

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE COUNTRY PUBLICATION

December, 1979 — \$1.25

COUNTRY MUSIC™

**And The
Winner Is...**

**KENNY
ROGERS**

**RITA
COOLIDGE**
Satisfied

DOTTIE WEST
**Talks About
Friends And
Career**

**STARS AT
CHRISTMAS**

Johnny Cash & June Carter
Kenny Rogers & Marianne Gordon
Kitty Wells & Johnny Wright
Jessi Colter & Wrayton Jennings



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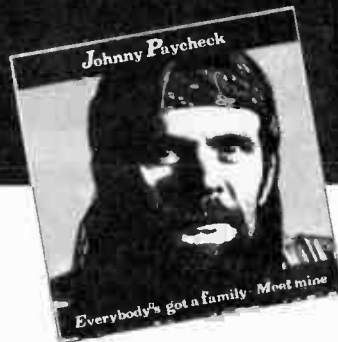
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A completely new 12" driver was created for the L150. It has an innovative magnetic assembly, the result of years of research at JBL. It

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**FIRST
WITH THE
PROS.**



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Letters

Loretta Lynn

I was really tickled when I got my September issue of Country Music and saw Loretta Lynn on the cover. I think she

is the greatest and I really enjoyed the story as well as the photos. Can't wait to see her movie *Coal Miner's Daughter*. I sure hope you will have more pictures and

articles on Loretta in the near future. I really enjoy getting Country Music Magazine. I think it is the best. Also enjoyed the story and pictures of Conway. DIANA O'DONNELL
SO. CONNELLSVILLE, PA.

I would like to thank you for the article and front cover picture of Loretta Lynn. Loretta Lynn will always remain number one with me regardless of awards or anybody else's opinion. She continues year after year to come out with fantastic singles and super good albums. I've never regretted a purchase of a single album of hers.

Also I appreciate the article on Charley Pride who also simply continues time after time to come out with enjoyable singles and albums.

BETTY HEITHOLD
PALMYER, MO.

Thanks for putting the *Coal Miner's Daughter* on the cover of the September issue.

Really enjoyed the article on Loretta and the great picture of Loretta and Sissy Spacek. Am looking forward to the movie. Let's have more stories on this super-talented lady.

CAROLYN WERNER
EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

Thanks for the beautiful photo cover and article on Loretta Lynn. She is my favorite entertainer. She certainly knows how to put on a show. When she sings, she puts her whole heart and soul into it. When she walks out onto the stage you can just feel the love pouring out of her. I had the great honor of meeting her at Fan Fair. She is a very warm and friendly person and to know her is to love her. Let's see some more articles about this fantastic lady. I loved the article on Cristy Lane, too. She is also a talented singer.

TERRIE WINTERS
LOVES PARK, IL

Roy Orbison

This is Florida's number one Roy Orbison fan writing. I think Roy is a very talented musician/songwriter. I'm a proud member of his fabulous fan club. I collect albums, tapes, pictures, etc. on Roy. But I've never seen him in concert or met him. I hope I'll be able to see him sometime in the near future.



THE MARTIN ELECTRICS
A New Energy Source

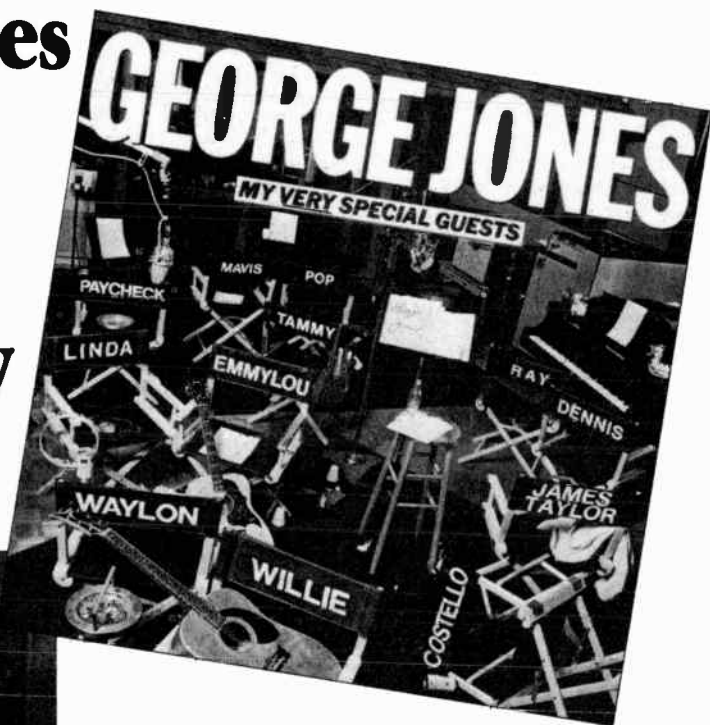
E-series Martin solid body electric guitars and bass are quality handcrafted instruments incorporating custom electronics and hardware as factory installed standard equipment. The one-piece select mahogany necks with rosewood fingerboards are mortised to a balanced contoured body of hard maple and walnut. From the distinctive old-world Martin headstock design to the latest in electronics and hardware, the E-series by Martin offers the ultimate in workmanship and custom electronic innovation.

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Will you please print a nice, long feature on Roy and accompany it with a color photo or two (or three, or four. . .)? I sure would appreciate it. So will every Roy Orbison fan who sees it.

Here's hoping that Roy will have a top-ten record soon, which is what he's trying to do. I'd like to see him win an award on television. Actually, for a talented entertainer like Roy, more than one award is long overdue.

SHEILA HANSEN
DELRAY BEACH, FLA.

Ralph Emery

In your October issue you had a story on Ralph Emery, country's most famous D.J. by Dolly Carlisle. Ms. Carlisle didn't say anything about Ralph having records on Elektra/Asylum records. I am sure Mr. Emery would like country fans to buy his records.

BOB JAMES (D.J.)
MILWAUKEE, WISC.

Hank, Jr.

First, let me say Country Music is the best magazine on the market today by far. I've been a subscriber from the very first issue. Would like to see a few more Waylon stories (one in every issue would not make me mad). He's the greatest. Another of my

favorites has always been Hank, Jr. until last night. I went to a great deal of trouble just to see his show in nearby Cleveland, Tenn. Bought tickets almost two months in advance and counted the minutes until show time. After parting with \$14 for tickets and \$15 for a baby sitter (very hard earned cash) Hank disappointed everyone very much by refusing to go on stage simply because the promoters lacked \$250 of a \$4000 fee. Let me say here I understand a contract is a contract and should be honored by both parties, but this show was supposed to be for Muscular Dystrophy and I cannot understand why a man would not make an exception for a worthy cause. This very much destroyed my faith in Hank Jr. As far as I'm concerned, I would not attend one of his shows for free! So, Hank, don't bother coming back around Chattanooga because we don't want you. Send Waylon in your place.

BOBBY AVERITT
CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

I've been waiting and waiting for someone to credit Hank Jr.—Hank Jr. not a clone of Daddy, thank you.

Hank's the best damn singer I've ever heard. His deep voice really cooks on songs like *Always Loving You*.

He has such a great, great voice. He doesn't need backup vocal or loud music to

drown him out. His singing can stand alone.

I pray he's found himself because I don't ever want to lose his creative genius and that voice which is my biggest joy . . . couldn't live without that voice.

Thanks so much for treating Hank as a man and not a shadow.

LYN HAAS
TACOMA, WASH.

Johnny Rodriguez

Thank you very much for the story on the great Johnny Rodriguez, in the July/August issue. Don't wait so long to have another great story on him. Would like to see him on the cover real soon.

I have been a fan ever since Johnny had his first hit. He is a great star and a credit to the country music field. I have met and talked with Johnny a number of times and he is friendly and he always has time for his fans.

I feel that Johnny isn't getting the recognition he deserves. Also he has never gotten the awards that he should have gotten. He is a fantastic singer. And he is the sexiest thing in Country Music. He doesn't have to use any false gimmicks to turn on his audience, all it takes is that sexy smile.

So come on lets give Johnny the star

HANK WILLIAMS, JR.
HAS MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF
... AND HIS NEW ALBUM IS ROCKING
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*Whiskey Bent
and Hell Bound*
The album and the single.
On Elektra Records and Tapes.
Produced by Jimmy Bowen.

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Whiskey Bent And Hell Bound

Exclusive Management: J.R. Smith,
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treatment for he is truly a super-star and a lot more. I am sure that all the members of his fan club feel the same way I do. I am starting my seventh year in his club and I have loved every minute of it. Johnny will always be no. 1 in my book. Your magazine is great. Looking forward to more articles on my superstar. Thank you very much for the story on Johnny. I am sure I speak for all his fans.

JO CRAWFORD
CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

Thanks so much to Bob Allen for the superb article in the July/August issue of Country Music Magazine on Johnny Rodriguez. My only disappointment was that Rodriguez did not appear on the front cover. I have recently subscribed to Country Music for 16 months and certainly hope that you feature Rodriguez more in the following months. The record review on Rodriguez was well written. Thanks so much.

ROSEMARIE PANCAKE
MURRAY CITY, OHIO

Marty Robbins

I would like to thank you very much for the recent article on Marty Robbins.

I've thought for years that he was the

best singer in the entire world. However I never had the pleasure of seeing his performance until recently.

I would just like to suggest that if anyone that has never been to a Marty Robbins concert, if you have the opportunity, don't miss it. You will be thrilled, you will be entertained. As far as I'm concerned he is the entertainer of every year.

NORMA JEAN SHERRILL
ADDRESS UNKNOWN

Thanks for the fantastic article on Marty Robbins in the July/August issue. I have waited for a while to see an article on Marty and I was really shocked to see his name on the cover. I believe Marty is the most underrated singer alive. He deserves more publicity. I just bought his latest album, **The All Around Cowboy**. Every song on it is tops but then again every song Marty does is tops.

DAVE SEAMAN
NEWTON FALLS, OHIO

I really enjoyed the article on Marty Robbins, but it wasn't long enough to suit me. My husband and I have always enjoyed his music but I really got hooked on him since watching his *Marty Robbins' Spotlight* which I am sorry to say is no longer being taped.

We went to Ponderosa Park for Marty's

show. Because it was my birthday, I was very lucky to have my good friends from WSLR Radio in Akron take me backstage. I only spent a minute with him—just long enough to take a picture with him. He has a wonderful personality and his smile could melt gold bars.

Most country & western stars can only sing country, which is fine, but Marty can sing anything and make it beautiful. Let's have more on Marty. He has many fans as evidenced by the overflowing crowd at his performance. To me his is a superstar, the king and a legend.

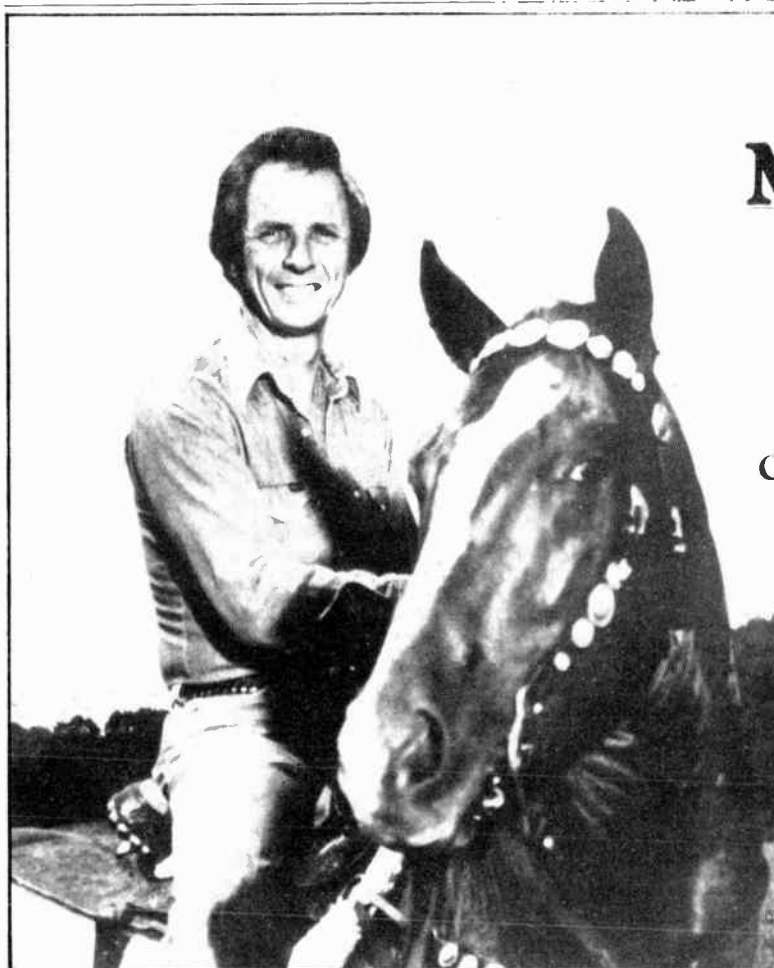
ANGELINE R. SPAGNOLA
UNIONTOWN, OHIO

The Oaks

I would like to know if Nelson Allen is trying to be cute, sarcastic or doesn't know any better. He stated that the Oak Ridge Boys were named after a place named Oak Ridge. This is true as I have heard them state. But this one is in my native state—Tennessee. It is a government reservation.

The one he mentioned is in the South (Sept. 1979) a famous Oak tree dotted cliff where preachers preach atop the cliff and singers sing. The boys were reared under the ridge and thus their name. I would love to know exactly where this is.


LOUISE WILKINSON
MCDONOUGH, GA



Mel Tillis Me and Pepper

It's the beginning of
another great relationship...
for you and Mel.

The new album on
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Contains the single, "Blind In Love"

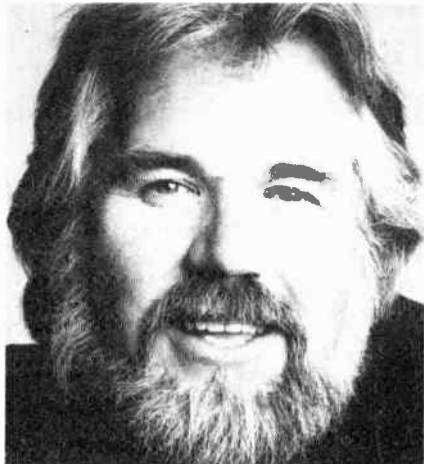


Produced by Jimmy Bowen.

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Top 50 Albums

Number 1



Number 2



Number 3



- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 Kenny
<i>Kenny Rogers</i> | 18 Stardust
<i>Willie Nelson</i> | 35 Golden Tears/Stay With Me
<i>Dave & Sugar</i> |
| 2 Greatest Hits
<i>Waylon Jennings</i> | 19 Just Good Ole Boys
<i>Moe Bandy & Joe Stampley</i> | 36 Portrait
<i>Don Williams</i> |
| 3 Miss The Mississippi
<i>Crystal Gayle</i> | 20 Loveline
<i>Eddie Rabbitt</i> | 37 When I Dream
<i>Crystal Gayle</i> |
| 4 The Gambler
<i>Kenny Rogers</i> | 21 Forever
<i>John Conlee</i> | 38 Our Memories of Elvis Vol. II
<i>Elvis Presley</i> |
| 5 Million Mile Reflections
<i>Charlie Daniels Band</i> | 22 Shot Through The Heart
<i>Jennifer Warnes</i> | 39 Don't Let Me Cross Over
<i>Jim Reeves</i> |
| 6 Straight Ahead
<i>Larry Gatlin</i> | 23 What Goes Around Comes Around
<i>Waylon Jennings</i> | 40 You're My Jamaica
<i>Charley Pride</i> |
| 7 I'll Always Love You
<i>Anne Murray</i> | 24 The Best of Eddie Rabbitt
<i>Eddie Rabbitt</i> | 41 Let's Keep It That Way
<i>Anne Murray</i> |
| 8 Just For The Record
<i>Barbara Mandrell</i> | 25 The Oak Ridge Boys Have Arrived
<i>The Oak Ridge Boys</i> | 42 Randy Barlow
<i>Randy Barlow</i> |
| 9 Images
<i>Ronnie Milsap</i> | 26 Should I Come Home
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<i>Anne Murray</i> |
| 10 One For The Road
<i>Willie Nelson</i> | 27 Great Balls of Fire
<i>Dolly Parton</i> | 44 Banded Together
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| 11 The Best of Don Williams Vol. II
<i>Don Williams</i> | 28 Blue Kentucky Girl
<i>Emmylou Harris</i> | 45 Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound
<i>Hank Williams, Jr.</i> |
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<i>Jimmy Buffett</i> | 29 The Legend & The Legacy
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| 16 Classic Crystal
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<i>Willie Nelson</i> | 50 If Love Had A Face
<i>Razzy Bailey</i> |
| 17 Classics
<i>Kenny Rogers & Dottie West</i> | 34 A Rusty Old Halo
<i>Hoyt Axton</i> | |

GREAT MUSIC... GREAT GIFT IDEAS... FROM MCA RECORDS AND TAPES

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BARBARA MANDRELL
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DIAMOND DUET

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PORTRAIT

MCA-3174



JOHN CONLEE
FOREVER

MCA-5106



TANYA TUCKER
TEAR ME APART

MCA-1135



THE OAK RIDGE BOYS
HAVE ARRIVED

MCA-3089



MERL HAGGARD
SERVING 190 PROOF

Audio

Your Favorite Songs At The Flip of a Switch

by Hans Fantel

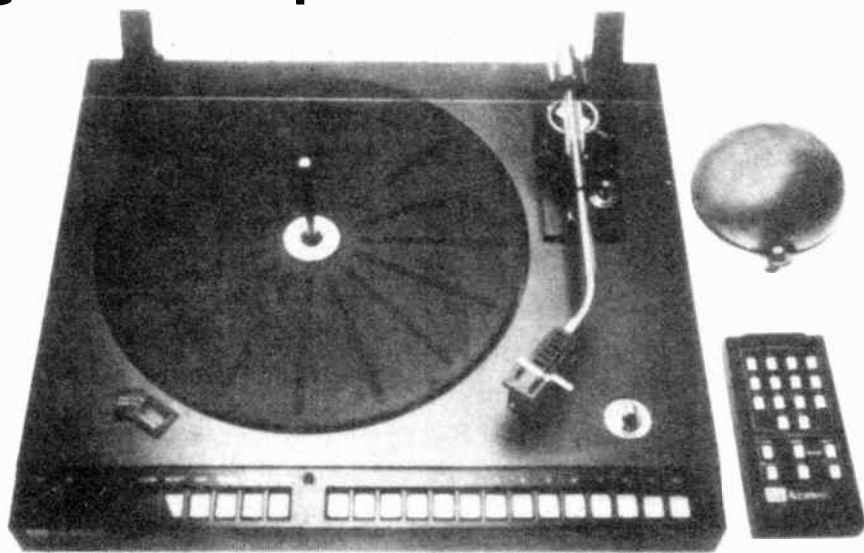
Just a couple of weeks back, I squeezed myself through the crowds at the New York High-Fidelity Show to get a look at the latest sound gear and maybe sniff out a few new trends.

As usual, most of the recent improvements were introduced in the top models of the various manufacturers, but luckily these advances have a way of trickling down to lower-priced units. Once the cost of research and development has been recouped from the high-ticket items, those features available at first only to audio fans with fat wallets eventually come within reach of the rest of us.

One of the most useful innovations among current sound gear is the use of automation in record players and tape decks. From the way it looks, there must have been a marriage between audio and the computer. Anyway, there's plenty of offspring from this union. More and more audio components now have some built-in "logic"—which means simply that they can run through a pre-set program in response to coded commands.

The first of these "smart machines"—ADC's Accutrac record changer—has been around a while, but it's learned some fancy tricks in its latest version. A photo-sensitive cell on the tone arm registers light reflections from the record. This lets the machine distinguish the groove tracks from the blank bands between. Fed to the "logic circuit" this information enables the Accutrac to pick out, play, skip, or repeat any track on a record in any sequence you choose. What's more, it will do this for up to six records in a row, then automatically restack the records and do it all over again. The second time around you can either tell it to repeat the same sequence of songs, or you can order up a different sequence.

The way it works is that you punch your instructions to the record changer into a keyboard that holds up to 27 pre-programmed cues—enough to tailor a whole evening's worth of music to your particular taste. The Accutrac 6-disk changer sells for about \$300, and for an extra \$50 you can get a remote control keyboard—about the size of a pocket calculator—to hold in your lap while issuing ultrasonic commands to the record player from your armchair. Another very similar record changer with a computerized memory bank for pre-programming any sequence of record



tracks is the **BSR Accuglide XR-50**, which carries a list price of \$230 and comes equipped with a pre-mounted high-quality ADC photo cartridge.

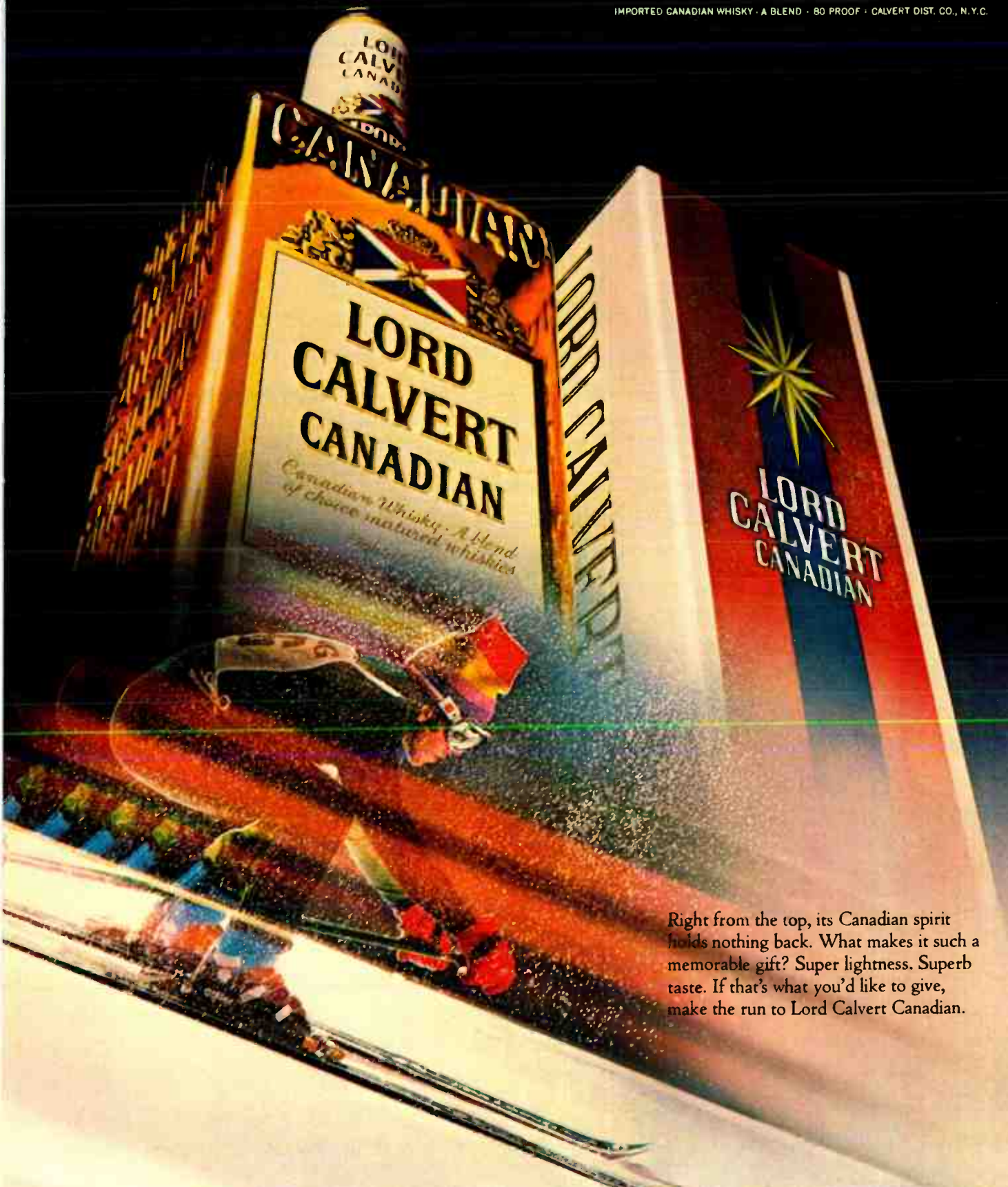
Similar computerized programming options are now also available in cassette equipment. If you ever tried to locate a particular piece of music on tape—hunting back and forth for the right spot—you'll be grateful for such computerized convenience. The same basic principle—as they say in computer lingo—is one of selective access and recall. For example, in the **Optonica RT-6501** cassette deck, which sells for \$420, has a built-in micro-computer that counts the silent intervals between the separate pieces of music and assigns a number to each, which is displayed in the form of signal lights. You can then punch in the numbers you want to hear and skip the others. The built-in computer then silently searches for the proper spot on the tape and starts playing after it finds the beginning of the piece. A few other tape decks now also have this useful feature—notably **Sony's TC-K65** (\$500) and a very posh model by **Marantz**.

Automation goes even further in the latest ultra-elaborate tape decks. For example, **JVC**, **Phase Linear** and **Hitachi** offer models that automatically adjust the recorder for the best possible performance from whatever tape you slap in. With all the different tape types now on the market—hi-bias, low-bias, ferric, chrome, and whatnot—it gets pretty confusing trying to set the bias and equalization controls to match the requirement of each tape. So it's

nice to have the built-in computer on those machines to do it for you.

But such super-sophisticated automation doesn't come cheap, and the question pops up if this kind of convenience is worth the cost. After all, the smart gadgetry does nothing you couldn't do yourself by twiddling a couple of knobs or setting a few switches. Besides, if—like most audio fans—you stick with the same tape type, you just have to set the controls once and then leave them alone—in which case that helpful computer has nothing to do. That's something to keep in mind before shelling out extra cash for such features.

Among the latest tape deck designs, **Teac's Model 124** (\$449) may prove particularly useful to musicians. It is the first cassette deck with facilities for sound-on-sound recording—an option formerly found only on open-reel recorders. It permits "live" input from a microphone to be added to previously recorded music. A singer or instrumentalist can thus contribute his or her own efforts to any recorded performance. The machine also has facilities for blending sounds from one channel to the other so that successive "takes" can be superimposed—building up a multitrack recording. You can thus sing-along with yourself or convert yourself into a whole group by playing and singing all the parts, one after the other (while listening to the previously recorded tracks on earphones). It's a fine way to produce your own audition tapes, if you've got professional ambitions. ■



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- Take a ride with **Johnny Duncan** and "The Lady in the Blue Mercedes" on a new album that's "Straight From Texas."
- **Moe Bandy** records classic-sounding country albums right now. No wonder people call him "One of a Kind."
- Follow **David Allan Coe** and you'll never get lost. He's one of the best songwriters and performers in music today.

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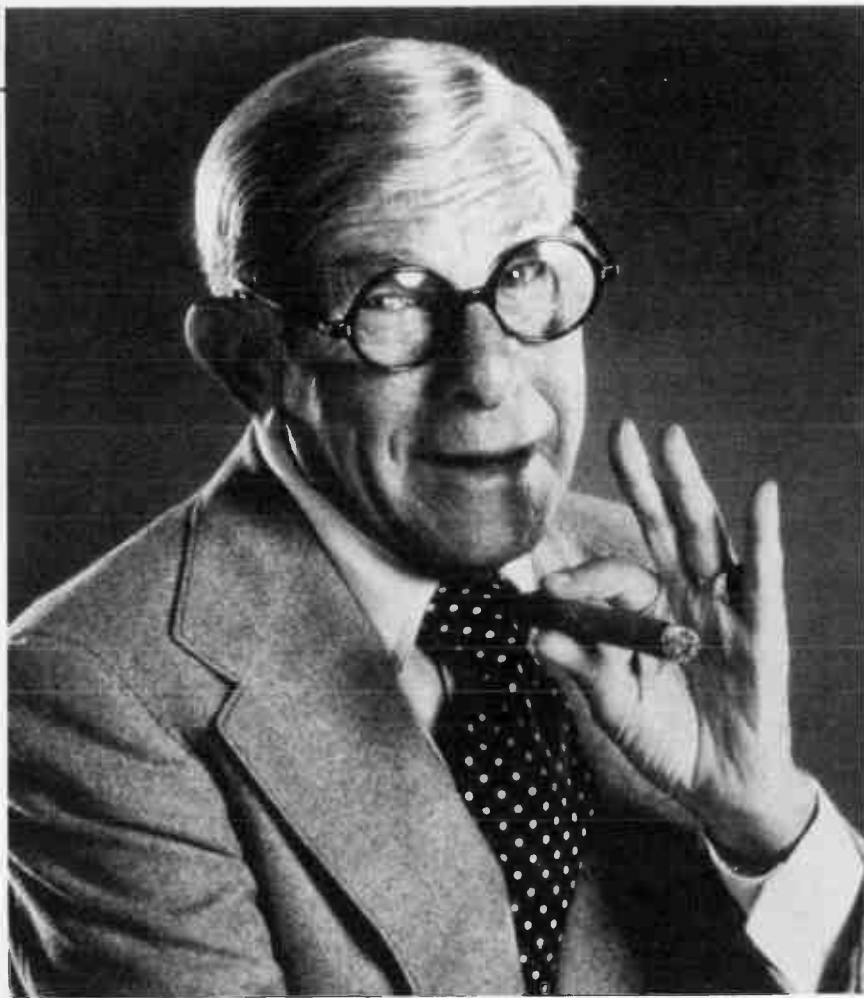
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Country Scene



George Burns in Nashville

For more than 70 years, the ineffable George Burns has been a fixture in American entertainment. From 1923 until 1958, first in vaudeville and early films, then in radio and television, along with Gracie Allen, he endeared himself to generation after generation with his long cigar, stylish clothes, round dark glasses and sharp sense of humor.

In more recent years, as an octogenarian (Burns passed his eightieth birthday a couple of years ago) he has not slowed down. He won an Academy Award for his performance with Jack Lemmon in *The Sunshine Boys*, and he played God with John Denver in the Warner Brothers film, *Oh God!* He's also written two books, the second of

which, *The Third Time Around*, is hot off the presses.

But recently, Burns, along with his cigar, glasses and humor, was in Nashville trying on yet another hat—that of a country singer. Going into the studios with Mercury Records producer Jerry Kennedy, he recorded two songs: Tom T. Hall's *The Mysteries of Life*, and Sonny Throckmorton's *I Wish I Was Eighteen Again*. The latter of these two was recently released as a country single.

At a press conference held at a Nashville hotel, Burns explained a little more about his new musical venture. He also demonstrated that his quick, ad-libbed sense of humor was as sharp as ever:

Question: Now that you're a country singer, are you going to start wearing flashy suits?

Burns: If the record sells. If not, I'll wear one boot.

Question: Do you enjoy singing country

Burns: Yes. I might not sing like some of the great singers in Nashville, and I might phrase it a little different. But we all have one thing in common: when we all sing, we open our mouths. Actually, I've been watching Dolly Parton and I've learned a thing or two.

Question: What really made you decide to come to Nashville and record country songs?

Burns: Well, when I gave up skiing, I had so much time on my hands. . . . Why not!? At my age, I think I can do a country song. It might not do well, but my sister'll like it.

Question: What other future plans do you have?

Burns: I've got a movie coming out at Christmas called *Going In Style*, with Art Carney and Lee Strasberg. Then I've got another book coming out at Christmas . . . and I'm taking up toe dancing.

Question: What's your favorite kind of entertainment?

Burns: Dancing close with very pretty girls.

Question: Do you ever think about retiring?

Burns: No. The most important thing at my age is having something to get you out of bed. I found out I can't make money in bed.

Question: Have you ever cut any records before, or is this your first?

Burns: Well, I made a record before, but I don't know how long ago it was. All I remember was that the arranger was John Phillip Sousa's father.

Question: Would you like to be eighteen again?

Burns: No. I like where I am. I'm not going to die anyway. I don't believe in it. I think it's been kicked. It's been done. I'm going to stay around and find a new exit, and when I find one, I'll let you all know.

BOB ALLEN

Country Scene

Singer/Composer Bob Newman Dies

"Things haven't been the greatest for me in the last few years," 63 year old singer/composer Bob Newman told me last June. Age has been kind, even stimulating for Grandpa Jones, Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff and other veteran performers who continue to thrive. Yet it can be harsh and unrewarding for the older, more obscure artists. Without a big hit to sustain their name, financial security or an ability to change with the times, many are driven out of music into less satisfying work. When Bob Newman died of a heart attack on October 8, barely a week before his 64th birthday, he was managing a Phoenix, Arizona trailer park. It was, he said, "a hell of a job."

Born near Macon, Georgia on October 16, 1915, Bob joined his older brothers Hank and Slim, both fulltime musicians in a new group called the Georgia Crackers in 1935. The band, with Bob's baritone voice, bass playing and comedy, worked in Columbus, Ohio until World War II. After Bob and Slim completed military service they joined Hank, the eldest brother, in Hollywood where they did Charles Starrett films, a daily radio show and recorded for RCA. Their music, which combined Sons of The Pioneers harmony with a driving swing sound and zany songs, placed them solidly in western music. But ironically, they returned to Columbus in the late forties.

Bob's songwriting abilities were impressive by then. Gene Autry recorded his *The Leaf of Love*, and in 1959 Bob began recording alone for Cincinnati's King label. He had no real hits on his own but the records were excellent. Many were original songs written under the name Lee Roberts, among them *Lonesome Truck Driver's Blues*, the rocking *Haulin Freight* [now a collector's item], *Greetings*, a bizarre tongue in cheek ode to draftdodging and his best song, *Phfft! And Then You Were Gone*, which Archie Campbell has rendered immortal through innumerable performances on *Hee-Haw*. All those performances could have made Newman wealthy had he not sold the rights some time after he recorded them in 1952. In

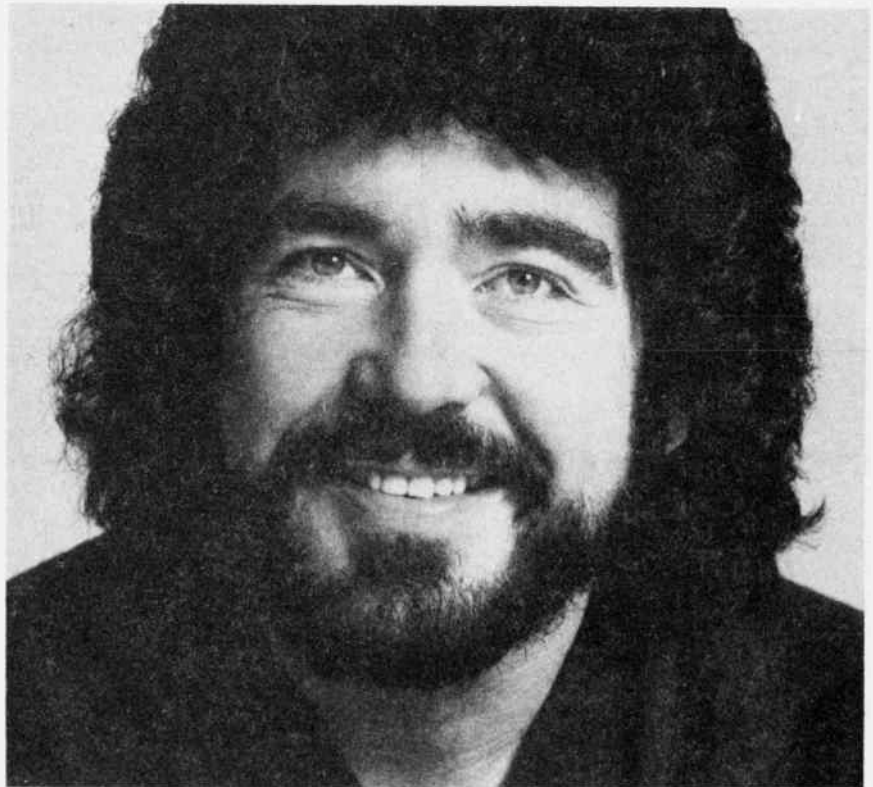
the end he, like many other song-sellers watched his tune take off and earn huge royalties—for someone else.

Bob left Ohio for Phoenix in 1958, afflicted with an inner-ear ailment. For a time he was a popular disc jockey at KHAT Radio, and later became its program director. He continued playing sporadically in the Southwest, but times changed for the worse. As tastes shifted,

music (and radio) passed him by. The original Georgia Crackers did reunite briefly in the seventies for nostalgic performances in Ohio, and may have continued to do had Hank not died earlier this year. But Bob Newman never did quit trying to revive his career. At the time he died he had several new songs written. All he needed was a publisher.

RICH KIENZLE

Watch This Face: Randy Barlow



"I've got a T-shirt that I had made up," the singer laughs sardonically as he sips his cup of coffee and leans back in his chair. "It says, 'Who the hell is Randy Barlow!'"

His name, and even the biographical material furnished by his record company somehow conjure up images of Randy Barlow as a fresh-faced country boy, waiting in the wings to set the music world on fire.

But the real Randy Barlow is something else entirely. At age 36, he is a seasoned performer and carries the scars that have come from almost a decade and a half spent waiting in the wings. He is

fully aware that he is starting a career at an age when others are peaking out. "It's better to be starting a career at 36 than finishing one," he smiles. "It's better than being 31 and doing an 'oldies but goodies' tour."

Behind his thick dark beard and matching dark glasses, there comes through in Barlow's personality, a refined mixture of west coast cool: a sharp sense of humor and a hard-edged, often sarcastic quickness of wit. Mixed with that, there is still the accent of the street-tough kid who was born in Detroit and first got into music by battering his way up through that town's rhythm and

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BING CROSBY - SM-11737 ALBUM \$2.98
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THE OAK RIDGE BOYS - C-33935 ALBUM \$2.98
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THE OAK RIDGE BOYS - C-32742 ALBUM \$2.98
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PATTI PAGE - CS-9326 ALBUM \$2.98
Tennessee Waltz; Cross Over The Bridge; Old Cape Cod; (How Much Is That) Doggie In The Window; Mister Mississippi; I Went To Your Wedding; Mockin' Bird Hill; Allegheny Moon; With My Eyes Wide Open I'm Dreaming; Changing Partners; Detour.
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RAY PRICE - CS-8866 ALBUM \$2.98
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JIM REEVES - ANL1-3014 ALBUM \$2.98
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NO TAPE AVAILABLE

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8 TRACK TAPE - TRR-254 \$4.98

Country Scene

blues scene; there are still traces of that kid who wanted to get out so bad that he hitch-hiked to Hollywood the day he got out of high school.

"I got into music in a negative kind of way," he reflects quietly. "I saw all the things in Detroit that I didn't want to do. My parents worked in automobile plants, and I didn't want any of that. I wanted to be the one who broke away. Nowadays, I hover over Detroit a lot, but I don't land very often. There's just nothing there."

Since he left Detroit, it's taken Barlow more than 15 years, three marriages, and a half a dozen record label changes to get where he wanted to go. But now, on Republic Records, one of the few small independent labels that is really showing any action in country music these days, he's beginning to make his mark as a professional recording artist. Since he joined Republic about two years ago, he's had more than a dozen nationally charted records; his last three, *Slow And Easy*, *No Sleep Tonight*, and *Fall In Love With Me Tonight*, have placed well up in the top ten. Spurred by the strength of these singles, his album, *Fall In Love With Me*, has also done well. The success of his records has, in turn, given him the opportunity to appear on national concert dates with the likes of Conway Twitty and Dolly Parton.

"I'm just now getting smart enough and mature enough to really be able to handle this business and do it right," says Randy. "After three marriages and gettin' your ass kicked real good, you learn. I was very intent upon making the Seagrams people very happy there for a while, but I've been dry now for two years. And since all that baloney is done, my life has really turned around—a lot!"

Though he's now comfortably taken up residence in middle Tennessee, Barlow, since he was a kid, has always been fascinated with the West Coast. ("I've always had the 'California Dream,'" he smiles. "It's always had a big influence on me.") So much, in fact, that he spent the better part of ten years there, involved in the music scene, before he ever came to Nashville. He got his first taste of Hollywood on that first post-high school trip; even though he only stayed two weeks, he knew he'd eventually be back.

From Detroit to California, Barlow's next stop was Bowling Green where he attended Western Kentucky University and majored in clinical psychology.

There, he continued playing music, began writing songs, and also promoted local concerts. "Now and then I'd hitch-hike to Nashville to knock on doors and everything, but I was stupid then. I didn't know anything about how the music business worked."

During one of these brief trips to Music City though, he did succeed in getting Mel Tillis interested in publishing one of his original songs. But when his "dumb-ass, would-be lawyer roommate" demanded front money from Tillis, "that was the end of that." It would be another ten years, almost to the day, before Barlow made it back to Nashville.

In the meantime, he quit college and took a job with *Dick Clark's Caravan*, a travelling musical show that sponsored many of the then up-and-coming English rock groups on their first American tours. "I was Herman and the Hermits' first American road manager," he recalls. "I was on the road with Bobby Vee, the Rascals, the Detergents . . . and other legends of contemporary fame . . . I really learned the business from the other side."

But after two years with the Dick Clark tour organization, Randy ended up back on the West Coast again, "going up and down Sunset Boulevard, knocking on doors. Just like in the songs, he was parking cars at a strip club on Sunset when he fast-talked his way into his first record deal.

"I told the owner I was the greatest songwriter that's ever been, and I asked him if I got a break, would he help me. He said he would. Then Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, and I wrote a song about his assassination called *Color Blind*, which made a parallel between his death and Kennedy's. Then I wrote a hot check and did a demo on it. The guy at the club liked it and took it to Mercury for me. They flipped out and produced a record on me the next day.

"I was all set to be a star," he laughs. "I was looking at big houses, I was going to get on the *Dinah Shore Show* and everything. . . . But it doesn't work like that. . . . Instead, the song was banned by the FCC. They'd just had the Detroit race riots and they wouldn't let anything on about the assassinations, except *Abraham, Martin and John*, which came out eight months later."

Barlow instead spent the next eight or nine years in the obscurity of the Califor-

nia music scene, recording for a number of different labels. For two years, he was signed with Capitol, and he had a couple of chart records there. "The problem was," he grimaces, "when I was on Capitol, it seemed like everybody knew I was on Capitol *except* Capitol!"

Around this time, Randy noticed that his music which, up until then, had been based on the influences of Detroit R&B and West Coast rock, was gradually moving more and more toward a modern country sound.

"I've always been influenced by country music, but back in the sixties, you couldn't make a living in California playing it. You had to play rock 'n roll. But then when I went with Capitol and started putting material down, it just *fell* country and that was very very pleasing to me. Then when my first record, *Throw Away The Pages*, charted country, we said, 'Well, if we're gonna do country, we better get to Nashville.

About two years ago, Randy resurfaced in Nashville with a contract with Republic Records, a rather small label. And, as he puts it, "it's just been a growing process since then."

"It's like a family over at Republic," he explains. "I'm sort of the number one artist over there and that's really comfortable for me. If I were with one of the big labels, I'd be way down the list, like I was at Capitol. If you're on a big label, they can make you or break you. If you've got the big guns shooting for you, fine. But if they don't promote you, you're dead."

Because he's only been in Nashville a relatively short time, and is a newcomer to the country top ten, Barlow is only now beginning to gain the name recognition that comes with hit records. But right now, it doesn't seem to bother him in the least. He's confident that all that is about to change.

"I'm becoming a little more visible now, but I like to take it as a slow, steady climb. I learned this in L.A. That the people you saw in Schwab's Drug Store ten years ago, studying all the parts they were going to have, are the same ones who are still sitting there now. . . . I'd rather just lay back and let things happen.

"My ultimate aim is the movies," he adds with a grin. "Move over, Clint! . . . But I also wanta get my own band and pay off my car. . . . That's in the cards too."

BOB ALLEN

Country Scene

Stewart, Allman, Betts Collaborate

Very quietly, during recent weeks, country-honker Gary Stewart and his friends, Gregg Allman and Dickie Betts of the recently re-formed premier Southern rock band, the Allman Brothers, have been slipping in and out of Chips Moman's Nashville studio where they have been working together on tracks for Stewart's up-coming RCA album.

This project is actually the culmination of an idea that the three of them have been kicking around for some time. Stewart, one of country music's finest vocalists and Betts and Allman, two of the South's most celebrated rock musicians, have long been members of a mutual admiration society. ("They're like Hank Williams to me," says Stewart. "The first time I heard them, it

changed my life.")

"When they started their last tour, Dickie called me and asked me to come to the dress rehearsal," Stewart explained when reached by telephone one morning after a sleepless night at Nashville's recently opened Rock 'n Roll Hotel. "From there, I went on to their first gig and then on to the next and the next. I ended up 'roarin' with 'em, and every night after the gig, we'd end up back in the room, havin' an old-fashioned guitar pull, just like in the old days."

Out of these late-night jam sessions came several songs co-written by the three of them, including *Ghost Train*, *Harlan County Highway* and *How Could We Come To This After That*.

Several months after the Allman Brothers' tour, Stewart was in Nashville, scheduled to begin work on his new LP, and he called Betts and Allman, inviting them to come and sit in with him. "When I asked 'em, they said if I *didn't* invite

'em, they were gonna beat my ass!" Gary laughed. "They're pretty strong guys . . . so I invited 'em!

"It ain't like, 'HEY, I got the Allman Brothers on MY NEW ALBUM!!' " he added cautiously. "It's just a friendship thing is what it is. Everybody loves somebody, and I love the Allman Brothers."

When reached in Nashville, Stewart was on his way to Pikeville, Kentucky—of all places—to put some more of his own songs down on tape in a small studio there. "I been on the wildest writin' streak lately that I've *ever* been on!" he explained. "I been stayin' up all night, writing, *without* cocaine! Now I wanta just go back up in the hills where I'm from and just put some of 'em down on tape, just for history.

"Just remember," he added cryptically before he slammed down the phone and rushed out the door, "if ya don't remember anything else, no matter what, just remember, there's a tape on me in Pikeville." **BOB ALLEN**



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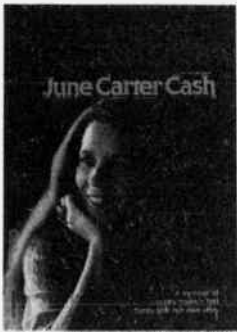
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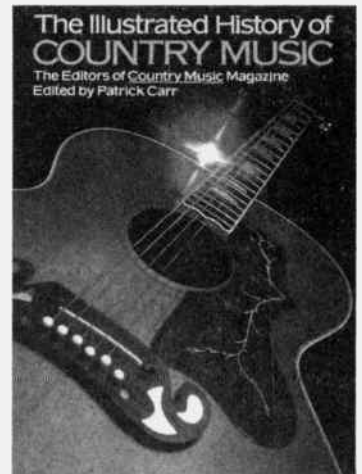


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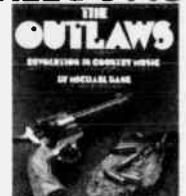
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Country Scene

Roba Stanley Baldwin — Unknown Legend



Roba in 1929

Roba Stanley Baldwin is a country music legend. But most people have never heard of her.

And until recently Mrs. Baldwin didn't even know it herself.

Roba Stanley Baldwin, 71, a woman who looks much younger than her years, was the first woman to record a solo country music record.

She did it in 1923 in an Atlanta studio. The song was *Devilish Mary*, and she was only 14 years old.

The Dacula, Ga. native (a suburb of Atlanta) recorded 12 songs with her father, Robert Stanley, playing the fiddle in the background.

Several years ago, Dr. Charles Wolfe, a Middle Tennessee State University professor discovered while doing research into early country music that the 1923 recording was the first instance of a woman recording country music by herself.

Wolfe said people had known of Roba Stanley's music for many years, but not until a few years ago was it known that she was the first to sing as a solo act. When Wolfe attempted to locate her, he was told she had died many years earlier.

"The hunt was called off because we thought she was dead. A few months ago while going through an Atlanta paper I came across a reference to Roba Stanley in Lawrenceville, Ga. I called the number

and Mrs. Baldwin's sister said Roba was quite alive and living in Gainesville, Fl.," Wolfe said.

"I can hardly believe it, I'm still walking on clouds. Those songs were such a long time ago," Mrs. Baldwin, said.

"We recorded the songs in a great big room, like a barn. There was nothing in it but recording equipment."

She stretched her arms as far as they would go and said, "There was a big old piece of wax. We'd sing into a horn and the sound would be printed on the wax."

There were no rehearsals before the recording session and only one take, since, "we knew the songs quite well."

Financially, there was not much incentive to rehearse a great deal. The Stanleys were paid \$50 a song and no royalties.

Although Mrs. Baldwin did not acquire material wealth, there was a certain amount of fame involved with recording country music.

"Twice my father and I were on live radio, WSB in Atlanta. We'd sing songs and as we were singing, there would be telegrams and telephone calls from adjoining states requesting their favorite songs," she said.

Mrs. Baldwin wrote the songs, but she admits borrowing freely from standard tunes of the day.

"I made up the words, anything that rhymed, they sound really crude now. When I'd run out of tune or words, I'd get them from another song."

Some of Mrs. Baldwin's songs are surprisingly modern. One in particular, *Single Life*, sounds like a feminist song of today.

Three years after Roba Stanley recorded the song, a version of *Single Life*, was recorded by the Carter Family. Professor Wolfe said that Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris recently recorded *Single Girl*, a very similar song.

Mrs. Baldwin said she is still stunned at the place her records have in history. Until Wolfe contacted her, she had no idea of the importance of her songs. It became more believable when she was recognized at the Grand Ole Opry.

A few of Mrs. Baldwin's relatives arranged a trip to Nashville for her. Seeing the Grand Ole Opry was a dream she

had had for many years. As she sat in the audience, waiting for the show to start, the emcee introduced her as, "the first sweetheart of country music."

Wolfe said "sweethearts" in country music were thought to be a rarity until the days of Kitty Wells. But his research showed that there were other women like Roba Stanley, although she was the first.

"There used to be an old cliché that was commonly accepted; women did not exist as artists in country music in the early days," Professor Wolfe said.

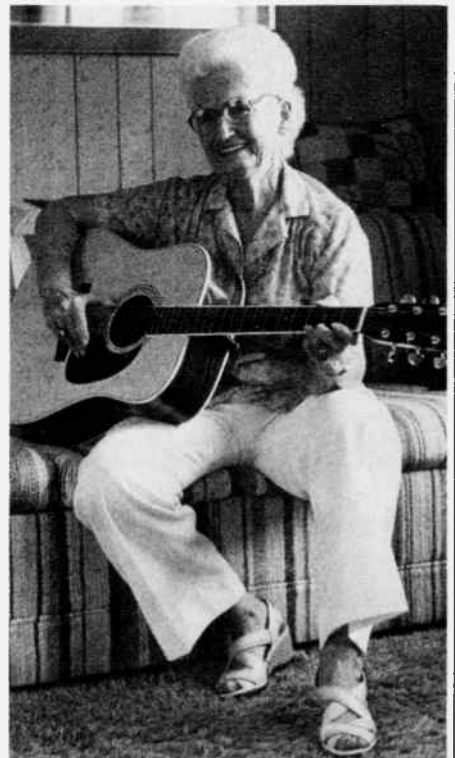
"My research showed that just wasn't true. There were several women recording in the early days and they were women trying to make statements. The songs show a distinctly feminine point of view in an all-male world," Wolfe said.

Wolfe put together an anthology of the early country music songs recorded by women, *Banjo Pickin' Girl*.

Does Roba Stanley Baldwin still sing?

"No, I never really could carry a tune too well," she laughed.

LEE STAPLETON



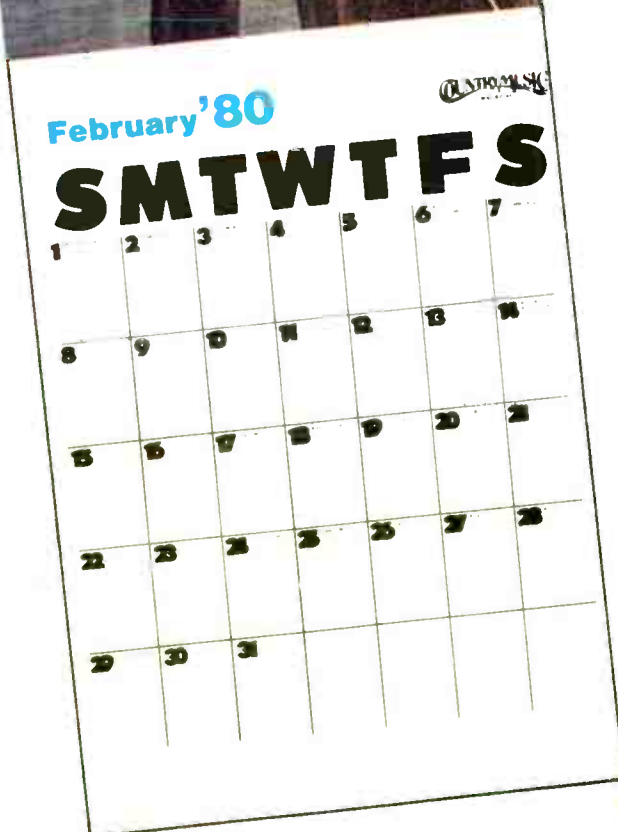
Roba fifty years later

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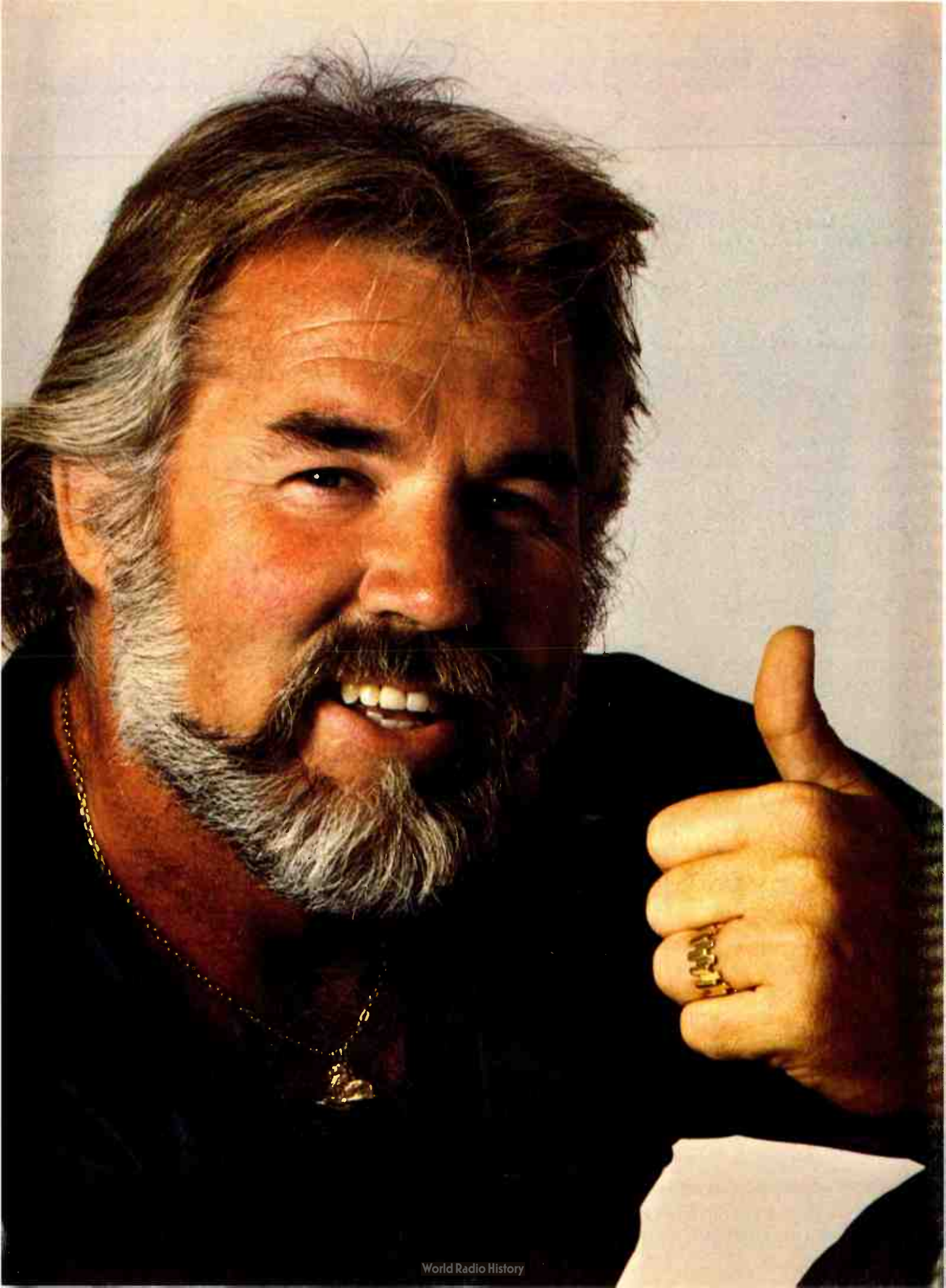


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And The Winner Is . . .

KENNY ROGERS

by Bob Allen

If Kenny Rogers was once a *presence* on the country music scene, he is now a *force*. Like a Phoenix risen from the ashes of the ill-fated pop/rock group, The First Edition, he now reigns supreme, straddling both the pop and contemporary country music fields by way of his access to that all-popular medium, television.

With the cool self-assurance of a championship athlete, Rogers has carefully and calculatedly unfolded what he refers to as his "game plan." And step by calculated step, his professional stature has risen. Today, he takes his place among those who inhabit the most exclusive, seven-figure circles of the modern entertainment world; he is now on equal footing—and equal billing—with the likes of John Denver, Bob Hope (who recently came on stage to introduce Rogers at a sold-out show at L.A.'s Universal Amphitheatre), Frank Sinatra and Clint Eastwood. There's no mistake about it anymore: Kenny Rogers has arrived.

This writer recalls seeing Rogers perform at the Exit/In, a small "listening" club in Nashville, just three and a half short years ago. At that time, he was just starting to gain recognition in the country field with top ten hits like *Laura (What's He Got That I Ain't Got)*, *Love Lifted Me*, and *While The Feelin's Good*. Like most of the people there that night, I was impressed with the ease with which he presented himself and his music to that small sell-out crowd. It was somehow gratifying to see that a leader of one of the

many soft-rock groups that burned out in the late sixties, was at least granted the dignity of making a modest come-back as a country singer.

But I don't think anyone there that night—including perhaps, even Rogers himself—had any idea of the scope and breadth of what was to come; that in just a few years, Kenny Rogers would be the Man of the Hour.

The before/after milestone in the incredible rise of Kenny Rogers was, of course, a song called *Lucille*, which shot to the number one spot in early 1977 and won

"I'm trying desperately not to be predictable . . . If I can keep coming up with hit songs, then I don't have to pick a direction . . . I am country . . . I'm influenced by music, not just any one element of music and that's what makes me happy."

him a Grammy Award for *Best Country Vocal Performance*, four Academy of Country Music Awards, and the Country Music Association's *Male Vocalist of the Year* Award. As Rogers himself is fond of saying, "I was going along fine with my quiet little career when someone screwed up and got me a hit."

Since then, he has more or less been writing his own ticket; before the momentum from *Lucille* was able to cool down, Rogers followed up with *The Gambler*, which not only went to the top of the country charts, but reached the top of the pop charts as well (just as practically all of his hits since then have). *The Gambler* was eventually certified gold, and later won both a Grammy Award and a CMA Award for its writer, Don Schlitz. By late 1979, the LP, *The Gambler* had sold more than two million copies (double platinum).

Rogers' next hit single, *She Believes In Me*, scored an even more impressive feat. Before it was all over, it had reached the number one position right across the board—in the country, pop, and easy-listening charts.

Between 1977 and mid-1979 alone, Rogers sold more than five million records, and by then, he had collected two platinum and five gold albums. Both of his duet albums with Dottie West also were certified gold.

By this time, Rogers was garnering industry awards so fast that he nearly had to take a wheel-barrow with him to awards shows just to bring them home. In 1978 and again in 1979, he and Dottie West won the CMA's *Duet of the Year* Award. In 1979, the Academy of Country Music voted him four awards, including their *Entertainer of the Year* and *Top Male Vocalist* Awards (the latter which he had also won in 1978).

Meanwhile, Rogers, with the

professional acumen for which he is noted, was busy parlaying his phenomenal record sales and popular acceptance into more and more lucrative prime-time television exposure. He continued to appear as a frequent guest host on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, just as he's done dozens of times over the years. In early 1978, he and Dottie co-hosted the NBC-TV special, *The World's Largest Country Music Show*, which drew a live audience of 60,000 to the Pontiac, Michigan Superdome. In April, 1978, Rogers hosted his own first variety TV show, *A Special Kenny Rogers*.

In July of 1979, Rogers was on location in Nevada for the filming of his second television special, *Kenny Rogers And The American Cowboy*. That same month, he flew to London to appear on a *Muppets Show* television taping. In November, Rogers was back on location again for the filming of a two-hour, made-for-television movie based on the song, *The Gambler*. He was also scheduled for an appearance on an ABC-TV *Wide World Of Sports* special on poker. And through all of this, of course, he was still flying around the country in his own seven-passenger Hawker-Siddeley de Havilland 25, performing his customary 250 live shows a year to sellout audiences.

But most important—in country music circles, at least—Rogers was chosen to host the 1979 nationally-televised CMA Awards Show; a distinction which in Nashville, is the equivalent of being knighted.

In the 1979 Country Music Association balloting, Rogers had been nominated in five different categories, including *Enter-*

tainer of the Year. He seemed a shoe-in for the top award; and most people were hedging their bets that he would indeed, end up handing himself that prestigious laurel before the evening was over.

Indeed, as the evening's show wore on, it appeared that Rogers was going for a clean sweep. He walked away the winner in three categories, including *Album of the Year (The Gambler)*, *Male Vocalist of the Year*, and *Vocal Duo of the Year* (with Dottie). The top award, however, went to Willie Nelson instead. Rogers—who had accepted his earlier awards almost casually—was visibly disappointed. As he explained to the Nashville *Tennessean* after the show, "It's hard not to care a lot at this point, but the trick is to take it with a grain of salt. . . . In order to be a good winner, you need to be a good loser. How can I be disappointed? I won three awards and lost to Willie Nelson."

Several months before all this, when much of the following conversation actually took place, Rogers had been in Nashville, mixing business with pleasure: recording, playing tennis five hours a day, and overseeing the development of some key real estate investments he'd recently made around town.

Earlier in 1979, he had paid an estimated \$225,000 for a large building and a lot of land on 16th Avenue South, and had begun spending even more money elegantly refurbishing it from top to bottom, with everything from fountains to chandeliers. He has since leased the office building to his record company, United Artists.

Also early this year, Shugg Baggot, George Jones' ex-manager and an old

friend of Kenny's, called him when he was in Las Vegas to see if he would be interested in purchasing Jones' Possum Holler Club. Rogers quickly wired him a reported \$350,000 to close the deal and another \$100,000 to make improvements on the building.

Of course, all of these investments seemed modest compared to the huge chunk of money Rogers recently spent when he bought a palatial home in Bel Air, California where he now resides with his wife, Marianne Gordon of *Hee Haw* fame. The new home, under Rogers' careful guidance, is also undergoing hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of renovations, not the least of which is the addition of a tennis court.

When this writer first sat down to talk to Rogers, it was a lazy summer afternoon in Nashville. Just in from a long morning on the tennis courts, Rogers was seated by the huge picture window in United Artists' seventh floor offices on Music Row. He and Jerry Seabolt, head of U.A.'s Nashville operations, were gazing whistfully down at the construction-in-progress of Kenny's new building, seven stories below and a block and a half away on 16th Avenue South. Dressed in a blue tennis warm-up suit, Rogers looked relaxed but tired after his several-hour work-out. After finishing a few quick phone calls pertaining to minor details in the new architectural plans for his building, he settled into a nearby sofa where he nibbled on a fast food bacon/lettuce/tomato sandwich, sipped on a Coke, and reflected on the recent progress on his life, career, and related matters.

Allen: *Well, besides recording and overseeing the construction of your new office building, what are you doing with your time here in Nashville this time around?*

Rogers: Well, for one thing, I've been playing five hours of tennis a day, out at the Maryland Farms Raquet Club. We've been taking on all comers and we've been holding our own. (Smiles.) The club pros out there, they beat us most of the time, but we take a set off them now and then. And, of course, that's when I stop. You get so caught up in the points that all of the sudden, you realize you're about to fall down. You don't really realize how exhausting it is.

Allen: *I understand you're an excellent tennis player.*

Rogers: I've only been playing for about four years, but I feel like I'm playing pretty well for my grade of tennis. That's as honest as I can be. I'm not a pro, but usually when I play with the pros, I make some dumb mistakes and I get some shots that they never expect me to get. So it averages out. The secret to getting better is playing with people who are better than you.

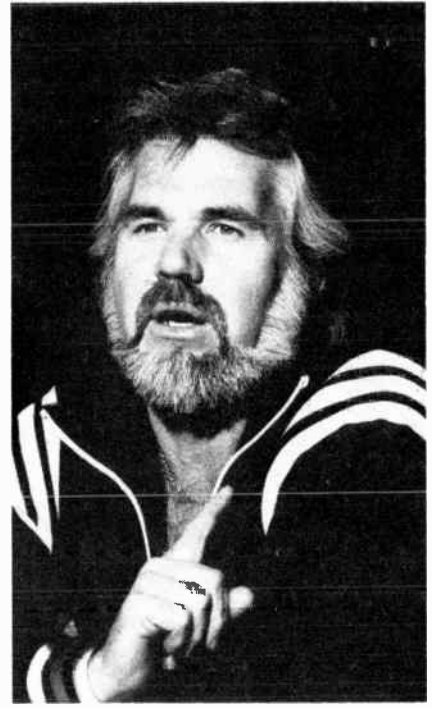
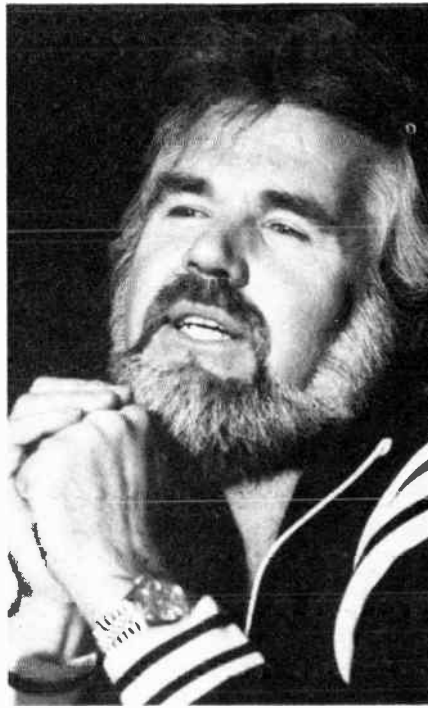
Allen: *Did it take you quite awhile to develop your game?*

Rogers: I've always been very athletic. But to me, there's always an enormous difference between being athletic and being an athlete. Being an athlete means you have the discipline to stay with it until you get it. The hardest part of anything is getting through that initial embarrassing stage of learning the proper technique. I played golf for about five years, and I was really a pretty good golfer. But the problem was, I was doing some things inherently wrong, because I started off and learned incorrectly. But with tennis, I decided to skip the hassles of learning and relearning, so I started taking lessons right from the start. In the last couple of years, I really started taking it seriously, in so far as I try to play it everyday, and I feel that my game has come up a thousand percent in the last year. I won a pro-celebrity tournament down in Florida, playing doubles and we went through a pretty strong field. So I play consistently better, and that's what it's all about.

Allen: *It seems like you've got all the bases covered right now, as far as your*

career goes. You've got records at the top of both the pop and country charts, you're scheduled to host the annual CMA Awards show this year. You're a regular host on Johnny Carson's Tonight Show. You've made a number of key real estate investments, you've bought a nightclub here in town. . . . Do you get a lot of satisfaction from all that?

Rogers: Yes, I do. One of the things that I'm most happy about now is that I'm one of those lucky few who is successful. . . . I'm successful being *me*. I don't have to be something I'm not in order to be successful, and I don't have to keep up a facade from day to day. Those people (who do that) don't usually last very long, because it's not easy to do. They're not very content with their success either, and they're not very happy. With me, I'm realistic enough to know that this is a phase. That I will cool off again, inevitably. Everyone does. One of the nice things about it though, is that the higher you get, the shallower the lows are. There's no reason for me to ever again be as low as I was when the First Edition broke up. Because I have enough of a name to be able to always make a



certain amount of money.

Allen: *Did you ever really imagine your career would get as big as it is now?*

Rogers: I don't think I anticipated the state that it is in now. Because it's hard for me to conceive past where I've already been. In other words, when the First Edition was successful, then later when it was not as successful, I could always imagine, 'Well OK, I've gotta do this and I've gotta do this, to get back to where I was. I could imagine getting back to what the First Edition was, but in every respect, I'm so much hotter now than the First Edition ever was, as far as record sales, acceptance, money, income. . . . Plus, it's not divided by four anymore. Everything in the First Edition, we divided four ways, as equal partners.

Allen: *You obviously have a lot of drive. You seem to be motivated, to a great extent by the material rewards of success. You seem to be a very success-oriented person.*

Rogers: I am basically success-oriented, because that's what this society is based on. I've always gone into it from the standpoint that as long as I enjoy what I'm doing and make enough money to get by on, it's alright. Money is a way of gauging success. If I make more money, I'm doing more things right. If I make less, then I'm not doing as many things right.

But it all had to start with a common love for music, and that's what it started with for me. I thoroughly enjoy doing what I'm doing. It's such a great position to be in, to be able to work at something I enjoy and have it be so lucrative also. So there are a lot of plusses involved. And there's a lot of sadness. . . . I don't want to say sadness, but a lot of lonely

times when you're on the road. I'm in a great position, because my wife goes with me when she wants to go. So I don't have that problem anymore. But still, it's not what it's cracked up to be: you're on the stage for an hour, maybe two hours a day, and the rest of the time what do you do? That's where tennis comes in. It's just a way to fill the time.

Allen: *So no matter how many luxuries you have at your disposal, you still never really get past that problem of loneliness and filling the empty time when you're out on the road?*

Rogers: I've always been athletic, and I could always find something to do with my days, but I know people who have been involved in music and drugs, and basically it starts with boredom. You get out on the road and for maybe two hours a night, you have people literally clamoring at your feet in adulation and you're on this incredible high, and you come off and you go back to your room and you're there by yourself, except for your friends in the band, and you think, 'My God! Such an extreme high and extreme low!' And then you end up actually looking for something to do. I mean, what do you do if you get to someplace like Des Moines at nine in the morning, and you don't actually go on until nine or ten at night? You end up finding an escape. Me, I have tennis. I'll go out and play all day.

Allen: *You're involved in so many different projects right now that you must be busy all the time. It seems that when people reach a certain point as their career grows, the career gets so big, it can take on a momentum all of its own. It must take a lot of stamina to keep up with all the demands that are made upon your time?*

Rogers: It takes a lot of patience.

(laughs) I'll go down there (to 16th Avenue South), to work on my building and I'll be right in the middle of it, about to really get something done, when one of those tour busses will stop and they'll just unload on me. You want to say, 'Hold it, I'm right in the middle of something. And at the same time, you have to realize that this is really exciting for these people. This is more than what they expected. So I have to explain to the people that I'm working with, to hold on a minute and I'll be right back, and I go sign autographs and let them take their pictures.

But there are times (he smiles again) when I feel like the little pony that they used to bring around my neighborhood: it would stand there with its head down and they would keep putting a different child on it and take a picture and then take it off . . . and that's exactly what I feel like sometimes. I put my arm around one lady and they take a picture, and then she moves and I put my arm around another lady and they take her picture, and so on, and I do this for about thirty minutes. And while it's boring to me, I have to remember that it's exciting to these people, just like it would have been exciting for me, ten years ago, if I had just accidentally walked in on somebody I admired and saw them there and just have that one brief chance to say hello. So I do get impatient with it sometimes, and I apologize to people for that. I try to handle it the best I can.

Allen: *I read an interview with Tom T. Hall recently in Penthouse Magazine, and he said that more and more these days, he tends to stay at home and not go out on the town. He explained that when you're a celebrity and people have seen you on television, they tend to take cer-*

tain liberties with your privacy that they wouldn't normally take. He gave an example of how he was once in a bar in downtown Nashville, just drinking with his buddies and minding his own business, and a struggling young songwriter at the next table, just turned around and said to him, 'You ain't so goddamned much.' It's the sort of incident, I guess, that is probably motivated by jealousy. . . . Do you ever have things like that happen to you?

Rogers: I've been really lucky. I have never had that happen to me, because I'd be the first to tell you I'm not great. I have really never kidded myself about my talent. I've never felt that I was a good singer. I've always felt that I had a great ear for hit songs. Now people cannot be jealous of your ability to recognize quality. If I present myself as a great singer, then people have a shot at me. If anyone ever came up to me and said, 'You're not so great,' I'd just tell them, 'I never said I was,' and it doesn't offend me at all. I'm not that vulnerable. I don't think people think I think I am great. You see what I'm saying? I think you have to put

yourself up in a position to be knocked down, before someone will take a slap at you.

Allen: Let's talk some more about picking hit songs. You've often said that the songs have been the key ingredient in your remarkable success. The last time I interviewed you, you told me that you picked Lucille out of a stack of about a hundred songs, and that it had already been turned down by a dozen or so people. Then with *The Gambler*, you were the fifth or sixth person to record that song, but you were the first major artist, of those who recorded it, who took a chance and released it as a single. Do you actually pick all these songs yourself? How do you find them?

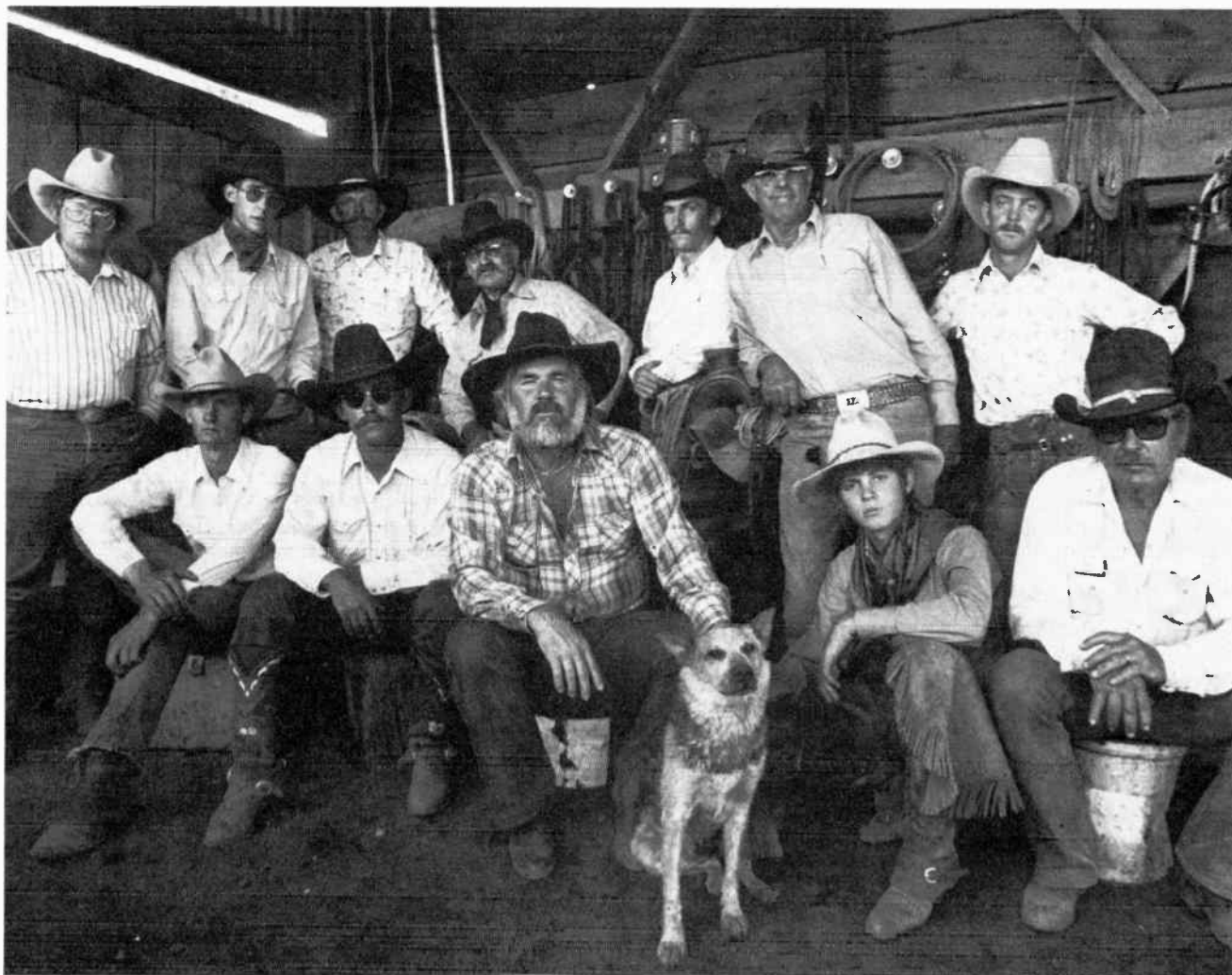
Rogers: *The Gambler* was admitted to us with about 200 different songs. Larry Butler (Rogers' producer) found it and said 'I've found a song that I really think you'll love. It's got all the ingredients you told me to look for,' and he played it and I loved it immediately, because it conjured up an image to me, and that's what I like. You can really see this man lying there. . . . The same with *Rueben James*.

You really get a feeling of the white kid that was raised by this black man. *Lucille*, there's a definite image created. That's what I like about those kinds of songs. *She Believes In Me*, while for some reason, I don't get a personalized identification, I do get a feeling for this relationship.

Allen: So you and Larry Butler work together on choosing material?

Rogers: Larry Butler usually finds all the material and he and I jointly will pick all the final songs, because he and I, we look for the same things, and once we get in the studio, if it doesn't do something for me, even if it does to him, we don't do it. And if it does something to me, and doesn't do anything for him, we don't do it. Because we need to know that both of us agree. There may be a lot of songs that he will like that I don't, or vice versa. But it's those few that both of us like that usually stand the best chance.

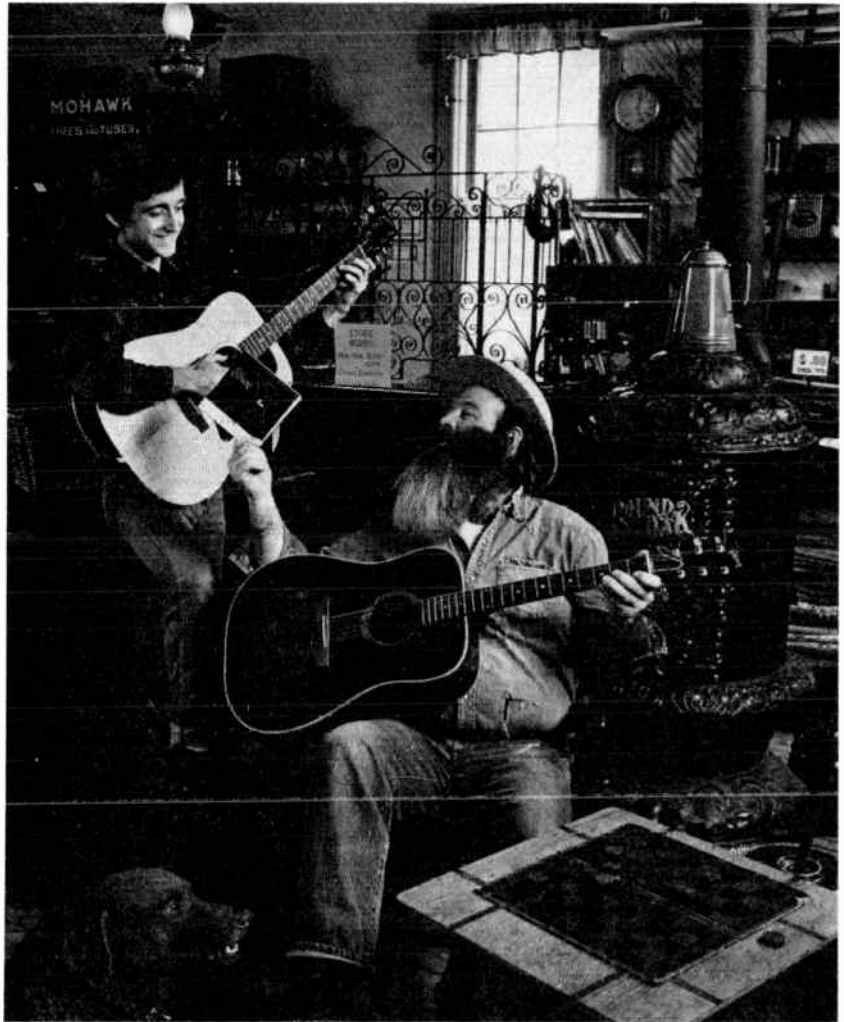
Allen: It's strange. All of those songs we've mentioned have been big hits, but beyond that, most of them have been markedly different from one another. Most of them are such strong songs that



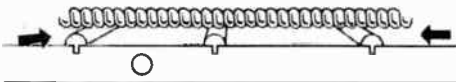
Kenny fits the part as "The American Cowboy," the title of his second TV special where he got a chance to live out one of his childhood fantasies working and living with the real life cowboys.

“Son, I’ve done a lot of pickin’ in my time. But never on nothin’ like these Gibson Equa guitar strings.

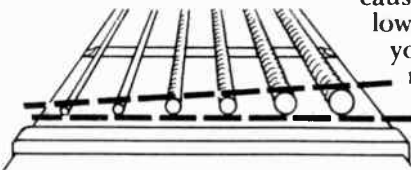
They actually make yer guitar easier to play.”



“These new... how d’ya say it, E-Q-U-A... strings give you really low playing action. These new strings are what ya call equalized on the same plane, so they sit low next to the frets. Just look at that there picture.



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once you hear them on the radio, you think, 'Wow that's such a good song! No wonder it went to number one. Yet, it's hard to compare them to one another. For instance, *The Gambler* is nothing like *She Believes In Me*. In theme and structure, most of your hits have been fairly different.

Rogers: I'm trying desperately not to be predictable. For instance, *Love Or Something Like It* was totally different from all my other records. So was *She Believes In Me*. So was *The Gambler*. The idea is, that if I can keep coming up with hit songs, then I don't have to pick a direction. The common denominators are all there in those songs. They're all country-influenced. And if you think they're not, walk into a top-pop station and play my records, any of them, and every one of them will tell you I'm a country artist. It's all relative. Country people think I'm a little more rock; the rock people think I'm a little more country.

But that's what is really exciting to me, because my success now affords me the opportunity, that, as long as I don't veer too far from what is really my accepted form of music, which is a country form, then I'm alright. You know, I was in a jazz band for six years, then I was with

the New Christy Minstrels, which is folk music, for a year and a half. Then I was with the First Edition, which was a sort of a pop-rock group. So I've had a lot of different musical influences, none of which, I think, are too terribly far from my roots, which is country music. For the purists in the country field to say, 'He's not country,' I defy them. *I am* country. I have done other things besides country music. I'm influenced by things other than country music. I'm influenced by music, not just any one element of music, and that's what makes me happy, even if it doesn't make those people happy. In my albums, there's a little bit of everything I've ever done. There's some country, there's a touch of rock 'n roll—for what I'm capable of. I don't think I'm capable of playing good rock 'n roll. I'm too old for that. Too tired. (Smiles) But my strength is the country story-ballad, and when things get rough, that's what I will always come back to, because I think that's what I do best. But if I had an album of all country story-songs, it would be the most boring thing in the world. So what I try to do is break it up a little bit and give the people, maybe a little something different.

Allen: *You've been in successful bands ever since you were a teen-ager. Has*

music always seemed like a natural career for you? Looking back, what was your first motivation to get involved in music as a profession?

Rogers: When I was a kid, about four years old, I used to go twice a month or so to my grandmother's and grandfather's house, which was in East Texas. My father was a fiddle-player. Not a professional fiddle player, just a fiddle-player, and all his brothers and sisters, there were six of them, all played some instrument. They would all get together on the front porch and play music on Sundays. And I used to get the greatest feeling out of that. I was only four years old or so, so I wasn't involved at all, other than to just sit back as a spectator. But they had so much fun! If someone screwed up, they just laughed. It seemed like such a great strengthening factor in that family. The music itself seemed to create such a positive influence on them.

Allen: *You came from a rather poor family didn't you?*

Rogers: Yeh. I grew up in what was nearly the ghetto of Houston. It was a great childhood for me though. We were very poor, but I didn't know the difference, because everybody around me was poor. I thought the whole world was that way. So it's all relative. Once I became conscious of the fact that this is a capitalistic society, and if you work a little harder, chances are, you'll make a little more, and if you work a lot harder, you'll make a lot more, rather than be bitter about the fact that I didn't have much, it made me want to get out and hustle a little harder and see what I could do. It was a personal challenge to me.

Allen: *It seems obvious that after all these years, it's still all a challenge to you. Sometimes I get the impression that you approach your career almost as a contest. You seem to want to see how far you can go and how much energy you can put into it.*

Rogers: I still remember when I was a kid, my dad was always saying, 'if we could get a couple of hundred dollars together. . . .' So I got to thinking, a couple hundred dollars, is what I need to be secure. But after I got a couple of hundred dollars, that wasn't anything, and then I got a little older, and I thought it would take a couple thousand dollars. . . . No matter how much you're making, you're always thinking, 'How much is enough?' You start wondering, 'Well, I've got enough to live on today, but what about ten years from now? What's the dollar going to be worth then?' And that's why there's so much overkill. You just have to keep going, not to prove you can do it, or not to prove that you can keep up with the Jones's, and not just to have more money than anybody else, but just to know that when you're 65 you're not going to be on welfare.



The "Gambler" takes time out for a game of cards while backstage at one of his concerts.

Allen: *You seem to have a very firm grip and a very realistic outlook on the financial aspects of your success.*

Rogers: I think that I am a businessman. And I am of the opinion that if I make it (money), then I'm going to be the one to spend it. I, meaning my wife and I. I mean, money isn't the end of the world! It's the fun of doing things that's exciting to me. If I buy a building and just say to somebody, 'OK, fix it up and let me know how much money I can make, what have I done? But if I buy a building and I go down there and pick out the colors myself and I put the trees in, and say, 'Yeh, I like this,' and 'No, I don't like this,' then when I'm done, I'm proud of it. I've put something into it, and I've taken something out.

My interests are very diversified, and I think that's what keeps my adrenalin going. I have this building here on 16th Avenue that I'm totally reconstructing. That's why I was looking out the window when you came in. I was checking to see if they had finished painting an area. . . . I am remodeling a home in L.A., and I own a bunch of other things that I've invested in. I'm negotiating for 20 acres of land in Hawaii right now. I'm involved in some stock that I'm constantly checking on.

You know, really what life is all about for me, is to be able to find someone that I'm very happy with, which in this case, is my wife; someone I can spend the rest of my life with. You take something from life that you enjoy, and I think part of the enjoyment of taking from it is putting something back into this life. For me, it's things like helping young kids in the music business, and helping some tennis player friends of mine that I've sponsored on the road. So part of the money that I make goes back toward helping other people. I do a lot of charity work for the cerebral palsy clinic. I host a celebrity softball tournament in Las Vegas every year, and totally on the strength of that one game alone, we support the Nevada Special Olympics.

You see, I look at life as a series of days where you try to string them all together with good memories and try and do something good with your time, entertain yourself and entertain others and feel like that if something happened to you tomorrow, number one, you could honestly say you've had a good time, and number two, you can honestly say you've tried to at least leave this place a better place than it was when you came.



Whether I have or not is for someone else to judge. I really have tried to improve the quality of everything I've been involved in. I've tried to give young people a chance at jobs and promotions. The band that I work with, I try to help further their individual careers, aside from their involvement with me. And that's what it's all about. It's finding fulfillment.

Allen: *I understand you just bought a huge house out in L.A.*

Rogers: Yeh, this is my third one in two years, and they keep gettin' bigger and my wife keeps goin' crazier. She swears that I'm going to move her to death. But we've made phenomenal profits on them, and we've created some beautiful places. So to me, it's like writing a song: when you write a song and record it, you don't want to sit there the rest of your life and do the same song. You want to move on to another song. Of course, women are different. Women are nest-builders. They like to say, 'This is where we're going to live for the rest of our lives and I'm going to raise our children here. Me, I like to create something and when I'm through, I like to move on. So this particular house that we just bought, we're probably going to be there at least five years, maybe ten years, because it's such a special place.

And it'll probably take me that long to get it finished!

Allen: *I understand it's really big.*

Rogers: It's enormous. It's ten thousand square feet and it's on two acres of land.

Allen: *How many rooms?*

Rogers: I don't know. Probably about 35. But our house has always been like a hotel anyway. We've always had people staying with us, so we need a lot of room. We're putting in a tennis court. But it's really just an investment to me. It's a way to beat inflation. So the actual living in the house is not really as exciting to me as what it does for my future. It really secures my monetary future. This one house alone, the profit I'll make from this when it's all over with, really to me, is what finally makes me feel like I won't have to worry anymore.

Allen: *You've mentioned retirement, and you seem to have a bit of a preoccupation with making sure you are financially secure in your golden years. Have you actually looked ahead and thought about retirements? Would you stay on the West Coast? Or where would you go?*

Rogers: In my fantasy, I see myself laying out on a beach in Maui with a deep suntan. But the truth is, I think in a couple of months I'd be bored silly. I'm buying some land down there, but if I change my mind, the worst that'll happen is that I'll have made a good investment. Ten years from now, that property is going to be worth a fortune. I try to make my dreams correlate with my investments, so that whatever my dreams are, they're not just thrown to the wind. Because we all change our minds. I mean, five years from now, I don't know what I'll want to do. I might want to be in carpentry work. I love that kind of work. I'll sit there and watch them work on my house for eight or ten hours at a time, and I'll go in and they'll show me how to do things. They taught me how to do casings around the doors, and I did some beautiful door moldings. They would have cost three thousand dollars for me to have someone come in and do them, and I did them myself. Again, life is just a give and take of what you get out of it and what you put into it. And whatever makes you happy, you're going to ultimately seek out, and so am I. And the things it takes to make me happy now, will probably change in the next ten years. They've changed in the last ten years. So I just have to be flexible enough in my position.

It is actually several months later before this conversation with Kenny Rogers resumes. This time, it is October in Nashville, two days after the televised CMA Awards show on which Rogers lost out to Willie Nelson for the coveted Entertainer of the Year Award. A late

afternoon press conference has been scheduled, just before Rogers goes back on stage to emcee the United Artists Records Show at the annual DJ convention.

The conference is held in the corner of a hangar-like backstage area amidst a clutter of stepladders and stage props.

English camera crews, Japanese radio announcers and European journalists, along with a dozen or so others, set up their equipment and nervously check and recheck their light readings and recorder battery levels as they wait for Rogers to make his entrance.

Rogers finally appears, looking almost regal in a fancy blue tight-fitting, open-chested shirt and an understated gold chain and pendant around his neck. He seems cheerful and relaxed, despite his mild upset at the show earlier in the week. Against the constant click of cameras, with no less than a dozen microphones stuck in his face, he fields the mixed bag of questions with the ease of a presidential candidate who's just topped the Gallup Polls.

European journalist: *Do you think the old styles of country music will carry on? Or do you think that pop music will take over?*

Rogers: Oh no, I think there will always be a demand for the purists in this business, which to me, are the George Jones and the Merle Haggards. This is witnessed, I think, by Willie Nelson winning the Entertainer of the Year Award. I think that was a big step forward, because I think Willie is more closely tied to the purist forms of country music that say, I am, or Crystal Gayle or Dolly Parton. I think that proves there is still a great demand and a great need for that particular form of the art of country music.

Country Music: *You keep finding some of the best songs that Nashville has to offer, and it's often said that the songs are the most important element in an artist's continued success. Can you keep finding songs of this caliber?*

Rogers: If they can keep writing them, I can keep finding them! (laughs.) I think one of the things that has hurt a lot of artists—and I think ultimately after they've been in the business a while, they begin to see this—is that the minute you start worrying about who writes a song or who publishes a song, or who makes money from that end of it, you start limiting yourself to a certain group of songs. So I think the trick is, you have to make yourself available to these guys (the writers). While I can't always do it personally, that's part of my producer, Larry Butler's job. Larry will sit down and listen to maybe 300 songs and weed out 270. And I'll come to town, and he and I will sit down and listen to that 30, and we'll pick four that we're going to record that night. It's like a football cut, and those songs that make it to the finals are really the best songs.

Country Music: *It's hard to imagine now, but I understand that when you first disbanded the First Edition and went out on your own, you didn't have a great deal*

of confidence as a solo artist. Was there a period there where you had to get used to being on stage by yourself?

Rogers: Well, there were a lot of physical factors when the First Edition broke up that I had never really encountered before. Not the least of which was walking on stage. It seems like a simple process, but I had always, for fifteen years, been with a group, behind a microphone with a bass guitar strapped around my neck. And then all of the sudden, in the midst of the first show I worked by myself, I realized that it was boring to me to be standing in one spot, so it had to be boring to the people watching. So I realized that I had to start moving around some. I had to learn to pace myself, you know. At first, when you're doing a fast song, the inclination is to move at the same pace you're singing, and you end up running back and forth across the stage. I was tripping over microphone cords. . . . I would have tripped over a piece of tape, those first couple of dates. It was kind of cumbersome for me at first. But it's also part of the growing process, and I enjoyed that phase of it too, trying to figure out what to do to make it right.

Country Music: *Have you always known how to talk to audiences?*

Rogers: No. When the First Edition was together, until about the last two years, I didn't do any talking at all. Terry Williams, who was my partner in the group, was the spokesman. I was kind of the straight man for him. And then he kind of outgrew the image he had created for himself, which was kind of a funny little kid, and he came to me and said, 'I'm getting kind of tired of doin' that funny little kid routine, why don't you talk to them for a while?' My response was, 'My God!' Ail I'd ever said on stage was 'Whaterya gonna do, Terry?' So you know, it was a strange thing to do. Yet again, almost like anything else, you almost have to throw yourself to the lions and make a fool of yourself a few times to find out what works and what doesn't.

English radio correspondent: *You were once in a folk group (The New Christy Minstrels), and then you were with a rock group (The First Edition), and now you have come into country music. What is next?*

Rogers: I don't know. Ironically, even before the New Christy Minstrels, I was with a jazz group (The Bobby Doyle Trio) for six years. So my feelings are that I am a country singer who can do a lot of different types of music, but my real strength is exactly where I am now: with the country story-ballad. I would like to believe that I can just stay where I am, but just keep finding new songs that have new sounds and new twists to them, with that same common denominator of honesty and simplicity that country music has to offer. ■

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CHRISTMAS

And Other Love Stories

by Paula Cavell Hooker



JOHNNY CASH & JUNE CARTER

Fidgeting from one foot to the other, June Carter Cash inches around her dressing room with a sound man and two make-up artists in tow. As her make-up lady re-touches June's pale lipstick, she explains—without moving her lips—why she's in such good spirits.

"John and I've been having a big time the last couple of days. We've been hiding out in the woods," she mumbles. "We've got this little place out in the country and we've just been out there relaxing and getting away from things."

There's nothing Johnny and June Carter Cash cherish more than a little freedom. And when they board the Concorde this Christmas season, they're headed for at least three weeks of it.

"Twenty-three days of freedom," sighs Johnny, reared back in a big lounge chair inside his dressing room at the Grand Ole Opry House. "Total freedom."

"June and John Carter and I usually go to our house in Jamaica for Christmas, but this year we've worked so hard—too hard—and I wanted to give June the dream vacation of a lifetime," the big man explains. "We're going to London, Athens, Rome, Egypt and Spain. I don't think we've been on television in those places and they don't know much about us, so we'll be pretty free."

The Cash's vacation is not designed entirely for twenty-three days of "R and R." Their itinerary includes sightseeing excursions to various historical sites from the beginning of Christendom, an important part of their everyday lives.

"We'll see ancient Corinth, take a trip down the Nile, visit the place in Egypt where they speculate the baby Jesus was brought, take a look at the catacombs of Rome and St. Peter's Basilica," maps out Johnny. "We're going to have an audience with President Sadat, and we're hoping for an audience with the Pope."

To strangers, the huge "man in black" might look stern,

hardened—even ferocious. But, when his thoughts turn to his wife or his nine-year-old son, John Carter, the love and depth of feeling he has for his family seems to melt away the deeply chiseled lines in his well-weathered face. He smiles. "This will be a special Christmas for us," he says. "It's a time to look back on the past and reflect on our lives and our direction. We want to be sure we know our little boy as well as we should and that we're bringing him up right."

"Christmas is back to where it should be for me—the celebration of the birth of the Christ child. And I see that through John Carter. He can tell the Christ story as well as anyone. He knows every detail." "Yes," he reiterates, "Christmas with June and John Carter will be a very special one."

Thinking of Christmas with his family reminds Johnny of his childhood holidays when his daddy would wake the whole family "before the crack of dawn."

"My daddy loved to watch us open our presents and get after the fireworks. We always had fireworks. Then, at sunup, every Christmas from the time I can remember at age three,

my daddy would shoot off a big stick of dynamite in the middle of the road. You could hear it echo for miles and miles and miles... Woke up everybody in the whole county," he laughs. "Even though we were shooting off firecrackers, we never forgot what we were celebrating about."

"We try to remember it as a very holy day in our family," says June as she joins her husband for a quiet supper in his dressing room. "Christmas is love. It means giving love and being loved. It's more than just the celebration of Christ's birthday, it's the joy of giving. It's love," June says quietly. "Just—love."

KITTY WELLS & JOHNNY WRIGHT

In all their 42 years of marriage, Kitty Wells and her husband and partner, John Wright, have never spent a Christmas apart. On only one Christmas did they find themselves away from home and their annual holiday feast with over 50 members of the family.

While it was not their favorite Christmas, by any

means, it did have its rewards and redeeming qualities.

"In 1960, we were booked for 21 days in Germany to perform for the servicemen," recalls Kitty. "That put us right through Christmas. But I remember we met this young boy who had just gotten over there and was all broken up 'cause he couldn't go home. It kind of helped make his Christmas to see someone from home. And it made us feel good to make him feel better."

Kitty reflects on her past Christmas' as a child from a large family and wonders if today's children appreciate their prosperous times.

"We were really lucky to get a doll or some other little toy to play with. Nowadays we're all guilty of giving our children too much."

"What I remember about the past," says John, "is a lot of noise. We used to get out our shotguns, shoot off firecrackers and blow whistles—anything to make noise. I lived on a farm and we'd blow up the hog bladders in November after we'd slaughtered the hogs. They'd dry like big balloons and on Christmas Day we couldn't wait to pop those things!"

Kitty and John openly ad-



Kitty Wells and Johnny Wright prefer to spend Christmas at home, but they do remember the time when they spent 21 days in Germany and performed for the servicemen during the holidays.



mire and respect each other's work and share the responsibility of selecting songs for each other to record. Both agree that one of the greatest gifts is the ability to make others happy—to lift the spirits of those less fortunate. Like every other year, their group plans to pay visits to hospitals and old folks' homes.

"Around Christmas we always take time out to play for the Veterans Administration Hospital or the Bordeaux Home or Tennessee Preparatory School," says John.

"I like to perform for the old people best," Kitty says, "because they can't get out and enjoy the season like the rest of us. One of the nicest things about being an entertainer is to feel like somebody likes you and your work."

Religion and the celebration of Christ's birthday is just as important to Kitty Wells and John Wright today as it was back in their less fortunate days.

"The only difference I can see," says Kitty, "is that I had to grow up before I realized that Christmas is all year 'round."

KENNY ROGERS & MARIANNE GORDON

If Kenny Rogers weren't violently allergic to Christmas trees, his wife, Marianne, would probably have three or four decorated around their massive new home in Bel Air.

But, since Kenny's throat swells shut and his voice drops an entire octave, she'll have to deck the halls with an artificial

tree and fake garland. Not exactly her style—but a small price to pay for the sweet and saleable sound of Kenny Rogers, the hottest country-pop recording star today.

After filming the CBS Movie of the Week, *The Gambler*, this month, Marianne and Kenny plan to skip town—and take a few friends with them.

"We just bought a new plane," says Kenny, who insists that as extravagant as it sounds, by leasing out his first plane, it's "a great business deal."

"It's a Lockheed Jetstar; the only plane approved for Presidential use and it's actually designed so you can take off *knowing* you don't have an engine... It has four. Our plans are to take a bunch of our friends with us to Acapulco or Puerto Vallarta."

"Only one problem, Kenny Rogers," chirps his sparkling and stunningly beautiful actress-wife, Marianne, as she leans over to confide in me. "We've been thinking about having a child. And I had lunch with a lady the other day and she told me her husband is *still sick* from a trip to Mexico, where he picked up something in the pool. Well, if I'm going to be pregnant, I really don't want to be getting sick and..."

"Scratch that then," interrupts Kenny. "We ain't going there. How about Hawaii?"

It doesn't take long after being with Marianne and Kenny to notice the subject of children as an ever-present issue for discussion.

Both Kenny and Marianne have some pretty strong feelings and, perhaps, reservations about their potential

roles as parents. Their mutual decision to have children has not been determined lightly.

"Up till now," explains Marianne, "I wanted to make sure I was ready. This is a *big* decision. You know, back when you were seventeen, it seemed glamorous to have a baby. You watch *Father Knows Best*, and you can't wait to have a family like that. But that's just not the way it is."

"Marianne is concerned about her availability to me and mine to her and the child," says Kenny, intently watching his wife's reaction across the breakfast table. "I have two children by previous marriages and I think in the past I haven't been a particularly good father. Success was the most important thing in the world. But one of the nicest things about life is that you can learn from your mistakes."

"I honestly believe a child can bring a family together," continues Kenny resolutely. "It creates a reason in life. If two people go through life without any responsibilities other than to themselves, at some point they'll feel a void."

"One of the reasons I believe we should have children is because of something I heard once and it brought tears to my eyes," agrees Marianne. "Somebody said the greatest gift a man can give his children is to love their mother. And Kenny and I have *such* a good relationship, I feel it would be a shame to deprive a child of it—almost a sin."

Maybe it's because Christmas means loving and giving, and spending time with loved ones, when Marianne and Kenny Rogers pause to consider the

joys of Christmas their thoughts turn repeatedly to the possibility of a future family.

"Christmas has always meant both the tradition of Santa Claus and the celebration of Christ's birth," says Marianne. "There's a little non-denominational church I like to go to called, 'The Church On The Way.' I really love it because they always give such a positive interpretation of the Bible, and that's what I want to believe."

"Unfortunately for me," says Kenny, "I don't feel Christmas as a 'religious experience.' I'm probably the product of commercialism or something. But Christmas is a very important time—kind of a legal slowing down point. To me, it's a time for us to *stop* and take stock of what we have. A time to look around—and be thankful."

JESSIE COLTER & WAYLON JENNINGS

It must be nearly impossible to think about Christmas when it's mid-October, you've just travelled all night in a bus, you're 2,000 miles from home, your wife's supposed to be with you but she isn't 'cause she's home in bed with a fractured elbow and a black eye from "showing-out" on roller skates, you've just been awakened by a persistent writer from Nashville—and, to add insult to injury, you're only halfway through with a 22 day cross-country tour.

But a promise is a promise; and Waylon Jennings is a man of his word. So, in spite of the inconveniences, he and his talented, singer/song-writing wife, Jessi Colter, slowed their action long enough to reflect on Christmas' of the past and share their personal sentiments on the significance of this special holiday.

"What I look forward to this Christmas is just hanging out at home" says Waylon, indicating he prefers to view Christmas as kind of a laid-back, but very interested, bystander.

"To me, Christmas is a get-together time, dedicated to kids. What I enjoy most is the giving at Christmas, and seeing friends and family enjoy



Kenny Rogers and Marianne Gordon plan to take their new Lockheed Jetstar airplane with "a bunch of our friends" and travel to Acapulco or Puerto Vallarta this Christmas.



No Vacations For DOTTIE WEST

by Mary Ellen Moore

Halloween in Atlantic City, and the casino's crawling with revelers.

The slots clatter and, not infrequently, chink with returning coins; the roulette wheels chitter; chips change hands, from croupier to The Gambler and back again; an occasional fully costumed clown strolls through, but nobody seems to notice.

The casino is Playland for these adults who have, for the evening, escaped the everyday pressures back home in the Bronx or Hoboken.

Tonight, they're Players: gamblers, honeymooners, clowns—whatever they wish to be. A mid-week vacation, an evening on the town, it's time to relax, however briefly, before returning to Brooklyn or Hackensack.

The Players overflow into the Cabaret, where they relax even further as the Entertainers go to work.

Work?—That nice-looking couple up there is having too much fun to call that work. They're just singing and making jokes and enjoying each other's and the audience's company. If *that's* work, we'll take the job.

About two years ago,

On a train bound for nowhere

I met up with The Gambler. . . .

The paraphrased lyrics, of course, belong to Kenny Rogers, but it might well be Dottie West who sings them. Right now, in the Atlantic City cabaret and concert halls across the country, she's making it all look pretty easy. But two years ago, her career was, essentially, bound for nowhere until she met up with Kenny Rogers who, through a spontaneous gamble to record a duet with her, got Dottie's career back on the track.

Full speed, non-stop, no detours, please.

Dottie West's a Worker, for the benefit of the Players, and while they may enjoy her on their vacations, she's taking no time out for one of her own.

"We say we are every year . . ." laughs her husband-drummer, Byron Metcalf. . . .

" . . . But it ends up that we don't," chimes in Dottie.

"Always something important comes up," continues Byron, "and we say, 'Oh, it would be silly to not do that.' You do it while you can, because it might not be available tomorrow. When you're hot, if you're lucky enough to get hot, you really have to take advantage of it. You don't want to go crazy, but you want to do as much as you can. Reap the benefits of your luck. It would be silly to take a vacation in the middle of it."

Some people might think it silly not to. Since that fateful recording of *Every Time Two Fools Collide*, Dottie's career has soared: Two gold albums with Rogers, several hit singles, concerts that have played to thousands, Country Music Association's Duo of the Year award, two years running. . . .

Surely she can afford to take a vacation?

Uh-uh. Dottie West has been working twenty years to get to the top, which is where she is today, and she's not about to let a little thing like time off derail her plans.

"I've always worked a lot," she explained as she curled up on the sofa in her hotel suite. "I really enjoy it. Working with Kenny has been a whole new thing for me and it's given me a new beginning in the business because I'm working in new places; he took me to new management; the new booking agency gets me to the cross-over crowds. And it's what I've always really wanted. It's like so many dreams come true for me."

Rather than sit back and rest on her fulfilled dreams, however, Dottie is working as hard as ever to fulfill some more. She has a habit of heaping praise on Kenny, and when it's pointed out that she, too, deserves some credit for the success, she laughs:

"Well, it does take two to make a duo," and then quietly adds, "I know that it did more for me than it did for him; I know that."

And knowing that, Dottie West's next dream is to see how well she can make it on her own. She and Kenny will probably

always be a duo—their third album is scheduled for release, and they're continuing to tour together—but she's also making a concerted effort to work as a solo act.

"Working with Kenny has been a whole new thing for me and it's given me a new beginning."

"I really enjoy working with Kenny, but I need the other, too—I need it for *me*. Not only does my career need it, but *I* need it. And I've noticed a big difference in my audience, not only in age, but in numbers, too, which makes me real happy. I needed to see that; I needed to know that I can draw crowds now, big crowds alone, for my own satisfaction, and to see what doing the duets has done for me."

The duets have done a lot. Although it's been many years since Dottie has actually seen hard times, with her—as with many entertainers, the *worst* times seem to serve as the stimulus for all future times, no matter how well things are going.

That's why vacations seem silly to Byron and Dottie who, although they did not share the initial failures (she was married to Bill West during this period), both recall those skinny years in the late 50s and early 60s.

For Dottie, these were very special years. A young woman with a big dream—and a big conflict. She had become a mother at an early age, while still in college, and it was difficult to pursue both the singing career and fulfill what she felt to be her ultimate responsibility—motherhood.

So it was a time of conflict. And, as with many women torn by the same conflicts, she began to count on a very special friend to help her through the rough times and share the good times.

For Dottie, that special friend was Patsy Cline.

"She was my idol. I heard her on the radio..." Dottie begins. For the next thirty minutes, the few listeners in the suite practically don't breathe as Dottie recalls her friendship.

"Then I saw her win on the Arthur Godfrey TV show. So as far as I can remember, it's the only fan letter I ever wrote to an artist. I was living in Cleveland, Ohio, at the time—'57, '58—where I did TV for four and a half years.

So I wrote her this letter and she wrote me back. That's the way it started. "Then she had *Walking After Midnight*, and I loved that record, everybody did. But I liked it because it wasn't really that twangy country. It was what I liked. I liked Patsy's style and she absolutely became my idol. I just thought there was nobody who could sing like she could. I really listened to Kay Starr and Patti Page—the same people that Patsy had. As we would write back and forth, we found out we had the same tastes in music. And Mahalia Jackson—we used to sit and listen to her records all night, before either one of us was working very much. Because when I moved to Nashville, Patsy had just been there about a year. She had just recorded *Fall to Pieces* when I got there.

"So we just became friends: she invited me to come over as soon as I moved to Nashville. And I think she had a lot to do with my first singing on the Grand Ole Opry, because it's difficult to get on the Opry without having a hit record. And I didn't have one, but they were using me as a guest now and then, way before *Here Comes My Baby* (the song which won her a Grammy in 1965).

"And Patsy loved to cook and entertain: she had a big heart, absolute gold, and just loved helping people. She gave me some of her clothes that burned when my house burned in '69. And she did give me her scrapbook, two weeks before she was killed.

"We visited often. She'd call me when she'd get in off a tour, and she'd come over. If she was having good times and laughing, then I was, or vice versa: when one was down, the other was down. She was married to Charlie Dick and they had some problems—all couples do: Byron and me have arguments. I like to forget 'em; I don't want to remember those things, because you like to remember the good things.

"So one night she and Charlie had had an argument and she called me about 2 or 3 in the morning to come over and talk with her. So I got up and drove over and we sat and talked 'til sun-up. And we laughed some and cried some, and just talked about life. And she said, 'Dottie, I don't know, I just have the feeling I will never live to see 30.' She was 29 then. And I said, 'Oh, Patsy, quit saying things like that. You're going to see us when we're 80 years old, walking on that Opry, singing.' She was just really, really down, talking



"Kenny is my best friend," says Dottie of her partnership with Kenny which won them CMA's

different than I'd ever heard her. Most of the time she was really a happy person, and just always cutting up. This particular night, though, she was just very melancholy and really on a downer.

"And here she was, with all these hit records, and I'm sitting there saying, 'Patsy, I'd give anything. You're on top of the world. Look at you. You've got all these hit records and I'd give anything to have a record like *Fall to Pieces*. C'mon.' So we sat up all night, and she got her scrapbook down that she'd kept. She'd kept all the charts, some fan letters, circled the charts with red on her hits. That's another thing I learned from her: she said you oughtta keep these kinds of things—pictures when she was at Carnegie Hall. So now I have

I want you to keep it.' And I said, 'You can't do that. You want to keep this to give to your grandkids some day! But Patsy insisted.

"So we had been talking about some of my ups and downs, too, just girl talk and careers, and she knew I was having it rough—I was only working a couple or three days a month on the road. I had a new baby. She knew I was having it rough. My husband was my steel guitar player and she used him on the road a lot of times when she didn't even need a steel player: she'd do it for us to make money. But I'd told her I'd stick it out—I meant to be a singer and I'd make it or die. So when I got home and sent the kids to school and sat down and started looking through this

"Patsy said, 'Before you go, I love you Dottie, and I want to give you this scrapbook, I want you to keep it.' And I said, 'You can't do that. You want to keep this to give to your grandkids some day!' But Patsy insisted."

scrapbooks where I mark where I have been. Little things like this stick with you, from people you really idolize in the business.

"But anyway, at the end of our conversation that night, when I said I'd better get home, it's time to send the kids to school, Patsy said, 'Before you go, I love you Dottie, and I want to give you this scrapbook,

book, there was a check she had written sometime in the night and stuck it in there, for \$75, with a little note that said, 'This will pay your rent this month.' I'm just telling you that because that's the kind of person she was. I really miss her still. I've never been that close or shared those kind of things with another female, especially in the business. It was a rare friendship. . . .



Kansas City—and I could drive on and do the show. And I said sure, I'll do that. And that's the reason I wasn't on that plane. And Billy Walker decided to fly commercial for some reason. So Cowboy Copas flew with them, because Randy Hughes was married to Cowboy Copas' daughter; and Hawkshaw Hawkins flew with them because Jeannie Shepard, his wife at the time, was expecting a baby just any day, so he felt that would make it quicker.

"So Patsy went to Montgomery and did that show on Saturday night, flew back to Nashville on Sunday morning and picked up Hawkshaw and Cowboy Copas, and flew to Kansas City to do the show. We were together in the dressing room that whole day, and she seemed really happy. All I can remember is that the last time I

"So tell me about fate . . . I almost went with her . . ."

saw her on stage that night she had on a white dress that had a lot of chiffon, and Patsy didn't wear that kind of thing much. Her clothes were usually pretty tailored. But she had lost a lot of weight and was really looking good. It was when she was her prettiest. And I remember her lifting her arms and honestly, she looked just like an angel. I loved her so much that I was in the back watching her show, and she just killed them; she closed the show because she was the hottest star there.

"After that we went and had dinner. It was just a terrible storm. Rain was coming straight down and the wind was terrible. So they couldn't fly out; it was a small

plane. So she talked me into spending the night and waiting 'til the next morning because she was going to have to stay over. The next morning we all got up and went down to have a good breakfast.

So when we finished eating, she picked up the check for the whole table—one of her favorite expressions was, 'Hoss, let me have it.'

"And I said, 'Patsy, I sure wish you'd ride home with us. Kansas City is not really a long way from Nashville, and we'll be there soon.' So she said, 'Okay, maybe I will.' We'd just gotten word again that it might be tomorrow before they'd be able to fly out. And I also talked to Hawkshaw who decided he would, then changed his mind and waited for the weather to clear up. So Patsy and I went up to the same floor to get our luggage; she packed, we came down the elevator, got downstairs to the lobby—and she changed her mind right there in the elevator.

"It was that close—she almost came with me. So tell me about fate. I almost went with her, then she almost came with us in the car. It's really strange. So she hugged and kissed me goodbye, and I said, 'Be careful, but I'm going to be worried about you up there in that little plane,' and the last thing she said was, 'Well, if it's my time, hoss, I'll go.'

"It was terrible. Then also in '63, I recorded with Jim Reeves, and that plane accident happened when our duet record was Number One. You talk about being afraid of planes. And just a few months after Jim Reeves' plane crashed, there was a small plane crash right in my back yard.

(Continued on page 66)

Duo of the Year award for two years running.

"And what's so ironic, too, fate is really something. The last thing Patsy said to me was, 'If it's my time to go I'll go. Two weeks later, after she had given me that scrapbook, on Saturday night she was working in Montgomery, Alabama, and on Sunday we were working a show in Kansas City, a benefit for a disk jockey who had really helped a lot of us with our records. The promoter had talked to all of us and asked if we would do the benefit, because the man had been killed in a car wreck and had left four kids and just nothing—no insurance, or anything. So about 14 or 15 artists went out there to do the show. And I was supposed to have been on a plane with Patsy. It was supposed to have been Randy Hughes, her manager and the pilot, and Patsy and Billy Walker and me.

"What's so weird is the Thursday night before that Sunday I got a phone call at my house, during dinner—and it was a Mr. Johnson in Glasgow, Missouri. He said, 'Dottie, I understand you're going to be on the show in Kansas City. I have just a small honky-tonk, but I have a pretty good country band, and I just wondered if you'd come out and sing. I can give you a hundred dollars.' Now, I'm brand new at the time, just getting started in '63. I don't know to this day how he got my home number, but he said he'd give me the hundred dollars and then I could just drive on—it was a hundred miles from Glasgow to



On a recent Mike Douglas TV Show, Dottie looking trim and fit, shows Robert Blake how to use the exercise ropes that keep her in shape.

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Record Reviews

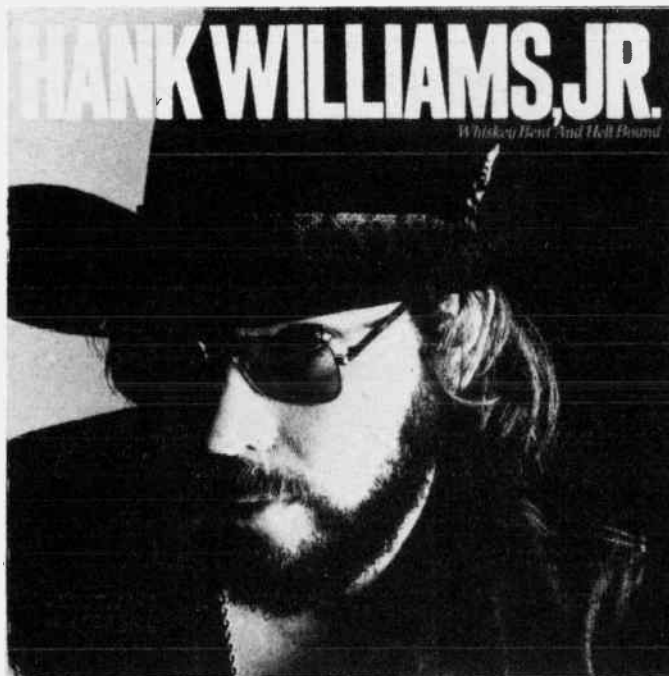
Hank Williams, Jr.
Whiskey Bent And Hell Bound
Elektra 6E-237

Unlike many, I thought Hank Jr.'s last effort, **Family Tradition** was a disaster, plagued by weak material and sloppy production. For the first time, he seemed a bit too shrill, and his gut response seemed exaggerated. Not so here. Whatever problems existed before are gone, and Bocephus is pursuing his special, primal musical vision as if nothing had happened. Since more artists seem to be sliding into this vein, it's good that Hank, Jr. is again setting the standards.

Yet there are still those strains of tradition running through his work, the elements of rockabilly, honkytonk, southern rock, blues [and even dixieland] that have given his music instant recognition. And the ambiguous production has been replaced by the well-focused work of Jimmy Bowen, who's shaken off his penchant for overarranging here.

Whiskey Bent And Hell Bound sounds, on the surface, like a standard honkytonker of the Moe Bandy variety. But Moe's lighter touch would be no match for the sheer menace of these lyrics. *Tired Of Being Johnny B. Good* likewise seems like the sort of tune Johnny Paycheck could do well with. Thing is, Hank isn't exaggerating his anger for effect. He means every word. *O.D.'d In Denver*, a tale of his own excesses, sounds like something Hank Sr. could've written in 1952, had he been able to get away with recording it. *Women I've Never Had*, done in style of Jimmie Rodgers' dixieland recordings, is an ebullient celebration of hedonism, as is his Chuck Berryized version of *White Lightnin'*.

Three tunes, however, may stand among his finest. The stark, wrenching emotion of *Come And Go Blues* is so personal one almost feels like an intruder. *Old Nashville Cowboys*, a tribute to the singers of Hank, Sr.'s generation, and in three minutes explains what happened to all too many of the



older greats with heart-rending sensitivity. *The Conversation*, a musical dialogue with Waylon, is yet another *Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way* tune that summarizes the Hank Sr./Outlaw connection.

It's taken Hank, Jr. many years and many albums to get to this point, to realize the potential of the music within him. But he's here now, and this may well be his definitive work.

RICH KIENZLE

Larry Gatlin
Straight Ahead
CBS JC 36250

When a man discovers his range of talents enable him to be a singer, songwriter and producer all at once, he's going to find all the opportunities he needs.

He can get his own way, succeed or fail on his own terms. Larry Gatlin has done some of both with his latest album, **Straight Ahead**.

At its best, his freedom leads to *All The Gold In California*, which became his second single to reach No. 1. At its worst the result is *Gypsy Flower Child*.

Gatlin, intensely ambitious and someone who could become a spellbinding enter-

tainer, wrote all 10 of these songs and he and his brothers Steve and Rudy handled the production. Gatlin's face bears a slightly expectant expression on the album cover, like he might be waiting for some applause to roll in. He shouldn't yet feel too serene.

The starting point for Gatlin's work remains his voice, a shining tenor with great power that he uses with remarkable control. He'll never be confused with anyone else, a real plus in the music business.

Everything that Gatlin does well is contained in *All The Gold*. He's delivering a good song, the harmony and arrangement are excellent and near the end there's even a great lick where an organ just



seems to ignite.

Can't Cry Anymore is a good song about a man who's already suffered too many emotional depth charges. *How Much Is A Man Supposed To Take?* is in the same vein. *Hold Me Closer* offers the line "Let me be your good deed for the day" and the catchy *Taking*

Somebody With Me When I Fall is easily the happiest song.

But the idea for *We're No. 1* is more than a little worn out these days.

And *Gypsy Flower Child* is a maudlin song that does not work at all. Battered children and a cycle that too often repeats incredible pain is a subject requiring great sensitivity. Gatlin's lyrics are weak, the arrangement—with a choir, birds and wind chimes—is totally overdone and the indulgence is compounded by the fact the number is seven minutes long.

Larry Gatlin wants it all in his career, and he'll probably get it. But he still ought to learn to say no to himself.

HARRY MORROW

Record Reviews



Willie Nelson
Pretty Paper
CBS JC 36189

I like Christmas carols, but never had much use for Christmas albums, except for the ones Phil Spectre did in the early-mid 60's. But when I heard Willie Nelson had a Christmas album this year, I had a feeling I would like it. I was right.

I put it on, and in three seconds flat gave a sigh of pleasure, right out loud. So did my friend who was hearing it with me. The sound that did it to us came from the organ of Booker T. Jones. I'm not a great fan of the organ, but the light, airy tone it has for this record is just right. Booker T. is responsible for most of the arrangements here, as he was for the classic pop standard album Willie made a little while back. When Booker T. and Willie get together, the result is uncluttered, perfect music. I hope they collaborate often and forever.

Two of my very least favorite songs are here, too, *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and *Frosty the Snowman*. But somehow, here I don't mind listening to them. A Christmas miracle! There's also three old time carols, *Silent Night*, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, and a snappy *Jingle Bells*. The rest of the songs date from between *White Christmas*, which opens side one, to *Blue Christmas*, which closes it. There's also one Willie original, *Pretty Paper*.

I might even give this a spin or two next July!

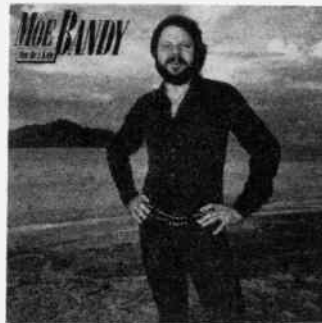
PETER STAMPFEL

Moe Bandy
One of a Kind

CBS JC 36228

Third rate singers recording albums of third rate songs don't bother me. Second rate singers making albums of second rate songs don't either. But when one of the very best does an album of wall to wall second and third rate stuff, I get real disappointed. Except for Best Ofs, there aren't many country albums with more than two to four great songs on them.

But there's not even one here. There's one or two that aren't



bad, but what's a great singer like Moe Bandy doing with stuff that at best is merely not bad? I've played this album half a dozen times, and there are only two tunes I can remember,

one of them just barely.

Is it Bandy's fault, or that of his producer, Ray Baker? More to the point, why were these songs chosen? Were they the best ones they could find? Were they written by old friends they didn't want to turn down? Or by folks they owed favors to?

Oh, well. A forgettable album by an unforgettable singer. Strictly for fans.

I got half a mind to ask a friend of mine to send Moe some songs. He's written dozens that are better than anything on this album. Be interesting to see what happens.

PETER STAMPFEL

Anne Murray
I'll Always Love You

Capitol S00 12012

A pensive and somehow matronly Anne Murray gazes reflectively from the cover of *I'll Always Love You*, bordered in sober black. This is not a grieving album by any means, but it does strike a moody, reflective pose throughout, as Ms. Murray sings of loves lost and found, running the gamut from *You've Got Me To Hold On To* and *I'll Always Love You* on the cheery side one to *Broken Hearted Me*, *Wintery Feeling*, and

Lover's Knot on side two, the down side.

Ms. Murray, the consummate professional, performs well—extremely well, in fact—and is superbly supported in supple middle of the road fashion by a group of Canadian musicians; the album, in fact, was largely recorded in Canada.

There are several very fine songs here, *Lover's Knot* and *Broken Hearted Me* outstanding among them, but there is no one magic moment, no *You Needed Me* or *Heaven Is Here* to transcend the smoothly professional and tread in the



realm of rich emotion. Still, a commendable, enjoyable album, holding the promise of many more to come from one who has already delivered so much.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Glen Campbell
Highwayman

Capitol S00 12008

Glen Campbell's latest is a wholly predictable but nevertheless highly enjoyable set of new country-pop songs dominated not—as often in the past—by Campbell's vocal pyrotechnics, but by powerful, muscular production.

This sort of production might overwhelm most artists, particularly if it came unexpectedly, but since this is the direction in which Mr. Campbell has been heading for some time, it does not come as any kind of shock, and in fact compliments the pleasant though generally

light material.

Song selection here is good, suiting both the production and the performer, and *Highwayman* and *Hound Dog Man* stand out in particular. One longs for the one song which knocks your socks off, but it is difficult to complain in the face of overall high quality.

There is no new ground broken here, but *Highwayman* is a successful exploration of known territory, and a fine showcase for the songwriting of the gifted Michael Smotherman, who wrote six of the songs, and the reliable Jimmy Webb, who wrote two of the others. It is quite a tour-de-force for both.



There is not a lot of wrenching emotion here, but there is pleasant easy listening aplenty; as this seems to be Mr. Campbell's goal, one must say he has succeeded admirably.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Record Reviews



Banded Together Various Artists

Epic JE36177

Country music is becoming an increasingly fast turn-over business. There are more artists than ever before and there are more records competing to get into the top of the charts. As a result, those that do get there, just don't stay there as long as they used to. Great records are heard fewer times on the radio before they drop back off the charts and gather dust in the radio station's file cabinets.

Such has been the case with great single releases like *Ain't No Good Chain Gang*, *Bartender's Blues*, *If You Can Touch Her At All*, and *Willie*

and *Waylon And Me* (by David Alan Coe, and in my opinion, one of the greatest quickly forgotten singles of recent years).

The great thing about **Banded Together** though, is that all of these previously released singles, as well as a whole lot more, are on here.

Though all of the tracks on **Banded Together** have been released before, when they are all gathered on one LP, as they are here, it is a virtual Whitman's sampler of some of the best moments in modern country music. Included on **Banded Together** are two great studio collaborations by Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings, a spirited live solo version of *Good Hearted Woman* by Willie Nelson, two great songs from Johnny Paycheck, as well as others from Bobbie Bare, The Charlie Daniels Band, and George Jones.

It's a shame that they don't release more "various artists" LP's like **Banded Together**. If you didn't get enough of these great single records the first time around, you'll get more than your money's worth here.

BOB ALLEN

Merle Travis The Merle Travis Story

CMH Country Classics 9018

Merle Travis did his last recordings for Capitol in the late sixties. He'd been on the label since 1946, and had seen his own recordings, like *So Round So Firm So Fully Packed* become major hits of the forties. *Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)*, a Travis composition, gave the label its first million-seller when Tex Williams recorded it in 1947 and *Sixteen Tons*, another original did likewise for Ernie Ford in 1956. And the Travis guitar style that influenced Chet Atkins and countless others, was also captured on record. But for the past decade, with a couple exceptions like the landmark *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* LP

and his album with Chet Atkins, Travis has done little recording. In the past few years, there were rumors of ill health, then his third marriage came unglued and he wrestled with personal problems. So when I heard he was recording again, I wondered what the results would be.

But this engaging two-record set shows that Travis, country music's Renaissance Man, has serviced his legendary picking might have a few rough edges, and his voice may be huskier, but that wry humor and enthusiasm are unchanged.

There are no new songs here, just rerecordings. But taken as a whole, they underscore his contributions of the last few decades. His guitar instrumentals are as sparkling as when he first recorded them. His coal mining songs inspired by his

Don Williams Portrait

MCA 3192

As are all his past efforts, Don Williams' **Portrait** is another personalized album with his indelible musical signature. Williams has a penchant for one-word titles to his albums—**Harmony**, **Visions**, **Expressions**—which succinctly capsize the album concept. Now comes **Portrait**, which is exactly that. It is a musical painting by a true master. This is a melodic album with no superfluous flash—just solid, well-produced music. Again, Williams' baritone voice is the highlight of the album. Like the *Outlaw From Laredo* in a little-known song of the same name, Williams possesses a "voice like velvet dragged through the dirt."

Co-produced by Williams and Garth Fundis, Williams has gone to the same well of songwriters for material as in the past. There are more exceptional songs from such tunesmiths as Joe Allen, Wayland Holyfield, and Bob McDill, as well as several numbers written by Williams himself. The

production is simplistic, traditionally laid-back, and sensitive to the lyric. On most of the songs the Shelly Kurland Strings provide a subtle background.

The album's best song is not necessarily its most commercial. McDill's *Good Ole' Boys Like Me* (not to be confused with the recent Moe Bandy—Joe Stampley hit *Good Ole Boys*) is a gem. This version is thoughtful and deep, a recollection of childhood memories gone forever except from the mind. A song of introspection, the tune is one of McDill's best ever.

Another standout is Roger Cook's *Love's Endless War*, sensitive and almost dirge-like, with Charles Cochran's piano and Lloyd Green's steel guitar accenting the sad, fragile melody.

Williams' record company is sure to garner another string of hits from this album. Best bets are Joe Allen's *Circle Drive-way*, a clever song about not wanting a love to end; the light-hearted and explicit *Woman, You Should Be In Movies*, written by Buddy Cannon; Wayland Holyfield's *Steal My Heart Away*; and McDill's *We've Never Tried It On Each Other*, an uptempo number with a bubbly lead guitar solo by Barry Byrd Burton formerly of the Amazing Rhythm Aces.

The two contributions from Williams' pen—*Love Me Over Again* and *We're All The Way* are two positive love ballads which serve to round out the hues of this multi-colored album.

Ever the creative maverick in a business which all too frequently settles for insipid, albeit innocuous commercial music, Don Williams has again come up with an album which makes a personalized, meaningful musical statement. While the subject matter is more varied than before, **Portrait** is no departure from the past. Yet, it is every bit an exploration of the mind, heart, and soul.

KELLY DELANEY

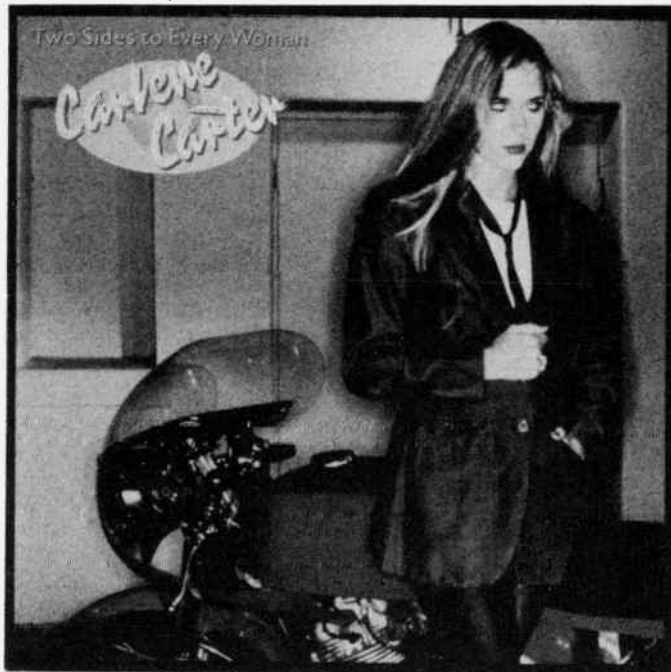
Kentucky roots are as stark and sensitive as they were 24 years ago.

The high point, however is the reception of his honkytonk hits of the forties, which featured trumpet, accordion and steel guitar. The accordion's gone, but the old sound is captured by the work of Johnny Gimble and fellow ex-Playboys Alex Brashear on trumpet and Herb Remington on steel. He also rerecorded *Re-Enlistment Blues*, which he sang in the 1953 movie *From Here To Eternity* (with a very drunk Burt Lancaster).

With much of the Capitol material out of print, **The Merle Travis Story** is an essential overview of a man who deserved a place in the Hall of Fame years before he actually got it.

RICH KIENZLE

Record Reviews



Carlene Carter Two Sides To Every Woman

Warner Bros. BSD 3375

Labels just get in the way of enjoying new music. Don't burden the spirited Carlene Carter with anything that's going to prove confining. If there's a word that gives even a

satisfactory hint about her it would have to be contemporary.

Wise beyond her years, she's a woman with drive, a fine voice and that valuable something extra, the ability to write a song for herself. She's also taking risks, trying the unexpected, escaping from that

killer phrase "doing what you're supposed to do."

Is there any real freedom besides the chance to make your own mistakes?

Ms. Carter and the good ole boys are not going to look at life in quite the same way, so she's not refining her style to the shuffle of beer drinking music.

The lyrics to the title song *Two Sides To Every Woman* are a provocative mass of contradictions, framing the dilemma of women trapped in lives that are nowhere near rewarding enough. The tragedy is that such a woman may never become her own person. "She's lost her pride," Carter says, "but she's too proud to admit it."

She wrote that song and four others and co-wrote two of the remaining four for the album, which was recorded in New York.

Ms. Carter perfectly captures the poignance she put into *Gold Hearted Lady*, especially when she's getting at the heart of despair: "You're slow dying fire, someone's unanswered prayer."

Coming right before those two thoughtful songs is one that

is definitely . . . memorable. *Swap Meat Rag* will even strike some listeners as controversial. Name another classic that takes a look at—congratulations, you guessed right—wife swapping in suburbia. Even those great cheatin' songs aren't like this!

Ms. Carter's going to get a lot better as a songwriter, but even now she comes up with lines worth remembering, like "All mistakes make for wisdom, that's the way he sees them" *It's No Wonder Why I Love Him*.

Old Photographs easily struck a chord of recognition. That's because it's built on an idea that's part of the bedrock of country music: you haven't lived unless you know the sense of loss. Ms. Carter works a subtle turn from casually claiming old photographs always make her laugh to the admission that sometimes they make her cry.

The song is the only one that's a threat for country airplay. Carlene Carter is her own woman, and she should be. She's got an exciting future. But let's accept *Two Sides To Every Woman* for what it is—a good rock album.

HARRY MORROW

Randy Barlow Randy Barlow

Republic, RLP6024

Top executives at big record companies probably run up more dollars on their expense accounts for business lunches in two weeks than a small record label like Republic spends on promotion in two months.

But so what. The small labels still somehow manage to get the job done, and often they do it better. While these megalabels have a tendency to sign more artists than they can effectively manage, and then proceed to lose some of the more promising ones in the shuffle, small record labels have traditionally, offered an

alternative to this—a place where newcomers could get the special time and attention it



takes for them to develop into major artists.

Randy Barlow is Republic's

only major artist. While he would more than likely—by his own admission—have been lost in the shuffle anywhere else, Republic has managed to get him on the record charts and keep him there. This is something that Capitol Records was not able to do during the two years they had Barlow.

Not that Barlow's a great singer. He is merely, judging from his debut Republic LP, *Randy Barlow*, a very good one. There are traces of Charlie Rich and Kenny Rogers in his voice, but there is the persuasiveness of neither. In his melodies and lyrics, there are traces of Neil Diamond, but unfortunately, not the same dis-

tinctiveness.

The point is though, with some more carefully chosen and stronger material, as well as a little more experience in the studio, Barlow could easily grow within his limitations and become a great stylist, just, for instance, as Kenny Rogers has done. Republic Records, glad to say, is giving him the special attention and support to do this, where a larger record label might not.

On that basis alone, Nashville needs more artists like Randy Barlow, just as it needs more thriving small labels like Republic.

In diversity there is strength. In bigness, there is blandness.

BOB ALLEN

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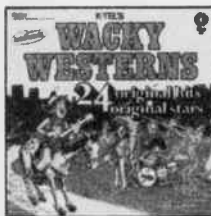
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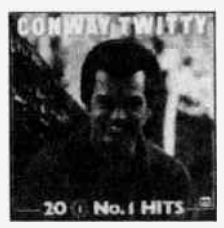
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Record Reviews

**Willie Nelson
Willie Nelson Sings
Kristofferson**
CBS JC 36188

Nearly a decade ago Kris Kristofferson, denim-clad and hair flying, picked up his first CMA Award for *Sunday Morning Comin' Down* as the Music Row hierarchy cursed under their applause. Because of that moment Willie Nelson walked onstage this year to accept the CMA Entertainer of The Year Award to a standing ovation (and few, if any, curses). Yet as Willie has thrived commercially and artistically, Kris catches ample

flak—and rightly so—for his halfhearted musical efforts, which take second place to his movie career. You couldn't find more irony in *A Star Is Born*.

So it is even more ironic that *Willie Nelson Sings Kristofferson* has accomplished something Kris himself hasn't been able to do: to recapture the essence of Kristofferson at his peak. All that brilliant, blunt imagery and grit that thousands of nightclub singers had blurred comes right back into focus. As Willie, his band and a few select guests (Kristofferson included) plow through *Me And Bobby McGee*, *Help Me Make It*

Through The Night and *For The Good Times*, you remember just what it was that made these songs so special in the first place. Kris's own version of *Why Me* hasn't been surpassed, only equalled. And the Johnny Cash interpretation of *Sunday Morning Comin' Down* still will stand as the definitive version. But as before, Willie has equalled it.

Just as Willie breathed life back into all those tired, worn-out old pop standards, so he has made the Kristofferson classics seem brand new. But hopefully his performances will serve as a reminder to Kris himself of the genius of his songwriting, and



perhaps give him the impetus to put Hollywood aside for awhile and take a stab at creating more music on this level. He can do it if he tries—and nobody knows that better than Willie.

RICH KIENZLE

BURIED TREASURES

by Rich Kienzle

This is the first of two columns dealing with the best new releases in bluegrass and related areas. This time, we'll look at vintage reissues and new recordings of traditional bluegrass. In the near future we'll be dealing with the modern, progressive bluegrass recordings.

There were a number of important pre-bluegrass performers who had a lasting influence on the music Bill Monroe pioneered. Recently County Records, the major bluegrass/old timey record company in the country, reissued two important sets. The blind singer-guitarist Riley Puckett, who worked with Gid Tanner's Skillet Lickers, pioneered the bass runs and rhythm styles that became the essence of bluegrass guitar back in the thirties. *Waitin' For The Evening Mail* (County 411), though it emphasizes his singing, still affords a glimpse at the roots of the guitar style Lester Flatt, Doc Watson, Clarence White and others later refined.

Another major influence on bluegrass—not to mention the Opry's first real instrumental

star—was Fiddlin' Arthur Smith, who provided one of the most imitated fiddle styles in country music at the time. Smith's fiddling featured sophisticated dynamics and an unequalled drive, and his recordings with Sam & Kirk McGee, who toured with him as the Dixieliners are classics. *Fiddlin' Arthur Smith & His Dixieliners Volumes 1 and 2* (County 546 & 546), however, looks at his later recordings with the Delmore Brothers and other groups from 1935 to 1940. Smith's influence is particularly obvious on the 1940 recordings he made with three of Bill Monroe's original bluegrass boys. The enclosed booklet with these two sets, featuring a biography and rare pictures, is even more enlightening.

One of the most revered names in old-timey music are Bill and Earl Bolick, the Blue Sky Boys, whose prewar recordings, featuring only their voices, Earl's guitar and Bill's mandolin, influenced not only bluegrass, but other groups like the Louvin Brothers. *Presenting The Blue Sky Boys* (JEMF 104) is a legal reissue of their

1965 Capitol LP by the historically-minded John Edwards Memorial Foundation. The music and harmonies are spellbinding, and a massive book included details *all* their recordings, with rare photos.

Few realize that during the peak of the career of Johnny Wright and Jack Anglin, that Kitty Wells was a part of their acoustic, hardcore country act of the late forties, before Kitty began recording for Decca (she started out recording gospel for RCA). Their act featured ample amounts of gospel, and was seldom better than when they were working on radio *Johnnie & Jack Featuring Kitty Wells* (Golden Country 2205) was taken from old radio shows. And if you thought *Drop Kick Me*, *Jesus was weird*, wait 'til you hear *Jesus Hits Like An Atom Bomb*.

As the Flatt and Scruggs Columbia recordings fade further into history, it's nice to know that Rounder is perpetuating the best of them. *Don't Get Above Your Raisin'* (Special Series 08) taken from their old Columbia 78s from 1950-1953, brings together 12 bluegrass standards, such as *Tis*

Sweet To Be Remembered, *Foggy Mountain Special* and *Thinking About You* with the classic Flatt and Scruggs sound, all described in a beautiful set of notes.

The Kentucky Colonels were one of the earliest bluegrass bands to deviate from the norm. Though the brilliant flat-picking of the late Clarence White, his brother Roland's mandolin and Billy Ray Latham's banjo was generally traditional, they also tackled tunes right off the country charts of the sixties, like *Chug A Lug*. *Livin' in The Past* (Sierra/Briar 4202), taken from live performances shows the Colonels at their best, from 1961 to 1965, and includes ample evidence that Clarence was one of the great guitarists.

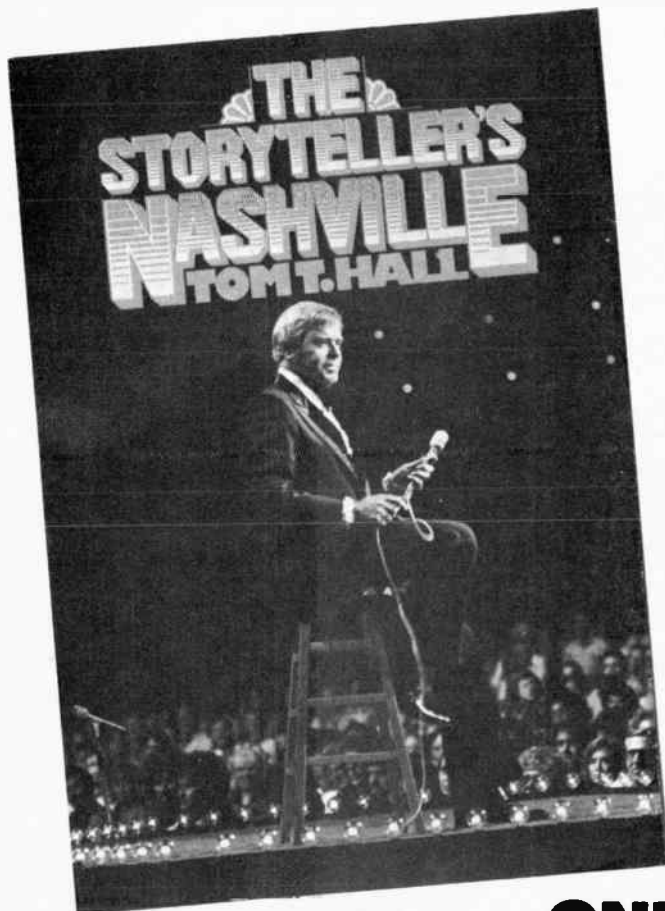
The Essential Bluegrass Album (CMH-9016) is a two-record excursion pairing the Osborne Brothers with the great Mac Wiseman. It is just what the title implies.

The Johnnie & Jack/Kitty Wells LP is available for \$5.99 plus \$2.00 postage from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California 94530.

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It was with good reason that Tex Ritter eventually christened Tom "the Ol' Storyteller," for **THE STORYTELLER'S NASHVILLE** unfolds with countless anecdotes of the early days: Tom's first night on the town (during which he overheard a sessionman's alimony complaints and later wrote the classic "Back Pocket Money"); encounters with the likes of Hank Snow (in whose show Tom first came to New York City) and a sullen Kris Kristofferson; the immersion into pills and drinking; the hard days when a young songwriter was of necessity a "street-fighter" and sideman as well.

It was "Harper Valley PTA" that changed everything for Tom. Success brought tough times in the pressure to write more songs in the same style. Tom was also to struggle against the classic fault of writing for his peers and not for himself.

THE STORYTELLER'S NASHVILLE beautifully renders the changes not only in Tom's life, but in the life of Country Music as well. The influx of "pop" in the persons of John Denver, Olivia Newton-John and others set off wails of protest among the Grand Ole Opry establishment. Inevitably, there came the backlash of the new "outlaws," headed by that rebellious Texan, Willie Nelson. A man of his own mind, and a man more dedicated to his music than to polemics, Tom T. has preserved through it all by the unusual content of his lyrics and the sheer warmth of his performances. His spellbinding story, and that of his town and its stars, is all in this new autobiography.

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BOOTS GET

by Dolly Carlisle

When Nancy Sinatra sang *These Boots Are Made For Walking* back in the early 1960's, it's unlikely she would have guessed that so many boots would be walking a decade and a half later.

Nor would she have thought a prominent New York fashion designer named Ralph Lauren would be walking all over

his fashion competitors with an exclusive line of expensive western wear that included ruffled prairie skirts, leather vests, western shirts and pointed cowboy boots. But how things do change. With the coming of western influenced movies like *Electric Horseman* (starring Willie Nelson, Robert Redford) and *Urban Cowboy* (the

next John Travolta blockbuster), everyone from Catherine Deneuve to Andy Williams is pulling on their own pair of western boots.

For those who cared about boots before they became fashionable, Sam Luchese and Tony Lama are the best bootmakers in America. Sam Luchese, former owner of



INTO STEP

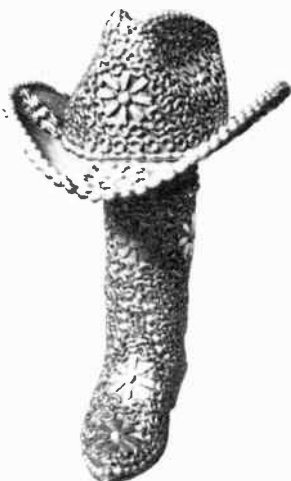
Luchese Boots in San Antonio, and now National Sales Manager of the Tony Lama Boot Company in El Paso (which manufactures approximately 900,000 boots a year) says he's been selling boots to a couple of New York stores for about 25 years. As for the great surge of interest in boots around the country, he says, "I'm happy for them. They finally woke up." He says the major difference in the orders from New York is for boots with higher



Rex Allen, Sr.'s Boots

tops and higher heels. Asked if the thought the fad would wane, he replied, "every fad runs out sooner or later, people are like a bunch of flies, they'll change when something new comes along."

And yes, in New York the fad is hot. Even famous athletes are getting into the act. On again, off again. Yankee baseball manager, Billy Martin has opened a store in New York's fashionable upper east side called Billy Martin's Western Wear, which sells everything from boots (they carry Justin and Dan Post with a price range of \$100-\$300) to custom made hats. Larry DeGray, Martin's sales manager says they are doing fabulously. He says "they're the only store who has everything under one roof, more so than out west." He also said that "most of the people are out of towners and foreigners, but we also get people from the west."



Little Jimmy Dickens' Boots and Hat were made out of macaroni by a fan.

Of course, us country music lovers have been wearing them for quite some time. Shucks, folks like Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash and Lynn Anderson would be hard put to find anything else to wear. But at long last the rest of the country has discovered the secret of cowboy, western style boots.



Jim Reeves' Boots

They are symbolic of the fabled, romanticized cowboy who road high and long in his saddle. The boots were developed for his particular line of work—high heel and steel shank adapted for the stirrup. Up until 1935 when Acme Boot Co. came into existence, cowboy boots

were made by hand. Many of the expensive pairs were considered a work of art, with the fancy stitchwork and multi-colored underlays. Now most of this work is done by machine although there are a few boot-makers still around. Handcrafted boots generally run \$500 to \$1,000 a pair, and they'll most likely last forever.

Brandname boots—Acme, Justine, Dingo, Dan Post, Ralph Lauren, and Frye run in the more conservative ranges of \$50 to \$250 and still offer the underlays and multi-colored stitching. They won't last forever, but most of the boots will outlast an ordinary pair of shoes.

The range in style is incredible. Everything from patchwork—a blend of patent leathers and calves skin—to a white studded rhinestone with designs of butterflies can be found. More conservative purchases will want something simple like pigskin leather, python snake skin or goat skin.

The United States's largest manufacturer of boots—Acme Boot Co., located in Clarksville, Tennessee reports that this fiscal year will be the best ever for them. "We really can't expect this to last," noted one representative, "but then we also know western boots will always be around. So, we'll still be here when this popularity wave rides out."

Yes, and those who discovered the comfort and chicness of western boots will most likely keep walking to their nearest store to buy another pair. ■



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HANK JR.

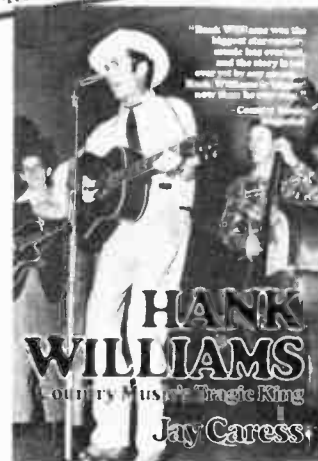
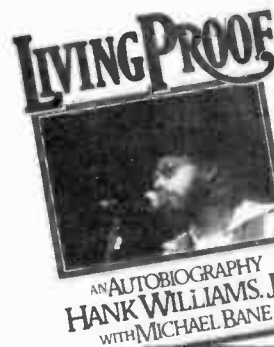
From the day his famous father died, Hank Jr. was pushed to fill his father's shoes. By seven, he had been tutored by Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Brenda Lee. At the ripe old age of eight, he played his first show, and even then it was apparent he had inherited his father's musical genius. His rise to fame was spectacular - at eleven he premiered at the Ole Opry and at four teen was a hit on the "Ed Sullivan Show." At nineteen Hank Jr. was perched atop show business.

But success took its toll. There were drugs and booze. Two marriages failed. Hostile audiences came to watch him forget lyrics or drop his guitar. The pressures were so enormous that Hank Jr. wanted to die. Then in 1975 his wish was almost granted when he slid five hundred feet down a mountain in the Rockies. Awaiting death in the snow, he had a powerful revelation—he wanted to live, and amazingly he did.

Now twenty nine, Hank Jr. just released his twenty fourth album and has a full concert schedule. With his career stronger than ever, this great singer movingly conveys his extraordinary life and his tortured journey to escape his father's fate in this brand new book. It's a fascinating story that anyone, whatever their musical taste, should be sure to read.

HANK SR.

This life story evokes not only the man, but a feeling for his era—the late 1940's and early 50's in the South. From Alabama farmtown to the Grand Ole Opry and his subsequent plunge from the heights of glory, this privileged biography draws on eyewitness testimony of friends and associates, laying bare more than has ever been told of Hank Williams' personal and professional life—his upbringing, his marriages, his artistry, his alcoholism, his tortured soul. Through the red neck honky tonks of deepest dixie to the top of the charts with songs like "Lovesick Blues," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Cold, Cold Heart," and more; author Jay Caress has shadowed the once, present, and future King of Country Music. Here are new insights from those who knew Hank in Montgomery, Shreveport, and Nashville, and a never before published detailed account of the night Hank Williams died, events which have been shrouded in mystery for a quarter of a century. As with the Hank Jr. story, we at the magazine heartily recommend this great new volume.



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RITA COOLIDGE

Satisfied

by Gail Buchalter

Rita Coolidge was unavailable for comment about her separation from Kris Kristofferson since she was in Japan. His surprise announcement, made on the *Today Show*, put an end to the rumors that had been flying around Los Angeles and Nashville. Unfortunately, they proved to be well-grounded. While Kris remains in their Malibu house, Rita has settled down in the Hollywood Hills, to a life as a single, working mother.

At the time of this interview, Rita and Kris had not formalized their own thoughts on their separation, so neither decided to publicize the possibility of a divorce. But to the discerning observer, it was obvious that there were several dramatic changes going on within Rita—some professional and some personal.

Her waist-length hair, as much a part of her presence as the man she shared the stage with for eight years, had been shorn in the fly-away free-feel of the '70s. She has traded in her turquoise Indian jewelry for perfectly cut diamonds, and replaced her Levi's and flower-child dresses with a Calvin Klein 24-karat gold original. But if you're thinking you can't judge an album by its cover, all you have to do is listen to the music to know something new is happening to Rita.

"I'm not sure what happened on *Satisfied*, but I've been asked by a lot of people why this album is so different from my others. In the past, I've always had something pulling me away from the studio, whether it was my own insecurities, having a baby, or going on the road. I would put down my vocals with the basic tracks and leave," she admits, with a slight shrug of her narrow shoulders. The album would be completed by her producer, David Anderle and Rita's friend, brother-in-law, arranger, and co-producer of her last two albums, Booker T. Jones.

"I finally realized what I was doing, or rather not doing. It was like a painter not completing his painting, or being a print-maker and turning your stone over to another lithographer," says the one-time art student, who studied lithography during a brief stay at Florida State College.

For some inexplicable reason to Rita, she remained involved with this project

from beginning to end. She, Anderle and Booker chose the material and worked out exactly the feel and arrangements before

it almost felt like I was recording my first album. It really mattered what it sounded like and who was on it.



the recording session. Rita is no longer leaving it up to chance—going into the studio and saying, "Hey guys, listen to this demo. Now, why don't ya all find a feel and see if we can make it groovy," she laughs, imitating the laid-back, low-down approach that is the antithesis of professionalism.

"I'm more sure of my career now and *Satisfied* was such a new experience for me

"I was emphatic about using Billy Joel's horn player, Richie Cannata. We were all in Cuba when I first heard him and there was something fresh about his sound that I wanted on my album. At first I felt kind of silly insisting on him since there are so many great horn players in L.A., including Booker, but I got over that feeling when everyone went along with my suggestion. But what really surprised me the most was

my own inspiration rather than finding out I had artistic control of my own record." commented Rita, as she reapplied her lip-gloss, complaining about their chappedness and apologizing for the interruption.

Rita has spent her recording years considering her albums to be a very personal expression of her art. If someone liked them, fine, but she was unwilling to do anything that would go against her personal convictions, and for some strange reason that seemed to include intentionally going for a commercial appeal. Finally she sat down with Jerry Moss, the "M" in A&M Records, and he suggested she change her pattern of thought concerning her records.

"He told me my albums were real nice and I had a fan club following that would assure sales of 150,000 per record. We

this point, "David and I realized we couldn't cop out so we reworked five songs on the album and breathed new life into some old ones." Three hit singles, *Higher and Higher*, *The Way You Do the Things You Do* and *We're All Alone*, turned **Anytime . . . Anywhere** platinum and proved everybody right.

Though success bred contentment it also brought a new area of insecurity. "Probably the hardest thing to do is follow your own hit record." *Love Me Again*, produced one hit single, *You*, but it did not enjoy the same success as its predecessor. "I think we went into the studio feeling too confident. We had the same people behind us but somehow the album lost its spontaneity. It was like we had a formula and everything became too polished. It sounded too clean—sometimes it takes a

she exclaimed incredulously. "But to be honest, I never thought of myself as a country singer. I literally married into it when I became Kris' wife. We won two Grammy's, two years in a row, for the *Best Country Duo*. And boy, that's got to be the peak of subtlety—having two Grammy's and nobody knows your name and what you do. I've never been country though I can sing it, and my favorite blues singers are country people like George Jones and Tammy Wynette. But I usually listen to Bonnie Raitt, the Doobies, and Ry Cooder—those are the albums I play incessantly until I wear them out. Two other favorites of mine are Jimmy Cliff and Al Jarreau.

This summer Rita competed against Al Jarreau, and 26 other acts from 29 countries, at the Tokyo International Music Festival. She walked away the *Grand Prize Winner* as well as the *Best Female Vocalist*. A compilation album, **All About Rita and Satisfied** have both gone Top 20 on the Japanese charts.

"It's real special over there. It's a big City but so much gentler than New York. You see thousands of people walking down the street and everybody is quiet and polite. There's a harmonious feel to the people and the land that I haven't found in the United States."

Rita has spent a good part of the past ten years touring the U.S., which adds credibility to this judgement. She was born in Nashville, raised in East Tennessee and moved to Memphis after her first year of college. "I had a great childhood, I can't remember anything ecstatic or traumatic about it—I just grew up. My Dad was a preacher and we sang in his Church as a family all the time. There were six services on Sunday and then we'd go to the Men's and Women's Prison, where my Father would preach. I guess today I'm more spiritual than religious though.

I had good grades but somewhere along the way I thought, wouldn't it be nice to sing *Fever* when I grow up. I used to sit with my ear against the record player listening to Peggy Lee."

But instead of following the sultry style of Ms. Lee, Rita sang jingles until one fine day, Delaney and Bonnie, arrived in Memphis to work on their album **Accept No Substitute**. "They came whirling into town with Leon Russell, Marc Benno and Carl Radle, and they were a breath of fresh air. It was great to meet them and hang out since they were so creative and a lot of fun. They talked me into going back to L.A. with them for the week-end, and I've been here ever since.

Rita joined their tour and even now when she reminisces a smile flickers across her face. "We sang all the time. We'd finish a show and just kept on singing. We'd sing on the bus through the night and half way into the next day. That's never happened to me since. When Kris and I would go on the road, jamming would be the exception. You'd have to call every-



were working on **Anytime . . . Anywhere**, and there was a feeling going around the company that this could be the one that would break it for me." Rita recalls.

They chose to record Boz Scaggs' *We're All Alone*, since it was already familiar to so many people, and this fact now blended with Rita's new acceptance of commercialism. She also suggested a song Booker had recorded years earlier, (*Your Love Has Lifted Me*) *Higher and Higher*. By

wrong note to get the right feel," she muses.

Rita retrained from making the same mistake with **Satisfied** which features the hit *One Fine Day*. "I feel like that album has received the highest compliment possible. I went on Sammy Jackson's country radio show because the country stations were playing it. At the same time, the trade magazines had reviewed the album R&B. That's what happened to Ray Charles."

body's room to see if someone felt like getting together—it didn't just happen."

The old L.A. days were very different for Rita, who was hardly ever in town to enjoy them. She and Leon Russell were romantically linked, and when asked if it was true he wrote *Delta Lady* for her, she hedged and said, "Well, rumor has it. . . ." When reminded it was written as fact in the *Encyclopedia of Rock*, she admitted, "It's true. I went with Leon for a year. It's a beautiful song but I got to live it every day on the road with Joe Cocker and his Mad Dogs & Englishmen tour.

"It's hard to describe that tour since I've tried to block it out. It was like someone else was there, not me. Joe booked the tour one week before it began, and then called Leon to get a band together, and asked me to come up with a choir of background singers. I went from being a single back-up singer to being in charge of a chorus of ten. We traveled in a DC-8, bearing the logo, Cocker Power, and stayed in sleazy hotels. I quit ten times but somehow managed to stick it out. I work well in a difficult situa-

tion but I don't enjoy it. It was like putting two years of rock and roll dues into two months," says Rita, nodding her head in amazement at her stamina.

"I had so much of working with other people during my first three years in California, it wasn't until two years later that it all soaked in. I would be at a session and Jimi Hendrix, George Harrison or Eric Clapton would just fall by. I had to revamp my thinking by the end of those first years just so I could figure out what was going on. I would come off the road exhausted and cook solid for a month—that's my therapy."

According to those who have been invited to one of Rita's dinners, it's a privilege. Casey, the Kristofferson's five year old daughter, is a great advocate of her mother's Mexican and Japanese dishes, and has had her taste buds developed to the point where she enjoys Sushi (Japanese raw fish).

"When I decided to have Casey, I was 29, and ready to have a baby. I was always into kids but I waited until I was able to

have the time to devote to a child and feel good about myself. I was ready to back off from my career for a while so I could give her what she needed.

Today, with Casey in school, the time is once again right for Rita to begin touring. She and Booker are planning to hit the road after the first of the year. Before she left for Japan, Rita and Booker did a short engagement at The Roxy in L.A., and it felt right to both of them. Though the two have been friends, relatives and co-workers for years, this is a new venture for them.

Another new aspect of Rita's life can be heard in song—the one she wrote with her sister, Priscilla, *Can She Keep You Satisfied*. "Before we cut this album, every one was telling me, 'You have to write for yourself—it's the next stop as an artist.' I never said I had any aspirations to be a songwriter. I always thought of myself as a stylist or interpreter but since I've started writing I feel like I've given birth to a new part of myself. Maybe that's not the best analogy," Rita jokes, "since I was in labor with Casey for 17 hours." ■

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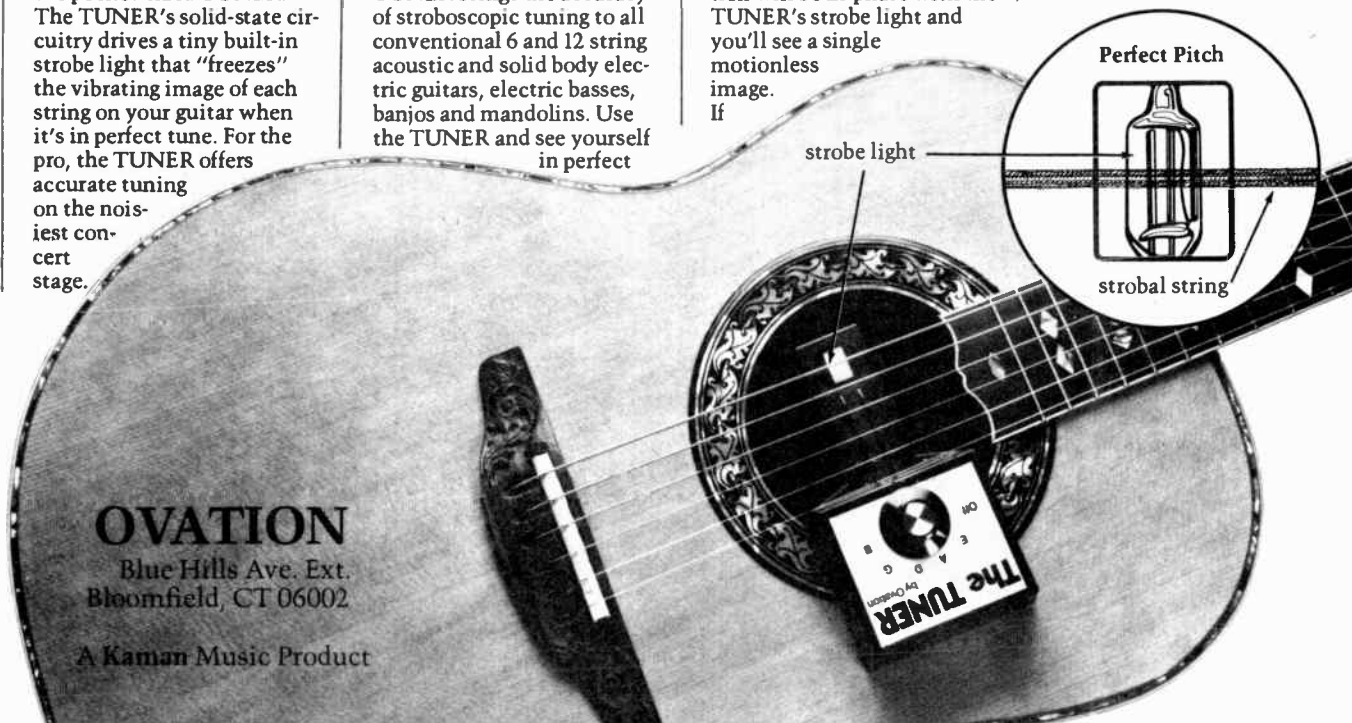
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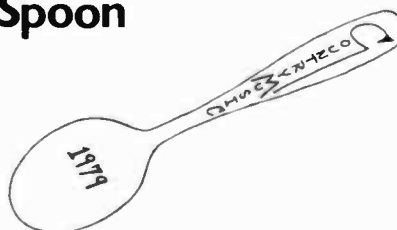
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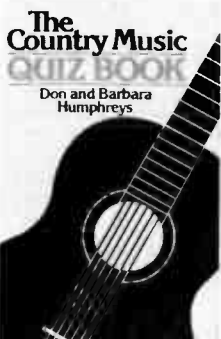
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DOTTIE

(Continued from page 45)

I lived in the country—two insurance men—they lived, but it knocked a hole in the ground. It was a long time—you didn't get me in a small plane."

As Dottie finishes her story, a collective sigh of release can be felt in the hotel room. It's been seventeen years since the tragedy, and those years have brought Dottie from needing a friend who could slip her a \$75 rent check to worrying about a business venture in a diamond mine that was intended as a tax shelter and is, instead, making her money!

Despite her 1973 hit with "The Coca-Cola song," *Country Sunshine*, Dottie believes that her career has only begun to peak within the last five years.

"I know that everybody has their time to happen, but I know the biggest reason that mine is just starting is that I didn't give full time to my career until the last five years because I loved my kids so and I really was a mother first. But I am not sorry. I feel younger now and I have new energy. I feel better now than in the 60s when I was taking care of the kids. I dress younger, I do what I want to do. I just know I can be me; before I was living for them."

Dottie at 46 does look younger. She confesses to a facelift, and she admits she wouldn't be caught asleep without her (false) eyelashes. But it's more than just make-up and make-overs. Dottie possesses a vitality and warmth that encompasses everyone she meets.

She's truly excited about her new album, *Special Delivery*; her new single, *You Pick Me Up, You Put Me Down*, which has done extremely well on charts; her new sound, sexier and more contemporary; and her new clothes, \$5,000 outfits designed by Bob Mackie. But she's equally excited about shopping for jogging outfits (she doesn't actually jog because of people constantly stopping her) and her exercise ropes, which she promises to demonstrate. And this Christmas she tried something new—acting. She played a bank teller, the mistress to Scrooge, in what was billed as a contemporary *Christmas Carol*. (Then she turned down a part in a series, for the same reason she turns down vacations—she doesn't want to risk the time out of the mainstream of music.) She joked about the part she played in the Christmas program—"I always wanted to be a mistress—never had the chance," but later she turns serious on the same subject:

"Kenny and I get accused of having a thing going, because we sing together and travel together so much." (They also do a risqué little number titled *Anyone Who Isn't Me Tonight*, and laugh their way through lyrics like "You've got the kind of body that was made to give a man a lot of pleasure"). "Now if we had a true thing going, other than music, we might not



laugh. But Kenny is my best friend, and I love him in that way."

And besides, it's pointed out, your husband does travel with you.

"And he really keeps us straight," Dottie shoots back with a laugh. "I even get fan mail from people who think that Kenny and me are married. And I write back and tell them, yes—but not to each other."

As Dottie prepares to "show us her ropes," we have to chuckle. Here's this magnificent redhead, looking fantastic in jeans and velour sweatshirt and, she swears, last night's make-up and eyelashes about to show us how she keeps that body looking like a 30-year-old's. (We, at 30, take careful note, as she stretches out on

the floor and begins work on her stomach and chest muscles; we should look so good in 16 years).

And we recall something she said earlier, when asked if she ever dwelled on her own mortality:

"Of course, you think about the law of averages. And all of us girls think about our age—I think more about my mileage than I do my age. I guess I might as well take the attitude of Patsy and be careful, but when my time comes—we only go once—and I'll just try to live as happy as I can until then. But I really would like to live to be 120, if I could sing that long."

And then, maybe, Dottie West will take a vacation?

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