

Ernest Tubb: Special Tributes from Hank Snow, Loretta,
Roy Acuff, Merle, Willie, Waylon, Hank Jr., Johnny Cash

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1985/82

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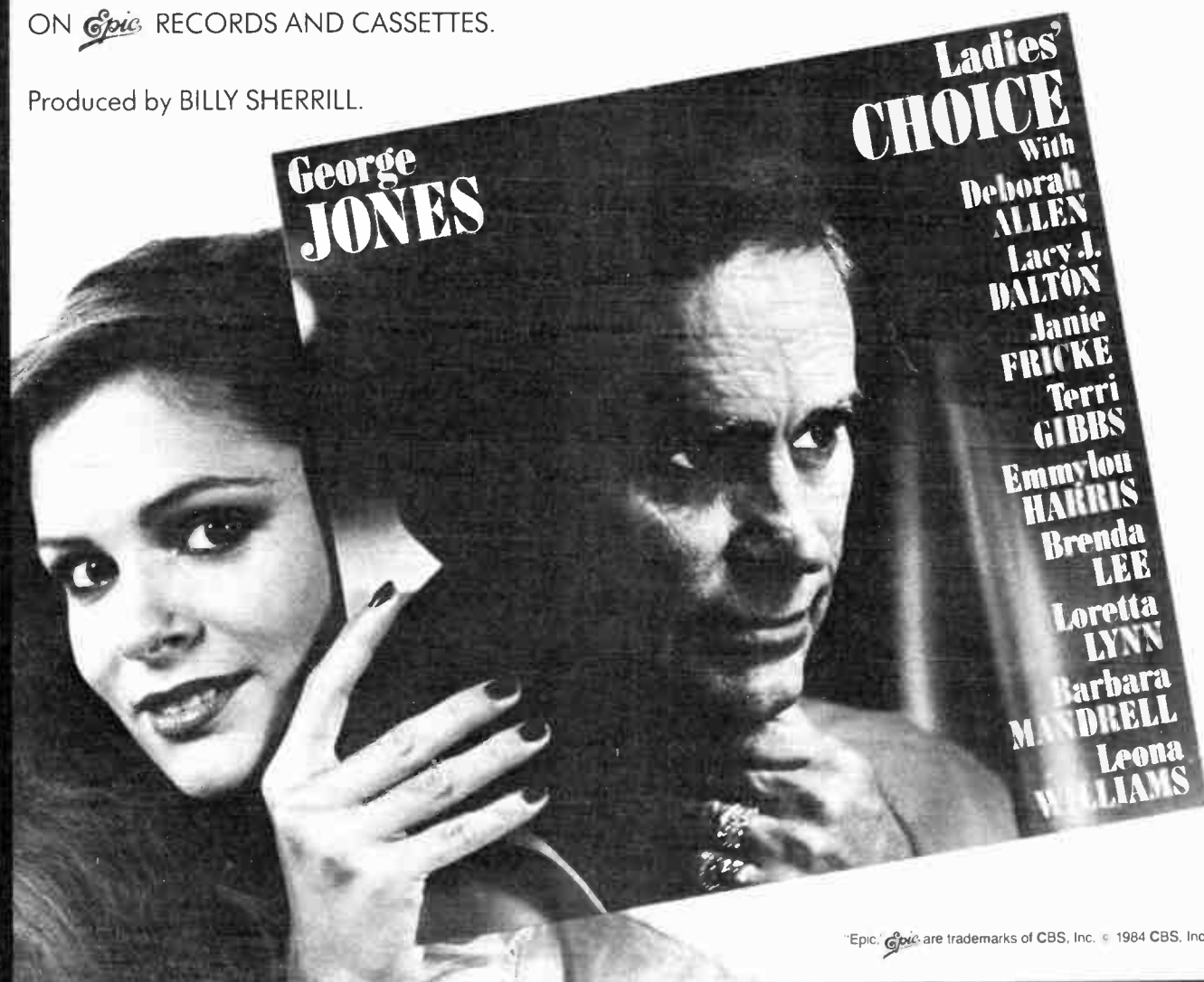
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Special Tribute to Ernest Tubb

4 Letters

About Ernest Tubb, the All-Time Best Poll, the CMA Awards, Merle Haggard, Alabama, Kip Kirby-and-Louise Mandrell, and lingering echoes of Dave Hickey and Elvis.

16 People

Hot out of Nashville comes the latest on Johnny Cash, Buck Owens, Faron Young, Norma Jean, the red-headed Willie, and none other than David Allan Coe.

by Hazel Smith

28 Twenty Questions with Jessi Colter

Jessie Colter knows what it's like to live in the shadow of a star like her husband Waylon Jennings—and also how to be her own person, musically and otherwise.

by Michael Bane

30 David Allan Coe's Long Hard Ride

The ups and downs of David Allan Coe: would he do it the same way a second time? Backstage and through the windshield of the bus, Michael Bane shares a special star's point of view.

by Michael Bane

36 Ernest Tubb Remembered: Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello

There was no one like him. Those who worked and sang with him recall Ernest Tubb, and *Country Music* re-publishes Marshall Falwell's interview with E.T. on the night of his last Opry performance at the Ryman Auditorium.

51 Record Reviews

The latest from George Strait, Reba McEntire, Gail Davies, The Judds, Willie and Kris, The Everly Brothers re-born, Ricky, Elvis in gold and more.

66 Buried Treasures

From early Ernest Tubb to early-middle George Jones, Carl Butler, Webb Pierce, and Flatt and Scruggs, Rich unearths it all.

by Rich Kienzle

67 Essential Collector

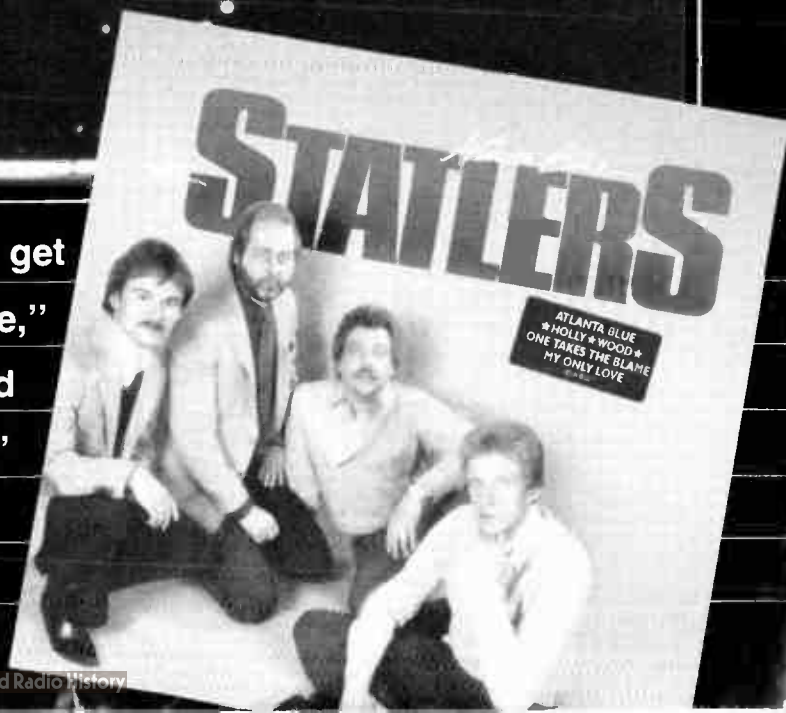
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Letters

Farewell to ET

We were so sorry to hear of the untimely passing of the great Ernest Tubb. We have a little son named after him. We had seen him several times and he was one of the finest people ever.

Marvin Craig
Kerrville, Texas

I think you should have some pictures and a story about Ernest Tubb. He was a great man and a real great singer. How about it, Russ?

Mary E. Town
Otsego, Michigan

We agree: See our special tribute to Ernest Tubb in this issue.—Ed.

The first and only time I was in a recording studio was on the day of ET's passing. I had a copy of a tribute song I wrote to him over a year ago with me, and I sang it to myself. My eyes got a little wet, but I hope ET heard it and liked it. Every time I sing "Our Baby's Book," I think of my father and ET. It was my dad's favorite song and the first song he taught me. My dad lost his battle with emphysema a couple of years ago. Maybe singing that song is my way to keep in touch with their souls.

Paul Magee
Marathon, Florida

CMSA members can read the text of Paul's tribute song in this issue's Newsletter.

For information on how to contribute to "For E.T.," an emphysema research and treatment fund founded in honor of Ernest Tubb, see the tribute to ET in this issue.—Ed.

I just heard on the radio that another of country music's greats died today: Ernest Tubb. He'll be missed by millions of his fans, including me, and by other people in the business and other country artists. All of us who loved him and loved his beautiful singing were enriched by his being here with us. No matter who else sings them, "Waltz Across Texas" or "Walkin' the Floor Over You" will always be Ernest Tubb's songs, and all the other beautiful songs he penned and sang have his unique

mark on them.

Really enjoyed the articles on Ricky Skaggs, The Whites, the fantastic mother-daughter singing duet The Judds, Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys, Delia Bell, and the Twenty Questions with Emmylou Harris. All great, great stuff.

Marie Deslongchamps
Allouez, Michigan

Eddy Arnold: Definitely Top 100



It does not seem possible that you would conduct an "All-Time Best Country Singer" contest without the name of Eddy Arnold. It's like an "All-Time Best Athlete" list without the name of Jim Thorpe or an "All-Time Best Baseball Player" list without the name of Babe Ruth.

Walter Krakowiak
Buffalo, New York

... and Tammy, Too!

How, in heaven's name, was Tammy Wynette not included on your All-Time Best Ballot? Her absence from the list has to be the biggest crime of the century. It becomes more ridiculous when you see who was included. Louise Mandrell? A cute kid but one of the 100 top country singers of all time? Please! Tom Jones? Shouldn't be on any country list of any sort. Linda Ronstadt? Just not country.

I vote for Tammy Wynette in place of Louise Mandrell, Glen Campbell in place of Tom Jones and Barbara Fairchild in place of Linda Ronstadt.

James Callen
Rockville, Maryland

You're both right. We cannot believe we did this. It was a mistake, totally our error. Eddy Arnold and Tammy Wynette will be placed in the final rankings in the same position they held in the nominations. Thanks to all of you who wrote to us about this.—Ed.

The Test of Time

About two years ago radio station KLAC in Los Angeles did a survey of country DJ's throughout the United States, asking them to name the most popular country stars. The top ten were: Hank Williams, Willie Nelson, George Jones, Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Elvis Presley, Jim Reeves, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline and Kenny Rogers.

Those who spent their entire lives performing, writing and promoting country music were further down the list of the top 60, if listed at all: Bob Wills (13), not even on your list of the top 100; Lefty Frizzell (15), Roy Acuff (16), Ernest Tubb (19), Jimmie Rodgers (23??), The Carter Family (25); Kitty Wells (28); Marty Robbins (32); Hank Snow (46); Bill Monroe (47); and Gene Autry (47). Dolly Parton was number 14 and Emmylou Harris was number 60.

With the exception of Hank Williams, the rest of the top ten in the KLAC survey became popular within the past 30 years. As for Elvis, he started country, but sure didn't stay there long. All this suggests that the voters were fairly young, 45 and under, and probably not country fans in the sense that they track country music back to the 1920's and earlier.

I believe the results of your survey will follow the same trend, fairly new fans who enjoy but do not study country music.

My selections are based on an individual's total contribution to country music and the impact they have had and are having still.

As with the singers, I suspect that the top songs selected will be from 1950 until the present. I really hope that I am

wrong, but based on the 200 offered, I won't be too far off.

Leonard M. Turner
FPO, San Francisco

The ballot's title, the All-Time Best, is an attempt to direct voters' thinking towards the longer view, but the point you make is valid. We plan to repeat the poll in a year or so to see how opinions change as time goes by.—Ed.

Task Too Tough

Please don't ever make me select ten favorites again. It's too tough.

As a former DJ on WCJM-FM in Lanett, Alabama/West Point, Georgia, I specialized in music that was at least ten years old. As I composed my lists for you, I was torn in two directions. One: my personal all-time favorites. Two: the songs and artists that had gotten the most attention for years and years. I finally finished but am not entirely satisfied.

It will be interesting to see your final results, to see if personal favorites or those most successful are top. Some of the "so-called" most successful have never produced what is known as a "Classic."

Herbert "Hoss" Steadham
Lanett, Alabama

On and Off the Top 100

I can't believe the list of 100 singers. Ray Charles is not country and he is on it. Tom Jones is not country and he is on it. Reba McEntire, who is about as country as you can get, is not on it. And Joe Stampley is not on it. I wouldn't really call Sylvia country, and she is on it.

Just because artists have recorded country songs doesn't mean they are country. Barbara Streisand could record "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Hello, Walls" and "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels," and do a hell of a job on it, but that wouldn't make her country.

If radio stations would play some of the real country music by the real country singers, then people would know who to vote for in these country music polls.

I had the very great pleasure of seeing Reba McEntire recently. She gets better all the time. And she's country. With that accent, she couldn't be anything else.

Dena Kay Warren
Blair, Oklahoma

Right On, Ricky

The September/October issue is fabulous. Loved the articles on Ricky and The Whites. That's what country music is all about. I especially like traditional country and would like more stories on those singers, Buck Owens, Connie Smith (she's one of my big favorites), and Lynn Anderson and her song-writer mom, Liz. Liz writes some real good songs; it turns me off that no one but Lynn sings them.

Sue Parker
Waterbury, Connecticut

For Connie, see this issue. For the others, stay tuned. We're working on it.—Ed.

It was great reading about Ricky Skaggs and The Whites, also The Judds—thanks for the beautiful pictures.

Now! I want to hear more about my long-time favorite, Faron Young. Where is he? What is he doing? Try and get some information on him. We also like George Jones, Merle Haggard, Mickey Gilley and Gene Watson. So tired of the Mandrells, Crystal and Dolly.

Mrs. Kenneth G. Thompson
Stuart, Iowa

Keep on reading this magazine. We plan to cover everyone you mentioned, including those you are tired of.—Ed.

Taking God on the Road

Thank you so much for the cover picture, articles and story about Ricky Skaggs and The Whites—Buck, Sharon, Cheryl and Rosie.

I don't waste my time reading about some that used to be drunk that still is, that had a good voice and went to the top only to find out they were in a pit, a deep hole they can never get out of, because they never took God on the road with them. The ones that do keep their heads on straight, go to the top and get higher and higher.

Mr. Carr said Ricky had a good voice. Ricky has a beautiful voice. If Mr. Carr would listen to "Talk About Sufferin'," he should know that. Ricky's band is the best, but I hope he never lets it drown out his voice.

Yes, I'm a Bible Thumper. Will keep on praying for Ricky, Sharon and Molly, along with my two daughters and grandchildren.

Keep us posted about Ricky Skaggs and The Whites. They are the best.

Rheba Honeycutt
Catoosa, Oklahoma

God's With the CMA

Anyone who ever doubted that God lives in country music must now be a believer, if they watched this year's CMA Awards. There were some very touching moments which truly showed God watching over his most special people.

The evidence was clear: seeing Barbara Mandrell with her beautiful family brought tears to everyone's eyes. Barbara knew who to thank for her life. Then there was Loretta Lynn paying a most warm and loving tribute to Ernest Tubbs. That certainly tugged at everyone's heart. No one doubted that Ernest was smiling in Heaven. And I'm sure everyone realized that it was God who gave Loretta the strength and courage that she needed to get through that moment.

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And then, what a heart-warming scene to see all of those wonderful people, young and old, all playing country music on their fiddles.

It was also such a happy and refreshing thing to hear so many of the artists thanking and giving credit and recognition to their dear loved ones, and not just the record companies and managers.

Even though I didn't agree with all the winners that were named, I could never be bitter after seeing so many special moments. It really made me proud to see all that's good about country music being carried out by so many good people.

My hope for the future is that *Love* will always stay in country music.

Kathy Caliaro
Seymour, Wisconsin

And the Devil Went Down to Nashville



Anne Murray, well-dressed, at the CMA Awards Show.

I didn't like Alabama getting the Entertainer of the Year award again this year. Only one guy, Randy Owen, could say thank you. Even last year Teddy Gentry could not say thank you, much less this year. Nor the other two. I think it's terrible. It made me so mad. If they can not thank their fans, producers and families, and *mainly God* for giving them this talent, I don't think they deserve it. Chet Atkins also looked and acted like he didn't appreciate it.

There are a lot of entertainers who have worked hard and have good voices and *show their appreciation* and have been in this type of entertainment, some a short while, others a long time. And they don't get anything.

Looks like y'all should have a dress code for the females—some dress terrible. Dresses look like they'll fall off if they move. If they sing country, they shouldn't look like a high society rich person. Their country music doesn't go with their clothes.

Now Anne Murray was very pretty. Her voice is breathtaking. She always looks great. Her music is fantastic. Her appearance is neat and with her voice, her

music is mellow and makes you feel as though you're hearing an angel sing. I wish she had gotten Female Vocalist of the Year and George Strait Male Vocalist of the Year because they sure deserved it.

Charlene Billingsley
Columbus, Georgia

Let's Get Logical

Alabama failed to win in any other category, so how can they be Entertainer of the Year? It completely defeats all reasoning. They didn't win Vocal Group, Band, Best Single, Best Album or any other award. This being so, the Entertainer of the Year award should have gone to Anne Murray (who won both Single of the Year and Album of the Year), and she wasn't even nominated!

Come on, you voters for these awards. Next time use some logic!

Laurence M. Beyer
Mineral Wells, Texas

Julio Who?

It was disgusting to hear over the air waves on the morning of October 9th that a single that included Julio Iglesias made it to the top of the yearly country awards. Julio Iglesias' and his management's only aim has been to "penetrate the American entertainment market," which, according to general opinion world-wide, is the most difficult to enter and triumph in. Iglesias' publicity-seeking photo sessions with Priscilla Presley, various Hollywood personalities, Diana Ross, and Willie Nelson were merely aimed at getting exposure with the rock, black and country fans. Believe me, Senor Iglesias never gave a hoot or a holler about country music and probably never even heard it before stepping on American soil.

Many singers of the past and many still alive and performing must feel cheated because the lucrative U.S. market has eluded them: singers like Carlos Gardel, Jorge Negrete, Pedro Infante, Daniel Santos, Pedro Vargas, Libertad Lamarque, Bobby Capo. I'm sure you've never heard about them, but they're the equivalent of Crosby, Presley, Sinatra, Como, "King" Cole, Patti Page, Streisand, etc., in Latin America.

Julio Iglesias is a talented singer, but CBS Records' strategy has been to bombard the media with him, associating him with key figures in American music. Wake up, country music lover. How far are these TV network-record industry conspiracies going to take our music before we order them to *stop it!*

James M. Ahles
Carolina, Puerto Rico

Another controversial letter from our friend in Puerto Rico. Writer Patrick Carr also has some views on this subject. See Record Reviews.—Ed.

To Each His Own

I'm tired of reading the complaints of other subscribers about the new artists. If it weren't for Alabama, John Anderson, Earl Thomas Conley, Lee Greenwood and many other new artists, I know myself and many of my friends would still be into rock. I personally don't enjoy the whining, crying in your beer music of old. The 20- and 30-year olds of today want more out of the music they listen to. They want something they can relate to. The new singers are giving it to them.

Beverly Chester
Morganton, North Carolina

I'm only nineteen years old and country music is all that I will listen to. Today's music is terrible! I could never understand what they are saying. My friends think I'm strange.

Please print more articles on my favorites—Mel Tillis, Don Williams, Charley Pride, Mickey Gilley and Merle Haggard. They're the greatest. So is Ronnie Milsap.

I'd like to welcome WXTU to our area. We were without country music being air-played for a long time. Now it's here and I hope forever.

Michèle Moleczan
Erial, New Jersey

Hey There, Martin, Kentucky

Back in the year 1939, one summer Saturday night in Martin, Kentucky, I was helping my brother-in-law run his filling station during rush hours. After the Martin Theater turned out, Bill Monroe and his band stopped in to get his 1938 Buick Roadmaster filled with gas and a quart of oil. They were there about five minutes and none of them got out of the car, they merely said they were going all the way to Nashville that night.

The story continues a few years later. I had to go into the U.S. Army in January 1941 and after two more years, in January 1943, I was transferred to the Ski Troops at Camp Hale, Colorado.

Soon thereafter I was entering the mess hall for breakfast. It was jammed with soldiers. Standing in line I heard a voice call out, "Hey there, Martin, Kentucky." After picking up my pancakes, I sat down with him. He told me he was a guitar player in Bill Monroe's band and remembered me from the night I filled the Buick with gas. After about three months he told me he was discharged. He was then 45 years of age and had a family back home. I have forgotten his name but maybe with the facts I've given, some of his former band members can remember his name or some of his family may know.

Joe L. Bailey
Catlettsburg, Kentucky

Anyone who'd like to write to Joe Bailey, we'll forward your letter.—Ed.

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A Lifetime Of Song | 324418*
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HANK WILLIAMS, SR. | 312488*
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GREATEST HITS | 324434
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RIGHT OR WRONG |
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| 329649
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How the Club operates: every four weeks (13 times a year) you'll receive the Clubs music magazine, which describes the Selection of the Month for each musical interest plus hundreds of alternates from every field of music. In addition, up to six times a year you may receive offers of Special Selections usually at a discount off regular Club prices for a total of up to 19 buying opportunities.

If you wish to receive the Selection of the Month or the Special Selection, you need do nothing—it will be shipped automatically. If you prefer an alternate selection, or none at all, fill in the response card always provided and mail it by the date specified. You will always have at least 10 days to make your decision. If you ever receive any Selection without having had at least 10 days to decide, you may return it at our expense.

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Note: all applications are subject to review and Columbia House reserves the right to reject any application.



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Freddie and the Heartbeats

Thanks a lot for your CMM Update on Freddie Hart in your September/October issue. I have been to six of his concerts. This man is a great entertainer. His new Heartbeats are really tops. I hope the new band and Freddie's new record label put him back on the charts where he belongs.

Freddie never leaves a concert until every fan has their autograph, handshake,



kiss or picture taken with him. I am enclosing a photo I had taken with him at a concert in Independence, Missouri.

Hope to see a feature article on him soon.

Norma Kabler
Sedalia, Missouri

I would like to see more on Freddie Hart. He is great. Saw him at a show in Pennsylvania last year and never heard any more about him until your CMM Update. His band is great, and I am looking to get his latest album by request at the local record shop.

Donald Ruff
Bogota, New Jersey

We can't keep up with you Freddie Hart fans. We give you an inch, you want a mile.—Ed.

Nudie too Brief

Your recent article about Nudie Cohen in People in your September/October issue was a bit short. Nudie not only catered to musicians, he knew several top stars in movies and television. The list of his famous friends is endless. He was also a talented musician himself.

It is difficult to describe a legend in a few words.

Marie Stone
Artesia, New Mexico

Has Hag Gone Camera Shy?

In late August and early September I attended a Merle Haggard and a Don Williams concert at Mud Island in Memphis, Tennessee. At the Merle Haggard show my camera was checked and not returned until the end of the concert. I couldn't believe it. They said orders from Merle. The same thing happened at the Don Williams

concert, so I walked out and lost the \$14.00 I spent for the ticket. I can't believe these guys would do this to the fans that put them on top and have kept them there all these years. Please check this out if possible and let them know how we feel.

Meanwhile, here is my ten-year-old Mandy and her favorite Alabama guy, Randy. Too bad the old guys don't have time for this. Remember our Number One



Cowboy? Old Marty had time for each fan until the end. What a loss!

Kay Davis
Southaven, Mississippi

We have our reporter on it right now, asking Haggard what's up. You're not the only one to have had this experience. We'll ask Don Williams too.—Ed.

I attended a Merle Haggard concert near Charlotte, North Carolina this summer, and after fighting the huge crowds and spending money for a ticket, we were not allowed to take pictures, at Merle's request. There were quite a few disappointed fans and I must say a lot of mad fans, and I was one of both.

I hope you print this letter and I hope Merle reads it, because he sure hurt a lot of his fans that day. He must understand that if it weren't for fans he wouldn't be where he is today. If I ever seen him again, I hope I can take a camera and be free to take a picture without being searched.

Louise Rollins
Lancaster, South Carolina

Special to Moe and Joe

Dear Moe and Joe:

I recently bought a copy of your latest album, *Where's the Dress?*, and, as with your other albums, I enjoyed it immensely.

Then, one night, I caught your video version of "Where's the Dress?" on TV on *This Week in Country Music*. Mercy! If I were a drinking man, I would never have believed my eyes! I laughed so hard, I damn near had a laundry problem. (You sure you guys didn't acquire your wardrobe in San Francisco???)

All I can say is, I really like your music,

but neither of you will ever be any kind of threat to either Dolly Parton or Bo Derek, in the sex symbol department. (Boy George, eat yer heart out???) I plan to buy your records and enjoy your music even if your mothers do dress y'all funny!

Harlan Jobe
Napa, California

Justice for Jessi

Thank you, Mary Ellen Moore, for your excellent review of Jessi Colter's *Rock and Roll Lullaby* in the September/October issue. Jessi has always been my favorite female vocalist. She does not receive the credit she deserves for her beautiful voice.

Edna Haynes
Abilene, Texas

For more about Jessi and her own view of her recording career, see Twenty Questions this time.—Ed.

Mandrell Madness KO's Kirby

I was really enjoying the September/October issue, especially the articles on The Judds and The Whites, but then I read Kip Kirby's review of Louise Mandrell's new album, *I'm Not Through Loving You Yet*. If this so-called "record expert" was working for me, I'd fire him/her. This is definitely Louise's best album yet, and I know for a fact I'm not the only one who's bought Louise's past albums—and loved them. Kirby calls Louise's past albums "wimpy" and her last duet album with R.C. "embarrassing"! Well, Kirby stands alone on this one, because Louise and R.C.'s fans loved it and wish they'd make more.

Maybe, judging by all his other reviews this month, we'll get lucky and Kirby will drown in "irate fan letters."

Tammy Tanner
Vermontville, Michigan

Kip Kirby is alive and well, as is Louise Mandrell, and we'll report here one more time that Kip is a woman. As for Dave Hickey, he's out of dar rer too, convalescing nicely. See letter below.—Ed.

A Hand for Hickey

I am appalled! When I read Letters in your September/October issue, I couldn't believe what many people wrote to Mr. Hickey! I imagine there are others who feel like him and that is their right. Whatever happened to freedom of speech?

I enjoy Elvis' music very much myself but didn't feel all that offended by Dave Hickey's review, in the May/June issue. Nor would I let one article cloud my opinion of a perfectly excellent magazine.

D. D. Swain
Evergreen, Colorado

We wouldn't either.—Ed.

Happy Birthday, Elvis

I'm writing to ask you if you are planning on honoring Elvis on his Golden birthdate, January 8, 1985. I certainly hope so. I feel we all should honor him as he did a lot for the music world. I don't believe any entertainer showed as much love and enjoyment of performing for his fans.

I have written two poems for the occasion and I'm hoping maybe you will publish one or both. I'd certainly appreciate it as I'd love to share them with all of Elvis' fans and I know *Country Music* must reach a lot of them.

Darlene Caputo
Rushville, Illinois

Happy Birthday, Elvis

*On this eighth day of January
Which is your Golden Birth-date
We are sending you our love
And we're going to celebrate.
We know that you are watching
From Heaven up above.
You want no tears to be shed
But show happiness and love.
We know our being blue
Would really make you sad
So we'll remember and rejoice
And make this a celebration
you never had.*

*So "Happy Birthday, Baby"
And remember we still care;
You will never be completely gone
As we have your music and love
to share.*

We all remember the legacy of great music that Elvis Presley left behind, but few people knew of the other legacy that he left us as well and that was the gift of being able to give of himself to organizations that really needed his support such as hospitals, nursing homes and other charitable organizations. He tried to keep what he did out of the papers and magazines but once in a while someone got hold of a story. It made the people who were cynical about his music and the fans' reaction to him as a person realize that he really cared about the people who bought his records and went to his movies and that he didn't regard them strictly as "fans."


Joy Notini of Lowell, Massachusetts decided to take up where Elvis left off. Nearly every holiday for the past seven years, Joy has visited a hospital in the name of Elvis Presley.

This is the year that Elvis would have been 50, on January 8th, and Joy will be staging an event in one of the local nursing homes either on or near that date.

Sandie Bateman
Hudson, Massachusetts

Special Elvis Album

A review of the special collection of Elvis recordings celebrating his 50th birthday is on page 51.



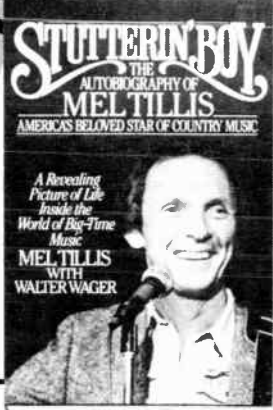
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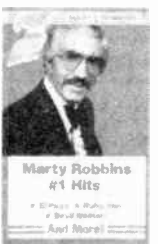
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ALL AROUND COWBOY: Marty Robbins • ARE THERE ANY COWBOYS LEFT IN THE GOOD OLD U.S.A.: Lacy J. Dalton • OLD WORN OUT COWBOY: Ed Bruce • MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COWBOYS: Willie Nelson • COWBOYS DON'T SHOOT STRAIGHT (LIKE THEY USED TO): Tammy Wynette • YOU'RE GONNA BE THE COWBOY: Johnny Paycheck • DON'T LET YOUR BABIES GROW UP TO BE COWBOYS: Mickey Gilley • (GHOST) RIDERS IN THE SKY: Johnny Cash



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Best Hits
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WHAT'S HAPPENING HAZEL?

Hazel Smith wrote a news column from Nashville called *Hillbilly Central for Country Music* from April 1976 until September 1977. We thought you readers might enjoy getting Hazel's special slant on what's going on in country music, so we asked her to be a guest reporter.—Ed.

GREETINGS FROM NASHVILLE

When *Country Music* Editor, **Russ Barnard** asked if I would "help him out" with the People column I answered, "You bet," within the twinkle of an eye. From past experience when I wrote the *Hillbilly Central* column for this magazine several years ago, I knew it would jerk me into thinking and remembering those of you whom I haven't heard from in ages... **Stella** in England, **Lucille** from Virginia, and on and on. Country music fans, dyed in the wool, with love and loyalty to the bone for their favorites.

Besides Russ at *Country Music Magazine* in those days were **Patrick Carr**, **Michael Bane**, **Dave Hickey**, **Martha Hume** and all the other great writers and lovers of country music, who, like myself, still love **Waylon** and **Willie**, **Loretta** and **Conway**, **Merle** and **Johnny**, and the rest. We don't talk everyday like we used to, but there is love amongst us and a common bond, the music and the music makers. And I would bet my last old dollar that any of the above, any country music artist, or any country music fan will tell you that the reason for the deep-rooted devotion of the fan, the writer, the columnist, the songwriter, and any and all of us involved in the music business *and* the reason why, these days, the "sun don't never set" on country music is *truth!*

When the two presidential candidates and the two VP candidates were asked their favorite music, **Walter Mondale**, who didn't win, named **Willie Nelson**, and VP **George Bush**, who did win, replied **The Oak Ridge Boys**. Friends and neighbors, that is bigtime, and two out of four ain't bad. **Gerry Ferraro** said **Pavarotti**



Emmylou Harris, Paul Kennerly, Bobby Bare and Frances Preston were just a few guests sampling the cooking at Harlan Howard's Number One party.

and **Reagan** the actor answered, "There are so many great ones out there, I just can't name one that is my favorite." The man can, at times, evade the issue.

Happiness is playing **Louise Mandrell's** Country Music Trivia. Even if you don't enjoy board games, if you are a fan, you will get a charge just sitting around asking and answering the questions.

A TREE GROWS IN NASHVILLE AND AROUND THE GLOBE

For some time, **Tree International**, Nashville's biggest song publisher, has thrown **Number One** parties for any staff member who achieves **Number One** status on the charts. Recently the honoree was one of the most loved songwriters in Music City, **Harlan Howard**. The song was "I Don't Know a Thing About Love" (The Moon Song), recorded by **Conway Twitty**. The first time I heard the song, I almost ran out of the road on I-65 heading to Nashville. I knew then that it had to be one of the best songs of 1984 or of any

year. The party was a night of nights. Held at Harlan's house, some 125 persons enjoyed kielbasa, red beans and rice, salad, corn bread, chocolate cake, apple cake, all prepared by Harlan's lovely wife **Sharon**. Tree executives showed up by the handful: **Buddy Killen**, owner and president; **Donna Hilley**, V.P. and lady with lots of answers (great gal); **Roger Sovine** V.P. and super buddy to the songwriters; ace song pluggers **Dan Wilson** and **Walter Campbell**. BMI was represented by the head lady, V.P. **Frances Preston**, who said that it was her fourteenth night out in a row, along with the songwriters' pal **Del Bryant**. Also seen during the evening were **Bobby Bare**, wearing a stetson the Howards had given him, with his steady lady... wife **Jeannie**; **Rodney Crowell** and his singing/songwriting wife/mother of his children/lady with many faces/lovely **Rosanne Cash**, whose hair is an orange/beige; and **Emmylou Harris**, sporting a shorter curly hairdo that is quite becoming. Harlan's buddy songwriters showed up for a drink and a pat on

Guest Reporter: Hazel Smith Editor: Rochelle Friedman

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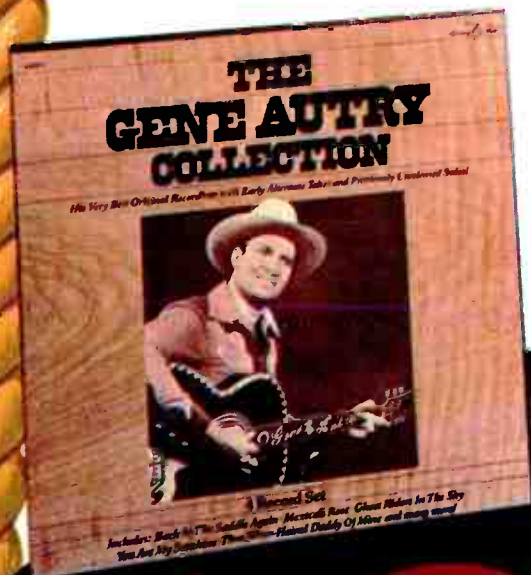
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the back, dished up food, and had a great time. They included **John D. Loudermilk** and his lovely **Sue**; **Curley Putman** and his blonde beauty **Bernice**; **Chick Raines** and pretty **Linda**; **Shirl Milette** and cute **Kay**; **Bucky Jones** with his attractive Mrs.; beautiful **Charmaine** accompanied her songwriting hubby **Don Cook**. Also present was **Max D. Barnes**, who co-wrote "If You're Gonna Do Me Wrong, Do It Right" with **Vern Gosdin**; **Kevin Welch**; **Gary Nicholson**; the great **Sonny Throckmorton**; the man who co-wrote many of my favorite songs including "He Stopped Loving Her Today," the multi-songwriter—**Bobby Braddock**; **Paul Kennerly**, who wrote "Born to Run" for Emmylou and was her escort, and on and on. A million dollars worth of talent in one room.

EVERYBODY WANTS TO SING COUNTRY AND SOME CAN

Remember **Barbara Fairchild**? Great hillbilly girl singer. Her range is incredible, and she does a country job on "Over the Rainbow" that brings a tear to a glass eye. Barbara says she made some mistakes on her own, and now she is ready to let someone else have the reins. This new Barbara started sprouting in England when she was on the same show with Mr. Great and Smooth, **Don Williams**. Don watched her show and liked her voice so much that he told her if she ever decided to give it that old 100% again, to look him up. That's exactly what she did. About the same time that Barbara was packing her songs and dreams, Don had made a musical decision to stay around home more and do a few projects that would keep him close by. The first name that came to mind was Miss Fairchild. Word is Don will produce Barbara, which is no new coat for Don to wear since he's been co-producing himself with **Garth Fundis** for years. The slow-talking Williams knows what he's doing. He always has, and this endeavor will be first class.

Another lady singer vying for another go round is **Norma Jean**, who will be remembered as the girl on the **Porter Wagoner Show** B.D. (before Dolly!). Recently, Norma Jean returned to Nashville, appeared on the Opry and gave interviews. Saying she wanted "at it" again, Norma allowed as how she was in love with Porter and left town in a snit some 15 years ago, but was now ready to return to the fold of female singers. It seems that she had even seen Porter, and it was a pleasant reunion.

BARBARA AND NORMA JEAN DESERVE ANOTHER CHANCE, BUT DOES EVERYBODY?

That is the question being asked frequently. The answer depends on who is buttering whose bread. There are those who say **Exile** ain't country. They aren't as country as **George Jones**, but their roots are just as country. Did you ever hear of **Lily Mae Ledford** of The Coon Creek Girls who performed on WLS's *National Barn Dance*? The lady was from Kentucky, still lives there and is the mother of **J.P. Pennington**, lead singer and chief songwriter for **Exile**. Lily Mae still plays a banjo and that is country.

COUSINS MAKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Somewhere I heard that **Mickey Gilley** said, "I ain't as religious as the Rev.," referring to first cousin **Jimmy Swaggart**, "and I ain't as wild as **Jerry Lee**," referring to his other cousin, the original **J.L. Lewis**, of course. So that leaves Mickey somewhere between a rock and a hard place, I would say. With Swaggart and Jerry Lee for bookends, clever and talented Mickey has carved himself out his own identity. I would pay the price of admission to see Mickey Gilley's stage show. You can even buy Gilley's Wild Bull Chile mix at your local grocery store.

A BUCK CAN MAKE A MILLION

If your name is **Buck Owens**, and if you sing your way into the hearts of country music lovers and *Hee Haw* watchers... then you can own a town called Bakersfield. You can also own a publishing company called Blue Book Music. And you can sell it to Tree Publishing if you want to. That's just what Buck Owens did. The

deal had been in the works almost a year according to **Buddy Killen**, owner of Tree Publishing. V.P. **Donna Hilley** flew out to the town owned by Buck to finalize the deal, and when Buck came to town for some *Hee Haw* tapings, all the powers that be and friends just partied on down. Buck had requested his old buddy Tree writer **Harlan Howard**'s presence at party time. Harlan once co-owned the company with Buck and had several copyrights with the company. Remember "I've Got a Tiger By the Tail"? Co-writers were Buck Owens and Harlan Howard, a Blue Book Music copyright. A very rich catalog with many **Merle Haggard**-penned songs as well as Buck Owens songs.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO NASHVILLE OR CAN THEY?

Remember when a status symbol was Country - Music - Star - has - Silver - Eagle - Bus? *Forget it!* Why this day and time, lots of those hillbillies have *three* (3) buses! And a semi truck or two! My opinion is that if the powers that be don't get up off their biggest part and start drawing some new pictures of new roads and start building them, by the year 1988 nobody will be able to travel the highways to Nashville except those who make the music. Multiply three by every singer you know, and figure the ratio of new ones and go from there. Why right now, when **Alabama** comes to town, they might 'nigh block 19th Avenue South with their caravan.

That drummer **Mark Herndon** is the cutest thing. He used to wander in my office on occasion, and I'd tell him if I were plenty years younger, he wouldn't be able to run fast enough to out run me. Shoot, if you catch **Mark**, **Jeff**, **Randy** or **Teddy** today, you gotta learn to fly. They bought their very own plane, have their own pilot.



Friends **Buddy Killen**, **Randy Owen**, **Buck Owens** and **Harlan Howard** got together when Buck sold his Blue Book Music Company.

People

However, cute Mark is co-pilot. Not only is he a cute drummer, girls... he can pilot your plane for you!

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

After returning from a visit to the White House with a bunch of country music people, I asked lovely **Sharon White** of **The Whites** if she was excited about being in the same room with the President. "Well," said Sharon, also known as Mrs. Ricky Skaggs, "I was so excited about being in the same room with **Loretta Lynn** and **Kitty Wells** that I almost forgot about the President." Besides that great line, the pretty White gal can sing a country song with sister Cheryl and pop Buck.

FORGIVE US FOR FORGETTING?

Seriously, when you live in Nashville, there is so much you just take for granted, like the **Grand Ole Opry**. Couple of weeks ago, I escorted two lovely ladies in their eighties and watched as they smiled at **Ernie Ashworth's** white suit with big red lips all over it to commemorate his big hit "Talk Back Trembling Lips"; as they laughed at the antics of **Lonzo and Oscar**; as they applauded wildly when the **Osborne Brothers** sang "Rocky Top"; as they shook their heads in amazement at how entertaining the **Riders in the Sky** were; as their eyes gleamed as **Ray Pillow** performed (later they kept saying how handsome the young man from Lynchburg, Virginia was); as tears filled their eyes when they learned that **Roy Acuff** wasn't able to perform; however, they did get to shake his hand in Roy's dressing room after the show which thrilled them so much. Then there are those we really take for granted, like that Opry staff band—it is incredible! Playing from three to a dozen shows on the weekend, every weekend, they are outstanding. The **Vic Williams** trio with the crystal clear vocals of **Curtis Young** is rocking the walls of the Grand Ole Opry. Everybody is into it when suddenly the steel guitar takes a break that just slays... **Little Roy Wiggins** was the first and will probably be the last to actually make a steel guitar cry. Didn't **Eddy Arnold** call Little Roy the tear-drop steel guitar player? If he didn't, he should have.

GOLDEN OLDIE BUT GOODIE

Faron Young cleans up real good. I mean the man can look like a shiny new penny. Having lunch at Spat's famed "ribbery" one day recently, I saw Faron stroll



At the hotel room, Willie got Johnny Cash, one of his favorite stars, to autograph his guitar.

in dressed real nice... nice sport coat with matching pants and shirt, every hair combed back in place... just looking real good and spiffy. As I thought about the image lots of people have of country music stars—hay bales and straw hats—Faron looked quite a piece from hay or straw... until... he slowly reached into his back pocket and pulled out a red bandana and wiped his nose. You can take the boy out of the country but you can't... and you know the rest. I for one would like to see Faron on the charts again. Remember how great he sang? Remember "Hello, Walls" and "Your Time's Coming" and all the others?

SEES BETTER THAN MOST

Ronnie Milsap was waiting at the airport last week for someone to pick him up when **Buck** and **Sharon White** arrived on their way to Canada. Buck spoke to Ronnie, and right away Ronnie exclaimed with a smile, "Buck, how are you?" Sharon quietly said something about luggage to her father, and Ronnie continued, "Buck, you heading out someplace?" "Yep, Canada," was Buck's reply. "I see you got Sharon with you," Ronnie said. Now, when this story was told to me, I listened in awe and amazement. Reason being, I have been friends with the Whites for 15 years, and sometimes I still can't tell you if it's Sharon or Cheryl on the phone. I have to ask, but Ronnie Milsap doesn't. That man is not only talented, he is truly remarkable.

LET'S ALL HAVE A SWITZERLAND CHRISTMAS OR LET'S YODEL IN XMAS NEXT YEAR

Johnny Cash and entourage including the missus **June Carter Cash**; **Waylon** and **Jessi Colter Jennings**; **Willie Nelson** and his delovely **Connie**; **Kris Kristofferson** and his **Linda**; **Chips Moman**, who is producing Cash's next album... all gathered in Switzerland for the annual Cash Christmas TV Special. I'd never thought about celebrating Christmas in Switzerland.

COWBOY JACK RIDES AGAIN

It's a pity and a shame that everybody's mama, best friend, and worst enemy didn't know some of the characters that make the music business stand up and be proud to sing. One of the more colorful and by far one of the most talented people to ever breathe a song on 16th Avenue is **Jack Clement**, affectionately known as "Cowboy" and other things: Jack the Baptist; Country Pop; or if you like Pop Country... I just call him Jack... and smile that I know him by his first name. Cowboy is the man who breathed life into a song titled "When I Dream." Written by **Sandy Mason**, the song has been recorded by just about everybody... **Crystal Gayle** had a Number One single with the song; it was also the title of one of her albums and was great... just great. I gotta say that with all due respect to **Crystal** and everyone else who recorded the song—Cowboy's just leaves a tear in the eye and an ache in

People

the heart that nobody else's can. New news on "When I Dream" is that the team of Superduper producer, **Chips Moman** and the legendary Texan **Willie Nelson**, have a cut of it that is just waiting for a 45 to take it home. If you know the song, I know you know that Willie is bound to lay some hurt on those lyrics. These nights, "When I Dream," I dream of Willie singing "When I Dream"! (Well, Russ, you didn't say I couldn't get silly!)

Cowboy's newest endeavor is forming a record label called Smallsville Records and Tapes. His first release, acquired from the old Four Star catalog, is to be a mail order/direct marketing **Patsy Cline** album of previously unreleased masters. Watch the smoke!

If you didn't know, Cowboy was the man who brought **Charley Pride** to town and produced all those great recordings in the early days using a click-a-chuck rhythm guitar with an upright bass, played with the almost forgotten tick/tack guitar. Do you remember "All I Have to Offer You Is Me"? Enough said? It was music at its best then and is music at its best now. And it is history, memories, yesterday... the man should be called Saint Jack!

STAY IN TEXAS, WILLIE

Rumor has it that after all the promises and threats, *The Red Headed Stranger* may finally become a reality on the silver screen. Willie's done quite a bit of acting and ain't done bad. Rumor again has it that Willie wasn't all that pleased with the total outcome of his last movie, *Songwriter*. A man of few words and much wisdom, Willie, the redhead himself, has made the decision that *The Red Headed Stranger* will not be taken out of Texas. If I'm reading Willie's thinking, I think the barometer reads, "They can't Hollywoodize this one to death, 'cause I ain't gonna let them." What Hollywood has offered in the past for the South, country music, Texas, and cowboys can be fitted in one of two categories: *Gone With the Wind* or *Hee Haw*. You know and I know there is nothing wrong with either of the two; however, there is more to us than the motion picture and TV folks have portrayed. Therefore, and in conclusion, rumor has it that Willie will be offering limited partnership shares to the tune of \$200,000 each until he raises the amount needed to finance the movie himself, with a little help from his friends.

One of the better country music videos, as we speak, is Willie and **Merle Haggard's** *Poncho and Lefty*. Written by Willie's oldest daughter, **Lana Nelson**, the

action was believable. And that's just about what Willie will do with *The Red Headed Stranger*... make it believable. Lord knows the tube and the theater can use that!

DO YOU TRULY LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC?

If you truly love country music, then you have already purchased **Vern Gosdin's** new gospel album titled, *If Jesus Comes Tomorrow, What Then?* Remember when it was the norm for country artists to release a get-down-good-old-timey-gospel album every three or four years? Somewhere along the way it wasn't stylish anymore. Gosdin's is catching on every which way. Vern's manager, first class **Robert John Jones**, made me aware of the album before the actual recording began, and I was a little excited, but when I heard it, wow! Those boys have made a serious record, and I hope it creates another brand new market for them good 'n' country gospel records.

A "SHEE HAW" JOKE

Do you know how many bluegrass musicians it takes to screw in a light bulb??

Five.

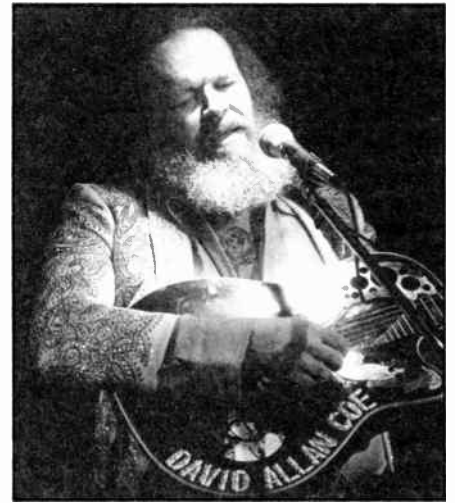
Five??
Yep, five. One to screw in the bulb and four to complain about it 'cause it's electric!'

YELLOW ROSE IN A DIFFERENT VASE?

Rumor has it that Alabama's hotshot producer, Mr. Cool, **Harold Shedd**, will be producing **Lane Brody**. Lane made quite a name for herself singing her "Yellow Rose" duet with **Johnny Lee**.

C'MON DAVID

David Allan Coe packed the Cannery here in Nashville in celebration of his ten years with CBS Records. He moseyed onstage in a long priest robe, looking somber and sedate, then removed the robe to reveal his rhinestone suit. Later in the show David read congratulatory telegrams from **Merle Haggard** and his manager/songwriter, **Tex Whitson**, and from **Willie and Connie Nelson**. Rumor is he read a long letter from *Country Music's* **Russ Barnard**. Along with the readings, David performed somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 songs. Everybody raved about how great the show was and how great David was. CBS Super Senior V.P. **Rick Blackburn** and product manager **Jim Carlson** presented David with a plaque commemo-



After ten years, David still knocked 'em out.

rating his ten years with the label. The show was also in memory of David's and country music's late great friend **Steve Goodman**. Steve's untimely death at 36 really hit hard even though he had fought leukemia for 15 years. One of David's biggest records, "She Never Even Called Me By My Name," was a Steve Goodman song. Monies from the gate will benefit Dream Makers, Inc., an organization that assists seriously-ill children realize some of their dreams. David chose Dream Makers because a lot of these children suffer from leukemia, also.

I like David. I always have. He is a crazy man. He likes to do things for shock value... like announcing he believes in polygamy because a rooster has more than one hen and a bull has more than one cow... and, besides that, David would add that he was Mormon. Just another crazy hillbilly finding a legitimate excuse for womanizing, no doubt. That's all in the past, however. Back to the present tense, David claims he's getting "commercial conscious." Getting? Come on, David! All of us remember one of the most commercial songs in the last ten years, your self-penned "Take This Job and Shove It." That was and still is the anthem of the working class. **Johnny Paycheck** built a career on that song and there was the movie. Man, you done been commercial! And what about last year? "The Ride" went chart topping, as did "Mona Lisa Lost Her Smile." Great performances and just as commercial country as **Martha White** Flour and **Goo Goo Candy Bars**. "Would You Lay With Me in a Field of Stone" is another David Allan Coe song that certainly was commercial!

"I had this little doll made of a corncob and Daddy made her a cornsilk wig." -Dolly Parton

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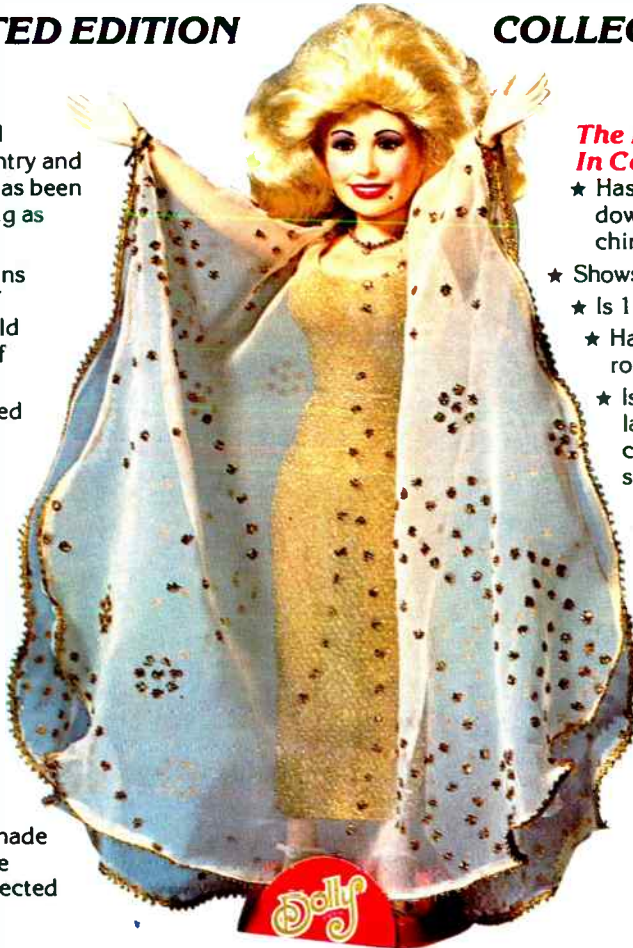
The face had to capture her expression.

There were many initial designs submitted by various artists. However, it was the world renowned sculptor, Neil Estern who made a face that was so much like Dolly's—that everyone expected her to open her mouth and start singing, "9 to 5"!

After the hard part was accomplished, step by step every detail of the doll was attended to... under the watchful eye of Dolly Parton. The hair style had to be pretty and current, the choice of gown had to be theatrical, without being gaudy. Progress was slow, but worth the effort.

The doll had to be remarkable, and worthy of being a limited edition collectible.

Dolly Parton grew up the fourth in a family of twelve children, and her father was a struggling dirt farmer. Her only doll was made of a corncob, so she wanted to be sure that people who bought her doll would get their money's worth. And they surely will!



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- ★ Shows off magnificent painted eyes.
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COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

11 Great Reasons Why You

Attention Country Music subscribers. By now, you have no doubt noticed references in Country Music to The Country Music Society of America. And, you may still be wondering just what it's all about. That's why I'm again taking a minute now to fill you in on the details.

For a long time, I have felt that you and I and other fans, whose knowledge and love for country music is above average, should have an organization to serve our interests. Not something for just everyone, but something special for serious country music loyalists. After all, we buy the records. We listen to the radio stations. We spend the money to go to the concerts. So how do we make our voice heard?

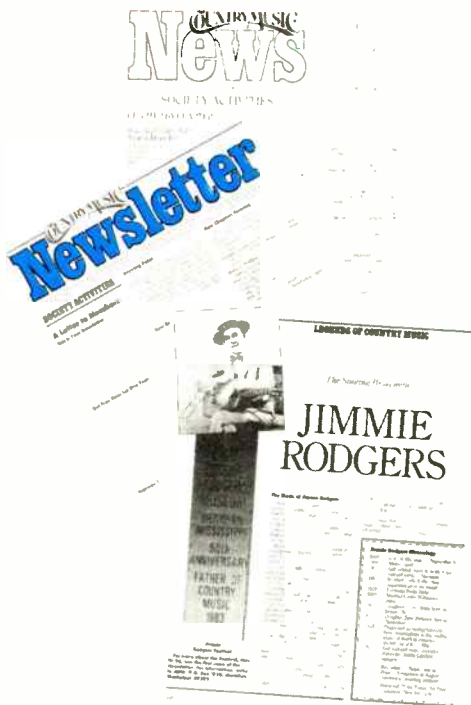
The answer is the Country Music Society of America. With 75,000 plus members enrolled since last October, we are the largest and most influential organization of music fans in the country.

Now, because you are a regular Country Music subscriber in good standing, you are eligible to become a "Charter Member" in this exclusive organization. And best of all, I'll give you your membership FREE when you extend your current subscription for an additional year.

This is the time you should sign up. And here are 11 great reasons why...

Eleven Reasons to Join!

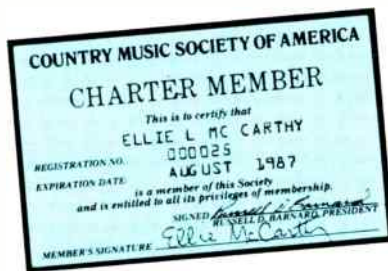
1. You get the Country Music Answer Book... a pocket digest crammed full of award winners, important fan club information, birthdates and birthplaces of the stars, important addresses and telephone numbers, and much more!



2. You get the Country Music Newsletter... a unique bi-monthly paper for Society members only.



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Russ Barnard
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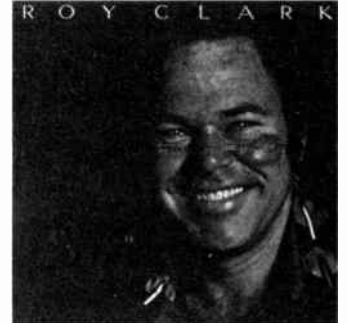
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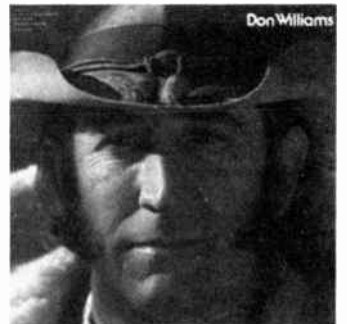
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 Pride Of Franklin County - Ain't That A Shame - Leave Him Alone - You've Got Me To Hold On To - Makin' Love Don't Always Make Love Grow - After The Thrill Is Gone - Don't Believe My Heart Can Stand Another You - My Cowboy's Getting Old



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LP No. CR-20153-1/Cass. No. CR-20153-4
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 Keeping Me Warm For You - Love Ain't Seen The Last Of Me - At The Moonlite - Goodbye Love - I Wish That I Could Hurt That Way Again - Tell Me What It's Like - Memories For Sale - The Cowgirl And The Dandy



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People

Also at David's party were **Emmylou Harris, Tony Joe White, Rattlesnake Annie McGowan, Dave Loggins, Jonathan Edwards**, David's producer/friend **Billy Sherrill** and *Country Music* editors **Patrick Carr** and **Michael Bane**. David's show was video-taped by Fanta for marketing by CBS.

Other CBS artists doing videos these days include **Moe & Joe** live at Bad Bob's in Memphis; **Lacy J. Dalton** taping in Santa Cruz, California; and **George Jones** taping at Hendersonville, Tennessee at Music Village, USA.

David Allan, I'm not quite finished with you. Just get out there and sing your heart out. That's all you've got to do. Write them songs and sing them.

I SHOULD ADD

Mentioning Steve Goodman reminded me that Steve's best known song, "City of New Orleans," not only achieved the Number One status for Willie, the album with the self-same title hung in the Number One slot for eight weeks. Another album that claimed home at Number One for seven weeks was **Hank Williams, Jr.'s** *All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight*. The record is real good. One song I really like is "Knoxville Blues." I am here to tell you, Hank Sr. would've been proud of that son!

WISH I HAD BEEN THERE!

Johnny Rodriguez and his producer, drummer **Richie Albright**, finished the vocal overdubs on Johnny's new album and took off for Europe. Things went without incident and then... picture this: Johnny, **Richie**, **Gordon Payne** and the entire band line up to cross the border in Germany at Check Point Charlie. You're talking about normal polite Texans and Okies who say howdy and grace, and here stand machine gun soldiers with their weapons aimed in the direction of their anatomies. Nobody freaked, everybody looked straight ahead, and for once in their lives, they did not say, "Thank you, sir." They were too scared to speak. However, all went well. Everyone survived and judging from reports received, the shows went off without further incident. Welcome home, troops.

BLUEGRASS AROUND THE WORLD LITERALLY

The **Bluegrass Cardinals'** six-week Middle East tour was truly something you write home to mama about, and even more. The group and their manager **Lance LeRoy** (Lance also managed the

late **Lester Flatt**), jetted around Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and India. Lance and the Cardinals were in India... in fact, they were in New Delhi... when **Indira Gandhi** was assassinated! Lance's family, who reside in Hendersonville, Tennessee, got word there was mass confusion, fighting in the streets, people walking around with fear all over their faces. Lance and the boys were accompanied by an American Embassy representative, who rushed them through all the madness as quickly as possible, to the airport, and got them on the first plane out, which happened to be going to Sri Lanka. Lance wrote his son a postcard that read:

Dear Lanny,
It's hot in Kampala, here on the equator, but it was hotter in New Delhi. So I'm happy here looking at the palm trees and drinking my Three Coin beer, and glad to be alive.

Dad

The Johnson Mountain Boys, who haven't unpacked their clothes since the last time it snowed in February, burned the roads in 1984 spreading their bluegrass sound throughout the U.S. and Canada. When the festival season slowed down, they took off for South Africa, touring such far away places with strange-sounding names as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Kenya, Rwanda, Bujambura and Tazania. Returning to the states in time for the holidays, they will be out and running again. January and February they will tour France and Germany. If you love bluegrass, and just about everybody loves bluegrass these days, I suggest you catch **The Johnson Mountain Boys** if they are in your neighborhood. Good pickers, good singers, and they look real good onstage.

To you and yours, fans, friends and entertainers alike, a very Happy New Year from myself and my family to you and yours and may God richly bless your life in 1985. ■



MAJOR SIGNING

It's usually **Russ Barnard** doing the signing when he pays **Bob Allen** for the articles he writes for this magazine. But, the shoe was on the other foot recently when **Russ** attended **Bob Allen's** party celebrating the publication of his book *George Jones: The Saga of an American Singer*. Shown here is **Bob** putting his **John Hancock** on the book.

20 Questions with



Jessi Colter leans slightly forward in a heavily upholstered chair in the back of the luxurious touring bus she shares with Waylon Jennings. She's young, vibrant, almost like a new singer rather than a woman who has weathered some of the highest highs and lowest lows the record business has to offer. Since her album I'm Not Lisa established her as a star in her own right in 1975, her own career has moved by fits and starts, while the career of the man she married in 1970 has zipped along its own crazy roller coaster ride. Jessi is recording again with Phil Walden's new Triad label, and she's anxious to talk about it. Outside, the Texas sun is merciless. Inside, it's cool and dark, with the sounds of a card game drifting from the front of the bus. If one peeks around a corner, one can see Waylon lounging there, listening.

1 I'd like you to describe your voice, because it's a pretty unique voice.

I think my voice sounds kind of raw and primitive. That's how I think it sounds.

2 This album marks the first time you've been back in the studio for awhile.

Why such a long period of time between albums?

Yes, but we cut it, golly, it's been over a year now. After the last one I did, *Riding Shotgun*, I'm not exactly sure why it's been so long. I think sometime soon after that Capitol and I parted company. But we kind of moved as quickly as everything permitted.

3 Did you miss recording or is that something you don't particularly like to do?

Recording...I'm fortunate because I've done it pretty much at my leisure without having much pressure. So therefore it's real inspiring to go in. Then it's a real letdown when you come out, because of the time it takes for the album to come out.

4 Your mother was a Pentecostal evangelist. Was that an odd occupation for a woman?

Yes...in the twenties. She was a Kentuckian and had a fierce passion for life. She was healed of tuberculosis at 27 and called into the ministry. She lived her life a totally devoted woman of God.

5 What kind of effect did that have on you growing up?

I found, as years go by, that I don't think there could've been anything left to me that would've been more valuable than to see a person who has tremendous faith in God and lives it and teaches you to believe it. It's had a great strengthening effect. I really feel for people who haven't had that background.

6 Tell me about your song-writing.

I mean, I always wrote. I'd write notes to Mother when I was little and poems in elementary school and dumb songs in my teen years. Then after I was married, I just kinda started writing. I was real lucky because Chet Atkins took the first songs I ever wrote and gave them to top artists. I kind of go in spells, writing spells. I've been co-writing with Mack...Basil McDavid. I can't use his real name when I talk about him... There were some on *Riding Shotgun* and the *Waylon and I* album that I had co-written. That's an interesting experience for me.

7 How does co-writing work?

Well, it's strange, because I don't do good sitting down in a room. Mack would call me and give me a line, and then he'd call and give me three more, and then he'd keep calling me, repeatin' them over and over and over, and about three months later I'd write something that went with it.

8 Some writers actually do sit down in the same room and work.

I know, but it's so scary, I'm so self-conscious. I could no more come up with something under those kind of circumstances. Although I once determined to write a song...the mood was incredible when it came over me, and I took three of my friends and said, "We're going for a ride, so get in the car."

The title came to me and I knew I just had to get it out. I drew two lines from two people...It's a new song I've written called "Do You Remember Me?" It's an incredible song. I haven't cut it yet.

9 What was the situation when you first met Waylon?

The first meeting was in a studio where he was cutting *Norwegian Wood*. It was in Phoenix, and I was still married to Duane Eddy. Duane had come over to Phoenix several times and had heard Waylon singing and was very impressed with his artistry and had brought me a copy of *Just to Satisfy You* to listen to, and I thought it was great. Waylon knew Duane had a publishing company, and he told Duane to bring him some of his writing sometime. I had written a duet, and Duane said, "Let's just drop by the studio." And Waylon asked me to get up there and sing it with him, and we cut the demo together. I stood next to him on a crate and I sang it. For a back-up singer, I sang four



times louder than he did. It was just so funny. I didn't see him again for a couple of years.

10 Has it been hard being married to a star of the magnitude of Waylon?

Well, I don't know. He's a complex man in a lot of ways and hell on wheels...

11 Well, I've heard rumors.

Jessi Colter

by Michael Bane



...But I kind of...in fact, before *Lisa*, I had quite a lot of drive, quite a lot of ambitions. But I came to the point that I realized that there was a greater will that I wanted to work on my life and I kinda let go.

12 Was letting go a tough thing to do?

It was tough. And it hurt when I did it. But it was so blessed because everything just kind of fell into place after that, that I had always wanted. And I've not really had reason to...I don't know, I guess I just haven't really been driven to go out there and do all that stuff by myself.

13 Two performer marriages rarely work. They pull themselves apart so quickly.

It's a lot of hard work on *any* woman trying to get the whole thing moving. What you have to do, now, just to go on the road and transport...what you have to be the head of...it's a full time occupation to handle what I have to handle. To keep any kind of home life. To stay at all social. To have any fun. I don't know, golly. There was much more packed into our lives than what we have now.

14 How much are you out on the road now?

Right now, we've been out for three weeks, and we'll go in for about ten days. This last year, it's been a dead run. We used to kind of book a little more sparsely. I'm looking for-

ward to it slowing down, frankly.

15 I know a couple of years ago things got a little grim. At least those were the rumors, and you didn't see Waylon around as much.

We had a time when our organization kind of reorganized and you had to break ties with people who had been with you. And those things are hard. And...re-establishing yourself ...when you realized that those who had been overseeing your business had not been taking care of business. It takes a great degree of investigation. We had to go through a lot of that and reforming, rebuilding records. We did a lot. And I think Waylon, too, was kind of coming to the end of the kind of life he's led. It kind of drove him more inward.

(Gruff voice from front: "Jessi, you're doing an awful lot of talking!")

I'm telling everything I know.

16 Are you happy he turned more inward?

No, during *that time* he turned more inward. I'm very happy that he's come out of it. He's come out of prison. He's been released.

17 Are there any women artists you're listening to now that have struck your fancy?

I tell you, I may be one of the worst artists I know, because you know what I want to hear when I listen? Nothing but classical. Unless somebody makes me listen to "this great record." I don't want to hear words, I don't want to hear voices. I want to hear cellos and violins. I really admire a lot of women and a good record ...ooh, I love to hear a good record, something that really knocks me out. I hear one about every five years that I like. *Laughs.*

18 Chips Moman produced your last record. What was it like working with him? He's sort of a character, isn't he?

Yeah, he is. It was sort of scary at first because I'd always really relied artistically on Waylon, knowing he knew me well. I knew Chips was sincerely interested in me, but going into the studio is just like *marrying* somebody. Is



this going to work? What's going to happen? It's scarier than the dickens. He and Waylon planned it that Waylon would be gone because they knew that if Waylon was there, I would lean on him and I wouldn't look to Chips enough. So they figured that out, and I looked around and wondered, "Where's Waylon? He just left me here." It took me several hours to figure that out. And we just kind of sat down and Chips asked me

to sing some songs that I had and songs that I liked. We just happened to love some of the same songs. In fact, when I sat down to sing "I Can't Stop Loving You," I thought I was just singing it for him. And he recorded it, and it's one of my favorite cuts because I can tell that I didn't know he was recording it. It was something real special for me. I've always loved that song.

19 Just one more thing. The whole world wants to know. Is Waylon really hard to live with or is he real easy to live with?

Well, I guess it kind of depends on who you are. For me, he's just fine, because I understand a lot about him. It's taken me a long time to learn him. I can't imagine trying to adjust to another man. Every man has his own style, and you just kind of have to be able to fit into a man's style. I feel you need to be able to roll to it somewhat. And I don't feel at all ever in his shadow because I talk louder than he does! So I have more to say more often. *Laughs.* So I feel that he's always made me feel completely my own person.

20 What would he say about living with you—hard or easy?

I think he'd say I'm easy. *Laughs.* ■



DAVID ALLAN

COE'S

LONG HARD

RIDE

BY MICHAEL BANE

As the Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy image fades, and other past devils die, David Allan Coe is still possessed by demons of several kinds. A man who sells records and has many fans still has trouble finding his real niche in today's country music. ■

First, a scene: the bus, with David Allan Coe himself at the helm, grinds off the Interstate and onto one of the main streets in Tampa. Outside the bus it is hazy hot, summer blast furnace haze hanging over everything; inside, the air conditioner labors with only minimal success. I'm sitting up front with David, my feet propped up on the dashboard of the tour bus. We've been on the road for hours and

hours, and we'll arrive just in time to eat and do the next show. David is driving silently, ignoring the passersby in other cars who turn and stare. The overall effect is like being trapped in a goldfish bowl.

Half way to the Jai Lai Fronton, where David will be playing, a woman in a van pulls alongside the bus. She honks and waves, and David raises his hand from the wheel in brief greeting.

"There's a girl who's just dying to

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEONARD KAMSLER



“It’s not that I invented country music, it’s just that I have, in fifteen years, made a hell of a mark in country music. And I have not been given credit for the things I’ve done.”

show off her titties,” David says absently.

Suddenly the van speeds up and cuts in front of the bus, then turns into a service station as we brake. The woman, an attractive woman, jumps out of the van and, in the middle of the service station parking lot, peels off her pink t-shirt. With her hands over her head, she dances topless for David Allan Coe, who watches from the stopped bus with no sign of any emotion. She has, I notice, a ring of flowers tattooed around her left breast. Finishing, she pulls her t-shirt on, waves, runs back to the van, which is quickly lost in traffic. David Allan Coe smiles, but it is the smile of a man who’s just tasted something very sour.

See, it’s like this,” David Allan Coe says. We are backstage before a show in Panama City. His grey braids have already been unbraided and combed into long, flowing hair that would give Crystal Gayle a run for her money. “A guy wrote a letter to my record company and said he heard me in concert one night and I acted like I invented country music. That I talked so much trash. It’s not that I invented country music, it’s just that I have, in fifteen years, really made a hell of a mark in country music. And I have not been given credit for the things I have done.”

Words, words, words—an avalanche of words about David Allan Coe. Fifteen years worth of words, and the end, as they say, is not in sight. David Allan Coe lives in a perpetual hurricane of words, a controversy looking for a place to happen. These days, ironically, he’s riding a couple of genuine, bonafide hits—“The Ride” and “Mona Lisa Lost Her Smile,” the first David Allan Coe songs to really receive widespread radio airplay. He’s gotten through one ugly divorce (“So much for monogamy,” he says with more than a trace of bitterness) and has four new wives—that’s right, four; three more than the overwhelming national average.

The road has been bumpy; sometimes it seems that even the elements are against him. A flash flood in May devastated his Ruskin Cave complex of houses and museums in Dixon, Tennessee, which, of course, wasn’t insured. A bus accident in March seriously injured two members of his Tennessee Hat Band, including longtime band member and friend Michael “Rodeo” Barton. And, as a final touch, the Internal Revenue Service dropped in to

discuss a little matter of \$387,000 in back taxes.

“And then you pick up the damn *Billboard*, and you start looking through it, and there’s like 30 people’s names that you don’t even know who they are,” David snorts. “They’re in the same industry you’re in! And you’re hearing these guys on the radio interviews saying, ‘Oh yes, I was influenced by David Allan Coe,’ like I was a has-been. And I’m still here trying to make it. I haven’t had a Number One record yet. I’m still trying to promote my career, and these guys are acting like I’m Ernest Tubb or something.”

The word is that David Allan Coe, ex-biker, ex-convict, ex-Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy, ex-freelance lunatic fringe of country music, and ex-general bad guy, has cleaned up his act. He will no longer do magic shows instead of country music concerts (he’s a pretty good magician); he will no longer do Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard imitations (he’s a great impersonator); he will no longer sing songs off his now-legendary “adult” albums, not even “One More Time,” a true country classic if there ever was one. He won’t get into fights and insult disk jockeys and offend womenfolk and lord knows what else.

These are, I think, ominous words.

True, David was never half as weird as he was given credit for. Such craziness would probably have been terminal. Still, though, David Allan Coe filled a very important niche in country music, that of deep left field. No matter how strange David appeared to be (or really was, for that matter), he couldn’t be completely dismissed because of one overwhelming, not to be ignored fact: *he sold records*.

“The remarkable thing here is that nobody with any vision at all in the industry should look up and say, ‘Now there must be a reason that this man has been on Columbia for ten years,’” David says. He almost smiles. “‘He’s not getting airplay, so that’s not the reason. He must be selling records.’”

And sell he does, at least 150,000 per album, and the figure for the last couple of albums has been over 250,000 per. That’s in a business where an artist can sell 60,000 albums and be considered a huge success.

But the rules are different for David Allan Coe. The Mysterious Rhinestone Madness he promoted for so many years can’t be overcome easily. For in a brand of music deeply rooted in the fundamentalist re-

ligions of the rural South, the one overwhelming rule is *if you play, you’re gonna pay*.

“I never claimed to be an outlaw,” David says. “I never *claimed* to be anything. I never claimed to be progressive country. I never claimed to be any of those things they tried to put on me. The only thing you can ever say about me is that I’m a singer-songwriter or an entertainer. That’s all. You can’t really classify me in any other way. And anybody that does is full of shit.”

A quick aside here:

I’ve been sort of cleaning things up as I go along, because David Allan Coe talks dirty, and every so often I thought I ought to leave a word or so in to remind you of it. He talks dirty by intent, sometimes a calculated challenge to his audience, sometimes just to liven up a flagging show. It’s a small vice, he says, and one he defends loudly. “Nobody ever writes that I don’t smoke and I don’t drink and I don’t do drugs,” he says. “I cuss.” He quickly goes into the story of another country artist he toured with who hit all the high points vice-wise right up until his wife came to a show.

“It’s okay for him to cuss, talk about drugs in front of *my* wives; they’re all hippie girls in his eyes, so it’s okay,” David says. “But his wife was there and he came in and said, ‘Okay, you guys, no swearing, no drugs, no smoking cigarettes—my wife’s here.’ So when she came in I said to him, ‘Hey, you want to do some cocaine, mother_____?’ Their values are different. They’re one way when they’re with their wives; they’re a different way when they’re not. I’m the same way all the time.”

More than anything else, ex-convict David Allan Coe is still a prisoner to his own self-created past. The Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy, the biker, the ex-con death row inmate turned to country music was so much bigger than life that David Allan Coe has never found a way to successfully exorcise the demons. Perhaps more than that, he seems pulled between the dual poles of his past and a respectable future. He has had more than a taste of the good life, of money and the prerogatives that money can buy. Forget all that stuff about money can’t buy you love. Maybe it can’t, but it can buy you freedom, and the convict in David Allan Coe aches for the free-



The country singer with his ex-wife Deborah Lynn. The marriage broke up, and David chronicled the event in an album.

dom that money, really big money, could buy. Yet he retains the dreams of the Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy, and I get the feeling that he misses the brotherhood he found astride a rumbling Harley. The more money he makes, the harder he tries to create his own perfect society, a world built on the revelations of David Allan Coe. Ruskin Cave is his latest try, and it has succeeded better than many of his efforts.

It is not surprising, given David's leanings and the fact he was born into the Mormon Church, that he has chosen to follow a fairly radical splinter group of the Church, the Confederate Nations of Israel, headed

by Alex Joseph. One of the prime tenets of this group is polygamy.

"All men believe in polygamy," David says cynically, and I admit there is probably some truth in that. "They just don't want to live in polygamy. They believe in marrying one woman and cheating on her. I don't believe in that."

After all, he did try monogamy last year, and see where it got him? Nothing but heartache.

"I was getting a lot of pressure from record companies and managers and lawyers to be normal," he says. "What they considered normal, anyway. And I had a relationship with Deborah Lynn that I

hadn't had previously with any other woman. I felt that if I was going to do a demonstration, an experiment, I wanted to have the right woman to do it with. I felt that she was the right woman, which was a mistake on my part."

The marriage broke up, as did David, so he chronicled the event in an album, *Just Divorced*.

He became increasingly involved in his religion and was ordained as a priest.

"My wives are all of age, they have the right to choose how they want to live," David says. "I have the right to choose how I want to live."

Isn't bigamy against the law?

*"I came here to play for everyone who bought a ticket . . .
If you don't like that, you can go get your money back."*

"Well," David replies, obviously having answered the question many times before, "it depends on who marries you. It's against the law if you're married by a judge or some a_____e like that.

"But it's not against God's law. We enter into a contract with our wives through God. We don't go down to the courthouse. We don't take blood tests."

Sex, says David Allan Coe, is not something that's lasting.

"Most of the men I know, I'd say 97 percent of them, spend their whole lifetime searching for women to go to bed with them," he says. "Cheating on their wives; cheating on their girlfriends; cheating, cheating, cheating. That shit don't even enter my mind, so it frees me up to do a lot more important things."

The bus grinds down the highway, from Panama City to Tampa, as dull a trip as exists on the Planet Earth. I sit up front with my feet propped on the dash while David drives, and mostly I reflect on how the past keeps sneaking up on you like some cowardly dog. Just when you think you're rid of the damn thing, there it is again, nipping at your heels. Ironically, David Allan Coe has outlived most of the categories both his fans and his detractors put him in. He aspires to more than being entertainment in a biker bar and he's not afraid of lecturing a predominantly biker crowd about what David Allan Coe's music is all about. "I came here," he told a heavily biker crowd recently, "to play for everybody who bought a ticket . . . If you don't like that, you can go get your money back."

The highway rolls along, three of the wives bustle around the back of the bus, the CB crackles intermittently.

Do you ever, I ask abruptly, miss the Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy image?

David drives for a while before answering.

"Yeah," he says finally, "I put so much into that . . ."

He drives in silence, then talks for a while about Nudie, who died this year. Sometimes the past just slips away, he says, gone like a song.

Maybe, I say, things like the Cowboy could only happen when country music was younger. There's no room today for a Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy.

Nope, David agrees. People might try, but Nashville wouldn't let it happen.



If you had it to do over again, I ask, would you?

Well, says David Allan Coe, knowing what he now knows, feeling what he now feels, it *would've* been different.

"I would probably have played their stupid game," he says, not without a trace of bitterness. "I probably would have cut my hair and worn the white shoes and been more like Bill Anderson, image-wise. Never cussed and never smoked and never drank. I would probably let them support me until I got on the top, and then I would do what I want to do. In other words, I would have taken the easy way. The line of least resistance . . ."

We drive on for a while although we might have been standing still for as much as the landscape changed.

"As it was," David continues abruptly, "I took the hardest possible route that you could take, and I still overcame and succeeded. There's no doubt in my mind that I would have been a Kenny Rogers or a Willie Nelson kind of celebrity if I had gone in the other direction. So for me to have still gotten as far as I've gotten in this direction, I still see the possibilities of that happening if I *bend* a little bit."

He shakes his head ruefully, and the

long braids move like tree limbs in a stiff breeze. Now, he says, people will accuse him of selling out for having a hit record. He never imagined it would be as hard a ride as it's been.

Forty-five years, 57 albums, four books, three movies, a television documentary, a special ten-year double record package, one gold record and Lord knows how many disasters later, David Allan Coe is still out there slugging away, running from his devils, as they say, and reaching for the stars.

In his hit song "The Ride," David tells of a young hitchhiker, guitar on his back, headed for Nashville, who takes a ride in an antique Cadillac with an emaciated, hollow-eyed stranger. The stranger is ghost white, and the music coming from the radio is solid country gold. Before the Cadillac turns, south of Nashville, and heads back to Alabama, the stranger, whose name is Hank, has this advice for the hitchhiker:

*Drifter, can you make folks cry
when you play and sing?
Have you paid your dues?
Can you moan them blues?
Can you bend them guitar
strings?*

*Boy, can you make folks feel what you
feel inside?
But if you're big star bound, let me
warn you, it's a long hard ride. . . **

One last scene: I step out of the concert hall for a few minutes to grab a cola from the bus and am instead grabbed by a young woman. She is attractive, short curly blond hair and wide green eyes. Designer jeans, a yellow lace-up blouse and just a bit of pale lipstick. Can I, she says, help her get in? She proceeds to explain, in an accent heavy with Wisconsin, how David Allan Coe is the most important man in her life, what his music means to her, what this concert means to her.

How was she to know that she couldn't carry an icepick in her purse?

Could I *please* fix it? She moves closer, opening her green eyes wide. Her shirt unlaces until her breasts are uncovered. Please, she asks.

Stage security laughs and shakes their heads. I shrug, lace her blouse up, and go looking for my drink. ■

*J.B. Detterline/G. Gentry, "The Ride," 1983, BMI

CMSA Newsletter

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1985—EDITOR, HELEN BARNARD
NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

NEWSWORTHY

GOODBYE TO E.T.

Dear CMSA,

It was Monday night, August 15, 1949. The first Grand Ole Opry show was in our town. The billing was Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams and Bill Monroe. The price of the ticket was \$1.80.

I had been an Ernest Tubb "Booster" (that's what we called ourselves, in those days) for about three years then, and we all did a lot of postcard requests to a local radio station, WEBC. WEBC had a one-hour request "hillbilly" show every day. E.T. was more popular than any other on the requests.



Even the other stations were getting into playing his records and transcriptions.

WEBC picked this Opry group to come to Duluth to help in the celebration of their 25th anniversary. You can't imagine my joy when I

In Honor of the New Year

The old and the new . . . both worthy of note. So the *Newsletter* is devoted this time to news of the young, news of the old, those who perform and those who would like to, those starting out in life, those who are retired, those who write songs and those who would like to. We start out with your recollections of Ernest Tubb . . . and include Kitty Wells, a legend living still. Don't miss the Members Poll . . . your chance to get others to take note of you.



E.T., a local Duluth cowboy, Hank Williams and Bill Monroe captured by Donna Church in Duluth in 1949: a historic photo.

got a call from the DJ, Bill Connor, of the *Friendly Time* request show, telling me that they were bringing E.T. to Duluth, that our local fan club could fill all the front seats, and that we were the reason they had picked E.T. We had done our "boosting" real well.

Mr. Connor said I was invited backstage to meet Mr. Tubb.

I was on a heavenly cloud that August night. The first sight of my "hero" on stage is a night I'll never forget. Backstage between shows we met the Man. We took all the pictures we wanted of E.T. and Hank Sr. Bill Monroe had come down with a cold and couldn't go on. But he did come and pose for pictures.

After that I saw Ernest many times, and there were always tickets at the ticket office for six of us fans. I saw him in 1977 at a ski resort some 80 miles from Duluth. He still had all the charm, charisma and smile, with a solid handshake for all his fans. He also was a terrific hit at Willie's 8th annual picnic, outside of Austin on July 4, 1980.

Ernest, I will miss you, but you left me so many hours of good music. I thank God for my meetings with you, and the fantastic music. You'll always be in my prayers.

Donna Church
Duluth, Minnesota

Dear CMSA,

I was recording an album in Memphis on September 6th when I heard the sad news of Ernest Tubb's passing. I was at the right place and unfortunately at the right time. I could have recorded this song, pressed it, and distributed it on the same day, but I didn't want to profit by someone else's loss. But I would still like to share the lyrics of the song with all the other E.T. fans and friends.

Mister ET

The Grand Ole Opry ET, from Texas to Tennessee

A man who we all loved

Not entertainment tonight, no extra-terrestrial flight

I'm talkin' Ernest Tubb

On his Midnite Jamboree, the new young stars were seen

He was an American

With his Texas Troubadours, he stopped Walkin' the Floors

He's singin' in heaven's land

Mister ET can't phone, but he has gone home

Waltzed Across Texas to the Hall of Fame

Mister ET can't phone, 'cause he has gone home

Said Tomorrow Never Comes, but it came

He lived out on the road, just doin' one night shows



ERNEST TUBB
and JOHNNY BOND

*Everyone was his friend
He sang Our Baby's Book, you could see
Roger Dale's look
Beginning to the end
Everybody was his fan, 'cause he's known in
every land
From palaces to bars
He's admired by his peers, his records bring
us cheer
Tonight he's the new star.*

My father's favorite songs to sing were E. T. songs. The first song he taught me was "Our Baby's Book." Several years ago, when I was working in Reno, I went to a club to hear E. T. It was the late show and there was hardly anyone in the audience. I felt like I was getting a private show. When he sang "Our Baby's Book" for me, he told me it was his most-requested song.

I met E. T. again at The Crystal Palace Saloon in Paramus, New Jersey. That's when he signed the enclosed sheet music for me.

Blackwood Productions are supposed to release a forty-five of mine in January. The ten-song cassette is a combination of rockabilly and country. I love them both. I was supposed to receive a rough mix of my tape long before this, but I haven't yet. Blackwood Productions has recently relocated; I hope to get my tape as soon as they're settled in. It's terrible to have made a recording, and not know what it sounds like.

**Paul Magee
Marathon, Florida**

Dear CMSA,

It was March of 1967 when we travelled to Bellevue, Nebraska, to see my dad, Paul Devine's, favorite country music star, Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours. We didn't know it then, but in his group that night were Jack Greene and Cal Smith, two men destined to be future country music stars. Ernest helped many, many people in country music to become stars! He was more than a living legend or a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame. He was the kindest and most thoughtful man I have ever met! All country music stars are great people, but Ernest Tubb was, and will always be remembered as, a man among men. He never knew he was a "star," but there is a new star in heaven and



Dennis' father Paul meets E.T. and...



...the rest of the Texas Troubadours, including Cal Smith and Jack Greene, in 1967.

he is among his friends. I am sure that Jimmie Rodgers, his idol, was there to meet him, as were Hank Williams, Sr., Tex Ritter and others. But wait, that song was already written and sung.

We will all miss Ernest Tubb, and we are so lucky to have his songs and TV shows to watch for years to come! The night my dad, my mother Della and I went to see him, he had time after the show to talk to us and for me to take some pictures that I will always treasure.

Thanks, Ernest, for your contribution to country music and for being a true Texas Troubadour. We will miss you.

**Dennis Paul Devine, Sr.
Council Bluffs, Iowa**

Dear CMSA,

When I learned of Ernest Tubb's death on September 6th, I was in shock and very close to a nervous breakdown! We have lost the greatest man and entertainer that ever lived. He was a very special person to all his fans, always friendly and never too tired to sign autographs or chat with you.

He was very special to me and I loved him. I feel a part of me has died since his death. He's given me so much inspiration and I'm glad I have most of his recordings. To make life easier, I listen to Justin Tubb who hosts his Midnite Jamboree each Saturday and still sings his dad's songs!

**Eleanor Chamberlain
Olean, New York**

Wish Upon a Star

Ask a star a question, we'll get the answer: that's Wish Upon a Star. Waylon Jennings and Dolly Parton are the next two stars to answer questions for you. Send us your questions for them and photos of yourself with Waylon or Dolly.

Your questions for Barbara Mandrell are here. As soon as she is well enough, we will have her answers for you.

Who else would you like to see in Wish Upon a Star? Send your suggestions, questions and photos to Star, *Country Music*, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.

NOW WHAT'S NEW

Dear CMSA,

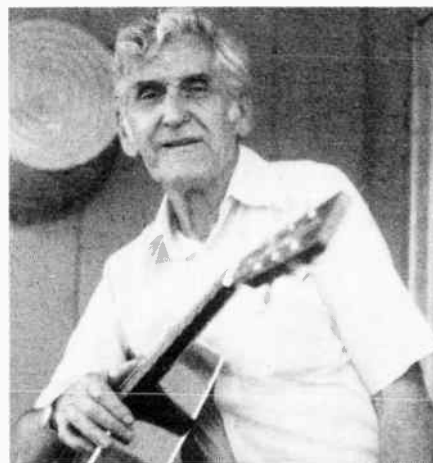
I play guitar and sing and write country music songs when I am feeling well and up to it. I am a former coal miner and moonshiner, boot-leg whiskey man. Stopped being a moonshiner in 1936. Started working in U.S. Steel coal-mining set up in the southern part of West Virginia. I am 69 years old, retired and disabled to a certain extent.

I spent two years in the U.S. Navy during World War II. When we set sail from San Juan, Puerto Rico through the Panama Canal for the Pacific Ocean to be part of the Phillipine Islands invasion, I was standing on the fo'c'sle deck playing my guitar and singing "Wabash Cannonball." Sailors on the deck were clapping their hands, keeping time to the music and singing. Sailors on the dock were doing the same thing.

Lately I wrote a song I named "Country Music Keeps Movin' It On." If you can print my song in your magazine, you have my permission to do so with no strings attached.

*Country Music Keeps Movin' It On
I am pickin' on my old guitar*

*Missin' a note ever now and then
I still play my ole gitar
The way I always did
When I was a honky-tonkin' gitar pickin'
man
We had bar fights ever now and then
And Hank Snow might be movin' it on
My time is runnin' out
And I will soon be long gone
While good ole country music
Keeps on movin' it on
Keeps movin' it on
Keeping in tune with space age time
And still movin' it on
Barbara Mandrell, Dolly Parton,
Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette sing songs
In music concerts and then they're long gone
Helping to keep good country music stay alive
And still movin' it on
Still movin' it on
And there will never come the day
When it will fade away and be long gone
It will keep on putting its mark
On space age time
Doin' its thing
And still movin' it on*



I have a lot more of them that might have potential, such as the one I sent to Sunset Recording Company in Hollywood, California, which is in the process of being recorded. The name of that song is "Frisco Bay Harbor Lights."

Everett J. Day
563 South Lane Street
Columbus, Ohio
614-221-5464

Ricky Skaggs Carries the Flag

Ricky will be in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states during the dirty-weather month, February. All you fans, take note.

- February 9 Washington, District of Columbia
Constitution Hall
- February 10 Salisbury, Maryland
Wicomico Civic Center
- February 15 Portland, Maine
Civic Center
- February 16 Montreal, Quebec
The Spectrum
- February 17 Bangor, Maine
Civic Center
- February 19 Rochester, New York
Temple Civic Center
- February 20 Buffalo, New York
Kleinhans Music Hall
- February 21 New York, New York
The Bottom Line
- February 22 Boston, Massachusetts
The Opera House
- February 23 Albany, New York
The Palace Theatre
- February 24 Syracuse, New York
Landmark Theatre
- February 25 Hartford, Connecticut
Bushnell Memorial Hall

As information is available on the touring schedules of other stars, we will bring it to you. Because we publish bi-monthly, we cannot always provide it in advance.

MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1985

WANTED: YOUR OPINION

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out both sides of the Members Poll. We forward the results of the Polls to those involved in the business of country music who are interested in what fans are thinking and doing, and we publish the results here and in *Country Music*.

What's on TV?

1. What are your 4 favorite TV shows?

a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____

2. Do you have cable TV? Yes No

3. Do you get The Nashville Network? Yes No

If you do, which are your 4 favorite Nashville Network shows?

a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____

Seen Any Good Movies Lately?

4. Check which of these movies you have seen and what you thought of them.

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Songwriter</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Country</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Places in the Heart</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Paris, Texas</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tender Mercies</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF FORM

NEWSWORTHY

Dear CMSA,

I really enjoy getting the magazine, and reading about all the guys and gals, and since I'm on that subject, my favorite female singer is Anne Murray, male singer, who else? Merle Haggard.

I, too, am a country songwriter, and singer, and I am enclosing a picture. I know it's asking a lot to ask you to put my picture in



your nice magazine. Us ole country boys mostly look like some the cat drug up and wouldn't eat, but maybe if we sing good enough, you can forget how bad we look.

If you would print my full name and address, I'd enjoy hearing from other country song fans.

Louis R. Simmons
Space 74
131 S. San Juan
Montrose, Colorado 81401

Dear CMSA,

Although he is not a star except in my eyes, my husband Marvin Wright had, I believe, one of the longest running shows of its kind on the air.

For 26 years, every Saturday morning, *The Marvin Wright Show* went on the air, live, from radio station KSYC, Yreka, California, playing records, doing commercials, ad lib. The people out in radioland looked forward to his program as he was the only country disc jockey doing a country music show, in the 26 years, on KSYC.

His retirement comes as a great disappointment to his listeners as they enjoyed his Alabama yakking and the country music he



Ruth Wright's star Marvin Wright with retirement plaque presented by KSYC.

played, reaching back and playing some of the oldies. He was always promoting country music.

He also helps entertain the senior citizens and different organizations in this area, as he plays guitar and sings and is the emcee for a group called The Siskiyou Old Time Fiddlers. He is really quite popular and well-liked in this valley.

KSYC converted to good ol' constant country in 1983, much to the enjoyment of the radio audience as this is Cowboy territory in beautiful northern California.

Ruth A. White
Yreka, California

Dear CMSA,

I have nice lyrics and would be so pleased to get in touch with the artists listed below. I would give them a song or two if they were interested in trying them out. All I would want in return is to be recognized and get credit for the lyrics.

Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Box Car Willie, Ricky Skaggs, etc., any and all who might be interested in a songwriter. I am, of course, unknown, but I love music of this type, and I am a Christian sort of person, so are these folks. I play guitar, harmonica, electric organ, can't read music. Play by ear.

Let me hear from you good old boys. I am a fan of yours.

Ken Carter
435 Grant Road
Saco, Maine 04072
207-283-7462

MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1985

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

5. How many albums did you or anyone in your household buy in the last month?

records _____ cassettes _____

6. Which ones did you like best?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

7. If you didn't buy any albums in the last month, how many in the last 12 months?

records _____ cassettes _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

8. To vote, list the numbers of your top 5 favorites from the Top 25 in the January/February *Country Music*. Winners will be announced.

albums (list 5 numbers)

singles (list 5 numbers)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Fill out both sides and mail to: January Poll, *Country Music*, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Photocopies acceptable.

FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF FORM

Family Bands

Like to participate in a special feature on family bands? Send us your recollections and photographs. Please send copies of the photos, not your originals, if at all possible. Let us know when and where you played and what it meant to you. We'll take it from there. All photos will be returned.

Jason Ellsworth at the Opry

Tracy Quinn of The National Committee, Arts With the Handicapped brought Jason's story to our attention.

Jason Ellsworth, an eight-year-old native of Hartford, Connecticut, took his place on one of the world's most coveted stages recently—the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee.

Jason is blind and has cerebral palsy, but he has proven that nothing can stop him from becoming an accomplished pianist and country music singer.

Jason was one of a group of children who taped public service announcements for the National Committee, Arts With the Handicapped at the World's Fair in New Orleans this past September. Tammy Wynette, Eddie Rabbitt and T.G. Sheppard heard Jason perform at a press conference announcing "Arts With the Handicapped Week," and were captivated. They invited him to join them on stage at the World's Fair concert the following evening and sang back-up for him.

"It's a hard world and it's so hard to be touched by anything these days, but that was touching," Rabbitt said. "He just blew us away."

A story in the *Nashville Tennessean* about that performance led to the newspaper inviting Jason to visit Music City. While there, he attended the Songwriters' Hall of Fame Banquet and Country Music Awards, a recording session at Tree Publishing, a luncheon with Ronnie Milsap and numerous other activities with Nashville celebrities. But the highlight of the trip was the Opry debut.

Opry star Jack Greene sat Jason at the piano bench and introduced him to the crowd, saying, "He's a fine example of what handicapped people can accomplish. Everyone loves him, and I know you will too."

Greene was right. With the Opry staff band and the Carol Lee singers in the background, Jason pounded the ivories and wailed out George Jones' "She Thinks I Still Care" and "The Grand Tour," plus Hank Williams' "Long Gone Lonesome Blues." By the end of the third song, the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

When Jason was born, he weighed three pounds and was hospitalized for nearly three months. The first 28 days of his life were spent on a respirator, and doctors gave him less than a ten percent chance to live. At eighteen months, he began playing the piano and emerged from a dark, lonely world.

Now a second-grader at Orchard Hill School in Windsor, Connecticut, Jason has been active in the Connecticut Very Special Arts Festival Program and performed at the National Very Special Arts Festival in Washington, D.C. last May. The National Committee, Arts With the Handicapped, now in its tenth year, has Very Special Arts Festival Programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico involving over



750,000 disabled people.

Jason hopes to be a cowboy someday, but in the meantime will keep busy with country music.

His mother, Sue Ellsworth, has some encouraging words for parents who feel they cannot cope with the prospect of a disabled child. She says, "I'd like to have them know Jason."

Tracy A. Quinn
The National Committee
Arts With the Handicapped
Washington, D.C.
202-332-6960

Dear CMSA,

All the issues are great. I especially like Hank Williams, Jr., Waylon Jennings and the old outlaw, David Allan Coe. Also Willie Nelson.

Speaking of Willie Nelson, he paid me a compliment in the late 1960's. I met him in Florida at a resort town late at night, and he looked at me and asked my name. When I told him, he said he had heard of me—a songwriter. Imagine the great Willie Nelson having heard of me! He's all right.

I know Tom T. Hall too! In fact, he penned his "Sneaky Snake" song at the place I worked in, I believe, in 1969, after witnessing an altercation one night between me and a musician friend of mine, Danny Butler. Tom T. Hall is one talented fella.

I did win best country/western (Lyric) songwriter back in either 1969 or '70. I lost my winner's cup. I think someone stole and hocked it. It was hectic back then.

The first talk-song I ever wrote was

"Drinking Coffee and Telling Lies" which 'Whispering' Bill Anderson recorded. It got to Number 12 in 1969.

John Scarbrough
Wewahitchka, Florida

Dear CMSA,

I would like to introduce a new artist, Gabriel. He's got charisma and a fantastic voice. He has opened for Tammy, Ronnie McDowell and Gary Morris and has had some songs in the Top 100 in *Billboard*. He also writes a lot of songs.

He has appeared on several TV shows, the *Joe Franklin Show* and *Real People*. Ever see or hear of him?

Carolyn Nelson
Hibbing, Minnesota

Album and Single of the Month

Ricky Skaggs	<i>Don't Cheat in Our Hometown</i>
The Judds	"Mama, He's Crazy"

Congratulations to Ricky, Naomi and Wynonna. Runners-up were Alabama with *Roll On* and Lee Greenwood with "God Bless the U.S.A." Also-rans in either the album or single category or in both were The Statlers, George Strait, The Oaks and the boys with the dress, Moe and Joe.

That's your choice for September 1984. The November vote, a big one, is being counted now. Results in March. Don't forget to vote in the January Poll in this *Newsletter*.

Kitty Wells

Queen of Country Music

First woman to top the country charts, a revolution in her own time, and still going strong, the Queen still reigns, out on the road with husband Johnny Wright, and recording on their own label.

The Kitty Wells/Johnny Wright Family Show got in at 4 A.M. from a swing through eastern Canada, yet by 3 P.M., Kitty Wells is as fresh as if she'd just come back from vacation. Touring has not burned her out; she can rattle off every town they played.

"We played in Kitchener and Hamilton, Ontario, and in Conewauga, Quebec, in New Brunswick over at Fredericton and Moncton, and in Halifax, Nova Scotia. We have a lot of fans in Canada," she says. Their schedule on this side of the border is also full. "We haven't slowed down any, and we're just travelin' all the time," she adds.

If that point needs to be made, it's because Kitty Wells seems less visible than she was even a decade ago. At age 65, she is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame who paved the way for the success of every female vocalist who came after her. But her records are seldom heard on the crossover-oriented country radio stations of today. And she has no major label recording contract at this time.

"The thing is, people don't hear our records on the radio and they think we retired, or something. But we work on the road from 150 to 200 days a year. I don't know how we'd go about getting our records played on the radio. Once in awhile you'll find a station that will play my records, and Ernest Tubb's and Roy Acuff's and Johnny and Jack's. It's hard to get them to play your records anymore, unless you're a new artist or somebody that's got things in the Top 40. A lot of country fans out there, they want to hear our records, and they want to know where they can buy 'em."

It is strange to hear such a comment considering that 30 years ago you couldn't find a

store that *didn't* carry Kitty's records or a station that wouldn't play them. Kitty began her career under her real name, Muriel Deason. A Nashville native, she started singing when she was a teenager, after learning to play guitar. She managed to get on the radio,



and, when she was 18, met singer Johnny Wright. In 1938 they married and continued their working relationship, even after Johnny teamed up with singer Jack Anglin in the now-legendary close harmony duo of Johnny and Jack, in the early 1940's. They spent a decade doing radio and personal appearances in theaters and schoolhouses throughout the Deep

South. Muriel Deason became Kitty Wells, taking her name from the vintage folk song "Sweet Kitty Wells."

They were charter members of the *Louisiana Hayride* when it began in 1948, spending several years there while Kitty did her first solo recordings of gospel for RCA, with no real success. After they joined the Opry around 1952, she signed with Decca. At the time, female country singers were a lonely minority; Patsy Montana had a hit with "I Wanna Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart," yet no other woman had any success after her. Then early in 1952 Hank Thompson hit Number One with "Wild Side of Life," which included the line "I didn't know God made honky-tonk angels." Louisiana music entrepreneur J.D. Miller wrote an "answer song," "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels" and recorded it with an obscure local woman named Al Montgomery. His friend Troy Martin took a copy to Nashville, and on March 3, Decca producer Paul Cohen recorded Kitty's version.

There was nothing contrived about her performance, and 32 years later it still sounds stark and haunting. By July it was the Number One country song in America in spite of the fact that it was controversial. NBC Radio banned it from their airwaves, until its obvious success led them to reconsider. Kitty Wells opened a door that would never close again.

Other hits followed. She did a second answer song, "Paying for That Back Street Affair," in response to Webb Pierce's hit. She quietly took up the cause of women, but also broadened her appeal with ballads like the 1955 hit, "Making Believe." Her duets with Red Foley, including the 1954 "One by One,"

LEGENDS OF COUNTRY MUSIC

were also successful. Right through the rock and roll era, the quiet dignity of her music remained, with successes like the 1960 "Heartbreak, USA," and she, along with Johnny and Jack, remained on the road.

After Jack Anglin's tragic death in 1963, Kitty and Johnny converted to a family show (their son Bobby, a singer, made a name as Willie, the hillbilly sailor on the *McHale's Navy* TV series), and have never really stopped. The hits continued through the 1960's, with the fragile "You Don't Hear" (1964), one of Kitty's most enduring ballads. Through the early 1970's, however, things began to slack off. Trends were changing. Where at one time she was *the* female performer, her success opened things up for Patsy Cline, Loretta and everyone else to such a point that her achievements were obscured. Finally in 1974 she asked for, and received, a release from her lifetime Decca/MCA contract to sign with Capricorn, a label best known for Southern rock acts like the Allman Brothers. When, even there, she met with only modest success, she and Johnny started their own Ruboca label for their releases.

"I haven't really tried that much to get on another label," she says, "but I know there's a lot of artists here like myself that don't have a label." However, she agrees that the rise of Reba McEntire, George Strait and Ricky Skaggs has encouraged her generation. "I'm glad to see them comin' along like they are, and I'm hopin' that there'll be more of them that will start recording traditional country music and get back into that trend."

Trying to cut crossover herself is not in the cards. "I really don't think string arrangements would work with me. I don't know that I would enjoy singing with string music and that type of background. For my type singing, I think that the country fiddle goes best with it."

Today, when Kitty is off the road, she is usually at the Johnny Wright/Kitty Wells Family Country Junction, a combination museum and gift shop in Madison, just outside Nashville. There she and Johnny meet their fans among relics like their old guitars and replicas of two trains (including the Tennessee Central, on which Kitty's father was a brakeman), as well as other memorabilia from forty years of traveling.

So, when all is said and done, anyone who hasn't heard much about Kitty Wells need not worry. "I guess we'll still keep doing a lot of traveling like we've always done," she says. "Maybe we'll get in the studio before too long and do some recording." And she remains quietly proud of accomplishments that were almost revolutionary at the time.

"I was more or less the first woman in country music to have a Number One chart record, so I guess it paved the way for the rest of them. Of course, I feel lucky to have been there at the right time."

Rich Kienzle



Available Albums

Most of Kitty's albums have long been out of print. There is enough available, however, to capture the essence of her best work. Golden Country offers two albums of 1940's gospel: *Johnny and Jack Featuring Kitty Wells* (GC 2205) and *Early Classics* (GC 2206). Kitty is mostly supporting Johnny and Jack. Still, these give a good accounting of her pre-1950's roots. Some of her classic original Decca recordings are available on Rounder Records' *The Golden Years* (Rounder SS 13), including duets with Red Foley, Webb Pierce and Roy Acuff. Several MCA albums are available. *Kitty Wells and Red Foley's Golden Favorites* (MCA 83) sums up the Wells-Foley duet recordings. *Dust On the Bible* (MCA 149) is a fine gospel effort, while *Greatest Hits* (MCA 121) and the two-record set, *The Kitty Wells Story*

(MCA 2-4031), provide overviews of her recording career. *Story* includes 24 of her major hits, a bargain at \$9.98.

To order these albums, write to Kitty Wells, c/o Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. All albums are \$7.98 except Rounder (SS 13) \$8.98 and the two-record *Story* (MCA 2-4031) \$9.98. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one album, \$.95 for each additional.

Kitty Wells' own Ruboca label offers *Kitty Wells' Hall of Fame, Vol. 1*, including re-releases of eight of her hits plus two new songs, "Thank You For the Roses," her latest single, and "Loving You Was All I Ever Needed." To order write: Johnny Wright Enterprises, 240 Old Hickory Blvd., Madison, Tennessee 37115. Cost is \$10, including postage and handling.



Dear CMSA,

Tonya is seven years old and has been performing since the age of three and a half. She plans to take guitar lessons in the future.

She has appeared with The Charlie Pruitt Show twice in Orange, Texas, once opening the show; with Janie Fricke at the Palace in Beaumont, Texas; and at Fan Fair in Nash-

ville this past June. *The Louisiana Hayride* has called and asked for her video tapes, pictures and resume.

I am Tonya's fan club president and her sister.

Janetta O'Pry
904 DuPont Drive
Orange, Texas 77630
409-883-8732

Dear CMSA,

Well, here's our certificate that we here at the Special Friends of Larry Grosso Fan Club got from Loudilla, Loretta and Kay Johnson's International Fan Club Organization a few months ago. This is what we were telling you about but it seems that you were waiting, so here is the proof, OK?

Larry does a variety of music in American and Italian, plus he does country and western and old hillbilly music. We would like to hear from the public for support, and if anyone wishes more facts, then have them send their letters to us and we'll see that they get answered.

George B. Hanna
President of Fan Club
10518 Westlake Drive #103
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Dear CMSA,

My husband and I took a five-week vacation across the U.S. this summer, the highlight being three days in Nashville with a performance of the Grand Ole Opry on August 3. We thoroughly enjoyed this 2½ hours of our favorite music, having looked forward to it for months. However, we were in for an extra treat with a presentation of several gospel performers. One of them was a 13-year old girl named Shannon Nesmith, who was so very outstanding and tremendously talented—we could not believe how a girl so young could be so professional. She is extremely pretty and vivacious.

The evening ended, for us, at a nearby Nashville restaurant where she came walking through the door with her father. After talking to them, we found that he is her manager and she had just completed an opening act for Hank Williams, Jr. in Alabama. My husband and I agreed that with her personality and talent she is one to be watched for in the next few years.

Shannon's address is Rte. 5, Box 276, Cullman, Alabama 35055.

Nancy B. Nessler
Tarpon Springs, Florida

Collecting the Magazine

Write to the member listed below if you have the issue he needs.

- I am looking for the April 1974 issue of *Country Music* and the September 1972 issue of *Guitar Player*. Thanks. **Don Brown**, Skaar Rt. Box 4038, Sidney, Montana 59270.

- *Daryl Roadcap* and *Violetta Roth* thank all those who responded to their requests in this column.

Information Please

Contact these members directly if you have the items or information they need.

- I am interested in purchasing older sheet music (C&W). I have a sizable collection of talking songs and narrations and would like to obtain fill-ins, such as: "Cowboy Heaven," Roy Rogers; "Truck Driver's Heaven," Red Sovine; "Giddy Up, Go Answer," Minnie Pearl. I would appreciate any help. **Harold Hammell**, Box 515, Altoona, Florida 32702.

- I've been trying to replace an 8-track tape that got destroyed. A record would also be fine. The name of the tape was *The Johnny Cash Show*. The song I want so bad is "These Hands." Can anyone help me? **Mrs. Vernon Revoir**, 3734 Yellowstone, Irving, Texas 75062.

- Does anyone know anything about Orion and/or Jimmy Ellis? Are they still performing and if so, where? **Linda Stevens**, Rt. 2, Box 213, Bedford, Virginia 24523.

- Where can I get a cassette tape of The

Browns? I think it may be entitled *The Three Bells*. **Mrs. Patti Gabler**, Box 6, Marlile, Pennsylvania 16334.

- There is one song I have been looking for and it is hard to find. It is "Five Little Fingers," sung by Bill Anderson in the 1950's or 1960's. Can anyone help? **Ellen L. Hudson**, 1003 15th St., Sioux City, Iowa 51105.

- Want to buy a copy of Jessi Colter's album *That's the Way a Cowboy Rocks and Rolls*. Was able to help two people who wrote to this column in the September/October issue. **Mike Sheets**, 516-B Barbara Lane, Pulaski, Virginia 24301.

- Can anyone answer a question for me? Charlie Rich sings a song called "Rolling With the Flow." Was this song written about him? **Chris Bitler**, Box 420A RD 6, Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania 19608.

- I have this old 78 with Gene Autry singing "The Life of Jimmie Rodgers." On the other side is "The Death of Jimmie Rodgers." I wonder if any other country music fans have this recording of him? **Selby Farmer**, Route 1 Box 224 A, Heflin, Alabama 36264.

- Partly due to sentimental reasons, my husband and I would like to find a record or tape of *There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere* by Elton Britt (Bluebird 900). We have it by Pat Boone, but it doesn't seem the same. Dave Dudley on Mercury is a better version if we cannot find Elton Britt. **Marie Osborn**, 2682 Alvarado Road, Sidney, Nebraska 69162.

- Can anyone tell me if these Jerry Lee Lewis albums are available, and if so, where? *Soul—My Way* (Mercury SRS 67097), *Un-*

limited (Mercury Wing SRW 16406), *Country Class* (Mercury SRM 1-1109). **Thomas L. Norton**, 1345 S. Newton, Springfield, Missouri 65807.

- I'm very desperate for a record, tape or whatever of Will Hawkins' "Susie Q," recorded in the late 1950's. Also "Indian Lake" by the Cowsills and any information or records of a duet of Misty Morgan and a male singer whose name I do not recall. They made several duets together which were great. I'd be happy to have any of them. **Carolyn Halbert**, 1314 Trelane Ave., St. Louis, Missouri 63126.

- Whatever happened to Peggy Little, the little girl with the big voice, who used to sing "Son of a Preacher Man"? I saw her twice in person and at that time she was going with Tommy Overstreet and helping him to get a start in the music field. **Montez D. Ellis**, 3451 Dunn St., Smyrna, Georgia 30080.

- Some years ago we heard the most beautiful voice singing a lovely song about a little girl. It was Larry Ford of the Dixie Echoes. Later we heard he had joined the ministry. Could anyone give us any information on him or where we could buy his records? **Almeda and Herbert Klutz**, 5816 E. Decatur, Mesa, Arizona 85205.

- Where can I find "Teller of Tales" by Paul Williams? **Jeanne Schulz**, RR 2, Leland, Illinois 60531.

- I recently lost a collection of pictures of Freddy Weller in a fire. Can anyone out there help me? Also, is there still a fan club for him? **Debbie Rusk**, P.O. Box 2511, Rm. T-1412-B, Houston, Texas 77001.

Risk-Free Records

Everyone knows that buying records can be a risky business. Which is why Warner/Nashville is proud to introduce these new "risk-free" records—the greatest hits by your favorite country artists. It's time to take the risk out of buying and put the fun back in listening.



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She Just Started Liking Cheatin' Songs
1959
Chicken Truck
I'm Just An Old Chunk Of Coal
(But I'm Gonna Be A Diamond Someday)
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Wild And Blue
Your Lying Blue Eyes
Black Sheep

**John Anderson
Greatest Hits** 1/4-25169



Ain't She Somethin' Else
The Rose
Slow Hand
Somebody's Needin' Somebody
Three Times A Lady
I Don't Know A Thing About Love
(The Moon Song)
The Clown
Heartache Tonight
Lost In The Feeling
We Did But Now You Don't

**Conway Twitty
Conway's Latest Greatest Hits,
Volume I** 1/4-25170



Blue Kentucky Girl
Wayfaring Stranger
Beneath Still Waters
Born To Run
Someone Like You
Mister Sandman
Pledging My Love
I'm Movin' On
(Lost His Love) On Our Last Date
Save The Last Dance For Me

**Profile II:
The Best Of Emmylou Harris** 1/4-25161



You And I
The Conversation
Make My Day
The Yellow Rose
The Waltz You Saved For Me
You're Welcome To Tonight
I Don't Care (If Tomorrow Never Comes)
Cajun Invitation
Faking Love
Does He Ever Mention My Name

**You And I:
Classic Country Duets** 1/4-25171

Featuring such artists as Eddie Rabbitt, Crystal Gayle, Hank Williams, Jr., T.G. Sheppard, Johnny Lee, John Anderson, Emmylou Harris, Gary Morris, David Frizzell, Shelly West, Karen Brooks, Rick Carnes and Janis Carnes.



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A Texas State Of Mind
Husbands And Wives
Another Honky-Tonk Night On Broadway
I Just Came Here To Dance
Please Surrender
Cajun Invitation
It's A Be Together Night
Silent Partners
Do Me Right

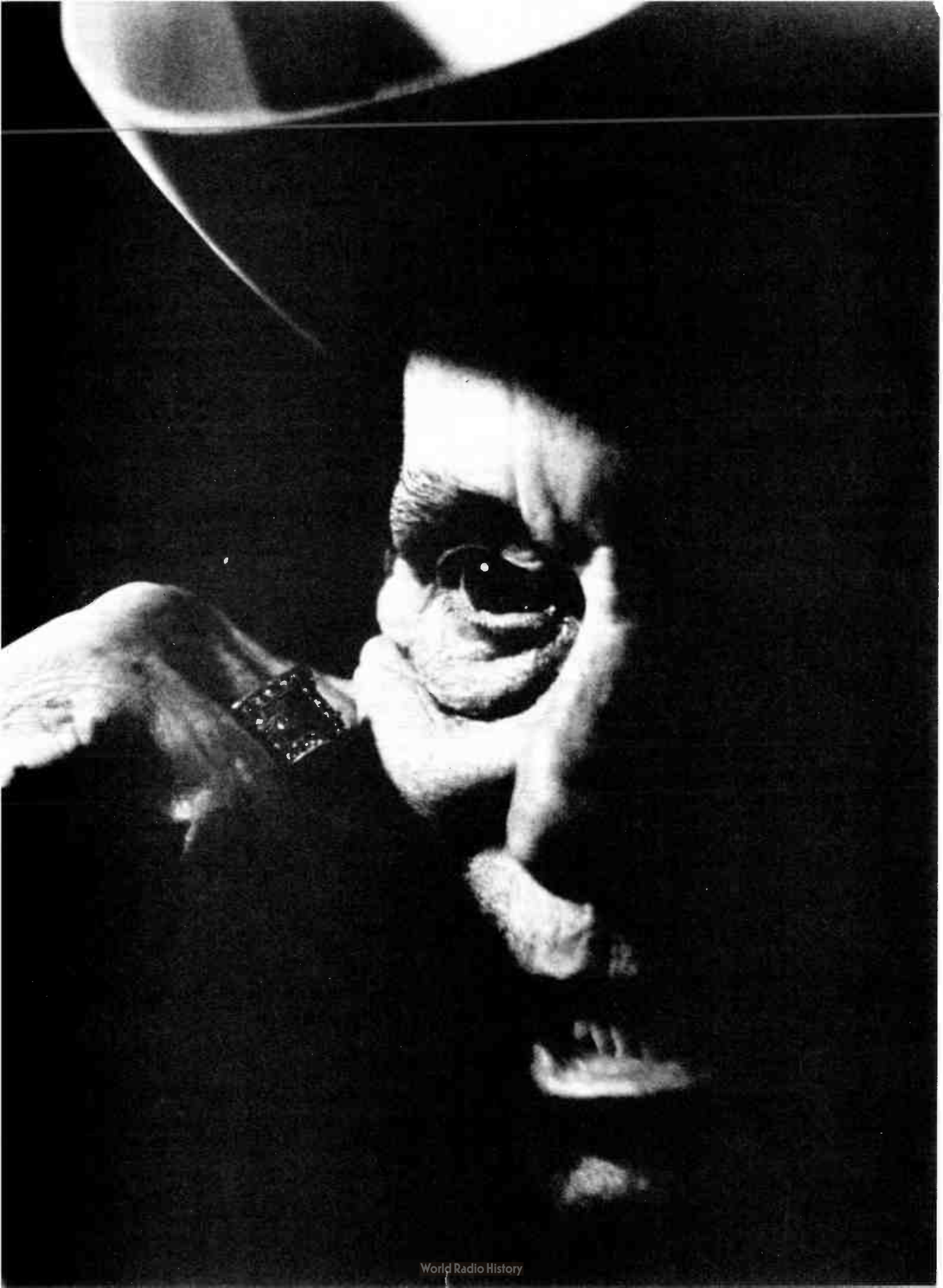
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The Best Of Frizzell & West** 1/4-25148

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Country Classics, Volume I and Volume II *
Hank Williams, Jr.: Greatest Hits**



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ERNEST TUBB REMEMBERED

*“Let’s Say Goodbye Like
We Said Hello”*

He was as much a legend for helping others find their way to stardom as he was for his own music. Hank Snow and Loretta Lynn are just two of the most famous who knew his helping hand. So, when he died, Ernest Tubb was mourned as much by his fellow performers as he was by his fans. In tribute, those fellow performers recall their experiences with Ernest and share what was special about him on the following pages. Also presented are Ernest Tubb’s own thoughts about Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and his own career, from a 1974 interview conducted for us on *E.T.*’s last night at the Ryman Auditorium by Marshall Fallwell, who also took several of the accompanying photos.

More on Ernest Tubb is presented in this issue’s Letters, Buried Treasures and Essential Collector.

I was born in Texas. You know that. But I never got a callin' to music 'til my sister brought home a Jimmie Rodgers record; 'In the Jailhouse Now,' I think it was, and this was when I was 15.

"Now, my daddy used to kid me. He'd hear me down in the pasture tryin' to yodel. That's where I'd practice. Nobody could yodel like Jimmie Rodgers, but I was bound to try. Did pretty good, too, 'til I lost my tonsils.

"Anyway, he'd hear me down in the pasture, and then, he'd come a-runnin', sayin', 'Didn't I hear Jimmie Rodgers down here?' And my brother, he'd just aggravate me. He'd come runnin' up, sayin', 'Hey folks, I knew this boy before he could yodel.'

"Well, this was 1929, when I was 15. A couple years later, in Benjamin, Texas, I was singin' at dances, and my sister said, 'Why don't you get a guitar or something?' So, I bought one for \$5.95.

"Well, things moved on. A few years later, when Jimmie Rodgers died, I was in San Antonio. Had a program on radio station WONO. At the time, I also worked in a drug store. And I was thinkin' to myself one day, 'Now, Jimmie Rodgers' widow lives in San Antonio; I wonder if she's in the phone book?' So, I looked up the name, and sure enough, there was a Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers. I called her, and when she answered the phone, I like to fainted. But, I said, 'Hello, I'm Ernest Tubb, and I was wonderin' if you could send me a picture of Jimmie—just anything.'

"'Come on over,' she said. So, I went to her house, thinkin' I'd stay just a few minutes. Well, we talked and talked, and I looked at my watch, and saw I'd been there three hours. Anyway, she said she'd listen to my program. So, I went on home, and three months later, she called back and said, 'Ernest, I like your show. I've listened for a while, and I think you can go places, so I'd like to help you.'

"And that's how I got started."

★

In case you don't already know, that's Ernest Tubb talking.

I followed him around all one Saturday night, January 19, 1974, which just happened to be the last night he would perform on the stage of the Ryman Auditorium. Because downtown was jammed tighter than a can of tuna fish, I had trouble finding a parking place, so I missed most of Tubb's first show. When I finally managed to find a space, about four long blocks from the Ryman, I knew why those vast acres of asphalt and vacant parallel white lines pointing off into the distance would be such a welcome sight to anybody wanting to go to the Grand Ole Opry after March 15.

ERNEST TUBB REMEMBERS

An Interview
by Marshall Fallwell



LES LEVERETT

Ernest Tubb, however, had other thoughts about the Ryman, since this was to be his last night in the cramped, hot, uncomfortable old structure where the Opry had lived and flourished since the early 1940's. So, as he stood in the wings or in the dressing-rooms, rehearsing songs he'd done for 30 years; as he talked with friends backstage—Roy Acuff, Hank Snow, Grandpa Jones; as he walked through the dark shadows behind the Ryman, holding his daughter's hand and talking to me, Ernest Tubb was feeling nostalgic. Not sad. He's not the kind of man to be sad. If you met him, you'd know what I mean. But he is, as much as anybody I've met on the Opry, aware of a sense of history to his life, to the people he's known, to the million places he's been since that little town in Texas. The next day he would be off on another long road trip, so long that it would be the middle of March before he would come back to Nashville and home.

Ever since that night, I've wondered how I could best tell you about Ernest Tubb. It seems like writing about a legend should be easy, but it's not. There's too much to say. Also, everybody who knows anything about country music knows at least about the high points in

Ernest's career, so there's no point in going over that again, either. Instead, I thought the best way I could tell you about E.T., as his friends call him, is to let him speak for himself. That Saturday night, between shows, we spent about three hours in his private office behind the record store he originally opened in 1946. It is here, or at Linebaugh's cafe down the street, that he goes between shows.

Oh, I guess I been everywhere. I still go on the road about two hundred days a year. I figured it out once. Since I began, I've averaged about 100,000 miles a year. Back when I started, it was hard travelin'. You see, there weren't no buses or planes like there are now. Another thing—you had to be back in Nashville every Saturday night, come hell or high water, for the Opry. No matter where you were. In the forties, it was rough, too, because of the war. The hardest thing was finding boot-leg tires.

"I wouldn't do anything else, though. I had a lot of jobs and I hated them all. During the Depression, I worked all over Texas doing everything from threshing wheat to digging sewer ditches at Randolph Field. Listen, that wheat threshing, there ain't nothing harder. You throw that stuff in the air and that chaff gets down your back and you itch all day long. When you get off work at night, the only thing you want to do is get a bath.

"Working on a WPA curing gang on a highway ain't so much fun either. What you did was shovel dirt all day onto concrete that'd just been laid. After 12 hours of that, you can hardly move. I've had to have my sister rub my shoulders with liniment just so I could go back to work the next day.

"Another job I had was soliciting for a dry-cleaning firm. I had to knock on doors all day, and my knuckles got so sore, I finally wound up using my knife to knock, and not my fists.

"Now, when you travel a lot, you've got to take care of yourself. If you don't, you get sick. Back during the Korean conflict, Hank Snow and me went over to entertain the boys, you know. We paid our own bands and everything but expenses. Anyway, we swore we wouldn't take a drink 'til the tour was over. Well, Old Hank didn't make it that far, but I did.

"On the way over, the boys all got together and played a trick on me. You know, there are a lot of people think they're songwriters. Everybody's a songwriter. And that's alright, but sometimes, you can't go no place for people wanting you to hear their songs; I must have heard . . . I don't know how many. Any-



way, on the way over, we stopped off at Wake Island to refuel and get something to eat. And I thought, 'Well, while we're way out here, we won't be bothered with people trying to play us their songs.' Well, I had just sat down in this cafe, the only place on the whole island—it wasn't but a mile wide—and the cook, who was also the waiter, came over to the table right when I was about to take a bite of this sandwich, and he puts his foot on my chair and whips this guitar out from behind his back and says, 'Gosh, Mr. Tubb, would you listen to some of my songs? There ain't nothing to do out here but write songs.' I nearly fell out of my chair. The guys thought they would play a little joke on me by getting this guy to do it, but you know, he wasn't kidding. He *did* have some songs. Not bad ones, either.

Naw, the road gets to you sometimes, anyway. One time after a Canadian tour, I was driving home. I got almost all the way to Gallatin, not far from here, when the next thing I knew, I was off the shoulder into a telephone pole. I woke up with the steering wheel in my mouth. A highway patrolman stuck his head in the car and said, 'Can we do anything for you, Mr. Tubb?' They knew who I was and all. I said, 'Just get me to the hospital.' Well, they did and the doctors ran every kind of test there is, and when my own doctor came in, he said, 'You've got the healthiest worn-out body I've ever seen.' That's what he said. He said, 'Ernest, you ain't sick yet, but you could get *anything* now. You got nothing left to fight with.' So I slowed down a while."

★

Tubb still had his big white hat on, even in the office. He'd gesture with his hands as he talked, molding and shaping the story in the air in front of him.

Cary Justin Tubb, Ernest Tubb's grandson, came romping into the small room as if he owned it, which he may well do in a few years. Cary, about three or four years old, wore a cowboy hat, too; and as he leaped across the room into his grandfather's lap, the hat came sliding down to cover his face. Surrounded by all this youth and vitality, Ernest Tubb seemed glad that he had decided to take care of himself. But some damage had already been done.

I got emphysema, you know. . . . Oh, it's a whole lot better than it was. Why, I'm just like a preacher when it comes to quitting smoking. I smoked for years and years and when I first started getting sick, I was laying on the bed one night and I started to cough. Well, after a minute, I couldn't breathe, and I got scared. I truly thought I would die. I quit the next day, and haven't even wanted one since. And since 1964, I haven't had a drink. Like my daddy said, 'When anything gets bigger than you are, you better quit.' So I did.



COURTESY THE COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION & MEDIA CENTER

"I've seen some mighty fine boys ruined that way. But, you know, back in 1949, when I finally got Jim Denny, who was the manager of the Opry, to let Hank Williams come on my show, Hank promised me he wouldn't drink for six months. He said, 'Lord, I'd crawl all the way to Nashville on my stomach if they'd let me be on the Opry. Ernest, if you let me come with you, I'll never take another drink.' I said, 'Son, don't say something you can't do, but if you quit for six months, I'll try to get you on the show.' Well, not many people know this, but Hank Williams, to my knowledge, didn't take a single drink for nine months. And I know, because he was on my show and I worked closely with him. When he got going though, there wasn't anything you could do to stop him."

★

It was about this time, the early fifties, that Ernest Tubb's concern for his fellow-human almost cost him his life. He had come back from Korea with pneumonia. As soon as he got back, though, he refused to rest. Instead, he'd spend his time calling the wives and families of soldiers he'd met overseas. He had carried a notebook with him to put names and phone numbers in, and he had promised the boys he would contact their loved ones.

You know, I don't think I've ever seen a sadder thing in my life. I'd call these numbers, and as many as eight out of ten wouldn't care. Sometimes a small child would answer and I'd say, 'Where's your mommy?' and the child would say, 'I don't know.' That kind of thing gets to you."

★

At this point, Mrs. T. said, "He was livin' everybody else's life in his mind, and when he saw all this sadness it made him sick."

Ernest Tubb has been living everybody else's life for a long time. Tubb was personally responsible for seeing that Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers received all the money due her from the royalties from Jimmie's songs.

There's one thing about Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers that I don't think anybody knows. Now, Hank couldn't yodel. He could break his voice pretty good like he did on 'Lovesick Blues' and other things, but that wasn't a real yodel. Anyway, he loved Jimmie Rodgers as much as I did, and he could do his songs well, too; not like Jimmie, but like himself. Well, Hank was scared to death to record any of Jimmie's songs, because he was afraid Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers would hear them

and make fun of him. He'd call her and sing one of Jimmie's songs to her over the phone, and ask her what she thought, and she'd say, 'Well, it ain't Jimmie, but it's you, Hank. Why don't you record it?' But he never would. That's how much the legend of Jimmie Rodgers meant to him."

★

Ernest Tubb helped not only other performers, but the business itself. After 1942, when he found himself with a big hit on his hands and a whole lot of clout with the money people, it was Ernest Tubb (according to the great Owen Bradley), who singlehandedly made recording in Nashville possible. At the time most recording was either done on location with portable equipment (Tubb's first record was cut this way, in Houston) or in radio stations. So it came down to Tubb's convincing the bosses at Decca that Nashville was as good a place as any to cut his records. You could even say that he was responsible for bringing the industry to Nashville in a big, decisive way.

Tubb was also responsible, with others, for giving "country" music its very name.

Back then, it was called 'hillbilly' music, even in the magazines and papers. Now, I always said, 'You can call me a hillbilly if you got a smile on your face.' You know, it had a kind of mocking tone to it. You called somebody a hillbilly if you was making fun of him. So I started telling the record companies, 'Don't let's call it 'hillbilly'; let's call it something else.' So, I thought, 'Why not 'country' since we all come from the country?' After a while, the name stuck. Don't nobody call it hillbilly music no more."

★

By now, it was time for Tubb's last show across the street at the Ryman. Once more, we made the walk along Broad. You could tell he was somebody, by his milk-white hat and blue stage suit, and the ever-present fans, his people, would stop him every ten feet, their outstretched hands clutching programs, old photos, odd scraps of paper, anything for him to make valuable with his name. The fans can't seem to get enough of him, and he, for sure, can't get enough of them.

Onstage at the Ryman for the last time that night and perhaps forever, the curtains came floating back, the spots picked him out like pointed fingers of light and he went right into "Walkin' the Floor Over You." Before the first bar was completed, the aisles were filled with pushing fans and popping flash-bulbs, and not a single note of the song was unaccompanied by applause. The fans had him now. He was nailed to that stage. And knowing Ernest Tubb, he was loving every minute of it.

OWEN BRADLEY *Owen Bradley, a former pop pianist, helped produce Ernest's Decca sessions from the 1940's until Decca's Paul Cohen retired in the 1950's, when Owen took over as sole producer. He credits Tubb with helping start Nashville's recording industry.*

I wasn't really into country music, and Paul Cohen was the head of the A&R department of Decca, and Ernest had all these hits goin'. He was a big star. If he had said, "I don't want to make records down here in Nashville, I want to make 'em up in Chicago," there might not have been an Owen Bradley. Ernest embraced it and just cooperated with it, and the company wanted everything they could to get their hands on from Ernest.

Ernest was very, very generous with just everybody. Gosh, there are so many people that owe him so much. If you just tried to please him, that's all you had to do. He knew what he wanted. As long as he felt like you were on his team, boy, you were okay. There were a bunch of the Troubadours at the funeral, and I was very honored to be considered one of the Troubadours. Somebody told me that there were some 140 all told in his career.

I once got him to tell a story on an old black and white Sony video recorder I had. They were somewhere out in California when the bus engine busted, and they gave it to somebody named Charlie to fix it. They rented some cars and took off. When they came back, they couldn't find Charlie. They came on back to Nashville, and Ernest was on WSM and he says, "Charlie, come on back, wherever you are—give me back my engine!" But he had to get another engine. ■

LORETTA LYNN

The first song I remember on the radio was "I'm Walkin' the Floor Over You," with Ernest Tubb singing. Nowadays, I can stand right on the stage and watch my friend Ernest Tubb singing that same song. Thrilled? That ain't the word.

It was Owen Bradley that provided one of my big thrills in show business. Ernest, who recorded on Decca, was looking for a duet album, and he had his choice of women singers. Just on Decca alone he could have sung with Kitty Wells or Brenda Lee. But he chose me, after I'd had just a couple of hits. I remember Ernest chose me because, he said, I was an "honest country performer who sang with her heart and soul." It was a thrill to work with him, and I love him for all he's done for me. Ernest never tried to hog the songs. He'd just share the melody with me, without getting fancy, and I still think they're some of the best songs I ever did.—from *Coal Miner's Daughter* ■



LES LEVERETT

MERLE HAGGARD

Number one, I have lost a great friend—a man that I truly loved. He was the last of the cowboys. There can be no replacement for Ernest Tubb. He is an example that will never be forgotten, both as a man and as an entertainer. Musically, he had a guitar style and a vocal style that were classics and imitated by many. As a man, he was a legend for his generosity to his fans. He was indeed a great American. ■



COURTESY GRAND OLE OPRY

JACK GREENE *From 1962 to 1967, while he was trying to break into the business as a singer, Jack Greene served as the Texas Troubadours' drummer. In late 1966 he had a Number One hit with "There Goes My Everything"; in May 1967 "All the Time" went to Number One, and Ernest Tubb saw that the time had come.*

When "All the Time" was Number One for five weeks in a row, Ernest said, "I think it's time (for you) to go." He said, "I hate to lose you, but go on out and pay for your kids' education and make yourself a livin'. If you can't make it, you can always come back and be a Troubadour."

He rewrote a lot of songs, some big hits. People would bring 'em, and the idea would be there, but they didn't have it together. He would rewrite the songs, record them and never take credit for them.

One thing I learned from him was perseverance, and also to take the business seriously. When he talked about another artist, he'd always say, "He's or she's serious about the business." He always determined where somebody's head was by how much they were willing to give.

I've seen him give back club owners their money because they had a complaint about something. Ernest was a very proud man; I've never seen anybody as proud as he was.

I think Ernest Tubb gave more to the world than any politician or head of state or famous person in this world and asked for nothing in return. He never asked for anything back. He gave the world more than anybody I know. Remember, for God so loved the world, He gave us Ernest Tubb. ■



LES LEVERETT

RICKY SKAGGS

Ernest Tubb was what people like Gene Autry and Tex Ritter were to country music. Legends walking around. He helped so many people get started who became important... Hank, Sr., Carl Smith, Ray Price, Faron Young, and Loretta... he was so influential that way. So, when I was officially inducted as a member of the Grand Ole Opry, it meant as much as anything in my career that I was introduced by Ernest Tubb during his part of the show. ■

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON Ernest Tubb was probably the first country artist that I can remember listening to as a kid down around Brownsville, Texas. "The Old Rainbow at Midnight," "Seaman's Blues," and things like that. He was just my idea of what a country singer was. Later he was still my favorite because he was the one I could imitate. He was the *only* one that I could imitate. I sang on a record with him that Pete Drake was making. I don't think they ever released it, but it's fun to try to tell who was who.

When I moved to Nashville to try and make it, he represented the "old school" to me. One of the guys who kept on doing because he really loved it. He loved to be on the road as much as Willie Nelson does, and you could see every mile on his face too.

I never saw him do anything ugly, and I never heard an ugly story about him, and I've heard ugly stories about everybody else. He was just a beauty. I think he'll be up there with the giants like Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, Lefty and those kind of guys if there is a Mount Rushmore of country music. ■

JOHNNY CASH In his own way, Ernest Tubb was a good teacher. I remember once he gave me a lesson in dramatics. It was in 1956, and I was working my first dates with him. He watched me do my show in Columbia, South Carolina, and when I came offstage he said, "Let's have a talk." We sat in the dressing room, and he complimented my stage presence and delivery. But he said, "Make those people know that you believe in what you're singing. When you're singing 'Folsom Prison Blues,' don't smile. Make them feel the misery of the lyrics; but when you're singing 'I Walk the Line,' give them a twinkle in the eye once in a while and let them know it's light-hearted." I still think of those things Ernest told me when I'm onstage from time to time, and remember the lesson he gave me.

When he was a young man he was one of the most handsome people that ever lived. And he had the rights, at one time, to portray Jimmie Rodgers in a movie on Jimmie Rodgers' life. That was when he was close to Mrs. Rodgers, working with her back in the late 1930's and early 1940's. There were big plans for that movie, and it's a shame that it never happened. I always saw Ernest Tubb as a man who, if he had developed his talents and potential as an actor, would have done a great job at it. He did make a couple of country music movies, but wouldn't it have been interesting to have seen Ernest Tubb play Jimmie Rodgers?

Ernest, well, Ernest Tubb was a good man. ■



JUNE CARTER CASH When I first came to the Grand Ole Opry, it was my job two or three times on Saturday night to make the people laugh. I was given a spot where I might tell some funny stories, jokes, strange little things and then sing a song. My greatest asset was a friend and help-person named Ernest Tubb.

I'd work on Saturday afternoons and write my funny (and not so funny) jokes and rush down to the Opry to find a little dressing room where all the boys were. And over the top of everybody's head, I'd see this big hat and smile and that voice that said, "Just a minute, Junie, I'm coming."

He'd leave all his peers and run to meet a gangly little girl who would share her hard afternoon's work. It was the first time in his life that he was actually a straight man to a comic, I guess. But he made me feel like it was the part he enjoyed most about being at the Grand Ole Opry. He always took the time to listen, the time to remember, the time to laugh, but mostly the time to care.

He was somebody I looked for every Saturday night; he *is* someone I will always look for in my mind's memory. Ernest Tubb made me feel like a very special person, and because of the time I spent with him, maybe someday I will be. ■

BILL MONROE

Well, me and Ernest were friends all down through the time since he came to the Opry. We done a lot of shows together. I would bet you that me and Ernest Tubb did more show dates than anybody on the Grand Ole Opry. He was a awful good man. Awful good friend of mine. It was wonderful to sing at his funeral. ■

WILLIE NELSON

Ernest was the first guy that I started learning songs from. I had an Ernest Tubb songbook, I couldn't have been over six or seven years old. My sister was playing the piano by then, and she would play all of his early songs, and I would sing "My Baby's Book," "Walkin' the Floor Over You" and all of those early ones. I knew most every one of them.

He was just your real basic Texas-type guy, and everyone could identify with Ernest Tubb. The first time that I ever met him, I was playing in a band with a guy named Smiling Jerry Jericho, and we were on the same bill at a club along with Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours down in Bandera, Texas. Buddy Emmons was playing steel guitar with him, and we got to be friends on the tour, and we worked together.

He changed country music simply by adding Ernest Tubb, because Ernest Tubb had never been along before, that's for sure, and he added himself, his ideas, his thoughts, his philosophies, his way of life and the way he looked at things. Everyone that I know admired and respected Ernest Tubb. ■

TEDDY WILBURN

A gentle man, he was just one of the kindest, greatest people that I have ever known. ■



Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers, E.T., Hank .

THE COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION & MEDIA CENTER

HANK SNOW

Ernest brought me to the Grand Ole Opry when you had to have a hit record to come there. I had everything else but a hit record. It took him over a year to convince the people at WSM that I should have a try, and that he thought I had some talent. He and I'd been corresponding a couple of years before that because of our admiration for Jimmie Rodgers.

I was in Ft. Worth starving to death. I was on the same show he was headlining. I got \$25.00 for my part of it, and that's when he told me, "You need to be at the Grand Ole Opry, that's where it's happenin'. I'll do everything in my power to get you there because I think you have something people like."

I would repeat what I told the people in my acceptance speech when I went into the Country Music Hall of Fame: that Ernest was one of the most unselfish people that I had ever met, and that he had helped more people reach stardom than any other person in country music. And that is true. He didn't value money at all, he gave fortunes away to underprivileged people, people that really needed it. So I have nothing other than good to say about Ernest. He was a giant in our field, and a legend, and he will be missed. There was only one Ernest Tubb. If it had not been for Ernest, I would not be talkin' to you now. ■

JERRY HANLON

Country music singer and personal friend of Ernest Tubb.

In the liner notes on the back of Ernest Tubb's *Midnight Jamboree* album, Grant Turner wrote, in part, as follows: "Hundreds of eager contest winners, young hopefuls with their first record... make the long trip to hear the applause of a Nashville audience and to broadcast over the great 50,000 watt clear channel transmitter of radio station WSM. Each leaves the stage with words of encouragement from Ernest. This group is represented in this album by two young artists, Linda Flanagan and Jerry Hanlon."

That was in 1961—and the following years have seen a very good association between Ernest Tubb and myself. He was always "for" my every effort and, more important, I'm proud he was my friend. He was, perhaps, the kindest person I have ever known.

I have never reached the stature of some artists, and by comparative standards I am unknown in country music circles, but I have had many opportunities, most of them made possible by the kind person of Ernest Tubb—and I am only one of many. ■

CARL SMITH He was just a genuine person. The first work I did after I came to the Opry was on the road with him. He let me ride with him and the Troubadours in their cars, and he told me things I was doin' wrong, like leavin' the stage too quick and stuff like that. One of the biggest songs I had, "(If You Feel Like You're in Love) Don't Just Stand There," he gave to me. He was always the same. Every time you saw him, he had a grin. If you needed something, he'd be there. He wasn't one of those people who tried to tell everybody what to do. When he told you something, it was genuine and he meant it sincerely. I don't think he ever wanted anybody to say, "He helped me." I haven't met another one like him.

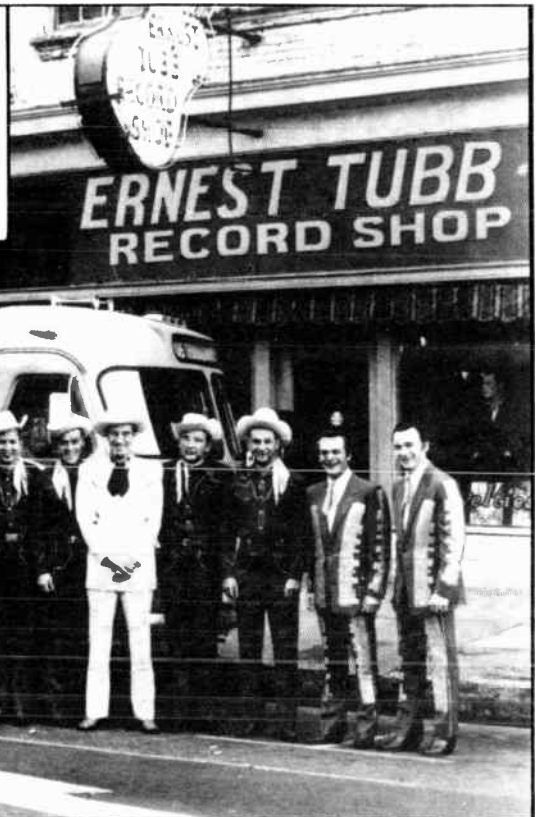
It was a learnin' part of my life during that period, and you steal a little bit or learn, however you want to say it, from everybody you are involved with. I did, and I think everybody else did. The main thing I always tried to do was to be myself. That's one of the things Ernest taught me. ■



Carl Smith, Marty Robbins, Ernest, Faron Young.

TIM HARDEN

KITTY WELLS I think he was one of the greatest entertainers in the country music field. He did an awful lot to help people comin' up, new artists. Anyone that came to town, he would have them on his Record Shop show. He did a lot to promote country music in every way that he could. We worked a lot of show dates with Ernest, Johnny and Jack and myself in the late 1950's. Our show and his show travelled together. He was just a great guy, and he'll always be remembered as one of the greatest, I think. ■



COURTESY THE COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION & MEDIA CENTER

Tennessee Mountain Boys, Johnny & Jack, Kitty Wells, E.T. and The Troubadours, the Wilburn Bros. and Stonewall Jackson looking out store window.



PETE DRAKE

First rank steel guitar player and producer of Ernest Tubb: The Legend and the Legacy. If I could pattern my life after anyone, it would be Ernest Tubb. He was the most honest and honorable man I ever met. He probably helped more new people get started than anyone in the business. He was one of a kind. ■

ROY ACUFF

Ernest was a very loyal and dedicated artist who did as much for young entertainers as anybody in the history of country music. He was a wonderful friend. ■

HAROLD BRADLEY *In 1942, a teenaged pop/jazz guitarist named Harold Bradley reluctantly took a summer job playing behind Ernest Tubb. He went on to become the dean of Nashville's session guitarists in the 1950's and 1960's. His brother Owen produced Tubb's records for over 25 years.* Ernest was country music. And he was a very early pioneer, a unique personality, a unique talent and a very kind and warm man. His contributions will probably be unmatched by anybody that's coming along now, because their longevity will probably not go that long. He was unique, one of a kind. In his own way, he was with Elvis, he had his own style. He was like Popeye: he was what he was, and that's all he had to be. He was a super human being, and just a pure, pure country artist, and I wish we had more of them. ■



COURTESY THE COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION & MEDIA CENTER

LEWIS CROOK *Part of the Crook Brothers and member of the Grand Ole Opry for 55 years.*

I first heard Ernest Tubb in February of 1943 while on my way to basic training in Camp Lee, Virginia. We were being processed in Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia. They had a camp-wide hook-up with WDOD in Chattanooga. I heard the announcer say, "Ernest Tubb made his debut on the Grand Ole Opry last night," then he played his recording of "Walkin' the Floor Over You." I thought to myself what a unique voice. Then when I came back from overseas in 1945, Tubb was already on his way to stardom.

He was a man among men. He was an entertainer in his own right. There is no one that can ever fill his shoes on the Opry stage or any other stage. He was never too busy to give a word of encouragement to a newcomer or help him financially if the need was there. He was known the world over for his Texas drawl, and for his own style of singing. No doubt he will have lots of imitators, but there will never be another Ernest Tubb. ■

OSCAR SULLIVAN *Since the early 1940's Rolin Sullivan has been Oscar of the comedy team of Lonzo & Oscar, which appears regularly on the Opry.*

I must first state that above all else he loved his fans. His fans always came first to him. He never let them down. He was always at a date when he was supposed to be there. He never entertained the idea of not showing up. His word was his bond.

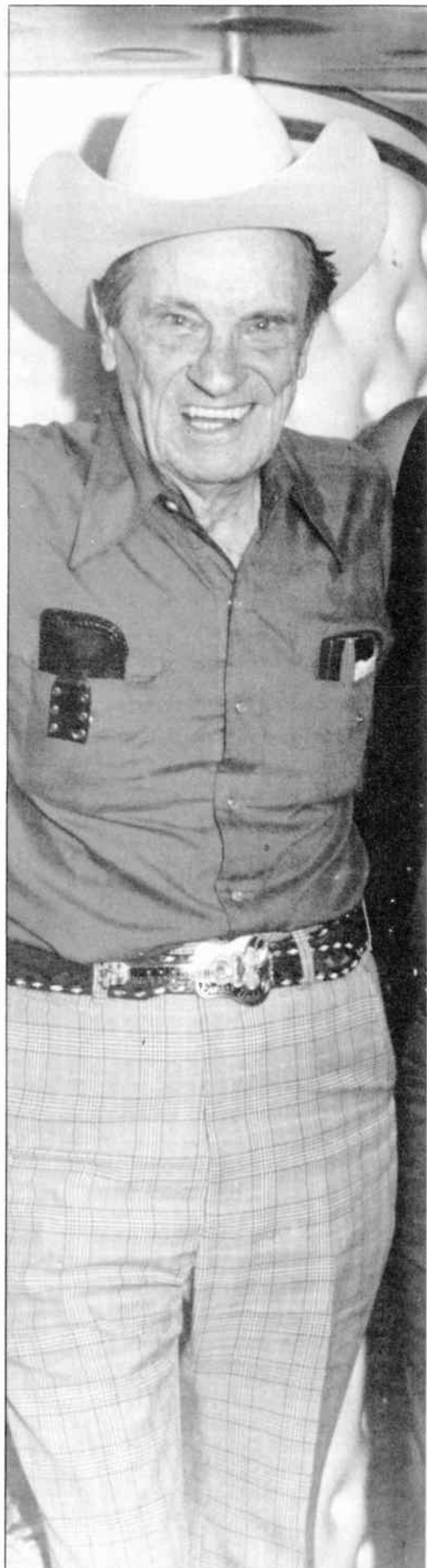
We did the Carters Champion Chicks TV show together for six years. He was always a gentleman and displayed a good sense of humor. He knew what he wanted his music to be and never strayed from that. He wasn't one to jump on new fads. His very presence on a stage was one larger than life. This personality, charm, calm, and dedication to his fans and music propelled him to the heights he attained. He did his best.

I notice that I keep bringing up his fans. I guess I could say that, above all else, E.T. loved his fans. Perhaps even more than they loved him, which was no small feat. He always loved to be in front of the people who loved him and his music. This love and admiration from both directions made for a genuine legend on stage. ■

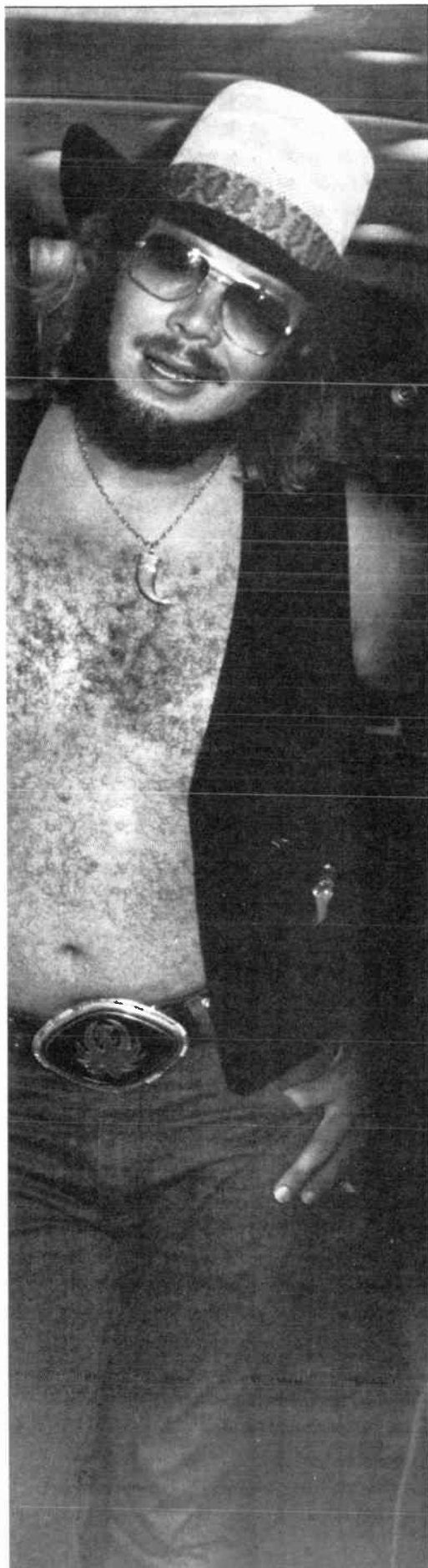
WAYLON JENNINGS *He was the one. My first hero.*

When I was real little, I'd take a broomstick and pretend it was a guitar. And I'd sing Ernest Tubb songs. The thing that I first remember was some of the movies that he made back then. That was really the first exposure I had to a live picture show. The show would play for a week. The drive-in sat out in a field near where we lived. You could see just enough of the screen over the fence, and you could hear the singing real clear on account of those big speakers that drive-ins had back then. I would sit out in the backyard every night.

I've always loved him. One of the biggest thrills that I've had was recording with him when Pete Drake produced that record *The Legend and the Legacy*. Ernest's voice was there on tape before I came in to record my part, but his presence was so strong and his voice was so intimidating that when he said that thing in there, "Aw, sing it, Waylon," it got to me so bad that I had to have them turn it off because when he said that, everything just went away. I told the engineer to be sure and put it back in, though, when I finished singing, but I just couldn't sing while it was on there. It was too spooky. He was my hero all along up to the very end. ■



COURTESY HANK WILLIAMS, JR.



BUDDY EMMONS *Pedal steel virtuoso Buddy Emmons played steel with the Texas Troubadours from 1957 to 1962, and helped make the band one of the finest instrumental groups in the business.*

I got on the bus one time with one of the loudest shirts you'd ever want to see... every color in the rainbow. Ernest looked at it all day and joked about it. And that night at the hotel, we got upstairs, and I was in his room, and he said, "Take that shirt off." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because I want to buy it. What'd you pay for it?" I told him about ten bucks. He said, "I'll give you \$25 for it." So I jerked it off and gave it to him, and he took it over to the window... and we were about five stories up... and he threw it out the damn window. It floated down and hit the sidewalk. Johnny Johnson and Jack Greene had just been to the restaurant to eat, and they came by and recognized my shirt as it was fallin' down on the sidewalk. They picked it back up, took it up to the room, knocked on my door and said, "Is this yours?" I said "Yeah," so they gave it to me that night. I got on the bus next morning with the same shirt, and Ernest like to come unglued.

He was always concerned. I was in my 20's when I worked with him, and I had my share of troubles. I came down with rheumatic fever. I was supposed to go in the hospital for three months. I went to him, and Ernest said, "Son, don't go to the hospital. See my doctor first; you may not have to." So I went to see his doctor, and he said, "Stay in the house, be very calm and don't move around. You won't have to go in." So I did, and Ernest kept me on salary those three months until I got back out. I still had my job, and we went on from there. He was always concerned about your welfare.

One thing I learned from him was honesty. He was very honest in what he tried to do. If there was any doubt he owed you a nickel, he'd pay you a dime. ■

MARTY STUART In the winter of 1973 I was playing in Lester Flatt's band on a package tour across the Midwest. We stopped in Moline, Illinois for a night. There were only around 150 people, but they were true country fans. Lester was well received, but they honestly must have come just for Ernest because they acted as if there would never be another show, and Ernest Tubb performed for them the same as if there had been a stadium full. I decided to sit down and watch his show, and I'm glad I did because I have thought about it a number of times. It was like sitting in a classroom and being taught how to treat your audience. Some drunk kept hollering "In the Jailhouse Now!" Ernest sang it for him and then continued right along with his show, but then the ole boy decided that he wanted to hear "In the Jailhouse" one more time and started hollering it out again. I expected Ernest to be annoyed and say something to put him in his place, but instead he just had the band kick it off again. That impressed me, but after the show a sight I always want to remember is Ernest Tubb in that white hat and his overcoat, not really paying attention to how cold the building was, sitting in a chair on the edge of the stage, autographing pictures, albums, popcorn boxes, or whatever they asked him to, and smiling for pictures with his fans till the last one had gone away. ■

HANK WILLIAMS, JR.

When I think of Ernest Tubb, I see him standing onstage with his white hat and his guitar singing his heart out. He was an inspiration to me. ■

"RANGER DOUG" GREEN *"Ranger Doug" Green, former*

writer for this magazine, and Riders in the Sky, a western trio, are some of the newest members of the Grand Ole Opry.

First memories of Ernest Tubb are hard to recall: wasn't there always an Ernest Tubb? Somewhere, on a trip somewhere, maybe in Dad's old yellow '50 Chrysler convertible when we moved to California back in '52—or maybe it was that shiny new Ford Victoria—somewhere, over the hum of tires on the blacktop came that improbable voice soaring through the velvet, star-spangled night, fading in and out, a burst of static punctuating that ritualistic, mantric four-note guitar lick ("Awww, Billy Byrd!"), or marring, for a moment, the peculiar trailing off of that authoritative, resonant voice at the end of each phrase. It was a frank, worldly-wise, avuncular voice, singing with unflinching directness—and sometimes with a wink and a grin—of things and worlds and lives far beyond my ability to know or comprehend at the time.

The first time I saw Ernest Tubb in person was at a huge, star-studded package show at McCormick Place in Chicago in 1965 or 1966. Loretta Lynn was there, and Porter Wagoner and pretty Miss Norma Jean, and Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, whom we'd driven several hundred miles to see. My banjo pickin' pal Jim McQuaid and I even snuck backstage to meet the Master, but we were so awestruck when he answered our knock on the dressing room door that all we could do was mumble, "How do you do, Mr. Scruggs," and retreat with wide eyes and flaming faces. In spite of our feeling about Scruggs, it is Ernest Tubb who stands out in memory from the show itself—the graciousness, radiant despite his lanky, somewhat stiff frame, the hardened, road-weary looks of the beautifully dressed Texas Troubadours, the deep, compelling, perfectly sincere voice, both in speech and in song.

The last time I saw Ernest Tubb was the night we Riders in the Sky joined the Grand Ole Opry, June 19, 1982. He was frail then, and creased—it was one of his last Opry appearances—but gracious and warm and complimentary beyond necessity both when he formally introduced us as members on stage, and later during the shooting of photos that the Opry had requested for the event.

An entertainer, a showman, a trouper, and a gentleman to the last, he made us welcome with a generosity of spirit which might have been remarkable in others, but was the essence of the Texas Troubadour. It is this Ernest Tubb we'll remember always. ■



COURTESY CONNIE SMITH

CONNIE SMITH

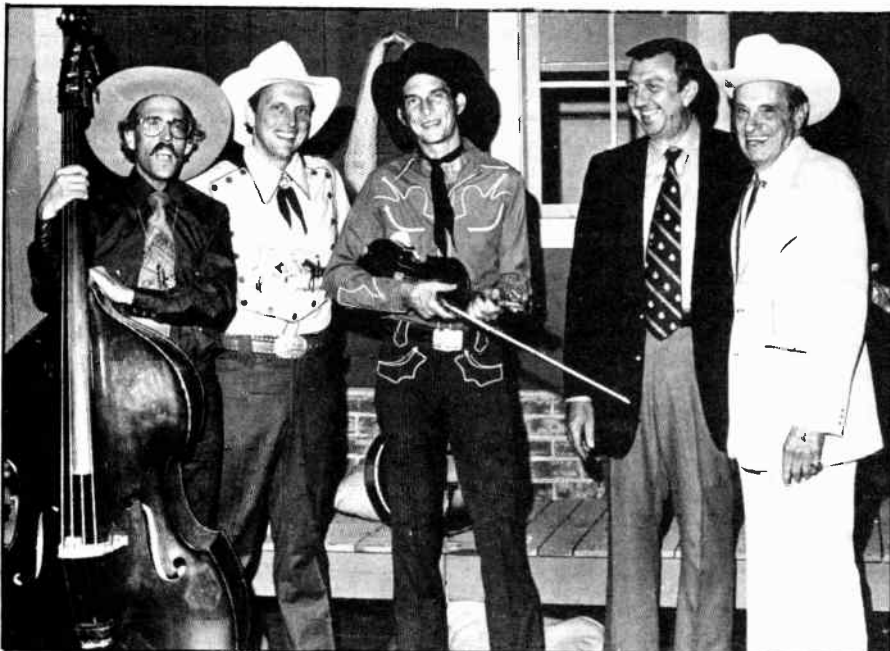
Like so many other artists, the first stage I performed on in Nashville was at the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, March 28, 1964. To me, Ernest Tubb was such a kind and gentle man. I loved him—the whole world loved him, but I'm sure that, especially, the flag deep in the heart of Texas will wave at half-mast for a long time over the loss of E.T. ■

HAL DURHAM

Manager of the Grand Ole Opry.

I regarded Ernest as one of the most professional people on the Grand Ole Opry. He always prepared himself meticulously for his emcee role, and he was very careful about the sponsor and the other entertainers on the show.

Ernest introduced the *Tonight Show* bandleader, Doc Severinsen, on the Opry one night. And, of course, Doc was at that time particularly famous for his wild clothes. When he came out and Ernest introduced him—Ernest had on one of his bright western outfits—Doc said, "Boy, I'm just a beginner at this thing, and you're the master of it." He was really impressed by E.T.'s outfit. ■



LES LEVEHETT



JUSTIN TUBB *Justin Tubb, Ernest's firstborn son and a Grand Ole Opry star in his own right, remained extremely close to his father through the years and was deeply involved in Ernest's final battles with emphysema.*

The last date Daddy played was November 13, 1982 at Berlin, Ohio. He hadn't smoked in 19 years, and his doctor told him that he probably added four, five or six years onto his life. He didn't suffer so much with pain. They had medications to take care of that. He suffered from being cooped up, tied down, not able to get up and go and do the things he loved to do, but he had a ton of exercises to do to keep his lungs flexible, anything to make him breathe.

The last couple or three years he'd been sick off and on, but trying to get better was foremost in his mind. The first of those years, he was firmly convinced he was going to get better. Even at the end, he never did say he wasn't. The day before he died was the best he'd had in two weeks, and he said, "I think I'm gonna get up and go home." He was always hoping.

He kept up with things at first and then the last six or eight months, he quit listenin' to the Opry. I think the last thing he quit listenin' to was the Midnite Jamboree. He told me that he started goin' to bed a little earlier. But he actually got to the point that if he couldn't be a part of it, he didn't want to hear it. He did watch his old television show, which I introduce, on the Nashville Network.

There were false rumors that a lot of the artists he had helped never came around to see him. I'd tell Daddy that so-and-so wanted to come out and see him, and he said, "Thank 'em for me," but, he said, "I really would rather not have any company."

He was very strongly unhappy with the way things were goin' in Nashville. But he loved Ricky Skaggs and George Strait, Gene Watson, Moe Bandy... Merle Haggard was his favorite. I think he felt better about things after Ricky hit. I think his being dropped by MCA was the biggest blow to his pride, but he finally accepted that it was happening to everybody. When MCA dropped Kitty Wells I think that really eased his mind, because she was in a class with him as far as stature. But it still hurt him very, very much.

Pete Drake told me about the time my dad first heard the tribute album *Legend and the Legacy*. Pete called him into the studio and said, "I've got your album mixed; I want you to hear it." So Daddy went over, and Pete didn't say anything, he just put the tape on and it started playing. Of course, the first one played, and the first artist on it with him didn't come in till about halfway through the song. When they started singin', he looked up at Pete. When he heard another song, it dawned on him what Pete had done. So Pete played the whole thing and he said big tears were in my dad's eyes, and he told Pete it really touched him that they thought enough of him to come in and do that.

He was never as impressed with his place in country music as a lot of people were. He was just doin' something he loved, and tryin' to put more into it than he got out of it. I'm sure he was aware of who he was, and the impact he had. ■

The Ernest Tubb Memorial Fund, "F O R E.T." was founded in conjunction with and under the auspices of the American Lung Association of Tennessee. F O R E.T. represents For Ongoing Research & Emphysema Treatment. If you would like to donate, make checks and money

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Record Reviews

Elvis Presley
A Golden Celebration
RCA CPM6-5172

Those of us who have hungered to discover every track Elvis Presley ever recorded, particularly early material, have long had to content ourselves with crumbs. A string of complaints from critics greeted nearly every Presley reissue for the past decade. The collectors' complaints were often more intense (and often unprintable).

The truth is RCA's past Presley projects *were* often tacky. They hit a low point a couple of years ago with *I Was the One*, an album dedicated to making Elvis' early classics more palatable to contemporary rockabilly fans by overdubbing modern studio musicians. Since RCA merely re-did the original Scotty Moore, Bill Black and D.J. Fontana backing, the whole project made about as much sense as copying the Mona Lisa over the original painting to attract modern art fans.

No more. The Presley legacy is at last in capable hands. RCA's new vice president, Gregg Geller, a rockabilly collector in his spare time, has finally set things straight. Using Elvis' 50th birthday as the hook, Geller has created *Elvis Presley: A Golden Collection*, a masterful six record retrospective of rare and previously unissued material, carefully compiled and more revealing than any previous effort.

Record one begins with the remaining Sun out-takes, apparently not as extensive as we thought. There is the legendary slow take of "I'm Left,



You're Right, She's Gone," arranged like the Delmore Brothers' "Blues Stay Away From Me," an alternate, slower take of "Blue Moon of Kentucky," a version of "When It Rains It Really Pours" which was re-issued earlier this year, and "Harbor Lights" from the first session in July '54. Most of this material, along with the 1956 TV appearances included in this collection, has appeared before in bootleg versions by both American and foreign concerns. One of the most telling moments of this particular section comes during a break in the recording of "When It Rains," when Sam Phillips urges the group not to get "too damn complicated" in the middle of the song. This is the Phillips of legend, putting simplicity and feel ahead of everything else.

The 1956 TV appearances—the Dorsey Brothers, Milton

Berle. Steve Allen and Ed Sullivan shows—are issued in their entirety, legally leased from the owners (contrary to popular belief, RCA never owned any of these soundtracks). The sound quality surpasses any previous reissue of this material and the shameful overdubbing done when the Dorsey and Sullivan shows were excerpted for the *This is Elvis* film soundtrack is gone.

Three sides are devoted to Elvis' homecoming concerts at Tupelo's annual Mississippi-Alabama Farm and Dairy Show in September 1956. The sound quality isn't great even by 1956 standards. Still, this is the first opportunity to hear a complete 1956 concert in front of a friendly audience. Clearly comfortable, Elvis chuckles at the hysteria, reads announcements, greets local politicians, repeats his onstage jokes and tries to hold the audience in

check between songs. Scotty Moore's lead guitar is startling during the evening show. His solos on "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Baby, Let's Play House," wild enough on the records, take on a savage, violent intensity.

The five newly-discovered home recordings done in Germany during Elvis' army stint are equally fascinating. "Danny Boy" sounds more like it's sung by bluesman John Lee Hooker than by any Irish balladeer. In an interesting excerpt from this famous (and rare) *TV Guide* interview, Elvis denies the story that he learned his gyrations from the fundamentalist church services of his youth. Four home recordings sung around the Graceland piano, probably with the Memphis Mafia, are ragged, yet Elvis' singing is far more intense than anything he was doing for the movie soundtracks. Side twelve winds it all up with eleven previously released excerpts from the famous 1968 comeback TV special, which brings the album full circle.

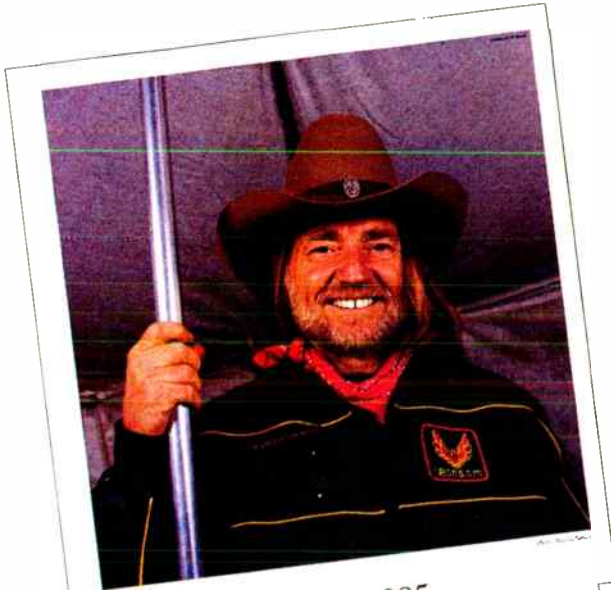
In all fairness to RCA, I've often thought much of the problem was that neither previous RCA executives—nor Colonel Parker—ever really understood the Elvis collector or scholar as well as they did the typical fan. This time, even the packaging is dramatically improved. Instead of posed publicity shots, the stark black and white imagery of Alfred Wertheimer's 1956 candid shots grace each album sleeve; the liner notes are substantive and thoughtful. The sum total suggests that at last Elvis Presley's contributions are being taken seriously by his record company, and that is cause for celebration.

—RICH KIENZLE

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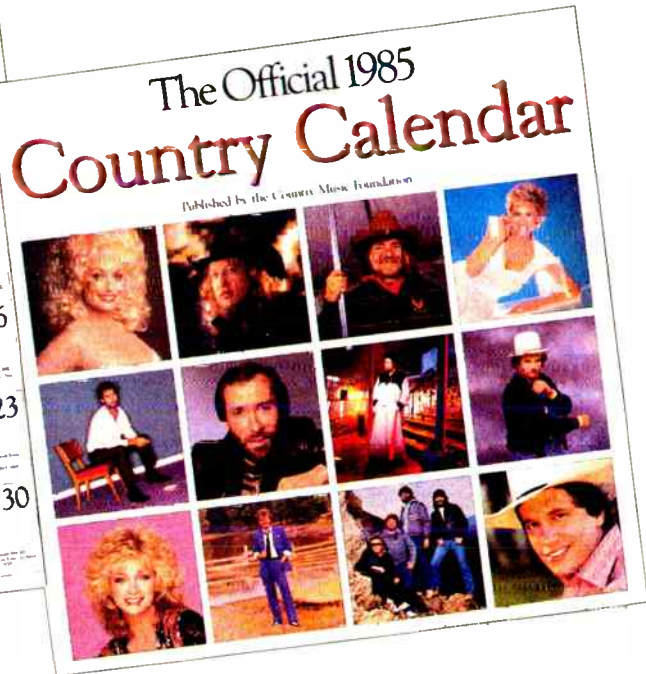
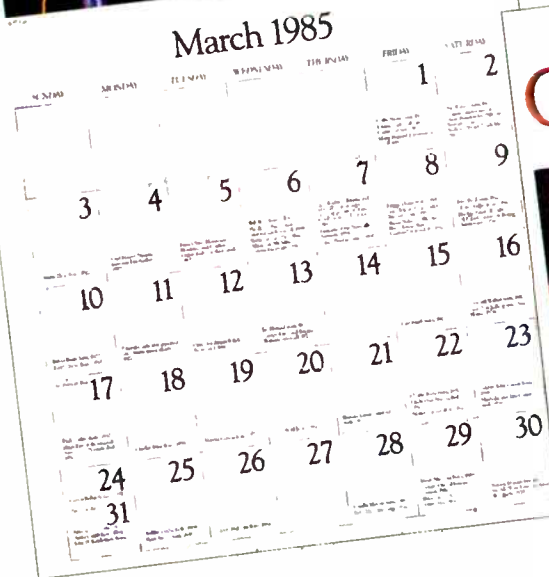
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Record Reviews

The Everly Brothers EB '84

Mercury 822 431-1 M1

Don and Phil proved they could recreate their 1950's and 1960's magic in their much-acclaimed reunion concert last year. Still, that was a live performance; the audience was enthused, the band well-rehearsed and sympathetic. The odds against carrying all those good feelings into a recording studio are high for any reconstituted act. Reunions are rarely that successful. Many fail because good material isn't there, or more often, because expectations are raised into the stratosphere.

Not this time. With amazing good fortune, a producer totally in tune with both past and present, prime-cut material and the nucleus of the reunion concert band, the Everlys have literally picked up where they left off. Not only do they retain the Kentucky mountain harmonies of their childhood, the rockabilly grittiness of their Cadence hits and the graceful sensitivity of their later Warners material, but Dave Edmunds' masterful production has placed all of this solidly in a 1980's context, complete with synthesizers where appropriate.

The contemporary quality of this music is obvious from the roaring majesty of Paul McCartney's "On the Wings of a Nightingale" to the rocking "Danger Danger," which bridges the gap between fifties rock and eighties punk. "The Story of Me" is an airy, contrite ballad, done up in a symphonic, Phil Spectorized arrangement, on which the Everly harmonies show more maturity and durability than any of us had a right to expect. The churning contemporary rockabilly of "I'm Takin' My Time" shows their drive intact as well, decorated by Albert Lee's razor-sharp lead guitar. Composer Paul Kennerly's "The First in Line"



oozes authentic country purity, and could have been slipped onto their classic *Songs Our Daddy Taught Us* album with nary a problem. "Lay Lady, Lay," which Bob Dylan tried to get them to record 15 years ago, was indeed perfect for them. "More Than I Can Handle" has much of the feel of "When Will I Be Loved." Don's three compositions, "Following the Sun," "You Make It Seem So Easy" (with a reggae arrangement, yet) and the haunting "Asleep" are custom-tailored to the brothers' sound.

That Don and Phil reunited was a pleasant surprise; that *EB '84* reveals them to be as vital as they were nearly 30 years ago can only be considered a triumph.

—RICH KIENZLE

Ricky Skaggs *Country Boy* Epic FE 39410

Surely, the essence of Ricky Skaggs' charm and his overwhelming popularity, which recently enabled him to accomplish the almost unheard-of feat of taking a streamlined version of the old Bill Monroe bluegrass chestnut, "Uncle Pen," to the top of the country charts, is his purity.

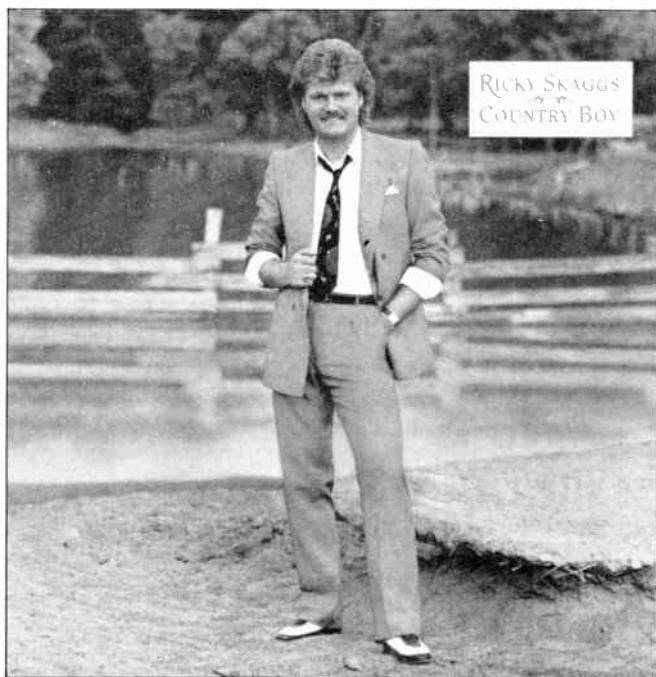
After all, we're talking here about an artist who wears his religion on his sleeve, who sometimes frowns upon alcoholic beverages being served at music industry parties celebrating his success, and who even gives special thanks to God on the liner sleeve credits of his albums.

This purity pervades *Country Boy*, Skaggs' latest outing. If not thematically, then at least in Skaggs' musical rendering of them, all of the songs have a G-rated wholesomeness about them; and even when he turns in a version of the old George Jones honky-tonk cheating classic, "Window Up Above," he replaces the malicious cynicism and slightly sinister moral condemnation of Jones' original version with an almost tender evocation of shattered expectations and naive disappointment. On "I'm Ready to Go," he even slips in a fine, spirited, old-timey gospel song for the sake of whatever passive non-believers might happen to be out there listening.

Though drums, steel guitar, and even an occasional electric guitar lick can be heard throughout *Country Boy*, Skaggs, as always, clings tenaciously to the clear, soaring harmonies, fast-paced instrumental interchanges and emotional clarity of his first love, bluegrass music. This background comes through ever so clearly on the celebratory title song; it's in ample evidence on the lively up-dated breakdown, Bill Monroe's "Wheel Hoss"

(which features Monroe himself on mandolin); and you can even hear it on the almost jazz-like instrumental break on "Baby, I'm in Love with You" (which features Ricky's talented father-in-law, Buck White, on piano).

All of this is why, in my humble opinion, Skaggs is perhaps the most important artist at work in country music today. Granted, there is a strong-headedness about the man that is said to border occasionally on arrogance. But such an attitude is, perhaps, necessary when one is—as Skaggs is—a fish swimming upstream against swift, opposing musical currents. I'm afraid, if we left it to the Lee Greenwoods, the Jannie Frickes, the Kenny Rogerses, or even the latter-day Dolly Partons of the world, the country charts would soon be reduced to a paltry and watered-down stepchild of the pop and rock charts. ("If ya can't cut it in Hollywood," they all seem to be telling us, "then come on down to Nashville!") But as long as we have a few fine, commercially-appealing purists-at-heart like Skaggs as a counterbalance, who are willing to work hard at revitalizing mainstream country from the



Record Reviews

wellspring of its rural roots, then I suppose we're not in too much trouble. —BOB ALLEN

George Jones
Ladies' Choice
Epic FE 39272

Delia Bell and Bill Grant
The Cheer of the Home Fires
Rounder 0187



Why does this new George Jones record fail to move me? Is it George, or is it memories?

Perhaps it is both. Looking back, what stands out most strongly about "The George Jones Story" is the pain involved and expressed, the magnificent and horrific drama of self-abuse and self-disgust played out for twenty years both live-in-person (where the pain was real) and through the miracle of recording tape (where the pain was art, and triumph-over-life art at that). I think it is true that while George's vocal skills alone would have set him ahead of his contemporaries, the element which placed him in a class of his own was the uncannily (embarrassingly? calculatedly?) close fit between what he sang and what he was doing with his life. I mean, "If drinking don't kill me, her memory will"... "I know that I'm not standing tall, but I'm trying, and at least I've learned to stand on my own two knees"—lines like those made masterpieces of the maudlin art like "Teddy Bear" and "Blind Man

in the Bleachers" sound as phony as they were, and as confessional art, George's late-middle-period records were unequalled before or since. Descended straight down the Hank-and-Lefty soul-bearing mainline, they were just as powerful as "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and "I Never Go Around Mirrors," and somehow (perhaps because *everybody* knew the shape George was in), they were a lot more spooky.

These days, of course, the man is no longer so spectacularly hell-bent, and his material is not so outrageously personal. George seems to be applying his truly amazing craft to songs more or less any country star could (or would) sing, and quite naturally the "edge" which was his alone has disappeared from his records. And inevitably, this poses a truly distasteful question: can a sober George Jones ever be as great (or mean as much) as the monumentally screwed-up George Jones of yore?

Precedent does not tell us much—most of the great substance-abusing singers kept at it until it killed them, denying us the opportunity to find out how straightening up might have affected their art—but perhaps, one hopes, the answer is that if George finds the right songs, of course he can be great. Now, however, because he can't (or shouldn't) do "those" kind of songs for a while, he will have to find material which is profound for reasons other than its spook-power. And that's a tough proposition: there aren't that many great new songs floating around, and George has to compete with all the other top-rank stars for them.

This problem may account for what seems to be a marking-time process in George's recording career. These days, he seems to handle his recording commitments by breezing into the studio with what amounts to a kind of daily-rotation list of people who have spent anything from the last

twenty years to the last twenty minutes fervently hoping to sing with him.

You can understand this phenomenon from George's point of view—it's fun, it's sociable, and now and again it even works musically—and you can certainly understand it from his record company's angle. CBS, in case you haven't noticed, has taken to using George and Willie Nelson (who also seems to have little new of his own to say) as booster rockets for those of their artists whose careers have yet to reach altitude or, having once achieved it, are currently heading downward toward or past the hard red line of the promo-bucks/record-sales equation. The technique works often enough, of course—had you ever heard of Julio Whatsisname before the Willie-burner kicked-in?—but, being an artificial concept in essence, it often produces results which are more "interesting" than "righteous."

Ladies' Choice is not quite this kind of animal, since many of the women on the album are not CBS artists, but the end result is still just a mildly interesting "concept" album which gets your attention only occasionally. George sings wonderfully throughout, of course (but not as wonderfully as he does by himself or did with either Tammy Wynette or Melba Montgomery), and whether or not you buy the record depends on whether or not you want to find out how he sounds with Brenda Lee ("silly" according to my ear), Janie Fricke ("good"), Loretta Lynn ("historic but strange"—come back, Conway and Tammy!), Barbara Mandrell ("good"), Emmylou Harris ("good" again, because she's a born harmony singer and it's a class song), Lacy J. Dalton ("never again"—someone give that girl a tonsillectomy!), Deborah Allen ("surprisingly good"), Terri Gibbs ("very good indeed" because she takes the low parts and sings the blues), and Leona Williams ("the best," because

she and George really know each other and the song actually applies to their lives).

Maybe somebody's career will take off (or take off again) because of *Ladies' Choice*, but to my ear there's nothing here which just knocks my socks off. Maybe it's the material; maybe it's because I lust for total-killer George Jones songs too much; maybe it's the overall flow. Maybe hearing just one of the tracks on the radio would be exciting—it's quite possible that the record's too-even "sound" and pacing obscure some gems—and that may be the key to getting the most out of this album: wait for the hit single, buy that, and hope that George and that lady go on to sing together for a while, possibly even make a *real* duet album.



The main factors which compromise *Ladies' Choice* as an album—so-so material, run-of-the-mill ultra-modern production, and some odd or ill-advised pairings—are exposed by comparison with another new duet album, *The Cheer of the Home Fires* by Delia Bell and Bill Grant. This album, made for the low-bucks Rounder label by two people who have been recording together for fifteen years, is a beauty; it has grace, style, and the kind of communication between the two principals which only time and mutual feeling can create.

In overall tone, Delia and Bill Grant are a lot more like, say, Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper than Conway and Loretta or Dolly and Kenny; their's is a classic form in which the lady is the star and the music, non-electric and played

Record Reviews

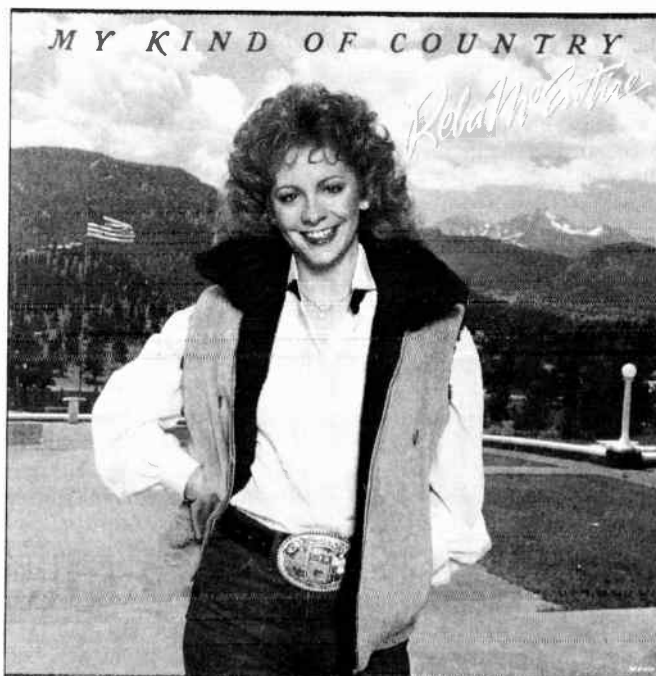
with the venerable skills of the mountains, could be performed by any old combo of pickers who happen to have a couple of decades' pre-Opryland Grand Ole Opry stage experience.

What I'm saying, I guess, is that you just don't hear records like this any more in mainstream country music. Delia has a genuinely arcane, heavily-accented, almost-but-not-quite-flat vocal style which is genuinely riveting and far more rural than that of Ricky Skaggs or Emmylou Harris or The Whites or anyone else who came up on the "Newgrass" circuit, and while *The Cheer of the Home Fires* features some modern material, it differs from the others' albums in that while they are vamping up the old-style country sounds, Delia and Bill Grant are playing it straight. Check out "Field of Flowers" or "Sad Situation," and you'll know what I mean: they are gorgeous.

Delia had a shot at the big time a little over a year ago when, thanks to Emmylou Harris, she made a Warner Brothers album which was so "country" (and so good) that it sailed right through the time warp Ricky Skaggs and the folks were riding to the top of the charts, and disappeared somewhere in the Dust Bowl. She is now back where one supposes she belongs—on a minor label—and personally, as long as those who want to hear this kind of music get informed of its continued availability, I don't mind that at all. I really can't imagine Delia closing up the condo, firing up the BMW, and zooming off to open the show for Razy Bailey.

I hope that she and Bill Grant go on making their kind of albums—which, if you're interested, have been the absolute cream of the *really* hard-country minor-label crop for a lot more than a year or two—and I am comforted by the thought that not all modern duet records are compromises, "concepts," or cost-effective career promotions.

—PATRICK CARR



Reba McEntire
My Kind of Country
MCA 5516

It would be no exaggeration to say that this is one of the best country albums to come out of Nashville in a long time. Reba McEntire sounds like she's poured her heart into each and every one of the songs, and the result is a stone-cold country album, no strings attached.

Everything is right with *My Kind of Country*, from the selection of the songs to the production. The list of writers whose work was chosen for this album reads like a "Who's Who in Country Music"—Harland Howard, Troy Seals, Nathan Stuckey, Faron Young, Billy Deaton, Connie Smith, George Richey and Rick and Janis Carnes, just to name a few.

And that warble that characterized Reba's earlier works—sounding good sometimes, but simply irritating at others—has settled down into a strong, pure country voice. For lack of a better word, Reba's put the "twang" back into country.

What's even better is that

she and producer Harold Shedd decided to let her voice carry the album. There are no unnecessary frills evident anywhere. On the other hand, when the distinctive sound of a steel guitar is called for to complement Reba's own twang, they're not bashful about giving it room to reverberate.

From the first sounds of the blue-grassy "How Blue" right on through to the traditional hard country "You've Got Me (Right Where You Want Me)," there is not one pure-puff filler song to be heard. On one song, Fred Carter Jr.'s "I Want to Hear It From You," Reba sounds uncannily like Patsy Cline, so much so that a friend and country music expert who heard the song checked out the album credits to see just who was singing. It was Reba, but, other than on that song, there is no way to compare Reba to anyone else. She stands on her own. (And that's no criticism, comparing Reba to Patsy Cline.)

As Reba herself explains on the album's liner notes, "Country music has been hard to define in the last few years. So anymore, when anyone asks me, 'what kind of country are you singing?,' I can honestly say 'my kind of country.'"

This is definitely our kind of country, too.

—MARY ELLEN MOORE

George Strait
Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind
MCA 5518

With this, his fifth album for MCA Records, the lean, tall, quiet Texan, George Strait, once again reaffirms his position as the latter-day Gary Cooper heart-throb of the Texas and honky-tonk sound.

Though there are no great surprises on *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*, there are a few changes. Jimmy Bowen, the new top executive of Strait's record label, MCA, has managed to angle his way in on the credits as co-producer (something he's managed to do with a preponderance of the best-selling artists on his label), along with Strait.

Even so, there's no real damage done. (Nor is there any indication that Bowen spent all that much time in the studio during the recording of the album). In fact, the straight-ahead, slightly under-produced manner in which Strait's clean-cut honky-tonk appeal is showcased on these ten cuts is more effective than the contemporary sweetening that was beginning to seep into the tracks of his last album outing, with producer Ray Baker.

Perhaps in a conscious effort to keep himself anchored in a solid country vein (when the rest of the Nashville industry seems to be drifting away from it), Strait has, this time around, drawn heavily on the material of some of the original poet laureates of modern honky-tonk: Whitey Shafer, Wayne Kemp, Sonny Throckmorton, and Mac Vicky. There is also, with "Any Old Time," a token bow to Western Swing.

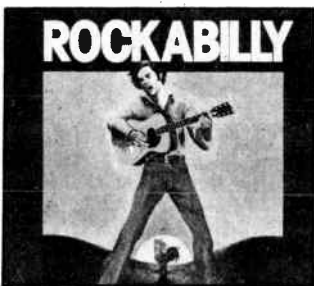
But the disarming quality that sets Strait apart and distinguishes him from Moe Ban-

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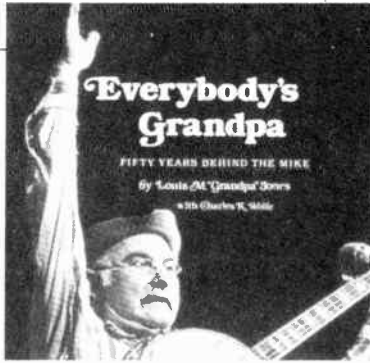
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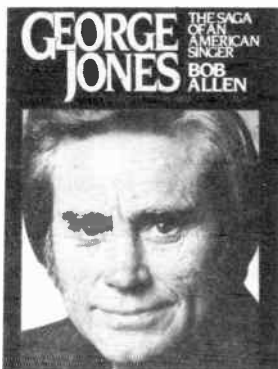
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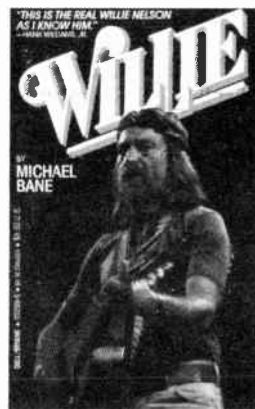
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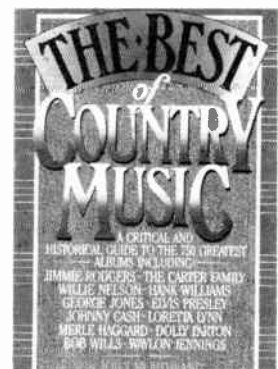
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Record Reviews



dy, Joe Stampley, and a host of other slightly more one-dimensional contemporaries is the youthful earnestness and dignity with which he is able to imbue even the most dismal and cynical of these honky-tonk tales of hung-over despair and Saturday-night sexual intrigue and betrayal. This quintessential appeal of his can be best heard on the melodically sophisticated romantic ballad, "You're Dancing This Dance All Wrong," where he lays it on the line with near perfection.

All in all, *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind* is another notch in George Strait's belt. It solidifies his role as one of the latter-day saviors of good, old country music. And in this era when the crown princes of the lounge reign supreme, we need all of those that we can get. —BOB ALLEN

The Judds *Why Not Me* RCA-AHL1-5319

This captivating new mother-daughter duet team set the country music world a-churning last year with its debut mini-LP, *The Judds*. Music business professionals then put their stamp of approval on the act, voting them the 1984 Country Music Association Horizon Award.

Why Not Me is The Judds' first full-length album; it clearly demonstrates for any doubters that might still be out there in the woods that the charm, musical vitality and vocal originality showcased on *The Judds* was no one-time fluke.

Why Not Me is such a fine album that it should serve as a reminder to record producers up and down Music Row that originality and tastefulness are not necessarily a contradiction in terms with commerciality.

If anything, *Why Not Me*, in a subtle and thoughtful kind of way, nudges The Judds just a little bit further musically up-town, and thereby expands and enhances their appeal. Producer Brent Maher has effected this shift through a judicious choice of material, and by easing up ever so slightly on the washboards and dobros and getting just a little more exotic with heavier touches of drums, bass and guitar.

On a song like "Bye Bye Baby Blues," The Judds achieve a lilting smoothness reminiscent of The Andrews Sisters. Backed by ominously crashing drums and relentless bass fills, they even venture successfully into a sultry rockabilly posture on the old 1950s Jody Reynolds hit, "Endless Sleep."

Why Not Me makes it even more apparent than did *The Judds* how extraordinarily gifted eighteen-year-old Wynonna is. Her voice has an emotional range that goes far beyond her years. In fact, with a few more years under her belt, it's difficult to see what could stop her from emerging as a latter-day Bonnie Raitt (one of Wynonna's musical role models), or even a Linda Ronstadt. Listen, for instance, to her lovely rendering of "Sleeping Heart"—how, with the magical underpinning of the precise family-honed harmonies of her mother Naomi, she creates a subtle yet devastating emotional presence.

Special credit is due here to producer Brent Maher for the care and intelligence he's brought to this project. It's one thing to discover such a unique vocal sound such as these two have; yet it's quite another to keep its basic appeal intact and nurture it through the trials, tribulations and hundreds of split-second artistic decisions

that must be made in the course of long weeks of recording sessions. That he's succeeded marvelously in doing this is not only evident in the range and choice of material, but also in the imaginative vocal arrangements and tasteful, provocative embellishments of acoustic instrumental hooks and fills. All of this conspires to make great songs like the Harlan Howard/Sonny Throckmorton/Maher title cut, which practically jumps right out of the speaker at you.

Simply put, this is one fine album that speaks well for everyone involved. It proves that when you get past all the hype and novelty appeal of this attractively down-home mother-daughter team, they can musically deliver with flying colors.

—BOB ALLEN

Jimmy Buffett *Riddles in the Sand* MCA 5512

Coming to grips with Jimmy Buffett is like trying to reason with the hurricane season. Big storm rolls in off the Gulf; rains like all hell for a couple of days, palm trees blowing all over the place. Then the sun comes out, the sky turns a perfectly clear shade of blue, and we all forget about it until next year.

In the mid-1970's Key West resident Jimmy Buffett emerged as the hottest cult artist of the decade. His music was a blend of hot country and cool Caribbean rhythms, steel guitars and steel drums. His lyrics were intelligent, at times poignant, at times gently humorous. He could sing a song to break your heart, maybe "A Pirate Looks at Forty," then kick your ass with "Why Don't We Get Drunk and Screw" (yep, he told me once a pretty long time ago, you write a song like that, you've got to live with it).

But Jimmy Buffett—and I guess all of us, if you want the truth—got older. The commer-

cial success he'd dreamed of became a reality; fifteen-table clubs became multi-thousand seat auditoriums and even stadiums. The songs became predictable, stale as last night's rum punch. For a long time, you didn't hear about Jimmy Buffett at all.

Now he's back with an unassuming album called *Riddles in the Sand*. It is as if Jimmy Buffett decided to look through the wrong end of the telescope, making the world *smaller*, and in doing so, maybe make it more real. It's a more country album; also a more Caribbean album, more tuned to earlier Buffett than his music in recent years.

Interestingly enough, what it lacks is some of the drive that characterized his earlier work—*Riddles in the Sand* is clearly the work of an older and wiser artist:

I'm a singer and a sailor on a midnight sea

If we're crazy, that ain't nothing new

'Cause we don't care what the people say

If there's a price, it's the price we'll pay...

Most of the songs are written by Buffett, Michael Utley and Will Jennings. One of the exceptions is "Bigger Than the Both of Us," written by Rhonda Coulet, which is one of the best songs on the album.

Is this one of Jimmy Buffett's best albums? It's hard to say, because so much of my own life is tied up in those Caribbean fantasies. It is, as Jimmy Buffett wrote a long time ago, a strange situation, a wild occupation, living your life like a song. This is, though, a happy album in a sad sort of way. Maybe Buffett himself sums it up best in "La Vie Dansante":

Feel it all with a willing heart

Every stop is a place to start

If you know how to play the part with feeling

*I play with feeling
That's why I wander...*

—MICHAEL BANE



"See it, lad. Live it.
There'll never be its
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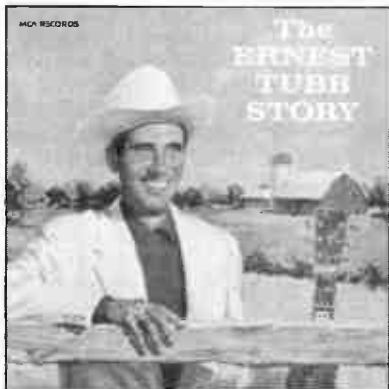
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Record Reviews

Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson

Music from The Songwriter
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in fact, that I remembered why it was that I liked Willie Nelson so much in the first place. I even like his profane jab at record executives, "Write Your Own Songs." It is a jab that's been a long time coming. "Who'll Buy My Memories" is a hauntingly evocative performance that stands on its own.

Kris' side is equally good, especially Kris Kristofferson and Guy Clark's "Under the Gun." I was surprised that Kris could still make the hackles on the back of my neck stand up.

Willie Nelson writes about wars of the soul. He takes the small pieces of our lives and makes them seem so large they fill up the universe. Kris Kristofferson deals increasingly with the larger palette, taking things so large that they seem to make no sense and making them personal and painful. Forget about the movie and buy this record just to listen to two masters' work magic, together and alone.

—MICHAEL BANE

Gail Davies

Where Is a Woman To Go
RCA AHL1-5187

Ordinarily, an artist's proclamation that a new album contains "the best music I've ever made" proves about as accurate as a long-range weather forecast. But, in the case of *Where Is a Woman to Go*, the artist is Gail Davies—who is hardly ordinary. On the contrary, since the release of her debut album for Lifesong in 1978, Gail has approached her music with a level of intensity and commitment that too many of her female contemporaries seem to exhibit only when choosing their wardrobe and hair style.

During her four-album stint with Warner Bros., Davies declined to play the subservient role women in country music have commonly adopted. Not only did she produce and arrange her records; she also

Honestly, I didn't see *The Songwriter*. I figured I would wait around until it was released on video cassette, then rent it for a couple of bucks. The soundtrack, though, is a pretty good record in its own right. For one thing, it's especially interesting to see two of the main influences on country music in the last 20 years packaged together on a single album. And, one of the advantages to listening to a movie soundtrack without having seen the movie first is that the music has to stand on its own. Otherwise, there may be songs I'm fond of because I've liked the movie. I mean, you can just picture a certain scene in your mind, soundtrack and all. Ah well, never mind.

There are two sides to *The Songwriter*, Willie's side and Kris' side. Each side opens with a duet. Of the two, I think I like "How Do You Feel About Foolin' Around" better than "Eye of the Storm," although both are a cut above the most recent spate of country music. "Foolin' Around" is light-hearted silliness, with production by Booker T. Jones to match. The rest of Willie's side is clearly the best Willie Nelson music to surface in a couple of years. Willie sounds more animated than he has since, gosh, I guess *Stardust*. He sounds so good,

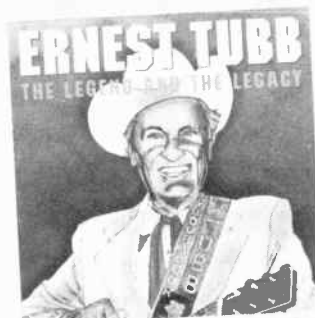
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Record Reviews

composed a substantial amount of her material. However, despite critical acclaim, Gail's respectable chart success has been eclipsed by that of singers whose "vision" appears limited to the *Wall Street Journal*. Hoping to expand her following, she recently joined RCA's impressive roster.

Ms. Davies' satisfaction with

this album is well-founded. For she and co-producer Leland Sklar (a prominent Los Angeles studio musician) have fashioned a striking alternative to "business as usual" country album-making. In place of swirling strings and overblown orchestration in general, we hear restrained but sparkling instrumentation from accom-

plished pickers, including Sklar, Billy Payne and Reggie Young, who actually sound interested in the project. And instead of ten interchangeable songs selected on the basis of publishing control rather than merit, we find a wonderfully varied program which spotlights Davies' remarkable versatility as a singer.

"Break Away" and "The Trouble With Love," the opening tracks, are infectious, well-arranged rockers with strong lyrics. The spirited "Lovin' Me Too," written by Gail's brother Ron and sung with talented label-mate Vince Gill (formerly of Pure Prairie League) is propelled by a delightful acoustic guitar pattern. Even Dolly

Hits or Misses?

Tom Jones

Love Is On the Radio
Mercury 0704

Johnny Lee

Workin' For a Livin'
Warner Bros. 25125-1

Ed Bruce

Tell 'Em I've Gone Crazy
MCA 5311

John Conlee

Blue Highway
MCA 5521

T. G. Sheppard

One Owner Heart
Warner Bros. 25149-1

Dottie West

Just Dottie
Permian 8206

There's bad news at the O.K. Corral. Country record sales are down, and Nashville is getting nervous. Record company executives quote new research statistics hourly, while they pore over their diminished bottom lines and fire off cheerful memos to the corporate brass.

Well, sit down, Sherlock, we may have a solution. If this month's mailbag is any indication, people aren't rushing out to buy country albums

because Nashville isn't *making* country albums. They're making pseudo-pop imposters. And no one likes a poor imitation.

This month's review selections collectively resemble warmed-over Eddie Rabbitt tracks. That's not so bad if you happen to be Eddie Rabbitt, but it's disastrous if you're really John Conlee. At the rate Nashville is going, I suppose we can look forward before long to Gene Watson crooning Tony Bennett. Or Vern Gosdin singing Henry Mancini. Or Johnny Lee attempting Barry Manilow. Excuse us, but this doesn't sound like country.

Keep the customer satisfied, said Paul Simon, who knows whereof he speaks. Too bad some Nashville producers seem to have forgotten about that. Records aren't supposed to be vinyl substitutes for Sominex. And it shouldn't require No-Doz to make it through a review session.

But enough. Down to business. Our new releases this column are by Tom Jones, Johnny Lee, Ed Bruce, John Conlee, T.G. Sheppard and Dottie West.

Tom Jones: now here's a phenomenon. Could someone explain the secret of this man's mystique? (In terms of airplay, please.) The way he overdramatizes lyrics sounds like Bill Murray doing his *Saturday Night Live* Las Vegas impersonation.

Maybe no one has told Jones

about the effectiveness of understatement. Or convinced him that heartfelt isn't synonymous with histrionic. Jones uses vocal dynamics like nuclear projectiles, destroying anything in their path, including



meaning and emotion. Certainly he's a powerful singer; but it's hard to take him seriously when he sounds like country's answer to Marjoe Gortner.

The latest Tom Jones album, *Love Is On the Radio*, isn't one of his best. He sounds more agitated than usual, as if he spent his vacation in a Maytag. He's most effective when he concentrates on *what* he's singing, not *how* he's singing. Unfortunately, that rarely happens. Instead of utilizing his famous vibrato with discretion, he unleashes it like rampant Jell-O. Thus songs like "A Picture of You" or "Only My Heart Knows" undergo the Tom Jones primal therapy treatment and end up like limp dishrags when he's wrung them dry.

The title cut is a new Leon Russell composition. "Bad Love" sounds like a remake of Elvis Presley's "Burning Love." So what? Perhaps one day Tom Jones will make an album on which he doesn't feel obliged to show us every vocal trick he knows. It's something to look forward to. Scratch far enough below the surface and we might find a very likable country artist.

Johnny Lee rode in on the *Urban Cowboy* craze. "Lookin' For Love" was a rarity: a crossover hit that deserved to be one. Since then, he's been searching for a follow-up in a string of imitations.

His newest album, *Workin' for a Livin'*, isn't going to change his status as a singles artist. Why should people spend \$8.98 to hear Lee do below-average rockabilly, middle of the road pop/country and something he obviously believes is blues?

Lee is a pleasantly innocuous singer who is dependent upon strong songs and energetic arrangements to make an impression. He noticeably lacks the former here: "Rock It, Billy," "Waitin' on Ice" and "Everybody Wants to be Single" are throwaways. "Short Changed" and "You Could've Heard a Heart Break" (another of Lee's "Lookin' For Love" derivatives) can't compensate for the fact that this album, as a whole, is *boring*.

Record Reviews

Parton takes a break from counting *Rhinestone's* meager box office receipts to harmonize on a heartfelt reading of Bobby Braddock and John Prine's "Unwed Fathers"—a poignant ballad that recalls Dolly's best work.

Only "Lion in the Winter," another duet, this time featuring J.D. Souther, emerges as

something of a disappointment, lacking the fluidity of Hoyt Axton and Linda Ronstadt's original version.

A number of these songs, among them the first single released from the album, "Jagged Edge of a Broken Heart," sound themes of despair, regret, or even bitterness. Yet, significantly, Davies' compelling

delivery of them conveys not self-pity, but an overriding strength and determination.

Containing only one of her own compositions, *Where Is a Woman to Go* may not supplant Gail Davies' first album as her definitive work. It was there, after all, that we were introduced to such profoundly personal and moving originals

as "Grandma's Song" and "Someone is Looking for Someone Like You." Still, if the quality of material, production, and performance here should happen to correlate with recognition, Ms. Davies could well be delivering some sort of acceptance speech at next year's CMA Awards.

—PETE LOESCH

Notes on Review by Kip Kirby

• Every artist has an album or two he'd just as soon never saw the light of day. Now that **Ed Bruce** has moved to RCA, he would undoubtedly prefer that MCA hadn't gone ahead and released *Tell 'Em I've Gone Crazy*. The album was recorded more than a year ago, and it shows.

In Bruce's case, however, the problem isn't the songs, it's the production. Tommy West has worked with Bruce far too long not to realize that you don't put the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on this guy's records.

You don't surround an Ed Bruce with strings, horns and

tentially best moments—"Someone Who Would Care," "If She Just Helps Me Get Over You," "Tell 'Em I've Gone Crazy"—are buried under an avalanche of superfluity. Someone should tell West that being an effective producer often means laying back and letting your artist carry the ball. Hopefully, Ed Bruce will survive, and with luck, live down "Birds of Paradise" and "The Devil Inside." Maybe he'll get a new producer as well.

• As strange as it is to hear Ed Bruce mired in crossover arrangements, it's stranger to see it happening to **John Conlee**. What happened to "Rose Colored Glasses" and "Lady, Lay Down" or "I Don't Remember Loving You"? Conlee is one of country's most underrated stylists. With the right lyrics and production, his voice can run shivers up your spine, bring tears to the eyes, and make one realize what country music is all about.

Which is why Bud Logan's production on Conlee's *Blue Highway* is so bewildering. He's made a blatantly pop album which falls flat because the artist is incapable of creating any emotion with it. And rightfully so. You'd think an artist would know when he's in over his head. Yet Conlee muddles through laughable efforts like "De Island" with no obvious qualms. Maybe he didn't show up for the overdubs later

and hear the scores of strings and saxes, not to mention background vocalists. Even Thom Schuyler's lovely "Years After You" isn't enough to save this album.



• **T.G. Sheppard** shouldered some risk an album or two ago when he decided to pursue a more consequential career. He abandoned the "I Loved 'Em Every One" approach and opted for Jim Ed Norman, who produces perfect pop/country crossover tracks.

The only problem is, while Sheppard sings better than ever, his latest release, *One Owner Heart* is almost straight adult contemporary music.

True, there's more feeling from Sheppard on this album—and he does sing beautifully, especially on "You're Going Out of My Mind," "One Owner Heart" and "Love Burning Down" (a highlight)—but the arrangements are grandiose. On the second side of the album, things begin to run together. These aren't songs that

linger in the memory when the needle lifts.

Oh, yes—the highly publicized mating of Judy Collins and T.G. on "Home Again." Predictably heartwarming. A movie soundtrack duet looking for a movie.

• The good news about **Dottie West's** first album on Texas-based Permian, *Just Dottie*, is that Dottie no longer sounds like a nightclub torch singer straining for her upper register. She sounds relaxed, comfortable, easy.

Couldn't better songs have been chosen for her, though, than "What's Good for the Goose (Is Good for the Gander)," or "Tell Me Again" or "Ain't Nothin' Like a Woman"? Come on, this is Nashville, home of countless great songwriters. Triteness is becoming tiresome.

It's a credit to West that she manages to sound as good as she does on this sugary package. She acquits herself well on numbers like "Memories For Sale," "Blue Fiddle Waltz" and "Where Is a Woman To Go," chiefly because she's the professional she is.

But once more, songs have been sacrificed for syrupy instrumentation. And while the Musicians Union is undoubtedly rubbing its hands in glee over all these overproduced albums, it's the artists themselves who will suffer most in the long run. ■



offensively saccharine orchestration. What you *do* is give him a handful of clean, honest country songs like "Diane" or "The Last Cowboy Song" and leave him *alone*. Leave the tracks lean, simple, and acoustical so that Bruce's great, laconic voice can shine.

But West, for no apparent good reason, has cluttered this album up. As a result, the po-

Buried Treasures

Re-issues, Rarities, and the Hard-to-Find

by Rich Kienzle

Even before he died in September, few of **Ernest Tubb's** albums were readily available. Finding anything other than Rounder's *Honky Tonk Classics* and *The Legend and the Legacy*, a late 1970's tribute album, took dedication. The Ernest Tubb Record Shops carry the more recent Decca/MCA sets, and individual stores still have copies of *Golden Favorites*, *The Ernest Tubb Story* and *Greatest Hits*. But even they were largely re-recordings done in the late fifties, not the original forties hits. There is no indication that MCA, who dropped Tubb from their roster in 1975, will rectify the situation.

But all is not lost. Two re-issues of material culled from the 1944-45 World Transcriptions fill the void somewhat. *Early Radio Broadcasts* (Golden Country LP 2211) is taken from a series cut in January 1944 with an early incarnation of the Texas Troubadors. Tubb's voice, as rough-hewn back then as later, was a bit more nasal. The material itself, aside from a cover version of Al Dexter's "Too Late to Worry, Too Blue to Cry," focuses on Tubb favorites like "Our Baby's Book," "Answer to Walkin' the Floor Over You," "Tomorrow Never Comes," and "When the World Has Turned You Down." The performances are relaxed, and the Troubadors sound much as they did in later years (though Tubb stopped using fiddlers in the 1950's).

A second album, also taken from World Transcriptions, *Early Radio Transcriptions* (ACM 14), features 20 songs cut in Chicago in May and June of 1945. The sound is passable. Despite no notes and lackluster packaging, this collection is worth having. There is no over-



lap with the Golden Country album which focuses on Tubb favorites; this one emphasizes cover versions of other hits. Several Bob Wills numbers are included ("My Confession," "Ten Years," "Blue Bonnet Lane,") along with hits of the day like "There's a New Moon Over My Shoulder," Roy Acuff's "Low and Lonely" and an interesting version of "Frankie and Johnny" paying tribute to Jimmie Rodgers' classic version. Considering the dearth of original forties Tubb material, both albums are essential.

Another interesting new Golden Country reissue is **Carl Butler's** *Early Classics* (LP 2212), a look at Butler's solo recordings (without Pearl) from the early 1950's, before "Don't Let Me Cross Over" propelled them to stardom. Butler has always been a rough-edged East Tennessee

singer in the Roy Acuff style, and that influence is well-reflected in this material recorded with some of the best bluegrass musicians in the business. Listening to Butler's prideful rustic music is a time warp of sorts, for it could just as easily be from the late thirties as the early fifties.

The importance of Martha White Flour to the success of **Flatt and Scruggs**, and bluegrass music in general, can't be overestimated. Their 5:45 A.M. WSM radio broadcast, sponsored by the company, made them stars despite the fact the Opry would not accept them as cast members.

A new album, *Martha White Biscuit Time: 1953* (Radio Gems 1), brings together several of the earliest shows. The secret of the show's success, combining topnotch bluegrass with hearty, early morning informality, is readily apparent.

And there are surprises, among them Scruggs' energetic rendition of "Steel Guitar Rag" and some haunting gospel songs with exquisite three-part harmonies. My sole complaint is the album's poor sound quality.

I have had a policy against reviewing material from Old Homestead Records ever since they pointedly refused to provide review copies for this column some years ago. I'm making an exception now only because I find **Jimmy Walker's** *Loving Country Heart* (OHC 310) so fascinating. Walker, a West Virginian, sang so much like Roy Acuff that he was hired by the Opry to replace Acuff when Roy briefly left the show in a 1946 contract hassle.

Walker subsequently wound up working in Los Angeles in the mid-forties, recording with the best of that area's Western Swing musicians. Among his recordings for Coast Records was the original version of the classic "Detour," included here. Walker's full-throated Appalachian voice combined with smooth, sophisticated West Coast swing backing is a truly odd musical fusion. He had few substantial hits, yet his engaging versions of "Sioux City Sue" and "From Now On" are excellent. The latter is enhanced by a stunning steel guitar solo from Joaquin Murphey (who should have been credited in Ivan Tribe's fine liner notes).

It's no secret that Nashville was stood on its ear in the wake of Elvis' success. In response, many hardcore country performers attempted rockabilly-flavored music with varying degrees of success. **Webb Pierce** was one noteworthy example, and the best of his ef-

forts in this vein are included in *I Ain't Never* (Charly 30235). The album covers a variety of material recorded from 1951 to 1960. The 1956 "Teenage Boogie" may have seemed new at the time, but in fact Webb had recorded virtually the same song earlier with Tillman Frank's band under the title "Hayride Boogie," for the Pacemaker label. One pleasant surprise is his 1957 adaptation of the Everly Brothers' "Bye, Bye Love," with which he is totally comfortable.

There are two Jimmie Rodgers numbers, recorded nine years apart, which reflect the vast changes in Pierce's style. "California Blues" (1951) is sparse and spare, while "In the Jailhouse Now" (1960), complete with voices, drums, piano and tic-tac bass, is pure Nashville sound. Other hits included are "I'm Walkin' the Dog" (1953), "More and More" (1954), "I Ain't Never" (1959) and Pierce's 1955 hit duet "Why, Baby, Why" with Red Sovine which rivaled George

Jones' version on the charts. One unissued track, the 1954 "Sneakin' All Around," is basically the old Bob Wills instrumental "Blue Bonnet Rag" with added lyrics.

After leaving Mercury Records in 1962, George Jones had his next great successes with United Artists Records, both alone and on duets with Melba Montgomery. George was a bit more polished here than he was in 1955, yet far earthier than after Sherilli-

zation set in in the mid-seventies. This 1962-65 period saw some of his finest work, and *The King of Country Music* (British Liberty SLS 26 0042 1) brings together 20 of his biggest hits from those three years. Most are classics like "She Thinks I Still Care," "Open Pit Mine," "The Race Is On," and "We Must Have Been Out of Our Minds" (with Melba). It's the next best thing to reissuing the old UA albums. A must for any serious George Jones collector. ■

The Essential Collector *The Editors' Guide to Classic Country Albums*



In 1978, Pete Drake, one of Nashville's premier steel guitar players and an independent record producer, had a good idea: let's get a bunch of Ernest Tubb's fans into the studio and get them to record duets with The Texas Troubadour. The result was *Ernest Tubb: The Legend and the Legacy, Vol. I* (FGLP-0002), a two-record twenty-song set. It is excellent. Not much more needs to be said other than to list the songs and the singers, all including E.T., of course: "Waltz Across Texas" with Willie Nelson, "Walkin' the Floor Over You" and "Seaman's Blues" with Merle Haggard and Charlie Daniels, "Filipino Baby" with George Jones, "Jealous Loving Heart" and "Soldier's Last Letter" with Johnny Cash, "You Nearly Lose Your Mind" with Waylon and Willie, "When the World Has Turned You Down," with Waylon and Vern Gosdin, "Thanks a Lot" and "Answer the Phone" with Loretta Lynn, "Jimmie Rodgers' Last Blue Yodel (The Women Make a Fool Out of Me)" and "It's Been So Long, Darling"

with Conway Twitty, "Rainbow at Midnight" with Marty Robbins, "Journey's End" with Marty and the Wilburn Bros., "Set Up Two Glasses, Joe" with Ferlin Husky and Simon Crum, "Our Baby's Book" with Cal Smith, "You're the Only Good Thing" with Charlie Rich, "Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello" with Johnny Paycheck, and "Blue-Eyed Elaine" with E.T.'s son, Justin. There isn't a bad thing about this album except that it ends; the good news is that Pete Drake is working on Volume II which should be out early this year.

Another great Tubb duet album, this one an old one, is *The Ernest Tubb/Loretta Lynn Story* (MCA2-4000), a two-record set with 22 songs, including "Sweet Thang," "Beautiful Friendships," "I Chased You Til You Caught Me" and "Let's Stop Right Where We Are." This album was made shortly after Loretta came to Nashville. Tubb was big then and could have recorded with Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells, anyone he wanted. His choice of Loretta produced a

classic. However much you may identify duet singing with George and Tammy or Conway and Loretta, or the droves who followed these examples, on this album Ernest and Loretta set the direction for everyone to follow.

In case you're beginning to think that Ernest Tubb never sang alone, don't worry, he did: *The Ernest Tubb Story* (MCA2-4040), a giant, two-record album presenting 24 songs—every one a classic, including "Slippin' Around," "Filipino Baby," "Have You

Ever Been Lonely." As Rich Kienzie mentioned in *Buried Treasures*, these are recordings of his earlier 1940's hits which Ernest made in the 1950's. But they are top-notch performances. Kienzie says in some cases, like "Blue Christmas," the performance is better than the originals. *Ernest Tubb's Greatest Hits* (MCA 16) covers the rest of E.T.'s classics, including the anthem "Waltz Across Texas" along with "Thanks a Lot," "Half a Mind," "I'll Get Along Somehow." Five songs appear on both records, "Walkin' the Floor Over You," "Rainbow at Midnight," "Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello," "I Wonder Why You Said Goodbye" and "It's Been So Long, Darling." So, if you buy both albums, you're stuck with some duplication. But, for anyone who wants a more or less complete Ernest Tubb collection, these two albums are essential. ■

How to Get These Treasures

For the Ernest Tubb albums mentioned in Essential Collector, see the special Ernest Tubb ads on pages 62 and 63 in this issue. For albums mentioned in *Buried Treasures*, make your check payable to Treasures, Country Music Magazine, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. (Country Music Society of America members, deduct 10% and include your membership number). All albums \$8.98 each. (No cassettes) Add \$1.95 postage and handling for one album, \$.95 for each additional. Ernest Tubb, *Early Radio Broadcasts* (Golden Country LP 2211), and *Early Radio Transcriptions* (ACM 14); Carl Butler, *Early Classics* (Golden Country LP 2212); Flatt and Scruggs, *Martha White Biscuit Time: 1953* (Radio Gems 1); Jimmy Walker, *Loving Country Heart* (Old Homestead HC 310); Webb Pierce, *I Ain't Never* (Charly 30235); George Jones, *The King of Country Music* (British Liberty SLS 26 0042 1). ■

TOP 25

Singles

1. Johnny Lee *You Could've Heard a Heart Break*
2. Janie Fricke *Your Heart's Not In It*
3. Earl Thomas Conley *Chance of Lovin' You*
4. Anne Murray & Dave Loggins *Nobody Loves Me Like You Do*
5. Mickey Gilley *Too Good To Stop Now*
6. Lee Greenwood *Fool's Gold*
7. George Jones *She's My Rock*
8. Tom T. Hall *P.S. I Love You*
9. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band *I Love Only You*
10. The Judds *Why Not Me*
11. Dolly Parton *God Won't Get You*
12. The Bellamy Brothers *World's Greatest Lover*
13. George Strait *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*
14. Waylon Jennings *America*
15. Eddie Rabbitt *The Best Year of My Life*
16. David Frizzell & Shelly West *It's a Be Together Night*
17. Exile *Give Me One More Chance*
18. Mark Gray *Diamond in the Dust*
19. Hank Williams, Jr. *All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight*
20. Ronnie Milsap *Prisoner of the Highway*
21. Barbara Mandrell *Crossword Puzzle*
22. John Schneider *I've Been Around Enough To Know*
23. Reba McEntire *How Blue*
24. Don Williams *Maggie's Dream*
25. John Conlee *Years After You*

Albums

1. Willie Nelson *City of New Orleans*
2. The Oak Ridge Boys *Greatest Hits 2*
3. Alabama *Roll On*
4. Exile *Kentucky Hearts*
5. Barbara Mandrell & Lee Greenwood *Meant For Each Other*
6. Ricky Skaggs *Country Boy*
7. Lee Greenwood *You've Got a Good Love Comin'*
8. John Schneider *Too Good To Stop Now*
9. George Strait *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*
10. Merle Haggard *It's All in the Game*
11. Earl Thomas Conley *Treadin' Water*
12. Hank Williams, Jr. *Major Moves*
13. Ray Charles *Friendship*
14. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band *Plain Dirt Fashion*
15. John Anderson *Eye of the Hurricane*
16. Kenny Rogers *What About Me*
17. Jim Glaser *The Man in the Mirror*
18. Jimmy Buffett *Riddles in the Sand*
19. Janie Fricke *The First Word in Memory*
20. The Judds *Why Not Me*
21. Anne Murray *Heart Over Mind*
22. Willie Nelson & Kris Kristofferson *Music From "Songwriter"*
23. The Statlers *Atlanta Blue*
24. The Judds *The Judds—Wynonna & Naomi*
25. The Everly Brothers *EB84*

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