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Ricky Van Shelton

Nanci Griffith

Patty Loveless

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JENNINGS**

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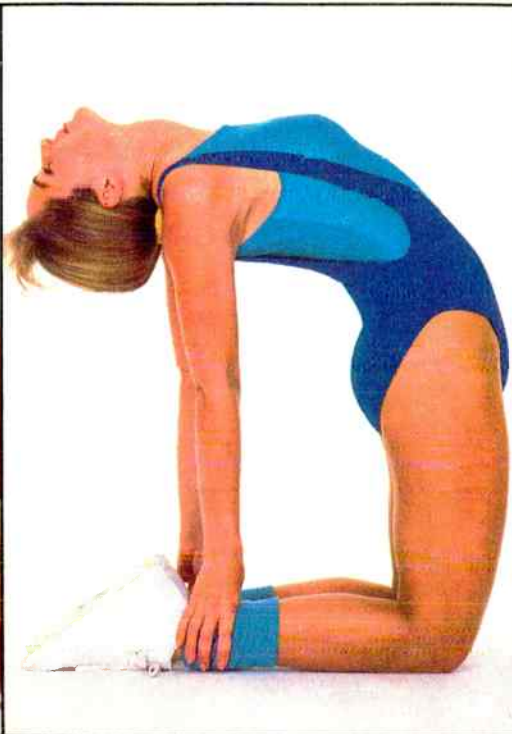


- 6 Letters**
Dolly rings readers' bells, Curly Fox puts in an appearance, so does William Lee Golden. Reviewers get lambasted. Minnie Pearl's poem stirs up a storm. And more.
- 17 People**
Reba McEntire joins forces with Bob Hope, George Bush trades jokes with Jimmy Dean and Ralph Emery, Van Shelton joins the Opry, Ricky Skaggs surprises Sharon White, Restless Heart rolls along. Plus Hazel's-eye-view of Fan Fair and an Update on Del Reeves. *by Hazel Smith*
- 34 Cowboy Don't Sing the Blues**
Waylon Jennings' new lease on life has launched an autobiographical album and plans for a Broadway show. The old Outlaw is definitely not singing the blues. *by Michael Bane*
- 40 Steve Wariner Travels On**
Road-weary veteran or rising star? Steve Wariner's both, with a strong dash of talent and good clean fun thrown in to boot. *by Patrick Carr*
- 43 Ricky Van Shelton: Heating Up**
After years of practicing in front of the mirror, Ricky Van Shelton is out playing the small towns on his way, he hopes, to playing some big ones. *by John Morthland*
- 46 Nanci Griffith: Keeping Her Hand In**
Texas-born and Texas-bred singer-songwriter Nanci Griffith is touring in a big way, but she doesn't ever want to get too far from her typewriter. *by Bob Allen*
- 48 Asleep at the Wheel: Dance to the Music**
As long as toes tap and boots stomp, there'll be a place for Western swing music, and as long as Ray Benson's around, there'll be an Asleep at the Wheel to play it. *by Bob Allen*
- 52 Patty Loveless: The Time is Right**
Patty Loveless tried Nashville twice. The second time, she and the system hit it off. She's a coal miner's daughter with a rock 'n' roll past. *by Bob Allen*
- 61 Record Reviews**
Rosanne Cash, Tammy Wynette and Charlie Daniels get high marks. Willie Nelson, Hank Jr. and Emmylou Harris make stabs in various directions. David Lynn Jones debuts. And more.
- 68 Buried Treasures**
The Louvin Brothers, Kitty Wells, Elvis Presley, Rick Nelson, The Sons of the Pioneers and Hillbilly Jazz rise again. *by Rich Kienzle*
- 69 Essential Collector**
Hank Williams Jr. and Bobby Bare share the spotlight with two classic albums. *by Rich Kienzle*

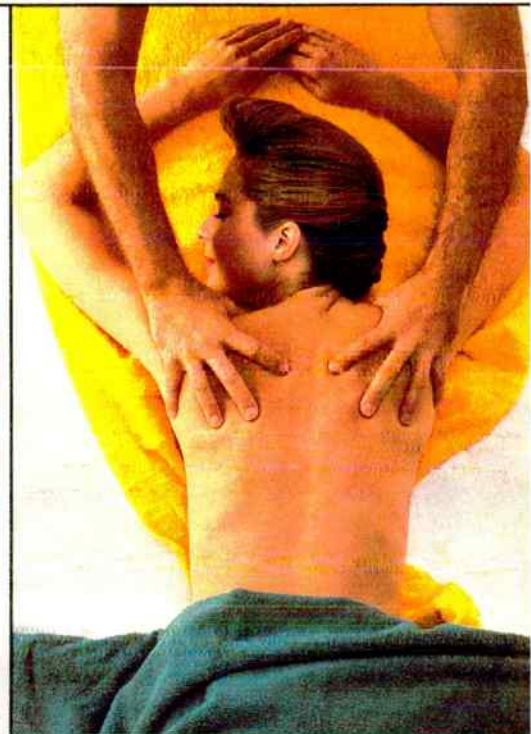
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Letters

A Loyal Dolly Fan

I'd like to give a hearty thank you to Deanna Starkey and Andrea Dzik for the *excellent* article on Dolly Parton in the July/August issue. The photos of ole Dolly were superb. She's looking better than a body has a right to these days, isn't she?

I've been a Dolly fan since I saw her old *Dolly* show in Nashville back in 1976. Boy, has she come a long way since then. I sure am looking forward to her new show this fall on ABC. She'll take ABC to the top. You just watch.

Dolly is a natural and has that special air about her that nobody else has. Folks were great about handing out criticism when she was making changes in her career. Well, I just wonder what they've got to say now? "Hello, out there...?"

Thanks again for the Dolly feature. It was great.

Jeff Davidson
New York, New York

P.S. Your Dolly cover/article/photos were so good I've decided to subscribe to *Country Music Magazine* again after a long absence. So keep that "Dolly stuff" coming.

We like your thinking. To get tickets for Dolly's show on ABC/TV, write Dolly, % Guest Relations, 4151 Prospect Ave., Los Angeles, California 90027.—Ed.

Dolly Is Great, But He Wants More!

I just loved your article on Dolly Parton in the July/August issue. I think it's the best article I've read since I subscribed in January, 1986.

But, I do have a very big complaint. How about a big cover story on the Queen of Country Music, Tammy Wynette, and a cover story on the First Lady of Country Music, Loretta Lynn?

Charles Nagle
Detroit, Michigan

Never satisfied.—Ed

Poems for Dolly Parton

I just started my second year subscription to your magazine. I write songs and poems for my own personal reading. I taught myself how to read and write, and then I taught myself how to write songs and poems. They're not anything like a pro would write, but they're good enough for me.



Anyway, I just finished this one about Dolly Parton. I really think it fits her, and I also feel she deserves to have songs written about her. Would you pass this song on to her? Thanks, or you can print it in your magazine, maybe she'll see it.

David Pickle
Rosharon, Texas

She's an American Lady

*Like the beautiful rose she is
Growing among the flower garden
She stands out so very attractively
That lady known as Dolly Parton*

*She's a country girl at heart
With her blue denims on tight
She's an American lady so true
With her eyes sparkling vividly bright*

*She sings a happy love song
With a greatness that can't be matched
And she sings a sad tune
With her most tender emotions attached*

*She gives us her very best
Like she was born to do
And the love she always shows
Is given so honest and true*

*She's a country girl at heart
With her blue denims on tight
She's an American lady so true
With her eyes sparkling vividly bright*

—David Pickle

Another Tribute

I could write endlessly on my feelings for Dolly Parton because I think the world of her. Isn't she just the greatest? I used to think fan clubs were foolish,

but not anymore! I belong to Dolly's.

I wrote this little poem about her which I thought maybe her zillions of fans might like to read. Who knows, maybe she'll pick up your magazine and read it too.

Patricia Castro
Boca Raton, Florida

To Me, She's God's Little Angel

*Dolly with the dimples, doesn't
she shine bright?
When I see her smiling, I know
that she's alright.
I see her in the movies, and I watch
her on TV.
She's the happiest person
we all might ever see.*

*Her Tennessee mountain home, way
back in the Hollow,
Was just a four-room shack with
a worn-down path to follow.
The luxuries of life, like lights
and running water,
Were not what Avie Lee and Lee
provided for their daughter.*

*They lived off of the land, their
ways were just their own,
They fed eleven children from
the seeds that they had sown,
And Dolly had their love, which
they could always give,
Because, with faith in God, was how
they chose to live.*


*When she went to Nashville, to sing
to us her song,
I feel she planned to give us
the love she brought along.
For when I hear her music, or look
into her eyes,
I know her love is honest, not
a playful guise.*

*Thanks to Dolly Parton, for
brightening up my day,
For being a beautiful person, I love
in every way.
I'll always play her music, her life
I'm sure to follow,
To me, she's God's little angel, from
way back in the Hollow.*

—Patricia Castro

Dolly Parton Fan Club

I thoroughly enjoyed your story on Dolly Parton. Her "Magic Touch" really touched me. I've never seen a woman like her, with such determination. I'd like to know if there is a Dolly Parton



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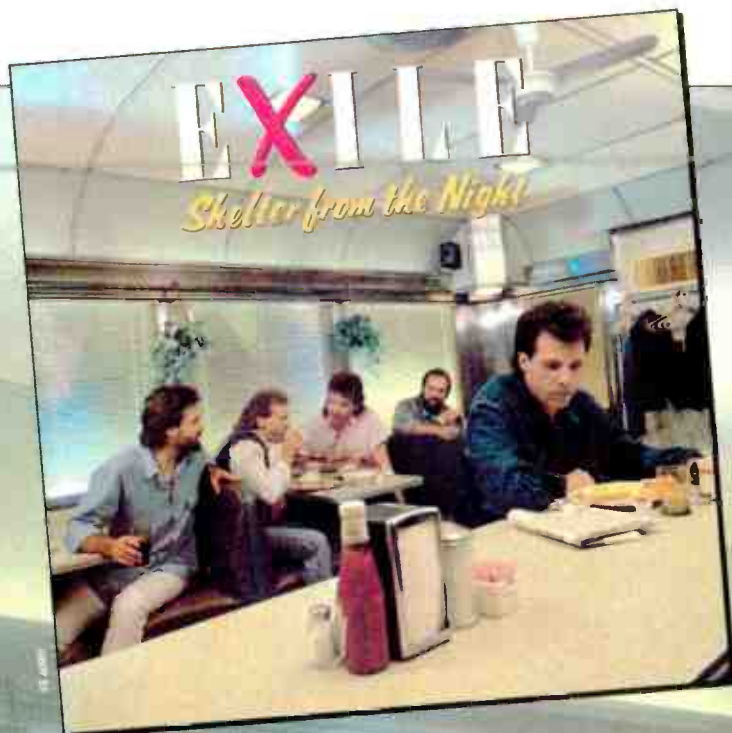
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Fan Club and if I could have the address.

A. Campbell

Norman, Oklahoma

You can write to Dolly's Fan Club, %
Eunice Eledge, Dollywood, Pigeon
Forge, Tennessee 37863-4101.—Ed.

Will the Real John Schneider Please Stand Up

That story on John Schneider made me
ill. First he was an actor (a bad one at
that), then he was singing Elvis.

Suddenly, he had a change of heart,
and he said, "I told producers to pitch
me songs that John Schneider would
never do."

So he tried to sound like a "real" coun-
try singer. Now the leaf changes again.
"I said, 'Pitch me songs that you would
do to Bruce Springsteen.'"

Gosh, doesn't John know that the most
successful people make it because they
are themselves?

If he stops trying to be everything to
everyone, who knows? There might be a
singer lurking beneath all that facade.
Come on, John, just be happy being you,
not Elvis, not George Jones, not even
Springsteen.

Connie Olmos

Granada Hills, California



Jacki Carr caught up with Bill Golden
and friend Brenda walking the dogs.

Gaping at Golden

Last July I was vacationing and visiting
my in-laws, who live in Portland, Ten-
nessee. One day when my husband,
baby, in-laws and I were driving around
sightseeing the stars' homes, we hap-
pened down a road where Bill Golden
lives, and he just happened to be taking
his dogs for a walk when we passed him.
"Hey," I said, looking back in the back
window. "That's William Golden of The
Oak Ridge Boys. Back up so I can say
hello to him and maybe get a picture of
him."

We asked him if we could take his and
his friend Brenda's picture, and he said,
"Sure can," in his always soft voice. I
thanked him and started getting back in
the car when he held out his hand and
pulled me over next to him and Brenda,
and said to my father-in-law, "You can
take another picture of us three if you'd
like to." Well, that really made my day.

He is a kind and gentle man, still a
Christian as he was before (The Oaks

used to sing all gospel music). I just love
to hear him sing "Thank God for Kids,"
and I sing too and sing that to my two-
year-old baby.

Thank you, Bill Golden, and keep on
singing.

Jacki Carr

Mendon, Michigan

Talented New Grass

Thanks for the article on the New Grass
revival in the July/August issue! Pat-
rick Carr is right about the group's in-
credible talent on their respective in-
struments and the excitement of their
live show. I saw them in Cincinnati, and
they were unbelievable. When the
audience wasn't wildly applauding, they
were just sitting there with their
mouths open in disbelief at how great
these guys can play.

However, at the risk of sounding
picky, Mr. Carr stated that Bela Fleck
and Pat Flynn had only been with the
group two years, and it has actually
been five. Also, at one point he referred
to John Cowan as Paul, and failed to
make note of the fact that John is as
uniquely talented vocally as the other
members are instrumentally.

Hope to hear lots more on New Grass
Revival in the future!

Amy Tansey
Cincinnati, Ohio

Bela Fleck and Pat Flynn joined New
Grass in 1981. Calling lead singer John
Cowan "Paul" was entirely our error.
We'll take the blame.—Ed.

New York's New Country Music Station

New Jersey! New York! Don't despair.
New York has a fantastic new country
station. We may have lost WHN, but
since July 1, we have "Constant Country
97" FM—WYNY.

Living up to its name, "Constant
Country" plays more great country
music with fewer interruptions,
although with their radio personalities,
you don't mind the interruptions. The
station was great as a rock station, but
it's even better now.

Give a listen to Jack, Mike, Lisa and
all the others, and you'll agree country
has found a new home!

Betty Grimes
Randolph, New Jersey

★ 15th Anniversary ★ Letters and Albums

Watch these pages for a selection of
15th Anniversary letters from you
readers. And some from pickers, too!
Coming in our next issue.

Plus an opportunity to buy as
many of the Editors' Choice Top 15
Anniversary albums as we can find in
Nashville. Don't miss it.



Conway Twitty and Randy Travis draw the name of the lucky recipient of a free cabin for two for the Cruisin' With Conway and Randy trip set for December 4-7 aboard the Caribbean cruise ship Emerald Seas. Conway sold the tickets himself through his own travel agency, Ambassador Travel. Space was gone months in advance.

Twying to Find Conway Twitty

I am a Conway Twitty fan, and I have been for eighteen years now. I have been to Twitty City ten times, and I have *not* seen him as of yet. We even moved to Mississippi and still no luck. It would at least make me a little happier to see him on the cover of my favorite magazine or a few more articles about him.

I would also like to know about his fan club and how I can join.

Dorothy Scott
Tupelo, Mississippi

Conway's currently on his way to the Caribbean to head up his sold-out cruise December 4-7 on the Emerald Seas, featuring his own and Randy Travis' music. To join the fan club, write Twitty City, 1 Music Village Boulevard, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37075.—Ed.

More Poetry, Please

We have been getting your magazine for several years now. You keep changing and updating it, and I enjoy it. You never leave out the older stars, and I appreciate that.

There is one thing that I would love to see, and that is more poems from people like me. I love to write poetry, and I enjoy sharing it with others. Most of my poetry is inspirational (gospel) poems.

If you could set aside one page for poems, you might help some talented person get discovered. Anyway, it's just a suggestion.

Earlene Harris
High Ridge, Missouri
The CMSA Newsletter features readers' artwork and poetry in a special section called Readers Create. Plus all the poems in this column this time.—Ed.

Highway 101 Hits New York

I would love to see an article on Highway 101 in *Country Music Magazine*. My friend John DeCesare and I went to see the group perform at New York City's Lone Star Cafe this summer. Wow! Can this band play country music! Their set included most of the songs from their hot debut album along with versions of

classics like "Sea of Heartbreak," "Born on the Bayou," and "Hillbilly Highway."

Even though time was short between shows and backstage was crowded with well-wishers, including country radio personality Lee Arnold, Highway 101 graciously granted us an interview for our Gram Parsons Memorial Foundation country music publication. After the rest of the band had to leave to set up for the second show, lead singer and guitarist Paulette Carlson took a few extra minutes to answer our last questions and pose for photos.

Diane Fisher
Union, New Jersey

Michael Bane likes them, too. See his review of their debut album in the September/October issue.—Ed.



Paulette Carlson and Diane Fisher backstage at the Lone Star Cafe.

What's New With Eddy Arnold?

I have been getting *Country Music Magazine* for quite some time now, but I never read anything about Eddy Arnold. I would like to see a 20 Questions on him sometime in the near future. Also a picture of his wife. He is such a wonderful person, and I especially would like to know if he is going to do another Kraft Special or any more new recordings

Could you look into this? I know there are still a lot of Eddy Arnold fans around who would like to hear about him.

Mrs. Thomas J. Smith
Trumansburg, New York
Good idea. Watch these pages. For a look

at the early days of Eddy's career, see the January/February 1987 CMSA Newsletter.—Ed

Hank Thompson Puts On a Great Show

On July 17, 1987, I had the chance to see the legendary Hank Thompson at the NCO Club at Whiteman A.F.B., Missouri. Let me tell you, this guy is still putting on one heck of a show. I'm only 28 years old, so I didn't have much of a chance to enjoy his hits "Six Pack to Go," "Wild Side of Life" and "Oklahoma Hills" when they first came out. But I sure do enjoy them now.

Hank has an album which came out in 1986 on MCA/Dot Records. On it, George Strait and The Oak Ridge Boys make special guest appearances, to sing with Hank. I sure would like to hear the radio stations start playing some of the cuts off this album.

David L. Cotner
Knob Noster, Missouri

Hank's scheduled for a CMM Update soon.—Ed.

What's Up With Gary Stewart?

I have been a fan of Gary Stewart for the better part of my life. He is my favorite singer. I've been to most all his concerts back when he was still singing. However, I have lost track of him. Where is he and is he still recording?

His singing is so beautiful, it would be a shame if fans didn't get an opportunity to hear it. Also where can I get his old records?

Loretta Bagaye
Bluff, Utah

Gary Stewart is living in Florida, performing locally and working on new material. For his old records, try the independent record stores and dealers listed in the September/October Newsletter.—Ed.

Minnie Pearl's Poem

I also watched the Academy of Country Music Awards last April. It seems no one knows the origin of the poem, "A Bell's Not a Bell 'Til You Ring It," that Ricky Skaggs quoted as being on Minnie Pearl's desk.

Well, I recognized the words right away. I am a big fan of Reba McEntire's, and on her *Behind the Scene* album, she has a song, "Love Isn't Love ('Til You Give It Away)." The words of the poem Minnie Pearl has are in that song.

The song was written by T. Tappan and D. Roth. Maybe this will help find out who wrote the poem. The song is really good.

A Reba Fan
From Indiana

Timmy Tappan and Donald Roth did a copyright search on the poem before writing the song in 1983. They found nothing. It's been one of their most pop-

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World Radio History



The Girls Next Door visited Country Music Magazine's office in New York and got their picture taken by Russ Barnard. L. to r., Tammy Stephens, Diane Williams, Doris King and Cindy Nixon.

ular songs. Other readers report that the poem appears in *The Sound of Music*, movie version. We're checking. Still another version has turned up on a single by Bob Chandler on the Eagle International label, recorded in 1984. Thanks to all who wrote in.—Ed.

Girls Next Door Go Visiting

Dear Helen,
Thanks again for the grand tour of *Country Music Magazine's* offices, and the time you gave us, especially during your big anniversary hustle and bustle. Please extend our thanks to your art department and to Rochelle Friedman for spending some time with us. Congratulations to you all! Sincerely,

The Girls Next Door

For more on *The Girls Next Door*, see record review in this issue.—Ed.

Asleep at the Wheel Review Burns One Fan's Boots

I am writing in reference to Rich Kienzle's review of the great country group Asleep at the Wheel's latest album, *10*, in the July/August issue. Well, you've got me fired up, and to repeat your words, your stagnant, dull, generic, trivial, silly, witless—and it even gets worse, it's also boring—version of what you call a review just burns my boots. You say The Wheel has already reached its peak with out-of-print albums. Well, buster, it sounds as if you and your taste have never come even close to what you'd probably call a peak in listening or writing about music and musicians.

I won't be reading this magazine any more. Maybe that don't mean much, but I do have lots of friends all over this great big state of Texas. Living out in the country has its advantages, too, 'cause talk spreads like wildfire...that includes good and bad talk.

Dyn Aln

San Augustine, Texas

Hope you haven't cancelled your subscription already. Wouldn't want you to miss the feature on your favorite band in this issue.—Ed.

Helping Willie Nelson Help the Farmers

Enclosed you will find a poem entitled "The Farmer, His Old Gray Mule and Plow," written by my friend Jimmy

Swaim. Jimmy is an avid fan of Willie Nelson. Knowing what Willie is trying to do to raise money for FarmAid, he wrote this poem.

Being a manicurist by trade, I'm in contact with many women and men. This gives me a chance to read the poem to them. In response to their suggestions, I'm sending you a copy.

Our American farmers need all the help we can give them, for they are the backbone of our nation.

Bridget Ryan

Buena Park, California

The Farmer, His Old Gray Mule and Plow

Long before the John Deere tractor
Rolled across this Promise Land
There was the old gray mule and plow
And the farmer's calloused hands
For two hundred years, he's tilled this sod
Beyond valleys and mountain tops
Yet, he had his doubts, with the floods
and droughts
Not even sure he could save his crops

And for two hundred years—he fed a nation
He was there, at Old Glory's birth
Yeh, the farmer pitched in with
calloused hands
And helped make America—the greatest
nation on earth

So all you people, here in freedom land
Let's stand and be counted now
Let's pitch in and show our thanks
To the farmer, his old gray mule and plow

And, last but not least,
Here's a very special thanks,
to Mr. Willie Nelson
And for all he's trying to do
So, let's all try with Farm Aid III
To do even better than Farm Aid II
—Jimmy Leon Swaim

Farm Aid III was held September 19 in the University of Nebraska Stadium in Lincoln, Nebraska. Details in an upcoming issue.—Ed.

Dot Roggi Waylays Willie Nelson

The nicest thing happened to me on the 29th of July. I met Willie at the hotel he was staying at while entertaining at the Oakdale Musical Theatre in Wallingford, Connecticut.

He and I talked for a while, and I showed him a letter from *Country Music Magazine* that I had written about him several months ago.

After seven years of being a fan club member, I finally spent some time with

him. He was very friendly.

I will never forget this day.

Dot Roggi
Glastonbury, Connecticut



Dot Roggi and her man Willie Nelson, caught by Dot's sister-in-law Theresa.

Whatever Happened to...Jean Shepard and Warner Mack

I am a subscriber to *Country Music Magazine*, and I think it's great. I have a couple of things I'd like to know. Is Miss Jean Shepard still entertaining? She was a well-liked person. I have a picture of Jean and Hawkshaw Hawkins with their baby. The baby now should be about 20 or so. I saw Jean just before I moved to Florida.

I also would like to know what has happened to Warner Mack. I used to follow him around and sell his records for him. I met him in New Hampshire. I'd like to know if he is still singing.

D. Campbell

Brooksville, Florida

Jean Shepard still entertains on the Opry and tours. Anyone out there know about Warner Mack?—Ed.

Here's What Happened to Curly Fox

In answer to the question "Whatever Happened to Curly Fox" in Letters in the July/August issue, here goes—

Curly Fox is living in Graysville, Tennessee, with his sister, Mrs. Helen Cofer. He hasn't been in real good health for some time now, but he is still able to play his fiddle some. In 1986, he appeared with Tom and Mary Morgan in Dayton, Tennessee, for the American Cancer Society. This year he rode with the Morgans in the Strawberry Festival Parade. His picture taken at this event was published in the *Chattanooga Life and Leisure Magazine*. In 1977 he was featured in an article by Mary Morgan in *Bluegrass Unlimited*.

I talked to Curly a few days after I read the question about him. I've known him since the early 1930's. I was a member of my daddy's band on the Opry

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The Morgans and friend with Curly Fox on fiddle at a local concert.

then—Daddy being “Fiddling” Arthur Smith, and the band The Dixie Liners. Other members of the band were Sam McGee, guitar, and Kirk McGee on banjo. I played piano. Curly and Texas Ruby were on the Opry when I left in 1934.

Texas Ruby died in a trailer fire in 1963, and I believe Curly was playing that night on the Friday Night Opry.

I do hope Mr. Boone, who sent in the question, will write to Curly. I’m sure Curly would like to hear from him and any other fans of his. Curly Fox is a good fiddler and a fine person, and a friend.

Lavonne Smith Brown
Hixson, Tennessee

Thanks for this great update, and thanks to all who wrote in. Anyone who'd like to write to Curly, we'll forward the mail.—Ed.

Now, Whatever Happened to Little Miss Rita Faye?

Up until recently, one of our PBS TV stations carried a program called *Classic Country* which was films of the Grand Ole Opry in the 1950's. It came on at 4:00 in the morning, but believe me, I was up taping. I have two tapes of nothing but the great legends of country music.

Ernest Tubb hosted most of the shows, and on several of them he would introduce Little Miss Rita Faye, the child country singer. She must have been around nine or ten years old, and could that little girl sing! Do you know anything about her?

I'm a traditional country music fan and enjoy your articles on the Legends of Country Music, especially Webb Pierce, Carl Smith and Roy Acuff.

Ruth Roberson
Cumming, Georgia

Who knows the whereabouts of Little Miss Rita Faye?—Ed.

Oaks Review Off Base

Bob Allen's review of the Oak Ridge Boys' album, *Where the Fast Lane Ends*, in the July/August issue, couldn't have been more off base.

I saw The Oaks on July 12, 1987, in California, and their show is fabulous! They are a far cry from being “a well orchestrated puppet show.” Their energy and talent shines as bright as ever, maybe even brighter! I will miss William Lee Golden, and no one can fill his shoes, but Steve Sanders is very good, and I expect the group will do very well in the future.

You were right, Mr. Allen, about Joe Bonsall's talent. His energy on stage is astounding, and he is oh-so handsome.

The Oak Ridge Boys will never fall into the category of “tomorrow's has-beens.” You all watch out, because The Oaks will show you all how seriously they take their music!

Rose Gomes
Concord, California

There's nothing like a fan.—Ed.

Loretta Lynn's Biggest Little Fan

I am part Northern Cheyenne Indian and live on a reservation with a population of about 3,000. I have a 10-year-old granddaughter, Stormey Robinson, who has loved country music since the age of 4. As soon as she could talk, she started singing her idols' songs—Loretta Lynn and Patsy Cline.

Stormey entered the Little Miss of America contest held in Great Falls, Montana, recently and took 2nd runner-up in the pageant, but in the talent competition she took first place out of six girls. Her winning song was “Coal Miner's Daughter” by Loretta Lynn. For a 10-year-old she can really sing, and we are proud of her.

She now qualifies to compete in the pageant and talent show which will be held at the Sheraton-Universal Hotel on the Universal Studios lot in Hollywood. This is a dream come true for a little Indian girl from a very small town.

Hansa Faye Burns
Lame Deer, Montana

Keep us posted on the results.—Ed.

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3350 **SONG OF WINTER** "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year"—*artist Ted Blaylock*



7003 "For everything there is an appointed season, and a time for everything under heaven..." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"—*photo by Abi Garaman*



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2276 "May Christmas bring Friends to your Fireside, and Peace to your Pathway." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"—*artist Chris Cummings*



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CHET ATKINS AND THE WILD COWBOY

Chet Atkins just never stops. He's made a mint as a record label exec, made another mint as a hillbilly guitar picker who ended up playing for and with long hair symphony folks, is making another mint selling mail order guitar lessons via video, and now he's a hit songwriter with the Ray Stevens monster, "Would Jesus Wear a Rolex," the funniest song out of Nashville in many a blue moon. Friends, that ain't all. Chet has took up banjo playing and showed up at the last Full Moon Bluegrass party hosted by Nashville attorney Ted Walker. This festivity is held (naturally) every full moon. Accompanying Chet was the inimitable "Cowboy" Jack Clement. Right after the bluegrass event, Cowboy split for Yugoslavia with head label person Steve Popovich looking for more polka pickers. Seems Frank Yankovic's success on Polygram with his polka recording convinced the dangerous duo that polka might start poking around again. If so, they will be ready. That's the place they grow it!! Call the album "Yugo Polka!"

OPRY FIRST

Ricky Van Shelton debuted on the Grand Ole Opry. He is managed by the outlandishly wonderful newspaper columnist Jerry Thompson of the *Tennessean*. CBS is hoping the good-looking Virginia native can give George Strait a run for his money, so to speak. From what I hear, Strait has lots of money to run with.

IT'S YOUR MOVE, STEVE

In this game of musical moves, the man with all the pawns these days is Steve Earle. He writes 'em up and belts 'em out. I got high hopes and fantasies about that boy. Don't you just love *Guitar Town*? I do. He and Dwight Yoakam are different. But so was Elvis Presley. Honey, there's enough ears for all of us. You hear me!



AFTER ALL

Writers Hinson and Stinson penned the Patty Loveless goodie "After All." As country as her labelmate Loretta Lynn, Patty is coming into her talent real fast. Ripe for harvest. Watch her smoke. Keith Bilbrey introed Patty on Opry TV as Linda Lovelace! Different country, Bilbrey.

OLD HILLBILLIES NEVER DIE

Polygram Records released Volumes 5 and 6 in the acclaimed Hank Williams series. Titled *Long Gone Lonesome Blues* and *Hey, Good Lookin'*, I gotta have 'em. How 'bout you?

MINNIE AWARDED AND REWARDED

Everybody's favorite funnylady Minnie Pearl is the 1987 recipient of the Roy Acuff Service Award. Voted by members of the CMF (Country Music Foundation), the award boasts previous

honorees such as Kenny Rogers and Willie Nelson.

ONLY THING RESTLESS IS THEIR NAME

Restless Heart, who ain't resting or restless these days, topped the country and contemporary charts with "I'll Still Be Loving You." Braggarts and with every right to be, they reached a respectable 33 on the national pop charts. This is the biggest crossover hit since the Dolly Parton/Kenny Rogers duo "Islands in the Stream" in 1983. Congrats, Mike Stewart and company. Mike, you do sing good but not restless!

ON THE ROAD WITH SWEETHEARTS OF THE RODEO

Some hillbilly luminaries The Sweeties have opened for this summer are Willie Nelson, Alabama, Waylon Jennings, Eddie Rabbitt, Emmylou Harris and The Oak Ridge Boys. Not bad company

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

POLITICKIN' COUNTRY STYLE



Vice President Bush guested on *Nashville Now* recently, along with singer/songwriter/sausage-maker Jimmy Dean. Host Ralph Emery didn't have to pull any teeth to get the Vice President talking, while Jimmy Dean kept them all laughing.

for some pretty lucky and pretty-pretty gals who are pretty talented.

O'KANES ALL OVER

That other hot CBS group is *The O'Kanes*. Rumor has it O'Hara and Kane are everywhere but home. It couldn't happen to two finer folks, in my opinion. Besides that, they are talented. You can't knock it when a great songwriter gets a break. These two got a well-deserved break with this act!

THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE

"You don't cut off the hand that rocks the cradle" has been a saying I've used all my life in reference to someone who abuses the "check signatory" or worse. Now Glen Campbell with Steve Wariner duetting on "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" is one of my favorite songs for 1987. Anything that real about mama suits me. After all, I am mother to children who are older than I would ever claim to be.

THE MOLLY KATE SKAGGS SAGA

Sharon White was singing "I Wonder Who's Holding My Baby Tonight" somewhere in West Virginia with her family *The Whites*. Thinking of three-year-old Molly Kate, and Molly's daddy, Ricky Skaggs, Sharon closed her eyes. When she opened her eyes, to her surprise she saw Molly in her daddy's arms near the

sound board. "I love you, Molly," Sharon said. "And I love you, too, Ricky," she added. Sharon had the shock of her life. She thought Ricky and Molly were home in Tennessee, but they caught the late flight in and caught mama at the show. Nice surprise? You bet. By the way, the first duet by the Skaggs/White couple, "Love Can't Get Any Better Than This," went Top Ten for Mr. and Mrs. Skaggs.

JOHNNY RUSSELL AND STELLA PARTON

Are they an item? Lord knows, I don't know, but they are in each other's company a lot. There's no two nicer folks in show biz. They told me they were having a good time. Johnny seems to be pretty well mended following the stroke. God does heal. Also, Johnny's back on the Optifast diet and is looking thinner and better.

ACCORDING TO PEE WEE'S ACCORDIAN

Pee Wee King and Redd Stewart were listening to the Grand Ole Opry one night about 45 years ago and heard Bill Monroe performing his self-penned "Kentucky Waltz." "We ought to write a 'Tennessee Waltz'," allowed Pee Wee. Stewart agreed and the rest is music (and money). According to Pee Wee's accordian, the song has sold over 20 million records. I can dig them numbers. This made those two hillbillies

very wealthy men. Pee Wee resides in Louisville where his brother Gene King owns and operates King's Record Shop. Musician/photographer Hank DeVito had taken a photograph of the record shop and friend Rosanne Cash loved the photograph. She loved it so much, in fact, she titled her "husband produced" (Rodney Crowell is husband) album on CBS *King's Record Shop*. The record shop, privately owned, boasts collectors items as well as today's sounds. Rosanne and Rodney and a bunch of media folks drove up to Louisville and saw the shop and Gene King and bought some records. Kentucky fans are smart. I bet there's a bunch of them done bought Rosanne's newest effort. I think it cooks. But I'm a fan.

HUGH MOFFATT ALIVE AND WELL

Remember "Old Flames Can't Hold a Candle To You" that gave Joe Sun a semi-hit and Dolly Parton a big hit?? Well, the songsmith of this tailor-made song, Hugh Moffatt, has released an album on the Philo/Rounder label with 10 song/poems that are the best.

McENTIRE HAS HIGH HOPES



At a press conference in St. Louis recently, Reba McEntire showed up to lend her support for the formation of Hope For a Drug-Free America, an organization that will act as a clearing house for all anti-drug establishments. It is hoped that a united front will better aid the fight against drug abuse. Serving on the Board of Directors of this worthy cause are Henry Kissinger, Walter Cronkite and representatives from the sports, arts and corporate worlds.



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Lynn Anderson was more than happy to welcome the fans to Fan Fair. More than 23,000 people attended this year's event.

FANS AND FAN FAIR

My column, like the Declaration of Independence, is of the people, for the people and by the person! Of the stars and for the fans. Listen, fans, if your favorite artist seems a little "holier than thou" or gets a little too big for hillbilly britches, don't you ever forget there's many a potential new star trekking down Music Row. The business of music is as fickle as a fifteen-year-old cheerleader with the entire team on her tail! Hillbillies are a dime a dozen, but stars are might' nigh as scarce as hen's teeth. Staying a star is harder than maintaining a good marriage. Country fans, as loyal as they are, are prone sometimes to "turn to someone else when their someone ain't around." The fans like to hobnob. The smart stars hobnob back.

Hobnobbing in Music City was at an all-time high during Fan Fair. Yeah, I know, that was a while back...but you haven't heard my side of the story. So here goes. Who, in 1986, walked through the autograph area with just his manager, but required double security in 1987? If you're guessing **Randy Travis**, you're right. Above and beyond anyone, the young, shy North Carolinian magnetized them females. People old enough to know better were pushing and showing. Wish I had hold of that little blond with the big feet who stepped on my toes.

Up-and-comers like **Holly Dunn** and **Patty Loveless** attracted medium-sized mobs while **John Schneider** and **Alabama** just drove the women crazy. *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* came to town and filmed **Schneider**, **Barbara Mandrell** and **T.G. Sheppard** during "F.F." Friends and fans, if you think John Schneider ain't serious about hillbillying, you got another thought coming. Why that boy was there, pen in hand, one morning at 10:00 A.M. when the doors opened for the fans. And he stayed most of that day and a good portion of the next. His old TV buddy **Tom Wopat** shared the booth for a spell. Lordy, you'd have thought the females got touched where they like it with Schneider/Wopat "together again." Screaming like Elvis-mania! Plumb embarrassing. I swear, my throat was sore all week!

"Do you spell Debbie with an 'i', or 'ie'? Is that one or two 'b's'? Quoting: **Billy Joe Royal** who was autographing away. You may swear Billy Joe is too pop to be country or too rock for beer and banjo, but if "Old Bridges Burn Slow" didn't tickle you pink, then you ain't as country as me. My country heart and hillbilly mind tell me that the charts spoke loud and clear. A hit!

Stars have to have helpers to do stuff they can't do themselves. They need folks to get the press to write stories or to get them on TV or on radio. It's called Public Relations. I met one of the better

ones at doing that during this go-round—Ms. **Kathy Gangwisch** from Kansas City. We said howdy and how are you.

Ain't it a crying shame, with all the fabulous radio programming of country music in the world, that only *one* station saw fit to program live from Fan Fair. That was Nashville's WNKZ with **Don Ryman** (a/k/a **Dennis Thibodeaux**). You want to know Thibodeaux's *other* real claim to fame? Just this, a radio station in New Orleans fired him for retrieving a single record from the trash by an unknown named **Randy Traywick** and playing it on the air. He was fired for this unforgivable sin. Randy Traywick, of course, is better known these days as **Randy Travis**.

Approximately 23,000 persons paid a whopping \$60.00 each to see days of fun and their favorites entertain. Let's see, \$1,386,000. Geez, one million, three hundred eighty six thousand dollars! Wow! Never fret. With entertainment by the legendary **Johnny Cash**, the celebrated **Statlers**, the great **Marshall Tucker Band** along with Polka hero **Frank Yankovic** and new and rising **David Lynn Jones**, nobody can frown on paying the 60 bucks. By the way, this list of favorites was *only* from the Mercury/Polygram folks. For your info, attention-getter David Lynn Jones penned the **Willie Nelson** mega-hit, "Living in the Promiseland." Introduced by one of my favorite hillbillies,

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People

Waylon Jennings, Jones performed from the stage of the local Music Row Showcase for a house filled with media execs. Claiming Jones as a leader of the new generation in Nashville, Waylon further attested to his regard for him by dueting with the songster. Other super-songsters hailing the new Jones singer were **David Allan Coe**, **Tanya Tucker** and **Steve Earle**. That smart **Steve Popovich** of Polygram and his header-upper **Dick Asher** smiled and clapped as **Kathy Mattea**, **Larry Boone**, **Butch Baker** and the greatest storytelling-singer ever born, **Tom T. Hall**, sang their hearts out to the country folks.

I mentioned **Waylon Jennings**, but I need to talk further about that boy. It was ever so great to see Waylon at Fan Fair. He and his doll baby **Miss Jessi Colter** held their annual celebrity auction at Fair Park, netting several thousand most-needed dollars for battered women in the area. I could easily write the entire 'people piece' on Waylon and Jessi. He looks so great, and Jessi is as pretty now as she was when we first met more years and tears ago than either would dare admit. I mentioned to Waylon how happy I was for him and producer **Jimmy Bowen** on account of their Number One single "Rose in Paradise." Waylon smiled, shy and honest, and simply stated, "We're having lots of fun." I was jabbering so with Waylon and Jessi, I might' nigh missed my old buddy **Roger Murrah**, who is writing himself rich! Waylon allowed that he and Roger had penned his entire new album, adding, "Wait till you hear that." I reminded Murrah of an incident some dozen or more years ago when he told me his ambition in Music City was to write songs with Waylon. Well, they've done it now, and from what I've been told, it's absolutely flawless, musically and lyrically.

Lo and behold, the inevitable has finally happened! The Grand Ole Opry folks made us aware they've got their own fan club. The club is the brainchild of **Glen Thompson** from Kenosha, Wisconsin, according to Opry publicist **Jerry Strobel**, who made the announcement during this week of weeks in Nashville. Thompson, who will serve as president of the newly formed club, made his first journey to the Opry in October of 1953 and has attended some 200 times since. I met the amicable Glen in the Opry booth. We chatted and it seems that he, like me, followed the lead of parents who listened to **Roy Acuff**, **Bill Monroe**, **Hank Williams** and **Ernest Tubb**. If you are interested in

becoming a member, write to Jerry Strobel, Grand Ole Opry Fan Club, 2804 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37214.

My brother, **Daniel Boone** (I swear!), favorite singer **Gene Watson** and newcomer **Holly Dunn** performed at the Hyatt Regency during the week.

Loretta Lynn, **Conway Twitty** and **Randy Travis** 'pre-faired' the fans with a drag 'em out hillbilly show at the Coliseum prior to the big week, leaving folks weak at the knees. Conway Twitty is still about the only hillbilly that can make me ache in places that I do not tell about!

Course the bluegrassers had their day headed up by the Old Master Mandolinist **Bill Monroe** who can still, by God, pick and sing. With the likes of **Wilma Lee Cooper** (with hot bassist **Terry Smith** and dobroist **Tim Graves**), the **Doug Dillard Band** (with **Ginger Boatwright's** angelic vocals), **Osborne Brothers**, **Mac Wiseman**, the raw-talented **Ralph Stanley**, **New Coon Creek Girls**, **Bluegrass Cardinals** and others performing, it was a helluva three hours.

Johnny Russell, recouping nicely following a stroke, performed at the Nashville Palace, where young **Randy Travis** washed dishes and grilled hamburgers just last year.

The All-American Country Games is not one of my favorite pastimes for the entertainers during Fan Fair. Last year **R.C. Bannon** (husband of **Louise Mandrell**) injured his leg in the games and required surgery. This year **Ricky Van Shelton** pulled a hamstring muscle, **June Forester** fell in the foot race, **Gary Morris** hurt his knee, **Ricky Skaggs** suffered a stone bruise and **Vince Gill** hurt his shoulder. Granted, money from this event is donated to Tennessee Special Olympics, a worthwhile charity. But aren't there safer games to play? I'm not as smart as most, but I'd really hate for anybody to receive permanent injury even though it is fun and for a good cause. Stars work hard, but they don't have the time or energy to be the Charles Atlas of Fan Fair. This is my opinion. I'm curious to know if the fans think the stars should continue playing the games. How important is their well-being? Aerobics is one thing while the 50-yard dash is another.

The **Johnson Sisters**, **Loudilla**, **Kay** and **Loretta**, performed magic again for this year's Fan Fair. They were everywhere and reminded me of deacons' wives at an all-day preaching with dinner on the ground in my Caswell County



People



home. They were tending to everybody and everything at the same time. Co-presidents of IFCO, the International Fan Club Organization, these sisters are amazing. They were there in the beginning with **Loretta Lynn**, and like the Garden of Eden, the club keeps growing. Then Johnson Sisters organized Loretta Lynn's Fan Club and it was good, 'cause after God breathed life into them Johnson Girls, he breathed life into Loretta's Fan Club and is still a-puffing and a-blowing.

By the way, winners of the IFCO's prestigious "Booth of the Year" award were **The Whites**. Using the theme "I Love Country," Fan Club President **Patty White** created handmade country decorations, charming wall pieces, shadow boxes, ducks, geese and other handmade pretties. JoAnne Splitter, IFCO Monitor, made the presentation.

Funnyman **Eddie Edwards** hosted the Capitol/EMI show. Stars included **Tom Wopat**, **Sawyer Brown**, **Dan Seals**, **Marie Osmond**, **Mel McDaniel** and **Tanya Tucker**.

16th Avenue Records, the newest label in town, showcased perennial favorite **Charley Pride** with the ton-of-fun duo of **Little David Wilkins** and **Johnny Russell**. **Jerry Bradley** heads up the label.

The Whites hosted a brunch, **Johnny Cash** hosted a breakfast, **Johnny Rodriguez** hosted a nacho party, **Jeanne Pruitt** hosted a cat fish supper, **Ricky Skaggs** hosted a luncheon, **Darlene Austin** and *Nashville Now* regular **Tom Grant** hosted a breakfast, **Barbara Mandrell** hosted a breakfast, **Conway Twitty** hosted a county fair, **Ronnie Robbins** hosted a dinner, **Suzi Deveraux** hosted a dinner/show, **The 4 Guys** hosted a luncheon, the **Twitty kids**, **Michael**, **Joni Lee** and **Kathy**, sang for free. Lotsa good eats.

RCA Records presented **Michael Johnson**, **Vince Gill**, **Restless Heart**, **Earl Thomas Conley** and **Eddy Raven** for the fans.

Patty Loveless had a get-together while **Freddy Fender** performed at the Stock Yard. **Eddie Adcock** and his all-female bluegrass band performed at the Station Inn. The multi-talented **Vern Gosdin** performed at PeeWee's. By the

Summer's heat, driving rains and personal injuries couldn't keep the stars away from Fan Fair. Pictured clockwise from top are **Dan Seals**, **David Lynn Jones**, **Mel McDaniel**, **George Jones**, **Rosanne Cash**, **Ricky Van Shelton**, **Judy Rodman**, **Waylon Jennings** and **Tom Wopat**. A good time was had by all.

way, Gosdin signed with CBS. The great **Bob Montgomery's** producing.

Charlie Douglas outdid himself emceeing the Country Music Legends show. Some of the performers included **Bill Anderson**, **Martha Carson**, **Connie Smith**, **Florida Boys**, **Bobby Bare**, **Jim & Jesse**, **Melba Montgomery**, **Henson Cargill**, **Tommy Collins**, **Charlie Louvin**, **Narvel Felts**, **Norma Jean**, **Bobby Helms**, **Jeanne Pruett**, **Jack Greene** and **Billy Walker**. Wears me out!!

June Carter's self-penned book *From The Heart* has seen the light of day. Good book. I read it from cover to cover without being able to put it down. June claims she almost titled it, *Out of My Mind*. Some of the writing is pretty unorthodox, even for a hillbilly, but nonetheless believable. As ludicrous as it sounds, June probably did get on that canoe and go down those Alaskan rapids with her two Johns—**Johnny Cash** and **John Carter Cash**. I can tell you one thing, there ain't enough downers on this planet to get me on a raft with Johnny Cash or Jesus. Leave the rapids for the bears and elk to view. Just give me the Cumberland River Bridge, and let me view the water from that angle as God meant us to do. One noticeably weird point about the book, June never mentions **Rosanne Cash's** spouse, **Rodney Crowell**. I found that a "hard to miss" oversight.

June Carter Cash ain't never been no dummy. She can make biscuits and make you laugh. Besides, I think it was uncommonly smart of her to release the book just prior to Fan Fair, don't you?

Mel Tillis has a sweet wife named **Judy Tillis**. She had all kinds of Fan Fair plans, but wasn't able to follow through on one of them. Why? Judy and Mel have adopted a little daughter named **Hannah Elizabeth**. I know for a fact this is truth, because I got it first hand from Hannah's grandmother. Yep, as usual, I got the scoop. Judy's mother, who womaned Mel's booth during Fan Fair, even showed me a photo of Hannah Elizabeth, who was only two weeks old. Cutie. Beaming grandma agreed. She had to grin proudly...grandma's name is Elizabeth also!! Congratulations, Hannah Elizabeth, for garnering a wonderful mama, daddy and grandma.

Janie Fricke's booth was a replica of "Texana," her and hubby **Randy Jackson's** home in Lancaster, Texas. Janie is an Indianian by birth, which explains the 'ana' in Texana. The miniature model attracted a lot of viewers during the week. Janie and Randy set up the replica

People

in their home after Fan Fair. My understanding is Janie was quite touched by the fact that her fans designed and made the model.

The CBS Records show starred the biggest star of them all, **George Jones**, in living color. Hosted by **Ralph Emery**, the show also included **Sweethearts of**

the Rodeo, Ricky Van Shelton, Rattlesnake Annie and Asleep at the Wheel.

Not too long ago **The Whites** recorded a song titled "It Sure Rains Hard in Tennessee" that I penned some years back. Fan Fair-goers and Fan Fair-doers will swear by that statement now. And the

rains came down on the MTM show. Lord bless **Holly Dunn, Judy Rodman, The Girls Next Door, Marty Haggard, Ronnie Rogers and SKB**, and thanks to you wonderful fans who hung out and listened in the Tennessee rain. Country fans are the best. MTM Records and the staff were amazed and happy that the fans stuck it out.

And the rain kept falling Friday night for the IFCO show. The 20th annual event saw appearances by **John Schneider, Holly Dunn, The Forester Sisters, Patty Loveless, Chris LeDoux, Gary Morris, Mason Dixon, Johnny Rodriguez, Southern Pacific and Keith Whitley**. Surprise guests were **Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty**.

You know, I wish I could afford it, I'd like to send buses to every state in the union (course I'd need a boat to Hawaii) and bring all the fans to Music City for Fan Fair. You just have to come next year. All that talent, all that love, all that music. And nobody does it like us. We give great Fan Fairs!! The world of entertainment, whether Hollywood, New York or London, can never boast anything like this week. Wembley doesn't touch it, though it is great. The parade of talent for the fans is incredible. And it works like clockwork. **CMA's Alesha Bess** must have gotten a license from God. That girl kept everything running so smooth. She works for the CMA and should be making lots of money, with all the work she does. She sure gave us fans her undivided attention. Fiddlers need attention too, so let's congratulate **Randy Pollard** of Las Vegas who won the Grand Master's Fiddling Championship.

Wanna come to Fan Fair next year? Get your tickets early. The dates are June 6 to 12. I will see you there, and I want every fan to give me their autograph. You are the heroes this week.

I want to mention **Lindsay Dorman**, who came all the way from Australia for Fan Fair, and **Lucille and Ken Cruise** and **Press Jamison** who attended their 16th Fan Fair. My love and prayers to these and all the thousands of others. Thanks for making it something all of us can remember. When a fan like me gets to meet fans like **Susie French** from Florida, **Janet Self** from Michigan, **Shirley Anne Fales** from Wyoming, **Bernice Gallagher** and **Vance Smith** from White Bluff, Tennessee, through love of the music—we know and understand why we are there and why you are reading this. It's a fan-ship that we share and understand. One on one. It's like holding hearts with smiles and love.

CMM Update: *Del Reeves*



Good Time Charlie, indeed. Franklin Delano Reeves' enthusiasm for *everything* is downright infectious. "I work about 125 days a year, record for the Playback/Sutra label," he roars with pride. "I'm still at it, workin' hard, tryin' to get a TV show with just the right format.

"Hopefully it'll be with *The Nashville Network*. If not, it'll be with another cable television deal. I go overseas once every year, and sometimes go to Germany. Other than that," he laughs, "I stay busy on the farm in West Nashville, toward Centerville, Tennessee."

The first farm Del Reeves stayed busy on was near Sparta, North Carolina, where he was born in 1933. "Roy Acuff and Ernest Tubb and Hank Williams were all we could get in those days on the radio, and that's how we all started off, tryin' to sing like them." At age 12 Del was on the radio singing bluegrass and, he declares, "I still love bluegrass today."

He recorded for Capitol in the late 1950's while stationed in California with the Air Force. Then in 1961 "Be Quiet, Mind," on Decca broke the Top Ten. When his Reprise single "The Only Girl I Can't Forget" hit in 1963, he finally moved to Nashville.

With United Artists his single "Girl on the Billboard" hit Number One in 1965, and for the next four years he had fifteen Top 20 hits (six Top Ten). In 1966 he joined the Opry where he remains today. By Del's own admission, his 1968 hit "Good-time Charlie" defined his image, an image that still dominates his shows. "Everything's uptempo," he says.

His onstage imitations of Roy

Acuff, Little Jimmy Dickens, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ray Charles and others are carefully crafted. "I try to make them funny, but I take them seriously. I worked in the mirror to get their mannerisms down." Del takes only a trio on the road today, but recalls one memorable alumnus: a sax player named Lee Greenwood. "I didn't know he could sing. He never offered to," Del laughs.

Twenty years later, Del's flair for novelties hasn't deserted him: his recent "Dear Dr. Ruth," got him an appearance on the popular sex therapist's syndicated TV show. "I gotta be one of the only country artists to ever get invited to do Dr. Ruth's show. A lot of nice things have happened off that."

And other things, too. "I damn sure got some flak," he said. "A local pastor got signatures and sent it to the Opry (asking) to please ban me from the Opry. That pastor probably never heard the Opry one time. Hal Durham, the Opry manager, took it with a grain of salt. He said, 'Del, if they're not talkin' about you, we don't need you.'" That's a change. In Nashville 20 years ago, it would have been an instant scandal.

Del's daughter Kari is the only one of his three daughters interested in a musical career. So far, her taste is tending toward pop. Daughters Anne and Bethany are in non-musical careers. He's proud of all three, and he also has some definite plans for his own future. "I'd love to stay on the road another five years, then just really slow it down and do television, spend some time with my wife, Ellen, and do some things we'd like to do."

—RICH KIENZLE

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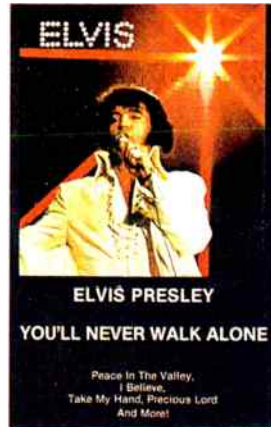
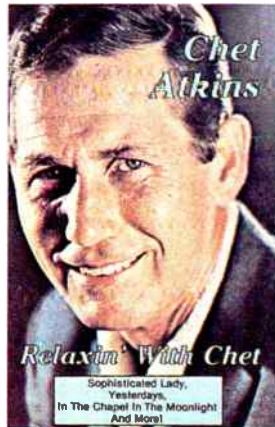
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CHET ATKINS—THE GUITAR GENIUS: Heartbreak Hotel/Swanee River/Blackjack/I'll Be With You In Apple Blossom Time/Daar's 'N Wind Wat Waai/It's Now Or Never/Out Of Nowhere/Hidden Charm/Even Tho—No. CAK753

CHET ATKINS—RELAXIN' WITH CHET: Blues For Dr. Joe/Sophisticated Lady/Yesterdays/Say "Si Si"/Vilia/Martha/In The Chapel In The Moonlight/Czardas/Nagasaki/April In Portugal—No. CAK2296

CHET ATKINS—NASHVILLE GOLD: La Fiesta/Down Home/I Love How You Love Me/I Got A Woman/Whispering/Alley Cat/Arkansas Traveler/Spanish Harlem/Django's Castle—No. CAK 2555

BOBBY BARE—FOLSOM PRISON BLUES: Folsom Prison Blues/Abilene/Gotta Travel On/Autumn Of My Life/Blowin' In The Wind/Lemon Tree/Try To Remember/Silence Is Golden/When Am I Ever Gonna Settle Down/No Sad Songs For Me—No. CAK2290

THE ORIGINAL AND GREAT CARTER FAMILY: Diamonds In The Rough/God Gave Noah The Rainbow Sign/Forsaken Love/The Grave On The Green Hillside/I'm Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes/Little Moses/Lula Walls/On The Rock Where Moses Stood/Sweet Fern/Wabash Cannon Ball/Kitty Waltz/Wildwood Flower—No. CAK586

JOHNNY CASH—THIS IS JOHNNY CASH: A Boy Named Sue/Five Foot High And Risin'/Man In Black/Folsom Prison Blues/If I Were A Carpenter/Frankie's Man/Johnny/One Piece At A Time/Understand Your Man—No. CBK3014

COUNTRY GIANTS—(M. ROBBINS, J. HORTON, J. CASH): Battle Of New Orleans/El Paso/If You've Got The Money Honey/We Sure Can Love Each Other/Waterloo/I Walk The Line/The Grand Tour/PT 109—No. CBK3006

SKEETER DAVIS—THE END OF THE WORLD: The End Of The World/Daddy Sang Bass/My Coloring Book/Son-Of-A-Preacher Man/Am I That Easy To Forget?/Little Arrows/Hold Me Tight/Angel Of The Morning/I Forgot More Than You'll Ever—No. CAK2607

HITS BY TOM T. HALL: (Old Dogs, And Children And) Watermelon Wine/A Week In A Country Jail/The Year That Clayton Delaney Died/I Wish I Had Loved Somebody Else/Son Of Clayton Delaney/You Show Me Your Heart (And I'll Show You Mine)/It's All In The Game/More About John Henry—No. CPK3202

JOHNNY HORTON—BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: The Battle Of New Orleans/North To Alaska/Sink The Bismarck/Honky Tonk Man/Comanche/Whispering Pines/Johnny Reb/Rock Island Line—No. CBK3012

WAYLON JENNINGS—THE ONE AND ONLY WAYLON JENNINGS: Yes, Virginia/Dream Baby (How Long Must I Dream)/You Beat All I Ever Saw/She Loves Me (She Don't Love You)/It's All Over Now/Born To Love You/Down Came The World/The Dark Side Of Fame/John's Back In Town/Listen, They're Playing My Song—No. CAK2183

WAYLON JENNINGS—HEARTACHES BY THE NUMBER: Heartaches By The Number/Tiger By The Tail/Foolin' Round/(That's What You Get) For Lovin' Me/You're Gonna Wonder About Me/Folsom Prison Blues/Busted/Time To Bum Again/Leavin' Town—No. CAK2556

WAYLON JENNINGS—RUBY, DON'T TAKE YOUR LOVE TO TOWN: Just To Satisfy You/Gentle On My Mind/Ruby, Don't Take Your Love To Town/Leavin' Town/Your Love/New York City, R.F.D./Hangin' On/Today I Started Loving You Again/Time To Bum Again—No. CAK2608

BILL MONROE—THE BEST OF BILL MONROE: Summertime Is Past And Gone/Old Cross Road (Is Waiting)/Blue Grass Special/Mansions For Me/Goodbye Old Pal/Yodel #4/Toy Heart/True Life Blues—No. CBK3021

JIM NABORS—OUR LOVE: The Impossible Dreams/Strangers In The Night/Somewhere My Love/Swanee/Our Love/There's A Kind Of A Hush/Little Green Apples/Sunrise/Sunset—No. CBK3011

WILLIE NELSON—COLUMBUS STOCKADE BLUES AND OTHER COUNTRY FAVORITES: Columbus Stockade Blues/I Love You Because/Heartaches By The Number/Seasons Of My Heart/San Antonio Rose/Don't You Ever Get Tired/Fraulein/Go On Home/I'd Trade All Of My Tommors (Just For You)—No. CAK2444

DOLLY PARTON—JUST THE WAY I AM: Just The Way I Am/Little Bird/Mama Say A Prayer/My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy/In The Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)/In The Ghetto/Daddy Come And Get Me/The Carroll County Accident/Gypsy, Joe And Me—No. CAK2583

ELVIS PRESLEY—ELVIS SINGS "FLAMING STAR": Flaming Star/Wonderful World/Night Life/All I Needed Was The Rain/Too Much Monkey Business/Yellow Rose Of Texas—The Eyes of Texas/She's A Machine/Do The Vega/Tiger Man—No. CAK2304

ELVIS PRESLEY—LET'S BE FRIENDS: Stay Away, Joe/If I'm A Fool (For Loving You)/Let's Be Friends/Let's Forget About The Stars/Mama/I'll Be There (If You Ever Want Me)/Almost/Change of Habit/Have A Happy—No. CAK2408

ELVIS PRESLEY—ALMOST IN LOVE: Almost In Love/Long Legged Girl/Edge Of Reality/My Little Friend/A Little Less Conversation/Rubberneckin'/Clean Up Your Own Back Yard/U.S. Mail/Charro/Stay Away—No. CAK2440

ELVIS PRESLEY—C'MON EVERYBODY: C'Mon Everybody/Angel/Easy Come, Easy Go/A Whistling Tune/Follow That Dream/King Of The Whole Wide World/I'll Take Love/Today, Tomorrow And Forever/I'm Not The Marrying Kind/This Is Living—No. CAK2518

ELVIS PRESLEY—YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE: You'll Never Walk Alone/

Who Am I?/Let Us Pray/There'll Be Peace In The Valley/We Call On Him/I Believe/It Is No Secret/Sing You Children/Take My Hand, Precious Lord—No. CAK2472

ELVIS PRESLEY—I GOT LUCKY: I Got Lucky/What A Wonderful Life/I Need Somebody To Lean On/Yoga Is As Yoga Does/Riding The Rainbow/Foots Fall In Love/The Love Machine/Home Is Where The Heart Is/You Gotta Stop/If You Think I Don't Need You—No. CAK2533

ELVIS PRESLEY—ELVIS SINGS HITS FROM HIS MOVIES: Down By The Riverside And When The Saints Go Marching In/They Remind Me Too Much Of You/Confidence/Frankie And Johnny/Guitar Man/Long Legged Girl (With The Short Dress On)/You Don't Know Me/How Would You Like To Be/Big Boss Man/Old MacDonald—No. CAK2567

ELVIS PRESLEY—BURNING LOVE AND HITS FROM HIS MOVIES-VOL. 2: Burning Love/Tender Feeling/Am I Ready/Tonight Is So Right For Love/Guadalajara/It's A Matter Of Time/No More/Santa Lucia/We'll Be Together/I Love Only One Girl—No. CAK2595

ELVIS PRESLEY—SEPARATE WAYS: Separate Ways/Sentimental Me/In My Way/I Met Her Today/What Now, What Next, Where To/Always On My Mind/I Slipped, I Stumbled, I Fell/Is It So Strange/Forget Me Never/Old Shep—No. CAK2611

RAY PRICE—THE SAME OLD ME: Heartaches By The Number/My Shoes Keep Walking Back To You/I Won't Mention It Again/The Same Old Me/Invitation To The Blues/City Lights/You're The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me/Crazy Arms—No. CBK3013

THE INCOMPARABLE CHARLEY PRIDE: I'd Rather Love You/Time/You're Not A Friend Of Mine/Jeanie Norman/Anywhere (Just Inside Your Arms)/When The Trains Come In/Piroque Joe/Was It All Worth Losing You/Instant Loneliness/This Highway Leads To Glory/Time Out For Jesus—No. CAK2584

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JIM REEVES—THE COUNTRY SIDE OF JIM REEVES: A Railroad Bum/Blue Side Of Lonesome/Waitin' For A Train/I Won't Forget You/My Lips Are Sealed/Most Of The Time/When Two Worlds Collide/Yonder Comes A Sucker/A Fallen Star/Highway To Nowhere—No. CAK686

JIM REEVES—GOOD 'N' COUNTRY: Don't Let Me Cross Over/There's A Heartache Following Me/The Talking Walls/Little Ole Dime/The World You Left Behind/I've Enjoyed As Much Of This As I Can Stand/Lonely Music/Bottle, Take Effect/You Kept Me Awake Last Night/Before I Died—No. CAK784

JIM REEVES—YOUNG AND COUNTRY: Spanish Violin / You're The Sweetest Thing/I'll Tell The World I Love You/ Never Take No For An Answer/I'll Always Love You/Wagon Load Of Love/

Did You Darling/I Could Cry/Hillbilly Waltz/Please Leave My Darling Alone—No. CAK2532

ROY ROGERS/DALE EVANS—JESUS LOVES ME: Jesus Loves Me/The Circuit Ridin' Preacher/The Bible Tells Me So/A Cowboy Sunday Prayer/Read The Bible And Pray/Do What The Good Book Says/Watch What You Do/The Lord Is Counting On You—No. CAK1022

ROY ROGERS, DALE EVANS, THE SONS OF THE PIONEERS—"LORE OF THE WEST": Happy Trails/Lore Of The West/That Palomino Pal O' Mine/The Yellow Rose Of Texas/Texas For Me/Rock Me To Sleep In My Saddle/On The Range—No. CAK1074

HANK SNOW—THE SINGING RANGER: The Gold Rush Is Over/I Went To Your Wedding/Honeymoon On A Rocket/Mississippi River/The Engineer's Child/Ben Dewberry's Final Run/Born To Be Happy/I Cried But My Tears Were Too Late/The Night I Stole Old Sammy Morgan's Girl/Just A Faded Petal From A Beautiful Bouquet/Somewhere Along Life's

Highway/I'm Gonna Bid My Blues Good-bye—No. CAK514

PORTER WAGONER—A SATISFIED MIND: A Satisfied Mind/Eat, Drink And Be Merry/Born To Lose/Ivory Tower/I Can't Live With You/Settin' The Woods On Fire/Company's Comin'/I Like Girls/Your Love/As Long As I'm Dreaming/Midnight—No. CAK769

KITTY WELLS—INSPIRATIONAL SONGS: You Better Get Down On Your Knees And Pray/Jesus Remember Me/Too Far From God/Too Much Sinning/Trails And Tribulations/How Far Is Heaven/My Mother/Pray Together And We'll Stay Together—No. CAK620

OTTIE WEST AND THE HEARTACHES—THE SOUND OF COUNTRY MUSIC: You Ain't Woman Enough/Together Again/Pick Me Up On Your Way Down/Someone Before Me/Don't Hurt Anymore/Heartaches By The Number/City Lights/Slowly/Crazy Arms/I Miss You Already—No. CAK2155

SLIM WHITMAN—BIRMINGHAM

JAIL AND OTHERS: I'm Casting My Lasso Towards The Sky/There's A Rainbow In Ev'ry Teardrop/I'll Never Pass This Way Again/Birmingham Jail/Wabash Waltz/I'm Crying For You/Paint A Rose On The Garden Wall/Tears Can Never Drown The Flame—No. CAK954

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HITS BY HANK WILLIAMS, JR.: All For The Love Of Sunshine/It's All Over But The Crying/Cajun Baby/Eleven Roses/Rainin' In My Heart/The Last Love Song/Pride's Not Hard To Swallow/Hank—No. CPK3201

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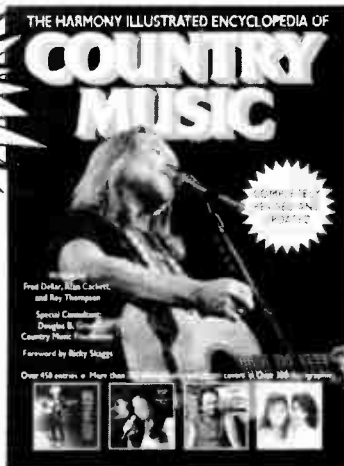
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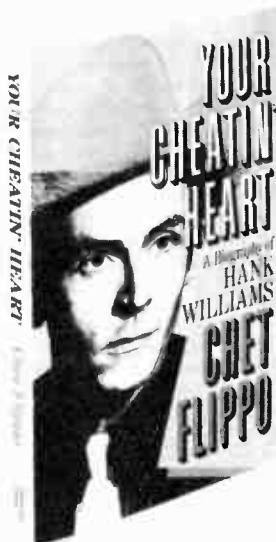
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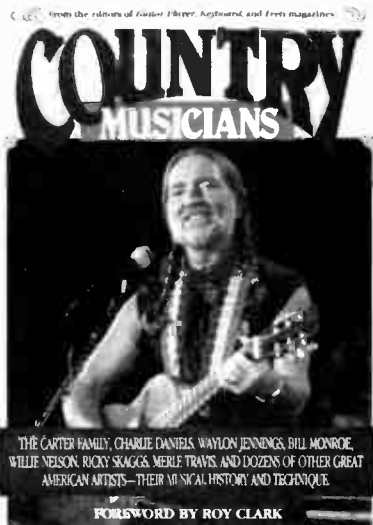
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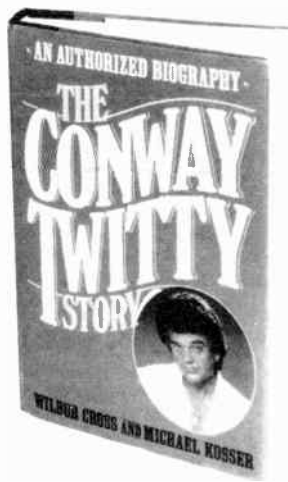
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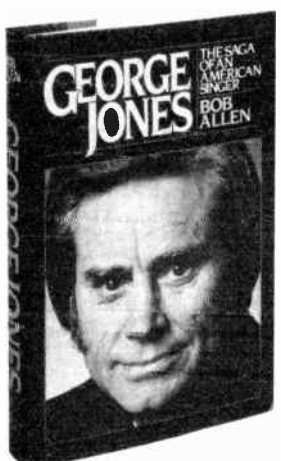
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SPOTLIGHT ON THE PICK OF THE MONTH

HEART WORN MEMORIES: A DAUGHTER'S PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIE NELSON

Willie has won the hearts of music fans everywhere, with a style and repertoire that ranges from country to popular, from gospel and blues to rock. The bittersweet story of his long struggle for fame and search for personal happiness is now told in this new book. In a down-home, no holds-barred style, daughter Susie interweaves her own story with that of her father and the family. "There's a lot of pretty salty stuff in the book," says *Publishers Weekly*. But the book is "authorized," that is, Susie ran it past her father and excised a few things he disapproved of. All in all, it's a lively tale for every country music lover. Hardcover...48 Page Photo Insert...228 Pages. Item No. B7J—NOW \$17.95



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People

OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN-JOHN???

If Olivia Newton-John married Elton John, would her name be Olivia Newton-John-John? Hell, I don't know, but I know Elton John went to see Desert Rose perform at the Roxy in Los Angeles, was impressed and went out the next day to buy a record by Desert Rose.

BOREN REUNION

Mae Boren Axton is almost as colorful as Colonel Tom Parker. When she had her recent family reunion at her mansion in Hendersonville, Tennessee, son Hoyt Axton flew in for the do, as did cousin Arlo Guthrie. Mae could've charged for the event. Singer/picker/author/songwriter John Hartford and wife Marie Hartford also attended. And all 200 folks lived happily ever after, so to speak. I promise you, if 200 people came to my house, I would wig out. Course, Mae has a huge house and yard, but I am betting it got smaller by the minute with that many folks.

KEITH BILBREY, LONG-TIME FRIEND, DONE GOOD

With curiosity and determination, Keith Bilbrey's weekly trek to Music City from Cookeville was a ritual. He paid house calls and one was to 916 19th Avenue South, my place of employment. He'd stop by to visit the legendary DJ, Captain Midnite, and yours truly. At that time Keith's ambition was to be an announcer at the Grand Ole Opry. The great Grant Turner was his hero, and still is. Were his ambitions fulfilled? You betcha! He eventually made his way to WSM where he manned the night stretch, and moved up from there.

Presently, Keith arises at the ungodly hour of 4:00 A.M. and heads to the WSM TV studios where he does the news on the *Ralph Emery* television show from 5:30 to 7:00 A.M. and continues until 8:30. Then he eases into radio on WSM AM until 1:00 P.M. On Friday and Saturday nights, Keith is an announcer on the Grand Ole Opry radio show. And for the past year and a half, he has hosted *Grand Ole Opry Live* on TNN from 7:30 to 8:30 P.M. CST. Starting last April, Keith had a fantastic idea of interviewing the guests who were to appear on the live portion of the Opry, so at 7:00 P.M. CST each and every Saturday night, Keith Bilbrey hosts this show also. Additionally, Keith hosts a syndicated radio trivia show. This is taped,



Backstage at the Roxy, Chris Hillman of the Desert Rose Band was visited by Lyle Lovett, Stephen Stills, Bernie Taupin and Elton John. You never know who will show up at a country concert.

thank God, or I don't see how the man could find time to do it. This is an example of someone who had a dream, went to college, hung out in Nashville, learned his trade, made friends and done good. Hats off to my buddy, Keith Bilbrey... a good friend and a good man.

TILLIS GOES GOLD

Mel Tillis, a man of few words, so to speak, received the Gold Award for a TV commercial shot out in Salt Lake City.

JUDY'S ZONKED BUS

Judy Rodman's music is hotter'n Texas chili, but her bus died in the Lone Star State. A second bus blew a water hose and a third bus just would not jig to the gig. Poor Judy and band ended up having to cancel the show. Don't fret, she and the band did get some Tex/Mex rations and opened the next night for Willie Nelson, and that is pretty close to heaven in my book. Especially when Willie asked Judy to join in his closing gospel sing. She did.

GOODBYE TO GREATNESS

Up in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, there is a pleasant little motel called "Rocky Top." Its owners were Felice and Boudleaux Bryant, the writers of the monster hit song with same title and many others. Country music lost one of its greatest song tailors when Boudleaux Bryant kissed this world goodbye. His bride of 43 years, Felice, survives him. Bryant set the music to Felice's poetry, and there was music, love, money and two sons. Del and Dane reside in Nashville and like their famous parents are associated in the business of music. The Everly Brothers recorded the Bryants' "Bye, Bye, Love," "All I Have To Do Is

Dream," "Wake Up, Little Susie" and "Bird Dog." Hand-holding sweethearts, the Bryants lived every moment to the fullest. If their own love story could be set to music, Lord knows, it could probably be heard around the world. Boudleaux's first job in Nashville was playing fiddle with Bill Monroe. As a composer, his first song, "Country Boy," co-written with Felice, was recorded by Little Jimmy Dickens in 1948. Good-bye, Boudleaux. Thanks for the music. And thanks to Felice, Del, Dane and the grandchildren for sharing your loved one with us and with the world.

WHAT'S HAPPENING, REBA

Reba McEntire filed for divorce from her husband of 11 years, Charlie Battles, citing "complete and irreconcilable differences." The red-headed lovely performed a couple of nights later at the local Starwood Amphitheater in Nashville with The Judds. McEntire's lawyer/manager Bill Carter announced that Battles would no longer oversee Reba's business affairs. There was also a court order preventing Battles from spending money from the couple's accounts, except for daily expenses.

SEALS WITH FIVE NUMBER ONES

Dan Seals, producer Kyle Lehning and Manager Tony Gottlieb are all kissing friends of mine. And when Dan scored his fifth straight Number One single with the song "I Will Be There," I was as happy as if I had good sense. Good guys, all three of them. Congratulations to all three crazy people. Thanks to the powers that be that Dan isn't sleeping under the piano in the studio anymore and Tony no longer has to use the office as his house. Applause, applause, applause. ■

THE LATEST FROM

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TRACES



Featuring

I WOULDN'T BE A MAN



Cowboy Don't Sing The Blues

by Michael Bane

Always a fan of songwriters, Waylon Jennings was content to interpret other people's lyrics. But today, after years of soul-searching and mind-cleansing, this happy cowboy is telling his story in his own words. And, it just may become a Broadway play.

"A long time forgotten, the dreams that just fell by the way..."

—Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson
"Good-Hearted Woman"

Scowling, all black leather and jeans, turquoise jangling, the Cowboy plucks at his jet-black shirt, sticky with sweat. It is a self-conscious pluck, and for the first time the Cowboy smiles a self-conscious smile.

"It's hot in all this black stuff," Waylon Jennings says, the unspoken words "... but what else would the baddest Cowboy of them all wear?" hanging in the warm air of the recording studio, where television technicians are setting up a "live remote" of Waylon Jennings talking about his newest album. It is a coup for the television crew, who are busily trying to find a camera angle that doesn't go straight up the anchorwoman's skirt.

I mean, Waylon Jennings! One-half of the most awesome song-hit-money-making machine to ever come out of Music City. Waylon'n'willie; Willie'n'waylon. "Luckenbach, Texas" and "Good-Hearted Woman" and outlaws and cowboys and pinball machines and Lone Star Beer and Bob Wills music.

The bad one, black hat and greasy hair and eyes as unfeeling as stainless steel marbles; stories of hard nights and hard liquor and hard drugs.

Outlaws, right?

But Willie went to Maui. Waylon went to hell.

Waylon Jennings pulls at the sticky black shirt and takes a seat in front of the cameras. He smiles and makes small talk; plucks an errant eyelash from the anchorwoman's perfectly formed nose—"I always wanted to do that," he says. He is charming and absolutely captivating, a man in control of both himself and his environment.

Three years straight, a long way from Luckenbach.

"I've always been different, with one foot over the line..."

—Waylon Jennings
"I've Always Been Crazy"

We are having lunch, Waylon Jennings and I, to celebrate the release of his "audio-biography," *A Man Called Hoss*. Audio-biography? "Jimmy Bowen thought that one up." An audio-biography is exactly what one might expect—a biography in song. There are, he says, stories to be told, old wounds to be salved, myths to be maintained.

"I thought I'd better get it down," he says ruefully, "before somebody gets it wrong."

And, since Waylon was, after all, a musician, didn't it make sense to do a record instead of a book?

We laugh, sitting in this upscale restaurant eating our Yuppie chicken sand-

wiches and talking about diets. Of the many paths Waylon Jennings has trod, the one that leads to this restaurant seems the least likely.

"Hey," he says, "you know my kid, Shooter, don't you?" I nod.

"When he was about three years old, he used to listen to my records," Waylon says. "We got him one of those little record players, toys, you know, that'd scratch up a record pretty bad. Pretty soon, the records would stick everywhere. So one time I asked him, 'Shooter, you know any of my songs?' Sure, he said. I said, 'What song do you know?,' and he says, 'Hank.' You know—'Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way.' I said, 'Well, why don't you sing it for me?' And he says, 'Are you sure Hank... Are you sure Hank... Are you sure Hank... Are you sure Hank... Are you sure Hank...'"

This man is a far cry from the Waylon Jennings I remember, pacing around his office like a caged animal, sweat that had nothing to do with the heat of the day pouring off his body to soak his clothes, his vest, his hair. A Waylon Jennings trapped, watching his phenomenal successes slip through his hands like the light reflecting off the crystal surfaces of the white powder. A Waylon Jennings on a jagged emotional edge, alternately lashing out and holing up, jerking back from the pitiless lights of the stage.

"You know, I didn't do interviews for a while. But I knew better, you know,



even when I was on drugs. I was liable to say anything—that and being misquoted, and everything like that,” Waylon says. “I was always afraid of that. But it was mainly like, you know, you withdraw. I got to where I just withdrew completely. And all I wanted to do was sit in a dark room with a cocaine bottle in my hand.”

The bad thing about it, Waylon says, is that you have to hit bottom before you can start back up.

“Most of us aren’t intelligent enough to know when we’re in trouble,” he says.

He laughs. Waylon Jennings laughs a lot, catching up, I think, on those years when he didn’t laugh at all. It takes a man who can laugh to name an album *A Man Called Hoss*.

Okay, I say, let’s settle this thing once and for all. Where’d the “Hoss” come from?

“Richie, I think,” Waylon says, sifting through a lot of scattered memories. “Richie Albright, my old drummer. He always called me Hoss . . . You know, ‘You got to check with the Hoss.’ I think he may have gotten it from me calling him Hoss.”

I seem to recall *Country Music Maga-*

zine reporting that very fact. “I think you’re right. I think that’s exactly the way it was. ‘Cause you know what it was—I’ve always had trouble with names. I have a mental block about names. I even tried the Dale Carnegie method, you know, of association. If you knew somebody named Whitfield, you’d think of windmill. All I could remember was windmill. I’d say Hoss ‘cause I didn’t remember their names. Hoss, I think I got from Ferlin Husky. He said that a lot . . . may have been something I picked up from him . . . I mean, Willie always called me Hoss.”

The album represents not only a return to songwriting, but songwriting with a partner, something Waylon has never been particularly fond of. “I’ve been thinking about the album for about a year,” Waylon says. “You know, I was on stage—I mean, literally on stage one night—and I was trying to figure out what was wrong with me . . . ‘cause I wasn’t having a good time. And I realized I was really tired of singing other people’s songs. I needed something new, something that was me again. But I’ve always

been a singer first and a songwriter second.” That began to change when he met a Nashville songwriter named Roger Murrah, who contributed a couple of songs for *Will the Wolf Survive*, his first album after the change from RCA to MCA and the first album with Jimmy Bowen producing.

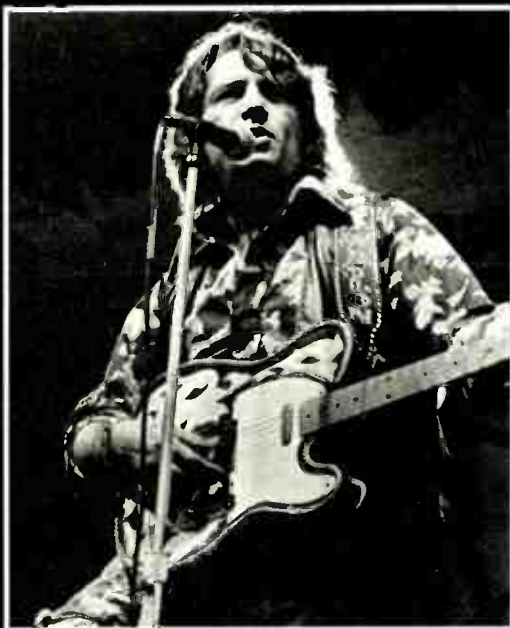
“I’m a big fan of songwriters,” he says. “When I started to do the *Will The Wolf Survive* album, I looked for material I’ve never done before. I said, ‘Well, let’s just treat this album like it’s the first one I’d ever done.’ That’s how I met Roger Murrah . . . So when I decided to do this album, I gave him a call.”

The two men retired to an eight-by-eight foot room to hammer out the story of Waylon’s life in verse. According to Waylon, one side of the room was neat as a pin, with sharpened pencils and notepads for writing. That side wasn’t Waylon’s side.

Since it was, after all, Waylon Jennings’ life they were talking about, they decided to write the album backwards, starting with the present and working toward the past.

The experience was a decided shock for Waylon, who usually wrote songs in

The Taming of the Outlaw



Waylon’s made his audiobiography with his recordings. Here’s our “photobiography” of Waylon over the years.

Left, classic Waylon in the early Nashville Rebel days, on stage scratchin’ his Telecaster, no beard.

Below left, on his tour bus in 1983 during the depths of the Bad Days, playing his favorite card game, Farkle, with one of the boys in the band.

Top right, pickin’ with his ex-roommate, Mr. Cash, and their favorite songwriter, Mr. Kristofferson.

Below right, in a scene from one of his videos, surrounded by smoke, whiskey and a dog. That looks like a pretty fancy dog for a cowboy, Waylon!



bits and pieces on the road. It was always Willie and Harlan Howard and those guys who went into the little room and came out with music.

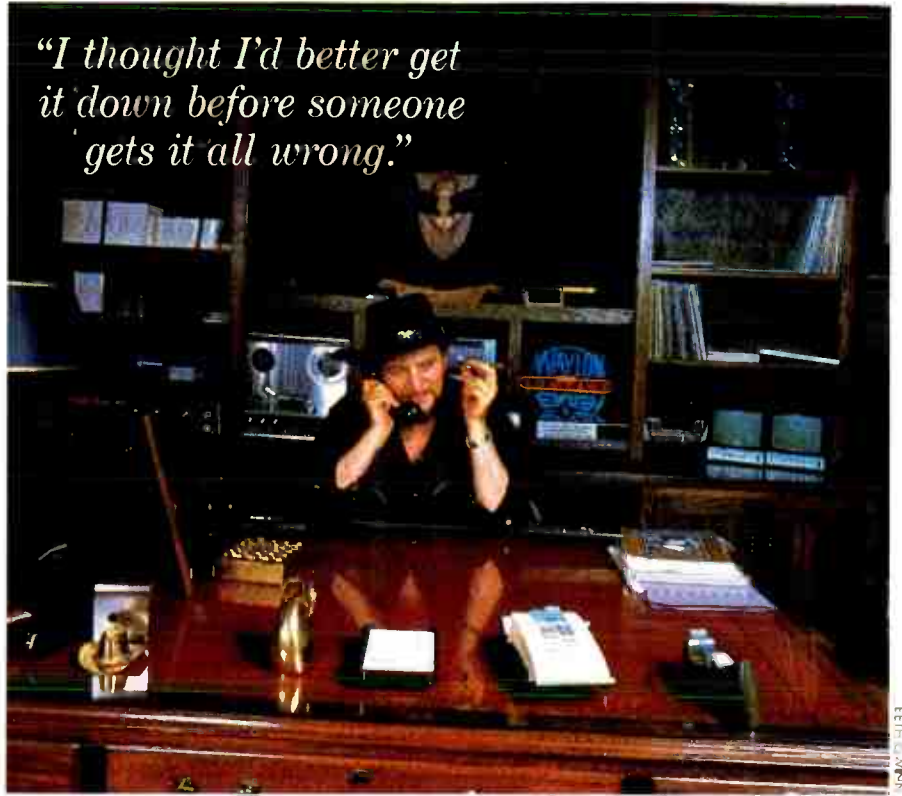
"I never thought I could do that," Waylon says. "I never wrote songs like that, going into a room and sitting down and writing. I usually had half a song that I wrote or something—I'd just write them here and there, you know."

Murrah, while excited about the prospect of working with a legend like Waylon Jennings, had his reservations.

"Roger said to me, 'You know, Waylon, I'm an awfully straight guy.' Said, 'I may be boring, you know.' I said, 'Let me tell you something, Roger. I've had enough unstraight and unboring to last me a lifetime. You're gonna do fine.'"

In 11 days the two hammered out the ten "Chapters" of the album. And they just kept on writing. The songwriting team of Jennings and Murrah have pitched their songs to some country music heavies, just like a pair of Nashville newcomers. "I think we got Barbara Mandrell's next single," Waylon says. "And some stuff on John Anderson's next album." Waylon, I think, is having loads of fun.

"I thought I'd better get it down before someone gets it all wrong."



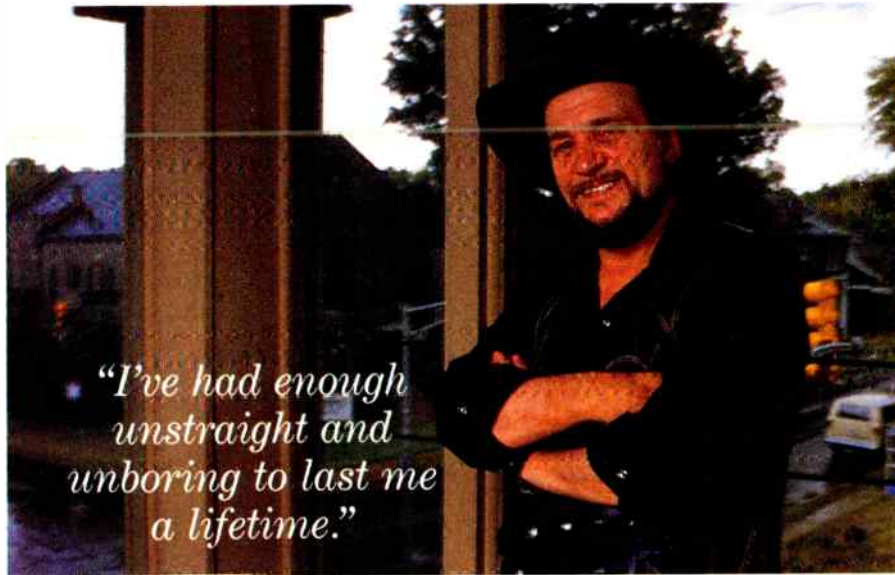
ETHAN JOHNSON



Clockwise from top left: mellowing out with Jessi and baby son Shooter; clowning with Cash, the day Cash interviewed Waylon for this magazine; receiving a gold record, Waylon covers his eyes to stay even with Milsap; hanging out with first Big Bird and then J.R. Ewing.

BOB ROY





"I've had enough unstraight and unboring to last me a lifetime."

"I think I may have found a great way to get our songs cut," he adds. "You go in and say, 'If you'll record this song, I'll cut it with you.'"

Waylon laughs again.

The album isn't the only thing he's got cooking. The baddest Cowboy of them all would also like to appear on Broadway with a one-man (or, at least, a one-band) show. It's a way to reach past—or reach beyond—the limitations of a stage performance. Having seen dozens of Waylon shows through the years, I don't think I'll be revealing any secrets if I tell you that the boy don't talk. He plays the guitar and sings. But what if the format were different?

"I just want to be able to talk to people, you know, and maybe get something out of it. Just do things entirely different," he says. "I'll use tracks for the first half of the show—tracks from this album, sing with them and play the guitar. Then we take an intermission, come back with the band and try to turn the place into a honky tonk."

It would, he says, give him a chance to relax around people and tell them what Waylon Jennings is all about.

"Cause you know me, and you've known me a long time, and you know that a lot of things people think I am, I am nowhere near that." The show is well on its way to becoming a reality. The lunch is actually fun, with Waylon reeling out stories and "Do you remember whens?" from the old outlaw days.

He finishes with a flourish.

"How did we ever survive all that?" he says. "All of us, you know—I ain't kidding. I mean, we were all bumping heads every which way we went . . . That music—you know, as far as that's concerned, they could never nail down what it was. It was too many different directions. Bunch of old Texas boys, but most of the shit was done right here." We get

all cranked about country music, who's hot and who's not. I'll bet you'd love to hear some of those stories, folks. Not in this lifetime.

"You know, I can't listen to a country station all day long," Waylon says. "I'll tell you, some of these songs I can't tell what category they're in . . . I mean, they're not—no disrespect for them—except I don't know what they're doing. And maybe I'm getting old."

We both laugh at that one.

"And I don't care if I am," he says. "I still love Randy Travis and Steve."

Steve Earle, I ask?

"Steve Earle reminds me of myself when I was about his age," Waylon says. "He opens his mouth and he tells everything he knows on himself."

That does describe you pretty well, I say.

"Oh yes," he says. "If I thought it, I said it. And they printed it . . . Sometimes added a little to it."

What Nashville needs right about now, says Waylon, somewhat wistfully, is another Kristofferson—a songwriter so good that he (or she) shakes everything up.

"Writing is what wakes this town up," he says.

We finish lunch and make our escape, with Waylon pausing to shake a few hands along the way. He is treated like family by the people who stop him on the street, the prodigal son, now returned.

We cruise up the sidestreets around Music Row in Waylon's gold Cadillac. "I was gonna get me a Jaguar, but Shooter reminded me that he helped me pick this car out, so I gotta keep it." We pass old pinball parlors, turned into trendy restaurants, and we have a brief silent moment for all those quarters gone to untimely deaths. We drive past Tompall's old recording studio, Hillbilly Central.

"We had us some times," Waylon says, "didn't we?"

We go back to his office, arguably the most tasteful office in Nashville, with its muted blue carpet and dark stained walnut walls. There are a few pictures of Waylon and Jessi Colter on the wall, and he looks at her fondly.

We look around the office, which seems strangely silent without hordes of people crashing around it. Waylon goes upstairs to take a call from Neil Young, who's on his bus between dates. The altogether pleasant lunch stretches into an altogether pleasant afternoon.

I was wore out," Waylon Jennings says. "I turned out about three or four years ago, and it's taken me three years to get back where I can sing again. You know what the bad thing is. When you've been on drugs as long as I have—I was on drugs for 21 years, and when I quit, I was doing \$1,500 a day—it becomes everything you do, you . . . I mean, when it was time to eat, I would go take a snort of cocaine before I sat down at the table." Waylon takes a deep breath and starts again. It's not the first time he's talked about the drugs, but it's like a talisman, a bad luck charm, if you will, that he must take out and examine from time to time to make sure its power is really dead.

"It's like everything you do . . . you don't think you can do it. You have to learn to live again, you have to learn to talk again, you have to learn to sing, you have to learn to do everything again," the baddest Cowboy of them all is saying, "and find out how you're supposed to be. And it's taken me that long to figure out who I am and what . . . it's just re-educating yourself as to how to do all this stuff without drugs. It's an insecure thing going in. Now it's a completely different thing. I mean, I just . . . I don't think about it much anymore. See, I'm not a drug addict now."

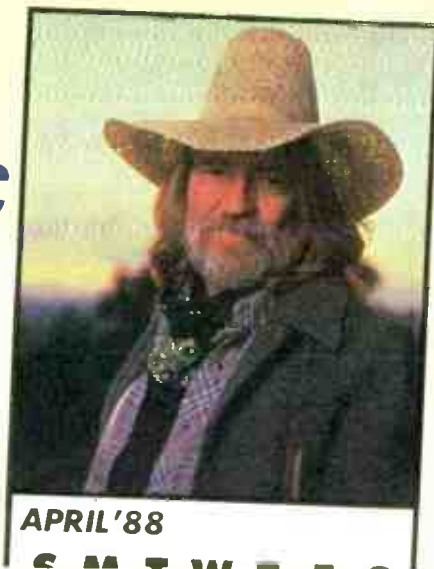
Three years straight.

In fact, Waylon Jennings has done an extraordinary thing. He has walked through the fires and emerged with his life, his talent and the love of a good woman intact. He looks back, I think, with the certain incredulous sense of a man who has walked away from the crash of an airliner. The person who walks through the smoking rubble is not the same person who got on the plane.

"When I quit, I meant it," he says. "I mean it . . . I am not a drug addict anymore. I am a person with an addictive personality. I could never do one and then nothing. I had to do it all."

"It's insecure," says Waylon Jennings again, "but that insecurity makes you hop up and kick your ass a little harder." And that is, I think, something Hank could have said. ■

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Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Sweet Memories

Sweet memories—a performer that one has been fond of over a long period of time, a certain kind of sound in playing, a certain song: the grateful heart overflows when these things are brought to mind.

Photos are memories in tangible form. Photos preserve the past as well as register the impressions of the present. In the faces of Letha Freed and her friends and sisters and their favorite stars, Marty Robbins, Ray Price, Carl Smith and others, the past

is brought into the present. In the faces of Brother Oswald and of Marty Robbins toward the end of his life, we see the present containing the past, as a full cup. In the photos of a recent concert where a fan, Sheila Richardson, went to see old favorites and wound up liking some new ones, and in the photos of a young girl's trip as a musical ambassador to the Soviet Union, we see the present with its many hints and suggestions of the future.

Plus some albums that may ring memory's bell.

Sharing Memories Through Photos

Letha Freed of Florida caught our call for Historic Photos in the May/June Newsletter. We're so glad she did. Look at these treasures from her photo collection.

In the May/June issue of *Country Music*, I found an article in the *Newsletter* section saying you'd like to have "historic" photos of country music stars. Well, I do have lots and lots of them, which I took in the early 1950's at country music shows—back then, we didn't call them concerts—and we enjoyed them so much more than we enjoy the "concerts" that we see now.

I was busy for 29 years with my husband, raising four kids; during that time I didn't see many country music shows. Now, my husband passed away in November 1985, and to help fill this awful void, I am now going to the "concerts" and trying to build

up my record collection of my favorite "old-time" country music.

My two all-time favorites were Hank Williams and Marty Robbins. I saw Marty several times, in shows down here, and once at the Grand Ole Opry in August 1955. I saw Hank Williams only once—at a show in Tampa in November 1952, and then he died on January 1, 1953.

Thank you for letting me share my "memories" with others through the maga-

zine—the best publication I have found on country music. I would like to complete my set of copies of *Country Music*.

I especially like the articles on the "old-timers." Please, soon as you can, do a feature on Lefty Frizzell, Hank Snow, Carl Smith, Faron Young, Teddy and Doyle Wilburn—I could go on for hours. Would love to see a feature real soon on Marty Robbins and also a story on Ronnie Robbins. He's a good singer. Of the "new breed," I like Randy Travis and Reba McEntire and Ronnie Robbins.

Will close for now and wait for my next *Country Music*. You said all prints will be returned, so I'll be waiting to hear from you.

Letha J. Freed
Plant City, Florida

You'll get 'em back and thanks for sending. We put the Marty Robbins feature in this Newsletter partly because of you.—Ed.

In This Issue

- Photos Make Memories
- A Salute to Oswald
- Marty Robbins Remembered
- Collections

HISTORIC PHOTOS



Letha Glass Freed and her friends and sisters loved the country music shows back in the 1950's. L. to r., Sally Glass Purvis, Marty Robbins, Betty Godwin Griffen, Carl Smith, Ray Price, Lena Glass Rogers, The Davis Sisters, Skeeter and Georgie, Letha Glass Freed, Marty again, Faron Young and Frances Royster. All photos date from 1954 and 1955.



Brother Oswald and Dorothy Shuffler.

Memories of Oswald

Among the many letters we received from readers about our 15th Anniversary was this one from Dorothy Shuffler. It fits right in with our theme of memory this issue. You'll be seeing more 15th Anniversary letters. Russ Barnard plans to publish some in each issue of the magazine this year.

I just want to congratulate you and everyone connected with *Country Music Magazine* on your 15th Anniversary. I've been a subscriber for many years and kept all my copies. It was a pity when it wasn't published for awhile but made us so happy when publication was resumed.

As a charter member, I have paid my dues till 1992. I'm hoping to get back to Nashville and mingle with the stars backstage at the Opry again soon. What a joy to meet the people who have brought us so much happiness for so many years.

I'm enclosing a picture of myself and Brother Oswald, who is one of my earliest memories with his famous laugh over the little radio with a big speaker on top. He is such a warm, friendly man and so is his longtime associate, King Roy Acuff. He takes time for his fans and makes us feel so comfortable.

I'll be glad to read Oswald's autobiography. Keep up your good work.

Dorothy Shuffler
Laquey, Missouri

Correction on Marty Robbins

I love your Readers Create section, but the poem on Marty Robbins, "Marty's Buddy," in Readers Create in the May/June Newsletter left me wondering. Poems about people should be truthful. I wonder if the author ever really saw Marty Robbins?

I met Marty backstage 20 years ago in Evansville, Indiana, and had my picture taken with him. He is far from tall

The Beautiful Sound of Bashful Brother Oswald

Oswald has inspired many musicians, Bev King among them. Bev, a dobroist in her own right, has produced two albums of Oswald's music. Here she describes what, to her, is special about him.

Trivia question: Which musician has worked longer for the same artist than any other musician has worked for any major artist in country music? It would be hard for anyone to top Pete "Bashful Brother Oswald" Kirby's record for working 49 years for the King of Country Music, Roy Acuff! For nearly half a century, the pure-as-springwater sound of Oswald's dobro guitar has been synonymous with Roy Acuff's unique sound; his comedy, old-time banjo picking, and singing have delighted generations of Roy Acuff fans at performances around the world.

Born December 26, 1911, near Sevierville, Tennessee, Beecher Ray "Pete" Kirby was part of a large family of musicians, although none of the others played professionally. Pete learned guitar and banjo as a youngster, and later, when he was old enough to begin working at a saw mill, he supplemented his income by passing the hat when he performed locally.

When he was 17, he hitchhiked to Flint, Michigan, hoping to get a job with the Buick Motor Company, where one of his uncles was a boss. But the Depression came along at that time, and the job never materialized, so Pete turned to his music as a means of making a living. While he was at Flint, he



heard a Hawaiian guitarist, Rudy Waikuiki, and Pete began trying to play Hawaiian style on a flat-top guitar, using a pocket knife for a bar. His only "lessons" were whatever he could pick up from watching Rudy Waikuiki.

After two years in Flint, Pete moved to Chicago. During 1933-34, he worked as a fry-cook at the World's Fair, playing music by night. Later, he returned to east Tennessee, taking a job at Kern's Bakery in Knoxville for \$13 a week. During this time, he performed with various local bands, occasionally filling in for Clell Sumney, who played dobro with Roy Acuff and The Crazy Tennesseans. In 1938, Acuff's group moved to Nashville and the Grand Ole Opry, but Clell (later to become known as Cousin Jody) and another band member wanted to do more pop type music, so they left the band. As a result, Pete Kirby became the dobroist for Roy Acuff's group, now called The Smoky Mountain Boys. In addition, he played guitar and banjo, sang tenor with Roy, did his own vocals, played jug in the jug band and did comedy.

When Rachel Veach joined the group, Pete Kirby became Rachel's "great big Bashful Brother Oswald," and they performed together, singing, playing banjo, and doing comedy routines. Oswald began using his trademark laugh on stage, which he had adopted from the natural laugh of a man he had known in east Tennessee.

During the 1940's, Roy Acuff and his Smoky Mountain Boys became one of the most popular acts in the general field of entertainment as well as in country music. They appeared in eight movies, and during World War II (and all subsequent wars) went overseas each year to perform for the armed forces.

The lonesome, spine-tingling sound of

Oswald and Western Albums Available

The Best of Oswald (CH-002), *Dobro Dreamland: Bev and Joe in the Land of Os* (CH-003) and *Billy Western Comes to Nashville and Makes Some Records with Little Roy Wiggins* (NR 16675) are all available through Country Heritage Records, R. R. 1, Box 320, Madill, Oklahoma 73446. Send check or money order. Oswald albums are \$7.95 each, Western album \$6.75, postage and handling included.

and lanky. I'm 5'5" and we looked straight on at each other. The picture proves it. He's barely taller than I am.

I was at every concert within reasonable distance from my hometown and at every race he drove in that I could possibly attend. I remain a loyal Marty Robbins fan.

Linda Thompson

Ft. Walton Beach, Florida

You have a point. Wish you'd sent the photo, too.—Ed.



Joe Knight, Bev King, Roy Huskey Jr. and Oswald at what may have been Oswald's last recording session.

Oswald's dobro touched the heart of many a listener, and a good number of them decided that they, too, would like to learn to play this unusual instrument. However, by 1941, dobro guitars were no longer being manufactured, so some of these people were forced to turn to the electric steel guitar instead; others selected an electric instrument by choice. Many of these people played strictly for their own enjoyment, but a poll of the well known dobro and steel guitarists of the late 1940's and beyond would indicate that many of them had gotten interested in the instrument because of Oswald.

One influential musician inspired by Oswald is Shot Jackson, famous not only for his own picking, but also for his part in the development of the pedal steel, and his (along with Buddy Emmons') Sho-Bud instruments—which, of course, had a great effect on the country sound.

Today, Oswald's picking is still inspiring new dobroists. Although Roy Acuff, at the age of 83, no longer performs outside of Nashville, Oswald still appears with him nearly every weekend on the Grand Ole Opry and on occasional TV shows and other appearances around Nashville. In addition, up until last year, Oswald appeared at Opryland throughout the park season, along with Smoky Mountain Boys guitarist Charlie Collins. Os and Charlie still appear once a week at the KOA campground near Opryland during the spring through fall season.

One of Oswald's current projects is his autobiography, which should be available before too long.

During the latter part of 1986, Oswald recorded what will probably be his final two albums. *The Best of Oswald* is currently available on Country Heritage Records.

Among the 14 dobro instrumentals on the album are three of Oswald's original tunes, plus his only commercially-recorded instrumental version of one of the songs he helped to make most famous: "The Great Speckled Bird."

The second album, titled *Dobro Dreamland: Bev and Joe in the Land of Os*, is a collection of dobro instrumentals. It was a great privilege for me to take part in this album, on which Oswald and I took turns on each song playing dobro, my picking partner Joe Knight played rhythm, and Grand Ole Opry staff band member Roy Huskey Jr. played upright bass.

Although arthritis is creeping into his fingers, the smooth touch and the feeling that he puts into his music are still there, as he draws beautiful sounds from that same old dobro guitar he has played since 1938. Fads may come and go, but music that touches the heart is something that will never be out-dated.

**Bev King
Madill, Oklahoma**

Shot Jackson and other steel guitar greats were featured in the Newsletter in November/December 1986.—Ed.

Billy Western Records Traditional Country Music

Little Roy Wiggins recently made a record with longtime country music show producer Billy Western that Bev King heard about when she was in Nashville with Oswald. Here's what she says about this one. Doyle Grisham was the producer.

Some readers have probably been hearing a new traditional country record on their local radio station, by Billy Western, with backing by Little Roy Wiggins, longtime steel guitarist with Eddy Arnold and George Morgan. For many years, Billy Western has been a major producer of traditional country shows in the Southwest. At one time, he had a record in the charts, but he put his recording aside to concentrate on producing shows. Recently, he resumed his long-dormant recording career, and four cuts from his latest album were sent to radio stations. These four songs, "Waiting for a Train," "Shenandoah Waltz," "Women Make a Fool Out of Me"

Bev King and Traditional Country Music on Radio

Back in September/October 1986, the *Newsletter* featured Bev King and her musical partner Joe Knight. In that issue, Bev called for responses from readers about radio stations that play traditional country music. More about what she found out and about country music on the radio in our next issue.

Update on Hank Snow

We featured Hank Snow in Legends of Country Music in the July/August 1986 Newsletter. At that time we reported that Hank Snow was spending more time at home to be with his wife Minnie, who was ill. Here's good news on a happy turn of events that's bringing Hank Snow back out on the road.

I wanted to correct a statement that has appeared from time to time in articles I have read in the various magazines, newspapers, etc., which has been misleading to the public. I am speaking of statements regarding my retirement.

No, I have definitely not retired, and I do not intend to as long as the Good Lord gives me the strength and the talent to continue. This rumor may have started when I mentioned a few times in interviews that I had slowed down on personal appearances which was mainly due to my wife's health at that particular time; however, I am very happy to report that she is doing extremely well and has made a remarkable recovery.

At this writing, I am anticipating tours of England, Australia and Japan, and I am doing the Tommy Hunter National Television Show in Toronto, Canada, on September 18, 1987.

Many thanks for your inquiries and interest, and I am glad to have this chance to set the record straight.

**Hank Snow
Nashville, Tennessee**

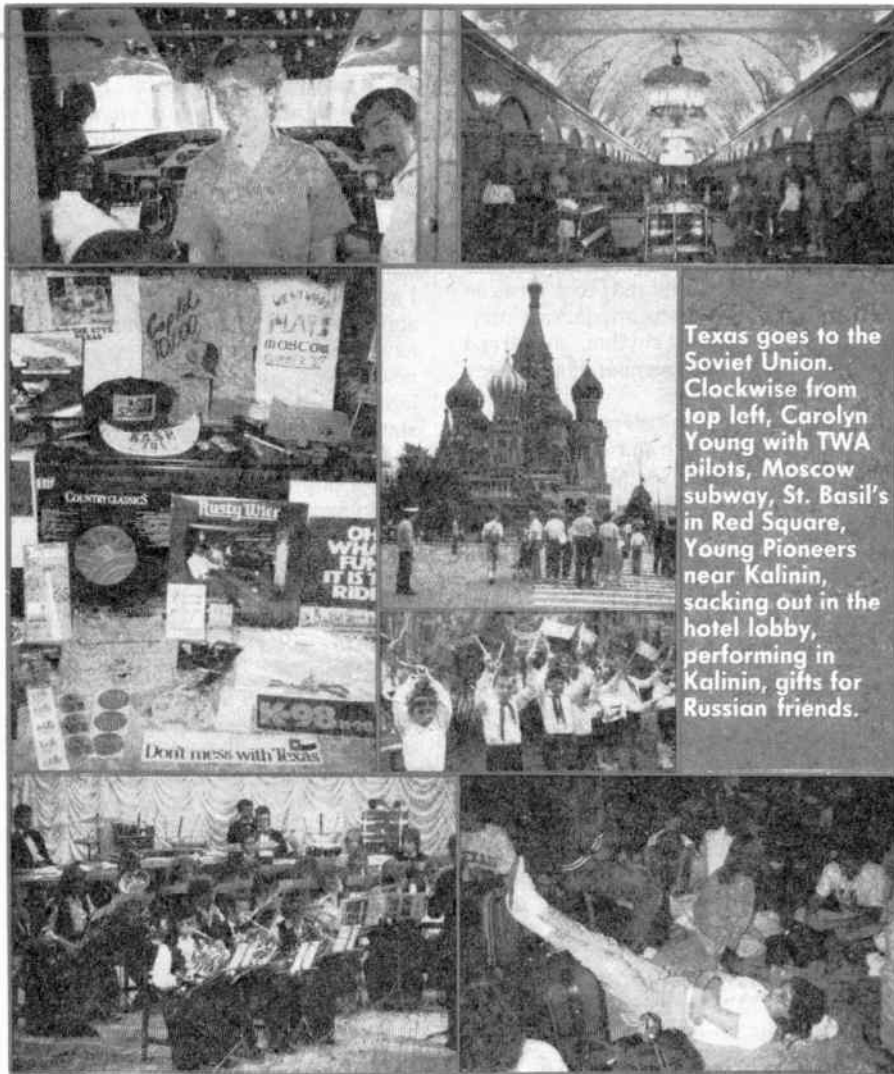
and "There's a New Moon Over my Shoulder," have been enthusiastically received by a number of stations. "Waiting for a Train" even made the Top 20 on the BBC pop music charts in England!

The title of the album: *Billy Western Comes to Nashville and Makes Some Records with Little Roy Wiggins!*

By the way, I see that people are asking about Curly Fox and Texas Ruby in Letters in the July/August issue. When Joe Knight, my picking partner, was about 14, Grandpa Jones came through Madill and did a show here, along with Curly Fox and Texas Ruby. They asked Joe to join their troupe, but he declined—I think he had visions of putting the tent up and taking it down at each place they played!

—Bev King

Here's what Little Roy Wiggins said about the album on the back of the jacket: "Billy Western and I hope you enjoy these wonderful 'Country Songs'. We hope they bring back memories of the past when 'Country Music' meant exactly that, 'Country'. These songs are done from the depth of our hearts because we love real country music so much."—Ed.



Texas goes to the Soviet Union. Clockwise from top left, Carolyn Young with TWA pilots, Moscow subway in Red Square, Young Pioneers near Kalinin, sacking out in the hotel lobby, performing in Kalinin, gifts for Russian friends.

Music Makes Friends Worldwide
In June, an Austin, Texas, high school band traveled to the Soviet Union, making music and bearing gifts. We heard about this trip in the Academy of Country Music's newsletter and followed up with the band members and Rusty Wier, local Austin country musician whose album, *Kum-Bak Bar and Grill*, made the trip with the band.

This past June, with the help of the Creative Arts Workshop (CAWS) of New Jersey, and Anniversary Tours of New York City, 156 Westwood High School Symphonic Band members and 23 chaperones traveled from Austin, Texas, to three cities in the Soviet Union. With them went 100 copies of Rusty Wier's *Kum-Bak Bar and Grill* album, along with many other gifts donated by businesses interested in being part of the band's journey.

Senior band member Carolyn Young and her mother faced the task of assembling the gifts head-on. Carolyn contacted companies all over America asking for donations of their product to be given as gifts to

the Russians they would meet. In addition to the 100 copies of *Kum-Bak Bar and Grill* donated by Black Hat Records, Carolyn collected tea bags from Celestial Seasonings, lipstick from Max Factor, calculators from Texas Instruments and handpainted magnets from a local artist, among other things. Mrs. Young took on the task of getting the more expensive gifts the group would give to their official Russian guides.

Band members presented the gifts to Russians chosen from the audience at the four concerts they played. According to Carolyn, the recipients, called up on stage, were usually so grateful that in return they would present the American student with something of their own—a piece of jewelry or a trinket—often these gifts were very expensive.

The band played four concerts, two in Moscow, one in Leningrad and one in Kalinin. Assistant bandleader Al Cardenas says all the audiences were very enthusiastic. The band played a variety of music, from selections from Bizet's *Carmen* to a

SEPTEMBER POLL

Album and Single of the Month

Randy Travis *Always & Forever*
Reba McEntire "One Promise Too Late"

Randy Travis wins Album of the Month for the fifth time in a row. His second album, *Always & Forever*, is the CMSA top choice this time. George Strait's *Ocean Front Property* is the second place album, as it was in July. Restless Heart's *Wheels* is third.

In singles, Reba McEntire's the winner with "One Promise Too Late." Hank Jr.'s "Born to Boogie" is second. Ricky Skaggs' and Sharon White's first duet single, "Love Can't Get Any Better Than This," is third.

Cast your vote for the latest and best singles and albums on the CMSA For Members Only page.

Beatles medley—which turned out to be the most popular tune at the shows.

The only disappointment according to Carolyn Young was, "We were supposed to play the concerts with the Russian kids—it didn't pan out and we don't know why." Bandleader Bob Dalrymple attributes this to the fact that the Russian schools were already out for the summer when the band arrived. "But," he says, "the students did get to meet with Russian children when we went to a Pioneer Youth Camp."

Cardenas added that the Pioneer Camp in Kalinin was "just beautiful." He was also impressed with the interest and discipline these nine- and ten-year olds showed in the classes they took at camp. The only thing that wasn't impressive in Kalinin was the weather. Heavy rains made the air thick and foggy during the band's visit.

Despite the inclement weather, Bob Dalrymple and his assistants Randy Smith and Al Cardenas are very happy with the way the trip turned out, and Carolyn came back with photos to last a lifetime.

Larry Watkins of Black Hat Records says he jumped at the chance to donate the 100 Rusty Wier albums even though it was an expense for his company. He wonders where those albums are right now. "Are they in a trash can...on some kid's dresser...being played?" He's curious if they will ever find out. And Rusty Wier, whose voice went before him to a land a world away, says about it all, "I felt honored to know I was one of the only country artists ever to have his songs taken behind the Iron Curtain."

—Jeanine Morley

For more on Rusty's album, contact Black Hat Records, P. O. Box 4088, Austin, Texas 78765.—Ed.

Q. & A.

Rich Kienzle is taking the lead this time, filling us in on news items that have reached his ears. More of your questions for him in upcoming issues.

The historic photo of Harry Choates was taken by Cajun musician Crawford Vincent at the Show Boat Club in Orange, Texas, in 1945. Choates was playing in Leo Soileau's band at the time. Vincent sent the photo to Rich.

• Harry Choates

If you've heard "Jole Blon," you've heard the music of Harry Choates. Born in Rayne, Louisiana, in 1922, he eventually learned enough fiddle to play for tips in a Port Arthur, Texas, barber shop. By the late 1930's he was playing with various Cajun bands, even then fooling with the song that would become "Jole Blon."

In 1946 he recorded "Jole Blon" for Gold Star Records in Houston. Nobody paid attention until a local disk jockey played it. The record took off in Cajun areas, then spread beyond. Alas, Harry sold the song for a bottle and 50 bucks. He rarely, if ever, left the Gulf Coast. His marriage didn't stop his heavy drinking, and though he was popular on the club circuit, his drinking and partying worsened. In 1950 the marriage ended and though still popular, he was headed for oblivion.

While working in Austin in July, 1951, he was arrested for contempt of court

relating to his divorce back in Beaumont. He died in jail on July 17, shortly before he was to be returned to a Beaumont judge. Though there were rumors of a beating by guards, it appears the bottle—or sudden withdrawal from booze in jail—got to him. Austin lawmen never told the family what hap-



Harry Choates in 1945.

C. J. VINCENT

pened. Until 1981, his grave wasn't even properly marked. At that point, admirers raised money for one.

One fine Choates album is available: *The Fiddle King of Cajun Swing* (Arhoolie 5027). Though it doesn't include "Jole Blon" (now owned by another record company), it has 16 other examples of his best work.

Also, three recent deaths worth noting.

• **Joe Holley**, the brilliant left-handed fiddler who worked with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, died in July in California.

• **Fred "Papa" Calhoun**, the first-ever Western swing pianist, best known for his work in the 1930's with Western swing innovator Milton Brown's band, The Musical Brownies, died this past summer in Texas.

• **Guitarist Thumbs Carllile**, who played a standard guitar that lay on his lap like a dobro, died of a heart attack July 31 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at age 56. Thumbs was known for his work with Little Jimmy Dickens and Red Foley in the 1950's, but really came to prominence when he worked with Roger Miller in the mid-1960's.

—Rich Kienzle

Steel guitarist Speedy West, featured in CMSA Q & A in the July/August issue, appeared recently on radio station KCSN/FM north of Los Angeles. More on this in our next issue. —Ed.



Merle Haggard, Holly Dunn and T. Graham Brown on stage in Maine.

Concerts Blend Old and New

Sheila Richardson of Buckfield, Maine, has been a good correspondent. Her 15th Anniversary letter to Russ Barnard was one of the most forceful and touching received. Here she is on two concerts she's attended in recent months. Sheila is reviving a feature we used to run often in early editions of the Newsletter—Fans Review Concerts.

We went to two great concerts in Augusta, Maine, this past spring. The first was T. Graham Brown opening for George Jones. Tony G. Brown told a lot about his family during his shows, in between songs. His

show was good. Songs were great.

We were anxious to see George Jones. When he came out, everyone was on their feet. Some people threw flowers on the stage. He went right into a medley of old songs and sang and sang and sang. He joked with the audience and some of us joked back with him. My sister-in-law, George's biggest fan, and I saw him two years ago and this show was so much more up-beat and fantastic.

And to beat all it was in February, and it had already snowed six inches at showtime and was still snowing very heavily. But

George didn't care and neither did we. It was hard driving home, but we talked about the show all the way. I didn't get a good printable picture of George.

And in April we went again to Augusta to see Holly Dunn and Merle Haggard and The Strangers. The only thing we knew of Holly Dunn was "Daddy's Hands." She's very pretty and seems kinda shy. But she has a great voice. It reminds me of Emmylou Harris. But where Emmylou's voice is haunting, Holly's voice is masterful and bold. Everyone was surprised and liked her very much. I have just purchased her new album *Cornerstone*.

I was so glad to see Merle Haggard and his band The Strangers. And you could tell he's proud of his band. He gave each of them several chances to show their stuff. Merle did some old songs and some new songs, and we all could not get enough. But the highlight for me was when he opened up on the fiddle, warring back and forth on the fiddle breakdowns with his two exceptional fiddle players. Boy, was it smokin'!

I hope other country music artists will come to Maine. We do love the music here as well as anywhere.

Sheila Richardson
Buckfield, Maine

Marty Robbins



Marty Robbins was a great performer who loved his fans as much as they loved him. His death left a void.

by Rich Kienzle

Think of the singers who excel in one style, then try another and fail. That never happened to Marty Robbins. Not once. He may have been known as “Mr. Tear-drop,” but whether he sang hard country, Mexican, Western or Hawaiian ballads, blues, gospel, rockabilly, contemporary country or mainstream pop, the man never broke a sweat.

Marty was the most versatile singer in country music. I know blanket statements are risky, but not this one. Willie may come close yet Marty still has the edge. Anyone who saw one of his concerts or his legendary open-ended closing shows at the Opry can attest to the breadth of Marty’s talent. He was among the greatest entertainers in any field, and even his earliest records hold up well today. If that’s not enough, consider this: in 31 years of recording, he was barely ever off the charts.

Martin David Robinson’s early years were a far cry from fame and fortune, however. Born in 1925 in Glendale, Arizona, he had seven brothers and one sister, all of whom lived in stark poverty. His dad drank too much (and later abandoned the family), but his grandfather, “Texas Bob” Heckle, cultivated a lifelong love of Old West lore in Marty. As a kid, Marty idolized Gene Autry and worked to earn the money to see his movies.

When Marty was 19, he joined the Navy and served in the Pacific at the end of World War II. He returned home in 1947 able to play guitar and write songs. He worked day jobs and began playing casually around Phoenix. He changed his stage name several times so his mother wouldn’t find out about his performing, and landed a spot over at KPHO radio in Phoenix. Soon he graduated to KPHO-TV’s *Country Caravan*.

Little Jimmy Dickens, on tour in the Southwest, guested on KPHO in early 1951. When he met Marty, he was so impressed he suggested Columbia Records sign him, which they did that May. Robbins’ first recording followed in November in Los

Angeles with several of his own musicians backing him, augmented by local sidemen. His producer was Columbia’s legendary “Uncle Art” Satherley, who had produced Gene Autry, Bob Wills and Roy Acuff and was nearing retirement.

None of Marty’s first four recordings were blockbusters despite an appealing, laid-back quality not unlike the early Eddy Arnold. Still, they sold well enough to satisfy Columbia.

His second session, recorded at Jim Beck’s Dallas studio in 1952, yielded the ballad “I’ll Go On Alone.” When it was released in early 1953, it hit Number Ten on the *Billboard* charts even though Webb Pierce had just taken his own version of the song to Number Seven.

Marty’s golden era was beginning. His boss at KPHO, ex-Grand Ole Opry head Harry Stone, helped him get a guest appearance on the Opry. The Opry made him a member in 1953. Fred Rose himself signed Marty to Acuff-Rose as a composer. Early in 1955 he covered Elvis’ “That’s All Right, Mama,” taking it to Number Nine on *Billboard*’s country charts at a time when Elvis wasn’t known outside the Deep South.

In 1955 and 1956 he recorded hot versions of “Maybelline,” “Long, Tall Sally” and his own “Tennessee Toddy” that stand with that era’s best rockabilly recordings. None were hits, but he became a crossover success anyway. In the fall of 1956 his version of Melvin Endsley’s song “Singing the Blues” became his first Number One on the country charts. And though pop singer Guy Mitchell’s version was Number One on the pop charts, Marty’s version was just 16 slots behind, his first crossover.

That was just the beginning. In April 1957, Marty was Number Two on the pop and Number One on the country charts with the teen ballad “A White Sport Coat,” the first of a series of recordings he made in New York with The Ray Conniff Singers. It gave him his first gold record and made him a national figure. He would crack the pop charts 11 more times in his career.

In the fall of 1957, he recorded his first Hawaiian album, *Song of the Islands*. His singles remained teen-oriented ballads through 1957 and 1958. Both “Story of My Life” and “Just Married” crossed over. Successful as he was, he never stayed long in one style; by 1959 he was exploring his fascination with the Old West.

The result was the classic 1959 album *Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs*, and its hit single, “El Paso,” a song he’d written driving through Texas. Despite the song’s four minute, 37 second length, unusual for the late 1950’s, it topped both country and pop charts and won him a Grammy. Nearly 30 years later, it remains his most enduring record. If Louis L’Amour had a musical counterpart, Marty was it.

Though he cut several albums’ worth of fine western material, his next big hit in 1961 was the blues-tinged ballad “Don’t Worry.” While recording it at Bradley studios in Nashville, guitarist Grady Martin (who played the Spanish guitar licks on “El Paso”) soloed on a six-string bass. The recording mixer malfunctioned, distorting his solo. Marty liked the weird sound, insisting the record be released as is, credited to “Marty Robbins and The Bumblebees.” The “error” didn’t hurt the record’s success: Number One country, Number Three pop.

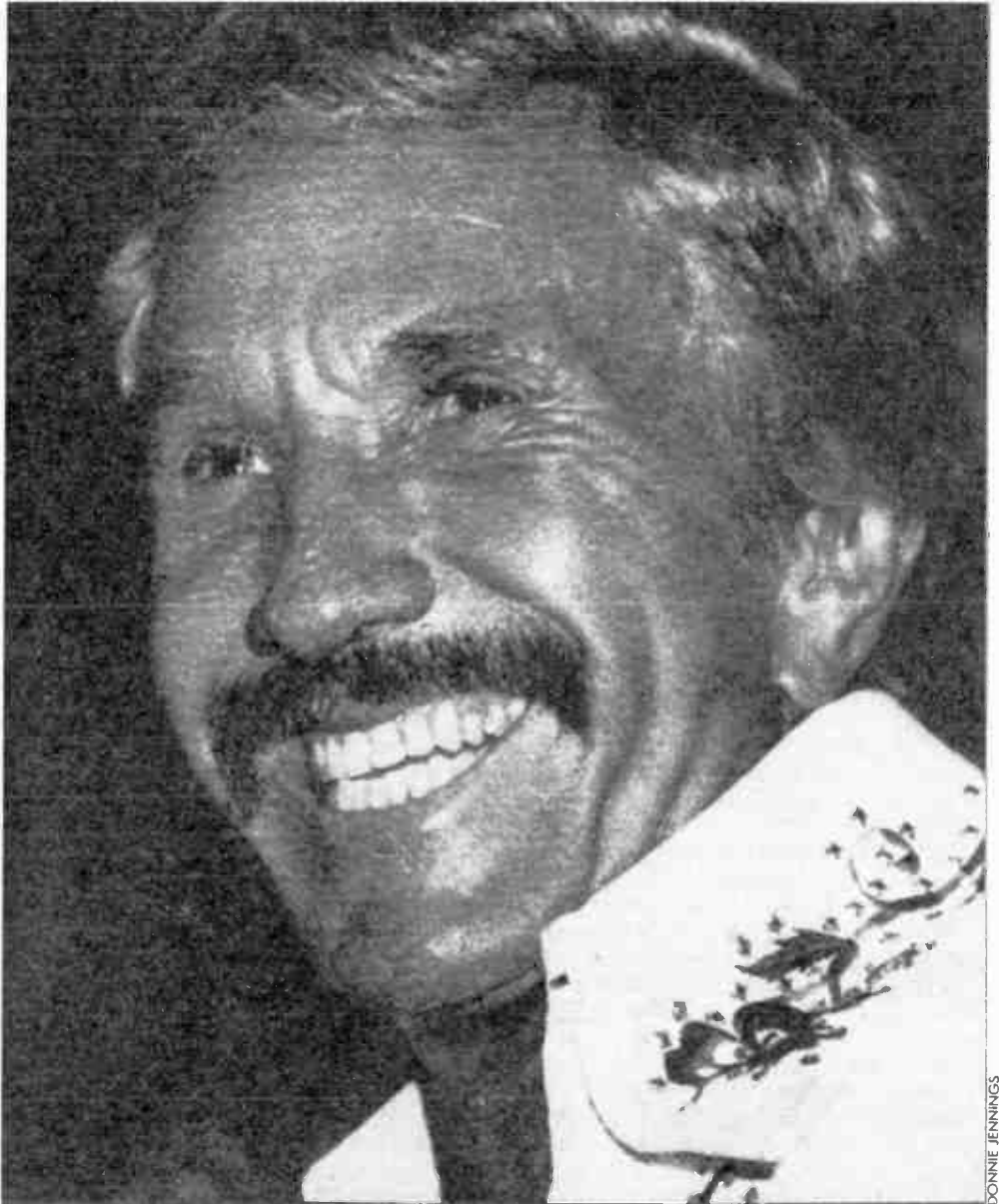
Columbia released *Marty After Midnight* in 1962. On it Marty crooned Tony Bennett-style jazz and pop that worked surprisingly well, and this was 18 years before Willie’s *Stardust*. That same year he had another crossover with the calypso-flavored “Devil Woman.” In 1963 he came out with *Hawaii’s Calling Me*, a followup to 1957’s *Song of the Islands*.

Robbins played as hard as he worked. By 1963 he was deeply involved in stock car racing, despite the risks to life and limb. Over the years nothing, not even accidents, deterred him from pursuing his hobby. He and his wife Marizona had two children and he wisely insulated his home life from his career.

His hits weren’t as prominent in the



GLENN HELM



DONNIE JENNINGS

Marty was a man of many styles. Donnie Jennings, a friend and fan from Oklahoma, took the photo above at a concert in 1982, just a few months before Marty died.

mid-1960's, but he still sold records and did well on the road. His western songs broadened to include more contemporary themes, best evidenced in "Cowboy In the Continental Suit" in 1964. In 1966 he even recorded "Ain't I Right," a song reflecting political beliefs so conservative Columbia didn't release it. That same year he wrote *The Small Man*, a western novel.

The heart trouble started in 1969 with an attack requiring major open-heart surgery. But he made it back to the Opry, and ran overtime with his return appearance. In 1970 "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife" became his first Number One record in three years and it, too, earned a Grammy.

Marty's closing the Saturday night show at the Opry became a tradition. Onstage he had enough energy to power a factory. He sang, hollered, picked his tiny Martin guitar, jumped to the piano, ran through medleys of his hits, and often let fly with an impromptu rockabilly version of "Big Boss Man." He obviously enjoyed himself,

laughing at private jokes with his band, cracking up in mid-song. He was just as energetic in dealing with his fans and often answered their letters himself.

In 1973 he left Columbia for MCA, and managed a few hits, among them "Walking Piece of Heaven" and "Twentieth Century Drifter," before returning to CBS in 1976. That year two of his releases hit Number One: "El Paso City," a modern western number, and his adaptation of the 1920's pop tune "Among My Souvenirs," which had been a 1960 hit for Connie Francis. At last too many wrecks ended his active racing career, and a mild 1981 coronary slowed him down for a time.

But Marty's heart condition was far more serious than most realized. His body was unable to absorb cholesterol. The condition became worse if he ate junk food, but even on a strict cholesterol-free diet his circulatory system clogged up, further straining his heart. Nevertheless, onstage it was business as usual. In May 1982, he had his

final hit on CBS: "Some Memories Just Won't Die."

When he took the stage to accept his 1982 election to the Hall of Fame, he quipped, "Others deserve it before I do, but it might not happen to me again. So I'm gonna take it tonight." He'd returned to Nashville from a Cincinnati appearance early that December when the chest pains struck. Though St. Thomas Hospital cardiologists did all they could, the damage was too much. He died December 8. He was 57.

His death was doubly hard, for like Ernest Tubb or Bill Monroe, Marty was irreplaceable. Apart from his long and distinguished career, the sole consolation was that unlike many Hall of Famers, Marty Robbins lived long enough to walk on the Opry stage and accept the award himself. ■

Albums Available

For information on Marty Robbins albums, see *For Members Only* page in this issue.

COLLECTIONS

Collecting the Magazine

Help each other complete your collections of Country Music.

● Wanted: Every issue of *Country Music Magazine* with Waylon Jennings in it. Will buy or trade. Also, who do you collect? Please help me! Carolann Babin, P.O. Box 1804, Sydney, Nova Scotia, B1P 6W4, Canada.

● I have been collecting *Country Music Magazine* since it first came out. I am lacking these issues in order to have a complete set: January 1973, May, October, November and December 1981. Thank you. Monroe S. Johnson, 3105 Highway 12, Vidor, Texas 77662.

● I have back issues of *Country Music Magazine* in good shape. Will accept best offer. I have November and December of 1983, January/February through November/December in 1984, 1985, 1986, and up to present in 1987. Also I have the *Country Music Inquirer* from April to December 1984, from January to December 1985 and from January to December 1986. Bessie Stewart, 2416 4th Street, Harvey, Louisiana 70058.

● I have a collection of *Country Music Magazine* that I will sell (all in good condition): June 1981, September/October and November/December 1983, all of 1984, all of 1985, all of 1986, and up to present in 1987. Mrs. Charles H. Eary, 3375 Old State Road, Mt. Orab, Ohio 45154.

Information, Please

Write these members directly if you have what they need.

● I need the lyrics to the Elvis Sun Records release, "That's Alright, Mama." I'm not sure of the year. Les Houser, Rt. 1 Box 145, Ossian, Iowa 52161.

● I am looking for the album *Reba McEntire*, which was recorded on the Mercury label in 1976 or 1977. If anyone has a copy for sale or knows where I might find one, please let me know. Beverly A. Hall, 116

Storey Creek La., Rocky Mount, Virginia 24151.

● Help! I'm trying to locate the name of an album by Vince Gill with the song "Will I Do Till the Best Comes Along." If anyone knows the name of this album, please write to me. J.C. Robinson, Route #5, Lee's Chapel Road, Cedartown, Georgia 30125.

● I am looking for a tape or record of the Chuck Wagon Gang singing "When the Wagon Was New." I would buy the record or send a blank tape and pay for having it taped off for me. I have written everywhere I know to try and find it but have failed to locate that song, so would appreciate your help. I get the *Country Music Magazine* all the time and sure enjoy reading them. I have lots of tapes and records and would be willing to help anyone get what they were looking for if I have it. Patricia Guynes, 203 Roosevelt Street, Flat River, Missouri 63601.

● I am desperately searching for an early Barbara Mandrell album called *This Time I Almost Made It*. I believe it was released in 1974, but I have been unable to locate it. I would also appreciate photographs and newspaper and magazine articles concerning Miss Mandrell. Please help! John C. Jones, 2504 Meadow Lane, Rogers, Arkansas 72756.

● I would appreciate some help in locating a record—probably a 45 r.p.m. When I was in Texas in 1951, this record first came out and was played for only one week by an Amarillo radio station before it was banned from the air. The title was "The Tattooed Lady." I was never able to get the entertainer's name. If anyone knows where this record can be obtained or who the entertainer was, please contact me. Mrs. Patrick Colton, 4236 North Cordoba, Spring Valley, California 92077.

● I am trying to find a song entitled "Mama Went A-Walking." This song was sung, I believe, by Red Foley. I am also trying to find an album set that I believe is entitled *The Legend of Jesse James*. I am told it consists

of eight records. If any of you readers can help me in locating these songs, I would greatly appreciate your help. John Doster Sr., 7007 Curtiss Avenue, Levittown, Pennsylvania 19057.

● I am trying to find either records or tapes of Leroy Van Dyke's "The Auctioneer" and "Walk On By." If anyone can, please tell me where to get them. Viola Ramsey, 1501 38th Street, Ft. Madison, Iowa 52627.

I'm looking for these singles by Wayne Kemp—"Harlow County, Kentucky" and "Come Home and Talk To a Stranger." If I can get his album, I'd like that too. The other record I'm looking for is Bob Luman, "Neither One of Us Wants to Be the First to Say Goodbye." If anyone out there can help me, I would appreciate it. I've been looking for these for years. Thank you. Mrs. Dixie Marshall, 18646 Austin Road, Manchester, Michigan 48158.

● I'm looking for records of "America's Favorite Cowboy," Gene Autry. I'm mainly looking for Gene Autry 45's, extended plays, radio transcriptions and some of the early Gene Autry albums. Can anyone help? Thanks. Gary Parmenter, 3774 Marvin, Memphis, Tennessee 38167.

● I have for sale Dolly Parton records and hundreds of photos, both color and black and white, of her in concerts, movies and TV, as well as personal life pictures. I also have recording tapes of Dolly's TV shows in 1976. Douglas Aloisio, 48 Bay 14th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11214.

● Does anyone have the album *Last Train to Clarksville* by Ed Bruce? I would like to buy this album or any of his other early albums. Cindy Fulton, 2638 Village Court, Katy, Texas 77449.

● Wanted: Album or cassette in excellent to mint condition of The Statler Brothers' *Country Symphonies in E Major*—it is out of print now. Will pay reasonable price for it. Thanks. Lori Anderson, 7 Harriman Road, Merrimac, Massachusetts 01860.

Pen Pals

Make new friends by writing these people.

● Hello, my name is Rachel Eller. I am an 18 year-old country music fanatic! But it's hard to find people who share the same interests. I would love to hear from other country music fans. Some of my favorite entertainers are Randy Travis, Restless Heart, Sawyer Brown, Alabama and many others. I'll answer all letters. Rachel Eller, 117 Kelsey Drive, Bristol, Tennessee 37620.

● Help, please! I'm a fairly new member of CMSA, but would love to hear from any Reba McEntire fans. I'm trying real hard (with no luck) to find three of her albums: *Reba McEntire* (1977), *Out of a Dream* (1979), and *Heart to Heart* (1981). Even if you can't help me with the albums, please write if you like Reba. I want to learn all I can about her. I'll gladly answer all letters and be a pen pal. Thanks! Debra G. Jackson, P.O. Box 974, Gray, Georgia 31032.

● Hi. My name is Lisa Texeira. I'm 19 years old. I'd like to hear from men and women any age. I live in Massachusetts. I love country music. My favorites are Ricky Skaggs, Dwight Yoakam, Randy Travis and many others. I also love old movies and old movie stars. My favorite is Marilyn Monroe. My dream is to be a singer/actress. Any people who love country music and movies, please write. I'd love more pen pals. Lisa Texeira, 96 Main Street, Acushnet, Massachusetts 02743.

● Hello, my name is Brad Bowyer. I am a 17-year old male who is interested in hearing from other country music fans (males and females of all ages are welcome). I promise to answer all sincere fans. Brad Bowyer, 1112 Woodfield Drive, New Albany, Indiana 47150.

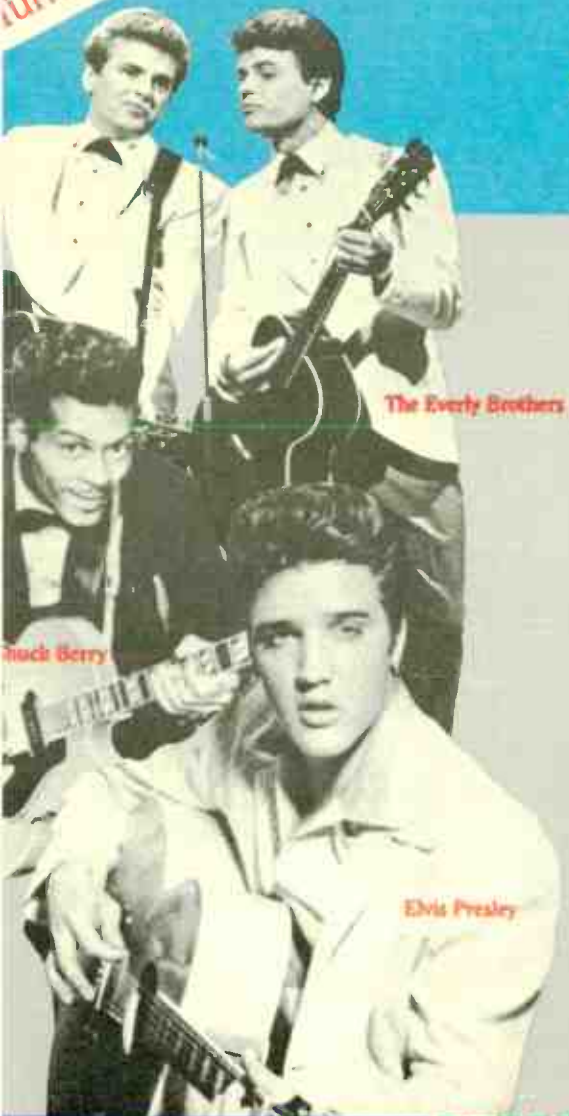
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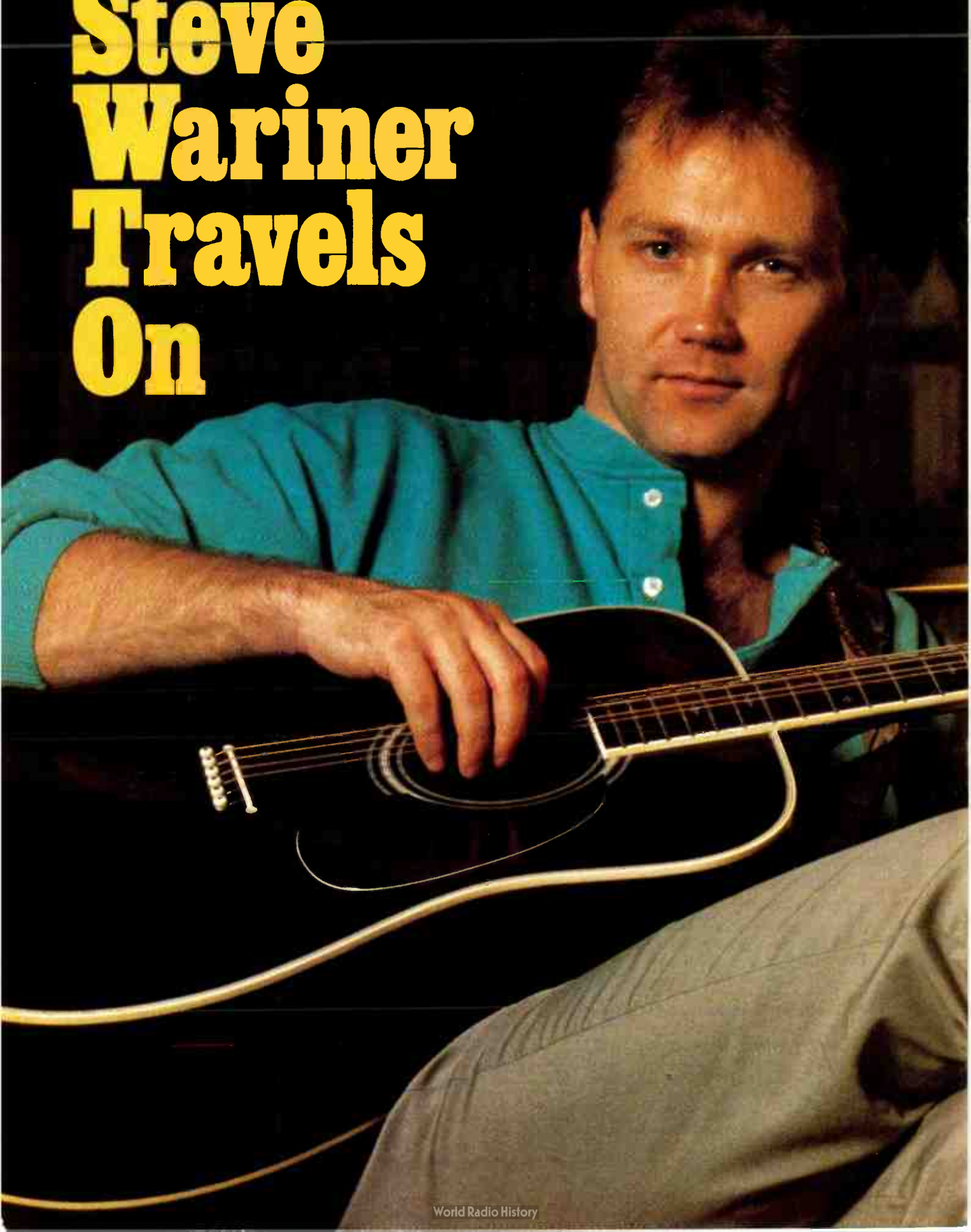
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Steve Wariner Travels On



The clean-cut boy next door got his start in music way back when. Today he's a professional and has his own way of dealing with life on and off the road.

by Patrick Carr

At 4:30 P.M. in Florida, with the sun broiling the asphalt all around him, Steve Wariner is fighting off the bio-clock feeling that it's really sometime around dawn and struggling to glad-hand adequately with a couple of standard issue razor-cut country radio jocks. Their upbeat drive-time voices boom weirdly in the heavy, heated air; by contrast, the singer sounds frail, indecisive, all too human.

Looks it, too: in the immortal words of Steve Earle, his pale, wilted presence speaks volumes on the "two-pack habit and a motel tan" of all those young men out there hacking the road two hundred or more days a year.

But then at 5 P.M. he plunges into the darkened auditorium and hits the stage—the event's a radio station promo-day held in a hall full of retail concessions and beer stands and the latest line of Iacocca's bargains from the local Dodge dealer—and suddenly he's a dynamo. Well, actually, not "suddenly." It does take him a couple of numbers to get his gig all tuned up just right, but once he's got it there, it sounds like it's been soldered; he's got the hits ("Lonely Women Make Good Lovers," "All Roads Lead to You," "Midnight Fire" and his current collection of chart-toppers from

the *Life's Highway* album), he's got the ballads, he's got the rockers, he's got those master-of-the-frets hot-guitar talents so unusual in a singer/songwriter. He's got a nice friendly to-and-fro with his band (notably his younger brother/second singer/guitar player), he's got charm and looks and open, winning ways.

Really, you couldn't ask for a more attractive, personable, professional performance. The people in the crowd aren't necessarily Steve Wariner fans (the event's free; he's just the star of the entertainment), but after the first few songs you get the feeling that they may be by the time it's all over.

Me too, in my own odd way. Watching Steve up there playing and singing strongly, balancing his act with precise instinct and intelligence and coming across like a real-world nice guy, I'm visited by the notion that what we may have here is a sort of Positive Universe Larry Gatlin, a performer just as sharp as Mr. G in the middle-ground folky/country/poppy row they both hoe, but free of the personality characteristics which often make one wonder whether ole Larry might not be better suited to a career in politics or TV evangelism than in music. Steve doesn't lecture his

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT



audiences, for instance, and if he acts humble or happy or upset or impressed—or whatever—it's more than possible that he is really, honestly feeling that way.

Others say the same thing, but they do it differently. The local picker/songwriter watching Steve from the backstage area, for instance; he just thinks "the boy's *et up* with talent. Loaded with it. Nice guy, too; not on an ego trip, y'know?"

It's true no matter how you say it, but then it's also true that neither talent nor personal attractiveness is the factor which transformed a sorry, sleepy parking lot spectacle into a genuine live-wire entertainer; *that* was sheer hard road-bred experience.

Steve Wariner is no grizzled veteran (actually, he's more of a pretty face), but he's certainly not a new kid on the block. Before he started hitting the big time consistently as a solo artist—before landing his album contract with MCA Records, that is—he'd spent close to half his life on the road in the country Major Leagues; started out playing bass for Dottie West at the age of 17, went on to do likewise with Bob Luman until Bob passed away in 1979, then combined a bass-playing job in Chet Atkins' road band with his own career as an RCA singles artist.

In other words, the boy learned it all directly, by doing it under the eye of people who knew the game in and out and up and down. Dottie taught him all about the mechanics of the road life, all the little tasks and tricks which go into the creation of a well-oiled touring machine; Luman, a wild card and master of improvisation, taught him about things like how to wing it when you have to, how to defeat hecklers, how to make it fun; Chet added another (dry, biting) dimension of humor, and introduced him to a strange new world overseas and the even odder universe of the recording studio and the music business politics behind it.

By the time he was thirty, then, Steve Wariner knew the game more thoroughly than many musicians twice his age ever will. Maybe he looked a lot like the new kid on the block (and fortunately for him he sounded that way), but he wasn't; he'd travelled turf the other kids never even knew existed. He knew the big time inside out. He understood what it took to enter the Top Ten crapshoot with a fighting chance of getting lucky in the record stores—and when at last that happened, with three Number One singles off his first MCA album after several frustrating years of erratic chart success with RCA, he'd learned as much as any singer in Nashville about how to keep the odds stacked



The star of the show signs for his fans.

his way. He was a pro.

He knows what to do now. Concentrate on the records, what happens in the studio and in the processes which lead up to recording; write and choose the songs well, record them as carefully and classily as possible, don't just keep the standards high but drive them higher every time out, never let anything else (ego, fame, greed, ambitions in other directions) distract you. Never let the records get sloppy. Everything else being equal, that's the only way you'll get to put more than one of those gold or platinum albums up on your wall.

And then of course there's the road. You have to concentrate on that, too; you have to work it, and you *have* to work out a way of dealing with it. Otherwise, it's a bear that really will eat you alive.

There's an easy, intimate, family feeling about the crew of pickers and support personnel on the road with Steve in Florida. That figures; Steve's co-guitarist and backup singer is his younger brother Terry, one of the five Wariner kids, and his road manager Terry Kimbrell ("T.K.") is an old buddy from high school; started out as the bass player but gradually grew into his current role as Steve's success necessitated more and more organization. The core of the outfit *is* family, in other words. It was that way in the beginning, when Steve learned the music craft playing with his daddy, a full-time Kentuckian foundryman and part-time honky tonker who brought him up on Merle Travis and Ray Price and George Jones (and of course Hank Williams and Chet Atkins), and now it's that way again; old, close, personal and

working relationships, a piece of Noblesville, Indiana, roaming around out there in the blurred, shifting world of the one-night stands.

In part, this tight little unit handles the road life with the usual tools—careful planning, intelligent scheduling, expert attention to the details—but they also have their own unique approach to certain of its problems, chiefly the issue of how to blow off steam and have fun without resorting to the traditional, dangerously short-term solutions of drugs, alcohol, and party mania.

Their solutions come from their past. Back in high school, for instance, Steve and T.K. and Terry were nuts about basketball, so these days the Steve Wariner group has a standing requirement of any hotel or motel it stays in: directions to the nearest basketball court, which must be within a reasonable distance. And since back in high school the boys were also jokers, they have invented a way of making sure that wherever the road leads them, the joke will be there waiting.

There's this matter of offering passersby the chance to be on TV. They get their "victims" to sing wherever they find them and videotape the whole deal. (The one I witnessed was named Bill. They met up with him in a parking lot.) The Wariner crew have perfected this con, and have a whole library of bizarre videos—their view of the private world of strange characters all over America.

Dinner with Steve and his friends is a pleasure, very human. We talk about parents and kids and brothers and sisters, people we all know in the business, places we've been, all the usual stuff. Steve, forgetting that tomorrow is Sunday (who can blame him?), wants to know if there's an art supply store nearby because his watercolor set needs replenishing; painting is another old enthusiasm of his, recently revived as one more release from the road's pressure. T.K. wonders idly whether any of Steve's folks know any of old Bill's folks back in Kentucky. Bill's the parking lot star of the video Steve and friends just made, and he's from Hazard. T.K. also mentions that he felt sorry for the feller, and gave him a little cash before hopping on the bus and disappearing out of his life. Likely as not, Bill's feeling no pain by now.

One of those "there but for the grace of God..." pauses settles in for a moment, but then things pick up again. The boys go on being happy and normal and personable. Nobody gets weird or grows the big head or says anything nasty. They're nice boys, good company. May they thrive and prosper. ■

RICKY VAN SHELTON HEATING UP

In the wake of two hit singles, Ricky Van Shelton is out on the road, building a base. His determination and his love of the music are his guides.

by John Morthland



As the promoter's custom-built Caddy cruises noiselessly past the jungle of fast food joints and convenience stores that is modern-day Abilene, Ricky Van Shelton slouches way down in the back seat and lets out a weary sigh. "I like Texas, and this state has sure been good to me so far, but next time I think I'd like to come back when it's not July or August. If they book me into Canada in January, I might just have to switch labels," he declares, more than a little pleased with his own joke.

Ricky Van Shelton of Grit, Virginia, is a young country singer seemingly on the way up, a beneficiary and cornerstone of the so-called "new traditionalist" movement, and a man blessed with movie star (video star?) good looks, an accident of fate that those who guide his career emphasize whenever possible. Abilene is an old West Texas city seemingly on the way down, a victim of the disastrous

drop in oil prices, drab, weather-beaten and worn around the edges. Though he has made weekend forays out of Nashville for the last three months in support of his two hit singles, "Wild-Eyed Dream" and "Crime of Passion," and his semi-hit album, *Wild-Eyed Dream*, released late in 1986, Ricky is now in the midst of his first full-fledged tour. Abilene is more or less a typical stop on a Texas trail that also takes him through Wichita Falls, Longview, Terrell, Jacksonville, Brownwood, Corpus Christi, Midland, San Angelo and the like. These are what is known as "secondary markets," which is a music biz way of saying they are not Dallas or Houston.

On a tour of secondary markets, you play clubs instead of ballrooms, auditoriums or amphitheaters. You stay in some of the more modestly-appointed motel chains rather than the Radissons and Sheratons. And hopefully, you build a solid career foundation by reaching the

diehard country fan out there, the one who actually buys the record and plays it at home every night after work instead of just humming along when it comes on the radio.

Six months ago, of course, Ricky Van Shelton had never heard of terms like "secondary market" or "in-store promo." But he is learning. He is learning how hard it is to sleep on a Silver Eagle bus, learning to live with that empty feeling that comes up every time you feel a bump in the road and wonder from your bunk if the driver has fallen asleep at the wheel. Learning about how the record company runs a tab on you the first couple years you're out there making no money, and takes it out of your future record royalties. Learning about just how much money it takes to keep a band on the road. And learning about places like Texas in August: "You know, it gets this hot sometimes in Virginia," he gasps, "but only for a few

days at a time. They call that a heat wave. You people live in this every day for months!

But Ricky Van Shelton—former housepainter, former grocery store clerk, big-boy jobber, gas station attendant, former t-bone puller, former hay gainer, former car salesman, former appliance store manager, former pipe-fitter—can look at the alternative to all this too, look at it like a good soldier and eagerly acknowledge that there's no place he'd rather be right now than a crowded market, any secondary market, for it is a huge step up from no market at all. This tour was by the CBS marketing departments, design, and those people know what they're doing," he says. "Instead of going in and hitting the major markets they wanted to go to the smaller markets, the smaller markets are where they buy records, and they follow you to major markets. So this has only an experiment, and I'm the first new artist they've done this with. And from what I was told last week, they're already getting results back, so far so good."

So it is that Ricky Van Shelton is cruising through these Abilene streets back to the hotel, and he will forego some vital naptime by changing out of his blue shirt and sweatpants tucked into cowboy boots (a fashion statement," checkles, name Mike Campbell; "a combat statement," counters Ricky) and into a pressed white shirt, bolo tie, blue jeans, and white cowboy hat so he can head down to a local supermarket. There, at a table set up between the T-Eggs and the Aqua Net, the 12-inch oscillating fans and the babywipes, he finds mundane questions live on the air from a local deputy as he signs autographs and poses for pictures with all comers, including a Spuds MacKenzie, also apparently working the secondary markets this week on behalf of his product. And when that's over and it's time to return to the hotel, Van Shelton will still have the presence of mind to turn to the promoter before getting back into his car and ask the most crucial question of all: "Did you remember to give the A.C. on while we were gone?" he demands.

No doubt about it, Ricky Van Shelton wants to please. In the wake of Urban Cowboy pop market overkill, there are still tried and true ways—in addition to making good music, which he does—of becoming a country star, and he has followed most of them to the letter. When he arrived in Nashville with his then-girlfriend (now wife) Bettye on January 1, 1989, they had a battle plan all mapped out. She was beginning a good business as a professional care for a large family, and her father would support both of them. As for Ricky's end of the deal,

"I would take care of the house and the cars. I scrubbed the floors, washed the dishes, washed the clothes, I fixed her meals. And at night time she'd go to bed and I'd take a shower and go out to the clubs."

He'd make the rounds of the Nashville Palace, Gabe's, Real Country, getting up to sing with any pickers who'd back him. He passed demo tapes out to anybody who'd take one, on the assumption that, "It don't do you no good to beat on doors with those record labels—you gotta know somebody in the business to get anywhere." Eventually, he met somebody who could help; ironically, it was a friend and co-worker of his wife.

That was Linda Thompson, whose husband Jerry is a popular Nashville columnist, though not a music writer. While visiting Bettye, Linda heard Ricky making a demo, which she liked enough to take home to her influential husband. When he finally got around to listening to it at her urging, he liked it enough to bring Ricky to the attention of CBS Nashville head Rick Blackburn. And when he heard it, Blackburn got Thompson to arrange a showcase at the Stockyard in Nashville. Blackburn brought along his head of A&R Steve Buckingham—"He had to order Steve to go, by the way," Ricky grins—and after a couple of tunes, both men were ready to sign the singer up. When they went into the studio, Ricky and Buckingham worked so quickly that the fledgling star didn't even get a chance to show the producer his own songs. Instead, he just cut material brought to him by Buckingham.

"The sound of the album is my voice and his creation—oh yeah, totally his creation. He told them all their licks, all the arrangements. He uses good musicians but he tells 'em what to play. I choose the songs that I like to sing from what he gives me, the songs that are me."

"But being so new to the business and being so excited to have a deal, I wasn't about to stick my foot in my mouth by saying hey, let's do this and let's do that," Ricky explains. "I don't even want to be my own producer, that'll drive you crazy. But next time I might do a few of my own songs. I'd do 'em for fun, not because they're my songs. But I'll always leave the producer in charge of that, because that's his job, that's what he does for a living."

Ricky is a conservative, but he is a conservative in the best possible way. His debut album combines, in the phrase of producer Buckingham, "1950's Memphis with 1960's Bakersfield"—but it's all done with just enough swing to confirm that Ricky's no stranger to Texas music, and just enough rock 'n' roll to confirm that he is indeed a child of the Beatles era. He is a thoughtful man



who spends his time on the bus staring out the window and thinking about his music, his show, his career. "It may not look like I have a lot to think about being a country singer, but I do. I have a lot to think about," he says solemnly. He is still simultaneously awed, intimidated and bemused by his success, by the fast-lane music industry, by the whole idea of recording and touring and hearing his own voice on the radio. He has spent all but the last three years of his life in the same tiny Virginia hamlet, and he speaks with a rich, broad accent that's almost Bostonian, a ready reminder that his home state gave this nation its first aristocracy as well as the original rank and file.

Grit, Virginia, is in the Blue Ridge foothills, near Hurt and Hell Bent. It is "just a road with houses, a little community three or four miles out of town," town being Altavista, population about 5000. And Altavista is on the Staunton River halfway between Lynchburg and Danville on Route 29, right where the Norfolk and Western and Southern railroads cross.

Born in 1952, Ricky grew up in a devoutly Pentecostal family; his father sang every Sunday morning and night and every Wednesday night at revivals

*"The smaller markets
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into major markets."*



Ronnie. He played some mandolin and liked Hank Williams, the Osbornes, Jim and Jesse, Ernest Tubb, Warner Mack. So I started playing country at 15, but I still liked rock 'n' roll.

"I had a split emotion because I liked rock 'n' roll with friends my own age, but when I went out with my brother and his friends, they were playing country. By the time I had got outta school I had done a whole about-face. I didn't listen to nothing but country by 1970."

Sitting in his bus between sets at the Abilene club, he runs off a list of some of the songs that changed his mind: Conway's "Hello Darlin'," Merle's "Working Man Blues," Don Gibson's "Ashes of Love." Something about this music was different.

"Everything about it got me: I liked the songs, the rhythm, the melody, everything about it. I don't break it down, I never have been the type of person to think, well, do I like this or not. I don't wonder why I like it; I just know I like it," he says. "I just liked the honesty and the truth of country music; people had so much fun, and they weren't puttin' on no airs. It was real simple and real pleasing. So it's not that I was turned off by rock or anything: I just fell in love with country. It's like when you fall in love with a woman, you don't care about the rest of them women. I didn't care about rock 'n' roll no more."

Now Grit and Altavista were (and are) not exactly music business centers; there was only one club to speak of, so Ricky spent most of the 1970's among musicians who jammed informally in the living room, or at fish fries and the like. He had a country-rock band called Daybreak that dominated the local scene for a couple of years, but more typical was Firecreek, a country band that rehearsed all summer and then broke up before ever playing a gig. Starting in 1975, Ricky made occasional forays to Nashville, where he sat in to sing a song or two with the Jones Boys at George Jones' Possum Holler club and thought that might just make him about the biggest wheel in town. But he didn't make the rounds of record companies or song publishers. For the most part, Nashville's country music business might as well have been on a different planet.

"It took me a long time to get my head together to move, y'know, but that's all I ever thought about. I don't 'spect a day went by since I graduated from high school that I didn't think about sitting here in this bus," he insists. "To me, it was going somewhere all those years because I was learning more songs, I was learning to play guitar better, my voice was getting better.

"I mean, I practiced at it. I'd stand there in front of a mirror and I'd sing a

song over and over. I'd work on a note on the guitar until I reached it. I'd go stand in a corner sometimes and sing into that corner just to hear my voice, to see if I was flat or sharp. Wasn't a day go by that I didn't pick up that guitar, strum it, hold it, fondle it, sing a song. I constantly worked on it, even if I was naive about the business."

He couldn't have picked a better time to finally make his move, though. Ricky arrived in Nashville as Urban Cowboy ("just city people doing their thing, you know, just a kick") was fading and the new guard was about to emerge. Today he is linked with Dwight Yoakam and Randy Travis and the like, but as he tells the story, "I was there before that movement really hit, and the only thing I was aware of was that I had a purpose, and that was to get myself known any way I could.

"What I'm doing now is what I've always done," he continues. "I think my timing was right because I used to be kinda wild and free, y'know, I used to party a lot, and then I settled down and got my head straight. I still drink a few beers, but that's about it. I matured, slowed down, got a sense of direction, got a good woman.

"But it was time for new blood; country music was getting stale with the same artists all the time, and they needed some new personalities. I welcome new blood because I think people like Yoakam and The Sweethearts of the Rodeo and Alabama and Restless Heart expand country music a lot. 'Cuz it's drawn in a lot of young people now, and it's given life back to country music. There's room for George Jones and there's room for Alabama and there's room for us too."

Indeed. That afternoon, we had dropped Ricky off back at the motel so he could (natch) "get back into the air conditioning" and because he can't eat before a show anyhow. As he stood in the parking lot, he suddenly snapped to the fact that he was in the city George Hamilton IV sang a Number One song about.

"I used to do that song," he exclaimed. "I'd forgotten all about this, but I sang that song once in a talent show. I remember because after we'd sung, they came back and told us to get another song ready. So we thought we'd won. And it turned out we hadn't. I'd forgotten all about this until just now, but boy, was that embarrassing, to think you'd won and go out there with another song and find out you hadn't. I can feel the embarrassment again now just thinking about it."

But he probably doesn't have much cause for embarrassment from here on out—the Texas weather isn't the only thing that's hot these days. ■

"for 50 miles in four directions." It was a strict, pious upbringing, but Ricky also insists that he was "a happy kid from a happy family in a happy neighborhood. There was never no dull moments. We fished and hunted and did what we wanted as long as the chores got done. I remember one summer, I don't think I slept in a bed in the house all summer." Later, he and his sister went to the beach for a week each summer, though he always felt uncomfortable around so many people. After all, in the Van Shelton family, a Friday night visit to the K-Mart was a big weekend.

Then there was music. By the time he was three, Ricky was himself singing in the church. By the time he was about eight, he had discovered, via the radio, a kind of music other than gospel: rock 'n' roll, his first real love. His first real band, Radiant White, came when he was 15. They played songs by the Beatles, the Association, Percy Sledge, Otis Redding's "Dock of the Bay." But already, his orientation was changing—at 15, he also discovered country music.

"Until then country had been just a sound. It wasn't cool. I was so interested in rock 'n' roll and the Beatles and girls, and I was so uninterested in the older generation," he recalls. "I just wasn't exposed to country music. Then I got exposed to it through my older brother



Nanci Griffith

Keeping Her Hand In

Nashville newcomer Nanci Griffith's been blessed with all kinds of success as a singer and songwriter. She paid her dues on the folk circuit, and she's a committed writer, so she's not letting any of it go to her head. For her, writing will always come first. by Bob Allen

"I remember how, several years ago, I sent copies of my independent-label albums to all the major Nashville record labels, trying to get a deal," Texas-born singer-songwriter Nanci Griffith recalls with the kind of easy laugh that only becomes possible when one looks back at bad times turned good.

"I got form letters of rejection back from all of them," she continues. "They all sort of said the same thing: 'Nothing

personal, but your music doesn't fit the commercial climate that we're reaching for at the present time.'"

But, my, my, how times change. Now, just a few years later, Griffith, the 33-year-old former folk singer and outsider looking in, has become one of the most closely-watched new talents on Music Row's inside track. This time around, after considering offers from several major labels, she finally went with MCA in the spring of 1986. Her first album for

them, *Lone Star State of Mind*, which she co-produced, received favorable reviews. Versions of her original songs, recorded by other artists, have also found their way on to the charts—most notably, Kathy Mattea's hit rendition of her "Love at the Five and Dime." Nanci also received a Grammy nomination in 1986 in the Contemporary Folk category. Griffith—who has already written an extensive catalog of original songs, many of which have appeared on the

half-dozen or so independent-label albums she's recorded in the last eight or ten years, and who sings in a soulful, effervescent style that reminds me of a younger and rawer Emmylou Harris—is also about to close a deal to have her first novel published. She's been working on the book for the better part of ten years, she explains. And during the past couple of years, she has finally managed to trim her original 2,000-page manuscript down to a more manageable 450 pages.

All in all, it seems that Griffith, who has, for the last several years, enjoyed a sort of minor stardom as a popular headliner on the Canadian-American folk music circuit, may be poised to make a mark in both the mainstream country market and the literary world, as well.

But whether she is writing novels or songs, Griffith makes it clear that her inspiration flows from the same sources. She has been heavily influenced by Southern short story writers and novelists such as Eudora Welty and Larry McMurtry, and even more fundamentally, by the people, history and culture of her native state, to which she turns again and again, as both a theme and a tapestry.

"Eudora Welty has had a massive impact on me, because of the way she handled dialect in her books," Griffith explains. "I can even look at some of my own songs, like 'Daddy Said' (on her outstanding 1984 Philo-Rounder album, *Once in a Very Blue Moon*), and just feel like if Eudora Welty wrote music, this would have been one of her songs. It's because she writes so much in conversation, and is so natural with southern dialect.

"Larry McMurtry," she says of the Texas-born Pulitzer-Prize-winning author of *Lonesome Dove*, *The Last Picture Show*, and many other novels, "has also been a great influence, because his literature really gave me a sense of my own roots. He writes about modern Texas, and I do too, quite frequently. I really respect him for bringing Texas out of the dark ages, and educating a whole country that Texas is no longer a place where people are running around the streets with guns. It's a modern-time place. Yet it is also a place where, when people first came, there was no upper class, and they really had to fight for everything they had. That's why Texans in general have these backbones that won't bend. They're very stubborn, very staid people. That's because, in most parts of the state, in the 1940's, 1950's and even up into the 1960's, everybody in Texas was workin' their bumpers off, just trying to get by."

The daughter of a publisher/printer, Griffith, a native Texan, has spent her

entire life, right up to her recent move to Nashville, in the Houston and Austin areas. Her father, as a sideline, sang in a barbershop quartet; and both parents were involved in amateur theatre. So she found a lot of encouragement in her middle class home to develop her talents.

"I started playing guitar when I was six, and when I was ten, I was already surrounded by all kinds of music. But I was never really knocked out by anything until I heard Carolyn Hester on the radio. The first song of hers I ever heard was 'I'll Fly Away.' Bob Dylan was playing blues harp for her on it. I just immediately said, 'What is that!?' That's

novels on the road," she explains. "In motel rooms, in vans. I always haul my typewriter along. I wrote the song 'Love at the Five and Dime' on deadline, for this songwriting workshop at a folk festival. I borrowed the two characters from a short story I'd written. It all came real easy, and at first the song wasn't even something I expected to keep. It just happened to come out very special.

"When I was working on *Two of a Kind Heart*, my first novel, I had this rule that I had to work on it three hours a day, no matter where I was. But with my new novel, I've let up on myself a

"That's the way I like to do it: go in the studio and have a good time and let it romp."

great stuff! That's Buddy Holly stuff! Carolyn just had such a neat, beautiful voice. 'I'll Fly Away' was just this wonderful non-traditional 'folk-a-billy' version of this very traditional song, and it took a lot of courage to do the kind of arrangement she did. As soon as I heard it, I knew right then that that was exactly the kind of thing I wanted to do."

So Nanci began her professional career at age 14, singing in Austin, although after her own schooling, she taught school for two years before turning to music full-time. She refers to her unique hybrid style as "folkabilly."

"Folkabilly is what I've always called my music," she emphasizes. "And when I first started out, the folk music community had a very hard time accepting me, because at that time, it was very much entrenched in this 'granola' business, and there was a lot of very mediocre music. In my opinion, folk music kind of put itself on the shelf, because it got so boring. It had ceased to be what folk music is: a reflection of the times.

"But on the other hand," she adds, "I didn't really consider myself country either, because I don't dress in sequins, and I'm not out there on stage doing flashy moves in cowboy boots. I'm still just on that borderline of hillbilly stuff. In the studio, I really like to go after that straight-ahead old country sound that Loretta Lynn got with her records. That's the way I like to do it: go in the studio and have a good time and let it romp. Sit everybody down in the same room, havin' a great time, crackin' jokes, winkin' at each other. Because it ultimately comes out on vinyl if you had a good time or not."

No matter how much fun she has performing, writing always comes first with Griffith. At home or on the road she's always working on a song, a story or the second novel that is already half finished. "I've written quite a bit of my

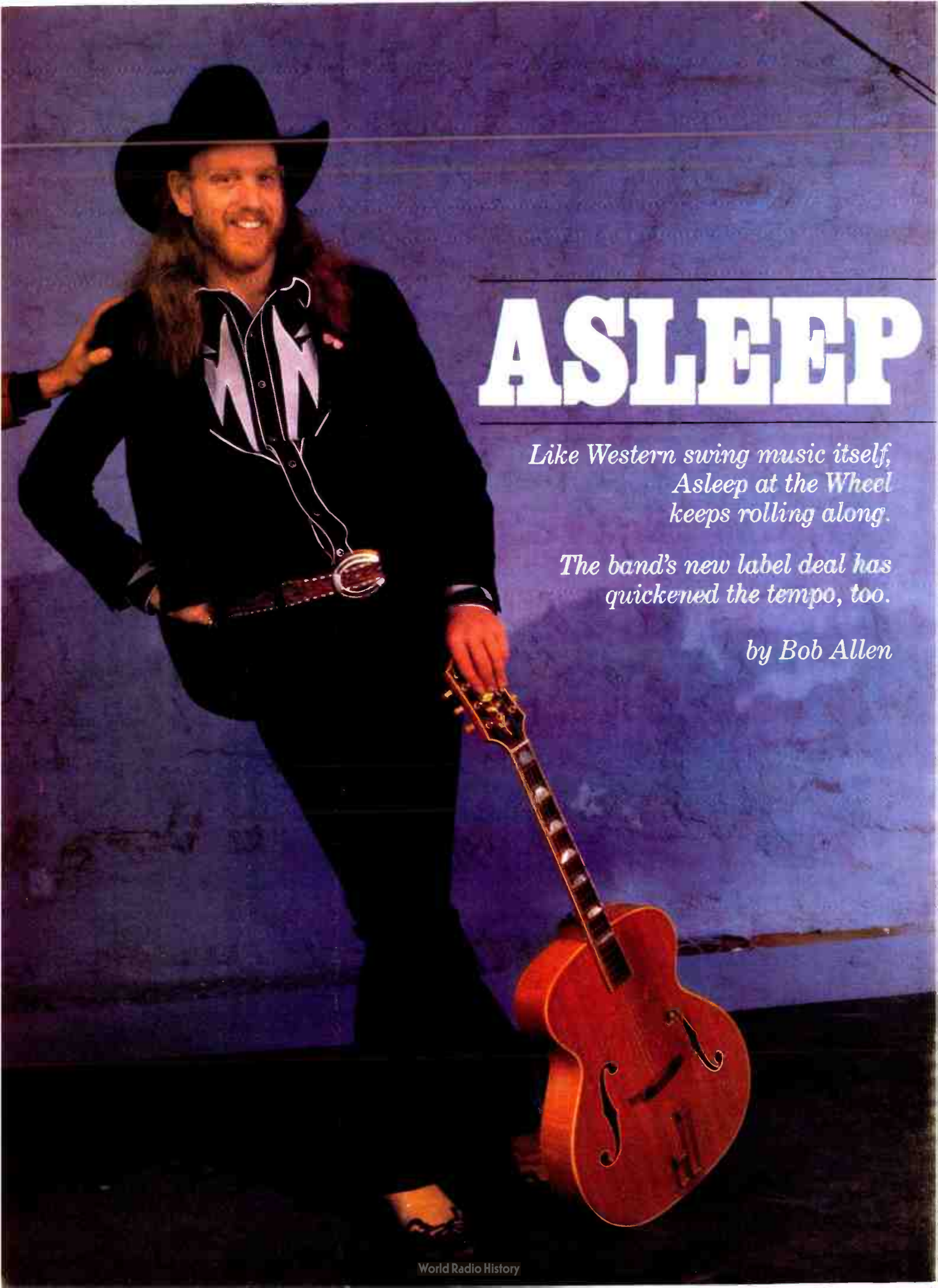
little bit. I only work on it when I feel I have something positive to add to it.

"But writing for me isn't work," she points out. "It's therapy. If I'm feeling bad or depressed, the best thing for me to do is to sit down and write. Because I can do anything I want to. I can get rid of whatever it is that's bothering me." She laughs: "If someone's hurt my feelings, I can sit down and kill 'em off!"

Still, one wonders how the changes in lifestyle—and workstyle—that have already beset Griffith might influence her writing. Even she admits there have been some adjustments—although pleasant ones—to make.

"For years, on the folk circuit, I just toured with one or two sidemen, and I did everything myself," she recalls. "I drove thousands of miles in my little Toyota. I did my own bookings, made my own hotel reservations, set up my own equipment and carried my own luggage. But then, last summer, I did a long tour of the U.S. and Canada, opening for The Everly Brothers. All of a sudden, after all those years of being used to being behind the steering wheel, I found myself on a touring bus. It was weird, and for a while I didn't know what to do. I didn't even have to carry my own suitcases anymore! But it proved, ultimately, to be a great relief." And so far, she's relieved to note, all the changes and demands of a major-league recording career haven't interfered with her writing—at least as far as she can tell.

Harlan Howard, the award-winning songwriter, has given her some good advice about keeping up with her writing. "Harlan is my pal here in Nashville," she laughs again. "And he stays on my case about that. He's always telling me, 'Remember, you're a writer first, and when all this hoopla is over, you are going to want to maintain as a writer for other people. So make sure you don't forget how to do it!'" ■



ASLEEP

*Like Western swing music itself,
Asleep at the Wheel
keeps rolling along.*

*The band's new label deal has
quickenened the tempo, too.*

by Bob Allen

It's a beautiful spring afternoon in New York City's Gramercy Park. The tulips and flowering cherry trees are in full bloom, giving this old and quaintly elegant Lower Manhattan neighborhood a mood of serenity such as one seldom finds in the midst of this huge, unwashed metropolis.

A small crowd has gathered in the

Dance to the Music

"What we do is Western swing, insofar as we're a Western swing band by instrumentation," adds Benson, who speaks in the precise terms of the avid record collector and armchair musicologist that he is. "But what Asleep at the Wheel really does is straight-ahead swing music, just like Count Basie or Duke Ellington or Louie Jordan. The

AT THE WHEEL

park and on the surrounding streets for a neighborhood festival. Over near the park's iron gates, beyond the flower stalls, The Bourbon Street Jazz Band, a locally renowned Dixieland-style jazz revivalist group, is in full swing. Its boisterous, rhythmic cadences bounce off the staid old brownstone houses and echo up the narrow avenues.

Out there on the edge of the crowd of quietly appreciative spectators is Ray Benson, the toweringly tall, red-headed founder, producer, lead singer and lead guitarist of the Western swing revival band, Asleep at the Wheel. Benson and his parents, who have driven up from Pennsylvania to visit with him while he plays a weekend engagement at the Lone Star Cafe, are soaking up the lazy afternoon sights and sounds.

As The Bourbon Street Jazz Band reels off yet another tune familiar to Benson's ears, he smiles appreciatively in the direction of the makeshift bandstand and applauds.

"They're great," he laughs. "Not only that, but they're doing all *our* tunes, man! 'Choo-Choo Boogie,' 'Don't Roll Those Bloodshot Eyes at Me,' plus a hundred other songs I've always wanted to do. I'm telling you," Benson shakes his head knowingly and smiles again. "There's a revival of swing music going on right now."

Benson, who, as he speaks, is in the midst of a promotional tour for Asleep at the Wheel's brand-new Epic album, *Asleep at the Wheel*, has every right to feel elated. Since founding Asleep at the Wheel more than 17 years ago, he has survived stints with nearly half a dozen record labels, gone through dozens of personnel changes, and endured a long-running battle with the I.R.S. And he's done it all to keep his band, and his favorite brand of music, Western swing, alive.

Now, after a long commercial hiatus,



The current members of the band.

in which nobody much seemed to be interested in Asleep at the Wheel's music, except for those small but faithful Saturday-night audiences that continued to turn out for Asleep's live shows at colleges and honky tonks from coast to coast, Benson and his band are, once again, back on a major record label. They are, as Benson himself notes with no small degree of satisfaction and relief, "back in the ball game."

The timing could not be better for Asleep at the Wheel. The nation seems fascinated with "roots"-style music. And since the surviving members of the late Bob Wills' band, The Texas Playboys, retired a couple of years ago, "The Wheel" is now the only band with national name-recognition still carrying on in the Western swing vein.

"That's right," Benson agrees a short time later as he drapes his lanky, six foot-plus frame and size 16-E feet over an easy chair in a room at the Gramercy Park Hotel. "Nobody else is doing this right now. George Strait and his band do Western swing, but he doesn't mix in boogie-woogie and jazz kinds of swing like we do. Merle Haggard sometimes does what I call 'country-swing,' and he's great at it. But it's still kind of different from our music.

only difference is that we do it with fiddle, steel guitar, sax, bass, drums and guitar."

Though musical trends have come and gone since Benson founded his group in the late 1960's, he, himself, at least outwardly seems to have changed little. He still has an air of 1960's grassroots back-to-the-basics about him. He is dressed in baggy Levis and a white T-shirt. His forearm sports a spider tattoo. He wears his beard long, and his flowing red hair cascades well down past his shoulders. His voice is so low and resonant that when he speaks, it almost seems to rattle the windows. This particular afternoon, both hands are swathed in bandages.

"It was a fluke accident," he shakes his head and laughs. "I fell through the top of a glass coffee table, and had to get some stitches. Luckily, I cut everything except those fingers that I need to play guitar. I can still pick and play," he smiles, holding up a couple of fingers that are nearly encased in gauze and tape. "Only problem is it looks like I'm shootin' the bird at everybody when I do."

As Benson explains, it has been a long and rocky road that has led this 36-year-old drop-out of Ohio's Antioch College into his self-chosen role as one of the late twentieth century's sole revivers of Western swing.

To begin with, Western swing is a strain of music that came into being in the great Southwest U.S., many miles away from where Benson was born and many years before he drew his first breath. The big-band sound Benson loves was forged in the 1930's by musicians like The Light Crust Doughboys, Milton Brown and His Musical Brownies, and, of course, the late, great Bob Wills. The music itself is a unique and complex hybrid of Dixieland jazz and 1930's dance band music, interfused



Like today, in 1979 the group had many fans. Included here are Peter Fonda and Brooke Shields. Also pictured are Pat Ryan, Chris O'Connell, a member of Hee Haw, and Ray Benson.

with jazz, blues, pop, cowboy and even Mexican music.

Benson has been an avid record collector and roots music fanatic since his high school years, but he admits that, "I got into Western swing ass-backwards. I didn't grow up on this stuff. My parents never even heard it until later, when I played it for them. I've always been into collecting 78's, researching music, that sort of thing. In high school, I played in swing bands—Bennie Goodman stuff—as well as in a rock 'n' roll band and a square dance band. That never made any sense to anybody but me."

Benson first formed Asleep at the Wheel in the Washington, D.C., area, "as a sort of roots country band, you know: Hank Williams, George Jones... Also roots rock: Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis. We always liked blues beats, and when we discovered Bob Wills' music, it just fit in great, because he's really the daddy of 'em all, in terms of all the different roots styles of jazz, Dixieland, blues, fiddle music, Western swing and country music.

"There were dozens of other great musicians who influenced us too," Benson emphasizes, "including some people that most people have never heard of unless they're really into a certain style. People like Moon Mullican influenced me a lot. So did Ernest Tubb, Tennessee Ernie Ford, and Hank Thompson. Sure we loved Bob Wills. But there were hundreds of others we loved, too."

For a time, Asleep at the Wheel woodshedded it on a farm in West Virginia. "We lived in a 200-year-old cabin way up in the hills, with no running water and a generator for electricity. We'd practice, farm a little, get drunk. Finally the owner showed up and kicked us out."

The band played its first professional engagements in the D.C./Maryland/Delaware area. In D.C. Benson and the other founding members met Commander Cody and The Lost Planet Air-

men, another pioneering roots-oriented group that was then enjoying a taste of national success with their own unique brand of 1950's-style rock and country revivalist music.

"Cody"—his real name is George

"I just made up my mind that I was going to keep going until somebody shut me down."

Frayne—"was really instrumental in encouraging us and really showing us the ropes of the business and helping us get our first record deal," Benson recalls. "In 1971, we left West Virginia for the San Francisco Bay Area. We went out there and bounced around and played all the clubs, along with Commander Cody and Dan Hicks and The Hot Licks, the Doobie Brothers and a band called Clover, which included Huey Lewis and John McPhee—McPhee's now with Southern Pacific. I remember two writers, Ed Ward and John Morthland, were living out there then. They started writing articles about us for *The San Francisco Chronicle* and some other magazines, and pretty soon, we got our first record deal." Some of Benson's contacts from those early days have lasted over the years. He and Huey Lewis remained friends. Lewis produced one cut on AATW's current album, and writer John Morthland, like this writer, is a Contributing Editor to this magazine.

Asleep at the Wheel's real heyday

rolled around in the late 1970's, when the group was on a roll with the Capitol label. Not only were they selling albums like gangbusters; in 1978, they won a Grammy for their instrumental rendition of "One O'Clock Jump," and were nominated for Grammy awards on two other occasions. In 1977, they also received the Academy of Country Music's annual "Best Touring Band" award.

But even during this gravy year, Benson recalls, the major record labels never knew quite what to make of the band and its music. Often, they were treated like the ugly stepchild who, even though he earns his own keep in the household, is still a slightly misunderstood and resented presence.

"When we did our very first album for United Artists, they didn't know what the hell was going on," Benson remembers with what sounds as much like humorous nostalgia as it does annoyance. "What we were doing was Bob Wills-type stuff: roots country, with lap steel guitar instead of pedal steel, no strings, no background vocals, etc., etc. We took the finished tape to U.A.'s Los Angeles office, and they said, 'We don't know what this is, we gotta send it to Nashville.' And the Nashville office just said, 'We don't know what to do with this. This is old stuff. They were playin' this twenty years ago, but they're not playin' it now.'

"Then," Benson grimaces as he proceeds with his band's rather long and checkered history with the Nashville power brokers, "we made one album for Epic. At the time, the people in that company's Nashville A&R department didn't know their asses from a hole in the ground. There was this one stupid lady, who is no longer with the company, and she asked us to do a demo record. This is after we've already signed with the company, and already had two albums out! So we went ahead and did a demo

like they told us. We put three songs on it: 'The Letter That Johnny Walker Reads,' 'Bump Bounce Boogie,' one other one, which slips my mind right now. So we took the demo to this woman in the A&R department, and she listened and said, 'Frankly, Ray, this material's not up to snuff.' So we said, okay, fine, bye-bye. Then Capitol Records picked us up. It turned out that all three of those tunes that were on that demo that CBS turned down were Top Ten singles off our first Capitol album."

Asleep at the Wheel had its best run, lasting through about five albums, with Capitol. "We won awards, and we sold records, which is the bottom line. We had a real good run until about 1979. We were selling about 100,000 units per album. But even then, the record company people kept going, 'Look, you're doing fine, but you should be selling a million albums. You need to be making platinum records.'"

In 1979, the band did their last recording—a live album—for Capitol and then moved on for a short and unsatisfying stint with MCA. "The 1980's started out kind of rough," says Benson. "We had no label deal. Personnel started leaving the band." Overall Benson estimates that somewhere in the neighborhood of 75 musicians have come and gone since he started the group; he is the only original member in its current seven-man lineup.

"I was constantly having to reorganize," he continues, "and there were alcohol and drug problems. It was a mess. It was just touch and go on through most of the 1980's. At one point, we owed a hundred thousand dollars to the I.R.S. But through it all, we still played two hundred dates a year, and the band was still great. We kept on making albums, but nobody would put them out. But I just decided that I was going to tighten my belt and weather through it and see what happened. I just made up my mind that I was going to keep going until somebody shut me down."

In order to make ends meet, Benson, who has made his home in Austin, Texas, for the last decade and a half or so, was able to moonlight in various capacities. He produced other acts. He even produced a couple of cuts that will be heard on Willie Nelson's next album, including one that features pop singer Bruce Hornsby; and he is scheduled to complete an album with legendary guitarist Lonnie Mack later this year. He also did soundtrack work for several films, including Louis Malle's *Alamo Bay*. Special assistance came from Willie Nelson, Benson's longtime friend and frequent golf partner. Always a booster of Asleep at the Wheel and a big Western swing fan himself, Nelson provided Benson with free time in his Texas recording studio to put together

an album that was released a couple of years ago on the MCA-Dot label.

The MCA-Dot album, if nothing else, did serve as a demonstration record of sorts, which led to the band's present affiliation with CBS. "I'd known Rick Blackburn, head of CBS/Nashville, for a number of years," says Benson. "He was always very nice and very polite, and would listen to my stuff and say, 'No, we're not interested.' But I guess the

"There's a revival of swing music going on right now."

marketplace finally shifted around to where we fit their concept or something. This time when I took a demo to Rick, he loved it. He just said, 'You just do what you do. Don't worry about the demands of the marketplace or what other people are doing. Just do Western swing and boogie-woogie and Asleep at the Wheel music.' And that was real nice to hear," Benson smiles. "Nobody at a record label had said that to me in years."

If New York City is any indication, Benson is absolutely right when he maintains that a swing music revival is under way. Around midnight on this particular Saturday night, Asleep at the Wheel is in full (Western) swing on the small stage of the Lone Star Cafe. The small Greenwich Village club is packed beyond standing room only. More people are being turned away at the door.

In 1987 a different group of fans visited Ray Benson after a show, including Rattlesnake Annie, Mel Tillis, CBS Records' Rick Blackburn and Lonnie Mack.



Benson and the band work their way through spirited and extended renditions of hot numbers off the new album: Billy Joe Shaver's shuffle-y "Way Down Texas Way," the first single off the album, "House of Blue Lights," an old jump-style number that Benson had been meaning to record for years, and finally did; and a countrified version of Huey Lewis' "I Want a New Drug"—Lewis insisted Benson record it. As they play on into the night, the two solidly-packed floors of sweating, swaying, beer-drinking, wall-to-wall humanity seem to shuffle and cheer in unison.

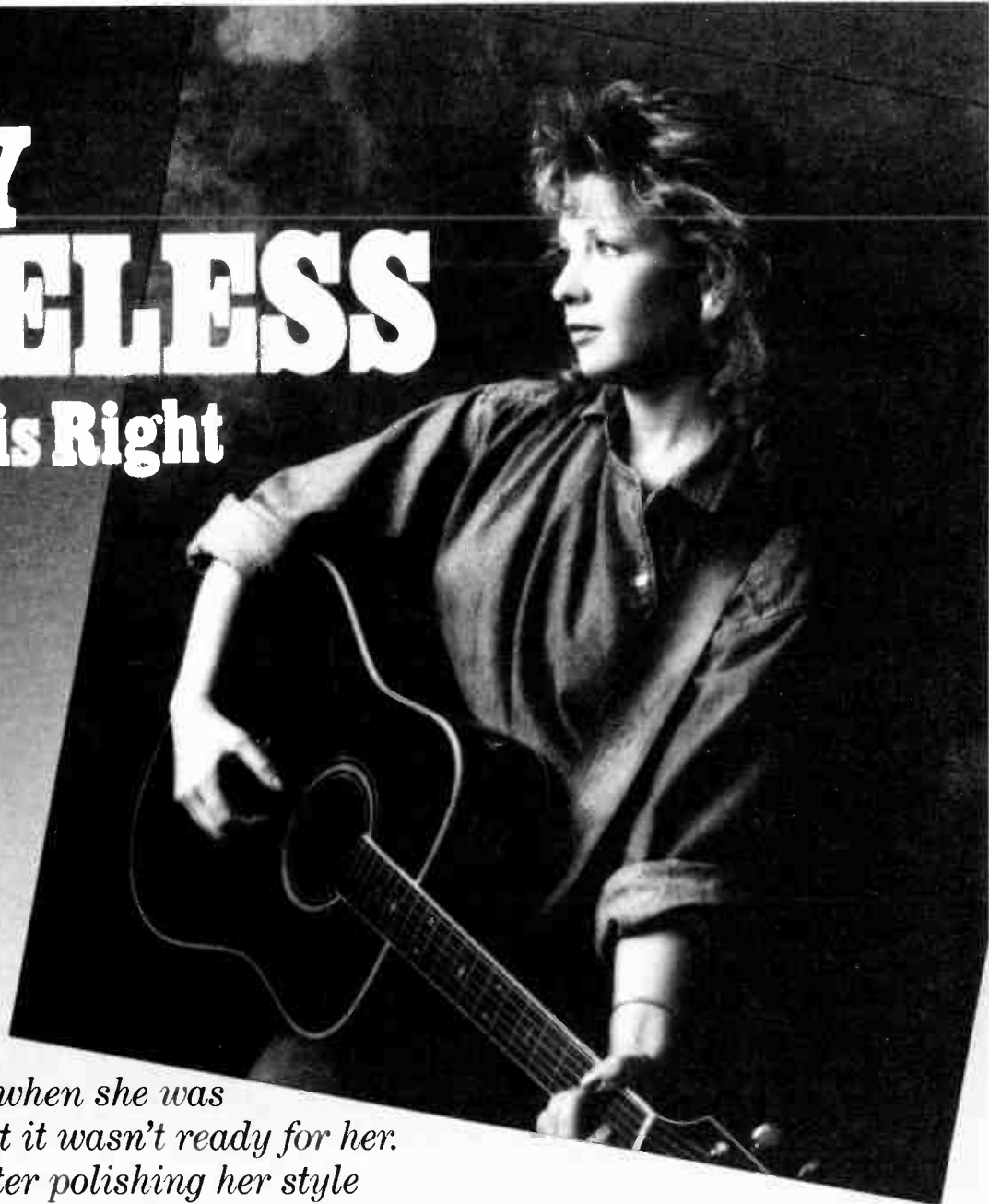
As I look out across the crowd, at the smiling, appreciative faces eagerly lifted toward the bandstand, it looks to me as if Asleep at the Wheel's audience pretty well spans all age groups. I am reminded of Benson's parting words about his brand of music and its enduring popularity.

"Western swing has gone out of fashion and come back again. It seems like people lose track of it, then they rediscover it. And right now, I honestly feel like we're leading another swing revival. And yet I hate to use the word 'revival,' because this music has been around for years. It's never died. There are always pockets—even here in New York City—where it's always been played. Not just Western swing, but big-band swing, New York swing... And because of the swing aspect, there's a wide range of people, from fifteen to fifty really, who can dance to our music. We've got hardcore fans who just keep coming back and coming back, and we're also getting younger fans who, maybe ten or fifteen years ago, were only fifteen years old and couldn't see us.

"So whether there's a fad or not, or whether there's a revival going on, it doesn't matter," Benson smiles with quiet confidence. "As long as there are people coming out to dance, we're still going to be here, doing it." ■

PATTY LOVELESS

The Time is Right



She tried country when she was just a teenager, but it wasn't ready for her. Ten years later, after polishing her style with rock 'n' roll, she's back in Nashville singing country music, and people are more than listening. by Bob Allen

The Cannery is a drafty, cavernous old brick building in one of South Nashville's drab industrial pockets that has been converted from its original manufacturing function to a rock 'n' roll and country music night club. On any given afternoon or evening, freight trains still rattle by outside, interrupting the concert tapings by *The Nashville Network* that are often in progress there. Even on a sunny day, The Cannery's wide stairwells and expansive rooms on the upper floors are bathed in shadows. The entire building has the perennial smell of stale beer. All in all, it's like a weird cross between the French Bastille and a haunted house from the Hollywood set of a Tony Perkins honky tonk horror movie.

Late on a weekday afternoon, a very

tired-looking Patty Loveless is sitting on one of the wooden benches in the lobby outside her publicist's office, which is located on one of The Cannery's upper floors. She is yawning, fighting to keep her eyes open, as she explains how she has endured almost a week's worth of the Country Radio Seminar, an annual convention of country deejays and program directors held at the Opryland Hotel.

For a new artist like Loveless, it is, of course, essential to make your presence known at the seminar: to shake hands, swap jokes and business cards, have your picture made with ten dozen local-yokel deejays, tape interviews and otherwise charm, beseech and beg them to play your records on their stations. Never mind that far too many of the

assembled radio industry figures are the sleazy sort of characters that you really wouldn't care to be seen in public with—if it wasn't so essential to your career to do so. Never mind that the hours (boring cocktail receptions that roll on until three or four in the morning) are horrendous. And never mind that, in the midst of all this, Loveless is also moving from one apartment to another.

She somehow manages to bear up under the weight of it all with a smile and no complaints, though fatigue is clearly etched into her face, and this is probably her two-hundredth interview.

"Lately, I've been running into all these friends of mine from the old days, back in Kentucky and North Carolina," the attractive 30-year-old singer laughs wearily as she stifles another yawn.

"They all ask me, 'Wow, how does it feel to be famous!?' How does it feel to have a hit record, to be doin' shows with people like Willie Nelson and George Jones and Randy Travis!?' I just tell 'em that so far, it just feels *broke!*"

The financial dividends may not have rolled in—yet, but the critical accolades have. Loveless' powerful voice and countrified style has already won her favorable comparisons with such figures as Reba McEntire and even Patsy Cline. The gratifying response to her first singles, "I Did" and "Lonely Days and Lonely Nights," and her debut album *Patty Loveless*, has put her in the forefront of the female contingent of Nashville's latest generation of pretenders to the throne of country stardom.

Not bad for a young woman who shares with fellow Kentuckian Loretta Lynn the distinction of being a for-real coal miner's daughter. In fact, it's pretty good progress for someone who, just a couple of years ago, was still dividing her time between being a North Carolina housewife and singing with her ex-husband in a small-time rock 'n' roll band for whom top-dollar work was often a stint in one of the illegal speak-easies operated in the various "dry" counties throughout the deep South.

"I've seen my day in court, believe me I have!" Loveless laughs heartily. "For about seven years there, me and Terry played at those places. The money was decent, the people were good to work for, even if you did get in trouble with the law at times. I can show you clippings telling how our band was arrested for aiding and abetting. It was just harassment, you know. It was just so they could make you go and sit in court from nine in the morning until five in the evening, when they knew you were booked that night to play in some little place from ten at night until sunrise. That was just their little trick."

Ultimately, the decade-long excursion into rock 'n' roll proved to be a detour leading back to the very same country music on which she'd cut her teeth as a young girl. Patty Loveless is quick to point out that two of the songs on her new album—"I Did" and "Sounds of Loneliness"—were written when she was only seventeen years old.

These two were among the 30 or so songs that she included on the demo tape she carried with her when she made her first trip to Nashville. That was when she first made the rounds, along with her older brother Roger (who is now her manager), trying to get a record deal.

"The first people I met when I came to Nashville were Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton, who was still singing with Porter at the time," Patty recalls. "They were real nice. Porter listened to my

demo tape, and even recorded one of my songs, even though it was never released." On the same trip to Nashville, she met The Wilburn Brothers, although at the time they didn't pay much attention to her or her music. But a year or so later, back in Louisville, in her native state of Kentucky, Patty got a chance to open a show on which The Wilburns were headlining. After hearing her this time, Doyle Wilburn hired Patty for his road show. Interestingly enough, Doyle had hired Loretta Lynn and given her *her* big break years before.

"I come from a family of eight children, and my parents were a little over-protective," Patty smiles with a trace of

"Right now is a real breakthrough time for women in country music."



devilishness. "And the only time I really got a lot of freedom was when I went out on the road with The Wilburns to do shows. It was like, 'Wow! I can let myself go!'" she laughs heartily. "But even then, I had to behave myself. I had to be a good girl."

The long and short of it was that in 1976 she married the drummer in the band and moved back to his home state of North Carolina.

"My husband didn't pull me away from my music," she emphasizes. "I just needed to pull away from it myself. We lived in a small town in North Carolina, and I just loved it there. It was a beautiful place. We lived in a trailer, and later we bought a house. For a while there, I just layed low, just living a domestic life, being a housewife." The pull of the music, however, eventually led her to resume singing in a club in Charlotte, North Carolina. "I was driving five nights a week to Charlotte, from our home in King's Mountain, which is thirty-five miles each way," she recalls.

During the "Urban Cowboy" era,

Patty Loveless admits, she stopped listening to country radio, but her brother Roger kept in touch with the Nashville music business and woke her up to the changes that were being wrought by people like The Judds, Reba McEntire and The Forester Sisters. In 1985, Roger talked his sister into coming to Nashville to record a demo session, then hand-carried the demo tape to Tony Brown, at MCA Records—Tony Brown, the production genius behind such artists as Steve Earle and Nanci Griffith.

"Roger didn't have an appointment or nothing," Loveless recalls. "But he knew this girl that worked there, and somehow slid in there. But Roger was really faking it, and Tony was *not* real happy to see him. But he finally said, 'Okay, I'll listen to half a song—but that's all.' Well," Patty smiles, "he listened to half a song, then he listened to it all. Then he listened to the second song, and then the third song..."

It has taken Loveless the better part of two years to get her career into high gear after signing with MCA in 1985. The single "I Did" was originally released in February, 1986, before MCA had even committed to recording an entire album, and it died in the lower regions of the Top 40, only to be resurrected earlier this year.

Along the way, the longtime marriage with Terry also fell apart. "Sometimes I'm just not sure," she sighs. "There were some times when I think Terry wanted success for me, and there were other times when I think he was scared by it. Back when we were in those rock 'n' roll bands together, everybody was independent. We all had our own ideas, and we'd all talk it over. But then when I got my deal with MCA, that all changed. It was me who suddenly had a label and a manager to answer to, and he was suddenly in the band, working for me. I found myself having to give him orders, and that's where a lot of the disagreements came.

"So he's back in North Carolina now," she adds wistfully. "He now owns the house, and I have nothing," she laughs lightly. "I left it all to him, because that's the way I wanted it to be, because he did hang in there with me for years.

"Looking back, though, I'm really glad I waited as long as I did to come back to Nashville," Patty adds on a more cheerful note. "Right now is a real breakthrough time for women in country music. I mean, look at what Reba's doing. And look at people like The Judds and The Foresters, and Holly Dunn, and Nanci Griffith, who is a tremendous talent. You've got all this new blood coming into Nashville right now, and I think it's really gonna be happening for the next few years. I feel really fortunate to have all that on my side." ■

SPECIAL HOLIDAY GIVEAWAY.

12 CHRISTMAS



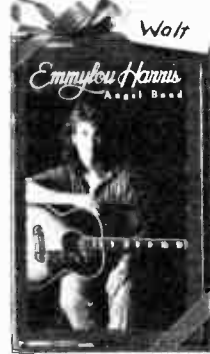
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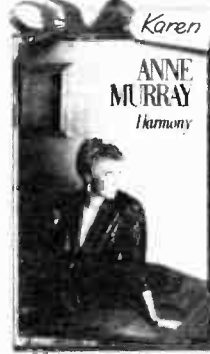
Peter



Pam



Walt



Karen



Joe

356329. Randy Travis
—Always and Forever.
Forever and Ever, Amen.
(Warner Bros.)

352633. D. Parton/
L. Ronstadt/E. Harris
—Trio. To Know Him Is To
Love Him. (Warner Bros.)

357194. Willie Nelson
—Island in the Sun.
Title cut, Little Things;
etc. (Columbia)

356964. Emmylou
Harris—Angel Band.
Title cut; Precious Me plus
more! (Warner Bros.)

356139. Anne Murray—
Harmony. Title hit, Are
You Still in Love With Me,
etc. (Capitol)

354035. Dwight Yoakam
—Hillbilly Deluxe. Little
Sister, Little Ways, more!
(Reprise)

CLASSIC ROCK FROM THE 60's & 70's

- 357475 RAY STEVENS
CRACKIN' UP
- 356675 ORIGINAL SOUND TRACK
BEVERLY HILLS COP II
- 353383 MOE BANDY
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE LAST OF ME
- 348987 LINDA RONSTADT
ROUND MIDNIGHT
- 398982 WITH NELSON, HARRIS, AND THE DOOBIES
THEIR GREATEST HITS VOL. 1
- 346288 RAY CHARLES
FROM THE PAGES
OF W.F. MIND
- 330738 EMMYLOU HARRIS
PROFILE II: THE BEST OF
EMMYLOU HARRIS
- 346932 VARIOUS ARTISTS
ENDLESS LOVE
MUSIC
- 352389 DAVID ALLAN COE
A MATTER OF LIFE... AND DEATH
- 394940 THE BEACH BOYS
MADE IN U.S.A.
- 352765 JOHNNY CASH
1958-1986
- 349489 THE VERY BEST OF
JOHNNY RIVERS
- 351178 STEVE RAY VAUGHAN
AND DOUBLE TROUBLE
LIVE ALIVE
- 352229 CARLY SIMON
COMING AROUND AGAIN
- 345751 PAUL SIMON
GRACELAND
- 353490 RAY STEVENS GREATEST HITS
- 346296 JANIE FRICKIE
BLACK AND WHITE
- 353458 BRUCE WILLIS
THE RETURN OF BRUNO
- 353839 THE GOLDEN ERA
- 393835
- 353755 LYLE LOVETT
- 354464 OAK RIDGE BOYS
WHERE THE FAST LANE ENDS
- 347161 AMY GRANT
THE COLLECTION
- 355305 JANIE FRICKIE
AFTER MIDNIGHT
- 355420 GENE WATSON
HONKY TONK CRAZY
- 342253 JOHN SCHNEIDER
A MEMORY LIKE YOU
- 355653 BARBARA MANDRELL
GREATEST HITS
- 350124 JOHN ANDERSON
COUNTRYFIED
- 345231 JOHNNY CASH & WAYLON JENNINGS
HEROES
- 339200 STEVE WONDER
IN SQUARE CIRCLE
- 347096 SOUTHERN PACIFIC
KILLBILLY HILL
- 345215 BILL HALEY
FROM THE ORIGINAL MASTER TAPES

- 356154 WHITNEY HOUSTON
WHITNEY
- 349233 LARRY STEVE RUDY, THE CATLIN BROTHERS
PARTNERS
- 326629 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
BORN IN THE U.S.A.
- 352757 CHARLY MCCLAIN
STILL I STAY
- 351874 GREAT MOMENTS WITH
B.B. KING
- 352179 VARIOUS ARTISTS
TRUE ROMANCE: A COLLECTION OF
GREAT LOVE SONGS
- 314443 NEIL DIAMOND
12 GREATEST HITS VOL. II
- 352427 TAMMY WYNETTE
ANNIVERSARY: 20 YEARS OF HITS
- 392423
- 353482 GREGG ALLMAN BAND
I'M NO ANGEL
- 353540 RONNIE McDOWELL
OLDER WOMEN AND OTHER GREATEST HITS
- 346536 THEN AND NOW...
THE BEST OF THE MONKEES
- 345793 STEVE EARLE
GUITAR TOWN
- 354720 SCHUYLLER, KNOBLOCH &
OVERSTREET—SKO
- 346510 THE FORESTER SISTERS
PERFUME, RIBBONS & PEARLS
- 357178 FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS
HOT NUMBER
- 355628 VINCE GIORDANO
DIGITAL SERENADE
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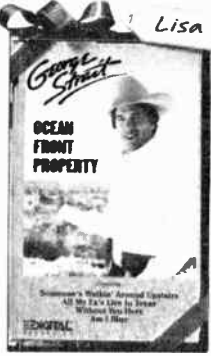
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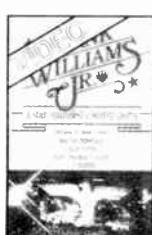
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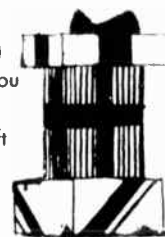
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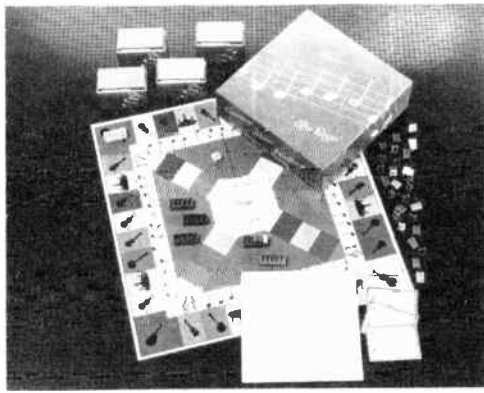
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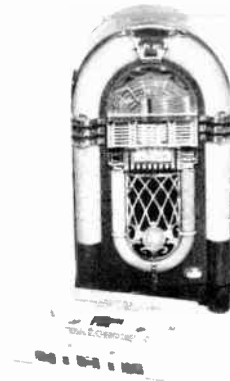
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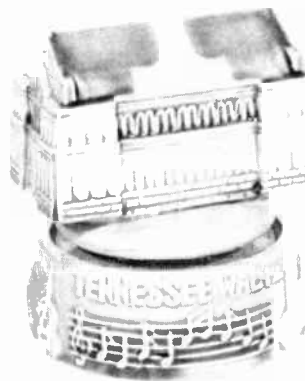
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Record Reviews

Rosanne Cash
King's Record Shop
Columbia FC 40777

I liked the cover photo before I heard the record: an old, independent record store, no plasticized shopping mall chain outlet. We vinyl junkies have fond memories of such places, most of which look like this. Four of my old haunts in Pennsylvania instantly came to mind: Stan's in Lancaster, Abraham's in Altoona, and Atkins' in Connellsville. Stedeford's on East Ohio Street in Pittsburgh just moved a few doors away and still has a great selection. But it'll never again look like the old place.

Of course, none of this has a thing to do with the record. Fact is, I'd wondered if Rosanne could recover her early promise. The last couple of albums didn't knock me out, and since Marty Stuart's fine debut sank like a stone, things haven't been encouraging for the Cash clan lately.

Yet underestimating her is risky. She and husband/producer Rodney Crowell have pulled out the stops to create a record so ferociously *alive* it snaps, growls and rushes from the first note. It reminds you that she was actually ahead of her time. Her best earlier music anticipated the new sounds only now gaining acceptance.

Eliza Gilkyson's "Rosie, Strike Back" shows how far Nashville's come 19 years after Tammy's "Stand By Your Man." Who then could imagine any Nashville artist singing such a ferocious assault on wife-beaters? The album's first (and I'm sure not last) hit, John Hiatt's "The



Way We Make a Broken Heart," has a Tex-Mex feeling, but the lyrics manage to be both creative and commercial.

I'm glad Rosanne didn't give the plaintive "If You Change Your Mind," the song she wrote with Hank DeVito, to The Everly Brothers as she'd planned, because her own version is so desperate and compelling. (Cut it anyway, guys.) The introspective "The Real Me" is a perfect interlude between "Mind" and her own "Somewhere, Sometime," a weak song saved by a piledriving arrangement.

John Stewart's "Runaway Train," which kicks off Side Two, is a jittery, compelling number that's not only beautifully sung, but also showcases Crowell's gifts as an arranger. "Tennessee Flat Top Box" works both as a departure from her dad's 1961 version and—with its straightforward, Tennessee

Three style accompaniment—a tribute as well. Her foreboding performance of Rodney's "I Don't Have to Crawl" equals Emmylou's earlier version, reflecting the fact Rosanne's sung it for years and can turn each lyric whatever way she wants.

The violent, teeth-gnashing rockabilly of "Green, Yellow and Red" truly burns, and repeated listens don't diminish its clout. Written by Memphis professor John Klizer, it proves what Michael Bane's said about Memphians for years: their craziness permeates *everything*. I can imagine what this guy's classes are like. The low-keyed "Why Don't You Quit Leaving Me Alone" by Tom Petty's keyboard player Benmont Tench is the perfect, melancholy way to sum up both sides.

Crowell the producer has never been so masterful. The appearance of contemporary rock icons Patty Smyth and

Steve Winwood singing harmony on "Rosie, Strike Back" doesn't hurt, but these people are really a fifth wheel, for Rodney has everything under control.

Every great artist does one album which defines their work for posterity. They may do better work later on, but everybody remembers *that one*. It was *Storms of Life* for Randy Travis; it was *Honky Tonk Heroes* for Waylon and *Guitar Town* for Steve Earle. *King's Record Shop* is Rosanne's. I know it.

—RICH KIENZLE

Tammy Wynette
Higher Ground
Epic E-40832

If it didn't work as well as it does, this would still have been one hell of a gimmick: Tammy Wynette is bouncing back from the latest setbacks in her career and her personal life—the two have always been inseparable—by recording a surprisingly solid set of songs using various male stars as harmony singers (*not* duet partners, except for Vern Gosdin on "Some Things Will Never Change," but harmony singers).

Despite the big names, this is definitely Tammy's show all the way. For the most part, the guys—Ricky Skaggs, Gene Watson, Emmylou Harris (honorary guy), The Gatlin Brothers, The O'Kanes, Rodney Crowell and others—stay out of the way, making contributions that are subtle though tangible. The rest is up to the star, who carries the load with a lot more authority than she's shown in ages. Tammy doesn't belt like she

Record Reviews

used to, and the "break" or "tear" in her voice is almost gone, but she still phrases exquisitely, and the more reflective, meditative, contained Wynette vocal style conveys its own world of emotion. Put succinctly, she's aged well.

And her songs are still largely "old-fashioned love songs for people with old-fashioned pain," as they are termed on the Gosdin duet. "Tempted" couldn't be more up her alley, and Gene Watson's haunting vibrato seconds her emotion in a way that comes close to recapturing the devotional tone of the Don Williams original. "Beneath a Painted Sky" (with Emmylou) is a song of dashed dreams that cuts deeply, and if "I Wasn't Meant to Live My Life Alone" (with Vince Gill) isn't Tammy's statement of self, I don't know what is. On "Higher Ground" she sounds gritty while The Gatlins have a churchy sheen. "Talkin' to Myself Again" is full of sweet sorrow, her sense of loss eerily palpable. "There's No Heart So Strong" (with Paul Overstreet) comes closest to the classic Tammy sound of the late 1960's and early 1970's, while "All Through Throwing Good Love After Bad" (with Rodney Crowell and Jeanne Smith) sounds infinitely sad but with a wondrous, happy resolution.

Higher ground? You bet. To say nothing of a new lease on life.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Hank Williams Jr.

Born to Boogie
Warner/Curb 25593-1

Side one is basically the rockin' side, starting off with the title song, a hot rod of a Southern rock tune that rumbles along on an engine built from rhythmic guitar fuzz. The rest of the side is a waste. "Honky Tonk Women" is slavish and uninspired on



the part of the band, while Hank's vocals sound contrived. "Young Country" is positively insipid, sentimentalizing something into its grave before it's even had a chance to really get off the ground. Hank's version of "Keep Your Hands to Yourself" is pointless, though I'm sure he did it just because he was so gassed that such a sizzling slab of Southern-fried rock ever topped the charts in this glossy MTV year. I share his glee and wish he'd instead been moved to come up with something that hot on his own, rather than just attempting to xerox the hit. "Buck Naked" is a novelty that's faintly amusing for a few listenings, but still undeniably a throwaway. (I do, however, eagerly await the video.)

Side two is the country side, leading off with "Heaven Can't Be Found," a weeper of the type they don't write too often anymore, "new traditionalists" or not. "Thanks a Lot" is a limber version of Ernest Tubb's terse little classic, the sort of update Hank Jr. always does right. After that, this side joins its predecessor on the rush downhill. "What It Boils Down To" is a feeble Leon Redbone impression, while "Shadow Face" is the most sticky son-of-Hank dreck he has ever concocted. On "Practice What I Preach," the emphasis is all on the "preach."

I will listen to anything Hank Jr. puts out, if only because I'm never sure what he's gonna do next. He is wildly erratic, subject to tre-



mendous fluctuations, and I readily accept him as such. Maybe he records a little too often, as if he's enamored of everything he does and can't tell the good from the bad so he simply throws it all out there. That also comes with the turf. But *Born to Boogie* still sounds discouragingly like a modern version of a hallowed old Nashville country tradition: the album made up of a hit single or two and a ton of filler.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

The Charlie Daniels Band

Powder Keg
Epic FE 40760

Ol' farmer Charlie has a couple of lines in the song "Dance With Me" which point directly to the heart of this, the CDB's first album since 1985. "Here's to the boys who play the joints and dives across the USA," he sings. "Here's to the bands who keep the music live in clubs and cabarets."

The music accompanying these words defines what he's talking about: solid, foot-stomping made-in-America rock 'n' roll, son. It's the traditional brew, the straight stuff; post-Elvis Southern boogie music, part blues, part country, part gospel, and all rhythm, the sort of potion the consumer has a right to expect from a visit to any honky tonk anytime anywhere in America...except New York, Los Angeles, and the outposts of those two trendy polarities, where

what's new among the few outsells what's familiar among the many.

You can also count on Lonnie Mack, Hank Williams Jr., Delbert McClinton, NRBQ, The Fabulous Thunderbirds, and a good hard core of other veteran and fledgling rock-blues-country road/recording units to deliver this brew, and of course—most especially—you can count on the Charlie Daniels Band. For the CDB, as you well know, holds a spot in the roots-boogie business similar to that occupied by a certain Colonel in the fried-chicken field: there may be other big-time vendors, and some of them may offer products of comparable or even superior spice and succulence, but the big C's Original Recipe is still the one that's going to end up in the time capsule, still the national-asset taste you know the best.

So really, you can't fault Charlie for waxing sentimental about his product in a hefty little prose poem on the back cover of *Powder Keg*, lovingly listing its roots in a style just a touch more plain-folks-melting pot than purple-mountain-majestic till you can almost hear his husky snuffles of pride and patriotism; it's okay for a feller as truly down-home/git-down funky as he is to go mushy on you now and again. And besides, Charlie probably felt moved to such grand sentiment because he'd started thinking of himself as that newly loyal and passionately grateful quantity, a returning prodigal son. While 1985's *Me and the Boys* album wasn't exactly New Wave or *avant garde*, you see, it also wasn't exactly straight down the all-American blue-collar kick-ass roots-boogie beam.

Back in 1985 that beam wasn't quite as commercially viable as it's grown to be recently—thanks to the efforts of musicians a lot younger than the CDB—so something besides pure re-kindled love of his roots may have been a factor in the



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Record Reviews

thorough re-beaming of Charlie's music represented by *Powder Keg*—but so what? This is the real world, where people really enjoy getting loud cheers and lots of money, not just informed applause, and where mass-popular stuff can also be really good. In the end, the only thing that matters is whether or not the music makes it.

So does it?

Yup. It does. Themewise, *Powder Keg's* got the standard straight roots-boogie works—all new stuff, all written by Charlie and the boys—dreamgirls and unfaithful bitches, good ol' boys being bold and broken-hearted and badass, hot happy nights in the juke joint, tense tough times on the street, loneliness in the city, love in the country—and musicwise it's tight, dense, hard, semi-nasty and swampy with soul, moans and snarls and backup singers and slide guitars all over the place. Overall the whole album sounds hotter, more immediate and even more modern than Charlie and the boys have been sounding on records these last few years.

The modernity certainly doesn't come from the instrumentation; if Charlie's got any of those damn synthesizers in there, he's kept 'em real well hidden. Here you've got real guitars, amps jumping, people hammering on skins with sticks! Yo! Mainline!

So where *does* the modernity come from? Why did my young New Music friend, born several years after Charlie Daniels rocked his five hundredth roadhouse, start bopping as soon as *Powder Keg* hit her? "Charlie Daniels? Really?" Well, that's not too hard to figure. I'm sure Charlie meant all that noble stuff in the liner notes about his music's national-communal roots, but when the mikes went live on this one, I'd guess he was also thinking something just as all-American but a lot more personal: *Wanna take my*

Boogie King crown away, do you, punk? Well, beat THIS...

That might be hard. In the roots-boogie biz, older really is better.

—PATRICK CARR

Willie Nelson *Island in the Sea* CBS FC 40487

So here we are at Willie's billionth-or-so album, with a cast you'll probably recognize in a flash: Paul English on drums, Mickey Raphael on harmonica, Bee Spears on bass, Bobby Nelson on piano, Grady Martin on guitar, Jody Payne on guitar and vocals, Booker T. Jones on drums, keyboards, acoustic guitar and bass, plus some other excellent pickers here and there. Bruce Hornsby and the Range are somewhere in there, along about "Nobody There But Me."

Willie's records don't lend themselves to a traditional critical approach. Willie makes records for Willie. That we all happen to love them is, I think, a fortuitous coincidence.

There are some givens here:

- The production is superb.
- The song choice is eclectic.
- The arrangements are flawless.
- Willie's vocals sound like, well, *Willie* vocals.
- There ain't no violins.

Island in the Sea is another signpost in the continuing career of Willie Nelson.

What else can you say? We aren't breaking any new ground here. Just a continuation of an impressive string of excellence in recording. Still, with so much Willie material out there, I find myself picking through any new Willie album, looking for cuts to add to the Willie Permanent Tape Collection. There are a couple of nominees on *Island in the Sea*, most notably the title cut itself, written by W. Nelson. "Islands in the Sea" has the classic Nelson feel to it, midway between lonesome trails and the third pew from the front of the church. I also liked Paul Horne's "Cold November Wind." From a strictly personal viewpoint, I can do without Bruce Hornsby, Bruce Hornsby songs and the Range.

As he progresses in his musical career, Willie re-

minds me of a couple of classic jazz artists I like. Music becomes a question of subtle nuance, shadings of emotions.

Willie calls his shots better than anybody in the business.

—MICHAEL BANE

The Forester Sisters *You Again* Warner Bros 25571-1

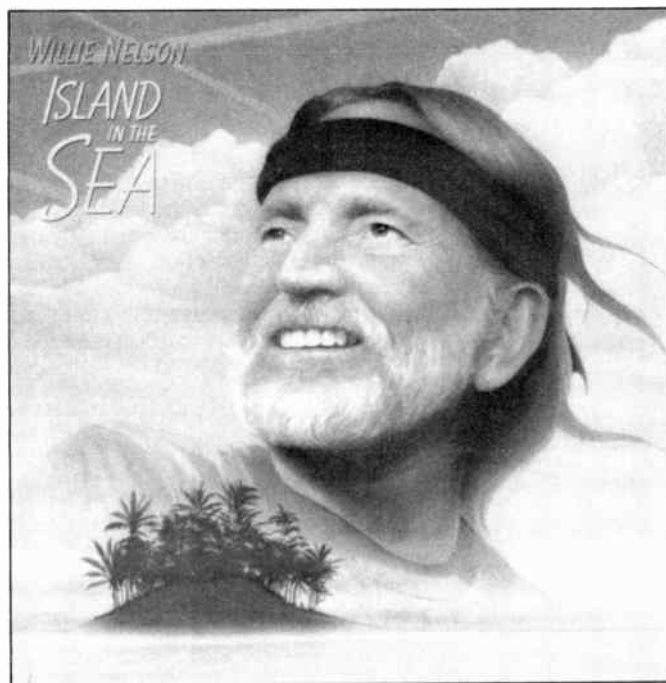
Much better, guys. After hitting it big the first time out, then getting struck by lightning on the second album, The Forester Sisters seem back on the track with their third release, *You Again*.

The four women from Lookout Mountain, Georgia, really broke on the scene with what I'd call a major updating of the traditional country sisters' harmony—mountain gospel filtered through the last 20 years of rock 'n' roll. Here were women who first sang their harmonies in the church cutting hard-rocking country music in a rhythm and blues recording studio in Muscle Shoals. It was a huge success—the old fusions are still what powers this music.

The second album can be summed up and dismissed in a single short word—pop. Everybody in Music City, The Foresters unfortunately included, was suffering from a vicious case of Whitney Houston poisoning.

The poison, however, appears to have drained out of the patient's system.

You Again, which features almost as many producers as pickers, totally forsakes the pop ballads (no loss) for country in a variety of flavors. The first single release off the album, the old Harlan Howard chestnut "Too Many Rivers," fairly screams country. The rest of the album follows suit. As important, the sisters have wisely included some solid up-tempo material, their forte. I especially like the title cut, "(I'd



Record Reviews

Choose) You Again," written by the songwriting juggernaut of Don Schlitz and Paul Overstreet, who are up for sainthood this year in Nashville.

Actually, my favorite song on this album is "Before You," which has a real good honky tonk ballad feel to it. Interestingly enough, it's one of three songs, including "Too Many Rivers," produced by J.L. Wallace and Terry Skinner, producers of the first two Forester albums. Skinner and Wallace are wonderful producers, and I love the difference between recording in Muscle Shoals and in Nashville—in the hands of the right producer, it's about 20 years—Muscle Shoals at its best sounds like a high-tech honky tonk in 1953.

It's interesting to take a look at the different producers—Emory Gordy, James Stroud and Barry Beckett and Wallace and Skinner—and see the subtle differences in the way they craft the sisters' music—Gordy's precise, almost folkish touches on, "My Mother's Eyes," Beckett and Stroud's hard country rockin' "Sooner or Later," which I really like, and Wallace and Skinner's honky tonk soul.

Anyway, I'm glad to see the guys back on track. In truth, I'm still carrying the torch for June—although I have not received a whit of encouragement from her. She looks great on the album cover.

Sigh!

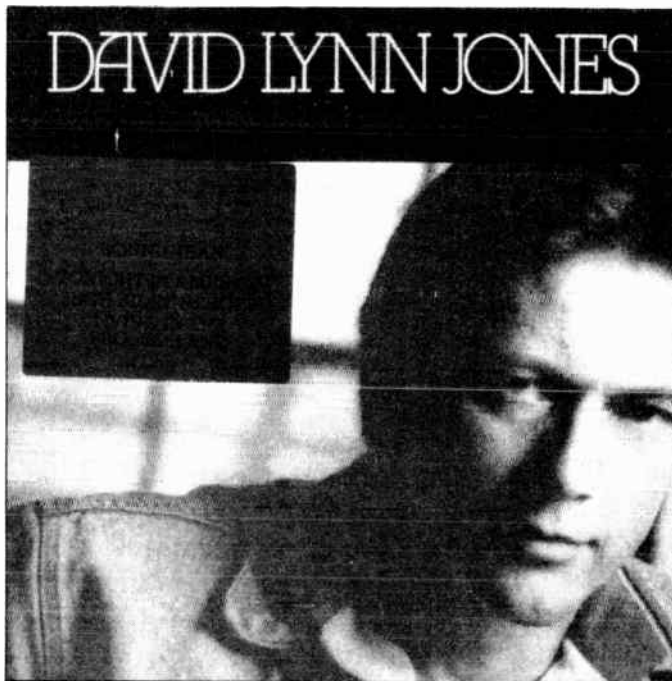
—MICHAEL BANE

Emmylou Harris

Angel Band

Warner Bros 25585-1

Emmylou's been heading toward an album like this for years. I expected it back around the time of *Roses in the Snow* seven years ago. Her love of The Louvin Brothers, whose traditional gospel music remains a thing of beauty, makes the entire idea



perfectly logical for her. Such experimenting, staying within the style she's comfortable with while still trying new twists, is something other artists tempted to go out on a limb ought to learn from.

To come back with a standard effort with her regular group after *Trio* would not have been wise. In that context, a gospel album makes good sense. I'm assuming from reading the back-cover credits that all songs were recorded live, Emmylou sitting around the studios with Vince Gill, Carl Jackson, producer/bassist Emory Gordy, Mike Aldridge, Jerry Douglas and Mark O'Connor, acoustic instruments at the ready. I like that. There aren't enough live recordings being done in studios anymore. Everybody's gotta play with the technology.

So why, with all this promise, does *Angel Band* never get to first base, much less the Pearly Gates? Simple. For a country gospel effort, it's so incredibly *down* it sounds like a funeral service. When you listen to The Louvins, or even the gospel quartets like The Statesmen, The Blackwoods and others, you hear a variety of music. Everything from

stomping (even rocking) flag-wavers to bluesy numbers to balladlike tunes are freely mixed together so you never know what's coming next.

Example: "Where Could I Go But to the Lord" is usually done double-time, but here it's downright somber. "When He Calls," written by Emmylou's husband, Paul Kennerley, fits the context nicely, as does Allen Reynolds' "Someday My Ship Will Sail" and "The Other Side of Life," written by the Nashville Bluegrass Band's Alan O' Bryant. The same boring tempos drag them down and rob them of their fire.

The beautiful, unaccompanied harmonies on "Bright Morning Stars" lose their impact because the number runs right into the following songs. The same thing happens with "Drifting Too Far," which is lovingly performed in the spirit of the original. Only "We Shall Rise," which opens side two, is uptempo, and stands out both for Carl Jackson's incredible Travis-style lead guitar and the sheer fact that it's different from the other songs.

I love and respect what Emmylou had in mind. But no matter how you slice it, secu-

lar or gospel, eleven dirges with only one stomper to break the monotony isn't a very good ratio.

—RICH KIENZLE

David Lynn Jones

Hard Times on Easy Street
Mercury 832 518-1Q-1

What you know of David Lynn Jones so far, you probably know solely through Willie Nelson's hit version of one of his songs, "Living in the Promiseland." But I'd guess you'll be learning a lot more about the man from here on out.

His debut album gets me to thinking of the Nashville of twelve or so years ago, when all of a sudden a whole bunch of country albums were coming out that didn't sound very "country" as the term was then understood. Somehow, a miraculous new guideline had come into play there at that time: If someone said it was country, then it was country. And that made it possible for artists as diverse as Tompall Glaser, Billy Swan, Delbert McClinton, Willie Nelson, Steve Young, Guy Clark and many more to carve out niches there, at least for a while. From its imaginative and eclectic arrangements to its unlikely combination of producers, Waylon alumnus Richie Albright and former glitter-rocker Mick Ronson, this album qualifies in much the same way.

Jones combines elements of Outlaw, Southern rock, rockabilly, Nashville country and folk balladeering into a rich, melodic sound that reconciles urgent harmonica and piano with a background of smooth voices or biting dobro with silky strings. Sometimes this mix works against him—a few songs here sound over-produced, with all those extras subverting the lean sound that the lyrics cry out for. But more often, it works just fine.

His weather-beaten voice

Record Reviews

has already been compared more than once to Bruce Springsteen's, though it has little of the Jersey star's grandiose, Broadway-like pomp and circumstance; for all the surface similarities, these two guys are working much different necks of the woods. I also hear such elements as a grainy texture reminiscent (again) of Guy Clark, a worried tone that recalls The Band in their heyday, and intimations of classic country singers from Woody Guthrie to George Jones.

David Lynn's songs are full of populist anxiety, irony and dread along the lines of "Promiseland" and the title song. But Jones is also convincing when he turns to unabashed country sentimentality, as in "Home of My Heart," and moralism, as in "The Rogue." Amidst all the sloganeering, he also proves himself on "Bonnie Jean (Little Sister)" to be a fine storyteller. And best of all, unlike so many of his peers, Jones has enough sense and soul to leave people with a little hope alongside all those fears. See, for example, "See How Far We've Come." He's come a long ways himself, and he's bound to be going a lot further.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Girls Next Door
What a Girl Next Door Could Do
MTM ST 71062

What could a girl next door do? It's a question I've pondered more than once, to be sure.

Anyway, I've got an embarrassing confession here. I sort of like The Girls Next Door. They are an unabashed girl group, sorta like Ronni Spector with steel guitars. Their music is light, flirty and exactly what it should be—the musical equivalent of novels you read on the beach.

Girl group music is amazingly fragile. The subjects it

can deal with are surprisingly limited. Girl groups can sing about *True Love*, but not real love, *Heart Break*, but not broken hearts, *Hurt*, but not pain. Girl group music can be tough, but their collective chins still have to quiver.

When they stick to the formula, The Girls Next Door are extremely successful.

I mean, I just love "I Can Hear My Heart Begin to Cry," a *capella* country. They beat The Nylons all to heck. Plus, it's really hard to pull off an *a capella* anything, much less a country song. The voices have to be just right, the song has to be able to carry a voices-only version and the arrangement is critical. On "I Can Hear My Heart Begin to Cry," everything works.

I also like the title cut, fraught as it is with peppy innuendo. "Dancin' Shoes" also works well, as does "You're the Rock, You're the Rebel."

I think there's really a great album in The Girls, sort of The Go-Gos meet Minnie Pearl, and they seem to be headed in the right direction. Keep up the *a capella* stuff—it's just offbeat enough to become a hit.

Meanwhile, hand me the beach towel and my Walkman, please.

—MICHAEL BANE

Tanya Tucker
Love Me Like You Used To
Capitol CLT-46870

I'm upset. The last time I checked in on Tanya Tucker she was sounding gooooooood: real strong, real smart, real personal and real *real*. That was about the time of her last album, *Girls Like Me*, the first product of her "new start" with Capitol. And said album was in every musical way the high point of her career. Apart from being flat-out good, it linked Tanya the person with Tanya the singer more movingly than any of her previous work had, and was therefore a distinct artistic step forward.

That's why I'm upset about *Love Me Like You Used To*. Sure, it's a decently average modern country album, but that's the problem; if a singer/person as interesting as Tanya puts out records you have to compare with those of Nashville's few dozen female

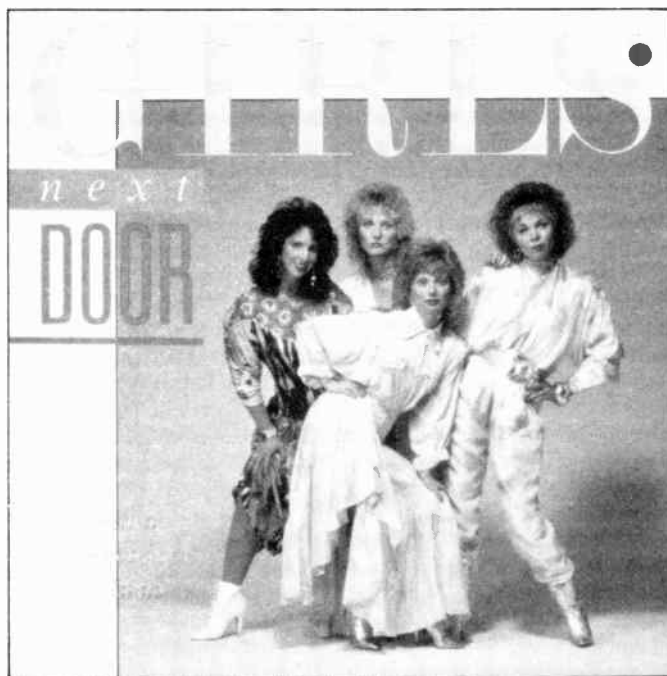
(and male) dim bulbs and TuneMart shoppers, somebody somewhere is missing the boat.

I mean, not to put too fine a point on it, the fact of the matter is that Tanya is crazy in the manner of creative bright-burning bulbs everywhere—sometimes crazy-good, sometimes crazy-bad, sometimes self-aware-crazy-inspired and now and again crazy-self-destructive, but never, ever, plain old ho-hum normal and boring—so why in God's name should she settle for sounding like Janie Fricke? Why load up her cart with the standard medium-budget Nashville country-pop album kit (30 to 35 minutes' worth of Manager's Special Standard Love Tunes containing no less than three factory-certified cute hooks, 20 pounds of Synthviol[®] sentiment, a ton of medium-tempo rhythm, one duet partner and an optional original idea), then set the machines on automatic and feed in the vocals like so many slices of pound cake?

Why not go the extra mile or two, shop around the specialty stores and custom craftspersons, get excited, and take a shot at the history books?

There could be all kinds of reasons why not, of course, ranging all the way from consciously conservative radio drive-time targeting to time and budget restrictions to creative lethargy or even pure laziness. Whatever. It doesn't matter much; it's unlikely that the compromise of *Love Me Like You Used To* will end up costing anybody anything significant. In fact, the music being so predictable, it'll probably keep Tanya's revitalized career moving along just fine (*Look-see, folks, no surprises!*). But personally, I'm going to tape one song off *Love Me Like You Used To*—"Alien," which is both energetic and silly enough to qualify as an original idea worth keeping—and then forget about it.

—PATRICK CARR



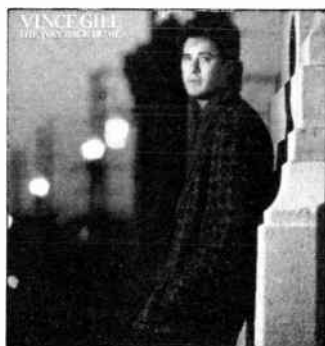
Record Reviews

Vince Gill *The Way Back Home* RCA 5923-1-R

Vince Gill, by dint of his remarkable musical talents, has amassed a set of credentials that are second to none. He is former lead singer of the pop-harmony group Pure Prairie League. He has played in bluegrass ensembles with all the best, including Ricky Skaggs, J.D. Crowe and others. His song-writing collaborators include such top-echelon names as Guy Clark and Rodney Crowell. And as an instrumentalist, he is proficient on not only guitar, but mandolin, dobro and banjo as well. As a point of passing interest, Gill's wife, Janis, is one half of the highly-praised duet team, Sweethearts of the Rodeo.

At long last, Gill's formidable talents seem to have found focus on a solo album which faithfully showcases his versatility as a singer, instrumentalist and songwriter. Under the sure-handed direction of producer Richard Landis, Gill manages to touch all the right bases here. On "Everybody's Sweetheart," a tongue-in-cheek lament of a guy who is left all alone at home to spend the money while his wife is on the road being a star, and "Baby, That's Tough," a cool, bobby-sox-style rockabilly excursion, co-written with Guy Clark, he gently pulls out the stops and rocks and rolls. At the other extreme, Gill turns in several heartfelt ballads, like "The Way Back Home," a song to all the missing children of the world, the kind of song on which his sweetly soulful voice works so well. He also delivers a few surprises, such as a welcome reprise of the old Paul Anka favorite, "It Doesn't Matter Anymore."

Last but not least, with "Cinderella," written by Reed Nielson, and "The



Radio," co-written by Gill and Nielson, Vince ventures masterfully into the mid-tempo, melodic, pop regions that were such familiar ground during his time with Pure Prairie League. When it comes to this particular musical groove, I just can't think there is anyone who can do it better—Dan Seals and Michael Martin Murphey notwithstanding.

Gill is the last person to need an "assist" in the vocal department. But by dint of his many connections in the music business, he's been given some great back-up support here anyway. The voices of friends such as Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash, Emmylou Harris, Bonnie Raitt, Andrew Gold and The Sweethearts of the Rodeo, Janis Gill and Kristine Arnold, can all be picked out of the rich vocal harmonic textures which highlight *The Way Back Home*.

Every now and then the music on *The Way Back Home* is marred by a touch of vocal slickness and instrumental restraint. This, as is so often the case, seems to be the result of trying to cover a wide range of musical styles, yet still make the songs palatable to the rather restrictive demands of country radio, in terms of airplay and sales, upon whose favor a record lives or dies. All in all, though, *The Way Back Home* is a strong, intelligently conceived and executed album that promises to be the cornerstone of the thriving solo career that Gill richly deserves. —BOB ALLEN



Bobby Lee Springfield *All Fired Up!* Epic B6E 40816

Maybe it was the name that grabbed me. Then I heard his single, "Hank Drank," among the few honest tributes to Hank Williams I've heard in awhile. The record company folks were super as usual when I asked for information. When the artist biography came in the mail, I started reading: *The man is from another planet, from a place called Bobby Lee Land, which is located at the center of that vortex of music, political commentary, parental advice and raw energy known as Bobby Lee Springfield.*

What??

I hadn't seen that type of hyperactive, feverish prose since Lee Gutkind's New Non-Fiction Course at the University of Pittsburgh in 1972, a course so inane it damn near scared me into selling Buicks. What would the record sound like? What did I get myself into this time? It was a plot. Right—Lee Gutkind used to wear a cowboy hat, too...

My God, why do I write crazy stuff like this? Must've been a flashback. The unending 90-plus temperatures here in Western Pennsylvania in August toy with your judgment.

Anyhow, one day in July the cassette arrived, and the music within had nothing to do with the bizarre biography. What I found was a

promising country singer, a honky tonker with rockabilly overtones.

Springfield, a gifted songwriter who wrote "Some Memories Just Won't Die," Marty Robbins' last hit, has his own vision: good times, straight-ahead ballads and a cocky, Jimmy Dickens attitude. His voice could be compared to Ricky Skaggs, though it's huskier and more versatile. The album is bare bones: bass, guitar, drums, steel, fiddle. No more.

The results aren't bad for a debut, especially since the plastic would-be Yoakams, Rebas and Randys are due any day now. "Hank Drank" would make the Man himself nod knowingly. "Teenage Darling" and "All Fired Up" aren't wild enough to be pure rockabilly, but jump along nicely somewhere in the cracks between it and country. "Wild Cat" does likewise, though it's closer to Western swing.

"I Need a Girlfriend" also conjures up the spirit of Hank: wry, cynical with just the right dose of humor. The song Bobby Lee didn't write, Eddy Arnold's 1965 hit "What's He Doing in My World" (with a pointless intro by Eddy), is brilliantly transformed from "Nashville Sound" ballad to slow-dance teenage anguish right out of a 1950's sock hop. "Opry Time," a tribute to youthful nights of WSM addiction, could become the show's theme. The country gospel of "Jesus, You've Been a Friend to Me" seems heartfelt enough though at times he seems to over sing it.

In other words, *All Fired Up!* is a pleasant introduction to another fine new voice revitalizing Music Row today. Springfield doesn't need the silly, bird-brained hype he's getting—he was recently billed as "The Intergalactic Bobby Lee Springfield." *Star Trek* and "Hank Drank" don't mix. Ain't no Klingons in Nashville.

—RICH KIENZLE

Buried Treasures /

Re-issues
Rarities and the
Hard-to-Find

The Louvin Brothers: Emmy-lou knew it for years. Ira and Charlie, The Louvin Brothers, were an American musical resource. Even compared with legendary duos like Johnny and Jack, The Blue Sky Boys, The Bailes Brothers and even The Monroe Brothers, The Louvins' raw Alabama soul still holds the high ground.

The Louvin revival has spawned fine recent reissues on the Stetson and Rebel labels, and the Country Music Foundation's *Radio Favorites: 1951-57* (CMF-009), which captures them live, is a masterpiece. Divided into sacred and secular sides from live Opry shows and 1951 radio shows in Danville, Virginia, it captures the breadth of their repertoire in both fields.

The sacred side opens with the exquisite "The Gospel Way" and "They've Got the Church Outnumbered" from Danville. "If We Forget God," from a 1956 Opry show, captures fervent southern fundamentalism with warnings about magazine "stories and pictures... unfit to be seen" and artists who "sing of evil" that would bring tears to Jerry Falwell's eyes.

The secular material is of equal beauty. From Danville come "You'll Forget" and "Childish Love" (which they didn't record until 1956). Both conjure up earlier, simpler times. Several Opry performances were also Capitol singles of the day, including "When I Stop Dreaming" and "You're Running Wild," and fine as the studio recordings are, the live versions have more of an edge. The harmonies aren't all. There's hot, juicy lead guitar on the Opry shows by either Chet Atkins or The Louvins' own guitarist Paul Yandell.

Kitty Wells: Sometime late this year or early next, Bear Family plans a boxed-set reissue of the complete recordings of Kitty Wells.



But for those who can't wait to hear some of her finest material, not re-recordings but the original 1950's hits, Stetson has reissued her first album, *Country Hit Parade* (HAT 3037), originally released in 1956, summarizes some of the best music she had to offer.

Virtually the entire album is a 1952 to 1955 Greatest Hits collection. The original "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," still chilling 35 years later, is here, along with hits like "Making Believe," "Paying For That Back Street Affair"—an answer to Webb Pierce's 1952 hit, "Back Street Affair"—"There's Poison in Your Heart" and "I've Kissed You My Last Time." "Searching For a Soldier's Grave" features Kitty singing with a trio that includes bassplayer Joe Zinkan and guitarist Eddie Hill.

Elvis Presley: As expected, the 10th anniversary of Elvis' death brought many tacky and bizarre products, but RCA's four new Presley reissues are top notch. Each one was lovingly assembled by RCA Vice-President Gregg Geller—who, alas, has since left RCA.

The Complete Sun Sessions (RCA 6141), a double album, replaces the 1976 single album, *The Sun Sessions*, combining the original material with alternate takes and other Sun material that was previously scattered. *The Memphis Record* (RCA 6221) assembles all the material

from his classic 1969 sessions at American Studios in Memphis that produced such later Elvis high points as "Kentucky Rain," "In the Ghetto" and "Suspicious Minds." Both sets include superb notes by *Country Music's* Contributing Editor, Peter Guralnick.

The Number One Hits (RCA 6382) includes Elvis' 18 Number One hits, "Heartbreak Hotel" to "Suspicious Minds," while *The Top Ten Hits* (RCA 6383) adds everything else, from 1956's "Love Me Tender" to 1972's "Burning Love." Both albums feature rare portrait shots, and the sound on all four mentioned so far is digitally remastered.

The most significant new Elvis reissue, from England, duplicates nothing American. *Essential Elvis* (PL 89979) comes from the soundtrack recordings of the films *Love Me Tender*, *Jailhouse Rock* and *Loving You*. Few people realize that the film soundtracks, recorded separately from the released records, often differ from them in various ways.

Essential Elvis combines the film versions of songs with various unreleased takes that show how he experimented with some of his best-known numbers. Presenting different takes is a two-edged sword. An uptempo version of "Loving You" is arguably better than the hit ballad version (on still another take of the song, he breaks up laughing), as is the

alternate version of "Treat Me Nice." The other side of the coin is a horrible alternate take of "Jailhouse Rock" done with The Jordanaires.

Rick Nelson: In 1963 Rick Nelson signed with Decca (later MCA) Records, and by 1966 his career was stalled. The *Ozzie and Harriet* TV series finally ended, and The Beatles had already put a stop to his "teen idol" days. But two subsequent albums, *Country Fever*, 1966, and *Bright Lights and Country Music*, 1967, revitalized him and pointed him to the country rock that redeemed him in the 1970's. England's See for Miles Records has released both albums on one record, *Country Fever/Bright Lights and Country Music*—24 tracks in all (SEE 84).

Rick had no Southern roots, yet his rockabilly past and the able assistance of his longtime guitarist/dobroist James Burton, along with The Jordanaires and Glen Campbell, made both albums credible. Bill Anderson's "Bright Lights and Country Music," Willie's "Hello Walls" and "Alone" and hot versions of "Mystery Train" and "Night Train to Memphis" are particularly well-done. Roger Dopson's liner notes are informative and well-written, a welcome change from notes on other foreign reissues.

Sons of the Pioneers: Last issue's CMSA Newsletter included a Legends of Country Music feature on the Sons of the Pioneers, written by yours truly. Well, since that article, Bear Family has reissued five volumes of 1945 to 1950's RCA Victor Pioneer recordings. *The Sons of the Pioneers* Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (BFX 15202, 15252, 15253, 15254, and 15255) are now available. These albums, plus others, were featured on the September/October For CMSA Members Only page.

Many Pioneer classics are included, among them "Cool Water," along with a second

Essential Collector

version of it sung with 1930's crooner Vaughan Monroe, "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," "The Everlasting Hills of Oklahoma" and "Teardrops in My Heart." Several "period" numbers deal with then-current events. "Stars and Stripes on Iwo Jima" and "Gold Star Mother with Silvery Hair" were World War II songs; a later topical number, "Old Man Atom," their controversial 1950 number about the Atomic Bomb, sounds positively tame today.

One thing that can be said for The Pioneers: they'd tackle *anything*, even "The Whiffenpoof Song." An ample amount of gospel music, from "The Old Rugged Cross" to "Will There Be Sagebrush in Heaven," is also included. Songs from their movies comprise a fair amount of their repertoire, some good, some awful. Though it gets tiresome saying this, Bear Family's packaging, as usual, is excellent. All songs are digitally remastered, and the covers include beautiful hand-tinted photos and complete recording information down to the time of day the sessions took place.

Hillbilly Jazz: In 1974 Flying Fish records released *Hillbilly Jazz*, two albums of new Western swing built around fiddler Vassar Clements, steel player Doug Jernigan and fiddler/vocalist Gordon Terry. A best seller, it brought the Bob Wills/Spade Cooley sound to many for the first time. *Hillbilly Jazz Rides Again* (Flying Fish FF 385) revisits the concept with Clements and Jernigan remaining and a group of new musicians.

I didn't like it at first, perhaps unfairly comparing it to the original. A couple more listens changed my mind. The band acquits itself well, and even Vassar's vocals on "Don't Hop, Don't Skip" and the Mose Allison blues number "Your Mind Is on Vacation" are above average. I can't say the same for the two inept female backup singers, whose wimpy folk harmonies have no business on a swing album.

—RICH KIENZLE



Hank Williams Jr.: "The album was everything I hoped it would be. It was my masterpiece, and I had a gut feeling that it was the right album at the right time," was the way Hank Jr. described *Hank Williams Jr. and Friends* in his autobiography, *Living Proof*. The record teamed him with Charlie Daniels, The Marshall Tucker Band's guitarist Toy Caldwell and The Allman Brothers' pianist Chuck Leavell, a departure in itself.

But MGM Records, used to the formula that made Bocephus successful, cared only about singles. "They clung like lint to the old ways of doing business," Hank wrote. He felt the entire album needed promotion. He wanted "Can't You See" as the single; they wanted the

autobiographical "Living Proof." Waylon wound up with the hit version of "Can't You See."

Nonetheless, the album helped Hank find himself musically. Soon enough, *And Friends* went out of print, its price rising on the collectors' market. When PolyGram bought out MGM, Hank's success didn't spur its reissue until earlier this year when they wised up and reproduced the original, cover and all (PolyGram 831 575-1 Y-1).

Seen in the context of Hank's later successes, it's a tentative effort. His voice is still youthful, far less weathered than it was after the accident. But "Can't You See" (which could have been a hit for him), "On Susan's Floor" and "Stoned at the Jukebox" hint at the future,



and the straight-talking boogie of "Brothers of the Road" sounds much like the Hank of today. It's amazing how stupid the folks at the now-defunct MGM were a dozen years ago.

Bobby Bare: Among Bobby Bare's masterpieces was his 1973 *Bobby Bare Sings Lullabys, Legends and Lies: The Songs of Shel Silverstein*. It's long out of print, but Britain's RCA International has reissued it (NL 89998). Silverstein's bizarre and screwy images were just right for Bare, who had two hits from the album: the disgustingly cute "Daddy, What If?" in 1973 and the down-and-funky "Marie Laveau" in 1974.

The loose, party atmosphere in the studio, where part of the album was recorded live in front of an audience of friends, accounted for at least part of the appeal. Bare's tongue-in-cheek vocals fit the satirical "Paul" and "She's My Ever Lovin' Machine" perfectly. The same holds true for the spooky, mystical "In the Hills of Shiloh." "Marie Laveau" remains one of his better performances, right up there with "Detroit City" and "The Streets of Baltimore." Bare's done some fine albums since the above-mentioned came out, but this one easily stands with the best.

—RICH KIENZLE

How to Get These Treasures

In records or cassettes, at prices shown: \$6.98, Hank Jr., *Hank Williams Jr. and Friends* (Poly 831 575-1 Y-1). \$9.98, Louvins, *Radio Favorites* (CMF-009), Wells, *Country Hit Parade* (HAT 3037). \$10.98, Hillbilly Jazz, *Hillbilly Jazz Rides Again* (FF 385), Bare, *Bobby Bare Sings Lullabys* (NL 89998). \$11.98, Elvis, *Number One Hits* (RCA 6382), *Essential Elvis* (PL 89979). \$14.98, Elvis, *Sun Sessions* (RCA 6141), *Memphis Record* (RCA 6221), *Top Ten Hits* (RCA 6383). In records only: \$13.98, Sons of the Pioneers, Vol. 1 (BFX 15202), 2 (BFX 15252), 3 (BFX 15253), 4 (BFX 15254), 5 (BFX 15255). \$14.98, Nelson, *Fever! Bright Lights* (SEE 84).

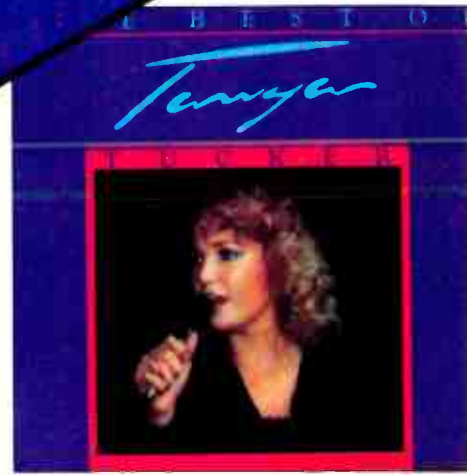
Send check to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 111287, 342 Madison Ave., Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Add \$1.95 first item, \$.95 each additional, postage and handling. CMSA members, see For CMSA Members Only page for discounts.

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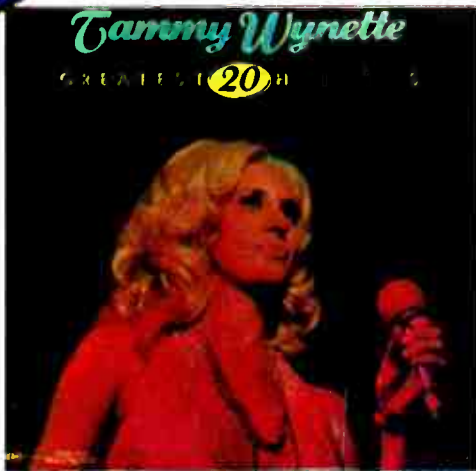
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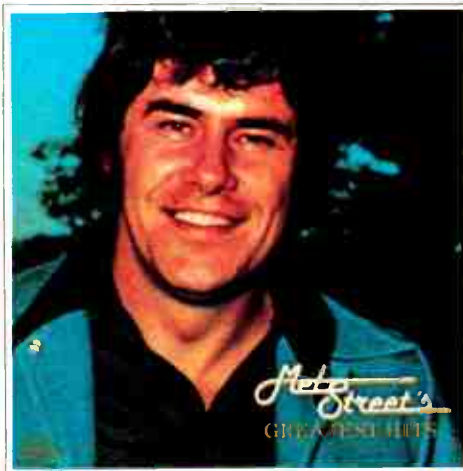
TANYA TUCKER

The Man that Turned My Mama On • You Are So Beautiful • Would You Lay with Me in a Field of Stone • Spring • Blood Red & Goin' Down • Bed of Roses • What's Your Mama's Name • How Can I Tell Him • The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A. • The Jamestown Ferry • Delta Dawn • Almost Persuaded • Greener than the Grass • Love's the Answer • I Believe the South is Gonna Rise Again • Teddy Bear Song • Guess I'll Have To Love Him More • Let Me Be There • and MORE!



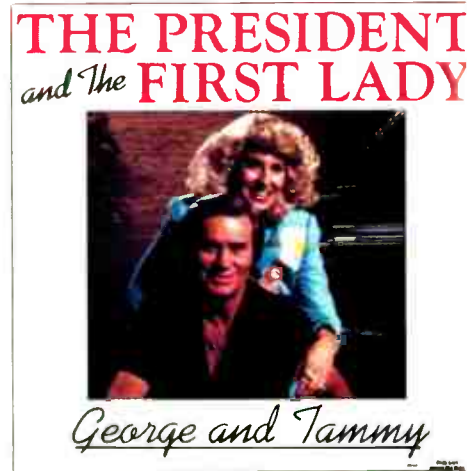
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You and Me • Stand by Your Man • 'Til I Can Make It On My Own • D-I-V-O-R-C-E • Singing My Song • Kids Say the Darndest Things • Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad • Womanhood • One of a Kind • I'll See Him Through • Bedtime Story • I Don't Wanna Play House • Take Me to Your World • Apartment No. 9 • The Way to Love a Man • He Loves Me All the Way • Run, Woman, Run • Good Lovin' (Makes it right) • My Man (Understands) • 'Till I Get It Right



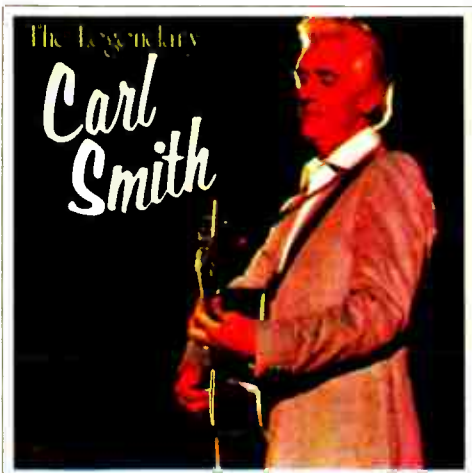
MEL STREET

Borrowed Angel • The Town Where You Live • Bad Bad Leroy Brown • Eye Hurt Her More Than She Loves Me • Last Affair • I Met A Friend Of Yours Today • Big Blue Diamond • Forbidden Angel • Country Pride • Don't Lead Me On • Smokey Mountain Memories • Rub It In • Virginia's Song • Don't Be Angry • Even If I Have To Steal • You Make Me Feel More Like A Man • Today I Started Lovin' You Again • Love Me Tender • and MORE!



GEORGE & TAMMY

We're Gonna Hold On • Two Story House • Take Me • The Ceremony • Old Fashioned Singing • (We're not) The Jet Set • We Loved It Away • God's Gonna Getcha (For that) • Someone I Used to Know • Livin' on Easy Street • Golden Ring • After Closing Time • Something to Brag About • We'll Talk About It Later • Rollin' In My Sweet Baby's Arms • Near You • Southern California • Let's Build a World Together After the Fire Is Gone • If We Don't Make It



CARL SMITH

Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way • Mr. Moon • Just Wait Till I Get You Alone • Back Up Buddy • Deep Water • Hey Joe • Are You Teasing Me • If Teardrops Were Pennies • It's a Lovely Lovely World • You Are the One • Don't Just Stand There • Satisfaction Guaranteed • Kisses Don't Lie • Our Honeymoon • Trademark • Let's Live a Little • Take My Ring Off Your Finger • I Overlooked an Orchid • Go, Boy, Go • This Orkid Means Goodbye



JOHNNY HORTON

North to Alaska • Battle of New Orleans • When It's Springtime in Alaska (It's 40 below) • Johnny Reb • I'm Gonna Home • Honky Tonk Man • Sink the Bismarck • All for the Love of a Girl • The Mansion You Stole • Comanche • Jim Bridger • I'm a One-Woman Man • Sleepy Eyed John • They'll Never Take Her Love from Me • Old Slewfoot • All Grown Up • Sal's Gotta Sugar Lip • Whispering Pines • Johnny's Freedom (Freedom Land) • I'm Ready If You're Willing



ROY ACUFF

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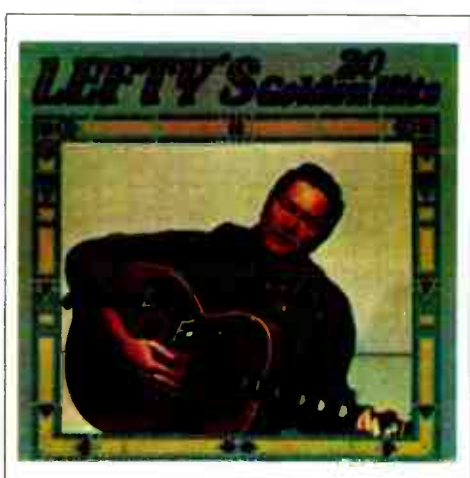
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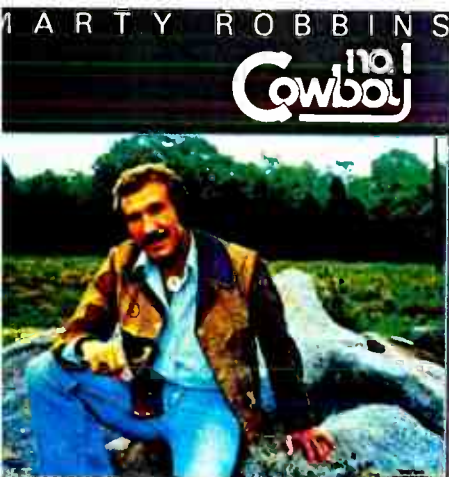
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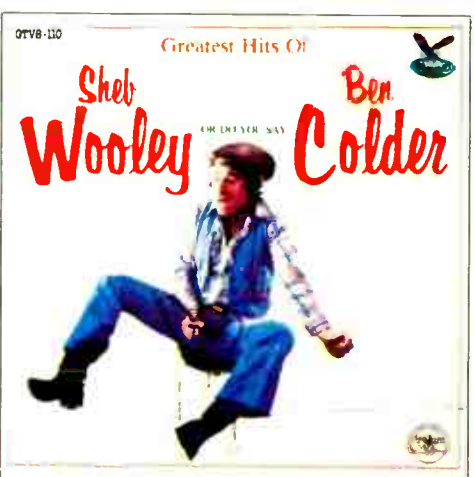
LEFTY FRIZZELL

If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time • I Love You a Thousand Ways • Look What Thoughts Will Do • I Want To Be with You Always • Always Late with Your Kisses • Mom and Dad's Waltz • Travelin' Blues • Give Me More, More, More of Your Kisses • Don't Stay Away • Forever • Release Me • Cigarettes and Coffee Blues • The Long Black Veil • Saginaw, Michigan • She's Gone • Gone • Watermelon Time in Georgia • The Waltz of the Angels • and MORE!



MARTY ROBBINS

El Paso • El Paso City • The Hanging Tree • Red River Valley • Streets of Laredo • San Angelo • All Around Cowboy • Tumbling Tumbleweeds • The Fastest Gun Around • Meet Me Tonight in Laredo • Mr. Shorty • They're Hanging Me Tonight • Cool Water • Strawberry Roan • Ballad of the Alamo • Big Iron • Running Gun • Five Brothers • The Cowboy in the Continental Suit • Old Red



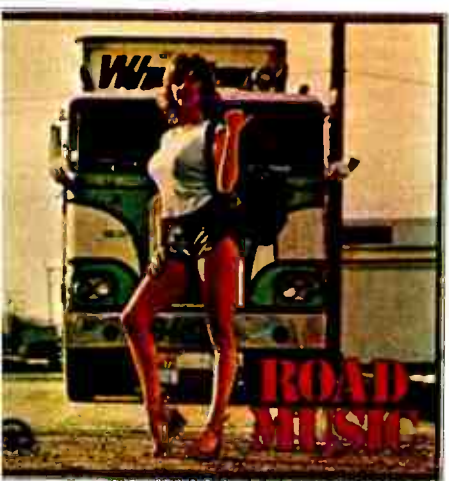
SHEB WOOLEY • BEN COLDER

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Love in the Afternoon • Farewell Party • Pick the Wildwood Flower • One-Sided Conversation • Should I Come Home (Or should I go crazy) • I Don't Need a Thing at All • The Old Man and His Horn • Where Love Begins • Cowboy • Don't Get Lucky All the Time • Paper Rosie • No One Will Ever Know • Bedroom Ballad • Raisin' Cane in Texas • Nothing Sure Looked Good on You • You Could Know as Much About a Stranger • Bail Water • and MORE!



ROAD MUSIC

Teddy Bear (Red Sovine) • Six Days on the Road (Dave Dudley) • Girl on the Billboard (Del Reeves) • Passing Zone Blues (Coleman Wilson) • Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun (Dove Dallas) • Convo (T. H. Music Festival) • Give Me 10 Acres to Turn this Big Around (The Willis Brothers) • White Knight (T. H. Music Festival) • Looking at the World Through a Windshield (Del Reeves) • Giddyup Go Answer (Minnie Pearl) • The Gearjammer and the Hobo (Red Sovine) • MORE!

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Marty Robbins Special

Marty Robbins, featured in this issue's *Newsletter*, had a long career full of hits. Many of his songs are available on records.

For the budget-minded, CBS's *A Lifetime of Song: 1951-1982* (C2-38870) has 20 of the absolute essentials, including all of his greatest hits. A two-record set, available in records or cassettes, at \$15.98. Members' price, \$13.98.

For those who would like to branch out, Bear Family has made virtually all his early Columbia recordings available, including many tracks never before issued. Available in records only, albums grouped under styles, each \$13.98. Members' price, \$11.98.

Early recordings/country 1951-1960: *The Marty Robbins Files, Volumes 1 through 5* (BFX 15095, 15096, 15118, 15138, 15139); *Just Me and My Guitar* (BFX 15119).

1960's country recordings: *Pieces of Your Heart* (BFX 15212).

Western recordings: *Marty Robbins in the Wild West, Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5* (BFX 15145, 15146, 15147, 15183, 15213).

Hawaiian: *Song of the Islands* (BFX 15130); *Hawaii's Calling Me* (BFX 15123).

Rockabilly/pop: *Rockin' Rollin' Robbins, Volumes 1, 2 and 3* (BFX 15045, 15105, 15184).

For a listing of songs included on each Bear Family album, see *The Best of Country Music* and *Immortal Marty Robbins* ads in the January/February issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Prices have gone up since then.

Many of these albums have also been covered in *Buried Treasures/Essential Collector* in recent months.

Buried Treasures/Essential Collector Specials

Members may deduct \$2.00 from the price of every album listed in *Buried Treasures/Essential Collector*. A continuing bonus for all CMSA members. See this issue's column for important Kitty



Wells, Elvis, Hank Jr. and Bobby Bare albums, and more.

Album of the Month Poll

In every issue, members have an opportunity to vote for the Album and Single of the Month, based on the Top 25 in that issue. Results are published in the *CMSA Newsletter*.

Here's the history of that vote, in capsule form: **Sept. and Nov. 1984**, Ricky Skaggs, *Don't Cheat in Our Hometown*; **Jan. and Mar. 1985**, The Statlers, *Atlanta Blue*; **Jul. and Sept. 1985**, The Judds, *Why Not Me*; **Nov. 1985**, Alabama, *40-Hour Week*; **Jan. and Mar. 1986**, The Statlers, *Partners in Rhyme*; **May 1986**, Hank Jr., *Greatest Hits*; **July 1986**, Alabama, *Greatest Hits*; **Sept. and Nov. 1986**, Reba McEntire, *Whoever's in New England*; **Jan., Mar., May and July 1987**, Randy Travis, *Storms of Life*; **Sept. 1987**, Randy Travis, *Always & Forever*.

How-to-Find the Hard-to-Find Records

The *CMSA Newsletter* offers members several ways to locate hard-to-find and out-of-print records. One is the Information, Please column, where members may ask each other for songs, old 45's, albums, sales information, whatever. Another is CMSA Q & A, where members may ask expert Rich Kienzle if a certain artist is still recording and what is available. Another is the CMSA listing, compiled mainly by Rich, of independent record dealers and stores, where by mail-order, auction or walking in the door, collectors may locate their heart's desire. This listing appears in the September / October 1987 *Newsletter*. Copies available in the New York office for \$1.50.

How to Order

To order albums featured here, send check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 111287N, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173.

Add \$.95 additional each item for postage and handling.

MEMBERS POLL / NOVEMBER 1987

VOTE

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

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

Yes No

How many records? _____ How many cassettes? _____

2. Which ones did you like best? List performer and album title.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

3. To vote, list the numbers of your top 5 favorites from the Top 25, page 68.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, fill in your Membership Number _____

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4. Conway Twitty..... *I Want to Know You Before We Make Love*
5. Foster and Lloyd..... *Crazy Over You*
6. The Desert Rose Band... *Love Reunited*
7. Eddy Raven..... *Shine, Shine, Shine*
8. Dwight Yoakam..... *Little Ways*
9. Earl Thomas Conley..... *Right From the Start*
10. Tanya Tucker..... *Love Me Like You Used To*
11. John Conlee..... *Mama's Rockin' Chair*
12. George Strait..... *Am I Blue*
13. The Judds..... *Maybe Your Baby's Got the Blues*
14. Alabama..... *Tar Top*
15. Dan Seals..... *Three Time Loser*
16. The Bellamy Brothers... *Crazy from the Heart*
17. Randy Travis..... *I Won't Need You Anymore (Always and Forever)*
18. Judy Rodman..... *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight*
19. Tammy Wynette..... *Your Love*
20. Moe Bandy..... *You Haven't Heard the Last of Me*
21. Ricky Van Shelton..... *Somebody Lied*
22. Steve Wariner..... *Lynda*
23. Holly Dunn..... *Only When I Love*
24. Larry, Steve, Rudy: The Gatlin Bros..... *Changin' Partners*
25. The Oak Ridge Boys.... *This Crazy Love*

Albums

1. Randy Travis..... *Always & Forever*
2. Hank Williams Jr..... *Born to Boogie*
3. George Strait..... *Ocean Front Property*
4. Dwight Yoakam..... *Hillbilly Deluxe*
5. Reba McEntire..... *Greatest Hits*
6. Restless Heart..... *Wheels*
7. The Judds..... *Heartland*
8. Highway 101..... *Highway 101*
9. The Statler Brothers..... *Maple Street Memories*
10. K.T. Oslin..... *80's Ladies*
11. Rosanne Cash..... *King's Record Shop*
12. Randy Travis..... *Storms of Life*
13. Ronnie Milsap..... *Heart and Soul*
14. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band... *Hold On*
15. Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris *Trio*
16. The Forester Sisters..... *You Again*
17. Willie Nelson..... *Island in the Sea*
18. Kenny Rogers..... *I Prefer the Moonlight*
19. Tanya Tucker..... *Love Me Like You Used To*
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