearances scattered over the next 35 years) and moved west, while A.P. retired to the southwestern Virginia mountains from whence he came, and Maybelle continued in music with her daughters as the Carter Sisters and Mother Maybelle. Sara and Maybelle recorded an album for Columbia in the 1960s, *An Historic Reunion* (with Johnny Cash filling in A.P.'s bass part), and the Original Carter Family was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1970.

The least performance-oriented and the least recognized of the original trio, Sara Carter nonetheless was the very heart of the Carter Family sound, her rich voice, the musical focal point around which the essence of that classic sound developed. With her death the circle is once again unbroken.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Country Scene



life and beauty, a feeling for people and their emotions, a hunger to create, express and give of himself. Most of all, he had love. All this came out in every song. You got the feeling that St. Valentine couldn't have done any better.

Along the way he took time from his music to marry and father 13 children. When he saw three of his daughters growing up with the same musical leanings he had had, he nurtured and guided their talents to the point where they eventually joined him on stage. Their music had such a movingly ethereal quality that sitting there being wafted away by their show, you almost expected to see a backdrop of Julie Andrews sweeping across the meadows of the Swiss Alps.

Once a person said of their stage quality, "When the girls wear their hair full and the light hits them from behind, it gives them a halo and they look just like angels." To which another said, "They sound just like a whole choir of them." Why not? They couldn't have asked for a better director.

It has been written that the only justification for existence is to leave something that will outlive you. Jim Lunsford's music more than justified his life. His love for his fellow man multiplied it a thousandfold.

JOHN PUGH

The Musical Legacy of Jim Lunsford

Jim Lunsford didn't go out quietly and peacefully. A heart attack claimed him last September and it was all over in seconds. No last words, no dying request, no brave but gentle wife holding his hand till the end. One instant he was here, the next he was gone. The pity of it all was that no man ever deserved a more pleasant death than Jim Lunsford. For he lived one of the most beautiful lives ever.

It would be hard to say for which of his two loves Jim Lunsford was more memorable: music or life. He was a master at both. If you heard his music just one time, you simply had to meet him. Once you met him, you simply had to hear more of his music. It was a sublime cycle.

He was born near Asheville, N.C., 50 years ago. While just a boy he began absorbing the ballads and hymns and timbres of his native Great Smoky Mountains, and it wasn't long before he tried his own hand at them with an heirloom fiddle. At age 15 he was working professionally. He soon got a reputation as one of the most creative fiddlers extant, though he always downplayed that aspect of his art. "I knew I had to do something different to keep working," he once laughed. "When you're running scared, you get very creative."

In 1963 he decided that, though *playing* music may be a nice way to make a living, *writing* it was an even higher calling. He moved to Nashville and took up

songwriting. He had never written a song in his life. He had only an eighth grade education and wasn't even sure of his English. But he had an appreciation of



Dolly & Carol In Nashville

At the press conference to promote the TV special "Dolly & Carol In Nashville," the stars established themselves as a predictably odd couple. Dolly: "(Carol's) been one of my favorite people in the whole world ever since." Carol: "she was a child!" Dolly: "No-we were children..." As viewers recall, the two stars shared a mutual admiration that proved they weren't anything like that other "Odd Couple."

STACY HARRIS

Country Scene

Watch This Face: Susie Allanson

If it's true there's safety in numbers, then you'd have to say it's a safe bet Susie Allanson has a fine career ahead of her. With three names, a fleet of Brink's trucks, and five successful chart records in two years behind her, what better numbers could this young California-based singer ask for?

A little background behind those numbers:

Susie has maintained a low profile on the concert circuit, but she's made no effort to hide her hit singles. Her first national release, *Baby Don't Keep Me Hangin' On*," scurried up the charts in the summer of 1977. It was followed, in steady succession, by *Baby, Last Night Made My Day*, *Maybe Baby*, *We Belong Together*, and *Back to the Love*.

What about those three names? Well, she was born Susie Allanson, and grew up just outside Las Vegas, where her father worked as a carpenter. Susie and her sister spent every waking hour that they could on horseback—at the family's two-acre farm, in rodeos, and in long country rides. Susie began to sing at rodeo dances, and, to her delight, discovered she could handle melodies as well as she had handled horses. In 1970 she left her job as an usher at the Merv Griffin show in Las Vegas and joined a touring company of *Hair*, in which she played the part of Jeanie, a pregnant girl. A stint in *Jesus Christ Superstar* followed.

What about her other two names? Susie soon moved to southern California, where she teamed up with Ray Ruff, who was already a successful record producer (The Osmonds, among others) and record executive. Susie and Ray eventually married, and many friends think of Susie as Mrs. Ruff. But to further complicate matters, Ray's legal name is Ruffin, so Susie can also make a claim to that one too.

Meeting Ruff was a turning point in Susie's life, for a number of reasons. Susie knew she liked to sing, but her career was nondirected ("I didn't care, I'd work anywhere."), and she had no confidence in her voice. "There was a time when I always wanted to sound like somebody else," she revealed. I didn't like my voice. I'd think I sounded too squeaky, or I wanted my voice to be lower, or I thought I pronounced things wrong."

Intensive work on sessions Ray was producing—and intensive "career direc-

tion" talks with Ray—led Susie to accept her "different" voice. A few hit records didn't hurt, either. Ray generated interest in Susie's voice by releasing *Baby Don't Keep Me Hanging' On* through his own Oak Records. Sales and airplay on the single resulted in a Warner-Curb Records contract, and the song was re-released through that company. (A recent in-house shift of artists has moved Susie from Warner-Curb to Elektra Records both which are owned by the



same corporate parent company, Warner Communications).

Ray's business savvy, and his promotion and production experience, seem to lend a perfect balance to Susie's artistic talents. To promote *Words*, Susie's first Elektra single, Ray masterminded a countrywide "assault" by Brink's security trucks on the more than 100 radio stations that report record activity to music trade magazines. Ray, who used Wells Fargo, Purolater, and sheriff's offices in towns that had no Brink's offices, admitted he was "sweating blood" by the

time the promo venture peaked in late January. The Brink's trucks—some of which carried hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of other goods—rolled up to radio stations across the country and simply dropped Susie's single and photo on dumbfounded DJs and program directors. Ray would only admit the personally financed Brink's venture ran "into five figures."

Susie's new album, *Heart to Heart* (due out March 1), is carefully geared to appeal to both pop and country audiences, although both Ray and Susie toss off questions about how much they pursue pop sales. "Music is music—I don't think it's meant to be categorized," Susie says. "I would like my music to appeal to everybody."

Ray has been busier than ever in the studio in recent months, producing Hank Williams, Jr., R.C. Bannon, Debby Boone, and T.G. Sheppard. "I think we're going to try and narrow things down this year," confides Susie. "My career's taking more and more time." Susie freely admits she and Ray split for a time when her records first broke. "I went through a period when I didn't know what to do. For about six months we were kind of gettin' to each other," said Susie, who said her initial success got her a little scared. "You have to stop and think about it. But now everything's fine."

Elektra, like every other record label in the world, wouldn't mind having another female artist who sells like Linda Ronstadt. Label chief Joe Smith phoned Susie in L.A. and, after hearing she was glad to be on his label, replied, "Well, I don't know, Susie—we may ruin your career, just like we ruined Linda Ronstadt's and Jackson Browne's." There's no coincidence behind the fact that Elektra had Susie's upcoming LP cover photographed by the same man who shot Linda Ronstadt's *Simple Dreams* and *Living in the USA* album covers.

Ray Ruff sets definite goals for Susie every year. Last year he wanted Susie to get a number one record and "get exposed." She did it. "This year he's projecting three number ones," Susie said. "I'm sure if he wants it, that's what it'll be."

And why not? Who's going to stop a girl with three names, five hit records, and a fleet of Brink's trucks behind her?

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Whoa Mule; Carolina Breakdown; Orange Blossom Special; Turkey In The Straw; Little Darling Pal; McKinley's White House Blues; Blue Grass Bugle; Lonesome Road Blues; False Hearted Love; Nine Pound Hammer; Old Joe Clark; McCormick's Picnic; Red Wing Cripple Creek; Girl I Left Behind Me; Under The Double Eagle; Raymond's Talking Banjo; Cotton Eyed Joe; Banjo Fling; Cumberland Gap; Raymond's Banjo Boogie; Crooked Creek; Bail Them Cabbage Down; Pretty Polly; Leaning On Jesus; Sugar Foot Rag; Train Forty-Five; Earl's Breakdown; Cindy; Red River Valley; John Hardy.

**ELVIS PRESLEY - ANLI-1319 \$2.98**

His Hand In Mine; I'm Gonna Walk Dem Golden Stairs; In My Father's House (Are Many Mansions); Milky White Way; I Believe In The Man In The Sky; Joshua Fit The Battle; He Knows Just What I Need; Swing Down Sweet Chariot; Mansion Over The Hilltop; If We Never Meet Again; Working On The Building; Known Only To Him.

ELVIS PRESLEY - ANLI-0971 \$2.98

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LEFTY FRIZZELL - CS-9288 - SPECIAL \$2.98

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RAY PRICE'S GREATEST HITS - VOL. 2 - CS-9470

Another Bridge To Burn; Let Me Talk To You; Burning Memories; Healing Hands; Of Time; Unloved, Unwanted; This Cold War With You; A Way To Survive; Pride; Night Life; A Thing Called Sadness; Make The World Go Away.

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RAY PRICE'S GREATEST HITS - CS-8866 \$2.98

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SONS OF THE PIONEERS - ANLI-1092 - \$2.98

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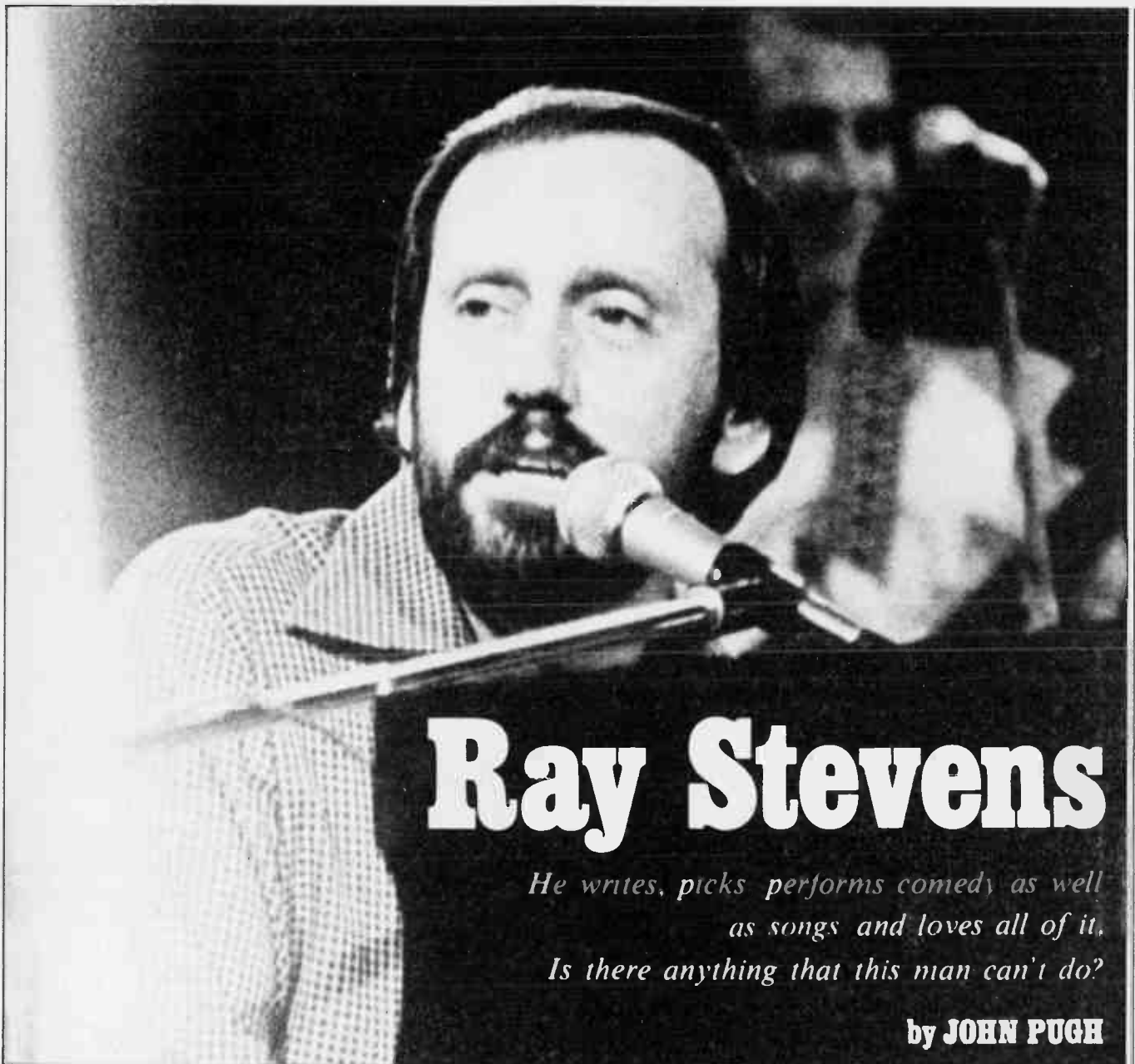
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Ray Stevens

*He writes, picks performs comedy as well
as songs and loves all of it.
Is there anything that this man can't do?*

by **JOHN PUGH**

Here's a great idea for a new awards show. Call it the Country-Pop-Singer-Songwriter - Instrumentalist - Performer-Comedian-Best All Around-Most Likely To Succeed Award. Then given an 18-foot high trophy (one foot for every year in the business) to . . . da da . . . Ray Stevens! Then just clear the stage and let ole Ray rip for an hour. Let him do *Gitarzan* and *Ahab The Arab* and *The Streak* and *Everything Is Beautiful*. And let him do all the other songs he's done about midgets and camels and flashers. And let him do his impersonations of the Wolfman and the Killer and the Pips. And let him do his sound effects and tell his jokes and play various parts of his anatomy and all the other things he does. Just let him do it all. Just Ray. All by himself. And then let him do this every year. Because nobody is more talented, more versatile, more gifted, more anything and everything than Ray Stevens.

"First time I ever saw him onstage, I

knew he had it as an entertainer; the first record of his I ever heard, I knew he had it as a writer and an artist," said Shelby Singleton, Ray's first producer in Nashville. "He can sing all parts, play all instruments, produce, arrange, everything. On his records he has the musicians put down the rhythm track, maybe some strings, then everything else he does himself. He may just be the greatest overall creative talent in Nashville."

"I've been in the studio with Ray several times," said Charlie McCoy, "and the one thing that always struck me about him was how totally confident he is. No music ever seems to baffle him, faze him, or even cause him the least concern. We were doing some horn parts once and neither of us had much experience playing horns, but Ray just picked up his horn and started playing like he'd been practicing it all his life."

"I've always thought Ray would be a

natural actor," said Donald Williams, Ray's manager for ten years. "I'd like to do a TV sitcom with him based on his own character. He 'acts' on all his records: *The Streak*, *Gitarzan*, *Ahab*. Trouble is, he loves to record and perform so much that I don't know if I could ever get him out of Nashville."

If Ray is reluctant to pull up stakes, even for a few weeks out of the year that a TV show would require, it is because he has had a nearly two decade love affair with the city's music industry second only to San Franciscans' infatuation with their cable cars. This is not necessarily true of all Nashville artists. For many of them the town holds bitter memories: the long years of struggle, bouts with booze and pills, shaftings by record companies or talent agencies, promises that never materialized, marriages that didn't work, money that went to somebody else. Many of the more disillusioned or more sensitive—Roger



Miller, Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Sammi Smith—leave at the first opportunity.

Ray, by contrast, has found the town so downright enjoyable that he reminds one of a Horatio Alger character whose story skipped the first 20 chapters. "I knew the kind of music I wanted to make, and I knew the studios and musicians were here that could make it," he said. "When Shelby Singleton offered me a job, I jumped at it. I cut *Ahab* two weeks after I moved here."

He came to Nashville from Atlanta. He gives most of the credit to his Southern upbringing for his musical proficiency and diversity, affording him, as it did, exposure to blues, jazz, country, bluegrass, etc., etc., the same factor that has influenced every white Southern performer from Elvis to the Allman Brothers. When speaking of this background, he refers to himself, almost inevitably, as a "sponge." "It's all etched in my subconscious," he said. "All the old fiddle, steel and dobro licks from country, all the old harmonies from the early vocal groups like the Dominoes and the Ink Spots, all the old horn and rhythm licks from R&B. I just know subconsciously how to combine all this to make a commercial record."

He had also started music lessons at age five and continued them right on through three years at Georgia State, where he was

majoring in music theory and composition and had formed a college dance band on the side. There his main influence was boredom: the between-set drags with absolutely nothing going on, except maybe a desultory jukebox, people leaving, the boys backstage sitting around staring at each other, talking about how tired they were and wondering if the Varsity Drive-In would still be open when they got off. Finally one night when he could stand all this no longer, Ray wandered up to the microphone and started an impromptu comedy shtick. It went over so well that he did it the next intermission, the next show, then running over into the sets, but nobody minding because the guy was the funniest thing they had ever seen or heard, till it got to where as many people were coming for Ray's funnies as they were for their listening and dancing pleasure.

At last, figuring there were no more worlds to conquer in Georgia, he split for the city that would soon become his purlieu. Eighteen years and countless records later, he mused on his decision. "I never went back to get my degree. I'm not slighting the value of one, but I really don't think I need it any more."

And so he has been in good ole Music City, U.S.A. ever since, living, loving, laughing and being happy. In fact, Ray is so upbeat and, despite an occasional risqué lyric, so upright that a local dairy uses him

to help sell its milk, yogurt and cottage cheeses. "I guess the most impressive characteristic of Ray is his easygoing attitude toward life," said Shelby Singleton. "Whenever I see him, he's always the same: happy, positive, optimistic. Success hasn't changed him. I don't think I've ever seen him angry in my life. When he finished *Ahab* it was six or eight minutes long. I cut it down to where the stations would play it. The next thing I knew Ray's calling me about 'ruining' his record. But even then he never got mad. A little frustrated, maybe, but not really mad."

But think not that Ray Stevens is Nashville's answer to Br'er Rabbit. All of Ray's associates constantly relate how intelligent he is, how concerned about various political, social and economic issues, his business acumen, etc. "If you took every nickel away and told him he could never play music again, Ray's so bright that he'd still be a millionaire within five years," said songwriter and close friend Layng Martine. "He'd probably do it in real estate. He loves to buy old houses, fix them and sell them."

Ray questions whether he doesn't, indeed, get "sidetracked" into other areas, and if maybe he shouldn't just lock himself in the studio and concentrate entirely on his music. And sitting in his office one long winter's night, he reflected on his art and his artistry. "Music is made up of two parts," he said. "The first is emotion and feeling. The second is the underlying mathematics that most people don't realize actually forms the basis of all music. A song is a calculated compromise between these two elements: a commercial blend of the mathematical structure and raw emotion. In my formative years I absorbed the emotional part, then in college I learned the math part. Maybe I'm fooling myself, but I don't think of myself as being confined to any one form of music, and I think I have enough understanding to where I can make this compromise in all types of songs: comedy, pop, country, gospel. I can think very technically in my arrangements and production, and at the same time I know music has to *breathe*. It's one of the beautiful, intangible things in life. Of the five senses, hearing can conjure up more of the other four than any of the other four can conjure up the others.

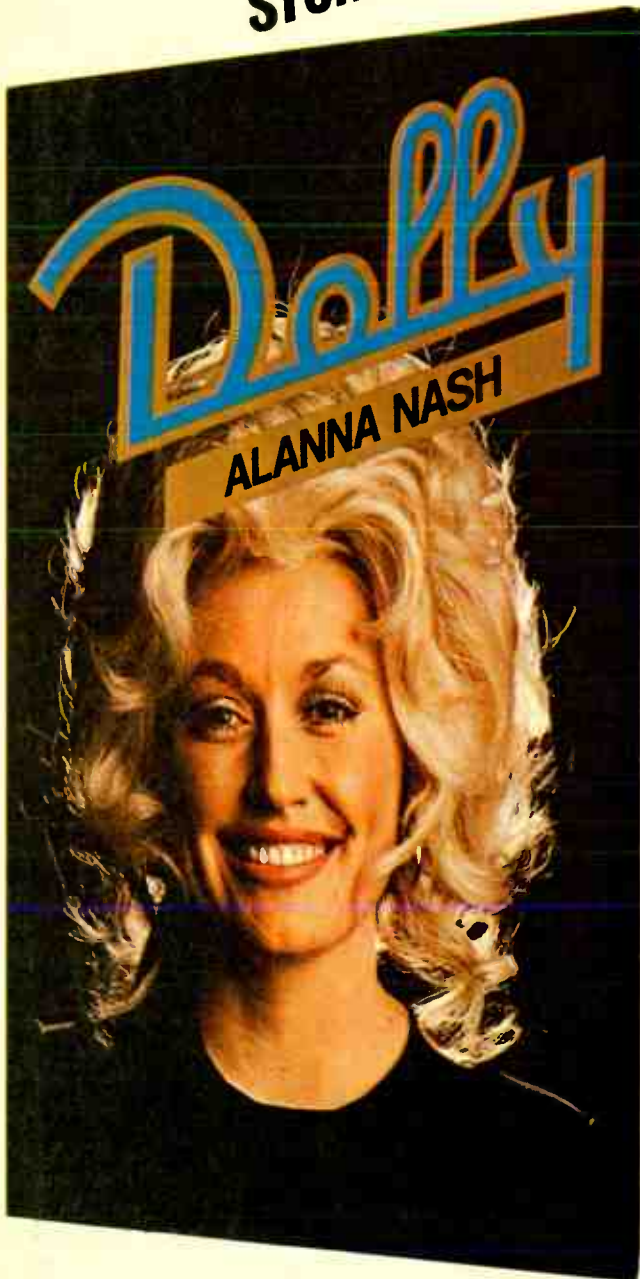
"In the same vein, I believe everyone can conjure up his creative abilities. Anyone can train his mind to be aware of events, conversations, media communications, etc. for the purpose of using them to make a creative contribution, whether in music, art, literature, architecture or photography. Even a song like *Ahab*. The inspiration was already in the air. I don't know where I got the idea to write it down, other than just that I had trained myself over the years, so that when it came along, I was ready for it."

Over the years an awful lot of people are even more ready for Ray Stevens. ■

DOLLY

THE NEW
ILLUSTRATED
STORY OF

Dolly Parton



Skeptics disclaim her, fans adore her, but whatever she is, none can ignore her. Dolly Parton's star is on the rise, and now author Alanna Nash makes us part of Dolly's dazzling success story in this intimate new biography that fans have long awaited.

Based on interviews with Dolly herself, and with others who have known her all her life, DOLLY reads like a true Cinderella story — one of twelve children growing up in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee, the first album for Monument Records, her big break with the Porter Wagoner Show, one of the first platinum albums by a female country music singer. But above all, Ms. Nash takes us beyond the flashy exterior to reveal the true Dolly — a bright, articulate woman who knows exactly what she wants and where she is going. Dolly is currently music's most visible songstress, but she still wants to write, produce, direct and star in her own movie. Will Dolly's staying power with her new found pop audience be as strong as it has proved to be in Nashville? Once you've read DOLLY, you know she'll do it all.

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His story and his accomplishments are too familiar to tell again, but the man himself is something else. Once a prisoner of fame, he travelled towards middle age as the very definition of uptown country respectability, the Country Music Association's symbol of class. In those, recent years, he seemed like a rock, immobile, dignified, and maybe also slightly bored. But now it's plain that this period, like his lost days in the early 1960's was a phase. Today Johnny Cash has regained his freedom. His new album, **Gone Girl** is a clear reflection of that freedom. In this exclusive Country Music interview, Cash speaks frankly to Patrick Carr about the change and how it feels.

JOHNNY CASH'S FREEDOM

Cash was not like I thought he would be. Yes, he was big and charismatic and hot with the nervous energy that is his key to other people's attention, but he was also loose, funny, and very much alive. That, the first time I met him in earnest, was some four or five years ago. Maybe his mood had something to do with the fact that he was recording with his old room mate Waylon Jennings for the first time, and with his old producer/songwriter Jack "Cowboy" Clement for the first time since Sun days; certainly, it betokened something good in the wind for music fans.

This time around with Cash, it was obvious from the start that with his best album in more than a decade under his belt, he had committed himself back to fun and music with all his heart. When you think about it, you have to say that after all, he had more staying power, more strength, than any of those Sun boys.

We began, of course, by talking about music.

Carr: *The last time we talked, John, you spoke about making albums more like the old Johnny Cash. . . . You know, without a lot of fancy orchestration and stuff.*

Cash: Yes, well, that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to make it sound a bit more like something that was done today, rather than back in 1955, but we had a lot of things going on the **Gone Girl** album. First of all we had fun making it, we enjoyed it. We had my people that I enjoy working with—The Carter Family, Jan Howard, my group—and Jack Clement came in and played rhythm guitar. He's

by **PATRICK CARR**

always a ball on sessions—or usually, anyway. Yes, we enjoyed doing the album.

Larry Butler had been busy producing some big hit artist, and about the time that I wanted to do the album he was right in the middle of it. I had to wait a while, and I got a little frustrated, and he knew I got a little frustrated, and finally we got together on a date. We didn't have words or anything, but I wanted in the studio. You know—when I wanted in, I wanted in.

The album came after a trip that June and Jan Howard and Jack Clement and I took to New York City. We went up and saw a couple of plays, and we sat up at night and picked and sang, and we got into some old songs like *A Bar With No Beer* and *Careless Love* and *Always Alone* and *Born To Lose*, all those old things. Then we got into bluegrass, uptempo stuff. Then we got to doing Jagger and Richard's song *No Expectations*, and Jack said "Let's do it bluegrass style." I said, "It don't quite fit bluegrass style, but let's do it uptempo," so we got to doing *No Expectations*. Jan Howard knew it—she'd sung it before on the Grand Ole Opry—so she gave us the words for it. So we sang *No Expectations* perhaps forty times during the whole evening, and when we quit singing it the people next door called the room and said, "Please play some more!" We thought we'd been keeping everybody up.

That's the kind of spirit we had in the studio when we recorded the album—you

know, we were having fun.

The musicians know that, too, see. It's awfully important to the musicians to feel that the artist is not acting like a star and not acting like the boss; he's acting like somebody that you're having fun with. That's what my guys felt in that studio that day. They were talking and laughing and cutting up and kidding Jack Clement about this and that, trying to make him balance a glass on the top of his head and do different kinds of dances. So we just had a lot of fun. Everybody was loose and laughing, and that's what helped to make it work.

But way before that I did a lot of homework. I weeded out a whole lot of songs. There were a lot of songs I didn't record on that album that I *wanted* to record, because I've been looking for good songs. You know who I've been listening to a lot? Tom T. Hall. Tom T. Hall has got to be the greatest country songwriter alive. I went to the K-Mart to buy a Tom T. Hall album the other day, just to hear some more of his songs. So I've got some of his songs laid back that I want to do—things he did on albums and didn't release as singles. But he's got so much great stuff.

It's not only him, either. There's other people like Rodney Crowell. Rodney has some good songs, and I'm holding some of his. I wanted to do some more of his on the album, but I didn't have room for them. So I'm looking forward to my next album, and I'm going to do my homework before I go in. And if everybody's not enjoying themselves and having fun when we get in the studio, then we'll just go home.

That's about as far as I get. I guess it's about time that I did let them know that I'm really galled that they don't have great people like Tom T. Hall and Marty Robbins and Ferlin Husky on there. I mean, Ferlin Husky's an entertainer. He's one of the greatest the business ever had. And just 'cause he doesn't have a hot record right now doesn't mean he's not important. There's a lot of them out there that are important.

Then there's the other world of country music like Waylon and Willie or Charlie Daniels—oh, Charlie was on there this year—and the other guys who couldn't care less about the CMA or anything else that goes on, only with what they're doing and the way they want to do it, like I am right now. The way I feel about the *Gone Girl* album is I guess the way these guys feel about most everything in the business—"If it don't feel right, I ain't going to get in it." I get into a lot of things in the music business that don't feel right but I get involved in them because of who I am. Whatever that means.

Carr: How do you feel about Jimmy Carter these days, John?

Cash: I'm not going to talk to you about politics.

Carr: Can I press you on one point? When we last talked, you said that you hoped Jimmy Carter might just bring back a sense of honesty and Christian values to this country. Do you think that has happened, if only a little?

Cash: Well, it's happened to me personally, and it's happened to a lot of people around me. Jimmy Carter's been up and down in the polls, but I think he's been as good a President as a President can be. I can't imagine any man even being able to handle the job in the first place. Any man that can bear it and keep grinning like he does has to be quite a man. But I don't believe that he's directly responsible for any great Christian revival—no. There's been a lot written about his being born again, and it's become a joke in a lot of areas—even though it's not a joke, it's a spiritual truth—but no, no great spiritual revival has taken place in this country that I can see. As a matter of fact, I've seen more decadence in the last couple of years than I've ever seen before in my whole life, I believe.

But the churches are full. But you know what, Patrick? I read a book recently called *In His Steps*. It was written in 1896, and in this book the man talks about the Church and how it separates itself from the very ones who need it most—the poor, the needy—and this preacher challenges his congregation in this book to go out next week and do it as Jesus would do it. Whatever you do, whatever you say, you ask yourself, "Is this the way Jesus would do it?" and see what comes about. So there

was a lot of people in the congregation took the challenge, and started going out among the poor people and giving them food packages. They started putting their Christianity into action. Stopped separating themselves in their beautiful white sepulcher of a church from the poor people, the hungry people in the slums and the ghettos. Like I say, the churches are full, but the slums and the ghettos are still full, and for the most part, the churches and the needy haven't quite gotten together yet. And until more people in the Church realize the real needs of the people, and go out rather than going in . . . I mean, to go into church is great, but to go out and put it all into action, that's where it's all at. And I haven't seen a lot of action.



"I like this picture better than any other ever taken of me," says Cash. The photo, above, used on the cover of Cash's new album, *Gone Girl*, was taken by photographer Norman Seeff for CBS Records, as were the photos on the cover and page 24 of this issue.

Carr: One of the things I've always liked about you is that you are a committed Christian, and yet you still work and hang around with people who might be considered backsliders or might have supposedly non-Christian habits. Funky musicians, you know? And you seem to be able to inhabit both worlds.

Cash: Well, it's not like going both ways. I don't compromise. I don't compromise my religion. If I'm with someone who doesn't want to talk about it, I don't talk about it. I don't impose myself on anybody in any way, including religion. When you're imposing you're offending, I feel. Although I am evangelical and I'll give the message to anyone that wants to hear it, or anybody that is willing to listen. But if they let me know that they don't want to hear it, they ain't ever going to hear it from me. If I think they don't want to hear it, then I will

not bring it up.

It's something that Waylon and I have never discussed, and we're the best of friends. We've got into some deep subjects, like—well, we got into religion a little bit; not much, but we got into some deep stuff. I never got into it with Kristofferson, really. Even when I was doing *Gospel Road* and he was around, we really didn't talk about it much 'cause, you know, some people are uncomfortable talking about it. But back to how Jesus did it, He was that way, and I'm just trying to be like him.

Carr: John, is there anything you'd like to say about *Mother Maybelle*?

Cash: Mother Maybelle Carter. I still get choked up. She was my fishing buddy. That was my relationship with her. I've just lost an old buddy. That's it, and I don't have too much to say. She was the greatest. She was the first and the greatest, and the music world will slowly but surely begin playing its tributes to her by people recording everything she ever wrote and recorded.

Carr: I was talking to Carl Perkins the day after she died, and he said much the same thing. He said that when he was on the road with you, he and Mother Maybelle used to sit up at night playing cards, and that's how he'd always think of her.

Cash: I did a lot of that. We'd play poker. We'd sit up all night playing poker with Mother Maybelle.

Carr: What about Elvis, John? Any last words on Elvis?

Cash: Well, what has not been said? Elvis was the greatest in his field, of course. I'd always admired him. Every show before I went in, I'd always watch every minute of his show from the side. But I didn't see Elvis for the last eighteen years of his life, so I didn't know him that well.

Carr: What did the commercialization after his death do to you?


Cash: Well, I didn't go out and buy a bunch of posters and junk they were selling, but it's something I expected. I'll tell you what it's done, though—it's got him a whole new world of fans. Little kids. Every little kid loves Elvis Presley. Kids John Carter's age, eight years old. I take him to school, he's singing *All Shook Up* or *Jailhouse Rock* or something, every day. Every little kid knows Elvis.

Carr: Sounds sort of like 1953 all over again.

Cash: No, I'm talking about little bitty kids, you know?

Carr: Well, it makes a change from John Travolta, eh?

Cash: Right. ■



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Minnie Pearl

Sharing The Gift Of Laughter

by LAURA EIPPER

The lady who lives in the rambling brick mansion on a tree-lined street in one of the most exclusive parts of town looks much like her neighbors, as she graciously takes a visitor on a guided tour.

In her mid-sixties, she wears a tasteful knit dress and high heels, her soft gray hair swept up on her head, her bearing dignified but relaxed.

The house is lovely inside, decorated in pale greens, yellows, white, with an occasional vivid painting adding a splash of color. The furniture is a comfortable mixture of antiques and more contemporary pieces. The dining room is formal, and through French doors in the living room a swimming pool, guest house and carefully-tended tennis courts are visible.

In all, it's the very picture of a suburban lady leading the good life. But unexpectedly, as she settles down behind the desk in her cheery yellow study, the lady's eyes crinkle up, she tells a perfectly *terrible* joke and you realize that this is no ordinary suburbanite.

Though her neighbors know her as Mrs. Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon, wife of Nashville businessman Henry Cannon, to most of the world she is known by a simpler name: Cousin Minnie Pearl.

It has been nearly 40 years since Minnie Pearl made her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry, a naive, lovable country girl with a dime-store hat, preposterous organdy "Sunday best" dress and Mary Jane shoes.

Her ear-to-ear grin and "Howdeee! Jest so proud to be here!" have become in the ensuing years the very symbol of what the Grand Ole Opry is all about. She has taken her wry, corn-pone jokes about life in rural Grinders Switch overseas and to every state in the Union, logging over a million miles in the air. She has performed everywhere from high school auditoriums to the best-equipped television studios in the country. She has worked with everyone from Roy Acuff to Perry Como. She is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame. And still, whenever she appears on the Opry, she knocks 'em dead.

Minnie's incredibly varied, rich career will soon be the subject of an autobiography to be published by Simon and Schuster. But the real-life Minnie Pearl, at 66, finds herself with little time these days to look back. Despite her semi-retirement eleven years ago, she is still working steadily, with a variety of highly-prized jobs to choose from.

"You would think," she said recently, "That being at retirement age and all that there would be a slack-up, but it hasn't worked that way."

Last year, as an example, she made five network television appearances between October and December and this February made her first non-Minnie Pearl television appearance on ABC's *The Love Boat*. It's a pace many a younger actor would envy.

Offstage an engaging, direct woman with a soft, cultivated Southern accent, Minnie and her husband live quiet but active lives. She jokingly calls herself a suburban matron, but enjoys her tennis games (she's an avid player), her charitable work and her social life. After all, she points out, she was 55 years old before she got off the road and was able to reach this phase. Still, full retirement is out of the question.

"I have to stay on the road occasionally. I miss the laughter," she says simply.

Laughter is a subject Minnie has devoted a good deal of thought to. She refers to it frequently, gesturing, making jokes, telling anecdotes to illustrate a point. At times she is analytical, every inch the professional comedienne. At times she is breezily comic. And at times when she talks about laughter she is reverent.

"There is a poem I keep on my desk," she says. "'A bell's not a bell til you ring it and a song's not a song til you sing it. Love in your heart wasn't put there to stay. Love isn't love til you give it away.'"

"Laughter is the same way. The first thing you think of when you hear a joke is to want to tell it, to share it. . . ." She smiles, and gestures emphatically. "You see, I believe in God and I believe he intends for us to laugh or He never would have made things so beautiful. I know the

Lord has a sense of humor or He never would have made little children and monkeys. He *couldn't* have put as many funny people in the world without a sense of humor."

She remembers her own first fascination with laughter, when twice a year as a child she travelled to Nashville and, while her mother shopped for clothes, she would sit in the Palace Theater watching vaudeville shows.

"I didn't realize at the time that this was going to be my life's work, but I had this funny feeling about watching this one gal work," Minnie said. "Her name was Elvirey Weaver and she was a lot like Marjorie Main or Marie Dressler—a comic heavy. It was pure slapstick comedy and I ate it up.

"I'd sit through three or four shows. I'd sit there and I'd see the lights. I didn't see that it was tawdry and I didn't see that half the canvas was off the backdrop and that it was in tatters. I didn't see that these were tired vaudevillians that had to get themselves back up together for the four o'clock show. I thought it was delightful . . . that she could make people laugh."

Her eyes grow merry and a little soft when she relates incidents like this from her childhood. She was the youngest daughter of a successful lumberman in the small town of Centerville, Tenn., not far from the real-life town of Grinders Switch. Her family life was happy, much like the Waltons, she says. For a time her theatrical interests were more oriented toward drama than comedy. After graduation from high school she attended Nashville's fashionable Ward Belmont school, where she studied speech and drama, then returned to Centerville to teach.

"Finally after two years I couldn't take teaching any longer, because I'm not a teacher," Minnie said. "I'm a performer. The Lord never intended me to be a teacher and I thank Him for that."

Anxious for a chance to see the world, she left Centerville and joined the Wayne P. Sewell Company, a theatrical group





The real Mrs. Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon

based in Georgia. For six years she toured small towns in the South, giving dramatic readings and directing plays. It was a grueling, far from glamorous experience, and now the occasion of dozens of funny anecdotes. It was during those years that Minnie Pearl had her beginnings, a character gleaned from the dozens of Plain-Jane, starstruck girls she came across in her travels.

In 1940 came her chance to audition for the Grand Ole Opry on a late-night portion of the show. She recalls now that she was absolutely terrified by the ordeal.

Ironically, though she was to spend the next several decades as part of a growing country music business, at the time the music wasn't a favorite of hers.

"I didn't dislike country music back then, but I didn't particularly like it. I didn't know it very well, you see," she said. "When I was growing up my father was an outdoorsman and he loved country music. The sound of the Grand Ole Opry was there in my home on Saturday nights as an accompaniment to whatever I was doing, but I didn't listen closely because I would be getting ready to go to a dance. I preferred pop music and used to play it on the piano."

She smiles recalling her earliest days on the Opry. Her associations with country music people have turned out to be the most rewarding she has ever had, she says, and date back to the time when country music was a struggle and ties between the performers were close.

"I'll tell you, I've seen a lot in 38 years. I've seen a little, tiny show that I knew when I came in 1940, when nobody had or-

nate homes and they were paying on their cars and some had trailers and some were living in one room in a boarding house, trying to have their babies and pay for it. When we were all starting out and nobody around Nashville cared much about their kind of music. When we were riding out to all different kinds of places trying to make a dime. I've seen it grow from that into this multi-million dollar industry," she says with a note of amazement in her voice.

She is concerned, though, that something has been lost in the course of the industry's growth.

"What is most important in this change, after all? What have we kept? What have we lost? Everybody has a different concept of that, but I feel that we may have lost some of that camaraderie and closeness that existed. We've gotten so busy making money and working out tax shelters and financial deals."

Despite her doubts, she feels the musical roots of the business are strong. She finds much to like in contemporary country music.

"I loved the fact that Willie came up with a monster hit with no electrified instruments and the sound of pure country music behind him on *Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain*, she said. "But when people say 'Minnie, I'm really worried about that rock influence. These new guys come in here and they've got that rock sound and they'll ruin the Opry,' I always think I'll die laughing. That's what they said when the first drum was put on there."

If she has seen major changes come about in her own life and those of her colleagues, there is at least one thing that

has changed very little over the years: Cousin Minnie herself. In fact, that may be her strength, says her creator.

"I think one thing that has kept Minnie alive is that in a changing world where people are shocked daily by change and hurt by change, disillusioned, they can go back to Minnie Pearl as changeless, because she hasn't changed anything. She talks about the same thing she always did. And she even has the same gags, mostly because I'm not smart to get any new ones."

Mrs. Cannon and Minnie have developed a fascinating relationship over their years together. Known to nearly everyone even offstage as Minnie Pearl (that's even the way she answers her home phone), Mrs. Cannon speaks of her dramatic creation always in the third person, always with affection—and always with respect.

"I was talking to Jim Nabors once about how I always speak of her in the third person and he said that he always spoke of Gomer the same way," she says. "I became more ruminative and more reflective and more analytical about her after I got off the road."

The two, though close friends, are not the same people, she points out, and hints that Minnie may be the real pro on stage.

"At times she comes off pretty funny, I think, but that's when I don't get in front of her and just let her handle it. If I do that she just opens up like a flower. But just let me say 'We've got so and so here, let's not use that gag,' and then I can't find her. She just takes off and she's just a little wisp or something backstage. She's gone and there I stand with my bare face hanging out and her hat on."

Among Minnie Pearl's other virtues, as Mrs. Cannon sees them:

"She thinks she's cute. I don't think I'm cute, but she thinks she's cute and I love getting into her skin and feeling cute.

"She has a wonderful love of people. Normally I go along pretty good, but I finally get tired if I'm on a long-term engagement. I'm not as pleasant as I would like to be. But she never gets tired. I've wondered sometimes what she thinks about having to get into that costume and work over and over."

There are times when the real-life Minnie Pearl wonders what her career might have been like without the stage Minnie, without the Grand Ole Opry, if she had wound up on Broadway instead. She would still like to pursue some straight dramatic roles, a decided possibility in the future.

"If I had it to do over again the goal I would strive for would be to be a comedic actress like Carol Burnett," she said. "I would do comedy, but I would spend more time establishing a more varied spectrum of comedy." She pauses for a minute, thinking it over.

"But then, think what I would have missed if I hadn't created Minnie Pearl and just let her take over." ■

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*As a child she predicted
she'd win the CMA
Female Vocalist Award in 1981,
and now it looks like
she just may do it.*

by **DOLLY CARLISLE**

Charly McClain

The story goes that when a very young Charlotte McClain was watching the first Annual Country Music Awards Show on television, she suddenly exclaimed to her parents that she would win the Female Vocalist of the Year Award in 1981. Her parents supposedly exchanged glances, chuckled and then dismissed the statement as the fantasies of a young child. But only moments later, her older brother bounced into the room to proclaim the same prediction. Her parents again only chuckled, but both thought it strange that their two children would spontaneously and separately forecast the same happening.

"I made that statement years before I ever thought about singing professionally," remarks 22-year-old Charly McClain. "It just slipped out of my mouth. Wouldn't it be something if it came true?"

It is now eighteen years later, the name Charlotte has been changed to Charly for professional reasons and Charly is regarded as one of Country Music's brightest young talents. At 22, she has been awarded *Country Music Magazine's* Annual Bullet Award as Runnerup in the Vocalist of the year category, and currently has a single high on the Country Music charts. More than a few country music veterans postulate that with the right promoter, manager, producer and songs, Charly McClain will be a superstar. "She's definitely got the talent," was one comment.

Referred to as the "Princess of Country Music" within the business walls, Charly certainly makes a striking candidate for this possible status. Petite (5'1", 100 pounds), dark complexion (her grandmother was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian), doe-like brown hair that falls below her waistline with a finely chiseled face and body, Charly's physical appearance does justice to her pleasing, mellow-sounding love songs. "I think I sing the sad love songs best," she reflected in her Memphis recording studio one recent winter afternoon. "I at least identify with them the most."

It is those love songs that have proven most successful for Charly on the charts—*Lay Down*, a single from her first album *Here's Charly McClain*, *Let Me Be Your Baby* and *That's What You Do To Me*, both cuts from her second and most recent album *Let Me Be Your Baby*.

But the truth be known, Charly turned her back on love to follow the path of her own singing career. Facing a wedding date at 18 she was given a choice of a career or full-time wifedom by her fiancé. "There was no way I was going to give up singing," she said. "I broke the engagement and have never regretted my decision. I have no interest in sitting around doing nothing."

According to Charly, her ex-love still calls from time to

time, but only to inquire about her career. "He's married now," she notes with a smile. "But he's apologized since our split for making such a request. He can see how serious I was about singing."

Today, Charly has an off-again, on-again romance with Shylo band member Danny Hogan, but attracts fan mail from such admirers as Cincinnati Red's catcher Johnny Bench. "We're just good friends," she emphasizes.

Charly's singing career began, at least in part, as the result of her ailing father. "He was in the hospital for over a year with tuberculosis," she recounted. "During that time, the children couldn't see him and our only means of communications was through taped messages. In the beginning, we sent him talking tapes, but eventually they turned musical. Shortly afterwards, my brother and I formed a band and kept right on singing."

Charly and her brother formed the nucleus of a locally based Memphis band that soon had to disband because of the draft. It was then that Charly auditioned and won a spot on the Mid-South Jamboree, a Memphis version of the Grand Ole Opry. It too, eventually folded. After that she had a stint as an opening act on the O.B. McClinton Show. But her break came when she by chance happened to sing a few numbers with her favorite local band, Shylo, at the Mid-South Fair in Memphis. "They just called me up on stage," she reminisced. A few days later, Shylo producer Larry Rogers, called asking for Charly to record a few songs on tape. "Larry took the tape to producer Billy Sherrill," she recalled. "I got a contract with Epic a few weeks later. It sounds like I had an easy way of it, but I had pushed tapes for years on Nashville's Music Row with no success."

"It really hasn't been easy," she continued with a flicker of disillusionment in her eyes. "There were a lot of promises made that never came through. I was also shocked at how many times sexual favors were expected. I used to spend time with my parents talking about it. I remember one guy in particular who had a tremendous amount of influence who promised me favors if I was hospitable toward him. But I just couldn't do it. I have a conscience to live with. I know when I do something wrong. So I decided if I have to do that to make it, I just won't make it. I want to be successful based on talent. I haven't screwed around to make it where I am and I won't do it now."

Born in a conservative, Pentecostal home, Charly regards herself as old fashioned in many respects. She works long hours and enjoys it; she still lives with her parents in Memphis and she wants to remain feminine in an industry that has turned many women callous and hardedged. "I've always worked hard," she reflected. "Even though I had a



younger sister and older brother, I was the one who worked with my father on his electrician jobs. I was also the one who usually helped with the dishes. Partially for that reason I think I became closer to my parents than either my brother or sister. I became particularly close to my dad."

But unlike a Tanya Tucker whose family became her entourage, Charly struck out on the road alone. "When I was a single act, there was only me to depend on. I did that for two years. I'm very close to my parents, but I make my own decisions. My father gives his opinions, but he would never think of actually interfering. I think in the long run, it's better this way."

Much of Charly's appeal is her soft, childlike sound and her quiet innocent Southern demeanor that sets her apart from the brash come-on appeal of a Donna Summer or Bonnie Tyler. "I want to remain feminine," contemplated Charly. "There are a number of female singers who are pushing themselves as sex symbols. But I think sex appeal is a natural phenomenon. If you got it, you can't hide it. But if you don't there's really nothing

you can do to try and have it. So I think it's better just to be what I am. But I do want to remain soft."

The past year has had its bumps for Charly. She has been hampered with recurring sinus problems and chest congestion. Only recently she discovered she is allergic to grass, trees, dogs, sheep, milk, cheese and "almost everything." "I'm taking allergy shots which have made a big difference," she said with a sigh.

Before forming her current traveling band, the "Bluff City" in December, Charly had become disillusioned with road work. "It was depressing to appear in a city never knowing what the circumstances were going to be or if the band that was to accompany me was going to be good. I was very tired. My new band has made all the difference in road work. Now I feel very proud of our act. It's polished, professional and I feel good."

But it was after the first gig Charly performed with her new band that their equipment was stolen. It was eventually recovered, however her group was forced to perform with rented equipment for the

"Sex appeal is a natural phenomenon, if you got it you can't hide it. I want to remain soft."

next several nights. "She's tough," observed one record company executive. "She went on like a real trooper."

"When I get enough money, I want to invest in some elaborate props, Vegas style, said Charly concerning her road jobs. "I hate to say this as a performer, but if you've seen one country music act, you've seen them all. I would like for mine to be special."

Charly's desire to present her audience with a unique delivery is also the major reason she continues to record in Memphis versus Nashville. "I wouldn't want to move to Nashville," Charly proclaimed. "I like being away from the music industry and I think I get a different sound recording in Memphis. As long as things are going well, I'm going to stay here."

"I want to be different," she continued, "with my own style. I don't want to be compared to anybody else. I'm not a great singer, I know that. But I do want to be myself. That's the only way I'll ever be able to win that CMA award in 1981." ■

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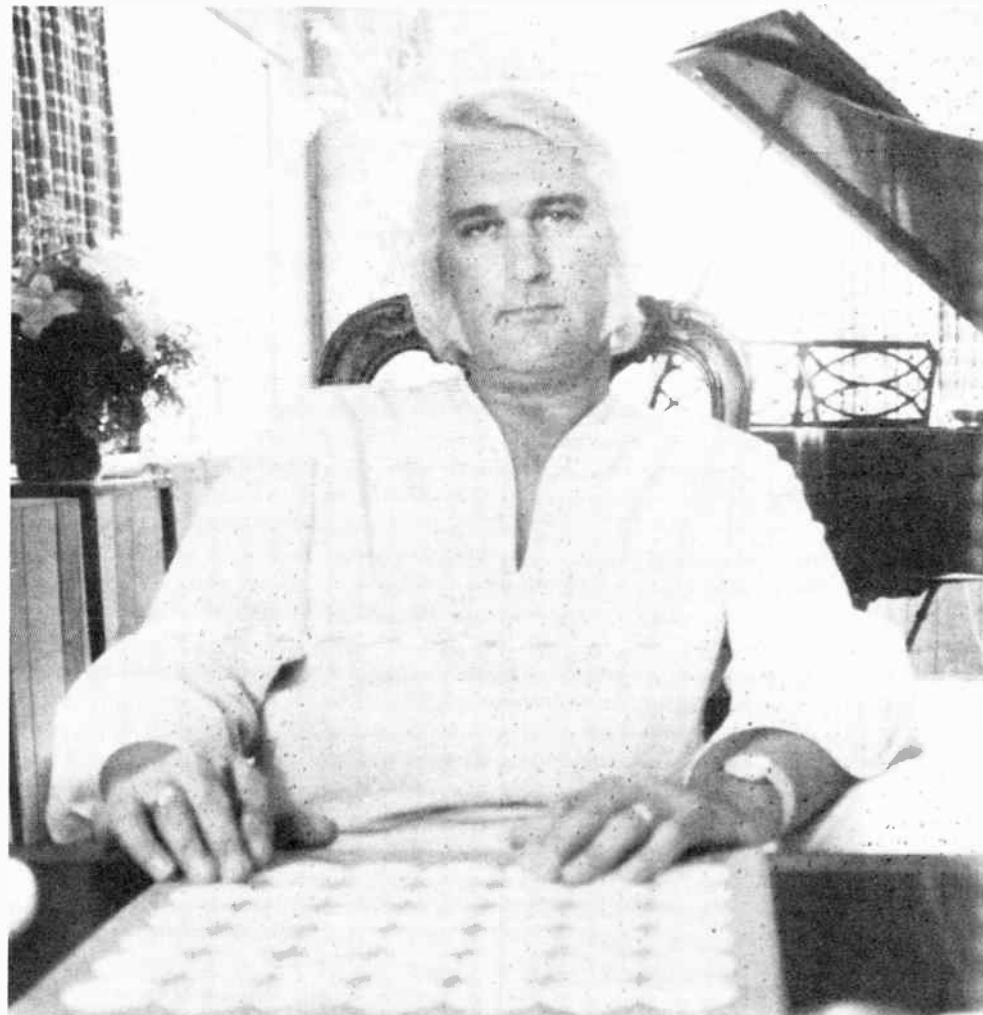
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Charlie Rich Just Rollin' With The Flow

by BOB ALLEN

If a movie were ever to be made of Charlie Rich's life, then Marlon Brando should surely play the lead. There is with the two men, a number of obvious similarities: an air of brooding, disconsolate nobility—the sulking, self-effacing elegance of a star ill at ease in the midst of the excitement he commands; the thick mane of silver hair; the restive, histrionic gestures that both use to underline their points when they speak; the subdued, vaguely nasal voices; and the large, 200 pound-plus frames which for both men, have gone slightly to paunch. And there are even vague parallels in their careers, both of which have been a series of monumental triumphs and colossal blunders, interspersed with insufferably long periods of relative hiatus.

For more than 15 years, as he played one-night stands, mainly throughout the South and Southeast ("Arkansas, Texas, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi . . . wherever I could drive to . . ."), success, except for a few fleeting tastes of it, eluded Charlie Rich. But then, after recording for about a half-dozen different record labels, in the mid-'70s, he and Epic producer, Billy Sherrill changed all that with a series of hit records that began with *I Take It On Home*, and peaked with *Behind Closed Doors*, a record which broke all musical boundaries, swept the CMA Awards in 1974, won Charlie a Grammy, and swept



him out of 15 years of relative obscurity and into the vortex of national recognition. (The L.P., *Behind Closed Doors*, has since gone on to sell nearly four million copies.) An excellent follow-up (co-written by Billy Sherrill) fanned the fire still more; and as Charlie found out, despite the preparation that nearly two-decades on the skull orchard circuit might have given him, "success is never what somebody thinks it is. It was just a terribly hard adjustment to make. After *Behind Closed Doors*, it seemed I could never get any time with my family. I had problems wondering if I was going to be able to *keep* my family. It's awful hard for a guy to concentrate on pleasing an audience when he knows his wife is at home crying, or his kids are at home sick. It's an *upsetting* thing. You feel like you've gained in one way, but you've missed a lot in another. It's a tormenting thing to decide whether you should go on this six-week promotion tour, and you may get to see your wife one time, and you come back and your kids have grown two inches, you know. . . . The suspicions that lengths of time away from people leave you with, I guess, is probably the hardest thing to get used to. I got to the point where it seemed like the two forces were pulling me apart (he gestures extreme tension by locking the fingers of two hands

Charlie keeps his 13 year-old Steinway in his Memphis office "for sentimental reasons." and pulling them forcefully away from each other); the family force here and the music force here. . . ." He shakes his head and sighs. "And still, in a way, it's uncomfortable."

Always a thoughtful, introspective man, the roil and pressure of national recognition that followed in the wake of *Behind Closed Doors* seemed to drive Charlie even deeper into his introspectiveness. He seemed to be drinking more, and often in public, he seemed obviously ill at ease. He gave the impression of a man who was along for the ride, clinging precariously to the frantic locomotion of his own career which had taken on a furious momentum of its own. But deep down, he seemed to be wondering if, in fact, he was on the right train after all.

Eventually, after he had won the coveted CMA Award for Entertainer of the Year, and weathered the fiasco the following year when a somewhat under-the-weather Charlie Rich made a spectacle of himself on national television when he came onstage to present the CMA Award to his successor ("That was one of those unfortunate things I'm not proud of," Charlie recalls today. "I wouldn't go on TV and intentionally screw up. There was no



animosity or resentment toward anybody. It was just that I happened to be a little ill at the time, and that's about what it amounts to . . . regardless of what from."), the storm slowly began to subside. He and Sherrill found a number of modest, but nonetheless substantial follow-up hits like *A Very Special Love Song*, *Every Time I Touch You (I Get High)* and *Rollin' With The Flow*.

Several more years passed, and gradually, the Silver Fox, as he had come to be known to his fans and admirers, was once again, becoming less and less visible on the music scene; Charlie seemed to purposely be trying to slow down the fast train on which he'd been riding, and bring a more realistic set of dimensions to his life. In 1977, he parted ways with Epic Records and ended his ten-year association with producer, Billy Sherrill, and moved over to United Artists where his last several LP's have been produced by Larry Butler.

"I went through a lot of sweaty nights, worrying about it and trying to decide what to do," Charlie says. "But ten years of recording is a long time, and you get to thinking just like the other guy. I have the highest respect for Billy, and I think the work we did together was good. But I think there are times when you need renewed vigor, and you need to make a

change. It was a good financial move and everything finally came to a head, and it's worked out fine up to this point."

In the few years preceding his label change, Charlie had clung to what one might call a sort of self-imposed obscurity. For years, he has had his home (a beautiful tree-shrouded five-acre estate, complete with a huge wrought-iron fence and electronically operated gates, situated in one of Memphis's most exclusive suburbs) and his offices in Memphis, and in recent times, he has been seen less and less around Nashville. Similarly, he seemed to have lightened his touring schedule considerably, and he seldom gave interviews. Reports from the hinterlands trickled in that the occasional shows he did do, were lackluster, and that Charlie seemed bored, sullen . . . disinterested. All that was enhanced by the fact that anything that Charlie did was obscured by the towering shadow of the phenomenal success of *Behind Closed Doors*.

But in the meantime, Charlie had been operating on a low key, carefully investing his money, with the help of his financial advisors. Among his present holdings are: a small shopping center, some undeveloped property in the Memphis suburbs, as well as farms in Arkansas and Tennessee. Earlier, he had also invested in a franchise of "Wendy's" Hamburger stands in the Nashville-middle Tennessee area, and it has turned out to be a wise investment. Recently, Nashville's daily paper, the *Tennessean* reported that Charlie had sold his share in the Wendy's franchise for "cash installments totalling \$4 million."

The Wendy's thing was a really lucky thing that happened to us." (When talking about himself and his career, Charlie often uses the plural, referring to Margaret Ann, his wife of 26 years, and his four children and two grandchildren.) "It's kind of like a hit record: it would have been very easy to have just skipped over it. . . . It alone, is worth more money than I expected I would ever hear about." He smiles, as if still pleasantly bemused by it all. "I wasn't even thinking in figures over five hundred bucks."

* * *

I had never actually seen Charlie Rich perform until just a few months before our interview. It was last fall when both of us were in Dallas for the premier of *Every Which Way But Loose*, the Clint Eastwood film in which Charlie sings and makes a cameo appearance. Charlie was present for most of the weekend's festivities which included an almost endless round of parties, receptions, press conferences, photo sessions and film screenings; but for the most part, he seemed weary, detached and a trifle bored. His publicist enthusiastically set up interviews for him, and Charlie, just as unenthusiastically, cancelled them.

His brief performance on the second night, at a reception held in a Dallas dinner

club, was a near-disaster. Obviously under the weather, he loped nonchallantly onstage and sat at his piano for a stiff and singularly uninspired set of songs. He slurred lyrics and forgot the titles of songs. (Ah . . . here's a lovely number I wanta do for ya called . . . uh. . . ." He shoved a cigarette into the corner of his lips, fumbled with a match and then turned to his bass player . . . "uh, *what's* the name of it? . . .) He spent long, embarrassing, but strangely comic moments fidgetting on his piano stool and rummaging through the bulging pockets of his sportscoat, and he aimed humorously snide remarks at his captive audience, which included various record company and movie executives, as well as Clint Eastwood himself. ("Well, it's sure been nice playin' for you tonight," he told the crowd toward the end of his show. ". . . Actually, *we're* gonna be up here for another eight hours, but *you* all can leave whenever you want.")

"I don't know," I overheard one writer explain after the show, "Ole Charlie's goin' downhill. . . ."

* * *

Nearly three months later, I am watching Charlie Rich in action again. This time he is behind the large desk in his spacious, comfortable office in his headquarters just off the interstate, about 20 minutes east of downtown Memphis. Dressed in a comfortable looking denim shirt, faded levis and cowboy boots, he is talking on the phone and going over bits and pieces of paperwork brought to him by his employees. He is nursing a sore throat which he'd like to shake before he journeys to the west coast the next day for some television tapings; there is a bottle of cough syrup and another of vitamin C tablets on the desk in front of him.

At this point in time, Charlie is back on the record charts in full force, with *three* separate songs, released by *three* separate record labels: In the number one spot, is a duet with Janie Fricke called *On My Knees* (a song that Charlie originally wrote and recorded nearly 20 years ago, back in his days with Sun Records and Sam Phillips) on Epic; a song called *I'll Wake You Up When I Get Home*, released on Elektra, as part of the soundtrack from the Eastwood film; and *The Fool Strikes Again*, a single from his latest LP on United Artists.

"If you've got three or four things in the charts, it's not always good," Charlie frowns. "It can cause resentment . . . not only from the listeners, but from other artists who would have liked those slots. But," he laughs. "I'm not gonna cry too much, because I waited my turn in line."

It is a very cold day in January, and the landscape around suburban Memphis—the trees, the fields, the houses and the telephone lines—is drenched with thick, crystalline ice formations. Charlie's office, as you might expect, is full of trophies

from his career: platinum and gold records, framed photographs, music industry awards, and an old upright Steinway piano, the very first piano he ever owned. ("I used it for 13 or 14 years. It's not that good of a piano, but I just keep it for sentimental reasons.") From the other extremities of the suite of offices, there drift in all the clattering sounds of jet-age, mass-communications efficiency: the beeps and buzzes of telephones and office intercoms and the subdued rattle of electric typewriters. There is something just a little incongruous about this sophisticated operation, as it is, plopped down right next to a small suburban shopping center (which Charlie also owns), on the edge of a quiet, rustic looking field in the outward-most reaches of this west Tennessee suburb. It's as if Charlie has just plucked up a little piece of Nashville and moved it down the interstate, 200 miles or so, to Memphis.

"Yeh, it's about 200 miles to Nashville," says Charlie as he gets up from his desk and moves over to a sofa near the window, beyond which, the sun is beginning to go down over the beautiful quiet landscape of snow-covered fields, hedges, and weather beaten farm buildings. Charlie lights a cigarette and takes a drink of the cup of coffee and then one of the Coke he is chasing it with. "I should know how far it is to Nashville, because I've driven it at least a thousand times," he smiles. "And I *enjoyed* the drive, because everywhere we go now, we fly, and I'm not too crazy about that.

"That's something I've tried to decide," he adds, fidgeting slightly on the sofa, "whether it would be better to be in Nashville, rather than just read what's going on in the trades (trade magazines) which are a few weeks late anyhow. But I can get there in 30 minutes, by plane, when I have to. I like Nashville very much, but living there, I'm afraid that I would get so totally into it, that everything else, my family and my business would suffer. So far, it's worked out pretty good. I'm not gonna say we're happy as hell, livin' here, but it's developed into a pretty nice set-up and we've gotten accustomed to it.

"Still, I miss pallin' around with people . . . and talkin' to people . . . like Chet (Atkins) . . . people I respect in the business. . . . I think people need that to keep their enthusiasms going." A flickering trace of sadness passes over his face like a wince. "I don't know. There are a lot of people I really think a lot of that I just don't get to see much anymore. They go their way and I go mine, and there are a lot of deep friendships that have kind of gotten lost along the way. . . . Sometimes I'll go out in my studio in back of my house, or I'll come over to this old piano, and I'll bang around on it a little bit, and I'll wish maybe I had someone to share an idea with or something. I don't know. It's one of those situations you never resolve. . . ."

Charlie Rich is a sensitive man . . . and perhaps something of a worrier. Watching him sitting on the edge of the sofa in the muted, late afternoon sunlight, puffing deeply on his cigarette and occasionally running his fingers through his full head of silver hair, you can almost sense the weight he carries on his shoulders; he is full of empathy and concern for his fellow entertainers, and he seems sincerely apologetic toward those people who may have caught one of his shows on a bad night. ("It's awful hard to *fake* feeling good," he admits. "That's another reason that so many people try to fortify themselves with booze or whatever . . . to at least *appear* to be in a good frame of mind. Like Dallas. . . . We couldn't seem to get things going like we felt they should be. We didn't want to be a downer to people, but we *were* down. . . . I certainly don't intend to take it out on people. . . . Probably when I feel that way, it



would be best for me to stay home. . . .") Charlie comes across as a man who occasionally blunders, occasionally drinks more than he should, yet beneath it all, really *wants* to give it his best shot. Most of all, he is a man painfully devoid of pretense, who lives with a constant, acute awareness of the compromises and the ongoing razor's-edge tension that is inevitably brought on by the conflicts and claustrophobia of stardom. And he carries the weight of this concern and anxiety not only for himself, but for his contemporaries as well . . . George Jones ("I've been through the same old bit as George. I've known for a long time now, he's been having problems, but I really didn't know it had gotten as bad as it was.") . . . The late Bob Luman ("I heard about him dyin' recently. At one time, he and I travelled around together. . . . It makes you just wonder if you couldn't do a little something' to help him in a situation like

that. . . .").

Charlie is, in fact, so troubled by the high attrition rate among country entertainers that one of his dreams is to someday, create a retreat or a treatment center somewhere, specifically for music people and their particular problems. "I've just had to take a couple of weeks and check in some place and get away from it a time or two," he explains. "I was just about at my wit's end. And boy, for me to stay in one place for two weeks is something. But it was very helpful to me. It helped me straighten things out that had gotten so balled up. It seems that that happens so much to people in the entertainment business that it would be nice to have a place to go for people who don't want it that widely known about all their problems.


"I don't know," he adds, "it may end up being a pet project of mine; there's just a need for some help of some kind along the way there somewhere. . . . I'm talking about a specialized treatment center, just to help a guy get over a hurdle and then he can go back and do his thing. I don't expect there's a place that could cure the ills of everybody in the business and stop everybody from taking pills or drinking or whatever. . . . But just helpin' somebody get over a hurdle in my experience, can make a difference in the rest of their lives.

"The music business is kind of like a circus to me," he adds. "It's the old 'Hey Rube!' bit: If a guy needs help, he shouts, 'Hey Rube!' and the other carnival dudes come to his aid, because that family is all they've got, and because they are that *family*. . . . I think a lot of people like Waylon and Cash have helped their fellow man in the same business."

In no uncertain terms, Charlie expresses a strong kindred bond with his musical peers. He seems to smile through their triumphs and cry through their crises, with nearly the same intensity he does his own. "It's kind of like a brotherhood thing," he explains. "It goes way on back there. Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash and that group all came out of Memphis, and I was lucky enough to get right in on the tail end of it. The first time I met Billy Sherrill, was in a club we were working in with a little four-piece combo down near the Alabama-Tennessee line. Billy came in and had on a white sports-coat. Later, he engineered the very first session I ever cut in Nashville, with Sam Phillips. Way back then, I remember him telling me, 'Charlie, one of these days, we're gonna make a *big* hit record together.'"

"Like Narvel Felts," Charlie adds. "We worked together years ago, and now it seems like he's finally doing good. That's another ole boy who's really paid his dues. I like to see guys I worked with, and knew way back down the road . . . to see 'em when they finally do pop up with something. It's like the time you're sitting with one of your buddies, having a beer, talking

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by **DOUGLAS B. GREEN**

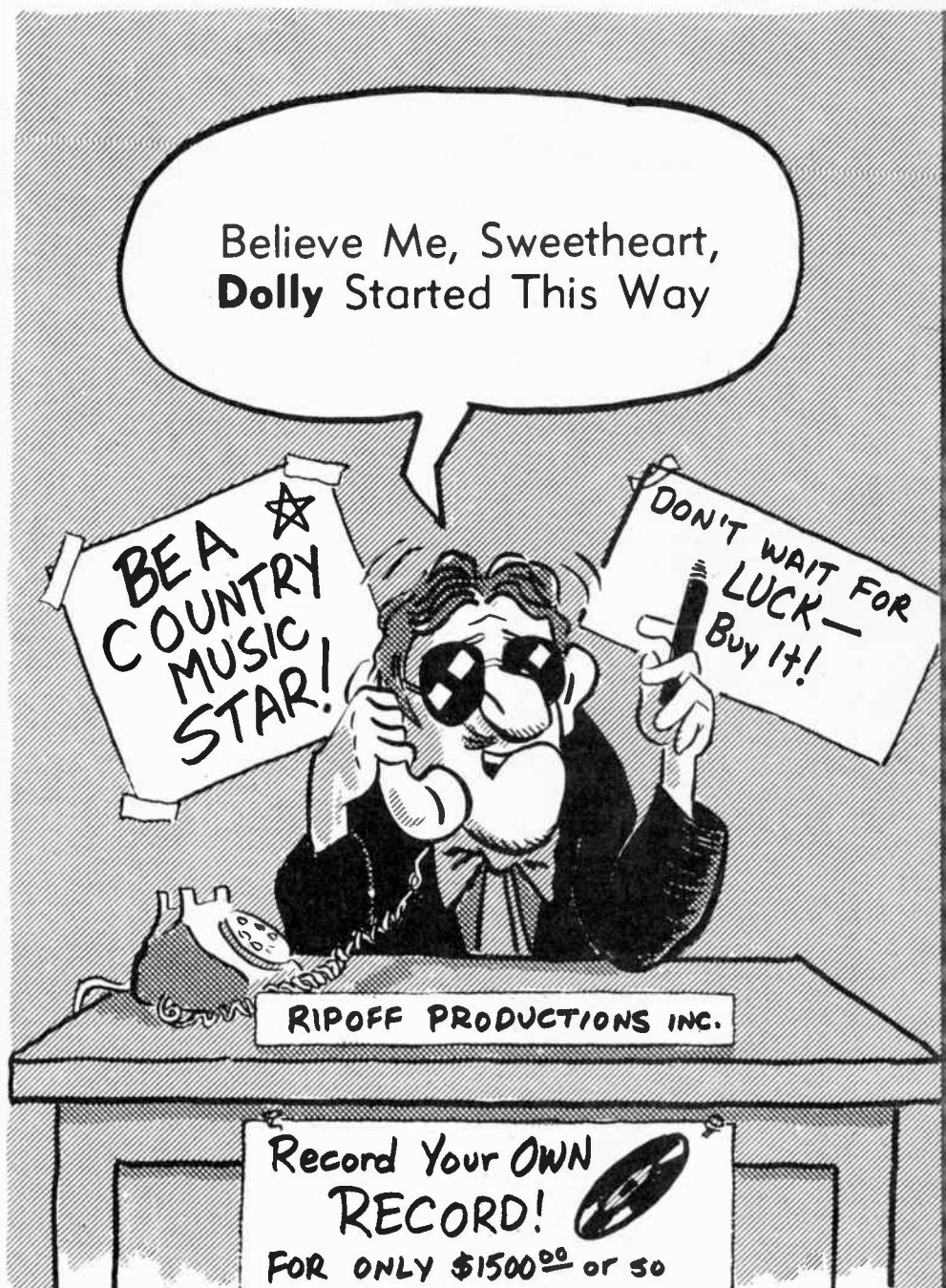
A young lady we'll call Diane sang a bit around her small South Carolina town, but occupied most of her time trying to make ends meet by working as a clerk in a five and dime store, adding to her husband's wages as a mechanic. Brown haired, slender, her looks are unremarkable, her voice sweet but untrained, nice but unprofessional.

She was approached by a man in the five and dime one day who claimed to recognize her as a singer, and gushed enthusiastically about her talent. She really ought to be making records, he insisted, and he was just the man to help her—after all, he was a Nashville-based music executive, and he wanted to help her get her start.

He was willing to go to the time and trouble to cut a record on her, a guaranteed smash, and would use the best facilities in town—Bradley's Barn, where they do Loretta Lynn records, and have the best backup singers, and the best Nashville studio musicians. All she had to do was put up the initial financing—\$10,000 would do nicely, he claimed—which would quickly be made back once the record became a smash hit.

Flattered and awestruck, she nonetheless turned him down; she and her husband had nowhere near that kind of money, and no way to get it. He persisted nonetheless: he believed in her talent so much, he insisted, that he would co-invest in her future out of his own pocket, dropping her cost to \$5,000. She still demurred, but he was so persuasive she agreed to accompany him to meet the president of the production company involved, which we'll call Golden Eagle Productions. Once they spoke, the president of Golden Eagle agreed to drop the price even further; he too was willing to invest in her future.

If Diane and her husband could just



Cartoon by Campbell. Reprinted, courtesy of the Nashville Tennessean.

come up with \$2,500, they would be able to produce and promote a hit record, using the best studio and the best musicians in Nashville, including such names as Hargus "Pig" Robbins on piano and Lloyd Green on steel guitar. Further, Golden Eagle would hand-deliver the finished record to the 48 top radio stations in the U.S., and mail out copies to 1,500 other stations. This would guarantee air play, chart action, and a big hit record. Diane and her husband signed a perfectly legal contract and paid \$1,000 down.

They paid another \$1,500 when they got to Nashville, but things weren't exactly as they imagined: the offices of Golden Eagle Productions were not on Nashville's world-famous Music Row, but were in the apartment of the president and his wife. The

fellow who had first contacted her at the five and dime was in the music business all right; he was Mel Street's bus driver. Instead of Bradley's Barn, the session was held at The Pickin' Post in Lebanon, Tennessee, 30 miles east of Nashville.

The Pickin' Post was a demo studio; that is, a place where demo, or demonstration records are recorded. A songwriter might take a couple of musicians into a demo studio to record a tape suitable to effectively "pitch" songs to recording artists, or a band might make an audition tape there, but while a demo studio is adequate for these purposes, it is not equipped to record a first rate commercial recording. It was light years behind Bradley's Barn, technologically, and even Diane and her husband could tell that.

... Dolly Furdly Of Topeka,
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There were five good musicians there, but none of them was Lloyd Green, Pig Robbins, or anyone else of that calibre—or even close. She recorded there, the results of which on tape were competent—they claimed the backup singers would be added later—and they grandly announced to Diane that she'd been signed to a major label: Stardom Records.

Never heard of it? Neither had Diane: she finally became suspicious only to find that the president of Golden Eagle Productions and his wife had skipped town, and Mel Street's bus driver was nowhere to be found. She and her husband spent \$2,500 for a recording which amounted, in industry jargon, to a demo tape: a demonstration of her singing ability and no more; in no way suitable for commercial

release. She is currently trying to sue, but the responsible parties cannot be found.

* * *

Diane is but one of some 3,339 cases an attractive Music Row publisher named Betty Holt has on file. Her bulging filing cabinet contains reams of stories documenting a seamy, sleazy side of the music industry which its leaders have tried to ignore, but cannot any longer. Both Nashville daily papers have investigated the so-called "ripoff" industry, and CBS Television's *Sixty Minutes* came to Nashville in October of 1978 to explore the problem.

"We found an embarrassment of riches" claimed Mike Wallace. He said *Sixty Minutes* "has been getting complaints of unethical practices in the custom recording business in Nashville off and on for a

couple of years."

One such session was financed by *Sixty Minutes* for a Pennsylvania construction worker, going through the entire process step by step. Like Diane, Frank Crispo signed a perfectly legal contract and *Sixty Minutes* paid the \$3,000 Caprice Records asked as subsidy to record and promote a record. Crispo, a 40-year-old Elvis emulator of modest talent, did indeed record and his records were sent to radio stations all over the country, with no result. Mike Wallace concluded "To date there has been no reaction to the record, no followup. No one knows how many stations, if any, ever played his record, and Frank is back at his construction job. *Sixty Minutes* is out \$3,000."

This is indeed a big business. Betty Holt totaled up the astonishing figure of \$5,883,820 invested by 3,339 individuals in her files (that averages out to \$1,762.15 each), and her figures include *only* the cases she knows about and *only* covers the past two years.

* * *

Nashville is very much a land of enchantment for thousands of dreamers, thousands of hopefuls across the country, from dewy-eyed teenagers to bored and frustrated housewives, to local-level entertainers and beyond—one of Ms. Holt's cases involved a 60-year old Virginia nurse. All have entertained dreams of entering the glamorous, exciting music business in Nashville.

Virtually every person who comes to Nashville runs into these so-called "sharks," and though entertainers from Hank Williams to Kenny Rogers have warned the aspiring singer/songwriter that they exist, thousands still fall into their clutches yearly. If you've ever entertained thoughts of coming to Nashville to offer your songs or your voice, you'll meet a dozen such leeches within days, maybe even hours.

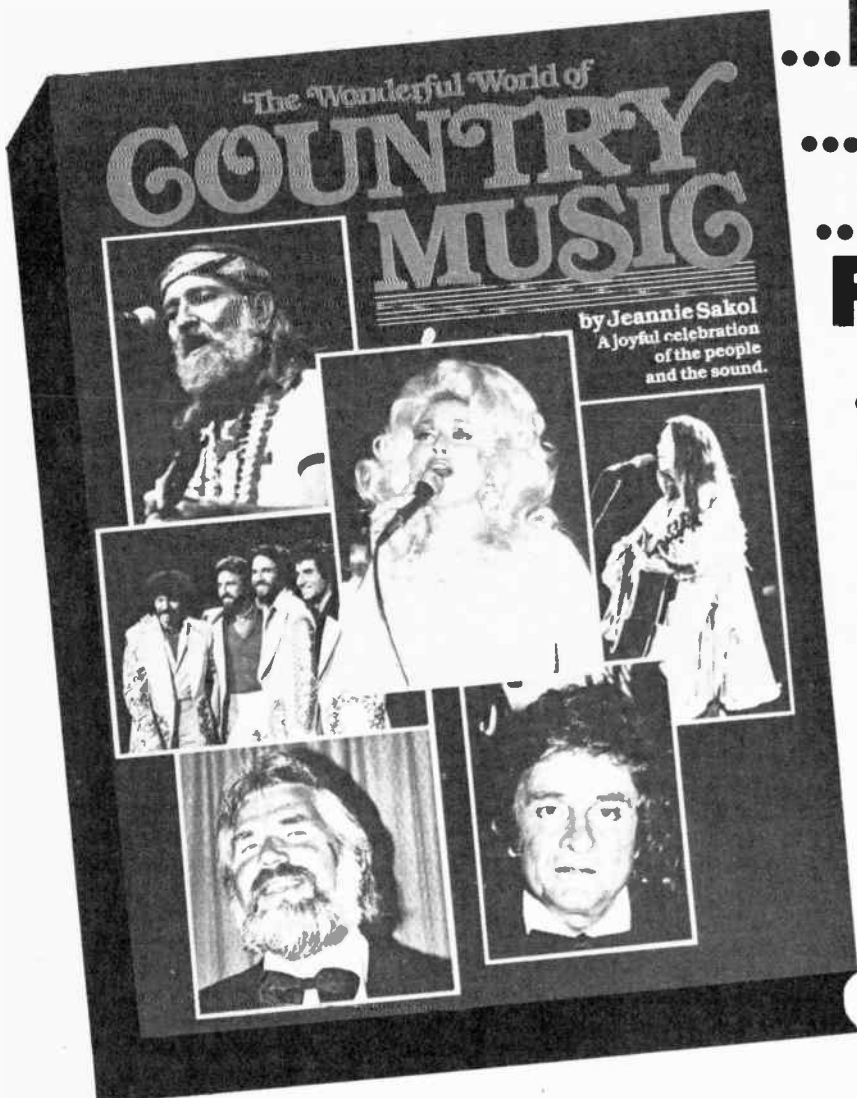
The way it often works is this: the hopeful singer or songwriter will contact (often through a magazine ad) an agency in Nashville by mail—although many simply drive to Nashville, knowing no one, hoping to be "discovered." Major labels and major song publishers won't usually take the time to audition these people, so they turn to those who will listen to them. The catch is, yes they'll record you or your song, but there's a price for these services and it is usually high, ranging from about \$100 per song to get it published, to \$1,000, \$2,500, and occasionally as high as \$30,000 to record you and promote your record and your career.

They'll promise to record you and your songs with the finest Nashville studio musicians, press thousands of copies of the record, promote it via ads in the trade papers, and send the record to every country radio station across the country, a number now approaching 2,000.

(Continued on page 67)

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Archie Campbell-Ole Opry's Good Humor Man: 3 Little Pigs/The Swimm'n' Hole/Who Does All The Work/Woman, more! Starday LP No. SLP-377
8 TK No. SLPT-1377

Will Carter

Will Carter-"Montana Slim": 2 Little Girls In Blue/Daddy And Home/Put My Little Shoes Away/Hey Hey Mr. DJ, more! Starday LP No. SLP-300
8 TK No. SLPT-1300

Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash-Showtime: The Old 97/Cry, Cry, Cry/Hey Porter/Rock Island Line/I Walk The Line/Folsom Prison, more!
LP No. S-106
8 TK No. ST-106

Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash And The Tennessee Two-Story Songs Of Trains And Rivers: Wreck Of Old 97/Blue Train/Wide Open Road, 8 more!
LP No. S-104
8 TK No. ST-104

Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash-Original Golden Hits, Vol. 1: I Walk The Line/Folsom Prison Blues/Cry, Cry/Next In Line/Hey Porter, more! Sun LP No. S-100
8 TK No. ST-100

Johnny Cash

Original Golden Hits Vol. 2: Ballad Of A Teen-Age Queen/Big River/The Ways Of A Woman In Love/Just About Time, more!
LP No. S-101
8 TK No. ST-101

Johnny Cash

Original Golden Hits, Vol. 3: Country Boy/Rock Island Line/The Wreck Of The Old 97/Oh Lonesome Me/Don't My Time, more!
LP No. S-127
8 TK No. ST-127

Johnny Cash

Country Gold: Cry, Cry, Cry/Katy Too/Born To Lose/Next In Line/Sugartime/I Forgot To Remember To Forget, more!
LP No. PO-246
8 TK No. PO-1246

Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash-Get Rhythm: Two Timin' Woman/Luther's Boogie/New Mexico/Country Boy/You Win Again, more!
LP No. S-105
8 TK No. ST-105

J. Cash & J.L. Lewis

J. Cash & J.L. Lewis-Sing Hank Williams: Hey Good Lookin'/Cold Cold Heart/Settin' The Woods On Fire, 7 more!
LP No. S-125
8 TK No. ST-125

J. Cash & J.L. Lewis

J. Cash & J.L. Lewis-Sunday Down South: Goodnight Irene/Old Time Religion/If The Good Lord's Willing/Silver Threads, more!
LP No. S-119
8 TK No. ST-119

Cash/Lewis/Rich

Greatest Hits, Vol. 1: I Walk The Line/Sittin' & Thinkin'/Great Balls Of Fire/Folsom Prison Blues/Lonely Weekends, more!
LP No. PO-248
8 TK No. PO-1248

Cash/Lewis/Rich

Greatest Hits, Vol. 2: There Won't Be Any More/Guess Things Happen That Way/Drinkin' Wine Spo-De-O-De, more!
LP No. PO-249
8 TK No. PO-1249

Ray Charles

14 Original Greatest Hits: Ain't That Fine/Honey, Honey/Let's Have A Ball/Sitting On Top Of The World, and much more!
LP No. K-5011 X
8 TK No. K-15011 X

Lew Childre

Old Time Get Together: Wreck Of The Old 97/Hog Callin' Blues/This Train/Alabama Bound/Sister Lucy Lee, more!
LP No. SLP-153
8 TK No. SLPT-153

The Cook Brothers

Opry Old Timers: Rag Time Annie/Roll On Buddy/Hung Down My Head And Cried/Will The Circle Be Unbroken, more!
LP No. SLP-182
8 TK No. SLPT-182

Cowboy Copas

Cowboy Copas-Best Of: Ride In My Little Red Wagon/Filipino Baby/Sunny Tennessee/Signed, Sealed, Delivered, more! Starday LP No. SLP-958
8 TK No. SLPT-1958

Cowboy Copas

16 Greatest Hits: Flat Top Guitar/Alabama/Signed, Sealed Delivered/I Dreamed Of A Hillbilly Heaven/Beyond The Sunset, more!
LP No. SD-3012
8 TK No. SDT-13012

C. Copas & H. Hawkin

In Memory: Lonesome 7-203/Sunny Side Of The Mountain/If I Ever Get Rich Mom/Slow Poke After All, more! Starday LP No. K-835
8 TK No. KT-1835

Billy Crash Craddock

Billy Crash Craddock-I'm Tore Up: Love Me Just A Little/Talk To Me/Betty Betty/Mama You Told Me, 9 more! Power Pak LP No. PO-281
8 TK No. PO-1281

Billy Crash Craddock

16 Favorite Hits: Your Love Is/Learning To Live Without You/I Love You More Every Day/2 Arms Full Of Lonely, more!
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8 TK No. SDT-13005

J.D. Crowe

J.D. Crowe And The New South: You Can Have Her/Devil In Disguise/God's Own Singer/Ten Degrees And Getting Colder, more!
LP No. SLP-489
8 TK No. SLPT-1489

S. Posey & S. Davis

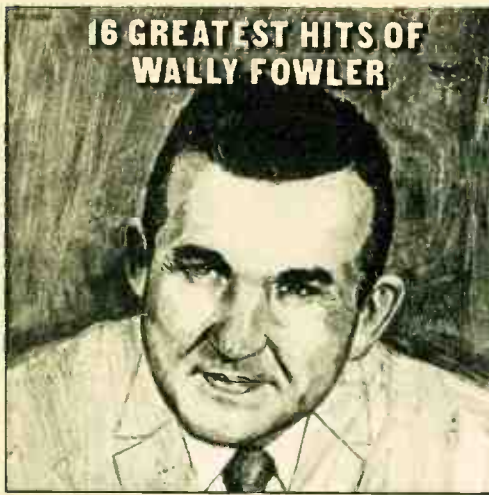
The Best Of: Born A Woman/Single Girl/I Take It Back/My Last Date With You/He Says The Same Things To Me, more!
LP No. GT-0005
8 TK No. GT8-0005

Bill Doggett

Hold It: Hold It/Boo-Da-Ba/Hipp Dippy/Pimento/Black Door Birdie/Blip Blop/Tanya Rainbow Riot/Lonestar Blues, more!
LP No. PO-269
8 TK No. PO-1269

Skateer Davis

Best Of The Best: The End Of The World/I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know/I'm A Lover (Not A Fighter), more!
LP No. GT-0014
8 TK No. GT8-0014



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Delmore Bros.-Best Of: Blues Stay Away From Me/Barnyard Boogie/I'll Be There/Tennessee Choo Choo/Hillbilly Boogie, more!
LP No. SLP-962
8 TK No. SLPT-1962

Ronnie Dove

Ronnie Dove-Greatest Hits: Right Or Wrong/Let's Start All Over Again/Happy Summer Days/One Kiss For Old Time Sake, more!
LP No. PO-286
8 TK No. PO-1286

Narvel Felts

Narvel Felts-Live: The End Of My World Is Near/Maybelline/Me & Bobby McGee/Swinging Doors, and 6 more hits! Power Pak
LP No. PO-237
8 TK No. PO-1-1027

Freddy Fender

Freddy Fender-Inside Louisiana State Prison: Our Pledge Of Love/Hello Loneliness/The Village Queen/Carmelia, more! Power Pak
LP No. PO-280
8 TK No. PO-1280

Lester Flatt

Rollin': Drink That Mash & Talk That Trash/Daddy Sang Bass/Yonder Stands Little Maggie/Show Me Around, more!
LP No. PO-293
8 TK No. PO-1293

Flatt & Scruggs

Flatt & Scruggs-Golden Hits Of: Foggy Mountain Breakdown/Salty Dog Blues/Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms, and 7 more!
LP No. PO-297
8 TK No. PO-1297

Wally Fowler

Wally Fowler-Greatest 16 Hits: Turn On The Radio/I'm In His Care/Farther Along/Closer Walk With Thee/Little Talk With Jesus, more!
LP No. SD-3020
8 TK No. SDT-13020

G. Lewis & Playboys

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LP No. KSD-1072
8 TK No. KSDT-11072

Pass The Apple: Recorded Live At The Redd Foxx Club, Hollywood, Cal.
LP No. KSD-1073
8 TK No. KSDT-11073

In A Nutshell: Recorded Live At The Redd Foxx Club, Hollywood, Cal.
LP No. KSD-1074
8 TK No. KSDT-11074

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The Greatest Gospel Groups: Blackwoods/Oak Ridge/Stamps/Speers...Guide My Feet/Keep Me...more groups more hits!
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8 TK No. PG-1723

Great Gospel

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LP No. PG-730
8 TK No. PG-1730

Hawshaw Hawkins

16 Greatest Hits: I'm Slowly Dying Of A Broken Heart/I Love You A 1000 Ways/Slow Poke/Lonesome 7-203, more!
LP No. SD-3013
8 TK No. SDT-13013

Bobby Helms

Bobby Helms-Greatest Hits: Fraulein/Work Things Out With Annie/The Midnight Of My Mind/You Are My Special Angel, more!
LP No. PO-283
8 TK No. PO-1283

David Houston

The Best Of: It Started All Over Again/So Many Ways/It's All Over/She's All Woman/Where Could I Go (But To Her), more!
LP No. GT-0012
8 TK No. GT8-0012

David Houston

David Houston-Ain't That Lovin' You Baby: So Many Ways/The Twelfth Of Never/Unchained Melody/Love Is A Miracle, more!
LP No. SD-990X
8 TK No. SDT-1990X

Ferlin Husky

Greatest Hits Of: Just For You/Fallen Star/Walkin' & Hummin'/Money Greases Wheels/The Wings Of A Dove/Timber, more!
LP No. SD-3018
8 TK No. SD-13018

George Jones

George Jones-Crown Prince Of Country Music: 1 Is A Lonely Number/One Woman Man/Hear Broken Me, 9 more! Power Pak
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8 TK No. PO-1271

George Jones

George Jones & Friends-Hillbilly Hit Parade: Why Baby Why/I Walk The Line/Any Old Time/Searching, 10 more! Starday
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8 TK No. SLPT-1102

George Jones

George Jones-Golden Hits: Why, Baby, Why/Color Of The Blues/I Gotta Talk To Your Heart/Just One More, 7 more! Starday
LP No. SLP-440
8 TK No. SLPT-1440

George Jones

George Jones-Greatest Hits: It's Okay/Boat Of Life/Still Hurting/Taggin' Along/Ragged But Right/Hold Everything, more! Starday
LP No. SLP-150
8 TK No. SLPT-1150

George Jones

16 Greatest Hits: One Is A Lonely Number/Just One More/Uh Uh, No/If I Don't Love You/Color Of The Blues, more! King
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8 TK No. SDT-13021

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16 Greatest Hits: I'm My Own Grandpa/Uncle Eff's Got The Coon, more!
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8 TK No. SDT-13008

15 Cents Is All I've Got: Title Song/Here Rattler Here/That Memphis Train, more!

LP No. PO-301
8 TK No. PO-1301

16 Sacred Songs: The Arm Of God/Come & Dine/144,000 Were There, more!

LP No. K-822
8 TK No. KT-1822

Grandpa Jones-Greatest Hits: Old Rattler/15 Cents Is All I Got/Mountain Dew/8 More Miles To Louisville, 8 more! Starday

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8 TK No. K-1554

Grandpa Jones-24 Big Country Hits: Darby's Ram/I'm Tying The Leaves/My Little Napping Wife/Going Down Town, more! Starday

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8 TK No. KT-1967

Grandpa Jones-Other Side Of: My Darling's Not My Darling Any-more/You'll Miss Me When I'm Gone/Trouble, more! Starday

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8 TK No. GT8-0001

W. Lee & S. Cooper

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8 TK No. SDT-1965

Wilma Lee & Stony Cooper-Walking My Lord Up Calvary Hill: Title Song/Tramp On The Street/Great Sp-eckled Bird, more!

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8 TK No. PO-1242

Featuring: Picture On The Wall/Worried Man Blues/Little Darling Pal Of Mine, more!

LP No. SD-980
8 TK No. SDT-1980

Monsters: Don't Be Cruel/Your Cheating Heart/Save The Last Dance For Me/Be Bop A Lula/Pink Pedal Pushers, more!

LP No. S-124
8 TK No. ST-124

From The Vaults Of Sun: Hound Dog/The Wild Side Of Life/Rock & Roll Ruby/Feel So Good/Sick & Tired, more!

LP No. PO-247
8 TK No. PO-1247

Jerry Lee Lewis-Golden Hits Vol. 1: Great Balls Of Fire/It'll Be Me/Breathless/Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On, 6 more! Sun

LP No. S-102
8 TK No. ST-102

Jerry Lee Lewis-Golden Hits Vol. 2: Save The Last Dance For Me/Fools Like Me/I'll Sail My Ship Alone/Money, 7 more! Sun

LP No. S-103
8 TK No. ST-103

Original Golden Hits, Vol. 3: One Minute Past Eternity/Lovin' Up A Storm/Sweet Little Sixteen/Love On Broadway, more!

LP No. S-128
8 TK No. ST-128

The Lewis Family-16 Greatest Hits: In The Garden/Did You Ever Go Salling/The Man Of Gallilee/The Purple Robe/Sing, more!

LP No. SD-3019
8 TK No. SDT-13019

Lewis Family

Lewis Family-Best Of: My Lord Is Taking Me Away/Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho/Don't Be Ashamed Of Jesus, more! Starday
LP No. SLP-959
8 TK No. SLPT-1959

Play 14 Mountain Songs: Eatin' Out Of Your Hand/Lonesome Pine/Kentucky Hill Special/Two Timin' Baby, more! Starday

LP No. SLP-155
8 TK No. SLPT-1155

Lulu Belle & Scotty Sweethearts Of Country Music: Homecoming Time In Happy Valley/Mountain Dew Time, more! Starday

LP No. SLP-206
8 TK No. SLPT-1206

Lulu Belle & Scotty Sweethearts Still: I'll Be All Smiles Tonight/Between You & Me/I Told Them All About You, more! Starday

LP No. SLP-351
8 TK No. SLPT-1351

Malner's Mountaineers-Good Ole' Mountain Music: The Lonely Train/The Forks Of The Road/Run Mountain/John Henry, more!

LP No. KLP-666
8 TK No. KLPT-1666

Benny Martin

Benny Martin-Greatest Hits: Me & My Fiddle/Crackin' Country Corn/Sinful Cinderella/If I Could Stay Away Long Enough, many more!
LP No. PO-223
8 TK No. PO-1-1013

Great Bluegrass Hits: Widow Maker/White Dove/Uncle Pen/Big Country/Taylor Made Sally Good/Goodbye Old Pal, more!

LP No. GT-0003
8 TK No. GT8-0003

Duelling Banjos: Title Song/Home Sweet Home/Brassy Bluegrass/Old Joe Clark/Doodiin' Banjos/Red Dress, more!

LP No. PO-236
8 TK No. PO-1-1026

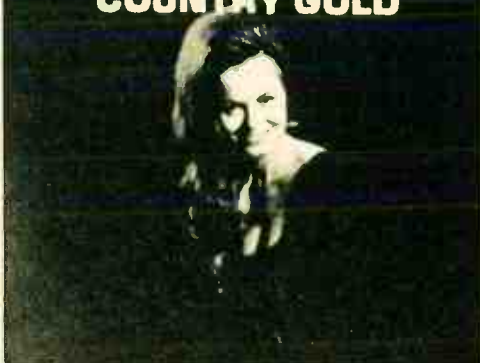
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STEREO
SLP 957



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ROOM FULL OF ROSES
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YOU'RE THE ONLY GOOD THING
STEAL AWAY
SOUNDS OF GOODBYE
ALMOST
I'LL SAIL MY SHIP ALONE
BARBARA LIVING

Jeannie C. Riley
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PHANTOM 309
I KNOW YOU'RE MARRIED (BUT I LOVE YOU STILL)
GIDDYUP GO
SATISFIED MIND
FREIGHTLINER FEVER
LITTLE ROSA
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8TK No. SDT-13011

Charlie Monroe

Charlie Monroe-Tally Ho: Lazy Day/Penitentiary Blues/Hard To Believe/Willow Garden/Time Clock/I'm Going Away, more!
LP No. S-484
8TK No. ST-1484

C. Moore & B. Napier

The Best Of: I'm Just Your Stepping Stone/Chain Gang/No One As Sweet As You/I've Got Over You/Down South, more!
LP No. SLP-963
8TK No. SLPT-1963

C. Moore & B. Napier

The Lonesome Truck Drivers: Long White Line/A Truck Driver's Romance/Long Old Road, more! Starday
LP No. K-936
8TK No. KT-1936

George Morgan

George Morgan-Best Of: You're The Only Good Thing/Room Full Of Roses/I'll Sail My Ship Alone/Candy Kisses, more! Starday
LP No. SLP-957
8TK No. SLPT-1957

George Morgan

George Morgan-Steal Away: Beyond The Sunset/Beautiful Isle Of Somewhere/Softly & Tenderly/Precious Memories, more!
LP No. SLP-413
8TK No. SLPT-1413

Moon Mullican

Moon Mullican-Greatest Hits: I'll Sail My Ship Alone/Louisiana/Mona Lisa/Bottom Of The Glass/Jole Blon/Farewell, my more!
LP No. SLP-398
8TK No. SLPT-1398

Nashville Harmonica

Nashville Harmonica: I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry/Satin Sheets/Orange Blossom Special/Me And Bob-bie/McGee, more!
LP No. PO-219
8TK No. PO-1-1009

New Grass Revival

New Grass Revival-To Day's Bluegrass: Cold Sailor/Pennies In My Pocket/Great Ball Of Fire/Lonesome Fiddle Blues, much more!
LP No. SLP-474
8TK No. SLP-1482

The Oak Ridge Boys

Featuring: I Am A Pilgrim/Shine Shine Down On Me/Golden Hills Ahead/There's A Light Guiding Me/Angel Band, more!
LP No. SLP-356
8TK No. SLPT-1356

The Oak Ridge Boys

Featuring: I Wouldn't Take Nothing/Hide Thou Me/The Christian Way/I Asked The Lord/One Of These Mornings, more!
LP No. PG-716
8TK No. PG-1716

Oak Ridge Quartet

Sing & Shout: At The Roll Call/Behind Your Tears/Do You Know Jesus/My All I Give/Keep Me, many more!
LP No. SD-984
8TK No. SDT-1984

Molly O'Day

Molly O'Day-Living Legend Of Country Music: I'm Going To Walk Right In/He Has Called Me By My Name, more! Starday
LP No. SLP-367
8TK No. SLPT-1367

Roy Orbison

Roy Orbison-Original Sound: You're Gonna Cry/Ooby, Dooby/It's Too Late/I Never Knew/Rock House/Devil Doll, more! Sun
LP No. S-113
8TK No. ST-113

Brother Oswald

Bashful Brother Oswald: Southern Moon/Wear My Weary Blues/I Like Mountain Music/Columbus Stockade Blues, more! Starday
LP No. SLP-192
8TK No. SLPT-1192

Buck Owens

Buck Owens And Friends-Sweethearts In Heaven: Right After The Dance/It Don't Show/Loose Talk, 7 more! Sun
LP No. SLP-446
8TK No. SLPT-1446

Dolly Parton

Release Me: Two Little Orphans/Release Me/3 Sides To The Story/Angel On Paper/Weeping Willow, more!
LP No. PO-299
8TK No. PO-1299

Johnny Paycheck

Johnny Paycheck-At His Best: Who Needs Your Love/Forever Ended Yesterday/Julie I'm Remembering, much more! PowerPak
LP No. PO-284
8TK No. PO-1284

Carl Perkins

Carl Perkins-Blue Suede Shoes: All Mama's Children/Movie Magg/Glad All Over/Gone, Gone, Gone/Forever Yours, more! Sun
LP No. S-112
8TK No. ST-112

Carl Perkins

Carl Perkins-Golden Hits: Matchbox/Blue Suede Shoes/Dixie Fried/Right String But The Wrong Yo Yo/Only You, more! Sun
LP No. S-111
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8TK No. SDT-1994X

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Don Reno-Fastest Five String Alive: Remington Ride/Double Banjo Blues/Interstate 81/Banjo Riff/Old Kentucky Home, more!
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8TK No. KT-11065

D. Reno & R. Smiley

Country Singing And Instrumentals: Wall Around Your Heart/Follow The Leader/I Wouldn't Change You If I Could, more!
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8TK No. KLPT-1776

D. Reno & R. Smiley

Last Time Together: Are You Waiting Just For Me/Row My Boat/Yes Sir, That's My Baby/Family Bible/Holiday Religion, and!
LP No. SLP-485
8TK No. SLPT-1485

D. Reno & R. Smiley

The Best Of: I'm The Talk Of Town/8 More Miles To Louisville/I Wouldn't Change You If I Could/Money, Marbles, Chak, more!
LP No. SLP-961
8TK No. SLPT-1961

D. Reno & R. Smiley

World's Best 5 String Banjo: My Old Kentucky Home/Green Mountain Hop/Bill Bailey, more!
LP No. KLP-861
8TK No. KLPT-1861

D. Reno & R. Smiley

Country Songs: Blue And Lonesome/Dark As A Dungeon/Don't Let Your Sweet Love Die, more! Starday
LP No. K-701
8TK No. KT-1701

Charlie Rich

Charlie Rich-The Early Years: Easy Money/Big Man/Philadelphia Baby/My Heart Cries/I've Lost My Heart, more! Sun
LP No. S-132
8TK No. ST-132

Charlie Rich

Sun's Golden Treasures: Apple Blossom Time/Everything I Do (Is Wrong)/Gonna Be Waiting/Time And Again, much more!
LP No. S-134
8TK No. ST-134

Charlie Rich

Lonely Weekends: The Title Song/That's How Much I Love You/I Need Your Love/C.C. Rider/Big Man, more! Sun
LP No. S-110
8TK No. ST-110

Charlie Rich

Sun's Best Of: Another Place I (Can't Go)/Baby, I Need You/Goodbye Mary Ann/Stop, Thief/Sittin' & Thinkin', more!
LP No. S-135
8TK No. ST-135

Charlie Rich

The Memphis Sound: C.C. Rider/Finally Found Out/I Need Your Love/It's Too Late/Little Bit Sweet/Stay, more! Sun
LP No. S-133
8TK No. ST-133

Charlie Rich

A Time For Tears: Gentle As A Lamb/The Wedding's Over/You're Gonna Be Waiting/My Baby Done Left Me, more!
LP No. S-123
8TK No. ST-123

Charlie Rich

Arkansas Traveler: Unchained Melody/Time And Again/Ballad Of Billy Joe/Who Will The Next Fool Be/Stop/Rebound, more!
LP No. PO-245
8TK No. PO-1245

Jeannie C. Riley

Jeannie C. Riley-Greatest Hits: Duty Desire/The Girl Most Likely/The Rib/The Man/Harper Valley/Back Side Of Dallas, more! Sun
LP No. PLP-13
8TK No. PLT-13

Jeannie C. Riley

Country Gold: Games People Play/Help Me Make It Through The Night/Oakie From Muskogee/That's A No No, more!
LP No. PO-250
8TK No. PO-1250

Jeannie C. Riley

Jeannie C. Riley-Harper Valley P.T.A.: The Little Town Square/Harper Valley/Widow Jones/Run Jeannie Run, much more! Sun
LP No. PLP-1
8TK No. PLT-1

Kenny Roberts

Kenny Roberts-Indian Love Call: Maybe I'll Cry Over You/Listen To The Mockingbird/Tavern Town/Chime Bells, more! Starday
LP No. SLP-336
8TK No. SLPT-1336

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Hot Rod: Hot Rod Lincoln/The Doggone Recession/Side Car Cycle/Steel Rock/Hot Rod Harley/Through The Mill, more!
LP No. KLP-751
8TK No. KLPT-1751

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LP No. SD-999
8TK No. SDT-1999

Jean Shepard

Jean Shepard-Best Of: Many Happy Hangovers To You/Haul Off And Love Me/Satisfied Mind/2 Little Boys, 6 more! Power Pak
LP No. PO-778
8TK No. PO-1278

Jimmie Skinner

Jimmie Skinner-No. 1 Bluegrass: Everybody Ought To Have A Song/It's Blowin' Away/This Old Road/Whoopie Liza, more!
LP No. SD-988
8TK No. SDT-1988

Jimmie Skinner

Original Greatest Hits: I Found My Girl In The Good Old USA/Jimmie's Ramblin' Blues/Wrong Side Of The Tracks, more!
LP No. PO-259
8TK No. PO-1259

Red Sovine

Christmas With: Blue Christmas/A Bed For Baby Jesus/Santa Is A Texas Cowboy/Faith In Santa/Rudolph The Reindeer, more!
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8TK No. SDT-1-1040

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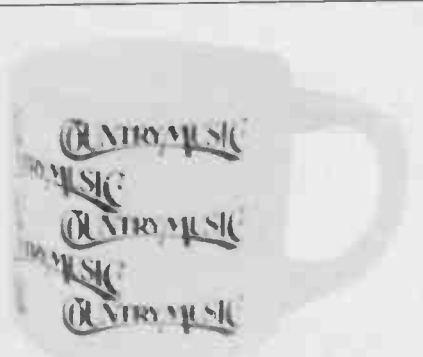
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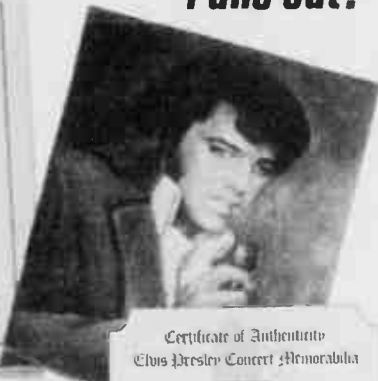
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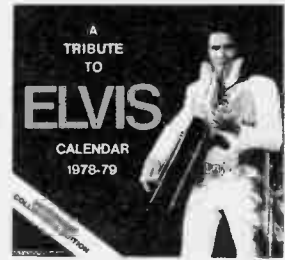
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Bob Luman

(April 15, 1937 - December 27, 1978)

A Retrospective

by DOUG GREEN

Bob Luman performed on the Friday Night Grand Ole Opry on December 15, 1978. On Tuesday the 19th he entered a Nashville Hospital, where he was placed in the critical care unit for pneumonia. On December 27, after a week of battling the virus, he died at the age of 41.

Although he was back on the road touring and recording, Luman apparently never really recovered from the close brush with death he suffered in February of 1976, when a blood vessel ruptured in his esophagus while on tour. Though he nearly bled to death then, subsequent operations (and a six-month layoff) seemed to have cured him; apparently, however, he never fully regained his strength, and the normally curable pneumonia virus ravaged his weakened physical defenses.

Still, with his youth, his seeming vigor, and his high spirits, his death came as a surprise and a shock to the Nashville music community.

Luman was born in Nacogdoches, Texas, on April 15, 1937, and like many country entertainers had but two interests in life as a young man: music and baseball; and like many country entertainers (from Roy Acuff to Jim Reeves) he played some semi-pro ball, and was scouted by a major league team: in his case the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Always musically active, he had a band all through high school, but told writer Paul Hemphill his musical life changed when a girl friend took him to see an up and comer named Elvis Presley in Kilgore, Texas: "This cat came out in red pants and a green coat and a pink shirt and socks, and he had this sneer on his face, and he stood behind the mike for five minutes, I'll bet, before he made a move . . . and these high school girls were screaming and fainting and running up to the stage, and then he started to move his hips real slow like he had a thing for his guitar. . . . He made chills run up my back. . . . For the next nine days he played one-nighters around Kilgore, and after school every day, me and my girl would get in the car and go wherever he was playing that night. That's the last time I tried to sing like Webb Pierce or Lefty Frizzell."

Bob Luman thus began his career as a



rockabilly in the rockabilly era, and though he experienced a good bit of success, it was not without its frustrations.

He made a bad movie called *Carnival Rock*, and though he had recorded a bit previously on local labels, his big breakthrough came with Imperial Records, where he had a mild hit with *A Red Cadillac and a Black Moustache*. He gave baseball a fling for a time before being pitched a song by Felice and Boudleaux Bryant, who at the time had a hot string of Everly Brothers hits going for them.

The song was *Let's Think About Living*, an upbeat rockabilly tune about the deaths of recent rock and country singers (Buddy Holly, Johnny Horton etc), which contains the ironic line "If all of our singers keep on a-dyin' / I'll be the only one you can buy!"

The song shot to high places on both the pop and country charts, but Bob Luman wasn't around to capitalize on his chart success: he'd been drafted, and was serving Uncle Sam during the Berlin Crisis while *Let's Think About Living* and its followup, *Snowman*, became hits.

Having worked on the Louisiana Hayride before these hits, Bob Luman, though still cast in the rockabilly mold, suspected Nashville was the place to be, and upon his discharge from the Army in 1962, moved to Music City.

But hits like *Let's Think About Living* sometimes come around only once, and

though Bob Luman's career was successful on a high level from then on, he never really re-climbed that summit of national success represented by his early chart hits.

Luman was one of the early rockabillies; among them, he was also one of the first to return to his country roots, leaving his pop ties with Imperial and Warner Brothers and signing first with Hickory, then with Epic in Nashville. He had a good country hit called *The File* in 1964, and if his career did not have the enormous push it had earlier—which he'd been forced to miss while in uniform—it at least had considerable momentum, highlighted by his being granted membership on the Grand Ole Opry in August, 1965.

From Rockabilly, Luman went to Nashville-slick, the epitome of the double-knit, immaculately-barbered look that Nashville singers tended to adopt in those years, and it was a successful changeover. He did well in Vegas and on the Nevada circuit, and even appeared several times in Puerto Rico. He put a band together, and had a number of hits and near misses, all chart records, including *Ain't Got Time To Be Unhappy* (1968), *When You Say Love*, and *Lonely Women Make Good Lovers*, (1972), *Neither One of Us* (1973) and *Still Loving You* (1974), as he continued his Opry membership and worked both hard and steadily.

Around 1975 he underwent another image change, his leisure suits making way for denim and hats, and he lost thirty or forty pounds in trading in his sleek look for that of a latter day outlaw.

Although a homebody at heart, Luman often spent considerable time on the road, and it was enroute from a show in Odessa, Texas to one in Houston that he became ill. Having eaten two large and spicy meals of Mexican food he began to feel nauseous, and although he felt no pain he began vomiting blood. The first doctor he saw diagnosed it as a bleeding ulcer, but the volume of blood (several pints) was so great it quickly became obvious that there was even a more serious problem. He was taken to a Dallas Hospital where his problem was diagnosed as a ruptured blood vessel in the esophagus, near his

(Continued on page 64)

Records



Loretta Lynn We've Come A Long Way, Baby

MCA-3073

Loretta's albums are almost a throwback to the sort that came out of Nashville 15 or 20 years ago, when the packaging was austere, and totally devoid of external flash. I trust that you will never see any self-indulgent, overdone photo spreads (such as the recent

album by one well-known artist that featured a huge, pointless color shot of a cluttered recording studio mixing board) on a Loretta Lynn album cover. The music within comes first with her, and that is as it should be.

We've Come A Long Way, Baby, continues to loosen the restrictions on what women can and cannot sing about, just as *One's On The Way* and *The Pill* did several years ago. Loretta hasn't let her guard

down, as the title tune, a well-aimed (if overly generalized) assault on the crumbling bastions of male chauvinism, proves. Her interpretation of Kenny O' Dell's *Easy Street* makes it a protest against wealth's ability to drive a couple apart.

The strongest tunes of course are the most pungent ones, particularly the moving *Lullabies To A Memory*, a sensitive and philosophical tale of an unwed mother who has few, if any, regrets. *My Conscience Goes To Sleep* explores the moral uncertainty and failed willpower involved in slipping around in just enough detail to upset the prudish. Nor is *Standing At Our Bedroom Door*, an even-handed number dealing with male frigidity, for the faint of heart. And her impassioned delivery of Shel Silverstein's blunt confessional *No Love Left Inside Of Me* make the powerful lyrics absolutely wrenching. Her best efforts, however, can't save the run-of-the-mill *Between The Preacher And The Lawyer*, *The Lady That Lived Here Before* and the oozing, sappy *I Can't Feel You Anymore*.

Loretta could sit back and let others take her lead now, but she won't, and makes that clear through her hard-edged, natural performances of seven of these ten songs.

RICH KIENZLE

hit], a Tony Joe White styled mini-vignette of rural Southern life. It also keeps *Don't Waste It On Me* from being swallowed up by the excesses of the Sheldon Kurland strings. Perhaps the biggest surprise, however, is Ryles' own composition *It's Raining Outside Your Door* which he co-wrote with Teresa Stamps. As a songwriter, he shows a sense of humor and a gift for tailoring his work to fit his own musical direction. There is an intimacy here, accentuated by the song's blues feel, that none of the other tracks can even approach.

Unfortunately the remainder of the album sounds like outtakes from *Shine On Me*, particularly *Love Coming Down*, *When It Begins To End* and the pathetically banal *Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers*.

As I see it Ryles has two choices: to press on with his original focus [and his very promising songwriting] and take his chances or to become just another faceless, bland country-politan crooner. *Love's Sweet Pain* spells out both alternatives. I think you can guess which one makes the most sense.

RICH KIENZLE

John Wesley Ryles Love's Sweet Pain

ABC AY-1112

Nearly two years ago, John Wesley Ryles' debut album on ABC pinned me to the wall. Here was a mature vocalist who had overcome a reputation as a one-hit artist by cultivating a distinctive country blues sound that drew heavily on the Memphis/Muscle Shoals R & B of the sixties. Hearing it was a revelation. Then came *Shine*

On Me, as followup album that dissipated that initial promise in a flood of overproduced mush.

Love's Sweet Pain had to be an improvement, and it is, though it doesn't begin to surpass that first album. The tight rhythm section that had served as a foil for Ryles' high-strung vocals is back, and proves its value on such gutty numbers as *Some Kind of Miracle* and *Love Ain't Made For Fools*. That forceful voice is responsi-

ble for the success of *Patches* [not the abominable 1962 pop



Anne Murray New Kind Of Feeling

Capitol SW-11849

Like Karen Carpenter, Anne Murray possesses one of those absolutely magnificent natural voices which seems to exude warmth and immediacy with every note. But this gift is a double-edged sword: these great natural voices lack expression, for so finely are they honed that attempts at subtlety, expression, come out instead sounding forced, too deliberate, or worse, as irritating affectations.



This is the curse of Anne Murray's great gift: to forever make records either burdened with rococo vocal ornamentation or records of blandness, letting the great natural tones

of that voice alone carry the burden of all expression.

New Kind of Feeling is the latter kind of album, though it is blessed with two overwhelming virtues. It is free (well, nearly) of the cloying vocal mannerisms of earlier times, and also pretty free of the flat (in texture, not in pitch), blank pseudo-soul tone that made some of her earlier records somewhat offensive. Here, her voice is natural, relaxed sounding, the beauty of its tone transcendent.

Better yet is the material. True, it is straight out of the L.A. mold, but generally it is quite good, excellent even, with the best of the lot being *Shadows In The Moonlight*, *Yucatan Cafe*, *For No Reason at All*, and especially the smashing duet, *Heaven Is Here*, the best thing I've heard this year.

True to the L.A. tradition, there are two obligatory oldies, one country (*Raining In My Heart*) and one early easy rock, Marvellous Marv Johnson's *You've Got What It Takes*, which in the nearly twenty years since it was first a hit has lost none of its status as the least romantic love song I've ever heard.

A *New Kind Of Feeling* is unadorned Anne Murray, straight and simple. This role and this style suit her best, and I don't recall ever hearing her better.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Charlie Rich The Fool Strikes Again

UA-LA925-H

Every now and then, a voice comes along that makes you want to hug it to yourself—take it into a deserted room, turn down the lights and turn up the stereo, and let that voice work its wonders; let it make you feel both bad and good, both empty and full. . . .

It's not too often that you find such a voice, and when you do, it's heartbreaking to lose it.

Charlie Rich has a voice with this magical quality. A short time ago, it might have been said that Rich once had it, but

now, with *The Fool Strikes Again*, it's apparent that the loss was merely temporary.

Although there are a few jarring seconds, where it sounds like he's reaching for something that's not there, (*Born to Love*



The Amazing Rhythm Aces

The Amazing Rhythm Aces

ABC AA-1123

These guys just keep getting better honing their sound, which is *their* sound, down closer and closer to the razor edge. They owe a lot to Memphis, and elsewhere, but they've mastered their influences and gone on to create and find a

place unique in southern music. In short, they've got a lot of class and this lp is a case in point.

They kick off side one in fine style with *Love And Happiness*, the Al Green rhythm and blues classic. Another bluesy number, *Whispering In The Night* written by lead singer Russell Smith, takes up 7 minutes on the flip side and features some hot licks particularly by lead guitarist Barry "Byrd" Burton and Billy Earheart and James Hooker on organ and piano. Nice horn arrangement by Harrison Calloway. But the musicianship sparkles throughout the entire album. There's several country flavored tunes best represented by *Homestead In My Heart* and *Rodrico*. *Rita And Elaine*, a song full of south-of-the-border images which is highlighted by guest vocalists Tracy Nelson and Joan Baez. *Lipstick Traces (On A Cigarette)*, *If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody* and *Pretty Words*, written by drummer Butch McDade, are the kind of rhythmic numbers at which the Aces excel and help round out the album.

The Aces are low-key boogie men and perfectionists. Their albums are usually smooth and this one is no exception. There's nothing on it that'll shake you out of your boots, but it's solid good music from beginning to end.

Me is particularly painful, the majority of the album is superb.

Conveniently, Side 2 is free of any of the jarring moments, so it's possible to retreat to your darkened sanctuary, and wallow in the voice as it runs through the up-beat *Some-where There's A Love Song*, wife Margaret Ann's *Life Goes On*, and the great country song, *Standing Tall*.

Perhaps the best moment comes with *Lady*. Here, Rich's fluid voice is at its best as it glides through the lyrics, touching those good and bad feelings that music was *meant* to touch.

MARY ELLEN MOORE

NELSON ALLEN

Jacky Ward Rainbow

Mercury SRM-1-5013

It happens all the time: a great artist produces a disastrous record and a mediocre artist creates a masterpiece. After a time, critics become used to that. But for me, a truly frustrating moment comes when I'm confronted with an album that insults the known capabilities of both an artist and a producer.

Jacky Ward has some fine recordings to his credit, most notably his 1974 hit *Big Blue*

Diamonds and Lover's Question. Likewise, Ward's producer, Jerry Kennedy was responsible for Tom T. Hall's definitive recordings and played an important part in the resurrection of Jerry Lee Lewis as a viable country recording artist. The combination, then, should be dynamic. But almost every-



thing about *Rainbow* has a haphazard, assembly line quality that even Ward's best efforts can't overcome.

There are three potentially fine numbers here: the rollicking *I Want To Be In Love*, with its Randy Newman overtones, a cover of the old Beatle tune *From Me To You* and his current hit *Rhythm of The Rain*, the golden oldie. His performances are natural and low-keyed. But the overall production is so sloppy that the subtle vocal nuances characteristic of Ward's style have been mixed right out of existence. The rhythm section plays so many cliches that I can't imagine how the musicians kept a straight face. Bergen White's string arrangements are equally dull and uncreative (if Nashville producers are going to use strings, when will they start insisting upon some creative flair from arrangers?).

Writing a review like this is generally unpleasant for a reviewer as it is for those who read it. But it is equally unpleasant to see a fine recording artist like Jacky Ward so badly mishandled. Both he and his fans deserve far better than this.

RICH KIENZLE



Olivia Newton-John Totally Hot

MCA3067

Totally hot?—no. Lukewarm—maybe.

Olivia's voice is pleasant enough when it's tackling something like *Have You Ever Been Mellow?* But it totally lacks the depth to be an out-and-out rocker, which is unfortunate, since she is unabashedly aiming for that with this album.

She almost pulls it off with the title cut, halfway through Side Two, but her innocence prevails and what could be a great song if belted out by, let's say, Tanya Tucker, is not so much *Totally Hot* as it is *Completely Unconvincing*.

What saves the album from being a Total Washout is her sweet rendition of *Boats Against the Current*. Done in the traditional Olivia-vein, it's something she can handle, and she does it well. Unfortunately, she follows it up—and ends the album—with the old Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels classic rock 'n roller, *Gimme Some Lovin'*. Again, she almost makes it, even adding a slight rasp to her voice, but the strain is so evident it's almost painful to hear her striving for that magic that makes a rocker a real rouser.

If this is cutting loose, Olivia was better off holding back, and if she doesn't cool down, she may burn herself out.

Oh, yes. Country?—not a chance!

MARY ELLEN MOORE

Cooder Browne Cooder Browne

Lone Star L-1604

Some of the tales you hear from Texas are true and some are not. Like the one about the Arab who tried to buy the Alamo for his daughter's birthday present. Another concerns a fellow named Cooder Browne—who doesn't exist—but whose band seldom performs without a standing ovation. There are, in fact, four musicians collectively using the name, which comes from a regional expression, "drunk as Cooder Browne."

This latest Lone Star album is the hottest one to date. If you are tired of listless pop crooning being passed off as country, **Cooder Browne** is a must. Side one takes off with *Lonesome Rider*, a knockout



fiddle tune, which aptly displays Larry Franklin's talents as a world champion. Next comes *Two Trains*, a spirited vocal number that blends into *Orange Blossom Special*.

Perhaps the most commercial selection is *Isle of View*, a smooth, romantic slice of reggae, complete with sea breeze sound effects. *Jalepeno Lady* puts Mexican party music right back in its place.

Lead vocals are shared by Larry Franklin, Skip Tumbleson, and David Haworth. Nearly all of the compositions here are originals. David's classically inspired piano background, including Beethoven, comes through on some terrific runs. Cooder Browne's main accomplishment is the injection of that element called *fun* back into country music.

BILL OAKEY

Bill Anderson Ladies Choice

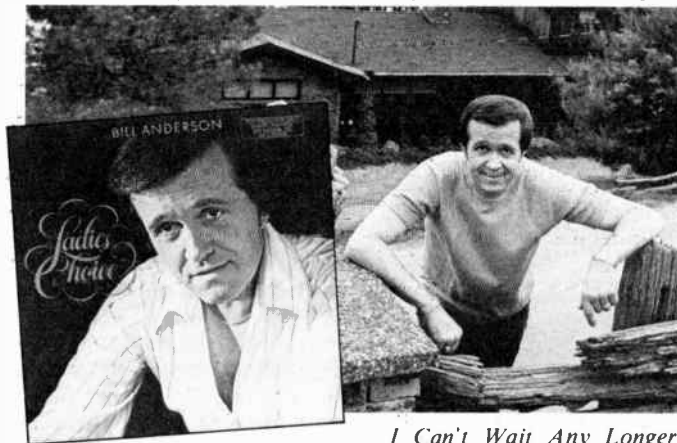
MCA 3075

It's a matter of record that Bill Anderson is a ladies man. They're his biggest fans because they know he's a man who understands their dreams and pain, someone who proved it for all time when he sang a song "for all the lonely women in the world."

And today how could a woman remain unmoved by his soft, reassuring whispers that she's sexy and loved, the most desirable woman he knows?

That's what she'll hear on *Ladies Choice*, a package of passion wrapped in the disco sound. It's a woman's album. If there's a limitation beyond that, it's the fact that the songs are so serious.

"You still take my breath



away" is a line Barry White might have growled, and Anderson knew exactly what he was doing when he measured himself for that intimate style. He's probably the only country artist who could make it work and he also knows that lyrics like White's tend to be thin.

I Can't Wait Any Longer, Anderson's first experiment, is typical of the songs on the album, which really should come with a fireplace and wine.

Yet, listening to songs like *Trust Me* and *Ladies Get Lonesome Too*, I got a vague feeling that Anderson might have been trying too hard.

Anderson is a member of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, so I'm always listening for his next great song, but none of the selections on *Ladies Choice* compare to his best work. *Double S*, which he wrote with producer Buddy Killen, is a story so heavy on alliteration that it immediately invites parody, and it's already gotten some. *Ladies Choice* also includes *This Is A Love Song* by Jim Weatherly. Whatever happened to Jim Weatherly?

Finally, the album proves one thing: not even an artist like Anderson and some beautiful, soaring violin work can make disco interesting.

What's the best chaser for the numbness caused by too much disco. Anderson gave us the answer for that. It's bright lights and country music.

HARRY MORROW

BURIED TREASURES

by RICH KIENZLE

In a day when a handful of large record companies handle the bulk of all country releases, the idea of major independent country labels seems almost nostalgic. That, however, was not always the case. Once two of America's largest and most distinguished country labels, *King* and *Starday*, were both independent. *King*, the creation of an acerbic Cincinnati record dealer named Syd Nathan, began in 1945 and once boasted no less than Grandpa Jones, Hawkshaw Hawkins, the Delmore Brothers and Cowboy Copas among its country artists. *King* also recorded rhythm and blues.

Starday was founded in Houston, Texas in 1952 by Jack Starnes, "Pappy" Daily and Don Pierce, and their first success came in 1955 when a skinny ex-Marine named George Jones recorded *Why Baby Why* for them. Around 1957 operations moved to Nashville. *King's* country division took second place to R & B by the fifties and in 1968, a year after Syd Nathan died, *Starday* and *King* merged, only to be purchased by *Gusto*

Records of Nashville in 1975. Today, though neither label issues many new recordings, *Gusto* has been repackaging vintage *Starday* and *King* material as part of their 16 **Greatest Hits of . . .** series.

Country Music Hall of Famer newcomer Grandpa Jones was the first artist *King* recorded, and his collection (SD-3008) includes his original recordings of *Mountain Dew*, *Eight More Miles To Louisville*, *Old Rattler* and thirteen other tunes culled from his early days. Considering Grandpa's reputation as a traditionalist, it may seem unusual to hear electric instruments on several cuts; Nathan often added them for contrast.

Though the late Cowboy Copas was also a member of the *King* stable, the bulk of his anthology (SD-3012) was drawn from his early sixties *Starday* sides. His 1962 hit *Alabam* is here along with remakes of *Tragic Romance* and other earlier hits. Hopefully, *Gusto* will someday issue some of Copas' *King* sides, especially the unbelievably hot instrumental *Jamboree*.

Hawkshaw Hawkins joined *King* in 1946 as their answer to Ernest Tubb, but quickly blazed his own trail as a smoother vocalist. Hawkins' album (SD-3013) mixes *King* hits like *Rattlesnakin' Daddy* and *I Wasted A Nickel* with *Lonesome 7-7203* and his later *Starday* recordings, made shortly before he, Copas and Patsy Cline died together in that infamous 1963 plane crash.

Early in the fifties, *King* released their first bluegrass record by the team of Jimmy Martin and Bobby Osborne. But their first major bluegrass success came with the banjo-guitar team of Don Reno and Red Smiley. Their definitive material is on (SD-3001), a sampler of their *King* material from the fifties on that features *Talk of The Town*, *Emotions* and the banjo showcase *Reno Ride*.

Some of the greatest white gospel music ever recorded came from the Brown's Ferry Four, (SD-3017) a quartet made up of Merle Travis, Grandpa Jones and the Delmore Brothers that started informally when all worked at

WLW Radio in Cincinnati. On several occasions they recorded for *King*, beginning around 1946. The sides here generally are drawn from that first session (with Red Foley filling in for Travis) and from their final 1951-52 sessions. Their close harmonies, simple and elegant are best heard on *The Arm of God* and *Rock of Ages Hide Thou Me*.

A current *Starday* reissue getting considerable promotion is **16 Greatest Truck Driver Hits** (SD-3014). Though the title's not quite accurate [*Six Days on The Road* and *Gears* are absent], there is nonetheless much meaty material here, like the Willis Brothers' *Give Me Forty Acres*, Jimmy Martin's *Widow Maker*, and Coleman Wilson's hilariously primitive *Radar Blues*.

Though none of these sets have detailed liner notes or recording data, both *Starday* and *King* have impressive (and underrated) reputations, and even the older music here stands the test of time.

May the *Gusto* vaults continue to gush forth. ■

Narvel Felts One Run For The Roses

Columbia AY-1115

Narvel the Marvel is back again and a lot of people might wonder 'so what?' at the news. The problem isn't that Narvel can't sing; of all the self-styled r & b artists suddenly making an appearance in Nashville Narvel has a greater claim to the territory than most (he's always leaned in that direction) and he can sing with a voice which can bend notes like the E string on an electric instrument that hasn't yet been invented sometimes reminding you of Roy Orbison and Johnny Burnette or even Elvis. What's the matter is that this album sounds a lot like the last album which sounded a lot like the one before that.



For one thing there's a lot of pale material here that Narvel (and we) have to wade through. There's the obligatory oldie, in this *In The Still Of The Night* complete with shoo-do shooie-doo background vocals and who needs it? Of the rest the title cut along with *You're A Heartbreaker*, *Everlasting Love*, and *You've Got Your Troubles* seem to work best. Narvel Felts is a good and distinctive enough singer that almost any song could probably be culled from this album and turned into a minor country hit, but that doesn't make for a very interesting album concept. What it boils down to is Narvel singing his heart out on a bunch of weak songs backed up by the same slick slop each time. I'd like to see him cut better records. I know he's got it in him.

NELSON ALLEN

Kenny Rogers The Gambler

United Artists UA-LA934-H

Kenny Rogers says he's a country singer now as opposed to pop but the truth is country/pop has been big for a good many years now and Kenny has always been in the middle of it. He's stung the country charts before, long before *Lucille*, remember *Ruby*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town* for instance? The *Green, Green Grass of Home* kind of country which always attracts people like Tom Jones and the Las Vegas sect as well as harder country pickers. But Kenny, who's an old boy from Houston after all, has a distinctive gravel voice and can sometimes latch onto one of these tunes with a vengeance, making it his own, and making you believe no one else can do it even though they try. He has a solid middle-of-the-road appeal and America keeps buying his records.

This is his latest album and although there's nothing on it the caliber of *Ruby* or *Lucille*, it's a good record from a man who's bound to have another smash one of these days. *The Gambler* is the title cut and the one you've probably been hearing on the radio written by Don Schlitz. It's a pretty fair narrative song except I don't understand it—if the gambler had such good advice concerning the playing of life's game—why then did he have to bum a drink



and a cigarette off Kenny? Rogers does a great job on *I Wish That I Could Hurt That Way Again* and *King Of Oak Street*, two of the best songs on the album. There's several tunes with a touch of Tony Joe White funk to 'em (Tony Joe plays guitar here and there) although Kenny ain't as funky as Tony Joe or even as Jerry Reed. *The Hoodoo' Of Miss Fannie Deberry* seems to work best of the songs in this vein. Alex Harvey of *Delta Dawn* fame contributed 3 songs including *Hoodoo' in' and King Of Oak Street*. *Making Music For Money* is kinda boring if only

we're all probably getting a little tired of hearing songs about singers who haven't made it. The stand-out on the flip side is Mickey Newbury's *San Francisco Mabel Joy* which is one of those songs that's so good it deserves to be cut over and over again.

Included in the package is a color poster of Kenny dressed up as a gambler and wearing six-guns. I tried to give mine to my 8-year-old niece but she turned it down. Still it's what's in the grooves that counts and *The Gambler* does all right where it counts.

NELSON ALLEN

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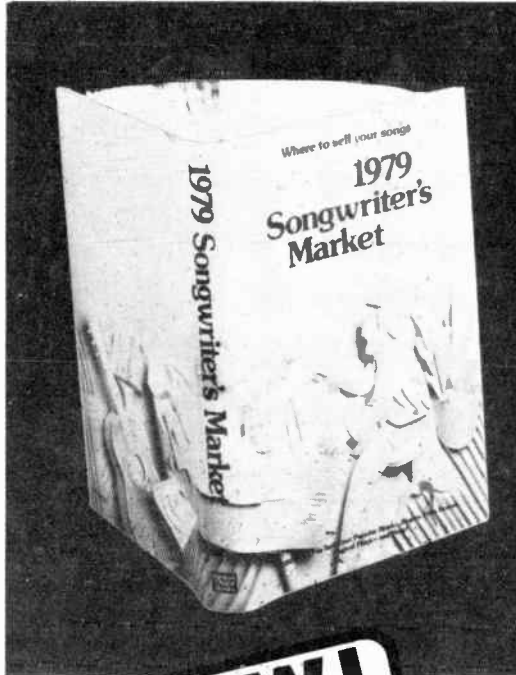
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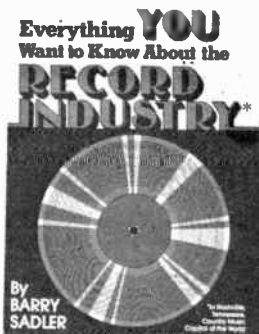
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LUMAN

(Continued from page 56)

stomach.

He was operated on twice, and released, but soon underwent surgery again in Nashville, which seemed at last to correct the problem. He was later to comment frequently and sincerely that the Red Cross literally saved his life, and to joke sardonically about the bill he received for health care from both hospitals amounting to the staggering sum of \$39,000.

It was some time, six full months, before Luman began to work again, and slowly at that. His previous diet had taken the weight on his 6'2" frame from a husky 240 to a bit over 200; he dropped to 159 while hospitalized.

Although he resumed his career, he never really got over his brush with death, and though he appeared fit and healthy after a few months, he was never the same. One of his first projects was to talk his old friend Johnny Cash (who he had years earlier, replaced on the Louisiana Hayride) into producing his next album, which he wanted firmly in the modern vein. Cash did indeed produce it at the House of Cash; not only that, the Carter Sisters sang the backup and none other than Waylon Jennings played rhythm guitar.

They called the album *Alive and Well*, but although a successful single (*The Pay Phone*) came out of it, it did not cause the hoped for resurgence in Luman's national career. He went on as a popular Opry entertainer whose label, Epic, believed he had what it took to make that big big record, but that big big record never came his way.

So he continued to play his modified rock and roll on the Opry, and to grind out those road miles to clubs, fairs, and package shows, and to record with those hopes of another big hit for Epic. But somehow life ebbed slowly out of him until his weakened body succumbed to that small virus, pneumonia, which in this era of powerful penicillins kills only the very weak and tired.

Bob Luman is remembered for his big, easy smile, his love of gardening, his bringing something of the energy, the beat, and the moves of rockabilly to the Opry stage; for his enthusiastic play with the Nashville Pickers (the musician's baseball team,) and as the guy with the big rock hit who, though obviously talented, never came up with another one like it.

"When he walked out on stage he gave all of himself," said Opry house manager Jerry Strobel. "You could tell he loved entertaining. . . . He never met a stranger. His love of life and exhuberance will certainly be missed."

One of the Opry's younger members, Luman is survived by his wife Barbara and eleven year old daughter Melissa, and by his parents and sister.

CHARLIE

(Continued from page 42)

about the trials and tribulations of the music business, and when one of them finally comes through it, you sort of wish them the best. . . . A lot of times, there'll be some jealousy involved, but overall, it's sort of like a brotherhood. . . . Like I remember one time, I was on tour in Alaska and I was homesick and lonesome and I just didn't really feel good at all. And Tom T. Hall and his bass-player checked into the same hotel. I was never so glad to see anybody in my life! It was just somebody that I could relate to."

The recent sale of his Wendy's Hamburger chain franchise, along with Charlie's other investments, have actually put him in a situation, where, if he so chose, he probably wouldn't have to make another live appearance again for the rest of his life. Yet he insists that he has no intentions of bowing out at this stage of his life. "Music is all I really know," Charlie insists. "I mean, despite all this, I'm not really a businessman. Music will always be my first love . . . or rather, my second love, after my family. Even if I didn't ever have to work again, I'd stay with it. . . . I think the road thing is an inborn thing or something. Sometimes I have to grit my teeth and kiss my wife hello and goodbye at the same time and leave home when I don't want to, but I also know in this business, if you see that little spark there with a new record, you've really got to throw coal oil on it or somethin' and get out there and work."

"But I don't imagine I'll hit it really as hard, you know, but I want to stay active in it. I think once I got away from it, I wouldn't have the confidence to get back in it again. I think I'd lose that confidence. I guess what I'm trying to say is, I just want to be able to have the freedom to pick and choose and pace myself to the way I feel. . . . I just kind of play it by ear. I guess my whole life's been like that." Charlie pauses a moment, reflects on what he's just said, and then grins at the irony of his own words.

"Yeh," he laughs. "I guess that's right. I have just sort of played my whole life . . . by ear."

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RIP-OFFS

(Continued from page 45)

Even if they fulfill all these promises (and many do, staying within the limits of the law), what does the fledgling singer have? A record. There is not one chance in a thousand (if that) it will be a hit, even if they have indeed hired the best musicians in town, for the simple reason that when a disc jockey gets a record on an unknown label by an unknown artist, it simply goes into the trash bin, unheard, along with the forty or fifty similar records he received the same day.

This is not because he has a vested interest in Dolly's or Willie's latest single; it's simply because even if it was good enough for air play (and one or two of the fifty might be), listeners who wanted to buy it couldn't get a copy at any price. When was the last time you saw the Stardom label at your local record store?

True, many major artists started their careers on small labels, even Dolly (Gold Band) and Willie Nelson (Abbot), but they generally did not have to pay to get on them, and that is a crucial difference. So any record an aspiring entertainer pays to have recorded on a no-name label has all odds against it being a hit, much less the overnight smash the bogus producers usually promise.

There are, in all fairness, a few people—Moe Bandy, for instance—who have financed their first record themselves before they were picked up by a major label. It is a freaky, unusual circumstance, but that this is a possible, demonstrable route to success is dangled ostentatiously before the victim, the shiniest, juiciest lure of all.

This is, at its heart, unethical, but it is really no crime—you can pay whatever you wish to have a record cut. To go back to Diane's case, suppose Golden Eagle had been on the level; suppose it had been like Caprice Records in their dealings with Frank Crispo. Had that been the case Stardom Records would have sent copies of her single to radio stations all over the country, to disc jockeys who would automatically have dropped them in the wastebasket. Still, like Frank, she would have a record out. But in the hands of a scrupulous producer of custom records—akin, in many ways, to the vanity presses of the book publishing world—she would only have had to pay less than half of what Golden Eagle Productions charged her.

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from the master tape for \$300-400 per thousand.

Demo rates are much cheaper still, and since that's all Diane really got—a good demo tape—she paid \$2,500 for that roll of tape which, had she known better, could have been had for as little as \$631.50.

Even the legal ones will do nothing more than overcharge you. The illegal producers will do worse—as with Diane, they'll take the money and run. In her case they did not only leave her holding the bag; they also wrote bad checks to the musicians and the studio! Still, they've been known to do far worse: they can bilk their innocent client into enormous fees for publicity and promotion.

A scheme recently exposed by Betty Holt's Music Industry Information Panel is a classic case. One such promoter claims that television is the key to "breaking" a new act, and as part of the whopping fee one pays to this promotion firm, a television appearance is guaranteed. Sure enough, the gullible victim is led to a makeshift studio where they sing and are interviewed on the syndicated *Eddie Sky's Music Row* show. All well and good except that *Eddie Sky's Music Row* has no commercial outlet—it is never seen nor broadcast. The tape of the show is erased and the next show put on the same reel, *ad infinitum*.

There are a great many more such horror stories Betty Holt has to tell—one of my favorites is the one about the bogus producer who claimed his checkbook was stolen, wrote checks forging the signature of his singer's girlfriend's husband (he'd "discovered" her singing along with the jukebox in a Nashville tavern), then skipped town. Ms. Holt has made a personal crusade of trying to get this mess cleaned up. Serving without pay, she has compiled facts and figures on the known crooks, and is attempting to force a crackdown on these predators.

"The main problem," says Ms. Holt, "is that the victims who are lured by these unscrupulous producers have no place to turn for information or advice. If some place was set up as a clearing house for information we'd clean out the ripoffs! We'd get rid of them! It would serve to educate the people who want to know who is on the level and who is not, and if they want to pay for a session, how much is fair and how much is exorbitant, and whether a contract is not only legal, but fair as well. If all the aspiring songwriters and artists knew that they could come to Nashville and have a place which would look out for their concerns, why we'd have so much *real, legitimate* business it would be unbelievable!"

There are a number of reasons she has not gotten a great deal of cooperation. "For years, most of us in the music industry thought that these victim's recourse was simply to sue. Well, first and foremost, they can't afford it! And the

ripoff artists know this. Secondly, for years nobody saw this pattern emerging, nobody realized how big this ripoff was until we began keeping tabs on the cases we knew about. Another thing has been the industry-wide apparent lack of concern and sympathy for these victims. The feeling has been: if you're gullible enough to fall for this, then you deserve what you get."

Another reason that it is difficult, especially for the outsider, to separate the scrupulous from the unscrupulous, is that custom recordings are in many cases useful and necessary, if the buyer is well aware of what he is getting. "We need custom recordings," Betty Holt states flatly and firmly. "But it is an area which is easily abused, and we need someone or something to look over the shoulder of this side of the business."

Here is an example of the very common legitimate use of custom recording: your favorite nightclub singer leads a popular group in your town, be it Dothan Alabama, Fairbanks Alaska, Caribou Maine or Tucson, Arizona. He or she may well wish to have albums to sell his fans



Betty Holt in her Nashville office.

and patrons at his shows, so he goes to Nashville, hires the studio and the musicians, and cuts the ten or twelve most requested songs he does, which will most likely be *Help Me Make It Through The Night*, *Release Me*, *For The Good Times* and other such standards. He is realistic enough to know there is no hope of national sales—he simply wants some product to sell at the club where he's popular.

Gospel groups frequently do the same thing, recording custom records to sell at their live performances, potentially a large source of income. A major star might make a custom album as well: although he's on a major label he might want to record an album featuring his band. Fans buy these records, though not in quantities enough to entice major labels, so he might finance an album by his band to sell at their performances, calling it something like "Bobby Joe Blancmange Presents His Rangers."

None of this is in the least illegal or unethical; it provides a needed service. The problem begins with the unscrupulous at the edge of this business who deliberately try to take advantage of those who have no

knowledge of or experience in the music industry, deliberately trading on their dreams and hopes and innocent trust to run up massive profits, promising much and delivering little, or nothing.

What concerns Betty Holt most is the black eye the city of Nashville and the music industry stand to get from the adverse publicity; not the publicity in the newspapers, or magazines, or even on *Sixty Minutes*, but the intense negative personal publicity from each of these 3,339 bitter, disillusioned victims who return to their home towns and paint a dismal picture of a city full of vipers and sharks to all who know them.

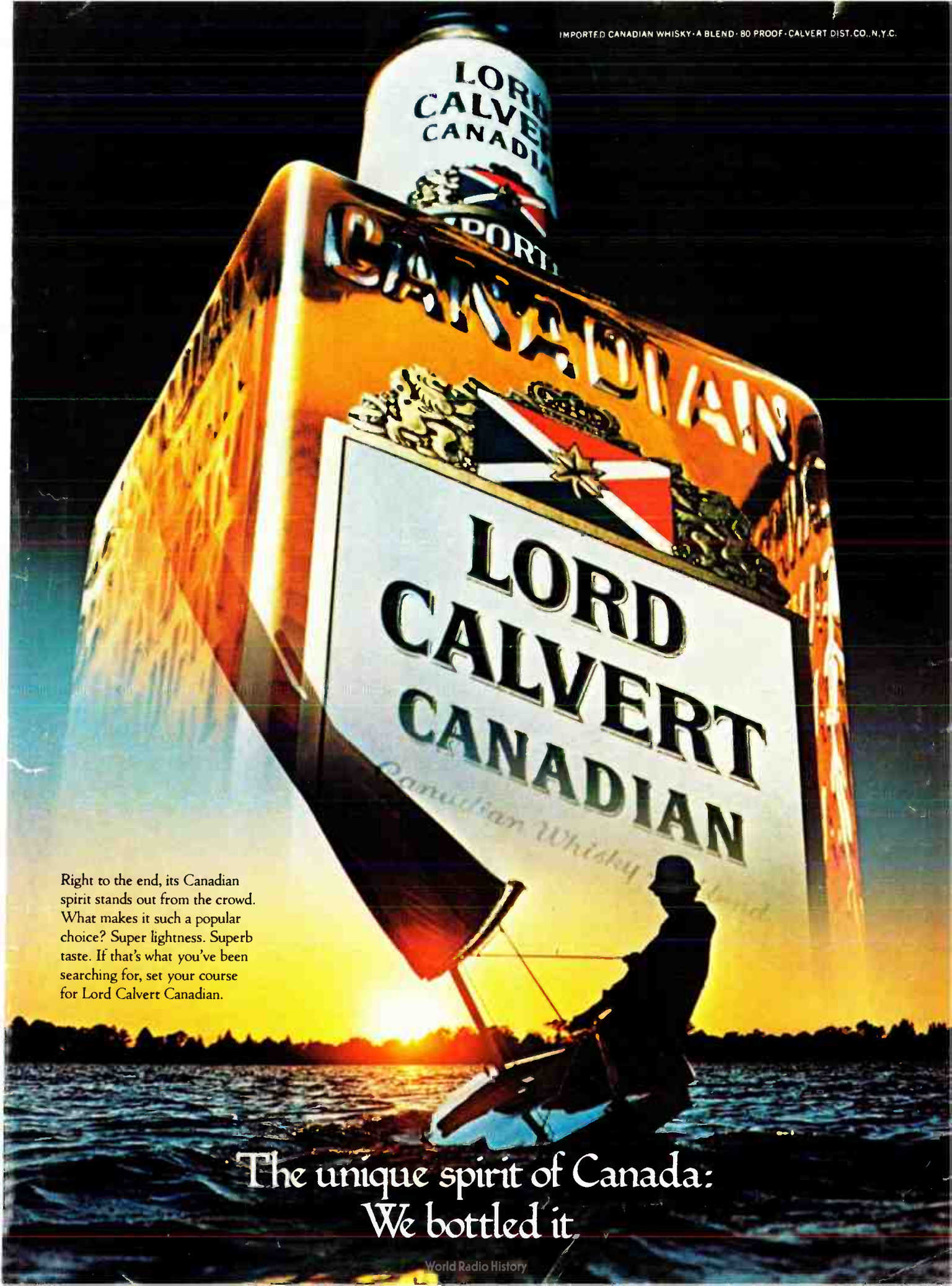
It is a big big problem, one which refuses to go away. And there are many ramifications and schemes besides the custom records ripoff and the bogus publicity schemes mentioned.

Other wrinkles in this shell game include pyramid schemes for investing in recordings, putting music to your "song poems" (regardless of the content of your "poem," the music you get for this \$50 or \$100 service is invariably *Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes* or some other public domain tune), and one of the newest: charging a flat fee (as much as \$395) for placing your song on a guaranteed hit album. Sure enough the album comes out and includes your song, along with the songs of eleven other poor souls who likewise coughed up their \$395 to have their song cut. Few, if any, copies are ever distributed or sold, and the "producer" has pocketed \$4,740 (\$395 times 12 songs) less the minimal cost of recording and pressing up a very few records.

This is a problem which does not go away. As long as there are people who come to Nashville blind, knowing no one, perfectly innocent of the knowledge of the actual workings of the music industry, there will be those who will make good livings taking advantage of them.

If you are one of the thousands who have considered bringing your songs or your talents to Nashville, it is crucial that you watch your step—there are people who are quite literally out to get you. They are on the fringe of an otherwise pretty respectable industry, but it is nevertheless best to advance with caution. A little careful checking (with the Better Business Bureau, the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, or with anyone you're sure you can trust) may save you hundreds or thousands of dollars.

There is now no centrally located information service to let you know who in the music business is a barracuda and who is on the level, but Betty Holt is doing her best to compile these records and this data. You can call her at the Music Industry Information Panel at 615-320-7947; if you suspect a firm or an individual might be about to rip you off, whatever the phone call costs could well be the best investment of your life. ■



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