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Cover Photo

by Marty Stuart

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HITS

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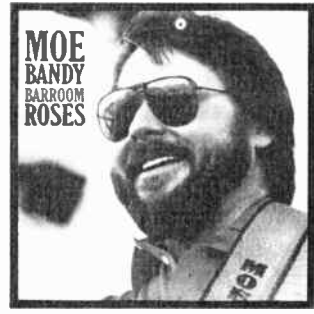
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Letters

Stuck on Statlers

Thank you for the Statler story in the May/June issue. Also, for all the great pictures. I can never get enough of them—not in print, on stage or on albums. If you've ever seen one of their live concerts, you'll know why I say they are *The Entertainers* of this or any other Year.

The terrific poster placed in the center of the magazine by The Statlers is typical of how they treat their fans. Once a Statler fan, always a Statler fan!

This article, like other Statler news items, leaves a fan wanting more.

Illa D. Ward
Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Carr,

I really enjoyed your wonderful article about our favorites, The Statler Brothers. I thought you really understood the true feeling the fans have for The Statler Brothers—until I was *stunned* by your *false, callous* and *inept* description of Harold! What would a *man* know about it anyway?! To be so totally off base and insulting was especially distressing to me. Obviously you aren't aware of the fact that there is a very special and wonderful "eye" appeal about Harold as well, and that The Brothers are more to us than an act singing country songs—they are *family*!

The Statlers may have dropped the "Brothers" to you, the media, but they certainly have not dropped it in regard to their fans. To us, The Statlers will *always* be our *brothers*.

Mrs. Marge Belth and Family
Bloomington, Indiana
Mr. Carr and Lester "Roadhog" Moran both concede that Harold is a ladykiller. That's why they're so jealous.—Ed.

The former name of the group included "Brothers." Now, however, they prefer to be "The Statlers." Why then are they referred to as "The Statler Brothers" on the front of the issue? Are they or aren't they still using "Brothers"?

Kathy M. Lewallen
Wharton, Ohio

Harold says they're using anything they can get their hands on.—Ed.

The cover photo of The Statlers is great.



I was disappointed to hear that the Roadhog isn't working right now. We were hoping he would bring his Cadillac Cowboys to the July 4th celebration in Staunton. They would be a real deduction to the Stafford Brothers and Helen Cornea.

Betty M. Law
Sherburne, New York

Harold was so putrified that the Roadhog would steal the show, he had the Pepsodent of the United States make the Roadhog illegible on the Fourth.—Ed.

Thanks so much for the great pictures and story on The Statlers. I've been a fan of theirs for many years and have had to endure the fad of Alabama and The Oaks who aren't even in the same league as The Statlers. The Statlers don't need long stringy hair and rock music because they have talent and don't need gimmicks.

Cathy Bills
Santa Rosa, California

No, The Statlers are in the National League, which only allows short hair.—Ed.

What a great surprise to open the May/June issue and find a Statlers poster inside!

The Statlers article was also very well

done. I think Jimmy has fit in very well with the rest of the group and he certainly has brought a different sound and possibly some new fans to the group.

Leslie Houser
Ossian, Iowa

The Statlers are and always will be the All Time *Greats*. I miss Lew, but am glad to hear he's getting better, and I'm sure Jimmy is and will continue to be a real asset to the group.

Donna Dingus
Myrtle Point, Oregon

Fortunately?—Ed.

Your fine article on The Statlers, terrific pictures, and especially their gift poster really made my day. It is always refreshing, in this somewhat crazy, mixed-up world, to read about people who have it all together and are not afraid to take a stand for what is right and good. Their concerts are always fantastic, and their albums always A-1. I just love 'em!

Sandy Ferrier
Marcellus, Michigan

First, what was said about The Statlers' autograph signing is true. I saw that part at the Ponderosa Park, near Warren, Ohio. You could take pictures while they performed. But, when we were alongside their buses going out the gate... talk about hurrying!

Also, I think I have bought their last album for myself. *Atlanta Blue* was a fair album. But after hearing parts of their latest, forget it! In their 10th Anniversary album, there was a cut, "No one wants to be country, they all want to go pop/We'll be the only ones left in country." So what do you call "Oh, Baby Mine," "Mary Lou" and some others? They are getting away from their original Statler Brothers type music.

Also, reading between the lines of the Lew DeWitt interview, I had a feeling there weren't and aren't any warm lines between them anymore. Like, if *you* don't bring them up, *I* won't.

Alan R. Meyers
South Amherst, Ohio

... and Lew

Way to go! The May/June issue is a keepsake item. It will be an antique in

my house if I can preserve the paper. The Statlers and their "Other Brother" is almost more excitement than I can stand. But, send you my picture taken with Lew? No, thanks. It's priceless and not for handling by mailmen and publishers.

Vivian Chadwick

Rocky Mount, North Carolina
Oh, come on, Vivian! We won't show it to the mailman.—Ed.

Does Lew have any posters or pin-up shots of himself? I would like his picture to go with The Statlers' centerfold. The Statlers really lack their former gorgeous harmony that Lew added to the group. As Lorna Wuyts said in the May/June Letters section, The Statlers could use a fifth brother to complete their harmony.

Good luck to Lew.

M. Louise Deich
Clackamas, Oregon

Lew says his pin-up shots cannot be sent through the mail. Maybe he has the same photo Vivian does.—Ed.

It's great to know Lew is feeling better and thinking of a comeback. The last time I saw him in concert with The Statlers in Saginaw, Michigan, it was obvious he was not feeling well, but he still sang a great show.

Please forward my name to his fan club so that I can keep in touch with his activities.

Becky Hackney
Lapeer, Michigan

For Lew's fan club address, see Barbara Rowzee's letter below.—Ed.

Thanks so much for the really great article about Lew DeWitt. I know you made all his fans' day! The article was so well done; there's only one thing that could be added and that would be Lew's address so fans can write him: Lew DeWitt Fan Club, P.O. Box 808, Waynesboro, Virginia 22980.

Barbara Rowzee
Levels, West Virginia

Others asked for this address. Thanks.—Ed.

Dear Mr. Barnard,
In the article on Lew DeWitt, I read that you got back in touch with him through a *Country Music* subscriber. Could this subscriber be me? I remember writing to you, I believe, back in 1982, about Lew and where to write for information on him, and where to write The Statler Brothers.

And I remember telling of the old western movies Lew collected and bought from my father. (Both are "cowboy" movie collectors.) In fact, most all the Statlers ordered film from my dad. This was before we knew their names

and who they were! So, you can see how very surprised and happy we were when we found out we had been addressing envelopes and sending film to them for their collection, and that they were the Famous Statler Brothers.

Thanks for the article on Lew and on The Statlers. We still love them all!

Loretta Willis
Tifton, Georgia

We heard about Lew from several readers. The first one was Barbara Rowzee.—R.D.B.

Academy of Country Music Awards

It's hard to understand the absurdity of the country music awards shows. The Academy of Country Music named Alabama as entertainer of the year again. They're good but not that good. It's time to give someone else a chance. Ricky Skaggs is more deserving, and he didn't win a thing.

It was nice seeing a great man like Roy Acuff honored for all he's done for country music but where were Merle Haggard and Gene Watson? Two great country singers not even mentioned.

Jim Dennis
Crystal, Michigan

Three cheers for Boxcar Willie—my feelings exactly! I watched the Academy of Country Music awards and felt really disappointed. So many great country stars could have been used—Jean Shepard, Porter Wagoner, Faron Young, Hank Snow, Connie Smith, Brenda Lee—to name a few, but no, who do we see? Mr. T., Katherine Bach, Jennifer O'Neil. What classifies these people as presenters at a country music awards show? I've had it up to here. Put country stars on country shows!

Darlene Le Garde
Ashland, Wisconsin

Katherine Bach? Jennifer O'Neil? If they keep putting honeys like that on, I may start watching the show!—R.D.B.

Well, I watched the Academy of Country Music Awards Show. They got it about half right. The part where they gave awards to Reba, George Strait, The Judds and Hank Jr. was the part they got right. Why can't they have country music on the show? After all, it is the Academy of Country Music, not the Academy of Pop Music. Just once, I wish someone like Reba, George (either one), Gene Watson or Vern Gosdin could perform on the show.

I have a couple of suggestions to improve your magazine. First, put in more letters. I enjoy them more than the interviews. When I read the letters, I realize that I am not the only person left in the world who likes real country music. Second, more record reviews. I

love reading Michael Bane's and Kip Kirby's reviews. I end up rolling on the floor after reading some of them.

Please, please let Rochelle write the People section. I am over-dosing on sugar.

Dena Kay Warren
Blair, Oklahoma

Rochelle is too busy, spooning syrup out of Hazel's copy.—Ed.

In response to Cheryl Kimminau's letter in the May/June issue, I disagree 500 percent about Alabama. Everybody I have talked to feels the same. Alabama is not country, they don't sing country, and they don't dress country. On a scale of one to 50, this is how I would rate them: ability to sing...30, blend and harmony...10, country music and beat...10, country dress...0, appearance (especially beard)...minus 0.

I have said many times that the people who vote need hearing aids. I think every singing group around, including The Statlers, The Oaks and the Gatlin Bros., is better than Alabama. And there is no justice when Gail Davies, Charly McClain and Gene Watson never get a mention. As for Cheryl Kimminau, to each his own. I was probably listening to country music before she was born.

Alabama may be the nicest guys in the world. I am writing this in reference to their music and their personal appearance.

Larry Brockett
Hemet, California

After watching the Academy of Country Music Awards, I finally figured out why Alabama receives so many awards.

You see, pop music has its Prince and Michael Jackson, rock music has its Rolling Stones, but country music has no "Superstar." That is, not until it manufactured one. Along comes Alabama, and the big record executives and other big shots in Nashville decide that they are country music's "Superstar."

Now don't get me wrong. Alabama is good. But they're no better than Conway Twitty, Barbara Mandrell or Waylon Jennings—who is always on the charts but never seems to even get a nomination for anything!

Personally, I don't like to watch any country awards anymore because I know who is going to win most of the awards, deserve it or not...Alabama. And any chance they get, they plug Fort Payne, who knows why. That flag they had on the show was nothing but commercialism for themselves.

If you start checking, you'll find many people feel the same as I do. It's time for a new "Superstar."

Allen Williams
Coon Rapids, Minnesota
As I said in this section in the July!

August issue, no act in country music is more controversial than Alabama right now. That's why we publish so many letters about them. For more, see Readers Interview Alabama and the Alabama feature, both coming soon. —R.D.B.

Two Cheers for Alabama

I think Alabama is the greatest act in country music today. Their beautiful harmony is unbeatable, and every song they sing is so beautifully done. I am especially proud of my favorite group lately. I was watching *America's Top Ten* the other night—because Alabama was featured—and I discovered that Alabama's single, "There's No Way," was positioned at Number One—where else? It makes Alabama's sixteenth consecutive Number One single. That ties Alabama with Sonny James for the most consecutive Number One singles on any *Billboard* chart: country, pop, soul, rock. If Alabama's next single reaches Number One, and I know it will, they will hold the record.

I would like to congratulate Alabama for tying this amazing record. Keep the "Super Songs" coming, boys.

David Dutton

Island Pond, Vermont

As we went to press, the single of "40 Hour Week" hit Number One. —Ed.

I am 56 years old, and I just love Alabama. Their music just does something for me. Alabama is the only group I know of that works hard to try to please the people. I have all their tapes—play them all the time when I am at home or driving. I have six scrapbooks on them. Have about all their t-shirts, and boy, I am proud to wear them when I am not working in the office. I have their license tag on the front of my car and their sticker on the back. So you see, I really love those boys.

I am looking forward to your article, "Readers Interview Alabama."

Listening to Alabama at depressing times really is the thing for me. Especially when I lost my father two years ago. Listening to Alabama really built me up when I was down. It's just the meaning and feeling in the songs and the way they present them. I know they are all true songs. They put all they got into the songs.

Mrs. Elbert (Marie) McCray
Hickory, North Carolina

Gee Whiz, It's Gene!

What happened to me this spring was a dream come true. First, I was parking at the Roanoke Civic Center where Ricky Skaggs and Gene Watson were going to perform when I noticed Gene Watson drive up and park right beside us. That night I had the pleasure of meeting him. Then, the very next day, I received my



Kitty Clifton's dream come true, meeting Gene Watson outside his bus.

May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*. I was so glad to see the feature article on Gene Watson. Michael Bane shares my opinion of Gene. He put my feeling into words.

Kitty Clifton

Appomattox, Virginia

Lots of readers seem to agree. In September 1984, Gene Watson was No. 54 among readers' album purchases. By November, he was No. 21. He hit No. 9 in March 1985 and No. 7 in May!—Ed.



Marge Fraley and favorite Gene.

Thanks, thanks, thanks! The article on Gene Watson was just terrific. He's one in a million and my favorite artist. He's still all country.

Marge Fraley
Wichita, Kansas

P.S. I've been a subscriber since before you took it over again. It's greater and better than before. I'm paid up until 1987 but am sending in my "lowest price" renewal. I always love a bargain. It would be a bargain at twice the price.

I never knew Gene Watson was in his 40's because he looks so young and handsome. I like his down-to-earth country style of singing. I always turn the radio up when one of his songs comes on.

Kristy Birkelbach

Cuero, Texas

Can't people still look young and handsome after 40? Lots of us around here hope so.—R.F.

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Photos Without Flash

May I add my two cents worth to your controversy on taking pictures at concerts?

With the many good cameras on the market today and with the advent of the new 1000 and 1600 speed films, there really isn't any reason why there has to be a single flash used for pictures taken during a performance. Unless you're within 20 feet of your subject, an electronic flash isn't going to do you a whole lot of good, and, to be perfectly honest, if you have an Instamatic and flash cubes, leave them home because they're absolutely worthless. It amazes me to see all the flashes going off in a balcony of a huge auditorium. The only thing you're going to accomplish is make the paying folks around you upset.

I've taken some really good pictures at concerts with 400 and 1000 speed film and a 70-210 zoom lens, and if you have a steady hand, you can even add a 2x extender to that. Granted, the extender will add some graininess to the finished picture. The stage lights are bright enough to illuminate the stars very well. Experiment with the shutter speed and the lens opening; I've found that the lower your aperture (lens opening) and the slower your shutter speed, provided you can hand-hold without a blur, the better off you are.

I'm just a rank amateur, but I feel I've gotten some good pictures. So, fans, get out there and snap away without flash. You might just surprise yourself, and have a good time in the process.

Anna Zettle
Monroe, Wisconsin

This is good advice. How many of you out there would like us to run a Country Music Readers' Photo Contest? Drop a card to Photo Contest, Country Music, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.—Ed.

First Word in Memory is Fricke

Our club has received many, many letters as a result of something you published in your magazine recently. I do not know the date, but I have received many copies of the page it was on. The title of the page is "Top 25 Singles and Albums."

Under Albums you have "25. Janie Fricke *Workin' for a Livin'*." I assure you that Janie never recorded an album by that title. It sounds like something Hank Williams Jr. or possibly Alabama might record *but certainly not a lady.*

I wish you would explain where you got this information and also that you would publish some kind of correction.

I am president of Janie's Fan Club—she is also my daughter-in-law.

Floreine Jackson
Kerrville, Texas

It was a typographical error: Johnny Lee's Workin' for a Livin' was Number 26 at the time. Number 25 in the May/June issue should have been Janie Fricke's First Word in Memory. Thanks for pointing out the mistake. Please send the "many, many letters" your club received so we can answer them personally. I wonder why none of them wrote to us? Since you didn't know the date of the issue in which the page appeared, I assume you are not a subscriber, so I'm entering a gift subscription in your name and sending you a copy of our July/August issue so you don't miss our feature, "Janie Makes a Video." By the way, what's wrong with a lady "workin' for a livin' "?—Ed.

Songwriters

I see by the March/April issue that Alan Winsor, Music Director of radio station KTRI/FM in Mansfield, Missouri, has trouble getting records without having to buy them. If he will write me, I'll see to it that he gets a free record.

I just had two songs released on the



Anna Zettle caught The Oaks from her seat in spotlights only—no flash—with a 210mm. telephoto lens and a 2x extender.

Big Sound label. I know he will like "I'll Always Be Holden to You." It could very well be the Number One song of our time. Bud Rogers is the artist.

If any other radio stations need records, please write me on the station letterhead, and I will send a record.

My wife Marie and I have met quite a few of the artists. I have been writing quite a few years. Have had several songs published. I am retired from Eaton Corp. of Kalamazoo, Michigan, so I am getting into the songwriting business full time now.

God Bless. Keep up the good work.

Forest A. Cutler
Tucson, Arizona

The KTRI station address is Box 317, Mansfield, Missouri 65704. Congratulations on your success so far. Many wish that they could do as well. For example, see letter below.—Ed.

In your May/June issue, Paulette Cano of Louisville, Kentucky, mentioned how hard it is for a new songwriter to get started. As an unpublished songwriter, I've found the same problem over the years.

I've heard performers say they need new music, but no one wants to listen. I have the list of publishers out of Nashville and everyone says that's where to start, yet all they do is 'pass the buck' on to someone else 'cause they can't be bothered. I've put money out to a promoter, but so far nothing there either.

Anyway, thanks for the info on The Sue Brewer Fund. There's probably lots of us looking for a contact.

Betty Scott
Camino, California

Morthland's Book

Dear Mr. Morthland,
I just finished reading your book, *The Best of Country Music*, and I found it to be one of the most interesting works dealing with country music to date.

With the many opinions that you express, it would probably be impossible for any one person to agree with all of them, and I disagree with a fair share. For example, I feel you really downplayed the significance and contributions of Roy Acuff, Ricky Skaggs and Emmylou Harris. And after reading the statement about all of Roy Acuff's melodies sounding alike, I hummed through a whole bunch of them, and I don't agree with that analysis at all. I feel many others, including two of my favorites, Johnny Cash and Tom T. Hall, are much more soundalike in their melodies.

However, all of this is just nitpicking. I found your book very insightful and thought-provoking, and written from a perspective of knowledge, research and concern. Good work, and it deserves another volume.

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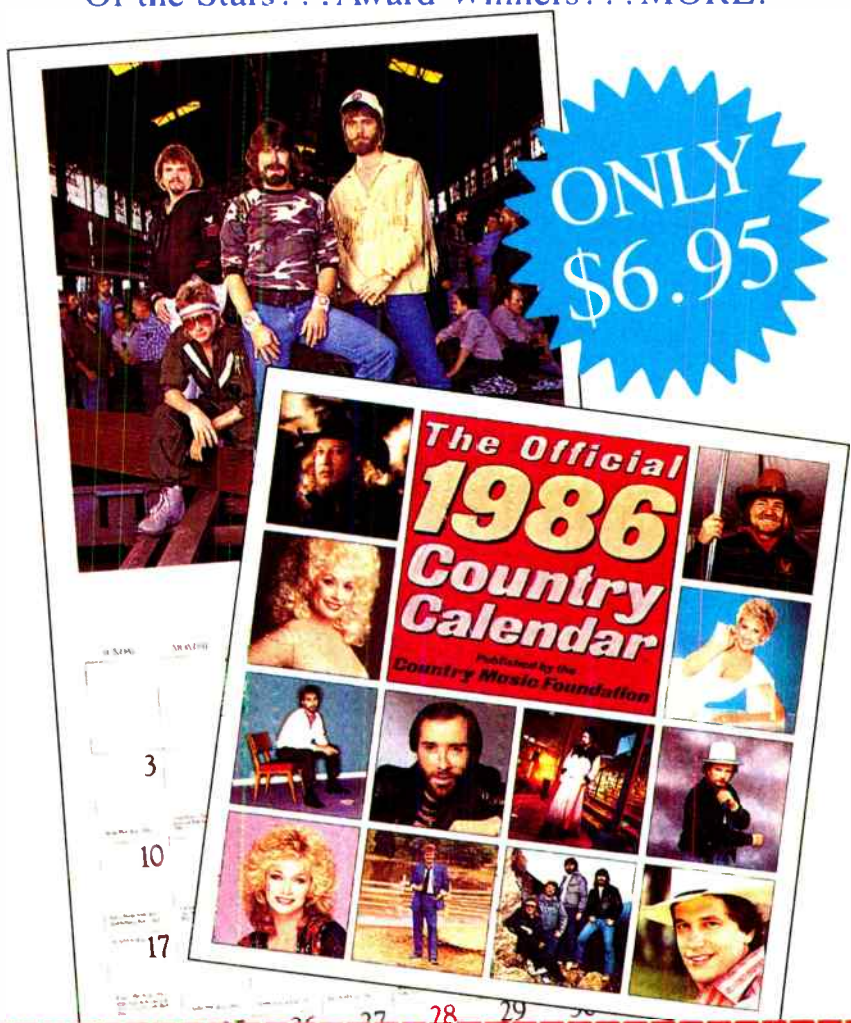
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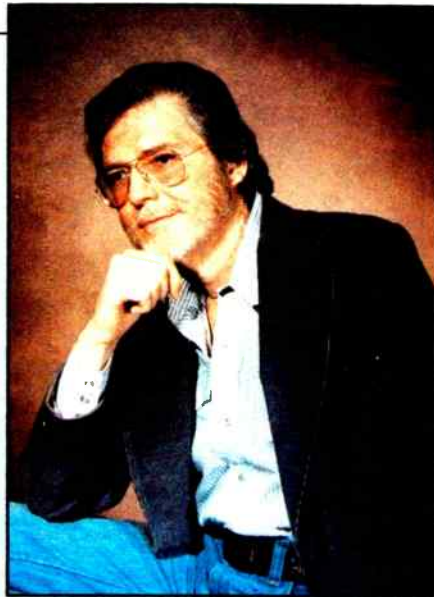
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Lew DeWitt

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Here, however, is the point I'd like to make: you note that a lot of good stuff didn't make it commercially and imply that country fans go along peaceably with the watering down of their music into pap.

My own opinion is that the watering down takes place because those who run record companies and radio stations are trying too hard to reach beyond the country fan, because, for the most part, the true hard country fan doesn't spend money on a dependable basis. An example: I didn't buy your book. I took it out of the local library.

Jerry Barney
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Good points, but you are wrong about the true hard country fan's buying habits. The average reader of Country Music, for example, buys about 50 albums a year—over 20 times the national average. —Ed.

Fans Recommend . . . Sawyer Brown

I just attended a Sawyer Brown concert in California and had to tell you about it. What a super bunch of guys and what a dynamite show they do. From the minute they walk on stage, everything is up and fun.



Sawyer Brown's Mark Miller autographed Sue Barnhart's May/June issue.

You printed a picture of them with Dolly Parton in the May/June issue, and I took the magazine along to show them. They enjoyed seeing themselves in the magazine. They autographed it for me.

They stood in front of the bus after the show and signed autographs and posed for pictures until the last scrap of paper was signed and the last roll of film shot. Finally they boarded the bus and we waved them good-bye as they pulled away.

Just wanted to let the readers of *Country Music* know there's no way they will be disappointed if they go to see Sawyer Brown.

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Ceres, California

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Frank (left) and Jesse James invented the daylight bank robbery in America and tested the idea for the first time in Liberty, Missouri, on Valentine's Day, 1866.

Western Hist. Dept.
Denver Public Lib.



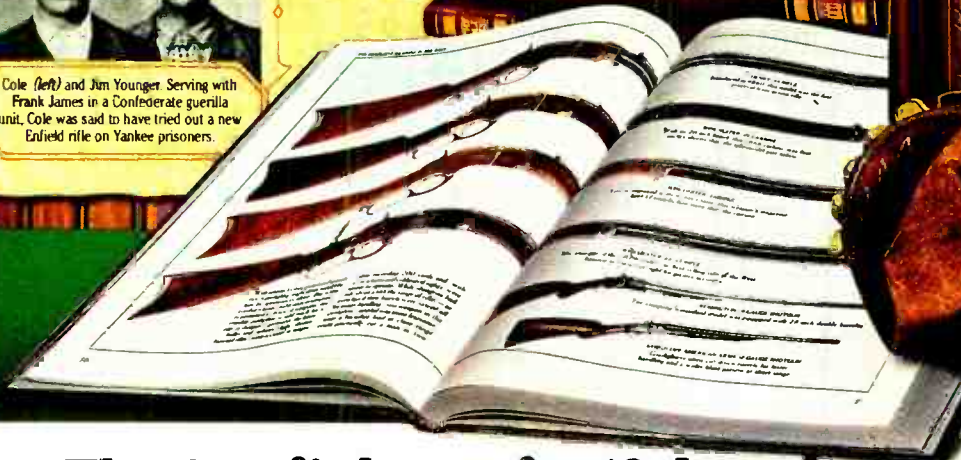
Cole (left) and Jim Younger. Serving with Frank James in a Confederate guerrilla unit, Cole was said to have tried out a new Enfield rifle on Yankee prisoners.

Missouri Hist. Soc.

By the 1870s, Jesse James (far left) was secure—and vain—enough to pose for a photographer summoned to the gang's cave hideout in Missouri. For 15 years the James gang held sway, imitated, but never equaled, for notoriety and hell-bent originality.



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THE GAMBLERS
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TIME LIFE BOOKS

THE OLD WEST



Donna Aylor and friends in Steve Wariner's bus after a performance: l. to r., Steve's road manager Terry, Donna, Steve, and Donna's sister-in-law Karen Aylor Wells. The Aylors also played basketball with Steve.

...and Steve Wariner

My husband and I love to listen to Steve Wariner sing his songs. In the last year, we have seen three of his performances. We visited with him each time. He sings with such real feeling and we can always hear his lyrics perfectly. We have enjoyed getting to know him and his band. His video "Why Goodbye" deserves an award.

Don and Donna Aylor
San Angelo, Texas

...and Son of Conway

Last week we went to see Michael Twitty at the Lima Mall Fun Fair. He really did a super show. He is going to be just as great as his father. Would enjoy something on him in your future issues. We really enjoyed the article on Conway.

Mrs. James Hamilton
Kalida, Ohio

Eyes on Hank Jr.

I want to compliment Hank Williams Jr. on another great album, *Five-O*. It is great! Who wrote the song "Outlaw's Reward" on this album? Hank's albums just keep getting better and better. Also for winning Video of the Year Award. Maybe he's finally getting some of the recognition he deserves!

And to all the big Alabama fans out there, there's a book out entitled *Alabama* by Edward Morris of Nashville, Tennessee. This book is by far the best you'll ever read on an entertainer of any kind. Mr. Morris did a superb job with this book. In the acknowledgements section he said that Kip Kirby put him onto the book in the first place. Great going, Kip!

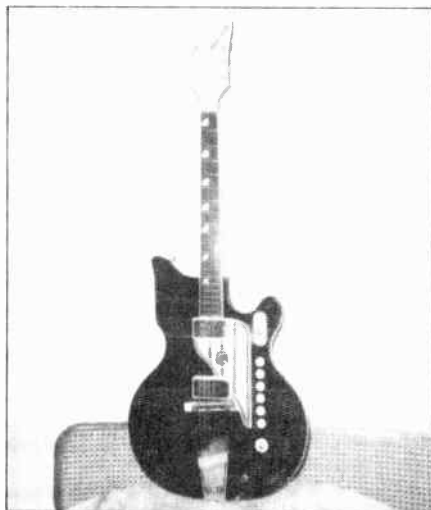
Shelley Ruff
Florence, Mississippi

Hank Jr. wrote "Outlaw's Reward," as well as five other songs on the *Five-O* album, which stood at Number Two on the *Billboard* chart as we went to press. To order Ed Morris' book on *Alabama*, see the ad on page 37 of the July/August issue. —Ed.

...and on Hank Jr.'s Guitar

I received the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Upon opening the front cover, I observed the Hank Williams Jr. *Five-O* advertisement showing him riding in an automobile, holding and apparently strumming a particular type of guitar which, to my knowledge, is not manufactured today. I own one like Hank's, except that it is black with white trim, including the head, tuning keys, six in-line control knobs, master volume control, neck, side trims, two pickup mounts and the band encircling the body. This instrument has two very excellent, sensitive pick-ups, a three-position "rocker" type tone switch, and a very unusual tail piece. I like to play it because of its outstanding acoustical quality and sound, and because of the variations possible with the tone and volume controls. I have always heard that the guitar body is made of fiberglass. It has the word "National" in chrome letters affixed to the head in a diagonal position.

I traded for this guitar at a music store in Borger, Texas, in 1966, and while visiting El Paso, Texas, I noticed a



Ed Havlik's guitar is like Hank Jr.'s.

red one on display in a pawn shop, but have never seen one since, until I noticed the one in the Hank Williams photo in your magazine.

Through hearsay I heard, long ago, that the Gretsch Company manufactured National guitars, and that this particular one, made from fiberglass, was on a limited and/or experimental basis. Several years ago, I wrote to *Guitar Player Magazine*, along with a photograph of this instrument, but failed to receive a response.

Do you have any information as to the current rarity of this guitar, the number manufactured, the year manufactured, and whether or not it is in demand today?

Ed. J. Havlik
Amarillo, Texas

Your guitar and Hank's are both *National Glenwood Models*. The body is fiberglass. They were made by National, not Gretsch, which also made the famed *National metal-bodied acoustic steel*. For more details about its value as a collector's item, write George Gruhn, *Gruhn Guitars, Inc.*, 410 Broadway, Nashville, Tennessee 37203. —Ed.

Real Dolly and Bad Michael

I don't agree with Michael Bane's review of Dolly's album *Real Love* in the May/June issue. It is a good album, but "I Can't Be True" is not one of Dolly's better songs. I am only 15 years old, but I love country music and know a good song when I hear one. "I Can't Be True" may be "true," but it is not very "nice" in its choice of words. I think it is somewhat crass. It may be real life but I don't enjoy hearing it.

I am not criticizing Dolly's album. I have it and love it. Also, Mr. Bane, Side A is not totally forgettable.

Laura Warren
Avoca, Michigan

For another view on this same song, see the letter below. —Ed.

Dear Michael Bane, In your review of Dolly Parton's new album *Real Love*, you say "I Can't Be True" is the best song on the album, yet you say the gist of it is she would never ask a man to do what she can't do, "be true." Listen to the lyrics again and you'll find she says "don't expect it of me, though I expect it of you"—see what I mean? It puts a whole new angle on it—the old double standard. It's a very clever song, and it's the type of song that guys usually sing.

Also, on the lighter side, I agree with you about Sylvia. I think that *One Step Closer* is her best thus far, but I think she's holding back a real lioness of a singer inside—please, Sylvia, let it out!

Rocio Sinaya
Los Angeles, California

Play Straight with Sylvia

I want to reply to Michael Bane's review of *One Step Closer* by Sylvia in the May/June issue. Although I agree with Mr. Bane when he says Sylvia is sexy, I feel too much time was spent on the fact, and not enough on what's most important, the material.

In Mr. Bane's last review of one of Sylvia's albums, *Surprise*, in the September/October 1984 issue, he said that until Nashville wakes up, females are doomed to a labor of crossover. To that I say, "Wake up and smell the coffee." Sylvia is back with a new country album and a new producer, Brent Maher. There are no over-produced or pop songs here, just country!

I say hats off to a wonderful lady who has come back to her country roots.

Joe Brown
Apex, North Carolina

As a loyal fan of Sylvia, I thought it was very unfair of Mr. Michael Bane to use a record review to give his personal views of Sylvia as a singer and not a review of the album. He used over half the review talking about the cover and his thoughts on what she should be singing and only named the titles of three songs. He did not talk about "Fallin' in Love," which hit Number Two on the charts. If Mr. Bane is going to review the album, then that is what he should do, and if he wants to talk about Sylvia and her singing, then he should do that as a story and let Sylvia answer his complaint.

Clifford Phillippi
Monroeville, Pennsylvania
Looks like Michael is up to his old tricks—trying to see if readers are paying attention. They're paying attention, Michael!—Ed.

Groovin' on George Jones

I have been a George Jones fan for years. When I was a kid and everyone else my age was playing rock 'n' roll on the juke box, I was playing George Jones and Stonewall Jackson. Last year I finally got to see his show in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It was a 300-mile round trip, but if I had walked, I still got my money's worth. I own 21 George Jones albums, and *George Jones First Time Live!* is my favorite. I don't know what George's wife Nancy is feeding him, but he sure looks good, and his voice is as good as it has ever been, maybe better. There is none better than old George.

Marlon (Scrooge) Jones
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

Credit to Counts

Dear John Morthland,
Just read your review of the George Jones *First Time Live!* album in your May/June issue with special interest. . .

I was really sorry to see you'd done

the same thing a lot of other folks have done, since I am a special fan and have been for at least 15 years, of George's fiddler, Murrel Counts.

It is Murrel Counts on the vocals on "Fox on the Run." Mr. Jones didn't even join in. That haunting vocal you mention that steals the song is Counts. . . and it is a real shame, to me, that he's not getting credit for it, since he's been a sideman and a fine musician since he was eight years old! He's worked with many, many top names and has never had an opportunity like this one. . . to be on a record on a major label with a superstar.



Jones Boys' fiddler Murrel Counts, r., shown here with piano player Kent Goodson, l., is also Sue Barnhart's uncle.

I just had to drop you a line or two on this, since I was so very disappointed to see he's not getting any credit at all for the song, which is the high point, I'm sure, of his career.

Thanks, though, for the super review. I'm sure all of The Jones Boys will appreciate it. They're the finest touring band in country music today!

Jorgene McGuire
Gallatin, Tennessee
John Morthland replies: Ya coulda fooled me. I reviewed the album on the basis of an advance cassette from Epic, and credits weren't given. My apologies to Murrel Counts, who is obviously a multi-talented man in his own right.
—J.M.

Country Carl Smith

I enjoyed the article on Carl Smith in your May/June issue. He was one of the finest country singers of all times. Sure wish he was recording today. Back when Carl Smith was on the Opry, they were all country music singers. I can't say the same for today. The only real country music singers today are Roy Acuff, George Jones, Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Bobby Bare, George Strait, The Statler Brothers, Ricky Skaggs, Barbara Mandrell, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, Emmylou Harris and Hank Williams Jr. We lost one of the finest, Ernest Tubbs, also George Morgan, and the great Marty

Robbins. There will never be another one like Marty Robbins—never.

Jim Kennedy
Dodge City, Kansas

Your list of today's country singers reads like our Table of Contents. Maybe things aren't so bad, after all. —Ed.

Bravo Boxcar

The May/June issue of *Country Music* was extra special. You mentioned in your article on Boxcar that he wrote and recorded the song "Boxcar Willie" way back when, but that nobody was listening. I, for one, was. I remember Boxcar Willie as Marty Martin, a disk jockey on a Boise, Idaho, radio station. He always referred to himself as "Ma Martin's baby boy." He recorded "Boxcar Willie" along with several more songs that he had written on a record produced by Heritage Records out of Boise, Idaho. I also remember when he performed at the Weiser, Idaho, Oldtime Fiddle Festival and received a standing ovation.

I still have my record and have now taped it on a cassette so that I can play it in my car. I feel very honored to have one of Boxcar Willie's original recordings.

Marge Price
Escalon, California

I remember Boxcar Willie when he was here in Lincoln. Also have a 45 rpm record of his song "Boxcar Willie." Flip side is "There Goes the Sun." It's on a ROTO label and is sung by Marty Martin and the Rangers. I was a long time connecting Boxcar Willie with Marty Martin, but I *knew* the voice was familiar.

Helen Bowers
Lincoln, Nebraska

Hooray for Boxcar Willie! It's about time someone spoke up! It makes me disgusted to watch a country program or listen to one that has bands and singers on there that are *not* country. Why do they do it? There are lots of country artists you don't even get to see or listen to, too. Why?

A. Veach
Eagle Point, Oregon
We answered—or at least addressed—these questions in our November/December 1984 issue of the CMSA Newsletter, devoted to the topic of country radio. We plan a followup issue on that subject soon. For more, see letter below. Back issues of the Newsletter are available through our New York office for \$1.50. Mark envelope Attention, Back Issues. —Ed.

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People

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

I cannot begin to relate the number of times, here in Music City, that a tour bus has braked to a screech in front of me, causing me and a line of other local yokels to do the same and to wish that summer and tourists were gone. Therefore, I am amazed myself that my lead-in story involves tour buses. There are Silver Eagles, mini-buses, mini-vans, short buses, long buses, medium buses driving past stars' homes, studios, Music Row, the Old Ryman, the new Opry at Opryland, Twitty City, the House of Cash and the Country Music Hall of Fame. Lordy, Nashville has gotten to be a mecca for the country music fans. There are Halls of Fame for Jim Reeves, Minnie Pearl, Barbara Mandrell, Bill Monroe, Kitty Wells, and perhaps others I don't know about. And the tour buses (God bless 'em) haul the fans (God bless 'em, too) around the music scene. My friend Bob, a songwriter by heart—that is, he's never had a song recorded—and a tour bus driver by profession, got the thrill of his life last week along with the load of twenty tourists from South Dakota he was driving, when they stopped to look at the Tammy Wynette mansion on Franklin Road. As they pulled in to the stop where one can actually view the house, Tammy's husband George Richey came outside, walked over to the bus and invited twenty ecstatic fans to come inside. Richey himself showed them around. According to her husband, Tammy was out of town performing, so the fans got the next best thing. And I for one want to thank Mr. George Richey for treating country music fans the way they deserve to be treated. Country fans are the best in the world. And don't you know that's show biz!

ARE YOU SURE HANK WANTED IT THIS-A-WAY?

Hank Jr. refers to the palatial mansion his mother occupied until her death as the "big house on Franklin Road." The house was really a "house within a house," which has recently been dismantled piece by piece and moved to a



RICKY AND COSTELLO

A lot has been said about Ricky Skaggs' overseas tour. The way we hear it, Skaggs won the Europeans' hearts. During his Dominion Theatre show in London, Ricky got a chance to share the stage with rocker Elvis Costello. He and Ricky did a bang-up job on Ricky's hit "Don't Get Above Your Raisin.' "

spot at the corner of Division and 17th Avenue South. It is now back together and called The Hank Williams Shrine.

The recent grand opening celebration for the new tourist attraction starred Hank Sr.'s original Drifting Cowboy Band live and in color on the front porch of the house. They stood just under the red, white and blue sign that read, "Hank Williams Sr. Home Open." Also featured were Lyrencia Guy Morris, Audrey's daughter before she married Hank, and Miss Audrey Ragland, Hank Jr.'s nurse when he was a baby.

There was no sign of Hank Jr. at the grand opening. However, there was a wooden baby bed built about 30 or 35 years ago, and Lyrencia proudly stated how she recalled her mama buying the bed in Shreveport and moving it to Nashville and how her mama herself pasted the decals on the bed for Hank Jr.

Lyrencia will operate the shrine and Miss Audrey Ragland will be traveling in from Dickson, Tennessee, now and then. No doubt the ex-governess with her white hair and grandmotherly attitude will be spreading yarns of Hank Wil-

liams to fan and foe alike.

Minnie Pearl and hubby Henry Cannon dropped by to have a look around. The original furnishings and atmosphere really created an eerie feeling for Miss Minnie, who was one of the true friends of the late legend. Hank Williams' bouts with drugs, alcohol and Audrey are synonymous with the name and fame. Stories of Hank shooting up the place and shooting out windows are as legendary as "Your Cheating Heart" and "Cold, Cold Heart."

Lyrencia stated that the house was beginning to "feel like home" again, while Bocephus' ex-nurse said the house was often filled with stars from the Grand Ole Opry and other visitors and was not always peaceful. According to Miss Ragland, and to legend, Audrey wanted to be an entertainer too, and she bugged Hank all the time to take her on the road with him. Again according to legend, Miss Audrey was not even blessed with a good voice, never mind a great voice . . . so ole Hank left her at home.

Lord only knows how everything was

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

salvaged over the years, but apparently many of the furnishings are authentic. The dining room suite, accompanied by a matching chest of drawers, bears the initials HW and AW for Hank and Audrey. And yes, the Drifting Cowboy Band was also authentic. Why, fiddler **Jerry Rivers** said it was a special day for the band. Rivers further stated that the band members used to visit the house quite a lot. As the sound of "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" drifted on the breeze, he wiped away a tear falling from his own eye and said, "Man, ole Hank sure knew how to lay a hurt on a song."

It's been thirty-two years last New Year's Eve . . . since Hank passed away in the back seat of his Cadillac in Oak Hill, West Virginia, on his way to a concert in Canton, Ohio. The man has been compared to Jesus, Shakespeare and the lowest drunk/druggie on this planet. It has been said that he was the loneliest man in the world. It has also been said that, because of his alcoholism and drug addiction, *all* his friends turned their backs on him.

As a case in point, I have been told about Hank's returning to Music City in early December 1952 and having his driver take him down the alley to the back door of the Ryman Auditorium, which housed the Grand Ole Opry at that time. Word spread throughout the backstage area that Hank Williams was outside. Given the way the entertainers flocked to Montgomery one month later to his funeral and given all the accolades that followed his untimely death, you would think that Hank's friends would have all gone out to shake hands with him. Not true. The word I got was that one man . . . *one man*, went out in the cold December night, reached into the back window and shook hands with the great Hank Williams, sick and weak and alone.

As the story goes, Hank told the gentleman, "I've got two friends at the Grand Ole Opry, Mr. Denney and you. I sure appreciate you coming out in the cold to speak to me." Mr. Denney, the late Jim Denney, was the manager of the Opry back then.

Folks deal with "live drunks" and "dead heroes" totally different, don't they? And in the self-same situation no one can say what they would do or could do. All of us "see the light" with different eyes.

I can't help but wonder if this had happened in the 1980's, if things would



ROBERT JOHNSON

Hank Williams Sr.'s Home, the newest tourist attraction in Nashville, is now open to the public. Opening day attracted tourists as well as oldtimers.

have turned out differently for ole Hank. Recently there's been a rash of country singers going for help in dealing with drug and alcohol problems. Nowadays the fans and music industry seem to stand behind a man (or woman) who needs help. Remember Waylon's great song, "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?" I can't help but wonder if Hank would've had any of it this-a-way!

FAMILY-MINDED

Last issue we told you about Nashville's efforts to aid Ethiopia. Well, here's more of the inside scoop: the single, titled "One Big Family" and the album, *From Nashville to the World With Love*, out on Compleat Records, include, alphabetically, participating in the worthy cause, Roy Acuff, Rex Allen Jr., Lynn Anderson, Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Bobby Bare, Lane Brody, T. Graham Brown, Little Jimmy Dickens, Karen Taylor-Good, Dobie Gray, Sonny James, George Jones, The Kendalls, Dave Kirby, Neal Matthews, Kathy Mattea, O.B. McClinton, Ronnie McDowell, Lorrie Morgan, Colleen Peterson, Boots Randolph, Jerry Reed, Jeannie C. Riley, Ronnie Robins, Ray Sawyer, Troy Seals, Jeannie Seely, Rick Schulman, Gordon Stoker, Tanya Tucker, Mack Vickery, Porter Wagoner, Duane West, Leona Williams, Bergen White and Faron Young.

Jerry Reed's production company also videotaped the event; the video will be released by the time you read this. **Buddy Killen**, Tree Publishing mogul,

gave his valuable time as producer of the recording. Another name that deserves praise is Compleat Recording's giant **Charlie Fach**, who said, "Yes, I will release the single, and I will release the album, on Compleat Records." A good *Country Music* thank you is due you, Mr. Fach, and your label, staff and families. Of course, the same God bless you goes to Ronnie McDowell for heading up the event, and to all the others who took part.

GOING NASHVILLE!!

Leaving *Hollywhere* and Hazard, Kentucky, and going Nashville is **John Schneider!** Rumor has it that so is **Marie Osmond**, who was just freshly divorced and out wooing the fans in Music City. Marie will replace **Holly Palance** co-emceeing *Ripley's Believe It or Not* with **Jack Palance** on TV this fall. And John will just keep on singing cause that's what he wants to do.

Seems that Marie's singing brothers, **The Osmonds**, are going Nashville too. They were smiling at least a million dollars' worth of dental work from their booth. Can you imagine paying dental bills on all those smiles!

RONNIE MILSAP'S FOUNDATION FOR BLIND

Did you know there are 522,000 people in this country that are legally blind? Did you know that only 65% of the working age blind population is employed? I wasn't aware of either fact. However, I

do know that as of June 1985 somebody is doing something to improve things. A gentleman and a scholar, a man who knows the plight of blindness firsthand, **Mr. Ronnie Milsap.**

The Ronnie Milsap Foundation will provide educational assistance—in the form of scholarships—for talented blind



students in all fields of study; will give financial aid to support eye research; and develop career opportunities for the blind and visually impaired.

The Foundation will also be working with the Lion's Clubs in Little Rock and Montgomery through album sales and concerts. They are also planning other music projects.

Requests from students should be made (by letter) to: Board of Trustees, The Ronnie Milsap Foundation, 12 Music Circle South, Nashville, TN 37203.

Personally, I say thank God for an unselfish human being like Ronnie Milsap. Not only does he bless us with his God-given talents, he turns around and heads up a cause that few others would have the guts to tackle. From *Country Music Mag* and me, we love you.

PRAYERS ARE IN ORDER FOR ROY

The Country Music King, **Roy Acuff**, has been in and out of the hospital again. Weak, and known to have had heart trouble, the 81-year-old superstar was reportedly suffering from a blood clot in his lung. Our prayers are with you, Mr. Roy Acuff.

FRANCES, YOU CANNOT STAY AWAY!

As we reported not long ago, BMI's **Frances Preston** got a promotion so big that she has to spend as much time in New York as in Nashville these days. She now holds the number two spot on the prestigious performing rights ladder, second only to **Ed Cramer**. Congrats are in order to BMI for having the good taste

and good sense to employ a woman of Preston's caliber in the first place, and secondly, it sure don't hurt to have a classy female with looks good enough to decorate the place around. Those corporate halls are prone to grow gloomy without glamor. Now, Frances, you didn't bother to ask me what I thought, but I'm gonna tell you anyway. You just cannot stay away from Nashville too long at one time. In other words, we certainly should see as much of you as they do in New York City.

MONEY WELL SPENT

Money from the mighty Oaks dug wells in Africa for folks and their cattle who, in the past, had to go 60, I said 60, miles for water. If any of those guys ever need surgery for the heart, I would not be at all surprised to learn that among the four, there are eight hearts. I swear, I bet you that each of them has got two apiece. Isn't it wonderful that little children will live and grow up to be men and women and not die of thirst all because four somebodies named Duane, Bill, Joe and Richard reached out and dug wells? I'm so proud to be in this business with good folks. The Oaks got the money from a big concert they played in Nice, France, in May. *Country Music's* own **Rochelle Friedman** covered the event. For her views see the story coming soon.

NEWS FROM THE HEART OF DIXIE....NASHVILLE

I hope this is sort of a scoop. I don't think **Ricky Skaggs** has told this story

in its entirety to the press. Most of the fans know that **Ricky** and his band toured Europe for about a month and that the reception was outstanding. Most know that **Ricky** and the band recorded a live album and also videotaped a show while on tour, the tape for use as a future TV special. Some of you may know that **Charles Haid** a/k/a **Charlie Haid** a/k/a **Renko** on *Hill Street Blues* is a friend/fan of **Ricky Skaggs**. A few of you may know that **Charlie** and **Mrs. Charlie Haid** spent their vacation touring Europe with **Ricky**. What I hope none of you have read or heard is this: on the plane over from *Hollywhere*, **Charlie** heard from the fellow in the next seat that there was an annual folk festival being staged in Ireland that the gent planned to attend. **Charlie** allowed as how he was meeting **Skaggs** in London and that, after a couple of days, they would be heading out on the road touring. The fellow suggested that they make the festival. **Charlie** made **Ricky** aware of this conversation, and they decided that they'd take in the festival along with some much-needed fishing. Some business folks tried to discourage the duo, saying the festival attracted musicians that were out and out snobs, what with their musical ability and all. Lord a mercy! That didn't faze **Ricky** at all. He didn't say so, but I know that he knows what being snobbish is, having picked with and hung out with *bluegrass musicians!* Need I go any further into the snobbery neighborhood? I know where that is and was. To make a long story short, **Ricky's** bass player, **Jesse Chambers**, who's played with the band

BARNARD ON THE TUBE



Our publisher **Russ Barnard** got a chance to air his views on national TV when Cable News Network came to visit our magazine. On the show, broadcast before the airing of the Academy of Country Music Awards, **Russ** told CNN reporter **Jeff Panzer** (left) what he thought about the present state of country music. Hope no one was offended.

People

since its inception, said that for the first time since he's known Rick, he saw him get totally lost for three hours. I asked Ricky about this. He said, "Hazel, I truly was consumed by it all. All those elderly people singing gospel songs just like in Kentucky. And those old-timey fiddlers playing one song right after another that I knew, but knew with a different title and maybe one or two chords that weren't the same, like the fiddle tune, "Leather Britches," exactly the same except for one note." Ricky could not recall all the Irish song titles, but he could remember that he had never had a better time in his life. Following all the work, Ricky's better

half, lovely Sharon White, finished a show with her family, The Whites, just outside of Jackson, Mississippi, and took a plane out the next morning for a week's holiday. This was Sharon's first trip to London, and she related how much she enjoyed it, especially seeing **Charlton Heston** perform live in a play. I asked her to tell him I said hey!

Harking back to Fan Fair for a minute, Ricky Skaggs, David Allan Coe, **The Kendalls** and **Gary Morris** placed stars in the Walkway of Stars at the Country Music Hall of Fame during that week. It was a tearful ceremony for Coe, who reminisced about his past incarcerations and hoped for a brighter tomorrow

with more acceptance by country fans.

BIG RIVER FLOWS BIG FOR ROGER MILLER

Big River, the hillbilly version of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, by **Roger Miller**, opened on Broadway this past spring and has raked in its share of awards. One goes to Miller himself, the first hillbilly songwriter to receive the prestigious Tony Award for a Broadway score. I screamed loud enough from Nashville for New York City to hear, I was so impressed and proud for Roger, Nashville and Oklahoma—Roger's home state...and humbly thankful that Broadway at long last has allowed one of our own to walk the hallowed halls once reserved for the **Sammy Cahns**, **Moss Harts** and others like them of the world, those great, but mostly educated, musicmakers who write as much from the head as from the heart. Well, now they're joined by one of our hillbilly penspeople who writes "where it hurts." Following the hullabaloo, MCA Records and **Jimmy Bowen** announced that they were recording Roger Miller in the fall.

Ron Richardson, who plays Jim, the runaway slave, and major cast members **Bob Gunton**, **Rene Auberjonois** and **Daniel Jenkins**, who plays Huck Finn, attended the festivities with Roger.

BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

Tandy Rice and **Top Billing** welcome the return of **Johnny Rodriguez** and **Ronnie McDowell** for concert bookings. Also booked by this prestigious organization are **Razzy Bailey**, **Terri Gibbs**, **Jerry Clower**, **Tom T. Hall**, **Kelly Lang**, **Mel McDaniel**, **Ronnie Robbins**, **Lorrie Morgan**, **David Wills** and **Dave & Sugar**. Do you know why I am so smart and know all this? Because **Tandy Rice** is a smart enough man to hire my friend **Judy Newby** to do media promotions for him, and she tells me all about **Top Billing**.

A CLUB CALLED JEANNIE SEELY'S

Printer's Alley has a lovely new addition and she is country as can be. **Miss Jeannie Seely** has opened up her very own night club, **Jeannie Seely's Country Club**, in the world-famed alley of clubs. **Jeannie** appears Wednesday through Saturday nights with her red hot band. Monday and Tuesday nights banjo virtuoso **Buck Trent** will be manning the stage with a lot of good entertaining.

JONES GOES VIDEO

George Jones, who has taken about as many dives as anybody, and missed quite a few, has taken a new plunge—into the world of video. In his new Epic album, titled *Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes*, which is also the title of his new single, written by **Troy Seals**, **George** is looking at some of his old buddies and wondering who is gonna take their places tomorrow.

In the video, there's a scene of the countryside, and lo and behold there's **George's Silver Eagle** bus, driven by the old master producer **Billy Sherrill**. They stop; **Billy** refuels at **Hall's Market** while **George** makes friends with an old timer who owns the market, played by **Earl Whitenburg**.

Jones signs his name on the old man's guitar alongside the signatures of **Hank Williams**, **Lefty Frizzell**, **Ernest Tubb**, **Willie Nelson** and **Merle Haggard**. **Jones** allows as how the instrument is priceless as the two country

boys enter a museum of country music memorabilia.

There they find old film footage of **Waylon Jennings**, **Johnny Cash**, **Merle Haggard**, **Conway Twitty**, **Jerry Lee Lewis**, **Lefty Frizzell** and **Marty Robbins**, along with dust-covered photos, posters, scrap books, record covers, hats and guitars. There's also the outlaw wall of **Tompall Glaser**, **Willie Nelson**, **Kris Kristofferson** and **Waylon Jennings**, as well as the rockabilly wall with **Elvis**, **Carl Perkins** and all the **Sun Records** heroes.

With vivid imagery and a lot of imagination, this video depicts a lot of what country music is about and should be about. Aren't you glad that **George** finally dived into videos? My God, I am...and Lord knows and I know that all of the above-mentioned have wondered in reference to the one and only **George Jones**, "Who's Gonna Fill His Shoes?"



SILVER ANNIVERSARY FOR THE SILVER-HAIRED BIG DADDY



With all the hullabaloo during Fan Fair, executives of BMI found time to honor one of their own. Harlan Howard, songwriter extraordinaire, received a silver tray commemorating his 25th Anniversary with the publishing group.

The Number One songwriter has written hits for Conway Twitty ("I Don't Know a Thing About Love"), Reba McEntire ("Somebody Should Leave"), The Judds ("Why Not Me") and many more. Chick Raines co-wrote the McEntire tune, while producer Brent Maher and Sonny Throckmorton helped pen the Judds hit. Congratulations to Harlan, we know he'll be around for at least another 25 years. Pictured from left to right are: BMI's Roger Sovine, Naomi Judd, Conway Twitty, BMI's Frances Preston, Wynonna Judd, Harlan Howard and Reba McEntire.

BETH GWINN

Jeannie, I love you, and I hope the very best for you and your club. You are one of the good people, you write a great song and you can sing like nobody's business. Good luck, gal!

OVER ¾ OF A MILL

Do you know what \$820,305 is? That's 54,687 multiplied by \$15.00, which is the amount of money and total number of folks who attended the Alabama June Jam in Fort Payne. They tell me you had to be either drunk, dead, or both not to enjoy the event hosted by Alabama's favorite sons. The Judds, Ed Bruce, Charlie Daniels and Bill Medley all turned out for this event.

NASHVILLE STANDARD CHANGES HANDS BUT NOT NAME

The mighty Acuff Rose, Nashville's first music publishing company, founded by the late Fred Rose and Roy Acuff, and later operated by Wesley Rose, has just been purchased by Gaylord Enterprises. Started in 1943, Acuff Rose's catalogue boasts perhaps more country standards than any other publishing

company in the world. Among some of the songs they own are "The Tennessee Waltz," "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," and all the tunes penned by Hank Williams.

Around the first of the year, rumors surfaced that the powerful Gaylord Enterprises was flirting with the idea of buying the Acuff Rose giant. At the time, all concerned claimed this was nothing more than talk. The facts that Wesley isn't getting any younger, that Mr. Acuff's health isn't good and that a multimillion dollar law suit by Roy Orbison against Acuff Rose was in the works, kept the rumors flowing. Now, though, Mr. Orbison's suit has been settled out of court.

Gaylord, which also owns Opryland, The Opryland Hotel, The Grand Ole Opry and The Nashville Network has purchased the Franklin Road building, plus all copyrights, for an undisclosed sum. As in the past, Wesley Rose will stay on as head of Acuff Rose.

Mr. E.W. "Bud" Wendell, president of Gaylord Enterprises, will oversee the publishing operation. Mr. Wendell announced that they planned to reactivate

Hickory Records, which has been dormant for a long time. With such great writers as Orbison, Fred Rose, Hank Williams, Ira & Charlie Louvin, John D. Loudermilk, Mickey Newberry, Don Gibson and more, there ain't no telling what that company is worth, or how much they paid for it. When I find out, I will let you know.

FROM MY FRONT ROW SEAT AT FAN FAIR

As I watched the heart of America pass by my eyes at Fan Fair, the week of June 10th, I became a brand new country music fan again. Sure, it's been said that I've got a hillbilly heart, and it's been said that I am what country music is about. Maybe. But friends and neighbors, there's more to country music than somebody who ekes out a living writing about it.

Multi-talented John Anderson made his moves from Warner Brothers' booth to his own booth, doing his duty as a hillbilly star, signing and posing. John has an eleven-hundred-acre farm near Smithville, Tennessee, where he is

People



Gary and son Matthew

building a half-million-dollar home. That Anderson named John is still Swingin'! Also saw John's pretty sister and sweet mama during the *hectirities* (good new word—hope you like it) here in Nashville.

Oldtimers **Jimmy C. Newman** (whose Cajun music I love) and **Martha Carson** greeted the fans at Fan Fair, along with **Margo Smith** and newcomers **Sawyer Brown**. The Sawyer Brown group received a very warm welcome, especially from the younger fans.

Hee Haw had a booth. How many stars are on that show? I don't know the actual count, but I know one thing... those who showed up to meet the fans in the *Hee Haw* booth were **John Hager**, **Jim Hager**, **Roni Stoneman**, **Jackie Waddell**, **Kelly Billingsley**, and **Jeff**. *Hee Haw* has made millionaires out of a bunch of entertainers. And those fans at Fan Fair are for sure part of the the reason they have a gig. Shame, shame that they didn't all show.

T.G. Sheppard greeted fans both old and young. The youngest fan that I saw was held by T.G. for local TV. The little doil was a girl, all of two months old. Very brave parents, I would say. I would not have the nerve to take a baby to Fan Fair. Them females just ain't got no brakes at ail when they see **Porter Wagoner** signing autographs! After all these years, Porter can still bring out the girls.

Singing looks good on **Dottie and Glen**. **Dottie West**, who will never die because she looks too young to ever get old enough to die, did her part during Fan Fair week, singing like a songbird at the Parade of Stars Show. Perennial favorite **Glen Campbell** didn't let the fans down either. He, too, was a big hit at the Parade of Stars.

Eye saw the crowds go bonkers before **Alabama** even had a chance to set foot in the building at the Tennessee Fair Grounds, where Fan Fair takes place. **Teddy Gentry's** shy smile was in place even before the Metro Police led the group to the booth, and it stayed in place

the entire time he autographed for the fans. The whoop and holler continued, and **Jeff Cook** sort of rocked and rolled as he wrote his name, similar to the way he picks. **Randy Owen**, now that's another story. Randy smiled, winked and wrote just like onstage. And that **Mark Herndon** is just the cutest thing in country music. As in years past, Mark perched himself atop the autograph tables while the women's screeches went throughout the area.

Eye saw an Illinois car with a license tag that read *Oaks Fan!!!* I tried to go around the area where the *Oaks* were signing autographs. I thought I'd say hello to my old friend **Duane Allen**. Not a chance... no way. Women were lined up like bees in a hive after that honey. Like Alabama, the *Oaks* love and are loved. They patiently stood in the heat for hours and smiled. There must have been three cameras for every person in front of their booth. Duane, **Joe Bon-sall**, **William Lee Golden** and **Richard Sterban** all looked great. By the way, did you see that male model look-alike for Richard Sterban in shorts at the games?? Wow!

Eye saw my old friend **Jo Walker-Meador**, who did a splendid job with all the festivities. Jo, the executive director of the Country Music Association, sure had good taste in hiring young **Randy Morgan**. He was getting his job done in a first class way. His duty was to see that those who had booths got their tickets and were properly happy, and this took a lot. Believe me, I was one of the people he was trying to please and that ain't easy.



Barbara and daughter Jamie

Eye saw **Janie Fricke's** mother-in-law accept first prize for best decorated booth at Fan Fair, and I saw **Patty White**, wife of **Buck** and mother of those pretty singing **White Girls**, pick up her second prize and **Reba McEntire's** fan club president pick up her third prize. All these ladies are fan club presidents and they are all definitely winners themselves.

Eye red **Bob Oermann**, first class writer for *The Tennessean*, friend, good guy, and all around hillbilly fan, quoting me in the newspaper. He asked me what I thought about Fan Fair, and I said, "There'll be no crepe paper in heaven." Now that I've had time to think, I am convinced that all kindergarten teachers will go to heaven, especially if they work with crepe paper! By the way, do you think that your child's kindergarten teacher should make less money than a Las Vegas show girl?? I don't.

Eye saw my all time favorite, **Loretta Lynn**, graciously sign autographs for hours. Her booth was tended by her fan club co-presidents, the **Johnson Sisters**. The Johnsons are also co-presidents of the International Fan Club Organization. Loretta's Pow-Wow, held on the grounds of her home in Hurricane Mills, was a real success, so I am told. One of these years I am going, but, as I've said before, Loretta is the one artist who makes me shake in my shoes, so I've held back.

Eye herd **Conway and Mickey Twitty** did D-I-V-O-R-C-E. I still can't say that hurtful word in reference to Conway. Which reminds me... *Eye herd* a fan hurriedly leaving her booth say, "I am going to hear Conway Twitty say 'Hello Darlin.'" I been waiting five years to hear him say that again." Conway, **The Judds** and **Reba McEntire** all performed at the Municipal Auditorium during the week that was. *Eye saw* pretty **Connie Smith**, who sings like a bird (and has for twenty years), as she made her way through the Fan Fair crowd. Five children later, she still looks like a model and is starting a brand new singing/recording career. I'm for Connie having Number One records again and I think she can. Look for her on the Epic label. *Eye bowed* as the Queen of Country Music, **Miss Kitty Wells**, walked past. "Are you having a good time, Kitty?" I asked. "I always do," she replied in her sweet, classy way. *Eye glimpsed* beautiful **Louise Mandrell**, who had about as many men autograph seekers around her as women. Country music is said to be marketed for the female audience. I bet

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WILMA LEE & STONEY COOPER: THE CARTER FAMILY'S GREATEST HITS The combination of old Carter Family songs and the artistry of the Coopers assures that this album is country music at its purest. Included are: Sweet Fern/You Are My Flower/Keep On The Firing Line/Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven/Worried Man Blues/Wildwood Flower/Picture On The Wall/Little Darling/Pal Of Mine/Lulla Wall, more!



"LITTLE" JIMMY DICKENS: THE BEST OF THE BEST OF Every major hit recorded by this country music mainstay is included on this special album. Such as: May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose/Take An Old Cold Tater And Wait/Country Boy A-Sleeping At The Foot Of The Bed/Hillbilly Fever/My Heart's Bouquet/I'm Little But I'm Loud/Out Behind The Barn/Another Bridge To Burn, more!

From The Pages Of Country Music Magazine

Hawkshaw began with King covering whatever Ernest Tubbs was doing. But "Sunny Side of the Mountain" and "Slow Poke" in 1948 and 1951 were enough to establish him as a force in his own right. Like Copas, Hawkins fell by the wayside, with no hit records, though he was a member of the Grand Ole Opry and had contracts with RCA, Starday and Columbia. Then in March 1963, just days before he died, his King recording of "Lonesome 7-7203" hit Number One. Hawkins, like Copas, made other fine records, "Rattlesnakin' Daddy" and "Dog House Boogie" among them, that hinted at rockabilly. *16 Greatest Hits of Hawkshaw Hawkins* (Gusto SD-3013) covers all these and more.

Copas first made his mark as a vocalist with Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys... "Filipino Baby," his first hit, came in 1944. Throughout the 1940's he had still more hits—with "Tennessee Waltz," "Tragic Romance" and others. In the early 1960's, Copas was successful with Starday, with the hits "Alabam," and "Signed, Sealed and Delivered" in 1961. Some of his best-known songs are available on *16 Greatest Hits of Cowboy Copas* (Gusto SD-3012). Most of the material is from his Starday period, though "Filipino Baby" and "Tragic Romance" are also included. Copas never got the credit he should have, considering his rich, supple voice and laconic, offhand delivery.

Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper worked together nearly 40 years... *Early Recordings* (County CCS 103) compiles 12 Columbia songs, leased from CBS, that helped establish their reputation. A second Wilma Lee/Stoney album from the 1970's is *Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper Sing The Carter Family's Greatest Hits* (Starday SD 980), an outstanding salute to the Carters cut in the early 1970's. Wilma Lee and Stoney tackle such Carter classics as "Keep on the Firing Line," produce a delicate version of "You Are My Flower" and are back on Wilma Lee's stops-out treatment of "Lulla Walls." The Carter style and the Coopers' sound blend easily here.

RICH KIENZLE, SEPT./OCT. 85
PAGE 50, *Country Music Magazine*



THE BLUEGRASS HALL OF FAME Stringbean: String's Mountain Dew/Grandpa Jones: Old Rattler/Stamley Bros.: Rank Stranger/Flatt & Scruggs: Foggy Mountain Breakdown/Carl Story: Tramp On The Street/Lonesome Pine Fiddlers: Windy Mountain/Hylo Brown: Hills Of Georgia/Country Gentlemen: Sunrise (Instrumental)/Reno & Smiley: Home Sweet Home/J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers: Run Mountain/Jimmie Skinner: Fallen Leaves/Rex Allen & Kentuckians: Beautiful Blue Eyes/Jim & Jesse & The Virginia Boys/Let Me Whisper, and more!



CARL SMITH: GREATEST HITS
In this album Carl sings better than ever, giving a warm new glow to these classic hits he created. Included are: Mr. Moon/Are You Teasing Me/Hey Joe/Deep Water/I Just Loved Her For The Last Time Again/You Are The One/Don't Just Stand There/If Teardrops Were Pennies/Take My Ring Off Your Finger/Kisses Don't Lie



MAC WISEMAN: GOLDEN CLASSICS
This album is a compilation of some new recordings of the very best traditional bluegrass songs, plus some newer releases. Included: Jimmie Brown, The Newsboy/Goin' Like Wildfire/I Saw Your Face In The Moon/Barbara Allen/The Prisoner's Song/Johnny Cash & Charlie's Pride/Sweeter Than The Flowers/18 Wheels A Humming/Don't Make Me Go To Bed, more!



LULU BELLE & SCOTTY: SWEET-HEARTS OF COUNTRY MUSIC
Their style and songs made America think of them as close personal friends. Here's a sample: Homecoming Time In Happy Valley/Each Time You Leave/Have I Told You Lately That I Love You/Remember Me/The Brown Mountain Light/When The Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again/In The Doghouse Now/Sunday School/Sweet Lps Mountain Dew, more!



LULU BELLE & SCOTTY: SWEET-HEARTS STILL
More classic recordings, including: I Told Them All About You/First Whippoorwill Call/Molly Darlin/Between You And Me/Bonnie Blue Eyes/I'll Be All Smiles/Try To Live Some (While You're Here) Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain/When I Yoo Hoo In The Valley/Rocking Alone In An Old Rocking Chair/Sweet Evalena/Sunset Years Of Life. Why not order both.



SKEETER DAVIS: THE BEST OF THE BEST OF
A gracious star with a different sound, especially with harmony. Included on this great album are: Set Him Free/(I Can't Help You) I'm Falling Too The End Of The World/I'm Saving My Love/Gonna Get Along Without You Now/I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know/I'm A Lover (Not A Fighter) My Last Date With You/Bus Fare To Kentucky, more!



PATSY CLINE/COWBOY COPAS/HAWKSHAW HAWKINS: GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN
Patsy: Lovesick Blues—Just A Closer Walk With Thee—There He Goes/Hawkshaw: I Suppose—Little White Washed Chimney—Sunny Side Of The Mountain—The Life Of Hank Williams/Cowboy: Wings Of A Dove—Cowboy's Deck Of Cards—He Stands Rea' Tall—Beyond The Sunset. A truly fitting tribute to some great legends.



WILF CARTER: "Montana Slim"
Many of the great old favorites of yesteryear and more. Including: Two Little Girls In Blue/Put My Little Shoes Away/Daddy And Home/One Golden Girl/Hey Hey Mr. D.J./Granddaddy's Yodeling Song/Lonesome For My Baby Tonight/Shoo Shoo Shoo She La' Lah/Two Little Stars/The Little Shirt My Mother Made For Me



BEN COLDER (SHEB WOOLEY): GOLDEN HITS
There are few aspects of the entertainment field that this star has not been highly successful in. This album is another success story with tunes like: Easy Lovin' #2/Almost Persuaded #2/Detroit City #2/Little Green Apples #2/Roll'n In My Sweet Baby's Arms/Don't Go Near Eskimos/Sunday Morning Falling Down/Games People Play/10 Little Bottles, and more!

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**—Editorial Staff,
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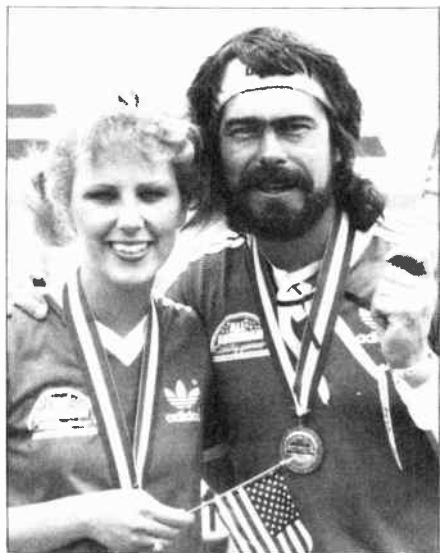
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910-3

People

men buy Louise's product! *Eye watched* a very interesting sight at the CBS Records booth. **Tammy Wynette** is for sure The First Lady of Country Music. She is royalty in a designer dress. There's no doubt about it. Two policemen had to stand on either side of her, to protect her from the pushing and shoving, while she posed with fans and



Shelly and Randy

signed the autographs they longed for. The heart of our country, those who live by and love by her songs, were standing before her, smiles mingled with tears. On the other end of the booth, just as much excitement but a totally different scene. There, very chic, with a semi-punk haircut and hip attire, was lovely **Rosanne Cash** surrounded by today's youth, dressed like her with haircuts to match. Country music fans are so true-blue. They stand by their stars till they drop, or the stars do.

By the way, I had the pleasure of meeting Tammy Wynette's mother during the "first crepe paper day" on Monday, before Fan Fair actually started. What a nice woman Tammy chose for Mama. And I sneaked around to the first lady's booth, where Mama stayed a good deal during the week, and saw her stand and smile as if this was her first year at the fair with her daughter the star.

Eye was there when **The Whites** had a brunch for their fans. The camaraderie, friendly atmosphere and down home feelings were oh, so apparent. Two fans leaving in tears said to me, "I've never been treated like this before. These are the finest people in the world." By the way, photographer for the event was **Ricky Skaggs**. Another mama I had the

privilege of seeing during the week was **Patty White**, mentioned before, mother of Sharon and Cheryl, wife of Buck and mother-in-law of Ricky Skaggs. She worked **The Whites'** booth everyday and greeted those fans, stood with smiles through tears as fans raved about her family. Of course she hosted the brunch until Buck and the girls arrived. What rations they served. My, my. Ham, biscuits, frozen salad, fruit punch, eggs pimento, banana bread, strawberry bread, zucchini bread, petit fours and lots of hot coffee.

Eye saw **Jeannie Pruett** in her booth smiling and autographing and another fave of mine . . . **Vern Gosdin**, smiling and signing. By the way, if you haven't heard "Dim Lights, Thick Smoke and Loud, Loud Music" by Vern Gosdin, you have missed a huge treat. Outstanding record . . . well produced. Sounded like triple fiddling, and doubly great.

Eye was there and saw **Freddie Hart** who looked great and **Ferlin Huskey**, who looked outstanding. Remember, Ferlin had heart surgery last year. Young **Clyde Foley Cummings**, grandson of the late, great **Red Foley**, was meeting and greeting. His lovely mom, the former **Betty Foley**, was Red's eldest daughter. Her youngest sister is married to **Pat Boone** and lives in Hollywood. Course you know that Pat and Shirley Boone are the parents of **Debby Boone**. And there was **Charlie Walker** signing autographs in the Grand Ole Opry booth, and, later on, **Bill Carlisle**. Grand Ole Opry manager **Hal Durham** made an appearance or two, as did seasoned disk jockey **Grant Turner** and somewhat younger **Keith Bilbrey**. I have known Keith since he was in college in Cookeville, Tennessee. You fans should know Keith not only as disk jockey for the powerhouse WSM and for the Opry; he also hosts the "Opry Live" portion every Saturday night on *The Nashville Network*, for all you who are lucky enough to get the show locally on your tube.

Eye saw that **Larry Gatlin** looked fantastic, as did **Rudy** and **Steve**. I pray Larry has fully recovered from his bout with drugs. From what I hear, he is okay following treatment. *Eye want to know*, are you coming to Fan Fair next year? *Eye* will be there. I love the fans and I love Fan Fair. It is a hassle, yes. There is no place to park. You get stepped on, sweated on, pushed and knocked. But if you are a fan, then you must come once.

Eye saw more. **The Judds** looked like country dolls and **Reba McEntire** was

delightful amongst the scrambles and screams. The fans went pretty crazy over **Lee Greenwood**, who autographed at his own booth and at the MCA Records booth. **Exile** had the females wooing again—screams followed by a never-ending roar. Another very exciting artist for the younger fans was **Gary Morris**. With his regrown beard and country smile, he was sure happening during the week.

There were **Little Jimmy Dickens** and **Leroy Van Dyke**. Little Jimmy is still little and Leroy is still handsome. I saw **Johnny Lee's** transfer truck, and it is a whopper, with his name painted across it. Folks, your stars are truly merchandise.

Old friends **Lucille** and **Ken Crews** from Virginia were working in **Ronnie Robbins'** booth. Sure was good to see the Crews again. They told me about the excellent visit and dinner they had with their friend and mine, **Tompall Glaser** and his **June**, at Kobe Steak.

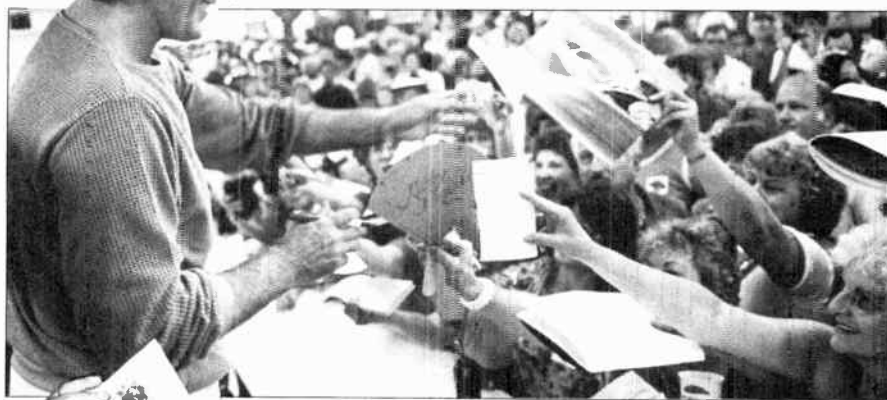
In addition to his duties at **The Whites'** brunch, that sweet **Ricky Skaggs** had a picnic of his own and performed for all of his fans at an outside tent near the Marriott Hotel. **The Whites** also attended Ricky's partying and did some singing there, to the delight of the fans.



Charley and Rozenne

And God worked miracles upon miracles for **Barbara Mandrell**. Her first appearance since the horrendous accident was at the live Music City News Awards Show, where the very pregnant lady received the Pioneer of the Year Award. The 36-year-old beauty seems to be healed emotionally; however, she still has a slight limp, which she vows to

People



Clockwise at their booths: T.G., Sylvia, Naomi and Janie sign for the fans.

overcome. She also vows to return to high-heeled shoes and to dancing. My prayers are with this great lady. It isn't easy to recover from a severe break. I know. Eighteen months ago I broke my leg, and still cannot wear high-heeled shoes, much less dance. In the last month or two I have ceased awaking at night in a cold sweat reliving the fall. I hope and pray that part is over for Barbara.

My buddy and ex-Country Music writer, Doug Green, and his super group, Riders in the Sky, were right there, saying hello and signing their names at Fan Fair. Doug and the guys had a great five weeks in Alaska entertaining the folks with their western songs and skits, as only they can. I hear that Alaskans are country music hungry.

It was sure good to see my buddy, CBS newcomer Carl Jackson, "smiling and signing." I sorta zoomed by like I did for all those with whom I am closely acquainted. I can see the stars eating at the Cracker Barrel anytime. The fans from out of town need to be close with their favorites at Fan Fair.

Charley Pride looked outstanding, and after all this time is still in demand

for autographing and photographing. Mrs. Pride looked rich and scrumptious in her lavender and purple with rose trim. A very sharp dresser is Mrs. Rozenne Pride.

Head of the label himself, Mr. RCA—Joe Galante, made at least two trips that I saw walking among the people. There's a few things that Galante has done in the last year or two worth mentioning. One is assisting those Judd ladies with their wearing apparel. God will bless you for that one, Joe. And another is knowing where his artists' records are on the chart. He knows what part of the country the records are selling in, and he also knows which artist is stronger where. What's more, he knows most of this without referring to anybody except his own papers. That's the kind of know-how that looks good on a person who heads up a hillbilly label in Nashville.

Good guy Lynn Schultz, V.P. of Capitol Records, moseyed by one day. And I spied that sweet Harold Shedd in the crowd. Harold, as you know, produces Alabama, Lane Brody, Mel Tillis and Glen Campbell. Didja know Glen's mama, Carrie Campbell, turned 80 the last

of June? See what you learn by reading my column? MCA's V.P. Bruce Hinton came out among the fans too.

I did not see any outlaw hats. I only saw one Willie Nelson cap and one Willie t-shirt. I saw a couple of Waylon caps. I saw Serge Denisoff's book about Waylon on sale at Mills Bookstore booth. Available at the same booth was the re-released paperback version of Chet Flippo's *Your Cheating Heart*, the Hank Williams story, with Chet on hand to personally autograph copies. It sure was good to see Chet.

Eye saw beautiful Shelly West signing autographs and taking photographs with her many, many admirers while not so far away in the CBS Records booth, Allen Frizzell, her ex-husband and father of her daughter, was also choring away at chatting and smiling and autographing.

Eye no and saw head honcho Jim Foglesong of Capitol Records, who had the good taste and sense to escort Capitol Records' artists Dan Seals and Lane Brody personally to the label's booth... and Razy Bailey, giving fans lots of pictures, spending lots of time at his booth. ■

THE GREAT PLANET EARTH TOUR

On the Road with Johnny Cash

November, 1984. If you've ever spent any time out on the road, you know that restless feeling that rises up after you've been off for a month and reminds you that it's time to leave the comforts of home to go out for a few thousand miles drive.

The final leg of the two-year-long *Johnny Cash Planet Earth Tour* began in Phoenix, Arizona. Autumn was showing its colors in Nashville, but Phoenix, with its eighty degree climate, was a last reminder of how good summer had been. One last look at the multishades of purple and deep red in the late evening sky as the sun gradually disappeared into the desert night, like a scene from a Peckinpah movie.

Here was the first stop of a twenty-city tour: the Arizona State Fair with a few thousand whooping and hollering fellow cowpersons attending. We took the stage cold with no sound check or rehearsal and, like most first nights out, it felt more like a dress rehearsal than a live show as we played our way through a string of songs. Cash announced that we would be leaving for Europe in the morning to do some concerts there and I was trying to psych myself that it was going to be fun, already missing my family and wondering whether I got everything done before I left home this morning. You know, the more human side of show biz. Then I happened to hear a familiar voice saying, "Here's one for you cowboys and cowbelles, 'Ghost Riders in the Sky,' " as I came down out of space: hello, we're on tour!

by Marty Stuart





The next morning everyone stood around in the airport as we were waiting to leave, speculating on everything from the weather to the presidential election that we would miss and our hero Jerry Lee's comment to the press after he did his song and dance for the IRS about not knowing exactly how he was going to pay them: "Maybe I could get a good G.I. loan." But nobody could remember Uncle Gerald ever serving in the armed forces. We did remember how things were at this same time last year: We were just returning from Europe, leaving few fond memories, not the best music ever played, less than favorable reviews and the scariest part immediately after we got home, John R. being rushed in for major surgery and almost dying, then recovering and going on to the Betty Ford Center in California. That's all over though, and this year had been good from the first tour back in March. Everybody's health was miraculously restored. There was plenty of work to do, and it was pretty much business as usual. But for many reasons this was more than just the annual trip to Europe. There was an anxious feeling around that we were ready to make up for not being up to par on the last tour, and then some.

The Johnny Cash Christmas Special, which was to be filmed in Montreux, Switzerland, sat out on the calendar like a reward at the end of the race. The city alone would be a spectacular enough event, but the music promised to be even better. How could it not be with a line-up of people like Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson? But that was seventeen days away and more important now was the eight-hour airplane ride.

Our initial stop was Oxford, England, where Cash did the first of eleven two-and-a-half hour shows. No intermission, no razzle dazzle, just a musical marathon. Midway into this show the band found the groove, claimed it, and never fell out of it for the remainder of the tour. Each night along the way was a musical happening. There were Carter Family songs, cowboy songs, folk standards, gospel music, work songs and a seemingly endless collection of early Sun Records classics.

June and Anita sang Carter Family songs, sitting in chairs at the edge of the stage with their guitars and autoharp. It was reminiscent of the stories of the early days of the Carter Family when A.P., Sara and Maybelle would play those little school houses in mining communities with kerosene lamps for stage lights. It was as close and intimate as the songs themselves. John R. defined the delivery of the Merle Travis classic "Dark as a Dungeon," and it would have made ole Travis proud. Cash learned how

to make a B-minor chord on the guitar, and, in keeping with his motto "If it don't fit, force it," he was likely to play his newfound chord at any time, on any song. But it was all musical, and the magic thumb stirred and gave way to the only beat in town.

We danced across the face of Europe, playing shows in Wales, Finland, England and Scotland before going on to Switzerland, making good music and amends, if there really were any needed, with a seemingly unlimited force of sober fire.

Montreux, Switzerland. It was better than a disk jockey convention or Fan Fair or any other hillbilly happening. Montreux Palace Hotel was like a palace. Where else on earth, for the next four days, had claim to any such combination of personalities? The elite calvary. To see them all together, with every mile showing on their faces. If it had been 1912 and this were Mexico, Cash, Willie, Waylon and Kristofferson could easily have been taken for four of Pancho Villa's Dorados, or "Golden Ones," en route to the Mexican convention. Instead they had fanned the western border for Switzerland and gathered here with their wives to film the Christmas show.

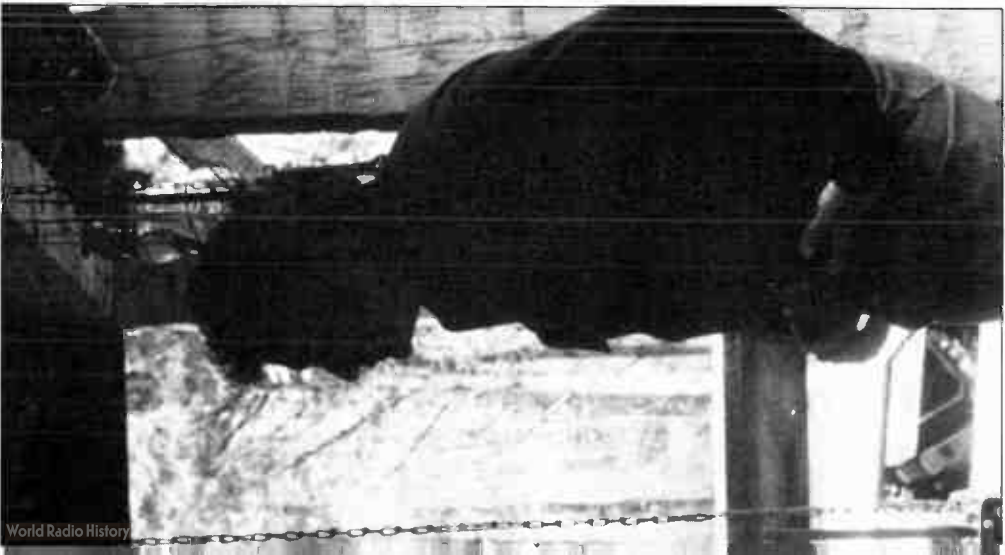
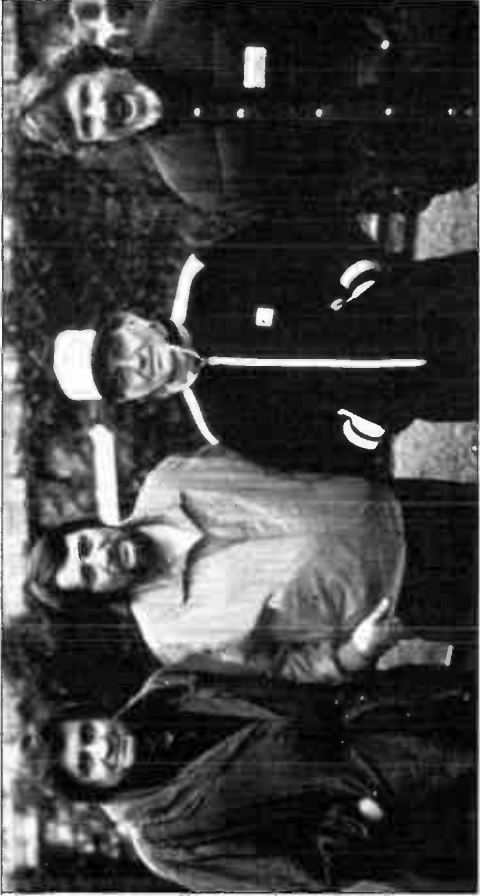
Nobody knew the name of the show. Our piano player, Earl Ball, suggested "Recovery Christmas" because everyone was so healthy and clear-eyed. Cash said, "Aw, call it 'One Christmas at a Time.'" However, the producer confirmed that it would be called "Christmas on the Road."

Kristofferson showed up with some new songs. "Here's one I wrote called 'Love is the Way.' It goes 'Deep in the heart of infinite darkness, a tiny blue marble is spinning through space. Born in the splendor of God's holy vision, sliding away like a tear down His face. Closer you see the whole wide holy wonder, oceans and mountains, rivers and trees. And the strangest creation of many, the human, a creature of laughter and freedom and dreams.'"

And the magic started.

To see Kris standing there teaching his words to everybody and to see them like a convicted choir, out on Sunday morning, and then hear him sing a song that he wrote for Cash because "John beat the devil again"... With every phrase I saw John R. grow a shade meeker, and when it was finished, a glassy-eyed John simply said, "Thank you, Kris" and gave him a big hug. Waylon said, "I've got to have that one." John said, "All right, but I want the other one. Would you put it on tape for me after a while?" Kris consented. It was a whole lot more than just a television show. Actually, after the first hour,





World Radio History

The rehearsal wrapped up, and June invited everybody to a guitar pullin'. June, Jessi, Lisa Kristofferson and Connie Nelson rehearsed a song they'd be doing.



it was more like a family reunion. Cash said, "Man, this is inspirational. It makes me want to write and sing." He and Willie sang "I Still Miss Someone." It felt like it had been written for the moment. Good songs always do sound like that. After they finished singing, Willie laid his guitar down and Cash picked it up to look at all of the signatures. "Hey, Willie, can I sign your guitar?" Somebody produced a pen and it was done.

It's natural for a star to have a slightly larger than normal ego for his public

image, but everybody left theirs somewhere else. There was total consideration on everyone's part. It was like a musical vacation. Hardly anyone at this hotel spoke English and few people recognized the foursome, or if they did, they left them alone. Very few people even realized that a television show was being filmed.

There was one group of good ole Swiss boys who were die-hard Willie fans. They looked like characters out of a *Honeysuckle Rose* bar scene. They had come across country in an old bus that

they had fixed up to resemble the bus from that movie. They asked Willie if he would look at it. Not only did he look at it, he got in and went out on the town to a local casino and sang for a while with the good ole Swiss boys. This was the spirit of things.

Second day. As Waylon and Jessi sang "Silent Night," there was silence. The sound was haunting and pure as Jessi played the piano and Waylon sang. John called Jessi the "prayer warrior" for the show. He said, "If you need something prayed about, tell Jessi. She calls sometimes just to let us know she's remembering us." And it was powerful to hear everybody singing "I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame, I want to be true to His holy Name."

But a TV show will be a TV show. Chips Moman was brought over as the musical overseer, and he immediately recognized the importance of having Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson together. He wanted the event recorded as perfectly as possible. But the production company put more emphasis on everything else *but* the recording system. The crisis came when Willie asked if he could go into the recording studio and re-record his guitar and Chips went to check it out. When he discovered that the system dated back to the technology of the 1950's, Chips blew up! It gave us great satisfaction to see him with his finger in the producer's face, spitting, "Hey, you have 747 talent on your stage, and you only have cropduster equipment to record them on." Well, right then this bell started ringing in my ear, and I clearly understood Cowboy Jack Clement's universal truth that all people from Memphis speak in parables—the other two universal truths being "Women don't like steel guitars" and "If you throw enough shit against the wall, somebody will see a picture in it." Nevertheless, Chips drew a round of applause for his concern for the music.

The rehearsal wrapped up, and June invited everybody to the Cash suite after dinner for a guitar pullin' and general get-together. Kris put his songs on tape for Waylon and John. June, Jessi, Toni Moman, Lisa Kristofferson and Connie Nelson rehearsed a song that they would be doing on the show. The guitar was passed around to John, who sang "Deportee," the old Woody Guthrie song about the airplane load of Mexican immigrants who died in a crash over Los Gatos Canyon in Northern California. Just as he was singing, out of nowhere, a door in the room slammed closed. Somebody said, "Ah, it was probably just Woody." Waylon said, "Yeah, or Hank. He goes with us sometimes."

June knows how to throw a bash, and this one 'was a five-star guitar pullin'. There were great songs being sung. Kristofferson commented, "If I could have gone to something like this when I was first starting, I wouldn't have had to eat for a year. The inspiration is just great."

John and Willie started singing bits and pieces of some of their more obscure songs from the 1960's. I was impressed that while Nashville was flowing in one direction during that time, Willie's words were going elsewhere, and that he, like Cash, had confronted issues not always landing on a commercial target. Looking back after hearing this, it's apparent that it took a tailor-made situation to let Willie Nelson evolve.

Waylon said, "Hey, John. Here's a song that I'll bet you didn't know that I knew. The one you wrote for Ricky Nelson." So Waylon sang all of a hardly known song, "Restless Kid," that Cash wrote at Nelson's request for the John Wayne film *Rio Bravo* but was not used.

As songs and stories were swapped, it was clear that these guys have appreciated each other's work down through the years, and now, for the first time ever in this combination, they were in the midst of a musical gathering. Collectively, their singing and their songs represent a major portion of serious country music as it is known today. It fell together so naturally that you got the feeling that this wouldn't be the last time you'd hear them sing together. Like seeing four guys discovering that if they sing together, they sound a certain way. And, well, the songs are there. Everybody has some trucks and buses. What if...? Nobody said, "We should do a record or a movie together." But a zillion and one possibilities went flying by as the night wore on.

Long after the gathering was over, I was awake thinking. I'm still awed at how things come together in this world. It seems that if something is meant to happen, you can't stop it. And timing proves to be the key again and again. Ten or fifteen years ago, tonight's gathering would have yielded a totally different impact. Hillbilly Central and the House of Cash were worlds apart. Outlaw was a baby. Kris was delivering demos of his songs in helicopters, and Austin was only the capital of Texas. John R. and Waylon tested the musical waters together from time to time along the way. Waylon and Willie made their mark, and everybody sang Kris' songs. And now that the time seems right, what if you combined all of those worlds? How could it not be great?

Bocephus is right. Nobody's rowdy anymore. A lot of people say amen to that. Everybody looks healthy, content, wise and in love with their families.

After they finished singing Willie laid his guitar down and Cash picked it up to look at all the signatures. "Hey Willie, can I sign your guitar?"



Waylon is a great study in motion these days. He goes around happy all the time. The drugs that he credits for covering up his voice for so long have all cleared away. Waylon Jennings hasn't sung as true as he's singing right now in well over a decade. Listen for yourself. W.S. Holland, Cash's longtime drummer and a lifelong teetotaler, remarked that if he ever did decide to start taking dope, when the time came to get off of it, he wanted to do it exactly the way Waylon did it. "I've never seen it change a man for the better as much as it has Waylon,

and I've been knowing him for 20 years." Final day. If I had to single out any one particular thing that I like about the Cash organization, it would be that it constantly evolves. You can set your watch by the fact that things are going to change daily. It grows. Sometimes to the left, but that's fine. John, Marshall and Luther started from the left in 1955. Thinking back on only two years' worth of towns, airports, truckstops, picking parlors, recording sessions, television shows, movies, books, people, hotels, songs, emotions and fire escapes is

enough to make me want to just do it some more.

You can claim the road, or it can claim you. It has taken too many to mention. It's a way to make a living, a good place to run when the water gets too hot everywhere else, another place to play your music—and it's freedom. There's a million reasons to be out there and that's why we're all doing it. It's in vogue to be a hillbilly in 1985, and the Fearsome Foursome, as Russ Barnard calls them, have contributed greatly to that cause. It's easy to understand why Willie has the world's attention right now. He deserves it. It's that simple. Not only is he a great talent, he's also a good man. It's not hard to understand why the world respects Johnny Cash. He really cares, and he's been there in the face of whatever emotion you'd care to talk about. So he understands. Waylon has earned his keep. Every bit of it. He's tough. He's proved himself and his music. And then there's Kris and his profound words that will stand as long as there is a world.

The road always offers a new beginning. Montreux felt like the beginning of something. The world enjoyed the Christmas special and shared in some of the good will that went around there. But I hoped with all of the creative seeds dropped there, something more would spring forth.

After the last bit of filming was done, John R. shook hands with Willie and said, "I'm glad this happened. I feel like I got to know you. I enjoyed singing last night. We should record some things with that same feel!" Willie said, "Well, why don't you come down to my studio in Texas, and we'll do it." It's reassuring that in the midst of corporate country music those verbal deals still exist.

Cowboy Jack Clement calls Johnny Cash, "Captain Decibel." And three of the best rules that the captain ever thought of were: One. Don't sweat the small stuff. Two. If it don't fit, force it. Three. I don't believe in endings, only new beginnings. Good rules to run a tour by.

And the Planet Earth tour wound down into history. The credits were rolling while the wheels were turning to decide what to call the next year's worth of concerts. And as Crowell says, "That old high-waay goes on forever." ■

Marty Stuart went on the road at age 13, playing and singing in Lester Flatt's bluegrass band. Now, at the advanced age of 26, he is in his fifth year on the road as guitar, fiddle and mandolin picker in the band of one John R. Cash. Marty says he is signing a recording contract for himself with CBS Records, so that he can stay on the road in case Mr. Cash decides to go back to rustling cattle.—R.D.B.



From left: Marty Stuart, guitar; Jimmy Tittle, bass; W.S. Holland, drums; Bob Wootton, guitar; back up The Fearsome Foursome at Willie's Picnic.

Postscript: Austin, Texas, July 4, 1985. Well, like I said, after the gathering in Switzerland, we felt and hoped something was going to happen. Something did: *The Highwayman*.

John was already working on an album which would be his first with ace producer Chips Moman, who had already produced individual albums for Willie, Waylon and Kris. I was pleased that John and Chips had recorded two songs I had suggested: "The Highwayman" by Jimmy Webb and "Deportee" by the legendary Woody Guthrie. Glen Campbell had even stopped by to record a demo to help us to learn "The Highwayman" which he had recorded ten years ago.

John cut "Love is the Way," the new song Kris had given him in Switzerland. John asked Waylon to sing on it. Around the same time, Willie and Kris were in town working with Brenda Lee and Dolly Parton on a TV show, *The Winning Hand*, on which Cash was the host. Plus, Willie and John had just recorded "I Still Miss Someone" as a step toward the duet album idea they'd discussed in Switzerland. But, instead of standing in line for another duet album, John was looking for a different idea. So, one night after working on the TV show, John mentioned to Willie and Kris how much he liked "The Highwayman," which we had just recorded. Willie said, "Yeah, let's call up Chips and record it together." So they rounded up Waylon, got Chips out of bed and recorded "The Highwayman" over the tracks we had already put down. That was the start of the Great Magic Album Project. Several sessions later, when the album was basically finished, Willie, John, Chips and CBS's Bonnie Garner were talking about other songs they might do. I said, "Do you know a Guy Clark song called 'Desperados Waiting for a Train?'" Willie said he'd wanted to record it for years, and John said, "Guy Clark sends it to me once a year." So they all said, "Let's do it," and they did.

So now I'm standing on stage at Willie's Picnic with The Fearsome Foursome, as my editor Russ Barnard has now dubbed them. It's an honor to participate in all of this—like watching history develop from

the inside. It rained all day on this Texas hillside, but at five o'clock, when Johnny Cash took the stage, for the first time ever at Willie's Picnic, and was joined by the rest of The Highwaymen, the clouds rolled back.

I've used a lot of words to tell you my side of this story. To see what John R. has to say about *The Highwayman*, just read this poem he wrote, "How Can You Tell."

—MARTY STUART

HOW CAN YOU TELL by Johnny Cash

- John:* Hey Willie, how come you never did a duet album with Bill Monroe?
- Willie:* He's in the "M's."
- Kris:* Man, my throat's sore. I hope I don't sound hoarse.
- Chips:* How can you tell?
- Kris:* Let's dedicate this album to Sam Pekingpah.
- Waylon:* Yeah, we can kill each other when we finish.
- John:* Waylon, I thought you and I were gonna do some duets.
- Waylon:* I thought you and Willie were going to do some duets.
- Kris:* Let's all do duets and then put them all together.
- John:* What'll we call ourselves?
- Willie:* How about "The Other Brothers."
- Waylon:* We don't sound like brothers.
- Chips:* How can you tell?
- Kris:* Willie can't phrase with us.
- Waylon:* Yeah, it throws us off.
- John:* Yeah, it makes us sound bad.
- Willie:* How can you tell?

—Chips Moman Studio
11:00 P.M., January 5, 1985

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE 1985 AWARDS BALLOT

Country Music Magazine subscribers who fill out and return this ballot by November 30, 1985 will determine who wins the 1985 Country Music Magazine Awards. Results will be published in the January/February 1986 *Country Music*. In addition, details of the voting will be made available to record companies, radio stations, concert promoters, record retailers as well as to the performers and their managers. Your opinion counts, especially when combined with the opinions of others of *Country Music's* 375,000 subscribers.

Album of the Year

You have five votes for Album of the Year. Check any five boxes.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atlanta Blue
The Statlers | <input type="checkbox"/> Major Moves
Hank Williams, Jr. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City of New Orleans
Willie Nelson | <input type="checkbox"/> Meant for Each Other
B. Mandrell/L. Greenwood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Country Boy
Ricky Skaggs | <input type="checkbox"/> My Kind of Country
Reba McEntire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind
George Strait | <input type="checkbox"/> Plain Dirt Fashion
Nitty Gritty Dirt Band |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Cheat in Our Hometown
Ricky Skaggs | <input type="checkbox"/> Right or Wrong
George Strait |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Make It Easy For Me
Earl Thomas Conley | <input type="checkbox"/> Roll On
Alabama |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exile
Exile | <input type="checkbox"/> The Judds: Wynonna & Naomi
The Judds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40 Hour Week
Alabama | <input type="checkbox"/> Too Good to Stop Now
John Schneider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship
Ray Charles | <input type="checkbox"/> Treadin' Water
Earl Thomas Conley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greatest Hits II
Oak Ridge Boys | <input type="checkbox"/> What About Me
Kenny Rogers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Over Mind
Anne Murray | <input type="checkbox"/> Why Not Me
The Judds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Houston to Denver
Larry Gatlin | <input type="checkbox"/> You've Got A Lot of Good Love Comin'
Lee Greenwood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's All In The Game
Merle Haggard | |

Single of the Year

You have five votes for Single of the Year. Check any five boxes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> America
Waylon Jennings | <input type="checkbox"/> Let's Chase Each Other Around the Room
Merle Haggard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Place to Fall Apart
Merle Haggard | <input type="checkbox"/> Let's Fall to Pieces Together
George Strait |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baby's Got Her Blue Jeans On
Mel McDaniel | <input type="checkbox"/> Mama He's Crazy
The Judds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dixie Road
Lee Greenwood | <input type="checkbox"/> My Only Love
The Statlers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind
George Strait | <input type="checkbox"/> One Takes the Blame
The Statlers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire In The Night
Alabama | <input type="checkbox"/> Seven Spanish Angels
Ray Charles/Willie Nelson |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girls Night Out
The Judds | <input type="checkbox"/> She's My Rock
George Jones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> God Bless the U.S.A.
Lee Greenwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Somebody Should Leave
Reba McEntire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hello Mary Lou
The Statlers | <input type="checkbox"/> The Cowboy Rides Away
George Strait |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How Blue
Reba McEntire | <input type="checkbox"/> The Mississippi Squirrel Revival
Ray Stevens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I Don't Know a Thing About Love
Conway Twitty | <input type="checkbox"/> Uncle Pen
Ricky Skaggs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's A Short Walk From Heaven to Hell
John Schneider | <input type="checkbox"/> Why Not Me
The Judds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I've Been Around Enough to Know
John Schneider | |

Album and Concert Artist of the Year

Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month?

Yes No

How many records? _____ How many tapes? _____

How many concerts, stage shows, fairs, featuring major country stars, have you attended in the last 12 months? _____

Check below if you bought any albums or attended any concerts, by the performers listed below, in the past 12 months. Check as many as apply.

	Bought Album	Attended Concert		Bought Album	Attended Concert
Alabama	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Willie Nelson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
John Anderson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oak Ridge Boys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Johnny Cash	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dolly Parton	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Earl Thomas Conley	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marty Robbins	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kenny Rogers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Janie Fricke	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	John Schneider	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lee Greenwood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ricky Skaggs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Merle Haggard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Statlers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emmylou Harris	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	George Strait	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waylon Jennings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sylvia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
George Jones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conway Twitty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don Williams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Barbara Mandrell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gene Watson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ronnie McDowell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hank Williams, Jr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reba McEntire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tammy Wynette	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gary Morris	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

HOW TO VOTE: Only *Country Music* subscribers are eligible. You must return this complete page. No photocopies will be eligible. To qualify your ballot, you must write, in the space provided below, the first five letters of the code which appears immediately above your name on the mailing label on the front of this issue.

Nominations shown on this ballot were determined by the results of six polls conducted over 12 months among 100,000 members of the *Country Music Society of America* all of whom receive *Country Music* with their membership. If you would like to participate in next year's nominating polls, you may join the *CMSA* at a special rate for *Country Music* subscribers of \$12. Just include your check to *Country Music Society of America* with this ballot. It is not necessary to join to vote with this ballot. Just fill in the ballot and the information below.

MAIL TO: Country Music Awards, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.

I am a *Country Music* subscriber. The first five letters in the code above my name on the mailing label for September/October are

Subscribers Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Do not be deceived by this offer... THIS MERCHANDISE IS ALL TOP QUALITY! In fact, many of the items below were mainstays in Country Music Magazine catalogs for many years... selling from \$5.95 to \$40.00. We are offering them now because we must clean out our warehouse. What better way to dispose of them than to our members... just one more benefit of being a Charter Member. (Sorry, but we must limit orders to one item so we can reach as many of our members as possible.) If you are not already a member, join below and you can still get in on this special giveaway.

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- THE BEACH BOYS: SUMMER FUN** An expanded album featuring: Fun Fun Fun/I Get Around/Little Honda/Then I Kissed *lar/California Girls/Help Me Rhonda/Barbara Ann/Don't Worry Baby/Dance Dance Dance/409/Hush-A-Bye/Do You Wanna Dance/Surfin' USA/Summertime Blues/Louie Louie/Surfer Girl/Tell Me Why/Surfin' Safari. LP No. R3B (No Tapes)—A \$6.98 VALUE
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- Used To Be/Didn't We/House Of The Rising Sun/End Of The World. LP No. R5N/8TK No. T50 (No Cassettes)—A \$5.98 VALUE
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- BRIGHT LIGHTS AND COUNTRY MUSIC** This 6-record set is available in 8TK boxed set only. It features: Jerry Lee Lewis: Jambalaya/Mac Davis: I Believe In Music/Conway Twitty: Hello Darlin'/Lefty Frizzell: If You've Got The Maney, I've Got The Time/Marty Robbins: Can't Help Falling In Love/Johnny Horton: Honky-Tonk Man/Tammy Wynette: Stand By Your Man/Johnny Cash: Ring Of Fire/Jeanie C. Riley: Harper Valley P.T.A., much more! 8TK No. R4X (No LPs or Cassettes)—A \$40.00 VALUE
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- No. B2H—A \$7.95 VALUE
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- * **TOO YOUNG TO DIE** Not country, but still a book that everyone should read. Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Hank Williams... these are just some of the 31 stars whose stories are told in this handsome hardcover edition. It is a treasury of documented material about some of the most famous people from the era of the 20's to the 70's... complete with rare photos. Author Patricia Fox-Sheinwald's first work in a very famous series. Book No. B3Z—A \$17.95 VALUE
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- * **WATERMELON WINE** It's an inside look at the lives and music of Nashville's finest... Waylon Jennings, Loretta Lynn, Charlie Daniels, Johnny Cash, Kris Kristofferson, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Hank Williams. Wrote singer Bill Anderson upon its release, "I've often said you can't describe music with words. However, author Frye Gailard comes awfully close..." And songwriter Mickey Newbury, "...one of the best books I've ever read on country music..." Book No. B3R—A \$10.00 VALUE

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Bobby Bare's Still Doing Things His Way

The songwriter's best friend has got himself a successful cable television show, a new record label and some new views on country music. But Bare hasn't changed—he's as relaxed as ever, singing his songs and taking life one day at a time.

Casting a professional eye over the career of Bobby Bare, any promo man worth his slush fund would have to conclude that the man was terminally unambitious, and therefore either very dumb or just plain crazy.

The "wrong moves" go all the way back, and continue to this day. After "Detroit City" and a whole string of major hits ("Miller's Cave," "The Streets of Baltimore," "500 Miles Away from Home," and others) which could have made him a coast-to-coast, live-in-person, Legend-in-His-Own-Time for the rest of his life, he chucked it all in because he was "sick of what was going on" in country music and thought it was too easy for any old officially-sanctioned fool to ride any old officially-sanctioned song to the top of the charts.

After he became the first Nashville artist to seize production control of his own records, thereby initiating the artistic/business revolution which became known as the "outlaw movement," he failed conspicuously to adopt the "outlaw" image with which he could have capitalized on his achievement, using his freedom instead to make "concept" albums like *Lullabies*, *Legends and Lies* (folk poetry! art!) and *Singin' in the Kitchen* (kids' songs! with his family!).

It just goes on and on. Look at him now: here he is, the host of the most successful show on *The Nashville Network* cable TV channel, *Bobby Bare and Friends*, and he

seems to regard this hot shot at the biggest of all big times—an opportunity for which any right-thinking entertainer would gladly murder his whole home town, let alone his grandmother—as little more than a pleasant way to hang out and do right by his songwriter friends.

All this means that Bobby Bare is indeed terminally unambitious according to the standards (ruthless opportunism, ravening greed, total ego fulfillment) by which ambition is usually measured in any business you care to mention. But it doesn't mean that he's crazy: it just means that he gets to have a lot of fun, help his friends along, contribute a significant number of gems to the archives, and stay interested in his work. These have always been the principles behind Bare's professional output, and there is no reason to expect that becoming a TV star would change them.

The show, in fact, speaks for itself. For those readers denied access to the wide world of cable TV, it goes like this: for one hour weekly, Bare invites selected songwriter friends into a recording studio which is also set up for video production, shoots the breeze with them about music-related matters, and has them pick and sing a bit. Sometimes he picks and sings

too. Since Bare's friends include just about every songwriter and singer in Nashville (he has, unsurprisingly, no enemies among those who actually make the music), the range of guests is wide.

What emerges is the kind of stuff you just never, never see on TV, never hear on the radio, and can't buy for love or money at the local record store or bootleg tape emporium: genuinely intimate, knowledgeable conversations of more than three minutes' duration between people who know a lot more about each other than can be gleaned from press kits, *National Enquirer* stories and pre-show staff briefings, plus live performances which are often spontaneous (as in "Why don't you pick that one, John?") and always unusual. The guests pick their absolute all-time favorites, works-in-progress, numbers they've always wanted to record but have never gotten around to, killer songs they heard last week which will never see the light of commercial day, songs they've always wanted to sing with Bare or other guests on the show, and so on. The music is processed through recording-studio equipment rather than the kind of primitive set-up found on most TV shows, and it comes out clear as a bell.

And that's it: *Bobby Bare and Friends* is absolutely unique, absolutely shuck-and-jive-free, and wonderfully entertaining. Like most other Bare activities, it is at heart "alternative programming."

by Patrick Carr

which is another way of saying that it's more than just another way to turn a fast buck or (in the case of cable TV networks) fill up an infinity of empty air time.

Bare is an easygoing individual (in style, at least), and as such he is both a pleasure to watch on TV and a good man to visit for the purposes of an interview. This time around, I visited with him in Nashville, beginning at his office and proceeding through dinner (with his wife Jeanie). It was a good day for Bare, because he had just concluded negotiations on a new recording deal with Capitol—EMI Records, thereby getting himself back into the record-making business after being without a contract since he and CBS Records parted company some two years ago. I found him, therefore, laid out on his office couch wearing his customary hat and boots and a grin a little wider than normal.

The tone of the occasion was extremely civilized in a kind of happily-married-middle-aged-couple-perfect-neighbors kind of way—there was a lot of family-story telling and ordinary chit-chat—and since this contrasted quite sharply with previous interviews conducted at odd hours of the day and night in various bars, recording studios, pinball arcades and the like, my first official question concerned the Bobby Bare "lifestyle."

You seem to be about as laid-back as you always were, or maybe even more so. Have you slowed down much in recent years?

I think I'm more or less the same, except that I have more respect for staying healthy. You have to be more aware of that, the older you get. In other words, I can't go out and roar all night long like I used to, and still bounce back. It's too hard on you when the hurting lasts longer than the fun. But being a real good hillbilly and

a country singer like I am, I misjudge that every once in a while. It relieves the tension.

I guess a little career success does that, too. Are you happy with your new recording deal? Did you get what you wanted?

Yup, I got exactly what I wanted. I wanted a record company with a guy running it that I respect and like, and one that's strong internationally. I've been touring internationally, forever, without any real help from my record companies, but EMI is probably the strongest international label there is, and I think Jim Fogelson will be able to shape Capitol up into a major force in Nashville. Sounds like there's a real commitment there. And as far as creative control goes, the bottom line is the songs, and I've got the last word there. So I'm happy.

Which raises the issue of modern country songs. What do you think of the state of the art right now?

Well, it seems like you've got your Kenny Rogers housewife songs and your George Jones beer-joint songs, and that's about it. I'm sure that's all due to pressure from the record companies; they figure that's what's selling, so that's what they're gonna put out, and everybody falls in line behind that. There really isn't any room for a whole lot in between. It's not that there aren't a bunch of great songs on the radio; it's just that they're all basically about the same things.

So, I guess the songwriters who were writing outlaw-type material in the 1970's are writing Kenny Rogers or George Jones-type material in the 1980's, right?

That's about it. They're still writing great songs which don't fit the mold, but they're not showing them around. They're singing them at guitar pulls, but they always pre-



face them with, "This isn't really commercial, but . . ." So the songs are there.

What do you think of that?

I don't know if I'm right or wrong, but I like to get my head turned around once in a while—like, "Ooh! What was *that*?" That's what keeps my interest up. I like to see the business growing, and that means saying fresh things in songs.

So what's your policy on songs?

I just look for good songs, and I don't worry about how to categorize it. If it's a housewife song and I love it, hell, I'll cut it. If you spend a lot of time finding the best songs you can, and cut 'em, one of them is bound to come off. Lightning's got to strike sooner or later if you've got good material.

You're not making "concept" albums any more, are you?

No. Concept albums have kind of fallen by the wayside. I guess the record companies' idea of a great concept album is one that has ten Number One singles on it. They're not interested in messages 'cause they can't sell 'em, so why put a lot of time and energy into something that tries to relay a message of some sort, and ties it all together, when nothing will happen with it? So now, I'm going for the ultimate concept—ten hit singles. And *then* I'll do a concept album.

How about novelty songs? Got any plans there?

Record companies are scared to death of novelty songs. They say they've got a high "burn-out factor." My theory is that I should do one, let it burn out, then do another one two weeks later and let *it* burn out—put out ten of 'em, put 'em on an album, and then let *it* burn out. In the meantime, I've sold ten million records. I love the record business, 'cause nobody



Lacy J. Dalton sat behind the control board on one of Bare's shows.



A probing question caused Emmylou Harris to stop and think.

really knows what the hell is going on. I have this vision, you know: there's all these millions of people—artists, musicians, record company executives—sitting around waiting, and way over in the corner there's a songwriter with a guitar and a pencil and paper, writing. Everybody else is just waiting for him to finish writing, and that's just exactly the way it is; everybody else would be useless if it weren't for the guy writing the song. There ain't nobody likes to admit it, but that's it.

How do you feel about the new singers who have come along in the last few years?

Well, I do get tired of hearing new songs on the radio, and trying to figure out who the hell is singing them, you know? Usually it could be any one of a whole lot of people. I guess what I'm looking for is somebody with a real identity. And there's some real good talent out there. Gary Morris, for instance—I don't mind hearing him singing "The Wind Beneath My Wings" and songs like that. You can tell it's him; he's got the fire. I don't know; I guess I'm looking for an Elvis to come along—and he ain't never gonna come back. He's gone to the big rock 'n' roll show in the sky. But that's what we need, somebody who can just turn the whole business inside out.

There's always Hank, Jr. He's pretty exciting.

There is always ol' Hank. He holds up real good. He's got it down. But they've kind of walled him out, you know? "You're real good, Hank, but you can't have no awards and you can't have no recognition."

Isn't that weird? He outsells and out-draws just about everyone else in country music, but come awards time, he just doesn't exist. Why is that?

I guess he must have taken some dope or got drunk sometime, and said something. Or acted weird or turned his guitar up too loud, or something that pissed somebody off. Maybe he ought to come to town and hang out; maybe that would make them feel better about him. I'm just making this up off the top of my head, but maybe he got all the powers in country music together for a showcase somewhere, and pissed them all off. One fell swoop. Like, maybe a bunch of bikers and rednecks came and shoved them all around, having too much fun. That would do it.

And then of course there's always David Allan Coe. It's always boggled my mind that he still gets to cut records.

Well, he's talented. He has the ability to cut hit records, and Billy Sherrill says "Sure—why not?" If you cut a record, you don't have to go home with it. I mean, I don't know if I'd go bar-hopping with David—you might get your head hurt—but I like everything he does. I love his approach. I'd like to see other people do things like he does. Give it a little flash, a little showbiz. That's what it is, after all—*show* business! Like, I saw him on the Ralph Emery show, wearing a three-piece suit and dancing—a three-piece suit with his gut sticking out between his vest and his pants! David may be crazy, but he's not stupid, so I'm sure he figured "Hell, that's middle-class America out there, so I'll go in a three-piece suit and act right." It didn't come off like that; it looked like a crazy person in a three-piece suit. It was beautiful, you know?

Indeed. He was real funny on your TV show, too. And speaking of TV, has your show changed your position in Nashville?

Sure. Everybody seems to love it, the songwriters and the powers and everybody. It's made me a lot more visible, and

everybody seems to think they know me better—which they probably do. It's gotten me more respect.

Has it helped you get more good songs? No, not really. I never did have trouble getting access to songs. I pretty much got the best shot the songwriters had at a given moment. But I hear a lot of great songs.

How do you do the show? One a week, six at a time, twelve at a time?

We block off a couple of weeks for doing about twelve shows, with days between taping so we don't get in too bad a shape. We only do one a day.

Are the interviews something you have to work out beforehand, or do you pretty much wing it?

Well, the people I have on the show are people I've known for a long time, and I know just about everything there is to know about them. The only real preparation I do is sometimes, there will be three or four things I don't want to miss touching on, so I'll write them down on a little piece of paper so I don't forget them during the interview. Like, I was interviewing Hoyt Axton, and I completely forgot to ask him about his movies 'cause I got so wrapped up in what we were talking about.

Do you tape a lot more material than you use?

No. Not at all. When they let me know when to go to a commercial, I can usually hit it pretty much on the button. It's edited very little.

Do you have problems getting people to talk?

Not usually, but sometimes it can get a little tough, like with Bill Monroe. He showed up with his band and his mandolin, and I'll tell you: whenever they show up in a bunch with their instruments strapped



Bare got a chance to cut-up with Willie on another.

on, they ain't there to shoot the shit. They're there to *play*, buddy. That's when you get them "Yes sir, no sir" answers. They're like race cars, standing there revving up their motors. But Bill's impressive, you know. I bet he's a mean, *mean* son of a bitch. I bet he's a fighter, even now.

The format of the show—without an audience—seems to work very well. People really open up.

The people are in their element. Basically, songwriters and artists spend a whole lot of their time in the recording studio, and they feel comfortable there. If I got 90% of the people I have on the show into a television studio with an audience and everything, they'd freeze up. Bob McDill, for instance. He's written God knows how many hits, but he won't perform in public or record his songs himself 'cause he just doesn't want to be a star. Me and Don Williams have tried everything in the world to get him to cut a record, but he just won't. So I got him to come on the show. I'd told him he didn't have to sing if he didn't want to, but we got to having a pretty good time, and he got up there and sang. I got it on 24-track, and it sounded pretty good, too. He came into the control room and sat down, and I said, "Well, I just won a thousand dollars. I bet Don Williams I could get you in the studio and cut a record on you—and there it is!"

It must feel good getting all those inside stories down on tape and getting all those people together.

It does. Like when I had Chet Atkins and Don Gibson on together, talking about "Oh, Lonesome Me" and "I Can't Stop Loving You." They hadn't been together for years and years; in fact, Chet hadn't played those songs since he played on the records. And Glen Campbell and Jimmy Webb—they didn't even really know each other well. They hadn't seen each other in years, but a few weeks after we taped the show Glen called me from Jimmy's house in New York. Being on the show had gotten them together. Then we did one show with John Hartford and the Glaser Brothers, and that was great: the Glasers had gotten all pissed off at each other after the money started rolling in from "Gentle on My Mind," and Hartford had moved to the West Coast, but I got Hartford singing that song with the Glasers doing those great harmonies, and that was *really* magic. That was musical history. Things like that really make it worth while, and besides, I just enjoy doing the show. Visiting with all those folks is real nice.

It ain't a bad way to make a living, is it? Interviewing people can be a lot of fun. You're pretty good at it, too.

Well, I guess that what I do best is listen, because I really am interested. I love all those stories, and I really do care for the people.



"The people are in their element and they feel comfortable there," says Bare of his guests. Some of the other stars he's interviewed on his show recently include Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins, Roger Miller and his wife Mary Miller and Jerry Reed and Dottie West.

BETH GWINN

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Hank Williams Sr. *Just Me And My Guitar*

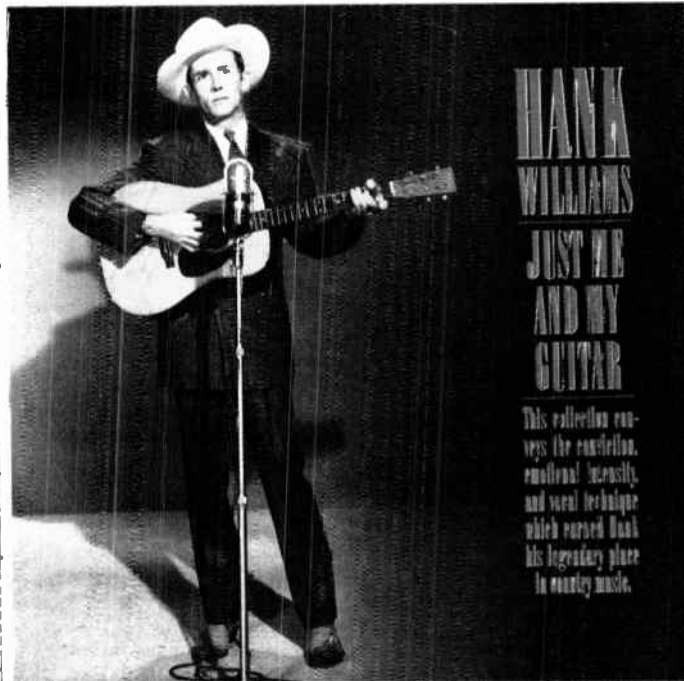
Country Music Foundation
CMF-006

Just when you thought all the Hank Sr. material was accounted for on Polygram's *Rare Takes & Radio Cuts*, here comes this collection of newly discovered demonstration recordings that Hank made for his song publisher, Acuff-Rose. After Hank's death, three of these were overdubbed by The Drifting Cowboys and released by MGM to keep the new release bandwagon rolling. The rest sat in the Acuff-Rose files, unnoticed, for over 30 years.

All too often, such albums are loaded with duplications or substandard junk. Not this one. Seven of the songs here Hank never recorded for MGM in any form. The rest are early versions of well-known Hank tunes that, musical rough spots aside, often boast stronger, more impassioned vocals than the released versions. The demo of "Your Cheatin' Heart" is an example—Hank sounds genuinely wounded as he sings it. His classic MGM single sounds jaunty by comparison.

"Jambalaya" also differs from the issued version. This one omits the final verse. Conversely, extra verses and small differences in the lyrics appear on both "Honky Tonk Blues" and "Help Me Understand," a Luke the Drifter recitation, which shows how great songs—even Hank's—are a result of exhaustive reworking as well as genius.

Hearing Hank sing these songs alone can be eerie, comparable to listening to the tor-



tured recordings of 1930's bluesman Robert Johnson. Even on the gospel tunes "House of Gold" and the prophetic "Neath a Cold Gray Tomb of Stone," his voice is downright chilling. On a contrasting note is the uptempo "Nothing as Sweet as My Baby," written with songwriter Mel Foree, which wound up as one of Carl Smith's first releases for Columbia in 1951.

The most welcome unreleased song is "The Log Train," an evocative, folk-flavored chronicle of his childhood days when his dad, Lonnie Williams, was engineer of a rural Alabama logging train. Previously available only in Time-Life's boxed set, it was one of his last—and most moving—compositions, and presented such a departure from the norm that you wonder what musical direction he'd have taken had he lived.

This is the first widely distributed album from the

Country Music Foundation's own record label, whose previous releases consisted of some reissue cassettes presented with little fanfare. It is an auspicious debut, and with knowledgeable CMF staffers Ronnie Pugh and Bob Pinson around there could be more where this came from, like the many 1940's and 1950's Armed Forces Radio transcriptions the CMF has in its vaults. If you own only one Hank Williams album, you need this one; if you have everything, you *still* need this—and don't look for it in your neighborhood record store.

—RICH KIENZLE

Willie Nelson & Hank Snow *Brand on My Heart* Columbia PC 39377

In 1977 Hank Snow recorded *Still Movin' On*, an album

designed to bring him into a contemporary context. It was a harebrained idea, which made about as much sense as teaming Bill Monroe with Jason and the Scorchers. Snow's best music has a majestic, panoramic aura and reserved dignity that time can't erode; it will never sound dated. Willie's best music is much the same, but they share something else as well. As much as Willie cites Frank Sinatra, Lefty Frizzell and Wade Ray as vocal influences, Hank is right up there with them, and singing together, Hank and Willie sound uncannily alike.

This should have been an enjoyable effort, on a par with the Willie/Ray Price album, and easily the best of Willie's duet albums. Unfortunately, it isn't. The problem here isn't one of concept or intention; musically, the album's just plain sloppy. Hank's timing is off in some places, his phrasing and pitch are off in others. As they trade off verses, Snow sometimes jumps in half a beat too fast or slides off key.

Now before you traditionalists blow your stacks, bear this in mind: a record can be loaded with technical flubs and still work. Ernest Tubb knew his voice wasn't perfect, yet he was still one of our best singers. If the feeling is there, everything else is irrelevant. The problem is this entire album sounds perfunctory and rushed, as if everyone ran through it all as fast as possible. And it ignores a crucial point: Hank Snow's music has always been based on *precision*. His crystal clear voice, perfect enunciation and cleanly played backup distinguished him from Hank Williams, Ernest or Lefty, all of whom made their imperfec-

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tions work for them.

On *20 of the Best of Hank Snow*, the British import album of Hank's RCA hits, you can hear this meticulous intensity on "I'm Movin' On," "A Fool Such as I," "Golden Rocket" and every other number. If this record had half that intensity, I wouldn't hear the flaws. It doesn't, and every one stands out.

I admire the fact that Willie, comfortable at the top,

reacquaints his young and old fans with those legends who inspired him. He probably doesn't make much money off any of these records, and most of his younger fans would never hear of these people otherwise. Unfortunately, good intentions aren't enough this time.

—RICH KIENZLE

Reba McEntire
Have I Got a Deal For You
MCA 5585

It's no secret why Reba McEntire is Merle Haggard's favorite female singer, or Gene Watson's, or anybody else's, for that matter. In a world where plasticity runs rampant and artificiality pa-

rades as authenticity, McEntire stands out like sheet silver in a box of Reynolds Wrap.

Few winners of the CMA's female vocalist trophy have been more deserving—or more popular choices—than this Oklahoma redhead. Few artists have progressed as rapidly since switching record companies, either. From the moment she went to MCA, McEntire's career took on the unmistakable patina of stardom. It was just a matter of finding the right songs; the other elements were already in place.

Like her male counterparts George Jones or Vern Gosdin, McEntire is a natural stylist. She wrings feeling from lyrics like they're damp Kleenex, bending her almost-yodel vocals around phrases until

they're spent. Her newest album, *Have I Got a Deal For You*, exceeds the stunning promise of her Harold Shedd-produced predecessor and shimmers on its own.

However, the album is, in my opinion, misnamed; in contrast to the surface flippancy of its title, *Have I Got a Deal For You* contains the kind of substance that once fed the souls of country fans before techno-synthesized slickness turned commerciality into a dirty word. The song choices are inspired, spread among a group of fine writers who couldn't hope for much better than to have one of their compositions recorded by McEntire. The voice is inspired too. It's not easy to establish yourself in a sea of sound-alikes; fortunately for Reba, she has no sound-alikes. Listen to her

Hit or Miss?

Eddy Raven

Love And Other Hard Times

RCA AHL1-5456

Karen Brooks

I Will Dance With You

Warner Bros. 25277

Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

Partners, Brothers And Friends

Warner Bros. 25304

Moe Bandy

Barroom Roses

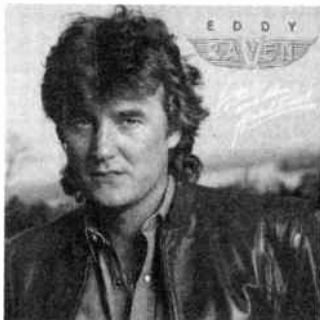
Columbia FC39906

Just when the Long Hot Summer is over and our brains are a little scattered and our bodies have turned to wrinkled prunes, along come vinyl oases to revive our spirits. Let's look at a few of the best albums from a recent batch.

Take *Love and Other Hard Times* by Eddy Raven. Here's an album that ought to qualify this hard-working, underappreciated artist for his place in the sun. There's not a weak song in the whole lot, no lyric liabilities or musical mistakes. Raven sings songs precisely the way they're meant to be sung: with feeling. Give him a great song—or 10—watch him shine.

Raven and co-producer Paul Worley seem to feel the same about what belongs and what doesn't. Their arrangements are engaging, unobtrusive and sparkling.

Choosing favorite cuts on



Love and Other Hard Times is like walking into Baskin-Robbins and trying to decide among 31 flavors. Certainly Raven's own picturesque vignette-in-song, "We Robbed Trains," in which he conjures up long-gone days with Jesse James and Billy the Kid, has the qualities to make it a modern masterpiece. For that matter, all seven of the tunes Raven co-authored are praiseworthy. And with a couple of outside tunes like "Operator, Operator" and "I Wanna Hear It From You," with its cheeky arrangement, the album fairly soars off the turntable.

I Will Dance With You is Karen Brooks' third album. It's not, perhaps, another *Walk On*, her excellent 1982 debut album, but it will do satisfactorily until she makes the definitive Karen Brooks statement.

Brooks' career has suffered its share of ups and downs; this album, her first with Muscle Shoals export Barry

Beckett, ought to refuel her career and get things back on track. She's an unconventional talent, to say the least. Her voice, a truly distinctive instrument, sounds like steel-belted radials encased in dry silk. Like others of the Rodney Crowell/Rosanne Cash ilk, Brooks is a thinking person's artist whose unpredictability is part of her charm, just as much as the curious mix of tough-girl resiliency and childlike fragility that prevails in her work. Beckett has kept the instrumentation basically lean and clean, since Brooks' natural stylistic tendencies tend to dominate tracks, anyway.

Not every song here is destined to be a minor classic, but several deserve special mention. "The Last One to Know," "The Hard Way," "I Do Blues" and "Beyond the Great Divide" each take on sheen through Brooks' interpretation. As for the title duet with Johnny Cash—reminiscent of the Hoyt Axton/Linda Ronstadt duet "Lion in the Win-

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elevate pain to a higher form of expression when she laments her way through "Red Roses (Won't Work Now)"—a song that should immediately be inaugurated into the Country Songwriters Hall of Fame. Hear her smile bravely through the fragile optimism of the lovely "Don't Forget Your Way Home."

Ironically, McEntire has a version of "She's Single Again" that overshadows the chart version released by Janie Fricke. In Fricke's, you can hear the female cat claws unsheathing in defensive territoriality; but McEntire turns the number into something universally real and ultimately honest.

She's not particularly known for her songwriting, but McEntire may change that shortly if she continues to

put forth such superior efforts as "Only in My Mind." What an angle: the woman telling the man that she's only cheated on him in her mind. Now that's different—and compelling—as she interprets it with understated resignation. Cuts like these and "The Great Divide" showcase this artist as few of her albums have previously. She sounds like she knows people are taking her seriously these days: very seriously.

—KIP KIRBY

John Anderson
Tokyo, Oklahoma
Warner 25211-1

Me, I'm a big John Anderson fan. I like him be-



cause he's not afraid to try anything—and for somebody with a voice as distinctive as John Anderson's, that's saying a lot.

Tokyo, Oklahoma is one of the most solid, most satisfying John Anderson albums to come along in a while. On it, Anderson does a good job of balancing a little bit of this, a little bit of that: a little hard country, a little rock 'n' roll and blues. He starts the al-

bum with a screamer, the old Bobby Womack composition "It's All Over Now." The song was originally cut in 1964 by the Valentinos, but it's best remembered for the cover version by the Rolling Stones later that year, one of their first American hits. When the Stones released the song, critics called it "an infectious thumper," and it still is. In fact, Anderson brings a funky flavor that really makes it roll.

He follows that with Paul Kennerley's "I've Got Me a Woman," a truly off-beat song that probably only John Anderson could get away with: *We live with a monkey and a*

Chinese acrobat

She calls me Tex and makes me wear a cowboy hat

But I don't care, 'cause she's a pretty good woman at that.

Notes on Review by Kip Kirby



ter"—a few million less la-la's in the final fadeout would have added a lot.

After 17 albums together and 19 years of camaraderie, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band is finally becoming commercially popular. Country happens to be a market ideally suited to The Dirt Band, which started out as peers of now-defunct legends like The Flying Burrito Brothers and New Riders of the Purple Sage. It's nice that country music has caught up with these guys, because while they've honed their act, they haven't changed their

sound all that much.

Partners, Brothers and Friends is the newest studio effort by this long-lived, still youthful band. It accurately depicts the exploits of five musicians during a two-decade time frame. Though not a concept project *per se*, it provides insights into their colorful collective history.

The Dirt Band's producers never fall into any of the formulized flytraps that often ensnare groups once they've had a few hit records. They keep the proceedings focused, inventive yet controlled. From Jeff Hanna's opening cut, "Modern Day Romance," a delightfully ironic twist on traditional male/female relationships, through to the final epic, "Leon McDuff"—a blockbuster story of the tragedy and travesty that is farm life in America now—this album will undoubtedly be a milestone in The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's career. Cuts such as "Other Side of the Hill," "Home Again in My Heart" and "As Long As You're Lov-

ing Me" prove why being around for a long time works for, not against, this group.

Outside the confines of his role as a "Good Ol' Boy" with partner Joe Stampley, Moe Bandy is a very credible solo artist. There are no fireworks with Bandy: he simply makes country music that pulls no punches. *Barroom Roses*, Bandy's newest, is a perfect example.

Producer Blake Mevis has gently shifted lanes here, easing Bandy away from his Texas swing roots into a more mainstream style without compromising any of the art-

ist's basic traditionalism. Bandy is, after all, one among a scant handful of country singers these days who still gets by with lines like "the good Lord up above." He excels on heartfelt ballads, showing special affection for such emotions as pain, loneliness, heartbreak and desire. No complicated turmoil—just normal human feeling, the kind you expect to find on a truckstop jukebox when you need a little salve for the soul.

Cuts like "After Losing You," "He's Got Her (Right Where I Wanted Her Tonight)," "What's a Memory Like You" and "When It Comes to Lovin'," set against a backdrop of tasteful arrangements, allow Bandy to do what he does best. Which may be why there's such a nice, solid feeling to this record. Bandy seems to stand a little taller, and in a certain sense, a little stronger. He'll still sound great on the two-for-a-quarter machines, but he also sounds awfully good on the old home turntable. ■



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*I like nothing better than to spend my nights at home
And listen to my baby play her slide trombone
She talks in tongues, and boy that turns me on
With a woman like that, a man need never roam.*

The more I listen to that, the stranger it gets. The better it gets, too. One of the things I like about ole John is that he really seems to have fun with his music. Like Ricky Skaggs, he was branded with the title "Savior of Hard Country." Unlike Ricky, Anderson didn't take it all that seriously. So *Tokyo, Oklahoma* swings from the off-beat, like "I've Got Me a Woman," to the lighthearted, like the title song and "Willie's Gone," to some pretty sad songs—an outstanding example is "Down in Tennessee," which is one heck of a ballad.

Anderson shows an impressive range on this album. Simply put, it's outstanding.

—MICHAEL BANE

Keith Whitley & Ricky Skaggs *Second Generation Bluegrass*

Rebel REB-1504 (reissue)

The contemporary bluegrass scene has, in the past few years, furnished country music with two of its most talented new singers: Ricky Skaggs and, more recently, Keith Whitley.

Skaggs, of course, has already become a dominant figure on the country scene. By drawing heavily on his bluegrass/white gospel background, he has helped revitalize country music, lifting it out of its pop-influenced doldrums and giving it a healthy dose of back-to-basics vitality.

Whitley, on the other hand, has strayed far afield from the days when, as lead singer for Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys, and later for J.D. Crowe & The New South, he became one of the most re-

spected vocalists on the bluegrass circuit. His 1984 RCA debut album, *A Hard Act to Follow*, cast him in the hard country role of a Lefty Frizzell disciple. With his upcoming, as yet untitled album, due out soon, he edges somewhat more into the mainstream of the 1980's, where he seems destined to carve out his own neo-honky tonk niche alongside other contemporary masters like George Strait and John Anderson.

So much for the present. Back in June 1971, when this recently reissued album was recorded in a small Southern Maryland studio under the auspices of Ralph Stanley, Skaggs and Whitley were both in their early teens. They had been performing together in their own small bluegrass band for several years, on radio stations and at festivals around their native Eastern Kentucky. By the time they recorded this album, they'd also become proteges of bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley and members of his band, The Clinch Mountain Boys.

The music on *Second Generation Bluegrass*, not surprisingly, is solid, straight-ahead bluegrass. The precise, flowing harmonies are steeped heavily in The Stanley Brothers influence. About half the songs are Stanley Brothers standards. Ralph Stanley himself can be heard playing banjo throughout.

It is apparent from *Second Generation Bluegrass* that, even at this early stage in their careers, Skaggs and Whitley possessed two of the finest voices to have emerged in bluegrass in recent years. Even the drawling inflections and the unusual vocal twists and trills that now serve Whitley so well as a neo-honky tonker can be discerned just under the smooth, flowing surface of the ethereal bluegrass harmonies.

Whitley handles all the lead singing on *Second Generation Bluegrass*. At this point, Skaggs had apparently not yet begun to think of himself as a lead singer. In fact, it was

reportedly not until much later, when he had his own band, Boone Creek, that he was finally forced into that role—when one day his lead singer quit and he was left facing a crowd without one.

Second Generation Bluegrass is a fine, traditional bluegrass album that easily stands, indeed improves with, the test of time. It offers a fascinating glimpse of the early musical development and bluegrass roots of these two superbly gifted singers who rose from the same background only to take wildly divergent musical paths in later years.

—BOB ALLEN



Willie Nelson & Faron Young *Funny How Time Slips Away*

CBS PC-39484

If you can give me an exact count on the number of albums Willie Nelson currently has out flooding the market, then you've probably got more fingers and toes than I have.

Some of Nelson's numerous duet choices of late have actually seemed rather silly and far-fetched. Julio Iglesias!? Ray Charles!?! But *Funny How Time Slips Away*, Nelson's new duet outing with his old mentor and partner in mayhem, Faron Young, is a much more logical choice; and it's resulted in a solid, highly enjoyable album as well.

Faron, who was riding high in country music in the 1960's and early 1970's, has in more

recent years slipped into relative obscurity because of a combination of factors that include personal problems, poor management and an overall lack of musical direction.

The Nelson-Young connection is a strong one, though. Back in the early 1960's, when Nelson had just hit town from Texas, Young was one of the first established artists to befriend him and turn his original songs into hits. It was he who had the initial chart-toppers on such Nelson standards as "Hello, Walls" and "Funny How Time Slips Away." Finally, Nelson has found a way to return the favor.

To hear Faron sing with the finesse and authority that he shows on *Funny How Time Slips Away* is a real pleasure. Despite all the years and all the hardships he's inflicted upon his vocal cords (his life story reads like a minor variation on the George Jones saga), he sounds amazingly supple and husky here.

The entire album, which was recorded in a few days in Nelson's Pedernales Studio, has a wide-open, free-flowing good-timey beer hall flavor to it. It's almost as if it were 1962 again, and the two of them were back at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge getting drunk and busting beer bottles in the alley out behind the Opry.

On *Funny How Time Slips Away* Nelson and Young have chosen to unwind on a dozen songs that are indelibly familiar to both of them. In fact, I'd be amazed if this album required more than 30 seconds rehearsal time! In addition to seven familiar Nelson originals, most of them recorded by Young at some time in his career, they also lightheartedly rip into several of Faron's other hits of yesteryear. The solid lineup of Nashville session players, including Johnny Gimble, Buddy Emmons and Chip Young, among others, seems enlivened by the revival of delightful old chestnuts like "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young," "Goin' Steady" and "Four in the Morning."

Record Reviews

They dig and play for all they're worth, almost like they mean it.

—BOB ALLEN

Waylon Jennings

Turn the Page

RCA AHLI-5428

What we have here is another addition to country's recent crop of LAD material. LAD is an elastic term; strictly interpreted, it means Life After Detox, but it can also mean "lad," a representative of that stage in the evolution of the male human which precedes full adulthood and is



characterized by rapid growth, high energy and great hope shot through with equally powerful insecurity. LAD is therefore an especially appropriate term to apply to the work of full-grown country stars who have but recently extricated themselves from the jaws of physical and spiritual death by abandoning their nasty habits, and who are embarking upon an exciting but frightening new life without the cold, but very real, comfort of their substance(s) of choice.

The list so far is impressive: George Jones, Johnny Rodriguez, Larry Gatlin, Johnny Cash (one more time) and, last but certainly not least, ole Waylon himself. Most of these men have talked publicly about their trials and transformations, and some of them have sung about their feelings. But it has fallen to Waylon to come right out and

devote most of an album to the subject. *Life After Detox* is not just the psychological turf on which *Turn the Page* is built: it's pretty much the whole ball of wax.

This is, therefore, a difficult album to judge by the usual standards expressed in such questions as...does it have *Eternal Melodies*? is the writing original? can you waltz or two-step to it? It is even difficult to judge by the professional reviewer's standards specific to Waylon, e.g., how closely does it approach *Dreaming My Dreams*? Obviously, Waylon had to get this stuff off his chest, and in that context the usual business of picking the nits and highlighting the bits seems petty at best and downright destructive at worst.

There is a way out of this dilemma, however, and that is to go with my conclusion that, purely as songs and music, the most moving parts here are the genuinely personal material, the really hard-core LAD stuff. That may even make sense, for the LAD songs are very probably the ones Waylon cared about most: "The Devil's on the Loose" (it's a nasty, upside-down world out there, and you gotta be strong); "You Showed Me Somethin' About Lovin'" ("Well, I used to treat ladies like bottles of gin, just to get high from the contents within"); "The Broken Promised Land" (about slipping after quittin'); "Drinkin' and Dreamin'" (when you're drinkin', dreamin's all you're doing); "Good Morning, John," written by Kris Kristofferson, which addresses fellow-traveller Johnny Cash with reflections on the unlikely fact of his physical survival and a promise of friendship no matter what; and "Don't Bring It Around Anymore," a cunningly composed, angrily explicit warning to all those who might want to lay a few hip substances on our man—"I don't care if it's free, keep it away from me! Don't bring it around anymore..."

In comparison with these

songs, the other material is, well, "mixed." There's a nice but standard things-ain't-what-they-used-to-be slow song, "Those Kind of Memories"; there's another of Waylon's bizarre big-pop-hit covers, this one of Fleetwood Mac's "Rhiannon," a hypnotic, ultra-smoothly-moving tune into which the boy and his team have thrown some truly inappropriate West Texas grit, and then there's the title cut, "Turn the Page." This is probably the best music-star-on-the-road song ever written—it's very sad and graphic and true—and if Waylon doesn't sing it quite as well as it's been sung in the past, the song is so appropriate to his life that it shivers your spine anyway.

To me, though, the real star here is "As Far as the Eye Can See." This too is a LAD song; maybe it's *the* LAD song. The others are pieces of the story—regrets, admissions, declarations, messages—but this one, beautifully written and gently, deeply sung, just says it all. There's nothing explicit about former life *vs.* new life in it, but there *is* a great deal of acceptance, faith, and wisdom. Those are the qualities a LAD lad really needs, and if Waylon's choice of the song reflects where he's at these days, he's doing better than well.

And another thing. "As Far as the Eye Can See" is nowhere near the title cut of *Dreaming My Dreams* in meaning—it's the positive flip-side of that masterpiece of self-pity and pain and hopeless love—but it's very, very close in quality.

—PATRICK CARR

Pinkard & Bowden

PG-13

Warner 25299-1

Tough trick following up a masterpiece. The first album by Sandy Pinkard and Richard Bowden won the Ben

Colder Satire Resurrection Award for the last decade



hands down. So here's the good news on at least one song on the next album—"Mama, She's Lazy," a takeoff on The Judds' huge hit "Mama, He's Crazy," is probably the best single satire song I've ever heard. We're talking big time weirdness here, brilliance of a strange order.

Think about how this has to work. These guys are walking down the street listening to a Walkman or something, maybe riding in one of them big Music City limos, hobnobbing with all the stars they wrote them songs for. They hear something on the radio, perhaps a country song. I suppose it's marginally possible to hear a country song in Nashville, although I'd hate to stake my life on it.

Wham!

Smash-o!

Miscellaneous other words!

The song is fed through the Cuisinart of Pinkard and Bowden's keen minds (possibly keen mind, assuming a single wit is the product of two half-wits), and a mysterious, even creepy, metamorphosis begins taking place, kind of like one of those cheap language translators gone berserk. You know, \$39.95, you type in "Where is the bathroom?" in English and this little screen spells out "I lust for your mother" in Spanish. Similarly, I have this vision of song lyrics pouring in one ear—I'm not sure whether it's Pinkard's or Bowden's ear—and mysterious messages from the asteroid belt coming out the other.

Well, anyway, they're

Record Reviews

pretty good at this sort of stuff.

I was going to quote you the lyrics of "The Ballad of Dick and Jane," just so you could see how funny these guys can be. I have, however, reconsidered. I get enough hostile letters as it is. You might want to avoid playing this one for the kiddies, although most of the kiddies I know are into Madonna and know more about unnatural acts than I do.

I do have one small bone to pick with Pinkard and Bowden directly. Speaking as a card-carrying member of the dread Gun Lobby, I was a bit miffed to see you guys take a shot at us in "Guns Made America Great." After years of fighting one nitwit law after another, we gun people don't have much of a sense of humor left about that particular subject. Tread lightly.

Otherwise, you guys done good again. I have personally pored over this record looking for a suitable closing word or two of wisdom. A fellow could do much worse than:

*I'd much rather have a bug in
my ear
Than a dog making love to my
leg....*

—MICHAEL BANE

Bob Wills

*Papa's Jumpin':
The MGM Years
of Bob Wills*

Bear Family BFX 15179(5)

Bob Wills is remembered (often, these days) as the leading innovator of western swing, a dynamic musical hybrid of New Orleans jazz, folk fiddle music and blues which dominated the airwaves in the 1930's and 1940's, and best and most frequently recalled, as far as recordings are concerned, for the vintage disks he cut with his band, the Texas Playboys, for the Columbia label from 1935 to 1947.

The music in this five-LP boxed-set reissue by the Ger-

man Bear Family label encompasses a different, somewhat overlooked body of work recorded by Wills for MGM during the five years after he left Columbia, from late 1947 to 1954.

The Bob Wills we hear in this 99-song collection, which includes seven previously unreleased cuts and 35 more that have never before appeared on an album, is arguably a man already past his prime. By this point in his career, he'd become weighted down with financial and personal problems that almost ruined him. Chronic alcoholism had landed him in the hospital more than once; and despite the immense popularity he'd enjoyed in earlier decades, he was, by the late 1940's, fighting a running battle with bankruptcy. A rift with his longtime lead singer Tommy Duncan had developed; Duncan left the Playboys in 1948 and consequently is heard on only a few of the earlier cuts in this collection.

Still, quite a bit of Wills' work for MGM was substantial. Occasionally it even embodied the archetypal Bob Wills sound. However, during these years it was also, typically, marked by departures from his usual style. As author/historian Rich Kienzle, who contributes the monthly Buried Treasures column in this magazine, notes in the extensively-researched, 33-page biography included as part of the set: "In signing with MGM, Wills made a judgment that had clear advantages and disadvantages. On the negative side, he lost the astute guidance of Art Satherley, whose sense of taste and understanding of Wills' audience and his music contributed to his recorded success in the thirties and forties." "Yet to some extent," Kienzle continues, being without a strong producer like Columbia's Satherley "liberated" Wills and the Playboys, "giving them a freedom to experiment," to "try a variety of numbers and ideas. Many worked. A few were not the

band's better moments on record."

This collection is plagued—as any such comprehensive, warts-and-all collection would be—with some clearly second-rate material, which, other than offering historical perspective, is of little value. For instance, "Three Little Kittens," sung by Wills with yodeler Carolina Cotton, has never been issued before. Listen and you can see why.

The Bob Wills that we hear on *Papa's Jumpin'* had also, by and large, scaled down from the legendary big-orchestra sound that typified his music during its heyday. Though an occasional saxophone or trumpet is heard on the MGM sessions, Wills had now turned to a leaner sound, dominated by guitar and fiddle, that was widely emulated by the many honky tonk bands of that era.

Despite its inherent flaws, this new collection will certainly be of interest to Bob Wills scholars. And those with an intense interest in his career as a whole and its impact on the popular music of his era will find it indispensable. Like many Bear Family releases, the set's value is enhanced by a detailed discography, as well as by Kienzle's lovingly researched notes, which paint a portrait of Wills as a cantankerous, temperamental, erratic man who emerged as a popular musical genius almost in spite of himself.

—BOB ALLEN

Lane Brody

Lane Brody

EMI America ST-17160

Ispent some time with Hank Williams Jr. last month, and one of the things we talked about was women singers. For about the past year Hank has been looking for a woman singer who could really take the country market by storm. He's convinced—and so am I—that the time is right for a really hard-hitting woman



singer to sweep through Nashville like BMW's at a Yuppie convention. Sadly, that hasn't happened.

I was interested, then, in Lane Brody's album, not just because I like her name, which I do, but also because I like her voice. Her duet with Johnny Lee on "Yellow Rose" was just a super performance. She sings with abandon and flair. I thought, here's a woman who could do it.

You all know what's coming here, don't you?

There's only the barest trace of the Lane Brody I liked so much on this album. Instead, there's a "melted" version, all the hard edges run together like a candle on a stove. Another Music City hack job.

I think that as far as women singers are concerned, Nashville is stuck in 1978. They simply cannot get over the idea of the lush, overproduced pop girl singer of the late 1970's. You can only mine the same vein so long, guys—the collapse of the original Nashville Sound in the mid-1970's proved that, as did the tapering off of "outlaw" music in the latter part of that decade.

Want to hear a real good woman singer? Listen to Maria McKee of the rock revivalist group Lone Justice. Her voice has warmth, humor, punch, all sorts of shades of meaning. There's no one like her in country, and I think there *could* be. There *should* be.

So rise up, Lane Brody, and throw off your shackles. You have nothing to lose but your apronstrings, and there's an awful lot to gain.

—MICHAEL BANE

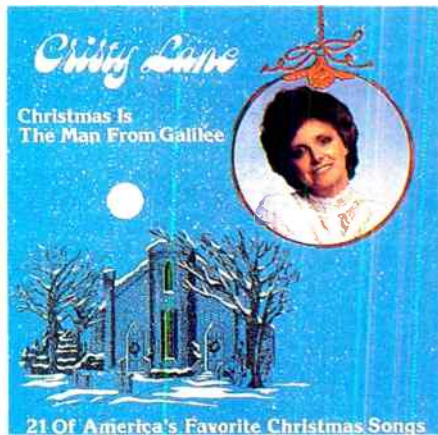
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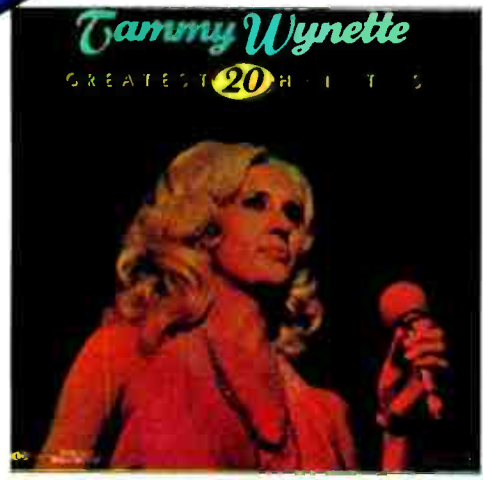
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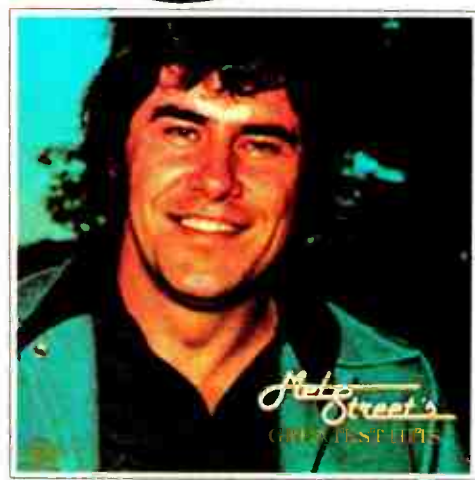
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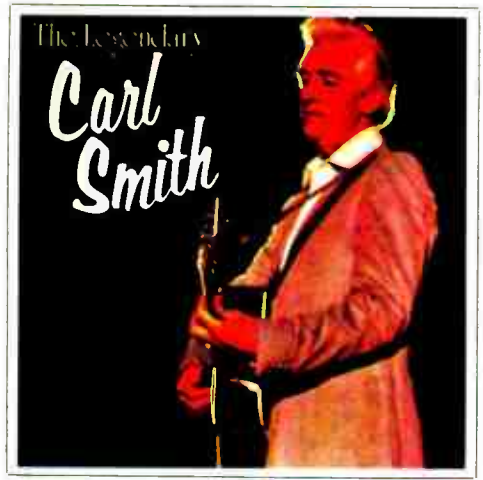
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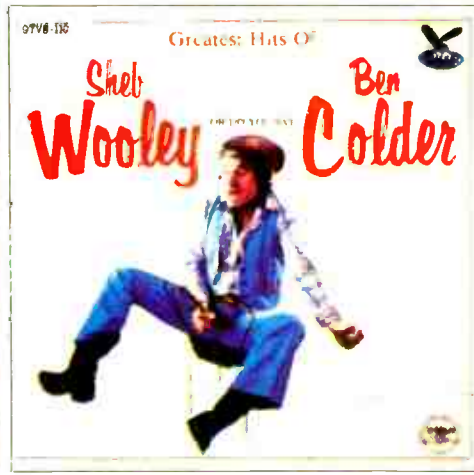
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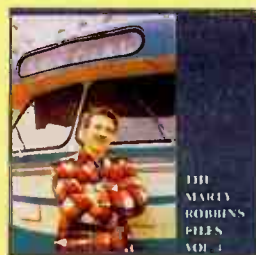
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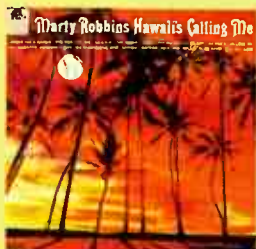
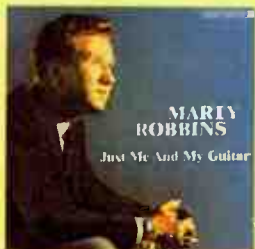
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MARTY ROBBINS FILES, 2 [1953-1954]: Sing Me Something Sentimental—At The End Of A Long, Lonely Day—Blessed, Jesus Should I Fall Don't Let Me Lay—Kneel And Let The Lord Take Your Load—Don't Make Me Ashamed—It Looks Like I'm Just In Your Way—I'm Happy 'Cause You're Hurtin'—Aloha Oo—more!

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Buried Treasures

Re-issues, Rarities and the Hard-to-Find
by Rich Kienzle



Merle Haggard, Brenda Lee, Spade Cooley,
The Carlisles, Merle Travis

Merle Haggard had his first Top Ten hit 20 years ago this year. For 11 years he racked up an impressive string of hits for Capitol Records, but Capitol has done little with the Haggard legacy in recent years, certainly nothing to compare with what's out now from British EMI.

Branded Man (EG 26 05291) compiles Merle's 20 biggest Capitol hits on a single disc, beginning with "Strangers" from 1965 and ending with "Freedom Train" from 1976, just before Merle went to MCA. One by one, the songs that made Hag are all covered—from "Swinging Doors" and "The Bottle Let Me Down" to "Mama Tried," "Workin' Man Blues," "Okie From Muskogee" and "Sidewalks of Chicago." (Can you believe that "Okie From Muskogee" is 16 years old?) The packaging is above-average, with intelligent notes and reproductions of old Haggard record sleeves on the cover. Why can't—or won't—U.S. Capitol do anthologies like this?

Brenda Lee would have been just another kid singer had she been as marginally gifted as most in that category. Her mid-to late 1950's Decca recordings reflected nothing more than sassy enthusiasm and an ability to handle both novelties and soft-core rockabilly. Had she stopped there, she'd have been a mere

footnote. But as she grew, so did her talent. *The Golden Decade* (Charly CDX 6—2-record set) chronicles the era from 1956 to 1966 when Brenda grew into an artist with remarkable staying power. Beginning with her fiesty 1956 version of "Jambalaya," recorded when she was 12, producer Owen Bradley helped her maintain a consistent quality in her work, without recourse to the artificial cuteness that did in similar acts, such as the Collins Kids.

The snarling semi-rocking of "Dynamite," "One Step at a Time" and "Little Jonah," done with standard Nashville Sound production, gave her something to build on. By 1960 she'd made an easy transition into ballads like "I'm Sorry," moving even further into that style with "All Alone Am I" (1962), "As Usual" (1963), and the more contemporary "Coming On Strong" (1966). Bradley sometimes overdid the choruses and strings, but Brenda retained her country integrity, much as Jim Reeves did.

Fiddler/bandleader Spade Cooley helped define the smooth, harmonically sophisticated West Coast western swing of the 1940's and 1950's. In 1961 he was jailed for murdering his second wife, Ella May. Nearing parole in 1969, he died of a coronary, just after performing at a benefit concert. *Swingin' the Devil's*

Dream (Charly CR 30239) picks up 18 of his 1950-55 Decca singles, which were far superior to his Lawrence Welk-inspired 1947-1950 RCA recordings.

At the time he made the Decca recordings, he was leading a smaller band with a tight fiddle ensemble, occasional horns and scintillating steel guitar by Noel Boggs or Joaquin Murphey, two of the steel's true innovators. Overall, the playing is crisp and above average. "Horse Hair Boogie" probably features Jimmy Wyble on guitar. Why are there no personnel listings? "Carmen's Boogie" is a swing adaptation of the old opera theme, featuring Boggs' futuristic playing; "Nashville Special" features fine fiddling and "Y' Hear" spotlights Murphey's more lyrical steel work. You won't want to hear "Hitsitty Hotsitty" but once, and hearing vocalist Betsy Gay gleefully sing "You Clobbered Me" is rather unsettling in light of later events. Still, these are Cooley's last good records. Rockabilly writer Adam Komorowski's liner notes reflect lazy research. Most of his biographical data came from my 1977 *Country Music* Cooley story. We aren't credited. Tacky.

Even more than Jimmy Dickens, the Carlisles are the Opry's foremost musical comedians. Together since 1951, Opry members since late 1953, they're led by veteran Bill Carlisle, who's made records for 52 years. Their style was defined on their early 1950's Mercury records: raucous, smart-alecky novelty songs with an infectious, tambourine-led rhythm, gut-bucket vocals and plenty of juicy fingerstyle guitar, often played by Chet Atkins. With only three Top Ten hits to the group's credit, Mercury never released a Carlisles album. Bear Family, to their credit, has filled that void. *Busy Body Boogie* (BFX 15172) consists of 16 of their hottest Mercury singles (including one never issued), among them "No Help Wanted," "Too Old to Cut the Mustard" (theirs was the original version that everyone else cov-

ered), "Busy Body Boogie," and a version of the Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters' rhythm and blues hit "Honey Love." At times they sound a little samey, but this is still entertaining and underexposed material. Charles Wolfe's notes are enlightening and reflect original research. Hear that, Adam?

Merle Travis final recording has just been released, and in many ways it couldn't be a better way to end a career that spanned half a century: in the company of his closest friends Grandpa Jones and Joe and Rose Lee Maphis. *Merle and Grandpa's Farm and Home Hour* (CMH-9032) is a double album done in the style of the early-morning hillbilly radio shows of the 1930's, 1940's and early 1950's.

Including back-ups by Grandpa's family—wife Ramona, son Mark and daughters Alisa and Marsha—and dobroist Mike Audridge, this easygoing set of 28 tunes ranges from Grandpa's old standby "Are You From Dixie?" to Joe and Rose Lee's "As Long As I Live" and Merle's "Hominy Grits." A few unusual performances spice things up as well. Joe and Merle team up to recreate The Delmore Brothers' "Brown's Ferry Blues," and on "Goin' Across the Sea," a duet with Mark Jones, Merle makes a rare appearance playing a 5-string banjo, the instrument he played before he learned guitar. ■

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The Essential Collector

Cowboy Copas, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper, The Delmores, Red Foley, Grandpa Jones

One of *Hee-Haw's* most popular features is their Gospel Quartet, which features Grandpa Jones, Roy Clark, Kenny Price and Buck Owens, among others. Many *Hee-Haw* fans don't realize this idea came from the old Brown's Ferry Four, a close-harmony quartet built around Grandpa, Merle Travis and The Delmore Brothers in the 1940's, when they all worked at WLW Radio in Cincinnati. From 1944 to 1947 the Brown's Ferry Four recorded extensively for King Records, occasionally substituting Red Foley as vocalist. The cream of their work, some cut in California, is available on *16 Greatest Hits of The Brown's Ferry Four* (Gusto SD-3017). "Over in the Gloryland" and "Everybody Will Be Happy Over There" feature Grandpa, The Delmores, and Foley (singing bass) singing some of the cleanest country gospel ever done. "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" and "Rock of Ages Hide Thou Me" feature Travis. Anyone who has the *Hee-Haw* quartet albums will want this.

With all the attention sure to be given Patsy Cline on account of the imminent appearance of *Sweet Dreams*, her film biography, it's easy to forget that two other country music legends died in the March 1963 air crash that killed Patsy: Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins. Today Copas and Hawkins are all but forgotten, and that's unfortunate, because from the 1940's to the 1960's they were two of the hottest stars in the business. Except for occasional divagations, both did their best recordings with King and, later, with Starday Records, labels now owned by Gusto Records of Nashville.

Copas, the senior of the two, first made his mark as a vocalist with Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys just following World War II. "Filipino Baby," his first hit, came in 1944 and was among King's



first successful records. Throughout the 1940's he had still more hits—with "Tennessee Waltz," "Tragic Romance" and others. In the early 1960's, Copas was successful with Starday, with the hits "Alabam," and "Signed, Sealed and Delivered" in 1961. Some of his best-known songs are available on *16 Greatest Hits of Cowboy Copas* (Gusto SD-3012). Most of the material is from his Starday period, though "Filipino Baby" and "Tragic Romance" are also included. Copas never got the credit he should have, considering his rich, supple voice and laconic, offhand delivery.

Hawkshaw didn't either. His hits weren't as plentiful, and he began with King covering whatever Ernest Tubb was doing. But "Sunny Side of the Mountain" and "Slow Poke" in 1948 and 1951 were enough to establish him as a force in his own right. Like Copas, Hawkins fell by the wayside, with no hit records, though he was a member of the Grand Ole Opry and had contracts with RCA, Starday and Columbia. Then in March 1963, just days before he died,

his King recording of "Lonesome 7-7203" hit Number One. Hawkins, like Copas, made other fine records, "Rattlesnakin' Daddy" and "Dog House Boogie" among them, that hinted at rockabilly. *16 Greatest Hits of Hawkshaw Hawkins* (Gusto SD-3013) covers all these and more.

Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper worked together nearly 40 years, from 1938 when Stoney joined the family band led by Wilma Lee's father, until Stoney's death from chronic heart trouble in 1977. Eventually they created their own act, and their rough-hewn music became immensely popular on radio through the South and occasionally the Midwest in the 1940's. Their earliest recordings, for Rich-Tone in 1947, did little. They went next to Columbia, who recorded them from 1949 to 1953 while they worked over WWVA in Wheeling, piling up a following in the Northeast.

Early Recordings (County CCS 103) compiles 12 Columbia songs, leased from CBS, that helped establish their reputation. "There's a Big

Wheel" and their other hits came out in the 1960's on Hickory Records. "Sunny Side of the Mountain," "Walking My Lord Up Calvary Hill" (both from 1951) and "No One Now" (1949) are outstanding old timey/bluegrass. Listen to Wilma Lee's expressive, Acuff-style vocals on the latter and you can see why she was one of Hank Williams' favorite female singers. Poor Hank only had Audrey to listen to. A second Wilma Lee/Stoney album from the 1970's is *Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper Sing The Carter Family's Greatest Hits* (Starday SD 980), an outstanding salute to the Carters cut in the early 1970's. Wilma Lee and Stoney tackle such Carter classics as "Keep on the Firing Line," produce a delicate version of "You Are My Flower" and rare back on Wilma Lee's stops-out treatment of "Lulla Walls." The Carter style and the Coopers' sound blend easily here. Either album is worthwhile, particularly if you're listening to Ricky Skaggs or The Whites and want to hear where they learned it.

—RICH KIENZLE

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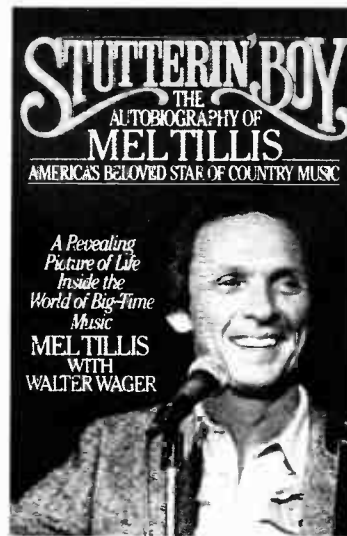


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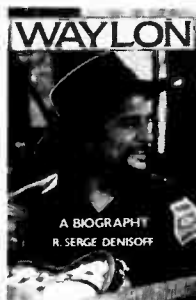
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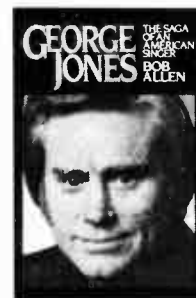
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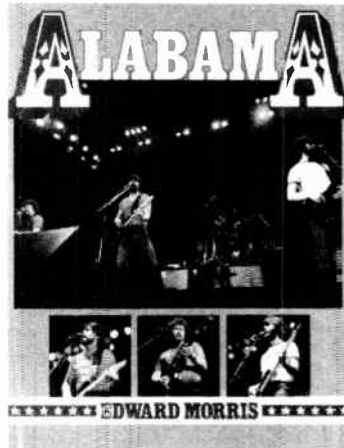


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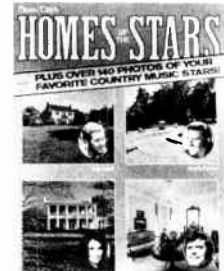
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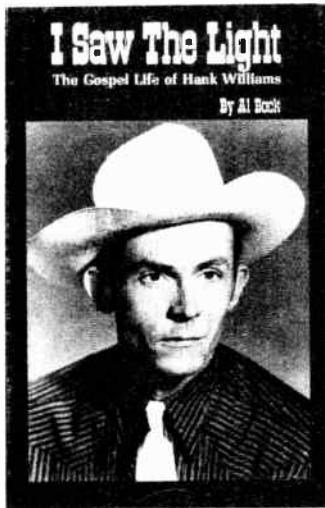
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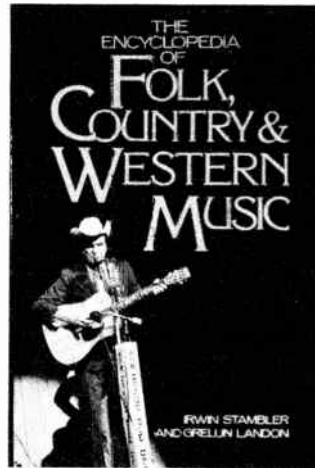


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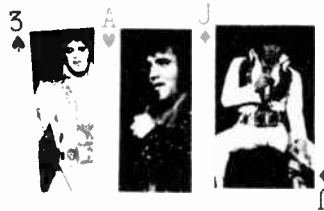
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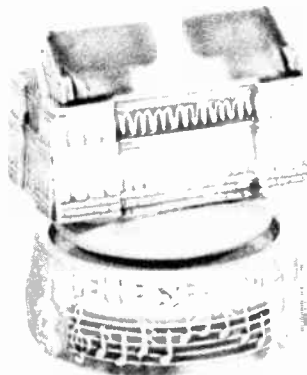


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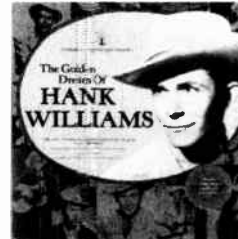
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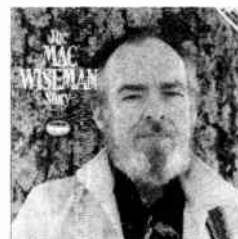
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4. W. Jennings, W. Nelson,
J. Cash, K. Kristofferson *Highwayman*
5. Dolly Parton/
Kenny Rogers *Real Love*
6. Earl Thomas Conley *Love Don't Care*
7. Anne Murray *I Don't Think I'm Ready for
You*
8. Janie Fricke *She's Single Again*
9. George Strait *The Fireman*
10. The Judds *Love Is Alive*
11. Rasanne Cash *I Don't Know Why You
Don't Want Me*
12. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band *Modern Day Romance*
13. Lee Greenwood *Dixie Road*
14. Glen Campbell *(Love Always) Letter to
Home*
15. Michael Martin
Murphey *Carolina in the Pines*
16. Restless Heart *I Want Everyone to Cry*
17. Sawyer Brown *Used to Blue*
18. Mac Davis *I Never Made Love (Till I
Made it with You)*
19. Reba McEntire *Have I Got a Deal for You*
20. Waylan Jennings *Drinkin' and Dreamin'*
21. Rockin' Sidney *My Toot Toot*
22. The Forester Sisters *I Fell in Love Again Last
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23. Johnny Lee *Save the Last Chance*
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4. Willie Nelson *Me and Paul*
5. Lee Greenwood *Greatest Hits*
6. George Strait *George Strait's Greatest Hits*
7. Rannie Milsap *Greatest Hits Vol. 2*
8. W. Jennings, W. Nelson
J. Cash, K. Kristofferson *Highwayman*
9. Conway Twitty *Don't Call Him a Cowboy*
10. The Statler Brothers *Partners In Rhyme*
11. Sawyer Brown *Sawyer Brown*
12. Merle Haggard *Kern River*
13. Ray Charles *Friendship*
14. The Judds *Why Not Me*
15. Dolly Partan *Real Love*
16. John Schneider *Trying to Outrun the Wind*
17. Rosanne Cash *Rhythm and Romance*
18. Exile *Kentucky Hearts*
19. Crystal Gayle *Nobody Wants to Be Alone*
20. Mel McDaniel *Let It Roll*
21. George Strait *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross
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If one listens to Charley Pride long enough, one comes away with the feeling that here is an artist with a bit of a crisis on his hands.

Admittedly, Pride's is the kind of crisis that, if one *must* have a crisis, is surely among the better kinds.

At the relatively young age of 47, he is wealthy and immensely popular, with a career record that is nothing short of spectacular. Worldwide, he has sold more than ten million albums, and he's had more than 25 Number One singles, which is more than almost any country artist ever. His chart-toppers stretch from his 1969 "All I Have to Offer You (Is Me)" to his 1982 remake of the old George Jones honky tonk classic, "Why, Baby, Why." He was the winner of the 1971 Country Music Association Entertainer of the Year award, and has also won two consecutive Male Vocalist of the Year awards from the same organization. He is the holder of three Grammys, as well as countless other industry awards.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Pride remains a top concert draw not only in the U.S. but internationally as well. He recently received a special

award for selling his millionth ticket in consecutive annual appearances at Houston's Livestock Show, held in that city's Astrodome, and in Australia alone, for example, he has sold more than a million and a half albums. On the most recent of his five sellout tours there, he drew 4,000 fans to an autograph-signing appearance in a store in Brisbane—a larger crowd than Australia's prime minister, Bob Hawke, drew at a similar gathering in the same city.

Now these accomplishments look good on paper, just as all those awards and citations surely look good on Pride's office walls. And, of course, there is the more tangible evidence of his success: a rather vast personal empire overseen by his wife Rozene, to whom he's been married for nearly 25 years. This empire includes banks, commercial real estate, music publishing, ranch land and recording studios. It's all run out of Charley's own 22,000-square-foot office building in Dallas.

The only problem is that in the Nash-

ville record industry's often addled perspective, such resounding achievements amassed so early in a career are sometimes perceived merely as the excess baggage of legend. A consequence of this is that an artist in Pride's shoes can find himself—as he feels has happened—pigeon-holed as an "old, established artist" (read: antique) whose power as a contemporary record-seller may indeed be waning.

Oh sure, there *are* the sellout tours, the pile of awards, the healthy international following... But in the Nashville music biz, where performers often live—and die—by the record charts, and where a whole barrage of young new faces, like The Judds, Ricky Skaggs, Alabama, John Anderson, George Strait and a dozen others, are hungrily competing for a slot at the top, anything beyond last week's *Billboard* Top Ten is considered ancient history. And if the truth be told, Pride's chart showings in the past couple of years have been something less than spectacular.

In light of all this, Pride's *crisis*, of course, is that he is not at all ready to hang up his gloves as a hit-maker, open a museum, fade into quiet gentility and

by Bob Allen

“There are younger fans in the cradle, just waitin’ to hear this voice, just waitin’ to enjoy it and to become my fans.”

make way for this new wave of hungry young artists. Though he’s often been called the Jackie Robinson of country music (Robinson was the first black man to break the race barrier in major league baseball), there must be times when he feels more like Pete Rose: the aging major league legend who, at age 44 and well past his prime, is struggling to break Ty Cobb’s all-time hit record of 4,191 hits before the years run out on him.

Pride, of course, has heard the industry whispers about how the years may have run out on him, too. It’s not much different from when he heard them back at the very beginning of his career, when Music Row first reacted to the then outlandish notion that there could possibly be a place for a black artist on the country charts. Yes, he’s heard it before, and he knows what they’re thinking out there in their little florescent-lit office cubicles along Sixteenth and Seventeenth Avenue South. And he wants oh-so-badly to prove them wrong, just the way he did the first time around. And he has no doubts that he will.

“All the awards and all that, is old hat,” he explains, addressing the problem with typically relaxed confidence. “It’s history. Everybody knows about that. I’m more interested in the *now*. I’m still here, still selling records, still *competing*. I feel like I’m singing better than I ever have in my life. It’s my intention, my goal, in the next decade to equal or hopefully even surpass what I’ve done in the last ten years.

“Some people have had two or three block-buster records in their careers,” he continues. “I’ve just had one—‘Kiss an Angel Good Morning.’ I feel like I’m good for a couple more before it’s all said and done.

“You see,” he adds softly, eyes glowing as he warms to the subject, “I truly believe my voice, my music, my shows, are still wanted out there. Not just by the fans I’ve already made—who’ve been my fans for the past ten or fifteen years. There are also younger ones in the cradle, just *waitin’* to hear this voice, just *waitin’* to enjoy it and to become my fans. You’ve got people out there like Michael Jackson and Prince and Lionel Richie. They’re different. But even so, those young cars in their audiences are ears that eventually one day, just *might* become Charley Pride fans.”

As Pride speaks, he is sitting on the sofa in his rather spacious suite at Nash-

ville’s Spence Manor Hotel, chewing a throat lozenge and drinking a glass of ice water. It is late morning and the remnants of a heavy snowfall from the week before checker the barren landscape. The fourth-story window looks down on the dark, turgid water of Webb Pierce’s long-abandoned guitar-shaped swimming pool.

Pride is in town finishing up some tracks for an album he is recording with a new producer, Blake Mevis, the man who helped launch the brilliant career of newcomer George Strait. The album, *Greatest Hits Volume II*, he explains, will be a package of some of his biggest blasts from the past with three brand new songs thrown in for good measure.

“It’s to keep me current,” he explains. “There has been a little bit of a void there. On the one hand, it’ll be a good album for my fans. But on the other hand, there will be three brand new songs that will start me on this decade of what I’m looking for.”

Though Pride is dressed rather casually this particular morning, there is about him a veneer of formality that never seems to leave him. Then too, underlying his rather easy-going, soft-spoken manner there is a healthy, almost childlike thread of egocentricity. His observations about his own life and career, in addition to including frequent analogies to the game of baseball, are peppered with buzz words. Terms like “success,” “one in a million” and “unique” recur. In a fascinating and ultimately ingratiating way, he is—as the saying goes—*full* of himself. This is, after all, the man who once told *People Magazine*: “I am the whole ball of wax: Elvis Presley, Ernest Tubb, B.B. King, Bob Dylan, Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra all combined into one—I am the epitome of American music.”

His declarations this blustery winter morning are admittedly a bit more subdued. Still, a similar thread runs through them. Take, for instance, his reflections on the task of eventually writing his autobiography:

“When you consider the, uhm... (he lightly rubs the skin on the back of his hand) *skin factor*—you know: the ‘*Y’all, them and us,*’ I am probably one in a million to come out of my situation in life. I came from Mississippi, which is basically not a country music state, but a rhythm and blues state. Considering the color that I am and coming from a segregated society, a state that has, in

the past, practiced that as much as any, it’s a pretty unique thing.

“I don’t think there’s anybody on the face of the earth who’s been through the same conditions I have,” he adds thoughtfully. “It’s not a brag. It’s just a fact. The same as Jackie Robinson was the only one who could really express the feeling of what he had to go through as far as breaking the color barriers in baseball. I think that it’s the same sort of thing.

“When I was coming up, there were just a thousand little innuendos I had to deal with, a thousand things I had to be able to decipher and react to and just keep movin’ on and being Charley Pride, the *man*, the *American*. This was something Eddy Arnold never had to face, and something Hank Snow never had to face. And there’s a lot to be said, I feel, from that vantage point.”

One can’t help but imagine that Pride’s unusual style, his assurance and self-absorption, has come in handy for this sharecropper’s son who rose out of the cotton fields of Mississippi to become something of a national hero. The fourth of eleven children, he was born on a farm near Sledge, Mississippi. (Today, that farm is one of many parcels of farmland that Charlie owns—in Arkansas, Texas and elsewhere.) His father worked for six dollars a day, and he himself picked cotton—a back-breaking job—for as little as half that much. In the after hours, he spent his childhood listening to WSM’s Grand Ole Opry and WGN’s “National Barndance” from Chicago. This was at a time when most of his friends were tuned into B.B. King and other local black rhythm and blues masters. At times, he endured their ridicule.

“My own sister, she’ll tell you today, she used to tease me for singing country music,” he smiles. “It was: ‘Why you singin’ *their* music? Why you singin’ *white folks’* music? You sound just like *them!*’ That was my own sister, so you can imagine how my school chums reacted!”

As to the source of his unique brand of ambition and self-direction, he speculates: “When I was growing up, my brother was a good baseball catcher, but I was always skinny. Everybody’d say, ‘Well, what you gonna do? You’ll probably never do nothin’.’ You’re too skinny!’ I think I sort of developed a... a *complex*. I started feeling like, well, maybe I better get out there and see what I *can* do.”

“When I go into the studio now, I still feel that same nervous excitement I did when I used to step up to home plate in the ninth inning of a 1-0 game.”

In spite of his build, it was baseball that he first perceived as “my way out of the cotton fields.” He left home at 17 to pitch and play outfield as a \$100-a-month semipro player with the all-black Memphis Red Sox and various other teams in the old American Negro League.

Memories of those years in the mid-1950’s still burn bright. “There were moments that will always stick out in my mind, they were so close,” he recalls vividly. “I remember one time, around 1955 or 1956, the head scout for the St. Louis Cardinals was following our team. I thought for sure he was watching me, and that my time had come around. My batting record that season was .367, and I’d hit ten homers. I had a great earned run average as a pitcher, I’d won seven games, and my only losses were by one run. The Sunday before, I’d hit two home runs in Memphis against the Birmingham Black Barons. I was pitching the next night, and I’d struck out the entire side the inning before. Then, in the third inning, a guy hit an infield popup and the catcher missed the ball and it kind of upset me. The next pitch, I threw a curve ball and didn’t follow through.” He grimaces painfully. “I just heard my arm go *crunch*... and I knew I’d cracked my elbow.”

After being sidelined during a several-month recuperation, he emerged with a knuckle ball almost as lethal as his curve had once been. He went on to play in a game against a 1956 black all-star major league team that included Willie Mays, Hank Aaron and Ernie Banks. “I had ‘em 1-0 in the ninth inning, and then the game got away from me,” he sighs. “Oh me! I cried after that! I mean, baseball was how I intended to make my mark. I was gonna be the next Babe Ruth! I was gonna be in the *Baseball* Hall of Fame, not the Country Music Hall of Fame, where it looks like I might now end up someday. But,” he shrugs, “it was just fate, I suppose.”

After bouncing up and down in the minor leagues a few more years, Pride entered the service. Back in civilian life, he ended up working in a zinc smelting plant in Helena, Montana, where, at the encouragement of his fellow workers, he began singing in the local bars by night.

On the promise of an introduction to Red Foley and Red Sovine, he paid his way in to see a package show in Helena where the two were playing. Later, he got an opportunity to meet them. After

they’d heard him sing, they encouraged him to go to Nashville and audition. And he landed a spot on Foley and Sovine’s tour.

In Nashville, Pride met talent agent Jack Johnson, who later became his manager. It was Johnson who hooked him up with renegade record producer “Cowboy” Jack Clement.

“I visited Nashville on my vacation, and they gave me seven songs,” he remembers. “They told me if I took those songs back home and worked ‘em up real good and came back to Nashville, they’d record me. I still remember I had a two o’clock session set up. August 16th, 1965. They sent me in the studio and I cut ‘Snakes Crawl at Night.’ Then I went back to Montana and waited to hear something. I didn’t realize that all this whispering was going on around Nashville.” He mimics a faint, secretive, whispering voice: “‘Pssst! Pssst! Hey! Didja hear about Jack Johnson, tryin’ to get a *jig* signed to a major label! Pssst! Pssst! Hey, didja *hear* about that! Can you *believe* that!’ Even though I’d grown up in Mississippi and was singing locally in Montana, I guess I’d forgotten all about that sort of thing, until it was later pointed out to me... But that kind of thing happens in every era,” he frowns slightly. “Even now, people get so blinded by prejudice that they refuse to remember this is 1985.”

In any case, Jack Clement took the tapes of Pride to Chet Atkins, then head of RCA Records. “Chet said, ‘I like it!’” Pride recalls with faint humor. “Clement said, ‘Well, sit down... he’s *colored*!’ Chet said, ‘*Oh!*... we’ll sign him anyway, but we better not put any picture on the record, better not put *nothin’* on there about what color he is or *nothin’!*’ That was the decision,” Pride continues. “And here I sit.” It worked: nineteen consecutive Charley Pride albums, produced by Jack Clement.

When Pride addresses the peculiarity of his own rise to fame, his present career crisis and his ambitious ten-year plan for repositioning himself at the top of the charts, his reflections are relaxed and rambling. He has a curious manner of interspersing humorous remarks or stories with more weighty perceptions. What emerges, in both his assessments of his past achievements and his vaulting hopes for the future, is much more than a simple Dale Carnegie, pull-yourself-

up-by-your-own-bootstraps philosophy. Rather, there seems to be an almost mystical sense of destiny intertwined in his deepest beliefs. He is a devoted believer in astrology and can’t resist guessing—in this case, incorrectly—the zodiacal sign of his visitor. At times, an otherworldly gleam comes to his eyes and his voice grows soft and faraway.

“You have to try and understand individualism and *destiny*,” he explains. “Those are things that make up all of us. Everyone, I feel, is especially put here for a purpose: to find their niche and go as far as they can go. I’m in my niche. That’s just how I choose to believe. I feel that my success is not only my own doing. Something bigger than I am has also been involved.

“My success would never have worked if I had merely been a novelty—which is what a lot of people thought I was at first. It would never have worked if, instead of being a kid who followed country music from the ground up, I’d just been someone doing it for the money or trying to prove a point. It would not have worked if it had been a matter of my being anything else other than what I really am through and through: a *country* singer. An *American* singer.”

And as far as Pride’s concerned, there is even less doubt that his sense of destiny and artistic certitude will keep him at the top of the record charts, after all the fads, fashions and preoccupations of the day have long fallen by the wayside:

“When I go into the studio now, I still feel that same nervous excitement I did when I used to step up to home plate in the ninth inning of a 1-0 game,” he says smiling. “It’s the same feeling as when I first started out and there was all this excitement as to whether I was gonna sell to... you know...” He gently rubs the skin on the back of his hand again, “to *y’all*, them and us.

“And here it is, nearly twenty years later, and I’m still here, ready to compete, ready to get back to Number One, right across the board. I don’t just mean competing with my fellow RCA artists. I’m talking about competing with the Michael Jacksons, the B.B. Kings, the whole bit.”

And then, like the slow wind-up to his once lethal knuckle ball, here it comes: “This is because I think country-gospel-blues is the basis of all American music. And I believe I am the *epitome* of that. I’m ready to prove it.” ■

RODRIGUEZ Plays It Straight

Unhappiness was too high a price to pay. So Johnny Rodriguez has kicked his habit. He's set a new course to straight country with a few Spanish songs on the side.

A lot of people react badly to that moment in their lives when the shine wears off the job; the work which was once a whole new world to enjoy and conquer has proven to be both difficult and limited, and a terrible realization begins to dawn: *perhaps, God forbid, this is it. Maybe it doesn't just keep getting bigger and better, and this, what I'm doing now, is my whole life.* The possibility of a radical change of occupation being too dangerous for most people to consider seriously, this realization brings a very large question: *How am I going to enjoy myself now? Where do I get my kicks?*

For the majority of people that question occurs at some point during their middle or late thirties; and if not satisfactorily answered may result in brisk business at the local liquor store—but in show business, a calling which offers nothing less than the world in the palm of your hand, the victims of job frustration can be mere teenagers and booze is but one of a wide and wonderful array of readily available painkillers.

Most of these remedies do indeed offer a hell of a kick, and therefore serve their primary function very effectively. That, however, is only the beginning of their benefits to the bored. Being more immediately addictive than good ol' Jack Daniel's, they also offer absorbing rituals of supply and dose adjustment with which to pass the time; the procurement and consumption of drugs, in fact, becomes a matter of such interest that it amounts to a whole new career. Last year, "X" was worrying about what he

could do to make his music more exciting and get himself on TV; this year, he's happy to be playing any old place where cocaine dealers he knows and trusts will be waiting for him.

If you stay in the music business any length of time, you may begin to take this arrangement of affairs as a matter of course. At any given time you know who is functioning on what level of addiction/professionalism, and you adjust your expectations accordingly. When you haven't heard from "X" recently, and the word has come down the pike, you know exactly what kind of life he's leading—the running after dealers, the demented raps and fixations, the constant scuttling from drug bump to drug bump all day and night, the unnatural attraction to the bathroom—and you know what you can expect of him: not a whole lot.

If you're in the interviewing end of the business, this means that you try to avoid running into him on your travels, because the last thing either of you needs is some deeply dishonest fake-out on the drug issue. You really don't want to publish a story quoting "X" about how cleanly he's living on the basis of an interview during which he disappeared into the bathroom for a quick snort every five minutes, and neither do you want to write a story describing this action. And besides all that professional queasiness, there is the fact that the combination of "X"'s drug-induced paranoia and his real-life prospects (optimistic raps notwithstanding) makes him about as much fun to be around as an East German border

guard suffering a terminal illness.

Johnny Rodriguez spent quite a few years in this category, addicted to booze and cocaine and going 90 miles an hour in no direction whatsoever; and during that time I did indeed run into him on my travels. I was interviewing Waylon at the time—itsself an infernally difficult proposition in those days—when Johnny showed up, and the job became impossible. Between them, those two were like eight acrobats arguing on a trampoline, with no one acrobat hearing anything of what the others were saying. And while that was spectacular in a sleazy-easy kind of way—such lunacy! such color! such an abundance of extremely expensive powder!—it was also extremely tiring and more than a little ominous.

That encounter never became a story, and neither did much else about Johnny Rodriguez during the next few years. This situation went largely unremarked by industry professionals, who knew of his situation, and by most fans, whose interest flagged when his songs stopped getting on the radio, and the young man whose first years in the business had provided so much desirable, up-beat copy just disappeared. It had happened to countless other performers before him, and now it happened to him. The charismatic young Mexican-American heart-throb with the perfect country voice and the truly great 'how-I-got-in-showbiz' story (who else could legitimately say that they connected with the big time by getting caught stealing a goat?) became just another sad unpublished story.

That situation, happily, has changed. In mid-1984 Johnny got serious and

by Patrick Carr



checked into a drug treatment center. By all accounts (not just his), he has been straight ever since. This means that we can expect to be hearing from him and about him more frequently than in the past; it also means that it is possible to hold a sane conversation with him.

I talked to Johnny by telephone about two months after he was released from the hospital. Despite pleas from publicists to the effect that the drug issue was old news, it is what we talked about. That is because for Johnny (and for those many great musicians still caught in the cocaine trap), the drug issue is *the* question. And whether he knows this yet or not, it will continue to be the central issue in his life for a long time.

Johnny, why did you start doing drugs?

Well, after I'd been in the business a little while, it started getting a lot more difficult on account of all the responsibilities. I wasn't a very responsible person at the time, and I just started getting bored with it all. So I started doing drugs. About all I could think of there for a while was doing drugs and doing the shows, just getting them out of the way.

You injured your back somewhere in there. Did that have anything to do with your getting on drugs?

That was a karate accident. I cracked my sternum and my collarbone, and I dislocated my shoulder and put a bend in my back. And yeah, the cocaine would kill a lot of the pain when I was out singing and stuff. The only problem was that I got strung out on it.

Reminds you a little of a singer called Hank, doesn't it?

Yeah, really, no shit. I lived the first part of that story, but no way do I want to go through the rest of the crap. I've got too much to look forward to.

How long did your drug period last?

Five or six years, I guess. At first I was just messing around with it, playing with it—but it *was* fire. I was doing alcohol at the same time, and they don't mix at all; I was doing all kinds of irrational shit, not making sense, and my voice was just going to hell. All the paranoia and all the symptoms you get—I had 'em.

How did your friends react to all this?

I got away from a lot of people and things while I was all coked up. I didn't stay in close contact with my friends or even my family; I was running around with different people, people who had a lot of coke.

When did you realize that you had a real problem?

I started trying to get out of it about a year-and-a-half ago. There were all kinds of things about it, but basically I was just real unhappy. I wasn't satisfied with myself. I knew I had a problem and I wasn't doing anything about it, and it just started bothering me. I'd been in a treatment center about four years ago, but I wasn't serious about it then. This time around I tried to do it by myself, but I couldn't, so I checked into a treatment program.

When was that? Where did you go for help?

I checked in on August 7th, 1984, to a place called La Hacienda in Hunt, Texas, and I stayed there a month. It was like going to college, I guess. You've got to be up at six in the morning and in bed by eleven at night, and you have classes all day long—group therapy, drug education, films, marriage and family counselling, bio-feedback, sports, A.A. meetings, N.A. (that's Narcotics Anonymous) meetings, Emotions Anonymous meetings—the works.

What about support groups now?

I'm going to A.A. meetings as much as I can. Also, I have peers here in Nashville who are working on it—Waylon's working on it, Johnny Cash is working on it, Willie's not doing coke any more—and we support each other and help each other as much as we can. Like, when I was in the hospital, Waylon called a couple of times, supporting me. That was great. Man, he sounded totally *different* on the phone. He sounded like a young man! That sure told me something. And Richie Albright, my producer and drummer—he was with Waylon for a long time—has been straight for quite a while, and he helps me a lot.

Have you gotten back into drugs at all since you checked out of La Hacienda?

Hell, no. That stuff just about ruined my life. My voice is clear as a bell now, and I'm eating and sleeping and doing the things normal people do. I'm getting involved in things again now. That's another thing: if you stay busy, you don't have time to think about getting high. I'm going into my office all the time, stuff like that. It gets easier, see, because you start feeling better. You actually start feeling *good*, and that helps a whole lot.

What about getting back into the business after you got off drugs? Did you find that you'd blown a lot of connections, like with the people who book shows?

When I was doing drugs, some of them would worry about whether I was going to show up stoned or straight, but the one thing that I'm proud of is that I didn't get into not showing up for gigs. I wasn't at my best—I couldn't wait to get off the stage so I could go do some more of that damned coke—but I did show up. So no, I didn't blow the whole thing. I've got a five-year contract with CBS Records now, so it looks good.

How about the fans? How did you treat them during your stoned period?

Well, like I said, I couldn't wait to get off the stage, so I didn't do a lot of autograph signing or hanging out—but now the fans are being great. I think they understand what I was going through, you know, and they've stuck by me. Country fans are like that; if I'd been in rock 'n' roll, it would have been different, I think. Now I'm *happy* to sign autographs; it means a lot to me.

You were into doing rock 'n' roll there for a while, weren't you?

Yeah, I was. I had to get it out of my system. I had a bunch of old rock 'n' roll songs I'd wanted to record for a long time, so I took about a year and recorded them. Maybe sometime in the future I'll do some of that again, but I ain't in no hurry.

So what kind of thing do you want to do now?

Pretty much straight country, but some other things too. I've got my own record label down in Texas, and I'm starting to get into the Spanish market. I've never gotten involved in that before, but lately I've woken up and realized that it's there and I ought to try it.

How about pop songs? You want pop hits?

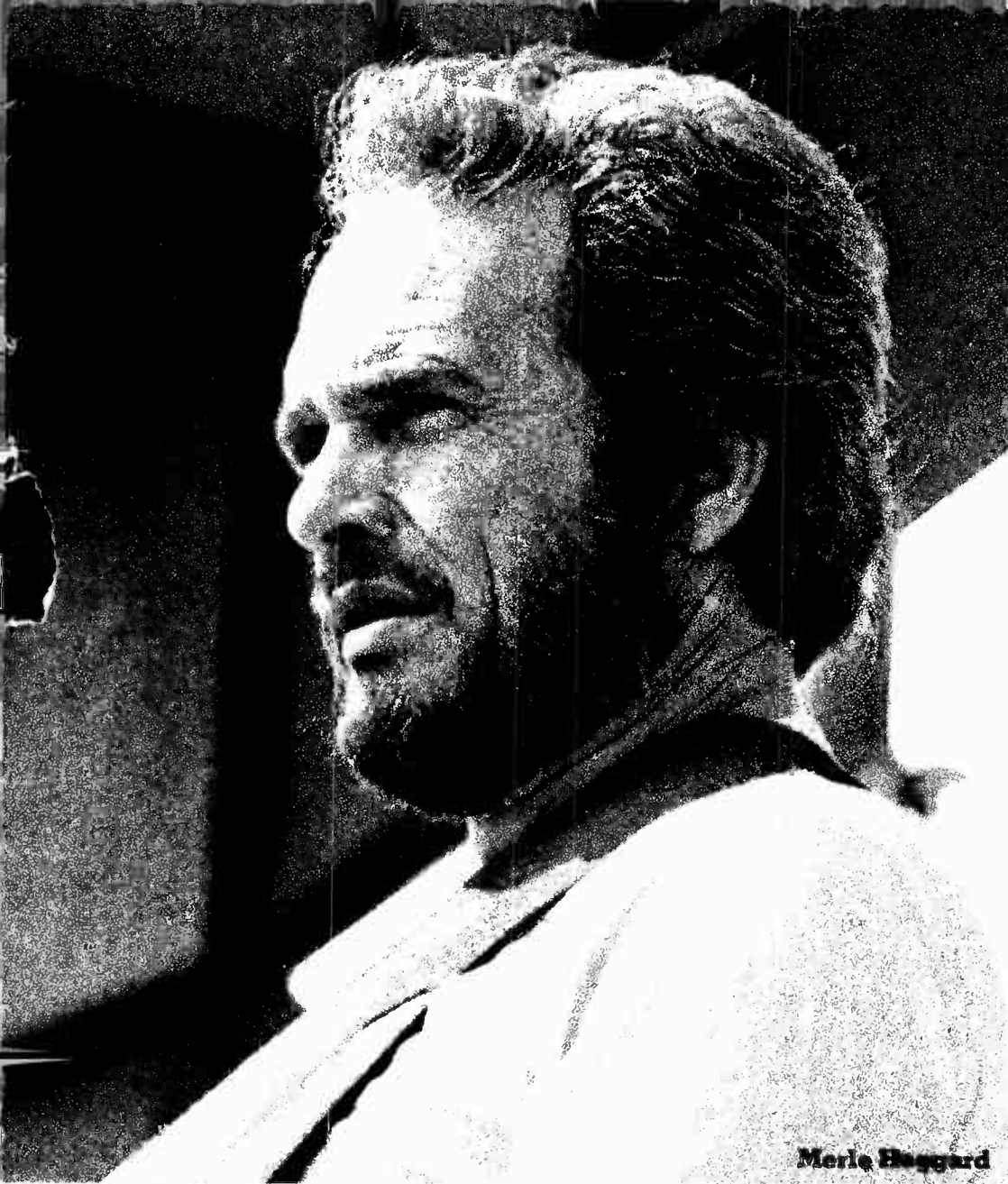
Oh, yeah, I'd like that. But that's for later on. If it comes, it comes; I ain't gonna hang around and wait for it. Maybe I'll get one by accident—that seems to be the best way of doing it. Right now I need to get back to country. It can grow from there.

What kind of gigs are you doing now?

Fairs, rodeos, clubs, concerts—the same kind of thing I've always done, except now I'm doing a good job and at times it's real fun, you know? It ain't as boring as it was before, and it's a hell of a lot easier without being stoned all the time. That can get to be a real hassle.

You think you can stay off drugs?

I don't know, but I'm sure going to try. Being off feels real good, and I've got a lot of help. I don't need that crap; nobody does. ■



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